

ISRAEL'S PARADOXICAL KING: THE
CHARACTERIZATION OF SOLOMON IN 1 KINGS 1–11, 2
CHRONICLES 1–9, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND
SONG OF SONGS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the question of how the figure of Solomon is characterized in the Hebrew Bible. This question arises from the observation of divergent depictions of Solomon in the different books. In 1 Kings 1–11, Solomon is depicted in an ambivalent manner where his wisdom can be used positively for the benefit of all Israel and negatively through focusing on the royal court to the neglect of Israel at large. In contrast, Solomon is presented as a model king of cultic fidelity in 2 Chronicles 1–9 in spite of his failures in 1 Kings 1–11. In Proverbs, Solomon is remembered as the paragon of wisdom in Israel but is also presented in Ecclesiastes as a pessimistic king describing the limitations of his wisdom. Furthermore, Solomon is used as the picture of an ideal lover in the Song of Songs, but it is his romantic exploits that lead to him becoming an idolater turning away from YHWH. In light of these observations, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the characterization of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11, 2 Chronicles 1–9, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. In order to examine this, a communicative theory of interpretation that benefits from a theory of characterization from narrative-criticism will be utilized. This hermeneutical tool will help establish the integrity of individual books as acts of communication and demonstrate how characterization is a literary technique utilized by authors to depict a character to be imagined by readers.

The finding of this thesis is that Solomon's characterization is well beyond a single attribute as a wise king or even a two-fold attribute as wise king and temple builder. Instead, he is a paradoxical and ambiguous figure that integrates positive and negative features emerging both from the individual accounts and from the relation of these accounts to one another. The accounts associated with describing Solomon's reign or those books that have a poetic association share significant themes, but these themes are reframed and re-interpreted as a part of an enduring legacy. By re-evaluating the depiction of Solomon in individual parts or wholes of books, as well as considering the unique contributions of the individual accounts in relation to one another, this thesis demonstrates that the figure of Solomon generates ever fresh elaborations.

DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution.

STATEMENT OF LENGTH

The thesis (including footnotes and references, but excluding prefatory material and bibliography) does not exceed the prescribed length of 80,000 words set by the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Cambridge.

Signed:

Date:

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ABBREVIATIONS

AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
AB	Anchor Bible Commentary
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ANESSup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
Bib	Biblica
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BTCB	Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CC	Continental Commentary
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
<i>DOTHB</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books</i> . Edited by Arnold, Bill T. and H.G.M Williamson. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2005.
<i>DOTWPW</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and the Writings</i> . Edited by Tremper Longman, III and Peter Enns. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2008.
DSB	Daily Study Bible
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> . Edited by Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum. 2nd ed. 22 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
EUS	European University Studies
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literature des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FCI	Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
<i>GKC</i>	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arther E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E.J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden, 1994–1999.
HAT	Handuch zum Alten Testament

HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
HCHCB	Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible
HeyJ	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IBHS	<i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
Joüon	Joüon, Paul. <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. SubsBi 27. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006.
JSem	<i>Journal for Semitics</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JHebS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIVAC	New International Application Commentary
NIBCOT	New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testamen
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
OTL	Old Testament Library
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
SBLAIL	SBL Ancient Israel and Its Literature
Schol	<i>Scholastik</i>
SHBC	Smyth and Helwys Commentary
SHANE	Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Commentary on the Septuagint
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Study Monographs
SubBi	<i>Subsidia Biblical</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study Judaism
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
ABRL	The Anchor Bible Reference Library
JPSBC	The JPS Bible Commentary
SGBC	The Story of God Bible Commentary

TBC The Torch Bible Commentaries
TynBul *Tyndale Bulletin*

I have used the ESV translation throughout this thesis for biblical quotations unless otherwise noted. I have prioritized the MT versification throughout with the English versification, where different, in square brackets (e.g., Eccl 5:17 [18]). General abbreviations used in the thesis which are not listed above follow the SBL Handbook of Style (2nd ed. [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014]).

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

Solomon, son of David, is a figure who has an enduring legacy in the Hebrew Bible. This legacy is so prominent that it extends into the later traditions of Second Temple Judaism (e.g., Sirach 47:12–20, Josephus, *Ant* 8:1–212, Wisdom of Solomon, Psalms of Solomon), Christianity (Matt 6:29; Luke 12:27; Testament of Solomon), and Islam. In addition, his legacy is complex, transitioning from being described as Israel's wise and wealthy king to being included as a prophet and exorcist in Christian and Islamic traditions and as a magician in Rabbinic traditions.¹ But even within the constrained narrative of the Hebrew Bible, Solomon's legacy is complicated. In the foundational narrative of 1 Kings 1–11, he is set apart from other figures for his role in erecting Israel's temple, providing a central location to worship YHWH in Jerusalem. Furthermore, his reign as king was marked by YHWH's gift of wisdom which resulted in the most prosperous time period in Israel's history. Because of his wisdom, a steady stream of tribute came from surrounding nations and the borders of Israel were at their fullest extent with the people enjoying the prosperity of the land. But in spite of the grand descriptions of his wisdom and accomplishments, Solomon's heart was turned away from YHWH by his many foreign wives and concubines and he ends his reign as an apostate king.

Although 1 Kings 1–11, 2 Chronicles 1–9, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are con-

¹ L. K. Handy, *Solomon*, Bill T. Arnold and H.G.M. Williamson eds, DOTHB (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 922, 928; Pablo A. Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

cerned with Solomon to a greater or lesser extent and often display a shared continuity with basic themes, each of the books following 1–2 Kings tells of Solomon in their own way. In a retelling of Solomon's reign, the Chronicler also emphasizes Solomon's role as Israel's temple builder but omits Solomon's political wisdom in judgment (1 Kgs 3:16–28), administration (4:1–5:8 [4:1–28]), or in superlative description (5:9–14 [4:29–34]).² Furthermore, mention of Solomon's apostasy is omitted and he is explicitly described as faithful to proper cultic prescriptions.³ The book of Proverbs is headed by Solomon's name, giving the book an authoritative status by connecting the book with Israel's wise king. There is no hint of any of the negative assessment of the King that one finds at the end of his reign in the Kings account. The book of Ecclesiastes gives an imaginative retelling of Solomon's reign with his great wisdom and wealth, but, ironically, only in order to stress the limitations of those benefits. The Solomonic figure appears to be responding to the optimistic benefits of wisdom associated with Solomon's Proverbs. The Song of Songs is also associated with Solomon both in the title of the book (Song 1:1) and in the body of the Song (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12). In the Song, the ideal male lover is presented as a Solomonic figure. But the Song appears to portray no issue of a tension between this ideal lover and the historical accounts of Solomon's romantic life where his heart was turned away from YHWH and his negative assessment in post-exilic times (Neh 13:26). These general observations raise important issues on the legacy of Solomon within the Hebrew Bible. Despite the enduring legacy of Solomon, how can this single character display such continuity between various books but also such clear discontinuity? Clearly, Solomon's legacy is ambiguous in the Hebrew Bible.

The enduring legacy of Solomon, found in a variety of books and genres in the Hebrew Bible, means that investigating Solomon can be approached from different angles. For instance, much scholarly effort has gone into researching the historical accuracy of the 1 Kings account, especially distinguishing between the historical and legendary elements of the narrative through compara-

² Still included are Solomon's request of wisdom (2 Chr 1:2–13) and the description of Solomon's wisdom in comparison to the "kings of the earth" (2 Chr 9:22–23).

³ In this thesis, I follow Roddy L. Braun, "Solomonic Apologetic in Chronicles," *JBL* 92, (1973), 503, and others and will adopt the nomenclature of "the Chronicler" to refer to the author or authors of 1–2 Chronicles for convenience.

tive ancient Near Eastern parallels⁴ and archaeological verification of Solomon's reign.⁵ Others have investigated the Solomon narratives in the theological context of the Deuteronomistic history⁶ as well as the relationship between the Chronicler's narrative of Solomon and 1 Kings 1–11.⁷ A more recent trend has been to analyze how Solomon has been received in Rabbinic, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions.⁸

Each of the approaches mentioned above provides different benefits for scholars. Yet despite

⁴ Alan Millard, "King Solomon in His Ancient Context," in *The Age of Solomon. Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. L. K. Handy, SHANE (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 30–56; J. Maxwell Miller, "Separating the Solomon of History from the Solomon of Legend," in *The Age of Solomon. Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. L. K. Handy, SHANE (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1–29; Pekka Särkiö, "Solomon in History and Tradition," in *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 45–56.

⁵ William G. Dever, "Archaeology and the 'Age of Solomon': A Case-Study in Archaeology and Historiography," in *The Age of Solomon. Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Lowell K. Handy, Studies in the History and Cultural of the Ancient Near East (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 217–51; Gary N. Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel," *JBL* 116, (1997), 19–44.

⁶ Pauline A. Viviano, "Glory Lost: The Reign of Solomon in the Deuteronomistic History," in *The Age of Solomon*: ed. Lowell K. Handy, SHANE 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 336–47; Gary N. Knoppers, "Solomon's Fall and Deuteronomy," in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Lowell K. Handy, SHANE (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 392–410; J. Daniel Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?: Narrative Subtlety in 1 Kings 1–11," *JSOT* 28, (2003), 149–74.

⁷ Sean E. Cook, *The Solomon Narratives in the Context of the Hebrew Bible: Told and Retold*, LHBOTS 638, (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017); Mark A. Throntveit, "The Idealization of Solomon and the Glorification of God in the Chronicler's Royal Speeches and Royal Prayers," in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. L. Handy, SHANE (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 411–27; Mark A. Throntveit, "The Relationship of Hezekiah to David and Solomon in the Books of Chronicles," in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie, and Gary N. Knoppers, JSOTSup 371 (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 105–21; Braun, "Solomonic Apologetic", 501–16; Roddy L. Braun, "Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder: The Significance of 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29 for the Theology of Chronicles," *JBL* 95, (1976), 581–90; Raymond B. Dillard, "The Chronicler's Solomon," *WTJ* 43, (1980), 289–300; Yong Ho Jeon, *Impeccable Solomon?: A Study of Solomon's Faults in Chronicles*, (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013).

⁸ Gerhard Langer, "Solomon in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 127–42; Jules Janssens, "The Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā' on King-Prophet Solomon," in *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 241–53; Albert L.A. Hogeterp, "King Solomon in the New Testament and Jewish Tradition," in *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 143–64; Joseph Verheyden, "Josephus on Solomon," in *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 85–106.

the insights that these approaches provide, scholarship has provided limited insight on the corporate presentation of the character of Solomon due to the inbuilt limited focus of these scholarly approaches. The diverse presentations of Solomon that exist within the canon of the Hebrew Bible deserve further attention in order to understand how these different presentations relate to one another and how each contextualizes Solomon toward its own end. It is only after reading these texts in their full literary and theological integrity that further questions can be analyzed, such as the historicity or the textual development of the texts.⁹ Thus, this thesis expands scholarship on Solomon by providing a synthetic literary analysis of the characterization of Solomon in the books that are linked to him in tradition or treat him as a central character in the books of the Hebrew Bible.

In order to accomplish this goal, I will analyze 1 Kings 1–11, 2 Chronicles 1–9, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs individually, assuming that they are coherent literary compositions. I will begin with 1 Kings 1–11 as the foundational narrative about Solomon before proceeding to the later narrative of 2 Chronicles 1–9 and the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. Before turning to the Solomonic narrative in 1 Kings 1–11, I will review past research that has considered the Solomon figure from the perspective of the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible scholarship.¹⁰

2. Literature Review

As I noted above, the enduring legacy of Solomon from different religious traditions has produced various studies and approaches. Though there are studies that analyze Solomon from a literary and theological perspective within selected books, only a select few have grappled with the diverse characterizations of Solomon within the Hebrew Bible as a whole.¹¹ But before addressing studies that focus on Solomon from the perspective of the whole of the Hebrew Bible, I will briefly review early Jewish interpretations of Solomon as illustrative of early attempts to understand Solomon's

⁹. See chapter 2 on my methodological framework.

¹⁰. Throughout this thesis I use “Hebrew Bible” as a neutral term for the authoritative Scriptures that Jews and Christians have received. For a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of the “Old Testament” and “Hebrew Bible” see John Barton, “Old Testament or Hebrew Bible,” in *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature, and Theology: Collected Essays of John Barton*, SOTSMS (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 83–89.

¹¹. These individual studies will be engaged throughout this thesis.

connection to the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs in light of Solomon's reign before turning to the contentious issue of the role of archaeology in understanding Solomon's reign. Reviewing these two areas will help to set the trajectory of the enquiry into Solomon as a figure.

2.1 Early Jewish Interpretation of Solomon

Early Jewish interpreters were convinced of Solomon's authorship of the Solomonic corpus and attempted to connect these books through a biography of his life. In a stimulating review, Thomas Bolin notes that early Jewish interpreters sought to connect Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes to Solomon's biography.¹² But, as he observes, there was no single, authoritative view of how these books were connected to Solomon's life. Rabbi Ḥiyya, for instance, argued that the listing of proverbs prior to songs in 1 Kings 5:12 indicated that Solomon composed these books in the order of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and, lastly, Ecclesiastes.¹³ Ecclesiastes Rabbah, instead, described Solomon composing the books early in his reign following being endowed a holy spirit while at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:7). Rabbi Jonathan asserted that Solomon supposedly composed Songs, Proverbs, followed by Ecclesiastes in Canticles Rabbah: "When a man is young he composes songs; when he grows older he makes sententious remarks; and when he becomes an old man he speaks of the vanity of things."¹⁴

The Jewish Targum of Ecclesiastes also reveals an attempt to associate a time in Solomon's life when he would have composed the book of Ecclesiastes by harmonizing the account of Ecclesiastes 1:12 with the historical narrative in 1 Kings.

The words of prophecy which Qohelet, *that is, Solomon* the son of David the king who was in Jerusalem, *prophesied. When Solomon King of Israel saw through the holy spirit that the kingdom of Rehoboam his son would be divided with Jeroboam the son of Nebat and that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed and the people of the household of Israel would go into exile, he said to himself, "Vanity of vanities is*

¹² Thomas M. Bolin, *Ecclesiastes and the Riddle of Authorship*, (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 20–34.

¹³ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴ *Canticles Rabbah*, H. Freedman and Maurice Simon eds, vol. 9 (London: Soncino Press, 1961), 17. Cf., Bolin, *Ecclesiastes*, 29.

this world. Vanity of vanities of everything for which I and David my father laboured.

All of it is vanity (Tg Qoh 1:1–3).¹⁵

*When King Solomon of Israel was sitting on his royal throne, his heart became very proud because of his wealth, and he transgressed the decree of the Memra' of the Lord; he gathered many horses, chariots, and cavalry; he collected much silver and gold; he married among foreign peoples. Immediately the anger of the Lord grew strong against him. Therefore, He sent Ashmedai king of the demons, against him who drove him from his royal throne and took his signet ring from his hand so that he would wander and go into exile in the world to chastise him. He went about in all the districts and towns of the Land of Israel. He wept, pleaded, and said, "I am Qohelet, who was previously named Solomon. I was king over Israel in Jerusalem" (1:12).*¹⁶

The Targum is an imaginative expansion of Solomon's life unrecorded in the biblical texts. YHWH sent a demon to Solomon as a punishment for his sin and Solomon's reflections on the vanity of life were due to seeing the kingdom of Israel divided. Thus, the book of Ecclesiastes, according to the Targum, is an expression of Solomon's experience on the vanity of life as a result of his apostasy.

What these examples from early Jewish interpretation show is an implicit understanding of the diverse characterizations of Solomon that exist in the Hebrew Bible. These different interpreters reconciled the diverse pictures through a biography of Solomon's life. If one can locate a book to a phase of Solomon's life, then the tensions of what is presented can be relieved. However, the majority of modern scholars rightly do not believe that the Solomonic corpus should be connected with a particular point of Solomon's life. Indeed, as will be discussed, the majority of scholars would date the Solomonic corpus to be much later than Solomon's lifetime. The effect of dating Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes to a post-Solomonic period is that there are only a select few studies that have examined the figure of Solomon from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible. But before reviewing these studies, it is helpful to review the major studies of the twentieth century that concentrate on the historical dimensions of Solomon and his reign in order to place

¹⁵ Peter S. Knobel, "The Targum of Qohelet," in *The Aramaic Bible: The Targums*, ed. Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 20. Italics original.

¹⁶ Ibid., 21. Italics original.

this study within the larger scholarly context of discussions about Solomon.

2.2 Historical and Archaeological Support and Decline of Solomon's Reign

Past research concerning Solomon shows the highly controversial nature of this king and his reign. Questions of the accuracy of Solomon's reign, as described in the 1 Kings narrative, have created a highly contested debate among scholars ranging from confidence to scepticism about the account. The emergence of archaeology as an academic discipline in the 20th century led to focused questions on whether archaeology supported the description of Solomon's reign in the 1 Kings narrative. In the early to mid-twentieth century, scholars such as W.F. Albright, tended to have great confidence in the biblical descriptions of Solomon's reign over Israel through correlating the archaeological remains with the biblical text.¹⁷

Yigael Yadin's identification of six-chamber gate systems at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer is frequently noted as an example of the correlation between the archaeological finds and the biblical text that support such confidence. Yadin argues that these similar gate systems show a common design suggesting a single administration that corresponded to Solomon's building of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer (1 Kgs 9:15–17). Thus he has associated them as a common design from Solomon's kingdom.¹⁸ John Bright, one of Albright's students, exemplifies confidence in the archaeological and biblical data in his book *A History of Israel*. Bright's confidence in the historical record translates to him following the narrative in the biblical text in order to describe the history of Solomon's reign without any substantial modification.¹⁹ He describes Solomon's rise to the throne and his foreign policy, his military defences, the extent of the empire, Solomon's trading activities along the sea and with Sheba, and trade in horses with Egypt:²⁰ "The Bible with justice depicts Solomon's reign as one of unexampled prosperity. Israel enjoyed a security and a material

¹⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Solomon: Israel's Ironic Icon of Human Achievement*, Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 1–2.

¹⁸ Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel", 22; cf., William G. Dever, "Monumental Architecture in Ancient Israel in the Period of the United Monarchy," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. T. Ishida, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 269–306.

¹⁹ John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 4th ed., (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 211–28; Cf., Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 1–2.

²⁰ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 211–17.

plenty such as she had never dreamed of before and was never to know again. And this in turn allowed an amazing flowering of the peaceful arts.”²¹ Furthermore, Bright correlates Solomon’s reign as a Golden Age in Israel that saw economic prosperity and cultural development.²² He unquestioningly accepts the statements regarding Solomon’s wisdom with the wisdom of Proverbs:

The Bible depicts Solomon as an exceedingly wise man (I Kings 3:4–28; 10:7, 23f.) who also enjoyed international fames as a composer of proverbs (ch. 4:29–34). The statement is difficult to evaluate since we do not know what any of the wise sayings attributed to Solomon were. But it is reasonable to assume that Israel’s wisdom tradition, of which the book of The Proverbs is the distillation, began to flourish at this time.²³

For Bright, the archaeological evidence verifies the biblical portraits of Solomon’s reign. Thus, to describe the history of Solomon’s reign, one only has to give a general summary of the biblical text.

However, the assumption that the portrayal of Solomon’s reign is credible has been challenged in the last several decades. Beginning in the 1970’s, Thomas Thompson and John Van Seters challenged the reliability of the Patriarchal narratives,²⁴ and this was extended, raising doubts about the Moses tradition and the Davidic and Solomonic empires. More recently, there have been challenges to the tenth century dating of the Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo fortifications and questions about how similar the gate systems were.²⁵ Van Seters sums up that the re-dating of the archaeological material suggests that Judah “did not begin to develop as a state until the late ninth and early eighth centuries bc,” which is after Solomon’s reign.²⁶ Therefore: “All signs of a large and pros-

²¹. Ibid., 217

²². Ibid., 217–20.

²³. Ibid., 220.

²⁴. See Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, BZAW 133, (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1974); John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975). Cf., G.W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Paleolithic Period to Alexander’s Conquest*, JSOTSup 146, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 539, who argues that the narrative is historically reliable but still also contains exaggerations. Dever, “Archaeology and the “Age of Solomon:” A Case-Study in Archaeology and Historiography”, 251, argues from the archaeological evidence that “if we have never heard of a ‘Solomon’ in the biblical texts, we should have to invent a tenth century BCE Israelite king by another name.” Likewise, Georg Hentschel, “Auf der Suche nach dem geschichtlichen Salomo in Ideales Königtum,” in *Ideales Königtum: Studien zu David und Salomo*, ed. Rüdiger Lux, (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005), 91–105, concludes that the narrative should not be dismissed even if certain conclusions remain open at this time.

²⁵. See discussion in Knoppers, “The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel”, 27–29.

perous capital of the Davidic-Solomonic era are completely missing.”²⁷

The historical reliability of Solomon’s reign continues to be debated among scholars with no sense of resolution. There is a complexity and interrelatedness of factors that influence scholars’ individual judgments: one’s methodology (especially in what sense the biblical text should be used as a source), how to determine what counts as exaggeration in the sources, the dating of archaeological finds, and personal commitments of all involved.²⁸ The number of issues and the way they relate to one another imply that this is a hotly debated area among minimalists, maximalists, and those who are somewhere in-between. And there is no sense that the debate will resolve any time soon.

2.3 A Solomonic Enlightenment

For much of the twentieth century, scholars assumed that the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible was imported into Israelite culture from foreign nations, especially Egypt and Mesopotamia.²⁹ Gerhard von Rad famously stated that Solomon’s reign was the most likely time for wisdom to have been integrated into Israel and hypothesized that there was an emergence of a scribal and administrative class that was modelled after Egyptian administration through the diplomatic contact between Israel and Egypt. According to von Rad, during Solomon’s reign Israel shifted to a more centralised government that brought with it building programs, taxation schemes, military forces, and an international presence. Thus, according to von Rad, Israel’s close contact with Egypt and the adaptation of Egypt’s bureaucracy helped usher in an “enlightenment” in Israelite culture. Israel’s international trade economy was the seed for the exchange of “spiritual ideas” that led to “a sharp break with the ancient patriarchal code of living.”³⁰ The influence of von Rad’s hypothesis that Israel adopted Egyptian administrative practices can be seen in studies such as that of T.N.D. Mettinger and E.W. Heaton, who argued that Solomon’s large bureaucracy (1 Kgs

²⁶ John Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 88.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁸ Knoppers, “The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel”, 44.

²⁹ R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study*, (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 19–20.

³⁰ Gerhard von Rad, “The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel,” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, (Edinburgh / London: SCM Press, 1965), 203.

4:1–19) needed well-trained administrators who, Heaton suggests, were modelled after Egypt's administration.³¹

However, von Rad's "Solomonic enlightenment" hypothesis has been significantly challenged.³² R.B.Y. Scott, for one, undermines Solomon's reign as ushering in the literary activity by arguing that the flourishing of literary activity did not occur during Solomon's reign and that the description of Solomon's wisdom in 1 Kings may have historical roots but many of the ideological claims are late and legendary.³³ Scott argues that Proverbs 25:1, which states that the proverbs of Solomon were copied by officials of Hezekiah, demonstrates a literary presence during his reign: "...this is first-rate evidence that an organized literary wisdom movement existed at Hezekiah's court and under his patronage."³⁴ Furthermore, based upon a lexical analysis of phrases in the narrative, he writes that: "Though general historical considerations do not preclude, but rather favour, the connection with Solomon of the origins of literary wisdom in Israel, the ostensible biblical evidence for this in the first Book of Kings is post-exilic in date and legendary in character."³⁵ Scott distinguishes three types of wisdom in the narrative. First, he sees that there is a pre-Deuteronomic view of wisdom that describes the ability of the successful ruler (2:1-2, 5-9; 5:15-26). This type of wisdom assumes that the king or ruler will know what to do. A second layer of interpretation of wisdom comes from the Deuteronomic editor and this reading of wisdom is the ability to distinguish right from wrong and to render true justice (3:9; 3:16-28). The last layer is wisdom as encyclopedic knowledge (5:9–

³¹. T.N.D. Mettinger, *Solomonic State Officials: A Study of the Civil Government Officials of the Israelite Monarchy*, (Lund: Gleerup, 1971), 25–124; E. W. Heaton, *Solomon's New Men: The Emergence of Ancient Israel as a National State*, (New York: Pica, 1974). Also, e.g. Christa Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1–9*, WMANT 22, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966), 35–36; G.W. Ahlström, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine*, (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 27–43. Walter Brueggemann, "The Social Significance of Solomon as a Patron of Wisdom," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. G. Gammie and L. G. Perdue, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 117–32.

³². Samuel L. Adams, *Wisdom in Transition: Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instructions*, JSJSup 125, (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 64; James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, Third 'ed.', (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 48–49; R. N. Whybray, "Wisdom Literature in the Reigns of David and Solomon," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays Read at the International Symposium for Biblical Studies, December 1979*, ed. T. Ishida, (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1982), 13–26.

³³. R. B. Y. Scott, "Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1976) See also J. L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 52–54.

³⁴. Scott, "Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel," 273.

³⁵. *Ibid.*, 101.

14; 10:1–10, 13, 23–24) which was added during the post-exilic period. These later descriptions provide the basis for Solomon's reputation as the founder of the Wisdom Literature and Scott argues that the historical connection between Solomon and the influx of wisdom to Israel in the 9th century BCE are not supportable.³⁶

Another influential critique of the so-called "Solomonic enlightenment" has been Stuart Weeks' study *Early Israelite Wisdom*. In contrast to Scott, who focused on dating through words and phrases, Weeks challenges the assumption that Solomon's administration was modelled after Egypt rather than other comparable Canaanite administrations.³⁷ Weeks especially challenges the arguments that Solomon's state officials (listed in 1 Kgs 4:1–19) and his system of provision for the royal court are in fact modelled after the Egyptian state. Weeks' reexamination of Mettinger's arguments for this persuasively shows that the evidence for this is sparse.³⁸ Indeed, he notes that two or possibly three of these offices were already in use in David's kingdom. Since David's influence was limited to Palestine and the Transjordan region, it makes it unlikely that these offices were modelled after Egyptian practice.³⁹ Furthermore, Weeks challenges D.B. Redford's argument that Solomon's provisioning system of dividing Israel into twelve districts and giving workgroups one month off was modelled after the Egyptian Pharaoh, Shoshenq I, when similar work systems are seen in Canaan that correspond more closely to Israel's emerging bureaucracy, rather than the large infrastructure of Egypt.⁴⁰

In summary, the above review shows two ways that scholars have analyzed Solomon from an historical perspective. First, I noted that one question is whether (or not) archaeological remains verify (or not) the 1 Kings narrative as a reliable source. It is clear, even from a brief survey, that the historical reliability of Solomon's reign from 1 Kings is highly debated with a spectrum of opin-

³⁶ Ibid., 279.

³⁷ See however, Katharine Dell, "Solomon's Wisdom and the Egyptian Connection," in *The Centre and the Periphery: A European Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, Hebrew Bible Monographs, 27 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), 23–37. She has shown the Egyptian connection, though lacking indisputable evidence, is plausible.

³⁸ Stuart Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 115–16; Cf., Mettinger, *State Officials*, 111–27.

³⁹ Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 126–27.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 128–29. Cf., D.B. Redford, "Studies in Relations between Palestine and Egypt during the First Millennium BC: I, The Taxation System of Solomon," in *Studies on the Ancient Palestinian World*, ed. J.W. Wevers and D.B. Redford, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1972), 141–56.

ions. Second, I considered whether Solomon's reign would have been the means by which foreign wisdom was brought into Israel. It was also noted that the "Solomonic enlightenment" hypothesis has grown out of favour with most scholars. Reviewing this perspective was important in order to place the present study in context. Though such historical questions are still important to the understanding of Solomon, there have been hermeneutical shifts toward literary and reception approaches, which have opened up other avenues to pursue. In the following chapter, I will lay out the literary approach adopted for this thesis. But before doing that, for the remainder of this literature review, I will review past research that has focused upon studies that have considered Solomon in the context of the Hebrew Bible as a whole.

2.4 The Development of Solomonic Tradition: Pablo Torijano

In a far reaching study, Pablo Torijano analyzes the development of the Solomonic tradition starting with the biblical texts of the Hebrew Bible and traces the development of the Solomonic tradition through until late antiquity in the 7th century CE. In his study, Torijano seeks to understand how Solomon, Israel's wise king, became Solomon "the exorcist, the magician par excellence, acquiring extreme popularity in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages."⁴¹ In order to accomplish this goal, Torijano begins with the biblical texts of the Hebrew Bible of Solomon in 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs before turning to the LXX and other Second Temple texts.

Of particular interest for this project is his handling of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible. Torijano's conclusion is that there is an "oscillation" from the positive to the negative in how Solomon is used in the texts of the Hebrew Bible: "The biblical texts allow for a multiple reading of Solomon; he is portrayed first and foremost as a king, to which multiple adjectives (wise, rich, powerful, etc.) can be added. The different texts project differing judgments of the king, an appraisal that from the very beginning oscillated between approval and disapproval."⁴² Furthermore, Torijano argues that "this oscillation remains and allows for considerable development of traditions centered on the king."⁴³ According to Torijano, Solomon's memory in the Hebrew Bible is complex, containing both

⁴¹.Torijano, *Esoteric King*, 2.

⁴².Ibid., 25.

⁴³.Ibid., 25.

positive and negative memories. It is these variable memories of a single figure that provide avenues for later traditions to further elaborate upon.

In such a broad investigation with so much material to cover, it is not surprising that his reading of the biblical texts are not exhaustive and lack depth and nuance. To give just a few examples, Torijano concludes that the emphasis on covenant fidelity in 2 Chronicles impoverishes Solomon's wisdom.⁴⁴ As well, he maintains that the omission of Solomon's sins in 2 Chronicles is an attempt to cover up the king's indiscretions.⁴⁵ Regarding the book of Proverbs, he argues that the title (Prov 1:1) is about Solomon as a king and son of David rather than about Solomon as a wise man: "This attribution depicts Solomon not as a wise man, but as the Son of David and king, that is, the characterization of Solomon as royal and as David's legitimate heir was viewed as central by the final editor of Proverbs. From this basis, he added the traditional epithets of wise and just, but the main motive for the attribution was Solomon's dual role as king and Son of David."⁴⁶ It is questionable how Torijano knows that the final editor of the book of Proverbs was depicting Solomon as a son of David and only later as wise and just. It is also unclear as to why it is necessary to divide Solomon's royal pedigree from his wisdom. Torijano's conclusions are misleading and could benefit from more nuance of how Solomon is depicted in these books, as will be shown throughout this thesis.

A further drawback to Torijano's study is his emphasis on the hypothetical pre-history of the biblical materials in order to understand the development of the tradition. Because of this, Torijano's study of Solomon in the biblical texts misses the nuance in which the biblical materials reveal the complex nature of the Solomon figure. His reading of 1 Kings 1–11 leaves much to be desired because he spends too much time on the source history of the narrative as the means by which the ambivalent character of Solomon emerges. Thus he concludes his discussion on the narrative by arguing:

The image of Solomon has undergone an intensive process of idealization and theological recasting in the Hebrew text of Kings. Whatever the sources and their historical value may have been, they have been consciously reworked to fit the theological interest of the editors of the text; these

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 22.

reworkings had already taken place in the first stages of composition, which seems to prove that the figure of Solomon was assessed in an ambivalent manner from early times. Besides the reworking of the historical sources, there is an ideological adaptation of the figure of the king that, taking as its basis the historical king, changed him into an idealized royal figure following the royal ideology of the ancient Near East, but enriching this image at the same time with the notion of his encyclopedic wisdom.⁴⁷

To be clear, I am not stating that 1 Kings 1–11 does not have a complex compositional history, only that it is one thing to argue that Solomon is an ambivalent figure based upon contradictory sources and another thing to understand that complexity at the level of the story. We can see another example of Torijano's focus on the prehistory in his comment on Song of Songs:

The name of Solomon appears several times in the text. The basis for the attribution could be the mention of the marriage of Pharaoh's daughter with Solomon. In the Song of Songs 1:1–3, there is a word play based on the terms “peace” שלמה and “name” שם that also occurs in Psalm 72 and at 1 Chr 22:9. In Song of Songs 7:1, the name of the Shulammite is a possible allusion to 1 Kgs 1:3. The fact that the male protagonist of the epithalamium (nuptial song) is described as a king is noted by some scholars as a further reason for the attribution to Solomon.⁴⁸

Torijano's assertion that the Song is attributed to Solomon because of possible connections with Pharaoh's daughter, word plays, and a royal male lover misses the way that the male lover is a Solomonic figure and is characterized within the Song itself.

Given Torijano's acknowledgement of analyzing texts from outside the Hebrew Bible during the 2nd century BCE–7th century CE, this raises the question of whether a focus on the hypothetical pre-history of texts would really be the way in which Solomon was actually received and the tradition developed and elaborated. It is of course possible that these texts developed in this way, but a more thorough synchronic understanding of Solomon in these texts must take priority before an analysis of the textual pre-history. This thesis, therefore, seeks to fill this gap.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 14–15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22–23.

2.5 Unauthorized Biography: Steven Weitzman's Solomon: The Lure of Wisdom

In another recent book on Solomon, Steven Weitzman writes what he calls an “unauthorized” biography of King Solomon. By an “unauthorized” biography, Weitzman means that he does not approach the Hebrew Bible as an authoritative text, nor will he constrain his reading by reference to the biblical material alone.⁴⁹ Thus, Weitzman’s study tells the story of Solomon, but he also shows how this story has been imagined through time by a diverse reception of artists, scientists, theologians, and adventurers.⁵⁰ Through the integration of such diverse receptors, Weitzman then proposes how Solomon’s story serves as a parable for modern life’s quest for knowledge and knowledge’s limitations.

The foundation of Weitzman’s study on Solomon is the 1 Kings 1–11 narrative. In addition to integrating the reception of various elements from Solomon’s life, Weitzman also illuminates the ambiguous nature of Solomon from gaps in the narrative. For instance, he considers what the etymology of Solomon’s two names, Jedidiah and Solomon, might suggest about the king.⁵¹ Furthermore, he also uses psycho-analysis research in order to understand Solomon’s development in childhood as well as speculating as to why Solomon would have such a great desire for wisdom and knowledge. But more important for this thesis is the way that Weitzman uses the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs in order to fill the gaps at the end of Solomon’s life after Solomon has been condemned in 1 Kings 11 for his many wives and concubines and his idolatry.

First Kings 11 ends with Solomon rejected by YHWH, but his death notice also states that Solomon did more than what was recorded. It is at this point that Weitzman draws upon the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs to fill in this gap. He does not draw upon these books because he takes them as genuine Solomonic compositions, but rather he follows the clues within these books that are associated with Solomon’s life and uses them to open up the imagination about whether or not Solomon ended his life in repentance. Weitzman observes that readers may have a different opinion about Solomon if they read the last book as Ecclesiastes or Song of Songs. Does Solomon end his life in skepticism or in persistent pursuit? Rather than arguing for one un-

⁴⁹ Steven Weitzman, *Solomon: The Lure of Wisdom*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), xi.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xxvi.

⁵¹ It should be noted that the name Jedidiah only occurs in 2 Samuel 12:24 and does not occur in the 1 Kings 1–11 narrative.

derstanding or the other, Weitzman proposes that readers keep both endings in mind. The effect is to see Solomon as fluctuating between recognizing that this life can never fully be known and continuing to seek to understand the mysteries of life:

I would like to propose that the king's final act was to respond to the irresolvable mystery of life in not one but two ways that might seem contradictory at first but that can in fact coexist as part of one equation: that he came to recognize the mind's limits, how little power it has to penetrate life's secrets, but also, at the same time, that he did not give up in the face of those limits, was still willing to go into the darkness, to search late into the night, to keep knocking at the door even without anyone ever opening it.⁵²

Weitzman's study on Solomon is a clever and engaging approach that shows the numerous ways that Solomon's story has continued to have an enduring legacy in the world. But this thesis will operate in a different manner. First, my thesis differs from Weitzman's by focusing more on the textual presentations of Solomon than Weitzman allows. In this way, I seek to be constrained by the text under investigation in order to see how Solomon is depicted. Furthermore, my analysis of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs will differ from Weitzman's. Weitzman's engagement with these books is only in order to fill in the gaps of Solomon's life. My handling of these books will approach them with an individual integrity and will demonstrate that they have much to reveal to readers on the depiction of Solomon within each of those books.

2.6 The Canonical Solomon: Walter Brueggemann's Solomon

Walter Brueggemann's study *Solomon: Israel's Ironic Icon of Human Achievement* is a unique contribution to the figure of Solomon in both biblical and extra-biblical traditions. Like Torijano, Brueggemann's work is far reaching and examines Solomon in 2 Chronicles, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Psalms, plus he includes a chapter on "four belated refractions" in the Wisdom of Solomon, the Quran, Ethiopic traditions, and Freemasonry before closing with a chapter on Solomon in the New Testament. Rather than examining Solomon from an historical point of view, Brueggemann takes a canonical approach, focusing on a "Solomon of imaginative tradition"⁵³ as he concludes that Solomon was a "modest figure presiding over a modest state in what was likely a

⁵² Ibid., 181.

⁵³ Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 23.

modest economy.”⁵⁴

The core of Brueggemann’s investigation is based on the idea that the Solomon of the biblical tradition is an ambivalent character.⁵⁵ Brueggemann devotes seven chapters to examining different aspects of the Solomon narrative in 1 Kings and argues that three themes from the 1 Kings account—Solomon as temple builder, wise king, and economic genius—highlight the ambivalent dimensions of Solomon in the narrative which is undermined by his disobedience to Deuteronomic law: 1) the temple ideology of royal legitimation is undermined by God’s name only, rather than his full presence, dwelling in the temple, 2) Solomon’s wisdom has more in common with the ideology of ancient Near Eastern nations than the Sinai traditions, and 3) Solomon’s wealth does benefit Israel but creates an elite class in contrast to the poor and oppressed agrarian culture.

Brueggemann’s conclusion to his study is that Solomon in 1 Kings and “the several derivative presentations” is a “complex interpretive construct”⁵⁶ and is “surely a product of interpretive imposition, that is, of ideology.”⁵⁷ Brueggemann asserts that the canonical portrait of Solomon has emerged through complex interpretive and theological reflections and that “the memory of Solomon has continued to feed and energize the interpretive imagination of ongoing communities of faithful interpretation.”⁵⁸ For Brueggemann, the complexity of the interpretive reflection increases as one acknowledges the ironic portrait of Solomon under the surface.⁵⁹ He argues that recognizing the ironic dimension of Solomon’s characterization is crucial for understanding Solomon because it reveals the theological purpose of subverting the presentation of Solomon’s absolute claims of power:

On the surface, Solomon is as fully absolute as any ruler in Israel could ever be. . . . The narrative presentation of Solomon, however, is given in literature that has a distinct, deliberate theological edge, that is, an awareness that the power of YHWH—variously enacted by direct or hidden

⁵⁴ Ibid., 21

⁵⁵ Ibid., 64.

⁵⁶ Ibid., xii.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 225.

⁵⁹ Ibid., xii.

means—serves to deabsolutize every human claimant to power and to render such claimants penultimate.⁶⁰

Brueggemann's study is a positive contribution toward understanding the literary and theological dimensions of Solomon in biblical and post-biblical traditions. I agree with Brueggemann that Solomon in the biblical material is a product of a long interpretive and theological reflection. Indeed, the portrayal of Solomon in these diverse books is motivated in part by the ideology of those responsible for these books. However, this thesis will depart from Brueggemann's central claim that Solomon is an ironic character in the Hebrew Bible. This characteristic cannot bear the weight that Brueggemann places upon it. Though there are some ironic dimensions to Solomon in the 1 Kings narrative, it is questionable whether these ironic dimensions are as prominent as Brueggemann thinks.⁶¹ Furthermore, Brueggemann's focus on the irony of the Solomon character is not at all central to any of the presentations of Solomon in the other biblical books, aside maybe from Ecclesiastes. Thus, it is unlikely that irony should be given such prominence. In this thesis I will be engaging with parts of Brueggemann's arguments on these chapters and I will show that Solomon is a more multifaceted character. Though later biblical books may present a flatter character, such as in Proverbs or Chronicles, as a whole Solomon cannot be reduced simply to ironic character. But before turning to these characterizations, it is important to lay out the methodological and hermeneutical framework that will be utilized in this investigation.

3. Summary

The above literature review has identified at least three gaps in scholarship that this thesis seeks to fill in regards to Solomon and the Hebrew Bible: 1) the need for a nuanced study of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible itself, 2) the need for the biblical material to constrain the presentation of Solomon before attempting to understand how Solomon has been received in later traditions, and 3) the need to reevaluate the only other current synchronic study available because Brueggemann's larger argument that Solomon is an ironic figure is not persuasive. In order to do this, this thesis seeks to give a thorough synchronic analysis of Solomon's characterization in 1 Kings 1–11, 2 Chronicles

⁶⁰ Ibid., xii–xiii.

⁶¹ Richard S. Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 95.

1–9, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. This analysis can then serve other scholars as a starting point for a diachronic (or indeed synchronic) study of the development of Solomonic traditions in later post-biblical traditions.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the previous chapter, I stated that this thesis focuses upon a synchronic analysis of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11, 2 Chronicles 1–9, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs in the Hebrew Bible. Before proceeding to these analyses, this chapter will describe the methodology that will be used in order to analyze the various characterizations of Solomon in this project.

1. Introduction

Characters, along with the plot, are an instrumental part of the way a story communicates to a reader.⁶² In particular, characters help communicate the values present in the worldview of the narrative. Shimon Bar-Efrat helpfully describes the importance that characters have in communicating these values of the narrative:

Not only do the characters serve as the narrator's mouthpiece, but also what is and is not related about them, which of their characteristics are emphasized and which are not, which of their conversations and actions in the past are recorded and which are not, all reveal values and norms within the narrative...The characters can also transmit the significance and values of the narrative to the reader, since they usually constitute the focal point of interest.⁶³

Thus, the way an author portrays a character serves as one way of communicating to a reader. This project is concerned with the way various authors characterized Solomon in the Hebrew Bible.

⁶² James Phelan, *Living to Tell about It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 1.

⁶³ Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, JSOTSup 70 / Bible and Literature Series 17, (Worcester: The Almond Press, 1989), 47.

Questions regarding characterization are necessarily answered through tools offered by literary studies and over the past several decades a literary approach that has focused on the literary conventions of the Hebrew Bible has become common.⁶⁴ However, just as there is no singular historical-critical approach,⁶⁵ there is no singular literary approach. What follows, then, is a communicative framework that will draw upon a narrative-critical approach that will be used to analyze the characterization of Solomon across the Hebrew canon.

2. Solomon in the Context of the Hebrew Bible

2.1 The Masoretic Text

In this study I examine the different characterizations of King Solomon across the Hebrew Bible. By the Hebrew Bible, I am referring to the Hebrew Scriptures that have been received as Scripture by Judaism and then subsequently by Protestant Christianity, as preserved in the Masoretic text (MT). Brevard Childs, perhaps more than anyone else, has stressed the MT as the focus of Old Testament study according to his canonical approach: “The initial point to be made is that the canonical approach to Old Testament theology is unequivocal in asserting that the object of theological reflection is the canonical writing of the Old Testament, that is, the Hebrew Scriptures which are the received traditions of Israel.”⁶⁶ Childs’ preference for the MT is partially based on the fact that it has had a continuous faith community.⁶⁷ Thus, according to Childs, the MT is the object of Old Testament study because it has been the received Scripture of Judaism and Christianity. John Barton, however, has noted that this theological motivation for the MT does not account for the diversity of Scripture that the Christian church has accepted as authoritative; for the Catholic church,

⁶⁴ Most notably Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, David M. Gunn, ed, Bible and Literature Series 9, (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*.

⁶⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, “Canon, Community, and Theological Construction,” in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Scott Hahn, Robin Parry, Christopher Seitz, and Al Wolters, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 4.

⁶⁶ Brevard S Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 6; cf., Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Orton, (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005), 2.

⁶⁷ Childs, *Old Testament Theology*, 7

the Latin Vulgate is the authoritative Scripture, and for the Greek Orthodox church, it is the Greek Bible.⁶⁸ Barton is correct to draw attention to this problem for preferring the MT as the object of study on ecumenical grounds when it is only Judaism and the Protestant tradition that recognize the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative. Therefore, a more nuanced reason for the priority of the final form of the MT is needed.

In this thesis, the MT is prioritized as the object of study for literary analysis of the characterization of Solomon because of the authority it held in Judaism. Discoveries at Qumran suggest that there was a plurality of text-types in the third to first centuries BC with proto-Masoretic texts, pre-Samaritan texts, texts closely resembling the LXX, and texts that do not align with the major text types. Emanuel Tov's statistics of biblical texts at Qumran makes this clear.⁶⁹

	Proto-MT	Pre-Samaritan	Supposed <i>Vorlage</i> of LXX	Non-aligned
Torah	48%	11%	2%	39%
Prophets and Writings	44%	0%	7%	49%

Though there is a plurality of textual witnesses, Tov recognizes “the great number of \mathfrak{M} -like texts found at Qumran probably reflects the dominance of \mathfrak{M} in several sectors of Israel.”⁷⁰ Evidence from other Judean desert discoveries suggests that textual plurality was not representative for Judaism from the third century BC to the first century AD. Adam van der Woude in his review *Fifty Years of Qumran Research* notes there is no evidence of textual plurality at Masada or Wadi Murabba'at.⁷¹ He argues that, instead of a movement from pluriformity to uniformity in Israel, “another possibility” is “that a far-reaching uniformity of textual tradition existed in the religious circles around the Temple of Jerusalem well before 70 CE *alongside* a pluriform tradition elsewhere in Palestine, with both traditions being exemplified by the Qumran biblical texts.”⁷² Furthermore, the

⁶⁸ John Barton, “The Final Form of the Text,” in *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology*, SOTSMS (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 189.

⁶⁹ Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd Edition, Revised and Expanded 'ed.', (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 108.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 110.

⁷¹ Adam S. Van Der Woude, “Fifty Years of Qumran Research,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years*, ed. Peter F. Flint and James C. Vanderkam, (1998), 41–42.

⁷² Ibid., 42.

authority that the proto-Masoretic text held for Judaism is evidenced by the revisions of Greek manuscripts in alignment with the Hebrew text. Van der Woude notes the Greek manuscript of the Twelve Prophets at Nahal Hever being revised in line with a proto-MT text starting at least by second century BC.⁷³ Despite the existence of these differing textual witnesses for texts dealing with Solomon, this thesis will focus on the MT as Israel's authoritative Scriptures.

2.2 Hermeneutical Implications of the Canon

The authority that written revelation has for faith communities is recognized within the Hebrew Bible in numerous places, e.g. when Josiah seeks to respond in repentance and obedience to the book of the law discovered in 1 Kings 22, when Joshua must adhere to the book of the law (Josh 1:8; 24:25–26), or when Jehoshaphat sent his officials, the Levites, to teach the people of Judah from the Book of the law (2 Chr 17:7–10). The presence of Solomon in multiple canonical books raises the question of how or whether these books should be understood in relation to one another.⁷⁴ Gordon McConville asserts that: “The specific point about canonicity is that no text has canonical status in itself, but only in conjunction with others. Canon thus takes on a *hermeneutical* quality, since texts must always be read with alertness to other texts.”⁷⁵ In other words, the nature of *multiple* canonical texts is that they collectively *share* authority rather than have their authority independent of one another. More specific to this point, Ched Spellman argues that canon provides the context from which these books are to be read and this canonical context results in the opportunity to draw out intertextual relationships.⁷⁶ According to Spellman the effect of the canon

⁷³ See also Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 206; Al Wolters, “The Text of the Old Testament,” in *The Face of the Old Testament: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. D. W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, (1999), 28–31.

⁷⁴ The difference—or whether there should be—between “Scripture” and “Canon” looms on. John Barton, *Holy Writings, Sacred Text: The Canon in Early Christianity*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 12, notes the centre of the issue is whether one defines “canon” in a broad way that includes a growing body of authoritative writings or whether “canon” should be reserved only for a list of books.

⁷⁵ Gordon McConville, “Old Testament Laws and Canonical Intentionality,” in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Scott Hahn, Robin Parry, Christopher Seitz, and Al Wolters, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 267.

⁷⁶ Ched Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon*, Sheffield Phoenix New Testament Monographs 34, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), 101–83.

is to create a context from which to read these texts and from which the intertextual relationships can emerge.

Recognizing that the books studied in this project are a part of canon has important methodological implications for this project. Though I agree that the canonical books are relevant to one another, I believe it is important to stress that this should not diminish the authority that the individual text contributes to the canon. For surely the recognition of the authority of the book should lead to the recognition of the authority of the individual message. I want to exercise some methodological caution because there is a danger in attending too quickly to apparent intertextual allusions that can flatten or even silence the contribution of the individual book. Therefore, my aim is not to recover the *historical* Solomon as he actually was, if such a task were possible. Nor do I seek to combine the different presentations of Solomon into a single characterization. Such a result would be a composite character made up of the multiple perspectives. Instead, the Hebrew Bible preserves and recognizes the collective authority of multiple canonical texts of different genres across time with a diversity of voices.⁷⁷ As such I aim to prioritize the characterization of Solomon found in each of the biblical texts under question, recognizing the way that each book in question has contextualized the Solomon character.

For instance, when examining Solomon in 1–2 Chronicles, my goal is not to conclude that the portrait of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 1–9 is inferior to that of 1 Kings 1–11 or to fill in gaps from Kings that are missing from in Chronicles. Rather, I prioritize the portrait of Solomon in Chronicles in order to understand that book's presentation of Solomon; even though the canon assumes a unity between these different texts, the canon also preserves the diversity of theological voices found within its books. I seek to appreciate the various canonical perspectives of Solomon that have been preserved and to note the unity preserved in the presentations, without ignoring the diversity found between the canonical books.

It goes without saying that the canonical perspective taken in this project is the perspective of a contemporary reader rather than that of an ancient reader. The high level of intertextuality in

⁷⁷ On theological diversity in the Hebrew Bible see John Barton, "Unity and Diversity in the Biblical Canon," in *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology*, SOTSMS (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 53–66; John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

the Hebrew Bible suggests that these books evolved and were shaped in relation to one another.⁷⁸ But it is impossible to know whether an ancient reader had access to multiple canonical books. A further complication is our lack of knowledge of other traditions that may have circulated regarding Solomon. The narrator's closing remarks on Solomon's death in the book of Kings recounts that there was a further source, *The Book of the Acts of Solomon* (1 Kgs 11:41), suggesting that readers at the least were aware of another account. Unfortunately we have no knowledge what other traditions were circulating at any point in time, other than this. We do not know how these sources would have impacted their understanding of Solomon's characterization. We can only judge characterizations from the sources we have in the biblical canon. As modern readers, who have received these texts and recognize their canonical nature, we have the advantage of being able to see clearly where texts and themes intersect and intertwine across the canon.

