

**Justification for the Fall
of the
Omride Dynasty**

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The oracles of judgment made against King Ahab (and against the Omride Dynasty) in 1 & 2 Kings are ambiguous at best. These oracles are given in four different locations and contexts: (1) God's commissioning of Elijah (1 Kings 21:19), (2) Elijah's pronouncement of the oracle to King Ahab (1 Kings 21:20-24), (3) Elisha's commissioning of the guild prophet (2 Kings 9:1-3), and the guild prophet's pronouncement of the oracle to Jehu on the occasion of his anointing as king (2 Kings 9:6-10). The overall transmission of this oracle is characterized by variations in the charges brought against Ahab as well as a significant expansion in the sentencing between the commissioning of the oracle and its transmission to the ultimate recipient. The charges are sometimes limited to the spilling of Naboth's blood and at other times expanded to include idolatry in reference to the Baal worship which was either tolerated or promoted by the Omride Dynasty. The sentences pronounce through the oracle vary to include only the death of King Ahab, the death of all the members of his household, or the death of his wife, the Phoenician Queen Jezebel. Tables 1 and 2 contain comparisons of all four oracles.

Following the episode between King Ahab and Naboth regarding Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-16), Elijah is commissioned by God to give a specific message to the king regarding his demise (1 Kings 21:17-19), but this message contains no reference to the fall of the entire Omride Dynasty nor are there any implied charges of idolatry. When Elijah conveys this message to Ahab, he expands it significantly (1 Kings 21:20-24); the accusation is expanded beyond the murder of Naboth to include "causing Israel to sin" presumably through idolatry, and the sentence spells out not only the death of Ahab but the fall of the entire dynasty as well as the grizzly death of his wife Queen Jezebel. It is interesting to note that Elijah pronounces this sentence on Ahab in the first person singular voice (*מָצָאתִי* - *I have found* and *וְהִכָּרְתִּי* - *I will*

Table 1: Comparison of all Four Oracles of Judgment Against Ahab

God to Elijah	Elijah to Ahab	Elisha to Guild Prophet	Guild Prophet to Jehu
1 Kings 21:19 (<i>NRSV</i>) ¹	1 Kings 21:20-24	2 Kings 9:1-3	2 Kings 9:6-10
<p>¹⁹ ...“Thus says the Lord: Have you killed, and also taken possession?” You shall say to him, “Thus says the Lord: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood.”</p>	<p>“I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, ²¹ I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel; ²² and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin. ²³ Also concerning Jezebel the Lord said, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel.’ ²⁴ Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat.”</p>	<p>“Gird up your loins; take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. ² When you arrive, look there for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi; go in and get him to leave his companions, and take him into an inner chamber. ³ Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord: I anoint you king over Israel.’ Then open the door and flee; do not linger.”</p>	<p>“Thus says the Lord the God of Israel: I anoint you king over the people of the Lord, over Israel. ⁷ You shall strike down the house of your master Ahab, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord. ⁸ For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; I will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. ⁹ I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah. ¹⁰ The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and no one shall bury her.”</p>

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in English are taken from the *NRSV*.

Table 2: Comparison of all Four Oracles of Judgment Against Ahab

	God to Elijah	Elijah to Ahab	Elisha to Guild Prophet	Guild Prophet to Jehu
	1 Kings 21:19 (<i>NRSV</i>)	1 Kings 21:20-24	2 Kings 9:1-3	2 Kings 9:6-10
Charges	Killing	You have done evil in the sight of the Lord	None	[spilling] the blood of prophets
	Taking possession [of Naboth's vineyard]	You have caused Israel to sin		[spilling] blood of servants of the Lord
Condemned	Ahab	Ahab	None	House of Ahab
		The House of Ahab		Jezebel
		Jezebel		
Punishment	Dogs will lick up your [Ahab's] blood.	I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you [Ahab]	None [the loss of his crown could be seen as a punishment on Ahab]	You shall strike down the house of your master Ahab; I will cut off from Ahab every male; I will make the house of Ahab like the house of...
		[I] will cut off from Ahab every male; I will make the house of Ahab like the house of...		
		Dogs shall eat Jezebel		
		Dogs or birds will eat members of the House of Ahab		Dogs shall eat Jezebel

cut...) without prefacing it with the typical quotation frame “Thus says the Lord...” This feature may be an interesting topic for future research but it will not be addressed in this project.

