

The Empty Land in Kings

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The biblical picture of Israel's history is clearly structured. The period of the monarchies of Israel and Judah is followed by the exile. At the end of the book of Kings, we are told how Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed the Judean kingdom of the Davidic dynasty. The Temple and palace were burned, and Jerusalem's walls were demolished. We are told that the two conquests of 597 and 586 were accompanied by extensive deportations. As the result of these deportations—so the Biblical account tells us—the land was stripped bare of people for decades. This caesura is the most radical in the whole of Israel's history. It brings the canonized picture of history we are given in the *Enneateuch* to an end. It divides the epoch of the First Temple, with which the OT deals with for the most part on a surface level, from the Jewish community in whose midst the OT came into being. From now on, the Judeans live in the exile; and it is the exile which has determined the fate and the self-understanding of the Jewish people of the centuries.

Caesuras are necessary as a way of understanding the course of historical events. Only if we divide the continuous flux of time into epochs can we perceive connections, and come to conclusions about cause and effect. But generally speaking caesuras are not recognized by the immediate contemporaries—they emerge through hindsight. In real history, history as it is lived, discontinuity and continuity go hand in hand; so every caesura between epochs which the historian determines rests on a decision. Evaluations and judgments are inescapable.

During the course of critical exegesis it has become increasingly clear that the historical continuity at the end of the Judean monarchy was greater than the biblical account would have us understand. This is suggested by contradictions and inconsistencies in the transmitted text which are probably not due to chance and carelessness. We have reason to believe that the picture of history was subsequently altered. This would not have happened unless particular interests had been at work.

What has become fundamental for the Bible's historical picture is the claim that the Jewish tradition persisted exclusively by way of the

1 English translation by Margaret Kohl.

exiles in Babylon. This is what we are told in the books of Ezra-Nehemiah and in Chronicles. If we follow this presentation, that which came to an end in Judah was not just the dynasty and the Temple; it was the end of the people of God. Only when the exiles returned could the Temple be rebuilt; and the exiles were the ones who brought the cultic tradition back with them in the form of the Temple vessels.

But this picture is one-sided and does not accord with the historical facts. This is certain because the earlier tradition to some extent still exists. Between the earlier sources and the picture of the history we have today there are considerable discrepancies—much to the satisfaction of the historian. These discrepancies were already detected a long time ago, for example, by Willem Kusters in Leiden.² In 1956, Enno Janssen drew attention to the facts.³ The last in the series was Hans Barstad,⁴ although he did not spend much time on earlier literature which was mainly in German.

The biblical view of history was intended to settle the question of who was authorized to represent the Jewish tradition legitimately in the Persian period. The books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in their present form claim that only the Babylonian exilic community preserved the heritage of God's people. In recent times, three scholars, Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, Hermann-Josef Stipp, and myself, have discovered that this claim rests on purposeful revisions.⁵

What is important is that the precedence of the exilic community relates exclusively to the first deportation. It is not the exiles as a whole who are favoured but only the Judeans who went into exile with Jehoiachin in 597. During the conquest of 586, on the other hand, the annihilation of the remaining population (and not the deportation) is supposed to have taken place. The theological program is put into the

2 Willem Hendrik Kusters, *Het Herstel van Israël in het Perzische Tijdvak* (Leiden: Brill, 1894); German translation: *Die Wiederherstellung Israels in der persischen Periode* (trans. A. Basedow; Heidelberg: J. Hörning, 1895).

3 Enno Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Judentums* (FRLANT 69; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956).

4 Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the "Exilic" Period* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996).

5 Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches* (FRLANT 118; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 183–91; idem, *Ezechielstudien: Zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Buches und zur Frage nach den ältesten Texten* (BZAW 202; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1992); Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Jeremia im Parteienstreit: Studien zur Textentwicklung von Jer 26, 36–43 und 45 als Beitrag zur Geschichte Jeremias, seines Buches und jüdischer Parteien im 6. Jahrhundert* (BBB 82; Frankfurt a. M.: Anton Hain, 1992), 278–84; Christoph Levin, *Die Verheißung des neuen Bundes in ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt* (FRLANT 137; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 165–9, 200–09.

mouth of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They are supposed to have prophesied between the first and the second conquest of Jerusalem, and to have proclaimed salvation to the exiles of 597, and disaster to the Jerusalem that was left. The most distinct programmatic text is the vision of the two baskets of figs in Jer 24. The good figs are the Judeans, who went into exile in 597. Yahweh will look upon them favourably. But the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea who were left behind at the first deportation are the rotten figs. Yahweh will deliver them up to King Nebuchadnezzar, or will destroy them himself through sword, hunger and pestilence. The people who fled to Egypt are threatened with the same fate.

Here we shall concentrate on what is reported in the book of Kings. The literary genre is historical narrative, which professes to reproduce what actually happened, whereas the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are rather an indirect reflection of events. At the same time, under the conditions in which the OT was passed down, we cannot exclude the possibility that it is precisely the facts which are fictitious. Indirect information, on the other hand, can actually be more reliable than what is seemingly direct. The account found in Ezra-Nehemiah, for example, presents things as they cannot possibly have been. And some details in the book of Kings are not far removed from this late historical picture.

Jehoiachin and the First Deportation

The first deportation is reported in 2 Kgs 24:8–17, which deals with King Jehoiachin.⁶

⁽⁸⁾ **Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.** ⁽⁹⁾ *He did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that his father had done.* ⁽¹⁰⁾ **At that time** [*the servants of*]⁷ **Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon 'came'⁸ up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.**

6 In the translation the Judean annals (24:8, 10, 12a, 15a, 17–18, 20b; 25:1a, 2, 3 [only בַּת־שָׁעָה לְחִדָּשׁ], 4 [only וַתִּבְקַע הָעִיר], 6, 9bβγ, 22aα, b, 25) are marked by bold types, and the Temple records (24:13a) by bold italics. The text of the Deuteronomistic Historian, or DtrH (24:9, 19) is printed in italics. The records of the Babylonian branch of the Davidic house (25:8aα, b, 9a, 27 [without מְלִכּוֹ] בַּשָּׁנָה) are underlined. Later additions are given in ordinary types, and their supposed sequence is shown by indentation.

7 This is a late expansion, which is witnessed in the Masoretic textual tradition only.

8 Read the singular עָלָה with *K^cfib*.

(11) And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it.

(12) **And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he himself, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his palace officials.**

The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign.

(13) **And he carried off from there all the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king's house.**

And he cut of all the vessels of gold, which Solomon king of Israel had made in the Temple of Yahweh, as Yahweh had said.

(14) He carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the warriors of valor, ten thousand captives [and all the craftsmen and the smiths]; none remained, except the poorest people of the land.

(15) **And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon.**

And the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the chief men of the land, he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

(16) And all the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand [all the warriors, fit for war]: the king of Babylon brought them captive to Babylon.

(17) **And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, his uncle, king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.**

The section begins as usual with the king's age upon his accession to the throne. The length of his reign is mentioned, and the name of the queen mother (v. 8). These details are taken from the Annals of the Judean kings, on which the biblical book of Kings is based. Then follows, from the pen of the Deuteronomistic Historian, the condemnation of Jehoiachin's impious behaviour (v. 9).⁹ At the end of the section the king's successor on the throne is named, as always. On this occasion, however, the succession is irregular: "And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, his uncle, king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah" (v. 17). As was already the case with Jehoiachin's predecessor Jehoiakim (cf. 23:34), it is the great foreign king who installed the successor. There were particular circumstances which brought Jehoiachin's reign to an end. Nebuchadnezzar's campaign, reported in vv. 10–16, must already have been mentioned in the Judean Annals.

9 For the separation of the Annals from the text of the Deuteronomistic Historian see Christof Hardmeier, "Umrisse eines vordeuteronomistischen Annalenwerks der Zidkijazeit," *VT* 40 (1990): 165–84; and Christoph Levin, "Die Frömmigkeit der Könige von Israel und Juda," in *Houses Full of All Good Things: Essays in Memory of Timo Veijola* (eds. Juha Pakkala and Martti Nissinen; Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 95; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society; and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 129–68 (131–8).

However, this is not true of today's text to its full extent. The report contains several troublesome doublets. Apparently it was expanded later. The closing, v. 17, does not follow from what immediately precedes it in the text. It is true that the subject of both vv. 16b and 17a is the king of Babylon, and both verbs are in the causative. But the relationship shifts, quite without warning. Verse 16 talks about the exiles, but the suffixes in v. 17a refer to Jehoiachin, who was last mentioned in v. 15a: "The king of Babylon brought *them* (וַיָּבִיאם) captive to Babylon. And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, *his* uncle (דָּוִד), king in *his* stead (תַּחֲתָיו)." It is only if v. 17 follows directly on v. 15a that there is a continuous text: "And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon. And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, his uncle, king in his stead."

