

The Function of the Chronicler's Temple Despoliation Notices in Light of Imperial Realities in Yehud

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The importance of Jerusalem for the Chronicler¹ (hereafter, Chr) has been highlighted by many previous studies.² Of course, the Deuteronomistic History (hereafter, DH) was also concerned with the Jerusalem temple and its importance, yet the centrality of the temple for the DH is on a different level from that of Chronicles. Despite all the attention paid to the centrality of temple in the book of Chronicles, surprisingly little attention has been given to Chr's treatment of the temple

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¹ By the Chronicler I mean the author(s) of the book of Chronicles.

² Gary N. Knoppers, "The City Yhwh Has Chosen: The Chronicler's Promotion of Jerusalem in Light of Recent Archaeology," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew; SBLSymS 18; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 307–26; Norbert Dennerlein, *Die Bedeutung Jerusalems in den Chronikbüchern* (BEATAJ 46; Frankfurt am Main/New York: P. Lang, 1999); Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Jerusalem in the Book of Chronicles," in *The Centrality of Jerusalem: Historical Perspectives* (ed. Marcel Poorthuis and Chana Safrai; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), 15–28; Martin Selmen, "Jerusalem in Chronicles," in *Zion, City of Our God* (ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 43–56; and Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place and Writing* (SSN 18; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2005), 125–39.

despoliation notices found in his *Vorlage*. Both the Deuteronomist³ (hereafter, Dtr) and Chr show a consistent interest in the history of the temple treasuries in their work.⁴ A study by Gary N. Knoppers has focused on how Chr's presentation of both palace and temple treasuries diverges from that of Dtr, noting that Chr integrates royal actions toward these treasuries more closely into his presentation of the reigns of these kings than Dtr.⁵ Knoppers suggests that through his divergences Chr effectively presented an alternative picture to Dtr's story of decline.⁶ However, the fact that Chr mitigates Dtr's history of decline through his many divergences in this regard still leaves unexplained some aspects of Chr's reworking of the despoliation notices in his *Vorlage*.

This article will suggest that Chr's change in despoliation notices evinces an attempt to impose limitations on royal privileges regarding the temple. Contrary to David Noel Freedman's suggestions long ago that Chr purposed to give a basis for the authority of the house of David over the temple and its cult,⁷ Chr actually limits even the Davidides' temple privileges compared to Dtr in his reworking of the Davidic despoliation notices of the book of Kings. Through a study of the accounts of Judahite monarchs who appropriated temple treasures in times of military duress in both the book of Kings and the book of Chronicles, it will be apparent that Dtr does not view such actions negatively, while Chr is at pains to characterize such actions as errant. Chr's explicit statements condemning such temple despoliation, his negative characterization of the offending monarch (contrary to the king's characterization in the DH), and his omissions of temple despoliation notices all reveal the negative disposition of the book of Chronicles in this regard and the author's desire to limit royal control over temple treasuries. I will conclude by exploring possible reasons for these differing attitudes toward the sanctity of the temple.

I. DAVIDIC TEMPLE PLUNDERERS IN BIBLICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

A. *In the Book of Kings*

E. Theodore Mullen has examined instances in the DH where kings seek to survive a military threat through the offering of temple and palace treasuries.⁸

³ By Dtr I mean the author of the books of Joshua–Kings. Whether a Josianic Dtr1 with an exilic Dtr2 is posited or a Nothian understanding of a single exilic Dtr is preferred makes little difference to this article.

⁴ Gary N. Knoppers, "Treasures Won and Lost: Royal (Mis)appropriations in Kings and Chronicles," in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture* (ed. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 263; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 181–208.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 182–83.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁷ Freedman, "The Chronicler's Purpose," *CBQ* 23 (1961): 436–42.

⁸ Mullen, "Crime and Punishment: The Sins of the King and the Despoliation of the Treasuries," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 231–48.

Noting how all of these kings (besides Hezekiah, who Mullen thinks is an exception to the rule) fail to remove the high places, Mullen concludes that the account of the despoliation of the treasuries functioned to show that the king was being punished for not removing the high places.⁹ However, his view is difficult to accept since kings who despoiled the treasuries are evaluated in varying ways by the narrator, with most judged to have done right in Yahweh's eyes (e.g., Asa, Joash, Hezekiah).

Nadav Na'aman has criticized Mullen's study, concluding that it is doubtful that the despoliation notices consistently indicate the punishment of the king for failing to remove the high places.¹⁰ Na'aman has examined these narratives, emphasizing the different circumstances of each king and distinguishing between those who voluntarily hand over treasure (Asa and Ahaz) and others who meet demands in an attempt to avert a threat to Jerusalem (Joash and Hezekiah). Similarly, Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor have argued that the term "bribe" (שחד) employed in the description of Ahaz's despoliation of temple treasuries "bears negative connotations" and is used to criticize the king.¹¹ The same term, however, is used of Asa, despite the fact that he is characterized positively by Dtr.¹² In order to assess what is inferred when the DH presents a Judahite monarch's appropriation of temple treasures, a brief examination of such instances is requisite.

1. Asa

In 1 Kgs 15:16–22, in the context of a threat from his northern neighbor, Israel, Asa draws on the temple riches to bribe the Arameans to come to his aid. Cogan suggests that Asa's despoliation of the temple "was likely viewed negatively by Dtr, though this is not specifically stated."¹³ This suggestion seems doubtful, however, because Asa is assessed positively in direct statements by the narrator, despite these actions.¹⁴ In 1 Kgs 15:14 it is stated that "the heart of Asa was whole [שלם] with

⁹ Ibid., 247.

