SIX

1 Kings

List of major characters:

Abiathar, Priest under David, sole survivor of house of Eli, competitor of Zadok; banished by Solomon

Adonijah, eldest son of David; replaced by Solomon, then executed

Ahab, king of Israel, married to Jezebel, opposed by the prophet Elijah

Benaiah, head of David's private mercenaries, Solomon's hatchet man

Ben-hadad, name of numerous kings of Aram (Syria)

Elijah, prophet in time of Ahab

Elisha, prophet who succeeded Elijah

Gehazi, servant of Elisha

Jehu, fanatical reformer who eliminated the house of Ahab (not to be confused with the brief appearance of the prophet Jehu in 1 Kgs 16:7)

Jeroboam I, first king of northern Israel, blamed for fall of the North

Jezebel, wife of Ahab, king of Israel, opponent of the prophet Elijah

Joab, commander of David's army

Josiah, ideal king of Judah, implemented Deuteronomic reformation

Naboth, vineyard owner framed and executed by Ahab and Jezebel

Nathan, prophet at court

Rehoboam, son of Solomon and his successor

Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba, third king of Judah and Israel

Zadok, priest under David and Solomon who founded priestly line competing with Levitical line, represented by Abiathar

The books of Kings can hold their own for fantastic stories: a king who burns himself to death; an ax head that floats on water; a mother who cooks and eats her own child; and a queen who becomes dog food. There is a prophet who can make a king's hand shrivel (and unshrivel), and another who can raise the dead, and who, to evoke Superman, is faster than a speeding chariot, is a survivalist who can live forty days in the wilderness without food or water, and who departs this mortal life like a rocket. The books often refer to other historical

records which, unfortunately, we do not have: e.g., "Book of the Acts of Solomon," "Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel" and "of Judah." There are also numerous stories that fit in the category of "prophetic legends." Indeed, often the narrative is as much about prophets as it is about kings, easily earning the title "Former Prophets," if it has not already been deserved from 1 and 2 Samuel. The reigns of some kings receive only a short passage; those of others relatively large blocks of material.[1] As with previous books, the intention of the writers and editors is not only to provide an historical narrative, but also and even more so, a theological commentary on that narrative. Thus we will often find sizeable gaps in the historical information about a particular ruler's reign, even if that ruler had an international reputation (e.g., Omri). The method of presentation is not strictly chronological; rather, the narrative moves from one king to another (e.g., A to B), sometimes including material about another king (B) who lived simultaneously with the other (A)—i.e., one in Judah, the other in Israel. Then the narrative will focus on the next king's reign (B), even if already partially presented under king A. Thus there are overlapping "panels" which move back and forth chronologically, instead of straight forward.[2] Needless to say, the method can create considerable confusion, which is compounded by the problem that some kings have the same name (and in North and South!). Overall, the editors have marked the reigns of each king with a summary introduction and conclusion, basically telling us if they were good kings or bad kings—the good kings being the ones who tried to correct the religious unorthodoxy of their predecessors. The chief, indeed, almost exclusive, concern in those evaluations is sacerdotal—the worship of Yahweh alone, at the proper place, in the proper manner, conducted by the proper personnel.

1. Solomon, 1 Kings 1–11; Jeroboam, 1 Kings 12–14; Ahab (and Elijah), 1 Kgs 16:29—33:40; Elisha (and various kings) 2 Kings 2–9; 13; Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18–20; Josiah, 2 Kings 22–23.

2. See Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 8–9, who uses the computer analogy of "windows" from which one moves back and forth.

Clearing the Deck (Chaps. 1–2)

There are good reasons for seeing 1 Kings 1–2 as the conclusion to the stories of David in 1 and 2 Samuel, especially since here he finally dies. In retrospect his "last words" in 2 Sam 23:1–7 will prove to be premature after we hear his deathbed words. Because Solomon's rise parallels David's dying, many scholars see these chapters more specifically as the conclusion to a "succession narrative" that traces Solomon's ascendance to the throne, beginning in 2 Samuel 9. However, only in 1 Kings 1–2 does the question about David's successor really come to the foreground, even though Solomon is clearly the subject of such passages as Nathan's oracle concerning the building of the temple in 2 Sam 7:13.

