

Article

Altering Solomon's Alternative Altar: Chronicles' Revision of Kings in Light of Priestly Tradition

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between the Book of Kings and the Book of Chronicles through a focused case study: the depiction of the altar(s) in Solomon's temple. While scholarly models vary—some positing a shared source, others viewing Chronicles as a revision of Kings—this analysis supports the view, associated with Wellhausen, that Chronicles reinterprets the Deuteronomistic History in line with the Pentateuch, particularly its Priestly layer. In Kings, Solomon's two altars function within a hierarchical system that distinguishes between the royal and communal spheres. Chronicles, by contrast, aligns the temple's cultic architecture with the Tabernacle model, presenting a single sacrificial altar alongside a golden altar with a different function. The Chronicler's account reveals its secondary nature through both expansion and abbreviation of the Kings narrative, shaped by a theological agenda to harmonize Israel's cultic past with the normative framework of priestly law.

Keywords: Solomon; Deuteronomistic History; chronicles; golden altar; royal cult; royal patronage; temple construction; incense cult

1. Chronicles and the Deuteronomistic History—General Remarks

The book of Chronicles essentially runs through the history presented in the historical books of the Hebrew Bible, summarizes it, and supplements it with genealogies, geographic lists, and sometimes narrative details. It is therefore called Παραλειπομένων in the Greek canon, meaning “things omitted/left out,” highlighting this book's role in providing added material for readers of the “Former Prophets” (See a detailed discussion in [Knoppers 2004](#), pp. 47–51).

However, in modern critical biblical studies, it is the parts of the book that parallel other materials in the Hebrew Bible that have captured scholarly attention. Those have often been found to present a somewhat different story and grand narrative than that related elsewhere, with its own distinct emphasis and concerns. These differences have led scholars to question the exact relationship between the book of Chronicles and the history presented in the Books of Samuel and Kings (or the four books of “Kingdoms/Reigns,” according to the LXX titles, labeled “The Deuteronomistic History [DtrH]” in scholarship). This discussion can be divided into two basic models: Chronicles as a revision and adaptation of DtrH, or a shared source that has been adapted in distinct ways in the two compositions.

Wellhausen identified several points in Chronicles that align well with aspects found in the Pentateuchal Priestly literature. According to his model of the gradual growth of the Pentateuch, which positions the Priestly literature as the latest stage of development in Israelite religious and textual activity, he suggested that the Book of Chronicles revises



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DtrH and adapts the ancient history of the monarchic period in the spirit of P (Wellhausen 1885, pp. 40–49 [the argument regarding Chronicles relying on Samuel-Kings is further developed, based on additional types of argument, on pp. 171–227, though in those pages as well, the Chronicler’s relationship to P figures repeatedly]. For the general argument, see De Wette 1806, pp. 1–132, and more recently: Knoppers 2004, pp. 66–68; Kalimi 2005; McKenzie 2006; Segev 2023). One example is the inauguration of Solomon’s temple, which takes place on “the festival” in the seventh month (at least according to MT. See 1 Kings 8:2 || 2 Chr 5:3¹). In DtrH, Solomon celebrates “the festival” with the entire people for seven days (1 Kgs 8:65 [LXX]), sending them back to their homes on the eighth day (1 Kgs 8:66).² This fits the Deuteronomic festival calendar, according to which the festival of booths, celebrated on the occasion of gathering the harvest and the grapes (around October, which approximates the seventh month in many years), lasts for seven days (Deut 16:13–15). In contrast, the Chronicler speaks of a seven-day celebration followed by an eighth day of “assembly,” and only “on the 23rd day of the seventh month,” namely, the *ninth* day of the celebrations, does Solomon send the people home (2 Chr 7:8–10). This presentation accords with the Priestly legislation, which states that the festival of booths lasts seven days, followed by a required one-day assembly (Lev 23:33–36). This requirement for an assembly makes the dispatch of the people on the eighth day *illegitimate*, necessitating adjustments to the dates given in the DtrH to conform to the Priestly legislation (Wellhausen 1885, p. 106; Myers 1965, p. 41; Kalimi 2005, pp. 147–49. See also Giffone 2021, pp. 240–42, who argues that the Chronicler’s historical formulation is grounded in a sensitive narrative reading of P in its final form).

In contrast, more recent scholars have advocated the idea of a shared source, reconstructible from the shared material between DtrH and the book of Chronicles. This shared source, they argue, was adapted in two distinct directions in the two historiographic traditions, each adjusting it to its own preferences regarding legislative stance (Initially suggested in an article discussing Solomon’s dream in Gibeon: Auld 1993 [and see response in Segev 2023]. Auld later developed this method to encompass larger portions of the account of the kings of Judah: Auld 1994; Auld 2017. See also Person 2010). This approach is explicitly related to the assumption that texts grow, resulting from the expansion of earlier material rather than revision (Carr 2011, pp. 78–81. Cf. the more general text-critical rule of *lectio brevior potior*). When sifting out the non-shared material, it is claimed, a pristine “non-denominational” (Pentateuch-wise) kernel of history is revealed (Carr 2011, pp. 83–84, 87–93).

The lists provided by advocates of this approach, showing that the shared material is highly non-Pentateuch-oriented, are indeed overwhelming. Nevertheless, several texts appear to be misrepresented in the analyses offered by scholars in support of that model. For instance, I did not find more than a single reference to Solomon’s seven- or eight-day festival discussed above.³ The reason is that the shared elements include (1) mention of a festival that lasts seven days (1 Kgs 8:65 || 2 Chr 7:8); (2) a reference to the following, eighth day (1 Kgs 8:66aα1 || 2 Chr 7:9); (3) a statement regarding sending the people away (1 Kgs 8:66aα2 || 2 Chr 7:10). However, the putative “shared source” could include only one of the options—either an assembly on the eighth day, with sending the people on the ninth day, or sending the people on the eighth day, without an assembly. A third option, in which the eighth day is mentioned without specifics, allowing “distinct expansions” in different directions—one connecting it with the dispatch of the people and another with an assembly—is not feasible. Thus, the source of this specific textual unit was already oriented towards a particular festival legislation and was later reworked to fit the other one.

However, Solomon’s inauguration festival is insufficient to determine the exact relationship between the two histories, as the existence of a textual link is not in itself suffi-

cient to determine the direction of the borrowing (Carr 2001). Instead, in the following argument, I will present another test case from the same textual environment—the construction of Solomon’s temple—in which the revisional activity involves both omission and addition (i.e., the original text is not reconstructible through the sifting out of the non-shared material), but only one of the texts—that in Chronicles—is oriented toward a specific Pentateuchal tradition. DtrH, in contrast, reflects an idiosyncratic conception of the sacrificial arrangements in the temple, thus ruling out the possibility that someone reworked the Chronicler’s text towards that end. It will then become clear that DtrH is the source, the underlying text used by the Chronicler, who sought to conform his source-text to P’s standards, as was claimed by Wellhausen.⁴

2. The Bronze Altar

I will start the investigation with a review of the text in the DtrH. After Solomon’s prayer and blessing for the people, the narrative states that he, along with the entire people, offered sacrifices totaling several thousand animals. Therefore, “The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the Lord; indeed,⁵ he offered there the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat pieces of the sacrifices of well-being, because the bronze altar that was before the Lord was too small to receive the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat pieces of the sacrifices of well-being” (1 Kgs 8:64). And yet, despite this consecration of the court, on regular occasions, the king did still present his offerings upon the altar: “Three times a year Solomon would offer up burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being *on the altar that he constructed for the Lord*” (1 Kgs 9:25; cf. LXX-3 Kgdms 2:35g).⁶ Scholars raised concerns about the originality of 1 Kgs 9:25, casting doubt on whether it can be discussed on the same level as 1 Kgs 8:64 and on its impact on our understanding of the ritual practice reflected in the Book of Kings. **A full treatment of this approach can be found in Appendix A.** In the meantime, it is worth saying that the verse also appears in the Book of Chronicles (2 Chr 8:12), so it is relevant at least to the discussion of the relationship between the two books in their current form.

