RECONSIDERING THE ROLE OF DECEPTION IN SOLOMON'S ASCENT TO THE THRONE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. *Defining deception.* The study of deception in the Bible has become increasingly popular in recent years.[1] Simply defined, "to deceive" means intentionally to cause someone to believe something one knows to be false. Deception is thus distinct from, though related to, lying. "To lie" means to communicate intentionally and explicitly that something is true when one believes it to be false.[2] Therefore a person may deceive someone by means of a lie, by less overt means such as ambiguous statements or actions, or even by a true statement. To illustrate deception by true and false statements, philosopher Thomas Carson gives the hypothetical example of trying to sell a car that routinely overheats.[3] One the one hand, if a poten-

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[1] Recent treatments of this subject include Michael James Williams, *Deception in Genesis: An Investigation into the Morality of a Unique Biblical Phenomenon* (Studies in Biblical Literature 32; New York: Peter Lang, 2001); idem, "Lies, Lies, I Tell You! The Deceptions of Genesis," *Calvin Theological Journal* 43 (2008) 9–20; Yael Shemesh, "Lies By Prophets and Other Lies in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 29 (2002) 81–95; Peter J. Williams, "Lying Spirits Sent by God? The Case of Micaiah's Prophecy," in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture* (ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 58–66; R. W. L. Moberly, "Does God Lie to His Prophets? The Story of Micaiah ben Imlah as a Test Case," *HTR* 96 (2003) 1–23; Gregory H. Harris, "Does God Deceive? The 'Deluding Influence' of Second Thessalonians 2:11," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 16 (2005) 73–93; Daniel I. Block, "What Has Delphi to do with Samaria? Ambiguity and Delusion in Israelite Prophecy," in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard* (ed. Piotr Bienkowski, Christopher Mee, and Elizabeth Slater; London: T&T Clark, 2005) 189–216; Ken Esau, "Divine Deception in the Exodus Event?" *Direction* 34 (2006) 4–17; Joe E. Barnhart, "Acknowledged Fabrications in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1–2: Clues to the Wider Story's Composition," *Scandinavian Journal of the OT* 20 (2006) 231–36; Dean Andrew Nicholas, *The Trickster Revisited: Deception as a Motif in the Pentateuch* (Studies in Biblical Literature 117; New York: Peter Lang, 2009); John E. Anderson, "Jacob, Laban, and a Divine Trickster? The Covenantal Framework of God's Deception in the Theology of the Jacob Cycle," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 36 (2009) 3–23; idem, *Jacob and the Divine Trickster: A Theology of Deception and YHWH's Fidelity to the Ancestral Promise in the Jacob Cycle* (Siphrut 5; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Ezekiel 14: 'I, the Lord, Have Deceived That Prophet': Divine Deception, Inception, and Communicative Action," in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives* (ed. R. Michael Allen; London: T&T Clark, 2011) 73–98; Matthew Newkirk, *Just Deceivers: An Exploration of the Motif of Deception in the Books of Samuel* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, forthcoming).

[2] The verbs in these two definitions are significantly different. For a person to be deceived, the belief they acquire must actually be false, and therefore the deceiver must *know* that it is false. For a person to lie, however, the content of their assertion may either be true or false; they need only *believe* that it is false and assert that it is true to be considered a liar. See the discussions of James Edwin Mahon, "A Definition of Deceiving," *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 21 (2007) 190; Don Fallis, "What is Lying?" *Journal of Philosophy* 106 (2009) 33.

[3] The following example is drawn from Thomas L. Carson, "Lying, Deception, and Related Concepts," in *The Philosophy of Deception* (ed. Clancy Martin; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 154.

tial buyer asks whether or not the car overheats and the seller says, "No," the seller has lied. On the other hand, if asked about the car overheating and the seller responds, "I drove this car across the Mojave Desert on a very hot day and had no problems," he would be making a true statement (if in fact he had once done so). In both cases, however, if the buyer concludes falsely that the car does not routinely overheat, the seller has deceived him.

