

Article

The Cultic Reformation Chiastic Structure in the Book of Kings

Yitzhak Lee-Sak 

Institute of Christianity and Korean Culture, College of Theology, Yonsei University,
Seoul 03722, Republic of Korea; leeyitzhak@gmail.com

Abstract: *The Book of Kings* presents religious reforms in ancient Israel and Judah in an elaborately designed pattern. Repetitive verbal and thematic parallels concerning reforms and political incidents reveal a systematic–concentric chiastic structure. A good king/bad king pattern framed within a concept of “one Israel” shows that Solomon’s/Jeroboam’s and Manasseh’s/Josiah’s reforms are placed at the opposite ends of the chiasmus, enveloping those of Asa/Ahab and Ahaz/Hezekiah and then Jehu’s/Joash’s reforms centered within the larger structure. By virtue of their positioning inside the structure, the Yahwistic reforms of Solomon, Josiah, and Jehu/Joash are emphasized as compared to other kings’ reforms. All of northern Israel’s reforms fail, while in Judah only some succeed, and even these have limitations and require further development. The Davidic heirs and their supporters may now perceive that *Kings* presents and pursues the pro-Yahwistic reforms as the ideal ones, based on the Davidic covenant, while rejecting the potentially problematic ones.

Keywords: *The Books of Kings* (1–2 Kings); religious reformations; good king/bad king pattern; concentric chiasm; pro-Yahwistic reforms; repetition of reformations

1. Introduction

Specific documents in Near Eastern records evaluate successive kings’ feats according to their religious standards, that is, their behavior before their respective gods.¹ *The Book of Kings* (hereafter, *Kings*)² considers consecutive kings of Israel and Judah as “good kings” or “bad kings” based on their cultic activities³ and their consequent status in YHWH’s eyes.⁴ Their respective religious reforms become the clear-cut and definitive criterion for their goodness/badness, rather than their political and economic activities. Generally, *Kings* details the religious activities of those kings who carry out cultic reforms. With the exception of accounts of several kings concerning Elijah’s and Elisha’s activities, *Kings* does not draw attention to those who do not pursue these reforms, and instead only briefly treats them in a summarized religious evaluation.⁵ The reforms in question are closely associated with current political circumstances, such as internal political upheavals between Israel in the north and Judah in the south, or political shifts produced by external powers such as Aram-Damascus, Assyria, and Babylonia.

In this article, I will review the literary characteristics of the successive kings’ religious reforms and their overall structure by identifying chiasm.⁶ More specifically, I seek to demonstrate the newly proposed chiastic structure’s validity by comparing each corresponding section verbally and thematically.

The chiastic structural writing unit enables unit and sub-unit arrangement analysis by identifying starting/ending marks and content connections and noting the length and number of units. Noting predominant biblical overlapping idioms, similar themes, and concepts/notions, scholars generally detect a linear, balanced structure set alongside an odd-number symmetric design featuring pattern repetitions.⁷ These literary rhetorical techniques provide formal beauty, consistency, completeness, pivotal axis, comparison, contrast, emphasis, and explanation. The reader is meant to notice the symmetrical structure’s central elements, identical literary form, corresponding points, analogous theme/motive repetition,



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structural similarity, and the turning point and climax.⁸ Generally, in the chiasm, both the center of the system, as the turning point, reflecting a change in the trend of thought, and its extremes, beginning or ending with the very idea or similar impressions, are regarded as essential parts. The elements listed above tend to gravitate toward these positions.⁹ Thus, these unit arrangements reveal the narrative's embedded theological ideas.¹⁰

There are two systematically, coherently intertwined literary structures in *Kings*, a chronological, linear arrangement from Solomon to Zedekiah, and a symmetrical layout, which stands irrespective of the religious reforms. Two studies have patterned these two structures. First, Dorsey (1999, pp. 137–44) analyzes *Kings*' entire unit division as a seven-fold symmetric structure, (A) Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 3:1–11:43); (B) Northern kingdom's initiation (12:1–16:34); (C) Elijah and early Omri dynasties (1 Kgs 17:1–2 Kgs 1:18); (D) YHWH's mercy shown in Elisha's miracle (2:1–8:6); (C') Elisha and the Omri dynasty's demise (8:7–13:25); (B') Northern kingdom's demise (14:1–17:41); and (A') Fall of Jerusalem (18:1–25:30). This places the Elijah–Elisha story at the book's center. Savran (1987, p. 148) treats the text similarly, but achieves different unit divisions, namely (A) United Monarchy (1 Kgs 1:1–11:25); (B) Northern kingdom initiation (11:26–14:31); (C) Early kings of both Israel and Judah (15:1–16:22); (D) Omri dynasty rise and decline, and the Baal religion (1 Kgs 16:23–2 Kgs 12:23); (C') Other kings of Israel and Judah (13:1–16:20); (B') Samaria's demise (17:1–41); and (A') Judah's demise (18:1–25:30). Savran's analysis concludes the Elijah–Elisha cycle with the Jehu–Joash story, incorporating this specific story into the book's center. Both studies make verbal and thematic classifications and allow for political influences while differing in their more extensive frame analysis, which allows for an observation of the religious reforms as a larger-frame chiastic structure to achieve different results.

In this article, I will attempt to discuss why linear and concentric systems present the kings' religious reforms. The present study will explain why Jehu's and Joash's reforms are placed at the center, why Solomon's and Josiah's are placed at the extremes, and other kings between Jehu–Joash and Solomon–Josiah. Finally, I will argue that the cultic reformation chiastic structure in *Kings* aids in understanding the book's underlying theological basis.

2. Cultic Policies Alongside Political Events

Kings, which interweaves Judah's and Israel's kings chronologically and sees Israel and Judah as inseparable, describes each king's record in order of their ascension based on evaluation of the kings' religious deeds. Before narrating the military and diplomatic incidents, *Kings* provides a religious judgment for all kings, using phrases similar to the below.¹¹

X became king of Israel/Judah in the Ath year of King Y of Judah/Israel. He ruled for B years. He did what was right in the eyes of YHWH, like David, or He did evil in the ways of Jeroboam.¹²

Kings also chronologically describes religious and political events as the context for each king's activities. Cultic issues are executed with political conflicts and wars between Israel and Judah through reconciliation by mutual treaty or in response to external invasions. All events are recorded sequentially, with religious matters in Judah recorded even after Israel and Samaria's fall. The following is an analysis of each king's religious policies considering their associated contemporary political events in the order they happened.

Solomon (Judah)/Jeroboam (Israel): Solomon consolidated a national religion by developing a unified political and economic system: the YHWH religion centralized at Jerusalem in the national temple (1 Kgs 5–6). However, his policy failed. The unified kingdom's demise prompted Jeroboam's rebellion after Solomon's death (11:26–40). Jeroboam's actions, founding his kingdom and initiating religious renovation, deflected the people's economic and religious attention from Jerusalem (12:26–30). Thus, the unified kingdom's establishment and division into two realms can be interpreted as the foundation of the two kingdoms' cultic policy. Solomon is regarded as a “good king” for establishing the

religion for YHWH, and Jeroboam as an “evil king” not because he broke away but rather for restoring Canaanite religious practice.