The natural reading of 1 Kgs 9:25 is that the bronze altar, upon which the burnt- and grain-offerings and sacrifices of well-being were offered on the day of the temple inauguration, if it was not too small to contain them, is the very altar upon which Solomon makes his offering three times a year. If this reference is to the three festivals (Exod 23:17; 34:23–24; Deut 16:16), they might still be very crowded, rendering the bronze altar too small to accommodate all the sacrifices. Yet, even if the court’s floor was intended to serve as an offering place on those occasions, as in the inauguration ceremony, the king’s offerings were made on the altar, implicitly the altar that was supposed to be used on the temple’s inauguration day, i.e., the bronze altar (Thenius 1873, p. 151; Montgomery 1951, p. 200; Myers 1965, p. 22; Mulder 1998, p. 495).

The problem with that reading, though, is that the qualification “the altar *that he constructed for the Lord*” is very unlikely to be a reference to the bronze altar. The account of Solomon’s building activities is very detailed regarding bronze manufacturing (1 Kgs 7:15–45), yet there is no mention of the bronze altar throughout that exhaustive report. This has been noted by almost all commentators (among others: Gray 1964, p. 254; Robinson 1972, p. 92; DeVries 1985, p. 133). In contrast, others suggested that 1 Kgs 9:25 is exactly where the construction of the bronze altar is also attributed to Solomon (Rehm 1979, p. 108), but the wording of the verse does not seem to support this reading. It seems to function as a reference to an altar already perceived as built by Solomon, rather than as an attribution of that building to Solomon of an altar that had already been presented without that attribution (1 Kgs 8:64).

This problem cannot be dismissed as an inadvertent omission (contra Kittel 1900, pp. 63, 88; Myers 1965, p. 22 [contrast with his own assessment on p. 41]; Mulder 1998, p. 322; McKenzie 2004, p. 240; Klein 2012, pp. 58–59),⁷ as the bronze works in Solomon’s temple are depicted in both a detailed account and a summary list. Both lack a reference to the bronze altar. The account begins by expanding on the two bronze pillars to be placed “at the vestibule of the temple” (1 Kgs 7:15–22). It then proceeds with the molten sea (vv. 23–26), the ten stands of bronze (vv. 27–37), the ten basins of bronze (v. 38), and the location of these twenty-one vessels (v. 39). Then the text moves to depict several utility utensils: pots,⁸ shovels, and basins⁹ (v. 40a), which, probably due to their smaller scale and portable nature, do not have a fixed location in the sacred space. The list contained in verses 40b–45 then repeats all these vessels, almost in the same order, with no further details regarding construction artistry: pillars, stands, basins, sea (whereas in the detailed account beforehand the sea appeared before the stands), pots, shovels, and basins (Thenius 1873, p. 119; Kittel 1900, p. 67; contra Montgomery 1951, p. 181, who thinks that the summary begins already in v. 40a. However, the duplication of 40a in 45 proves otherwise. Mulder 1998, p. 355, suggests that the opening of the list was lost, and that v. 40b concludes the earlier section). No bronze altar in sight, though its utility utensils are clearly present (v. 40a; and see in more detail in Section 4 below).¹⁰

This discrepancy is not attested in the Chronicler’s account. There, the bronze altar is explicitly mentioned among Hiram’s bronze artworks (2 Chr 3:15–4:16). Thus, the account begins with the pillars of bronze (2 Chr 3:15–17), and before proceeding to the sea (2 Chr 4:2–5) and the basins (v. 6),¹¹ it mentions the manufacturing of the bronze altar: “He made an altar of bronze, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and ten cubits high” (2 Chr 4:1). There is no question, then, that when Solomon is reported to offer up “burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of the Lord that he had built in front of the vestibule” (2 Chr 8:12), this is a reference to the bronze altar. Furthermore, this qualification is directly attributed to the bronze altar on the Chronicler’s account of the inauguration day:

	1 Kings 8:64	2 Chronicles 7:7
1	The same day, the king	Solomon
2	consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the Lord...	consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the Lord...
3	because the bronze altar	because the bronze altar
4	<i>that was before the Lord</i>	<i>Solomon had made</i>
5	was too small to receive	could not hold
6	the burnt offerings and the grain offerings and the fat	the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat
7	pieces of the sacrifices of well-being.	Parts

Lines 2, 3, and 6 are identical in both columns. Lines 1, 5, and 7, instead, convey the same content, though with slightly different formulations in the two versions. The main divergence between the DtrH and Chronicles in that specific verse, then, is in the italicized material on line 4. DtrH qualifies the bronze altar as “that was before the Lord,” whereas Chronicles describes it as the altar “Solomon had made,” in accordance with the Chronicler’s bronze vessel manufacturing account.¹²

Chronicles, then, lacks the discrepancy apparent in the DtrH regarding the altar, and all the pieces of the account fit nicely together, and cohere with the natural reading sug-

gested above, that Solomon's offering on the altar he built to the Lord refers to the bronze altar mentioned in the inauguration ceremony account.

3. What Is the Original Version?

How are we to interpret the data collected thus far?

According to the DtrH's-priority model suggested by Wellhausen (and followers), the data indicate that DtrH's shorter account was later expanded by adding a report on the manufacturing of the bronze altar and changing its qualification in the description of the courtyard's consecration to clarify that this altar is the one made by Solomon and upon which he offered his regular sacrifices.

According to the shared-source model, however, the reconstructed original shared material seems to lack both the report on the manufacture of the bronze altar *and* the very qualification of that altar in the description of the courtyard's consecration. However, it then seems highly surprising that both branches of transmission of that shared source decided to dedicate a special treatment to the somewhat negligible issue of the qualification of the altar. While the addition in Chronicles might seem appropriate, intended to highlight the addition of the account regarding the manufacturing of the bronze altar, in DtrH it appears to be a very odd addition, unless one interprets it as a *polemic*, aiming precisely against the Chronicler's added qualification.

A third model, then, emerges, according to which the DtrH revises Chronicles. Such a model has never been suggested and is undefendable. That leaves us—at least in this particular case—with Wellhausen's model, according to which Chronicles revised DtrH in order to fill a lacuna in the DtrH's text, which mentions the bronze altar (1 Kgs 8:64) and Solomon's altar (1 Kgs 9:25) without equating the two and without supporting material for such an equation.

