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ABSTRACT

INDICATORS OF TYPOLOGY IN THE NARRATIVE OF ELIJAH: AN
INVESTIGATION INTO THE PREDICTIVE
NATURE OF BIBLICAL TYPOLOGY

by

Jônatas de Mattos Leal

Advisor: Richard M. Davidson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: INDICATORS OF TYPOLOGY IN THE NARRATIVE OF ELIJAH: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PREDICTIVE NATURE OF BIBLICAL TYPOLOGY

Name of researcher: Jônatas de Mattos Leal

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Richard M. Davidson, PhD

Date completed: 2022

Elijah is among the most popular prophets in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In Judaism, the hope for his return has evolved into a plethora of legends in which he functions as a helper to the righteous in the present and avenger to the wicked in the future eschaton. In Christianity, the expectation involving his return has also a multitemporal dimension, but its fulfilment is typologically oriented. More often, scholars study the fulfilment of the Elijah typology from the NT perspective in a backward movement. This dissertation investigates this typology in a forward movement going from the OT to the NT while still recognizing the

value of a both ways approach. In other words, the present work aims at looking for indicators of typology in the narrative of Elijah.

This study is divided into three parts. In the first one (Chapter 2), a review of literature of the last two decades reveals that although the basic issues involving the study of typology in Scriptures have not changed during this period, new trends have emerged. After this initial methodological positioning, this study proceeds in the second part (Chapters 3–5) with a text-empirical analysis of Elijah cycle (1 Kgs 17–19, 21; 2 Kgs 1–2:14), that takes into account not only the historical element of the narrative but also its artistic features as literature. Finally, in the third part (Chapter 6), the study identifies the typological indicators that emerged from the exegesis of the passage in part 2 and shows their relationship with the actual fulfillment of Elijah typology in the NT era.

In conclusion, the analysis of the biblical data indicates that there are at least three clear indicators of typology in the narrative of Elijah and in its broader canonical context: (i) the antitypical use of Elijah as a new Melchizedek, Moses, Joshua, and David; (ii) the presence of major redemptive-historical events such as the exodus and new covenant; and (iii) the recurring and unfinished characteristic of the prophet's narrative. Thus, regarding the typology of Elijah, both Malachi and the NT authors were not reading into the OT something that was not already there. At the same time, the NT writers develop the typology of Elijah beyond its contemporary and initial fulfillment in the ministry of John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah. In addition to this inaugurated eschatological fulfilment, they signal future appropriated and consummated fulfilment phases in the historical progress from the establishment of the NT church to the end of time.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jônatas de Mattos Leal
2022

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE

Faculty Adviser,
Richard M. Davidson
J. N. Andrews Professor of
Old Testament Interpretation

Oliver Glanz
Associate Professor of
Old Testament

Roy E. Gane
Professor of Hebrew Bible &
Ancient Near Eastern Languages

Jiří Moskala
Professor of Old Testament Exegesis

James M. Hamilton, Jr.
Professor of Biblical Theology
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Director, Ph.D./Th.D Programs
John Reeve

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Jiri Moskala

Date Approved

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	The Anchor Bible Commentary
ABR	Australian Biblical Review
AC	Affirmation & Critique
AIL	Ancient Israel And Its Literature
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATR	Anglican Theological Review
ATSDS	Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series
AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies
AUSSDDS	Andrews University Seminary Studies Doctoral Dissertation Series
AUSSJ	Andrews University Seminary Students Journal
BBR	Bulletin for Biblical Research
BET	Bulletin for Ecclesial Theology
BI	Biblical Interpretation
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BN	Biblische Notizen
BO	Beit Olam
BRIS	Biblical Research Institute Studies

BS	Bibliotheca Sacra
BSC	Bible Study Commentary
BSIH	Brill's Studies in Intellectual History
BSL	Biblical Studies Library
BSL	Biblical Studies Library
BT	Baptistic Theologies
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
BTCOT	Brazos Theological Commentary of the Old Testament
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cornerstone Bible Commentary
CBQ	The Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBR	Currents in Biblical Research
CC	Concordia Commentary
CCen	The Christian Century
CEP	Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives
CI	Critical Inquiry
CJ	Concordia Journal
CJAS	Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series
CP	The Confessional Presbyterian
CPNIVC	College Press NIV Commentary
CTJ	Calvin Theological Journal

CTQ	Concordia Theological Quarterly
CTR	Criswell Theological Review
CV	Communio Viatorum
DARCOM	Daniel and Revelation Committee Series
DCG	A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels
DCH	Dictionary of Classical Hebrew
DDD	Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible
DJCR	A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations
DJG	Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels
DL	DavarLogos
DTIB	Dictionary of the Theological Interpretation of the Bible
EAC	Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity
EB	Estudios Bíblicos
EDB	Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible
EDEJ	Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism
EDSS	Encyclopaedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls
EJ	Evangelical Journal
EM	Estudios Marianos
EUS	European University Studies
EvT	Evangelische Theologie
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FM	Faith and Mission
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature

FT	First Things
HALOT	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
HAR	Hebrew Annual Review
HBT	Horizons in Biblical Theology
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HS	Hebrew Studies
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
IBC	Intertextual Bible Commentary
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDBSup	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplementary Volume
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
IJRS	Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies
IJST	International Journal of Systematic Theology
Int	Interpretation
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JASS	Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary
JATS	Journal of Adventist Theological Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBMS	Journal of Book of Mormon Studies
JBQ	Jewish Bible Quarterly

JBT	Journal of Biblical Theology
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JETS	Journal of Evangelical Theological Society
JHR	The Journal of Religious History
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JPSBC	The Jewish Publication Society Bible Commentary
JQS	Journal of Qur'anic Studies
JRH	The Journal of Religious History
JRSAI	The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JTAK	Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa
JTI	Journal of Theological Interpretation
LBD	Lexham Bible Dictionary
LBI	Library of Biblical Interpretation
LEB	Lexham English Bible
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies

LT	Literature and Theology
LWC	Living Word Commentary
MJT	Midwestern Journal of Theology
MNTS	McMaster New Testament Studies
MSJ	The Master' Seminary Journal
NAC	New American Commentary
NB	New Blackfriars
NBBC	New Beacon Bible Commentary
NBD	New Bible Dictionary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NCI	New Critical Idiom
NEAEHL	The New Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavation in the Holy Land
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary of the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
NLH	New Literary History
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NovT	Novum Testamentum
NTM	New Testament Monograph
NTS	New Testament Studies
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OF	Orthodoxes Forum

OJT	Ogbomoso Journal of Theology
OTE	Old Testament Essays
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PHSWM	Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
PRS	Perspectives in Religious Studies
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
QR	Quarterly Review
RB	Revista Bíblica
RE	Review & Expositor
RFH	Revista de Filología Hispánica
RFP	Reformed Faith & Practice
RHPR	Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses
RJ	Reformed Journal
RSR	Revue des Sciences Religieuses
RTR	The Reformed Theological Review
SAIS	Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture
SB	Subsidia Biblica
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBJT	The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study

SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series
SCS	Sino-Christian Studies
SDAIBC	Seventh-Day Adventist International Bible Commentary
SGC	Study Guide Commentary
SGCS	Study Guide Commentary Series
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SHJ	Studying the Historical Jesus
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
SJSJ	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
SJT	Scottish Journal Theology
SLJT	Saint Luke's Journal of Theology
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
SP	Studia Pohl
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
ST	Scripta Theologica
STR	Southeastern Theological Review
SymS	Symposium Series
Syr	Syria
TA	Tel Aviv
TB	Tyndale Bulletin
TE	The Theological Educator

ThPh	Theologie und Philosophie
TJ	Trinity Journal
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
TS	Theological Studies
TSAJ	Text and Studies in Ancient Judaism
UBC	Understanding the Bible Commentary
VE	Verbum et Ecclesia
VT	Vetus Testament
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WHJP	World History Jewish People
WLQ	Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly
WTJ	The Westminster Theological Journal
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZNW	Zeitschrift Für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Mark 9:11-13, Jesus makes one of the most intriguing declarations about the prophetic nature of the Old Testament narrative. Jesus's disciples approach him asking why the scribes insist that Elijah should come first. Jesus responds: "Elijah indeed does come first *and* restores all *things*. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man that he should suffer many *things* and be treated with contempt? ¹³ But I tell you that indeed Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they wanted, just as it is written about him" (LEB). Assuming Jesus is not referring to a lost Scripture or any contemporary tradition about Elijah, the only part of the OT that he can be alluding to is the cycle of Elijah in 1 Kgs 16:21–2 Kgs 2:14. Provided this is the case, Jesus is indicating that the prophet's life and ministry is somehow pointing forward and beyond Elijah to the gospel realities elucidated by Jesus.

Jesus' statement not only raises the question as to the character of Elijah's narrative but also about the very nature of typology. In this context, this present research will look for typological indicators both in the cycle of Elijah (1 Kgs 16:21–2 Kgs 2:18) and the reverberations of this narrative in the Latter Prophets in order to evaluate its use in the New Testament as retrospective or prospective. As will be seen, the exegetical analysis of Elijah's story reveals several textual indicators of typology that could have

been discerned already in the first part of the Christian canon.

Considering typology with regard to Elijah, it must be considered whether there are any OT typological indicators contained within the narrative in its original context in 1 and 2 Kings, or in the Latter Prophets. The answer to this issue could assist in addressing other related issues, not specifically addressed in this research. These issues include: (i) is the typological interpretation of the OT in the NT retrospective, prospective, or both?; (ii) if any retrospection element is present, is it epistemological or ontological?; (iii) if it is prospective, is it prospective in each NT typological interpretation of the OT?; (iv) when interpreting the OT, are the NT authors merely reusing it in creative ways, and looking for analogies that support the life, ministry, and mission of Messiah?; and, finally, (v) does the privileged perspective of revelation and inspiration assist the NT author to identify something in the OT text that is not there or is otherwise indistinguishable by unprivileged readers?

Despite twenty years of continuous debate and numerous publications since the last comprehensive review of literature concerning typology there is no agreement among scholars regarding the answers for these questions. Further, the disagreement is not merely confined to the contrasting views of traditional and the post-critical neo-typology views. Within these groups themselves, there are wide differences. Regarding Elijah typology, there have been no significant studies on his story in 1 and 2 Kings focused on the predictive nature of biblical narratives as found in other studies involving persons such as Joshua and Joseph, events such as the exodus, or institutions such as the temple and its rituals. This is surprising given that Elijah is a prominent person of the OT to

which NT writers refer several times. In fact, the prophet is the third most mentioned OT character in the NT, with only Moses and Abraham referenced more frequently.

My strategy to carry out the present research is to divide my analysis into three parts which are further organized into five chapters. The first part comprises chapter 2, where I will delineate the main trends in typology studies between 2000 and 2022. Since Friedbert Ninow formulated the last comprehensive review of literature concerning typology research in 2000,¹ this study will review the major contributions to this topic published after 2000. In doing so, my objective is threefold: (i) to lay out options for the definition of typology and appropriate methodology for analyzing it; (ii) to compare the results of my analysis to previous comprehensive reviews of earlier literature formulated by Richard M. Davidson² and Ninow, highlighting recent developments, especially regarding the predictive aspect of typology; and (c) to define my own position regarding definition and methodology in the scholarly debate.

At the start, it is not the aim of this study to propose a new definition of typology or the methodology for analyzing it. Rather, this study will utilize the definitions (with corresponding methodology) already shaped by structures that exist in the biblical text, as proposed by Leonhard Goppelt,³ Patrick Fairbairn,⁴ G. K. Beale,⁵ and particularly

¹ Friedbert Ninow, *Indicators of Typology Within the Old Testament: The Exodus Motif* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 2001), 22–96.

² Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical τύπος Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 191–408.

³ Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 1–60, 198–208.

⁴ Patrick Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1989), 1–41.

⁵ G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 1–28.

Davidson. However, in the process of research there is an openness to refine or even propose a new definition based upon the findings, as appropriate.

The second part of my analysis will be set forth in Chapters 3 through 5 of this study. Therein I will exegete the passages between 1 Kgs 17 and 2 Kgs 2 in which Elijah is an active character. That analysis will take a text-phenomenological reading that considers not only the word level but also the important linguistic aspects contained in phrase, clause, sentence, and text level as well as in issues related to valence.⁶ This text-phenomenological reading considers six categories of empirical data: participants, syntax, text-grammatical hierarchy, discursive dynamics, space- and time-markings in texts, and lemma distribution.⁷

The text-empirical exegesis takes the linguistic and textual properties of biblical meaning seriously.⁸ The advantage to include a text-empirical analysis in the exegetical task is that as an empirical inductive procedure⁹ it is based on “observation methodologically controlled and prescription of the textual track, which involves the

⁶ Oliver Glanz, *Understanding Participant-Reference Shifts in the Book of Jeremiah: A Study of Exegetical Method and Its Consequences for the Interpretation of Referential Incoherence*, SSN 60 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 103–124. See also Janet Dyk, Oliver Glanz, Reinoud Oosting, “Analyzing Valence Patterns in Biblical Hebrew: Theoretical Questions and Analytic Frameworks,” *JNSL* 40 (2014): 1–20. Oliver Glanz, Reinoud Oosting, Janet Dyk, “Analyzing Valence Patterns in Biblical Hebrew: Classical and Linguistic Patterns,” *JNSL* 41 (2015): 31–55.

⁷ Oliver Glanz, “Bible Software on the Workbench of the Biblical Scholar: Assessment and Perspective,” *AUSS* 56 (2018): 12–13.

⁸ Christof Hardmeier and Regine Hunziker-Rodewald, “Texttheorie und Texterschließung Grundlagen: Einer empirisch-textpragmatischen Exegese,” in *Lesarten der Bibel: Untersuchungen zu einer Theorie der Exegese des Alten Testaments*, ed. Helmut Utzschneider and Erhard Blum (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006), 14.

⁹ Hardmeier and Hunziker-Rodewald, “Texttheorie und Texterschließung Grundlagen,” 31.

linguistic signals that guide the communication-pragmatic formation of meaning and specific mode of action in a speech or narrative text.”¹⁰

In addition to the linguistic aspects of the text, an analysis of Elijah’s cycle must consider the poetics of the biblical narrative.¹¹ The study of the literary design involves an exploration of the rhetorical patterns and terminological, semantic, and thematic connections/ interruptions present in the text.¹² By tracking all signs that point to the “past performative communication process,”¹³ the reader is in a better position to understand the textual meaning as the author intended it.

It is important to note that this study will not attempt to produce a detailed exegetical analysis of each verse of 1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 2. Instead, the focus will be on those sections wherein possible typological indicators may be recognized. Furthermore, bearing in mind the synchronic nature of this study, diachronic aspects will have secondary importance. Accordingly, linguistic, literary, and theological aspects will receive more attention than issues arising from authorship and history of composition. Issues related to

¹⁰ Hardmeier and Hunziker-Rodewald, “Texttheorie und Texterschließung Grundlagen,” 16.

¹¹ Important methodological insights to analyze the poetics of biblical narrative are provided in the following works: Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011); J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987); Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007); Jerome T. Walsh, *Style & Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001).

¹² Oliver Glanz, “Exegetical Process Description (OT) v1.64,” [github.com/oliverglanz](https://github.com/oliverglanz/Text-Fabric/blob/master/o.glanz_exegetical-process-description_v1.64.pdf), July 7, 2019, https://github.com/oliverglanz/Text-Fabric/blob/master/o.glanz_exegetical-process-description_v1.64.pdf (MIT licensed).”

¹³ Christof Hardmeier, “The Achilles Heel of Reader-Response Criticism and the Concept of Reading Hermeneutics of Caution,” in *Literary Construction of Identity in the Ancient World: Proceedings of a Conference--Literary Fiction and the Construction of Identity in Ancient Literatures: Options and Limits of Modern Literary Approaches in the Exegesis of Ancient Texts, Heidelberg, July 10-13, 2006*, ed. Hanna Liss and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 124.

the historical background will be explored but only as they are pertinent to the understand of the passages involved.

The relevance of Chapters 3–5 is based on the assumption that “some indication of the existence and predictive quality of the various OT types should occur already in the OT before their NT antitypical fulfillment—otherwise there would be no predictive element.”¹⁴ According to Davidson, this is the logical consequence of the fact that “biblical types are divinely designed to serve as prospective/predictive prefigurations.”¹⁵ Such an assumption has been verified as true not only through Davidson’s work but also through the most recent study by James Hamilton.¹⁶ If any internal indicators or prophetic/eschatological warrants are present in Elijah’s narrative, it is through a full exegetical analysis of the passage that they may be discovered. For this reason, the inclusion of all exegetical analysis of the Elijah cycle is an important methodological step. The identification of typological relationships is an exegetical endeavor, and as such involves a careful consideration of all textual material available. Based on this analysis, the identification of typological indicators is made in the third part of this study, wherein the reader can see what is included and what is excluded from the discussion of part 3.

Finally, the third part comprises Chapter 6 wherein I will identify possible indicators of typology in the Elijah narrative. Such typological markers can be found either in the immediate context of the passage or in the broader context of the canonical development. Regarding the immediate context, I will look for verbal hints and other

¹⁴ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” *TheoRhema* 6 (2011): 16.

¹⁵ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic,” 16.

¹⁶ James M. Hamilton Jr., *Typology: Understanding the Bible’s Promise-Shaped Patterns. How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academics, 2022).

textual aspects of the narrative that may indicate predictive import in the passage.¹⁷

Using Bible software queries based, for instance, on Logos Bible Software and ETCBC database,¹⁸ I will examine “the linguistic phenomenological collection of stylistic formations, pictorial motifs or word fields”¹⁹ to find intertextual fields of reference (i.e., reuse) or non-habitual ways of using language. In addition to elucidating the meaning of the passage, this survey will seek to detect special uses of the language that the narrator may have employed to highlight any significant insight. At the same time, this methodological step should provide safeguards against confusing the normal with the exceptional use of the language.

In accordance with Beale’s methodological suggestion regarding the identification of typology in the OT, the material of Chapter 6 is organized into three sections: (a) the understanding of a later person as an antitype of an earlier person within the OT (e.g. Joshua as a second Moses); (b) the recurrence of major redemptive-historical events that in some fashion are repeated in various places in the OT and share unique characteristics; and (c) recurring and unfinished narratives (awaiting future resolution).²⁰

¹⁷ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic,” 29.

¹⁸ See Glanz, “Bible Software on the Workbench of the Biblical Scholar,” 5–45.

¹⁹ Hardmeier and Hunziker-Rodewald, “Texttheorie und Texterschließung Grundlagen,” 32.

²⁰ Beale, *Handbook*, 20–22. In a recent article Beale reformulates his criteria for discerning types of Christ in the OT as follows: 1. Presence of five elements of typology (a. analogical correspondence; b. historicity; c. forward-pointing; d. escalation; e. retrospection); 2. presence of the word *typos* or fulfilment formula in immediate context; 3. evidence of typological anticipation in immediate context; 4. indications of typology in the wider canonical OT context; 5. literary clustering of commissions to prophets, priests, and kings; 6. OT characters styled according to pattern of earlier OT characters; 7. partially fulfilled OT prophecies pointing to more complete NT fulfillment; 8. repeated major redemptive-historical events. G.K. Beale, “Finding Christ in the Old Testament,” *JETS* 61 (2020): 30–43. Although the individual criteria are valuable, the way they are organized can be quite confusing for three reasons. First, although they are under the subhead “criteria for discerning types of Christ in the Old Testament,” the first two criteria concern the NT. Thus, the immediate context in the second criterion refers to that of the NT, while the immediate context of the third criterion refers to that of the OT. Second, Beale does not clarify the nature of the evidence of typological anticipation to be found in immediate context. Hos 11:1 is provided as an example,

When examining recurring and unfinished narratives, special attention must be paid to Mal 3:23–24 (Eng. 4:5–6)²¹ wherein the prophecy concerning the return of Elijah is presented. It is quite interesting that despite Elijah’s significance in the books of 1 and 2 Kings as well as frequent references to him in the NT, Elijah is explicitly mentioned only once more in this passage of Malachi. Indeed, the passage by itself is already a clear OT indicator of a typology of Elijah as the Messiah forerunner. While this study is interested in the typological indicators in the immediate context of Elijah’s cycle, the text of Malachi may provide important clues about the factors behind this reuse that makes Elijah an appropriated representation of the coming messenger. Indications of the significance of Elijah’s life in Mal 3:23–24 may be identified in those aspects that relate to the mission of the future messenger, such as his role before the day of Yahweh and his work of reconciliation between his people and the God of their fathers.

Once the typological indicators are identified, I will deal briefly with the typological fulfilment of Elijah in the NT. When doing so, I will evaluate the biblical data regarding the relationship between Elijah and John the Baptist. The concepts of historicity, correspondence, prefiguration, and escalation will provide the conceptual framework to assess the existence and nature of the typology involving these two characters.

Finally, my conclusion will consider and contrast theoretical, theological, and practical implications of this research. From the theoretical point of view, I will evaluate

but nothing else it is said about which kinds of evidence we should expect to find. Third, since criteria 5–8 deal already with wider canonical OT context, the role of the fourth criterion is not clear.

²¹ Modern versions differ from the Hebrew Bible regarding the versification of the last part of the book of Malachi. In this research, I will follow the versification as found in the Hebrew Bible.

the contribution of this research as to the nature and definition of typology and the methodology to analyze it. This is particularly important regarding the aim of identifying predictive import in the OT types. From the theological point of view, I will assess the contribution of this analysis to theological discipline, especially in understanding OT eschatology, and the nature of the predictions involving the Messiah. From the practical point of view, I will evaluate the application of the study of Elijah typology to God's people living before the second coming of Jesus. This is crucial because "these things happened as examples for us" (ταῦτα δὲ τύποι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν) (1 Cor 10:6a).

CHAPTER 2

TYPOLOGY STUDIES SINCE 2000: CONTINUOUS DEBATE AND CURRENT TRENDS

This chapter will provide an updated survey of the studies in typology made during the last two decades following the comprehensive earlier reviews including those of Richard Davidson and Fridbert Ninow. I hope to follow their insights and to identify continuities and/or discontinuities in the trends that they already identified.

It should be noted that this study will not deal with vertical typology. Since others have carried out significant studies in this area, my focus here will be on the historical or horizontal typology which as stated above has not received sufficient attention in Adventist studies.

The Ongoing Debate on Typology

The use of the OT in the NT is one of the most debated topics in the history of Christian interpretation.¹ Klyne Snodgrass stresses the significance of this discussion by declaring that “no subject is perhaps more important for the understanding of the Christian faith than the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament.”² Especially in

¹ In his book, “Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century,” Henning Graf Reventlow dedicates almost 80% of his book to discuss the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. Henning Graf Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia, PA: 1986), 10–144.

² Klyne Snodgrass, “The Use of the Old Testament in the New,” in *The Right Doctrine from the*

the second half of the twentieth century, and more particularly in the last twenty years, the use of the OT in the NT as a discipline of the broader field of biblical studies has experienced significant development through the release of a myriad of publications³ in

Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 29.

³ “There has, of course, been a long-standing interest in such inquiry, but the subdiscipline has become more productive in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in the light of C. H. Dodd’s titular work on OT/NT.” David Allen M., *According to the Scripture: the Death of Christ in the Old Testament and the New* (London, U.K.: SCM, 2018), 19. Here Allen refers to Dodd, C. H., *According to Scriptures: the Substructure of the New Testament Theology* (London, U.K.: Nisbet, 1953). A representative sample of such a vast corpus of publication include: David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001); Craig Blomberg, “Interpreting the Old Testament Prophetic Literature in Matthew: Double Fulfillment,” *TJ* 23 (2002): 17–33; Donald Macleod, “Jesus and Scripture” in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*, ed. Paul Helm & Carl R. Trueman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 69–95; Donald S. Fortner, *Discovering Christ in Genesis* (Darlington, U.K.: Evangelical, 2002); Martinus J. J. Menken, “Observations on the Significance of the Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel” in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar*, ed. G. van Belle, J. G. van der Watt, and P. Maritz (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 155–175; G. K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *JETS* 48 (2005): 5–31; Stanley Porter, ed., *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Paul Miller, “‘They Saw His Glory and Spoke of Him:’ The Gospel of John and the Old Testament,” in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, MNTS (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2006), 127–151; Steven R. Coxhead, “Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ,” *WTJ* 68 (2006): 305–320; A. B. Caneday, “The Muzzled Ox and the Abused Apostle: Deut 25:4 in 1 Cor 9:9” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, St. Paul, IN, 31 March 2006); R. W. L. Moberly, “Christ in All the Scriptures? The Challenge of Reading the Old Testament as Christian Scripture,” *JTI* 1 (2007): 79–100; Derek Tidball, “Songs of the Crucified One: The Psalms and the Crucifixion,” *SBJT* 11 (2007): 48–61; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., Darrell L. Bock, and Peter Enns, *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008); Susan E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Douglas S. Earl, *Reading Joshua as Christian Scripture* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraus, 2010); Douglas S. Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian Scripture* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraus, 2017); G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011); Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Rom 9:10–18: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis* (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2011); Knut Backhaus, “‘Before Abraham was, I am:’ The Book of Genesis and the Genesis of Christology” in *Genesis and Christian Theology*, ed. Nathan MacDonald, Mark E. Elliott, and Grant Macaskill (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 74–84; Lawrence R. Farley, *The Christian Old Testament: Looking at the Hebrew Scriptures through Christian Eyes* (Chesterton, IN: Conciliar Press, 2012); Ahearne-Kroll and Stephen P., “The Scripturally Complex Presentation of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark” in *Portraits of Jesus: Studies in Christology*, ed. Susan E. Myers (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 45–67; Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012); Richard S. Briggs, “‘The Rock Was Christ:’ Paul’s Reading of Numbers and the Significance of the Old Testament for Theological Hermeneutics” in *Horizons in Hermeneutics: A Festschrift in Honor of Anthony C. Thiselton*, ed. Stanley E. Porter & Matthew R. Malcolm (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 90–118; Lacy K. Crocker, “A Holy Nation,” *RTR* 72 (2013): 185–201. Stephen Dempster, “From Slight Peg to Cornerstone to Capstone: The Resurrection of Christ on ‘The Third Day’ According to the Scriptures,” *WTJ* 76 (2014): 371–409; Felix

both the contexts of Protestant and Catholic scholarship.⁴ According to Steve Moyise, one of the leading scholars of the OT/NT relationship, such a revival at the present time has been fueled by four factors: (i) the progress of Septuagint studies, (ii) “the use of literary theory to understand the role or function of Scripture in the New Testament (e.g. Richard Hays); [iii] a renewed interest in biblical theology, and [iv] the development of theological or canonical interpretation.”⁵

This revival brought with itself a wave of disagreement that seems to be proportional to the growth of the studies on the relationship between both the testaments.

Opoku-Gyamfi, “The Use of Scripture in the Letter of Jude,” *IJRS* 5 (2015): 73–102; Tobias Hägerland, ed., *Jesus and the Scriptures: Problems, Passages, and Patterns* (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury; New York, NY: T&T Clarke, 2016); Eusebio González Martínez, “Hermenéutica y Teología en la Interpretación Paulina del AT: *Un status quaestionis*,” *ST* 48 (2016): 405–428; Craig L. Blomberg, “Reflections on Jesus’ View of the Old Testament” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2016), 669–701; Matthew S. Sichel, “Sacraments Reimagined: Fulfillment, Continuity and the New Israel,” *EJ* 34 (2016): 1–16; Ignacio Sanz Extremerño, “El Hijo del Hombre: Del Libro de Daniel al Nuevo Testamento,” *Ilu* 22 (2017): 399–419; Boskamp Ulloa and Karl Günther, “Jesús Como Mediador En Hebreos Desde Una Perspectiva Veterotestamentaria,” *DL* 16 (2017): 21–56; David H. Wenkel, “Abraham’s Typological Resurrection from the Dead in Hebrews 11,” *CTR* 15 (2018): 51–66; Jason P. Kees, “Where the Wild Animals Are: The Inauguration of the Last Days in Mark 1:12–13,” *MJT* 18 (2019): 75–85; Thomas M. Winger, “Praying the Psalms with Jesus and His Body,” *CTQ* 84 (2020): 119–136; Jeremy Otten, “The Bad Samaritans: The Elijah Motif in Luke 9.51–56,” *JSNT* 42 (2020): 375–389; Michael A. Daise, *Quotation in John: Studies on Jewish Scripture in the Fourth Gospel*, LNTS 610 (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2020).

⁴ One interesting aspect of typological studies within the Catholicism is its development in Mariology. Marie Anne Mayeski, “Catholic Theology and the History of Exegesis,” *TS* 62 (2001): 140–153; J. Sánchez-Perry, Theotokos of Byzantium & Guadalupe of Tepeyac: Patristics, Typology, and the Incarnation, *Apuntes* 33 (2013): 18–33; Emery de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 294; Antonio Aranda, “La Belleza de María, Prototipo de La Belleza de La Iglesia,” *EM* 85 (2019): 363–380; Kateřina Kutarňova, “Suffering for the Love of God: Adam, Job, Theotokos and Christ,” *Cauriensia* 14 (2019): 537–550; Eugene Hensell, “The Annunciation and the Priestly Call: Mary, the Model Disciple and Prophet, Offers Priests a Powerful Paradigm for Pastoral Ministry,” *The Priest* 76 (2020): 18–20, 22–23; Karen O’Donnell, “A Feminist Approach to the Marian Temple Type,” *NB* 101 (2020): 29–45. Outside Christianity, typology has received almost no attention. See: T. Lawson, “Opposition and Typology in the Qur’an: The Apocalyptic Substrate,” *JQS* (2008): 23–49; Miriam Sklarz, “Nahmanides’ Typological Interpretation of the Encounter between Abram and Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20),” *JJS* 70 (2019): 68–82; Allen Cooper, “On the Typology of Jewish Psalms Interpretation,” in *Biblical interpretation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Peter J. Haas (New York, NY: T&T Clark), 79–90.

⁵ Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2008), 1–2.

According to Moyise, there are two key issues involved in this scholarly debate: literary theory and theological framework.⁶ Disagreements coming from the theological framework include a certain comprehension of the doctrine of Scriptures involving, for instance, the nature of revelation and inspiration as well as the doctrine of God, concerning the possibility of predictive prophecy. From a hermeneutical point of view, issues like the role of authorial intention and the place of the reader are in the center of the controversy as well.

Evidently, the issues just mentioned above affect directly the place and importance of typology in the studies of the OT/NT relationship. While some scholars reserve little or no space for typological interpretation in their work, others assume the importance or even the centrality of the typology for the understanding of the use of the OT in the NT. Moyise is one example of the first group. Usually, his discussion on the topic encompasses the linguistic, textual, and literary aspects of the OT/NT relationship without significant provision of any space for typology.⁷

⁶ Moyise, *Evoking Scripture*, 125.

⁷ Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010); Steve Moyise, *Was the Birth of Jesus According to Scripture?* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013); Bart J. Koet, Steve Moyise, and Joseph Verheyden, eds., *The Scriptures of Israel in Jewish and Christian Tradition: Essays in Honour of Maarten J.J. Menken* (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 2013); Steve Moyise, ed., *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. L. North* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 2000); Keneth L. Schenck, "Shadows and Realities," in *Exploring Intertextuality: Diverse Strategies for New Testament Interpretation of Texts*, ed. B. J. Oropeza and Steve Moyise, (Eugene, OR: Cascade; Wipf and Stock, 2016), 81–92. The reason for his neglect of typology is exactly connected with his theological and hermeneutical framework as becomes clear in the following two declarations. First, he downplays the place of predictive prophecy in Jesus' use of the OT: "Indeed, many of the texts cited by Jesus are not prophecies in the traditional sense, something both Kimball and France make use of 'typology' to explain. This goes further than saying that Jesus saw David, Solomon, Elijah and Jonah as examples for his own ministry; it is more that certain aspects of their lives 'prefigured' certain aspects of his, though not in the form of future-tense prophecy. Again, it would be difficult to argue that this represents a 'closer adherence to the original sense' unless one believes, with Luke, that everything written in the law, prophets and psalms refers to Jesus (Luke 24:44)." Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture*, 116–117. Second, although Moyise does not claim an exclusive reader-centered hermeneutics, there is much more place for it in his view of how the NT authors read the OT versus what other evangelical authors, like Beale, are willing to give. "Reader-centered theories start at the other end.

However, the importance of typology for the study of the OT/NT relationship is still upheld by many scholars. According to Leonhard Goppelt, one of the most influential voices on typology in the twentieth century, typology is “the principal form of the NT’s interpretation of Scripture and the way the NT understands itself in the light of redemptive history.”⁸ James M. Hamilton remarks that “understanding typology is significant because without it we cannot understand the New Testament’s interpretation of the Old.”⁹ Along the same line, several contemporary scholars have reaffirmed the importance of typology not only for the study of the use of the OT in the NT but also for the understanding of Scripture as a whole. For instance, Wellum says that “In fact, it is hard to read Scripture and to do theology without it. . . . It is impossible to think about Jesus apart from thinking about typology.”¹⁰ Richard N. Soulen also concluded that “although typology is not the only way in which the Bible interprets itself, it is a central, and perhaps even, *the* central way. . . . the typological interpretation of Scripture is—and

The reason why New Testament interpretations differ from the original is because they are interpreting in a different context. They read the text with different presuppositions, and they use the text for different purposes. Thus, looked at in a different way, what our case studies have been trying to ascertain is how the New Testament authors read Scripture.” Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture*, 135. In one article on intertextuality and the use of the OT in Revelation, Jon Paulien tries to trace the commonalities between Moyise and Beale claiming that in many cases there is “more a matter of semantics than a real divide.” Jon Paulien, “Dreading the Whirlwind Intertextuality and the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation,” *AUSS* 39 (2001): 20. However, as their last publications have shown, the gulf between both authors seems to be greater than Paulien’s analysis would indicate. Other examples of recent OT/NT relationship treatments in which typology is not taken into consideration is found in David Allen, *According to the Scriptures*; David Allen and Steve Smith, eds., *Methodology in the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Context and Criteria* (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2020).

⁸ Goppelt, *Typos*, xxiii.

⁹ James M. Hamilton, Jr., “The Typology of David’s Rise to Power: Messianic Patterns in the Book of Samuel,” *SBJT* 16 (2012): 4–5.

¹⁰ Stephen J. Wellum, “Editorial: Thinking about Typology,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 5. He adds that “typology is at the center of what differentiates entire theological systems: In fact, within evangelical theology, ongoing debates between covenant theology, dispensationalism, and progressive covenantalism often center on different conceptions of typology, or at least its application.” Wellum, “Editorial,” 5.

will remain—an indispensable task.”¹¹ Indeed, “typology amounts to one of the key ways in which the Bible as a whole may be said to hang together.”¹²

In his recent research of early centuries’ interpretation, Seely J. Beggiani points out that in the Church Father’s practice of reading the Bible “typology was used not just as a method to interpret Scripture, but as the main vehicle of doing theology.”¹³ More than that, for Church Fathers like Ephrem and the Syriac writers typology was “the very nature of created reality itself.”¹⁴

In any case, while there is no general consensus about the place and importance of typology for the study of the OT/NT relationship, it is clear that the topic is still crucial in the debate.

Today it seems inappropriate to speak of a revival of interest in typology as did Ninow twenty years ago when he commented about the “Post-critical Neo-Typology” era.¹⁵ In fact, that interest has remained alive throughout these intervening years.

¹¹ Richard N. Soulen, *Sacred Scripture: A Short History of Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 75.

¹² Soulen, *Sacred Scripture*, 62.

¹³ Seely J. Beggiani, “The Typological Approach of Syriac Sacramental Theology,” *TS* 64 (2003): 543. Some scholars like Craig A. Evans highlight the significant role of typology in theological (formation of canon) and historical (rise of Christianity) contexts. Craig A. Evans, “Jesus, John, and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Assessing Typologies of Restoration” in *Christian Beginnings and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Craig A. Evans (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 45–62; C. A. Evans and L. Novakovic, “Typology,” *DJG*² 986.

¹⁴ Beggiani, “The Typological Approach,” 546. He goes on saying that “It is not only that God chose types as a means of revelation. Rather, Creation is by its very nature revelatory and Christological. This is why the Syriac tradition finds types not only in Scripture but in all of nature.” Beggiani, “The Typological Approach,” 546.

¹⁵ In his dissertation, Ninow indicated three factors contributing for the renewal of interest in typology in what he called Post-critical Neo-Typology era: “1. The need to take into account the New Testament writer’s use of the Old Testament; 2. Old Testament Theologians—especially in Germany—sought to make Old Testament theology more relevant to modern ‘Gentile’ readers to whom the Old Testament cult with its offering of animal sacrifices at the temple of Jerusalem did not apply; and 3. There was an increasing awareness of the Old Testament’s own use of typology as it related one event in salvation history with another as well as with future, eschatological events.” Ninow, *Indicators of*

Therefore, it seems more than appropriate to speak about the ongoing interest in the subject.

The following review of literature will show that although the interest in this topic has not waned in the last two decades, typology has been understood in new (and sometimes confusing) ways. New approaches or emphases have coexisted with traditional views, and new developments have taken place. After a descriptive account of these developments within the last twenty years, I will provide a brief assessment of the state of affairs in biblical typology today.

Previous Surveys on Typology

Richard Davidson presents a significant comprehensive historical and chronological survey on the understanding of typology throughout history. He begins with the Early Church Fathers, through the early 1980s. In his review of literature, he documents two leading trends.

First, the traditional understanding was predominant in previous centuries and now is maintained mostly by conservative scholars. In this approach, typology is “the study of specific OT realities which were divinely ordained to be prospective/predictive prefigurations of Jesus Christ and/or the Gospel realities brought about by him.”¹⁶ In spite of this common broad definition, disagreements regarding the extension of typology have divided proponents of the traditional approach into three different “modes” represented here by: (i) Johannes Cocceius (1603–69), who asserts that controls are minimal and mere resemblances are accepted as legitimate typological correspondences; (ii) Hebert

Typology, 36.

¹⁶ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 409.

Marsh (1757–1839), who argues that only those types made explicit in the NT are legitimate; and, finally, Fairbairn, who seeks to mediate those positions by delineating hermeneutical controls.¹⁷

The second trend is termed Post-Critical Neo-Typology. In it, typology is “a common human way of analogical thinking ... [which] involves the retrospective recognition of general correspondences within the consistent divine ‘revelation in history.’”¹⁸

Almost twenty years after Davidson’s comprehensive review of the literature, a significant summary of the state of typological studies was formulated by W. Edward Glenny. In his seminal article published in 1997, Glenny identifies four different views on typology prevalent in the evangelicalism of his time. These are summarized in the table below:¹⁹

Table 1. Glenny’s Overview of Typology Studies

	History Understanding	Typology Conceptualization	Adherents Sample
The Covenant View	History is salvation history or redemptive history.	Progression of salvation-history from the old covenant to the new.	H. K. LaRondelle, Karlberg, Edmund P. Clowney, Bruce Waltke, Meredith Kline
The Revised Dispensational View	History is not primarily history of God's redemptive activity as much as it is a history of the establishment of his rule on earth.	Typology is limited to specific persons, events or institutions of the OT that are designated as types in the NT.	Roy Zuck, John Fernberg

¹⁷ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 17–45.

¹⁸ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 410.

¹⁹ W. Edward Glenny, “Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion,” *JETS* 40 (1997): 629–638.

Table 1 — *Continued.*

The Progressive Dispensational View	History is kingdom history; the present age is not a parenthesis in that history but rather an initial stage in the establishment of Christ's kingdom.	Some of the OT promises for Israel are allowed to find a typological fulfillment in the Church age.	Glenny
The View of Richard M. Davidson.	Without elaborating on Davidson's view of history, Glenny affirms that Davidson follows closely Ladd's salvation-historical perspective.	A comprehensive system of typology involving historical, prophetic, eschatological, Christological and ecclesiological elements.	Davidson

One reservation regarding Glenny's analysis on Davidson's approach should be mentioned here. Given that Davidson's position regarding typology is basically the same as that held by the covenant view (or progressive covenant view) adherents, it is intriguing that Glenny distinguished Richard Davidson's view as a fourth approach. Perhaps Davidson's emphasis on the predictive nature of OT prefiguration and his insistence that typological indicators are already present in the OT led Glenny to this decision.²⁰ As such, the emphasis does not seem to justify a whole different category for Davidson's view. Correctly, Erick Mendieta points out that Glenny misses two points in his analysis of Davidson's view about the predictive element of biblical typology: "Davidson is not the only one who argues for the predictive nature of typology and the predictive element of typology is the logical outcome of the theological foundations of

²⁰ The idea that the OT genuinely anticipates the NT witness is considered by Alastair John Roberts as a "daring claim" of Davidson. Alastair John Roberts, "The Red Sea Crossing and Christian Baptism: A Study in Typology and Liturgy" (PhD diss., University of Durham, 2017), 131.

biblical typology.”²¹

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, Friedbert Ninow produced a new comprehensive review of typology in his doctoral dissertation. Therein, he covered an extensive volume of literature with an emphasis on works published between 1980 and 2000.²² Following Davidson’s classification, he identified three main currents in the typology studies during this period.

In the traditional approach, most scholars agreed around a general definition of typology in which types are “persons, events or actions, and institutions divinely ordained or designed to foreshadow aspects of Christ and His ministry in the Gospels and New Testament dispensation.”²³ However, disagreements still existed in the extension of typological use in the NT and in the use of exegetical controls to discover types. A second approach was identified as the historical-critical repudiation which rejected typology as an “odd relic with little or no significance.”²⁴ The main reason for that position was the refusal to accept the history of the Bible, and the naturalistic assumption that the future could not be foreseen. This spoiled two basic foundations of biblical typology, namely, historical correspondence and divine design. The last approach was identified as Post-Critical Neo-typology. It was marked by a renewed interest in typology after the initial historical-critical repudiation (hence, post-critical) as well as by reformulations of the traditional comprehension of the nature of typology (hence, neo-

²¹ Erick Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity: Friend or Foe?,” *AUSSJ* 1 (2005): 56.

²² Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 22–97.

²³ Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 22.

²⁴ Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 34.

typology).

Within that Post-Critical Neo-typology, Ninow identified four particular emphases/approaches. In the patterns of God Acts, whose main representant was Gerhard von Rad, “typology is a means within *Heilsgeschichte* to bring out structural analogies between the two Testaments.”²⁵ Related to the patterns of God Acts is the second emphasis wherein the study of literary patterns was advanced by Northrop Frye to whom typology is “a form of rhetoric, a mode of thought and a figure of speech.”²⁶ In the third emphasis, thinking in types was considered “a basic structure of the human experience”²⁷

²⁵ Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 40. See: Charles H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London, U.K.: Nisbet, 1952); Hans Walter Wolff, *Alttestamentliche Predigten—mit hermeneutischen Erwagungen* (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins Neukirchen Kreis Moers, 1956); Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, “The Reasonableness of Typology,” in *Essays on Typology*, SBT 22 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), 9–38; Kenneth J. Woollcombe, “The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology,” in *Essays on Typology*, SBT 22 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), 39–75; Francis Foulkes, *The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament* (London, U.K.: Tyndale, 1958); Gerhard von Rad, “Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament,” in *Essays on the Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Clauss Westermann (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1963), 17–39; Richard T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (London, U.K.: Tyndale, 1971); Keith Poysti, “The Typological Interpretation of Scripture,” *Direction* 12 (1983): 3–11; David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of Some Modern Solutions to the Theological Problem of the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, Revised Edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991); George Wesley Buchanan, *Jesus: The King and His Kingdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984); John D. Currid, “Recognition and Use of Typology in Preaching,” *RTR* 53 (1994): 115–129.

²⁶ Ninow, *Indications of Typology*, 54. See: Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982). Frye’s ideas on typology still exert great influence in the contemporary scenario, specially upon those who approach typology from a literary standpoint. Charles H. Scobie summarizes adequately Frye’s view on typology: “Frye sees typology as the key to the unity, or more exactly, the continuity of Scripture. In *The Great Code* he outlines a sequence or dialectical progression in the biblical revelation consisting of seven main phases: creation, revolution (or exodus), law, wisdom, prophecy, gospel, and apocalypse. Each phase provides a wider perspective on its predecessor and takes its place in a chain of types and antitypes.” Charles H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 38. For more about Frye’s view of typology see: Tibor Fabiny, “Typology: Pros and Cons in Biblical Hermeneutics and Literary Criticism (from Leonhard Goppelt to Northrop Frye),” *RFH* 25 (2009): 138–152; Joe Velaidum, “Typology and Theology in Northrop Frye’s Biblical Hermeneutic,” *LT* 17 (2003): 156–169; Robert Alter, “Northrop Frye between Archetype and Typology,” *Semeia* 89 (2000): 9–21. This entire number of *Semeia* is dedicated to the work of Northrop Frye.

²⁷ Ninow, *Indications of Typology*, 55.

or “a normal and common way of knowing and understanding things.”²⁸ Although this view, which could be termed “psychological,” did not acquire more than a few adherents, it is echoed in the Richard Hays’ argument that a Christian converted imagination is needed to read the Bible accordingly. Finally, in the historical hermeneutical approach, scholars shared “the conviction that the key was to be found in hermeneutical principles displayed by contemporaries of the New Testament’s writers and rabbinical Judaism.”²⁹

Ninow concludes his review of literature by discussing the recent evangelical debate. He highlights that with the ‘demise’ of the Biblical Theology movement, interest in typology began to decline among critical scholars who paid less and less attention to the topic. However, the same is not true with the evangelical scholarship to which typology is still a relevant topic. There the debate is divided between covenant theologians³⁰ and dispensationalists³¹ to which the typology understanding is in the center

²⁸ C. J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 111.

²⁹ Ninow, *Indications of Typology*, 57. See: Albert. C. Sundberg Jr., “On Testimonies,” *NovT* 3 (1959): 268–281; Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London, U.K.: SCM, 1961); Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1968); Stanley N. Gundry, “Typology as a Means of Interpretation: Past and Present,” *JETS* 12 (1969): 233–240; Richard N. Longenecker, “Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?,” *TB* 21 (1970): 3–38; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975); E. Earle Ellis, “How the New Testament Uses the Old” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 199–219; William David Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, BJS 186 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1989); James H. Charlesworth, “What Has the Old Testament to Do with the New?” in *The Old and New Testaments: Their Relationship and the ‘Intertestamental’ Literature*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 39–87.

³⁰ Accurately, Ninow classified Davidson’s view of typology within the covenant theology, even though he dedicates a separate section to treat Davidson’s understanding. See also Edmund P. Clowney, “Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church: A Hermeneutical Deepening of Ecclesiology,” in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization*, ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), 64–109; Bruce K. Waltke “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments—Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1988).

³¹ See: John F. Walvoord, “Christological Typology,” *BS* 106 (1949): 27–33; Paul D. Feinberg, “The Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship*

of what divides the two theological systems.³²

A more recent review of literature is provided by Brevard Childs. In his presentation, five distinct phases can be identified. In the first, which I suggest be labeled initial consensus, there is a sharp distinction between typology and allegory. Typology is not seen as a return to precritical interpretation, but rather as a way of actualizing the text. The second phase reflects the renewed international interest in typology during the first decades of the post-World War II era. With the publication of Goppelt's *Typos* under the influence of von Hofmann, there was renewed interest in typology in German theological circles for a short time. Even though Goppelt's work was followed by the important voices of von Rad, H.W. Wolff, and O. Cullman, typology did not develop deep roots in the country.³³ Both in France (Daniélou) and North America (Brown and Grant), typology was viewed as lying outside the Christian tradition, and therefore having Greek roots. In Britain, Hanson launched an attack on the sharp distinction between allegory

between the Old and New Testaments, ed., John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 109–128; Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1991); Craig A. Blaising, "Typology and the Nature of the Church" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, CA, 19 November, 2014); Craig A. Blaising, "Biblical Hermeneutics: How Are We to Interpret the Relation Between the Tanak and the New Testament on This Question?," in *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 79–105.

³² Still today typology is crucial to the ongoing debates within evangelical theology. Wellum observes that the debate between covenant theology, dispensationalism, and progressive covenantalism often centers on different conceptions of typology, or at least its application. Wellum, "Editorial: Thinking about Typology," 5. In his dissertation, Brent Evan Parker explores the divergence between dispensationalists and progressive covenant theologians regarding the relationship between Israel and the church. Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern."

³³ During this period von Rad appeared to repudiate his own view on typology as advanced in his original publication on the topic. Rad, Gerhard von. "Typologische Auslegung des Alten Testaments," *EvT* 12 (1952–1953): 17–33. See: Brevard Childs, "Allegory and Typology within Biblical Interpretation," in *The Bible as Christian Scripture: The Work of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz and Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta, GA; Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 302.

and typology.³⁴

The third phase was marked by the fierce criticism of Barr who seemingly intended to administer a death blow to typology. During the mid-1960's, interest faded in the topic. In the fourth stage, various patristic scholars inspired a reemergence of interest in typology. Among them were leading Catholic scholars like Lubac, Crouzel, and von Balthasar. Additionally, Frances Young and Andrews Louth called for a return to allegory. Childs observes the strengthening of the conflation between typology and allegory in the previous two decades (1990s and 2010s).³⁵

Typology within Adventism

Curiously, after the publication of the influential dissertation of Richard Davidson in 1981, no major work in horizontal typology (like that of Friedbert Ninow) has emerged in Adventist studies. Most of Adventist research in typology has been restricted to vertical typology involving the sanctuary.³⁶ Although this can be explained in part by the importance of the doctrine of the sanctuary to Adventist theology, the lack of interest in horizontal typology is still striking.

The current low level of interest in horizontal typology (as reflected in the small

³⁴ R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (Richmond: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

³⁵ Childs, "Allegory and Typology," 301–305.

³⁶ One of the most comprehensive works about vertical typology involving the sanctuary in the OT by an Adventist scholar was written by Elias Brasil de Souza. See: Elias Brasil de Souza, *The Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple Motif in the Hebrew Bible*, ATSDS 7 (Berrien Springs, MI: ATS Publications, 2005). See also: Leonardo Nunes, "Function and Nature of the Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple in the NT and Its Relationship to the Earthly Counterparts: A Motif Study of Representative Texts" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2020). In 2017, Kim Papaioannou and Ioannis Giantzaklidis edited a book containing several articles on vertical typology of the sanctuary. See: Kim Papaioannou and Ioannis Giantzaklidis, eds., *Earthly Shadows, Heavenly Realities: Temple/Sanctuary in Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Jewish Literature* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2017).

number of publications in this area) is still more surprising in the face of the crucial role that typology played in early Adventism.³⁷ According to Erick Mendieta, “the indicators that typology played an important role in the formation of the theological identity of early Adventism are indisputable.”³⁸ In fact, “historically, Seventh-day Adventism is not only a prophetic movement; it is also a typological movement.”³⁹ Since its inception, “typology was a method used to evaluate, experience, and understand Adventism’s identity, role, and message in salvation history.”⁴⁰

It should be noted that despite the few major works produced by Adventist scholars on horizontal typology, it remains the subject of some current controversies within Adventism. For instance, it is part of the debates involving date setting, the concept of atonement (e.g., last generation theology), and the Israelite Festivals.⁴¹

³⁷ Typology also played an important role in other contemporary religious movements. In an article published in March 2015, Pugh Benjamin shows the influence of the Exodus typology in the rise of Pentecostalism in USA. Benjamin Pugh, “‘Under the Blood’ at Azusa Street: Exodus Typology at the Heart of Pentecostal Origins,” *JRH* 39 (2015): 86–103. Mendieta summarizes the thoughts of the four major Adventist authors who wrote about typology Gerhard Hasel, W. G. C. Murdoch, Hans K. LaRondelle, and Davidson. Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 49–53. From all these authors, Davidson has been the one whose work on typology has received more attention and has had a lasting impact on general evangelical scholarship. Mendieta provides a sample of his influence outside Adventism. Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 55. The subsequent analysis in this study of the prior twenty years of scholarship dealing with typology will indicate how Davidson’s work continues to be relevant. All the substantial books, articles, and dissertations in this area reference Davidson’s *Typology in Scripture*.

³⁸ Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 44.

³⁹ Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 45.

⁴⁰ Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 46. At this point, the importance of Mendieta’s analysis cannot be overstated. For “without typology early Adventists would not have been able to understand and interpret the first disappointment in the spring of 1844, and again, in the fall of the same year.” Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 46. Clearly, without the unique understanding of this disappointment Adventism would not have existed (at least as it is today).

⁴¹ Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 60–62.

New Developments in the Study of Typology between 2000–2020

Bearing in mind these previous reviews of relevant literature, this study will now focus on the publications within the immediately previous twenty years. The objective will be to identify new developments and demonstrate continuity and/or discontinuity with the trends that preceded them. On the one hand, in continuity with Davidson and Ninow's classification, two major approaches have been identified, to wit: the Traditional, and the Post-Critical Neo-Typological. On the other hand, new developments in each approach have emerged, particularly concerning the latter one. While the traditional approach has been divided into *retrospectivism* and *prospectivism*, the Post-Critical Neo-Typology approach has been split between the literary and theological emphases. Although this approach has taken quite a different form, it may be argued that is still relevant today.

My objectives in this chapter are threefold: (i) to lay out different definitions of typology fashioned over the last two decades in the scholarly debate, as well as the distinct proposals of methodology for analyzing it; (ii) to compare the results of my analysis to previous comprehensive reviews, especially those of Davidson and Ninow, while highlighting recent developments, particularly as to the predictive aspect of typology; and finally, (iii) to identify my own position regarding definition and methodology in the field.

Accordingly, the following discussion is divided between these two approaches with their corresponding emphases. Such a classification appears to be comprehensive enough to comprise the wide range of authors, who have written about typology in the last twenty years with their broad ideological and theological spectra.

Traditional approach

In general, proponents of the traditional approach agree that biblical types refer to persons, events (including acts), and institutions designed by God to foreshadow/ correspond with the NT realities brought about by Christ's incarnation, life, death, and resurrection. Although there is disagreement among scholars as to the extension, application, and frequency of typology used in the NT,⁴² the main point of division concerns the strength of the prophetic import already present in the OT type and, consequently, the hermeneutical warrant of the NT writers in their typological interpretation. Regarding this difference of opinion, traditional proponents may be divided in *retrospectivists* and *prospectivists*.

An understanding of the definition of the adjectives “retrospective” and “prospective” is crucial at this point in the study. Starting with the latter, prospecting refers to the predictive nature of a type as divinely designed pointing forward in time to its antitype. Therefore, in the author-reader axis, typology is based on the textually-encoded intentionality of the author. Regarding the definition of retrospection, Brent

⁴² Modern representatives of the Cocceian School (maximalist school) maintain that typology is not governed by exegetical methods but rather is a result of later theological reflection. For this reason, the number of types is unlimited. Examples of this maximalist approach can be found in the works of James B. Jordan and Peter Leithart. See: Bill DeJong, “On Earth as It Is in Heaven: The Pastoral Typology of James B. Jordan,” in *The Glory of Kings: A Festschrift in Honor of James B. Jordan*, ed. Peter J. Leithart and John Barach (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 133–146. Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 35–74. Another example of a maximalist approach, though for different reasons, can be found in the works of Jonathan Edwards, who assumes a typological view of reality wherein types can be found everywhere, including in nature. Gerald R. McDermott, “Typology in Creation,” *BS 175* (2018): 10. A modern representative of the Marshian School (minimalist school) includes Robert James Utley, who expressly affirms that “because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.” Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, SGC 2 (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 322. See also Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2002–2013). Other examples can be found among the dispensationalists. For a brief discussion on maximalists and minimalists, see Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern,” 81–83. He argues that both approaches fail in their attempts to understand the nature of typology.

Parker suggests that there is a crucial distinction between ontological and epistemological applications. For those espousing retrospection in the ontological sense, types are not the intended predictions of God. Rather, they are mere analogies that occurred to the NT authors when looking backwards, or at most, the recognition by NT writers of the consistency of the acts of God in history. In this context, typology then is the creation of textual meaning by the reader, or in this case, the NT author. In this approach typology does not depend on the OT author's intention, but it rather can be discovered in light of the events of Christ's life. The adjective "ontological" qualifies retrospection here in the sense that in this view retrospection is by nature a product of how type and antitype relate to each other. It follows that if typology is in the essence of its being (so to say) retrospective then the search for typological indicators presented in advance in the OT is a contraction of terms. This dilemma permeates the work of Francis Foulkes and Baker, among others.⁴³ For those espousing retrospection in the epistemological sense, "certain types may be retrospective in the sense that the NT writers, and in turn subsequent Bible readers, recognize them through the benefit of later revelation and in light of the fulfillment in Christ."⁴⁴ From the perspective of the time, the discovery of typology in an epistemological sense is the process of backward analysis beginning with the empowering Christ event. However, both perspectives are "co-created" by the reader in a distinct sense. Differing from the ontological retrospection where the OT author/text intentionality is irrelevant, epistemological retrospection involves a later identification of

⁴³ See: Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 342–371. See also: Baker, *Two Testaments*.

⁴⁴ Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern," 63.

OT types, the prophetic/eschatological import of which was already available to the original audience. Thus, these later NT recognitions are in line with the original intention of the OT author.

The fact that some types were identified only retrospectively through the reader's epistemic activity (more specifically by the NT authors) does not entail the conclusion that these types were in essence retrospective (hence, ontologically retrospective). This only means that in some cases readers were epistemically impaired from seeing certain typological relationships beforehand. Thus, the difference between ontological and epistemological retrospection lies in the essential nature of the typology as intended by God himself to prophetically point to the Messiah.

Therefore, in the following section I summarize the evangelical debate regarding the traditional approach to interpreting typology. Given the distinction described above, the debate is divided among *retrospectivists* and *prospectivists*. It should be underscored here that within the traditional approach most *retrospectivists* defend a kind of epistemological retrospection. That view is in stark contrast with Post-Critical Neo-Typology proponents whose understanding is more often ontologically retrospective in nature.

Retrospectivists

The following analysis is divided into three parts based on the predominant idea of typology as found in each author. Although all authors in this section can be correctly labelled retrospectivists, there are differences among them regarding emphasis and certain ambivalence that should not go unnoticed. In the first part, the reader can find "Pure Retrospectivists" whose treatment of typology is unambiguous. In the second part,

entitled “Ambivalent Retrospectivists,” are the authors whose reasoning has been more fluid, and a certain ambiguity is characteristic. Although these scholars still emphasize more retrospection than prospection, the prospective aspect of typology is considered as a possibility. This is more evident in some authors who through time have changed from a retrospective to a more prospective view on typology. Finally, the segment closes with Adventist authors whose view on typology is retrospective. The works reviewed in this section are organized in chronological order. Whenever an author has more than one book or article, his or her work is grouped before the chronological order resumes.

Pure Retrospectivists

Basic to *retrospectivists* is the central idea that typology is mostly a NT endeavor. Two examples from the beginning of the twenty-first century clearly illustrate this point. Charles H. H. Scobie wrote about the importance of the rehabilitation of typology to create “a deeper appreciation of much traditional interpretation of Scripture and a deeper understanding of the unity, or better, the continuity inherent in Scripture.”⁴⁵ However, the perception of this continuity is only evident when looking backwards since it is the NT which “constantly draws upon events, persons, and institutions from the OT as it seeks to bring out the significance of the Christ event.”⁴⁶

Typology as a way to make sense of the OT in light of Christ is asserted also in the work of Duane F. Watson and Alan J. Hauser. In the first volume of their *A History of Biblical Interpretation* (2003), they define typology as “an interpretive method that

⁴⁵ Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 90.

⁴⁶ Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 90. The influence of David Baker’s work is evident in Scobie’s approach to typology. According to him, “D. L. Baker’s (1976) set of definitions can hardly be improved upon.” Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, 89.

combs the Jewish Scriptures to find foreshadowings or prototypes of the work of Christ and the church in persons, events, things, and ideas mentioned in the text.”⁴⁷

In 2006, Graeme Goldsworthy published his pivotal work on biblical hermeneutics. In his sixteenth chapter, he explores the relationship of the two testaments where he addresses the theological dimension of the Gospel. In his treatment of the topic, he points to the interesting connection between Salvation history (and eschatological consummation), type and antitype, and promise and fulfilment whose central character is Christ as representative of all reality. As a direct result of this Christological view of salvation history, he concludes that the entire OT is about Christ: “Thus we can say that all the texts of the Bible speak about either God, human beings, or the created order, or they speak about some combination of these. Since the fullest revelation of *all* (sic) these elements is to be found in Christ, we can say that all Old Testament texts in some way foreshadow or typify the solid reality revealed in Christ.”⁴⁸

This way, he advances a view of “macro-typology” whereby typology does not correspond primarily to facts, persons, and events but “entire epochs or stages within salvation history.”⁴⁹ Consequently, any person, fact, or event in the Old Testament is a

⁴⁷ Duane F. Watson and Alan J. Hauser, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation: The Ancient Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 39.

⁴⁸ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2006), 256. A similar view is adopted by Alan S. Bandy and Benjamin L. Merkle. According to them, the Gospel is at the center of the OT narrative and, consequently, Jesus fulfills the entire scope of the OT ideas. The OT is prophetic in its core, and this includes all genres like narrative. They affirm that “every major Old Testament theme has a future aspect to it that finds its fulfillment in the New Testament either in the Christ event or in the final consummation.” Alan S. Bandy and Benjamin L. Merkle, *Understanding Prophecy: A Biblical-Theological Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2015), 31. Like Goldsworthy, Bandy and Merkle maintain that many messianic prophecies were “shrouded in mystery,” and hence, the nature of its fulfillment can be known only retrospectively.

⁴⁹ Goldsworthy, *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics*, 248.

type of Christ to the degree that its theological function foreshadows that of Christ.”⁵⁰

This is possible because the revelation of God’s kingdom is set up in three stages in which the third is the fulfillment of all OT expectations, to wit: God’s kingdom in Israel’s history up to the United Monarchy; God’s kingdom in the prophetic eschatology as recapitulation of the first phase; and finally, God’s kingdom as the fulfillment in Christ.⁵¹

Goldsworthy does not suggest a new definition for typology but following Reventlow and Baker’s definition conceives typology more in terms of corresponding or structural analogies patterned in the salvation history.⁵² Such a recognition requires a retrospective view of salvation history from the vantage point of the NT. This emphasis on historical correspondence or structured analogy at the expense of prophetic typological import may draw his readers to wonder in what sense Christ truly can be spoken of in terms of fulfillment.

⁵⁰ Goldsworthy, *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics*, 248. David Schrock lays out a concise critique on Goldsworthy’s concept of “macro-typology.” He thinks that as a concept it should not be discarded but refined. According to him, the major strength of Goldsworthy’s approach is the encompassing nature of the correspondences which are no longer only accidental similarities. However, he indicates its “unavoidable ambiguity” as its major weakness. He points to two additional problems: (1) “the Robinson-Hebert-Goldsworthy schema fails because Matthew’s genealogy is not intended to be the final word on the shape of OT history.” And consequently, (2) by shaping redemptive history into three periods (Law, Prophets, Christ), he does not give due attention to the OT itself and the covenants therein. David Schrock, “What are Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Evangelical Approaches to Typology,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 160.

⁵¹ Goldsworthy, *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics*, 247. It is evident that although Graeme assumes two possible approaches to typology: (i) The correspondence of facts, persons and events as they occur in both testaments; (ii) Typology as a method of salvation history hermeneutics (following Reventlow), he is more interested in the latter one. This represents a development of his thought. In a book he published six years before *Gospel-centered Hermeneutics*, Goldsworthy affirms that typology “involves the principle that people, events, and institutions in the Old Testament correspond to, and foreshadow, other people, events, or institutions that come later.” Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2000), 109. As one can see, he has moved from the first approach to the second.

⁵² In his 2006 publication, the author mentions Reventlow’s definition of typology. “Typology is a means of discovering structural analogies between the saving events attested by both Testaments which bridge the gap produced by our loss of a direct relationship in faith to the events of the Old Testament.” Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 247.

In a chapter where Jonathan S. Nkhoma deals with the relationship between Old Testament and Jewish hermeneutics, he defines typology as “the theological interpretation of the Old Testament history.”⁵³ In this sense, since typology is rooted in history, it is not allegory. However, as a later “interpretation,” which goes beyond the literal sense,⁵⁴ it is always retrospective. In accepting France’s definition of typology,⁵⁵ Nkhoma points out its five basic characteristics: (i) the unchanging nature of the outworkings of God (the most fundamental one); (ii) the historical character of typological interpretation; (iii) divine intention; (iv) intensification; and (v) Christ-centeredness.”⁵⁶ Although such Christological interpretation is a Christian endeavor, he remarks that typology is not a Christian invention, since it can be found already within the OT.

Ambivalent Retrospectivists

Regarding the prophetic nature of typology, Douglas J. Moo is one of the most influent writers whose view can be labeled ambivalent. Moo insightfully admits that “typology is easier to talk about than describe it.”⁵⁷ He provides a less controversial definition of typology as “the hermeneutical implication of a salvation-historical

⁵³ Jonathan S. Nkhoma, *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Essays: Biblical and Early Christianity Studies from Malawi* (Zomba, Malawi: Mzuni, 2013), 44–89.

⁵⁴ For this reason, Nkhoma believes that the NT writers practice a “grammatical-historical exegesis plus.” He explains: The “plus” consists in their claim to find specific references to the Christ-event in scriptures where a non-Christian could naturally have a different understanding. It is this “plus” which makes their approach specifically Christian.” Nkhoma, *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 89.

⁵⁵ France defines typology as “the recognition of a correspondence between New and Old Testament events (persons, institutions, experiences) based on conviction of unchanging character of the principles of God’s working, and a consequent understanding and description of the New Testament event in terms of the Old Testament model.” France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*,” 40.

⁵⁶ Nkhoma, *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 77.

⁵⁷ Douglas J. Moo, “Paul’s Universalizing Hermeneutic in Romans,” *SBJT* 11 (2007): 81.

understanding of the relationship of the testaments.”⁵⁸ This way, typology is not an exegetical technique “but a broad theological construct with hermeneutical implications.”⁵⁹ Following Baker and Seitz, Moo insists on a working definition that contains at least historical correspondence and intensification and thereby maintains the distinction between typology and allegory.

In a certain sense, Moo resists the proposed categorizations of *retrospectivist* or *prospectivist*. Moo’s ambivalence on the topic is made clear in a more recent article wherein he affirms that “typology has a prospective element, but sometimes people can recognize it only retrospectively.”⁶⁰ Such ambivalence is criticized by David Crump who regards Moo’s position an oxymoron.⁶¹

In an even more recent article, Moo indicates a new inclination toward a prospective view of typology by affirming that types in the OT are seen as “prefiguring something like them in the NT economy.”⁶² Clearly, this marks a noticeable change in the view of this author, who had previously declared: “Typology is fundamentally

⁵⁸ Moo, “Paul’s Universalizing Hermeneutic in Romans,” 81. In his first treatment of the topic Moo refused to propose a definition of typology preferring to provide an extended clarification: “we suggest that typology is best viewed as a specific form of the larger ‘promise-fulfillment’ scheme that provides the essential framework within which the relationship of the Testaments must be understood. This ‘salvation-historical’ movement from Old to New Testament permeates the thinking of Jesus and the early church and is the ultimate validation for their extensive use of the Old Testament to depict and characterize their own situation.” Douglas J. Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 196.

⁵⁹ Moo, “Paul’s Universalizing Hermeneutic in Romans,” 82.

⁶⁰ Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Nasalli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2016), 702–746. In this article, the authors provide one of the best treatments concerning the issue of the NT’s use of the OT.

⁶¹ David Crump, *Encountering Jesus, Encountering Scripture: Reading the Bible Critically in Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 26–27. See more on his criticism on pages 128–129.

⁶² Douglas J. Moo, “‘The Type of the One to Come’: Adam in Paul’s Theology,” *TJ* 40 (2019): 155.

retrospective; there is no attempt to assert that the original text had any forward-looking element at all.”⁶³

A very similar ambivalent position can be found in the work of Stephen B. Chapman and Horace D. Hummel. Chapman affirms that:

Christian figural reading of the Old Testament operates to a certain extent “retrospectively” – otherwise the Old Testament is at risk of losing its own witness within the shape of the Christian Bible, with the concomitant result that Judaism will be disinherited and devalued. Yet such reading cannot be *only* retrospective. There must be an ontic dimension to Christian figural reading, which has traditionally been grounded and expressed in the doctrine of Trinity.⁶⁴

Along the same lines, Hummel suggests that typology represents the other side of the coin of prophecy, but in comparison with direct prophecy it is mute and mostly only retrospectively recognized. In his own words, types anticipate and presage “some event, person, place, or institution later in biblical history... Some mere analogy must be present, but the subject must also be performative, not only reiterating but also recapitulating and consummating.”⁶⁵

In an article entitled “Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue,” Benjamin Ribbens tries to provide a more accommodating concept of typology. He recognizes that although the term typology has been coined in the 18th century, there is no consensus about its definition. More than that, there are still contradictory ideas as to its meaning

⁶³ Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield, U.K.: Almond, 1983; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 31. A brief evaluation of Moo’s stance on typology is offered by Matthew S. Harmon. See: Matthew S. Harmon, “Allegory, Typology, or Something Else? Revisiting Galatians 4:21-5:1 in *Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas J. Moo*, ed. Matthew S. Harmon and Jay E. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014) 144–158.

⁶⁴ Stephen B. Chapman, “Saul/Paul: Onomastics, Typology, and Christian Scripture,” in *Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kevin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 239.

⁶⁵ Horace D. Hummel, “Vertical Typology and Christian Worship,” *CTQ* 73 (2009): 41.

and application. In his survey, he identifies two main views on the subject: 1. prefiguration typology (prophetic import); and 2. correspondence typology (analogical interpretations of history).

Ribbens clearly wants to create a definition broad enough to accommodate both groups. By defining typology in this way, he intends “to mediate dialogue between differing views of typology as well as between typology and figural reading.”⁶⁶ In his attempt to formulate such a broad concept, he distinguishes three subcategories of typology: Christological types are OT figures, actions, or institutions that prefigure Christ and his redemptive work; Tropological types serve as examples of moral or immoral activities; and Homological types involve patterns. Here, “*certain persons and events are types corresponding to similar persons and events.*”⁶⁷

Curiously, despite the fact that Ribbens includes in his definition the Christological (prefiguring) types, he affirms that types are merely “retrospective appropriations of *Heilsgeschichte*.”⁶⁸ Again, the ambivalence between prospection and retrospection can be seen here. Another interesting aspect to notice is that in spite of the fact that the author agrees with Davidson that the use of types in the NT and by the Church Fathers is a key element in the attempt to define typology. His own definition is a “democratic” attempt to accommodate diverse views on the topic instead looking for one in the Bible and the Church Fathers.

Another major work on typology emerged in 2012. Beale’s *Handbook on the New*

⁶⁶ Benjamin J. Ribbens, “Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue,” *JTI* 5 (2011): 94.

⁶⁷ The author adds that this last “category, in some sense, is a catch-all for all types that do not fit the distinctive Christological or tropological categories.” Ribbens, “Typology of Types,” 92.

⁶⁸ Ribbens, “Typology of Types,” 85.

Testament Use of the Old Testament seeks to address the more comprehensive issues of the OT/NT relationship. However, he pays significant attention to typology.⁶⁹ The author starts his discussion recognizing that “the definition and nature of typology has been one of the thorniest issues to face in OT-in-the-NT studies in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.”⁷⁰ He confirms the present conviction that within the evangelical debate among traditional approach proponents the division between *retrospectivists* and *prospectivists* is a crucial issue at stake. He says “one major question (...) here is whether typology essentially indicates an analogy between the OT and NT or whether it also includes some kind of forward-looking element or foreshadowing.”⁷¹

Beale’s definition of typology, which includes its main characteristics, elucidates his position:

the study of analogical correspondences among revealed truths about persons, events, institutions, and other things within the historical framework of God’s special revelation, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature and are escalated in their meaning . . . The essential characteristics of a type are (1) analogical correspondence, (2) historicity, (3) a pointing-forwardness (i.e., an aspect of foreshadowing or presignification), (4) escalation, and (5) retrospection.⁷²

Three aspects in his definition require some elaboration. The first concerns the pursuit for sound criteria or guidelines to identify types. In a certain sense, the essential

⁶⁹ The main objective of the book is to suggest a methodology to approach the NT use of the OT in a very practical way. Basically, his methodology is implemented in a massive commentary where, as editors, he and D.A Carson gather different scholars to approach several NT uses of the OT individually. Typology is an important topic in the commentary, being mentioned almost 200 times when variations are considered (like typological and typologically). G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, “Introduction,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, U.K.: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007).

⁷⁰ Beale, *Handbook*, 13.

⁷¹ Beale, *Handbook*, 13–14.

⁷² Beale, *Handbook*, 13–14.

characteristics function as such criteria. Beale himself confirms this in a more recent article published in 2020 when he proposes 8 criteria for discerning types of Christ in the OT: 1. Presence of five elements of typology (a. analogical correspondence; b. historicity; c. forward-pointing; d. escalation; e. retrospection); 2. presence of the word *typos* or fulfilment formula in immediate context; 3. evidence of typological anticipation in immediate context; 4. indications of typology in the wider canonical OT context; 5. literary clustering of commissions to prophets, priests, and kings; 6. OT characters styled according to patterns of earlier OT characters; 7. partially fulfilled OT prophecies pointing to more complete NT fulfillment; and 8. repeated major redemptive-historical events.⁷³

By suggesting these criteria, Beale provides an important contribution aiming to assist Bible students to avoid the common trap of reading into the OT types that are not there, thereby addressing one of the main reasons why the practice of finding types has been criticized in the last century.

Some discussion regarding Beale's criteria is necessary here. Although it is evident that the individual criteria are valuable, the way they are organized is quite confusing for at least three reasons. First, although they are under the subheading "criteria for discerning types of Christ in the Old Testament," the two first criteria concern the NT. Thus, the immediate context in criterion 2 refers to that of the NT, while the immediate context of criterion 3 refers to that of the OT. Second, Beale also does not clarify the nature of the evidence of typological anticipation to be found in an immediate context. He provides Hos 11:1 as an example, but says nothing about which kinds of

⁷³ Beale, "Finding Christ in the Old Testament," 30–43.

evidence we should expect to find. Third, since criteria 5-8 deal with the wider canonical OT context, the role of the fourth criterion (“indications of typology in the wider canonical OT context”) is unclear. Although the way Beale organizes his criteria in this new article is rather confusing, his set of criteria as found in his *Handbook of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (see page 7 above) is still pertinent and it will be useful as the methodological framework in the last part of this study.

The second aspect that requires elaboration is the idea that typology is part of God’s special revelation and possesses a prophetic nature, Beale elucidates his view regarding typology and authorial intention. After his publication of “The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New,” it is clear that the issue of authorial intention is a focus of his research. Regarding the OT/NT relationship, he affirms that “the most important debate is about whether the NT interprets the Old in line with the original OT meaning.”⁷⁴ In his first set of criteria to identify types in the OT, the first item in the list is “discerning an OT type as exegetically discerned from the OT writer’s authorial perspective.”⁷⁵ Thus, since fulfillment language or equivalent is used to introduce typology in the NT, typology is more than drawing analogies from the OT. Typological interpretations found in the NT are contextual, and

⁷⁴ Beale, *Handbook*, 1.

⁷⁵ His current list of criteria presented in his plenary discourse during the ETS Annual Meeting at Denver, CO in 2019, is a reformulated version of this first list published in his handbook in 2012: “(1) discerning an OT type as exegetically discerned from the OT writer’s authorial perspective, (2) the clustered narrational principle cited by von Rad, (3) discerning OT people modeled on other earlier well known and established OT types, (4) observing major redemptive-historical events that are repeated (e.g., the repeated new creation narratives throughout Scripture), (5) being aware that types may be discernible in the central theological message of the literary unit and not in the minute details of a particular verse, and (6) being aware of OT prophecies that are only partially fulfilled within the OT epoch itself and that contain patterns that still point forward to a complete fulfillment (e.g., the “day of the Lord” prophecies).” Beale, *Handbook*, 23.

hence exegetically consistent with the intent of the original authors, even though the OT writers were not always fully aware of the canonical meaning of their writings.⁷⁶ As mentioned before, this marks a striking contrast between Beale and Moyise's schools of thought.

The last aspect of his definition to be considered here relates to the concept of retrospection. Beale himself clarifies what he means by retrospection which he defines as “the idea that it was after Christ's resurrection and under the direction of the Spirit that the apostolic writers understood certain OT historical narratives about persons, events, or institutions to be indirect prophecies of Christ or the church.”⁷⁷ The prophetic import is already latent in the OT types, but it is the NT that elucidates it. Thus, even though the messianic hope was available to the original audience, in many cases it was recognized after the occurrence of the facts to which it was pointing.

Interestingly, as is the case with Moo, Beale seems to be more inclined toward a prospective view in recent publications. In the 2020 article mentioned before, Beale admits that “recent ongoing research is finding that in the context of some of these OT passages viewed as types by the NT, there is evidence of the foreshadowing nature of the OT narrative, which then is better understood after the coming of Christ.”⁷⁸ Although Beale remains rather reluctant regarding the prospective nature of the biblical typology,

⁷⁶ For instance, see: G.K. Beale, “The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15 One More Time,” *JETS* 55 (2012): 697–715. See more on authorial intention in the last part of this chapter.

⁷⁷ Beale, *Handbook*, 14.

⁷⁸ Beale, “Finding Jesus in the Old Testament,” 30. Even prior to this publication Beale had been criticized by considering whether the prophetic import already was present in the OT. John VanMaaren affirms that “while Beale noted that in some cases of typology the Old Testament writer appeared to be pointing to the future, this is rarely the case.” John VanMaaren, “The Adam-Christ Typology in Paul and Its Development in The Early Church Fathers,” *TB* 64 (2013): 10.

this seems to point to a change in his thought. Unfortunately, Beale’s ambiguity about the prophetic aspect of typology opens the way for criticism of his position in the same way as happened with Moo.⁷⁹

Adventist Retrospectivists

Finally, this section concludes with the insights of three Adventist authors. Speaking about Jesus’ words in Luke 24:27, John S. Nixon states that “with these words, Jesus revealed a new method of interpreting Scripture; a method based on the heart of the gospel—His life, death, and resurrection. With Christ as the interpretative key, Bible students could unlock passages of Scripture and find in them meaning they couldn’t have seen before His coming.”⁸⁰ Thus, he concludes that typology is a later interpretation imposed on the OT from the NT perspective. In his book “Redemption in Genesis,” Nixon seems to practice what Roy Adams termed a “quasi-typological approach.”⁸¹ According to Adams, this approach seeks “to explore the broader implications of certain experiences and occurrences connected with the Old Testament sanctuary and cultus.”⁸² In short, this approach seeks to liberate the interpreter allowing him to find “theological” meanings with homiletical applications that are not necessarily exegetically consistent.

⁷⁹ See more about it in the last part of this chapter.

⁸⁰ John S. Nixon, *Redemption in Genesis: The Crossroads of Faith and Reason* (Nampa, ID: Pacific, 2011), 9.

⁸¹ Mendieta prefers the term “quasi-controlled typology.” See: Mendieta, *Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity*, 63.

⁸² Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary Doctrine: Three Approaches in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*, AUSSDDS 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press), 278.

Although Nixon does not deal in his book with the sanctuary and its rituals, the author seems to apply this approach to Genesis wherein these practices originate.

Another influential Adventist scholar who wrote about typology during this period is Hans K. LaRondelle. His retrospective point of view is made evident when he suggests that “it is the authority of the New Testament which establishes the divinely pre-ordained connection between a type and antitype and discloses the predictive nature of the type.” Hence, “New Testament typology does not start with the Old Testament history or symbolic ritual, but with Jesus and His salvation.” Both authors would agree that the typological sense discerned by the NT is neither contrary to the literal meaning of nor imposed arbitrarily on the OT. However, according to LaRondelle, the predictive nature of typology is not detectable in the OT. Indeed, the NT is the only key and typology happens in the freedom of Spirit.⁸³

The idea that the NT is the starting point in any typological reading of the OT is also advanced in a book co-authored by Hans K. LaRondelle and Jon Paulien. They insist that “Christian typology must start with Jesus as the true Interpreter of the Scriptures.”⁸⁴ Although any early event had an anticipatory import, the original audience or authors were not able to recognize any typological force. More significant is their notion that NT writers like Matthew were not limiting themselves to the exegetical intention of the OT.

⁸³ Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 37, 45.

⁸⁴ Hans K. LaRondelle and Jon Paulien, *The Bible Jesus Interpreted: Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament*, (Loma Linda, CA: Jon Paulien, 2014), 61. In a similar way, Jacques Schlosser highlights that the typological process does not start in the OT. Jacques Schlosser, “Déluge et Typologie dans 1 P 3,19–21,” in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 201.

But they approach the NT from the perspective of faith in light of the Christ event.⁸⁵

They use Matt 2:15 as a test case and conclude that “this typological interpretation of Hosea 11 originated in the Spirit-filled, or charismatic, exegesis of Matthew, and can be accepted only by faith in Christ Jesus. The understanding of Israel’s exodus from Egypt as a type of Christ finds its starting point in the New Testament.”⁸⁶

As is the case of other *retrospectivists*, by trying to offer a serious safeguard against unwarranted conclusions, Paulien and LaRondelle, as well as Douglas S. Earl, weakened the prophetic nature of the OT types and crippled the original intention of OT authors. This is illustrated by their understanding of the use of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15 when they admit that Matthew is reading a meaning into Hosea that he did not intend. Thus, it is “only the authority of the New Testament which establishes the divinely *pre-ordained* connection between a type and antitype.”⁸⁷ However, by doing that, they open the door for what they are exactly trying to get rid of: unwarranted conclusions.

Prospectivists

As was the case in the last segment, the following analysis is divided into three parts based on the predominant idea of typology as found in each author. Although all authors in this section can be correctly labelled prospectivists, there are differences among them regarding emphasis and a certain ambivalence that should be noticed. In the first part, the reader can find “Pure Prospectivists” whose treatment of typology is

⁸⁵ LaRondelle and Paulien, *The Bible Jesus Interpreted*, 54, 56. At this point, they rely on Grant R. Osborne. See: Grant R. Osborne, “Type, Typology,” *ISBE* 4: 931.

⁸⁶ Paulien, *The Bible Jesus Interpreted*, 57.

⁸⁷ LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 37.

univocal. In the second part, entitled “Ambivalent Prospectivists,” are the authors whose reasoning has been more fluid, and a certain ambiguity is characteristic. Although these scholars still emphasize more prospection than retrospection, the retrospective aspect of typology is considered as a possibility. Finally, the segment closes with Adventist authors whose view on typology is retrospective. The works reviewed in this section are organized in chronological order before the chronological order resumes.. Whenever an author has more than one book or article, his or her work is grouped. *Prospectivists* have been the most vocal group having produced a larger number of publications on typology.

Pure Prospectivists

Ardel B. Caneday maintains that in the Pauline reading, Scripture has an eschatological orientation toward Jesus and his people. In this sense, “an Old Testament type anticipates things to come. That is to say, a type looks for the fulfilment just as any prophetic announcement looks for fulfillment.”⁸⁸ Thus, the NT authors do not forge but rather reveal types. Types are exegetically consistent and are identified according to original intention. In a more recent article in the SBJT forum on biblical theology for the church, Caneday advances the idea that we should speak of typological revelation instead of typological interpretation. According to him, speaking in terms of typological interpretation is admitting “a form of reader-response hermeneutics.”⁸⁹ To Caneday, NT

⁸⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 225.

⁸⁹ Ardel B Caneday, “The SBJT Forum: Biblical Theology for the Church,” *SBJT* 10 (2006): 96.

writers, including Paul, have no right to impose their views on events recorded in the OT typological import. Types or foreshadows are forged by God, not by human authors.

In 2003, a major commentary on *The Song of Songs* was published, wherein Christopher W. Mitchell dedicates considerable attention to issues of typology.⁹⁰ In his impressive 1300-page work, he interprets the book in light of the five typological elements proposed by Davidson, who (according to Mitchell) undertakes “the most careful recent attempt to define typology.”⁹¹ In Mitchell’s opinion, typology “requires that the fulfillment in Christ be part of the original purpose of the inspired OT text.”⁹² Although the author recognizes that the Song is seldom verbally predictive, he points to the presence of typological indicators both in the immediate context of the book and in the larger context of the OT prophecy.⁹³ Considering that larger context, he concludes that “the OT nuptial passages in the prophets (...) support the interpretation of the Christian marriage as a prophetic sign.”⁹⁴

Another interesting example of research in typology can be found in Paul M. Hoskins’ work. In his dissertation, Hoskins recognizes that the key element of the traditional typology is the predictive import of the OT types.⁹⁵ To him typology is connected to the progress of salvation history, the eschatological impetus of which is

⁹⁰ Mitchell dedicates a complete section to deal with the subject in his introduction. Christopher W. Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, CC (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2003), 67–97.

⁹¹ Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, 75.

⁹² Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, 71.

⁹³ Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, 90–92.

⁹⁴ Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, 80.

⁹⁵ Paul M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 22.

expressed in a relationship between promise and fulfilment. Thus, the NT typological interpretation is an extension of this movement already present in the OT. However, from a historical-critical point of view, the predictive element of the OT types causes a certain hermeneutical dilemma since in some cases the authors were not fully aware of the prophetic import of their own message. However, according to 1 Pet 1:10–12, the OT prophets were themselves involved in careful inquiry, “investigating for what person or which time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he testified beforehand to the sufferings with reference to Christ and the glories after these things” (LEB). Peter adds that in the process it “was revealed that they were serving not themselves but you with reference to the same things which now have been announced to you through those who proclaimed the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels desire to look” (LEB). The solution proposed by Hoskins is in accord with Peter’s statement, which entails the dual divine-human authorship in the context of the biblical concept of inspiration.⁹⁶

Thus, although the progressive revelation makes the earlier announcement clearer, the new developments are by no means contradictory. It is evident, therefore, that a conviction of God’s intervention in history and the doctrine of inspiration both are in the core of his understanding of typology.

In his definition of typology, Hoskins highlights three basic characteristics, to wit: (i) prefiguration, (ii) correspondence, and (iii) escalation. To him, typology “is the aspect

⁹⁶ He says that “as a result of inspiration, the human author’s intentions are not the only intention that is important for the interpreter. (. . .) In light of divine intention and inspiration, the human author of an Old Testament writing may not have a full understanding of the typological import of what he is writing.” (. . .) [However,] “the inspired Old Testament authors may have had some understanding of it. Yet it becomes clearer to later ones in the light of further revelation; this is especially evident in the works of the Latter Prophets. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple*, 24–26.

of biblical interpretation that treats the significance of the Old Testament types for prefiguring corresponding New Testament antitypes or fulfilments.”⁹⁷

In order to avoid fanciful interpretation of the OT, Hoskins suggests (in a more recent publication) the use of hermeneutical controls to guide interpreters as they look for typological relationships: convincing evidence of correspondences, consultation of writing of other interpreters, and the use of the NT as a guide to judge the strength and significance of each typological relationship.⁹⁸

Hoskins’ assumptions about typology and his perception about the value of establishing controls for typological interpretation are applied in his study of Jesus as the fulfillment of the temple in the Gospel of John and the typology connected to Jesus’ death. In the first case, he discusses the OT warrant for the NT seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Temple. He found four patterns in the OT that “link Solomon’s Temple with its predecessor, the Tabernacle, and with its anticipated replacement, the new Temple.”⁹⁹ The four patterns are:

First, the temple is God’s chosen dwelling place among his people. (...) Second, it is an ideal place closely associated with the immanence of God, his majesty, and experience of his abundant provision. (...) Third, a new, eternal Temple is a prominent part of prophetic hopes for the future of Israel. (...) Fourth, in spite of the Temple’s greatness, the Old Testament does recognize its limitations.¹⁰⁰

To a certain extent, all these patterns prepare the typological interpretation of Christ as the new temple in the Gospel of John. Patterns also found in characters (David),

⁹⁷ Paul M. Hoskins, *That Scripture Might Be Fulfilled: Typology and Death of Christ* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2009), 20.

⁹⁸ Hoskins, *That Scripture Might Be Fulfilled*, 25–26.

⁹⁹ Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple*, 38–107.

¹⁰⁰ Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple*, 105.

rituals (Passover and other sacrifices), and institutions (temple) also converge into Christ. In his most recent book, Hoskins provides an insightful analysis on the typology involving the death of Christ, where he takes seriously the OT and NT contexts through a controlled use of typology and how some of the most important messianic prophecies contain typological hints already in their original contexts.¹⁰¹

Dennis Johnson starts his discussion of typology by remarking how many evangelicals have become discomfited and feel a certain degree of “bad conscience”¹⁰² due to the pervasive influence of the historical criticism. Apparently, to address what he calls the church’s embarrassing track record of outlandish and imaginative twisting of Scripture, Johnson suggests that “surprising typological connections” should be restricted to inspired authors.¹⁰³

Johnson identifies five categories of typology in the NT: (i) *typos* texts (e.g. Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 10:6,11; 1 Pet 3:21); (ii) OT quotations applied to Christ without the use of the Greek word *typos*; (iii) unmistakable allusions to OT events applied to Christ (John 3:14-15); (iv) subtle and debatable allusions to OT events, persons, and institutions (e.g. Josh. 7:1); and (v) general OT patterns fulfilled in Christ and His Work.¹⁰⁴

The author admits that “Old Testament texts may both refer (even retrospectively)

¹⁰¹ Hoskins, *That Scripture Might Be Fulfilled*. In a different publication Hoskins explores specifically the typology of the Passover lamb also in the Gospel of John. Paul M. Hoskins, “Deliverance from Death by the True Passover Lamb: A Significant Aspect of the Fulfillment of the Passover in the Gospel of John,” *JETS* 52 (2009): 285–299.

¹⁰² Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), Kindle edition, ch. 4, “Complication: From the Church Fathers through the Middle Ages”.

¹⁰³ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, ch. 1, “Introduction: Preaching like Peter and Paul.”

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, ch. 7, “Theological Foundations of Apostolic Preaching.”

to an Old Testament event (type) and find fulfillment (prospectively) in a New Testament event (antitype).”¹⁰⁵ And, therefore, “we should not conclude that it would have been impossible for faithful Israelites in Old Testament times to have discovered in their Scriptures the implications that the apostles later drew out of them.”¹⁰⁶

Seven years after this first publication Johnson offered a fresh look on the topic reaffirming his conviction that the OT types should be understood prospectively.¹⁰⁷ According to him, “biblical types are previews embedded by God, the Lord of history, into time and space, into the historical experience of his covenant people, in order to show the shape of things to come.”¹⁰⁸ They function like “road signs in the terrain of the Old Testament itself to point the way forward to Christ by pointing backward to God’s mighty deeds in the past.”¹⁰⁹

Three different perspectives about the OT/NT relationship are laid out in “*Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*.”¹¹⁰ Although typology is not the

¹⁰⁵ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, ch. 7, “Theological Foundations of Apostolic Preaching.”

¹⁰⁶ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, ch. 7, “Theological Foundations of Apostolic Preaching.”

¹⁰⁷ He defines types as “Old Testament individuals, events, institutions, and offices that are shown to foreshadow Christ and his mission by the way they are interpreted in the New Testament.” Dennis E. Johnson, *Walking with Jesus Through His Word: Discovering Christ in All of Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 56.

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, *Walking with Jesus*, 60.

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, *Walking with Jesus*, 67.

¹¹⁰ Since my focus is on typology, Peter Enns’ view is not explored here. Although he admits that typology is helpful, it does not provide an adequate *hermeneutical* explanation for the mechanics of what NT authors do with OT texts.” Peter Enns, “Fuller Meaning, Single Goal: A Christotelic Approach to the New Testament Use of the Old in Its First-Century Interpretative Environment” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 207. That is why he does not elaborate on typological reading. He proposes a Christotelic hermeneutics parallel to the one practiced by the NT author which he defines as “an intuitive, Spirit-led engagement of Scripture, with the anchor being not what the Old Testament author intended but how Christ gives the Old Testament its final coherence.” Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2015), 153. Such an approach, which is not directed by grammatical-historical principles, is to be seen and understood

only topic in the discussion, its treatment is unavoidable. In his introductory chapter and using an illustration of a gravitational center, Jonathan Lunde considers the topic as one of five questions orbiting the issue of the NT use of the OT.¹¹¹ Lunde defines typology as a reference “to events, institutions, or people that foreshadow future things,”¹¹² whose foundation is grounded in the divine sovereignty over history in the context of his unchanging character, historical pattern with its theological foreshadowing, and escalation. Typology is not a method but a theological perspective on history.

Lunde also recognizes a key question in typology studies: “is the divinely intended, prospective element in typology known by the original human author, or is this only ascertained *retrospectively* from the NT author's vantage point?”¹¹³ This is the same question that drives the present research on the indicators of typology in the Elijah narrative in the subsequent chapters.

Walter Kaiser’s chapter is basically a response to Moyise concerning his view of authorial intention. This includes typology, of which the key aspect for Kaiser is the matter of divine designation. He wonders: “would the fact that God providentially guided the story of the Messiah and his people be adequate also to indicate the needed divine

in light of the historical and cultural environment from where the NT emerged. The OT is not Christological, but Christotelic. It walks toward Christ, but only from the NT retrospective view.

¹¹¹ The five questions are: “(1) Is *sensus plenior* an appropriate way of explaining the NT use of the OT? (2) How is *typology* best understood? (3) Do the NT writers take into account the *context* of the passages they cite? (4) Does the NT writers’ use of Jewish exegetical methods explain the NT use of the OT? (5) Are we able to replicate the exegetical and hermeneutical approaches to the OT that we find in the writings of the NT?” Jonathan Lunde, “An Introduction to Central Questions in the New Testament Use of the Old Testament” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 12.

¹¹² Lunde, “An Introduction to Central Questions,” 19.

¹¹³ Lunde, “An Introduction to Central Questions,” 21.

indication that it was a type found in the text of the OT designation?”¹¹⁴ Kaiser’s answer is an emphatic yes. To him any prediction (types included), “must be seen ahead of time and not added after an alleged fulfillment takes place.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, it only makes one wonder which purpose a prediction has if it can be only recognized after its fulfillment.

James M. Hamilton is another theologian who is leaving his impression in typology studies in the last two decades. Hamilton defines typological interpretation as “canonical exegesis that observes divinely intended patterns of historical correspondence and escalation in significance in the events, people, or institutions of Israel, and these types are in the redemptive historical stream that flows through the Bible.”¹¹⁶ These patterns, created by the impact that earlier narratives (especially in the Pentateuch) had on the minds, vocabulary and interpretative framework of later authors, should be understood prospectively. Regarding Joseph and David’s case, he himself explains that “as a result of the deep impression made by the Joseph story, the life of David was interpreted by people who read what happened to David through the lens of Joseph. In this sense Joseph functioned as a type of David.”¹¹⁷ As David and his descendants fail miserably in meeting God’s expectations, the hope of a coming Messiah is developed through the whole remaining canon until Jesus’s coming.

In a more recent article, Hamilton highlights the idea that typology is more than a

¹¹⁴ Walter Kaiser, “Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 61.

¹¹⁵ Kaiser, “Single Meaning, Unified Referents,” 61.

¹¹⁶ James M. Hamilton, “Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah? Tracing the Typological Identification between Joseph, David, and Jesus,” *SBJT* 12 (2008): 53.

¹¹⁷ Hamilton, “Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah?,” 53.

perspective on history. It is also a method of interpretation that can be reproduced as it was in the NT, although without the same level of epistemological certainty that the inspired apostles enjoyed.¹¹⁸ Indeed, when engaged in typological interpretation, the NT writers were engaged in biblical theological reflection. He also admits the possibility that already in the OT, people could have observed these messianic patterns of rejection-suffering-saving intervention “in the lives of Joseph, Moses and others, what may have Isaiah [for instance] to see how David’s pointed forward to the Messiah.”¹¹⁹ In another publication Hamilton remarks that “as people notice the type of thing God has done and interpret these patterns in light of the promises God has made, they begin to expect God to act in the future as he has acted in the past.”¹²⁰

However, by far, Hamilton’s most important contribution to typological studies is his recent book entitled *Typology: Understanding the Bible’s Promise-Shaped Patterns. How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ* published in the beginning of 2022. The work, which is entirely dedicated to the topic, is the most comprehensive treatment of typology in the previous twenty years. In the introduction, the author sets out the basic lines of his understanding on typology and explains how indicators work in the micro-level. In the conclusion, the author expounds upon the indicators for determining authorial intention in the macro-level. As a whole, the book explores the typology of persons (Adam, priests, prophets, kings, and the righteous sufferer), events (creation and

¹¹⁸ Hamilton affirms that “typology should be recognized as an interpretive method.” Hamilton, “Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah?,” 9.

¹¹⁹ Hamilton, “Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah?,” 18.

¹²⁰ James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 103.

exodus), and institutions (Leviticult and marriage). Curiously, in terms of content, both the book as a whole and the individual sections are organized chiastically. Indeed, according to Hamilton, the phenomenon of biblical chiasm forms a conceptual basis and an appropriate illustration of how typology, which is grounded in repetition, works.

Typology, according to Hamilton, is based on authorial intention. Thus, “when the biblical authors composed their writings, they intended to signal to their audiences the presence of the promise-shaped patterns.”¹²¹ In this way, the NT authors claim fulfillment when they realize historical correspondences and escalation purposefully created by the OT authors. Therefore, the search for typological indicators is a key point in his methodology to identify genuine types. The recognition of these indicators happens through the identification of intentional historical correspondences which authors make explicit through the re-use of significant terms, the quotation of whole phrases or entire sentences, the repetition of sequences of events, and the parallels in covenantal or salvation-historical significance.¹²² Canonically speaking, “when patterns of historical correspondences are repeated across narratives, expectations accumulate and cause escalation in the perceived significance of the repeated similarities and patterns.”¹²³ In this context, it comes as no surprise that Hamilton conceives types prospectively.

In his definition, “typology is God-ordained, author-intended historical correspondence and escalation in significance between people, events, and institutions

¹²¹ Hamilton, *Typology*, 5.

¹²² Hamilton, *Typology*, 20.

¹²³ Hamilton, *Typology*, 25.

across the Bible’s redemptive-historical story (i.e., in covenantal context).”¹²⁴ As is evident from this definition, three factors are basic to his concept of typology: historical correspondence, escalation, and God’s sovereignty. Since historical correspondences and escalation are not the result of the biblical authors’ imagination, God is the one orchestrating history. The role of the authors was to notice and highlight the patterns. In speaking about these textual patterns in Scripture, Hamilton correctly prefers the word “re-use” to designate the phenomenon.

One of the most original aspects of his work is his insistence that Genesis functions as a hermeneutical key for the development of typology throughout Scripture. According to him, “... in Genesis Moses teaches the biblical authors who follow him how to interpret, how to communicate, how to structure material, how to symbolize, how to typify.”¹²⁵ Thus, in the first book of the canon, Moses establishes the “methodological” guidelines that other biblical authors are to apply in other parts of Scripture. Consequently, the same mindset is required of those engaged in typological reading of Scripture. Hamilton remarks that “those who embrace what the biblical authors teach will also seek to embrace the habits of mind, patterns of thought, and interpretative practices that the biblical authors model in their writings.”¹²⁶

In the context of the traditional approach, the proponents of “progressive covenantalism” have been the most vocal players in the evangelical debate.¹²⁷ They

¹²⁴ Hamilton, *Typology*, 26.

¹²⁵ Hamilton, *Typology*, 17.

¹²⁶ Hamilton, *Typology*, 27.

¹²⁷ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012): 277–291; Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern,” 20–94; David S. Schrock, “What Designates a Valid Type? A Christotelic, Covenantal Proposal,” *STR* 5 (2014): 3–26; Hamilton, “Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah?,” 52–57;

emphasize the progression of the covenants as the backbone of the Scripture metanarrative reaching its fulfilment in Christ and the New Covenant. This explains why typology receives significant attention in their studies. Usually, they appeal to Davidson's threefold eschatological aspects of the typological fulfilment (inaugurated, appropriated, consummated).¹²⁸ Typology is generally considered prospective even though its identification is sometimes retrospective (epistemological retrospection). Although types are not limited to NT explicit identification, there is a concern for appropriate criteria to identify genuine types. Many of these studies search for textual warrants that arise from textual and contextual hints already present in the Old Testament.

Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum's book *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* may be considered in a certain sense a textbook for progressive covenantalism. They highlight the strong connection between typological structures and biblical covenants. Indeed, "to reflect upon typological structures and their development is simultaneously to unpack the biblical covenants across redemptive-history."¹²⁹ Relying on Davidson's definition of typology, they speak of types as "intertextual relationships between early and later revelation."¹³⁰ Typology is "a grammatical/linguistic-historical-canonical method of interpretation,"¹³¹ which, as symbolism, is rooted both in history and text. Typology is also prophetic and hence, is given and intended by God. For this reason, it should be considered a subset of

Hamilton, "The Typology of David's Rise to Power," 4–25.

¹²⁸ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 278.

¹²⁹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 276.

¹³⁰ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 249.

¹³¹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 260.

predictive prophecy that builds prediction through established models/patterns created by God Himself.

In their view, typology is the key to solve the intriguing fact that within the OT the Gospel is both predicted (Rom 3:21) and hidden (Rom 16:25-27) at the same time. On one hand, typology is predictive in the sense that it was God who designed the type to anticipate Christ, the antitype. On the other hand, typology is hidden since in many cases “we come to know that they are types as God’s redemptive plan unfolds and later texts pick up the recurring pattern.”¹³²

They agree with Hamilton that types are more than mere analogy and that they should be based upon textually-encoded author intentionality. However, they admit that “this is not to say that everyone associated with the Old Testament type understood and knew the pattern to be pointing forward. Rather, it is to say that when the type is discovered to be a type (at some point along the trajectory of its repeated pattern due to intertextual development) it is then viewed as such and rightly as God-given.”

The predictive nature of typology is in the center of the discussion related to the nature of typology in John 12:37 advanced by Todd A. Scacewater. In an article, the author argues that John viewed typology as predictive by nature.¹³³ Based on his study of John, Scacewater maintains that the predictive nature of typology has at least three implications. God has intentionally created types to foreshadow future events based on his sovereignty over history and so it is possible to suggest that the OT author was cognizant of an inherent forward-looking component. Consequently, “the NT writers did

¹³² Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 271.

¹³³ Todd A. Scacewater, “The Predictive Nature of Typology in John 12:37-43,” *WTJ* 75 (2013): 129–143.

not retrospectively label an OT counterpart as a ‘type’ solely because of its analogical similarity to the ‘anti-type.’”¹³⁴ It is evident that Scacewater sees an interweaving between typology and direct prophecy. He concludes that the distinction between the two was much less stark than it is for modern scholarship.

In 2013 and 2014 two dissertations dealing with typology were defended, both in Baptist theological seminaries. In the first, Barbara Ann Isbell explores the exodus typology in the book of Revelation. According to her, typology is “the theological interpretation of God’s history among his people, observing correspondences or patterns within Scripture and presupposing the continuity of God’s purpose and action throughout history.”¹³⁵

Isbell distinguishes typology from typological interpretation. While the first refers to a particular view of history by which the NT writers under inspiration recorded their own account, the second concerns the evaluation of modern interpreters of the typology present within Scripture.¹³⁶ In doing so, Isbell proposes a more restrictive view of typology in which typological interpretation should be applied “only to those passages in which a type is explicitly or implicitly contained.”¹³⁷ Unfortunately, she does not provide criteria to identify those types that are implicitly present in the Old Testament.

¹³⁴ Scacewater, “The Predictive Nature of Typology,” 130.

¹³⁵ Barbara Ann Isbell, “The Past is Yet to Come: Exodus Typology in the Apocalypse” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 31.

¹³⁶ Isbell, “The Past is Yet to Come,” 267. The only controls mentioned by Isbell are those advanced by Hoskins. She adds that typology “is not an alternative to exegesis, nor a critical method, but a supplement to a solid exegetical approach to Scripture. Typological interpretation incorporates aspects of each of the three disciplines necessary for NT interpretation— literature, history and theology— and recognizes the importance of each for a proper reading of the Scriptures.” Isbell, “The Past is Yet to Come,” 271.

¹³⁷ Isbell, “The Past is Yet to Come,” 269.

Isbell also asserts that the controversy involving prospection and retrospection is the “crux of the typology debate.”¹³⁸ In the first case, she remembers that for prospectivists correspondences are more than mere coincidences, and God is actively directing history through which he has intended to reveal his plan of salvation. In the case of retrospectivists, Isbell sees an attempt of modern scholarship to harmonize typology with the critical outlook. Consequently, any predictive element is denied, and any forward import is rejected if it goes beyond the inferred original intention of the OT author.¹³⁹ Thereby she points to the important role that presuppositions such as those related to historicity, inspiration, and the unity of Scripture play in one’s view of typology.

The second relevant dissertation, titled “An Examination of Selected Uses of the Psalms of David in John and Acts in Light of Traditional Typology,” was defended by Donald Lee Schmidt. In his work, Schmidt “argues that prophetic David typology best explains the application of the Psalms quotations to the specific events of Jesus’ passion, resurrection, and exaltation in select passages in John and Acts.”¹⁴⁰ He identifies five approaches to typology: analogical typology (based in analogies – Baker); literary typology (a method of writing in the NT – K. J. Woollcombe, M. D. Goulder); allegorical typology (no distinction between allegory and typology – James Barr); cyclical typology

¹³⁸ Isbell, “The Past is Yet to Come,” 28.

¹³⁹ Isbell, “The Past is Yet to Come,” 29, 44.

¹⁴⁰ Donald Lee Schmidt Jr., “An Examination of Selected Uses of the Psalms of David in John and Acts in Light of Traditional Typology” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), v.

(the idea of cyclical repetition in history – Bultmann); and mnemonical Typology (memory refraction - Le Donne).¹⁴¹

However, in face of the biblical evidence in support of the traditional approach,¹⁴² the author rejects all five of these views and assumes the working definitions espoused by Davidson and Hoskins. He asserts that prospection and correspondence are the marks of the traditional approach, while defending the idea that typology and direct prophecy are different in form but not in essence.¹⁴³ While correspondence is textual, Christological, and escalated, prospection involves a pointing forward that is always present, but not always detected. That is why Schmidt admits that although OT “types are prospectively oriented, they can be retrospective in a sense. This admission refers to their *detection* rather than their *design*.”¹⁴⁴

Finally, it should be mentioned that Schmidt is also concerned with exegetical controls. He suggests a fourfold methodology: (i) identify the NT’s use of an OT text; (ii)

¹⁴¹ Regarding the mnemonical typology, I should mention here Anthony Le Donne’s approach which defies the categorization proposed here. Although his proposal can be considered Post-Critical Neo-Typological, he is out of the limits of literary and theological emphasis. In his book, Donne rejects the pervasive distinction between typology and history (against Goulder) as well as scriptural appeal and historicity (against Crossan) in the search for the historical Jesus. He argues “for a historical method that establishes trajectories of memory refraction.” Anthony Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology, and the Son of David* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2009), 87. He approaches the search of historical Jesus from an adapted form of social memory theory where typology is a key concept since it provides an apt example of how memories are propelled forward by certain patterns of interpretation that evolve over time and (re)consideration.” Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus*, 14. He defines typology as “a particular manifestation of memory refraction.” Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus*, 14. Memory refraction “is a gradual and imperceptible process that renders past perceptions intelligible to the continually shifting contexts of the present.” Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus*, 14. As a mnemonical device, typology is a means of remembering. In this case, it is inevitably “socially and culturally conditioned.” Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus*, 68 It is also a literary device only in the context of a mnemonic cycle.

¹⁴² He presents this biblical evidence on pages 50-69. See: Schmidt, “An Examination of Selected Uses,” 50–69.

¹⁴³ Schmidt, “An Examination of Selected Uses,” 23–24.

¹⁴⁴ Schmidt, “An Examination of Selected Uses,” 29.

conduct thorough exegesis, (iii) identify the element of correspondence, and (iv) identify indications of prophetic fulfillment.¹⁴⁵

The same concern about exegetical controls is at the center of a relevant article written by David Stephen Schrock. In it, Schrock proposes that the progression of covenants in Scripture should be considered an additional methodological control. According to him, “genuine types must arise from within the biblical text and be organically related to one another through the progressive covenants of the Bible.”¹⁴⁶ This way, the author rejects the conflation between typology and allegory that somehow denies the assumption that typology should originate from within the text. To him, “a valid Christological type must be *textual* in its origin, *covenantal* as to its theological import, and *Christotelic* in its teleological fulfillment.”¹⁴⁷

In the context of biblical covenants, Schrock claims that “through a process of formation, deformation, and reformation, the wine of typology ages until the time of Christ, when the old wineskins are broken and the new wine is ready.”¹⁴⁸ He proposes an intra-canonical understanding of typology that faces a process of formation, deformation, and reformation in the Prophets. It is his contention that “every type begun in Eden, promised in the Patriarchs, and legislated by Moses dies and rises again in the

¹⁴⁵ Schmidt, “An Examination of Selected Uses,” 45–49.

¹⁴⁶ Schrock, “What Designates a Valid Type?,” 4.

¹⁴⁷ Schrock, “What Designates a Valid Type?,” 5. He clearly “stands against the intentional conflation of typology and allegory, what Christopher Seitz labels a ‘figural reading,’ and what Hans Boersma, citing the ‘sacramental hermeneutic’ of Henri DeLubac and Jean Danielou, describes as a ‘return to mystery.’” Schrock, “What Designates a Valid Type?,” 4.

¹⁴⁸ David S. Schrock, “From Beelines to Plotlines: Typology that Follows the Covenantal Topography of Scripture,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 36.

Prophets.”¹⁴⁹ Methodologically speaking, such a control rooted in a “covenantal typology” seems to be useful to avoid the posed danger of finding types that are not textually encoded.

In 2016, another dissertation directly connected with typology was defended. In his work, Samuel Emadi explored the typology of Joseph. The basic question in his research is whether Joseph is a type of Christ, even though no NT writer explicitly identifies Joseph as a type. In face of this lack of NT warrant, the identification of typological indicators becomes crucial. Emadi looked for these indicators in the original context of Gen 37–50. Having in mind that “types are rooted in the *text* of the Old and New Testaments and are exegetically discerned,”¹⁵⁰ he sought to respond to the question: “Does the Joseph narrative itself indicate that Joseph’s life ought to be read as a pattern of God’s future saving activity?”¹⁵¹ In other words, Emadi’s intention was to determine if the typological “features” would emerge from the OT text. His answer is positive, and he concludes that Joseph’s narrative “functions as the resolution to the plot of Genesis and that this story typologically influences how later biblical authors narrate redemptive history culminating in the NT’s portrayal of Jesus as an antitypical Joseph.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Schrock, “From Beelines to Plotlines,” 42.

¹⁵⁰ Samuel C. Emadi, “Covenant, Typology, and the Story of Joseph: A Literary Canonical Examination of Genesis 37–50” (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 35.

¹⁵¹ Emadi, “Covenant, Typology, and the Story of Joseph,” 41.

¹⁵² Emadi, “Covenant, Typology, and the Story of Joseph,” 6. In 2018, Samuel Emadi published a summary of his dissertation in the form of article. His main argument in brief is: “the Joseph story provides a significant development of the Abrahamic covenant. Joseph is an anticipatory fulfilment of the covenant and thus provides literary and redemptive-historical resolution to the Genesis narrative. Joseph also points forward to a more complete fulfilment of the patriarchal hopes expressed in the Abrahamic covenant. These observations provide evidence from within Genesis itself that the author intends Joseph to be read typologically, anticipating God’s eschatological work through the Messiah.” See: Samuel C. Emadi, “Covenant, Typology, and the Story of Joseph,” *TB* 69 (2018): 1. A related discussion is found in an article published by Nathalie Siffer-Wiederhold where she analyzes the typological interpretation of Joseph in the NT with focus on the discourse of Stephen in Acts 7:9–16. Nathalie Siffer-Wiederhold, “La Figure de

The year 2017 saw the publication of an important scholarly volume exploring typology. In this year, an entire issue of *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* dealing with typology was released. The publication attests that the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has become the leading institution in typology research in recent years. In his editorial, Wellum sets forth the basic definition assumed by most articles: “Typology is the study of the relationship between OT revealed truths of persons, events, institutions (‘types’) which God has specifically designed to correspond to, and predictively prefigure, their intensified ‘antitypical’ fulfilment in Christ and his people.”¹⁵³ This basic view advances at least three tenets: (i) Typology is a characteristic of divine revelation ingrained in history; (ii) it is prophetic and predictive; and (iii) its function involves repetition, escalation, and covenantal progress.¹⁵⁴

In the first article within the periodical, Aubrey Sequeira and Samuel Emadi develop Wellum’s initial considerations on typology as they seek “to set out the essential features of a type by rooting typology in the basic presuppositions of biblical theology and in Scripture as a self-interpreting divine-human book that progressively unfolds along covenantal epochs.”¹⁵⁵ In fact, they propose to unveil the exegetical logic undergirding the typological interpretation of the NT’s author. From their analysis they conclude that “types are historical, authorially-intended, textually rooted, tied to

Joseph dans le Discours d’Étienne en Ac 7,9–16: Amorce d’une Typologie Christologique,” in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 141–163.

¹⁵³ Wellum, “Editorial: Thinking about Typology,” 6.

¹⁵⁴ Wellum, “Editorial: Thinking about Typology,” 7–8.

¹⁵⁵ Aubrey Sequeira and Samuel C. Emadi, “Biblical-Theological Exegesis and the Nature of Typology,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 11.

Scripture's covenant structure, and undergo escalation from old covenant shadow to new covenant reality."¹⁵⁶ Following Beale's definition, they describe their approach as "biblical-theological exegesis."¹⁵⁷ As a canonical approach, biblical-theological exegesis "is not limited to grammatical-historical investigations of 'meaning' in the original context but also includes the redemptive-historical and literary-canonical contexts which both develop and constrain the original meaning of a text."¹⁵⁸ In this context, typology should be understood as part of the process by which the text is subjected to an organic development, the climax of which is Jesus. Although they suggest that typology is not an exegetical technique or even a hermeneutical axiom but a broad theological construct, they affirm that "interpreting types is not an 'imaginative' task but an exegetical one."¹⁵⁹

Finally, they assert that the prospective nature of typology is attested by the way Jesus and the NT authors expected their contemporaries to interpret the OT (see John 5:46-47; Acts 28:23; 18:28; 9:22). As such, types are designed by God, rooted in history and textually encoded even though sometimes the recognition is retrospective. In their views, types are not created but instead are discovered. That is the main reason why the authors reject figural reading. At this point, they fully agree with the views of Brent Parker, who relying on Caneday affirms that "the typological patterns are part of

¹⁵⁶ Sequeira and Emadi, "Biblical-Theological Exegesis," 12.

¹⁵⁷ Beale defines a biblical-theological approach as an attempt "to interpret texts in light of their broader literary context, their broader redemptive-historical epoch of which they are a part, and to interpret earlier texts from earlier epochs, attempting to explain them in the light of progressive revelation to which earlier scriptural authors would not have had access." G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 104 n41.

¹⁵⁸ Sequeira and Emadi, "Biblical-Theological Exegesis," 14.

¹⁵⁹ Sequeira and Emadi, "Biblical-Theological Exegesis," 23.

revelation because God casts and invests the types with foreshadowing significance in Scripture. ... the task of the reader is to explicate the meaning of sentences by attending to the authorial intent and their usage of literary forms.”¹⁶⁰

In another article, Mitchell L Chase provides an example of typological interpretation by exploring the relationship between Boaz and Jesus. This is a particularly important example since it deals with an unidentified type. With this in mind, Chase is concerned about criteria required to identify a valid type. He shows how Beale’s criteria (analogical correspondence, historicity, a pointing-forwardness, escalation, and retrospection) can be useful and how the prospect of a type increases when Hamilton’s controls are also discernable: linguistic correspondences, sequential event correspondences, and redemptive historical import. In the end, Chase identifies Boaz as a type of Christ.¹⁶¹ Chase seems to be successful in his attempt to determine a typological relationship based on more than mere analogies.

Two subsequent articles also seek to capture the application of typological interpretation. In the first, Nicholas G. Piotrowski argues for a use of temple typology in Mark 11-12 emphasizing the role of context to understand types derived from direct quotations.¹⁶² In the second, Peter J. Link, Jr. and Matthew Y. Emerson identify Joseph,

¹⁶⁰ Brent Evan Parker, “Typology and Allegory: Is There a Distinction? A Brief Examination of Figural Reading,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 66.

¹⁶¹ Mitchell L. Chase, “A True and Greater Boaz: Typology and Jesus in the Book of Ruth,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 85–96. An ectype remains in the middle of the path from archetype and antitype. At this point Mitchell relies on Schrock’s definition of ectype: “intermediate types that stand between the original type and Christ.” Schrock, “What Designates a Valid Type?,” 23. Schrock provides additional insights by explaining that “standing between the historical type and the eschatological antitype is a series of ‘ectypes’ that repeat an earlier type and further adumbrate a later type.” See: Schrock, “Strengths and Weaknesses,” 162.

