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Mothers and Sons: Queen Mothers of Judah and the Religious Trends that Develop During their Sons' Reigns

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Cover Page Footnote

A huge special thanks to my advisor, Kevin Mellish, Ph.D., for working with me through the whole research process from the seed of an idea to the final polished draft. Without his guidance, this project would not exist. Thank you to Pam Greenlee, Sandy Harris, and the Benner Library Interlibrary Loan Department for helping me to get access to resources that would not have been available to me otherwise. Thank you to Elizabeth Schurman, Ph.D., and Dan Sharda, Ph.D., for assisting with the submission process to the Honors Council for the annotated bibliography, proposal, and thesis. Also, thanks to Elizabeth Schurman, Ph.D., Eddie Ellis, Ph.D., and Larry Murphy, Ph.D., for support with the editing and polishing of my thesis. Thanks to the Olivet Nazarene University Honors Council for giving me the opportunity and means to do this research project. Finally, a special thanks to my friends, my family, and especially my fiancée, Kelsey Stang, whose support and encouragement were essential to my success with this project.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the implicit relationship between the early *gēbîrâ* of the Judaeen Monarchy and the religious trends during the reigns of their sons. Though previous studies noted a relationship between the origins of the *gēbîrâ* and the religious evaluation of her son, a systematic treatment on this subject has not yet been written. This study systematically analyzes the first three queen mothers of Judah—Bathsheba, Naamah, and Maacah—in view of their ethnic or national origins, the theophoric nature of their sons’ names, and their implicit religious and political effects upon their sons’ reigns. In a final section, it compares these findings with later *gēbîrâ* of righteous kings within the Judaeen Monarchy—Abijah and Jedidah. This study confirms that pagan mothers indeed have sons that follow pagan gods, and Yahwistic mothers have devout sons, but it seeks to develop this trend in more depth.

Keywords: *gēbîrâ*, queen mother, religious influence, Hebrew Bible, kings of Judah, Bathsheba, Naamah, Maacah, Abijah, Jedidah, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijam, Josiah, Hezekiah

INTRODUCTION

Opening statement

Women occupied important roles in ancient Israelite society. Though narratives of the “patriarchal” and “oppressive” nature of familial relationships in the ancient world have been pointed out previously, more recent scholarship has begun to highlight prominent roles that women played in the family during biblical times. One of the titles ascribed to women in the Hebrew Bible is that of *gēbîrâ* (גְּבִירָה).¹ The term *gēbîrâ* is typically translated as “queen mother” or “great lady,” a title that implies a prominent position within the royal household. Notably, queen mothers are listed in all but two of the regnal formulas of the Judaeen kings that are identified in the Hebrew Bible.² These formulas include important mothers, such as Bathsheba, Maacah, and Athaliah, in the theological evaluation of the kings’ reigns. This is rather remarkable since queen mothers are not included in the regnal formulas in the accounts of kings in the ancient Near East or even Israel.³ The inclusion of mothers in Judaeen regnal formulas, then, raises a question: Why? This study will seek to answer this question by investigating the relationship of the queen mother and the religious trends that developed during the reign of her son. This question is especially pertinent in view of the political authority and religious influence queen mothers exerted in the royal family.

Literature review: the identity and role of the *gēbîrâ*

Scholarly discussion of the role of the queen mother in Judah has highlighted two aspects of the *gēbîrâ* in recent times. Some of the debate has centered upon whether the terminology of *gēbîrâ* applies to all mothers of kings or only to some. The rest of the debate has focused upon the cultic role of the queen mother and the influence she had on the Judaeen Monarchy.

Bowen claims that *gēbîrâ* should not even be translated as “queen mother.” In her article, she delineates the differences between the mother of a king and the *gēbîrâ*. She highlights the circular reasoning of scholars who translate *gēbîrâ* as queen mother and then use mothers of kings to further define the term.⁴ She notes that the root, ג.ב.ר., occurs in diverse contexts, usually connoting power or dominance and concludes that a better translation would be “great lady” or “principal lady.”⁵ Though her translation could include a mother of a king, it does not necessarily denote such. Other powerful ladies, such as grandmothers or wives of kings, she argues, could be *gēbîrôt* (גְּבִירֹת).⁶

A few other scholars contend that *gēbîrâ* is a word used primarily for the queen mother but that it is applied only in specific instances. For example, Ben-Barak argues that scholars have made broad assumptions about the role of queen mother on the basis of a few cases in biblical and ancient Near Eastern sources where *gēbîrâ* and other similar words are used.⁷ She concludes that this term describes an extraordinary woman who exerted influence to help her son rise to the throne when he otherwise would not have been eligible for kingship.⁸ As a result, this term should not be blindly applied to every king’s mother.⁹ Brenner-Idan holds a similar opinion, arguing that a woman occupied this position only for a short time as a regent until her son became king.¹⁰ She argues that the queen mother only nominally kept the title of *gēbîrâ* after her son came of age. These scholars have argued that the role of the queen mother should be assigned only to the mothers who are titled *gēbîrâ* in the text and not to every mother of a king.¹¹

At the other end of the spectrum, a growing majority of scholars argue that the “queen mother” was a position occupied by all mothers of kings. In their short studies of the types of queens in the Bible, Scheering and Solvang both contend that every king’s mother occupied the role of *gēbîrâ*. Berlyn,¹² Smith, and Spanier each presuppose this view in their studies as they examine queen mothers such as Athaliah, Bathsheba, Maacah, and Jezebel.¹³ Schniedewind, discussing the reign of Manasseh and its correlations with Ahab,

4 Nancy R. Bowen, “The Quest for the Historical *Gēbîrâ*,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2001): 618.

5 Ibid., 598.

6 Plural *gēbîrâ*.

7 Zafira Ben-Barak, “The Status and Right of the *Gēbîrâ*,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible: Samuel and Kings*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 185.

8 Examples she referenced specifically were Bathsheba and Solomon; Maacah and Abijah (or Abijam); Hamutal and Jehoahaz; and Nehushta and Jehoiachin.

9 Ben-Barak, “The Status and Right of the *Gēbîrâ*,” 185.

10 Athalya Brenner-Idan, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 20.

11 Otzen also highlights a similar literary type of woman, whom he calls the “promoting mother,” which depicts a woman who helped her child attain a higher position within the family or government. Though this is similar to the theory of scholars such as Ben-Barak or Brenner-Idan, he mostly uses Ugaritic mythology and a few biblical traditions, not discussing the *gēbîrâ* explicitly at all. Benedikt Otzen, “The Promoting Mother: A Literary Motif in the Ugaritic Texts and in the Bible,” in *History and Traditions of Early Israel: Studies Presented to Edward Nielsen, May 8th 1993*, 1993, 113–114.

12 Linda S. Scheering, “Queen,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 5 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 585; Elna Solvang, “Queen,” in *The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 702.

13 Patricia J. Berlyn, “The Great Ladies,” *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1996): 26–35; Ktziah Spanier, “The Northern Israelite Queen Mother in the Judaeen Court: Athalia and Abi,” in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Meir Lubetski, Clair Gottlieb, and Sharon Keller (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 136–49; Ktziah Spanier, “The Queen Mother in the Judaeen Royal Court: Maacah - A Case Study,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Bible: Samuel and Kings*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield, England, 1994), 186–95; Carol Smith, “‘Queenship’ in Israel: The Cases of Bathsheba, Jezebel and Athaliah,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, 1998, 142–68.

1 A more extensive study of this word will be undertaken later in this paper.

2 Only Amon and Jehoram were not given a mother. Elna K. Solvang, *A Woman’s Place Is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and Their Involvement in the House of David* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 79–80. A regnal formula is a short summary statement that each king receives upon ascending to the throne. The regnal formula of Judah typically included an accession notice, the assessment of the king, and the succession of the king.

3 Jezebel is listed in the narrative of the kings of Israel, but she is still absent from the regnal formulas. Ibid., 79–80.

argues that queen mothers wielded considerable influence within the court.¹⁴ Though none of these scholars further define the role of the queen mother within the state of Judah, they do all agree that every king's mother was a *gēbîrâ*.

Andreasen adds to the understanding of the role of queen mother by defining it more specifically. He agrees that 'queen mother' was a title and a position bestowed upon all kings' mothers. In his estimation, the queen mother served as a wise counselor to the king, whom the king would consult when he had to make a difficult decision.¹⁵ He points to the story of Bathsheba as his prime example because she advocated for her son's ascension to the throne and was later an intercessor between Adonijah and Solomon.¹⁶

Solvang develops the list of roles that Andreasen ascribes to the queen mother as the former examines the function of royal women within the monarchies in the ancient Near East and Judah.¹⁷ In her book on royal women, Solvang emphasizes that queen mothers had a political, economic, and dynastic function within the monarchy.¹⁸ She states that the whole royal family, not just the king, was involved in the governing of the kingdom.¹⁹ Unlike Andreasen, Solvang argues that royal women, including the queen mother, were integral to every aspect of the governing of the kingdom rather than just assuming a political or advisory role. Ackerman adds to the argument of Solvang by emphasizing the relationship of the queen mother to the cult both in Judah and in the ancient Near East. According to Ackerman, the queen mother of Judah not only participated in the cult, but she also actively led the people in the worship of fertility deities, like Asherah.²⁰ Her main argument for this hypothesis is that several of the queen mothers specifically mentioned as *gēbîrâ*, such as Jezebel or Maacah, demonstrated a leadership role within the cult, and other queen mothers exercised a religious influence.²¹ She finds a similar trend within the ancient Near East by studying various materials from Ugarit, Akkadia, and Phoenicia, including their myths, king's lists, letters, and sculptures.²² Ackerman concludes through study of both the materials from the ancient Near East and the Bible that the queen mother primarily fulfilled a cultic role.

14 William M. Schniedewind, "History and Interpretation: The Religion of Ahab and Manasseh in the Book of Kings," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (1993): 660.

15 Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, "The Role of the Queen Mother in Israelite Society," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1983): 188.

16 Ibid.

17 Solvang, *A Woman's Place Is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and Their Involvement in the House of David*.

18 Ibid., 16–49.

19 Ibid., 21.

20 Susan Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112, no. 3 (1993): 388, 401.

21 Those mothers she points to as fulfilling a cultic role are Nehushta and Athaliah. Ibid., 396.

22 Susan Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in the Ancient Near East," in *Women and Goddess Traditions: In Antiquity and Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 179–209.

Ackerman's observations are further supported by the findings of Tan, Yeivin, Bowen, and Solvang in their analysis of the Judaeen regnal formulas.²³ They note that typically, when a king receives a negative evaluation in the text, he had a foreign mother. Conversely, when a king receives a positive evaluation, his mother had Judahite or Levitical origins. Because these evaluations are based on the king's religious devotion to or deviation from the worship of Yahweh, this trend points to a direct correlation between the influence of the queen mother and the religious climate during the reign of her son. The significance of this trend is further highlighted when it is considered that, as stated above, the regnal formulas for the kings of Judah list their mothers, unlike the regnal formulas for kings in the ancient Near East or Israel. This observation impacts how one reads the text of the Hebrew Bible. It seems that the queen mother's power and influence vastly affected the reign of her son and, by extension, the trajectory of the nation of Judah. Even with the considerable implications of this observation, this trend has received superficial treatment in scholarship, only receiving the attention of a statement or a chart in within the above scholars' larger arguments.²⁴ Because a full and careful analysis is lacking, this paper will give a further systematic treatment of this subject.

On the basis of this survey of recent scholarship, I adopt two key concepts to serve as the foundation and governing assumption for this study. Firstly, taking the position of Schearing, Spanier, Schniedewind, Solvang, Andreasen, and Ackerman, the term *gēbîrâ* applies to all queen mothers. Secondly, in keeping with the arguments of Ackerman, the queen mother tends to fulfill a religious role within the state of Judah. Building on these two concepts, this analysis will elaborate with more detail the religious influence of the queen mother on her son's reign. Primarily, this paper will analyze the correlation between her ethnic/national origins and the religious developments that transpire under her son.

Methodology

To begin this analysis, the literary and historical background of the *gēbîrâ* will be studied. Section II of this paper will engage in an etymological and philological analysis of the root ג.ב.ר. (g.b.r.) and all its semantic derivatives. This will help to provide a fuller understanding of the term *gēbîrâ*, which is derived from this root. Also, this section will investigate two aspects of the historical context for the *gēbîrâ*: the role of the queen mother in the ancient Near East and the role of the mother within household religion in Israelite culture. Without both the etymological and historical background of the *gēbîrâ*, a study of any queen mother in Judah would be superficial.

The core of this paper's analysis will address the first three queen mothers of Judah (Bathsheba, Naamah, and Maacah). Each of these mothers' sons received a negative evaluation for engaging in the cultic practices of the surrounding culture. Within the main section, each selected queen mother will be analyzed in depth.

23 Nancy Nam Hoon Tan, *The Foreignness of the Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1-9: A Study of the Origin and Development of a Biblical Motif* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 77; Shmuel Yeivin, "Social, Religious and Cultural Trends in Jerusalem under the Davidic Dynasty," *Vetus Testamentum* 3, no. 2 (1953): 163; Bowen, "The Quest for the Historical *Gēbîrâ*," 602; Solvang, *A Woman's Place Is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and Their Involvement in the House of David*, 79–80.

24 Tan, *The Foreignness of the Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1-9: A Study of the Origin and Development of a Biblical Motif*, 77; Yeivin, "Social, Religious and Cultural Trends in Jerusalem under the Davidic Dynasty," 163; Bowen, "The Quest for the Historical *Gēbîrâ*," 602; Solvang, *A Woman's Place Is in the House: Royal Women of Judah and Their Involvement in the House of David*, 79–80.

Firstly, her ethnic/national origins will be studied to determine whether she is Canaanite or Israelite. When there are differences between her treatment in the Deuteronomistic History and the Chronicler's History, these discrepancies will be analyzed. This may imply a sanitization of the original narrative on the part of the Chronicler, who may not have been comfortable with the pagan origins of some of the mothers. Secondly, analysis will be performed on the religious trends that develop during her son's reign. More specifically, the evaluation of the son, the theophoric meaning of his name, the types of deities worshiped during his reign, and the political impact of his reign upon the community will be studied. In section IV, these findings will be contrasted with the study of righteous kings, Hezekiah and Josiah.

LITERARY AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF *GĒBÎRÂ*

It is important to know the literary context of the role of queen mothers in the ancient Near East. The first step to ascertain this context is to examine the etymological and philological foundations of the term.

Etymology and philology

Before studying the etymology of a word, understanding the structure of the languages from which it is derived is important. One of the critical aspects to take into consideration about Semitic languages, Hebrew included, is the “discontinuous morpheme.”²⁵ This concept is commonly referred to as the triliteral root. A discontinuous morpheme is a series of consonants that functions as the root of a word.²⁶ Adding vowels, prefixes, or suffixes to this root will determine the person, number, gender, and tense of the root, as well as its grammatical form within the sentence. Each root has implicit meaning, so in studying any specific word in Hebrew, one must understand its root to fully comprehend its meaning. For example, the Hebrew root, m.l.k. (מ.ל.ך), meaning “to rule,” is used to derive the nouns: *melek* (מֶלֶךְ—“king”), *malkâ* (מַלְכָּה—“queen”), and *mamlakâ* (מַמְלָכָה—“kingdom”), as well as the verb and its tenses.²⁷ Furthermore, the earliest forms of the Hebrew did not include vowels in the written language, implying that Hebrew words that share the same root are very closely linked.²⁸

The root gbr on the basis of cognate languages

The Semitic cognates of the root *gbr* all have to do with superiority, power or strength.²⁹ In Akkadian, the verb *gapāru* and the adjective *gapru* in poetic language are based on the root meaning “to be superior,” except in Ethiopic, where the meaning is “to do, or make.”³⁰ In Phoenician, the noun *gbr* means “man,” and possibly *gbrt* refers to “mighty deed(s).”³¹

25 John Huehnergard, “Languages (Introductory),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 4 (New York City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 156.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Gene M. Schramm, “Languages (Hebrew),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 4 (New York City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 211–212.