One might object that the relationship to Jehoiachin is obvious and must be bridged in thought, and that (in spite of the thirty-three intervening words) it does not necessarily presuppose a disturbance to the text. But the intermediate text shows that it is an addition through its additive list style: "And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon—and the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the chief men of the land, he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon" (v. 15). Surprisingly, this is not a single sentence, but two. The first is a regular narrative sentence with the sequence: verb, object, adverbial of place. The second is an inverted verbal sentence, in which the object—or, to be more precise, a sequence of four objects—precedes the verb, which is now in the perfect. The closing, somewhat more broadly formulated, is again formed by the adverbial of place. A smooth text would form a single sentence, and would read more or less as follows: וַיִּגַּל אֶת־יְהוֹיָכִן וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְאֶת־נָשָׁיו וְאֶת־סָרִיסָיו וְאֶת־אֵלֵי הָאָרֶץ בַּבֶּלֶה "And he carried away Jehoiachin and his mother and his wives and his officials and the chief men of the land to Babylon." These observations lead us to the conclusion that the second sentence is a later addition which has been incorporated by means of the classic stylistic device of resumptive repetition ("Wiederaufnahme"),¹⁰ in this case the repetition of the concluding word בַּבֶּלֶה "to Babylon."

But that is not the end of the matter, for in v. 16 the list of those deported is expanded a second time in the same style: "And all the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, the king of Babylon brought them captive to Babylon." Again the series of objects comes first, and again the sentence ends with the adverbial of place. This time the resumptive repetition is somewhat more extensive:

10 Curt Kuhl, "Die 'Wiederaufnahme'—ein literarkritisches Prinzip?" ZAW 64 (1952): 1-11.

גולה בְּבָבֶלָה “captive to Babylon.” That shows that this part of the list is already picking up the expansion in v. 15b. This time also the syntax is irregular, for the verb וַיְבִיאֵם “he brought them” is a narrative, as in v. 15a, although it is in the postpositive position, as in v. 15b. Moreover the subject מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל “the king of Babylon” need not have been given, since it has not changed. The asyndetic apposition הַכֹּל גְּבוּרִים עֲשֵׂי מְלָחָמָה “all the warriors, fit for war” in v. 16αβ has probably been added still later, for it is related as explanation to כָּל-אֲנָשֵׁי הַחַיִּל “and all the men of valor,” and is thus wrongly placed in the text. It is probably meant to be in line with v. 14.

The deportation was the result of Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign, which we are told about in v. 10. The textual transmission is split. According to the Masoretic *Q^{erê}*, the army had initially marched to Jerusalem without the great Babylonian king, and had begun to lay siege to the city: מְלֹךְ-בָּבֶלָה “the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up.” The Septuagint and the Peshitta do not mention the servants, and so let Nebuchadnezzar himself at once advance to Jerusalem; these correspond to the *K^{efib}* עָלָה: “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up.” The Masoretic *Q^{erê}* is the longer reading and also the easier one. Stade and Schwally have noted, “It was inserted to harmonize v. 10 with v. 11 which is from a different pen.”¹¹ When v. 11 reports that “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city,” the great king cannot have been there before. Consequently the Masoretes have made his servants the subject instead of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

The change must also be seen as secondary because there are good reasons for viewing v. 11 as a later addition, “an exegetical recapitulation of v. 10, in order to bring in not only Nebuchadnezzar’s generals but Nebuchadnezzar himself.”¹² For “Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon” is introduced again in full in v. 11, just as if he had not already been mentioned by name and title in v. 10. The participial adverbial clause וַעֲבָדָיו צָרִים עָלָיָה “while his servants were besieging it” is supposed to link the expansion with the event related. Evidently there was a particular concern to stress the person of the great king.

Jehoiachin’s reaction to the siege is capitulation, which is reported in v. 12a. The most prominent people associated with the monarchy

11 Bernhard Stade and Friedrich Schwally, *The Books of Kings* (SBOT 9; Baltimore/Leipzig/London: J. C. Hinrichsche Buchhandlung, 1904), 300.

12 August Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige* (KK A 3; Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1887), 486; following him Immanuel Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige* (KHC 9; Freiburg/Leipzig/Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1899), 197; similarly Stade and Schwally, *Kings*, 300; and Otto Eißfeldt, *Das zweite Buch der Könige* (HSAT[K] 1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1922), 583.

surrender to the great Babylonian king together with Jehoiachin himself: the king's mother (אִם הַמֶּלֶךְ), the ministers (עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ), the princes (שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ), and the palace officials (סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ). The only curious point is the date given for the event in v. 12b: "The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign." The date can hardly be derived from the Judean Annals, for it is calculated not according to the years reigned by the king of Judah but according to the reign of the king of Babylon. There is a striking contrast to the report of the second conquest which is dated in 25:2 according to the years of the Judean king. A Babylonian dating of this kind can be found in 25:8aβ too, where it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and also in 25:27b (there only בְּשָׁנָה מְלֹכוֹ) for the year in which Jehoiachin was pardoned. In both passages it is a later addition, as shall be shown later. Of these three dates, our particular instance is the most important, for as Ezek 1:2 shows, the exiles in Babylon counted their years from the exile of Jehoiachin (cf. also Ezek 33:21; 40:1).¹³ 2 Kgs 24:12b is precisely the information which links this initial year with the Babylonian calendar. The date has probably been subsequently calculated, from the Judean side, because there has come to be a difference of one year compared with the Babylonian chronicle, which gives the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar for the conquest of Jerusalem.¹⁴

The note about the plundering of the Temple treasure in v. 13a does not provide the appropriate continuation. As Bernhard Stade observes, "מִשֵּׁם in v. 13 has nothing to which it can refer back, and וַיֵּלֶךְ in v. 15 joins directly on to v. 12."¹⁵ This assessment is shared by most commentators.¹⁶ At the same time, this does not therefore mean that the note in v. 13a must be an *ad hoc* addition, for according to the terminol-

13 The other dates in the book of Ezekiel, in which "there is no dating according to the years of king Zedekiah, who actually ruled in Jerusalem after 597, but only in accord with Jehoiachin, who was among those deported in 597" (Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, vol. 1 [trans. Ronald E. Clements; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 10), follow this system: Ezek 8:1; 20:2; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17.

14 BM 21946 reverses lines 11–13; trans. COS 1.137.

15 Bernhard Stade, "Wie hoch belief sich die Zahl der unter Nebucadnezar nach Babylonien deportierten Juden?" *ZAW* 4 (1884): 271–7 (272).

16 Benzinger, *Könige*, 197; Rudolf Kittel, *Die Bücher der Könige* (HKAT I 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900), 307; Charles Fox Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), 366; Hans Schmidt, *Die großen Propheten* (2d ed.; SAT II 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), 317; Eißfeldt, *Könige*, 583; James Alan Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings* (ed. Henry Snyder Gehman; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), 554–5; John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (2d ed.; OTL; London: SCM Press, 1970), 760–1; Ernst Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige* (ATD 11,2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 473.

ogy used, this sentence is one of seven accounts, all in which the Deuteronomistic Redactor has taken over into his work from the Temple records because they testify to the state of the Temple treasure: "And he carried off ... all the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king's house."¹⁷ The relation **הַשָּׁמַיִם** "from there" serves to link the two sources: the excerpts from the royal Annals, and the excerpts from the Temple records. It is probably added by the Deuteronomistic Historian.