Rehoboam, Abiyam, and Asa (Judah)/Jeroboam; Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri (Israel): These Judahite kings are contemporary with four Israelite kings, namely Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, and Elah. Military tension between the two kingdoms was exceptionally high (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:30; 15:6–7, 16, 32) and *Kings* describes and assesses these kings’ political/religious events and actions (12:25–16:28);¹³ the above kings of Judah and Israel are assessed as “bad kings”.

Asa (Judah)/Ahab (Israel): Asa’s removal of the empress, who exercised her powers to stabilize her political position, initiates the YHWH cultic reformation (1 Kgs 15:12–15). In contrast, Ahab’s establishment of inherited kingship and production of economic prosperity through diplomatic relations with Sidon served to embrace the Baal religion and initiate the Baal reformation (16:31–33). However, during this period, peaceful rapprochement built up between the two kingdoms, and thus they were stable (22:4, 44). Here, Asa appears as a “good king” and Ahab as a “heinous king”.

Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah (Judah)/Ahaziah and Jeram (Israel): The historical events happening during the days of these kings are reported in more detail compared to those of other kings. *Kings* describes how, like their predecessor, Jehoshaphat, who inherited his father (Asah)’s religious policy (1 Kgs 22:43, 46), Jehoram, and Ahaziah maintained good relations with their relatives—Ahab’s two sons, Ahaziah and Joram, kings of Israel (1 Kgs 22:44; 2 Kgs 3:7; 8:18, 27, 29). However, *Kings* does not focus on their good relations. Instead, as previously stated, *Kings* attends to additional details of events in Israel and Judah and even outside of the two kingdoms related to the ministry of the two Yahwistic prophets, Elijah and Elisha (e.g., Elijah’s movements to foreign lands (1 Kgs 17), Israel’s battles against Aram (1 Kgs 20 and 2 Kgs 5–8), Israel’s and Judah’s campaign with Elisha’s help against Moab (2 Kgs 3), and Elisha’s visit to Damascus and Hazael’s enthronement (2 Kgs 8:7–15)).¹⁴ Based on their international prophetic authority, the two prophets could fight against the house of Ahab, the patrons of the Baal religion. Thus, *Kings* places the stories of their prophetic activities (the chapters mentioned above) and their struggle against the Baal cult (1 Kgs 18–19, 2 Kgs 1–2, 9) at the center of its literary scope. In addition, Elijah’s and Elisha’s conflict against the foreign cult offers a clue for answering why *Kings* pays so much attention to their activities. According to the plot development in 1 Kgs 18–2 Kgs 9, the prophets preserve the Yahwistic religion even under the strong influence of the Baal religion and eventually act as a catalyst to bring about the end of the Omride’s rule, the abolition of the foreign religion, and the pro-Yahwistic reforms of Jehu and Joash. All the kings who follow the Baal religion, except Jehoshaphat, are labeled “evil kings”.

Jehu (Israel)/Joash (Judah): During the wars against Aram, Jehu’s coup d’état and his religious reforms in the Northern Kingdom eliminated the Baal religion and destroyed Ahab’s family (2 Kgs 9–10). Israel’s rapidly changing circumstances also caused the coup of Athaliah, Ahab’s daughter and Jehoram’s wife, in the kingdom of Judah (11:1–3), becoming a stimulant leading to the kingship restoration by the line of David by Joash and Jehoiada, Joash’s high priest (11:12, 20). By the two coups, Elijah and Elisha’s curses on Ahab’s house were accomplished (1 Kgs 19:15–18; 21:21–24; 2 Kgs 9:7–10). Nevertheless, Jehu’s follow-up measures to conduct the YHWH reform do not break away from Jeroboam’s golden calf worship (2 Kgs 10:28–29). On the contrary, Joash was successful in the restoration of the YHWH religion, with the help of Jehoiada (11:4–12:16). Hence, Jehu receives the ambiguous evaluation of “good-evil,” whereas Joash is designated a “good king”.

Amaziah, Azariah, and Jotham (Judah)/Jehoahaz; Joash, Jeroboam (II), Zechariah, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah (Israel): Three kings of Judah—Amaziah, Azariah, and Jotham—are contemporary with the Nimshide and Menahem dynasties (2 Kgs 14–15). They foster military conflicts between the two kingdoms (e.g., 14:11–14; 15:37). *Kings* briefly mentions these kings’ political and religious exploits, similar to the cases of Rehoboam and

Abiyam of Judah, and Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri of Israel.¹⁵ All the Judahite kings are assessed as “good kings,” whereas all the kings of Israel are “bad kings”.

Ahaz and Hezekiah (Judah)/Hosea (Israel): Military tension between the two kingdoms was dissipated by Assyria’s western campaigns seeking hegemony in the ancient Near East, as both Judah and Israel worry about their fate (2 Kgs 16:6–9; 17:4–5). After Hosea of Israel was defeated and destroyed by Assyria, Ahaz’s cultic reform was carried out to enforce conformity of ritual as part of a submission to the empire (16:10–16); yet, Hezekiah’s reform rejected it and proposed the opposite of the religious policy (18:4–6). Ahaz is labeled as a “wicked king” for importing the Aramean religion into Jerusalem; his son, Hezekiah, is defined as a “good king” through his active work for YHWH religion preservation.

Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah (Judah): The abolishment of YHWH religion at the height of Assyrian political and military influence was due to Manasseh’s introduction of foreign religious customs to Judah (2 Kgs 21:2–9, 11, 16). This Judahite king was a submissive Assyrian vassal, solidifying his “bad king” image. However, as Assyria’s power was gradually weakened, Josiah, Amon’s son (21:24), extending his influence in Israel, conducted a major religious reform (23:1–25). Josiah is called a “good king,” the most pious YHWH religion supporter, while his father, Amon, remains a “heinous king”.

Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (Judah): The Babylonian threats and attacks against the kingdom of Judah ended with Jerusalem’s fall and the temple’s destruction (2 Kgs 24:1, 10–17; 25:1–7). *Kings* reports all the circumstances of the national disasters in detail (24:1–25:26); yet, these Judahite kings’ political and religious feats are stated briefly (23:32–33, 37; 24:1–2, 9, 18–20). Ultimately, all these kings are evaluated as “bad kings”.

Thus, the religious policies are associated with specific political factors, the hostile Israel–Judah relationship, their reconciliation, religious–political coups, and Assyrian and Babylonian invasions. Except for the kings during the days of Elijah and Elisha, the text briefly reports the activities of specific kings unrelated to cultic issues (as highlighted in light type in Table 1).¹⁶ This implies that *Kings* is (are) relatively less concerned with those kings. Furthermore, apart from the activities of Elijah and Elisha themselves, *Kings* particularly emphasizes specific kings who implemented pro- or anti-Yahwistic cultic policies, with relatively detailed descriptions (as highlighted in bold type in the table).

Table 1. Religious evaluation in light of events.

Kings	Religious Evaluation	Political Events
Solomon	Good/Bad	Establishment of the United Monarchy Divided kingdoms
Jeroboam	Bad	
Rehoboam, Abiyam	Bad	
Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri	Bad	Tensions between the kingdoms Wars and lull in wars
Asa	Good	
Ahab	Bad	Kingship stability of the two kingdoms, their reconciliation, and alliance
Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah	Good/Bad	
Ahab, Ahaziah, Joram	Bad	Continuation of peace Elijah and Elisha’s engagement in these kings’ political and religious events.
Jehu	Good/Bad	
Joash	Good	Two coups Annihilation of Ahab’s house
Amaziah, Uzziah	Good/Bad	
Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam, Zechariah	Bad	Tensions between the two kingdoms Lull in wars

Table 1. Cont.