29 H. Kosmala, “גבר,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 367.

30 J. Kühlewein, “גבר,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 299; Kosmala, “גבר,” 367.

31 Kühlewein, “גבר,” 299.

The Mesha stele uses *gbr* to mean “man” and *gbrt* to mean “woman.”³² Ugaritic does not have any cognates that have been found by scholars thus far, but it appears that the root *gbr* is used in a proper name (Gbrn).³³ The root *gbr* is used frequently in Aramaic: *gbr* as a noun means “man,” *gbrth* is used meaning “his might,” and finally the verb form of this root is also used.³⁴ As one can see, this root in the Semitic languages tends to show an idea of might or strength, or refer to a male person (and the inherent strength that comes with being a man as opposed to a woman or child in ancient culture).

Knowing the origins of the root *gbr* adds to one's understanding of the term *gēbîrâ*, but in order to fully comprehend its meaning, further philological study on the various derivatives of the Hebrew root *gbr* is necessary. At its basest form, the root *gbr* implies strength, prominence, or power.³⁵ Therefore, any derivative of this root must imply some form of power or position since it derives from *gbr*. The derivatives of *gbr* in the Hebrew Bible include *gēbûrâ* (גְּבוּרָה), *gibbôr* (גִּבּוֹר), *geber* (גִּבּוֹר), *gēbîr* (גִּבּוֹר), and *gēbîrâ*. Each of these will now be examined in detail to fully understand the meaning of the words based on the root, *gbr*.

Gēbûrâ—גְּבוּרָה

The noun *gēbûrâ* and its plural form, *gēbûrôt* (גְּבוּרוֹת), is used sixty-four times in the Hebrew Bible.³⁶ *Gēbûrâ* has several different connotations depending on context, but it is generally defined as “strength” or “power.”³⁷ This could be in reference to an animal, such as the might of the horse (Ps 147:10) or Leviathan (Job 41:12, plural), but it can also be used to refer to the physical strength of a man (Judg 8:21; Eccl 10:17) or the acts of the king, which are the figurative “strength” of a king (1 Kgs 16:27; 22:45; 2 Kgs 10:34; 13:8, 12; 14:15, 28). Kosmala even notes that the king is in some ways the personification of this strength of *gēbûrâ* (2 Kgs 18:20).³⁸ Another connotation of this word is the power of God. Just as the king is in some ways the personification of *gēbûrâ*, God possesses the highest degree of *gēbûrâ* (Ps 66:7; 145:11–13).³⁹ Many of God's attributes are executed through his *gēbûrâ*: His wisdom (Isa 11:2; Job 12:13; Prov 8:14), justice (Ps 89:13–14; Mic 3:8), righteousness (Mic 3:8; Ps 89:13–14),

32 Ibid.

33 Kosmala, “גבר,” 367.

34 Kühlewein, “גבר,” 299.

35 In Hebrew, there are several different verb stems, which imply whether the action is active or passive, simple or complex. The verb *gbr* is used in four of these different verb stems, *qal*, *piel*, *hithpael*, and *hiphil*. In all, the verb appears 24 times in the Hebrew Bible. Half of these occurrences are in the *qal* stem. In this form, it can mean “to be strong” (Job 21:7) or “to prevail,” (Exod 17:11; Ps 65:4), but it is often used comparatively to mean one person is stronger than another (2 Sam 1:23; 11:23; Gen 49:26). In the *piel* stem, it can mean “to use more power,” (Eccl 10:10) or “make another strong” (Zech 10:6, 12), and in the *hithpael* stem, it can mean “to make oneself greater, to boast, to be proud” (Job 15:25; 36:9). Finally, in the *hiphil* stem, it means “to make oneself strong” (Ps 12:5), or “to make a firm agreement” (Dan 9:27). In the Apocryphal book, Sirach, the *hiphil* stem of *gbr* occurs in the figurative sense meaning “to be prominent” or “to be important” (Sir 36:27; 39:21, 34). Kosmala, “גבר,” 368; George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance: Coded to Strong's Concordance Numbering System* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 221; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1906), 149.

36 Kosmala, “גבר,” 367.

37 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 150.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

faithfulness (Ps 89:13-14), understanding (Isa 11:2; Job 12:13; Prov 8:14), counsel (Isa 11:2; Job 12:13; Prov 8:14), and knowledge (Isa 11:2; Prov 8:14). During the Rabbinic age, this term had such a strong connection with Yahweh's power that *gēbûrâ* was one of the Hebrew words spoken in place of God's holy name.⁴⁰ Finally, *gēbûrâ* is also used in a religious sense to refer to wisdom that comes from a fear and love of God (Isa 30:15; Jer 9:23).⁴¹ The plural form, *gēbûrôt*, is often used to describe the mighty acts of Yahweh (Deut 3:24; Ps 71:16; 106:2; 145:4; 150:2).⁴² These are recalled in times of doubt to remember the might of Yahweh and his acts of salvation on behalf of his people, Israel.

Gibbôr—גִּבּוֹר

The adjective *gibbôr* is used 159 times in the Hebrew Bible.⁴³ This adjective describes great strength or military power, and many times it is translated as “might” or “strength.”⁴⁴ In Hebrew, an adjective can function as a noun, signifying a person who embodies the qualities of that adjective. As a result, *gibbôr* often functions as a noun, meaning, “mighty man,” which is often translated as “warrior.”⁴⁵ A few examples of men described as *gibbôr* in the Hebrew Bible include Nimrod (Gen 10:8-9), the Israelites under Joshua (Josh 1:14; Josh 8:3; Josh 10:7), Gideon (Judg 6:12), Jephthah (Judg 11:1), Boaz (Ruth 2:1), Kish (Saul's father—1 Sam 9:1), David (1 Sam 16:18; 2 Sam 17:8, 10), Goliath (1 Sam 17:51), David's mighty men (2 Sam 10:7; 16:6; 20:7; 1 Chr 11:10-12; 12:1; 19:8).⁴⁶ Though this list is by no means exhaustive, it shows that *gibbôr* refers to someone of great strength or possessing military power.

Gibbôr is often used in tandem with the word *hayil* (חַיִּל), which means “strength, efficiency, wealth, or army.”⁴⁷ Often the phrase *gibbôr hayil* is translated as “mighty man of valor” in a physical or military sense (Josh 8:3; Judg 6:12; 11:1; 1 Chr 7:5; 2 Chr 13:3), but it can also be translated “mighty man of wealth” and refer to a rich landowner (Ruth 2:1; 1 Sam 9:1; 2 Kgs 15:20).⁴⁸ In other words, *gibbôr hayil* can also have the connotation of might or power of position, instead of physical strength.

Gibbôr is also used as an adjective to describe Yahweh (Isa 42:13; Ps 24:8). Kosmala explains, “[Yahweh] has incomparable power, and he has the greatest military might. He is the *gibbôr* par excellence.”⁴⁹ God is the mightiest *gibbôr*. As Deuteronomy 10:17 notes, “For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the *gibbôr*, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.”⁵⁰ In Isaiah, the future Messiah is called ‘*el gibbôr*’ (אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר — Isa 9:6), which always refers to the indescribable mighty power of God, and his “wonderful and saving acts” (also Isa 10:21).⁵¹ As such, the name ‘*el gibbôr*’ ascribed to the Messiah can be translated as “Mighty God.”

40 Ibid, 370.

41 Ibid, 372.

42 Ibid, 372-373.

43 Ibid, 367.

44 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 150.

45 Wigram, *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance: Coded to Strong's Concordance Numbering System*, 289–290.

46 Ibid.

47 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 298.

48 Kosmala, “גִּבּוֹר,” 374.

49 Ibid.

50 *Gibbôr* was translated in this context as “mighty,” ESV.

51 Ibid.

Geber—גִּבֵּר

Geber is a masculine noun, and it occurs sixty-five times in the Hebrew Bible.⁵² *Geber* is typically translated as “man,” but, more specifically, *geber* carries with it the idea of strength that distinguishes a man from a woman or a child (Exod 12:37; Jer 43:6; 44:20).⁵³ It was always used in reference to a grown man—usually after the man was married and had children (childlessness was considered a curse—Jer 22:30).⁵⁴ It can also have a poetic, more religious meaning in later texts, referring to one who has a special relationship to God rather than one with physical strength or virility (Num 24:3,15; 2 Sam 23:1; Prov 30:1).⁵⁵ In Psalms, the spiritual strength of the *geber* comes from fearing, trusting, and obeying Yahweh (Ps 40:4; 34:8-9; 52:8-10; 88:1-2), and in Job, one further sees that the highest strength of wisdom comes by having humility before God (Job 37:24; 38:2; 40:7).⁵⁶ In contrast to *gibbôr*, even with the spiritualization of *geber*, Yahweh is never called a *geber* and Yahweh's actions are distinguished from the actions of a *geber* (Job 10:5; 22:2; 33:29; Prov 20:24).⁵⁷

Gēbîr—גִּבִּיר

Gēbîr is a masculine noun typically translated “lord.” It is used only twice in the Hebrew Bible, both times in Isaac's blessing of Jacob in Genesis 27.⁵⁸ This is the masculine form of the word *gēbîrâ*, which makes the translation of *gēbîr* significant for this study. In Genesis 27:29 Isaac says to Jacob, “Be ‘*gēbîr*’ over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you...” In Genesis 27:37, Isaac says to Esau, “I have made him ‘*gēbîr*’ over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants...”⁵⁹ In his analysis, Kosmala states that the context of the word shows its true meaning.⁶⁰ In these instances, it can be gathered that *gēbîr* is some sort of position of power or dominion.

Gēbîrâ—גִּבְיָרָה

Gēbîrâ is used fifteen times in the Hebrew Bible.⁶¹ When it is found with possessive endings attached, “mistress” is usually used as the translation, and in the regular form, “queen” or “queen mother” is the typical English translation.⁶² Regardless of the specific translation used, the term “*gēbîrâ*” applies to someone who has a position of authority or power.

52 Ibid.

53 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 150.

54 This is because it was considered a sign of weakness or immaturity if the man did not have children. Kosmala, “גִּבֵּר,” 377.

55 Ibid., 378.

56 Ibid., 381.

57 Kühlewein, “גִּבִּיר,” 302.

58 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 150.

59 In both cases, *gēbîr* was translated as “lord,” ESV.

60 Kosmala, “גִּבֵּר,” 373.

61 He sites this number including two occurrences of the word *gēberet*, which he considers to be synonymous with *gēbîrâ*, in the Hebrew Bible. Kosmala, “גִּבֵּר,” 373.

62 Wigram, *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance: Coded to Strong's Concordance Numbering System*, 291–292.

Gēbîrâ appears with the possessive ending seven times.⁶³ The fact that it appears with the possessive ending implies a position of authority. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is called a *gēbirtâ* (גְּבִרְתִּי—her mistress, Gen 16:4), *gēbirti* (גְּבִרְתִּי—my mistress, Gen 16:8), and *gēbirtēk* (גְּבִרְתְּךָ—your mistress, Gen 6:9) when referencing her relationship with Hagar. Namaan’s wife is also referred to as a *gēbirti* by her Israelite slave (2 Kgs 5:3). In Psalms, a maid servant looking to the hand of her *gēbirtâ* is compared to a servant looking to the hand of his lord (Ps 123:2). A handmaiden who is an heir to her *gēbirtâ* is included in a list of unimaginable events in Proverbs (30:23). In prophesy of Yahweh’s coming judgment upon the Earth, Isaiah refers to Yahweh’s leveling the playing fields, and within this prophecy, he says “As it is with the maid, so with her *gēbirtâ*,” (Isa 24:2).

Gēbîrâ occurs six times in the Hebrew Bible without possessive endings.⁶⁴ Twice it is recorded that Asa removed his grandmother/mother, Maacah, from being *gēbîrâ* (2 Kgs 15:13 = 2 Chr 15:16). Three times the *gēbîrâ* is mentioned parallel with the king, almost portrayed as his equal (1 Kgs 10:13; Jer 13:18; Jer 29:2).⁶⁵ Finally, Pharaoh’s wife, Taphenes, is called a *gēbîrâ* (1 Kgs 11:19). These all add to the understanding of the *gēbîrâ* as a woman who had great authority and power (especially since she was set parallel with the king on multiple occasions).

A similar word, *gēberet* (גְּבֵרֶת), is used figuratively twice in Isaiah to describe Babylon as the “mistress of kingdoms” (Isa 47:5,7).⁶⁶ This implies the dominion, rule, or position of Babylon over the kingdoms of the world. Kosmala studies this word synonymously with *gēbîrâ* and uses it to further define the meaning of the term *gēbîrâ*. It is possible that this is the construct form of *gēbîrâ*.⁶⁷

The overall trend of the uses of *gēbîrâ* in all its forms shows a lady who has a position of power or dominance—whether it is the relationship of a mistress to her servants or even a type of queenly position. Her authority is evident through contextual clues and the fact that half the occurrences of *gēbîrâ* in the Bible are possessive—meaning that she had authority over someone else.

63 Ibid., 292.

64 Ibid., 291.

65 1 Kings 10:13 – “the sons of the king and the sons of the *gēbîrâ*,” Jeremiah 13:18 – “say to the king and the *gēbîrâ*,” and Jeremiah 29:2 – “This was after King Jeconiah and the *gēbîrâ* ... had departed from Jerusalem”

66 Kosmala, “גְּבֵרֶת,” 373.

67 At least in Isaiah 47:5, it functions in the construct of a word pair, but it is not functioning as a construct of a word pair in Isaiah 47:7.

The above analysis demonstrates that the root *gbr* implies having strength, power, or position, as evidenced by each derivative of the word. In a few of the derivatives, the strength or power is even attributed to the power of Yahweh.⁶⁸ Thus, the term, *gēbîrâ*, implies a powerful lady with a position of great authority.

Historical context of the *gēbîrâ* and mothers in Israel

The discussion of the historical context of the queen mother in the Davidic Monarchy begins with the study of the role of queen mothers in the ancient Near East and the study of the religious role of mothers in Israel and the ancient Near East.

Queen mothers in the ancient Near East

Our understanding about the queen mothers of Judah is aided by analysis of the numerous examples of queen mothers in the ancient Near East. In the ancient Near Eastern literature, the queen mother is a role of great prominence.

In Ugaritic literature, queen mothers displayed prominent roles in the family and monarchy. Otzen notes that there appears to be a “promoting mother”—a mother who acts on behalf of her son to get him to a higher position of authority—in Ugaritic texts.⁶⁹ This trend is identified in both the Keret Legend and the mythological story of the king Athtar, whose mother, Athirat, advocated for him before Baal and the other gods.⁷⁰ Ugaritic letters were written to a woman who, in some cases, was identified as queen and in others was identified as the king’s mother, causing Ackerman to conclude that this woman must be the queen mother.⁷¹ Some of these letters were written by the queen’s servants (indicating authority), some directly acknowledged her authority by repeatedly calling her *adnt* (feminine form of *adn*—lord or master), and one letter was addressed to “the queen, my mother” from “the king, your son.”⁷² Aḥutmilku, who was the wife of the king of Ugarit, was very influential in the rise of her son to the throne, and her son, Ammištamru, was chosen for kingship above his older brothers because of her influence.⁷³ Later in his reign, the divorce arrangements between king Ammištamru and his wife specify that their son, Utrišarruma, who was the crown prince, must cut all ties with his mother or else forfeit the right of kingship.⁷⁴ Even after becoming king, he is explicitly forbidden from bringing his mother back to Ugarit as queen mother. If he does, he must abdicate his throne.⁷⁵ This evidence suggests that in Ugarit, the queen mother had authority and was not merely the woman who brought the king into the world.