After the exchange with Elijah, Ahab repents and the sentence is commuted to the next generation. This fact may imply that the original commission Elijah received was intended not only for Ahab but for his descendents as well and that 1 Kings 21:19 might actually be a diegetic summary of the fuller prophecy. Nevertheless, ambiguity remains in the accusation; the original commissioning of Elijah only mentions killing and taking possession of the vineyard. There is no mention of the charges brought later (causing Israel to sin and the killing of prophets and servants of the Lord). Furthermore, the sins committed by Israel by compulsion of the Omride Dynasty are ambiguous. However, from 1 Kings 21:25-26 we may presume that these involved the sin of idolatry:

Indeed, there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD, urged on by his wife Jezebel. He acted most abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD drove out before the Israelites.

Additional problems arise in 2 Kings 9:6-10 when the sentence is once again pronounced on the next generation through the guild prophet; the accusation makes no direct reference to idolatry and it is not pronounced to Joram (son of Ahab) who is the ill-fated subjected of the oracle. Rather, it is pronounced to Jehu who will be the instrument in carrying out the punishment. In addition, the oracle speaks of vengeance for “the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord” (2 Kings 9:7). The “blood of my servants the prophets” seems to be a reference back to the guild prophets of 1 Kings 18:3-4:

Now Obadiah revered the LORD greatly; when Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, hid them fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water.

Nevertheless, “the blood of all the servants of the Lord” remains ambiguous. It is possible that this is a reference back to Naboth. Thus, the question remains: did God pronounce sentence on the Omride Dynasty for idolatry or for the death of Naboth or both?

It is my position that the apparent confusion and ambiguity between the various charges and sentences spelled out in the four oracles of judgment against Ahab and his dynasty can be attributed to the work of a redactor reshaping an older story to include elements of his theology. Specifically, a Deuteronomistic redactor took the older story of Naboth’s vineyard, which concluded with the condemnation of Ahab, and added elements of Deuteronomistic theology which gives transgressions of the Mosaic Law in the form of idolatry priority over other transgressions such as murder.

The essence of this argument boils down to the severity of the two crimes: was the crime of idolatry considered more serious than the crimes committed against Naboth in the eyes of the redactor? The crimes against Naboth were murder and Ahab’s thwarting of tribal traditions by seizing the land which was Naboth’s hereditary right. Both of these crimes, as well as the crime of idolatry, would have been condemned by Mosaic Law. I intend to show that the Deuteronomistic redactor considered the crime of idolatry more serious and this, combined with the need to address polytheistic cult practices in the Northern Kingdom, led to the inclusion of the charges of idolatry within these oracles. The inclusion of idolatry subsequently implicated others complicit in the crime namely Jezebel and the entire House of Ahab.

Given the vagueness of some of the language used in all four oracles, especially in the charges brought against Ahab and his dynasty (you have caused Israel to sin, avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord), a semantic analysis of

the terms will also be necessary in order to understand the exact nature of the charges and to whom they should be applied. This may also help identify the original stories which were subject to redaction and the process of inclusion of the additional charges.

While there is little scholarship devoted specifically to the questions regarding the ambiguities of the prophecies selected for this study, a great deal of work has been done regarding Elijah, Elisha, and the role of prophecy in the Northern Kingdom especially regarding the political succession of dynasties. In addition to the historical-critical approaches which have addressed the socio-economic/political influences on the text, other studies have addressed the topic through literary and narrative approaches.

