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Wicked Usurpers and the Doom of Samaria

Further Views on the Angle of 2 Kings 15 – 17

1 Preliminary Remarks on the Credibility of Details in Historiography

In this paper I will argue that the chaotic portrayal of the last days of the kingdom of Israel follows the Judean bias more than it accurately reflects the course of historical events in the second half of the eighth century BCE. While some of the information is historically correct, the general impression is that the biblical description is intended to smear the northern state and its legitimacy. Accordingly, the general tendency in portraying the Northern Kingdom is to emphasize the coups in the last 25 years in Samaria. The usual assumption, that the greater part of information – particularly that given in 2Kgs 15 – is drawn from Samarian annals,[1] is misleading. This assumption is based on the principle that the biblical record is an accurate representation of history, rather than being largely invented. The biblical text is assumed to be correct unless strong arguments speak against it. This *a priori* assumption, that derives from credibility assessments of testimonies in legal proceedings, has to be questioned in many respects when it comes to historiography. Even detailed information can be invented. However, this does not necessarily mean that details indicate only the fictive inventiveness of authors. In this aspect, one has to agree with William G. Dever's statement that details have to be "left in the realm of possibility, unless they appear so fantastic that they lack any credibility."[2] But one has to bear in mind that not everything that is possible is probable, and not everything that is credible is factual.

However, the opposite *a priori* assumption, that gives credibility to the extra-biblical accounts, is just as bad. Hence it is necessary to discuss aspects of historicity, literary composition, and tendencies of presentation ("Darstellungstendenzen") alike. The aim of this discussion is not to prove the biblical account right or wrong, but rather to evaluate its probability and accuracy. I use the portrayal of the last kings of Israel in 2Kgs 15 as a test case and I will demonstrate the account's bias.

While most of the studies have engaged in the trouble of dating and chronology, fewer studies have taken a closer look at the biblical representation of the eighth century BCE in 2Kgs 15, which is highly biased. The chapter mentions seven kings of Israel in total, including the last king of the Nimshide dynasty Zechariah, who is followed by the reigns of Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and finally the last king Hoshea. In focusing on the reported revolts, the present paper will not so much engage in chronological issues. This is not only due to the fact that the chronology is dealt with masterfully in this volume by Kristin Weingart and Stephen L. McKenzie; it is also on methodological account, because I have sincere doubts that we can fix the biblical chronology in the Book of Kings in exact figures. The following overview does not intend to settle the chronological issues under debate,[3] but is meant to provide a rough framework for the events discussed:

King's name	Length of reign according to the Bible	Assumed historical framework
Zechariah	6 months	747 BCE
Shallum	1 month	747–743 BCE
Menahem	10 years	747–738 BCE
Pekahiah	2 years	737–736 BCE
Pekah	20 years	735–733/2 BCE
Hoshea	9 years (following 2Kgs 18:10)	732–723 BCE

The lengthy presentation of the decline of the Northern Kingdom consists of 24 verses comprising almost 15 years up to the reign of the last king Hoshea. On the one hand, apart from the great reflection chapters and the narratives in the Book of Kings, no other period is characterized so extensively in historiographical respect. On the other hand, the historical information given in the annalistic script is scarce: no particular background of the four revolts is given, and the Assyrians are mentioned only twice, first in the reign of Menahem, and then in the reign of Pekah. The substantial loss of territory in 733/32 BCE in the 13th

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3 Cf. Christian Frevel, *Geschichte Israels* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 161–63.

and 14th *palû*, both named as *a-na* [KUR]*Di-maš-qa*,[4] is related in almost only one sentence in 2Kgs 15:29.

The verse lists the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser capturing cities in the north: Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee. The biblical list concludes with "all the land of Naphtali" and a note on the mass deportation of people to Assyria (ויגלם אשורה). Although the report of the 12th *palû* is missing in the Kalḫu Annals, the Assyrian sources give some information on the 12th *palû* (*a-na* [KUR]*Pi-liš-ti* "against [the Land of] Philistia") and the 13th *palû* (*a-na* [KUR]*Di-maš-qa* "against [the land of] Damascus") and the subjugation of these lands. However, more detailed information on the annexation of the northern territory is completely missing.[5] No further information is given on the political status of Samaria after the campaigns of Tiglath-Pileser III, let alone the status of the province after the conquest of Samaria.

Some peculiarities accompany the portrayal of the kings.[6] While it holds true that the burial of the northern king is not generally part of the annalistic framework,[7] the burial is mentioned with Baasha (1Kgs 16:6), Omri (1Kgs 16:28), Ahab (1Kgs 22:37), Jehu (2Kgs 10:35), Jehoahaz (2Kgs 13:9), Joash (2Kgs 13:13), and (if we accept the originality of the Antiochene text, which attests και εταφη εν Σαμαρεια)[8] for Jeroboam II in 4Kgdms 14:29 – he is the last king bur-

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4 For a proposed ordering of the campaigns see Peter Dubovský, "Tiglath-pileser III's Campaigns in 734–732 B.C.: Historical Background of Isa 7; 2 Kgs 15–16 and 2 Chr 27–28," *Bib* 87 (2006): 153–70, esp. 157–61; Hayim Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria: Critical Edition with Introductions, Translations and Commentary* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), 232–82.

5 For the Assyrian point of view see the textual evidence assembled in Tadmor, *Inscriptions*, 27–215; and Manfred Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); further Kyle Lawson Younger Jr., "The Summary Inscription 9–10 (2.117F)," in *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2: *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Hallo and Kyle Lawson Younger Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 2000): 291–92. For a quick overview see William W. Hallo's Introduction in Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2, xxi–xxvi; Heather D. Baker, "Tiglath-pileser III," in *RlA* 13, ed. Michael P. Streck (2014): 22; Hayim Tadmor and Shigeo Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 2–18, 232–37.

6 Note further the formula of the "sin of Jeroboam" (2Kgs 15:9, 24 לא סר מחטאות ירבעם, 2Kgs 15:18 לא סר מן־חטאות ירבעם, 2Kgs 15:28 לא סר מעל חטאות ירבעם; the evaluation formula can be found with Zechariah, Menahem, Pekaiah, Pekah. It is lacking with Shallum and Hoshea (in 2Kgs 17).

7 Notes on the burial are missing for Jeroboam, Nadab, Elah, Simri, Ahaziah, Joram, Jeroboam II (MT), and all following kings.

8 Natalio Fernandez Marcos and José Ramón Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno De la Biblia Griega II: 1–2 Reyes* (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1992), 125.

ied in Samaria. Any further notice of burial is missing, particularly for the last kings of Israel. This already underlines that the composition of 2Kgs 15 is special. The murdered kings do not "pass away" and are not even buried. For Menahem, the only king who had a *legal* successor with his son Pekahiah, the pass-away-formula is used וישכב מנחם עם־אבתיו (2Kgs 15:22) but no burial is mentioned. Besides the evaluation formula, which is lacking for Shallum and emendated for the reign of Hoshea, it is the formulaic expression of the regicide, which is strikingly similar with all four revolts (Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea), including the phrase קשר על (lacking with Menahem), נכה, and the following phrase וימיתהו וימלך תחתיו.[9]

Shallum v. 10	וַיִּקְשֹׁר עָלָיו שַׁלֻּם בֶּן־יָבֵשׁ וַיַּכֵּהוּ קָבָל־עָם וַיְמִיתֵהוּ וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו׃
Menahem v. 14b	וַיַּךְ אֶת־שַׁלּוּם בֶּן־יָבֵישׁ בְּשֹׁמְרוֹן וַיְמִיתֵהוּ וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו׃
Pekah v. 25	וַיִּקְשֹׁר עָלָיו פֶּקַח בֶּן־רְמַלְיָהוּ שָׁלִישׁוֹ וַיַּכֵּהוּ בְשֹׁמְרוֹן[...] וַיְמִיתֵהוּ וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו׃
Hoshea v. 30a	וַיִּקְשָׁר־קֶשֶׁר הוֹשֵׁעַ בֶּן־אֵלָה עַל־פֶּקַח בֶּן־רְמַלְיָהוּ וַיַּכֵּהוּ וַיְמִיתֵהוּ וַיִּמְלֹךְ תַּחְתָּיו

Table 1: The four revolts in 2Kgs 15

The verb קשר "to bind (together)" in the G-stem is the technical term used for conspiracies, particularly for military coups. Significantly, it is used in an intensifying compound with the noun קשר for Hoshea. The verb is also employed for Baasha (1Kgs 15:27); Zimri (1Kgs 16:9, 20); Jehu (2Kgs 9:14; 10:9); Shallum (2Kgs 15:10, 15); and the rebellions *against* Athaliah, Joash, Amaziah, and Amon (2Kgs 11:19; 12:20; 14:19; 21:23 – 24).

In the following I will try to evaluate the upheavals and regicides in the context of the portrayal of the northern monarchy 1Kgs 12 – 2Kgs 17.

2 The General Assessment of the North as Unstable Entity

The designation of the Northern Kingdom as unstable is deliberate. Of the 20 kings (including the unlucky Tibni, who – following 1Kgs 16:22 – was displaced allegedly without reigning as king) one half are irregular or illegitimate successors (Jeroboam I, Baasha, Zimri, Tibni, Omri, Jehu, Shallum, Menahem,

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9 For the formula see also Peter Dubovský, "Why Did the Northern Kingdom Fall According to 2 Kings 15?," *Bib* 95:3 (2014): 321 – 46.

Pekah, Hoshea).[10] This is in stark contrast to the supposed continuity of the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem. The lengthy reign of Ahaz, who survived almost four Israelite kings, clearly underlines the contrast between stability and volatility. The historic background of this characteristic on both sides is difficult to evaluate in particular. While former studies in the history of kingdoms took the continuity of the Davidic kingdom for granted and the vicissitude of the Israelite monarchy as a historical characteristic of this political entity,[11] one has to be more cautious. I have argued elsewhere that the uninterrupted continuity of the Davidic dynasty is a Judean construct, at least before King Ahaz in Jerusalem.[12] As regards the northern monarchy, we have indications that the Omrides (Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram) and the Nimshides (Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II, and Zechariah) formed dynasties which reigned continuously over 50 or even 100 years.