The Mari texts also display authority of the queen mother over the affairs of the state. In these documents, the queen mother was the highest ranking woman in the kingdom, and, upon her death or absence, the position was given to the chief wife of the king (whose son would be the next king—making her the next queen mother).⁷⁶

68 As in the case of *gēbîrâ*, even functioning as a replacement for Yahweh in the rabbinic age, and *gibbôr*, which is used on multiple occasions to describe God.

69 Otzen, “The Promoting Mother: A Literary Motif in the Ugaritic Texts and in the Bible.”

70 Ibid., 105–107.

71 Ackerman, “The Queen Mother and the Cult in the Ancient Near East,” 182.

72 Ibid., 183.

73 Ben-Barak, “The Status and Right of the *Gēbîrâ*,” 32.

74 Ackerman, “The Queen Mother and the Cult in the Ancient Near East,” 183–184.

75 Ibid., 184.

76 Solvang, *Royal Women of Judah*, 17.

In Asia Minor, the Hittite queen mother, Puduḥepa, was the wife of Hattushili III. She was integral in her husband's ascension to the throne and, consequently, her son's rise to power over his older brothers.⁷⁷ During the reign of her husband, she wrote letters in direct correspondence to Ramses II of Egypt, and during the reign of her son, she made a judgement in the name of her son in regard to foreign relations with Ugarit.⁷⁸ All of the actions that she took display the prominent position that the queen mother or the queen consort, who would become queen mother, had in the Hittite Kingdom.

Further to the east, the Assyrians also had a queen mother within the royal court. The wife of King Sennacherib, Naqia-Zakutu, helped her son Esarhaddon rise to the throne and later advocated for her grandson, Ashurbanipal, helping him to ascend to the throne as well.⁷⁹ During her son's reign, Esarhaddon and other people recognized the king's mother, Naqia-Zakutu, as having great influence. Her influence included being the "ultimate model of wisdom and piety," and her word was recognized as "final as that of the gods."⁸⁰ The Assyrian queen mother also had many servants under her command including maidservants, men dedicated to her protection (such as cupbearers or body guards), her own limited military force (such as chariot drivers or a cohort commander), and a treasurer.⁸¹ Such information about Naqia-Zakutu shows exactly how much influence the Assyrian queen mother could possess.

These examples support the idea that the queen mother had an influence upon the reign of her son. Ackerman even claims that there was symbolism of a divine element to the role of queen mother within the artwork and mythology of the ancient Near East.⁸² The information gleaned about the religious and political roles of queen mothers in the ancient Near East provides an essential backdrop for understanding how queen mothers functioned in Judah.

Mother's role in household religion

Understanding the roles the mother played in household religion clarifies her religious influence upon her children. In recent years, scholars have been investigating the concepts of "family religion" and "household religion." However, before a study on household religion can be undertaken, a brief understanding of the structure of the household in ancient Israelite and Judahite culture is necessary.

Ancient Israel's society revolved around the family. Scholars generally identify four "levels" of familial communities. At the broadest level is the tribe (שִׁבְטָא *šēḇeṭ*). Members of a tribe are related to each other through the common ancestor of one of the twelve sons of Jacob.⁸³

At the next level, there is the clan (מִשְׁפָּחָא *mišpāḥā*), which is still fairly large and functions primarily as a sub-category of the tribe.⁸⁴ Then, there was the *bēt 'āb* (בֵּית אָב), which literally translates to "house of the father" and includes the extended family and servants.⁸⁵ There is debate as to whether the *bēt 'āb* encompassed two, three, or four generations.⁸⁶ Several scholars suggest that the *bēt 'āb* would reside as one family unit in a compound of many individual houses.⁸⁷ At the smallest level, the immediate family functioned more as sub-category of the *bēt 'āb*, as shown when the family would be destroyed for the sins of the male figurehead (Achan: Num 16:20-35; the sons of Korah: Josh 7:20-27). Though scholarship has analyzed religion at each of these levels of community, recent scholarship has focused on the "household religion" of the *bēt 'āb* and the "family religion" of the immediate family. Religion at this level focused on the worship of a family deity as it related to everyday life, and it included cultic actions to ward off demonic spirits who were threatening the family.⁸⁸ There is both biblical and archeological precedent for family religion. Jeremiah condemns idol worship in the context of a family: "The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women [or wives] knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven" (Jer 7:16-20; see also Jer 44:15-19). Archeology suggests that family and household religion was very prevalent through the monarchical period.⁸⁹

Scholars have highlighted the important role played by women within family religions. Since in ancient Israel, a woman's role was primarily internal to the house, Gerstenberger argues that the household cult was primarily part of the wife's responsibilities.⁹⁰ Other scholars have defined the household cultic responsibilities of women in more depth. In her discussions on the relationship between religious feasts and regular meals, Meyers notes that the women are the ones who prepare these feasts for the immediate family.⁹¹

84 Bendor, *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (Beit 'ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy*, 36; Zevit, "The Textual and Sociological Embeddedness of Israelite and Family Religion: Who Were the Players? Where Were the Stages?," 291–292.

85 Susan Ackerman, "Household Religion, Family Religion, and Women's Religion in Ancient Israel," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub. Ltd, 2008), 128; Zevit, "The Textual and Sociological Embeddedness of Israelite and Family Religion: Who Were the Players? Where Were the Stages?," 291–292.

86 Bendor argues for a larger *bēt 'āb*, encompassing three or four generations. Bendor, *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (Beit 'ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy*, 51; Stager argues for smaller, only two or occasionally three generations. Lawrence E Stager, "Archeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 260 (1985): 20.

87 Ackerman, "Household Religion, Family Religion, and Women's Religion in Ancient Israel," 128–129; Rainer Albertz and Rudiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 36–37; Stager, "Archeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," 18.

88 Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Theologies in the Old Testament*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 35–40; Stanley Stowers, "Theorizing the Religion of Ancient Households and Families," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub. Ltd, 2008), 5–19.

89 Rainer Albertz, "Family Religion in Ancient Israel and Its Surroundings," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub. Ltd, 2008), 96.

90 Gerstenberger, *Theologies in the Old Testament*, 42.

91 Carol Meyers, "Feast Days and Food Ways: Religious Dimensions of Household Life," in *Family and Household Religion: Toward a Synthesis of Old Testament Studies, Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Cultural Studies*, ed. Rainer Albertz et al. (United States of America: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 239.

77 Ben-Barak, "The Status and Right of the *Gēbirā*," 33.

78 Solvang, *Royal Women of Judah*, 38.

79 Ben-Barak, "The Status and Right of the *Gēbirā*," 33.

80 Solvang, *Royal Women of Judah*, 39.

81 Monika Müller, "The Households of the Queen and Queen Mother in Neo-Assyrian and Biblical Sources," in 'My Spirit at Rest in the North Country' (Zechariah 6.8): *Collected Communications to the XXth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Helsinki 2010, 2011*, 244–245.

82 Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in the Ancient Near East."

83 Shunya Bendor, *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (Beit 'ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy* (Jerusalem: Simor Ltd, 1996), 36; Ziony Zevit, "The Textual and Sociological Embeddedness of Israelite and Family Religion: Who Were the Players? Where Were the Stages?," in *Family and Household Religion: Toward a Synthesis of Old Testament Studies, Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Cultural Studies*, ed. Rainer Albertz et al. (United States of America: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 291–292.

Sometimes this preparation of a feast may even include a cultic practice, such as offering a sacrifice or prayer to protect the family from disease or other spiritual activity.⁹² Expanding this role slightly, Nakhai suggests that women were included within the “elders” of the *bēt ’āb*, and they bore some responsibility for worship and feasting with the extended family as well.⁹³ Also, she expands the understanding of women within family religion, suggesting that because of the many fertility deities found in archaeology, women cared for both the physical and spiritual needs of the home.⁹⁴ Ackerman perhaps defines the most expansive role of the mother within the family and household religion—not only does she prepare the religious feasts, but also, she makes textiles and even sometimes brings the family sacrifice to the altar.⁹⁵ According to Ackerman, the story of Micah and his mother in Judges 17 even suggests that the mother furnished idols for household religion and functions as the patron of the family shrine.⁹⁶ In his study of the pillar-base figurines found in Judah, Dever agrees with the previously cited scholars upon an important role of women within family religion, but he did not elaborate upon the details of that role.⁹⁷ Bloch-Smith notes that these figurines also appear in tombs, adding a female role in the intercession between the current generation and their deceased ancestors.⁹⁸ In sum, modern scholars agree that women played a role within family or household religion. Interestingly for this study, a cultic role within family religion also necessitates a religious influence upon the children.

Not only is there religious influence implied by archaeological finds, but the Hebrew Bible also highlights important religious roles for the mother. In the Hebrew Bible, many times it is the mother who names the child, so any theophoric element in a name highlights the type of religious influence the mother had upon the child.⁹⁹ Also, it emphasizes the importance of the mother’s religious teaching and training for children. There are many times throughout Proverbs that the mother’s instruction is highlighted either implicitly or explicitly (Prov 1:8; Prov 6:20; Prov 23:22; Prov 29:15; Prov 30:17; Prov 31:1). The Decalogue encourages Israelites to honor both their mothers and their fathers (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16). All Israel, which includes both mothers and fathers, is called to teach their children to love Yahweh in the *šmā’* (Deut 6:4-9). These are just a few of the examples that show that raising children was never considered to be just the job of the father. In fact, because of the father’s role working outside the home, Stager and King suggest that

the primary religious training of the children fell to the mother.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Blenkinsopp argues that this was her most important contribution to society:

In the inevitable round of tensions, power plays and trade-offs, within the small world of the household, the woman had leverage primarily as mother of her children, especially her male children. Her role in childrearing meant that she was the one most responsible for the internalization of the group ethos and for what passed for an education in general...¹⁰¹

Yeivin emphasizes that it was likely the princesses in the court that were responsible for the religious training for the young princes, citing this as a reason for the trend of foreign mothers having sons who did not follow Yahweh as king.¹⁰² Both Blenkinsopp and Yeivin suggest that the reason for the frequent warnings about marrying foreign women was precisely this negative influence upon the children.¹⁰³

Based on recent scholarship, mothers played an important role within family religions and with the religious training of their children. Since every mother played such an important role in the religious upbringing of her children, the powerful queen mother would have no less influence on her children than an average mother.

CONCLUSION

The literary and historical context both suggest that the queen mother would have an impact upon the reign of her son. Because of its root, the word *gēbîrâ* implies a woman with great position, power, or authority. This position is clearly seen through many examples of queen mothers in the ancient Near East. Finally, every mother had a strong hand in the religious training and cultic expression of her children. Because of these things, it is clear that the queen mother of Judah had a religious influence upon her son’s reign.

92 Ibid.

93 Her reason for arguing this is because though “elders” is masculine in the Hebrew, it is sometimes used as gender inclusive, and there are a few examples of a wise woman who is consulted for advice. Beth Alpert Nakhai, “The Household as Sacred Space,” in *Family and Household Religion: Toward a Synthesis of Old Testament Studies, Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Cultural Studies*, ed. Rainer Albertz et al. (United States of America: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 66.

94 Ibid., 57.

95 Ackerman, “Household Religion, Family Religion, and Women’s Religion in Ancient Israel,” 143.

96 Ibid., 139.

97 William G. Dever, “The Judean ‘Pillar-Base Figurines’: Mothers or ‘Mother-Goddesses’?,” in *Family and Household Religion: Toward a Synthesis of Old Testament Studies, Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Cultural Studies*, ed. Rainer Albertz et al. (United States of America: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 138.

98 Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, “The Cult of the Dead in Judah: Interpreting the Material Remains,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 2 (1992): 219.

99 When a child is named in the Hebrew Bible, twenty-five times the subject of the verb is feminine, whereas only twenty-one times is the subject of the verb is masculine. Some examples of mothers who named their children are: Eve (Gen 4:25); Lot’s daughters (Gen 19:37-38); Leah (Gen 29:32-35; 30:11, 13, 18, 20-21); Rachel (Gen 30:6, 8, 24; 35:18); Judah’s wife, Bathshua (Gen 38:4-5); Pharaoh’s daughter (Ex 2:10); Manoah’s wife (Judg 13:24); Hannah (1 Sam 1:20); Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:25); Jabez’s mother (1 Chr 4:9); and Maacah, wife of Machir (1 Chr 7:16). One time, it is the feminine plural, the neighbor women (*haššēkēnôt* – חֲשֵׁכְנוֹת), who name the child (Ruth 4:17).

100 Phillip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, ed. Douglas A. Knight (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 51.

101 Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Don S. Browning and Ian S. Evison (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 78.

102 Yeivin, “Social, Religious and Cultural Trends in Jerusalem under the Davidic Dynasty,” 163.

103 Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” 78; Yeivin, “Social, Religious and Cultural Trends in Jerusalem under the Davidic Dynasty,” 163.

MOTHERS OF SONS WITH A NEGATIVE EVALUATION

Now this religious influence will be studied through three specific examples of mothers who had a negative impact upon their sons' reign: Bathsheba, Naamah, and Maacah.

Bathsheba

This examination of queen mothers will begin with the first queen mother, Bathsheba. Of all the queen mothers, her role is the most explicit within the text—appearing in four chapters within the Hebrew Bible (2 Sam 11-12; 1 Kgs 1-2).¹⁰⁴

Identity background

The ethnic identity of Bathsheba is not explicitly stated in the text. However, it is known that Bathsheba was married to Uriah the Hittite, her father was Eliam, and she was living in Jerusalem during David's reign (2 Sam 11:3). Some scholars claim that Bathsheba was an Israelite, but many clues in the text suggest Bathsheba was a Canaanite.

Though Bathsheba was living in Jerusalem, this does not imply that she was an Israelite. Many scholars postulate that David did not eradicate all of the Jebusites upon taking over the city of Jerusalem. Rather, they suggest he took the bureaucratic structure that was in place to help him govern the city and kingdom. Yeivin notes that many of his officials, including Ittai the Gittite (2 Sam 15), Shavsha the scribe (1 Chr 18), the Cherethites and the Pelethites (1 Chr 18), and his mighty men, including Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 23; 1 Chr 11), are not Israelite.¹⁰⁵ Mendenhall notes that there are many striking similarities between the structure of the early Davidic Monarchy and Syro-Hittite pagan states. He suggests that the reason for such parallels was the use of the preexistent Jebusite bureaucracy of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ In 2 Samuel 24, David purchased the threshing floor from Araunah the Jebusite to build an altar for Yahweh. The name for Araunah, אֶרְוֶנָה, is a non-Semitic name, which could be related to the Hurrarian root for “lord or king.”¹⁰⁷ As a result, some suggest that Araunah was in the pre-Israelite aristocracy or even the king of Jerusalem before David.¹⁰⁸ Even at the end of David's reign, Jones highlights the continuing conflict between the Jebusites and the Israelites in the Succession Narrative.¹⁰⁹ All of this evidence suggests that there were Jebusites living in Jerusalem when David took the throne. In 2 Samuel 5, the text states that David took more wives and concubines from Jerusalem (מִרוֹשְׁלָם—*mirûšālayim*).

104 Anne E. Gardner, “The Identity of Bath-Sheba,” *Revue Biblique* 112, no. 4 (2005): 521–535. Gardner argues specifically for the Benjaminitic heritage of Bathsheba. She argues her name means “daughter of Sheba,” who was the same as the Benjamite who led a revolt against David in 2 Samuel 20. She cites also that the tensions between Benjamin and Judah around the time of David, dissipate after Solomon's reign as Benjamin stays with Judah when the kingdom split (1 Kgs 12). She suggests this was because Solomon had Benjamite heritage through Bathsheba. This does not seem to be a prevalent or convincing theory, in part because it requires two patronyms be given to Bathsheba and no name.

105 Yeivin, “Social, Religious and Cultural Trends in Jerusalem under the Davidic Dynasty,” 150.

106 George E. Mendenhall, “The Monarchy,” *Interpretation* 29, no. 2 (1975): 155–170. Among others, he cites a possible reason for this being that the Israelite village communities would have had no need for literacy or other thing necessary in the running of an empire, so David employed those who were recently in Jerusalem.