Whether in the present context or another (e.g., connecting to 2 Samuel 20), the opening scene seems to have jumped over David's later years to his final days (vv. 1–4).[3] Suddenly he is an

3. Verses 1–4 could be an editorial insertion, elaborating on v. 15, which now seems redun-

old man, wrapped in a blanket, who still cannot get warm. His servants apparently are concerned with more than his body temperature, however, for their suggestion of finding "a young virgin" to heat up his bed clearly implies an attempt to raise his libido as well. As we have seen (e.g., 2 Sam 23:2–4), the figure of the king was associated with fecundity. He was a channel for divine blessing that would fructify people, crops, and the land in general. In other cultures, the king acted out this role liturgically in rituals involving sexual intercourse. There is no such activity here, but David's waning sexuality calls into question his potency, a remarkable sign of aging in the man who had seven wives and ten concubines. Now even the presence of the beautiful Abishag in his bed is not enough to revive him, however, for "the king did not know her sexually" (v. 4). The king is impotent.

Immediately the significance of potency shifts from the sexual to the political, from the one who is impotent to those who seek to take his place as potentate.[4] David's oldest surviving son, Adonijah, is the first contender, and the narrator wastes no time in giving us his opinion: Adonijah is an arrogant upstart who "exalts" himself in the same way as his deceased half-brother, Absalom. Their political aspirations seem to have been orchestrated by the same campaign manager: a chariot procession with fifty runners in front, a handsome appearance, conspirators among David's inner circle, and a barbeque dinner with "all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah," as guests (cf. 2 Sam 14:25; 15:1–12). If the location is historical fact, it nonetheless sounds sinister: Snaking Rock and Spy Spring (Zoheleth, En-rogel, v. 9, AT)![5] The dinner is supposed to be a kind of inaugural banquet, and later we hear that the guests are saying "Long live King Adonijah!" (v. 25).[6] Adonijah's supporters include Joab, the former head of David's military, and Abiathar, the priest and sole-survivor of the massacre at Nob (1 Sam 22:20). Abithar and Zadok had supported David in his struggle with Absalom (2 Sam 15:26–29; 17:15). But Adonijah does not favor Zadok with an invitation, nor the prophet Nathan, nor Benaiah (chief of David's personal bodyguard), much less David's one other son, Solomon. The narrator also tells us that Adonijah "was born next after Absalom," thus emphasizing Adonijah's understandable expectation that he will be the successor. And he reveals one other similarity between Absalom (and other siblings) and Adonijah—David "had never at any time displeased him

dant. Verse 5 would make a good beginning on its own.

4. In the Ugaritic epic of Kirta, his son challenges his authority to rule on grounds of juridical negligence but also physical infirmity that implies sexual impotence: "Like a bedfellow is illness, / (your) concubine is disease!" See Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 239. Greenstein, "Kirta," 41, uses somewhat less suggestive language: "consort" (literally "sister") and "company."

5. Conversely, the spring Gihon ("Gusher") is the location for the inauguration of Solomon (vv. 33, 38).

6. Note the context of sacrifices with the establishment of Saul's monarchy, 1 Sam 10:8; 11:15. It is possible, though, that Bathsheba and Nathan have exaggerated the situation—there is no report *by the narrator* of Adonijah's kingship in vv. 9–10.

by asking, 'Why have you done thus and so?'" (v. 6). David seems never to have learned the lesson about permissive parenting (cf. 2 Sam 13:21, 39; 19:1–8), but it will be Adonijah who pays the price.

Despite Nathan's absence from Adonijah's party, he has heard about it, and that Adonijah had become king, and he promptly goes to Bathsheba and informs her, adding that the one who was incapable of "knowing" Abishag now does not know what Adonijah is up to (cf. also v. 18). On the other hand, Adonijah does not know what is happening back in David's bedroom, and will not know until it is too late (v. 41). The author has arranged the scenes in such a way that Adonijah is partying all the while oblivious to the events that will bring his reign to an end before it has really begun. Nathan assumes the role of privy counselor to the queen, warning her that both her life and Solomon's are at risk. The danger of a coup d'état among the king's sons has its precedent (2 Sam 13:30). Nathan instructs Bathsheba to go to David and remind him of his previous oath affirming that Solomon "would be king" after him (v. 13, AT). We know nothing of this, but David confirms it in v. 30. Then she is to inform David of Adonijah's move, and while she is still speaking, Nathan will come in and back her up. Bathsheba complies, but adds her own words: "all Israel" is waiting for David to name his successor, suggesting that his decline is public knowledge, and if David does not take charge she and Solomon will be "counted as offenders."

