

Article

The Literary and Theological Function of the Philistines and Arameans in Chronicles

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Abstract: The book of Chronicles is a well-known example of how theological developments in Judah during the Persian and Hellenistic periods played a role in reshaping the received literary traditions of the Hebrew Bible. This study focuses specifically on Chronicles' narratives of violent conflicts between Israel/Judah and the Philistines and Arameans and their relationship to the portrayal of the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings. It discusses five case studies pertaining to violent encounters between Israelite/Judahite kings and the Philistines (Saul in 1 Chr 10; Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr 17; Jehoram in 2 Chr 21; Uzziah in 2 Chr 26; Ahaz in 2 Chr 28) and five pertaining to the Arameans (Asa in 2 Chr 16; Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr 18–19; Ahaziah in 2 Chr 22; Joash in 2 Chr 24; Ahaz in 2 Chr 28). Among other new findings, the study highlights how Chronicles repeatedly depicts the Philistine threat in tandem with conflicts with the Edomites (a phenomenon not found in Samuel–Kings) and, furthermore, casts the Arameans as an instrument of divine punishment not only against northern Israelite kings but also against Judahite kings.

Keywords: Chronicles; Philistines; Arameans

1. Introduction

The book of Chronicles has long been recognized in biblical scholarship as a rewriting of the books of Samuel–Kings (or, more precisely, a rewriting of a textual precursor to the Masoretic version of Samuel–Kings) that has its own theological profile reflecting the particular concerns of its author or authors (major monographic studies and commentaries on Chronicles include, among others, [Willi 1972](#); [Mosis 1973](#); [Welten 1973](#); [Williamson 1987](#); [Japhet 1989](#); [Japhet 1993](#); [Kalimi 1995](#); [Johnstone 1997a](#), [1997b](#); [Dyck 1998](#); [Ben Zvi 2006](#); [Klein 2006](#); [Klein 2012](#); [Jonker 2016](#); [Levin 2017](#)), namely priestly scribes working in Jerusalem during the late Persian or early Hellenistic period (ca. late fourth century BCE) (see [Jeon and Jonker 2021](#), p. 2). Considering that Chronicles offers a unique chance within the textual corpus of the Hebrew Bible to observe specific theological developments through comparison with Samuel–Kings, a multitude of case studies have been produced on different themes and topics in Chronicles, including the depiction and theological significance of conflicts between Israel/Judah and their regional neighbors, which forms a major part of the historical narrative in Samuel–Kings (for studies on war in Chronicles, see, e.g., [Davies 1992](#); [Ruffing 1992](#); [Knoppers 1996](#); [Wright 1997](#); [Knoppers 1999](#); [Siedlecki 1999](#); [Jonker 2007](#); [Beentjes 2008](#), pp. 177–85; [Cudworth 2016](#); see also the brief overview in [Trimm 2012](#), pp. 181–82). Within these specialized studies on war in the book of Chronicles, little attention has been given to the overall portrayal of two of Israel's main aggressors that already feature prominently in the books of Samuel and Kings, namely the Philistines and Arameans (for an overview of the references to Arameans in Chronicles, see also [Levin 2019](#), although he does not discuss the Arameans' overarching historiographic function in the war passages). The present study thus considers how the portrayal of the Philistines and Arameans in Chronicles departs from the portrayal found in Samuel–Kings and how it fits within the larger theological program of the book of Chronicles.



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In comparing Samuel–Kings and Chronicles, one must reckon with multiple possible reasons for the divergence between the two texts, including textual corruption, Chronicles’ use of a *Vorlage* that differed from the Masoretic text of Samuel–Kings, or deliberate changes to the text for theological/ideological reasons, including the omission of certain passages and the addition of new material (Chronistic *Sondergut*). Given that most of the passages discussed below deal with macro-level divergences from the books of Samuel–Kings (as opposed to variant readings of individual words or phrases) and reflect an overarching narrative strategy, in what follows I will operate on the premise that the divergences discussed here stem from the author(s) of Chronicles and reflect the theological and historiographic perspectives of the latter.