3. A Communicative Approach

If a larger canonical analysis is applied to the Solomon character across the Hebrew Bible by analyzing the unity and diversity of characterizations, then the interpretive framework used for analyzing those individual characterizations is through a literary approach that has come to be called narrative-criticism. But before addressing how authors depict characters in literature, it is important to address two interpretive assumptions utilized in this project: first, that literary texts are an act of interpersonal communication, and second, that a literary approach gives priority to the final form.

3.1 Written Texts as Interpersonal Communication

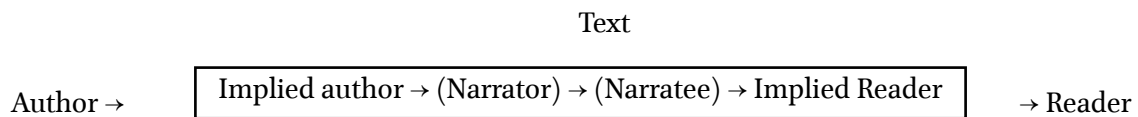
The first underlying assumption for this project is that written texts are an act of interpersonal communication between an author and reader through a message.⁷⁹ Narrative critics frequently draw upon a communicative model to understand how written texts function as communication.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Spellman, *Canon-Conscious Reading*, 60–99.

⁷⁹ Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, GBS, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 8–10.

⁸⁰ On communication as a foundational element to literary approaches see R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, (Fortress Press, 1983), 6; Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, Moises Silva, ed, FCI, vol. 3, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 63–64; Elizabeth Struthers Mal-

Contemporary literary theory, especially in the area of narratology, has helpfully shown the ways in which communication takes place between a sender and a receiver. Seymour Chatman in his influential work, *Story and Discourse*, argues for a narrative-communicative model that has proved influential in the way communication takes place between authors, texts, and readers in narratives. Chatman's model can be diagrammed as below.



Of particular importance are the concepts of the implied author and implied reader. In this way, there is communication of an implied author to an implied reader through a message. The implied author is the author that is presupposed by the text.⁸¹ The implied author is a construct of the text and is not the same as the real author. Wayne Booth argues that distinguishing between the empirical author and the implied author is important because authors present themselves differently in their texts depending upon the purpose and relationships to the recipients of a text.⁸² J. P. Fokkelmann—though not using the term “implied author”—writes: “When we open up a story, we hear as it were a voice speaking to us. This is not the voice of the historical and unique individual that was the writer, that one person who around 800 or 500 BCE wrote about Moses or Solomon. What we hear is the voice of his persona...the narrator. The narrator is a pose, an attitude. One could call him an offshoot or a sub-personality of the writer.”⁸³ Gordon Wenham uses a modern example to illustrate this point. He notes that the persona of the politician in political speeches is different—sometimes drastically—from the real person.⁸⁴ Wenham further notes that when we read the texts of the Hebrew Bible, we are always dealing with an implied author. Our only access to the writers

bon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 7; Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 8.

⁸¹ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press, 1961).

⁸² Ibid., 71.

⁸³ J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 55.

⁸⁴ Wenham, *Story as Torah*, 8–9.

of the Hebrew Bible is through the texts themselves and not through any other means.⁸⁵

The second concept is the implied reader. Like the implied author, the implied reader is also a construct that is inferred from the text. The implied reader is the reader that the author had in mind when writing the text. Jeannine Brown defines the implied reader "as the textually constructed 'reader presupposed by the narrative' or text."⁸⁶ The implied reader is the reader who responds to the written text in the way the real author envisions. This does not mean that the real reader will respond to the text in the intended way, just that the implied reader is the reader envisioned by the real author who will respond in the intended ways. As Brown writes: "The implied reader reflects the intended response the author [i.e. real author] envisions for the text. While actual readers may respond in all sorts of ways to a text, the implied reader responds only as the real author intends."⁸⁷ The response of readers will vary. But even a reader who chooses not to respond to the text in the envisioned way must first grasp what is the envisioned response.⁸⁸

3.2 Holistic Readings

The second framework assumption for this project that is derived from the communicative framework is that the focus of interpretation is holistic readings of the final form rather than scholarly reconstructions of hypothetical sources.⁸⁹ As noted above, this project is focused on the characterization of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11, 2 Chronicles 1–9, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs in

⁸⁵ Ibid., 9, notes that for a prophetic text like Amos, even though we have the name of the historical prophet, our only access to him is through the text itself. We have no way of knowing how much the literary persona relates to the actual prophet. Concerning the narrative books of the Hebrew Bible, Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, 55, writes: "The prose writers have remained anonymous, and wanted to remain anonymous. The only exception (Nehemiah, in whose story an "I" figures) only serves to confirm the rule."

⁸⁶ Jeannine K. Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*, (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 36.

⁸⁷ Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture As Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, (Grand Rapids Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 40.

⁸⁸ Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 23–24.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 7; James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 38. However, John Barton, "Reading Texts Holistically: The Foundation of Biblical Criticism," in *Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007*, ed. André Lemaire, VTSup 133 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 379, argues that a holistic interpretation has always been the agenda of biblical criticism: "It makes perfect sense to look for consistency and coherence in texts. Consequently it also makes sense to register the fact when such coherence is not to be found, and to seek explanations for the lack of it by suggesting the presence of underlying sources. There could be other explanations - subsequent textual confusion, for example - in given cases."

the MT. Focusing on the final form of the MT recognizes the canonical nature of these texts and the authority the MT held in Judaism. Likewise, a communicative model of interpretation that reads texts holistically and prioritizes the present form of the text rather than hypothetical reconstructions implies an important methodological point. Prioritizing the final form as an act of communication does not deny the reality that authors used sources or that texts were edited and evolved over time.⁹⁰ However, the final form of the text takes priority over hypothetical reconstructions, even if scholars can be relatively confident in their reconstruction of pre-canonical forms because hypothetical pre-canonical texts are different texts and have different messages. For instance many scholars believe that the so-called *Succession Narrative* may have existed independently of its current place in 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2. But even if one could be absolutely certain of the existence of an independent source, what a text may have meant in a previous form does not determine its meaning in the present form.⁹¹

Of course, some scholars may be interested in seeking to try and uncover the compositional history of a book. But with the lack of independent sources this type of investigation only comes through a reading of the final form.⁹² Even a book like Chronicles which uses Samuel–Kings as a source becomes more complicated because the Samuel–Kings source is not the same version as what has been preserved.⁹³ Walter Moberly describes the problem well when he writes that the “reconstruction of sources is therefore entirely dependent upon unevennesses and difficulties in the present text - doublets, contradictions, anachronisms, variant linguistic usages, divergent theological emphases, etc. The problem obviously is to determine what constitutes a genuine unevenness.”⁹⁴ It is the question of criteria that continues to cause disagreement between those looking for sources and those who understand such issues as part of literary style. This project does not set out to solve these disagreements. But what should be agreed upon is that a disciplined reading of the final form should precede investigating the sources that make up the text in question.⁹⁵ By stat-

⁹⁰ Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 7.

⁹¹ R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34*, JSOTSup 22, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 23.

⁹² Ibid., 22–23; Craig G. Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory*, (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1998), 214.

⁹³ Steven L. McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984).

⁹⁴ Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 23.

⁹⁵ Iain W. Provan, V. P. Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel*, (Louisville: West-

ing that the final form takes priority over a diachronic study, I am not trying to diminish the value that such studies do contribute. Rather, I'm recognizing that one must be done prior to the other and that the diachronic study is dependent upon a final form reading.

4. Characters and Characterizations

Having discussed the interpretive assumptions that will be assumed throughout this thesis, I will now turn to the ways authors depict or portray characters in order to outline how Solomon will be analyzed in this thesis.

4.1 A Brief Definition

Characters are the persons or actors that serve some function in the plot of a story. A very simple definition is offered by James Resseguie. He defines characters as the "dramatis personae, the persons of the story."⁹⁶ But it is helpful to note that characters in a story are not limited to persons in the usual sense of the word. Brian Small comments that in addition to human beings being characters, various non-human beings can also be characters in biblical narratives, such as "animals (the serpent in Gen 3; Balaam's donkey in Num 22:28–30), plants (Judg 9:7–15), abstract ideas (wisdom in Prov 1:20–33; 8:1–36), and perhaps even heavenly bodies (Gen 37:9) being made into characters."⁹⁷ But, characters are not only individual entities but can also be groups of people, as Samuel Hildenbrandt has shown in his recent study on the servants of Saul.⁹⁸

Characters are the construction of an author to then be imagined by a reader.⁹⁹ Drawing on the creation story, Resseguie writes: "...the author of a narrative breathes life into a character that is re-

minster John Knox, 2003), 93, state that Biblical accounts must be appreciated as narratives before they can be used as historical sources; cf., Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 11–12.

⁹⁶ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 121.

⁹⁷ Brian C. Small, *The Characterization of Jesus in the Book of Hebrews*, BibInt 128, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 48.

⁹⁸ Samuel Hildenbrandt, "The Servants of Saul: 'Minor' Characters and Royal Commentary in 1 Samuel 9–31," *JSOT* 40, (2015), 179–200. Hildenbrandt notes the function that individuals and collective groups serve in the narrative and concludes that the majority of the time the servants function as an "amorphous collective" (p. 196).

⁹⁹ Small, *Characterization of Jesus*, 45.

alized in the reader's imagination.”¹⁰⁰ To speak about a character is not to make a judgment about characters being fictional, e.g. to ask whether Solomon really existed. Rather, it is to acknowledge that the access of our study is through literature and the way that literature works. It is impossible for an author to portray a character exhaustively. Therefore selectivity is a necessary component to portraying a character in a story. An author must be selective as to what events to narrate, what actions to describe, and what dialogue to replicate.

4.2 Types of Characters

Scholars have found it beneficial to categorize different types of characters. E. M. Forster's classic study, *Aspects of the Novel*, described characters as either round or flat.¹⁰¹ Forster described a round character as a character that is complex, made up of more than one trait, and that can change during the course of the story.¹⁰² In contrast, he described a flat character as one that lacks complexity and is constructed around a single trait and does not change during the story.¹⁰³ Forster's categories, though influential, are not sufficient. Scholars have needed to supplement Forster's categories because his binary categorization does not adequately describe every character in a story—an issue it appears that Forster understood as well when he wrote about flat characters: “[W]hen there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve toward the round.”¹⁰⁴

In order to supplement Forster's categories, scholars have proposed other types of characters. In his discussion on New Testament characters, Resseguie adds to Forster's categories a stock character, a foil, and a walk-on.

- “A *stock character* is a type that appears repeatedly in narratives and is recognizable as part of the conventions of a literary genre.”¹⁰⁵
- A *foil* is a contrasting character intended to emphasize the characteristics of another character.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 121.

¹⁰¹. E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1927), 78.

¹⁰². Ibid., 68.

¹⁰³. Ibid., 67.

¹⁰⁴. Ibid.

¹⁰⁵. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 124.

¹⁰⁶. Ibid.

- *Walk-on* are “characters that are not fully delineated and individualized; rather they are part of the background or setting of the narrative.”¹⁰⁷

Adele Berlin also nuanced Forster’s categories by distinguishing three types of characters in her study on characters and characterizations in Hebrew narrative: full-fledged, type, and agent.¹⁰⁸

- Full-fledged: a full-fledged character corresponds to Forster’s round character.
- Type: a character type corresponds to Forster’s flat character.
- Agent: an agent that corresponds to a walk-on character. This character is a functional character that serves some function in the plot or setting.¹⁰⁹

The drawback to categories like Forster’s or to adding additional categories like Resseguie is that characters do not always fit neatly into the categories, as Forster himself seems to acknowledge: “The problem with such a classification schema is the danger of forcing every literary character into a single category, a move that invariably requires some amount of shoehorning.”¹¹⁰ However, what is beneficial about Berlin’s descriptions is that she recognizes these as characterizations along a continuum rather than hard categories: “There is no real line separating these three types; the difference is a matter of the degree of characterization rather than the kind of characterization.”¹¹¹ Thinking about characters along a continuum prevents readers from forcing characters into a specific category that does not adequately describe the degree of characterization and the role that character contributes to the story.

4.3 Means of Characterization

If characters are the construct of an author, how then does the author construct a character to be imagined by a reader? What means does he or she have to get readers to imagine characters in particular ways?

¹⁰⁷. Ibid., 125.

¹⁰⁸. Berlin, *Poetics*, 23.

¹⁰⁹. Ibid., 32.

¹¹⁰. William P. Brown, *Wisdom’s Wonder: Character, Creation, and Crisis in the Bible’s Wisdom Literature*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 7.

¹¹¹. Berlin, *Poetics*, 32.

4.3.1 Telling

Telling is a direct means of characterization and occurs when a narrator comments directly about a character, giving readers a direct view of a character from the narrator. M. H. Abrams writes: "In telling, the author intervenes authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of his characters."¹¹² In addition to the evaluative nature of *telling*, as a means of characterization it is typically terse and unambiguous in its description of a character.¹¹³ For example, Noah is described as "a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God" (Gen 6:8–9); the narrator of Genesis recounts that "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him..." (27:41); and the narrator of the Solomon narrative describes Solomon's idolatrous acts as "evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done" (1 Kgs 11:6). Because *telling* is a direct comment from the narrator that is typically clear in its meaning, it does not require the reader to infer about the motivation and nature of a character.

4.3.2 Showing

Showing, on the other hand, is not a direct statement from the narrator, but rather the reader is *shown* the character and must infer the character's motivation and nature.¹¹⁴ A narrator *shows* the reader a character through a variety of means such as a character's action or inaction, speech, inner-life, or relationship to other characters, and the reader then imagines a character's motivations and nature. The way a character acts typically reveals their motivations and nature because a person's actions usually indicate their nature. Bar-Efrat writes: "Since one's inner nature is embodied in external behaviour a narrator can present the characters in action rather than spelling out their traits. In biblical narrative deeds do in fact serve as the foremost means of characterization, and

¹¹² M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Seventh 'ed.', (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999), 34. Cf., Small, *Characterization of Jesus*, 60, who describes direct presentation as a "description, exposition, analysis, or evaluation."

¹¹³ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 64.

¹¹⁴ Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 33. "In showing (also called "the dramatic method"), the author merely presents his characters talking and acting and leaves the reader to infer what motives and dispositions lie behind what they say and do."

we know biblical characters primarily through the way they act in varying situations.”¹¹⁵ For instance, Berlin notes how Abraham’s actions emphasize his obedience following God’s command to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering (Gen 22:1–2).¹¹⁶ Through narrating Abraham’s actions of rising early, cutting wood, and going to the place God instructed (22:3) the narrator of Genesis is able to convey Abraham’s obedience to God’s command without needing to directly tell the reader about Abraham’s obedience. In another example, Solomon is characterized as pious king through making numerous offerings following the transfer of the ark to the newly constructed temple (1 Kgs 8:5). Describing Solomon’s offering of sacrifices demonstrates the king’s inner qualities that would not have the same effect on the reader as a direct comment.

Readers also infer the motivations and nature of characters through recorded speech. Speech is an external feature that can reveal a character’s social standing. For example, Nathan and Bathsheba’s references to David as “my lord” (1 Kgs 1:17, 24, 27, 31) reveals the respect expected when addressing the king.¹¹⁷ Direct speech can also reveal a character’s inner nature, similar to someone’s actions. Solomon’s sudden outburst at Bathsheba for requesting Abishag as a wife for Adonijah may indicate Solomon’s insecurities of a threat to his throne: “And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my older brother, and on his side are Abiathar the priest and Joab the son of Zeruiah (1 Kgs 2:21–22).” Solomon’s outburst at Bathsheba’s request likely reveals his own (understandable) worry that Adonijah’s request for Abishag as a wife is a play for the throne and that Adonijah has serious support for his kingship from Abiathar and Joab.

Readers also infer the nature of characters through relationships with other characters in the story. This can be through who the character associates with, or their reaction to what others say and how they act. An author can also characterize a character through narrative analogy and contrast. For example, in Solomon’s succession to the throne the narrator makes connections between

¹¹⁵ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 77. Bar-Efrat acknowledges the difficulty in characterization through deeds because we rarely know for certain the motivations characters have for certain actions and our guesses on these motivations have to be taken into consideration with other actions and speech from the character (pp. 77-78).

¹¹⁶ Berlin, *Poetics*, 39.

¹¹⁷ Or their reference to David as “my Lord” may reveal deliberate flattery as they are seeking to persuade the King of their case.

Adonijah's actions and Absalom's. The narrator describes Adonijah as being "very handsome," as Absalom was, and notes that he was born after Absalom (1 Kgs 1:5–6; 2 Sam 14:25). Adonijah also declares himself king and his chariotry, horses, and heralds portray him as a successor just as Absalom did (1 Kgs 5:10; 2 Sam 15:1). Describing Adonijah in similar ways to Absalom, David's favourite, now dead son, gives the reader all the information needed to evaluate Adonijah and adds a certain pathos to the description.

Scholars are in agreement that characters are primarily characterized through *showing* in the majority of biblical literature. And because the reader is primarily shown the character indirectly and is not explicitly told, the reader's reconstruction of the character must be done through inferences in the text.¹¹⁸ Bar-Efrat writes: "Whereas the importance of the direct ways of shaping the characters lies in their quality (the fact that they are clear and unequivocal), that of the indirect ways lies in their quantity. This means that there is more indirect than direct shaping of characters in biblical narrative and therefore the burden of characterization falls primarily on this method."¹¹⁹ The effect of *showing* is that the reader must gradually draw together the apparent traits of the character. The result is a character that is both fluid and complex. Bar-Efrat writes:

While direct characterization, which determines an individual's nature in definite terms, embodies a static view of the person, indirect characterization, which is based on both words and deeds, tends to regard personality as being mobile. In many biblical narratives a person's character is not regarded as constant, but as something continually shifting and changing, even though stable components can be discerned.¹²⁰

Showing a character therefore demands more from a reader, because a character's inner nature has to be inferred from a character's external features.¹²¹ The reconstruction of a character at times requires the reader to modify their opinions about the character after re-reading. Robert Alter argues for a "scale of means...for conveying information about the motives, the attitudes, the moral nature of characters."¹²² This scale is helpful to determine how sure a reader can be about their evaluation

¹¹⁸ Small, *Characterization of Jesus*, 60.

¹¹⁹ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 64.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 89-90.

¹²¹ Ibid., 89.

¹²² Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 116.

of a character based upon “explicitness and certainty”:¹²³

- 1) A character's actions and appearance are the furthest from certainty because these are based entirely upon inferences;
- 2) Direct speech from characters move up the scale because these “lead us from inference to the weighing of claims”¹²⁴
- 3) A character's inward speech can be judged as fairly certain, though the reader might not be privileged to the exact motivation;
- 4) The most reliable characterization comes from the narrator's direct comments.¹²⁵

Alter's scale indicates the relative certainty a reader can have in evaluating a character. But it also shows the flexibility required in evaluating characters. The most reliable characterizations are direct comments, but these are relatively rare in biblical narrative. The other three are all indirect means and will require flexibility from the reader, as one must modify how one evaluates a character through the progression of the text and this may require further modification upon re-reading.

4.4 Narrator and Point of View

The narrator and the point of view of the text are important aspects of the way any story is told, so it is important to consider their impact on how readers imagine characters and the way they sympathize with or reject certain characters. The narrator is the voice readers hear when they read a text. The narrator selects what material is included and what material is left out, when to comment directly on the actions and circumstances of the characters, and when to allow readers to draw their own opinion. It is the narrator who presents the world of the text and controls the perspective presented. This perspective or point of view impacts the way a reader imagines a character.

Analyzing the various points of view in a story is important, because the way a character is understood is influenced by whether it is the point of view of the narrator or some other character. Berlin writes: “It is impossible to discuss character without reference to point of view, for, after all,

¹²³. Ibid.

¹²⁴. Ibid.

¹²⁵. Ibid., 116-117.

a character is not perceived by the reader directly, but rather mediated or filtered through the telling of the (implied) author, the narrator, or another character. For the reader is shown only what the author wishes to show. Never can the reader step behind the story to know a character other than in the way the narrative presents him.”¹²⁶

It is appropriate to note that scholars use *point of view* in at least two different ways. At the broadest level, point of view is the perspective from which an author tells his or her story. This perspective of the story can be understood at least at two levels. It can refer to the “‘angle of vision’ from which the narrator tells a story or the conceptual worldview of the narrator.”¹²⁷ This angle of vision refers to how characters, events, and dialogue are observed. They could be observed directly through the narrator, but they could also be observed through another character. Determining whether the perspective of the narration is that of the narrator or of a character becomes crucial in determining how a character is being depicted and how reliable a depiction is being made. An evaluation from the narrator carries different weight to one from a character who is untrustworthy.

More frequently, narrative critics refer to point of view as representing the values or the worldview of the narrator inscribed in the text. This can be referred to as the evaluative/conceptual/ideological point of view set by the narrator. Resseguie writes: “conceptual or ideological point of view refers to the narrator’s attitude toward or evaluation of the action, dialogue, characters, setting, and events.”¹²⁸ As texts are means of communication, authors communicate for particular reasons and through this communication they may wish to persuade readers to adopt their own values and worldview. Thus narratives are not neutral but embed a way of understanding the world.¹²⁹ Biblical authors, thus, have a particular view of the world and seek to persuade readers of these values.

In the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH), for instance, the narrator seeks to persuade readers toward YHWH-istic worship by evaluating kings based upon their fidelity.¹³⁰ Similarly, the father fig-

¹²⁶ Berlin, *Poetics*, 43.

¹²⁷ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 167.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 169.

¹²⁹ Cornelius Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 90–91.

¹³⁰ So Mark O’Brien, “The ‘Deuteronomistic History’ as a Story of Israel’s Leaders,” *ABR* 37, (1989), 4–34. On the reasoning for retaining the term “Deuteronomistic History” and for reading 1 Kings 1–11 in light

ure in Proverbs seeks to persuade the son to pursue wisdom as the best way to live in this world. These values can be explicit, such as when an author makes a comment like “this was evil in the eyes of the Lord.” But more often it is implicit through the selection of events, characters, and dialogue. It is through the evaluations of events and characters that the narrator seeks to persuade readers to adopt values imbedded in the text.

The narrator’s point of view can influence the way a reader understands and sympathizes with a character. A reader typically identifies with and is sympathetic to a character when that character shares the same values as the narrator.¹³¹ Conversely, the portrayal of a character outside of norms set by the narrator leads readers to understand characters more negatively and distance themselves from these characters. Understanding the point of view of the narrative helps reveal the intended evaluation of characters.

4.5 Characterization in Non-narrative Genres

This study on the characterization of Solomon also considers how Solomon is characterized in the wisdom books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and in the poetry of Song of Songs. Recently, scholars such as Michael Fox, Eric Christianson, and Craig Bartholomew have observed the narrative dynamics present in the book of Ecclesiastes, and this will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.¹³² But what about Proverbs and Song of Songs that lack a narrative? Brown argues that the wisdom literature is filled with a variety of characters and that their depiction is an important element in the formation of the ethical character of the reader. He writes:

The relationship between descriptive and prescriptive character is of critical importance in the wisdom corpus, since much of the literature conveys or models the contours of normative character through literary characterization. The book of Proverbs, for instance, introduces the reader to a veritable cavalcade of competing characters in lively discourse: parental figures, rebellious youth, Wisdom, the “strange” woman, the fool, the wise, the righteous, the wicked, just to name a few. The

of the Deuteronomistic History see chapter 3..

¹³¹. Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative*, 49.

¹³². See Michael V. Fox, “Frame Narrative and Composition in the Book of Qohelet,” *HUCA* 48, (1977), Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes*, 139–170; Eric S. Christianson, *A Time to Tell: Narrative Strategies in Ecclesiastes*, JSOTSup 280, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

book of Job profiles Job, his friends, and God, all in passionate interchange. Ecclesiastes portrays its main and only character, Qoheleth, in revealing autobiographical fashion.¹³³

Brown rightly observes the abundance of characters that fill the wisdom literature and that the importance they play in the formation of the ethical character of reader is dependent upon the literary character. But are characters in non-narrative depicted in the same way as in narrative? It is unclear how Brown answers this question. He argues: “[a]ll characters are defined primarily by their discourse. Some bare their souls while others remain relatively flat and one-dimensional.”¹³⁴ According to Brown, the primary means by which a character is depicted is through their own speech, and this influences how well developed the character is. This claim is supported by the long dialogues of Job and his friends, and by Qoheleth’s monologue. But even if Brown is correct that speech is the primary means of characterization in wisdom literature, it is not the only way. Characters are also defined by their descriptions and their actions. For instance, sinners in Proverbs 1:8–19 are certainly characterized through their speech (as told from the father): “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse” (Prov 1:11–14).

But they are also characterized through the father’s description of their actions: “[T]heir feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird, but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives” (1:16–18). Of course, the problem in non-narrative is that characterization techniques utilized to make a character appear complex and life-like are not as frequent as in narrative. Non-narrative texts focus less frequently on a character’s actions, dialogue, or reactions to the action and dialogue of others. Thus the features present in a narrative that makes a character appear more complex and lifelike are typically not as frequent in non-narrative texts. The result is that characters in non-narrative tend to be shallow and more typecast, like the sinners in Proverbs 1. But even if characters are typically less complex than in narrative, they are characters nonetheless, and readers still get a

¹³³. Brown, *Wisdom’s Wonder*, 15.

¹³⁴. Ibid.

glimpse of understanding them even if in a more stereotypical manner.

5. Summary

In this chapter, I have described the methodological framework that I will use in order to analyze the figure of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible. First, I stated that I will approach these books in their canonical form and thus will focus upon the MT as my point of departure. This has hermeneutical implications. This approach assumes that the books studied share authority as a collection and become relevant to one another without removing their independent contributions. In each chapter I prioritize the message of the individual book, letting the book speak for itself as far as possible. Second, I have approached these texts as literary texts. Therefore, I have assumed that literary texts are acts of interpersonal communication. Furthermore, approaching these biblical texts with literary integrity prioritizes the final form for their interpretation. Third, I have described the manner in which authors depict characters in order for readers to imagine them through showing, telling, and point of view. It is this literary approach that will be used to analyze the different characterizations of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible.

Having now addressed the framework that I will use in order to analyze the figure of Solomon throughout the Hebrew Bible, I will now turn to the foundational narrative of Solomon's reign in 1 Kings 1–11.

A PARADOXICAL KING: THE CHARACTERIZATION OF SOLOMON IN 1 KINGS 1–11

1. Introduction

The narrative of Solomon's reign in 1 Kings 1–11 is a perplexing story. It is a tale, of a unique king who is gifted by YHWH with extraordinary wisdom and who uses this wisdom to construct Israel's temple. In the end, this king turns away from YHWH and toward the idols of his many foreign wives (1 Kgs 11:1–8). This story is frequently characterized as being authorially arranged with theological intent in order to demonstrate that blessings result from faithfulness and cursings from disobedience.¹ However recent scholars, influenced by new hermeneutical models, such as narrative criticism, argue that this schema of a Solomon of blessing at the beginning of the narrative and a Solomon of cursing at the end is too simplistic and fails to consider the subtlety of Hebrew narrative.² Furthermore, such recent studies conclude that the character of Solomon is more complex and nuanced than previously understood. Many argue that the narrator is far from idealizing Solomon, but, in actuality, is presenting a Solomon whose reign does not just go wrong at the end but is problematic from the start.³ On this model, the seemingly glorious descriptions of Solomon's

¹ See for example Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, HSM 52, vol. 1, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 59–60; Viviano, "Glory Lost", 336–47, who argues that theology of retribution shapes the narrative.

² On subtlety in Hebrew narrative see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 114–130.

³ These studies are examined below.

reign are thus ironically undercut by the narrator. But it is my contention in this chapter that these readings are also subject to criticism. They are guilty of overreading the narrative, and, in effect, flatten the narrative rather than allowing a character's portrayal to accumulate progressively through the story.

In this chapter, I will argue that an important tension must be held together: the figure of Solomon can neither be collapsed into a wholly glorious figure who deviates at the end of his life, nor can his entire reign be reduced to a subtle and ironic critique by the narrator.⁴ Rather, it is important to keep two perspectives—namely, unprecedented glory and tragic downfall—together in order to do justice to both aspects of the narrative. The Solomon narrative is, I argue, purposefully paradoxical in that it frequently juxtaposes Solomon's glory and folly side-by-side. As one reads through the narrative, the negative characterizations of Solomon progress and become more prominent. The narrative does present Solomon's reign as one of unprecedented glory, but also one that is integrated with a misapplication of his wisdom. But before looking at this juxtaposition, it is important to consider some of the more recent arguments for Solomon's depiction in the narrative.

1.1 The Golden Age of Solomon's Reign

On the surface, it appears that the Solomon narrative can be divided into two phases. Chapters 1–10 give an idealistic account of Solomon presiding over a golden age in Israel that then suddenly ends with Solomon's condemnation as an apostate king for his marriage to foreign wives and concubines and worshipping their deities (chap. 11).⁵ J.M. Miller and J.H. Hayes argue that the editor of the account recognized the conflicting reports between the ideological claims and therefore edited the material to make it portray Solomon as grand in chapters 3–10 and as going astray in chapter 11.⁶ Similarly, Gary Knoppers also argues that Solomon is portrayed positively in chapters

⁴ Contrary to Lyle Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God*, (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989).

⁵ So L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. VI, (Philadelphia: JPS, 1968), 281, 294; I. Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige*, KHC, (Freiburg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1899), 76; James A. Montgomery, *The Books of Kings*, ICC, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1951), 231; Ernst Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige: Kapitel 1–16*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 130; John Gray, *1 & 2 Kings*, OTL, (London: SCM Press, 1970), 270; J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Judah and Israel*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); *Ibid.*; 196; *Ibid.*; 196.

⁶ Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Judah and Israel*, 196.

1–10 in order to legitimate his rule and then negatively in chapter 11 with the breaking of Deuteronomic law. Thus, when Solomon is obedient to the standards of the law it “leads to unexampled blessing.” On the other hand, disobedience “leads to dissolution of the kingdom he helped establish.”⁷ For Knoppers, the vast majority of this characterization is “unexampled blessing” as he argues that Solomon is presented as the apex of Israelite history:

The rise of Solomon, in deuteronomistic perspective, fulfils both the David promises and David's prayer. Solomon's enormous success legitimates his reign and vindicates the reign of his father. As much as David is the Deuteronomist's ideal king, the first period of Solomon's tenure is the Deuteronomist's ideal age. He champions Israel's imperial age as superior to any preceding, commending the divine selection of Jerusalem and David...1 Kings 1–10, in brief, is a deuteronomistic legitimation of Solomon's imperial monarchy.⁸

Similarly Pauline Viviano argues that the “Deuteronomistic historian's retributive theology has dictated the ordering of his narrative.”⁹ She writes that according to this arrangement: “By and large 1 Kings 1–10 presents Solomon and his reign in a favorable light. The impression given is one of unparalleled peace and prosperity under the reign of a wise king.”¹⁰ However, the problem with understanding Solomon's depiction as essentially positive in chapters 1–10 and negative in chapter 11 is the issue of Solomon's violation of Deuteronomic law during his reign (e.g., Deuteronomy 17 prohibits the king from gathering for himself abundant gold and silver and the acquiring of horses and chariots from Egypt) that all accumulate together (10:23–11:8). The existence of these covenant violations has inclined scholars to rightly examine whether Solomon is as glorious as he appears on the surface.

1.2 Literary Structure

In contrast to Solomon's presentation as essentially positive and idealistic, some scholars have argued that 1 Kings 1–11 has been deliberately arranged into a meaningful structure in order to reveal both the positive and negative characterizations of Solomon, making the abrupt transition in

⁷ Knoppers, *Two Nations Under God*, 60.

⁸ Ibid., 59–60.

⁹ Viviano, “Glory Lost,” 345.

¹⁰ Ibid., 344.

chapter 11 something anticipated by readers. Martin Noth argued in his study of the Deuteronomistic History that chapters 3–8 depict Solomon positively, while chapters 9–11 describe “the beginning of his apostasy.”¹¹ K.I. Parker then developed Noth’s thesis more fully by contending for a fully developed chiasm, arguing that recognizing that the narrative has been organized *chiastically* is important in order to understand how Solomon is characterized in the text in relation to the wider themes of wisdom and law. He argues that chapters 1–2 and 11:14–43 frame the narrative concerning the opposition of enemies to the throne. Chapters 3–8 and 9:1–11:14 mirror each other and are headed by a dream theophany. Chapters 3–8 present Solomon positively, while 9:1–11:14 present Solomon negatively. Parker argues that the implications of discerning the *chiastic* arrangement “allows the reader to focus, more sharply, on the two sides of Solomon’s character.”¹² Thus, Parker sees that the *chiastic* arrangement has a purposeful intent in the way Solomon is characterized in such grand descriptions before his fall into idolatry. By recognizing the arrangement, interpreters can understand the point at which Solomon’s actions begin leading toward apostasy.

Marc Brettler was an early reactor to Parker’s analysis and also argues that the literary structure of the Solomonic narrative is arranged in a way that reveals a “pro-Solomon” and “anti-Solomon” depiction. Brettler points out deficiencies in Parker’s arrangement, especially how uneven 1 Kings 6–8 is in comparison to only thirteen verses in 1 Kings 11:1–13.¹³ Instead, Brettler divides the narrative into three sections with two frames:

Solomon’s accession to the throne (1–2)

Frame (3:1–2)

Solomon serves YHWH and is blessed (3:3–9:23)

Frame (9:24–25)

Solomon violates Deuteronomy 17:14–17 and is punished (9:26–11:49)

Importantly, Brettler argues that the narrator’s negative portrayal of Solomon begins in 9:26,

¹¹ Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15, (1957; repr., Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981), 60.

¹² K.I. Parker, “Repetition as a Structuring Device in 1 Kings 1–11,” *JSOT* 42, (1988), 23–24.

¹³ Marc Z. Brettler, “The Structure of 1 Kings 1–11,” *JSOT* 49, (1991), 88.

which begins Solomon's breaking of the Deuteronomic kingship laws. He asserts that the breaking of these laws begins with Solomon's shipping ventures that first lead to unprecedented wealth (9:26), then continues with Solomon's collection of horses and chariots (10:26–29), and finally concludes with Solomon's marrying a large number of foreign wives (11:1–9). In support of “pro-Solomon” and “anti-Solomon” bifurcations, Brettler also argues that the “pro-Solomon” section (3:1–2) and the “anti-Solomon” section (9:24–25) are framed by mentioning Pharaoh's daughter and her house, a building project, and worship at the temple.¹⁴ Thus, the frames in each section serve to transition from one portrayal to the next.

Another reaction to Parker's study is Amos Frisch's study of the structure and significance of the Solomon narrative. Frisch argues that the narrative is organized *concentrically*, rather than *christically*, with the construction of the temple as the focal point of the structure, which highlights the positive and negative elements of Solomon.¹⁵ Frisch's concentric pattern can be summarized as follows:

- A. The Beginning of Solomon's Reign: From Adonijah's Proclamation of Himself as King until the Establishment of Solomon's Reign (1:1–2:46)
- B. Solomon and the Lord: Loyalty and the Promise of Reward (3:1–15)
- C. The Glory of Solomon's Reign: Wisdom, Rule, Riches and Honour (3:16–5:14 [ET 4:34])
- D. Towards Building the Temple: Collaboration with Hiram, and the Corvee for the Temple (5:15–32 [5:1–18])
- E. The Building and Dedication of the Temple (6:1–9:9)
- D'. In the Wake of Building the Temple: Trade with Hiram, and the Corvee for Building Projects (9:10–25)
- C'. The Glory of Solomon's Reign: Trade, Riches, Wisdom and Honour (9:26–10:29)
- B'. Solomon and the Lord: Disloyalty and the Announcement of Punishment (11:1–13)
- A'. The End of Solomon's Reign: Rebellions against Solomon and the Division of the Kingdom (11:14–12:24)

¹⁴ Ibid., 89–90.

¹⁵ Amos Frisch, “Structure and its Significance: The Narrative of Solomon's Reign (1 Kings 1–12.24),” *JOT* 51, (1991), 8–9.

In Frisch's arrangement, the construction of the temple as the central feature reveals how the parallel units contrast with one another: "It would seem that the Temple is drawn into prominence not only because of the affection in which it is held by the author/editor of Kings, but also because it is regarded as Solomon's most significant work. But in addition to emphasizing the focal unit, the structure also helps to illuminate the parallel units which complement each other."¹⁶ Thus, Frisch asserts that these parallel units contrast between the positive and negative characterizations: "This contrast highlights into prominence the conception of reward and punishment whereby Solomon's fidelity to the Lord brings blessing upon him, and his rule is graced with success, while disloyalty leads to misery and to his son's loss of power over the tribes of Israel."¹⁷

The arguments on the literary structure of the Solomon narrative have pushed scholarship forward by appreciating how a text's literary structure influences its message.¹⁸ However, the above arguments that the Solomon depiction is determined by the literary structure still do not overcome the problem of Solomon's negative depiction earlier in the narrative. These arguments do not account for, for instance, Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter (3:1), the accumulation of military power from Egypt (5:6; 10:26–29), or the delay of building the temple in order to construct his own palace (6:38–7:1). In order to address this issue, studies that focus upon a text's subtleties and ironies have been pursued to explain these incongruencies.

1.3 Narrative-Criticism

Another approach to understanding Solomon's presentation is narrative-criticism. These studies have observed that Solomon may not be being portrayed as glorious as it appears on the surface and that there are subtle indications that ironically subvert the glorious king. Jerome Walsh, in his article "The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1–5" argues that while on the surface it appears that Solomon is repeatedly praised, under the surface there are negative characterizations

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ Ibid., 14. Frisch believes that the criticism is implied rather than overt in order not to taint the material gain in Israel.

¹⁸ On the structure of 1 Kings 1–11, see David S. Williams, "Once Again: The Structure of the Narrative of Solomon's Reign," *JSOT* 86, (1999), 49–66; John W. Olley, "Pharaoh's Daughter, Solomon's Palace, and the Temple: Another Look at the Structure of 1 Kings 1–11," *JSOT* 27, (2003), 355–369. Parker, "Repetition as a Structuring Device in 1 Kings 1–11", 19–27; Frisch, "Structure and Significance", 3–14.

and states that: “it is difficult to escape the impression that the more covert pattern of characterization is likely to be closer to the opinion of the author. This is no surprise. For the author of this text, the bottom line was disapproval of Solomon: because of his sin, Yahweh rejected him, and the Davidic kingdom was divided.”¹⁹ Similarly, J. Daniel Hays, in his article “Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?”, argues strongly that when 1 Kings 1–11 is read in the context of Deuteronomy, specifically the Deuteronomic kingship laws in Deuteronomy 17, it is shown that the narrator is presenting an extensive critique of Solomon. He writes:

On the surface of the text, especially when read out of context, the narrator does seem to heap praise after praise on Solomon and the realm that he built. However, I will argue that there are numerous clues that suggest to us that perhaps the narrator is playing literary games with his readers. He may be openly and overtly praising Solomon on the surface, but he does not tell the story with a straight face, and if we look closely, we see him winking at us. On the surface the text glorifies the spectacular reign of Solomon. The point of many details in the text is to impress the reader with the glory of Solomon and his reign. However, below the surface another theme lurks, quietly and ironically pointing out some serious inconsistencies and some serious problems that the surface story glosses over.²⁰

For Hays the Solomon narrative is a “literary game” where overt praise of Solomon is continually undermined ironically in order to critique the entirety of his reign. In a similar way, Jung Ju Kang also argues a negative portrayal of Solomon’s reign using rhetorical criticism. He believes that the purpose of this negative characterization was in order to persuade exilic readers toward repentance. He writes: “the whole Solomon text is intended to show his inevitable failure in the ‘covenant relationship’ with Yahweh through the persuasive tension or contrast between expectation and reality. The portrayal of the inevitability of the failure of Solomon serves to persuade the reader in exile to realise the fact that the continuity of their covenant relationship with Yahweh does not depend on the Davidic kingship, the temple, and the land, but on Yahweh’s mercy and

¹⁹Jerome T. Walsh, “The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5,” *CBQ* 57, (1995), 493.

²⁰ Hays, “Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?”, 154; cf., Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 22–23, argues that the glorious Solomon is ironically undermined under the surface: “The canonical Solomon is triumphant—except that the construction of Solomon is, in the very text of 1 Kings 3–11, subverted from triumph by the ironic exposé of his would-be success. The narrative ends in indictment and demise (11:1–13).”

their repentance.”²¹

Closer to my own reading is the recent monograph from Sean Cook on *The Solomon Narratives in the Hebrew Bible*. Cook’s reading balances the positive and negative characterizations of Solomon in the narrative. His main concern is the rhetoric and the movement through the narrative. The heart of his argument is that Solomon’s “great failure is his failure to know and remember Torah...In the end, Solomon’s failure to keep Torah close (to read it, to know and remember it) leads him to sins of exogamy, polygamy, as well as apostasy in ch. 11. This failure further reveals that in many ways Torah is lost with Solomon. He does not keep it with him or read it.”²² Cook asserts that Solomon’s failure to keep, write, and remember Torah is revealed through the progression of the interrelated themes of Solomon’s wisdom and obedience to the law. He notes that Solomon’s wisdom progresses from “shrewdness” (1 Kgs 1–2), to judicial wisdom (3–5), to “prodigious knowledge” (5:9–14 [4:29–34]; 10:1–13, 23–24). Linked with the varieties of Solomon’s wisdom, he argues, is Solomon’s depiction of hearing and listening to YHWH and to the people. Solomon listens to David’s questionable advice to rid himself of threats to the throne (1–2), but then Solomon asks for a listening heart and utilizes it in his famous judgment (3:3–28). Cook argues that after chapter 3, Solomon is no longer portrayed as one who listens to YHWH or the people but only as the one who is heard because of his prodigious knowledge. Thus, Solomon’s prodigious knowledge, though true wisdom, only serves the royal court and does not assist in his faithfulness to YHWH or ability to govern Israel in justice or righteousness.²³

There is much to be gained from the narrative-critical research mentioned above. I believe these studies have correctly highlighted that there is more ambiguity to Solomon than is normally recognized in either the “good Solomon/bad Solomon” of 1 Kings 1–10 and 11 or the literary structure of the narrative determining the positive and negative depictions of Solomon. My own reading of the Solomon narrative will benefit from the observations of a narrative-critical approach. Like these other readings, I agree that the Solomon narrative contains a more complex Solomon who is characterized in negative ways throughout his reign. However, my reading is distinct from

²¹ Jung Ju Kang, *The Persuasive Portrayal of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11*, EUS XXIII / 760, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 17–18.

²² Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 84.

²³ Ibid., 82–84.

others because those applying a narrative-critical approach have overstated the case when it comes to possible negative characteristics of Solomon. Though there is flexibility in how some ambiguities could be taken, the overly-negative arguments appear to be incongruent with the immediate context. The overly-negative characterizations likewise do not fit well with the way the figure of Solomon has been understood in the wider Hebrew Bible. Examples include: the “all-wise” king of Proverbs, the subversion of Solomon in Ecclesiastes, Solomon as the ideal king of Psalm 72, and Solomon’s kingdom as a way of future prosperity for Israel (Mic 4:1–4; Zech 3:6–10) or its opposite as a sign of Israel’s punishment (Ps 105:33; Jer 5:17). These need to come into our evaluation, as some of them will in this thesis.

Cook’s reading rightly balances the positive and negative elements without ever letting one dominate the other. But his reading is less convincing when he suggests that the rationale of Solomon’s sin is due to his failure to write and listen to Torah. Of course, Solomon is condemned for breaking Deuteronomic law, specifically Deuteronomic kingship law, but the narrative does not mention anything about Solomon’s failure to write the law, nor does there appear any hint or implication to this. Nor do I think Cook is correct that Solomon’s prodigious knowledge foreshadows his failure. Solomon’s knowledge is presented as a direct fulfilment of his request for wisdom at Gibeon (e.g., 1 Kgs 5:10; 10:24).

Rather, Solomon is presented paradoxically in the application of his wisdom. His wisdom is a gift from YHWH, but the application of his wisdom wavers between faithfulness to YHWH and political and personal shrewdness. In the end, the narrative reveals that wisdom alone is not enough to govern God’s people, nor does it guarantee obedience to YHWH.²⁴ The final portrait is of a king who accomplished glorious things during his reign but who was far from perfect. The presence of negative actions in his life does not negate the glorious aspects, as later biblical authors exemplify, but highlights YHWH’s patience and emphasizes the importance that the narrator places on exclusive faithfulness to YHWH.

²⁴Michael V. Fox, “The Uses of Indeterminacy,” *Semeia* 71, (1995), 187–90.

2. The Context of the Solomon Narrative

2.1 The Deuteronomistic History

Scholars recognize that the books of 1–2 Kings²⁵ exist as a part of a larger context spanning from Deuteronomy–2 Kings that “constitute a single work, unified by a basic homogeneity of language, style and content” and has been called the Deuteronomistic history (DtrH).²⁶ But while there is a consensus among scholars regarding the existence of a DtrH and scholars continue to refer to it, the specifics of how this composition came together is still disputed and shows how difficult it is to reconstruct the evidence.²⁷ The most widespread debate regarding its composition is between three views: the DtrH was written by a single individual writing during the exile as a means to show YHWH’s justification in punishing Israel, as Noth proposed,²⁸ the DtrH is a double-redactions: 1) a single pre-exilic redaction in the time of Josiah and 2) an exilic redactor, as argued by Frank Cross Moore and his followers,²⁹ or there are multiple exilic and post-exilic redactions, as argued by Rudolph Smend, Jr. and Walter Dietrich.³⁰

²⁵ R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 719, notes that it was beginning in the 15th century that the book of Kings divided into two books. I will refer to the books in the plural for the convenience of biblical references.

²⁶ Gary N. Knoppers, “Introduction,” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 1.

²⁷ The literature on the DtrH is extensive. See S. L. McKenzie, “Deuteronomistic History,” in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 160–168; T. Römer and A. de Pury, “Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues,” in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. A. de Pury, T. Römer, and J.-D. Macchi, JSOTSup 306 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 24–141; Sandra Richter, “Deuteronomistic History,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, ed. H.G.M Williamson and Bill T. Arnold, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 219–231.

²⁸ Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*. Noth’s hypothesis was refined further by Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, SBT 9, (London: SCM, 1953) and H.W. Wolff, “Das Kerygma des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes,” ZAW 73, (1961), 171–86, who argued that Noth ignored much of the material that extended hope for restoration.

²⁹ Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 18, (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981). Cf., Iain W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, BZAW 172, (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1988), who argues that the time of redaction is better placed in the reign of Hezekiah.

³⁰ R. Smend Jr., “Das Gestz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomischen Redaktionsgeschichte,” in *Probleme biblischer Theologie*, ed. H.W. Wolff, (Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 494–509; W. Dietrich, *Prophetie*

In spite of there not being a consensus on the details of the compositional history of Deuteronomy–2 Kings, there are agreements on the structure of the account, as well a linguistic and thematic unity to these books, that still make the term “DtrH” useful. Keith Bodner helpfully defines the DtrH as:

[T]he epic narrative compiled in the aftermath of the Babylonian invasion and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, when the temple was destroyed and a sizeable portion of the population deported into exile. The period of exile and beyond led to a massive reappraisal of Israel's history, and the books of Joshua–Kings for a long and sophisticated reflection on their experience in the land from conquest to collapse.³¹

Bodner's definition presents a model that is useful in discussing this context. According to this model, the DtrH reached its final form in the sixth century and the structure of this epic narrative began with Israel outside of Canaan looking to possess the land and ended with a divided nation outside of the land in exile.³² In particular for the DtrH serving as the context for the Solomon narrative, Hays argues that regardless of views on the composition of Kings, scholars agree that Deuteronomy and 1–2 Samuel are its background. He writes: “Deuteronomy is the expression of the law and covenant relationship that forms the criteria by which the kings and the nation are evaluated. Likewise the words of Samuel and the life of David add to the criteria by which the narrator judges the history of Yahweh's people in 1–2 Kings.”³³

Scholarship reveals a lack of consensus on the dating of or on the number of redactors to the DtrH. This project does not set out to solve these issues. My working assumption is that the present form of the DtrH, and 1–2 Kings in particular, is the form that was intended to be transmitted by its authors/redactors.³⁴ Reading the Solomon narrative in the context of the DtrH is dependent upon the present form having a narrative unity that is present in the transition between

und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk, FRLANT 108, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); W. Dietrich, “Prophetie im deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk,” in *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. T. Römer, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Lovaniensium CXLVII (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 47–65.

³¹ Keith Bodner, *Elisha's Profile in the Book of Kings*, (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 13.

³² Ibid.

³³ Hays, “Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?”, 155.

³⁴ See chapter 2 for my methodological framework.

the books. The death of Moses binds the ending of Deuteronomy with the beginning of Joshua; the death of Joshua binds the end of Joshua with the beginning of Judges; the last judge, Samuel, binds together the end of Judges with the beginning of 1–2 Samuel; the end of David's reign binds together the end of 1–2 Samuel with the beginning of 1–2 Kings.³⁵ Furthermore, linguistic links between books reinforce this narrative unity. For instance:

- The command to be strong and courageous (Deut 31:6, 7, 23/Josh 1:6, 7, 9)
- All Israel (Deut 31:6/Josh 1:7, 23)
- Servant of the Lord (Deut 34:5/Josh 1:1, 7, 13)
- The command to devote to destruction a city that allows “worthless fellows” to lead the people into idolatry (Deut 13:15–17; Judg 20:16–18)
- The Israel's desire to set a king over themselves like the surrounding nations (Deut 17:14–15; 1 Sam 8:5, 20)
- Rest as an inheritance from YHWH (Deut 12:8–9; 2 Sam 7:1)
- The covenant blessings and curses (Deut 28–29 and 1 Kgs 8:22–53)³⁶

The perspective of where 1–2 Kings ends is the sixth century exile with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. Of course, this does not mean that all the material that is found in the DtrH arose from the sixth century. There may well have been a pre-exilic edition of the DtrH as hypothesized by Cross or perhaps some post-exilic material.³⁷ Nevertheless, the literary perspective from which the material has been integrated and presented is from the perspective in which this history ends. It should also seem common sense that authors/redactors had control over the material they were editing. Thus, the material found in the book is what the final author/editor chose to keep and transmit because it fit his own perspective. The context in which the material of 1–2 Kings is read is from the exilic perspective, which is the historical point in which the book ends.

³⁵ Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, NAC, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 38.

³⁶ J. Gordon McConville and Philip E. Satterthwaite, *Exploring the Old Testament History: The Histories*, (London: SPCK Publishing, 2007), 210–211.

³⁷ Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction*, (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007), argues for a Persian redaction in addition to his reconstruction of a Neo-Assyrian redaction in the seventh century and an exilic Neo-Babylonian redaction.