Much scholarship has been devoted to the study of the Deuteronomistic History which encompasses the books of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings. Martin Noth is credited with the theory of the Deuteronomistic History which holds that it was the work of a single author or school during the Exile around 562 BC.² The author “selected those traditions that were appropriate for his purposes and unified them... [making] changes where necessary in order to introduce his own theological view of Israel’s history.”³ The purpose of the author of the history has been the subject of debate over the years. In Noth’s view, the purpose of the author was to illustrate the theme of faithfulness to Yahweh versus wrath and judgment for unfaithfulness. Other subsequent scholars like von Rad proposed that its purpose was to demonstrate God’s grace working throughout history.⁴ He noted that despite the punishments brought upon Israel and Judah, God never reneged on the Davidic promise to maintain the

2. Steven L. McKenzie, “Deuteronomistic History,” In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary: Volume 2 D-G*, edited by David Noel Freedman et al (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 161.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 162

dynasty. Others, like Wolff, note the cycle of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance which begins in the Book of Judges and can be seen throughout the Deuteronomistic History. In this cyclic process, Wolff also noted that the Davidic Promise is almost always subordinated to the Mosaic Law.⁵

Since the groundbreaking work by Noth, other scholars have addressed the question of authorship for the Deuteronomistic History. Lisa M. Wray Beal partially addresses this in her analysis of the prophetic narratives regarding Ahab and Jehu. Similar to her predecessors, Beal acknowledges that there is a prophetic source narrative which predates the Deuteronomistic History. Since her primary concern is a narrative analysis of 2 Kings 9 and 10, Beal does not spend a great deal of time examining this source material but she notes that it can generally be broken into 4 categories: 1) a pre-Deuteronomist source that can be extracted from the historical narrative, 2) a pre-Deuteronomist source that can be examined through form criticism, 3) the work of the Deuteronomist redactor, and 4) a pre-Deuteronomist narrative which cannot be separated from the historical narrative and must be taken along with the whole.⁶ Specifically regarding the ambiguities between the utterances of Elijah, Elisha, and the guild prophet, Beal accepts the work of other scholars such as A. Graeme Auld, which suggests that this feature of the narrative serves to highlight the ministry of Elijah. In addition, it serves to build narrative tension in the story which instructs the reader in Deuteronomist theology regarding cultic practice as well as the prophetic office. This would be a satisfactory answer if the oracle pronounce by Elijah and the guild prophet were substantially the same but the charges made by

5. Ibid.

6. Lissa M. Wray Beal, *The Deuteronomist's Prophet: Narrative Control of Approval and Disapproval in the Story of Jehu (2 Kings 9 and 10)* (London: T&T Clark Int., 2007), 29-30.

Elijah imply idolatry and the charges made by the guild prophet entail murder. In her narrative analysis, Beal explains this feature as a way of highlighting Jezebel's guilt which encompasses all; she bears the guilt of idolatry and bloodshed.

Other scholars have done more work on the prophetic source materials which may have been used by a Deuteronomist redactor in creating the historical narrative. Marsha White, for example, attempts a treatment of the oracles of judgment according to Beal's first category, a pre-Deuteronomist source that can be extracted from the historical narrative. She argues that the narrative of Naboth's vineyard and the oracle of judgment are a retelling of the story of David and Bathsheba which she contends is really the story that establishes the legitimacy of Solomon's kingship.⁷ Only Jezebel's role in the murder of Naboth has no parallel to David and Bathsheba.⁸ She concludes that the oracle of judgment and its deferral to the next generation in 1 Kings 21:21,27-29 as well as the narrative of Jehu's coup d'état share the same provenance as the vineyard narrative; a provenance which she distinguishes from the Deuteronomistic History. "This original scheme of prophecy and fulfillment together with its setting in the vineyard story and coup narrative was authored by a supporter of King Jehu, probably a member of his scribal corps, shortly after the coup in an effort to anticipate and legitimate it."⁹ White's theory points toward murder and greed as the original root causes for the fall of the Omride Dynasty similar to my own thesis. Unfortunately, she does not address the discrepancies in the other accounts of the oracle such as the inclusion of Jezebel in the whole affair and the references to idolatry.

7. Marsha White, "Naboth's Vineyard and Jehu's Coup: The Legitimation of a Dynastic Extermination." *Vetus Testamentum* 44, (1994): 68-70.

8. *Ibid.*, 69.

9. *Ibid.*, 76.

