

THE WORD OF THE LORD TO THE RULING HOUSES IN SAMUEL AND KINGS

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Abstract: *There is a collection of speeches that indict or reward eight of Israel's leaders: the high priest Eli and Israel's kings Saul, David, Solomon, Jeroboam, Baasha, Abab, and Jehu. These speeches share a common form and respond to something significant the leader has just done. In most cases, this action was evil, and so the speech predicts dire consequences for his house. However, in two speeches the leader is rewarded for doing good. Each speech plays a pivotal role in the narrative's structure, initiating a transition from the ruler being addressed to his successor. This pattern—an evil or good deed, followed by a speech predicting the rise or fall of the ruling house, and the accounts of how those predictions are fulfilled—unifies the narrative of Samuel and Kings. But it is precisely this pattern that has been eliminated from the parallel passages in Chronicles.*

Key words: *narrative, structure, form, speeches, leaders, prophets, house*

Like a series of ancient fortresses whose scattered stones call out along an abandoned Roman road, a chain of speeches running through the heart of Samuel and Kings needs to be heard for its strategic role in the narrative. Like the forts, the speeches are tactically positioned, with similar plans, but their matching forms and functions along the *Via Militaris*¹ of Samuel and Kings² have yet to be described.

Perhaps the terrain is too varied and vast. Though Israel's narrative is built upon the successive lives of its leaders, it does digress or even reverse.³ It is also overgrown with stories of judges and prophets that obscure its rhythms and structures. The actions of Eli, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha intermittently lead the narrative's focus away from the kings. Furthermore, the prophets' predictions and notices of fulfillment are so pervasive that, if they were dropped from the narrative, much of it would disappear.⁴ Indeed, the account of Israel's dynasties is so paved with deeds and thoughts of prophets as to justify calling it the "Former Prophets."

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¹ The *Via Militaris* connected Rome's fortifications from Singidunum (Belgrade) on the Danube to Byzantium (Istanbul) on the Bosphorus.

² Translations are taken from the ESV unless otherwise indicated.

³ The accounts of the Danites' seizure of Micah's idols (Judges 17–18) and the Benjamite civil war (Judges 19–21), though placed at the end of Judges, come from early in the period (Judg 18:30; 20:28). Similarly, the Gibeonites' revenge, the accounts of battles against the Philistines, David's song of praise, his mighty men, and the tragic story of counting his troops, refer to events earlier in his reign, but are appended to his life in Samuel.

⁴ For predictions and their fulfillments compare 1 Sam 2:27–36 with 1 Sam 4:10, 11, 14–18, 1 Sam 22:18–23, and 1 Kgs 2:27; 1 Sam 9:15–10:1 with 1 Sam 10:17–24; 1 Sam 10:2–8 with 1 Sam 10:9–16, 1

Within the apparent tangle of this narrative, the forms of eleven carefully crafted speeches wait to be excavated, analyzed, and described. As prophetic addresses to Israel's leaders, they integrate the narrative's two major dynamics, Yahweh's call for righteous and loyal rulers and the dynastic fortunes of Israel's judges and kings. The speeches mark the summit of each leader's rule, and either his reward or the onset of his demise, and they are followed directly by the introduction and ascent of the next ruler. By stationing each speech at this transitional moment, the narrative achieves a rhythm, and by forming the speeches with the same components, in the same order, the narrative signals a central motif.

Martin Noth has noticed how at each new phase, the narrative from Joshua to Kings, "brings forward the leading personages with a speech, long or short, which looks forward and backward in an attempt to interpret the course of events, and draw the relevant practical conclusions about what people should do."⁵ Joshua's speeches mark the transition from the wilderness to the conquest (Josh 1:12–14) and the transition from the conquest to the judges (Joshua 23). Samuel's speech marks the transition from judges to kings (1 Samuel 12), and Solomon's speech (1 Kgs 8:12–21) and his prayer (1 Kgs 8:23–30) inaugurate the first temple, and as his prayer continues (1 Kgs 8:31–53) he teaches the generations to come how to pray in response to the difficulties they will face, even in exile. In addition, the narrator summarizes the occupation of the land (Josh 12:1–24), the cycle for the period of the judges (Judg 2:11–3:5), and the factors that resulted in the demise of northern Israel (2 Kgs 17:7–40). This article complements Noth's observations with another set of speeches that mark the transition from one dynasty to the next. However, rather than leaders looking forward and backward to interpret the nation's progress, and to conclude what people should do, prophets look back to the deeds or misdeeds of the leaders and forward to the consequences for their houses.⁶

Though recent studies do not discuss the significance of this series of speeches,⁷ some of their salient features have been noticed, and the presence of something

Sam 13:13, 14, and 15:22, 23, 26, 27; 1 Sam 15:28 with 1 Sam 16:1–2 Sam 5:5; 1 Sam 16:1–13 with 2 Sam 2:1–7 and 5:1–5; 2 Sam 7:1–16 with 1 Kgs 8:14–21; 2 Sam 12:1–14 with 2 Sam 12:8, 13:23–37, 18:1–33, 1 Kgs 2:13–25, 2 Sam 16:21–22, and 2 Sam 20:4–13; 1 Kgs 11:29–39 with 1 Kgs 11:14–40, 12:1–20, and 15:4; 1 Kgs 13:1–3 with 1 Kgs 13:4–6 and 2 Kgs 23:17, 18; 1 Kgs 13:20–22 with 1 Kgs 13:23–27; 1 Kgs 14:1–16 with 1 Kgs 14:17, 18 and 1 Kgs 15:29, 30; 1 Kgs 16:1–4 with 1 Kgs 16:12; 1 Kgs 17:1 with 1 Kgs 18:41–44; 1 Kgs 20:13–14, 22, 28 with 1 Kgs 20:19–21, 26, 29, 30; 1 Kgs 20:35–42 with 1 Kgs 22:34, 35; 1 Kgs 21:17–26 with 1 Kgs 22:38, 2 Kgs 9:21–37, and 2 Kgs 10:1–30; 1 Kgs 22:1–28 with 1 Kgs 22:29–38; 2 Kgs 9:1–10 with 2 Kgs 9:14–10:17; 2 Kgs 10:30 with 2 Kgs 15:8–12; 2 Kgs 13:14–19 with 2 Kgs 13:25; 2 Kgs 19:5–7 with 2 Kgs 19:9, 35–37; 2 Kgs 20:1–10 with 2 Kgs 20:11; 2 Kgs 20:16–18 with 2 Kgs 24:13; 2 Kgs 21:10–15 with 2 Kgs 23:26, 27 and 2 Kgs 25:1–21; and 2 Kgs 22:15–22 with 2 Kgs 23:29 and 25:1–21.