The option of an accidental omission in the DtrH is also less convincing. As noted above, the account reports the construction of the bronze vessels twice: in a detailed exposition (1 Kgs 7:15–40a || 2 Chr 3:15–4:10) and in a summary list (1 Kgs 7:40b–45 || 2 Chr 4:11–16). While the two lists agree in DtrH, in Chronicles, they differ exactly at the point of the bronze altar, which is mentioned in the detailed exposition but not in the summary list. It would be surprising if the bronze altar, which initially, according to the “accident” hypothesis, appeared in both lists, was inadvertently omitted in three out of four expected occurrences (two lists in each history).

Not only that, the description of the bronze altar in Chronicles lacks some basic structural features that recur throughout the list of bronze vessels. For instance, all the large stationary vessels are depicted with their location (pillars: 2 Chr 3:17; sea: 2 Chr 4:10; basins: v. 6; golden vessels—lampstands: v. 7; tables: v. 8), while the bronze altar lacks this information. The ornaments of the bronze vessels are described in exhaustive detail (pillars: 2 Chr 3:16; sea: 2 Chr 4:3–5; stands [which are missing from the detailed account in Chronicles, but do appear in the summary list in 2 Chr 4:14]: 1 Kgs 7:29–36), while the bronze altar lacks this information, although it most probably had decorations (an illustration of decorative elements in a bronze altar can be found in Exod 27:4–5). It seems like the bronze altar unit in Chronicles is an attempt by a reviser to fill a lacuna he identified in his *Vorlage*, and, being more concerned with the lacuna than with style, he made do with the mere mention of the vessel rather than with other expected features such as location and decoration (see Burney 1903, p. 103). It appears that *even if* a putative shared source did, indeed, include the account of manufacturing the bronze altar that was accidentally omitted in the DtrH, the current account in Chronicles (2 Chr 4:1) does not go back to that lost original. Rather, it is an adaptation of the DtrH text (or of a DtrH-like text) that lacks this account.

All evidence, then, points to the priority of DtrH over Chronicles in the passage under discussion, and not to a shared source.

4. Alternative Altar in Kings

We are still required to figure out, then, on which altar Solomon was said to offer three times a year according to the DtrH, if not on the bronze altar “that was before the Lord.” The immediate suspect would naturally be the altar the manufacture of which is reported in the DtrH, namely, the golden altar.

Solomon’s golden altar is mentioned twice. The first of these is in the depiction of the inner sanctuary and its golden overlay (1 Kgs 6:20–22).¹³ The second mention is in the concise list of golden vessels (1 Kgs 7:48).

The identification of Solomon’s altar of offerings with the golden altar he constructed in the temple appears somewhat problematic. This vessel has sparked debate among scholars, mainly because of the Pentateuchal Priestly tradition concerning a golden altar. Wellhausen, based on the unexpected location of the prescriptive golden incense altar unit, suggested that it was secondarily inserted into the Tabernacle texts. Accordingly, he sought to rebut any attestation for the existence of a golden altar within the sanctuary, as such an attestation would support the originality of such a vessel in the Tabernacle account, as well. He therefore suggested that Solomon’s inner golden altar was used as a mere table upon which to present the bread of the Presence (Wellhausen [1899] 1963, p. 138. Followed by, e.g., Benzinger 1899, p. 35). In contrast, Hurowitz rejected the idea that one can prove literary lateness by “mislocation” in the text, and advocated for the Tabernacle incense altar’s originality (Hurowitz 1985). Accordingly, he regarded Solomon’s inner golden altar as evidence for the originality of such a vessel in any depiction of the Israelite ritual system (Hurowitz 1995, p. 158 [and briefly on p. 164]. Followed by Mulder 1998, pp. 365–67, and references there). Neither of these scholars would accept that Solomon regularly offered his sacrifices on the golden altar.

However, both scholars seem to be wrong on that issue. The function of the altar can be elucidated from the complete list of Solomon’s golden vessels:

	1 Kgs 7:48–50		2 Chr 4:19–22
A	מזבח הזהב	Golden altar	מזבח הזהב
B	השלחן אשר עליו לחם הפנים	Table/s for the bread of the Presence	השלחנות ועליהם לחם הפנים
C	המנרות	Lampstands (and their lamps)	המנרות (ונורתיהם)
D	הפרח	Flowers	הפרח
E	הנרות	Lamps	הנרות
F	המלקחים	Tongs	המלקחים
G	הספות	Cups	
H	המזמרות	Snuffers	המזמרות
I	המזרקות	Basins	המזרקות
J	הכפות	Ladles	הכפות
K	המחתות	Firepans	המחתות
L	הפתות	Sockets/doors	דלתות

The golden altar (A), the table (or tables—B), and the lampstands (C) are large vessels that occupy the temple’s space. The lamps (E) and the tongs (F) are probably the lampstands’ utility vessels (cf. Exod 25:37–38), and thus *the flowers* that precede them (D) might

also be related to the decorative elements on Solomon's lampstands (cf. Exod 25:33–34). The firepans, which are also associated with the lampstand (cf. Exod 25:38), appear later in Solomon's list (K). Their mention only later in the list suggests that they are related not only to the lampstands, but to other vessels, too. Indeed, another large vessel with related firepans is the altar. But what about all the vessels mentioned in between (G–J)?

Answering this question requires closer attention to the function of firepans and related utility utensils. Firepans are associated with altars, for instance, in Exod 27:3, where the sacrificial altar in the Tabernacle is described. The list of its utility utensils is highly reminiscent of Solomon's bronze utility vessels (Montgomery 1951, p. 181):

	Exod 27:3		1 Kgs 7:45
a	סִירְתֵּי	Pots	הַסִּירֹת
b	יָצִי	Shovels	הַיָּצִים
c	מִזְרְקֵי	Basins	הַמִּזְרְקֹת
d	מִזְלָגֵי	Forks	
e	מִחְתֵּי	Firepans	

It appears, then, that even though Solomon did not construct a bronze altar (according to DtrH), he did ensure that its utility vessels were renewed. One of the vessels that both lists share—the basins (c: מִזְרְקֹת)—also appears in the list of Solomon's golden vessels (I). Together with the firepans (K || e), they imply that the ladles (J), too, are the utility utensils for an altar. Indeed, ladles filled with incense are offered by the chieftains of the Israelite tribes as part of their contribution to the inauguration of the altar (Num 7:84). Another utility utensil in this list, the מִזְמֶרֶת (H), might also be altar-related. One of the senses of the root זמר refers to power, so the derivative noun מִזְמֶרֶת might denote scissors for cutting the sacrificial meat (Thenius 1873, p. 124 [however, see Fritz's assessment, that “the knives made of gold were useless,” thus probably deeming them rather ceremonial: Fritz 2003, p. 86]. Contra Hurowitz 1995, pp. 155–56, who derives this noun from I זמר, “to sing,” and interprets it as musical instruments).