2.2 The Succession Narrative

Another preliminary question to be discussed regarding the context of the Solomon narrative is the narrative's boundaries. Leonhard Rost argued in his influential study, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, that there is an independent source that he calls the Thronfolgegeschichte, the Succession Narrative (SN), spanning 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2.³⁸ The purpose of this source was to defend Solomon's succession to the Davidic throne. The theme of succession in this source was discerned from Bathsheba's question to David: "And now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him" (1 Kgs 1:20). Rost's theory has been influential among scholars with the result that some are reluctant to interpret 1 Kings 1–2 along with chapters 3–11 because of the belief that these chapters did not originally come from the same source.³⁹ For instance, von Rad believes that 1 Kings 3:1 marked the beginning of Solomon's reign from the perspective of the Deuteronomist.⁴⁰ Even more direct is G.H. Jones's assertion that chapters 1–2 should be separated from chapters 3–11, a conclusion based upon Rost's findings of the SN.⁴¹ The effect of Rost's theory can even be seen in Walter Brueggemann's book on Solomon, where Brueggemann treats chapters 1–2 as a background to the Solomon narrative but separately from from chapters 3–11.⁴²

Though Rost's hypothesis has been influential, there is "considerable disagreement among scholars today about the limits, unity, purpose, dating, and authorship of the succession narrative."⁴³ Indeed, Barton writes: "Thirty years ago it was all so simple. There was definitely a Succession Narrative, consisting of 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2, with maybe a few fragmentary extensions back into 2 Samuel."⁴⁴ But now there are questions whether 1 Kings 1–2 is the end of any source. If 1 Kings 1–2 is not a part of this source then the uniting theme of succession in 2 Samuel

³⁸ Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David*, Historical Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship 1, (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982), 85–87. Rost admitted the beginning of the source is unclear, but included 6:16, 20b–23 as a part of it.

³⁹ Kang, *The Persuasive Portrayal*, 103.

⁴⁰ G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962, 1965), 334.

⁴¹ G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, NCB, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 88.

⁴² Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 46–65, 66–86.

⁴³ Eric A. Seibert, *Subversive Scribes and the Solomonic Narrative: A Rereading of 1 Kings 1–11*, LHBOTS 436, (New York/London: T & T Clark, 2006), 103.

⁴⁴ John Barton, "Dating the 'Succession Narrative,'" in *In Search of Pre-exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, JSOTSup 406 (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 95.

9–20 is problematic, as are readings that separate 1 Kings 1–2 from chapters 3–11. Rost's hypothesis on succession is based on identifying the theme in 1–2 Kings and tracing it backwards into 2 Samuel 9–20. But scholars have questioned whether or not this is the predominate theme of this stretch of text. Joseph Blenkinsopp, for example, argues that there are two themes in the SN, not just one: 1) David's own legitimation to rule and 2) the succession.⁴⁵ J.W. Flanagan argues that the SN is a double redaction: there was an original court history that was then supplemented with 1 Kings 1–2.⁴⁶ Similarly, P. Kyle McCarter questions whether the "so called" SN is a unity and instead argues that 1 Kings 1–2 was composed independently but in reference to the Samuel material.⁴⁷ Gillian Keys' reassessment of the SN in particular shows the distinctiveness of 1 Kings 1–2 from the Samuel material.⁴⁸ She argues that there has been too much emphasis placed upon the theme of succession and that a more accurate theme is "sin and punishment."⁴⁹ Furthermore she argues that 2 Samuel 10–20 and 1 Kings 1–2 display several distinctions.⁵⁰ For instance:

1. Narrative Style: 2 Samuel 10–12 is told with rapid narration without the use of repetition (e.g., 11:14–25), while 1 Kings 1–2 is a slow narration with the use of repetition (e.g., 1:41–48).
2. Language: The language of the two texts seem to differ as well. First Kings 1–2 uses אָדָנִי eighteen times in chapter 1 in comparison to twenty-five times in 2 Samuel 10–20. The allusion in 2 Samuel 15:1 and 1 Kings 1:5 has distinct vocabulary choices for "chariots" and "horses." Second Samuel 15:1 uses מַרְכָּבָה and סָסִים, while 1 Kings 1:5 uses רֶכֶב and פָּרָשִׁים.

⁴⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Theme and Motif in the Succession History (2 Sam. XI 2ff) and the Yahwist Corpus," in *Volume du Congrès: Genève, 1965*, ed. G.W. Anderson, VTSup 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 44–57.

⁴⁶ J.W. Flanagan, "Court History or Succession Document? A Study of 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2," *JBL* 91, (1972), 172–181. He also argues that 2 Samuel 11:2–12:25 was added in this second redaction.

⁴⁷ P. Kyle McCarter, "'Plots, True or False', The Succession Narrative as Court Apologetic," *Int* 35, (1981), 361–362.

⁴⁸ Gillian Keys, *The Wages of Sin: A Reappraisal of the 'Succession Narrative'*, JSOTSup 221, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). See also Robert P. Gordon, "A House Divided: Wisdom in Old Testament Narrative Traditions," in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, ed. Day, John, Gordon, Robert P., and H.G.M Williamson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 104. Cf., Barton, "Dating the 'Succession Narrative'", 101–05, who argues that the SN of 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2 has a distinct Hebrew narrative style resembling the J source and stories within the DtrH (minus overt Deuteronomistic editorial). This style is distinct from Deuteronomistic style and the later Jewish novel.

⁴⁹ Keys, *The Wages of Sin*, 43–54.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 54–69.

3. Theological Outlook: Second Samuel 10–20 has only hints of cultic material, whereas cultic material is mentioned frequently in 1 Kings 1–2 (e.g., 1:39; 2:3, 28–30).

The debate on the nature and extent of a SN should lead to reevaluating 1 Kings 1–2 in relation to 1 Kings 3–11. These chapters should be read as a holistic narrative. Whether or not chapters 1–2 and 3–11 were originally from different sources, the coherence of chapters 1–2 with chapters 3–11 should be noted. As should the coherence of these chapters in relation to the rest of the narrative due to the structure of the narrative and the relationship between chapters 1–2 and chapter 3. First Kings 1–2 and 1 Kings 11 form an *inclusio* around the Solomon narrative suggesting its literary wholeness. Walsh shows that 1 Kings 1–2 mirrors 11:26–43. He observes that the role the prophet Nathan plays in securing Solomon's succession in 1 Kings 1:1–2:9 corresponds to the role that the prophet Ahijah plays in Jeroboam's succession for the northern kingdom in 11:26–40. He also argues that Solomon's elimination and expulsion of the enemies of his throne (2:12b–46) corresponds to YHWH raising up enemies in 11:14–25.⁵¹ Frisch, who I noted above, argues that the Solomon narrative is framed by an *inclusio* as seen in 2:15 and 12:15.⁵² His argument for extending the Solomon narrative to 12:24 has not gathered many supporters because it ignores the notice of Solomon's death as a marker for the end of the narrative. However, his observation on the similar phrases usefully demonstrates, in my view, the coherence between chapter 2 and other parts of 1–2 Kings.

The coherence of the Solomon narrative is also suggested by the relationship between chapters 1–2 and chapter 3 suggesting a literary wholeness. This shows that these opening chapters are to be read as the beginning stages of the Solomon narrative. Robert Gordon observes that YHWH's delight in Solomon's not asking for the death of his enemies (3:11) could be taken as "some kind of oblique commentary on his previous actions."⁵³ I would add to this observation that chapters 1–2 also serve as an important function narratively in establishing Solomon as king. Starting the Solomon narrative in 3:1 (or 3:4) lacks narrative sense. Without an introduction to Solomon's reign the reader is expected to somehow know who Solomon is. It is more likely that the context of 1

⁵¹ Jerome T. Walsh, *1 Kings*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 151.

⁵² See note 15.

⁵³ Gordon, "A House Divided," 103.

Kings 1–2 is to be read in relation to 1 Kings 3–11. The structure of the narrative as a whole and the links between chapters 1–2 and chapter 3 indicate that these chapters are intended to be read together as an integrated literary work, describing the beginning of Solomon's reign. The inclusion of these chapters are an integral part of Solomon's characterization revealing the ambiguity of the nature of Solomon's character from the beginning of his reign as king.

3. Absence and Action: Solomon's Succession to the Throne: 1 Kings 1:1–2:46

Solomon's accession to the throne has produced a strikingly diverse array of opinions from scholars. At the level of sources, some scholars, such as Rost, believe that 1 Kings 1–2 is the ending of the Succession Narrative and was written by a pro-Solomonic author seeking to legitimize Solomon's reign.⁵⁴ In contrast, Van Seters argues that the Succession Narrative is anti-Solomonic and it meant to delegitimize the Davidic house.⁵⁵ Of course, such discussions remain speculative and unverifiable. Even remaining at the narrative-level of the story, these chapters have created polarizing opinions about whether these chapters should be understood as depicting YHWH's approval and providence for Solomon's ascension to the throne⁵⁶ or whether Solomon's accession reveals problems right from the beginning. I suggest that the narrative juxtaposes these two perspectives and it legitimates Solomon's rule as occurring through the providence of YHWH, but it is in the consolidation of his rule that Solomon's efforts are unnecessary and this creates the potential that Solomon's focus on his absolute power could place him at odds with YHWH's will.

3.1 Solomon as an Absent Character

The beginning of Solomon's accession to the throne is notable for his lack of any role in the heated rivalry that leads to his accession. The ambiguity in the circumstances leading to Solomon's accession causes some to question the legitimacy of Solomon's reign. Marvin Sweeney and Daniel Hays each argue that the fact that nowhere does YHWH explicitly approve of Solomon's kingship char-

⁵⁴ Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings*, AB, (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 167. The conclusion that 1 Kings 1–2 has a pro-Solomonic agenda can be traced back to Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David*.

⁵⁵ John Van Seters, *In Search of History*, (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983), 289–90. See a discussion on different redactional theories up to 1978 in David M. Gunn, *The Story of David: Genre and Interpretation*, JSOTSup 6, (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), 22–24.

⁵⁶ As highlighted by Richard Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, IBC, (Louisville: John Knox, 1987), 21–22.

acterizes Solomon negatively and is intended to make readers question the validity of his succession.⁵⁷

However, I suggest that Solomon is characterized by his absence and passivity in order to demonstrate his legitimacy to the throne and YHWH's providence and approval.⁵⁸ The distinctive feature in this narrative is Solomon's lack of activity. The narrator notes that Solomon, along with Zadok the priest, Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei, Rei, and David's mighty men (1:8–10), are not invited to Adonijah's sacrifices at the Serpent's Stone. This statement implies that this group did not support Adonijah's bid for kingship. And while Nathan and Bathsheba's plan is focused on securing the throne for Solomon, he is notably absent. This scene focuses on Solomon's succession but is orchestrated by Nathan and Bathsheba on Solomon's behalf. Nowhere in the narrative about the succession does Solomon appear to have a role in securing the throne for himself.⁵⁹ Even when David has decided to make Solomon king, Solomon is passive in the coronation. David's instructions to Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah are to make Solomon ride upon his mule and for them to bring him down to Gihon and anoint him (1:33–34).⁶⁰ Solomon's passivity is further reinforced by Jonathan, son of Abiathar, as he recounts these events to Adonijah's party stating that David has made

⁵⁷ Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Critique of Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 114, (1995), 619–20, argues that Solomon is thus contrasted with Josiah who is made king by the people of the land following the assassination of his father Amon (2 Kgs 21:23–24) (620). Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?," 158.

⁵⁸ Walsh, "The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5", 474, argues that the effect of Solomon's absence in the first place and passivity in the second creates suspense to what the readers' first encounter with Solomon will be like when he first acts and speaks. He writes: "The overt effect of the narrator's reticence about Solomon is to build up considerable suspense about this otherwise unknown person who has unexpectedly emerged as David's successor. When the narrator finally shows us Solomon in action, the scene is brief but telling: he treats his erstwhile rival fairly and with commendable restraint." Walsh is correct that this does create anticipation about the type of king Solomon will be, but the narrator's reticence probably has multiple effects. I would suggest that it primarily portrays the lack of any role Solomon played in his succession as everything was either done for him or on his behalf. This is clear when contrasted with Adonijah's overt actions in attempting to become king.

⁵⁹ The only view of Solomon is through the way Nathan and Bathsheba speak about him. Significantly, Nathan and Bathsheba portray Solomon as loyal to David along with Nathan, Zadok the priest, and Benaiah (1:26) in contrast to Adonijah's support from Abiathar and Joab (1:19, 26). Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 91 and Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, NIBCOT, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 24–25 note that the factions seem to be divided between David's leadership at Hebron (Joab, Abiathar, and Haggith) and Jerusalem (Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah).

⁶⁰ The hipil רכב, ירד in 1:33 emphasizes Solomon's passivity by these actions done to Solomon.

Solomon king (1:43).⁶¹

It is true that nowhere in these chapters does YHWH explicitly affirm Solomon's kingship, as Sweeney and Hays observe.⁶² But YHWH's love of Solomon and the contrast set up between Solomon and Adonijah suggests that we should understand that Solomon is YHWH's choice as David's successor. In 2 Samuel 12:24–25, YHWH is said to have loved Solomon and named him Jedidiah: "beloved by YHWH". Hays argues that this point may be to contrast YHWH's love of Solomon with the firstborn who died.⁶³ However, it is reasonable to expect that YHWH's love for Solomon at his birth would foreshadow the important role Solomon would play in the future, especially after the promise of a son to succeed David.⁶⁴ Further, YHWH's instructions to name him יְדִידִיָּה, which shares the root דָּוָד, suggests Solomon's future role as the next Davidic king.⁶⁵ Brueggemann concludes: "Indeed, a good case can be made that this entire literature is designed to substantiate Solomon as the proper successor to David."⁶⁶

Furthermore, an element that is often overlooked is how Adonijah's portrayal with Absalom-like actions reveals the narrator's evaluation of Adonijah's actions in contrast to Solomon's. Adonijah, in his bid for kingship, is depicted in a manner similar to Absalom: he assembles chariotry and horses and heralds himself as the successor to David, just like Absalom (2 Sam 15:1). He then goes on to host a celebration meal at En-rogel as Absalom did (2 Sam 15:7–12).⁶⁷ Frisch notes that just as Adonijah and Absalom are linked together, Solomon is paralleled to David by Solomon being anointed with קֶרֶן הַשֶּׁמֶן "horn of oil", which only occurs in David's and Solomon's anointings (1 Kgs 1:39; 1 Sam 16:13). He argues: "This parallel makes a statement about the similarity between the anointing of Solomon and that of his father, who was the youngest of Jesse's sons" and thus

⁶¹. The hiphil מָלַךְ in 1:43 again emphasizes Solomon's passivity. Jonathan's recounting of the event that Solomon was made to ride on the king's mule and was anointed as king (1:44–45) demonstrates Solomon's lack of any active role.

⁶². Marvin A. Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, OTL, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 48; Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?", 158–59.

⁶³. Ibid., 158.

⁶⁴. Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, ApOTC, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014), 79.

⁶⁵. J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and the Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis: King David (II Samuel 9–20 and I Kings 1–2)*, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 92.

⁶⁶. Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 39.

⁶⁷. Additionally, a comment on Adonijah's looks may link him with Absalom (2 Sam 14:25).

“undercuts Adonijah’s main claim to the throne.”⁶⁸ By portraying Adonijah’s actions in a similar way to Absalom’s and Solomon’s anointing similar to David’s, the narrator implicitly comments on Adonijah’s “exalting himself” (מתנשא). This implicit commentary reveals the unfavourable evaluation of Adonijah’s actions in his bid for the throne. Furthermore, the fact that Solomon is the only one of the king’s sons not invited to Adonijah’s sacrifice and feast (1 Kgs 1:10), in addition to the narrator revealing that Bathsheba and Solomon will be executed if Adonijah becomes king, suggests that there is truth behind the expectation of Solomon’s eventual rule (1:12, 21).

All of these things taken together suggest that Solomon’s accession is to be viewed as the providential working of YHWH. The narrator’s portrayal of Solomon’s absence and passivity in his succession sets up a contrast with Solomon’s subsequent actions in consolidating his power and there is a contrast between the workings of YHWH and Solomon’s own attempts at establishing and keeping his kingdom.

3.2 Solomon’s Consolidation of His Throne

Just as Solomon’s rise to the throne has created an array of scholarly opinions, so has Solomon’s consolidation of power through the removal of any potential challengers to the throne. B.O. Long argues that the narrator portrays Solomon’s strengthening of his power as justified in his actions to remove his potential competitors.⁶⁹ Conversely, Iain Provan describes Solomon’s actions as “a fairly sordid story of power-politics thinly disguised as a morality tale.”⁷⁰ I would maintain that the narrative seems to suggest that both of these realities are true at the same time. Solomon’s actions in the removal of any potential threats appears justified, but the perspective of the narrator is that Solomon’s actions are unnecessary because YHWH has already established his reign.

In 1 Kings 2:1–46, the narrator describes David’s final instructions (2:1–9), David’s death (2:10–11), and Solomon’s consolidation of his throne (2:12–46). Interpreters have observed that

⁶⁸ Amos Frisch, “Comparison with David as a Means of Evaluating Character in the Book of Kings,” *JHebS* (2011), 12.

⁶⁹ B. O. Long, *1 Kings: With an Introduction to Historical Literature*, FOTL 9, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 49. See also Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 344–54.

⁷⁰ Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 40.

Solomon's consolidation of his power is framed by verses 12 and 46.⁷¹

So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established. (2:12)

So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon (2:46).

Long argues that this frame functions to demonstrate to the reader that Solomon must eliminate his enemies in order to establish his rule.⁷² However, it is difficult to read verse 12 as anything other than the result of Solomon's coronation and accession as king upon David's death: Solomon's throne was secured without Solomon taking any action. After all, Solomon himself believed, before the elimination of his opponents, that YHWH had already established his throne (2:24, 45). The variation of wording in verses 12 and 46 is also significant. Verse 12 uses the niph'al wayyiqtol of כִּון suggesting that the establishment of the throne was completed and the context implies that Solomon had no part in it. This is enhanced by the phrase "firmly established." Verse 46 also uses the niph'al of כִּון but adds בִּיד שְׁלֹמֹה. Thus, I would suggest that this frame provides a dual perspective on the establishment of Solomon's throne. It contrasts the results of YHWH's providence and Solomon's own actions in consolidating his power. Comparing the two frames suggests, as J.P. Fokkelman notes, that Solomon's subsequent actions in disposing of his enemies was unnecessary.⁷³ Thus, the frame presents contrasting views of the establishment of Solomon's royal power: 1) Solomon's establishment as king, in which he played no part, and 2) Solomon's own efforts to consolidate power. This frame is important because it provides the narrator's perspective, especially in light of what appears to be the justified removal of opponents to the throne.

When we look more closely at Solomon's actions, on the surface it appears that these actions were justified in the execution and removal of each of his opponents in light of Israel's bloodguilt law (Deut 19:10). Indeed, Long writes that: "the episodes nevertheless give careful justification for each of Solomon's actions, as though to remove any doubt as to the legitimacy of his attempts to consolidate authority."⁷⁴ Solomon and Adonijah recognize that Solomon's succession to the throne was through the providence of YHWH (2:15, 24), making Adonijah's actions disloyal to his oath to Solomon and also contrary to the divine will. Solomon's declaration against Adonijah is that, by his

⁷¹Long, *1 Kings*, 47–48; Walsh, *1 Kings*, 46.

⁷²Long, *1 Kings*, 47.

⁷³Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 390, 409. See also Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God*, 126.

⁷⁴Long, *1 Kings*, 49.

own actions, Adonijah is responsible for his own death (2:23). This, therefore, removes any type of bloodguilt that would be attached to Solomon for Adonijah's murder.⁷⁵ The execution of Joab is also attributed to being Joab's own responsibility (2:31–33) due to the murder of Abner and Amasa (cf., 2 Sam 3:21–39; 20:1–13) during a time of peace (1 Kgs 2:5). Furthermore, Solomon's elimination of Shimei is presented as Shimei's own responsibility. This situation with Shimei is unique among the others because in order to eliminate Shimei justly, the right circumstances had to come about because of David's former pardon promising Shimei that "You shall not die" (2 Sam 19:23). By breaking his oath with Solomon, Shimei nullified his earlier pardon from David and gave Solomon the basis he needed in order to execute him legally and avoid any bloodguilt.⁷⁶

However, there is a somewhat ironic twist in this chapter where Solomon breaks his own promise to Bathsheba in order to execute Adonijah for breaking his oath. After publicly agreeing to grant Bathsheba whatever she asks (1 Kgs 2:20), he refuses her request and has Adonijah executed (2:23–25). Solomon's breaking of his word at this point, even if that word proves to be against his own interests, characterizes him negatively. Sweeney concludes that this action discredits Solomon's credibility.⁷⁷ Furthermore, Walsh comments that Solomon's characterization suddenly changes from respect for his mother to an outburst, especially in light of the new oath. He writes:

...the intensity of Solomon's reaction to Adonijah's request is striking. His instantaneous rage at Bathsheba, the incoherence of the last words of verse 22, and the unprecedented double oath in verses 23–24 (no comparable example of a double oath occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible)—all combine to point up how strongly Solomon feels threatened by the request.⁷⁸

And rightfully so. There is clear precedent that the taking of the king's concubine is a challenge to royal power (2 Sam 16:20–22). Nevertheless, Solomon's public breaking of his promise undoubtedly creates complexity to the nature of Solomon.

Furthermore, the questionable nature of Solomon's actions is accentuated by the reasons Solomon gives to have Joab executed. Solomon declares that Joab's death is the will of YHWH for Joab's bloodguilt (1 Kgs 2:32–33), but this appeal to YHWH's will rings hollow on Solomon's lips.

⁷⁵Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 77.

⁷⁶Gane, *Cult and Character*, 349–350.

⁷⁷Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, 69.

⁷⁸Walsh, *1 Kings*, 66.

The context of Joab's execution is the removal of Adonijah's supporters as initiated in Adonijah's request for Abishag and Solomon's removal of Abiathar. Furthermore, the narrator remarks in verse 28 that the primary motivation for Joab's execution was on account of his support of Adonijah.⁷⁹ Solomon's true motivation is the disposal of an enemy, which is understandable in a state of turmoil. Solomon understood that Adonijah's request for Abishag was a threat to his rule. His worry over Adonijah intensified because both Joab and Abiathar represented military and religious support that could make a schism within the kingdom a reality. But Solomon's defence of his actions as a moral issue suggests a masking of true intentions.⁸⁰

First Kings 1–2 juxtaposes two perspectives of Solomon's accession to the throne. First, his rise comes through no effort of his own and resulted in his kingdom being "firmly established". Solomon's rise is portrayed as happening through the providence of YHWH and depicts him as the rightful heir to the throne. Solomon's lack of any role in securing his succession is juxtaposed by his unnecessary actions in consolidating his throne. The evaluation that Solomon's actions were unnecessary are dependent upon understanding the contrast between the episode frame in 2:12 and 46. After all, it would be commonplace for a king to eliminate potential rivals to the throne and consolidate power. Furthermore, Solomon's public breaking of his word to Bathsheba and his insecurity in the establishment of his throne that YHWH had given him shows the complexity of human actions in the midst of upheaval.

4. The Gift and Application of Wisdom: 1 Kings 3:1–5:14

Following Solomon's securing of his kingdom, various elements are recorded regarding his receiving of and use of wisdom. For the majority of readers, Solomon's request for wisdom, his judgment of the case regarding the two prostitutes, the division of his kingdom, and his encyclopaedic knowledge depict him in an exemplary way. In contrast to the innate wisdom David describes Solomon as having (1 Kgs 2:6, 9) and which he used in order to eliminate his opponents (2:13–46), the wisdom Solomon receives and applies in chapter three is of a different order and benefits Israel at large. Some interpreters, Walsh and Hays in particular, argue that Solomon's practice of

⁷⁹Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 77. See also Gordon, "A House Divided," 103.

⁸⁰Walsh, "The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5", 485; Walsh, *1 Kings*, 62–63.

wisdom is far from ideal and that there are far more troubling elements in these chapters than what one finds on the surface, which undercuts the glorious Solomon.⁸¹ However, these conclusions are exaggerated. I will show that Solomon is characterized as a king who uses his wisdom in a variety of ways and in different circumstances in order to fulfil the promises of YHWH. I will also show that, at points, Solomon's use of wisdom places him in opposition to Israel's laws. Solomon's law breaking is not used in a way that ironically subverts all of Solomon's actions nor does it overshadow the positive use of his wisdom. Instead, it shows that wisdom does not guarantee the absence of law breaking.

4.1 Wisdom at Gibeon

Solomon's practice of sacrifices to YHWH, YHWH's appearance to him in a dream, and his request for wisdom are typically understood in a favourable manner for Solomon. C.L. Seow notes that the pattern of a king's deity visiting him in a dream at the beginning of his reign is meant to communicate the legitimation of his rule in the ancient Near East.⁸² The dialogue between Solomon and YHWH exemplifies a Solomon of a different order than that of Solomon depicted in 1 Kings 2. Solomon's request to YHWH presents to the reader a humble king and results in YHWH's promises of wisdom, wealth, and honour. Solomon refers to himself as "a little child"⁸³ not knowing "how to go out or come in."⁸⁴ Solomon's humble request to YHWH emphasizes this ideal characterization, setting up a contrast between what he did ask and what he could have asked. Brueggemann notes that: "The contrast between what Solomon asked and what he might have asked but did not is spectacular. The contrast sets the bar very high for 'good kingship' and nicely reflects distinctions in the command of Deuteronomy concerning kingship (Deut 17:14-20)."⁸⁵ Solomon's request is for

⁸¹ Walsh, "The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5", 485–89; Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?", 161–62.

⁸² C. L. Seow, "The Syro-Palestinian Context of Solomon's Dream," *HTR* 77, (1984), 152.

⁸³ In the same way as the prophet Jeremiah does in his reluctance to be a prophet (Jer 1:6), Solomon indicates his reluctance to rule YHWH's people.

⁸⁴ This phrase most likely refers to an ability to lead. Cf., Num 27:17; Deut 31:2–3; Josh 14:11; 1 Sam 18:13, 16; 29:6; 2 Kgs 11:8. In 1 Sam 18, David "knows how to go out and come in." This sounds similar to Solomon's inability to do so.

⁸⁵ Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 75. Similarly, Terence E. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, Westminster Bible Companion, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 31, argues that Solomon's request for wisdom is consistent with ideal kingship present in other texts such as Deut 17:16–17; 1 Sam 8:11–18; royal Psalms (esp 72); Isa 11:2–5.

a “hearing heart” rather than long life, riches, or the lives of his enemies. As Walter Moberly argues, the things that are not requested are not necessarily bad things and would have been normal requests for a king.⁸⁶ However, Solomon’s request for wisdom in order to govern Israel shows that his priority was the community of Israel over the personal desires of a king.⁸⁷

The positive depiction of this scene has been questioned, however. Hays argues that Solomon is portrayed positively in this account, but he stresses that “the main purpose within the broad story of Solomon for including the narrative of Yahweh’s appearance and his gift of wisdom to Solomon in 3.4–15 is to underscore Solomon’s great culpability for his later apostasy. This text is not ultimately praising Solomon; it is underscoring the absurdity of his turning away from Yahweh.”⁸⁸ Hays also argues that the point of the inclusion of Solomon’s request for a “listening heart” is to contrast with chapter 11 and his half-hearted devotion. However, this misses the point. Chapter 11 shows how drastically Solomon has fallen by this stage in the narrative. Of course, Hays is correct in drawing attention to the echoes between Gibeon and chapter 11, but he has flattened the narrative. To say that the entire account serves this single focus is far too narrow. His conclusion ignores other elements, such as 5:9–14 that confirms Solomon’s gift and his positive use of wisdom.

Walsh also calls into question the positive picture of Solomon, especially in light of Solomon’s humble confession in contrast to his actions from chapters 1–2. He argues that in comparison to chapters 1–2 this confession “seems disingenuous, to say the least.”⁸⁹ But it is difficult to imagine that YHWH would give these gifts to Solomon if he understood Solomon’s statements as disingenuous. It is more likely that YHWH has made him king, that Solomon does not feel he is up for the task, and that there is a desire on Solomon’s part to change after making less than ideal decisions.

⁸⁶ R.W.L. Moberly, “Solomon and Job: Divine Wisdom in Human Life,” in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?*, ed. Stephen C. Barton, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 5–6. Cf., John Monson, “1 Kings,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament: Volume 3, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, ed. John H. Walton, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 22, highlights that Solomon’s request for wisdom and YHWH’s promise of wealth and long life could be associated with any ancient Near Eastern King.

⁸⁷ Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 32. See also Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God*, 131, who argues that there is a distinction between what Solomon asked for and what YHWH gave to Solomon. But he fails to take into account that in 3:12 YHWH states that he has done “according to Solomon’s word.”

⁸⁸ Hays, “Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?”, 164.

⁸⁹ Walsh, “The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5,” 488.

Solomon's hesitation is further elaborated by his own perception that he lacks leadership skills. His lack of confidence is heightened by his questioning of his ability to lead a people who have been blessed by YHWH, as confirmed by the allusion to the Abrahamic covenant (1 Kgs 3:8).

Some have also questioned how adequately Solomon's worship habits are portrayed at Gibeon. Hays notes the parallels between 3:1–3 and 11:1–8. In 3:1–3 Solomon marries an Egyptian princess, loves YHWH, and sacrifices at high places (3:1–3) and in 11:1–8 Solomon is married to many foreign women, loves them instead of YHWH, and they sacrifice at the high places of Chemosh and Molech. He writes: "Can this similarity be accidental? Does it not seem likely that the narrator has so placed these references in ch. 3 so as to give an ominous foreshadowing of the terrible things to come? Solomon does not wait until ch. 11 to start his downward slide. He starts off already quite some way down the slide; ch. 11 merely describes the clear impact at the bottom."⁹⁰ Hays argues that 3:3 is the most explicit critique saying that רַק "carries a nuance in this passage of 'however', or 'on the other hand.' So, clearly the implication of this 'however' or 'except' is that, from the beginning, Solomon is following some questionable worship practices. The fact the narrator mentions this rather nonchalantly only underscores his use of irony."⁹¹ But this is not the only way to understand this parallel. More likely, the narrator is showing just how far Solomon has moved away from his love of YHWH.⁹² The same phrase is used in the evaluation of Jehoash (2 Kgs 12:1–3) suggesting that Solomon's love is genuine, yet incomplete. Furthermore, Richard Briggs reminds us that love of YHWH echoes the Shema of Deuteronomy 6 and Brueggemann notes that "love" has the connotation of loyalty.⁹³

Verses 2–3 of chapter 3 are designed to contrast with one another. The people of Israel worship at high places because the temple had not yet been built. Meanwhile, Solomon loves YHWH, except he sacrifices at high places. The Deuteronomic ideal is that all Israel would worship YHWH in a central place. It appears that the people are given an excuse for the less than ideal worship setting—no temple had been built. Solomon's love for YHWH on the other hand is qualified by his sacrificing at the high places. Solomon's love may be genuine, but there is an incompleteness to

⁹⁰ Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?", 162.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Cogan, *1 Kings*, 189.

⁹³ Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, SHBC, (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2000), 46.

it.⁹⁴ Kings of Israel are condemned for failure to remove high places (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:43; 2 Kgs 12:3; 18:4; 23:5), but faithful worshippers are critiqued for not removing the high places (1 Kgs 15:14; 2 Kgs 14:3–4). Thus, Cook is correct when he writes: “Although it is clear that there is a problem with the **במות** in 3:2–3, there is no indication here that gods other than YHWH are being worshipped (especially given 3:3a) at these sites, and thus the emphasis is placed on the failure to centralize YHWH worship and as a result the high places are condemned.”⁹⁵

The narrator signals to the reader that full devotion to YHWH will mean fulfilling the vision of Deuteronomy 12 by noting that worship is still taking place on the high places. So even though Solomon’s worship at the high places is still permitted, his unqualified love of YHWH will be demonstrated in both building the temple and in tearing down Israel’s high places. YHWH’s appearance is a positive result of Solomon’s practice of making sacrifices (1 Kgs 3:5). But a question that is raised is: Will Solomon build the temple and abandon the high places? Verse 2 highlights the significance of this question because Solomon’s actions have ramifications for Israel. Israel will only be able to abandon the high places once the temple is constructed. For now, these questions are open to the reader and indicate what temptations might be present within Solomon’s own character.

4.2 Solomon’s Judgement

Following YHWH’s promise of wisdom to Solomon is the infamous case deciding the true mother of a child that involves no other witnesses; a case that Ellen Van Wolde describes as having no solution due to Solomon and readers only being given unverifiable accounts of the two women without the narrator giving clues to the identity of the real mother.⁹⁶ The episode is driven forward by the dialogue and Terence Fretheim notes that the technique of allowing the dialogue to push the story forward is used to portray Solomon as a king who listens: “The predominance of dialogue in this story is noteworthy and gives evidence that Solomon indeed has ‘a listening heart’” (3:9).⁹⁷ In

⁹⁴ Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, *1 and 2 Kings*, Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds, EBC, vol. 4, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 660.

⁹⁵ Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 34.

⁹⁶ Ellen Van Wolde, “Who Guides Whom? Embeddedness and Perspective in Biblical Hebrew and in 1 Kings 3:16–28,” *JBL* 114, (1995), 630–31.

⁹⁷ Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 35.

addition, this episode, which is used to demonstrate Solomon's wisdom, involves two prostitutes and is meant to demonstrate Solomon's care for the lowest of society.⁹⁸

This episode is typically understood by interpreters as a demonstration of the fulfilment of the wisdom promised to Solomon.⁹⁹ However, the picture of an ideal king who is wise enough to discern a solution to a difficult case and who attends to the lowest of society has been challenged by some. Hays notes that prostitution is illegal in Israel and the fact that prostitution is occurring in the land should call into question Solomon's faithfulness to Deuteronomic law.¹⁰⁰ And Sweeney argues that it does not speak well of Solomon for spending his time deciding cases as such: "The narrative passes no judgment on the women, but their designation as prostitutes trivializes Solomon as a monarch who spends his time resolving quarrels between prostitutes."¹⁰¹ However, Hays assumes that Solomon has power to eliminate all law breaking in his kingdom which overestimates the power of a monarch. Walsh distinguishes between the practice of prostitution in Israel based upon cultic prostitution and that based upon non-cultic. He argues that cultic prostitution (which he notes that some scholars doubt occurred in Israel) was wrong because it was a form of idolatry, whereas non-cultic was not and was simply not a respectful way to live. Based on this he concludes: "The identification of the women as prostitutes, then, is not intended to cast them as sinful and to depict the king's dilemma as how to do justice in a fundamentally immoral situation. It is intended rather to cast them as among the lowest and most disadvantaged members of society, and to depict the king as attending to justice even in a case involving the least important of his people."¹⁰²

Sweeney also questions why Solomon is the chief magistrate and notes that there are previous examples of an abuse of power: Saul condemns the priests of Nob (1 Sam 22:6-30); David judges himself after the Bathsheba incident and he had Uriah killed (2 Sam 11-12); and Absalom tried to

⁹⁸. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 34–35, asserts that Solomon looks like the ideal king: "Solomon here exemplifies the ideal royal paradigm that speaks clearly of the king as one who 'defends the cause of the poor of the people' and 'has pity on the weak and the needy,' and adds that their life is 'precious...in his sight' (Ps. 72:4, 12, 14)."

⁹⁹. Cogan, *1 Kings*, 196.; Simon J. De Vries, *1 Kings*, WBC, (Waco: Word, 1985), 60.

¹⁰⁰. Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?", 164–165.

¹⁰¹. Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, 82.

¹⁰². Walsh, *1 Kings*, 79–80.

build support to revolt.¹⁰³ Sweeney notes that the king is responsible for justice in the land (Deut 32:41; Isa 11:1-5; Jer 21:11-12), but that Levitical priests and not the king are the chief magistrates (Deut 17:8-13). He concludes: “From the perspective of Deuteronomy and the DtrH, Solomon's assumption of judicial power is illegal.”¹⁰⁴ However, the lack of witnesses in this case suggests its uniqueness and this is the whole reason for Solomon hearing this case.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Walsh notes that Solomon is not doing something unexpected of the king. Rather, Solomon was doing his kingly duties because subjects had access to the king (cf. 2 Sam 14:4-7; 2 Kgs 8:3-6). He states: “Naturally most juridical cases were handled on a lower level, but in theory every person had a right to a royal hearing.”¹⁰⁶

Now that we have looked at the incident itself, we now need to look at what effect the result of the incident had on the characterization of Solomon. Walsh argues that there are three areas that reflect negatively on Solomon in regards to his judgment. First, he argues that Solomon has given the child away to the wrong mother. Most English translations mask the ambiguity in verse 27 by translating Solomon's order: “Give the living child to the first woman.” However, the Hebrew is “give her” (תנו לה). Walsh notes that the nearest antecedent to “her” is the mother who desired for the child to be divided (1 Kgs 3:26b).¹⁰⁷ Second, the distinction between people being in “awe” (ירא) and “fear” is small. He writes that: “[T]he distance between what is awesome and what is fearsome is not great. When they heard of Solomon's judgment, all Israel ‘feared’...the king. This reaction is understandable, given the divine quality the people perceive in Solomon's wisdom, but it does not disguise the fact that the first result of the use of Solomon's gifts is fear.”¹⁰⁸ And third, the people recognize Solomon's wisdom, but this is never confirmed by the narrator.¹⁰⁹

These suggestions are forced. Walsh assumes that referentiality must be consistent in the ordering of the story. Walsh himself notes that the women's speeches occur concurrently with one another, so it is unnecessary to conclude that the order in which Solomon referenced the women

¹⁰³. Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, 82.

¹⁰⁴. Ibid.

¹⁰⁵. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 51.

¹⁰⁶. Walsh, *1 Kings*, 80.

¹⁰⁷. Ibid., 84.

¹⁰⁸. Ibid.

¹⁰⁹. Ibid., 84–85.

indicates that he gave the child away to the incorrect mother. The effect of not naming the women gives readers the same perspective that Solomon had in hearing this case and in discerning the true mother.¹¹⁰ Walsh's suggestion that "awe" and "fear" are indistinguishable from one another is also not persuasive.¹¹¹ The context of this phrase shows that the people's awe is "because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice" (3:28). It is hard to imagine how wisdom attributed to God in order to provide justice is meant to create fear. Walsh's insistence that the lack of explicit approval from the narrator is also unnecessary. By portraying the story through the eyes of the people, a reader gains an appreciation that YHWH's gift of wisdom was fulfilled to Solomon in a unique way. This would not have been possible from a direct comment. The reader is not told what to think, but is instead shown how YHWH's promises are being fulfilled.

4.3 Wisdom and Administration

Following Solomon's judgment of this case is a description of Solomon's wisdom in his organization and taxation of Israel (4:1–28). Jones is right that, though this section describes Solomon's administration and lacks any description of Solomon's wisdom, this section is framed by two wisdom accounts suggesting that it is to be understood as Solomon utilizing his wisdom.¹¹² In this account, Solomon's use of his wisdom results in the fulfilment of YHWH's previous promises to Israel.¹¹³ Fretheim notes that the way peace and prosperity are integrated within the administrative lists functions as a way of showing that wise leadership leads to these results.¹¹⁴

Significantly, Solomon's use of wisdom to organize Israel results in prosperity for all the people in the land. The responsibility of these twelve districts is to provide food for the king and his household, rotating primary responsibility once a year (4:7). Moreover, the result of Solomon's administrative gifts is happiness for all of Israel (4:20). The previous mention of Israel being numerous was because of Solomon's need for wisdom in order to govern Israel. The reference, further-

¹¹⁰ Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 52.

¹¹¹ Timothy J. Sandoval, "Reconfiguring Solomon in the Royal Fiction of Ecclesiastes," in *On Prophets, Warriors, and Kings: Former Prophets through the Eyes of Their Interpreters*, ed. George J. Brooke and Ariel Feldman, BZAW 470 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 22–23.

¹¹² Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 133.

¹¹³ Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 36–37.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

more, reminds the reader that Israel is YHWH's special people and he promised Abraham that Israel would be a numerous people and would be blessed. The reference demonstrates the reality that Israel has grown into a great nation and has been blessed by YHWH through Solomon's wisdom. Solomon's organization ensures that the people continue to be numerous but also results in prosperity in the land. Both the monarchy and the people have plenty of food and the narrator reports that all of Israel is content. The recognition that Israel is a great and numerous people had earlier posed a problem for Solomon and his ability to rule (cf., 3:8–9). YHWH's gift of wisdom to Solomon appears to make governing such a vast people not only not a problem, but also results in Israel's delight in the land.

The narrator also describes Solomon's rule as extending beyond the borders of Israel to include the territory initially promised to Abra(ha)m (Gen 15:18). Solomon's dominion is described as the territory from the Euphrates river to the border of Egypt (1 Kgs 5:1 [4:21]), which he inherited from David (2 Sam 8:1–14; 10). Solomon's rule over this ideal land contributes to the prosperity found in Israel.¹¹⁵ This wise rule over an ideal dominion results in both peace and prosperity for Israel reminiscent of the covenant blessings of safety and prosperity in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. This reality under Solomon's wisdom—safety and prosperity—is what is used by the prophets to speak of the hope for future prosperity for Israel (Mic 4:1–4; Zech 3:6–10) and the opposite is used to talk of punishment (Ps 105:33; Jer 5:17).¹¹⁶

Yet, some have sensed that there are elements found in the narrative that are meant to be critical of Solomon's actions in setting up his kingdom in regards to a bias between the northern and southern kingdoms. Sweeney argues that Solomon's unfair tax scheme in the north in comparison to the south (1 Kgs 4:7–19) by the omission of Judah from taxation.¹¹⁷ Cogan, however, rightly shows that there is a text-critical problem with verse 19, which shows that Judah was not omitted

¹¹⁵ Similarly Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 51.

¹¹⁶ Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 55, argues that there is a contrast between Micah 4:1–4 and 1 Kings 4:21 where the nations are coming to hear YHWH in the latter days, while during Solomon's reign they came to hear Solomon, not YHWH.

¹¹⁷ Sweeney, "The Critique of Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History", 614. Furthermore, Sweeney notes that the northern tribes supply more labour for the temple construction described in 1 Kings 5:27–32. He recognizes that "all Israel" in these verses includes Judah, but that the majority of workers are supplied from the north.

from taxation, but the omission is an example of haplography due to “Judah” appearing at the beginning of verse 20.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, without this text-critical emendation there are only eleven districts and not the stated twelve districts (4:7). The fact that Solomon is trying to establish a unified state seems to go against the idea that there is an intentional placement of hardship on the north.

4.4 Solomon’s Encyclopedic Wisdom

No other description of Solomon’s reign characterizes the king in such idealistic terms than the closing description of Solomon’s encyclopedic wisdom (1 Kgs 5:9–14 [4:29–34]) prior to the preparation of the temple construction. This account stresses Solomon’s superlative wisdom and instead of telling the readers of examples of incidents in which Solomon used his wisdom, the narrator provides a commentary on his wisdom and the ideal depiction comes through in the diversity of items listed to exemplify it. The narrator lists such things as speaking numerous proverbs and songs and his knowledge of plants and animals (5:12–13 [4:32–33]). R.B.Y. Scott notes that this type of knowledge was valuable in the ancient Near East. By describing Solomon’s wisdom in such terms, Solomon is placed amongst the most elite of kings and this explains why the nations would seek to hear Solomon’s wisdom.¹¹⁹

However, some scholars argue that this description of Solomon’s wisdom is unfavourable. For example, Scott and Cook each argue that there is a subtle shift in Solomon’s wisdom from “judicial wisdom” to “prodigious knowledge.” They each argue that instead of being a king who “hears” (in fulfilment for what he asked at Gibeon), he is now a king who is “heard” by surrounding nations and kings.¹²⁰ They argue this is a negative aspect to Solomon’s character because the wisdom attributed to him here is not the same as the judicial wisdom he requested in 3:9, but signals a

¹¹⁸ See Cogan, *1 Kings*, 211.

¹¹⁹ R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom*, (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 36.

¹²⁰ Scott, “Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel”, 270–72; Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 53–55. Cf., Sandoval, “Reconfiguring Solomon”, 24, who argues that wisdom here is described as a commodity much like Solomon’s wealth and that the description of wisdom here lacks the virtue connotation that Proverbs has. However, to critique Solomon’s wisdom in 1 Kings because it is not identical to wisdom in Proverbs is unfounded. Walsh, “The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5”, 490, states that this section does not directly contribute to a negative characterization, it is “adding a new dimension to the theme of Solomon’s wisdom.” Yet, he still places these comments in the negative characterization section of his argument, which makes it unclear whether he really thinks this is a negative characterization or not.

shift away from Solomon practising just rule in Israel.¹²¹ This assertion is questionable, though, when 5:9–14 echoes language from Gibeon showing that this section is seen as a fulfilment of YHWH's promises. The description of Solomon being given “wisdom” and “understanding” as “beyond measure” and the extent of his knowledge being “like the sand on the seashore” (5:9 [4:29]) and surpassing other wise figures in the east and Egypt (5:10 [4:30]) and other wise figures (5:11 [4:31]) echoes back to YHWH's promise in 3:12 where these gifts were promised.¹²² Indeed, Solomon's request for wisdom was in order to govern Israel. But YHWH's promise of wisdom is not limited to Solomon's request. Solomon is promised that his wisdom will be greater than those before and after him (3:12). Thus, 5:9–14 is an enthusiastic description that YHWH's promises are being fulfilled.

4.5 The Problems of Solomonic Glory

I have argued above that Solomon's request for wisdom at Gibeon and his use of that wisdom portrays him as an exemplary king. I have also shown that the suspicions that the interpreters cited have about Solomon's characterization is largely unwarranted. However, Solomon's marriage to an Egyptian princess and his collection of many horses and chariots do show Solomon in violation of Deuteronomic law and precludes us from saying that Solomon is a flawless character in the application of his wisdom. These violations do not flatten the character of Solomon into an ironic king, instead they add depth to his character and his wisdom. Solomon's wisdom does not guarantee that he will always do the right thing. These violations show that Solomon's wisdom can also be used in ways that would violate his covenant relationship with YHWH.

4.5.1 Marriage

Prior to the scene of Solomon at Gibeon described above, the narrator states that: “Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt” (3:1a). Marriage alliances were typical in the ancient Near East as a means of diplomacy, and Solomon's marriage with an Egyptian princess may

¹²¹. Scott, “Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel”, 270–72; Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 53–55.

¹²². Cogan, *1 Kings*, 221. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 98.

have been a strategic political move for Israel.¹²³ Mordechai Cogan argues that Solomon is the only Davidic king described as “loving YHWH” (3:3) and so concludes that his marriage alliance with a foreigner and his worship at Gibeon is excused.¹²⁴ Peter Leithart argues that: “the suggestion that his marriage is sinful is undercut when we are immediately told that he ‘loved Yahweh’” (3:3).¹²⁵ Furthermore, he writes: “The author is hardly an uncritical admirer of Solomon, but he does not criticize the king for his marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter (3:2). Solomon’s marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter instead fulfils the Abrahamic promise to bless the nations.”¹²⁶ However, within the context of the DtrH, Solomon’s marriage alliance is troubling.¹²⁷ Gordon McConville argues that Solomon’s marriage with the Egyptian princess is a “return to Egypt” (Deut 17:6) with the marriage violating Deuteronomy 7:3.¹²⁸ But the marriage prohibition only prohibits the Israelites from intermarrying with Canaanites because of the danger these marriages pose in regards to exclusive worship of YHWH (7:3–4). The principle that foreign marriages create the temptation for idolatry and that Deuteronomy does caution Israel from returning to Egypt (17:16), however, does raise a concern about the appropriateness of this alliance for Israel. The suspicion that this marriage is not an appropriate arrangement can be discerned by analyzing the attitude toward other marriage alliances. The hithpael of חתן occurs eleven times in the Hebrew Bible. One occurrence of the word is in the story of Shechem’s rape of and subsequent desire to marry Dinah (Gen 34:9). Another is found in the story of Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab (2 Chr 18:1). Three occurrences of the word are in prohibition of the Israelites marrying foreigners (Deut 7:3; Josh 23:12; Ezra 9:14).¹²⁹

^{123.} Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige: Kapitel 1–16*, 29, argues that Solomon’s alliance with Egypt through marriage is meant to emphasize his international influence. For a fresh evaluation of the evidence for this marriage alliance see Dell, “Solomon’s Wisdom and the Egyptian Connection,” 23–37.

^{124.} Cogan, *1 Kings*, 189.

^{125.} Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 43.

^{126.} Ibid.

^{127.} Marriage alliances were a strategic way of establishing peace between differing nations in the ancient Near East. See John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 16–165 and Alan R. Schulman, “Diplomatic Marriage in the Egyptian New Kingdom,” *JNES* 38, (1979), 182–83 on Egyptian marriages to foreign monarchs.

^{128.} J.G. McConville, “Narrative and Meaning in the Books of Kings,” *Biblica* 70, (1989); Hays, “Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?”, 161. Also, Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 85–86; Jeon, *Impeccable Solomon?*, 71–80; Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God*, 129–30; Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 44–46; Walsh, *1 Kings*, 70–71; Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 31–33.

^{129.} Walsh, “The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5,” 486. The hithpael of חתן can be seen positively in the five times of David’s alliance with Saul through his marriage to Michal (1 Sam 18:21, 22, 23, 26, 27).

The prohibitions of returning to Egypt and these other contexts of marriage alliances call into doubt that this marriage is positive or even neutral. The fact that Solomon is engaging in this marriage alliance foreshadows for the reader what type of negative impact this might have on Israel.

4.5.2 Collection of Horses and Chariots

As I noted above, Solomon's wisdom was used in order to organize the kingdom in such a way that it resulted in peace and prosperity for Israel. Yet, scholars dispute how to evaluate the fact that Solomon purchased such a large collection of horses and chariots which violated the Deuteronomistic law.¹³⁰ Interestingly, opinions regarding Solomon's collections of horses and chariots vary broadly from being a blessing of God to being a violation of the Deuteronomistic law that reflects poorly on Solomon's faithfulness.

The kingship laws in Deuteronomy 17 prohibit the king from collecting numerous horses (Deut 17:16) in addition to forbidding having many wives or much wealth (17:17). The side-by-side reality of the ideal kingdom and Solomon's disobedience to the law creates a gap of how these two realities go together. Walsh argues that the juxtaposition of the idyllic vision and Solomon's collection of horses means this kingdom was "less the result of Solomon's glorious administration of the empire than of brute strength, and that the tribute Solomon exacted from his vassals was wrested from them only at swordpoint."¹³¹ Walsh effectively collapses these descriptions into an ironic portrait. However, the narrative itself does not seem to point in this direction and is contrary to the inspiration that Solomon's kingdom becomes Israel's future of hope of prosperity in the land (Mic 4:1–4; Zech 3:6–10).