James E. Brenneman offers a reader-response approach to examining prophetic literature which addresses the text as it has been preserved through the millennia.¹⁰ In his analysis, Brenneman compares the texts of 2 Kings and Hosea regarding the military coup led by Jehu and presumably sanctioned by Yahweh via Elijah and Elisha. While this study does not specifically address the contradictions in the oracles of judgment, it does examine apparent contradictions in the interpretation of the events between 2 Kings and Hosea. Jehu is praised in the former for fulfilling the word of Yahweh through his bloody massacre while the latter condemns the violence. Rather than questioning these contradictory interpretations, Brenneman seeks to find meaning in the contradiction itself. This meaning is found in the dialogue between the two texts in the form of a prophetic call to commitment and advocacy on the part of Hosea. "As the text stands, Hosea is criticizing an earlier interpretation [Deuteronomistic History] that had as its authoritative base repeated reference to Yahweh speeches affirming Jehu's violent campaign."¹¹ This may offer little in support of the present thesis but it does highlight a propensity toward violence found in the Deuteronomistic History which is either absent altogether or denounced in other prophetic texts. It allows for the possibility of an older prophetic tradition which simply condemned Ahab for his own crimes against Naboth rather than convicting his entire family for a host of other charges.

In a similar study, Walter Houston examines several theories of speech acts in order to apply them to oracles of judgment to demonstrate that these have the declarative force of placing the recipient (or affected third party) under judgment. One of Houston's theses regards the fact

10. James E. Brenneman, "Prophets in Conflict: Negotiating Truth in Scripture," In *Peace and Justice Shall Embrace: Power and Theopolitics in the Bible*, Edited by Ted Grimsrud and Loren L. Johns, 49-63(Telford, PA: Pandora, 1999), 49-63.

11. *Ibid.*, 55.

that the speech act itself becomes “performative” or representative of an action that is already in progress.¹² The salient point of such speech is the response it elicits: obstinance/defiance or mourning/repentance. Unfortunately, Houston is not clear in whom the response is to be elicited; is he speaking diachronistically of the response by the historic or literary character subject to the speech act or is he speaking anachronistically of the reader’s response? He does state that “the power of words is located in the social conventions which surround our own use of language,”¹³ implying that he is making a reader-response argument despite the fact that he analyzes the prophetic texts diachronistically. In the case of the oracles against the Omride Dynasty, Houston asks the question, “did they intend... to evoke repentance... or simply to announce inexorable doom?”¹⁴ He concludes that oracles of judgment have the force of conviction, placing the recipient under judgment. In other words, even though Ahab repents before God following utterance of the oracle by Elijah, he and his dynasty remain convicted. Therefore, any repetition of the oracle of judgment would be a logical progression of the narrative regardless of any alteration. Furthermore, the inevitability of the oracle would highlight the prophetic ministry of Elijah, the first prophet to deliver the message, which is similar to the conclusions of Beal. Nevertheless, Houston’s conclusions necessitate the treatment of the text as an unaltered unity which is unrealistic in the face of modern scholarship regarding the development and redaction of the text.

Other approaches have been taken to indirectly analyze the oracles against the Omride Dynasty like David Jobling’s literary critical approach in which he compares the rise and fall of

12. Walter Houston, "What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing?: Speech Acts and Prophetic Discourse in the Old Testament." *Biblical Interpretation* 1, (1993): 170.

13. *Ibid.*, 171.

14. *Ibid.*, 179-181.

dynasties in the historical books to a judge-cycle from the Book of Judges.¹⁵ He notes that this literary cycle provides a “powerful theology of salvation by punishment.”¹⁶ In this framework, Jeroboam of the House of Jehu serves as a savior figure while Syria serves as both the primary antagonist and an instrument of salvation. This contrasts conventional scholarship which holds the Baal worshipers as the primary antagonist to the dynasties of the northern kingdom. The Syrian Empire is described as an assisting agent to the punishment brought on Israel which ultimately allows for their salvation. This sequence begins during the time of Ahab when “they were already his [God’s] helper in the purging of the greater, indeed the uniquely grave, sin of the previous dynasty.”¹⁷ The “uniquely grave sin” refers to Baal worship by the House of Ahab; thus, Jobling points to Baal worship as the primary reason for the fall of the Omride Dynasty. He also addresses the role of Elisha in these narratives; several narrative incoherencies indicate that there are points where the character of Elisha may serve as a literary device to intensify the role of the Syrians but these incoherencies are typically chronological in nature versus inconsistencies in the narrative regarding the oracle of judgment itself. Jobling ignores the murder of Naboth and the role it might play in the narrative.