In approaching Chronicles’ depiction of the Philistines and Arameans, I am not concerned with the historicity of the events depicted (e.g., the question of whether the *Sondergut* of Chronicles contains historically reliable information). Thus, I will not deal here with the extensive literature on the history of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, Damascus, etc. Rather, I treat the Philistines and Arameans as “stock characters” that serve particular functions in Chronicles’ narrative of the monarchic period. This approach is inspired especially by the work of David Jobling on the literary role of the Philistines and Arameans in the books of Samuel and Kings, respectively (Jobling 1998, esp. pp. 212–43; Jobling 2003; on the literary function of the Arameans in Kings, see also Axskjöld 1998, pp. 65–152).

2. Results

2.1. Literary–Theological Background: The Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings

Within the narrative arc of Samuel–Kings, the Philistines and Arameans both serve a dual function as “kingmakers” and “kingbreakers” in these books’ portrayal of the history of the monarchic period in Israel and Judah (for a detailed discussion of the observations summarized in this section, see Germany, forthcoming). In the book of Samuel, the Philistines are “kingbreakers” insofar as they bring an end to Saul’s reign, while they are “kingmakers” insofar as they pave the way for David’s rise. In the book of Kings, and especially in 1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 17, the Arameans act as “kingbreakers” against the northern kingdom of Israel during the dynasties of Baasha (Baasha and Elah), Omri (Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Joram), and Jehu (Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, and Jeroboam II) insofar as they directly or indirectly bring about the king’s death or severely weaken Israel during the king’s rule. In each case in which the Philistines and Arameans act as “kingbreakers,” their defeat of Israel can be associated with the Israelite king’s cultic transgressions.

In Samuel–Kings, the depiction of the Philistines and Arameans is part of a larger process of historical patterning in these books, in which the Philistines, Arameans, and Assyrians serve in turn as the primary external threat to Israel and in which conflicts with the Philistines and Arameans typologically anticipate the later fates of Israel and Judah under Assyrian domination. Just as one of the Philistines’ primary roles in the book of Samuel is to bring about Saul’s death, allowing David to take over the kingship of “all Israel,” so too does the Assyrians’ defeat of the northern kingdom allow Judah to take on the role of Israel’s successor. The conflicts between Israel and Aram-Damascus in the book of Kings likewise typologically anticipate the depiction of the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel under the Assyrians later in the book of Kings, as can be seen, for example, in 1 Kgs 15:16–22 (cf. 2 Kgs 15:29; 16:5, 7–9); 1 Kgs 20:42 (cf. 2 Kgs 15:29; 17:1–23); and 2 Kgs 10:32 (cf. 2 Kgs 15:29).

2.2. Conflicts with the Philistines in Chronicles

2.2.1. Saul, David, and the Philistines

In the book of Samuel, the Philistines feature prominently in the Ark Narrative and its aftermath (1 Sam 4–7) and in the stories relating to Saul’s reign, both before and after the introduction of the figure of David (1 Sam 13–14; 17; 21:10–15; 23:1–14; 27:1–28:2; 29–30). In Chronicles, in contrast, the Philistines appear on the scene rather suddenly, in the battle

against Israel in the Jezreel Valley that results in Saul's death (1 Chr 10:1–2; cf. 1 Sam 31). Whereas 1 Sam 31 depicts Saul's death as a rather natural – if tragic – outcome of the reality of war, Chronicles offers an explanation for the cause of Saul's failure in battle, namely because Saul was unfaithful to Yahweh and “on account of the word of Yahweh that he did not keep” (וימת שאול במעלו אשר מעל ביהוה על דבר יהוה אשר לא שמר) (1 Chr 10:13–14). Here, the use of the root מעל (“to transgress, commit a sacrilege”) implies that Saul committed a cultic transgression (cf., e.g., Lev 5:15, 21; 26:40; Josh 7:1; 22:16, 20; see further [Knierim 1971](#); [Mosis 1973](#), pp. 28–33; [Knoppers 2006](#), p. 202), which in turn suggests that Chronicles has the episode of Saul's unauthorized offering in 1 Sam 13:7b–15a and possibly also Saul's failure to fully implement the ban in 1 Sam 15 in view (cf. [Klein 2006](#), p. 289). This connection is further supported by the fact that in both 1 Sam 13:14 and 1 Sam 15:23, 26, Samuel explicitly links Saul's transgressions with the loss of his kingship.