What type of altar do all these utensils accompany? Probably a sacrificial altar. As mentioned, the מִזְמֶרֶת are probably related to the sacrificial meat, while the מִזְרְקֹת are probably used for the sacrificial blood, which is described elsewhere as being tossed using the root זרק (Exod 24:6, 8; 29:16, 20; Lev 1:5, 11; 3:2, 8, 13; 7:2), or for choice flour offered as grain offering (Num 7:13, 19, 25, 31, and eight more times in intervals of 6 verses).¹⁴

There are, then, two lists of utility utensils related to an altar—one list of bronze utensils (1 Kgs 7:45) and one of gold utensils (1 Kgs 7:50). There are also two altars—one of bronze, not made by Solomon, and one of gold, made by Solomon. It is most probable, then, that the bronze utility utensils are for service in the bronze altar (cf. Exod 27:1–3), while the gold utility utensils are for service in the golden altar. The golden altar, then, is a sacrificial altar, as its utensils are dedicated to sacrifices, and as we are told that Solomon regularly offered sacrifices on the altar he had made, a qualification that fits only the golden altar in the DtrH's account.¹⁵

It seems, then, that according to the ritual system embedded in the DtrH, sacrifices on behalf of the people were offered on the bronze altar, as on the day of the temple's inauguration. On special occasions, though, when the king wanted to make a private offering, he delivered the sacrifice on a more lavish altar, made of gold, using gold utility utensils.

5. Altering the Alternative Altar in Chronicles

In Chronicles, this distinction between the people and royalty disappears. Solomon regularly offers his sacrifices on the bronze altar, where the community's offerings are presented. This transition, of course, renders the golden altar, at least as a sacrificial altar, obsolete. If the case were only a misunderstanding of the ritual system reflected in the original text, or a mere attempt to fill a lacuna in it (the lack of an account of the construction of the bronze altar), we would expect to find the golden utility utensils in Chronicles untouched. After all, their association with the golden altar is not apparent, as they are not textually adjacent, nor is there any explicit statement about that relation, which must be inferred by philological investigation as suggested in Section 4 above. Indeed, this is precisely what we find in MT's Chronicles: an added account about the construction of the bronze altar, an explicit qualification of the altar as built by Solomon, and the list of golden utility utensils, as if, insofar as the text does not directly address the bronze altar, the text is not disturbing.

However, in the LXX, a different picture emerges, as one can see in the following table:

	1 Kgs 7:50		2 Chr 4:21–22 MT		2 Chr 4:21–22 LXX
	הפרח		הפרח		----
	הנרות		הנרות		----
	המלקחים		המלקחים		Λαβίδες
					οἱ λύχνοι
G	הספות	Cups	----		----
H	המזמרות	Snuffers	המזמרות		----
I	המזרקות	Basins	המזרקות		τὰς φιάλας
J	הכפות	Ladles	הכפות		τὰς θυῖσκας
K	המחתות	Firepans	המחתות		τὰ πυρεῖα
	זהב	of gold	זהב		Χρυσίου
L	הפתות	Sockets/doors	דלתות		ἡ θύρα τοῦ οἴκου

Two items are missing: the ספות and the מזמרות. One can claim that this is an inadvertent omission: the נרות appear *after* the מלקחים, and thus, if it represents an actual Hebrew *Vorlage*, a copyist's eye might have jumped from the end of this word to the end of מזמרות. However, this requires reconstructing a very complex (though not impossible) process, in which the reviser of the LXX towards MT restored the order of the נרות and מלקחים according to the order in Kings, *and* added back the מזמרות, and yet forgot the intermediate ספות. I suggest that the *Vorlage* of the LXX followed the same order as in MT-Chronicles and DtrH (all versions). The reason for the transposition of the נרות is to be sought in the processes of translating or transmitting the translated text.¹⁶ Yet, it did not include the ספות and מזמרות, the latter being secondarily added in MT as a midway harmonization towards the DtrH.

Why would the original version (according to my suggestion) omit the ספות and מזמרות? These are the only utility vessels in the list that are exclusively related to a sacrificial altar. The מזרקות, for instance, are for some reason related in Chronicles to the *tables* (2 Chr 4:8). The כפר and מקהה are used elsewhere in the Bible for incense.¹⁷ Only the omitted utensils are markedly related to sacrifice, and the Chronicler rejected the idea that Solomon's golden altar is for sacrifices. As he left the incense vessels in the list, he probably attributed this function to the altar. Where did he get that idea from? Of course, the Priestly legislation in

the Pentateuch, where a bronze altar is used for sacrifices (Exod 29), while a golden altar is used for incense (Exod 30:1–10). The Priestly golden altar is explicitly *not* a sacrificial altar: “You shall not offer unholy incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering” (Exod 30:9), so Solomon cannot be said to have offered burnt offerings on a golden altar.¹⁸

This shift in the altar’s function required a sophisticated revision, including erasure (of two golden utility utensils for a sacrificial altar: 2 Chr 4:22), supplementation (of a manufacturing account for the bronze altar: 2 Chr 4:1),¹⁹ and erasure-and-supplementation, i.e., revision (of the qualifier of the bronze altar: 2 Chr 7:7). A shared source cannot be reconstructed, as that reconstructed source would lack a functioning sacrificial altar on which Solomon could have offered his sacrifices. Furthermore, a shared-source model would require us to suggest that the list of golden utility utensils in the DtrH expands on the list of the shared source preserved in the LXX to Chronicles. But then, one would wonder why this expansion, transforming the golden altar into a sacrificial one, did not use the utensils mentioned in the list of bronze vessels (for instance, using סירות and יעים [MT] or מזלגות [LXX]). The different terminology between the two lists indicates genuine original material in the DtrH’s list of golden utility utensils, though this material is definitely not shared by both traditions. The Chronicler does not share this material because it contradicts his ideological purview: depicting the first temple religion as bound by the Priestly legislation in the Pentateuch.²⁰

There is no option but to claim that, at least in that passage, the Chronicler adapted the DtrH text to fit the Priestly legislation, as proposed by Wellhausen, and he did so meticulously and with many interventions of various types. There is no reason to doubt, then, that he could do the same in other passages, as well. He did not move only in the direction of expansion.

6. Ahaz

The same pattern repeats in another DtrH attestation of a “royal altar,” namely, in Ahaz’s story. When King Ahaz visited Damascus, “he saw the altar that was at Damascus. King Ahaz sent to the priest Uriah a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details. The priest Uriah built the altar; in accordance with all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus” (2 Kgs 16:10–11). Later, Ahaz commanded Uriah: “upon the great altar (=the newly built altar) offer ... *the king’s burnt offering, and his grain offering*, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offering ... *but the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by*” (2 Kgs 16:15). Notice that Ahaz requires both the peoples’ burnt offerings *and the king’s burnt offerings* to be offered upon the great altar. It seems, then, that he designates the bronze altar for the occasions when he comes himself to officiate in the cult (“to inquire by”), much like as he did for inaugurating the new altar just a moment ago (vv. 12–13). Just like Solomon, after the inauguration, in which he used the entire people’s altar (or, in the case of Solomon, also the courtyard’s floor), he then turns to offer on the more lavish alternative altar.