107 P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction Notes and Commentary*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 9 (New York City, NY: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc, 1984), 512.

108 Ibid.

109 Gwilym Jones, *The Nathan Narratives* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 31–46.

Hill notes that the preposition *mem* (מ) is used in the partitive sense, which implies that David took Canaanite wives who were already living in Jerusalem and who originated from Jerusalem.¹¹⁰ Bathsheba was likely one of these Canaanite wives taken from Jerusalem. Cushman also highlights a close relational connection between Hittites and Jebusites, suggesting that since Bathsheba was married to a Hittite, it is likely that she was a Jebusite herself.¹¹¹

It is also telling that later traditions consider Bathsheba to be non-Israelite. The Talmud notes that Bathsheba's father was the same Eliam as the son of Ahithophel, who was one of David's mighty men (2 Sam 23:34).¹¹² Eliam, the son of Ahithophel, was from Giloh (2 Sam 23:34), which was a small Canaanite settlement outside Jerusalem occupied by the Jebusites.¹¹³ Also, the name of “Ahithophel” suggests foreign origin and honors a Canaanite god. The “-*tophel*” element of his name functions similarly to “-*boshet*,” a theophoric element for Baal, occurring in other names.¹¹⁴ Also, Matthew includes four Canaanite women who were included in Jesus' lineage: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah the Hittite (Matt 1).¹¹⁵ Notice, also, that the text in Matthew does not mention Bathsheba by name, but simply identifies her as the wife of Uriah the Hittite, which also emphasizes her foreignness.

Other literary clues in the narrative provide even further evidence of Bathsheba's Canaanite heritage. At the beginning of the story of David and Bathsheba, David is walking on his roof and sees Bathsheba bathing (2 Sam 11). The Hebrew word used in this passage for “bathing” or “washing,” *rōḥešet* (רוֹחֶשֶׁת), implies a foreign ethnicity for Bathsheba.¹¹⁶ Its root, *rhs* (ר.ח.צ), is used reactively with ceremonial washing from sin, or proactively with a foreigner washing before acceptance into the people of Israel.¹¹⁷ This occurrence is a proactive use of *r.h.s.* pointing to Bathsheba's Canaanite identity because in the narrative this word appears when Bathsheba is bathing on the roof—before any sin has taken place.¹¹⁸

In addition, the Chronicler's account of Bathsheba indicates that Bathsheba had foreign origins. In Chronicles, Bathsheba is listed in the genealogy, but her name is adjusted to Bath-shua (1 Chr 3:5). The only other occurrence of the name Bathshua (בַּת-שׁוּעַ) is in

110 Because the wives were part of Jerusalem. They were part of the whole, so they were not Israelites who recently moved into Jerusalem. Andrew E. Hill, “On David's ‘Taking’ and ‘Leaving’ Concubines (2 Samuel 5:13; 15:16),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 1 (2006): 130.

111 Beverly W. Cushman, “The Politics of the Royal Harem and the Case of Bat-Sheba,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30, no. 3 (2006): 336.

112 The Talmud is a later rabbinical work. Jones, *The Nathan Narratives*, 44.

113 Cushman, “The Politics of the Royal Harem and the Case of Bat-Sheba,” 336.

114 J. D'Ror Chankin-Gould et al., “The Sanctified ‘adulteress’ and Her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 3 (2008): 351.

115 Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, I & II Samuel: A Commentary, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al., trans. J. S. Bowden, *The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1964), 310.

116 Chankin-Gould et al., “The Sanctified ‘adulteress’ and Her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11,” 350–1.

117 Ibid., 347.

118 Ibid., 352 They argue against the common theory that this word refers to her purifying herself from her menstrual cycle simply because of what has been said previously about *r.h.s.* within the rest of the Hebrew Bible *miṭṭum'atah* (מִטְטֻמ'אָתָהּ from her uncleanness) never refers to a menstrual cycle, and *mitqaddešet* (מִתְקַדְּשֶׁת self-sanctifying) does not fit this type of ritual either.

reference to Judah's Canaanite wife (Gen 38:12; 1 Chr 2:3).¹¹⁹ Bathshua is listed as the name of Judah's wife before she is mentioned here with David (1 Chr 2:3). Braun emphasizes that its inclusion here is puzzling because in the story of David and Solomon, Bathsheba is absent from the Chronicles narrative. One of the reasons for including Bathshua here, however, was to recall Judah's Canaanite wife, and making a parallel between Bathsheba and his wife.¹²⁰ However, Braun also suggests another reason for including Bathshua could have been to conceal the relationship between David, Solomon, and Bathsheba.¹²¹ The exact intentions of the Chronicler's inclusion of Bathshua remain dubious, but this name still shows a Canaanite heritage for Bathsheba. Overall, with the abundance of textual evidence, Bathsheba was clearly, in fact, a Canaanite.

Significance within Solomon's narrative

Within the Solomon narrative, the first significant story Bathsheba is involved in is the birth narrative of Solomon (2 Sam 11-12). Finlay suggests that the birth narrative of Solomon was written to give his reign legitimacy over and against the illicit child of David and Bathsheba's adultery.¹²² However, Bathsheba played her most significant role in the succession of Solomon to the throne of David, and she displays qualities that one would expect of a *gēbîrâ*.

In the biblical narrative, David is old and weak, so Adonijah, his oldest surviving son, appoints himself as king. Nathan and Bathsheba plot against Adonijah and approach the king to remind him of an oath he made to Bathsheba that Solomon would be his successor (2 Kgs 1:11-14). Solomon was not in line to be David's successor, so if Solomon was to be king, David must name Solomon as his successor.¹²³ Considering this, Bathsheba took great initiative to "remind" David of the oath that he made to her. In the plan made by Nathan, she should ask a hypothetical question to David, "Did you not say...", but Bathsheba makes an emphatic statement directed at David, "my lord you swore..." (1 Kgs 1:13 vs 1 Kgs 1:17-18). Scholars question if David ever made this oath because the only record of it is through Bathsheba and Nathan's word. Most

suggest that Nathan and Bathsheba fabricated this oath to take advantage of David's senility and make Solomon king.¹²⁵ Even those that are uncertain whether the oath was fabricated admit the nature of the oath was suspect.¹²⁵ This "oath" of David, which was brought to his attention through Bathsheba's initiative, elicits an emotional response from David, who is moved to crown Solomon king instead of Adonijah (1 Kgs 1:30-40). Throughout the whole story, the relationship of Bathsheba and Solomon is constantly highlighted. Bathsheba is introduced as "Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon" (1 Kgs 1:11). Three times Nathan uses the Hebrew word *bēnēk* (בֶּנֶךְ), which has the feminine second person possessive pronoun attached (1 Kgs 1:12, 13, 17). David himself refers to Solomon as *bēnēk*, "your (f,s) son" even though Solomon is equally his son (1 Kgs 1:30). All of this shows that Bathsheba is the mother and advocate for Solomon, and she takes initiative to ensure that he is the one who rises to the throne instead of Adonijah. When one studies the narrative, she clearly plays a *gēbîrâ* type role.

After Solomon took control of the throne, Bathsheba acted as an intercessor in the narrative as the new queen mother. Adonijah approached Bathsheba asking her to go before King Solomon to make a suspicious request for him (1 Kgs 2:13). Ironically, Adonijah begins this request by asking Bathsheba for permission to speak and Bathsheba gives him permission to speak, which implies the authority that Bathsheba now possesses within the kingdom.¹²⁶ When Bathsheba approaches the king with her request, he arises from his throne and bows down to her, *wayyišttahû* (וַיִּשְׁתָּחֲוֶה—1 Kgs 2:19), which always implies an inferior person paying homage to a superior person.¹²⁷ However, under David, Bathsheba bowed (*wattiqqōd*—דָּבָר) to the king upon entering his presence (1 Kgs 1:16). Upon Solomon's ascension, a shift in dynamics occurred between Bathsheba and Solomon, as Bathsheba functioned as an equal to the king. Solomon also had a seat brought for her to sit at his right hand (1 Kgs 2:19). Being seated at the right hand of the king was a sign of great power, authority, and respect. By giving his mother a seat at his right hand, Solomon displayed his respect for Bathsheba and gave her an important position within his monarchy. Both of these occurrences are evidence for Bathsheba's assuming the role of *gēbîrâ* upon Solomon's rise to power.¹²⁸ As to Adonijah's request, it is denied, and he is killed for the insolence of his inquiry. Solvang suggests that Bathsheba was not naïve to the implications of Adonijah's request.¹²⁹ It is possible that Bathsheba communicated Adonijah's request to Solomon as a way to get rid of a potential political rival. Though this is the last text in which Bathsheba is mentioned, it is significant how much Bathsheba did before and after the succession of Solomon to enable him to rise to power and establish his kingdom (1 Kgs 2:46).

119 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 124 The Brown Driver Briggs says that the occurrence in Genesis 38:12 is likely not a case of a proper noun, as Judah's wife is introduced at the beginning of the chapter as "the daughter of a certain man named Shua."

120 Roddy Braun, 1 Chronicles, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986); Ralph W. Klein, 1 Chronicles: A Commentary, ed. Thomas Krüger, *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

121 Braun, 1 Chronicles, 54.

122 Timothy D. Finlay, *The Birth Report Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 219–230. Finlay studies a "birth report genre," in which there are usually four elements – a use of the verb *yld* (to give birth), a conception element, a naming element and an etiological element. Among other birth reports, he studies the two birth reports involving Bathsheba – that of David's illicit child of adultery and that of Solomon. He notes that both David and Bathsheba are the subjects of active verbs within the narrative (Bathsheba "comes to him" – 2 Sam 11:4), suggesting that Bathsheba played a participatory role on this affair, not a passive one. He notices that there are important deviances from the normal pattern of the birth report genre, which offer interpretive clues to the nature of the births. Where usually the illicit child would be named, the narrative reveals the divine disapproval of Yahweh, which foreshadows the death of the child. In contrast, with Solomon's birth, he is named twice, and his second name, Jedidiah, is given the etymology of divine favor. Another difference he notes is in the first report, the verbs are "took," "came," and "lay," whereas in the second birth report the verbs are "comfort," "came," "lay," which further implies the legitimacy of the relationship of David and Bathsheba in Solomon's birth. Overall, the birth report of Solomon gives him legitimacy in contrast with David and Bathsheba's first child.

123 David had six sons born in Hebron before he even came to Jerusalem, and Solomon is typically listed as the fourth son David had after he arrived at Jerusalem (2 Sam 3:2-5; 5:13-16; 1 Chr 3:1-9; 14:3-7)

124 Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, trans. Anselm Hagedorn, *Continental Commentary Series* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 19; Walter Bruggemann, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 15; Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: 1 & II Kings: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 56; Jones, *The Nathan Narratives*, 51.

125 Simon DeVries, *1 Kings*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 20; Solvang, *Royal Women of Judah*, 148.

126 Solvang, *Royal Women of Judah*, 150.

127 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 1005.

128 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: 1 & II Kings: A Commentary*, 68; Bruggemann, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, 31; Gwilym Jones, *1 and 2 Kings, The New Century Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994), 112.

129 Solvang, *Royal Women of Judah*, 174.

Religious nature of Solomon's names

Names in the Hebrew Bible often show the religious or cultic atmosphere in which people were raised. A pagan name indicates a pagan upbringing, whereas a Yahwistic name would suggest a Yahwistic one. Thus, the theophoric element of a person's name provides insight into religious leanings. Even more important in the case of Solomon is the fact that many textual traditions identify Bathsheba as the one who named Solomon.¹³⁰ If Bathsheba named Solomon, then studying the theophoric nature of his name helps to identify whether her religious influence on him was pagan or Yahwistic.

The proper translation for the name Solomon (שְׁלֹמֹה—*Šēlōmōh*) has been under debate. McCarter suggests the translation “his replacement,” which refers likely to Bathsheba's first child who died, using the word *šillēm* (שָׁלַם—make amends, replace, restore).¹³¹ Mellish notes that this linguistic connection of Solomon's name to *šillēm* or *šilūmā* is significant considering later events within the story of David and Solomon.¹³² Both Hertzberg and Anderson suggest that his name is a derivative of the word *šālōm* (שָׁלוֹם—peace, completeness) aligning with the etymology given in 1 Chronicles 22.¹³³ However, the root, *š.l.m.* (ש.ל.מ.), is also related to the word *šalem* (שָׁלַם), which is related to Šalem the Canaanite god of the Evening.¹³⁴ Huffmon says many scholars see this word as the theophoric element in both Absalom and Solomon.¹³⁵ Several scholars also use the story of Abraham and Melchizedek, the Canaanite king of *Šalem*, to demonstrate that the root *šalem* is used as a theophoric element. The city of *Šalem* is identified with Jerusalem, which is also taken to mean “the foundation of (the god) Šalem.”¹³⁶ Several of the deities presumed to be worshiped in this pre-Davidic Jebusite cult are Šalem, Šedeq, and El Elyon.¹³⁷ As a growing number of scholars connect *šalem* with the meaning of the name Solomon, it is telling that Solomon was named after a Canaanite deity, especially when compared to his second name.

Solomon is also named Jedidiah (יְדִידְיָה—*Yēdīdyāh*). This means “beloved of Yahweh.”¹³⁸ The purpose for this naming was primarily theological: Solomon was loved by God in

complete contrast to the previous illicit child of an affair.¹³⁹ Although this name is Yahwistic, the text continues to refer to Solomon by his Canaanite name.

Why is the name that Solomon goes by throughout the Hebrew Bible not the name given to him by Nathan? Jedidiah was a good Yahwistic name that displays divine favor for Solomon, yet he continues to be referred by the name in dedication of another deity. The theophoric nature of the name Solomon and the lack of use of the name Jedidiah become very interesting considering Solomon's story.

Solomon's apostasy and evaluation

The editors of Kings tell us that Solomon's reign started out on a good note. Solomon asked God for wisdom to rule the people of Israel (1 Kgs 3), demonstrated his wisdom on several occasions (1 Kgs 3; 10), and built a magnificent Temple for Yahweh (1 Kgs 5-9). However, Solomon's Deuteronomistic evaluation reads thus: “So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh and did not wholly follow Yahweh, as David his father had done” (1 Kgs 11:6). Though Solomon started out following God, the end of his life turns tragic.

Solomon is explicitly condemned for his relationship to his wives. Solomon married foreign wives, even though Yahweh had strictly forbidden such marriages (Deut 7:3; 1 Kgs 11:2). Brueggemann notes that Solomon's change is due to a change of heart—“Solomon loved Yahweh” (1 Kgs 3:3) to “Solomon loved many foreign women” (1 Kgs 11:1), who turned his heart against Yahweh.¹⁴⁰ So, he engaged in worship of many foreign gods, including Ashtoreth, Micolm, Chemosh, and Molech (1 Kgs 11:5-7), which was also strictly forbidden (Ex 20; Deut 5). Solomon even built a high place for Chemosh and another for Molech because of his foreign wives (1 Kgs 11:7-8).

Solomon was also implicitly condemned for his accumulation of wealth. Deuteronomy 17 gives instructions for the king of Israel, and its prohibitions are parallel to the description of Solomon's means of obtaining wealth in 1 Kings 10. It instructs the king not to acquire horses, especially from the nation of Egypt (Deut 17:16), yet Solomon had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses imported from Egypt and Kue (1 Kgs 10:26-28). This passage also prohibits the king from collecting “excessive” amounts of silver or gold (Deut 17:17), yet they were so common that silver was “not counted as anything” (*lō'-neḥšāb*—לֹא נֶחְשָׁב) during Solomon's reign and 666 talents of gold came in yearly (1 Kgs 10:14, 21). The parallels between Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Kings 10 are not coincidental.¹⁴¹ Sweeney suggests that the authors highlighted Solomon's failure to obey the “Torah of the King” to make him “the royal antitype or the model of royal misbehavior.”¹⁴²

The final condemnation of Solomon comes with his excessive taxation and abuse of the people of Israel. The final instruction in Deuteronomy 17 is to copy the law, study it, and fear Yahweh, so “his heart may not be lifted above his brothers” (Deut 17:18-20). However, Solomon does not follow God, and the people feel enslaved by him (1 Kgs 12). In all of Solomon's excessive building projects, the reader is reminded of

130 The MT, Syr, and Targ say “and she called his name...” McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction Notes and Commentary*, 298.