Besides two episodes featuring the heroic deeds of David's warriors in which the Philistines serve primarily as part of the narrative scenery (1 Chr 11:12–14, 15–19; cf. 2 Sam 23:9–10, 13–17), the next text in Chronicles in which the Philistines appear in the foreground is 1 Chr 12, which provides a detailed list of “those who came to David at Ziklag, while he could not move about freely because of Saul son of Kish; they were among the mighty warriors who helped him in war” (1 Chr 12:1; cf. 1 Sam 27:5–6). Particularly significant for the question at hand is the statement in 1 Chr 12:19–22 that “some of the Manassites deserted to David when he came with the Philistines for the battle against Saul” (although, ultimately, the Philistines do not allow David to take part in the battle). This statement indicates that, even before Saul's death in battle with the Philistines, the loyalties of the northern tribe of Manasseh begin to shift away from Saul and toward David (see further [Knoppers 2006](#), pp. 197–99), reinforcing the Philistines' role (even if indirect) in David's rise as king over “all Israel.”

2.2.2. Jehoshaphat and the Philistines

Following Chronicles' depiction of the period of the “united monarchy” under Saul, David, and Solomon (1 Chr 10–2 Chr 10), the Philistines appear next in 2 Chr 17:11, in the report of the reign of king Jehoshaphat of Judah (cf. 1 Kgs 22:41–50). Thus, Chronicles makes no mention of the northern Israelite kings' campaigns against the Philistine city of Gibbethon that form the backdrop to the rebellions of Baasha and, later, Omri (cf. 1 Kgs 15–16). Conversely, the account of Jehoshaphat's reign in 1 Kgs 22:41–50 makes no mention of the Philistines as Chronicles does. As in Kings, in Chronicles Jehoshaphat is evaluated positively and is said to have followed Yahweh's commandments rather than “seeking the Baals” (2 Chr 17:3). Evidently as a reward for Jehoshaphat's faithfulness, “all the kingdoms of the lands around Judah” refrained from going to war against Jehoshaphat, and some nations, including the Philistines and Arabs, brought him presents and tribute (2 Chr 17:11) (cf. [Johnstone 1997b](#), p. 80; [Jonker 2016](#), p. 178). This statement is somewhat comparable to the implicit connection made in 2 Kgs 18:7–8 between Hezekiah's faithfulness to Yahweh and his successful military offensive against the Philistines (which, interestingly, is not mentioned in Chronicles' account of Hezekiah's reign). The main difference is that in 1 Chr 17:11, Jehoshaphat does not have to fight against the Philistines; rather, they proactively show their submission to him by bringing gifts and tribute (see further [Cudworth 2016](#), p. 129).

2.2.3. Jehoram and the Philistines

The Philistines next appear in Chronicles in the account of the reign of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram, who is described as doing what was evil in the sight of Yahweh (2 Chr 21:6). Given this negative theological evaluation of Jehoram, it comes as little surprise to the reader that, unlike his father Jehoshaphat, Jehoram was subjected to multiple defeats at the hands of Judah's neighbors. According to 2 Chr 21:8–10, Edom revolted against Judahite overlordship (cf. 2 Kgs 8:20–22), and according to 2 Chr 21:16–17, the Philistines and Arabs—upon divine instigation—invaded Judah and plundered the king's possessions.

Just as Jehoshaphat's receiving of tribute from the Philistines is absent in the book of Kings, so too is the Philistines' (and Arabs') attack against Judah in the days of his son Jehoram absent in Kings (cf. [Begg 1989](#); [Johnstone 1997b](#), p. 113; [Klein 2012](#), p. 308; [Levin 2017](#), p. 175). Although Jehoram is evaluated negatively already in the book of Kings (2 Kgs 8:18), the geopolitical consequences of his failure to follow Yahweh are relatively limited there. In Chronicles, by contrast, not only does Edom rebel against Judah's rule, but Jehoram's transgressions against Yahweh also result in the Philistines' (and Arabs') invasion of Judah.