We are not explicitly told what the newly built altar was made of, and the word “build” is also used elsewhere for the construction of the golden altar (1 Kgs 9:25, according to the interpretation suggested above). However, the Book of Kings tells of several raids on the temple of Jerusalem and initiatives of the kings of Judah that stripped it of its more lavish construction materials (1 Kgs 14:26; 15:18; 2 Kgs 12:19). Specifically, some sixty years before Ahaz, King Jehoash of Israel is said to seize “*all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king’s house*” (2 Kgs 14:14), and Ahaz himself “took the silver and gold found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king’s house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria” (2 Kgs 16:8), thus preventing himself from constructing a gold or silver replacement for the golden altar

that Jehoash probably forsook.²¹ It is probable, then, that Ahaz's newly constructed altar is a simple stone altar, though elaborate and decorative, requiring a specific plan to be sent to the constructor. This construction material rendered the bronze altar the more lavish one, thus fit for a royal sacrifice from now on.²²

In the DtrH, then, Ahaz's deed is depicted as a mere reconstruction of the traditional cult: one altar for the community and one for the king, serving as officiating priest of his own sacrifices.²³ Ahaz's "reform" is only concerning the material, and consequently the location of the king's altar: while Solomon's altar was made of gold, thus allowing it to be placed inside the house (1 Kgs 6:20–22), Ahaz's altar was of bronze, and hence had to remain in the court: "The bronze altar that was before the Lord he removed from the front of the house, from the place between his altar and the house of the Lord, and put it on the north side of his altar" (2 Kgs 16:14). This reform is due to lack of relevant gold for constructing the original golden altar, and it does not seem that the narrative expresses any negative stance towards Ahaz's innovation in light of the circumstances. If at all, then the negative assessment is of the "bribe" that he sent over to the king of Assyria, enclosing the altar narrative from all sides, which forced him to settle for cheaper materials (Long 1991, pp. 177–78).

In contrast, the Chronicler does not relate this episode in full, and makes do with the short notice that Ahaz "made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem" (2 Kgs 28:24). Those plural altars in Jerusalem play a significant role later, in Ahaz's son Hezekiah's, cultic reforms (2 Chr 30:14). The Chronicler, then, rejects the idea of royal service in the temple from the outset, condemns Ahaz for any possible multiplication of altars, and has Hezekiah "purge" this atrocity from the cult, in full accordance with P's cultic system.²⁴

Ahaz is not presented as a good king in the DtrH (2 Kgs 16:2–4). Therefore, if the DtrH's sources disapproved of his altar(s) reform, we can expect them to have depicted it more negatively. The current form of Ahaz's narrative in the DtrH suggests that the phenomenon here is the same as the one we have already seen with regard to Solomon's altar: an original text, preserved in the DtrH, according to which a system with two altars existed in the temple, and a later revision of that source in accordance with P's mono-altar cultic system. The only change in the revisions is that Solomon, at least in that stage of the narrative, is a good character, so this judgment is preserved in Chronicles, as well, suggesting that he adhered to P's cultic system. In contrast, Ahaz is a sinister figure from the outset, so all of his cultic actions are condensed to the succinct evaluation that he "made (plural, oh no!) altars."

The comparison of Solomon and Ahaz helps clarify another detail in Solomon's account. The verse expressing that Solomon made offerings three times a year on the altar (1 Kgs 9:25) uses two verbs:

והעלה שלמה	Solomon <i>would offer up</i>
שלוש פעמים בשנה	three times a year
עלות ושלמים	burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being
על המזבח אשר בנה ליהוה	on the altar that he built for the Lord
והקטיר אתו אשר לפני יהוה	

This translation, adapted from the NSRV to fit the Hebrew word order, is brought here without the translation of the final line, as MT's text, והקטיר אתו אשר לפני יהוה, makes no sense whatsoever. Indeed, the NRSV translates here the LXX version (2:35g): ἀκαθάρτου ἑσθλῶς, which can be reconstructed as a Hebrew *Vorlage* reading: והקטיר לפני יהוה, thus suggesting "offering incense before the Lord." According to this reading, the two

verbs describe two different ritual actions: offering the sacrifices and, apart from that, offering incense.

However, the same sequence of verbs also appears in Ahaz's story of the inauguration of the new altar (2 Kgs 16:12–13):

וירא המלך את המזבח	The king viewed the altar.
ויקרב המלך על המזבח	Then the king drew near to the altar,
ויעל עליו	went up on it,
ויקטר את עלתו	and offered his burnt offering
ואת מנחתו	and his grain offering

The second line is already revealing. MT's verb ויקרב is vocalized as an intransitive verb, קרב *qal* (ויקרב), as expressed in the translation “to draw near.” However, the particle על suggests a transitive verb, קרב *hifil* (ויקרב), suggesting that the king “offered up” on the altar (On קרב *hifil* as a hypernym denoting the entirety of the sacrificial procedure, see Meshel 2014, p. 142 and footnote 40 therein). Accordingly, the verb ויעל, which is translated in the NRSV as an intransitive verb, “went up on it,” might also actually be a *transitive* verb, as in Solomon's העלה. However, unlike the translation there, here it is pretty clear that the two verbs are in a single sequence: he *brings up* (עלה *hifil*) and *burns*, turns into smoke (קטר *hifil*), his burnt and grain offerings.

The same should also apply to Solomon: he did not “offer up three times a year his sacrifices” and also “burn incense before the Lord.” Instead, he raised the offerings and turned them into smoke (thus, ויקטר should be vocalized as a normal perfect *hifil* [והקטר], in accordance with the וְהַעֲלֶה at the beginning of the verse and as fits with the ם in the middle of the verb], and not the current MT's infinitive),²⁵ thus highlighting the oneness of the ritual activity, the place (the golden altar), and the officiating person—the king himself.²⁶ The later distortion of the verse in MT is probably an attempt to challenge that oneness and suggest multiple ritual actions, one of sacrifices and one of offering incense on a different altar (hence requiring a different qualifier אשר), as in P, and as interpreted by practically any medieval Jewish exegete, all of them assuming that Solomon followed P's cultic system. Chronicles, with the same line of thought, intervened differently in the text, and just omitted the קטר verb (2 Chr 8:12, 13).

7. Conclusions

The examination of Solomon's temple inauguration and the construction of the cultic altars offers a focused vantage point from which to reassess the relationship between Chronicles and the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH). Against models that posit a “shared source” underlying both corpora, the analysis advanced here supports the priority of DtrH and understands Chronicles as a deliberate, ideologically motivated revision of its Vorlage, broadly in line with the position associated with Wellhausen.

Three interrelated observations emerge from the preceding discussion. First, the Chronicler engages in **systematic ideological harmonization**. He does not merely supplement or embellish the monarchic narrative but reshapes it in order to bring Israel's cultic past into conformity with Priestly (P) legislation. This harmonization operates not at the level of isolated glosses but through coordinated narrative interventions.

Second, the Chronicler undertakes the **correction of perceived textual lacunae**. The treatment of the bronze altar demonstrates that he identified an unresolved tension in Kings, where the altar plays a central ritual role without any account of its construction, and sought to resolve it. By inserting a manufacturing report for the bronze altar (2 Chr 4:1)

and explicitly identifying it as the altar “Solomon had made” (2 Chr 7:7), the Chronicler produces a coherent cultic narrative that Kings itself does not supply.