131 Ibid., 303.

132 He noted that David called for a four fold restitution to the man who stole the sheep from his neighbor. David lost four children between the time that he committed the sin with Bathsheba and when Solomon took the throne: the baby born to Bathsheba, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah. Solomon became established as king after the fourth son died, therefore it is as if the “restitution” for David's sin had finally been paid. Kevin Mellish, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition, New Beacon Bible Commentary* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2012), 232.

133 Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 317; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 164.

134 Jones, *The Nathan Narratives*, 25.

135 H. B. Huffmon, “Shalem שָׁלַם,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 755–757; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Abraham: The Story of a Life* (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 57.

136 Jones, *The Nathan Narratives*, 127.

137 Interestingly enough, in 2 Samuel 5:6, where the sons born to David while he was living in Jerusalem are listed, there are four of his sons with names containing the theophoric element for the Canaanite god, El: Elishua, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet. It seems that more than just Solomon had Canaanite roots to their name. Ibid., 128.

138 Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 165; McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction Notes and Commentary*, 298.

139 Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 317; Finlay, *The Birth Report Genre in the Hebrew Bible*, 231.

140 Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, 141.

141 DeVries, *1 Kings*, 138.

142 Marvin A. Sweeney, “The Critique of Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 4 (1995): 611–612.

another oppressor in the Hebrew Bible—the nameless Pharaoh in Exodus, who enslaved the Hebrews. At first glance, one can see the similarities—both are oppressive individuals who force the people of Israel into forced labor. Furthermore, the very words used to describe Israel’s enslavement in both cases are the same: *mās* (מַס “body of forced labor”—1 Kgs 5:27-28 cf. Ex 1:11), *sēbel/sēbālā* (סֶבֶל/סֶבָּלָה “hard labor”—1 Kgs 11:28 cf. Ex 1:11), and *miskkēnôt* (מִסְכְּנוֹת “store cities” or “fortified cities” 1 Kgs 9:19 cf. Ex 1:11).¹⁴³ The language illustrates the severity of Solomon’s policies on the people. Under Solomon, the Israelites were objectified and forced to do grueling labor to build “store cities” for the king. The man who married Pharaoh’s daughter starts to become more and more like Pharaoh as his reign progresses (1 Kgs 3:1), and the lasting effects of this failure on the part of Solomon is felt for centuries.

The political ramifications of Solomon’s reign

The results of Solomon’s apostasy were devastating both personally and to the people of Israel. The first punishment was within Solomon’s lifetime—Yahweh raised up enemies to come against Solomon (1 Kgs 11:14-40), and Israel no longer had peace. Hadad of the Edomites attacked Israel, and Rezon became king of Damascus and rebelled against Israel. This political turmoil was a punishment against the disobedience of Solomon.

The second punishment was worse than the first. Yahweh promised to give Jeroboam, who was one of Solomon’s servants, ten of the tribes of Israel. Under the reign of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, the United Kingdom split into two kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom of Israel, led by Jeroboam, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, led by the Davidic Dynasty. Though the narrator attributes this to God’s punishment for Solomon’s sin (1 Kgs 12:15), the narrative specifically identifies the mistreatment of his people as a big reason for the division (1 Kgs 12:4). Despite his wisdom, Solomon became the king who takes—prophesied in 1 Samuel 8.

Conclusion

Overall, Bathsheba was a Canaanite woman whose son’s reign ended with apostasy and a resounding negative Deuteronomistic evaluation, even though his beginning seemed promising. Also, though Solomon was given an obvious Yahwistic name in Jedidiah, throughout the biblical narrative he is referred to as *Šlōmōh*, a name that was connected to a Semitic deity. The story of Bathsheba and Solomon follows the trend highlighted by several scholars referring to the kings of Judah: when a king has a foreign mother, he typically has a negative evaluation, and worships foreign gods. The pagan influence of Solomon has a severe detrimental effect upon the community of Israel. They are oppressed both by Solomon and by invaders from the outside, and they are divided by Solomon’s disobedience. The kingdom of Israel never again reunites into the old Davidic Kingdom. Though the text does not implicate Bathsheba specifically with Solomon’s apostasy at the end of his life, this correlation suggests a possible unstated influence of Bathsheba.

¹⁴³ The reason the middle word, *sēbel/sēbālā*, is different is because the first is the masculine form, and the second is feminine form.

Naamah

This study will now turn to Naamah, the mother of Rehoboam. She is mentioned twice in the account of Rehoboam’s reign: in his regnal formula and at his death notice (1 Kgs 14:21, 31). Even though she is only mentioned twice, there is still a lot to be learned from her in our study on the queen mothers of Judah.

Identity background

The text is very clear as to her ethnic identity, and the meaning of her name is related to pleasantness or politeness.¹⁴⁴ Every time her name is mentioned in both Kings and Chronicles, it is accompanied by the epithet “the Ammonite” (1 Kgs 14:21,31; 2 Chr 12:13). The Ammonites were a Transjordan people group, distantly related to the Israelites through Abraham and Lot (Gen 19:38). The Israelites first encountered the Ammonites as one of the Canaanite groups in their Promised Land (Deut 2-3; Josh 12).¹⁴⁵ Israel was not to inherit the land of the Ammonites because it was given to Lot (Deut 2-3), but since the Ammonites did not aid the Israelites in their journey from Egypt, Deuteronomistic legislation prohibited covenant relationships with them (Deut 23:3-6). Solomon disobeyed this legislation by forming political alliances through the marriage of many foreign wives—including Ammonites (2 Kgs 11:2). Considering this, Malamat argues that Naamah was an Ammonite princess with whom David arranged a political marriage for Solomon during his campaign against the Ammonites (2 Sam 10; 12).¹⁴⁶ His main argument was that Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, whereas his father’s reign lasted forty years, so Rehoboam was born before Solomon ascended to the throne. This suggests that Solomon was married to Naamah for a few years before he became king.¹⁴⁷

Significance within Rehoboam’s narrative

There are two significant points about how she is identified in the text. Firstly, she is listed twice, once at the beginning of Rehoboam’s reign in his regnal formula and another time at the end of his reign with his death (1 Kgs 14:21, 31). The dual reference to Naamah is unique in that she is the only queen mother to be mentioned in both the introduction and conclusion of her son’s reign.¹⁴⁸ Cogan and DeVries both suggest that this is secondary material to the narrative because of its abnormality.¹⁴⁹ Whether primary or secondary, the dual reference to Naamah was intentional and emphasizes

¹⁴⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 653.

¹⁴⁵ Jean-Michel De Tarragon, “Ammon,” trans. Gerard J. Norton, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 194.

¹⁴⁶ Abraham Malamat, “Naamah, the Ammonite Princess, King Solomon’s Wife,” *Revue Biblique* 106, no. 1 (1999): 39.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Some mothers are mentioned twice, but other than Naamah, the other three mothers play a specific role within the narrative. The four mothers mentioned twice are: Bathsheba (2 Sam 11-12, 1 Kgs 1-2), Naamah (1 Kgs 14:21; 1 Kgs 14:31), Maacah with Asa (1 Kgs 15:10; 1 Kgs 15:13), and Athaliah (2 Kgs 8:26, 2 Kgs 11). Bathsheba helped Solomon rise to the throne, as discussed previously. Maacah was deposed as *gēbīrā* because of her involvement in Asherah worship (1 Kgs 15:13). After Jehu murdered all of the house of Ahab in Israel, Athaliah murdered her remaining grandchildren, and took the throne as queen of Judah for six years (2 Kgs 11).

¹⁴⁹ A secondary gloss is text that is added by a later editor in explanation, and not in the original document. Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 388; Simon DeVries, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Kings* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 185.

her foreign heritage.¹⁵⁰ Secondly, Naamah is the only queen mother to be identified by her ethnic identity rather than her patronym or her city of origin. Therefore, not only is Naamah identified as a foreign woman, but her foreignness is also emphasized within the narrative. Bruggemann suggests that this is done to emphasize Solomon's apostasy with his wives.¹⁵¹ She is important as one understands the trends that developed during his reign and the effect his policies had on the community.

Rehoboam's apostasy and evaluation

Rehoboam receives a negative Deuteronomistic evaluation. The MT emphasizes the sins of Judah by claiming the people of Judah did evil in the eyes of Yahweh (1 Kgs 14:22). Because of this, Cogan and Jones conclude the MT gives Rehoboam a "moderate" evaluation rather than a "negative" one.¹⁵² However, since Rehoboam is Judah's king, he is responsible for leading them in proper worship, so a statement of Judah's sin portrays Rehoboam in a negative light. Other traditions specifically highlight Rehoboam's leadership role in the sins of the people. In Chronicles and in the LXX of Kings, it states that Rehoboam did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh (1 Kgs 14:22; 2 Chr 12:14).¹⁵³ Also Chronicles emphasizes that Rehoboam led "all Israel" to turn away from Yahweh as soon as his rule was "established" (2 Chr 12:1). As a result, Rehoboam is given a negative evaluation: "And Judah [by implication Rehoboam] did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done" (1 Kgs 14:22).

In Rehoboam's Deuteronomistic evaluation, Judah is said to have done evil in the eyes of Yahweh, "more than all their fathers before them" (1 Kgs 14:22). Though this may refer to the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, Sweeney argues that a sweeping statement like this must refer to more than Israel and Judah.¹⁵⁴ The Hebrew word for father, *āb* (אב), can also mean "ancestor," and the statement "to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh" was a Deuteronomistic expression referring to Canaanite worship, which Yahweh detests.¹⁵⁵ This suggests that Rehoboam is worse than all the ancestors who proceeded him. According to this, the Deuteronomist is insinuating that Judah became worse than the Canaanites, whom Yahweh drove out before giving the land to them.

In the text, Rehoboam is condemned for doing two things. First, he introduced paraphernalia of the Canaanite fertility religion (1 Kgs 14:23). He built high places (*bāmôt*—בָּמוֹת), which were Canaanite centers of worship, usually situated on a hill, a mountain top, or on an artificial raised platform, where Yahweh or pagan gods would be worshipped.¹⁵⁶ The *bāmôt* were condemned in Deuteronomy as unacceptable worship practices for true worship of Yahweh (Deut 12:2-4). He set up sacred stones (*maššēbôt*—מַשְּׁבֹת), which were connected to a Canaanite altar.¹⁵⁷ These sacred stones were condemned

as unsuitable for true Yahwistic worship in Deuteronomy and were associated with Asherah worship (Deut 16:22). He built Asherim, which were poles built in dedication to the goddess Asherah. These idolatrous items were built "on every high hill and under every green tree" (1 Kgs 14:23). This means that in every suitable place where idol worship could occur, it did.¹⁵⁸ Idol worship was prolific, and the Deuteronomistic ideal for monotheistic worship of Yahweh was abandoned. Second, the *qēdēšīm* (קִדְּשִׁים) were in the land. Some scholars hold to the traditional understanding of *qēdēšīm* involving cult prostitution (which is why it is typically translated "male cult prostitutes"), and though others contend that this may be a holy person involved in pagan worship, all agree that it is the highest form of corruption in the land and intensely offensive to Yahweh.¹⁵⁹ Rehoboam is the only king condemned for introducing *qēdēšīm* in the land. Every other time *qādēš* is mentioned in a king's evaluation, it occurs in the cultic reform of a good king (1 Kgs 15:12; 22:47; 2 Kgs 23:7). The author is implying that Rehoboam continued and intensified the idol worship during the reign of his father and led Judah deeper down the path of idolatry, which began the progression that led to the exile at the end of Israel's story.

The political ramifications of Rehoboam's reign

Rehoboam is remembered for two political events. The first episode indicates that his actions led to the division of the kingdom. In 1 Kings 12, the author tells us that at Rehoboam's coronation, the people of the land came to Rehoboam and asked for relief from the "yoke" that Solomon had placed on them. Rehoboam listened to the young men instead of the elders and promised that he would be harsher than his father. In response, the ten northern tribes of Israel rebelled against the house of David and formed the Northern Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam. When Rehoboam attempted to go to war to reunify the Davidic Kingdom, a man of God warned Rehoboam that he should not because the separation was punishment from Yahweh (1 Kgs 12:21-24; 2 Chr 11:1-4). Rehoboam listened and returned home. Later we are told that he was continually at war with Israel (1 Kgs 14:30). Cogan explains this discrepancy by suggesting that "war" here probably refers not to a battle for the united Israel, but rather to a series of land disputes since Rehoboam decided not to go to war to bring back Israel at the beginning of his reign.¹⁶⁰ Rehoboam's actions with this conflict led to the further division of the land, and the people of God were no longer united. In this context, the meaning of Rehoboam's name has special significance. Rehoboam's name is constructed of two words: *rāḥāb* (רָחָב—wide or broad) and *ām* (עַם—people or nation).¹⁶¹ Though he does not have a theophoric element in his name, it is ironic that the king under whom the kingdom split is named "a wide nation." The kingdom of David under Rehoboam was reduced to a fraction of what it was in the reigns of David and Solomon, yet the king's name draws attention to the former glory of the kingdom. This episode shows two things: the failure of Solomon's legacy because of idolatry and Rehoboam's foolish actions as an evil that led to the schism of the nation.

¹⁵⁰ There are other examples in the Deuteronomistic History of a person's heritage being listed twice for emphasis. King Saul's heritage is listed twice when Saul is first introduced in 1 Samuel 9:1. "There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorah, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth." There would be no reason to include both mentions of the tribe of Benjamin twice in one sentence except to draw attention to Saul's heritage. So, repeating a person's heritage for emphasis is a tactic that has been used before in the Deuteronomistic History.

¹⁵¹ Bruggemann, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, 180-181.

¹⁵² Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 389.

¹⁵³ He also notes that this also fits with Chronicles better. DeVries, *1 Kings*, 183.

¹⁵⁴ Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: 1 & II Kings: A Commentary*, 189.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 119.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 663.

¹⁵⁸ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 185.

¹⁵⁹ Those who say it is simply a pagan "holy person": Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 161; Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 387; Those who hold the traditional interpretation of "temple cult prostitutes": Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: 1 & II Kings: A Commentary*, 189; DeVries, *1 Kings*, 185; Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 1:277; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 873.

¹⁶⁰ Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 391.

¹⁶¹ Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 932.

The second episode the author describes about the reign of Rehoboam is the attack of Shishak of Egypt (1 Kgs 14). Chronicles directly attributes this invasion to Rehoboam's apostasy (2 Chr 12). Shishak took the fortified cities of Judah built by Rehoboam because of his sin (2 Chr 11-12). Then he came up against Jerusalem and took the golden shields made under the reign of Solomon when the Kingdom of Israel was prosperous. Myers suggests that this implies that a tribute was paid to Shishak.¹⁶² This tribute is not explicitly stated by either Kings or Chronicles, but Rehoboam likely became a vassal of Shishak that day. Rehoboam could not afford to make golden shields again, so he replaced them with bronze shields, which were less expensive. These shields were a symbol of the king's power, and the fact that Judah had bronze shields communicates that Judah was less wealthy and weaker than it had once been.¹⁶³ Because of this event with Shishak, the glory of the Kingdom of Israel as it had been in the days of Solomon ended, and under Rehoboam the prosperity that Israel had enjoyed declined.