Rather than the collection of military trappings creating the dominion, security, or economic independence for Israel, it should be understood in the same way that Solomon provides for his own table (1 Kgs 5:2–3) in addition to providing security and provisions for Judah and Israel (5:4–5).¹³² The horses and chariots are a result of Solomon's wisdom. Yet, his wisdom is used in ways

¹³⁰. "Solomon also had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots and 12,000 horsemen" (1 Kings 5:6). The Greek version of Kings and the Hebrew parallel in 2 Chronicles 9:25 records "4,000." This suggests that this is either a scribal error or an intentional exaggeration.

¹³¹. Walsh, *1 Kings*, 90.

¹³². The *ויהי* in verses 2 and 6 are parallel and are the result of Solomon's rule (5:1).

contrary to YHWH's instruction even in the midst of great blessings. Solomon is presented as one who in the midst of great heights may use his wisdom in ways that oppose the will and desire of YHWH. In this case, he trusted in human tools rather than in YHWH who has given Israel the land and has promised both safety and provision (Deut 28:7).

5. Wisdom and Worship: 1 Kings 5:15–9:10

The construction of Israel's temple is the highlight of Solomon's reign and, along with his wisdom, is what he is most remembered for in the canon (e.g., 2 Chr 1–9). Solomon's construction of the temple is central to his reign and it is in many ways regarded as the climax of Israel's history. The key moment in the narrative is when temple construction began on, we are told, the 480th year after the Exodus event (1 Kgs 6:1). Frisch argues: "The association of the Temple with the Exodus in 1 Kgs 6.1, therefore, seems to indicate that the erection of the Temple is the apex of the extended process that began with the Exodus from Egypt."¹³³ The centrality of the temple in the Solomon narrative is set apart by its focus in narrative time—the amount of actual space allocated to it in the narrative.¹³⁴ The preparations, construction, and dedication of the temple comprises almost half of the story. Furthermore, some scholars, such as Frisch and Walsh, argue that the narrative is structured concentrically with the temple occupying the focal point of the story, demonstrating its importance.¹³⁵

This description of the temple account continues to portray Solomon as an ideal king, where Solomon's use of his wisdom is viewed as bringing God's blessings to his people Israel. The centralization of Israel's cult through the construction of the temple is a step towards the elimination of Israel's temptation toward religious idolatry that is present when worship is not centralized. This view is reinforced through the reflection of Deuteronomy 12, the instruction to centralize Israel's worship in order to eradicate idolatry and promote the singular focus of worship of YHWH. However, we will again see that there are indications that Solomon's actions are not free from mistakes. Solomon's role as temple builder portrays him as a glorious king, but juxtaposed within his use of

¹³³ Amos Frisch, "The Exodus Motif in 1 Kings 1-14," *JSOT* 25, (2000), 6.

¹³⁴ On narrative time see Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 94–95.

¹³⁵ See Frisch, "Structure and Significance", 3–14; Walsh, *1 Kings*, 51.

his wisdom are questionable actions which demonstrate that he is far from a perfect king.

5.1 Preparations for Temple Building

The narrator's characterization of Solomon emerges in the interaction that takes place between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, where the kings negotiate in order to supply Solomon with the materials and workers he needs to construct the temple. The overall context suggests that the narrator has linked the acquisition of temple building materials to Solomon's international fame due to his wisdom (5:14).¹³⁶ When he "heard" that Solomon had succeeded David, Hiram's response was to send his servants (5:15). This corresponds to other kings who go to Solomon when they "hear" of his wisdom (5:14).

Further characterizing Solomon as an ideal king, Hiram links what he recognizes in Solomon as a fulfilment of YHWH's promise to him at Gibeon. It is significant that when Hiram hears from Solomon that he has received the rest that David never had and will build the temple for YHWH as was promised to David's son (5:3–5), he responds by blessing YHWH for giving David a wise son to rule over this great people. Though it would be customary for a foreign ruler to bless another's deity, Hiram's words resonate with previous elements in the Solomon story.¹³⁷ By linking Solomon's wisdom with his rulership over "this great people," Hiram's words confirm that YHWH's gift of wisdom was provided for Solomon to rule over "this great people" (cf., 3:8–9). Hiram recognizes YHWH's promise of wisdom and broadens Solomon's governance of YHWH's people to include the building of the temple, acknowledging Solomon's wisdom to judge YHWH's people in Solomon's desire to build the temple. Solomon's and Hiram's negotiations are then capped by a direct comment from the narrator: "the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him. And there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty (5:26)."

Yet, in spite of this seemingly favourable characterization of Solomon, Walsh argues that the narrator's report of Solomon having wisdom is being used ironically. He argues that the negotia-

¹³⁶. So Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 62.

¹³⁷. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 38, says that we may be justified in being sceptical about Hiram's confession of YHWH in light of the economic deal that comes out of the relationship, but he notes that there is a focus in other parts of the narrative on non-Israelites knowing and worshipping YHWH (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:1–66; 2 Kgs 5:1–27). Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, 103, also notes the similarities to Jethro's blessing of YHWH in Exod 18:10.

tion results in a better deal for Hiram. According to Walsh, Solomon's income was around 32,000 cors of meal and flour supplied by all the kingdom (5:2). Whereas, Solomon is paying 20,000 cors of wheat and 20,000 cors of oil year by year. Therefore, according to Walsh, Solomon's lousy deal subverts his wisdom.¹³⁸ However, it is unwise to base a conclusion on numbers that are probably not meant to be taken literally.¹³⁹ Martin Mulder is correct when he writes that: "it is likely that our verses speak in superlative terms about Solomon's riches and greatness, so that these and other numbers must certainly be taken with a grain of salt."¹⁴⁰ The narrator seeks to demonstrate that the deal struck was one of mutual benefit where both kings get what they desire rather than of one of the kings deceptively controlling the upper hand. Solomon used YHWH's gift of wisdom to enable a mutually beneficial relationship and he and Hiram each received what they "desired" (5:8, 9, 10). Solomon met Hiram's desire by providing food for his royal court (5:23, 25) and Solomon received all the lumber he needed for the temple (5:24). In this negotiation, Solomon's wisdom mutually benefits both kings just as it benefits the royal household and all of Israel (cf., 5:1, 5). Indeed, Solomon's wisdom not only benefits Israel, but also benefits the surrounding nations. Wisdom from YHWH was concerned with benefitting all those who came into contact with YHWH's people.

On the other side of the argument, scholars have argued that, in light of the complaints of Solomon's unfair work practices later in the book, Solomon's draft of forced labour as a part of the preparation in order to build the temple characterizes the king negatively. Kang argues that Solomon's forced labour demonstrates Solomon's unfair policies toward the northern tribes.¹⁴¹ As well, Hays detects a sense of irony at the mention of forced labour in these verses when placed next to 6:1 with the mention of the Exodus.¹⁴² But these are cases of overreading the narrative. There is no clear indication that this practice is unfavourable to the northern tribes, as the descrip-

¹³⁸ Walsh, "The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5," 491–492.

¹³⁹ For a comparison of the large provisions in other ancient Near Eastern royal courts, see K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 132–133.

¹⁴⁰ Martin J. Mulder, *1 Kings*, HCOT, (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 190. Mulder clarifies that it is possible the numbers could be seen as literal if the provisions included "members of the families of court officials, the soldiers, and the attendants of Solomon throughout the land."

¹⁴¹ Kang, *The Persuasive Portrayal*, 234. Similarly, Sweeney, "The Critique of Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History", 614–15.

¹⁴² Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?", 168. Hays also observes that in 5:13–18 there is no mention of Solomon paying wages to his workers as Josiah does (2 Kgs 22:3–7).

tion of workers is בל ישראל. Furthermore, Kang flattens the narrative by not considering that Solomon's use of his corvee changes in the narrative. This change of its use is what created unrest, as exemplified in 1 Kings 12.¹⁴³

5.2 Solomon the Temple Builder

The erection of the temple marks a decisive moment in Israel's history. It marks the end of Israel's wilderness wanderings (cf., Exod 12:40–41), YHWH's gift of rest in the land (2 Sam 7:10–11) where YHWH is worshipped in a permanent place. Such a decisive event increases the prestige of Solomon as Israel's king. The narrator also testifies to Solomon's glory through the description of the temple by drawing attention to the materials and the care that was taken during construction, the contrast between Solomon and the craftsman, Hiram of Tyre, and in his dedication of the temple.

Chapters 6–7, which recount the actual construction, delay the pace of the narrative by drawing attention to the details of the temple and the magnificence of the final product and are a testimony to Solomon himself. The effect of delaying progression slows the reader down through the details of the temple. Walsh argues that pausing on the details has the effect of “establishing an atmosphere.”¹⁴⁴ Solomon's work is characterized by the care of its construction: no tool was used inside the temple (1 Kgs 6:7); only costly materials such as cedar, bronze (7:47), silver, and gold (6:15) were used; and there were extravagant decorations (6:18, 29, 32, 35) and sculptures (6:23–26; 7:15–16).¹⁴⁵ Sweeney argues that scholars have missed the point of this section if reading it in order to reconstruct the building. He writes: “...it is written to impress the reader with the glory of the Solomonic temple and the care taken during construction to ensure its sacred character.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue*, 95, makes note of Kenneth Clark, *Civilization: A Personal View*, (London: BBC and John Murray, 1969), 56, where people were honoured to be a part of building. Briggs' point is that our conclusions about such an activity might reflect more of ourselves rather than that of the author or even the workers.

¹⁴⁴ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 108. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 63, notes that the long descriptions of the interior of the temple may have the function of describing the temple to the normal Israelite who would never have the privilege of going inside.

¹⁴⁵ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 108.

¹⁴⁶ Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, 109.

Solomon's depiction as the temple builder takes on continued significance through the contrast with Hiram of Tyre, the craftsman. The construction of the temple shares a patterning with the building of the tabernacle in Exodus and the effect of this patterning heightens the presentation of Solomon.¹⁴⁷ Besides Solomon, the only other person mentioned by name in the construction of the temple is Hiram of Tyre and he is described as "full of wisdom, understanding, and skill for making any work in bronze" just as Bezalel is described in the tabernacle account (Exod 31:1–11; 35:30–35). The narrative echoes between Hiram and Bezalel draw attention to the fact that Solomon's wisdom is matched by his other worker. Hiram, however, is not the primary wise builder. Rather, it is very clear in the narrative in 6:1, 6:2, 6:14 and 7:51 that Solomon is identified as the sole builder of the temple. Hiram's work, therefore, is best understood in a supporting role as is made clear by his work being done for Solomon (7:40, 45).

Provan notes that the relationship between Solomon and Hiram is not one of equals. Rather, the narrator's presentation of both figures magnifies Solomon's superiority. Bezalel's wisdom included his ability to work with gold, silver, and bronze (Exod 31:3–4), but Hiram only works with bronze in the Kings narrative. Hiram's lack of use of silver can be explained by the report in chapter 10 that the abundance of silver made it valueless. But, interestingly, only Solomon is described as working with gold, reserving the more precious metal for the king and magnifying Solomon's greatness by comparison.¹⁴⁸ Solomon works with gold and is in charge of many of the costly pieces in the temple (1 Kgs 7:48–50).¹⁴⁹ Through this apposition with Hiram, the primacy of Solomon as the temple builder emerges.

Following Solomon's construction of the temple, his characterization as Israel's temple builder culminates in its dedication. In the dedication, he is characterized by his devotion and dependence on YHWH through praise, prayers, and offering sacrifices to YHWH. Solomon's praise of YHWH is in response to YHWH being a god who keeps his promises and centres on YHWH being a promise-keeping god. Solomon praises YHWH for fulfilling his previous promises to David: that a son of David would sit on Israel's throne and would build a temple for YHWH (1 Kgs 7:15–20; cf., 2

¹⁴⁷ So Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 71; Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 43; Patterson and Austel, *1 and 2 Kings*, 690.

¹⁴⁸ Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 73.

¹⁴⁹ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 122–124.

Sam 7:12–13), as well as YHWH's fulfillment of his promise to Moses that he would give rest to Israel in the land (1 Kgs 7:56; cf., Deut 12:10). Solomon's act of prayer further displays his devotion to YHWH. In his request, Solomon refers to himself four times as "your servant" (1Kgs 7:27–30). He acknowledges that YHWH's presence is not limited to the temple (1 Kgs 8:27), but requests that YHWH would still make the temple a place where he would hear and respond to Israel's prayers (8:27–30, 31–53).¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, that YHWH's presence in the temple would incline the hearts of Israel "to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers" (8:58, cf., 8:61). Such obedience is not for its own sake, but so that "all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other" (8:60).

Solomon's piety to YHWH also emerges through making numerous sacrifices to YHWH. Solomon's offering sacrifices forms a frame around the dedication of the temple (8:5, 62–64). Solomon's response to the priests bringing in the ark is to lead the congregation "sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered" (8:5). These acts are met with YHWH's approval filling the temple with a cloud as he had done with the tabernacle (Exod 40:35). Furthermore, the narrator closes the dedication account by recalling the number of sacrifices Solomon offered (1 Kgs 8:62–63) following Solomon's prayer of dedication. The scene described is Solomon being forced to consecrate the middle of the court because the bronze altar could not contain the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and peace offerings (8:64). The exuberance of Solomon's cultic piety results in the entirety of the empire being "joyful and glad of heart" (8:66). Thus, as Israel's temple builder, Solomon is presented as an individual who possesses the skill to build the temple as well as leading all Israel in heart-felt devotion to YHWH.

5.3 Solomon's Divided Motives

Yet, even in the magnificence of the temple and the prominence that Solomon takes on as the temple builder, Solomon's divided motives peer through. The narrator nuances the temple account, which displays the glory and splendour of the temple and contributes to the glory of Solomon in completing such a design, by also telling the reader that Solomon interrupted the

¹⁵⁰. On name theology see Sandra Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: lēšakkēn šēmō šām in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, BZAW 318, (New York and Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002).

completion of the temple to build his own palace. Solomon spends twice the amount of time building his own palace as he does building the temple (6:38; 7:1), and the effects of this delay are significant. Foremost, this delays the centralization of worship in Israel allowing worship to continue at the high places. As noted above, while this was permitted, there still exists the temptation of idolatry. Furthermore, 7:8 reminds the reader of the already mentioned marriage alliance with the Egyptian princess and tells us that the reason for the delay is to provide a palace for this marriage.

This delay in the completion of the temple clearly demonstrates Solomon's divided devotion. But Hays's treatment of the negative characterizations of Solomon in this section is too one dimensional.¹⁵¹ The warnings of 9:1–9 might seem to be characterizing Solomon negatively, but the warnings present here are the exact same things found in Solomon's prayer and are not a surprise in comparison to Solomon's own understanding of the way that the covenant relationship with YHWH works. However, these warnings do take on a new significance when one considers 7:1–12. The delay in completing the temple opens up the ominous warnings of the need for Solomon to be obedient in 6:11–13 and 9:1–9 to the reality that may come. In both of these places, YHWH reminds Solomon to walk in his statutes and obey his rules. Solomon's obedience to YHWH is the basis by which the Davidic promises will continue to be realized, ensuring YHWH's continual presence among Israel and life in the promised land. The demonstration of Solomon's divided heart through his halting of the temple construction in order to build his own palace and the prolonging of the peoples' worship at high places shows that Solomon's disobedience has important consequences for Israel's continued blessing in the land. Therefore, Solomon's exhortation to the people to be fully devoted to YHWH's commands (8:61) is ironic in light of the overall story, where Solomon himself is condemned for not being so (11:4). Again, the reader is shown in Solomon's actions the reality that wisdom is not identical with obedience.

6. Wisdom and Wealth: 1 Kings 9:10–10:29

Following the construction and dedication of the temple are reports of Solomon's further accomplishments and wealth as king in the period following the construction of the temple and royal

¹⁵¹ Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?", 168, 170.

palace. Though the individual units lack the cohesion of a unified story, the units are bound together by the theme of Solomon's wealth and splendour in an international context.¹⁵² There is generally more agreement among interpreters that there are concerning features that emerge in Solomon's reign, especially in relation to Israel's kingship laws.¹⁵³ In this section, Solomon's wealth, which includes his accumulation of military power, is the focus of the narrator. This great wealth is a result of his wisdom, but the wealth accumulated is focused on benefitting Solomon's court rather than the people of Israel, as in earlier chapters. The Deuteronomistic law prohibiting kings from acquiring great wealth (Deut 17:17) is put into conflict with Solomon's reign.¹⁵⁴ Walsh writes that: "Where Solomon's efficient administrative system once assured prosperity and security for Judah and Israel, it now assures nothing but gold and more gold for the royal coffers. There is no mention of the people's benefit, nor indeed of 'Judah' and 'Israel' at all; all the wealth Solomon amasses goes to decorate the palace complex."¹⁵⁵ The context suggests that Solomon possesses the wisdom and riches promised by YHWH, but these gifts no longer mutually benefit the royal court and the people of Israel. Solomon's motivation has progressively shifted to focus solely on the royal court at the expense of the nation.

This change in Solomon's focus, from the mutual benefit of the people of Israel and the royal court to the court only, is seen in a number of ways. Solomon's extravagant wealth is stressed in these closing chapters and the reader is told that this wealth comes from a variety of places, placing great strain on the Deuteronomistic command to not acquire great wealth. Hiram supplied Solomon with all the gold he desired (1 Kgs 9:11, 14), brought 420 talents from Ophir (9:28), and brought costly lumber, stones, and exotic animals from Tarshish (10:11, 22). The queen of Sheba (10:2, 10) supplies Solomon with 120 talents of gold, spices, and stones (10:10).¹⁵⁶ The rulers of surrounding nations each brought tribute to the king (10:25). Solomon's wisdom previously resulted in Judah and Israel living in prosperity and safety (4:20–25) as promised in Deuteronomy. But

¹⁵² Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 57, argues that this section is reports from the middle of Solomon's reign and that they are functioning more like glimpses or snapshots from his reign that do have a certain thematic thread that gives them coherence rather than any single overarching story.

¹⁵³ E.g., Brettler, "The Structure of 1 Kings 1–11", 87–97; Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 67; Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, 152; Walsh, *1 Kings*, 137–38; Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 84–85; Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 81–82.

¹⁵⁴ Highlighted, for example, by Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 85; Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 159.

¹⁵⁵ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 131–132.

¹⁵⁶ Solomon's gifts to the queen highlight his great wealth by his giving to the queen all that she desired in addition to what he already gave her (10:13).

here, Solomon's extraordinary wealth is used to adorn his own house. The costly wood from Hiram went to the two houses and to make instruments for singers (10:12), and Solomon's yearly intake of 666 talents of gold went towards decorative shields (10:16–17), making an extraordinary throne (10:18–20), and making all drinking vessels of his house (10:21–22). Interestingly, this quantity of gold makes silver worth nothing in Jerusalem (10:27).

The queen of Sheba's visit sheds light on the priority that the royal court had to Solomon. When the queen visits Solomon, she attributes all the wealth of the court to the king's wisdom: the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, his servants and their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings offered to YHWH (10:4–5). Some scholars point out that the queen's speech hints at two concerns taking place in Solomon's kingdom.¹⁵⁷ First, the queen's focus is on the way that Solomon's wisdom and wealth benefits the royal court rather than on the nation of Israel: "Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!" (10:8). The happiness and contentment that Sheba recognizes is found only in the court. Secondly, the queen's comment that YHWH has made Solomon king in order "that you may execute justice and righteousness" (10:9) may also suggest a troubling feature in Solomon's kingdom. Fretheim suggests that this may be a reminder to the reader of the absence of justice and righteousness occurring in the kingdom at this time.¹⁵⁸ Beal asks: "Where, in this, is his 'justice and righteousness'? Indeed, in just two short chapters, his injustice will be cited as reason for secession (12:4)."¹⁵⁹ The larger context of this section does make the queen's recognition that the purpose of Solomon's reign was to rule with justice and righteousness ominous. Just as the wealth of the kingdom stays within the royal court, it appears that justice and righteousness, which were previously a feature of Solomon's rule (3:16–28), have been replaced with a wisdom set upon increasing wealth and a lack of justice and righteousness feature in the eventual division. It appears that the intake of such extravagant prosperity has led to the neglect of the purpose of Solomon's reign.

Furthermore, listed among Solomon's wealth is his multiplying of military power (10:26–29).

¹⁵⁷ Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 60.; Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 134.; Hays, "Has the Narrator Come to Praise Solomon or to Bury Him?", 172.; Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 86–87.; Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 164.; Walsh, *1 Kings*, 131–132.

¹⁵⁸ Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 60.

¹⁵⁹ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 164.

For the second time, the reader is told that Solomon purchased horses and chariots, which was prohibited in the Deuteronomic kingship law (10:26–29; cf. Deut 17:16–17). But now the narrator adds that these horses were imported from Egypt and Kue. Nelson is correct when he writes that: “...no one with a Deuteronomic theological background could ever have missed the broad hint of the last verses about horses from Egypt (10.28-29), which point directly to Deuteronomy 17.16.”¹⁶⁰ Not only does Solomon’s purchase of horses and chariots from Egypt violate Deuteronomic law, but it also demonstrates a lack of trust in YHWH’s protection and places Solomon’s trust in the arena of human military action. But increasingly worrisome is the fact that Solomon engages in selling horses and chariots to Hittites and Arameans and in essence contributes to the military power of the descendants of Canaanites and to an eventual powerful threat to Israel (2 Kgs 7:6).¹⁶¹

The large infrastructure that Solomon established in order to keep wealth coming into Israel was extensive and required a large workforce. The recounting of Solomon’s workforce, who completed the many building projects, also stresses the focus of his kingdom to the detriment of his people. The earlier workforce (1 Kgs 5:27–32) were designated to build “the house” (5:32), but now they work to build “whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion” (9:19). The idea of forced labour probably would not have had a negative connotation in this chapter,¹⁶² but the real issue is that those forced into labour are Canaanites who were living in the land. Israel was unable to remove the Canaanites from the land, so instead Solomon drafted them as slaves (9:20–21). In Deuteronomy 7:1-6, YHWH commanded Israel to remove the Canaanites from their presence because the Canaanites posed a threats to Israel’s faithfulness to YHWH through the temptation of idolatry. But in the Kings account, we see the Canaanite workforce contributing to building the cities for Solomon’s chariots and horsemen (1 Kgs 9:19) that, as I have shown, transgress the kingship laws. They will also be used to erect the

¹⁶⁰ Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 167. Yutaka Ikeda, “Solomon’s Trade in Horses and Chariots in Its International Setting,” in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays: International Symposium for Biblical Studies, Tokyo, 1979*, ed. Tomoo Ishida, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 225, 229–30, notes that the price for a chariot and horse was expensive, further demonstrating Solomon’s wealth. Therefore, Solomon’s collecting and selling of horses and chariots demonstrate Solomon’s economic dominance in the surrounding region.

¹⁶¹ Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 81–82.

¹⁶² Walsh, “The Characterization of Solomon in First Kings 1-5,” 124–125; Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 151.

high places for his wives' gods (11:7–8). Furthermore, the juxtaposition of Pharaoh's daughter in 9:24, which also poses the threat of idolatry, with the Canaanite workforce is significant. The juxtaposition raises the question of whether exclusive faithfulness to YHWH can be maintained. How long can the ever-temptation toward idolatry but faithful worship of YHWH co-exist even if Solomon is faithfully worshipping at the temple at this time (9:25)?

The narrator further demonstrates Solomon's focus on wealth to the neglect of the people and YHWH's promises through his relationship with Hiram, king of Tyre. This relationship was very profitable to Solomon (9:28; 10:11–12; 10:22). But instead of the agreed-upon exchange of food for lumber, Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in Galilee, which Hiram found unacceptable.¹⁶³ Solomon inherited the land from David and is reigning over a territory that corresponds to the land YHWH promised to Abra(ha)m. Solomon himself previously recognized that the land was a gift and inheritance from YHWH (8:34, 36, 40) and this is reiterated by YHWH in his threat to exile Israel from the land (9:7).¹⁶⁴ Solomon's attempt at selling portions of the promised land demonstrates Solomon's movement away from YHWH in exchange for economic splendour.

7. Solomon's Final Portrait

The Solomon narrative ends with a full evaluation of Solomon's reign and concludes with Solomon's actions as an idolater. In the closing of this account, Solomon's actions demonstrate how far he has moved away from what the ideal Israelite king should have been. As noted above, Solomon's disregard of Israel's kingship laws regarding the prohibition of the collection of much wealth and of acquiring horses from Egypt is finally completed with the narrator's description of Solomon having numerous wives and concubines who turned his heart away from YHWH (11:1–4) and with the remark that Solomon was not wholly devoted like David (11:4, 6). Significantly, Solomon's actions are highlighted by his disregard for YHWH's commands to not inter-marry with foreign women because they will turn his heart after other gods (11:2–3, 9). And his love is no longer for YHWH (even in a qualified way) as it was previously (3:1). Now his heart is for his many wives and he built high places for each of them (11:8). Solomon's disregard for YHWH's word ap-

¹⁶³. The exchange also highlights that in addition to the lumber that Hiram provided for Solomon, he also provided all the gold that Solomon desired (9:11).

¹⁶⁴. As highlighted by Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 80.

appears after YHWH's declaration that he would take the kingdom from him and would give it to his servant Jeroboam. Following Ahijah's prophetic announcement that Jeroboam would be king over the ten northern tribes, Solomon attempted to kill Jeroboam. Solomon's actions in disregarding YHWH's commands could not be further from his own earlier exhortations of his need for obedience to YHWH as the means for blessing to continue in Israel.

8. Summary

This chapter has shown that Solomon is presented paradoxically in the application of his wisdom. When reading the narrative in the context of Deuteronomy, Solomon is portrayed as blessed by YHWH with unparalleled wisdom and wealth for the purpose of governing Israel with justice and righteousness. Significant to the Solomonic portrayal is the employment of his wisdom as the means by which Israel is able to enjoy life in the land: they are a numerous people, living in the ideal territory, and experiencing prosperity and dwelling safely in the land. Furthermore, Solomon's construction of Israel's temple is seen as the partial fulfilment of Deuteronomy 12, that Israel would have a permanent place to worship YHWH. However, Solomon is unable to bring about the full realization of Deuteronomy 12 due to building high places for idols. Even in the midst of the actualization of these former promises which result from Solomon's wise reign in Israel, Solomon sows the seeds of its undoing. Throughout the narrative, the glory of Solomon's reign is shaded by various decisions that raise questions for the reader of how long Solomon will remain devoted to YHWH. Yet in spite of the troubling elements that are present throughout Solomon's reign that ultimately result in a divided nation, the glorious events accomplished with Solomon's wisdom are never undermined. It is this paradox—Solomon's use of his wisdom that brings about the high point of Israel's history, but also that same wisdom is used to break YHWH's commandments—that provides opportunity for divergent characterizations of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible.

This chapter has also contributed to the question of the characterization of Solomon in the 1 Kings 1–11 narrative by evaluating other narrative and theological readings of the Solomon narrative and demonstrated agreement with those who argue that Solomon's faults occur early and progress throughout the narrative. But I have also shown that many of these arguments have tried to argue for further negative critiques about Solomon throughout the narrative and are overstate-

ments. It is with this final portrait of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11 that I now turn to the other narrative description of Solomon's reign as king over Israel in 2 Chronicles 1–9.

A RE-IMAGINED KING: THE CHARACTERIZATION OF SOLOMON IN 2 CHRONICLES 1–9

As I have shown in the previous chapter, the narrator of 1–2 Kings presents Solomon as a paradoxical king who represents the apex of the united kingdom of Israel brought about by his wisdom and, at the same time, as a flawed king who ends his reign in apostasy, the beginning of Israel's division. It is well accepted that 1–2 Chronicles, though telling Israel's history, is a radically different book to 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. In regards to Solomon's characterization, two major scholarly questions arise from this Chronicistic re-telling: 1) to what extent has the narrator idealized Solomon and 2) what is the narrator's purpose for omitting Solomon's sins of idolatry? It is common to find scholarly sentiments that the Chronicler has edited his account in order to present an idealized Solomon.¹ In this chapter, I will show that this dominant scholarly view of a whitewashing of Solomon is an oversimplification of the material. Rather, I will demonstrate that Solomon's sins are presupposed by the narrative. I will argue that in 2 Chronicles 1–9 Solomon is characterized as a model of fidelity to the temple through a re-telling of his reign that reframes the 1 Kings 1–11 material in order to show the benefits of God's benevolence from cultic fidelity. Solomon has been adapted as a model of faithfulness and inspiration for a post-exilic audience, *even in the midst*

¹ Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 166; Torijano, *Esoteric King*, 15–16; W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, HAT 21, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1955), 135, 225–26; Roddy L. Braun, *1 Chronicles*, WBC, (Waco: Word, 1986), xxxii–xxxv; J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, trans. J. S. Black, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 184–85; Braun, “Solomonic Apologetic”, 501–16; R. Mosis, *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Chronistischen Geschichtswerkes*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 162–68; Dillard, “The Chronicler's Solomon”, 289–300; William Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 2 vols., JSOTSup 253, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 298–99.

of Solomon's faults.

But before analyzing the characterization of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 1–9, it is important to address a *reading strategy* for 1–2 Chronicles as a book. Establishing the correct interpretive context will impact our understanding of Solomon. As Sean Cook states, the majority of scholars who study 1–2 Chronicles read the books in relation to 1 Samuel–2 Kings, noting the way that 1–2 Chronicles differs from 1 Samuel–2 Kings as a source text.² Without disparaging such an approach, Cook asserts the need for a synchronic reading of 1–2 Chronicles as an independent and coherent narrative. He maintains that a diachronic reading is not sufficient in order to read 1–2 Chronicles in its new literary context.³ Cook's argument here is an important one because rarely is the significance of such a context reflected upon. In spite of my agreement with Cook that scholars should be reflective upon how to read 1–2 Chronicles, I find Cook's conclusion to read 1–2 Chronicles outside the context of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings ultimately deficient. Cook's choice of reading 2 Chronicles 1–9 outside of the context of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings leads him to read Solomon's actions in contrast to David's, which characterizes Solomon as less than positive.⁴ Fundamentally, Solomon is characterized in subtle ways, according to Cook, and is presented as having nowhere near the level of generosity and gratefulness toward the temple that David does.⁵ However, it is difficult to maintain this conclusion in light of YHWH's appearing to Solomon at the temple (2 Chr 7:1) and Solomon's praise of YHWH (6:18). As will be shown, an awareness of 1 Kings 1–11 provides a helpful key toward understanding Solomon's characterization. This does not mean that the 1 Kings 1–11 narrative subsumes the 2 Chronicles 1–9 narrative, but it provides a helpful key to the distinctiveness of Solomon's characterization in 2 Chronicles 1–9.

Thus, 1–2 Chronicles is not an independent narrative that is to be read in isolation of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. The gaps in the narrative of 1–2 Chronicles require some knowledge of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings indicating internal signs within the book itself that these books serve as a larger context in which to read 1–2 Chronicles.⁶

² Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 171–73. E.g., Braun, “Solomonic Apologetic”, 507, takes the view that the two texts should be compared.

³ Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 171.

⁴ Ibid., 88–89, 144–45.

⁵ Ibid., 124, 143–44.

⁶ It is important to note that in my methodology for this thesis I have stated that I would read each

1. Reading Chronicles

To begin, it is important to consider two features in 1–2 Chronicles that show that these books are not intended to be read as an isolated narrative. First, there are signs that the Chronicler presupposes that his readers know the 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings history at various stages, as I will show in what follows. But what is more, there are gaps in the 1–2 Chronicles narrative that do require some knowledge of this earlier history in order to make the narrative coherent. Second, there are significant allusions in 1–2 Chronicles to 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. Allusions between the two books suggests that the first history is not only known by the original readers, but that it also informs the reading of 1–2 Chronicles.

1.1 Presuppositions and Allusions in 1–2 Chronicles

First and Second Chronicles recount the history of Israel beginning with Adam and ending with Cyrus's edict to those Israelites wishing to return to re-build the Jerusalem temple. In order to compose this history, the authors of 1–2 Chronicles used a number of sources, most prominently 1 Samuel–2 Kings.⁷ In spite of this, it is clear that, at the same time, the authors presume that readers are familiar with the 1 Samuel–2 Kings narrative. A few examples can help demonstrate this point. In the account of Saul, the narrator only mentions the king's death (1 Chr 10:1–14). As readers, we are not told how Saul came to be king. We are only brought to the final scenes of the king's death with a closing summary of his reign. Saul is charged with a "breach of faith" (מַעַל), but it is unclear from the perspective of 1 Chronicles what this was.⁸ The narrator does not mention

book in its own integrity. By reading 2 Chronicles 1–9 in reference to 1 Kings 1–11 this is not incongruent to the methodology outlined because the books of 1–2 Chronicles point outside themselves. Therefore, in order to read 2 Chronicles 1–9 on its own terms readers must read according to its own internal logic.

⁷ A. Graeme Auld, *Kings Without Privilege: David and Moses in the Story of the Bible's Kings*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), argues that 1 Samuel–2 Kings and 1–2 Chronicles used a common source but use this common source in diverse ways. Auld's thesis has not garnered much of a following. For an example of critique see Ralph W. Klein, *1 Chronicles*, HCHCB, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 31–37; Steven L. McKenzie, "The Chronicler as Redactor," in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, ed. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 263 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 70–90.

⁸ H.G.M Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, NCB, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 95, suggests that Saul's unfaithfulness was over the course of his reign as a whole rather than referring to a specific event.

YHWH's commands to Saul. This lack of an introduction to Saul's reign and the omission of the criteria by which Saul is judged suggests that the audience of 1–2 Chronicles was familiar with Saul's narrative in 1 Samuel.⁹ Thus the reader is clearly supposed to fill in the gap of Saul's reign from 1 Samuel.

The narrator's telling of aspects of David's reign also presupposes that readers are familiar with 1 Samuel in order to understand the narratives about David in 1 Chronicles. The narrator begins David's reign with all Israel gathered around him at Hebron for David's anointing (1 Chr 11:1–3). And David's anointing is said to have been done "according to the word of the LORD by Samuel" (11:3b). However, the narrator does not tell the reader about Samuel's announcement of David as Israel's king. Verse 3b likely infers the prophet's announcements of David as king in 1 Samuel 13:14; 15:28; 16:1–13.¹⁰ Further gaps in the narrator's story of David's recognition as king has elements that are filled in by having a knowledge of 1 Samuel. For instance, the Benjaminites show support for David at Ziklag "while he could not move about freely because of Saul the son of Kish" (1 Chr 12:1). Further, the Manassites show support for David at Ziklag "when he came with the Philistines for the battle against Saul" (12:20 [19]). Both of these citations tell us that David received support during the conflict with Saul. But the narrator gives no record of David's wars with Saul in 1 Chronicles. In fact, David's ascension as king is presented as conflict free and without struggle. Including mention of the support David received during the conflicts with Saul not only suggests that readers were familiar with the stories from 1 Samuel but also that their knowledge would help make sense of these references.

A different aspect that shows that 1–2 Chronicles presupposes that readers have knowledge of 1 Samuel–2 Kings and that this knowledge would be used as a part of reading 1–2 Chronicles is the use of allusions.¹¹ We see an example in the allusion to David's affair with Bathsheba. It is frequently noted by scholars that the David and Bathsheba incident has been omitted in 1 Chronicles.¹² But it is likely that 1 Chronicles 20:1 presupposes a reader's knowledge of this affair by re-

Whichever option one selects, knowledge of 1 Samuel is necessary to fill in the gap created.

⁹ Jeon, *Impeccable Solomon?*, 208.

¹⁰ Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles*, TOTC, (Leicester: IVP, 1994), 138–39.

¹¹ Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 194–215.

¹² E.g., Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 210.

taining the report that David remained in Jerusalem while Joab went out to capture Rabbah (1 Chr 20:1a; cf., 2 Sam 11:1a), at the cost of introducing ambiguity on David's location in relation to the Rabbah capture.¹³ In 1 Samuel, David sends Joab to fight Ammon, but the Chronicles material diverges from 1 Samuel describing Joab as taking the initiative to fight Ammon. Further, the narrator of Chronicles tells us that Joab overthrew Rabbah, but Samuel does not describe the victory until later in 1 Samuel 12:26. The omission of the David and Bathsheba incident, which is inserted between the opening and closing of the war with the Ammonites (2 Sam 11:1; 12:26–31), creates a confusion of David's location—is he in Jerusalem (1 Chr 20:1) or in Rabbah (1 Chr 20:2–3)? As Williamson observes: “By abstracting only that which was relevant to his theme, the Chronicler has introduced a slight unevenness into his account over David's location in 20:1–3, but probably...he assumes knowledge of the fuller account.”¹⁴ Going further, Jeon thinks that this unevenness is “most probably intended to remind the reader of the omitted story of David's adultery.”¹⁵ It seems likely that the allusions in 1 Chronicles 20:1 would remind readers of David and Bathsheba's affair. But it seems speculative that the purpose of not smoothing out David's location was in order to draw attention to the omitted story. The allusion itself is what draws attention to the incident.

First Chronicles 29:22 may also serve as an allusion to point back to 1 Kings.¹⁶ Here, Solomon is described as being made king a “second time.” The odd reference to “the second time” raises issues concerning the date of Solomon's first anointing. Both Williamson and Selman suggest that the reference to “second time” is a sequel to Solomon's anointing in 1 Kings 1–2.¹⁷ Both texts share similarities: Solomon is described as prince (נָגִיד) (2 Chr 29:22; 1 Kgs 1:35), there is a contrast between the allegiance of all of David's sons that Adonijah previously enjoyed (1 Kgs 1:9; 1 Chr 29:24), and both describe Solomon sitting on the throne (1 Kgs 2:12a; 1 Chr 29:23a). Yet in spite of the similarities, it is clear that this anointing in 1 Chronicles 29 is not a record of the same event,

¹³ The Hebrew of these verses have slight differences, but both keep the phrase וְדָוִד יָשָׁב בִּירוּשָׁלַם [2 Sam 11:1a=יָשָׁב].

¹⁴ Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 140.

¹⁵ Jeon, *Impeccable Solomon?*, 213.

¹⁶ The use of allusion to the Ahijah's prophecy that presupposes Solomon's sin of idolatry is discussed in section 4.

¹⁷ Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 186–87; Martin J. Selman, *2 Chronicles*, TOTC, (Leicester: IVP, 1994), 261–62.

as the atmosphere suggests. Solomon's anointing in 1 Kings 1 takes place as a semi-private function, whereas the context of 1 Chronicles 29 is a recording of a more public and formal ceremony.¹⁸ These allusions to 1 Kings 1–2 lead us to assume that the readers had a knowledge of this text. As noted, 1–2 Chronicles requires some general knowledge of 1 Samuel–2 Kings in order to fully understand the narrative in question. Likewise, the narrator also alludes to his *Vorlage*. What this suggests is that 1–2 Chronicles should not be read in isolation from 1 Samuel–2 Kings, but should be read, in a general sense, in conjunction with 1 Samuel–2 Kings filling in the narrative gaps of 1–2 Chronicles narrator and help demonstrating the emphases of the Chronicist narrator.

But before moving on to Solomon's characterization in 2 Chronicles 1–9 there is the complication of what source text was used in the composition of 1–2 Chronicles. For if the source text of 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings was a different text type than what has been preserved in the Masoretic tradition, then it creates a problem to the legitimacy of viewing the differences between 1–2 Chronicles and 1 Samuel–2 Kings as intentional changes that reveal the Chronicler's theology.

1.2 The Complication of Reading 1–2 Chronicles with 1 Samuel–2 Kings

Reading 1–2 Chronicles and 1 Samuel–2 Kings in conjunction in order to determine the Chronicler's purpose and theology is a standard scholarly practice. But text-critical work on the edition of 1 Samuel–2 Kings used by the authors of 1–2 Chronicles has questioned the assumption that the authors were working with a proto-MT edition of these books. For instance, Peter Ackroyd argues: "...our basis for detecting the Chronicler's viewpoint must be in part our consideration of the ways in which he modifies his source material."¹⁹ But as he notes: "Our knowledge of the history of the text – particularly in light of the Qumran discoveries and of the text of the Greek translations – suggests that there was more than one text-form at any given moment."²⁰ Knoppers notes the text-critical work of Lemke²¹ and Ulrich²² that show that the Chronicler's source text of 1–2 Samuel is closer to an Old Palestinian text type, something similar to 4QSam.^a²³ Furthermore, he notes

¹⁸ Ibid., 261; cf., Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 187.

¹⁹ Peter R. Ackroyd, *I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah*, TBC, (London: SCM Press, 1973), 21.

²⁰ Ibid., 21.

²¹ W. E. Lemke, "The Synoptic Problem in the Chronicler's History," *HTR* 58, (1965).

²² Eugene C. Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, HSM 19, (1978).

²³ Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, AB, (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 70.

McKenzie's study²⁴ which shows that the edition of 1–2 Kings is a proto-MT text type.²⁵ He writes that: "When studying synoptic passages, the Chronicler's deviations from MT Kings may be more safely ascribed to his creativity than his deviations from MT Samuel may be."²⁶ When comparing 1–2 Chronicles with 1–2 Kings, we can have reasonable confidence that differences between the Kings and Chronicles texts can be attributed to the Chronicler's intentional changes for his own purposes rather than due to the use of a different *Vorlage*. This point is further strengthened by Williamson who shows that the Chronicler only drew upon 1 Kings 1–11 as a source for the Solomon narrative in 2 Chronicles 1–9.²⁷ For that reason, we can be confident that the differences between the two Solomon narratives are due to intentional changes.

In summary, as I have shown, the narrative of 1–2 Chronicles presupposes readers are familiar with 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings and will at times use that information in order to fill in gaps and clarify allusions made in the narrative. This suggests that 1–2 Chronicles was intended to be read in conjunction with 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. But as just noted, the different *Vorlage* of 1–2 Samuel cautions readers from drawing too large of conclusions based on every minor difference between the texts as an intentional change that reveals the purpose or ideology of the Chronicler. But as noted, scholars can have confidence that 2 Chronicles 1–9 is an adaption of 1 Kings 1–11 and can take omissions and the rearrangement of events from Solomon's reign as meaningful to the depiction of Solomon. Having now laid out the reading strategy for 1–2 Chronicles in relation to 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings, it is time to analyze the way Solomon has been characterized in the narrative of his reign.

2. Solomon as One-Half of Israel's United Kingdom

The importance of the relationship between David and Solomon, for the message of 1–2 Chronicles, is indicated by the amount of space the narrator allocates to the accounts of their reigns.²⁸

²⁴ McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History*, esp. 119–58.

²⁵ Knoppers, *1–2 Chronicles*, 70.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁷ Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 18, 192–93.

²⁸ Braun, *1 Chronicles*, xxxiii. The predominance of those chapters are devoted to David. Nineteen chapters are devoted to describing David's reign alone (1 Chr 11:1–29:30), in comparison to nine chapters for Solomon's reign (2 Chr 1–9).

The portrayal of David's and Solomon's reigns as united for the task of building the temple is unique to the book of Chronicles. The temple was understood to be a key feature in Israel's history, both in relation to David's desire to build the temple and in the laying of the foundation stone as the culmination of Israel's exodus from Egypt (1 Kgs 6:1). But whereas the descriptions of David's reign and Solomon's reign include various episodes that culminate in the erection of the temple in 1 Samuel–2 Kings, the narrator of 1–2 Chronicles focuses much more intensely on the task of building the temple during their reigns. It could be argued that the fundamental way the narrator chooses to unite David's and Solomon's reigns is through patterning the transition of leadership after the transition from Moses to Joshua, as I shall now discuss.

2.1 David and Solomon: A New Moses and Joshua

A fundamental feature of the narrator's characterization of Solomon in 1–2 Chronicles is that he and David are presented as having a united reign for the task of building the temple. David's and Solomon's unity is most apparent through the succession of Solomon being shaped according to the succession of Moses by Joshua in Deuteronomy–Joshua. In his study of Joshua, Norbert Lohfink observed three formal aspects for the transition in leadership from Moses to Joshua that have similarities to Chronicles: 1) an invocation of encouragement (Josh 1:6; 1 Chr 22:13; 28:10, 20), 2) an explanation of the task to be completed (Josh 1:16; 1 Chr 22:1; 28:10, 20), and 3) a promise of accompaniment (Josh 1:9; 1 Chr 22:11, 20).²⁹

H.G.M. Williamson notes these parallels and argues that Solomon's succession as king presents the reigns of David and Solomon as a single unit with the sole purpose of building Israel's temple. This is accomplished by modelling the transition of kingship after the transition of leadership between Moses and Joshua in Deuteronomy 32 and Joshua 1.³⁰ Williamson highlights the similar thematic and verbal allusions shared by both texts in the transition of leadership: Moses and David are prohibited by God from completing their main goals as Israel's leaders. For Moses this was leading Israel into Canaan (Deut 1:37–38; 31:2–8) and for David it was his desire to build the

²⁹ Norbert Lohfink, "Die deuteronomistische Darstellung des Übergangs der Führung Israels von Moses auf Josue. Ein Beitrag zur alttestamentliche Theologie des Amtes," *Schol* 37, (1962), 32–44. See also, D.J. McCarthy, "An Installation Genre," *JBL* 90, (1971), 31–41.

³⁰ H.G.M. Williamson, "The Accession of Solomon in the Books of Chronicles," *VT* 26, (1976), 351–61. See also Braun, "Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder", 581–90.

temple for YHWH (1 Chr 22:5–13; 28:2–8). In both transitions, Joshua and Solomon are advised that keeping the law will lead to prospering (Deut 31:5; Josh 1:7–8; 1 Chr 22:12–13; 28:7–9). Further, Joshua and Solomon are commissioned in private (Deut 31:23; 1 Chr 22:6) and in public gatherings (Deut 31:2; 1 Chr 28:8), they are received immediately with full support from Israel (Deut 34:9; Josh 1:16–20; 1 Chr 29:23–24), and God magnifies each of them (Josh 3:7; 4:14; 1 Chr 29:25; 2 Chr 1:1).³¹ Dillard also adds to this list of parallels that both Joshua and Solomon lead Israel to rest in the land (Josh 11:23; 21:44; 1 Chr 22:8–9).³² The Chronistic narrator uses these parallels to draw together the reigns of David and Solomon. Even though each king has a distinctive reign, their reigns function as a unit with Solomon completing the task which David began.³³

2.2 Continuing and Completing David's Task

In the presentation of David's and Solomon's reigns, then, the narrator focuses primarily on the temple. Japhet observes that in both kings' reigns, some material from 1 Samuel–2 Kings has been omitted while other material has been added in order to emphasize the role of the temple for each king.³⁴ This focus on the temple is a point on which scholars are in near consensus.³⁵ The picture that the narrator presents of David and Solomon is such that neither king can complete the building of the temple on his own. It requires a unified effort of preparation and execution.³⁶

2.2.1 The Divinely Chosen Temple Builder

Foundational to the portrayal of a united reign is the fact that David and Solomon require one

³¹ Williamson, "The Accession of Solomon", 353–54.

³² Dillard, "The Chronicler's Solomon", 294. Dillard also adds that Joshua and Solomon use foreign labour for work on the tabernacle/temple (Josh 9:26–27; 2 Chr 2:17–18; 8:7–10) and both receive divine wisdom (Deut 34:9; 2 Chr 1). But he rightly notes that these features are not unique to only these two figures.

³³ Williamson, "The Accession of Solomon", 356–57. Cf., Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 88–89, who argues that David and Solomon are united in order to provide a contrast between David and Solomon.

³⁴ Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*, 2nd ed., BEATAJ 9, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), 488–89.

³⁵ E.g., J. Gordon McConville, *1–2 Chronicles*, DSB, (1984), 108; Rodney K. Duke, *The Persuasive Appeal of the Chronicler: A Rhetorical Analysis*, JSOTSup 88 / Bible and Literature Series 25, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 56; Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, OTL, (London: SCM Press, 1993), 48; William Riley, *King and Cultus in Chronicles: Worship and the Reinterpretation of History*, JSOTSup 160, (1993), 87; Selman, *2 Chronicles*, 285.

³⁶ Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 153; Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 434.

another in order to complete the temple. Although David desired to build the temple for YHWH, he was disqualified from doing so because he had “shed much blood and...waged great wars (1 Chr 22:8).”³⁷ But Solomon, though a wise king, was young and inexperienced, requiring the assistance of his father to make the preparations for building the temple. David’s disqualification contrasts the appointment of David’s son as temple builder. As Braun notes, the depiction of Solomon as YHWH’s divine choice as king in Chronicles stands in stark contrast to that of 1 Kings.³⁸ 1 Kings 1–2, which is omitted from the Chronicler’s account, reports the struggle between Solomon and Adonijah that took place in order for Solomon to come to the throne, resulting in Solomon receiving the throne based upon the political manoeuvring of Nathan and Bathsheba (1 Kgs 1), and Solomon’s cunning actions to eliminate David’s enemies who may be disruptive to Solomon’s reign (1 Kgs 2). Instead, the narrator presents Solomon’s accession as conflict free with Solomon receiving Israel’s full support, including the support of the other sons of David and the mighty men in the army (1 Chr 29:24).³⁹

Here, YHWH reveals that Solomon will be the son who is to build the temple. YHWH’s choice of Solomon is made even more prominent in the public ceremony through the concept of *בחר* in chapter 28 where the Chronicler refers to Solomon as *בחר* four times in David’s speeches (28:5, 6, 10; 29:1). Like in chapter 22, David summarizes that he has been prohibited from building the temple (22:2–3) and that Solomon has been chosen to build it (22:5–6). Braun notes that out of the kings of Israel, only David and Solomon are said to have been chosen by YHWH.⁴⁰ Solomon has been chosen by YHWH in order to succeed David as Israel’s king and to build a temple for YHWH.⁴¹

Yet, in spite of Solomon’s election to succeed David and build the temple, Solomon requires

³⁷ Ibid., 436, notes that commentators have struggled to understand this disqualification because David’s warring was a divine initiative. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 397–98, argues that these wars were still necessary as a part of the divine plan but regardless still disqualify him from erecting the temple. Thus, this is “David’s paradoxical and tragic flaw.” Brian E. Kelly, “David’s Disqualification in 1 Chronicles 22:8: A Response to Piet B. Dirksen,” *JOT* 80, (1998), 53–61, on the other hand, argues that the blood that was shed does not refer to the wars David fought, but to the seventy thousand who died because of the census David took in 1 Chronicles 21.

³⁸ Braun, “Solomonic Apologetic”, 507. Similarly, Dillard, “The Chronicler’s Solomon”, 289.

³⁹ Ibid., 291; Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, WBC, (Waco: Word, 1987), 1.

⁴⁰ Braun, “Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder”, 588–90. See also Japhet, *Ideology*, 448–51.

⁴¹ Braun, “Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder”, 588–90.

David in order for the temple to become a reality. In the midst of David's extensive preparations for the temple,⁴² the narrator gives the reason why David's preparations were necessary: "For David said, 'Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands. I will therefore make preparation for it' (22:5)." As Japhet notes, this explanation from the Chronicler gives the rationale for all the preparations that David made in chapters 22–29.⁴³ By focusing so much on David's preparations, the narrator has characterized Solomon's inability, but also his faithfulness to complete the task that he has been chosen to do.