¹⁰ Na'aman, "The Deuteronomist and Voluntary Servitude to Foreign Powers," *JSOT* 65 (1995): 37–53, here 44 n. 18. In addition, Knoppers has pointed out that in the DH "four out of six kings associated with treasury raids are rated positively" ("Treasures Won and Lost," 188).

¹¹ Cogan and Tadmor, "Ahaz and Tiglath-Pileser in the Book of Kings: Historiographic Considerations," *Bib* 60 (1979): 491–508, here 499.

¹² Yet Cogan suggests that the word "bribe" "is not original to the message but is one inserted by Dtr in order to taint Asa's act" (*1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 10; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2001], 400). However, he offers no other evidence for the word being a redactional insertion, and it seems unlikely that Dtr would insert a negative comment here rather than add to the regnal evaluation of Asa, which appears to be the work of Dtr himself.

¹³ Cogan, *1 Kings*, 402.

¹⁴ Volkmar Fritz notes that although this positive judgment is qualified by Asa's failure in regard to the high places, "[t]he attitude of the king to the temple in Jerusalem is the sole standard for his evaluation by the Deuteronomistic Historian" (*1 & 2 Kings* [CC; Minneapolis: Fortress,

Yahweh all his days.” To be sure, in the same sentence it is noted that Asa did not remove the high places (15:14), making it appear that his oversight in that regard was not seen as determinative in his evaluation; that is, his neglecting to do something good (removing the high places) did not indicate that his heart was not right with Yahweh. However, could the same be said if Asa willingly and overtly did something sinful (i.e., presumably temple despoliation)? It seems more difficult to think of Asa being commended in this way if his direct actions violated his heart’s relationship with Yahweh. Although it *could* be said that Asa’s dipping into temple funds might present a negative aspect of Asa’s character, it was clearly not a road-block to his positive characterization in the rest of the narrative, and it seems more likely that Dtr did not view it negatively.¹⁵

2. Joash

In another moment of military crisis for a Judahite monarch, Joash draws on the “holy things” (הקדשים) and “all the gold found in the house of Yahweh” (2 Kgs 12:19 [Eng. 18]) when Hazael of Aram invades Judah. Joash’s strategy proves successful as the king of Aram withdraws from Jerusalem (v. 19 [Eng. 18]). Here Cogan and Tadmor suggest that Joash’s “seizure of temple treasures” was not to his credit.¹⁶ Once again, however, it is significant that the narrator assesses Joash positively, claiming that he “did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh all his days” (2 Kgs 12:2). It is difficult to exclude the time Joash paid off the Arameans to secure Jerusalem’s safety from the phrase “all his days.” Again, such actions are not criticized by Dtr.

3. Ahaz

The next Judahite monarch to withdraw monies from the temple treasuries is Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:8). Like Asa, Ahaz uses these treasures to bribe his way out of military duress. However, unlike his predecessors (Joash and Asa) who utilized temple funds in similar situations, Ahaz *is* characterized negatively by the narrator (2 Kgs 16:2–4). It is interesting that this criticism is *not* explicitly linked to his appropri-

2003], 166). However, Fritz does not comment on Asa’s dipping into temple treasuries for his alliance with Aram.

¹⁵ Marvin A. Sweeney suggests that the “account of Asa’s war against Baasha of Israel provides reasons for his religious reforms” (*I & II Kings: A Commentary* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007], 193). Therefore, he seems to suggest that the accounts are out of chronological order and that Asa gives gifts to the temple after he plundered it and sent its treasures to Aram. While Sweeney does not discuss the morality of Asa’s temple plundering, perhaps he sees this acknowledgment of chronological displacement as the reason for Dtr’s indifference to the despoliation, since Asa added to the temple to replace what he took.

¹⁶ Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 11; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 141.

tion of temple monetary resources. In fact, the reasons for such negative characterization are explicitly laid out. 2 Kings 16:3–4 catalogues his shortcomings: he “walked in the way of the kings of Israel”; he participated in the “abominable practices” of the Canaanites, making “his son pass through fire”; and he “sacrificed and made offerings on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.” If Dtr viewed a monarch’s appropriation of temple treasuries as negative, why would he not list this shortcoming here? Once again temple despoliation does not appear to be viewed unfavorably by Dtr, and the fact that Ahaz is characterized negatively cannot be used to support the idea that such actions were deemed sinful in the ideology of Dtr.

4. *Hezekiah*

In 2 Kgs 18:15–16 Hezekiah takes precious metals from the temple and his own palace to placate Sennacherib. While the plundering of his own treasury could be viewed as a self-sacrificial act that reflects well on Hezekiah, utilizing the temple treasuries to mollify the Assyrian king is again ambiguous as to its probity. This action may show a lack in Hezekiah’s piety, where the pragmatic needs of the present outweighed the holiness of the sanctuary and its treasures.¹⁷ Alternatively, it could show that Hezekiah was a faithful king, willing to sacrifice everything at his disposal to preserve his people, the holy city, and even the sanctuary from destruction. Since, as we have seen, there appears to be no precedent to mark such actions *clearly* as negative, this leaves Hezekiah’s conduct in this regard ambiguous.¹⁸ In

¹⁷ Adherents of the [Bernhard] Stade-Childs hypothesis have contrasted the portrayal of Hezekiah in this section (the putative Account A) with those of the following sections (B1 and B2) to show that they must stem from discrete sources. B1 and B2 present a pious monarch who approaches the temple to seek the prophet and pray, while account A presents Hezekiah as plundering the temple to pay off Sennacherib. See John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; 2nd, fully rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 659, 666; and Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (SBT 2/3; London: SCM, 1967), 100. Similarly, James A. Montgomery characterized Account A as less moralizing than the B accounts (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings* [ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1951], 515).