We find ourselves on another literary level in v. 13b, which tells about the plundering of the golden Temple vessels. It refers to the account of the building of Solomon's Temple, cf. 1 Kgs 7:48–50. The verb **קָצַץ** pi. "to cut off" is surprising. It means that the gold was not simply taken away nor the vessels shattered. The wording can rather be explained as casting back to the account in 18:16 (cf. 16:17), which says that King Hezekiah *cut off* (**קָצַץ**) the gates of the Temple in order to give them as tribute to Sennacherib. The change from **בֵּית יְהוָה** "the house of Yahweh" in v. 13a to **הַיְכָל יְהוָה** "the Temple of Yahweh" in v. 13b can be explained on the basis of the same reference. The word of Yahweh that is supposed to have been fulfilled through the plundering of the Temple (**כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה** "as Yahweh had said"), can only be the utterance which was put into the prophet Isaiah's mouth in 20:17. It is a prophecy after the event, dating from the postexilic period, which again confirms the late date of 24:13b, for "the real Isaiah would of course have threatened the people with the Assyrians, not with the Babylonian exile."¹⁸

The account of the deportation in v. 14 is perceived by most scholars as being a later interpolation.¹⁹ As in v. 15a, and other than in vv. 15b and 16, the verb again stands at the beginning; but the perf. cop. as *tempus historicum* is an evident disturbance of the syntax, which, as so frequently, indicates a late interpolation.²⁰ The verse is a doublet of vv. 15–16. The exile described there now extends to the whole of Jerusalem. As in 25:12 only the poorest in the country are excluded. The sentence disturbs the narrative coherence of the pericope. If the whole of Jerusalem had been deported, the detailed information given in vv. 15–16 would be superfluous. What is particularly strange is that the king is no longer named first. But above all the statement clashes with what is

17 The other passages are 1 Kgs 14:25–26aα; 15:17, 18*, 20aβγβα, 21; 2 Kgs 12:18–19aα*, bβ; 14:8–9, 11aβ*, 13ba, 14*; 16:5a, 8, 9aβγb; 18:13, 14b–15.

18 Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (HKAT III 1; 2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902), 260.

19 See note 16.

20 Emil Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (English ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), § 112tt.

said in 2 Kgs 25 about the deportation after the second conquest, for there would not have been anyone left for this second deportation.

We can detect the secondary character of v. 14 from details too. Now the princes (שָׂרִים) are included. They were mentioned at the capitulation in v. 12 but were missing in vv. 15 and 16 at the deportation. Furthermore, the numbers given in v. 16 are picked up and expanded; only the seven thousand soldiers and the one thousand craftsmen are counted, not the court officials. In place of כָּל־אֲנָשֵׁי הַחַיִל שִׁבְעַת אֲלָפִים "all the men of valor, seven thousand" there is now כָּל־גִּבּוֹרֵי הַחַיִל עֲשָׂרָה אֲלָפִים "all the warriors of valor, ten thousand," which is probably meant to include the court officials. But now the craftsmen are not part of the count. They could have been added later in order to fit in with v. 16. "The words כָּל־הַחֲרָשׁ וְהַמְסַגֵּר could rest on an entry from v. 16, since they are placed after the number ... stated."²¹

From this analysis we may say the following about the literary growth of 2 Kgs 24:8–17: The section on Jehoiachin is based on an *excerpt from the royal Annals*, as is the case of all the kings of Israel and Judah. This section is confined to vv. 8, 10, 12, 15a, and 17:

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. At that time Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon 'came' up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he himself, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his palace officials. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon. And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, his uncle, king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

As we shall see, this is the only report about the exile to Babylon drawn from historical sources which the books of Kings contain. It tells only of the deportation of King Jehoiachin. We know from the cuneiform documents which record the provision made for Jehoiachin at the Babylonian court that the king was not deported by himself.²² But that is not noted in the Judean sources. However, we can deduce it from the fact that at the capitulation the king's mother, his servants, his princes and his palace officials are mentioned.

The *Deuteronomistic Historian* has expanded the excerpt from the Annals by a condemnation of the king's godlessness. He also interpolated into v. 13a a second source: an *extract from the Temple records*. He

21 Stade, "Wie hoch belief sich die Zahl der unter Nebucadnezar nach Babylonien deportierten Juden?" 273–4.

22 Cf. E. F. Weidner, "Jochin, König von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten," in *Mélanges Syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud par ses amis et ses élèves*, vol. 2 (Paris: Geuthner, 1939), 923–35. Trans. ANET, 308.

linked this excerpt rather casually with the other source by means of קִשְׁרָה "from there."

A later hand has expanded the account by vv. 11, 12b, 15b. These additions are linked by the interest in the person of King Jehoiachin, so that we might talk about the *Jehoiachin edition*. In v. 11a the deportation is linked with the person of King Nebuchadnezzar. This serves to dovetail Jehoiachin's exile into the Babylonian dating (v. 12b) and in this way it acquires the official status which not only the book of Ezekiel presupposed, but the book of Jeremiah too. Verse 15b adds that the whole court accompanied the king: the king's mother, the harem, and the court officials. The country's aristocracy is also said to have gone into exile.

Another revision is palpable in vv. 13b, 16*, which we might call the *golah revision*. It goes further than the Jehoiachin edition by allowing the Jerusalem tradition to break off. In v. 16 not only the courtiers but all the soldiers are taken off to Babylon, as well as the technical craftsmen. The redactor makes the Judah that is left behind defenceless and also takes from it the men who could have begun a major rebuilding, for example, of the Temple. Now numbers are also given: 7000 soldiers and 1000 craftsmen. The plundering of the Temple gold, reported in the expanded note about the Temple in v. 13b, may also belong to this stratum.

A second *golah revision* can be found in v. 14. The first deportation is now said to have been comprehensive. The very existence of the Judah that remained after 597 is denied. This variant is so intensely partisan that it ignores the evident course of history, and for this it pays the price of contradicting the account in 2 Kings 25.

Zedekiah's Fate

The revisions which have expanded the account of the first deportation in accordance with their own interests have also left their traces in the presentation of the second conquest.

^(24:18) **Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.** ⁽¹⁹⁾ *And he did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.*

⁽²⁰⁾ For because of the anger of Yahweh it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence.

And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. ^(25:1) **In the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Ne-**

buchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it.

And they built siegeworks against it round about.

⁽²⁾ **So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.** ⁽³⁾
On the ninth day 'of the fourth month'²³,

the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land

⁽⁴⁾ **a breach was made in the city.**

'And the king'²⁴ and all the men of war 'went out'²⁴ by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden.

But the Chaldeans were around the city.

And he went in the direction of the Arabah. ⁽⁵⁾ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

⁽⁶⁾ **They captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, 'who'**²⁵ **passed sentence upon him.**

⁽⁷⁾ They slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and he put out the eyes of Zedekiah.

and bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon.²⁶

The section begins in the regular way with Zedekiah's age at his accession, the length of his reign, and the name of the queen mother (24:18). Here too the Deuteronomistic judgment on the king's godlessness follows (v. 19). The section ends with the exile of Zedekiah: "And he bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon" (25:7bβγ). With Zedekiah's deportation, the monarchy of the Davidic house came to an end in Judah.

This end follows the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, which must therefore have been included in the excerpt from the Judean Annals on which the account is based. It is Zedekiah's rebellion which lets loose the catastrophe (24:20b; cf. 18:7; 24:1). The great king with his army advances against Jerusalem and lays siege to the city (25:1a; cf. 24:10). The source gives the date of the campaign and the length of the siege, as well as the day on which the city was taken (vv. 2, 3αα, 4αα*). The king is taken prisoner, and is brought before the great king, who has meanwhile taken up his quarters in Riblah. Nebuchadnezzar condemns him, and has him taken away to Babylon in chains (vv. 6, 7bβγ; cf. 23:33–34).

23 Added from the parallel account in Jer 52:6.

24 Added from the Lucianic recension of the Septuagint, cf. Burney, *Notes*, 367–8.

25 Read the singular with a number of Masoretic manuscripts, Septuagint, Peschitta, Targum Jonathan, Vulgate and the parallel account in Jer 52:10.

26 The parallel account in Jer 52:11 adds, "and put him in prison till the day of his death." Cf. Jer 52:34 compared with 2 Kgs 25:30. See below n. 88. In Jer 39:7 (> LXX) the addendum is skipped again.

Once again, the account has been painted over at some later point. Juha Pakkala has pointed out that the fate which Zedekiah suffers according to 2 Kgs 25:7 is in contradiction to the prophecy in Jer 32:4–5.²⁷ Jeremiah certainly prophesies to the king that he will be defeated, but he does not prophesy the death of his sons, or that he will be blinded. Quite the contrary, Jeremiah threatens that Zedekiah will see the king of Babylon “eye to eye,” and that Nebuchadnezzar will carry him off to Babylon “eye to eye,” and that Nebuchadnezzar will carry him off to Babylon “eye to eye,” and that Nebuchadnezzar will carry him off to Babylon “eye to eye,” and that Nebuchadnezzar will carry him off to Babylon “eye to eye.” The saying even implies that there might be a positive turn of events, which would be impossible for a blind king. The contradiction between Jer 32 and 2 Kgs 25 is decisive because this saying, to judge by the literary development of Jer 32, is a prophecy after the event²⁸ which rests on 2 Kgs 25, on an earlier form of the text, in which the murder of Zedekiah’s sons and the blinding of Zedekiah himself were still unknown.