Kings	Religious Evaluation	Political Events
Jotham, Ahaz	Good/Bad	Three coups in Israel Lull in wars and Syro-Ephraimite war
Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah	Bad	
Ahaz	Bad	Assyrian Levantine invasion Fall of Israel/Samaria
Hosea *	Bad	
Hezekiah	Good	Demise of Assyria Josiah's northern Israel expansion
Manasseh	Bad	
Amon	Bad	
Josiah	Good	
Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim	Bad	First capture of Jerusalem
Jehoiakin, Zedekiah	Bad	Fall of Jerusalem

* According to Kings, Hosea and Amon are recorded in order, placed between Ahaz and Hezekiah, and between Manasseh and Josiah.

Now, we shall observe why *Kings* pays special attention to these kings, and how it highlights their pro- or anti-Yahwistic cultic movements.

3. Religious Appraisal Structure

As observed above, *Kings* is interested in the Yahwistic cultic movements and their counter examples, alongside the political issues. *Kings* is primarily concerned with recording when, how, and why the pro- or anti-Yahwistic actions occurred; thus, *Kings* also tends to assess each king's cultic activities under the king's religious policy. *Kings* goes further, however, and draws particular attention to kings who systematically execute the following pro-or anti-Yahwistic cult procedures: 1. Build (repair) or demolish temples, high places, and altars, that is, religious institutions. 2. Build or destroy divine images or symbols such as golden calves, Baal and Asherah, stone poles/statues, and other idols. 3. Appoint or remove priests, sacred whores, prophets, sorcerers, fortune-tellers, and religious figures who perform cultic rituals. 4. Set up religious laws and regulations. 5. Make covenants in front of the people. 6. Cultic festival observance, cultic centralization promotion, and other elements. On this basis, here I would like to define these kings as the "religious reformers".

A closer examination of the entire literary extent of *Kings*—carefully investigating all kings reported in this book—reveals that only the following kings associated with the reformation components stand out as religious reformers, due to their specific cultic rationales. Their religious appraisal draws readers' eyes since *Kings* itself offers its editorial judgment to the kings.

1. Solomon: Building the temple, the altar, and utensils; adorning the temple's interior; installing the Ark of the Covenant in the temple (1 Kgs 6:15–35; 7:13–51); appointing the Zadokite priests (4:2, 4; 8:2–11); making a covenant with the people when dedicating the temple (8:22–66)¹⁷.
2. Jeroboam: Establishment of the Bethel and Dan altars; making a golden calf; appointing non-Levites as priests; establishing a religious feast (12:29–32).
3. Asa: Leaving high places intact; removing idols; cutting down and burning Asherah images; driving sacred whores out (15:12–14).
4. Ahab: Building Baal temple and altars; worshipping Baal images; destroying YHWH's altar; killing YHWH's prophets; nurturing Baal and Asherah prophets (1 Kgs 16:31–33; 18:13, 19; 19:10, 14; see also 2 Kgs 10:19).
5. Jehu: Destroying Baal temple; burning statues/idols in the temple; killing Baal prophets, priests, and servants (2 Kgs 10:19, 25–27).

6. Joash: Destroying Baal temple and altar; destroying idols; killing Baal priests; appointing YHWH priests; setting a covenant between the people and God; repairing the temple (2 Kgs 11:13–14, 17–18, 20; 12:1–16).
7. Ahaz: Building a Damascene-styled altar in Jerusalem and worshipping there; offering sacrifices on mountaintops and under green trees; sacrificing his son as a burnt offering; appointing Uriah, builder of the foreign altar, as high priest (2 Kgs 16:3–4).
8. Hezekiah: Destroying high places; cutting down idols and Asherah statues; destroying Nehushtan; repairing temples; conducting cultic centralization; keeping YHWH's commandments (2 Kgs 18:4, 6, 16, 22).
9. Manasseh: Rebuilding the high places, building altars for Baal and the sun, moon, and constellations; making Asherah statues and setting them up in YHWH's temple; conducting divination and sorcery; shedding innocent blood (2 Kgs 21:3–6, 16).
10. Josiah: Destroying the high places, Tobeth in the Hinnom Valley, Ahaz and Manasseh's altars, the elevated area next to the destruction, and the Bethel high place and altars; destroying Baal, Asherahs, constellations, stone statues, teraphims, idols, and abominations; eliminating idol-worshipping priests and those offering incense to the sun, moon, and constellations; removing sorcerers and fortune-tellers (2 Kgs 23:5, 8, 10, 12–15, 24); establishing a covenant with the people (23:1–3); repairing the temple; discovery of the Mosaic Law (23:1–12), and keeping Passover (23:21–23).

Based on the kings' pro- or anti-Yahwistic elements listed above, the author(s) of *Kings* evaluate(s) their reforms as good or bad. For example, ordering the above factors and each king's religious propensities produces the following chart.

Therefore, we can conclude that the literary structure of cultic reformations involved in significant political and religious events reveals a specific pattern incorporating the evaluations of the successive kings, as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 and described as follows.

1. Most kings initiating the cultic reformations implemented three activities: building religious institutions, manufacturing sacred objects/symbols, and appointing new spiritual leadership. However, besides those elements, other specific kings—Solomon, Jehu, Joash, and Josiah—carried out the construction or repair of the temple, regulated religious practices, made covenants between religious figures, scheduled religious festivals, and centralized religion.
2. Jehu's and Joash's cultic reforms are centrally located between Solomon, Josiah, and other kings.
3. As shown below (see no. 4), all these kings are connected in a chronological relationship in the good king/evil king framework. They parallel each other, and both experience interrelated political events.
4. Solomon–Jeroboam and Asa–Ahab have a south–north relationship in political events. Joash–Jehu are connected to their religious–political coups. Ahaz–Hezekiah and Manasseh–Josiah are associated with external power, specifically Assyria. All other kings are bound by the political situations between the two kingdoms, such as political–military tensions, lulls, and reconciliation.
5. Composition of cross-parallels—A “Solomon–Jeroboam” (a division of the two kingdoms); B “The rest of the kings” (tensions between them); C “Asa–Ahab” (reconciliation); D “The rest of the kings” (reconciliation); E “Jehoash–Jehu” (two religious–political overthrows); D' “the rest of the kings” (tension–reconciliation); C' “Ahaz–Hezekiah” (submission to Assyria/resistance to the empire); B' “Hezekiah–Hosea” (lull between them due to Assyrian invasions); A' “Manasseh–Josiah” (Assyrian hegemony and decline)—allows us to place Joash–Jehu at the center of this “chiastic” structure. Israel's kings are absent from post-Hezekiah political events due to Israel's destruction.
6. The “goodness and evil” evaluation pattern throughout *Kings* is suitably designed for chiastic form. The “good and bad king” order is confirmed from Solomon–Jeroboam to Asa–Ahab. After the central position of Jehu (a good (bad) king)—Joash (an evil king), the concept of “bad and good kings,” is also expressed in Ahaz–Hezekiah/Manasseh–Hezekiah.

Table 2. Religious reform elements in *Kings*.

King	Religious Reform Elements in Kings						Religious Evaluation
	Building (Repairing) or Dismantling Religious Institution	Setting Up or Destroying Divine Images	Appointment or Dismissal of Religious Figures	Setting Religious Laws and Regulations	Making a Covenant with the People	Cultic Support	
Solomon (United Israel)	O	O	O	O	O	Cultic centralization	Pro-Yahwism
Jeroboam (Israel)	O	O	O			Cultic feasts	Anti-Yahwism
Rehobaom, Abiyam, Asa (Judah)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism
Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri (Israel)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism
Asa [†] (Judah)	X [‡]	O	O				Pro-Yahwism
Ahab (Israel)	O	O	O				Anti-Yahwism
Jehoram, Ahaziah (Judah)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism
Aahaziah, Jerhoam (Israel)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism
Jehu (Israel)	O	O	O	X [§]	O		Pro-/Anti-Yahwism
Joash (Judah)	O	O	O	O	O		Pro-Yahwism
Jehoahaz, Joash, Uzziah, Jotham (Judah)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism
Amaziah, Jeroboam, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah (Israel)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism
Ahaz (Judah)	O	O	O				Anti-Yahwism
Hosea (Israel)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism
Hezekiah (Judah)	O	O	X	O		Cultic centralization	Pro-Yahwism
Manasseh (Judah)	O	O	O				Anti-Yahwism
Amon (Israel)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism
Josiah (Judah)	O	O	O	O	O	Cultic centralization	Pro-Yahwism
Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakin, Zedekiah (Judah)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Anti-Yahwism

[†] 1 Kgs 22:46 ('The rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained in the days of his father Asa, he expelled from the land') shows that Asa's cultic reformation was completed under Jehoshaphat; their reformation should be viewed as one continuum. [‡] There is no mention about this issue under Asa. [§] 2 Kgs 10:31.

The above analysis, illustrated in Table 3, raises new questions. 1. Can all reformations be paired to form a perfect symmetric/corresponding pattern ranked by royal goodness or evil: (A1, A2), (B1, B2), (C1,2, C1), (B'2, B'1), and (A' 2, A'1)? 2. What is the relationship between A and A' and between B and B'? Are they reciprocally parallel to and matching each other? 3. What is the A–A' and B–B' relationship? Are they symmetric and corresponding to each other? I will address these questions below.

Table 3. Detailed religious reform elements **.

Kings	Detailed Religious Reform Elements						Evaluation	Political Events	Chiasm
	Building or Destroying Temple/Shrines	Setting Up or Demolishing Divine Images/Statues	Appointing or Dismissing Religious Figures	Repairing Temple; Observing the Law	Covenant with People before God	Additional Elements			
Solomon	O	O	O	O	O		Good		A1
Jeroboam	O	O	O			Religious festivals	Bad	Division of two kingdoms	A2
Asa	X	O	O				Good		B1
Ahab	O	O	O				Bad	Reconciliation between the two	B2
Jehu	O	O	O	X	O		Good/Bad	Two coups; Destroying Baal cult	C1,2
Joash	O	O	O	O	O		Good		C1
Ahaz	O	O	O				Bad		B'2
Hezekiah	O	O	X	O		Cultic centralization	Good	Assyrian attacks; Israel's fall	B'1
Manasseh	O	O	O				Bad		A'2
Josiah	O	O	O	O	O	Cultic Centralization	Good	Assyria's demise	A'1

** An article summarizes the causes of Israel's and Judah's destructions in 2 Kgs 17 with the religious reform elements. [Becking \(2007, pp. 95–101\)](#).

4. A Chiasm of Symmetrical/Parallel Comparisons

In this section, following similarities and contrasts between the specific religious reforms, as highlighted by scholars, I show that the parallel points given are crucial clues to corroborate the symmetry of the reforms and the overall chiastic structure.

Solomon (A1) and Jeroboam (A2) are David's successors, kingdom founders who conducted cultic reforms. David's son Solomon is depicted as the architect of the national temple (1 Kgs 6) that houses the ark of the covenant (YHWH, 8:1–6). Additionally, the Zadokite priesthood is shown to perform the high priest's duties in this chapter (6:35), and God is described as the Israelites' covenant partner (8:62). As [Bodner \(2012, pp. 40–41\)](#) states, after Solomon's passing, Jeroboam emerged as “a new David” in Israel. Jeroboam fled to Egypt to escape Solomon's anger (11:26–40) but became the next king over ten of Israel's twelve tribes following Solomon's death (12:1–20). He then counteracted Solomon's religious policy by building altars at Bethel and Dan and installing golden calves, appointing non-Levite priests, and effecting monarchical religious reformations (12:25–33).

Asa (B1) and Ahab (B2)'s cultic reformations are also contrasted. Asa expelled the sodomites, destroyed the idols built by his ancestors, and abolished Queen Mother Maacah's position because she made the Asherah statues. He dedicated the consecrated remains to the temple (1 Kgs 13:11–15). By contrast, Ahab, walking in Jeroboam's way, expelled YHWH's prophets. He set up Baal and Asherah with altars and, for a wife, takes Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, Baal priest and king of Sidon (16:30–33).

Jehu (C1) and Joash (C2) share many similarities regarding their political coups and cultic reforms. [Barré \(1988, pp. 4–55\)](#) combines their stories into a single, unified account, whose theme is the end of the Omrides in Israel and Judah. This theme includes the settings, the incitement to a coup d'état, the destruction of the old rule, and the establishment of a new government. All these activities were conducted by Jehu and his counterpart, Joash, with his high priest Jehoiada's help, all in the name of YHWH. Despite Jehu's sin, following on from Jeroboam's golden calf worship, the two kings faithfully executed the five major works of pro-Yahwistic reform indicated above (2 Kgs 9:30–37; 10:18, 24–27/11:13–16, 17, 18–20).

[Ackroyd \(1984, pp. 250–251\)](#) is interested in the author(s) of *Kings*' assessment of the religious reformation of Ahaz (B'2)–Hezekiah (B'1). Ahaz was viewed as an evil king

before YHWH; he requested help from the Assyrian emperor with the temple treasure as a bribe when threatened by the Aram-Damascus–Israel military alliance in the Syro-Ephraimite war (2 Kgs 16:1–9). After meeting the Assyrian emperor in Damascus, he built a new altar in Jerusalem in an architectural style imitative of the Aramean altar already installed in Aram-Damascus and performed religious activities (16:10–18) (see [Ackroyd \(1984, pp. 252–56\)](#)). Hezekiah, the son of the wicked Ahaz but considered an excellent king before YHWH (18:1–7), rebelled against Assyria. He avoided immediate crisis by paying bribes when Assyria invaded Jerusalem (18:13–16).¹⁸ However, when asked to surrender, Hezekiah then firmly resisted Assyria (18:17–37), prayed to YHWH to defeat Assyria, and received an answer to his prayer delivered by Isaiah (2 Kgs 19). Both kings' reforms are linked to the Assyrian policy, but they use opposite tactics.

Manasseh (A'2) and Josiah (A'1) are interesting in that Manasseh's cultic reformation is mentioned in the text about Josiah (2 Kgs 23:12, 26). [Smelik \(1992, p. 154\)](#) points out that the two kings' reforms are opposite but closely related. Based on Smelik's study, [Eynikel \(1997, pp. 233–61\)](#) observes more details in overlapping/repetitive concepts and expressions. For example, Manasseh rebuilt the high places or altars for Baal/Asherah, or heavenly constellations (2 Kgs 21:3, 7), whereas Josiah demolished them (23:3–4, 6). Eynikel (*ibid.*) argues that even though the text does not employ the repetitive form of association, what is depicted is that Josiah spurs the counter-reformation against Manasseh's reformation, removes the priests and the incense offerors and extends his reformation's geographical scope into Israel's territory (23:4–20). With this perspective, it is noteworthy that Ahab or Hezekiah appear in Manasseh's story (21:3) and again in Josiah's reformation (23:12).¹⁹ Other kings' names rarely appear in the writings on later kings, other than David and Jeroboam as ideals.

In comparing those rulers whom *Kings* classifies as evil, [Cross \(1973, pp. 285–89\)](#) asserts that the DtrH(s) make(s) a theological reassessment of Judah's fall, since Manasseh's reformation resembles Jeroboam's. [Lasine \(1993, pp. 164–65\)](#) explains the Jeroboam–Manasseh relationship in more detail (A2–A'2). It is Jeroboam, not Ahab, who ultimately causes Israel to sin. Jeroboam's idolatry leads to his kingdom's later downfall.²⁰ Jeroboam's negative evaluation appears repeatedly (e.g., 1 Kgs 13:1, 33–34, 14:7–10; 2 Kgs 17:21–22). Manasseh also leads the people to sin through idolatry, eventually destroying the Judahite kingdom. In addition, Manasseh's leading of Judah to destruction is repeated (2 Kgs 21:9, 11). Thus, [Nelson \(1987, pp. 247–49\)](#) understands Manasseh as the “Jeroboam of Judah”.

In analyzing both the relationships of Jeroboam–Ahab (A2, B2) and Ahaz–Manasseh (B'2, A'2) from the perspective of their reformation, [Schniedewind \(1993, pp. 649–61\)](#) notes that Ahab's sin produces identical results to those of Jeroboam and Baasha. Jeroboam and Baasha receive prophetic judgments that their families will be destroyed, and their corpses will become food for dogs and birds (1 Kgs 14:9–11; 16:1–4), and so too for Ahab and his family (2 Kgs 9:20–24). Ahab hears this oracle in Naboth's vineyard (1 Kgs 21) in the moment of the accusation of a social crime against himself for accepting the murder of Naboth to forcibly attain coveted property. However, the punishment befalling him is engendered by his sinful Baal reformation.

Kings evaluates Manasseh and Ahab's sins using similar language. Each is described as practicing idolatry, guilty of detestable deeds, and making foreign idols in the fashion of the Amorites (2 Kgs 21:11, 26).²¹ The Israel–Amorite comparison appears only in 1 Kgs 21:26 and 2 Kgs 21:11. A specific word, גִּלּוּלִים (*gillulim*: idols), is used a total of forty-nine times in the Hebrew Bible. Excluding thirty-eight appearances in Ezekiel alone, out of the remaining eleven, six usages are in *Kings*, of which five describe Ahab and Manasseh's sins. As the house of Ahab sheds human blood (2 Kgs 9:7, 26), so Manasseh sheds the blood of the righteous (2 Kgs 21:16); thus, Manasseh's sin is described as similar to the deeds of Ahab (2 Kgs 21:3). In addition, as [Rofé \(1988, pp. 189–90, 192, 200\)](#) argues, the content of the sins mentioned in 2 Kgs 17:16–17; 21:3, which may let readers remember the wrongdoings of Jeroboam and Ahab, explains the basis for Israel's destruction: because it had made an image of a calf and a statue of Asherah; because it had worshipped the sun, the moon,

the constellations, and Baal; and because it had practiced child sacrifice, divination, and witchcraft—the very same offenses as Manasseh. From *Kings*' point of view, Manasseh's reform results are equivalent to Ahab's sins (21,13) (A'2, B'2) (For example, [Schniedewind \(1993, pp. 653–55, 659\)](#); [Lasine \(1993, pp. 164–65\)](#); [Stavropoulou \(2004, pp. 17–45\)](#)). Due to the sins of Ahab and Manasseh (1 Kgs 16:31–33; 2 Kgs 17:16–17; 21:2–7), Israel and Judah have no choice but to perish (2 Kgs 17:18–23; 21:10–16; 23:26–27).

Considering the comparison between Ahaz and Jeroboam (B'2, A2), [Smelik's \(1997, pp. 277–78\)](#) deserves more attention. The author(s) of *The Book of Kings* assert(s) that King Ahaz of Judah is much more evil than other kings of Judah (2 Kgs 16:3). Jehoram, who was married to the royal family of Israel, the house of Ahab, is the only other Judean ruler qualifying for such notoriety (2 Kgs 8:18). Yet, even Jehoram did not eagerly follow the way of Jeroboam, the first king of Israel. However, even though Ahaz was not married into the royal family of Israel, he followed more actively the way of Jeroboam than any other evil kings of Israel and Judah. As Jeroboam cut off the anti-Jerusalem reformation to establish an ideology replacing and thus removing the House of David's influence on his people, Ahaz grafts the Aram-Damascus religion onto Jerusalem, seemingly to comply with Assyria's religious policies as its vassal and make his people sin before YHWH. Both kings undertake reform due to their political and religious positions.

Kings says that Ahab and Ahaz (B2, B'2) both brought pagan religious ideas to Israel and Judah and were related. Ahab adopted the Baal religion from Sidon, built a temple and altars to Baal in Samaria, and conducted the ritual procedures with religious regulations established (1 Kgs 16:31–33). Similarly, Ahaz ordered Uriah, the high priest, to imitate the sacred architecture of the Arameans, transplant it to Jerusalem, and perform cultic rituals on it (2 Kgs 16:10–16). Typical of their reforms are the building of temples and the use of spiritual practices from other countries.

A comparative study of Joash's (C1), Josiah's (A'1), and Solomon's (A1) cultic reformations reveals that only these kings of Judah are presented as associated with specific reformation factors, primarily temple-building and repair processes (For example, [Cogan and Tadmor \(1988, p. 293\)](#); [Cohn \(2000, pp. 152–53\)](#); [Long \(1991, p. 158\)](#)). Solomon's temple construction, reported in 1 Kgs 6:1–38, highlights Solomon's interior decoration embellishments (6:15–36). However, only Solomon is depicted as guiding this process, whereas in Joash's temple-repair project, he ordered the priests to complete the mission and often received progress reports (2 Kgs 12:5–9). With silver donated by the public, the king proceeded with the repairs and enabled the priests and the professional renovators to receive remuneration (12:10–17). Josiah, like Joash, gave orders to the priests for renovation activities, supervised the repair process and rewarded the people for mending the temple (2 Kgs 22:2–9). In addition, Josiah's reform emphasizes the *Book of Law* found during the temple repairs (22:8, 10–11). Although these three temple construction/repair processes conducted by Judahite kings differ in detail, the interior renovation descriptions are generally akin to each other.

Asa and Hezekiah share similar attitudes and values regarding the cultic reformation. Their activities share common elements: conducting the reforms indicated above, enduring foreign powers' invasions, and surrendering the temple treasures in return for escaping destruction. It is noteworthy that *Kings*, which displays great interest in cultic reform, only records Hezekiah's reforms briefly (2 Kgs 18:4), in marked contrast to the considerable space devoted to them in *Chronicles*. Presumably, the author(s) intend(s) to compare and correlate Hezekiah's reforms with those of the other Judahite kings.

Combining previous scholarly works with these observations demonstrates the following points: while *Kings* presents records of the good kings (A1, B1, C1, B'1, A'1) and those of the evil kings (A2, B2, C2, B'2, A'2) differently in terms of the amount of detail, their religious reforms share many commonalities. These commonalities are paired, compared, and sometimes contrasted in conceptual and verbal parallelism. More specifically, regarding reform, (A1, A2), (B1, B2), and (C1–2, C1) correspond to each other, (B'2, B'1) and (A'2, A'1) exhibit parallelism, and (A1–2, A'1–2) and (B1–2, B'1–2) become counterparts

to each other. B1–2 and B'1–2 are linked, enveloping C1–2 and C1. A1–2 and A'1–2 form an inclusio in a larger frame of reformation, arranged in an inverted manner. The overall structure demonstrates how religious reforms are designed and placed in a linear and parallel symmetry to form a chiastic pattern (Table 4). The structure also explains why the cultic reforms of Solomon and Jeroboam, Manasseh and Josiah, and Jehu and Joash are located at the extremities and center of the chiastic system, respectively: these positions imply primary or dominant imagery and patterned messages worthy of being spotlighted in these most prominent positions.

Table 4. Religious reform elements.

Kings	Religious Reform Elements						Political Events	Similar or Antithetical Elements Shaping Symmetry and Concentricity	Overall Chiasm
	1. Sanctuary/Temple (Altar)	2. Divine Image	3. Religious Figures	4. Temple Repairment/	5. Covenant	6. Festivals/Cultic Centralization			
Solomon	O	O	O	O	O		Good	Division of Two kingdoms	A1
Jeroboam	O	O	O			O	Bad		A2
Asa	X	O	O				Good	Reconciliation of two kingdoms	B1
Ahab	O	O	O				Bad		B2
Jehu	O	O	O	X	O		Good/Bad	Two coups; Destroying Baal religion	C1,2
Joash	O	O	O	O	O		Good		C1
Ahaz	O	O	O				Bad	Assyrian attacks; Israel's fall	B'2
Hezekiah	O	O	X	O		O	Good		B'1
Manasseh	O	O	O				Bad	Assyria's Demise	A'2
Josiah	O	O	O	O	O	O	Good		A'1

5. Religious Reformation Structure: Analysis and Theological Implications

Yet, given this framework, the question still stands: Why does *Kings* repeat excellent or bad religious reformations of all the kings of Judah and Israel several times with this stylistic design and arrangement?

As Weinfeld (1972, pp. 320–67) argues, religious reformation in *Kings* seems founded on the following theological themes and concepts, influenced by Deuteronomy: 1. Emphasis on the temple as the only suitable place of worship. 2. Observance of laws. 3. Abhorrence and criticism of pagan religions and monotheistic themes. 4. Yahwistic prophets' prophecies and fulfilment. 5. Emphasis on the Davidic line or covenant. These concepts justify the linear arrangement of the good king–evil king composition of religious reformation(s), its parallel structure, and the overall concentric structure. In the religious reformation circles of good kings such as Solomon and Josiah, who bring about the Yahwistic reformation, the above four themes/concepts are described as these kings' religious exploits. The same is true for Jehu and Joash's reformation stories. Furthermore, *Kings* describes these kings' cultic reformations as destined to fail, due either to their problems or to external challenges by foreign powers. Criticism of such failures is equally applied to Solomon, Josiah, Jehu, and Joash. *Kings* needs to describe the previous reformations' success and failure, leading to the repetitions.

Then, why must the author(s) of *Kings* state the achievements and frustrations of each king's reformation together with the above four themes? The answer clarifies how reformation successes and limitations were equally applied to Solomon and Josiah, placed at both ends of the concentric structure, and to Jehu and Joash, at its center.

Even though Solomon turned evil later, his deeds, following David's way, made him a role model for other kings. Solomon's cultic reformation is (literally) ground-breaking and becomes the paradigm: building the temple where YHWH puts his name for all Israel (1 Kgs 6–7; 8:17–18, 20, 43–44); the installation of the divine presence, the ark (6:19); and the establishment of the high priesthood and its assignment to Zadok and his offspring (2:35; 4:2, 4). YHWH's order to Solomon to keep the divine commandments and laws (6:12–13; 8:23–26) is significant for both Israel and Judah, since their destiny depends on their observance. However, the positive assessment of Solomon's behaviors turns negative, due to his marriages with foreign women and the introduction of foreign religion into Israel during his later reign (11:4–13). The Unified Monarchy (the unified kingdom) that enabled Solomon's wealth and glory is now divided into two, just as Ahijah, the Yahwistic prophet, prophesied (11:30–39; 12:16–19, 23–24). This leads to Jeroboam's anti-Jerusalem cultic reformation, the foundation for the prophecy, and its fulfilment of Samaria's fall (2 Kgs 17:13, 23).

Josiah follows David's way honestly and undertakes a more thorough religious reform than any other king. No king after Solomon's reign is credited with temple repair except for Josiah (2 Kgs 22:3–7) and Joash (12:4–15). Additionally, the abolishment of other regional sanctuaries reinforces the Jerusalem temple's prerogative and exclusive authority (23:8). Moreover, Josiah's "good" deeds—repairing the temple, reading the Mosaic Law found during the repair process, and making the people obey YHWH's law—are strikingly accentuated (2 Kgs 22:8–13; 23:1–3). Furthermore, Josiah's reformation treating Jeroboam's Bethel altar reminds the readers of the man of God's prophecy at that time (1 Kgs 13:2, 23; 2 Kgs 23:15–16). However, Josiah cannot escape YHWH's wrath for the lasting impact of Manasseh and Judah's sins (21:10–15; 23:16–17). According to Huldah's prophecy, Josiah is destined to die in battle with Pharaoh Neco II. Worse, despite his efforts, the temple will ultimately be destroyed (22:14–20; 23:29).

In contrast, Jehu initiated an unprecedented, thorough, anti-Baal reformation in Israel and removes all Baal images, temples, and priests, fulfilling Elijah, Elisha, and their disciples' prophecies and oracles. Jehu's zeal for YHWH becomes the basis for their fulfilment (Oracles: 1 Kgs 21:21–26, 29; 2 Kgs 9:7–10; Fulfilment: 1 Kgs 22:38; 2 Kgs 9:25, 26, 35–37; 10:10, 17). The observance of the divine law, which does not occur any longer since Jeroboam's reign until Jehu's reign again played a role in Jehu's reform, since whether the Nimshide (Jehuite) dynasty continued relied on it (2 Kgs 10:30–31). Nevertheless, Jehu eventually followed Jeroboam's iniquity (2 Kgs 10:29), not David's ways. The reformation in Israel could not overcome its inherent limitation of Samaria, which could not have the Jerusalem temple's centrality and superiority as its rival.

The same is true for Joash's reformation. The temple repair undertaken by Joash's order with the high priest's help (2 Kgs 11:3–4, 9–15) seems essential for Kings' description of cultic reform, as it became a role model for Josiah's repair procedure. Joash's further initiation of cultic reform—placing the testimony before him (11:12), making a covenant (11:17), and removing Baal images and Baal priests (11:18)—brings about the Davidic house's resurrection. Elijah and Elisha's prophecies regarding the demise of Ahab's house are eventually accomplished in Joash's reformation: Athaliah, a member of Ahab's house who ruled the kingdom of Judah, was then killed (11:20). Yet, even his reformation was not wholly successful. When invaded by Aram-Damascus, Joash offered the temple vessels to the Aramean king, and was killed by his servants (12:17–21).

In review, *Kings* consistently finds shortcomings not only for the anti-Yahwistic reformation but also the pro-Yahwistic one. Indeed, none of the kings of Israel's reformation programs ultimately worked since they were generally anti-Yahwistic. Hence, *Kings* tries to imply that reforms were undertaken in a spirit of hope by the good kings of the kingdom of Judah, who inherited the concept of "One Israel" after the fall of Samaria. Nevertheless, the examples also reveal the same limitations: only two Judahite kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, tried to conduct reform in good ways, and even they failed. In this sense, a repeated pattern is found across *Kings*: as the author(s) point(s) out, the existing reforms' shortcomings

motivate the implementation of new ones only by the line of Davidic kingship or (a) new Davidic heir(s), not by anyone related to Israel. Therefore, *Kings* would not posit that cultic reformation ends in total failure, considering a pattern of “One Israel” rebellion, repentance, and salvation. The book makes it clear through repetitions that each process produces another, either good or bad.

While writing this history, the author(s) intend(s) to make the audience ever-conscious of the good reformations of the past; through this emphasis, the audience, (a) new Davidic heir(s), and their supporters or those who wait for the Davidic heir(s), will anticipate an “ideal” reformation to take place in their own time or the future. In this vein, *Kings* teaches that even bad reformations result in lessons and that the audience will not make such mistakes when engaging in reformation. The readings show what good cultic reform looks like, so that those who experience and carry out such reforms learn to trust that YHWH will forgive their past sins, caused by failed reforms leading people into sinful practices, and join in their efforts to bring Israel and Judah back to repentance. This new vision presents the ideal reformation as a model for the future community. As [Lasine \(1993, pp. 181–84\)](#) argues, the wicked kings are portrayed as scapegoats of a sort, as anti-heroes, to be avoided. The nuanced, balanced account of different reforms in such a setting is a legacy for the future. It comprises a series of working models and experiments that pave the way for the next generation, giving those who want to try this kind of reformation a goal to aim for and a set of rules to follow.

6. Conclusions

Kings sets up and analyzes the religious reformation and shows a carefully planned linear and concentric chiasmus in a straightforward horizontal and vertical framework. First, with the concept of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah as “One Israel,” *Kings* arranges the royal religious reforms alongside contextual political events in a linearly organized pattern of “good king, bad king.” By comparing verbal and thematic similarities and differences, it makes a larger symmetrical and chiastic pattern. Second, *Kings* places the reforms of Solomon/Jeroboam and Manasseh/Josiah at the respective ends of a continuum, enveloping those of Asa/Ahab and Ahaz/Hezekiah. Third, the reformation of Jehu and Joash is in the last part of the circle of Elijah and Elisha, in the middle of the larger frame of *Kings*. Since crucial ideas and thoughts usually appear in the middle and at the ends of the chiastic form, the three reforms—Solomon’s, Josiah’s, and Jehu/Joash’s reforms—likely contain an additional message to be discerned. Fourth, the author(s) give(s) a very detailed overall framework in which the Yahwistic reforms of Solomon, Josiah, and Jehu/Joash are explained in much more detail than the reforms of other kings, deliberately drawing the reader’s attention to these kings. Observing the full scope of the data provided by *Kings* shows that the recurrent, cyclical good and bad cultic reforms form a series, each process entailing another. *Kings* then becomes a kind of guide to reformation for its audience, the future Davidic heir(s), and their supporters or those who wait for the Davidic heir(s). According to *Kings*, none of Israel’s reforms ultimately work: even Jehu could not make his changes completely successful. In contrast, even though the reforms of the kings of Judah (carried out even after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel) each have limitations and require further development, some of them, as “good” ones, demonstrate their potential, appealing to the audience themselves. Presumably, the author(s) of *Kings* want(s) the audience(s) to recognize a carefully and meticulously crafted pattern of reformation that does not accept the anti-Yahwistic reformation of Israel at all but does accept some good reforms of Judah. With this pattern in hand, the audience should remember why the pro-Yahwistic reforms based on the Davidic covenant and the concept of “One Israel,” as their model to strive for, have crucial religious reform elements in common. These reforms are thus highlighted by their placement within the chiastic framework. The audience can now identify and look forward to achieving the ideal reforms in the future while rejecting the problematic or potentially problematic ones.

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Notes

- ¹ For instance, the Weidner Chronicle contains religious propaganda elements like other Ancient Near Eastern/Western Asian records. Mamik Ilisu, king of Isin, reports the divine blessings bestowed upon the early rulers who offered sacrifices to the supreme god Marduk to the Babylonian king Apil Sin in Babylon's Esagila sanctuary. His predecessors are judged as good kings if they served Esagila's religion well, and as evil kings if they neglected it. See [Grayson \(2000, pp. 43–45, 145\)](#).
- ² Since the 2000s, scholars have asked, "Who is(are) the Deuteronomi(sti)c historian(s) [henceforth, DtrH(s)]? Do(es) such person(s) really exist? Do Deuteronomi(sti)c historical works really exist?" These questions presuppose a fundamental skepticism about the existence of the historian(s) defined as the DtrH(s). Hence, herein, I do not define the author(s) of *Kings* as the DtrH(s); merely as the author(s) of *Kings*. See a summarized scholarly discourse on this topic in [Römer \(2015, pp. 43–66\)](#).
- ³ A typical example is Baasha's coup d'état, betraying Nadab, Jeroboam's son, which is depicted due to all of Jeroboam's house and the people of Israel sinning before the LORD. Ahijah prophesies its fall (1 Kgs 15:28–30).
- ⁴ Kings of Israel are portrayed negatively; those of Judah positively—unless the latter are associated with idolatry—since they are David's offspring and rule Jerusalem, God's chosen city.
- ⁵ To be sure, we are told a reasonable amount about the historical events happening during the days of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah (Judah) and Ahaziah and Joram (Israel). However, the events are closely related to the two great Yahwistic prophets' activities, which concern their lifelong anti-Baal religion movement, the preservation of the Yahwistic religion, and the abolishment of the Baal religion. Accordingly, these events cannot be simply regarded as the exploits of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah. See the more detailed discussion in Section 2.
- ⁶ For chiasm's symmetry as an Ancient Near Eastern documents literary convention, see [Welch \(1981\)](#). Regarding the discussion on the literary and theological significance of chiasm as a structuring device in the Hebrew Bible, see several case studies, for example, [Lund \(Lund 1929–1930, pp. 104–26\)](#); [di Marco \(1975, pp. 21–97\)](#); [Kalimi \(2005, pp. 215–274\)](#); [Levinson \(2020, pp. 171–80\)](#).
- ⁷ [Bar-Efrat \(1980, p. 170\)](#) sees four chiastic patterns, parallel pattern (A A'), ring pattern (AXA'), chiastic pattern (ABB' A'), and concentric pattern (ABXB' A'). The concentric pattern deserves attention in the present study.
- ⁸ [Alter \(1981, pp. 94–97\)](#) explains five frequently used elements in biblical repeated descriptions, 1. *Leitwörter* ("leading words" in German, sg. *Leitwort*, in relation to their phonetic, semantic, and thematic synonymy and antonymy); 2. Motive; 3. Theme; 4. Consequences of the characters' actions; 5. Type of scene. Here, I pay special attention to *Leitwörter*, motives, and theme, in addressing a linear and concentric chiasm.
- ⁹ See citation nos. 6–8.
- ¹⁰ About literary units, unit arrangement, literary structure and form, and their meaning and theological significance, see [Alter \(1981, pp. 88–113\)](#); [Bar-Efrat \(1989, pp. 93–140\)](#); [Dorsey \(1999, pp. 1–12\)](#).
- ¹¹ Solomon (Unified Kingdom: United Monarchy): 1 Kgs 11:3,5; Jeroboam (Israel): 12:28–32, 13:33–34; Rehoboam (Judah): 14:22; Abiyam: 15:3 (Judah); Asa (Judah): 15:11; Nadab (Israel): 15:26; Baasha (Israel): 15:34; Zimri (Israel): 16:19; Omri (Israel): 16:25–26; Ahab (Israel): 16:30–31; Jehoshaphat (Judah): 22:43; Ahaziah (Israel): 22:52; Jehoram (Israel): 2 Kgs 3:2–3; Jehoram (Israel): 8:18; Ahaziah (Judah): 8:27; Jehu (Israel): 10:29, 31; Joash (Judah): 12:3; Jehoahaz (Israel): 13:2; Joash (Israel): 13:11; Amaziah (Judah): 14:3; Jeroboam (Israel): 14:23; Azariah (Judah): 15:3; Zechariah (Israel): 15:9; Menahem (Israel): 15:18; Pekahiah (Israel): 15:24; Pekah (Israel): 15:28; Jotham (Judah): 15:34; Ahaz (Judah): 16:2–3; Hosea (Israel): 17:2; Hezekiah (Judah): 18:3; Manasseh (Judah): 21:2–3; Amon (Judah): 21:20; Josiah (Judah): 22:2; Jehoahaz (Judah): 23:32; Jehoiakim (Judah): 23:37; Jehoiakin (Judah): 24:9; Zedekiah (Judah): 24:19.
- ¹² Regarding religious practices of kings, for Israel, the comparison is Jeroboam; for Judah, it is David. [Ash \(1998, pp. 16–24\)](#); [Leithart \(2005, pp. 19–33\)](#). As for the basic framework for evaluating the successive kings in *Kings*, see [Long \(1984, p. 22\)](#).
- ¹³ [Nelson \(1987, pp. 97–105\)](#) conceptualizes this method of historical description as a "paradigmatic history," since the historical writing about these kings, as compared to others, features a succinct historical depiction in a repetitive pattern, rather than a verbose one.
- ¹⁴ The stories, which report the political and religious events occurring outside of Israel (1 Kgs 17; 2 Kgs 3), demonstrate the prophetic power of Elijah and Elisha firmly established within the territory of Israel and even outside of it. With this description, *Kings* argues that these two prophets are broadly accepted as authoritative figures even by foreigners and this helps confirm that whatever their prophecy, which goes beyond national boundaries, will be eventually accomplished. This understanding can be applied to the story of Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:5–36). In the final form of the present text, the oracle of Micaiah about the military conflicts with Aram-Damascus and the death of Ahab on the battlefield (22:17, 19–23, 28, 35–37) serves as a foundation to fulfill

the curses of Elijah on the house of Ahab (21:19; 22:38) in the context of international affairs. The fact that Micaiah's prophetic condemnation against Ahab objectively legitimizes the curse of Elijah indicates that Ahab's religious transgressions will result in Jehu's coup d'état (1 Kgs 21:29; 2 Kgs 9:6–10:14), supported by Elisha's approval (2 Kgs 9:1–3) and his pro-Yahwistic reforms (10:18–29). The embedment of Micaiah's oracle (1 Kgs 22) within the larger story about Elijah–Elisha and Ahab and his sons (1 Kgs 18–2 Kgs 8) induces readers to understand in this way.

- 15 See Nelson (1987, p. 215). This style of “paradigmatic history” is noteworthy, since the era of the Nimshide dynasty was the political and economic golden days of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It shows that *Kings* does draw less attention to the political successes than to religious zealotry in the service of YHWH.
- 16 Note that even the historical events happening in the days of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah (Judah), and Ahaziah and Joram (Israel) are not directly related to these kings' deeds; instead, 1 Kgs 18–2 Kgs 9 clearly connect the incidents to Elijah and Elisha. If the stories of Elijah and Elisha were omitted from the literary scope of 1 Kgs 18–2 Kgs 9, readers would gain little information about the above-mentioned kings.
- 17 Regarding the cultic exploits of Solomon, see Hurowitz (1992). Solomon requires much scrutiny to discern *Kings*' judgment of him; it appears to be either or both good (1 Kgs 6–9) or/and bad (1 Kgs 11). As the Davidic covenant heir, he receives the divine oracle of an eternal throne should he obey YHWH's commands; but if he serves and worships other gods, his people and the temple will be cut off (1 Kgs 9:4–7). Solomon is portrayed positively in his youth due to his obedience to that commandment (1 Kgs 3:3–14; 6:12–13; 8:12–61; 9:3–5; 10:9), but negatively in his old age as he violates the divine regulations and stipulations, marries foreign women, commits abominations, and worships other, foreign gods (11:1–13). However, the comparison of other kings' activities with Solomon's offers the approach that *Kings* has ambivalent evaluations on several kings even in the period of the divided Kingdoms. *Kings* evaluates Asa as a good king (15:11, 14), yet he has disease and dies in his old age (15:23). Ahab is usually known as the most notorious king due to his Baal worship; however, when he repents, the disaster will be delayed into his son's days (22:27–29). On the other hand, Hezekiah is regarded as a good king (2 Kgs 18:5–7), yet he displays the temple treasures to the Babylonian emissaries by mistake and thus the royal estate and his descendants will be moved to Babylon as divine punishment (20:15–19). Josiah follows more completely the divine commandments than other kings (22:2; 23:22, 24–25), yet he is destined to meet his death in the battlefield (22:20; 23:29). The difficulty in finalizing the evaluations on these kings may indicate one of *Kings*' rhetorical goals; seemingly, *Kings* argues that every king has his limitations, as I will discuss later in Chapter 5. However, generally, the text explicitly refers to the conductor of the pro-Yahwistic reform as a good king, even though he is portrayed negatively later due to his sins. Given that Solomon is involved in religious rituals of the cultic reform, he should then, ultimately, be assessed positively.
- 18 Robb A. Young, Regarding the cultic exploits of Hezekiah, see Young (2012, pp. 9–121).
- 19 Long (1991, pp. 248–49) argues that *Kings* positions Manasseh against YHWH, just as Ahaz, in thematic contrast to Hezekiah and Josiah. Manasseh and Ahaz are described as their antitypes.
- 20 Even Ahab, the most notorious king for leading Israel into sin, receives only one mention in *Kings* (1 Kgs 21,22). This evidences the text's extreme negative evaluation of Jeroboam.
- 21 For the historical Manasseh, see Stavrakopoulou (2004, pp. 73–119).

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