Judging from this scene alone, Bathsheba enjoys a favored status with David, as does Nathan, even though the last we heard from him was his rebuke of David *because of* Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12). Nathan follows his scenario, posing slightly different versions of the question—has David designated Adonijah as successor without letting his servants know? Nathan asks if David *does* know what is going on and has not let *him* know. David responds by summoning Bathsheba again (presumably each person leaves when the other arrives, cf. v. 32), and reaffirming his promise of Solomon's succession, adding "so will I do this day" (v. 31). Both Bathsheba and Nathan have been bowing and scraping before the king (vv. 16, 23; the same language is used for obeisance to God), and Bathsheba adds one more bow and the obligatory wish, "May my lord King David live forever," something which clearly is not in the cards.

Now David issues orders to Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah, putting his decision into motion. They are to gather David's various officials, set Solomon on David's mule (the mount of royalty), proceed to the Gihon spring of Jerusalem, "anoint him king over Israel," blow the trumpet, and proclaim "Long live King Solomon!" In fact, David authorizes Solomon as his immediate successor even before his own death, having him sit on his own throne, "king in my place," "for," David says, "*I* have appointed him to be ruler (*nagid*) over Israel and over Judah" (v. 35).[7] In other words, Solomon is at once "crown prince" and king (something like the monarch of England abdicating to the Prince of

7. Following the LXX with the emphatic "I." The MT has "him," emphasizing the object.

Wales). The statement contains a remarkable combination of developments in the institution of the monarchy. Compare the initiation of the monarchy when God said to Samuel, "you shall anoint [Saul] to be ruler (*nagid*) over my people Israel" (1 Sam 9:16; cf. 10:1); or compare the transition to David, when God said "I have seen among [Jesse's] sons a king for me" (1 Sam 16:1, AT). There the selection is God's to make, mediated through the prophet. Of course, with Saul, there was no question of a competitor because he was the first king. Still, both the donkey story and the lottery story emphasized God's control over the process. Even the text that might reflect an originally independent tradition in which Saul was crowned by the people now appears as a "renewal" of God's previous selection (1 Sam 11:14–15). The same applies to David. Although "the people of Judah anointed David king" (2 Sam 2:4), as did subsequently "all the elders of Israel," the preceding narrative has already established David as God's choice, as acknowledged by those elders (2 Sam 5:2–3). Also different here is the participation not only of Nathan the prophet but also Zadok the priest and Benaiah the captain of the royal guard, representing three spheres of power, with Benaiah no doubt in full military dress.

In effect, David has issued an executive order on his own (the word "appointed" could be "commanded" as well), thus subverting both the assumption of primogeniture and God's initiative. If Bathsheba is correct, "all Israel" *expected* David to make such an order (v. 20). Of course, *God* had already subverted primogeniture by bypassing Jonathan. But in this story, we have not heard a single word from God, even to Nathan, who here seems to be more a lobbyist for Solomon. As if realizing the vacuum, Benaiah responds to David's orders with the wish that they will prove to be *God's* will also: "May it be so! May Yahweh, the God of my lord the king, make it so" (v. 36, AT).[8] It's as if Benaiah is saying, "Let's hope God goes along with this!" He then also invokes God's being "with Solomon" as God was so frequently "with David," and concludes expansively with the hope that God will "make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David." On the other hand, the narrator gives no indication that what has happened is *against* God's will, and the negative assessment of Adonijah at the outset suggests the narrator's own approval. We know nothing of Solomon's merits for the position, however, other than being the son of Bathsheba and the favorite of his supporters. Presumably, the notice at Solomon's birth still holds true: "the Lord loved him" (2 Sam 12:24). The question will be whether that love is adequately requited.