The religious effect of the king's reign can be seen in the political sphere. These two political events associated with Rehoboam are important to understand the full depth of the religious state during Rehoboam's reign. Rehoboam's response to those requesting relief was harsh. This reflected that his heart was raised above his brothers, which was against the Torah of the King (Deut 17:20), and he also fulfilled the prophecy of the king who takes in 1 Samuel 8. In his dealings with Shishak, Yahweh was dishonored, and the glory of the Temple was diminished. He became a vassal, yet Deuteronomy clearly implies that Yahweh should be Israel's true suzerain by its very form written with all the components of a suzerain-vassal treaty.¹⁶⁴ In Rehoboam's reign, it is seen clearly that a king who does not dedicate himself fully to Yahweh causes suffering for his people.

Conclusion

Again, Rehoboam's reign follows the trend highlighted earlier. A foreign mother raised a son, who committed himself to the worship of idols, and was condemned for "doing evil in the eyes of Yahweh." In the case of Rehoboam, specifically, the foreign ethnicity of his mother was especially emphasized, and so was the nature of Rehoboam's idol worship. The idolatry during his reign was portrayed as intense and pervasive. Also, the community of Judah suffered because of the idolatry and disobedience of Rehoboam. The kingdom was divided at the beginning of his reign, it was attacked and plundered by invaders from Egypt, and its secure cities were taken away by these very attacks.

162 Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, Commentary*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible*, Second Edi. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1965), 75.

163 Fritz, *I & 2 Kings*, 161.

164 J. A. Thompson, "The Near Eastern Suzerain-Vassal Concept in the Religion of Israel," *The Journal of Religious History* 3, no. 1 (1964): 8.

Maacah

The final queen mother of an evil king to be studied is Maacah, the daughter of Absalom. She is listed as the queen mother of Abijam.¹⁶⁵ She is significant for our study, as she is explicitly called a *gēbîrâ* in the text.

Identity background

Maacah is identified two different ways in the text. The first is Maacah, the daughter of Absalom (1 Kgs 15:2; 2 Chr 11:20), and the second is Macaiah, the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah (2 Chr 13:2).¹⁶⁶

To understand the origins of Maacah, it is important to establish clearly the identity of her father. Williamson argues that the available information does not allow us to identify this Absalom as the son of David.¹⁶⁷ However, most scholars suggest Absalom is the son of David because the name "Absalom," is used only of David's son and of Maacah's father.¹⁶⁸ Since Absalom was dead long before Abijam was even born,¹⁶⁹ and Samuel claims that Tamar was the only daughter of Absalom (2 Sam 14:27),¹⁷⁰ many scholars suggest that Absalom was Maacah's grandfather through his daughter, Tamar.¹⁷¹ This relies on the fact that the Hebrew term, *āb* (אב) means "forefather" or "ancestor."¹⁷² Sweeney notes that Josephus also identifies Absalom's daughter, Tamar, as Maacah's mother.¹⁷³

Maacah's lineage is informed by Absalom's Canaanite heritage. Absalom's mother was Maacah, the daughter of the king of Geshur (2 Sam 3:3).¹⁷⁴ It is intriguing, then, that the mother of Abijam shares the name of the princess of Geshur and the name of the Canaanite settlement associated with Geshur.¹⁷⁵ After killing his stepbrother, Absalom fled to Geshur, the land of his mother, and remained there for three years (2 Sam 13:38). He maintained a relationship with the king of Geshur, as he plotted a revolt

165 Abijam is named Abijah in Chronicles.

166 Alternatively, "Absalom" is sometimes spelled "Abishalom," which is the same name with a slight spelling difference. אבשלום (Absalom) means something like "father is peace," and אבשלום means something like "my father is peace." Other names within the Hebrew Bible have interchange "Ab" with "Abi" referring to the same person (such as Abner). For more details see Jones, *I and 2 Kings*, 1:281.

167 H. G. M. Williamson, *I and 2 Chronicles*, ed. Ronald E. Clements, *The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 245.

168 Jones, *I and 2 Kings*, 1:281; Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987); Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*; Bruggemann, *I & 2 Kings: A Commentary*; Myers, *II Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, Commentary*; Spanier, "The Queen Mother in the Judaeon Royal Court: Maacah - A Case Study."

169 Approximation of time. Absalom was killed in the middle of David's reign, not the very end. Solomon reigned for 40 years (1 Kgs 11:42), and Rehoboam reigned for 17 years (1 Kgs 14:21). So, for Absalom to have been the grandfather of a young upcoming king is highly improbable.

170 DeVries, *I Kings*, 187.

171 Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 99; Spanier, "The Queen Mother in the Judaeon Royal Court: Maacah - A Case Study," 191.

172 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 3.

173 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 191.

174 Geshur was a small country in the region of Bashan on the east of the Jordan River, who remained unconquered, and later became subordinate to Israel during the reign of Solomon. Zvi U. Ma'oz, "Geshur," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 996.

175 Mazar argues that Geshur was once a part of Maacah, but later gained its independence by the time of David. Points to references of Geshur being "in the land of Maacah", and kings "of Maacah" within the text. Benjamin Mazar, "Geshur and Maacah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80, no. 1 (1961): 23.

against David (2 Sam 14-15). Because the text lists the children born to Absalom after he returned to Jerusalem, Spanier suggests that Absalom was likely given a wife of Geshurite royalty during his time in Geshur.¹⁷⁶ Because these are the only two stories of Absalom in the Hebrew Bible, Absalom is portrayed as an evil son who is antithetical to David. Thus, at the very least, Maacah, mother of Abijam, is identified by lineage of the “black sheep” of David’s family, who himself was a product of a foreign marriage. This identification of Maacah highlights Canaanite roots.

The Chronicler identifies the mother of Abijah as Macaiah, daughter of Uriel of Gibeah (2 Chr 13:2). Some scholars have suggested that Macaiah was the actual mother of Abijam, and then Maacah was his “adopted mother” since Macaiah died too early to fulfill the role of *gēbîrâ*.¹⁷⁷ However, this seems to be unlikely, as there is not much textual evidence for this explanation. The name Macaiah is easily explained by Williamson as a variant of Maacah. As for the difference in origins, Dillard suggests that Maacah is Absalom’s granddaughter through his daughter Tamar, since Uriah of Gibeah may have been Tamar’s husband, the father of Maacah.¹⁷⁸ Whether that is true or not, Chronicles portrays Abijah in a better light than Abijam and shows him as a good king for the first part of his reign. In addition to this, the regnal formula in Chronicles, unlike that in Kings, seems to show the mother of “Abijah” to have an Israelite heritage, because Gibeah is a town in the tribe of Benjamin. This supports rather than detracts from the Canaanite origins of Maacah, as the Chronicler, who has a high opinion of David, redacted the narrative to portray Abijam in the best possible light. Considering the text, Maacah has strong connections to the Canaanites.

Significance within Abijam’s and Asa’s narratives

At first glance, Maacah may not appear to be worthy of study since she does not appear after the regnal formula in Abijam’s reign. However, her influence is apparent in Asa’s reign, which follows.

Both Kings and Chronicles list Maacah, daughter of Absalom, as the mother of Asa, Abijam’s son (1 Kgs 15:10,13; 2 Chr 15:16). This is significant because she is the only woman to fulfill the role of the queen mother during two consecutive reigns of a king of Judah.¹⁷⁹ But it also raises questions about how she can be the “mother” of both Abijam and Asa. Though a few scholars exercise caution before jumping to conclusions about the true relationship between Asa, Abijam, and Maacah,¹⁸⁰ most scholars simply

conclude that the Hebrew word for mother, *’em* (אִמָּה), is more properly translated as “grandmother” in this instance.¹⁸¹ This fact highlights Maacah’s influence within the reign of Abijam. In most instances, the position of queen mother would pass to the mother of the new king upon his ascension to the throne. In Maacah’s case, however, she had retained the title of *gēbîrâ* even after her son died, and her grandson became king.

Maacah’s religious influence on Abijam is apparent in Asa’s reign. As a part of his religious reform, Asa removed Maacah from the position of *gēbîrâ* and tore down the abominable image (*miplešet*—מִפְלֶשֶׁת) for Asherah she erected (1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Chr 15:16). The word *miplešet* refers to something that is an abomination, literally “a thing to shudder at.”¹⁸² Sweeney suggests that since Asa cut this abomination down and burned it, it was probably a tree or pole in honor of Asherah.¹⁸³ Maacah’s removal as queen mother coincided with Asa’s reform when he purified the Israelite cult. In addition to removing her, he expelled the *qēdēšîm* that Rehoboam introduced, and removed the idols (1 Kgs 15:12). Asherah was the Canaanite goddess of fertility, and Sweeney notes that each of the things that Asa removed may have had something to do with the Asherah cult (cult prostitutes, idols, Maacah’s abominable image).¹⁸⁴ The fact that Maacah had to be removed showed that destroying the object she created was not enough. The idolatry problem would not be resolved until Asa’s grandmother was no longer *gēbîrâ*; this underscores her religious influence upon the reign of her son. Ackerman uses this episode to highlight the cultic influence of the *gēbîrâ*.¹⁸⁵

Religious nature of Abijam’s names

As highlighted earlier, the son of Rehoboam is given two different names. Abijah (אֲבִיָּה) is the name that he is given in Chronicles, whereas Kings refers to him as Abijam (אֲבִיָּם).¹⁸⁶ Though the names may appear very similar as orthographic variations, their differences in meaning could not be greater.¹⁸⁷

Abijam is a combination of two Hebrew words: *’ābî* (אֲבִי), which means “my father” and *yām* (יָם), which means sea. The name Abijam is translated “My father is Yam.”¹⁸⁸ Yam, or sea, considered divine in Near Eastern thought, was the Canaanite god, who represented chaos that was defeated by Baal.¹⁸⁹ Stolz notes that though Yam was known

176 Spanier, “The Queen Mother in the Judean Royal Court: Maacah - A Case Study,” 190.

177 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 191.

178 Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 99.

179 Except for possibly Athaliah (2 Kgs 8, 11). There are some scholars that question whether Athaliah was married to Jehashaphat instead of Jehoram, which is the typical assumption. Both were married to members of the house of Ahab, but neither wife is mentioned by name, so it is possible (though not probable) that Athaliah was the wife of Jehashaphat and thus queen mother during two consecutive kingships (Jehoram and Ahaziah). See Ktziah Spanier, “The Northern Israelite Queen Mother in the Judean Court: Athaliah and Abi,” in *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Meir Lubetski, Clair Gottlieb, and Sharon Keller (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 141–142.

180 Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 190.

181 Much like “father” was taken to mean “ancestor” in Maacah’s patronym. Choon-Leong Seow, “The First and Second Books of Kings,” ed. Leander E. Keck, Thomas G. Long, and David L. Petersen, *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999); Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 106; Cogan, *I Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 398; Myers, *II Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, Commentary*, 79–80; DeVries, *I Kings*, 190; Spanier, “The Queen Mother in the Judean Royal Court: Maacah - A Case Study,” 193; Berlyn, “The Great Ladies,” 29.

182 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 814.

183 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 193.

184 Ibid.

185 Ackerman, “The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel,” 389.

186 We are using “Abijam” because our project looks at the Kings narrative primarily and then turn to the Chronicles narrative secondarily.

187 Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 15:101. Dillard suggests that these could be “orthographic variants,” or Abijam could have been a reference to the god, Yam, edited by a later editor in Chronicles to be Abijah. Either one, he suggests is no more likely than the other.

188 DeVries, *I Kings*, 187; Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 164.

189 Fritz Stolz, “Sea יָם,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel Van Der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. Van Der Horst, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 739.

in Ugaritic literature, the Israelites also may have viewed it as a force of chaos to be bridled by Yahweh.¹⁹⁰ It is interesting considering Abijam's legacy that he is named in honor of a Canaanite deity.

In Chronicles, Abjam is given the Yahwistic name Abijah. Abijah is the combination of 'ābî (אָבִי) and the theophoric yā (יָה), which refers to Yahweh. Abijah is translated "my father is Yahweh."¹⁹¹ It is noteworthy that Abijah is more devout in Chronicles (2 Chr 13) than Abijam in Kings (1 Kgs 15). A few scholars suggest that Abijam was his birth name, whereas Abijah was the throne name.¹⁹² Other scholars have suggested that this may be an intentional redaction on the part of the Chronicler because he was not comfortable with the pagan meaning of Abijam.¹⁹³ In either case, his original name was Abijam, and this is understandable considering the religious trends in his reign. His name, therefore, suggests his pagan upbringing.

Abijam's apostasy and evaluation

The evaluation of Abijam is not as straight forward as it is with other kings. In the Deuteronomistic History, he is a king who is not devoted to Yahweh, and he does not receive much attention within the text (1 Kgs 15:1-8). In Chronicles, we are told a lengthy story about a battle led against Jeroboam by Abijah, who was preaching against Jeroboam in the name of Yahweh (1 Chr 13). Since these evaluations are so different, they will be analyzed one at a time.

In Kings, Abijam is condemned as an evil king who followed in the sins of his father, Rehoboam (1 Kgs 15:3). Sweeney notes, however, that the term, father, may that indicate he walked in the sins of his ancestors, just as Rehoboam followed in the sins of Solomon and the Canaanites before him.¹⁹⁴ This language implies that he participated in all the sins condemned in Rehoboam's and Solomon's reign: he kept the *qēdešîm*, the high places, the pillars, and the Asherah (1 Kgs 14:23).¹⁹⁵ The text then contrasts his apostasy with the whole-hearted devotion of David, his father (1 Kgs 15:3). The evaluation is simple: he followed his evil father, Rehoboam, into sin, rather than following his faithful ancestor, David, in obedience. Though Abijam is only given eight verses within Kings, it is very clear that it is a negative portrayal of the king.

In Chronicles, Abijah seems to be a king who is a righteous warrior for Yahweh. He goes to war against Jeroboam. Abijah declared Yahweh as the true God, who should be worshipped at the Temple (2 Chr 13:8-12), and David was God's chosen king (2 Chr 13:4-7), whose descendants are the rightful heirs to the throne (2 Chr 13:4-8). In Abijah's battle with Jeroboam, God defeated Jeroboam before Abijah and the Judahites, and they won a very decisive victory that day (2 Chr 13:13-18). Abijah grew in strength and might, whereas Jeroboam, who was smitten by God, died (2 Chr 13:20-21). This portrayal of Abijah is in stark contrast with that of Abijam in Kings. McKenzie points to the fact that the Chronicler consistently has a higher portrayal of the Davidic Monarchy than that of the Deuteronomistic History and suggests that the

reason for the discrepancy between Abijam and Abijah is due to the Chronicler's higher view of the Davidic Monarchy.¹⁹⁶ Rather than point out the negative aspects of Abijam's reign in an evaluation, the Chronicler opted to leave his explicit evaluation ambiguous, including only the positive aspects of his reign to portray a righteous warrior of God.¹⁹⁷

In both Kings and Chronicles, Asa, Abijam's son, leads an extensive cultic reform, suggesting that Abijam was not as whole-heartedly devoted to Yahweh as some might suggest from the Chronicles narrative. He specifically removes the abhorrent *qēdešîm* from the land that were introduced during the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kgs 15:13), which suggests that they were still allowed in the land during the reign of his father. He also removes the idols created by his father (1 Kgs 15:13). Chronicles gives an itemized list of the sins that Rehoboam was condemned for and says that Asa tore them down: the high places, the pillars, and the Asherim (2 Chr 15:3).¹⁹⁸ The removal of Maacah is present in both (1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Chr 15:16). The sins of Rehoboam that continued into the reign of Abijam were addressed in the reign of Asa. Abijam allowed idol worship to continue. The specific evaluation given to Abijam in Kings notes: "And [Abijam] walked in all the sins that his father did before him, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father" (1 Kgs 15:3). He followed his father into sin. Overall, his evaluation is a negative one because he does not commit his whole heart to Yahweh, as his father David did.

The political ramifications of Abijam's reign

There was conflict between Judah and the North during the reign of Abijam. In Kings, he was at war with Jeroboam all his days (1 Kgs 15:6-7), and Brueggemann suggests that this may have been another negative judgment upon Abijam because of a previous Yahwistic prohibition against war with Israel (1 Kgs 12:24).¹⁹⁹ Asa, his son, also was at war with the Northern Kingdom during his reign, so Abijam's victory did not last very long.