This earlier form is still existent behind the text as we have it in vv. 6–7, and can be detected from disturbances to the narrative form. In the beginning of v. 6 the army of the Chaldeans is the subject and “the king” is the object: “They captured the king.” In the second sentence the object is represented by the pronoun אֹתוֹ: “They brought *him* up to the king of Babylon at Riblah.” In the third sentence, the textual transmission is split. A number of Masoretic manuscripts, the Septuagint, Peshitta, Targum Jonathan, Vulgate and the parallel account in Jer 52:9 give the verb in the singular, so that the king of Babylon is the subject: “He passed sentence upon him.” The change of the subject is grammatically unexceptionable, and factually necessary. In the Codex Petropolitanus, on the other hand, the verb is in the plural. This reading is clearly secondary, and we know this because v. 7 immediately reverts to the plural. But there, in spite of the narrative context, the *consecutio temporum* is broken through since both sentences begin with the object. It is also noticeable that Zedekiah is no longer referred to through a pronoun but actually by name. A smooth consecutive text would have read: וַיִּדְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ מִשְׁפָּט וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ אֶת־בָּנָיו לְעֵינָיו וַיַּעַר אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ וַיִּבְנֶה שְׁתֵּימִּים “And *they* passed sentence upon him and slew *his* sons before his eyes, and he put out *his* eyes and bound him in fetters.” The parallel account in Jer 52:10 has therefore changed the syntax and starts with the usual narrative וַיִּשְׁחֲט מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל “and the king of Babylon slew.” All

27 Juha Pakkala, “Zedekiah’s Fate and the Dynastic Succession,” *JBL* 125 (2006): 443–52.

28 Cf. Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT I 12; 3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968), 207–9; Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26–45* (WMANT 52; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 29–30; Gunther Wanke, *Jeremia* (ZBK 20; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1995/2003), 299.

observations indicate that the text has been expanded: the object in its ante-position introduces a parenthesis which interrupts the flow of the earlier text: "They captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who passed sentence upon him and bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon."

The addition states that Zedekiah had no surviving descendants, and that the Jerusalem branch of the Davidic house had been wiped out. Zedekiah himself, having been blinded, had become incapable of acting. This being the presupposition, it is significant that the name "Zedekiah" is used, and not his title. The reason is that another Davidic king, Jehoiachin, has survived in exile. From now on, he is the sole bearer of the Davidic tradition and, we may add, that includes his descendants. We can recognize the intention of the *Jehoiachin edition*, which is to mark out Jehoiachin as the only legitimate heir.

The account of Zedekiah's flight from the besieged city also comes under suspicion, for it sheds a very unfavourable light on the king. It is surprising that he should succeed in escaping from the city at the very moment ("a breach was made in the city") when it is taken. As Juha Pakkala observes: "It is improbable that the Babylonians would make such a mistake in their military strategy that the entire Judean army (כל־אנשי המלחמה) could have escaped from the besieged city."²⁹ The text of v. 4 is corrupt and has been repaired in the textual witnesses in different ways. The parallel passage Jer 52:7 יִבְרְחוּ וַיֵּצְאוּ מִהָעִיר "they fled and went out from the city" is difficult because of the simple imperfect and it is not confirmed by the Septuagint, which here, as well as in 2 Kgs 25:4, only offers ἐξῆλθον = יֵצְאוּ.

It is true that this short reading is syntactically correct, but in substance it falls short. The king must be presupposed as subject, as well as "the men of war;" otherwise there is nothing to which the following predicate וַיֵּלֶךְ "and he went" can refer. The simplest correction is offered by the Lucianic recension, "which supplies in v. 4^a before וְכָל אָנָשׁ וַיֵּצְאוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְכָל־אָנָשִׁי וְגו' καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ βασιλεύς. We may thus read in v. 4^a וַיֵּצְאוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְכָל־אָנָשִׁי וְגו' הַמֶּלֶךְ, retaining sing. וַיֵּלֶךְ in v. 4^b as referring to the principal actor."³⁰ But this reading, though the best possible, is so poorly substantiated that it may only be the best form of the repair, and the disturbance may be due to literary expansion. A further unevenness in the text is the transition from v. 5 to v. 6, where the pronoun abruptly gives way to the explicit object אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ "the king," without any detectable reason. The original reading here was: וַתִּבְרַקַּע הָעִיר וַיִּתְפָּשׂוּ אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ "A breach was

29 Pakkala, "Zedekiah's Fate," 451.

30 Burney, *Notes*, 368.

made in the city, and they captured the king." It has now been interpolated: "And the king and all the men of war went out by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden. And he went in the direction of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him." Zedekiah is described as a coward who flees before the enemy instead of standing up to it. While the Babylonians penetrated the city from the north, the king and all the Judean army are said to have stolen away under cover of night. They leave the city through the royal gardens, at the southern tip of the city, and escape in the direction of the Jordan by way of the Kidron valley. But the flight does not save Zedekiah. The Babylonians are on his heels and at Jericho he falls into their hands. Then his troops desert him.³¹ The fact that this account of events is fictitious can be deduced from the extremely precise topographical information: "by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden," "in the direction of the Arabah," "in the plains of Jericho." The original Annals were not interested in details of this kind. The very way in which the writer suggests historical exactness betrays that this exactness did not exist.

The hostile account given by today's text does not affect Zedekiah alone. It also applies to what was left of Jerusalem and Judah as a whole. It is in this way that the *golah revision* asserts its claim. To the pronouncement about Zedekiah's godlessness, in v. 20a a sharp judgment is added: "For because of the anger of Yahweh it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence." This theological commentary has already been recognized as belonging to a later date.³² It is not covered by the sin of Zedekiah mentioned by the Deuteronomist in v. 19, but rather forms the reverse side of an emphatic theology of election:³³ Yahweh casts away Jerusalem and Judah from his presence because he has chosen the exiles.³⁴

To illustrate this pronouncement, further details are inserted into the account. In 25:1b the text is disturbed by a sudden shift from the singular הוּא "he (Nebuchadnezzar) laid siege to it (הָעִיר)"³⁵ to the plural

31 The parallel account Jer 39:5 (// Jer 52:8 // 2 Kgs 25:5), which was added after the Greek translation in the second century, skips this detail.

32 Albert Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige* (EHAT 9/2; Münster i.W.: Aschendorff, 1912), 396; Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 474

33 See 2 Kgs 13:23 on the one hand, and Jer 7:15; 2 Kgs 17:20 on the other.

34 In 24:3–4 the similar statement is related to the "sin of Manasseh," which served the later theologians to justify that Jerusalem was conquered.

35 For better coherence, Jer 52:4 changes to the plural. Benzinger, *Kings*, 198, prefers that reading. But the *lectio facilior* is clearly secondary.

וּבְנִיּוֹ *“they* (the Babylonian army) built siegeworks against it (עָלֶיהָ)”³⁶ as well as by the repetition of עָלֶיהָ *“against it.”* Additionally, the sentence וּבְנִיּוֹ עָלֶיהָ דָּיֵק סָבִיב *“and they built siegeworks against it round about”* is an explanation of what has been said before.³⁷ The model for it can be found in the symbolic act, where the prophet Ezekiel is told by Yahweh to besiege Jerusalem symbolically: “And you, O son of man, take a brick and lay it before you, and portray upon it a city, even Jerusalem; and put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it (וּבְנִיּוֹ דָּיֵק (עָלֶיהָ דָּיֵק) and cast up a mound against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it round about (סָבִיב)” (Ezek 4:1–2, cf. 17:17; 21:27). The addition establishes that this prophecy has been fulfilled. The adverb סָבִיב is used in a similar way within the parenthesis וּבְנִיּוֹ עָלֶיהָ עִיר סָבִיב *“the Chaldeans were around the city”* (v. 4aβ), which interrupts the sequence of the action in order to underline the inescapability of the situation.³⁸

But it is not only the Chaldeans to whom Jerusalem falls victim; Yahweh himself destroys the city. According to the *golah*-orientated revision of the book of Jeremiah, he does so through “sword, famine, and pestilence”: “I will send sword, famine, and pestilence upon them, until they shall be utterly destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their fathers” (Jer 24:10).³⁹ This threat, which is directed against the Judeans who have been left behind, has now been fulfilled: “The famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land” (2 Kgs 25:3aβb). As a sequel to the dating “on the ninth day of the fourth month,” this sentence is nonsensical. One cannot give the precise day on which famine becomes unendurable. Others have also noted: “Famine will already have gained the upper hand in the city earlier, not just on the last day”⁴⁰ and, “The consecution ... is impossible.”⁴¹ The comment “must be judged an addition.”⁴² With this presupposition, the

36 Septuagint and Peshitta present the singular, again *lectio facilior*. Stade and Schwally, *Kings*, 301: “this is right, since וְיָחַן is singular. Otherwise we should have to read וְיָחַנו as well as וְיָבְנוּ in accordance with Jer. 52,4.” This suggestion (followed also by Eißfeldt, *Könige*, 584) does not solve but indicate the problem.