The three agents proceed with their charge, with Zadok doing the actual anointing (vv. 38–40). The "horn of oil" comes "from the tent," the sanctuary erected by David to shelter the ark (2 Sam 6:17). Whether or not this is the same horn used by Samuel, its presence along with the sacred ark clearly implies

8. This translation, like the NRSV, follows numerous alternative textual traditions. "May it be /make it so" translates the Hebrew cognate for our word "amen."

divine sanction to the ritual (even if God has not spoken). The inaugural parade back to the palace then strikes up the band, producing an earthshaking noise, and the scene shifts back to Adonijah's rival inaugural party (vv. 41–48). They have scarcely finished their feast when they hear all the commotion, and Joab notices above all the shrill blast of the trumpet. His puzzlement soon finds its answer when Abiathar's son, Jonathan, arrives, *not* with the "good news" expected of a good man (v. 42)[9]—"Solomon now sits on the royal throne" (v. 46). Not only that, but everyone is shaking David's hand and expressing their hope that Solomon will be even more famous than his father, and David has offered a prayer of thanks to God for granting one of his offspring succession to his throne, whereby David seems to confirm the wish previously expressed by Benaiah. As David has ordered, so God has done (v. 48).

At the very moment that Abiathar was celebrating his inauguration, another was taking place that would nullify his own. Never has a party broken up so suddenly, or with such fear—everyone goes home, and Adonijah himself flees for his life. Apparently he runs to the tent from which Zadok took the anointing oil, or at least to the sacrificial altar associated with it. There fugitives would find asylum if they held on to the horns that decorated the altar's corners.[10] Adonijah must resort to these horns because his brother benefited from the *anointing* horn. He refuses to let go until Solomon swears not to execute him, which Solomon does on the condition of Adonijah's honesty, and then sends him home.

Chapter 2 opens with the aging David on his deathbed, issuing a series of orders to Solomon. There are two parts—a pious encouragement in the faith and a settling of scores. The Christian use of the word "testament" in "Old / New Testament" derives from this tradition of a deathbed testimony delivered at key times of transition.[11] The encouragement (vv. 2b-4) also sounds very much like that addressed to Joshua by God in Josh 1:7–9. David charges Solomon to be courageous and to follow everything that is in "the law of Moses," referring to the book of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 17:14–20). Obedience to God's rules will result in God's establishing *Solomon's* rule. Here David repeats the dynastic promise first delivered to him by Nathan, but with a notable change: in 2 Sam 7:11–12 the promise is unconditional, qualified only by the threat of punishment, but not termination. Here the promise is conditional. Solomon is to keep all of God's rules "*so that*" he may prosper and "*so that*" God "will establish his word" to David (AT). In other words, God's confirmation of that word will come *as a result of* Solomon's obedience. David then repeats the "word" of promise: "*If* your heirs . . . walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel." The promise will continue if the kings

9. Note the similarity to the announcement of Absalom's death in 2 Sam 18:27.

10. Presumably Exod 27:1–2; 21:12–14 suggest the custom involved here.

11. E.g., Jacob, Genesis 49–50; Moses, Deuteronomy; Joshua in Joshua 23–24.

adhere to the Great Commandment of Deut 6:4–5. On the other hand, the condition concerns the *extent* of the *realm*, not the *extension* of the *dynasty*. That is, "the throne of Israel"—the unified people of North and South—is at stake, not the continuation of the dynasty itself.[12] That unity will not last much longer than Solomon himself (cf. chap. 12); the dynasty's future will remain a question to the end of Kings. Only two kings will fully live up to David's charge (Hezekiah and Josiah, 2 Kgs 18:5; 22:2; 23:25), and the latter's rule will be tragically short.

In the second part of the deathbed speech David turns to recompense and rewards (vv. 5–9), "a will and testament worthy of a Mafia chieftain," as Robert Alter so aptly puts it.[13] The recompense first involves Joab's murder of David's two military leaders, Abner and Amasa, actions that were done to *David* as well as them. David describes Joab as covered in blood not from battle but from murders done in peacetime. He advises Solomon to act "according to your wisdom," but defines what that should be—not to let Joab live to old age. On the other hand, Solomon is to reward the sons of Barzillai for their father's act of mercy and generosity in supporting David in his flight from Absalom. Then requital comes again, this time against Shimei, the Benjamite who *cursed* David in his flight from Absalom. Although Shimei had subsequently asked David's forgiveness, and received a pardon, Solomon was under no such restraint, and David again suggests what Solomon's wisdom should conclude: "you must bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol." The narrator then reports David's death and burial, leaving one to wonder what it would be like to die with the last words on one's lips words of bitterness and revenge.[14]

There is a notice about the length of David's reign, and then yet another confirmation of Solomon's succession: "So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established." A new era has begun.