2.2.4. Uzziah and the Philistines

In Chronicles' account of Uzziah's reign (2 Chr 26; cf. 2 Kgs 14:21–22; 15:1–7, where the same king is called Azariah), violent conflicts with the Philistines are also closely connected to the theological evaluation of the king: 2 Chr 26:4 states that Uzziah did what was right in the sight of Yahweh, which here goes hand in hand with an expansion of Judah's power abroad. Firstly, Uzziah restores Eloth to Judah (2 Chr 26:2; cf. 2 Kgs 14:22), which constitutes a point of contrast between the "bad" king Jehoram and the "good" king Uzziah. Moreover, unlike 2 Chr 21:16–17, which casts the Philistine invasion of Judah as a punishment for Jehoram's sin, 2 Chr 26:6–7 depicts the righteous Uzziah as successfully waging war against the Philistines and even building cities in Philistine territory ([Na'aman 2003](#), p. 62 suggests that 2 Chr 26:6–7 draws on the depiction of Hezekiah's wars in 2 Kgs 18:8). Notably, just as the book of Kings makes no mention of the Philistines during Jehoram's reign, the Philistines also play no role in Azariah's (=Uzziah's) reign in Kings (2 Kgs 14:21–22; 15:1–7). It is also noteworthy that in 2 Chr 26, like in Chronicles' account of Jehoram's reign, an external conflict with the Philistines is juxtaposed with an external conflict with Edom.

2.2.5. Ahaz and the Philistines

The last reference to the Philistines in the book of Chronicles appears in 2 Chr 28 in the account of the reign of Ahaz of Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 16). Following the evaluation of Ahaz as "not doing what was right in the sight of Yahweh" (2 Chr 28:3), a reader familiar with Chronicles' theory of historical causation will hardly be surprised to learn that Ahaz faced a number of challenges from foreign enemies. First, Ahaz is defeated by the king of Aram, who deports a portion of the population; then, he is defeated by the king of Israel (vv. 5–6; cf. 2 Kgs 16:5, where neither Aram nor Israel succeed in defeating Ahaz). Later, Chronicles reports that Ahaz "sent to the king of Assyria for help" (v. 16), which could be understood as a response to the invasions by Aram and Israel in vv. 5–6 (as is explicitly the case in 2 Kgs 16:7–9), although Chronicles explains this otherwise, namely as the result of incursions into Judah by the Edomites and Philistines (vv. 17–18; on the literary function of the Philistines in 2 Chr 28:18, see further [Mosis 1973](#), p. 188; [Na'aman 2003](#), p. 51; [Cudworth 2016](#), pp. 108–9). Whereas the Edomites also appear in the parallel account in 2 Kgs 16 (v. 6), the Philistines play no role in the account of Ahaz' reign in the book of Kings. However, given the frequent coupling of the Philistines with the Edomites elsewhere in the book of Chronicles (2 Chr 21 and 26; see above), the reference to the Philistines here is not surprising. It reflects an extension of the association of good and bad kings with victories and defeats against the Edomites—which is already present in the book of Kings (see [Germany 2022](#), pp. 364–75)—to a similar association of good and bad kings with successes and failures against the Philistines as well. (Somewhat differently, [Na'aman 2003](#), p. 51 proposes that the depiction of the Philistine attack in 2 Chr 28:18 draws on Isa 9:10–11, which describes how Yahweh raised up against Israel "the Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west, and they devoured Israel with open mouth." The two explanations are not mutually exclusive, and it is possible that both contributed to the formulation of 2 Chr 28:18.)

2.3. Conflicts with the Arameans in Chronicles

2.3.1. Asa and the Arameans

Although the Arameans are already mentioned in Chronicles during the narrative of David's reign (1 Chr 18:6; cf. 2 Sam 8:6), the first major divergence in their depiction in Chronicles compared to Samuel–Kings appears in the account of the reign of king Asa of Judah (2 Chr 16). Like its parallel in 1 Kgs 15:16–22, Chronicles reports how Asa sought assistance from the Aramean king Ben-hadad in countering Israel's blockade of Judah (2 Chr 16:1–6). Yet unlike in Kings, Chronicles has an additional passage reflecting on the consequences of Asa's action: The seer (i.e., prophet) Hanani declares to Asa, "Because you relied on the king of Aram, and did not rely on Yahweh your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped you" (2 Chr 16:7). Within the immediate narrative context, this statement is quite unexpected, considering that nothing is said in 2 Chr 16:1–6 about Asa's obligation or attempt to defeat the Arameans. Rather, Hanani's prophecy reflects the same theory of historical causation that is found in the prophetic critique of the northern Israelite king Ahab's treatment of a certain Aramean king Ben-hadad in 1 Kgs 20:42: "Because you have let the man go whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people." In Chronicles, the consequence of Asa letting the king of Aram go is expressed slightly differently: The prophet declares to Asa that "from now on you will have wars" (2 Chr 16:9). Considering that Chronicles does not report any further wars during Asa's lifetime, the "you" addressed in the prophecy should rather be understood in the extended sense of Asa's dynasty or descendants (cf. Klein 2012, p. 241, with reference to 2 Chr 18:3; 22:5). That is, Asa's failure is treated as the cause of future wars that confronted the kings of Judah, just as 1 Kgs 20:42 can also be understood in a broader, corporate sense. Whereas in 1 Kgs 15:16–22 Asa's alliance with Aram is treated rather neutrally as a case of *Realpolitik*, in Chronicles it is evaluated negatively on theological grounds and has long-term consequences for Judah (on 2 Chr 16:1–10, see further Cudworth 2016, pp. 122–24, although he misses the intertextual connection with 1 Kgs 20:42).