All northern kings are portrayed as villains, and the Deuteronomists do not judge even a single ruler positively, making the assumption untenable that regicide was in fact the norm for the succession of power. Particularly if read against the background of the economic and political success of the Northern Kingdom, one cannot take the volatility as described in the biblical accounts as an evaluative starting point. On the other hand, the most successful periods under the reign of the Omrides and Nimshides are portrayed as dynastically more stable, so the biblical descriptions may have some foundation in historical fact. But strikingly, upheavals and regicides increase in the last 25 years of the kingdom of Samaria, a fact that was emphasized by Peter Dubovský as part of the Deuteronomistic reasoning regarding Samaria's demise: "the biblical text points to the first cause of the downfall of Samaria."[13] Although the present paper has profited very much from Dubovský's sophisticated analysis, the suggestion that 2Kgs 15 not only "washes dirty laundry" but gives an implicit cause for the fall of Samaria in historical respect calls for some critique. His paper aims to understand the "dynamics latent in the society of the Northern

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10 Based on various arguments, Peter Dubovský counts seven revolts during that time in the north. He sees the number as deliberate "in order to convey the idea of completeness": Dubovský, "Northern Kingdom," 325. Although this is a tempting argument, I doubt that the number of actual revolts was reduced in order to reach the number seven. I see, in particular, the exclusion of Omri as problematic, see below.

11 The impression is emphasized if the instability is compared against the long reigns of Azariah and Ahaz.

12 Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 178, 228.

13 Dubovský, "Northern Kingdom," 326.

Kingdom, which … led to its fall,"[14] which is at the end itself a kind of a Deuteronomistic approach by taking the instability of the Northerners for granted. But isn't northern instability as a general feature and a 'birth defect' more rhetorically true than it is factually true? The "sin of Jeroboam" that drives the critique in the biblical portrayal of northern history is an invention of tradition rather than it is historically grounded. The term "invention of tradition" that Eric Hobsbawm introduced into the historian's vocabulary denotes supposed facts that evolve to mythic power in forming "history." These "facts" can be demonstrated as being projected backwards if not invented at all.[15] Recent evaluations of the "sin of Jeroboam" point exactly in that direction.[16] I have argued elsewhere that Jeroboam I's reign is, in fact, an invention to install a damaged eponym and to mark the birth of the Northern Kingdom as corrupted (see further below). Thus one should not build historiography on this highly colored portrayal to reconstruct deep historical structures. Moreover, had the *coups d'état* actually "ravaged the Northern Kingdom" as Dubovský is ready to assume? Assessed from the archaeological evidence this evaluation remains doubtful. While Dubovský can be praised for his detailed discussion, his blending of literary and historical analyses is open to some methodological critique. However, although being more skeptical, I agree with Dubovský in attempting to get somewhat behind the rhetoric of 2Kgs 15.

My approach to 2Kgs 15 is firstly to evaluate the literary design of the presentation and not to buy into its bias too quickly. And if historical information is lacking from the extra-biblical accounts, it should not be added from the Deuteronomistic narrative. 1Kgs 15 – 17 forms an unfavorable framework to the history of Samaria/Israel and does not aim to be a proper historical account. However, although most of the defamatory information is suspicious, there are actually no *strong* indications to question the biblical data for Israel in principle. Only some information can be proved more or less wrong by extra-biblical sources.

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14 Dubovský, "Northern Kingdom," 321.

15 See Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14.

16 See Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 148–51, 231; Angelika Berlejung, "Twisting Traditions: Programmatic Absence-Theology for the Northern Kingdom in I Kgs 12:26–33* (the 'Sin of Jeroboam')," *JNSL* 35 (2009): 1–42.

3 Destroyers, Subversive Forces, and Revolutions: The North as a Chaotic Entity

While it is not possible to go into every detail in this essay, I will now take a closer look at the portrayal of the northern state. I will briefly address each of the ten non-dynastic, irregular rulers of the Northern Kingdom with a short comment. This is to demonstrate the general tendency to devalue and denounce the North, on the one hand, and to highlight certain characteristics in the particular portrayals on the other hand. My thesis is that the portrayal of Israel as an unstable entity which is shaped by a chain of revolts is, more or less, invented; it is fabrication rather than fact.

3.1 Jeroboam I

From its very beginning in 1Kgs 11–14, the history of the North is already problematic. When does it become reliable? If we accept that, with regard to historicity, there was no United Monarchy (in the sense of a state that covered both the territory of Judah and Samaria, or an even larger territory that included the Negev, Shephelah, the Mediterranean coast, the hill country of Ephraim and Gilboa, and even Galilee, Bashan, and Gilead[17]) then there was no division of "kingdoms" at all. The struggle between Jeroboam I and Rehoboam over the succession to Solomon's throne, the opposition between the northern and southern tribes, and the historical reconstruction of a division of kingdoms are myth rather than history.[18] We cannot go into a detailed analysis here, but there are ample reasons to consider the biblical reconstruction in 1Kgs 11–14 as *invented tradition:* the double justification of the division in 1Kgs 11–12; the forced labor of Solomon; the election scene in Shechem; the establishment of Bethel and Dan as state sanctuaries; the resemblance between Jeroboam I (the dynastic founder) and Jeroboam II; and the Judean bias evident in the name-play of the "People's Contender" [Jeroboam: ריב√] and the "People's Expander" [Rehoboam: רחב√][19]

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17 See Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 103–48.

18 See Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 148–65; id., "Disrupted or conjoined? A new proposal regarding the division of kingdoms in the history of Israel" (delivered at IOSOT Stellenbosch 2016, to be published 2018); id., "Ben Hadad I and his alleged campaign to the North in 1 Kings 15:17–20" (delivered at SBL Boston 2017, to be published 2018).

19 I am grateful to Jonathan Robker for this translation of my German pun "Volksweiter und Volksstreiter".

etc. Many arguments point in the direction that 1Kgs 11:26 – 14:30 is a literary account with only a few historic details, if there are any at all. With regard to a historical reconstruction of events, the first revolt by the people of Israel is neither directed against a Jerusalemite prerogative nor is the origin of Israel as an independent monarchy related to a *coup d'état*. In contrast to 1Kgs 11:26, Jeroboam I did not raise his hand against Solomon (וירם יד במלך) because of the corvée in Jerusalem, and he did not tear apart the northern tribes from the south. By *inventing* an upheaval that initiated the Northern Kingdom it became sinful from the moment of its foundation, even if Solomon is blamed (later?) for his misdoings (particularly for his mixed marriages and religious deviance). In sum: to build a history of the northern state based on the account in 1Kgs 11 – 14 is "skating on thin ice". From the historical side we cannot say anything safe about Jeroboam I, if he existed at all.

3.2 Baasha

Although presenting some details, the information about Baasha's reign is not very consistent. It is noted in formulaic manner that there was war between Asa and Baasha throughout his reign (1Kgs 15:16, and the repetition of the phrase in 1Kgs 15:32), and that he built Ramah to hinder Asa going north. Asa himself should have bribed the Arameans to push back Baasha. When Baasha was threatened by the Arameans, he withdrew from Ramah and built Tirzah (ויחדל מבנות את-הרמה וישב בתרצה, 1Kgs 15:21). Subsequently, Asa built Geba with the stones of Ramah (1Kgs 15:22). Although several places named Ramah are mentioned in the OT (Josh 13:26; 19:8, 29, 36 etc.), only the Ramah in Benjamin (Josh 18:25; Neh 11:33), *er-Rām* (today *al-Ram*, coord. OIG 1721.1402),[20] about five miles north of Jerusalem, can be taken into account for identification. Accordingly, the previously-mentioned Geba can be identified with *Ǧeba* (coord. OIG 1749.1405), whereas Tirzah is *Tell el-Fārʿah* in the North (coord. OIG 1823.1882). The archaeological record cannot decide issues, but it is striking that neither Ramah, nor Geba, nor Tirzah show traces of building activities which can be attributed to Asa or Baasha. All these places show evidence of later building activities, mostly in the Iron IIB, if anything.

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20 Localizations are given following the map reference points of the so-called Palestine Grid 1923 (= OIG, "Old Israel Grid"). Add 500 to the latitude and 5000 to the longitude to receive the Israeli Transverse Mercator coordinates 1994 (= NIG, "New Israel Grid").

That the portrayal of Baasha's reign is drawn from literary sources rather than from historical records is further corroborated by the other information in 1Kgs 15. The text in 1Kgs 15 presents Baasha as an Aramean *protégé*, or at least as under Aramean influence (1Kgs 15:19), but neither his nor Asa's affiliation with Ben-Hadad (who is actually not found in the extra-biblical record at all) has left traces outside of the Bible. To make a long story short, many reasons suggest that this very Ben-Hadad and his influence on Israel is *invented*, as is the eponym of Aram by biblical scribes.[21]

Because the Aramean king Ben-Hadad defeated Israel following a bribe sent by Asa, the pressure on Judah should have stopped. 1Kgs 15:20 mentions the Aramean conquest of Ijon/*Tell ed-Dibbin* (coord. OIG 2052.3054), Dan/*Tell el-Qāḍī* (coord. OIG 2112.2948), Abel-bet-maacha/*Tell Ābil el-Qamḥ* (coord. OIG 2045.2962), the whole sea region of Kinneret, and the entire land of Naphtali. With many others, I have argued elsewhere that this does not reflect the situation in the early ninth century, but rather in the second half of the ninth century under the Aramean Hazael or even – since 1Kgs 15:20 is drawn from 2Kgs 15:29 – in the eighth century under Tiglath-pileser III.[22] This is supported by the archaeological record, which cannot be unfolded here.