Rather than looking back to the Book of Judges, Michael S. Moore, turns to the neighboring ancient city of Ugarit in order to read the narrative of Jehu and his purge of the Omride Dynasty as a parody of the Baal-Anat cycle.¹⁸ He cites the prevalence of other satirical elements in prophetic literature as supporting evidence of this. This satire or parody would have

15. David Jobling, "The Syrians in the Book of the Divided Kingdoms: A Literary/Theological Approach." *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 3/4 (July 2003): 532.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 540.

18. Michael S. Moore, "Jehu's Coronation and Purge of Israel." *Vetus Testamentum* 53, no. 1 (January 2003): 100.

been a means of narrating an important historical event such as the succession of dynasties while at the same time attacking the religious traditions of Israel's enemies. This satire would have been aimed at the ruling elite in the Northern Kingdom who were either complicit in the military coup or in Baal worship. Regarding the anomalies in the various appearances of the oracles of judgment, namely the difference between Elisha's instructions to the guild prophet's and the latter's fulfillment of those instructions, Moore acknowledges the possibility of redaction but considers them part of a larger literary strategy along with other elements such as the location and role of Naboth's vineyard. While Moore makes a strong case for the parallels between the Jehu narrative and the Baal-Anat narrative, he does not sufficiently address the anomalies in the oracles nor does he offer any treatment of the commissioning of Elijah and the version of the oracle he presents to Ahab. With this in mind, and Moore's own admission that the hand of a redactor may be at work, he cannot conclusively say that the differences in the oracles are strictly a literary device.

Nachman Levine also takes a literary approach to examine the parallels between Elijah and Elisha although he does so through an examination of their miracle narratives rather than looking at prophetic commissioning and oracles. Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit invites the reader to make these comparisons. While Elisha is reported to have performed miracles along similar thematic lines to his master (life, death, and food)¹⁹ and he is reported to have performed twice the number of miracles compared with Elijah, he will always be working through "twice the spirit of his master" whom he cannot surpass. Gene Rice offers that "twice the spirit of his master" should be read in the context of the birthright of an eldest son to receive

19. Nachman Levine, "Twice as Much of Your Spirit: Pattern, Parallel and Paronomasia in the Miracles of Elijah and Elisha." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* no. 85 (September 1999): 27.

twice the inheritance of the remaining sons.²⁰ In other words, Elisha received twice as much of Elijah's spirit than anyone else received not twice the amount of spirit originally possessed by Elijah. Levine does not go beyond a comparison of the miracle narratives nor does he draw any conclusions regarding the literary function of the repetition in the miracle themes but if one were to apply his research to the oracles of judgment, the original problem would remain. If Elisha only does the things that Elijah does, one could presume that the abbreviated commissioning of the guild prophet by Elisha might have resembled the fuller oracle pronounced by Elijah to Ahab. However, there still remains a significant difference in the charges leveled against the Omride Dynasty by Elijah (doing evil in the sight of the Lord and causing Israel to sin) and those leveled by the guild prophet (spilling the blood of the prophets and of the servants of the Lord). Thus Levine's treatment of the narratives as a coherent unit without the consideration of the effects of authorship or redaction is insufficient.

Unlike Levine, Rice goes beyond the miracle narrative to examine the socio-economic and political environments in which Elijah and Elisha were operating. He portrays Elijah as the hero of his day who "opposed the subversion of Israel's authentic faith and called a nation to a decision"²¹ but whose life was drawing to an end before his work was complete, necessitating a successor, Elisha. Both Elijah and Elisha are seen as social advocates, which is certainly a prophetic role; however, like Levine, Rice concentrates on the parallels between the two prophets rather than their differences. Thus, he has little to offer in clarifying the differences between the oracles of judgment.

20. Rice, Gene. "Elijah's Requirement for Prophetic Leadership (2 Kings 2:1-18)." *Journal of Religious Thought* 59/60, no. 1/2, 1 (January 2006): 5.

21. *Ibid.*, 2.