¹⁸ In the present context these actions could be viewed as “wise,” since 2 Kgs 18:7 says that in all he did *יִשְׁכִּיל* (*hiphil* imperfect third person masc. sing.). In the *hiphil*, this word usually means “to act wisely,” though it often does seem to mean “to have success.” However, perhaps the narrator purposefully uses this terminology to suggest that Hezekiah acted wisely in all he did—including the appropriation of the precious metals from the temple. H. Haag has viewed Hezekiah’s payment to Sennacherib as a last-ditch attempt at salvation from the human side. He comments, “On sait que la confiance en la Providence n’empêche pas l’homme de se servir des moyens humains dont il dispose, mais qu’elle l’exige au contraire” (“La campagne de Sennachérib contre Jérusalem en 701,” *RB* 58 [1951]: 348–59, here 355–56). So August H. Konkel, “Hezekiah in Biblical Tradition” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1987), 111.

fact, he could be seen as heroic, since he is defending Jerusalem and his people by such deeds.¹⁹

Interestingly, although appropriating temple treasures is never explicitly judged negatively, when Hezekiah shows the Babylonians the non-temple treasures of Judah, Isaiah levels an extremely negative oracle in response, clearly implying the sinful nature of this action (2 Kgs 20:16–18).²⁰ This is so, even though Hezekiah does not dip into these treasures, but merely displays them for his guests.

In sum, a close look at instances of Judahite monarchs despoiling the temple in the DH has shown that the actions are not criticized by Dtr. In most cases, the “offending” king is assessed positively by the narrator, making it unlikely that these actions were viewed negatively. In Ahaz’s case, when he is castigated by Dtr, his despoliation of the temple is not listed among his deficiencies. If the instance of Hezekiah showing the palace riches to the Babylonian envoys is any indication, then the motive behind such actions may have been more decisive in characterizing them as negative or positive than the actions themselves.

Knoppers concludes that the evidence suggests one of two conclusions: “either the Deuteronomist was inclined to view treasury raids as a positive factor in rating kings or such raids did not inform his regnal evaluations.”²¹ However, why we must assume that Dtr either viewed them as a positive or a negative factor, even if he did not take the latter into account in his evaluations, is unclear. The evidence would suggest that Dtr viewed the Davidic king as having the right to draw on temple resources in times of crisis and that this is not viewed negatively, nor necessarily positively per se. After all, the kings who *are* viewed positively, though they draw on temple treasures, are not lauded explicitly *because* of their utilization of temple monies. It is perhaps better to understand Dtr’s stance as acknowledging that the king had the right to draw on temple treasures and that it was the motives and the reasons these rights were exercised that factored into Dtr’s evaluation of Judahite monarchs.²²

¹⁹ Walter Brueggemann sees these actions as positive, since “Hezekiah, good king that he is, wants the occupying troops of the empire removed” (*1 & 2 Kings* [Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 8; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000], 494). Naʾaman observes that in the DH “the payment of treasure under threat of siege may have been described in a non-critical tone” (“Deuteronomist and Voluntary Servitude,” 44). Similarly, Burke O. Long suggests that such payment of treasures was merely “a strategy to relieve military pressure on Jerusalem and to preserve Judah’s independence” and not capitulation (2 *Kings* [FOTL 10; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 205).

²⁰ Christopher T. Begg has drawn attention to the fact that Judahite kings who despoil the temple are never explicitly evaluated for their actions, nor “is anything directly said about their evoking retribution from Yahweh. . . [but] Hezekiah’s action [of showing the treasures to the Babylonians] does call for a divine response” (“2 Kings 20:12–19 as an Element of the Deuteronomistic History,” *CBQ* 48 [1986]: 27–38, here 33).

²¹ Knoppers, “Treasures Won and Lost,” 188.

²² Fritz notes that the king had authority over both the temple and palace treasures (*1 & 2 Kings*, 305).

B. In the Book of Chronicles

In order to assess Chr's attitude toward temple despoliation, I will now examine how these same kings are presented in the book of Chronicles. With the above survey of Davidic monarchs who despoil the temple in view, the assessment of Chronicles and its parallel accounts of these same kings will be more focused and the distinct emphases and perspective of Chr will be clearer.

1. Asa

In the book of Chronicles, contrary to the structure of his *Vorlage*, Chr divides the reign of Asa into two distinct periods. In one period Chr portrays the king positively (2 Chr 15:1–19); in the other, the king is depicted in a negative light (2 Chr 16:1–12).²³ It is in the second, negative period of his reign that Chr situates Asa's temple plundering, which suggests that Chr viewed these actions unfavorably. This negative view is more explicitly communicated by the condemnation of Asa's actions by the prophet Hanani. Immediately after Asa's timely bribe pays off, thereby eliminating the Israelite threat to Judah, Hanani accuses Asa of relying on the king of Aram instead of relying on Yahweh (2 Chr 16:7). The prophet clearly associates Asa's temple plundering with distrust of Yahweh. Knoppers suggests that, contrary to the account in the book of Kings, Asa's appeal to Syria in Chr's account is "ultimately ineffective," as Hanani predicts that Asa will have wars from that point on.²⁴ However, Chr does present Asa's appeal as effective in the interim, as Ben-Hadad responds and removes the Israelite threat for Judah.