37 The parallel account Jer 39:1–2 could easily skip Jer 52:4b–5a (// 2 Kgs 25:1b–2a).

38 In the late parallel account Jer 39:4 (// Jer 52:7 // 2 Kgs 25:4), which is still missing in the Greek translation, the phrase is skipped.

39 Cf. Jer 14:12; 21:9; 27:8, 13; 29:17, 18; 32:24, 36; 38:2; 42:17, 22; Ezek 6:11; 12:16 †.

40 Šanda, *Könige*, vol. 2, 381–2.

41 Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 561.

42 Würthwein, *Könige*, 475 note 7. The parallel account Jer 39:2 (// Jer 52:6 // 2 Kgs 25:3) skipped the phrase.

term עַם הָאָרֶץ “the people of the land” takes on particular significance.⁴³ It is used in the same way as in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, where it describes the people who have remained behind in Judah, as distinct from the exiles.⁴⁴ The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel were supposed to have announced the extermination of the country’s population. In its present state, the account in 2 Kings tells that their prophecy has now been fulfilled.

The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Deportation

After King Zedekiah had been taken off to exile in Babylon, the great king installed Gedaliah as his new vassal in Judah: “[The king of Babylon] passed sentence upon him (Zedekiah) and bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon. And the people who remained in the land of Judah, he appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, over them” (25:6b, 7bβγ, 22α, b). This corresponds to the usual sequence of the political events, cf. 23:33–34 and 24:15a, 17. The textual details indicate that the original account ran in the same way. Verse 22 begins with a *casus pendens* construction: וְהָעָם הַנִּשְׁאָר בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה וַיִּפְקֹד עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־גְּדַלְיָהוּ “And the people who remained in the land of Judah, he appointed Gedaliah over them” (v. 22α, b). In the present context, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, who acts in vv. 8–21, is the subject of the sentence. That is doubtful.⁴⁵ The later expansion, v. 23, naturally sees Nebuchadnezzar himself acting. A further discrepancy is that it is הָעָם “the people” in Judah who are supposed to have remained behind, not דָּלָה “the poorest” as in v. 12. If this reconstruction is correct, the report in 25:8–21 which tells that Jerusalem was destroyed and Judah largely divested of its population would have been inserted later. It brings the disruption of Jerusalem’s political and religious tradition into the foreground.

We need not expect from the outset that what we have here are contemporary accounts. The associative and repetitive list-style shows that the text has eventually grown to its present extent in several stages,⁴⁶ and it is easy to see the concerns which were behind the addi-

43 For a discussion of the original meaning see Christoph Levin, *Der Sturz der Königin Atalja* (SBS 105; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1982), 66–69.

44 Cf. Jer 1:18; 34:19; 37:2; 44:21; Ezek 7:27; 12:19; 22:29; also Ezra 4:4.

45 Jer 41:10 already reflects the present sequence of the account.

46 The differences in the parallel account Jer 52:12–30 (and again in the Septuagint of Jer 52) prove that the text was still “fluent” to some degree in very late time.

tions.⁴⁷ The section centres on four different motifs: 1) the destruction of Jerusalem; 2) the deportation of the people; 3) the plundering of such of the Temple vessels as have been left and which are now taken to Babylon; 4) and the extermination of the Judean elite.

The latest part is probably the one that has to do with the Temple vessels. Nebuzaradan is said to have taken them to Babylon. The list of vv. 13–17, “an intruded antiquarian ... note,”⁴⁸ interrupts the account about the fate of the population, and tears it apart. Since the destruction of the Temple has already been reported in v. 9a, this account appears too late in the sequence.

⁽¹³⁾ And the pillars of bronze that were in the house of Yahweh, and the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of Yahweh, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried the bronze to Babylon.

⁽¹⁴⁾ And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the dishes for incense and all the vessels of bronze used in the Temple service, they took away.

⁽¹⁵⁾ And the firepans, and the bowls, what was of gold, as gold, and what was of silver, as silver, the captain of the guard took away.

⁽¹⁶⁾ The two pillars, the one sea, and the stands, which Solomon had made for the house of Yahweh. The bronze of all these vessels was beyond weight. ⁽¹⁷⁾ The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and upon it was a capital of bronze; the height of the capital was three cubits; a network and pomegranates, all of bronze, were upon the capital round about. And the second pillar had the like, with the network.

The motif about the Temple vessels had a particular importance. On the one hand, it was therefore possible to maintain—contrary to historical probability⁴⁹—that the Temple cult was broken off when Jerusalem was conquered (see 2 Chr 36:7, 10, 18; Jer 27:16–22). On the other hand, with the help of the vessels, the continuity between the First and the Second Temple could be presented in palpable terms. Cyrus is supposed to have commanded that at the beginning of the rebuilding the vessels were to be given back (see Ezra 1:7–11; 5:14–15; 6:5), and in this way the Second Temple entered into the tradition of the First. Like a midrash, the details have been gathered together from the inventory of the furnishings of the Temple in 1 Kgs 7:15–51. The list has obviously been supplemented several times. Most scholars note especially the addi-

47 Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 476–9, has got yet the best understanding of the text's nature.

48 Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 563.

49 Cf. Angelika Berlejung, “Notlösungen – Altorientalische Nachrichten über den Tempelkult in Nachkriegszeiten,” in *Kein Land für sich allein: Festschrift Manfred Weippert* (eds. Ulrich Hübner and Ernst Axel Knauf; OBO 128; Freiburg [Schweiz]: Universitätsverlag; and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 196–230.

tional character of vv. 16–17;⁵⁰ but this is true of the whole section which is of one and the same style.

The murder of the Jewish aristocracy, which is reported in vv. 18–21a, is factually speaking an addendum to the murder of Zedekiah's sons. The parallel account in Jer 52:10 has seen this exactly in that way, when it adds the reference: "The king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and also slew all the princes of Judah at Riblah" (וְגַם אֶת־כָּל־שָׂרֵי יְהוּדָה שָׁחַט בְּרִבְלָהָהּ). According to this, the list is wrongly placed. The statement in v. 21b: "And Judah went into exile out of its land" forms a comprehensive resumption to the second deportation which is told in vv. 11–12. By insertion of vv. 18–21a (and later vv. 13–17) it has lost its original place.

⁽¹⁸⁾ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the threshold,

⁽¹⁹⁾ And from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the men of war,

and five men of the king's council who were found in the city,
and the secretary of the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land

and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city.

⁽²⁰⁾ And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them.

and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

⁽²¹⁾ And the king of Babylon beat them (to death),

and he killed them at Riblah in the land of Hamath.

Initially the enumeration of the victims was restricted to v. 18: "And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the threshold." In spite of the apparent precision, this is not a historical report but an exegetical conclusion drawn from the list of Judean officials named in 23:4: "And the king commanded Hilkiyah, the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the threshold." On this note the late author has based his conclusions about the officers of the Judean administration. 2 Kgs 23:4, for its part, is not historical either; the writer has thereby had recourse to 22:3–4.⁵¹ We can easily follow the thoughts of the late scribe: under Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, Hilkiyah, who had held office under Josiah himself, can no longer have been the high

50 Benzinger, *Könige*, 199; Kittel, *Könige*, 309; Eißfeldt, *Könige*, 584; Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 563; Gray, *Kings*, 767–8; Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 477.

51 Cf. Christoph Levin, "Josia im Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk," in idem, *Fortschreibungen* (BZAW 316; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2003), 198–216 (201–2 with n. 16).

priest, so he was replaced by a man called Seraiah.⁵² For the “second priest” the author draws on Jer 21:1; 29:25–29; 37:3 where a certain Zephaniah is mentioned as a priest at that time, and he renders more precisely that there might have been *three* “keepers of the threshold.”⁵³ These five officials are carried off to Riblah, like the sons of Zedekiah, and are executed there by the great king: “[The captain of the guard] brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he killed them at Riblah in the land of Hamath” (vv. 20b, 21aβ). This is a way of asserting that in Judah it was not only the dynasty which was exterminated, but the administration as well. The men who held office later, when the country was reorganized, are supposed all to have returned from exile.