¹⁶² The complex author’s argumentation is hard to follow and it makes one wonder if the author is presenting the more natural view of texts and their relationship. Nicholas G. Piotrowski, “‘Whatever You Ask’ for the Missionary Purposes of the Eschatological Temple: Quotation and Typology in Mark 11-

Mordecai, and Daniel as types fitting between the first and the second Adam. One interesting aspect of their proposal is the idea that “typology exists within the OT as an act of writing and not merely a way of reading.”¹⁶³ As a way of reading, typology is not part of intended meaning if it has no anticipatory import. In this way, it is not exegesis but later application to the OT. As a way of writing, typology is “a technique employed in composition or canonization. A biblical author intentionally casts features of his own book with the words, phrases, situations, narrative techniques and themes initiated in the Pentateuch to create a book that is new and yet not new.”¹⁶⁴ In this line of thought, NT writers “proved to be reasonable and careful interpreters of the OT and its eschatological and messianic focus.”¹⁶⁵ In the case of Adam, they conclude that NT authors “draw on the Adam typology *as a whole* instead of citing particular “new Adams” in the OT.”¹⁶⁶

The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology volume on typology closes with a forum discussing two questions. By responding to the first one—“How does Scripture teach the Adam-Christ typological connection?”—Joshua Philpot shows that the Adam-Christ typology is “*textual* in its origin, *covenantal* as to its theological import, and *Christotelic* in its teleological fulfillment.”¹⁶⁷ In the second question—“What are strengths and weaknesses of current evangelical approaches to Typology?”—David

12,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 97–121.

¹⁶³ Peter J. Link, Jr. and Matthew Y. Emerson, “Searching for the Second Adam: Typological Connections between Adam, Joseph, Mordecai, and Daniel,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 125.

¹⁶⁴ Link and Emerson, “Searching for the Second Adam,” 126.

¹⁶⁵ Link and Emerson, “Searching for the Second Adam,” 125.

¹⁶⁶ Link and Emerson, “Searching for the Second Adam,” 128.

¹⁶⁷ Joshua M. Philpot, “How does the Scripture Teach the Adam-Christ Typological Connection?,” *SBJT* 21 (2017): 151.

Schrock evaluates four aspects of typology currently at work in typology research. After a brief assessment of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement, the author addresses consecutively: Richard Davidson's *TYPOS* structures; Graeme Goldsworthy's macro-typology; and Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum's progressive covenantalism. He presents quite a positive view on Davidson's definition of typology. According to him, "Davidson's near-exhaustive exegesis and biblically grounded definition of typological structures stands alone in a field of literature on typology."¹⁶⁸ Since "he grounds his understanding of typology in the text itself," Davidson's "exegetical method is superior to others that rely on the ever-changing dictates of literary studies—ancient or modern."¹⁶⁹ Schrock correctly sees Davidson's approach as parallel (at least in general lines) to that practiced by Progressive Covenantalism.

Still in 2017, another dissertation came about in which typology is also a central issue. In his work, Brent Parker argues that "national Israel's antitypical fulfillment in Christ and the church necessarily entails that the essential ecclesiological tenets of covenant and dispensational theology on the Israel-church relationship are incorrect."¹⁷⁰ In chapter 2 entitled "The Challenges of Typology," the author sums up the main issues involving typology in the contemporary debate. Among them are the distinction between typology and allegory, the problem of figural reading in the context of the Theological

¹⁶⁸ Schrock, "Strengths and Weaknesses," 157.

¹⁶⁹ Schrock, "Strengths and Weaknesses," 158.

¹⁷⁰ Parker, "The Israel–Christ–Church Typological Pattern," 9. In this way, "the relationship of Israel and the church must be understood in direct orientation to the person and work of Christ. Jesus Christ is the antitype of Israel, and while Israel and the church are the one people of God and linked together typologically and analogically, the church-Israel relationship must always be triangulated through God's Son." Parker, "The Israel–Christ–Church Typological Pattern," 10.

Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) movement, and the nature, definition, and unique characteristics of typology.

Parker presents historical correspondence and prospection as the hallmarks of the traditional approach. The nature of typological fulfillment is Christotelic and eschatological and involves continuity and discontinuity. Especially enlightening is his discussion of textual warrant for typology as a criterion to identify types. He discerns two approaches in discerning typological relationships. In the maximalist approach, Parker includes scholars who reject the prospective nature of typology, and hence do not believe that typology should be governed by hermeneutical rules. Also in this group are scholars who like Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) “raided the OT for types” without using exegetical controls. Modern proponents of this less controlled typology may include scholars like James Jordan and Peter Leithart, and certain TIS advocates. Minimalist scholars are concerned by imaginative typological interpretations and usually restrict types to those revealed in the NT.

Parker proposes four criteria to recognize types: (i) indication in the immediate OT context that “the author himself recognized the foreshadowing significance of a person, event, or institution;” (ii) search for types in “the central theological message of the literary unit and not in the minute details of a particular verse” (Beale); (iii) later OT intertextual development at epochal level revealed in the redemptive historical trajectory; and (iv) OT characters styled according to an existing pattern of earlier OT characters (Beale).¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Parker, “The Israel–Christ–Church Typological Pattern,” 84–87.

Parker's work shows the characteristic marks of typological interpretation practiced by progressive covenantalists, especially in his search for typological indicators through which he can go beyond the controversy between maximalists and minimalists. His work offers a fresh view of the most debated matters in the field up to the present time.

In 2018, Bryan D. Estelle published a book titled *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif* wherein he explores the exodus motif, recognizing, as do others, that Moses and Israel's exodus from Egypt is the most important OT typology. The author intends "to revivify a responsible use of typology which has fallen out of favor in the academy."¹⁷² Estelle does not think of typology as an outdated, overworn, or fanciful method unless it is practiced without hermeneutical controls.¹⁷³ He distinguishes literary typology (retrojective) and typology in a more traditional sense as used in the history of interpretation that he defines as "a divinely designated shadowy type anticipating and looking forward to a fulfillment in the antitype."¹⁷⁴ Although he concedes the possibility of a predictive looking forward, he maintains that typology is often "retrojective."¹⁷⁵ Through his analysis of the exodus motif over the biblical canon, he establishes the difference between typology and analogy. He affirms that "The New Testament uses exodus imagery mediated through and transformed by the Psalter and Isaiah. In addition, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and many other Old Testament Scriptures exert theological

¹⁷² Bryan D. Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 11.

¹⁷³ Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus*, 42.

¹⁷⁴ Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus*, 11–12.

¹⁷⁵ Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus*, 47.

pressure relating to a new exodus on the Gospel writers, Paul, and Peter. This is not analogy. It is typology.”¹⁷⁶

In a clear indication of the ongoing interest in typology, one of the most recent volumes of the series “40 Questions about” focuses on the topics of typology and allegory. The book, written by Mitchel L. Chase, was published in 2020. In parts one and two, Chase deals with typology. While part one deals with the literary aspect of the Bible, part two addresses more specifically typology. Part two is divided into three sections. In section A, the author addresses the most fundamental questions regarding typology; among them is the issue of definition. Chase affirms that “a biblical type is a person, office, place, institution, event, or thing in salvation history that anticipates, shares correspondences with, escalates toward, resolves in its antytype.”¹⁷⁷ He also discusses the exegetical and theological framework of typology in the canonical context highlighting its assumptions and extension in the NT. More importantly, Chases addresses the prophetic nature of the OT types. He admits the existence of retrospective and prospective types. The presence of the former relates to the fact that in some cases “biblical authors wrote better than they knew. The divine author has woven together the people, offices, places, things, institutions, and events that point to Christ, and some of these types were not clear until after Christ.”¹⁷⁸ The latter refers to types which are recognizable but existed prior to the advent of Christ. The prospective nature of these types could be recognized through “a character’s speech, a narrator’s description, or a

¹⁷⁶ Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus*, 43.

¹⁷⁷ Mitchell L. Chase, *40 Questions about Typology and Allegory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2020), 38.

¹⁷⁸ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 59.

series of correspondences that recall something or someone earlier in the biblical story.”¹⁷⁹ In section B, the author explores the history of typology since the Early Church through the postmodern era.

In section C, Chase provides an illustration of his method by navigating through the whole OT canon and indicating where types appear in the HB. It is here where the most significant flaw in Chase’s work becomes visible. His failure in establishing the prospective aspect of typology rooted in authorial intention as a criterion to identify types in the OT leads him to find types that in some cases that seem to lack textual warrant. Some examples include: (i) the tree of life as a type of Christ’s work on Calvary’s hill;¹⁸⁰ (ii) “Seth as a type of Christ because he was the new son of Eve;”¹⁸¹ (iii) the opening of the earth to bury alive Korah, Dathan, and Abiram as a type of Christ’s final judgment;¹⁸² and (iv) the scarlet cord in Rahab’s house as a type of the cross.¹⁸³ He also identifies Ezra, Nehemiah, and even Mordechai as types of Christ.¹⁸⁴ Although Chase’s contributions surpass his deficiencies, his theoretical approach to typology proves in some cases to be better than his application of it.

Matthew Barret’s book *Canon, Covenant and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel* was published in the beginning of 2020. In his view, typology has

¹⁷⁹ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 60.

¹⁸⁰ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 126.

¹⁸¹ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 128.

¹⁸² Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 149.

¹⁸³ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 154.

¹⁸⁴ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 168–171.

a prophetic element and it is a form of revelation through which “God *reveals* what is and what is to come in Christ.”¹⁸⁵ As such, typology is not a NT invention but is organic and inherent to the OT itself. Relying on Davidson’s studies, he affirms that “typology is *eschatologically* oriented, not merely being *retrospective*, but *prospective* as well.”¹⁸⁶ However, since typology is grounded in the divine authorial intention, further revelation is required. As the redemptive history unfolds, such clarity is provided and the reader can view beyond the human author’s limited purview. That is why “a *redemptive-historical, canonical approach* that pays attention not only to the textual and epochal horizons, but to the canonical horizon”¹⁸⁷ is essential to typological interpretation of Scripture.

Ambivalent Prospectivists

Darrell Bock is a good example of ambivalent prospection. He identifies six different uses of the OT in the NT.¹⁸⁸ The second is denominated by him as typological-prophetic. He differentiates typological-PROPHETIC from TYPOLOGICAL-prophetic. In the first kind of case, texts contain short-term historical events, the initial fulfillments of which fall short of the expectations (e.g. Day of the Lord, Servant). Since such a “passage begs for and demands additional fulfillment, (...) the expectation of its

¹⁸⁵ Matthew Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel*, NSBT 51 (London, U.K.; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; IVP Academic, 2020), 32.

¹⁸⁶ Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 35.

¹⁸⁷ Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 37.

¹⁸⁸ The ten uses are prophetic fulfillment, typological-prophetic, authoritative illustration, principle, allegory, OT ideas, language, or summaries. See Darrell Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament’s Legitimate, Accurate, and Multifaceted Use of the Old” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 118–121.

completion is anticipated in the future.”¹⁸⁹ Bock seems here to point to a *devoir-être* (“must be”) element as argued by Davidson. However, in the second kind of case such an element is not present. In the TYPOLOGICAL-prophetic fulfilment, patterns are not anticipated by the language and can only be discovered retrospectively when the connection becomes clear. He insists that it is still a prophetic category because God has designed the correspondence (e.g. Hos 11:1 in Mat 2:15).¹⁹⁰ Bock also proposes another use that he calls authoritative illustration or simple typology.¹⁹¹ Here, types have exhortatory function with no prophetic element embedded in the pattern (e.g. 1 Cor 10:1-13). Since to him typology “involves a spectrum of usage, some of which is prophetic and some of which is not,” foreshadowing is not a distinctive mark of the phenomenon in the Bible. Such a loose concept of typology reflects a confusing view on the topic within dispensationalism.¹⁹²

In his book *From Typology to Doxology: Paul’s Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34-35*, Andrew D. Naselli identifies typology as one of the NT author’s ten hermeneutical warrants for using the OT.¹⁹³ Naselli conceives typology as an essential

¹⁸⁹ Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents,” 119.

¹⁹⁰ Bock, “Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents,” 120.

¹⁹¹ The term “simple typology” represents a slight difference in the name of the category which is called simply *typology* in a 2000 publication. Darrell L. Bock, “Scripture Citing Scripture: Use of the Old Testament in the New” in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. Darrel L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), Apple Books edition, ch. 11.

¹⁹² In his dissertation, Parker provides a good assessment of the nature of typology within dispensationalism. His conclusion is that in this theological framework “typology is frequently ill-defined, and its characteristics are malleable as the subject is treated in a way that the core distinction between Israel and the church is kept intact. (...) The lack of consensus on the subject of typology, as well as the inconsistent or arbitrary use of typology, pose significant problems for dispensationalism. Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern,” 186.

¹⁹³ The other warrants are: borrowed language, alternatives point of view; Jewish exegetical methods; *sensus plenior*; fulfillment of a specific prediction; the larger OT context, application, canonical

element of canonical history that takes place when “NT persons, events, and institutions fulfill OT persons, events, and institutions [repeat] the OT situation at a deeper, climactic level in salvation history.”¹⁹⁴ Types are part of the promise-fulfilment framework so essential in order to understand the relationship between the OT and NT.

Although Naselli relies on Baker’s definition of typology,¹⁹⁵ he goes further by affirming that typology has a prospective element. In this sense, since the NT author saw OT types as pointing toward the future, the OT functions prophetically. However, the author contends “sometimes people can recognize it only retrospectively.”¹⁹⁶

In 2012, Richard Ounsworth published his dissertation on the Joshua typology in the NT. Although Ounsworth agrees with Frances Young that the typology concept should come from Scripture, he distances himself from Davidson, Beale, and others by thinking that NT typology is not necessarily rooted in authorial intention. Instead of speaking about authorial intention, he prefers to speak about “plausibility of inferences.”

At the heart of his working definition is the notion of divinely intended isomorphic correspondences. In many and various ways, God has stamped in an

approach. Andrew D. Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology: Paul’s Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34-35* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 118–128.

¹⁹⁴ Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology*, 125.

¹⁹⁵ Typology is the study of types and the historical and theological correspondences between them. The basis of typology is God’s consistent activity in the history of his chosen people. See: Baker, *Two Testaments*, 180.

¹⁹⁶ Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology*, 128. Regarding Rom 11, he concludes that the connection between Isa 40:13 and Job 41:3a and Rom 11:34 is typological for in each case “the events of Rom 11 fulfill the events of Isa 40 [and Job] at a deeper, climatic level in salvation history. This typology is primarily retrospective rather than prospective.” Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology*, 128–134. This conclusion is mainly based on the parallels the Naselli finds between Isa 40:13, Job 41:3 and Rom 11:34. The identification of OT indicators could strengthen his case. While this would be more straightforward in Isa, Job might represent a real difficulty. The use of both passages may show the importance of the OT indicator. His case is much stronger in Isa than Job since such indicators are obvious when we take the exodus motif into consideration.

eschatological way the character of his saving power into the life and history of his chosen people. Curiously, the author distinguishes between “weak” or literary typology (wherein an author uses his literary skill to illustrate one thing by referring his reader or hearer to something else to which is it *not* intrinsically related – Parker calls this kind of phenomenon “ontological” retrospection) and “strong” or ontological typology (the relationship is real, and the literary art is there to draw attention to it – the concept was found already in the OT itself, and was further developed in later Jewish literature). However, lack of clarity emerges when Onsworth says that typology does not always involve intensifying. The end result then is confusion between analogy and genuine typology.¹⁹⁷

Regarding the prophetic import, the author maintains that “historical typologies similarly can have either a purely retrospective or a prospective nature in the OT”¹⁹⁸ though they are always determined by divine will. In any case, the author insists that the biblical author's role is not to create the typological relationship but to reveal it through his writing. For this reason, typological correspondences are textually encoded so that they are hinted at with sufficient clarity for the spiritual reader to uncover them. However, it should be noted that for Onsworth what is prospective is limited to the foundational patterns “underlying the life and history of the people of Israel, revealed by the way in which Scripture narrates Israel’s past history, showing the power of God and

¹⁹⁷ “Not all typology, even horizontal, needs to be of this intensifying kind.” Richard Onsworth, *Joshua Typology in the New Testament* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 43.

¹⁹⁸ Onsworth, *Joshua Typology*, 42.

giving the hope of a future that reiterates them.”¹⁹⁹ In any case, typology is more than a literary phenomenon guided by reader-response hermeneutics.

In another enlightening discussion of typology, Joshua Philpot lays out his view on the topic. The author admits that typology is “a key way in which the OT and NT reveal an internal interpretative framework.”²⁰⁰ Following Achtemeier’s definition of typology,²⁰¹ Philpot also wavers between prospection and retrospection. On one hand, he grants that “a primary distinctive of typology is that it is predictive.”²⁰² On the other hand, he concurs that this does not mean that recognition is prospective. For since the OT authors were under divine inspiration, “they spoke better than they knew.”²⁰³

Although his major concern is the historical aspect of the OT type, he also insists that types should be discovered exegetically and “not on a merely analogical or arbitrary basis.”²⁰⁴ Typology should come from the text and not be based on pure reader-response hermeneutics. In the case of Adam, Philpot finds biblical warrant in verbal, thematic, and conceptual correspondence. He argues that this is possible because the NT authors did not invent typology but their typological reading “receives its imprimatur from the OT.”²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ Onsworth, *Joshua Typology*, 43.

²⁰⁰ Joshua Philpot, “The True and Better Adam: Typology and Human Origins,” *BET* 5 (2018): 83.

²⁰¹ “The study which traces parallels or correspondences between incidents recorded in the Old Testament and their counterparts in the New Testament such that the latter can be seen to resemble the former in notable respects and yet to go beyond them.” Elizabeth Achtemeier, “Typology,” *IDBSup*, 926.

²⁰² Philpot, “The True and Better Adam,” 91.

²⁰³ Philpot, “The True and Better Adam,” 86. Abner Chou challenges this idea affirming that more often the prophets speak better than we give credit for. Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018), 93.

²⁰⁴ Philpot, “The True and Better Adam,” 84.

²⁰⁵ Philpot, “The True and Better Adam,” 86.

Adventist Prospectivists

Finally, in this last section I will address some Adventist studies on horizontal typology. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, Friedbert Ninow defended his dissertation that later was published by Peter Lang. As his work was already previously referenced, only a few additional remarks are needed here. Ninow's goal is "to fill this gap by examining Old Testament passages to ascertain whether there are indicators of typology within the Old Testament itself that would provide a basis (or rationale) for the hermeneutical endeavor of the New Testament writers."²⁰⁶ In other words, Ninow wants to define the exact nature and indication of the predictive element of OT types, regarding which "there has been hardly any exegetical endeavor."²⁰⁷

Ninow correctly observes that the issue of exegetical soundness of the NT author's typological interpretations of the OT and the prophetic/predictive nature of typology are closely related. He insists that "if typology is devoid of any prospective or prophetic thrust, one has to conclude that typology is merely a form of analogical thinking or retrospective analogy."²⁰⁸ Consequently, if typology has a prophetic aspect, one can wonder what function this prophetic element has if it can be recognized only by looking at it retrospectively.

Ninow presents five compelling reasons to make his case for the presence of the prophetic/predicative element that is available already in the OT original context:

²⁰⁶ Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 19.

²⁰⁷ Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 96.

²⁰⁸ Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 90.

(1) the term type itself suggests a counterpart (antitype) to the type; (2) the appeal to “prophetic fulfillment” by the New Testament writers; (3) the notion that certain things are “shadows” which “foreshadow” the “greater” reality Christ; (4) the concept that God’s salvific acts are worked according to a pattern that is repeated/“fulfilled” in the following ages; and (5) the concept that types have to be “divinely designed” to be “real” types.

Perhaps Ninow’s most important contribution to the field is to show in a practical way (through the exodus motif) that the prophetic indicator combined with other basic concepts such as historical correspondence, divine design, and escalation should be used as hermeneutical controls to investigate OT types.

In 2011, Davidson published his important article on typology entitled “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology.” In his article, Davidson focuses on the typological structures/aspects revealed in his original study of the hermeneutical *typos* passages, namely, the prophetic element. Davidson argues that “the prophetic-eschatological substructure of Biblical typology provides crucial inner-biblical hermeneutical controls for the nature and modality of typological fulfillments.”²⁰⁹ Since types look prophetically/predictively in advance to their antitypes, Davidson concludes that “some indication of the existence and predictive quality of the various OT types should occur already in the OT before their NT antitypical fulfillment”²¹⁰ This way, OT types, whether persons, events, or institutions, are accompanied “by an internal indicator—a prophetic/eschatological warrant—showing its typological nature.”²¹¹ In the last part of his article, Davidson provides evidence for his position through the study of four OT types: Adam, the Flood, the exodus, and the sanctuary. In each case he

²⁰⁹ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic,” 5.

²¹⁰ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic,” 16.

²¹¹ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic,” 18.

demonstrates that NT authors are not arbitrarily reading back into the OT, but in their typological interpretation they are following the signs posted already by OT authors.

In a chapter published in 2006 titled “Interpretation of Biblical Types, Allegories, and Parables,” Tom Shepherd defines a type as “an OT historical event, person, or institution which serves as a prophetic model or pattern for a heightened or intensified fulfillment in an OT and/or NT historical counterpart (often called the Antitype).”²¹² He seeks to distinguish exemplary from hermeneutical types. Exemplary types function as paradigms of “lifestyle that is to guide the choices of the Christian.”²¹³ They serve as patterns of living, as models to be imitated or avoided. Shepherd identifies this use in several Pauline passages (cf. 1 Cor 10:6; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:7, 2 Thess 3:9, 1 Tim 4:12, and Titus 2:7). The hermeneutical application of *typos* seems to develop from this exemplary function to a fuller historical/prophetic use as that found in Rom 5:14.

As there are examples within the OT itself of types that point forward and indicate the predictive nature of typology, Shepherd emphasizes that typology is not a NT invention. However, in challenging Goppelt’s famous claim, Shepherd insists that typology “is not the only way, or even the primary way, that biblical writers make their point.”²¹⁴ Apparently, Shepherd wants to alert the reader of the always present danger of

²¹² Tom Shepherd, “Interpretation of Biblical Types, Allegories, and Parables,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid, BRIS 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 223.

²¹³ Shepherd, “Interpretation of Biblical Types,” 224.

²¹⁴ Shepherd, “Interpretation of Biblical Types,” 227. Another and more significant challenge to Goppelt’s view is presented by Karl-Heinrich Ostmeyer in an article where the author puts in check the use of the term antitype. According to him, “the definition of Goppelt fails, among other things because such an *antitypos* understanding is nowhere documented and that Christ is never referred to as an antitype, but certainly as a *typos*. . . . *τύπος* denotes the relation in which A stands to B: if A becomes visible in B, B is *τύπος*. When B becomes visible in A, A is *τύπος*. So neither A nor B are *τύπος* per se. *τύπος* denotes a relationship and not a being.” Karl-Heinrich Ostmeyer, “Typologie und Typos Analyse eines schwierigen Verhältnisses,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 115, 199. Unfortunately, Ostmeyer seems to be unaware of Davidson’s

“typologicalmania,”²¹⁵ even though the biblical evidence seems to give more room for typology in the NT than he is willing to admit.

A good summary of typology studies within the environment of Adventism is provided by Mendieta in an article (already mentioned before) published in 2015. In his survey, the author presents the importance of typology in the beginning of Adventism and how the topic developed through the writings of four Adventist scholars: Gerhard Hasel, W. G. C. Murdoch, Hans K. LaRondelle, and Richard Davidson. He points out that following the work of Hasel, there is a concern with exegetical controls. Hasel calls for a rigid exegetical control based on rigorous attention to context in both testaments. In order to avoid arbitrary typological analogies, Hasel even suggests that the soundest approach in typological analysis is to move backwards from NT to OT, i.e. retrospectively. A similar concern with control underscores Murdoch’s definition of typology.²¹⁶ In his presentation on LaRondelle and Davidson, Mendieta highlights the conspicuous distinction between the two authors regarding the prospective nature of typology.²¹⁷

study on τύπος where the relationship between type and antypes is clarified (Vorbild–Nachbild–Vorbild). Davidson, *Typology of Scriptures*, 185.

²¹⁵ See Dale C. Alisson, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 18–19.

²¹⁶ “A biblical type, by contrast, is like a shadow cast on the pages of earlier literature, which presents a limited account of a truth, the full embodiment of which is amplified in a later revelation. A type invariably points forward in time to its antitype. Types are rooted in history yet are prophetic in nature. Their basic ideas lie in their earthly and human correspondence to a heavenly and divine reality. Genuine OT types are not concerned with unessential similarities between type and antitype (counterpart). They are realities (persons, events, things) of the OT, which later are shown by inspired writers to have a corresponding spiritual reality superseding the historical fact.” W. G. C. Murdoch, “Interpretation of Symbols, Types, Allegories, and Parables,” in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Committee, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974), 209.

²¹⁷ Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 51–57.

After introducing the impact of typology in some Adventist controversies, Mendieta closes his survey proposing the existence of three approaches to typology within the structures of Adventist theology today: (i) closed typology – an almost restricted view wherein an explicit and direct NT identification is required (Hasel, Shepherd); (ii) controlled typology – involving the use of sound biblical parameters (LaRondelle, Davidson); and quasi-controlled typology – typology with theological, homiletical, and pastoral purposes.²¹⁸

A last study to be considered here is entitled “The New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22: The Convergence of Hermeneutics with Eschatology.” In it, Elias Brasil de Souza and Jônatas de Mattos Leal explore the Jerusalem/Zion motif as the eschatological city of God. They investigate the motif from a literary point of view by identifying intertextual connections between Jerusalem in the OT and the New Jerusalem in Revelation and from the theological point of view by showing how the motif is developed typologically.

They trace how the Zion motif emerges in the five typological structures proposed by Davidson: historical, eschatological, Christological/soteriological, ecclesiological, and prophetic structures.²¹⁹ The use of the five elements not only provides a exegetical basis (rationale) for its identification but also helps to understand the image of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. Indeed, the understanding of Jerusalem as a type has significant implications for the comprehension of the nature of the city described by the prophet of Patmos. They conclude that “since the type was a historical and concrete reality, so the

²¹⁸ Mendieta, “Typology and Adventist Eschatological Identity,” 62–63.

²¹⁹ Elias Brasil de Souza and Jônatas de Mattos Leal, “La Nueva Jerusalén en Apocalipsis 21–22: La Convergencia entre la Escatología y la Hermeneutica” in *Apocalipsis: El Evangelio del Tiempo del Fin*, ed. Roy E. Graf, Alvaro F. Rodriguez, and Sergio Celis C. (Lima, Peru: Theologika, 2019).

antitype must be. Consequently, the New Jerusalem and the church, although closely linked realities, must be kept distinct.”²²⁰ In other words, in this case the typological relationship between Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem contributes, on one hand: “to avoid the polar opposites of a literalistic, materialistic, and national eschatology of dispensationalism. And on the other hand, to be immune to the spiritualization and metaphorizing of eschatology, as proposed by idealistic interpretations.”²²¹

Post-Critical Neo-Typology Approaches

A survey of relevant scholarly literature in the last twenty years reveals that while the second trend termed by Davidson as Post-Critical Neo-Typology²²² has developed new emphases, the label continues to be appropriate. The approach still represents the ongoing interest in typology despite the fierce initial repudiation of historical critical proponents. Furthermore, its proponents also defend a new meaning of typology. Such a re-signifying involves an erosion of the basic typology pillars as accepted by traditional adherents, such as historical correspondence, escalation, hermeneutical coherence, and prophetic import.

The current Post-Critical Neo-Typology approach has two distinctive emphases. In studies whose emphasis is literary, the designation *figural reading* is preferred rather than *typology*. Since types are recognized always and only retrospectively, there is no search for textual warrant in the OT. Consequently, the border between types and literary

²²⁰ Souza and Leal, “La Nueva Jerusalén,” 83.

²²¹ Souza and Leal, “La Nueva Jerusalén,” 84.

²²² Davidson remembers that the term was coined by Gilbert F. Cope. See: Gilbert F. Cope, *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1959). Davidson, *Typology in Scriptures*, 3.

parallels or mere analogies is not clear.²²³

In studies having a theological emphasis,²²⁴ typology is a “cousin” of allegory and it is considered “a form of non-literal or figurative reading of the Bible.”²²⁵ Usually, typology is defined in a broader sense to include Christological, tropological, and analogical types.²²⁶ Hence, this perspective has been propelled by the “rediscovery” of patristic hermeneutics and it is illustrated by Hans Boersma’s call for a return to mystery through a *sacramental hermeneutic*.²²⁷ Although figural reading is also a preferred nomenclature in this perspective, the proponents of this emphasis suggest an “intentional conflation of typology and allegory.”²²⁸

A short chronological account of the major works representing each emphasis is

²²³ This can be illustrated by Joshua M. Philpot’s suggestion that there is a typological relationship between Joseph and Daniel. Joshua M. Philpot, “Was Joseph a Type of Daniel? Typological Correspondence in Genesis 37–50 and Daniel 1–6,” *JETS* 61 (2018): 681–698. See also Nathan C. Johnson, “The Passion According to David: Matthew’s Arrest Narrative, the Absalom Revolt, and Militant Messianism,” *CBQ* 80 (2018): 247–272; Daniel J. Cameron, “Typology,” *LBD, Logos Edition*. It is important to notice that “biblical typology,” which connects the OT to the NT, should be differentiated from “narrative typology.” See John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, LBI (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 37.

²²⁴ Here “theological” is distinguished from “exegetical” and “historical” research.

²²⁵ John J. O’Keefe, “Typology,” *DJCR* 431.

²²⁶ Ribbens, “Typology of Types,” 81–96. According to Ribbens, the three different kinds of types are under the designation *ikonik mimesis*. The roots of these three dimensions are found in the Quadriga of the Middle Ages. See: Davidson, *Typology in Scriptures*, 25–27.

²²⁷ Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, “Spiritual Interpretation and Realigned Temporality,” in *Heaven on Earth? Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 1–10. The following works represent the theological-allegorical approach: Christopher R. Seitz, *Figure Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001). See also Christopher Seitz, “History, Figural History, and Providence in the Dual Witness of Prophet and Apostle,” in *Go Figure! Figuration in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Stanley D. Walters, PTMS (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 1–6; John J. O’Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2005); Roland Meynet, “Résurgence de l’Exégèse Typologique: Une Dimension Essentielle de l’Intertextualité,” *Gregorianum* 94 (2013): 549–572; Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

²²⁸ Schrock, “What designates a Valid Type?,” 4.

presented below. Following that is a comparative analysis that considers Davidson and Ninow's reviews of literature by pointing out the continuities and discontinuities. This concludes with a brief and more critical analysis of the central issues in the current debate.

Literary Emphasis

The works reviewed in this section are organized in chronological order. Whenever an author has more than one book or article, his or her work is grouped.

With several recent publications, Richard Hays is among the most influential theologians in the contemporary field of biblical studies. Dean B. Deppe even suggests that "Hays has performed nothing less than a Copernican revolution in turning the whole discipline of literary parallels and influences upon an author 'inside out.'"²²⁹

Hays' book, *The Conversion of Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scriptures* (2005) follows up his acclaimed *Echoes of Scriptures in the Letters of Paul* (1993). In *The Conversion of Imagination*, Hays argues that "Paul engaged Scripture with great imaginative freedom, without the characteristic modernist anxiety about factuality and authorial intention."²³⁰ As Christians today attempt to imitate Paul's approach, a conversion of imagination to an *intellectus spirituellis* is required. In doing so, the interpreter is able to avoid on the one hand "some version of liberal demythologizing" and on the other hand "conservative literalism."²³¹ Such a conversion of imagination

²²⁹ Dean B. Deppe, "Interpreting Figural Interpretation: A Review of Richard Hays— *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*," *CTJ* 52 (2017): 277.

²³⁰ Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), ix.

²³¹ Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, ix. Through the studies of particular passages in Paul, Hays advances three main theses: "1. The interpretation of Israel's Scripture was central to the

entails an epistemological transformation. What this represents is shown more clearly in Hays' two subsequent books wherein the author explores the hermeneutic of the Gospel writers, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (2014) and *Echoes of Scriptures in the Gospels* (2016).

Leaning on the classical definition of figural interpretation as found in Auerbach,²³² Hays' approach, which can be classified as an exploration in intra-biblical intertextuality, is noticeably literary. He prefers the term "figural reading" instead of typology to describe the most common approach that the Gospels' writers used to interpret the OT, although he does not avoid the term typology altogether.²³³ According to him, Scriptures can bear witness of Jesus, as John asserts, only if readers embrace figural interpretation, which Hays defines as "a reading that grasps patterns of correspondence between temporally distinct events, so that these events freshly illuminate each other."²³⁴ In order to find these patterns of correspondence the readers need to undergo a conversion of imagination so that they can reproduce the ways in

Apostle Paul's thought; 2. We can learn from Paul's example how to read Scripture faithfully; [and] 3. If we do follow his example, the church's imagination will be converted to see both Scripture and the world in a radically new way." Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, viii.

²³² "Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first. The two poles of a figure are separated in time, but both, being real events or persons, are within temporality. They are both contained in the flowing stream, which is historical life, and only the comprehension, the *intellectus spiritualis*, of their interdependence is a spiritual act." Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 73.

²³³ In *Echoes of Scriptures in the Gospels*, Hays mentions the term typology several times — Davidic typology (p. 72, 81, 95); Moses/Joshua typology (p. 73, 86, 95, 148, 177, 185); exodus typology (p. 74, 97, 310); Isaac typology (p. 174); Son of Man typology (p. 179); Elijah/Elisha typology (p. 285, 287); Israel's typology (p. 143, 147, 150, 151); typological echo of the Jacob/Rachel (p. 345). Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scriptures in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2016).

²³⁴ Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2016), 234.

which the NT authors read the OT. The conversion of imagination involves “awareness of story, metaphor, prefiguration, allusion, echo, reversal, and irony. . . . [and] a complex poetic sensibility.”²³⁵

Hays categorically assumes that the discernment of a figural correspondence must be retrospective rather than prospective.²³⁶ He insists that figural reading does not need to assume that OT authors were aware of the anticipating messianic import of their message. This is possible because Hays defends a distinction between prediction and prefiguration. Indeed, he affirms that “it would be a hermeneutical blunder to read the Law and the Prophets as deliberately predicting events in the life of Jesus.”²³⁷

In short, Hays suggests that a Gospel-shaped hermeneutic implies a reading backwards by which the reader reinterprets Israel’s Scriptures in light of Jesus and the surrounding events of his life. The modern interpreters of the Bible should imitate the NT author in their “diverse imaginative uses and transformations of the OT texts.”²³⁸ It is really difficult to understand how such hermeneutics does not create opportunity for the engagement “in fanciful Promethean poetic creativity,”²³⁹ as Hays asserts will not be necessarily the case.

²³⁵ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 236.

²³⁶ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 20.

²³⁷ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 213.

²³⁸ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 236.

²³⁹ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 14. Curiously, while Hays rejects the idea that the Gospel authors did not produce fanciful interpretation of the OT, he affirms that “Paul fancifully explores the figurative possibilities inherent in the imaginative act of reading Exodus as metaphor for early Christian experience.” Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 91. For critiques of Hays’ view see: N. T. Wright, “Pictures, Stories, and the Cross: Where Do the Echoes Lead?” *JTI* 11 (2017): 49–68; Thomas J. Millay, “Septuagint Figura: Assessing the Contribution of Richard B. Hays,” *SJT* 70 (2017): 93–104.

One interesting phenomenon in studies with a literary emphasis is the confusion of typology with literary features such as type-scenes.²⁴⁰ This is evident in Edward W. Klink III's article where the author traces a parallel between 2 Kgs 3–4 and John 2:1–11, where Jesus' first sign occurs. Based on analogical similarities, the author concludes that "the narrative of John 2:1-11 casts Jesus in typological relation to the prophet Elisha."²⁴¹ The same idea appears in an essay by Keith Bodner. The author considers type-scenes as a form of inner-biblical figuration. He presents John 4 as an example where "the type-scene is part of the theological configuration of the text."²⁴²

Another basic aspect of literary approaches is the conflation of typology with allegory, but for a different reason from those proponents of the theological emphasis. Usually, typology within the literary emphasis is understood as a figure of speech tantamount to allegory. For instance, Mark Gignilliat thinks of typology as a subset of allegory. Although variations between the two exist, a sharp distinction is not necessarily a good one. After all, "typology is allegorical or figural reading."²⁴³

²⁴⁰ For more about type-scenes see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. From a methodological point of view, the lack of a clear criterion to identify type-scenes is a weakness of Alter's work. Although some of the type-scenes, which are advanced by him in this classic, are straightforward like the betrothal type-scene in the Moses, Isaac, and Jacob stories, others are less obvious, like those in the beginning of Saul's career (1 Sam 9:11-12), and the story of Ruth and Boaz, that according to Alter were aborted (Saul) or modified (Ruth) by the narrator with the purposeful intention to convey a message. In both cases (Saul and Ruth), his argument is not convincing, and these type-scenes seem to be imposed upon these narratives. At any rate, the author fails in providing a criterion to discern a true "clue of meaning" that might help the reader to differentiate type-scenes from allusions when elements are missing.

²⁴¹ Edward W. Klink III, "What Concern is That to You and to Me?: John 2:1-11 and the Elisha Narratives," *Neotestamentica* 39 (2005): 283. It seems to me that combining literary convention with prophetic type creates more confusion than clarification.

²⁴² Keith Bodner, "Go Figure: narrative Strategies for an Emerging Generation" in *Go Figure! Figuration in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Stanley D. Walters, PTMS (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 23.

²⁴³ Mark Gignilliat, "Paul, Allegory, and the Plain Sense of Scripture: Galatians 4:21–23," *JTI* 2 (2008): 140.

Another example of this trend can be found in Crump, who defines typology as “the understanding of some characters and stories in the Old Testament as allegories foreshadowing events in the New Testament.”²⁴⁴ Crump conceives of typology as reinterpretation of the OT through the inspired lenses of apostolic faith. It is first a leap of faith and then an interpretative leap. He describes this interpretative leap in the same terms of Hays by saying that “the New Testament writers read the Old Testament through the lens of a gospel-inspired imagination activated by the Holy Spirit.”²⁴⁵

Consequently, such a leap is always backwards. Crump not only rejects the idea of a prospective nature of the OT types but also denies the possibility defended by several proponents of the traditional view of typology in which the prospective element is recognized retrospectively. He questions “How can something be prospective if it was intentionally recognizable only in retrospect?”²⁴⁶

A last example of how typology is considered a literary tool can be found in Jane Heath’s proposition that typology “is a ‘figure of speech’ that configures or reads texts to bring out significant correspondences so as to invest them with meaning beyond themselves (...) [Typology] belongs to the literary phenomenon of intertextuality, to the genre of liturgy and sacred story.”²⁴⁷ It is not a surprise that in her view typology is more literary and liturgical than historical.

²⁴⁴ Crump, *Encountering Jesus*, 45.

²⁴⁵ Crump, *Encountering Jesus*, 40.

²⁴⁶ Crump, *Encountering Jesus*, 36. See more on his critique in the last part of this chapter.

²⁴⁷ Jane Heath, “Moses’ End and the Succession: Deuteronomy 31 and 2 Corinthians 3,” *NTS* 60 (2014): 43. Here Heath is quoting Frances Young. See: Frances Young, “Typology,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, ed. S. E. Porter, P. Joyce and D. E. Orton, BIS 8 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1994), 48.

Finally, James W. Skillen (2017) brings forward a more nuanced concept of figural reading. In stark contrast with previous authors, Skillen defends a more controlled use of figural interpretation and calls for “a mature Christian use”²⁴⁸ of it. According to him, “figural interpretation is not a literary device imposed on biblical texts from the outside. The New Testament authors were writing to proclaim the arrival of Israel’s Messiah in the person of Jesus.”²⁴⁹ Although he fails to define what a mature Christian use of figural reading would look like, the author tries to fit the practice within the flow of redemptive history. In any case, as a retrospective task, figural reading is still a reader-based rather than textually controlled phenomenon.

Apparently, Skillen’s different approach to figural reading relates to his divergence from Auerbach regarding the concept of time. Disagreeing with Philo and Auerbach, Skillen argues that although God transcends history, “the biblical view of created reality cannot be accurately described in terms of a timeless model imitated in material figures.”²⁵⁰ As a result, “history is not a closed, temporal continuum, but neither is it merely the occasion for material embodiments of eternal, unchanging models.”²⁵¹

Theological Emphasis

The second emphasis of the Post-Critical Neo-Typology is theological. The works reviewed in this section are organized in chronological order before the chronological order resumes. Whenever an author has more than one book or article, his or her work is

²⁴⁸ James W. Skillen, “Reengaging Figural Interpretation: The Impact of Erich Auerbach,” *CTJ* 52 (2017): 190.

²⁴⁹ Skillen, “Reengaging Figural Interpretation,” 184.

²⁵⁰ Skillen, “Reengaging Figural Interpretation,” 196.

²⁵¹ Skillen, “Reengaging Figural Interpretation,” 198.

grouped. Before presenting the works pertaining to this trend, a short word on the impact of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement is necessary.

In recent years, studies in typology whose emphasis is theological has been advanced by those in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement. The TIS (which is difficult to define due to its vagueness and range of its scope)²⁵² is a reaction (or perhaps an overreaction) to the narrowly historical result of the historical critical methods. D. A. Carson characterizes TIS as a “partly disparate movement, partly a call to reformation in biblical interpretation, partly a disorganized array of methodological commitments in hermeneutics, partly a serious enterprise and partly (I suspect) a fad.”²⁵³ Along the same lines, Brad East observes that TIS is a “wooly and somewhat indefinable thing, hardly a movement, more a loose collection of trends and shared interests and practices grouped under the same name.”²⁵⁴ However, Hans Boersma believes that the movement represents “a renaissance in biblical studies and a genuine rapprochement between biblical and theological studies.”²⁵⁵

²⁵² This is evident, for instance, from the Hans Boersma’s definition of TIS: “I mean by that simply a reading of Scripture *as Scripture*, that is to say, as the book of the church that is meant as a sacramental guide on the journey of salvation—and one aspect of reading Scripture as Scripture is to take history seriously as anchored in Jesus Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega of history.” Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, ii. Boersma himself recognizes that TIS is “a catchall for a variety of approaches to the Scriptures.” Skillen, “Reengaging Figural Interpretation,” i.

²⁵³ D. A. Carson, “Theological Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. R. Michael Allen (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clarke, 2011), 187. In this essay, Carson provides one of the sharpest critiques of the upsides and downsides of TIS.

²⁵⁴ Brad East, “The Hermeneutics of Theological Interpretation: Holy Scripture, Biblical Scholarship and Historical Criticism,” *IJST* 19 (2017): 30. East proposes that theological interpretation “names an approach to Christians’ reading of the Bible as Holy Scripture that explicitly foregrounds theological interests, relativizes the role of historical-critical methods, and assumes some kind of communicative relation, mediated by the text, between the triune God and the church.” East, “The Hermeneutics of Theological Interpretation,” 31.

²⁵⁵ Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, i.

The movement is marked by a return to pre-critical exegesis (particularly patristics) with emphasis on theological meaning at the expense of historical meaning. Additionally, there is a revival of the Rule of Faith characterized by the importance of communal ecclesiastical reading of the whole biblical canon combined with the prominent role of the reader in biblical interpretation. Boersma considers “the influence both of Karl Barth, via the Yale school, on North American theological scholarship, and of the *nouvelle théologie* movement in France, most notably Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou,²⁵⁶ not only in Catholicism but also among Protestants”²⁵⁷ as driving elements in the current growth of TIS.

Instructively, East draws the basic lines of the resulting hermeneutic of TIS. Usually, advocates are not beholden to naturalist metaphysics. Their interpretation often involves figural reading, the meaning of which is not limited to original intent. There is no problem in accepting readings undertaken in the light of faith – based on doctrinal commitments.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Both theologians continue to be the starting point in spiritual reading today. See: Henri De Lubac, *Theological Fragments* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989); Henri De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). Jordan Hillebert, ed., *T & T Clark Companion to Henri De Lubac* (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2017). Kevin Storer, “Theological Interpretation and the Spiritual Sense of Scripture: Henri de Lubac’s Retrieval of a Christological Hermeneutic of Presence,” *JTI* 7 (2013): 79–96; Ian Christopher Levy, *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation: The Sense of Scripture in Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 11, 73, 210; Hans Moscicke, “The Theological Presuppositions of Ancient Christian Exegesis: G. K. Beale and Henri de Lubac in Conversation,” *JTI* 10 (2016): 125–143. Here the author seeks to present “communalities” between Beale and Henri de Lubac. It is my opinion that the commonalities are superficial. Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (Ex Fontibus, 2018).

²⁵⁷ Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality*, i.

²⁵⁸ East, “The Hermeneutics of Theological Interpretation,” 38–39. East suggests these essential hermeneutical contours result from four basic presuppositions of theological interpretation: “1. The role of divine action in the production and transmission of the biblical texts, action that is anterior, not posterior, to our reception and reading of them; 2. The role of divine action in the right reading of Scripture, that is, of the need for the Holy Spirit’s illumination; 3. The biblical texts’ social and religious location in the life and worship of the church; 4. Scripture has divinely ordered purposes, with especial reference to the church in its mission, message, knowledge, life together, sanctification, graces and worship.” Daniélou, *From*

Since introductions to TIS abound and several evaluations have been produced, there is no need here for a more extensive presentation of this movement.²⁵⁹ In any case, the basic features of how proponents of TIS approach the Scriptures are best understood by looking at the work of certain advocates, and how they approach biblical interpretation (even though restricted to typology).

One startling aspect of the TIS movement is its ecumenical appeal. Boersma evaluates TIS as “genuine theological rapprochement between Catholicism and Protestantism”²⁶⁰ which fosters “an opportunity for renewed ecumenical discussion.”²⁶¹ To be more precise, such rapprochement is more hermeneutical than theological. Since hermeneutics was one of the key points of divergence that prompted the Protestant Reformation, it does not come as a surprise that a return to allegory would open a door for such a rapprochement.

The first author for consideration here is Christopher Seitz, a former student of Brevard Childs. Not surprisingly, he calls for reconnecting the Old and New Testaments via figural interpretation, which he does not consider an exegetical technique. In 1998,

Shadows to Reality, 33–38.

²⁵⁹ In their article Aubrey Sequeira and Samuel C. Emadi examine the relationship between ITS and what I call the “theological-literary approach.” Sequeira and Emadi, “Biblical-Theological Exegesis,” 11–34. For the distinction between Biblical Theology and Theological Interpretation of Scripture, see Daniel J. Treier, “Biblical Theology and/or Theological Interpretation of Scripture? Defining the Relationship,” *SJT* 61 (2008): 16–31. See more about TIS in Stanley E. Porter, “What Exactly Is Theological Interpretation of Scripture, and Is It Hermeneutically Robust Enough for the Task to Which It Has Been Appointed?” in *Horizons in Hermeneutics: A Festschrift in Honor of Anthony C. Thiselton*, ed. Stanley E. Porter & Matthew R. Malcolm (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 234–267.

²⁶⁰ Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Theologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 149.

²⁶¹ Boersma, *Nouvelle Theologie*, 150. This ecumenical dialogue is exemplified by the publication of *Heaven on Earth: Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue* edited by Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering. See: Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, ed., *Heaven on Earth: Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue* (Levering; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

Seitz proposed that *sensus literalis* should not become historical or connected to the authorial intention alone.²⁶² What is rather remarkable is that ten years later he defines figural reading as “historical reading seeking to comprehend the work of God in Christ, in Israel, in the apostolic witness, and in the Holy Spirit’s ongoing word to the church.”²⁶³

In his call for a return of “precritical” apostolical reading, he seeks a “reattachment to the classic tradition.”²⁶⁴ This precritical revival entails a return to typology, which the tradition-historical approach failed to use in doing theology. Such a typology should be practiced in the context of the rule of faith governed by an ecclesial community.²⁶⁵

While Seitz admits that he is not proposing a looking back to the OT from the NT to find “things there that simply were not there,”²⁶⁶ figural interpretation “has assumed there is a surplus of intended meaning in every divine revelation.”²⁶⁷ This surplus of

²⁶² Christopher Seitz, *Word Without End* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 12.

²⁶³ Seitz, “History, Figural History, and Providence,” 6.

²⁶⁴ Seitz, *Figure out!*, 88. The title can be misleading if the reader expects any kind of systematic presentation on typology and providence in Christian Scripture. In fact, the book is a collection of essays where concerns about the typology and allegory relationship, notions of history and figural readings, and exegetical practices of Church Fathers are only underlying. Indeed, the book does not deal directly with or exemplify figural or typological reading. Rather, it is a collection of essays that urge readers to escape the pitfall of the historicism and at the same time to see how the OT and NT are theologically related in an organic way. He deals with mission, prayers, ecumenism, etc. This same impression is implicit in David Baer comments about the book: “These essays appear to be held together as much by the author’s own professional and theological pilgrimage as by any factor internal to the chapters.” David Baer, Review of *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture*, by Christopher Seitz, *VT* 54 (2004): 419.

²⁶⁵ J. Mann also holds a similar position. He says that when interpreting types, symbols and allegories a “praxis of love in the context of the Church that is the criterion of interpretation.” J. Mann, “Preaching, Spiritual Formation, and the Figural Interpretation of Scripture,” *BET* 3 (2016): 61.

²⁶⁶ Seitz, *Figure out!*, 104.

²⁶⁷ Seitz, *Figure out!*, 32

meaning is based on divine sovereignty and providence. In fact, the OT is prophetic only in a providential sense.

J. D. Dawson, in his turn, tries to provide a resolution for the challenging question about how “to read the text in a way that does justice to the novelty of Christianity, and [at the same time preserving] Christianity’s intrinsic relation to Judaism, and yet [respecting] Judaism’s own ongoing identity as a separate religion in its own right.”²⁶⁸ His answer is to read the text figurally allowing the novel figural meaning to be extended without supplanting the preexistent Jewish Scriptures. In this way, Christianity can fashion its own identity and still respect the identities of others.

Curiously, Dawson treats typology and figuration as synonymous terms while at the same time he makes a distinction between typology and allegory²⁶⁹ as well as between figurative and figural. In the core, the difference is only one in both cases, namely, the presence of genuine similarities. In this way, the author tries to establish a kind of criterion to differentiate real figural correspondences from mere “figurative” resemblances. He says “both the figure and its fulfillment are concrete, historically real persons or events, related in ways that are fundamentally figural rather than figurative.”²⁷⁰ However, without a criterion to distinguish what are or are not genuine similarities involving historical entities, the norm loses usefulness.

²⁶⁸ J. D. Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 207.

²⁶⁹ The author sees typology as a subset of allegory though. Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading*, 263.

²⁷⁰ Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading*, 86.

The same concern regarding supersessionism can be found in an article by Richard J. Clifford wherein the author presents a Catholic perspective on the exodus. The author explicitly declares his preference for the use of the term figural instead typological to identify his reading strategy. He explains his reasoning by remarking that “given the misunderstanding surrounding ‘typological,’ ‘figural’ may be a better term for the phenomenon, for it carries no supersessionist overtones and better underscores the cross-referencing *within* each testament.”²⁷¹ Such a cross-reference involves “words, deeds, symbols [that] point forward and backward constantly throughout the Bible.”²⁷²

Another Catholic contribution to the topic is that of Glenn W. Olsen in his essay “The Spiritual Sense(s) Today.” Based on Longenecker’s studies, Olsen assumes that spiritual reading is primarily a Jewish heritage and not Greek. He equals spiritual reading with contemporizing interpretation. Such contemporizing is present already on the NT where a Gospel writer, for instance, “can find more in an Old Testament passage than the original human author could reasonably be assumed to have intended.”²⁷³ In this context, Olsen proposes a rehabilitation of Origen, who according to him “draws his exegetical method from Scripture itself.”²⁷⁴ Thus, like others Olsen invites interpreters to appreciate

²⁷¹ Richard J. Clifford, “The Exodus in the Christian Bible: The Case for ‘Figural’ Reading,” *TS* 63 (2002): 360

²⁷² Clifford, “The Exodus in the Christian Bible,” 360.

²⁷³ Glenn W. Olsen, “The Spiritual Sense(s) Today” in *The Bible and the University*, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey and C. Stephen Evans, *SHS* 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 121.

²⁷⁴ Olsen, “The Spiritual Sense(s) Today,” 133. He adds that Origen “is discovering the true, redemptive meaning encoded into the Song of Songs by divine intention that structures all of Scripture (and all creation and history).” Olsen, “The Spiritual Sense(s) Today,” 127.

a kind of “analogical imagination in a way that crosses confessional lines.”²⁷⁵ Such an appreciation is one of the distinctive marks of new scholarship on spiritual sense.

Two evangelical authors provide additional illustrations of the theological emphasis in typology studies. The first is Daniel Treier, who (following Ellis) affirms that typology relates “the past to the present in terms of a historical correspondence and escalation in which the divinely ordered prefiguration finds a complement in the subsequent and greater event.”²⁷⁶ The author correctly observes that decisions regarding definition and nature of typology has a settling impact in at least three areas: (i) inner-biblical exegesis (OT/NT relationship); (ii) contemporary hermeneutic for moving from text to application; and (iii) reproduction (or not) of NT author’s interpretative practices. The author seems to consider typology as a category of figural reading that permits OT interpretation be both literal and Christian.

In a more recent article, Treier offers his view of spiritual reading in a clearer way. According to him, “spiritual exegesis and theological exegesis are largely synonyms, not contrasting terms. Many use the term ‘theological’ in order to highlight the pursuit of the knowledge of God, resulting in the church’s attentive listening to Scripture as God’s Word. Others prefer the term “spiritual” in order to highlight ontological claims about participation in God.”²⁷⁷ In any case, although he admits the

²⁷⁵ Olsen, “The Spiritual Sense(s) Today,” 133.

²⁷⁶ Treier, “Typology,” DTIB: 823. See: E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 106.

²⁷⁷ Daniel J. Treier, “Pursuing Wisdom: (Back) Toward Evangelical Spiritual Exegesis,” *Crux* 48 (2012): 24. See more about Treier’s view of theological interpretation of Scripture: Daniel J. Treier, “Biblical Theology and/or Theological Interpretation of Scripture? Defining the Relationship,” *SJT* 61 (2008): 16–31; Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scriptures: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics: 2008).

usefulness of the nomenclature, he deems it a tautology. In his analysis of wisdom literature, he shows how “scriptural texts open up ranges of divine meaning to be read in light of redemptive history (...), as the realization of incipient mystery.”²⁷⁸

The second evangelical author, Peter Leithart, dedicates a whole chapter to typology in his book *Deep Exegesis*. It is enlightening to observe the way he opens this chapter. He starts by saying that “the authors of the New Testament do unconscionable things with the Old Testament,” even though they “were following hints from the Old Testament itself.”²⁷⁹ Basic for his conception of typology is the idea that “events themselves change over time, taking on new properties because of later events.”²⁸⁰ It is in this sense that the text is not fixed. Consequently, “typology is merely a way of reading that acknowledges the fundamental temporality of writing, reading, communication, and interpretation.”²⁸¹

Although it should be acknowledged that Leithart brings up an important issue that is present in the process of generating textual meaning, one confusing aspect of his position is how typology can be a deliberate overshadowing if later events change the meaning of original events. For instance, if Matthew is doing something different with “out of Egypt I called My son,” (Matt 2:15) how could Hosea’s passage (Hos 11:1) provides a deliberate foreshadowing? This is possible only by a disjunction between the divine and human authors. Thus, typology always involves the discernment of the divine

²⁷⁸ Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scriptures*, 20.

²⁷⁹ Leithart, *Deep Exegesis*, 37.

²⁸⁰ Leithart, *Deep Exegesis*, 41.

²⁸¹ Leithart, *Deep Exegesis*, 74.

intention of the text that should be guided by a group of believers in the context of a church community with spiritual authority to interpret Scriptures. Therefore, NT authors' habits of reading are not only reasonable but should be emulated by Christians today.

Hans Boersma is one of the most influential scholars in the field of spiritual reading today. The impact of de Lubac and Jean Daniélou is perceptible in his notion of sacramental ontology through which he invites to a return to mystery. Although Boersma (following Daniélou) recognizes the existence of 'eschatological typology' (OT) and Christological typology (NT), his focus is on sacramental typology (Church) and mystical typology (OT application to individual life).²⁸²

Particularly important is his view of sacramental understanding of time, familiar to the premodern mindset. The author agrees with Charles Taylor's distinction between secular time and higher time. In the higher time, "all times are present to [God], and he holds them in his extended simultaneity. His now contains all time."²⁸³ Such a distinction allows that two events like Isaac's quasi-sacrifice and Jesus's death can be simultaneous in higher time but far apart in secular time. In this context, time is neither purely linear nor based on chronological progression.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Boersma, *Nouvelle Theologie*, 200.

²⁸³ Boersma and Levering, "Introduction," 4.

²⁸⁴ To Boersma the use of typology and allegory by the church fathers is only possible because of this particular view of time: "the reason the church fathers practiced typology, allegory, and so on is that they were convinced that the reality of the Christ event was already present (sacramentally) within the history described within the Old Testament narrative." Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 27. In her study on 1 Cor 10, Alexandra R. Brown also reflects on the issue of time in relation to typology. According to her, "Pauline typology in 1 Corinthians exhibits a template for 'rhyming' within history that opens new messianic time in the midst of *chronos*." Alexandra R. Brown, "Kairos Gathered: Time, Tempo, and Typology in I Corinthians," *Interpretation* 72 (2018): 46.

Boersma's spiritual reading is not restricted to the Bible. In fact, from his Christian Platonist perspective, "everything around us is sacramental."²⁸⁵ As a result, he calls for a sacramental hermeneutic that includes not only typology but also anagogy, allegory, and the like. In order to practice this kind of hermeneutics, the reader needs to be open "to the infinite mystery of meaning that God invites us to explore in Christ."²⁸⁶ This is possible only when interpreters allow themselves to take more seriously the theological (vertical) interconnectedness instead of the chronological (horizontal) connection.

From the author's ideas, four features of sacramental reading (typological exegesis) can be inferred: (i) the text is not a historical artifact; (ii) Scriptures can transform their readers; (iii) maturity affects our reading; and (iv) grounded on divine providence, we should not make a clear-cut distinction between typology and allegory.²⁸⁷ It is not surprising that this particular way to read the OT can (or certainly will) produce something "other." However, according to Boersma, this "other" is not unrelated to original text, but is something hidden as a deeper or underlying meaning already latent in the text itself. According to him, such a reading also seen in the Church Fathers' writings is merely "an extension of the typology that the Scriptures themselves employ."²⁸⁸

In his reading of Joshua's narrative in the OT, Douglas S. Earl suggests that the mythical character of the texts is parallel to the triggers of spiritual reading already

²⁸⁵ Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 18.

²⁸⁶ Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 32.

²⁸⁷ Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 36.

²⁸⁸ Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 96.

present in Origen (historical difficulties) and in Augustine (ethical issues).²⁸⁹ Based on the absence of the *herem* motif and the presence of a high theological tone, Earl suggests that the transition between literal and “spiritualizing” is already indicated by Joshua’s composition itself.²⁹⁰

In a most recent work, he expands the scope of his first book to reflect on the reading of the whole OT as Christian Scripture. This illustrates how spiritual reading or theological interpretation of Scripture are in line with postmodern hermeneutics. Regarding the reading of the OT as Christian Scripture “there may be no meta-justification or methodological description available for the practice as one of rule-following. (...) It is simply ‘what we do.’”²⁹¹ However, his suggestion that there are no correct or false and only weak/poor or strong interpretations seems to contradict his own idea that TIS as a language game has rules that allows certain “interpretative moves” while not permitting others.²⁹²

While closely following Hays’s phraseology, Earl defends the use of existential symbolic imagination as an essential tool for theological interpretation. Although he admits the existence of the interaction between the world of the text and the construction

²⁸⁹ He says: “sensitivity to the mythical character of a text indicates that its significance is not only or necessarily located in its ‘literal’, ‘historical’ or ‘first-order’ sense; rather its significance lies ‘beyond’ this, which is something that traditional spiritual reading of the Old Testament has sought to capture, even if inadequately.” Earl, *Reading Joshua as Christian Scripture*, 46–47. In a more recent book, he affirms that by identifying difficulties and problems in the text and seeking cues in an inner meaning, Origen is an old example of “critique of Ideology.” Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian*, 69–70. He adds: ‘Stumbling blocks’ in the narratives, either of a historical, logical or moral nature, point us away from a single, straightforward, naïve reading of Scripture at the literal level, and point instead toward a spiritual reading, as Origen would put it, or toward a symbolic reading as poetic fiction, to use Ricoeur’s terminology. Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian*, 323.

²⁹⁰ Earl, *Reading Joshua as Christian Scripture*, 121.

²⁹¹ Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian*, 17, 10.

²⁹² Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian*, 10.

of the reader, he insists that “symbolic conception is reader involving.”²⁹³ It is evident that in a reading more “symbolic/rhetorical/existential rather than literal/ontological/historical reading of texts” (which he considers more faithful),²⁹⁴ it is the reader who has primacy.

In his combining of Origen with Wittgenstein, Earl adds a more academic flavor to his spiritual reading,²⁹⁵ which he defines “as reading in a specifically Christian context in which the Incarnation is the ‘hermeneutical key’ that draws the narrative pattern of Scripture and the horizons of the reader together in an imaginative existentially significant way with Christ at the centre.”²⁹⁶ Even if the supremacy of the reader in this enterprise is accepted, theological interpretation still should promote character formation and cultivate adequate assumptions and practices of reading to enable its adherents to make good judgements.

Another aspect of the theological emphasis in typology studies is the downplaying of the two pillars of the traditional approach: historical correspondence and prophetic prefiguration. This is particularly clear in Matthew Bates’ thought. Following the

²⁹³ Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian*, 82.

²⁹⁴ Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian*, 82.

²⁹⁵ The idea that figural reading is compatible with historical criticism is expressed by Brien E. Baley when he affirms that “to read Scripture figurally, as well as critically and analytically, is not to abandon a modern sense of the history in which we live, but simply to see history in greater depth, as having “spiritual” significance—as rooted in God’s reality, coming forth from God, leading to God. It is to read history in faith, and to see faith as the key to understanding history’s comprehensive meaning.” Brien E. Daley “‘In Many and Various Ways:’ Towards A Theology of Theological Exegesis” in *Heaven on Earth: Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 29.

²⁹⁶ Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian*, 323. Regarding the role of imagination, Earl remembers Ellen Daves’s words: “The capacity for fruitful theological wondering resides chiefly in the imagination.” Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian*, 332.

direction of Steven DiMattei's studies, Bates affirms that prefiguration is unsuitable to characterize Paul's use of *typos*. Paul uses that term as *paradeigma* for moral pedagogical instruction. Instead of prefiguration, Bates suggests iconic mimesis as a more appropriate term to describe what Paul is doing.²⁹⁷ Iconic mimesis involves a deliberate anticipation based on God's providential design rather prophetic prediction. Thus, it is only retrospectively that NT authors can find this surplus of meanings made evident by the unfolding of God's providential control of history. Types are only pedagogical in nature and are determined on the basis of mimetic correspondences.

Kevin Vanhoozer expresses his view of spiritual reading in an essay wherein he defends a "transfigural" interpretation of Scriptures. In the context of what he recognizes as a Protestant *ressourcement*,²⁹⁸ typology is a kind of spiritual interpretation that can be defined as "a form of theological interpretation that responds to something unique to the biblical text, a special rather than general hermeneutic that is particularly attentive to the divine authorial discourse and its organic unity."²⁹⁹ To him, spiritual reading is a three-dimensional affair: "(1) divine discourse, (2) the 'what' and the 'about what' of meaning, and (3) the church's reading Scripture to gain Christ-mindedness ('to whom' and 'for what purpose')."³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ He defines iconic mimesis as occurring when "the representation of a text by the interpreter takes that text as a coherent whole into account, and there is a genuine correspondence between linguistic token and referent." Matthew W. Bates, *The Hermeneutics of Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul's Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2012), 138.

²⁹⁸ In the context of TIS, the term "*ressourcement*" means a return to the sources. In this case, the old hermeneutical practices of the Church Fathers.

²⁹⁹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock: Biblical Interpretation Earthed, Typed, And Transfigured" in *Heaven on Earth: Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 214.

³⁰⁰ Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain," 211.

Vanhoozer is more cautious regarding the role of authorial intention in spiritual interpretation.³⁰¹ He differs from Leithart, for instance, in that he is not inclined to support the idea that biblical meaning changes. In his view, typological discourse does not append a second, spiritual sense but rather it extends the literal. What changes is not the meaning but the referent. Although he rejects the idea of reducing God's authorial discourse to that of the human author, he insists that "typological exegesis therefore discovers the plain sense of the author, yet it also discovers that the human authors tell more than they can know, for they are not always cognizant of the ultimate referent of their discourse."³⁰² That is why he prefers speaking about *sensus splendidus* (a more glorious referent) instead of *sensus plenior*. This hermeneutic is transfigural just as Jesus' Transfiguration changed his form but not his essence. In the same way, the NT author did not change the meaning of the OT but only its referents.

Ephraim Radner is bolder in his contention that the path for the modern biblical interpreter is a return to the kind of allegorical reading as was practiced by the early Church Fathers and continued throughout the Middle Ages.³⁰³ Radner remarks that although deriving from a broad literary scope, by the 18th century figural reading had already taken on the wide-ranging meaning of "spiritual sense" as held among church fathers – being at odds with or at least distinguished with "historical." Interestingly enough, he draws the lines defining figural reading also in terms of a change in referents

³⁰¹ Another difference in Vanhoozer's view is that to him spiritual interpretation is covenantal and not sacramental.

³⁰² Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing The Rock," 218.

³⁰³ Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2016), 1. Here Radner follows Louth's suggestion. See: Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).

(like Vanhoozer before). According to him, figural reading of Scriptures “stands for the general approach of reading the Bible’s referents as a host of living beings — and not only human ones — who draw us, as readers, from one set of referents or beings to another, across times and spaces, whatever these may constitute.”³⁰⁴

The author conceives figural reading as a task primarily and centrally theological. It is not a method though; rather, it is an outlook of “the nature of a world that God has made in relation to which a certain divine text rises up, hovers over, and orders.”³⁰⁵ In such a worldview, “figural” refers to the “everything” of God’s act in creation, as it is “all” given in the Scriptures. And “figural reading” of the Bible is that reading that receives this divinely-given “allness” — who is the person of the Christ “through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor. 8:6), who “is before all things, and in [whom] all things hold together” (Col. 1:17) — from within the breadth of the Word written.

On the other side of the spectrum, Steven Edward Harris disagrees with Radner’s levelling of figural reading and allegory. According to Harris, “Figural has come to designate a kind of interpretation that preserves the historicity of the referent in the biblical text, while recognizing a second level of meaning, also at the bodily, historical level. This is in opposition to allegorical interpretation, which is said to rely on evacuating the text of its literal, historical meaning.”³⁰⁶ This divergence illustrates that there is no uniform view among the figural reading proponents and that any general

³⁰⁴ Radner, *Time and the Word*, 6.

³⁰⁵ Radner, *Time and the Word*, 7.

³⁰⁶ Steven Edward Harris, “Greater Resurrections and a Greater Ascension: Figural Interpretation of Elijah and Jesus,” *JTI* 13 (2019): 23.

labeling that does not pay attention to the different nuances among authors may misrepresent the data. In this case, both authors defend a return to a premodern or pre-critical exegesis, but such an exegesis does not mean the same for both.³⁰⁷

Continuities and Discontinuities

The aim of this section of the study is to trace the basic lines of continuity and discontinuity between the author's own survey of the last twenty years of research in typology and those of Davidson and Ninow. In short, the purpose here is to indicate what has changed (or not) in the last two decades in the field.

What Davidson and Ninow observed as an astounding revival of interest in biblical typology after the World War II has not dimmed during the last two decades.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ In his article, Harris uses the term premodern and precritical interchangeable to refer to "common hermeneutical and theological commitments shared among the classical Christian exegetical tradition, whether patristic, medieval, or post-Reformation, from before the rise of modern historical biblical criticism. The commitments that separate premodern from modern or precritical from critical involve the natures of divine activity, Scripture, and history; the need (or not) for divine illumination of human reasoning capacities, and so, epistemological universality or particularity; the locatedness of proper biblical interpretation in the church and/or academy; and so on. Strictly speaking, premodern is a larger category of analysis than precritical: modern historical biblical criticism arises as a subset of wider cultural shifts that bring about modernity in the Western world, shifts in the areas of politics, religion, philosophy, and science." Harris, "Greater Resurrections and a Greater Ascension," 22n2.

³⁰⁸ Works whose importance was only secondary are not mentioned there. Among them are those which suggest typological readings of the NT without a clear identification of their methodological stand. Edwin Earl Reynolds, "Another Look at the Serpent on the Pole," *JASS* 4 (2001): 35–47; Maja Weyermann, "The Typologies of Adam-Christ and Eve-Mary and Their Relationship to One Another," *ATR* 84 (2002): 609–626; Witness Lee, "The Seed of David becoming the Son of God," *AC* 7 (2002): 85–90; Bernard Renaud, "Jésus et la (Nouvelle) Alliance dans les Récits de l'Institution Eucharistique," in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 119–140; Michèle Morgen, "La Figure de Frère dans 1 Jn 3,12. L'Audace de la Typologie et Ses Clins d'Œil au Lecteur," in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 203–222; R. Fowler White and E. Calvin Beisner "Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology: Understanding the Principles at Work in God's Covenants," in *By Faith Alone: Answering the Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification*, ed. Gary L.W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 147–170; Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2007), 127, 184; Herbert W. Bateman IV, ed., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2007), 342; Günther H. Juncker, "'Children of Promise': Spiritual Paternity and Patriarch Typology in Galatians and Romans," *BBR* 17 (2007): 131–160; Leroy Andrew Huizenga, "Matt 1:1: 'Son of Abraham' as a Christological Category," *HBT* 30 (2008): 103–113; J. Daryl Charles, "Polemic and Persuasion: Typological and Rhetorical Perspectives on the letter of Jude," in *Reading Jude With New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of Jude*, ed. Robert L. Webb

Indeed, it does not seem appropriate to speak of a revival anymore because interest in typology has not seen a real decline since then.³⁰⁹ This is attested by the numerous

and Peter H. Davids (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2008), 81–108; Donald John MacLean, “‘So Great a Love’: James Durham on Christ and His Church in the Song of Solomon,” *CP* 5 (2009): 239–255; Benjamin L. Gladd, “The Last Adam as the ‘Life-Giving Spirit’ Revisited: A Possible Old Testament Background of One of Paul’s Most Perplexing Phrases,” *WTJ* 71 (2009): 297–309; J. Knox Chamblin, *Matthew: A Mentor Commentary*, Mentor Commentaries (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2010), 126–129; John K. Goodrich, “Guardians, Not Taskmasters: The Cultural Resonances of Paul’s Metaphor in Galatians 4.1-2,” *JSNT* 32 (2010): 251–284; Philip R. Davies, “Son of David and Son of Saul,” in *The Fate of King David: The Past and Present of a Biblical Icon*, ed. Tod Linafelt, Claudia V. Camp, and Timothy Beal (New York, NY: T&T, 2010), 123–132; Robert Reed Lessing, “Isaiah’s Servants in Chapters 40-55: Clearing up the Confusion,” *CJ* 37 (2011): 130–134; Nicholas P. Lunn, “Allusions to the Joseph Narrative in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts: Foundations of a Biblical Type,” *JETS* 55 (2012): 27–41; Jonathan Lunde and John A. Dunne, “Paul’s Creative and Contextual Use of Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8,” *WTJ* 74 (2012): 99–117; Matthew Y. Emerson, “Arbitrary Allegory, Typical Typology, or Intertextual Interpretation?: Paul’s Use of the Pentateuch in Galatians 4:21–31,” *BTB* 43 (2013): 14–22; Daniel M. Gurtner, “‘Fasting’ and ‘Forty Nights’: The Matthean temptation Narrative (4:1–11) And Moses Typology,” in “*What Does the Scripture Say?: Studies in the Function of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: The Synoptic Gospels*,” ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, SSEJC 1 (London, U.K.; New Delhi, India; New York, NY; Sydney, Australia: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1–12; Ryan S. Schellenberg, “Does Paul Call Adam a ‘Type’ of Christ?: An Exegetical Note on Romans 5,14,” *ZNW* 105 (2014): 54–63; David W. Pao, “Israel and Israel’s Scripture: A Review Article,” *TJ* 37 (2016): 47–56; František Ábel, “‘Death as The Last Enemy’: Interpretation Of Death in the Context of Paul’s Theology,” *CV* 58 (2016): 19–54; Johnson, “The Passion According to David,” 247–272; Tucker S. Ferda, “Flesh from Heaven: The Text of John 6.52 and its intertext,” *NTS* 65 (2019): 371–387; Seong-Kwang Kim, “The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15.” *구약논단* 25 (2019): 102–129; Hans Moscieke, “Jesus, Barabbas, and the Crowd as Figures in Matthew’s Day of Atonement Typology (Matthew 27:15-26),” *JBL* 139 (2020): 125–153.

³⁰⁹ In addition to publications dealing more directly with typology, the interest on the topic can be illustrated by other studies examining the use of typology in individual authors or literary corpus. For instance, Frank Chan, “Baptismal Typology in Melito of Sardis’ ‘Peri Pascha’: A Study in the Interpretation of Exodus 12 in the Second Century” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2001); Claude Coulot, “La Nouvelle Alliance au Pays de Damas,” in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 103–118; Jennifer Lynn Leader, “‘A house not made with hands’: Natural typology in the work of Jonathan Edwards, Emily Dickinson and Marianne Moore” (PhD diss., The Claremont Graduate University, 2003); Marvin A. Sweeney, *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). See Chapter entitled Davidic Typology in the Forty Year War between the Sons of Light and Sons of Darkness on pages 262–268; Arkady Kovelman, “Typology and Peshar in the Letter of Aristeas” in *Ancient Israel, Judaism, and Christianity in Contemporary Perspective: Essays in Memory of Karl-Johan Illman*, ed., Jacob Neusner (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), 175. Here the author explores the intersection between typology and Peshar in the Letter of Aristeas. Stephen R.C. Nichols, *Jonathan Edwards’s Bible: The Relationship of the Old and New Testaments* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008); Devin P. Zuber, “Edwards, Swedenborg, Emerson: From Typology to Correspondence” in *The Contribution of Jonathan Edwards to American Culture and Society: Essays on America’s Spiritual Founding Father (the Northampton Tercentenary Celebration, 1703-2003)* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2008), 109–124; Kelly M. Kapic, “Typology, The Messiah, and John Owen’s Theological Reading of Hebrews,” in *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, ed. Jon C. Laansma and Daniel J. Treier, (London, U.K.: T&T Clark, 2012), 135–154; Mario Imperatori, “P. Beauchamp e L’Egesesi Tipologica della Scrittura: Tradizione e Modernità,” *Gregorianum* 93 (2012): 23–45; Sidney H. Griffith “Disclosing the Mystery: The Hermeneutics of Typology in Syriac Exegesis,” in *Interpreting Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Overlapping Inquiries*, ed. Mordechai Z. Cohen and Adele

publications mentioned in the previous section. Indeed, biblical typology has gone beyond biblical studies and has been analyzed in the contexts of culture, politics, television and arts.³¹⁰

However, the scholarly landscape in the field has changed in the last two decades. On the one hand, the number of new publications reflecting the traditional approach has been consistently steady. Among evangelicals, covenant and progressive covenant theologians have been more productive. Although dispensationalists have written about typology during this period, their contribution is less significant: only a few publications have come forth and in these no unified or clear proposition regarding the nature of typology has been offered.³¹¹ On the other hand, the initial historical critical repudiation

Berlin (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 46–64; Vern S. Poythress, “Typology and Christocentricity in the Hermeneutics of Johannes Oecolampadius,” *WJT* 81 (2019): 295–304; Drew Hunter, “Hebrews and the Typology of Jonathan Edwards,” *Themelios* 44 (2019): 339–352; Kiseong Lee, “An Evaluation of Typology in the Sermons of Charles H. Spurgeon and Alexander Maclaren and Its Implications for Text-Driven Preaching” (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019).

³¹⁰ Sara Scott Armengot, “Typology and the Promised Land in Twentieth-Century Inter-American Literature and Film” (PhD diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 2008). Kevin Killeen, “Veiled Speech: Preaching, Politics, and Scriptural Typology” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, ed. Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford, U.K.; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 387–403; Paul Corby Finney and Franz Rickert, “Type and Antitype,” *The Eerdmans Encyclopedia of Early Christian Art and Archaeology*, ed. Paul Corby Finney (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 664; Joshua Laurence Cohen, “Echoes of Exodus: Biblical Typology and Racial Solidarity in African American Literature, 1829–1962” (PhD diss., Emory University, 2019).

³¹¹ See footnote 31 above. The dispensationalist view of typology is not found in publications dedicated directly to this topic, but usually in “their discussions/understanding of typology is embedded in articles where they lay out their view of Israel and the church, the land.” Brent Parker, email message to author, October 13, 2020. In addition to that, dispensationalist views of typology are often reactionary being found in response to challenges posed by progressivist covenant theologians. See: Michael J. Vlach “Have They Found a Better Way? An Analysis of Gentry and Wellum’s *Kingdom through Covenant*,” *MSJ* 24 (2013): 5–24; Craig A. Blaising, “A Critique of Gentry and Wellum’s *Kingdom through Covenant: A Hermeneutical-Theological Response*,” *MSJ* 26 (2015): 111–127; Michael A. Grisanti, “A Critique of Gentry and Wellum’s *Kingdom through the Covenant: An Old Testament Perspective*,” *MSJ* 26 (2015): 129–137; Darrell L. Bock, “A Critique of Gentry and Wellum’s *Kingdom through the Covenant: A New Testament Perspective*,” *MSJ* 26 (2015): 139–145. There are two clear communalities among dispensationalists though. First, types should be discovered with extreme caution. There is a healthy concern with controls, although clear criteria are not provided. For instance, Michael J. Vlach affirms that “a historical-grammatical-literary approach will discover the existence of types (compare Matt 2:15 with Hos 11:1), but adoption of a hermeneutic of ‘typological interpretation’ unnecessarily assumes typological connections between the Testaments that are not warranted.” Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church replaced*

has not returned to the scholarly landscape of typology. Indeed, historical critical scholarship has been silent on the topic.

Despite the ongoing interest and work in typology, any agreement regarding its nature is still far from being reached. This is true not only when the extremes of the spectrum are considered but also when scholars who are closely related ideologically are viewed. For instance, the proponents of traditional approach are still divided into *prospectivists* and *retropectivists*. Another example is found in the divergence about the use of allegory and the limits of spiritual reading among those whose emphasis is theological. While some like Vanhoozer are concerned about controls and the role that the biblical text itself should play in the process, others like Leithart are more willing to accept a freer hermeneutical approach where the reader assumes a more active capacity.

The division between the Cocceian and Marshian approaches is much less visible today among the traditional approach proponents. While dispensationalists would be among those with a more constrictive view (closer to Marsh), the call for a more balanced approach as defended by Fairbairn (with hermeneutical controls) is almost unanimous among traditional upholders. A more uncontrolled approach (closer to Cocceius) is followed by spiritual reading advocates, mainly those who defend a return to allegory or a conflation of it with typology.

Israel? (Nasville, TN: B&H, 2010), Books edition, ch. 9, “Evaluating the Hermeneutics of Supersessionism.” Another common aspect is the insistent denial of typological fulfilment in the relationships Israel/Church or Israel/Messiah. See: Lee Tan, “Symbols and Types in Prophecy,” in *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*, ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2000), 71–86. Again, Parker’s insight is instructive here: “If typology consists of the elements (correspondence, prefiguration, escalation, fulfillment) (...), then Israel and the promised land are not types. However, Israel or the land could be typological if typology (or a separate category of typology) is characterized by the mere repetition of patterns that serve analogous or illustrative purposes.” Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern,” 186.

A major point of discontinuity concerns the topography of the Post-Critical Neo-Typology, which according to Ninow was divided mainly between the Pattern of God's Acts approach and the Historical Hermeneutics approach. While no major publication of typological studies has come forth from the perspective of historical hermeneutics,³¹² the Patterns of God's Acts as an approach has had its influence diminished in the last years. However, it should be mentioned that the pattern of God's acts is still the basis for many theological and literary studies of typology. The influence of Baker and Foulkes is still present in many works following their definitions of typology. In the traditional approach, *retrospectivists*, who do not recognize an advanced foreshadowing in the OT, still rely on the pattern of divine acts as the key indication of typology. Somehow, the pattern of God's acts idea is still present throughout the spectrum in the traditional approach and in the Post-Critical Neo-Typology, even though it is wrapped in a different package.

In this new scenario, the rise and strengthening of figural or spiritual reading is the most significant development during the period surveyed here. The emergence of this approach brings with itself three surprising aspects in the study of typology in the last two decades. The first is not only an admission of the value of the precritical exegesis but even a call to its return and its practice in the academic milieu of biblical studies. This has been prompted by a renewal of interest in Patristics as some have considered a return to the classics, or *ressourcement*.³¹³ In a certain sense, this is a reaction to the rigid

³¹² One could point to Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation* as a possible exception.

³¹³ Michael G. Haykin, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 13–30. In the first chapter entitled “Rediscovering the Church Fathers: A Vital Need for Evangelicals,” the author discusses the value of Patristic for Evangelicals. On its turn, Lewis Ayres defends a return to Scripture’s “sources in the early Christian period.” Lewis Ayres, “‘There’s Fire in That Rain:’ On Reading the Letter and Reading Allegorically” in *Heaven on Earth*:

naturalism of the historical critical approach made possible by the postmodern intellectual mindset. A second aspect, which is closely related to (if not resulting from) it, is the conflation of allegory and typology. As has been seen in the previous section, there is a frequent and unafraid (I would say) call for a return to allegory in the context of figural or spiritual reading.

The third aspect, also closely connected with the previous, involves the ecumenical ramifications occasioned by the figural and spiritual interpretation. It is rather ironic that one of the major causes of the division between Catholics and Protestants in the dawn of the Reformation, namely, hermeneutical divergences regarding the literal and spiritual sense of Scriptures, is becoming today a bridge of rapprochement between the two groups. It is really striking to see how the rule of faith and the role of an authoritative body (usually a community of believers) establishing what is an acceptable reading are resurfacing in the hermeneutical vocabulary of biblical studies.

The brief summary of continuities and discontinuities that follows shows how the field of biblical typology has developed in the last twenty years. There have been advances and setbacks. Among the advances are the ongoing interest in typology that has propelled the publication of articles, books, and dissertations, which, in their turn, provide the modern interpreter with more adequate tools whether methodologically or theoretically speaking.

A mingling of positive and negative aspects can be singled out in the progress of figural/spirit reading. On the one hand, figural reading is opening the door of academia

Theological Interpretation in Ecumenical Dialogue, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 33.

for typology.³¹⁴ In this sense, it provides a forum for discussion and dialogue. Furthermore, an openness to pre-critical interpretation may even serves to reconnect modern readers to a more consistently biblical approach to the sacred text that takes in consideration supernatural elements, such as, divine inspiration and spiritual illumination. Somehow, spiritual reading may work as a corrective for the excessive concern for historical reference found in modern biblical scholarship. This is even though the corrective may be worse than the original problem. Unfortunately, this return to a precritical exegesis has been marked by assimilation of allegory and reader-response approaches that undermine biblical authority by jettisoning the role of authorial intention and maximizing the individual as the locus of meaning. A return to allegory is not only a hermeneutical setback, but also an historical one. Historically speaking, if looking backwards has any value, it should help the modern interpreter to learn from the mistakes and successes of our predecessors. Looking back should help us to see that *eisegesis* is not the adequate remedy for the “excess of exegesis.” In the end, spiritual or figural reading seems to only transfer the authority of interpretation from the man *intellectualis* to *spiritualis*. However, in both cases the decision center is still the human being.

The Central Issues in the Debate

It is important to note at this point that amid all the continuities and discontinuities discussed above, some central issues still dominate the debate. Questions involving the definition of typology, the distinction (of the lack thereof) between

³¹⁴ However, some authors suggest that figural reading is a practice for church not academia. For instance, David Starling suggests that reading based on “imaginative correspondences between the world of the text and the world of the reader” (...) “has its proper home in the church not the academy.” David I. Starling, *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship: How the Bible Shapes Our Interpretative Habits and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 162–163.

typology and allegory, authorial intention, and the existence of prophetic import already discernible in the OT, still divide scholars.

Fairbairn's observation in the late 1870s regarding typology that "the landmarks that are set up today are again shifted tomorrow" is followed by a similar diagnosis made by Davidson in the early 1980s: "Almost every area of typological interpretation is as yet unsettled. Even among the representatives of the various trends ... there is an almost bewildering disparity of opinions on many crucial issues."³¹⁵ In fact, both authors' contentions are still accurate today just as they were in the past. The last section of this chapter will present a brief discussion of some of the crucial issues still debated today especially as they become pertinent for the study proposed in this dissertation.

Definition of Typology

It is surprising that even after many years the key and unresolved issue is still the nature of biblical typology. In Schrock's words, the question is "what makes a person, event, or institution a *type*? Or more exactly, what designates a type as hermeneutically valid?"³¹⁶

Clearly, the questions above concern the most basic and complicated issue of biblical typology: its definition. Indeed, a plethora of variant definitions of biblical typology have been suggested throughout the years.³¹⁷ Such disparate definitions reflect

³¹⁵ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 411.

³¹⁶ Schrock, "What designates a Valid Type?," 3.

³¹⁷ Several definitions have been introduced in the previous section of this chapter. But many others are available, most of which have only slight differences or nuances. See: Peter Williamson, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, SubBi 22 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2001); 195–196; Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 28; George Wesley

authors' views about the nature of inspiration, the relationship between the testaments, the place of readers in finding types, etc. Ideally, from the perspective of the motto *Scriptura Scripturae Interpres*, any definition of typology should emerge from the biblical text itself.

In this case, Davidson's proposal, which is often referenced to in scholarly debate, seems to be adequate as it allows "the structures of typology to emerge from within the biblical text."³¹⁸ By "structures" he means characteristics or elements already present in biblical typology phenomenon. He identifies them as historical, eschatological, Christological-soteriological, ecclesiastical and prophetic.³¹⁹

Buchanan, *The Book of Hebrews: Its Challenge from Zion*, IBC (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 12; Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), Books edition, "Glossary: Typology"; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Concluding Observations," in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, ed. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 336; Scott W. Hahn, *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009), 108; Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Kregel, 2011), 704; Benjamin Guyer, ed., *The Beauty of Holiness: The Caroline Divines and Their Writings*, Canterbury Studies in Spiritual Theology (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012), 23; Craig A. Evans and Lidija Novakovic, "Typology," DJG² 986; Devin Roza, *Fulfilled in Christ: The Sacraments—A Guide to Symbols and Types in the Bible and Tradition* (Bellingham, WA: Verbum, 2014), Logos edition; Douglas Mangum, *The Lexham Glossary of Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014); Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, rev. and enl. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 329; Melissa Rene Buck, "Wind in Ezekiel 37 and πνεῦμα in John 3: Allusion, Pun and Typology" (MA Thesis, Concordia University College of Alberta, 2016), 3; Melissa Welshans, "Wifely Figures: Gender, Marriage, and Biblical Typology in Early Modern England" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 2017), 19; David Vincent Christensen, "Atonement in John: The Death of Jesus in Light of Exodus Typology" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 6; Alastair J. Roberts and Andrew Wilson, *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing Themes of Redemption through Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 38.

³¹⁸ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 411.

³¹⁹ Davidson summarizes the five elements as follows: (i) "The historical element underscores the fact that typology is rooted in history;" (ii) "The eschatological ('end-time') element of typology further clarifies the nature of the historical correspondence and intensification between type and antitype;" (iii) "The Christological (Christ-centered)-soteriological (salvation-centered) element of biblical typology points out its essential focus and thrust;" (iv) "The ecclesiastical (church-related) element of biblical typology points to three possible aspects of the Church that may be involved in the typological fulfillment: the individual worshipers, the corporate community, and/or the sacraments;" (v) The prophetic element of biblical typology implies that "the Old Testament type is an advance-presentation or prefiguration," "the type is divinely designed to prefigure the New Testament antitype," and there is a "must-needs-be" quality about the Old Testament type, giving it the force of a prophetic/predictive foreshadowing of the New

All of these structures are apparent in Davidson’s definition of typology: “the study of certain OT salvation-historical realities (persons, events, or institutions) which God specifically designed to correspond to, and be prospective-predictive prefigurations of, their eluctable (devoir-être) and absolutely escalated eschatological fulfillment aspects (inaugurated/ appropriated/ consummated) within NT salvation history.”³²⁰

In the present study, his definition is the starting point. Although initially there is no intention to provide or even refine a different definition from that of Davidson, the present research is open to this possibility.

Distinction between Typology and Allegory

From the previous survey, it is evident that no longer is there any consensus as to a clear distinction between typology and allegory.³²¹ Childs goes so far as to affirm that the previous sharp distinction “cannot be sustained.”³²² Boersma even suggests that the abandonment of this sharp distinction is the new consensus among patristics scholars.³²³

Testament fulfillment. Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 11.

³²⁰ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 421.

³²¹ The initial consensus can be represented by the following works just to mention a few examples: Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scriptures*, 1–9; Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality*, 57–65, 131–149; Goppelt, *Typos*, 50–51. A good historical survey on the literature about the distinction between typology and allegory is offered by Peters W. Martens and Von Tobias Mayer. See: Peter W. Martens, “Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen,” *J ECS* 16 (2008): 296–310; Von Tobias Mayer, “Geschichtsbegriff und Wirkungspotential der Typologie,” *ThPh* 94 (2019): 192–210.

³²² Childs, “Allegory and Typology,” 304. Childs also affirms that “the distinction between the so-called literal sense and the figurative/allegorical cannot be correctly defined in terms of historicity.” Furthermore, “frequent contrast between the Alexandrians and the Antiochenes has largely been misconstrued.” Childs, “Allegory and Typology,” 304–305. Mayer considers such a distinction obsolete. Mayer, “Geschichtsbegriff und Wirkungspotential der Typologie,” 193.

³²³ Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 105. Boersma observes that “the basic reason typology and allegory cannot be sharply distinguished is that typology, properly understood, is not just a historically unfolding series of events; instead, typology, much like allegory, looks up from the types in history to their eternal archetype, the providential Word who has become incarnate in Christ.” Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 37–38.

This return to typology is accompanied by and results from the rehabilitation of premodern exegesis.³²⁴ Whether or not typology is a subset of allegory³²⁵ or it is a twin form of non-literal exegesis,³²⁶ there is indeed a growing appeal to the importance and revitalization of allegory.³²⁷

Although the initial movement was composed mostly by Catholic theologians, the return to allegory transcends the boundaries of Catholicism and Protestantism today. Vanhoozer, for instance, suggests an evangelical future for typology if it is controlled by literal sense and Jesus event instead of being “free-wheeling nor deregulated.”³²⁸ As was seen, even though evangelical theologians within the TIS movement often prefer spiritual or figural reading rather than allegory, in practice they are suggesting a revitalization of the early approach.

Although the rupture of the old consensus around the distinction between typology and allegory is undeniable,³²⁹ Childs’ contention of a new consensus seems to

³²⁴ See: Kenton L. Sparks, *God’s Words in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

³²⁵ Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading*, 2002. See also Chih-hsin Lin, “Personification, Neoplatonic Allegory, and Biblical Typology: The Syntheses of Allegorical Methods in Spenser’s “The Faerie Queene”, Books III–V.” (PhD Diss., New York University, 2002). The author sets typology under the rubrics of one of the three allegorical methods along with Neoplatonic allegory and personification.

³²⁶ Martens, “Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction,” 295.

³²⁷ One of the most comprehensive histories of allegory was assembled by J. Whitman. See: J. Whitman, ed. *Interpretation and Allegory*, BSIH 101 (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 2000).

³²⁸ Vanhoozer, “Ascending the Mountain,” 214. Search for an adequate use of allegory: Starling, *Hermeneutics as apprenticeship*, 147–162; Mark Sharidan, *Language for God in Patristic Tradition: Wrestling with Biblical Anthropomorphism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 236; M. Higton, “Hermeneutics,” *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, ed. Martin Davie et al (London, U.K.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 399–400.

³²⁹ Many scholars have voiced the idea that any sharp distinction between typology and allegory is no longer tenable. For instance, see: Brandon Lee Morgan, “The Efficacy of Salvation in the Allegorical Reading of Scripture: Learning from Origen,” *Logos* 18 (2015): 151–171; Hans-Peter Mathys, “Typology” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids,

be exaggerated. There are still many scholars upholding such a distinction.³³⁰ One of the best and most recent defenses of a sharp distinction between allegory and typology is put forward by Parker. He starts his survey by correctly emphasizing that “any study of typology in recent days must account for allegory and elucidate if any distinction should be maintained between the two.”³³¹ He lists four compelling reasons for why this distinction should be maintained: a. allegory and typology are distinct literary features; b. complications arise with the notions of “figural reading,” “allegorical interpretation” or “typological interpretation;” c. allegorical interpretations are not exemplified in the NT as some scholars claim; d. appealing to the Patristics is not definitive in how to understand biblical typology and interpretation.³³² In fact, the distinction goes far beyond a mere

MI: Eerdmans; Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 576–577; Mark Gignilliat, “Paul, Allegory, and the Plain Sense of Scripture,” 135–146; VanMaaren, “The Adam-Christ Typology,” 277; Mayeski, “Catholic Theology and the History of Exegesis,” 153; Robert L. Wilken, “How to Read the Bible,” *FT* 181 (2008): 24; Ekaterini Tsalamponi, “Typologische und allegorische Schriftauslegung bei den ostkirchlichen Vätern und Schriftstellern am Beispiel von Exodus,” *OF* 22 (2008): 61–72.

³³⁰ For instance: Pieter de Vries, “The Legitimacy of Typological Interpretation of the Scriptures,” *JBT* 2 (2019): 37–34; Dianne Bergant, *Scripture: History and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2008), 109–118; Nkhoma, *Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Essays*, 44–89; Bandy and Merkle, *Understanding Prophecy*, 76–77; Robert L. Webb and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Reading Jude With New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of Jude* (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2008), 85; Moo and Nasalli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 702–746; Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: an introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans: 2009), 83–87; Daniel J. Cameron, “Typology,” *LBD* Logos Edition; Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2010), 582; Hamilton, “The Typology of David’s Rise to Power,” 4–25; Philpot, “The True and Better Adam,” 84; D. Treier, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis? Sic et Non,” *TJ* 24 (2003): 77–103; D. A. Carson “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D.A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 2:404; Corley, Lemke, and Lovejoy, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 84.

³³¹ Parker, “Typology and Allegory,” 57.

³³² Parker, “Typology and Allegory,” 60–72.

phraseological quarrel and it is crucial to avoid “theological confusion and faulty interpretative moves.”³³³

The Relationship Between Typology and Intertextuality

Another important aspect in the debate of typology today is the issue of intertextuality. Since typology is understood in light of promise-shaped patterns³³⁴ manifested in a web of correspondences in the canonical context, from a methodological perspective the discussion on typology builds on the discussion of intertextuality. Consequently, a clear understanding of scriptural reuse is fundamental in any exploration of the topic, for in the end, typology is only recognized through the rich and multifaceted use of parallels. Instructively, Hamilton observes that “seeing typological patterns requires thinking about an account in light of those earlier and later.... The study of typology amounts to active reflection on one passage in light of others.”³³⁵ In short, “typology deals in repetition.”³³⁶ There is little space here for a full treatment of the topic, but a few remarks are in order.

There is little doubt that “intertextuality” has become the word of the time in biblical studies during the last several years. Indeed, as Lyle Eslinger rightly puts “hardly a journal issue goes by without an essay on some aspect of the network of literary linkages.”³³⁷ Michael Fishbane states that “intertextuality is the core of the canonical

³³³ Parker, “Typology and Allegory,” 72.

³³⁴ Hamilton, *Typology*, 1–34.

³³⁵ Hamilton, *Typology*, 8.

³³⁶ Hamilton, *Typology*, 28.

³³⁷ Lyle M. Eslinger, “Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category,” *VT* 42 (1992): 47.

imagination.”³³⁸ Notwithstanding the importance and strategic role that intertextuality has played in biblical interpretation in the last decades,³³⁹ there is much confusion about its nature and definition.

As a result of competing and confusing definitions,³⁴⁰ “the term intertextuality has become an umbrella term for a diverse range of reading strategies.”³⁴¹ In many cases, the term is used to loosely refer to any kind of relationship between two texts.³⁴² In this context, “a number of Bible studies seem innovative at first glance but, in fact, use intertextuality as a modern literary theoretical coat of veneer over the old comparative approach.”³⁴³ In this sense, “some exegetes replace ‘a reference of Matthew to Isaiah’

³³⁸ Michael Fishbane, “Types of Biblical Intertextuality,” in *Congress Volume Oslo 1998*, ed. A. Lemaire and M. Sæbø (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA; Köln, Germany: Brill, 2000), 39. However, it should be kept in mind that Fishbane does not use the term intertextuality in its original literary sense.

³³⁹ David M. Carr, “The Many Uses of Intertextuality in Biblical Studies: Actual and Potential,” in *Congress Volume Helsinki 2010*, ed. Martti Nissinen (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 2012), 506.

³⁴⁰ James H. Charlesworth, “Intertextuality: Isaiah 40:3 and the Serek Ha-Yahad,” in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon (Leiden, The Netherlands; New York, NY; Köln, Germany: Brill, 1997), 197. Regarding attitudes towards intertextuality, Charlesworth divides biblical scholars in three groups: “the ‘progressives,’ those, like the semioticians, who are preoccupied with this methodology; the ‘traditionalists,’ those like the analytically and biblically trained translation specialists, who find it is consonant with other methods of historical criticism; and the ‘anti-intertextualists,’ those who are against intertextuality because they consider it a confused methodology or because they find it a too faddish name for what they have been doing for decades.” Charlesworth, “Intertextuality,” 199.

³⁴¹ B. J. Oropeza and Steve Moyise, eds., “*Exploring Intertextuality: Diverse Strategies for New Testament Interpretation of Texts* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), xvii. Peter Miscall, affirms that intertextuality functions as “a covering term for all the possible relations that can be established between texts. The relations can be based on anything from quotes and direct references to indirect allusions to common words and even letters to dependence on language itself.” Peter D. Miscall, “Isaiah New Heavens, New Earth, New Book,” in *Reading between Texts Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Danna N Fowell (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 44

³⁴² For instance, Fishbane includes what he calls inner biblical exegesis in all its manifestations in the OT under the umbrella of intertextuality. Fishbane, “Types of Biblical Intertextuality,” 39–40.

³⁴³ Ellen van Wolde, “Trendy Intertextuality?,” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*, ed. Sipke Draisma (Kampen, Netherlands: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1989), 43.

with ‘allusion, quotation, addition or deletion of Matthew concerning Isaiah’ and that is as far as their intertextuality goes.”³⁴⁴

Intertextuality is a postmodern approach to texts in general.³⁴⁵ In fact, it “is not a method but a theory (or group of theories) concerning the production of meaning.”³⁴⁶ The term was coined in French by Julia Kristeva,³⁴⁷ who stands besides other influential poststructuralists such as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser.³⁴⁸ Based on the writings of Ferdinand de Saussure and, especially, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Kristeva conceives intertextuality as an inescapable cultural and psychological phenomenon. As part of socio-cultural processes, “each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read.”³⁴⁹ In this context, writing is “a reading of the anterior literary corpus and the text as an absorption of and a reply to another text.”³⁵⁰ If a text is absorption and a transformation of other texts, “the authors are not original and do not create anything

³⁴⁴ Wolde, “Trendy Intertextuality?,” 43. In this case, intertextuality is “a trendy label for the traditional study of inner-biblical exegesis or inner-biblical allusion.” Richard L. Schultz, “Intertextuality, Canon, and Undecidability,” *BBR* 20 (2010): 22.

³⁴⁵ John S. Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told: An Intertextual Reading of the Psalter and the Pentateuch* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 2.

³⁴⁶ Steve Moyise, “Intertextuality and Historical Approaches to the Use of Scripture in the New Testament,” in *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, ed. Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier, and Leroy A. Huizenga (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 23.

³⁴⁷ Later Kristeva herself proposes a new term, “transposition” in order “to avoid the reduction of intertextuality to the traditional notions of influence, source-study and simple ‘context,’” Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, 3rd ed., NCI (London, U.K.; New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 52.

³⁴⁸ Allen, *Intertextuality*, 15.

³⁴⁹ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Language and Art*. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1980), 66.

³⁵⁰ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 69.

from their texts from original minds but compile from the already existing texts.”³⁵¹ Thus, “texts are not isolated personage but culturally fashioned discourses, ways of systemic/institutional ‘speaking and saying.’ ... The text, on its own, has no unity or unified meaning’ but is part of the on-going socio-cultural processes.”³⁵²

The hermeneutical consequences are evident. In light of this “galaxy of signifiers”³⁵³ contained in any given text, “no interpretation is ever complete because every word is a response to previous words and elicits further responses.”³⁵⁴ As the author is dead or is, at best, behind his/her text without providing guiding authority,³⁵⁵ the reader becomes the meaning producer.³⁵⁶ Timothy K. Beal aptly summarizes the outcome of such a view.

... every text is a locus of intersections, overlaps, and collisions between other texts. ... one’s arrival at a particular interpretation is always a matter of exhaustion and despair. The tracing out of intertextual relations is endless and, quite literally, pointless. Our commonly held definitions of written texts, writing subjects, origins, and religious traditions are all called into question and potentially dynamited by the theory of intertextuality.³⁵⁷

³⁵¹ P. Prayer Elmo Raj, “Text/Texts: Interrogating Julia Kristeva’s Concept of Intertextuality,” *Ars Artium* 3 (2015): 78.

³⁵² Raj, “Text/Texts,” 78.

³⁵³ A term proposed by Roland Barthes. See: Udo J. Hebel, *Intertextuality, Allusion, and Quotation: An International Bibliography of Critical Studies* (New York, NY: Greenwood, 1989), 10.

³⁵⁴ Allen, *Intertextuality*, 27.

³⁵⁵ While Roland Barthes declares unambiguously the death of the author, in his famous essay “The Death of the Author” (1968), Allen notes that “Bakhtin does not seek to announce the death of the Author. The author, for Bakhtin, we might say, still stands behind his or her novel, but s/he does not enter into it as a guiding authoritative voice.” Allen, *Intertextuality*, 23.

³⁵⁶ James Voelz, “Multiples Signs and Double Texts: Elements of Intertextuality,” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*, ed. Sipke Draisma (Kampen, Netherlands: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1989), 27.

³⁵⁷ Timothy K. Beal, “Intertextuality,” in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. A. Adams (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2000), 128–129. In his book, Allen observes that Kristeva attacks the very notion of “stable signification.” Allen, *Intertextuality*, 31.

However, it is evident that such an approach to texts is “inherently impractical,”³⁵⁸ and it cannot be “an operative category for hermeneutics,”³⁵⁹ as Jacob Neusner puts it. He adds that “we can read these texts one by one, we do well to but we have no reason as a matter of literary interpretation to invoke that invitation to chaos represented by the counsel: read everything in light of everything, everywhere at once.”³⁶⁰ In his critique of the poststructuralist intertextuality, Charlesworth observes that “to claim that every text absorbs and transforms another text—as so many who write about intertextuality claim—undermines the ability to perceive the difference between text and pretext and the important insights that may be possible through intertextuality.”³⁶¹ He emphasizes that the text and not the reader should govern the interpreter’s reflection.

In light of these practical problems with the poststructuralist concept of intertextuality some authors have tried to redeem it through a more author-oriented approach.³⁶² Indeed, although there are many approaches to intertextuality, “most of these approaches fall into two main categories: author-centered and reader-centered.”³⁶³ Vassar

³⁵⁸ Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told*, 17.

³⁵⁹ Jacob Neusner, *Canon and Connection: Intertextuality in Judaism*, SJ (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1987) xiii.

³⁶⁰ Neusner, *Canon and Connection*, xiii.

³⁶¹ Charlesworth, “Intertextuality,” 204.

³⁶² Schultz is one example. See: Schultz, “Intertextuality,” 19–38. Based on Michael Riffaterre’s approach to intertextuality, he proposed a redeemed version of intertextual study. For more about the less radical form of intertextuality found in Riffaterre’s work, Schultz mentions: Michael Riffaterre, “Syllepsis” *CI* 6 (1980): 625–638; Michael Riffaterre, *Text Production* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983). Michael Riffaterre, “Compulsory Reader Response: The Intertextual Drive” in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practice*, ed. Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester, U. K.: Manchester University Press, 1990), 56–78; Michael Riffaterre, “Intertextuality vs. Hypertextuality,” *NLH* 25 (1994): 779–788.

³⁶³ John Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told*, 10. Kirsten Nielson admits that “The starting-point for my intertextual readings is the claim that no text comes into being or can be read as an isolated unit. It is

succeeds in showing the two schools in the work of Roland Barthes (reader-centered) and Harold Bloom (author-centered).

Although a more detailed treatment of the issue goes beyond the scope of this study, some remarks explaining my own position as author are in order. I admit that the poststructuralist concept of intertextuality brings to biblical interpretation emphases which historical critical studies usually ignored such as the importance of the synchronic study of the biblical text. I also share “the presupposition that any reading of a text necessarily brings into account other texts”³⁶⁴ (although not in an unlimited way). Indeed, no biblical text is an island.³⁶⁵ However, I concur with William A. Tooman when he says that “attempts to resignify “intertextuality” in biblical studies run the risk of, at best, disorienting readers and, at worst, diluting the value and utility of our scholarly technical vocabulary.”³⁶⁶

For this reason, this author prefers the term “reuse” rather than “intertextuality.” In this research, “reuse” means the multifaceted use of previous texts by a more recent one including direct quotations, allusions, and echoes.³⁶⁷ The most debated topic in this

always part of a network of texts. Most scholars probably agree on this. The differences only appear when we begin to discuss which role to attribute to the author, the text and the reader, respectively.” Kirsten Nielsen, “Intertextuality and Hebrew Bible,” in *Congress Volume Oslo 1998*, ed. A. Lemaire and M. Sæbø (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA; Köln, Germany: Brill, 2000), 17.

³⁶⁴ Vassar, *Recalling a Story Once Told*, 15.

³⁶⁵ Miscall, “Isaiah,” 44.

³⁶⁶ William A. Tooman, *Gog of Magog: Reuse of Scripture and Compositional Technique in Ezekiel 38–39* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 11.

³⁶⁷ Again, I am not alone in this methodological decision. In his research on Isaiah, Benjamin Sommer also chooses the terms allusion/influence instead of intertextuality. See: Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Joseph Ryan Kelly observes that in looking for literary allusion “Scholars in biblical studies generally recognize and privilege three attributes of literary allusion: an identifiable form, a hermeneutically active and intentional author, and a hermeneutically passive and receptive reader.” These attributes play a significant role in my own approach. Joseph Ryan Kelly, “Identifying Literary Allusions: Theory and the Criterion of

area of study is the criteria for identifying genuine reuse. In fact, the identification of “deliberate use of another biblical text is fraught with difficulty.”³⁶⁸ It is not an overstatement to consider it “the Achilles’s heel of any method that depends on determining parallels to other literature.”³⁶⁹ Since “connections may be coincidental, similarly focused but independently derived, products of stock language, or evidence of a shared cultural repertoire,”³⁷⁰ sound criteria should play an important role in finding legitimate literary allusions.

In an attempt to establish safeguards against what some call parallelomania or comparasionits,³⁷¹ namely, the trend to collect parallels and draw comparisons that are beyond the text intention, several groups of criteria have been suggested as antidotes. In his insightful study on Revelation, John Paulien proposes as an internal factor three signs of literary dependence: verbal parallel (at least two significant words); thematic parallel (deliberate contrast or similarity of theme); and structural parallel (similar ordering of content).³⁷² Based on these criteria, he suggests that allusions should be classified as: certain allusions, probable allusions, possible allusions, uncertain allusions and nonallusions.³⁷³

Shared Language,” in *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translations in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ziony Zevit (Sheffield, UK, Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2017), 25.

³⁶⁸ Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, 23.

³⁶⁹ Jon Paulien, “Allusions, Exegetical Method, and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7–12” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987), 165.

³⁷⁰ Kelly, “Identifying Literary Allusions,” 22.

³⁷¹ Kelly, “Identifying Literary Allusions,” 22.

³⁷² Paulien, “Allusions,” 179–185.

³⁷³ Paulien, “Allusions,” 193.

More recently another round of criteria was suggested by Keneth Bergland. Relying upon the work of Michael Lyon and William Tooman,³⁷⁴ Bergland suggests six indicators or criteria that may be utilized to establish a case of reuse. Bergland summarizes these indicators as follows:

Uniqueness: an element, i.e. a lexeme, morpheme, or syntax, is unique to the two parallel passages; *Distinctiveness*: an element may not be exclusive to two parallel texts, but it is demonstrable that it is specifically associated with a particular antecedent text. *Inversion*: According to ‘Seidel’s law’ inversion may be a sign of reuse; *Availability of options*: if various ways of formulating an idea is attested in a language, a shared specific formulation may indicate reuse; *Thematic correspondence*: similar subject, theme, or argument between two passages; *Multiplicity*: extensive parallels, even of common elements, may add support to a case for reuse.³⁷⁵

What is important to note here is his insistence in calling these criteria “indicators” instead of rules. He himself explains that “rather than imposing ‘criteria’ as a set of rules to which literary parallels need to conform in order to be determined as verifiable cases of reuse and direction of dependence, I rather adopt certain ‘indicators’ that can aid us in becoming more sensitive to textual phenomena that might imply reuse and the direction of dependence.”³⁷⁶ The problem of setting a rigid series of criteria as checklist to determine reuse resides in “our limited knowledge of ANE literary reuse, the infancy of studies on ANE and inner-biblical literary reuse, and the fluidity and elusiveness of literary influence and reuse are all reasons we should be careful not to pre-determine or set in stone what inner-biblical reuse should look like.”³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ Michael A. Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel’s Use of the Holiness Code* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2009), 47–58; Tooman, *Gog of Magog*, 23–30.

³⁷⁵ Kenneth Bergland, “Reading as a Disclosure of the Thoughts of the Heart: Proto-Halakhic Reuse and Appropriation between Torah and the Prophets” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2018), 103.

³⁷⁶ Bergland, “Reading as a Disclosure of the Thoughts of the Heart,” 100.

³⁷⁷ Bergland, “Reading as a Disclosure of the Thoughts of the Heart,” 100.

In an instructive article, Joseph Ryan Kelly contemplates the role of shared language and unique lexical congruity as criteria to identify literary allusions. Although he admits the useful criterion of shared language, it should not be considered as essential criterion to determine literary dependence. Its presence may be considered an initial indicator, but the volume and nature of the shared language should be analyzed in a case-by-case basis. The same is true regarding unique lexical congruity. The reason is that what can seem to be rare and unique use of vocabulary to the modern reader, might not be so to the original audience. According to him, “the boundaries of canon or the accidents of history may arbitrarily narrow our field of vision and impoverish our cultural repertoire. What appears unique to us might have been more commonplace to ancient audiences and less likely to have triggered allusive patterning for ancient readers.”³⁷⁸

Therefore, when the task of studying types involves the determination of parallels or literary allusions, interpreters should keep these criteria in mind in order to avoid finding correspondence where there is none. This has been a constant and pervasive temptation in which many typological studies have succumbed. However, in face of the complexity involving the identification of genuine parallels or literary allusions, these criteria cannot be considered more than preliminary indications that should lead the reader of Scriptures to a closer consideration. Hamilton recalls that “the fact we arm ourselves with criteria, however, does not mean that every question is answered. ... There is no substitute for long, slow, patient reading of the texts in their original languages supplemented by meditative reflection upon them.”³⁷⁹ In the end, there is no

³⁷⁸ Kelly, “Identifying Literary Allusions,” 35.

³⁷⁹ Hamilton, *Typology*, 24. Hamilton also cites M. H. Abrams who provides an insightful input about this matter. “Only a delicate and mature judgment bred of familiarity with the tradition will be able to

mathematical constants for any form of art. Once exegesis is both a form of art and science at the same time, this applies to it as well.

Authorial Intention

Another thorny issue in this debate is the place of authorial intention in the search for typological reading. Since many others have already dealt with it, there is no need here for a full treatment of the topic. However, as the topic directly impacts the present research, some remarks are in order.

The previous survey revealed how the field is divided on this point. Within the traditional approach, authorial intention is important. However, *retrospectivists* are inclined to emphasize divine authorial intention at the expense of human authorial intention. For instance, Niehaus “is persuaded that any quest to discover the so-called intent of a biblical author is chimerical and pointless.”³⁸⁰ To him, “the only one whose intent matters with regard to any biblical writing is the Lord, who is the Spirit who produced words that communicated what *he* intended to communicate—and those words continue to do so today.”³⁸¹ Furthermore, retrospectivists who admit a prospective element are prone to provide a more nuanced view, like Naselli and Moo who respond yes and no to the question: does the OT intend the NT’s typological correspondence?

feel whether a suggested allusion or typology is solid or insubstantial: the truth must be divined, groped for by ‘taste, tact, and intuition rather than a controlling method.’ Hamilton, *Typology*, 24. Citing M. H. Abrams, “Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History,” in *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism*, ed. Wayne C. Booth (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 176.

³⁸⁰ Niehaus, *Biblical Theology*, Logos edition.

³⁸¹ Niehaus believes that God is outside time producing meaning independent of the authorial intent or complete consciousness. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology*, Logos edition. Bandy illustrates a similar position by affirming that ‘The prophecies of the Old Testament were shrouded in mystery so that the precise nature of the fulfilment could not be known until after the fact.’ Bandy and Merkle, *Understanding Prophecy*, 32.

They say no if intention stands for original consciousness of typological significance, and yes if intention implies prophetic function of the OT.³⁸² There are also *retrospectivists* to whom human authorial intention is important, such as Beal. At any rate, basically all authors here would agree that “imagination has no place in typology,”³⁸³ which should be based on either divine or human intention.

There is a more uniform view on the topic among *prospectivists*, who are more vocal in the defense of authorial intention. In this case, the NT author recognizes what is already present in the OT.³⁸⁴ Typology is more a way of writing than reading. As such it is a “technique employed in composition or canonization.”³⁸⁵ In other words, “a biblical author intentionally casts features of his own book with the words, phrases, situations, narrative techniques and themes initiated in the Pentateuch to create a book that is new and yet not new.”³⁸⁶ In this context, typology in Scripture is a function of language. Thus, “failure to see typological structures is not simply a theological problem but a reading problem.”³⁸⁷

³⁸² Douglas and Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” 727–728.

³⁸³ Bock, “Scripture Citing Scripture,” Apple Books edition, ch. 1.

³⁸⁴ Chad L. Bird, “Typological Interpretation within the Old Testament: Melchizedekian Typology,” *CJ* 26 (2000): 36–52; In his survey of Noah’s flood typology, Daniel Strett concludes that: “the NT’s typological understanding of the Genesis flood is not the result of novel or imaginative exegesis on the part of the NT authors, but is in fact a) shared by other Second Temple texts that predate the NT, and more importantly b) modeled on the OT’s own interpretation of the flood.” Daniel R. Strett, “As It Was in the Days of Noah: The Prophets’ Typological Interpretation of Noah’s Flood,” *CTR* 5 (2007): 33. Also note Russel Meek who believes that authorial intention controls meaning. Russell Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology,” *Biblica* 95 (2014): 281. See also: Robert L. Plummer, “Righteousness and Peace Kiss: The Reconciliation of Authorial Intent and Biblical Typology,” *SBJT* 14 (2010): 54–61; Harmon, “Allegory, Typology, or Something Else?,” 154.

³⁸⁵ Link and Emerson, “Searching for the Second Adam,” 126.

³⁸⁶ Link and Emerson, “Searching for the Second Adam,” 126.

³⁸⁷ Schrock, “What designates a Valid Type?,” 8.

Post-Critical Neo-Typology proponents are also divided regarding the issue of authorial intention. On the one hand, there are those to whom authorial intention is restricted to divine design to which human authors were often unaware.³⁸⁸ On the other hand, the idea of authorial intention itself is problematic for others scholars in this current environment.³⁸⁹ For instance, Boersma affirms that “the assumption that the biblical text carries only one meaning, namely, the one intended by the author, seems to me rooted in an approach that models exegesis on the natural sciences and, for all practical purposes, obviates the role of the Holy Spirit within the actual interpretive process.”³⁹⁰ Thus, most authors are comfortable with the idea that new meaning is produced out of old tradition.³⁹¹

Indeed, the issue of authorial intention is key for the comprehension of the nature of typology and it is a line that divides the players in the field. Rikk Watts is correct when he affirms that the “where we start” is responsible for the diverse positions about the NT

³⁸⁸ Vanhoozer, “Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock,” 218–219. Enns defends that idea that NT authors can go beyond the original authorial intention and context as they are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Matthew Levering, “Readings on the Rock, Typological Exegesis in Contemporary Scholarship,” *MT* 28 (2012): 716. See more on dual authorship in Jared M. Compton, “Shared Intentions? Reflections on Inspiration and Interpretation in Light of Scripture’s Dual Authorship,” *Themelios* 33 (2008): 23–33; R. W. L. Moberly, “Christ in All the Scriptures? The Challenge of Reading the Old Testament as Christian Scripture,” *JTI* 1 (2007): 79–100; Henri A. G. Blocher, “God and the Scriptures Writers: The Question of Double Authorship” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 497–541.

³⁸⁹ Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture*, 131.

³⁹⁰ Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 30.