Adonijah's next move is incredibly stupid (2:13–25). Solomon had promised to spare him as long as he did not act out of line, but Adonijah now goes to Bathsheba and asks her to ask Solomon to give him David's bedroom companion, the beautiful Abishag as a wife. Although she was not described as a concubine, she most likely now belongs to Solomon, making Adonijah's request seem like a gesture of political defiance, if not outright subversion. We have seen the same issue before, most notably with Ishbaal and Abner.[15] Taking the king's concubine is tantamount to an attempt at taking the king's throne. In making his request, Adonijah reiterates his claim, alleging that "all Israel expected me to reign" (v. 15), contrary to what Bathsheba had previously said, that "all Israel" was waiting for David to *decide* who should reign (1:20). Nevertheless,

12. So Halpern, *First Historians*, 161, 163, referring also to 8:25–26 and 9:4–9.

13. Alter, *David Story*, xiv.

14. David's wish is something like saying "may he go to hell," in that Sheol (a kind of shadowy underworld) "very often has to do with punishment." See Levenson, *Resurrection,* 73. Thus David's absolutely last word is "Sheol," perhaps a risky valediction!

15. 2 Sam 3:6–8; cf. with Absalom, 2 Sam 16:21–22.

Adonijah acknowledges the "turn" of events that established Solomon on the throne, even that "it was his from the Lord," a divine confirmation that we have yet to see.

Bathsheba does go to Solomon, who bows *to her* and has the Queen Mother enthroned at his right hand. She then conveys Adonijah's request as if it were her own, and at first Solomon says of course he will grant anything she asks. But his reply to the request shows how subversive it seems to him: "ask for him the kingdom as well! For he is my elder brother." Indeed, he says, why not add Abiathar and Joab as well, not, of course, as husbands to Abishag but as accomplices to Adonijah's attempted coup. Instead, he vows to take Adonijah's life, and his vow claims divine sanction of his position (which, again, we have not heard): God "has established me and placed me on the throne of my father David, and . . . made me a house as he promised" (v. 24). The language again recalls Nathan's oracle of 2 Samuel 7:11: "the Lord will make you a house," referring to David's offspring. Then in the same breath Solomon dispatches Benaiah who promptly puts Adonijah to death.

Now Solomon turns to the priestly conspirator, Abiathar, and banishes him to Anathoth, saying that he will not execute him since he has "carried the ark of the Lord God before my father David." The narrator interprets Abiathar's exile as "fulfilling the word of the Lord that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh," referring to 1 Sam 2:27–36, where Abiathar is the one who will be left to weep, and Zadok is the one who will have his own priestly house to serve the house of the anointed.

Now it is Joab's turn. Hearing of Adonijah's death, he too flees to the "tent of the Lord" and grabs the horns of the altar, but it will be no sanctuary for him as well. When Benaiah (by now, clearly Solomon's hatchet man), approaches him, Joab insists that he would rather die in the tent rather than elsewhere.[16] Benaiah returns to tell Solomon, who orders him to kill Joab where he is nonetheless. If Joab is inside the tent, he is executed in front of the holy ark; if he is outside, his blood on the altar replaces that of the sacrificial animal. In issuing his order, Solomon affirms that Joab's blood will remove the guilt on David's house for the blood Joab has spilled, thus fulfilling David's dying wish. Indeed, Solomon's defense of David's righteousness is effusive (if not also *self*-righteous), concluding with the conviction that his dynasty will enjoy "peace from the Lord forevermore." Having banished Abiathar and executed Joab, Solomon is now free to confirm Benaiah in the position he had under David, chief of his personal bodyguard, and Zadok as priest (v. 35; cf. 2 Sam 8:17). This continuation of David's administration reiterates the extent to which the monarchy has displaced the old militia, as well as co-opted the sacerdotal institution. The relationship with the latter will become even cozier when the king builds his temple.