Inversely, one may lie, yet fail to deceive by making a false statement that does not successfully convince one's audience. For example, if I were to tell my neighbor that I can bench-press four hundred pounds, I would be lying. Yet if my neighbor does not believe my lie (and he probably would not!), I would not have succeeded in deceiving him. For these reasons, deception and lying should be distinguished from each other. To state it in terms of speech act theory: deception is classified as a perlocutionary act, while lying falls under the illocutionary category of assertion.[4]

2. *The question of deception in 1 Kings 1*. While the Bible is replete with examples of people engaging in deception, perhaps one of the most surprising instances where many see this phenomenon is during the first transition of royal leadership in Israel. In 1 Kings 1, David, who had received YHWH's covenant promise of an everlasting dynasty, passed his rule over Israel to his son Solomon. According to the prevalent interpretation, however, David named Solomon king only because Nathan and Bathsheba deceived him into believing falsely that he had sworn an oath that Solomon would succeed him.[5] According to this view, David never swore this oath, and therefore Solomon's ascent to the throne was simply the ignoble result of the duplicity of Israel's queen and YHWH's prophet. For example, David Gunn states that in this passage "we are witnessing an act of deliberate deception,

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[4] For further discussion of the nature and significance of deception, see Mahon, "A Definition of Deceiving" 181–94.

[5] See, e.g., John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 85; David M. Gunn, "David and the Gift of the Kingdom," *Sem* 3 (1975) 31; Harry Hagan, "Deception as Motif and Theme in 2 Sm 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2," *Bib* 60 (1979) 302; Sean E. McEvenue, "The Basis of Empire: A Study of the Succession Narrative," *Ex Auditu 2* (1986) 40; David Marcus, "David the Deceiver and David the Dupe," *Prooftexts* 6 (1986) 166; Tomoo Ishida, "Adonijah the Son of Haggith and his Supporters: An Inquiry into Problems about History and Historiography," in *The Future of Biblical Studies: The Hebrew Scriptures* (ed. Richard Elliot Friedman and H. G. M. Williamson; Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1987) 175; Raymond-Jean Frontain, "The Trickster Tricked: Strategies of Deception and Survival in the David Narrative," in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text* (ed. Vincent L. Tollers and John Maier; Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1990) 188; Gwilym H. Jones, *The Nathan Narratives* (JSOTSup 80; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 51; Ora Horn Prouser, "The Phenomenology of the Lie in Biblical Narrative" (Ph.D. diss., The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1991) 105–8; Steven L. McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 178; Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 396–97; Michael S. Moore, "Bathsheba's Silence (1 Kings 1:11–31)," in *Inspired Speech: Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (ed. John Kaltner and Louis Stulman; JSOTSup 378; London: T&T Clark, 2004) 342; Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007) 56; John Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) 333; John A. Davies, "'Discerning Between Good and Evil': Solomon as a New Adam in 1 Kings," *WTJ* 73 (2011) 44 (although he seems to express some uncertainty on p. 51).

an ingenious ploy by the Solomonic party."[6] Raymond Frontain concludes that "the narrative is at pains to emphasize the role of human duplicity in the selection of David's successor."[7] Gwilym Jones states that "we are dealing with a devious attempt to intervene in what was an expected pattern of succession."[8] And according to John Van Seters, "The manipulation of the old man is quite pathetic."[9]

But what are the implications of such an interpretation? Historically, many have viewed 1 Kings 1 as a form of court apologetic defending the legitimacy of Solomon's reign.[10] On this reading, however, it makes little sense for the implied author of Kings to portray Solomon's kingship as founded upon lies and stratagems, since that hardly serves to validate him as David's successor. To resolve this, Steven McKenzie argues that although the historical David was deceived into naming Solomon king, the biblical writer has attempted to obscure this embarrassing fact in order to serve his apologetic purposes. According to McKenzie, the astute interpreter can read between the lines here and perceive what actually happened.[11] However, such a position implies not only that Nathan and Bathsheba are deceptive but that the biblical text is as well.