Similarly, Hannelis Schulte has taken a sociological approach to the narrative of Elisha and Jehu. Schulte examines the historical social-ethical milieu of the northern and southern kingdoms of the ninth century BC, including the implications of international politics, to explain court intrigue in both kingdoms and the eventual fall of the Omride Dynasty. His analysis begins with the social instability in both kingdoms which accompanied the shift from a tribal society to a monarchy with clans being broken down into smaller family units of subsistence farmers.²² This instability would have been compounded by the system of taxation imposed by the monarchy. At the same time, the resurgence of Assyria as the dominant power in the region forced smaller states, including Israel, to form coalitions in order to resist their advancement. These military coalitions often resulted in cultural exchanges which were opposed by “an already existing or newly awakening nationalism”²³ and created tension between traditionalists and those moving toward syncretism. Schulte assigns Elisha and the guild prophets to the peasant class while Jehu and other military leaders are assigned to the upper class which experienced the aforementioned nationalism. According to this theory, an oppressed peasantry and a xenophobic upper class created the perfect conditions for a military coup instigated by Elisha and the guild prophets and supported by Jehu and his fellow officers. While he offers a rational explanation for the events recorded in 2 Kings including the roles of Elisha and the guild prophets, Schulte ignores the implications of earlier events such as the Naboth narrative and the impact of redaction.²⁴

22. Hannelis Schulte, "The End of the Omride Dynasty: Social-Ethical Observations on the Subject of Power and Violence." *Semeia* 66, (1994): 133.

23. *Ibid.*, 134.

24. Patricia Berlyn [Berlyn, Patricia. "The Rebellion of Jehu." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 35, (2007): 211-221.] also portrays Elisha as more revolutionary than prophet. However, she provides neither conjecture on the source of the accounts in 2 Kings nor any analysis of the differences in the judgment prophecies in her largely non-critical essay.

Other historical and sociological perspectives on the prophets Elijah and Elisha have been offered, for example those of Joseph Blenkinsopp. Blenkinsopp describes the state of society in the Northern Kingdom in terms of the tension between the dynastic kingship and the tendencies toward the traditional tribal organization following the schism between the two kingdoms and the rejection of the Davidic Dynasty in the north. He also notes that “there are clear indications the Deuteronomistic Historian has substantially edited the reports [of prophetic political involvement] – for example, by extending prophetic predictions to cover the fall of the Northern Kingdom and by highlighting prophetic opposition to the cult of Bethel and Dan...”²⁵ In addition, he points to the “abrupt introduction of Elijah”²⁶ in 1 Kings 17:1 as an indication that the Deuteronomist historian had acquired an older tradition which he used to further his own religious and political point of view. Blenkinsopp also points out problematic elements between the Elijah and Elisha traditions including some of the miracles attributed to Elijah and Elisha’s political involvement especially in Samaria and Damascus. Although not clearly stated, this suggests the existence of two independent and older prophetic traditions, one regarding Elijah and the other regarding Elisha, and that the Deuteronomist brought these together in the narrative to serve his purposes. Blenkinsopp goes so far as to states that “the revolutions fomented by Elisha in Samaria and Damascus (2 Kings 8:7-15; 9:1-13) were given firmer legitimation by reference back to the more prestigious figure [of Elijah] (1 Kings 19:15-16).”²⁷ Blenkinsopp’s conclusions are in general agreement with the present thesis although there is divergence regarding the Deuteronomist’s motivations for making such redactions to an older tradition regarding Elijah and Elisha.

25. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 57.

26. *Ibid.*, 58.

27. *Ibid.*, 63.

Theodore Mullen also takes an historical approach to this period in Israel's history and the involvement of the prophets. In his analysis, the Deuteronomist historian uses the political situation in the Northern Kingdom as a character foil for the political climate in the Southern Kingdom and vice versa. A period of relative stability in the southern monarchy following Solomon is contrasted by a tumultuous series of nine kings in the Northern Kingdom. These are followed by political unrest and a break in the Davidic line in the south while the north enjoyed relative stability under the House Omri and its successor, Jehu. The lengthy kingships of the Omrides and Jehu, coupled with the central theme regarding the break from central cultic worship and Baalism in the north, required special justification in the eyes of the Deuteronomist.²⁸ In the case of the Omride Dynasty, justification was given in the form of Ahab's repentance following Elijah's condemnation; Jehu's lengthy rule was justified in the form of a royal dynastic grant on par with that given to King David.²⁹ While Mullen does little to address the oracles of judgment in question, his work does point out the hand of the Deuteronomist historian and the centrality of cultic worship as a theme in Jehu's ascension to the throne.