2.2.2 Faithfully Completing the Temple

David's and Solomon's united reign focused around the task of building the temple is also demonstrated through Solomon's obedience in following David's preparations. Solomon's first action involves ensuring preparations for the temple through establishing a workforce in Israel (2 Chr 2:2, 17–18) and trade relations with Hiram (Hiram in Samuel–Kings), King of Tyre (2:1–16), thus expanding the workforce that David had prepared for him.⁴⁴ After proposing to build the temple and his own house (2:1), the narrator reports that Solomon conscripted his workforce of resident aliens:⁴⁵ "And Solomon conscripted 70,000 men to bear burdens and 80,000 to quarry in the hill country, and 3,600 to oversee them (2:2, 18)."⁴⁶ The Chronistic narrator adds in 2:17 that: "Then Solomon counted all the resident aliens who were in the land of Israel, after the census of them that David his father had taken, and there were found 153,600." This report refers back to David's preparations for the temple by assembling a workforce (1 Chr 22:2, 15–16). By referring to Solomon's own actions of conscripting resident aliens in the land for the task of building the temple, the narrator explicitly links together David's and Solomon's actions.

⁴² David's preparations include gaining rest for the land in order for the temple to be built (1 Chr 18:1–20:8) and the circumstances that led to the purchasing of the temple site (21:1–22:1).

⁴³ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 294.

⁴⁴ חִירָם is a variant spelling of חִירָם. Because חִירָם is the preferred spelling in 1–2 Chronicles (besides 1 Chr 14:1), I will refer to him as Hiram in this chapter.

⁴⁵ The Chronicler replaces 1 Kings 5:1 which has Hiram initiating negotiations with Solomon with 2 Chronicles 2:1, Solomon's desire to build the temple. This change has Solomon initiating the conversation and portrays him as the initiator of temple construction. See Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 197.

⁴⁶ On numbers in Solomon's workforce see Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 39–40.

Solomon's interaction with Hiram, King of Tyre, also characterizes Solomon's faithfulness to David's previous preparations. Solomon expresses to Hiram his desire to establish a relationship with Hiram as David had: "As you dealt with David my father and sent him cedar to build himself a house to dwell in, so deal with me" (2 Chr 2:3). While David's relationship with Hiram was based upon an exchange of cedar that went toward building his own house, Solomon desires that the relationship would be continued in order that the materials could be used to build the temple (2:4-6). Selman is correct in his observation that Solomon's appeal to Hiram's former relationship with David was not just an appeal to that relationship, but that Solomon's relationship with Hiram would contribute to building the temple in accordance with the Davidic promises.⁴⁷ Solomon also desired that Hiram would send him a skilled worker to work alongside the workers whom David provided (2:7), to which Hiram agrees (2:14). These acts, both through census taking and establishment of the relationship with Hiram, demonstrates Solomon's desire to continue with the preparations David made and primes the reader for the same thing to occur throughout the narrative of temple construction.

Solomon's unity with and obedience to David carries on throughout temple construction, the dedication of temple vessels, and the organization of temple personnel. The narrator reports that the location where Solomon began to construct the temple was in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah (3:1). John Van Seters notes that the narrator has chosen to report the place of the temple rather than the time of construction as was done in 1 Kings 6:1.⁴⁸ An attentive reader will have remembered that this is the location that David purchased (1 Chr 21:18-30) and declared: "Here shall be the house of the LORD God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel" (22:1). Despite this, the narrator makes it explicit that Solomon is building the temple at the location David appointed.

Solomon's obedience to David is also seen in Solomon's dedication of temple vessels.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁷ Selman, *1 Chronicles*, 299.

⁴⁸ John Van Seters, "The Chronicler's Account of Solomon's Temple Building: A Continuity Theme," in *The Chronicler as Historian*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund, and Steven L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 238 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 288-89. Van Seters further suggests the change of settings may suggest the importance on the place of the temple against "rival claims." Though his suggestion is plausible, it is speculative. It is best to note, as Van Seters does, that the place that Solomon constructs the temple is the same place David purchased land for it.

⁴⁹ Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Temple Vessels: A Continuity Theme," in *Studies in the Religion of Israel*, ed. P. de Boer, VTSup 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 166-81, argues that the survival of temple vessels and their survival after the destruction of Jerusalem serves as a continuity theme for the post-exilic community.

narrator reports that: “Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of God...as prescribed”(2 Chr 4:19–20). The remark “as prescribed” connects the production of the vessels with David’s preparations for Solomon and confirms for the reader that he followed David’s instructions as the construction of the vessels in 4:19-22 corresponds directly to the temple plans that were given to him by David (1 Chr 28:13b-19). Further, the narrator’s closing remark on the construction and the filling of the temple reports that: “Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, and stored the silver, the gold, and all the vessels in the treasuries of the house of God” (2 Chr 5:1). Part of David’s preparation for the temple was to provide rest for the temple through war with surrounding nations (1 Chr 18:1-20:8). The spoils of these wars were then dedicated for the temple (18:8, 10, 11; c.f., 22:3, 14, 16; 26:26; 29:29) reinforcing the Davidic connection.⁵⁰

A final example of the unity of David’s and Solomon’s tasks to build the temple is in the organization of the temple personnel (2 Chr 8:12-15).⁵¹ Here, the narrator describes Solomon’s patterns of feasts, sacrifices, and temple organization. It is clear that it was important that the appointment of priests, Levites, and gate keepers was in accordance with the instructions of David. Twice the narrator describes that this organization of temple personnel was from David. First, he opens this report by stating that Solomon did this according to the ruling of David his father (8:14a). Then again, after the report of Solomon’s personnel, the narrator gives the reason for this action by stating that it was David’s command (8:14e).

Throughout the account of the building of the temple, the narrator focuses on how the initial preparations were made by David and faithfully followed by Solomon. The narrator describes these connections between David’s preparations and Solomon’s completion in order to depict a united reign of David and Solomon. Further, Solomon’s actions in preparing and building the temple characterizes him as faithful to the preparations and instructions given to him by David which were in turn given to him by YHWH (1 Chr 28:19). Thus, the theme of Solomon’s fidelity to David’s preparations enhances his overall fidelity by linking Solomon’s obedience to the temple that has

⁵⁰Leslie C. Allen, “Kerygmatic Units in 1 & 2 Chronicles,” *JOT* 41, (1988), 24–25.

⁵¹These verses are an expansion of 1 Kings 9:25: “Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar that he built to the LORD, making offerings with it before the LORD. So he finished the house” (1 Kgs 9:25).

been designed by YHWH himself.

2.3 David and Solomon as Models for the Future

Scholars have noted that David's and Solomon's united reign is also signalled through the different ways the narrator alludes to the two kings as a point of comparison in order to offer them as models to be emulated.⁵² Braun notes three texts in 1–2 Chronicles which show the complementary reign of David and Solomon. First, he notes in 2 Chronicles 7:10 following the dedication of the temple at the feast of tabernacles, the people left “joyful and glad of heart for the prosperity that the LORD had granted to David and to Solomon and to Israel his people.”⁵³ That the people praised David and Solomon would have been enough to conclude that this is another example of the Chronicler's portrayal of the united reign. However, when we compare 2 Chronicles 7:10 with the parallel verse in 1 Kings 8:66, we see that what only mentioned David in 1 Kings now includes David and Solomon, demonstrating the Chronicler's emphasis on uniting the two kings. Second, Braun notes 2 Chronicles 11:17. Here, the narrator uses David and Solomon as a point of comparison to describe the manner in which the Levites and some from tribes of the northern kingdom walked.⁵⁴ David and Solomon, therefore, serve as positive models for the people. Third, Braun notes that David's and Solomon's work on the temple-cult was used during Josiah's reign where the king instructs the Levites to prepare themselves according to the “writing of David king of Israel and the document of Solomon his son” (2 Chr 35:4).⁵⁵ In addition to these three verses we can also add Riley's observation of the united reign during Manasseh's reign (33:7).⁵⁶ Here, the temple is described as the place where YHWH told David and Solomon that the temple is the place that he would dwell.

The Chronicist narrator of Solomon's reign makes many indications that Solomon's role in Israel's history is as one-half of the united reign. This united reign, therefore, was presented as a way that would accomplish the construction of Israel's temple and provide exemplars of fidelity to be

⁵² E.g., Braun, “Solomonic Apologetic”, 513–14; Braun, *1 Chronicles*, xxxv; Riley, *King and Cultus in Chronicles*, 76–77; Selman, *2 Chronicles*, 288; Japhet, *Ideology*, 481–82.

⁵³ Braun, *1 Chronicles*, xxxv.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxv.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, xxxv.

⁵⁶ Riley, *King and Cultus in Chronicles*, 76.

emulated. As we will see next, the narrator continues to characterize Solomon as a king fundamentally faithful to the cultic-regulations which results in prosperity for Israel under his rule providing a model for the post-exilic community for flourishing in the land after exile.

3. The Fidelity of Solomon and the Blessing of His Reign

Integral to the narrator's portrayal of Solomon is characterizing him as a pious king, faithful to the temple-cult, who then receives great blessings for this faithfulness. Japhet argues that the characterization of Solomon, like that of David, is more concerned with Solomon's role in public life than with his private life.⁵⁷ To an extent, this is a true observation, but making a distinction between Solomon's private and public life does not accurately reflect the details omitted from 1 Kings 1–11 in 1–2 Chronicles. For instance, Solomon's judgment between the two prostitutes or the description of his administrative districts can hardly be described as private life. It is better to say that the narrator's attention is focused on Solomon's work on the temple, the positive impact it had for Israel's corporate life under YHWH, and the prosperity that resulted in Israel. Comparing this portrayal of Solomon to the picture we see in 1 Kings 1–11 has led a majority of scholars to the assumption that Solomon has been idealized or made perfect.⁵⁸ This consensus among scholars has recently been challenged by Jeon who understands the Solomon of Chronicles as being far from flawless. Therefore, the contrast between a Solomon who is portrayed as a perfect king and a Solomon who still contains many of the the flaws we saw in 1 Kings 1–11 must be evaluated. But, as we will see, the fundamental way that the narrator recasts Solomon is as one who receives blessing because of his fidelity. This does not mean that he is portrayed as a perfect king, but as a king who embodies the ideal of faithfulness to the temple.

3.1 The Fidelity of Solomon

Unique to the account of Solomon in 1–2 Chronicles is the frequent characterization of Solomon's piety and devotion to Israel's cultic regulations. This emphasis is derived from David's commission of Solomon before his death. In this commission, David stresses the need for Solomon to observe

⁵⁷Japhet, *Ideology*, 467–68.

⁵⁸See note 1 above.

the Mosaic law in order to experience YHWH's blessing of prosperity (22:12-13). Braun argues that this text is foundational in communicating the Chronicler's theology of retribution.⁵⁹ In various places throughout the report of Solomon, his faithfulness is underscored by the attention given to the king's observance and enthusiasm for Israel's cult—frequently through material that was either absent in 1 Kings or through the reframing of existing material.

Solomon's first act as king sets the tone for the narrator's portrayal of Solomon as devoted to the temple. As others have noted, there are some significant changes that reframe the description of Solomon's worship from 1 Kings 1:3–15. The narrator of 1–2 Chronicles omits 1 Kings 3:3 which describes Solomon worshipping at high places. Gibeon is also described as a high place as in 1 Kings (2 Chr 1:3, 13), but Solomon's actions are justified because “the tent of meeting of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there” (1:3; cf., 1:13). Solomon's purpose for assembling Israel's leaders (1:2) was to go to Gibeon and seek the tent in order to go before the LORD and offer sacrifices (1:5–6).⁶⁰ Because this is Solomon's first act as king, this impresses upon the reader a significant aspect of the king's character: Solomon is devoted to worshipping YHWH.⁶¹

The narrator's emphasis on Solomon's devotion to faithful worship according to the Mosaic covenant is again stressed in Solomon's correspondence with Hiram, king of Tyre. Interestingly, the narrator has omitted 1 Kings 3:16–5:14 [3:16–4:34]. He does this in order to move directly from an account of Solomon's wealth to his preparation to build the temple.⁶² Two instances in Solomon's correspondence with Hiram has the effect of drawing attention to Solomon's commitment to the temple. First, the narrator has omitted that Hiram sent servants to Solomon when he heard that Solomon had succeeded David as king (5:15 [5:1]). By omitting this, it emphasizes that Solomon takes the initiative in the relationship with Hiram and begins his reign by establishing a relationship in order to gain materials and workmen for the temple. Second, Solomon gives a more

⁵⁹ Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 226.

⁶⁰ Duke, *The Persuasive Appeal*, 50, describes “seeking YHWH” as: “[A] total response of the worshiper to God. One turned to, prayed to, inquired of, trusted, praised and worshiped Yahweh and no other god. Most importantly, one did so through the proper cultic means in the proper cultic place.”

⁶¹ Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 103–05, argues that Solomon's going to Gibeon and delaying building the temple causes readers to question how seriously Solomon takes David's directive to build the temple.

⁶² Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 536.

expanded explanation than in 1 Kings 5:3–6 of the purpose of the temple, gives a detailed account of the sacrifices to be offered to YHWH, and gives a general praise.

Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the LORD my God and dedicate it to him for the burning of incense of sweet spices before him, and for the regular arrangement of the showbread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed feasts of the LORD our God, as ordained forever for Israel. The house that I am to build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods (2:4–5)

In the 1 Kings letter, Solomon explained why David was prohibited from building the temple, but the Chronicler omits this in favour of expanding Solomon's reason for building the temple: the temple was to be dedicated to the name of YHWH for the burning of incense (Exod 25:6; 30:1-8), consecrated bread (Exod 25:6; 30:7-8; Lev 24:5-9), and burnt offerings (Num 28:3) on every morning and evening, on Sabbaths (Num 28-29), new moons (Num 10:10), and feasts (Num 10:10). By naming these feasts as a part of the reason for the temple to be built, Solomon characterizes his devotion to Israel's cultic responsibility before YHWH and reveals that the purpose of the temple remains true to Israel's covenant.

The narrator's characterization of Solomon's piety toward the temple is especially emphasized in the dedication of the temple. Solomon's first action in the dedication is to assemble Israel in order to bring the ark to the temple from the tent in Jerusalem just as David did when bringing the ark from Kiriath-jearim (cf., 1 Chr 13:5; 15:3)—assembling Israel's elders, heads of the tribes, leaders of the father's families (2 Chr 5:2), and the rest of the nation (5:3). And like David (1 Chr 15:25–26; 16:1–2), Solomon and all of Israel, whom he had assembled, respond to the ark's entrance by “sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered” (2 Chr 5:6). This focus on the enthusiasm of sacrifice also comes a few chapters later in chapter 7. Here, YHWH responds to Solomon's prayer by consuming the burnt offering and sacrifices with fire from heaven and fills the temple with his glory (7:1–2). All Israel responded to YHWH's presence by worshipping, and Solomon and the people offered more sacrifices (7:3–7). The narrator elevates Solomon's characterization by the hyperbolic number of animals Solomon and all the people are said to have sacrificed—22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep—along with a note explaining that Solomon had to consecrate the middle courtyard in order to accommodate all the sacrifices be-

cause the bronze altar was unable to contain them all (7:7).

Further, Solomon's praise of YHWH for his covenantal faithfulness (6:3–11) and his prayer of dedication for the temple (6:12–42) continue to demonstrate his devotion toward the temple because of YHWH's promise to place his name there (6:20b). The narrator portrays Solomon's humility in his devotion to the temple by emphasizing Solomon's body language and his speech. In an act of praise, Solomon spreads out his hands while standing in front of the altar (6:12), and then stands on the altar before kneeling and again spreading out his hands before God (6:13). As he addresses YHWH in his petitions for him to answer the prayers of his people, Solomon refers to himself as "your servant" (6:19, 20, 21). In essence, Solomon prays that the temple would be a place where YHWH would hear the prayer of his people; he asks that prayers offered to YHWH at or toward the temple would be heard because of the promise that his name would be there (6:20b).

The narrator's concern with demonstrating Solomon's dedication to Israel's temple after its completion is captured in an additional report from 1 Kings 9:25 about the daily, weekly, monthly, and annual sacrifices as well as in the organization of the temple personnel which we see in 8:12–15. Verse 13 describes Solomon's faithfulness to the Mosaic law: "as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths." The narrator makes it explicit that the offerings presented were according to proper regulation (Exod 29:38; Num 28:9; Num 10:10; Exod 12:17; Num 28:16–25; Exod 23:16; Num 29:12–38). Further, the narrator highlights Solomon's faithfulness in relation to David's preparation in verses 14–15 by demonstrating that Solomon organized the temple personnel as David had instructed.

Thus, the narrator has characterized Solomon through his dedication to proper cultic activity. This emphasis on Solomon's covenant faithfulness is a part of a larger theological strategy used by the narrator to demonstrate to readers that fidelity to YHWH through prescribed means of worship results in YHWH's blessings for Israel which is where I turn next to examine the evidence.

3.2 The Blessing of Solomon's Reign

Solomon's reign as king is the apex of the Israelite kingdom. Scholars note that the narrator of 1–2 Chronicles highlights the great wealth and wisdom of Solomon as blessings for his reign. This is a

correct observation. But a somewhat neglected feature of this blessing is that of YHWH's presence among his people as a result of fidelity to cultic regulations.

3.2.1 The Blessing of YHWH's Divine Presence and Approval

At Gibeon, YHWH responds positively to Solomon's worship. The connection between Solomon's worship and YHWH's appearance is strengthened by the narrator in 1:7 noting that God appeared בלילה ההוא "on that night." YHWH's response to Solomon was to grant him a request and subsequently promising Solomon unsurpassed wealth and wisdom (2 Chr 1:11–12).

The blessing of YHWH's presence and approval also comes as a response to worship and prayer, but this time in the temple. YHWH responds with approval to Solomon's gathering of Israel's leaders to carry the ark into the temple (5:2), to Solomon and the congregation's numerous sacrifices (5:6), and to the Levites' and priests' worship (5:11–14) by allowing his glory to fill the temple. This glory was physically manifested as a cloud covering the temple which the priests could not enter, much in the same way that Moses was unable to enter the tabernacle because of the glory of YHWH (Exod 40:34–38). Further, in the dedication of the temple Solomon is characterized through his appeal of praying for YHWH to continue to uphold the covenant that he granted Israel (2 Chr 6:12–42). YHWH's response to Solomon's prayer is his presence and his approval through fire from heaven which consumes the burnt offering (7:1). This is reminiscent of the divine approval of the tabernacle (Lev 9:23–24) and David's offering following the purchase of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (1 Chr 21:26; cf., 1 Kgs 18:38; Judg 6:20–22). And again, YHWH responds to Solomon's prayer and the dedication of the temple in what is portrayed as an immediate response by appearing to him a second time (2 Chr 7:12). According to 1 Kings 7:1 and 9:10, Solomon's palace is not completed until thirteen years after the temple. But, the narrator of Chronicles presents YHWH's response to Solomon's prayer as occurring directly after the prayer highlighting YHWH's approval of Solomon's actions. It is YHWH's blessing and his approval of proper cultic activity that results in the wisdom of Solomon and the prosperity for Israel.

3.2.2 Wisdom and Prosperity

Just as in 1 Kings, Solomon's wisdom and wealth are major themes in 2 Chronicles. However,

through omitting and reframing material from 1 Kings, the Chronicler recontextualizes Solomon's wisdom and wealth as: 1) gifts provided to build the temple and 2) blessings for faithfulness to the temple regulations. In 1 Kings, the narrator portrays Solomon's wisdom as a function of governing Israel, as we can see in the request at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:9). The narrator further demonstrates Solomon's political wisdom as he presides over a case concerning two prostitutes (1 Kgs 3:16–28), and his political wisdom used in dividing the land into taxation territories (4:1–28), and concludes with the hyperbolic statement of Solomon's lyrical and encyclopedic wisdom (4:29–34). By contrast, the narrator of 1–2 Chronicles opts to omit these examples of Solomon's wisdom in favour of framing Solomon's wisdom and wealth as blessings from YHWH in order to build the temple.⁶³

David's charge to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 22 provides the framework needed in order to understand the Chronicler's depiction of Solomon's wisdom and wealth.⁶⁴ David reports that Solomon's success and prosperity will be based upon obedience to the Mosaic law (1 Chr 22:11–13). Solomon's success in building the temple will only be accomplished through YHWH's accompaniment (22:11). David also communicates his wish that YHWH would give to Solomon discretion and understanding in order that he might be obedient to the covenant which will lead to prosperity (2 Chr 22:13). Throughout this chapter, the reader understands that YHWH's gifts of wisdom and wealth to Solomon are applied directly to the temple.

Like 1 Kings, these twin themes are introduced at Gibeon. But as noted above, Solomon's actions are more explicitly grounded in faithfulness to the Mosaic covenant by the Chronicler. Solomon's first act as king is to go to Gibeon to worship YHWH (1:2–6). During this act of worship, YHWH comes and says to Solomon: "Ask what I shall give you" (1:7). Solomon requests that YHWH would both fulfil his promise to David (1:9) and grant Solomon wisdom in order to govern YHWH's people (1:10).⁶⁵ Solomon's request is met with approval based upon both what he did and what he did not ask for. YHWH therefore grants to Solomon wisdom, riches, possessions, and honour like

⁶³. *Contra* Cook, *The Solomon Narratives*, 128–29, 143–44, who argues that Solomon's wealth characterizes him negatively in contrast to David's generosity of his wealth.

⁶⁴. Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 226, argues that this text is foundational in communicating the Chronicler's theology of retribution.

⁶⁵. וְאֵצְאָהּ...וְאֵבֹאָהּ "I will go out and come in" can be used to depict military leadership (1 Chr 11; 2; 1 Sam 18:13, 16), but the connotation here is probably leadership in general since Solomon is described as a man of peace in 1 Chr 22. So Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 12.

no king before or after him (1:11–13). The introduction of these themes is connected with temple building based upon 1) Solomon's request for YHWH's promise to David to be fulfilled and 2) the fact that David prayed for Solomon to have wisdom (1 Chr 22:12). This request prepares the reader for how YHWH might do that.

After Solomon leaves Gibeon and returns to Jerusalem, Solomon's wealth is the first of these themes presented by the narrator. He describes Solomon's military strength, domestic wealth, and international trading.⁶⁶ The placement of these verses after YHWH's promise of wealth signifies that YHWH's promise is being fulfilled. In particular, Solomon's gathering of gold, silver, and cedar and making them common in Jerusalem demonstrates that YHWH's gift to Solomon, and the wealth accumulated, was intended to contribute to the temple.⁶⁷

Later, we see that the first mention of Solomon's wisdom comes in the context of building the temple. Both the narrators in 1–2 Kings and 1–2 Chronicles report that Hiram's response to Solomon for desiring to build a temple was to bless YHWH for giving David a wise son. The narrator in 1–2 Chronicles then adds that this son also has discretion and understanding in order to build the temple (2 Chr 2:12). Hiram's response to Solomon in this verse has a slightly different connotation than Solomon's original request at Gibeon where he was primarily concerned with governing Israel. The wisdom being recognized by Hiram is the wisdom, knowledge, and discretion needed in order to build the temple. This echoes David's previous charge to Solomon in 1 Chr 22:12: David wishes for YHWH to grant to Solomon discretion and understanding in order for him to keep God's law. This signifies to the reader that the narrator's view was that Solomon's wisdom was a gift in order to build the temple.

Solomon's portrayal of wisdom and wealth also occur after the completion of the temple and are signs of YHWH's blessing due to his cultic fidelity. Chapters 8–9 of 2 Chronicles have various themes running through them: Solomon's building schemes and workforce; Pharaoh's daughter; the worship structure; shipping ventures; a visit from the queen of Sheba; and Arabian relations. But, throughout this section the Chronicler continues to point to YHWH's blessings of wisdom and wealth as a result of Solomon's faithfulness, as we will see below.

⁶⁶Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 532; Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 26.

⁶⁷Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 196; Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 532.

Solomon's wealth is highlighted in his shipping venture with Hiram which was reported in 8:17–18.⁶⁸ These verses are grouped with Solomon's other international relations (Hiram [2 Chr 8:17–18], Sheba [9:1–12], and kings and governors of Arabia [9:13–15]) before closing again with a report of Hiram's shipping ventures (9:16–21), forming a narrative frame of the entire unit. The completion of Solomon's work on the temple was accomplished, finished, and completed is noted in 8:16 before linking it with Solomon's shipping ventures in verse 17 through the particle **וְ**. The Chronicist narrator, thus, presents the blessing of wealth pouring in from the nations as temporally occurring once the temple was finished and was cared for faithfully in line with the covenant.

In another example, as noted above, the queen of Sheba account must be interpreted in light of the Chronicler's presentation of cultic fidelity. This narrative combines the themes of wealth and wisdom. The queen reports that while she had heard reports of his wisdom, she doubted them to be true and therefore travelled to Jerusalem to test Solomon. Solomon was able to answer every question that the queen put forward (9:2). After experiencing Solomon's wisdom for herself, the queen became overwhelmed by its greatness (9:3–6). Experiencing the wisdom of Solomon leads the queen to contribute to the already extravagant wealth present in Solomon's kingdom, thus furthering YHWH's blessings.

The last report of Solomon's international relations is the account of the kings of Arabia (9:13–14), the wealth that was accumulated, and what Solomon did with it. The Chronicler tells us that the kings of Arabia brought to Solomon gold and silver (9:14). These verses connect with both the shipping venture and the queen of Sheba by repeating the wealth that they brought to Solomon. The narrator reports that silver was too abundant in Jerusalem to even be seen as valuable. In verse 21, the Chronicler tells the reader that much of this wealth was acquired when Solomon's ships traveled to Tarshish every three years with the servants of Hiram. By reminding the reader of Hiram and Solomon's shipping ventures, this temporally locates the gifts given to Solomon in relation to the completion of the temple. Thus prosperity is being portrayed as a result of proper devotion to the temple.

⁶⁸ 1 Kings 9:26 reports that Solomon built ships for the shipping ventures with Hiram whereas the Chronicler has altered the text in 8:17 to report that Solomon went with Hiram on the ventures. This suggests the Chronicler's desire to portray Solomon's initiative and first hand role in collecting his wealth.

The narrator closes the Solomon narrative with a final section dedicated to Solomon's wealth and wisdom (9:22–28). In this passage, he reports a summary of Solomon's reign that combines the themes of wealth and wisdom and the reader is told that Solomon was greater than all other kings (9:22). After this summary the Chronicler then illustrates the way in which wisdom and wealth were recognized. First, the Chronicler reports that the kings of the earth sought an audience with Solomon in order to hear the wisdom that was given to him by God (9:23). Like the queen, these kings brought tribute to Solomon (9:24). Verses 25–28 then further illustrate Solomon's wealth in relation to military strength (9:25) and the extent of his domain (9:26). The reader is reminded that Solomon made silver and cedar plentiful in Jerusalem (9:27) and that he imported horses from Egypt and from all lands (9:28). Here, the Chronicler's purpose becomes clear: the repetition balances out the narrative. In a sense, we've come full circle. The first mention of Solomon's military wealth and material blessings were given to him in light of his faithful piety to Israel's cult. The difference however is that the description of Solomon's wisdom and wealth is in comparison to all kings. Solomon's reign ends with the presentation of YHWH's promise to Solomon at Gibeon being fulfilled: Solomon's wealth and wisdom are unsurpassable.

The combination of Solomon's wisdom and wealth is not only a fulfilment of YHWH's promise, but stretches back to David's charge to Solomon. David's hope is that Solomon might fulfil YHWH's promise that his son would build the temple. David tells Solomon that his success in building the temple would be based upon YHWH's accompaniment (1 Chr 22:11). David also adds that Solomon's prosperity would be based upon keeping the law (22:12) and the result would be that Solomon would prosper if he obeyed the law (22:13). This implies that Solomon's success in building the temple was because YHWH was with him and his prosperity was a result of his obedience to the Mosaic law.

4. An Idealized Solomon?

As is apparent, the characterization of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 1–9 is decidedly different than in 1 Kings 1–11. In particular, the omission of Solomon's faults in consolidating his power seen in 1 Kings 1–2 and especially the omission of Solomon's apostasy in 1 Kings 11 significantly alters how the reader of 2 Chronicles 1–9 understands Solomon. The exclusion of the more unsavoury ele-

ments of Solomon's reign has led many scholars to conclude that Solomon has been depicted as idealized or perfect.⁶⁹ In his article "Solomonic Apologetic," Braun argues that Solomon is presented ideally and is depicted as surpassing David in having no faults with YHWH and because he completes the building of temple.⁷⁰ According to Dillard, David's and Solomon's faults have been removed and thus are presented messianically.⁷¹ Furthermore, arguments that understand Solomon as idealized typically tell us that the king serves as an evaluation for kings following Solomon. Mosis, in his *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Chronistischen Geschichtswerkes*, argues that Saul, David, and Solomon all function as types for subsequent kings: Saul represents unfaithful kings, David represents kings during war and re-establishment, and Solomon represents kings of peace and blessing.⁷² But Williamson and Throntveit show the inadequacy of Mosis's argument that Saul, David, and Solomon function as discrete paradigms by showing how a king such as Hezekiah is patterned after David and Solomon.⁷³ A more typical interpretation is Duke's who argues that David and Solomon are ideal types who properly sought YHWH.⁷⁴

However, this idealized view of Solomon does raise questions. As Jeon observes, there appears to be a problem of definition.⁷⁵ What do scholars mean by idealized? The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb "idealize" as to "regard or represent as perfect or better than in reality."⁷⁶ Even in the definition of idealize, perfection is usually meant but is not necessary. This ambiguity in definition is also found in Chronicles scholarship. For instance, Braun argues that through omitting many of David's sins he has been idealized by the Chronicler, yet he writes: "[I]t should be noted that the Chronicler does not present to us a blameless David. His responsibility for the abortive census, for example, is magnified in Chronicles (1 Chr 21). Above all, his rejection as the temple

⁶⁹ See note 1.

⁷⁰ Braun, "Solomonic Apologetic", 506–07.

⁷¹ Dillard, "The Chronicler's Solomon", 290. Dillard nuances this statement by noting that the Chronicler's presentation is focused on the temple and that positive items for the 1 Kings narrative have also been omitted.

⁷² Mosis, *Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Chronistischen Geschichtswerkes*, 165.

⁷³ H.G.M Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 119–25; Throntveit, "The Relationship of Hezekiah to David and Solomon in the Books of Chronicles", 105–21.

⁷⁴ Duke, *The Persuasive Appeal*, 66.

⁷⁵ Jeon, *Impeccable Solomon?*, 27.

⁷⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Idealize," <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/idealize> (accessed March 1, 2018).

builder is specifically charged to the fact that he has shed much blood (1 Chr 22:8) and is a man of war (28:3).⁷⁷ But when he speaks about Solomon: “No indication is given that any part of Solomon’s reign was characterized by anything other than complete obedience and service to Yahweh.”⁷⁸

On the other hand, Japhet argues that there is a contradictory presentation of Solomon. Along with the omission of Solomon’s sins, there is the omission of facts from 1 Kings that would have elevated the king’s stature even more, such as the case of the two prostitutes and his encyclopaedic wisdom. In addition, some of Solomon’s accomplishments in the temple are reassigned to David.⁷⁹ Japhet argues that by omitting material that would have enhanced Solomon more and reassigning Solomon’s accomplishments to David, he is portrayed as perfect but is not idealized. What is unclear in Japhet’s conclusion is why Solomon would have to be maximally enhanced in order for him to still be idealized? It is difficult to understand how one could be portrayed as perfect, as she argues Solomon is, but not also in some sense be idealized.

Another argument that has been levelled against the fact that the purpose of omitting material was to idealize Solomon or to present him as flawless has been made by Brian Kelly. He argues: “The omission (in detail) of critical materials is not intended as ‘Solomonic apologetic’ (*contra* Braun). Rather it is the Chronicler’s means of concentrating on what he sees as the lasting significance of Solomon’s reign, the fulfilment of the Davidic covenant through the building of the temple and the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. Consequently, other materials, including those which reflect positively on Solomon, are omitted as extraneous to the writer’s purpose.”⁸⁰ According to Kelly, the omission of negative and positive material is a way of narrowing the focus of the story. It is true that negative and positive material has been omitted, but there appears to be a conscious effort to portray Solomon in as positive a light as possible. As noted in the previous section, there are numerous cases where Solomon is portrayed more explicitly in fidelity with cultic regulations. Thus it is not just the omission of material, but it is also the addition and reframing of mate-

⁷⁷ Braun, *1 Chronicles*, xxxiii.

⁷⁸ Ibid., xxxiv.

⁷⁹ Japhet, *Ideology*, 483–87.

⁸⁰ Brian E. Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles*, JSOT Supplement Series 211, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 90.

rial, that demonstrates the intention to portray Solomon positively.

However, Kelly has correctly observed negative elements that are presupposed by the Chronistic narrator at the end of Solomon's reign.⁸¹ The mention of Ahijah's prophecy, Jeroboam's return from Egypt, and Solomon's harsh labour should, therefore, encourage the reader to understand Solomon with more nuance. Prior to the Chronicler's customary closing statements recounting the length of Solomon's reign (2 Chr 9:30) and his death (9:31), he writes: "Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?" (9:29). Williamson believes the mention of the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite suggests that this refers to Ahijah's condemnation of Solomon in 1 Kings 11:29–39.⁸² However, Japhet criticizes Williamson on this point, arguing that omitting the sins of Solomon is "because the historical picture he wished to portray demanded their omission. It seems rather doubtful that he would direct his readers to the very material he had intentionally avoided."⁸³ Japhet's view is problematic, as Kelly notes, because she assumes Solomon is being presented as perfect.⁸⁴ Thus, she is forced later in 10:15 (which describes the schism based upon the fulfilment of Ahijah's prophecy) to resort to calling it "not fully adjusted or integrated into the Chronicler's philosophy of history."⁸⁵ The more satisfactory understanding is that the Chronistic narrator does presuppose the faults of Solomon's idolatry, namely that YHWH would divide the kingdom due to Solomon's erection of high places for worshipping Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom.⁸⁶

Additionally, the Chronistic narrator's mention of Jeroboam's return from Egypt when Rehoboam was installed as king (10:2), also hints at a knowledge of Solomon's less than ideal actions. The Chronistic narrator does not record the prophecy of Jeroboam's future reign of the northern kingdom nor his fleeing to Egypt, but the explanation here reminds readers of the reason Jer-

⁸¹ Ibid., 91; c.f., Selman, *2 Chronicles*, 359.

⁸² Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 237. Selman, *2 Chronicles*, 359; Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology*, 91; Jeon, *Impeccable Solomon?*, 24–25, 32; William M. Schniedewind, *The Word of God in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period*, JSOTSup 197, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 222.

⁸³ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 646.

⁸⁴ Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology*, 91.

⁸⁵ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 657.

⁸⁶ Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology*, 90.

oboam was in Egypt—Solomon's attempt to assassinate him (1 Kgs 11:40). Furthermore, in this same context, the mention of Solomon's use of harsh labour also suggests knowledge of the troubling situation that was emerging under Solomon's reign. Jeroboam and all Israel requested Rehoboam to lighten up the hard service that Solomon placed upon the people (2 Chr 10:4). But instead of easing the work load, Rehoboam increases Israel's yoke beyond that of Solomon (10:9–11, 14–15). Israel's desire to be relieved of Solomon's oppressive workload only makes sense if the readers were familiar with Solomon's harsh corvée usage, as it has been omitted from the book of Chronicles.⁸⁷ The presupposed knowledge of Solomon's faults in order to appreciate the narrative in 2 Chronicles 10 should colour our understanding of Solomon as a more complex figure.

Jeon notes the presupposed faults of Solomon from the end of Solomon's reign in 2 Chronicles 9–10 as observed above, but suggests that: "However, when we consider that the Solomon account consists of a comparatively large amount of material, we can guess that the author might have left some hints to allude to 'Solomon's weakness' within the scope of the account of his reign."⁸⁸ Thus, for Jeon the fact that 1–2 Chronicles shares so much of the same material from 1–2 Kings suggests that the critiques of Solomon's reign found in 1 Kings 1–11 are still present in 2 Chronicles 1–9. In particular he argues that three critiques from the narrator of 1 Kings 1–11 that are found in the Solomon narrative of 2 Chronicles are Solomon's accumulation of chariots and horses, an alliance with Egypt through marriage, and the heavy burdens from his workforce. Jeon argues that readers of 2 Chronicles would be aware of these critiques.⁸⁹ He argues that the lack of explicit critiques by the narrator is necessary because the act of building the temple must be understood as positively as possible. This is because of the hope the temple represents for the post-exilic period and because the narrator does not desire to distract from the presentation of David and Solomon as representing Israel's golden age in the united monarchy.⁹⁰ By including Solomon's faults, the narrator highlights one of the prominent themes of the book—YHWH's mercy.

Jeon's understanding of the Solomon character, however, suffers from a few problems. First, he gives too much control to 1 Kings 1–11 in determining the meaning of the material in 2 Chroni-

⁸⁷ Ibid., 91.

⁸⁸ Jeon, *Impeccable Solomon?*, 6.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 203.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 204, 268–69.

cles 1–9. He assumes the narrator is using the material in the same way. This questionable assumption forces him to speculate that the narrator is resorting to such subtle means of critique in order to present the temple as positively as possible and in order to not distract from presenting David and Solomon's united reign as a golden age. But of course, 1 Kings 1–11 has a high view of what the temple represents and tells the reader that Solomon's reign was an apex in Israel's history, but it still condemns Solomon's actions. I wonder why the Chronistic narrator could not do the same.

This interpretive assumption also leads to unnatural individual interpretations of Solomon's military blessing and the reason for Solomon's movement of Pharaoh's daughter to her own palace away from the city of David, which Jeon concludes to be negative. Concerning Solomon's import of horses and chariots (2 Chr 1:14, 16–17), Jeon questions the assumption that this is a blessing for Solomon's fidelity as is normally understood by scholars. Jeon notes that this description of horses and chariots is found in 1 Kings 10:26–29 and assumes that the rearrangement of the material suggests that the Chronistic narrator is trying to make a point.⁹¹ He concludes that the narrator of 1 Kings is demonstrating the progressive and cumulating nature of Solomon's sins by withholding the fact that Solomon's import of horses and chariots from Egypt does not come until 1 Kings 11. In contrast, the narrator of 1–2 Chronicles places this fact at the beginning of his reign, highlighting God's grace in the midst of disobedience.⁹² But this is not the only way to understand these verses. The description of Solomon's wealth in 1 Kings 11 also represents the material height of Solomon's reign. By placing the material earlier in the narrative the narrator could be making a more explicit connection between fidelity, as shown in Solomon's worship at Gibeon, and the abundance of blessing as a gift.

Jeon further argues that the mention of Solomon moving Pharaoh's daughter away from the city of David is because of her status as a foreigner. He argues that readers would already know that Solomon's marriages to foreign wives are what lead to his eventual apostasy.⁹³ He also notes that many scholars understand that Solomon removed Pharaoh's daughter because of her gender

⁹¹. Ibid., 217–18.

⁹². Ibid., 218–20.

⁹³. Ibid., 241–43.

and not because of her ethnicity.⁹⁴ Jeon, following Selman, argues that the context of 8:1–11 is foreigners and the separation of foreigners from Israelites in regards to the temple.⁹⁵ He further argues that removing her based upon her gender has no biblical support and argues that it is presupposed that women could touch sacred items, could go into the sanctuary, and served at the tent of meeting and probably at the temple.⁹⁶ He argues that in 8:11 the complexity of Solomon's presentation is between Solomon's marriage and cultic holiness. However, Jeon's argument does not adequately deal with the plain language that Solomon gives for the reason for removing her. Dillard, for instance, has correctly noted that the reason Solomon gives is because she is his wife, not that she is a foreigner. It might be further suggested that if Solomon was separating Pharaoh's daughter because she was foreign we would expect to see *האשה הזאת* or *האשה* or something similar written to specifically identify that his motivation was that she is Pharaoh's daughter. As it is, Solomon's motivation is that a wife of his should not be at a place where the ark was. Given Uzzah's death for unauthorized handling of the ark, this situation suggests that Solomon is again presented in his care for cultic holiness, rather than this indicating any problem for his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter.⁹⁷

The Chronistic narrator tells his story by reframing and recontextualizing the Solomonic material. He has presented readers with a Solomon who has presupposed flaws in regards to his idolatry, but who is also a model of fidelity when it comes to cultic protocol. Of course the post-exilic audience was familiar with Solomon's deficiencies. The narrator, however, is more interested in making an explicit connection between fidelity and flourishing in the land. Thus, Solomon is presented as an example of the results that can come about through fidelity to YHWH through accepted temple conventions.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 243.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 244.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 258.

⁹⁷ Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 231. Though, Williamson does attribute her status as a Gentile as a motivation to move her in addition to her gender.

5. Summary

In this chapter, I have made two contributions to the understanding of Solomon's characterization. First, I have shown the importance of having a reading strategy for 1–2 Chronicles and that the author of the books of 1–2 Chronicles presupposed that readers were familiar with 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings in order to fully understand the narrative and to fill its gaps. Second, this chapter has contributed to the characterization of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 1–9 by showing that he is not a flawless king, in contrast to Braun, Dillard, Japhet, and others. Neither is Solomon presented as a flawed king throughout the narrative, as Jeon argues. Both of these views of Solomon are in need of refining. I have argued that Solomon's faults of his idolatry are clearly known and presupposed by the narrative. Yet, the narrator presents Solomon as a model to be emulated for post-exilic Israel in spite of the flaws presupposed by the narrative. Thus, the Chronistic narrator presents the pattern of God's gracious activity and the actions of Solomon in such a way that the people are to imitate the actions of Solomon as far as devotion to correct worship is concerned, even if there was knowledge of Solomon's own failures from 1 Kings 1–11.

THE AUTHORITATIVE, WISE KING: THE CHARACTERIZATION OF SOLOMON IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Having analyzed Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11 and 2 Chronicles 1–9, I will now move away from the narrative traditions and turn to examine Solomon in the wisdom and poetic traditions in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs in the following three chapters. Just as the characterizations of Solomon in the narrative traditions shared similar themes such as wisdom and prosperity that were distinct contextualizations of Solomon, the wisdom and poetic books will likewise share related themes with the narrative traditions and with each other but will also have diverse presentations of Solomon. To begin, this chapter focuses on Solomon's characterization in the book of Proverbs, which shows that Solomon is characterized as Israel's authoritative, wise king.

1. Introduction

In the book of Proverbs, Solomon is mentioned three times in the thirty-one chapters (Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1), indicating some type of relationship between Solomon and the subsequent material. However, many interpreters deny that Solomon has any meaningful relationship to the book and

instead argue for these titles to be a late attribution from the post-exilic period. Even with these titles, Brueggemann argues that Solomon is not prominent: “In the discussion of the book of Proverbs undertaken...the text itself makes only passing claim that connects the literature to Solomon, so that we are in a different world of interpretation. The book of Proverbs cites Solomon three times and seems to treat the matter with casual interest at best.”¹ An exception to this lack of interest in the links between Solomon and Proverbs is Claudia Camp’s provocative chapter “Reading Solomon as a Woman.”² In this chapter, Camp reads the 1 Kings narrative in light of wise woman/strange woman and observes several connections between Proverbs and 1 Kings 3–11. Camp notes:

- Solomon had to choose between two women (1 Kgs 3:16–28) as the reader must choose between woman Wisdom and strange woman in Proverbs 9.³
- Foreign women have an important theme in the Solomon narrative: daughter of Pharaoh, Queen of Sheba, and his foreign wives (1 Kgs 3:1; 10:1-13; 11:1-13). Foreign women are also a topic Proverbs is concerned with (Prov 2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 23:27).⁴
- Solomon applies his wisdom to wise governance (1 Kgs 4:1-19). Wisdom likewise is concerned with the application of wisdom in rule (Prov 8:15-21).⁵
- Solomon’s rule was concerned with justice and righteousness (1 Kgs 10:9) as is Wisdom’s concern (Prov 8:20).⁶
- The Queen of Sheba’s conclusion is that the one who listens to Solomon’s wisdom would be happy. Listening to Wisdom should also have the same result (Prov 8:34).⁷
- Solomon was promised to be incomparable (1 Kgs 3:12–13). Wisdom is also judged to be incomparable (Prov 3:15).⁸
- Solomon established his father’s throne (1 Kgs 2:45). The establishment of the throne is also important in Proverbs (cf., Prov 16:12; 25:5; 29:14).⁹
- The strange women in 1 Kings and in Proverbs have houses (1 Kgs 9:24; Prov 2:16; 5:8; 7:27; 9:14).¹⁰

¹ Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 181.

² Claudia Camp, V., *Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible*, JSOTSup 320 / Gender, Culture, Theory 9, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 144–86.

³ Ibid., 166.

⁴ Ibid., 168.

⁵ Ibid., 169.

⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁷ Ibid., 177.

⁸ Ibid., 177.

⁹ Ibid., 177.

¹⁰ Ibid., 183.

Camp's reading has highlighted interesting themes that are consistent between Proverbs and 1 Kings. However, Camp's observations do not necessarily tell us much about the characterization of Solomon as most of these connections are concerned with Lady Wisdom rather than Solomon, *per se*.

What is more common among interpreters is to assert that Solomon establishes authority for the book through the title in Proverbs 1:1.¹¹ However, the implications and the ways Proverbs implies Solomonic authority are rarely explored. It is my intention to show that, though the presence of Solomon may seem minimal, the final compilers of the book presuppose and present an implicit, ideal Solomonic authority over the entire book in subtle ways. First, the authority of Solomon's wisdom is established by looking backwards to Solomon's reputation for wisdom from 1 Kings 1–11. And second, once Solomon's authority is established by its connection to Solomon's reign, the book itself perpetuates Solomon's authority through the transmission of his authoritative wisdom. We will look at how these features demonstrate Solomonic authority over the book of Proverbs in more detail in the following sections.

2. The Relationship between Solomon and the Book of Proverbs

The title, "The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel" (1:1) categorizes Proverbs with other books in the Hebrew Bible as a Solomonic corpus (Eccl 1:1; Song 1:1).¹² Early Jewish interpretation, such as is found in *Canticles Rabbah*, understood the title in 1:1 to indicate Solomon's authorship of the book.¹³ However, modern interpreters generally dismiss Solomonic authorship.¹⁴ A cursory reading of Proverbs shows that Solomon cannot be the author of Proverbs because the

¹¹ Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Proverbs," ed. Leander E. Keck, NIB 5 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 20; Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4; Richard J. Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature*, Interpreting Biblical Texts Series, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 45; Ryan P. O'Dowd, *Proverbs*, The Story of God Bible Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 18–19.

¹² E.g., Thomas Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, HCHCB, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 27–28; Timothy J. Stone, *The Compilational History of the Megilloth: Canon, Contoured Intertextuality and Meaning in the Writings*, FAT II 59, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 186–87; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 573–74.

¹³ "Canticles Rabbah", 17.

¹⁴ See Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 31–34.

book is made up of multiple collections, shown by the superscriptions naming other individuals in 22:17; 24:23; 25:1; 30:1; 31:1.¹⁵ Furthermore, scholars highlight that proverbs typically arise in oral settings and this makes it difficult to envisage authorship in a typical sense.¹⁶ Indeed, Michael Fox argues that the majority of proverbs typically appear to come from a perspective outside the monarchy, thus ruling out both the time period of Solomon and kingly reigns subsequent to him.¹⁷ Therefore, scholars understand Solomon's relationship to the book in a number of ways.

On the one hand, some scholars reject any type of relationship between Solomon and the book of Proverbs. R.B.Y. Scott and Leo Perdue both argue along these lines. Scott argues that the superscription in 1:1 depends upon the extravagant claims of Solomon's wisdom in 1 Kings 5:9–14 and 10:1–10, 13, 23–25 which he concluded were largely folklore and should be dated in the post-exilic period: "The romantic and fanciful elements are clearly those which have to do principally with Solomon's proverbial glory and wisdom. Yet it is on these passages alone that the repute of Solomon as founder and patron saint of the Wisdom literature in Israel ultimately depends."¹⁸ Likewise, Perdue argues that the literary tradition about Solomon in 1 Kings 5:9–14 [4:26–34] is legendary: "Rather than noting authorship, these superscriptions are dedicatory formulae in praise of Solomon, the patron saint of wisdom (cf., the dedication of some psalms to David)."¹⁹

On the other hand, Brevard Childs and Ernest Lucas offer more moderate approaches. Childs argues that the superscription in 1:1 has a hermeneutical function for the interpretation of the book. He claims that it only generally links Proverbs with the Solomon narrative in 1 Kings and, in particular, with the explicit mention of Solomon's speaking proverbs and songs (1 Kgs 5:12). His point is that the title constrains the reader to understand the book as a discrete witness rather than to integrate it into Israel's historical traditions: "The superscription thus guards against forcing the proverbs into a context foreign to wisdom such as the decalogue...The title serves canonically

¹⁵ Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), xi.. But see K. A. Kitchen, "Proverbs and Wisdom Books of the Ancient Near East: The Factual History of a Literary Form," *TynBul* 28, (1977), 69–114; Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 31–32.

¹⁶ Ellen F. Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 14; Ernest Lucas, *Proverbs*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary Series, (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 2015), 6–7.

¹⁷ Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, AB, (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 56.

¹⁸ Scott, "Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel," 266.

¹⁹ Leo G Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of Empires*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 98.

cally to preserve the uniqueness of the sapiential witness against the attempts to merge it with more dominant biblical themes.”²⁰ Childs further argues that the connection with Solomon indicates that the age of wisdom in Israel is an early time in the monarchy. He understood wisdom not to be a late development in the post-exilic community but thought that it was running parallel with Israel’s historical tradition. Of course, it is difficult to be confident on dating. The current trend is to date all biblical texts later and later. And Scott and Whybray have proved influential in arguing that wisdom has no connection with the Solomonic period.²¹

Lucas advocates that the superscription in 1:1 underscores the historical role that Solomon played in collecting Proverbs for Israel: “It seems likely that the attribution of the book and two collections in it to Solomon serves primarily as noting his foundational role in the collecting of proverbs in Israel, though this does not exclude the reshaping of some proverbs as they were written down, and the creation of some new ones.”²² He points out that the description of Solomon in 1 Kings is of his speaking proverbs rather than writing them.²³ Because the majority of proverbs seem to speak from outside the royal court, he concludes that the superscriptions speak more about the foundational role Solomon played in collecting and gathering wisdom sayings about Israel’s wisdom tradition than of his kingly role, *per se*.²⁴

The superscription in 1:1 is doing more than making an historical nod to Solomon. Rather, the name of Solomon in the superscription functions to establish the authority that these proverbs have in Israel’s life. Raymond Van Leeuwen is right to assert that the title is “traditional and honorific.”²⁵ Dell is also probably correct when she adds that “[t]he name of a great king renowned for wisdom gives authority to a mass of material that may well have had a much more diverse origin.”²⁶ Richard J. Clifford notes that Egyptian Instruction texts are given authority by their “association with a king whom the gods endowed with skill to govern, or from the maturity and experience

²⁰ Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 552. Childs, therefore, understands the title in Proverbs to serve a different hermeneutical function than the historical titles do in Psalms which provides a secondary context to interpret the Psalms.