Others have argued that rather than seeking to defend Solomon, the opening chapters of 1 Kings present him in a less-than-favorable light.[12] While this may be true, if Nathan and Bathsheba tricked David into naming Solomon king and thereby subverted Adonijah's rightful succession, this would not negatively characterize Solomon personally as much as portray Solomon's kingship itself negatively.[13] Yet while Solomon's actions as king certainly receive critique in the narrative, a negative depiction of his status as king would be at odds with the presentation of his succession in Chronicles. According to the Chronicler, before Solomon was born, YHWH said of him, "He will be my son and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever" (1 Chr 22:10, NIV).[14] Here YHWH himself affirms Solomon as David's successor, and thus to posit a negative depiction of Solomon's succession in 1 Kings 1 would be incongruent with its portrayal in Chronicles. Although the literary goals of the Chronicler differed from those of the writer of Kings, leading the Chronicler to be selective and only include

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[6] Gunn, "David and the Gift of the Kingdom" 31.

[7] Frontain, "Trickster Tricked" 188.

[8] Jones, *Nathan Narratives* 51.

[9] Van Seters, *Biblical Saga* 333.

[10] E.g., P. Kyle McCarter, "'Plots, True or False': The Succession Narrative as Court Apologetic," *Int* 35 (1981) 361; Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2001) 167; McKenzie, *King David* 178; Halpern, *David's Secret Demons* 392–97; Eric A. Seibert, *Subversive Scribes and the Solomonic Narrative: A Rereading of 1 Kings 1–11* (Library of Hebrew Bible/OT Studies 436; New York: T&T Clark, 2006) 122.

[11] McKenzie, *King David* 178.

[12] E.g., Jerome T. Walsh, "The Characterization of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–5," *CBQ* 57 (1995) 471–93; Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Critique Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 114 (1995) 607–22.

[13] Thus leading to Marvin Sweeney's conclusion that "Solomon came to the throne improperly" (*I & II Kings* 48).

[14] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

positive information about David and Solomon, these positive data must be considered when forming a biblical-theological view of Solomon's ascent. Therefore, whether one views 1 Kings 1 as a Solomonic apology or critique, a succession by deception in this chapter creates hermeneutical difficulties.

The purpose of this article is to reconsider this prevalent view that Nathan and Bathsheba deceived David into naming Solomon king. To do this, this article will proceed in three parts. First, I will briefly summarize the episode as found in 1 Kings 1. Second, I will consider the arguments advanced by scholars that David was deceived into naming Solomon king and seek to show that they are unpersuasive. Third, I will provide positive argumentation against deception in this passage by highlighting evidence in the text suggesting that Adonijah is depicted as seditious and that Solomon is depicted as the rightful heir to the throne.

II. SUMMARIZING THE EPISODE

First Kings 1:1–4 describes David as old and sexually impotent, which in the ancient world was perceived to make a king unfit to rule.[15] Therefore Adonijah "exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king'" (v. 5a, ESV). He gathered chariots, horses, and runners, conferred with Joab and Abiathar, and organized a sacrificial feast to which he invited all the king's sons except Solomon (vv. 5b–10). Believing that if Adonijah were crowned king it would bring harm to Solomon and Bathsheba, Nathan advised Bathsheba to save their lives by notifying David of Adonijah's actions and reminding him of an oath he swore that Solomon would succeed him (vv. 11–14). When Bathsheba informed David of these things, Nathan entered and confirmed her word (vv. 15–27), so David swore an oath in YHWH's name that Solomon would sit on the throne of Israel after him (vv. 28–30).

III. ARGUMENTS FOR DECEPTION

1. *Two primary arguments.* Two arguments are generally adduced that Nathan and Bathsheba deceived David and that David never swore this oath that Solomon would succeed him. The first is that 2 Samuel records no such oath, which for many casts doubt on its existence. The second is that the author of 1 Kings 1 allegedly depicts David as senile and easily manipulated, which makes plausible the view that he was duped. Related to the first argument, in discussing unrecorded events in biblical narrative, Meir Sternberg writes,

> With the understandable exception of prophetic messages, it rarely happens that the utterance of a forecast or the occurrence of an event emerges only from a later scene of report. So much so that when the reader finds the natural order subverted, he is entitled to take it as a question mark about the reliability of the report or the reporting character.[16]

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[15] Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox, 1987) 16.

[16] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985) 379.

For this reason, some view the absence of the oath in 2 Samuel as evidence that Nathan and Bathsheba's report of it in 1 Kings 1 is a fraud.[17] However, although such a subversion of the natural narratological order may lead one to question the reliability of the report, to conclude that the oath never occurred solely on this basis is to commit the fallacy of the negative proof.[18] Ultimately, our conclusion regarding the veracity of Nathan and Bathsheba's report must cohere with the other data in 1 Kings 1. Since it is plausible that David would have believed he swore an oath that never occurred only if he was mentally senile, it follows that the force of argument 1 (no oath is recorded in 2 Samuel) is contingent upon the validity of argument 2 (David is depicted as senile).[19] Therefore, in moving forward, I will first analyze the validity of the argument that David is depicted as senile in 1 Kings 1. If this argument can be shown to be untenable, the fact that 2 Samuel records no succession oath may not be used to impugn the veracity of Nathan and Bathsheba's claim.

2. *The depiction of David.* Some interpreters who conclude that Nathan and Bathsheba deceived David simply assume that David was senile in this passage.[20] Others infer that because David was old he was likely "forgetful."[21] However, the context of 1 Kings 1–2 does not support these views. In 1:28–35 David is portrayed as very alert in giving specific directions for how Solomon should be crowned king.[22] Moreover, on his deathbed address to Solomon, David gave him a clear, Deuteronomic exhortation to faithfulness (2:2–4; cf. Deut 8:11; 11:1; 30:16), recalled specific actions of those who had done him both wrong (Joab and Shimei) and right (the sons of Barzillai), and instructed him on how to deal with them (2:5–9).[23] Aside from these two speeches, David's only other reported speech in 1 Kings 1–2 is his question to Bathsheba when she entered to speak with him—"What do you want?" (1:16)—which provides no evidence of mental decline. Thus David's direct discourse in these chapters does not support the view that he was senile or forgetful. On the contrary, David's reported speech shows that he had lucid memories of the past and clear directives for the present.

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[17] See, e.g., McKenzie, *King David* 178; Halpern, *David's Secret Demons* 396; Keith Bodner, *David Observed: A King in the Eyes of His Court* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008) 144.

[18] See the helpful discussion in David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) 47.

[19] Jones, who views Nathan and Bathsheba as deceptive, also acknowledges this: "[Nathan's] plot depended entirely on the king in his senility accepting Bathsheba's word" (*Nathan Narratives* 53).

[20] E.g., Marcus, "David the Deceiver" 166; Ishida, "Adonijah the Son of Haggith" 176; Nelson, *First and Second Kings* 20; Jones, *Nathan Narratives* 46; McKenzie, *King David* 178.

[21] E.g., Halpern, *David's Secret Demons* 397.

[22] Regarding these verses Jerome Walsh writes, "These evidences of David's mental alertness further complicate the unresolved issue of the genuineness of the oath. There are reasons to consider it a fabrication intended to dupe a dotard king. … Yet, if it was a fabrication, it is unlikely that it would have succeeded, for a dotard this David plainly is not" (*1 Kings* [Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996] 25).

[23] So also notes Seibert, *Subversive Scribes* 127–28.

Marvin Sweeney argues that Bathsheba's audience with David in verse 15 "re-iterates that the king is very old (cf. v. 1), which establishes that the king is depend-ent upon others and that he can be manipulated."[24] However, the text does not associate David's old age with him being manipulated; rather, David's old age is associated with him "not knowing." By a circumstantial clause, verse 1 emphasizes David's old age (והמלך דוד זקן) and his inability to keep warm. In verse 4a, another circumstantial clause highlights Abishag's beauty and mentions that she "served" (שרת) David. These three elements of the exposition—David's old age, Abishag, and her "service"—are then followed in verse 4b by a disjunctive clause emphasiz-ing David's sexual impotence: "But the king did not know her (והמלך לא ידעה)." The only other place where David's old age, Abishag, or her "service" are men-tioned again is Bathsheba's audience with David: "So Bathsheba went to the king in the room. Now the king was very old (והמלך זקן מאד), and Abishag the Shunam-mite was serving the king (ואבישג השונמית משרת את־המלך)" (v. 15). With two more circumstantial clauses the narrator recalls all three elements of the exposition. Significantly, in the ensuing conversation between David and Bathsheba, the theme of David "not knowing" also reappears. However, whereas in the exposition these three elements were associated with David "not knowing" Abishag, in this later scene Bathsheba informed David that Adonijah had become king and added, "And now, my lord the king, *you do not know* (לא ידעת)" (v. 18). Therefore, both scenes that mention David's old age, Abishag, and her "service" also emphasize David "not knowing." The first concerns his sexual impotence, and the second concerns not his poor memory or easy manipulability but his political ignorance. Jan Fokkelman similarly notes that the reiteration of ידע "pairs his sexual impotence with a general powerlessness—the loss of his grip on political reality."[25] However, that David was politically ignorant and unaware of current events does not mean that he was forgetful of past events or easily manipulated, as his direct discourse in these chapters attests.

In his work on death narratives in the OT, Bryan Cribb writes: "This claim that David had made a pledge to his younger son may be fabricated, but even if it is not, David is portrayed as a weak figure. Either he is easily manipulated (if the claim is false), or he is senile and forgetful (if the claim is true)."[26] However, while it is clear that David was weak, it does not follow that if the oath was true that David was senile and forgetful. If David had sworn that Solomon would be king but was ignorant of Adonijah's self-advancement to the throne, it is not unreasonable that Bathsheba would recall the past oath in order to move David to act against the current situation. Moreover, when Nathan entered to confirm Bathsheba's words in

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[24] Sweeney, *I & II Kings* 56.

[25] Jan Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, vol. 1: *King David (II Sam. 9–20 & I Kings 1–2)* (SSN 20; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981) 350. See also Walsh, *I Kings* 13; Rober Alter, *The David Story* (New York: Norton, 1999) 366; Bryan Howard Cribb, *Speaking on the Brink of Sheol: Form and Message of OT Death Stories* (Gorgias Dissertations 43; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009) 266 n. 819.

[26] Cribb, *Speaking on the Brink of Sheol* 265.

verses 24–27, it is most significant that he never mentioned the oath but only confirmed that Adonijah was celebrating his kingship.[27] This reveals that what Nathan and Bathsheba conspired to convince David of was not the existence of the past oath but the current political crisis—Adonijah's seditious actions.[28] This agrees with the conclusion above that narratologically the problem depicted with David was his political ignorance rather than failed memory.

In objection to this, Alice Bach states, "One would assume that if Bathsheba had been given assurance of her son's ascendancy to the throne, she would not have needed Nathan to encourage her to remind the king of his promise."[29] However, Nathan's advice to Bathsheba consisted not simply of suggesting that she recall the oath but also planning for how he would enter and confirm her words (v. 14b). Since Nathan did not confer with Adonijah (v. 8) and thus was not invited to his sacrificial feast (v. 10), which inevitably put him in danger if Adonijah were to gain power, it is not unreasonable that he would take the initiative and encourage Bathsheba to remind David of a promise made to her son. Moreover, since David historically had not opposed Adonijah by questioning his actions (v. 6), it is understandable that Nathan would employ as much rhetorical force as possible to convince him that Adonijah was overstepping his place and needed to be opposed. This effort to maximize persuasiveness and orchestrate their testimony does not logically or necessarily lead to the conclusion that Nathan and Bathsheba were being untruthful.

For these reasons, the claim that the narrative presents David as mentally senile or forgetful is not persuasive. Rather, David is depicted as having clear memories of the past, even though he was ignorant of current events. Since this argument is not persuasive, and because the force of Argument 1 (no oath is recorded in 2 Samuel) depends upon the validity of Argument 2 (David is depicted as senile), we must conclude that neither of the main arguments offered for seeing deception in this passage are convincing.

IV. ARGUMENTS AGAINST DECEPTION

Having considered the primary arguments in favor of viewing Nathan and Bathsheba as deceptive, I will now provide three arguments against the view that David was deceived here. These include the characterization of Adonijah as a pretender to the throne, the portrayal of Solomon as the rightful heir to the throne,

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[27] Contra Halpern, who says, "No such promise is recorded, but Nathan all the same offered to confirm that the commitment had been made" (*David's Secret Demons* 392–93).

[28] Therefore David Gunn is incorrect to conclude that Nathan's orchestration of his and Bathsheba's arrivals to speak with David indicates that "the claim [that David swore the oath] is to be seen as fabricated for the occasion" ("David and the Gift of the Kingdom" 30–31). This also addresses K. L. Noll's objection that if Nathan and Bathsheba were aware of a past oath, their "charade of 1 Kings 1 would have been unnecessary" (*The Faces of David* [JSOTSup 242; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997] 69). On the contrary, their "charade" was to convince David of what Adonijah was doing, not what David himself had done.

[29] Alice Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 144.

and the witness of the book of Chronicles concerning David's knowledge of Solomon as his successor.

1. *The characterization of Adonijah.* Several elements in the text suggest that Adonijah is characterized as seditious and therefore attempting to usurp the throne. First, the narrator's use of the reflexive verb מתנשא to describe Adonijah "exalting himself" (v. 5aα) suggests a presumptuous and self-aggrandizing character.[30] Second, Adonijah's statement, "*I* will be king" (אני אמלך, v. 5aβ), uses the emphatic subject pronoun, which stresses his volition and further characterizes him as pretentious.[31] Tomoo Ishida maintains that Adonijah was not seditious in this passage and asserts that this statement in verse 5aβ must have originally included a temporal phrase—"I will be king *after the demise of my father.*" Ishida claims that this temporal phrase "was omitted to give the reader the false impression that Adonijah had attempted to attain the throne without David's consent."[32] Ishida's reconstruction is without textual foundation, however, and actually supports the view that by this statement the text as it stands depicts Adonijah as seditious.

Third, Adonijah is depicted as a second Absalom, and thus like Absalom is characterized as rebellious. After nominating himself for kingship, Adonijah "prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him" (v. 5b, ESV). This description recalls Absalom's similar action at the beginning of his rebellion in 2 Sam 15:1 and portrays Adonijah as similarly rebellious.[33] The narrator reinforces this connection with Absalom explicitly in verse 6b: "He [Adonijah] was also very handsome and was born after Absalom." Furthermore, in describing Adonijah's chariots and horses, instead of using the terms that described Absalom's seditious company in 2 Sam 15:1 (מרכבה וססים), the narrator of Kings uses רכב ופרשים (1 Kgs 1:5b), which elsewhere in 1 Kings refer only to Solomon's chariotry and cavalry (9:19, 22; 10:26). As Ishida observes, this change suggests that not only is Adonijah depicted as a second Absalom, but also that he had "made the decisive step toward a rebellion by gathering a military force."[34] Despite this association with Solomon's military force, Ishida still views Adonijah's company as "a ceremonial troop or procession but not a rebel army," claiming that the Solomonic historiographer adjusted the vocabulary to "mislead the reader" into viewing Adonijah as rebellious.[35] Here again, despite his conclusion to the contrary, Ishida's observation supports the argument that the text as it stands portrays Adonijah as seditious. In addition, whether or not Adonijah's sacrificial gathering should be understood as a

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[30] So also Stefan Seiler, *Die Geschichte von der Thronfolge Davids (2 Sam 9–20; 1 Kön 1–2)* (BZAW 267; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998) 49; Cogan, *1 Kings* 157; Sweeney, *I & II Kings* 54; Seibert, *Subversive Scribes* 117.

[31] So also Joachim Conrad, "Der Gegenstand und die Intention der Geschichte von der Thronfolge Davids," *TLZ* 108 (1983) 166; Sweeney, *I & II Kings* 54; contra Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings* (WBC 12; Waco, TX: Word, 1985) 13.

[32] Ishida, "Adonijah the Son of Haggith" 172.

[33] McCarter, "Plots, True or False" 365; Fokkelman, *King David* 348–49; Halpern, *David's Secret Demons* 392; Nelson, *First and Second Kings* 19; Sweeney, *I & II Kings* 54.

[34] Ishida, "Adonijah the Son of Haggith" 173; see also Cogan, *I Kings* 157.

[35] Ishida, "Adonijah the Son of Haggith" 172–73.

coronation feast,[36] because of the many other parallels to Absalom's revolt it is best viewed as analogous to Absalom's sacrificial gathering, about which the narrator says, "while offering the sacrificial animals the *conspiracy* gathered strength" (2 Sam 15:12).[37]

2. *The portrayal of Solomon.* Having considered the characterization of Adonijah, we now turn to highlight several hints in the text that Solomon is depicted as the rightful king.[38] First, Solomon alone of David's sons was not invited to Adonijah's feast at En Rogel (vv. 1:9b–10). Many attribute this exclusion to two rival factions existing in the court—one Hebronite and one Jerusalemite—and thus Adonijah simply did not invite his rival.[39] However, since Solomon was not the only son of David born in Jerusalem (see 2 Sam 5:13–16), this does not explain why Solomon alone of David's sons was excluded. Gwilym Jones claims that nothing in the text indicates that Adonijah knew about an oath to Solomon,[40] but Adonijah's exclusion of Solomon alone may be that very evidence indicating that he was aware of such an oath. If Nathan knew about the oath, it is plausible that others within the court could have known about it as well.

The second hint comes from Adonijah when he later tells Bathsheba, "You know that the kingdom was mine and all Israel looked to me to be king, but the kingdom turned and went to my brother, *because it was his from YHWH* (כי מיהוה היתה לו)" (1 Kgs 2:15). Here Adonijah himself admits that Solomon had a divine right to the throne.[41] Halpern acknowledges the significance of this statement for legitimatizing Solomon's accession, yet because he insists that the text is attempting to cover up the fact that Adonijah was the true heir apparent, he concludes that "this admission is the work of the apologist."[42] As was the case with Ishida's observations noted above, this argument is wholly conjectural and supports the view that the final form of the text is portraying Solomon as the rightful successor.

Third, the only comment the narrator makes about Solomon before this episode is that "YHWH loved him (ויהוה אהבו)" (2 Sam 12:24). This notice singles out Solomon early in the narrative as the recipient of divine favor, and therefore that the kingship "was his from YHWH," as Adonijah admitted, is plausible. K. L. Noll goes to great lengths to argue that the verb אהב here does not imply that YHWH chose Solomon as David's successor.[43] Yet it is not necessary to conclude that אהב

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[36] Robert Alter views it as a coronation feast (*David Story* 365); Iain Provan argues that it was not (*1 and 2 Kings* [NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995] 28).

[37] So also Fokkelman, *King David* 350.

[38] In this section I build upon the similar line of argumentation in Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003) 236–37.

[39] Gray, *I & II Kings* 86; Walsh, *1 Kings* 8; cf. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* 24–25; Sweeney, *I & II Kings* 55; Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2000) 12.