⁵ Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSS 15; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), 5–6.

⁶ Like Noth, Lyle Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God* (BLS 24; Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 232, focused on key speeches to the nation and evaluative spikes in those and related speeches to the nation (Josh 1:11–15; 12; 22:2–23; Judg 2:11–23; 1 Sam 2:1–10; 12; 2 Sam 22; 1 Kgs 8:14–61; 2 Kgs 17; 19), rather than the speeches by the prophets to the leaders.

⁷ David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Apollos OT Commentary 8; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009); Graeme A. Auld, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011); Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *1 & 2 Samuel* (Teach the Text Commentary Series; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013);

more is suggested. In his discussion of the indictment of Eli, Hans Hertzberg rightly asserts that such passages “represent the theological explanation of the events that have been described ... they give an event its place in the divine plan.”⁸ Focusing on its components, Ralph Gehrke notices how the speech to Eli “follows the well-known pattern of a prophetic pronouncement of doom with three elements, the accusation of the culprits (vv. 27b–29), the messenger formula (v. 30a), and the announcement of divine verdict.”⁹ These and additional patterns will be developed more precisely and traced through a series of ten speeches.

Robert Polzin observes how “the rise, fall, and rise of priestly houses, foreshadows exactly the repetitious rise and fall of kingly houses in the history to follow.”¹⁰ Polzin sketches Eli as a royal figure, old and blind, and Eli’s house as a royal parable whose shadow stretches to Jehoiachin in exile. He sees Yahweh’s speech to Eli as the paradigm applied to each ruling house in Israel.¹¹ Similarly, John Martin outlines a reversal of fortunes motif in Samuel, overlapping patterns of decline, rise, and decline, that stitch together the successive fortunes of the houses of Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David.¹² These patterns will be traced in more detail and extended to include the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, Ahab, and Jehu.

In his assessment of Eli, Graeme Auld suggests there is “no passage in the rest of Samuel–Kings that uses so many stock elements of developed prophetic narrative so close together as ... ‘Man of God,’ ‘thus has Yahweh said,’ ‘utterance of Yahweh’ [and] ‘Behold, days are coming.’” He then exclaims “an accumulation like this is without parallel and calls for explanation.”¹³ This article offers such an explanation.

I. SPEECHES AND THE NARRATIVE’S STRUCTURE

Speeches are addressed to every dynastic head from the judge Eli to the house of Jehu. Each of these leaders founded their dynasty except for Eli, Solomon, and Ahab. However, Eli heads the Aaronic dynasty, and though neither Solomon nor Ahab are founders, they are treated with the same attention. Twice Yahweh promises to establish the throne of Solomon’s kingdom (2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kgs 9:5), and his construction of the temple elevates him as the founder of a new era, if not a new

Craig E. Morrison, *2 Samuel* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013); Iain W. Provan, *1 & 2 Kings* (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series 7; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012); Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos OT Commentary 9; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014).

⁸ Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *1 & 2 Samuel* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 37.

⁹ Ralph David Gehrke, *1–2 Samuel* (ConcC; St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), 40–41.

¹⁰ Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 44–45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² On the reversal of fortune motif in the book of Samuel see John A. Martin, “The Structure of 1 and 2 Samuel,” *BSac* 141.561 (1984): 28–41; John A. Martin, “The Literary Quality of 1 and 2 Samuel,” *BSac* 141.562 (1984): 131–145; *idem*, “The Text of Samuel,” *BSac* 141.563 (1984): 209–22; *idem*, “The Theology of Samuel,” *BSac* 141.564 (1984): 303–14.

¹³ Auld, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 51, suggests that it is “only in the narrative about Isaiah and Hezekiah shared by 2 Kings 18–20 and Isaiah 36–39 that the majority of these features of our portion recur.”

dynasty. Ahaz is also dealt with in much greater detail than his father Omri. With his infamous queen Jezebel, he overshadows the founder of their dynasty.

In most cases, the speeches to these leaders are provoked by acts that abuse or promote Yahweh's cult. Eli's sons abuse the sacrifices at Shiloh. Saul presumes to sacrifice at Gilgal and fails to inquire of the Lord, but resorts instead to inquiring of a witch. Solomon corrupted the Mount of Olives with high places for his foreign wives. Jeroboam sets up golden calves, shrines, and priests at Dan and Bethel, and Baasha and Jehu follow in his sins. On the other hand, David brings the ark to Jerusalem and plans to build the temple, and Jehu destroys Baal worship in Israel. Two other crimes are ominously parallel. David murders Uriah to take his wife, and Ahab murders Naboth to take his vineyard. Only Saul's failure to destroy the Amalekites remains unique.

In response to the leaders' actions Yahweh sends prophets to predict appropriate consequences for their houses. As most of their deeds are evil, they lead to such disastrous consequences that their dynasty is decimated or destroyed and replaced, though Solomon's is spared. However, David and Jehu are commended for their good deeds. David is promised an eternal throne, while Yahweh promises Jehu his sons will rule to the fourth generation. The fulfillment of these predictions, whether good or evil, forms a central element in the narrative that follows.

The speeches conclude with a description of the ruler's replacement who appears in the narrative directly after the speech. As the new leader rises, the old ruler recedes to his demise. By instigating these alternating fortunes, the speeches stitch together the overlapping dynasties in Samuel and Kings, creating a rhythmic rise and decline at the heart of the narrative.

There are two surprising variations to this pattern of deeds/speech/consequences. Typically, each ruler is indicted only once, but the narrative records three of Saul's sins, each followed by a speech, and two speeches to David, the first rewarding him with an eternal kingdom, and the second punishing him for his sin against Uriah. Perhaps variations such as these have obscured the motif. Nevertheless, even when there are two or three speeches to the same ruler, the narrative maintains the rhythm of evil or good deeds, followed by speeches, and accounts of how their consequences are fulfilled. The following table outlines this pattern within the narratives of Samuel and Kings.