2. Joash

In the presentation of Joash in Chronicles, Chr has reordered Dtr's Joash account for theological reasons.²⁵ Dissolving the historical progression of temple reform followed by invasion by foreigners, Chr separates Joash's reign into two distinct time periods—one of obedience (2 Chr 24:1–14) followed by another of apostasy (2 Chr 24:15–27). During the first period, when the king listened to the priest Jehoiada, Joash did what was right in Yahweh's eyes (24:2); however, after the death of the priest, Joash listened to the officials who "abandoned the house of Yahweh" (24:18). It is during this period of apostasy that Chr situates the Aramean attack on Jerusalem. However, in Chr's account of the Aramean invasion, he omits Joash's

²³ Raymond B. Dillard, "The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14–16): An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method," *JETS* 23 (1980): 207–18.

²⁴ Knoppers, "Treasures Won and Lost," 198–99.

²⁵ As Sara Japhet has shown, Dtr's outline was impossible for Chr since his ideology "would not permit him to see the Temple restoration followed by the invasion of Jerusalem by a foreign king and the violent assassination of Joash by conspirators" (*I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993], 840). Cf. Dillard, "Reign of Asa," 210–11.

despoiling of the temple to secure Jerusalem's freedom. Since Joash has been characterized negatively in this latter period, this omission is curious. A suggestion that Chr simply viewed appropriating temple treasures negatively lacks explanatory power in this instance, as Joash is already characterized negatively in this latter period of his reign. Why not narrate his temple despoliation in order further to denigrate his character in this period and heighten the apostasy?

It is also interesting that not only is the temple plundering omitted, but the outcome of the conflict with Aram is overturned. Rather than having the king of Aram withdraw (which happens after the gift/tribute of precious metals in the DH), the Arameans instead have a successful campaign as Yahweh delivers the Judahites into their hands (24:24). It could be suggested that the tribute payment is omitted simply because Chr does not wish to include the resultant withdrawal of the Aramean force in his narrative. However, the case of Ahaz appears to invalidate this suggestion, as we will see.

3. Ahaz

As in the DH, in Chronicles Ahaz is characterized in a thoroughly negative manner (2 Chr 28:1–27). In fact, many have argued that in Chronicles Ahaz is presented as the worst Judahite king ever, a spot reserved for Manasseh in the DH.²⁶ However, of keen interest for the present study is the way that Ahaz's appropriation of temple funds (2 Chr 35:21) is portrayed in an explicitly negative way.

There are many obvious differences between the accounts in Kings and Chronicles. First, Chr has recontextualized the situation; the appeal to Assyria for help is presented in the context of a threat from Edomites and Philistines rather than the threat from the Syro-Ephraimite coalition, as in the DH (2 Kgs 16:5–6). Second, the result of the appeal to Assyria for help is not successful, as it is in the DH (2 Kgs 16:5–10); it results in Tiglath-Pileser "oppressing" (יָצַר) Ahaz rather than "strengthening him" (חִזַּק) (2 Chr 28:20). What is extremely interesting for

²⁶ Richard H. Lowery, *The Reforming Kings: Cults and Society in First Temple Judah* (JSOTSup 120; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 128–29; Japhet, *Chronicles*, 897; and Ehud Ben Zvi, "A Gateway to the Chronicler's Teaching: The Account of the Reign of Ahaz in 2 Chr 28,1–27," *SJOT* 7 (1993): 216–49. Steven S. Tuell has suggested that Chr's "unstinting condemnation of Ahaz" is because Ahaz "was the first king to succumb to a foreign power, and he did so willingly, without resistance" (*First and Second Chronicles* [Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 2001], 210). However, this appears to be an instance where the interpreter is reading Chronicles on the basis of the DH. In Chronicles' portrayal it does not appear that Ahaz is appealing to Assyria in order to submit. Whereas in the DH Ahaz calls himself the Assyrian king's "servant and son" (2 Kgs 16:7), such language is not found in Chronicles. What is more, if merely an appeal for help indicates a willingness to succumb to a foreign power, Ahaz is not the first in the book to do so. Asa appeals to Aram for help against northern Israel and even calls explicitly for an alliance/covenant (בְּרִית) between them (2 Chr 16:3).

the purposes of this study is the causal connection Chr makes between Ahaz's temple plundering and the outcome of the appeal to Assyria. It appears that Chr is suggesting that the reason the Assyrians oppressed Ahaz is *because* (כי) he plundered the temple. Two כי clauses in v. 19 precede this verse: "because Yahweh brought Judah low . . . because he threw off restraint in Judah and trespassed against Yahweh." Simon J. De Vries has described these as "two grounding clauses" that explain both "why the Edomites and Philistines came" and "why Yahweh allowed this to happen."²⁷ These comments in v. 19 would suggest that the כי clause in 28:21 should be understood similarly, and that Ahaz's temple plundering is explicitly to be blamed for the Assyrian oppression.²⁸

4. Hezekiah

The account of Hezekiah in Chronicles omits any mention of his despoiling the temple to pay off Sennacherib, as referenced in the DH (2 Kgs 18:15–16).²⁹ Sara Japhet suggests that this action was omitted "for the sake of creating a simpler and more unified account, and to some degree may have been influenced by the parallel account of Isa. 36–39, which does not contain [it]."³⁰ However, given that Chronicles exalts Hezekiah³¹ as it does no other king except David and Solomon, Raymond B. Dillard appears closer to the mark when he suggests that the omission is "not because it was not in his source, but because . . . it would be out of accord with the faithful acts of Hezekiah."³² Contrary to the DH, Hezekiah does not take away treasures from the temple but rather assembles treasures for the sanctuary (2 Chr 29:5–

²⁷ De Vries, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (FOTL 11; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 365.