We can see from the inversion and the repetition of the verb לָקַח “he took” that the list has been expanded in v. 19 at a later point. The military commanders should have been included in the execution: the officer who had been in command of the soldiers (אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה, cf. 24:16; 25:4), and the secretary of the commander of the army who “mustered the people of the land.” As in 24:14, 16 the Judeans who have been left behind are to be left without any military defence. As in v. 3b, again “the people of the land” is understood to be the contrary group to the exiles. Finally sixty people belonging to “the people of the land” itself are said to have been executed, people whom the captain of the Babylonian guard is supposed to have come across in the city, as well as “five men of the king’s council.” These pieces of information can be recognized as further additions from the circumstantial clauses which are in actual fact superfluous.

According to the original account, it was only the Temple and the palace which were destroyed (vv. 8aα, b–9a). With these measures a visible end was put to the kingdom of the Davidic rulers in the name of the great king. This can be understood—at least in the framework of today’s text—to mean that the tradition of the Davidic kings broke off in Jerusalem, whereas in Babylon it continued. In this sense the destruction of the Temple and the palace is a pendant to the rehabilitation of king Jehoiachin, which is of the same annalistic style. These records might originate from the archives of the Babylonian branch of the Davidic dynasty.

52 As the name is not infrequent with the Judean officials, it was not difficult to invent it; cf. 2 Sam 8:17; Jer 36:26; 51:59–64; 2 Kgs 25:23 // Jer 40:8; Neh 11:11. Among the exiles, there are several bearers of the name: Ezra 2:2; 7:1; Neh 10:3; 12:1, 12.

53 For the “keepers of the threshold” see Christoph Levin, “Die Instandsetzung des Tempels unter Joas ben Ahasja,” in idem, *Fortschreibungen*, 169–97 (186 with n. 86).

- ⁽⁸⁾ In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month,
 which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of
 Babylon
Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of
Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁽⁹⁾ And he burned the house of Yahweh, and
the king's house
 and all the houses of Jerusalem.
 Every great house he burned down.
⁽¹⁰⁾ And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of
 the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ⁽¹¹⁾ And the rest of
 the people who were left in the city
 and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon
 and the rest of the 'masterworkmen'⁵⁴
 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile.
⁽¹²⁾ Of the poorest of the land the captain of the guard left some to
 be vinedressers and plowmen.
⁽²¹⁾ And Judah went into exile out of its land.

For the destruction, an exact date is given: "in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month," i.e. 25 August 587 or, more probable, 14 August 586. Nebuzaradan (Nabû-zêru-i-din-nam), who is supposed to have carried out the destruction, is mentioned in a prisma inscription of Nebuchadnezzar's which lists the most distinguished court officials and governors;⁵⁵ although there he is called "the man in charge of the kitchen," not "the captain of the bodyguard." We may ask whether the Jewish recollection to which the report probably goes back is in this respect historical.

It is worth noting that in the same inscription we find a mention of Nergalsharezer (Nergal-šarru-ú-šur) the Sîn-magir,⁵⁶ who is mentioned in Jer 39:3b in an addition to the account of the conquest of Jerusalem as one of the princes of the Babylonian king. This addendum is certainly late, for it is still missing in the *Vorlage* 2 Kgs 25:4 and Jer 52:7.⁵⁷ Apparently the late scribes could draw on some vague historical knowledge about Neo-Babylonian court officials.⁵⁸

54 So according to the parallel account Jer 52:15.

55 Babylon, now Istanbul 7834, column III line 36; trans. *ANET*, 307-8.

56 Column IV line 22.

57 The original sequence of this haggada, which focuses on the fate of the prophet Jeremiah, runs as follows: "All the officials of the king of Babylon came and sat in the middle gate and sent and took Jeremiah from the court of the guard, and he dwelt among the people" (Jer 39:3a; 40:14*). This was later enlarged by the list of Babylonian officials in 39:3b, as can be seen from the doublets. Still later the report of the conquest of Jerusalem 39:4-13, which is missing in the LXX, was copied from Jer 52.

58 This is recently proven by the clay tablet BM 114789 (1920-12-13, 81) found in the British Museum by Michael Jursa, which witnesses the name Nabû-šarrussu-(u)ki*n, that is Nebu-Sar-Sechim, the Rabsaris, of Jer 39:3b. See B. Becking, "The

As in 24:12b and 25:27* (*vide infra*), the date has been retrospectively related to the Babylonian calendar in v. 8αβγ, probably here too by the hand of the reviser responsible for the *Jehoiachin edition*; “The synchronism would have been mentioned in connection with the former dates, if it had formed a part of the original text.”⁵⁹

The devastation was extended subsequently, and made to take in Jerusalem as a whole: “and all the houses of Jerusalem” (v. 9b¹).⁶⁰ When the city’s walls are razed to the ground (v. 10), every possibility of defence is removed, and at the same time the rebuilding under Nehemiah (which historically speaking was no more than a repair, see Neh 2:13–15) is given comprehensive importance.

The report as we have it today means that the whole population of Jerusalem had to have been deported. The words “and the rest of the people who were left in the city” (v. 11α¹, b) refer back to the account of the first deportation in 24:14, 16. Now all the people who were preserved from the first deportation are taken off into exile. Verse 11α² actually stresses that even people who had deserted to the king of Babylon had to leave the country, thus withdrawing the promise given by Jeremiah in Jer 21:9. The country is supposed to be completely bereft of people. Verse 21b even sums it up in this way: “Judah,” that is, the remaining population of the whole country, “went into exile out of his land.” This is an allusion to 2 Kgs 17:23b, which emphasizes that the deportation was as disastrous as it was after the conquest of Samaria.⁶¹ Significantly, for the second deportation no destination is given. The deportees are not thought to have joined the community of the first *golah* that went to Babylon with Jehoiachin, but to be spread among the nations like the inhabitants of Samaria.⁶² From now on, the true Judah is to be found exclusively among the exiles from 597.⁶³

Identity of Nabu-sharrussu-ukin, the Chamberlain: An Epigraphic Note on Jeremiah 39,3,” in *BN 140* (Salzburg: ISDCL-Publishers, 2009), 35-40.

59 Stade and Schwally, *Kings*, 302–3.

60 The parallel account in Jer 39:8 (// Jer 52:13–14 // 2 Kgs 25:9–10), which forms a late Masoretic surplus, avoids Jerusalem being completely destroyed.

61 The use of ארץ for “land” is strange in the books of Kings. It is reminiscent of the language of the book of Ezekiel. This may be an indication of the *golah revision*.

62 This was changed only by the late parallel account in Jer 39:9 (// Jer 52:15 // 2 Kgs 25:11), where בָּבֶל “to Babylon” is added. The late editors of the Hebrew text tried to reshape history.

63 Cf. Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 478–9. At that point, the parallel account in Jer 52:28–30 adds a detailed list of three(!) deportations including surprisingly exact numbers of the exiled people. As this passage is still missing in the LXX, it is probably not based on memory, but a late evaluation.

However, the report is not consistent, as the captain of the guard left the poor people in the country behind. This is probably due to the fact that the following (earlier!) text already mentioned “the people who remained in the land of Judah” (v. 22). Since this could not be brushed aside, they are now degraded to “the poor,” and the reason is given that the land should be planted and not go to waste (v. 12). In order that these poor people could live in the country, an additional clause mentions that it was not *all* the houses in Jerusalem that were burnt down but only “the great houses” (v. 9b²).⁶⁴ On the other hand, all skilful master-workers are mentioned to have gone into exile.⁶⁵ Among the poor people no one should be left who was able to rebuild the temple.

The Reign of Gedaliah

The aftermath of the Judean kingdom under the brief rule of Gedaliah is probably historical. But the reason for assuming this is not the consistency of the reports that have been passed down, but their obscurity.

⁽²²⁾ **And the people who remained in the land of Judah,**
whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left,

he appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, over them.

⁽²³⁾ Now when all the captains of the forces, they and ‘their’⁶⁶ men, heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah,

and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men.

⁽²⁴⁾ And Gedaliah swore to them and their men, ‘saying’⁶⁷, Do not be afraid ‘to serve’⁶⁸ the Chaldeans.

Dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

⁽²⁵⁾ **But in the seventh month, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, son of**

64 The addition is recognized by most scholars; cf. Benzinger, *Könige*, 199; Kittel, *Könige*, 309; Burney, *Notes*, 368; Šanda, *Könige*, vol. 2, 386; Eißfeldt, *Könige*, 584; Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 562 (“superfluous and ungrammatical clause”); Gray, *Kings*, 766 note c; Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 478.

65 Read קָאֲמֹן with Jer 52:15.

66 Read וְאֲנָשֵׁיהֶם as at the end of the verse, with Septuagint, Peschitta, Targum Jonathan, Vulgate, and Jer 40:7.

67 For וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם the parallel account in Jer 40:9 gives the shorter and better reading לְאֹמֶר.

68 Instead of מִעֲבָדֵי “before the servants” the parallel account in Jer 40:9 preserves the better reading מִעֲבֹד.

Elishama, of the royal family, came, and ten men with him, and they beat Gedaliah and he died

and the Judeans [and the Chaldeans]⁶⁹ who were with him at Mizpah.

⁽²⁶⁾ Then all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces arose, and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

As has been shown above, the note about Gedaliah's installation, v. 22, originally followed v. 7. The murder of Gedaliah by Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, which we are told about in v. 25a belongs to the report in any event. Frankly speaking, we know nothing about the background and circumstances of this act. After Gedaliah, state authority in Judah apparently came to an end, and with it our account. From this point on, the sources are silent.⁷⁰

The note has later been elaborated into a brief narrative. Even before Ishmael and his murderous henchmen came to Gedaliah, "all the princes of the army" came to Gedaliah, to Mizpah (v. 23a). Being extensively linked with the previous text, the statement shows itself to be an addition.⁷¹ The unusual title "princes of the armies" is otherwise found only in 1 Kgs 15:20, where it is used for the military commanders of Aram.⁷² Gedaliah tried to convince them that they should subject themselves to the king of Babylon (v. 24a). Consequently Ishmael must also have murdered the aristocrats who were with Gedaliah. Then he died (גִּדְיָהוּ), as further victims "and the Judeans [and the Chaldeans]" are added. "Either גִּדְיָהוּ or the whole of v. 25^b is to be cancelled."⁷³ Most exegetes decide to omit גִּדְיָהוּ without any support in the textual trans-

69 Probably added later according to Jer 41:3a^β.

70 The account in Jer 40:7–41:18, which tells many more details, is obviously a later haggadic elaboration of 2 Kgs 25:22–24a, 25. This is clearly seen from the fact that Gedaliah's installation itself (2 Kgs 25:22) is lacking in Jeremiah. The parallel account starts with the reference 2 Kgs 25:23 // Jer 40:7 only. Other than in 2 Kgs 25:25 the date given in Jer 41:1 lacks something to relate to; see Gunther Wanke, *Untersuchungen zur sogenannten Baruchschrift* (BZAW 122; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 115. Contrary to the midrashic nature of the narrative in Jer 40–45, most scholars, however, hold that "25.22–26 is a much abbreviated account of the events described in Jer 40.7–43.6" (Burney, *Notes*, 368); cf. more recently esp. Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, "Erwägungen zum Schlußkapitel des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks," in *Textgemäß: Aufsätze und Beiträge zur Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments* (FS Ernst Würthwein; eds. Antonius H. J. Gunneweg and Otto Kaiser; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 94–109; and Stipp, *Jeremia im Parteienstreit*, 276.

71 As a matter of consequence, in Jer 40:5a, 6 the prophet Jeremiah was moved to Gedaliah's court also.

72 The instances 2 Kgs 25:26; Jer 40:7, 13; 41:11, 13, 16; 42:1, 8; 43:4, 5 depend on 2 Kgs 25:23.

73 Stade and Schwally, *Kings*, 305.

mission.⁷⁴ But the *lectio difficilior* favors the opposite. The editor felt the need to link the amendment explicitly with the scene by adding “who were with him at Mizpah.”

The clumsily appended v. 23 puts a name to four of these army leaders, the first among them being the murderer Ishmael himself. Johanan, the son of Kareah, is the official to whom the key role is assigned in the further elaboration which the tradition has undergone in the book of Jeremiah.

The person who added these men to the scene evidently did not yet read anything about the deportation of the people and the murder of their leaders of which we are now told in vv. 11–12, 18–21. Consequently, here too the *golah revision* has intervened, shaping the account according to the *theory of the empty land*. For this revision, 2 Kgs 25:22–26 does not form the model of Jer 40–41, but *vice versa*. The editor starts in v. 22a β with a recollection of the deportation under Nebuchadnezzar. As is told in Jer 41–43, after the murder of Gedaliah all the leaders of the army and all the people (כָּל־הָעָם מִקָּטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל) cf. Jer 41:1, 8) are supposed to have left Judah and have gone to Egypt (v. 26, cf. Jer 43:7). This indicates the disobedience against Jeremiah’s (and Gedaliah’s) warnings (cf. Jer 42:10–22), as is stated at the end: “For they were afraid of the Chaldeans” (v. 26b), i.e. they did not obey the command given by Gedaliah in v. 24a: “Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans.” Gedaliah’s speech is secondarily enlarged in v. 24b by an allusion to Jeremiah’s admonition: “Dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you” (cf. Jer 42:6, 10). The amendment can be detected from the repetition of עָבַד “to serve” and from the change from “the Chaldeans” to “the king of Babylon.”

Like the report in the book of Jeremiah these details have been formulated later and are fictitious. In historically reliable sources, the move of the rest of the Judeans to Egypt never happened. This does not exclude that it happened in real history to some degree,⁷⁵ only that it happened without record. In the biblical account, the country was evacuated by literary means, so to speak. The Judean tradition must not be broken off merely on the level of the Davidic dynasty; the whole of the population is to be included. “The total emigration destroys the primary Judean salvation-history line ... The author declares the

74 Thus Stade and Schwally, *ibid*. Cf. Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 569: “יִמְחָה: this interruption of the sequence of accusatives is to be omitted.” Similarly Gray, *Kings*, 770; Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 479. The Masoretic surplus in Jer 41:2 also supports the present text of 2 Kgs 25:25.

75 The historical fact is witnessed at the end of the fifth century by the papyri from Elephantine.

Judeans who have remained in Palestine to be simply non-existent."⁷⁶ A new beginning can now only come from outside, i.e. from the Babylonian *golah*.

The Rehabilitation of Jehoiachin

The presupposition for this new beginning is indicated by the rehabilitation of Jehoiachin, the report of which now ends the book of Kings and lends it a hopeful finish. The hope applies only to the exiles and is in sharp contrast to the fate of the country and its inhabitants, which is marked by complete devastation and depopulation.

(27) And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon,

in the (first) year of his reign
raised the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah 'and brought him'⁷⁷ out of prison.

(28) He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon.

(29) And he put off his prison garments. And he got his regular maintenance before him as long as he lived.

(30) And for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, every day a portion, as long as he lived.

The basis of the section is confined to v. 27. This note gives the impression of being a historical source. But according to its style it no longer derives from the Annals of the kings of Judah. For like the book of Ezekiel, it is dated after Jehoiachin's exile. Apparently the historical picture given here has been determined by the Babylonian exilic community.⁷⁸ This also emerges from the content of the account, which concentrates on the fate of King Jehoiachin. We cannot exclude the possibility that this was not yet part of the original version of the DtrH, but "was subsequently added to the book of Kings,"⁷⁹ in order to relate the historical presentation to the Babylonian branch of the Davidic dynasty.

76 Stipp, *Jeremia im Parteienstreit*, 279–80.

77 Add *יחזק* with Septuagint, Peschitta, Targum Jonathan and Jer 52:31.

78 Šanda, *Könige*, vol. 2, 397; Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 566; Gray, *Kings*, 774; Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 482.

79 Würthwein, *ibid.*; cf. Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 559; Šanda, *Könige*, vol. 2, 398.

With the phrase נָשָׂא רֹאשׁ “to raise someone’s head” the account interprets Jehoiachin’s fate as rehabilitation.⁸⁰ Amel-Marduk is supposed to have released Jehoiachin from prison (בֵּית כְּלִיא = *akk. bīt kilī*). The given date of 27 Adar corresponds to 23 March 560.⁸¹ We may ask whether the proceeding is described accurately or whether its significance has been exaggerated. In the context of today’s text, the report—“leaping over a gap in time of 26 years”⁸²—joins on to the end of the Davidic house in Jerusalem as it was previously reported; this serves as assertion that the dynasty of David has found its sole continuation in the Babylonian branch.

