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Angaben zur Veröffentlichung / Publication details:

Gaß, Erasmus. 2018. "The bloodguilt of Jezreel (Hos 1:4) and the Tel Dan Inscription." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 49: 139–63.

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The bloodguilt of Jezreel (Hos 1:4) and the Tel Dan Inscription

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The important Tel Dan Inscription and its three fragments have prompted an enormous amount of scholarly literature in the last 25 years since the discovery of this inscription during regular excavations at *Tell el-Qādī* (2112.2948).²

The body of literature on this topic might be due to the obvious differences of the account of the deaths of Ahaziah and Jehoram in the inscription's *editio princeps* to the biblical picture of this event. According to the biblical description, Jehu alone is responsible for the assassination of his predecessor Jehoram of Israel: "*Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot Jehoram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart; and he sank in his chariot*" (2 Kgs 9:24). Although it is not explicitly stated in the text, Jehoram most probably died after this deadly blow. The usurper Jehu killed his predecessor, and then organized the death of Ahaziah, king of Judah, as his men shot down Jehoram's Judean counterpart. Thus, he was indirectly responsible for the killing of YHWH's anointed. In contrast with the first assassination, the biblical text stresses that Ahaziah died after being shot: "*When King Ahaziah of Judah saw this, he fled in the direction of Beth-haggan. Jehu pursued him, saying, 'Shoot him also!' And they shot him in the chariot at the ascent to Gur, which is by Ibleam. Then he fled to Megiddo, and died there*" (2 Kgs 9:27).

The death of Jehoram of Israel happened near Jezreel and this violent *coup d'état* imposed a bloodguilt upon the house of Jehu that remained in place even a century later when the prophet Hosea writes: "*And YHWH said to him, 'Name him Jezreel; for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.*" (Hos 1:4).³ It is clear that the usurper Jehu was responsible for the bloodguilt of Jezreel. Therefore, Jehu's family had to atone for the events at Jezreel, although the actual deed committed at Jezreel was not specified further.

First, the supposed contradictions between the biblical text and the Tel Dan Inscription should be re-examined. As it will become apparent, both versions need

¹ Many thanks to Matthew Suriano for his valuable comments and to Chris McKinny for improving my English.

² The following discussion of problems is only possible if fragments A and B₁+B₂ are reconstructed as one inscription. This was doubted already by Cryer 1995, 223–234; Thompson 1995, 238f.; Becking 1996, 21–24; Becking 1999, 200f. See also Demsky 1995, 35: "the publisher's attempt to make a join between these and the large Fragment A found in 1993 seems to me forced." However, Becking 2003, 19 changed his mind and now supposes that the fragments belong to one text.

³ For syntax and semantics of this difficult prophecy see Gaß 2011, 42–56.

not be contradictory. Second, I will argue that the original Jehu narrative in 2 Kings 8–10 was not in favour of the usurper. Thus, the positive evaluation of Jehu's revolt was a later theological construction of the Jehuides and cannot be used as a historical core. Third, the violence Jehu committed at Jezreel should be evaluated because this was the basis for the accusations made by the prophet Hosea. Whereas in the biblical account the *coup d'état* is described as the total annihilation of the reigning dynasties of Israel and Judah, this picture might be an exaggeration of the actual events, since only a fractional amount of the slaughter could be located at Jezreel.

I.

Contrary to the biblical description, the author of the Tel Dan Inscription – most probably an Aramean king – claims that he himself killed Jehoram, the king of Israel, and Ahaziah, the king of Beth-David – at least according to the *editio principis* of the Tel Dan Inscription and most subsequent studies (even KAI 310).⁴ The common reading of the respective lines is as follows:

7 [I killed Jeho]ram son of [Ahab]
 8 king of Israel, and I killed [Ahaz]iah son of [Jehoram kin]g
 9 of the House of David.

This extra-biblical description of Ahaziah's and Jehoram's death has baffled many interpreters because it contradicts the biblical story. Furthermore, it opens anew the discussion about the bible as a reliable historical source. According to the Tel Dan Inscription, it is not Jehu – as in the biblical account – but an unnamed Aramean king who killed both kings.⁵ Different solutions have been proposed so far:

1) The author was Jehu⁶

If Jehu was indeed the unnamed author of the Tel Dan Inscription, there is no tension to the biblical portrayal. However, this hypothesis requires further speculation. Jehu would have been an Aramean vassal, and this yet might have been the case. But he must have been a devotee to Hadad at the time of his *coup d'état* which would contradict the biblical picture of Jehu as a devotee of YHWH. The divine name Hadad is listed on Fragment A (l. 5) and B₁ (l. 4) whereas YHWH is missing altogether on all fragments. Thus, this interpretation creates new problems.

⁴ The names of both kings are only fragmentarily preserved. Such a reconstruction is indeed possible, see already e.g., Margalit 1994, 317; Biran/Naveh 1995, 9–11; Schniedewind 1996, 87 n. 14; Kottsieper 1998, 482f.; Miller/Hayes 2006, 324. According to Dion 1999, 151f. only the reading Jehoram is certain whereas the second name could also be Jehu, son of Nimshi. However, see the critical remarks raised by Younger 2005, 253; Younger 2016, 609. The name Jehu is always spelled with ' contrary to the reading *yhw* on the Tel Dan Inscription. This is right even for the Assyrian spelling of Jehu as "*Ia-ú-a*. For content-related problems with a restoration as Jehu see especially Couturier 2001, 73 n. 2.

⁵ A most fanciful reconstruction, which is not to be taken seriously, offered by Knauf 2000, 60–67.

⁶ Wesselius 1999, 184f.; Wesselius 2001, 103. But see the appropriate objections raised by Becking 1999, 189–200; Hasegawa 2011, 7.

- 2) The author was Hazael – the assassination was by Jehu as an Aramean vassal⁷ According to this proposal, Jehu assassinated the kings of Israel and Judah as an Aramean vassal. Since he did not kill both kings on his own initiative, but in compliance with his overlord Hazael, the king of Damascus could have claimed responsibility in the royal inscription of Dan.⁸ There are indeed some indications for the possibility of an Israel-Aram coalition. In the battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE, troops of Israel and Aram fought effectively side by side against Shalmaneser III.⁹ However, the anti-Assyrian coalition collapsed after the successful revolt of Hazael around 845–841 BCE.¹⁰ It seems that Jehoram did not feel connected to his Aramean partners after Hazael's usurpation.¹¹ It is possible that Hazael himself began an aggressive policy against his neighbours. According to 2 Kgs 9:14, Jehoram had to defend Ramoth-gilead against the Arameans.¹² Thus, Jehu could have tried to establish a new coalition with Hazael as a vassal and not as an equal associate. Furthermore, the Aramean usurper Hazael was also anointed in a manner similar to Jehu according to 1 Kgs 19:15–18.¹³ Jehu and Hazael are set in parallel in the biblical text so that there might have been a connection between both rulers.

A good parallel for describing deeds of others for oneself could be found in the annals of Ashurbanipal.¹⁴ In prism B 'Ammuladīn, the Arab king of

⁷ Schniedewind 1996, 82–86; Axskjöld 1998, 153–155; Kottsieper 1998, 489; Dion 1999, 153; Otto 2001, 250 n. 16; Liverani 2005, 114; Kottsieper 2007, 125f.; Niehr 2011, 347; Aster 2012, 42; Robker 2012, 273; Berlejung 2013, 76f.; Sauerwein 2014, 93; Oswald/Tilly 2016, 38; Reinhold 2016, 121; Schipper 2018, 41. See already Biran/Naveh 1995, 18. For the problems of Aramean vassality see Na'aman 2007, 404; Frevel 2008, 650f.; Bolen 2013, 54–57; Sergi 2017, 93; Peetz 2018, 116; Frevel 2019, 315. See also Dietrich 2001, 116 n. 5: "entweder versäumt es die Bibel, Jehu als Befehlsempfänger Hasaëls zu deklarieren, oder Hasaël rückt sich auf Kosten Jehus übermäßig in den Vordergrund."