The second political ramification is one that is implied. During his reign, Abijam's son, Asa, enters a treaty with the king of Damascus, saying "as it was between your father and my father" (1 Kgs 15:19; 2 Chr 16:3). Though the word for "father" can also mean "ancestor," one must wonder whether this is referring to a treaty established between Abijam and the king of Damascus. Sweeney argues that this is talking about the treaties with Aram under the reigns of David and Solomon, which were recorded in earlier tradition (2 Sam 8:3-12; 10:6-19).²⁰⁰ Jones and Dillard support this notion by citing the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Dillard, 2 Chronicles, 101; DeVries, 1 Kings, 187.

¹⁹² Myers, *II Chronicles: Introduction, Translation, Commentary*, 74; Leslie C. Allen, "The First and Second Books of Chronicles," ed. Leander E. Keck, Thomas G. Long, and David L. Petersen, *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 529.

¹⁹³ Williamson, 1 and 2 Chronicles, 250; DeVries, 1 Kings, 187; Dillard, 2 Chronicles, 101.

¹⁹⁴ Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: 1 & II Kings: A Commentary*, 190.

¹⁹⁵ For a more detailed description, see above discussion in Rehoboam's Apostasy and Evaluation

¹⁹⁶ Stephen L. McKenzie, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, *Harvard Semitic Museum: Harvard Semitic Monographs*, vol. 33 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 86.

¹⁹⁷ His explicit evaluation is ambiguous because there is no moral evaluation of his reign. Usually in the middle of verse two, there would be a statement like "Abijah did evil in the eyes of the Yahweh," or "Abijah did what was right within Yahweh. In fact, he is the only king after the kingdom split in Chronicles to not receive this explicit statement of evaluation within his regnal formula.

¹⁹⁸ Incidentally one of his faults highlighted in the Kings narrative was the failure to tear down the high places. Dillard gives several theories to try to resolve this tension, suggesting that the high places were removed at the beginning of his reign as per Chronicles, but toward the end of his reign, more had popped up, and he failed to remove them (1 Kgs 15:14) or that the high places removed were those following Canaanite deities and those that stayed were Yahwistic. Dillard, 2 Chronicles, 118.

¹⁹⁹ Brueggemann, 1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary, 188.

²⁰⁰ Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: 1 & II Kings: A Commentary*, 194.

victory of Abijah over Jeroboam as evidence of the Aramaean intervention.²⁰¹ Cogan also asserts that because the noun sentence, “as it was between your father and my father,” can be parsed in the present, it implies the presence of an ongoing treaty between the two countries set up under previous kings.²⁰² If such a treaty between Aram and Judah under Abijam’s reign existed, then this implies that Abijam was relying on Aramaeans for protection from enemies instead of submitting to God.

Conclusion

Abijam also follows the trends highlighted above. Maacah has Canaanite heritage and is portrayed in a negative light when she is introduced, and Abijam has a name that has a pagan theophoric element for the god Yam. Chronicles changes the storyline of the reign of Abijam, presumably to hide the pagan nature of Abijam’s reign. In reality, it seems that Abijam’s policies continued in the sins of his father, Rehoboam, against the commands of Yahweh. Asa, his son, enacted much cultic reform within his reign to return to the Deuteronomistic ideal of proper worship. It is also possible that Abijam forged a treaty with Aram, which was continued under his son Asa. In Maacah’s story, however, we see very specific religious influence that she had in her son and grandson’s reigns. She created an abhorrent object for the worship of Asherah and has a leadership position, but Asa deposes her as *gēbîrâ* because of her idolatry. We can clearly see the pagan influence of the pagan mother upon the reign of Abijam, son of Maacah.

MOTHERS OF SONS WITH A POSITIVE EVALUATION

The mothers of Judah that were studied in the previous section all follow a similar trend: a Canaanite mother raises a son, who often is given a pagan name, and this son grows up to be an evil king, not leading the country in following Yahweh. We will now turn our attention to a brief study of the mothers of Hezekiah and Josiah, the two kings with the best evaluations. Both kings led the nation toward Yahweh in Judah, so they will serve as a good litmus test for the trend that we are studying in more detail.

Abi

The first mother of a good king to be considered is Abi. Though she is only mentioned once in Hezekiah’s regnal formula in each of Kings and Chronicles, her origins are very significant for this study.

Identity background

Though her place of birth is not explicitly mentioned in the text, she is given a patronym, which helps provide insight into her origins. Abi is identified as “the daughter of Zechariah” (2 Kgs 18:1; 2 Chr 29:1). Zechariah (זְכַרְיָה) is a name based on the combination of the verb *z.k.r* (זָכַר), meaning “to remember,” and *yâ* (יָה), the theophoric element for Yahweh.²⁰³ Because of this, the proper translation of the name Zechariah is “Yahweh remembers.”²⁰⁴ Not only does the name Zechariah honor

Yahweh, but interestingly, it is a name often given to various Yahwistic religious personnel, such as Levitical priests (1 Chr 9:17-19, 21-22; 15:18, 20, 24; 20:14; 24:25; 26:11; 2 Chr 24:20; 29:13; 34:12; 35:8; Neh 12:35, 41; Zech 1-14; Luke 1:5; 3:2) or even prophets of Yahweh (Zech 1:1).²⁰⁵

The name, Abi, meaning “my father” (2 Kgs 18:1), does not necessarily demonstrate a connection to the Yahwistic faith. Chronicles, however, identifies her by the name Abijah, which is Yahwistic. The meaning of Abijah is “My father is Yahweh.” So even though her city of origin is not explicitly mentioned, the theophoric elements of the names of Abijah and her father, Zechariah, suggest a strong connection to the religion of Yahweh.

Religious nature of Hezekiah’s name

Hezekiah’s name is also very Yahwistic. His name, *Hizqîyâ* (חִזְקִיָּה), is a combination of the verb *h.z.q.* (חָזַק), meaning “to strengthen” or “to be strong,” with the theophoric element for Yahweh (*yâ—יָה*).²⁰⁶ This name connotes the idea of Yahweh and strength, and scholars have translated it in different ways. It can mean “Yahweh strengthens,”²⁰⁷ “Yahweh is my strength,”²⁰⁸ or “Yahweh is strong.”²⁰⁹ However his name is translated, it suggests a Yahwistic upbringing. His name is significant considering what Hezekiah accomplished religiously and politically during his reign.

Hezekiah’s Reform and Evaluation

Hezekiah was one of the two greatest reformers of the Davidic Monarchy. He removed the high places (*bāmôt*—2 Kgs 18:4), which were Canaanite shrines dedicated to the worship of pagan gods. This fact is very significant because all the previous good kings and reformers “did not remove the high places” (1 Kgs 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs 14:4; 2 Kgs 15:4, 35).²¹⁰ Sweeney notes that the failure to remove the high places is a common theme in the Deuteronomistic History up to this point.²¹¹ The rigor of Hezekiah’s dedication is explicitly emphasized in the incomparability formula, which states there was “[no king] like him ... after him nor ... before him” (2 Kgs 18:5). Also, he broke down pillars (*maššēbâ*) and cut down the Asherah pole (2 Kgs 18:4). These three cultic expressions—the *bāmâ*, the *maššēbâ*, and the worship of Asherah—all are introduced during Rehoboam’s reign (1 Kgs 14:23).²¹² No previous king successfully removed all three of these cultic items, thus demonstrating the ferocity with which Hezekiah enacted his reform. Moreover, he broke the bronze serpent (Nehushtan) into pieces (2 Kgs 18:4). The text identified Nehushtan as the bronze snake Moses made at God’s command to heal the people of their snake bites (Num 21; 2 Kgs 18:4). The people, however, worshipped the snake as an idol. Jones argues that the origins in the text are fabricated, and Nehushtan was a Jebusite symbol found in Jerusalem when David

201 Gwilym Jones, *1 and 2 Kings, The New Century Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1994), 286; Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 109.

202 Cogan, *I Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 400. He also suggests that the parsing does not rule out the possibility of it being the initial contact from Asa for a new treaty.

203 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 272.

204 John W. Wright, “Zechariah (Person),” ed. David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 2008), 1057.

205 Ibid.; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 272.

206 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 306.

207 Ibid.

208 Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 359.

209 Cogan and Tadmor suggest that this was the original meaning, but a character was deleted from the original form by later redactors. Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 216.

210 The kings referenced here were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah (or Uzziah) and Jotham, who were all the kings of the Davidic Dynasty who received a positive evaluation in the Deuteronomistic History before Hezekiah.

211 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: 1 & II Kings: A Commentary*, 403.

212 For a fuller description of each of these items see “Rehoboam’s Apostasy and Evaluation” section of this paper.

conquered it.²¹³ Regardless of its origins, Nehushtan had become a Canaanite symbol of worship, possibly for a fertility deity.²¹⁴

The verbs throughout Hezekiah's reform suggest the intensity of his reform.²¹⁵ There are the four actions Hezekiah took within with this cultic cleansing: "he removed" (Hiphil of *s.w.r*—ס.ו.ר.) the *bāmā*, "he smashed" (Piel of *š.b.r*—ש.ב.ר.) the *maṣṣēbā*, "he cut down" (Qal of *k.r.t*—כ.ר.ת.) the Asherah, and "he broke in pieces" (Piel of *k.t.t*—כ.ת.ת.) Nehushtan. The stems of these verbs indicate intensified action or causative action.²¹⁶ Cogan and Tadmor note that the Piel of *k.t.t*, which was used for Hezekiah's destruction of Nehushtan, was also used for Moses' breaking the golden calf to pieces.²¹⁷

In Chronicles, one sees an even clearer picture of the devotion of Hezekiah. Hezekiah cleanses the Temple (2 Chr 29), reinstitutes proper worship of Yahweh by offering burnt offerings (2 Chr 29), and celebrates a Passover unlike any that has been celebrated "since the time of Solomon the son of David" (2 Chr 30). Dillard notes that in Chronicles Hezekiah is portrayed as a kind of second David and is compared to Solomon, which implies that under Hezekiah there was a time of such obedience to Yahweh that it was reminiscent of the golden years under David and Solomon.²¹⁸

Due to his reform, Hezekiah is given a very positive evaluation: "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all his father David had done" (2 Kgs 18:3). He is made out to be a second David—one who follows God. Cogan and Tadmor note that this statement occurs only in the evaluation of Hezekiah and Josiah.²¹⁹ He trusted in the Lord and obeyed his commandments (2 Kgs 18:5-6). Perhaps most intriguing is the statement "none like him in all of the kings of Judah—before him or after him" (2 Kgs 18:5). Sweeney cites this as evidence for an early Hezekian redactional edition of the Deuteronomistic History since Josiah also receives a similar evaluation, but Knoppers says that this statement probably indicates incomparable trust in Yahweh, whereas the statement about Josiah indicates incomparable reform.²²¹ Regardless, this statement shows the greatness of his reign. He was a king dedicated to Yahweh.

213 Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2:562.

214 T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 251; Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 217; Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 403.

215 Bruggemann, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, 491.

216 For example, being this stem *š.b.r* means that he *smashed* the pillars, rather than being in the qal, which would mean that he broke them.

217 Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 217.

218 Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 228–229.

219 Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 216.

220 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 20–22.

221 He was mainly noting that though a lot of scholars hold to these as evidences of separate hands within the text, a similar phrase is used for Solomon, and these scholars would not hold to a Solomonic edition of the Deuteronomistic History, so these phrases must be understood differently. Gary N. Knoppers, "'There Was None Like Him': Incomparability in the Books of Kings," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (1992): 413.

The political ramifications of Hezekiah's reign

Hezekiah's religious reform affected his political reform. Hezekiah, unlike his father, refused to submit to Assyria as his overlord. Hezekiah's revolt against Assyria is important to understand in context of his great reform.

In Hezekiah's regnal formula, Kings states that "he rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him" (2 Kgs 18:7). Because Hezekiah trusted in Yahweh, he rebelled against the suzerain that his father had served and undid his father's religious policies. As a part of becoming a vassal to Assyria, Ahaz had begun to mimic the religious practices of Assyria (2 Kgs 16:10-15), so Hezekiah's religious reform was the beginning of the political revolt. The Hebrew word for "serve" in 2 Kings 18:7 is '*b.d*. (ב.ד.), which in other contexts can be translated "worship." Hezekiah worships ('*b.d*.) only Yahweh and now we see him refusing to serve ('*b.d*.) the king of another land as the vassal. Borowski notes that the religious reforms and political revolt were closely connected and were mutually caused by the desire to restore the glory of the Davidic Monarchy.²²² His attack on the Philistines (2 Kgs 18:8) was likely also a part of his revolt against Assyria. Philistia was on the coastal plains, which was crucial to the Assyrian control of the region.²²³ Scholars suggest two reasons that Hezekiah attacked the Philistines: it opened a clear pathway for communication with Egypt,²²⁴ and it consolidated whatever resistance was around against Assyria.²²⁵

Assyria responded to Hezekiah's rebellion. After deporting the Northern Kingdom (2 Kgs 18:10-12), Sennacherib launched a very harsh campaign against Judah and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:13). This campaign of Sennacherib is recorded in his annals, which state that he captured forty-six fortified cities.²²⁶ After the conquest of Judah, Hezekiah offered Sennacherib a tribute (2 Kgs 18:14-16), but Sennacherib continued to ravage Judah. Sweeney notes that he was not satisfied with simply a tribute but threatened deportation (2 Kgs 18:19-25).²²⁷ Hezekiah cried out to Yahweh for help, and Isaiah promised that Yahweh would respond (2 Kgs 19:1-7). According to the narrative in the Bible, an angel of Yahweh struck down 185,000 men in one night and Sennacherib retreated (2 Kgs 19:35-37). According to the Assyrian records, Sennacherib trapped Hezekiah in a siege, "like a bird in a cage;" and then he exacted a heavy tribute from Hezekiah and went home.²²⁸ A few scholars suggest an attack from Babylon to be the reason for the hasty return to Assyria.²²⁹

Jedidah

The final mother we are studying in this section is Jedidah, the mother of Josiah, who is arguably the greatest king of the Southern Kingdom.

222 Oded Borowski, "Hezekiah's Reforms and the Revolt against Assyria," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58, no. 3 (1995): 153; Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 251; Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 218–219.

223 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 410.

224 Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 253.

225 Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 221.

226 James B. Pritchard, ed., "Sennacherib (704-681): The Siege of Jerusalem," in *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (United States of America: Princeton University Press, 1958), 200; Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 413; Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 363.

227 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 412.

228 Pritchard, "Sennacherib (704-681): The Siege of Jerusalem," 200.

229 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 413; Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 363.

Identity background

Jedidah (*Yēdîdâ*—יְדִידָה) can be translated to “beloved.”²³⁰ According to Hobbs, this is the feminine form of the name given to Solomon by Nathan (2 Sam 12:25).²³¹ If Hobbs is correct, this suggests a Yahwistic etymology for Jedidah.

Furthermore, Jedidah’s patronym suggests Judahite and Yahwistic origins. Her father is identified as “Adaiah of Bozkath” (2 Kgs 22:2). Adaiah (‘*ādāyâ*—עֲדַיָּה) is a Yahwistic name that comes from the root ‘*d.h.* (ד.ה.), which means “to deck or to ornament.”²³² Thus, the literal translation would be rendered “Yahweh ornaments” or “Yahweh has decked himself.” However, this root also at times has to do with adorning oneself with majesty, so the implication is it refers to Yahweh’s majesty.²³³ Regardless, it is a Yahwistic name, and this honors Yahweh in some fashion. Jedidah’s father’s town of origin, Bozkath, is a town in the Judaeen region of the “Shephelah” between Lachish and Eglon.²³⁴

The fact that Jedidah originates from the Shephelah is interesting considering that Josiah is one of three kings whose reigns were influenced by the ‘*am-hā’āreš* (עַם הָאֶרֶץ—“the people of the land”) (2 Kgs 21:24).²³⁵ The only two kings who were placed on the throne by the ‘*am-hā’āreš* had mothers from the Shephelah. Several scholars have suggested that the term ‘*am-hā’āreš* was used to distinguish between the residents of Jerusalem and the rest of the people of Judah.²³⁶ A few others have suggested that this group was a social class unto themselves.²³⁷ Regardless, whenever this group of people appeared in the Hebrew Bible, they represented the devout, orthodox Yahwists who supported the Davidic Monarchy.²³⁸ Though Josiah’s connection to this group of people was likely through Jedidah from the Shephelah,²³⁹ the important concept to gather from this is that the most devout people of the land supported Josiah, which shows Yahwistic origins for Jedidah and support for Josiah.