16. The situation is confusing in that the altar would not be inside the tent (since it is a sacrificial altar requiring fire), yet Benaiah orders Joab to "come out."

Finally, there is Shimei (2:36–46). Solomon does not follow David's orders but grants him conditional asylum in Jerusalem, provided that he will not leave the city limits. But after three years, Shimei makes the mistake of traveling to the town of Gath in pursuit of escaped slaves, and on his return Solomon summons him, reminding him of the condition (which Shimei himself had declared to be "fair"). Shimei has not only broken Solomon's "commandment" but also his "oath to the Lord," and Solomon cannot help but remind him also of "all the evil" that he did to David in cursing him. Solomon then concludes with another florid glorification of himself and David, claiming that the curse has been reversed: "But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord forever." Benaiah, Solomon's grim reaper, has more work to do.

"So," we hear once again, "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon" (v. 46b; cf. v. 12).

The events in chs.1–2 thus legitimate Solomon's claim to the throne in a number of ways. The narrator characterizes his opponent as an arrogant, deceitful, rebel, much like Absalom. David himself authorizes the succession of Solomon, as the people expect him to do (according to Bathsheba). Solomon's supporters include the formidable figures of the Queen Mother, the prophet Nathan, priest Zadok, and royal guardsman Benaiah. Solomon's execution of Adonijah is presented not as a matter of revenge or mere political expedience but the proper punishment for one who has made a subversive move. The exile of the priest Abiathar is far better than the death he deserves. Similarly, the execution of Joab is demanded to remove blood guilt, and that of Shimei only after he has broken an agreement that he himself described as "fair." As with various acts of his father, Solomon cannot help the fact that all of these events are also in his interest politically.

Solomon's Exceptional Wisdom, Except . . . (3:1–28)

David is remembered as the "Sweet Psalmist of Israel," and many of the Psalms are associated with him; Solomon is remembered as a wise man, and the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon are ascribed to him.[17] David has already alluded to Solomon's wisdom, even though still telling him what he should do (2:6, 9). The story of the two harlots in 3:16–28 is probably the most popular one about Solomon, as "David and Goliath" is about his father. The story provides an instant illustration of the wisdom that Solomon will ask for and receive from God in 3:3–15. But the narrator introduces both passages with reference to two issues that will call Solomon's wisdom into question. One, Solomon's first official act is to arrange a marriage with a foreign woman, a daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Such marital arrangements were common in ancient Near Eastern realms, functioning not to fulfill romance, much less the wishes of the bride, but to seal a political

17. Prov 1:1; Eccles 1:1; cf. 1 Kgs 4:32. The ascription especially of Ecclesiastes is suspicious in that it presents a radically different type of wisdom from that of Proverbs, namely, skepticism.

liaison of mutual benefit to the groom and the father-in-law. (On a lesser scale, a similar arrangement may characterize the marriage of David to Merab, 1 Sam 18:17.) The marriage here signifies Solomon's remarkable prestige in that Egypt was a superpower—Solomon is marrying up! But the problem inherent to such marriages, from the perspective of Deuteronomic theology, was the tendency for the Israelite king to cater to his wife's need to practice her own religious faith, worshipping her own god or gods, a slippery slope leading to his apostasy if not also that of his people. We have seen this issue before, and it will come to center stage later (chap. 11). In a worst-case scenario, Solomon's first act not only seals a marriage but also Israel's doom—not a wise move!

The second problem concerns worship at the "high places" (vv. 2–4). The high places were venerable holy sites frequented by figures as orthodox as Samuel.[18] They never appear in Joshua or Judges, but suddenly become an issue here in the reign of Solomon, and subsequently with Jeroboam in the North (cf. especially below on 13:1–2). Although such worship was common and accepted earlier, the Deuteronomist condemns it, again on the basis of the book of the law of Moses. One way to control ritual is to centralize it under a single authority, which is what the ordinance on sacrifice accomplishes—only the single place that God chooses to put God's name is authorized (Deut 12:13–14, 21). That will mean that all sacrifices are to be performed at the temple in Jerusalem (also thereby providing a monopoly for the temple priesthood). The problem with high places is not that they are associated with apostasy (worshipping other gods) but that they violate the law of centralization. However, one could argue that the law is also intended to *prevent* apostasy by placing all worship under the thumb of the Jerusalem priesthood.

As with other orthodox criteria, we can see two sides to the issue. On the one hand, centralization seems authoritarian, exclusive, and rigid, if not fanatical. Orthodoxy ("right dogma") is always open to the danger of self-righteousness, the smugness of "being right," as well as an intransigence that refuses to accept change (hence the amusing definition of "dogma" as "the living faith of the dead that has become the dead faith of the living"). On the other hand, centralization provides what we might call theological "quality control." Just as there were as many Baal's as there were local shrines venerating him, so there was the potential for numerous Yahweh shrines, and therefore the possibility of numerous *understandings* of Yahweh, and therefore numerous Yahweh's. We have noted before the references to "Yahweh-of-Place-Name."[19] Was the Yahweh of Hebron the same as the Yahweh of Gibeon? Thus one way to read the Shema (Deut 6:4) is "Yahweh our God is *one* Yahweh." Moreover, in addition to quantity, as it were, there is quality. We can see what could happen at local shrines in the story of Micah and the images in Judges 17 (even though there is no editorial condemnation there).

18. 1 Sam 9:12–26; 10:5 (NRSV "shrine").

19. Reading 2 Sam 15:7 as "Yahweh-in-Hebron"; "Yahweh-at-Gibeon," 2 Sam 21:6; cf. Gen 31:13, perhaps "El-Bethel."

Of course, as the narrator notes, Solomon has not yet built the temple, so both he and the people continue to use the high places. Indeed, God is about to show up at the high place also! Nevertheless, like foreign wives, the high places will become a major problem, which is why the narrator has to explain and excuse Solomon's presence at Gibeon that follows as an exception that proves the rule. Thus the Hebrew word *raq*, "except that, only, nevertheless," appears at the beginning of v. 2 and the middle of v. 3. In v. 3 it introduces Solomon's use of the high places as the exception from his otherwise obedient love of God, again to which David had encouraged him and provided the model (v. 3a). The narrator is signaling that the problem identified frequently in the narrative that follows begins here.[20] Failure to remove the high places will mark the negative Deuteronomic assessments of the southern kings;[21] the kings who *do* destroy the high places (Hezekiah, Josiah) will serve as the positive role models. A king can do *everything* right, and be under the tutelage of a priest, and *still* be criticized for not removing the high places (Jehoash, 2 Kgs 12:2–3). As we have observed before, the orthodoxy of a later time is imposed retrospectively to judge the characters.[22] As the next two stories will tell, Solomon is an exceptionally wise man, but with exceptions. The effect is to frame the stories in a way that undermines any unqualified exaltation of the king.

> *The Pilgrims and Puritans of New England fled to America in part to escape what they saw as rigid requirements of the established church (proper vestments, compulsory tithes, hierarchical authority, ordination regulations, required weekly church attendance in a designated building—even the removal of hats by men in worship). But when* they *became established in America they began to see the problems of decentralized worship. When agricultural needs required abandoning a central parish community, changes loomed. "For William Bradford, dispersal was new, and threatening. Many men and women soon lived much too far away to come to the meetinghouse on Sunday. This in itself might undermine the religious mission of the Pilgrims . . . Bradford made plain his fears that the loss of solidarity endangered the very purpose of New England."*[23]

20. See 1 Kgs 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35. The criticism regarding the high places in these royal evaluations is only one of numerous criteria used by the Deuteronomic Historians.

21. Such accusations against northern kings occur only with Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 12:31–32) and a general one at the end of Israel's story (2 Kgs 17:9, 11, 29, 32).

22. See Excursus 4. On the high places and other sacerdotal phenomena, see Halpern, *First Historians*, 224–28.

23. Bunker, *Making Haste from Babylon*, 403. Cf. again Deuteronomy 12, the ordinance on centralization of worship, especially vv. 13–14. Ecclesiastically the spectrum of church authority has played out in numerous ways, in particular in terms of church polity—with the hierarchical, "episcopal," churches on one side (the pope being the supreme example) and the "free," "congregational," churches on the other