2.3.2. Jehoshaphat and the Arameans

The Arameans next appear in Chronicles in the story of Ahab's and Jehoshaphat's joint military campaign at Ramoth-gilead in 2 Chr 18, which has its parallel in 1 Kgs 22. In 1 Kgs 22:3, Ahab introduces the idea of fighting for Ramoth-gilead by asking his servants a rhetorical question: "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, yet we are doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?" In 2 Chr 18:2, in contrast, the text merely states that Ahab persuaded Jehoshaphat to "go up against Ramoth-gilead," making no mention of the king of Aram. In this respect, when the details of the battle are eventually reported in vv. 28–34, the reference to the king of Aram comes rather unexpectedly. Indeed, in this narrative, Chronicles does not attribute much significance to the Arameans per se; rather, the battle against the Arameans at Ramoth-gilead merely serves as the backdrop for the prophetic critique of Jehoshaphat that comes at the beginning of 2 Chr 19. There, Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer (cf. 2 Chr 16:7–9) tells Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate Yahweh? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from Yahweh" (2 Chr 19:2). While already 1 Kgs 22:1–38 and 22:44 depict Jehoshaphat's alliance with Israel in a rather unflattering light, the critique remains implicit there and can be deduced above all through comparison with the later alliance of Ahaziah of Judah with Jehoram of Israel in another battle at Ramoth-gilead (2 Kgs 8:28–29). In Chronicles, however, the critique is explicit, and the fact that it comes from Hanani's son creates a link with 2 Chr 16:7–9 and the critique of Judah's alliance with Aram in that passage. Thus, the message that emerges from Chronicles is that alliances between Judah and other nations—whether Israel or Aram—are categorically wrong since Judah's kings should rely on Yahweh alone (on Chronicles' critical stance toward alliances with the northern kingdom of Israel, cf. Japhet 1989, pp. 313–14; Knoppers 1991; 1996, pp. 612–22; Johnstone 1997a, p. 83).

2.3.3. Ahaziah and the Arameans

Unlike the book of Kings, Chronicles completely omits the Elijah-Elisha narratives (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13*) and thus the further encounters with the Arameans described in 2 Kgs 5–7 as well. Rather, the next appearance of the Arameans in Chronicles is found in the report of the “second” battle at Ramoth-gilead, in which king Ahaziah of Judah joins Ahab’s son Joram in battle against king Hazael of Aram (2 Chr 22:5–6 // 2 Kgs 8:28–29). In Chronicles’ version of this event, Ahaziah is clearly criticized for his decision to join Joram in battle against Hazael at Ramoth-gilead (2 Chr 22:4–5), whereas in Kings, such a critique is implicit at best. Furthermore, in contrast to the subsequent account of Jehu’s coup in 2 Kgs 9, where Ahaziah simply seems to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, according to 2 Chr 22:7, Ahaziah’s death at the hands of Jehu is clearly a punishment for his earlier participation in the battle against Hazael as well as for his decision to join Joram’s military response to Jehu’s coup, which Chronicles describes as divinely willed.