Religious nature of Josiah’s name

Josiah also has a Yahwistic name—*Yō’sīyāhû* (יְאֹשִׁיָּאֵהוּ). The etymology of this name comes from the root ‘*š.h.* (ש.ח.), meaning “to support,” and the theophoric element for Yahweh.²⁴⁰ On the end of his name, there is a *šûreq*, which functions as the masculine

singular direct object marker. Taken together, his name can be translated “Yahweh supports him.” This implies that Yahweh is Josiah’s sustainer and supporter as, is apparent throughout his reign.

Josiah’s reform and evaluation

Josiah’s reform was the broadest and most thoroughgoing revival that occurred in the Deuteronomistic History. Most other kings have a few verses dedicated to the actions taken during their reform, but Josiah has twenty verses dedicated to the vast nature of his reforms (2 Kgs 23:1-20). In the Deuteronomistic History, the narrative begins by noting Josiah’s decision to repair the Temple in which his officials discover the Book of the Law (2 Kgs 22:8). The Book of the Law is read before the king and subsequently, Josiah repents of the sins of his nation and begins to reform it (2 Kgs 22:6-13). Based on the reforms undertaken and their similarity with the instructions in Deuteronomy, it is widely accepted that this “Book of the Law” was an early form of Deuteronomy.²⁴¹ Some suggest that the book was originally written during the time of Josiah as a justification of his reforms.²⁴² Cogan and Tadmor note that the repairing of the Temple is reminiscent of Jehoash, except that it was instigated by Jehoiada, a zealous priest.²⁴³ Josiah’s reform is further validated by the identity of his scribe, Shaphan. Shaphan was a member of a family of scribes who were extremely devoted to Yahweh, and he had sons and grandsons who also followed Yahweh (2 Kgs 22; 2 Chr 34; Jer 26:24; 29:3; 36; 40).²⁴⁴ The Shaphan family was also influential in the ministry of Jeremiah, even when the rest of Israel was against him (Jer 26:24; 29:3; 36; 40).²⁴⁵ Dearman even suggests that some members of the Shaphan scribal family may have been among the Deuteronomistic editors.²⁴⁶

Josiah’s reform was unique and more vigorous than other reforms for many reasons. First, his reform was not limited to Jerusalem or Judah but stretched into the Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs 23:15-20). He dealt with corruption in the temple and the idolatrous practices associated with temple worship (2 Kgs 23:4-8), he removed high places from all over Judah (2 Kgs 23:9-14), and he rid the land of corrupt priests (2 Kgs 23:5,8,20). He also sacrificed the priests at the shrine of Bethel upon the altar in order to defile it as prophesied to Jeroboam by the nameless prophet (1 Kgs 13; 2 Kgs 23:20). Also, Josiah tore down cultic images, as other kings had (2 Kgs 23:5,7,10,15), but Josiah went a step further by pulverizing them and grinding them to dust (2 Kgs 23:6,12,15). He also took the dust and spread them over graves to further deface the images.²⁴⁷

230 Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 323; Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 392.

231 Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 323.

232 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 725–726.

233 Ibid., 725.

234 Wade R. Kotter, “Bozkath,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 281; Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 323. Translators have different understandings for what “Shephelah” means in Hebrew. It connotes lowness, which can refer to its geographical topology or possibly a derogatory slur used by those in Jerusalem who looked down upon the inhabitants of the region. Harold Brodsky, “Shephelah,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

235 The other two kings were Josiah’s son, Jehoahaz, and Joash, the other boy king who revolted against Athaliah.

236 Joseph P. Healey, “Am Ha’arez,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 169; Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 443.

237 Healey, “Am Ha’arez,” 169.

238 Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 311; Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 129.

239 Fritz, *I & 2 Kings*, 395.

240 Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 78.

241 Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 325; Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 444; Jones, *I and 2 Kings*, 1:611; Fritz, *I & 2 Kings*, 398; Bruggemann, *I & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, 545.

242 Nadav Na’aman, “The ‘Discovered Book’ and the Legitimation of Josiah’s Reform,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 1 (2011): 47–62.

243 Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 290.

244 J. Andrew Dearman, “My Servants the Scribes : Composition and Context in Jeremiah 36,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, no. 3 (1990): 410.

245 There seems to be a semi-large influence that this family had with on of Shaphan’s descendants becoming the governor of Judah after the Fall of Jerusalem. Lipschits suggests that they do not have a pro-Babylonian tendency as some have suggested, but rather the politically moderate view of submission to whatever authorities Yahweh has put in place. This idea would lend to the devotion of this family to Yahweh in all their affairs, which casts Josiah in a positive light. If these people that help to lead his reform followed Yahweh devotedly for generations, it helps to emphasize the righteous nature of Josiah’s reform. Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Eisenbrauns, 2005).

246 Dearman, “My Servants the Scribes : Composition and Context in Jeremiah 36,” 419.

247 Hobbs noted that by spreading the dust on the grave, it implied that these idols were unclean and belonged with dead things. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 333.

Josiah defiled high places that were built during the time of Solomon to gods such as Milcom, Chemosh, or Asherah, which implies that these high places had never been completely destroyed since the time that Solomon built his empire several hundred years earlier (2 Kgs 23:13). Thus, Josiah is portrayed as the model king who cleaned up the sins left over from Manasseh, Ahaz, and Solomon. In some ways Josiah is seen as attempting to restore the covenant as it was in the time of Moses or Joshua.²⁴⁸ Sweeney suggests that Solomon was portrayed as the “royal antitype” or the “model of royal misbehavior,” whereas Josiah is portrayed as the perfect model for the Deuteronomistic kingship.²⁴⁹ The intensity of Josiah’s reform is evidenced by the verbs used to describe his actions.²⁵⁰

Josiah also leads the people in a Passover celebration (2 Kgs 23:21-23). Josiah is the only king to celebrate Passover in the Deuteronomistic History; in fact, the only leader to celebrate Passover was Joshua.²⁵¹ The Deuteronomist claims that this Passover celebration was unlike any since the time of Joshua because the participants partook in Passover “as it is written in the Book of the Covenant” (2 Kgs 23:21-22). Jones notes that this could mean that Josiah changed what used to be a family dinner or feast into a communal feast and a pilgrimage to a central shrine.²⁵² Since he is the only king to celebrate Passover in the Deuteronomistic History, Josiah is portrayed as the model leader according to the theology of the Deuteronomist.²⁵³

The story of Josiah in Chronicles differs in some important respects from that in Kings. Firstly, it rearranges the order of his reforms. Though Kings has Josiah finding the “Book of the Law” while restoring the Temple before his revival movement, Chronicles has Josiah reforming the cult before the book of the Law is discovered (2 Chr 34). Dillard suggests that this could be a theological insertion since a good king, such as Josiah, would have started his reforms before his 18th year; however, he cautions not to assume that Josiah’s early piety was fabricated.²⁵⁴ Secondly, Chronicles has the reforms of Josiah reach even farther north into the regions of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and Naphtali (2 Chr 34:6). Hobbs suggests that this is an anachronistic insertion because these tribal territories were dissolved by the time Josiah began to reign.²⁵⁵ Other than the slightly adjusted chronology and geological spread of Josiah’s reforms, the Chronicles narrative is very similar to the Kings narrative in substance.

248 Sweeney, “The Critique of Solomon in the Josianic Edition of the Deuteronomistic History.”

249 Ibid., 622.

250 Of the seventeen different verbs used to describe the actions Josiah took only four of the verbs were used in the *qal* stem. Six of the verbs were used in the *piel* stem, and seven were in the *hiphil* stem. Though the verbs in the *qal* stem were used multiple times, over two thirds of the occurrences of any verb in this text is in the *piel* or *hiphil* stem. This helps the reader to fully understand the idea that Josiah is very zealously acting upon his convictions – both being emphasized as active cause of his reforms (*hiphil*), but also the intensity of the reforms being highlighted (*piel*). The Deuteronomist helped to portray these things through the verb stem choice.

251 Sweeney, *The Old Testament Library: I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 450.

252 Jones, *I and 2 Kings*, 2:626.

253 In his article, Nelson details the strong comparison of Josiah to Joshua in the Deuteronomistic History. He notes that there are certain things (such as celebrating Passover) that only both of these two heroes do. He notes that they both almost flawlessly fulfill what is expected of Israel’s leaders to do according to Deuteronomistic Theology. Not only do these similarities portray both Josiah and Joshua in a positive light, but it shows the literary process of the Deuteronomistic editors who bookend the Deuteronomistic History with two Deuteronomistic leaders. Richard D. Nelson, “Josiah in the Book of Joshua,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100, no. 4 (1981): 531–540.

254 Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, 277.

255 Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 333.

Due to his thorough reform, Josiah received unqualified praise for his reign. In fact, he received the best evaluation given to any king of the Southern Kingdom. His evaluation from his regnal formula states, “And he did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left” (2 Kgs 22:2). He is portrayed as another David, and he followed Yahweh without turning off the proper path one way or the other. At the end of his reign, his greatness is again confirmed by the statement, “Before him there was no king like him, who turned to Yahweh with all his heart and with all of his soul and with all of his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him” (2 Kgs 23:25). Nowhere else in the entire Hebrew Bible is someone described as following Yahweh, “with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might,” as Josiah is.²⁵⁶ This recalls the command given to Israel in Deuteronomy 6:5. The command is for all Israel, but only Josiah succeeds in following it. Josiah is portrayed as having a radical trust and dependence on Yahweh, unlike anyone else in the Deuteronomistic History.

The political ramifications of Josiah’s reign

The political ramifications of Josiah’s reign are all implicit, as the text does not detail a political rebellion as it does in Hezekiah’s story. Perhaps the largest ramification of Josiah’s reign is the attempted reunification and restoration of the people of Israel. Josiah’s reforms rose into the Northern Kingdom’s territory in his cleansing of the Bethel shrine, and Chronicles has him going even higher into the Northern Kingdom. Thus, he was attempting to reunite Israel under the monotheistic Yahwism. Josiah attempted to reinstate the old Davidic Kingdom—in breadth and in religious devotion to Yahweh. Brueggemann calls this idea “Greater Israel,” and he claims that scholars commonly believe that Josiah regained some of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the attempt to reunify Israel.²⁵⁷ This was made possible by the weakness of the Assyrians, who had retreated back to their country by the time Josiah began to reign.²⁵⁸ This is especially interesting with his connection to the *‘am-hā’āreš* who were trying to preserve the Davidic Monarchy.

The other major political ramification is the battle with Pharaoh Neco, where Josiah dies. In Chronicles, it is seen that Neco is not marching against Judah, but rather through Judah in aid of another one of its allies (2 Chr 35:21). Likely, Neco was marching in aid of his old ally, Assyria, which was struggling against Babylon, and Josiah, wishing to remain free from Assyrian rule, decided to intervene in opposition to Assyria.²⁵⁹ Again, it seems that political rebellion against the major powers in the region accompanies the most robust religious reforms, and in this case, Josiah is no exception.

Conclusion

Overall, we see the continuing of the trend that we expected to see. Hezekiah is a king with a Yahwistic background and a mother who had a Yahwistic pedigree. He had a Yahwistic name and was a great king, who enacted both religious and political reforms in support of Yahweh. To top everything off, he eventually received a highly positive

256 Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 290; Mark D. Wessner, “No One like Josiah: Covenant Faithfulness and Leadership,” *Direction* 47, no. 2 (2018): 233.

257 Brueggemann, *I & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, 556.

258 Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 293.

259 Brueggemann, *I & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, 560.

evaluation. We see the same trend in Josiah, a mother with Judaeen origins and connections to “the people of the land.” Josiah is given a Yahwistic name, and he was a great king who enacted the most extensive religious reform recorded in the monarchical period. Josiah also took political action in support of Yahwistic agendas. So, we also see the positive religious effect of Yahwistic mothers upon the reigns of their sons.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the queen mother had a religious impact upon her son and his reign. This fact is implied in the word *gēbîrâ*, which due to its root, *g.b.r.*, connotes a woman with great strength, power, or position. The idea of the prominent role of the queen mother of Judah is also supported by the many different women in the ancient Near East, who displayed substantial authority as queen mothers. Queen mothers also had a religious influence upon their children as shown by recent findings about household religion in Israel. This research suggests that mothers in Judah had a cultic role within family religion and carried the primary responsibility for the religious training of their children. Therefore, queen mothers would have also played similar roles within the royal family and with the training of her children.

It is further noted that the pagan queen mothers of Judah had a devastating impact on the religious atmosphere of Judah. Her impact upon her son’s reign seems to be rooted in two causes. Firstly, as many scholars have postulated, the queen mother played a prominent role within the governing of the kingdom. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because she was in charge of religious training of her son, she influenced his religious leanings. The pagan name of the apostate kings underscores the negative religious influence their mothers had upon them and the trends that developed during their reign. Additionally, the religious values instilled in the king also affected his political decisions, which had a harmful impact on the community. Often, a great reformer, such as Josiah or Hezekiah, attempted to unify the people under Davidic kingship and revolted against the dominant nation because Yahweh was their true sovereign. Conversely, pagan kings, such as Solomon, Rehoboam, or Abijam, abused the people of Israel and submitted themselves as a vassal to other nations. Under pagan kings, the community suffered, whereas under righteous kings, the community was blessed. For example, Solomon abused his people, and was portrayed as a second Pharaoh. When continued into the reign of his son, Solomon’s harsh policies led to the division of the United Kingdom of Israel. The abuse of the people appears in kings who are raised by pagan mothers. It seems that the kings, being raised by foreign women, began to look more and more like their neighbors. The religious practices developed under the reigns of pagan kings, ultimately led to the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and Exile.

The results of this study have vast implications on reading the biblical narrative. God prohibited intermarriage between the Israelites and the Canaanites because foreign women would lead the Israelites astray. When kings married foreign women, the kings, and by extension the entire nation, were unfaithful to Yahweh. This also emphasizes the

importance of religious upbringing for children. The *šēmā’* instructs religious devotion to Yahweh should be a part of everyday life for the Israelites. When this training was not executed with precision, both the kings and the people followed after pagan gods.

This study also brings up several questions for further research. To start, there is a need for each of the other mothers of Judah to be analyzed systematically for the religious impact they had upon their sons. Other questions have also been raised by this study. Firstly, why did the children of a faithful leader, like Samuel, have sons who did not follow Yahweh? Secondly, why is it that David, the man after God’s own heart, engaged in relationships with foreign woman when this was strictly forbidden in the Torah? This study noted that all three of the kings analyzed were influenced by relationships with foreign women that David initiated. First, he married Bathsheba, the Canaanite, who later negatively influenced Solomon to turn away from Yahweh. Second, he likely arranged the marriage of Solomon to Naamah, the Ammonite, who exerted a pagan influence on Rehoboam. Finally, he married Maacah, the Geshurite, who influenced her son Absalom, the son, who revolted against David and against Yahweh. Later, Abijam was also influenced negatively by his mother, Maacah, a descendent of the relationship between David and Maacah. Since the Deuteronomistic History is so negative toward marriage to foreign women, why do the editors not condemn David for his relationships to these women? Does it suggest pro-Davidic redactors of the Deuteronomistic History, or that foreign marriages were not taboo in David’s time, or is there another more compelling reason? This anomaly could be the subject of further research.

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