Coming to Baasha's *coup d'etat*, we have to acknowledge the combination of standardized wording and supposed detailed information: Baasha started a revolution against Jeroboam's son Nadab (ויקשר עליו בעשא) and killed him at Gibbethon (ויכהו בעשא בגבתון, 1Kgs 15:27). After becoming king, he struck down all the offspring of the house of Jeroboam (הכה את־כל־בית ירבעם, 1Kgs 15:29). Further information is given on Baasha's ancestry. While his father's name בן־אחיה is inconspicuous (1Kgs 21:22; 2Kgs 9:9), the Hebrew לבית יששכר (1Kgs 15:27) is odd; it points to a place named Beth-Issachar, or a family named Issachar, rather than to the region of the tribe in the north. Strikingly, except for Ezra 2:36// Neh 7:39 the construction PN+לבית+PN is not used elsewhere. This may be the reason why the Vaticanus has ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Βελααν instead of לבית יששכר. The Antiochene text, in contrast, gives evidence for the variant ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Βεδδαμα τοῦ Ἰσσαχαρ. Whether this has to be taken as the oldest variant does not have to be decided here. Be that as it may, the additional information prevents the reader from identifying Baasha's father with the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite (1Kgs 11:29–30; 12:15; 14:2, 4). There has been much discussion on the specifica-

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21 See the lengthy arguments in Frevel, "Ben Hadad I."

22 See Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 195; id., "Ben Hadad I"; Angelika Berlejung, "Nachbarn, Verwandte, Feinde und Gefährten: die 'Aramäer' im Alten Testament," in *The Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs in Babylonia and Palestine in the First Millennium B.C.*, ed. Angelika Berlejung and Michael P. Streck (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 72–73.

tion that Baasha slayed Nadab in *Gibbethon* while the king of Israel besieged the city, which is said to be "Philistine" (אשר לפלשתים). This expression is attested only once more in 1Kgs 16:15, suggesting that the siege of Nadab was not successful at all. The narrative gives the impression that Baasha was part of Nadab's army and that he usurped the throne. After gaining power, as happens later with Jehu (2Kgs 10:11) and particularly Zimri (1Kgs 16:12), he killed all members of the house of Nadab (1Kgs 15:27). Gibbethon, the Assyrian Gabbutunu, is located in the vicinity of Gezer, either identified with *Tell el-Melat/Tell Mālāt* (coord. OIG 1374.1405) or less probably *Ras Abū Ḥamīd* (coord. OIG 1398.1456).[23] Strikingly, a siege of Gibbethon is mentioned on the eve of Omri's coup in 1Kgs 16:15. Omri and the people of Israel besieged Gibbethon while Zimri slayed Elah, the son of Baasha. When Omri heard about this he broke off the siege of Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah instead (1Kgs 16:17). The two notes on Gibbethon are part of a Deuteronomistic retribution-scheme, and are obviously related to each other. At least one, if not both of the notes was created for the purpose of correspondence. While it is not, in principle, impossible that in the face of changing Philistine power (including the decline of Ekron as the leading Philistine city) there were military struggles between "the Philistines" and Nadab in Gibbethon[24] (which was perhaps controlling the trade routes to the coast) it is not very likely. 1Kgs 15:27 mentions that Nadab laid siege to Gibbethon with the whole of Israel (וכל־ישראל צרים על־גבתון). The motif resembles the pointed participation of the people in Omri's revolt, where it makes perfect sense in legitimizing Omri. In 1Kgs 15:27 it is a borrowed motif.

The information on Baasha's illegitimate accession to the throne is now crisscrossed by the concluding comment about Baasha in 1Kgs 15:33, which is placed after the doublet of the war-note in v. 32. Whether Baasha conspired to overthrow Nadab (1Kgs 15:27–28) in Gibbethon or whether he accessed the throne more or less legitimately in 1Kgs 15:33 is open for discussion (and a fascinating topic), which cannot be unfolded here. But the composition as a whole

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23 The localization follows Stefan Timm, "Die territoriale Ausdehnung des Staates Israel zur Zeit der Omriden," *ZDPV* 96 (1980): 35; Ed Noort, *Die Seevölker in Palästina* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 41; For Ras Abū Ḥamīd/Humeid see Steven M. Ortiz, "Gibbethon," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000): 500–501; Volkmar Fritz, "Das erste Buch der Könige," in *Zürcher Bibelkommentar: Altes Testament* 10:1 (Zürich: TVZ, 1996): 155; Manfred Görg, "Gibbeton," in *Neues Bibellexikon* 1, ed. Manfred Görg and Bernhard Lang (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 2001): 859; John L. Peterson, "Gibbethon (Place name)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992): 1006–1007.

24 Carl S. Ehrlich, *Philistines in Transition: a History from ca. 1000–730 BCE* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 66–68.

casts doubt on Baasha's *coup d'état*. I support Šanda's astute view, that the whole chapter of 1Kgs 15 is more formulaic than it is historic: "Das ganze Kapitel ist eine Verquickung von Formeln des R, deuteronomistischen Phrasen und an wenigen Stellen auch von Worten der alten Quellen. Es ist ein Werk des R."[25] In sum, the revolt of Baasha – at least in its portrayal in 1Kgs 15 – is drawn from other biblical sources.

3.3 Zimri-Tibni-Omri

We will also not engage in speculation about the Omri-Tibni-Zimri entanglement here, although the alliteration of names is as suspicious as the rival kingdom of Tibni (1Kgs 16:21) is enigmatic. All names appear to be hypocoristic forms of Yahwistic names. While Zimri ("My praise is Yah") and Omri ("My life is Yah") are positive nominal-sentence-names, Tibni can be read, in parallel to Omri, as a mocking name denoting either "scarecrow" (from תבן "straw, chaff" with allusion to עמר "bind sheaves, clamp of ears") or "copy, piece" (from בנה or תבנית "to build"; "likeness, copy").[26] The legitimation of the military officer Omri by the people as an opponent to Zimri, who staged a revolt against the alcoholic Elah, makes Omri, on the one hand, a hero. On the other hand, Omri's takeover seems plausible,[27] if Zimri's act was judged a villainous regicide by the people. 1Kgs 16:9 classifies Zimri's act as a coup by using the phrase ויקשר עליו. Already this note introduces the opposition between Zimri and Omri, since both are army officers. While Zimri is a commander of half the king's chariots (1Kgs 16:9), Omri is a commander of the army (1Kgs 16:16). The subtle ironic difference makes sense because Omri overpowers Zimri. King Elah, the son of Baasha, is denounced as unable to lead Israel, because he drinks alcohol excessively in Tirzah (והוא בתרצה שתה שכור, 1Kgs 16:9) in the house of Arzah, the senior official of the palace. This ironic description proves him incompetent to govern, not only in the moment, but during the entire two years of his reign. Zimri then kills all the members of the royal family and of the reigning party in Tirzah (1Kgs 16:11).

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25 Albert Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1911), 395.

26 See Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966), 232.

27 Dubovský, *Northern Kingdom,* 323 sees "several reasons to conclude that the ancient scribes did not classify it as a *coup d'état*", which makes the evaluation difficult from a historical standpoint. The parallel to the Jehu coup is obvious. Both have the same angle of evaluation, so that I tend to go with the first part of Dubovský's quote that "Omri's ascension to the throne bears several signs of a *coup d'état*" (323).

This is emphasized with the formulaic משת בקיר "every male" (lit. "anyone, who is pissing at the wall") which is used in the context of regicide (1Sam 25:22, 34; 1Kgs 14:10; 21:21; 2Kgs 9:8). The extermination is emphasized with the phrase "any kinsmen and any friend" (וגאליו ורעהו) which is unique in this context. However, to attribute the end of the house of Baasha to Zimri, a monarch of only seven days, is to relieve Omri from regicide, and such a notion would most likely have originated in annals from the North. Omri battles in Gibbethon against the Philistines (see above) and is thus presented as "defender" of Israel. Even the Deuteronomistic fulfillment of the prophecy of the prophet Jehu (1Kgs 16:1–4, 12–13) makes the Zimri episode suspicious. His reign of seven days, as well as his suicide in Tirzah is construed.

The rival kingdom of Tibni has no reason to exist and sounds strange. It deliberately gets no regnal evaluation formula, and yet it might still have been historical. However, the reference to Tibni emphasizes the *basso continuo* of the chaos, disorientation, and ungovernability of the North.

3.4 Jehu

While there was no doubt about the account of Jehu's act of regicide, which launched the Nimshide dynasty (2Kgs 9–10), the discovery of an extra-biblical orthostat with an Aramaic inscription from Tel Dan in 1993 changed the situation completely.[28] In the most probable reconstruction, the author of the inscription (most likely the Aramean king Hazael) claims to have murdered both the Israelite king "Jehoram" and the King of the house of David "Ahaziahu." In contrast to Hazael's claim, the Bible ascribes the murder of these two kings (supposedly both Omrides[29] waging war together in Ramoth-Gilead against the Arameans) to Jehu, who usurped the throne of Joram and established his own dynasty (henceforth the Jehuite Dynasty) in the kingdom of Israel. Following 2Kgs 9:24–27, Jehu is the one who eliminated the last Omrides in Samaria and in Jer-

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28 Shuichi Hasegawa, "The Historiographical Background for Jehu's Claim as the Murderer of Joram and Ahaziah," *AJBI* 37 (2011): 5–17; Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 110. The inscription was published by Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 43 (1993): 81–98; id., "The Tel Dan Inscription: a New Fragment," *IEJ* 45 (2015): 1–18. The most recent discussion of the find context is Merja Alanne, *Tel Dan. An Archaeological and Biblical Study of the City of Dan from the Iron Age II to the Hellenistic Period* (PhD thesis, University of Helsinki, 2017).