2.3.4. Joash and the Arameans

The next reference to the Arameans in Chronicles appears in 2 Chr 24, in the account of the reign of king Joash of Judah, who is said to have done “what was right in the sight of Yahweh all the days of the priest Jehoiada” (v. 2). However, following Jehoiada’s death, the absence of a priestly leader has negative consequences: The officials of Judah turn away from Yahweh and begin to worship idols (vv. 17–18). This turn of events is presented as the cause of the subsequent attack against Joash by the Arameans, who defeat Judah despite being heavily outnumbered (vv. 23–24). Chronicles’ narrative of Joash’s reign and the role of Jehoiada the priest differs in significant ways from the accounts concerning Jehoiada and Joash in the book of Kings (2 Kgs 11:1–18), where no explicit connection is made between cultic matters during Joash’s reign and the attack by the Arameans. Rather, Hazael’s advance against Jerusalem is depicted in mundane geopolitical terms (2 Kgs 12:17). In 2 Kgs 12:18, Joash manages to deflect Hazael’s attack by paying a massive tribute, while this element is not mentioned in Chronicles, which instead depicts the Arameans’ defeat of Judah, leaving Joash severely wounded (2 Chr 24:25; see further [Mosis 1973](#), p. 182; [Levin 2019](#), p. 100). Here, Chronicles departs once again from Kings’ depiction of Judah’s payment of tribute to stronger regional powers as a legitimate means of self-preservation. For Chronicles, such a solution flies in the face of the need to rely on Yahweh (cf. [Johnstone 1997b](#), p. 184). Thus, in 2 Chr 24, Hazael’s role as a “kingbreaker” for northern Israel (2 Kgs 9:14–16; 10:32–33) has been transferred to Judah.

2.3.5. Ahaz and the Arameans

The last reference to the Arameans in Chronicles appears in 2 Chr 28, in the narrative of the reign of king Ahaz of Judah. Since Ahaz did not do what was right in the sight of Yahweh (v. 1), Yahweh handed him over to the king of Aram, “who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus” (v. 5). In addition to the Aramean attack, Judah also suffered defeat and partial exile at the hands of Israel (vv. 5–15; see further [Mosis 1973](#), p. 187; [Na’aman 2003](#), p. 50; [Cudworth 2016](#), pp. 104–5). Following this, Ahaz sought help from the king of Assyria in response to further raids against Judah by the Edomites and Philistines, yet the Assyrian king “oppressed him instead of strengthening him” (v. 20). In the end, corresponding to Ahaz’ particularly egregious cultic violations, Judah is attacked by not just one but five surrounding nations: the Arameans, the northern kingdom of Israel, the Edomites, the Philistines, and the Assyrians. Here, as in the case of Joash (2 Chr 24), Chronicles rejects the view found in Kings that paying tribute is a legitimate form of defense for Judah. Whereas in 2 Kgs 16:5–6 Ahaz’ tribute to Assyria protects Judah from an attack by Aram and Israel, in 2 Chr 28, Aram is once again an instrument of divine punishment for Judah and not only for Israel. Chronicles’ mapping of Israel’s fate onto Judah in this passage is reinforced by the fact that 2 Chr 28:5, which describes the king of Aram’s deportation of part of Judah’s population, has literary over-

tones with 2 Kgs 15:29, which refers to Assyria's deportation of part of Israel's population several years before its annexation of the kingdom in 722 BCE.

3. Discussion

The ten cases discussed above show how Chronicles draws on literary constellations from Samuel–Kings involving the Philistines and Arameans in order to reinforce its own theological interpretation of the history of the kingdom of Judah. However, the overall literary and theological functions of the Philistines and Arameans in Chronicles differ somewhat from each other. Thus, this final section will focus on highlighting the unique aspects in Chronicles' portrayal of each group.

3.1. The Literary and Theological Function of the Philistines in Chronicles

Chronicles' portrayal of the Philistines contains a number of distinctive features compared to Samuel–Kings. Foremost among these is the fact that Chronicles begins its account of the monarchic period *in medias res* with the death of Saul in battle against the Philistines in the region of the Jezreel Valley and Mount Gilboa (1 Chr 10; cf. 1 Sam 31), thereby leaving out many of the biblical narratives in which the Philistines play a prominent role (1 Sam 4–7; 13–14; 17; 21:10–15; 23:1–14; 27:1–28:2; 29–30; but see the brief allusion to David's sojourn with the Philistines in 1 Chr 12:19–22). Given this selectivity, it is all the more striking that Saul's death in battle against the Philistines is included in Chronicles. The choice to narrate precisely this episode highlights a major narrative function of the Philistines in 1 Samuel itself, namely as "a correlate to the decline of Saul" (Jobling 1998, p. 102). Rather than narrating the whole process of the Philistines' role in Saul's decline, Chronicles narrates only the climax of this process, *pars pro toto*.