Howard N. Wallace has analyzed the oracles against the dynasties of the Northern Kingdom from a redaction perspective with interesting results. Regarding Ahab, Naboth, and Elijah, he notes that there is a lack of Deuteronomistic language in the narrative of Naboth's vineyard which is in sharp contrast to the oracle Elijah pronounces against Ahab for the murder

28. E. Theodore Mullen Jr., "The Royal Dynastic Grant to Jehu and the Structure of the Books of Kings." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107, (1988): 194.

29. *Ibid.*, 195

of Naboth.³⁰ Likewise, he notes the typical Deuteronomistic phrase “my servants, the prophets” in the guild prophets pronouncement to Jehu which contrasts the absence of such language in Elisha’s commissioning of the prophet.³¹ Wallace uses these characteristics in the use of Deuteronomistic language to conclude that a single redactor authored the oracles given in 1 Kings 21:20-24 and 2 Kings 9:6-10 which he inserted into an older tradition regarding Elijah and Elisha. Thus, Wallace supports the present hypothesis regarding the formation of the text; however, our agreement ends regarding the rationale for making such an editorial change. Wallace identifies the theme of obedience to the divine will as common throughout all the oracles made against the northern dynasties including those made against the Omride Dynasty. This point cannot be denied but the Deuteronomist redactor did not need to insert new charges regarding idolatry in order to show that Ahab had not been obedient to YHWH. The older narrative of Naboth’s vineyard, which encompassed the charges of murder and the disenfranchisement of a presumably righteous man from his hereditary land, would have been sufficient to support the theme of disobedience.

Saul M. Olyan’s work is similar to Wallace’s in that they both agree on the Deuteronomistic redaction of 2 King 9; however, Olyan identifies a “*hāšālôm*” motif which he claims is central to the Elijah-Ahab/Elisha-Jehu narratives.³² By “*hāšālôm*” motif, he refers to the multiple meanings that can be derived from the root *šlm* which are used in juxtaposition to each other to illustrate the tension between completeness/order and incompleteness/disorder

30. Howard N. Wallace, "Oracles against the Israelite dynasties in 1 and 2 Kings." *Biblica* 67, no. 1 (January 1, 1986): 31.

31. *Ibid.*, 32.

32. Olyan, Saul M. "Hāšālôm: Some Literary Considerations of 2 Kings 9." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 46, (1984): 655.

which is created through the nefarious actions of Ahab and Jezebel. In drawing his conclusions, Olyan has taken into consideration both the narrative of Naboth's vineyard and the oracle pronounced to Jehu. Unfortunately he largely takes the oracle of 2 Kings 9:6-10 at face value without any comparison or consideration for the earlier oracle of 1 Kings 21:20-24.

Perhaps one of the most compelling arguments regarding the work of the Deuteronomist redactor comes from Susanne Otto who takes the work of Martin Noth as her point of departure in developing a four stage model for the composition and Deuteronomistic redaction of 1 Kings 16:29 through 2 Kings 10:36. She proposes an exilic Deuteronomistic History composed around 562 BCE which contained the narratives regarding Naboth's vineyard and Jehu's coup.³³ A common Deuteronomistic thread runs through both narratives – “the pattern of prophecy and fulfillment of the word of God.”³⁴ Otto also notes a second common theme of Baal worship which is more prevalent in Elijah's condemnation of Ahab for “having caused Israel to sin.” According to Otto, the Naboth narrative was part of an older tradition incorporated by the Deuteronomist in which Ahab is condemned by God for murder and robbery. In the Deuteronomist's version, the accusation is shifted “from the social to the religious sphere: Ahab did evil, caused provocation, [and] led Israel to sin.”³⁵ Likewise, she attributes the story of Jehu's coup to an older tradition to which the Deuteronomists have added details including the expansion of the oracle pronounced by the guild prophet. If taken at face value, this would seem to be the answer to the question and the end of the story: two older stories were modified by the Deuteronomists to serve their own purposes regarding the word of God and the unacceptability

33. Susanne Otto, "The Composition of the Elijah-Elisha Stories and the Deuteronomistic History." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 27, no. 4 (June 1, 2003): 491-493.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 498.

of Baal worship. However, some of the differences between the two oracles remain unanswered namely the differences in the accusation between Elijah and the guild prophet (refer to Table 2).