29 For this assumption see Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 159.

usalem.[30] Many attempts have been made to reconcile the Aramaic inscription with the Bible. However, they mostly evince a harmonizing tendency or the effort to maintain the Bible's truth.[31]

Who was, then, the "real" murderer of Joram and Ahaziah? There is an ongoing discussion about whether the Aramean king Hazael is the mastermind behind the *coup d'état*, and whether he installed Jehu as Aramean vassal king in Samaria (and Joash in Jerusalem) after the victory over Israel and the killing of these kings.[32] The issue becomes complicated if one compares the Assyrian sources that mention the tribute of Jehu, the man of *Bit-Ḫumri*, being paid to Shalmaneser III in his eighth regal year 841 BCE.[33] This would seem to exclude the possibility that he was an Aramean vassal. On the one hand, this may demonstrate that the Assyrians saw in Jehu a continuation of the Omride dynasty. On the other hand, the tribute shows clearly that Jehu was not an Aramean puppet at that time. We do not know much about the first years of Jehu's reign and how he behaved in foreign affairs after he gained power. It is still possible that Jehu was installed as an Aramean agent or vassal by Hazael (who killed Joram by himself or with his army) or that the Jehu coup was integrated immediately in the Aramean foreign policy strategy which failed under pressure from Shalmaneser III. However, this remains mere speculation. Following the general tendency of denouncing the North in the biblical record, and considering the character of the story in 2Kgs 9–10, stylizing this as an *intra*-Israelite development is perhaps too easy. Following Edward Lipiński, 2Kgs 8:28 may also give a clue for Hazael as the real wrong-doer.[34] Although the Tel Dan inscription cannot decide issues, it casts doubt on the portrayal of a Nimshide *coup d'état* as a military putsch which is parallel to the other revolts described in the Book of Kings.

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30 For the killing of Athaliah as part of the Jehu coup see Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 159–62.

31 See Hasegawa, "Background," 9.

32 See positively e.g. William M. Schniedewind, "Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu's Revolt," *BASOR* 302 (1996): 85; in contrast: Nadav Na'aman, "The Story of Jehu's Rebellion: Hazael's Inscription and the Biblical Narrative," *IEJ* 56 (2006): 162–63; id., "Three Notes of the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 50 (2000): 102–103. For discussion see Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 216; Jonathan Miles Robker, *The Jehu Revolution: A Royal Tradition of the Northern Kingdom and Its Ramifications* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2012), 219–24.

33 In addition to the Black Obelisk (2.113F) see also the Annals: Calah Bulls (2.113C), Marble Slab (2.113D), Kurba'il Statue (2.113E), cf. Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2, 267–70. For tribute in general see Jürgen Bär, *Der assyrische Tribut und seine Darstellung: Eine Untersuchung zur imperialen Ideologie im neuassyrischen Reich* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996).

34 Edward Lipiński, *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 379–80.

Jehu's accession definitely remains illegitimate, but it may not be evaluated as a sign of intrinsic instability in the Northern Kingdom.

3.5 Shallum

With Shallum's *coup d'etat* in 2Kgs 15:10 we enter the "last days of the kings of Israel." This revolt against Zechariah, the last member of the Jehuite dynasty and the son of Jeroboam II, who reigned for only six months (2Kgs 15:8), is also difficult to evaluate from a historiographic perspective. On the one hand, it is plausible that the royal succession after the successful reign of Jeroboam II may have been accompanied by turmoil and crisis. One would expect nothing else in turbulent times and under the shadow of growing pressure from the Assyrians like Tiglath-pileser III who ascended the throne in 745 BCE. Hence, the short reigns of Shallum and Menahem are reasonable in general. On the other hand, some issues of chronology and geography within these accounts cast doubt on the integrity of the Deuteronomistic report. In 2Kgs 15:10 we find the same phraseology as in the revolts before: ויקשר עליו שלם בן־יבש ויכהו קבל־עם וימיתהו וימלך תחתיו, "Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and struck him down at Ibleam, and killed him, and reigned in his stead." The peculiarities start with the name or origin of the king. Although the name is followed by a patronym (בן־), the name of his father can also be read as an indication of provenance. All other attestations of יבש/Ιαβις are related to the city in Transjordan albeit usually followed by גלעד. Miller and Hayes suggest a metathesis and take the Ephraimite town Jasib (*Yāsūf,* coord. OIG 1726.1865) as the hometown of Shallum[35] (although none of the ancient versions attest such a metathesis). The city of Jabesh in Transjordan can be identified with either *Tell Abū Charaz* (coord. OIG 2061.2007) or *Tell el-Maqlūb* (coord. OIG: 2144.2011).[36] Taking into account the biblical characterization (Judg 21:9–14; 1Sam 11:1–10; 31:11) it is a special place, from which separatist ambitions in critical situations are quite probable. Replacing the father's name with the city Jabesh would then parallel, in a way, the revolt of Shallum with the coup of Pekah, who is said to be accompanied by "fifty men of the Gileadites" (2Kgs 15:25). That there was turmoil in the important

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35 James Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006; 2nd edition), 376.

36 For discussion see Erasmus Gass, "Jabesch," in *Das Wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet (www.wibilex.de),* 2010 (https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/21995/, last access: 01/12/2017) and, on Tell el-Maqlūb, Volkmar Fritz, "Das zweite Buch der Könige," in *Zürcher Bibelkommentar. Altes Testament* 10:2 (Zürich: TVZ, 1998): 84–85.

transregional zone of Gilead, under Aramean control since the days of Jehu (2Kgs 10:32) and most probably under pressure as transition zone in the eighth century BCE (cf. 2Kgs 15:29), is quite imaginable. However, these textual and historical speculations cannot be based on further details.

Following the Masoretic Text, Shallum batters Zechariah קבל־עם, which is peculiar and transliterated in the Septuagint as καὶ Κεβλααμ. This text treats Keblaam as a companion. Keblaam is described in the Syrian text as 'his father' conspiring with Shallum.[37] The odd phrase קבל־עם is often translated "before the people" thus signifying the revolt and murder as a public affair. However, the phrase קבל־עם would have been used only here in this way and one has to stick to a late Aramaic adverb קבל "before" to make sense of it. Instead, the Antiochene text reads ἐν 'Ιεβλαάμ ("in Ibleam")[38] and is probably older than the MT. Thus, the emendation of the text in Ibleam is one option that removes one oddity and uncovers another one. The site Ibleam is located in the direct neighborhood of Jenin/En Ganin (*Ḥirbet Belʿame*, coord. OIG 1777.2058[39]) between Dothan and Jezreel. What makes this solution easy to dismiss is the fact that Ibleam at the ascent of Gur (במעלה־גור אשר את־יבלעם, 2Kgs 9:27) is the place where Jehu is said to have slain Ahaziah.[40] From a literary perspective, the Nimshide reign is framed by murder and "revenge" in Ibleam, which absolutely makes sense in the composition of Kings (see 2Kgs 15:12: "This was the promise of the LORD that he gave to Jehu, 'Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.' And so it happened."). Again, the composition suggests that these regicides are not only understood as "historical" facts but also as a structural device.

3.6 Menahem

According to the biblical chronology Menahem usurped the throne after Shallum had reigned for only one month. In contrast to Shallum, who was from Transjordan, Menahem's origin is attributed to Tirzah, the former residence of the kings of Israel, which has to be located in *Tell el-Fārʿah* (North) (coord. OIG 1823.1882).

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37 This is all the more evident when the order is reversed and the verbs are in plural, see the list of manuscripts in Dubovský, "Northern Kingdom," 327. This seems more or less due to the misreading of ιεβλααμ.

38 Marcos and Saiz, *Texto Antioqueno*, 126.

39 See Fritz, *Das zweite Buch der Könige*, 84.

40 For the itinerary see Shuichi Hasegawa, *Aram and Israel during the Jehuite Dynasty* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 32–33, 148–49.

Tirzah is the place where Omri started his revolution with a siege (1Kgs 16:17)[41] and Baasha, Elah, and Zimri resided (1Kgs 15:21, 33; 16:6, 8, 15, 23).[42] The only attestation we have to Menahems coup is the biblical text. The phrasing of this passage is slightly different compared to similar accounts: ויעל מנחם בן־גדי מתרצה ויבא שמרון ויך את־שלום בן־יביש בשמרון וימיתהו וימלך תחתיו, Menahem the son of Gadi came up from Tirzah and came to Samaria, and he struck down Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and slew him, and reigned in his stead." (2Kgs 15:14) Besides the absence of the catch-phrase ויקשר עליו the order of notes is striking. Verse 15 presents the evaluation formula of Shallum referring back to his conspiracy in a formulaic expression which is almost identical to 1Kgs 16:20 and the conspiracy of Zimri. Verse 16 then inserts an אז sentence with regard to Menahem *before* the introductory synchronism of his reign. This important "information" introduces Menahem with incredible brutality without specifying, when "at that time" was. It may have been before, during, or after his revolution.

Whether Menahem was part of the royal family of the Nimshides or a member of the old Manassite elite in Tirzah (cf. Gaddi as representative of the Manassite tribe in Num 13:11) or perhaps even coming from Transjordan ("the Gadite"), is open for discussion.[43] If the latter is the case and בן־גדי has to be interpreted as a clan name (cf. 2Sam 23:36) or indicates the region (1Sam 13:7 ארץ גד; 24:5),[44] the origin of Menahem becomes parallel to the origin of Shallum from Jabesh (see above). This descent from Gilead is perhaps deliberately related. If so, it is also most relevant that his son was killed by 50 men from Gilead (2Kgs 15:25). Gilead in northern Transjordan is presented as a region in turmoil (perhaps following its eventful history as part of the northern state in the ninth and eighth century BCE). It may reflect a pro-Assyrian position arguing that

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41 Note that this also fits the above-mentioned framing idea of Ibleam for the Nimshides and is supported further by the parallel of 1Kgs 16:20 with 2Kgs 15:15. One gets the impression that incidents and locations are put nicely together to emphasize divine providence.

42 For the "Tirzah polity" as a first cluster of power see Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 154; for a more biblically based portrait of Tirzah see Israel Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: the Archaeology and History of Northern Israel* (Atlanta GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 66. For the archaeological record see also the overview of id., "Tell El-Far'ah (Tirzah) and the early days of the Northern Kingdom," *RB* 119 (2012): 331–46, focusing on Iron I and IIB while not discussing the Iron IIBC stratum VIIe.

43 Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 171.