²⁸ Note the difficult verb (חלק) used here to describe Ahaz's temple plundering. Japhet notes that this verb is "not clear, this being the only illustration of this use" (*Chronicles*, 907). *HALOT* (1:322–23, s.v. חלק) suggests emending it to חלץ, meaning "apportion" or "divide" or "share in" rather than "plunder" or to "take from." Perhaps Chr used this word to imply Ahaz's view that the temple treasures were his own possession to divide and share, as the word is often used in reference to apportioning an inheritance or one's own possession or the like. Cf. Josh 14:5; 18:2; 22:8; 1 Sam 30:24; 2 Sam 19:30; Neh 9:22; Job 27:17; Prov 17:2. Perhaps a contrast is intended with David, who is the only other person in Chronicles to perform an action related to the temple that is described with the word חלק (see 1 Chr 23:6; 24:3).

²⁹ And, of course, in Assyrian annals. See "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," translated by Cogan (COS 2.119B: 303).

³⁰ Japhet, *Chronicles*, 977.

³¹ As is universally noted by scholars. See, e.g., Dillard, *2 Chronicles* (WBC 15; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 228; Japhet, *Chronicles*, 936; and Donald C. Raney, *History as Narrative in the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 56; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2003), 159.

³² Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 255. Further, this omission could be due in part to the importance of the deliverance of Jerusalem under Hezekiah and the need to attribute it fully to God rather than partially to timely tribute paid.

11). Chr also omits any mention of Hezekiah showing off the palace treasuries to the Babylonians, only alluding to the episode as a test God put him through (2 Chr 32:31).³³

In sum, in the DH the despoliation of the temple by kings does not appear to have been viewed negatively. Perhaps the common view that these actions were viewed unfavorably by Dtr stems from the ideology of the book of Chronicles rather than from the DH. The problem of the relation of the DH to Chronicles has usually hindered the interpretation of the latter, as scholars have interpreted the differences in Chronicles within the framework of the DH rather than within Chronicles itself.³⁴ However, this may be an instance where the reverse is true, and the interpretation of the DH may be unduly influenced by that of Chronicles. Perhaps millennia of harmonistic interpretation have subtly affected interpreters in this regard.

II. EXPLAINING DIVERGENCES IN TEMPLE DESPOLIATION NOTICES BY THE DEUTERONOMIST AND THE CHRONICLER

A. Kings and Temples in the Ancient Near East

In the ancient Near East, temple building was a central feature of state formation, a state essentially being unable to exist without a temple.³⁵ Though primarily cultic facilities, temples also functioned somewhat as national banks, as a supplement to palace treasuries.³⁶ Therefore, the ruling monarch had an understandable interest in the maintenance and protection of the temple and in the possible distribution of the monies held there.³⁷ In many ways, the temple legitimized a monar-

³³ H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (NCB Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 387–88; and Japhet, *Chronicles*, 995–96.

³⁴ As John W. Wright has observed (“The Innocence of David in 1 Chronicles 21,” *JSOT* 60 [1993]: 87–105).

³⁵ Drawing from anthropological evidence (modern and ancient), John M. Lundquist has offered a model of ancient state development showing the connection of royal and temple ideology (“The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State,” *SBLSP* 21 [1982]: 271–97).

³⁶ Long ago, L. Waterman suggested that the temple was primarily a bank/treasury and that the cherubim were thought to be guardians of the royal treasure (“The Damaged ‘Blueprints’ of the Temple,” *JNES* 2 [1943]: 284–94). Most scholars have not followed his lead, as the cultic aspect is obviously more important than the financial. However, the temple clearly functioned as a state treasury in many ways. According to Knoppers, “ancient temples were important not only as places of worship, but also as banks,” since they were “homes for some of the nation’s most valuable treasures” (“Treasures Won and Lost,” 181). See also Gray, *1 & 2 Kings*, 589.

³⁷ Aarnoud van der Deijl emphasizes the role of the temple in ancient Near Eastern royal ideology, noting the connection between the king as “co-creator with the deity” and the temple as “the centre of creation . . . [and] the centre of distribution of all blessings for humanity” (*Protest or Propaganda: War in the Old Testament Book of Kings and in Contemporaneous Ancient Near Eastern Texts* [SSN 51; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008], 665).

chy;³⁸ however, the monarch generally had extensive rights and privileges regarding the temple. It would appear that in preexilic Judah liberties taken by the Davidic king in regard to the temple were acceptable, perhaps especially because of the view that the reigning monarch was uniquely God's vice-regent on earth.³⁹

In the postexilic situation, however, with no reigning Davidide on the throne, the centrality and sanctity of the temple were heightened, and Chr resisted allotting the same royal privileges in regard to the temple. As we have seen, in the book of Chronicles some monarchs are presented as despoiling the temple, but Chr takes measures to mitigate the inferences of these actions. In some cases Chr portrays these kings negatively, either entirely (Ahaz) or at least during the period of such temple despoliations (Asa). Moreover, such despoliations are presented as somewhat ineffective.⁴⁰ In the case of Ahaz, his despoliation results in oppression rather than help (2 Chr 28:20), while in Asa's case, his actions alleviate the immediate threat but are said to guarantee further oppression in the future (2 Chr 16:9). In two other cases Chr omits the temple despoliation notices that were in his *Vorlage*. In one case, the monarch is portrayed positively (Hezekiah), and in the other the king (Joash) is portrayed in a negative light at the time when the temple despoliation would have occurred. What is to account for Chr's particular way of dealing with the temple despoliation notices found in his *Vorlage*?

Knoppers has suggested that part of the reason for limiting the despoliation notices in Chronicles was that "[i]t is bad enough for an adversary to pillage one's national institutions, but it is even more disconcerting for domestic monarchs repeatedly to do the same."⁴¹ However, this fails to explain why Chr left any despoliation notices at all, unless it was specifically to present the monarch negatively. If that was the case, then the omission of Joash's despoliation of the temple is difficult to explain, since Chr's purpose was to present Joash in a negative light at that point in his narrative.