⁸ Dion 1999, 151–154 thinks that the second royal name has to be read "Jehu". Therefore, Jehoram was wounded by Hazael and murdered by Jehu, however with the compliance of Hazael. But see the problem of this reconstruction mentioned above in n. 4. According to Schneider 1995, 33.80; Schneider 1996, 107; Schniedewind 1996, 83, Jehu was also part of the Omride dynasty since Jehu is related to the "House of Omri" in Assyrian inscriptions and the Assyrians have realized changing dynasties in other cases. His association with the royal dynasty and the extirpation only of the house of Ahab, and not of Omri, speaks for his being of Omride stock. But see the objections raised by Na'aman 1998, 237; Yamada 2000, 193 n. 402; Miller/Hayes 2006, 331.

⁹ Contrary to Gugler 1996, 71–76, who doubts the equation of *Ahabbu Sir'ilā'a* with Ahab of Israel and suggests instead a North Syrian ruler.

¹⁰ Kuan 1995, 56f.; Kottsieper 1998, 494; Miller/Hayes 2006, 329. According to Irvine 2005, 344, Aram and Israel were allies only until the end of the kingship of Ahab.

¹¹ Yamada 1995, 618. Similarly, Sergi 2017, 91 thinks that Jehoram switched sides and became an Assyrian vassal.

¹² Pitard 1987, 146.

¹³ See the similar scenes in 2 Kgs 8:7–15 and 9:1–13, for discussion see Schniedewind 1996, 83.

¹⁴ This is a better parallel than the much cited reference to the people of *Balih* killing their ruler Giammu who revolted against Assur. Schniedewind 1996, 84; Halpern 1996, 47 n. 10 argue that Shalmaneser III. also claimed to have killed the vassal. However, in all versions it is said that the people have killed their ruler himself (*iduku* or *idūkū*, not *adūk*) and that

Qedar, was defeated by *Kamāš̥ḥaltā*, the Moabite vassal. It is possible that Assyrian troops based in Moab were commanded by *Kamāš̥ḥaltā*. Afterwards, the vanquished *Ammuladīn* was brought to Nineveh to his political overlord.¹⁵ In contrast to prism B, the more recent prism A attributed the defeat of *Ammuladīn* to the Assyrian king himself.¹⁶ The fact that it was the Moabite king who actually defeated the rebel was obviously suppressed in the Assyrian royal inscription. It seems to be common practice that any successes by a vassal could or possibly should be attributed to the overlord. In that respect, Jehu could have been the henchman of Hazael. Jehu's triumph could be cast as Hazael's triumph in the Tel Dan Inscription as in the case of the Assyrians.

However, there is no real indication of an alliance between Jehu and the Arameans.¹⁷ On the contrary, since there seemed to be further conflicts between Israel and Aram according to fragment A “siege upon” (l. 13’),¹⁸ the alleged coalition between Jehu and Hazael cannot have held for any length of time. Therefore, it is more probable that Jehu was an Assyrian vassal instead, and that he abandoned the former anti-Assyrian policy of the Omrides. Significantly, the Assyrians considered Jehu a legitimate successor to the throne of *Bīt-Humri*. Although not kin to the Omrides, Jehu was called a *mār Ḫumri* “son of (*Bīt*-)*Humri*”. Jehu could have taken advantage of Assyrian pressure on Aram to free himself from Aramean dependency.¹⁹ With the help of the Assyrians, Jehu tried to free Israel from Aramean pressure and subjection.

Shalmaneser entered the city *Til-ša-Turāhi* afterwards, see *Wesselius* 2001, 101; *Younger* 2005, 255f.; *Na'aman* 2006, 160–162; *Younger* 2016, 610–612.

¹⁵ *Borger* 1996, 115f.244; *Gaß* 2009, 132–134. For this parallel, see already *Knauf* 2000, 59 n. 4.

¹⁶ Col. VIII:15–29. *Lamprichs* 1995, 177 supposes that the Assyrian army took part in the suppression of the revolt, but the military action was commanded by the Moabite ruler: „Eine direkte Intervention des assyrischen Herrschers war nicht notwendig. Dieser Teilkonflikt konnte demnach auf regionaler Ebene gelöst werden“ (*ibid.* 177 n. 15). See also the so called “Gottesbrief” Col. II:34–44, *Borger* 1996, 78.

¹⁷ *Becking* 1999, 195f.; *Na'aman* 2006, 162; *Frevel* 2008, 650f.; *Frevel* 2018, 248; *Frevel* 2019, 315.

¹⁸ See also *Kottsieper* 1998, 491f. This is also reflected in the biblical traditions of the rule of the early Jehuides, see 2 Kgs 13–14.

¹⁹ *Galil* 2001, 17f. According to *Na'aman* 1998, 237f., Jehu was an Assyrian vassal, thus breaking through the former anti-Assyrian policy of his predecessors Ahab and Jehoram. The Assyrian description of Jehu as *mār Ḫumri* [“son of (*Bīt*-)*Humri*”] indicates that Jehu was the legitimate ruler of the kingship of *Bīt Ḫumri*. Thus, Jehu was the legitimate heir on the throne of the Omrides notwithstanding his revolt. *Na'aman* 2005, 9 n. 15 notes that Assur called political entities after the dynasty ruling there at the time of their first contact. Accordingly, Israel was Beth-Omri for the Assyrians. The similar term Beth-David has to be regarded as toponym for Jerusalem and its surroundings according to *Robker* 2012, 262; *Alanne* 2017, 113f.; *Peetz* 2018, 82. Similarly, *Kelle* 2002, 645 thinks that the toponyms Israel and Beth-David used by the Tel Dan Inscription are local terms for the Northern and Southern kingdom. In contrast, *Reinhold* 2016, 114–116 still adheres to the common view that Beth-David refers to the dynasty of David.

Furthermore, the well-documented pro-Assyrian policy of Jehu²⁰ cannot be reconciled with his status as an Aramean vassal (if this was ever the case).²¹ The interpretation that Jehu has soon changed sides after the successful revolt which led to an furious attack on Israel by Hazael,²² is just a harmonising attempt to reconcile contradicting sources.

- 3) The author was Hazael – the text is historically inaccurate royal propaganda²³
According to this view, Hazael's claim that he killed the kings of Israel and Judah is historically incorrect. The Tel Dan Inscription is simply pro-Aramean royal propaganda while the biblical text is closer to the actual events,²⁴ claiming that Jehoram and Ahaziah were killed by Jehu. Moreover, the Tel Dan Inscription was written by Hazael after the subjugation of Israel and Judah.
- 4) The author was Hazael – the assassination was by Hazael²⁵
The biblical text is not a uniform text but has multiple layers. A diachronic treatment makes it possible to detect a Judean chronicle in 2 Kgs 8:28; 9:27bβ–28a: “*He (= Ahaziah) went with Jehoram son of Ahab to wage war against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-Gilead, where the Arameans struck Jehoram ... Then he (= Ahaziah) fled to Megiddo, and died there. His officers carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem.*” This Judean chronicle suggests that Jehoram's death occurred on the battlefield of Ramoth-gilead and that Ahaziah's escape to Megiddo caused the death of the king of Judah.²⁶ If this is so, there is no contradiction between the biblical and the extra-biblical versions of events. This would indicate that Hazael alone – not Jehu – was responsible for the death of both kings. Afterwards Jehu killed all other possible pretenders to the throne in his struggle for power,²⁷ before he was subjugated by the Assyrians. Only after the withdrawal of the Assyrians could Hazael raid Israel once again. Hazael then captured the town of Dan, erected a stele there, and made Israel an Aramean vassal.