³⁹¹ J. Goldingay, “Hermeneutics,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, U.K.: IVP Academic; InterVarsity, 2008), 278. Commenting on the typological process, Danièle Duval and Raymond Kuntzmann proposes that “the textual interaction and the insertion of old traditions in an ideological and social context give birth to a new autonomous textual world and a new symbolical field.” Danièle Duval and Raymond Kuntzmann, “Synthèse Finale,” in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 268.

use of the OT.³⁹² As Watts suggests, I will follow “a methodological path that reads forwards rather than backwards.”³⁹³ Such a methodological path seems to be in line with the biblical support coming both from the OT and the NT.

From the OT point of view, there is evidence that “typology is not a later imposition upon the Hebrew Bible, but a device clearly found and developed within its pages.”³⁹⁴ Indeed, already in the OT there are indications that the prophets interpret Israel’s history as moving teleologically toward its end.³⁹⁵ As mentioned before, typology is not a novelty of NT authors; there are several examples of typological development within the OT itself.³⁹⁶ Instructively, Dennis E. Johnson identifies three characteristics of

³⁹² Rikk Watts, “Rethinking Context in the Relationship of Israel’s Scriptures to the NT: Character, Agency, and the Possibility of Genuine Change” in *Methodology in the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Context and Criteria*, ed. David Allen and Steve Smith (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2020), 157–177.

³⁹³ Watts, “Rethinking Context,” 157

³⁹⁴ Bryan J. Whitfield, *Joshua Traditions and the Argument of Hebrews 3 and 4* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 75. Evidence for Whitfield’s statement can be found in the studies of the typology involving Joseph (Emadi, “Covenant, Typology, and the Story of Joseph,” 40–153), Joshua (Davidson, *In The Footsteps of Joshua*, 24–35), the exodus (Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 98–237), flood, and Adam (Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 23–31).

³⁹⁵ Schmidt, for instance, offers a few examples: the OT anticipates a new but greater David (cf. Isa 9:6ff; Jer 23:5ff; 30:9; 33:14ff; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24ff), a new but greater Moses (cf. Deut 18:15–19), an eschatological Exodus (cf. Isa 40–55), a new Temple (cf. Ezek 40–48), etc. Schmidt, “An Examination of Selected Uses of the Psalms of David,” 69.

³⁹⁶ Philip Johnston and Peter Walker, *The Land of Promise: Biblical Theological, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000); W. J. Van Bekkum, “Eve and the Matriarchs: Aspects of Woman Typology in Genesis,” in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuis (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 2000), 128–139; Meira Polliack, “Deutero-Isaiah’s Typological Use of Jacob in the Portrayal of Israel’s National Renewal,” in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (London, U.K.; New York, NY: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 72–110; Jean-Marie Husser, “La Typologie comme Procédé de Composition dans les Textes de l’Ancien Testament,” in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 11–34; Thomas Römer, “Typologie Exodique dans les Récits Patriarcaux,” in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 49–76; Eberhard Bons, “Y a-t-il une Typologie de l’Exode en Isaïe 43,16-23?,” in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 77–102; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, rev., WBC 25 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 609–610; R. Fowler White and E. Calvin Beisner “Covenant, Inheritance, and Typology: Understanding the Principles at Work in God’s Covenants” in *By Faith Alone: Answering the Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006),

NT authorial hermeneutics having precedents in the OT self-hermeneutics:

In his view, the Old Testament (i) invests physical events and institutions with symbolic spiritual significance; (ii) portrays future redemptive events in imagery drawn from past deeds of God in creation and salvation; and (iii) testifies to the incompleteness of the redemption accessible through its own institutions, directing the longings of the people of God forward to a future salvation and Savior.³⁹⁷

From the NT stance, Carson makes a good case in showing that “as far as Paul is concerned, conversion to Christ removes the veil to enable the reader to see what is actually there.”³⁹⁸ The paradoxical relationship between mystery and fulfillment meets its resolution at least partially in typology.

Finally, a few questions could be raised at this point. One can only wonder about which kind of persuasion the NT author would impress upon his audience if he were making up a sense different from that intended by the prophets.³⁹⁹ Why would God use

156–157; Timothy J. Stone, “Joseph in the Likeness of Adam: Narrative Echoes of the Fall,” in *Genesis and Christian Theology*, ed. Nathan MacDonald, Mark W. Elliot, and Grand Macaskill (Grand Rapids, MI: 2012), 62–73; G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2014); Terrance Randall Wardlaw, “The Significance of Creation in The Book of Isaiah,” *JETS* 59 (2016): 449–471; A.D. Saner, “Of Bottles and Wells: Hagar’s Christian Legacy,” *JTI* 11 (2017), 199–215; Seth D. Postell, “The Old Testament in the Old Testament,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2019), 93–102; Seth D. Postell, “Typology in the Old Testament,” in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2019), 161–176.

³⁹⁷ Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, Kindle edition, ch. 7, “Theological Foundations of Apostolic Preaching.”

³⁹⁸ Carson “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 411.

³⁹⁹ Kenneth Berding correctly observes that “many New Testament scholars maintain that the New Testament use of the Old Testament works within a closed logical circle: it depends on Christian presuppositions and reads the Old Testament in a distinctly Christian way (even if employing Jewish methods of exegesis), often doing violence to the true meaning of the Old Testament texts employed. Thus, New Testament arguments based on the Old Testament, it is held, would generally be convincing to Christians but hardly to Jews. If this is true, it will be hard to vindicate the New Testament authors from the charge of misusing the Scriptures.” Kenneth Berding, “An Analysis of the Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed.

human authors to reveal truths which they would not be able to grasp in any case? What value does the OT have if it is only from the NT that its meaning can be grasped?

In light of the discussion above, it seems more accurate to admit that biblical authors were aware of the forwarding-pointing import of types and the existence of types, even though they could not be conscious of the complete contours or developments of the relationship between type and antitype.⁴⁰⁰

Predictive/Prophetic Import

Intrinsically connected with the issue of authorial intent is the question of prophetic import. Although Crump himself maintains a retrospective view, he points out the incongruence of epistemological retrospection (typology is prospective but its recognition is retrospective). He considers both claims contradictory. He says “either the Old Testament is properly understood only in light of Jesus’ actual manner of fulfillment, or it points to the ministry of Jesus in a comprehensible manner by predicting what he would do. We cannot have it both ways.”⁴⁰¹ If by prospective, one understands a kind of clue embedded in the text to assist readers to figure out what comes next, such a clue needs to be efficient. Correctly, Crump remarks that “if such an indicator is recognizable only after the fact, it has failed to indicate and its potential for suggestion is empty. It is like a highway exit sign that becomes visible only after the exit.”⁴⁰² It should be noticed how compelling Crump’s argument is.

Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 60.

⁴⁰⁰ Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 103.

⁴⁰¹ Crump, *Encountering Jesus*, 35.

⁴⁰² Crump, *Encountering Jesus*, 34.

According to Davidson, types are “specifically designed to correspond to, and be prospective-predictive prefigurations.”⁴⁰³ The prophetic nature of typology, whether retrospective or prospective/predictive, is acknowledged by most proponents of the traditional view. For instance, Leonhard Goppelt recognizes that prefiguration entails something that God has ordained.⁴⁰⁴ In this sense, typology is more than a mere historical analogy. However, Goppelt believes that the meaning of Scripture (i.e., of the OT) is only unlocked by faith in Christ (2 Cor 3:15).⁴⁰⁵

In a certain sense, Glenny is only partially correct when he affirms that “the most controversial and innovative aspect of Davidson’s theory of typology is his belief that types are predictive.”⁴⁰⁶ In fact, most proponents of the traditional view accept typological prefiguration, although many of them maintain that its identification is only retrospective.⁴⁰⁷ However, Glenny may be right when he considers “controversial and innovative” Davidson’s concept of typological predictability/prefiguration combined with the idea that “there must be some indication of the existence and predictive quality of OT types before their antitypical fulfillment—otherwise they cannot be predictive.”⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 403.

⁴⁰⁴ Goppelt, *Typos*, 17.

⁴⁰⁵ Goppelt, *Typos*, 219.

⁴⁰⁶ Glenny, “Typology: A Summary,” 637.

⁴⁰⁷ For instance, Hans K. LaRondelle affirms that “It is the authority of the New Testament which establishes the divinely pre-ordained connection between a type and antitype and discloses the predictive nature of the type.” Hence, “New Testament typology does not start with the Old Testament history or symbolic ritual, but with Jesus and His salvation.” Both authors would agree that the typological sense discerned by the NT is not contrary to the literal meaning of or imposed arbitrarily on the OT. However, according to LaRondelle, the predictive nature of typology is not detectable in the OT. Indeed, the NT is the only key and typology happens in the freedom of Spirit. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 37, 45.

⁴⁰⁸ Glenny, “Typology: A Summary,” 637.

Davidson highlights the idea that the logical consequence of accepting that the OT types were divinely intended to be prospective/predictive prefigurations is that “some indication of the existence and predictive quality of the various OT types should occur already in the OT before their NT antitypical fulfillment.”⁴⁰⁹ This serves as “a prophetic/eschatological warrant” for its typological interpretation in the NT.⁴¹⁰

On this point, Davidson is not completely alone.⁴¹¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., speaks about “competent evidence of Divine intention in the correspondence between it [type] and the Antitype”⁴¹² as an essential characteristic of a valid type. However, it is in Davidson’s work that a call to find these indicators/signals is expressed with more emphasis. In suggesting further studies on predictive elements in the OT, he recognized in his dissertation that “there has not been a thorough investigation of the indications in the OT itself of the presence of typology.”⁴¹³ In 1995, Davidson himself already identified in the OT six verbal and contextual indicators of a typological understanding that would allow the conceptualization of “two Joshuas.”⁴¹⁴

⁴⁰⁹ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 16.

⁴¹⁰ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 18.

⁴¹¹ Daniel Treier, “Typology,” *DTIB*: 823-827.

⁴¹² Here Kaiser is quoting Van Mildert (1815). See Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, 121.

⁴¹³ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 423.

⁴¹⁴ These are the six verbal and contextual indicators of Joshua’s typology in the OT suggested by Davidson: (1) the peculiar name of Joshua; (2) a possible connection between Joshua’s father and the tetragrammaton; (3) the unique character of Joshua’s connection with the mission of the son of God in comparison with the work God assigned to Joshua with that of the preexistent Christ; (4) the use of Joshua in Zech 6:12; (5) the relationship between Moses and Joshua in light of Deut 18:15–18 and the expectancy of the Prophet throughout the OT; and (6) the allusion to the mission of Joshua (Deut 31:7; Jos 1:6) in connection to the work of the coming Messiah in Isa 49:8. Richard Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 24–35.

Typology and Presuppositions

The present survey reveals again the powerful influence of presuppositions in any field of study. Michael Austin is accurate when he affirms that “typology is one of those words whose meaning shifts dramatically with the position of its user.”⁴¹⁵ He is also precise when he differentiates the believing and unbelieving perspectives as a source of individual views on typology. For believers, typology is a mode of history. For unbelievers, typology is a mode of rhetoric as “a connecting strategy that writers use to create retroactive links between otherwise unrelated stories or that readers use to infer connections between otherwise unconnected things.”⁴¹⁶

If presuppositions are not only necessary but inescapable, as Hans G. Gadamer suggests,⁴¹⁷ any discussion on typology should take a step back to exchange views about them. In this case, the point is not whether or not one should approach the topic from one’s own presuppositions, but to discern which presuppositions are legitimate or illegitimate.

If the Bible is the object of study, its interpreters should allow themselves to approach it from the presuppositions that come from it, and not from another alien epistemological framework. In the case of typology, this is not different.

⁴¹⁵ Michael Austin, “How the Book of Mormon Reads the Bible: A Theory of Types,” *JBMS* 26 (2017): 48.

⁴¹⁶ Austin, “How the Book of Mormon Reads the Bible,” 48. For instance, Raymond Kuntzmann suggests that typology should be analyzed as “a rhetorical figure and a creative process of thinking” in the context of tradition. Raymond Kuntzmann, “La Définition d’un Type au fil d’une Lecture Intertextuelle (2 Ch 20,5–13),” in *Typologie Biblique: De Quelques Figures Vives*, ed. Raymond Kuntzmann (Paris, France: Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 44.

⁴¹⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Verdade e Método* (Petrópolis, Brazil: Vozes, 2007), 368.

Excursus: Common Criticism of Typology

At the conclusion of this literature review it may be helpful to briefly comment on four main arguments used against biblical typology. The first one is that typology promotes a non-contextual reading of the Old Testament. It is undeniable that the uncontrollable use of typology can generate non-contextual interpretations that are not rooted in authorial intention. However, as the following section in this research will show, typology can be grounded on exegesis. Indeed, authorial intention is an indispensable aspect to determine the existence of a legitimate type.⁴¹⁸

The second argument involves the presumption that typology is a Christological trajectory imposed on the OT. This is somewhat related to the previous argument that typological reading is at odds with the original context of Scriptures. Several scholars have already attested the messianic thrust of the Old Testament,⁴¹⁹ and for this reason there is no need for any discussion here. The fulfilment of the messianic hopes in Jesus of Nazareth is the central part of the NT preaching and message. Its authors, who were all first century Jews, recognized in him the Messiah promised by the prophets. Thus, the idea that a Christological trajectory is alien to the OT text is not only untenable from a historical point of view but also from an exegetical one.⁴²⁰ A third major argument against typology involves the assumption that there is no distinction between allegory and typology. This is seen particularly in the literary and theological emphases with some

⁴¹⁸ This is a crucial point for Hamilton in his new book *Typology*.

⁴¹⁹ See: Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*; Smith, *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah*; John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to the Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995); John H. Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *JETS* 44 (2001): 5–23.

⁴²⁰ See Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*.

degree of variation. Since this necessary distinction has been already discussed above, there is no need for additional comment at this point.⁴²¹

The last challenge to be mentioned here concerns the prosopological exegesis as defended by Bates. In his book *The Hermeneutics of Apostolic Proclamation*, he affirms that prosopological exegesis “explains a text by suggesting that the author of the text identified various persons or characters (*prosopa*) as speakers or addressees in a pre-text, even though it is not clear from the pre-text itself that such persons are in view.”⁴²² According to Bates, this early church technique should be used whenever the reader needs to overcome an ambiguity where “the true identity of the speaker or the addressee (or both) in the pre-text is not self-evident, at least to the would-be ancient expositor.”⁴²³ In these texts, the OT prophets were capacitated to listen in dialogues between the Son and the Father. In this case, the NT authors whether by inspiration or creativity reinterpret these passages in light of the trinitary revelation. A classic example of this approach is found in several patristic readings of Ps 2 and 110 where Christ is considered the actual character speaking in these verses instead of David.

One of the best critiques of this approach, which is an expression of the recent movement of *ressourcement* or retrieval in biblical scholarship, is provided by Peter Gentry. He localizes his criticism in two areas. First, he correctly points out the

⁴²¹ For additional arguments against the conflation between allegory and typology, see Robert C. Dentan, “Typology: Its Use and Abuse” *ATR* 34 (1952): 210–217.

⁴²² Bates, *The Hermeneutics of Apostolic Proclamation*, 183. See also: Madison N. Pierce, *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture* SNTS 178 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁴²³ Bates, *The Hermeneutics of Apostolic Proclamation*, 216.

anachronistic character of Bates' proposal. Although it is conceivable that the early church fathers could have been influenced by "Greco-Roman literary criticism, classical Greek drama, and early handbooks on rhetoric,"⁴²⁴ it is highly improbable that the NT authors were influenced by late handbooks of rhetoric such as those of Theon, Hermogenes, and Libanius.⁴²⁵ In addition to that, "the parallel [as claimed by Bates] between identifying actors in plays and identifying speakers in texts is rather weak."⁴²⁶

The second area in which Gentry succeeds in his critique to the prosopological approach is related to its flawed exegesis of the OT. In his analysis of Ps 2, 45, and 110 he shows that the apostle were not "removing speech from original context and providing it with new meaning by giving it a new setting."⁴²⁷ Rather, the NT authors were reading Scriptures in accordance to its storyline or metanarrative following the natural flow of patterns found in canonical context.

Summary

The present survey of literature demonstrates how the understanding of typology has developed in the last twenty years. The scholarly debate is still quite divided about the nature of typology, its application, and relevance for Christians today. Two major approaches have been identified. The traditional approach is split mostly between *prospectivists* and *retrospectivists*. The first group emphasizes the prophetic nature of typology whose prospective element was somehow known by the original author or

⁴²⁴ Peter J. Gentry, A Preliminary Evaluation and Critique of Prosopological Exegesis, SBJT 23 (2019): 106.

⁴²⁵ Gentry, A Preliminary Evaluation, 107–108.

⁴²⁶ Gentry, A Preliminary Evaluation, 119.

⁴²⁷ Gentry, A Preliminary Evaluation, 119.

audience. More often, the second group maintains that although this prospective element can be present in the text itself, it can be known only looking backward from the Christ event.

The Post-Critical Neo-Typology approach has changed drastically in the last two decades. This has been driven by the advance of figural or spiritual reading. The approach has two major emphasis. In one group are those who stress the literary aspects of typology. In a second group are those who underline its theological features. In both cases, typology involves looking backwards and retrospectively. In figural studies, the primacy of the text is replaced by the precedence of the reader. There is a call for a return to allegory as practiced in the precritical period.

Amid continuities and discontinuities with former periods, the key issues in the debate have not changed. This is an indication that there is need for continuing work in the area. The present research, which looks for typological indicators in the narrative of Elijah, seeks to contribute to this debate, in particular, concerning the prospective nature of typology.

CHAPTER 3

TEXT LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ELIJAH NARRATIVE

SCENE 1: 1 KGS 16:21–1 KGS 17

A Brief Note on the Composition and Formation of 1 and 2 Kings

Even a preliminary survey of the literature of 1 and 2 Kings can demonstrate how bewildering the issues of formation, composition, and date of their individual units can be. The scholarly debate involving these issues are extensive and up to now any agreement is far from being reached.¹ Although any discussion on the formation and composition of the book goes beyond the scope of this study, a few remarks are in order.

It is evident today that the initial historical critical consensus around diachronic approaches to the book can be held no longer.² While looking for the pre-history of the

¹ One of the best reviews of literature on these issues in recent years is found in Michael Avioz, “The Book of Kings in Recent Research (Part I),” *CBR* 4 (2005): 11–55; Michael Avioz, “The Book of Kings in Recent Research (Part II),” *CBR* 5 (2006): 11–57. See also: Steven L. MacKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1991), 81–98.

² For the historical critical discussion on the Elijah cycle see: Otto Eissfeldt, “Die Komposition von I Reg 16, 29 – II Reg 13, 25” in *Das Ferne Und Nahe Wort; Festschrift Leonard Rost*, ed. Fritz Maas (Berlin, 1967), 49–58; Richard D. Nelson, “God and the Heroic Prophet: Preaching the Stories of Elijah and Elisha,” *QR* 9 (1989): 93–96; Steven L. MacKenzie, “The Prophetic History and the Redaction of Kings,” *HAR* 9 (1985): 210–214; Judith A. Todd, “The Pre-Deuteronomistic Elijah Cycle” in *Elijah and Elisha in Socioliterary Perspective*, ed. Robert B. Coote (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1992), 1–36; A. Graeme Auld, *Life in Kings: Reshaping the Royal Story in the Hebrew Bible*, AIL 30 (Atlanta: SBL, 2017), 1–19. Susanne Otto proposes a process in four major stages for the development of the text of 1 Kgs 16:29–2 Kgs 10:36. According to her, 17–18 was added in early post-exilic times and 1 Kgs 19:1–18 and the remaining Elisha stories were added in the fifth century. Susanne Otto, “The Composition of the Elijah-Elisha Stories and the Deuteronomistic History,” *JSOT* 24 (2003): 487–508.

text, these studies emphasized the diversity aspect of the stories in order to determine sources and layers of tradition behind the final form of 1 and 2 Kings. Nevertheless, with the advent and strengthening of literary studies, more and more focus on unity has been expressed in more recent publications.³ The present analysis considers the text in its extant canonical form maintaining “the integrity of the biblical narrative” in the context of “a holistic interpretation of the Bible.”⁴ The reason for that appears self-evident: in terms of composition and formation, the final form of the text is the only historical artifact that remained.⁵ Only after analyzing what is at hand and identifying possible

³ Brevard S. Childs, “On Reading the Elijah Narratives,” *Interpretation* 34 (1980): 128–137; R. L. Cohn, “The Literary Logic of 1 King 17–19,” *JBL* 101 (1982): 333–350; Denise Dick Her, “Variations of a Pattern: 1 Kings 19,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 292–294; Todd, “The Pre-Deuteronomistic Elijah-Cycle,” 1–35; David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analysis in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOT 7 (Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT, 1986), 1:63–88; James Richard Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings: The Past as the Social Identity*, JSOT 272 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 182–83; Christopher T. Begg, “Unifying Factors in 2 Kings 1.2–17a,” *JSOT* 32 (1985): 75–86; Mark O’ Brien, “Portrayal of Prophets in 2 Kgs 2” *ABR* 46 (1998): 1–16. John Barton observes that “in the English-speaking world, there has been in the last twenty years or so a clear drift in the direction of exegesis of the ‘final form’ of the text as the preferred style for biblical interpretation. There are at least two different conceptual bases for this shift. One is theological and is associated with so-called ‘canonical criticism.’ The other is literary, and rests on the argument that the interpreter of any text, biblical or not, has a primary duty to interpret the text that lies before us, before (or instead of) being concerned with putative earlier stages underlying that text. The drift has been so marked that it is now sometimes described as a paradigm shift, using Thomas Kuhn’s controversial term from the history of science.” It has produced a sharp cleft between the English- and the German-speaking worlds in biblical studies. John Barton, “Intertextuality and the ‘Final Form’ of the Text,” in *Congress Volume Oslo 1998*, ed. A. Lemaire and M. Sæbø (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA; Köln, Germany: Brill, 2000), 33.

⁴ These two basic methodological stances are defended by Brevard Childs. Brevard Childs, “On Reading the Elijah Narratives,” 136–137. J. G. McConville observes that there is “a perceptible move back towards a single author of the deuteronomistic history (DtH) The modern tendency to view books of the Old Testament, provisionally at least, as literary units and to look for sophistication in their execution. J. G. McConville, “Narrative and Meaning in the Books of Kings,” *Biblica* 70 (1989): 31. Avioz also notes that “furthermore, it seems that more and more scholars recognize that too much emphasis has been laid upon the diachronic aspects regarding the composition and redaction of the book of Kings, and less on the synchronic aspects focusing on the book in its extant form. This imbalance is beginning to be redressed as new scholarship continues to find new ways to approach the book of Kings. Avioz, “The Book of Kings in Recent Research (Part I),” 31.

⁵ Robert Polzin properly notes that “biblical critics have been so busy juggling concepts of myth and history that they have ignored the most obvious feature of biblical narrative: it tells a story.” Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York, NY: Seabury, 1980), ix.

textual problems, interpreters should use diachronic tools that rely on text-external factors, such as editorial work, transmission problems. (if this is required or helpful at all).⁶

In the following exploration of Elijah cycle, I share the same assumptions held by Lissa M. Wray Beal: first, the narrative stands as a coherent whole and makes sense as it is; second, form and content are inextricably connected;⁷ and third, it is possible to retrieve the meaning of the text.⁸ The consequences for this analysis are also threefold: first, the focus will be entirely on the final form, leaving aside any attempt to identify sources or layers of tradition. In the footnotes the reader will eventually find pertinent

⁶ Regarding the books of 1 and 2 Kings, one of the sharpest critiques of the attempt to identify different layers of tradition from apparent incongruences and discontinuities found in the text is provided by Robert Wilson. He says, "... editors work on a text for two basic reasons. First, editorial work on a text may simply involve the correction of errors. Second, editors may revise a text in order to improve its effectiveness or to sharpen its impact on the reader. (...) Even when the reader knows that editorial changes have been made, those changes should not be visible unless the reader is able to compare the most recent edition with previous ones. Our knowledge of editorial techniques in the ancient Near East is almost non-existent, but the few studies that have been done suggest that the goals of ancient editors were similar to those of their modern counterparts. (...) When ancient editors worked on a text in a systematic way, they left no tracks. Their interest was in the cohesiveness of the text and in tightening its structure and sharpening its purpose. This would seem to suggest that thorough-going editing is impossible to detect." Robert R. Wilson, "Unity and Diversity in the Book of Kings," in *A Wise and Discerning Mind: Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, ed. Saul M. Olyan and Robert C. Culley, BJS 325 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 301–303.

⁷ The rejection of the dichotomy between historian and poet as previously held by Hermann Gunkel is one of the most characteristic traits brought to the spotlight by the literary revolution in biblical studies. Hermann Gunkel, *Elijah, Yahweh, and Baal* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 41–48. For instance, Bar-Efrat remarks that "We should by no means underestimate the facets of the narratives, that is, the way the narrative material is organized and presented [i.e. plot, facts, and motifs]. The subject-matter, themes and values of the narrative cannot exist separately from the techniques, which define its character no less than the content. Shimeon Bar-Efrat *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield, U.K.: Almond, 1989), 10–11. See also: James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond" *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 19–22; Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 91–95; Yarah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001); Jerome T. Walsh, *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009); Matthew Mullins, *Enjoying the Bible: Literary Approaches to Loving the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 123–156.

⁸ Lissa M. Wray Beal, *The Deuteronomist's Prophet: Narrative Control of Approval and Disapproval in the Story of Jehu (2 Kings 9 and 10)* (New York, NY; London, U.K.: T&T Clark, 2007), 11–15.

bibliography on these issues. Second, special attention is dedicated to the narrative features of the passages and how they affect the meaning of the individual pericopes. And finally, authorial intention will be considered in terms of the overall strategy of the narrator⁹ from the way he uses different narrative tools, such as plot, characterization, repetition, structure, reuse, motifs and so forth. However, the broader authorial intention will be considered only in the next chapter when the theological implications of the following exegesis will be drawn with special focus on typology.

Historical Prologue: The Introduction of Omride Dynasty as Prelude to the Elijah Cycle (1 Kgs 16:15-34)

There is no need here for a complete historical introduction to the books of Kings since others have already done an excellent job in that regard,¹⁰ including aspect of background and chronology.¹¹ However, in light of the role that the Omride dynasty has

⁹ Throughout this chapter I am using narrator in the literary sense. In this context, narrator is the storyteller of the work and should not be confused with the author. According to Shimeon Bar-Efrat “the narrator within the narrative should not be identified with the writer as a real person.” Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 14. In the same book the author dedicates the first chapter to explain the distinction between author, narrator, and implied author. The narrator determines the point of view that the audience will come in contact with.

¹⁰ See: J. Alberto Soggin, “The Davidic-Solomonic Kingdom,” in *Israelite and Judaeen History*, ed. John I. Hays and James M. Miller (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1971), 332–380; Herbert Donner, “The Separate States of Israel and Judah,” in *Israelite and Judaeen History*, ed. John I. Hays and James M. Miller (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1971), 381–434; J. Alberto Soggin, *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 34–37, 197–270; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman:1998), 203–408; André Lemaire “The United Monarchy: Saul, David, and Solomon,” in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archeology Society, 1999), 91–128; Siegfried Horn and P. Kyle McCarter, Jr, “The Divided Monarchy: The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel,” in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archeology Society, 1999), 129–200; Anthony Kam, *The Israelites: An Introduction* (London, U.K.; New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 81–105; J. Maxwell Miller, “Reading the Bible Historically: The Historian’s Approach,” in *Israel’s Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelites Historiography*, ed. V. Philips Long, SBTS 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 354–372; John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 4rd ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 229–266; R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament Times: A Social, Political, and Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 190–263.

¹¹ Several works about the chronologies of the Judean and Israelite monarchies have been

in the Elijah cycle and its impact on the state of the religious affairs that triggered his ministry, some remarks about the introduction of his dynasty in 1 Kgs 16 may provide important insights about this crucial moment in the history of Israel in which God called Elijah.

Omri ascends to the Israelite Throne

There is a striking contrast between the royal lines of the Southern and Northern kingdoms in the book of Kings. In the Southern kingdom, the transference of power always follows the royal blood, even when there is a deviation from the normal pattern of father to son.¹² In this case, following David's divine election, his bloodline remains until the last king before the Babylonian exile. In the case of the Northern kingdom, the situation regarding the deviation from a bloodline dynasty is completely different; from nineteen kings, only two come to power by divine election (Jeroboam – 1 Kgs 12:25–

produced. But Edwin Richard Thiele is still a standard reference. Edwin Richard Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983). See also: J. M. Miller, "Another Look at the Chronology of the Early Divided Monarchy," *JBL* 86 (1967): 276–288; H. Tadmor, "The Chronology of the First Temple Period," *WHJP* 4 (1979): 44–60. E. R. Thiele, "Coregencies and Overlapping Reigns among the Hebrew Kings," *JBL* 93 (1974): 174–200; John H. Hays, *A New Chronology for the Kings of Israel and Judah and its Implications for Biblical History and Literature* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1988); William Hamilton Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1991); Gershon Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Leiden, The Netherlands; New York, NY: Brill, 1996); M. Christine Tetley, *The Reconstructed Chronology of the Divided Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005); Mordechai Cogan, "Chronology, Hebrew Bible," *ABD*, 1:1005–1011.

¹² Such deviations can be seen in the ascension of Athaliah, mother of Ahaziah (2 Kgs 11:1–20) and in the foreign interference before the Babylonian exile: Jehoiakim (Eliakim) (2 Kgs 23:34–24:6) and Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:18–20). In the case of Athaliah, it should be remembered that although she is the only non-Davidic ruler in Judah, there is a legitimate Davidic descendant alive and waiting to ascend the throne.

13:7 and Jehu – 2 Kgs 9–10)¹³ and seven ascend to the throne as a result of various conspiracies.¹⁴ That being so, there is no bloodline continuity in the Northern kingdom.

In terms of sequence, divine election is followed by a period of stability that is broken by a succession of turbulent transitions each marked by a coup d'état. As can be seen in the table below, two major clusters of machinations can be identified. While the first precedes a period of political stability starting with Ahab, the second precedes the demise of the Northern kingdom as a nation. It might be argued that the divine intervention through the ministry of Elijah and Elisha at the end of the first half of the book temporarily prevented Israel's destruction, which was not avoided after the second cluster of conspiracies.

Table 2. Transfer of Power in the Northern Kingdom

1 Kgs		2 Kgs	
Divine Appointment	Jeroboam	Divine Appointment	Jehu
Royal succession	Nadab	Royal succession	Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II, Zechariah
Conspiracy	Baasha	Conspiracy	Shallum, Menahem
Royal succession	Elah	Royal succession	Pekahiah
Conspiracy	Zimri, Omri	Conspiracy	Pekah, Hoshea
Ahab dynasty	Ahab, Ahaiah, Joram	The end of Northern kingdom	

It should be mentioned that even such conspiracies humanly devised are not presented in the book as being independent from God's agency. In Kings, everything is under God's sovereign control. For instance, in the case of Baasha, Yahweh declares to

¹³ Curiously, even these two kings are chosen by God as instruments of judgment. The first against the house of David, particularly due to the sins of Solomon, and the second, against the house of Ahab.

¹⁴ Baasha (1 Kgs 15:33–16:7), Zimri (1 Kgs 16:15–20), Omri (1 Kgs 16:21–28), Shallum (2 Kgs 15:13–15), Manahem (2 Kgs 15:16–22), Pekah (2 Kgs 15:27–31), and (2 Kgs 17:1–6).

him: *I exalted you from the dust and I made you a leader over my people Israel* (1 Kgs 16:2a). In the sequence, Elah, Baasha's son, is murdered in a plot orchestrated by Zimri. Once again, such a coup is not random but divinely allowed as the fulfillment of Jehu's prophecy against Baasha: *I am now about to consume Baasha and his house. I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat* (1 Kgs 16:3). Thus, in his turn, Zimri is also an instrument of judgment who, like Baasha, also becomes a target of divine punishment. His seven-day kingdom is long enough to attract God's condemnation (1 Kgs 16:19).

It is in this context of political turmoil regarding royal succession that Omri comes on the scene. With the killing of Zimri by Omri and his army, which had already declared him king when the news about Baasha's assassination was delivered in Gibbethon, the Northern kingdom is split in two: one half following Tibni and the other Omri.

Although the suggestion that "Omri had the support of the professional troops and mercenaries and Tibni was chosen by the popular assembly"¹⁵ is feasible, the historical or biblical data is terse and prevents a clearer picture of this period. Since there is no formal regnal formula, whether regarding the beginning and the end of Tibni's rule. The introductory regnal formula for Omri appears only after Tibni's death. What seems to be clear is that in the eyes of the biblical narrator there is no legitimate government during the dispute between the contenders. Based on the synchrony with Asa's kingdom, it

¹⁵ G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, NCBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; London, U.K.: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), 1:295.

seems evident that this period lasts about five years leaving seven years for Omri to reign as a sole ruler.¹⁶

As is widely recognized, more than a historical encyclopedia of Israelite kings, the book of Kings is a theological reflection about their failures to comply with God's expectations as laid out in Deuteronomy. However, in the case of the clash between Tibni and Omri, there is a meaningful silence. Was Omri's ascent to the throne part of God's will? In each dynastic swap the narrator makes explicit God's control over the events. Somehow, Jeroboam, Baasha, and even Zimri are raised as instruments of punishment. In the last case, even his suicidal death is considered a divine retribution as 1 Kgs 16:19 makes clear. However, nothing is said about Omri's ascension. Even Tibni's death is left wrapped in mystery. Was it a natural death or was he killed? If he was killed, did Omri have anything to do with it? Here is one example how the Kings' narrator invites the reader to engage actively in his often-laconic account of the facts. In any case, with the death of Tibni, the way is open to the kingdom of Omri.

The most surprising aspect of the account of Omri's ascension is its conciseness. Only six verses describe one of "the most capable of the North Israelite monarchs."¹⁷

¹⁶ Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 85, 88–90; Galil, *Chronology of the Kings*, 22. Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton provide a good summary of the historical importance of this period: "Thiele's dates for Omri are 885–874 BC. This is a critical juncture in the history of the region because the Assyrians are ready to begin their attempts at western expansion. Ashurnasirpal II came to the throne in 883 BC and extended his control over the entire course of the Euphrates, thus putting him on the doorstep of the western nations. The Aramean state of Bit-Adini by the western reaches of the Euphrates came under his control, and in 877 BC he marched to the Mediterranean and then south between the Orontes/ Litani rivers and the Mediterranean, collecting tribute from cities as far south as Tyre. Additionally, the Arameans of Damascus under Ben-Hadad have become a force to reckon with, and all of this will force Israel to find its niche through international alignment." Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Logos Edition.

¹⁷ James Alan Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, ICC (New York, NY: Scribner, 1951), 284.

From the biblical perspective, only the sequence of Kings' narration will hint to the reader the lasting impact of Omri. He is the first Northern king to secure a dynasty. Both in the political and religious arena the seeds Omri plants develop and bear fruit in his son's realm. Omri is able to unify the Northern kingdom and make peace with Judah. In addition to that, most likely he is responsible for the politically motivated marriage of Ahab with Jezebel, a Phoenician princess. Such a rapprochement has evident religious consequences as the cult to Baal reveals.¹⁸ In fact, Peter Leithart suggests that "Omri and his son Ahab pursue a program of 're-Canaanitization,' reinstating the worship and practices of the Canaanites that Yahweh drove from the land (1 Kgs. 16:31–32)."¹⁹ The rebuilding of Jericho seems to be part of this agenda. However, more than that, "the Omrides aspire to reunite the kingdom under an Omride king. By intermarrying with the house of David (Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, marries Ataliah, daughter of Ahab. cf. 1

¹⁸ The god Baal mentioned throughout Elijah circle should probably be identified as Baal-Melkart. A good history of interpretation about the precise identity of Baal here is provided by F. C. Fensham. F. C. Fensham "A few Observations on the Polarisation Between Yahweh and Baal in 1 Kings 17-19," *ZAW* 92 (1980): 228–231. The Baal myth is well summarized by Aharon Wiener: "Baal-Melkart, who was at this time worshipped in Phoenicia and Canaan, was derived from the Baal of the Ugarite pantheon, a son of the mother-goddess Astarte and the great El Whom he later dethroned. Originally predominantly of a chthonic character, Baal-Melkart later assumed the aspects of the weather god as well as of the rain god Baal-Hadad, and also the solar traits of the Baal—Shaman. Baal's consort Anath, later considered to be equal to Astarte, was the goddess of love and fertility but also of war and destruction. Baal was swallowed up by his brother Mot, the god of aridity and death, and had to dwell in the underworld together with rain, clouds and other retinue. Anath mourned her brother and husband, killed Mot and freed Baal, so that rain and fertility might again come to the earth. This mythological occurrence then became an annual ritual event within the framework of the cult. The periodic disappearance of the fertility god into the underworld, or his death, led to the withering of the vegetation and the infertility of animals until the female deity resurrected her lost lover and their union brought about a new cycle of vegetable and animal life." Aharon Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism: A Depth-Psychological Study* (London, U.K.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 10. See more on Baal-Melkart in Leila Leah Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics against Baal Worship* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1968), 35–49; James Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh's Appropriation of Baal* (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2015), 47–62. Manfred Lurker, *The Routledge Dictionary of Gods, Goddesses, Devils & Demons*, 3rd ed. (London, U.K.; New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 27; W. Herrmann, "Baal," *DDD*, 132–138.

¹⁹ Peter J. Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, BTCOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006), 120.

Kgs 8:18, 26), the Omrides also evidently want to reunite the kingdom under an Omride king.”²⁰

It is from the extra-biblical perspective that the importance of Omri becomes evident. The picture that emerges from these sources is of “one of Israel’s greatest, most energetic, and most foresighted kings.”²¹ In the famous Mesha Stone, Mesha recalls the days when “Omri, king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years ... [and] occupied the land of Medeba,”²² Even in later Assyrian annals when Jehu had exterminated his offspring he himself is called “son of Omri” and Israel as “Omri-land.”²³ Thus, “in terms of political initiative, Omri apparently set out to move Israel into the mainstream of Canaanite culture and to a position of leadership among the surrounding nation states.”²⁴

From the archeological remains in Samaria (modern Sebastiyeh), it is possible to deduce that there was significant economic growth during Omri’s rule with large-scale construction activity and opportunities in international trade made possible by the alliance with the Phoenicians.²⁵

²⁰ Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 120.

²¹ Winfried Thiel, “Omri (Person),” *ABD* 5:18.

²² “Palestinian Inscriptions,” trans. W. F. Albright (*ANET*, 320).

²³ “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” trans. A. Leo Oppenheim (*ANET*, 280–281, 284–285).

²⁴ Jesse C. Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, CPNIVC (Joplin, MO: College, 2002), 198. However, Leah Bronner observes that the start of Phoenician influence on Israel dates back to Solomon kingdom when Economic and political contacts led to a free exchange of cultural and religious practices as well.” Leah Bronner *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 5.

²⁵ Paul K. Hooker, “Omri,” *EDB*: 987. Long affirms that “excavations at the site (Sebastiyeh) have exposed fortifications and a palace that date from the time of Omri. Sophisticated building techniques are evidenced with well-dressed ashlar masonry with header and stretcher construction. Along with prestige items like ivory plaques that display Phoenician motifs, the material remains testify to the Phoenician influence on the house of Omri (as in Solomon’s building projects).” Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 199.

In light of this evidence, the silence of the biblical narrator regarding Omri's achievements becomes even more telling. It reminds the reader that any worldly success whether political, economic, or cultural is irrelevant in the face of spiritual failure. The account of Omri's spiritual fiasco is the only window opened to the reader by the narrator. Other than the mention of the construction of Samaria by Omri in 1 Kg 16:24, the reader of 1 and Kings knows nothing else about him.

The account of Omri's kingdom is found in 1 Kgs 16:23–28, and it comprises four parts: (i) introductory regnal formula (v. 23); (ii) Samaria's purchase and edification (v. 24); (iii) theological assessment (vv. 25–26); and (iv) concluding summary (vv. 27–28). Both the introductory regnal formula and the concluding summary follow the formulaic pattern of the book of 1 and 2 Kings.

Regarding Omri's introduction in verse 23, what stands out is the absence of any patronymic or tribal affiliation. Besides Zimri, Omri is the only monarch for whom this information is not provided in Kings. This has led some interpreters to think that Omri was not Israelite. Although both biblical and extra-biblical information cannot confirm a non-Israelite origin of Omri, this absence is remarkable, especially when one bears in mind that he is founder of a dynasty.²⁶

²⁶ The first to suggest a non-Israelite origin of Omri was Martin Noth who defended an Arabic ascendance. Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1960), 230. He was followed by Soggin, *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*, 203. In his turn, Jeffrey Kuan argues for a Phoenician origin. He provides four reasons for that position: "(1) while the root 'mr occurs only in the name Omri in the Hebrew Bible, it is common in Phoenician and Punic; (2) during the Omride rule, close political ties existed between Israel and Phoenicia, not least of which was the marriage of Ahab, the son of Omri, to Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal (Ittobaal), the king of Tyre and Sidon; (3) archaeological levels at key sites (Samaria, Megiddo, Hazor, and Dan) reflect strong Phoenician influence; and (4) Ahab's patronage of the Baal cult culminated in the building of a temple to the deity in Samaria." Jeffrey K. Kuan, "Was Omri a Phoenician?" in *History and Interpretation Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, William P. Brown, and Jeffrey K. Kuan, JSOT 173 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 234–235.

The concluding summary of his kingdom also falls short in offering any hint about his achievements. The use of *גְּבוּרָה* (might, strength) in *וּגְבוּרָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה* (“the mighty acts that he did”) (1 Kgs 16:27) does not make his presentation exceptional when the phrase also appears in connection with most of the Israelite kings.²⁷ The last part of the concluding summary, also called a royal epilogue, follows the exact threefold pattern found in the book of Kings: the dynastic notice, the burial notice, and the notice of the successor.²⁸

Only two aspects of the account of his kingdom lay out content enabling the reader to get a glimpse of Omri’s persona: the move of his capital from Tirza to Samaria and the narrator’s theological reflection about his spiritual condition and leadership. The move of the capital in verses 23c–24 is both strategic and symbolic. From the strategic point of view, it provided commercial and military advantage. From the symbolic perspective, the action parallels David’s establishment of Jerusalem as his royal administrative center. Such a move combined with other correspondences between David and Omri led Leithart to conceive Omri as a counterfeit David and Ahab as a counterfeit Solomon.²⁹

Finally, the theological reflection is in the center of Omri’s account.

- A Introductory regnal formula
- B Actions: the purchase and establishment of Samaria
- C Theological reflection
- B^I Actions: concluding summary

²⁷ For instance, Baasha (1 Kgs 16:5); Jehu (2 Kgs 10:34); Jehoahaz (2 Kgs 13:8); Jehoash (2 Kgs 14:15); Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 14:28).

²⁸ Matthew J. Suriano, *The Politics of Dead Kings*, FAT 2:48 (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen: 2010), 22–50.

²⁹ Peter Leithart, “Counterfeit Davids: Davidic Restoration and the Architecture of 1–2 Kings,” *TB* 56 (2005): 22–26.

A¹ Royal Epilogue

Since the narrator omits any further deed of Omri besides the purchase Samaria, this short theological assessment is what demarcates his character. While the evaluation includes the regular comparison with Jeroboam (v. 26) as the defining characteristic of idolatrous kings in Israel, the narrator adds the important note that “Omri did evil in the eyes of Yahweh more than all who were before him” (v. 25). At this point again, the narrator’s terseness provides an assessment without giving the reason. However, the religious habits of Ahab in the more detailed theological assessment of his kingdom may give some hints about the spiritual legacy of his father.

Ahab Ascends to the Israelite Throne

In the effort to reconstruct Ahab’s historical place in Israel and in ANE, and consequently that of Elijah’s ministry, three major sources are available: (i) the biblical record of his kingdom, (ii) the epigraphical remains that contain mentions to him, and (iii) the archaeological remains of his capital, Samaria. In this summary all these sources are taken in consideration. No complete treatment of Ahab is necessary here since others have already undertaken this task.³⁰ However, a quick review or reminder of his historical

³⁰ H. Parzen, “The Prophets and the Omri Dynasty,” *HTR* 33 (1940): 69–96; D. W. Gooding, “Ahab According to the Septuagint,” *ZAW* 76 (1964): 269–280; G. Fohrer, “Ahab,” *TRE* 2 (1978): 123–125; Winfried Thiel, “Ahab (Person),” *ABD*, 1:100–104; William M. Schniedewind, “History and Interpretation: The Religion of Ahab and Manasseh in the Book of Kings,” *CBQ* 55 (1993), 648–661; Lester L. Grabbe, ed. *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty* (London, U.K.: T&T Clark, 2007); Hayyim Angel, “Hopping between Two Opinions: Understanding the Biblical Portrait of Ahab,” *JBQ* 35 (2007): 3–10; Jerome T. Walsh, *Ahab: The Construction of a King* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2006); Stuart Lasine, *Weighing Hearts: Character, Judgment, and the Ethics of Reading the Bible*, LHBOTS 568 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 171–191; A. Chadwick Thornhill, “Ahab, King of Israel,” *LBD*, Logos Edition.

place can help interpreters to understand the historical moment at which God called Elijah as a prophet in Israel.

According to Thiele's chronology, Ahab rules Israel from 874 to 853 BC.,³¹ a regnal period longer than that of any other Israelite king except Jehu. The fact that Ahab ascends to the throne without contenders shows that the Omride dynasty, which would last around 50 years, has been established. Although the Bible is mostly silent about his achievements, the extrabiblical evidence points to the fact that Ahab managed to keep himself in the mainstream of the ANE with political and military relevance. In this sense, Ahab succeeds in following up the program already initiated by his father.

Ahab sought out strength to stand against the growing threat of the neighboring Aram for several years³² by establishing covenants with Phoenicia through the marriage

³¹ Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers*, 94–96. Ahab is the seventh northern king to follow Jeroboam's evil example. Magnus Ottosson observes that given the Deuteronomist's use of the number seven as a maximal number, Yahweh's patience had become exhausted. Magnus Ottosson, "The Prophet Elijah's Visit to Zarephath" in *In the Shelter of Elyon Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström*, ed. Boyd W. Barrick and John R. Spence, JSOT 31 (Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT, 1984), 189. Leithart suggests a numerological structure in 1 and 2 Kings. According to him, "Ahab is the seventh king of the northern kingdom (following Jeroboam I, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri) and initiates a numerological structure that runs throughout 1–2 Kings. In the south, the seventh king is Ahaziah of Judah (preceded by Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijam, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram), who is explicitly compared to Ahab for his wickedness (2 Kgs. 8:27; cf. 8:18). The seven Davidic kings that follow Ahaziah culminate in Manasseh (who follows Jehoash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah), who is the most Ahab-like of the southern kings (21:3, 13). In each case, the seventh king in the sequence is the object of prophetic condemnation, and the seventh king's sins bring an interruption or end of the dynasty of which he is a part. The kings in this sabbatical seventh slot bring the sins of Israel and Judah to completion, and the Lord of the Sabbath brings rest through judgment." Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 120.

³² Thiel, "Ahab (Person)," *ADB* 1:101.

with Jezebel,³³ daughter of Ethbaal,³⁴ and with Judah as shown by the support of Jehoshaphat against the Arameans in 1 Kgs 22 and the marriage of Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, with Joram, Jehoshaphat's son (2 Kgs 8:16–18). In the biblical account, Ahab's military importance is evident from the size of the coalition comprising 32 kings that Ben-Hadad needed to fight against Ahab at Samaria (1 Kgs 20:1). Extra-biblical accounts also attest Ahab's military influence. In the Mesha inscription, he figures as Omri's son, who during half of his kingdom was able to secure Medeba.³⁵ In the annals of Shalmanaser III, Ahab is mentioned as part of the coalition of twelve kings who fought against the Assyrian king at Qarqar. In the account, Ahab is credited as a major player in the battle, having two hundred chariots and 10,000 soldiers.³⁶

The military strength of Ahab combined with his treaties with Phoenician and Judean kings and the absence of internal struggles for power provided Ahab with the

³³ There is no definitive evidence of the existence of Jezebel outside the biblical account. In fact, “the only possible reference to Jezebel in contemporary records is a seal from this time period inscribed with the name ‘yzbl.’ It is a large seal featuring Egyptian motifs accompanied by the Phoenician inscription of the name.” Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1 Kgs 16:31. See more on Jezebel in: Patricia Dutcher-Walls, *Jezebel: Portraits of a Queen* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2004); Stephanie Wyatt, “Jezebel, Elijah, and the Widow of Zarephath: A Menage a Trois that Estranges the Holy and Makes the Holy the Strange,” JSOT 36 (2012): 435–458.

³⁴ Ethbaal, who is known as the king of Tyre and Sidon, ruled Phoenicia during 887–856 BC. He was a priest of Astarte that overthrew the house of Hiram. He is credited with the unification of the major Phoenician cities and a vigorous increase of trade opportunities. The king is mentioned by Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* 8.224. Some suggest that his name means “Baal exists.” See: Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 325; Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, 2nd ed., WBC 12, (Dallas: Word, 2003), 204; Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 206. A complete survey of Ethbaal and his kingdom can be found in H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre: From the Beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.E. until the Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C.E.* (Jerusalem: Schocken Institute, 1973), 129–166.

³⁵ “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” trans. A. Leo Oppenheim (ANET, 320).

³⁶ “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” trans. A. Leo Oppenheim (ANET, 278–279). See also: Douglas Mangum, ed., *Lexham Context Commentary: Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 1 Ki 16:29–19:21.

opportunity of prosperity evinced by his construction projects.³⁷ In fact, Felipe Carlos Yafe suggests that “the establishment of Omri’s royal house appears to have inaugurated an era of expansion for the Northern reign comparable in its splendor only to that of the days of Solomon.”³⁸ In his concluding summary, the biblical narrator underlines the king’s capabilities as a builder (1 Kgs 22:39). Archeological findings seem to confirm that Ahab followed up his father’s building program. He both fortified Samaria and embellished it with abundant use of ivory as mentioned in 1 Kgs 22:39.³⁹ Besides Samaria, several other cities were completed or developed into fortifications by Ahab. Among them were Hazor, Dan, En Gev and Megiddo.⁴⁰

³⁷ For instance, the alliance with Phoenicians brought mutual benefits (although disastrous to Israel’s spiritual health). “Israel imported Lebanon cedar wood and other merchandise garnered from the ends of the known world of that day; Israel enjoyed revenue from valuable trade routes to a larger clientele further south and east, and from supplying Phoenicia with grain and olive oil. Tyre also welcomed, as did Samaria, an ally with the growing power of Damascus on the east. Thus, just as Tyre had been David’s link with the world of trade and international ports, so it was for the house of Omri as well.” Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 326.

³⁸ Felipe Carlos Yafe, “The Case of Naboth’s Vineyard (1 Kings 21): An Historical, Sociological and Literary Study” (PhD diss., The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1991), 295.

³⁹ Kaiser highlights that Ahab “resumed the building programs of his father Omri. As the excavations at Samaria revealed, he surrounded the acropolis of the royal quarter of the capital with an impressive casemate wall (a double wall with partitions between the two walls forming rooms inside the walls). On the north side, the wall was six feet thick on the outer wall and four feet thick on the inner wall, with twenty-three feet of space in between the two. A large number of ivory plaques and fragments were found throughout the city, suggesting that the ivory palace criticized by the prophet Amos (3:15; 6:4) did in fact exist. The ivories were used as inlays in paneling and furniture, reflecting the artistic conventions of Egypt and Mesopotamia.” Walter, *A History of Israel*, 326. This fact may be related to the prophetic critique in Amos 3:15 and 6:4.

⁴⁰ Thiel observes how strategic these cities were saying that “Hazor, Dan, and En Gev protected the land against the Aramean threat; Megiddo shielded the plain of Jezreel against incursions from the coastal plain, especially by the Philistines; while Jericho (1 Kgs 16:34) apparently served as protection against possible Moabite attacks, or as a base of operations in South Cis-Jordan.” Thiel, “Ahab (Person),” *ABD* 1:103.

Notwithstanding his achievements, the biblical narrator has almost nothing to say about them just as it happened with his father, it is to Ahab's spiritual failure that the reader is drawn. The account of his kingdom is divided as follows:

Introductory regnal formula 1 Kgs 16:29
Theological reflection 1 Kgs 16:30–34
The Elijah cycle and Ahab's actions 1 Kgs 17:1–22:38
Concluding summary 1 Kgs 22:39
Royal Epilogue 1 Kgs 22:40

The account of Ahab's kingdom is unique due to the lengthy deviation formed by the Elijah narrative in 1 Kgs 17:1–22:38. While it is true that Elijah is the focus here, through the king's actions and interaction with the prophet the complex character of Ahab is developed. Different from Elijah, Ahab's characterization is revealed not only by showing but also by telling. The narrator constructs the king's characterization in three different ways: narrator intrusion by which he judges Ahab based on the theology of Deuteronomy (telling); Ahab's dialogues scattered throughout his narratives (showing); and finally, his actions (showing). In the following exegesis, this characterization will be in focus only when he intersects with Elijah.

The introductory regnal formula (1 Kgs 16:29), the concluding summary (1 Kgs 22:39), and the royal Epilogue (1 Kgs 22:40), follow the formulaic expression found in the account of other kings. They are important though, since the information helps the reader to situate Ahab historically.

The last aspect to be considered in this historical prologue to Elijah's ministry is the narrator's theological reflection on Ahab. Indeed, there are two major direct theological considerations of Ahab. One is found in 1 Kgs 21:25–26 and is prompted by the episode involving Naboth's vineyard. This will be reviewed later in the course of this

chapter. The theological reflection found in 1 Kgs 16:30–34 summarizes and somehow forms the background in which the narrator invites the reader to grasp the narratives of Ahab and Elijah.

The narrator indicates two major sins that cause Ahab to surpass any other king in degree of iniquity, including his father (v. 30) and Jeroboam (v. 31a): his marriage with a non-Israelite princess called Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal the king of the Sidonians (v. 31b) and his furtherance of the widespread idolatry as evidenced by the building of a temple and an altar to Baal in Samaria (v. 32)⁴¹ and the erection of the Asherah or sacred pole (v. 33a). Such sins lead Ahab to earn “the most violent reproof on the part of Dtr.”⁴²

Although the role of Jezebel in the development of idolatry will become clearer as the narrative unfolds, the cause-and-effect relationship between the intermarriage with foreign women and idolatry is clear. At this point the narrator establishes a notorious parallel between Ahab and Solomon, who also gave himself up to idolatry following intermarriages prohibited by the Torah. Such cause-and-effect relationship is clear in Deut 7:3–5 where God warns that this kind of intermarriage would lead to idolatry. It is quite interesting to note how this passage in Deuteronomy is connected both with the actions of Ahab and Solomon.

Table 3. Deuteronomy, Solomon, and Ahab

Deuteronomist commandment	Solomon’s disobedience	Ahab’s disobedience
Prohibition of intermarriage (Deut 7:3)	Intermarriage with foreign women (1 Kgs 11:1–2)	Intermarriage with Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31b)

⁴¹ “Excavations in Samaria have not yet located any remains from Ahab’s temple of Baal.” Victor Harold Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1 Ki 16:32.

⁴² DeVries, *1 Kings*, 205.

Table 3 — *Continued.*

Consequent idolatry (Deut 7:4)	Consequent idolatry (1 Kgs 11:4–5)	Consequent idolatry (1 Kgs 16:31c)
Command to destroy places of worship to other gods: altars and Asherah poles (Deut 7:5)	Construction of a high place for Chemosh and Molech (1 Kgs 11:7)	Construction of the altar for Baal and the Asherah pole (1 Kgs 16:32–33a)

In each context prohibited intermarriages lead to idolatry including the actual construction of idolatrous “sacred” spaces. The gravity of this sin is highlighted in the Deuteronomist legislation wherein God clarifies that such actions would demand a “quick destruction” (Deut 7:4). In both cases, severe judgments follow, even though they are postponed until the next generation.

This historical prologue to Elijah’s ministry ends with a side note regarding the rebuilding of Jericho. The note is laconic and it is not clear about Ahab’s involvement. However, its placement here may indicate at least the king’s connivance in the narrator’s eyes. Also, the actual cause of the death of Hiel’s children is not clear. In any case, whether natural, accidental or resulting from foundational sacrifice,⁴³ it is evident that the

⁴³ Foundation sacrifices involved offerings usually with dedicatory purpose when any important building enterprise was initiated or concluded. Usually, archeologists have found animals, domestic items or even human remains intentionally concealed or deposited in domestic buildings. See: Ceri Houlbrook and Davies Owen, “Foundation Sacrifice: The Survival of a Problem in Archaeology, Folklore, and History” in *Building Magic*, PHSWM (London, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 21–33. The idea that 1 Kgs 16:34 refers to a foundation sacrifice is advanced for instance by Montgomery and DeVries. See: Montgomery, *Kings*, 287–288 and DeVries, *1 Kings*, 205. Others like E. V. Hulse defended the view that the children succumbed to the contaminated waters of the Jericho oasis. E. V. Hulse, “Joshua’s Curse and the Abandonment of Ancient Jericho: Schistosomiasis as a Possible Medical Explanation,” *Medical History* 15 (1971): 376–386. The information in the text seems to be enough only to determine the meaning of their death but not the cause. In recent years, archeological studies have shown that the practice of foundation sacrifices were very rare event in antiquity. See: Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 175. See more on foundations sacrifices in George A. Barton, “Corners,” in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* ed. James Hastings, John A. Selbie, and Louis H. Gray, (Edinburgh, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908–1926), 120. Seán O. Súilleabháin, “Foundation Sacrifices,” *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 75 (1945): 45–52.

narrator interprets it as a fulfillment of Joshua's curse on anyone who would rebuild the city (Jos 6:26).

The theological function of this aside note will be explored in chapter 3. At this point, it suffices to say that it compounds with the previous theological assessment of the narrator's portrayal of a retrogression process wherein Israel is making the land increasingly similar to Canaan before the conquest.

Summary and Implications

There is no intention here to provide an exegetical exploration of 1 Kgs 16:21–34. But the importance of these verses for the subsequent exegesis resides in the fact that they provide the necessary historical background to the appearance of Elijah. The previous review shows how crucial were those times to which Elijah was called to minister.

Under Omri, the Northern kingdom finally saw a dynasty being established. In his new capital, the king managed to forge alliances and advance his project to insert Israel in the mainstream cultural milieu of the ANE. Through his political programs he was able to institute some relative stability that in its turn brought prosperity to the Northern kingdom as never before seen.

Omri's successful agenda is kept by his son Ahab, who ascends to the throne peacefully. Even though Ahab faces more tumultuous geopolitical movements with neighboring Syria becoming a major threat and the reemergence of Assyria in the horizon, he is able to keep an audacious project of construction and rehabilitation of cities and fortifications as well as to maintain his military relevance, as also attested by extrabiblical sources.

However, this progress exacted from the Northern kingdom a heavy spiritual toll. Particularly harmful was the alliance with the Sidonians that the marriage between Ahab and Jezebel apparently sealed. The union resulted in an institutionalized idolatry patronized by the royal family and assimilated by the great majority of the Israelites.

Based on the theological perspective of Deuteronomy, the Northern kingdom is then at the brink of destruction. At this point, the material prosperity of Israel is misleading. The same dynamics between prosperity and sin found in Solomon are present here. In the face of the spiritual bankruptcy of Omri and Ahab, their secular success is ignored by the narrator. The prospect in the end of chapter 16 is clear: secular success is accompanied by spiritual apathy. If nothing changes, the Northern kingdom is about to face divine punishment and the people and their leaders seem to be unaware of the danger. It is for this decisive time that Elijah is called. The drought introduced in chapter 17 will be the first sign that things are not good.

First Scene: From Samaria to Zarephath (1 Kings 17)

Preliminary observations

1 Kgs 17 is part of the Elijah–Elisha cycle that is located in the central part of the book of Kings. Therefore, based on its structure or its literary place, it is not an overstatement to affirm that this narrative summarizes and highlights the main theological aspects of the book. This is clear from the chiasmic structure below:

- A Solomon/United Monarchy (1 Kgs 1:1–11:25)
- B Jeroboam/Rehoboam; division of kingdom (1 Kgs 11:26–14:31)
- C Kings of Judah/Israel (1 Kgs 15:1–16:22)
- D Omride dynasty; rise and fall of Baal cult in Israel and Judah (1 Kgs 16:23–2 Kgs 12)
- C' Kings of Judah/Israel (2 Kgs 13–16)
- B' Fall of Northern Kingdom (2 Kgs 17)

A' Kingdom of Judah (2 Kgs 18–25)⁴⁴

Its place in the chiastic structure of 1 and 2 Kings and the exceptional length of the section dealing with the Omride dynasty including its interactions with prophets such as Elijah (“out of proportion to the period of narrated time – eighteen chapters for about forty years”)⁴⁵ draw attention to the importance of this block of events.

Chapter 17 introduces Elijah rather bluntly. Indeed, “the beginning of the Elijah cycle will seem familiar—a prophet confronts a king with a word from Yahweh (1 Kgs 17.1). But nothing that has gone before quite prepares one for what follows.”⁴⁶ As a prophet, Elijah carried out his activities in the Northern Kingdom. He is a key character in the book⁴⁷ and an “important figure in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions.”⁴⁸ In

⁴⁴ Michael Hagan, “First and Second Kings” in *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House 1993), 148.

⁴⁵ Hagan, “First and Second Kings,” 149. In fact, there is more material dedicated to the house of Ahab (512 verses) than to the United Kingdom of Solomon (434 verses) and the solo kingdom of Judah (228 verses). Daniel Arnold, *Elie: Entre le Jugement et la Grâce* (Saint Léger, France: Emmaus, 2001), 72. Naturally, it should be kept in mind that much of this material is dedicated to Elijah and Elisha.

⁴⁶ Thomas W. Overholt, “Elijah and Elisha in the Context of Israelite Religion in Prophets and Paradigms,” in *Prophets and Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker*, ed. Stephen Breck Reid, JSOT 229 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 94.

⁴⁷ His name is mentioned 77 times in only 8 chapters (1 Kgs 17 – 2 Kgs 2). Besides, Elijah is the dominant speaker in these chapters. Glover observes that he has 30 speeches with 35 verses; Yahweh has 8 speeches with 11 verses; Obadiah and the widow have 3; Ahab and the servant have 2; and people, Elisha, Jezebel/messenger have 1; and Baal has 0. Neil Glover, “Elijah Versus the Narrative of Elijah,” *JSOT* 30 (2006): 452.

⁴⁸ Amy Balough, “Elijah the Prophet,” Logos edition. Throughout the years, Elijah has received much attention as can be reflected by numerous publications which focus on him: René Voeltzel, *Élie, le Prophète: Ascète, homme politique* (Paris, France: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1972); William Milligan, *Elijah, His Life and Times* (New York, NY; Chicago, IL: Fleming H. Revell, 1890); Arthur W. Pink, *The Life of Elijah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1956); George Fohrer, *Elia* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1968); David Napier, *Word of God, Word of Earth* (Philadelphia, PA: United Church Press, 1976); W. Phillip Keller, *Elijah Prophet of Power* (Waco, TX: Word, 1980); Nelson, “God and the Heroic Prophet,” 93–105; Ronald S. Wallace, *Readings in 1 Kings: An Interpretation Arranged for Personal and Group Bible Study with Questions and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eedmans, 1996), 107–140, 152–160; Raymond B. Dillard, *Faith in the Face of Apostasy: The Gospel according to Elijah & Elisha* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Prebyterian & Reformed, 1999); Charles R. Swindoll, *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility* (Nashville, TN: Word, 2000); Harald Schroeter-Wittke, *Unterhaltung: Praktisch-Theologische Exkursionen Zum Homiletischen Und Kulturellen Bibelgebrauch Im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert Anhand Der Figur Elia*. Friedensauer

the biblical account, the prophet appears almost always in opposition to Omri's dynasty (9th cent. B.C.). In this context, he "is presented as the powerful champion of Yahweh against the royally-patronized worship of Baal."⁴⁹ William L. Kelly highlights how the emblematic nature of his ministry in the wide range of activities including "royal politics, military affairs, natural disasters (i.e., drought), religious practice, and worship all fall within the realm of authority of the prophet."⁵⁰ Therefore, it is not an accident that within Judaism "Elijah became the prototype of the hero—archetype for the Jewish people."⁵¹

Indeed, the significance of this "first of the classical prophets"⁵² in biblical tradition cannot be overstated here. In many ways, Elijah can be considered a prophet par excellence whose traits would be emulated by many subsequent prophets. Jerome T. Walsh highlights three of these traits: "a miracle worker whose word of power can produce wealth or woe; a powerful intercessor for individuals or the whole people; and [a divine spokesperson confronting] the king with condemnation for religious infidelity and for social injustice."⁵³ According to Peter Leithart, "the ministries of Elijah

Schriftenreihe: Reihe C Musik--Kirche--Kultur 4 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2000); Walter Brueggemann, *Testimony to Otherwise: The Witness of Elijah and Elisha* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2001); Dave Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly: An Exposition of the Book of First Kings* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2002): 197–284, 301–316. Michael S. Moore, *Faith under Pressure: A Study of Biblical Leaders in Conflict* (Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood, 2003).

⁴⁹ Jerome T. Walsh, "Elijah (Person)," *ABD* 2:463. About the relationship between prophetism and Baalism in Israel see: Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, NAC 8 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman P, 1995), 210-212; Patricia J. Berlyn, "Elijah's Battle for the Soul of Israel," *JBQ* 40: (2012): 55; Auld, *Life in Kings*, 117–140.

⁵⁰ William L. Kelly, "Elijah Cycle," *LDB*, Logos edition.

⁵¹ Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism*, 197.

⁵² David Napier, *Word of God, Word of Earth*, 12.

⁵³ Walsh, "Elijah," 2:464.

and Elisha mark an epochal shift in the focus of Yahweh's work with Israel his people."⁵⁴

While "Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and was the mediator of the Sinai Covenant [.] Elijah was the prophet who saved the Israelite faith in the greatest peril it had to face between the days of Moses and the Exile."⁵⁵

In chapter 17, three scenes follow Elijah's introduction in verse 1. In each one of them "he confronts an increasingly more difficult problem which must be solved."⁵⁶ They are organized in a parallel structure that opens and closes with the use of the words דָּבַר and פָּה (17:1, 24). This resumptive element forms the boundaries of the literary unity of chapter 17.

In 17:1 Elijah addresses Ahab: "neither dew nor rain except at my word" (lit. at the mouth of my word - לְפִי דְבָרִי).

A The word of the Lord came to Elijah (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר) (17:2)

B Command to leave (17:3) (לֵךְ)

C Promise of sustenance (17:4) (לֶכְלֶכֶלֶךְ)

D Obedience (17:5) (וַיִּלְךָ וַיַּעַשׂ)

E Fulfilment (17:6)

F Complication: drought worsens (no water) – death motif (17:7) (וַיְהִי מִקֶּץ יָמִים)

A' The word of the Lord came to Elijah (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר) (17:8)

B' Command to leave (17: 9a) (לֵךְ)

C' Promise of sustenance (17:9b) (לֶכְלֶכֶלֶךְ)

D' Obedience (17:10a) (וַיִּלְךָ)

E' Fulfilment (17:10b-16)

F' Complication: death of the widow's child (no breath) – death motif (17:17-26)
(וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה)

⁵⁴ Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 209. According to Ronald Allen, "the extensive section of the book of Kings describing the reign of Ahab likely depends not on the infamy of the king but on the greatness of Elijah, who was the prophet of Yahweh in Israel's darkest hour." Ronald Barclay Allen, "Elijah the Broken Prophet," *JETS* 22 (1979): 193.

⁵⁵ H. H. Rowley, *Men of God: Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy* (London, U.K.: Nelson, 1963) 37.

⁵⁶ House, *1, 2 Kings*, 214.

G 17:24 The widow addresses Elijah: “you are a man of God and the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth” (אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים אָתָּה וּדְבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אֱמֶת).

As the structure above shows, the material in 1 Kgs 17 is organized in a parallel panel where each element of the first part meets its equivalent in the second (ABCDEF/A'B'C'D'E'F').⁵⁷ Each panel (A/A') begins with the known formula וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו (lit. “the word of the Lord happened to Elijah saying”), which often introduces the divine discourse to a prophet. The word comes in the form of a command involving geographical displacement (B/B') and the use of the imperative of הֲלַךְ. The command is followed by the promise of sustenance through God's unconscious agents (C/C').⁵⁸ Obviously, Elijah's obedience involves geographical displacement (D/D') that leads the prophet farther and farther from Samaria.⁵⁹ Such movement assumes significance as it attests to God's sovereignty outside the limits of Israel and Judah. The account of the fulfilment of God's promises is verbatim in both parts of the panel (E/E'). In fact, the unflinching word of the Lord is one of the main theological themes of the book.

⁵⁷ My structural analysis indicates that the passage is more than a haphazard and sloppy agglomeration of ancient traditions that were put together unmethodically by an incautious editor as suggests the analysis of Mordechai Cogan, Burke O. Long and Simon J. DeVries. See: Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 10 (New Haven, CT; London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 2008); Burke O. Long, *1 Kings with an Introduction to Historical Literature*, FOTL 9 (Grand Rapids, MI Eerdmans, 1984); DeVries, *1 Kings*. On the literary logic of this section see: Cohn, “The Literary Logic of 1 Kings 17–19,” 333–350.

⁵⁸ Note that in both cases the language is the same וַאֲתֵּהֱעֲרַבִּים צִוִּיתִי לְכַלְכֵּלְךָ שָׁם (“and I commanded the ravens to sustain you there”) (v. 3) and צִוִּיתִי שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה לְכַלְכֵּלְךָ (“I commanded there a widow to sustain you”) (v. 9). As the narrative indicates the woman seems to be as conscious as the ravens about the divine order.

⁵⁹ Even the choice of refuge for the prophet involves God's sovereignty over nature. Walsh remarks: “A ‘wadi’ is a stream that flows only during the wet season—hardly an auspicious hiding place during a drought!” Jerome Walsh, *1 Kings*, BO (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), 227.

The last part of the panel structure presents a complication that involves the death motif (de-creation). In the first case (F), the drying up of the wadi (גַּחַל) represents a new threat to the prophet's life and demands quick action. In the second case (F'), it is the death of the widow's boy, which apparently is not related to the drought, that demands the prophet's action. It is interesting to notice that in both cases God's miraculous intervention does not prevent the rising of an additional and unexpected crisis. Both crises lead the narrative to its climax: the resuscitation of the boy and the subsequent confession of the widow. The repetition highlights the move from the word of Yahweh to its fulfilment.

Another interesting aspect of the literary structure of the chapter is the resumptive use of דְּבַר ("word") and פֶּה ("mouth"), which appear in 1 Kgs 17:1, 24 (see above), to encompass three small narratives (v. 2–6; 7–16; 17–24). Each one of them illustrates and in this way establishes Elijah as אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים ("man of God"). Since the prophet is introduced without presentation in verse 1, what seems to be a mere human affirmation becomes the true word of God confirmed by God's acts through the hand of Elijah.⁶⁰

However, it is the way the narrator characterizes the special relationship between God and his prophet that can be considered the most distinct facet of 1 Kgs 17. In the chapter, there is an intentional interplay between Yahweh and Elijah. In other words, the narrator merges their actions in a way that it is not always possible to discern who is

⁶⁰ The structural analysis indicates the inherent connection between the three episodes that are chronologically and thematically arranged. Based on the final form of the text it seems difficult to agree with Hermann Gunkel when he affirms that the three episodes are "originally independent stories, inserted here by the narrator of the whole circle in order to fill up the three years of famine." Gunkel, *Elijah, Yahweh, and Baal*, 11. Additionally, it is evident that the narrator does not need material to "fill up" any given time between different episodes. He is the "owner" of time and can, so to say, manipulate it how he feels convenient or as he is inspired.

acting. In addition to that, there is a close parallel between the actions and roles of Yahweh and Elijah where the prophet is for the widow who God is for the prophet. It is not an accident that in the history of interpretation, some rabbis have accused “Elijah of overidentifying with Yahweh, or, at least, with *his* image of Yahweh.”⁶¹

Elijah’s First Appearance and the Announcement of the Drought (1 Kgs 17:1)

Text-syntactical Organization⁶² and Translation

[<Co> אל אהאב]	[<Su><ap><sp> מתשבי גלעד / התשבי / אליהו]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]	WayX 1Kgs 17:01
	[<Su><ap> אלהי ישראל / יהוה]	[<PC> חי]		AjC1 1Kgs 17:01
	[<Co> לפניו]	[<Pr> עמדתי]	[<Re> אשר]	xQt0 1Kgs 17:01
[<Su> טל ומטר]	[<Ti> השנים האלה]	[<Pr> יהיה]	[<Cj> אם]	xYqX 1Kgs 17:01
	[<Aj> לפי דברי]	[<Cj> כי אם]		NmC1 1Kgs 17:01

And Elijah the Tishbite from the sojourners of Gilead said to Ahab, “As Yahweh, the God of Israel before whom I stand, lives there shall be no rain these years except at the mouth of my word.”

Delimitation

The account of Ahab’s kingdom is suddenly interrupted by the introduction of Elijah. Curiously, such an interruption is more thematical than syntactical since 17:1 starts with wayyqtol ויאמר (“he said”). At this point, the narrative mainline suspended by the aside note about the building of Jericho and the fulfillment of Joshua’s curse in 1Kgs 16:34 is resumed. Elijah’s narrative interrupts the sequence of kingly successions

⁶¹ Stuart Lasine. “Matters of Life and Death: The Story of Elijah and the Widow’s Son in Comparative Perspective,” *BI* 12 (2004), 133.

⁶² The list of abbreviations with all the codes found in the display of the text-syntactical analysis can be found in Appendix A. The text-syntactical analysis of these passages displayed here was generated by Oliver Glanz from the ETCBC data base.

providing “a pause to consider the *prophetic counterforce* in Israel’s life.”⁶³ It is indeed “a declaration of war.”⁶⁴ The only glimpse about Elijah’s identity is provided in verse 1, which is the focus of the following section.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The first surprising aspect about Elijah is his abrupt appearance in chapter 17.⁶⁵ In this regard he is unique. In Kings, the narrator always introduces prophets as such before giving them voice. From the thirteen prophets mentioned in Kings, eight are identified by a name. Of these, four have the designation “prophet” or “man of God” in apposition to their names when first referred to (Nathan in 1 Kgs 1:8; Ahijah in 1 Kgs 11:29; Shemaiah in 1 Kgs 12:22; Jonah in 2 Kgs 14:25). The other three are introduced narratively as prophets (Jehu in 1 Kgs 16:1; Micaiah in 2 Kgs 22:6; Elisha in 1 Kgs 19:15). However, no prophetic credentials are found until verse 2 where the expression וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו (“and the word of Yahweh happened to him”) appears.⁶⁶ In order to avoid this awkward and unusual presentation, the Old Greek (henceforth OG) translator adds the word ὁ προφήτης, “the prophet,” right after Elijah’s name.

⁶³ Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 207. Emphasis added in the original.

⁶⁴ Wallace, *Readings in 1 Kings*, 107.

⁶⁵ The abruptness of Elijah’s appearance in 17:1 has led some interpreters to think the original beginning of the narrative of chapters 17–19 is missing. Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 159.

⁶⁶ The expression, which appears 101 times in the BH, is often used to introduce a divine discourse to a prophet. See more about the expression in the analysis of verse 2 in the next scene. In the case of Jehu, for instance, the expression comes after the prophet’s actions (1Kgs 16:1).

Although some interpreters like Patterson and Austel have named 17:1 as “Elijah’s call,”⁶⁷ there is no call at all. It is only while having in mind Ahab’s sins in the backdrop that a reader first gets a clue that Elijah is a prophet announcing judgment against the king. Since there is no introductory formula to divine speech until verses 2 and 8, at least from the immediate narrative perspective, “Elijah’s proclamation of the drought (...) is not attributed to YHWH, but rather to Elijah.”⁶⁸ In this sense, “in view of the bold claims Elijah makes in this verse, the narrator’s silence about his religious authority is striking.”⁶⁹ In fact, “Elijah appears from an unknown location and (like a neo-Melchizedek) with no parents. ... there seems to be little human about him... . [As] Yahwistic *übermensch*, ... he establishes no credentials for himself, there are no miraculous birth narratives, no battles won, no patriarchal heritage: he is simply the man who speaks.”⁷⁰

Elijah is identified by the apposition **הַתִּשְׁבִּי מִתְּשֻׁבֵי גִלְעָד** (“the Tishbite from the sojourners of Gilead”). Since only Elijah is identified in the Biblical Hebrew (henceforth BH) by the gentilic **תִּשְׁבִּי** (cf. 1 Kgs 21:17, 18; 2 Kgs 1:3, 8; 9:36), the term itself does not provide a useful clue about Elijah’s origin. Some interpreters have connected **הַתִּשְׁבִּי** with

⁶⁷ Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: 1 Samuel – 2 Kings*, rev. ed. , ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 770.

⁶⁸ Hee-Sook Bae, “Elijah’s Magic in the Drought Narrative: Form and Function,” *BN* 169 (2016): 13.

⁶⁹ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 226.

⁷⁰ Glover, “Elijah Versus the Narrative of Elijah,” 452. In his study the character of Elijah and its relationship with the Deuteronomist theology, Roy L. Heller supposes that Elijah mysterious introduction reflect the hesitancy and suspicion of the Deuteronomist attitude toward the prophets (until proven otherwise). Roy L. Heller, *The Character of Elijah and Elisha and the Deuteronomist Evaluation of Prophecy: Miracles and Manipulation*, LHBOTS 671 (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury; T&T Clark, 2018), 44. However, the narrative analysis of Elijah as a whole prevents such a conclusion.

the next noun revocalizing תְּשׁוּבֵי (“sojourners”) into תִּשְׁבֵי (“Tishbe”). In fact, the oldest witness to this interpretation is found in the OG which diverges from the Masoretic Text (henceforth MT) rendering תְּשׁוּבֵי as Θεσβων. (“Tishbe”). Today, biblical versions are divided into those following the Greek rendering (e.g. ESV, NIV, GNB, LEB, NET, NRSV) and others the MT vocalization (NKJV, NASB, ASV, ERV, HCSB, LUT1921, LS1910, BEARA, CSB).⁷¹

At least three reasons seem to favor the MT vocalization. First, if תְּשׁוּבֵי is a noun, the context requires that it is in construct relationship with the following noun גִּלְעָד (“Tishbe of Gilead”). Although the use of a noun as an apposition to another noun is a common phenomenon in the BH,⁷² the identification of Tishbe as Gilead is quite unlikely. There is no example in the BH of a proper noun in construct.⁷³ Thus, both grammar and context conspire against the reading “Tishbe.” Second, despite the fact that the preposition מִן is used a few times following a proper noun to further specify a character like in וּבִרְזִלֵי הַגִּלְעָדִי מִרְגְּלִים (“Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim”), the word to which the preposition is attached is never in construct.⁷⁴ Third, Tishbe is never mentioned again in the HB. Some have suggested that the proper noun is likely to be identified with a town in Naphtali that receives the same name in Tobit 1:2.⁷⁵ Although

⁷¹ Another ancient and important witness is the Targum that reads תוֹתָב (settler).

⁷² Around 885 cases. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Testing Two Proper Names in Constructus](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

⁷³ See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Testing Two Proper Names in Constructus](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

⁷⁴ The other cases are Gera the son of the Benjaminite from Bahurim (1 Kgs 2:8); Benaiah the Pirathonite from the sons of Ephraim (1 Chr 27:14); Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites from the Merarites (2 Chr 34:12).

⁷⁵ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Tishbe, Tishbite,” *BEB* 2071.

these grammatical and lexical observations are not individually conclusive, it seems that when all are taken in consideration the MT vocalization (תֹּשֶׁבִי) becomes preferable.

If this is case, the reading “from the sojourners of Gilead” should be kept. The word תֹּשֶׁב appears only 14 times in the HB. The word means “sojourner, resident alien, (temporary) inhabitant, or settler.”⁷⁶ In Lev 25, where half of the occurrences are found, the status of תֹּשֶׁב as “temporary, landless wage earner”⁷⁷ becomes clear. Due to their lack of Israelite “citizenship” they are prohibited to eat the Passover (Exod 12:45) and they do not enjoy the same protection of a native Israelite against slavery (Lev 25:45). However, as a resident alien, a תֹּשֶׁב had access to cities of refuge (Num 35:15).⁷⁸ The implication for the identity of Elijah is clear: the passage may imply that Elijah is of non-Israelite descent.⁷⁹ In this case, he is counted among the “immigrants or foreigners dwelling in the territory bounded by the Jabbok and Yarmuk,”⁸⁰ namely, Gilead.⁸¹ Other scholars suppose that “Elijah belonged to the sect of Rechabites, who were living in southern Palestine as nomadic shepherds and had always been distinguished by their

⁷⁶ David J. A. Clines, “תֹּשֶׁב,” *DCH* 8: 616.

⁷⁷ Walter C. Kaiser, “תֹּשֶׁב,” *TWOT* 412.

⁷⁸ In the HB, the word appears in parallel with זָר, גֵּר, שְׂכִיר, and בְּנֵי-נֶכֶר. See: A. H. Konkel, “תֹּשֶׁב” *NIDOTTE* 4: 284.

⁷⁹ From textual criticism, the fact that the MT reflects a more difficult reading (Elijah, one of the greatest prophets in Israel, may not be an Israelite) reinforces the possibility of its originality.

⁸⁰ Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, AOTC 9 (Nottingham, U.K.; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity, 2014), 231.

⁸¹ Gilead is located on the east side of Jordan River that became part of the Israelite inheritance after the exodus. Ottosson observes that “whatever usage the name Gilead may have in the OT—as *heros eponymos* of a tribe (Num 26:29; Judg 11:1) to whom Machir was the father (Josh 17:1; 1 Chr 2:21, 23; 7:14), as the designation of a “tribe” (Judg 5:17; Hos 6:8), or as the name of a territory (Gen 37:25)—it is always connected with the region to the E of the Jordan. The inhabitants are often called Gileadites (Num 26:30; Judg 12:4–5). Magnus Ottosson, “Gilead (Place),” *ABD* 2:1020.

special fervour for the God of Israel and by their simple, almost ascetic way of life.”⁸²

However, given the lack of additional information, there is no way to choose dogmatically between these possibilities. At any rate, considering the fact the Elijah may be regarded as the apex of biblical prophetism, the fact that he may not be of Israelite descent is startling.

Elijah’s speech to Ahab, for which no setting is provided, is another important aspect of verse 1. The expression *חַי־יְהוָה* (“alive is Yahweh”) opens an oath with an exclamatory formula.⁸³ The actual content of the oath is introduced in the following clause initiated by the conjunction *וְ*; in this case the absence of dew or rain during the subsequent years.⁸⁴ Curiously, the predicate complement containing the word *חַי* in relation to a proper name (as in *חַי־יְהוָה*) followed by a clause introduced by a conjunctive phrase containing the word *וְ* is exclusively found in Samuel (10x), Kings (12x), and in Jeremiah (2x), i.e., what some call Deuteronomistic literature. In addition, the expression is either connected with the monarchy (Saul, David, Zedekiah)⁸⁵ or with the prophets Elijah and Elisha.⁸⁶

⁸² Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism*, 6.

⁸³ Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006), 583.

⁸⁴ The mention of “dew” here may also be connected with the polemics against Baal. Ottosson remarks that “It has been suggested that dew in Canaanite religion was a kind of symbol for the fairly undifferentiated concept of the renewal of life.” Ottosson, “Elijah’s visit to Zarephath,” 190. He adds that “with the rain motif stressed in 1 Kings 18, it is not impossible that the revival of the widow’s son is connected with the dew, the symbol of resuscitation. If this is the case, of course, we must reject the common idea that 1 Kings 17.17–24 is a secondary insertion based upon the traditions of Elisha. Ottosson, “Elijah’s visit to Zarephath,” 191.

⁸⁵ Saul (1 Sam 14:39; 28:10), David (1 Sam 25:34; 26:10; 2 Sam 14:11), Zedekiah (Jer 38:16). The phrase is used by Saul’s army to the king (1 Sam 14:39), Jonathan to Saul (1 Sam 19:6), Ittai to David (2 Sam 15:21).

⁸⁶ Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:10) and Elisha (2 Kgs 2:2, 4, 6; 3:14; 5:16). The phrase is used by the

The tetragrammaton is qualified by the apposition אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (“God of Israel”) and the relative clause אֲשֶׁר עִמָּדָתִי לְפָנָיו (“before whom I stand”). Although יהוה is often qualified by the apposition אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,⁸⁷ the proper noun יהוה is qualified by the relative clause אֲשֶׁר עִמָּדָתִי לְפָנָיו only here. A brief analysis of the valence of the verb עמד reveals that when the preposition לְ governs its complement the literal meaning of standing before someone is more often triggered (Gen 43:15; Exod 9:10; 1 Kgs 3:15). In addition to that, other meanings potentially triggered by עמד + לְ are “to serve” (1 Kgs 1:2), “to resist” (Dan 8:4), and “to intercede” (Jer 15:1). In any case, all of these usages derive their meaning from the literal idea of being in the physical presence of someone to either serve or resist them.⁸⁸

Outside Elijah and Elisha’s cycle, the tetragrammaton is the object of the preposition לְ (as is the case here in verse 1) 15 times.⁸⁹ In almost all occurrences the physical presence before the Lord is the case, usually in the context of people standing before the sanctuary or priests serving it.⁹⁰ In Kings, only the spirit at the heavenly council from Micaiah’s vision (1 Kgs 22:21) and the prophets Elijah (1 Kgs 17; 18:15)

widow from Zarephath to Elijah (1 Kgs 17:12), a boy’s mother to Elisha (2 Kgs 4:30), and Geazi to himself regarding the incident of Elisha refusal to accept Naaman’s gift (2 Kgs 5:20). See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Oath Formula](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

⁸⁷ 119 times. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[God of Israel in Apposition to Yahweh](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

⁸⁸ In Deut 10:8 and 2 Chron 29:11 the expression is followed by the infinitive construct לְעִמֵּד.

⁸⁹ Torah: 4x (Lev 9:5; Deut 4:10; 10:8; 19:17); Prophets: 5x (1 Sam 6:20; 1 Kgs 22:21; Jer 7:10, 49:19, 50:44); Writings: 6x (Ps 76:8; 106:23; Ezra 9:15; 2 Chr 20:9; 18:20; 29:11).

⁹⁰ Exceptions are the occurrences found in rhetorical questions (1 Sam 6:20; Jer 49:19, 50:44; Ps 76:8). Even in these cases, the figurative use implies physical presence.

and Elisha (2 Kgs 3:14; 5:16) stand before יהוה. The implications of this distribution will be discussed in chapter 3. However, regarding the meaning of אֲשֶׁר עֲמַדְתִּי לְפָנָיו in 1 Kgs 17:1, it suffices to say that by characterizing God in this way, Elijah affirms that he lives in his presence in a special way. His service, and consequently his oath, derives directly from God to whom the prophet has direct access. In this, the authority of his oath resides.

Nevertheless, the prophet's speech is an oath more than a prophecy. In this sense, 1 Kgs 17:1 "defies classification as to genre." It has no parallels in prophetic literature.⁹¹ Although later in the narrative Elijah is characterized as following Yahweh's direction, the initial lack of explicit prophetic authorization creates confusion regarding the source of authority in Elijah's oath. Is he speaking by himself or by God? Since only God is able to prevent the gathering or pouring down of dew or rain (טל ומטר), the narrator blurs the distinction between Elijah's and God's speech.

An additional evidence of such a blurring of identities is provided by the use of the phrase כִּי אִם-לְפִי דְבָרִי ("except at my word"). The double conjunction כִּי אִם, which can be translated as "except," opens the nominal clause. Interestingly, most nominal clauses opened by כִּי אִם are found in the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic literature (including Jeremiah) with a major concentration in the Former Prophets.⁹² In 1 Kgs 17:1, this clause complements the sense of the oath by establishing the condition by which the land will see rain or dew again, namely, לְפִי דְבָרִי ("the mouth of my word").

⁹¹ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 215.

⁹² See Text-Fabric query results in section "[The Double Conjunction כִּי אִם by Glanz](#)" of my jupyter notebook. Here the close relationship between the Pentateuch and Deuteronomic literature can be seen once again.

A literal rendering of the preposition phrase פִּי דְבָרִי is “the mouth of my word.” A search on the phenomenon through the Hebrew Bible (henceforth HB) shows that with the exception of 1 Kgs 17:1 the construction appears only in the Pentateuch (Gen 43:7; Exod 34:24; Dt 17:10).⁹³ Although the expression may be considered typically Mosaic, its occurrence in 1 Kgs 17:1 is unique. In this passage the noun פִּי is determined by the 1cs pronominal suffix, while in the Pentateuch the noun is determined by the article. Furthermore, while in the Mosaic literature the noun is governed by the preposition עַל, it is governed by the preposition לְ here.⁹⁴ In any case, the use of the expression in 1 Kgs seems to reflect the Mosaic formulation having the same idiomatic thrust. As in the Mosaic literature, the phrase emphasizes the exactness of spoken or written words. In Elijah’s case, nothing but his own word, in fact the expressed word coming from his mouth can reverse the course of the drought.

Lastly, an additional point to be considered here is the referent of the 1cs pronominal suffix in דְבָרִי. It is interesting that apart from the poetic literature (Job,

⁹³ See Text-Fabric query results in section [“Other Occurrences of פִּי דְבָרִי by Glanz”](#) of my jupyter notebook. The noun דְבָרִי is in construct with the noun פֶּה in Jer 9:19; Ps 36:4; Prov 18:4; Eccl 10:12, 13. In these cases the expression “word (s) of mouth” highlights the mouth as the source of speech.

⁹⁴ The preposition לְ governs the noun pi 66 times. From these, 53 times the noun pi is in construct. According to Oliver Glanz, “one can easily observe that L-PH appears usually in idiomatic expression. The strongest distribution has the construction L-PH/-XRB/ rendered ‘by the opening of sword’ (ESV: ‘with the edge of the sword’). Often it carries the meaning of ‘measure’ or ‘amount’ (‘the amount that goes through your mouth’) as in Exod 12:4 ‘And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons;’ according to what each can eat (אִישׁ לְפִי אֶכֶל) ‘you shall make your count for the lamb.’ (ESV) The meaning of ‘measure’/‘amount’/‘proportion’ is also present in constructions with CNH/ as in Lev 25:16; According to the multitude of years (לְפִי | רַב הַשָּׁנִים) ‘thou shalt increase the price thereof; and according to the fewness of years (וּלְפִי מְעוֹט הַשָּׁנִים) ‘thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee.’ (KJV). See Text-Fabric query results in section [“L Governed by the Preposition לְ by Glanz”](#) of my jupyter notebook.

Psalms, Proverbs), the 1cs pronominal suffix in דָּבַר always has God as its referent.⁹⁵

Thus, the use of the expression itself may indicate some blurring of identity between the sender and the sent. However, it is the lack of a previous indication of divine discourse that makes the use of דָּבַר here striking. Since the referent here is Elijah and the word involves the shutting down of the sky preventing dew or rain, we wonder how the prophet could say it by his own initiative. And if he is just quoting God's words or conveying his will (as the rest of history indicates), why does the narrator not make it clear?

As can be seen, the omission of any divine directive to Elijah in the verse 1 or before creates an ambiguity between Yahweh's and Elijah's speech. On one hand, through the ambiguity the narrator leaves the first reader wondering whether Elijah is speaking for himself. The answer is given in the rest of the story and it becomes loudly clear in the widow's speech: דְּבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אֱמֶת: ("the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth"). On the other hand, the blurring between Yahweh and Elijah's acts signals the special relationship that the prophet has with him. The idea that the oath results from Elijah's initiative is denied by the subsequent narrative and prevented by the abundant evidence that in the context of the OT, only God controls the natural elements (including water and fire).⁹⁶ The word of Elijah is none other than the word of God itself.

⁹⁵ The only exceptions are Judg 11:35, Neh 6:12, and 1 Kgs 17:1. The construction appears 57 times in 56 verses throughout the OT. If Job, Psalms and Proverbs are disregarded, 35 out of 38 times God is the referent of the suffix.

⁹⁶ This idea is advanced by Heller who suggests that "Elijah is the one who is in charge of the situation, and he is willing to destroy everything—Israel, Ahab, YHWH's own life—with the drought to assure his own place." Heller, *The Character of Elijah and Elisha*, 49. In order to substantiate his argument, he affirms that "oaths in the Hebrew Bible, and in the History in particular, always occur in contexts where an addressee is either doubtful or reluctant to believe the statement of the speaker." Heller, *The Character of Elijah and Elisha*, 45. The problem is that Heller does not provide any example of this kind of use in the HB. If such a category of oath exists, this is clearly not the case here. Against this idea, Simon writes: "Are we to infer from this conspicuous contrast that the omission of a divine command to appear before Ahab means that Elijah brought such a severe drought on Israel on his own initiative, and

Narrative Features

Three main narrative features of verse 1 should be noted here. First, through the unexpected way in which Elijah is introduced, the narrator hints at the special nature of his prophetic career. With Elisha, Elijah forms the apex of the prophetic activity in the life of Israel. Second, from the very onset the choice of vocabulary by the narrator connects Elijah with the Mosaic tradition. The following narrative will only strengthen such a connection. Finally, in a very careful and skillful way the narrator starts to blur the identities of Yahweh and the prophet. Although this will become clear in the following verses, there are some hints of it already in verse 1.

Structure

The repetition of the words פָּה and דְּבַר in verse 1 (דְּבַרִי לְפִי) and in verse 24 (וַדְּבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִי־יָאֲמַת יְהוָה) seems to constrain the boundaries of a literary block. More than simply delimiting the literary limits of the passage, the widow's confession in verse 24 clarifies the conundrum created by the narrator regarding the source of authority of the oath stated by Elijah in verse 1. The word in the prophet's mouth is the very word of God.

Elijah Seeks Refuge in the Wadi of Ketith (1 Kgs 17:2–7)

Text-Syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Co> אֱלֹהִים] [<Su> דְּבַר יְהוָה] [<Pr> יְהִי] [<Cj>ו] WayX 1Kgs 17:02
[<Pr> לְאֹמַר] | | InfC 1Kgs 17:02

that he was willing to risk so daring an oath on the same basis? The rejection of this hypothesis is more plausible and more in keeping with the personality of Elijah as depicted in the rest of the story, as well as with his explicit statements in his two prayers—one to revive the child (v. 20) and the other for rain (18:36). There are several cases in Scripture where the implementation of a command to deliver a prophecy is not described in so many words (e.g., 1 Kings 21:17–19), and, on the other hand, where the revelatory source of prophetic messages is not recounted (1 Kings 20:22, vis-a-vis verses 13-14).” Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 160.

	[<Co> מזה] [<Pr> לך]				ZIm0 1Kgs 17:03
[<Co> קדמה]	[<sc> לך] [<Pr> פנית] [<Cj>ו]				WQt0 1Kgs 17:03
	[<Co> בנחל כרית] [<Pr> נסתר] [<Cj>ו]				WQt0 1Kgs 17:03
	[<PC> על פני הירדן] [<Re> אשר]				NmCl 1Kgs 17:03
	[<Pr> היה] [<Cj>ו]				MSyn 1Kgs 17:04
	[<Pr> תשתה] [<Co> מהנחל]				xYq0 1Kgs 17:04
	[<Pr> צוית] [<Ob> את הערבים] [<Cj>ו]				WxQ0 1Kgs 17:04
	[<Lo> שם] [<PO> לכלכלך]				InfC 1Kgs 17:04
	[<Pr> ילך] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 17:05
	[<Aj> כדבר יהוה] [<Pr> יעש] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 17:05
	[<Pr> ילך] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 17:05
	[<Co> בנחל כרית] [<Pr> ישב] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 17:05
	[<PC> על פני הירדן] [<Re> אשר]				NmCl 1Kgs 17:05
[<Ti> בבקר]	[<Ob> לחם ובשר] [<Co> לו] [<PC> מביאים] [<Su> הערבים] [<Cj>ו]		Ptcp	1Kgs	17:06
	[<Ti> בערב] [<Ob> לחם ובשר] [<Cj>ו]				Ellp 1Kgs 17:06
	[<Pr> ישתה] [<Co> מן הנחל] [<Cj>ו]				WxY0 1Kgs 17:06
	[<Ti> מקץ ימים] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 17:07
	[<Su> הנחל] [<Pr> ייבש] [<Cj>ו]				WayX 1Kgs 17:07
[<PC> בארץ]	[<Su> גשם] [<Pr> היה] [<Ng> לא] [<Cj> כי]			xQtX 1Kgs	17:07

²The word of Yahweh happened to Elijah saying:

³ Go from this *place*, turn⁹⁷ toward the east, and hide yourself in the wadi of Kerith which is on the face of the Jordan.

⁴ And⁹⁸ from the wadi, you shall drink, and I have commanded ravens to provide for you there.

⁵ And he went and did according to the word of Yahweh. He went and stayed in the wadi of Kerith which is on the face of the Jordan.

⁶ Ravens were bringing⁹⁹ to him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening; and he was drinking¹⁰⁰ from the wadi.

⁹⁷ A ZIm0 is followed immediately by a WQt0 125 times in the HB. Very often, the weqatal assumes imperative force. For instance, see: Gen 44:4; Exod 3:16; Lev 1:2; 1 Sam 22:5, etc....

⁹⁸ The verb וְהָיָה functions as a discourse marker. Merwe highlights that “by using וְהָיָה the speaker or narrator indicates that the events in the (sub) paragraph are part of the mainstream events belonging to the procedure being described or of the future events envisaged.” Christo Van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield, U. K.: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 331.

⁹⁹ The participle often expresses a continuous action whether in the past, present or future. See: Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 162.

¹⁰⁰ In some cases, the yqtol may express actions and events in the past which continue for shorter or longer periods.” Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 147. Waltke and O’Connor speak in terms of the customary non-perfective aspect. They explain that “in the *customary non-perfective* the internal structure of a situation is conceived of as extended over an indefinite period in the time prior to the act of speaking.” Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*

⁷ And at the end of *some* days,¹⁰¹ the wadi dried up for there was no rain in the land.

Delimitation

Elijah's appearance in 17:1 is followed by three short episodes. Each one of them are initiated by the common discourse marker וַיְהִי (verses 2, 8, 17). The prophetic formula וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה (“and the word of Yahweh happened”) prompts the events of the first episode. The episode closes with וַיְהִי in verse 7. Here it marks the transition from the short period of stability to the complication that triggers the next episode when Elijah seeks refuge in Zarephth.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The discourse marker וַיְהִי introduces a new development in the mainstream of the larger narrative. At this point the reader is made aware of Elijah's prophetic role. The expression וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לְאמֹר (“the word of Yahweh happened to him:”), which is more common in Ezekiel (49x) and Jeremiah (35x), appears 110 times in the HB and usually functions as “a technical term for the onset of prophecy.”¹⁰² From the eight occurrences of the phrase in Kings, five launch divine directives to Elijah.¹⁰³ The

(Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 502.

¹⁰¹ Here וַיְהִי functions as a discourse marker introducing a new development in the mainstream of the larger episode. And for this reason, it is not translated.

¹⁰² According to William Lee Holladay “היה does not mean ‘come,’ strictly speaking, but ‘happen, occur,’ and דְבַר does not mean ‘word’ alone but more generally ‘revelatory activity’ (compare the remarks on דְבַר־י in v. 1). The expression is a standard one, not only in superscriptions but in first-person testimony of the prophets as well (e.g., vv. 4, 11, 13, and 2:1) and, before the prophetic literature proper, in Gen 15:1 (JE), 1 Sam 15:10.” William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1–25*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 17.

¹⁰³ The other three times the word appears in the book are 1 Kgs 6:11 (to Solomon); 13:20 (to the lying prophet); and 16:1 (to the prophet Jehu).

discursive mode, which extends from verse 3 to verse 4, is set up in a command and promise pattern that is followed by the obedience and fulfilment pattern in verses 5 and 6.

The first clause of Yahweh's speech (לֵךְ מִזֶּה) contains the imperative of הֵלֵךְ ("to go") followed by a prepositional phrase governed by מִן ("from"). The imperative of הֵלֵךְ appears 251 times in the HB, and out of all these occurrences, in only 49 times the verb הֵלֵךְ has a prepositional phrase as its complement. What is especially interesting is that in only six times is the prepositional phrase introduced by מִן. Further, in all narrative occurrences the command involves a pilgrimage in the context of an "exodus" experience, whether due to adversity or promise (Gen 12:1; 26:16; Exod 10:28; 1 Kgs 17:3).¹⁰⁴ Perhaps, the most significant parallel is the divine command to Abraham to leave his homeland in Gen 21:1.

A similar phenomenon happens with the next clause וּפְנִיתָ לָךְ קִדְמָה ("turn toward the east"). Here the weqatal of פָּנָה ("to turn") has imperative force.¹⁰⁵ From the 57 times that the verb has a prepositional phrase as its complement or supplement, the construction פָּנָה + לְ appears only in Deut 1:40; 2:3 where it is used to describe Israel's wandering in the desert.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it seems reasonable to suppose that through these two first clauses the narrator is tracing a parallel between the past experience of the patriarchs and Israel and that of Elijah.

¹⁰⁴ The phrase appears in a different context outside narrative texts in Amos 6:2 and Prov 14:7. See Text-Fabric query results in section "[Complements of the Imperative of הֵלֵךְ](#)" of my jupyter notebook.

¹⁰⁵ See footnote 97 on page 174.

¹⁰⁶ See Text-Fabric query results in section "[Complements of the Verb פָּנָה](#)" of my jupyter notebook.

The following clause reveals the objective of Yahweh's command: Elijah should hide. Although the reason for that is not spelled out, it seems obvious that the prophet had drawn royal antagonism, and now his life was in danger. A parallel situation involves David in his flight from Saul when he seeks a place to hide (1 Sam 20:5, 24).¹⁰⁷

The exact location of Elijah's refuge is disputed. The word נַחַל is often translated as "wadi" or "stream." According to L. A. Snijders and Heinz-Josef Fabry נַחַל "is the valley cut by a stream, often quite deep. The water, which runs down the mountains with great force during the rainy season (cf. Dt. 9:21), carves a channel in the soil. In contrast to a נַהַר *nāhār*, which never dries up, a *nahal* is a stream that flows only after a rain, but then with great force and volume."¹⁰⁸ If this is the case, the order in itself contains a miraculous element,¹⁰⁹ given that Elijah is bracing for a long period of drought. God's provision to the prophet involves more than the food brought by the ravens but also the miraculous supply of water. It is clear that Elijah's obedience would demand faith in the divine provision. Although Walsh is right to argue that the place is "hardly an auspicious hidden place during a drought," its proximity to the wadi provides a perfectly hidden place where no one would think the prophet would be. The narrator locates the wadi on the east of Jordan.¹¹⁰ If this is the case, it is not unlikely that the brook might be identified

¹⁰⁷ The verb is complemented by a prepositional phrase 34 times in the HB. The most common prepositions are כִּן 28x (e.g., Deut 31:17), בְּ 1x (Jer 16:17), אֶל 5x (1 Sam 20:5, 24; 1 Kgs 17:3; Jer 23:24; Zeph 2:3). In the narrative corpus of the OT only David hides from someone in someplace.

¹⁰⁸ L. A. Snijders and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "נַחַל," *TDOT* 9:335.

¹⁰⁹ Cogan, *I Kings*, 426.

¹¹⁰ Randall W. Younker suggests that "most scholars have preferred to locate the stream on the E bank, arguing that the most obvious reading of 'al-pēnē is 'east of' the Jordan (e.g., Eusebius in the *Onomast.* p. 174). Although Thenius argued for the Wadi Rajib or Ajlun, a number of scholars, beginning with Benjamin of Tudela and including F. Abel (*GP* 1: 484–85) and N. Glueck (*AASOR* 25–28), have preferred the Wadi el-Yubis in the highlands of N Gilead. This suggestion may make the most sense in

“with one of the wadis in Gilead.”¹¹¹ If so, Elijah is coming back to a neighborhood with which he is quite familiar.

God’s commands precede his promises to Elijah. In a similar fashion, the same care provided for Elijah’s predecessors would be granted to him. God would give him water and food in the middle of dry land.¹¹² The fronting of וְאֶת־הָעֲרָבִים (“and the ravens”) highlights the usual instrument by which God would work out his plan. The ravens would “provide” (לְכַלְכֵּלָם) to his prophet. The use of כּוֹל in a divine assurance of provision is initially found in Gen 45:11 when God promises to provide for Jacob and his family in Egypt. The same promise of divine provision for the just is repeated in Ps 55:23. Many years after Elijah, in remembering God's care for the Israellites during their 40-year journey, Nehemiah says that he sustained them (בְּכַלְכֵּלָם) (Neh 9:21).

Verses 5 and 6 present the counterpart of the verses 3 and 4; while verse 5 introduces Elijah’s obedience, verse 6 presents Yahweh’s fulfilment of his promise. The prophet’s obedience is expressed through the command-and-compliance pattern. This pattern designs the phenomenon where the imperative meets its fulfilment expressed by

view of the fact that Elijah was a Gileadite (1 Kgs 17:1). This wadi empties into the Jordan about 8 km S of Pella.” Randall W. Younker, “Cherith, Brook of (Place),” *ABD*, 1:899. Suggesting that עַל־פְּנֵי sometimes means “on the way to,” Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton conclude that “the wadi is one that drains into the Jordan from the west. Matching this description and known for its desolate terrain is the Wadi Kelt. Wadi Swenit runs past Micmash and halfway to Jericho meets the Wadi Kelt, which is the major pass into the region of the Jordan. This would be about thirty miles southeast of Samaria. An alternative in the region of Samaria would be the Wadi Faria, which meets the Jordan at the fords at Adam. Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*: 1 Ki 17:3. In his turn, Wiener suggests that “the valley of Kerith “was presumably in the Aramaic region ruled by Damascus.” Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism*, 8.

¹¹¹ Allen C. Myers, “Cherith, Brook,” *EBD*: 203.

¹¹² Roy E. Gane instructively observes that in this instance Elijah “is a microcosm of the nation, as Samson was when God gave him water from a rock (Judg 15:19). These cases seem typologically significant, prefiguring Christ, who becomes the representative of the nation (cf. Dan 9:24-27) Roy E. Gane, email message to author, October 26, 2021.

the wayyqtol of the same root. Through this literary device (which has been sometimes confused with unnecessary repetition), the narrator reveals the quality of his character's obedience. In the case of 1 Kgs 17, the command expressed by the imperative **לֵךְ** in verse 3 meets the compliance in the wayyqtol **וַיֵּלֶךְ** in verse 5. The repetition is not a naïve narrative pleonasm, but is a way to say that the prophet was completely obedient. This idea is reinforced by the use of the phrase **וַיַּעַשׂ כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה** and the repetition of **וַיֵּלֶךְ** in verse 5.

DeVries considers the repetition of **וַיֵּלֶךְ** in verse 5 a result of dittography.¹¹³

However, a close view of the literary structure of verses 3-6 shows that this does not need to be the case. The table below shows how balanced is the narrator's strategy to organize the material:

Table 4. Narrator's Strategy in 1 Kgs 17:3–5

Command (verse 3)	Obedience (verse 5b)
C1: לֵךְ מִזֶּה וּפְנִיתָ לְךָ קִדְמָה (“go from this place and turn toward the east”)	O1: וַיֵּלֶךְ (“and he went”)
C2: וְנִסְתַּרְתָּ בְּנַחַל כְּרִית (“hide yourself in the wadi of Kerith”)	O2: וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּנַחַל כְּרִית (“and he stayed in the wadi of Kerith”)
Promise (verse 4)	Fulfilment (verse 6)
P1: וְהָיָה מִהַנַּחַל תִּשְׁתֶּה (“and you shall drink from the wadi”)	F1: וּמִן־הַנַּחַל יִשְׁתֶּה (“and he drank from the wadi”)
P2: וְאֶת־הָעֹרְבִים צִוִּיתִי לְכַלְכֵּלְךָ שָׁם (“I have commanded ravens to provide for you there”)	F2: הָעֹרְבִים מְבִיאִים לוֹ לֶחֶם וּבֶשֶׂר בַּבֹּקֶר וּלְחֶם וּבֶשֶׂר בְּעָרֶב (“Ravens were bringing ¹¹⁴ to him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening”)
Obedience Summary (verse 5a)	
וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה (“And he went and did according to the word of Yahweh”)	

¹¹³ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 213.

¹¹⁴ The participle often expresses a continuous action whether in the past, present or future. See: DeVries, *1 Kings*, 162.

Since Elijah's obedience is already made clear by the command-and-compliance pattern, the obedience summary is a non-essential element. However, more than merely emphasizing Elijah's immediate disposition to obey God, its placement here connects Elijah with the past again. The phrase **יְהוָה יִקְדָּבֵר** is another example of the Deuteronomy vocabulary. Most of its occurrences are in Kings (17x out of 26).¹¹⁶ In Joshua, the expression appears in the context of Ai's conquest (Josh 8:8, 27). The people should proceed according "to the word of Yahweh" (**יְהוָה יִקְדָּבֵר**). As they did, they succeeded. Again, the narrator of 1 Kgs 17 seems to be thoughtfully selective in his wording and thereby he shows how Elijah is living Israel's experience. The phrase is later connected with obedience or fulfillment. One interesting aspect of this distribution is that although the expression is often found in Kings as a whole, it reflects obedience only in 1 Kgs 17:5, which is aligned with its use in Joshua.¹¹⁷

Following the preciseness of the command-and-compliance pattern, verse 6 recounts God's fulfilment of his promise to Elijah. Here the ravens' role and the nature of the divine provision are clarified. Again, there is a parallel between the divine provision to Elijah and that of Israel during her wilderness wanderings. In Exod 16, after they complain about the food (the lack of meat and bread) (v. 3), God promises to provide for Israel with meat in the evening and bread in the morning (v. 12). As an indication of

¹¹⁶ See Text-Fabric query results in section "[Fulfillment/Obedience Language: According to the Word of God](#)" of my jupyter notebook.

¹¹⁷ Obedience - Josh 8:8, 27; 1 Kgs 17:5 Jer 13:2 Jonah 3:3; 1 Chr 15:15; 2Chr 35:6; 1 Kgs 12:24; fulfilment - Jer 32:8; 1 Chr 11:10; 1 Kgs 13:26; 14:18; 15:29; 16:12, 34; 17:16; 22:28; 2 Kgs 1:17; 4:44; 7:16; 9:26; 10:17; 14:25, 23:16; 24:2 obedience/fulfillment - 1 Chr 11:2.

God's generosity, Elijah's supply includes meat twice a day, a "rich fare in ancient Palestine."¹¹⁸

Finally, verse 7 marks a transition in the narrative. As the wadi dries up, the stay of Elijah there comes to an end. Although the narrator attributes the adversity to the extended period of drought, it is clear that the cessation of water is under God's control and reflects his intention to move Elijah to Zarephath. Verse 7b advances the drought motif that connects chapter 17 and 18 as a literary unity. The narrator does not provide a clear indication about how much time Elijah remained in this hidden place. The expression מִקֵּץ יָמִים denotes the end of a period of time. Usually, the phrase is accompanied by a numerical (Gen 8:6; 41:1; Num 13:25) or another quantifier element like "many" (Jer 13:6). Having in mind that this is not the case here (cf. Gen 4:3), there is no way to find out how much time Elijah spent there, but it was enough to see the worsening of the drought that finally pushes him to Zarephath.

Narrative Features

The narrator's word choice suggests an intention to trace a parallel between Elijah's experience and that of the patriarchs and the Israelites. The analysis of the distribution of some syntactical structures further supports it. The implication of such an intention will be explored in chapter 3.

¹¹⁸ Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, Interpretation (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1987), 109. William H. Barnes remarks that "These are generous provisions; rarely would meat be eaten daily by the common people, still less, twice a day." William H. Barnes, *1-2 Kings*, CBC 4b (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012), 149.

Another important narrative aspect of this section is the use of repetition.¹¹⁹

Repetition has different purposes in the Hebrew narrative, but here the narrator uses repetition, *inter alia*, to set up the command-and-compliance and promise-and-fulfilment patterns.

In their turn, these patterns put forward the characterization of Elijah and Yahweh. The bold appearance of Elijah in verse 1 is counterbalanced by the passive role of Elijah in verses 2–7. At this point, Elijah is silent and completely submissive to God. There is no questioning or arguing, only obedience. In his turn, Yahweh is characterized as the Lord of creation whose elements obey him as their sovereign. In addition to that, he has not changed. He is still the trustworthy God of the patriarchs whose promises are unfailingly fulfilled.

Structure

The symmetry found in verses 3–6 reveals the narrator’s theological perspective: command and promise are followed by obedience and fulfillment. Such a pattern is the basic blueprint of every covenant in the OT (e.g., Noah, Abraham, Israel, and David). For instance, in the case of Israel, the order to leave Egypt was accompanied by the promise that God would sustain them in their journey toward Canaan. When they finally obeyed God’s commands, they saw the divine promises fulfilled. Again, this structure shows how Elijah’s experience in verses 2-7 resembles that of his ancestors.

¹¹⁹ R. A. Carlson recognizes two kinds of repetition: (i) the kind which is necessary for description (e.g. “Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself” 1 Kgs 18:6b) and (ii) a kind which indicates intention. R. A. Carlson “Élisée – Le Successeur D’Élie,” *VT* 20 (1970): 25. The latter usually has literary purposes. It is this kind of repetition that is in view here and throughout the analysis of narrative features in each pericope.

Elijah Seeks Refuge in Zarephth (1 Kgs 17:8–16)

Text-Syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Co> אליו]	[<Su> דבר יהוה]	[<Pr> יהי]	[<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs	17:08
		[<Pr> לאמר]		InfC	1Kgs	17:08
		[<Pr> קום]		ZIm0	1Kgs	17:09
	[<Co> צרפתה]	[<Pr> לך]		ZIm0	1Kgs	17:09
	[<PC> לצידון]	[<Re> אשר]		NmCl	1Kgs	17:09
	[<Co> שם]	[<Pr> ישבת]	[<Cj>ו]	WQt0	1Kgs	17:09
[<Ob><ap> אשה / אלמנה]	[<Lo> שם]	[<Pr> צויתי]	[<Ij> הנה]		xQt0	1Kgs 17:09
		[<PO> לכלכלך]		InfC	1Kgs	17:09
		[<Pr> יקם]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:10
	[<Co> צרפתה]	[<Pr> ילך]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:10
	[<Co> אל פתח העיר]	[<Pr> יבא]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:10
	[<Su><ap> אשה / אלמנה]	[<Lo> שם]	[<Ij> הנה]	[<Cj>ו]	NmCl	1Kgs 17:10
	[<Ob> עצים]	[<PC> מקששת]		Ptcp	1Kgs	17:10
	[<Co> אליה]	[<Pr> יקרא]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:10
		[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:10
[<Aj> בכלי]	[<Ob> מעט מים]	[<Co> לי]	[<Ij> נא]	[<Pr> קחי]		ZIm0 1Kgs 17:10
		[<Pr> אשתה]	[<Cj>ו]	WYq0	1Kgs	17:10
		[<Pr> נתלך]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:11
		[<Pr> לקחת]		InfC	1Kgs	17:11
	[<Co> אליה]	[<Pr> יקרא]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:11
		[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:11
[<Aj> בידך]	[<Ob> פת לחם]	[<Co> לי]	[<Ij> נא]	[<Pr> לקחי]		ZIm0 1Kgs 17:11
		[<Pr> תאמר]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	17:12
	[<Su><ap> אלהיך]	[<PC> חזי]		AjCl	1Kgs	17:12
	[<Su> מעוג]	[<PC> לי]	[<eX> יש]	[<Cj> אם]		NmCl 1Kgs 17:12
	[<Su><sp><cj><pa><sp> בצפחת / מעט שמן / בכד / מלא כף קמה / בכד / ו / מעט שמן / בצפחת]	[<Cj> כי אם]		NmCl	1Kgs	17:12
[<Ob> שנים עצים]	[<PC> מקששת]	[<Is> הנני]	[<Cj>ו]		Ptcp	1Kgs 17:12
	[<Pr> באתי]	[<Cj>ו]		WQt0	1Kgs	17:12
[<Co> לי ולבני]	[<PO> עשיתיהו]	[<Cj>ו]		WQt0	1Kgs	17:12
	[<PO> אכלנהו]	[<Cj>ו]		WQt0	1Kgs	17:12
	[<Pr> מתנו]	[<Cj>ו]		WQt0	1Kgs	17:12
	[<Su> אליהו]	[<Co> אליה]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs 17:13
		[<Pr> תיראי]	[<Ng> אל]		xYq0	1Kgs 17:13
		[<Pr> באי]		ZIm0	1Kgs	17:13
	[<Aj> כדברך]	[<Pr> עשי]		ZIm0	1Kgs	17:13
[<Ti> בראשנה]	[<Ob> עגה קטנה]	[<Lo> משם]	[<Co> לי]	[<Pr> עשי]	[<Mo> אך]	xIm0 1Kgs 17:13
	[<Co> לי]	[<Pr> הוצאת]	[<Cj>ו]		WQt0	1Kgs 17:13
[<Ti> באחרנה]	[<Pr> תעשי]	[<Co> לך ולבנך]	[<Cj>ו]		WxY0	1Kgs 17:13

[<Su><ap>]	אלהי ישראל / יהוה	[<Pr> אמר]	[<Mo> כה]	[<Cj> כי]			xQtX 1Kgs 17:14	
[<Pr>]	תכלה	[<Ng> לא]	[<Su> כד הקמח]				XYqt 1Kgs 17:14	
[<Pr>]	תחסר	[<Ng> לא]	[<Su> צפחת השמן]	[<Cj> ו]			WXYq 1Kgs 17:14	
		[<Ti>]	עד יום				Defc 1Kgs 17:14	
[<Co>]	על פני האדמה	[<Ob>]	גשם	[<Su> יהוה]	[<Pr>]	תתן		InfC 1Kgs 17:14
		[<Pr>]	תלך	[<Cj> ו]			Way0 1Kgs 17:15	
		[<Aj>]	כדבר אליהו	[<Pr>]	תעשה	[<Cj> ו]		Way0 1Kgs 17:15
[<Ti>]	ימים	[<Su>]	הוא והיא וביתה	[<Pr>]	תאכל	[<Cj> ו]		WayX 1Kgs 17:15
		[<Pr>]	כלתה	[<Ng> לא]	[<Su>]	כד הקמח		XQt1 1Kgs 17:16
[<Pr>]	חסר	[<Ng> לא]	[<Su> צפחת השמן]	[<Cj> ו]			WXQt 1Kgs 17:16	
		[<Aj>]	כדבר יהוה				Ellp 1Kgs 17:16	
[<Aj>]	ביד אליהו	[<Pr>]	דבר	[<Re>]	אשר			xQt0 1Kgs 17:16

⁸ The word of Yahweh happened to him saying:

⁹ Arise, go¹²⁰ to Zarephath which belongs to Sidon¹²¹ and you shall stay there. Look, I have commanded a woman there, a widow, to provide for you.