44 This is quite possible even if the conception of twelve tribes with Gad in Transjordan is mostly post-exilic.

only in subservience to Assur can a political connection between "the Gilead" and Israel be perpetuated.

If בן־גדי is not meant to link Shallum and Menahem, or does not reflect Transjordanian political background realities, Gad is the father's name,[45] and Menahem probably has a connection to Tirzah. One may speculate that Menahem is a partisan of the former Samarian elite who retired to the old regnal quarter in Tirzah when Shallum defeated the Nimshides and killed members of the royal house. It makes a lot of sense that the Samarian elite was superseded by the Shallum party, and may thus have fled to the old regnal quarter in Tirzah, about 8.5 miles east of Samaria, to organize a counter-revolution.

Dubovský points to the palace building 148 in Stratum VIId and to three patrician houses (no. 327, 328, 710) as possible evidence "that just before the collapse of Samaria the city of Tirzah reappeared as a new rival on the Israelite political scene."[46] He argues that Tirzah was destroyed by fire during the reign of Omri and that this forced him to move the capital to Samaria. Tirzah then "disappears ... from the biblical account, only to reappear again in the account of Menahem's usurpation."[47] In attributing Stratum VIId to the last days of the kingdom of Israel, Dubovský follows Alain Chambon. Since the significant prosperity of Stratum VIIb already postdates the move of the capital to Samaria by the Omrides in the ninth century, this prosperous phase may have been ended by Hazael.[48] After a short abandonment, Tirzah was rebuilt in Stratum VIIc which has to be taken together more or less with Stratum VIId. Stratum VIId then "consists of a large palatial complex in the north, medium-size domestic units in the center and smaller houses in the south. This architectural sequence seems to represent a three-tier hierarchy of citizens: a ruling class, wealthy families, and poorer families."[49] The pottery of Stratum VIIc and VIId "represents an

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45 For the element Gad in personal names see Nahman Avigad and Banjamin Sass, *Corpus of West-Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997), 491.
46 Dubovský, "Northern Kingdom," 332.
47 Peter Dubovský, "Menahem's Reign before the Assyrian Invasion (2 Kings 15:14–16)," in *Literature as Politics. Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, ed. David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013): 36.
48 See Finkelstein, "Tell El-Far'ah," 334. The attribution of the destruction level to Omri has produced various theories of rivalry between Samaria and Tirzah. See e.g. Bob Becking, "Menachem's Massacre of Tiphsat: At the Crossroads of Grammar and Memory (2 Kings 15,16)," in *History, Memory, Hebrew Scriptures: A Festschrift for Ehud Ben Zvi*, ed. Ian D. Wilson and Diana V. Edelman (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015): 20.
49 Ze'ev Herzog and Lily Singer-Avitz, "Sub-Dividing the Iron Age IIA in Northern Israel: A Suggested Solution to the Chronological Debate," *TA* 33:2 (2006): 163–95, 175

8th-century assemblage"[50] parallel to Megiddo IVA which dates to the end of the eighth century.[51] Israel Finkelstein has recently put *Tell el-Fārʿah* Stratum VIId in the very short period between 740/30 – 20.[52] The eighth century heyday is parallel to other cities in the North. However, to attribute these structures to Menahem's agency and to imagine "tensions between Samaria and Tirzah since Tirzah became a military base for a new revolt"[53] is elaborate and remains mostly theoretical.

A further detail is noted in 2Kgs 15:16: "At that time Menahem sacked Tiphsah, all who were in it and its territory from Tirzah on; because they did not open it to him, he sacked it. He ripped open all the pregnant women in it." There are grammatical and exegetical problems with this verse, which have already been discussed at length by Bob Becking and Peter Dubovský. Let me briefly expound on four issues:

a) The preposition מן

One of the many problems of 2Kgs 15:16 is the understanding of the מן in מתרצה, which is usually translated to mean that Tirzah was the base from which Menahem sacked Tappuah or Tiphsah ("from Tirzah on"). If the מתרצה, which immediately follows the description of the first נכה-action and its three את-objects, is meant locally "from Tirzah" then one would expect a subsequent עד ("from Tirzah to ..."). As an alternative to this understanding Dubovský suggested either to read the מתרצה as a declaration of Menahem's origin (thus doubling the מתרצה in v. 14) or as "from Tirzah" meaning that Menahem "attacked ..., (the one who was) from Tirzah."[54] While admitting "insurmountable syntactical difficulties"[55] with the latter proposal, it can be ruled out. For the first interpretation, there is no need to mention the Menahem's origin again. Bob Becking added two further readings of מן, namely a causal "because of Tirzah" and a comparative "more than Tirzah."[56] Both remain problematic because they presume a context that

50 Herzog and Singer-Avitz, "Sub-Dividing", 176.

51 Lily Singer-Avitz, "The Pottery of Megiddo Strata III – II and a Proposed Subdivision of the Iron IIC Period in Northern Israel," *BASOR* 372 (2014): 123, 134.

52 Finkelstein, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 69.

53 Dubovský, "Menahem," 38. For the rivalry between Samaria and Tirzah see already fn. 49 and below.

54 Dubovský, "Menahem," 32.

55 Dubovský, "Menahem," 33.

56 Becking, "Menachem," 20.

is not mentioned in the text. They shall elliptically refer back to what had been done to Tirzah, that is Omri's siege on the city and the suicide of Zimri (1Kgs 16:18). For Becking, this is a counterstrike against the memory of a defeated group in the Northern Kingdom. However, the brutality of this event and its place in the collective memory as rivalry between Tirzah and Samaria remains only a guess (see below). 2Kgs 15:16 is not a "revenge for Omri's deeds and doings."[57] In sum, I agree with Dubovský that the only possible reading is the locational one: that Menahem is going out from Tirzah. Thus it becomes all the more important to understand the relation of Tirzah and Tiphsah (see c).

b) Menahem, the ripper

The atrocious act of ripping up pregnant women aims at razing out a population, since women in childbirth and offspring are killed alike. It is attested in biblical passages (2Kgs 8:12; Hos 14:1; Amos 1:13, cf. Isa 13:16, 18; Hos 10:14) and rarely in extra-biblical sources.[58] This is expressed by the use of the double verbs נכה and בקע (which are combined only in this verse). In biblical texts this cruel war crime occurs rarely. Amos 1:13 accuses Ammon of having ripped up pregnant women in Gilead to enlarge their territory (הרחיב את־גבולם). If Tiphsah could be attributed to Transjordan, Menahem (the Gadite?) could have been taking revenge for this Ammonite cruelty. But the location is almost excluded (see below c). The other two instances of ripping pregnant women in the Bible relate to the Arameans. In 2Kgs 8:12, Elisha weeps and prophesies that Hazael will dash little ones and rip the pregnant women of Israel. This corresponds to Hos 14:1. If we take Tiphsah at face value and locate it in Syria then it may be the north-eastern edge of the Aramean empire which is addressed here. Menahem then may take revenge for the Aramean cruelty committed by Hazael (2Kgs 8:12). But this implicit connection is also very elaborate.

In v. 15 the double נכה is striking. While the first clearly has Menahem as the subject, the second, in the כי-sentence, remains grammatically obscure. It has no object and no clear subject. The subject could be Menahem, but also the same

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57 Becking, "Menachem," 20.

58 See Mordechai Cogan, "'Ripping Open Pregnant Women' in the Light of an Assyrian Analogue," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 103 (1983): 755 – 56; Peter Dubovský, "Ripping Open Pregnant Arab Women: Reliefs in Room L of Ashurbanipal's North Palace," *Or* 78 (2009): 394 – 419.

subject as in כי לא פתח.[59] Strikingly most translations change the subject with the narrative ויך. But if this is not the case, the subject of בקע "he ripped" opens up and does not necessarily have to be Menaham. If the subject of פתח is *not* the city as it is usually assumed to be, but should be read as "he did not open" (a masculine singular referring to a person), Hazael comes to mind, particularly on the literary level (2Kgs 8:12). Although it is the last and only other passage in the Book of Kings which uses also the verb בקע with הרה this might be too far-fetched. If the atrocious act by Menahem is not considered to be revenge, the solution may perhaps be found in the obscurity of "Tiphsah"?

c) Tiphsah

Tiphsah is mentioned only once more in 1Kgs 5:4 (Engl. 1Kgs 4:24) as the northern frontier of the Solomonic empire. It is usually identified with a city Tapsake/Θαψακος or Θαψα, *latin:* Thapsa[cus], close to Carchemish at the river Euphrates, an important caravanserai identified either with *Qal'at el-Dibse* or *Qal'at Naǧm:*[60] "Tifsach war eine wichtige Karawanenstation am Eufrat, die in pers. Zeit wohl auch einen bedeutenden Grenzübergang von der transeufratischen in die zwischenstromländische Satrapie markierte."[61] The siege of a city on the western shore of the Euphrates-knee seems very unlikely for Menahem. In acknowledging the "too far away location", the ancient versions read Θερσα Tirzah (LXX 2⁰ B A *L*†), θαιρα (A†), or ταφωε (L†) Tappuah.[62] With the emendation of the text Menahem's crime comes closer to the core territory of the state of Israel. Tir-

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59 Although the LXX has a plural ἤνοιξαν, the subject is *not necessarily* the city of Θερσα (or Tiphsah), as Bob Becking assumed. However, the city is the most probable subject even in the Hebrew text, because the suffixes of גבוליה (τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ τὰ ὅρια αὐτῆς) and הההרותיה refer to Tiphsah.

60 See Wolfgang Röllig, "Thapsacus," in *Brill's New Pauly*, ed. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1206490, last access 21/12/2017).

61 Othmar Keel, Max Küchler and Christoph Uehlinger, *Orte und Landschaften der Bibel,* vol. 1: *Geographisch-geschichtliche Landeskunde* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1984), 234. For an update to the archaeology of Carchemish see Nicolò Marchetti, "The 2014 joint Turco-Italian Excavations at Karkemish," *Kazi Sonuçlari Toplantisi* 37 (2016): 363–80 and id., "The Cultic District of Karkemish in the Lower Town," in *L'Archeologia del Sacro e L'Archeologie del Culto: Sabratha, Ebla, Ardea, Lanuvio*, ed. Paolo Matthiae (Rome: Bardi Edizioni, 2016), 373–414.