The note has been expanded later. The additional dating בְּשָׁנַת מְלִכּוֹ “in the first year of his reign,” that is, the reign of Amel-Marduk, “is strikingly remote, lying between subject and object, from the exact date given at the beginning of the verse.”⁸³ Again the Judean time-reckoning has been interlocked with the Babylonian one. This shows the same concern we noted in 24:12b and 25:8 and there assigned to the *Jehoiachin edition*. Verse 29 is also added, probably by the same hand. This can be detected from “the sudden change of the subject”⁸⁴ as well as of the “aramaizing irregular construction”⁸⁵ וְשָׂנָא “and he put off” which is used as the historical tense.⁸⁶ The expansion maintains that there was a special relationship between the Judean ex-king and the great king of Babylon: Jehoiachin “put off his prison garments” and got his allowance by the great king, following the original meaning of the Hebrew אָכַל לֶחֶם “to eat bread.”⁸⁷ The assertion that Jehoiachin was given his allowance “as long as he lived” probably shows that the writer was aware that Jehoiachin was already dead.⁸⁸ The presupposition is then that there were descendants who could claim the succession for themselves, and that the legitimacy of this claim was based among other

80 Cf. Isak Leo Seeligmann, “Zur Terminologie für das Gerichtsverfahren im Wortschatz des biblischen Hebräisch,” (1967) in idem, *Gesammelte Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel* (ed. Erhard Blum; FAT 41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 293–317 (309–10).

81 The textual transmission differs: Jer 52:31 gives the 25th of Adar, Septuagint the 24th.

82 Šanda, *Könige*, vol. 2, 397.

83 Erich Zenger, “Die deuteronomistische Interpretation der Rehabilitierung Jojachins,” *BZ.NF* 12 (1968): 16–30 (20).

84 Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 481, n. 5; Georg Hentschel, *2 Könige* (NEB 11; Würzburg: Echter, 1985), 261.

85 Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 569; cf. Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 481, n. 5.

86 Stade and Schwally, *Kings*, 305: “We should expect, however, וישנה.”

87 Cf. Gen 3:19; Exod 2:20; Amos 7:12.

88 Cf. the surplus “until the day of his death” in Jer 52:34, the parallel account of 2 Kgs 25:30. This is probably a later conclusion. See above n. 26.

things on the fact that the great king was supposed to have repealed the condemnation of their father Jehoiachin.

This assertion is brought out even more clearly by means of another editorial expansion: "He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon" (v. 28). The interpolation can be detected from the "difficult change of subject from v. 28 to v. 29, which takes place without the subject being named,"⁸⁹ and because the sequence is confused. Jehoiachin could hardly have taken his seat above the other kings if he had not previously divested himself of his prison garments (cf. Gen 41:14). But there is a good reason why the amender has interpolated his addition at precisely this point: it interprets the rehabilitation as an exaltation over the other kings. We remember that Zedekiah was among these exiled kings in Babylon. The statement וַיְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ טוֹבוֹת "he spoke kindly to him," can be seen as a counterpart to the expression דָּבַר מִשְׁפָּט describing the judgment over Zedekiah (2 Kgs 25:6).⁹⁰ Judging by comparable phraseology, it means "the official recognition of Jehoiachin as royal vassal."⁹¹ The great king is directly called upon to favour the Jehoiachin branch of the Davidic dynasty that means to reject the Zedekiah branch.

This is finally underlined through an expansion of the note about the provision made for Jehoiachin, which shows itself very clearly to be an addition through the resumptive repetition of כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּו "as long as he lived."⁹² The addendum makes it clear that the bread which Jehoiachin ate in the king's presence was given to him on a daily basis by the king, proving that his status is recognized.

Conclusions

If we look back at our analysis, we can trace the following main stages of the literary development:

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- 89 Zenger, "Die deuteronomistische Interpretation," 17.
 90 Bob Becking, "Jehoiachin's Amnesty, Salvation for Israel? Notes on 2 Kings 25:27–30," in idem, *From David to Gedaliah* (OBO 228; Fribourg: Academic Press; and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 174–189 (176); also Zenger, "Die deuteronomistische Interpretation," 25.
 91 Zenger, "Die deuteronomistische Interpretation," 24–5.
 92 Würthwein, *Könige*, vol. 2, 481 n. 5; and Hentschel, *Könige*, 261, recognize that v. 30 contradicts v. 29 to some degree and that it therefore cannot come from the same hand. However they take only v. 29 for the addendum, as they do not notice the function of כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּו as resumptive repetition. The Biblical record should not be confused with the historical knowledge we get from the cuneiform sources, cf. n. 22.

(1) The foundation of the text, as usual in the books of Kings, is the *excerpt from the Annals of the Judean kings* (24:8, 10, 12a, 15a, 17–18, 20b; 25:1a, 2, 3 [only לַחֲדָשׁ בְּחֶשֶׁב לַחֲדָשׁ], 4 [only וַתִּבְקַע הָעִיר], 6, 9bβγ, 22aα, b, 25). The regular pattern is only altered insofar as both for Jehoiachin and for Zedekiah there is no reference to the Annals themselves, which otherwise belongs to the scheme. We see here how Judah as a kingdom is beginning to break up, and with it, the Annals.⁹³ Both Jehoiachin and Zedekiah are deported. Nebuchadnezzar replaces Jehoiachin with Zedekiah, and then puts Gedaliah in the place of the disloyal Zedekiah. Gedaliah no longer belongs to the Davidic house and is murdered after a few months (25:22a, 25). With his murder the Judean administration of the land breaks down, as far as we can see. At this very point the first edition of the Deuteronomistic History came to an end. Referring to exile, the Annals tell the deportation of only the two kings (and their entourage). There is no record to be found in the historical sources of the Bible of any deportation of the population of Judah by the Babylonians.

(2) As usual, the *Deuteronomistic Historian* has added his notes about the king's apostasy (24:9, 19). He has also inserted in 24:13a an excerpt from the *Temple records*, as he has done elsewhere, in order to put on record the state of the assets held in the Temple treasury. This fragment telling of the raid of the Temple is another Judean witness for the first conquest of Jerusalem.

(3) The notes about the destruction of the Temple and palace (25:8aα, b, 9a), and about the rehabilitation of Jehoiachin (25:27 [without מְלִכּוֹ בְּשָׁנָה מְלִכּוֹ]) have been added to the Deuteronomistic History at a later stage. They probably derive not from the archives of the kings of Judah, but from the *records of the Babylonian branch of the Davidic house*, supporting their view of the history. These Annals of the Babylonian Judeans have been slotted into the original sequence of the Deuteronomistic History in a meaningful way: The destruction of the Temple and the palace follows soon after Zedekiah was deported, and the rehabilitation forms the contrast to the murder of Gedaliah, granting the whole run of the history of the kings of Israel and Judah a hopeful end.

(4) The account was *edited* in such a way that *Jehoiachin* appears as the sole legitimate heir in the Davidic line. The date when he was exiled, from which the Babylonian Judean community counted, was brought into line with the dates of the Babylonian kings (24:12b; cf. 25:8aβγ, 27 [בְּשָׁנָה מְלִכּוֹ only]). Nebuchadnezzar is personally present on the decisive events (24:11). The members of Jehoiachin's court are also

93 The last reference of this kind relates to Jehoiakim, 2 Kgs 24:5.

explicitly listed at his exile (24:15b). Zedekiah, on the other hand, is described as a coward (25:4 $\alpha\alpha^*$, b-5). His sons are supposed to have been killed (25:7a). This is a way of asserting that the Jerusalem branch of the Davidic dynasty has been extinguished. Zedekiah himself is supposed to have been blinded (25:7ba). In contrast, Amel-Marduk's rehabilitation of Jehoiachin is emphasized (25:29, later expanded by v. 28, 30). The great Babylonian king takes the part of the Babylonian branch of the Davidic dynasty.

(5) The support for the exiles in Babylon is underlined again and again by a sequence of *golah* revisions. Now it is told that Jerusalem was completely destroyed (25:9b-10). To save for the *golah* as much as possible of the Judean tradition, the whole of the population should have been deported to Babylon at the first conquest (24:14a, 16; 25:11, 21b). The Judeans who remained are said to have died of hunger (25:3a β b), or fled (25:26). The aristocracy is murdered (25:18-21a). Only the poorest of the land are left as vinedressers and plowmen in order to avoid the land turning into desert (24:14b; 25:12). The Temple vessels are taken to Babylon (24:13b; 25:13-17). A new beginning in Judah is now possible only when the exiles return.