²¹ Scott, “Solomon and the Beginnings of Wisdom in Israel”, 84–101; R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition of the Old Testament*, BZAW 135, (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1974), 69–70.

²² Lucas, *Proverbs*, 7.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Van Leeuwen, “Proverbs,” 20.

²⁶ Dell, *Proverbs*, 4.

of a ‘senior.’”²⁷ This would seem to bolster the suggestion that the title in 1:1, therefore, is asserting the authority that the book has because it represents Solomonic wisdom.

This idea of gathering the book of Proverbs under the authority of Solomon can be developed further by noting the various ways in which the compilers of Proverbs implicitly present Solomon’s authority. The picture is a cumulative one. The title in 1:1 relates the book of Proverbs to Solomon, Israel’s paragon of wisdom. The mention of Solomon’s name in 1:1 also establishes his royal credentials as a “son of David” and “king of Israel” which is unique when compared to the other superscriptions.²⁸ Solomon’s name recalls his reign and reminds readers of his proclivity to speak proverbs and songs (1 Kgs 5:12) and, therefore, establishes the authority not only of his person but also of his wisdom. But more specifically, there is an even greater element to the authority that Solomon’s name establishes: his wisdom was endowed to him by YHWH. Thus, the authority associated with Solomon as Israel’s wise king is firmly grounded in the fact that his wisdom was a divine gift. This is established through the allusion to Solomon from the 1 Kings text. The narrator of 1 Kings 1–11 reminds the reader numerous times that the wisdom Solomon possesses is a gift from YHWH (3:12, 28; 5:9 [4:29], 26 [5:12]; 10:1–10, 13, 24). This wisdom manifested itself in various ways: it provided justice in Israel (3:28), provided peace and prosperity for Israel (4:20–5:5, 7–8) [4:20–25, 27–29]; 9:10–14, 26–28; 10:4–5, 9–10; 10:11–12, 14–29), led to the construction of the temple (5:15–26 [5:1–12]; 6:1–8:66), and gave Solomon/Israel international prestige (5:14 [4:34]; 10:1–10, 13, 23–25). The linking of Solomon in 1:1 with this narrative, therefore, links the authority of Proverbs with Solomon who was gifted with wisdom and utilized this wisdom in extraordinary ways in Israel. Furthermore, the superscription not only grounds the authority and surety of its wisdom by cross-referencing to the Solomon of 1 Kings, but it also solidifies the authority of Solomon on a larger scale by incorporating 1:1 as a title for the entire book.

²⁷ Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature*, 45.

²⁸ Of course, Ecclesiastes 1:1, 12 identifies Qohelet as a “son of David,” “king in Jerusalem,” and king over Israel in Jerusalem.” However, Solomon is never explicitly named.

3. Solomonic Authority and the Titles of Proverbs

3.1 The Title of Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is segmented by a number of titles. Three of the titles describe the material as משלי שלמה (Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1). Additionally, two titles are attributed to an anonymous group called “the wise”²⁹ (22:17; 24:23) and others are attributed to figures such as Agur (30:1) and King Lemuel (31:1).³⁰ Yet in spite of the distinct segments the book, *inclusios* across the book and the book's prologue (1:2–7), which explains the book's purpose, show that the title in 1:1 applies to the entire book in its final form.³¹ Consequently, the title in 1:1 is not naming Solomon as the author of the entirety of book. Rather, the title binds and marks the entirety of the book under the authority of Solomon's name.³²

Scholars have observed that the book's prologue and the last poem have parallel language. Roland Murphy observes that the book's motto “fear of the Lord” (1:7) is echoed in the last poem of the book by the description “that a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised” (31:30).³³ Furthermore, the goal to produce righteousness and justice (1:3) from the introduction (1:2–7) is repeated in 31:9 where King Lemuel is instructed by his mother: “Open your mouth, judge righteous-

²⁹ The identity of a distinct social class referred to as “the wise” is debated among scholars. Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 90–91, argues against there being a distinct social group, whereas Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, 21 and Lester L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel*, (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995), 162–63, 175–76) argue in the affirmative. The references to a חכמים in Isaiah 19:12; 29:14; Jeremiah 8:9; 18:18; 50:35; 51:57 suggest to me that there was a developed class of wise men.

³⁰ For a recent discussion on the structure of Proverbs and the titles see Alex Luc, “The Titles and Structure of Proverbs,” *ZAW* 112, (2000), 252–255. Luc argues that the superscriptions in 22:17 and 24:23 are not actual superscriptions but the “words of the wise” are a part of the poetic line.

³¹ E.g., Lucas, *Proverbs*, 6. Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 547–48, 551; Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 173–174. R.N. Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, JSOTSup 168, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 51. Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs*, IBC, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000), 64; Christopher B. Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son, and Make My Heart Glad: An Exploration of the Courtly Nature of the Book of Proverbs*, BZAW 422, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 45. Van Leeuwen, “Proverbs,” 32; Christine Roy Yoder, *Proverbs*, AOTC, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009), 2.

³² E.g., Lucas, *Proverbs*, 6. Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 51. Perdue, *Proverbs*, 64; Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son*, 45. Van Leeuwen, “Proverbs,” 32; Yoder, *Proverbs*, 2.

³³ Roland E. Murphy, *Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 16.

ly.” Whybray also notes that in 31:10–31 the ideal wife corresponds with Lady Wisdom from Proverbs 1–9 (especially 4:5–9): “At the very least, she is clearly a supreme example of wise behaviour as taught throughout the book; she is also one who ‘speaks wisdom’ and teaches it (v. 26); and she is praised as ‘a woman who fears Yahweh’” (v. 30).³⁴ The repetition shared between the prologue and the final poem suggests that the prologue, along with the title in 1:1, applies to the entirety of the book and, therefore, can be approached as a literary whole.

Though there is support to conclude that the title in 1:1 is functioning as a title for the final form of the book of Proverbs, this point is not universally accepted. For instance, William Reyburn and Euan Fry argue that 1:1 only applies to chapters 1–9 precisely because of the presence of other titles.³⁵ However, scholars rightly recognize that 1:2–7 serves as a prologue to the book that describes the purpose of the work and the intended readers.³⁶ Whybray rightly argues:

The first seven verses of the book of Proverbs are clearly of an introductory character. Whether they are to be regarded as introductory only to chs. 1–9 or to the whole book is a matter which has long been debated; there is in fact no reason why they should not have been intended to serve both purposes: a passage whose introductory function was originally restricted to those chapters may easily have been reapplied, perhaps with some modifications, to serve the larger work.³⁷

Therefore, it is unlikely that in a book containing a title followed by a prologue, that these would only apply to the first collection in chapters 1–9 rather than the entire book. Furthermore, the similarities between the first and last poem lends to reading the corpus as a whole and enable the prologue to function as an introduction to the whole rather than only Proverbs 1–9. It is of course well accepted that chapters 1–9 were a late addition to the composition of the book.³⁸ But “[w]hat-

³⁴ R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs*, NCB, (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 17.

³⁵ William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Proverbs*, UBS Handbook Series, (New York: United Bible Society, 2000), 20. In a related way, Stuart Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1–9*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40 n. 15, is reluctant to read Proverbs as a book because he views chapters 1–9 as a coherent unit that does not presuppose chapters 10–31. Thus, the final form of Proverbs is editorial rather compositional in nature.

³⁶ E.g., Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*; Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 174; Timothy J. Sandoval, “Revisiting the Prologue of Proverbs,” *JBL* 126, (2007), 455; Magne Sæbø, *Sprüche*, ATD 16, 1, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 40; Brown, *Wisdom’s Wonder*, 30–31; Arthur Keefer, “A Shift in Perspective: The Intended Audience and Coherent Reading of Proverbs 1:1–7,” *JBL* 136, (2017), 103.

³⁷ Whybray, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 51.

³⁸ E.g., Whybray, “Wisdom Literature in the Reigns of David and Solomon”, 236; Van Leeuwen, “Proverbs,” 21; Murphy, *Proverbs*, xx; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 56. C. H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on*

ever the origins of the book's sayings and sections, the whole now claims the heritage of Solomon, David's son, to whom God gave wisdom and the covenant promises (2 Sam 7; 1 Kgs 3; 10; Ps 132).³⁹ The book of Proverbs, however it came to be in its present form, has now been headed with Solomon's name in 1:1 aligning the book with his authority.

3.2 The Canonical Function of Proverbs 1:1

The inclusio highlighted above shows that the book of Proverbs has been perceived as a coherent whole in its final form. And we have seen that the effect of these features is that the title in 1:1 in the present form of the book serves as a title for the entire book of Proverbs, in spite of the various other collections. But the canonical function of this title still needs bearing out. It is one thing to note that 1:1 is a title for the book and another to note its function within the book. It is clear from a casual reading of the book of Proverbs that it is a varied book. It is made up of various collections as discussed above, but it also consists of diverse genres and settings. Therefore, one function that the title in 1:1 serves is to gather together the diversity of proverbs and gather them all under Solomon's authoritative name.

Scholars have noted that at a broad level Proverbs is largely made up of instructions (primarily chapters 1–9) and proverbial sayings (primarily chapters 10–22, 25–29).⁴⁰ In William McKane's commentary on Proverbs, he compared the extended discourses in Proverbs 1–9 with Egyptian and Mesopotamian instructions showing the similar characteristics with these instructions.⁴¹ The sentence sayings typically are two-lined parallels in which the second line complements, restates, or contrasts with the first line.⁴² But when examining these proverbs more closely, scholars have

The Book of Proverbs, ICC, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1904), xix–xxxi. Cf., Kayatz, *Studien zu Proverbien 1–9* who dates Proverbs 1–9 to the monarchy due to chapters 1–9 reflecting Egyptian instructions. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 6, however, argues that it only shows that Proverbs 1–9 reflects an ancient genre rather than an ancient composition.

³⁹ Van Leeuwen, "Proverbs," 32.

⁴⁰ E.g. Roland E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*, FOTL 13, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 49–50; Clifford, *The Wisdom Literature*, 46; Murphy, *Proverbs*, xxii; Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, BCOTWP, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 30; Lucas, *Proverbs*, 10–13.

⁴¹ William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL, (London: SCM, 1970), 51–182; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 45 also described the instructions, what he calls lectures, as containing an exordium, lesson, and conclusion.

⁴² See Longman III, *Proverbs*, 34–35.

noted that there are further diverse literary forms utilized within the book. For example, there are numerical sayings (Prov 30:15–31), riddles (23:29–30; 30:4), an acrostic poem (31:10–31), a poem in praise of wisdom (3:13–18), speeches by Lady Wisdom (1:20–33; 8:1–36; 9:1–6), example stories (4:3–9; 7:6–27; 24:30–34), and rhetorical questions (6:27–29).

Another diverse feature of the book that has been the focus of scholarly debate is the setting of the proverbs. This continues to be a highly contested area of scholarship. Scholars have debated whether proverbs are more at home in a royal court setting or a folk wisdom setting.⁴³ But a growing consensus appears to be that there are multiple backgrounds to the book and the genres that make it up. The instructions of Proverbs 1–9 seem most naturally to be from a home setting with the father, mother, and son relationship in the foreground (1:8; 6:20; 30:17; 31:1–9, 26).⁴⁴ Fox argues that some proverbs seem to be from a more urban setting because of the mention of valuable metals (17:3; 27:21), fine jewellery (25:11–12), messengers (25:13), masters of slaves (29:21), and wealthy landowners (11:26).⁴⁵ There are some proverbs that seem most relevant to someone working in the royal court (16:13–14; 23:1–3; 25:6–7; 28–29).⁴⁶ But there are also proverbs that appear to be from outside the court with a more agrarian setting (10:5; 12:10; 12:11).

Although Proverbs is made up of a diversity of collections, genres, and potential settings, in the final form, these are placed under Solomon's authoritative name.⁴⁷ Solomon's authority over the entirety of the work, gives the book its unity as representative of Solomonic wisdom. The diversity of the book of Proverbs, with its different collections, literary forms, and settings, is reflective of the diversity of Solomon's wisdom from 1 Kings 1–11. The diverse elements of Proverbs find their unity with Solomon's name and reputation.

⁴³ See discussion in Michael V. Fox, "The Social Location of the Book of Proverbs," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, ed. Michael V. Fox and et. al., (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 227–39.

⁴⁴ So Michael V. Fox, "Wisdom and the Self-Presentation of Wisdom Literature," in *Reading from Right to Left: Essays in Honor of David J.A. Clines*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and H.G.M Williamson, JSOTSup 11 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 153–72; c.f., Dell, *Proverbs*, 88–89; Lucas, *Proverbs*, 43–44.

⁴⁵ Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 9. Fox, "Social Location," 232–234.

⁴⁶ Bruce V. Malchow, "A Manual for Future Monarchs," *CBQ* 47, (1985), 238–245. Fox, "Social Location," 234.

⁴⁷ Fox, "Social Location," 236, argues that it is the "king's men" (25:1) who are responsible for the book's final redaction and unity.

4. Solomon's Authority and the Goal of Proverbs

As I noted above, scholars are in general agreement that 1:2–7 is an introduction describing the purpose of the book and its intended readers.⁴⁸ Verses 2–6 contain six infinitive phrases outlining this purpose. The aim of this introduction is to transmit wisdom that impacts the human life holistically. Von Rad, amongst others, describes the introduction as a “piling up of nouns” and Murphy writes that it suggests that an entire “wisdom program” is being advocated.⁴⁹ Though it is unclear what Murphy means by a “wisdom program,” I think we can observe in the introduction that the wisdom that is advocated impinges on every aspect of life. Thus, Duane Garrett argues for four attributes of wisdom gleaned from these opening verses: first, wisdom is practical as illustrated by the uses of חכמה elsewhere equated with practical skills (e.g., Exod 28:3); second, wisdom has an intellectual component (“to understand words of insight” [1:2b]); third, wisdom has a moral dimension (“to receive instruction in righteousness, justice, and equity” [1:3]); and fourth, wisdom is concerned with the mysteries and enigmas of life (e.g., riddles and proverbs [1:6]).⁵⁰ Fox also argues that the wisdom terminology can be divided into faculty, activity, and knowledge showing that the aim of the book is a comprehensive way of living. It is wisdom that impacts all of life and begins with the fear of YHWH (1:7).⁵¹

The introduction directs these goals to an intended reader. Scholars predominantly assert that the book has two intended audiences in mind—the simple and the youth (1:4) and the wise (1:5).⁵² However, in spite of this being a predominant view, Arthur Keefer has shown that the in-

⁴⁸ Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 54.

⁴⁹ G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, (London: SCM, 1972), 25. Murphy, *Proverbs*, 4.

⁵⁰ Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 67–68.

⁵¹ Michael V. Fox, “Words for Wisdom,” *ZAH* 6, (1993), 149–169; Michael V. Fox, “Words for Folly,” *ZAH* 10, (1997), 4–15.

⁵² McKane, *Proverbs*, 262; Whybray, *Proverbs*, 31; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 4; Sandoval, “Revisiting the Prologue of Proverbs,” 456; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 58; Weeks, *Instruction*, 106; McKane, *Proverbs*, 262. Clifford, *Proverbs*, 35; Perdue, *Proverbs*, 69. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 64, correctly makes a distinction between the חכם of verse 5 and the חכמים of verse 6. He notes “the wise ones” (חכמים) (1:6) probably refers to a group of “authors of wisdom” (22:17; 24:23) rather than a person who is wise (חכם) (1:5). This distinction is important in determining that the prologue is not directed to this group of wise ones but to the literary figure found throughout the book.

tended reader of the book is only “the wise” (1:5) rather than both “the wise” and “the simpleton.” Keefer shows that those advocating the predominant view of two intended readers must understand a shift in subjects in the purpose clauses of the introduction. Thus, in verses 2–3 it is “the reader...who knows (1:2a), who understands (1:2b), and who receives (1:3a).” But “in verse 4 it is the proverbs of Solomon, not the reader, that give [prudence, knowledge, and discretion].”⁵³ Because there is no clear shift in subjects, it is best to understand “the wise” (1:5) as the subject of verses 2–4 and it is therefore the wise who are giving prudence, knowledge, and discretion to the simple and the youth.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the youth or simpleton is characterized negatively in the instructions (e.g., 1:22, 32) making it likely that the author seeks to persuade the audience against identifying as a youth or simpleton.⁵⁵ And this negative characterization of the simple elsewhere in the instruction encourages interpreters to look back at “the wise” in verse 5 as the intended reader.

With the intended reader of Proverbs in mind, we can now see how the introduction reveals the relationship between Solomonic wisdom and the wisdom of “the wise.” The title, which includes Solomon’s name, serves to direct “the wise” in how to obtain the holistic wisdom that impacts all of life. The title implies that “the wise” can continually increase their own wisdom through the hearing and application of Solomonic wisdom. In this way, the address of the introduction appears to contextualize Solomon’s reputation for wisdom in the 1 Kings narrative. As we saw in this narrative, it is clear from YHWH’s promise to Solomon that he would give Solomon “a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you” (1 Kgs 3:12). This promise of YHWH is affirmed sporadically in the narrative to demonstrate his fulfilled promise and the magnitude of Solomon’s wisdom (5:10–11 [4:30–31], 14 [34]; 10:6–7, 23–24).

The key difference between the wisdom attributed to Solomon in Proverbs and the accounts in 1 Kings is the context in which it is found. As can be seen in the 1 Kings narrative, Solomon’s superlative wisdom is placed largely within an international context where his wisdom is compared to the wisdom of other nations. These descriptions serve to display Solomon’s grandness in

⁵³ Keefer, “A Shift in Perspective,” 104.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 111.

comparison to other nations. Conversely, there is now an inversion where the international wisdom of the nations gets placed in an Israelite context. Thus, the superlative of Solomon's wisdom implied in the introduction is placed within an didactic context, as I shall go on to argue in the next section. Solomon's wisdom, which was used to display his grandeur in comparison to the nations, is now placed into a primarily family context that stresses the need for wisdom in everyday life.

5. The Hierarchy of Relationships

So far in this chapter, I have argued that Proverbs implicitly characterizes Solomon as Israel's authoritative wise king by linking Proverbs to Solomon's reign and that the very nature of his wisdom embodies the values that it seeks to pass on. One last area in which Proverbs contextualizes Solomon's authority is through the emergence of hierarchal relationships in a literary fiction, where an anonymous Israelite father transmits to his son Solomonic wisdom that has YHWH as its ultimate source.

5.1 The Father as a Mouthpiece of Solomonic Wisdom

Proverbs 1:8 begins the first of ten instructions consisting of an anonymous father's instructions of wisdom to his anonymous son.⁵⁶ Instructions of this type from a father to a son are a well known literary form found in other ancient Near Eastern texts.⁵⁷ The inherent nature of parental relationships implies authority, parent over child. As Israel's commandments for children to obey their parents make clear, Israelite society weaves parental authority into the fabric of society. Children are commanded to obey their parents (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16), and the value of parental honour was so high in Israel that if a child cursed his parents the child could receive a death penalty (Exod 21:17). Proverbs echoes this authority structure by teaching that children are expected to obey their parents (Prov 20:20; 30:11–14; 30:17).⁵⁸ Thus, the parental discourses in 1:8–9:18 assume

⁵⁶ Michael V. Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9," *JBL* 116, (1997), 615–616. Fox distinguishes 10 lectures (Prov. 1:8-19; 2:1-22; 3:1-12, 21-35; 4:1-9, 10-19, 20-27; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27) from five interludes (1:20-33; 3:13-20; 6:1-19; 8:1-36; 9:1-18).

⁵⁷ See K. A. Kitchen, "Proverbs 2: ANE Background," in *IVP Dictionary for Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 557–558.

⁵⁸ Tremper Longman III, "Family in the Wisdom Literature," in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs,*

this authority and, by their very nature, present an authority structure between the father (and mother) and the son(s).

Philip Nel argues that rather than the authority of the admonitions being located in the family setting: “The authority of the admonition is the wisdom it reveals.”⁵⁹ He claims this is so because: “There exists no direct indication in Proverbs that the family or family father is regarded as fundamental to the authority of the wisdom.”⁶⁰ However, this claim underestimates the assumed nature of parental authority and the father’s attempt at persuading the son. As Fox notes, the father’s way is to be obeyed. His is the way that leads to life and other alternatives lead to death.⁶¹ Similarly, Daniel J. Estes argues that the admonitions imply the type of authority assumed between the father and the son; the father’s instructions, which couple his commands with the promised outcome, demonstrate the father’s knowledge of wise living. This knowledge establishes his authority to command his son to pursue the ideal life.⁶²

It is apparent in the admonitions that there is a clear authoritative structure between the father and son. By nature, the father exercises authority over the son and he has knowledge of the outcome of his instructions. But one aspect that is often unnoticed by scholars about this authority structure is that this literary fiction portrays the father’s instructions as being Solomonic wisdom that he is transmitting to his son. Thus, the father serves as a spokesman for Solomonic wisdom, testifying to its authority. There are three aspects of repetition between the introduction and the father’s instructions that show that the father is serving as a mouthpiece for Solomon that are worth noting: the call to the son, the substance of the father’s teaching, and the result of obedience to the teaching.

The father’s first words to his son—and those that are often repeated—are a command “to hear” (שמע) (1:8). Waltke suggests that this command “links the first admonition with the preamble and subtly identifies the son with the wise who hear to add learning.”⁶³ Keefer reinforces this

Culture, and Context, ed. Richard S. Hess and Carroll R. M. Daniel, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 85.

⁵⁹ Philip Nel, “Authority in the Wisdom Admonitions,” *ZAW* 93, (1981), 426.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁶¹ Fox, “Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9,” 621.

⁶² Daniel J. Estes, *Hear, My Son: Teaching and Learning in Proverbs 1–9*, NSBT 4, (Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 125.

⁶³ Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 186.

argument by noting that: “The son is directly addressed throughout the book (e.g., 19:27, 23:15, 24:13, 27:11) and appears in context with the wise (1:8, 10:1b–8, 13:1, 15:20; cf. 13:20, 17:25), supporting the view that in 1:5 the author addresses the ‘wise’ as the intended audience in terms of the role that audience should assume.”⁶⁴ The father’s command to hear, beginning in the first admonition, is repeated again in 4:1, 10; 5:7; and 7:24 and identifies that the instructions he is calling the son to hear are the means by which the goals of the introduction are realized.

In addition to the father’s call to the son, the father conveys himself as a mouthpiece of Solomonic wisdom by repeating vocabulary from the “wisdom program” in the prologue to describe the substance of his own teaching. We see this in the repetition of the words “instruction” (מוסר) (1:2–3, 7, 8; 4:1; 5:23), “wisdom” (חכמה) (1:2; 2:2; 4:5, 7, 11; 5:1); “learning” (לקח) (1:5; 4:2), and “understanding” (תבונה) (2:3; 4:1). By doing so, the father is transmitting to the son the path that leads to the preservation of life and fear of YHWH. Additionally, the father’s language in the instructions parallels with the prologue in order to convey the result of obeying his instructions. This is seen in the repetition of the words “righteousness, justice, and uprightness” (צדק ומשפט ומישרים) (1:3; 2:9), “knowledge” (דעת) (1:4; 2:5; 5:2), and “fear of YHWH” (יראת יהוה) (1:7; 2:5).

The father’s instructions are designed for the son to acquire the aims set out in the introduction. The related language that is shared between the introduction and the father’s admonitions suggests that the father’s teaching is meant to be closely aligned with the aims of the book. The goals intended by the introduction are the same goals that the father hopes to be achieved in the son through the reception of his teaching. Through the repetition of language, the father transmits to the son the purposes of this Solomonic wisdom, implying that his authority and wisdom are firmly grounded in Israel’s wise king.

5.2 The Identity of the Father

The proximity of the title in 1:1 with the first instructions raises the issue of the relationship between Solomon and the father. After all, the repeated calls, instructions, and promises may suggest that readers are intended to imagine Solomon as this father passing along wisdom to his son.

⁶⁴ Keefer, “A Shift in Perspective,” 110.

Christopher Ansberry and Alan Moss have recently argued for identifying Solomon as the father figure, albeit in different ways.

Ansberry seeks to understand Solomon as the implied father, that is, readers are to imagine Solomon as the father figure passing along wisdom to his son.⁶⁵ This conclusion goes along with his re-examination of the royal court as the setting in Proverbs. He argues that the title in 1:1 serves to establish Solomon as the voice of Proverbs. He claims that the title functions to “introduce the voice of the tradition, the speaker of the document.”⁶⁶ Ansberry draws this conclusion by looking at Egyptian instructional texts in which the name of the “author”—which includes third person epithets—also presents the voice in which to hear the message of the document. For Ansberry, this suggests that readers hear the voice of Solomon as the father in Proverbs 1–9. He writes: “The opening verses of Proverbs portray the king as a teacher of wisdom and place Solomon in an implied role as the father...Moreover, the attribution to Solomon represents the only linear-sequential antecedent to the father (1:8), suggesting that the editors included the title to clarify the identity of the speaker in the document.”⁶⁷

Moss, on the other hand, reviews three pre-critical interpreters: Bede, Hugo Grotius, and Augustin Calmet. He then offers the following reading: “Like the ancient commentators, I will hear Solomon speaking throughout and will consider his character to be reflected in what he is assumed to say or to write.”⁶⁸ Moss concludes that in Proverbs 1–9 Solomon functions not as the glorious king, but as an everyday Israelite: “As a family-teacher he divests himself of his royal panoply in order to strenuously uphold family values in a series of instructions expressed in a rhetoric of reasoned appeal...In Proverbs 1–9 the royal and uniquely wise Solomon is depicted as every Israelite’s teaching parent.”⁶⁹

^{65.} Also, Alexa F. Wilke, *Kronerben der Weisheit: Gott, König und Frommer in der didaktischen Literatur Ägyptens und Israels*, FAT 20, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 1. Richard J. Clifford, “The Community of the Book of Proverbs,” in *Constituting the Community: Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride Jr.*, ed. J.T. Strong and S.S. Tuell, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 289. But, Wilke and Clifford only assert this point rather than argue for it.

^{66.} Ansberry, *Be Wise, My Son*, 45.

^{67.} Ibid., 46.

^{68.} Alan Moss, “Proverbs with Solomon: a Critical Revision of the Pre-Critical Commentary Tradition in the Light of a Biblical Intertextual Study,” *HeyJ* 43, (2002), 204–205.

^{69.} Ibid., 207.

In my opinion, both of these views of trying to identify Solomon as the father-figure are interesting contributions but have certain drawbacks. It is doubtful that in Proverbs Solomon is intended to be read directly as the father figure. I believe the best understanding is that the figure should be understood as an anonymous Israelite father who is passing along to his son “Solomonic” wisdom. The parental admonitions are intended to be identified as Solomonic wisdom and embody his authority, but this fiction resembles the command for Israelites to pass along the Deuteronomic law to their children (Deut 6:7–9). As Israelite parents were to serve as vehicles for Mosaic law in Deuteronomy, in Proverbs they serve as vehicles of Solomonic wisdom.

Furthermore, Ansberry’s conclusions from his comparison of the literary fiction in Proverbs 1–9 with other father-son instructions in Egypt are not supportable. Of the twelve Egyptian instructional texts, the son is always named in these instructions and is never found in the main body of the text.⁷⁰ Proverbs, on the other hand, never names the son and an address to “my son” is used thirteen times and “my sons” three times (Prov 19:27; 24:13; 27:11; 31:2).⁷¹ The anonymity of the characters in Proverbs 1–9 suggests that the father-son dynamic is designed to be used in a more general way that would allow any Israelite family to identify with the instruction.⁷²

The setting of Proverbs 1–9, as well, does not seem to be best read against the backdrop of the royal court. As we saw earlier, identifying the social setting of Proverbs is difficult. But Fox helpfully makes the point that the self-presentation of Proverbs 1–9, in distinction to an unknown originating setting, is the home.⁷³ André Lemaire notes that the father could be used in a metaphorical sense as that of a teacher and that Proverbs 1–9 could be a school setting.⁷⁴ But the pairing of the father with the mother’s teaching (1:8; 6:20) identifies this with a home setting.⁷⁵ Thus, the generalization of the instructions suggests that their intent is for any Israelite to identify and enact the advice. The father is a typical Israelite father transmitting wisdom and seeking to persuade his son

⁷⁰ Fox, “Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9,” 620–621; Lucas, *Proverbs*, 54.

⁷¹ Kitchen, “Proverbs 2,” 557–558.

⁷² Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 186.

⁷³ Fox, “Wisdom and the Self-Presentation of Wisdom Literature,” 155.

⁷⁴ André Lemaire, “The Sage in School and Temple,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 173–74. On the debate of a school setting see, for example, Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 132–56; G.I. Davies, “Were There Schools in Ancient Israel,” in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, ed. Day, John, Gordon, Robert P., and H.G.M. Williamson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 199–211.

⁷⁵ Fox, “Social Location,” 232; Dell, *Proverbs*, 88–89; Lucas, *Proverbs*, 54.

to pursue a life of wisdom.

5.3 The Source of Wisdom

As we have just seen, the implicit characterization of Solomon's authority in the literary fiction establishes this authority through the anonymous father serving as a spokesman for Solomonic wisdom. But one further aspect of the hierarchy of relationships is revealed in the father's appeal: that the source of wisdom is YHWH himself. In the father's second instruction to the son (2:1–22) he exhorts the conditions necessary to “understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God” (Prov 2:5). To gain these the father instructs:

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures (Prov 2:1–4).

What is significant in this passage is that the reason the son will understand the fear of the LORD and knowledge of God is because “the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Prov 2:6). This implies that the wisdom the father is passing on to the son comes from God and he, thus, serves as a mouthpiece of God's wisdom.⁷⁶

What emerges is that YHWH is the ultimate source of wisdom. It is through Solomon's proverbs, which are passed along by the father to the son, that his wisdom is communicated. In the relational hierarchy, these verses reveal that Solomon (and the father) are subordinated to YHWH. Similarly, in the third instruction, the father grounds the authority of his instruction with YHWH. The father describes his teaching in 3:1 as both תורה and מצוה. Newsom argues that this language aligns the father's wisdom with divine support: “...this particular pair has resonances of God's *torah* and *mitswot* to Israel and so subtly positions the father in association with divine authority.”⁷⁷

The establishment that wisdom's ultimate source is YHWH also serves to enhance Solomon's

⁷⁶ Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 224; Longman III, *Proverbs*, 120–121.

⁷⁷ Carol A. Newsom, “Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom,” in *Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and The Book*, ed. Timothy K. Beal and David M. Gunn, (London: Routledge, 1997), 123.

authority. Neither Israel's or the Queen of Sheba's acknowledgements in 1 Kings that Solomon's wisdom was a result of YHWH's gift diminished their awe of Solomon. Rather, it seemed to increase it because YHWH had chosen to bless Solomon. Identifying God as the source of Solomon's wisdom magnifies the authority that Solomon has and provides his wisdom with the significance it needs to be passed along and to be obeyed. In this way, Proverbs is in line with the portrayal in 1 Kings 3 where YHWH is attributed with being the ultimate source of wisdom. Therefore the Solomonic wisdom portrayed in Proverbs is elevated in its authority because the ultimate source is YHWH.

6. Summary

This chapter has contributed to the characterization of Solomon in the book of Proverbs by drawing out the common assertion that Solomon's name contributes to the book's authority. I have shown that Solomon may appear to have a minimal role in the book, but in fact he has an implicit presence throughout, and through this implicit presence he is characterized as Israel's authoritative, wise king. This characterization is built from the title in Proverbs 1:1 recalling Solomon as being gifted with wisdom from YHWH that was then enacted in diverse ways during his reign over Israel. The book of Proverbs has conceptually drawn upon Solomon's wisdom and contextualized it in such a way as to mark the entire book with his authority. Importantly, this portrayal of Solomon's authoritative wisdom has a unique place in the Israelite home. Proverbs presents Solomon's wisdom as being transmitted from generation to generation through a literary fiction that creates an enduring memory of his wisdom.

THE RESIGNED KING: THE CHARACTER OF SOLOMON IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Having already examined the authoritative characterization of Solomon in the book of Proverbs, it is now time to examine Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes, the second of the Solomonic books under investigation. Though Solomon is never mentioned by name, the book has traditionally been associated with Israel's wisest king.

1. Introduction

In the book of Ecclesiastes, which is post-Solomonic in date,¹ it is generally recognized by scholars that the character of Solomon has been adopted into a royal fiction in order to persuade the audience that if someone like Solomon could not find ultimate benefit, then no one can.² The Solomon figure allows Qohelet's search for benefit or gain to be pursued by someone with only Solomon's means.³ The impressive accomplishments described in 2:4–8 reveal that: "if even Solomon, who

¹ C. L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, AB, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 21, argues that the book is dated to the Persian period. Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of Empires*, 221, argues for Hellenistic date. Tremper Longman III, "Determining the Historical Context of Ecclesiastes," in *The Words of the Wise are like Goats: Engaging Qohelet in the 21st Century*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Cristian G. Rata, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 89–104, argues that it is impossible to be more precise than a post-exilic dating.

² E.g., Christianson, *A Time to Tell*; Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, BCOTWP, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 122; Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 144. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 37, 97–98. Antoon Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, HCOT, (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 29, 105. Peter Enns, *Ecclesiastes*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 37, 44.

³ I will refer to Qohelet as "Qohelet-Solomon" when Qohelet assumes the role of King Solomon in his quest for benefit in life.

possessed everything which a man can possess, nevertheless found all his effort to achieve happiness and contentment profoundly unsatisfactory, how much more would lesser persons be likely to fail in that attempt.”⁴ Similarly, Brueggemann argues that the items listed in the royal fiction as Solomon's greatest successes become his greatest failures and readers are left with the picture of an old king reflecting on the vanity of his life. According to Brueggemann, Ecclesiastes critiques self-aggrandizement and refutes ambitious displays of autonomous power. Solomon is, therefore, an example of how not to live.⁵ However, Timothy Sandoval has recently sought to go beyond the general connections between the royal fiction and the 1 Kings narrative by analyzing the manner in which the character of Solomon has been contextualized. He argues that Qohelet's adoption of Solomon in the Royal Autobiography is principally drawn from the “non- or pre-deuteronomistic representation of Solomon in 1 Kings.”⁶ He claims:

Ecclesiastes's construction of Qohelet in the likeness of what i [sic] will call ‘Imperial Solomon’ of 1 Kings—especially Imperial Solomon's *wisdom*—is an important strategy the book deploys to offer a kind of satiric critique of Qohelet and political-economic elites of the Ptolemaic epoch for whom Qohelet is a kind of figure. Because Ecclesiastes is most concerned to unmask and challenge Ptolemaic era pretensions to domination, the scribe(s) who produced the book did not need the deuteronomistic portrait of Solomon, with his covenant obligations and religious apostasy, and so left this aspect of 1 Kings aside when constructing Qohelet as Solomon-like.⁷

I believe that Sandoval is correct to go beyond the general themes shared between the royal fiction and 1 Kings. However, his argument that Qohelet-Solomon is a non-Deuteronomic Solomon designed to critique Qohelet remains speculative. Sandoval is forced to reconstruct a non-Deuteronomic portrayal of Solomon from 1 Kings that is a negative critique of Solomon.⁸ He hypothesizes what a previous edition of 1 Kings may have looked like and ends up reading the current form of 1

⁴ R. N. Whybray, *Ecclesiastes*, NCB, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1989), 48. Similarly, Tremper Longman III, “Qohelet as Solomon: “For What Can Anyone Who Comes After the King Do?” (Ecclesiastes 2:12),” in *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually*, ed. Katharine J. Dell and Will Kynes, LHBOTS 587 (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 52.

⁵ Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 203.

⁶ Sandoval, “Reconfiguring Solomon,” 13.

⁷ Ibid., 14–15.

⁸ See chapter 3 for my own identification of the negative aspects of Solomon from the 1 Kings narrative. Sandoval goes further here in attempting a negative portrayal of Solomon from a hypothetical non-Deuteronomic source.

Kings outside its final form context.

Though the hypothesis that Solomon has been adopted into a kingly fiction is a dominant one, it has recently been challenged in studies by Jennie Barbour and Stuart Weeks, albeit in diverse ways.⁹ A fresh assessment of Qohelet's relationship to Solomon is justified. In this chapter, I will show that the challenges of Weeks and Barbour are unconvincing and that Solomon is indeed adopted into a royal fiction. This chapter will contribute to the royal fiction hypothesis, showing that by attending closely to the Solomonic parallels Qohelet-Solomon characterizes his grand wisdom and achievements as intentionally independent of Israel's God. Qohelet-Solomon has recontextualized his wisdom and achievements that were originally understood to be benevolent gifts of YHWH, but are now claimed as autonomous accomplishments.

2. The Relationship of Qohelet and Solomon

2.1 Qohelet's Adoption of Solomon

Solomon, Israel's wise king *par excellence*, bears a unique relationship to the book of Ecclesiastes. Unlike Proverbs and Song of Songs, which explicitly mention Solomon by name in the titles, Solomon is never mentioned by name in Ecclesiastes. Yet, in spite of the lack of any explicit reference, Solomon is indeed alluded to through epithets (in the superscription and the self-introduction in 1:12) and thematic links with the Solomon traditions in 1:12–2:26.¹⁰ Ecclesiastes opens with the title: "The words of Qohelet son of David, king in Jerusalem."¹¹ Early Jewish interpretation understood Qohelet to be Solomon and Qohelet served as a nickname for Solomon. In Qohelet Rabbah 1:1 it is asked: "Why was his name called Qoheleth [קהלת]? Because his words were proclaimed in public meeting [קהל], as it is written (1 Kgs 8:1)."¹² But, it is doubtful that the name Qo-

⁹ Jennie Barbour, *The Story of Israel in the Book of Qohelet: Ecclesiastes as Cultural Memory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Stuart Weeks, "Solomon and Qoheleth," in *Issues in the Megilloth: The Shape of Contemporary Scholarship*, ed. Brad Embry, (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2016); Stuart Weeks, *Ecclesiastes and Scepticism*, LHBOTS 541, (New York: T & T Clark, 2012).

¹⁰ So Longman III, "Qohelet," 47–48.

¹¹ For issues of editorship of title, epilogue, and the body of book of Ecclesiastes see Fox, "Frame Narrative and Composition in the Book of Qohelet," 83-106.

¹² This same point is made in pre-modern Christian interpretation as well. Gregory Thaumaturgos, a disciple of Origen's, linked Solomon and Qohelet in his paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 1:1. "Solomon (the son of

helet was ever a nickname for Solomon. Scholars generally accept that Qohelet [קהלת] is derived from the verb קהל “to gather.” The form is a qal participle feminine singular most likely functioning as a substantive participle meaning “to assemble or gather.” In 7:27¹³ and 12:8 the form is הקהלת which points to the name functioning as a title in the same way that other substantival participles often designate the title or profession of an individual.¹⁴ Thus, the name probably means something like “one who assembles” or “the speaker of an assembly” as many commentators attest.¹⁵ Barbour notes that in the Hebrew Bible those described as gathering the assembly of Israel most often involve Israel’s leadership—frequently kingship.¹⁶ Evoking the name Qohelet begins to fill the reader with expectations from the character. Qohelet is a person who has the authority to gather an assembly together and based upon his authority, his words should be evaluated carefully by those he instructs. In 1:12 the name is used in relation to Qohelet’s role as king and again in 12:9–10 regarding his vocation of instructing the people in knowledge and his arrangement of proverbs, probably referring to educational materials.¹⁷

Yet, in spite of not mentioning Solomon by name, Qohelet is to be identified as Solomon through a combination of Qohelet’s epithets and themes. So, at least for a limited time, Qohelet takes on the persona of Solomon, Israel’s all-wise king. Through the use of the appositive phrases

the king and prophet David), a king more honoured and a prophet wiser than anyone else, speaks to the whole assembly of God.” See John Jarick, *Gregory Thaumaturgos’ Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes*, SBLSCS 29, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 7. Longman III, “Qohelet”, 48–49, recently suggests that the only really intertextual link between the Solomon narrative and Ecclesiastes 1:12–2:26 is the name Qohelet (1 Kgs 8:1, 2, 14, 22, 55, 65).

¹³ קהלת זה מצאתי אמר “Look, this is what I found, says Qohelet.” The odd 3fs form of אמר with Qohelet is explained as a textual corruption due to incorrect word division. The ך was incorrectly attached to the verb.

¹⁴ Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 614–15 §37.2a.

¹⁵ Roland E. Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, WBC, (Dallas: Word, 1992), 1; Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*

¹⁶ Barbour, *The Story of Israel*, 26. For instance, Moses gathers Israel (Exod 35:1; Lev. 8:3, 4; Num 8:9; 10:7; Deut 4:10; Deut 31:28) Moses and Aaron assemble Israel (Num 1:17-18; Num 20:8, 10); Moses commands Joshua to assemble the people (Deut 31:12); the Bichrites assemble together and follow Sheba through the tribes of Israel (2 Sam 20:14); Solomon assembles to bring up the ark (1 Kgs 8:1-2; 2 Chr 5:2-3); Rehoboam assembled Judah and Benjamin to fight against Israel (1 Kgs 12:21; 2 Chr 11:1); God summons the court (Job 11:10); David assembled Israel to bring in the ark (1 Chr 13:5; 15:3); and David assembled the officials of Israel, tribes, officers, commanders, stewards, palace officials, mighty men and warriors (1 Chr 28:1).

¹⁷ Michael V. Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, Bible and Literature Series 18, (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 3.

“son of David, king in Jerusalem” (Eccl 1:1) and “king over Israel in Jerusalem” (1:12) the reader imagines Qohelet as Solomon. J.L. Crenshaw rightly notes that בן דוד does not necessarily refer to Solomon, but the phrase could designate a grandson, any male in the same lineage, or someone of like ethical character.¹⁸ However, the context of the passage and, as Seow notes, the majority of referents to the collocation of בן דוד reveals that Solomon is in view.¹⁹ Thus the mention of a בן דוד indicates to the reader what Murphy calls the “aura of Solomon.”²⁰ The second appositive phrase “king in Jerusalem,” along with Qohelet’s self-introduction in 1:12 stating that he “has been king over Israel in Jerusalem,” strengthens the Solomonic identification because we know of no other king, other than David, who ruled over the united monarchy from Jerusalem.

In addition to these epithets that most naturally point to a Solomonic identification, a number of themes in 1:12–2:26 point toward allusions to Solomon’s reputation. Qohelet describes himself as having a close relationship with wisdom. In his proposal to seek and search everything under heaven, wisdom is his method (1:13). Even more direct is Qohelet’s claim that the wisdom he possessed and his other possessions were greater than all others before him in Jerusalem (1:16; 2:9). These claims of wisdom and his boastful possession of it resonates with Solomon’s reputation for wisdom (1 Kgs 3:12; 4:29–34; 10:23–24; 2 Chr 1:11–12; 9:3, 5–7). Qohelet-Solomon’s testing of pleasure to find what humanity should be doing during their lives also has close allusions to Solomon’s reputation (2:4–11), as is discussed below. He boasts of building houses (cf., 1 Kgs 3:1; 5:15–7:51), planting vineyards, making gardens and parks, and planting trees (cf., 1 Kgs 5:9–14), and collecting servants (cf., 1 Kgs 9:20–22; 10:5), livestock (cf., 1 Kgs 5:3; 8:5), and silver and gold (cf., 1 Kgs 10:14–21/2 and 2 Chr 9:13–28). The combination of Qohelet’s royal heritage, his reign over Jerusalem, and his reputation for wisdom and vast wealth make it doubtful that anyone else, or no one specific, was in mind in his portrayal.

¹⁸ J. L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, OTL, (London: SCM, 1988), 56; *HALOT*, Koehler and Baumgartner, ed, trans. M.E.J Richardson, 2 vols., (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 137-138.

¹⁹ Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 97. The phrase is used 9x’s in the Hebrew Bible (Prov 1:1; 2 Sam 13:1; 1 Chr 29:22; 2 Chr 1:1, 11:18 13:6, 30:26, 35:3). All refer to Solomon as בן דוד except Absalom (2 Sam 13:1) and Jeremoth (2 Chr 11:18).

²⁰ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 1.

2.1.1 A Composite Character?

Barbour has recently challenged the traditional view of the Solomonic persona in her 2012 monograph, *The Story of Israel in the Book of Qohelet*. She argues: “Qohelet’s Solomon is not the historical Solomon alone, but a post-exilic Solomon with all the accretions of the successors who sat on his throne and added to his royal mythology.”²¹ Thus, Qohelet is not constructed only from Solomon but also various descriptions of other kings that are then attributed to the foundational Solomon figure. To support the post-exilic, composite nature of the Solomonic Qohelet, Barbour notes a number of allusions to later kings in Israel’s history from the books of 1–2 Chronicles. In particular she notes that the following allusions point to a composite character: building projects, riches, tribute, singers, and the title of Qohelet, son of David and king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Barbour notes that the building activities of Qohelet in 2:4–6 echo the Solomon account in 1 Kings in particular (1 Kgs 3:1; 9:19). But she also notes that building activities are mainly reported when undertaken by good kings and therefore take on a thematic role: “A king who is a builder in the biblical histories, then, belongs to a stereotype that starts with Solomon but goes on to take in the good kings of Judah too.”²² She argues, thus, that Solomon is the proto-type builder, but later kings are compared to him in their own building activities.

Barbour also notes that Qohelet’s wealth described in his pursuit of pleasure resonates with kings other than Solomon. Qohelet’s riches are described in 2:7–8 as the acquisition of male and female slaves and herds and flocks. Wealth measured by livestock is also attributed to David, Asa, Uzziah, and Hezekiah (1 Chr 28:1; 27:29, 31; 2 Chr 14:14:26:10; 32:29). But in particular, Qohelet and Hezekiah measure their great wealth by their possession of herds and flocks (מקנה בקר וצאן) Eccl 2:7) (הרבה היה לי) (Chr 27:29) (ומקנה צאן ובקר לרב). She notes that David and Uzziah (1 Chr 27:27; 2 Chr 26:10) are the only kings described as owning vineyards.²³ Qohelet is also described by his riches of silver and gold which resonates with Solomon, but she notes that in Chronicles David is described in a more elevated way for his riches (1 Chr 22:14; 2 Chr 8:18). Qohelet’s treasure סגולה is only elsewhere used non-figuratively in 1 Chronicles 29:3 with David. Je-

²¹ Barbour, *The Story of Israel*, 16.

²² Ibid., 20.

²³ Ibid., 21. Barbour argues: “This type of wealth in Ecclesiastes, then, is a mark of membership of a particular class of kings rather than a characteristic of one individual.”

hoshophat and Hezekiah are both described with riches of silver and gold (2 Chr 21:3). Qohelet's tribute reflects Solomon but David also received tribute (2 Chr 5:1 from 1 Chr 18:1–3). This is then a pattern used for subsequent kings: Asa (2 Chr 14:12–14), Jehoshophat (17:5, 17:11; 20:25), Uzziah (26:8), Jotham (27:5), and Hezekiah (32:23). Barbour also notes that various other kings, such as Josiah, were interested in male and female singers (35:25). In addition, we see this in David's association with the Psalter (1 Chr 15:16; 2 Sam 1:17–27).

Furthermore, Barbour argues that the name Qohelet and the accompanying titles can be construed to stress the composite nature of his makeup. She notes that the root of קהל contains royal associations and not merely a generic person assembling an assembly: David assembles all Israel to bring in the ark (1 Chr 13:5; 15:3; 28:1); Solomon calls an assembly to bring in the ark (2 Chr 5:2); and Rehoboam assembles troops (11:1). She notes that specific language is absent, but the general theme is present in Chronicles of kings gathering assemblies: Solomon summons at Gibeon (1:2), Asa gathers the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon to himself (15:9, 10); Jehoash assembles Judah (20:4, 5); and Hezekiah summons for passover (30:13). “The name קהל, then, is a label with royal associations—after Moses, only kings summon assemblies—and those associations take in more kings than simply Solomon. Qohelet's name itself casts him as a royal archetype: not Everyman so much as Everyking.”²⁴

Barbour further argues against the narrow view that “son of David, king over Jerusalem” has to be Solomon. She argues that good kings who have bad fathers are linked with David as father (2 Kgs 20:5). As the designation of a “Son of David” can also be used in the sense of a royal family (2 Chr 13:8; 23:3; 32:33). Going against the majority of commentators, she understands the designation of “king over Israel in Jerusalem” to not only refer to Solomon but to a composite king. Barbour notes that the term “Israel” does not designate a static place and represents more than geopolitical boundaries. It can refer to Judah both while the northern kingdom exists and after its fall. Thus, Israel can be used for the period from Hezekiah's reign to Babylonian exile to provide continuity of identity. Barbour's point is that the claim that Solomon must be identified because he is the only “son of David” to reign in Jerusalem over all of Israel is to be mistaken because it does not take account of the way Israel can be understood in a post-exilic setting. Barbour con-

²⁴Ibid., 25–26.

cludes, therefore:

With all its elements taken together, then, the royal boast in Eccles. 2:4–10 displays the king's achievements in terms which have a particular use in the Second Temple exegesis of earlier royal material: these accomplishments work against the backdrop of a historiographic tradition that sees the king as a perpetual template rather than only a series of individuals. Qohelet's king fits that template: the writer has pulled together motifs which in the histories work to show that the paradigm king, Solomon, is a king in a mould that has been continually replicated from the inception of the Israelite monarchy down to the exile.²⁵

Of course, Barbour may well be correct that certain elements may have resonance with other kings besides Solomon. But her argument is flawed because she takes an element that is shared amongst kings, including Solomon, and decides that it is a composite feature that undermines any individual representation. For many of these elements, Solomon serves as the representative king after which other kings are modelled. For instance, the Chronicler depicts building as a blessing from YHWH and uses this theme as a way to comment on the faithfulness and disobedience of other kings.²⁶ The fact that Solomon and other kings share propensities toward building projects does not support this as a distinct feature from Solomon that is attached to Qohelet making him a composite king.

Furthermore, the foundational characteristic of Qohelet in his royal persona is his wisdom. No other king can really be identified with this characteristic.²⁷ This fact creates tension in Barbour's own understanding of the composite nature of Qohelet because she still cannot totally dismiss the primary Solomonic identification. She writes: "[T]he primary identification for this figure must be Solomon, made clear by the twin emphases of wisdom and wealth in the broader context of the royal fiction, and the writer does make careful exegetical use of the biblical Solomon materials."²⁸ Therefore, it is better to understand that Solomon is a persona that Qohelet adopts. Some of the elements may resonate with other kings as a way to describe his wealth, but the identification of Qo-

²⁵ Ibid., 23–24.