[40] Jones, *Nathan Narratives* 52.

[41] See the discussion of Robert P. Gordon, "In Search of David: The David Tradition in Recent Study," in *Faith, Tradition, and History: OT Historiography in its Near Eastern Context* (ed. A. R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 295.

[42] Halpern, *David's Secret Demons* 396.

[43] Noll, *The Faces of David* 71–74.

in itself designates Solomon as successor; it simply shows that from his birth Solomon is characterized as in a special, favored relationship with YHWH, which lends plausibility to the idea that he was YHWH's choice.

The last hint of Solomon's right to the throne is the onomastic puns in this chapter. As Moshe Garsiel insightfully observes, puns on the names of the two brothers' mothers correspond to the tactics used by the two men in their attempts for the throne.[44] On the one hand, although the word חג ("feast") does not occur in this chapter, Adonijah's sacrificial gathering is described in feast-like terms.[45] This corresponds to Adonijah's mother's name, חגית (Haggith), which is from the root חג, with whom he is associated three times: "Adonijah the son of Haggith" (1:5, 11; 2:13). On the other hand, in these chapters Bathsheba is twice referred to as "the mother of Solomon" (1:11; 2:13), and it is twice stated that David "swore" (שבע) that Solomon would be king (1:13, 17). This corresponds to her name, בת־שבע ("daughter of an oath"). If the narrator is using these puns to "enrich and intensify the plot,"[46] as Garsiel suggests, it could imply that just as Adonijah actually had a feast by which he attempted to attain the throne, so did Solomon actually have an oath by which he successfully attained the throne. If this is the case, these puns on the names of the two rivals' mothers serve as further literary indicators supporting the veracity of the oath and thus the validity of Solomon's kingship.

3. *The witness of Chronicles.* Whereas the Deuteronomistic material does not explicitly describe David's prior knowledge that Solomon was to succeed him, the book of Chronicles clearly presents David as cognizant that YHWH had chosen Solomon to rule after him. In 1 Chr 22:7–10, David recalled YHWH's word that came to him before Solomon was born stating that he would reign after him and build the temple. In 1 Chr 28:5, David told all his officials, "Of all my sons—and YHWH has given me many—he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of YHWH over Israel." In 1 Chr 29:1, David later repeated to the whole assembly that Solomon was the one whom God had "chosen" (בחר). Therefore, according to the Chronicler, David knew that Solomon would succeed him, and he communicated this fact to others throughout the narrative. The interpretation that David chose Solomon only on his deathbed due to deception does not comport with the witness of Chronicles, which clearly depicts David knowing that Solomon had a divine right to the throne from birth. In contrast, the interpretation that David previously swore an oath to Bathsheba that Solomon would succeed him is consistent with the testimony of Chronicles.

V. CONCLUSION

In this article I have considered the arguments that Nathan and Bathsheba deceived David into naming Solomon king and concluded that they are unpersuasive. Nothing in the text suggests that David should be viewed as senile or easily

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[44] Moshe Garsiel, "Puns Upon Names as a Literary Device in 1 Kings 1–2," *Bib* 72 (1991) 381.

[45] In v. 41 the narrator describes Adonijah and his guests "finishing their eating" (והם כלו לאכל).

[46] Ibid. 386.

manipulated. Rather, the narratological emphasis on David's old age is connected to his political ignorance. In conjunction with David's history of failing to correct Adonijah, this explains why Nathan and Bathsheba orchestrated their appeal for David to actualize his oath that Solomon succeed him as king. I then argued that the textual evidence suggests that Adonijah is depicted as seditious, that subtleties in the passage suggest that Solomon was the rightful heir to the throne, and that the book of Chronicles reinforces this interpretation by portraying David as knowledgeable that Solomon was YHWH's choice to succeed him. Rather than being the result of human duplicity in the royal court, Solomon's ascent to Israel's throne was the fulfillment of YHWH's word to David in line with his covenant promises.