¹⁰ And he arose and went to Zarephath. He came to the entrance of the city. And look, there was a woman, widow, gathering wood. And he called her and said, “please, bring to me a little water in a vessel so that I can drink.

¹¹ And she went to bring *it*. And he called her, “please, bring¹²² to me a piece of bread in your hand.”

¹² And she said, “As Yahweh, your God, lives surely I have nothing baked,¹²³ except a handful of¹²⁴ flour in a jar and a little oil in a pitcher. Look, I am gathering a couple of wood pieces and I will go and prepare it for me and my son. Then we will eat and die.”

¹²⁰ The use of imperative pairs without the conjunction ׀ in between is common in the Hebrew Bible appearing 243 times. It is even more common than the pairs separated by the conjunction (207x). See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Pairs of Imperatives without the Conjunction ׀ in Between](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

¹²¹ Here the verb “to belong” conveys the sense of the possessive ל. In a stricter sense, the phrase with the two topographical names expresses the idea of “being under the jurisdiction of.” See: Judg 18:28; 1 Kgs 19:3; 2 Kgs 14:11.

¹²² Curiously, after using the regular form of the imperative feminine of לקח in verse 10, the narrator uses the irregular form לקחי in verse 11. In his commentary, DeVries suggests that the morphology of לקחי in verse 11 “preserves an authentic North-Israelite form.” DeVries, *I Kings*, 213.

¹²³ According to James Swanson מעוג means “bread-cake, i.e., a simple, flat, round cake of flour baked on hot stones or even the ash of an open fire (1Ki 17:12), note: some translate as a less specific food ‘provision, (food) supply.’” James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997). Here, I follow the translation proposed by Cogan and DeVries. See: Cogan, *I Kings*, 424; DeVries, *I Kings*, 212.

¹²⁴ The word “handful” translates מלא כף which literally means “the fulness of a hand.”

¹³ And Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid. Go and do according to your word; only prepare for me from it¹²⁵ a small cake first and bring to me. And for you and for your son prepare afterward.”

¹⁴ For thus says Yahweh, God of Israel, “the jar of flour will not come to an end and the pitcher of oil will not lack until the day Yahweh gives¹²⁶ rain on the face of the earth.”

¹⁵ And she went and did according to the word of Elijah. And she, he, and her household ate *several* days.

¹⁶ The jar of flour did not come to an end and the pitcher of oil did not lack according to the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of Elijah.

Delimitation

The limits of the second episode of chapter 17 are evident. As in the first episode, the story opens with the expression: וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר: (“the word of Yahweh happened to him saying:”) that introduces a new divine speech. Again, the expression is followed by God’s imperatives that demand the immediate departure of the prophet to a new destiny.

The discourse marker וַיְהִי in verse 17 indicates the transition point to the last episode of the chapter (vv. 17–24). As in verse 7, the transition is marked by a time frame (הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אַחֵר “after these things”). However, while in verse 7 the emphasis is on the elapsed time (וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ יָמִים “and at the end of *some* days”), in verse 17 the focus is on the miraculous provision involved in the events described in verses 7–16.

Text-Empirical Analysis

After the prophetic formula in 17:8, the text changes to discourse mode in verse 9 that opens also with an imperative clause (cf. verse 3). In fact, the structure of verses 9–

¹²⁵ The expression מִשָּׁם has the sense of “from it, from them, from the aforementioned” also in 2 Kgs 7:2, 19, Ezek 5:3, Lev 2:2. Clines, “שָׁם,” *DCH* 8:421.

¹²⁶ The use of עַד is indicates that the “action of the main clause occurs in the period extending to the events described by the infinitive construct.” Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 157.

10 is identical to that of the first episode: divine commands (v. 9ab) are followed by a promise of sustenance (v. 9c) that in turn are followed by strict obedience (v. 10ab) and fulfilment of God's promise (v. 10c).

The pair קום (“to arise”)/הלך (“to go”) appears often in narrative texts to express the start and the process of a journey or task.¹²⁷ However, the imperative use of the pair, which occurs 17 times in the HB, has God as speaker only 6 times. All these usages involve important prophetic figures such as Abraham (Gen 13:17), Balaam (Num 22:20), and Moses (Deut 10:11), Jeremiah (Jer 13:4, 6), and Jonah (Jonah 1:2; 3:2).

The destiny of Elijah's journey is Zarephath, a city located on the Mediterranean coast between Tyre and Sidon. The city, which was conquered by Sennacherib in 701 BC, was a considerable commercial center following the Phoenician occupation. Archeological research has revealed among its ruins industrial, religious, and residential quarters.¹²⁸ However, the biblical narrator is more concerned about its location than the city's characteristics. The relative clause אֲשֶׁר לְצִידוֹן that qualifies the city highlights Yahweh's control over Baal's land.

However, the choice of Zarephath, which takes the prophet deep into Tyrian territory “at the heart of Baal's geographical domain,”¹²⁹ may involve more than polemics against Baal. Ottosson argues that “Elijah's visit to Zarephath also has symbolic and ideological implications regarding the borders of Yahwistic Canaan and, more

¹²⁷ For instance, Gen 22:19; 24:10; Num 16:25; Josh 18:8; Judg 19:28; 1 Sam 24:8; 1 Kgs 1:49; Jer 13:4; Jonah 1:2; Mic 2:10.

¹²⁸ To see more on Zarephath: Jeremy D. Otten, “Zarephath,” *LDB*: Logos edition; Ray L. Roth, “Zarephath (Place),” *ABD* 6:1041; Joe E. Luncford, “Zarephath,” *EDB*:1408.

¹²⁹ James Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh's Appropriation of Baal*, 68.

interestingly, the borders of the Davidic Kingdom.”¹³⁰ In his journeys, Elijah travels between Gilead, Zarephath, Mountain Carmel, and Beer-Sheba which constitute the same itinerary found by the David’s census patrol in 2 Sam 24 (cf. vv. 6, 7) and delimit the area of Yahweh’s inheritance. Ottosson concludes that “bearing in mind the motifs of the Wilderness wanderings stressed in the Elijah cycle, we ought not be surprised to find that Elijah, as a traditional forerunner of a Davidic-messianic restoration, follows this pattern.”¹³¹

The imperatives are followed by a weqatal with imperative force וַיֵּשְׁבֵת (cf. verse 3). This time Elijah is not told to hide as in verse 3, but to dwell. The change may be connected with the location (a city instead of a hidden place in the desert) or with the fact that more than being hidden, the prophet starts to challenge Baal’s claim on his own land before challenging his dominion over Israel on Mt. Carmel.

As in the first episode, the instrument of God’s provision is also improbable. Here a widow, who “functions in the narrative as a cipher for the powerless, uncredentialed, disadvantaged, and hopeless”¹³² should provide (בֹּל) for the prophet. Instructively, Allan J. Houser observes that “the use of the more inclusive verb בֹּל, ‘to sustain,’ rather than

¹³⁰ Ottosson, “Elijah’s Visit to Zarephath,” 185.

¹³¹ Ottosson, “Elijah’s Visit to Zarephath,” 193. He adds that “these implications are consistent with the rest of the Elijah traditions and are symbolically demonstrated in Elijah’s use of twelve stones to build Yahweh’s altar on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 18.31). The Deuteronomist has regarded the prophet as the messianic forerunner.” Ottosson, “Elijah’s Visit to Zarephath,” 194.

¹³² Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 210. On the vulnerable social status and economical precariousness of widows in biblical times see: Paula S. Hiebert, “‘Whence Shall Help Come to Me?’ The Biblical Widow,” in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*,” ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 125–141.

אכל, ‘to feed’ (in Hiphil) also helps emphasize Yahweh's power. Yahweh does not just feed: he sustains life.”¹³³

The divine choice of the widow is a sign of “God’s strangely humble extravagance”¹³⁴ through which the text “intertwines Elijah’s power with an unlikely source of blessing and grace—and with a call to be in a seemingly unprofitable union with those who have little to give beyond daily manna.”¹³⁵ The fact that the widow demonstrates complete unawareness of her divine appointment (הִנֵּה צִוִּיתִי שָׁם “look, I have commanded there”) highlights God’s sovereignty. It is applied now over human beings in contrast with the natural elements and animals in the first episode.

Verse 10 is about command-and-compliance and promise-and-fulfilment patterns. While the wayyqtol forms וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ (“and he arose and went”) fulfill the command expressed by the imperatives קוּם לֵךְ (“arise and go”), the clause וַיָּבֹא אֶל-פֶּתַח הָעִיר (“and he came to the entrance of the city”) fulfils the command expressed by וַיִּשְׁבֶּת שָׁם (“and you shall stay there”). The repetition of הִנֵּה (“look”) and שָׁם (“there”) reinforces the idea that the clause וַיִּהְיֶה-שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה (“and look, there was woman, a widow”) is the fulfillment of God’s promise. Whether by divine intuition or by the widow’s clothing Elijah recognizes her as the woman about whom God had spoken. However, such a

¹³³ Alan J. Houser “Yahweh versus Death – The Real Struggle in 1 Kings 17–19” in *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis*, JSOT 85 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 14.

¹³⁴ Amy Laura Hall, “Prophetic Vulnerability and the Strange Goodness of God: A Reading of Numbers 22 and 1 Kings 17,” *STR* 46 (2003): 341.

¹³⁵ Hall, “Prophetic Vulnerability,” 348. It is important to see that in the middle of the polemics between Baal and Yahweh, God is showing his care for a widow, and consequently his concern for social justice. This is something that he also expected from his people (Deut 10:18). While God is caring for a foreign widow, Ahab is blatantly ignoring social justice in God’s own land as the episode involving Naboth shows (1 Kgs 21).

fulfilment is only initial. The prophet had met the widow,¹³⁶ but would she be able to provide for him? This question triggers the next part of this episode where the interaction between Elijah and the widow is narrated.

A turn of events marks this interaction as the table below show:

Table 5. From the Kerith Valey to Zarephath

In the Kerith Valley		In Zarephath	
God's command	Elijah's compliance	Elijah's command	Widow's compliance
הֲלֹךְ מִזֶּה ("Leave here") (v.3)	וַיֵּלֶךְ ("and he went") (v.4)	קַח ("take")	וַתֵּלֶךְ לְקַח ("she went to take")
קוּם לֶךְ ("Get up, go")	וַיִּקַּם וַיֵּלֶךְ ("and he got up and went")	לְקַח ("take")	no compliance
		בֹּא עֲשֵׂה ("go and do")	וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲשֶׂה ("and she went and did") (v.15)

As can be seen, now Elijah is in the position to issue imperatives and the widow's house takes over his place in the wadi of Kerith. Thus, Elijah is for the widow what God was for him in the first scene. While God commands and Elijah complies, here the prophet commands and she complies. A difference is the use of the particle **אֵן** attached to the imperatives **קַח** (v. 10) and **לְקַח** (v. 11). This may indicate a politer tone being characterized more in terms of a request rather than an actual command like in the previous divine imperatives. One peculiar aspect of the widow's compliance is that the pattern is not perfect as it is in the first column. Through the narrator's choice of words, he seems to indicate that the widow's obedience is not as perfect as that of the prophet. She obeys, but her obedience is hesitant.

¹³⁶ The Hebrew phraseology suggests that the widow was probably outside the city's gate.

The initial imperative of Elijah in verse 10 is met with compliance in verse 11 (לְקַחַת וַתִּלֶּךְ). The widow provides the prophet with water, the most essential commodity of hospitality in ANE. However, when faced with his request for food (פַּת־לֶחֶם), the widow's dilemma is spelled out. At this point, the command-and-compliance pattern is disrupted. Now, as the woman is "caught between the demands of ancient hospitality and the harsh reality of famine, she reacts with an oath and fatalistic resignation."¹³⁷ The oath is an expression of her dilemma.¹³⁸

Despite her social and economic condition before the drought,¹³⁹ she is now at the brink of starvation. The minimalist language highlights her personal drama and adds vivacity to the scene: מְעַט־מַיִם ("a little water"), פַּת־לֶחֶם ("a piece of bread"), מְלֵא כַּף־קֶמַח ("a handful of flour"), מְעַט־שֶׁמֶן ("a little oil"), and a couple of wood pieces (שְׁנַיִם עֵצִים). The woman is aware of their fateful destiny. Like hammer strikes, the sequence of weqatal closes verse 12 with a tragic prognosis of certain death (וַעֲשִׂיתִיהוּ, וּבָאֲתִי, וְאָכַלְנָהוּ, וּמָתָנוּ "I will go, prepare it, we will eat, and die").

Elijah meets her hesitation with a renewed request accompanied by a divine assurance. As it was with him, it will be with the woman: God's commands are quite

¹³⁷ Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 110.

¹³⁸ In addition to the widow here, the Shunammite is the only other woman who proclaims this oath formula (cf. 2 Kgs 4:30). See Text-Fabric query results in section "[Oath Formula Pronounced by Women in the BH](#)" of my jupyter notebook.

¹³⁹ Nelson suggests that the woman was a woman well-off enough to own a house with an upper room (reading in context with vv. 17, 19) Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 110. However, Patterson and Austel remark that houses with an upper room were common in the Near East; Patterson and Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 773. Consequently, this is not necessarily a sign of wealth. The mention of "her household" (בֵּיתָהּ) may indicate the existence of servants. But the text does not provide enough evidence for a conclusive position about the widow's status before the drought. What is evident is that with the drought she is in a desperate situation.

often accompanied by promises. Elijah’s speech opens with the reassurance formula¹⁴⁰ אַל־תִּירָאִי (“do not be afraid”). The formula, which appears in fairly different situations,¹⁴¹ is often found in theophanic contexts (e.g. Gen 15:1; Nm 21:34; Dt 3:2; Jos 8:1).¹⁴² Walter Brueggemann highlights that the phrase “is a characteristic formula whereby an utterance of powerful presence alters circumstance. [Do Not Fear] It is spoken against death in order to assure life. It is spoken against exile to assure homecoming. It is spoken against despair in order to assure hope. The speech mobilizes the life-giving power of Yahweh.”¹⁴³

Later in the narrative, God addresses Elijah with the same formula (2Kgs 1:15).¹⁴⁴ Again, there is an indication of the interplay between the prophet and Yahweh.¹⁴⁵ In this sense, the interaction with the widow works as a reflection of Elijah’s interaction with God. After the assurance formula, the prophet renews his challenge, adding the injunction to prepare the food for him first (v.13). Certainly, this is a test of faith.

¹⁴⁰ The label is suggested by Sweeney. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 547.

¹⁴¹ The expression appears 78 times in the HB. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Occurrences of the Expression ‘Do Not Fear’](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

¹⁴² The expression is often found in patriarchal narratives. Apart from the divine speech, the expression appears in the mouth of patriarchs and prophets (e.g. Gen 50:19; Exod 14:13; 20:20; Josh 10:25; 1 Sam 12:20; Isa 37:6).

¹⁴³ Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 211.

¹⁴⁴ Curiously, the same syntactical structure is found in 2 Kgs 1:15 where the phrase אַל־תִּירָאִי is preceded by the imperative דַּבֵּר.

¹⁴⁵ Such an interplay is somehow present in the idea that both Elijah and Elisha represent the divine presence in the Northern kingdom. For instance, Nicholas Lunn proposes that both prophets function as itinerant temples that compensate the lack of access to the temple in Jerusalem. Although Lunn provides important insights, some parallels, like the comparison between the upper room built by the Shulamite for Elisha with the temple including its furniture, are pushed too far. Nicholas Lunn, “Prophetic Representations of Divine Presence,” *JTI* 9 (2015): 49–63.

Elijah concludes his speech with a surprising salvation oracle introduced by כה
 אָמַר יְהוָה.¹⁴⁶ In addition to providing a high claim of authority for Elijah, the oracle
 provides a firm assurance for the widow. Here the narrator builds an astonishing contrast
 between two Sidonian women: While Jezebel wonders about the future in her palace at
 Samaria (as the drought worsens and leads to the desperate measures of the beginning of
 chapter 18), the nameless widow living in the queen’s homeland receives the assurance of
 provision until the end of the drought. In this way, the expression כה אָמַר יְהוָה (“thus
 says Yahweh) sparks hope in a foreign land, Baal’s land. The last clause of verse 14 is
 unusual הָאֲדָמָה עַד יוֹם תֵּת יְהוָה גֶּשֶׁם עַל־פְּנֵי “until the day Yahweh gives rain on the face
 of the earth”). Apart from the prophetic and poetic literature,¹⁴⁷ the idiom “to give rain”
 (גֶּשֶׁם + נתן) is found only in Lev 26:4.¹⁴⁸ The normal way to express the idea “to cause to
 rain” is conveyed by the hiphil of מָטַר¹⁴⁹ or by מָטַר + נתן.¹⁵⁰ The connection with Lev
 26:4 is important because it puts the drought in the context of the covenant curses.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ The phrase appears 432 times and always introduces a divine discourse. It is more often found in Jeremiah (154x), Ezekiel (125), and Isaiah (41x). In the books of Kings, it appears 34 times, of which 14 are in 1 Kgs and 20 are in 2 Kgs.

¹⁴⁷ See Jer 5:24; Zech 10:1; Ps 105:32.

¹⁴⁸ Lev 26:4: יוֹתֵן פְּרִי־ו: הַשָּׂדֶה וְעַץ הַיְבֹלֶה יְבֹלֶה וְהָאֲרֶז יְבֹלֶה וְנִתְּנָה הָאֲרֶז יְבֹלֶה וְנִתְּנָה הָאֲרֶז יְבֹלֶה וְנִתְּנָה הָאֲרֶז יְבֹלֶה

¹⁴⁹ E.g., Gen 2:5; Exod 9:18; Ezek 38:22; Amos 4:7; Ps 78:24.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Deut 11:14; 28:12, 24; 1 Sam 12:17, 18; 1 Kgs 18:1; Isa 30:23; Zech 10:1; Job 5:10; 2 Chr 6:27

¹⁵¹ It is also important to highlight that the drought works in two levels. In the context of the polemic against Baal, it shows Yahweh’s superiority over it and its actual inexistence. A Canaanite lore reads: “Seven years Baal is absent; Eight, The Rider of the Clouds; No dew, no downpour; No swirling of the deeps; No welcome voice of Baal.” Simon Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, WAW 9, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997), 157. However, in a second and maybe even more important level, the drought is presented as a result of disobedience through widespread idolatry. In light of the immediate and larger context, it is intriguing why Heller affirms that “It is not clear, furthermore, what the purpose of the drought was, nor exactly what the drought was supposed to accomplished.” Heller, *The Character of Elijah and Elisha*, 106.

The imperatives of verse 13 (בֹּאִי עֲשֵׂי “go and do”) meet compliance in the wayyqtol forms in verse 15 (וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲשֶׂה “she went and did). Although בוא and הלך are part of the same semantic range, it is clear that the narrator does not describe the widow’s compliance in strict terms as he has described Elijah’s obedience to Yahweh.

One surprising element in the narrative is the phrase כְּדִבְרֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ (“according to the word of Elijah”) that should be understood against the backdrop of the expression דְּבַר יְהוָה (“the word of Yahweh”) in the Elijah cycle. In the first scene, the narrator mentions that Elijah acts according to Yahweh’s word: וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה (“and he went and did according to the word of Yahweh”). The expression דְּבַר יְהוָה seems to be the organizing principle of the Elijah cycle. Apparently, the word of Yahweh dominates every part of 1Kgs 16:29 – 2Kgs 2:11.¹⁵² Brodie recognizes in this section an “overarching emphasis on the word” by affirming that “the multi-faceted richness of God’s word is perhaps the single most important idea in the Elijah-Elisha narrative.”¹⁵³ In fact, such an emphasis is in line with the thrust of the book as a whole:

This is a work which emphasizes the inexorability of that fate by its use of repetitive, stereotypical language and by a continuous demonstration of the reliability of prophecy. (...) There is no prophetic figure in Kings (except those who are intentionally proved false) whose words do not come to pass, either as predicted or

¹⁵² John W. Olley observes that “through the whole narrative the dominant explicit action of YHWH is that he ‘says:’ seven times ‘the word of YHWH came;’ four times ‘the angel of YHWH said,’ along with ‘thus says YHWH’ (six times) and ‘according to the word of YHWH’ (five times; plus 2 Kgs 10.17). Apart from this motif there are only five deeds: two explicit judgment actions (one in the past)—the ‘anger of YHWH’ provoked by Ahab (1 Kgs 16.33) and a reminder that ‘YHWH drove out the Amorites’ (21.26); and three mainly compassionate actions towards Elijah— he ‘listened to Elijah’s voice’ in his cry to restore the son (17.22), his ‘hand was on Elijah’ when he ran ahead of Ahab (18.46) and he ‘took Elijah up (2 Kgs 2.1).” John W. Olley, “YHWH and His Zealous Prophet: The Presentation of Elijah in 1 and 2 Kings,” *JSOT* 23 (1998): 50.

¹⁵³ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis-Kings and a Literary Model for the Gospels* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000, 70.

with some degree of reinterpretation. The ideal of prophecy invoked here is that of Deuteronomy 18:22: true prophecy is that which actually comes about, but “if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.”¹⁵⁴

Textually, the centrality of דְּבַר־יְהוָה (“the word of Yahweh”) in 1 Kgs 16:29 – 2 Kgs 2:11 is manifested in three different ways. First, the expression דְּבַר־יְהוָה itself, which appears 15 times in only eight chapters,¹⁵⁵ is presumably a *Leitwort*. It occurs in different contexts¹⁵⁶ whether as an expression of salvation or of judgment and always in connection with prophetic activity.

Bearing in mind the theological importance of דְּבַר יְהוָה, it is quite significant that in 17:15, the widow acts in accordance with the word of Elijah: וַתַּעַשׂה כְּדְבַר אֱלִיָּהוּ (“and she did according to the word of Elijah”). By putting in parallel the same expression in verses 5 and 15 and substituting in the *postconstructus* יְהוָה (“Yahweh”) by אֱלִיָּהוּ (“Elijah”), the narrator is playing with the roles of Yahweh and his prophet. These parallel structures also seem to point to an intentional interplay between Yahweh and Elijah.¹⁵⁷

The narrator closes the episode with a summary statement that describes the fulfilment of God’s promises, thereby completing the pattern promise-and-fulfillment. An indefinite period of time (simply יָמִים) marks the period of miraculous provision (v. 15b).

¹⁵⁴ Hagan, “First and Second Kings,” 147, 161.

¹⁵⁵ 1 Kgs 16:34; 17:2, 5, 8, 16, 24; 18:1, 31; 19:9; 21:17, 28; 22:5, 19; 2 Kgs 1:17.

¹⁵⁶ Guidance to the prophet’s movements (1 Kgs 17:2; 8; 18:1); the prophet’s obedience (1 Kgs 17:5); fulfilment (1 Kgs 17:16); widow’s affirmation of faith (1 Kgs 17:24); judgement against Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs 21:17); divine mercy toward Ahab (1 Kgs 21:28); Jehoshaphat’s request (1 Kgs 22:5); judgement against Ahab (1 Kgs 22:19, 38).

¹⁵⁷ A similar use of the expression is found in Exod 8:9 where in the context of the plague of frogs “Yahweh did according to the word of Moses” (וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה כְּדְבַר מֹשֶׁה).

The narrator is more precise regarding who partakes from it: she, he, and her household (היא הוא וּבֵיתָהּ).¹⁵⁸ The detailed nature of the description is part of the narrator's strategy to match both parts of the promise-and-fulfilment pattern. The same can be said about the verse 16a (לֹא חָסַר בַּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא כָלְתָה וְצִפְפַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן) “the jar of flour did not come to an end and the pitcher of oil did not lack”) where the phraseology is identical to that found in verse 14b (בַּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא תִכְלֶה וְצִפְפַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא תִחָסֵר) “the jar of flour will not come to an end and the pitcher of oil will not lack”). By establishing this perfect pattern, the narrator impliedly contrasts the perfect fidelity of God with the hesitant and faulty faithfulness of the widow. If this is the case, the interaction between Elijah and the widow mirrors the experience between Yahweh and his people.

The divine promise is fulfilled בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה (“according to the word of Yahweh”) (16b). The prepositional phrase, which has an adjunctive function, brings back the important motif of the word of Yahweh already mentioned before. However, here דִּבְרֵי (“word”) is further qualified by the relative clause אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד אֵלִיָּהוּ (“which he spoke by the hand of Elijah”) (16b). The phrase is almost verbatim to 16:34b: בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בְּדִבְרֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נּוּן (“according to the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of Joshua”). The only difference is the subject of דִּבְרֵי, Joshua, son of Nun instead of Elijah. Thus, “the narrator introduces a Moses/Joshua paradigm that will serve as a construct for

¹⁵⁸ At this point I am following the Qere. The Ketib, which is “he, she, and her household” (הוא היא וביתה היא), matches the sequence Elijah first and mother and son afterwards. However, the point in the statement is not the description of the first meal when the prophet would have his portion first. The summary has in view the duration of whole period. Besides that, the verb אכל is feminine and in this way requires a feminine entity as the first element of the subject phrase.

reading and interpreting the Elijah story. As Joshua (and Moses) served Yahweh, so Elijah stands in a special place as his representative in Israel.”¹⁵⁹

Narrative Features

One key feature in the narrative of verses 8–16 is the strategic use of repetition. As is the case in the previous episode, the narrator uses repetition to build command-and-compliance and promise-and-fulfillment patterns. These patterns are used to advance the characterization of Yahweh, Elijah, and the widow. The repetitions involving the promise-and-fulfillment pattern show that God is completely faithful to his promises. In its use, the command-and-compliance pattern shows how Elijah is obedient. Such an obedience leads to the fulfillment of God’s promises. The deviation of the command-and-compliance pattern involving the widow’s actions in response to Elijah’s injunctions may signal a deficient faith that is nonetheless sufficient to grant God’s miraculous provision.

Another achievement of the narrator’s use of repetition is the way the second episode parallels the first. In a certain sense, the episode where Elijah interacts with the widow works as a parallel or reflection of the one where Yahweh interacts with the prophet. By doing so, the narrator reinforces the interchangeable roles of Yahweh and Elijah in the chapter.

Structure

As already mentioned, the episode is organized through command-and-compliance and promise-and-fulfillment patterns as can be seen in the following table:

¹⁵⁹ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 207.

Table 6. Command-and-Compliance and Promise-and-Fulfillment Patterns in ch. 17

Part A: Yahweh–Elijah Interaction	
Command	Obedience
C1: קוּם לְךָ צָרְפָתָה אֲשֶׁר לְצִידוֹן (“Arise, go to Zarephath which belongs to Sidon”) (9a)	O1: וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ צָרְפָתָה (“And he arose and went to Zarephath”) (10a)
C2: וַיִּשְׁבֹּת שָׁם (“and you shall stay there”) (9b)	O2: וַיָּבֹא אֶל־פֶּתַח הָעִיר (“he came to the entrance of the city”) (10b)
Promise (verse 4)	Fulfilment (verse 6)
P1: הִנֵּה צִוִּיתִי שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה לְכַלְכֵּלְךָ: (“look, I have commanded a woman there, a widow, to provide for you”) (9c)	F1: וְהִנֵּה־שָׁם אִשָּׁה אֶלְמָנָה מְקַשֶּׁשֶׁת עֵצִים (“And look, there was a woman, widow, gathering wood”) (10c)
Part B: Elijah–Widow Interaction	
Command (10d)	Obedience
C1: וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־יָנָא לִי מֵעֵט־מִים: בְּכֶלִי וְאַשְׁתָּה: ‘please, bring to me a little water in a vessel so that I can drink”) (10d)	O1: וַתֵּלֶךְ לְקַחַח (“and she went to bring it”) (11a)
C2: וַיִּקְרָא אֵלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר לְקַח־יָנָא לִי פֶת־לֶחֶם: בְּיָדְךָ (“and he called her, ‘please, bring to me a piece of bread in your hand”) (11bc)	Hesitation: וַתֹּאמֶר חַי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אִם־יִשְׁלִי מְעוּג כִּי אִם־מִלָּא כַף־קֶמַח בְּבֶד וּמְעֵט־שֶׁמֶן בְּצַפְחַת וְהִנְנִי מְקַשֶּׁשֶׁת שָׁנִים עֵצִים וּבֹאתִי וְנַעֲשִׂיתִיהוּ לִי וּלְבָנִי וְאֶכְלֵנָהוּ וּמָתָנוּ: (“And she said, ‘As Yahweh, your God, lives surely I have nothing baked, except a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a pitcher. Look, I am gathering a couple of wood pieces and I will go and prepare it for me and my son. Then we will eat and die.’”) (12)
C2 (Reaffirmation) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ אֵלֶיהָ אַל־תִּירָאִי בֹאִי עֲשִׂי כְדָבְרִי אֲדָ עֲשִׂי־לִי מִשֶּׁם עֵגָה קִטְנָה בְּרֹאשֹׁנָה וְהוֹצֵאתָ לִי וְלֶךְ וּלְבָנְךָ תַעֲשִׂי בְּאַחֲרֶנָּה (13)	O2: וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲשֶׂה כְּדָבָר אֵלֶיהָ: (15ab)
Promise	Fulfilment
P1: כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא תִכָּלֵה וְצַפְחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא תִחָסֵר עַד יוֹם תָּת־לֹא תִכָּלֵה וְצַפְחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא תִחָסֵר (“And Elijah said to her, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and do according to your word; only prepare for me from it a small cake first and bring to me. And for you and for your son prepare afterward.’”) (14)	F1: כִּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא כָלְתָה וְצַפְחַת הַשֶּׁמֶן לֹא חָסַר (“the jar of flour did not come to an end and the pitcher of oil did not lack”) (16)

As one can see, in part A there is a strict correspondence between commands and promises and obedience and fulfillment. The same is not seen on part B where Elijah's commands/requests are not met with perfect correspondences (e.g. C1 cf. O1 and C2 cf. O2). In addition to that, the widow expresses reluctance before C2. Her hesitation is met with a divine assurance in verse 13 and promise in verse 14.

At least two aspects of the structure above deserve mention at this point. First, Elijah assumes Yahweh's place in part B; which reinforces the interplay between God and the prophet. Second, the imperfect obedience of the widow does not prevent God to fulfill his promises. In any case, her compliance to Elijah as God's representative and the way she overcomes her initial hesitation is in stark contrast with her countrywoman in the palace of Samaria.

Elijah Resurrects the Widow's Son (1 Kgs 17:17–24)

Text-Syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Ti> אחר הדברים האלה] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:17
[<Su><ap> חלה] [<Pr> בן האשה / בעלת הבית]	ZQtX 1Kgs 17:17
[<Mo> מאד] [<PC> חזק] [<Su> חליו] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]	WayX 1Kgs 17:17
[<Su> נשמה] [<Co> בו] [<Pr> נותרה] [<Ng> לא] [<Cj> עד אשר]	xQtX 1Kgs 17:17
[<Co> אל אליהו] [<Pr> תאמר] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:18
[<PC> לי ולך] [<Su> מה]	NmC1 1Kgs 17:18
[<Vo> איש האלהים]	Voct 1Kgs 17:18
[<Co> אלי] [<Pr> באת]	ZQt0 1Kgs 17:18
[<Ob> את עוני] [<Pr> להזכיר]	InfC 1Kgs 17:18
[<Ob> את בני] [<Pr> להמית] [<Cj>ו]	InfC 1Kgs 17:18
[<Co> אליה] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:19
[<Ob> את בנך] [<Co> לי] [<Pr> תני]	ZIm0 1Kgs 17:19
[<Co> מחיקה] [<PO> יקחהו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:19
[<Co> אל העליה] [<PO> יעלהו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:19
[<Co> שם] [<PC> יישב] [<Su> הוא] [<Re> אשר]	Ptcp 1Kgs 17:19
[<Co> על מטתו] [<PO> ישכבהו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:19
[<Co> אלהיה] [<Pr> יקרא] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:20

[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:20
[<Vo><ap> יהוה / אלהי]	Voct 1Kgs 17:20
[<Co> גם על האלמנה] [<Qu>ה]	Defc 1Kgs 17:20
[<Co> עמה] [<PC> מתגורר] [<Su> אני] [<Re> אשר]	Ptcp 1Kgs 17:20
[<Pr> הרעות]	ZQt0 1Kgs 17:20
[<Ob> את בנה] [<Pr> להמית]	InfC 1Kgs 17:20
[<Mo> שלש פעמים] [<Co> על הילד] [<Pr> יתמדד] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:21
[<Co> אל יהוה] [<Pr> יקרא] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:21
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:21
[<Vo><ap> יהוה / אלהי]	Voct 1Kgs 17:21
[<Co> על קרבו] [<Su> נפש הילד הזה] [<Ij>נא] [<Pr> תשב]	ZYqX 1Kgs 17:21
[<Co> בקול אליהו] [<Su> יהוה] [<Pr> ישמע] [<Cj>ו]	WayX 1Kgs 17:22
[<Co> על קרבו] [<Su> נפש הילד] [<Pr> תשב] [<Cj>ו]	WayX 1Kgs 17:22
[<Pr> יחי] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:22
[<Ob> את הילד] [<Su> אליהו] [<Pr> יקח] [<Cj>ו]	WayX 1Kgs 17:23
[<Co> הביתה] [<Co> מן העליה] [<PO> ירדהו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:23
[<Co> לאמו] [<PO> יתנהו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 17:23
[<Su> אליהו] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]	WayX 1Kgs 17:23
[<Pr> ראי]	ZIm0 1Kgs 17:23
[<Su> בנך] [<PC> חזי]	AjC1 1Kgs 17:23
[<Co> אל אליהו] [<Su> האשה] [<Pr> תאמר] [<Cj>ו]	WayX 1Kgs 17:24
[<Pr> ידעתי] [<Ti> עתה זה]	xQt0 1Kgs 17:24
[<Su> אתה] [<PC> איש אלהים] [<Cj>כי]	NmCl 1Kgs 17:24
[<PC> אמת] [<Su><sp> דבר יהוה / בפוך] [<Cj>ו]	NmCl 1Kgs 17:24

¹⁷ After¹⁶⁰ these things the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, got sick. His sickness was very severe until there was no breath left in him.

¹⁸ And she said to Elijah, “what is there among us¹⁶¹ man of God, that you have come to me to make known my iniquity and to kill my son?”

¹⁶⁰ The word יָהִי functions as a transition marker here and it is not translated.

¹⁶¹ The phrase “what is there among us” literally reads “what for me and for you?” I have opted to translate the sense but in a more neutral way. The idiomatic senses range from “what do we have in common?” (Josh 22:24; 2 Sam 16:10; 2 Kgs 3:13; 2 Kgs 9:18, 19) to “what you have against...”? (Judg 11:12; 2 Sam 19:23; 2Chr 35:21). The OG preferred to translate the phrase literally (τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί).

¹⁹ And Elijah said, “Give me your son.” And he took him from her lap and brought him up to the upper room where he was living. And he laid him on his bed.

²⁰ And he called to Yahweh and said, “Yahweh my God, have you also caused evil against the widow with whom I am staying to kill her son?”

²¹ And he stretched himself¹⁶² over the boy three times. And he called to Yahweh and said, “Yahweh my God, please let the life of this boy return to¹⁶³ his inner body.”

²² And Yahweh obeyed¹⁶⁴ Elijah and the life of the boy return to his inner body, and he lived.

²³ And Elijah took the boy and brought him down from the upper room to the house. He gave him to his mother and said, “Look, your son is alive.”

²⁴ And the woman said to Elijah, “Now this I know that you are a man of God and the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth.

Delimitation

The last episode opens with the transition marker וַיְהִי and closes right before the next וַיְהִי which is also followed by a temporal phrase (יָמִים רַבִּים “many days”) in 18:1.

Although some insist that the narrative of vv. 17–24 is independent from the rest of the chapter,¹⁶⁵ the final form of 1 Kgs 17 provides enough evidence not only in favor of the internal unity of the episode but also its link with the previous material.

¹⁶² Although the root occurs 52 times in the HB, the Hiphil of מָדַד is unique. In Qal, the verb means “to measure.” Perhaps, the meaning of the Hiphil may be linked with the act of someone stretching to measure something. But this etymological relationship is not clear. The rare use of the word is reflected by the difficulty of the OG translator to render its actual meaning. Probably, using contextual exegesis, he translates וַיִּתְמַדְד as και ἐνεφύσησε (and he breathed).

¹⁶³ Wray Beal suggests an emendation. According to her, “עַל is read correctly here as אַל. The confusion of terms is common. Wray Beal, *1 Kings*, 163. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily the case here. It is true that the expression עַל-קִרְבּוֹ + שׁוּב is unique. However, the preposition עַל complements the Qal of שׁוּב 7 times outside 1 Kgs 17 (Exod 14:26; Num 33:7; Josh 19:12; 2 Sam 10:14; Jer 11:10; Eccl 12:7). In all cases the valence expresses movement and עַל is translated as “to” or “over.” One exception is Neh 4:6 where עַל means “against.”

¹⁶⁴ See the reasoning for this translation in the following discussion. The OG has a complete divergent reading of verse 22: και ἐγένετο οὕτως, και ἀνεβόησεν τὸ παιδάριον (“And it happened thus, and the lad cried out” – NETS). A probable reason behind this difference is discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁶⁵ For instance, Long affirms that “the unity seems only vaguely related to the chronology of vv. 7, 14-15, and has no connection with the longer background motif of drought (vv. 1, 12, 14)...” Long, *1 Kings*, 184. Along the same lines Jones argues that “this section contains an independent wonder narrative, which is not directly linked with the drought presupposed in the previous anecdotes and which also stands apart structurally from the remainder of the chapter. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2:307.

The absence of the introductory formula וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו (“and the word of Yahweh happened to him”) should not come as a surprise or a sign of discontinuity, as there is no geographical movement. In chapter 17 and 18, the phrase is consistently used to introduce divine directives regarding where Elijah should go (17:2, 9; 18:1). The complicating event described in verse 17 happens while Elijah is still in the widow’s house.

The phrase אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה (“after these things”) in verse 17 connects the third episode to the previous one.¹⁶⁶ Although the phrase sets a temporal sequence, its focus is on the events described in the second episode in verses 7–16. The connection is also established through key words. For instance, the mother of the boy is identified as הָאִשָּׁה הַבַּיִת (“the woman, the owner of the house”). The use of the article in אִשָּׁה (“woman”) and בַּיִת (“house”) indicates precise identification referring to entities mentioned before (cf. v. 9, 15).¹⁶⁷ The fact that this episode is dealing with the same woman of vv. 7–16¹⁶⁸ is confirmed in 17:20 where Elijah identifies the mother of the dead boy as הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־אָנִי מְתַגְּוֵר עִמָּה (“the widow with whom I am staying”).

¹⁶⁶ Curiously, the same time marker opens the narrative of Gen 22. A further study could analyze if there is any relationship between the two passages.

¹⁶⁷ Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 237.

¹⁶⁸ Some authors like DeVries suggest that “the house inhabited by the Zarephath widow is not in question” here and another woman is in view. DeVries, *1 Kings*, 221. See also Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 184. Although Cogan suggests that the third episode had originally circulated as a separate tale, he admits that in the present condition it was meant to be seen in connection with the previous one. He recalls a similar juxtaposition in the Elisha narrative: “in 2 Kgs 4, a tale concerning the provision of oil for a woman in distress (vv. 1–7) is followed by one telling of Elisha’s reviving the son of the Shunamite (vv. 8–37).” Cogan, *1 Kings*, 433. P. Buis comes to the same conclusion, saying that “the final redaction unifies the two stories,” which according to him are independent. P. Buis, *Le Livre des Rois* (Paris, France: Gabalda, 1997), 141. The narrative analysis of the passage confirms that the woman referred in the second episode (vv. 7–14) is the same woman mentioned in the third episode (vv. 8–24). See: Walsh, *1 Kings*, 230–235; Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 233–236.

Furthermore, from a thematic perspective, the narrative also advances the two major themes of chapter 17: “YHWH’s power to grant life over against that of Baal and the role of Elijah as a man of G-d.”¹⁶⁹

As mentioned before, the repetition of דְּבַר (“word”) and פֶּה (“mouth”) in verse 24 (וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אֶמֶת) is resumptive (cf. v.1) and closes the chapter as a whole. As Elijah is set as a true man of God, he is ready for the climatic event of the mount Carmel. The question still hanging is whether Israel will confess as did the Sidonian woman.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The complicating factor in the last episode is a grave sickness whose nature is not revealed but its seriousness leads to the boy’s death. The boy’s death is described in non-conventional terms.¹⁷⁰ According to the narrator the illness worsens to the point that no breath is left in him (לֹא־נִוְתַרְהָ־בּוֹ נְשָׁמָה) (v.17). The clause is significant for at least two reasons. First, apart from the poetic and prophetic literature, the word נְשָׁמָה (“breath”) appears only in two contexts: creation and חֶרֶם passages.¹⁷¹ Somehow both motifs relate: the extermination is a kind of de-creation marked by death which is the reverse of life. In 1 Kgs 17:17–24 both themes are present: by God's power the prophet would revert the curse of death and bring life again, life instead of punishment. Second, the only place

¹⁶⁹ Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 214.

¹⁷⁰ The most common way to report death is through the use of the Qal of מוֹת which occurs 620 times in the HB. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Use of מוֹת in the BH](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

¹⁷¹ See more on חֶרֶם concept in: G. Giesen, “חרם,” *TDOT* 5:200–203; Lilley, J. P. U., “Understanding the Herem,” *TB* 44 (1993): 169–177; Yair Hoffman, “The Deuteronomistic Concept of the Herem.” *ZAW* 111 (1999): 196–210; Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A window on Israel's Religious Experience* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar’s Press, 1991); Elias Brasil de Souza, “Two Applications of HRM in Leviticus 27:28-29,” *Hermenêutica* 2 (2002): 111–125.

besides 1 Kgs 17:17 where a clause containing the verb יתר as the predicate and the noun נשמה as the subject is Joshua 11:11, which says “He struck all the people that *were* in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them. There was no one left who breathed [לא נותר כל־נשמה], and he burned Hazor with fire” (LEB). The widow and her son are located in a region assigned to Asher during the conquest (Josh 19:24–31), whose inhabitants were under God’s curse of חרם (Deut 20:17). However, her faith is rewarded with a reverse of the curse. In the widow’s question following the narration of her son’s death (1 Kgs 17:18) there lies implicit the issue: has the new Joshua come to fulfill the curse upon her son?

One significant element missing in this pericope is the verb כול which is an important word in the first and second sections of the narrative and will appear again right at the beginning of 1 Kgs 18:4. This is somewhat remarkable. The narrative effect of this absence makes the reader wonder about Elijah’s attitude in the crisis. While Elijah is taken care of in the previous segments, he is now the one who is called to take care of another. Will he return the care he received and offer himself as a caretaker?

Ironically, death, which was prevented by the arrival of the prophet in the previous episode (cf. v. 12), is now attributed to Elijah’s presence in the house. Now, the widow is in a desperate state and confronts the prophet suggesting that his presence brought God’s attention to her “iniquity” (עֲוֹנִי).¹⁷² At this point, Walsh seems to be

¹⁷² In the narrative literature the hiphil of זכר is part of the vocabulary reminiscent of Deuteronomy (Exod 20:24; 23:13; Josh 23:7; 2 Sam 18:18). Most of its occurrences are found in poetic and prophetic literature. The most basic meaning of the hiphil is “to cause to remember.” But the semantic range includes “to mention” and “to make known.” The idiom לְהַזְכִּיר אֶת־עֲוֹנִי (to make my iniquity known or to cause remembrance of my iniquity) “appears again in Ezek 21:28 and 29:16, where it is predicted that the major powers, Babylon and Egypt, will no longer ‘bring sin to mind,’ as they had enticed Israel in the past” Cogan, *I Kings*, 429.

correct by proposing that no specific sin is in view besides “the inevitable unworthiness of any human life in a deity’s eyes.”¹⁷³ However, having in mind the singular use of לֹא-נִשְׁמָה (“there was no breath left in him”) in the previous verse, the original חרם curse might be implicit here.

In this emergence mode there is a radical change in the widow who “was responsive to the man of God who bore blessings, but rebels against the man of God who focused a spotlight on her sin.”¹⁷⁴ Simon usefully observes that:

Her scathing words (both parts of verse 18) resonate with indictments similar to those that the people hurled at Moses at the beginning of his career in Egypt (Exod. 2:14 and 5:21), and again during crises in the wilderness (Exod. 14:11—12 and 17:3; Num. 17:6). The reaction of both prophets to the first confrontation in which they find themselves is similar: silence toward the complainants (Exod. 5:22a) and an outcry to God; even the language and, content of their prayers are similar.¹⁷⁵

The last infinitive clause of verse 18 לְהַמִּית אֶת-בְּנִי (“to kill my son”) clarifies the meaning of לֹא-נִשְׁמָה (“there was no breath left in him”). The narrator does not interpret the boy’s condition as a quasi-death state. Both clauses depict actual death. Curiously, Alexander Rofé argues that “the expression ‘until he had no breath left in him’ (v. 17), and similar ones, merely indicate a coma or unconsciousness.” The problem with his argumentation is that he does not present even one passage where the same expression can be found¹⁷⁶ and, additionally, ignores the true parallels in Joshua as mentioned above.

¹⁷³ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 231.

¹⁷⁴ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 165.

¹⁷⁵ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 165.

¹⁷⁶ Rofé gives as examples Dan 10:17; Judg 15:19; 1 Sam 30:12; 1 Kgs 10:5, but the expression לֹא-נִשְׁמָה is not found in any of these passages. Alexander Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories: The Narratives about the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, Their Literary Types and History* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 134.

He also argues that the word “to revive” means healing in other passages (e.g., Num 21:8–9) being oblivious to the fact that it is always the context that determines the meaning of a word and not vice-versa.¹⁷⁷

The ancient idea that the lad’s experience is not more than a “temporary suspension of animation or deprivation of the faculties”¹⁷⁸ is not textually supported. The fact that this notion was first defended by Josephus indicates the shocking nature of the miracle.¹⁷⁹ In the context of the polemics against Baal, the question was “When faced by ‘Mot,’ must the Lord, like Baal, bow the knee?”¹⁸⁰

Elijah reacts immediately and acts with urgency. The gravity of the moment excuses the absence of the particle **נָּ** attached to the imperative clause **תְּנִי־לִי אֶת־בְּנֶךָ** (“give me your son”) (v.19b). Without expecting any compliance, which is absent in the third episode, he took the boy from her lap. The cycle opened by the taking of the boy from his mother’s lap closes with the delivering of the boy alive in verse 23c (**וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ לְאִמּוֹ**) “he gave him to his mother”). The relative clause **אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יֹשֵׁב שָׁם** (“where he was living”) which qualifies **הַעֲלִיָּה** (“upper room”) shows that the prophet is complying with God’s command in verse 9 (**וַיֵּשְׁבֶתָ שָׁם**) “and you shall stay there”), and additionally connects the third episode with the previous one.

¹⁷⁷ Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 134.

¹⁷⁸ John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1963), 382. See also: S. Lasine, “Matters of Life and Death,” 117–144.

¹⁷⁹ Josephus affirms that the son “ceased to breathe and seemed to be dead” (*Ant.* 8.325).

¹⁸⁰ Iain W. Provan, *1 & 2 Kings*, UBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 134.

The narrator brings the reader to the intimacy of Elijah’s lodging remarking that the prophet is alone with the lad (וַיִּשְׁכְּבֵהוּ עַל־מִטָּתוֹ) “and he laid him on his bed”). Thus, there is clear setting demarcation where the boy is almost a prop.¹⁸¹ At this point, he goes from her mother’s lap to Elijah’s arms, from Elijah’s arms to the prophet’s bed. The reverse of the boy’s condition is marked by the narrator through the exact reverse of his location to his mother’s lap again in verse 23.

In verse 20, the discursive mode is launched by וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר (“and he called to Yahweh and said”). While the first clause sets forth the method, the second introduces the content.¹⁸² The construction קרא + אֶל + יְהוָה is found 13 times in the HB and in all contexts, it refers to a prayer requesting a favor from God. In his prayer, Elijah is bold and echoes the widow’s charge.¹⁸³ He identifies יְהוָה (Yahweh) as אֱלֹהֵי (my God) which combines intimacy and respect. In Kings the designation is used only by Elijah (1 Kgs 17:20–21) and Solomon (1 Kgs 3:7; 5:18–19; 8:28).¹⁸⁴ In short, Elijah questions why God would cause evil or harm to the widow who was helping him. By identifying the

¹⁸¹ Long suggests that the boy “is a curious prop as mystery takes place on stage.” Long, *1 Kings*, 185. Although he is right to note the complete passiveness of the lad, I use the word “almost” here since technically speaking he is not a prop. The boy is agent of at least one verb in the pericope וַיִּחֲי.

¹⁸² The pair וַיִּקְרָא and וַיֹּאמֶר (“he called and said”) occurs very often in the BH (115x) and is a common way to introduce a speech (e.g., Gen 3:9; Exod 2:22; 1 Kgs 17:10). Here וַיֹּאמֶר functions almost as וַיִּקְרָא. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Use of the Pair וַיִּקְרָא and וַיֹּאמֶר](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

¹⁸³ At this point, Walsh’s observation is quite pertinent. He says: “Elijah addressed the widow with command and explanation, just as Yahweh had addressed him. He Elijah addresses Yahweh with accusation, as the widow has addressed him. In this way the narrator positions the prophet in an intermediary role: as Yahweh to him, so he to the widow, and vice versa. Prophetic mediation is a two-way street: the prophet speaks the divine word to human beings and speaks the human word to God as well.” Walsh, *1 Kings*, 232

¹⁸⁴ In the HB אֱלֹהֵי appears 39 times (e.g., Num 22:18; Deut 4:5; Josh 14:8). See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Occurrences of the Phrase ‘Yahweh My God’](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

widow as the one with whom he was dwelling (מִתְגוֹרֵר),¹⁸⁵ Elijah seems to be weighing the connection between his presence and the death of the boy. He seems to be puzzled since his presence should provide protection instead of harm. How could God cause this evil (הִרְעוּתָהּ)? The Hiphil of רָעַע also appears in the interaction between Moses and Yahweh: “Yahweh, why have you brought trouble (הִרְעַתָּהּ) to this people?” (Exod 5:11 cf. Nm 11:11).¹⁸⁶ Moses is the only other biblical character who asks the same question.

After this short prayer, Elijah acts by stretching himself (וַיִּתְמַדֵּד) upon the boy three times.¹⁸⁷ The nature of his action has intrigued interpreters of the passage. For those who defend (against the textual evidence already put forward above) that the boy had not died, the action is not one of resurrection but healing.¹⁸⁸ Based on Babylonian parallels Jones supports the idea that Elijah is acting as a “witch-doctor” performing what he calls “contractual magic.”¹⁸⁹ However, the narrator does not present Elijah as a magician. Indeed, one of the main points of chapter 17 as a whole is to establish Elijah as “man of God.” It is God’s answer to his prayer that makes the miracle possible. For this reason,

¹⁸⁵ The Qal of גוֹר means “to dwell as an alien.” The Hiphil is only found in 1 Kgs 17:20; Jer 30:23; Hos 7:14.

¹⁸⁶ Regarding the idea of God causing evil or harm, at least two points should be considered here. The first concerns the fact that ancient Israelites attributed to God both good and evil. In the context of divine sovereignty, God is responsible for what he allows (e.g., Ruth 1:21). The second is that the Hiphil of רָעַע also is often used in the context of judgment when God brings disaster as a result of the breaking of the covenant (e.g., Josh 24:20; Jer 25:29; 31:28; Zech 8:14) as he exerts his prerogative as judge.

¹⁸⁷ See note of translation on section “Text-Syntactical Organization and Translation.”

¹⁸⁸ Herbert Chanan Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics: Tales of the Prophets* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 126; Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 215.

¹⁸⁹ Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2:308. Along the same lines, Gray suggests that Elijah is performing “a symbolic action of sympathetic magic in which the prophet takes the illness of the boy into himself. By placing himself face-to-face with the boy, the prophet provides a means by which the illness is transferred from the body of the boy into his own.” Gray, *I & II Kings*, 382–383.

DeVries suggests that his act “is not magic, but a typical symbolic act familiar to the prophetic movement in Israel.”¹⁹⁰ In an apparent attempt to take into account both the ANE parallels and the biblical narrative, Long suggests that even though Elijah is not a magician, “Yahweh is working through a prophet who mirrors cultural norms and expectations.”¹⁹¹

However, since the supposed magical act in v. 21 does not accomplish anything, all suggestions above seem to be problematic. A better way to understand Elijah’s act is looking carefully at the narrative itself which is the only “material” artifact left to be examined. Elijah’s action is preceded by his disbelief about what was happening with the boy. His prayer is not a request but a question (cf. v. 20). Implicit in his theological problem is also the question about the boy’s condition: had God indeed caused harm by killing the boy? Thus, the act of stretching himself might be understood as way to check if the boy was really dead.¹⁹² Once he verified the boy’s condition, Elijah boldly asks for

¹⁹⁰ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 222.

¹⁹¹ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 208. The idea that the boy’s resuscitation is an example of verbal, physical and ritual magical acts as Bae defends is not supported by the biblical text. Bae, “Elijah’s Magic in the Drought Narrative,” 23. In opposition to this view, Nobuyoshi Kiuchi suggests that Elijah by “deliberately pollutes himself by lying on top of the corpse,” and is sacrificing himself and like Moses is willing “to make himself anathema for the one for whom he prays.” Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, “Elijah’s Self-Offering: I Kings 17, 21,” *Biblica* 75 (1994): 78.

¹⁹² Andrew R. Davis proposes a new reading of the verb ויתמוזז in 1 Kgs 17:21 which, according to him, is not from מדד (“to measure”) but from מיד (“to shake”). Then, “in this reading, Elijah’s action is neither therapeutic nor magical, it is diagnostic and a necessary step that enables Elijah to formulate a prayer that is specific to the boy’s predicament. His revival is not achieved through Elijah’s self-measurement or sympathetic magic, rather it is the result of the prophetic word, which has the power to move YHWH to action.” Andrew R. Davis, “Rereading I Kings 17:21 in Light of Ancient Medical Texts,” *JBL* 135 (2016): 465.

his resurrection in v. 21: תָּשָׁב נָא נַפְשׁ-הַיָּלֵד הַזֶּה עַל-קִרְבוֹ (“please let the life of this boy return to his inner body”).¹⁹³

Since Elijah uses the jussive (תָּשָׁב) instead of the imperative of שׁוּב, his request is indirect. Perhaps, the extraordinary nature of his request may be behind his word choice, once Elijah does use imperative to address God in 18:37 (עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי “answer me O Yahweh answer me”).

Another intriguing aspect of verse 21 is the use of the word נַפְשׁ in the phrase תָּשָׁב נָא נַפְשׁ-הַיָּלֵד הַזֶּה עַל-קִרְבוֹ (“please let the life of this boy return to his inner body”). In his search for the meaning of נַפְשׁ in the HB, Glanz observes that “these two texts are the *only* HB texts in which נַפְשׁ is portrayed as an agent that moves in (שׁוּב; lit: “to return”) and out (יָצָא) of human bodies. In all the other verbal clauses (with finite verbal forms as a predicate) such imagery is absent.”¹⁹⁴ Although the possibility that the formulation has entered in a later stage of redaction should be seriously considered,¹⁹⁵ it is necessary to tackle with it in the present context if the final form of the text is the only artefact left to be examined.

¹⁹³ Olley reminds that the verb קרא (וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-יְהוָה) קרא, which introduces Elijah’s actual prayer, in verse 21 is “rare in the Former Prophets in contexts of prayer. It is so used eight times in the Elijah stories, but only ten times outside.” Olley, “YHWH and His Zealous Prophets,” 31.

¹⁹⁴ Oliver Glanz, “The Meaning of נַפְשׁ in the Hebrew Bible” in *God and Life after Death: Hell, Punishment, Resurrection, and Heaven* (Berrien Springs, MI: AUPress, Forthcoming), 30. He concludes that “consequently, these two texts are not representative of the overall HB concept of נַפְשׁ.”

¹⁹⁵ This is a possibility raised by Glanz in his article. According to him “during the Hellenization of the ANE formulations like ‘the soul left the body’ could have become popular for describing the death of a person. And thus, the scribal update of the Elijah cycle could have adapted the Hebrew to integrate this way of speaking. However, this does not automatically mean that the scribe(s) believed in a soul-body dualism. Many expressions used by language practitioners on a daily basis do not match their beliefs. No English speaker believes that the sun rises when she refers to the morning by saying ‘the sun has risen.’” Glanz, “The Meaning of נַפְשׁ,” 30.

In this case, the best rendering for נִפְשׁ is “life.”¹⁹⁶ The boy’s death is described by the extinguishing of נִשְׁמָה in verse 17. This, curiously, is the same way that the death of Hazor’s inhabitants is described in the context of חַרֵם in Jos 11:11. The only other text where both words appear together is in Gen 2:7 where the reader is told that life is the combination of נִשְׁמָה and מִן־הָאֲדָמָה. Thus, as נִשְׁמָה meets the boy’s dead body (עֶפְרָר (מִן־הָאֲדָמָה), his life (נִפְשׁ) returns to him. If the connection with Gen 2:7 and Jos 11:11 is intentional, Elijah is acting as God’s instrument to break the original curse. Additionally, by evoking Gen 2:7 the narrator develops the interplay between Elijah and Yahweh which has been seen in other parts of chapter 17.

The actual miracle is narrated in verse 22. Two important aspects should be considered at this point. The first clause (וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ) makes clear that the miracle has its origin in God’s response to Elijah’s prayer and not in Elijah’s act of stretching himself upon the boy three times.

However, a puzzling point emerges when the valence of שָׁמַע is considered. In the majority of cases שָׁמַע appears with either an explicit object or complement.¹⁹⁷ In the cases in which שָׁמַע has a complement (290x), the different complement constructions can be categorized into the following groups according to the preposition that introduces the prepositional phrase and the meaning that the construction triggers as can be seen in the table below:

¹⁹⁶ This is not always the case. The multifaceted use of the word נִפְשׁ requires a case-by-case approach. In Lev 21:11 and Num 6:6, for instance, נִפְשֵׁת מֵת is a corpse.

¹⁹⁷ All Shebanq queries in this section were formulated by Oliver Glanz. With a total of 1051 qal cases 669 cases have שָׁמַע with an explicit complement or object. See: <https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=2017&id=2942>

Table 7. Valence of שמע

Valence of שמע	
Group A	שָׁמַע+לְ (110x) ¹⁹⁸ : לְ governs the PP complement and triggers the meaning: “to listen to X” (e.g Gen 16:1; Deut 3:26; Isa 51:7)
Group B	שָׁמַע+בְּ (105x) ¹⁹⁹ : בְּ governs PP complement and triggers the meaning: “to obey” (e.g. Gen 26:5; Judg 2:2; 1 Sam 8:9)
Group C	שָׁמַע+לְ (52x) ²⁰⁰ : לְ governs the PP complement and triggers the meaning: “to pay attention to” (e.g., Gen 3:17; 16:2; 1 Sam 15:1)

In light of the valence of שמע, it appears rather awkward when one finds a text in which אֱלֹהִים/יְהוָה obeys a created being like in 1 Kgs 17:22.²⁰¹ Usually, man obeys the voice of אֱלֹהִים/יְהוָה. In general, English translations ignore the issue by simply translating the clause as “And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah” or like.²⁰² The problem with these renderings is that when the בְּ governs the noun קוֹל as the complement of the verb שמע, the meaning triggered is not “to hear” or “to listen to,” but “to obey.” In this case, the versions are not consistent; and the reason seems to be obvious: how can God obey a human being? Apart from 1 Kgs 17:22, the same phenomenon happens only in Num 21:3, Deut 1:45, Josh 10:14, and Judg 13:9.²⁰³ In all these cases, the versions follow

¹⁹⁸ See: <https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=2017&id=2945>

¹⁹⁹ See: <https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=2017&id=2946>

²⁰⁰ See: <https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=2017&id=2947>

²⁰¹ Such a construction can only be found 4x: <https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=2017&id=2937>

²⁰² For instance: “Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah” (NKJV, NASB); “And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah” (ESV, LEB, NRSV); “The LORD heard Elijah’s cry” (NIV); “The LORD answered Elijah’s prayer” (NET); “The LORD heard Elijah’s prayer” (NLT); “And the LORD hearkened unto the voice of Elijah” (JPS); “And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah” (KJV).

²⁰³ Only a few authors have recognized the implications of the obedience formula found in these passages. Commenting on Num 21:3, Baruch A. Levine points out the rarity of this formulation in biblical literature. See Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21–36*: AB 4A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 85. He also points to Judg 13:9 and 1 Kgs 17:22 as other instances in which the obedience formula (to use

his terminology) is used. From the perspective of the canonical order, the first occurrence of the formula appears in Num 21:3. However, from the perspective of the chronology of the story line, Deut 1:45 represents the earliest reference to divine obedience. Recalling Israel's past, Moses reviews the rebellion of the exodus generation in the desert of Paran at Kadesh when they refused to enter the land forty years earlier. He remembers their intention to go up and fight against the Canaanites in an attempt to reverse God's condemnation (Deut 1:41–42). Without God's intervention in their favor, the defeat would have been guaranteed. After a shameful debacle, they cried to Yahweh, but he did "not obey" them (*וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקִלְכֶם*) (Deut 1:45). It seems evident that the use of the formula here is ironic. In Deut 1:43, Moses says, "So I spoke to you, but you did not listen (*וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם*); you rebelled against the command of Yahweh." As they disobey God, he now "disobeys" them when they ask him to interfere. The reversal of the situation is found in Num 21:3. Now, thirty-eight years after this defeat before the Amorites, Israel is in the same place (note the mention of Hormah in both passages), ready to face the Canaanites from Arad. There are still people from the first generation alive—although they "will not claim the promise themselves, they will begin to see it fulfilled" (Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981], 399). It is significant that the episode marks a turning point in the military fortune of Israel, who from this point on start to overcome in every battle against the Canaanites. It is also important that the episode is literarily arranged after Aaron's death. The exodus generation is almost gone, and God starts to fulfill his plan with the second generation. Thus, God reverts their fortune and "obeys" them, giving them victory over the king of Arad. Such an irony should be understood in light of the covenant. On the one hand, as his people obey God's commands, he also obeys them, granting their request for help. On the other hand, as his people disobey him, he also "disobeys" them, denying his intervention in a circumstance he has not led them to. The use of the obedience formula in Judg 13:9 remains puzzling. The apparent lack of exceptionality in Manoah's request and the subsequent reply from Yahweh here seem to raise the question of whether this idiom reliably corresponds to the gloss "obey." When Judg 13:9 is considered in the context of the other passages where the obedience formula appears, the exceptional character of the occurrence becomes more evident. There are three coincidences common to all these passages where divine obedience is found. First, all of them appear in the Deuteronomist history. Second, all of them are related somehow to a battle against a power antagonistic to God (Amorites—Deut 1:45; Canaanites from Arad—Num 21:3; Amorites—Josh 10:13; Philistines—Judg 13:9; Baal—1 Kgs 17:22). Finally, and more important, all these passages involve a messianic figure (Israel, Joshua, Samson, and Elijah). On the development of messianic overtones involving Samson, see Matthew J. Grey, "The Redeemer to Arise from the House of Dan": Samson, Apocalypticism, and Messianic Hopes in Late Antique Galilee," *JSJ* 44 (2013): 553–589. As these characters relive the history of Israel, their typological function is established. See Beale, *Handbook*, 21–22. Regarding the use of the obedience formula in Josh 10:13, the exceptional nature of the circumstance is obvious. In his commentary on Josh 10:13, Paul Hinlicky remarks that "an exchange of idioms or attributes, indeed of subjectivities, occurred in this singularity: as YHWH fought for Israel, YHWH became the servant, listening to and obeying the human voice of Joshua, who acted as Lord in commanding heavenly bodies." (Paul Hinlicky, *Joshua*, BTCOT [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2021], 155). The way the LXX translators render these passages suggests that the valence triggers the obedience formula in each case. Joshua 10:14 (*ἐπακούσαι θεὸν ἀνθρώπου*) and Judg 13:9 (*καὶ ἐπήκουσεν ὁ θεὸς τῆς φωνῆς Μανωε*) use the word *ἐπακούω*, which means (according to BDAG) "to obey" or "to pay close attention to what one is told w. implication of being responsive." The other two cases, Num 21:3 (*εἰσήκουσεν κύριος τῆς φωνῆς Ἰσραηλ*) and Deut 1:45 (*καὶ οὐκ εἰσήκουσεν κύριος τῆς φωνῆς ὑμῶν*), use the construction *εἰσακούω* + *φωνῆς* + Gen. Again, the basic meaning BDAG suggests is "to obey" or "to listen, with implication of heeding and responding." Throughout the LXX, most of the cases of *ἐπακούω* and *εἰσακούω* have human beings as subjects that obey (or are called to obey) YHWH. See: Jonatas Leal and Oliver Glanz, "God's Obedience: A Linguistic and Narrative Exploration of the Hebrew Idiom in 1 Kings 17:22 and Its Theological Implications," *AUSS* 58 (2021): 35–37.

the same practice and translate the construction as “the Lord heard,” “listened to,” “heeded,” or “hearkened,” etc.”²⁰⁴

The struggle to render the expression seems to date back to the OG. As a whole the Greek version of chapter 17 presents few deviations from the MT.²⁰⁵ In face of the general textual agreement between the OG and the MT, the change in verse 22 is significant. The OG reads verse 22 as follows: *καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως, καὶ ἀνεβόησεν τὸ παιδάριον* (“and it happened thus; and the lad cried out”). Although no conclusive argument may be drawn from here, the possibility of a different *Vorlage* should not be dismissed automatically. However, it is not impossible to assume that the OG translator struggled with an obedient God; and instead of translating literally *וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ*, he preferred a summary rendering *καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως* (“and it happened thus”).²⁰⁶

A similar phenomenon occurs in the Targum of 1 Kings, which translates 22a as *אֲשֶׁר הָיָה וַיִּקְבַּל יְיָ צְלוֹתָיִהּ* (“and the Lord received the prayer of Elijah”). It is possible to

²⁰⁴ One exception is the NET Bible that translates the expression in Josh 10:14 with the correct nuance: “The LORD obeyed a man.” However, the NET Bible lacks consistence at this point, for they translated the same expression differently in Josh 10:14 and 1 Kgs 17:22.

²⁰⁵ Except verse 22, the most significant is the change from singular to plural of *בְּנֵי* (in Greek *τοῖς τέκνοις σου*) in verse 13 and verse 15 (*τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς* instead of *בְּיָתָהּ*). Such change may be an attempt to harmonize “her household” and “your son.” All deviations are listed next: 17:1 – OG adds *τῶν δυνάμεων ὁ θεός*; 17:13 – OG = *τοῖς τέκνοις σου*, MT = *בְּבָנָי*; 17:15 OG = *τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς*, MT = *בְּיָתָהּ*; 17:17 OG = *πνεῦμα*, MT = *נְשָׁמָה* (see Gn 2:7); 17:20 OG = *ὁ μάρτυς*, MT = *עַל*; 17:21 OG = *ἐνεφύσησεν*, MT = *וַיַּחַמְדָּךְ*; 17:22 OG = *καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως, καὶ ἀνεβόησεν τὸ παιδάριον*, MT = *וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ וַתִּשָׁב נְפִשׁ-הַיָּלֵד עַל-קִרְבּוֹ וַיִּחֵי*; 17:23 OG does not have *וַיִּקַּח אֱלִיָּהוּ אֶת-הַיָּלֵד*.

²⁰⁶ A detailed study on the relationship between the MT and the OG of 1 Kgs 17-19 is provided by Phillippe Hugo. Phillippe Hugo, *Les Deux Visages d'Elie: Texte Massorétique et Septante dans l'Histoire la plus Ancienne du Texte de 1 Rois 17–18* (Fribourg; Göttingen: Academic Press; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 2006); Phillippe Hugo, “Text and Literary History: Case of 1Kgs 19” in *Soundings Kings: Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Scholarship*, ed. Mark Leuchter and Klaus-Peter Adam (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010), 15–34. See also: Andrzej S. Turkanik, *Of Kings and Reigns: A Study of Translation Technique in the Gamma/Gamma Section of 3 Reigns (1 Kings)*, FAT 2:30 (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2008).

conjecture that the translator here is again trying to avoid the theological problem of God's obedience.²⁰⁷

In any case, the failure of the modern versions in communicating the nuance of the Hebrew text overshadows the narrative strategy in 1 Kgs 17:22. And, although a more precise translation may be suggested, the issue involving a divine obedience still persists.²⁰⁸

At this point, it should be noticed that the narrator's use of the language here is an additional clue of his intention to express an interplay between Yahweh and Elijah. Only as part of this overall narrative strategy can the meaning of 1 Kgs 17:22 be appreciated and the possible theological incongruence be solved.

A second and interesting aspect of verse 22 is the relationship between **תָּשָׁב נָפְשׁוֹ** and **נְפֶשׁ-הַיֶּלֶד הַזֶּה עַל-קִרְבוֹ** ("please let the life of this boy return to his inner body") in v. 21d and **וְתָשָׁב נְפֶשׁ-הַיֶּלֶד עַל-קִרְבוֹ** ("the breath of the boy return to his inner body") in v. 22b. Although **תָּשָׁב**²⁰⁹ is not an imperative form, the perfect match of the clauses indicates an

²⁰⁷ A detailed examination of the valence of **שמע** in the equivalent texts in the LXX and the Targumin could confirm this possibility. A lengthy treatment of the nature of the Targum to the Book of Kings is provided by Carol A. Dray. Carol A. Dray, *Translation and Interpretation in the Targum to the Books of Kings*, SAIS 5 (Leiden, Bloomsbury; Boston, MA: Brill, 2006). Unfortunately, the author does not consider 1 Kgs 17:22.

²⁰⁸ Only a few authors observe the phenomenon involving the valence of **שמע** here. Among them are Walsh, Long, and Leithart. Walsh affirms: "The phrase 'to listen to the voice' of someone is the usual idiom in Hebrew for 'to obey,' and it is often translated that way when the subject is a human being (for example, 1 Kgs 20:36)." Walsh, *1 Kings*, 235. In his turn, Long says that "in an important statement for the larger story, the narrator says that the Lord hears Elijah's cry (literally, 'heard/obeyed Elijah's voice' [קוּל, qôl])." This declaration stands out. Long highlights the parallel with Jos 10:14 where the phrase appears in connection with Joshua. Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 208. Finally, Leithart declares that "When Yahweh says X, Elijah does X. Now, when Elijah says Y, Yahweh does Y. The command-compliance pattern is reversed, for the Lord's answer to Elijah's prayer is stated in the same words as Elijah's prayer. There can be only one way to put this in the context: Yahweh heeds the voice of Elijah; Elijah commands, and Yahweh responds." Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 223.

²⁰⁹ The Yqtol form is followed by a **נָפְשׁוֹ**. The use of **נָפְשׁוֹ** with the Yqtol is fairly common in the HB. Besides its use with imperative, it accompanies verbs in cohortative and in jussive. Often, it expresses a

unexpected command-and-compliance pattern. The only difference is that Yahweh complies with a request instead of a command. The interchange of roles in this command-and-compliance structures involving Elijah and Yahweh himself is an additional indication of an interplay between God and his servant.

As an anticlimax, verse 23 closes the cycle opened in verse 19 (both verses are parallel). The boy, now alive (וַיְחַיֵּי see v.22c), is back to his initial place. At this moment, the lad goes from Elijah's bed to the prophet's arms (וַיִּקַּח אֵלָיָהוּ אֶת־הַיָּלֵד) and from his arms to the mother's lap again (וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְאִמּוֹ).

The extraordinary nature of this miracle resides in its unprecedented character.²¹⁰ This is the first resurrection recorded in the canon, and a miracle only rarely seen throughout the OT. Indeed, only three resurrections are narrated in the OT, and all of them happen in connection with Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs 4:18–37; 13:20).²¹¹ Pypers observes that “both Elijah's and Elisha's stories exhibit strange features that breach the most fundamental of boundaries in the Hebrew Bible, that between life and death.”²¹²

polite request found in prayer contexts. See Text-Fabric query results in section [“The Use of Yqtol plus אַ”](#) of my jupyter notebook.

²¹⁰ It is intriguing why Hall considers the boy's resurrection a “modest miracle.” The author remarks that “the gift Elijah gives is a relatively small one: he returns a son to a poor, foreign widow. This is not a grand gesture, not nearly as grand as his future battles with the prophets of Baal, but it is sufficient to enable her confession of the Lord's truth. Elijah has received a small amount, and it is enough.” Hall, “Prophetic Vulnerability,” 346.

²¹¹ Curiously, only three resurrections are also related in the Gospels in connection with Christ: Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:41), the young man of Nain (Luke 7:14); and Lazarus (John 11:38–44). Brodie considers Luke 7:11–17 as an *imitatio* of 1 Kgs 17:17–24. Thomas L. Brodie, “Towards Unravelling Luke's Use of the Old Testament: Luke 7:11-17 as an Imitatio of 1 Kings 17:17-24,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 247–267.

²¹² Hugh S. Pypers, “The Secret of Succession: Elijah, Elisha, Jesus, and Derrida” in *Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible—A reader*, ed., A. K. M. Adam (St Louis, MO: Chalice, 2001), 64.

Surely, Elijah is used by God to realize something unique that only God himself had personally done in the creation of humankind.

The episode closes the same way it began, with the woman addressing the prophet (ותאמר האשה אל־אליהו/v. 18 וותאמר אל־אליהו/v. 24). But the tone is completely different, with certainty instead of doubt, confession instead of profession, surrender instead of challenge. Curiously, although the women had addressed Elijah as איש האלהים in verse 18, now she knows that he is a man of God (עתה זה ידעתי כי איש אלהים אתה) (v. 24).²¹³ The designation איש האלהים (“man of God”) is used 76 times in the HB. The majority of its occurrences are found in Kings (55x) (19x in 1 Kgs and 36x in 2 Kgs). Moses is the first man to be so designated איש האלהים (Deut 33:1). The title highlights the close connection between God and his messenger. In the vocabulary of Kings, the expression came to designate God's spokesmen.²¹⁴

In terms of the general strategy of chapter 17 the widow's closing words are even more important. After the extraordinary experience, the widow recognizes also that now she knows (the verbal phrase is in ellipse here) that the word of Yahweh is in Elijah's mouth (אמת ודבר־יהוה בפי) (v.24). As mentioned before, the words פה and דבר are resumptive leading the reader back to 17:1. From the narrator's point of view, the chapter

²¹³ Instructively, Amy Kalmanofsky observes that “her words echo another biblical narrative about the near-death of a child—Genesis 22, the near sacrifice of Isaac. In Gen. 22.12, God tells Abraham that he does not need to sacrifice his son; Abraham has passed God's test, ‘Now I know that you are God-fearing (ידעתי כי ירא כי עתה). By echoing God's words, the widow indicates that Elijah has passed her test; he is a true man of God. Just as God tests Abraham by seeing if he was willing to kill his son, the widow tests Elijah to see if he was able to save her son. Being able to provide an endless supply of bread and oil is not enough to prove to the widow that Elijah is a man of God.” Amy Kalmanofsky, “Women of God: Maternal Grief and Religious Response in 1 Kgs 17 and 2 Kings 4,” *JSOT* 36 (2011): 66.

²¹⁴ In Kings, איש האלהים is a preferred title to designate Elisha. The expression designates him 10 times only in 2 Kgs 4 (cf. verses 7, 9, 16, 21, 22, 25, 27).

reaches its climax here. The remarkable miracle legitimates Elijah's authority establishing in a definitive way his role as a true prophet. Most likely, such a manifestation of God's intervention strengthened Elijah's faith, preparing him for his subsequent challenging tasks.

The widow's confession that the word of Yahweh was in Elijah's mouth (וּדְבַר־יְהוָה) is even more significant in light of the promise of a new prophet like Moses as found in Deut 18:18. There, God says, "I will raise up a prophet for them from among their countrymen like you, and I will place my words into his mouth (וְנָתַתִּי דְבָרַי) (בְּפִי), and he shall speak to them everything that I command him" (LEB). The parallel between וּדְבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אֱמֶת ("the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth") and וְנָתַתִּי דְבָרַי ("I will place my words into his mouth") cannot be coincidental. The reader might wonder if through these spontaneous words, this Sidonian woman, even without knowing of the Mosaic prophecy, is identifying Elijah as the great prophet promised in Deuteronomy.

This last episode functions as the climax of the one major motif found in 1 Kgs 17–19, namely, Yahweh's struggle against death. Alan J. Houser argues that this is "a major component in the structure of 1 Kings 17–19."²¹⁵ He adds that this motif is even "more pervasive, direct, and prominent than is the struggle with Baal."²¹⁶ In chapter 17, Elijah and Yahweh form "a potent, anti-death partnership"²¹⁷ to overcome all odds. It is

²¹⁵ Houser "Yahweh versus Death," 11. Nelson concurs saying "this theme is strongly present in several stories about Elijah and Elisha." Nelson, "God and the Heroic Prophet," 97.

²¹⁶ Houser "Yahweh versus Death," 80.

²¹⁷ Glover, "Elijah Versus the Narrative of Elijah," 452.

in the context of this motif that the narrator develops the polemics against Baal. In her essay, Bronner concludes that “Elijah’s activities therefore were intentionally directed by the writer, to undermining Baal worship, and to liberating the people from accepting the myths circulating about the power of the Canaanite deity.”²¹⁸ Baal was regarded as dying in the autumn and rising again in the spring, bringing essential fertility with him. So, when there was no rain for three years, it indicated that Baal was dead for 3 years. The issue of life and death is crucial because Baal was killed by Mot, according to Ugaritic mythology (the Baal myth).²¹⁹ Therefore, YHWH shows that he is superior to Baal by controlling fertility, but also by controlling life, and not being overpowered by death.

Narrative Features

The narrative features of the third episode in chapter 17 mirror closely the features already mentioned. There is a frequent use of intertextual links that connect Elijah to Joshua or Moses. These links become even more evident through the usage of key words or phrases (usually unexpected). The use of repetition is another important aspect of the narrator strategy. In the pericope, repetitions highlight the presence of command-and-compliance patterns (or the lack of them).

²¹⁸ Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 127. She adds that the narratives of Elijah “are not the work of simple people, but by a well-informed author who was intimately acquainted with Canaanite mythology and protested in heaven and earth are under control of Israel’s God.” Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 140. Regarding the extension of the polemics against Baal, James Anderson agrees that “this narrative abounds with attacks against Baal.” Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh’s Appropriation of Baal*, 67. However, Brevard Childs’ warning should be kept in mind here. He criticizes the central place of the polemics against Baal in 1 Kgs 18 as defended by Bronner. According to him, the exaggeration of parallels undermines the integrity of the biblical narrative leading interpreters away from the text of the OT itself. Childs, “On Reading the Elijah Narratives,” 129–134.

²¹⁹ The reader can find a good translation of the Baal myth in “The Ba’lu Myth,” trans. Dennis Pardee (*COS* 1.241–274).

As a whole, the narrative is terse which contributes to its dramatic nature. The dialogues vividly move the story forward. The structure is well balanced and provides a symmetry between action and speech verbs (cf. structure below). Through the use of unconventional phrases like *לֹא־נִוְתַרְה־בּוֹ נְשָׁמָה* (“there was no breath left in him”) and *וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֵלִיָּהוּ* (and Yahweh obeyed Elijah), the narrator challenges the reader’s understanding of convention. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to consider the story of verses 17–24 among other masterpieces of Hebrew narrative.

Structure

There are at least two ways to see the structure of chapter 17. The first is based on the use of the verbs of action and speech.

Complication factor: illness and death of the boy (17) (*וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים*)

The woman addresses Elijah (v. 18) – speech (*וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֵלִיָּהוּ*)
 Elijah addresses the woman (v. 19ab) – speech (*וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ*)
 Elijah and the boy (v. 19cde) – action (*וַיִּשְׁכַּבְהוּ/וַיַּעֲלֶהוּ/וַיִּקְחֶהוּ*)
 Elijah addresses Yahweh (v. 20) – speech (*וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יְהוָה*)
 Elijah with the boy (v. 21a) – action (*וַיִּתְמַדְד עַל־הַיֶּלֶד*)
 Elijah addresses Yahweh (v. 21bcd) – speech (*וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלֶיהִי*)
 Yahweh acts (v. 22) (*וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֵלִיָּהוּ*)
 Elijah and the boy (v. 23abc) – action (*וַיִּתְנַהוּ/וַיִּרְדֶּהוּ/וַיִּקַּח*)
 Elijah addresses the woman (v. 23d) – speech (*וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהוּ*)
 The woman addresses Elijah (v. 24) – speech (*וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה*)

In this pattern, there is a very balanced structure organizing the intercalation of the verbs of action and speech (ss asasa ss). The balance is broken only by Yahweh who acts in a decisive way answering the prophet’s prayer (v. 20). In this structure, the actions of Elijah are somehow enveloped by the woman’s speeches: the woman addresses the prophet (18) – the prophet acts (19-23) – the woman addresses the prophets (24). Thus, there is a movement from the woman’s first speech to the second speech. The change is

accomplished by what happens in verses 19–23. A similar movement appears in chapter 18 where Elijah’s actions and God’s decisive intervention lead the Israelites from silence to confession. Therefore, what happens in an individual level in chapter 17, happens in a collective level in chapter 18.

Another interesting way to see the pericope structure is through its content. Walsh proposes the following chiastic structure:

- A. speech by the widow (v. 18; “אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים”)
- B. speech by Elijah (v. 19a; “תִּגִּילִי אֶת-בְּנֶדְךָ”)
- C. Elijah takes the boy from his mother (v. 19b “וַיִּקַּח הוּא מִחִיקָה”)
- D. He brings him up to his own room (v. 19c “וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ”)
- E. He puts him on the bed (v. 19d “וַיִּשְׁכַּבְהוּ”)
- F. Elijah raises the child (vv. 20–22)
- E’. Elijah picks the child up (v. 23a “וַיִּקַּח”)
- D’. He brings him down from his own room (v. 23b “וַיִּרְדֵּהוּ”)
- C’. He returns him to his mother (v. 23c “וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ”)
- B’. speech by Elijah (17:23d; “רְאִי חַי בְּנֶדְךָ”)
- A’. speech by the widow (17:24; “אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים”)

In this structure the boy’s resurrection is the central part of the chiastic structure. Although the correspondences in this second proposal are undeniable and both structures can co-exist, the first one is preferable due to three factors: a. it is less selective since it considers all clauses; b. it is more objective since comes more directly from the syntactical and semantic levels of the text itself; and c. it is thematically more coherent with the main thrust of the chapter as a whole by highlighting the woman’s change of attitude toward the prophets as she recognizes him as a true man of God whose authoritative word in his mouth is genuinely divine.

CHAPTER 4
TEXT LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ELIJAH NARRATIVE
SCENES 2 AND 3: 1 KGS 18 –19

Second Scene: From Zarephath to Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18)

Preliminary Observations

The clash between Yahweh and Baal on Mount Carmel is part of the larger story of the drought. That drama opens in 17:1 with the announcement that there would be no rain except at Elijah's word. Further, the rain would not come until the occurrence of a public and unambiguous proof that it was Yahweh and not Baal who was sending it. In this sense, "the contest between Yahweh and Baal [...] is not limited to the story of the Carmel. It forms the theological backdrop for the entire narrative of the drought."¹

As such, the placement of Mt. Carmel account at this point in the drama is not an inconvenient or random interruption by an editor who is trying to combine different layers of tradition. Indeed, the narrative provides the reasoning for the rain. In addition, it raises the stakes of the bet. If Baal was not able to make fire come down from heaven, then clearly he would be incapable to make rain.

Chapter 18 is divided into three major sections. The first part (vv. 1–20) functions as a prelude to the contest that forms the second major unit of the chapter (vv. 21–40),

¹ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 260. Moore identifies four layers of conflict in 1 Kgs 18: Elijah versus Ahab; Elijah versus Israel; Elijah versus Baal prophets; and Yahweh versus Baal. Moore, *Faith under Pressure*, 97.

while the last section narrates the end of the drought (vv. 41–45). Each section is formed by small scenes where two characters (including collective ones in a united chorus like Baal’s prophets) share the stage. The first section opens with the divine command that sets Elijah on the move to meet Ahab. As in the previous chapter, God’s command (לְיָהוָה) is followed by a promise, which in this case is the return of the rain (עַל־וַאֲתָנָה מָטָר) (הַרְאֵה פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה) (v. 1). In the complex scheme of chapter 18, Elijah’s compliance starts in verse 2 (וַיֵּלֶךְ אֵלָיוּ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶל־אֲחָזָב), but the actual audience between the prophet and the king does not take place until verse 17. Likewise, the promise regarding the rain is not fulfilled until verse 45.

Although chapters 17 and 18 have many differences (including structure, themes, and setting among others), they are similar in terms of the main plot line. In 1 Kgs 17, there is a movement from profession to confession marked by the widow’s reluctance in the second and third episode. In 1 Kgs 18 a very similar movement can be seen. First, Obadiah meets Elijah’s imperative with compliance only after expressing initial reluctance (vv. 7–15). Second, and most importantly, there is a movement from the people’s silent lethargy (v. 21) to a complete commitment that goes beyond mere words (vv. 39, 40).

Although the miraculous wonders wrought in 1 Kgs 17 are unrivaled, it is in 1 Kgs 18 that the reader finds the climax of Elijah’s ministry. For in the context of the Elijah cycle the miracles are not an end in themselves, but they are instrumental in producing the final goal of his prophetic ministry, namely, the turning of people’s hearts

back again to God (v. 37). Indeed, “the turn from judgment to blessings is the real point of this story.”²

Elijah Returns to Israel and Meets with Obadiah and Ahab (1 Kgs 18:1–20)

Text-Syntactical Organization and Translation

	[<Ti> ימים רבים] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	18:01
[<Ti> בשנה השלישית]	[<PC> אל אליהו] [<Pr> היה] [<Su> דבר יהוה] [<Cj>ו]	WXQt	1Kgs	18:01
	[<Pr> לאמר]	InfC	1Kgs	18:01
	[<Pr> לך]	ZIm0	1Kgs	18:01
	[<Co> אל אחאב] [<Pr> הראה]	ZIm0	1Kgs	18:01
[<Co> על פני האדמה]	[<Ob> מטר] [<Pr> אתנה] [<Cj>ו]	WYq0	1Kgs	18:01
	[<Su> אליהו] [<Pr> ילך] [<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs	18:02
	[<Co> אל אחאב] [<Pr> להראות]	InfC	1Kgs	18:02
	[<Io> בשמרון] [<PC> חזק] [<Su> הרעב] [<Cj>ו]	AjC1	1Kgs	18:02
	[<Co> אל עבדיהו] [<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> יקרא] [<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs	18:03
	[<PC> על הבית] [<Re> אשר]	NmC1	1Kgs	18:03
[<Mo> מאד]	[<Ob> את יהוה] [<PC> ירא] [<Pr> היה] [<Su> עבדיהו] [<Cj>ו]	WXQt	1Kgs	18:03
	[<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	18:04
[<Ob> את נביאי יהוה]	[<Su> איזבל] [<Pr> בהכרית]	InfC	1Kgs	18:04
[<Ob> מאה נבאים]	[<Su> עבדיהו] [<Pr> יקח] [<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs	18:04
	[<PO> יחביאם] [<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	18:04
[<Co> במערה]	[<Ob> חמשים איש]	Ellp	1Kgs	18:04
[<Ob> לחם ומים]	[<PO> כלכלם] [<Cj>ו]	WQt0	1Kgs	18:04
	[<Co> אל עבדיהו] [<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs	18:05
[<Co> אל כל מעיני המים ואל כל הנחלים]	[<Lo> בארץ] [<Pr> לך]	ZIm0	1Kgs	18:05
	[<Ob> חציר] [<Pr> נמצא] [<Mo> אולי]	xYq0	1Kgs	18:05
	[<Ob> סוס ופרד] [<Pr> נחיה] [<Cj>ו]	WYq0	1Kgs	18:05
[<Co> מהבהמה]	[<Pr> נכרית] [<Ng> לוא] [<Cj>ו]	WxY0	1Kgs	18:05
[<Ob> את הארץ]	[<Co> להם] [<Pr> יחלקו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	18:06
	[<Co> בה] [<Pr> לעבר]	InfC	1Kgs	18:06
[<Aj> לבדו]	[<Co> בדרך אחד] [<Pr> הלך] [<Su> אחאב]	XQt1	1Kgs	18:06
[<Aj> לבדו]	[<Co> בדרך אחד] [<Pr> הלך] [<Su> עבדיהו] [<Cj>ו]	WXQt	1Kgs	18:06
	[<PC> בדרך] [<Su> עבדיהו] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs	18:07
	[<Su> אליהו] [<Ij> הנה] [<Cj>ו]	NmC1	1Kgs	18:07
	[<PO> לקראתו]	InfC	1Kgs	18:07
	[<PO> יכרהו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	18:07
	[<Co> על פניו] [<Pr> יפל] [<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	18:07

² Heller, *The Characters of Elijah and Elisha*, 74.

	[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 1Kgs 18:07
	[<PC> זה] [<Su> אתה] [<Qu>ה]			NmCl 1Kgs 18:07
	[<Vo><ap> אליהו / אדני]			Voct 1Kgs 18:07
	[<Co> לו] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 1Kgs 18:08
	[<Su> אני]			NmCl 1Kgs 18:08
	[<Pr> לך]			ZIm0 1Kgs 18:08
	[<Co> לאדניך] [<Pr> אמר]			ZIm0 1Kgs 18:08
	[<Su> אליהו] [<Ij> הנה]			NmCl 1Kgs 18:08
	[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 1Kgs 18:09
	[<Pr> חטאתי] [<Ob> מה]			xQt0 1Kgs 18:09
	[<Co> ביד אחאב] [<Ob> את עבדך] [<PC> נתן] [<Su> אתה] [<Cj> כי]			Ptcp 1Kgs 18:09
	[<PO> להמיתני]			InfC 1Kgs 18:09
	[<Su><ap> אלהיך / יהוה] [<PC> חי]			AjCl 1Kgs 18:10
	[<Su> גוי וממלכה] [<eX> יש] [<Cj> אם]			NmCl 1Kgs 18:10
	[<Co> שם] [<Su> אדני] [<Pr> שלח] [<Ng> לא] [<Re> אשר]			xQtX 1Kgs 18:10
	[<PO> לבקשך]			InfC 1Kgs 18:10
	[<Pr> אמרו] [<Cj>ו]			WQt0 1Kgs 18:10
	[<Ng> אין]			NmCl 1Kgs 18:10
	[<Ob> את הממלכה ואת הגוי] [<Pr> השביע] [<Cj>ו]			WQt0 1Kgs 18:10
	[<PO> ימצאכה] [<Ng> לא] [<Cj> כי]			xYq0 1Kgs 18:10
	[<Ti> עתה] [<Cj>ו]			MSyn 1Kgs 18:11
	[<PC> אמר] [<Su> אתה]			Ptcp 1Kgs 18:11
	[<Pr> לך]			ZIm0 1Kgs 18:11
	[<Co> לאדניך] [<Pr> אמר]			ZIm0 1Kgs 18:11
	[<Su> אליהו] [<Ij> הנה]			NmCl 1Kgs 18:11
	[<Pr> היה] [<Cj>ו]			WQt0 1Kgs 18:12
	[<Co> מאתך] [<Pr> אלך] [<Su> אני]			XYqt 1Kgs 18:12
	[<PO> ישאך] [<Su> רוח יהוה] [<Cj>ו]			WXYq 1Kgs 18:12
	[<Pr> אדע] [<Ng> לא] [<Re> על אשר]			xYq0 1Kgs 18:12
	[<Pr> באתי] [<Cj>ו]			WQt0 1Kgs 18:12
	[<Co> לאחאב] [<Pr> להגיד]			InfC 1Kgs 18:12
	[<PO> ימצאך] [<Ng> לא] [<Cj>ו]			WxY0 1Kgs 18:12
	[<PO> הרגני] [<Cj>ו]			WQt0 1Kgs 18:12
	[<Ti> מנערי] [<Ob> את יהוה] [<PC> ירא] [<Su> עבדך] [<Cj>ו]			Ptcp 1Kgs 18:12
	[<Co> לאדני] [<Pr> הגד] [<Ng> לא] [<Qu>ה]			xQt0 1Kgs 18:13
	[<Pr> עשיתי] [<Re> את אשר]			xQt0 1Kgs 18:13
	[<Ob> את נביאי יהוה] [<Su> איזבל] [<Pr> בהרג]			InfC 1Kgs 18:13
	[<Ob> מאה איש] [<Aj> מנביאי יהוה] [<Pr> ואחבא] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 1Kgs 18:13
	[<Co> במערה] [<Ob> חמשים חמשים איש]			Ellp 1Kgs 18:13
	[<Ob> לחם ומים] [<PO> אכלכלם] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 1Kgs 18:13
	[<Ti> עתה] [<Cj>ו]			MSyn 1Kgs 18:14
	[<PC> אמר] [<Su> אתה]			Ptcp 1Kgs 18:14

	[<Pr> לך]				ZIm0 1Kgs 18:14
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[<Su> אליהו]	[<Ij> הנה]				NmCl 1Kgs 18:14
	[<PO> הרגני] [<Cj>ו]				WQt0 1Kgs 18:14
	[<Su> אליהו] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]				WayX 1Kgs 18:15
	[<Su> יהוה צבאות] [<PC> חי]				AjCl 1Kgs 18:15
[<Co> לפניו]	[<Pr> עמדתי] [<Re> אשר]				xQt0 1Kgs 18:15
[<Co> אליו]	[<Pr> אראה] [<Ti> היום] [<Cj> כי]				xYq0 1Kgs 18:15
	[<Su> עבדיהו] [<Pr> ילך] [<Cj>ו]				WayX 1Kgs 18:16
	[<Ob> אחאב] [<Pr> לקראת]				InfC 1Kgs 18:16
	[<Co> לו] [<Pr> יגד] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 18:16
	[<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> ילך] [<Cj>ו]				WayX 1Kgs 18:16
	[<Ob> אליהו] [<Pr> לקראת]				InfC 1Kgs 18:16
	[<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 18:17
	[<Ob> את אליהו] [<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> כראות]				InfC 1Kgs 18:17
	[<Co> אליו] [<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]				WayX 1Kgs 18:17
	[<PC> זה] [<Su> אתה] [<Qu>ה]				NmCl 1Kgs 18:17
	[<Ob> ישראל] [<PC> עכר]				Voct 1Kgs 18:17
	[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 18:18
	[<Ob> את ישראל] [<Pr> עכרתי] [<Ng> לא]				xQt0 1Kgs 18:18
	[<Su> אתה ובית אביך] [<Cj> כי אם]				NmCl 1Kgs 18:18
[<Ob> את מצות יהוה]	[<Ps> בעזבכם]				InfC 1Kgs 18:18
[<Co> אחרי הבעלים]	[<Pr> תלך] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 18:18
	[<Ti> עתה] [<Cj>ו]				MSyn 1Kgs 18:19
	[<Pr> שלח]				ZIm0 1Kgs 18:19
[<Co> אל הר הכרמל]	[<Ob> את כל ישראל] [<Co> אלי] [<Pr> קבץ]				ZIm0 1Kgs 18:19
[<Aj> ארבע מאות וחמשים]	[<Ob> את נביאי הבעל] [<Cj>ו]				Ellp 1Kgs 18:19
	[<Aj> ארבע מאות] [<Ob> נביאי האשרה] [<Cj>ו]				Ellp 1Kgs 18:19
	[<Ob> שלחן איזבל] [<PC> אכלי]				Ptcp 1Kgs 18:19
	[<Co> בכל בני ישראל] [<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> ישלח] [<Cj>ו]				WayX 1Kgs 18:20
[<Co> אל הר הכרמל]	[<Ob> את הנביאים] [<Pr> יקבץ] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 18:20

¹ After many days³ the word of the Lord happened to Elijah in the third year, saying, “Go and show yourself to Ahab and I will send rain on the face of the earth.

² And Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. And the famine was severe in Samaria.

³ And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the house. And Obadiah was fearing Yahweh greatly.

³ The expression **וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים** is unique. Similar clauses appear in Exod 2:23 (**וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים**), Josh 23:1 (**וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים רַבִּים**), and Jer 13:6 (**וַיְהִי מִקֶּץ יָמִים רַבִּים**). However, in these cases the pair **יָמִים רַבִּים** is part of a prepositional phrase. The preposition “after” conveys the sense of the pair in this narrative context. The discourse marker **וַיְהִי** is followed by a temporal phrase expressing sequence of events in 1 Kgs 17:7, 17. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Many Days](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

⁴ When Jezebel killed the prophets of Yahweh, he took a hundred prophets and hid them, fifty to a cave,⁴ and he provided them with bread and water.

⁵ And Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the wadis; perhaps we will find grass so that we can keep alive the horses and mules⁵ and be not cut off from the animals.

⁶ And they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

⁷ Then Obadiah was on the way and, look, Elijah was there to meet him. Obadiah recognized him and fell on his face. And he said, “Is really⁶ you my lord Elijah?”

⁸ He said to him, “I am. Go, say to your lord ‘Elijah is here.’”

⁹ He said, “How have I sinned that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab to kill me?”

¹⁰ As Yahweh your God is alive surely there is no nation and kingdom that my lord has not sent me there to seek you. And when they said, ‘he is not here,’ then he made the kingdom or nation swear that it could not find you.

¹¹ And now you are saying, ‘Go, say to your Lord, “Elijah is here!”’

¹² It will happen that I will go from you and the Spirit of Yahweh will carry you to where I do not know. And I will go to declare to Ahab, and I will not find you. Then he will kill me, even though⁷ your servant has feared⁸ Yahweh since my youth.

¹³ Was it not told to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of Yahweh? I hid one hundred of the prophets of Yahweh by fifty⁹ in the cave.

¹⁴ And now you are saying, ‘Go, say to your lord, “Elijah is here.” He will kill me.’”

¹⁵ And Elijah said, “As Yahweh of hosts, before whom I stand, lives, I will show myself before him today.”

¹⁶ And Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and he declared to him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah.

¹⁷ When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it really¹⁰ you, O the troubler of Israel?”

⁴ Regarding the use of the article in *בְּמַעְרָה*, Gesenius observes that in some cases the article may denote “a single person or thing (primarily one which is as yet unknown, and therefore not capable of being defined) as being present to the mind under given circumstances. In such cases in English the indefinite article is mostly used.” Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 407. Montgomery suggests that the use of article in *בְּמַעְרָה* indicates the meaning “in the cave complex.” Montgomery, *Kings*, 309.

⁵ Singular with a collective sense.

⁶ The demonstrative *הֵן* is enclitic. It is used in exclamatory questions and presentations with purpose of emphasis. See: Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 312.

⁷ At this point, I am following the LEB’s translation of the conjunction *וְ*. The English phrase “even though” seems to be appropriate to convey Obadiah’s logic.

⁸ Although the participle *יָרָא* per se does not express continuity, the complement phrase triggers this function.

⁹ Literally, “fifty fifty men.” See LEB.

¹⁰ The demonstrative *הֵן* is also enclitic here (cf. v. 7).

¹⁸ And he said, “I have not troubled Israel but you and your father’s house by abandoning the commandments of Yahweh. And you went after the Baals.

¹⁹ Now, send and gather to me all Israel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at the table of Jezebel on Mount Carmel.

²⁰ And Ahab sent among all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets on Mount Carmel.

Delimitation

The first major section of chapter 18 is introduced by the discourse marker וַיְהִי in verse 1 that also marks the transition between 1 Kgs 17 and 18. The following nominal (יָמִים רַבִּים) clause places the events of chapter 18 in temporal sequence. In continuity with the previous episodes, the formula sets the prophet in motion and advances the main plot.

However, different from chapter 17, 1 Kgs 18 is formed mostly by dialogues that put forward the plot. There are more speeches and less description. Following the literary conventions of the ancient world, the narrator restricts the scenes to two principal actors.¹¹ In this first section the dialogues happen between Yahweh and Elijah (vv. 1–2a), Ahab and Obadiah (vv. 2b–6), Obadiah and Elijah (vv. 7–16), and Elijah and Ahab (vv. 17–20).

Text-Empirical Analysis

Yahweh & Elijah (vv. 1–2a)

The first small scene opens with the discourse marker וַיְהִי. The transition marks the move of Elijah back to Israel. There is no indication of how much time Elijah spent in the widow’s house besides the indefinite יָמִים רַבִּים (“many days”). However, in other

¹¹ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 236.

occurrences, the phrase covers periods longer than months.¹² At least, the duration of the drought that is implicit in יָמִים רַבִּים is somehow clarified by the temporal prepositional phrase בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית (“in the third year”). However, there is no agreement among scholars regarding the exact amount of time that the phrase implies. For instance, Walsh suggests that “in Israelite reckoning, ‘three years’ may mean no more than one full year, plus small portions of the preceding and following years.”¹³ In the NT, both Jesus in Luke 4:25 and James in Jam 5:17 affirm that the drought lasted three years and six months. As is evident, there is discrepancy (although a trifle one) between the narrator’s “third year” in 1 Kgs 18 and Jesus and James’ reference to the same period of time in the NT. Three major explanations are considered below.

First, the period of three years mentioned in 1 Kgs 18 refers to the time Elijah spent in Zarephath instead of indicating the time of the famine.¹⁴ Since the famine was not solved immediately after the rain, a period of three years and a half may be inferred from 1 Kgs 18:1. One of the problems with this suggestion is that the narrative of Kings does not separate the famine from the drought. If it is true that the rain did not immediately end the famine, the lack of it did not immediately cause food shortage. In addition to that, the focal point of 1 Kgs 18:1 is the return of the rain which is withheld

¹² In Exod 2:23, a similar phrase (וַיְהִי בְיָמִים הָרַבִּים) denotes the period between Moses’ flight from Egypt to his return. In Josh 23:1 וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים רַבִּים refers to the years since the conquest until the death of Joshua. In Jer 13:6, וַיְהִי מִקֶּץ יָמִים רַבִּים, designates the period of time enough to have a loincloth deteriorated.

¹³ Walsh additionally says that in the rain-dependent climate of Palestine, the absence of rain for even this amount of time is catastrophic.” Walsh, *1 Kings*, 237. Choon-Leon Seow agrees with Walsh suggesting that drought could have lasted only one full year, Choon-Leon Seow, “The First and Second Books of Kings” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon) 3:131.

¹⁴ See: Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 127–128.

since Elijah leaves the presence of Ahab and not when Elijah reaches the Sidonian territory. Lastly, this suggestion does not explain why Jesus and James specifically refer to three years and six months.

Second, both Jesus and James may be using “a more specific number for the approximate ‘three years’ of 1 Kgs (18:1). Again, this does not explain why they specifically opt for three years and six months. Third, following a Jewish tradition rooted in Dan 7:25 they are using a standard length of time as found in the apocalyptic literature to refer to an era of tribulation when evil predominates (cf. Dan 12:7; Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14). In this case, the use of three years and a half is symbolic.

It is difficult to affirm if Jesus and James have in mind any tradition in their reference to the OT narrative, but the chronological precision may in this case be subordinate to the intention to connect the drought of 1 Kgs 17–18 with a numerical pattern that traditionally would evoke the tribulation motif in the original audience. If this is the case, the NT writers are interpreting the Elijah narrative in eschatological terms (cf. Dan 7:25; 9:27; 12:7). If Elijah is one of the two witnesses in Rev 11, the trampling of the temple for 42 months and their prophesying in sackcloth for 1260 days (both 3 ½ yrs) are significant for understanding the use of three years and a half by Jesus and John.

In any case, right after this short introduction, לְאָמַר triggers the change from narrative to discursive mode. Here, for the third time God commands Elijah to go (לֵךְ). Now, no specific route is indicated,¹⁵ but the second imperative (הֵרְאָה) directs the prophet to the king. The conjunction וְ in וְהֵרְאָהוּ seems to have subordinative function referring to the purpose of the substance of the previous clause. In other words, the end of

¹⁵ In chapter 17, the divine command לֵךְ is always followed by a noun with a ה locale (cf. 17:3, 9).

the drought depends on this meeting. The fulfilment of the desire expressed by the cohortative **וְאֶתְנָה** can happen only after Elijah meets Ahab. In this way, the narrator interweaves the announcement of the drought (1 Kgs 17:1) and the contest (1 Kgs 18:21–40) that follows the meeting between the king and the prophet (1 Kgs 18:17–20) with the end of the drought (1 Kgs 18:41–45).

The clause **וְאֶתְנָה מִטָּר**, which appears nine times in the OT, has a strong connection with the covenant, particularly in contexts where blessings (or the lack of them) are based on covenant faithfulness. For instance, the promise of rain in the due season is found in Deut 11:13–14 while the lack of rain is emphasized as a direct result of disobedience in Deut 28:24. In his prayer, Solomon says that in the context of the breaking rain would be poured down again at the condition of the people's repentance (1 Kgs 8:36 cf. 2 Chr 6:27).¹⁶ In light of 1 Kgs 8:36, the divine initiative to send Elijah is a manifestation of his grace. At any rate, although God needs to interfere in 1 Kgs 17–18, rain indeed comes only after the people's response of repentance (1 Kgs 18:39–40). Having in mind Solomon's prayer, as there is no temple in Northern Israel at that time, the mount with an old solitary altar to Yahweh itself becomes a temple.

Implicit in God's resolution to bring back rain “over the face of the earth” (**עַל-פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ**) is the scope of the drought that strikes lands beyond the borders of Israel. The phrase, which is part of the Deuteronomistic vocabulary, usually denotes a more

¹⁶ The phrase also occurs in two more places. In 1 Sam 12:17, 18, rain legitimates Samuel's message and shows God's displeasure with the people's request of a king. In Isa 30:23, the rain is included in the promises of restoration based on God's mercy. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Distribution of the Expression ‘I will Give Rain’](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

universal sway.¹⁷ That the drought has gone beyond Israel's borders is also clear from the previous chapter where Elijah meets the widow at the brink of starvation. The phrase also leads the reader to the previous divine communication when Yahweh says that he would provide for the widow's family until the day Yahweh gives rain on the face of the earth (עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה) (1 Kgs 17:14).

In much the same fashion as in 1 Kgs 17, the prophet obeys immediately. Again, the command-and-compliance pattern is activated by the wayyqtol וַיֵּלֶךְ. Curiously, instead of the expected wayyqtol of רָאָה, the narrator uses the infinitive form. Rather than indicating a flawed or hesitant obedience of Elijah, the use of the infinitive is apparently part of the narrative strategy. Walsh observes that “instead of simply telling us that Elijah ‘went and presented himself,’ the narrator can present a whole series of scenes that accomplish the same result dramatically.”¹⁸ The meeting is deferred until verse 17. However, the two small scenes in between offer valuable background information that helps not only to understand what would happen afterwards but also what has already happened in chapter 17.

¹⁷ For instance, Gen 4:14; 6:1; 8:8; Exod 32:12; Num 12:3; Deut 14:2. The phrase appears 31 times in the HB. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Distribution of the Expression ‘On the Face of the Earth’](#)” of my jupyter notebook. Almost half of the occurrences are in the Torah (12x). Outside the Pentateuch, עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה appears in Samuel and Kings with the same sense (e.g., 1 Sam 20:15; 2 Sam 14:7, 1 Kgs 13:34). In the prophetic literature the phrase is used likewise (e.g., Jer 8:2; 16:4, Amos 9:9). In some cases, the phrase denotes the literal surface of the ground (Isa 23:17; Jer 25:33) rather a geographical range. This may be the case in 1 Kgs 17:14 and 18:1. Only in a few cases does the phrase refer specifically to the Israelite land (1 Kgs 8:40 cf. 2 Chr 6:31; 1 Kgs 9:40; Isa 28:16). Curiously, in Zeph 1:2–3 the phrase is part of the imagery in which Israel's land becomes a type of the whole earth under the divine judgment.

¹⁸ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 237.

Ahab & Obadiah (vv. 2b–6)

The nominal clause וְהָרָעַב הַזֶּקֶ בְּשֶׁמֶרוֹן (“and the famine was severe in Samaria”) breaks the sequence of wayyqtols indicating that the reader is entering into background information mode. The narrative main timeline is retaken only in verse 7 where the meeting between Obadiah and Elijah is recorded. The background information has two levels. The first (vv. 2b, 3a, 5–6) offers a glimpse into the consequences of the drought in the palace in Samaria. The second level (3b–4) can be considered background within background where the narrator gives a step back in time to focus on Obadiah taking the risk to save a hundred prophets of Yahweh as a sign of his fearing attitude.

The first level of background opens with the nominal clause הָרָעַב הַזֶּקֶ בְּשֶׁמֶרוֹן that changes the setting from foreign land to Israel.¹⁹ The famine has affected the heart of the land and the king has not been left untouched. Although the break in the food chain was more often due to climatology, particularly dry conditions,²⁰ here the drought is a divine punishment (17:1) resulting of the breaking of the covenant.

In order to cope with the scarcity of resources the king summons Obadiah (v. 3a), who is initially identified as the one “over the house” (אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַבַּיִת). The expression appears 14 times in the HB. In all of them, it is used to designate someone in administrative charge. In Isa 22:15, it is used in parallel to the noun הַסֵּכֵן (steward,

¹⁹ From a purely clause functional perspective, the nominal clause simply as a statement.

²⁰ Other collective famines mentioned in the OT are found in the patriarchal times (Gen 12:10; 43:1). In ANE, droughts are also responsible for severe famines. According to William Shea, “in ANE texts these conditions were encountered especially during the First Intermediate Period in Egypt (ca. 2150–2000 B.C.E.) from which come an extensive series of inscriptions from local governors who complained about low Nile river levels and poor crop production, and the need to search upriver and downriver to find grain with which to feed their subjects.” William H. Shea, “Famine,” *ABD*, 2:770. In this article, Shea provides a good summary about famine in the biblical times.

administrator). Most likely, Obadiah plays an important role in the palace, perhaps one of the highest offices.²¹

At this point, the narrator pauses again to provide additional background information about Obadiah. This pause is indicated by a new break on the wayyqtol sequence within the background level one initiated in 2b. This background level two is opened by a WXQt clause (מֵאֵד וְעַבְדִּיהוּ הָיָה יִרְאֵ אֶת־יְהוָה) “and Obadiah was fearing Yahweh greatly”). Here Obadiah, whose name means “servant of Yahweh,” is characterized as someone fearing Yahweh greatly. At this point, even before gaining voice Obadiah’s awkward position is spelled out. His duality as servant of Yahweh and servant of Ahab, the apostate king, mirrors the condition of Israel which is limping (233overeign233g) between Yahweh and Baal. Indeed, “Obadiah is at the same time courageous and fainthearted.”²² The ambivalent character of Obadiah hinted at here will be made obvious in his dialogue with Elijah.

The evidence of Obadiah’s fear is given in verse 4. The temporal use of בְּהִכָּרִית leads the reader to occurrences preceding the events narrated here and probably before those in chapter 17. Somehow, this flashback puts in perspective the divine command for Elijah to hide in 1 Kgs 17:2. The word choice involving the hipil of כָּרַת is meaningfully. The word is parallel to the root הָרַג in verse 13, and naturally implies that

²¹ “Though this position becomes the equivalent of prime minister, at this stage it most likely designates stewardship of royal lands and possessions. It is claimed as a title of an official named Gedaliah on a seal from sixth-century Lachish.” Matthews, Chavalas, Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1 Kgs 18:3.

²² Houser, “Yahweh versus Death,” 27.

“the cutting off” of the prophets is tantamount to their killing.²³ The verbal root is often found in the karet penalty formula (e.g., Exod 30:38; Lev 7:27; Num 4:18).²⁴ In this case, the karet penalty is “a conditional divine curse of extinction. It may occur simultaneously with or subsequent to the mere fact of death, whether the latter be prematurely wrought by God or man.”²⁵ It is important also to notice that in the Pentateuch the hiphil of כרת always has a divine subject (Lev 17:10; 20:3, 5, 6; Num 4:18).²⁶ Outside the Pentateuch, the verbal root is a “common expression of divine judgment” and has the sense of “exterminating.”²⁷ In Joshua, the root is used in the context of the mandatory utter destruction of Canaanite population (Josh 11:21; 23:4). From a theological perspective, this use of כרת indicates that God is the ultimate lawgiver, judge, jury, and executioner/preserver of those in Israel and outside of Israel.

Curiously, starting in Deuteronomy, every time that the hiphil of כרת has an explicit subject, this subject is יהוה (“Yahweh”) or אֱלֹהֵיךָ (“your God”), except in 1 Kgs 18:4 where Jezebel is the subject.²⁸ In the case of Deut 12:9 and 19:1 the hiphil is used in

²³ While the narrative description contains יהוה אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶת נְבִיאֵי יְהוָה אֵיזָבֶל בְּהַכְרִית אֵת נְבִיאֵי יְהוָה (v. 4) Obadiah’s words are אֵיזָבֶל אֶת נְבִיאֵי יְהוָה אֵיזָבֶל בְּהָרַג אֵת נְבִיאֵי יְהוָה (v. 13).

²⁴ The karet penalty formula comprises the root כרת (either NI or HI) and a subject followed by a prepositional phrase with the conjunction כִּי. Although the formula is not complete in 1 Kgs 18, the parallel with the root הרג (v. 13) in the context of an apparent religion purgation reinforces the possibility of an allusion to the karet punishment.

²⁵ John D. Wold, “The Meaning of the Biblical Penalty ‘Kareth’” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1978), 252.

²⁶ See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Subject of the Verb כרת](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

²⁷ G. F. Hasel, “כרת,” *TDOT* 7:346–348.

²⁸ See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Subject of the Verb כרת](#)” of my jupyter notebook. The cases are found Deut 12:29; 19:1; 1 Sam 20:15; Isa 9:13; Mal 2:12; Ps 12:4.

the context of the extermination of the defying Cannanites. Given the influence of Deuteronomy on the Kings' narrator/editor(s), it appears likely that the narrator is tracing a parallel between Jezebel's action of cutting off the prophets and the action of God in Deuteronomy.

In this context of religion purgation,²⁹ Obadiah's act of hiding the prophets in two separate places is notable.³⁰ Both the action to hide them in the caves and to provide for their maintenance there entail risky moves by Obadiah.³¹ In the process of the narrative, "his odd and important position as an undercover agent for Yahwism" is made evident. In the context of chapter 17 and 18, Obadiah's protective actions parallel those of Yahweh in providing for Elijah with food and water (יְבִלְלֵם 17:3/ וְיִבְלְלֵם/18:4). The reader is invited to evaluate the "usefulness" of Obadiah in his role as a double agent.³² The

²⁹ Jezebel's persecution of Yahweh's prophets is something unusual in the ancient polytheistic world which was mostly tolerant to distinct religious expressions. Bronner mentions the attempt of Ikhnaton to eradicate the worship to Amon making Aton the only God to be worshiped in the land of Egypt as a parallel of the religious persecution undertaken by Jezebel in the Northern kingdom. Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 17.

³⁰ As the karet punishment involved the erasing of someone's name (memory), the family of the cursed would face death too. Whether the family of the prophets in 1 Kgs 18 were also being killed is not mentioned in the passage, but that would be one possibility.

³¹ "That Obadiah would have little difficulty in finding caves for the sons of the prophets can be seen in that over two thousand caves have been counted in Mount Carmel area." Patterson and Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 775.