Third, and most significantly, the Chronicler effects the **suppression of a royal cultic sphere** preserved in the DtrH. Kings reflects a pre-Priestly ritual configuration in which the king maintained a distinct and more lavish sacrificial altar (golden in Solomon’s case, bronze in Ahaz’s).²⁷ Chronicles dismantles this two-altar system through a combination of omission, reinterpretation, and reassignment of cultic functions: sacrificial utility vessels associated with the golden altar disappear, the golden altar is redefined as an incense altar, and the Pentateuchal mono-altar system is retrojected into the monarchic period. This reimagining of the ritual landscape transcends the mere arrangement of vessels; it serves to strip the Davidic monarch of his unique cultic autonomy and subordinate him to the established Priestly hierarchy. This shift is consistent with the Chronicler’s broader program, exemplified in the narrative of Uzziah, who is struck with leprosy for attempting to officiate at the incense altar (2 Chr 26:16–21), the very vessel that had been stripped of its royal sacrificial function in the Chronicler’s version of Solomon’s Temple.

From this perspective, the “shared source” model proves methodologically problematic. It requires reconstructing a source that lacks a viable cultic configuration and fails to account for the patterned, ideologically consistent revisions attested in Chronicles. The evidence instead points to the preservation of an earlier ritual conception in the DtrH, which the Chronicler found incompatible with Priestly norms and therefore reworked.

Chronicles thus emerges not as a passive repository of inherited tradition, or a simple expansion of earlier historiography, but as an instance of active, revisional history-writing. Through a sophisticated combination of erasure, supplementation, and textual realignment, the Chronicler recasts the First Temple as having embodied Priestly law from its very inception. The case of the altars shows that this process is neither incidental nor superficial, but integral to the Chronicler’s theological and historiographic project.

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Appendix A. 1 Kgs 9:25

Darshan (2006) has suggested that the “miscellanies” section(s) in LXX-3 Kgdm 2:35a–k and 46a–l, which have many parallels throughout Solomon’s chapters in MT’s 1 Kings, are part of a separate, late composition that was circulated alongside Kings’ “base-layer” Solomon narrative. Eventually, this composition was integrated differently in the two main recensions of the book—as dispersed and out-of-context comments throughout the narrative (as reflected in MT), and as a more or less intact whole unit in chapter 2 (as reflected in LXX, which, in fact, reflects a doublet, as it also presents several of those comments in their MT’s dispersed locations). The general outline of his analysis was accepted, for instance, by Jan Joosten, who suggested that those miscellanies were composed without any acquaintance with the Book of Kings, as an appendix to an original Book of Samuel that ended with the ascension of Solomon to the throne (Joosten 2018).

According to this proposal, then, 1 Kgs 9:25, which finds its parallel in the LXX only in the miscellanies section (3 Kgdms 35g), is of a different origin than 1 Kgs 7:15–45 and 8:64, and must not be confronted with the claims therein or integrated with it in order to reconstruct the religious system that the Book of Kings captures (at least in its earlier layers; as mentioned above, the overall picture presented in this article is nonetheless valid, as Chronicles is also acquainted with this verse. See already [Wiener 1927](#), p. 14).

First, it must be noted that Darshan's suggestion has already been criticized, with the composition he identifies being described as having a dubious structure and questionable themes ([Talshir 2013](#), pp. 165–69). However, even if one accepts Darshan's overall analysis, there is still indirect evidence that at least the verse under discussion, 3 Kgdms 2:35g, was not part of the original source that constituted the miscellanies, but was inserted later based on MT's 1 Kgs 9:25. According to Darshan, the first miscellany exhibits a concentric structure, in which 3 Kgdms 2:35g parallels 3 Kgdms 2:35e. The latter, against Darshan's claim, exhibits explicit signs of influence from MT.

Darshan states that 3 Kgdms 2:35e is the only component of the miscellanies that has no parallel in MT whatsoever. He even contends that it creates tension with MT, as in MT the manufacture of the temple's bronze vessels is ascribed to Hiram of Tyre, whereas 3 Kgdms 2:35e ascribes them to Solomon himself ([Darshan 2006](#), pp. 33–34). However, I believe this observation is problematic. First, in MT itself, the manufacture of the bronze vessels is also ascribed to Solomon, right after the concluding list of bronze vessels (1 Kgs 7:40–45): "In the plain of the Jordan *the king* cast them" (1 Kgs 7:46; the words "the king," although represented in Rahlfs edition for the LXX, are missing from several manuscripts, such as codex Vaticanus, and were probably not represented in the Old Greek translation). The Peshitta also reflects such an attribution in v. 40. Second, this ascription need not surprise us, as the entire construction of the temple is attributed to Solomon (1 Kgs 6:1–2), and it is most probable that no ancient scribe imagined Solomon himself performing construction work in the temple.²⁸ The golden vessels are explicitly ascribed to Solomon (1 Kgs 7:48–51), and yet he is not to be thought of as a goldsmith ([Cogan 2001](#), p. 269). Hence, there is no real contradiction between MT and the miscellanies regarding the fabrication of the bronze vessels.

Regarding the lack of parallel, the list of bronze vessels in 3 Kgdms 2:35e appears to rely, somewhat freely, on the list found in MT's 1 Kgs 7:41–44. It consists of six vessels, though the first and the sixth are the same: "the (bronze) sea," τὴν θάλασσαν (τὴν χαλκῆν), which is mentioned (once) in 1 Kgs 7:44. The second item in the list is τὰ ὑποστηρίγματα, which, in the LXX to 1 Kgs 7 translates the elusive יָסָדִים of the sea (1 Kgs 7:24 [LXX 3 Kgdms 7:11]). This noun is idiosyncratic to the LXX (and derivatively in Josephus), but it seems to denote a support of some sort ([Liddell and Scott 1849](#), p. 1896: "underprop"). As they precede τοὺς λουτήρας, a noun which translates the basins (1 Kgs 7:30 [LXX 3 Kgdms 7:11]; cf. Exod 30:18, 28, and more), the ὑποστηρίγματα might actually denote here the מכנוֹת, which form the bases for the basins (1 Kgs 7:38, 43). Elsewhere in 1 Kgs 7, the LXX does not know how to translate this noun, leaving it transliterated into Greek, even when it appears in the singular, מכונה (e.g., in verses 28, 30, 32, 34, 35). The fourth item in the list is "the pillars," τοὺς στύλους, from 1 Kgs 7:41–42. As in Seidel's Law (the tendency of a later text to cite its source in reverse order), this list moves back from 1 Kgs 7:44 to 7:41, and ends with the only vessel which is not mentioned at all in 1 Kgs 7: "the fountain of the yard," τὴν κρήνην τῆς αὐλῆς and back to the sea. The fifth and sixth items are, indeed, a mystery. Nevertheless, the third item deserves more attention.