Deeds, Speeches, Consequences and the Dynastic Heads in Samuel and Kings

Eli's immoral sons abuse the sacrifices at Shiloh	1 Sam	2:12–25
The word of the Lord against the House of Eli		2:27–36
The destruction of Eli's House by Saul		22:6–23; 1 Kgs 1:7; 2:26–27
Saul's sacrifice at Gilgal		13:1–12
The first word of the Lord against the House of Saul		13:13–14
Saul's failures to inquire of the Lord and destroy Amalek		14:1–15:10

The second word of the Lord against the House of Saul		15:11–35
Saul's inquiry of the witch at Endor		28:1–15
The third word of the Lord against the House of Saul ¹⁴		28:16–19
The decimation of Saul's House by the Philistines		31:1–13
The murder of Abner and Ish-bosheth	2 Sam	2:8–4:12
David's retrieval of the ark and plan to build a temple		6:1–7:4
The Lord's promise regarding the eternal House of David		7:5–16
David's murder of Uriah to take his wife		11
The word of the Lord against the House of David		12:1–12
The sword within the house of David.		13:1–20:22
Solomon's high places on the Mount of Olives	1 Kgs	11:1–10
The word of the Lord against the Kingdom of Solomon		11:11–13
The division of Solomon's Kingdom by Jeroboam		11:14–12:24
Jeroboam's calves, shrines, and priests at Dan and Bethel		12:25–13:34
The word of the Lord against the House of Jeroboam		14:1–16
The destruction of the House of Jeroboam by Baasha		14:17; 15:25–32
Baasha's evil of walking in the ways of Jeroboam		15:33, 34
The word of the Lord against the House of Baasha		16:1–4
The destruction of the House of Baasha by Omri		16:8–12
Ahab's murder of Naboth to take his vineyard		21:1–16
The word of the Lord against the House of Ahab		21:17–24
The destruction of Ahab's House by Jehu		22:1–40
Jehu's destruction of the House of Ahab	2 Kgs	9:14–10:29

¹⁴ The narrator repeatedly refers to the Lord as the source of the speech and to Samuel as the spokesman. If this speech is part of the pattern being presented, it would fit with the view that the speaker was indeed a man of God, Samuel. For a recent discussion of this question see Steinmann, *1 Samuel* (ConcC; St. Louis: Concordia, 2016), 527–34.

The promise of the Lord concerning the House of Jehu	10:30
The four generations of the house of Jehu	13:1–25; 14:23–29; 15:8–12

Despite the variations within this outline, and the events in Samuel and Kings that it omits,¹⁵ the pattern of deeds/speech/consequences provides a literary structure and moral perspective for much of the narrative.

Like the strategic location of similar military camps along the *Via Militaris*, this pattern points to the narrative's central purposes; purposes which are even more apparent when the components of the individual speeches are compared.

II. THE COMPONENTS WITHIN THESE SPEECHES

The speeches share up to eight components which usually appear in the following sequence: (1) A man of God comes to the ruler and (2) reviews privileges Yahweh has earlier granted his house. The prophet then (3) indicts the ruler, usually with one or more questions, (4) often mentioning what might have been had he remained faithful to Yahweh. At the heart of each speech is (5) a couplet or phrase that focuses on the leader's attitude, his personal relationship with his God. This is followed by (6) the consequences that will overtake the ruler's house. In cases where several generations pass before all the consequences are realized (7) the imminent death of one or more sons is given as a sign. The speeches conclude with (8) a description of the unnamed leader who replaces the declining house.

The speeches to Eli, Saul, David, and Jeroboam incorporate all eight components, whereas the speeches, to Solomon, Baasha, Ahab, and Jehu, have only four or five. Nevertheless, they focus on the deeds of the kings and the consequences of their actions and attitudes for their descendants. Like the earlier speeches, the pattern of deeds/speech/consequences links them in a literary frame and moral perspective.

Though no one speech to Saul has all eight components, some are repeated and all eight can be found scattered throughout the three speeches to him. The first speech has four components, the second has seven, and the third has five.¹⁶

An analysis of the eight components follows. Examples of each component have been collected from all the speeches, and they are presented in the same order as they appear in the speeches.

1. *A man of God comes.* This first component introduces the messenger. He is a prophet who is usually named, and he arrives with "the word of the Lord" appro-

¹⁵ Passages not covered in this outline include stories about Samuel and Solomon, most of the supplemental material in 2 Samuel 22–24, stories about prophets such as the Man of God from Judah (1 Kings 13), Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 1–8), and the kings of Judah, from Rehoboam to Zedekiah.

¹⁶ The first speech includes a charge, consequences, and a description of Saul's replacement (1 Sam 13:13–14). The second speech includes all eight components except the imminent death of a son (1 Sam 15:11–35). The third speech, by Samuel's spirit, contains charges, consequences, the imminent deaths of his sons, and David is named as his replacement (1 Sam 28:16–19).

priate for the actions of the leader. While terms may vary, both a prophet and a word from Yahweh are mentioned in the opening lines of every speech except the first and third speeches to Saul (which do not explicitly mention the word of Yahweh), and the speeches to Solomon and Jehu in which God speaks directly to them.

- Eli: "Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, 'This is what the Lord says ...'" (1 Sam 2:27)
- Saul: "Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him." (1 Sam 13:10)
- Saul: "Samuel said to Saul, 'Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night.'" (1 Sam 15:16)
- Saul: "Then Samuel said to Saul ..." (1 Sam 28:15)
- David: "That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:⁵ 'Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord says ...'" (2 Sam 7:4, 5)
- David: "The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said ... 'This is what the Lord says ...'" (2 Sam 12:1a, 11a)
- Solomon "Therefore the Lord said to Solomon ..." (1 Kgs 11:11)
- Jeroboam: "Go, tell Jeroboam that this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says ..." (1 Kgs 14:7a)
- Baasha: "Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha ..." (1 Kgs 16:1)
- Ahab: "Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: 'Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. Say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: ...'"
 "... this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says ..." (1 Kgs 21:17–19a)
- Jehu: "And the Lord said to Jehu ..." (2 Kgs 10:30a)

2. *Past privileges.* The prophets begin by reminding the leader how Yahweh has elevated him to his priestly or royal office and the benefits attached to his promotion. Solomon is an exception. The information that the Lord has appeared to him twice, appears in the narrative before the speech.