Like Beal, and to some extent Otto, David L. Petersen is also a proponent of Noth's theory of the Deuteronomistic Historian and his role in the incorporation and redaction of the Elijah and Elisha narratives. "Legends about Elisha are, for the most part, not integral to the flow of the Deuteronomistic History... some deem the stories to be an independent source that was inserted into the Deuteronomistic History... other scholars have suggested that the legends were added to the Deuteronomistic History well after it had been composed."³⁶ Petersen draws similar conclusion regarding Elijah although he notes that while the Elijah narratives are sufficiently different in literary style as to distinguish them from the Deuteronomistic History, they are more consistent with it than the Elisha narratives especially with respect to their condemnation of Baal worship.³⁷ Like White, Petersen also notes the parallels between the narrative of Naboth's vineyard and the David and Bathsheba narrative. Beyond this background material, Petersen does little to shed light on the anomalies found in the oracles of judgment against King Ahab and the Omride Dynasty.³⁸

Several conclusions can be drawn thus far. First, there is a general consensus among scholars that the Deuteronomistic Historian acquired an older tradition or traditions regarding the

36. Petersen, David L. *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), (Kindle Edition), Kindle Locations 3111-3115.

37. *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 3126-3130.

38. James R. Linville has written a lengthy essay critiquing Petersen's general approach to prophetic literature (Linville, James R. "On the Nature of Rethinking Prophetic Literature: Stirring a Neglected Stew (A Response to David L Petersen)." In *Perspectives On Biblical Hebrew: Comprising the Contents of Journal of Hebrew Scriptures, Volumes 1-4*. Edited by Ehud Ben Zvi, 125-169. Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2006.) In it he addresses Petersen's and his own approaches to the major prophets and the Book of the Twelve but does not take up the topic of the former prophets.

prophets Elijah and Elisha which were then incorporated into the historical narrative for a purpose. Unfortunately, the consensus ends here and the debate begins regarding how and why the older material was incorporated. Second, there appears to be general consensus that macroscopic issues such as opposition to Baal worships seem to play the central role for the fall of the Omride Dynasty while the microscopic, such as the murder of Naboth, appear to play a secondary role.

If I were to continue with this research essay I would begin by examining each of the charges leveled against the Omride dynasty to determine their relationship with a host of semantic fields: their relationship to one another, to Deuteronomistic theology, to the social and political atmosphere in which they were pronounced, and to the various characters involved (Elijah, Naboth, Ahab, Jezebel, Elisha, the guild prophet, and Jehu). It is my belief that such an examination would reveal relationships that might eliminate the apparent ambiguities altogether.

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name of Dan their father who was born in Israel; however, the name of the city formerly was Laish. And the sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. His role in the Northern Kingdom was to oppose the Omride dynasty and support ancient Yahwism. Performed numerous miracles throughout the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 2:19-13:21) Completed the assignments God gave to Elijah in 1 Kings 19:15-17 Anoint Jehu as king over the Northern Kingdom Anoint Hazael as king over Syria The record of his death and the. The final blow to the dynasty is related in 2 Kings 10 when Jehu orders the annihilation of the remainder of the Omride dynasty. The 70 sons of Ahab, all resident at Samaria, are killed and their severed heads are brought to Jezreel to be stacked up at the city gate. But why did this chain of events take place at Jezreel and not in the capital city Samaria? In this particular session the topic chosen was the Omride dynasty, its rise and fall, and the subsequent Jehu dynasty, down to the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians. Participants discuss such topics as the dating of prophetic texts, the house of Ahab in Chronicles, the Tel Dan inscription, the Mesha inscription, the Jezebel tradition, and the archaeology of Iron IIB. Personal Subject Summary. The European Seminar in Historical Methodology is committed to debating issues surrounding the history of ancient Israel and Judah with the aim of developing methodological principles for writing a history of the period. In this particular session the topic chosen was the Omride dynasty-its rise and fall-and the subsequent Jehu dynasty, down to the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians.