JEHU'S CORONATION AND PURGE OF ISRAEL

by

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The Jehu tradition (II Kings ix-x) is complex and difficult. Some interpreters basically accept the text's deuteronomistic perspective, viewing Jehu as a king committed to "Yahweh's continuing mastery over Baal and the political machine promoting Baal worship."[1] From this point of view, Jehu is merely and only a purgation tool in the hands of Yahweh.[2]

Others disagree. G. Ahlström, for example, sees him as a political revolutionary.[3] When Jehu kills the royal families of both Judah and Israel, this shows to Ahlström only that a Yahwistic minority has become desperate enough to use terrorism as a political weapon. Later this behavior is creatively translated into religious terms and theological categories. Ahlström justifiably questions Jehu's use of violence and deception, but in so doing he subordinates the tradition's theological characteristics to a hypothetical reconstruction of its politics. In addition, he fails to explain why or how this so-called "powerless political minority" stays in power for several more generations.

H. D. Hoffman reads the Jehu story against the Ahab story, isolating and comparing what he calls the "standardized language" of both accounts.[4] From this comparison he concludes that no ancient

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[1] W. S. LaSor, D. A. Hubbard, and F. W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, 1996), p. 207. A few rabbis try to apply Jehu's sense of justice to their contemporaries; i.e., they argue that contemporary "Jehus" still need to "slay" contemporary "Jorams," particularly those guilty of usury (*Exod. Rab.* 382).

[2] G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York, 1965) 2.28-29; trans. from 1960 German edition. I. Provan (*1 and 2 Kings* [NIBC 7; Peabody, MA, 1995], p. 209) argues that Jehu's mission is to "purge" Israel and "cleanse" Judah of Baal-worship.

[3] G. W. Ahlström, "King Jehu—A Prophet's Mistake," in *Scripture and History in Theology: Essays in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam* (eds. A. L. Merrill and T. W. Overholt; PTMS 17; Pittsburgh, 1977), pp. 47-69.

[4] H. D. Hoffman, *Reform und Reformen: Untersuchungen zu einem Grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung* (ATANT 66; Zürich, 1980), pp. 99-101. P. Hanson (*The*

historical annal could possibly have lain beneath this text, though to support this conclusion he too must focus on the redactoral possibilities *above* the text instead of the theological conflicts *within* the text.[5]

Even among those who accept the story as in some sense historically true, many doubt whether everything Jehu does in Yahweh's name has Yahweh's approval. Hosea's negative appraisal, for example, is quite serious (Hos. i 4), and the negative appraisal of Dtr himself seems definitive (II Kings x 31). From this angle the conclusion seems obvious that the biblical tradition itself is ambivalent. Th. Mullen recognizes this ambivalence, yet notes that even though Jehu receives the same negative reprimand as every other northern king, he also receives some very high praise:

> Because you have done well in carrying out what I consider right, and in accordance with all that was in my heart have dealt with the house of Ahab, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.[6]

Mullen notes that this is "the strongest endorsement given to any northern monarch in Dtr," and suggests that it be interpreted as an "innovation on the concept of eternal dynasty promised to David" (II Sam. vii 12-16).[7] In his view, Dtr "utilizes the stories of the actions of Jehu in fulfillment of the prophetic condemnations of the house of Ahab" in order to "provide the basis for a uniquely designed divine assurance of dynastic stability for the Jehu dynasty."[8] This explanation is attractive, even if it, too, says little to the nature and character of the text's theological conflicts.[9]

People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible [San Francisco, 1986], p. 147) takes a sociological tack, arguing that Jehu perverts the whole "Yahwistic notion of community."

[5] That is, Hoffman presupposes that the ancient readers of this text "must rely on *our* knowledge of texts and traditions at that time" (D. C. Polaski, *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality* [BIS 50; Leiden, 2001], pp. 44-45 [emphasis original]).

[6] II Kings x 30.

[7] E. T. Mullen, "The Royal Dynastic Grant to Jehu and the Structure of the Books of Kings," *JBL* 107 (1988), pp. 196-97.

[8] Mullen, p. 198.

[9] Negative appraisals of Jehu are nothing new. Augustine, for example, finds him a reprehensible character motivated only by "the lust of his own domination" (*To Consentius: Against Lying* § 3). In the Talmud, Rab Joshua ben Levi throws Jehu onto something of a moral "compost heap" with six other "idolatrous kings"—Jeroboam, Baasha, Ahab, Pekah, Menahem, and Hoshea (*b. Git.* 88a). Talmud, however, is ambiguous. Attempting to explain why Jehu, a "righteous man," eventually defaults to Jeroboam's bad example (II Kings x 31), one rabbi rather feebly suggests that it is because of his boast in

Relatively few recent studies address what I believe to be the narrator's most pressing goal: viz., to articulate a prophetic theology of reform within a violent, oppressive, highly Canaanized religio-political context.[10] In my opinion, this scholarly lacuna leaves open a number of questions: Why does the Yahwist prophet Hosea excoriate the Yahwist king Jehu for doing what the Yahwist prophet Elisha (by proxy) commissions him to do—viz., exterminate the house of Omri (Hos. i 4)?[11] Why does Jehu so fervently attack Canaanite religion only to submit later to Assyrian hegemony?[12] Whether his submission is religious or political is, again, debatable,[13] yet the famous Black Obelisk

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x 18 Even though the biblical narrator defines it *as a ruse* (x 19), Rab Abaye still argues that the "covenant" he makes with his "lips" is binding, ruse or not (*b Sanh* 102a) Aquinas, on the other hand (agreeing with Jerome), sees Jehu's ruse as something "useful" when carefully "employed" under limited circumstances (*Summa Theologica, Question 111*) A Rofe (*The Prophetical Stories* [Jerusalem, 1982], pp 72-78) sees this ruse as folkloristic and anecdotal, but M Cogan and H Tadmor (*II Kings* [AB 11, Garden City, NY, 1988], p 117) dismiss this as "hypercritical" and "excessive"

[10] Like von Rad, M Noth (*The History of Israel*, 2nd ed [New York, 1960], pp 246-47, trans of 1960 German ed) distinguishes between Jehu's "religious" and "secular" sides—as a reformer, Jehu "acts as champion of the unsullied worship of Yahweh," but as a politician, he is "bound to abandon the political line" of the Omrides, and "give up all foreign involvements whatsoever" (Noth's explanation of Jehu's sudden submission to Assyria) S Herrmann (*A History of Israel in Old Testament Times*, 2nd ed [Philadelphia, 1981], p 222, trans from 1980 German ed) sees him as "perverting the power with which he has been entrusted" J Bright (*A History of Israel*, 3rd ed [Philadelphia, 1981], p 251) calls this "a purge of unspeakable brutality, beyond excuse from a moral point of view" Unwilling to segregate religion from politics, J Wesley sees Jehu simply as a man of "mixed" character ("Sermon 39 Catholic Spirit," in *The Complete Works of John Wesley, Vol 5 Biography and Sermons 1-39* [ed E Sugden, Nashville, 1983] § 5)

[11] S Irvine hypothesizes ("The Threat of Jezreel," *CBQ* 57 [1995], pp 494-503) that Hos i 4-5 dates from c 750 BCE and anticipates two imminent disasters the fall of the dynasty of Jehu and the territorial reduction of Israel to the hill country south of the Jezreel valley Hosea cites Jehu's massacre as the specific reason for divine judgment, resorting to this threat as a counter to the propaganda of Jeroboam's court (I Kings ix-x) T McComiskey argues ("Prophetic Irony in Hosea 1 4 A Study of the Collocation *pqd ʿl* and its Implications for the Fall of Jehu's Dynasty," *JSOT* 58 [1993], pp 93-101) that Hos i 4 does not establish a causal relationship between Jehu's coup and divine retribution on his dynasty, only that Hosea expresses the irony that Jehu both ascends and descends to power via *blood*

[12] While evidence is lacking for Assyrian religious hegemony, the famous "black obelisk" of Shalmaneser III clearly shows "Jehu son of Omri" (*ia-u-a mâr ḫu-um-ri*) kneeling and paying homage (*ANET* 281)

[13] N Gottwald (*The Hebrew Bible A Socio-literary Introduction* [Philadelphia, 1985], p 345), for example, presumes from the inscription on Shalmaneser's "black obelisk" (*ANET* 280-81) that Jehu "formally acknowledges Assyrian gods," but P K McCarter thinks Shalmaneser might be confusing Jehu with Jehoram ("'Yaw, Son of Omri' A

does show him submitting to Shalmaneser III,[14] and this fits poorly with the biblical tradition's portrayal of this king. Incongruities like these are provoking a number of explanations from a variety of perspectives today.[15]

This paper will attempt a new reading of the Jehu tradition by reading it alongside the Baal-Anat cycle from Ugarit (*KTU* 1.3 i-iii). To anticipate my conclusions, I will argue that Jehu's coronation and purge is most likely a multi-leveled *parody* of a well-known religious tradition, and further, that its primary goal is to narrate an important episode in Israel's history in a way that appropriately ridicules the religious traditions of Israel's enemies.

At the beginning of the Jehu cycle, Elisha and Hazael stand waiting for the fulfillment of Yahweh's commission to Elijah (I Kings xix 16). Nudged by Elisha, Hazael successfully drags the Omrides into a costly border war, and this begins to corrode the anti-Assyrian coalition which has hitherto bound Israel to Aram.[16] The Arameans wound Joram in battle, and the king retreats to Jezreel to lick his wounds. Thereafter Elisha sends an emissary to Ramoth-Gilead to anoint Jehu "king over Israel," a risky move since Joram is still very much Israel's king.[17]

Philological Note on Israelite Chronology," *BASOR* 216 [1974], pp. 5-7). B. Halpern suggests the problem is rooted in an Assyrian attempt to decipher an as-yet undiscovered written *Vorlage* ("Yaua, Son of Omri, Yet Again," *BASOR* 265 [1987], pp. 81-85).

[14] On *Ia-ú-a mār Ḫumri* as, in fact, portraying Jehu on the Black Obelisk, see M. Weippert, "Jau(a) mar Humri: Joram oder Jehu von Israel?", *VT* 28 (1978), pp. 113-18.

[15] Is he a biological (but objectionable) "son of Omri," and is this what Shalmaneser means? (T. J. Schneider, "Rethinking Jehu," *Bib* 77 [1996], pp. 100-07). Is he partnering with Hazael in a Syro-Israelite collusion to eliminate Joram and Ahaziah from power (W. Schniedewind, "Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu's Revolt," *BASOR* 302 [1996], pp. 75-90)? M. White ("Naboth's vineyard and the legitimation of a dynastic extermination," *VT* 44 [1994], pp. 66-76) speculates that the Naboth-"story" in II Kings ix predates the Naboth story in I Kings xxi, and further, that the latter is composed to legitimate Jehu's violent revolution. F. Garcia-Treto ("The Fall of the House: A Carnivalesque Reading of 2 Kings 9 and 10," JSOT 46 [1990], pp. 47-65) sees Jehu's destruction of the House of Ahab and the House of Baal as more than just anti-Samaritan polemic, suggesting that the whole narrative needs better integrating into the larger literary design of Dtr.

[16] Earlier this coalition succeeds in stopping the Assyrians at Qarqar (*ANET* 285-87).

[17] In Kings, only four men are anointed "king over Israel": Solomon, Jehu, Joash, and Jehoahaz. In each case, this time-honored ritual serves, in A. Caquot's words, as

Parody and prophecy

Paralleling this risky *political* move, the narrator makes an equally daring *literary* move. Basically he continues the satirical attack begun in the Mt. Carmel narrative,[18] then revisited in the farce of the blind Arameans,[19] then revisited again in the preceding narrative about the Samarian siege.[20] In this last episode, for example, an unnamed official complains that Samaria is doomed, and doubts aloud whether salvation might be possible even if a "window" in heaven were to open up and rain down salvation.[21] R. LaBarbera has convincingly shown that this line is a parody of the debate between Kothar-wa-Ḫasis and Baal over whether or not to put a window in Baal's palace (*KTU* 1.4 v 58-vii 29). In fact, he makes a convincing case for reading all of II Kings vi 8-vii 20—the episode immediately preceding our text—as a "cleverly constructed satire" aimed at "the ruling elite of the day . . . whether they come from Samaria or Damascus."[22]

LaBarbera is not alone. Biblical scholars have for some time been emphasizing both the ubiquity and the importance of prophetic satire. Th. Gaster once spoke of Hosea, for example, as a "sustained satire on pagan seasonal festivals."[23] D. Marcus identifies no less than fourteen examples of satire in the Hebrew Bible,[24] and G. Yee has definitively shown that parody tends to replicate, like a virus, the anatomies of the literary forms it tries to subvert.[25]

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a "sign of national salvation following a crisis that is insurmountable from a human point of view" (cited in J. Coppens, *Le messianisme royal: Ses origins, son développement, son accomplissement* [Lectio Divina 54; Paris, 1968], p. 228).

[18] I Kings xviii 26-29. R. P. Carroll ("Is Humour Also Among the Prophets?" in *On Humour and the Comic in the Bible* [eds. Y. T. Radday and A. Brenner; Sheffield, 1990] 177, cited in T. Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets* [Louisville, 1992] p. 13) speaks of the "savage irony" and "mocking parody" of Elijah's comments to the prophets of Baal. H. Jagersma ("YŠN in I Könige xviii 27," *VT* 25 [1975], pp. 674-76) traces this parody down to specific verbal parallels, suggesting that יָשֵׁן may be parodying Baal's "death sleep" at the hands of Mot (*KTU* 1.5 v-vi).

[19] II Kings vi 8-23.

[20] II Kings vi 24-vii 20.

[21] II Kings vii 2; *KTU* 1.4 v 59-65.

[22] R. LaBarbera, "The Man of War and the Man of God: Social Satire in 2 Kings 6:8-7:20," *CBQ* 46 (1984), pp. 637-51.

[23] T. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York, 1975) II, p. 620.

[24] D. Marcus, *From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-Prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible* (Brown Judaic Studies 301; Atlanta, 1995).

[25] G. Yee, "The Anatomy of Biblical Parody: The Dirge Form in 2 Samuel 1 and

Th. Jemielity, however, in a book-length study, addresses the ideological reasons why prophets (and prophetic narrators) so often gravitate to satire as a literary weapon.[26] Like the Roman satirists Horace and Juvenal, Hebrew prophets use satire because it has a demonstrated ability to "deny and subvert the acceptable moral form which complacency imposes on human action."[27] To challenge the elitist power-brokers of their day, prophets attack not only their behavior, but their literary traditions as well, both formally and substantively. Sometimes these attacks can be rather vulgar (one thinks of Ezekiel's preoccupations with excreta and genitalia), and sometimes they can degenerate into little more than "controlled rhetorical chaos."[28] Yet underneath its "generic instability,"[29] Hebrew satire can generate an amazingly wide range of "technique, theme, and victim."[30]

Even as Aristophanes parodies Herakles' "descent to the netherworld" in his play *Frogs*,[31] for example, so Jonah is a parody of a *prophet's* "descent into the netherworld."[32] Even as Juvenal mocks the weird religious practices of the Egyptians,[33] so Numbers mocks Balaam's weird religious practices.[34] Other examples include Zophar's second

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Isaiah 14," *CBQ* 50 (1988), pp. 565-86. L. Guilhamet (*Satire and the Transformation of Genre* [Philadelphia, 1987], p. 165) speaks of "the characteristic dynamic of satire to deform those structures as part of their transformation" (cited in Jemielity, p. 213, n. 17).

[26] Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets.*

[27] Jemielity, p. 57.

[28] Jemielity, p. 61.

[29] Gerald L. Bruns, "Allegory and Satire: A Rhetorical Mediation," *New Literary History* 11 (1979-80), p. 129 (cited in Jemielity, p. 60).

[30] Jemielity, p. 23.

[31] Aristophanes, *Frogs* (ed. and trans. A. Sommerstein; Westminster, 1996).

[32] R. Payne ("The Prophet Jonah: Reluctant Messenger and Intercessor," *Expository Times* 100 [1989], pp. 131-34) sees Jonah as a parody of what prophets are supposed to do. Instead of interceding for others, Jonah is always "descending"—to Joppa, into the ship, into the depths of the sea—away from God's presence. When he prays, it is always for himself; only the sailors and Ninevites pray in faith. D. Marcus (*From Balaam to Jonah*) sees Jonah as one of four anti-prophetic satires in the Hebrew Bible, the other three being Balaam and his donkey (Num. xxii 21-35), the boys and the bald prophet (II Kings ii 23-25), and the lying prophet (I Kings xiii). Each of these stories is critical of the prophets and uses satire to convey their message.

[33] *The Satires of Juvenal,* trans. R. Humphries (Bloomington, IN, 1958), pp. 175-76 (cited in Jemielity, p. 21).

[34] A. Rofé (*Spr Bl'm* [JBS 1; Jerusalem, 1979], p. 51) calls the she-ass story a בורלסקה ("burlesque").

speech in Job,[35] Isaiah's "dirge" over Babylon,[36] and the famous "anti-salvation" oracles beginning the book of Amos.[37]

Parodying the "coronation"

The "coronation" of Jehu is another case in point, and for several reasons. *First*, the liturgist at this "coronation" is a nameless "son of the prophets." This is not Samuel, the great prophet, or Zadok, the great high priest.[38] We have no idea who this person is, and this is precisely the point. His anonymity is deliberate—thus our surprise when an entire "oracle" comes out of his mouth. Elisha gives him one scripted line—"This is what Yahweh says: 'I anoint you king over Israel'"—but this is not what he actually says. Instead, he commands Jehu to "destroy the house of Ahab," "to avenge the blood of my servants the prophets." He compares the "house of Ahab to the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat," defaming him by association with Israel's most famous *Unheilsherrscher*,[39] and he predicts that "the dogs will devour Jezebel." We *could* read these lines as redactoral embellishment from a creative editor, but in light of the parodies in the immediate context, we also need to consider whether this sermonette is part of a larger, deliberate literary strategy.[40]

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[35] Job xx 1-29 (J. C. Holbert, "'The skies will uncover his iniquity': satire in the second speech of Zophar [Job XX]," *VT* 31 [1981], pp. 171-79).

[36] Isa. xiv 4-23 (Yee, "The Anatomy of Biblical Parody").

[37] Amos iv 6-13 (H. Gese, "Komposition bei Amos," *VTSup* 32 [1981], pp. 74–95).

[38] Samuel anoints David (I Sam. xvi 13); Zadok anoints Solomon (I Kings i 39).

[39] Carl D. Evans ("Naram-Sin and Jeroboam: The Archetypal *Unheilsherrscher* in Mesopotamian and Biblical Historiography," *Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method* [eds. W. W. Hallo, J. C. Moyer, L. G. Perdue; Winona Lake, IN, 1983], pp. 114, 124) argues that "the Jeroboam of tradition is Israel's historiographical counterpart to the Naram-Sin of Mesopotamia's *Unheilsherrscher* ('condemned leader') traditions. . . . In both cases the traditions emphasize the ruler's misfortune or condemnation and focus on a general calamity that overtakes the dynasty and nation, claiming that all is the result of certain religious offenses on the part of the king."

[40] W. Schniedewind ("History and Interpretation: The Religion of Ahab and Manasseh in the Book of Kings," *CBQ* 55 [1993], p. 656) sees all mention of Jezebel as exilic/post-exilic because he thinks "the strict condemnation of Jezebel, the foreign bride of Ahab, fits into an exilic and postexilic situation in which the marriage to foreign women threatened the ethnic and religious existence of Israel" (pp. 652-53). Such arguments used to be applied to Ruth as well—another foreign woman (M. S. Moore, *Ruth* [NIBCOT 7; Peabody, MA, 2000], p. 296).

Second, most kings are commissioned to *build* things (temples, armies, palaces, economies).[41] This king, however, is commissioned to "destroy" and "avenge" and "devour," and the objects of this destruction are not Israel's enemies, but Israel's leaders. Like a surgeon, Jehu goes into Israel's body politic and cuts out all the cancer he can find, even to the point of taking some of the pink tissue around the edges. Whether (post)moderns understand it or accept it or approve of it, Yahweh commissions Jehu to exterminate the house of Omri, not engage it in ecumenical dialogue.

Third, the narrator parodies the community's reaction to this commission. At first, this liturgist receives no respect from the community, only ridicule and disbelief. Jehu's men even label him a *měšuggāʿ* ("madman").[42] After Jehu's private meeting with him, though, their opinions quickly change as ridicule turns to fear and robes start piling up at Jehu's feet.

Parodying the "purge"

What follows next is literarily fascinating. As is well-known, ever since *KTU* 1.3 came to light in 1930,[43] scholars have puzzled over Anat's behavior.[44] To explain it, some have tried to tie her myth to

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[41] R. Grieshammer focuses on Egyptian parallels ("Altes Testament," *Lexicon der Ägyptologie* I [eds. W. Helck and E. Otto; Wiesbaden, 1972-73], pp. 163-66), but others see common patterns in several ancient Near Eastern coronation traditions (W. A. Ward, "Egyptian Relations with Canaan," *ABD* 2.406). J.-G. Heintz ("Royal Traits and Messianic Figures: A Thematic and Iconographical Approach," *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* [ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis, 1992], pp. 52-66) demonstrates the centrality of "anointing" to coronation rituals throughout the ancient Near East

[42] II Kings ix 11. Prophets often suffer at the hands of their opponents. Hosea laments how prophets are marginalized as fools and maniacs (*mešuggâʿ*, Hos. ix 7). Jeremiah designates two prophets among the exiles in Babylon (Ahab and Zedekiah) as false prophets because they commit adultery and preach lies (Jer. xxix 23). In retaliation, a certain exile named Shemaiah obliquely calls Jeremiah a *mešuggâʿ* ("madman").

[43] J B Lloyd, "Anat and the 'Double' Massacre of KTU 1.3 ii," *Ugarit, Religion, and Culture. Essays Presented in Honour of J. C. L. Gibson* (eds. N. Wyatt; W. G. E. Watson, and J B. Lloyd; Munster, 1996), p. 151.

[44] The story of "Anat's Purge" appears in the larger Baal-cycle and Ugaritologists disagree over exactly how to reconstruct the sequence of tablets upon which these stories are preserved. Dennis Pardee's reconstruction/translation appears in "The Ba'lu Myth," *The Context of Scripture*, vol. I: *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* [eds. W W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, Jr.; Leiden, 1997], pp. 241-74). Mark Smith's much different reconstruction/translation appears in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (ed. S. B. Parker; Atlanta, 1997).

a seasonal calendar, supposing Anat's "bloodbath" to be a primitive attempt to revive the land's "vegetative spirit."[45] Some have hypothesized that Anat's devotees may have engaged in some sort of homeopathic ritual for which the myth is a blueprint—perhaps a "ritual combat" designed to provoke Baal into ending the sterility of summer and sending down the autumn rains.[46]

Whatever the anthropological possibilities, others have noticed a number of intertextual parallels between this myth and various sections of the Hebrew Bible.[47] Ph. Stern, for example, takes M. Smith's[48] suggestions about Anat generally and applies them to Psa. xxiii, pointing out a number of common references to "tables among enemies," the destruction of both "house and valley," and the "house of the deity."[49] Before his death, P. Craigie proposed that the Song of Deborah parallels the Anat myth in at least five ways: (1) Deborah, like Anat, has a male warrior assistant; (2) Deborah, like Anat, is a leader of warriors; (3) Deborah "dominates" (*tdrky*) on the battlefield, just as Anat is a mistress of "dominion" (*drkt*); (4) Anat is a "maiden" (*rḥm*), so too Deborah is a "maiden" (*rḥm*); and (5) Deborah, like Anat, commands a military host of stars.[50] Craigie believed that Dtr was quite aware of this tradition, whether or not it ever found a home in a specific *cult* dedicated solely to Anat.[51]

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[45] Lloyd ("Double Massacre," pp. 153-57) cites and critiques the pioneering work of Dussaud, Virolleaud, Gray, Gaster, de Moor, Bowman, Caquot, and del Olmo Leite.

[46] Lloyd, pp. 156-57. T. N. D. Mettinger surveys the debate in his *The Riddle of Resurrection: "Dying and Rising Gods" in the Ancient Near East* (CB 50; Stockholm, 2001) pp. 15-53.

[47] J. Gray, "The Blood Bath of the Goddess Anat in the Ras Shamra Texts," *UF* 11 (1979), pp. 315-24.

[48] M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God* (San Francisco, 1990), p. 64.

[49] P. D. Stern, "The 'Bloodbath of Anat' and Psalm xxiii," *VT* 44 (1994), pp. 120-24.

[50] P. Craigie, "Deborah and Anat: A Study of Poetic Imagery (Judges 5)," *ZAW* 90 (1978), pp. 174-81. S. G. Dempster ("Mythology and History in the Song of Deborah," *WTJ* 41 [1978], pp. 33-53) sees the Baal-Anat imagery transferred to Yahweh-Deborah, but Barak-Deborah is a concurrent possibility. J. Day (*Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* [JSOTSup 265; Sheffield, 2000, pp. 137-39) is critical of Craigie's parallels.

[51] M. Smith (*Early History of God*, p. 6) and K. van der Toorn ("Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine," *Numen* 39 [1992], pp. 82-3) find little evidence for the existence of an Anat *cult* in first millenium Phoenicia, and D. Pardee (Review of N. Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth*, in *JBL* 113 [1994], p. 506) recognizes the "difficulty" of specific Anat worship because she represents "the dangerous side of young females . . . who have not (yet) knuckled under to . . . society." Few,

With regard to the myth's *structure*, however, J. Lloyd has helpfully suggested that Anat engages in two separate battles because at the root of this myth lies the primordial desire of conquerors to perfect their military conquests with corresponding religious sacrifices. Citing epigraphic and iconographic evidence from Moab, Egypt, and Ugarit, Lloyd suggestively proposes that conquerors cannot declare total victory until prisoners-of-war are brought before the (statue of the) appropriate deity, and put to death. "It is only once the actions of war are carried out within the microcosm of the temple itself that perfection is achieved."[52]

Assuming Lloyd is correct, I am inclined to think that the narrator of II Kings ix-x might be deliberately parodying the Anat tradition in order to propel his anti-Baalist program to a higher intensity-level. Just as Anat purges the earth, so Jehu purges Israel. Just as Anat purges both "field" and "house," so Jehu purges both "field" and "house." Just as Anat adorns herself and puts on paint, so Jezebel adorns herself and puts on paint. The following chart breaks down all the parallels I can find into subcategories of characterization, plot, and theme.[53]

Jehu's purge (II Kings ix 14-x 36)	*Anat's purge (KTU 1.3 i-iii)*
Characterization	
• One purging tool: Jehu	One purging tool: Anat
• Two enemies (Joram & Ahaziah)	Two "enemies" (Gapnu & Ugar)
• Jehu stacks 70 "heads" (*rōʾšīm*)	Anat kicks "heads" (*riš*) around like "balls"
• Jehu "fills his hand" with the bow (*qešet*)	Anat's signature weapon is her "bow" (*qšt*)[54]
• Jezebel adorns herself	Anat adorns herself
• Jezebel uses *pûk* on her eyes ("antinomy")	Anat uses *ánhb* on her eyes ("snail dye")
• Jezebel looks out a window	Anat closes "the gates"

however, question the existence of an ongoing Anat *tradition*, nor that this tradition continues well into the first millennium. Van der Toorn (p. 97), for example, agrees with those who see Anat as the "Queen of Heaven" in Jer. xliv 15-30).

[52] Lloyd, p. 160.

[53] Doubtless Israelite awareness of this myth is due less to cultic *Sitze im Leben* than centuries of debate. Whether or not Anat had her own cult and her own temple, the Baal-Anat myth lies at the very core of Canaanite religion. Every Syro-Palestinian in the first millennium would be at least nominally aware of its basic structure, characters, and themes.

[54] In another Canaanite myth, Anat so covets a particular bow, she kills its owner and steals it—behavior similar to what we see in Jezebel when she kills Naboth and steals his land (*KTU* 1.18 iv 12-13; I Kings xxi 5-14).

• Jezebel's "palms" (*kap*) are barely visible	Anat proudly wears the "palms" (*kp*) of warriors on her belt
• Jezebel's "skull," "feet" and "hands" are her only remains	Anat's "liver," "heart," "knees" and "fingers" participate in her victory
Plot	
• Two battles: one in the field, one in Baal's "house" (*bêt*)	Two battles: one in the field, one in the "palace" (*bht*)[55] of Anat
• Jehu "meets" (*qārâ*) several officials before final battle	Anat "meets" (*qry*) "pages" (*ǵlm*) before final battle
• Jehu meets Joram at Naboth's "field"	Anat meets enemies at the "foot of the rock" (*bšt ǵr*)
• Jehu shoots an arrow (*ḥēṣî*) through sickly Joram's heart	Anat shoots "old men" (*šbm*) with her "shafts" (*mṭ*)
• House of Baal has a "city" in it (*ʿîr*)	Anat fights "between two cities" (*bn qrytm*)
• Jezebel mocks her enemies	Anat mocks her enemies
• Jezebel's "blood" (*dâm*) spatters	Anat plunges her knees into "blood" (*dm*)
Theme	
• Justice	Purgation
• Prophetic covenant	Priestly power
• "House"	"House"
• Reward for obedience	Celebration of enemies' defeat

Characterization

Keeping in mind Jemielity's cautions about satire's "generic instability" and "controlled chaos",[56] I want to emphasize at the outset of these comparisons that no literary comparison can ever be "certain,"[57] especially when informed scholars cannot agree on matters as basic as tablet placement and/or narrative sequence. Some of these parallels will seem more convincing than others. Still, the main characters in these two traditions enact "flat" roles as *purifying agents*.[58] Anat purges both valley and town on behalf of Baal, her master and lord. Jehu likewise purges Israel on behalf of Yahweh, his master and lord. In

[55] According to C. H. Gordon, the form is plural, but the meaning is singular (i.e., multiple buildings, one palace; *UT* 19.463).

[56] Jemielity, pp. 60-61.

[57] Stern, p. 124.

[58] Jehu is not like, say, Bathsheba, who starts out "flat" in II Sam. but becomes considerably more complex in I Kings (A. Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* [Louisville, 1994], p. 149).

the Canaanite myth, Anat "raises her voice" against two low-level deities, Gapnu and Ugar, and vigorously defends her brother Baal from further divine attack.[59] In the Hebrew story, Jehu does not even bother to converse with, he simply exterminates the kings of Israel and Judah (Joram and Ahaziah), and by so doing the narrator immediately deflates these kings' exaggerated self-image, paralleling them, however subtly, with Canaanite demi-gods at "the lowest level of the divine assembly."[60]

Moreover, each agent focuses on the "perfection" (Lloyd's term) of their respective purges; i.e., each purges something "outside" (field/wilderness) as well as something "inside" (city/temple). In the Canaanite text, Anat does this by kicking her enemies' heads around like soccer balls and wearing their palms into battle like war-trophies.[61] In the Hebrew text, Jehu stacks up his enemies' heads before Samaria's gate, then forces his foes to look at them while he makes a speech.[62] Further, since myths are intentionally designed to be fluid and repetitious, several of these parallels easily shift back and forth between similarly "flat" characters, whether the parallel is between Anat-Jehu or Anat-Jezebel.[63] Just as Anat mocks her enemies, so Jezebel mocks hers, calling Jehu "Zimri" (the infamous assassin-king who precedes the Omrides).[64] And while we might speculate why Anat adorns herself,[65] Jezebel's motives seem a bit more obvious. Jezebel paints *her* eyes because Anat paints *her* eyes. Jezebel puts on antimony (*pûk*) because Anat puts on murex (*ánhb*). Whether this is warpaint or mascara is never stated in either text, but Dtr seizes on it to heighten his satire and intensify his parody.

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[59] Responding to a presentation of an earlier draft of this paper (Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Nov. 19, 2001, Denver, Colorado), Mark Smith objects to the suggestion that Gapnu and Ugar might be enacting roles as "enemies" here, but it seems obvious to me that Anat's reaction to their arrival is negative and hostile.

[60] *KTU* 1.3 iii 33 (Smith, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, p. 83).

[61] Many aboriginal North American tribes used to wear scalps into battle as well.

[62] M. Teichman ("How Writers Fought Back: Literature from the Nazi Ghettos and Camps," *Judaism* 47 [1998], pp. 338-50) notes that concentration camp commanders in World War II forced Jews to cremate the bodies of their fellow Jews in an attempt to break down resistance. Photographs of skulls piled up in front of victorious soldiers are not unknown in modern times.

[63] E. M. Forster (*Aspects of the Novel* [New York, 1927], pp. 72-73) carefully distinguishes between flat, undeveloped characters and round, complex characters.

[64] I Kings xvi 15-20.

[65] J. C. de Moor (*The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Baʿlu* [AOAT 16; Neukirchen, 1994], p. 94) notes the importance of Anat's *toilette* but does not explain it.

Apparently he wants to satirize this Phoenician queen on several levels, even down to the details of her personal *toilette*.[66]

This parody continues on into the narrative about her death. In the myth, Anat's liver "swells with laughter" as she "washes her hands in the blood of the guards, her fingers in the gore of the warriors."[67] In Dtr, however, Jezebel's "skull" no longer laughs, nor do her "hands" write false letters, nor do her "feet" any longer walk on family land stolen away from murdered Israelites. Just as Anat sheds her enemies' blood, so Jehu sheds his enemies' blood. Readers even nominally familiar with the Baal-Anat cycle would have no problem grasping these parallels.

Plot

Beyond characterization, however, each plot-line structures itself around two battles: one in the "valley" and one in the "town." In the Canaanite myth, Anat becomes dissatisfied with "fighting in the valley," and "takes herself to her palace." Once inside, however, she starts rearranging the furniture and slaughtering her enemies, until "sated with fighting in the house, with battling between the tables."[68] The same plot-sequence occurs in the Jehu narrative, *in the same order*. Jehu begins his attack in the plain outside Jezreel, but quickly moves the battle inside, massacring his enemies within the temple of Baal itself. Outside, on the plain, he purges Israel's politico-military establishment. Inside, in Baal's temple, he purges Israel's religious establishment.

Further, if Dtr *is* playing off this myth, this helps to explain the biblical text's flashbacks and other suspense-building features. In the Canaanite cycle, Anat "meets youths" (*wtqry ǵlmm*) before going into battle. In Dtr, however, Jehu "meets" (*qārâ*) a whole slew of people—a "horseman," a "second horseman," Jezreel's "officials, elders, guardians, and palace administrator," the "city governor," and a traditionalist

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[66] *Contra* J. C. Holbert ("Keren-Happuch," *ABD* 4.24) who thinks she paints her eyes "to woo the maniacal Jehu." Some preachers go wild with this text, vilifying *all* women who wear eye-makeup because Jezebel "painted her eyes."

[67] In light of my parody hypothesis, I am more inclined to agree with M. Smith against J. C. L. Gibson that *ydh bdm ḏmr* means "her hands *in* (not *from*) warrior-blood" (M. Smith, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, p. 167, n. 50).

[68] *KTU* 1.3 ii 18-19, 29-30. Stern ("Psalm xxiii," p. 121) sees this as "the most important connection" between the Anat myth and Psa. xxiii.

named "Jehonadab son of Recab." In each of these "meetings" another messenger asks Jehu, *Hašālôm? Hašālôm?* ("Is it peace? . . . Is it peace?"),[69] and Jehu responds by "turning" (סבב) each messenger into an ally and descending on Joram like a "madman" (a clear allusion to the "madman" prophet mentioned earlier).[70]

Finally, after prolonging the suspense, Dtr has these two enemies square off in a climactic battle. In the Canaanite myth, Anat engages her enemies at "the foot of the rock" (*bšt ǵr*), perhaps a reference to her own mountain sanctuary.[71] In the Hebrew narrative, however, the parties meet at the moral epicenter of the biblical tradition—Naboth's vineyard. Intensifying the suspense even further, Dtr inserts an historical flashback to explain why Joram has to die at this very spot, the killing field of Naboth's cruel death. This is brilliant writing, a powerful mixture of irony, history, satire, and theology. Just as Anat picks up her bow, so Jehu "fills his hand with the bow."[72] Just as Anat drives out "old men" with her "shafts" (*mṭ*), so Jehu shoots a final "shaft" (*ḥēṣî*) into the king's heart.[73] How fitting it is, from Dtr's perspective, that Joram not only faces judgment at the site of his mother's most heinous crime, but that it is encapsulated in a parody of his mother's religion.

Themes

Like all ancient Near Eastern myths, the Baal-Anat cycle is a ritual reflection of a major political reality, *priestly power*—which priest-

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[69] S. Olyan ("*Hašālôm*? Some Literary Considerations of 2 Kings 9," *CBQ* 46 [1984], pp. 652-68) argues that the key to understanding the story in II Kings ix is the recognition that underlying it exists an intellectual framework which views community/personal relations in terms of "completeness"/"order" vs. "incompleteness"/"disorder." Yahweh has, in response to the latter, chosen Jehu as king of Israel to requite Ahab and destroy Jezebel and, in so doing, restore שלום to the community.

[70] Jehu drives like a *šiggâʿôn* ("madman"). The prophet who anoints him is called a *mešuggâʿ* ("madman," from the same Heb root, *šgʿ*, II Kings ix 11).

[71] M. Smith in S. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry,* p. 167, n. 43.

[72] This phrase, "fill the hand" (*millê yad*) is a technical idiom for "to ordain" (Lev. viii 33; Judg xvii 12; *KB* 2.552-53), appearing in priestly literature as late as the Temple Scroll (11Q19.15.15-16, *ml' ydw*).

[73] The text continues by parodying the feast following Jezebel's death. In the Canaanite myth, Baal entertains his guests with "a thousand pitchers of wine, ten thousand . . . mixed in his mixture" (*KTU* 1.3 i 16-17). No such excess occurs in the biblical parody. In fact, just the opposite occurs: Jehu teams up with Jehonadab ben Recab, an individual known for his asceticism (Jer. xxxv 1-11).

hood has it, which priesthood would like to have it, which priesthood is willing to do whatever it takes to seize and preserve it. Ritualized purgation is the mother's milk of priestly politics. One need only look at the bitter rivalries and violent rituals practiced among the priests of Amun vs. Akhenaton in Egypt,[74] the priests of Marduk vs. Nabonidus in Babylon,[75] and even the less-ritualized struggle between the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness and the priests of Jerusalem.[76] Not to see the political realities behind these ritual narratives is to segregate *story* from *history*,[77] and not only is this unnecessary, it impoverishes the texts themselves. As E. Otto notes, "the mythical world of the gods is not a peaceful place"—and this, in my opinion, is because the priesthoods responsible for creating these worlds are constantly at war with each other.[78]

Whether or not Dtr fully understands this political reality, the theme of priestly *purgation* in the Anat myth finds its counterpart in the Jehu cycle in the theme of prophetic *justice*. Yahweh establishes the contours of this justice at Sinai and Dtr fully exploits it in, for example, the temple dedication speech of Solomon (I Kings viii 21) and the final programmatic diatribe (II Kings xvii 35). Jezebel utterly challenges this covenant when she murders Naboth and seizes his inheritance. Whatever else this text might be saying, it underlines the fact that murder and theft are internationally recognized crimes, and any deity worth his/her salt is obligated to respond—including the God of Moses. Whether Jehu goes too far in *administering* this justice is another, more difficult

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[74] W. J. Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt* (Atlanta, 1995), p. 31 (text #7).

[75] H. Tadmor, "The Inscriptions of Nabunaid: Historical Arrangement," in *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger* (Assyriological Studies 16; Chicago, 1965), pp. 351-64.

[76] J. C. VanderKam, "2 Maccabees 6, 7A and Calendrical Change in Jerusalem," *JSJ* 12 (1981), pp. 52-74; L. H. Schiffman, "Origin and Early History of the Qumran Sect," *BA* 58 (1995), pp. 37-48.

[77] The classic study of priestly politics is F. M. Cross, "The Priestly Houses of Early Israel," *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 195-215. Prof. Cross continues his discussion of Canaanite cosmogony (not theogony) in "The 'Olden Gods' in Ancient Near Eastern Creation Myths and in Israel," *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore, 1998), pp. 73-83. For a more narrow sociological analysis, see M. S. Moore, "Role pre-emption in the Israelite priesthood," *VT* 46 (1996), pp. 316-29.

[78] E. Otto, *Krieg und Frieden in der Hebräischen Bibel und im Alten Orient* (Theologie und Frieden 18; Stuttgart, 1999), p. 14: "Die mythische Welt der Götter is keine friedvolle."

question. Even the prophets cannot agree on how to answer it.[79] But that justice has to be meted out is non-negotiable—otherwise Israel's deity is a pious fraud.

Further, each tradition focuses on its respective fundamentals. From the Canaanite perspective, the Anat myth serves, in Otto's description, "to bind together two originally independent myths about the king-god Baal's struggle against Chaos by means of a common skeletal theme focused on the construction of Baal's palace."[80] From Dtr's perspective, however, behavior like Anat's raises a serious religious challenge, a question which goes straight to the heart of his whole theological programme: Where is prophetic justice even *articulated* in the Canaanite religious tradition, much less championed? If my parody hypothesis is correct, or even plausible, then Dtr may be parodying Israel's enemies' traditions so harshly and so mercilessly because he wants his audience to learn how to distinguish the context driving Anat's violence from the context driving Jehu's violence.

Context is never so critical than when interpreting acts of violence. Where Baal wants to secure a house for himself, Yahweh also wants to build a "house" (II Sam. vii 11)—only a "house" of a different kind. Yahweh's house is to be a place of covenant justice, a place where widows and prostitutes and mothers and lepers and slave girls and returning exiles can experience real צדקה and authentic שלום. Characters like these are conspicuously missing from the Ugaritic tablets, and Dtr wants his readers not just to notice it, but to figure out why. By parodying the Canaanite tradition the way he does, Dtr wants to help his audience learn how to distinguish carefully between two competing religious ideologies.

The problem for many (post)modern interpreters of this text is either (a) a total indifference to the text's literary-historical context, or worse, (b) the imposition of a foreign one. Jehu acts violently, yes, *but so does Anat.* Simply to blanch at the violence itself will not help us interpret

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[79] Hosea's opinion is obviously not shared by the narrator of Kings (Hos. i 4-5 vs. II Kings x 30). Irvine thinks ("Threat of Jezreel") that the debate between Kings and Hosea has fundamentally to do with whether or not the *dynasty* of Jehu deserves to continue.

[80] Otto, *Krieg und Frieden*, p. 14. C. Virolleaud ("La déesse Anat: Poème de Ras Shamra," *Syria* 18 [1937], pp. 85-102, cited in Lloyd, p. 154) hypothesizes that the person serving Baal in col. i is Mot, and Anat massacres the followers of Mot in col. ii as punishment for their (presumed) rebellion.

the meanings of these ancient texts. Should not the behavior of each purgative character be interpreted in its own context before attempts are made to translate the implications into a contemporary context?[81] (Post)modern interpreters apparently do not understand, as Th. Jemielity points out, that prophetic parody is designed to be a "savage, frequently unsettling laughter that God and his prophets enjoy" at the expense of their enemies.[82] Whether this text is a parody or not, or whether this particular definition of parody is acceptable to everyone, *some* explanation of this text's literary-historical context is preferable to *no* explanation.[83] Rolf Knierim, a survivor of the European death-camps, is correct: "The Old Testament does not call (unjust violence and) violence considered to be just by the same names."[84]

Finally, both traditions epitomize their main themes through poetic summaries designed to highlight their respective ideologies. In the Baal cycle, a newly-coiffed Anat picks up her harp and sings of her devotion to Baal, focusing her attention on two traditional themes: (1) the preservation of Baal's family and (2) the elimination of Baal's enemies:

> She sings the love of Mightiest Baal,
> the passion of Pidray, Daughter of Light,
> the desire of Tallay, Daughter of Showers,
> the love of Arṣay, Daughter of the Wide World.
> 'What enemy rises against Baal?

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[81] This needs to be underlined because Jehu often gets bad press from contemporary interpreters. Hannelis Schulte, for example ("The End of the Omride Dynasty: Social-Ethical Observations on the Subject of Power and Violence," *Sem* 66 [1995], pp. 133-48) places a contemporary socio-political context over this story instead of reading it in a comparative literary-historical context.

[82] Jemielity, *Satire*, p. 14. G. K. Chesterton (*Heretics* [Garden City, NY, 1905], p. 126) sees three types of parody: (a) parody where the satirist enjoys himself, who has "a sort of overwhelming and aggressive happiness in his assertion of anger," who uses language "which is voluble, which is violent, which is indecent, but which is not malicious"; (b) parody which is designed to right a wrong, where the satirist is "maddened by the sense of men being maddened"; and (c) parody in which the satirist is "enabled to rise superior to his victim in the only serious sense which superiority can bear, in that of pitying the sinner and respecting the man even while he satirizes both." The Jehu tradition appears to contain all three kinds of parody, with perhaps the greatest emphasis on (a). This is a very violent text.

[83] Jemielty, *Satire*, pp. 12-17 (responding to R. P. Carroll, "Is Humour Also Among the Prophets?").

[84] R. Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Substance, Method, and Cases* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 119.

> What foe against the Cloudrider?
> Surely I fought Yamm, the Beloved of El,
> Surely I finished off River, the Great God,
> Surely I bound Tunnan and destroyed (?) him.
> I fought the Twisty Serpent,
> The Potentate with seven heads.'[85]

By contrast, the prophetic oracles in Dtr focus on (1) Yahweh's decision to keep his promise, and (2) Yahweh's desire to reward Jehu's obedience:

> Yesterday I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, declares Yahweh, and I will surely make you pay for it on this plot of ground, declares Yahweh.[86]
> Because you have done well in accomplishing what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all I had in mind to do, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.[87]

Summary and conclusion

In short, comparative intertextual study suggests that the Jehu tradition is a rather sophisticated parody of a known myth, the product of a skilled satirist seeking to establish a clear theological programme in an uncertain, chaotic, religio-political environment. Much like the episodes preceding it, this episode continues to tell the story of Israel's history not as dry chronicle, but as powerful satire aimed squarely at the religious traditions of Israel's enemies.[88] As G. Yee points out, only two things are necessary for this or any other parody to work: (1) the literary work being parodied has to be at least nominally recognizable; and (2) readers must be able to "make the connections" and "get the joke."[89] Assuming Yee is correct, Jehu's coronation and purge may well be one of the most sophisticated "jokes" in the Hebrew Bible.

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[85] M. Smith's translation of *KTU* 1.3 iii 4-8, 38-42 (*Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, pp. 109, 111).

[86] II Kings ix 26.

[87] II Kings x 30.

[88] J. G. McConville ("Priesthood in Joshua to Kings," *VT* 49 [1999], pp. 73-87) points out that the topic of priesthood in Dtr is often neglected in favor of focusing too much on the monarchy, even though Dtr manifests an intrinsic interest in both the priesthood and individual priests.

[89] Yee, "Anatomy of Biblical Parody," p. 567.