The basins are defined as "the *large* basins," τοὺς λουτήρας τοὺς μεγάλους. This designation makes no sense in itself, as the basins contain liquids in the amount of only one-fiftieth of what the sea, which is mentioned twice in the list, can contain (compare

1 Kgs 7:38 with 1 Kgs 7:26, though the estimation in the latter is missing from the LXX). Even without the exact math, the fact that twelve bronze oxen are needed to support the latter (1 Kgs 7:25) indicates its much larger size. Why, then, would the basins be qualified with the designation “large”?

It seems that this designation is already influenced by a manuscript in which 1 Kgs 7:40, the verse right before the condensed list of bronze vessels, is distorted in a similar fashion to the distortion in MT, in which the original כִּירֹת became כִּירֹת.²⁹ As these are clearly small vessels, mentioned with other utility utensils with no fixed place in the temple, and as the scribe in charge of the list in 3 Kgdms 2:35e is specifically referring to the list that follows in the next four verses, he qualified the כִּירֹת that he refers to, those that appear in verse 43, as *הַכִּירֹת הַגְּדוֹלִים (as probably appeared in the reverse reconstructed Hebrew *Vorlage* of the miscellanies), resulting in the translation “the large basins”.³⁰

Hence, even if the miscellanies in general form a separate composition, it seems that 3 Kgdms 2:35e is *not* part of that separate composition, but is based on 1 Kgs 7. If 2:35e and 2:35g are indeed “concentric parallels,” as Darshan argues, then proving 2:35e is dependent on the MT’s Kings account automatically places 2:35g (and thus also 1 Kgs 9:25), the sole remaining reference to Solomon’s religious activity in the miscellanies³¹, into that same orbit of dependency.

It seems to me, then, that 1 Kgs 9:25 can be used in order to reconstruct the ancient monarchic-era Israelite royal-religious ideology, in tandem with 1 Kgs 8:64, as done throughout this paper.

Notes

- ¹ In the LXX-Chronicles, the festival is mentioned, though the month is missing from several manuscripts. Rahlfs regards the omission as secondary, hence inserting the words οὗτος ὁ γὰρ ἐβδόμοις in round parentheses (Rahlfs 1952, p. 817).
- ² MT’s verse 65 actually speaks of fourteen days, seven of “the festival,” and seven more days. The LXX version aligns this verse with the following one, which speaks of the *eighth* day rather than the fifteenth day, erasing the final five words that include the additional seven days and the amount of fourteen days (see also LXX-2 Chr 7:9). This version makes a lot of sense (McKenzie 2006, p. 96), but even if one accepts the MT, the tradition it presents still speaks of “the festival” as consisting of merely seven days, and the other seven days are Solomon’s (one-time) initiative.
- ³ The only exception is Auld himself, who actually accepts the DtrH’s version in that case, as well as in all the cases that will be discussed below in this paper. He does so without any further discussion, which is necessitated specifically according to his own claim! (Auld 1994; except for 1 Kgs 9:25 [p. 64—and see my suggestion in note 18 below]).
- ⁴ To be sure: This is not to say that there is no “original” material in Chronicles, but that in the parallel units, DtrH has some priority, and it is *the* source upon which modifications were made in Chronicles, sometimes through the use of original material neglected in the composition of DtrH.
- ⁵ NRSV: “for there he offered.” However, as the verse does not provide any rationale here, which is given only later in the verse—the altar was too small—I suggest that this is not the causal כי but the emphatic one, expanding on what the implications of this consecration of the middle of the court are: it enabled him to offer sacrifices on the floor of the court rather than on the altar.
- ⁶ Maybe the location of the verse here in MT relates to both the previous verses (which, according to LXX, reads אז העלה שלמה את בת פרעה and the following story about the queen of Sheba who sees Solomon’s burnt offering (1 Kgs 10:5). For the significance of this sequence, depicting the grandeur of the temple-palace complex, see Knoppers 1996, pp. 341–42, and footnote 50 therein. It might have been originally located following the inauguration ceremony.
- ⁷ Several scholars have even suggested an intentional omission by a redactor who assumed that the temple’s bronze altar was made by Moses (Wellhausen [1899] 1963, p. 264; Benzinger 1899, p. 47). However, see note 12 below.
- ⁸ MT preserved here כִּירֹת, as the basins mentioned on v. 38. However, the parallel text on v. 45 (see below) mentions כִּירֹת, which means “pots” (see also 2 Chr 4:11). This original reading was probably distorted to כִּירֹת due to graphic similarity (and maybe also due to a mix-up with the previous vessel? See Cogan 2001, p. 267). This was suggested by almost all commentators (among others: Thenius 1873, p. 119; Montgomery 1951, p. 184; Gray 1964, p. 197); contra Sweeney 2007, p. 123, who suggests the opposite direction. This exact inversion can also be detected in 1 Sam 2:14, in the list of cooking utensils, where MT reads והכה בכיור, which is most probably a distortion of the original בַּסִּיר preserved in 4Q51 (4QSama) Col. III fragment a, line 4 (see DJD 17, Pl. III and p. 42).