Knoppers has helpfully pointed out how Chr balances despoliation notices with accounts of the following king enriching the temple and country.⁴² As Ehud Ben Zvi would state it, Chr's history represents "a sense of proportion."⁴³ While this highlights an aspect of Chr's method, it still does not account for Chr's handling of all the despoliation notices. Knoppers suggests that, by including instances of tem-

³⁸ As Sweeney points out, "Temple renovation is frequently a sign of national restoration" (*I & II Kings*, 351).

³⁹ This monarchic mentality is present in Dtr regardless of whether it originated in his sources, that is, whether we think of a preexilic (Cross et al.) or exilic (Noth) Dtr.

⁴⁰ As Knoppers writes, "Chr. neither endorses nor admits to an ineluctable linkage between despoliation and the alleviation of foreign bondage" ("Treasures Won and Lost," 201).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 203: "Chr's record balances the despoliations by some kings with the reconstructions and amassing of wealth by others."

⁴³ Ben Zvi, "A Sense of Proportion: An Aspect of the Theology of the Chronicler," *SJOT* 9 (1995): 37–51.

ple enrichments following despoliations, Chr is delivering the message that “leaders and the community at large can also progress and make new contributions to their nation’s legacy.”⁴⁴ However, this does not seem to make sense of the omissions of tribute payment. Could not the same message have been delivered if, in negative phases of their reigns, monarchs despoiled the temple in times of international crisis? Since the subsequent monarch could overturn this and make “progress” and “contributions,” this does not satisfactorily explain these omissions.

According to John Van Seters, “A fundamental purpose of ancient historiography was to establish a continuity of identity, ideology, and institutions.”⁴⁵ As many have observed, Chr clearly emphasizes continuity between preexilic and postexilic practices in regard to the role of the Jerusalem temple and the organization of its worship (established by David and realized under Solomon).⁴⁶ In light of this aspect of Chr’s work, which attempts to safeguard the sanctity of the temple and its treasuries through establishing continuity with preexilic practice, there would have been a danger in presenting Davidic monarchs as having the right to despoil the temple as they saw fit.⁴⁷ Of course in the postexilic community there was no Davidic monarch on the throne, which leads one to question why Chr would be concerned with imposing such limits on the monarchy. The answer may be found through a brief examination of Chr’s presentation of foreign monarchs and their function in his narrative following the death of Josiah.

B. The Role of Foreign Emperors in Chronicles

In the book of Chronicles, after the death of Josiah Judah is no longer an independent state, and the subsequent Judahite kings served merely as puppets of Egypt or Babylon. William Johnstone has even gone so far as to suggest that, for Chr, the exile begins with Josiah’s death.⁴⁸ A close look at the presentation of foreign mon-

⁴⁴ Knoppers, “Treasures Won and Lost,” 205.

⁴⁵ John Van Seters, “The Chronicler’s Account of Solomon’s Temple-Building: A Continuity Theme,” in *The Chronicler as Historian* (ed. M. Patrick Graham et al.; JSOTSup 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 283–300. Knoppers similarly argues that Chr “wished to emphasize continuity between the First and Second Temple eras (“Treasures Won and Lost,” 194).

⁴⁶ As Knoppers writes, Chr was validating “contemporary sacerdotal arrangements and aspirations by recourse to native precedents in Israel’s past” (*I Chronicles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [2 vols.; AB 12; New York: Doubleday, 2004], 2:797). See also Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 28; Japhet, *Chronicles*, 45.

⁴⁷ According to Knoppers, “the fact that some of Judah’s better kings indulge in this activity complicates the attempt to argue that such a strategy is reprehensible” (“Treasures Won and Lost,” 193).

⁴⁸ As Johnstone writes, “With the death of Josiah the new phase of exile has now begun for Israel. . . . The story of Israel now passes from monarchy to exile” (*1 and 2 Chronicles* [JSOTSup 253–54; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 2:260).

archs in Chronicles from Josiah's time onward reveals that, in the absence of an independent Judean state or a legitimate, obedient Davidic king on the throne, the foreign kings after Josiah fulfill the role of Yahweh's vice-regent.⁴⁹

1. *Necho*

Though the mention of Pharaoh Necho is brief, in several ways he appears to sit as Yahweh's vice-regent in lieu of an obedient Davidic monarch. First, God is "with" him (2 Chr 35:21), as God was with David (1 Chr 11:9; 17:2), Solomon (1 Chr 22:15; 28:20; 2 Chr 1:1), Asa (2 Chr 15:2, 9), and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:7).⁵⁰ Second, Necho is careful to obey God and proceed with the battles he was commanded to fight (2 Chr 35:21), just as the anointed king should (Ps 18:39–40). Third, Necho speaks for God as he cautions Josiah not to "oppose God" (2 Chr 35:21), and the narrator affirms that Necho's words were "from the mouth of God" (2 Chr 35:22).⁵¹ This is analogous to the role of David in Chronicles: he is explicitly referred to as a prophet (2 Chr 8:14).⁵²

2. *Nebuchadnezzar*

When Chr evaluates Zedekiah, he criticizes him for "doing evil in the eyes of Yahweh" (36:12a), not humbling himself before Jeremiah (36:12b), and rebelling against King Nebuchadnezzar (35:13a). This association of the Babylonian king with Jeremiah and Yahweh is striking. Just as disobedience to the prophet is understood as disobedience to God, so rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar is interpreted by Chr as rebellion against the deity. In this way, Nebuchadnezzar functions as God's vice-regent, of whom obedience is demanded and rebellion against whom

⁴⁹ Kenneth Ristau emphasizes this ("Reading and Re-Reading Josiah: A Critical Study of Josiah in Chronicles" [M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 2004], 74–75). William Riley points out that, "by denying the post-Josian kings such royal trappings as the statement of their deaths and burials, and, to a lesser extent, the naming of the Queen Mother, the Chronicler seems to undermine their full legitimate status within the Davidic dynasty" (*King and Cultus in Chronicles: Worship and the Reinterpretation of History* [JSOTSup 160; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993], 142–43).

⁵⁰ According to Ben Zvi, "this expression and the status it conveys are usually associated with pious kings of Judah or Israel" ("When the Foreign Monarch Speaks," in Graham and McKenzie, *Chronicler as Author*, 209–28, here 221).

⁵¹ Japhet understands Necho as referring to his (i.e., an Egyptian) god in his direct speech, interpreting "god who is with me" as literally an idol accompanying Necho on his campaign (*Chronicles*, 1057). She acknowledges, however, that the narrator describes his words as coming from the mouth of the true God ("capital G"). Necho never refers to his god as "my god," and the plain sense in light of the narrator's remarks would appear to equate this god with the "capital G" God.

⁵² As Ben Zvi has noted, Necho is "a person who fulfils the role of a prophet, as some kings of Judah did" ("When the Foreign Monarch Speaks," 221).

results in God's wrath (cf. Ps 2:2–3, 12).⁵³ Again, a foreign monarch is seen filling the gap caused by disobedient Judahite rulers and functioning in place of the anointed Davidic king.

3. *Cyrus*

The final foreign monarch referred to in Chronicles is Cyrus (2 Chr 36:22–23). In the closing verses of the book Cyrus is presented as integral to the completion (לכלות) of Jeremiah's prophecy (v. 22). Cyrus refers to Yahweh as "the God of heaven," a designation that his audience would have found to be orthodox.⁵⁴ More significantly, Cyrus claims that Yahweh has given him "all the kingdoms of the earth," which is analogous to what was promised to the Davidic king elsewhere (Ps 2:2).⁵⁵ Moreover, Cyrus declares that Yahweh has charged him to build a "house" in Jerusalem, taking on one of the most significant roles in monarchical history—the Davidic role of temple builder (cf. 1 Chr 17:12).⁵⁶

It is also significant that the last devout message delivered in the book is from the Persian ruler, suggesting that "YHWH's kingship over Jerusalem may be executed by Cyrus."⁵⁷ After all, Second Isaiah presents Cyrus as Yahweh's "anointed" (Isa 44:28) and as his "shepherd" (Isa 45:1) both royal Davidic titles. Therefore, in a very real sense, in the book of Chronicles the Persian monarchs stand in (at least in the interim) for the house of David. Thus Chronicles appears to be quite favorable toward the Persian rulers.

With this perspective on Persian involvement in Yehud, perhaps Chr's reworking of earlier narratives subtly nuances this pro-Persian stance. In 2 Chr 12:8 the prophet Shemaiah explains the reality of foreign invasion as "that they may know the difference between serving me and serving the kingdoms of other lands." Boda suggests that Shemaiah's prophecy "provides an interpretive window into the Chronicler's view of foreign subjection. Although foreign subjugation is used by Yahweh for disciplinary purposes, it is not an ideal condition."⁵⁸ Foreign rule is not

⁵³ As Mark J. Boda has pointed out, "Not only does this place Nebuchadnezzar among a group that includes Yahweh and Jeremiah, the final phrase [2 Chr 36:13b] bolsters Nebuchadnezzar's role as vice-regent of Yahweh" ("Identity and Empire, Reality, and Hope in the Chronicler's Perspective," in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* [ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009], 249–72, here 252).

⁵⁴ As Ben Zvi suggests ("Foreign Monarch," 222).

⁵⁵ Chr's awareness of the book of Psalms is evident in his use of several psalms, for example, parts of Psalms 96, 105, and 106 are quoted in 1 Chr 16:7–36. Further, the book of Chronicles clearly associates David with the psalms in different ways. See Howard N. Wallace, "What Chronicles Has to Say about Psalms," in Graham and McKenzie, *Chronicler as Author*, 267–91.

⁵⁶ Ben Zvi, "Foreign Monarch," 223.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 228.

⁵⁸ Boda, "Identity and Empire," 258.

to be preferred to Davidic rule. If Shemaiah's statement has relevance for Judean subservience to nations other than Egypt (which is referred to explicitly in the prophecy), then perhaps this implies that there should be a difference between the license that Davidic kings exercise and that exercised by Persian monarchs. What was less than ideal about serving Persian kings? Perhaps it was their policies on the appropriation of temple monies.

C. *Imperial Realities in Yehud*

Joachim Schaper has drawn attention to taxation practices in Achaemenid Babylonia and the practice of the "king's chest," which was a tax-collection device by which part of the temple income was diverted from the sanctuary to the ruler.⁵⁹ Though acknowledging that tax-collection practices in Yehud are not well documented, he has made a good case for a similar practice in Jerusalem and other Achaemenid sanctuaries.⁶⁰ In light of this Persian imperial practice of using temples as tax collection agencies, Chr's presentation of the appropriation of temple treasures by Judahite monarchs had direct relevance for his contemporary situation.

Recently, Melody D. Knowles has examined the paying of taxes to Jerusalem in an effort to see how ritual practices can be "registered on an economic plane."⁶¹ She concludes that the biblical and archaeological evidence points to temple adherents largely (if not exclusively) supplying money to the Jerusalem temple.⁶² If this is the case, and if funding for the temple came largely from devotees and not from Persian overlords (despite the claims of biblical texts like Ezra), then a practice of a "king's chest" in the Jerusalem temple would be that much more controversial for the fledgling community of Yehud.⁶³ Since it was the sacrificial gifts of the faithful

⁵⁹ Schaper, "The Jerusalem Temple as an Instrument of the Achaemenid Fiscal Administration," *VT* 45 (1995): 528–39; see also idem, "The Temple Treasury Committee in the Times of Nehemiah and Ezra," *VT* 47 (1997): 200–205. Others see a similar role for the temple in Yehud, e.g., Oded Lipschits, "Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century B.C.E.," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 19–52; André Lemaire, "New Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea and Their Historical Interpretation," in *ibid.*, 413–56; idem, "L'économie de l'Idumée d'après les nouveaux ostraca araméens," *Transeu* 19 (2000): 131–43; idem, "Taxes et impôts dans le sud de la Palestine," *Transeu* 28 (2004): 133–42.

⁶⁰ Schaper, "Jerusalem Temple," 529. He also points out that "the Jerusalem temple served as an outlet of the Persian 'Royal Mint'" as "suggested by the evidence of the *Yehud* coins" (p. 533).

⁶¹ Knowles, *Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the Religious Practice of Yehud and the Diaspora in the Persian Period* (Archaeology and Biblical Studies 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 119.

⁶² Knowles notes that the temple *may* have functioned as a tax depot for Yehud (*Centrality*, 105–20).

⁶³ As Joseph Blenkinsopp has observed, "Control of and access to the temple would continue to be an important factor in the social and religious life of the Jewish community well beyond the Persian period" (*Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 69).

that were being siphoned off for Persian purposes, it is easy to see how a negative sentiment regarding this practice would find expression in Chr's work.

As Jonathan E. Dyck wrote, "It is clear that the Chronicler intended this story, like the history as a whole, to say something about the present day by saying something about the past."⁶⁴ Given this intention, Ralph W. Klein has noted that it is "remarkable that the Chronicler utters no critique of the Persians elsewhere and seems content with the implicit permission of the Persians for worship connected with the Jerusalem temple."⁶⁵ Perhaps a subtle critique of the status quo under the Persians is visible in Chr's handling of temple despoliations found in his *Vorlage*. This would be similar to (though more subtle than) the complaint in Neh 9:37 that "[the land's] rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us due to our sins . . . and we are in great distress."

Perhaps one of the reasons the temple is distanced from monarchic control in Chronicles was to express an ideal that was not realized in the Golah community. In Yehud the Jerusalem temple was economically important as a center of distribution and exchange within the imperial economic system, which was not controlled by the Golah community. Even if Persian kings currently filled the role of Davidic kings, this role was not absolute. If even the Davidides had limitations in terms of their rights and privileges concerning the temple—even more so the Persian rulers.

When Chr rewrote the narratives of the book of Kings, he included several stories of kings giving gifts to the temple (e.g., 1 Chr 26:26–28 [David]; 2 Chr 15:18 [Asa]; 2 Chr 30:24; 31:3 [Hezekiah]). It is for kings to encourage reform and give gifts to the temple, but *not* to take from the temple or view its treasures as their own possession (as Ahaz—the vilified king—appeared to do) or even at their disposal. Thus, the reason for Chr's omission or alteration of despoliation notices in his work could be a polemic against imperial authority over temple treasuries, or violation of temple sanctity through their use of the temple as a tax depot.

In the case of Asa, Chr shows that such royal invasion into sacred space can work in the interim level but will be disastrous in the long run. This is to be seen as similar to his audience's Persian situation. The Persian policy that used the temple as a tax depot may seem to work in the meantime, but it is a violation of the sanctity of the temple and will prove disastrous if continued. In the case of Ahaz, Chr shows that the monarch's appropriation of temple monies leads to negative consequences, however well conceived.

In the case of Joash, the reason the temple plundering is omitted (even though it would be during the regressive part of his reign) is that it would give backhand confirmation that kings had the right to appropriate temple treasures. Or, if we

⁶⁴ Dyck, *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler* (Biblical Interpretation Series 33; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 222.

⁶⁵ Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 47.

assume that the audience knew the DH and would continue reading it after reading Chronicles, Chr may hope his presentation would allow the audience now to realize that those actions were wrong, as they were part of the apostate period of Joash's reign (i.e., part of Chr's mission was to create a rereading of his *Vorlage*).⁶⁶

Finally, in the case of Hezekiah, Chr presents him as a model for the postexilic community.⁶⁷ In this context, the omission of any temple plundering on Hezekiah's part and the addition of the monarch's deeds of temple enrichment set out the ideal not only for the vice-regent of Yahweh (currently the Persians) but also for the Golah community. Boda has highlighted striking connections between the presentation of Hezekiah's reform and the conclusion of the book with the Cyrus decree, concluding that "the Chronicler shapes the Hezekiah account to maximize connections to his Persian period audience."⁶⁸ It is fitting, then, that the Hezekian ideal set forth in Chronicles, not only for the Golah community but also for the vice-regent of Yahweh, should unequivocally support the temple and respect its sanctity, so that it might be said of both monarch and community that "every work that [they] began in the service of the house of God, and according to the law and the command, to seek [their] God, [they] did with all [their] heart; and [they] prospered" (2 Chr 31:21).

⁶⁶ As Knoppers writes, "After reading the Chronicler's composition and its selective incorporation of earlier writings, ancient readers may have understood those earlier writings differently" (*I Chronicles*, 133).

⁶⁷ Raney, *History as Narrative*, 155.

⁶⁸ Boda, "Identity and Empire," 266.

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