Chronicles' depiction of the role of the Philistines during the time of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah also differs in important ways from that found in the book of Kings. Whereas in Kings, the Philistines serve as the narrative backdrop for two early regime changes in the northern kingdom (1 Kgs 15–16), these narratives are not included in Chronicles. This omission fits within the larger historiographic program of Chronicles, which is primarily concerned with recounting the history of Judah and therefore omits many passages from its source material in Kings pertaining to the northern kingdom of Israel. Conversely, Chronicles mentions the Philistines in the accounts of four of Judah's kings—Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Uzziah (=Azariah), and Ahaz—that have no parallel in Kings. In all of these cases, each king's relations with the Philistines are in lockstep with the theological evaluation of his reign, reflecting Chronicles' theology of retribution. Jehoshaphat's act of seeking God and following God's commandments (2 Chr 17:4) is rewarded with tribute from the Philistines and Arabs (2 Chr 17:11). In contrast, Jehoram's cultic transgressions cause Yahweh to incite precisely these nations (2 Chr 21:16–17) to attack Judah, plundering the king's palace and carrying away members of the royal family. This situation is reversed during the reign of Uzziah, who does "what was right in the sight of Yahweh" and is rewarded with military success against the Philistines and Arabs (2 Chr 26:4, 6–7). Yet, the cycle repeats itself once more under Ahaz, who suffers invasions on all sides, including from the Philistines (2 Chr 28:18), as a result of his cultic sins.

It is particularly interesting to note that in three of these four cases in which the Philistines appear in Chronicles with no parallel in Kings, the Edomites are also close at hand. Jehoram is not only confronted with invasion by the Philistines and Arabs (2 Chr 21:16–17), but Edom also revolts against Judah during his reign (2 Chr 21:8–10 // 2 Kgs 8:20–22). Likewise, Chronicles opens its account of Uzziah's (=Azariah's) reign by describing Uzziah's restoration of (Edomite-controlled) Elath (Elath) to Judah (2 Chr 26:2 // 2 Kgs 14:22). Finally, when Judah's fate again takes a turn for the worse under Ahaz, the Edomites are mentioned just before the Philistines in the report of foreign incursions into Judah (2 Chr 28:17–18; cf. 2 Kgs 16:6, which states that Edomites occupied Elath during Ahaz' reign; this last case is noted by Siedlecki 1999, p. 264). Thus, the Chronistic *Sondergut* describing Judah's alternating successes and failures against the Philistines during

the time of the divided monarchy builds upon a similar pattern of alternating successes and failures against Edom that is present already in the book of Kings.

3.2. *The Literary and Theological Function of the Arameans in Chronicles*

As in its portrayal of conflicts between Judah and the Philistines, Chronicles' portrayal of violent encounters between Judah and the Arameans repurposes existing literary patterns in the book of Kings in order convey its theological message. In the five passages involving the Arameans discussed above, two major themes can be observed.

Firstly, all five passages critique Judah's alliances with other polities, whether Aram-Damascus (in the case of Asa and Joash), northern Israel (in the case of Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah), or Assyria (in the case of Ahaz). Whereas the book of Kings at times portrays Judah's submission to outside powers (such as Aram-Damascus and Assyria) as a necessary form of self-preservation, Chronicles regards such political submission (such as through the payment of tribute or through joint military campaigns) as categorically wrong since it reflects a failure to rely on Yahweh alone.

Secondly, whereas the book of Kings portrays the Arameans above all as an instrument of divine punishment against the northern kingdom of Israel and at times even casts the Arameans as delivering Judah from Israelite aggression (in the case of Asa and Joash), Chronicles transfers the Arameans' literary and theological function as a harbinger of the ultimate end of the northern kingdom of Israel to Judah. This can be seen, for example, in the prophetic critique of Asa's alliance with Aram in 2 Chr 16:7–9, which alludes to the Israelite king Ahab's failure to execute the king of Aram and its long-term consequences for Israel (2 Kgs 20:42). It can also be seen in Chronicles' depiction of two major Aramean defeats of Judah during the reigns of Joash and Ahaz precisely where Kings depicts the Aram-Damascus as coming to Judah's aid (cf. 2 Kgs 12:18 with 2 Chr 24:25 and 2 Kgs 16:5–6 with 2 Chr 28:5). Here, Chronicles takes up the book of Kings' portrayal of the Arameans as anticipating the later role of the Assyrians in bringing about the end of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kgs 15:16–22; 2 Kgs 10:32–33; for further discussion, see [Germany, forthcoming](#)) and applies it to the kingdom of Judah.

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