³² Gloves goes so far as to say that the narrative indicates that Obadiah is the true hero of 1 Kings 18. Glover "Elijah versus the Narrative of Elijah," 459. Heller compares Elijah and Obadiah concluding that Elijah's devotion consists only in words, while Obadiah's devotion is demonstrated in deeds. He says, "whereas Elijah fled the country, Obadiah remains. Whereas YHWH commands Elijah to hide in the wadi, Obadiah himself takes the initiative and hides prophets in a cave. Whereas God commands ravens and a widow to sustain (כול) Elijah, Obadiah himself takes the initiative and sustains (כול) 100 prophets of YHWH. Whereas YHWH provides bread and water to Elijah through the widow, Obadiah provides the same to 100 prophets. Whereas Elijah has merely been the recipient of YHWH's provisions, Obadiah has actually provided." Heller, *The Characters of Elijah and Elisha*, 62–63. There is no doubt that the narrator presents Obadiah in a favorable way, but in the dialogue with Elijah a fearful Obadiah emerges leading the reader to counterbalance his initial presentation and thereby creating a certain ambivalence in his characterization.

tension created by this ambiguity becomes more prominent in his dialogue with Elijah in 1 Kgs 18:7–16.

The background level one is retaken in verse 5 (וַיֹּאמֶר אֶחָאָב אֶל-עֲבַדְיָהוּ) “and Ahab said to Obadiah”). Obadiah’s task is to go into the land to find water so that horses and mules could be kept alive. The concern with mules and horses may at first glance seem out of place, but it should be remembered that they were a renown military asset for Ahab.³³

Two ironies found in verse 4 are relevant to mention here. The first one involves the use of the verbal root כרת in וְלֹא נִכְרִית מִהַבְּהֵמָה in כרת (“and be not cut off from the animals”). While his wife is cutting off (כרת) prophets of Yahweh, the only glimpse of the consequences of the drought in Samaria is the trouble to avoid being cut off (כרת) or deprived from the animals. In this way, the narrator provides the first hint of Ahab’s dismissive attitude toward Yahwism. This first spark of antagonism will develop in the plot through the next two dialogues (vv. 7–16 and 17–20). The second irony concerns the involvement of Ahab in searching for resources to provide for the animals of the royal stable. Walsh points out the contrast between Ahab and Obadiah saying that “because of the drought, Ahab is unable to provide sustenance for his animals; despite the drought, Obadiah is able to provide bread and water for the prophets of Yahweh.”³⁴

³³ “The demand of the royal stables is illustrated by Shalmaneser III’s figuring of the chariots of ‘Ahab the Israelite’ at 2000.” Montgomery, *Kings*, 299.

³⁴ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 239.

The joint forces of Ahab and Obadiah separate and depart in two different directions (v. 6).³⁵ At this point, the background closes and the main timeline of the narrative is resumed. This little narrative window not only provides useful information to the reader but also advances the plot of bringing Obadiah to Elijah's meeting. The fact that Elijah meets Obadiah first adds drama to the account and give an opportunity to expand the reader's knowledge of the general climate of Israel in which Elijah is called to act.

Obadiah & Elijah (vv. 7–16)

From verse 7 to 16 the focus is on Elijah and, particularly, Obadiah. The verb *וַיִּהְיֶה* functions as a transitional marker of the new scene. The meeting between Elijah and Obadiah is also developed by dialogues. The narrator adds his words only in the beginning (v. 7) and in the end (v. 16). The unexpected aspect of this meeting is expressed by the use of the deictic *הִנֵּה* (“look or behold”) that adds vivacity to the scene (*וַיִּהְיֶה אֵלֵיָּהוּ לְקִרְאָתוֹ* “Elijah was there to meet him”).³⁶ Since Elijah starts his journey to meet Ahab (*וַיֵּלֶךְ אֵלֵיָּהוּ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶל־אַחָאָב* “Elijah went to show himself to Ahab”) and not Obadiah, the use of the infinitive *לְקִרְאָתוֹ* is intriguing. Elijah comes to encounter Obadiah before meeting the king. There is no explanation about why the prophet did not go directly to Ahab. In any level, Obadiah's introduction provides a window for the reader to

³⁵ Without further elaboration Brichto considers the enterprise of Ahab and Obadiah as one of confiscatory taxation. According to him the journey probably includes the presence of soldiery accompanying each group. Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics*, 132.

³⁶ In terms of pragmatics, its use brings attention to “events that are surprising or unexpected for the person addressed or the characters in a story.” Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 330.

look into the spiritual condition of Israel during this grueling time. The servant here appears to play a mediating role.

At the first moment that Obadiah sights Elijah, he recognizes him (וַיִּכְרֶהוּ) even before verbally confirming his identity,³⁷ and he falls immediately on his face (וַיִּפֹּל עַל-פְּנֵי) (v. 7). It is evident that this is not the first time that Obadiah meets the prophet. Both his attitude and the way he addresses Elijah as אֲדֹנָי (“lord”) expresses remarkable respect.³⁸

The prophet’s attitude is rather unexpected. He speaks without flourishing and with only minimal words. Indeed, his answer to Obadiah’s question is a sentence with only one word (אָנִי). Having in mind the role of Obadiah in preserving the prophets’ lives, the reader would expect more engagement from Elijah, despite his laconic style which is characteristic of the prophet. However, that does not happen.

Immediately, Elijah addresses Obadiah with the command: לֵךְ אָמַר לְאֲדֹנָיִךְ הַגֵּה אֵלָיְהוּ (“go, say to your lord ‘Elijah is here’”) (v.8). The irony in Elijah’s words should not go unnoticed. While Obadiah addresses him as “my lord” (אֲדֹנָי), the prophet refers to Ahab as “your lord” (לְאֲדֹנָיִךְ). It is only natural that Ahab is considered the “lord” of Obadiah, since the king was indeed his master.

Elijah’s command triggers a storm of words from Obadiah that extends from verse 9 to 14. The length of it is striking both in view of the laconic nature of Hebrew

³⁷ Since the question אֵלָיְהוּ זֶה אֲדֹנָיִךְ is asked after Obadiah recognizes Elijah, it expresses surprise and not doubt. On the use of the demonstrative here, see note on translation.

³⁸ The phrase עַל-פְּנֵי + נָפַל appears 23 times in the OT. See Text-Fabric query results in section [“Other Occurrences of the Expression ‘He Fell on His Face’”](#) of my jupyter notebook. The attitude expresses respect, humiliation and sometimes despair. See: Gen 17:3, 17; 50:1; Lev 9:24; Num 14:5; 16:4, 22; 17:10; 20:6; Josh 7:6; 1 Sam 17:49; 25:23.

narrative in which dialogues are often very short and in view of the contrast between the speech of Elijah (16 words) and Obadiah (101 words). Obadiah's speech shows his character and reveals the awkwardness of his position as an unwilling "double agent," trying to be faithful to the Lord while required to obey the commands of a king who was opposed to the Lord.

The fear of death dominates Obadiah's speech. This appears in the beginning (לְהַמִּיתָנִי) (v. 9), in the middle (וְהִרְגָנִי) (v. 12), and in the end (וְהִרְגָנִי) (v. 14) of his monologue. Obadiah interprets Elijah's command as a death sentence (v. 9). In the following verses his explanation includes why the prophet's demand is too risky (vv. 10–12) and why he does not deserve to engage himself in a such a venture (vv. 13–14).

Based on Ahab's failure in finding Elijah, following his thorough effort as described in verse 10, Obadiah fears that the Spirit of Yahweh (רוּחַ יְהוָה) will take Elijah to a place where he cannot be found again (v. 11).³⁹ By admitting this possibility, Obadiah implies that the divine providence might put him in a deadly position.⁴⁰ His second argument is based on his benevolence towards the prophets of Yahweh. He affirms his lasting faithfulness to the Lord (וְעַבְדְּךָ יְרֵא אֶת־יְהוָה מִנְעֻרָי) "your servant has feared Yahweh since my youth" (v. 12). As an evidence of his commitment, he recounts his action of protection already mentioned before by the narrator. His speech here is an almost a verbatim repetition of vv. 3b–4. The repetition adds reliability to the narrator's story and increases the drama by delaying the meeting between Elijah and Ahab.

³⁹ The clause וְרוּחַ יְהוָה יִשְׂאֶךָ is an anticipatory echo of his ascension in 2 Kgs 2:16 where the same elements appear again (פָּרֻחַ נִשְׂאֵהוּ רוּחַ יְהוָה).

⁴⁰ Simon highlights that "even those who save and sustain prophets are liable to view Elijah as the agent of their doom (cf 17:12, 18)." Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 175

Obadiah's argument runs like this: having taken such a risk to do the right thing, should I be punished for it? He is not willing to take further chances.

Through the repetition of verse 11 in verse 14 (**וְעַתָּה אַתָּה אָמַר לְךָ אֲמַר לְאֲדֹנָיִךְ הַנֵּה**) “and now you are saying, ‘Go, say to your lord, ‘Elijah is here.’”) and the use of the verb **אָלְיָהוּ** which closes Obadiah's speech, the narrator compounds the drama and prepares the way for Elijah's intervention. The prophet assures him that the plan will be fulfilled accordingly (v. 15). At this point, it is possible to realize the parallels between Obadiah and the widow in chapter 17. The prophet's demand is met with initial hesitation (in both cases the risk of death is legitimately raised – see verb **מוֹת** in 17:11 and 18:9); reasons are presented (in both cases they are introduced by an oath); and after Elijah's assurance (in both cases by the name of Yahweh), both the widow and Obadiah comply with his demands (v. 16). Finally, in verse 16 Obadiah complies with Elijah's imperative (**וַיֵּלֶךְ עִבְדֵיהוּ לְקִרְאֵת אַחָאָב**) “and Obadiah went to meet Ahab”). Ahab returns in verse 16 and braces for his meeting with Elijah. The verse is symmetrically structured in an ABA pattern:

A **וַיֵּלֶךְ עִבְדֵיהוּ לְקִרְאֵת אַחָאָב** (“and Obadiah went to meet Ahab”)
B **וַיִּגְדַּלְוּ** (“he declared to him”)
B **וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחָאָב לְקִרְאֵת אֵלְיָהוּ** (“and Ahab went to meet Elijah”)

Through this pattern, the narrator characterizes the king as complying with Elijah's demand. In the end, it is Ahab who will meet him, and not vice-versa. Such a compliance advances the motif of an invincible prophet who, when under God's direction, none

should dare to defy; not even the king. In fact, Elijah's request "insists that the king forgo his majesty and come to the prophet."⁴¹

The meeting between Elijah and Obadiah develops and reveals both characters in a contrasting way. Insightfully, Robert Alter remarks that

The contrastive form of the dialogue, which has a certain element of grim comedy, dramatizes the profound difference in character between the two speakers: the one, a God-fearing person who has taken certain chances because of his conscience but who is, after all, an ordinary man with understandable human fears and hesitations; the other, a fiercely uncompromising agent of God's purpose, impelled by the imperative sense of his own prophetic authority.⁴²

In addition to that, the meeting also illustrates in an individual way (as in the widow's case) what the prophet would accomplish in a collective way when in 1 Kgs 18:21–40 the hesitant and lethargic people assume Obadiah's place.

Elijah & Ahab (vv. 17–20)

Obadiah leaves the scene, perhaps quickly, and does not reappear in the drama. Now, it is the first time since 1 Kgs 17:1 that the king and the prophet stand face to face. It is also the first time that the narrator gives voice to Ahab within the narrative main line and the king does not start well. Although the question *הֲאֵתָהּ זֶה עִבְרַיִשׁ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* ("is it really you, O the troubler of Israel?") follows that same grammatical structure of Obadiah's question in verse 7 (*אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהֵי הָאֵתָהּ זֶה* "Is it really you my lord Elijah?"), the tone and content is quite different. From the syntactical point of view, *עִבְרַיִשׁ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* ("the troubler of Israel") functions as an apposition to the independent personal pronoun referring to Elijah. From the semantical point of view, it is an accusation.

⁴¹ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 173.

⁴² Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 73.

The use of the root עבר in 1 Kgs 18:17 is noteworthy. The word appears only 14 times in the HB, and it is utilized in connection with Achan's sin in Josh 6:18; 7:25. The same expression of 1 Kgs 18:17 עִבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל (“troublers of Israel”) occurs also in 2 Chr 2:7 to designate the same individual – here Achar (עִבְרָר) seems to be used as a nickname. Through his sin, Achan brought about defeat to Israel in a decisive moment of her story. In Chronicles, Achan is called Achar probably with the intention of a wordplay denoting how his character is related to his action of “troubling” Israel in her arrival on the promised land. The valley of Achor (עִבְרוֹר) derives his name being the same place where the divine's punishment met Achan and his household (Josh 7:24, 26). In his promises of restorations, God affirms that he would turn the valley of Achor into a door of Hope (Hos 2:15), a fertile place for herds to lie down (Isa 65:10). This way, God promises to transform curse into blessing, death into life.

In his turn, Elijah returns the accusation to Ahab affirming that he is the true troubler of Israel (לֹא עִבְרֵתִי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי אִם־אֶתְּהָ וּבֵית אָבִיךָ) “I have not troubled Israel but you and your father's house”). By affirming that Ahab is the true “troublers of Israel” (עִבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל), Elijah might be alluding to the fact that through his idolatry,⁴³ Ahab is leading Israel to defeat and death. Curiously, Ahab faces both the punishment of the

⁴³ The clause אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה + עֹזֵב appears for the first time in 1 Kgs 18:18. The clause appears again in the list of reasons for the Israel's downfall (2 Kgs 17:16). In his prayer, Ezra alludes to the same clause mentioning the “servants the prophets.” Curiously, the subsequent prophetic words which are abandoned come from the time when Israelites were entering the land (perhaps Deut 12:31; 18:9,12; 20:18 cf. Deut 7:1-3; Lev 18:24-30). Thus, in Ezra “to abandon the commandments of Yahweh happens when Israelites practice the very things by which the people of that land were driven out. The clause also appears in God's warning to Solomon in 2 Chr 7:19 regarding idolatry. The plural of בָּעַל in the following clause אֶתְּהָרֵי הַבָּעַלִּים most likely referred to the local manifestations of the Canaanite deity. Outside 1 and 2 Kings the plural appear only in Judges (2:11; 3:7; 8:33; 10:6, 10) and 1 Samuel (7:4; 12:10). Another possibility is that the plural is derogative.” See: Cogan, *1 Kings*, 438.

valley of Achor (עָבוֹר) and the hope expressed by the transformation of Achor into a door of Hope. In 2 Kgs 21:19, the king is condemned to the karet penalty, by which his name will be blotted out from Israel through the killing of all his descendants as happened with Achan. However, due to the king's repentance, God postpones his judgement to after his death (different from Achan who dies along with all of his household at the same time).

After this initial exchange of hostilities, the discourse marker עָתָה in the beginning of verse 19 changes the focus to the primary reason for the meeting. Elijah addresses the king with two imperatives (the *modus operandi* of the prophet's speech): שְׁלַח קָבֵץ ("send and gather"). The verb שְׁלַח often has the word "message" in ellipsis,⁴⁴ as is the case here. The gathering (קָבֵץ) of all Israel (אֶת-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל) has covenantal overtones that echo the great gathering of Israel in Mizpah (1 Sam 7:5) for instance. Besides the reunion in Mizpah, the verb קָבֵץ has as its object אֶת-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל ("all Israel"). This appears also in 2 Sam 28:4 when Saul summons all Israel to battle against the Philistines and in 2 Sam 3:21 when Abner pledges to gather all Israel to make a covenant with David. Interestingly enough, both motifs (battle and covenant) are present in 1 Kgs 18.

Besides all Israel, the prophets of Baal and Asherah are to be summoned as well. This is one of the few examples in the Bible where the existence of the prophecy outside Israel becomes evident. The expression אֹכְלֵי שֻׁלְחַן אִיזְבֵּל ("who eat at the table of Jezebel") (18:19) characterizes the prophets of Baal and Asherah whose number reaches almost one thousand. The phrase is unique for two reasons. The construct relationship between the active fientive participle of אָכַל ("to eat") and the noun שֻׁלְחָן ("table") is

⁴⁴ Clines, "שְׁלַח," *DCH* 8:377.

found in no other place in the Hebrew Bible. The adverbial genitive provides a sense of location here. In addition to that, the mention of Jezebel, instead of Ahab as the royal patron indicates that “she was ultimately behind the promotion of the new state religion”⁴⁵ as “the sponsor and benefactor of these prophets.”⁴⁶ Thus, although Jezebel is absent from the Carmel’s narrative, the narrator hints at her pivotal role in the widespread Baal cult in Samaria.

The choice of Mount Carmel is significant. In general, mountains made “a deep impression on people’s minds in biblical times.”⁴⁷ Some suggest that in the ANE they were considered as the navel of the world with the underworld below and the heavens above.⁴⁸ It is difficult to confirm if the Israelite accepted this ANE view, but it is evident that many of the most consequential moments of God’s people take place on the mountains. Perhaps, the reason for the mountains lofty position in the mind of the Israelites is that they called to their mind thought of immutability and permanence, ultimately pointing to the power and majesty of their Creator (Isa 40:12). The choice of

⁴⁵ John J. Bimson, “1 and 2 Kings,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, U.K.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 358.

⁴⁶ Matthews, Chavalas, Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1 Ki 18:19.

⁴⁷ Elwell and Beitzel, “Mount, Mountain,” *BEB*, 1498. Some mountains were regarded as places of gods, such as Mt. Tsaphon (Mt. North), the mountain of the Ugaritic gods. This is evident in Num 23–24 where Balak takes Balaam to high places so that he can perform his divination (Num 23–24). That “high places” were used in Israel as places for worship is clear from the prophetic denunciations about this practice (1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 23:15; Jer 7:31; Ezek 16:24). Also, mountains were good places from which to speak to large numbers of people (Judg 9; Isa 40). Mt. Carmel was used as a holy site for different religions and peoples, such as Egyptians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, and Greeks. Jeremy D. Otten, “Carmel, Mount,” *LDB*, Logos Edition. However, Carmel is in fact a range of mountains. As to the actual place where the contest of 1 Kgs 18 took place, see: Henry O. Thompson, “Carmel, Mount (Place),” *ABD* 1:874–875.

⁴⁸ W. A. VanGemeren, “Mountain Imagery,” *DOT: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, 481–483. See more on mountain imagery in the ANE: E. A. S. Butterworth, *The Tree at the Navel of the Earth* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970); R. J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*, HSM 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); S. Talmon, “הַר,” *TDOT* 3:42–47.

Mount Carmel specifically does not appear to be accidental. Howard F. Vos observes that the mount “was really Yahweh territory.”⁴⁹ Jones observes that “by moving so near to the Phoenician border Elijah was really challenging Jezebel.”⁵⁰ As Mount Carmel was the boundary between the Israelites and Phoenicians, it becomes a formidable stage for Elijah’s indictment: “How long you will be hopping over two boughs?” (1 Kgs 18:21).

The king complies with Elijah’s request (v. 20), but the command-and-compliance pattern is not perfect. The king sends (וַיִּשְׁלַח) to all the children of Israel (בְּכָל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) instead of all Israel and gathers only the prophets (אֶת-הַנְּבִיאִים).⁵¹ From the narrative perspective, this may indicate that Ahab’s compliance is hesitant or imperfect. As the prophets of Asherah are never mentioned again in the narrative they may have been left out of the assembly on the mount.

⁴⁹ Howard F. Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, BSC (Grand Rapids, MI: Lamplighter, 1989), 118. As the name “Carmel” probably refers to a mountain ridge, Vos suggests that the actual location where the contest took place is called Muhraqa, in the southeast part of the mountain, for it is the only place with a path to the Brook of Kishon. Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 118. This is the traditional place also called el-Muraqah, which in Arab means “the place of burning” Gene Rice, *1 Kings*, ITC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 149.

⁵⁰ Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 315. There is controversy regarding who had dominion over Mount Carmel before the divided monarchy. According to Jones, “Until c. 1000 BC Carmel stood outside the boundary of Israel, and David’s attempt to introduce Yahweh-worship into the area probably failed and Carmel still remained under Phoenician influence and was a noted centre for worshipping the Tyrian Baal.” Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 315. However, according to Josh 19:26 the mount forms the southern boundary of the tribe of Asher during the time of the conquest. Henry O. Thompson observes that “Some say Mt. Carmel itself was part of Asher while others maintain that it was included in the northern border of western Manasseh (Kallai *HGB*, 176–77; *GTTOT*, 189 n. 173—the borders of Asher ‘touched’ Mt. Carmel). Josephus included it in the tribal territory of Issachar (*GTTOT*, 352).” Henry O. Thompson, “Carmel, Mount,” *ABD* 1:875. Despite the uncertainties as to which territory the mount belonged prior to the divided monarchy, there is historical evidence pointing to the fact that the mount “marked the border between Tyre and Israel during the period of the divided monarchy.” Thompson, “Carmel, Mount,” 875.

⁵¹ The difference between כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל (“all Israel”) (1 Kgs 18:19) and כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (“all the children of Israel”) (1 Kgs 18:20) is subtle and in practice irrelevant. However, the change in the wording from Elijah’s command to the king’s compliance is significant from a narrative point of view. This is also true in relation to the difference between the gathering of אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת וַחֲמִשִּׁים הַנְּבִיאִים הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲרָבַע מֵאוֹת (“the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah”) (1 Kgs 18:19) and just הַנְּבִיאִים (“the prophets”) (1 Kgs 18:20). Through this strategy the narrator seems to convey the idea that Ahab’s compliance is reluctant.

With all players finally on stage in verse 20, the contest between Yahweh and Baal is ready to start. The contest is narrated in the next section (vv. 21–40) which is the only glimpse of Elijah’s ministry spoken directly to the people.

Narrative Features

The first major section of chapter 18 is marked by dialogues which set in motion the plot and develop the characterization at the same time. The dialogues follow the ancient convention that no more than two characters take the stage at one time. The use of a contrastive form of interaction between Elijah and Obadiah is another important narrative feature of the section that helps to create suspense and increase the drama.

The narrator also makes insightful use of alternation between background and foreground. The background works on two levels: a glimpse of the situation in Samaria, which will lead Elijah to finally meet Ahab, and a brief look at the resistance, even though covert, to the Baalism through the courageous act of Obadiah. The background information involving Obadiah’s fear of Yahweh appears in flashback mode taking the reader back to a time before the narrative timeline. The background involving the search for water (as a consequence of the severe drought) begins earlier and before the narrative time. It then progresses to meet the narrative timeline in verse 7 which is when Obadiah meets Elijah. This complex use of background and time movement attests to the prowess that Hebrew writers employed to engage the audience in their stories.

Another remarkable feature of this narrative section is the use of loaded words such as the hiphil of כרת and the verb עבר. Words like these would direct an attentive audience steeped in the biblical text to the parallel contexts where they were firstly employed. This way, they can engage readers in a profound reflection as to how the past

and present relate. At the same time, in the context of chapter 18, these words strengthen the polemical stand against the house of Ahab.⁵²

The use of irony is another ingredient found within the section.⁵³ A few examples have been pointed out in the exploration above: Jezebel “cutting off” (כרת) prophets of Yahweh (v.4); Ahab worried to be “cut off” (deprived) (כרת) from horses and mules;⁵⁴ the difficult position of Obadiah recognizing Elijah as his lord (אֲדֹנָי) while serving Ahab as his lord (אֲדֹנָיָהּ) (vv. 7–8); and Ahab’s accusation against the “troubler” (עֹבֵר) being turned back at him (vv. 17–18).

Finally, a last aspect to be appreciated here is the clever use of repetition. Its use in the section highlights compliance-and-command patterns that occur between Elijah and Obadiah and between Elijah and Ahab. This literary device helps to build a contrastive form of dialogue with disproportional length between Ahab’s servant and Elijah. For instance, in view of the background provided by the narrator in verse 4, verse 13 becomes completely superfluous. However, it is still useful to increase the discrepancy of speech and to add suspense by delaying the meeting between the prophet and the king. Another possibility is that the extended dialogue implicitly emphasizes the danger that Elijah faced. If it is true that Obadiah faced such danger from Ahab, *a fortiori* Elijah would be subject to greater danger.

⁵² The use of polemics in biblical narrative has been recognized by several scholars. A representative analysis of several examples combined with a good bibliography is offered by Yairah Amit. See: Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 2000).

⁵³ A detailed treatment about the use of irony in the Elijah cycle is found in Russel Gregory, “Irony and the Unmasking of Elijah,” in *From Camel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis JSOTSup 85* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 94–118.

⁵⁴ As the Elijah cycle advances, the irony around the use of כרת here increases when Elijah conveys the grim news to Ahab that his house is condemned to the karet penalty.

Repetition is also used to fashion an important motif of Obadiah’s speech, namely, the fear of death. This is expressed by the hiphil of מוֹת in v. 9 and the repetition of וַהֲרַגְנִי in verses 12 and 14.⁵⁵ There is no doubt that faithful believers were then living in dangerous times. However, the repetition creates the impression that Obadiah is so obsessed with his fear that it seems to control his decisions. This motif will return in chapter 19 where Elijah, for the first time, acts despite being under the fear of his own death. That fear leads him to move without God’s direction, for the first time, and ultimately requires another divine intervention, this time to save his own prophet.

Structure

The structure of the pericope in 1 Kgs 18:1–20 may be viewed on three levels. In the covenantal one, God commands and promises while he waits for a human response of obedience so that he can fulfill what he has promised. This pattern has been seen in the two episodes of 1 Kgs 17. This pattern is found also in chapter 18:

Table 8. Command-and-Compliance and Promise-and-Fulfillment Patterns in ch. 18

Yahweh – Elijah	
Command (v.1) לֵךְ הִרְאֵה אֶל־אַחָזָב (“Go and show yourself to Ahab”)	Obedience (v. 2): וַיֵּלֶךְ אֵלָיו לְהִרְאוֹת אֵלָיו אַחָזָב (and Elijah went to show himself to Ahab)

⁵⁵ Instructively, Walsh observes how this particular repetition organizes the dialogue between Elijah and Obadiah:

- A Protest; sentence of death (“to kill me”; 18:9)
 - B First argument (18:10)
 - C Elijah's command quoted (18:11)
 - B First argument continued (18:12a)
 - A’ Sentence of death (“he will kill me”; 18:12a)
 - B’ Second argument Q8:12b-13)
 - C’ Elijah's command quoted (18:14a)
 - A’’ Sentence of death (“he will surely kill me.” 18:14b)
- See: Walsh, *1 Kings*, 240.

Table 8 — *Continued.*

Promise: (v.1) : וְאֶתְנֶה מָטָר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה: (“and I will send rain on the face of the earth”)
--

The divine command (לֵךְ הִרְאָה) “go, present yourself”) is followed by the cohortative וְאֶתְנֶה (“I will give”) which expresses the divine promise of rain. Again, and without hesitation Elijah obeys Yahweh’s voice and starts his journey (וַיֵּלֶךְ אֵלֵיהֶו) “and Elijah went”). However, as God’s primary interest is not in bringing rain and physical relief, he delays his promise until after the contest on Mount Carmel so that an opportunity for spiritual reform is provided (v. 45).

On a human level, command-and-compliance are established both between Elijah and Obadiah and Elijah and Ahab. However, as can be seen bellow, compliance is only reached after hesitation or in an imperfect way.

Table 9. Command-and-Compliance with Obadiah and Ahab

Elijah – Obadiah	
Command (v.8): לֵךְ אָמַר (“go and say”)	
	Hesitation (v.9–14)
	Assurance (v.15)
	Obedience: (v.16): וַיֵּלֶךְ עֹבַדְיָהוּ לִקְרֹאת אָחָב (“And Obadiah went to meet Ahab”)
Elijah – Ahab	
Command (v.19) שְׁלַח קָבַץ (“send and gather”)	Obedience (v. 20): וַיִּקְבְּץ/וַיִּשְׁלַח (“he gathered/sent”)

The function of this first structural level is to highlight the position of Elijah as an obedient servant of the Lord whose fidelity is unailing. On the other hand, the hesitation of Obadiah and the failure of Ahab in complying with Elijah’s request in a complete way

may represent the flawed human nature that is unable to fully commit to God's requirements, which are transmitted by his human representative. Notwithstanding this human debacle (Elijah would not be exempted from it), God mercifully acts on behalf of his250overeignn purpose to save his people.

The function of the second structural level is that of the plot. As noted above, the plot is advanced by dialogues that take place always between two characters (or groups of characters) at a time.

Yahweh & Elijah (vv. 1–2a)
 Ahab & Obadiah (vv. 2b–6)
 Elijah & Obadiah (vv. 7–16)
 Elijah & Ahab (vv. 17–20)

The same structure of plot development is also present in the second part of chapter 18 where Elijah interacts with the people and the prophets of Baal who here functions as a single group. This is the focus of the next section.

The Contest between Yahweh and Baal (1 Kgs 18:21–40)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

	[<Ti> ימים רבים]	[<Pr> יהי]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0	1Kgs	18:01
[<Ti> בשנה השלישית]	[<PC> אל אליהו]	[<Pr> היה]	[<Su> דבר יהוה]	[<Cj>ו]	WXQt	1Kgs 18:01
		[<Pr> לאמר]			InfC	1Kgs 18:01
		[<Pr> לך]			ZIm0	1Kgs 18:01
	[<Co> אל אחאב]	[<Pr> הראה]			ZIm0	1Kgs 18:01
[<Co> על פני האדמה]	[<Ob> מטר]	[<Pr> אתנה]	[<Cj>ו]		WYq0	1Kgs 18:01
		[<Su> אליהו]	[<Pr> ילך]	[<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs 18:02
	[<Co> אל אחאב]	[<Pr> להראות]			InfC	1Kgs 18:02
	[<Lo> בשמרון]	[<PC> חזק]	[<Su> הרעב]	[<Cj>ו]	AjC1	1Kgs 18:02
	[<Co> אל עבדיהו]	[<Su> אחאב]	[<Pr> יקרא]	[<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs 18:03
	[<PC> על הבית]	[<Re> אשר]			NmC1	1Kgs 18:03
[<Mo> מאד]	[<Ob> את יהוה]	[<PC> ירא]	[<Pr> היה]	[<Su> עבדיהו]	[<Cj>ו]	WXQt 1Kgs 18:03
		[<Pr> יהי]	[<Cj>ו]		Way0	1Kgs 18:04
	[<Ob> את נביאי יהוה]	[<Su> איזבל]	[<Pr> בהכרית]		InfC	1Kgs 18:04
	[<Ob> מאה נבאים]	[<Su> עבדיהו]	[<Pr> יקח]	[<Cj>ו]	WayX	1Kgs 18:04

	[<PO> יחביאם] [<Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 18:04
[<Co> במערה] [<Ob> חמשים איש]					Ellp 1Kgs 18:04
[<Ob> לחם ומים] [<PO> כלכלם] [<Cj>ו]					WQt0 1Kgs 18:04
[<Co> אל עבדיהו] [<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]					WayX 1Kgs 18:05
[<Co> אל כל מעיני המים ואל כל הנחלים] [<Lo> בארץ] [<Pr> לך]					ZIm0 1Kgs 18:05
[<Ob> חציר] [<Pr> נמצא] [<Mo> אולי]					xYq0 1Kgs 18:05
[<Ob> סוס ופרד] [<Pr> נחיה] [<Cj>ו]					WYq0 1Kgs 18:05
[<Co> מהבהמה] [<Pr> נכרית] [<Ng> לוא] [<Cj>ו]					WxY0 1Kgs 18:05
[<Ob> את הארץ] [<Co> להם] [<Pr> יחלקו] [<Cj>ו]					Way0 1Kgs 18:06
[<Co> בה] [<Pr> לעבר]					InfC 1Kgs 18:06
[<Aj> לבדו] [<Co> בדרך אחד] [<Pr> הלך] [<Su> אחאב]					XQt1 1Kgs 18:06
[<Aj> לבדו] [<Co> בדרך אחד] [<Pr> הלך] [<Su> עבדיהו] [<Cj>ו]					WXQt 1Kgs 18:06
[<PC> בדרך] [<Su> עבדיהו] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]					WayX 1Kgs 18:07
[<Su> אליהו] [<Ij> הנה] [<Cj>ו]					NmCl 1Kgs 18:07
[<PO> לקראתו]					InfC 1Kgs 18:07
[<PO> יכרהו] [<Cj>ו]					Way0 1Kgs 18:07
[<Co> על פניו] [<Pr> יפל] [<Cj>ו]					Way0 1Kgs 18:07
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]					Way0 1Kgs 18:07
[<PC> זה] [<Su> אתה] [<Qu>ה]					NmCl 1Kgs 18:07
[<Vo><ap> אדני / אליהו]					Voct 1Kgs 18:07
[<Co> לו] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]					Way0 1Kgs 18:08
[<Su> אני]					NmCl 1Kgs 18:08
[<Pr> לך]					ZIm0 1Kgs 18:08
[<Co> לאדניך] [<Pr> אמר]					ZIm0 1Kgs 18:08
[<Su> אליהו] [<Ij> הנה]					NmCl 1Kgs 18:08
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]					Way0 1Kgs 18:09
[<Pr> חטאתי] [<Ob> מה]					xQt0 1Kgs 18:09
[<Co> ביד אחאב] [<Ob> את עבדך] [<PC> נתן] [<Su> אתה] [<Cj> כי]					Ptcp 1Kgs 18:09
[<PO> להמיתני]					InfC 1Kgs 18:09
[<Su><ap> יהוה / אלהיך] [<PC> חי]					AjCl 1Kgs 18:10
[<Su> וממלכה] [<eX> יש] [<Cj> אם]					NmCl 1Kgs 18:10
[<Co> שם] [<Su> אדני] [<Pr> שלח] [<Ng> לא] [<Re> אשר]					xQtX 1Kgs 18:10
[<PO> לבקשך]					InfC 1Kgs 18:10
[<Pr> אמרו] [<Cj>ו]					WQt0 1Kgs 18:10
[<Ng> אין]					NmCl 1Kgs 18:10
[<Ob> את הממלכה ואת הגוי] [<Pr> השביע] [<Cj>ו]					WQt0 1Kgs 18:10
[<PO> ימצאכה] [<Ng> לא] [<Cj> כי]					xYq0 1Kgs 18:10
[<Ti> עתה] [<Cj>ו]					MSyn 1Kgs 18:11
[<PC> אמר] [<Su> אתה]					Ptcp 1Kgs 18:11
[<Pr> לך]					ZIm0 1Kgs 18:11
[<Co> לאדניך] [<Pr> אמר]					ZIm0 1Kgs 18:11
[<Su> אליהו] [<Ij> הנה]					NmCl 1Kgs 18:11
[<Pr> היתה] [<Cj>ו]					WQt0 1Kgs 18:12

[<Co> מאתך]	[<Pr> אלך]	[<Su> אני]						XYqt 1Kgs 18:12
[<PO> ישאך]	[<Su> רוח יהוה]	[<Cj>ו]]						WXYq 1Kgs 18:12
[<Pr> אדע]	[<Ng> לא]	[<Re> על אשר]						xYq0 1Kgs 18:12
[<Pr> באתי]	[<Cj>ו]]							WQt0 1Kgs 18:12
[<Co> לאחאב]	[<Pr> להגיד]							InfC 1Kgs 18:12
[<PO> ימצאך]	[<Ng> לא]	[<Cj>ו]]						WxY0 1Kgs 18:12
[<PO> הרגני]	[<Cj>ו]]							WQt0 1Kgs 18:12
[<Ti> מנערי]	[<Ob> את יהוה]	[<PC> ירא]	[<Su> עבדך]	[<Cj>ו]]				Ptcp 1Kgs 18:12
[<Co> לאדני]	[<Pr> הגד]	[<Ng> לא]	[<Qu>ה]]					xQt0 1Kgs 18:13
[<Pr> עשיתי]	[<Re> את אשר]							xQt0 1Kgs 18:13
[<Ob> את נביאי יהוה]	[<Su> איזבל]	[<Pr> בהרג]						InfC 1Kgs 18:13
[<Ob> מאה איש]	[<Aj> מנביאי יהוה]	[<Pr> אחבא]	[<Cj>ו]]					Way0 1Kgs 18:13
[<Co> במערה]	[<Ob> חמשים חמשים איש]							Ellp 1Kgs 18:13
[<Ob> לחם ומים]	[<PO> אכלכלם]	[<Cj>ו]]						Way0 1Kgs 18:13
[<Ti> עתה]	[<Cj>ו]]							MSyn 1Kgs 18:14
[<PC> אמר]	[<Su> אתה]							Ptcp 1Kgs 18:14
[<Pr> לך]								ZIm0 1Kgs 18:14
[<Co> לאדניך]	[<Pr> אמר]							ZIm0 1Kgs 18:14
[<Su> אליהו]	[<Ij> הנה]							NmCl 1Kgs 18:14
[<PO> הרגני]	[<Cj>ו]]							WQt0 1Kgs 18:14
[<Su> אליהו]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]]						WayX 1Kgs 18:15
[<Su> יהוה צבאות]	[<PC> חי]							AjCl 1Kgs 18:15
[<Co> לפניו]	[<Pr> עמדתי]	[<Re> אשר]						xQt0 1Kgs 18:15
[<Co> אליו]	[<Pr> אראה]	[<Ti> היום]	[<Cj>ו]]					xYq0 1Kgs 18:15
[<Su> עבדיהו]	[<Pr> ילך]	[<Cj>ו]]						WayX 1Kgs 18:16
[<Ob> אחאב]	[<Pr> לקראת]							InfC 1Kgs 18:16
[<Co> לו]	[<Pr> יגד]	[<Cj>ו]]						Way0 1Kgs 18:16
[<Su> אחאב]	[<Pr> ילך]	[<Cj>ו]]						WayX 1Kgs 18:16
[<Ob> אליהו]	[<Pr> לקראת]							InfC 1Kgs 18:16
[<Pr> יהי]	[<Cj>ו]]							Way0 1Kgs 18:17
[<Ob> את אליהו]	[<Su> אחאב]	[<Pr> כראות]						InfC 1Kgs 18:17
[<Co> אליו]	[<Su> אחאב]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]]					WayX 1Kgs 18:17
[<PC> זזה]	[<Su> אתה]	[<Qu>ה]]						NmCl 1Kgs 18:17
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[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]]							Way0 1Kgs 18:18
[<Ob> את ישראל]	[<Pr> עכרתי]	[<Ng> לא]						xQt0 1Kgs 18:18
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[<Ob> את מצות יהוה]	[<Ps> בעזבכם]							InfC 1Kgs 18:18
[<Co> אחרי הבעלים]	[<Pr> תלך]	[<Cj>ו]]						Way0 1Kgs 18:18
[<Ti> עתה]	[<Cj>ו]]							MSyn 1Kgs 18:19
[<Pr> שלח]								ZIm0 1Kgs 18:19
[<Co> אל הר הכרמל]	[<Ob> את כל ישראל]	[<Co> אלי]	[<Pr> קבץ]					ZIm0 1Kgs 18:19
[<Aj> ארבע מאות וחמשים]	[<Ob> את נביאי הבעל]	[<Cj>ו]]						Ellp 1Kgs 18:19

[<Aj> ארבע מאות	[<Ob> נביאי האשרה	[<Cj>ו]				Ellp 1Kgs 18:19
[<Ob> שלחן איזבל	[<PC> אכלי					Ptcp 1Kgs 18:19
[<Co> בכל בני ישראל	[<Su> אחאב	[<Pr> ישלה	[<Cj>ו]			WayX 1Kgs 18:20
[<Co> אל הר הכרמל	[<Ob> את הנביאים	[<Pr> יקבץ	[<Cj>ו]			Way0 1Kgs 18:20

- 21 And Elijah drew near to all the people⁵⁶ and said, “How long will you be hopping over two boughs? If Yahweh is God, go after him; but if Baal is God, go after him. And the people did not answer him a word.
- 22 And Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of Yahweh and the prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty men.
- 23 Let them take to us two bulls and let them choose for themselves a bull, cut in pieces, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it. I will prepare the other bull and place it on the wood, but I will not put fire under it.
- 24 And you will call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of Yahweh, and it will be that the god who answers by fire, he is God.” And all the people answered and said, “the word is good.”
- 25 And Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but do not put fire under it.
- 26 And they took the bull that he gave to them,⁵⁷ prepared it, and called the name of Baal from morning to noon saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice and there was no answer. And they hopped around the altar that he had made.
- 27 Then⁵⁸ at noon Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry with a loud voice⁵⁹ for he is god! Surely there is conversation to him, or there is a withdrawal to him, or there is journey to him! Perhaps, he is asleep, and he will awake up!”
- 28 And they cried with loud voice and cut themselves with swords and spears according to their custom until pouring out blood over them.
- 29 Then⁶⁰ as the noon passed, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, there was no answer, and there was no attentiveness.
- 30 And Elijah said to all the people, “Draw near to me.” And all the people drew near to him. And he healed the altar of Yahweh that had been destroyed.
- 31 And Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of Jacob, to whom the word of Yahweh came saying, “Israel will be your name.”

⁵⁶ The LXX has only *πάντας* (“all”) instead of *כָּל־הָעָם* (“all people”). The apparent implication is that in the LXX Baal’s prophets and not only the people of Israel are included in Elijah’s “approaching.”

⁵⁷ The phrase *אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן לָהֶם* (“which he gave to them”) is missing in the OG. Most likely, the OG left it out in order to avoid a contextual difficulty. In verses 23 and 25 the prophets are the one who should choose for themselves the bull, while in verse 26 the bull is qualified as the one that Elijah himself had given to them.

⁵⁸ “Then” conveys the sense of the transition marker *וַיְהִי*.

⁵⁹ The word “loud” translates the phrase *בְּקוֹל־גָּדוֹל* (lit. “with great voice”).

⁶⁰ “Then” conveys again the sense of the transition marker *וַיְהִי*.

³² And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Yahweh, and he made a trench large enough to hold⁶¹ two seahs of seed around the altar.

³³ He arranged the wood, cut the bull in pieces, and placed it on the wood.

³⁴ And he said, “Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood. And he said, “Do it again!” And they did it again. And he said, “Do it a third time!” And they did it a third time.

³⁵ And the water went around the altar and even the trench was filled with water.

³⁶ Then, at the time of the oblation, Elijah, the prophet, drew near and said, “O Yahweh God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; let it to be known today that you are God in Israel and I am your servant and through your word⁶² I have done all these things.

³⁷ Answer me, O Yahweh, answer me that this people may know that you, O Yahweh, are God and that you yourself have turned their heart back.”

³⁸ And the fire of Yahweh fell down and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust; and the water which was in the trench it licked up.

³⁹ And all the people saw and fell on their faces. And they said, “Yahweh, he is God! Yahweh, he is God!”

⁴⁰ And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let any of them escape!” And they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the wadi of Kishon and he slaughtered them there.

Delimitation

As is the case in the previous act, the narrator follows the ancient convention to keep two players at a time in each scene.⁶³ The limits of the pericope are established based on this convention. Ahab disappears from the scene in verse 21 giving place to the first interaction between Elijah and the people that extends to verse 24. Indeed, Ahab will not be mentioned again until verse 41. Based on verses 41–46, the readers learn that the king is present. Thus, the silence of the narrator about Ahab during the contest is remarkable. It is not clear if the king is present all the time, but in any case, the narrator

⁶¹ The phrase “large enough to hold” translates *כְּבֵית* (“as the house of”). The idea seems to be that the trench could storage the specified measure (i.e., “two seahs”). In this sense, it was the house of two seahs.

⁶² Based on the manuscript evidence and internal cohesion (see the singular in 1 Kgs 17:1), I am following the Qere here. The Ketib has the plural form *ובדבריך*.

⁶³ Jerome T. Walsh, *Style & Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (College, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 131.

ignores him setting Ahab as part of כָּל־הָעָם (“all the people”) as a spectator while Elijah takes the stage.

The second “round” of the “bout” features Elijah and the prophets of Baal (vv. 25–29). The interaction, which is opened by וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם לְנַבְיֵי הַבַּעַל (“and Elijah said to the prophets of Baal”) (v. 25), starts with Elijah’s instructions that are dominated by imperatives (v. 25) and is followed by the prophets’ compliance. This is met with no answer from Baal (v. 26) and Elijah’s mocking (v. 27). It closes with the frenzy of the prophets (v. 28) that is followed by an additional note on their failure (v. 29).

Elijah and the people share the stage again in verse 30 (וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם לְכֹל־הָעָם (“and Elijah said to all the people”). Although this last section focuses mostly on Elijah and the sacrifice, the people are following every part of the spectacle closely. They draw near to Elijah (v. 30) and assist him with watering the bull, the altar, and the trench (v.34). They are the main theme of his prayer (v. 37) and they finally react by confessing Yahweh as God in v. 39. In the last verse of this segment, they comply with Elijah’s request to seize Baal’s prophets (v. 40).

Text-Empirical Analysis

Elijah & the People (1 Kgs 18:21–24)

This scene opens with Elijah, who is the dominating figure in the contest, taking the initiative to approach⁶⁴ and address “all the people” (כָּל־הָעָם).⁶⁵ The noun עַם is found eight times between verses 21 and 39, and in five occurrences it is preceded by כָּל. The recurrence of the word עַם emphasizes the universality of the event on Mount Carmel. Even though not all the individual Israel attend the contest, somehow all the people are made responsible by the choice proposed by Elijah. There was no way for them to hide or be neutral. The phrase also echoes the reunion of all Israel at the foot of mountain Sinai in Exod 19 and 24. From a structural point of view, Cohn observes that “clearly the author has patterned the Carmel narrative upon the Sinai covenant story. In so doing, he assigns overwhelming significance to the event.”⁶⁶ The parallels between the two historical moments are significant and will be explored later.

In a similar fashion, Elijah as Joshua in Josh 24:14 demands a decision from the people. Although the phrase עַד־מָתַי אַתֶּם פּוֹסְחִים עַל־שְׁתֵּי הַסַּעֲפִים (“How long you will be hopping over two boughs?”) seems to be a proverbial saying the exact meaning of which may elude the translators,⁶⁷ its intended meaning is clear and precise, especially when the

⁶⁴ “‘Draw near’ (שָׁגַל qal and niph) often means opening a controversy or demanding a decision (Gen 18:23, 27:21, 45:4; Josh 14:6, 21:1; 1 Sam 14:38 Isa 41:1, 50:8; Joel 4:9); hence it sometimes means to prepare to deliver or receive a prophetic oracle (1 Kgs 20:22, 28; 2 Kgs 2:5; Jer 42:1). DeVries, *1 Kings*, 228.

⁶⁵ Tal Rusak provides good insights regarding the historicity of 1 Kgs 18:21–40. See: Tal Rusak, “The Clash of Cults on Mount Carmel: Do Archeological Records and Historical Documents Support the Biblical Episode of Elijah and the Ba‘al Priests?,” *SJOT* 22 (2008): 29–46.

⁶⁶ Cohn, “Literary Logic of 1 Kgs 17–19,” 341. See also Leithart, “1 & 2 Kings, 224.

⁶⁷ Rice, *1 Kings*, 149. Jones provides a good summary of the main interpretative options: “(i) the Gk. has ‘on the knees’, thus suggesting ‘going lame on both joints’ (Skinner, p. 231); (ii) The word

second part of the verse is taken in consideration אַסְיָהוּהָ הָאֱלֹהִים לְכוּ אַחֲרָיו וְאִם־הַבַּעַל לְכוּ אַחֲרָיו (“If Yahweh is God, go after him; but if Baal is God, go after him”).⁶⁸ Apart from 1 Kgs 18:21, the root פסח appears only in 2 Sam 4:4 to explain the physical condition of Mephibosheth who after a fall became lame.⁶⁹ While some versions prefer a more graphic rendering⁷⁰ and others opt for a more paraphrastic way to translate the expression,⁷¹ most of them agree on the intent of the phrase. While it is correct to affirm that “the exact translation of Elijah’s accusation (v. 21) remains unclear, the meaning is clear.”⁷² While the English idiom “to sit on the fence” brings a different image, the intent is the same.

translated opinions (Heb. *s^e ippîm*) may have some connection with *sā’îp*, ‘twig, bough,’ and the phrase may mean ‘hobbling on two crutches,’ seeking help from both Yahweh and Baal (cf. *K-B*; Fohrer, *op. cit.*, p. 45); (iii) Accepting the connection with a twig, which branches off the trunk, it is possible to render as ‘hobbling between two forks,’ as at a crossroads, (iv) de Vaux (*op. cit.*, pp. 9n), noticing that the word for limping (*pos^ehîm*) is used for a ritual dance in v. 26, suggests that Elijah's question may have a reference to cultic rites; (v) The translation of RSV based on the suggestion that *s^e ippîm* may have been the same word as *s^e ippîm*, ‘thoughts,’ which is used in Job 4:13; 20:2.” Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 317–18.

⁶⁸ The valence הלך + אחר triggers two main meanings. When the object of the preposition אחר is non-divine, the expression means to follow someone whether literally walking (Gen 24:5, 8, 39, 61; Exod 14:19, Num 16:25; 1 Kgs 13:14; Isa 45:14), searching (Gen 37:17; Judg 19:3), or following in the sense of complying with leadership (1 Sam 17:14; 1 Kgs 19:20; Judg 9:4). However, when the object of the preposition has other gods or idols then the phrase refers to the practice of idolatry (e.g., Deut 4:3; 8:19; 11:28; Judg 2:12, 19; Jer 2:5; 7:6). Only in a few places the object of the preposition is God (1 Kgs 18:21; 2 Kgs 23:3). When this is the case, the phrase denotes following God in obedience by being faithful to him. The choice of following other gods or Yahweh appears in Deut 14:3, 5 and Josh 3:3 where the use of the expression is rhetorically closer. See Text-Fabric query results in section [“The Use of הלך Followed by אחר”](#) of my jupyter notebook.

⁶⁹ The root is homograph of פסח, which means “to pass over,” from which the word Passover has its origin. Clines, *DCH* 6:723.

⁷⁰ For instance, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions?” (ESV) or “How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions?” (NLT). See also: RSV, LEB, and ASV 1901,

⁷¹ For instance, “How long will you falter between two opinions? (NKJV). Synonymous of “flatter” appear in NASB95, NIV84, JPS, and KJV.

⁷² Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 117. R. K. Harrison and E. H. Merrill observe that in this passage the verb speaks “figuratively of limping about between two opinions or courses of action with regard to the worship of Yahweh or Baal.” Hendrik L. R. K. Harrison and E. H. Merrill, “פסח, פסח,” *NIDOTTE* 3:641.

There is no space for debate or duplicity of interpretation. Israel needs to decide whom they will serve.

Interestingly, the root פסח reappears in v. 26 to describe the actions of the prophets trying to arouse Baal's attention: וַיִּפְסְחוּ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ ("they limped around the altar"). The meaning of פסח is more obscure here but it seems to indicate a kind of ceremonial dance. As people were "limping" between two opinions, so the prophets were "limping" around the altar. The narrator's wordplay points to the fact that the new religion was molding the character of the nation according to the popular and influent cult devoted to this Canaanite god. The use of פסח here may represent an allusion to the Passover festival (cf. Exod 12:23).⁷³ If this is the case, the ceremonial dance functions as a parody of the Passover by contrasting the failure of Baal which results in death for his followers and the success of Yahweh which provides deliverance for Israel.

The first reaction of the people is silence (וְלֹא-עָנּוּ הָעָם אֹתוֹ דְבָר). When compared with the people's reaction in the two parallel events (Exod 24:3 Josh 24:16), the silence in 1 Kgs 18 is a striking indication of spiritual deterioration.⁷⁴ In the context of the idolatry, such a silence may characterize the "absence of any sense of conflict of loyalties."⁷⁵

⁷³ The word used has a different meaning here. While in Exod 12:23 the verb describes the act of Yahweh passing over the doorways marked with blood, in 1 Kgs 18 it describes the actions of the prophets hopping around the altar.

⁷⁴ Cf. וַיִּעַן הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ... (Exod 24:3) and וַיִּעַן הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ... (Josh 24:16).

⁷⁵ Rice, *1 Kings*, 150. According to Gina Hens-Piazza, "perhaps they did not even understand the question in a world where polytheism was the familiar religious framework." Gina Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, AOTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), 177. Indeed, "in the pluralistic Baal cult such a choice is not necessary, but in the monotheistic YHWH cult there can be only one God." Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 243.

The root ענה can be considered one of the *Leitworte* of the pericope. Only in the span of 16 verses (vv. 21–37), which comprise the entire scene of the contest on Mount Carmel, the root is repeated nine times (vv. 21, 24, 26, 29, 37). Combined with structural hints (to be explored later), the repetition of ענה indicates that the people’s answer is the main object of the story. Through his actions, God leads the people from a state of total apathy where they do not “answer a word” (וְלֹא־עָנוּ הָעָם אֹתוֹ דְבָר) to the confession that he is God (יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים). In fact, the people go beyond a mere confession, when they act in obedience to Elijah by seizing Baal’s prophets (18:40).⁷⁶ However, lying between the lack of response and the final positive answer of the people is the stark contrast between Baal and Yahweh.

Despite the effort of Baal’s prophets, he is unable to provide any answer — not even a sound (the phrase וְאִין קוֹל וְאִין עֲנָה “there was no voice, there was no answer” is repeated twice – vv. 26, 29).⁷⁷ Baal’s silence parallels the people’s initial failure to answer. It is true that usually people become like the god they worship. However, the true God responds immediately. In the end, the people, like Yahweh, are willing and able to respond and act. Thus, the climax of the story is not the fire, but the people’s answer.

After the initial silence of the people, Elijah addresses them again in verses 22–24. As an evidence of the people’s lack of adherence to Yahweh, Elijah points out the disparate numbers between the prophets of Baal and he himself who alone stands as a

⁷⁶ The last command-and-compliance pattern is found in the dialogue between Elijah and the people in verse 40 where the prophet says: אֶת־נְבִיאֵי הַבַּעַל and the narrator records: וַיִּתְפָּשׂוּם.

⁷⁷ “The Hebrew has the flat negative particle ‘ain five times! None, not any ever!” Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 224.

prophet of Yahweh (לִיהוָה נְבִיא) (v. 22).⁷⁸ As the reader is already aware by this time, Elijah’s affirmation requires some nuance in interpretation as there are at least a hundred more prophets of Yahweh being kept hidden by Obadiah in two caves. On the one hand, the narrator contrasts the timid and frightening attitude of one hundred prophets of Yahweh hidden in caves in the beginning of the chapter with the brave disposition of Elijah who alone faces all the prophets of Baal. Perhaps, in this sense, he is right in affirming that אֲנִי נֹתַרְתִּי נְבִיא לִיהוָה לְבַדִּי (“I alone am left a prophet of Yahweh”) (1 Kgs 18:22). On the other hand, since Elijah is aware of the existence of his colleagues (cf. v. 13), the prophet seems to criticize implicitly the attitude of Yahweh’s prophets, who are hidden in two caves. He is alone in representing the true God while the remaining one hundred are scared to death.

The uses of pronominal suffixes and verbal persons in verses 23 and 24 additionally pinpoint the people’s duplicity. On one hand, Elijah sides himself with the people by referring to the prophets as “them” (וַיִּבְחָרוּ לָהֶם “and let them choose for themselves”) (v. 23). The following narrative confirms that somehow the people are involved (even if in a limited way) in Elijah’s preparations (cf. v. 34). On the other hand, in verse 24 Elijah connects the people with the prophets of Baal saying that “you will call in the name of your god” (וּקְרַאתֶם בְּשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם). Since Elijah is still speaking with them, the subject of the verb is the people, not Baal’s prophets.⁷⁹ Whereas the people do not provide an answer, their neutrality puts them on the side of Baal by default.

⁷⁸ Here the phrase נְבִיא לִיהוָה functions as a predicative adjunct that amplifies or completes the predicate. The preposition לְ has possessive sense.

⁷⁹ Later in the narrative, Elijah instructs Baal’s prophets to call upon their god. However, he uses the imperative קְרֵאוּ.

With the terms of the contest defined, in verses 23 and 24 the people finally are ready to respond (וַיַּעַן כָּל־הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ) “and all the people answered and said”) (v. 24). As a first sign of change, the people agree to the terms (טוֹב הַדְּבָר) (v. 24). In simple fashion, the contest aims to prove unequivocally who is God indeed. Such a proof will be the demonstrated ability of the true deity in “responding by fire” (וְהָיָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲנֶה) (בָּאֵשׁ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים) (v. 24).⁸⁰

Elijah & Baal’s Prophets (1 Kgs 18:25–29)

Now it is time for Elijah to address directly the prophets of Baal. The chain of imperatives in verse 25 is a repetition of Elijah’s instructions in verse 23. However, instead of the impersonal jussives (יִשְׂמְרוּ/וַיִּשְׂמְרוּ/וַיִּבְחָרוּ) of verse 23, the narrator jots down a sequence of verbs in their imperative form (וַיִּקְרְאוּ/וַיִּקְרְאוּ/וַיַּעֲשׂוּ/וַיִּבְחָרוּ). The repetition seems intended to serve two functions here. First, it adds drama to the scene delaying the actual manifestation of Yahweh. Second, as the sequence reveals, the repetition creates a command-and-compliance pattern where the imperatives in verse 25 meet their corresponding wayyqtols in verse 26 (וַיִּקְרְאוּ/וַיִּקְרְאוּ; וַיַּעֲשׂוּ/וַיַּעֲשׂוּ; וַיִּבְחָרוּ/וַיִּבְחָרוּ). In contrast to the people who agreed with the terms of the contest, Baal’s prophets seem to be in a corner without even the chance to concur or not. Indeed, Elijah dominates every aspect of the contest, except for the fire itself. Even the bull which Elijah suggests they should choose (cf. vv. 23, 25) is designated in v. 26 as that one which Elijah had given to

⁸⁰ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton highlight the function of the fire in biblical imagery. According to them, “fire is an indication of the presence of God, it is connected to the lightning of the storm god, and it represents the acceptance of the sacrifice.” Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1 Kgs 18:23–24.

them (לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן).⁸¹ Likewise, the altar of Baal is qualified by the relative clause אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה (“which he had made”), which closes verse 26. Thus, when read together, both clauses indicate that Elijah, who is the subject implied in each case, prepared everything for the pagan prophets. However, this understanding raises contextual and theological problems that have led translators to review the MT text. On the contextual level the altar made by Elijah is mentioned only in verse 30 where he repairs the altar of Yahweh that had been destroyed. On the theological level, it is very unlikely that he would be willing to build an altar to a foreign god. Perhaps based on this difficulty, several old manuscripts and versions including the OG suggest a plural reading of עָשָׂה as suggested by the Masora Parva.⁸² The modern versions unanimously follow the Masoretic correction translating the clause אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֲשֶׁר as “which they had made” (v. 26). If the prophets of Baal are the subject of the verb עָשָׂה, the action of building the altar may be precedent to the scene in chapter 18. Elijah does not mention the need for the construction of an altar to Baal in the terms of the contest. Furthermore, the existence of an altar on Mt. Carmel to Baal before the contest of chapter 18 seems to be the obvious conclusion in face of its widespread worship in Israel by that time.

This description of the activities of Baal’s prophets in 1 Kgs 18 is the only occasion where the biblical text verifies the existence of prophecy outside Israel. Although Deut 13:2–6 prohibits Israelites to prophecy in the name of foreign god, this is the only biblical description of it.⁸³ The clause וַיִּקְרָאוּ בְשֵׁם־הַבַּעַל (“called the name of

⁸¹ There is no way to know for certain the reason for the change. But one possibility is that the lack of response or even the prophets’ lack of intention to participate in the contest might be involved.

⁸² See Critical Apparatus of BHS.

⁸³ Rolland de Vaux suggests that the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel were probably

Baal”) is parallel to אֶקְרָא בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה (“I will call on the name of Yahweh”) in verse 24 where Elijah is the subject. The clause is often used to refer to the action of praying directly to God (e.g., Gen 21:33; Exod 33:19; 2 Kgs 5:11). The content of the prophets’ prayer (הִבְעֵל עֲנֵנוּ) is also similar to that of Elijah later in the chapter (cf. v. 37 – עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה – עֲנֵנִי). However, the similarities stop there. Their prayer is in vain; there is no answer from Baal (וְאֵין קוֹל וְאֵין עֲנָה) (v. 26).

So far, the prophets’ and Elijah’s activities are in parallel: a bull is selected, the sacrifice is prepared, no fire is started, and their prayers are identical (both the narrator’s introduction to it and the actual prayer). However, Baal’s lack of response leads his prophets to take further actions. The first is a ritual dance around the altar (וַיִּפְסְחוּ עָלָיו הַמְזַבְּחִים “they hopped around the altar”). As already mentioned above, the use of the root פסח may suggest that the dance involved some kind of limping or hopping around the altar.⁸⁴

As the ritual dance remains ineffective until the midday (בַּצֶּהֳרָיִם) (v. 27), Elijah jumps into the scene to mock and antagonize them (וַיִּהְיֶה לֵב בָּהֶם) (v. 27). In his patronizing sarcasm, Elijah depicts Baal in quite condescending human terms. The two nominal

Phoenicians “since the priests or prophets of a God would be recruited in his country of origin.” Roland de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1971), 239. To see more about the prophecy as a phenomenon in the ANE outside Israel, check M. Nissinen, ed, *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives*, SymS 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); H. B. Huffmon, “Prophecy: Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy,” *ABD* 5:477–482.

⁸⁴ De Vaux observes that “A passage from the Greek novelist Heliodorus tells us more about these actions. He describes a feast at which Tyrian sailors made celebrations for their god Herakles: after the banquet they danced to music in the Syrian manner, ‘Now they leap spiritedly into the air, now they bend their knees (*epoklazontes*) to the ground and revolve on them like persons possessed.’ Compare with this the passage in 1 K 19:18 where God promises Elijah that he will spare ‘those who have not bent the knee before Baal’ and in which the Septuagint uses the verb *oklazein*, the same verb as that used by Heliodorus.” de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 241.

clauses *כִּי שִׁיחַ וְכִי־שָׁיג לוֹ* (“Surely there is conversation to him, or there is a withdrawal to him”) are difficult to interpret and their precise meaning is probably irrecoverable.⁸⁵ Yet, etymological studies suggest that the combination of *שִׁיחַ* and *שָׁיג* may mean to relieve himself.⁸⁶ Indeed, Elijah is underscoring how Baal is a mere projection of his worshipers; a god created by his followers in the image of his followers. The idea that Baal would engage in human activities like being on a journey (*וְכִי־דָרַךְ לוֹ*), being asleep and needing to be woken up (*אֹיְלֵי יִשָּׁן הוּא וַיִּקָּץ*) are not an unrealistic depiction of Canaanites’ beliefs.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, in the context of 1 Kgs 18, Elijah’s observations are aimed at ridiculing Baal by comparison with the infinite and transcendent God.

In verse 28, the prophets comply again with Elijah’s demand (*וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְקוֹל גָּדוֹל*) “and they cried with loud voice” cf. v. 27 *קָרְאוּ בְקוֹל־גָּדוֹל* “and they cried with loud voice”). As the time passes, they take more drastic measures. Now in a condition that

⁸⁵ Both from the syntactical and semantical point of view the nominal clauses *כִּי שִׁיחַ וְכִי־שָׁיג לוֹ* are challenging. The divergence between the NKJV and the ESV illustrates the division between the interpreters. While some understand that the clauses denote that Baal is merely occupied, others suggest that the phrase is a euphemism for “relieving himself.” The NKJV reflects the first option (...either he is meditating, or he is busy, ...), while the ESV reflects the second (... Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, ...). In the first group are Patterson and Austel, who suggest that the terms merely denote occupation – *שִׁיחַ* (*śīah*, “deep in thought”) and *שָׁיג* (*śīg*, “busy”). Patterson and Austel, “1 and 2 Kings,” 778. Also, see Cogan, *I Kings*, 441; Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 117. In the second group are Wray Beal and Montgomery. The latter highlights the antiquity of this interpretation. Montgomery, *Kings*, 302; Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 240. In fact, such a view of the passage dates back the Targum Jonathan where the noun *שָׁיג* is translated by *אֲשַׁתְּדַפֵּא* that means “to be withered” with the sense of relieving himself. The OG translator render *שָׁיג* as *χαρηματιζει* that means “to give an oracle.”

⁸⁶ Gary A. Rendsburg, “The Mockery of Baal in 1 Kings 18:27,” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 414–417.

⁸⁷ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1 Kgs 18:27. Several ancient sources attest this. For instance, an Ugaritic text that recounts a visit of Anath to Baal says: “The lads of Baal make answer: ‘Baal is not in his house, [The God] Hadd in the midst of his palace. His bow he has taken in his hand, also his darts in his right hand. There he is on his way to Shimak Canebrake, the [buf]falo-filled” (ANET, 142a). See also: Michael A. Fishbane, *Haftarot*, JPSBC (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 132; Cogan, *I Kings*, 441; House, *1, 2 Kings*, 220.

could be described as “ecstatic,”⁸⁸ they cut themselves according to their custom (וַיִּתְגַּדְדוּ (כְּמִשְׁפָּטָם)).⁸⁹ This could imitate the mourning actions of the god El when he heard that his son Baal had been killed by Mot: he scraped his chest with his fingernails.⁹⁰ Perhaps the priests of Baal were trying to jump-start the next phase of the myth in which Baal would come to life again.

By verse 29, the narrative reaches the time of oblation (לְעֹלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה) “the time of the offering of the oblation”). The time indicators in verses 26 (מִהַבֹּקֶר וְעַד-הַצֶּהֳרָיִם) “from morning to noon”), 27 (בַּצֶּהֳרָיִם) “at noon”), and 29 (כַּעֲבַר הַצֶּהֳרָיִם עַד לְעֹלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה) “as the noon passed, ... until the time of the offering of the oblation”) form the temporal framework of the narrative thus far. They create suspense by indicating the passage of time and increase the impression of exhaustion of Baal’s prophets in face of their ongoing failure in getting Baal to respond to their prayer and ritual. Since the time of the offering of oblation would happen “between the evenings,”⁹¹ the time spent by Baal’s prophets is disproportional to the time that remained for Elijah. While the first group works the entire

⁸⁸ This kind of prophetic frenzy finds parallel in other ANE peoples. For instance, “Wen-Amon (around 1100 B.C) left an account of a violent prophetic frenzy in the midst of a sacrificial temple ritual in Byblos.” Provan, *1 Kings*, 141.

⁸⁹ In his essay, De Vaux mentions other instances of self-laceration in Syria, Heliopolis-Memphis, and cults of Asia Minor. De Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 242–43.

⁹⁰ In the Ugaritic Baal epic, we read: “‘We came upon Baal / Fallen on the ground: / Puissant Baal is dead, / The Prince, Lord of Earth, is perished.’/ Straightway Kindly El Benign / Descends from the throne, / Sits on the footstool; / From the footstool, / And sits on the ground; / Pours dust of mourning on his head, / Earth of mortification on his pate; / And puts on *sackcloth and loincloth*. / He *cuts a gash* with a stone, / *Incisions* with ... / He *gashes* his cheeks and his chin, / He *harrows* the *roll* of his *arm*. / He plows his like a garden, / *Harrows* his back like a plain. / He lifts up his voice and cries: ‘Baal’s dead!—What becomes of the people? / Dagon’s Son!—What of the masses? / After Baal I’ll descend into earth.’” “Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends,” trans. H. L. Ginsberg (ANET, 139).

⁹¹ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 750.

day from morning to (at least) mid-afternoon,⁹² Yahweh's prophet has only a couple of hours (in the best scenario).

Notwithstanding the number of prophets, time (basically all day long), and frenzy, there is no answer from Baal. The narrator repeats the nominal clauses וַאֲזַן קוֹל וְאִין עֲנָה ("and there is no voice and there is no answer") found in verse 26 adding in verse 29 the clause וַאֲזַן קָשָׁב ("and there is no attentiveness").⁹³ Instructively, a very similar construction appears later in 2 Kgs 4:31 to describe the state of unconsciousness of the Shunammite's son: וַאֲזַן קוֹל וְאִין קָשָׁב ("and there is no voice and there is no attentiveness"). Walsh highlights that "the narrator does not say, 'Baal did not answer,' as if Baal exists and can answer but for some reason remains silent. By phrasing the sentence in terms of absence ('there is no') rather than presence, the narrator hints at Baal nonentity."⁹⁴ Actually, "nothingness itself is the enemy. How can Baal be the opponent of YHWH when Baal is an utterly speechless god?"⁹⁵ Baal's nonentity is also represented in two additional ways. First, Elijah prefers to refer to Baal as אֱלֹהֵיכֶם ("your God") (vv. 24, 25) instead of using his proper name. Second, the difficult phraseology found in Elijah's mockery (בִּי שִׁיחַ וּבִי־שִׁיג לֹא וּבִי־דָרָךְ לֹא אוֹלֵי יֶשֶׁן הוּא וְיִקְצֵן) in verse 27 may be linked with the literary avoidance of having Baal as the acting subject of the verbs. In this sequence of

⁹² According to Davidson, "the two evenings" refers to the period between 3PM and sunset. Thus, the time of the sacrifice was the ninth hour. See: Richard Davidson, "Ponder the Passover!," *Shabbat Shalom* 53 (2006), 5.

⁹³ The use of the present tense in וַאֲזַן קוֹל וְאִין עֲנָה adds the element of liveness to the description.

⁹⁴ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 248.

⁹⁵ Glover, "Elijah Versus the Elijah Narrative," 451.

clauses Baal is the acting subject of וַיִּקָּץ (“he will awake up”); that is the only verb in this sequence.

Elijah & the People (1 Kgs 18:30–40)

The shift in the addressee (now כָּל־הָעָם again) marks the beginning of a new section. Baal’s prophets leave the scene and do not return until verse 40 when Elijah summons the people to seize them. The focus now is on Elijah, “all the people,” and, naturally, Yahweh’s response. The first (vv. 21–24) and third sections (vv. 30–40) start in very similar way with the same two predicates containing the roots נגש and אמר. And not only this but the clauses also contain the same words though with different syntactical roles attributed to them in each verse.

Table 10. Comparison between Verse 21 and 30

v. 21	v. 30
וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלֶיהוּ אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר drew near to all the people”)	וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהוּ לְכָל־הָעָם גִּשׁוּ אֵלַי וַיִּגַּשׁוּ כָל־הָעָם אֵלָיו (and Elijah said to all the people, ‘Draw near to me.’ And all the people drew near to him.)

However, it is the differences between the two verses that are truly meaningful. While in verse 21 it is only Elijah who approaches the people, in verse 30 the people also approach Elijah at his request. While in verse 21 there is no answer or reaction from the people (וְלֹא־עָנוּ הָעָם אֵתוֹ דְּבָר) “and the people did not answer him a word”), in verse 30 they comply with the prophet’s imperative (גִּשׁוּ). The perfect compliance-and-command in verse 30 (וַיִּגַּשׁוּ כָל־הָעָם אֵלָיו / גִּשׁוּ אֵלַי) additionally demonstrates that after the failure of Baal’s prophets, the people are already more responsive to Elijah.

The last clause of verse 30 (וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה הַהָרוּס) “and he healed the altar of Yahweh that had been destroyed”) functions as a title summarizing the content of verses 31 and 32a where the narrator recounts the restoration of an altar. That the altar has been standing at that place before seems to be evident from the use of the Qal participle passive of הָרַס (הַהָרוּס) (“which had been torn down”)⁹⁶ that qualifies the noun מִזְבֵּחַ. Perhaps, the site had been used previously as a high place where the people had worshiped Yahweh. No information is provided regarding the reason for its destruction but it seems very likely that the cult to Baal was involved. Later in the narrative, Elijah interprets the demolishing of altars (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִזְבְּחֹתַיִךְ הָרַסוּ) “the children of Israel have torn down your altars”) (1 Kgs 19:10) as a sign of the breaking of the covenant (כִּי־ עָזְבוּ בְרִיתְךָ “they have forsaken your covenant”) (1 Kgs 19:10). It should be kept in mind that in Kings the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem is the ideal plan for God’s people. However, this was not more than an ideal most of time during the monarchy as the insistent reprehension for kings (even the good ones in Judah) who continued worshipping in high places shows (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs 12:3). In the case of the Northern kingdom whose access to the temple had been cut off by Jeroboam, the destruction of the altar to Yahweh occurred parallel to the depletion of the temple in Jerusalem, and so, it was something consequential.

⁹⁶ The word is the opposite of בָּנָה (to build) in Ezk 36:36; Mal 1:4; Ps 28:5; Prov 14:1; Job 12:14. Besides 1 Kgs 18, the root is used to describe the destruction of cultic sites in Judg 6:25; 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; Ezek 16:39. In the phrase “Look, what I have built I am about to tear down, and what I have planted I am about to pluck up, it is all the land” (Jer 45:4) the “word *hāras* no longer refers to destruction of cities and countryside, but to ‘annihilation’ pure and simple, the end of Heilsgeschichte.” G. Munderlein, “הָרַס,” *TDOT* 3:463.

The use of the root רפא in verse 30 is also meaningful. According to the narrator, Elijah “healed the altar of Yahweh” (וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה). Here, most versions translate the root רפא as “to repair.”⁹⁷ However, a quick look at the NKJV, for instance, shows that this is not a usual way to translate the root whose basic meaning is “to heal.”⁹⁸ There are only two places where the NKJV uses “to repair” to translate the root רפא. They are found in 1 Kgs 18:30 and Jer 19:11. In fact, these are also the only occasions where the verb has an inanimate physical entity as its syntactical or semantical object in the entire OT.⁹⁹

The choice of “repairing” to translate רפא is not problematic since it transmits properly the sense of the root in this particular context. However, as a result, the English reader misses an interesting nuance. The depiction of the “healing” of the altar in vv. 31–32b makes clear that Elijah was not merely fixing an altar partially torn,¹⁰⁰ but rather that he needed to rebuild it basically from scratch. It is possible that the remains of the altar were still visible, but nothing of it was left standing, much like the crushed pot in Jer 19:11. Perhaps, the storyteller slows down his narrative to focus on the altar’s repair because, in a certain sense, the altar was a reflection of Israel’s spiritual condition. The Northern kingdom did not need a simple “fixing,” but instead a complete “healing.” The use of the root throughout the HB seems to confirm this interpretation. On 10 occasions,

⁹⁷ For instance: ESV, NIV, NASB, ASV, LEB, NET, NRSV, NLT, RSV, JPS, KJV.

⁹⁸ H. J. Stoebe, “רפא,” *TLOT* 1254–1259.

⁹⁹ The closest parallel is the healing of the waters in Elisha’s narrative (2 Kgs 2:22).

¹⁰⁰ More probably the altar was torn down during Jezebel’s campaign against Yahwism as expressed in 1 Kgs 19:10. In his prayer, Elijah says: “So he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life’” (NKJV).

רפא is followed by a direct object. Curiously, except Gen 20:17, in all cases, the root does not refer to actual healing but has metaphorical and spiritual connotations (Jer 3:22; 6:14; 8:11). In 2 Chr 7:14, although the verb implies actual physical healing, its usage here is connected directly with spiritual healing. In 2 Chr 30:20, the healing of the people is not physical, but it refers to the purity needed in the context of the Passover festival.¹⁰¹ In the cases where רפא is classified as a predicate object (when the direct object is a pronominal suffix attached to the verb) the picture is not different. Thus, very often the concepts of physical and spiritual healing are intermingled (e.g., Isa 19:22; 57:18; Jer 17:14; 30:17; Hos 6:1; Ps 30:3).¹⁰²

In the following verses (vv. 31–34), the narrator slows down the story pace to focus on the “healing” of the altar (vv. 31–32a), the sacrifice preparation (v. 33), and the construction and watering of the trench (v. 34). In providing such details, he creates suspense delaying the climax of the contest.

Both the recounting of the construction of the altar and Elijah’s prayer contain elements that evoke the patriarchs and reinforce the identity of Israel that idolatry undermined.¹⁰³ For instance, the use of twelve stones according to the number of the tribes, one for each of the sons of Jacob (שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂרָה אֲבָנִים כַּמִּסְפָּר שְׁבַטֵי בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב) memorializes the great reunion in Gilgal (Josh 4) where the Israelites “took twelve

¹⁰¹ See: Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Healing of the Altar](#)” of my jupyter notebook. The verb is translated as “to repair” only in 1 Kgs 18:30. This is consistent in LEB, NKJV, and ESV (this last also translates רפא as “to repair” in Ps 60:2).

¹⁰² See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Healing of the Altar](#)” of my jupyter notebook. Curiously, when the verb רפא is followed by a complement (whether לְ or מִן) usually a physical healing is anticipated.

¹⁰³ In the narrative of Kings, the insistence on the practice of idolatry will lead to the irreversible doom of the national and religious identity of the northern kingdom (2 Kgs 17).

stones” (וַיִּשְׂאוּ שְׁתֵּי־עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים) from the Jordan river “according to the number of the tribes of Israel” (לְמִסְפַּר שְׁבַטֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) (Jos 4:8). The parallel is hardly only coincidental.

The construction of the altar in the name of Yahweh (וַיִּבְנֶה אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים מִזְבֵּחַ בְּשֵׁם) is followed by the mention of the trench (תְּעֹלָה) around the altar which is able to hold two seahs of seed (זֵרַע כְּבֵית סֵאתִים) (v. 32b).¹⁰⁵ The trench is a superfluous element not essential for the sacrifice, but it plays a role by adding odds against the prophet (cf. v. 34) and later it amplifies the legitimacy and strength of the divine fire (v. 38). With the altar ready, the sacrifice can be arranged on it (v. 33). From the narrative point of view the description of these details are parallel to Gen 22:9 where the narrator also creates suspense by setting out the arrangement of Isaac on the wood.¹⁰⁶ In addition to that, the detailed description shows that Elijah is following the terms as agreed to at the beginning of the contest.

However, Elijah goes beyond. Increasing the odds against him (besides the number of prophets and time left to him), he pours out four jars of water three times

¹⁰⁴ The phrase וַיִּבְנֶה אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים מִזְבֵּחַ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה appears only in 1 Kgs 18:32 and probably conveys the sense that the altar is dedicated exclusively to Yahweh. The verb וַיִּבְנֶה has a double accusation: אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים and מִזְבֵּחַ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה. Waltke and O’Connor observe that “verbs of creation and appointment often govern two accusatives.”¹⁰⁴ Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 173. These may be *thing made + materials* (Gen 2:7; Exod 38:3; Song 3:10) or be *thing made + thing remade* as is the case in 1 Kgs 18:32 (cf. Num 11:8; Judg 17:4;). Ibid, 174–75.

¹⁰⁵ The expression זֵרַע כְּבֵית סֵאתִים is also unique. It literally means “like the house of two seahs of seeds.” In the context seems to indicate that the trench was large enough to accommodate (hence the image of house) two seahs of seed. Wray Beal suggests that “a seah measures approximately 13 quarts (15 l); 2 seahs (26 qt [30 l]) is hardly a large volume. Possibly the area of land seedable by such a quantity is in view, although that measure (approximately 4,921 sq ft [1,500 sq m]) is exceedingly large and difficult to equate with the 12 jars of poured water (v. 34).” Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 240.

¹⁰⁶ See both passages in parallel here: וַיִּבְנוּ שָׁם אֲבָרְהָם אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת־הָעֵצִים וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ (Gen 22:9); וַיַּעֲרֹךְ אֶת־הָעֵצִים וַיִּגְתַּח אֶת־הַפָּר וַיִּשֶׂם עַל־הָעֵצִים (1 Kgs 18:33).

(totalizing 12 jars according to the number of stones)¹⁰⁷ over the sacrifice filling the trench with water (v. 34–35). Thus, he has no chance even to try to cheat, and he anticipates and disposes of any later claims of trickery.

The last temporal marker (וַיְהִי בַּעֲלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה) in verse 36 brings the contest to its final scene. There is no additional ritual, only a simple prayer that is recorded in verses 36–37. In it, Elijah, who is for the first and only time identified as a prophet (הַנְּבִיא) in the book, addresses Yahweh directly as אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַשָּׁרָאֵל. The phrase God of “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” appears 18 times in the Hebrew Bible to talk about Yahweh as the God of the covenant. However, the expression God of “Abraham, Isaac and *Israel*” occurs only four times in the OT: once in the Pentateuch in the context of the apostasy involving the golden calf (Exod 32:13) and three times in the Former Prophets (1 Kgs 18:36; 1 Chron 29:18; 30:6). Peculiar to the three occurrences is the fact that some kind of apostasy is in view in each context. In the case of 18:36, it is possible that the narrator is alluding to the episode in Exod. 32:13, the only previous instance where the phrase is used. If this is the case, then its usage may imply that Israel is again on the verge of destruction and for the second time a prophet by means of the construction of an altar will prevent the obliteration of God’s people. Furthermore, as in the episode of the golden calf, there is a call for killing the instigators of the apostasy in Exod 32 (see vv. 26–29).

¹⁰⁷ Some have questioned how Elijah could get so much water after years of drought. One way to understand the presence of water on Mount Carmel is formulated by Simon who affirms that the drying up of Wadi Cherith (17:7) does not mean that all wells and springs had also dried up. On the contrary, the description of the horrors of the famine in Zarephath and Samaria refers to a shortage of flour and fodder not of drinking water (17:11 and 18:5). Whether there was a well-known spring in the area (Bir el Muharaq?), or the water came from the flasks, waterskins, and jugs carried by the onlookers, it is quite plausible that the narrator saw obtaining twelve jugs of water as a purely technical problem that he did not have to address.” Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 184. Others submit that “there is no suggestion that this was fresh water. The nearby Mediterranean was full of water—it was just undrinkable” Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1 Kgs 18:33–34. The choice between the two positions depends on the actual location assigned to place of Mount Carmel.

The people in the Northern kingdom are repeating the history of their ancestors, and once again God is mercifully intervening in order to avoid their destruction (at least for now).

The fire would consume the sacrifice instead of them.

The content of the prophet's prayer is organized in a panel structure¹⁰⁸ with only one deviation (see A+ below).

A What should be known – You are God (אַתָּה אֱלֹהִים)

A+ What should be known – I am your servant (וְאֲנִי עַבְדְּךָ)

B What Elijah has done (עָשִׂיתִי)

C Elijah's request – Hear me! (עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי)

A' What should be known – Yahweh is God (אַתָּה יְהוָה)

B' What God has done (אַתָּה הַסַּבְתָּ)

The intriguing aspect of this symmetry is the asymmetrical element that like an intruder seems to interfere in the harmony of the structure as a whole. Walsh instructively remarks that “asymmetry can be one of the most forceful stylistic devices in biblical Hebrew narrative. It is not to be confused with absence of symmetry; it refers rather to deviation within an otherwise clear symmetry. (...) It is the tension between pattern and deviation that affords asymmetry its expressive power.”¹⁰⁹

In the case of 1 Kgs 18:35–36, the main asymmetrical element is Elijah's request that by God's intervention he may be recognized as a true prophet of Yahweh. Besides, while B' is about what God has made, B focuses on what Elijah has done through the word of God. The text is not explicit about the reference of all these things כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה (“all these things”) accomplished by the prophet. But they may refer proleptically to the fire coming down from heaven (v. 38), the killing of Baal's prophets (v. 40), the

¹⁰⁸ Walsh classifies this kind of structure as a “forward symmetry.” Walsh, *Style & Structure*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Walsh, *Style & Structure*, 101.

return of the rain (v. 45), and his supernatural run to Jezreel (v. 46). Through all these things the people should recognize Elijah as Yahweh's legitimate servant in the same way that the Israelites did with Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea in Exod 14:31. After that tremendous experience, the people believed Yahweh and His servant Moses.

Elijah's prayer includes three more important aspects. First, the prophet repeats the nominal clause **אַתָּה יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים** ("you Yahweh is God") twice (A, A').¹¹⁰ The fact that the fire would prove who is God (and who is Elijah) is the key point of the contest (v. 24). Second, the clause **וְאַתָּה הִסַּבְתָּ אֶת-לִבָּם אַחֲרֵינִי** ("you yourself have turned their heart back") implies that Yahweh's manifestation would not only prove his existence but also bring the people back to God.

The sense of **וְאַתָּה הִסַּבְתָּ אֶת-לִבָּם אַחֲרֵינִי** ("you yourself have turned their heart back") has divided scholars' opinion. Indeed, the clause is not found elsewhere in the HB. From the form-function relation of the WXQtI clause, the phrase functions as a statement.¹¹¹ Some interpreters believe that the turning back(wards) is a reference to apostasy. In this case, the perfect has a past orientation and God is responsible for Israel's apostasy since it is he who turn their hearts backwards.¹¹² Thus, there is a high view of the sovereignty of Yahweh here.¹¹³ The problem with this view is not only the difficult theological issue raised by it, but the reason for it in this context. Why should the people

¹¹⁰ In the nominal clause **אַתָּה יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים**, the tetragrammaton functions as an apposition to the independent pronoun.

¹¹¹ When a Qatal verb is anteceded by an expressed subject formed by an independent pronoun, the function of the clause is a statement. See Text-Fabric query results in section "[The Function of 'You Have Turned Their Hearts'](#)" of my jupyter notebook.

¹¹² Fishbane, *Haftarot*, 133

¹¹³ Barnes, *1-2 Kings*, 157.

know that God had caused their apostasy right before a divine manifestation that would bring them back to the right track? The context seems to preclude this interpretation.

Another option is to assign to the Hebrew perfect a future orientation. In this case, the verb should be taken as proleptic with the sense of a prophetic perfect.¹¹⁴ The idiom of turning (סבב) the heart (לֵב) of someone to someone else appears in Ezra 6:22 and clearly is used in a positive sense.¹¹⁵ Although the return (from שׁוּב) to God is the most common language for conversion in the OT (e.g., Jer 3:12), the hiphil of סבב is within the semantic field. If this is the correct understanding of the clause, the adverb means “back again, i.e., pertaining to a return to a state of relationship as a figurative extension of returning to an original space or position.”¹¹⁶ Simon insightfully observes that “the idiom *hašavath-panim* has the sense of breaking off relations (“turn your minds away from all your abominations”—Ezek. 14:6; cf. Ezek. 7:22); but once relations have been severed, *šivath-lev* refers to their renewal (“these people will turn back to their master, Rehoboam”—1 Kings 12:27).”¹¹⁷ Therefore, he concludes that “nothing prevents us from understanding the ‘turning backward’ of Israel’s heart as referring to the specific context of their current situation. Because they have already turned their face away from their

¹¹⁴ Clyde M. Miller, *First and Second Kings*, LWC 7 (Abilene, TX: A.C.U., 1991), 275. Although Merwe affirms that the prophetic perfect is rare, he recognizes its occurrence “as a rhetorical means of presenting future events as if they have already happened.” Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 146.

¹¹⁵ Ezra 6:22 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ חֲגֻמְצוֹת שְׁבַעֵת יָמִים בְּשִׁמְחָה כִּי שִׁמְחָה יְהוָה וְהוּא וְהָסֵב לֵב מְלֹךְ־אֲשׁוּר עָלֵיהֶם לְחֹזֶק יָדֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲבָנֵי מְלָאכִים וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲבָנֵי מְלָאכִים בְּיַתְהוֹאֲלֵהֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: אֶל־דָּוִד תַּחֲתֵיוֹ לְאֹמֶר לְמִי־אָרְץ לְאֹמֶר בְּרַתָּה בְּרִיתְךָ אֵתִי וְהָגָה יָדִי עִמָּךְ לְהָסֵב אֶת־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

¹¹⁶ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Logos edition.

¹¹⁷ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 188.

God (cf. 2 Chr 35:22), ‘turning their hearts back’ now means turning back toward Him.”¹¹⁸

Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that a proleptic sense is already present in the first part of Elijah’s prayer as mentioned above. Thus, in his prayer the prophet envisages the results of the fiery theophany (v. 38) that follows it and the subsequent reply of the people (v. 39).¹¹⁹

The third important aspect of Elijah’s prayer is the nature of his words in the central part. There is a simple request: *עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי* (“answer me, O Yahweh, answer me!”). Curiously, these same words appear in the prayer of Baal’s prophets in verse 26 (*הַבְּעַל עֲנֵנוּ* “answer us O Baal”). In the case of Elijah, however, there is no dancing or frenetic laceration. Thus, the parallel in words and the contrast in their actions only highlights that the problem with the prophets is not their prayer, but the god to which they are praying.

Yahweh answers immediately making fire come down (*וַתִּפֹּל אֵשׁ־יְהוָה*) (v. 38). Another occasion in which fire falls on a sacrifice is Lev 9:24 which “describes the very first sacrificial officiation of the Aaronic priesthood, inaugurating a worship system that lasted for over a millennium.”¹²⁰ The only other instance of this phenomenon is found in 2 Chr 7:1, 3 in the context of the temple inauguration. As shown in the following table, the parallels between 1 Kgs 18:38–39 and Lev 9:24 are remarkable:

¹¹⁸ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 188.

¹¹⁹ Elijah’s prayer is an illustration of Jesus’ teaching in Mark 11:24 – “For this *reason* I say to you, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you have received *it*, and it will be *done* for you.” (LEB)

¹²⁰ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 177.

Table 11. Comparison between Lev 9:24 and 1 Kgs 18:38–39

Lev 9:24	1 Kgs 18:38–39
וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה (“and fire went out from before”)	וַתִּפֹּל אֵשׁ־יְהוָה (“and the fire of Yahweh fell down”)
וַתֹּאכַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים (“and it consumed the burnt offering and the fat upon the altar”)	(...) וַתֹּאכַל אֶת־הָעֹלָה (“and it consumed the burnt offering”)
עַם כָּל־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא (“and all the people saw”)	עַם כָּל־הָעָם וַיֵּרָא (“and all the people saw”)
וַיִּרְנוּ (“and they shouted joyfully”)	(...) וַיֹּאמְרוּ (“and they said”)
וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם (“and they fell on”)	עַם כָּל־הָעָם וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם (“and they fell on their faces”)

As can be seen, in Lev 9:24 fire comes from Yahweh (וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה) upon the altar consuming (וַתֹּאכַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ) the sacrifice (אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים). As all the people see (וַיֵּרָא כָּל־הָעָם) the divine manifestation, they react immediately shouting for joy and falling on their faces (וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם). Although the parallels between the two passages are undeniable, the reader should dwell upon the meaning of them. Would these parallels suggest that by the same sign God is providing to Israel a new beginning, the inauguration of a new era? If this is the case, Elijah the prophet performed the priestly role as did Aaron.

Now, the people’s response is immediate. The attitude of falling on their faces (וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם) entails submission and involves a confession that Yahweh is God (יְהוָה) (הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים) (v. 39). The use of the independent pronoun הוּא is emphatic; he and not Baal is God. The repetition of הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים indicates the end of the drama that prompted the contest and provides the real climax of it: the move from lethargy to compliance and confession.

The people's reaction involves more than words. They comply with Elijah's command (וַתִּפְּשׂוּ) to capture the prophets (וַיִּתְּפְּשׂוּם) (v. 40), who are subsequently killed by Elijah (וַיִּשְׁחָטֵם) in the wadi of Kishon.¹²¹ The verb שחט normally refers to the ritual killing of animals.¹²² When it is used to describe the death of people, it implies "the whole killing of large number of people (for example, 2 Kgs 10.7, 14)."¹²³ Walsh remarks that "in case of human beings, the connotations tend to depersonalize the victims, treating their deaths as a mass phenomenon and reducing them to the same category as animal slaughter. ... the use sets up an oblique resonance with earlier uses of the verb 'cut off.'" ¹²⁴ The execution of Baal's prophets should be seen in the context of God's commands to exterminate Canaan's inhabitants during the conquest.¹²⁵ The spiritual

¹²¹ Sweeney observes that the reference to the Wadi of Kishon "recalls the victory by Deborah and Barak over the forces of Jabin and Sisera (Judg 4:7; 5:21; Ps 83:9). The Kishon flows from the western entrance to the Jezreel Valley by Megiddo through the valley that cuts between the hills of the Galil and the Carmel range, and empties into the Mediterranean south of Akko." Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 229.

¹²² "The majority of passages using the vb. šḥṭ describe the ritual killing of animals for the cult (Lev. 17:3[bis]; Nu. 11:22; 1 S. 1:25; 14:32; Isa. 22:13) ... to refer to the slaughtering of animals, usually in order to use their bodies or blood in cultic rites, and, on the other, to refer to the killing of people, usually more as passive captives than in the heat of battle." Ronald E. Clements, "שחט," *TDOT* 14:564.

¹²³ Walsh, *I Kings*, 254.

¹²⁴ Walsh, *I Kings*, 254. Holt suggests that "the slaughtering of the prophets of Baal can also be viewed as an *anti-sacrifice*, an inverted sacrifice. The prophets of Baal are not sacrificed to Yahweh; they are butchered as common cattle in a place far away from the altar." Else Kragelund Holt, "... Urged on by his wife Jezebel: A literary Reading of 1 Kgs 18 in Context," *SJOT* 9 (1995): 89.

¹²⁵ In a recent book, William J. Webb and Gordan K. Oeste suggest that following a literary convention the narrator of Joshua describes the complete destruction of several cities during the conquest in hyperbolic terms. See: William J. Webb and Gordan K. Oeste, *Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric?: Wrestling with Troubling War Texts* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2019), 181–206. They make their case showing that on several occasions, cities utterly destroyed by Israel's forces had to be conquered again in a short amount of time (Josh 10:33, 40 cf. 16:10; 10:38–39 cf. 15:15–16). Webb and Oeste, *Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric?*, 189–190. Although their model may be helpful to explain the cases in which cities needed to be conquered a second time during the conquest, it is hardly useful to be applied in the killing of the prophets of Baal, since there is no evidence of escaped ones. What is clear is that not all pagan personnel were on Mt. Carmel. Although Elijah had summed both the prophets of Baal and Asherah, Ahab assembled only "the prophets" (1 Kgs 18:20). The identity of these prophets on the mount is clarified by the subsequent narrative that refers to them as "prophets of Baal" (1 Kgs 18:22, 26, 40). Thus, the prophets of Asherah were not killed in verse 40. Furthermore, there is no way to confirm whether the 450 prophets

condition of the people during the contest on Mount Carmel was a vivid consequence of their failure to fulfill God's commission. As a new Joshua, Elijah executes God's instruction of eliminating those who have refused His mercy and denied abandoning a destructive way of life.

On the one hand, the chapter starts with the killing of the prophets of Yahweh and ends with the slaughtering of the prophets of Baal. On the other hand, Elijah, who starts his story in the refuge of a wadi hidden in the midst of persecution, is in a wadi again but this time leading the persecution and execution of the enemies of Yahweh. There is a complete reversal of circumstances in the narrative at this point. However, one more reverse is left, the change from drought to abundant rain. That is the concern addressed in the next verses (vv. 41–46).

Narrative Features

Three basic narrative features are especially noteworthy. First, the narrator makes an artful use of repetition. For instance, the two words ענה and נגש function as *Leitworte* in the narrative. In the first feature, initially a people with no answer mirror their god who is not able to provide an answer as well. As the plot line develops, the people slowly become more engaged to the point that they confess Yahweh as the true God. Similarly, the second feature is that a people who need to be approached end up approaching the prophet. These are key words and phrases that develop the main point of the contest that is not merely intended to prove who is God.

were all the prophets of Baal active in the Northern kingdom or there were more prophets who did not attend the contest on Mt. Carmel. The fact that Elijah commanded Ahab to summon all the prophets, does not mean that he complied with the request.

A part of the second feature to be considered here is the use of structural marks (see next section). The narrator uses them to create suspense and irony (e.g., the temporal markers). The use of irony and suspense is a distinct characteristic of the story. Indeed, the Carmel story can be considered one of the master pieces in irony among all biblical narratives. The satiric attack of Elijah against the prophets uses pointed humor to increase the drama underscoring the blind alley wherein the prophets are trapped.

The final noteworthy feature is the use of narrative echoes from important events such as those found in Josh 4, 24, and Lev 9. This situates the story in the context of covenant renewal. In this way, those references link the contest story of 1 Kgs 18:21–40 to the main biblical story line where God is working to bring his people back to him. At the same time, these echoes establish Elijah as a new Moses, a new Aaron, and a new Joshua by whom a new era is being inaugurated.

The structural arrangement of the narrative combined with the use of *Leitworte* suggests that Walsh is not correct in affirming that “the contest of God is the most evident plot line”¹²⁶ of the story. Along with the rivalry of the prophets, both plot lines are subordinate to the main one: the move of the people from Baal to Yahweh. The true victory of God does not happen at the top of the mount when the fire comes down from heaven but rather takes place in the hearts of the people when they confess: Yahweh, he is the God! It is the hardness of their hearts not Baal that needs to be defeated. As an idol, Baal is a nonentity and God does not need to fight against it. Apparently, the contest between Yahweh and Baal is a divine condescendence in order to turn their hearts to Him. However, Yahweh’s defeat of the evil forces should not be underestimated. Such

¹²⁶ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 254.

forces, which are materialized in the ministry of the false prophets, are as real as the spiritual powers involved in the practice of idolatry.

Structure

As a whole, the interaction between Elijah and the people and between Elijah and Baal’s prophets provides the basic narrative structure for the contest.

- Elijah & the people (vv. 21–24)
- Elijah and Baal’s prophets (vv. 25–29)
- Elijah and the people (vv. 30–40)

Two important patterns can be discerned within the structure above. First, the structural similarities and contrasts between the interactions of the prophets with the respective gods emphasize the ineffectiveness of Baal. The activities of Baal’s prophets are arranged in three acts while Elijah needs only one to obtain an answer from Yahweh.

Table 12. Actions of Elijah and Baal’s Prophets

Baal’s prophets		
<u>Act I</u>	<u>Act II</u>	<u>Act III</u>
Ritual Actions (v.26a)	Ritual Actions (v.26e)	Ritual Actions (v.28b)
Time Marker (v.26b)	Time Marker (v.27a)	Time Marker (v.29a)
Prayer (v.26c)	Elijah’s Mocking (v.27b)	Prayer (prophecy) (v.29b)
No response (v.26d)	Prayer (28a)	No response (v.29c)
	No Response	
Elijah		
<u>Act I</u>		
Ritual Actions (vv. 30-35)		
Time Marker (v.36a)		
Prayer (v.36b-37)		
Response (v.38)		

On one hand, the structure reflects the repeated actions of Baal’s prophets trying to get an answer from their god. Ritual actions appear in each act. They are always followed by a time indicator defining the time lapse between their actions. As the time

passes, their actions become more dramatic and extreme moving from the simple sacrifice preparation (v. 26a), to their leaping around the altar (v. 26e), and finally to self-laceration (v. 28a).¹²⁷ Clearly, their despair and embarrassment increases as Baal remains quiet throughout the day. In the same way, their prayers becomes more dramatic and extreme as the time advances, progressing from a short prayer: (“O Baal, hear us!”) (v. 26), to a loud cry (v. 28), and finally to mentioning their long prophesizing (v. 29).¹²⁸ In each act there is no response but silence. Although there is no explicit declaration in the second act about the lack of an answer from Baal, the context indicates that this is the case. In the very center of the three acts the antagonistic mocking of Elijah is inserted. The present structure highlights the fact that no matter how elaborate their ritual actions are, how much time they spend, or how many times they pray, Baal does not respond, as of course, he cannot.

Different from the acts involving Baal’s prophets, there is no time marker defining the passage of time in Elijah’s actions: Yahweh does not need time in order to take action. He responds immediately to Elijah’s prayer which consists of nothing more than words. The divine answer is unequivocal (1 Kgs 18:38) and it overcomes all odds against Elijah: quantity (all prophets versus one prophet), time (all day versus the time of daily sacrifice), and the saturation of the sacrifice.

¹²⁷ An Akkadian inscription discovered at Ugarit verifies the practice of self-laceration with ecstatic prophecy during burial rites. J. J. M. Roberts, “A New Parallel to 1 Kings 18:28–29,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 76–77.

¹²⁸ Apparently, the verb *וַיִּנְבְּאוּ* (“they prophesize”) here means “they rave” as speaking in ecstasy. Fishbane, *Haftarot*, 132. See also: A. Guillaume, “I. and II. Kings,” in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture: Including the Apocrypha*, ed. Charles Gore, Henry Leighton Goudge, and Alfred Guillaume (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1942), 1:263.

The last structural pattern to be considered here involves the interaction between Elijah and the people. The account of the contest between Baal and Yahweh itself begins in 18:21. It opens and closes with the repetition of the verb **שגג** (to approach) followed by Elijah's speech.

Table 13. Interaction between Elijah and the People

Opening	Closure
Elijah approaches (v. 21a)	Elijah approaches (v. 30)
Elijah addresses the people (v. 21b)	Elijah addresses Yahweh (vv. 36–37)
People do not respond (v. 21c)	Yahweh responds (v. 38)
People see (v. 39a)	
People respond (v. 39b)	
Climax	

The pattern described in the table above is carefully structured to emphasize the understating of the message that the narrator intends to convey. First, it is Yahweh through his prophet that takes the initiative to approach the people; without his direct intervention the true Yahwism would have soon disappeared. Second, Yahweh acts despite the initial apathy of the people demonstrated by their failure to answer. By tracing a parallel between Yahweh's immediacy and the people's initial lethargy, the narrator is contrasting God with his people and showing that in spite of their breaking of the covenant, God is still willing to bring his people back to him. Finally, the narrator's arrangement suggests that the climax of the contest is not the fire coming from heaven, but rather the positive answer of the people in the finale. The main point of the story is not Yahweh overcoming Baal, but is Yahweh overpowering Israel's apathy.

The End of the Drought (1 Kgs 18:41–45)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Co> **לֹא־חָאָב**] [**אֱלֹהֵינוּ**] [**יֹאמַר**] [**וְ**]

WayX 1Kgs 18:41

[<Pr> עלה]		ZIm0 1Kgs 18:41
[<Pr> אכל]		ZIm0 1Kgs 18:41
[<Pr> שתה] [<Cj>ו]		WIm0 1Kgs 18:41
[<Su> קול המון הגשם] [<Cj>כי]		NmCl 1Kgs 18:41
[<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> יעלה] [<Cj>ו]		WayX 1Kgs 18:42
[<Pr> לאכל]		InfC 1Kgs 18:42
[<Pr> לשתות] [<Cj>ו]		InfC 1Kgs 18:42
[<Co> אל ראש הכרמל] [<Pr> עלה] [<Su> אליהו] [<Cj>ו]		WXQt 1Kgs 18:42
[<Co> ארצה] [<Pr> יגהר] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:42
[<Co> בין ברכו] [<Ob> פניו] [<Pr> ישם] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:42
[<Co> אל נערו] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:43
[<Ij>נא] [<Pr> עלה]		ZIm0 1Kgs 18:43
[<Ob> דרך ים] [<Pr> הבט]		ZIm0 1Kgs 18:43
[<Pr> יעל] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:43
[<Pr> יבט] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:43
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:43
[<Su> מאומה] [<NC> אין]		NmCl 1Kgs 18:43
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:43
[<Pr> שב]		ZIm0 1Kgs 18:43
[<Mo> שבע פעמים]		NmCl 1Kgs 18:43
[<Ti> בשבעית] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:44
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:44
[<Co> עב קטנה / ככף איש] [<Su><sp> עלה] [<PC> מים] [<Ij>הנה]		Ptcp 1Kgs 18:44
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:44
[<Pr> עלה]		ZIm0 1Kgs 18:44
[<Co> אל אחאב] [<Pr> אמר]		ZIm0 1Kgs 18:44
[<Pr> אסר]		ZIm0 1Kgs 18:44
[<Pr> רד] [<Cj>ו]		WIm0 1Kgs 18:44
[<Su> לעצרכה] [<PO> לא] [<Ng>] [<Cj>ו]		WxYX 1Kgs 18:44
[<Aj>עד כה ועד כה] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:45
[<Co> עבים ורוח] [<Pr> התקדרו] [<Su> השמים] [<Cj>ו]		WXQt 1Kgs 18:45
[<Su> גשם גדול] [<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]		WayX 1Kgs 18:45
[<Su> אחאב] [<Pr> ירכב] [<Cj>ו]		WayX 1Kgs 18:45
[<Co> יזרעאלה] [<Pr> ילך] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:45
[<PC> אל אליהו] [<Pr> היתה] [<Su> יד יהוה] [<Cj>ו]		WXQt 1Kgs 18:46
[<Ob> מתניו] [<Pr> ישנס] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:46
[<Co> לפני אחאב] [<Pr> ירץ] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 1Kgs 18:46
[<Co> יזרעאלה] [<Ps> עד באכה]		InfC 1Kgs 18:46

⁴¹ And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink for there is the sound of the roar of rain.

⁴² And Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, he bent down to the ground, and put his face between his knees.

⁴³ And he said to his servant, “Go up please, look in the way of the sea.” And he went up, looked, and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go back seven times.”

⁴⁴ Then at the seventh time, he said, “Behold, there is a little cloud, like the hand of a man, going up from the sea. And he said, “Go up and say to Ahab, ‘Harness *your horses* and go down, lest the rain restrain you.’”

⁴⁵ Then in a little while, the sky grew dark with clouds and wind and there was heavy rain. Ahab rode¹²⁹ and went to Jezreel.

⁴⁶ And the hand of Yahweh was on Elijah; he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab until the entrance of Jezreel.

Delimitation

The last section of chapter 18 starts with a change of players. Now the people leave the scene, and the stage is divided between Elijah, his servant (who is mentioned for the first time), and Ahab. Following the ancient literary convention that only two characters may interact at a time, the dialogues happen between Elijah and Ahab (v. 41) and then between Elijah and his servant (vv. 43–44). Between the dialogues, the narrator advances the main storyline that culminates with a heavy rain (vv. 42, 45) which confirms the ending of the drought. The section finishes with Elijah and Ahab on the way to Jezreel (v. 46).

Although Ahab returns to the spotlight in this section, his role is still completely passive. He acts only in compliance to Elijah’s command (v. 42) and without voice. Indeed, the king even follows directions sent by Elijah through his servant (v. 44–45). The reader now wonders if Ahab has become an obedient servant of Yahweh. However, the next chapter of 1 Kings will tell otherwise. The following narrative unit opens in 1 Kgs 19:1 with Ahab declaring to Jezebel what Elijah has done instead of what Yahweh did in the face of Baal unresponsiveness.

¹²⁹ Curiously, the OG uses *καὶ ἔκλειεν* (וַיִּרְכַּב) instead of וַיִּרְכַּב.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The new section opens with Elijah addressing Ahab (וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶוּ לְאַחָאָב) “and Elijah said to Ahab”). Although the tone of the meeting is quite different from verses 17 and 18, Elijah is still in charge firing three imperatives (עֲלֵה אֲכַל וּשְׁתֵּה) “go up, eat, and drink”) and giving no sign of a more friendly relationship. The coordinating כִּי clarifies the reason: rain is coming (הַמִּזְוֹן הַגֶּשֶׁם קוֹל) “the sound of the roar of rain”) (v. 41). The command for Ahab to “go up” makes sense in the context of verse 40 where Elijah, who also “goes up” in the following verse (v. 41), had gone down to the wadi Kishon. Thus, the order implies that Ahab (and certainly the people) were witness to the slaughter of the prophets down in the wadi.

The king complies with Elijah’s command (וַיַּעֲלֵה אַחָאָב לְאָכַל וּלְשָׂתוֹת) and Ahab went up to eat and drink”) (v. 42a). The use of the infinitives לְאָכַל וּלְשָׂתוֹת (“to eat and to drink”) more than indicating an imperfect compliance, provides narrative space for the development found in verses 42b–44, namely, the ascent of Elijah and his servant to the mount, Elijah’s prayer for rain, the identification of the first sign of rain, and the sending of Elijah’s servant to speak with Ahab. All these things happen while Ahab had gone up to eat and drink. The suggestion that Ahab acts here as a representative of Israel “in a ritual meal under the renewed covenant, as had the elders, priests, Moses and Aaron

under the original covenant (Exod. 24:11)¹³⁰ should not be automatically dismissed as an overstatement. The reasons for that are presented in the final part of this analysis.

The indication that Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel (וְאֵלֵיהֶוּ עָלָה אֶל־רֹאשׁ הַהַרְקָמֶל) suggests that the king did not go up to the top with Elijah. Ahab might have taken an intermediary position above the wadi and below the summit (perhaps halfway to the Mt. Carmel peak where the prophet was). In this same way Moses had gone up alone to the top of Sinai to renew the covenant after the incident involving the golden calf in Exod 32 (cf. Exod 34:2). On the top, Elijah keeps praying but now it is for the rain. While no such words are recorded, both his position (וַיִּגְהַר אֶרְצָה וַיִּשֶׂם פָּנָיו בֵּין בְּרָכָיו) and his request for his servant to check for any sign of rain confirm that this was the nature of his prayer.

In verse 43, the interaction is now between Elijah and his servant. The prophet is anxious in his prayer which is somehow surprising when his speech in 1 Kgs 17:1 is taken in consideration. He longs for a sign and that is why he sends his servant to go up and look on the way to the Mediterranean Sea (עֲלֵה־נָא הַבֵּט דְרָדְדָיִם “look in the way of the sea”), from where usually rainstorms came.¹³¹ If Elijah and his servant are already on the top of the mountain, the command may imply that the servant could have sought an even higher or more privileged position to look towards the sea. If this incident took place in the modern Mukhraqa, the narrator’s descriptions fit the topography of that area accurately. According to Davidson, “the flat spot where the altar would have been was the general area of the ‘top’ of the mountain, yet one needs to follow a little trail a little

¹³⁰ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 245. See also: Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics*, 136.

¹³¹ Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 120.

further up and over in that general area of the “top” to the spot where the view point of the Sea is.”¹³²

After repeating the action seven times under Elijah’s direction (שָׁב שִׁבְעַת פְּעָמִים “go back seven times”) (v. 43b), the first sign of rain, in the form of a little cloud coming from the sea, appears in verse v. 44. Wray Beal identifies that in the mention of the rain coming from the sea (הַיָּד הַקְּטָנָה כְּכַף-אִישׁ עֹלָה מִיָּם) “there is a little cloud, like the hand of a man, going up from the sea”) “a final slight to Baal, who in Canaanite mythology conquered the sea god.”¹³³ By this point, the reader, who is engaged in the suspense created in verses 42 and 43, now glimpses at the first harbinger that the resolution is near. The rain is coming.

In light of the previous interactions, the concern of Elijah with Ahab in verse 44b is surprising. Again, Elijah commands his servant to go up (עֲלֵה אֶמֶר);¹³⁴ now to alert Ahab that rain is coming, and the king needs to hurry up lest the muddy roads stop him

¹³² Richard Davidson, email message to author, September 17, 2021.

¹³³ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 245–246.

¹³⁴ According to Davidson, “this again fits the topography. On the general area of the ‘top’ of this SE spur of Mt. Carmel, the road coming up the mountain today actually comes to the ‘top’ of the mountain a bit above where the flat spot on the mountain is, and where the altars mostly likely were built. Thus, if Elijah goes down to the Wadi Kishon for the execution of the false prophets, and then comes up presumably back to the general area of the top of the mountain where the altars were built, then both the views point of the Sea, and the ‘parking lot’ for the chariots and the place where Ahab ate and drank would be slightly elevated above the site of the altars on the top of the mountain. Elijah is faithfully describing the topography of the mountain, and this is one reason why Mukhraqa is the probable site of the Mt. Carmel showdown. This topography--- involving the Wadi Kishon directly below, with a wide amphitheater part way down the mountain where most of the people probably gathered, and the trail up to the Sea look out (which in the other sites does not fit because the spots directly overlook the Sea), and the road to the SE (which is the part of Carmel which would belong to the Northern Kingdom) would come the destination just above the flat spot of the altars---all fits this location!” Richard Davidson, email message to author, September 17, 2021.

(יִשְׁנֵם מִתְנִיּוֹ וַיִּרְץ לִפְנֵי (”harness *your horses* and go down, lest the rain restrain you”)

(v. 44). When the heavy rain finally comes, Ahab is on the way to Jezreel (v. 46).

The chapter closes with an additional manifestation of God’s power: Elijah girds up his loins and runs before Ahab until the entrance of Jezreel (וַיִּשְׁנֵם מִתְנִיּוֹ וַיִּרְץ לִפְנֵי) יִרְעָאֵלָה אֶחָאָב עַד־בְּאֶכָה “he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab until the entrance of Jezreel”). The distance from the probable location of the contest on Mount Carmel to Jezreel is likely between seventeen and twenty miles.¹³⁵ Although such an undertaking would not have been impossible for a son of the desert,¹³⁶ the text explicitly states that the hand of Yahweh was on Elijah (וַיְדִי־הָיָה אֶל־אֱלֹהֵיָהּ) “and the hand of Yahweh was on Elijah”) (v. 46a).¹³⁷ Thus, in light of the events of the whole chapter, it can be understood that is only by divine empowerment that Elijah may carry out such an enterprise.

The remaining question concerns the meaning of Elijah’s run. Vos and others have suggested that he is acting as a “loyal outrunner.”¹³⁸ Sweeney observes that Elijah

¹³⁵ Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 120.

¹³⁶ According to Montgomery, it is reported that Arab runners in the desert could cover 100 miles in less than two days. Montgomery, *1 Kings*, 307. Vos also observes that Elijah could run cross-country and take a more direct route. Moreover, the chariot would be increasingly slowed down by muddy tracks.” Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 120.

¹³⁷ The phrase וַיְדִי־הָיָה is subject of the verb הָיָה 12 times in the OT. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Hand of Yahweh’ as the Subject of the Verb הָיָה](#)” of my jupyter notebook. From these occurrences, two major valences can be identified. When וַיְדִי־הָיָה + הָיָה is accompanied by a prepositional phrase introduced by כִּי, the meaning is negative (the hand of the Lord was against ...) (e.g., Deut 2:15; Judg 2:15; 1 Sam 5:9). When וַיְדִי־הָיָה + הָיָה is accompanied by a prepositional phrase introduced by עַל, the meaning is positive and denotes the working of divine influence upon a prophet. In Ezekiel, where this valence is mostly found (there is only one example of it outside Ezekiel, cf. 2 Kgs 3:15), the phrase indicates “extraordinary sensory experiences.” Cogan, *1 Kings*, 445.

¹³⁸ Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 120. Patterson and Austel remark that “the position as an outrunner for the king was a privileged one in the ancient Near East.” Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 780.

“deliberately shows respect for the king by joining the escort that normally accompanies a king’s chariot (see 2 Sam 15:1; 1 Kgs 1:5).”¹³⁹ In their view, Matthews, Chavallas, and Walton suggest that Elijah “was playing the role of prophetic herald, apparently proclaiming the changed attitude of Ahab and his loyalty to Yahweh.”¹⁴⁰ In either case, through this act the prophet demonstrates a more favorable attitude toward the king. Apparently, the prophet is revealing that he had no intention “to subvert the monarch’s rule and undermine his authority.”¹⁴¹ Perhaps Elijah now believes that the “Baal” problem is solved, and he is no longer in danger. Chapter 19 comes to reveal how this calculation was wrong. Curiously, this is the first geographical movement that Elijah makes in the narrative without a divine directive via an oracle (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר) cf. 1 Kgs 17: 2; 8; 18:1).

As a whole, the contest narrative parallels the covenant ceremony in Exod 24. The first clue left by the narrator is the repetition of the verb עלה which occurs seven times in only six verses.¹⁴² Another biblical narrative with a high concentration of “going up” is found in Exod 24 where the same root is repeated eight times.¹⁴³ The numerical concentration by itself would not mean much if that was the only thing in common between both chapters. However, the repetition invites the reader to look closer and discover other parallels. These parallels are the narrative echoes that connect both stories:

¹³⁹ Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 230.

¹⁴⁰ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 18:46.

¹⁴¹ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 197.

¹⁴² 1 Kgs 18:41, 42 (2x), 43 (2x), 44 (2x).

¹⁴³ Exod 24:1, 2, 5, 9, 12, 13, 15, 18.

(i) Moses “draws near” to Yahweh alone (וַיִּגַּשׁ) (v. 2); (ii) after Moses shares with the people all the words, all the people answer to him (וַיַּעַן כָּל־הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד) (v. 3); (iii) Moses builds an altar using twelve stones (עָשָׂה מִצְבֵּה לְשִׁנַּיִם עָשָׂר וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ תַּחַת הַהָר וּשְׁתֵּי־מֵאוֹת) (v. 4); (iv) Moses sacrifices bulls (פָּרִים) (v. 5); (v) Moses goes up with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy to participate in a communion meal where they eat and drink (וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׂתּוּ) (v. 11); (vi) a cloud covers the mountain (וַיִּכַּס הָעָנָן אֶת־הַהָר) (v. 15); and, (vii) the sight of the glory of Yahweh is like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel (כַּאֲשֶׁר אֵכָלֶת בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָר לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (v. 17).

Although the meaning of these parallels in terms of theological implications will be discussed in the third chapter, it should be mentioned at this point that such echoes help to shape or present Elijah as a new Moses. In fact, Charles David Isbell considers Elijah “the ultimate second Moses.”¹⁴⁴ In addition to that, these parallels show that the events on Mountain Carmel are more than a mere contest. In fact, they represent an attempt to establish a new covenant (or renew the Mosaic one) with the backsliding Israel. It is, indeed, an opportunity of new era. Unfortunately, as the story of the book of Kings develops, it is clear that the people and their leadership do not take advantage of it.