Accordingly, the Tel Dan Inscription has the priority in historical reconstruction since the biblical text originated at a later time and does not present the actual events properly. It is the Tel Dan Inscription that is closer to the events and more reliable, while the later biblical texts embellish the story. The prophetic tradition behind the biblical version condemned the dynasty of

²⁰ Kuan 1995, 57–60; Schneider 1995, 31; Na'aman 2000, 102; Frevel 2008, 651. Jehu could have garnered Assyrian support by killing his anti-Assyrian predecessor and by paying tribute as well, see Smith 2001, 119f.

²¹ It was only after Assur withdrew from the west that the Arameans were able to expand southwards see Pitard 1987, 151; Kuan 1995, 210; Na'aman 2006, 162.

²² Stith 2008, 114f.

²³ Lemaire, 1998, 10f.

²⁴ Lemaire, 1998, 10: “probably close to the event”. But see the critical remarks of Irvine 2001, 114.

²⁵ Na'aman 2000, 100–104; Irvine 2001, 115f.; Berlejung 2010, 107; Hasegawa 2011, 11f.; Hasegawa 2012, 45; Knapp 2014, 115.

²⁶ For this option see Na'aman 2006, 163f., similarly see already Lipiński 2000, 380.

²⁷ Na'aman 2000, 104; Na'aman 2006, 164; Na'aman 2007, 404f., similarly also Sergi 2016, 508. Maybe l. 12 of fragment A reports the rule of Jehu over Israel: *lk 'l YŚ*, see Lipiński 2000, 380.

Omri and replaced Ahab and his line with a king appointed by YHWH. Since Jehu fulfilled the ban on the house of Ahab, he had to kill kings Jehoram and Ahaziah on theological grounds, although this was actually not the case. Thus, the biblical text should not be read as a historical text. However, if one accepts such a literary and historical reconstruction, the bloodguilt of Jezreel mentioned in Hos 1:4 has no reference point since Jehu and his house are not responsible for the bloodshed in Jezreel, regardless of the biblical description.

5) The author was Hazael – defeat by Hazael²⁸

The verb *QTL* used in the Tel Dan Inscription needs not to be translated with “*to kill*”. The translation “*to defeat*” might also be possible. It seems to be quite an exaggeration in l. 6 when Hazael boasts about his killing “70 kings”. Furthermore the verb *QTL* might be used like the Akkadian verb *dāku* that has the double meaning “*to defeat*” and “*to kill*”.²⁹ In late Aramaic, the verb *QTL* has the meaning “*to defeat*” that could be probably applied to the early Aramaic as well.³⁰ Thus, a typological interpretation of l. 6 in the sense of totality or abundance (“*killing 70 kings*”) is not necessary since Hazael refers only to the “*defeat*” of 70 kings.³¹ If the meaning “*to defeat*” is the accurate interpretation of *QTL* in the Tel Dan Inscription, Hazael would only have boasted about his defeat of Jehoram and Ahaziah. Following the suppression of Israel and Judah, Jehu would have exploited both the withdrawal of Hazael and the battlefield injury of Jehoram for his successful revolt.³²

However, the usual meaning of *QTL* is “*to kill*” which is broadly attested in the sources. Thus, it is not clear at all why one should suppose another meaning here.³³ Moreover, the killing of 70 people is a fixed *topos* for describing bloody revolts. It is a debatable point whether “*defeating*” 70 people really works in these texts. However, in Old Aramaic syntax the numeral has to precede the noun. Therefore, the interpretation “70 kings” of the fragmented text has to be abandoned.³⁴ Thus, a reading *tqpn* “mighty, powerful” is preferable.³⁵

In conclusion, the *editio princeps* allows for different historical reconstructions. The apparent contradictions of the biblical account have been solved mostly by the priority of either the biblical (3) or the extra-biblical account (4) or by Israel’s vassal status (2) at the time of Jehu, or by an ambiguous semantic range of *QTL*.

²⁸ For this option see Yamada 1995, 619f.; Yamada 2000, 318f.; Rainey/Notley 2006, 212f.

²⁹ See CAD-D 41; AHw 152. At least the Behistun-Inscription frequently renders *QTL* with a form of *dāku*. But see the objections of Hasegawa 2011, 8f. The Aramaic variable *QTL* instead of *QL* is used here. Such a dissimilation is common in Early Aramaic, see Hagelia 2006, 180 n. 44.

³⁰ Yamada 1995, 620.

³¹ Yamada 1995, 619 rejects a typological interpretation of “70 kings” in the sense of totality or abundance.

³² Yamada 2000, 194.

³³ See the objections raised by Na’aman 2000, 101; Kottsieper 2007, 125 n. 86; Niehr 2011, 347 n. 46. According to Irvine 2001, 115 the usual meaning of *QTL* is “*to kill*”. See also Hagelia 2006, 180: “It refers simply to killing people of royal descent”.

³⁴ Blum 2016, 38.

³⁵ Hasegawa 2012, 42.

(5), or by the attribution of the Tel Dan Inscription to Jehu (1). All solutions are unconvincing since they require further explanation not given in the texts. Moreover, the hitherto proposed reconstructions of the fragmentary Tel Dan Inscription are not beyond doubt as will be seen in the following.

A major problem of the Tel Dan Inscription is the mention of the author's father in 1, 2 and 3 of fragment A.³⁶ Since Hazael was a usurper – he is called *mār lā mammāna* “son of a nobody” in Assyrian inscriptions³⁷ – the reference ‘by’ could not be related to the actual biological father of Hazael.³⁸ Therefore, Bar-Hadad, the son of Hazael, could also be the author of the Tel Dan Inscription. This view creates new problems.

However, the formulation ‘by’ need not necessarily be interpreted genealogically, but metaphorically.³⁹ His predecessor was his patron who had put him into a privileged position beforehand. It is also possible that the author wanted to stress his legitimate claim on the throne of Aram-Damascus since he is called disrespectfully “son of a nobody” in Assyrian sources, a designation that diminishes his real position.⁴⁰ It is unlikely that Hazael was called a “son of a nobody” only for propagandistic reasons since there was the tradition that Hazael was a usurper assassinating his predecessor in 2 Kgs 8,7–15. Therefore, by claiming to have a royal father Hazael could have legitimized his position. All in all, it seems well-founded that Hazael was the author of the Tel Dan Inscription.

All that has been said above is based on the arrangement of the fragments A and B₁/B₂ as suggested by the *editio princeps*. ATHAS, GALIL and others tried to show that this collocation might not be advisable⁴¹ since the reconstructed lines drawn between fragments A and B₁/B₂ seem to be not as straight as would be expected if the proposed collocation would be correct.⁴² Moreover, there seems to be no physical connection between fragments A and B₁/B₂ at first glance. The

³⁶ Schniedewind/Zuckerman 2001, 90f. suppose that the name of Hazael’s father was Baraqel. Maybe Hazael’s usurpation even reflects religious rivalry between groups venerating El or Hadad.

³⁷ Halpern 1996, 64. For this expression see Younger 2005, 246–248. For Hazael being a usurper see also Schniedewind 1996, 87 n. 9; Galil 2007, 79.

³⁸ Sasson 1996, 550–551 holds that Hazael was never accused of killing the king. He is simply *mār lā mammāna* [“son of a nobody”]. One could imagine that the Assyrian annals would have mentioned it if he had killed his predecessor. Similarly, Lipiński 2000, 377, who supposes that Hazael was a son of Adad-idri but not a direct heir to the throne. According to Kottsieper 1998, 484, the formulation that Hadad made him king could underline the fact that Hazael was not the natural heir to the throne.

³⁹ See Kottsieper 1998, 485: his predecessor was “sein Patron, der ihn in eine gehobene Stellung gebracht und unterstützt hatte”. See also Blum 2016, 45; Reinhold 2016, 119.

⁴⁰ The usage of ‘by’ could be motivated due to ideological reasons to legitimize his claim for the kingship in Aram-Damascus, see Sasson 1995, 28. Eph' al-Jaruzelska 2014, 25 indicates that there are parallels that usurpers reference a predecessor as “father”. According to Suriano 2007, 165 it is possible “that Hazael’s father was an important leader of an Aramean tribe during the time of Hadadezer”.

⁴¹ See especially Galil 2001, 16–20; Athas 2003, 255–265; Sasson 2005, 30; Athas 2006, 253; Pardee 2006, 289; Staszak 2009, 68; Beyerle 2009, 65: “Bis auf Weiteres wird man die Fragmente A und B₁/B₂ je für sich interpretieren müssen.” See also the sceptical views of Ehrlich 2001, 63; Fosdal 2009, 92; Ghantous 2013, 37; Alanne 2017, 106.

⁴² But see Weippert 2010, 268: “die Zeilen sind einfach unregelmäßig”.

space between the fragments might be bigger than expected so that the author could have had reported different things about both kings which are now lost. Moreover, it is equally possible that fragments B₁/B₂ have to be read before or after fragment A. Furthermore, the script used on A and B₁/B₂ shows some differences. In addition, the fragments A, B₁ and B₂ were found on different spots during excavations at *Tell el-Qādī*. Finally, the reconstruction of the kings' names is connected to the accurate arrangement of the fragments since only the second part of the name survived on fragment B₂ [YHW]RM br [H'B] and [HZ]YHW br [YHWRM] whereas on fragment A the respective polities are mentioned: mlk YŚR'L and [ml]k BYTDWD.⁴³ Only if the arrangement of the *editio princeps* is correct can one identify the names with those of the kings of Israel and Judah in the 9th century BCE.⁴⁴ If another collocation is preferred, one has only two names – indicated by the patronym br. These names might refer to other people although the name with the theophoric element YHW seems to be a Judean or Israelite king. Different collocations, such as those made by ATHAS, remove any claim that the author has killed the king of Israel and the king of Beth-David. Thus, the contradiction to the biblical texts is removed.

However, all objections against the arrangement of the *editio princeps* could be rejected with good reason. Since the stele was destroyed and its parts reused as building material, the different find spots do not argue against their relationship.⁴⁵ The variance in the script is significant but not decisive since the script of other inscriptions shows similar differences and there are signs differing in shape even on each fragment.⁴⁶ Moreover, the joining of the fragments is beneath the surface of the inscription so that it cannot be immediately observed.⁴⁷ A further problem is the current arrangement of the fragments. Thus, fragment B should be rotated a little bit counterclockwise.⁴⁸ Furthermore, even the lines on fragment A are not entirely straight. First the lines are horizontal and then they bend downwards.⁴⁹ In that respect the lines reconstructed from fragment A to B₁/B₂ need not to be straight anyway. In support of the reconstruction of the *editio princeps* is a crack that runs from the upper left to the lower right.⁵⁰ All in all, the palaeography, the content, the language shared by the fragments, as well as the material on which the inscription is written are in favour of the usual relation of the fragments as

⁴³ For problems with this reconstruction see Younger 2005, 253f.

⁴⁴ Athas 2003, 237–244 reconstructs the second royal name with Amasja ben Joash whereas the first name could be interpreted in many ways since it is not sure whether it is an Israelite or Judean person.

⁴⁵ See Schniedewind 1996, 78: "The archaeological contexts of these finds would a priori suggest that they should be related."

⁴⁶ See Kottsieper 2007, 106. See also the discussion in Hagelia 2006, 97–102.

⁴⁷ For the connection between the fragments see Couturier 2001, 72; Hagelia 2006, 52; Hasegawa 2012, 36–38; Robker 2012, 242; Frevel 2018, 138. See also Kottsieper 2007, 107: "A and B can be joined below the surface even though the area of the join is small and the join is not unequivocal." Hagelia 2004, 140f. also objects to the problematic theory of ATHAS how the inscription was engraved.

⁴⁸ Schniedewind 1996, 77: "a slight rotation of the fragments makes the lines match better and renders a more convincing join." See also Suriano 2007, 176 n. 91.

⁴⁹ Kottsieper 2007, 106.

⁵⁰ Kottsieper 2007, 107.

correctly done by the *editio princeps*.⁵¹ But what about the killing of the king of Israel and Judah as described in the Tel Dan Inscription which appears to contradict the biblical version of these events?

First of all, the syntactic reading of l. 8 is far from certain,⁵² although this is very important for a proper understanding of the Tel Dan Inscription. The *editio princeps* and most subsequent studies have the following reconstruction:

- 7 [qilt 'yt YHW]RM br ['H'B]
- 8 mlk YSR 'L wqt[l t 'yt 'HZ]YHW br [YHWRM ml]
- 9 k BYTDWD w'sm [--]

Only the reading *wqt* in l. 8 might be certain according to the existing fragments and the joining of a small piece onto fragment A. The reconstructed *wqtl* – a *perfect*-form 1st singular – proposed by the *editio princeps* is possible, of course. In that respect, the author of the Tel Dan Inscription argues that he has killed the king of Beth-David. Consequently, this verb form could be filled in the lacuna of l. 7 as well (but without conjunction) so that the author maintains the assassination of both kings. Since the author mentions that he has killed “mighty kings” in l. 6, he might also be the subject of the killing in l. 7–8.

However, there is a significant change of the verb form: an *imperfect* verb form in l. 6 vs. a *perfect* verb form in l. 7–8.⁵³ At least this change of the verb form has to be explained by those who still adhere to the common reconstruction.⁵⁴ There are other reconstructions which are equally possible. Maybe the use of the *perfect* form indicates a subject change.⁵⁵ In that respect, one could read *wql* “and one has killed”⁵⁶, *wqtyl* “and he was killed”⁵⁷ or *wqtlw* “and they have killed”.⁵⁸ By

⁵¹ See also Schniedewind 1996, 78. For the usual arrangement of the fragments see Reinhold 2016, 104–106.

⁵² See already Gugler 1996, 174 n. 651.

⁵³ Rainey 2003, 38f. According to Muraoka 1998, 77 this occurrence would at least neutralize the opposition between *w+prefix conjugation* and *w+suffix conjugation*.

⁵⁴ But see Schniedewind 1996, 79: “the rhetorical shift probably would have been marked by a different verbal form, namely the shift from the prefix preterite (*yagtl*) to the suffic conjugation (*qatal*).”

⁵⁵ Bolen 2013, 54 refers to biblical parallels for this phenomenon (Gen 15:5–6; 2 Kgs 25:27–29). In contrast Blum 2016, 38 n. 4 thinks that the *perfect consecutive* expresses simultaneity. The killing of the “mighty kings” (l. 6) is explained with the killing of the kings of Israel and Judah (l. 7–8). Therefore, there is no difference between both sentences.

⁵⁶ Muraoka 1995, 19 considers an infinitive absolute.

⁵⁷ See Rainey 2003, 37 who assumes an Imperial Aramaic *q^etl* G-Passive either written defectively or *plene*. He further observes “that the curved tail of the broken letter just before the break in line 8 (preceded by *wqtl*) looks more like the tail of a *yod* than it does of a *lamed*.” According to Younger 2005, 252 n. 18 this reconstruction – though syntactically possible – seems rather unlikely due to the extant traces on the fragment.

⁵⁸ Rainey 2003, 38: “The intention of the third masculine plural would be to express the passive, i.e. to state that the two kings were slain.” But see Younger 2005, 253: “This restoration is, of course, possible since the suffix to *wqtl* is unfortunately not preserved. However, the flow of the narrative in this part of the inscription would seem to necessitate a first person verbal form.” For similar options see Rainey/Notley 2006, 213. Robker 2012, 259f. discusses at least the problem of reconstructing the verb form correctly though he still adheres to the common view.

reading the lacuna in these ways, Hazael does not boast about his slaying both kings. The verb form different to l. 6 could stress the antithesis: not I (Hazael), but they (i.e., Jehu and his men) have killed their rulers. Thus, there is no difference between the biblical and the extra-biblical sources.⁵⁹ There is also no need for Hazael to take credit for these assassinations since the contemporary Mesha stele likewise mentions the destruction of Israel, which was not due to Mesha's actions (KAI 181:7).⁶⁰

All in all, the syntax does not necessarily indicate that the author of the inscription – most probably Hazael – was responsible for the assassination of Je-horam and Ahaziah. The alleged discrepancy between Bible and Tel Dan Inscription simply does not exist, but is produced in the scientific discourse. Thus, the additional value of the Tel Dan Inscription for the reconstruction of the events of the 9th century BCE is meager at best.

To conclude: The discrepancy between the biblical text and the Tel Dan Inscription can be traced back to the *editio princeps*, but there is no need to contrast both versions. First, the author of the Tel Dan Inscription is not named and could be identified with several different people (Jehu⁶¹, Hadad-Ezer⁶², Hazael, Bar-Hadad⁶³) with Hazael being the most plausible candidate.⁶⁴ Second, the reading of the verb *QTL* with respect to both kings is semantically (“*to defeat*”) and syntactically (other verbal form) doubtful so that the alleged discrepancy with the biblical account seems forced.

The uncertainty of the king in the inscription, along with the philological and syntactical difficulties of l. 7–8, limit the inscription’s value as a historical source for reconstructing the 9th century BCE. Because of these issues, scholars should proceed carefully when discussing the tensions between the biblical text and the

⁵⁹ Furthermore, the verb *QTL* “*to kill*” in l. 8 has to be reconstructed out of the remaining *wqt*. Since there are no other meaningful possibilities, the reconstruction seems to be sure. But if one doubts the joining of the micro-fragment to fragment A, only the conjunction *w* is certain. Thus, the kings of Israel and Judah are mentioned in the Tel Dan Inscription, but there is no need to claim that they have been killed by the author of the inscription.

⁶⁰ See especially Bolen 2013, 54.

⁶¹ This is quite improbable. But see Wesselius 1999, 163–186; Wesselius 2001, 83–103. For different options see Alanne 2017, 109f.

⁶² Dijkstra 1994, 14.

⁶³ Ahituv 1993, 246; Halpern 1994, 68–74; Puech 1994, 233–241; Demsky 1995, 34; Galil 2001, 18; Athas 2003, 255–265; Athas 2006, 253; Pardee 2006, 290; Hafþórsson 2006, 63f.; Beyerle 2009, 70; Staszak 2009, 73.

⁶⁴ This is the usual interpretation, see Tropper 1993, 397; Lemaire 1994, 90–93; Margalit 1994, 317; Tropper 1994, 487; Na’aman 1995, 388–390; Sasson 1995, 28; Yamada 1995, 612; Sasson 1996, 553; Schniedewind 1996, 85; Emerton 1997, 438; Axskjöld 1998, 155–156; Biran 1998, 479; Kottsieper 1998, 495f.; Lemaire 1998, 5f.; Dion 1999, 151; Na’aman 1999, 112–118; Naveh 1999 119f.; Millard 2000, 161 n. 1; Irvine 2001, 113; Schwemer 2001, 624; Mittmann 2002, 48–53; Hagelia 2006, 224; Sasson 2005, 30; Younger 2005, 246; Kottsieper 2007, 119; Na’aman 2007, 396; Suriano 2007, 164; Fosdal 2009, 95 n. 19; Weippert 2010, 268; Hasegawa 2011, 5–7; Niehr 2011, 346; Aster 2012, 46; Hasegawa 2012, 42f.; Robker 2012, 265; Bolen 2013, 51; Finkelstein 2013, 85; Eph’al-Jaruzelska 2014, 19; Knapp 2014, 106; Richelle 2014, 12; Blum 2016, 38; Oswald/Tilly 2016, 37; Reinholt 2016, 119; Younger 2016, 592; Sergi 2017, 84; Frevel 2018, 248; Peetz 2018, 79; Schipper 2018, 41; Frevel 2019, 314.

Tel Dan Inscription. Most of the discrepancies are simply products of scientific imagination.

II.

As a matter of fact, the commander Jehu used an unstable political situation to seize power. This historic datum was interpreted differently by the biblical writings. In contrast to the negative description of Jehu in Hosea, Jehu was stylized as a devotee of YHWH in 2 Kgs 8–10 so that his *coup d'état* was justified. The writer of the book of Kings approved of Jehu's usurpation because he disapproved of the House of Omri for their practising illegitimate cult forms.

In contrast, Hosea condemned Jehu's methods (i.e., the bloodshed) and thus felt that the House of Jehu was illegitimate.⁶⁵ Therefore, the bloodguilt committed by Jehu at Jezreel was invoked on his dynasty according to Hos 1:4. In this view, Jehu bears full responsibility at least for the death of king Jehoram. Jehu has incurred guilt on himself and his entire dynasty. Thus, the violence of Jehu's palace coup was irreconcilable with YHWH's will. Hosea seems to be highly critical of the bloody *coup d'état*.⁶⁶ In addition, it appears that the biblical text does not hold the Aramean king Hazael accountable. Since Jehu was overzealous in his violent overthrow of the House of Omri he has to be punished. However, it is far from certain whether Hos 1:4 criticized only the revolt or also the atrocities committed by the Jehuides thereafter.⁶⁷ Be that as it may, Hos 1:4–5 does not contradict the biblical account of 2 Kgs 8–9 nor the Tel Dan Inscription as discussed above.⁶⁸ It is simply another version that is more critical with regard to the Jehuides than the Deuteronomists.

However, contrary to Hosea the Deuteronomists praised Jehu for the regicide since he brought an end to the Omrides and their condemnable cult of Baal. By foregrounding the story of Jehu's anointing (2 Kgs 9:1–13),⁶⁹ the biblical redactors could judge the overthrow favourably. There are some indications for the secondary character of 2 Kgs 9:1–13:⁷⁰

⁶⁵ In contrast Bolen 2013, 35–38 interprets Hos 1:4–5 differently. He thinks that the Jehuides would come to an end in a manner similar to the way Jehu overthrew the Omrides. Therefore, Hosea does not condemn Jehu for slaughtering the Omrides nor for other unattested massacre since Hosea must have praised the Anti-Baalistic reform of Jehu. However, this view regards the dtr. rendition of the events as trustworthy historical sources which they are not.

⁶⁶ Aster 2012, 42 regards the revolt committed by Jehu "as a treacherous act of calculated regicide, which brought political ruin and no religious advancement to Israel."

⁶⁷ See also Aster 2012, 42f.

⁶⁸ Robker 2012, 176 sees three elements shared both in Hos 1:4–5 and 2 Kgs 9–10 (Jehu, Jezreel and the bow as a killing weapon).

⁶⁹ According to Jaruzelska 2004, 179, Jehu was anointed by an anonymous prophet since Elisha was not active at the time of Jehu's revolt. Thus, the story of Jehu's anointing would have originated independently of the Elijah-Elisha-Cycle, see already Williamson 1991, 81.

⁷⁰ See also Kottsieper 2007, 126f.; Sauerwein 2014, 85f. However, according to Dietrich 2001, 117 there is dtr. reworking in the anointing story that alludes to the pre-dtr. originality of the account. But this does not mean that this story was an original part of the Jehu narrative from the very beginning. According to Hasegawa 2012, 17 the anointment story was an integral part of the original Jehu narrative.

- 1) There is no recourse to the anointing story in the account of Jehu's coup, even though it could have been used to excuse the brutal violence of his actions. Even the news embargo of v.15 is not explicitly related to the anointing.⁷¹ It most probably refers to the conspiracy of v.14 (*QSR*).
- 2) Jehu is named with his full name "Jehu ben Jehoshaphat" in 2 Kgs 9:2 and 2 Kgs 9:14. At least the second one is not necessary and might indicate two separate stories which were combined.⁷²
- 3) Moreover, 2 Kgs 9:15a is nearly identical to 2 Kgs 8:29a⁷³ and 2 Kgs 9:16b corresponds to 2 Kgs 8:29b so that there is a "Wiederaufnahme" indicating a secondary insertion.⁷⁴ The death of Jehoram might be already stated in 2 Kgs 8:28 since *NKY-H* could be translated "kill".⁷⁵ But the following verse makes it clear that Jehoram was not killed, but only wounded,⁷⁶ so that the Jehu narrative could follow. Thus, 2 Kgs 8:29 is necessary for the original Jehu narrative and 2 Kgs 9:15–16 is added as a "Wiederaufnahme" to insert the anointing story.
- 4) The anointment of Jehu and the approval by the army in 2 Kgs 9:1–13 contradicts the following description in v.14 of the revolt as a conspiracy (*QSR*).⁷⁷ Thus, Jehu has the right to seize power in Israel because he is YHWH's anointed according to 2 Kgs 9:1–13.
- 5) The difference between Hos 1:4–5 and 2 Kgs 9:1–13 seems to indicate that there was no prophetic legitimization for Jehu's revolt in the original account of the Jehu narrative.⁷⁸

Therefore, the originally profane story of Jehu's revolt was interpreted theologically by relating it explicitly to YHWH's will by adding the anointing story in 2 Kgs 9,1–13. By this redactional stratagem, Jehu is considered to be God's instrument that acts on behalf and in accordance to YHWH.⁷⁹ All in all, the original negative tradition was transformed to a positive story in 2 Kgs 9–10.⁸⁰ Moreover,

⁷¹ Otto 2001, 65.

⁷² Sauerwein 2014, 86.

⁷³ Except for the spelling of the personal names and the loss of the toponym Ramah in 2 Kgs 9:15.

⁷⁴ Sauerwein 2014, 86. Contrary Athmann 1997, 68, who considers the story of Jehu's anointing as integral part of the Jehu account. At all events, 2 Kgs 8:29 and 9:15–16 are related to each other somehow, see Minokami 1989, 24; Otto 2001, 47–50.

⁷⁵ Lipiński 2000, 380; Na'aman 2006, 163; Frevel 2018, 249.

⁷⁶ Miller 1967, 315 with some parallels to 1 Kgs 22.

⁷⁷ See also Kottsieper 1998, 489f., who theorizes that there was a conspiracy with Hazael that was broken soon thereafter.

⁷⁸ Kuan 1995, 58 n. 180. According to Moore 2003, 103–114, the anointment story is a parody on an Ugaritic myth, thus ridiculing the religious traditions of Israel's enemies. However, it is far from certain whether there is any relationship between these accounts due to their temporal and spatial distance to one another.

⁷⁹ According to this theological interpretation, the revolt is a rejection of idolatry and a return to the covenant with God, see Birch 1997, 21.

⁸⁰ See Irvine 1995, 499: "The positive bias of the account is difficult to deny". Similarly, Utzschneider 1980, 76. Irvine 2001, 106–110 supposes that Jehu is sketched positively as a second Elijah and as a counter-image to Ahab.

the revolt of Jehu was not prophetically inspired and supported since the prophetic intervention belongs to a redactional stratum. Thus, it was a political usurpation at first without theological legitimization.⁸¹

It appears that the pro-Jehuide narrative of Jehu's revolt is a pre-Deuteronomistic version presenting the revolt in a positive light as an act inspired by YHWH. This positive account could be composed as royal propaganda during the reign of Jeroboam II.⁸² Thus, the Jehu-narrative was reshaped by a prophetic redaction emphasizing the prophetic legitimization of Jehu.

The pro-Jehuide redactor kept the atrocities of the revolt as told in the original account, but marginalized them. The brutal and negative details of the revolt are still visible in the pro-Jehuide account:⁸³

- 1) Jehu's revolt was labelled with the lexeme *QŠR* in 2 Kgs 9:14 and 10:9. This verb denotes the conspiratorial union for a violent subversion of a ruler.⁸⁴ There is no positive connotation of the verb *QŠR* in the entire Old Testament.⁸⁵
- 2) Furthermore, the death of Jehoram was told with much sympathy for the overthrown ruler. Whereas Jehoram and the Judean king Ahaziah approached Jehu trustingly to find out more about the battle of Ramot-gilead, Jehu drove madly (*b'šiggā'ōn*) towards the two kings in a way that depicts him in a somewhat negative manner.

An interesting detail betrays the provenance of the pre-dtr. account: Jehu reproaches Jehoram with the whoredom of Jezebel in v.22 (*z^enūnîm*).⁸⁶ This noun is typical of prophetic criticism of the cult of Israel. The book of Hosea in particular uses this idiom to reproach Israel. The redactor of 2 Kgs 9 seems to use the language of Hosea to counteract the criticism on Jehu voiced by Hos 1:4. According to the pro-Jehuide redactor, Jehu did the proper thing to extirpate the Omrides since they had abandoned the Yahwistic cult. Thus, this redactor chose Hoseanic language to write favourably of a dynasty (the House of Jehu) that was ill-famed because of its violent origins. Most probably this idiomatic reproach suppressed the original verse in 2 Kgs 9:22, thus balancing the prophetic accusations voiced mainly by Hoseanic circles.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Sauerwein 2014, 93.

⁸² Sergi 2016, 504f. For this date of the Jehu narrative see also Robker 2012, 299f.

⁸³ See also Kottsieper 2007, 127: "the narration used in 2 Kgs 9–10 regards Jehu's revolution critically". According to Barré 1988, 42–46, Jehu's revolt is a counter-image to Jojada's revolt. Only by violence could Jehu come to power. However, Na'aman 2016, 69 regards Jehu's elimination of all relatives of the Omrides as usual way to consolidate his reign.

⁸⁴ Wolff 1985, 357. See also the remarks by Wray Beal 2006, 221f.

⁸⁵ See especially Würthwein 2008, 33.

⁸⁶ Ez 23:11,29; Hos 1:2; 2:4,6; 4:12; 5:4; Nah 3:4. According to Vielhauer 2007, 140, Hos 1 knows the interpretation of 2 Kgs 9. However, Rudnig-Zelt 2006, 88 supposes that the idiom is post-exilic: "Der Terminus מִנְנָה wird erst in nachexilischer Zeit im dtr. Bereich geprägt".

⁸⁷ Minokami 1989, 42. However, Dietrich 2001, 117 thinks that this verse is original because the Jehu revolt is motivated by religious reasons – at least in his opinion.

All in all, the original account that judged the Jehu revolt unfavourably, was positively reshaped by a pro-Jehuide redactor. The negative and brutal details of this *coup d'état* have not been suppressed. Furthermore, the negative bias of Hosea contra the Jehuides was countered by adding Hoseanic language and stressing the ruthless rule of the dynasty of Ahab. This redaction might also have pointed to the divine election of Jehu as instrument in God's masterplan. This pre-dtr. Jehu narrative underwent dtr. redaction by further additions and clarifications.

Thus, the biblical text is a multi-layered composition which has to be analysed in detail to distil the historical core. It appears that the original Jehu tradition was negative and focused on events that happened in Jezreel. But what atrocities can be related to Jezreel at all? This problem will be discussed in the following.

III.

Only the death of Jehoram can be placed with good reasons near Jezreel. Thus, the bloodshed of Jezreel mentioned in Hos 1:4 must be related with Jehu's assassination of Jehoram in the first place and not necessarily with the following six massacres. These killings may not be based on the original tradition of Jehu's revolt:

- 1) The fate of Ahaziah in 2 Kgs 9:27–29 is topographically problematic. First Ahaziah escaped to the south most probably to head for Samaria or Jerusalem. After being wounded by Jehu's henchmen at the ascent of Ibleam about 15 km south of Jezreel he moved 20 km northwest to Megiddo where he died.⁸⁸ Therefore, Ahaziah was killed neither by Jehu himself nor near Jezreel. Thus, the tradition of Hos 1:4–5 cannot be related to the death of Ahaziah.⁸⁹
- 2) Only a secondary insertion claims that the death of Jezebel in 2 Kgs 9:30–37 happened at Jezreel.⁹⁰ The original tradition in 2 Kgs 9:30b–35 seems to be placeless and timeless. Therefore, it is questionable whether the assassin-nation of Jezebel committed by her own servants can be related to the bloodshed of Jezreel. Since the judgement on Jezebel predicted in 1 Kgs 21:23 must take place at Jezreel, the redactors took over the story and situated it at Jezreel. Moreover, it is a matter of debate whether there was ever a royal palace in Jezreel. Such a palace is necessary for the story line, so that there must have been a royal building in Jezreel. However, all alleged biblical references in that regard are doubtful as will be seen in the following discussion.

Moreover, it is highly questionable whether the reference to the Naboth affair in 2 Kgs 9:25–26 was part of the original account.

⁸⁸ According to Na'aman 2006, 163 this topographical problem is due to a conflation of two sources. Frevel 2018, 249f. supposes that Ahaziah might have fled northwards to Hazael to offer vassality. However, Hasegawa 2006, 9–14 thinks that the toponyms Megiddo and Ibleam have been inserted by the dtr. redactor who wants to parallelize the end of Ahaziah with Josiah at Megiddo (2 Kgs 23,30) and Zechariah at Ibleam (2 Kgs 15:10-LXX).

⁸⁹ A different scenario is described in 2 Chr 22:9, as Ahaziah was captured while hiding in Samaria and was brought to Jehu and put to death.

⁹⁰ Würthwein 2008, 39.

After the ordeal on Mt. Carmel, Ahab headed for Jezreel on his chariot according to 1 Kgs 18:45–46. Since Jezreel was first of all a stronghold for chariots⁹¹ it would be the regular destination for Ahab. This biblical reference does not need a full-fledged royal palace at Jezreel.⁹² According to 2 Kgs 8:29 and 9:14–15 Jezreel was used as a military hospital for the wounded Jehoram, but not as a real palace. Thus, this could not be used as definite proof for a royal residence in Jezreel since military bases are often a secure haven for the wounded. Admittedly, it is not excluded that there was a royal palace at Jezreel. But the biblical evidence cannot confirm it either. Only in 1 Kgs 21:1 there is a clear reference to a residence of Ahab at Jezreel (*hēkal 'Ah 'āb*). However, the important relative clause *"šær b^eYizr^e'a'l* is lacking in the Septuagint.⁹³ Therefore, it is doubtful whether Jezebel was waiting for Jehu in the palace of Jezreel.⁹⁴ Be that as it may, the author drew a negative picture of the usurper by all means: Jehu acted in cold blood whereas Jezebel behaved like a real queen. When she prepared for the encounter, she painted her eyes, and tired her head,⁹⁵ although it is unclear why Jezebel beautified herself.⁹⁶ It appears that Jehu murdered Jezebel to abolish the Tyrian political and maybe religious influence introduced by her. In that respect, Jehu could distance himself from the Phoenicians.⁹⁷ Whereas the murder of Jezebel might be based on historical memory, it happened somewhere else and was surely not committed directly by Jehu himself, but by the servants of Jezebel at the behest of Jehu.

- 3) Even the slaughter of 70 princes of Israel⁹⁸ in Samaria in 2 Kgs 10:1–9 shows the brutality of the usurper, although he was not directly involved himself.

⁹¹ According to Niemann 2006, 25, Jezreel was founded as a chariot stronghold. Contrary to Megiddo, the stronghold of Jezreel was mainly of military importance, see Ussishkin / Woodhead 1997, 70. In contrast, Na'aman 1997, 123 supposes palace buildings on the mound of Jezreel though there is no archaeological evidence.

⁹² Contrary to Timm 1982, 147f., who supposes that there was a royal winter residence in Jezreel. According to Williamson 1996, 46–50 Jezreel should symbolize the military strength of the Omrides although the defensive character was minimal due to a weak casemate wall and the lack of sufficient water supplies.

⁹³ For the problematic location of Naboth's vineyard see Timm 1982, 118–121; Williamson 1991, 88.

⁹⁴ Furthermore, Franklin 2019, 197–200 thinks that the impressive military enclosure at Jezreel was constructed not in the time of the Omrides, but during the reign of Jeroboam II. However, there existed quite a substantial settlement prior to the building of the enclosure, see Franklin 2008, 46f. But it is a debatable point whether there was a palace in Jezreel at the time of Jezebel.

⁹⁵ Jezebel was a queen right to the end, see Miller/Hayes 2006, 323. According to Kuan 1995, 60f. Jezebel was murdered to push back Phoenician influence in Israel. It is questionable whether this influence was political or religious. Moore 2003, 108f. sees even a doubtful relationship to a Ugaritic myth with the goddess Anat caring about her personal toilet.

⁹⁶ Barré 1988, 76–81 supposes that Jezebel tried to seduce the usurper just to share in the new political system. But this is mere speculation.

⁹⁷ Na'aman 2007, 405.

⁹⁸ The number 70 is a fixed topos not only for a big number, but also in description of bloody revolts, see Suriano 2007, 168: "The literary motif of killing seventy individuals metaphorically represents the elimination of all other claimants to power". Abimelech

Instead, he commanded others to take action in Samaria. Therefore, it cannot be related directly to the bloodshed of Jezreel, although both murders are connected to each other.⁹⁹ The annihilation of the princes happened in Samaria. Only the anti-Jehuide portrayal of the revolt sketches Jehu responsible for this bloodshed. At least, it is doubtful whether Jehu was responsible for it.

- 4) Jehu killed everyone that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel according to 2 Kgs 10:11. This information might be reliable at first glance because it corresponds well to the bloodshed of Jezreel mentioned in Hos 1:4–5. Maybe he killed everybody after he took over control in Jezreel. However, since this verse is nearly parallel to 2 Kgs 10:17,¹⁰⁰ it might be a redactional device which is not based on the original tradition.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, the locative prepositional group *b^eYizr^e ‘æ’l* is difficult. It could be the location of the verbal action, in which case Jehu would have killed the dynasty in Jezreel. However, *b^eYizr^e ‘æ’l* could also be related to the participle so that Jehu killed the people who were left in Jezreel. Thus, the assassination could have taken place anywhere. Thus, it is far from certain whether the killing of the Ahabites occurred in Jezreel.
- 5) The story of the murder of the 42 princes of Judah in 2 Kgs 10:12–14 seems to be a later addition. It is questionable why the princes are still on their way northwards to salute the princes of Israel particularly since the Israelite royal sons were already killed in Samaria. It is difficult to imagine that they did not hear about Jehu’s revolt in the meantime. Furthermore, the number 42 is a fixed *topos*.¹⁰² Thus it is doubtful whether it is the exact number of the murdered victims. Moreover, the queen mother Athaliah was accused of killing all the royal seed of Judah according to 2 Kgs 11:1. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that Jehu was also responsible for this murder.¹⁰³ However, this episode could underline the negative portrayal of the usurper Jehu by the anti-Jehuide tradition. The brutal butcher Jehu also killed the Judean rivals!
- 6) According to 2 Kgs 10:17, Jehu slaughtered everyone that remained of Ahab in Samaria. This is a concluding remark that accuses Jehu of the extirpation of the Omride dynasty. Since this verse is related to a prophecy by Elijah, it is most probably a later addition based on the similar statement in 2 Kgs 10:11. Therefore it cannot be interpreted as historically reliable.

killed 70 of his brothers (Jdg 9:5,18). In the kingdom of Sam’al 70 princes were likewise slaughtered (KAI 215:3,7). According to Fensham 1977, 115, the number 70 is used “of an illegitimate seizure of the throne” and describes “a larger group of people taken as a whole.” For the number 70 see also de Moor 1998, 201.

⁹⁹ In contrast Hasegawa 2012, 33 thinks that the murder of the Israelite princes is supported by Hos 1:4 since the princes’ heads were brought to the gate of Jezreel and shown to the people (2 Kgs 10:8–9).

¹⁰⁰ 2 Kgs 10:11: *wayyak Yehû’ ‘æt kâl hanniš’ārîm l^bbêt ’Ah’āb b^eYizr^e ‘æ’l*

2 Kgs 10:17: *wayyak ‘æt kâl hanniš’ārîm l^e’Ah’āb b^eŠomrôn.*

¹⁰¹ Hasegawa 2012, 21,23 ascribes both verses to dtr.

¹⁰² Herrmann 1910, 150f.

¹⁰³ Würthwein 2008, 41f. But see Schniedewind 1996, 85: “The later author of Hosea saw Jehu’s revolt as a collusion between Israel and Aram that resulted in the slaughter of the king of Judah and even some of his family”. According to Na’aman 2016, 63, 2 Kgs 11 is a late story written in order to provide a parallel Judahite story to that of Jehu’s revolt.

All in all, Jehu is severely criticized in the anti-Jehuide tradition. He personally killed Jehoram in the field near Jezreel (2 Kgs 9:24) and maybe the remaining entourage of the house of Ahab either at Jezreel or somewhere else (2 Kgs 10:11). Both atrocities might be based on historical memory and can be related to Jezreel. Only these killings committed by Jehu at Jezreel might have influenced the verdict in Hos 1:4. Therefore, these murders might form the historical core that shaped both the Hoseanic tradition and the Jehu narrative.

All other assassinations are linked to Jehu only according to the anti-Jehuide tradition. These murders cannot be related directly to Jehu and to the bloodshed of Jezreel,¹⁰⁴ since his rivals were killed by different men at places other than Jezreel. Furthermore, it is questionable whether they were committed by Jehu himself, directly or indirectly. Only the biblical account suggests that Jehu ordered the deaths of Ahaziah (2 Kgs 9:27), Jezebel (2 Kgs 9:33) and 70 Israelite princes (2 Kgs 10:6). But this might be due to the negative portrayal of Jehu in the anti-Jehuide tradition.

In contrast, the extinction of all devotees of Baal and the abolition of the cult of Baal in 2 Kgs 10:18–31 may be due to the favourable judgment of later redactors¹⁰⁵ who framed the original negative Jehu account with two positive stories (anointing by Elisha and cultic reform). Therefore, these redactors could stylize Jehu as a paradigmatic good king of Israel. Since the dynasty of Ahab was judged negatively, Jehu's revolt could be praised as a positive act of commitment to YHWH, notwithstanding the historical course of action. The killing of the 42 Judean princes (2 Kgs 10:14) and the summary statement (2 Kgs 10:17) were meant to round out the extermination of the abhorrent Omrides. The narrative of the cultic reform might be part of the pro-Jehuide narrative as well, though it is far from secure whether there was a cultic reform in the time of Jehu at all. Be that as it may, the original Jehu tradition was interpreted favourably by redactional additions in the 8th century BCE to counter Hoseanic accusations. This positive pre-dtr. evaluation of Jehu could be used by dtr. redactors who do not fail to inform the reader about cultic laxity in the time of Jehu in 2 Kgs 10:29.

Most probably Jehu's revolt was only motivated by political reasons.¹⁰⁶ The religious motives would have been secondarily added by a pre-dtr. pro-Jehuide redaction,¹⁰⁷ since there was still strong prophetic opposition against the Jehuides

¹⁰⁴ Contrary to Gugler 1996, 261, who supposes that three murders were committed in Jezreel: Jehoram (2 Kgs 9:24), Jezebel (2 Kgs 9:33) and the slaughter of people loyal to the house of Ahab (2 Kgs 10:11). All other massacres happened in the highlands of Samaria or in the town of Samaria.

¹⁰⁵ According to Minokami 1989, 96f., 2 Kgs 10:18–27 does not belong to the original tradition. Contrary Otto 2001, 71f. who thinks that the abolishment of the cult of Baal and the story of the anointment are part of the old tradition. Similarly, Dietrich 2001, 117f.

¹⁰⁶ Ahlström 1977, 58. According to Irvine 1995, 499f., the Jehu account in 2 Kgs 9–10 is a propaganda story of the time of Jeroboam II. who wanted to promote his dynasty and counteract prophetic opposition. However, the original tradition without the religious motivation is not favourable to Jehu. Thus Kottsieper 1998, 490 rightly admits that the original tradition was critical towards the usurper Jehu.

¹⁰⁷ Jaruzelska 2004, 182. In contrast Williamson 1991, 80 supposes that the dtr. redactor must have had an old document about the abolishment of the cult of Baal by Jehu at hand. Otherwise, he would not have mentioned it. However, if the story of the anointment is a later addition as argued above it is only logical to regard the story of 2 Kgs 10:18–31 as secondary as well making the infamous usurper Jehu a zealous devotee of YHWH.

in the 8th century BCE. It seems that redactors responsible for 2 Kgs 9–10 tried to counteract Hosea’s verdict on the Jehuides in Hos 1:4 by praising Jehu’s religious zeal.¹⁰⁸ In that respect, the negative tradition on Jehu’s revolt was framed with two positive accounts. The original tradition nevertheless was in line with the Hoseanic condemnation of the Jehuides (Hos 1:4) and blamed Jehu for killing the royal houses of Israel and Judah – the bloodguilt of Jezreel.

Conclusion

A critical reading of 2 Kgs 9–10 supposes that the bloodguilt of Jezreel (Hos 1:4) refers only to the death of Jehoram (2 Kgs 9:24) and maybe of the remaining entourage of the house of Ahab (2 Kgs 10:11). All other killings are committed elsewhere and not directly by Jehu. Most probably the negative tradition contained in 2 Kgs 9–10 exaggerated Jehu’s revolt and blamed Jehu for more atrocities than Hosea did. Only later redaction praised Jehu’s *coup d'état*. Thus, the usurper Jehu was anointed as an instrument of YHWH (2 Kgs 9,1–13). Moreover, he could eradicate the abominations of Baalism in Israel (2 Kgs 10:18–31).¹⁰⁹ This pro-Jehuide theological interpretation of the narrative should not be misinterpreted as historical reliable. Furthermore, the Tel Dan Inscription is of little help in reconstructing the actual events, since it is ambiguous due to its fragmented status. The often-noticed discrepancies of 2 Kgs 9–10, Hos 1:4 and the Tel Dan Inscription can be explained by a critical and diachronic reading of these sources.

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¹⁰⁸ Sergi 2017, 92f. thinks that Jehu’s revolt was not based on social or religious motifs, but was the result of the geopolitical circumstances. Similarly, Robker 2012, 296 regards the religious revolution of Jehu as ahistorical.

¹⁰⁹ According to Athmann 1997, 74, Jehu tried to push back the religious and political infiltration initiated by the Phoenician princess Jezebel. However, this is a later perspective that cannot be regarded as historical fact.

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