²⁶ E.g., YHWH's blessing is seen 1 Chron. 14:1; 2 Chron. 8:1–6; 11:5–12; 14:6–7; 17:12; 26:2, 6; 27:3–4; 32:5, 29–30; 33:14. But a problem is Hezekiah's dependence on building fortifications to protect Israel from Sennacherib's invasion (2 Chr 32:5, 29) rather than on YHWH.

²⁷ Longman III, "Qohelet", 50.

²⁸ Barbour, *The Story of Israel*, 17.

helet as a son of David, king in Jerusalem, surpassing those around in wisdom and wealth makes it impossible to view Qohelet as adopting a template of several of Israel's kings.

2.1.2 Solomon's Dethronement?

Weeks, on the other hand, argues that there is little correspondence between Solomon and Qohelet: "There is, in the final analysis, nothing in Ecclesiastes that would push us toward that identification apart from the few details, scattered coyly in the first and twelfth verses of chapter 1, that combine to point that way and that are echoed, perhaps, by subsequent references to Jerusalem in 2:7 and 2:9."²⁹ Weeks argues that there are a number of discrepancies between Qohelet and Solomon in Qohelet's royal autobiography. For instance, Weeks sees a discrepancy between the fact that Qohelet claims to have outdone his predecessors in wisdom (Eccl 1:16), whereas Solomon is described as outdoing the world (5:10 [4:30]; 10:23).³⁰ Weeks also argues that the descriptions of Qohelet's wealth do not cohere with Solomon's. He argues that the way Qohelet refers to his wealth as a treasure of kings in 2:8 sounds odd coming from the mouth of a king. Furthermore, he claims that the fact that Qohelet does not know his successor does not line up with Solomon's knowledge that Rehoboam would succeed him.³¹ Weeks also doubts that the associations of wealth and the activities of Qohelet resemble Solomon. Solomon's wealth was given instantly by God whereas Qohelet's progressed (1:16). Qohelet brags about his silver and gold, whereas silver was so abundant that it was of little value in Solomon's day (Eccl 2:8; 1 Kgs 10:21). Weeks also notes that some interpreters see the phrase **שדה ושרות** as referring to "concubines."³² But he doubts that the phrase in 2:8 refers to concubines or women and thus argues against the understanding that the point is to describe Qohelet in the context of such wealth.³³ He writes that this connection is "motivated largely by a desire to align the account with Solomon, so the expres-

²⁹ Weeks, "Solomon and Qoheleth," 90.

³⁰ Ibid., 89–90; Weeks, *Ecclesiastes and Scepticism*, 26.

³¹ Weeks, *Ecclesiastes and Scepticism*, 27; Weeks, "Solomon and Qoheleth," 90.

³² E.g., Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 81, notes that **דש** in Songs 7:8 refers to a woman's breast. Tremper Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 92, also thinks that it is a cognate of Arabic and Aramaic roots meaning "breast." Thus, **שדה** would be functioning as a synecdoche of part where "breast" refers to a "woman." See further in note 83 below.

³³ Weeks, *Ecclesiastes and Scepticism*, 28.

sion can hardly be used as evidence for such alignment.”³⁴ Lastly, Weeks argues that the only real connection between Qohelet and Solomon is Qohelet’s construction activities. However, Qohelet’s activities as described in Ecclesiastes are different from what the Kings narrative says about Solomon’s building activities. He states:

[T]he only action listed by Qohelet which is said also to have been done by Solomon is the building of buildings (their nature unspecified in the case of Qohelet): the activities and acquisitions listed all relate to the establishment of a substantial business and household, not to the undertaking of public works, and all are explicitly for Qohelet’s own benefit—indeed, it is the realisation that others will get to enjoy them which subsequently so upsets him.³⁵

However, it is also difficult to know how persuasive Weeks himself finds these arguments when he writes:

Despite the discrepancies, it would be hard to prove that Qohelet’s account in the first two chapters actually rules out any identification of Qohelet with Solomon. On the other hand, if we were not being impelled to make such an identification by tradition and by the implications of 1:1 and 1:12, it seems far from certain that so many modern commentators would make a connection between the two simply on the basis of the text itself.³⁶

But of course, as Weeks recognizes, this is the text we have.³⁷ Weeks does not appear to consider that the discrepancies may be intentional in order to distinguish Qohelet’s accomplishments from Solomon’s or that, as a poetic elaboration, there is no need to have strict parallels. It is surely difficult to imagine how a royal, son of David, who is described as having great wisdom and wealth, could refer to any other king besides Solomon. The discrepancies between the accomplishments of Solomon in the Kings narrative and Qohelet’s accomplishments highlight the fact that this is an imaginative re-telling. Thus, it is still best to understand that Qohelet has taken on the persona of Solomon despite such discrepancies in the portrayals, which, in my view, Weeks overcharacterizes.

³⁴ Weeks, “Solomon and Qoheleth”, 90. See also Weeks, *Ecclesiastes and Scepticism*, 25, n. 32.

³⁵ Weeks, “Solomon and Qoheleth”, 90, notes that some scholars, such as Christianson, *A Time to Tell* and Y. V. Koh, *Royal Autobiography in the Book of Qoheleth*, BZAW 369, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), have identified kingly material outside chapter 2, but argues that nothing in the book necessitates reading from the perspective of Solomon. See discussion below.

³⁶ Weeks, *Ecclesiastes and Scepticism*, 29.

³⁷ Weeks, “Solomon and Qoheleth”, 91.

2.2 The Extent of the Solomonic Persona

Qohelet's adoption of the Solomon character as a means to explore benefit in life raises the question of whether his playing Solomon is sustained throughout the entire work. Do all of Qohelet's reflections come from a Solomonic perspective? And if limited, at what point do they end? I maintain that it is best to conclude that Qohelet's adoption of Solomon is not maintained throughout the book.³⁸ Once Qohelet has explored benefit from the perspective of Solomon he drops this persona.

2.2.1 A Non-Royal Perspective

The most decisive reason that leads us to believe that Qohelet drops his royal persona is that in chapters 3-12 Qohelet's perspective comes from outside the royal court.³⁹ We see this when Qohelet laments the problems of injustice that he sees coming from rulers and the powerful. He observes that wickedness is present where one would expect justice and righteousness to take place (Eccl 3:16–17). He also sees that those in power oppress the weak and that the weak have no advocate (4:1; 5:7–9). He then instructs the reader in how one should conduct oneself when dealing with the absolute power of a king who is inclined to do evil (8:1–5). Furthermore, Qohelet observes evil coming from the ruler when that ruler appoints fools to high places in the kingdom (10:5–7). Similarly, Qohelet groans for the land when the king is immature and when leaders are too busy with leisure activities to govern the land (10:16–17). But he also instructs readers to take care in cursing the king because word may spread to him (10:20). Accordingly, regardless of the epithets and themes that establish a Solomonic identification in chapters 1–2, outside these chapters Qohelet adopts other perspectives as a part of his exploration. Solomon is a character or a persona that Qohelet adopts as a part of his message of pursuing meaning in life through the perspective of wisdom, wealth, and power that only a king like Solomon has. Once he has reflected on these themes from a Solomonic perspective he feels free to adopt other perspectives.

³⁸ So Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 584; J. A. Loader, *Polar Structures in the Book of Qoheleth*, BZAW 152, (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1979), 19; Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 55; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, xx-xxi; Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 98; Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 6-7; Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, 39-40.

³⁹ Also acknowledged by Martin A. Shields, "Qohelet and Royal Autobiography," in *The Words of the Wise Are like Goats: Engaging Qohelet in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Mark Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Cristian G. Rata, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 128.

2.2.2 A Sustained Royal Perspective?

The limited Solomonic perspective, however, is not held universally. Some scholars have seen limited royal echoes later on in the book.⁴⁰ But Koh and Shields argue for a sustained royal perspective.⁴¹ Y. V. Koh argues that all of these supposed “anti-royal” passages can still be understood as coming from a royal voice. Yet, her readings are less than convincing. First, she argues that Qohelet’s laments over injustice are a general lament over the human condition rather than a particular lament over injustice occurring under the king’s watch (3:16–17; 4:1). She argues that the places of justice and righteousness in 3:16–17 are not referring to the law courts but to anywhere one would expect justice and righteousness to take place.⁴² Koh argues that these verses should be read in light of 3:18–22 concerning God’s judgment. According to Koh, the point of the section is to express God as the ultimate judge who will one day judge the righteous and the wicked. She argues that because the focus is on God’s future judgment this wouldn’t be out of the question for the reflections of a king: “The two verses taken together indicate that human systems of justice are inevitably flawed and that only God can resolve such apparent injustices once and for all. That the king might muse on such an issue is possible and so this passage should not be seen as “anti-royal” or out of keeping with the sentiments of a royal persona.”⁴³ Koh states that in 5:7–8 [8-9], the King may recognize the immorality that is occurring under his command by his officials and he cannot fix the problem. Verses 9–14 then serve as his warning to them.⁴⁴

Koh’s assertion that the “place of justice” and the “place of righteousness” do not refer to the law courts is questionable. She is correct that Qohelet’s lament is general in that it does not refer to a specific situation or miscarriage of justice. Koh is also correct that it would not be beyond the

⁴⁰ E.g., H. W. Hertzberg, *Der Prediger*, (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963), 147; R. Gordis, *Koheleth: The Man and His World*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 278.

⁴¹ See also L. G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 202, who argues that Ecclesiastes is an Egyptian Royal Testament where kings critique the monarchy themselves. Christianson, *A Time to Tell*, 136–37, 164, on the other hand, argues that the royal perspective is established in the first two chapters and is maintained in order to deconstruct the monarchy.

⁴² Koh, *Royal Autobiography*, 51. Similarly, Koh again claims that 4:1 is quite general and can speak of the King’s frustration of the human condition where the oppressed have no one to comfort them. Thus, Qohelet is not claiming his own inability to fix the human problem, 53.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 55–56, also offers another reading that it could be a very general statement about corruption in administration such as easily occurs, though she notes that this would imply also the king’s guilt as a part of the system. She notes that verse 8, which mentions the king, is difficult to interpret.

purview of a king to lament the sort of general injustice one could observe among humanity. However, Brown is correct that Qohelet's frustration of wickedness taking place instead of justice and righteousness arises from the observation that injustice is taking place where one would expect—the law courts⁴⁵. The fact that a king's responsibility is to ensure justice and righteousness (cf., 2 Sam 8:15; 1 Kgs 10:9) and that Qohelet bases his frustration on what he observes from the abuse of power from rulers and the powerful (Eccl 4:1; 5:8–9) suggests that his observations come from outside the royal court, rather than an example of a general complaint a king might have.

A second example from Koh is her reading of Ecclesiastes 8:1–5. These verses are clearly didactic in form, teaching one how to navigate the complex reality of a king with ultimate authority who is also inclined towards evil intentions. Koh argues that this may be an example of where the royal voice changes perspective from a royal voice to a wise teacher.⁴⁶ There is inconsistency in this argument that, on the one hand, the royal voice is sustained, but, on the other hand, that the perspective shifts at this point. A more natural reading would be as a warning about how to preserve one's life in the royal court when the king is bent to do evil.

Ecclesiastes 10:5–7 and 10:16–17 deal clearly with Qohelet's frustration over the actions of rulers. Here, Koh offers an alternative setting for these observations. She notes that it is possible that, in these instances, Qohelet could still be a royal figure who is now offering his observations to other kings and rulers. Thus, Qohelet is critiquing other rulers with whom he has conducted business.⁴⁷ Koh also claims that the issues of injustice here are general in nature and do not inherently contradict a royal voice.⁴⁸ Of course it is possible that Qohelet is referring to other kingdoms, but there are no clear indications that a change of setting is in mind. It also appears strange that Qohelet's laments would be as severe as they are if they are about outside kingdoms.

Shields also argues for a sustained royal voice throughout Ecclesiastes, but does so in a way opposite to Koh. Shields argues that Qohelet may be engaging in self-criticism, which is not foreign to biblical or ancient literature.⁴⁹ Shields warns us to not overestimate the power of an ancient ruler

⁴⁵ William P. Brown, *Ecclesiastes*, IBC, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 46. Similarly, Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 126–27; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 36; Whybray, *Ecclesiastes*, 77.

⁴⁶ Koh, *Royal Autobiography*, 64.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴⁹ Shields, "Qohelet and Royal Autobiography," 128–129. Shields notes that prophets denounce other

and that it is unreasonable to think that an ancient monarch had absolute control and could eradicate all injustice.⁵⁰ He argues that no interpreter would dispute Qohelet's role as a sage, in spite of Qohelet engaging in self-criticism (1:18; 2:15, 21; 7:16; 8:17).⁵¹ Furthermore, he argues that Proverbs contains pro-monarchal statements but also critiques the unjust or unwise (Prov 16:12; 28:15; 29:12, 26; 31:3).⁵² The difficulty with Shields' stance, however, is that Qohelet's self-criticism of wisdom always arises from within his observations (e.g., Eccl 1:16–18; 2:1–11). Qohelet's wisdom is what reveals its limitations. In these “anti-royal” texts, Qohelet's perspective is from outside the political system in order to instruct readers how to navigate a flawed political system. Thus, Qohelet's advice is not anchored in the perspective of a king but comes from one with wisdom in the complexities of life. Solomon, above any other character, provided a template that Qohelet could utilize as he pursued meaning in life. Once Qohelet wishes to explore other perspectives, he no longer needs to maintain a Solomonic perspective as the supposed anti-royal texts demonstrate.

3. Qohelet's Autonomous Grandeur and Resigned Experience

Qohelet-Solomon self-characterizes in a number of ways. Fundamentally it is through a possession of supreme wisdom and grandeur, but also through resignation because his wisdom and grandeur do not have the ability to give the benefit he is searching for in this life “under the sun.” Scholars frequently note that Qohelet-Solomon's depiction of his mission for ultimate benefit has meaningful parallels with other ancient Near Eastern texts, but that he uniquely subverts these grand accomplishments.⁵³ Thus, Qohelet-Solomon's quest with his supreme wisdom and wealth result in supreme failure. What is less frequently observed are the ways that Qohelet-Solomon's actions characterize him in opposition to Israel's God. This stance leads him to acknowledge his own fini-

prophets as an example of critique. But he rightly notes that prophetic critique is aimed at other prophets and not self-critique, which is what Qohelet is engaging in Ecclesiastes.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 128.

⁵¹ Ibid., 128–129.

⁵² Ibid., 128–129.

⁵³ E.g., C. L. Seow, “Qohelet's Autobiography,” in *Fortunate Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck, Andrew H. Bartelt, Paul R. Raabe, and Chris A. Franke, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 275–87; Shields, “Qohelet and Royal Autobiography”, 117–36; Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 12–25; Enns, *Ecclesiastes*, 37; Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 76–110; Brown, *Ecclesiastes*, 28–29.

tude and to adjust his aims regarding what is possible to be gained in this world. In spite of his grandeur, he depicts himself as autonomous from YHWH which leads to his frustration and to the need to readjust his aims so as to be in line with his finitude. Qohelet's frustration stems from the fact that no aspect of his grandeur can do anything to change the stark fact of his mortality. His wisdom too can only give relative gain (2:12–16). The immense pleasure that he experienced does not provide any long-term gain (2:1–11). Nor does his wealth, because there is no guarantee what his heir will do with it (2:17–26). By attending to Qohelet-Solomon's self-characterization we can see that he presents his efforts in an autonomous manner, distinct from God, with regard to his acquisition of wisdom and extreme wealth. The result of his autonomous wisdom is what leads to his frustration and his ultimate realization of his finitude.

3.1 Qohelet's Grandeur in a Royal Autobiography

An ongoing question among scholarly understandings of the book of Ecclesiastes is determining the book's genre, and currently there is no universal agreement. Scholars debate whether Ecclesiastes reflects more of a Hellenistic or other ancient Near Eastern background.⁵⁴ However, in spite of there being no consensus for the genre of Ecclesiastes as a whole, research on ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions, especially that by Seow and Koh, has been very fruitful toward understanding the probable expectations that Qohelet-Solomon's quest in 1:12–2:26 would create among his audience.⁵⁵

Seow and Koh show that Qohelet-Solomon's self-introduction and quest reflects the genre characteristics of other royal autobiographies such as in the "The Kulamuwa Inscription"⁵⁶ and "The Inscription of King Mesha."⁵⁷ Furthermore, Seow notes "Tell Siran Inscription" lists the ac-

⁵⁴. Roddy Braun, for instance, argues for a Hellenistic background. See Roddy Braun, *Kohelet Und Die Frühhellenistische Popularphilosophie*, (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), 165; Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, 12-14.

⁵⁵. Other scholars also note the similarities between Qohelet-Solomon's autobiography and West-Semitic inscriptions: O. Loretz, *Qoheleth und der Alte Orient: Untersuchungen zu Stil und theologischer Thematik des Buches Qohelet*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 62. Loader, *Polar Structures*, 20 fn. 71. Bo Isakkson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth*, (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), 50 fn. 55. Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, 174. Tremper Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), has also noted similarities with Akkadian inscriptions.

⁵⁶. "The Kulamuwa Inscription," trans. K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (*COS* 2.30:147–48).

⁵⁷. "The Inscription of King Mesha," trans. K.A.D. Smelik (*COS* 2.23:137–38).

complishments of Amminadab, which include planting a vineyard, building a garden, an enclosed park, and a pool.⁵⁸ Koh notes that West-Semitic inscriptions from Azatiwada, Hadad, Kilamuwa, and Bar Rakib boast of economic prosperity, peace, and an abundance of food⁵⁹ and in the Assyrian inscription concerning Sennacherib, the king is described as building canals and creating parklands and gardens.⁶⁰ This is not to say that Qohelet-Solomon copied a particular inscription as there are differences not only between Qohelet-Solomon and the other inscriptions, but also between the other inscriptions themselves.⁶¹ The similarities shared suggest that the audience of Ecclesiastes was familiar enough with the notion of a royal autobiography that would list various accomplishments of the king. However, the predominant opinion is that Qohelet-Solomon uses the royal inscriptions, which would typically serve as royal propaganda to glorify a king's accomplishments, to demonstrate that these accomplishments do not lead to ultimate meaning. Thus, Seow writes:

Qohelet's imitation of the genre is poignant in its irony. In the end the text makes the point that none of the deeds—even the royal deeds that are assiduously preserved in memorials—really matters. For human beings, even kings, there is no immortality of any sort. At first blush, the autobiography paints a picture of enormous success. But the mention of the king's deeds, and especially the superiority of his deeds to those of his predecessors, leads to a surprising conclusion, one that is quite contrary to the purpose of royal texts. The legendary acts, wealth, and wisdom of Solomon turned out to not have abiding significance after all. The genre of a royal inscription is utilized to make the point about the ephemerality of wisdom and human accomplishments.⁶²

Seow and Koh are correct to acknowledge that Qohelet-Solomon's quest to find benefit in life does share similar features with the royal inscriptions of the ancient world. By communicating his search using such similar features, he shocks his audience from the normal expectation of royal propaganda. Through Qohelet's Solomonic persona, he relativizes his own accomplishments. As Brown writes: "By adopting this form of self-presentation, Qoheleth also intends to immortalise

⁵⁸ E. J. Smit, "The Tell Siran Inscription: Linguistic and Historical Implications," *JSem* 1, (1989), 108–117. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 128.

⁵⁹ Koh, *Royal Autobiography*, 78–79.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 93–96.

⁶¹ Shields, "Qohelet and Royal Autobiography," 126.

⁶² Seow, "Qohelet's Autobiography," 284. See also Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 144–152.

himself, not, however, by his (fictionalized) accomplishments but by his abysmal failures.”⁶³ But acknowledging the similarities of genres and the expectations it creates is only one aspect of Qohelet-Solomon’s characterization. What needs to be seen is how Qohelet-Solomon describes his wisdom and wealth using the Solomonic material which reveals the lengths to which Qohelet-Solomon goes in his search for ultimate benefit.

3.2 Qohelet’s Supreme and Autonomous Wisdom

Qohelet-Solomon’s self-characterization of his wisdom is that it is unrivalled, but also that it cannot deliver the absolute meaning he set out to find. Qohelet’s self-professed greatness saturates his quest. He claims that his wisdom is great and surpasses all before him in Jerusalem (1:16). Such wisdom appears to be needed as his quest was to search out everything under heaven, the totality of human life.⁶⁴ There is an intensity to Qohelet’s search. He gives himself over “to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly.”⁶⁵ Now he continues to dedicate himself to an extreme intellectual pursuit, adding to his intellectual capacity madness and folly in addition to wisdom and knowledge.⁶⁶ Thus, Qohelet-Solomon’s self-understanding of his wisdom is that it cannot be outdone by anyone (2:12).

Qohelet-Solomon’s claim of surpassing all before him in wisdom resonates with YHWH’s promise to Solomon that he would gift Solomon with unsurpassed wisdom in the 1 Kings narrative, where he was given wisdom by YHWH and was promised that his wisdom would be greater than anyone before or after him (1 Kgs 3:7–12; 5:9–11; 10:7, 23). However, Qohelet-Solomon’s wisdom is stressed by its empirical nature rather than it being as a gift of YHWH. Fox writes:

⁶³ Brown, *Wisdom’s Wonder*, 144.

⁶⁴ Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 133, argues that Qohelet’s investigation is concerned with the human sphere and not metaphysical meaning. Brown, *Ecclesiastes*, 29, suggests that Qohelet seeks to know “all worldly phenomena” that include both creation and human nature.

⁶⁵ The above translation follows the versions (LXX, Syr, Tg, and Vg). These versions understand the one infinitive (לדעת) governing the four nouns.

⁶⁶ Brown, *Ecclesiastes*, 31, argues these four terms represent polar opposites and the terms are being used as merisms to include everything in the middle. Qohelet characterizes himself as someone after the totality of intellectual conduct.

Qohelet has a clearly conceived methodology. It is grounded in individual experience. He seeks experience, observes it, judges it, then reports his perceptions or reactions. He employs experience in argumentation, referring to what he has 'seen' as evidence for the validity of his conclusions. This methodology may be termed empirical, insofar as it seeks to infer knowledge from individual experience.⁶⁷

In other words, there is an essential difference between Qohelet-Solomon's wisdom and Solomon's wisdom in the presentation of how it was acquired. Qohelet-Solomon stresses that his wisdom was obtained through an examination of knowledge (five times in Eccl 1:16–18) and madness and folly (1:17; 2:12); it was not an endowment from God as in 1 Kgs 3:7–12 but came through his own search. As Longman notes: "He does not appeal to revelation or any kind of special insight into God or the world, even though the task that he has undertaken is divinely mandated (1:13)."⁶⁸ Qohelet-Solomon's autonomy can be seen in his own declaration that he became great surpassing over those before him in Jerusalem. Qohelet's use of the phrase *אני הנה* is revealing. In the majority of the uses of this phrase in the Hebrew Bible the speaker is YHWH.⁶⁹ This might suggest that Qohelet-Solomon's understanding of his independent acquisition of wisdom is in contrast to the endowment of wisdom that came to Solomon from YHWH.

But the result of Qohelet-Solomon's great wisdom was only that it revealed that which it cannot yield to him. It revealed the frustration that God has given a grievous task to humanity; life is filled with painful experiences ordained by God. God has created the world in such a way that Qohelet-Solomon cannot fully comprehend (1:14–15). Even though he has discovered that wisdom does have a relative gain over folly, the fact that the wise and the fool both die means that he will be forgotten, just as the fool will be (2:15–17). Thus, whatever benefits there are to wisdom over foolishness, they are short lived and they do not exempt the wise from death (2:14). The wise will be forgotten just like the fool, thus being wise or foolish changes nothing lasting. Qohelet-

⁶⁷ Michael V. Fox, "Wisdom in Qoheleth," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 121. See also Michael V. Fox, "Qohelet's Epistemology," *HUCA* 58, (1987), 137.

⁶⁸ Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 81.

⁶⁹ In this collocation, YHWH is the speaker eleven times (Gen 6:17; 9:9; 17:4; Exod 14:17; 31:6; Num 3:12; 18:6, 8; Jer 1:18; 26:14; 40:10). Jeremiah uses this phrase in surrendering himself to religious officials (Jer 26:14) and Gedaliah the son of Ahikam uses the phrase in his declaration to be a representative to Babylon (Jer 40:10).

Solomon's experience is that to increase in wisdom and knowledge only increases his vexation and sorrow (1:18). Thus, as the supremely wise king this means that his experience of vexation and sorrow is felt more acutely than anyone else.

3.3 Qohelet's Supreme and Autonomous Pleasure

It is commonly understood among interpreters that Qohelet's adoption of Solomon is used in order to persuade the audience that if someone like Solomon could not find lasting gain with every imaginable resource, then neither could they.⁷⁰ But by examining Qohelet-Solomon's accomplishments in comparison to Solomon's accomplishments in the historical narratives and those same actions in light of the wider canon it is revealed that Qohelet-Solomon exalts his own status by attributing to himself what were normally understood to be blessings from God. Indeed, Fox suggests that Qohelet-Solomon's list reads similarly to God's favour to Abraham and Solomon: "Compare Abraham's holdings in slaves, livestock, and gold, which showed that he was a man of substance, prospering under God's favor (Gen. 12:5; 13:2). Likewise, Solomon's vast projects and possessions were the fruit of his wisdom and God's favor (I Kgs 3:13)."⁷¹ I would add that Qohelet-Solomon seeks to find benefit in this life by enacting descriptions that are typical indications of God's blessings. But for Qohelet-Solomon these accomplishments are stressed as his own achievements. It is Qohelet-Solomon's attempts at finding gain independent of God that lead to his frustration.⁷²

3.3.1 Qohelet-Solomon's Boast

Qohelet-Solomon's autonomous status is stressed by his self-understanding of his accomplishments. According to the king, they were of such magnificence that they could not be replicated. Qohelet-Solomon's boastful pride is saturated in the listing of his achievements; as Qohelet-Solomon's wisdom is unrivalled, so are his accomplishments. He claims that his works were great (Eccl 2:4) and that he "became great and surpassed all who were before [him] in Jerusalem" (2:9; cf., 1:16; 2:7). The king was unrestrained in doing anything that he desired (2:10) and his declara-

⁷⁰ See note 4.

⁷¹ Michael V. Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, JPSBC, (Philadelphia: JPS, 2004), 13.

⁷² Whybray, *Ecclesiastes*, 52.

tion that he made his works great (הגדלתי) (2:4, 9) is similar to the usage of the *hiphil* of גדל to demonstrate god-like behaviour (1 Sam 12:24; Ps 126:2–3; Jer 48:26, 42; Ezek 35:13).⁷³ Furthermore, Qohelet-Solomon's claim that he "surpassed all who were before [him] in Jerusalem" also demonstrates the way that Qohelet-Solomon has attributed superiority to himself. While Qohelet-Solomon does not actually say *what* he is better than everyone else at, the implication is *everything*.⁷⁴

Qohelet-Solomon's boast of his greatness resembles the descriptions of Solomon's greatness in the 1 Kings narrative. Solomon's uniqueness among other kings before him and after him is a sign of God's blessing. But Qohelet-Solomon depicts his accomplishments as his own doing rather than being a result of God's blessing to Solomon. God's blessing is stressed in the provision of these riches which strikes a different chord to the autonomy in Ecclesiastes. Qohelet-Solomon's boast of amassing more wisdom (in Eccl 1:16) and wealth (in 2:7, 9) than those before him has been interpreted differently by scholars. If Solomon is only the second of Israel's kings to rule from Jerusalem, boasting of amassing more than anyone before him in Jerusalem is not much of a boast. E.H. Plumptre argues that Qohelet is comparing himself with Melchizedek and Jebusite kings who reigned prior to Israel's occupation of the land.⁷⁵ Daniel C. Fredericks suggests that because Qohelet does not limit this comparison to just kings, he is referring to anyone who was a leader before him, such as elders, wise men, and prophets.⁷⁶ Others see this as simply a point in which Qohelet lets his Solomonic mask slip slightly.⁷⁷ Whybray argues: "It is unlikely that Qohelet was thinking of Canaanite kings of Jerusalem who had reigned in pre-Israelite times. Probably this is just a slip: Qohelet was thinking of the many kings who had reigned in Jerusalem in the period of

⁷³ Iain W. Provan, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*, NIVAC, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 72; Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, 66.

⁷⁴ Naoto Kamano, *Cosmology and Character: Qoheleth's Pedagogy from a Rhetorical-Critical Perspective*, BZAW 312, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 67.

⁷⁵ E. H. Plumptre, *Ecclesiastes or The Preacher. With Notes and Introduction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1881), 111.

⁷⁶ Daniel C. Fredericks and Daniel J. Estes, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, ApOTC, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 83.

⁷⁷ Carolyn Sharp, "Ironic Representation, Authorial Voice, and Meaning in Qohelet," *BibInt* 12, (2004), 51, sees this as a means of the ironic presentation of Qohelet-Solomon: "In fact, he has done 'more than all the kings who were before' him in Jerusalem (2:9). Ah—more than all one of them (or all two of them, if one allows Saul into the lineage, construing 'in Jerusalem' more loosely)?" But she overreads at this point by not considering this echoes the historical narratives.

the kingdom of Judah, and had temporarily forgotten that Solomon came very early in the list.”⁷⁸ But Seow and Koh argue that these types of boastful comparisons with predecessors are stock phrases in both West-Semitic and Assyrian royal inscriptions.⁷⁹ Though I believe that Seow and Koh have correctly shown that these can be stock phrases, I would like to go further and suggest that they are similar to the descriptions of Solomon in the historical narratives. In 1 Kings 3:12–13, YHWH’s gift to Solomon is a wise and discerning heart that will be “like none before him or after him.” YHWH also gives to him riches and honour so that “no other kings will compare to him” all of his days (1 Kgs 5:9–10; 10:23).

The historical narratives present Solomon surpassing kings before him (and after him) as the fulfilment of God’s promise to bless Solomon in ways that would make him incomparable. Thus, Solomon’s uniqueness among other kings is a sign of YHWH’s blessing. Qohelet-Solomon’s claim to have surpassed those before him echoes activities that were the result of God’s favour in the Solomon narratives. Yet, Qohelet-Solomon’s focus is on his own achievements that were accomplished independently from Israel’s God.

3.3.2 *Qohelet-Solomon’s Achievements*

In addition to Qohelet-Solomon’s general boast of his superiority, his recounting of his accomplishments resembles aspects of Solomon’s own actions in the historical narratives and those of other kings in the ancient Near East.⁸⁰ In these accomplishments, Qohelet-Solomon stresses that he attributes to himself items that were signs of YHWH’s blessing to Solomon and to Israel’s faithfulness to Deuteronomic law. Whereas many of these elements were primarily viewed as a blessing from YHWH in Solomon’s reign, Qohelet-Solomon’s understanding of these elements is that they were accomplished by and for himself. There is a striking self-centredness in Qohelet’s recounting of his accomplishments in his pursuit of pleasure. Qohelet repeatedly states that in his pursuit for meaning in life through pleasure he emphasises that these actions were done by and for him (Eccl

⁷⁸ Whybray, *Ecclesiastes*, 51. Similarly Provan, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*, 73. Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 83–84.

⁷⁹ See discussions in Seow, “Qohelet’s Autobiography,” 281; Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 124; Koh, *Royal Autobiography*.

⁸⁰ Indeed, Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 17, writes that 2:4–11 “are freely modelled on the Solomonic tradition.”

2:4, 5, 6, 7 (twice), 8 (twice). Fox writes: “This emphasis on ‘myself’ exposes a sort of consumerism, an obsessive striving to fill an undefined but gnawing spiritual need by material goods. This attempt is, of course, hopeless (6:7).”⁸¹ Qohelet-Solomon, thus, found that even excelling in pleasurable activities was not straightforward. His pursuit of pleasure ends in frustration because he is attributing to himself and for himself what would have normally been seen as blessings of YHWH.

Qohelet-Solomon boasts of building houses, planting vineyards, making gardens and parks, planting fruit trees, and making pools to irrigate these trees (2:4–6). The building of houses strongly resonates with the Solomon narrative that recounts Solomon’s building of the temple, his palace, and other buildings (1 Kgs 6–9; 2 Chr 8:1–6).⁸² Qohelet’s planting of vineyards, gardens, and parks along with fruit trees and pools of water for irrigation do not feature in the Kings account, but their mention is an opportunity for the author to elaborate poetically upon Solomon’s great knowledge of plants, trees, and other vegetation, as indicated in 1 Kings 5:9–10. In the 1 Kings account, Solomon’s ability to build is principally dependent upon the wisdom granted to him by YHWH that made a treaty with Hiram for building supplies possible (1 Kgs 5:26). Similarly, the queen of Sheba contributes the glory of Solomon’s house to YHWH’s blessing (10:9). Likewise, Solomon’s immense knowledge of the created order is attributed as a gift from YHWH (5:9). But for Qohelet-Solomon, these accomplishments are attributed to himself and are only to benefit himself. The lack of any mention of God in Qohelet’s accomplishments and his attributing them to himself stresses Qohelet’s intentional independence from God.

Further, Qohelet-Solomon’s boast of purchasing male and female slaves and their children (Eccl 2:6) recalls Solomon’s slaves used in his building projects (1 Kgs 9:20–22). Qohelet-Solomon’s acquisition of livestock, silver, and gold further evokes Solomon’s wealth and status as king.⁸³ The recounting of Solomon’s livestock in the 1 Kings narrative was framed in order to high-

⁸¹ Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 13.

⁸² Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 18.

⁸³ Qohelet-Solomon’s boast to have acquired **שְׂדֵה וְשָׂדוֹת** is a notable crux in Ecclesiastes. The LXX translated the phrase **οἰνοχόον καὶ οἰνοχόας** “male and female cupbearers” from the Aramaic **שָׂדָה** “to pour out”. The Vulgate, Targum, and Aquila translate as “goblet”. The phrase is in apposition to **וְתַעֲנוּגַת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם** “and the delights of the sons of men.” Thus, many understand the phrase to refer to women. It is argued that the phrase is either related to **שָׂדָה** “to seize” and refers to women seized from battle or **שָׂדֶה** “breast” and is a crude reference to women by synecdoche. However, **בְּנֵי הָאָדָם** “sons of men” in Ecclesiastes refers to universal humanity making it doubtful that it has an erotic tone. For full discussion see Schoors, *Ecclesiast-*

light it as a blessing from YHWH (4:22–23), with the livestock supplying the palace with food (5:3) and also to provide a great number of sacrifices (8:5). Qohelet-Solomon's boast of silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces resembles Solomon's amassing of wealth in the form of gold and silver which comes through the form of taxations and tribute from other kings (1 Kgs 4:7–19; 10:14–21/2 and 2 Chr 9:13–28) and likewise was understood as a sign of God's blessing (10:23).

3.3.3 *Qohelet-Solomon and Re-Creation*

Some scholars have further suggested that Qohelet-Solomon's actions of building houses and gardens are intended to reverberate with God's own work in the creation of Eden. For instance, Arian Verheij argues that terms such as garden, plants, and fruit trees all resonate with the garden of Eden story: "Taken separately these words are not remarkable: for the most part they are indeed very common in Biblical Hebrew. It is their combined occurrence here and in Genesis that establishes a firm link between the texts."⁸⁴ In Qohelet-Solomon's listing of his achievements, he plants (נטע), as God planted (נטע) (Gen 2:8); makes gardens (גן), as God planted a garden (גן) (Gen 2:8–10; 15–16); plants fruit trees of all kinds (עץ כל פרי), just as the fruit trees that God created are prominent in Eden עץ פרי עשה פרי (1:12; cf. 1:29; 2:9, 16); and makes pools of water for irrigation (להשקות), just as the garden of Eden is watered by rivers (להשקות) (2:10). Lastly, Verheij observes that the verb עשה is used frequently in both texts. Thus, it is argued that Qohelet's works resonate with God's creation of the garden. But in contrast with God's enduring creative power, Qohelet's achievements were ultimately transient just as all human life is transient. It is through this contrast that we begin to understand his inability to find ultimate "benefit"

es, 162–165.

⁸⁴ Arian Verheij, "Paradise Retried: On Qohelet 2.4–6," *JSOT* 50, (1991), 114. For textual resonances shared between Genesis 1–11 and Ecclesiastes see C. C. Forman, "Kohleth's Use of Genesis," *JSS* 5, (1960), 256–263; W. H. U. Anderson, "The Curse of Work in Qoheleth: An Exposé of Genesis 3:17–19 in Ecclesiastes," *EvQ* 70, (1970), 99–113. Russell L. Meek, "The Meaning of הבל in Qohelet: An Intertextual Suggestion," in *The Words of the Wise are Like Goats: Engaging Qohelet in the 21st Century*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Cristian Rata, G., (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 241–256. Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, 66. But see the word of caution from Katharine J. Dell, "Exploring Intertextual Links between Ecclesiastes and Genesis 1–11," in *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually*, ed. Katharine J. Dell and Will Kynes, LHBOTS 587 (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014).

through building projects undertaken by his own means.

These resonances pointed out by scholars between Qohelet-Solomon's and God's creation of Eden helpfully highlight Qohelet-Solomon's intentional search for lasting benefit by his own efforts. Thus, Russell Meek suggests that this contrast could highlight the transient nature of Qohelet's accomplishments, and the allusion to the garden of Eden is to contrast human effort with lasting value.⁸⁵ But I would like to suggest that Qohelet-Solomon's actions have an equally strong connection with the Deuteronomic blessing for obedience to the Deuteronomic law, particularly as expressed by Israel's prophets. Thus, by attributing to himself promises of blessing, Qohelet-Solomon's actions intentionally seek to set his accomplishments against the promises of blessing for faithfulness.

3.3.4 Qohelet-Solomon and Other Canonical Resonances

In the Deuteronomic law, building houses and planting vineyards are a sign of God's blessing for faithfulness to the law. Embedded within YHWH's larger promises to bless Israel for covenantal faithfulness is his promise to bless Israel with living in cities and houses and the enjoyment of cisterns, vineyards, and olive trees (Deut 6:10–12; cf., 28:8) if they keep the commands and teach them to their children (6:4–9; cf., 28:1). But the promise of blessing also contains a warning of cursing. Israel's "forgetfulness" will lead to Israel being removed from their houses and to not enjoying the fruits of the vineyard: "A man will build a house but never live in it, and a man will plant a vineyard but not taste its fruit" (6:12; cf., 28:30–31). These promises of blessing and cursing, thus, enshrine what the prophets often convey in their messages.

In the prophets, notably in so-called Trito-Isaiah, Amos, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, this theme of building and planting is taken up as a threat that disobedience will lead to the forfeiture of their homes and land and as a sign of promise for restoration. Though these prophets arise from different time periods, and the direction of possible influence is still debated, their use of this theme is clear.⁸⁶ The prophet Amos threatens famine, drought, and the destruction of Israel's vine-

⁸⁵ Meek, "Meaning," 248.

⁸⁶ On the dating of so-called Trito-Isaiah see the survey in Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 19B, (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 54–66. For a survey of the date of Ezekiel see Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of*

yards because Israel did not repent and return to God (Amos 4:6) and castigates the rich for their expensive homes and vineyards (5:10-11). Ultimately, though, the promises of God will lead to a return to the promised land where they will rebuild and replant: “They shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit” (11:14). Similarly, Zephaniah threatens that Judah’s houses shall not be inhabited and their vineyards shall not result in wine-drinking (Zeph 1:13), and Jeremiah talks of this in the context of exile in Babylon (29:5) although he sees ultimate hope lying in the replanting that will occur in Israel’s own land (Jer 30:18; 31:5). Other prophets, such as so-called Trito-Isaiah, include the building of houses and vineyards in the vision of a future time when the earth will be renewed. In Trito-Isaiah: “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit” (Isa 65:21). Ezekiel has a similar vision for the exiles of rebuilding in the land—“they shall build houses and plant vineyards” (Ezek 28:26). In the prophetic hope, God grants the ability to rebuild and replant to his people after exile. Qohelet-Solomon’s activities of building and planting resonate as signs of God’s favour in the same way. But his depiction of these achievements stresses that these were accomplished independently of God and done explicitly for himself.

3.4 Qohelet’s Readjustment

Qohelet-Solomon closes his reflections as king with the first of five *carpe diem* passages in Ecclesiastes (Eccl 2:24–26; the others being 3:12, 22; 8:15; cf., 5:18 [17]).⁸⁷ In this reflection, Qohelet-Solomon readjusts his belief in terms of what type of benefit is achievable in his life under the sun because he recognized that his wisdom and wealth were unable to secure his legacy or status. He had possessed supreme wisdom and wealth, more than anyone else, but found that they could not profit him because his wisdom would not save him from dying a death like the fool and will equally be forgotten (2:12–17). Furthermore, Qohelet-Solomon concludes that he is unable to control

Ezekiel, VTSup 76, (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1999), 27–38. On the date of Jeremiah see Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986). Jack L. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 21A, (New York: Doubleday, 1999). On the date of Zephaniah see the discussion in James Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 217, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 178–80.

⁸⁷ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 26, notes Qohelet-Solomon’s recommendation of eating and drinking is not a recommendation for hedonism but is closely identified with the good life.

how his impressive accomplishments will be used by his successors (2:18–23). Qohelet-Solomon has spent much energy and wisdom toiling away, but who knows how his achievements will be used in the future?

Having found that the pursuit of wisdom and wealth cannot provide ultimate profit, Qohelet-Solomon is forced to conclude that the best thing for humanity is to eat, drink, and find enjoyment from labour, but these gifts must be received from God (2:24). Scholars debate about how Qohelet-Solomon's recommendation of what is best for humanity (2:24–26) relates to his previous reflections. The central issue is whether in 2:24–26 Qohelet is providing a message of genuine joy for his readers or is just resigning himself in frustration.⁸⁸ For Whybray and Ogden, these verses are a response to the struggle that Qohelet has had from the beginning of his quest in 1:12. These verses positively portray Qohelet as he recommends to his listeners that they should find joy that comes from the labour which is a gift from God.⁸⁹ Conversely, Crenshaw understands this as a last effort to find some type of enjoyment from the absurdity of life.⁹⁰

Contrary to Crenshaw, Qohelet-Solomon is authentically offering the best path to finding enjoyment. His recommendation to eat, drink, and find enjoyment in toil is a recommendation toward, “the good life,” as Murphy notes.⁹¹ This recommendation is based upon his own experience that his labour gave him enjoyment (2:10). Qohelet-Solomon's reward was the pleasure he found in the work itself (2:10) before discarding it as not being the “ultimate” gain for which he was looking. It was only in asking for his labour to intrinsically yield what it cannot that Qohelet experienced the frustration of his experience. But I do agree with Murphy that there is a sense of res-

⁸⁸ Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 150, suggests that 2:24–26 is an alternative response to the frustration that Qohelet-Solomon experienced in his exploration to find benefit in wisdom and pleasure. According to Bartholomew, this alternative response affirms the character-consequence of Proverbs 1–9, but is not reconcilable with Qohelet-Solomon's epistemological approach. But this suggestion does not take into account that Qohelet-Solomon states that his recommendation in 2:24 is based upon what he observed (רִאיוֹן), not tradition.

⁸⁹ Graham S. Ogden, “Qoheleth's Use of the ‘Nothing Is Better’-Form,” *JBL* 98, (1979c), 339–350; R. N. Whybray, “Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy,” *JSOT* 23, (1982), 87–98. Ogden argues that the formula אֵין טוֹב is also used in 3:12, 22; 8:15. The context is about enjoying happiness in fleeting moments.

⁹⁰ Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 88; Longman III, *Ecclesiastes*, 107. Also, J. A. Loader, *Ecclesiastes*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 41–42, argues that this is the only indulgence to a meaningless life. It is the last act one does when nothing matters.

⁹¹ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 26.

ignation in Qohelet-Solomon.⁹² Without the guarantee of making enduring influence, Qohelet-Solomon will have to settle for finding profit in the toil itself. It is only through his quest that has led him to this answer. Qohelet-Solomon may be recommending the joy found in toil, but it also may be an enigma because his own attempts to find lasting benefit have failed. Qohelet-Solomon discovers his limitations when it comes to finding gain in life “under the sun.”

4. Summary

In summary, this chapter has contributed to the characterization of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes by evaluating recent counter-arguments to the understanding that Solomon has been adopted into a royal fiction and has found these counter-arguments to be unpersuasive. This chapter has also contributed to the understanding of the characterization of Solomon in Ecclesiastes by attending to allusions in 1 Kings 1–11. Qohelet-Solomon’s royal autobiography demonstrates a significant message, when examined in light of the Solomon narrative in 1 Kings. Qohelet, through the adoption of a Solomonic persona, is painting a Solomon-like portrait that is not exactly correlating in every detail but rather extends beyond the Solomon narrative to give an imaginative retelling of a figure of great wealth and power. No doubt, adopting a Solomonic persona allowed Qohelet to search for benefit in life that only a Solomonic perspective could grant.

But one of the more significant findings is the way in which the allusions to the historical narratives and to the wider canon are highlighted, and we find that the accomplishments in those contexts are the result of God’s gracious benevolence. Indeed, Qohelet-Solomon’s self-characterization is as a king who has purposefully directed his efforts at finding benefit as an autonomous searcher frequently attributing his accomplishments to himself rather than as gifts from God. Though in the royal autobiography Qohelet-Solomon attributes his acquisitions only to himself, at the end of his kingly drama he is forced to recognize that even a king with as much wisdom and wealth as himself must be satisfied with the limitations that God places upon all humanity. Thus, Whybray may be correct that the failure of Qohelet-Solomon in finding meaning is a result of his intentional autonomy and therefore life will continue to be *hebel* and full of paradoxes.⁹³

⁹² Ibid., 27.

⁹³ Whybray, *Ecclesiastes*, 52.

The characterization of Solomon in the royal fiction is a unique contribution to the figure of Solomon in the texts under discussion in this thesis. In the royal fiction, common themes found throughout the biblical materials centred on Solomon are refashioned into a means for boasting by Qohelet-Solomon. The wisdom and wealth of Solomon that are so prominent in the narrative traditions and in Proverbs have been adapted as a means of self-indulgent boasting on the part of Qohelet-Solomon as he attributes to himself his wisdom and wealth which are elsewhere clearly gifts of God. Thus, Solomon's characterization in the book of Ecclesiastes demonstrates that an imaginative recasting of a figure like Solomon can serve a pedagogical purpose as a means of teaching succeeding generations.

THE KINGLY LOVER: THE CHARACTERIZATION OF SOLOMON IN THE SONG OF SONGS

The Song of Songs is the last of the wisdom and poetic books to analyze for Solomon's characterization and the last of the biblical books under discussion in this thesis. The pattern of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes was to adapt Solomon in diverse ways that served the messages of those books by drawing upon certain aspects of his reputation. This same pattern is found in the book of Song of Songs, which includes the mention of Solomon's name in the title (1:1) as well as an additional six times in the body of the Song (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12).

1. Introduction

The role that Solomon plays in the book is an issue that continues to be debated by scholars. Fox, for one, argues that Solomon's role in the book is secondary: "Solomon is not the speaker, the subject, or the center of interest in this poem, nor is there anything in the song itself imputing authorship to him. Solomon is mentioned only incidentally, as an example or byword, or even the object of mockery."¹ However, others argue that Solomon's role in the book is to provide a setting for the Song through a kingly fiction. J. Cheryl Exum, for instance, argues that the Solomonic title leads the readers to read the Solomonic function as a backdrop to the poem, transcending time and

¹Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 95.

history:

The association with Solomon at the very beginning encourages readers to think of Solomonic attributes or Solomonic splendour when a king is mentioned or regal imagery appears. And when city walls and squares and watchmen are mentioned, do readers not tend to think of Jerusalem? Indeed, by making the connection to Solomon for us, the title lends a Solomonic aura to the very features, mentioned above, that may have led an editor to associate the book with Solomon in the first place.²

Thus according to Exum, the Solomonic title serves to set a reading strategy for the book. For her, it does not mean that these poems are about the real historical Solomon and one of his lovers, but they are types that allow anyone to identify themselves with the poetry.³ Ariel and Chana Bloch agree with this line of interpretation. Thus, they do not view Solomon as a character in the book but rather believe that he “is a central figure in the lovers’ fantasies”⁴ and that he “is a sign and a wonder.”⁵ Furthermore, they state: “Whenever the poet alludes to queens and concubines, horses and chariots, the cedars of Lebanon, gold, ivory, and spices, the reader is imaginatively invited into King Solomon’s court.”⁶ For Exum and Bloch and Bloch, the Song casts an imaginative Solomon figure.

Scholars rightly argue that a kingly fiction takes place in the Song when the male lover takes upon himself the persona of king Solomon. Katharine Dell and R.S. Clarke, in separate works, nuance this view by arguing that the kingly fiction is complicated by the portrayal of a Solomon in all his grandeur in 3:6–11 along with the possibility of a critique of Solomon as the owner of a large harem in 8:11–12.⁷ Clarke seeks to resolve this problem by arguing that in 8:11–12 there is a con-

²J. Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs*, OTL, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 90.

³*Ibid.*, 8.

⁴Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 10.

⁵*Ibid.*, 10.

⁶*Ibid.*, 10–11. See also, Roland E. Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, HCHCB, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 47, 119; R.S. Clarke, “A Canonical Interpretation of the Song of Songs” (Ph.D., Highland Theological College/ University of Aberdeen, 2014), 94; Duane A. Garrett and Paul R. House, *Song of Songs / Lamentations*, WBC, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 146; Richard S. Hess, *Song of Songs*, BCOTWP, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 39; Fredericks and Estes, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, 267; Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 5–6. Exum, *Song of Songs*, 90.

⁷Katharine J. Dell, “Does the Song of Songs have any Connections to Wisdom?,” in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs Perspektiven der Hoheliedauslegung*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn, BZAW (Berlin / New York: Wal-

trast between the lover and the historical Solomon. Thus, Clarke writes: “The romanticised ideal is a literary fiction which can be contrasted with the historical reality.”⁸ She concludes:

The male character in the Song both embodies the Solomonic ideal (Song 3:6) and is better than the Solomonic reality (Song 8:11-12). The effect of this is to give a more realistic view of Solomon himself, neither wholly wise nor wholly foolish, and also to reinforce the image of the man in the song as the true romantic ideal. He is as good as Solomon in all the ways that Solomon was good, and better than Solomon in all the ways that Solomon failed. He is a wise man, who pursues his bride, enjoys her and is committed to her exclusively. He is a king whose kingdom is at the height of its glory, crowned on the day of his wedding with wisdom and love.⁹

But Clarke’s resolution that there is a distinction between the literary Solomon and the historical Solomon creates problems in itself. First, the fact that the characters in the Song display consistent characterizations makes the distinction between a literary Solomon and an historical Solomon in the Song unlikely.¹⁰ It seems unlikely that Solomon would be used so positively in 3:6–11 as the male lover, but negatively in 8:11–12 as distinct from the male lover. Another problem that arises is that if 8:11–12 is a critique of Solomon, this critique breaks outside the poetic world of the Song. In the Song there is a poetic world that the female and male lovers inhabit as a part of their romance. In no other place in the Song do the lovers break down the walls of the poetic world to comment on the historical world. So it seems unlikely that in this one place alone the poem would comment on Solomon outside the poetry. Granted, neither of these problems rule out Clarke’s argument. But it does show that such a reading should be evaluated.