Another important way to evaluate the events that unfold in 1 Kgs 18:40–46 is as the fulfilment of 1 Kgs 8:35–36.¹⁴⁵ In his prayer, Solomon envisages a time when God

¹⁴⁴ Charles David Isbell, *The Function of Exodus Motif in Biblical Narratives; Theological Didactic Drama*. SBEC 52 (Lewiston, USA; Queenston, Canada, Lampeter, U.K.: Edwin Mellen, 2002), 147–162. Instructively, Isbell argues that each Israelite period has a prophet like Moses: conquest (Joshua), judges (Gideon), United Monarchy (Samuel), and Divided Monarchy (Elijah). Isbell, *The Function of Exodus Motif*, 166.

¹⁴⁵ BHS:

would shut up the heavens (בְּהַעֲצֹר שָׁמַיִם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מָטָר). This lack of rain would be a direct consequence of sin or covenant breaking (כִּי יַחֲטְאוּ־לְךָ). In order to reverse the punishment and have the rain back, Solomon presents three measures: a. to pray towards the temple (וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֶל־הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה); b. to confess the name of Yahweh (וְהוֹדוּ אֶת־שִׁמְךָ); and c. to return from their sins. Although the temple is in Jerusalem, the mention of the time of oblation (וּמַחֲטָאתֶם יָשׁוּבוּן כִּי תַעֲנִים) (1 Kgs 8:35), which is the exact time of Elijah’s sacrifice and prayer (וַיְהִי בְּעֵלוֹת הַמִּנְחָה) (1 Kgs 18:36), and the sacrifice itself bring the people and the reader’s attention to the temple.

After the divine manifestation by fire, the people confess his name twice (יְהוָה הוּא) יהוה האלהים “Yahweh, you are God”) (v. 39) meeting the second condition to end the drought. Their participation in the capture of Baal’s prophets may indicate a turning from their sins in the sense that they are willing to actually abandon (at least for that moment) the idolatry that those prophets represented (v. 40). This way, when the cycle is complete the rain can return thus reversing the curse (וַיְהִי גֶשֶׁם גָּדוֹל) “and there was a heavy rain”) (v. 45). The unexpected aspect in 1 Kgs 18 that is not evident in Solomon’s prayer is the divine initiative to bring the people back to him. Such an initiative is very clear in Exodus 34, “where the whole tone shifts in the covenant making from status ‘you will be’ (Exod

³⁵ בְּהַעֲצֹר שָׁמַיִם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מָטָר כִּי יַחֲטְאוּ־לְךָ וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ אֶל־הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְהוֹדוּ אֶת־שִׁמְךָ וּמַחֲטָאתֶם יָשׁוּבוּן כִּי תַעֲנִים: ³⁶ וְאַתָּה תִשְׁמַע הַשָּׁמַיִם וְסָלַחְתָּ לְחַטָּאת עַבְדֶּיךָ וְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי תוֹרַם אֶת־הַדֶּרֶךְ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר יִלְכוּ־בָהּ וְנָתַתָּה מָטָר עַל־אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתָּה לְעַמְּךָ לְנַחֲלָה:

LEB: ³⁵ When you shut up the heavens so there is no rain because they have sinned against you, then they pray to this place and they confess your name and they return from their sin because you punished them, ³⁶ then you shall hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants and your people Israel, for you will teach them the good way in which they should go, and you will give rain upon your land which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

19), to ‘I will do’ (Exod 34).”¹⁴⁶ From the theological point of view, this is one more illustration that even the repentance is a divine gift (cf. Rom 2:4) without which humanity would be lost forever.

Narrative Features

In this final section of chapter 18 there is more description than conversation. The dialogues happen between Elijah and Ahab (v. 41) and Elijah and his servant (v. 43–44). After verse 41, Elijah addresses Ahab only indirectly through his servant (v. 44b). These dialogues are dominated by the use of command-and-compliance patterns. One interesting aspect of this unit is the juxtaposition between the king and Elijah’s servant. In the narrative of verses 41–46 both comply with the prophet’s commands in the same way. The king starts chapter 18 giving orders to his servant Obadiah and finishes it obeying the orders of the servant of Yahweh. Thus, the reader finishes chapter 18 with the impression that things have substantially changed following the decisive blow against Baal on the mount.

The second major feature of this unit is the repetition of root עלה. As discussed above, the reiteration of the verb serves as a pointer to Exod 24 which is the primary biblical parallel to 1 Kgs 18:40–46. The repetition invites the reader to realize the other significant narratives that echo the covenant ceremony in the Mosaic narrative.

Structure

¹⁴⁶ Richard M. Davidson, *Exodus*, SDAIBC (Nampa, ID: Pacific; Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, Forthcoming).

The section resists any attempt to find a symmetric structure. One way to organize the unit is through the various references to the movement of characters going up and coming down.

Ahab goes up (command-and-compliance) (וַיַּעֲלֶה / עָלָה) (v. 41-42a)

Elijah goes up (וַיַּעֲלֶהוּ עָלָה) (v. 42b)

The servant goes up (command-and-compliance) (עָלָה-נָּ) (v. 43)¹⁴⁷

The cloud goes up (עָלָה) (44a)

Ahab goes up and down (command-and-compliance) (v. 44b–45) (וַיַּעֲלֶה / וַיֵּרֵד)

Elijah goes down (to Jezreel) (v. 46).

As the structure shows, only Elijah as God’s representative and the clouds which naturally are also under God’s control do not act in compliance to any command described in the section. The structure also highlights a contrast between high and low places. Walsh observes that in this narrative, high places are the realm of the sacred whereas low places are the realm of the everyday world.¹⁴⁸

Third Scene: From Mount Carmel to Horeb (1 Kgs 19)

Preliminary Observations

The narrative of chapter 19 introduces an unexpected flaw hiding behind the face of Elijah who in a shocking change of direction plunges in a freefall from the top of Mount Carmel down to a cave in Horeb (Sinai). There is no doubt that this is “one of the most spectacular reversals in the Hebrew Bible.”¹⁴⁹ The pace of the events mirrors the hurry of Elijah to save his own life when he departs for the first time on a journey and

¹⁴⁷ It is really interesting to note the pattern of the use of the imperative throughout Elijah’s cycle. When he addresses the Sidon woman and his servant, the imperatives are accompanied by the particle *נָּ*. When the prophet addresses the king and Obadiah the particle is absent.

¹⁴⁸ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 258.

¹⁴⁹ Heller, *The Characters of Elijah and Elisha*, 75.

course without an oracle from Yahweh. Chapter 19 marks the third major geographical move of Elijah. In chapter 17, Elijah departs to Cherith fleeing from the kingly power in Samaria, he returns to face it “three years” later (ch. 18), but now he flees again (ch. 19). Cohn observes that these “three journeys form a sequence in which Yahweh's manipulation of the course of the journeys decreases as Elijah's independence increases. Whereas in chap. 17 Elijah hides at Yahweh's behest, in chap. 19 Yahweh only reacts after the fact to Elijah's self-motivated flight.”¹⁵⁰

While the events of verses 1–3 reveal the tenacity of Jezebel and of Baal's cult in Israel, which would linger even after the ministry of two of the most powerful prophets in the annals of the OT (Elijah and Elisha), the events in verses 19–21 (the call of Elisha) demonstrate that Yahweh will persist too.

There are elements of continuity with previous chapters like the divine provision to Elijah and discontinuities like the discouragement of the prophetic champion. However, as a whole, the most stunning aspect of the chapter is the reluctance of Elijah in complying with God's directions in striking contrast with chapters 17 and 18.

Since this is not the first time the prophet was in danger (17:2), the sudden flight of Elijah, particularly after the events on Mount Carmel, takes the reader by surprise. From the narrative point of view, the repetition of *חַיָּוּת* (“life”) (7x between verses 1–14) may provide a clue that can help the reader to reckon with the renegade Elijah. When faced with the threat to his life and the possibility that he would incur the same destiny as the prophets of Baal who he himself had killed (v. 2), Elijah flees for his life (v. 3). His journey, however, reveals that in the end he wants to die but not by the hand of Jezebel.

¹⁵⁰ Cohn, “The Literary Logic of 1 Kgs 17–19,” 345.

Curiously, he asks God to take his life (v. 4) because they seek his life (vv. 10, 14). In Elijah's self-centeredness, the narrator depicts a prophet completely disoriented. In his worry for his life, Elijah parallels Obadiah who almost as a caricature is too worried to come to terms with a prospective death by Ahab's hands.

What could have happened to change so quickly the nature of one of the most outstanding prophets of the OT? There is no clear response to that but it is possible that his own success is also the key to understanding his downfall. After the monumental success on Mount Carmel the prophet faces discouragement and depression probably resulting from high expectations meeting bitter disappointment. Perhaps, he thought that Jezebel's influence was forever gone, and that Baalism had been defeated once and for all. In his dark hour Elijah forsook God and ironically did what the other prophets of Yahweh had done: he flew into hiding from the threat. The episode of chapter 19 shows that even Elijah was not above human frailties. Indeed, Elijah could be facing what Kelsey Ramsden calls "success hangover," a psychological letdown followed by the reaching of a big goal. Such a letdown, which according to Ramsden is normally developed by high achievers, is characterized by a feeling of emptiness and discomfort.¹⁵¹ In the case of Elijah, this also involves a huge emotional letdown after great excitement combined with exhaustion.

However, chapter 19 involves more than discouragement and depression. Now, like in Jonah's experience God comes down to save his prophet. Ironically, it is in this moment of crisis that Elijah seems to reach the pinnacle of his career "privileged with a

¹⁵¹ See: Kelsey Ramsden, *Success Hangover* (Austin, TX: LionCrest, 2018).

personal revelation of Moses-like dimensions.”¹⁵² Thus, chapter 19 is still about God’s grace as is chapter 18. However, the characters in need of divine mercy have changed and reversed.

No one can deny or even diminish the contrasting presentation of Elijah made by the narrator in 1 Kgs 18 and 19. However, in the detailed description of Elijah’s display of human fallenness the narrator does not hide or excuse Elijah’s shortcomings. It should be kept in mind that as Dharamraj observes “any unreliability on the part of Elijah at Horeb must be reconciled at multiple points with the narrative that follows.”¹⁵³ These multiple points reveal a prophet who is rehabilitated and in God’s favor from chapter 21 on.

From the point of view of redaction and source criticism, chapter 19 is “an independent narrative, now editorially joined to 1 Kgs 17–18.”¹⁵⁴ Apart from verses 1–3a (which Jones believes were invented deliberately by the editor to connect Mount Carmel to Horeb) Jones has identified three layers of tradition: Elijah’s sojourn in the desert not far from Beersheba (3b–6); a Horeb tradition (7–18) and Elisha’s call (19–21).¹⁵⁵ Like DeVries, Jones also attributes the editorial work to a Judahite who was interested in promoting these stories as propaganda against the house of Ahab.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Cogan, *I Kings*, 457.

¹⁵³ Dharamraj, *A prophet like Moses?*, 223. This includes 1 Kgs 21, 2 Kgs 1, 2. Dharamraj provides good examples which will be explored later in this chapter: “the high-profile commissions he is entrusted with; his return to business as usual in faithfully discharging his duty in confronting Ahab (1 Kgs 21) and more powerfully, Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1); and, the undeniable commendation granted him by way of his departure. Especially considering that there is no mention of any rehabilitation, one questions that there was any act by which the prophet discredited himself in the first place.” Dharamraj, *A prophet like Moses?*, 223.

¹⁵⁴ Cogan, *I Kings*, 457–456.

¹⁵⁵ Jones *1 and 2 Kings*, 327–328.

¹⁵⁶ DeVries, *I Kings*, 234. This suggestion was originally proposed by Odil Hannes Steck. See:

However, apart from simply concluding that the final form of chapter 19 is formed by disparate layers of tradition there is nothing in the text itself supporting to these conclusions. There is no reason to suppose that verses 1–3a are not narratively cohesive with chapter 18. Critics have pointed out that Jezebel would not be able to threaten Elijah after the events of chapter 18. In a certain sense these critics may be right. However, the sending of a messenger announcing her intent instead of an assassin or executioner may indicate that her real objective was not to kill Elijah but rather to remove him from the scene. If this is the case, there is a plausible scenario for the plot development of chapter 19.

In the following analysis, 1 Kgs 19 will be considered in its final canonical form. As happened with the two previous chapters, the text is approached as an historical artifact that preserves the only possible glimpse of the past available to the modern reader. The chapter has three major sections. In the first, Elijah flees from Jezebel reaching the extremity of the Judean territory about 15 miles from Beersheba (1 Kgs 19:1–8). In the second section, Elijah encounters Yahweh at Horeb (1 Kgs 19:9–18). There Elijah receives the command to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place (1 Kgs 19:19–21). Elisha’s call forms the last unit of the chapter.

Elijah Flees from Jezebel (1 Kgs 19:1–8)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Ob> את כל]	[<Co> לאיזבל]	[<Su> אהאב]	[<Pr> יגד]	[<Cj>ו]	WayX 1Kgs 19:01
	[<Su> אליהו]	[<Pr> עשה]	[<Re> אשר]		xQtX 1Kgs 19:01
			[<cj><pa> /ו את כל]		Defc 1Kgs 19:01
[<Aj> בחרב]	[<Ob> את כל הנביאים]	[<Pr> הרג]	[<Re> אשר]		xQt0 1Kgs 19:01

Odil Hannes Steck, *Überlieferung und Zeitgeschichte in den Elia-Erzählungen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1968).

[<Co> אל אליהו] [<Ob> מלאך] [<Su> איזבל] [<Pr> תשלח] [<Cj> ו]	WayX 1Kgs 19:02
[<Pr> לאמר]	InfC 1Kgs 19:02
[<Su> אלהים] [<Pr> יעשוך] [<Mo> כה]	xYqX 1Kgs 19:02
[<Pr> יוספון] [<Mo> כה] [<Cj> ו]	WxY0 1Kgs 19:02
[<Co><sp> מהם / כנפש אחד] [<Ob> את נפשך] [<Pr> אשים] [<Ti> כעת מחר] [<Cj> כי] xYq0 1Kgs 19:02	
[<Pr> ירא] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:03
[<Pr> יקם] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:03
[<Co> אל נפשו] [<Pr> ילך] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:03
[<Co> באר שבע] [<Pr> יבא] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:03
[<PC> ליהודה] [<Re> אשר]	NmCl 1Kgs 19:03
[<Co> שם] [<Ob> את נערו] [<Pr> ינח] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:03
[<Ob> דרך יום] [<Co> במדבר] [<Pr> הלך] [<Su> הוא] [<Cj> ו]	WXQt 1Kgs 19:04
[<Pr> יבא] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:04
[<Co> תחת רתם אחת] [<Pr> ישב] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:04
[<Ob> את נפשו] [<Pr> ישאל] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:04
[<Pr> למות]	InfC 1Kgs 19:04
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:04
[<Mo> עתה] [<PC> רב]	AjCl 1Kgs 19:04
[<Vo> יהוה]	Voct 1Kgs 19:04
[<Ob> נפשי] [<Pr> קח]	ZIm0 1Kgs 19:04
[<Aj> מאבתי] [<Su> אנכי] [<PC> טוב] [<Ng> לא] [<Cj> כי]	AjCl 1Kgs 19:04
[<Pr> ישכב] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:05
[<Lo> תחת רתם אחד] [<Pr> יישן] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:05
[<Su> זה] [<Ij> הנה] [<Cj> ו]	NmCl 1Kgs 19:05
[<Co> בו] [<PC> נגע] [<Su> מלאך]	Ptcp 1Kgs 19:05
[<Co> לו] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:05
[<Pr> קום]	ZIm0 1Kgs 19:05
[<Pr> אכול]	ZIm0 1Kgs 19:05
[<Pr> יבט] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:06
[<Su> עגת רצפים וצפחת מים] [<PC> מראשתי] [<Ij> הנה] [<Cj> ו]	NmCl 1Kgs 19:06
[<Pr> יאכל] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:06
[<Pr> ישת] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:06
[<Pr> ישב] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:06
[<Pr> ישכב] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:06
[<Mo> שנית] [<Su> מלאך יהוה] [<Pr> ישב] [<Cj> ו]	WayX 1Kgs 19:07
[<Co> בו] [<Pr> יגע] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:06
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:07
[<Pr> קום]	ZIm0 1Kgs 19:07
[<Pr> אכל]	ZIm0 1Kgs 19:07
[<Su> הדרך] [<Co> ממך] [<PC> רב] [<Cj> כי]	AjCl 1Kgs 19:07
[<Pr> יקם] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:08
[<Pr> יאכל] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:08

- ¹ And Ahab declared to Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how¹⁵⁷ he had killed all the prophets of Baal with the sword.
- ² And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying,¹⁵⁸ “So may the gods do to me¹⁵⁹ and more also,¹⁶⁰ if by tomorrow I will *not* make your life as the life of one of them.
- ³ And Elijah was afraid, got up and ran for his life. He came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.
- ⁴ But¹⁶¹ he went into the desert one day’s journey. And he came and sat under a broom tree. And he asked his life to die, and he said, “It is enough now, O Yahweh; take my life for I am not better than my ancestors.”
- ⁵ And he lay down and slept under a broom tree.¹⁶² And look this! A messenger was touching him! And he said to him, “Arise and eat!”
- ⁶ And he looked, and behold, by his head a cake on hot coals and a jar of water. And he ate and drank. Then he returned and slept.
- ⁷ And the messenger of Yahweh returned a second time and touched him. And he said, “Get up, eat for the journey is greater than you.”
- ⁸ And he got up, ate, drank, and went with the strength of that food forty days and forty nights up to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Delimitation

¹⁵⁷ Sweeney suggests that “the second *wē’ēt kol-’āšer* in MT is a dittography and should read only *wē’āšer*, ‘and that.’” Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 218. The translation above reflects this understanding. The OG, the Syriac, and the Vulgate also reflect this reading. The OG has *καὶ ὡς*.

¹⁵⁸ Before Jezebel’s oath the OG has *Ei σὺ εἶς Ἡλίου καὶ ἐγὼ Ἰεζαβελ* (If you are Elijah and I am Jezebel). If the phrase is original, the OG may be reflecting here a different *Vorlage*.

¹⁵⁹ The words “to me” are added for sake of readability. Some manuscripts and version have *לי*. The OG has *μοι*.

¹⁶⁰ The phrase “So may the gods do to me, and more also,” translates *כִּה־יַעֲשׂוּן אֱלֹהִים וְכִה יוֹסִפוּן*. The phrase, which literally means “so may the gods do to me and so they add,” expresses an oath. The same kind of oath is found in 1 Sam 3:17; 14:44; 2 Sam 3:35; 19:14; 1 Kgs 2:23; 20:10; 2 Kgs 6:31. A monotheistic use of *אֱלֹהִים* is present in all passages, except in 1 Kgs 19:2 and 20:10 where the predicate is plural (*יַעֲשׂוּן*). It is not a coincidence that in these two passages, the speakers are non-Israelites (Jezebel and Ben-Hadad, respectively).

¹⁶¹ The word “but” translates the conjunction *י* that has a contrastive function here.

¹⁶² We would expect determination in *רֹהֵב*. The numeral *אַרְבָּעִים* is used as an indefinite article. Is the text implying a different tree from that mentioned in verse 4?

The new section in 1 Kgs 19:1 starts with a change of the participants in the narrative. The setting is still Jezreel, but Ahab is with his wife, Jezebel. Elijah had accompanied him until the entrance of the city (1 Kgs 18:46), but it is not clear if the prophet stayed in Jezreel. In the plot, Ahab's report in verse 1 and the reaction of Jezebel in verse 2 trigger the movement that will lead Elijah to Horeb.

Since Jezebel leaves the scene in verse 2 and does not appear again in chapter 19, the focus is not on her but on the journey of Elijah. In this sense, verses 1–3a function as a transition between Mount Carmel and Horeb. All geographical movements are marked by the wayyqtols וַיָּבֹא (“and he came”) in verses 3 and 9 and by וַיֵּלֶךְ (“and he went”) in verses 3 and 19. The first section closes right before verse 9 that contains the arrival of Elijah in Horeb (וַיָּבֹא-שָׁמָּה “and he came there”). Thus, verses 1–8 recount how Elijah made his way.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The wayyqtol וַיְגַד (“and he declared”) gives continuity to the main narrative line left in 1 Kgs 18:46 (וַיֵּרָץ לִפְנֵי אַחָזָב עַד-בְּאֵכָה יִזְרְעֵאלָהּ). There is no indication of passage of time between 18:46 and 19:1, but the impression is that Ahab's report to Jezebel happens as soon as he gets in the palace. Although the clause כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֵלֵיהֶו (“all that Elijah had done”) most likely includes everything that happened on the mount including the coming down of fire from heaven,¹⁶³ the focus on the killing of the prophets by Elijah

¹⁶³ The triple repetition of “all” puts a great deal of emphasis on the detailed completeness of Ahab's report. Walsh, *1 Kings*, 265.

puts the king in a bad light. Was he instigating Jezebel to act against Elijah? The answer is not clear, but in the face of Ahab's patterns of duplicity that should not be ruled out.

Jezebel reacts immediately sending a messenger to Elijah (וַתִּשְׁלַח אִיזָבֶל מַלְאָךְ אֵלָיו "and Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah") (v. 2).¹⁶⁴ It is the first time the narrator gives voice to Jezebel, but only in an indirect way. The reader can hear her through the messenger. In the OG, her speech starts with Εἰ σὺ εἶ Ἡλίου καὶ ἐγὼ Ἰεζαβελ ("If you are Elijah and I am Jezebel..."). The phrase may reflect a different *Vorlage*. If the phrase is original, Jezebel may be playing with the meanings of their respective names ('YHWH is my God' and 'Where is the Prince [Baal]') as part of her challenge to Elijah.¹⁶⁵ The content of the oath involves a self-imprecatory condition בְּהַיְעָשׂוּן אֱלֹהִים וְכִהּ יוֹסִפוּן ("So may the gods do to me and more also") found in the mouth of Ben-Hadad as well (1 Kgs 20:10). Jezebel does not seem to be bluffing and the phrase בְּיַדְּכֶם מָחָר ("if by tomorrow") adds urgency to the matter.¹⁶⁶ However, as noted before, the sending of an

¹⁶⁴ Only twice in the HB a feminine subject sends a messenger. One is Jezebel in 1Kgs 19:1 and the other is Oholibah, who is a symbol of the religious apostasy of Judah (Ezek 23:16). The contexts are completely different though. In the symbolism of Ezekiel, the woman sends a messenger to call her lovers from Chaldea.

¹⁶⁵ See Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 249. Long suggests that "the form of Jezebel's name in the Hebrew text may represent a parody. The name originally meant, 'Where is the Prince [*zēbūl*]?' It is derived from the epic of Baal's battle with *Mot* ('death'). When Baal is defeated by *Mot* and is taken to the underworld, the god of rain 'neglects the furrow of his tillage.' The search is made for Baal: 'Where is the Prince, Lord of Earth?' In the Hebrew rendering of Jezebel's name, "prince" (*zēbūl*) appears to be vocalized as "dung" (*zebel* signifies dung in Arabic; cf. 2 Kgs 9:37), surely representing the author's negative view of Israel's Sidonian queen and her influence on Israel. Idolatry in the northern kingdom of Israel now takes the form of worshipping foreign gods." Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 201–202.

¹⁶⁶ Jezebel's raging reaction against Elijah is explained by Winer in mythical-psychological terms: "She entirely dominates her royal consort Ahab, her mortal 'son-lover,' just as Astarte dominates the young Baal. At her command, he encourages the spread of paganism throughout the country. Yielding to her insatiable greed for power, he himself becomes a despot who allows his subjects to be robbed and murdered. Only towards Elijah is Jezebel unsure of herself. She despises the uncultivated, nomadic wandering prophet, but at the same time fears and hates him as the only power opposing her and her deity. She wants to kill him, but by overtly threatening him with death gives him the opportunity to escape. Rationally this might be explained by saying that she wanted only to prevent his further influence over the people, not to turn him into a martyr before their eyes by murdering him." Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah*, 21.

envoy instead of an executioner seems to show otherwise. Perhaps, fearing the public opinion or even being incapable to convince Ahab to dispatch this order, “Jezebel does not in fact seek Elijah’s death but his departure; (...) she is attempting to frighten him into exactly the sort of flight he undertakes. This in turn suggests that Elijah's victory on Carmel has fundamentally altered the earlier situation in the kingdom when Jezebel was free to kill other Yahweh prophets.”¹⁶⁷ In any case, “in one decisive stroke Jezebel rids the country of Elijah’s troubling presence and brings discredit on the prophet and his God.”¹⁶⁸

Much more surprising than Jezebel’s threat is the reaction of Elijah. Apparently, for the first time Elijah is “forgetting to think theologically.”¹⁶⁹ In a sequence of three short clauses, the narrator describes it almost as an automatic reflex: וַיֵּרָא וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֵל- (and Elijah was afraid, got up and ran for his life”). While the Masoretic vocalization has “he saw” (וַיֵּרָא), the witness of ancient versions like OG, Syriac, and Vulgate brings “he was afraid” (וַיִּרָא). Most contemporary versions follow the OG and these other ancient versions.¹⁷⁰ If the Masoretic spelling is correct, the sense of “seeing” is “to realize.”¹⁷¹ Thus, when Elijah realizes (רָאָה) what is happening, he gets up and

¹⁶⁷ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 265.

¹⁶⁸ Rice, *1 Kings*, 157.

¹⁶⁹ Iain Provan, “An Ambivalent Hero: Elijah in Narrative–Critical Perspective,” in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Kings*, ed. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, LHBOTS 670 (London, U.K.: T&T Clarke, 2020), 142.

¹⁷⁰ For instance, ESV, NIV, NASB, ASV, LEB, NET, NRSV.

¹⁷¹ According to Clines, this meaning appears in several passages: “to look at the situation in general or a particular situation or event (Ex 22:9; 32:5; Lev 9:24; Nm 25:7; 35:23; Dt 21:7=11QT 636; Dt 28:32; Jos 8:14; Jg 13:19, 20; 1 S 6:9, 16; 19:5; 26:12; 2 S 15:27). Clines, “רָאָה,” *DCH* 7:348.

escapes. However, the context also provides the ground for וַיִּרָא as the best vocalization. If he is running for his life, it is because he is obviously afraid.¹⁷² From the grammatical point of view, Simon notices that the root ראה frequently bears a sense of ‘understand and recognize’ (e.g., Gen. 42:1; Jer. 33:24); but as a transitive verb it really needs a direct or indirect object indicating what was understood or recognized (e.g., Gen. 3:6, 6:2).¹⁷³ Once such an object is not found in this passage, the ancient reading is to be preferred here. Furthermore, the pair ירא and קום appears in the Elijah’s cycle when the messenger of Yahweh says to him: אַל־תִּירָא מִפְּנֵי וַיִּקָּם (do not be afraid because of him and get up) (2 Kgs 1:15).

Although the phrase וַיִּלֶּךְ אֶל־נַפְשׁוֹ (“and he ran for his life”) is unique,¹⁷⁴ its meaning is clear; the prophet does not want to play with Jezebel’s threat. In the narrative, he goes straight to the southern extreme of Judah (וַיָּבֹא בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע אֲשֶׁר לַיהוּדָה) “he came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah”);¹⁷⁵ a trip that might require 100 miles of travel according to some estimates.¹⁷⁶ Beersheba is not his destination though. In this stop, he leaves his servant and continues alone (וַיַּנִּחַ אֶת־נַעֲרֹ שָׁם) “and he left his servant there”) (v.

¹⁷² The mere fact that he is running for his life should force Ronald Allen’s conclusion that “Elijah was broken, but he was not afraid!” Allen, “Elijah the Broken Prophet,” 197. The narrative will reveal that much more than fear, Elijah is driven in his flight by disappointment. However, fear seems to be the initial trigger to his flight. Simon notes the irony in the fact that “the prophet who told the widow not to be afraid (17:13) and calmed Obadiah’s apprehension (18:15) now finds himself confronting the terror of death.” Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 201.

¹⁷³ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 200.

¹⁷⁴ See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Distribution of the Phrase ‘He Went for His Life’](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

¹⁷⁵ According to Volkmar Fritz, “already part of the steppe, Beersheba was the starting point for all long-distance journeys to the southern deserts and probably also for the journey to the mountain of God. Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, CC (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 196–197.

¹⁷⁶ Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 121.

3). It should be noticed how intriguing is the fact that Elijah has a servant, who does not appear at all in other parts of the narrative, such as at the brook where ravens fed him and at the widow's house.

The change to a WXQt clause with the independent pronoun הוּא (v. 4) brings Elijah to the center of the spotlight highlighting that from now on Elijah is in a rogue mission outside God's field of prophetic action. In this context, the waw in וַהוּא־הֵלֵךְ ("and he went") has a contrastive sense.

A day's journey probably takes Elijah around 20 miles into the desert.¹⁷⁷ The sitting of Elijah beneath the broom tree¹⁷⁸ finds a parallel in 1 Kgs 13:14 where the man of God is also sitting under a tree (וַיִּמְצְאֵהוּ יֹשֵׁב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה). Since the man of God is in a position to which God has not called him, this narrative parallel by itself already puts Elijah in a negative light.¹⁷⁹ In the canonical context, this is confirmed by the experience of Jonah near the end of his book, where he is sitting in shade waiting for the destruction of Nineveh (Jon 4:5).

The purpose of that long journey is now revealed: the prophet wants to die (וַיִּשְׁאַל) "and he asked his life to die" (v. 4). Ironically the same person who runs for his life now is asking to die (רַב עֲתָה יְהוּה קַח נַפְשִׁי "it is enough now, O Yahweh; take my life").¹⁸⁰ The same desire is expressed by other great characters in the OT like Hagar

¹⁷⁷ Elwell and Beitzel, "Day's Journey," *BEB* 589.

¹⁷⁸ The plant is a "shrub, which grows to a height of over three meters, is plentiful in the Sinai, Petra and Dead Sea areas" Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 329. It was "used by nomads as fuel (cf. Ps 120:4), and even eaten in times of great want (Job 30:4)." Cogan, *1 Kings*, 451.

¹⁷⁹ Several parallels with Jonah story are found here.

¹⁸⁰ The same use of רַב is found in Gen 45:28; 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chr 21:15; Ezek 44:6; 45:9 See Text-Fabric query results in section "[The Use of רַב as Adjunct Phrase](#)" of my jupyter notebook.

(Gen 21:15), the Israelites (Num 20:2, 3), and Jonah (Jon 4:8). However, in all cases their pleas do not represent an actual “desire for death but rather expresses the despair emanating precisely from their *will to live*.”¹⁸¹ This seems to be the case with Elijah. Another possible parallel concerning this desire for death is found in the same plea made by Moses (Num 11:15). In that case Moses feels overwhelmed by the responsibility to carry the burden alone. The same feeling could be behind Elijah’s despair in realizing that he had failed in his mission to eradicate the Baal cult.¹⁸²

The reason presented by Elijah is quite ambiguous (כִּי־לֹא־טוֹב אָנֹכִי מֵאֲבוֹתַי “for I am not better than my ancestors”). The referent of “fathers” (מֵאֲבוֹתַי) could be to the patriarchs (up to this point the narrative has already traced some parallels between Elijah and Moses, for instance) or the prophets who preceded him. In any case, the comparison with the “fathers” sets the crisis around Elijah’s perception of his own failure. However, another possibility is that “this expression of a desire for death may be related to a frustrated ambition for recognition and authority. Elijah wants to die but he does not want to be killed.”¹⁸³ What seems to be clear is that the prophet has interpreted Jezebel’s person attack against him as the end of his ministry.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Micha Roi, “1 Kings 19: A ‘Departure on a Journey’ Story,” *JSOT* 37 (2012): 31, 32.

¹⁸² “There is also an extremely painful interpersonal aspect—which the narrator leaves entirely to the reader’s imagination: all of the lofty hopes that Elijah had pinned on Ahab during his enthusiastic run before his chariot go up in smoke; to increase the pain and humiliation, that very race now seems to have been rash and absurd. The depth of the despair is in proportion to the magnitude of the frustrated hope.” Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 207

¹⁸³ Hens-Piazza, *1-2Kings*, 187.

¹⁸⁴ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 235.

Elijah does not foster actively suicidal thoughts, but he lays down and sleeps expecting that God may hear his petition (וַיִּשָׁבּ וַיִּשָׁן תַּחַת רֵתֶם אֶתְדָּ (‘‘and he lay down and slept under a broom tree’’) (v. 5).¹⁸⁵ The monotony of the Wayyqtol chain is broken by וַהֲגִיחֵהוּ which literally means ‘‘look this;’’ a phrase meant to move listeners (so to speak literally). Initially, the agent who touches Elijah is identified only as a messenger (מֵלֶאֱדָ (נִגַּע בוֹ ‘‘a messenger was touching him’’). The intention is clearly to create suspense making the first-time reader to wonder if this could be the same messenger sent by Jezebel. Had he managed to pursue Elijah all this time? Perhaps, outside Ahab’s dominion she could without concern carry out her plan after all. It could be that God had listened to Elijah’s prayer leading his executioner to him. The ambiguity of נָגַע (‘‘to touch, hit, strike’’) only increases the suspense.

However, the messenger’s imperatives קוּם אֲכוּל (‘‘arise and eat’’) reveal that he is an agent of life and not death. Even though God had not sent his prophet in this journey, he is providing for Elijah again, exactly the way he had done before in chapter 17. The food is familiar, and as the words for it are rare, the reader does not miss the point. The cake (עֲגָה) is the same food provided by the widow to Elijah in Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:13).¹⁸⁶ The word for jug (צִפְתָּחַת) also appears in the narrative of 1 Kgs 17, and it is connected to the miraculous multiplication of oil (1 Kgs 17:12, 14, 16).¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Curiously, to lay down and sleep are figuratively used to describe the experience of death.

¹⁸⁶ The word appears only 7 times in the HB.

¹⁸⁷ The word also appears only 7 times in the BH. From these, four are present in the Elijah narrative.

Although God has not changed his pattern, as the repetition of עָגָה and צַפְחָת indicates, Elijah is not reacting in the same way as in the two previous chapters where divine commands were met with perfect compliance by the prophet. Here, while the messenger commands “get up and eat” (קוּם אֲכֹל) Elijah eats, drink, returns and lays down (וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיִּשְׁכַּב) (v. 6).

The messenger returns in verse 7. But now he is further identified as the messenger/angel of Yahweh (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה). The use of וַיֵּשֶׁב combined with שָׁנִית is pleonastic and occurs only here.¹⁸⁸ It leaves no doubt that he is the same messenger of verse 5. Both in verse 5 and 7, “the angel’s role is to comfort, encourage, and sustain Elijah. He gives no message, nor does he execute judgment.”¹⁸⁹ Joni Amanda McGuire-Moushon observes that “this account is unique within the context of Deuteronomy- Kings. Later, in the NT, we find a similar function for the angels who minister to Jesus in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 4:11, Mark 1:13, Luke 22:43).”¹⁹⁰

The messenger/angel of Yahweh appears often in “the traditions surrounding the exodus and conquest (e.g., Ex. 23:32, 33; Jgs. 2).”¹⁹¹ In the OT, “he is not only a messenger delivering God’s words but is also a minister or agent authorized to perform them.”¹⁹² As in some passages “it is no longer possible to distinguish God from his

¹⁸⁸ See Text-Fabric query results in section “[He returned a Second Time](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

¹⁸⁹ Joni Amanda McGuire-Moushon, “Angels and Sub-Divine Supernatural Beings: Their Characteristics, Function, and Relationship to God and Humanity in Deuteronomy-Kings” (PhD diss, Andrews University, 2019), 114.

¹⁹⁰ McGuire-Moushon, “Angels and Sub-Divine Supernatural Beings,” 114.

¹⁹¹ Freedman, D. N. and B. E. Willoughby, “מַלְאָךְ,” *TDOT* 8:317.

¹⁹² Freedman and Willoughby expand saying that “Thus, he is sent by God to go before Abraham’s servant (Gen. 24:7, 40), to go before Israel (Ex. 23:20, 23; 32:2, 34), to deliver them (Nu. 20:16), and to lead them into the land of Canaan (Ex. 23:20; cf. Mal. 3:1, where God’s angel will clear the

mal'āk in interactions with human beings,”¹⁹³ some have suggested that the angel of Yahweh is the second person of the Godhead.¹⁹⁴ If this is the case, God himself is taking care of his runaway prophet.

In this second contact, the order is the same (קום אכל “arise and eat”), but a rationale is provided: רב מןה הדרך (“the journey is greater than you”). This nominal clause is interesting, and although most versions render it as “the journey is too great for you” (e.g., NKJV), its literal meaning is “the journey is greater than you” (LEB).

Curiously, the phrase echoes the first speech of Elijah in verse 4 where he says, “it is

way before him by punishing sinners, a moralizing reappearance of the exodus motif). The angel protects the Israelites at the Reed Sea (Ex. 14:19), resists Balaam (Nu. 22:22), helps Elijah (1 K. 19:7), and smites the foes of Israel (2 K. 19:35 par. Isa. 37:36). These examples illustrate that in the religious thought of Israel the angel of Yahweh was understood as the agent of Yahweh’s assistance to Israel.” Freedman and Willoughby, “מלאך,” 317–318.

¹⁹³ R. Ficker, “מלאך,” *TLOT* 671. Several theories have been proposed to explain the phenomenon. A good summary of them is given by Ficker: “patristic literature understood the m.y. in terms of the divine Word (logos theory); in the Roman Catholic realm, the explanation that the m.y. is a creaturely messenger who acts in the name and on the commission of God has found many adherents (representation theory). For E. Kautzsch (*Biblische Theologie des AT* [1911], 83–87) and W. G. Heidt (*Angelology of the OT* [1949]; cf. also R. North, ‘Separated Spiritual Substances in the OT,’ *CBQ* 22 [1967]: 419–49), the m.y. is an appearance of Yahweh, it ‘is Jahweh himself appearing to human beings in human form’ (von Rad, *Theol.* 1:287) (identity theory). Others see the m.y. as a hypostasis of Yahweh (hypostasis theory). G. van der Leeuw (‘Zielen en Engelen,’ *ThT* 11 [1919]: 224–37) and A. Lods (‘L’ange de Jahwe et l’âme extérieure,’ *FS Wellhausen* 263–78) represent the theory of the ‘external soul,’ which maintains that an angel is essentially a freed soul; the m.y. is understood as an external divine power. Others see the m.y. as a later interpolation for Yahweh undertaken in order to counter an overly anthropomorphic depiction of Yahweh (interpolation theory: B. Stade, H. Gunkel; cf. W. Baumgartner, ‘Zum Problem des Yahwe-Engels,’ *SThU* 14 [1944]: 97–102 = *Zum AT und seiner Umwelt* [1959], 240–46).” Ficker, “מלאך,” 671. For more about the angel of Yahweh, see: H. Vogel, “The Angel of the Lord,” *WLQ* 73 (1976): 105–118; Stephen L. White, “Angel of the LORD: Messenger or Euphemism?” *TB* 50 (1999): 299–305; Gary Simmers, “Who Is ‘The Angel of the Lord?’” *FM* 17 (2000): 3–16; Jirí Moskala, “Toward Trinitarian Thinking in the Hebrew Scriptures,” *JATS* 21 (2010): 245–275; René López, “Identifying the ‘Angel of the Lord’ in the Book of Judges: A Model for Reconsidering the Referent in Other Old Testament Loci,” *BBR* 20 (2010): 1–18; Andrew S. Malone, “Distinguishing the Angel of the Lord,” *BBR* 21 (2011): 297–314; McGuire-Moushon, “Angels and Sub-Divine Supernatural Beings,” 43–45, 53–56, 61–71, 113–14, 122–23; David H. Wenkel, “The Angel of the Lord Aids the Son of David in Matthew 1–2,” *BS* 177 (2020): 56–69.

¹⁹⁴ Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 121. Jirí Moskala considers the angel of the Lord in the OT as Christophanies. After the study of key passages, he concludes that “this ‘Angel of the Lord’ is a divine being, the pre-incarnate Christ appearing as God’s Messenger.” Moskala, “Toward Trinitarian Thinking,” 263.

enough” (רב) and compares himself with the fathers using the comparative מן (מֵאַבְתָּי). Here God compares him (מִמֶּנִּי) with the journey (הַדֶּרֶךְ) and says it is too much for him (רב).

In verse 8, Elijah is closer to a perfect match in the compliance-and-command pattern but not quite there yet (messenger: קוֹם אֲבָל /Elijah: וַיֵּשְׁתָּה וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׁתָּה). Although the journey is not specified in the messenger’s speech, it is natural that this is the destiny that הַדֶּרֶךְ (“journey”) implies. Although a traveler could take no more than a quarter of the time to cross the 200 miles dividing Beersheba from Horeb,¹⁹⁵ there is nothing that would prevent Elijah from spending a literal forty days and four nights to get there. In fact, Davidson observes that it was precisely 40 days from the time that Israel crossed the Red Sea to when they came to Mt. Sinai, and they traveled 180 miles (almost 200 miles) from that Red Sea crossing to Horeb (Sinai). Thus, it took ancient Israel about the same amount of time to travel about the same distance to Horeb.¹⁹⁶ Accordingly, the number does not necessarily need to be understood symbolically (although there are meaningful implications in its use). Since the time duration is also reminiscent of the period of time that Moses spent on the mountain, the combination of the number with the reference to Horeb leads the reader immediately to Moses’s experience. Horeb, which is also known in the OT as Sinai,¹⁹⁷ is identified here as הַר הָאֱלֹהִים (“the mountain of God”). Indeed, the mountain is connected with the foundation of Israel as a nation and is a key place in

¹⁹⁵ Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 782.

¹⁹⁶ Davidson, *Exodus*, forthcoming.

¹⁹⁷ The same mountain is designated Horeb seventeen times (e.g., Exod 17:6; 33:6; Deut 1:2, 6, 19; 4:10, 15; Mal 3:22; Ps 106:19) and Sinai thirty-three times (e.g., Exod 16:1; 19:1, 2; Lev 25:1; Num 1:1; Ps 68:9, 18).

her history. From an individual perspective, it is there that Moses is called to deliver Israel (Exod 3). Besides 1 Kgs 19:8, Horeb is directly identified as the mountain of God only in Exod 3:1¹⁹⁸ where, like Elijah, Moses meets the messenger of Yahweh (מְלָאָךְ (יְהוָה)). Now, it is time for Elijah to rethink his own calling as a prophet and his role in Israel's liberation.

Narrative Features

Again, the narrator shows mastery in the use of repetition to create irony and even suspense. The clearest example of irony through repetition is the use of נִפְּשׁוּ. The prophet who runs for his life (וַיִּלֶךְ אֶל-נִפְּשׁוֹ) sits under a tree “asking his life to die” (וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶת-נַפְשׁוֹ לָמוּת). Elijah's concern with his life parallels with the fear of Obadiah to die by the hand of Ahab. Since the narrative does not affirm that Obadiah departed from the palace, the reader is left wondering if he now is bolder than Elijah. Another example of mastery in storytelling is found in verse 5. In terms of suspense, the repetition of מְלָאָךְ in verse 5 without further specification (cf. מְלָאָךְ יְהוָה in v. 7) leaves the reader puzzled and wondering if this could be the same messenger mentioned in verse 2. The use of וַהֲגִה־זֶה (“and look this!”) only adds to the tension. Irony seems also to be present in the messenger's speech to Elijah where he uses key terms from Elijah's own speech.

The storyteller also makes use of several narrative echoes that connect 1 Kgs 19:1–8 to immediate and larger contexts. For instance, the use of the rare words עָגָה

¹⁹⁸ Although the expression הַר הַיְאֵלִיָּהוּ refers to Horeb/Sinai in Exod 4:27; 18:5; 24:13, the noun does not appear in these passages הַרְבֵּי. For a summary of the different proposals for the location of Mt. Sinai/Horeb, and support of the traditional location of Horeb in the Southern Sinai Peninsula, see esp. James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2005), 111–148.

(“cake”) and צִפְחַת (“hot coals”) recall the previous divine provisions to the prophet through the widow of Zarephath. The image of a prophet sitting under a tree connects Elijah to the disobedient man of God from Judah. And, finally, the “forty days and forty nights” journey to Horeb, the mountain of God, connects Elijah to Moses in his meeting with the deity in Exod 3. Elijah’s experience also mirrors Israel’s experience which after its remarkable spiritual failure wanders forty years in the desert (Num 14).¹⁹⁹

Structure

There are no major structural signs in 1 Kgs 19:1–8. After the initial account involving Ahab, Jezebel and her messenger in verses 1 and 2, the plot develops through the verbs בוא and הלך that focus on the movements of Elijah and the dialogue between he and the messenger of Yahweh (vv. 5–7).

וַיֵּלֶךְ (v.3c) (“he went”)
 וַיָּבֹא (v. 3d) (“he came”)
 וַיָּבֹא (v. 4b) (“he came”)
 וַיֵּלֶךְ (v. 8d) (“he went”)

Elijah Encounters Yahweh at Horeb (1 Kgs 19:9–18)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Co> אל המערה]	[<Lo> שם]	[<Pr> יבא]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:09
	[<Lo> שם]	[<Pr> ילך]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:09
[<PC> אליו]	[<Su> דבר יהוה]	[<Ij> הנה]	[<Cj>ו]	NmCl 1Kgs 19:09
	[<Co> לו]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:09
	[<Lo> פה]	[<PC> לך]	[<Su> מה]	NmCl 1Kgs 19:09
		[<Vo> אליהו]		Voct 1Kgs 19:09
		[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:10
[<Co><ap> אלהי צבאות / ליהוה]	[<Pr> קנאתי]	[<Mo> קנא]		xQt0 1Kgs 19:10

¹⁹⁹ There is a close relationship between the units “days” and “years” throughout the OT. See: William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, DARCOM 1 (Siver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 67–110.

[<Su> בני ישראל] [<Ob> בריתך] [<Pr> עזבו] [<Cj> כי]				xQtX 1Kgs 19:10
[<Pr> את מזבחתך] [<Ob> הרסו]				xQt0 1Kgs 19:10
[<Aj> את נביאיך] [<Ob> הרגו] [<Pr> בחרב]				WxQ0 1Kgs 19:10
[<Aj> לבדי] [<Su> אני] [<Pr> אותר] [<Cj> ו]				WayX 1Kgs 19:10
[<Ob> את נפשי] [<Pr> יבקשו] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:10
[<PO> לקחתה]				InfC 1Kgs 19:10
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:11
[<Pr> צא]				ZIm0 1Kgs 19:11
[<Lo> לפני יהוה] [<Co> בהר] [<Pr> עמדת] [<Cj> ו]				WQt0 1Kgs 19:11
[<PC> עבר] [<Su> יהוה] [<Ij> הנה] [<Cj> ו]				Ptcp 1Kgs 19:11
[<Su> רוח גדולה וחזק] [<Cj> ו]				Defc 1Kgs 19:11
[<Ob> הרים] [<PC> מפרק]				Ptcp 1Kgs 19:11
[<Ob> סלעים] [<PC> משבר] [<Cj> ו]				Ptcp 1Kgs 19:11
[<PC> לפני יהוה]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:11
[<Su> יהוה] [<PC> ברוח] [<Ng> לא]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:11
[<Su> רעש] [<PC> אחר הרוח] [<Cj> ו]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:11
[<Su> יהוה] [<PC> ברעש] [<Ng> לא]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:11
[<Su> אש] [<PC> אחר הרעש] [<Cj> ו]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:12
[<Su> יהוה] [<PC> באש] [<Ng> לא]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:12
[<Su> קול דממה דקה] [<PC> אחר האש] [<Cj> ו]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:12
[<Pr> יהי] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:13
[<Su> אליהו] [<Pr> כשמע]				InfC 1Kgs 19:13
[<Co> באדרתו] [<Ob> פניו] [<Pr> ילט] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:13
[<Pr> יצא] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:13
[<Co> פתח המערה] [<Pr> יעמד] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:13
[<Su> קול] [<PC> אליו] [<Ij> הנה] [<Cj> ו]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:13
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:13
[<Lo> פה] [<PC> לך] [<Su> מה]				NmCl 1Kgs 19:13
[<Vo> אליהו]				Voct 1Kgs 19:13
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:14
[<Co><ap> קנא] [<Mo> קנאתי] [<Pr> ליהוה / אלהי צבאות]				xQt0 1Kgs 19:14
[<Su> בני ישראל] [<Ob> בריתך] [<Pr> עזבו] [<Cj> כי]				xQtX 1Kgs 19:14
[<Pr> את מזבחתך] [<Ob> הרסו]				xQt0 1Kgs 19:14
[<Aj> את נביאיך] [<Ob> הרגו] [<Pr> בחרב]				WxQ0 1Kgs 19:14
[<Aj> לבדי] [<Su> אני] [<Pr> אותר] [<Cj> ו]				WayX 1Kgs 19:14
[<Ob> את נפשי] [<Pr> יבקשו] [<Cj> ו]				Way0 1Kgs 19:14
[<PO> לקחתה]				InfC 1Kgs 19:14
[<Co> אליו] [<Su> יהוה] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]				WayX 1Kgs 19:15
[<Pr> לך]				ZIm0 1Kgs 19:15
[<Co> מדברת דמשק] [<Co> לדרכך] [<Pr> שוב]				ZIm0 1Kgs 19:15
[<Pr> באת] [<Cj> ו]				WQt0 1Kgs 19:15
[<Co><sp> משחת] [<Pr> את חזאל] [<Ob> למלך / על ארם]				WQt0 1Kgs 19:15
[<Co><sp> את יהוא / בן נמשי] [<Ob><ap> תמשח] [<Pr> למלך / על ישראל]				WxY0 1Kgs

[<Aj> תחתיך	[<Co> לנביא	[<Pr> תמשה	[<Ob><ap><sp> מאבל-מחולה / בן שפט				
	[<Cj>ו]						WxY0 1Kgs 19:16
	[<Pr> היה	[<Cj>ו]					MSyn 1Kgs 19:17
[<Co> מחרב חזאל	[<PC> נמלט	[<Re>ה]					Ptcp 1Kgs 19:17
[<Su> יהוא	[<Pr> ימית						ZYqX 1Kgs 19:17
	[<Cj>ו]						Defc 1Kgs 19:17
[<Co> מחרב יהוא	[<PC> נמלט	[<Re>ה]					Ptcp 1Kgs 19:17
[<Su> אלישע	[<Pr> ימית						ZYqX 1Kgs 19:17
[<Ob> שבעת אלפים	[<Lo> בישראל	[<Pr> השארתי	[<Cj>ו]				WQt0 1Kgs 19:18
	[<Aj> כל הברכים						Ellp 1Kgs 19:18
[<Co> לבעל	[<Pr> כרעו	[<Ng> לא	[<Re> אשר				xQt0 1Kgs 19:18
	[<cj><pa> /ו כל הפה						Defc 1Kgs 19:18
[<Co> לו	[<Pr> נשק	[<Ng> לא	[<Re> אשר				xQt0 1Kgs 19:18

⁹ And he came there to the cave and spent the night there. And look, the word of Yahweh happened to him and said to him, “What is there to you here Elijah?”

¹⁰ And he said, “I have been very zealous for Yahweh, God of hosts for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, your altars they tore down, and your prophets they killed by sword; and I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away.

¹¹ And he said, “go out and stand”²⁰⁰ on the mountain before Yahweh. And look, Yahweh was passing! And a great and a strong wind was tearing down the mountain and shattering the crags before Yahweh; but Yahweh was not in the wind. And after the wind there was an earthquake; but Yahweh was not in the earthquake.

¹² After the earthquake there was a fire; but Yahweh was not in the fire. And after the fire, there was a still voice of silence.²⁰¹

¹³ Then,²⁰² when Elijah heard, he wrapped his face with his cloak and went out and stood at²⁰³ the entrance of the cave. And look, there was a voice to him and said, “What is there to you here Elijah?”

¹⁴ And he said, “I have been very zealous for Yahweh, God of hosts for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, your altars they tore down, and your prophets they killed by sword; and I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away.

¹⁵ And Yahweh said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. Go and anoint Hazael as king over Aram,

²⁰⁰ Very often, a WQt0 clause has imperative force when preceded by a ZIm0 (cf. Gen 44:4; Exod 3:16; 1 Kgs 1:33). See Text-Fabric query results in section “[ZIm0 Followed by WQt0](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

²⁰¹ Here I follow the NRSV since the version conveys in a better way the oxymoron found in the Hebrew קול דממה דקה.

²⁰² וַיְהִי works as a transition marker.

²⁰³ The preposition is added for sake of readability, but it is not in the BHS text.

¹⁶ and Jehu, son of Zimri, you shall anoint as king of Israel, and Elisha, son of Shaphat from Abel-Meholah, you shall anoint prophet in your place.

¹⁷ And it will be that the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; the one who escape from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill.

¹⁸ I will leave in Israel seven thousand, all of the knees that have not bowed down to Baal and all of mouths that has not kissed him.

Delimitation

The clause וַיָּבֹא־שָׁמָּה (“he came there”) marks again the transition of setting and the beginning of a new unity (cf. 4). While the previous section narrates the journey of Elijah until Horeb, this section reveals what happened there. Now the interaction is between Elijah and Yahweh, whose speech is introduced by the prophetic formula דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו (“the word of Yahweh happened to him”) (v. 9) and an enigmatic voice וְהִנֵּה אֵלָיו קוֹל (“and look, there was a voice to him”) (v. 13) also characterized as a still voice of silence (דְּקָה דְּמָמָה) (v. 12).

The unity closes with Elijah’s new commission in verses 15–17 and God’s note about the existence of a remnant in Israel (v. 18). Since another verb of movement followed by an adverbial complement of place in verse 19 (וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם) “and he departed from there”) starts the last segment of the chapter, the limits of the pericope are quite evident.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The new segment starts in an unexpected way with the prophet again failing to complying with God’s expectations. Even though the trip as a whole is not intended by God, there is a divine accommodation in providing food for the prophet so that he can complete his journey miraculously without additional meals for forty days and forty nights (v. 8) just as Moses had been sustained on the mountain for the same length of

time (Exod 34:28). Notwithstanding the fact that he arrives at the mountain of God, when this section starts the prophet is in a cave (הַמְעָרָה), a usual place of refuge in the OT tradition (cf. Gen 19:30; 1 Sam 22:1).²⁰⁴ Very insightfully, Robert Coote points out the irony of the scene saying that “to be concealed in the cave and preserved with food and water is to remain alive, but not, according to Elijah's own words, to remain a prophet.”²⁰⁵ The narrator highlights the surprise by repeating unnecessarily, from the grammatical and stylistic standpoint, the adverb שָׁם twice. The precise location of the cave is not provided but based on verse 8 it seems logical to conclude that the cave is situated on mount Horeb. However, the presence of an article הַמְעָרָה in the word does not imply that this is the same place where Moses saw Yahweh passing (Exod 33:21–23) as several authors have proposed.²⁰⁶ First, the use of the article here is parallel to that found in the same word in 1 Kgs 18:4 referring to the caves where Obadiah hid the prophets. The precise location of the caves is not clarified by the use of the article.²⁰⁷ Second, while Elijah was in a cave, Moses was behind a rock cleft (בְּגִקְרַת הַצּוּר) (Exod 33:22). It is evident that their experiences of seeing Yahweh passing are parallels, but the text does

²⁰⁴ Brien Britt identifies the experience of Elijah in Horeb as a type scene found also in Exod 32–34 and other passages like Exod 3–4; 1 Sam 28; Ezek 3–4. Brian Britt, “Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 45–46. However, while the presence of many parallels a quite forceful, the more convincing parallels are circumstantial.

²⁰⁵ Robert B. Coote, “Yahweh Recalls Elijah,” in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 117.

²⁰⁶ For instance, Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 188; Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 783; Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 253. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 184. Walsh is more cautious but still thinks that “the definite article in “the cave” (which the NRSV omits) implies that this cave at Horeb is well-known to the reader.” Walsh, *1 Kings*, 272. At this point I agree with Cogan that הַמְעָרָה “does not refer to a particular cave at Horeb, which some identify with “the crevice of a rock” where Moses had stood (cf. Exod 33:22), though the echo of that earlier stay on the mountain can be heard. Cogan, *1 Kings*, 452.

²⁰⁷ See footnote 4 on page 226.

not specify that both meetings happened in the same exact place, except in the general setting of the same mountain.

For the first time in chapter 19 the prophetic formula וְהִנֵּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי (“and look, the word of Yahweh happened to me”) appears, but at this occasion it is not followed by imperatives that put the prophet in motion as in 1 Kgs 17 and 18. Now, Yahweh is doing exactly the opposite by questioning Elijah about his whereabouts: what is there to you here (מַה־לְּךָ פֹּה)? It is a complete reverse from the previous chapters.

The reply of Elijah enlightens the reader as to his state of mind and spiritual struggles. In his response, he compares his personal resumé to that of the apostate Israel saying that he has been very zealous for Yahweh (קָנָא קָנֵאתִי לַיהוָה). This is the only time in the HB that the infinitive absolute קָנָא modifies adverbially the root קָנָא.²⁰⁸ According to him, he has been extremely zealous. In addition, this is the only time that the root has someone other than God as the subject in the first person singular.²⁰⁹ These two factors make Elijah’s contention quite bold. In the human sphere the root קָנָא may refer “to a violent emotion aroused by fear of losing a person or object”²¹⁰ (like a jealousy between a man and woman or envy) or religious zealousness expressed by the willingness to obey God’s commands. One practical expression of Elijah’s zeal is the killing of the prophets of Baal that is tantamount to the killing of the woman involved in sexual immorality by

²⁰⁸ See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Use of the Infinitive Absolute of קָנָא](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

²⁰⁹ An exception is Ps 73:3 where Asaph is the subject. However, the sense of the verb is different there (“to envy”). In all other occasions where the verb is used in the first person singular, God is the subject (Deut 32:21; Ezek 39:25; Zech 1:14; 8:2 2x).

²¹⁰ E. Reuter, “קָנָא,” *TDOT* 13:49.

Phineas, who is also considered zealous for Yahweh (Num 25:7–10).²¹¹ This religious sense is conveyed by the valence קנא plus the preposition לִּי.²¹² Curiously, in the narrative of Horeb/Sinai in Exod 19–24, God refers to himself as “a jealous God” (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה) (אל קנא) (Exod 20:5). Indeed, “roughly half of all the occurrences of the root have to do with God’s jealousy. They are of substantial importance, since they concern the central characteristic of OT belief: Yahweh’s demand that he alone be worshiped, enshrined in the great commandment.”²¹³

Elijah contrasts his zeal for Yahweh, which means his complete disposition to obey God in the context of the covenant, with the failure of the people to do the same. His charge is threefold: “they have forsaken your covenant” (עָזְבוּ בְרִיתִיךָ),²¹⁴ “your altars they torn down” (מִזְבְּחֹתֶיךָ הִרְסוּ), “and your prophets they killed by sword” (נְבִיאֶיךָ הִרְגוּ) (בְּחֶרֶב). As a result, only Elijah has been left (וְאַתָּה אֲנִי לְבַדִּי).²¹⁵ It is not clear why Elijah ignores the positive outcomes of the contest on Mount Carmel where the people had their hearts turned back to Yahweh and the hundred prophets hidden in the two caves without mentioning also Obadiah who risked his own life to put them there. It seems that in his

²¹¹ In Num 25:11, Yahweh commends Phineas saying to Moses that “Phineas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, turned away my anger from among the Israelites when he was jealous [בְּקִנְאוֹ] with my jealousy [קִנְאוֹתִי] in their midst, and I did not destroy the Israelites with my jealousy” (LEB).

²¹² See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Use of the Infinitive Absolute of קנא](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

²¹³ Reuter, “קנא,” 53.

²¹⁴ In addition to 1 Kgs 19: 10, 14, the phrase is found only in Deut 29:24 and Jer 22:9. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[They Forsook Your Covenant](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

²¹⁵ “Elijah’s emphasis on himself is very strong: an emphatic pronoun, plus the word ‘alone.’ This deepens our impression that behind Elijah’s complaints about the Israelites’ crimes against Yahweh lies a more fundamental egoism: Elijah feels that he himself has been mistreated.” Walsh, *1 Kings*, 273.

spiritual discouragement and physical letdown Elijah is being selective or exaggerating things in his discourse. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that in his evaluation the people and not only Jezebel also seek his life (וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ אֶת-נַפְשִׁי לְקַחְתָּהּ) “And they seek my life to take it”). From the narrative point of view, no one except Jezebel wants him dead.

At first, God does not address Elijah’s complaints. Instead, God’s reply comes in the form of a command: “go and stand on the mount before Yahweh” (צֵא וְעַמַּדְתָּ בְּהַר) (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה) (v. 11).²¹⁶ This answer reinforces the idea that in the divine accommodation, Elijah should be on the mount and not in the cave. The interjection הִנֵּה interrupts abruptly the discourse mode starting a vivid description²¹⁷ of the theophany that follows.²¹⁸ In this manifestation, the passing of Yahweh (יְהוָה עֹבֵר) before Elijah parallels Moses’s experience in Exod 34:6. The disruption of nature through wind (רוּחַ), earthquake (רַעַשׁ), and fire (אֵשׁ) is associated with the Sinai narrative (cf. Exod 19:9ff; 20:18ff; Deut 4:9ff; 5:24ff).²¹⁹ However, there is a stark contrast between the Moses and

²¹⁶ Another echo of Moses’ narrative (cf. Deut 10:10).

²¹⁷ There are no finite verbs in the whole description, only nominal and participial clauses.

²¹⁸ The lack of a clear indication of the transition between discourse and narrative mode leads the reader to wonder if the description of the theophany is still part of the divine discourse. Walsh suggests three alternatives: “(1) Treat the whole description as Yahweh’s words; (2) Treat the whole description as narrative; (3) Treat part of the description as Yahweh’s words and the rest as narrative.” Walsh, *1 Kings*, 274–275. The last alternative is illustrated by the NRSV: “He said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.’ Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord...”. Since there is nothing in the text indicating interruption between הִנֵּה יְהוָה עֹבֵר וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה (“and look, Yahweh was passing”) and וְרוּחַ גְּדוֹלָה וְחֹזֶק מְפָרֵק (“a great and a strong wind was tearing down the mountain”) the last alternative seems to be unlikely. In addition, there is no conjunction introducing הִנֵּה עֹבֵר as the NRSV implies (for the Lord is about to pass by). Walsh’s suggestion that alternative 1 and 2 are true at the same time seems even more unlikely. The second alternative seems to be preferable for two reasons. First, the frequent references to Yahweh in the third person make the possibility of a divine discourse here odd. Second, the interjection functions as a transitional marker showing to the reader the change from discourse to narrative mode. In fact, הִנֵּה has this very function throughout the whole chapter (cf. vv. 5, 6, 9, 13).

²¹⁹ Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 332.

Elijah narratives. While Yahweh’s power is displayed through all these elements in Exodus, in 1 Kings his presence “in” these natural phenomena is denied. Indeed, “God brings about the wind, earthquake, and fire only to disassociate himself from each. And the disassociation is deliberate and emphatic.”²²⁰ While in Exodus Yahweh speaks through “a very loud ram’s horn sound” (חֲזֶק מְאֹד וְקוֹל שֹׁפָר) (Exod 19:16), in 1 Kings he speaks through “a still voice of silence” (דְּקָה קוֹל דְּמָמָה) (1 Kgs 19:12).²²¹ Elijah is indeed receiving a new revelation about God’s ways.

Bronner’s suggestion that in the context of the polemic against Baal the theophany shows “that God possessed all the attributes of a rain and storm god, but was not part of nature” is partially correct.²²² However, the focus of the theophany is on Elijah’s own struggle to understand God’s plan. Thus, if there is a polemic, it is about Elijah’s understanding of Yahweh. Although he has responded to Elijah by fire on the mount (1 Kgs 18:38) or even “obeyed” his voice in the upper room where the boy came to life again (1 Kgs 17:22), Elijah cannot control God as the worshipers of Baal could claim to manipulate him; Yahweh is not Baal. Elijah is part of God’s plan but is not the

²²⁰ Rice, *1 Kings*, 160.

²²¹ Coote properly considers the phrase an oxymoron. Coote, “Yahweh Recalls Elijah,” 118. The phrase קוֹל דְּמָמָה דְּקָה combines two contradictory elements: sound (קוֹל) and silence (דְּמָמָה). Several attempts to translate the phrase have been made as the divergence between the versions attests. Recognizing the pains in translating the expression, Brueggemann affirms that “the phrase is beyond us.” Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 236. Walsh observes that “daqqa (NRSV, ‘sheer’) describes something that is ‘fine’ like powder or dust. The numinous power of the image lies precisely in our inability to grasp it.” Walsh, *1 Kings*, 276. Another attempt is made by Brichto who translates the phrase as “the sound of thinnest silence. Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics*, 143. The idea that the word דָּק here is allusion to manna, which is qualified by the same adjective in Exod 16:14 seems to be forceful. See: Coote, “Yahweh Recalls Elijah,” 119. In his article, Robinson provides a good summary on the history of interpretation of the expression קוֹל דְּמָמָה דְּקָה. Robinson, “Elijah at Horeb,” 522–528.

²²² Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 63.

plan itself.²²³ At this point, Rice’s observation seems accurate, “it appears that Elijah had come to think of the LORD as a bigger and better Baal. As one tends to become like *the* enemy one opposes, so Elijah’s preoccupation with Baal seems to have led him to conceive the LORD in Baal’s image.”²²⁴ In this line of thought, Bob Becking conceives the revelation of Yahweh here in terms of symbolic correction. According to him, “after the story at Mount Carmel, the idea could arise that YHWH, like Baal, is a deity that makes himself known through the forces of nature. With the story on Elijah at Mount Horeb, the narrator of 1 Kgs. 17–19 makes clear that YHWH is above all a deity that reveals himself in speaking albeit through a subtle and small voice.”²²⁵

Elijah’s reaction before God’s manifestation is typical of all those who have a personal encounter with the deity (Isa 6:5); he tries to hide his face avoiding direct contact (בְּאֲדָרְתוֹ וַיִּלֵּט פָּנָיו) (v. 13). According to verse 13, Elijah is still inside the cave during all the theophany. Thus, he is still not complying with the imperative of verse 11 (צֵא וְעַמַּדְתָּ בְּהָר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה) “go out and stand on the mountain before Yahweh”). Even after the theophany his compliance is only partial. He does go out (וַיֵּצֵא) but only to the entrance of the cave (וַיֵּעַמֵּד פֶּתַח הַמְּעָרָה) “and he stood at the entrance of the cave”) instead of the mountain (בְּהָר). The prophet’s stubbornness prompts the repetition of the question

²²³ Provan, “An Ambivalent Hero,” 146.

²²⁴ Rice, *1 Kings*, 162.

²²⁵ Bob Becking, *From David to Gedaliah: The Book of Kings as Story and History*, OBO 228 (Fribourg, Switzerland; Göttingen, Germany: Academic Press Fribourg; Vandenhoeck & Rubrecht, 2007), 34. Curiously, Pyper points out that “the ambiguities of Elijah’s characterization is expressed in his own name. Its meaning is ambiguous depending on where the stress is put: ‘Yahweh, my god?’ or ‘Yahweh is my god.’ It can either be a claim of exclusive loyalty to Yahweh—whatever god anyone else might follow, I follow Yahweh—or a claim to some exclusive possession and even control over Yahweh. Yahweh is in my pocket. The conflict between these two meanings underlies the ambiguities of the stories that follow. Pyper, “The Secret of Succession,” 61.

found in verse 9: what is there for you here, Elijah? (מַה־לְּךָ פֹּה אֵלֶיּהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר) (v. 13). The force of the question seems to be: What are you doing here? There is nothing for you to do here. The prophet repeats word-by-word his first response (v. 14). Regarding the reason for the repetition, it is not evident whether “Elijah is stuck in his self-righteousness”²²⁶ or if based on the theophanic signs Elijah knows for sure that now he is speaking directly to God.²²⁷

Yahweh addresses Elijah again with new imperatives that express a new commission that constitutes a turning point in Elijah’s condition.²²⁸ The first command sets the prophet in motion back to north (לֵךְ שׁוּב לְדֶרֶךְךָ מִדְּבָרָה דְּמִשְׁק) “go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus”) (v. 15).²²⁹ Here Yahweh’s command sounds like the ones found in chapters 17 and 18 where Elijah is led by him to different geographical points. His mission is to anoint two kings and one prophet. The prophetic anointing of kings is seen in other places in Scripture,²³⁰ but the anointing of a foreign king is unique. Another interesting aspect of his mission is the anointing of Elisha as his substitute (לְנָבִיא תַחֲתָיִךְ) “as a prophet in your place”). This is the only biblical example of the

²²⁶ Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 191. Provan agrees with Hens-Piazza saying the repetition is a sign that he remains self-focused and self-pitying. Provan, *An Ambivalent Hero*, 150.

²²⁷ Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 223–224.

²²⁸ Roi observes that “the turning point in Elijah’s state is given concrete expression by a physical change in direction— southward to northward—instigated by the divine command: ‘Go back’ (v. 15). The same phrase is used in reference to Moses’ flight לֵךְ שׁוּב from Pharaoh (Exod. 4.19).” Roi, “1 Kings 19,” 28.

²²⁹ The phrase מִדְּבָרָה דְּמִשְׁק is unique. Miller suggests that “the wilderness of Damascus lies south of Damascus and northeast of Bashan. It is about thirty miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee. It was more than three hundred fifty miles from Mount Horeb to the wilderness of Damascus.” Miller, *First and Second Kings*, 281.

²³⁰ For instance, Saul (1 Sam 9:16; 10:1), David (1 Sam 16:13), Solomon (1 Kgs 1:34) or Jehu (1 Kgs 19:16; 2 Kgs 9:3).

anointing of a prophet; usually, kings and priests are anointed. Curiously, the valence מִשַׁח plus לְ as found in verse 16 (וְאַתָּאֵלִישָׁע בֶּן־שַׁפְט מֵאֲבֵל מְחֹלָה תִּמְשַׁח לְנָבִיא תַּחֲתָיִךְ) “and Elisha, son of Shaphat from Abel-Meholah, you shall anoint prophet in your place”) is exclusive to kings, but here is applied to Elisha.²³¹ It goes without saying that the act of anointing assumes messianic overtones throughout the OT.²³² At any rate, the anointing of Elisha as successor of Elijah parallels with the Moses’ hand-laying on Joshua appointing him as his successor in Num 27:18–23.

It is clear from verse 16 that Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha are instruments of judgment against Israel as the Baalism still persists in the following years until Jehu’s final blow (2 Kgs 9–10). However, two questions remain at this point. The first one relates to the meaning of “anointing” here. The following chapters of Kings do not record Elijah anointing any of these; not even Elisha directly anoints them.²³³ While the failure in anointing²³⁴ may indicate a persistent lack of compliance by Elijah (see more in the next section), other factors may have played a role, like Elisha’s initial hesitance to take the

²³¹ For instance, 2 Sam 2:4; 5:3; 1 Kgs 1:34. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Valence מִשַׁח plus לְ](#)” of my jupyter notebook for more examples.

²³² Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 17–96; James Smith, *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 1–37; Marinus de Jonge, “Messiah,” *ABD*, 777–789; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995) 13–35; Herbert W. Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel’s King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2012), 17–36; D. G. Firth, “Messiah,” *DOT: Prophets*, 537–545.

²³³ In the case of Jehu, Elisha sends a servant to anoint the king (1 Kgs 9:1–10). Considering Hazael, the prophet’s predication about his future kingship may have influenced the timing of his ascension (2 Kgs 8:9–15).

²³⁴ The idea that Elijah carried out these anointings, but his actions are not recorded in the narrative is certainly a possibility. However, in chapters 17–18 the narrator insists on recording every compliance of Elijah to God’s directives as I have already stated explicitly in previous sections. Thus, in light of this narrative strategy, we would expect the same here. At least, in the case of Jehu, the reader of 2 Kgs will know later that Elijah does not carry out his anointing (2 Kgs 9:1–12).

place of Elijah and the failure of Ahab to punish Ben-Hadad in 1 Kgs 20 leaving the door closed to the ascension of Hazael.²³⁵ In any case, the verb “to anoint” also does not need to be interpreted literally in this context. Perhaps, “the intention is simply to claim that the authorization of the three persons named was Elijah’s responsibility.”²³⁶ However, given the parallel with Samuel, whom God commanded to literally anoint David, this possibility sounds more implausible.

Another intriguing question concerns the role of Elisha as instrument of judgment against Israel. According to verse 17b, “the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill” (וְהַנִּמְלֵט מִחֶרֶב יְהוּא יָמִית אֱלִישָׁע). Although Elisha was directly involved in the demise of some people (e.g., 2 Kgs 2:23–25; 7:1–2 cf. 7:16–20), they are not connected with Baal’s worship and hardly could be used to characterize Elisha as a “killer” prophet. Indeed, Elisha’s characterization is more of a deliverer than a punisher. Nichol’s suggestion that his work of slaying should be understood figuratively and in the context of spiritual warfare (Hos 6:5; Jer 1:10; Heb 4:12; 2 Cor 10:3–6) has its value, but the problem with it is that the prediction of his future work of slaying stands right beside and in parallel to that of Hazael and Jehu which are admittedly very literal ones. Another possibility is that they did the job thoroughly enough that Elisha did not need to kill those whom they left.

²³⁵ In 1 Kgs 20, Ahab faces prophetic criticism by letting Ben-Hadad go. The Aramean king is characterized by God as a man devoted to being destroyed (אִישׁ־חֶרֶם) (1 Kgs 20:42). As Ahab does not kill Ben-Hadad, there is no room for the ascension of Hazael, who would finally become king only after the assassination of Ben-Hadad (2 Kgs 8:15). Perhaps, this could be an explanation for the failure of Elijah in anointing Hazael, who had been delayed by Ahab’s disobedience.

²³⁶ Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 334.

The section closes with Yahweh addressing more directly Elijah's complaint (v. 18). The position of this discourse is meaningfully. Apparently, although God is merciful and is willing to heal the prophet, he is not accepting of Elijah's discouragement. First, he waits up to the very end of the dialogue to address Elijah's complaint giving them less weight than the prophet would expect. The divine address is more like a side note, like a divine "by the way" before Yahweh leaves the scene. Putting his prophet in action through the new commission is the divine priority.

Second, frustrating Elijah's idea about the exclusive nature of his devotion, Yahweh makes clear that the remnant (וְהַשְּׂאֲרֹתַי) is much larger than Elijah was assuming.²³⁷ There are still seven thousand (אֲלֵפִים שֶׁבַעַת) whose knees have not bent to and mouths have not kissed Baal (לֹא-נִשְׁקוּ כָּל-הַבְּרִיּוֹת לְאֵל-כַּרְעוּ).²³⁸ Such a self-centeredness may be related to a psychological letdown that the prophet could be feeling after the experience on Mt. Carmel.

This unity closes without any indication of Elijah's reaction. The reader needs to wait until the last section to see if Elijah is finally back on track again. Although verses 19–21 show Elijah in movement, his destination is not the desert of Damascus. At least, the order of the itinerary has changed.

²³⁷ Fritz observes that number is still small when the total of the estimated population, which is a quarter of million, is considered. Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 199.

²³⁸ In the ANE, both the acting of kneeling and kissing denote submission and reverence. Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton observe that "On the black stele of Shalmaneser III, the Israelite king Jehu is portrayed kissing the ground before the Assyrian king. In *Enuma Elisha* the tribunal of gods kisses the feet of Marduk after he has put down the rebellion and established himself as head of the pantheon. This was the common act of submission offered to kings and gods. Likewise, the kissing of the idol involved kissing its feet in an act of homage, submission and allegiance." Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1 Ki 19:18. See more on Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, SP 12 (Rome, Italy: Biblical Institute, 1980), 1:320–346.

Narrative Features

One of the key features of the narrative style of this section is its vivacity. There is no place for monotony in the segment which delivers a very graphical description of the events in Horeb. The text is interrupted three times by הַגִּיחַ that introduces the divine discourse in v. 9 and 13. In verse 11, the interjection introduces the description of the theophany, which can be considered one of the most graphic descriptions in the whole HB.

The use of suspense is also part of the narrator's tool kit in the segment. This is clear from his account of the theophany where the sequence of elements is followed by the individual repetition that Yahweh was not in any of them (לֹא בְרֵעַשׁ; לֹא בְרוּחַ יְהוָה; וְאֶחָד הָאֵשׁ קוֹל; יְהוָה).

Finally, the extensive use of narrative echoes connects Elijah to Moses. Scholars have identified several parallels between the two characters. Some of them have been already presented in the previous analysis whereas others will be further discussed in the excursus "Elijah and Moses" in the end of this chapter. In any case, the effect of such echoes clearly presents Elijah as a new Moses. Thus, from the canonical point of view, the narrator is suggesting that this is an important moment in Israel's history where the stakes are high.

Structure

The structure of the segment is very balanced producing a parallel panel with a central section.

A Change of Setting – Elijah inside the cave (וַיָּבֹא־שָׁם אֶל־הַמְּעָרָה) (v. 9)

B Introduction to Yahweh's Speech – הַגִּיחַ (v. 9c)

B1 Yahweh's Speech – Question (מִה־לְךָ פֶה) (v. 9d)

- B2 Elijah's Answer (וַיֹּאמֶר) (v.10)
- B3 Yahweh's Speech – Imperatives (וַיֹּאמֶר) (v. 11a–c)
- C Introduction to Yahweh's Appearance – הִנֵּה (v.11d)
- C1 Theophany (יְהוָה עֹבֵר) (v. 11e–12)
- A' Change of Setting – Elijah at the entrance of the cave (וַיֵּצֵא וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח הַמְּעָרָה) (v.13)
- B' Introduction to Yahweh's Speech – הִנֵּה (v. 13e)
- B'1 Yahweh's Speech – Question (מַה־לְּךָ זֶה) (v. 13f)
- B'2 Elijah's Answer (וַיֹּאמֶר) (v.14)
- B'3 Yahweh's Speech – Imperatives (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו) (vv. 15–18)

The objectivity of the structure above is reinforced by the presence of הִנֵּה marking the transition of each new interaction between God and the prophet. Further, Yahweh's question and Elijah's answer are identical (B1 and B2 = B'1 and B'2) in each part of the panel. In this structure, the divine revelation is at the very center and forms the theological kernel of the pericope.

Elisha's Call (1 Kgs 19:19–21)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Co> משם] [<Pr> ילך] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:19
[<Ob><ap> את אלישע / בן שפט] [<Pr> ימצא] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:19
[<PC> חרש] [<Su> הוא] [<Cj> ו]	Ptcp 1Kgs 19:19
[<PC> לפניו] [<Su> עשר צמדים]	NmCl 1Kgs 19:19
[<PC> בשנים העשר] [<Su> הוא] [<Cj> ו]	NmCl 1Kgs 19:19
[<Co> אליו] [<Su> אליהו] [<Pr> יעבר] [<Cj> ו]	WayX 1Kgs 19:19
[<Co> אליו] [<Ob> אדרתו] [<Pr> ישלך] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:19
[<Ob> את הבקר] [<Pr> יעזב] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Co> אחרי אליהו] [<Pr> ירץ] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Co> לאבי ולאמי] [<Ij> נא] [<Pr> אשקה]	ZYq0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Co> אחריך] [<Pr> אלכה] [<Cj> ו]	WYq0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Co> לו] [<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Pr> לך]	ZIm0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Pr> שוב]	ZIm0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Co> לך] [<Pr> עשיתי] [<Ob> מה] [<Cj> כי]	xQt0 1Kgs 19:20
[<Co> מאחריו] [<Pr> ישב] [<Cj> ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:21

[<Ob> את צמד הבקר] [<Pr> יקה] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:21
[<PO> יזבחהו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:21
[<Ob> הבשר] [<PO> בשלם] [<Aj> בכלי הבקר] [<Cj>ו]	WxQ0 1Kgs 19:21
[<Co> לעם] [<Pr> יתן] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:21
[<Pr> יאכלו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:21
[<Pr> יקם] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:21
[<Co> אחרי אליהו] [<Pr> ילך] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:21
[<PO> ישרתהו] [<Cj>ו]	Way0 1Kgs 19:21

¹⁹ And he departed from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. And he was ploughing with twelve yokes of oxen before him; and he was with the twelfth. And Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him.

²⁰ And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah. And he said, “please let me kiss my father and mother and I will follow you. And he said to him, “Go back again²³⁹ for what have I done to you?”

²¹ And he turned back from him, and he took a pair of oxen. And he slaughtered them and with the oxen’s equipment he boiled their flesh.²⁴⁰ And he gave it to the people, and they ate. And he arose after and went after Elijah and served him.

Delimitation

The last section of chapter 19 starts with Elijah on the move. The main stages of the prophet’s journey in this chapter are marked with the adverb **שם** which appears in verse 9 marking his arrival in Beersheba and his arrival at Horeb and his departure from Horeb in verse 19.

The final limit is marked by the WXQt clause in 1 Kgs 20:1 that interrupts the sequence of narrative wayyqtols of verse 19. The introduction of Ben Hadad here

²³⁹ The verb **שוב** has adverbial sense (back) when preceded by **הלך** in Exod 4:19; 2 Sam 3:16; 1 Kgs 19:15, 20; 2 Kgs 1:6; Ruth 1:8.

²⁴⁰ The grammar is obscure here. Literally, the clause **ובכלי הבקר בשלם הבשר** means “and with the equipment he boiled them, the flesh.” Since the noun **בקר** is collective, the suffix pronominal plural in **בשלם** is not unexpected. However, the issue revolves around the syntactical function of **הבשר**. Apparently, **הבשר** functions as an apposition to the pronominal suffix **ם**, whose referent is **הבקר**. In this way, it complements the noun **הבקר** specifying what part of them was boiled. The remaining question is why this detail is important enough to be mentioned here. The grammatical awkwardness caused by the use of **הבשר** is avoided by the OG translator who omits it: **ἠψθη αὐτὰ ἐν τοῖς σακεύεσι τῶν βοῶν** (he boiled them with the equipment from the oxen).

represents a major break in the Elijah cycle. In chapter 20, the narrator focuses on Ahab's warfare with the Syrians and his failure in bringing judgment upon the Aramean king. In this chapter, two anonymous prophets interact with the northern king. Elijah will reappear in chapter 21 to announce the divine judgment against Ahab's house, but again the focus will be on king. Elijah will be in the spotlight again only in 2 Kgs 1 and 2 where his final acts as prophet are recorded.

In this last part of chapter 19, Elisha is introduced as Elijah's future replacement. This short story is crucial for the reader to understand the role of Elisha in the first verses of 2 Kgs 2. While there are authors who insist that the story is originally from the Elisha cycle,²⁴¹ the narrative is not out of place here. It shows how Elijah, at least in a limited way, is complying with God's directives from 1 Kgs 19:15–16.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The pericope starts with the note about Elijah's departure from Horeb (וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם) (v. 19). As the wayyqtol וַיֵּלֶךְ establishes a command-and-compliance pattern with the first divine imperative הֲלֵךְ in verse 15, the first impression is that Elijah is back on track once again. However, this conclusion quickly vanishes in the next clause. The grammar does not convey the idea that Elijah left Horeb towards the desert of Damascus. The valence הֲלֵךְ + מִשָּׁם means to departure from a certain place without determining any particular destiny or itinerary (Gen 26:17; 42:26; Judg 21:24; 1 Sam 22:1; 2 Kgs 10:15). By

²⁴¹ For instance: Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2:335.

contrast, the valence הלך + משם + אל means to depart from a place with a destination in mind (Judg 1:11; 2 Kgs 2:25; Amos 6:2).²⁴²

Thus, instead of וישב לדרך מדברה דמשק “and he went on the way to the desert of Damascus”, as the reader would expect in the sequence of the command-and-compliance pattern, the narrator says that Elijah found Elisha (וַיִּמְצָא אֶת-אֵלִישָׁע בֶּן-שַׁפְּחָט) “and he found Elisha, son of Shaphat” (v. 19). From the context, it seems clear that Elijah is now in Abel-Meholah (cf. v. 16). If Abel-Meholah is indeed in the Jordan Valley,²⁴³ Elijah could be en route to Damascus, and therefore, complying with the divine command. But if this is so, the narrator leaves the question open to the reader. Although it is clear that Elijah’s confidence had been restored to the point that he is traveling through Jezebel’s territory again,²⁴⁴ the narrator does not depict him as in the previous chapters. There is no record about a subsequent meeting between Hazael and Elijah, or between the prophet and Jehu. Elijah is back, but he does not seem to be the same.

Even in Elijah’s interaction with Elisha, there is no command-and-compliance pattern. Instead of anointing Elisha, Elijah throws his mantle on him. Although the action may symbolically express transference,²⁴⁵ the fact that Elisha does not become an

²⁴² In Amos 6:2 the preposition אל is implied. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Valence הלך + משם + אל](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

²⁴³ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 280.

²⁴⁴ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 255.

²⁴⁵ Walsh observes that “we are probably dealing with a cultural convention familiar to ancient audiences concerning the prophet’s mantle as a distinctive badge of office.” Walsh, *1 Kings*, 279 See also: Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2:336; Cogan, *1 Kings*, 455; Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics*, 144. Indeed, “in Scripture, one’s garment is viewed as part of one’s being; to a certain extent, one’s clothing is like one’s body. The garment is imbued with a portion of its owner’s essence.” Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 219. John T. Noble suggested that the throwing of the mantle is a type of symbolic adoption. John T. Noble, “Cultic Prophecy and Levitical inheritance in the Elijah–Elisha Cycle,” *JSOT* 41 (2016), 45. Against this predominant view Chistina Fetherolf seeks to “demonstrate that the mantle is not invested with power and authority. The mantle is instead associated with situations in which Elijah did not perform his

independent prophet in the place of Elijah indicates that the imperative in verse 16 is not being fulfilled at this point. Only eventually, Elisha becomes Elijah's substitute (2 Kgs 2).

That Elisha does not become immediately Elijah's substitute is clear from the fact that the pericope closes with Elisha serving Elijah (וַיִּשְׁרָתֵהוּ) and by the fact that the mantle comes back to Elijah (cf. 2 Kgs 2). The mantle returns to Elisha only after Elijah's ascension marking the end of the Elijah era and the beginning of Elisha's. The laconic nature of the narrative does not allow for a conclusion about the reason for that. Rachelle Gilmour explores two possibilities: a) Elijah is not willing to leave his prophetic office yet or b) Elisha thinks he is not ready to assume it.²⁴⁶ In the latter case, "Elisha insistence upon following him delays Elijah's premature resignation from the prophetic role, even if Elijah will ascend to heaven before he has anointed Jehu and Hazael."²⁴⁷ Although Gilmour's suggestion is plausible, there are not enough elements to confirm it. Another option is just to assume that a time of preparation was included in the process of prophetic transference. If a Moses–Joshua motif is taken in consideration here, such a time makes perfect sense.

prophetic duties in an ideal manner. Descriptions of both Elijah and Elisha elsewhere further reveal that the mantle was not closely related to their identity as prophet, which supports the argument that it was not symbolic of prophetic authority." Christina Marie Fetherolf, "Elijah's Mantle: A Sign of Prophecy Gone Awry," *JSOT* 42 (2017): 199. But Fetherolf seems to ignore the prominent role of Elijah cloak in 1 Kgs 2. Besides, Noble highlights that "the important social function of clothing is amply documented in diverse cultures and societies." Noble, "Cultic Prophecy and Levitical Inheritance," 47. See also: Ronald Schwarz, *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* (New York, NY: Mouton, 1979), 24–31. Philip King and Lawrence Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 259.

²⁴⁶ Rachelle Gilmour, *Juxtaposition and the Elisha Cycle*, LHBOTS 594 (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2014), 78–83.

²⁴⁷ Gilmour, *Juxtaposition and the Elisha Cycle*, 83.

In the very center of verse 19 lie two nominal clauses that provide background information about Elisha's occupation at the time of his call.²⁴⁸ First, Elisha does not come from any prophetic guild; what reinforces the fact that his election is not natural but divine. Second, the immediate response of Elisha leaving everything behind²⁴⁹ shows that he “is not responding to outside pressure and does not require signs and portents: he is motivated by an inner impulse, total confidence in the prophet, and unalloyed faith in his master.”²⁵⁰

Elisha's reaction is to leave the oxen and run after Elijah (וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת־הַבָּקָר וַיִּרְצֵץ) “and he left the oxen and ran after Elijah” (v. 20). Elisha understands the act of Elijah and he is willing to follow him (וְאֵלֶיכָה אֲתָרִיד) “and I will follow you”). He has only a request before starting his new journey: to kiss his father and mother (אֲשַׁקֶּה־נָּא) “please let me kiss my father and mother”). The verb נשק (to kiss) appears in Kings only in this chapter and in verses 18 and 20. This distribution helps the reader to connect Elisha with the seven thousand who have not kissed Baal.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Verse 19 is grammatically balanced with two wayyqtol clauses, two centralized nominal clauses introduced by וְהוּא, and two wayyqtol clauses:

וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם “and he departed from there”(W1)

וַיִּמְצָא אֶת־אֵלִישָׁע “and he found Elisha” (W2)

וְהוּא חָרַשׁ שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר צְמֻדִים לְפָנָיו “and he ploughing with twelve yokes of oxen before him” (NC1)

וְהוּא בְּשֵׁנִים הָעֶשְׂרִים “and he with the twelfth” (NC 2)

וַיַּעֲבֵר אֵלִיהוּ אֵלָיו “and Elijah passed by him” (W3)

וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ אֶדְרֹתָיו אֵלָיו “and he threw his mantle on him” (W4)

²⁴⁹ Several authors point out that the 12 pairs of oxen are a sign of Elisha's wealth. Fritz observes, however, that this does not necessarily need to be the case. He observes that this “could also be understood as a hint that certain tasks in farming were carried out collectively.” Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 200. Since the text does not say if the other 11 pairs of oxen are driven by servants or co-workers of Elisha both possibilities are feasible.

²⁵⁰ Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 223.

²⁵¹ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 255.

Elijah's response is enigmatic: "what have I done for you?" (כִּי מָה־עָשִׂיתִי לָךְ). The phrase has been variously interpreted as (i) a true question by which Elijah enquires Elisha about the real meaning of his symbolic act of throwing his mantle on him;²⁵² (ii) as a challenge that places all responsibility for the response upon Elisha;²⁵³ (iii) a rebuke to Elisha's request to say good-bye to his parents;²⁵⁴ and (iv) as a way to encourage Elisha to come back whose meaning is "'Go, but realize what I have done to you', and therefore come back to me."²⁵⁵

The problem with first option (i) is that it does not take into account that Elijah's question is a reply to Elisha's request to kiss his parents. Besides, since he left everything and followed Elijah, it is clear that Elisha understands what Elijah's act implies. Regarding the second option (ii), it is difficult to see how the question in this context places the responsibility on Elisha. The third option (iii) fails in realizing that Elisha's request is not merely a delay, but an attestation that he has accepted the call. Finally, although the last option (iv) is contextually possible, this use of כִּי מָה־עָשִׂיתִי לָךְ is not attested in any other passage in the OT.²⁵⁶

²⁵² Walsh, *1 Kings*, 279. The author suggests that perhaps Elisha had misunderstood Elijah's act. He was not inviting him to replace him but to serve him (against God's instruction). According to Cogan, Elijah challenged Elisha by denying that there was any significance to the cloak thrown over him or that he had demanded anything of him. Cogan, *1 Kings*, 455.

²⁵³ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 255 and DeVries, *1 Kings*, 239.

²⁵⁴ Barnes, *1-2 Kings*, 167.

²⁵⁵ Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2:336; Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 233.

²⁵⁶ The expression appears 37 times in the HB. See Text-Fabric query results in section "[For What Have I Done to You?](#)" of my jupyter notebook.

Another way to see the question is understanding it as a mere rhetorical allowance as if Elijah was saying “what have I done to you? I am not stopping you.”²⁵⁷ The two imperatives **לָךְ שׁוּב** that precede the question seems to support this view: Go back again, I am not preventing you to do that! On the one hand, Elijah’s reaction is coherent with his characterization as a whole: a lonely man with few social skills and fewer words who usually goes straight to the point. On the other hand, Elisha’s request and the subsequent farewell meal (cf. v. 21) is the starting point of his characterization as a prophet who is the exact opposite of Elijah; Elisha will develop his ministry in the middle of the people with constant social interactions.

The fact that Elisha leaves Elijah for a moment (**וַיָּשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרָיו** “and he turned back from him”)²⁵⁸ indicates that Elijah does not accompany Elisha in his farewell “party.” Instead of focusing on Elisha and his parents, the narrator zooms in in Elisha and the people. Although the root often has cultic overtones, it seems that here the slaughtering is not ceremonial.²⁵⁹ As the prophet uses his own equipment and animals, the meal represents a separation from his old life. He is enthusiastically embracing his new role. Barnes remembers that since “the common people probably ate meat only about three times a year (during the pilgrim feasts), so this meal would have been a momentous celebration.”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ This view is implied in Fishbane’s translation of the passage. Fishbane, *Haftarot*, 254.

²⁵⁸ The valence **שׁוּב + מִן + אַחֲרַי** means “to turn back from following someone” (Num 14:43; Deut 23:15; 1 Sam 15:11; 1 Kgs 9:6; Jer 3:19; Ruth 1:16).

²⁵⁹ According to Cogan, the verb *zbh* refers here to slaughter for food and not sacrifice, one of the few instances of this meaning; cf. Deut 12:15; 1 Sam 28:24; 2 Chr 18:2.” Cogan, *I Kings*, 455. Noble and others argue for a sacrificial sense. Noble, “Cultic Prophecy and Levitical inheritance,” 52.

²⁶⁰ Barnes, *1-2 Kings*, 167.

The pericope closes with Elisha following Elijah (וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרַי אֵלִיהוּ) “and he went after Elijah”) and not replacing him. In light of the events in 2 Kgs 2, in the last clause the verb וַיִּשְׂרְתֵהוּ has an ingressive sense. In his analysis of שרת throughout the OT K. Engelken suggests four main contexts for its use.²⁶¹ The earliest occurrences of the verb are related to the work of servants of men of God who ended up replacing their master like Joshua (Jos 1:1–9), Samuel (1 Sam 1–3), and Elisha (2 Kgs 19:19–21).²⁶² The word is also used in the context of the service of kings (2 Sam 13:17–18; 2 Kgs 1:4, 15) and God (Jer 15:11). A last but not less important context where the root appears is cultic. It often describes the work of Levites and priests in the sanctuary (Num 3:6; Dt 17:12; 1 Kgs 8:11; 1 Chr 6:32).

The election of Elisha sets in motion events which will culminate with the ascension of Hazael to the throne of Syria and the anointing of Jehu who eventually will bring judgment against the house of Ahab and strike a decisive blow to Baalism in the northern kingdom. The work of Elijah must advance through the work of others. Maybe that was one of the most important lessons on the Horeb: Elijah was part of God’s plan, but he was not the plan itself.

The presentation of Elijah in chapter 19 requires further consideration at this point. Many contemporary authors, especially those engaged in narrative criticism, have argued that the narrator here presents Elijah in a very bad light making him an unreliable character.²⁶³ While there is no way to deny a certain implicit critique of Elijah by the

²⁶¹ K. Engelken, “שרת,” *TDOT* 15:503–514.

²⁶² Although the root is used in connection with Gehazi’s servanthood, he does not replace Elisha (2 Kgs 4:43; 6:15)

²⁶³ For instance, Paul J. Kissling, *Reliable Characters in the Primary History: Profiles of Moses*,

storyteller, such a critique seems to have been highly exaggerated in these studies.

Although the narrator characterizes in a negative light the failure of Elijah to trust in God and wait for his direction after the arrival in Jezreel, the narrative structure of the Elijah cycle as a whole points to the temporary nature of this display of weakness which is followed by a quick rehabilitation. Jeremy D. Otten has shown that even in this moment of vacillation Elijah is still reliable: (i) subsequent narrative confirms the reliability of Elijah's words; (ii) Elijah is not rebuked for his claim of being left alone (Otten argues that God's response about the seven thousand remnants is a promise), and even if the prophet is not alone in serving Yahweh, he is the only one opposing the wicked king and the apostate nation; (iii) the parallels with Moses help to build Elijah's reliability as a prophet; (iv) apparently the repentance on Mt. Carmel was short lived (this could be another parallel with Exodus 25–32 where the progression toward apostasy is very rapid); and (v) as the people's representative the regression of Ahab to Jezebel and Baal is also the regression of the people.²⁶⁴ Otten concludes his analysis saying that “perhaps he was weak and discouraged in the wilderness, certainly he was lonely and scared, but he was faithful, and his despair was rooted not in egotism or misguided perfectionism but in sorrow for his people.”²⁶⁵ Indeed, “Elijah recognizes the fact that he has failed to bring about lasting change in an apostate people, that he is the last remaining link between

Joshua, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, JSOTSup 224 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 96–148.

²⁶⁴ Jeremy D. Otten, *I Alone Am Left: Elijah and Remnant in Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021), 40–42.

²⁶⁵ Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 42.

Yahweh and Israel, and that their attempt to take his life is tantamount to severing that last tie.”²⁶⁶

Narrative Features

The laconic nature of verses 19–20 gives to the section an enigmatic tone with many ambiguities and blanks. For instance, was Elijah en route to Damascus when he met Elisha? Do all the pairs of oxen belong to Elisha? Why does Elijah throw his mantle without a word while he keeps on the run? Was he unwilling to gain the company of Elisha or was the throwing of the mantle sufficient to engage Elisha in the mission? Was Elijah’s reaction to Elisha’s request to see off his family a rebuke, a test, a note about the importance of his act, or an impatient or sarcastic comment like “go, am I stopping you?” These are only some of the questions left open by the narrator. These open questions invite the reader to engage in the story by trying to fill these gaps as I have attempted in the previous section where most of these issues are considered.

Another narrative feature of the pericope is the use of narrative echoes from the theophany. Some of these echoes are noted by Walsh: “Yahweh ‘passed by’ Elijah on Horeb (v. 11); Elijah ‘passes by’ Elisha in the fields (v. 19b). Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle (v. 13); he now covers Elisha with the same mantle (v. 19b). Yahweh’s commands to Elijah began, ‘Go, return’ (*lek sub*); Elijah’s first words to Elisha are identical (v. 20b, *lek sub*; NRSV, ‘Go back again’).”²⁶⁷ Somehow, Elijah acts towards Elisha as Yahweh acted towards him on Horeb.

²⁶⁶ Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 42.

²⁶⁷ Walsh, *I Kings*, 281.

Structure

There is an intercalation between Elijah and Elisha actions in the narrative:

Elijah acts 19ab

Elisha acts 19cd

Elijah acts 19ef

Elisha acts 20a-d

Elijah acts 20e

Elisha acts 21a-g

There is also a balanced relationship between verses 19 and 20–21 with the centralization of each prophet in each section marking also the transition from a more active Elijah in the first part to a more active Elisha in the second part. This shows that by the end of chapter 19 Elisha becomes prominent even though he is still a servant. His enthusiasm contrasts with the image of a still reluctant Elijah whose prophetic ardor is still in the process of coming back.

First half: Predominance of Elijah

Elijah acts 19ab (two clauses)

Elisha acts 19cd (two clauses)

Elijah acts 19ef

Second half: Predominance of Elisha

Elisha acts 20a-d (four clauses)

Elijah acts 20e (four clauses)

Elisha acts 21a-g (seven clauses)

CHAPTER 5

TEXT LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ELIJAH NARRATIVE

SCENES 4 THROUGH 6: 1 KGS 21–2 KGS 2:14

Fourth Scene: From the Mount Horeb to the Garden of Vegetables (1 Kgs 21)

Preliminary Observations

Chapters 20–21 of 1 Kings are known as the Ahab stories due to their focus on the Northern king. They can be divided into two categories: the wars of Ahab and his military impact (1 Kgs 20, 22), and Ahab’s internal affairs (1 Kgs 21).¹ Following the Masoretic text,² the narrative of chapter 21 happens any time between the three years that separate chapter 20 from 22.³

¹ In the work, Mercedes Bachmann carries out a source, composition, redaction investigation of 1 Kgs 21 and 2 Kgs 9. According to her, the chapter is “didactic parable” instead of an historical account. However, there is nothing that precludes a historical literal understanding of the passage beyond the known critical assumption of OT scholarship. Mercedes L. García Bachmann, “La Viña De Nabot, Sus Diversas Lecturas Y El (Ab) Uso De Poder De Una Reina,” *RB* 77–78 (2015–2016): 53–75.

² The OG varies from the MT regarding the order of chapters 20–22. The OG brings chapter 21 right after chapter 19 making the story of Naboth’s murder part of Elijah’s stories. Since this research focus is on the MT, I will not explore the impact that the OG’s arrangement has on the Elijah or Ahab’s stories. Others have already done a good job in doing so. See: Julio Treballe, “The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in the Book of Kings,” in *VII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint Studies: Leuven 1989*, SCS 31, ed. Claude E. Cox (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1991), 285–299; Emanuel Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible* (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 1999), 411–418; Emanuel Tov, “Three Strange Books of the LXX: 1 Kings, Esther, and Daniel Compared with Similar Rewritten Compositions from Qumran and Elsewhere” in *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran*, TSAJ 121 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 283–308; T. Michael Law, “How Not to Use 3 Reigns: A Plea to Scholars of the Books of Kings,” *VT* 61 (2011): 280–297; Julio Treballe Barrera, *Textual and Literary Criticism of the Books of Kings*, VT 185 (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 2020), 401–433.

³ Walsh, *Ahab*, 35.

Chapter 21 has two major sections. The first one describes the sin of Ahab and Jezebel against Naboth as they murder him to possess his vineyard (vv. 1–16). The second one features Elijah’s appearance before the king to announce the doom of his dynasty (vv. 17–29). Since Elijah is the focus of this research, the following exegetical analysis will deal only with the final form of verses 17–29 wherein Elijah interacts with the king.⁴ However, a few notes on 1 Kgs 21:1–16 are fundamental to understand properly the divine intervention through Elijah.

The section is arranged in a symmetrical structure where the actions of Jezebel, whose role in the narrative is as the pivot, come to the center.

- A Ahab and Naboth: request and denial (vv. 1–4)
- B Jezebel and Ahab: promise to obtain (vv. 5–7)
- C Jezebel and the leaders: instructions for exercise of royal power (vv. 8–10)
- C’ Jezebel and the leaders: the vineyard obtained through royal power (vv. 11–14)
- B’ Jezebel and Ahab: promise delivered (v. 15)
- A’ Ahab and Naboth: vineyard possessed (v. 16)⁵

⁴ There is a long discussion about the complex (as some regard it) history of the growth of chapter 21 until its final and canonical form. An updated bibliography and recent discussion about the sources and origins of the narrative is provided by Patrick T. Cronauer. He suggests that verses 1–16 were composed in the post-exilic, Persian period in Judah; hence, they are much later than verses 17–29. In this last part, he sees at least two major layers of tradition: an old “Elijah–Naboth Fragment” and a “Jehu–Apologetic Redaction.” See: Patrick T. Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite: A Source, Composition, and Redaction Investigation of 1 Kgs 21 and Passages in 2 Kings 9*, LHBOTS 424 (New York, NY, London, U.K.: T&T Clark, 2005). Jones and B. Long also explore the history of composition of 1 Kgs 21. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 349–351 and Long, *1 Kings*, 224. See also: Alexander Rofé, “The Vineyard of Naboth: The Origin and Message of the Story,” *VT* 38 (1988): 89–104; J. M. Müller, “The Fall of the House of Ahab,” *VT* 17 (1967): 307–324. Kitz observes that the problem with these diachronic views about chapter 21 is that they encourage “an artificial disconnect between the episode involving the vineyard and Elijah’s prophetic delivery of the word of God and YHWH’s subsequent forgiveness of a suitably penitent Ahab in vv. 27–29. This perspective yields the image of an intractable deity whose wrath is so absolute that it can neither be swayed nor mollified. Divine mercy then becomes an afterthought designed to meet the needs of a later redactor desperate to accommodate the historical reality of Jehu’s coup d’état during the reign of Ahab’s son Jehoram.” Anne Marie Kitz, “Naboth’s Vineyard after Mari and Amarna,” *JBL* 134 (2015): 531. For reasons already mentioned before, the present narrative analysis considers that text in its final form.

⁵ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 272.

Chapters 20 and 21 are chronologically related by the expression וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים (after these things) which refers to the events described in the previous chapter. The juxtaposition of these chapters helps to highlight the contrast between the merciful and complacent attitude of Ahab towards the Aramean king and his despotic and arbitrary approach towards Naboth.⁶

Ahab asks Naboth to sell his vineyard conveniently located beside the royal palace in Jezreel⁷ that he may have it as “a garden of vegetables”⁸ (1 Kgs 21:1). The king is willing either to pay its fair market value or trade for it by offering a better vineyard (v. 2). However, the vineyard is an ancestral inheritance (נַחֲלַת אֲבוֹתַי) and Naboth is not willing to pass on its title of ownership (v. 3). Naboth’s rejection is based on the expressed prohibition in the law to sell in a definitive and final way any Israelite land (Lev 25:23–28; Num 36:7–12). He sees the selling of the land of his ancestral inheritance as something profane in the eyes of God.⁹ The land of Israel belongs to Yahweh whose mercy allows the Israelites to live in it as temporary dwellers. For this reason, the land

⁶ The phrase סָר וָעָרָה (sullen and angry). They describe Ahab’s feelings in 1 Kgs 20:43 and 21:4.

⁷ The palace in Jezreel “may have served as the seasonal residence of the royal family.” Cogan, *I Kings*, 477. See more about Jezreel: H. G. M. Williamson, “Jezreel in the Biblical Texts,” *TA* 18 (1991): 72–92; Melvin Hunt, “Jezreel (Place),” *ABD* 3:850; J. Carl Laney, “Jezreel of Issachar,” *LBD Logos Edition*.

⁸ The phrase appears only in Deut 11:10 to describe Egypt. When this allusion is seen in connection with Ahab’s attempt to buy the ancestral inheritance of Naboth, as it was divided by Joshua during the conquest, the motif of a reversal of the Exodus/conquest motif may be in mind as an implied lack of respect for God’s will.

⁹ Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 795. This is clear from the use of חֻלְיָה, which literally means “profanation.” Seow suggests “it is a profanation for me because of the Lord” as the translation for the phrase חֻלְיָה לִי מִיְהוָה. Seow, “The First and Second Books of Kings,” 156. It is used in contexts where something is to be avoided at all cost (Josh 22:29; 1 Sam 12:23; 26:11; 2 Sam 23:17). See: Cogan, *I Kings*, 478. Beal highlights that the word inheritance here describes “covenanted land gifted by YHWH according to Israel’s tribes (Josh. 13:6-7).” Wray Beal, “Dancing with Death; Dancing with Life,” in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Kings*, ed. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, LHBOTS 670 (London, U.K.: T&T Clarke, 2020), 114.

should never be sold in perpetuity. In the jubilee year all land should revert to its original owner.¹⁰ Thus, it is clear that Naboth's rejection has religious grounds that Ahab should be aware of.¹¹

Although Ahab seems to ignore the issue of ancestral inheritance,¹² he apparently accepts the refusal but retreats to his house (probably his palace in Samaria),¹³ sullen and angry (סַר וְזָעַף) (v. 4). This incident shows that even the king had limited power when property (and God's law) was in question. The need for the murder of Naboth in the context of Jezebel's plan only confirms this fact. Ahab does not disguise his dissatisfaction (v. 5) and, prompted by Jezebel's inquiry, he recounts the incident (v. 6). Since the issue about the ancestral inheritance is not included in Ahab's account of Naboth's words, his refusal seems to be merely capricious and personal.¹⁴ Whether this is

¹⁰ See: Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 429–448; Stephen C. Russell, "Biblical Jubilee Laws in Light of Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Period Contracts," *ZAW* 130 (2018): 189–203. Yarah Amit, "The Jubilee Law—An Attempt at Instituting Social Justice," *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence*, ed. H.G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffmann, JSOTSup 137 (Sheffield, U.K.; Sheffield Academic, 1992), 47–59. David L. Baker, "The Jubilee and the Millennium: Holy Years in the Bible and Their Relevance Today," *Themelios* 24 (1998): 44–70.

¹¹ Fretheim observes that "the issue has to do with the very foundations of Israelite society and social well-being." Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 118. Stephen C. Russel disagrees that the Levitical legislation is the background of Naboth's rejection. According to him, this move from Kings to Leviticus, which he considers an unwarranted juxtaposition, goes against the narrative logics of chapter 21. In his article, he argues "that Naboth's refusal is better understood within the context of a much broader theme in ancient Israelite tribal life—what anthropologist Parker Shipton has called in another context 'ideologies of attachment,' connecting households, ancestors, and land." Stephen C. Russel, "Ideologies of Attachment in the Story of Naboth's Vineyard," *BTB* 44 (2014): 29. However, his proposal does not seem to be incompatible with the Levitical legislation and his divergence seems to be more in the realm of semantics. What he proposes is a sociological and anthropological explanation for Lev 25:23–28.

¹² Both Ahab and Jezebel never refer to the land as an ancestral inheritance but only as a tradeable vineyard. Even when Ahab is repeating Naboth's words, he conveniently ignores this "detail" (cf. v. 6).

¹³ Since letters are sent to Jezreel by Jezebel (v. 8), this seems to be the case.

¹⁴ Cronauer rightly remarks that "Naboth's answer could mean two things: He could not sell, or he would not sell. Ahab and Jezebel think that it was the second." Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite*, 127. Curiously, Yafe concludes that Naboth's refusal was based on "his animosity towards the king." Naboth was part of "aristocratic circles" which opposed many of royal policies, including the liberalization of the land. Thus, "the king's reluctance to take an active part in Naboth's trial was not his

intentional or not, Jezebel is incited to act and without saying how, she promises to “give” (נתן)¹⁵ the vineyard to Ahab (v. 6–7). Through official letters, she instructs the elders and nobles of Jezreel to call a fast¹⁶ and bring Naboth to the head of the people in a special assembly where two scoundrels should falsely accuse him of blaspheming against God and the king (vv. 8–10); a sin whose capital penalty was provided for by the law (Exod 22:27; Lev 24:1; Deut 13:10–11; 17:5–6; 22:24). The need of two witnesses and the proceeding of stoning the guilty outside the city are also prescribed in these texts. Thus, Jezebel seems to be aware of this legislation in her knowing how to pervert it to get the expected results.

As the elders and nobles¹⁷ collude with her to accomplish her design,¹⁸ the plan is successfully fulfilled and Naboth (v. 11–13) and his children are killed (cf. 2 Kgs 9).¹⁹ In

alleged feeble character but to his being torn between the loyalty he felt towards the members of his family and the obvious need to give the insolent citizen an appropriate punishment.” Naboth died because he “had cursed the king and deserved his punishment.” The trial was “perfectly fair.” Yafe, “The Case of Naboth’s Vineyard,” 301. The narrative as it stands is a product of later angered redactors with his alleged Baalism. To him Ahab “never ceased to be a faithful follower of YHWH.” Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite*, 297. The king was “a rather sensitive monarch who was very careful not to encroach on the rights and interests of his subjects.” Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite*, 300. Yafe’s reinterpretation of the biblical text clearly lies in speculative historical reconstruction.

¹⁵ The root is a *Leitwort* in the pericope occurring 10 times only from verses 1 to 15.

¹⁶ The call for a fasting is a fascinating aspect of Jezebel’s plan and shows how she is using the biblical tradition in her ruse against Naboth. According to Wray Beal, “Fasting was practiced at times of great national crisis (2 Chr. 20:3; Jer. 36:9; Esth. 4:16) and humble repentance (see vv. 27, 29; Lev. 16:29, 31), and thus the call to fast alerts the people to the critical nature of the gathering.” Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 274–275. On the meaning of the fast here see also: Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite*, 138–143. Also: H. A. Brongers, “Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-Biblical times,” in *Instruction and Interpretation: Studies in Hebrew Language, Palestinian Archeology, Biblical Exegesis*, ed. A. S. Van der Woude, OtSt 20 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1977), 1–21.

¹⁷ On the meaning of nobles and elder, see Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite*, 132–134.

¹⁸ Indeed, they were acting on behalf of the king once the letters were written in his name.

¹⁹ The killing of the descendants of a guilty person was sometimes connected with the *karet* penalty and in this context would provide the certainty that no one could claim the land later on. Thomas L. Brodie sees in the Stephen text a certain dependence on the accusation and stoning of Naboth. Thomas

his death, “the three requirements for a person’s felicity in his afterlife—the continuation of his line, this continuation on the ancestral property, and burial—all these were denied to Naboth.”²⁰

With Naboth killed as a guilty man, the way is open for Ahab to possess the land. Although there is no specific biblical legislation about the right of a king to confiscate the property of a guilty person executed, there are ANE parallels of the practice.²¹ One of the clearest parallels is found in the Amarna letter where the king Ibâl-Addu deflects “responsibility for the death and seizure of property belonging to a certain Yaphur-Lim”²² with two false witnesses. After being informed about Naboth’s death, Jezebel tells Ahab to get up and possess his vineyard for he was not alive but dead (v. 14–15). Ahab complies with Jezebel directives going down to Jezreel to take possess of Naboth’s land (v. 16).

Louis Brodie, “The Accusing and Stoning of Naboth (1 Kgs 21:8–13) as One Component of the Stephen Text (Acts 6:9–14; 7:58a),” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 417–432.

²⁰ Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics*, 150.

²¹ There is example of “royal confiscation of land in the case of a man found guilty and executed for treachery in ancient Syria.” Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 796. The acquisition of the land by Ahab is explained by Russel in terms of the hierarchy of states in land. Since “more than one individual or group at different levels in any property can hold different kinds of rights in the same piece of land ... [and] ... rights entail and are contingent upon responsibilities,” ... “Naboth was publicly shown to have failed in his duty to honor those with administrative rights in land.” Stephen C. Russell, “The Hierarchy of Estates in Land and Naboth’s Vineyard,” *JSOT* 38 (2014): 453–455. See also: Francis I. Andersen, “The Social-Juridical Background of the Naboth Incident,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 46–57.

²² Kitz, “Naboth’s Vineyard after Mari and Amarna,” 530. In this letter, “Inib-Sarri details the efforts of her husband, Ibâl-Addu, to incriminate the regional Mari delegate, Itûr-Asdû, in seditious activities. Ibâl-Addu’s maneuverings, which Inib-Sarri labels *karsîsu ikulû* (lit., “they ate his pieces,” that is, denounced him), are remarkably analogous to the steps Jezebel takes against Naboth. Kitz, “Naboth’s Vineyard after Mari and Amarna,” 529. She concludes that “on the basis of the evidence adduced, this study concludes that 1 Kgs 21 records an incident of *karst akâlu* without using the expression and suggests that Jezebel’s acts are not the product of authorial imagination but reflect features of the ancient Near Eastern practice of denunciation.” Kitz, “Naboth’s Vineyard after Mari and Amarna,” 529.

The reader comes to the end of this section without any clear indication of Ahab's involvement in Jezebel's ruse. As a whole Ahab's characterization in chapters 20–22 is much more complex and ambiguous than that found in chapters 17–19. Although Ahab's complicity is clear enough, the extent of his active involvement is not. However, some clues left by the narrator may help the reader to grasp the king's connivance with his wife. First, although Ahab initially accepts Naboth's refusal, his childish attitude may be calculated to initiate his wife's attention and reaction. This is the second time that Ahab's "briefing" sets Jezebel in motion (cf. 1 Kgs 19:1). Second, in his account to Jezebel, Ahab makes Naboth's refusal seem personal and capricious. Third, Wiseman observes that "the use of the king's royal dynastic, administrative or even personal seal to gain his authority would require Ahab's collusion."²³ If this is the case, the king would be aware of Jezebel's plan. David Noel Freedman adds that "Ahab manipulated the manipulative Jezebel. He knew exactly what he was doing and what the outcome would be. However, even if he was not aware of the plot, Jezebel was acting on behalf of his "house(hold)," so his entire "house" would be culpable.²⁴ Thus, in any case, Elijah's condemnation is correctly aimed at the king; the use of his name signet cannot be without his permission and knowledge."²⁵ Finally, his prompt action to take possession of the vineyard when informed that Naboth was not alive but dead (כי אין נבֹּת הִי כִי־מֵת) "for Naboth is not alive,

²³ Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 194.

²⁴ See, for instance, the issue regarding Saul's genocide on the Gibeonites at the beginning of 2 Sam 21.

²⁵ This affirmation is found in the editor notes on footnote 3 of Cogan, *1 Kings*, 486. In its turn, Cronauer inquires "Might this possibly be the evidence that Ahab was in fact not as 'naïve' as is generally thought with regard to this affair? Might Ahab have deliberately been controlling what Jezebel knew about the situation and thereby manipulating her action? Possibly!" Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite*, 127.

but dead”) (v. 15) without questioning the reason for this “coincidence” works against him demonstrating his complicity and approval, at the very least.