- Eli: "Did I not clearly reveal myself to your father's house when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? I chose your father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your father's house all the offerings made with fire by the Israelites." (1 Sam 2:27b–28)
- Saul: "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel." (1 Sam 15:17b)
- David: "I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off

all your enemies from before you.” (2 Sam 7:8, 9)

David: “I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah.” (2 Sam 12:7–8)

Solomon: “... the Lord, the God of Israel ... had appeared to him twice ...” (1 Kgs 11:9b)

Jeroboam: “I raised you up from among the people and made you a leader over my people Israel. I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you.” (1 Kgs 14:7b–8a)

Baasha: “I lifted you up from the dust and made you leader of my people Israel.” (1 Kgs 16:2a)

Ahab: Absent

Jehu: Absent

Although their essential forms and functions continue, one naturally wonders why the later speeches drop some components. This may simply be part of the narrative’s tendency to treat the earlier lives of Eli, Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon in more detail than the later lives of Baasha, Ahab, and Jehu. Perhaps the speeches are also simplified in the same way that Neo-Assyrian treaties had no historical prologue, instructions for deposition, or blessings to accompany their curses. The tendency towards parallels and alternate terms in Hebrew may also account for variations such as the prophet being described as “a man of God” or being named or even being God himself. Indeed, what would compel prophets over the centuries from Eli to Jehu to litigate in precisely the same terms and forms? Why do we not speak like Shakespeare or write like King James scholars?

3. *The indictment.* The gravity of the following charges increases as they are juxtaposed with the memories of Yahweh’s favors in the previous component. Some charges penetrate behind the leaders’ actions to reveal how the leaders scorn God, honor others above him, and even despise God.

The component is essential. Its most striking feature is the percentage of charges that are cast in the form of questions.¹⁷ Even when the Lord is pleased enough with David to promise him an eternal house, he bars him from building the temple by asking questions. Not until the second speech to David do direct charges become the norm, so that none of the charges against Solomon, Jeroboam, or Baasha is cast in the form of a question. The charge against Solomon is explicit

¹⁷ This sort of interrogation/charge is found as early as Eden and is common in the Latter Prophets. In the garden the Lord questions the man, “Where are you? ... Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” And of the woman he asks, “What is this you have done?” (Gen 3:9, 11, 13). The prophet Isaiah questions, “Who is it you have ridiculed and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel!” (Isa 37:23). See also Isa 37:26; 40:21; 40:28; 50:1; 57:11; Jer 2:17, 22; 3:4, 6; 33:24; 44:9; Ezek 8:12, 17; 13:7; 16:43; 20:3; 38:13; Hos 13:10; Joel 3:4; Mic 4:9; Mal 1:6.

only in the narrative prior to the speech. Jehu is also commended rather than questioned.

- Eli: “Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling?”
 “Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?” (1 Sam 2:29)
- Saul: “What have you done?,’ asked Samuel.” (1 Sam 13:11)
- Saul: “What is this bleating of sheep in my ears?”
 “What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?” (1 Sam 15:14)
 “Why did you not obey the Lord?”
 “Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?” (1 Sam 15:19)
- Saul: “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?”
 “Why do you consult me, now that the Lord has turned away from you and become your enemy?” (1 Sam 28:15, 16)
- David: “Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?”
 “... did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’” (2 Sam 7:5b–7)
- David: “Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes?”
 “You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own.”
 “You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.” (2 Sam 12:9)
- Solomon: “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you ...” (1 Kgs 11:11b)
- Jeroboam: “You have done more evil than all who lived before you.”
 “You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal.” (1 Kgs 14:9)
- Baasha: “But you walked in the ways of Jeroboam, and caused my people Israel to sin ...” (1 Kgs 16:2b)
- Ahab: “Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?” (1 Kgs 21:19b)
- Jehu: “Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart ...” (2 Kgs 10:30b)

4. *What might have been.* Before announcing their sentences, the prophets inform the first four dynastic leaders that, had they followed the Lord, their legacy might have been an eternal priesthood or an eternal kingdom. The promise of a lasting priesthood (Num 25:10–13), originally granted to Eli’s forefather Phinehas, is withdrawn. Saul discovers that his house could have ruled over Israel “for all time,” but it will not (1 Sam 13:13). On the other hand, David is informed his

house will be securely established (2 Sam 7:9–11), and consequently Solomon is reminded that only part of his kingdom will be preserved and that for the sake of David (1 Kgs 11:12a, 13b). Like Saul, Jeroboam is contrasted with David who has kept God's commands and followed him with all his heart (1 Kgs 14:8b). While not explicit, this speech alludes to the kingdom that might have been when Ahijah promised Jeroboam: "If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, *as David my servant did*, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you" (1 Kgs 11:37–38). As for the houses of Baasha, Ahab, and Jehu, who come to power by assassinating their kings, no prospect of an eternal house is ever raised. However, Jehu is promised that four generations of his descendants will rule (2 Kgs 10:30; 15:12).

- Eli: "Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: 'I promised that your house and your father's house would minister before me forever.' But now the Lord declares: 'Far be it from me!'" (1 Sam 2:30)
- Saul: "You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time." (1 Sam 13:13).
- David: "Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel."
"I will also give you rest from all your enemies."
"The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you." (2 Sam 7:9–11)
- David: "And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more." (2 Sam 12:8b)
- Solomon: "I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen."
- Jeroboam: "But you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes." (1 Kgs 14:8b)
- Baasha: Absent
- Ahab: Absent
- Jehu: Absent

5. *The leaders' attitude toward Yahweh.* In every speech, this small component appears as an antidote to simple legalism. Whereas the speeches emphasize the leader's deeds and their consequences, a few lines near the mid-point of the speeches expose their relationship with Yahweh. In the earlier speeches these lines are crafted as aphoristic couplets. They identify the root issues of despising God, not listen-

ing, rebellion, arrogance, provoking God, and thrusting him behind one's back. On the other hand, in his affirmative speech to David, God speaks of being a father to David's son, who will in turn be a son to God. The short speeches to Solomon and to Jehu mention their attitudes before (1 Kgs 11:9) and after (2 Kgs 10:31) the speech, rather than at its midpoint.