Another complicating factor to the royal fiction hypothesis highlighted by Dell is the presence of the courtly and pastoral metaphors. Is this really a kingly fiction between a Solomonic figure and his lover or is there a three-person drama between Solomon, the beloved, and the Shepherd? These complicating factors to the royal fiction idea show the need for further evaluation of Solomon’s role and characterization in the Song of Songs. My intent in this chapter is to contribute to this thesis by showing that Solomon has been adopted into a literary fiction as a means to elevate the love shared between the lovers by creating a Solomonic atmosphere of grandeur and

ter de Gruyter, 2005), 13; Clarke, “A Canonical Interpretation of the Song of Songs”, 93.

⁸ Ibid., 94. Similarly, Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 199.

⁹ Clarke, “A Canonical Interpretation of the Song of Songs”, 100–01.

¹⁰ For the consistency of characters see, for example, Fox, *Song of Songs*, 202–04.

wealth from 1 Kings 1–11. Thus, Solomon’s reputation as a lover has been utilized in order to magnify the value of human love and sexuality. But, in the Song, he has been recontextualized in a way that increases the value that lovers feel for one another and the love they share. Thus, by elevating the woman as the supreme beloved of Solomon she outdoes any potential rival. Similarly, the male lover takes on the grandeur of Israel’s great king. These features allow the reader to read the Song through the lens of this love and grandeur in order to ascribe the supreme value of exclusive love. In order to do so, I will examine how the author of the Song adopts Solomon into a literary fiction before turning to the function of this Solomonic fiction and evaluating the complicating issues of Solomon in 8:11–12 and also how Solomon relates pastoral imagery.

2. The Adoption of Solomon into a Literary Fiction

2.1 The Title and the Setting of the Song of Songs

The Song of Songs begins with the title: שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשֹׁלֹמֹה, “The Song of Songs that is Solomon’s.” It is well known that there is ambiguity of Solomon’s relationship to the book because of questions of how to understand the function of the preposition-ל on לְשֹׁלֹמֹה. The Jewish Targum of the Song understood Solomon as the author, and in Canticles Rabbah Rabbi Jonathan concluded that the Song was written during the early phase of Solomon’s life.¹¹ Many commentators maintain that לְשֹׁלֹמֹה is most naturally read as dedicating authorship to Solomon just as many of the Psalms juxtapose the *lamed* preposition with a name.¹² Understanding the title to be attributing Solomon as the author of the Song seems to be confirmed by the report of Solomon’s propensity for performing songs (1 Kgs 5:12 [4:32]). Though this report from 1 Kings does not give the reader specifics about what types of songs the king may have spoken or sung, it does support that

¹¹ The title in the Targum of Song of Songs reads: “Songs and Praises which Solomon, the prophet, the king of Israel spoke by the holy spirit from [before] the Lord of the whole world, Yahweh”. “Canticles Rabbah”, 17.

¹² E.g., F. Delitzsch, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*, trans. M. G. Easton, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 8, 111. Garrett and House, *Songs/Lamentations*, 124. Garrett understands the *lamed* to mark authorship, but this does not necessarily mean that Solomon wrote the Song himself, but he could have commissioned the Song to be written. Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 119. On the *lamed* of authorship see Wilhelm Gesenius and E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A.E. Cowley, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 421 §130.b.

Solomon had a musical reputation.

However, it is common for scholars to express doubt that Solomon had any connection with the Song due to its late composition.¹³ F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp argues that the language of the Song resembles something closer to Mishnaic Hebrew and so dates the book during the post-exilic period.¹⁴ In the Song, there is a preference for the שְׁ preposition rather than אֲשֶׁר (other than in the title). Thus, Fox and Exum argue, based upon the אֲשֶׁר in the title, that the Solomonic attribution is a late addition.¹⁵ Bloch and Bloch assert further that Solomon is connected to the Song because of the tradition in 1 Kings 5:9–14.¹⁶ The Song also appears to contain loanwords such as the Greek *phoreion* (palanquin) (Song 3:9) and the Persian *pardes* (enclosure) (4:13), in addition to possible Aramaisms.¹⁷

But it is doubtful that the title in 1:1 is intended to indicate authorship—real or pseudonymous. Rather, the title appears to be designating this song as a part of a collection.¹⁸ Iain Duguid notes that $\text{אֲשֶׁר} + \text{לְ}$ is the typical way of designating possession, as in “belonging to Solomon” (e.g., 1 Kgs 10:28).¹⁹ This observation is also supported by Peter Craigie when he notes the wide variety of uses of the *lamed* preposition in the titles in the Psalter. Though he does not rule out the possibility that the *lamed* is being used to indicate authorship, Craigie argues: “[T]he conjunction of the

¹³ Bloch and Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, 21–22.

¹⁴ F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “Late Linguistic Features in the Song of Songs,” in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn, BZAW 346 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 71. Cf., the critique from Scott B. Noegel and Gary A. Rendsburg, *Solomon’s Vineyard: Literary and Linguistic Studies in the Song of Songs*, SBL Ancient Israel and Its Literature 1, (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 52–53, who argue that the language feature of Songs resembles a northern composition rather than late language development. Similarly, Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, FAT 5, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 73–96, argues that Mishnaic Hebrew is not a late descendant of the Hebrew language, but rather a distinct dialect from Standard Biblical Hebrew.

¹⁵ Fox, *Song of Songs*, 95; Cf., Exum, *Song of Songs*, 89.

¹⁶ Bloch and Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, 21–22.

¹⁷ Fox, *Song of Songs*, 95, also argues based upon the אֲשֶׁר relative pronoun that the Solomonic attribution is a late addition. Cf., Exum, *Song of Songs*, 89.

¹⁸ Some scholars believe that the title in 1:1 may be used to link Song of Songs with the other wisdom books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. E.g., Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 573–75; Clarke, “A Canonical Interpretation of the Song of Songs”, 62; Dell, “Song of Songs”, 23–25; Iain M. Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015), 71–72; Fredericks and Estes, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, 293, 302. Hess, *Song of Songs*, 39; Edmée Kingsmill, *The Song of Songs and the Eros of God: A Study in Biblical Intertextuality*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 73–74; See also Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Subsidia Biblica 27, (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006), §130e.

preposition לְ with certain personal names (such as David, Solomon, Moses, et al.) need not, and probably does not imply authorship.”²⁰ Psalms that have a לְ preposition attached to a juxtaposed name, such as David, along with a title, such as “musical director” (e.g., Ps 11:1) do not suggest dual-authorship of these psalms but implies that these psalms were to be used by the musical director from a David collection.²¹ However, the title in 1:1 seems to be functioning in another way, beyond just designating that this Song belongs in a collection of Solomon. It is designating that this Song is “about” or “concerning” Solomon.

The לשלמה title in Psalm 72 is a helpful analogy. Here the same preposition is attached to Solomon’s name but clearly does not refer to authorship as verse 20 indicates: “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended” (Ps 72:20). John Goldingay notes that this psalm resonates with the figure of Solomon in a number of ways: 1) Psalm 72:1–2 highlights the king’s need for God to give him what he needs to rule well (cf., 1 Kgs 3:6, 9); 2) verses 7–8 describe the flourishing of the people under this king in a large territory, which echoes Israel under Solomon’s rule where people were fed and happy (cf., 1 Kgs 4:20, 24 [5:4]); 3) the psalmist describes that this king will receive tribute from the nations—notably Tarshish and Sheba (Ps 72:10–11, 15, 17; cf., 1 Kgs 5:1 [4:21]; 10:1–10, 15, 17). Due to these connections, Goldingay argues that it is more likely that the heading was added to this psalm because it resonated with Solomon rather than the psalmist beginning with a heading and then composing a psalm in response to the name of Solomon.²² Whether or not Goldingay is correct about the prehistory of this Psalm, the present form suggests that Solomon is not the author and that the reader is to envision a Solomonic figure as the king spoken about in the psalm. By analogy, the title in Song 1:1 indicates that the Song has a loose relationship with Solomon and should be understood as communicating something as “concerning Solomon” or “about Solomon.”²³ In this way the titles in Song 1:1 and Psalms 72:1 are analogous to the Ugaritic texts that use the preposition לְ which is used to speak about the main figure of the text.²⁴ Therefore, the name Solomon creates an atmosphere and a context under which the book should be

²⁰ Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, WBC 19, (Waco: Word, 1983), 34.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

²² John Goldingay, *Psalms Volume 2: Psalms 42–89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007-11-01), 383.

²³ Provan, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*, 235.

²⁴ Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 119, notes that the *lamed* preposition marks a topic Ugaritic (CUT 1.6.i 1) similarly to 1 Chronicles 24:20.

read.

2.2 A Solomonic Lover

The next question that needs to be discussed is what is Solomon's relationship to the male lover? Are the two one and the same? The minimal explicit mentions of Solomon by name, the challenging interpretation of 8:11–12, and the mention of a shepherd whom the woman loves all pose problems for identifying a Solomonic lover.

But before addressing these challenges it is important to state that I do not hold to a view that the Song is about the historical Solomon or even portrays an ideal escapade of this king. While the title in 1:1 does indeed connect the Song with Solomon, it lacks any historical situation to serve as a background against which the Song should be read, such as in Psalm 3.²⁵ The lack of any historical situation suggests that this song is not intended to be a real telling of any of Solomon's many marriages or other relationships, but rather it is intended to be an imaginative and ideal celebration of love.²⁶ Furthermore, the life of the historical Solomon also makes it doubtful that this Song is meant to be a tale of his life given how it was his marriages and relationships with many concubines that led him to idolatry. It would seem that no one figure could possibly be a worse example as a means of teaching about romantic love than Solomon. The lack of an historical situation in the title and the incongruence regarding Solomon's own romantic life implies that identifying the Song with a courtship is going in the wrong direction.

Furthermore, I would also suggest that there is an incongruity in the persona of the male lover concerning the presence of a royal harem to which he compares his beloved (Song 6:4–10) when contrasted to the lovers' exclusivity. In a song of admiration, the male lover draws upon his experience in the royal court in order to assert:

There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her. (6:8–9)

²⁵ Garrett and House, *Songs/Lamentations*, 123.

²⁶ *Contra* Victor Sasson, "King Solomon and the Dark Lady in the Song of Songs," *VT* 39, (1989), 407–14.

Bloch and Bloch note that the mention of sixty queens and eighty concubines does not correspond with the numbers found in the 1 Kings account, however, the mention of them activates the idea of Solomon's court. The essence of this imagery is that the beloved's uniqueness is unsurpassed by the many women who belong to the royal harem.²⁷ As Murphy writes: "The various classes of royal consorts mentioned in verse 8 are represented as praising the man's beloved; the point is that all women, including especially the foremost, acknowledge her superiority."²⁸

But the reality of the royal harem is out of step with the lovers' commitment to exclusivity toward one another. Significantly, this comes in the form of mutual possession.

My beloved is mine, and I am his (2:16)

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine (6:3)

I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me (7:10).

Let my beloved come to his garden (4:16)

I came to my garden, my sister, my bride (5:1)

These statements from the lovers testify to their commitment to one another. This suggests that the male lover is drawing upon a Solomonic persona in order to boast of the greatness of his lover. The incongruity shows that the male lover and the historical Solomon are not to be totally conflated, but that Solomon is meant to function as a role that the male takes upon himself in the Song. Thus, Exum is correct when she argues that the Song is "not 'about' him [i.e., the historical Solomon], and yet he casts his shadow over it."²⁹ Solomon is, therefore, a persona that the male lover takes upon himself and is attributed to him by his female lover as a part of their environment. Solomon serves as a term of endearment that the male lover can take on as a means to facilitate an atmosphere of exotic wealth and sexual longing that elevates the value the lovers ascribe to one another.

²⁷ Bloch and Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, 190. Cf., M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, AB, (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 567–68, who argues against seeing these numbers as literal numbers, but are a literary device to emphasize the number of women at court.

²⁸ Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 178.

²⁹ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 90.

2.2.1 A Royal Solomonic Lover

As noted above, one of the more important debated issues regarding the book of Songs is the identity of the male lover and his relationship to Solomon. Songs 3:6–11 is unique in that Solomon is explicitly mentioned three times by name (3:7, 9, 11) and his presence clearly dominates the poem unlike the anonymous mentions of the king elsewhere. Though the speaker of this poem is highly debated, thematically speaking, Solomon serves as the focal point.³⁰ Dell and Exum are correct, in my opinion, to suggest that by naming Solomon in this poem, it clarifies the connection between Solomon and the king in the rest of the Song.³¹ To begin, it is difficult to imagine how one would not imagine a Solomonic figure when a king is mentioned in 1:4 following from Solomon's name in the title. Additionally, Dell rightly argues that the identity of Solomon as the lover in 3:6–11 clarifies the identity of the lover elsewhere. This is supported by the revelation of the woman being called “the Shulammitte” (7:1). Though Shulammitte is not a name, it does suggest that it is a title that is drawn from the same root as Solomon (שלם),³² perhaps in the same way that the woman is called “my darling” (רעיתי) which is from the same root as “to shepherd” (רעה). These suggest that the man should be identified as a Solomonic figure. And therefore, she is Solomon's counterpart, his equal.

Identifying the kingly lover as a Solomonic lover is also suggested by observations of geographic locations mentioned in the song. The locations mentioned include Jerusalem, Carmel, Sharon, Lebanon, Engedi, Hermon, and Tirzah.³³ Clarke notes that the geographical locations scattered throughout the song suggest the largest extent of Solomon's rule.³⁴ Thus, it appears that in the description of the geography, the author of Songs is drawing upon knowledge of a large Solomonic domain as described in 1 Kings 5:1, 4, 5 [4:20, 24, 25]. Furthermore, the luxury of royalty pervades throughout the lovers' dialogue. There is mention of the king's chambers (1:4), the king's table

³⁰ See discussion in J. Cheryl Exum, “Seeing Solomon's Palanquin,” *BibInt* 11, (2003), 301–16.

³¹ Dell, “Song of Songs”, 11, argues that the wedding song links Solomon with the king previously in the Song. Similarly, Exum, *Song of Songs*, 307.

³² So Fredericks and Estes, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs*, 274–75.

³³ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed., (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 539–40 and Garrett and House, *Songs/Lamentations*, 20–21, argue that the mention of northern and southern cities without hint of schism suggests that the book be pre-schism. However, if this is an ideal setting, it seems natural for the setting to be a united Israel.

³⁴ Clarke, “A Canonical Interpretation of the Song of Songs”, 93–94.

(1:12), the guards (3:7–8), the carriage (3:9), the king's crown (3:11), a royal harem (6:8–9), a profitable vineyard (8:11), the gardens (2:12–13; 4:16–5:1; 6:2, 11), and the chariots of Pharaoh (1:9). There are also spikenard (1:12), myrrh (1:13), frankincense (3:6), silver (1:11; 3:10; 8:9, 11), gold (1:11; 3:10; 5:14), ivory (5:14; 7:4), and materials dyed purple (3:10; 7:5).³⁵ Again, it might be suggested that Solomon's narrative is drawn upon in a general way with his knowledge of nature (1 Kgs 5:13), his great wealth (9–10), and even his acquisition of exotic spices (10:2, 10).

The above suggests that the male lover and king is being characterized as a Solomonic figure. This characterization begins with the title, which sets the backdrop of the Song, and continues throughout the Song. The Solomonic title, the woman Shulammitte, the geographic locales, and the luxury experienced by the lovers makes it difficult to read this song in a way that does not have a Solomonic focus. However, challenging the view of this Solomonic lover is how the reader should understand the male lover in light of 8:11–12 and the so-called shepherd lover.

2.2.2 A Critique of Solomon?

A significant challenge to this kingly fiction is how to understand Solomon as the kingly lover in light of 8:11–12. A number of scholars have taken these verses to be used as a critique of the historical Solomon and his large harem.³⁶ The point, therefore, is that love is more valuable than monetary gain.³⁷ Verse 11 states: "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver." According to this interpretation, this verse is a subtle reference to the historical Solomon's harem (1 Kgs 11:3–10). Vineyards are used in the Song as a representation of fruitfulness (Song 1:14; 7:13 [7:12]) and of the female's

³⁵ J. M. Munro, *Spikenard and Saffron: A Study in the Poetic Language of the Song of Songs*, JSOTSup 203, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 49, remarks that the mention of such fragrances takes the reader imaginatively into the royal court or royal bedroom.

³⁶ Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 194; O. Keel, *The Song of Songs*, CC, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 281–82; Hess, *Song of Songs*, 246–47; Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 577.

³⁷ Fox, *Song of Songs*, 174. Cf., Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 199, who argues that 8:11–12 is a boasting song that is similar to 6:8–9. In 6:8–9, the woman is seen as far superior to the royal harem. Hess, *Song of Songs*, 246–47, argues that the picture is of true love in exclusive commitment; Longman III, *Song of Songs*, 219, who argues that monogamy and polygamy are contrasted; Bloch and Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, 218, argue that the point of this poem is that love is better than riches (cf., 8:7); Exum, *Song of Songs*, 260.

body (2:15).³⁸ Thus, Solomon's harem was so large that it must be entrusted to others for care.³⁹ According to this interpretation, the message of 8:11–12 is to demonstrate the value of the love shared by the male and female lovers through the contrasting picture of Solomon's large harem which he cannot care for alone against the exclusivity of the lovers.⁴⁰

The result of this interpretation is to understand a distinction between the ideal Solomon that the Song leads readers to imagine and the historical failure of Solomon. Clarke writes: "The romanticised ideal is a literary fiction which can be contrasted with the historical reality."⁴¹ However, this line of interpretation has significant difficulties itself. It is true that vineyards are used in a metaphorical way to depict the female body. But vineyards are also used in a literal way. Songs 1:5–6 transitions from speaking of a literal vineyard to a metaphorical one. The woman speaks of her brothers making her a keeper of the vineyards which caused her to neglect her own vineyard (1:6). This same transition from a literal vineyard to a metaphorical vineyard parallels the poem of 8:11–12. Furthermore, the attempt to draw a parallel between the thousand pieces of silver with Solomon's seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines does not line up as these interpreters argue. In 8:11, the woman speaks of Solomon owning a single vineyard that produces a thousand pieces of silver in revenue by the keepers of the vineyard. If this was a veiled criticism of Solomon's indiscretions we would expect the parable to report that Solomon owned a thousand vineyards. The point appears to be that Solomon's vineyard is an extremely profitable vineyard (cf., Isa 7:23). Also, a royal harem does not operate by exchanging money for access, especially in light of the knowledge that taking a king's concubine could be interpreted as a challenge to the

³⁸ Hess, *Song of Songs*, 246; Longman III, *Song of Songs*, 219.

³⁹ Baal-hamon is an unknown locale. It has been suggested that Baal-hamon may be Balamon as recorded in Judith 8:3. Provan, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*, 369–70, argues it means "husband of a multitude" and speculates that this is meant as a critique of Solomon's many wives. But it also can mean "lord of wealth" meant to describe his wealth making Provan's suggestion speculative.

⁴⁰ There is debate over whether it is the male lover or the woman speaking in 8:11–12. Bloch and Bloch, *The Song of Songs*, 218, Fox, *Song of Songs*, 174, Exum, *Song of Songs*, 260 argue that the male lover fits the context better because there is a mutual ownership of each other's bodies (4:16–5:1). However, there is no clear change in speaker or the first-person perspective from the woman in verse 10 as well as the same phrase spoken by the woman in 1:6.

⁴¹ Clarke, "A Canonical Interpretation of the Song of Songs", 94. Cf., Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 401: "On the one hand, every young man in love is a Solomon in all his glory...On the other hand, Solomon is also a foil since young lovers really do not need the trappings of glory, as Solomon did; they have each other (see 8:11–12)."

throne.⁴² This is a description of a brothel.⁴³ Instead of the often proposed critique of Solomon, the best understanding of the poem is that the woman speaks of Solomon's great prosperity. She then transitions from speaking of Solomon's vineyard to speaking of her own vineyard, which she herself owns but gives freely to him (Song 8:12). An important clue to this interpretation is the way the woman has already hinted at giving herself to Solomon. She had previously stated her readiness for love by stating that she "was a wall" and her "breasts were like towers" (8:10). The result of her readiness is that she "was in his eyes like one who has found peace" (שָׁלוֹם) (8:10). Here, the woman uses a subtle wordplay on Solomon's name that identifies the peace that she has found with her lover. Thus the one she has found שָׁלוֹם with is her שלמה, to whom she freely gives herself.

2.2.3 A *Shepherding Solomonic Lover*?

Another challenge to identifying the lover as a Solomonic persona is that there are times within the Song where the female lover refers to her lover as a "shepherd" (1:7; 6:2–3). This reference to a shepherd was taken by some interpreters to mean that the song is a three-character drama between Solomon, the female lover, and her true-love, the shepherd.⁴⁴ This rustic female lover has found herself being taken up into Solomon's royal harem, but she refuses his seductions and stays loyal to her true love, the shepherd. However, the three-person drama idea suffers from several difficulties. Most notable are the abrupt changes it requires in order for the woman to be speaking of her longing for her shepherd-lover rather than the king. For instance, Provan argues that the woman is speaking about the king in 1:12 but states that in verses 13–14 she must be speaking about her beloved shepherd lover.⁴⁵ However, there are no clear indications in the Song that we should understand that the woman is speaking about two different people.⁴⁶ Likewise, the shepherd's speech to the woman is abruptly inserted (4:8–15) following a speech that is clearly from a

⁴² See chapter 2 on Adonijah's challenge of the throne.

⁴³ Garrett and House, *Songs/Lamentations*, 262.

⁴⁴ For a recent argument for the three-person drama see P.W.T. Stoop-van Paridon, *The Song of Songs: A Philological Analysis of the Hebrew Book Šîr haššîrîm*, ANESSup 17, (Louvain: Peeters, 2005) and Provan, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*.

⁴⁵ Provan, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*, 269–70.

⁴⁶ Dell, "Song of Songs", 11, is surely correct when she notes that the same metaphor of smell is present across these verses which suggests that the same king figure is being described.

kingly figure (4:1–7).⁴⁷ The three-person dramatic interpretation is forced to arbitrarily change who is being spoken about in what appears in the same contexts. Thus, Dell is correct when she writes that to read the Song as a drama “is actually to force it unnaturally into a shape that it doesn’t naturally have”.⁴⁸

The fact that the terms king and shepherd could refer to the same referent is of course not difficult to maintain in the ancient world.⁴⁹ Israelite and other ancient Near Eastern kings were depicted as both kings and shepherds. YHWH instructed David to shepherd Israel (2 Sam 5:2) and Ezekiel’s prophecy of a Davidic king is for the king who would be a shepherd over all Israel (Ezek 37:24). Similarly, Hammurabi, king of Babylon states in the prologue to his law code: “I am Hammurabi, the shepherd, selected by the god Enlil.”⁵⁰ Similarly: “The great gods having chosen me, I am indeed the shepherd who brings peace, whose scepter is just.”⁵¹ However, the king and shepherd imagery does not have the same metaphorical use as the above examples. In the Song, the shepherd appears to be a real shepherd rather than a king who is shepherding his subjects.

More significant is that the royal and pastoral imagery blend together as a part of the poetic world of the song. The lovers appear to always mirror one another. In a court setting the male lover is a king and she is the queen. When he’s a shepherd, she is his companion as a shepherdess.⁵² Furthermore, maintaining strict metaphorical distinctions between royal and pastoral imagery cannot be maintained in the Song. Exum notes that 1:12–14 shows an example of mixing of royal and pastoral imagery. That this poem has all the signs of a royal setting is clear:⁵³ 1) the king is described at his banquet table (Song 1:12);⁵⁴ 2) ornaments of gold and silver are promised for the woman (1:10–11); and 3) the woman describes her beloved as myrrh between her breasts (1:13). Such items would only be accessible to a king.⁵⁵ Exum correctly notes that the royal descriptions

⁴⁷ Provan, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*, 318.

⁴⁸ Dell, “Song of Songs”, 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 12–13.

⁵⁰ “The Laws of Hammurabi,” trans. Martha Roth (COS 2.131:336).

⁵¹ “The Laws of Hammurabi,” COS 2.131:351.

⁵² Exum, *Song of Songs*, 143.

⁵³ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁴ **מִסָּב** probably refers to a round banquet table (HALOT 604 s.v. **מִסָּב**) or possibly a divan with cushions (BDB 687 s.v. 2 **מִסָּב**). In Mishnaic Hebrew **מִסָּב** can refer to a dining couch, banquet table, or cushions (HALOT 604). The related noun **מִסְבָּה** refers to a banqueting party (HALOT 604 s.v. **מִסְבָּה**).

⁵⁵ Dell, “Song of Songs”, 12.

transition to rural scenery as the woman compares her beloved to a “cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi” (1:14). Furthermore, the woman envisions the couple’s couch as the lush foliage⁵⁶ that is outside and the beams of their home as being made of cedar and the rafters as pine (1:16–17).⁵⁷ The imagination of the couple freely draws upon both royal and natural settings. Their love begins in the indoors of the palace but transitions to their lovemaking taking place in a natural palace that resembles a Solomonic palace.⁵⁸ Therefore, the male’s characterization as a shepherd does not contradict the fact that Solomon is a guise. Rather, it seems to draw upon Solomon’s reputation of his great wealth while also drawing upon his knowledge of the natural world.

3. The Solomonic Fiction and the Value of Love

Having shown in the previous section that the male lover in the song has assumed a Solomonic identity, I will now turn to the purpose of the adoption of the Solomonic character by the author. Fox is correct when he argues that referring to the male lover as a royal figure is a term of affection.⁵⁹ However, we must go further than this in drawing out the implications of this lover’s adoption of the Solomonic persona. If it was only about a term of affection then any royal or wealthy setting would do. Exum is indeed correct, as I have noted, that Solomon’s name in the title provides a backdrop by which to read this Song.⁶⁰ So, I would suggest that the purpose of adopting Solomon and, thus, creating an atmosphere of Solomonic grandeur and wealth is meant to be the highest magnification of the love shared between the lovers. By adopting Solomon and the Shulammite rather than a generic king and queen the lovers assume the positions of Israel’s most glorious king and his lover when it comes to power and wealth. By playing the roles of Solomon and

⁵⁶ Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible the term רעננה (“lush, verdant”) refers to either foliage or trees (Pss 37:35; 52:8; Jer 11:16; Hos 14:8).

⁵⁷ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 110.

⁵⁸ Dell, “Song of Songs”, 12. A further point noted by Dell is that the woman is also portrayed in rural and royal descriptions, and not just the male lover. The woman’s rustic portrayal is evident by the fact that she is a keeper of the vineyards, but she is also royalty as noted by her description as a queenly maiden (7:1).

⁵⁹ Fox, *Song of Songs*, 98. Fox notes that royal language is used as terms of endearment in Egyptian love poetry. For example, in “Papyrus Harris 500” the female refers to her lover as “my prince” (stanza 13) and as the “prince of my heart” (stanza 17). Furthermore, Fox comments that the female’s claim to be the mistress of the Two Lands with her lover is a claim to be the queen of Egypt (stanza 8).

⁶⁰ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 90.

the Shulammite, the male and female lovers magnify the worth of the other by role playing as Israel's grandest king and his most esteemed lover.

In light of this, Solomon represents a symbolic king who is unsurpassed in Israel. Solomon's rule was characterized as the ideal kingdom of peace. Israel's territory was at its largest under Solomon's rule in fulfillment of YHWH's promises to Abraham (1 Kgs 5:1 [4:21, 4 [4:24]]). Solomon's kingdom, prior to 1 Kings 11, is characterized by its peaceful setting. God provided rest for Israel (5:18 [4]; 8:56) and Israel experienced peace from her enemies while under Solomon's rule (5:4–5 [4:24–25], 26 [5:12]). Furthermore, the Song is saturated with the prosperity of a king, as noted above. It is filled with royal furniture, exotic spices, costly metals, and luxurious locales. No other king of Israel is described as having such wealth. Solomon's wealth surpasses all other kings in fulfillment to YHWH's promises. Solomon's wealth not only comes in the form of food from the organization of his kingdom that provided abundantly for Israel (4:7–5:8 [4:7–28]) but also resulted from the international recognition of his wisdom (5:14 [4:34]; 9:10–10:29). Though, as I have argued in chapter 3, Solomon was far from a flawless king, his reign represents the pinnacle of Israel. If one was going to role play as a king, there would be no other king with more all around prestige.

Therefore, the adoption of Solomon clearly elevates the male lover. But this section would be incomplete without noting how the female lover's attribution of the male lover as her Solomon also exalts her as his lover. The woman is of course shown to be immensely valuable to her lover through the precious metals and exotic spices that are used to describe her. Through her identity as a royal figure herself (Song 7:2 [1]),⁶¹ the Shulammite is the king's equal, who is able to captivate her king with her hair (7:6 [5]).

Equally, the style of the book, as kingly fiction, not only serves to magnify the worth of the male lover but also elevates the value of the female lover as his queen. Of course the man describes her with the same wealth and exoticness that she attributes to him. Just as her king's love was better than wine and his fragrant oils (1:2), so the woman's love is also better than wine and

⁶¹. **בת נדיב** is ambiguous on its own. It could refer to a daughter of a prince, thus of noble heritage (*HALOT* 673 s.v. **נדיב**). But it could also refer to noble moral character (e.g., Prov 17:26; Isa 32:5, 8) (*HALOT* 673–74).

her oil greater than any spice (4:10). Furthermore, the Solomonic fiction allows her to show her value to her king by comparing her to the royal harem which she surpasses in value.⁶² The king's conclusion in his comparison of the female lover to the royal harem is that: "My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her" (6:9). The symbol of Solomon thus not only allows the man to represent the peace, power, and wealth of Solomon, it also shows that his beloved is his equal and has no rival.

4. Summary

This chapter has contributed to this thesis by analyzing and evaluating how Solomon is characterized in the Song of Songs. It was shown that Solomon is adopted into a royal fiction in order to provide a broad backdrop to the setting of the Song. The Song is not grounded in any specific situation during Solomon's life, but rather it is a literary fiction—similar to what was seen in Ecclesiastes—by which the male lover becomes a Solomonic figure in order to provide a prosperous and peaceful setting and to ascribe the absolute value that the two lovers feel toward one another. The adoption of Solomon appears to draw generally from the royal atmosphere of the court in 1 Kings 1–11 as it provides the lush setting for the two lovers to express their love and admiration for one another. This chapter also contributed to the question of Solomon's role in the book by arguing for a consistent Solomonic male lover which is contrary to Clarke who argues that the Song contrasts the historical Solomon with the ideal Solomon.⁶³ On the contrary, the Solomonic lover of the Song is a favourable figure throughout the Song.

The Song of Songs has a unique contribution to the characterization of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible. In the Song, the Solomonic figure is an ideal male lover. In this way, the Song is similar to Proverbs in that it only reveals to the reader positive sides to Solomon. Thus, in spite of Solomon's sins and eventual apostasy instigated by his romantic life in 1 Kings 11, the male lover's

⁶² Exum, *Song of Songs*, 221, argues that 6:8–10 activates the Solomonic backdrop. She notes that these verses balance the royal fiction in 1:2–4, 12; 3:6–11. In 1:2–4 other women sang the praises of the king. Here, the man returns the favour. The woman is in a courtly setting and other women in the royal court praise her.

⁶³ See especially Clarke, "A Canonical Interpretation of the Song of Songs", 100–01.

adoption of the Solomon character is understood in strongly positive and idealistic terms that are intended to be a model worthy of imitation.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on the question: What is the characterization of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11, 2 Chronicles 1–9, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs in the Hebrew Bible? It has led on to the related question of Solomon's legacy arising out of the varied accounts of Solomon in the biblical material: How does Solomon who ends his reign as an apostate king also get remembered as the authoritative voice of wisdom? How does Solomon who is blessed with wisdom by YHWH become characterized as a resigned king whose wisdom fails him? How does Solomon, who is charged with breaking Deuteronomic law regarding having numerous wives and concubines, endure as a picture of the ideal lover? In order to answer these questions, a communicative framework that benefited from narrative criticism was utilized in order to understand how Solomon was characterized in each book. This interpretive framework was an important aspect to the analysis of Solomon because it views texts as acts of interpersonal communication. Therefore, such an approach focuses on the integrity of each book on its own terms and treats each book as having a distinctive and valuable voice to contribute toward understanding the character of Solomon. In order to understand fully the depiction of Solomon in each book, I sought to read each book on its own terms as far as possible without seeking to silence the voice of the book under discussion or by combining those characterizations. This does not mean that a book's allusions to other books should not be pursued, only that attending to these allusions should be approached to illuminate the message of the individual book.

The findings of this thesis are that in spite of employment of significant themes around Solomon—wisdom, wealth, temple, love—the use of these themes is distinct from book to book. Thus, this thesis reveals that the figure of Solomon is malleable in the Hebrew Bible, used as a resource for various ends in the literature. His legacy is a mixed or ambiguous one that recounts the glory, wisdom, folly, and re-imaginings of Israel's second king. The findings of this thesis are that

Solomon's superlative wisdom, knowledge, wealth, and reign has created an enduring memory of Solomon. Especially seen in the poetic and wisdom books, Solomon's reputation sparks imaginative retellings and adaptations within the Hebrew Bible that continue to stay relevant for readers.

1. Thesis Findings

1.1 1 Kings 1–11

Solomon's mixed legacy is found in the first narrative examined in this thesis, the narrative of 1 Kings 1–11, in chapter 3. In this chapter I showed how the narrative depicts Solomon as a complex figure, and it was shown that he has been portrayed paradoxically through the use and misuse of his wisdom. This finding is distinguished from past research by arguing that the narrative does not divide the presentation of Solomon as wholly positive in chapters 3–10 and wholly negative in chapter 11. Neither does this finding support the overly negative readings where Solomon is critiqued throughout his reign. On the contrary, I have shown that throughout the narrative there is a tension with how Solomon could apply his wisdom. It was shown that Solomon used his wisdom in numerous positive ways so as to promote justice in Israel, to construct Israel's temple as a centralized place of worship to offer sacrifices to YHWH, and to bring prosperity to all Israel through his administration. But Solomon also used his wisdom in more questionable ways, as in the removal of his enemies, the breaking of Deuteronomic kingship laws in regards to the acquisition of many foreign wives and concubines that turn his heart from YHWH, the accumulation of horses from Egypt, and the accumulation of wealth that appears to benefit only the royal court to the neglect of Israel at large. Based on these findings, this chapter contributed a reading of 1 Kings 1–11 that shows a Solomon who is a thoroughly contradictory character: one who receives great blessing from YHWH and who uses this blessing to both benefit the nation and, at the same time, himself in a way that is contrary to a king who is to live under YHWH's divine rule.

1.2 2 Chronicles 1–9

The ambiguous nature of Solomon's characterization can also be found in the narrative of Solomon's reign in 2 Chronicles 1–9, but not to the extent found in 1 Kings 1–11. This chapter

contributed by showing that Solomon's faults were not omitted as a part of some cover up in order to pass off Solomon as a perfect king. On the contrary, his sins were presupposed by the readers and knowledge of these sins is actually required in order to make coherent the revolt against Rehoboam (2 Chr 10). Yet in spite of knowledge of Solomon's misdeeds, the Chronicler refigures Solomon as an ideal king who is worthy of imitation. Thus, in this chapter, I asserted that "model" is a better term than ideal or perfect for how the Chronicler characterized Solomon. Solomon has been refigured as a model of cultic fidelity through the completion of the temple that David began and blessings from YHWH are the result of this fidelity. It could be suggested that these two contradictory realities go towards encouraging the readers of Chronicles by describing that YHWH's blessing will come about through cultic fidelity, as it did for Solomon, and that YHWH's grace is still operative to someone who has sinned like Solomon. Thus, chapter 4 has demonstrated that even with the reality of Solomon's misdeeds, the Chronicler has reframed Solomon's actions in order to demonstrate the workings of God's grace.

1.3 Proverbs

In an analysis of Solomon in the book of Proverbs, it was shown that Solomon was characterized as Israel's authoritative, wise king through the function of the title in 1:1 in relation to the various other titles found within the book. The investigation on Solomon's presentation contributed to the current discussions on Solomon in Proverbs by drawing out the notion that Proverbs draws upon Solomon as a source of authority. Chapter five, therefore, built upon this assertion by expanding upon the function of 1:1 in relation to the other titles found within the book and by contributing to the way that Solomon's authority is portrayed through a hierarchy of relationships, where Solomon's wisdom is portrayed as being passed along from an anonymous father to his son. The other titles that name individuals are subsumed under the name of Solomon through 1:1 functioning as a title to the entire book of Proverbs rather than just as a title to Proverbs 1–9. This was supported by observations that the book of Proverbs contains inclusios around the book and the observation that the introduction in 1:2–7 states that the goal of the book of Proverbs applies to the whole book rather than to only chapters 1–9. Additionally it was shown that Solomon's depiction as Israel's authoritative, wise king also came through the literary fiction portrayed in chapters 1–9 where an Israelite father is passing along Solomonic wisdom to his son, serving as a mouthpiece of

Solomon's wisdom.

The distinctive contribution of Proverbs is the shallow positive depiction of Solomon. The basis of Solomon's authoritative wisdom is built off of Solomon's reputation for receiving superlative wisdom from YHWH. Even though Solomon's reputation for wisdom serves as the basis for the authority of wisdom in Proverbs, there is no sense that portraying Solomon in this way is intended to be ironic or subversive. However, it is easy to see how this depiction could be ironic. Solomon was blessed with remarkable wisdom, but he ends his life as an idolatrous and apostate king. It is therefore not inconceivable to question whether Solomon is a legitimate authority. Despite that, there is no hint that there is any of this type of questioning. On the contrary, the book of Proverbs uniquely raises up Solomon and his wisdom as the path "to receive instruction in wise dealing, in brightness, justice, and equity" (Prov 1:3).

1.4 Ecclesiastes

In the second of the wisdom books analyzed, the book of Ecclesiastes, I showed that Solomon was adopted into a royal fiction by the unknown figure of Qohelet. Qohelet-Solomon self-characterized himself as having autonomous grandeur and wisdom. This portrayal served as a way to critique the use of autonomous wealth and wisdom as a way of achieving ultimate gain in a world that God has made enigmatic. This suggestion contributes to discussions regarding Solomon's characterization in the book of Ecclesiastes by building on previous arguments that Solomon has been adopted into a royal fiction that, in the end, subverts the expectations of Qohelet-Solomon's boasts of his superlative wisdom and pleasure. This chapter, therefore, expanded upon these observations by considering how Qohelet-Solomon characterized his wisdom and accomplishments in comparison to Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11. This comparison reveals a further layer in Qohelet-Solomon's portrayal by attributing his wisdom and wealth to himself and for himself rather than as the benevolent gifts of God, as they were in 1 Kings 1–11. This finding was further supported by considering how Qohelet-Solomon's accomplishments resonate with the theme of building houses and planting vineyards as a sign of YHWH's blessing of obedience. In contrast, Qohelet-Solomon attributed these accomplishments to himself, independent of YHWH, and revealed his struggle for finding any type of lasting benefit in a world that is full of enigmas.

The distinctive voice of Ecclesiastes contributes to the characterization of Solomon by drawing upon the themes of Solomon's wisdom and wealth, but has refigured them in an imaginative retelling of Solomon's reign where his wisdom and wealth are not the result of a benevolent gift of God but are the independent accomplishments of a great king. Qohelet-Solomon's wisdom and wealth are through his own efforts, but this characterization only serves to demonstrate how inadequate these gifts are in an unpredictable world. Thus, the promises of Solomon's wisdom in Proverbs cannot be guaranteed when God's ways in the world cannot be known. Wisdom and accomplishments may have limited value in this life, such as Solomon found in his reign as described in 1 Kings 1–11 and 2 Chronicles 1–9. In the end they are of limited value because they cannot ensure any lasting benefit.

1.5 Song of Songs

Lastly, this thesis showed that in the Song of Songs the figure of Solomon was characterized as an ideal lover through adopting Solomon into a literary fiction, where an anonymous male lover assumes the persona of Solomon as a means to enhance the affections experienced by each lover in their romance. Solomon and his royal court, thus, serve as a setting of immense wealth and luxury and serve as a channel by which the female lover finds her lover to be like Israel's grandest king. In addition, the Solomonic characterization also serves to elevate the female lover as the grandest of all women as none in the royal court can compare to her.

The reading offered in this chapter built upon other studies that view Solomon's role in the Song through the lens of a literary fiction. I elaborated on these findings by clarifying two issues of the Solomonic fiction: the so-called critique of Solomon in Song 8:11–12 and the shepherd metaphors found in the Song. This chapter showed that far from Song 8:11–12 serving to critique Solomon, the woman lover uses the vineyard imagery to describe her Solomon's vast wealth but also to state that she is giving to him the full rewards of her own body. Additionally, this chapter helped clarify that the shepherding metaphors do not signal the presence of a shepherd-lover in distinction from a Solomon lover. On the contrary, it was shown that the royal and pastoral imageries are integrated parts of the Song's setting that draw together the rich tapestry of the royal setting along with the lushness of the created order.

The distinct contribution of this chapter regarding the characterization of Solomon in the Song is the elaboration of Solomon as lover. Of course, Solomon's romantic life is legendary both in scope and also in consequence (1 Kgs 11:1–8; Neh 13:26). It is precisely Solomon's love of his wives and concubines that supersedes his love of YHWH and turns his heart to the idols of surrounding nations. Perhaps surprisingly, there is no hint that Solomon's romantic life had any effect upon the Song. Rather, it is only the grandness of Solomon that has been drawn upon. The figure of Solomon creates a luxurious setting that only Israel's most prosperous king could provide. Additionally, the magnificence associated with Solomon's kingdom sets an immensely high standard in order to show the absolute value and worth the lovers feel toward one another.

1.6 Summary

In summary, I have analyzed the diverse characterizations of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11, 2 Chronicles 1–9, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs in the Hebrew Bible on account of my fascination with the perplexing preservation of memories of a king so famed for his wisdom but yet so famed for his folly. The findings of this thesis suggest that the authors of the books examined had no difficulty preserving a mixed reputation for Solomon. Though it cannot totally be proven, this thesis suggests that the authors' presentations drew upon certain aspects of Solomon without the uneasy feeling that other characterizations of Solomon might detract from their own depiction of him. For instance, 2 Chronicles 1–9 presupposes that Solomon's mistreatment of his subjects led to the revolt under his son, Rehoboam, but at the same time has no difficulty offering Solomon as an example of cultic fidelity to its readers. The book of Proverbs imputes Solomonic authority to the book through the function of the title in 1:1 as a title over the entirety of the book and through the literary fiction of an Israelite father passing along wisdom to his son. Through the book of Proverbs, Solomon's authority is nowhere diminished by Solomon's apostasy. Qohelet's assuming a Solomonic persona is frustrated by the failure of his wisdom, even though Solomon's wisdom in the historical traditions and Proverbs lead to such prosperity in Israel. Likewise, the male lover's adoption of a Solomonic figure is employed as a celebration of the lovers's affections for one another in the Song of Songs, but has no trouble of this characterization being overshadowed by Solomon's own sexual sins.

2. Implications

This thesis has implications for how to understand Solomon in the individual books that were studied. It has brought out the need for greater nuance and clarity of Solomon's characterization in the individual books of the Hebrew Bible. In the narratives of 1 Kings 1–11 and 2 Chronicles 1–9 there was a need to re-evaluate many of the scholarly understandings of the figure of Solomon. The application of narrative readings to 1 Kings 1–11 has been beneficial to understanding the subtle means by which Solomon is characterized correcting overly positive readings of Solomon's reign. However, it was also necessary to re-evaluate these narrative readings because they produced overly-negative judgments of Solomon that were not as persuasive when evaluated. The evaluation of Solomon's character in 2 Chronicles 1–9 was also in need of nuancing as the dominant view sees the presentation of Solomon's reign in this narrative as an apologetic for the king. This view does not take into account how the gap in 2 Chronicles 10 regarding the prophecy of Ahijah and Solomon's oppressive workforce is filled by 1 Kings 11. Furthermore, there is need for greater exploration of the elaboration of Solomon as a figure in the wisdom and poetic books. This thesis has shown that there is more to draw out and appreciate from Solomon in these books. For instance, in Proverbs, the scholarly conviction of Solomon's authority is supported by noting the function of the title in relation to the whole book as well as with the dynamic of a father passing along Solomonic wisdom to his son. In Ecclesiastes, the Solomonic characterization, which is frequently alluded to, has more implications when the claims of Qohelet-Solomon are analyzed in relation to Solomon in 1 Kings 1–11 showing that there is greater depth to what he is claiming for himself. In the Song of Songs, it was shown that Solomon has a greater presence in the book than is normally considered. Solomon, thus, is integral to the imagery and poetry of the Song as he establishes the setting of the Song as well as his figure enhancing the value of the love shared between the lovers.

Secondly, the varying characterization of Solomon explored in this thesis has implications for how to understand characterizations of one person in multiple books in the Hebrew Bible. Though the books studied here share overlapping themes about Solomon, such as his kingship, wisdom, wealth, cultic reputation, and love life, these themes are developed and used in distinct ways. The

findings of this thesis support Torijano's claim that there are different judgements about Solomon.⁶⁴ I, however, have brought greater clarity to Torijano's understanding of Solomon in the individual books of the Hebrew Bible which impacts the degree to which Solomon has attracted positive and negative evaluations. If one had a view that the Hebrew Bible must speak with a single voice, one may feel pressure to try and harmonize or flatten the character studied.⁶⁵ Concerning Solomon, it was noted how these different portraits were often reconciled by assigning them to specific periods in Solomon's life. However, retaining different characterizations of Solomon within the Hebrew Bible without seeking to place the writings of these books within a biography of Solomon proves a better route and should encourage readers to appreciate the diversity of presentations by considering the integrity of each book.

In addition, the presence of differing depictions of Solomon in the Hebrew Bible shows that certain features of characters can be elaborated upon without them being concealed by other features. For instance, the presence of Solomon's faults in 2 Chronicles 10 do not obscure the fact that he is at the same time offered as a model of faithful piety. Likewise, Proverbs can appeal to Solomon as an authority for its wisdom, but need not be overshadowed by his own life being out of step with such wisdom. Ecclesiastes can present a Solomon-like figure whose wisdom and wealth ultimately fail him. Or, the Song of Songs that adopts Solomon as a representation of the ideal lover, even if his own reputation for love has such a disastrous end. These examples show that Solomon is indeed a most complex figure, but the elaborations put forward about him do not fear that their portrayal of him will be in anyway obscured or seen as ironic.⁶⁶ On the contrary, there appears to be an overall canonical confidence that the attributes elaborated about Solomon will be taken at face value without being overshadowed by contradictory attributes and portrayals.

3. Future Research

Based on the results of this thesis, further lines of research could be addressed. The primary area that future research could build upon this thesis is to examine Solomon's characterization in

⁶⁴ Torijano, *Esoteric King*, 25.

⁶⁵ Barton, "Unity and Diversity in the Biblical Canon", 53–62, describes that those who find diversity a problem may delete, reconcile, or seek a higher unity.

⁶⁶ *Contra* Brueggemann, *Solomon*, xii–xiii.

Psalms 72 and 127 and Nehemiah 13:26, passages which were omitted from full consideration in this thesis due to their fragmentary nature and constraints of space. An analysis of these texts would fruitfully contribute to the variety of perspectives already examined in this project. Psalm 72, for instance, is a prayer for a future Davidic king who will judge and protect the poor as well as bless the surrounding nations. Much of this Psalm resonates with the narrative of Solomon's reign in 1 Kings 1–11 but contains no hint of the faults of Solomon. Also, Psalm 127 is connected with Solomon through the theme of the building of the temple and focuses on the acknowledgement that without the action of YHWH, humanity toils in vain. These somewhat positive and idyllic presentations of Solomon are contrasted with Nehemiah's description of Solomon's responsibility for the division of Israel due to his marriages with women from the surrounding nations. This suggests that Solomon's paradoxical nature is affirmed in the texts left to examine.

A second area where further research could build upon this thesis is the potential for diachronic questions of Solomon's evaluation as an historical figure. In my work I have taken a more synchronic approach to the narratives and other works as a whole. A diachronic study may be able to identify whether certain historical conditions might have influenced how Solomon was assessed. These historical conditions might be related to a certain time in Israel's history. Or geographical location, such as regions in Israel, Judah, or exile, might help provide a context for certain assessments to be more dominant. Furthermore, different types of communities may provide adequate contexts for understanding the distinctions more clearly: does an elite community regard Solomon in a certain way in contrast to that of the agricultural worker? It is likely that a diachronic approach would have to consider that these factors influence judgements about Solomon's legacy more likely than others.

A third area of research that could build upon the findings of this thesis could be an intertextual examination of these Solomonic texts. My own study has sought to hear each book in its own integrity for how it uniquely contributes to the characterization of Solomon. Some scholars may be interested in taking these findings and exploring the intertextual resonances of different voices on particular themes. The various semantic resonances of wisdom in 1 Kings 1–11 may be compared to the use of wisdom in Proverbs or Ecclesiastes.⁶⁷ Similarly, Solomon's reputation for great

⁶⁷ See an upcoming example in Will Kynes, "Wisdom Defined through Narrative and Intertextual Net-

wealth might be explored in relationship to the many references to how Proverbs uses the theme of wealth as a part of its own message of evaluating wisdom. Furthermore, Solomon's condemnation of having many foreign wives and concubines might be fruitfully explored in relationship to the messages of Proverbs and the Song of Songs that exhort the need for exclusivity of love. Any of these explorations are bound to produce interesting results due to the dynamics between the texts of a single figure of Solomon while presenting different points of view on these themes.

A final area of further examination might be the "afterlife" of Solomon outside the canon, as Brueggemann has explored.⁶⁸ King Solomon is an enduring figure that has an abiding and fascinating memory in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Solomon's reputation as a prophet and exorcist in these traditions may appear to be far from his reputation in the Hebrew Bible as Israel's wisest king, and it is. But yet, in the Hebrew Bible Solomon is a dynamic figure that spurs fresh interpretations.

In this thesis, I have shown that Solomon is a figure who can be moulded and morphed in fresh ways according to the interests of an author. Thus, he is a king beyond a single characterization or reputation. In fact, he is paradoxically a king that is remembered for his wisdom and grand accomplishments as king, but displays elements of weakness and folly. Scholarship that wants to highlight one or another element of Solomon's character in a single book misses the ambiguity and malleability of Solomon as a character when considered from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible. Solomon has generated a variety of elaborations and ensures that he has not one single legacy, but many.

work: 1 Kings 1–11 and Proverbs," in *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, ed. Katharine J. Dell and Will Kynes, LHBOTS (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming 2018).

⁶⁸ Brueggemann, *Solomon*, 225–44.

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