The section closes with the complete success of the husband-and-wife team. Ahab has what he wanted, and Jezebel is able to fulfill the promise. However, this “they lived happily ever after” moment is about to be interrupted in a drastic way. God is summoning Elijah to appear before Ahab, and the prophet does not carry good news. As will be seen in the next section, the sin of Ahab and Jezebel was not against Naboth only, but it was an insult to Yahweh. Samuel Wells observes that “the lesson of Naboth’s vineyard is that in the end there’s only one kind of injustice. All Ahab’s sins come down to one. The fundamental injustice is that Ahab fails to honor God. ... Failing to honor God is, in the end, the real injustice from which all other kinds come.”²⁶ And for their injustice, neither the king nor the queen would go unpunished. Instructively, Arthur Zannoni observes that “The Naboth incident provides an excellent preface to the *social message* of the prophets of a later period. Here we see Baalism and the Yahweh faith in opposition, not in a dramatic contest as on Mount Carmel, but in the field of social relationships.”²⁷

Elijah Announces the Doom of Ahab’s Dynasty (1 Kgs 21:17–29)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Co><ap> אל אליהו / התשבי	[<Su> דבר יהוה	[<Pr> יהי	[<Cj>]	WayX 1Kgs 21:17
	[<Pr> לאמר			InfC 1Kgs 21:17
	[<Pr> קום			ZIm0 1Kgs 21:18
	[<Pr> רד			ZIm0 1Kgs 21:18
[<Ob><ap> אהאב / מלך ישראל	[<Pr> לקראת			InfC 1Kgs 21:18

²⁶ Samuel Wells, “Forgiving Ahab: Naboth’s Vineyard and God’s Justice,” *CC* 130 (2013): 34.

²⁷ Arthur E. Zannoni, “Elijah: The Contest on Mount Carmel and Naboth’s Vineyard,” *SLJT* 27 (1984): 277. Many contemporary readings of the pericope focus on the social dimension of the story. For instance, Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 145; Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 211; Matthew Vandagriff, “A Modern Rendering of Naboth’s Vineyard,” *RE*116 (2019): 38–41.

[<PC> בשמרון]	[<Re> אשר]							NmCl	1Kgs	21:18
[<PC> בהנהגת נבות]	[<Ij> הנהגת]							NmCl	1Kgs	21:18
[<Co> שם]	[<Pr> ירד]	[<Re> אשר]						xQt0	1Kgs	21:18
[<PO> לרשתו]								InfC	1Kgs	21:18
[<Co> אליו]	[<Pr> דברת]	[<Cj>ו]						WQt0	1Kgs	21:19
[<Pr> לאמר]								InfC	1Kgs	21:19
[<Su> יהוה]	[<Pr> אמר]	[<Mo> כה]						xQtX	1Kgs	21:19
[<Pr> רצחת]	[<Qu>ה]							xQt0	1Kgs	21:19
[<Pr> ירשת]	[<Mo> גם]	[<Cj>ו]						WxQ0	1Kgs	21:19
[<Co> אליו]	[<Pr> דברת]	[<Cj>ו]						WQt0	1Kgs	21:19
[<Pr> לאמר]								InfC	1Kgs	21:19
[<Su> יהוה]	[<Pr> אמר]	[<Mo> כה]						xQtX	1Kgs	21:19
[<Co> במקום]								Defc	1Kgs	21:19
[<Ob> את דם נבות]	[<Su> הכלבים]	[<Pr> ללקו]	[<Re> אשר]					xQtX	1Kgs	21:19
[<Ob><ss> אתה]	[<Su> הכלבים]	[<Pr> ילקו]						ZYqX	1Kgs	21:19
[<Co> אליהו]	[<Su> אחאב]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]					WayX	1Kgs	21:20
[<PO> מצאתני]	[<Qu>ה]							xQt0	1Kgs	21:20
[<Vo> איבי]								Voct	1Kgs	21:20
[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]							Way0	1Kgs	21:20
[<Pr> מצאתי]								ZQt0	1Kgs	21:20
[<Ps> יען התמכרך]								InfC	1Kgs	21:20
[<Pr> לעשות]								InfC	1Kgs	21:20
[<Co> בעיני יהוה]	[<PC> רע]	[<Re>ה]						AjCl	1Kgs	21:20
[<Ob> רעה]	[<Co> אליך]	[<PC> מבי]	[<Is> הנהני]					Ptcp	1Kgs	21:21
[<Aj> אחריך]	[<Pr> בערתי]	[<Cj>ו]						WQt0	1Kgs	21:21
[<Aj> לאחאב]	[<Pr> הכרתי]	[<Cj>ו]						WQt0	1Kgs	21:21
[<Co> בקיר]	[<PC> משתין]							Ptcp	1Kgs	21:21
[<Lo> בישראל]	[<PC> עצור ועזוב]	[<Cj>ו]						AjCl	1Kgs	21:21
[<Aj><ap><cj><pa><ap> כבית ירבעם / בן נבט / ו / כבית בעשא / בן אחיה]	[<Pr> נתתי]	[<Cj>ו]						WQt0	1Kgs	21:22
[<Co> אל הכעס]								Ellp	1Kgs	21:22
[<Pr> הכעסת]	[<Re> אשר]							xQt0	1Kgs	21:22
[<Ob> את ישראל]	[<Pr> תחטא]	[<Cj>ו]						Way0	1Kgs	21:22
[<Su> יהוה]	[<Pr> דבר]	[<Co> גם לאיזבל]	[<Cj>ו]					WxQX	1Kgs	21:23
[<Pr> לאמר]								InfC	1Kgs	21:23
[<Lo> בחל יזרעאל]	[<Ob> את איזבל]	[<Pr> יאכלו]	[<Su> הכלבים]					XYqt	1Kgs	21:23
[<Lo> בעיר]	[<Aj> לאחאב]	[<PC> מת]	[<Re>ה]					Ptcp	1Kgs	21:24
[<Su> הכלבים]	[<Pr> יאכלו]							ZYqX	1Kgs	21:24
[<Cj>ו]								Defc	1Kgs	21:24
[<Lo> בשדה]	[<PC> מת]	[<Re>ה]						Ptcp	1Kgs	21:24
[<Su> עוף השמים]	[<Pr> יאכלו]							ZYqX	1Kgs	21:24
[<Aj> כאחאב]	[<Pr> היה]	[<Ng> לא]	[<Mo> רק]					xQt0	1Kgs	21:25
[<Pr> התמכר]	[<Re> אשר]							xQt0	1Kgs	21:25

	[<Pr> לעשות]				InfC 1Kgs 21:25
	[<Co> בעיני יהוה] [PC> רע] [Re>ה]				AjC1 1Kgs 21:25
	[<Su><ap> אשתו / איזבל] [Ob> אתו] [Pr> הסתה] [Cj> אשר]				xQtX 1Kgs 21:25
	[Mo> מאד] [Pr> יתעב] [Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 21:26
	[Co> אחרי הגלים] [Pr> ללכת]				InfC 1Kgs 21:26
	[Aj> ככל]				Ellp 1Kgs 21:26
	[Su> האמרי] [Pr> עשו] [Re> אשר]				xQtX 1Kgs 21:26
	[Co> מפני בני ישראל] [Su> יהוה] [Pr> הוריש] [Re> אשר]				xQtX 1Kgs 21:26
	[Pr> יהי] [Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 21:27
	[Ob> את הדברים האלה] [Su> אחאב] [Pr> כשמע]				InfC 1Kgs 21:27
	[Ob> בגדיו] [Pr> יקרע] [Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 21:27
	[Co> על בשרו] [Ob> שק] [Pr> ישם] [Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 21:27
	[Pr> יצום] [Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 21:27
	[Co> בשק] [Pr> ישכב] [Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 21:27
	[Mo> אט] [Pr> יהלך] [Cj>ו]				Way0 1Kgs 21:27
	[Co><ap> אל אליהו / התשבי] [Su> דבר יהוה] [Pr> יהי] [Cj>ו]				WayX 1Kgs 21:28
	[Pr> לאמר]				InfC 1Kgs 21:28
	[Pr> ראית] [Qu>ה]				xQt0 1Kgs 21:29
	[Co> מלפני] [Su> אחאב] [Pr> נכנע] [Cj> כי]				xQtX 1Kgs 21:29
	[Co> מפני] [Pr> נכנע] [Cj> יען כי]				xQt0 1Kgs 21:29
	[Ti> בימיו] [Ob> הרעה] [Pr> אבי] [Ng> לא]				xYq0 1Kgs 21:29
	[Co> על ביתו] [Ob> הרעה] [Pr> אביא] [Ti> בימי בנו]				xYq0 1Kgs 21:29

¹⁷ The word of God²⁸ happened to Elijah the Tishbite,

¹⁸ “Get up, go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, who is in Samaria.²⁹ Look, *he is*³⁰ in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down there to take possession of it.

¹⁹ And you shall say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “have you killed and taken possession?”’ You shall say to him: ‘Thus says the Lord: “in the place which the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth. The dogs will lick up your blood – indeed, yours!”’³¹

²⁸ The word יהי functions here as a transition marker and it is not translated here.

²⁹ The versions are divided regarding the translation of the relative clause אשר בשמרון which characterizes Ahab as king of Israel. Some of them bring a more literal rendering like ESV, NASB, LUT1912, and LEB (who is in Samaria), whereas others prefer a more interpretative approach like NKJV, ASV, and NET (who lives in Samaria) or NIV, NRSV, and NLT (who rules in Samaria). Since there is only one other passage where the same grammatical and syntactical scenario occurs in the BH (king of X is in) (cf. Josh 9:10), there is little to which this may be compared. In this case, only the broader narrative context can help to ascertain the nuance of the phrase. My choice here is to keep the literal meaning allowing the narrative context to determine the more precise nuance. See the discussion in the subsequent analysis.

³⁰ Added for readable purposes in English.

³¹ The independent pronoun is a superfluous element whose use is emphatic. Here it functions as an apposition for the pronominal suffix in דָּמָהּ. Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 508–509.

²⁰ And Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me my enemy?” And he said, “I have found you because you have given yourself over³² to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh.

²¹ ‘I am bringing³³ disaster to³⁴ you, and I will burn after you. And I will cut off from Ahab all males,³⁵ both bond and free in Israel.

²² And I will make your house as the house of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and the house of Baasha, son of Ahijah, because of³⁶ the provocation that you have provoked me and have caused Israel to sin.

²³ And also concerning Jezebel, Yahweh said, ‘the dogs will eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel.’

²⁴ The one belonging to Ahab who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field, the birds of the heavens will eat.”

²⁵ Surely,³⁷ there was no one like Ahab who had given himself over to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh whom³⁸ Jezebel his wife instigated him.

²⁶ And he acted very abominably by going after idols like all the Amorites had done whom Yahweh had expelled from before the children of Israel.

²⁷ Then,³⁹ when Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his flesh. He fasted, lay in sackcloth, and walked gently.⁴⁰

²⁸ Then, the word of Yahweh happened to Elijah the Tishbite,

²⁹ Have you seen that Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; in the days of his son, I will bring disaster on his house.

³² See: Koehler and Baumgartner, “מכר,” HALOT 582–583.

³³ Here the Qere מביא is preferable. The omission of א in the Ketib may be resulting from haplography.

³⁴ The interchange between אָל and עַל as complement of the valence בּוֹא + רָעָה is common in Jeremiah and 1, 2 Kings. For instance, the same phrase has אָל in 1 Kgs 21:21 and עַל in 1 Kgs 21:29 (cf. 1 Kgs 9:9; 14:10; Jer 17:18; 6:19). See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Evil in the Eyes of Yahweh](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

³⁵ Here “male” translates the expression מְשִׁתֵּן בְּקִיר which literally means “who urinates against a wall.”

³⁶ The OG, the Peshitta and the Targum have עַל instead of אָל. Although this is not the more common meaning of אָל, this is attested in other passages (e.g., 2 Sam 18:27; 21:1; Ezek 21:12; 22:13). Clines, “אָל,” *DCH* 1:269.

³⁷ רַק has affirmative force also in Gen 20:11; Deut 4:6; 1 Kgs 21:25; Ps 32:6; 2 Chr 28:10. Clines, “רַק,” *DCH* 7:550.

³⁸ The versions are divided regarding the sense of אֲשֶׁר here. In ESV, ASV, ERV, LEB, it introduces a relative clause. In NKJV, NASB, NCV, it introduces a subordinate clause with causal sense. Finally, the NIV, NRSV, NLT ignore it and leave it out.

³⁹ The word “then” reflects the transition signaled by the marker וְיָהִי.

⁴⁰ The word אֲזַח appears only 4 times in the OT besides 1 Kgs 21:27 (Gen 33:14; 2 Sam 18:5; Isa 8:6; Job 15:11). Here the noun has adverbial force.

Delimitation

The last unit of chapter 21 is introduced by the transition marker וַיְהִי (v. 17). In addition to that, new characters are introduced. At this point, Yahweh interacts with Elijah by commanding him to meet Ahab with an appalling message of judgment. From the perspective of the narrative time, the start of the new scene coincides with the end of the previous one. As Ahab gets up (קום) and goes down (ירד) to take possession (ירש) of Naboth's land (v. 16), Yahweh calls Elijah to get up (קום) and go down (ירד) to meet Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth where the king had gone down to take possession (ירד) (v. 18). The coincidence in the narrative time denotes that the divine sentence against Ahab is immediate.

The unit, which contains several echoes from indictment vocabulary found in Deuteronomy,⁴¹ closes with Yahweh addressing the prophet again. The divine discourse is introduced exactly in the same way as in v. 17. Indeed, verse 28 is an *ipsis litteris* repetition of verse 17. Thus, the unit finishes the same way it began (Yahweh speaks with Elijah: vv. 17–19; Elijah speaks with Ahab: vv. 20–27; Yahweh speaks with Elijah: vv. 28–29).

The following chapter interrupts again the Elijah's cycle and focuses on Ahab again. It is introduced with the temporal indication of three years of peace between Israel and Aram (1 Kgs 22:1). This peace is then interrupted by the battle in which Ahab would

⁴¹ Heller underlines that “the oracle also uses distinctively Deuteronomy language, paralleling Ahab's fate with that pronounced by Moses upon those who fail in their exclusive devotion to YHWH: ‘bringing evil’ (Deut 29:20; 31:17–21); ‘purging’ (Deut 13:6; 17:7, 12; 19:13, 19; 21:9, 21; 22:21–24; 24:7); ‘destroy’ (lit. ‘cut off;’ Deut 12:29; 19:1); ‘wrath’ (Deut 4:25; 9:18; 31:29; 32:16, 19, 21, 27); ‘to cause to sin’ (Deut 24:4). The judgment oracle sounds, both linguistically as well as theologically, like Moses as he speaks in Deuteronomy.” Heller, *The Characters of Elijah and Elisha*, 98

die. This chapter shows that Ahab's self-humiliation does not lead him to a life of obedience to God. He goes to the battle despite the fact he was alerted by Micaiah about the ultimate tragic result. However, although he dies as Micaiah had prophesied, his body is brought to Samaria. Although his blood is licked by dogs, he receives an appropriate burial. This does not indicate that Elijah's prophecy failed, but demonstrates God's mercy delaying his judgment overcame.

Text-Empirical Analysis

Elijah is introduced again in v. 17 with dramatic suddenness.⁴² At least two points demonstrate that Elijah has a new start here. First, the prophetic formula which puts the prophet in the move in chapters 17 and 18 reappears here (דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אֵלֶיָּהוּ) “the word of Yahweh happened to Elijah). Likewise, the formula is followed by divine imperatives which demand Elijah's departure from a place to another (קוּם רֵד לִקְרַאת אַחָזָב) “get up, go down to meet Ahab”) (v. 18). Indeed, the commandment is quite similar to that found in 1 Kgs 18:1 (הֲרָאֵה אֵלַי) “go, present yourself to Ahab”). Second, before 1 Kgs 21:17, Elijah is identified as הַתְּשׁוּבִי only in 1 Kgs 17:1 when he appears for the first time. He is reintroduced as such here in 21:17, 18 (also in 2 Kgs 1:3; 1:8; 9:36). Since Elijah is out of the spotlight in chapter 20, such reintroduction is made necessary. However, when read in the context of chapter 19 his identification as הַתְּשׁוּבִי combined with the reappearance of the prophetic form may indicate that Elijah is back on track again following Yahweh's commands and recovered from his moment of letdown. In this way,

⁴² Gray, *I & II Kings*, 392.

Elijah is not introduced as “someone unknown” as suggested by DeVries,⁴³ but as a prophet again. However, the lack of a command-and-compliance indicates a sensible difference between the characterization of Elijah in chapters 17–18 and 21. Whether this is an indication that Elijah is not the same is difficult to say, but such an inference should not be summarily dismissed.

Ahab is introduced as king of Israel in Samaria. The idea suggested by DeVries that Ahab is unknown to Elijah⁴⁴ at this point does not make any sense if the text is not considered a disorganized patchwork whose “true” sense is determined by speculative determination of sources and editorial layers in the historical arena. Indeed, several authors have pointed out that the mention of Ahab as *מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּשֶׁמְרוֹן* “king of Israel, who is in Samaria” is a subtle critic from the storyteller. It can be considered whether “a sneer on the part of a conservative at the crown possession of Samaria, with no Israelite tradition, as the basis of power of Ahab and his house” or a rebuke of his attempt “to reach for land and power beyond his own tribal holdings in Manasseh.”⁴⁵

The reason for the meeting is the delivery of a divine oracle to the king that is introduced by the prophetic formula *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* “thus says Yahweh”. The formula appears 11 times between 1 Kgs 17 and 2 Kgs 2:15 in the context positive and negative divine pronouncements. In the experience of Ahab, all occurrences are positive before he spared Ben-Hadad’s life (1 Kgs 20:13, 14, 28) and become negative afterwards (1 Kgs 20:42; 21:19; 22:11). In a certain sense, the experience of Ahab parallels that of Saul who

⁴³ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 257.

⁴⁴ DeVries, *1 Kings*, 257.

⁴⁵ Patricia J. Berlyn, “The Blood of Naboth,” *JBQ* 20 (1992): 241–242. See also: Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 251 and Cogan, *1 Kings*, 481.

after failing to kill a pagan king destined for destruction thereafter receives God's persistent disapproval (1 Sam 15).

The oracle consists of a question and sentence; a sequence seen in other parts of Scripture (Gen 3:8–19; 4:9–12). Verse 19 is structurally symmetrical:

A Divine imperative to Elijah: וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר “and you shall say to him,”

B Prophetic formula: כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה “thus says Yahweh”

C Question: הֲרָצַחְתָּ וְגַם־יָרַשְׁתָּ “have you killed and taken possession?”

A' Divine imperative to Elijah: וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר “and you shall say to him,”

B' Prophetic formula: כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה “thus says Yahweh”

C' Sentence: בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר לָקְחוּ הַכְּלָבִים אֶת־דַּם נָבוֹת יִלְקֹוּ הַכְּלָבִים אֶת־דַּמְךָ גַּם־ אֶתָּה “in the place which the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick up your blood – indeed, your!”

The divine discourse starts with two rhetorical questions whose ironic tone is evident: have you killed and taken possession (הֲרָצַחְתָּ וְגַם־יָרַשְׁתָּ) (v. 19)? Both questions set Ahab's sins in the context of covenantal moral failure by the breaking of at least six commandments: there shall not be for yourself other gods before me (Exod 20:3),⁴⁶ you shall not take the name of Yahweh in vain,⁴⁷ you shall not murder (Exod 20:13), you shall not steal (Exod 20:15), you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Exod 20: 16),⁴⁸ and you shall not covet (Exod 20:17). The positive answer to the divine inquiry forms the base for the subsequent sentence in the second part of verse 19.

⁴⁶ The king was having a “god” (the vineyard) before Yahweh (cf. Col 3:5).

⁴⁷ In a broader sense, as Israel's king, who was supposed to be a representative of YHWH, he was also breaking the third commandment by taking God's name/reputation in vain. The false witnesses may have taken God's name in vain in a narrower sense if they took oaths when they accused Naboth.

⁴⁸ When Ahab is telling Jezebel about the reason for his dissatisfaction, he distorts Naboth's rejection of his offer by omitting the factor of ancestral inheritance, giving the impression that Naboth's refusal is a matter of personal whim. In this sense, he is also bearing false witness.

The sentence is clearly based on the *lex talionis* principle. The punishment is proportional and parallel to the crime. Although Ahab would have a proper burial, the dogs would lick his blood like they had licked Naboth's blood (1 Kgs 21:19).⁴⁹ In antiquity, "dogs were scavengers who roamed the streets and alleys feeding on garbage."⁵⁰ The implication is clear: as Ahab's corpse is exposed to the dogs, he would not have a proper burial. The sentence is so startling that Yahweh adds the expression אֲנִי אֶמְצָא whose rhetorical force could be: "I am talking about you, you are hearing right!" In fact, such a sentence amounts to eternal punishment. Fritz observes that since the "transition to the realm of the dead was tied to the burial in a proper tomb, ... proper burial was a constitutive part of the Israelite notion of life and death."⁵¹ In this way, "improper burial was popularly thought to jeopardize an individual's afterlife. Israelites considered that a person's body ("flesh") and spirit were in principle inseparable. Thus,

⁴⁹ As I will discuss later, another aspect in which the punishment is parallel to the crime relates to the fact that Naboth was cut off from his descendants because, according to 2 Kgs 9:26, he was killed with his sons. Likewise, Yahweh would "cut off" (Hiphil of *k-r-t*) Ahab's posterity (1 Kgs 21:21) as was Naboth. This term (verb *karat*) is used in the Pentateuch for a divinely administered penalty that could go beyond death (Lev 20:2-3) in denying a wrongdoer an afterlife through his line of descendants (see Wold, "The Meaning of the Biblical Penalty *Kareth*", 251–255; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB3 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 457–460; Baruch J. Schwartz, "The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 13.

⁵⁰ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary, 1Ki 21:19*. The idea advanced by Othniel Margalith that the dogs who licked the king's blood were "temple-servants who practice self-mutilation and mutilation of other culminating in the eating of raw flesh and the drinking of blood" finds no support in the scholarship of Kings. See: Othniel Margalith, "The Kelābīm of Ahab" *VT* 34 (1984): 230. In the context of Elijah oracle, he concludes that "the words of the prophet 1 Kgs 21:19b may be understood to mean: 'If you condone the introduction of this cult, you will be its next victim: the hierodules will lick your blood as they licked the blood of the first victim, and bathe in it.' This interpretation would place the conflict between Elijah and Ahab in context with the spread of the Cybele-Dionysus cult from Asia Minor and Phoenicia in the 9th and 8th centuries B.C." Margalith, "The Kelābīm of Ahab," 231.

⁵¹ Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 214.

the individual was both spirit and flesh. Because of this, the dead corpse was very carefully treated, as it was still considered part of the person's existence."⁵²

After the divine command, the narrator goes straight to the interaction between the prophet and the king. Their interchange here recalls closely that of 1 Kgs 18:17–18, although here “my enemy” (אֹיְבִי) has a more personal tone than “troubler of Israel” (עֹבֵר (יִשְׂרָאֵל)). The first part of Elijah's answer points to Ahab's sin: the king is guilty of “giving himself over to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh” (הִתְמַכְרֶדָּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי) (v. 21). The “giving himself to do evil” appears only in connection with Ahab (1 Kgs 21:20, 25) and with the Israelite way of life which is pointed to as one of the causes for the fall of the northern kingdom in 2 Kgs 17:17.⁵³ On the one hand, the phrase gives a hint of the singular nature of Ahab's sinful disposition as the worst of any king before him, as the aside note of the narrator will confirm later on (cf. v. 25–26). On the other hand, when the phrase is applied collectively to the Israelites, the narrator of Kings highlights that leaders and people share the same responsibility for the final doom of Israel.

In verse 21, Elijah starts to convey the divine message as direct discourse.

Although not all elements of a covenant lawsuit (or covenant *rib*) are present in the

⁵² Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1Ki 21:19, Logos Edition. I am not implying any kind of conscious state of the dead which is contrary to the Hebrew view of the afterlife. In his systematic and comprehensive investigation of the nature, function, and purpose of the term Sheol, Eriks Galenieks concludes that it is “impossible to accept the view of a disembodied personal existence in Sheol [and that] the Hebrew Scripture provides no support for the idea that the term Sheol is somehow associated with one's after-death existence in the so-called underworld.” Eriks Galenieks, *The Nature, Function, and Purpose of the Term Sheol in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 2005), 620–621.

⁵³ The phrase “to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh” appears 56 times, mainly in Deuteronomy, Judges, 1 and 2 Kings and Chronicles to describe the sinful behavior of individuals, people and kings (Deut 4:25; Judg 2:11; 1 Sam 15:19; 1 Kgs 14:11; 1 Chr 21:6).

prophetic discourse of Elijah,⁵⁴ it is evident that his words express a pronouncement of judgment against a covenant breaker. In his role as a shepherd of Israel, Ahab's breaking of the covenant reaches its climax in his dealing with Naboth. This becomes even clearer in the narrator's evaluation where Ahab's sins are presented in the context of his covenant breaking.

Grammatical, syntactical, and narrative ambiguities are a distinct aspect of verses 21–26. The limits of Elijah's own words, the divine direct discourse and the narrator's asides are blurred by the lack of clear transitions. Furthermore, even within the divine discourse Ahab is referred sometimes to in the third person and other times directly in the second person. However, the text itself provides some important clues that help the reader to identify the different narrative voices in the pericope.

Elijah addresses Ahab directly (2ms) (20e) (וַיֹּאמֶר אֶחָאָב אֶל-אֵלֵיהֶוּ)

First transition: הִנֵּה (21a) – divine speech starts

Yahweh addresses Ahab directly (2ms) (21a-b) (אֱלֹהִים)

Yahweh addresses Ahab indirectly (3ms) (21c) (וְהִכָּרְתִי לְאֶחָאָב)

Yahweh addresses Ahab directly (2ms) (22) (וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-בֵּיתְךָ)

Yahweh addresses Jezebel indirectly (3ms) (23) (וְגַם-לְאִיזָבֶל)

Yahweh addresses Ahab indirectly (3ms) (24) (הַמֵּת לְאֶחָאָב)

Second Transition: כִּי – the narrator's aside note starts

Narrator addresses both Ahab and Yahweh indirectly (3ms) (25–26) (כִּי אֶחָאָב / יְהוָה בְּעֵינַי).

The interjection הִנֵּה introduces the divine speech in the first person. The content of the speech confirms that God is speaking now. He announces that the disaster (רָעָה) is imminent (מִבֵּיא הַנֶּגֶב).⁵⁵ The following clause has the valence בער + אחר (וּבְעַרְתִּי אַחֲרָיְךָ)

⁵⁴ Davidson provides an excellent survey on the divine covenant lawsuit motif in the canonical context including numerous examples. See: Richard M. Davidson, "The Divine Covenant Lawsuit Motif in Canonical Perspective," *JATS 21* (2010): 45–84.

⁵⁵ The use of הִנֵּה followed by a particle usually indicates that the verbal action is imminent (something is about to happen). This valence is very common in the HB (166x); e.g., Gen 6:13; Exod

which appears only in the oracles against Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:10), Baasha (1 Kgs 16:3), and Ahab (1 Kgs 21:21).⁵⁶ Indeed, the words of condemnation against the three kings are very similar making them a benchmark of evilness in the Northern monarchy (although Ahab exceeds them all). The expression בער + אָחַר is parallel to כרת in 21:21 and 14:10 suggesting that their meanings are related. In both cases, the expressions convey severe and irrevocable punishments from God. Curiously, when בער has the sense of exterminating as is the case here, the root is often used in the context of idolatry and murder.⁵⁷ It is important to remember that the use of כרת here reflects an irony used once in 1 Kgs 18:4 where it is Jezebel who with the royal license is cutting off the prophets of Yahweh.⁵⁸

Thus, the use of the clauses וּבְעַרְתִּי אַחֲרַיָּךְ “and I will burn after you” and וְהִכְרַתִּי לְאֶחָאָב מִשְׁתֵּינֵי בְקִיר “and I will cut off from Ahab all males” in parallel leaves no doubt that Ahab is about to face his final and irreversible condemnation resulting in the complete obliteration of his name. This is further clarified by the scope involved: every male (מִשְׁתֵּינֵי בְקִיר) free or bond (וְעֶזֶב וְעֹבֵד).⁵⁹ In other words, no one will escape this judgement.

14:17; 1 Kgs 14:10, etc. See Text-Fabric query results in section [“The Use of הנה Followed by Participle”](#) of my jupyter notebook for more examples.

⁵⁶ The OG translates the valence בער + אָחַר as ἐξέγειρω (“I will stir up, arouse”) in 1 Kgs 16:3 and as ἐγκαύσω ὀπίσω (I will burn after you). The Greek version of 1 Kings does not have 14:10.

⁵⁷ For instance, Deut 13:1–5. Helmer Ringgren establishes a direct connection between בער and כרת in the context of capital punishment. Helmer Ringgren, “בער,” *TDOT* 1:204–205.

⁵⁸ See discussion on 1 Kgs 18:4 to see the possible implications of the use of כרת here.

⁵⁹ The meaning of the pair וְעֶזֶב וְעֹבֵד has intrigued interpreters Koehler summarizes the main proposals about its meaning: “a) slaves and free men (Gesenius Thesaurus 1008a); b) those who are still under taboo and the pure (Schwally Krieg 59f; Brockelmann Heb. Syn. §17); c) controlled or obligated, and the liberated or independent (König Wb. 344a); d) military conscript and the one whose duty has been

In verse 22, the divine discourse changes to the second person again and Ahab is addressed directly. Now his judgement becomes even more graphic when his destiny is compared to Jeroboam and Baasha, figures not too far distant in the historical horizon. Their destiny is shared because they shared the same inclination to sin. The combination of provoking and causing to sin appears in the Bible only in connection with these three kings (1 Kgs 15:30; 16:2, 13, 26; 21:22).

The use of נָגַם in the beginning of verse 23 opens a window to address Jezebel's responsibility. Although her role will become more evident in the narrator aside in verses 25–26, by this point the reader is already aware of her role in the execution of the prophets of Yahweh (1 Kgs 18:4), her desire to kill Elijah (19:1–2), and her pivotal part in Naboth's assassination (1 Kgs 21:7–15). Although some indicate Ahab's harsh condemnation in Naboth's affair as a striking contradiction in the narrative since it is Jezebel who orchestrates all of the plan to have him killed and his land delivered to Ahab's hand,⁶⁰ her judgment is described in terms even more gruesome. In her case, dogs not only will lick up her blood, but eat her (הַכְּלָבִים יֹאכְלוּ אֶת-אִיזָבֶל)⁶¹ destroying her corpse, “a particularly disturbing prospect to the ancient mind.”⁶²

deferred (Seebass VT 25:182f); e) one under the protection of the family and one deprived of such protection, i.e. the member of a family and the unprivileged guest (Driver BZAW 103 (1968): 94); [and] f) one under the authority of the father and guardian and the one released from it, minor and adult (Kutsch VT 2 (1952): 57–69; Noth Könige 316; Willi F Schr. Zimmerli 540).” Koehler and Baumgartner, “עָצָר,” HALOT, 871.

⁶⁰ For instance, Jones, *1 Kings*, 351.

⁶¹ The prophecy specifies בְּחַל יִרְעָאֵל as the place where this would occur. The evidence from ancient versions and manuscripts is divided at this point. A few Hebrew manuscripts with Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate bring בְּחַלֶּק (in the of ground) connecting her death directly with Naboth. If the more difficult reading is preferable in this passage, לֵךְ is still the more probable reading.

⁶² Gene Rice, *Nations Under God: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Kings*, ITC (Grand Rapids, MI; Edinburgh: Eerdmans; Handsel, 1990), 179.

Ahab comes back to the spotlight in verse 24 but the divine discourse (via Elijah) addresses him in an impersonal way again (3ms). This sentence advances the idea that all Ahab's household would face the same punishment having their corpses exposed to natural elements and scavengers and thereby not having proper burials. This is an *ipsis litteris* repetition of 1 Kgs 14:11 and 16:4 where respectively Jeroboam and Baasha are the subjects of the same condemnation (לְאַחָאָב בְּעִיר יֵאָכְלוּ הַכְּלָבִים וְהַמָּת בְּשָׂדֵה יֵאָכְלוּ הַמָּת עֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם “the one belonging to Ahab who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field, the birds of the heavens will eat”). The reality of divine condemnation was reinforced with historical precedents that most likely were well known by Ahab.

At this point, Elijah's discourse which conveys the divine message is interrupted in verses 25–26 by a narrator's aside about the nature of Ahab's apostasy. When the reader reaches this point, it is evident that Elijah's words to Ahab are a more detailed version of the summary of the divine message given to him in verse 19 before his departure to meet the king. It is not necessary to assume that this expansion results from Elijah's own initiative and “his message is not what Yahweh instructed him to give.”⁶³ In his commentary on 1 Kings, Long proposes that Elijah “assumes the divine voice and in the first person saying commences to pass judgment on Ahab.”⁶⁴ It is really difficult not to see Elijah as a false prophet if he speaks in first person what God did not intend him to speak (cf. Deut 18:20). If God previously sent an expanded version of Ahab's sentence or

⁶³ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 256.

⁶⁴ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 256. This is also the position of Kissling who affirms that Elijah is changing both content and form of the divine sentence. Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, 131.

if he inspired the prophet at the spot is not declared in the text, but this silence does not imply a “prophet who is going beyond his directive.”⁶⁵

The adverb *וְכֵן*, which opens the narrator aside in verses 25–26, has affirmative force in this context. In a rare move, the narrator validates the terrible sentence against Ahab adding that his iniquity exceeds that of all his predecessors including Jeroboam and Baasha. This aside note shares the same themes and phraseology found in the narrator first’s evaluation in 1 Kgs 16:30–33. Regarding the practice of evil in the eyes of Yahweh, he is worse than any king before him (1 Kgs 16:30). However, whereas 1 Kgs 16:31 compares Ahab to Jeroboam and Baasha (previous benchmarks of evil in the northern monarchy), in chapter 21 he is compared to the Amorites. Thus, “the narrative must go outside of Israel to find a comparison bad enough: it is the Amorites, the ones so evil they merited expulsion from the land. The inference is that Ahab and his ilk are justifiably ‘driven out.’”⁶⁶ It is ironic that Israelites under God’s command took the land and divided it up in ancestral parcels, one of which Naboth inherited. Now, Ahab is annulling the divine apportionment of the land

Following his previous evaluation in chapter 16, the narrator affirms that Ahab is guilty of idolatry and unlawful marriage. The nominal clause *לֹא־הָיָה כָּאֲחָאָב* “there was no one like Ahab” in verse 25 is followed by two relative clauses introduced by *אֲשֶׁר*. The first one confirms the words of Elijah in verse 20 repeating them: *הִתְמַכְּרָה לְעֵשׂוֹת הָרַע* *בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה* “you have given yourself over to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh” (v. 20) and

⁶⁵ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 256.

⁶⁶ Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 261.

הַהוּה לְעֵשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה “[who] have given yourself over to evil in the eyes of Yahweh” (v. 25). Certainly, to do evil involves the practice of idolatry as mentioned in verse 26, but it encompasses other sinful acts like the murder of Naboth and the usurpation of his land. Instructively, according to Col 3:5, covetousness is a form of idolatry.

The second relative clause highlights the influence of Jezebel on the king (אֲשֶׁר-אִתּוֹ “whom Jezebel his wife instigated him”). Some versions interpret the second אֲשֶׁר as causal like the NKJV: “Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.”⁶⁷ Although Jezebel is not annulled if the clause is relative, the causal sense puts more weight on her responsibility. The ambiguous nature of the syntax may be intentional leading the reader to engage in judging the king and queen’s acts. Likewise, Balaam stirs up the Moabites (with the Midianites) to entice the Israelites into idolatry through sexual immorality (Num 31:36 cf. Num 25). In the book of Revelation, there appears to be a connection between an antitypical Balaam and Jezebel (Rev 2:14–15, 20–23).

At the first glance, the narrator’s evaluation seems to form a point of tension in the text once he denounces idolatry instead of Ahab’s dealings with Naboth. However, very often in Scripture there is a close connection between the sin of idolatry and the failure in meet ethical demands.⁶⁸ Such a connection is made evident in the blending of these two elements in the phrase “doing evil in the eyes of Yahweh.”

⁶⁷ Other examples are CSB, NASB, NCV. The ESV, LEB, RSV translate it as a relative clause (whom, whose). The NIV, NET, NRSV simply ignore it.

⁶⁸ Idolatry and social injustice are integral parts of an oracle of judgment in the Prophets.

The last subunit of this section starts in verse 27, and it is introduced by the transitional marker וַיְהִי. The storyteller brings the reader to the narrative time and again through the temporal clause כְּשָׁמַע אַחָאָב אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה “when Ahab heard these words”. This final paragraph presents the king’s reaction to Elijah’s message. Surprisingly, whether motivated by remorse or pure terror in face of the divine oracle, Ahab humbles himself before Yahweh. His actions are described in five short clauses (בְּגָדָיו וַיִּשֶׁם־שָׂק עַל־בְּשָׂרוֹ וַיֵּצֹם וַיִּשְׁכַּב בְּשָׂק וַיִּהְלֵךְ אֵט: וַיִּקְרַע) “he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his flesh. He fasted, lay in sackcloth, and walked gently.”). There is an interesting parallel between Ahab and Hezekiah at this point. When Hezekiah recovered from his sickness through a direct divine intervention, he committed to “walk carefully” (דְּדָה) (Isa 38:15 cf. 2 Kgs 20:1–11). In the context, he seems to express his desire to use in the best way possible the additional fifteen years graciously added by Yahweh to his life. These actions describe mourning practices in other passages (e.g., Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 12:15-17; 2 Kgs 6:28-30). Even though the king’s change in disposition is either short lived or partial in nature (as chapter 22 will show), it is enough to avert temporarily his condemnation.

Another surprising aspect of this last subunit is the return of the word of Yahweh to Elijah (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אֵלִיָּהוּ הַתִּשְׁבִּי לֵאמֹר) “then, the word of Yahweh to Elijah the Tishibite”) (v. 28). The repetition of the word הַתִּשְׁבִּי “the Tishibite” reinforces the idea that this identification serves other narrative purposes than merely reintroducing the prophet. Perhaps, it highlights that Elijah is “back to business” receiving divine oracles as he was in chapter 17 where the same word identifies him.

In his address to Elijah, Yahweh endorses Ahab's humbling (כִּי־נִכְנַע אַחָאָב מִלְפָּנַי) "because Ahab has humbled himself before me"). Although no word for repentance appears here, his actions are accepted by God as a genuine signal of humiliation and change. As a result, God promises to postpone his judgment until the time of his son.

The divine oracle seems to have two objectives. From the reader's perspective, it clarifies why Elijah's prophecy is not fulfilled in the way it was first delivered.⁶⁹ As chapter 22 records, although dogs lick up his blood, the king is properly buried. Further, the total destruction of his offspring does not occur until the time of the coup orchestrated by Jehu in 2 Kgs 9, 10. Thus, as its fulfillment depends on the human response, the prophecy has a conditional nature.⁷⁰ Fretheim observes that "the prophetic word about the future retains a certain openness to events, in this case, Ahab's penitence. God has not strait-jacketed himself to fulfill a prophetic word in precise terms. God remains open to change and adjustment in view of how people will respond and what the course of history will present (see also at 2 Kings 20:1–7)."⁷¹

⁶⁹ In his article Benjamin Foreman summarizes the five main positions regarding the apparent discrepancy between the prophecy and its fulfillment: 1. The prophecy is not location-specific; 2. The prophecy was not fulfilled; 3. Ahab's blood was licked up by dogs in Jezreel; 4. Elijah's prophecy was modified due to its conditional nature; 5. The prophecy was fulfilled generally, not specifically, and 1 Kings 21:19 has been misunderstood (Provan proposes that מִקֹּדֶם here means "in place of" or "instead of"). Benjamin Foreman, "The Blood of Ahab: Reevaluating the Ahab's Death and Elijah's Prophecy," *JETS* 58 (2015): 261–264. I would add to this list the historical critical suggestion exemplified by Jones who thinks that as the text was growing through the different layers of tradition, the editors manipulated the text so that it would fit the historical developments. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 352. Foreman himself proposes a different solution: Naboth was tried and executed in Samaria. Foreman, "The Blood of Ahab," 264. The problem with his solution is that although the letters were sent from Samaria, the narrative seems to be clear that Naboth's trial and execution was local. If Naboth's had been tried and executed in Samaria by the king as the author suggests, verse 14 would not make sense.

⁷⁰ Robert Chisholm, "When Prophecy Appears to Fail, Check Your Hermeneutic," *JETS* 53 (2010): 563; Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 130–131; Patterson and Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 796; Cogan, *1 Kings*, 483.

⁷¹ Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 120.

The second objective of the divine oracle is to address Elijah himself. The oracle is not public nor even directed to Ahab. Yahweh speaks to Elijah only (הֵרָאִיתָ). Why Elijah needs this “explanation” is not declared in the text. Therefore, the reader can only infer. Was Elijah unsatisfied with Ahab’s reaction? Was he skeptical about the king’s external signs of humiliation? Was the prophet perplexed? Was Elijah as Jonah “sitting” waiting for God’s justice to be manifested in Ahab’s life? In any case, in his speech to Elijah, God expresses a condescending attitude towards his prophet. Perhaps, God is showing that the thirst for justice cannot be surpassed by the divine impetus of mercy.

Narrative Features

Three major narrative features of the pericope are worth mentioning here. The first one is the use of irony which is reflected in the total reverse of Ahab’s condition. While he is going down to take possession of Naboth’s land, Yahweh meets him with the message that he will suffer Naboth’s same destiny. His punishment is proportional; the dogs will also lick up his exposed corpse in the same place where they have licked up Naboth’s blood (1 Kgs 21:19). The comparison with the Amorites who had been driven out by Israel from the land also implies that Ahab will be expelled from the land as was Naboth through Jezebel’s scheme.

The second important narrative feature in this unit is the rare interference of the narrator whose voice is heard in verses 25 and 26. Usually, biblical narrators prefer to be behind the curtains and guide the reader through the way in which the story is told. In this aside note the narrator makes clear that Ahab has reached the pinnacle of apostasy in the northern monarchy, whose parallel is found only outside Israel.

The last aspect to be mentioned here is the extensive use of narrative parallels. These correspondences connect Ahab with Jeroboam and Baasha and establish grounds for comparison not only for the sins they committed but for the sentences they share.

Structure

The section is organized in a symmetrical structure the central part of which highlights the punishment and evil of Jezebel and Ahab.

- A Yahweh's word to Elijah (21:17–19)
- B Elijah's words to Ahab (21:20–22)
- C The punishment of Jezebel and Ahab's house (21:23–24)
- C' The evil of Jezebel and Ahab (21:25–26)
- B' Ahab's reaction to Elijah's words (21:27)
- A' Yahweh's word to Elijah (21:28–29).⁷²

One of the most significant aspects of this arrangement is the relationship between A and A.' In the first part, Elijah is called to minister in God's behalf so that Ahab could be warned about the consequences of his decision to turn his back to Yahweh. In the second part, God somehow is ministering to Elijah. Since there is no mission or message to be delivered, the divine communication is for Elijah's sake only (although the reason is not expressed). At this point, Yahweh reveals to him how his mercy (a postponed judgment) is blended with justice (a sentence which is not cancelled).

The same interchange between ministering to and being ministered by appears in chapter 17 where Elijah, at the same time, is ministered by the widow and ministers to her through the multiplication of food and the revival of her son. The unexpected way chapter 21 closes parallels with the unexpected way God reveals himself to Elijah in

⁷² Walsh, *1 Kings*, 328.

chapter 19. God acts surprisingly teaching his prophet about his dealing with humanity and his nature as a sovereign, just, and merciful God.

Fifth Scene: From the Wayside to the Palace (2 Kgs 1)

Preliminary Observations

As it is widely known, the division between 1 and 2 Kings is not original and was introduced in the codices of the OG around BC 200. Such a division did not appear in the Masoretic tradition before the sixteenth century when in the Bomberg Rabbinic Bible (Venice, 1516) the following marginal note appeared “*ka`n mathîlîn hallô`ázîm sēper mēlākî(m) rēbî`î*, ‘Here the foreign speakers (i.e., non-Jews) begin the fourth book of Kings.’”⁷³ This Septuagintic arrangement interrupts the account of Ahaziah’s kingdom that starts in 1 Kgs 22:52 with his introductory regnal formula.

However, the OG’s ordering is not devoid of logic. The regnal introductory formula in 1 Kgs 22:51 is immediately followed by the theological assessment of the narrator in verses 53 and 54 that close the book of 1 Kings. At this point, the reader may wonder what the consequences of Ahaziah’s apostasy would be, especially having in mind the impending doom on Ahab’s offspring. The book of 2 Kings starts answering this issue. As his narrative unfolds in 2 Kgs 1, two practical consequences are revealed. First, the Israelite empire, which had been expanded during Omri’s and Ahab’s dominion, starts to collapse with the rebellion of Moab (2 Kgs 1:1), which is archeologically attested.⁷⁴ Second, the king gets seriously ill as a result of a fall from his

⁷³ Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 11 (New Haven, CT; London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 2008), 22.

⁷⁴ The Mesha inscription provides a formidable glimpse on the Israelite and Moabite conflict during the Omride area. See: Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from*

upper room in the palace in Samaria (2 Kgs 1:2a). Thus, the rebellion and the imminent death of the newly crowned king push the Northern kingdom to its greatest crisis in recent years.

Nevertheless, the main focus of chapter 1 is not on the description of the consequences of the king's sins but on a vivid illustration of his apostasy. His faithlessness becomes evident in two distinct ways: in his open engagement in idolatry – Ahaziah consults a foreign god instead the true God of Israel (2 Kgs 1:2b)⁷⁵ and in his persistent rejection of Yahweh as he attacks Elijah who is sent to rebuke him (2 Kgs 1:9–16). Chapter 1 closes with a modified version of a royal epilogue (2 Kgs 1:17) and the concluding summary of Ahaziah's reign (2 Kgs 1:18).

In his last solo appearance, Elijah is facing the Omride household again. As before, his uninvited appearance is sudden and recalls closely his intervention in 1 Kgs 21. The prophet has no good news to tell the king (2 Kgs 1:3–4). Although Ahaziah's reaction is not wise, it is not surprising. He tries to silence the prophetic voice through military strength (2 Kgs 1:9–16), which is something often viewed in the biblical tradition of Samuel and Kings. But this time, the king does not succeed, and Elijah's response is literally fiery.

Critical scholars like Jones have pointed to some signs of discontinuity between the first (v. 2–8) and second (v. 9–16) episodes concluding that both stories are independent of each other. However, their arguments are far from convincing. For

the Biblical Period (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 389–418.

⁷⁵ In this particular, Leithart highlights how the house of Ahab intensifies the wickedness and hypocrisy of the house of Jeroboam. He says, “Jeroboam sets up golden calves and worships them, but when his son gets sick, he sends his wife to visit a prophet of Yahweh (1 Kgs. 14).” Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 283.

instance, Jones affirms that there is two different pictures of Elijah here: in one the prophets transmits a message to the kings and in the other he destroys his opponents. It is only natural that the prophet acts differently when circumstances are different. In the first moment he is simply delivering a message, in the second he is being attacked. Jones also puzzled by the fact that Ahaziah, who had already received Elijah's word through messengers (v. 6), now wants to consult the prophet through military personnel. However, what is really unclear is why Jones would assume that military personal was sent by the king with the purpose of consulting the prophet since nowhere does the text make this suggestion even implicitly. That a king would send personnel to consult Elijah is highly improbable. According to the tone of the passage, they come to Elijah simply to take him to Ahaziah.

Therefore, since there are no actual textual signs of discontinuity between the two episodes the following analysis will treat them as being part of the same broader scene. Indeed, each episode in the chapter is connected through a singular plot which starts with the king's apostasy description by tell in 1 Kgs 22:51–53 and show in 2 Kgs 1:2. His apostasy triggers God's intervention through his prophet (2 Kgs 1:3–8) that in its turn prompts the king to action (2 Kgs 1:9–16). The death of Ahaziah is presented as a direct punishment for his apostasy as predicted by Elijah (2 Kgs 1:17–18). Leithart insightfully recognizes a pattern between Ahab and Jeroboam's family noting that "fathers sin and doom their dynasties to extinction; an older son lives and dies without incident, and the judgment falls on a younger son."⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Leithart, *1 & 2 Kings*, 167.

The King Ahaziah Inquires Baal-Zebub (2 Kgs 1:1–2)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Ti> אַחַב מוֹת אַחַב] [<Co> בִּישְׂרָאֵל] [<Su> מוֹאָב] [<Pr> יִפְשַׁע] [<Cj>וַ]	WayX 2Kgs 01:01
[<Co><sp> בַּעַד הַשְּׂבָכָה / בַּעֲלִיתוֹ] [<Su> אַחַזְיָה] [<Pr> יִפֹּל] [<Cj>וַ]	WayX 2Kgs 01:02
[<PC> בַּשְּׂמֵרוֹן] [<Re> אֲשֶׁר]	NmC1 2Kgs 01:02
[<Pr> יִחַל] [<Cj>וַ]	Way0 2Kgs 01:02
[<Ob> מַלְאָכִים] [<Pr> יִשְׁלַח] [<Cj>וַ]	Way0 2Kgs 01:02
[<Co> אֱלֹהִים] [<Pr> יֹאמֵר] [<Cj>וַ]	Way0 2Kgs 01:02
[<Pr> לָכוּ]	ZIm0 2Kgs 01:02
[<Co><ap> בַּבַּעַל זְבוּב / אֱלֹהֵי עַקְרוֹן] [<Pr> וְדַרְשׁוּ]	ZIm0 2Kgs 01:02
[<Co> מַחֲלֵי זֶה] [<Pr> אַחִיָּה] [<Cj> אַם]	xYq0 2Kgs 01:02

¹ And Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

2 And Ahaziah fell through the lattice⁷⁷ in his upper room,⁷⁸ which was in Samaria, and he became sick. And he sent messengers and said to them, “Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, if I will survive this illness.”⁷⁹

Delimitation

The opening of 2 Kings is in some degree surprising. At a first glance, it seems completely out of place since Ahaziah does not deal with Moab at any given time.

⁷⁷ The word שְׂבָכָה appears only 16 times in the HB. Although its meaning as an architectural feature is not fixed with certitude, “most commentators think the reference is to a trellis or screenlike structure over a window or the open area of the roof.” Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 24.

⁷⁸ Some versions use “upper chamber” (e.g., ESV, NASB, NET). Scholars are divided concerning the better translation here. On the one hand, Jones affirms that “the palace in Samaria had an upper storey, which was more extensive than the roof-chamber of 2 Kg. 4:10; the translation ‘roof chamber’ offered here in *NEB* is thus inadequate.” Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 377. On the other hand, Gray says that “the ‘upper chamber’ (*dliyyd*) was often little more than a shelter for privacy on the flat roof of an oriental house, as in the story of Elisha and the Shunammite lady (4.10).” Gray, *I & II Kings*, 412. According to Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, “the excavations in Samaria have demonstrated that the royal palace at this time did have a second story. The style of architecture featured open areas, and the lattice described here would have been a wooden grid offering both shade and air circulation. Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 2 Kgs 1:2.

⁷⁹ The valence חיה plus מן occurs only a few times in the HB. Curiously, when human healing is in view, the expression appears only in “inquiry” contexts like here (cf. 2 Kgs 8:8, 9; Isa 38:9). In Gen 19:32, 34 the expression conveys the idea of preserving offspring and in Neh 3:34 it relates to restoration of architectural structures.

Indeed, the last mention of Moab in the canon is made in 2 Sam 8:12 when the Moabites suffer defeat at the hand of David. The rebellion of Moab is picked up again only in 2 Kgs 3:5 where 2 Kgs 1:1 is repeated. However, T. R. Hobbs accurately observes that the same phraseology works as editorial introduction found in other places in the Deuteronomist History (Josh 1:1; Judg 1:1; 2 Sam 1:1). As in these other places the verse “serves the wider purpose of closing off one era in the history of Israel, and opening up another.”⁸⁰

After this editorial note which also provides the historical framework of Ahaziah’s short reign, the narrator retakes the main narrative line with the WayX וַיִּפֹּל. This small pericope provides the reason by which Ahaziah seeks Baal-Zebub and, in its turn, explains why God intervenes in verse 3. The following episode is opened by the WXQt clause וַיִּמְלֹךְ יְהוָה דָּבָר that breaks the sequence of wayyqtol verbs. Here the focus leaves Ahaziah and turns to Elijah as he receives God’s instructions to address the king’s apostasy.

Text-Empirical Analysis

It does not seem coincidental that the editorial note revealing the rebellion of Moab against the successor of Ahab after his death comes right after the theological evaluation of Ahaziah in 2 Kgs 22:52–54. Ahaziah does not rule much longer than one year, probably from 853 to 852 BC.⁸¹ From this short rulership, nothing more than the

⁸⁰ T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, WBC 13 (Dallas: Word, 1985), 4.

⁸¹ See Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers*, 217. Wray Beal observes that “Ahaziah’s two-year rule is tabulated by the non-accession-year system (in which a dying monarch’s last year and the new monarch’s first year are each counted as a full year). In real time, his rule is just over one year, starting sometime in 853 BC, Ahab’s last year.” Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 293. See also Miller, *First and Second Kings*, 307.

king's apostasy is highlighted by the narrator in his evaluation. He does evil in the eyes of Yahweh (וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה "he did evil in the eyes of Yahweh") and follows his father's steps (וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּדַרְךְ אָבִיו "he walked in the way of his father") by serving and worshipping Baal (וַיַּעֲבֹד אֶת־הַבַּעַל וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ "he served Baal and bowed down to him). He is also compared to Jeroboam and through his sins, he also provokes Yahweh according to all that his father did (וַיִּכְעַס אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה אָבִיו "he provoked Yahweh God of Israel according to all that his father did") (1 Kgs 22:53–54).

One surprising aspect of the narrator's evaluation is his view of the role that according to him Jezebel plays in Ahaziah's life. The narrator observes that the king went in the way of his father and mother (וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּדַרְךְ אָבִיו וּבְדַרְךְ אִמּוֹ "and he went in the way of his father and in the way of his mother"). Although the phrase "to go in the way of his father" is found in other places in the HB indicating how a king followed the way of his father (1 Kgs 15:26; 22:43; 2 Kgs 22:2; 2 Chr 17:3; 20:32; 34:2), this is the only canonical reference to a king going in the way of his mother.⁸² This gives an important clue about the decisive influence of Jezebel on the Omride dynasty.

Linguistically, the rebellion of Moab mentioned after the death of Ahab is parallel to the revolt of Israel against Judah after the death of Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 12:19; 2 Chr 10:19). Although the verb פָּשַׁע is more commonly used in the context of moral sin, it is used to refer to a rebellion of a nation against an oppressor as well. Curiously enough, as the Southern king Joram, son of Jehoshaphat, who is married with Ahab's daughter walks

⁸² See Text-Fabric query results in section "[In the Way of His Mother](#)" of my jupyter notebook.

in the way of the kings of Israel doing evil in the eyes of Yahweh, Edom also rebels (פּשַׁע) against Judah (2 Kgs 8:20).

After this note, the narrator goes on to illustrate in a practical way the apostasy of Ahaziah. As the result of a fall from his upper room the king becomes sick and sends messengers to inquire of the god of Ekron, Baal-Zebub (2 Kgs 1:1). The verb דָּרַשׁ (“to inquire”) is often used in the context of seeking God/gods for direction and advise.⁸³ The valence דָּרַשׁ + בָּ which appears in verse 2 is restricted in what is known as Deuteronomistic literature to unlawful consultations (cf. 1 Sam 28:7).⁸⁴

The choice of the god of Ekron is intriguing and the reason is not explicitly found in the text. The city is part of the Philistine Pentapolis and is located fifty-five miles (88.5 km) southwest of Samaria.⁸⁵ In any case, the selection of the city testifies about the ongoing influence of foreign religion in Israel during the Omride dynasty. Much discussion about Baal-Zebub has been carried out in the history of interpretation of this passage. Following the OG, which translates בְּעַל זְבוּב as *μύαν θεόν*, “fly god”, some scholars in the past have suggested that the fly god could be recognized by its healing attributes or its capacities to control plagues.⁸⁶ However, since no evidence has suggested the existence of a fly god in Ekron, today there is general agreement that the name is a

⁸³ Siegfried Wagner, “דָּרַשׁ,” *TDOT* 3:293–307; David Denninger, “דָּרַשׁ,” *NIDOTTE* 1:993–999.

⁸⁴ See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Valence of the Verb דָּרַשׁ](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

⁸⁵ David Tasker, “1 Kings, 2 Kings” in *Andrews Bible Commentary* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2020), 500.

⁸⁶ A good review of the literature about Baal-Zebub is provided by W. Herrmann. See: W. Herrmann, “Baal Zebub,” *DDD* 154–156.

caconym for the original Baal-Zebub, “Baal the Prince.”⁸⁷ In the Baal myth written in Ugaritic, Baal (bʿl/baʿlu) is characterized as “prince” (zbl/zebul).⁸⁸ Thus, it seems that the writer of 2 Kgs 1 alters the final consonant to make a caconym. Although there is no clarity about the reason of his choice, it seems correct to suppose that the reason behind the “inquiry” is not restricted to the knowledge about what will happen but might include the hope to be healed. At any rate, the point of the narrative is not speculating about why the king makes inquiries of Baal-Zebub but rather why he did not inquire of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Narrative Features

There is no significant narrative feature to be highlighted here. What could be mentioned is the use of the desertion of Moab as a sign of the arrival of a new era. Such a usage appears in other places and may reflect a convention in what is known as Deuteronomistic literature.

Structure

There are no significant structural signs in this pericope.

Elijah Meets the King’s Messengers (2 Kgs 1:3–8)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Co><ap> אל אליה / התשבי	[<Pr> דבר	[<Su> מלאך יהוה	[<Cj>ו]			WXQt 2Kgs 01:03
	[<Pr> קום					ZIm0 2Kgs 01:03
	[<Pr> עלה					ZIm0 2Kgs 01:03

⁸⁷ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 294–95. Walter A. III Maier, “Baal-Zebub (Deity),” *ABD* 1:554. In Ugaritic literature Baal-Zebub is often distinguished as the lord of the underworld. Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 2 Kgs 1:2.

⁸⁸ See the original text of the Baal myth transliterated in Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraus, 2009), 159–162.

[<Ob> מלאכי מלך שמרון]	[<Pr> לקראת]						InfC 2Kgs 01:03
[<Co> אלהם]	[<Pr> דבר]	[<Cj>ו]					WIm0 2Kgs 01:03
[<PC> בישראל]	[<Su> אלהים]	[<NC> אין]	[<Cj> מבלי]	[<Qu>ה]			NmCl 2Kgs 01:03
[<PC> הלכים]	[<Su> אתם]						Ptcp 2Kgs 01:03
[<Co><ap> בבעל זבוב / אלהי עקרון]	[<Pr> לדרש]						InfC 2Kgs 01:03
[<Mo> לכן]	[<Cj>ו]						MSyn 2Kgs 01:04
[<Su> יהוה]	[<Pr> אמר]	[<Mo> כה]					xQtX 2Kgs 01:04
[<Fr> המטה]							CPen 2Kgs 01:04
[<Co> שם]	[<Pr> עלית]	[<Re> אשר]					xQt0 2Kgs 01:04
[<Co> ממנה]	[<Pr> תרד]	[<Ng> לא]					xYq0 2Kgs 01:04
[<Pr> תמות]	[<Mo> מות]	[<Cj> כי]					xYq0 2Kgs 01:04
[<Su> אליה]	[<Pr> ילך]	[<Cj>ו]					WayX 2Kgs 01:04
[<Co> אליו]	[<Su> המלאכים]	[<Pr> ישובו]	[<Cj>ו]				WayX 2Kgs 01:05
[<Co> אליהם]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]					Way0 2Kgs 01:05
[<Pr> שבתם]	[<Qu> מה זה]						xQt0 2Kgs 01:05
[<Co> אליו]	[<Pr> יאמרו]	[<Cj>ו]					Way0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Pr> עלה]	[<Su> איש]						XQt1 2Kgs 01:06
[<PO> לקראתנו]							InfC 2Kgs 01:06
[<Co> אלינו]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]					Way0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Pr> לכו]							ZIm0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Co> אל המלך]	[<Pr> שובו]						ZIm0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Ob> אתכם]	[<Pr> שלח]	[<Re> אשר]					xQt0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Co> אליו]	[<Pr> דברתם]	[<Cj>ו]					WQt0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Su> יהוה]	[<Pr> אמר]	[<Mo> כה]					xQtX 2Kgs 01:06
[<PC> בישראל]	[<Su> אלהים]	[<NC> אין]	[<Cj> מבלי]	[<Qu>ה]			NmCl 2Kgs 01:06
[<PC> שלח]	[<Su> אתה]						Ptcp 2Kgs 01:06
[<Co><ap> בבעל זבוב / אלהי עקרון]	[<Pr> לדרש]						InfC 2Kgs 01:06
[<Mo> לכן]							MSyn 2Kgs 01:06
[<Fr> המטה]							CPen 2Kgs 01:06
[<Co> שם]	[<Pr> עלית]	[<Re> אשר]					xQt0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Co> ממנה]	[<Pr> תרד]	[<Ng> לא]					xYq0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Pr> תמות]	[<Mo> מות]	[<Cj> כי]					xYq0 2Kgs 01:06
[<Co> אלהם]	[<Pr> ידבר]	[<Cj>ו]					Way0 2Kgs 01:07
[<Su> משפט האיש]	[<PC> מה]						NmCl 2Kgs 01:07
[<Pr> עלה]	[<Re> אשר]						xQt0 2Kgs 01:07
[<PO> לקראתכם]							InfC 2Kgs 01:07
[<Ob> את הדברים האלה]	[<Co> אליכם]	[<Pr> ידבר]	[<Cj>ו]				Way0 2Kgs 01:07
[<Co> אליו]	[<Pr> יאמרו]	[<Cj>ו]					Way0 2Kgs 01:08
[<PC> איש בעל שער]							NmCl 2Kgs 01:08
[<Co> במתניו]	[<PC> אזור]	[<Su> אזור עור]	[<Cj>ו]				Ptcp 2Kgs 01:08
[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]						Way0 2Kgs 01:08
[<Su> הוא]	[<PC><ap> התשבי]						NmCl 2Kgs 01:08

³ And the messenger of Yahweh said to Elijah⁸⁹ the Tishbite, “get up, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and speak to them, ‘is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’

⁴ Therefore, thus says Yahweh, ‘as for the bed *into* which you have gone up,⁹⁰ you will not go down from it. And you surely will die.’” And Elijah went.

⁵ And the messengers came back to him and he said to them, “why have you come back?”

⁶ And they said to him, “A man went up to meet us and he said to us, ‘go and come back to the king who sent you and speak to him, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-Zebub, god of Ekron? Therefore, as for the bed *into* which you have gone up, you will not go down from it. You will surely die.’ ” ’ ”

⁷ And he spoke to them “what was the manner of the man who went up to meet you and spoke these things to you?”

⁸ They said to him, “A hairy man and with a loincloth of leather girded around his loins.” And he said, “He is Elijah the Tishbite.”

Delimitation

The second episode of 2 Kgs 1 brings Elijah into the spotlight again. Indeed, the limits of the passage are marked by the phrase אֵלִיָּה הַתִּשְׁבִּי “Elijah the Tishbite” which appears in the first and last clause of the pericope (cf. v. 3 and 8). As in 1 Kgs 21, the prophet is again reintroduced with the gentilic הַתִּשְׁבִּי. In the first part of the episode, the prophet receives the divine command to deliver a message to Ahaziah’s messengers (v. 3). Through narrative telescoping, the narrator merges the messenger’s words to Elijah with his delivery to them in the second part of the episode (v. 4). As Elijah leaves the scene again in v. 4 (וַיֵּלֶךְ אֵלִיָּה “and Elijah went”), the messengers come back to the king and convey to him Elijah’s words. The interaction between the king and his messengers forms the third and last subunit of this episode (v. 5–8).

⁸⁹ Here Elijah has a short spelling (cf. v. 3–4, 8; Mal 3:23).

⁹⁰ The phrase אֲשֶׁר־עָלִיתָ שָׁם הַמֶּטֶה is an example of nominative absolute. In addition to emphasis, the use of the nominative absolute “allows a grammatically complex part of the clause to stand on its own, thus increasing clarity.” Waltke and O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 77.

This whole section is dominated by dialogues that are introduced by the verbs דבר and אמר, which are used interchangeably in this unit (דבר 5x and אמר 6x). A major transition is seen in verse 9 where the narrator starts with a verb of action (וַיִּשְׁלַח “he sent”) instead of one of speech. It is clear that the king’s reaction is a direct result of the words delivered by the prophet to his messengers. In this sense, the episode that follows, where the commander of fifty with his men are sent (v. 9–14), is dependent on the narrative of verses 3–8.

Text-Empirical Analysis

From a pragmatic point of view, the narrative flow is interrupted by the introduction of the messenger of Yahweh (מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה) in the WXQt clause (v. 3). There is a close connection between the divine interventions through Elijah in 1 Kgs 21 and 2 Kgs 1. In both cases, wicked kings are met with doomy words of judgment as a consequence of their actions. God interrupts the flow of normal life to show that sin has unavoidable sequels. There is a noticeable shift between the first and the second parts of Elijah’s ministry. In the first part, he is working to get the people back to God. Although the drought might be regarded as a punishment, the whole narrative from chapters 17 to 18 shows that it is indeed a divine opportunity to display his power and the foolishness of going along with Baal. In this second part (1 Kgs 21; 2 Kgs 1), Elijah appears as a herald of disaster for Ahab’s house showing that their sins will not go unpunished.

The word of Yahweh comes to Elijah mediated by the messenger of Yahweh (מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה) as in 1 Kgs 19.⁹¹ There is an ironical parallel between the words of the

⁹¹ See discussion on מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה in footnote 193 on page 309.

messengers of the king and the messenger of Yahweh. The irony may explain why Elijah should meet the messengers instead of the king himself (לְקִרְאָת מַלְאָכָי מִלְדֹּד־שִׁמְרוֹן) “to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria”). The messenger of Yahweh commands Elijah to “arise and go up” (קוּם עֲלֵה). Curiously, the pair קוּם עֲלֵה (“arise, go up”) appears only a few times in the HB and only in divine discourses to encourage his instrumentalities in times of uncertainty (cf. Gen 35:1; Jos 8:1; Jer 49:28, 31). Evidently, this seems to be the case here as the narrative confirms later that there was some danger involved in the mission.

While the pair קוּם עֲלֵה explains where Elijah should go, the following imperative of דַּבֵּר (דָּבַר) introduces what he should speak. The first part of the message is a rhetorical question that expresses ironically the divine displeasure in face of the king’s inquiry of Baal-Zebub (הַמְבִּלִי אֵין־אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אַתֶּם הַלְכִים לְדָרֶשׁ בְּבַעַל זְבוּב אֱלֹהֵי עֶקְרוֹן) “is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?”). Since there is indeed a living God in Israel, his inquiry of Baal-Zebub in Ekron is an affront to Yahweh. In fact, there are other occasions in the book of Kings where dying kings send messengers to inquire about their chances of recovery (1 Kgs 14:1–18; 2 Kgs 8:7–15; 20:1–11). However, this is the only time where the king does not seek Yahweh or any of his representatives.

The second part of the message is introduced by לְכֵן “therefore” which logically connects the rhetorical question with the divine announcement of the king’s fate.⁹² The

⁹² The particle לְכֵן “can often be understood as a *discourse marker* because it relates two contents with one another which are not necessarily referred to only by means of two successive sentences, but also clusters of sentences.” Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 304.

prophetic formula *כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה* “thus says Yahweh” bestows authority to the oracle which affirms that the king’s disease will lead him to death (v. 4). The sentence was categorical as the use of the infinitive absolute (*מוֹת תָּמוּת* “you will surely die”) demonstrates. It is not clear if the sentence is a direct result from the king’s intent to inquire of Baal-Zebub or if that would be the sentence even if the king had sought out Yahweh’s response in the first place.

Through the use of narrative telescoping,⁹³ the narrator blends the delivering of the command and message to Elijah with the actual delivering of it to the messengers of Ahaziah. The last clause *וַיֵּלֶךְ אֵלֵיהֶם* “and Elijah went” in verse 4 is the only clue that Elijah met the messengers and delivered the message to them. It should be noticed that although Elijah is complying with the divine directive, the command-and-compliance pattern as found before 1 Kgs 19 is still not seen up to this point. In any case, through the use of narrative telescoping the narrator not only saves space moving promptly to the delivering of the message to the king but also blurs Yahweh’s words with those of his prophet, a very prominent aspect of Elijah’s characterization seen in 1 Kgs 17 and 18.

The messengers come back to the king who, surprised by their early return, receives them (v. 5). They report to him their meeting with a man who had gone up to meet them (*אִישׁ עָלָה לְקִרְאתָנוּ אִישׁ עָלָה* “a man went up to meet”). The use of the phrase *אִישׁ עָלָה לְקִרְאתָנוּ* is an additional way to show that Elijah was complying (cf. *עָלָה לְקִרְאת מַלְאָכָי* “go up to meet the messengers of the king” v. 3) with the divine commission. They report his command to return to the king (*שׁוּבוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכוּ* “go and return to the king”)

⁹³ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 295.

(v. 6) and the message they should carry to him. They comply with Elijah by the delivering the message with precision.⁹⁴

Once the king hears their words, he wants to learn the identity of the mysterious man and asks them about his manner (מִשְׁפַּט הָאִישׁ “the manner of the man”) (v. 7).⁹⁵ The messengers describe him in verse 8 as בְּעַל שֵׁעַר (“owner of hair”).⁹⁶ The intriguing expression may refer to “a man with flowing hair, or (...) a man clothed in hairy fur.”⁹⁷ According to Fohrer, “a specific development of the second interpretation would be the wearer of a hair cloak, which would distinguish the one so clothed as a prophet.”⁹⁸ The

⁹⁴ The messengers repeat Elijah’s words almost without variation. The only changes are the place of the formula כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה and the use of אֶתְּהָ שֶׁלַּח in the place of אֶתְּהָם הַלְכִים. The first change allows the king to realize the divine origin of the oracle since the onset. The second can be explained by the different contexts. In the first the messengers were on the way going to Ekron whereas in the second they were reporting to the king who had sent them.

⁹⁵ Koehler and Baumgartner, “מִשְׁפַּט,” *HALOT* 1344.

⁹⁶ The suggestion of some modern commentators like Patterson and Austel that בְּעַל שֵׁעַר should be understood as “garment of hair” (cf. NIV and RSV) is problematic. Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 808–809. Hobbs convincingly argues that “there is no justification for the translation of this phrase as ‘he wore a garment of haircloth’ (rsv). On its own the word שֵׁעַר simply means ‘hair,’ and when it is used adjectivally of clothing there is no ambiguity at all (cf. Gen 25:15; Zech 13:4). ... A perfect parallel exists in Dan 8:6, 20 in the use of בעל הקרניים ‘a baal with horns.’ [‘owner of horns’] (...) In the Jewish tradition, the appearance of Elijah as long haired was a source of ridicule (see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 4:295)” (Hobbs, 2 Kings, 10; words in brackets supplied).

⁹⁷ Koehler and Baumgartner, “שֵׁעַר,” *HALOT* 1344.

⁹⁸ Fohrer, *Elia*, 31. Joel Marcus correctly observes that even if the hairy cloak were the typical garb of the prophets, that would by no means be evidence that it was the referent of אִישׁ בְּעַל שֵׁעַר in 2 Kings 1:8. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, בְּעַל in combination with a body part always means the person who possesses that sort of body part, and שֵׁעַר by itself unambiguously means ‘hair.’ If the author of 2 Kings 1:8 had wanted to refer to a hairy cloak, he would have spoken אֶדְרֵת שֵׁעַר as in Zech. 13:4 and Gen. 25:25, not of שֵׁעַר alone. The Greek of the Septuagint of 2 Kings 1:8, ἀνήρ δασύς, is equally unambiguous; δασύς means ‘hairy or shaggy’ and modifies ἀνήρ, ‘man,’ not a word for a garment. Again, if the translator had wanted to refer to a garment, he would have added some sort of explanatory word or phrase. Besides, if the hairy cloak were the typical garb of the prophets, and if that were the referent of אִישׁ בְּעַל שֵׁעַר / ἀνήρ δασύς in 2 Kings 1:8, we would be faced with a puzzle in the narrative: how does Ahaziah know that the prophet that the messengers speak of is Elijah in particular? Something more distinctive than a hairy cloak has to be the referent, since the latter was allegedly common to all prophets. And that distinctive thing can only be Elijah’s hairy body.” Joel Marcus, *John the Baptist in History and Theology* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2018), 52.

NT allusion to Elijah's clothing in connection to John the Baptist favors the second interpretation. Regarding the translation of **בַּעַל שֵׁעַר**, the modern versions are divided in "a hairy man" (e.g., NKJV, ASV, LEB, NASB, JPS) and a "man with a garment of hair" (e.g., ESV, NIV). In any case, the word choice may constitute a subtle irony: instead of reaching Baal-Zebub (**בַּעַל זְבוּב**), Ahaziah is reached by baal of hair (**בַּעַל שֵׁעַר**). The messengers also remark that the man was wearing a loincloth of leather girded around his loins (**וְאַזּוֹר עוֹר אֲזוֹר בְּמַתְנָיו**). Based on their description, the king immediately recognizes the man as Elijah (**אֵלֶּיָּה הַתִּשְׁבִּי הוּא** "he is Elijah the Tishbite"). These two physical aspects of the prophet are distinctive enough to give the king the immediate conviction that the man was Elijah.⁹⁹

Narrative Features

The most singular aspect of this short episode is the use of narrative telescoping by which the narrator merges the words of the messenger of Yahweh commanding what Elijah should speak with the actual delivering of it. What the narrator achieves through this device has been discussed in detail above.

Another interesting aspect found in the dialogues of verses 3–8 is the alternation between the roots **אמר** (6x) and **דבר** (5x). There is no structural function or semantical distinctiveness in their use in this section. Thus, since the dialogue is dominated and moved forward by verbs of speech (11 verbs in 6 verses), the narrator's word choice may reflect a more elegant style avoiding the constant repetition of **אמר** or **דבר**. This

⁹⁹ Wiener observes that Elijah resembled "a nomadic shepherd or an archaic figure of the time when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. His simplicity, naturalness and spontaneity are in sharp contrast to the polished manners of the royal house." Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah*, 6.

alternance is also reflected in the OG which consistently translates אָמַר as λέγω/εἶπον and דָּבַר as λαλέω.

Structure

The only structural sign in this episode may be related to the place of each speaker in the section.

- A The messenger of Yahweh speaks (וּמְלָאֲךָ יְהוָה דָּבַר אֶל-אַלְיָהוּ) (v. 3–4)
- B The king speaks (וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלֵיהֶם) (v. 5)
- A The messengers of the king speak (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו) (v. 6)
 - C Elijah speaks indirectly through the messengers' speech (וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵינוּ) (v. 6)
- B' The king speaks (וַיְדַבֵּר אֵלֵיהֶם) (v. 7)
- A' The messengers of the king speak (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו) (v. 8)
- B' The king speaks (וַיֹּאמֶר) (v. 8)

In this design, the indirect discourse of Elijah is in the center of the pericope. In fact, the importance of this oracle is confirmed by its threefold repetition in chapter 1 (v. 3–4, 6, 16).

Elijah Encounters the Three Commanders of Fifty and His Fifty (2 Kgs 1:9–14)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Ob> שר חמשים וחמשיו	[<Co> אליו	[<Pr> ישלח	[<Cj>ו]		Way0 2Kgs 01:09	
[<Co> אליו	[<Pr> יעל	[<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:09	
[<Co> על ראש ההר	[<PC> ישב	[<Ij> הנה	[<Cj>ו]			Ptcp 2Kgs 01:09
[<Co> אליו	[<Pr> ידבר	[<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:09	
[<Vo> איש האלהים					Voct 2Kgs 01:09	
[<Pr> דבר	[<Su> המלך				XQt1 2Kgs 01:09	
[<Pr> רדה					ZIm0 2Kgs 01:09	
[<Su> אליהו	[<Pr> יענה	[<Cj>ו]			WayX 2Kgs 01:10	
[<Co> אל שר החמשים	[<Pr> ידבר	[<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:10	
[<Su> אני	[<PC> איש אלהים	[<Cj>אם	[<Cj>ו]			NmC1 2Kgs 01:10
[<Co> מן השמים	[<Su> אש	[<Pr> תרד				ZYqX 2Kgs 01:10
[<Ob> אתך ואת חמשיך	[<Pr> תאכל	[<Cj>ו]				WYq0 2Kgs 01:10
[<Co> מן השמים	[<Su> אש	[<Pr> תרד	[<Cj>ו]			WayX 2Kgs 01:10

[<Ob> תאכל] [<Pr> אתו ואת חמשיו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:10
[<Pr> יישב] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:11
[<Ob> ישלח] [<Pr> אליו] [<Co> שר חמשים אחר וחמשיו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:11
[<Pr> ייען] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:11
[<Co> ידבר] [<Pr> אליו] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:11
[<Vo> איש האלהים]			Voct 2Kgs 01:11
[<Su> אמר] [<Pr> כה] [<Mo> המלך]			xQtX 2Kgs 01:11
[<Pr> רדה] [<Mo> מהרה]			xIm0 2Kgs 01:11
[<Su> אליה] [<Pr> ייען] [<Cj>ו]			WayX 2Kgs 01:12
[<Co> ידבר] [<Pr> אליהם] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:12
[<Su> אני] [<PC> איש האלהים] [<Cj>אם]			NmCl 2Kgs 01:12
[<Co> תרד] [<Pr> אש] [<Su> מן השמים]			ZYqX 2Kgs 01:12
[<Ob> תאכל] [<Pr> אתך ואת חמשיך] [<Cj>ו]			WYq0 2Kgs 01:12
[<Co> תרד] [<Pr> אש אלהים] [<Su> מן השמים] [<Cj>ו]			WayX 2Kgs 01:12
[<Ob> תאכל] [<Pr> אתו ואת חמשיו] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:12
[<Pr> יישב] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:13
[<Ob> ישלח] [<Pr> שר חמשים שלשים וחמשיו] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:13
[<Pr> יעל] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:13
[<Su> יבא] [<Pr> שר החמשים השלישי] [<Cj>ו]			WayX 2Kgs 01:13
[<Lo> יכרע] [<Pr> על ברכיו] [<Co> לנגד אליהו] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:13
[<Co> יתחנן] [<Pr> אליו] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:13
[<Co> ידבר] [<Pr> אליו] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:13
[<Vo> איש האלהים]			Voct 2Kgs 01:13
[<Co> נא] [<Pr> תיקר] ZyqX 2Kgs 01:13			
[<Co> הנה] [<Ij> ירדה] [<Pr> אש] [<Su> מן השמים]			xQtX 2Kgs 01:14
[<Ob> תאכל] [<Pr> את שני שרי החמשים הראשנים ואת חמשיהם] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:14
[<Ti> עתה] [<Cj>ו]			MSyn 2Kgs 01:14
[<Co> תיקר] [<Pr> נפשי] [<Su> בעיניך]			ZYqX 2Kgs 01:14

⁹ And *Ahaziah*¹⁰⁰ sent to him the commander of fifty and his fifty and he went up to him and, look,¹⁰¹ he¹⁰² was sitting on the top of the mountain.¹⁰³ And he spoke to him, “O Man of God, the king speaks, ‘come down!’”

¹⁰ And Elijah answered and spoke to the commander of fifty, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹¹ And again¹⁰⁴ he sent to him another commander of fifty and his fifty and he went up¹⁰⁵ and spoke to him, “O man of God, thus says the king, ‘come down quickly!’”

¹² And Elijah answered and spoke to them, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” And the fire of God came down and consumed him and his fifty.

¹³ And again he sent¹⁰⁶ a third *time* a commander of fifty. And the commander of fifty went up and came and knelt down on his knees before Elijah and entreated him. He spoke to him, “O man of God, let my life and the life of your servants, these fifty, be precious in your eyes.

¹⁴ Look, fire came down from heaven and consumed the first two commanders of fifty and their fifty. But¹⁰⁷ now let my life be precious in your eyes.

¹⁰⁰ Added for better grammatical flow in English.

¹⁰¹ The Lucianic Recension of the OG, the OT Syriac, and the Targum have אנה instead of הנה. From a grammatical point of view, the presence of the independent pronoun is easier. From a pragmatical point of view, it is also difficult to give account of the presence of the discourse marker here. If they are going up to meet Elijah, how could his presence on the top of the mountain be unexpected or surprising? However, from a textual critical standpoint, הנה is preferable on basis of the *lectio difficilior* principle. Although modern versions prefer the easiest reading, the OG kept הנה (και ιδου) and added Ηλιου for clarification.

¹⁰² The subject of the participle is not expressed in Hebrew, but it is added here for greater clarity.

¹⁰³ Modern versions obscure the parallel between 1 Kgs 18 and 1 Kgs 1 when they translate ה as “hill” instead of “mountain” as the word is translated in 1 Kgs 18.

¹⁰⁴ Literally, “and he returned and sent.” Here the verb וישב is used adverbially.

¹⁰⁵ The MT has ויעל. Based on the possibility of an interchange between ו and ל and the compelling internal evidence, I suggest an emendation here following some manuscripts of Codex Vaticanus of the LXX and the Vulgate that have και ανέβη = ויעל. Regarding the internal evidence, it is difficult to see how the commander could “answer” Elijah if he was addressing him by the first time. Besides, both the first and the third also “go up” (ויעל) to meet Elijah after they announced mention that the king had sent them. This is the exact sequence with the second. Regarding a possible interchange between the letters ו and ל, the mistake could be committed not only due to the potential similarity between the letters, which is quite slight, but the use of the verbs ויעל and ויען in proximity.

¹⁰⁶ Literally, “and he returned and sent.” Here the verb וישב is used adverbially.

¹⁰⁷ The adversative force of the conjunction ו is evident here.

Delimitation

The beginning of this new segment is marked by a change in settings, characters and actions. Now the king sends military personnel (v. 9) instead of messengers as in verse 2. Elijah interacts with the commanders and their fifty while his personal audience with Ahaziah is delayed until the final section of the chapter. In terms of setting, the servants of the kings are no longer on the way going back and forth between the prophet and the monarch. Now the servants are going up and down from the palace to the top of the mountain where Elijah is. In fact, going up (עלה) and coming down (ירד) is a motif found throughout the chapter. In this segment עלה appears three times while ירד appears seven.

The final limit of this pericope is found in the plea of the third commander for his life and for the life of his fifty (vv. 13–14). At this point the unit reaches its climax. The following section is opened with the messenger of Yahweh's intervention commanding Elijah to go down to meet the king.

Text-Empirical Analysis

Although no textual transitional marker is found in 2 Kgs 1:9, the sending of the commander of fifty constitutes the beginning of a whole new episode in the interaction between the king and the prophet, and consequently, the king and Yahweh who Elijah represents. In the king's dealing with Yahweh, rejection and indifference are replaced by open hostility. This is clear when the king substitutes military personnel (שְׂרֵי־חַמְשִׁים) "the commander of fifty and his fifty" in place of the messengers.

Geographically, the narrative inverts Elijah's position from being the one who first had to go up (עלה) (v. 3) to meet the king's messengers. Now it's the commanders of fifty who

need to go up to meet the prophet (וַיַּעַל).¹⁰⁸ By sending a complete military detachment,¹⁰⁹ the king (finally) shows awareness that the prophet represents a real source of danger. Thus, if Ahaziah is aware of any of Elijah's spiritual powers, he engages in a strength struggle assuming that he can compete with the divine power. This establishes the stage of the conflict between the two kings: Yahweh and Ahaziah.

If הַהַר is original, the discourse marker brings the reader's attention to where Elijah is located (עַל־רֹאשׁ הַהַר "the top of the mountain"). Although this is the only time in the HB where someone is described sitting on the top of a mountain, the motif of prophets on mountains is not a novelty. In fact, the episode of 2 Kgs 1:9–14 recalls closely the battle of the Carmel in 1 Kgs 18. The prophet is again on the top of a mountain where fire from heaven will play an important role. Although there is no indication of the exact location, several authors have considered Mount Carmel the place where the events of verses 9–14 transpire.¹¹⁰ The use of the definite article in הַהַר further strengthens the possibility that this is a particular mountain that has been mentioned before.

¹⁰⁸ The Lucianic recension of the OT and the Syriac utilize the plural of עֵלָה. The change may reflect grammatical exegesis including the fifty soldiers who follow the commander.

¹⁰⁹ According to Cogan and Tadmor, "fifty men comprise a military unit, headed by an officer (*šar*); cf. 1 Sam 8:12; 2 Kgs 15:25; Isa 3:3. In contemporary Mesopotamian armies, a similar unit was led by a *rab ḥanšē*, 'officer/captain of fifty,' cf. *CAD* H 81." Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 26. Curiously, the number fifty also appears in connection with the prophets. They are hidden and supported by Obadiah in two groups of fifty (1 Kgs 18:4). Before Elijah ascended to heaven, the sons of the prophets, counted in fifty, interacted with Elisha. Perhaps the use of the numeral 50 establishes a parallel between the opposing forces in the narrative: the king and his military apparatus on the one hand and the prophets on the other. The prophets are the Yahwistic counterforce against the idolatrous power of apostate Israel.

¹¹⁰ Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 10; Patterson and Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 809.

The commander greets Elijah with the famous expression (אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים) “man of God”). As the expression is immediately followed by a peremptory imperative (רַדָּה), it is clear that such address does not include special deference. In fact, it may be derogatory¹¹¹ or even a mocking greeting.¹¹² The reaction of Elijah seems to confirm this impression.

The commander’s order triggers a new development in the general plot of the chapter. Although the character of Elijah as a man of God is in check here, ultimately is the audacity of the king and the two first commanders in their attempt to control the divine that is indeed at stake here. Fretheim insightfully observes that

The fire is less a divine means to protect the prophet than a public demonstration of the power of Israel’s God in a situation where that power (to heal) has been called into question and a public verification of Elijah as mediator of this power (and links up with Elisha in 2:11). It is almost as if in approaching Elijah (on a hill) they approach the reality of God himself (see Exod. 19:18).¹¹³

This is somehow reinforced by the parallel fire from Yahweh to destroy Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1–2) after God sent fire down on the sacrifices on the altar (Lev 9:24). As in Leviticus, the coming down of fire on individuals (2 Kgs 1:10, 12) comes after the coming down of fire on an altar (1 Kgs 18:38). In both cases, the men did not show respect before and for that which God considered holy. The fire upon the sacrifice should have been enough evidence to prevent such an attitude in both cases.

Elijah starts his speech to the first two commanders with the conjunction אִם which introduces a real condition (וְאִם־אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים אָנִי) “If I am a man of God”).¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Gray, *I & II Kings*, 414.

¹¹² Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 228.

¹¹³ Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 133.

¹¹⁴ Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 590–595.

Evidently, Elijah is not expressing doubt or hesitancy about his character as a man of God, but the use of the conditional clause may reflect Elijah's reaction to something that he could have identified in the first two commanders' directives. Sometimes, tone of voice or body expression can reveal doubt, irony or even sarcasm that are out of reach for readers because narrators do not provide stage directions. In this case, he could be saying: "If I am truly a man of God (and you probably do not believe that), fire will fall from heaven."¹¹⁵ Just as the Mt. Carmel fire attested who was *truly* God, here the fire attests who is *truly* a prophet.

The character of Elijah as a man of God had been already verbally attested to by the widow in 1 Kgs 17:24, Evidently, his special connection with Yahweh, to which the title **אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים** ("man of God") points,¹¹⁶ had been attested also in the public arena both on Mount Carmel and in his dealings with Ahab. Although the commander does not put into question. Elijah's authority as a man of God explicitly, his act of trying to seize the prophet indicates his defiance. Such defiance found in the two first commander prompted by the king's order (and probably) shared by them led to an immediate act of judgment upon them.

In an unexpected turn of events, fire falls from heaven consuming the commander and his fifty. Elijah's volition (**תָּרַד אֵשׁ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתֹאכַל אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־חֲמִשִּׁיָּדוֹ** "let fire come down from heaven and consume him and his fifty") meets its perfect match in the note

¹¹⁵ See also Moses' words to Dathan and Abiram in Num 16:28–30 (with the conditional conjunction **אִם** "if").

¹¹⁶ See page 212 for a short discussion on the title **אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים** ("man of God").

describing its fulfilment (וַתֵּרֶד אֵשׁ מִזֶּה שָׁמַיִם וַתֹּאכַל אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־חֲמִשָּׁיו) “fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty”) (v. 10).

A second commander with his fifty is sent to meet Elijah. There is no note about his knowledge of the fate of the previous company, and his attitude may indicate that he did not know what had happened. The formula בַּהֲאָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ “thus says the king” (v. 11) highlights the confrontation between the king’s words and Yahweh’s words (בַּהֲאָמַר יְהוָה) “thus says Yahweh” cf. vv. 4, 6, 16) which identifies the source of his authority and the agency that Elijah embodies as a prophet. The commander imperative is the same except by the adding of the adverb מְהֵרָה (“quickly”). The addition may reflect the king’s growing impatience with Elijah or the urgency in face the worsening of his illness. The answer depends on the king’s intention in sending the military company. The text does not explain the reason, but two major possibilities might be inferred. In the first case, the king would want to silence the prophet either in a desperate attempt to nullify his prophecy¹¹⁷ or simply out of bitter resentment.¹¹⁸ In the second case, the king also would want to reverse the prophecy but not through the prophet’s extermination. Perhaps, the king could convince the prophet to intercede on his behalf¹¹⁹ or even try “to buy” a favorable oracle. In any scenario, Ahaziah is trying to control Elijah.

Both the prophet’s reaction and the destiny of the second company as described in verse 12 are a replay of verse 10 with a very small variation. The use of אֵשׁ־אֱלֹהִים “fire

¹¹⁷ Cohn, *2 Kings*, 7. Olley, *The Message of Kings*, 212.

¹¹⁸ Francis D. Nichol, *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), 2:847.

¹¹⁹ Hens-Piazza, *1-2 Kings*, 228.

of God” seems to be a pun playing with *איש האלהים* “man of God”. Through this wordplay the narrator shows the strong connection between God and his messenger. In this case, any attack against Elijah or any *איש האלהים* (“man of God”) is an attack against God himself.

A third company is sent in verse 13 and as the commander’s attitude combined with his words in verse 14 reveal, he is aware of the fate of the two previous detachments. Indeed, he is in impossible position; “either he disobeys his king, or he is wiped out by the prophet.”¹²⁰ In a wise move, he chooses to align himself with Elijah. In an attitude of extreme humiliation, he humbles himself by kneeling before Elijah (*וַיִּכְרַע*) “and he knelt down on his knees before Elijah”) and entreats him (*וַיִּתְחַנֵּן אֵלָיו*) (“and he entreated him”) (v.13). In fact, this is the only time in the OT where the valence *חנן + אל* has an object of the complement other than God.¹²¹ Perhaps, this can be considered one additional example of the intentional conflation of Elijah with Yahweh as found in other places.

The speech of the third commander is tantamount to his attitude and is in striking contrast with the previous speeches. He replaces the imperative *רדה* “come down” by the jussive *תִּיקַר* “be precious” followed by the particle *נא*. The commander recognizes that his life and the lives of his company are at stake here. So instead of trying to control the divine power, he simply entreats it. After reminding the prophet of the fate of his

¹²⁰Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 286.

¹²¹ Cf. Deut 3:23; 1 Kgs 8:33, 47; Ps 142:2; Job 8:5; 2 Chr 6:37.

predecessors, the commander closes his discourse repeating the entreaty for his life (v. 14). The result of his approach is seen in the next unit found in verses 15–18.

Narrative Features

The most remarkable feature of the segment is the use of irony through which the narrator highlights the foolish of Ahaziah in trying to dictate his own future and ultimately dominate God Himself. The first use of irony is found in the motif of going up and down. In the case of the two first companies, the commander goes up (עלה) and commands Elijah to go down (ירד). However, fire from heaven comes down on them (וַתֵּרֶד אֵשׁ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם “and fire came down from heaven”) instead (v. 9–12). The second example of irony is found in the use of the phrase אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים (“man of God”) by the first two commanders. As they try to coerce Elijah to go down, it becomes clear that his title is not used with genuine respect or even grasped. This seems to be confirmed by Elijah’s challenge: if I am really a man of God.... The last use of irony to be mentioned here is found in the phrase בַּהֲאָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ (“thus says the king”) in verse 11 which parallels the phrase בַּהֲאָמַר יְהוָה (“thus says Yahweh”) in verses 4, 6 and 16. The similarity between the two phrases ironizes the pretentious attitude of Ahaziah in trying to coerce and control Elijah. Thus, it underlines the hidden conflict that involves much more than the prophet’s self-esteem or his ego. The conflict comprises the clash between two governments that should be in harmony. Such harmony is disrupted by the rebellious breaking of the covenant by the house of Ahab.

The second important feature found in this pericope is the use of narrative echoes reverberating chapters 17 and 18. The only place in Elijah’s cycle where he is addressed

as אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים outside of 2 Kgs 1 is in 1 Kgs 17. In the crisis prompted by her son's death, the widow questions the prophet's passive role saying, "what is there among us man of God (אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים)" (1 Kgs 17:18). Curiously, her confession in verse 24 reveals that her use of the title in verse 18 was not completely genuine and doubts lingered. After her son's resurrection, she says "now this I know that you are a man of God (אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים)." Whether or not the term is used ironically in 1 Kgs 17:18 is not clear. However, the situation here is quite similar: Elijah is addressed as a man of God in an ironic (or at least reluctant) way followed by a "test" of his character as to if he is a true man of God. In the present pericope it is the fire coming down from heaven that confirms Elijah's identity as such. When the third commander acts accordingly to Elijah's identity as a man of God, he delivers his life and the life of his soldiers.

Echoes of 1 Kgs 18 are also obvious in this pericope. Both stories have the same setting: a mountain. The meeting with the military personnel of Ahaziah becomes a contest around the identity and character of Elijah as a man of God. In 1 Kgs 18, the contest with the prophets of Baal proves Yahweh's character as the true and sole God. It should be remembered that in his prayer Elijah adds the element of his character as true prophet in the sending of fire on the sacrifice of chapter 18 (cf. 1 Kgs 18:36). Finally, the confirmation sign is the same in both stories: fire. The parallels reinforce the close connection between Elijah and Yahweh throughout the account of his ministry.

Structure

The threefold structure of the unit increases the drama and the use of repetition in each encounter and creates the tension and expectation leading the reader to the

denouement of verses 14 and 15. The structure below also highlights the role of the third commander to interrupt the cycle of destruction seen in the two first encounters.

- A The king sends the company (וַיִּשְׁלַח אֱלִיָּו) (9a)
 B The commander goes up to Elijah (וַיַּעַל אֱלִיָּו) (9b) [Parenthetical note on Elijah location (9c)]
 C The commander speaks: go down! (רְדָה) (9d)
 D Elijah answers challenging the company (וַיַּעֲנֶה אֱלִיָּהוּ וַיְדַבֵּר) (10a-f)
 E Fire comes down from heaven (וַתִּרְדַּד אֵשׁ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם) (10f-g)
- A' The king sends the company (וַיִּשְׁבּ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֱלִיָּו) (11a-b)
 B' The commander goes up to Elijah (וַיַּעַן) (11c)
 C' The commander speaks: go down! (רְדָה) (11d)
 D' Elijah answers challenging the company (וַיַּעַן אֱלִיָּהוּ וַיְדַבֵּר) (12a-e)
 E' Fire comes down from heaven (וַתִּרְדַּד אֵשׁ) (12f-g)
- A'' The king sends the company (וַיִּשְׁבּ וַיִּשְׁלַח) (13a-b)
 B'' The commander goes up to Elijah (וַיַּעַל) (13c-d)
 C'' The commander humbles himself and respectfully entreats the prophet (וַיִּכְרַע עַל־) (13e-14)
 בְּרַפְיָו (13e-14)

Elijah Meets Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1:15–18)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Co> אל אליהו]	[<Su> מלאך יהוה]	[<Pr> ידבר]	[<Cj>ו]		WayX 2Kgs 01:15
[<Aj> אותו]	[<Pr> רד]				ZIm0 2Kgs 01:15
[<Co> מפניו]	[<Pr> תירא]	[<Ng> אל]			xYq0 2Kgs 01:15
[<Pr> יקם]	[<Cj>ו]				Way0 2Kgs 01:15
[<Co> אל המלך]	[<Aj> אותו]	[<Pr> ירד]	[<Cj>ו]		Way0 2Kgs 01:15
[<Co> אליו]	[<Pr> ידבר]	[<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:16
[<Su> יהוה]	[<Pr> אמר]	[<Mo> כה]			xQtX 2Kgs 01:16
[<Ob> מלאכים]	[<Pr> שלחת]	[<Cj> ייען אשר]			CPen 2Kgs 01:16
[<Co><ap> עקרון / בבעל זבוב]	[<Pr> לדרש]				InfC 2Kgs 01:16
[<PC> בישראל]	[<Su> אלהים]	[<NC> אין]	[<Cj> מבלי]	[<Qu>ה]	NmCl 2Kgs 01:16
[<Co> בדברו]	[<Pr> לדרש]				InfC 2Kgs 01:16
[<Mo> לכן]					NmCl 2Kgs 01:16
[<Fr> המטה]					CPen 2Kgs 01:16
[<Co> שם]	[<Pr> עלית]	[<Re> אשר]			xQt0 2Kgs 01:16
[<Co> ממנה]	[<Pr> תרד]	[<Ng> לא]			xYq0 2Kgs 01:16
[<Pr> תמות]	[<Mo> מות]	[<Cj> כי]			xYq0 2Kgs 01:16
[<Aj> כדבר יהוה]	[<Pr> ימת]	[<Cj>ו]			Way0 2Kgs 01:17

[<Su> אליהו] [<Pr> דבר] [<Re> אשר] | | xQtX 2Kgs 01:17
 [<Ti><sp><ap><ap> בשנת שתים / ליהורם / בן יהושפט / מלך יהודה] [<Aj> תחתיו] [<Su>
 יהורם] [<Pr> ימלך] [<Cj>ו] | | WayX 2Kgs 01:17
 [<Su> בן] [<PC> לו] [<Pr> היה] [<Ng> לא] [<Cj>כי] | | xQtX 2Kgs 01:17
 | | CPen 2Kgs 01:18
 [<Fr> יתר דברי אחזיהו] [<Cj>ו] | | CPen 2Kgs 01:18
 | | xQt0 2Kgs 01:18
 [<Pr> עשה] [<Re> אשר] | | xQt0 2Kgs 01:18
 [<Co><sp> למלכי ישראל / על ספר דברי הימים] [<PC> כתובים] [<Su> ההמה] [<Ng> לוא] | | Ptcp 2Kgs 01:18
 | | [<Qu>ה]

¹⁵ And the messenger of Yahweh spoke to Elijah, “Go down with him. Do not be afraid of him.” And he got up and came down with him to the king.

¹⁶ And he said to him, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the God of Ekron – is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word? Therefore, the bed *upon* which you went up,¹²² you will not come down from it, for you surely will die.

¹⁷ And he died according to the word of Yahweh which Elijah had spoken, and Joram became king in his place in the second year of Joram the son of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, because he had no son.

¹⁸ The remainder of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written on the scroll of the events of the days of the kings of Israel?

Delimitation

The last segment of the chapter starts with the intervention of the messenger of Yahweh (מֵלֶאכֶדֶד יְהוָה) directing Elijah to go down and meet the king. As Elijah announces to Ahaziah the same message already delivered to his messengers, the meeting between them is anticlimactic. The meeting shows that in the same way that the prophet cannot be manipulated, his message is not affected by any royal maneuver because its origin is divine.

The royal epilogue (v. 17b), which is prompted by the note about the fulfilment of Elijah’s prophecy (v. 17a), is followed by the concluding summary (v. 18) that brings to an end both the short royal career of Ahaziah and 2 Kgs 1. The last major scene of Elijah’s ministry is introduced in 2 Kgs 2:1 by the discourse marker וַיְהִי.

¹²² See note on 1 Kgs 1:4. Regarding the adverb שָׁם, it is left out for stylistic reasons.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The speech of the third commander is interrupted by the messenger of Yahweh (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה)¹²³ who appears again in order to direct Elijah to follow him and meet Ahaziah (v. 15). From the textual point of view, it is the intervention of Yahweh's messenger that brings deliverance to the company. This only reinforces the suggestion that the judgment against the military personnel is not an initiative of Elijah as an expression of personal vendetta.

The assurance expressed in the clause אַל-תִּירָא מִפְּנֵי (‘‘do not be afraid of him’’) reveals that the prophet is indeed in danger. Again, the imperative רַךְ appears but this time Elijah complies (וַיִּרְדֵּךְ). Although it is clear that the prophet is complying with the messenger's instructions from the first part of the chapter, this is the first time since 1 Kgs 18 that the narrator records a direct command-and-compliance pattern.

In the meeting of verse 16, the narrator ignores the king and gives voice only to Elijah. If the king had any hope to have the prophecy reverted, such an expectation is frustrated by Elijah's speech to which no new element is added. Nelson observes that ‘‘Elijah's oracle is constructed according to the classic prophetic pattern of diatribe (‘because’), threat (‘therefore you shall not come down’), and concluding

¹²³ It is difficult to ascertain if the messenger of Yahweh (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה) is one of the references to the pre-incarnated Christ. In his article, Moskala proposes five criteria to identify the angel of the Lord as a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ: (i) He speaks in the first person singular with ‘‘I’’ formulas as if he himself were God when bringing a message (Gen 16:10; 22:16–17; 31:13; Exod 3:6; Judg 6:14); (ii) The biblical text uses in parallel terms the ‘‘angel of the Lord’’ and the ‘‘Lord’’ or ‘‘God,’’ and thus identifies them as one Being (Gen 22:11, 15; 31:3, 11, 13; Exod 3:2, 4, 7; Judg 2:1–2; 6:11, 14, 22; 13:3, 13, 22; Zech 3:1–2); (iii) He describes himself as holy (Exod 3:2, 5); (iv) He carries out God's judgment (2 Sam 24:16; 2 Kgs 19:35); (v) God's Name is in Him (Exod 23:20–23); and (vi) He takes on a human appearance as in cases of theophany, God's pre-incarnate appearances (Josh 5:13–15; Judg 13:6, 10, 21). Moskala, ‘‘Toward Trinitarian Thinking,’’ 263. As can be seen, none of these criteria are found in 2 Kgs 1. Although the passage is mentioned among others containing the theme of the ‘‘Angel of the Lord,’’ it is left out in his analysis of key passages and is not mentioned in connection with any criterion proposed by him.

characterization ('but you shall die')."¹²⁴ Central in Elijah's argument is the question *הַמֵּבִלִי אֵין־אֱלֹהִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְדַרֵּשׁ בְּדַבְרֹו* ("is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?") which is repeated here. In fact, this is the theological question of the chapter as a whole. The meaning of *אֱלֹהִים* determines the precise nuance of the question. If the word "gods" is in view, the question is a mockery of Baal. If *אֱלֹהִים* means God here, the question highlights Ahaziah's failure in seeking the only true God of Israel. In either case irony is involved. However, although both options are feasible, the latter seems to be more likely especially in view of the theology of the book of Kings as a whole and the Elijah cycle. When read together with 2 Kgs 17, the narrative of Naaman's healing in 2 Kgs 5 serves as a counter point to Ahaziah's rebellion. After his healing, the Syrian commander says, "now I know that there is no God in all of the world except in Israel" (2 Kgs 5:15).

Elijah finishes his discourse with the sentence *בְּיָמֹותָ תָמוּת* ("for you surely will die"). The king's disease is irreversible, and it will lead him to death (v 16b-d). The prediction of his death is immediately followed by its fulfillment which introduces the royal epilogue of Ahaziah. The proximity between prophecy (*בְּיָמֹותָ תָמוּת*) (v. 16) and fulfillment (*וַיָּמָת*) (v. 17) and the use of formula *כַּדְבַר יְהוָה* increases the focus on the inexorable word of Yahweh which is above human manipulation and beyond failure.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 156.

¹²⁵ In his dissertation, Phillip Glenn Camp explores the relationship between prophecy and fulfillment in the book of Kings. Phillip Glenn Camp, "According to the Word of the Lord: The Degree of Correspondence between Prophecies and Fulfillment in the Deuteronomistic History" (PhD diss. Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2004).

A very close variant of the phrase כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו (“according to the word of Yahweh which spoke Elijah”) is found in 1 Kgs 17:16 where the narrator remarks the fulfilment of the promise of ongoing provision for the widow and her house (כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד אֱלִיָּהוּ) (“according to the word of Yahweh which spoke by the hand of Elijah”). Apparently, Elijah is fulfilling his mission to convey the authoritative word of Yahweh. The source of his message is not any personal grudge against Ahab dynasty; he is only a herald.

Wray Beal observes that “Ahaziah’s death is not followed by the usual order of the closing formula.”¹²⁶ Perhaps, the disruption in the usual order is the result of two important elements missing in the epilogue of his kingdom. There is no son to succeed him (לֹא־הָיָה לוֹ בֵּן) (v. 17). In the OT, the lack of offspring is seen as a divine punishment, and in this context is also a rebuke to Baal. Brueggemann instructively observes that “Baal is the one who allegedly fructifies and is expected to give new life, but naturally Baal does not; another evidence that it is a futile force, unable to produce sons; the future and its generativity are under the sure aegis of Yahweh and none other.”¹²⁷

The second missing element is the phrase עִם־אֲבוֹתָיו “with his fathers” + וַיִּשְׁכַּב “and X slept” which is found in the epilogue of the vast majority of northern and southern kings.¹²⁸ Having in mind the sentence against Ahab’s house, the lack of the phrase in the description of Ahaziah and Joram is not a coincidence.

¹²⁶ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 297.

¹²⁷ Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 287.

¹²⁸ For instance, 1 Kgs 2:10; 11:43; 14:20, 31; 15:8, 24.

Narrative Features

The major feature in this narrative unit is the use of repetition. Key terms like the verbs עלה and ירד reappear here. The messenger of Yahweh uses the same imperative רד employed by the two first commanders. But this time the prophet meets it with compliance. Elijah is open only to Yahweh's direction. The prophet's discourse to the king is merely a repetition of what he had already said. The use of כה־אמר המלך ("thus says the king") in v. 11 in parallel with כה־אמר יהוה ("thus says Yahweh") in v. 16 shows that Yahweh has the final word, not the king.

In the use of the phrase כדבר יהוה אשר־דבר אליהו ("according to the word of Yahweh which spoke Elijah") a narrative echo of 1 Kgs 17 can be identified. His ministry ends as it began, and the word of God is still trustworthy. Nothing and no one can overthrow it.

Structure

The section is organized in the following structure:

- A The messenger's command – the messenger speaks (v. 15a-c)
- B Elijah's obedience – the narrator relates (v. 15d-e)
 - A' Prophecy of Ahaziah's death – Elijah speaks (v. 16)
 - B' Fulfilment of Ahaziah's death – the narrator relates (v. 17)
 - C Concluding summary (v. 18)

In the following structure there is a relationship between command and obedience and prophecy and fulfillment. This interconnection is pervasive in the book of Kings and moreover constitutes the core of biblical covenant.

Excursus: Fire from Heaven

The awful image of fire coming down from heaven to consume the two military companies has not gone without notice in the history of interpretation. Montgomery considers the destruction of the “innocent fifties” an unhuman act.¹²⁹ In fact, this view dates back to the Manicheans like Marcion. According to Caesarius of Arles (c. 470–543),¹³⁰ “These wretched men are apt to censure the writings of the Old Testament saying, ‘How was it just for blessed Elijah to burn two captains with their soldiers by means of fire brought down from heaven?’”¹³¹

A thorough discussion about the interpretation of this passage is beyond the scope of this research. However, a few remarks are worth mentioning here. First, the king’s demand is wrong, and he should submit himself to God’s will. Second, it should be kept in mind that there is no indication that Elijah is acting based on personal vengeance or initiative. In the role of a prophet, Elijah represents Yahweh, and for this reason he is defending the sacred reputation of God and the authority of his word.¹³² Consequently, this is more than a simple quarrel between an arrogant king and a stubborn prophet. Brueggemann observes that, “the king and the prophet are dramatic ciphers whose action and articulation embody competing views of reality. Thus the narrative presents to us a

¹²⁹ Montgomery, *1 Kings*, 348.

¹³⁰ See more on Caesarius of Arles in F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, U.K.; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 263–264.

¹³¹ Marco Conti and Gianluca Pilara, eds., *1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 139–140.

¹³² Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 807–808.

deep dispute about conflicting metanarratives that touch every facet of Israel's public life."¹³³

Third, the way the two first commanders address Elijah reveals that they share the royal disdain against Yahweh and his servant (see discussion above). Having in mind the justice of God (Ezek 18:20), the reader can assume that the soldiers who succumbed with their captains also would share the same view. Fourth, since it is God who performs the miracle, this should be understood as an example of divine judgement. Vos describes the fire from heaven in terms of "judicial miracles."¹³⁴ Wiseman observes with precision that "contradiction of this passage must imply denial of other similar Old Testament judgmental events. ... Some sensitive Christians would like to think that no-one will be damned—but that is not biblical."¹³⁵ Examples of immediate judgement are seen also in the NT as well (cf. Acts 5:1–11; 12:21–23). Such cases are samples of the cosmic final judgment where God will end the great controversy by renewing his creation through the same instrument: fire. In the end, deeper issues involving theodicy are always implicated in the interpretation of these passages.

Fifth, their death may be understood in the context of "ruler punishment." Ahaziah is punished by losing persons who belong to him, as David was punished in 2 Sam 24 by losing 70,000 of his subjects when he institutes a census. David Daube, who advances the concept, observes that "the punishment of a ruler by damaging or destroying

¹³³ Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 291.

¹³⁴ Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 136.

¹³⁵ Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 206.

his free subjects may be an effective mode of punishment whether the offence committed is religious (...), or political (...), or private (...).”¹³⁶

Lastly, it should be reminded that even if the soldiers did not share the same attitude of defiance against Elijah or Yahweh, in the cosmic conflict there are sometimes innocent casualties, but this is not the end of the story. Yahweh will sort all this out in the final judgement and resurrection when everyone will receive an ultimate and just retribution based on divine grace and mercy (Ps 75:2; Jer 11:20; 2 Cor 5:10).

Sixth Scene: From Gilgal to Heaven (2 Kgs 2:1–14)

Preliminary Observations

The importance of 2 Kgs 2 lies in the fact that the passage reports the only account of a human ascension and a prophetic succession in the OT and, for this reason, “carries great ideological weight.”¹³⁷ The chapter is located between the end of Ahaziah’s short kingdom (1:17–18) and the beginning of the next (3:1–3). Thus, the narrative is “outside ‘royal time,’”¹³⁸ focusing on the two prophets. According to Brueggemann, “it is likely that the text is intentionally placed as it is, in order to suggest that the remarkable moment of prophetic transition is so odd and so exceptional that it cannot be held in royal time or understood in royal rationality.”¹³⁹

Although Elijah is still an active character in the narrative, there is a certain consensus that the chapter is about Elisha as Elijah’s successor whose power is

¹³⁶ David Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (New York, NY: Ktav, 1969), 183.

¹³⁷ Cohn, *2 Kings*, 10.

¹³⁸ Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 293.

¹³⁹ Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 293.

transferred to the new prophetic leader.¹⁴⁰ Since the central point of this research is Elijah, the focus of the following analysis will be upon him. Attention will be given to Elisha only as he interacts with his mentor. The presence of Elijah is the delimitation of this exploration of chapter 2 that starts in verse 1 and continues until verse 14 where the ascension narrative closes.

Different suggestions have been made regarding the structure of the chapter. Some authors propose a chiasmic structure where geographical movements function as an organizing principle with Elijah's translation centralized in the middle.¹⁴¹ Long prefers to outline the content of verses 1–14 around the Jordan.¹⁴² Although these proposals are relevant, in the following analysis the section is organized by the linguistic clues found in the hierarchy of the clauses and the use of discourse markers present in the passage. Based on these markers the examination below is divided into three parts: The journeyings of Elisha and Elijah before Elijah's ascension (2 Kgs 2:1–8); Elisha's request (2 Kgs 2:9–10); Elijah's ascension and replacement (2 Kgs 2:11–14).

As a whole, 2 Kgs 2 describes a journey going from Bethel to the Jordan (vv. 1–13), the place of Elijah's ascension, and back from the Jordan to Bethel again (vv. 14–25). In the first part of the journey Elijah and Elisha appear together while in the second part Elisha is alone. Elisha leaves the scene of the ascension as a solo prophet carrying out in full measure his ministry in "the spirit of Elijah." As Elijah lives his last moments

¹⁴⁰ For instance: Roger Tomes, "1 and 2 Kings," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2003), 265; Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 302; Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 271; Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 136. Arnold, *Elie*, 185.

¹⁴¹ Patterson and Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 810; Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 302; Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 287.

¹⁴² Long, *2 Kings*, 19.

as a prophet from Bethel to the Jordan, Elisha starts his prophetic ministry from the Jordan to Bethel. Thus, the journey of 2 Kgs is in essence transitional. Different from what some scholars have suggested, the narrative of 2 Kgs 2 is not a second call account, but the passage reports the actual transference of prophetic power, just as Joshua took over when Moses died.¹⁴³

The ministry of Elijah does not close without leaving the reader a bit puzzled – in the same way his prophetic career starts in 1 Kgs 17. There are potentially several unanswered questions left by the narrator: What is behind Elijah’s journey and why are these specific locations chosen? Why does Elijah attempt to dismiss Elisha more than twice before his ascension? How did Elisha and the sons of prophets become aware of Elijah’s imminent departure? What motivates Elisha’s secrecy? Does Elisha not want Elijah to know that he knows? While some of these questions are beyond the scope of this research, others will be addressed in the following discussion.

Any exploration regarding the complex scholarly debate about the growth and formation of the text of 1 Kgs 2:1–14 is beyond the scope of this research which deals with the final form of the passage as found the BHS.¹⁴⁴

The Journeyings of Elisha and Elijah before His Ascension (2 Kgs 2:1–8)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

[<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו] Way0 2 Kgs 2:01

[<Co> השמים] [<Aj> בסערה] [<Ob> את אליהו] [<Su> יהוה] [<Pr> בהעלות] | InFC 2 Kgs 2:01

¹⁴³ For instance, Gray argues in favor of the two independent calls narrative. Gray, *I & II Kings*, 421–422.

¹⁴⁴ A good summary of this discussion can be found in Long, *2 Kings*, 24–5. Brien provides a good critique of the historical critical dismantling of 1 Kgs 2. Brien, “Portrayal of Prophets in 2 Kgs 2,” 1–16.