- Eli: "Those who honor me I will honor,
but those who despise me will be disdained." (1 Sam 2:30)
- Saul: "To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.
For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry." (1 Sam 15:22b, 23a)
- David: "I will be his father,
and he will be my son." (2 Sam 7:14)
- David: "... because you despised me." (2 Sam 12:10)
- Solomon: "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away
from the Lord." (1 Kgs 11:9)
- Jeroboam: "... you have provoked me to anger and thrust me behind your back." (1 Kgs
14:9b)
- Baasha: "... to provoke me to anger by their sins." (1 Kgs 16:2b)
- Ahab: "... because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin." (1
Kgs 21:22b)
- Jehu: "Jehu was not careful to keep the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all
his heart." (2 Kgs 10:31)

6. *Consequences.* This is the largest component in the speeches. It predicts the destiny of the ruling house as a consequence of its leader's deeds. These detailed predictions link the past with the future, pointing to events the narrative will track.

The consequences focus on the leader's male descendants—literally, their sons—and their destruction or exaltation. There will not be "an old man" left in the House of Eli, and Yahweh will "cut off ... every last male" from the houses of Jeroboam and Ahab. On the other hand, David's and Jehu's sons will rule, though Jehu's house is extended to four generations, but David's son will also be punished when he sins, and Solomon's kingdom reduced to one tribe.

Some variations appear. In addition to the destruction of Saul and his sons, Samuel predicts the army of Israel will be handed over to the Philistines. Some women are also mentioned, but never daughters. However, the gruesome fate of Ahab's wife, Jezebel, and the rape of David's wives are predicted.

- Eli: "The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of
your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line, and
you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in

your family line there will never be an old man. Every one of you that I do not cut off from my altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.” (1 Sam 2:31–33)

Saul: “But now your kingdom will not endure.” (1 Sam 13:14a)

Saul: “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.” (1 Sam 15:23)

Saul: “The Lord has done to you as he spoke by me, for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.”

“Moreover, the Lord will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines . . .”

“The Lord will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.” (1 Sam 28:17,19)

David: “I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men.” (2 Sam 7:11b–14)

David: “Now, therefore the sword will never depart from your house. Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.” (2 Sam 12:10–12)

Solomon: “I will surely tear the kingdom from you. . . . I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son.” (1 Kgs 11:11c–13)

Jeroboam: “I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung, until it is all gone. Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country.” (1 Kgs 14:10–11)

Baasha “So I am about to consume Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat. Dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country.” (1 Kgs 16:3)

Ahab: “In the place where dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!”

“I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free.”

“I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah.”

“And also concerning Jezebel the Lord says: ‘Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.’”

“Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country.” (1 Kgs 21:19b, 21–22a, 23–24)

Jehu: "... your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." (2 Kgs 10:30c)

7. *The imminent death of a son.* As it will take up to four generations before the consequences of Eli's, Saul's, David's, and Jeroboam's sins are completely realized, a sign is announced. The imminent deaths of one or more sons is mentioned. This component is explicit in the opening speech to Eli, but missing from the last three speeches. The imminent deaths of Bathsheba's firstborn and Saul's sons on Mount Gilboa are not explicitly called signs, and neither is the death of Jeroboam's son, but all are predicted at the same point near the end of the speech where a sign is given to Eli.

In the remaining speeches to David, Solomon, Baasha, Ahab, and Jehu no signs are given. Nathan has warned David that when his son does wrong, Yahweh will discipline him (2 Sam 7:14). However, in that speech Yahweh is rewarding David, and promises to establish his throne forever, so a prediction of the imminent death of his son is inappropriate. Instead, Yahweh promises his steadfast love for David's son. Conversely, when Nathan indicts him for the murder of Uriah, the imminent death of David's son is the first consequence and an appropriate signal that the other calamities announced will surely come to pass. Solomon's son does not die. Instead, God tears most of the kingdom away from his son, leaving him with only one tribe.

All the sons of Baasha and Ahab will be destroyed within two years of their fathers' deaths (1 Kgs 16:8–11; 22:51). There will be no delay, so signs are not needed. A sign is also inappropriate for Jehu as he is promised a dynasty of four generations.

Eli: "And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day." (1 Sam 2:34)

Saul: "... and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." (1 Sam 28:19)

David: "... but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you." (2 Sam 7:15)

David: "... the child who is born to you shall die." (2 Sam 12:14)

Solomon: Absent

Jeroboam: "As for you, go back home. When you set foot in your city, the boy will die." (1 Kgs 14:12)

Baasha: Absent

Ahab: Absent

Jehu: Absent

8. *The replacement/successor.* Rather than naming the next ruler, the speeches describe him. Only in the third speech to Saul is his successor, both described and

named, but by then Saul already knows David will succeed him, something he has failed to prevent.

After David sins against Uriah (2 Sam 12:14–15), Nathan does not describe a usurper, nor should there be one, as David has been promised a son whose throne will last forever. However, there will be a successor. Within a few verses the narrative notes the birth of Solomon (2 Sam 12:24–25), who establishes the house of David, rather than replacing it.

This component is also missing in the three shorter speeches in Kings.

- Eli: “I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always.” (1 Sam 2:35)
- Saul: “... the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command.” (1 Sam 13:14b)
- Saul: “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors—to one better than you.” (1 Sam 15:28)
- Saul: “The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors—to David.” (1 Sam 28:17)
- David: “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Sam 7:15–16)
- David: Absent (2 Sam 12)
- Solomon: “I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.” (1 Kgs 11:11d)
- Jeroboam: “The Lord will raise up for himself a king over Israel who will cut off the family of Jeroboam. This is the day! What? Yes, even now.” (1 Kgs 14:14)
- Baasha: Absent
- Ahab: Absent
- Jehu: Absent

Following each speech, the narrative introduces the successor by name and presents him in a favorable light, until he also sins, at which point a prophet appears with a speech against his house, and the cycle is repeated. Thus, the speeches link the overlapping accounts of these rulers into a rhythmic and coherent narrative.