62 For the various traditions see Dubovský, *Menahem's Reign*, 31–32; for the Greek manuscripts see Alan England Brooke, Norman McLean and Henry St. John Thackeray, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek, According to the Text of Codex Vaticanus, Supplemented from Other Uncial Manuscripts, with a Critical Apparatus Containing the Variants of the Chief Ancient Authorities for the Text of the Septuagint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

zah does not make sense, because Menahem came originally from Tirzah and would have destroyed "his hometown" or the city where his action took its outcome (this may be the reason why Rahlfs reads Θαρσιλα). The Antiochene text Ταφώε is the Tappuah that is often favored in commentaries.[63] Tappuah has to be identified with Tell aš-Šēḫ/Abū Zarad, located about 20 km south of Tirzah[64] at the border between Ephraim and Manasse (Josh 17:8). At first glance this makes more sense if the given rationale כי לא פתח ("because he did not open") can be understood as a resistance against reign of Menahem in the south. Whether there was a greater anti-Assyrian sentiment in the southern part of the land, or supporters of Shallum mounted an opposition against Menahem remains very speculative. Miller and Hayes suggested that Tappuah is very close to a village named Jashib (Yāsūf, coord. OIG 1726.1865) in Ephraim, which could be misread from Jabesh, the hometown of Shallum (see above). But why Tappuah if the revenge is actually directed against Jashib? Maybe there is another possibility to take Tiphsah metaphorically as will be elaborated in the next paragraph.

d) Why this brutality?

Does the reference mirror a struggle by the Israelite state for sovereignty in times of hardship? We come back to Bob Becking's idea that it may be "an act of revenge for Omri's deeds and doings" referring "back to the memory of a defeated group within the Northern Kingdom, which we rejected above"[65]. This may point in the right direction, but Zimri's suicide and Omri's cruelty are, in my understanding, already too far away in time to form the background to this reference. It is rather the revolt of Shallum and the end of the Nimshide dynasty that can be read as the background to Menahem's cruelty. If Menahem was not a member of the Nimshide dynastic family, he may nevertheless have been part of the elite.

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63 Karl Elliger, "Studien aus dem Deutschen Evangelischen Institut für Altertumswissenschaften in Jerusalem, 42: Die Grenze zwischen Ephraim und Manasse," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 53 (1930): 265–309, 292–93. See also Schoors, *Kingdoms of Israel and Judah*, 13; Jürgen Werlitz, *Die Bücher der Könige* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002), 265. For the Antiochene text see Marcos and Saiz, *Texto Antioqueno*, 126.
64 For the identification with Tell aš-Šēḫ/Abū Zarad (coord. OIG 1719.1679) see Siegfried Mittmann, ed., *Tübinger Bibelatlas* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2000). For the identification with Kirbet Beit Farr (A) (coord. OIG 1848.1831) see Adam Zertal, *The Eastern Valleys and the Fringes of the Desert*, vol. 2: *The Manasseh Hill Country Survey* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 112, 443–44.
65 Becking, "Menachem," 20.

That he was *already* a king by the grace of the Assyrian ruler (see below) is not very likely, if we rely upon the established chronological framework. Tiglath-pileser III had not subdued Samaria in neither 743 nor 738 BCE.[66] According to the biblical chronology Menahem's revolt took place around 748 BCE when the Assyrian presence under Aššur-nerari V was non-existent in the Southern Levant. Menahem was certainly an Assyrian vassal and paid tribute to Pul only by 738 BCE.[67] Pul is the throne name of Tiglath-pileser (assyr. Tukulti-apil-Ešarra) after he ascended to the Babylonian throne in 729 BCE. Thus, naming Tiglath-pileser III Pul is most probably an anachronism, which attests to an editorial bias as the text was being produced.[68]

However, when and how Menahem became king is open for discussion. The "chronological conundrum" (Kristin Weingart; this volume) calls for caution as not only the dates of Pekah's reign are wrong. The common date of 738 BCE for the tribute as well as the ten-year duration of his reign are by no means clear.[69] Hayim Tadmor has argued that the tribute in 738 BCE was perhaps not the only tribute Menahem paid, and that the acknowledgment for the duration of his reign mentioned in 2Kgs 15:19 "was paid in 740 or even earlier"[70]. If so, the amount mentioned in the biblical text becomes also questionable in its relation to the "second" tribute in 738 BCE. The tribute mentioned in 2Kgs 15:19 is extraordinarily high but may not have been exaggerated, since 1000 talents of silver are also mentioned in the Summary Inscription 4: 18′ as the tribute of Hoshea, who was installed by the Assyrians.[71] Following Nadav Na'aman, the very high amount "fits the context of a heavy tribute paid by a newly installed

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66 See Oswald Loretz and Walter Mayer, "Pūlu – Tiglatpileser III. und Menahem von Israel nach assyrischen Quellen und 2 Kön 15,19.20," *UF* 22 (1990): 226–27.

67 The tribute of Miniḫimme of Samerina (ᵐMi-ni-hi-im-ʿmeʾ ᴷᵁᴿSa-ʿmeʾ-ri-i-na-a-ʿaʾ) is listed twice in the Calah Annals 13*: 10 and in the Iran-Stele IIIA: 5; see Tadmor, *Inscriptions*, 66, 106. For the tribute list of Tiglath-pileser III and the 1000 talents of silver see further Bob Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (Leiden: Brill 1992), 4, and the discussion below.

68 For other explanations see Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2, 285 and Loretz and Walter, "Pūlu – Tiglatpileser III," 221–31.

69 See the discussion in Tadmor, *Inscriptions*, 274–76. With the date 738 BCE I follow Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, 288, whereas Loretz and Mayer, "Pūlu – Tiglatpileser III," assume that Menahem paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser III already in 743 BCE, following the study of Edwin R. Thiele, whereas Fritz, *Das zweite Buch der Könige*, 86 dates the tribute to the year 740 BCE. See also Kristin Weingart's chapter in this volume.

70 Tadmor, *Inscriptions*, 276.

71 Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 172; Tadmor, *Inscriptions*, 141; for the parallel cases of Hulli of Tabal and Metenna of Tyre see Tadmor, *Inscriptions*, 276.

king in return for the recognition of the Assyrian king"[72]. This parallel may suggest that Menahem's ascension to the throne was illegitimate and perhaps related to Assyrian westward-expansion. At the very least he bought Assyrian support for his rule (see below).

If the figures given in the Bible are correct, but relate to an earlier tribute to the Assyrian king, Menahem either needed the help of the Assyrian power to enforce his power/campaign against the anti-Assyrian Shallum partisans, or he was indeed a king by the grace of the Assyrian king. The "text indicates that Tiglath-pileser intervened directly and personally to support the pro-Assyrian Menahem and to preserve his hold on the throne"[73].

Given that the relationship between the amount of the tribute paid and the political status of the vassal was commonly known, there is another possibility to explain 2Kgs 15:19: the figures for Menahem's tribute are not *historically* correct, but the Deuteronomistic editor, aware of this Assyrian practice, adds in this detail to paint Menahem as a wicked usurper.

The brutality shown to Tiphsah is given as paradigmatic example of his wickedness. But this elaborate possibility is only theoretical.

It is more probable that the figures are historically correct, and Menahem was seen as a usurper by Tiglath-pileser III. The biblical chronology is perhaps corrupted, and Menahem ascended the throne in Samaria, in fact, only in 738 BCE, or his tribute has to be dated earlier to 743–740 BCE,[74] as earlier studies were willing to assume. This opens the window to the suggestion that perhaps he directed a rival monarchy from Tirzah in the years before accessing the throne illegitimately in Samaria. This would fit the archaeological record of Tell el-Fār'ah (North) presented above.

The exceptional phrase להיות ידיו אתו להחזיק הממלכה בידו, "to that his hand might be with him to strengthen his kingdom in his hand" as the ratio of the tribute may give another hint for the subjection of Menahem to Tiglath-pileser III and the suggestion of a rival kingdom of Menahem. The phrase has two parts which can be read as a doublet or even seen as evidence for a pleonastic style. But since the LXX has only εἶναι τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτοῦ, the second part להחזיק הממלכה בידו can be evaluated as a later gloss.[75] Interestingly enough the phrase is attested also with Amaziah, who erected a counter-kingdom in

72 Nadav Na'aman, "Tiglath-pileser III's Campaigns against Tyre and Israel (734–732 BCE)," *TA* 22 (1995): 275 with reference to Tadmor, *Inscriptions*, 276.

73 Miller and Hayes, *History,* 377.

74 See the discussion Loretz and Mayer, "Pūlu – Tiglatpileser III," 226.

75 See Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (Louisville KT: Westminster John Know Press, 2007), 373.

Lachish and who killed his servants (2Kgs 14:5), and with Jehoram in the context of the murder of his brothers (2Chr 21:4). By this, the suspicion is nurtured that Menahem's accession was 'special' in a way. It was irregular indeed, and supported by the Assyrians. Perhaps it was two-tiered process, and the second stage may also have been dearly bought with a bribe put into the hands of Tiglath-pileser III.

If we push this speculation even further, the enigmatic Tiphsah (given its original reading instead of Antiochene Ταφώε, Tappuah) gives a hidden clue to the revenge on Samaria, symbolizing the ideological transfer of Samaria in Assyrian realm ("because he had not opened" the city for the Assyrians). Tiphsah is a border city at the Euphrates and beyond there is clearly Assyrian territory.

The "payment and other tributes must have drained the wealth of Israel, broken the economic power of Israel, and financially ruined the Northern Kingdom"[76]. Menahem exacted the money from the people by imposing a tax on the wealthy. If the figures of the tribute are calculable and every rich man had to pay 50 silver shekels, as it is said in 2Kgs 15:20, Menahem was in need of 72,000 rich people. No matter how one looks at it, the given numbers cannot be sound. Dubovský has pointed to Lev 27:3. The idea of interpreting the figures theologically perhaps goes in the right direction.[77] Considering that this is a biased description of the North, these details may be intended to devalue Menahem's kingdom on an economic level. Be that as it may, the bribe did work and Tiglath-pileser III withdrew (ולא־עמד שם בארץ). This is only half of the truth, since the Assyrians were present shortly after this event at least in the 13th or 14th *palû* (see below). If the tribute of Menahem was meant to replace the anti-Assyrian policy of Shallum with the help of Tiglath-pileser III, the state of Israel was transferred into the second stage of vassalage.

To sum up, this in-depth historical discussion dealing with the scarcity of information about Menahem has come to some conclusions, which admittedly cannot be substantiated in terms of historical accuracy: in contrast to Shallum, Menahem seems to have taken a pro-Assyrian position. Shortly after the anti-Assyrian Shallum destroyed the Nimshides, and representatives of the ruling class had gained power in Samaria, he may have erected a rival kingdom in Tirzah. This may have formed the background for the biblical chronology which attributes a period of roughly ten years reign to him. Perhaps with an act of extraor-

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76 Dubovský, "Northern Kingdom," 340.

77 Dubovský, "Northern Kingdom," 340. על כל־גבורי החיל can also denote the leading elite, which was allegedly in Samaria. Is this an additional hidden hint for the "revenge"-theory against the anti-Assyrian party? However, this is mere theory and cannot be substantiated. We do not know anything on the foreign policy of Shallum and a possible anti-Assyrian attitude.

dinary brutality he expanded his power from Tirzah to Samaria. For this very gambit he made use of the help of Tiglath-pileser III. The anti-Assyrian party grew mighty because of the heavy tribute he had to pay and they swept his achievements away at the end of his reign or shortly after his death. 2Kgs 15:22 says that he died naturally and was buried regularly, but the succession to this throne may be more tumultuous, as will be discussed below.

3.7 Pekah

The similarity between the names Pekah and Pekahiah, which differ only by their explicit theophoric elements and their patronyms, is suspicious. However, no other sources support the view, that they are the same person. As we have learned already, not all usurpers are named with explicit Yahwistic theophoric names, but we can find other indications that Pekahiah was conflated with Pekah by the biblical authors. Anyway, there are some quite interesting details in the description of this penultimate regicide. Pekah is said in 2Kgs 15:25 to be a captain שׁליש – a high officer of the reigning monarch or king's deputy. Therefore, the rebellion was kindled within the inner administration. This makes a lot of sense considering the controversies surrounding foreign policy. The שׁליש is a high military or administrative position (Ex 14:7; 15:4; 2Kgs 9:25; 10:25) and is in 1Kgs 9:22 separated from the עבדים, שׂרים, אנשי המלחמה, and the שׂרי רכבו ופרשׁיו. 2Kgs 7:2, 17, 19 suggests that שׁליש is the king's deputy. The next detail is the location of the regicide: like Shallum he is killed in Samaria, but notably in the palace. The ארמון בית־המלך is part of the king's palace, most probably the private rooms. It is mentioned only once more in the Zimri conspiracy in 1Kgs 16:18 as the place where the king committed suicide. Perhaps this also points to the close relation between Pekahiah and Pekah. On a textual level, the similarity between the names of the king and his captain emphasizes the close relationship between them. In addition, Dubovský argues that this location is used to inform the reader that "conspiracies, intrigues, and murders penetrated the whole kingdom; not even the most protected place of the kingdom — the keep of the royal palace — was safe enough to protect the king against conspirators."[78] Additionally, the special place links the Pekah revolt to the Zimri account. In my understanding, it is not meant to be especially climactic. The putsch is carried out by Pekah and fifty men of Gilead (2Kgs 15:25), and following the LXX, these are fifty of four hundred (ἀπὸ τῶν τετρακοσίων) in total.

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[78] Dubovský, "Northern Kingdom," 328.

Whether there is an official relationship between the usurper and these men is not said: they may be his combat-effective unit, but then Pekah would be only one of many captains (ὁ τριστάτης). It is striking that the region of Gilead receives special emphasis, as it does in the revolts of Shallum and Menahem. As argued above, Gilead was weak and had experienced frequent changes of sovereignty between Israel, the Arameans, and the Assyrians.[79] The region may have felt the growing pressure of Tiglath-pileser in 735 BCE first and foremost. Most enigmatic is the reference to את־ארגב ואת־האריה which is usually translated as "along with Argob and Arieh." It is possible that these are two individuals who took part in the revolution (so LXX μετὰ τοῦ Αργοβ καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Αρια καὶ μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ πεντήκοντα ἄνδρες) or they are places, where the revolution first arose. Argob is the name of the region of Bashan, as noted in 1Kgs 4:13 and Deut 3:4, 13–14.[80] This is purely speculative, but it is striking that Transjordanian power is employed with the details of his revolution. Tiglath-pileser III raided Gilead to gain control over the Transjordanian trade route.[81] This may have preceded the conquest of Cis-Jordan described at the end of the reign of Pekah in 2Kgs 15:29. Another possibility is that the anti-Assyrian party toppled the reign in Samaria when Menahem died.[82] Be that as it may, the annexation of northern territory is connected to Pekah in the biblical text (2Kgs 15:29). The text mentions a military campaign of Tiglath-pileser, who is named here תגלת פלאסר for the first time (cf. 2Kgs 16:7, 10 for further references and 2Kgs 15:19 for Pul). This campaign is usually meant to be the 12th (*ana māt Pilišta*) 734 BCE or, more probably, the 13th and 14th *palû* of Tiglath-pileser III (733–732 BCE) (*ana māt Damašeq*).[83] It

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79 This is also the background of the Aramean conspiracy in the revolt of Pekah (cf. 2Kgs 15:37); cf. Miller and Hayes, *History*, 376. I will not discuss the so-called Syro-Ephraimite war in this chapter, but see Frevel, *Geschichte Israels,* 240.

80 See Johannes Bremer, "Argob," in *Das Wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet (www.wibilex.de),* 2014 (https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/13757/, last access: 03/12/2017).

81 See Meinders Dijkstra and Karel Vriezen, "The Assyrian Province of Gilead and the 'Myth of the Empty Land'," in *Exploring the Narrative: Jerusalem and Jordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages: Papers in Honour of Margreet Steiner*, ed. Eveline van der Steen, Jeanette Boertien and Noor Mulder-Hymans (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 6–7.

82 See Fritz, *Das zweite Buch der Könige*, 85.

83 For the dating Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, 288, map in Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 180. Dubovský mentions that Transjordan was conquered in the 13th *palû* which he draws from Annals 23 and Summary Inscription 9 and 13, and the conquest of Ashtarot depicted in Nimrud. He proposes three phases coast, "Transjordan and epicentres (Damascus and Israel)" (Dubovský, "Tiglath-pileser III's Campaigns in 734–732 B.C.," 158.). The province of Magiddû was founded 733 BCE, the province of Dimašqa in 732 BCE; see the chart in Simo Parpola, "The National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004): 5–22, appendix II.

is well known that the "he reigned twenty years" in 2Kgs 15:27 contradicts the chronology in several ways, most crucially the assumption that according to the vassal-list of Tiglath-pileser III the pre-predecessor Menahem payed tribute in ca. 738 BCE (see above). Taking this for granted, there is no time for Pekah (ass. *Paqaḫa*) to reign twenty years even without Pekahiah in between.[84] Be that as it may, the raid against Israel can best be placed in 734–732 BCE within the context of the annexation of Gaza and Damascus.[85] If we are forced to decide, it would fit our knowledge of the year 733 BCE best.[86]

The biblical text mentions the deportation of people and the conquest of eight areas in the north – moving from cities (Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor) to landscapes or regions (Gilead, Galilee) and from north to south. In adding the concluding element כל־ארץ נפתלי the list becomes different. Naphtali is not introduced by ואת and not determined by an article. The phrase is attested only once more in 1Kgs 15:20 to denote the territory taken by Ben-Hadad, but the latter appears to be dependent on 2Kgs 15:30 (see above). To bring up "all the land of Naphtali" after noting the cities in the Huleh valley is strange, because Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Kedesh, Janoah, and Hazor are all in the area which is commonly attributed to Naphtali. This very fact has nourished speculation that either Naphtali, or even the three regions of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali, are additions, not least because they are not listed in the alleged geographical order.[87] The list starts close to the Litani river in the North with Ijon, usually identified with Tell Dibbin (coord. OIG 2052.3054), then Abel-beth-maacah, the geographical "gate" to Palestine, *Tell Ābil el-Qamḥ* at the mouth of the Biqa valley (coord. OIG 2045.2962), going south to Janoah which is not Yenoʿam 5 km south from the outfall of the Sea of Galilee (coord. OIG 1982.2354), but rather *Tell en-Naʿameh/Tell an-Naʿimah* in the Huleh valley (coord. OIG 2058.2868). The next city Kedesh is usually identified with *Tel Qedesh* northwest of the Huleh swamp (coord. OIG 1997.2796), and the final city is Hazor identified with *Tell el-Qedaḥ* (coord. OIG 2035.2693) in the southwestern area of the Huleh basin. From this view, it is quite convincing to connect Galilee to the south, but the text mentions Gilead first and Galilee second. Scholars have

84 See Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 182–83.

85 See Naʾaman, "Tiglath-pileser III's Campaigns," 268–78.

86 See Fritz, *Das zweite Buch der Könige*, 88–89.

87 See Ernst Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige*, vol. 2: *1 Kön 17:2–2 Kön 25* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1984), 384–85; Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, 18; Fritz, *Das zweite Buch der Könige*, 88.

noted that the הגלילה is a more or less late form.[88] Considering the difference between the two object markers and the different phrase כל ארץ נפתלי, it has been argued that ואת־הגלעד ואת־הגלילה is a later addition. Both Gilead and Galilee are quite late additions which are intended to establish a larger territory of the North as conquered area. Perhaps it was influenced by Jdt 15:5, or the Maccabean revolt in 1Macc 5:17, 20, 55. If this is accepted, then כל ארץ נפתלי becomes the concluding summary of the cities in the north, which then only comprises the Huleh valley.[89] The important town of Dan, which was definitely destroyed by the Assyrians but later rebuilt as an administrative center, is (deliberately?) absent (but cf. 1Kgs 15:20). Despite this detailed discussion, most of the cities just mentioned show signs of significant destruction from Assyrian invaders in the archaeological record. Southern cities were also subject to the same destructive forces.[90] Tel Dan (Stratum II) was destroyed violently by Tiglath-pileser III. Domestic and public zones were affected alike. Bethsaida (et-Tell; Stratum Va) was destroyed by fire in intense warfare, Chinnereth (Tell el-ʿOreimeh; Stratum II) was almost completely destroyed. Although clear signs of destruction are undeniable, Yifat Thareani has recently argued against the view that the Assyrians totally emptied the land. "It seems that the archaeological evidence from Dan rules out the dominant theory that by the late eighth century BCE the Assyrians left the region as an 'empty cell'."[91] After the Assyrian conquest, Dan prospered and this fact also argues against a total decline in the Huleh region. Thareani calls this a "middle-range" strategy which aimed at the economic exploitation of the region. We will not discuss the outcome of the campaign and the repercussions of the Assyrian strategy in the present paper. With Tiglath-pileser III's raid, Israel entered the final stage of vassalage that was accompanied by a significant loss of territory and the deportation of people.

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88 The Galil is attested also in Josh 20:7; 21:32; 1Kgs 6:34; 9:11 ; 1Chr 6:61; Esth 1:6; Cant 5:14; and Isa 8:23. Only 2Kgs 15:29 reads גלילה.

89 See Naʾaman, "Tiglath-pileser III's Campaigns," 274; see James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (New York: Scribner, 1951), 452; Würthwein, *Bücher der Könige*, 383; Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 174.

90 See Yifat Thareani, "Imperializing the Province: A Residence of a Neo-Assyrian City Governor at Tel Dan," *Levant* 48 (2016): 257–58; ead., "The Archaeological Character of an Imperial Frontier: Assyrian Control Policy in the Hula Valley," in *Archaeology and History of Empires: Models, Projects and Works in Progress in Northern Mesopotamia*, ed. Maria Grazia Masetti-Rouault and Olivier Rouault (2013 Paris conference, forthcoming). For the campaign see also Dubovský, "Tiglath-pileser III's Campaigns," 164–66, and Dijkstra and Vriezen, "The Assyrian Province of Gilead," 6–10.

91 Thareani, "Imperial Frontier," 14.

3.8 Hoshea

Whether Hoshea, the last king of Israel (who is not even mentioned by the conquerors of Samaria Shalmaneser V and Sargon II in 722/21 BCE),[92] was a usurper, or whether he was installed by Tiglath-pileser III, differs between the portrayal in 2Kgs 15:30 and the Assyrian Summary Inscription 4 (2.117C), line 11 (translation following K. Lawson Younger in CoS II:288): "Pekah,* their king, and I installed Hoshea [as king] over them." How Pekah was eliminated remains unclear, but the Assyrian sources are distinct about the fact that Hoshea was installed by the Assyrians.[93] In contrast, the biblical account is clear in its classification of Hoshea's accession as a revolt. It employs the classical formula in 2Kgs 15:30a, but in an intensified form that repeats the root על־פקח בן־רמליהו ויכהו וימיתהו ויקשר־קשר הושע בן־אלה וימלך תחתיו, "And Hoshea son of Elah conspired a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah, attacked him, and killed him; he reigned in place of him."

Read against the sources, the historicity of Hoshea's *coup d'état* becomes doubtful. The situation is echoed in the Aramean inscription of the Tel Dan stele that claims the regicide of Joram (and Ahaziah), while 2Kgs 9:24–27 names Jehu as the killer of both (see above). While one has to admit that both reports are colored for propagandistic purposes, read against the Assyrian practice, the installation of Hoshea by the Assyrian king makes considerable sense. Perhaps it was also the Assyrian mastermind who drove the revolt against the disobedient Pekah, as Bob Becking suggested: "Beide Positionen sind von ihren jeweiligen Perspektiven geprägt und lassen sich in das Bild zusammenfügen, dass der assyrische König eine Revolte Hoscheas unterstützt haben könnte."[94] If this points us in the right direction, then also the last revolt in Samaria, which is pictured so vividly in many versions of the history of Israel, intentionally misinforms to promote a particular viewpoint.

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92 For the discussion on the conquest of Samaria see the chapters of Dan'el Kahn and Bob Becking in the present volume.
93 For the installation of Hoshea as king see Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III*, 277–78; Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, 147–49; Kyle Lawson Younger, Jr., "The Summary Inscription 9–10 (2.117F)," and "The Summary Inscription 13 (2.117G)," in Hallo and Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2, 291–92.
94 Bob Becking, "Hoschea," in *Das Wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet (www.wibilex.de)*, 2012 (https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/21574/; last access: 04/12/2017).

4 The Built-in Weakness of the Northern State: Some Conclusions

This viewpoint is a very critical attitude towards the north, which does not attribute to it any continuity of governance beyond the Omride and Nimshide dynasties. This must be contrasted with the allegedly unbroken chain of Davidides in the south. However, this continuity becomes suspicious, when one considers how heavily biased this account is. When we consider the details of Solomon's succession and the accounts of Athaliah and Joash, Joram and Ahaziah, it is the continuity of the Davidic dynasty that becomes suspicious.[95] Anyway, the described instability of the Northern Kingdom is clearly the result of a Judean bias. Within this pattern, it is striking that all usurpers of the eighth century carry non-Yahwistic names. Is this by chance? I do not think so, but whether this is by chance, or partly deliberate, cannot be answered. Menahem (*Miniḫini*), Pekah (*Paqaḫa*), and Hoshea (*Auši'*) are attested in Assyrian sources as names of the northern monarchy, and Menahem or Shallum are names often attested extra-biblically. Hence, to be suspicious about the occurrence of non-Yahwistic names is probably being overly-cautious. However, it fits the pattern that the irregularities of the Northern Kingdom stand in direct contrast to God's will, as expressed in the unified Davidic kingdom in the south. One question has to be answered at the end of this argument: Why is there any continuity in the northern dynasties? It is striking that Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Joram, and Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam, and Zechariah were conceived as dynasties, although they were sometimes judged more harshly than other kings of Samaria. I have no explanation, other than that these prosperous dynasties, which were all largely successful in economic, political, and religious governance, could not be easily disparaged by the Deuteronomists. Further historiographical studies are necessary to substantiate this.

Let me summarize these considerations with a few remarks. This paper focused on the portrayal of the last kings of Israel against the background of the string of revolts reported in the historical accounts in the Book of Kings. The revolts of Jeroboam, Baasha, Zimri, Tibni, Omri, Jehu, Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea have been considered in detail. The account of the 15 year period from 747–732 BCE in 2Kgs 15 was demonstrated to be a mix of historical and legendary construction. Only meager glimpses of 'historical' details are

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95 For the discontinuity of the Davidic dynasty see Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 192, 205–8, 216–21.

given in the biblical account. The single reports are linked very much with each other in terms of keywords, phrases, geography, and particular details. They form a continuous narrative of depravity, instability, and even immorality. This portrayal is not interested in historical correctness, but instead distorts the political history of Samaria deliberately. Particularly the detailed information on the Assyrian campaigns from the 12th to the 14th *palû* of Tiglath-pileser III (i.e., the years 743–743 BCE) is missing. Only the list of cities in the Huleh valley of the northern territory gives us a clue about the loss of Israelite sovereignty, although the portrayal does not reflect the creation of the province of Magiddû (in 732? BCE). The campaign to the Huleh basin is not related to the subjugation of Gilead and Galilee. This detail was added to the text by a later gloss for the purpose of historical accuracy. It has become clear, that the portrayal of the Northern Kingdom in 2Kgs 15 does not aim at a historically exact narration of the events. It is biased and interested in the instability of the Northern Kingdom in contrast with Davidic continuity. Whether Hoshea, Pekah, and even Menahem were indeed usurpers by revolution, or whether they were installed by the Assyrian power, remains thus open for discussion. But we have presented grounds to assume an Assyrian mastermind behind the revolts of Menahem and Hoshea rather than individual usurpers who acted on their own account.

This bias was particularly apparent in the fact that the text does not differentiate explicitly between pro- and contra-Assyrian foreign policy. In fact there are indications that Hoshea and Menahem pleaded (and if under constraint …) for a more pro-Assyrian position, while Pekah established an anti-Assyrian policy. But almost nothing from the struggle in Israel between different positions can be drawn directly from the text. Most inviting to speculation was the often enigmatic information given about Menahem outside that in 2Kgs 15: the murder of Shallum; the role of Tirzah; the regional importance of Gilead; and the cruelty to Tiphsah, etc. We suggested that Menahem erected a rival kingdom in Tirzah and that he gained power in Samaria with the help of Tiglath-pileser III, paying a heavy tribute to gain power against the anti-Assyrian Shallum.

With regard to the earlier revolts, we argued that, in particular, the account of Jeroboam I, the putsch of Baasha, and the struggle of Zimri and Tibni were more or less inventions. The "sin of Jeroboam" was characterized as a very effective "invention of tradition" to blame the Northern Kingdom from its beginning. Methodologically speaking, the present paper took a very sceptical position on historicity for heuristic purposes. In discussing the textual evidence, we were unable to uncover sufficient reliable historical details in the biblical text. This paper has argued on the presumption that the history of the Northern Kingdom was compiled from administrative lists, which existed for the Omride and Nimshide kingdoms. However, almost all historiography *before* the Omrides is a retelling of

later stories, details, and characterizations. This became particularly evident in the discussion of 1Kgs 15 and the presentation of the confrontation between Judah and Israel. The presentation of the Northern Kingdom is much more a fictive narrative than a factual history.