- ⁹ Not to be confused with the “basins” of v. 38. The Hebrew text uses here a different term, מזרקות (rather than כירית, which appear on v. 38).
- ¹⁰ Thenius (1873, p. 119), suggested that the omission of the bronze altar in this list is due to its focus on cast bronze rather than beaten metalwork (1 Kgs 7:46; cf. also v. 23, 30, 33, and the LXX’s version for v. 15). However, this suggestion assumes that the fabrication of Solomon’s bronze altar must adhere to the instructions regarding the tabernacle bronze altar. Furthermore, Hiram is explicitly depicted as “full of skill, intelligence, and knowledge to make *all* bronze works” (1 Kgs 7:14), so even if the summarizing list is focused on bronze castings, there is no reason to omit the bronze altar from the detailed account that precedes it.
- ¹¹ The stands are missing, maybe due to homoeoteuton, skipping from one ויעש (cf. 1 Kgs 7:27) to the next (2 Chr 4:6), although if the DtrH version is indicative, then the jump is of some ten or so rather long verses. Another possibility is that the Chronicler wished to juxtapose the sea and the basins in order to compare their uses (2 Chr 4:6aβ-b: “In these they were to rinse what was used for the burnt offering. The sea was for the priests to wash in”), but then forgot to go back to the basins.
- ¹² According to Myers (1965, p. 41), DtrH “assumed that the bronze altar of the tabernacle was moved into the temple complex” (italics mine), though the tabernacle is mentioned only in the Chronicler’s account (2 Chr 1:5). For the DtrH, it is enough to assume that the bronze altar was indeed already present in Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:4), although it is not explicitly stated that “that altar” on which Solomon offered “a thousand burnt offerings” is made of bronze. Alternatively, the author of Kings was indifferent to the origins of the bronze altar, at least compared with “the altar that he (=Solomon) constructed,” probably because of its lesser significance in his overall religious system, as I will elaborate below.
- ¹³ MT’s version in those verses is unintelligible and probably corrupted. The LXX reflects something like “he also made an altar in front of the inner sanctuary and overlaid it with gold” (vv. 20–21).
- ¹⁴ If the מזרקות were used for solids (against Montgomery 1951, p. 181), the ספות (“cups.” Compare Zech 12:2 with all the prophecies about the poisonous cup [Is 51:17; Jer 25:15; Ezek 23:33, etc.]) might have been used for the blood. Thus, the instruction to gash the blood collected in the סף on the night of the Exodus (Exod 12:22), which refers to the threshold of the houses in which the פסח was consumed, might be a wordplay on the סף used in the temple for collecting and manipulating blood. One opinion in Rabbinic literature holds that in the Exodus event, the Israelites used an actual cup, like the sacred vessel סף (Epstein 1955, pp. 25–26). The LXX to Kings, in contrast, suggests the opposite, that even the temple’s ספות are the thresholds (πρόθυρα).
- ¹⁵ Thus, I agree with de Groot on his basic intuition that Solomon’s temple included two altars (de Groot 1924), although Wiener is correct that 1 Kgs 8:64 is not, of itself, evidence of two altars, and 1 Kgs 9:25 does not address “the middle of the court” as a “built altar” (Wiener 1927, p. 31). I also disagree with de Groot’s identification of Solomon’s second altar as a threshold altar, signifying a kind of *rite de passage* (pp. 18–22). De Groot’s reading of 2 Chr 6:13 as initially referring to Solomon’s bronze altar (and not to a water-basin, on which Solomon could not stand at all) is inspiring (pp. 6, 24–29), but it perfectly fits specifically the Chronicler’s revision, suggesting that Solomon, indeed, constructed *only* the bronze altar as a sacrificial altar.
- ¹⁶ A possible reason is that once the פרה at the beginning of v. 21 was omitted for any reason, as in the LXX, the previous vessel mentioned is the very same נרות (2 Chr 4:20), thus leading to a certain separation between the נרות of v. 20 from those of v. 21.
- ¹⁷ See Montgomery’s assessment, that those vessels, even in Kings, are “doubtless for incense” (Montgomery 1951, p. 183). I agree with him that this is what the Chronicler thought.
- ¹⁸ Milgrom speculated, based on minor inconsistencies within the Priestly literature, that the golden altar was originally used in a somewhat similar way to the bronze altar, only inside the sanctuary (Milgrom 1990, p. 240). Note that while the DtrH speaks of burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being (1 Kgs 9:25), the Chronicler mentions only the burnt offerings (2 Chr 8:12), as if disclosing the main reason for the revision, as the verse in Exodus addresses mainly the burnt offering. Contra Auld (1994, p. 50), who finds it “hard to see any reason for the Chronicler to have deleted from his source an otherwise acceptable sacrificial term.”
- ¹⁹ Another supplementation can be found in the explicit location of the altar on which Solomon was sacrificed, “in front of the vestibule” (2 Chr 7:7).
- ²⁰ This is not to imply, however, that every ritual detail must conform strictly to the Priestly system. Scholars have noted that in certain instances—particularly regarding general principles derived from Priestly texts—the Chronicler treats the source material as a form of inspiration rather than a rigid obligation (see, for instance, Meyer 2021). Nevertheless, the case of Exodus 30 is distinct; because it contains an explicit prohibition against offering sacrifices on the golden altar, the Chronicler adheres to it strictly.
- ²¹ However, 2 Kgs 24:13 attributes the spoilage of Solomon’s golden vessels to Nebuchadnezzar’s raid on Jerusalem in 598/7 BCE (cf. Cogan 2001, p. 269). Commentators have already noted that 2 Kgs 24:13–14 form a distinct, somewhat exaggerated account that does not fit easily in its textual surroundings and that stands in tension with the primary DtrH account, probably resulting from a mislocated depiction of the 586 BCE raid on Jerusalem (Burney 1903, p. 366). More recently, it has been suggested that it might be part of a parallel source/tradition (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, pp. 312–13).
- ²² Following those raids, and the orientation of the royal altar to bronze, it is understood why the snuffers and the ladles, which were made of gold in Solomon’s times (1 Kgs 7:50), are already made of bronze at the time of the destruction of the temple

- (2 Kgs 25:14; the tension was already noted by, e.g., Kittel 1900, p. 69, with no solution). The next verse demonstrates that some restoration of gold (and silver) aggregation took place in the temple from Ahaz to the destruction, and several utensils were made of those materials as well.
- ²³ Wazana (2016, pp. 383–85), compares Ahaz’s actions with Mesopotamian accounts of cultic restorations. While Wazana’s suggestion regarding Ahaz’s “renovation of the altar” opens an important line of inquiry, its precise implications remain somewhat difficult to pin down, given that the bronze altar appears to have remained fully operational and was, in fact, reserved for the king’s own officiating. The analysis proposed here seeks to complement her discussion by suggesting that the cultic sphere undergoing “renovation” was not the communal service but rather the royal rite.
- ²⁴ Note that Rabshakeh also highlights the “oneness” of the altar of Hezekiah: “is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, ‘You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?’” (2 Kgs 18:22 | Is 36:7, cf. also 2 Chr 32:12, which explicitly states “one altar” [MT]). This speech might also have prompted the condemnation of Ahaz’s reform. However, it is most probable that Rabshakeh addresses the newly constructed altar, on which the people (“Judah and Jerusalem”) are to offer their sacrifices, without ruling out the possibility that another altar was reserved for the king alone.
- ²⁵ This correction of the vocalization is widely accepted. See already (Stade 1904, pp. 111–12. Contra Auld 2017, pp. 50–51), who maintains the Masoretic vocalization of the *hifil* verb in 1 Kgs 9:25.
- ²⁶ Contra Rehm (1979, p. 108). The conclusion that Solomon officiated himself as priest, then, should not be assumed as part of the king’s office (cf. Mulder 1998, p. 495). Rather, this is implied by the conscious parallel between Solomon and Ahaz, the latter explicitly depicted conducting ritual service upon the altar.
- ²⁷ On the DtrH’s nonalignment with Pentateuchal sources with regard to the cult, see Levinson (2001, pp. 523–30). This nonalignment makes the DtrH a particularly plausible point of comparison in cases where later cultic alignment is evident.
- ²⁸ Gudea is, indeed, claiming in his inscriptions that he was doing construction works in the temple he “built” (Gudea’s Cylinder A, 20:26–21:12). He is also depicted as carrying a basket with bricks for the construction (20:24–25). However, this is probably a ceremonial event, and he also admits that he gathered levied corvée to complete the construction (14:7–15:3), and there is a delicate play between their actions and their attribution to him as the builder of the house (compare 21:19, “They made the house grow as high as the hills,” with 22:9–10, “The ruler built the house, he made it high, high as a great mountain.” Translation according to ETCSL t.2.1.7, <https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7#>, accessed on 1 February 2026).
- ²⁹ See note 8 above.
- ³⁰ If this is correct, then the author of the first miscellany is not only familiar with the Book of Kings (contra Joosten 2018, pp. 304–5), but he also assumes that the reader is familiar with it, and wants to make sure that he understands that he speaks of the large vessels, the small ones do not merit (for him) any special attention in the context of chapter 2.
- ³¹ See also Talshir’s critique of Darshan’s analysis, claiming that a later reader must have been more concerned with Solomon’s temple building (Talshir 2013, pp. 168–69). According to the analysis presented here, a later reader indeed inserted these two references to Solomon’s temple.

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