As the speeches share these components, the pattern of *deeds / speech / consequences* is strengthened. Absolute uniformity in the form of the speeches is not achieved, especially in the speeches to Solomon and the last three dynasties. Still, the recurrence of so many components, in the same order—and at the same pivotal moments in the narrative—calls our attention to the authors’ central concerns, an evaluation of Israel’s leaders, their personal relationship with Yahweh, and the consequences of their actions.

Like the main north-south street in the standard plan for a Roman fort or colony, lined on both sides with the leading civic and religious buildings, the speeches with their ordered components provide the narrative's central thoroughfare, its *cardo maximus*.¹⁸ Their centrality is further confirmed by the persistence with which the narrator observes how their predictions are fulfilled.

III. CONSEQUENCES FULFILLED IN THE NARRATIVE

The narrative in Samuel and Kings is tied to the speeches, not only by the deeds that provoke them, but also by a detailed record of how their predictions are fulfilled in the lives of both the leaders and their male descendants.

The prophet's prediction that the strength of Eli's house will be "cut short" (1 Sam 2:31) is fulfilled in his death, the deaths of his sons (1 Sam 4:17–18), and Doeg's slaughter of eighty-five of his clansmen (1 Sam 22:17–20), so that there is not "an old man left" in his family line (1 Sam 2:32). In the fourth generation, the only one left to the house of Eli is Abiathar, *My Father's Remnant*. The irony that blind Eli will "see distress in my dwelling," apparently refers to the capture of the ark, news of which precipitates his death, and the naming of his grandson, Ichabod, whose dying mother laments, "The Glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured" (1 Sam 4:21–22).

Samuel predicts Saul's kingdom will not endure (1 Sam 13:14a), and it does not. He is rejected as king (1 Sam 15:23) and directly after that, Samuel anoints the son of Jesse (1 Sam 16:1). Samuel also predicts Yahweh will hand over Saul, his three sons, and Israel's army to the Philistines (1 Sam 28:19), and the next day "Saul and three of his sons and his armor bearer and all of his men [die] together" on Mount Gilboa (1 Sam 31:6). Within two years his commander, Abner and his heir, Ish-bosheth, are both murdered (2 Sam 2:10; 3:27; 4:5–7). In the end, his daughter Michal has "no children" (2 Sam 6:23), and the Gibeonites execute seven of his male descendants (2 Sam 21:1–14), so that Saul's lone heir is the cripple Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9:1–13). Ultimately, the houses of Eli and Saul are not completely destroyed. One unemployed priest survives, and one struggling invalid is sheltered by David.

In fulfillment of the good promises to David, Yahweh raises up Solomon, and firmly establishes his kingdom (2 Sam 7:12; 1 Kgs 2:46). It is Solomon who builds "the house" for Yahweh's name (2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kgs 8:15–20). The promise of an eternal throne (2 Sam 7:13, 16) is echoed in the narrative's observation that one tribe is left to David's house so that he will "always have a lamp" in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19). Yahweh's promise to be "a father" to David's son (2 Sam 7:14a), is kept when Yahweh names him Jedidiah/*Loved of Yahweh* (2 Sam 12:24–25), grants him wisdom, wealth, long life, and victory (1 Kgs 3:5–14), and appears to him twice (1 Kgs 9:1–2; 11:9). The promise that Yahweh will punish

¹⁸ Lyle Eslinger rightly affirms that "the meaning of a narrative arises from the union of content ... and form. The line between form and content is indefinite." *Kinship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1–12* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 41.

David's son with the rod of men (2 Sam 7:14b) is equally fulfilled as Yahweh raises up Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam to deprive the house of David of its empire and the ten northern tribes (1 Kgs 11:14–40).

In fulfillment of David's own sentence that he will pay fourfold for his theft and Nathan's prediction that the sword will never depart from his house (2 Sam 12:6, 11), David suffers the deaths of four sons—Bathsheba's infant, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah (2 Sam 12:18; 13:28; 18:15; 1 Kgs 2:25). He also loses his cousins Amasa and Joab to the sword (2 Sam 17:25–26; 20:10; 1 Kgs 2:34). The prediction that someone who is close to David will lie with his wives in broad daylight (2 Sam 12:11–12) is fulfilled when Ahithophel advises Absalom to lie with his father's concubines "in the sight of all Israel" (2 Sam 16:21–22).

Whereas Yahweh's speech to Solomon predicts the loss of most of his kingdom, rather than the destruction of his house, the narrative immediately reports how Yahweh raises up Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam against Solomon to cut off his empire and reduce his son's kingdom to the tribe of Judah (1 Kgs 11:14–12:24).

Yahweh promises the immediate death of Jeroboam's son, and that he will "cut off from Jeroboam every last male" (1 Kgs 14:10–11). These are fulfilled precisely. His son dies as his wife sets foot in Tirzah (1 Kgs 14:17), and Baasha kills his heir Nadab and his "whole family." He does not leave Jeroboam "anyone that breathed" (1 Kgs 15:29).

In the same way Yahweh predicts he will make Baasha and his house like that of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 16:3), and this is fulfilled when Baasha's son Elah is murdered by Zimri who kills "Baasha's whole family" (1 Kgs 16:9–11).

This motif continues with the deaths of Ahab, Joram, Jezebel, and seventy sons of Ahab (1 Kgs 22:35; 2 Kgs 9:24–26; 32–35; 10:6–8), and the accounts of dogs lapping up Ahab's blood and eating Jezebel in Jezreel (1 Kgs 22:38; 2 Kgs 9:10), fulfilling Elijah's predictions that "in the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood," and "every last male" in Ahab's house will be cut off, his house will be like the house of Jeroboam, and "dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel" (1 Kgs 21:19, 21–24).

The motif ends with Jehu, who is promised that his descendants would "sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation" (2 Kgs 10:30c). This is fulfilled through the reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam, and Zechariah (2 Kgs 13:1, 10; 14:23; 15:8).

While most predictions focus on their male descendants, the narrative does mention some women whose fates are not predicted in the speeches, but whose lives are tied to a ruling house. Eli's daughter-in-law dies while giving birth to Ichabod (1 Sam 4:21). Saul's daughter Michal is barren (2 Sam 6:23), and his concubine Rizpah guards the corpses of Saul's seven sons, which the Gibeonites have exposed (2 Sam 21:10). Tamar is raped by David's firstborn (2 Sam 13:1–32).

Like the civilian communities that emerged around Rome's border forts, this network of stories links much of the narrative in Samuel and Kings to the speeches. Furthermore, when the prophets' predictions are fulfilled, the narrative highlights their fulfillment with seven reminders.

IV. REMINDERS OF THE SPEECHES

At the demise of the house of Eli, the dedication of Solomon's temple, the division of Solomon's kingdom, the death of Jeroboam's son, the loss of ten tribes to Jeroboam, and the deaths of Jeroboam, Baasha, Ahab, and Jehu, the reader is reminded that these events fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by his prophets concerning their houses. Most of these reminders mark the place in the narrative where all the predictions concerning a house have been fulfilled.

- Eli: "So Solomon removed Abiathar from the priesthood of the Lord, fulfilling the word the Lord had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli." (1 Kgs 2:27; as predicted in 1 Sam 2:31–33)
- David: "And [Solomon] said, 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father. . . . Now the Lord has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and I have built the house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel'" (1 Kgs 8:15, 20; as predicted in 2 Sam 7:5–13)
- Solomon: "So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord that he might fulfill his word, which the Lord spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat." (1 Kgs 12:15)
- Jeroboam: "Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed and came to Tirzah. And as she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. And all Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Ahijah the prophet." (1 Kgs 14:17–18; as predicted in 1 Kgs 14:12–13)
- Jeroboam: "As soon as he began to reign, [Baasha] killed Jeroboam's whole family. He did not leave Jeroboam anyone that breathed, but destroyed them all, according to the word of the Lord given through his servant Ahijah the Shilonite." (1 Kgs 15:29; as predicted in 1 Sam 2:31–33)
- Baasha: "So Zimri destroyed the whole family of Baasha, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken against Baasha through the prophet Jehu." (1 Kgs 16:12; as predicted in 1 Kgs 16:3)
- Ahab: "When Jehu came to Samaria, he killed all who were left there of Ahab's family; he destroyed them, according to the word of the Lord spoken to Elijah." (2 Kgs 10:17; as predicted in 1 Kgs 16:19b, 21–22a, 23–24)
- Jehu: "So the word of the Lord spoken to Jehu was fulfilled: 'Your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.'" (2 Kgs 15:12; as predicted in 2 Kgs 10:30c)

Samuel has no reminder when David replaces Saul, but Chronicles has three reminders. The parallel account repeats the reminder that David's son would succeed him and build the temple (2 Chron 6:4, 10), and it repeats the reminder of the prediction that Jeroboam would take ten parts of Solomon's kingdom (2 Chr 10:15).

Like lampposts along the central thoroughfare these reminders highlight major intersections in the narrative.

V. THE CASE OF SAMUEL AND OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE MOTIF

Yahweh's words to Samuel on the destiny of his descendants (1 Sam 8:4–9) comes at the point in the narrative where a speech would normally occur, following a report of what he has done wrong, and just before his decline begins. Samuel's faults are relatively minor. He has sacrificed at Ramah's high place, contravening the injunctions in Deuteronomy 12. This is a failure that several otherwise good rulers would later be charged with (1 Kgs 3:2–3; 15:14; 2 Kgs 12:3; 14:4; 15:35). He has also appointed his corrupt sons as judges (1 Sam 7:17–8:3).

However, Yahweh's address fails to follow the form typical of the speeches. Yahweh speaks directly to Samuel, but he will also speak directly to Solomon and Jehu, and none of these will suffer the death of a son. More significantly, Samuel is indicted by the elders, rather than Yahweh, who charges the people, not Samuel. Yahweh never refers to his "house," and Samuel does not establish a dynasty. Though Samuel appoints his sons as judges, they are rejected by the elders, and there is no account of the extent or duration of their rule. Instead, Samuel remains Israel's leader until he is replaced by Saul. Where the narrative fails to explain what happens to Samuel's house, the Chronicler observes that his grandson serves as David's most distinguished musician (1 Chr 6:26–28, 33, 39; 25:4–5). If it were not for its location in the narrative and its attention to Samuel's male descendants, this conversation might not be associated with the motif.

A full discussion of other passages that reflect the pattern of *deeds/speech/consequences* is beyond the scope of this study, but the following examples illustrate how various elements from this motif surround the central chain of speeches.

Yahweh at Sinai warns that he punishes the sons for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation (Exod 20:5). Alternatively, the regulations for kings promise that the sons of godly kings will rule for a long time (Deut 17:18–20).

In the time of the judges, Gideon's rise and his profession that Yahweh will be their king is contradicted by his tendency to live like a king—his ephod, the evidence he had a harem, and the name he chooses for his concubine's son, Abimelech/*My father is king*. There is no speech against Gideon, but Abimelech frames the murder of his seventy sons as a dynastic coup, asking the Shechemites: "Which is better for you: to have all seventy of Jerub-Baal's sons rule over you, or just one man? Remember, I am your flesh and blood" (Judg 9:2). Rather than a prophet's speech, Gideon's youngest son curses the Shechemites, and upon their demise the narrator reminds the reader, "The curse of Jotham ... came on them" (Judg 9:56).

Before God confronts Solomon for his sin in 1 Kings 11, he speaks to him twice (1 Kgs 3:10–14 // 2 Chr 1:11–12; 1 Kgs 9:3–9 // 2 Chr 7:12–22). The first speech responds to Solomon's request for wisdom, but it does not mention his house or share any of the elements that characterize the pattern. The second speech affirms Solomon's prayer regarding the temple and establishes the criteria by which Solomon's throne and the nation will be established or destroyed. This speech combines elements from Deut 17:18–20, Deut 28:37, Deut 29:24–28, 1 Sam

12:25, and 1 Kgs 2:3–4, several of which reappear in similar speeches to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11:31–39; 14:14–16). It confirms options and a rationale, rather than predicting consequences for what Solomon has done. In it Yahweh establishes the basis for his indictment in 1 Kgs 11:9–11.

Centuries later, after Hezekiah's rise and sinful alliance, Isaiah charges him with the question: "What did they see in your palace/*house*?" The prophet then predicts that everything in his palace/*house* will be taken away, and some of his descendants/*sons* will become eunuchs in Babylon" (2 Kgs 20:16–18).

Jeremiah appears "to the house of the kings of Judah [to] say, 'Hear the word of the Lord'" (Jer 21:11), "Do justice and righteousness ... then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David ... but if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation" (Jer 22:1–5). Jehoiakim is indicted with the questions, "Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink?" (Jer 22:15). Jeremiah then predicts his death and the exile of his son, who will have no successor (Jer 22:18–30).

Finally, the dire consequences the fathers' deeds have for their sons is expressed before, during, and after the exile when the sins of the fathers are confessed as the reason for their distress (compare Lev 26:40 with 2 Kgs 22:13; 2 Chr 29:6; 30:7; 34:21; Dan 9:6, 8, 16; Ezra 5:12; 9:7; Neh 1:6; 9:34; 13:18; Zech 1:4–6; Mal 3:7).

Like provincial villages and commercial centers scattered along the military highway, these fragments from speeches and stories, laws, and prayers reveal a patchwork of ideas related to this motif.

VI. THE MISSING MOTIF IN CHRONICLES

Every part of the deeds/speech/consequences pattern has been carefully eliminated from the parallel accounts in Chronicles. The exception is the positive speech in 2 Samuel 7 regarding the eternal house of David. It is repeated almost verbatim in Chronicles, which also notes that its predictions have been fulfilled.¹⁹ Otherwise, Chronicles does not record any of the sins which provoke the Lord to send prophets against each house, and without the sins, the speeches disappear along with the stories of how their predictions are fulfilled. All of these are entirely absent. While many passages from Samuel and Kings have clear parallels in Chronicles, precise breaks at the points where the pattern would have appeared suggest that it was deliberately eliminated.²⁰ Nevertheless, comments in Chronicles indicate the author was aware of the motif.

¹⁹ The speech from 2 Samuel 7 is repeated in 1 Chronicles 17, with the omission of 2 Sam 7:14b: "When he does wrong I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by man." Second Chronicles 6:3, 10 also notes how its predictions were fulfilled.

²⁰ For example, the account of David's sin, Nathan's speech, the death of his child, and the birth of Solomon (2 Sam 11:1–12:25) were cleanly eliminated from 1 Chr 20:1, a verse that is otherwise taken directly from both 2 Sam 11:1 and 12:26.

Even though the Chronicler has no stories about Elkanah and Samuel, he reveals the destiny of their house that Samuel and Kings fail to supply. Chronicles notes that in the fourth generation “Heman, the musician, the son of Joel, the son of Samuel” is the head of all the musicians (1 Chr 6:33, 39, 42), with many sons, and that “all these were the sons of Heman the king’s seer, according to the promise of God to exalt him, for God had given Heman fourteen sons and three daughters” (1 Chr 25:4–6). By mentioning Heman’s exaltation, the Chronicler completes the story of the house of Elkanah with honors like those awarded to David and Jehu. By this he suggests he knows of and appreciates the motif he has eliminated.

Though the Chronicler also avoids the three speeches to Saul, his observation regarding Saul—“Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, consulted a medium for guidance and did not inquire of the Lord” (1 Chr 10:13, 14)—reveals his knowledge of Saul’s sins (1 Sam 13:13; 14:19; 28:6–7), and that Saul’s demise is a consequence of them.

The Chronicler also cleanly eliminates the account of Solomon’s wives, his idolatry, and Ahijah’s speech predicting the consequent reduction of his kingdom in the days of his son (2 Chr 9:28–29).²¹ However, he identifies their fulfillment in the reign of Rehoboam: “So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord that he might fulfill his word, which the Lord spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat (2 Chr 10:15 // 1 Kgs 12:15; as predicted in 1 Kgs 11:9–11, 31–37). In this the Chronicler indicates again that, even though he has eliminated the pattern, he knew of its prediction.

The Chronicler’s precise omission of every trace of this pattern from the many parallels he shares with Samuel/Kings, reveals how well he was aware of it. Apparently, the motif did not support his purposes, and although this is not the place to analyze those purposes, a fresh assessment of them is now appropriate.²²

Like engineers constructing a highway over the same territory for later merchants and travellers, the Chronicler retells Israel’s story atop the original accounts in Samuel and Kings, reusing some of their materials, but adjusting the pathway, leaving behind some central structures, and enlarging upon other sections.

²¹ Though God speaks to Solomon three times, and the first two speeches are repeated in 2 Chronicles (1 Kgs 3:10–14 // 2 Chr 1:11–12; 1 Kgs 9:3–9 // 2 Chr 7:12–22) it is only after Solomon sins that the characteristic elements of this motif appear in the third speech, the very one Chronicles will avoid (1 Kgs 11:11–13).

²² It is too simplistic to hold that Chronicles is pro-Davidic because it omits the sins of David’s house, as Chronicles also omits the sins, speeches, and consequences for the houses of Eli, Saul, Jeroboam, Baasha, Ahab, and Jehu. The distinct purposes of Chronicles will be found elsewhere in its considerations of an exilic audience, its habit of repeating in more detail stories that were told too succinctly in Samuel and Kings, its supplementary material that could be used to rebuild the community, the temple and its services, its omission of large portions that have to do with prophets, especially Elijah and Elisha, its more explicit repetition of blessings and curses from Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, and its broader focus on promises to David from 2 Samuel 7.

VII. CONCLUSION

Noth argues that speeches by Israel's leaders, and summaries by the narrator, contain "the elements of a simple and unified theological interpretation of history."²³ Now it is evident that speeches by Israel's prophets reveal another simple and unifying theological interpretation of the dynastic component in that same history. The narrative's structure leads the reader along the road whose foundation is the good or evil deeds of Israel's leaders, their attitudes toward Yahweh, and the immense implications of their actions for their sons. Through the rhythmic reversals of fortunes that link Israel's rulers, by the placement of speeches at the transition from one dynasty to the next, by the matching components within the speeches, the systematic observation of how their predictions are fulfilled, and with regular reminders that the words of the prophets are fulfilled, a strategic and coherent path can be traced across the narrative's landscape, the *Via Militaris* of Samuel and Kings.

²³ Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 6.