[<Co> מן הגלגל	[<Su> אליהו ואלישע	[<Pr> ילך	[<Cj>ו]		WayX	2	Kgs	2:01
[<Co> אל אלישע	[<Su> אליהו	[<Pr> יאמר	[<Cj>ו]		WayX	2	Kgs	2:02
[<Co> פה	[<Ij> נא	[<Pr> שב			ZIm0	2	Kgs	2:02
[<Co> עד בית-אל	[<PO> שלחני	[<Su> יהוה	[<Cj>כי		XQt1	2	Kgs	2:02
[<Su> אלישע	[<Pr> יאמר	[<Cj>ו]			WayX	2	Kgs	2:02
[<Su> יהוה	[<PC> חי				AjC1	2	Kgs	2:02
[<Su> נפשך	[<PC> חי	[<Cj>ו]			AjC1	2	Kgs	2:02
[<PO> אעזבך	[<Cj>אם				xYq0	2	Kgs	2:02
[<Co> בית-אל	[<Pr> ירדו	[<Cj>ו]			Way0	2	Kgs	2:02
[<Su> בני הנביאים	[<Pr> יצאו	[<Cj>ו]			WayX	2	Kgs	2:03
[<PC> בית-אל	[<Re> אשר				NmC1	2	Kgs	2:03
[<Co> אל אלישע	[<Co> אל				Defc	2	Kgs	2:03
[<Co> אליו	[<Pr> יאמרו	[<Cj>ו]			Way0	2	Kgs	2:03
[<Pr> ידעת	[<Qu>ה]				xQt0	2	Kgs	2:03
[<Co> מעל ראשך	[<Ob> את אדניך	[<PC> לקח	[<Su> יהוה	[<Ti> היום	[<Cj>כי		Ptcp	2 Kgs 2:03
[<Pr> יאמר	[<Cj>ו]				Way0	2	Kgs	2:03
[<Pr> ידעתי	[<Su> גם אני				XQt1	2	Kgs	2:03
[<Pr> החשו					ZIm0	2	Kgs	2:03
[<Su> אליהו	[<Co> לו	[<Pr> יאמר	[<Cj>ו]		WayX	2	Kgs	2:04
[<Vo> אלישע					Voct	2	Kgs	2:04
[<Co> פה	[<Ij> נא	[<Pr> שב			ZIm0	2	Kgs	2:04
[<Co> יריחו	[<PO> שלחני	[<Su> יהוה	[<Cj>כי		XQt1	2	Kgs	2:04
[<Pr> יאמר	[<Cj>ו]				Way0	2	Kgs	2:04
[<Su> יהוה	[<PC> חי				AjC1	2	Kgs	2:04
[<Su> נפשך	[<PC> חי	[<Cj>ו]			AjC1	2	Kgs	2:04
[<PO> אעזבך	[<Cj>אם				xYq0	2	Kgs	2:04
[<Co> יריחו	[<Pr> יבאו	[<Cj>ו]			Way0	2	Kgs	2:04
[<Su> בני הנביאים	[<Pr> יגשו	[<Cj>ו]			WayX	2	Kgs	2:05
[<PC> ביריחו	[<Re> אשר				NmC1	2	Kgs	2:05
[<Co> אל אלישע	[<Co> אל				Defc	2	Kgs	2:05
[<Co> אליו	[<Pr> יאמרו	[<Cj>ו]			Way0	2	Kgs	2:05
[<Pr> ידעת	[<Qu>ה]				xQt0	2	Kgs	2:05
[<Co> מעל ראשך	[<Ob> את אדניך	[<PC> לקח	[<Su> יהוה	[<Ti> היום	[<Cj>כי		Ptcp	2 Kgs 2:05
[<Pr> יאמר	[<Cj>ו]				Way0	2	Kgs	2:05
[<Pr> ידעתי	[<Su> גם אני				XQt1	2	Kgs	2:05
[<Pr> החשו					ZIm0	2	Kgs	2:05
[<Su> אליהו	[<Co> לו	[<Pr> יאמר	[<Cj>ו]		WayX	2	Kgs	2:06
[<Co> פה	[<Ij> נא	[<Pr> שב			ZIm0	2	Kgs	2:06
[<Co> הירדנה	[<PO> שלחני	[<Su> יהוה	[<Cj>כי		XQt1	2	Kgs	2:06
[<Pr> יאמר	[<Cj>ו]				Way0	2	Kgs	2:06
[<Su> יהוה	[<PC> חי				AjC1	2	Kgs	2:06
[<Su> נפשך	[<PC> חי	[<Cj>ו]			AjC1	2	Kgs	2:06

[<PO> אעזבך	[<Cj> אם]				xYq0 2 Kgs 2:06
	[<Su> שניהם	[<Pr> ילכו	[<Cj>ו]		WayX 2 Kgs 2:06
[<Pr> הלכו	[<Su><sp> מבני הנביאים / חמשים איש	[<Cj>ו]			WXQt 2 Kgs 2:07
[<Aj> מרחוק	[<Co> מנגד	[<Pr> יעמדו	[<Cj>ו]		Way0 2 Kgs 2:07
[<Co> על הירדן	[<Pr> עמדו	[<Su> שניהם	[<Cj>ו]		WXQt 2 Kgs 2:07
	[<Ob> את אדרתו	[<Su> אליהו	[<Pr> יקח	[<Cj>ו]	WayX 2 Kgs 2:08
		[<Pr> יגלם	[<Cj>ו]		Way0 2 Kgs 2:08
	[<Ob> את המים	[<Pr> יכה	[<Cj>ו]		Way0 2 Kgs 2:08
	[<Co> הנה והנה	[<Pr> יחצו	[<Cj>ו]		Way0 2 Kgs 2:08
[<Co> בחרבה	[<Su> שניהם	[<Pr> יעברו	[<Cj>ו]		WayX 2 Kgs 2:08

¹ When Yahweh was about to take up¹⁴⁵ Elijah in a storm¹⁴⁶ to¹⁴⁷ heaven, Elijah and Elisha went from Gilgal.¹⁴⁸

² Elijah said to Elisha, “Please, stay here, for Yahweh has sent me as far as Bethel.” And Elisha said, “As Yahweh lives and you yourself live, I will not leave you.” And they went down to¹⁴⁹ Bethel.

³ And the sons of prophets who were *in* Bethel came out to Elisha, and they said to him, “Do you know that today Yahweh is going to take your lord from over your head?” And he said, “I also know; be quiet.”

⁴ And Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here, for Yahweh has sent me to¹⁵⁰ Jericho. And he said, “As Yahweh lives and you yourself live, I will not leave you.” And they came to Jericho.

¹⁴⁵ Gesenius clarifies that “the period of time to which an action or occurrence represented by the infinitive construct belongs, must sometimes be inferred from the context, or from the character of the principal tenses.” Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 351. In this context the actual “taking up” of Elijah is about to happen. The narrative of verses 1–11 gives an account of the events that lead up to it.

¹⁴⁶ The word סַעְרָה contains an article in Hebrew. The use of the article here seems to be parallel to that found in the word בְּמַעְרָה in 1 Kgs 18:4. See translation note on this verse. The presence of the article does not necessarily mean that the writer has in mind “a well-known tradition regarding the translation of Elijah” as Gray suggests. Gray, *I & II Kings*, 423.

¹⁴⁷ There is no preposition or ה locale in the Hebrew text. The Hiphil of עלה is not followed by a preposition or ה locale also in Num 20:25; 22:41; 2 Kgs 25:6; Jer 39:5; 2 Chr 2:15. See: Clines, “עלה,” *DCH* 6:411.

¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, Brichto suggests the following translation for verse 1: “The circumstances of YHWH’s carrying off of Elijah, aloft in a whirlwind, were [as follows]: Elijah left (and Elisha) from Gilgal [in this manner:]” Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics*, 158.

¹⁴⁹ The preposition לְ is not an essential element in the valence “someone went down to someplace or someone.” In this valence, the preposition follows the verb 19 times (e.g., Josh 16:3; 1 Sam 25:1; 1 Kgs 21:16) and does not follow the verb another 14 times (e.g., Gen 43:15; Josh 15:10; 1 Sam 15:12). See Text-Fabric query results in section “[They Went Down \[to\] Bethel](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

¹⁵⁰ There is no preposition in Hebrew. Although the preposition לְ complements the verb שלח most of the time (207x), there are a few occasions where the preposition is not found (e.g., Josh 7:2; 1 Sam 4:4; 5:10; 2 Kgs 10:1; 18:7) and the sense remains the same. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[The Valence of the Verb שלח](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

⁵ Then the sons of the prophets, who were in Jericho, approached Elisha, and they said, “Do you know that today Yahweh is going to take your lord from over your head?” And he said, “I also know; be quiet.”

⁶ And Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here, for Yahweh has sent me to the Jordan.” And he said, “As Yahweh lives and you yourself live, I will not leave you.” And the two of them went on.

⁷ And fifty men from the sons of the prophets went and stood on the other side from afar and the two of them stood by the Jordan.

⁸ And Elijah took his cloak, rolled *it* up, and hit the water. And they were divided in two¹⁵¹ and the two of them crossed over on the dry land.

Delimitation

The boundaries of the first and second episodes of the chapter are delineated by the use of the discourse marker וַיְהִי followed by an infinitive form prefixed by a preposition: בְּהֶעֱלֹת וַיְהִי (v. 1) and כְּעָבְרָם וַיְהִי (v. 9).

The first clause of verse 1 (וַיְהִי בְּהֶעֱלֹת וַיְהִי אֶת־אֱלִיָּהוּ יְהוָה בְּהֶעֱלֹת וַיְהִי) “when Yahweh was about to take up Elijah in a storm *to* heaven”) functions as a title for this section that reports the events that precede Elijah’s ascension. Thus, there is no suspense regarding his ascension itself. The drama concerns the timing and who would witness it. The section title is followed by a sequence of wayyqtol verbs that advance the plot leading the two prophets from one point to the other. The geographical movements are mingled with dialogues between Elijah and Elisha and Elisha and the sons of prophets.

From a geographical point of view, verses 1–8 contain the movement from Bethel to the other side of the Jordan. In verse 8, the prophets are already on the other side of the river. The wayyqtol sequence is interrupted only in verse 9 when the discourse marker וַיְהִי introduces the last interaction between Elijah and Elisha.

¹⁵¹ Literally “here and here” (הִנֵּה וְהִנֵּה).

Text-Empirical Analysis

The reader is made aware of Elijah's ascension since the first clause (v. 1a). The early announcement seems to “normalize” one of the most extraordinary events of the OT. This is the only description of a human ascension in the canon. The close parallel is found in Gen 5:24 where Enoch is taken by God (בִּי-לָקַח אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים “for God had taken him”); but there nothing is said about the way the “taking” is carried out. Thus, Elijah figures as a singular character in the OT. While Moses' death is shrouded in mystery (Deut 34:5–6 cf. Jude 9), he had a burial place, even though it is unknown.

While the first temporal subordinate clause (וַיְהִי בְהֶעָלוֹת יְהוָה אֶת-אֵלֵיהֶוּ בְּסַעֲרָה) “When Yahweh was about to take up Elijah in a storm *to* heaven”) indicates the context of the following narrative, the main clause starts the action depicting the two prophets on the move departing from Gilgal (וַיֵּלֶךְ אֵלֵיהֶוּ וְאֵלֵי־שָׁעַר מִן-הַגִּלְגָּל) “and Elijah and Elisha went from Gilgal”). The precise location of Gilgal here is problematic. The most famous Gilgal in the OT is located between Jericho and the Jordan River, and it is mentioned in the narrative of the Conquest (Jos 4:19). However, both the logic of the journey as revealed in the following verses and the mention of a descent to Bethel in verse 2 (וַיֵּרְדוּ בְּיַם-אֵל) “they went down *to* Gilgal”) (the famous Gilgal is 700 ft below sea level) have led most commentators to conclude that this is another city also known as Gilgal¹⁵² (perhaps a city 7.5 miles from Bethel).¹⁵³

¹⁵² Insert here those discussing the issue. Beal's suggestion that the “going down to Bethel” is symbolic seems to be untenable. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 302–303.

¹⁵³ Wade R. Kotter, “Gilgal,” *ABD* 2:1023.

What commentators fail in realizing is that the narrator does not speak about a journey directly from Gilgal to Bethel. The prophets come from Gilgal to a place where Elijah suggests Elisha to stay, for Yahweh had sent him to Bethel (שְׁבִינָא פֹה כִּי יְהוָה) שְׁלַחְנִי עַד־בֵּית־אֵל “please, stay here, for Yahweh has sent me as far as Bethel”) (v. 2). This language shows that this journey happens in two phases: from Bethel to an unknown point and from this point to Bethel. The possibility of a descent from this unknown location to Bethel should not be automatically ruled out, and consequently, this Gilgal could be the city of the twelve stones near to the Jordan. In fact, the mention of Gilgal combined with Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan is meaningful. All these cities have prominence in the conquest account. This is not a “mindless route”¹⁵⁴ or a “pointless journey”¹⁵⁵ as some scholars have suggested. Thus, in this roundabout journey Elijah and Elisha are on the footsteps of Joshua roaming the land that from a theological point of view needs to be conquered again.

Both the reason for the journey and what leads Elijah to request Elisha to stay behind (which is repeated three times) are not declared. It seems clear that the journey is related to urban centers where the sons of prophets are located. Since these groups are connected to Elisha more than Elijah, the suggestion of a farewell tour seems to be unlikely.¹⁵⁶ Having in mind the fact that chapter 2 is about Elisha’s inauguration, the trip may be connected to the succession in an effort to show that Elisha will take Elijah’s place soon. These groups of “sons of prophets” will feature prominently in Elisha’s

¹⁵⁴ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 287.

¹⁵⁵ Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 158.

¹⁵⁶ Wiseman is one of those who propose a farewell tour. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 207.

narrative.¹⁵⁷ In a certain sense, these could be regarded the agents of this “new conquest.”

The reason for Elijah’s attempt to dismiss Elisha is more puzzling. Some authors have suggested that Elisha is passing a series of tests which would qualify him as Elijah’s successor.¹⁵⁸ In light of the fact that Elisha would soon become his successor, it seems probable that Elijah is testing the resolution of his disciple in these final moments. Even though this is Elijah’s journey, the sons of the prophets are said to come to Elisha (וַיֵּצְאוּ אֶל-אֵלִישָׁע בְּנֵי-הַנְּבִיאִים אֲשֶׁר-בֵּית-אֵל אֶל-אֵלִישָׁע “and the sons of prophets who were *in* Bethel came out to Elisha”). The reason why they are not willing to bring up the topic in front of Elijah is not revealed.

The sense of immediacy is reflected in the use of the participle לִקַּח (“to take”). S. R. Driver remarks that the participle of future time represents something already happening and, hence, “if the event designated can only in fact occur after some interval, it asserts forcibly and suggestively the certainty of its approach.”¹⁵⁹ It is exactly here where the narrator sets the suspense of the story: the taking is about to happen, but no one knows when.

¹⁵⁷ The phrase בְּנֵי-הַנְּבִיאִים appears nine times between 1 Kgs 20 – 2 Kgs 9. In these chapters, the phrase designates a prophetic order or guild also known as the school of the prophets. Many studies have dealt with the existence, function, and objectives of these schools. See: Ira M. Price, “The Schools of the Sons of the Prophets,” *OtSt* 8 (1889): 244–249; Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 202; Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 25–27; James G. Williams, “Prophetic ‘Father’: A Brief Explanation of the Term ‘Sons of the Prophets,’” *JBL* 85 (1996): 344–348; R.E.O. White, “Sons of the Prophets,” *BEB* 1985; Wesley J. Bergen, *Elisha and the End of Prophetism* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 57–61; Olusayo Bosun Oladejo, “Prophetic Guilds in the Old Testament as a Paradigm for Socio-Political Transformation in Africa,” *OJT* 16 (2011): 115–136; Jeremiah K. Garrett, “Sons of the Prophets,” *LBD Logos* edition.

¹⁵⁸ Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 159. See also: Tasker, “1 Kings, 2 Kings,” 501; Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 812.

¹⁵⁹ S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some Other Syntactical Questions* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1892), 168.

The same sequence found in verses 2–3 repeats in verses 4–5 when the prophets move from Bethel to Jericho. The third part of the journey towards the Jordan starts in the same way. Elijah commands Elisha to stay in Jericho because Yahweh had sent him to the Jordan (v. 6a-c). As previously, Elisha categorically refuses to leave Elijah (v. 6d-h). However, the pattern found in verses 2–3 and 4–5 is interrupted in verse 7, which also breaks off the sequence of wayyqtols. The phrase וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם (“the two of them went on”), which closes verse 6, may constitute an allusion to Abraham and Isaac on their way to Mt. Moriah (Gen 22:6). If so, then it shows the close and intimate relationship that had developed between the two men, as father and son.

For the first time a specific number of sons of prophets is mentioned (וַחֲמִשִּׁים אִישׁ). The fifty men from the sons of prophets simply go (הֵלְכוּ) instead approaching Elisha as before. As they stand in on the other side from afar (וַיַּעֲמָדוּ מִמְּנַד (מֵרְחוֹק “they stood on the other side from afar”), they witness the crossing of the Jordan as related in verse 8. Such a discontinuity provides the reader with the clue that the “taking” is even more imminent. The third part of the journey closes with the two prophets standing by the Jordan (וַשְׁנֵיהֶם עָמְדוּ עַל־הַיַּרְדֵּן “the two of them stood by the Jordan”) separated from the fifty men.

However, verse 8 shows that the west side of the Jordan was not the destination of Elijah and Elisha. The journey is to continue but in a surprising way. As they carry on with the trip the separation between the two groups increases; only Elisha would witness the actual “taking” of Elijah. In a surprising move, Elijah takes his cloak, wraps it, and hits the river which then splits in two providing a dry path for them (v. 8). The parallel between the opening of the sea by Moses and the Jordan by Joshua is obvious. From

eight occurrences of the word *חֲרָבָה* (“dry land”), five of them relate to these three miracles. Regarding the closest parallel, the direction of the miracle is reverse: while Joshua crosses the Jordan from the east to the west side, Elijah passes from the west to east. Thus, after the crossing, the prophets are in the territory of Moab which is the region of Moses’ death.¹⁶⁰

Narrative Features

Two major narrative features should be mentioned here. The first is the impressive number of omissions and open questions left by the narrator. Such questions, which are mentioned in the initial remarks of this analysis, invite the reader to engage in the narrative and highlight the mysterious aspect of Elijah’s persona. In fact, from the onset the narrator builds Elijah’s character ambiguously making the prophet one of the most fascinating examples of characterization in the Hebrew narrative art.

The second significant feature to be mentioned here is the varied use of language as can be seen in the table below:

Table 14. Variation of Language in 2 Kgs 2:1–8

Variation in the use (or lack) of prepositions	The use of different verbal roots	
כי יהוה שלחני עד-בית-אל “for Yahweh has sent me as far as Bethel” (v. 2)	וירדו בית-אל “and they went down to Bethel” (v. 2)	ויצאו בני-הנביאים “the sons of prophets came out” (v. 3)
כי יהוה שלחני יריחו “for Yahweh has sent me to Jericho” (v. 4)	ויבאו יריחו “they came to Jericho” (v. 4)	ויגשו בני-הנביאים “the sons of the prophets approached” (v. 5)

¹⁶⁰ Hobbs notes that “the connection is fully exploited by Josephus. The G translation of Deut 34:6 reads: *καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν οὐδεὶς τὴν ταφὴν αὐτοῦ ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης* ‘and no one knows the place of his burial to this day.’ Josephus (*Antiq.* Ix.24), referring to the departure of Elijah, echoes this with the statement: *καὶ οὐδεὶς ἔγνω μέχρι τῆς σήμερον αὐτοῦ τὴν τελευτήν* ‘and no one even today knows his end.’” Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 20–21.

Table 14 — *Continued.*

כִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחַנִי הִירְדָנָה sent me to the Jordan” (v. 6)	וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם two of them went on” (v. 6)	וַחֲמָשִׁים אִישׁ (...) הָלְכוּ sons of the prophets went ” (v. 7)
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The variation in vocabulary and grammar breaks the monotony of repetition and seems to be more related to style than meaning. In any case, this is a remarkable aspect of this narrative. The same level of variation is not found in the threefold episode of Elijah and the three companies in 2 Kgs 1.

Structure

In this section dialogues are intermingled with verbs of movement that advance the plot from Gilgal to the east side of Jordan. The unit is divided in three main sections preceded by an introduction. Each section follows the same logic, except the last part of the third one that deviates from the pattern.

Introduction (1a)

I – From Gilgal to Bethel (1b)

A – On the way: interaction between Elijah and Elisha (2)

B – In Bethel: interaction between Elisha and the sons of prophets (3)

II – From Bethel to Jericho

A – On the way: interaction between Elijah and Elisha (4)

B – In Bethel: interaction between Elisha and the sons of prophets (5)

III – From Jericho to the Jordan

A – On the way: interaction between Elijah and Elisha (6)

B – At the Jordan: The sons of prophets observe from afar (7)

C – Elijah and Elisha cross the Jordan (8)

The interruption in the sequence found in verse 7 shows that the climax of the episode is nearby. The opening of the Jordan river announces the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. It defies the everyday life breaking its normality. When seen

backwards, the Jordan river becomes a portal: from the east to west is the entry of the Promise Land and from the west to the east is the entry of heaven.¹⁶¹

Elisha's Request (2 Kgs 2:9–10)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

	[<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 2 Kgs 2:09		
	[<Ps> כעברם]		InfC 2 Kgs 2:09		
[<Co> אל אלישע]	[<Pr> אמר]	[<Su> אליהו]	[<Cj>ו]	WXQt 2 Kgs 2:09	
	[<Pr> שאל]		ZIm0 2 Kgs 2:09		
[<Co> לך]	[<Pr> אעשה]	[<Ob> מה]		xYq0 2 Kgs 2:09	
[<Co> מעמך]	[<Pr> אלקח]	[<Cj> בטרים]		xYq0 2 Kgs 2:09	
	[<Su> אלישע]	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]	WayX 2 Kgs 2:09	
[<PC> אלי]	[<Su><sp> ברוחך / פי שנים]	[<Ij> נא]	[<Pr> יהי]	[<Cj>ו]	WYqX 2 Kgs 2:09
	[<Pr> יאמר]	[<Cj>ו]		Way0 2 Kgs 2:10	
	[<Pr> הקשית]		ZQt0 2 Kgs 2:10		
	[<Pr> לשאול]		InfC 2 Kgs 2:10		
[<Ob> אתי]	[<Pr> תראה]	[<Cj> אם]		xYq0 2 Kgs 2:10	
[<Co> מאתך]	[<PC> לקח]		Ptcp 2 Kgs 2:10		
[<Mo> כן]	[<PC> לך]	[<Pr> יהי]		ZYq0 2 Kgs 2:10	
	[<Ng> אין]	[<Cj> אם]	[<Cj>ו]	NmCl 2 Kgs 2:10	
	[<Pr> יהיה]	[<Ng> לא]		xYq0 2 Kgs 2:10	

⁹ Then,¹⁶² after they crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “ask what I may do for you before I am taken away from you. And Elisha said, “let a double portion¹⁶³ of your spirit¹⁶⁴ be upon me.”

¹⁰ And he said, “you have asked a difficult thing.¹⁶⁵ If you see me being taken from you, let it be so for you, but if not, let it not be for you.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Jesus coming as lightning from east to west in Matt 24:27.

¹⁶² The conjunction “then” conveys the meaning of וַיְהִי as a transition marker.

¹⁶³ Literally, “mouth of two” (פִּי־שְׁנַיִם). The expression has the same sense only in Deut 21:17.

¹⁶⁴ Regarding the use of the preposition בַּ in רִוַּח, it should be kept in mind that this preposition “is not very specialized semantically.” Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 280.

¹⁶⁵ The expression לְשֹׂאֵל לְקַשְׁיֹת represents a major grammatical difficulty in the passage. According to Joüon and Muraoka, “The object of a Hifil expressing an adverbial idea (§ 54d) is almost always introduced by ל: Jr 1.12 לְרֵאֵזוֹת לְרֵבֶבֶת לְרֵאֵזוֹת lit. *you have done well to see = you have seen well*; 1Kg 14.9 וַתֵּרַע לַעֲשׂוֹת *you have acted badly*. The *adverbial* idea is expressed in this way (§ 102g).” Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 406–407. However, as they also recognize the expression

Delimitation

This short pericope starts with the discourse marker וַיְהִי followed by the infinitive of עבר (כְּעֵבֶרֶם) with the preposition בְּ attached to it. The use of the preposition normally indicates that “the action of the infinitive construct occurs *just before* the events described in the main clause.”¹⁶⁶ Apparently, 2 Kgs 2:1–14 is organized by the use of the discourse marker וַיְהִי followed by a non-wayyqtol clause that introduces the three smaller episodes of this unit. In verse 11 the last episode is also introduced in the same way.

In verses 9 and 10, the last interaction between Elijah and Elisha is recorded. The prophets are alone again and Elijah grants to his disciple a last wish. He knows that his time has come, and they would be separated very soon. The scene evokes the image of a father granting to his son a last wish in the moment of farewell.

Text-Empirical Analysis

At this point, the prophets are in the other side of the Jordan when Elijah grants to Elisha a bold request: “ask what I may do for you” (שְׁאַל מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ). The modal sense can be inferred from the natural limitation of Elijah in complying with the fulfillment of עשה as the context itself suggests. A similar offering was granted by God to Solomon in 1 Kgs 3:15 (cf. 2 Chr 1:7).

Without hesitation, Elisha expresses his daring desire. He wants “a double portion” of Elijah’s spirit (וַיְהִי־נָא פִי־שְׁנַיִם בְּרוּחֶךָ אֵלַי) “let a double portion of your spirit be upon me”). The use of the jussive וַיְהִי combined with the particle אֵלַי may indicate some

הַקְּשִׁיָּה לְשֵׂאוֹל “cannot be extended to the adverbial meaning; the meaning is: you have made a difficult request (and not: *you have requested with difficulty*).” Ibid, 407.

¹⁶⁶ Merwe, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 157.

acknowledgment on the part of Elisha about the nature of his wish. The construct פִּי־שְׁנַיִם has the sense of “double portion” only in Deut 21:17 in the context of fathers’ legal obligation to grant a double portion of inheritance to the firstborn. Then, in light of this use in Deuteronomy, it seems reasonable to suppose that Elisha is not asking to be twice as Elijah was or had, but his request is “an acknowledgment of a spiritual birthright, that he might be regarded as the first-born spiritual son of the elder prophet.”¹⁶⁷

The use of “double portion” in connection with “spirit” is peculiar in the sense that it combines a quantifiable measure (פִּי־שְׁנַיִם) with an unquantifiable entity (רוּחַ). Although the “spirit of Elijah” is a nonmaterial entity, its manifestation is visible and tangible. It is the special gift granted by Yahweh that “enables the prophet to proclaim God’s will, but also lets him perform acts that surpass the limits of human strength and nature. Only the spirit gives authority and superiority to the prophet.”¹⁶⁸ In a certain sense, the granting of Elijah’s spirit relates to the confirmation of Elisha as his legitimate successor which is the key point of the narrative of 2 Kgs 2. The signs performed by Elisha in the second part of the chapter reveal the tangible manifestation of this spiritual succession.¹⁶⁹ In fact, some have suggested that the number of signs and miracles performed by Elisha corroborate the fulfilment of his request.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Nichol, *SDABC*, 2:851–852.

¹⁶⁸ Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, 235.

¹⁶⁹ See: Rickie D. Moore, “Finding the Spirit of Elijah in the Story of Elisha and the Lost Axe Head: 2 Kings 6:1–7 in the Light of 2 Kings 2,” *OTE* 31 (2018): 780–789.

¹⁷⁰ In his article, Nachman Levine argues that “Elisha’s miracles not only double Elijah’s but seem to parallel and multiply them in their themes, elements and language.” Although some of the parallels presented by him are forceful (based on coincidence of words and narrative trivial parallel), he succeeds to show how Elisha goes beyond his master. Nachman Levine, “Twice as Much of Your Spirit: Pattern, Parallel and Paronomasia in the Miracles of Elijah and Elisha,” *JSOT* 85 (1999): 25. Unfortunately, the author does not provide an enumerated list of their miracles. The idea that Elijah did eight miracles and Elisha sixteen dates back to the Midrash. In his commentary to 2 Kgs 3:1, Rashi refers to the “Thirty-two

Elijah's response manifests the fact that his disciple's request is beyond his ability to grant (הַקְּשִׁיתָ לְשֹׂאֵל) "you have asked a difficult thing") (v. 10). Elisha's being able to see Elijah's "taking" (מֵאַתָּה אִם-תִּרְאֶה אֹתִי לְקַח) becomes the condition for Elisha's request, and such a possibility is only in God's hand. Indeed, this eyesight is a major motif in this first part of 2 Kgs 2. It is connected with the insistence of Elisha in not being dismissed by Elijah (see his oath and interaction with the sons of the prophets). In the culmination of this motif, the narrator highlights that Elisha saw (וַיֵּאֱלֹשֶׁע רְאָה) when Elijah was ascending to heavens in the storm (v. 12).

Narrative Features

No significant or new narrative features are found in this section.

Structure

No clear individual structural elements are found in this passage beyond those of the normal Hebrew grammar.

Methods of Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yose Haglili" where the author proposes that the duplication indicates the fulfillment of "a double amount of your spirit upon me." "Rashi on II Kings, II Kings 3:1," Sefaria, https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_II_Kings.2.16.1?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en. Access in Sept 1, 2021. There is a certain amount of subjectivity when authors are listing the miracles as disagreement appears among them. For instance, Michal Hunt proposes 8 for Elijah and 16 for Elisha while David Pyles suggests 14 for Elijah and 28 for Elisha. See: Michal Hunt, "The Book of 2 Kings. Lesson 2: Chapter 4:1–6:7. Part 1: The Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The Miracles of Elisha." Agape Bible Study. Available at: https://www.agapebiblestudy.com/Kings_2/Kings_2_Lesson_2.htm. Access in Sept 1, 2021. David Pyles, "A Double Portion of Thy Spirit." The Berean Christian Bible Study Resources. Available at: <http://www.bcbsr.com/survey/eli.html>. Access in Sept 1, 2021. By and large, the reason behind the difference relates to the inclusion or not of prophecy as a miracle and the number of prophecies considered. However, even within an author's list some inconsistencies may be found. For instance, in his list, Hunt includes three acts of prophesizing by Elisha (relief from enemy—2 Kgs 6:8–23; the death of Ben-Hadad and the rise of Hazael—2 Kgs 8:7–15; and Israel's defeat of King Hazael—2 Kgs 13:14–19). However, he does not include any prophesizing activity for Elijah (e.g., the destiny of Ahab's house in 1 Kgs 21). It is undeniable that there is a close parallel between some of the Elijah and Elisha miracles. It is also evident that Elisha's ministry was much broader than that of his predecessor. Nevertheless, the "double portion" does not need to indicate a literal duplication of wonders but should be understood in the context of the relationship of father and firstborn as suggested before in this chapter.

Elijah's Ascension and Replacement (2 Kgs 2:11–14)

Text-syntactical Organization and Translation

	[<Pr> יהי] [<Cj>ו]		Way0 2 Kgs 2:11
[<Mo> הלוך ודבר] [<PC> הלכים] [<Su> המה]			Ptcp 2 Kgs 2:11
[<Su> רכב אש וסוסי אש] [<Ij> הנה] [<Cj>ו]			NmCl 2 Kgs 2:11
[<Co> בין שניהם] [<Pr> יפרדו] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:11
[<Co> השמים] [<Aj> בסערה] [<Su> אליהו] [<Pr> יעל] [<Cj>ו]			WayX 2 Kgs 2:11
[<PC> ראה] [<Su> אלישע] [<Cj>ו]			Ptcp 2 Kgs 2:12
[<PC> מצעק] [<Su> הוא] [<Cj>ו]			Ptcp 2 Kgs 2:12
[<Vo> אבי אבי]			Voct 2 Kgs 2:12
[<PC> רכב ישראל ופרשיו]			NmCl 2 Kgs 2:12
[<Mo> עוד] [<PO> ראהו] [<Ng> לא] [<Cj>ו]			WxQ0 2 Kgs 2:12
[<Co> בבגדיו] [<Pr> יחזק] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:12
[<Co> לשנים קרעים] [<PO> יקרעם] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:12
[<Ob> את אדרת אליהו] [<Pr> ירם] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:13
[<Co> מעליו] [<Pr> נפלה] [<Re> אשר]			xQt0 2 Kgs 2:13
[<Pr> ישב] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:13
[<Co> על שפת הירדן] [<Pr> יעמד] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:13
[<Ob> את אדרת אליהו] [<Pr> יקח] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:14
[<Co> מעליו] [<Pr> נפלה] [<Re> אשר]			xQt0 2 Kgs 2:14
[<Ob> את המים] [<Pr> יכה] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:14
[<Pr> יאמר] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:14
[<Mo><sp> הוא / אף] [<Su><ap> אלהי אליהו / יהוה] [<PC> איה]			NmCl 2 Kgs 2:14
[<Ob> את המים] [<Pr> יכה] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:14
[<Co> הנה והנה] [<Pr> יחצו] [<Cj>ו]			Way0 2 Kgs 2:14
[<Su> אלישע] [<Pr> יעבר] [<Cj>ו]			WayX 2 Kgs 2:14

¹¹ Then,¹⁷¹ they were talking as they went,¹⁷² and look, a chariotry¹⁷³ of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them and Elijah went up in a storm *to* the heavens.

¹² And Elisha was seeing. And he cried out, “My father, my father; the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he did not see him again. And he grasped his clothes and tore them in two pieces.

¹³ And he took up Elijah’s cloak, which had fallen from upon him, and he returned and stood on the bank of Jordan.

¹⁷¹ The conjunction “then” conveys the meaning of וַיְהִי as a transition marker.

¹⁷² “The postpositive inf. Abs. followed by a second inf. Abs. expresses the simultaneity or quasi-simultaneity of a second action. (cf. 1 Sam 6:12; Josh 6:13; Judg 14:9; Gen 8:7).” Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 395.

¹⁷³ The noun רֶכֶב is usually used collectively. See ESV.

¹⁴ He took Elijah's mantle which had fallen from upon him and struck the waters. And he said, "Where is, indeed, Yahweh the God of Elijah?"¹⁷⁴ And he struck the waters and they were divided in two, and Elisha crossed over.

Delimitation

As mentioned before, the last section of 2 Kgs 2:1–14 is also introduced by the discourse marker וַיְהִי followed by a non-finite verbal clause (in this case a participial clause instead of an infinitive one). In this subunit, Elijah ascends to heaven leaving Elisha as his successor. For sake of limitation, the following analysis ends with verse 14 where Elisha crosses back across the Jordan in the first demonstration of Elijah's spirit residing in him. From this point on, Elisha starts his solo ministry following one of the greatest prophets of the OT.

Text-Empirical Analysis

The sentence הָמָּה הִלְכִים הַלֹּדֶד וַדְּבַר ("they were talking as they went") increases the suspense postponing the climax of the narrative and providing the context for the interjection וַהֲגִה which interrupts the normalcy of walking and talking to introduce the final scene of Elijah.

The abrupt appearance of fiery chariotry and flaming horses (רֶכֶב-אֵשׁ וְסוּסֵי אֵשׁ) separates the prophets. The image of chariots and horses of fire is restricted to the Elijah and Elisha cycles. In 2 Kgs 6:15, it designates רֶכֶב-אֵשׁ וְסוּסֵי אֵשׁ ("a chariotry of fire and horses of fire") the heavenly protective force around Elisha and his servant. However, the image does not represent the same thing in the two pericopes. Here, the chariots and

¹⁷⁴ Here I rejected the Masoretic punctuation which connects אָרִי-הוּא with the following clause. Mordechai and Tadmor recognize the awkwardness of the syntax here. Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, 33.

horses function as a vehicle escorting the prophet in his stormy ascension from earthly to heavenly dimension.¹⁷⁵

Both fire and storm appear in OT theophanies (cf. Gen 15:17; Exod 3:2; 13:21 and Job 38:1; 40:6).¹⁷⁶ The combination of storm (סַעֲרָה) and fire (אֵשׁ) occurs in the description of God's throne of Ezek 1:4. However, fire is a particularly important motif throughout the Elijah narrative. The element develops the theme of God's existence (1 Kgs 18), his real presence (1 Kgs 19) and his judgment (1 Kgs 21; 2 Kgs 2). Fire is also part of the polemics against Baal that is a major feature in the Elijah cycle.¹⁷⁷ The mention of storm (סַעֲרָה) and chariotry (רֶכֶב) may also contain polemic significance in the context of Baalism. Anderson observes that "the whirlwind belongs to the imagery of the storm-god, and Elijah's chariot of fire is a direct hint at Baal's designation as "rider of the clouds" at Ugarit."¹⁷⁸

The clause וַיַּעַל אֵלָיוּ בְּסַעֲרָה הַשָּׁמַיִם ("and Elijah went up in a storm to the heavens") (v. 11) relieves the tension created by the narrator in verse 1. Different from the popular view, the fiery chariots and horses are not the vehicle for Elijah's ascension to heaven but the storm (סַעֲרָה). It is also possible that the chariots were part of the storm, and that the narrator is using synecdoche to include the chariots in the storm. This

¹⁷⁵ Vos suggests that Elijah "represented the divine forces that were Israel's true defense. The chariot as the greatest weapon then known was symbolic of God's supreme power, and Elijah was the instrument through which God's power was operative in Israel." Vos, *1, 2 Kings*, 139.

¹⁷⁶ See Michael M. Homan, "Fire," *EDB* 461; R. D. Patterson, "סַעֲרָה," *TWOT*, 630.

¹⁷⁷ Bronner discusses several common motifs between the Ugaritic legends about Baal and the biblical account about Elijah and Elisha (e.g., fire, rain, oil and corn, healing, resurrection, ascent, river). Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 35–49.

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh's Appropriation of Baal*, 71.

peculiar experience does not find precedent in the OT, and it is not found later in the biblical canon, except in the experience of Jesus.¹⁷⁹ Elijah’s ascension opens the door for his return and has instigated the imagination of interpreters since antiquity.¹⁸⁰ The idea of a human being ascending to the heavenly realm without facing death is singular. Such a uniqueness has led some to affirm that the motif of an actual ascension to the divine sphere cannot be earlier than the Greco-Roman period since such an idea would be “unimaginable to the ancient Israelites and Judahites.”¹⁸¹ However, only “hermeneutical gymnastics” as that practiced by J. Edward Wright in his study on the topic can prevent the reader from understanding the ascension of Elijah to heaven as the obvious meaning of the text. It is true that the narrator does not explain why Elijah is chosen among all the great characters of the OT to be translated and nothing is said about his place in “heaven” after his ascension. But such an omission is not foreign to the nature of the Hebrew narrative.

In the narrative dynamics of 2 Kgs 2 the phrase וַיֵּאֱלֹהִים רִאֲוֶה (“and Elisha was seeing”) is a way to say that Yahweh granted Elisha’s request for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. The use of the participles provides a graphical description of the scene. In awe, Elisha exclaims “my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen

¹⁷⁹ In his article, Steven Edward Harris explores some parallels between Jesus and Elijah through a figural interpretation where his ascension plays a major role. See: Steven Edward Harris, “Greater Resurrections and a Greater Ascension: Figural Interpretation of Elijah and Jesus,” *JTI* 13 (2019): 21–35. The typological import of Elijah’s ascension will be explored in the next chapter.

¹⁸⁰ Louis Ginzberg, Henrietta Szold, and Paul Radin, *Legends of the Jews*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 992–1022. See more about the history of interpretation on next chapter.

¹⁸¹ J. Edward Wright, “Whither Elijah? The Ascension of Elijah in Biblical and Extrabiblical Traditions” in *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael Stone*, ed. Ester G. Chazon, David Satran, and Ruth A. Clements, *SJSJ* 89 (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 2004), 138.

(אָבִי אָבִי רָכָב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו) “my father, my father; the chariots of Israel and its horsemen”) (v. 12). The expression אָבִי אָבִי (“my father, my father”) has been variously interpreted.¹⁸² In any case, the title seems to express “his deep respect for Elijah and recognizes his prophetic leadership”¹⁸³ or the intimate father-son relationship that had been developing as they worked together. A certain amount of speculation can be seen in the interpretation of רָכָב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו (“the chariots of Israel and its horsemen”).¹⁸⁴ However, in its narrative context the phrase is based on Elisha’s sight. Since the exclamation is followed by the act of tearing clothes (וַיִּחַזַק בְּבִגְדָיו וַיִּקְרַעֵם לְשֵׁנִים קָרְעִים) “and he grasped his clothes and tore them in two pieces”) (v. 12), it likely carries astonishment added to grief. The complete exclamation is found again in connection with Elisha’s death which maybe indicating “at the end of his life that, undeniably, he embodied the spirit of Elijah (2 Kgs 13:14).”¹⁸⁵

It seems evident that the transference of Elijah’s cloak represents the transference of power from the prophet to Elisha as a symbol of his new ministry in the spirit of his predecessor.¹⁸⁶ At this point, the narrator focuses the reader’s attention on the cloak by

¹⁸² A title designating the head of the prophetic guild: Williams, “Prophetic ‘Father,’” 348. A title of a decipher of ecstatic enunciation: Anthony Phillips, “The Ecstatics’ Father,” in *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented in Honor to David Winton Thomas on His Retirement from the Regius Professorship of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge*, ed. Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars (London, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 194. Simply an exclamation expressing a mild anxiety: Jack R. Lundblom, “Elijah’s Chariot Ride,” *JJS* 24 (1973): 47.

¹⁸³ Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 304.

¹⁸⁴ Kittel has popularized the idea that “the Elijah-Elisha tradition borrowed motifs from local solar mythology (Kittel, pp. i88ff.), and took chariot and horses to stand for the deity.” Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2:385–386.

¹⁸⁵ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 290.

¹⁸⁶ See the remarks about the significance of Elijah’s mantle in the previous analysis of 1 Kgs 19:13, 19. Contrary to the general agreement, Heller believes that “there is nothing particularly miraculous or theologically significant with regard to the mantle itself; it is not representative of the transfer of the

designating it twice as the cloak “that fell from upon him” (אֲשֶׁר נָפְלָה מֵעָלָיו) “which had fallen from upon him”) (vv. 13, 14). Thus, having in mind the main thrust of chapter 2, the transference of the cloak plays a major role in the climax of the narrative.

The repetition of Elijah’s miracle performed by Elisha when the waters of the Jordan are split apart again is the public demonstration that he is the “new Elijah” (v. 14).¹⁸⁷ After about five or six years of training,¹⁸⁸ he is ready to become the prophet of Israel. At this point, Elijah’s story finishes. It is important to notice that although his ascension is the climax of the chapter, it is not its main topic. The ascension functions as a historical turning point. The keynote of the narrative is the continuation of Elijah’s ministry through Elisha. Only three clauses are used to describe the ascension while several others report Elisha’s reaction to it (including the picking up of Elijah’s cloak). There is no speculation about Elijah’s condition in heaven. Instead, the narrator’s priority is on what happens on the earth; and at this point the work should continue.

Although the ascension of Elijah does not receive much attention in the narrative, the peculiar and extraordinary nature of the event should not be underestimated. The episode finds parallel only in Enoch’s (Gn 5:24; Heb 11:5) and Jesus’ experiences. Indeed, the verb ἀναλαμβάνω describes the taking up of Elijah in 2 Kgs 2:11 and Jesus in Mark 16:19 and 1 Tim 3:16. As it will be seen in the last part of this research, Elijah’s ascension has significant implications for his typology.

power or authority of Elijah to Elisha. The mantle simply “falls” to the ground as Elijah ascends.” Heller, *The Character of Elijah and Elisha*, 119.

¹⁸⁷ The parting of the water may also contain certain polemic significance against Baal who was thought to have the water under its control. Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh’s Appropriation of Baal*, 71.

¹⁸⁸ David J. Zucker, “Elijah and Elisha: Part I Moses and Joshua,” *JBQ* 40 (2012): 228.

Narrative Features

The use of contrastive narration where much more attention is given to Elisha's reaction than the translation itself is on some degree surprising. Notwithstanding the uniqueness of Elijah's take-off in the storm, the narrator zooms in in the aftermath of his ascension focusing on the continuity of the prophetic ministry through Elisha. The narrative details emphasize the transference of power and the fulfillment of Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. As Elijah leaves the scene, the spotlight is not on him, but in his successor who continues the work.

Structure

Although the unity can be outlined as below, the reader can attain its structural function when seeing the chapter as a whole.

The translation of Elijah (וַיַּעַל אֵלֵיהוּ בְּסַעֲרָה הַשָּׁמַיִם) (v. 11)

The reaction of Elisha (וְהוּא מְצַעֵק) (v. 12)

The transference of power (וַיִּרַם אֶת־אֲדָרְתוֹ אֵלָיו) (v. 13)

The confirmation and evidence of succession (וַיִּבֶן אֶת־הַמִּיִּם וַיַּחֲצֵהוּ הַנָּהָר וַהֲנִיחָהוּ) (v. 14)

Excursus: Elijah as a New Moses

Since early times in the history of interpretation the connection between Elijah and Moses has been noted. For instance, one Midrash says that “you find that Moses and Elijah were alike in respect.”¹⁸⁹ Today, there are quite a few topics in the areas of OT

¹⁸⁹ Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 4, 85. The Pesikta Rabbat was “composed in Talmudic Israel (c.600 — c.900 CE). Pesikta Rabbati (“Great Sections”) is a medieval book of midrash on weekly Torah readings and those read on special occasions. The term “rabbati” (great) is meant to distinguish the work from the earlier and smaller Pesikta d’Rav Kahana. Pesikta Rabbati contains midrashim from Pesikta d’Rav Kahana and other earlier sources.” “Pesikta Rabbati,” Sefaria, https://www.sefaria.org/Pesikta_Rabbati?lang=bi. In the Piska 4, nineteen parallels between Moses and Elijah are indicated.

scholarship in which interpreters can find full agreement. Among these is the recognition of significant parallels between Elijah and Moses many of which have already been indicated throughout this chapter. Such a recognition is found spanning the spectrum from more liberal to more conservative approaches to 1 Kgs 17 – 2 Kgs 2. From a more liberal standpoint, White admits that “this incessant recollection of Moses is best explained as an attempt to identify Elijah as the prophet of his time, the special intermediary of YHWH, as Moses was in his time (Cf. Num 11:14, 126-8).”¹⁹⁰ From a more conservative point of view, Beale recognizes the Messianic import of these parallels in light of the NT revelation of Jesus.¹⁹¹

However, disagreement emerges when interpreters consider the meaning and extension of these parallels. Regarding the meaning, two major positions are identified. In the first group, scholars observe that the parallels are there to emphasize the differences between Moses and Elijah. Heller, for instance, affirms that in some cases Elijah is an “anti-Moses.”¹⁹² In the same line of thought, Childs, commenting on the theophany of 1 Kgs 19, declares that “the parallels to Moses only serve to lay stress on

¹⁹⁰ Marsha C. White, *The Elijah Legends and Jehu's Coup* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997), 5. White concludes that the use of these parallels attests the lack of historicity in the Elijah cycle. He is a character imaginatively built to resemble Moses. He says that “to the extent that the Elijah of the legends is a second Moses he is not the historical Elijah, but a recreation of the predecessor upon whom he is modeled. . . . The author's purpose was to ground Elijah in Moses's unique prophetic authority, not to create either a coherent narrative or a faithful historical representation. White, *The Elijah Legends*, 11.

¹⁹¹ He says that “the apparent purpose of the episode in 2 Kings 2 is to identify both Elijah and Elisha as prophets like Moses and Joshua in leading Israel's restoration back to worship of Yahweh in the midst of the nation's capitulation to Baal worship, so that even before Matthew's application of this exodus motif to Jesus, it had also been applied to Elisha, perhaps serving as a precedent for the later use in the NT.” Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 413.

¹⁹² Heller, *The Characters of Elijah and Elisha*, 82.

the differences between the two events,”¹⁹³ which only reinforce the fact that “Elijah is no new Moses.”¹⁹⁴ Indeed, the sharpest contrasts between Elijah and Moses are found in 1 Kgs 19. Three can be mentioned here. First, while Moses is summoned by Yahweh to go up to the top of the mountain, Elijah starts his trip to renounce his prophetic call hiding in a cave.¹⁹⁵ Second, while Yahweh reveals himself to Moses through thunder, fire, and earthquake, he discloses himself to Elijah through the “thin silence” which is preceded by the same elements found in the book of Exodus that here mark the absence of Yahweh instead of his presence. Finally, while Moses intercedes for the people, Elijah indicts them pointing their failures and evil inclinations.

Although these contrasts should not be disregarded, they do not support the position that Elijah is not modeled according to Moses. Indeed, the contrary seems to be true. They serve as an additional evidence of their paralleled lives. It is significant that these dissimilarities are found in 1 Kgs 19 where the narrator records Elijah’s failure. In his failure, Elijah joins to Moses whose record is also marred by a moment of weakness (Num 20:7–12). Both prophets fail in crucial moments in their ministries. In fact, the failure motif is found in several, although not all, messianic types in the OT. Such a motif develops the hope in the coming Messiah, who would not experience failure. Although Elijah was a prophet like Moses, he was not *the* prophet.

The second group recognizes that these parallels point to a like-Moses description of Elijah. The most detailed research about the nature of the parallels between the two

¹⁹³ Childs, “On Reading the Elijah Narrative,” 135.

¹⁹⁴ Childs, “On Reading the Elijah Narrative,” 135.

¹⁹⁵ Another related contrast is found in the disposition of Moses to see Yahweh and Elijah’s willingness to stay hidden.

prophets in recent years is undertaken by Havilah Dharamraj in the study entitled “A Prophet like Moses? A Narrative-Theological Reading of the Elijah Stories.” The author not only points to isolated parallels but also shows how Moses functions as a paradigm to evaluate Elijah showing that both lives are structurally related. He concludes that “this prophetic narrative recreates for a new generation in dire need of deliverance – from their own king and from their own waywardness – a prophet like Moses.”¹⁹⁶ In a similar vein, Sang Jin Kim affirms that such parallels comprehend literary, conceptual, and theological correspondences that associate in a special way the two narratives.¹⁹⁷

While the narratives contain a number of correspondences there is also divergence. Dharamraj identifies 27 direct parallels¹⁹⁸ between Elijah and Moses, Hagan recognizes nine,¹⁹⁹ White finds 13,²⁰⁰ and Arnold 12.²⁰¹ The discrepancy among the authors only underlines the subjectivity often involved in the discovery and defining of parallels in biblical studies. The lack of clear criteria to establish real correspondences has led some to artificially force the existence of parallels, like the correlation between

¹⁹⁶ Havilah Dharamraj, *A Prophet Like Moses? A Narrative-Theological Reading of the Elijah Stories* (Milton Keynes, U.K.; Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2011), 225. Dharamraj identifies the major concentration of correspondences in 1 Kgs 19 and 2 Kgs 2. Simon also highlights the correspondences between the two generations: “Elijah in his generation is like Moses in his generation.” Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives*, 168. Gregory also adds “the connection with Moses remains the most extensive and significant.” ... “The people of Israel, in Moses’ or Elijah’s time, are unimaginatively similar.” Gregory, “Irony and the Unmasking of Elijah,” 144.

¹⁹⁷ Sang Jin Kim, “The Literary and the Theological Functions of the Miracle Narratives Associated with Moses/Joshua and Elijah/Elisha” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2008), 134.

¹⁹⁸ Dharamraj, *Prophet Like Moses?*, 218–221.

¹⁹⁹ Hagan, “First and Second Kings”, 162.

²⁰⁰ White, *The Elijah Legends and Jehu’s Coup*, 5.

²⁰¹ Arnold, *Elie*, 39–41.

the veil of Moses and the cloak of Elijah²⁰² or between the widow's act of gathering sticks (מקששת עצים) and the gathering of sticks on Sabbath that resulted in the stoning of the transgressor in Num 15: 32–33.²⁰³

Although a summary of the most persuasive parallels between the two prophets will be provided in the next chapter,²⁰⁴ two groups of correspondences should be mentioned at this point. The first concerns the cluster of miracles that Kim considers the “the two major OT miracle periods.”²⁰⁵ Gilmour also remarks that “miracles that interfere with nature in such a dramatic way are not recorded in the time between Moses/Joshua and Elijah/Elisha, greatly exalting these prophets.”²⁰⁶ Such a cluster of miracles in the Elijah and Elisha narratives point to the importance of the time in which they were ministering.

The last group of correspondence is found in the prophetic succession between Elijah–Elisha and Moses–Joshua. In his dissertation, Kim identifies four parallels between them as can be seen below:

²⁰² Avioz, “The Book of Kings in Recent Research (Part II),” 25.

²⁰³ Kalmanofsky, “Women of God,” 62.

²⁰⁴ Many other lists of parallels can be found within the scholarly literature: Robert P. Carrol, “The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel,” *VT* (1969): 410–411; Celso Alcaina Canosa, “Eliseo sucede a Elías,” *EB* 31 (1972): 324–329; See also: G. Fohrer, *Elia*, ATANT 53, 2nd ed. (Zurich: Zwingli, 1968), 100; F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 190–194; W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1984), 167; Kathryn Roberts, “God, Prophet, and the King Eating and Drinking on the Mountain in First Kings 18.41,” *CBQ* (2000): 635–637. Roi, “1 Kings 19”, 38; Zucker, “Elijah and Elijah: Part I,” 226–227.

²⁰⁵ Kim, “The Literary and the Theological Functions,” 276. Kim considers the first formational the second reformatinal.

²⁰⁶ Gilmour, *Juxtaposition and the Elijah Cycle*, 85–86. Kim concurs with Gilmour saying that “these patterns of Elijah and Elisha miracle narratives show remarkable parallels to those of Moses and Joshua and help to differentiate the Elijah and Elisha narratives from other miracle narratives, which contain sparse miracles.” Kim, “The Literary and the Theological Functions,” 134.

Table 15. Prophetic Sucession

Elijah–Elisha	Moses–Joshua
Elisha’s special relationship with Elijah (2 Kgs 2:2, 4, 6)	Joshua’s special relationship with Moses (Exod 32:17; 33:11)
Elisha’s retaining of the same title as his predecessor's (2 Kgs 4:25; 6:9)	Joshua’s retaining of the same title as his predecessor's (Josh 24:9).
Elijah left his spiritual legacy behind after his departure (2 Kgs 2:13)	Moses left his spiritual legacy to Joshua after his departure (Deut 31:7-8; 34:9)
Elisha’s Jordan crossing (2 Kgs 2:14)	Joshua’s Jordan crossing (Josh 3-4) ²⁰⁷

The theological implications of these parallels will be further discussed in chapter 5.

Excursus: The Relationship between Elijah and Elisha

The prophetic succession between Elijah and Elisha raises the question about the relationship between the two prophets. Although there is space only for a cursory treatment of theme here, a few remarks that are in order follow next.

The nature of the relationship between the two prophets can be explored from two distinct angles. Firstly, the unique account of the succession reinforces the close connection between them, and it is modeled according to the Moses–Joshua succession.²⁰⁸ In both cases there is a mentorship period in which a master–disciple relationship is developed. This period is followed by the actual succession where the substitute replicates some miracles of his predecessor. David Zucker observes that “Joshua not only follows Moses as leader of the Israelites, he consciously repeats events

²⁰⁷ Arnold, *Elie*, 152–153.

²⁰⁸ Claude Coulot, “L’Investiture d’Élisée par Élie (1R 19, 19–21),” *RSR* 57 (1983): 92.

in Moses' life."²⁰⁹ The same can be said of Elisha, who according to Zucker "thinks of himself in part as a latter-day Joshua."²¹⁰

Mostly, the replications are found in miracles narratives that constitute the second angle from which the relationship between Elijah and Elisha can be explored. The idea that Elisha performed the double of Elijah's miracles dates back to Kimhi²¹¹ and is still upheld by modern interpreters today²¹² as the fulfillment of the double spirit granted to Elisha. Even if the number of miracles does not perfectly match the double proportion 8 X 16, it is clear enough that the Elisha's ministry surpassed that of his successor not only in the number of miracles/wonders but also in its time and efficacy. Some have calculated the duration of Elijah's ministry as 18 years (ca. 867–847 BC) while Elisha's ministry seems to have extended for about 50 years (ca. 847–798 BC).²¹³ In terms of efficacy, Elisha not only anoints Jehu as Israel's king who is instrumental in the annihilation of the Omride dynasty and Baalism from the Northern kingdom but also lives through the actual fulfillment of 1 Kgs 19:17–18.²¹⁴

Not surprisingly, there are also contrasts between the prophets. Hugh S. Pyper asserts that "when Elijah and Elisha cycles are compared, both the similarities and the

²⁰⁹ Zucker, "Elijah and Elijah: Part I," 227

²¹⁰ Zucker, "Elijah and Elijah: Part I," 229.

²¹¹ David J. Zucker, "Elijah and Elijah: Part II Similarities and Differences," *JBQ* 41 (2013): 21.

²¹² For instance, Tasker, "1 Kings, 2 Kings," 501.

²¹³ Faithlife, LLC. "Logos Bible Software Timeline." Logos Bible Software, Computer software. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, LLC, June 15, 2021.

²¹⁴ When the succession of Moses–Joshua is considered, the same pattern can be seen since it is Joshua who actually leads the people to Canaan fulfilling the mission of Moses.

differences are striking.”²¹⁵ For instance, in his comparison of the resurrection of the two boys, Michael Reagan Humber concludes that the scenes are “polar opposites.”²¹⁶ However, the differences do not cancel the parallels since they are only parallels and not exact duplications.²¹⁷

The last thing to consider here is the meaning of the close relationship between Elijah and Elisha. When their ministries are compared it seems clear that this relationship should be understood in terms of “initiator and completer” patterned after the model of Moses–Joshua. Kim convincingly argues that “the initiator-completer pattern [...] shows the paradigm that the successors eventually accomplished the divine plans because their predecessors had failed.”²¹⁸ The same pattern can be seen in the succession between David and Solomon. However, as the last case better illustrates, the completion accomplished by the completer is always provisory. Only the Messiah would break this vicious circle of failure.

Summary of Chapters 3 through 5

In this final section, a summary of the main findings is provided for the benefit of the reader. The presentation follows the order of the analysis starting in 1 Kgs 17 and going through 2 Kgs 2:1–14.

²¹⁵ Pyper, “The Secret of Succession,” 58.

²¹⁶ Michael Reagan Humber, “Elijah and Elisha: Prophets in Contrast,” *JTAK* 25 (2001): 73. Curiously, Humber concludes that “the comparison of these two narratives of Elijah and Elisha reveals an Elisha character who is much less faithful to God and, therefore, much less successful as a prophet.” Humber, “Elijah and Elisha,” 80–81.

²¹⁷ See more parallels and differences between Elijah and Elisha in Coulot, “L’investiture d’Élisée par Élie,” 87; White, *The Elijah Legends and Jehu’s Coup*, 16.

²¹⁸ Kim, “The Literary and the Theological Functions,” 280.

Certainly, 1 Kgs 17 is one of the richest chapters in revealing the Elijah cycle. There are so many angles from where to explore the chapter that it was impossible to exhaust all the interpretative issues presented in this section. For this reason, there was no presumption of the possibility to treat thoroughly all material. The focus was on Elijah and his central role as God's agent. The portions with potential to reveal important traits of the prophet's persona received more attention. Based on the precedent analysis, three main points may be drawn.

First, through different narrative strategies the narrator builds an intriguing and engaging interplay between Elijah and Yahweh. Such interplay attests to the unprecedented and unique nature of Elijah's authority as a prophet. Notwithstanding such an interplay, his authority is based on his total obedience and surrender to God who is the source of his authority. The climax of chapter 17 is the woman's recognition and confession about this authority.

Second, the various echoes from the Torah and the book of Joshua, especially those found in the level of phraseology shows that Elijah is reliving the past experience of God's people. Such echoes also indicate that there is a close link of Elijah to Moses and Joshua. As the new Moses and the new Joshua, Elijah appears as the pinnacle of the prophetism in Israel. There are great expectations about him; would he be the great prophet promised by Moses (Dt 18:18)?

Finally, the amazing cluster of miracles found in chapter 17 finds a counterpart only in the exodus era. God uses his creative power to control the elements of nature at the same time bringing judgment (the drought) and supporting his chosen ones (provisions to the prophet and the widow's house). Thus, as in the exodus era such a

supernatural intervention produces both death (for the targets of divine judgment) and life (for God's genuine children). However, 1 Kgs 17 brings an unexpected and unprecedented demonstration of divine power through the revival of the widow's child. This display of power counteracts the original curse of death to which all humanity is submitted. There is compelling reason to suppose that in the face of these powerful acts Elijah's contemporaries could have believed that a new era was being inaugurated through his ministry.

Elijah appears in chapter 18 in the climax of his office as a prophet. After the account of his refuge outside Israel, Elijah is back to face the king's opposition, the people's apathy, and their apostasy as embodied in the prophets of Baal.

The drought, which had extend for a long period now, is a clear consequence of the breaking of the covenant that needs to be renewed. In the middle of a religious purification, the true Yahwism is at the brink of total obliteration. The moment requires decisive action before it is too late. Matthew Barret aptly observes that "the prophetic role is cultivated within the context of covenant."²¹⁹ Then, "by representing Yahweh, the prophet represents the covenant as well."²²⁰

At this point, Elijah acts as a new Moses and Joshua calling Israel to repent from their sins. The narrator has left enough indications that the ceremony on Mount Carmel is modeled according to the Sinaitic covenant account. God is giving a new chance to Israel and, if accepted, a new era lies ahead.

²¹⁹ Matthew Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; IVP Academic, 2020), 74.

²²⁰ Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 74.

After the close reading of 1 Kgs 19 the uncanny nature of Elijah comes to the fore. At this point, the reader follows amazed at the unexpected reversal that takes the prophet from the top of Mount Carmel to a cave on the mount Horeb. In this moment of weakness, the man of God faces deep discouragement and depression which lead him to act independently from Yahweh's direction. However, the chapter is not only about crisis and failure. In fact, in the bottom of his mood and feelings when no other thought than giving up seems an option for Elijah – that is the exact point that he reaches the pinnacle of his prophetic career and retraces the path followed by Moses. That is not a human achievement, and it is not the result that Elijah was planning. Nonetheless, this seems still to be the very lesson that the prophet needed to learn.

A few points regarding Elijah should be noted here. First, there is no doubt that in chapter 19 Elijah is in crisis, and in this moment of crisis Elijah is exposed and the reader can learn a lot about him and his God. Although one could judge Elijah for his flight, it is clear the prophet is not thinking theologically (even logically) and is being led by his instinctive emotions and by some temporary amount of self-centeredness (without mentioning the possibility of a physical break down). He fails to grasping his place in God's plan and the nature of his mission as a prophet who is still human and cannot control the circumstances. His collapse advances one of the most important motifs found in the lives of messianic precursors in the OT, namely the failure to meet God's expectations (see Moses, David, Hezekiah, etc...).

Second, it is ironic that it is at this moment of crisis that the parallels between Elijah and Moses are the most apparent. As Yahweh is caring for Elijah during his journey towards the Sinai, the prophet is reliving Israel's past experience in her

wanderings in the wilderness after the exodus. It is also at this point that Elijah has a Moses-like personal encounter with God in the theophany of verses 11–13.

Finally, in his dialogue with the prophet, God is working to take Elijah beyond his moment of discouragement in which Elijah has held a distorted view of reality. He warns Elijah that he does not have the whole picture and it is he and not the prophet who remains in control. The divine priority is putting Elijah in motion again. The theophany of 1 Kgs 19 triggers an experience of healing that starts as a process by which Elijah is recovered at least to the point to be ready to face Ahab and Jezebel in 1 Kgs 21 with the remarkable boldness characteristic of all divine ambassadors.

In 1 Kgs 21 Elijah is rehabilitated as a prophet to face the most powerful political force in Israel during his time, the monarchy. Now his mission is not to bring the people back to Yahweh but to denounce how Ahab has turned his back to him. In his confrontation Elijah acts as a prosecutor of the covenant treaty whose “peculiarly prophetic task was the elaboration and application of the ancient covenant sanctions.”²²¹ As the king and his house behave like the nations Israel drove out in the time of Joshua, they will also be driven out like the Amorites. The monarchy is not above the divine law and will suffer the consequences of breaking it. The destiny of the Omride dynasty should have been an alert to Israel.

At this point, Elijah is commissioned to be the herald of the divine punishment to Ahab and his household. This is a mission that he accomplishes fearlessly as in the “old times.” The condemnation of Ahab’s house echoes Yahweh’s words in the end of chapter

²²¹ Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 58.

19. Elijah's ministry will end before the complete fulfilment of his oracle, but the prophetic word will not become empty or remain unfulfilled.

The pericope found in 2 Kgs 1 confirms that apostasy is a family business in the Omride dynasty. Still under influence of the mother queen Jezebel, her son openly rebels against Yahweh in consulting Baal-Zebub regarding the future of his illness perhaps also in an attempt to prevent the worst.

As Elijah appears, the reader wonders if this is the time for the fulfillment of the prophecy of 1 Kgs 21. Although Ahaziah died without heirs, the doom of Ahab's house is postponed until the next son, Joram. Such a delay does not represent any change in the future of the dynasty since the Omrides persist in their sins.

Through Elijah's actions and by fire again, Yahweh demonstrates his superiority and claims his place as the judge of all earth (Gen 18:25). Now, fire comes down on humans instead of sacrifices as in Lev 10:2. When read together, 1 Kgs 18 and 2 Kgs 1 form a practical illustration of the salvation plan, a judgment in miniature. The wrath of God is being put upon the supreme sacrifice, and all those who accept his gift and voluntarily enter into a covenant relationship with God are spared from this fiery wrath of God against sin. However, those who do not accept the graceful gift of salvation will receive upon themselves their just divine wrath.

Along with 1 Kgs 2,1 the episodes of 2 Kgs 1 confirm that Elijah is healed from his temporary psychological breakdown. He is following Yahweh's directives and facing the usual dangers of the prophetic office. At this point, Elijah is a direct instrument of judgment in Yahweh's hands. The conflation between the prophet and God is found again, even though not so prominently as in 1 Kgs 17. It would be easy to believe that

messianic hopes around a prophet who calls fire from heaven would arise among his contemporaries.

In Elijah's ministry two major themes connected to hope that are found in the messianic era are developed: salvation and judgment. While the prophet enacts works of salvation in 1 Kgs 17 and 18 (including to non-Israelites), he is instrumental to bring judgment in 1 Kgs 21 and 2 Kgs 1.

In 2 Kgs 2:1–14, the narrative of Elijah closes as enigmatically as it starts. Without a precise record of his origin or a place of burial, the prophet marks the biblical account with almost “superhuman” overtones. The uncanny character of Elijah is only confirmed by the chronicle of his departure to heaven in a storm escorted by fiery horses and chariots. However, little is said about his actual departure. The focus of 2 Kgs 2:1–14 is on what happens before and after it.

Elijah starts the chapter being led by God to key strategic locations during the conquest. In this way, he is reliving the experience of Israel and Joshua. Other echoes of this experience appear when the Jordan is split apart. Many questions remain unanswered during the journey from Gilgal to the other side of the Jordan making the episodes a fertile soil for reader engagement and imagination. In any case, it is evident that in his death Elijah parallels Joshua in the sense that both have unfinished missions (as was the case of Moses and would be that of Elisha). With Elisha, the sons of the prophets should preserve his legacy and carry on his mission.

After his ascension, Elisha is presented as his successor. The double of Elijah's spirit is granted to him. The subsequent narrative of his life, that encloses one of the most prolific ministries among the biblical prophets, attests.

The objective of the present chapter was to explore exegetically the ministry of Elijah in order to collect data that can be useful in the theological investigation of the next chapter which investigates the meaning of Elijah within the context of salvation history. This preliminary search tends to support Allen's conclusion that "From Moses to Jesus the prophetic hinge was Elijah. In his actions he was a Moses redivivus; in his actions he also portends Messiah."²²²

²²² Allen, "Elijah the Broken Prophet," 201. Although Allen's conclusions seem to be correct, he fails in providing enough exegetical support to them from the OT itself.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS THE TYPOLOGY OF ELIJAH: OLD TESTAMENT INDICATIONS AND NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT

In this last chapter, I intend to draw up together a complete picture of Elijah typology throughout the canon. This section is divided in two parts. In the first part, I explore how the exegesis of the Elijah cycle reveals indicators of typology in the original context of the OT. These indicators are organized in three parts in accordance with the three criteria to identify types in the OT as suggested by Beale. Then, I proceed to explore the typological fulfillment as indicated in the NT. After analyzing the biblical data on John the Baptist, who is interpreted in the NT as the promised Elijah who would prepare the way to the Lord, I show how the four essential elements of typology are presented in the forerunner's life (historicity, correspondence, prefiguration, and escalation). Finally, I pinpoint how Elijah typology is fulfilled in salvation history in an inaugurated, appropriated, and consummated way.

In this approach, the movement from OT to NT and from exegesis to interpretation constitutes an important methodological step that further suggests that in identifying typological connections authors are not inventing them. They are only recognizing the patterns ingrained in history by the sovereign God whose crescendo movement meets their culmination in the Messiah.

Identifying Types – An Exegetical Endeavor

Contrary to the previous position widely held that typology was not an exegetical enterprise,¹ a growing number of authors have come to the opposite conclusion.² For instance, Schmidt includes a “thorough exegesis” step in his fourfold method to deal with typology.³ In a more recent publication, Mitchell L. Chase defends the position that typology is canonical exegesis.⁴ According to him, “typology is an attempt to interpret *what is there* in the text.”⁵ For this reason, “recognition of types is the result of attention given to the grammar and history of words, concepts, patterns, and ultimately the whole storyline of Scripture itself.”⁶

The need for approaching typology exegetically is based on the fact that types have been inscripturated to the biblical text. It is in this context that Schrock says that “a valid Christological type must be textual in its origin, covenantal as to its theological import, and Christotelic in its teleological fulfillment.”⁷ When the NT authors recognize

¹ In his dissertation Ninow provides a good summary of this trend. Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 78–97. Among other scholars, he refers to R. E. Murphy, R. T. France, Walter Brueggemann, Hans K. LaRondelle, Leonhard Goppelt.

² Among them are Brent Evan Parker, Chad L. Bird, Paul M. Hoskins, Mitchell L. Chase, James M. Hamilton, Jr. See: Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern; Bird, “Typological Interpretation;” Hoskins, *That Scripture Might Be Fulfilled*; Chase, *40 Questions about Typology and Allegory*; Hamilton, *Typology*. See more examples in chapter 2.

³ Schmidt, “An Examination of Selected Uses of the Psalms,” 45–49.

⁴ A historical-critical approach to canonical exegesis is provided by Konrad Schmid. See: Konrad Schmid, “Innerbiblische Schriftauslegung: Aspekte der Forschungsgeschichte” in *Schriftauslegung in der Schrift: Festschrift für Odil Hannes Steck zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz, Thomas Krüger, and Konrad Schmid, BZAW 300 (Berlin, Germany; New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2000), 1–22.

⁵ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 71.

⁶ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology*, 72.

⁷ Schrock, “What Designates a Valid Type?,” 5.

an OT type, they are not creating meaning but merely following the clues left by the unfolding of the redemptive history between the promise and fulfilment. They did not need a conversion of imagination as Hays asserts,⁸ but an opening of their “theological eyes” to see what God had already revealed in the OT (cf. Lk 24:25–27). It is only in this context that Jesus’ critique of his followers makes sense: “O foolish and slow in heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” (LEB Luke 24:25).

As the example of the disciples shows, the fact that types have been inscripturated does not guarantee that the original audience always was aware of them. Regarding this point, Chase instructively points out that “the Spirit inspired prospective types that, whether or not they were fully appreciated at the time, were truly there in the text. If the biblical authors saw these types and advanced them in their writings, the readers were meant to see them too.”⁹ Since the way the ancient Israelite understood the typological import of several OT passages is not available, any attempt to ascertain it is mere speculation. Thus, the focus of modern interpreters should be the clues left by the authors in the biblical text.

As mentioned in chapter 1, several authors have been successful in demonstrating the presence of such typological pointers in the original context of the stories of Joseph, Joshua, and David. In all cases, these verbal and contextual indicators are found in both the immediate and broader context of the canon. The task of finding these indicators in the narrative of Elijah is at the core of the present research.

⁸ Hays, “*The Conversion of the Imagination*,” viii–xvii, 1–24, 190–201.

⁹ Chase, *40 Questions about Typology and Allegory*, 60.

Methodologically speaking, one of the central premises of this research is that typological import should not be imposed on the OT text. Scripture must speak for itself if any more objective result is to be expected. In the case of Elijah's cycle, I was not aware of any specific typological pointer besides the clue left by Malachi 3 and the NT indication of that. The indicators emerged from the exegesis of the text instead of being imposed on it.

In this context, the choice of text-empirical exegesis combined with a close narrative reading of the Elijah cycle was crucial because the observation was methodologically controlled, allowing the evidence to come from the text instead of being read into it. In this text-phenomenological reading, all levels of language such as word, phrase, clause, sentence and valence were taken in consideration. This proceeding brought to light a rich complex of Scriptural resonances that form the core of the typological import identified as having existed within the original context of 1 and 2 Kings.

In my exegesis of the Elijah narrative, I was not interested in finding or tracing parallels between Elijah (type) and antitype (John the Baptist), even though some parallels became obvious. My particular concern was to discern textual signs that indicated that typological import could have been evident to the original readers of the OT before the first coming of Christ. These signs are often connected to messianic expectation mingled with the hope of restoration and vindication of the remnant.

As the present chapter will show, the analysis of the Elijah narrative confirms the hypothesis advanced by Davidson and others that verbal and contextual indicators were already inscripturated in the OT and could have been discerned by an attentive first-time

reader. This does not mean in any case that every typological import found in the OT would be discerned by every first-time listener. The actual Christ event triggered “new” understandings by making some typological shadows into clear pictures of reality. The logical consequence of recognizing the prospective nature of typology is that its interpretative movement is not only backward from the NT to the OT but also from the OT to the NT.

In searching for indicators of typology in the narrative of Elijah, I looked for verbal hints and other textual aspects of the narrative that may indicate any predictive import in the passage. Using Jupyter notebooks as a digital platform to build queries based on the ETCBC database, I examined “the linguistic phenomenological collection of stylistic formations, pictorial motifs or word fields”¹⁰ to find intertextual fields of reference or non-habitual ways of using language. In addition to elucidating the meaning of the passage, this survey helped to detect special uses of the language that may have been employed by the narrator to highlight significant insights. The result not only shed more light on the Elijah narrative per se but also revealed a web of intended intertextual connections that contain evident prophetic import.

Such prophetic import is found in verbal and contextual marks left by the author of 1 and 2 Kings. In the following section, these indicators are laid out in three different categories following Beale’s methodological proposal to identify types within the OT:

¹⁰ Christof Hardmeier and Regine Hunziker-Rodewald, “Texttheorie und Texterschließung Grundlagen einer empirisch-textpragmatischen Exegese,” in *Lesarten der Bibel: Untersuchungen zu einer Theorie der Exegese des Alten Testaments*, ed. Helmut Utzschneider and Erhard Blum (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 2006), 32.

types and antitypes within the OT, recurrence of major redemptive-historical events, and recurring and unfinished narrative.¹¹

Identifying Types in the Narrative of Elijah

Types and Antitypes within the Old Testament

The first textual warrant for typology to be addressed here is the presence of OT characters styled according to the pattern of earlier OT characters. According to Bird, these “are arguably the most important of OT types for they are the clearest and most precise expressions of the One who would come as the Antitype of types—the individual, Jesus of Nazareth.”¹² Beale suggests that “if it can be shown in the OT itself that a later person is seen as an antitype of an earlier person, who is clearly viewed as a type of Christ by the NT, then this later OT person is also likely a good candidate to be considered to be a type of Christ.”¹³ Beale mentions the relationship between Adam and Noah as an example. Since Noah is modeled according to Adam, both characters are related in a type and antitype interconnection. As Adam is a clear type of Christ, Noah becomes a good candidate for being a type too. The same kind of type and antitype relationships have been attested in the narratives of Abraham,¹⁴ Joseph,¹⁵ Moses,¹⁶ Joshua,¹⁷ and David¹⁸ to

¹¹ See Beale, *Handbook*, 20–22.

¹² Bird, “Typological Interpretation,” 41.

¹³ Beale, *Handbook*, 21.

¹⁴ Hamilton, *Typology*, 94–97.

¹⁵ Emadi, “Covenant, Typology, and the Story of Joseph,” 40–125.

¹⁶ Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthaen Typology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1993).

¹⁷ Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua*, 24–35.

¹⁸ Hamilton, “The Typology of David’s Rise to Power,” 4–25.

mention only a few. Bird observes that “Pentateuchal events, individuals, and institutions primarily define the *esse* of Israel,”¹⁹ and for this reason are foundational for OT theology, and consequently establish the typological models to be developed throughout the OT Scriptures. In this way, “prophets foretold *what would be* with the vocabulary and imagery of *what had been*; they painted the promise of the future with the colors of the past.”²⁰

In the case of Elijah, the exegesis of his narrative reveals that the prophet is stylized according to earlier characters in the redemptive history. As the lives of these memorable characters are “relaunched” through Elijah’s career, messianic expectation probably reemerged among his contemporaries. When the original audience of 1 and 2 Kings looked at Elijah’s ministry in light of previous revelation, the parallels of his life with the lives of earlier characters became evident and the typological import of his prophetic career could have been identified.

In the next paragraphs, the evidence regarding the presence of typological indicators found in the previous text-empirical analysis of the Elijah narrative is listed and summarized. It should be kept in mind that the value of each individual pointer should be appreciated within the sum of them all. It is in its totality that the case for the presence of forward-looking typological import becomes compelling.

¹⁹ Bird, “Typological Interpretation,” 38. By “esse” the author means “essential nature” or “essence.”

²⁰ Bird, “Typological Interpretation,” 38.

A New Melchizedek

Elijah's appearance in the book of Kings is unique. Bart Koet observes that "the prophet is not introduced (or even hinted at) in any of the stories before. He appears suddenly, more or less like a *deus ex machina*."²¹ He is the only prophet in the book whose voice is heard without any prior presentation of his prophetic credentials.²² In verse 1, the reader is left wondering about the identity and authority of the one whose word can close the skies. There is also no patronymic name, and his origin is quite obscure. Since only a gentilic name is used to designate Elijah, even the clan affiliation as a Tishbite is uncertain. As a "sojourner" of Gilead, his place of birth is also unknown.

Combined with this lack of precision regarding the prophet's origin is his prophecy itself. As mentioned before, his prophetic speech to Ahab in his first appearance defies classification and has no parallel in prophetic literature. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to affirm that Elijah is in essence *sui generis*.

Since the prophet emerges from an unspecified location with no mention of his parents, it is natural to compare him with Melchizedek (Gen 14:18). This neo-Melchizedek could be also considered "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life" (Heb 7:3). Such characterization is at the core of the typological reading of Melchizedek proposed by the

²¹ Bart J. Koet, "Elijah as Reconciler of Father and Son: From 1 Kings 16:34 and Malachi 3:22–24 to Ben Sira 48:1–11 and Luke 1:13–17," in *Rewriting Biblical History: Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honor of Pancratius C. Beentjes*, ed. Jeremy Corley and Harm van Grol (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2011), 174.

²² Curiously, Koet remarks that the same phenomenon appears in Ben Sira and Josephus where Elijah's identification as a prophet is also postponed. Koet, "Elijah as Reconciler," 181.

author of Hebrews chapter 7.²³ Elijah's ascension without facing death seems only to reinforce this parallel.

The mysterious king of Salem, who receives the title from Abraham in his victorious return from the battlefield in Gen 14, is presented in Psalm 110 as a type of the Messiah. Indeed, several scholars have already examined the typology of Melchizedek in order to determine his nature and function as a type and his antitypical fulfillment in the NT.²⁴ Melchizedek is an appropriated type for he is at the same time king and priest. According to Chad, the king-priest fits the parameters of an office-type that he defines as an individual whose function in an office corresponds "closely to or set the pattern for those carried out by one who fills the same office in a later period."²⁵

Since verbal parallels between Elijah and Melchizedek are missing, the evidence for an intentional correspondence between the two is thin. However, the way Elijah starts his ministry and ends it echoes the short appearance of the mysterious Pentateuchal

²³ See: Wesley Nottingham, "Melchizedek: Exposing His Character and Its Biblical-Theological Implications," *Eleutheria* 5 (2021): 60–73; Bird, "Typological Interpretation," 36–52; Lacy K. Crocker, "A Holy Nation," *RTR* 72 (2013): 185–201; Alan Kamyau Chan, *Melchizedek Passages in the Bible: A Case Study for Inner-Biblical and Inter-Biblical Interpretation* (Warsaw, Poland; Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2016).

²⁴ Some of these studies have already been mentioned in the previous footnote. See also: Kevin Chen, "Psalm 110: A Nexus for Old Testament Theology," *CTR* 17 (2020): 49–65; Ian J. Vaillancourt, *The Multifaceted Saviour of Psalms 110 and 118: A Canonical Exegesis* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Phoenix, 2019); Peter Y. Lee, "Psalm 110 Reconsidered: Internal and External Evidence in support of a NT Hermeneutic," *RFP* 2 (2017): 17–47; Robin L. Routledge, "Psalm 110, Melchizedek and David: Blessing (the Descendants of) Abraham," *BT* 1 (2009): 1–16; Matthew Emadi, "You Are Priest Forever: Psalm 110 and the Melchizedekian Priesthood of Christ," *SBJT* 23 (2019): 57–84; Gard Granerød, "Melchizedek in Hebrews 7," *Biblica* 90 (2009): 188–202; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 36 (New Haven, CT; London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 2008), 337–374; Harold W. Attridge and Helmut Koester, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 186–215; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 156–179.

²⁵ Bird, "Typological Interpretation," 45. In his article the author distinguishes two more categories of typical individuals: action-type and person-type. Due to its pertinence to Elijah typology, the latter will be discussed later in this chapter.

character. At least, the author of Kings is hinting from onset that Elijah is more than an *ordinary* prophet.²⁶

A New Moses

The typological nature of Moses has been explored in biblical scholarship before.²⁷ The expectation of the coming of a prophet like Moses is already set in the original context of the Pentateuch where Moses foresees the coming of a prophet like him who would originate from Israel and to whom they would finally listen (Deut 18:15–19). The persistence of such an expectation is confirmed by a later scribe who wrote Deut 34:10.²⁸ The hope for the coming of the Deuteronomical prophet is finally recorded in the Gospels (e.g., John 1:21; 6:14; 8:40). The connection established by the NT writers between Jesus and Moses seems to point to the fact that Christ was understood as the fulfilment of the Deuteronomical prophet, the prophet like Moses.²⁹ Perhaps the most

²⁶ Bird also shows how the understanding of Melchizedek developed during Second Temple Judaism. “Philo (20 B.C.-50 A.D.) spoke of Melchizedek as the Logos (Legum Allegoriae III 79-82); the pseudepigraphical book of 2 Enoch (c. first century A.D.) spoke of Melchizedek as a pure priest from antediluvian years who, saved from the Deluge, would reappear in later times to establish another-non-Levitical-line of priests; and the Qumran document, 11 Qmelch (c. first century B.C.), which conceived of Melchizedek as a warrior-like, angelomorphic redeemer who would appear in the final jubilee of world history specifically on Yom Kippur-to destroy the foes of God and usher in the eschatological kingdom.” Bird, “Typological Interpretation,” 51–52.

²⁷ See for instance: Patricia Sharbaugh, “The New Moses and the Wisdom of God: A Convergence of Themes in Matthew 11:25-30,” *Horizons* 40 (2013): 199–217; Hamilton, *Typology*, 111–119; Abraham van de Beek, “Moses, Elijah, and Jesus Reflections on the Basic Structures of the Bible,” *In die Skriflig* 46 (2012): 4–7; David P. Moessner, “Jesus and the ‘Wilderness Generation:’ The Death of the Prophet like Moses according to Luke,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers*, SBLSPS 21 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1982), 319–340.

²⁸ According to Sailhamer, the text of Deut 34:10 was probably added by Ezra. See: Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 456, 478–479.

²⁹ Allison provides a good analysis of the Moses typology in the Gospel of Matthew. See: Allison, *The New Moses*, 137–270.

explicit evidence of the fulfilment of this prediction in Jesus is found in Acts 3:22–26 where Deut 18:15 is explicitly quoted.³⁰

One of the most remarkable and recognized set of parallels is that involving Elijah and Moses.³¹ According to Bird, “Moses exemplifies one who is an office-type individual both to his immediate successor, Joshua, to a later prophetic successor, Elijah, and to his eschatological ‘supersuccessor’ Jesus.”³²

As mentioned before, several authors have already proposed different lists of correspondences. Thus, it is not my intention here simply to repeat the content of these lists. Rather, I want to point out what are the most persuasive textual correspondences that stood out in the previous text-empirical reading of the Elijah cycle. I have identified two major groups of correspondences. The first one concerns a number of striking narrative analogies that create a compelling web of association between the two prophets. These are the parallels usually recognized by biblical interpreters. The second group of correspondences covers the special relationship that both individuals had with Yahweh. Curiously, it is in this second group that verbal connections are mostly found, and for this reason, the evidence of intentional allusion is stronger. In the following list, both groups are presented separately.

³⁰ Christoph W. Stenschke, “The Prophet like Moses (Dt 18:15-22): Some Trajectories in the History of Interpretation,” *VE* 42 (2021): 1–11.

³¹ Dharamraj, *Prophet Like Moses?*, 218–221; Hagan, “First and Second Kings”, 162; White, *The Elijah Legends and Jehu’s Coup*, 5; Arnold, *Elie*, 39–41.

³² Bird, “Typological Interpretation,” 43.

Narrative Analogies

It is not always simple to determine intentional allusions, and in the last years several elaborate systems of criteria have been suggested by scholars.³³ It is clear though, that since the identification of allusions is both a science and an art at the same time, objective criteria will not be enough to deal with the issue and a certain amount of subjectivity is inevitable. Corroborating this point, Gary Edward Schittjer observes that “the extremely wide range of variables in the scriptural use of Scripture eliminates a definitive list of rules for detecting allusion.”³⁴ In his monumental work “*Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide*,” he proposes a rating system that yields “relative likelihood of exegetical allusion based on the combination of primarily subjective judgment and secondarily empirical indicators.”³⁵ Thus, although he himself proposes objective empirical marks based on verbal, syntactical, and contextual evidence, he recognizes that purposeful reuse can only be analyzed in a case by case approach.

Considering the first group of correspondences, parallels are based on narrative analogies instead of verbal connections. It is true that when viewed individually, some of similarities can first appear to be no more than coincidences. However, when all of them are taken into consideration the possibility of so many echoes being unintentional shrinks considerably. The following parallels reveal how Moses and Elijah’s narrative are structurally related. As mentioned before, this is not an exhaustive list, but it has the objective to show such a structuring relationship.

³³ See pages 114–123.

³⁴ Gary Edward Schittjer, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), xxviii.

³⁵ Schittjer, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament*, xxiii.

1. Both prophets are called while sojourners. While Elijah is directly identified as a sojourner (תּוֹשֵׁב) from Gilead, Moses is called during his sojourning (יִשָּׁב) in the land of Midian (Exod 2:15).
2. At a point in their lives, both Moses and Elijah flee from a wicked king who seeks their lives (Exod 2:11–15; 1 Kgs 17:3), even though one flight is directed by Yahweh and the other is self-inflicted by Moses and allowed by God. During this period of flight, they stay away from the spotlight.
3. In their return, both prophets face threatening monarchs willing to silence their voices. However, in both cases Pharaoh and Ahab are not able to inflict damage upon the respective prophets (Exod 10: 27–29; 1 Kgs 17:3; 18:10).
4. Moses and Elijah promote the renewal of the covenant, leading the people to a new experience with Yahweh (Exod 24; 1 Kgs 18).
5. Both prophets have a forty-days-and-forty-nights experience, the culmination of which is found in a personal meeting with Yahweh (Exod 24:18; 1 Kgs 19:8).
6. This meeting happens on the same mountain. Mount Sinai or Horeb is also qualified as “the mountain of God” in Exod 3:1 and 1 Kgs 19:8, where both prophets witness a theophany (Exod 3:2; 1 Kgs 19:9–18)
7. Their theophanic experiences are also alike. Both in the level of experience and in the level of phraseology the two incidents are described in similar terms. In addition to Exod 12:23 where Yahweh goes through Egypt bringing the judgment that makes the exodus possible, Yahweh is the explicit subject of עָבַר only in Exod 34:6 and 1 Kgs 19:11. Even the natural elements that play a role in both theophanies are similar. The only contrast is their role in each narrative. While the

disruption of nature through wind (רוּחַ), earthquake (רָעַע), and fire (אֵשׁ) (cf. Exod 19:9ff; 20:18ff; Deut 4:9ff; 5:24ff) is associated with the presence of Yahweh in the Mosaic experience, in 1 Kgs 19 they signal its absence.

8. Another crucial parallel between the prophets is their experience of failure and discouragement. Even though their debacle and despair do not follow the same order (Moses' discouragement comes before his failure, while in Elijah both are inextricably connected), they meet Yahweh in their moment of weakness and depression. Both prophets ask for their own death (Num 11:15; 1 Kgs 19:4). While Moses feels overwhelmed by the responsibility to carry the burden alone, the same feeling could be behind Elijah's despair in realizing that he had failed in his mission to eradicate the Baal cult. It is interesting that in both cases God comes with a plan to alleviate their burden. While in the case of Moses, God instructs him to choose 70 elders (Num 12), in the case of Elijah God reminds him that he is not alone and makes arrangements for a successor (1 Kgs 19:16). Later in his career, Moses fails in complying with the divine directive to speak to the rock and goes rogue by hitting it in an angry outburst (humanly justifiable per se) (Num 20:7–12). In Elijah's failure, he also goes rogue by ending up in a place to which God had not called him. Although God deals mercifully with both prophets, the consequences of their failures are irreversible. Moses will not enter the land of Canaan and Elijah must choose a replacement. In any event though, Yahweh has better plans for both.
9. The choosing of a successor is also a singular element in their trajectory. There is no other example of prophetic succession like that found in Moses-Joshua and

Elijah-Elisha. In both cases, there is a period of training for the respective successor who completes the work initiated by his predecessor. This initiator-and-completer pattern is also found in the relationship between David and Solomon. While Joshua leads the Israelites to Canaan accomplishing what Moses had been called to do, Elisha anoints Jehu as the king who would at least temporarily exterminate the Baal cult, whose first blow had been already carried out by Elijah, who for some reason was not able to comply with the divine command to anoint Jehu. In terms of actual transference, the anointing of Elisha as successor of Elijah parallels Moses' hand-leaning on Joshua as his successor in Num 27:18–23. The successor was a man of the Spirit in each case, with Elisha getting a double portion of his predecessor's spirit.

10. Finally, the ends of Moses' and Elijah's ministry also share similarities. On the geographical level, both prophets end their careers in the territory of Moab close to Jericho, which is mentioned in Deut 34:1 and 2 Kgs 2:4–8. On the practical level, their departures are surrounded by mystery. Moses dies alone on Mount Nebo, the peak of Pisgah (Deut 34:1) and Yahweh himself buries him (Deut 34:6). The fact that his place of burial is never found (Deut 34:6) combined with the mention of the contention for his body in Jude 9 has led many interpreters to the conclusion that Moses was resurrected by Yahweh. His appearance on the mount of transfiguration only reinforces this possibility (Mark 9:2–13). Elijah leaves this life without experiencing death and, for this reason, shares with Moses the anticipated dwelling in the heavenly dimension. It should be underlined how unique each of their experiences in "death" is. Indeed, there is almost no parallel

in the OT for both situations. Thus, their appearance on the mount of transfiguration is not a coincidence.

These previous ten points of contact between the narrative of the lives of these great prophets are far from being exhaustive and many others could be mentioned, but these are the most convincing parallels that have stood out in my text-empirical reading of the Elijah cycle. It seems to be clear that from the start to the end of Elijah's ministry, he is described as a new Moses.

However, the correspondences between their lives go beyond narrative consistency. The singular nature of each of their relationship with Yahweh has also become evident in the exegesis of 1 Kgs 17 – 2 Kgs 2:14. This second group of correspondences, which is presented below, deals with this special connection.

Singular Connection with Yahweh

In the close of Moses' life, the author of Deut 34:10 remarks that “Since then, there has never been such a prophet in Israel as Moses, the man whom Yahweh knew face to face” (NJB). Such an exceptional connection had been evidenced by the working of many signs (הַאֲתוֹת), wonders (וְהַמּוֹפְתִים), great power (הַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה), and awesome might (הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל) (Deut 34:11–12).

After the text-empirical reading of the Elijah cycle there is little doubt that like Moses, Elijah was endowed with a special relationship with Yahweh. One of the remarkable features of the narrative of 1 Kgs 17 is how the author builds an interplay between the prophet and Yahweh. By blurring their identities, the narrator highlights Elijah's prophetic authority and his singular connection with God.

The very initial words of Elijah are dropped with the unparalleled authority of someone who can apparently control the natural elements (dew and rain). The oath that involves a drought is only reversed by Elijah's words (כִּי אִם-לִפִּי דְבַרִּי). The lack of previous indication of divine discourse makes the use of דְבַרִּי ("my word") astounding. Elijah leaves Ahab's presence with the audience wondering whether the "word" was Elijah's or God's.

Later in 1 Kgs 17, even Yahweh *obeys* Elijah in bringing the lad's life back to him. As the use of נִפְּשׁ and נִשְׁמָה reveals, the prophet's action here parallels those of God in Gen 2:7. By breaking this most fundamental boundary, namely that between life and death, Elijah is used by God to realize something unique that only God himself had personally done in the creation of humankind.

In several ways, the special relationship between Elijah and Yahweh correlates with that of Moses and Yahweh. Some of the most compelling examples are in order here.

1. As part of this blurring of identities in 1 Kgs 17, the prophet is for the widow who God is for the prophet. The widow responds positively to Elijah's directives through the command-and-compliance pattern. Elijah addresses her hesitation, providing assurance with the known phrase אַל-תִּירָאִי ("do not be afraid") that is very often found in divine discourse to humans. The widow also acts "according to the word of Elijah" כְּדִבְרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהוּ (כְּדִבְרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהוּ) a phrase frequently used to describe human compliance with God's command (including in the immediate context of 1 Kgs 17). Curiously, the same "exchanging" of role is found in the narrative of Moses. In Exod 7:1, Yahweh himself says, "I have made you a god to

Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother will be your prophet.” In the following story of the plagues, without the knowledge of God’s communication with Moses, his actions could be confused with the directly divine actions. Thus, both prophets act in so direct a way on God’s behalf that their actions (frequently in an extraordinary fashion) are interlaced with and difficult to distinguish from personal divine deeds.

2. Both prophets lived in the presence of God in singular and unique way. While in the case of Moses this is directly stated in Deut 34:10, in the Elijah narrative the phrase “Yahweh of hosts, before whom I stand” hints at this distinct trait of the prophet. As already noted in the previous chapter, in almost all occurrences of the phrase, physical presence before the Lord is the case, usually in the context of people standing before the sanctuary or priests serving it. In Kings, only the spirit at the heavenly council from Micaiah’s vision (1 Kgs 22:21) and the prophets Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:15) and Elisha (2 Kgs 3:14; 5:16) stand before יהוה. By characterizing God in this way, Elijah affirms that he lives in God’s presence in a special way. His ministry originates directly from God, to whom the prophet has direct access.
3. As a result of this special connection with God, both prophets have a frank and straightforward conversation with God. As Elijah questions why Yahweh would allow the death of the lad while his mother was faithfully hosting him in her house, he boldly asks: “Yahweh my God, have you also caused evil against the widow? The Hiphil of רעע also appears in the interaction between Moses and Yahweh: “Yahweh, why have you brought trouble (הַרְעִיתָהּ) to this people?”

(Exod 5:11 cf. Num 11:11). Moses is the only other biblical character who asks the same question.

4. In light of all these parallels there is little room for doubt that Elijah is narratively fashioned as a prophet like Moses. However, the direct statement found in the widow's confession in the end of 1 Kgs 17 additionally confirms this characterization (v. 24). In her confession, which is the climax of the chapter, she says that the word of Yahweh was in Elijah's mouth (וּדְבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אֱמֶת). This seems to indicate the fulfillment (at least partially) of the promise of a new prophet like Moses found in Deut 18:18 where God says, "I will raise up a prophet for them from among their countrymen like you, and I will place my words into his mouth (וְנָתַתִּי דְבָרִי בְּפִיו), and he shall speak to them everything that I command him" (LEB). The parallel between וּדְבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אֱמֶת ("the word of Yahweh in your mouth is truth") and וְנָתַתִּי דְבָרִי בְּפִיו ("I will place my words into his mouth") does not seem to be coincidental. The reader might wonder if this Sidonian woman is consciously recognizing in Elijah the great prophet promised in Deuteronomy.
5. Finally, the special relationship between Yahweh and these two prophets was recognized by their contemporaries. Through all the things that Elijah had accomplished, the people recognized him as a legitimate servant of Yahweh (1 Kgs 17:24; 18:36; 2 Kgs 1:13) in the same way that the Israelites recognized Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea in Exod 14:31. After that tremendous experience, the people believed Yahweh and His servant Moses.

A New Joshua

The fact that Joshua functions as a type of the Messiah is evident already in the original context of the OT. As mentioned before, Davidson has identified in the OT six verbal and contextual indicators of a typological understanding that would allow the conceptualization of “two Joshuas.”³⁶ The typological fulfilment of Joshua in Jesus’ life and ministry is also indicated in the NT, especially in Hebrews 4.³⁷

Elijah is also modeled according to Joshua. In fact, Joshua provides the initial background for the beginning of Elijah’s ministry. Right before the appearance of Elijah in 1 Kgs 17:1, the narrator mentions the rebuilding of Jericho in the days of Ahab and how the curse pronounced by Joshua in Josh 6:26 was fulfilled in the death of the two sons of Hiel the Bethelite (1 Kgs 16:35). As the narrator closes, chapter 16 referring to an oath articulated by Joshua, he opens chapter 17, which introduces Elijah for the first time with an oath pronounced by him. In a certain sense, Elijah’s oath is also a curse. The difference resides in the fact that in his case such a curse could be reversed by his expressed word (כִּי אִם-לִפִּי דְבָרִי “except at my word”).

³⁶ These are the six verbal and contextual indicators of Joshua’s typology in the OT suggested by Davidson: (1) the peculiar name of Joshua; (2) a possible connection between Joshua’s father and the tetragrammaton; (3) the unique character of Joshua’s connection with the mission of the son of God in comparison with the work God assigned to Joshua with that of the preexistent Christ; (4) the use of Joshua in Zech 6:12; (5) the relationship between Moses and Joshua in light of Deut 18:15–18 and the expectancy of the Prophet throughout the OT; and (6) the allusion to the mission of Joshua (Deut 31:7; Jos 1:6) in connection to the work of the coming Messiah in Isa 49:8. Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua*, 24–35.

³⁷ In his article, Davidson also mentions the following passages in the NT as evidence of the antypical fulfilment of Joshua in Christ: Matt 11:28; Eph 1:11, 14, 18; Col 2:15; 3:24; Heb 1:4; 9:15; 12:22–24. Davidson, “Eschatological Hermeneutic,” 22. For more about this see: Onsworth, *Joshua Typology*, 55–130; Richard S. Hess, “Joshua,” *NDBT* 171; Brian Pate, “Who Is Speaking?: The Use of Isaiah 8:17-18 in Hebrews 2:13 as a Case Study for Applying the Speech of Key OT Figures to Christ,” *JETS* 59 (2016): 743–744; Sandro Leanza and Fabrizio Bisconti, “Joshua,” *EAC* 465–466.

Thus, from the onset of Elijah’s ministry, his connection with Joshua is already alluded to. However, other narrative clues linking the two characters appear throughout the story of Elijah. Some of the most significant are mentioned next.

1. As the narrative of 1 Kgs 17 advances, the connection between the prophetic character of Elijah’s ministry becomes explicit. In verse 16, the miraculous provision of flour and oil happens “according to the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of Elijah” (1 Kgs 17:16) (אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד אֱלֹהֵיוֹ: כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה). Likewise, the fulfilment of Joshua’s curse in 1 Kgs 16:35 happens “according to the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of Joshua” (כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה) (אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נוּן). As can be seen, the verbatim repetition has the subject of the verb דִּבֶּר as the only deviating element.³⁸ The verbal and contextual correspondences between the two statements reduce the possibility of an unintentional allusion. In his ministry, the new Joshua displays the same authority as that of his predecessor. In their mouths, the word of Yahweh is unfailing.
2. Another important parallel between both prophets is found in the phenomenon of God’s “obedience.” Only three times in the Bible is God the subject the verb שמע in the construction Y וישמע X בקול Y, the valence of which conveys the meaning “to obey.” This structure expresses the extraordinary compliance of Yahweh with a request that in two cases involved miraculous divine intervention. The first occurrence was connected with Israel’s victory over the

³⁸ Curiously, the phrase is exclusively found in 1 Kings. See: 1 Kgs 14:18; 15:29; 16:12, 34; 17:16.

Canaanite king of Arad (Num 21:1–3). Yahweh complied with Israel’s entreaty, giving the Canaanite people of the region into the hands of the Israelites. Another occurrence is linked with Joshua’s prayer requesting that the sun could stand still (Jos 10:14).³⁹ The extraordinary aspect of the event is explicitly highlighted as a day unlike any other, both before and after. As Elijah prayed for a boy’s resurrection (1 Kgs 17:22), Yahweh granted to him his request in the same way he had granted Joshua’s, making a new day like no other before.

3. Another interesting way Elijah relives Joshua’s experience is found in the record of his journeying before his ascension in 2 Kgs 2. According to the narrator, Elijah goes from Gilgal to Bethel passing through Jericho and arrives at the Jordan. Although some authors have called the expedition pointless, this geographical combination alludes to the conquest. The prophet is on the footsteps of Joshua roaming the land.
4. The most obvious parallel between Elijah and Joshua is the crossing of the Jordan river (2 Kgs 2:7–8; Josh 3:1–17). In both cases, Yahweh opens the water of the river as a manifestation of his presence with both leaders. They pass through the river on dry land. As mentioned before, from eight occurrences of the word חַרְבָּה (“dry land”), five of them relate to the opening of the Red Sea and the Jordan river (Exod 14:21; Josh 3:17; 4:18; 2 Kgs 2:8). Regarding the correspondence with Joshua, the direction of the miracle is

³⁹ The same valence also appears in Deut 1:45. However, in this case God does not comply with Israel’s plan.

reversed: while Joshua crosses the Jordan from the east to the west side, Elijah passes from the west to the east.

Although the parallels between Elijah and Joshua are less numerous than those between Elijah and Moses, they are significant and show how the life of the ancient prophet and leader is relaunched in Elijah's ministry.

A New David

As in the cases of Melchizedek, Moses, and Joshua, David is clearly recognized in Scripture and scholarship as a type of Christ. The earliest indication of this typological relationship can be found in several psalms, where the language goes beyond the historical David (e.g., Ps 2, 16:18–11, 22, and 40:6–8). Later OT indicators can be found very often in the Prophets (e.g., Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23; 37:24; Dan 9:26 [echoing Ps 22:11]; Isa 9:5, 6; 11:1-5; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 8:3; etc). In its turn, the NT contains several passages attesting to the typological fulfilment of David in Jesus (Matt 1:1–18 [gematria using the number 14]; John 19:24; Acts 2:29–33; 13:31–37; Heb 1:5; 5:5; 10:5–9; etc.)⁴⁰

The relationship between Elijah and David is less explicit and should be considered as a probability at best. However, the links seems sufficient to be worthy of mention here. Three likely connections should be mentioned.

⁴⁰ These lists of passages are provided by Davidson. See: Davidson, "Eschatological Hermeneutic," 22. For the David typology in the OT, see: Richard M. Davidson, "New Testament Use of the Old Testament," *JATS* 5 (1994): 23–28; idem, "Psalms 22, 23, 24—A Messianic Trilogy?" (Forthcoming in the volume 2 of *Psalms Studies* published by ATS and Peruvian Union University); Hamilton, "The Typology of David's Rise to Power," 4–25. For NT studies and the antypical fulfilment of David, see e.g., Lidija Novakovic, "Jesus as the davidic Messiah in Matthew," *HBT* 19 (1997): 148–191; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 146–153; Johnson, "The Passion according to David," 247–272.

1. The use of the phrase חַי־יְהוָה (alive is Yahweh) followed by a clause introduced by a conjunctive phrase containing the word אֶם is exclusively found in Samuel (10x), Kings (12x), and in Jeremiah (2x), in what is widely known as the Deuteronomistic literature. The language is used in the context of serious oaths, as in 1 Kgs 17:1; 18:10, and is only connected with monarchs, including Saul, David, and Zedekiah, or with the prophets Elijah and Elisha.
2. Another correspondence between Elijah and David is their flight from a wicked king seeking to harm them. Although the reason is not declared, Elijah is guided by God to hide (סָתַר) from Ahab. The verb סָתַר is complemented by a prepositional phrase 34 times in the HB. The most common prepositions are מִן 28x (e.g., Deut 31:17) and בְּ 5x (1 Sam 20:5, 24; 1 Kgs 17:3; Jer 23:24; Zeph 2:3).⁴¹ In the narrative corpus of the OT only David and Elijah hide from a persecuting king, seeking refuge in the wild (cf. 1 Sam 20:5, 24).
3. Perhaps the most significant allusion to David is the most subtle as well. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the choice of Zarephath may represent more than a controversy against Baal. Ootsson provides an interesting insight regarding the symbolic and ideological implications of Elijah's geographical moves, particularly in relation to the border of the Davidic kingdom. In his journeys,

⁴¹ The valence $\text{סָתַר} + \text{מִן}$ usually has the figurative sense of ignoring. From the 28x of its occurrences, the combination is mostly found in the expression “to hide the face from something of someone else.” In 16 of them, it refers to God in the act of hiding his face as a judgement against his people and allowing them to face the consequences of their choices (e.g., Deut 31:17; Isa 54:8; Ezek 39:23; Mic 3:4). It appears very often in the context of the Psalm where the author asks God to hide his face no longer (e.g., Ps 13:2; 69:18). It also refers to the fact that sins cannot be hidden from God (Jer 16:17). Only in two occasions the valence has literal meaning (someone is physically hiding or being hidden from someone else) (2 Kgs 11:2; Ps 55:11). In its turn, the valence $\text{סָתַר} + \text{בְּ}$ introduces the actual act of physically hiding in some place (e.g., 1 Sam 20:5, 24; Jer 23:24).

Elijah travels between Gilead, Zarephath, Mount Carmel, and Beer-Sheba, which constitute the same itinerary as that of David's census patrol in 2 Sam 24 (cf. vv. 6, 7) and delimit the area of Yahweh's inheritance. Thus, Ottosson concludes that "bearing in mind the motifs of the Wilderness wanderings stressed in the Elijah cycle, we ought not be surprised to find that Elijah, as a traditional forerunner of a Davidic-messianic restoration, follows this pattern."⁴²

Although the evidence for the construct of Elijah as a new David is sparse, the connection between them becomes more persuasive when interpreters realize how this connection is consistent with the rest of the Elijah narrative and how the author of 1 and 2 Kings portrays him as a messianic forerunner.

Recurrence of Major Redemptive-Historical Events

In his outstanding work on the use of the OT on the NT, Beale advances that "candidates for types also may be those major redemptive-historical events that in some fashion are repeated throughout the OT and share such unique characteristics that they are clearly to be identified with one another long before the era of the NT."⁴³ Among the insightful examples provided by him are the way the second generation of Israelites who crossed the Jordan river are described like the first generation who crossed the Red Sea; the way the creation account in Gen 1 offers a narrative paradigm for the description of a new creation, including the flood, the exodus, and the return of captivity; and, finally, the

⁴² Ottosson, "The Prophet Elijah's Visit to Zarephath," 193.

⁴³ Beale, *Handbook*, 22.

way the tabernacle and the temple (including the new temple of Ezekiel) are uniquely modeled according to the first temple on earth, the garden of Eden.⁴⁴

One interesting aspect not observed by Beale is how all these repeated major redemptive-historical events involve individual types. Following the order of the examples just mentioned, Moses and Joshua are identified with the first and second generation of Israelites. Adam, Noah, Moses, and Zerubbabel are connected with the recurrent theme of a new creation. Finally, Adam, Moses, Aaron, and the priesthood as a whole are linked with the continual search for an adequate place of worship.

The case of Elijah is similar. The reader of his story can find at least two obvious recurring themes in the redemptive-historical stream of Scripture. First, in his life and ministry Elijah relives the experience of Israel during the exodus. Second, in 1 Kgs 18, Elijah is clearly reviving the divine-human covenant that was established at Sinai through the mediation of Moses (Exod 24). In fact, “in 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2 the restoration of the covenant between Y^{HWH} and his people was the heart of Elijah’s mission.”⁴⁵ Such a new covenant constitutes another merciful offer of grace, granting to wayward Israel a new opportunity.

A New Exodus

Others already have undertaken successfully and thoroughly the effort to discuss the exodus typology and its development through the Canon. One of the most comprehensive studies on the topic is carried out by Ninow in his doctoral dissertation

⁴⁴ Concerning the temple motif in the Gen 1–3 see Richard M. Davidson, “Earthly First Sanctuary: Genesis 1–3 and Parallel Creation Accounts,” *AUSS* 53 (2015): 65–89.

⁴⁵ Koet, “Elijah as Reconciler of Father and Son,” 178.

mentioned in the second chapter of this research.⁴⁶ There are early indicators of this typology already in the immediate context (Exod 15:14–17; Numbers 23–24)⁴⁷ and throughout the pages of the OT canon, where the exodus event becomes the salvific paradigm for the most important divine acts of deliverance on behalf of Yahweh’s people.⁴⁸ Studies involving the new exodus in NT scholarship have allowed its authors to advance the idea of the new exodus.⁴⁹

However, one of the most overlooked aspects in scholarship regarding Elijah is how he is modeled according to the people of Israel, especially in the time of the exodus. There are several verbal and contextual connections between his experience and Israel’s. In the following paragraphs, the more convincing ones are identified.

1. The first way Elijah replays Israel is through their common experience of exodus.

As mentioned in chapter 2, the first clause of Yahweh’s speech (הָלַךְ מִן) to Elijah in 1 Kgs 17 contains the imperative of הָלַךְ (“to go”) followed by a prepositional phrase governed by מִן (“from”). It is quite significant that all of the six narrative occurrences of the same valence (הָלַךְ + מִן) refer to a pilgrimage in the context of

⁴⁶ Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 98–241.

⁴⁷ Regarding Num 23–24, esp. 23:22; 24:8, 14–17, see: Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 408.

⁴⁸ For instance: Hos 2:14–15; 12:9, 13; 13:4–5; Jer 23:4–8; 16:14–15; 31:32; Isa 11:15–16; 35; 40:3–5; 41:17–20; 42:14–16; 43:1–3, 14–21; 48:20–21; 49:8–12; 51:9–11; 52:3–6, 11–12; 55:12–13. See also: Davidson, “Eschatological Hermeneutic,” 32–34; Hamilton, *Typology*, 254–286; Charles H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London, U.K.: Nisbet, 1952), 75–133.

⁴⁹ Daniel Lynwood Smith, “The Uses of ‘New Exodus’ in New Testament Scholarship: Preparing a Way through the Wilderness,” *CBR* 14 (2016): 207–243; Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus and Mark*, BSL (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000); Debbie Hunn, “The Testing of God’s People: Exodus and Luke,” *FM* 21 (2003): 3–17; Fred L. Fisher, “New and Greater Exodus: The Exodus Pattern in the New Testament,” *SJT* 20 (1977): 69–79; Otto Alfred Piper, “Unchanging Promises: Exodus in the New Testament,” *Interpretation* 11 (1957): 3–22; Jindřich Mánek, “New Exodus [of Jesus] in the Books of Luke,” *NT* 2 (1957): 8–23.

an “exodus” experience, whether due to adversity or promise (Gen 12:1; 26:16; Exod 10:28; 1 Kgs 17:3).⁵⁰ Perhaps, the closest verbal parallel is the divine command to Abraham to leave his homeland in Gen 12:1 (לְדָדֹאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ וּמְוֹלַדְתָּהּ). As a new Israel, Elijah is sent by God to find refuge in the desert where Yahweh would sustain him. As God has expected in the past, the prophet should only trust in God’s promises.

2. Another evidence of the relationship between Elijah and Israel’s experience is found in God’s command וּפְנֵיתָ לְךָ קִדְמָה (“turn toward the east”; 1 Kgs 17:3). Here the weqatal of פנה (“to turn”) has imperative force.⁵¹ The only time that the same valence פנה + לְ occurs is in Deut 1:40 and 2:3 which refers to Israel’s roaming in the desert. Thus, it seems reasonable to suppose that through these two first clauses the narrator is tracing a parallel between the experience of the patriarchs and Israel in the past and that of Elijah in the present.
3. In the narrative of 1 Kgs 17, the author remarks how God provided (כול) for his prophet during his refuge in the wadi of Kerith. As already mentioned, the use of כול in a divine assurance of provision is first found in Gen 45:11 when God promises to provide for Jacob and his family in Egypt. The same promise of divine provision for the just is repeated in Ps 55:23. Many years after Elijah, in remembering God’s care for the Israelites during their 40-year journey, Nehemiah says that he sustained them (בְּלִבְלֵתָם) (Neh 9:21). Thus, the restricted use of כול in

⁵⁰ The phrase appears in a different context outside narrative texts in Amos 6:2 and Prov 14:7.

⁵¹ When a ZIm0 clause is followed immediately by a WQt0 clause (125 x) in the HB, very often the weqatal assumes imperative force. For instance, see Gen 44:4; Exod 3:16; Lev 1:2; 1 Sam 22:5. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[ZIm0 Followed by WQt0](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

direct connection with the experience of his people in the past is another indication that Elijah is narratively constructed as a new Israel.

4. Even in more specific terms, the divine provision for Elijah coincides with that of Israel during her pilgrimage in the desert. In Exod 16, after they complain about the food (the lack of בָּשָׂר “meat” and לֶחֶם “bread”) (v. 3), God promises to provide for Israel with meat (בָּשָׂר) in the evening and bread (לֶחֶם) in the morning (v. 12). In 1 Kgs 17:6, the narrator notes that the birds would bring bread (לֶחֶם) and meat (בָּשָׂר) in the morning and in the evening.
5. The mention of the prophet’s obedience in terms of acting according to the word of Yahweh (בְּדִבַּר יְהוָה) in 1 Kgs 17:5 is not only one more example of shared vocabulary among the Deuteronomist literature but also a subtle allusion to Israel’s experience. The phrase mostly appears in 1 and 2 Kings (17x out of 26). But in the book of Joshua, the expression occurs in the context of Ai’s conquest (Josh 8:8, 27). The people should proceed according “to the word of Yahweh” (בְּדִבַּר יְהוָה). As they did, they succeeded. Again, the narrator of 1 Kgs 17 seems to be thoughtfully selective in his wording, whereby he shows how Elijah is living Israel’s experience.
6. From a structural point of view, the relationship between Israel and Yahweh and Elijah and Yahweh is also parallel. In both cases, there is a clear command-obedience and promise-fulfilment pattern, which is based on the covenant. As God enters into a covenant with his people, he expects obedience from them. His commands are an expression of his love and desire for their survival and well-being. His stipulations are usually accompanied by promises of success and

flourishing. As Israel obeys God’s commandments trusting his benevolent will, it receives the fulfilment of his promises. When his people do not obey him, they tragically reject his protection and consequently they cannot see the fulfilment of the divine promises. Instead of flourishing and living, they face defeat and death. Such a pattern is often seen in the narrative of God’s dealings with Israel not only in the history that precedes Elijah’s ministry, but also the history that comes after him. The same pattern can be seen in the Elijah narrative itself, especially in 1 Kings 17, as has been shown in chapter 2.

7. In the context of faithfulness, Yahweh complies with Israel’s requests in the same way he complies with those of Elijah. Concerning the unique valence found in the phrase *וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ*, see the section above entitled “A New Joshua.”
8. Finally, Elijah and Israel share a similar experience of failure. After seeing so many manifestations of God’s favor and power, Israel fails at Kadesh Barnea in not trusting in God’s protection and his plans for their success (Num 13–14). The Israelites still try to go rogue but they find only defeat and shame. After this failure, they wander forty years in the desert. Likewise, Elijah, who embodies the new Israel, fails after a remarkable exhibition of God’s power and superiority over the gods of the land. As a result, Elijah wanders in the desert forty days. However, in both cases their failure does not frustrate God’s master plan. God mercifully sustains them during their 40-year (-day) trip which God did not plan for them. After the period of 40 years (or days), both Israel and Elijah cross the Jordan river to find God’s intended destination for them.

All of these verbal and contextual marks show that Elijah's story is narratively described within the terms and events of Israel's story. He is a new Israel whom God has chosen to represent him and bless the whole earth. However, just as all previous prototypes of the true Israel (Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, etc.) failed before, Elijah also does not achieve the perfect standard of God's just demands. Indeed, other candidates would come after Elijah, but with no success. Only the Messiah would meet the perfect requirements of divine justice. This cycle of attempts and failures form part of the background of the messianic hope in the OT. Only Jesus of Nazareth breaks the vicious cycle of attempts and defeats to become the true new Israel.

Mediator of a New Covenant

There are several intertextual links between the renewal of the covenant in 1 Kgs 18 and in other previous episodes. Only the more convincing allusions with sufficient verbal and contextual similarity are addressed here.

1. The need for a renewal of the covenant here is closely connected with another episode of apostasy. Such an apostasy involves again the widespread practice of idolatry. In his stubborn condition, Ahab is identified by Elijah as the new "troubler" of Israel (עִבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל) (1 Kgs 18:17–18) who through the promotion of idolatry has led Israel to defeat and death like the first troubler of Israel mentioned in Jos 6:18; 7:25, namely, Achan.

In this idolatry spree, Jezebel is implementing a purge of those who are faithful to Yahweh.⁵² The cutting off of Yahweh's prophets mentioned in 1 Kgs 18:4 is

⁵² Here a woman is leading God's people into idolatry. Compare to the episode involving Baal Peor in Num 25, where women seduce the Israelites into idolatry. Revelation mentions such an apostasy of idolatry and immorality through the image of a prostitute (Rev 17). In Rev 2:14, 20–21, John connects

grotesquely equivalent to the cutting off of the Canaanites commanded by God in the conquest of the land of Israel (e.g., Josh 11:21). Jezebel's actions under the complacency of Ahab function as a parody of God's initial judgment against the very nations that promoted the cult to Baal and other deities. Thus, there is a process of reversal that, if not stopped, would inevitably lead Israel to extinction. The same logic of reversal and extinction is found in the narrative of the golden calf in Exod 32–34. One interesting verbal connection in this narrative appears in Elijah's prayer in 1 Kgs 18:36. The expression God of "Abraham, Isaac and *Israel*" occurs only four times in the OT: once in the Pentateuch in the context of the apostasy involving the golden calf (Exod 32:13) and three times in the Former Prophets (1 Kgs 18:36; 1 Chron 29:18; 30:6). Peculiar to all occurrences is the fact that apostasy is in view in each context. In the case of 1 Kgs 18:36, it is possible that the narrator is alluding to the episode in Exod 32:13, the only previous instance where the phrase is used. If this is the case, then its usage may imply that Israel is again on the verge of destruction and for the second time a prophet by means of the construction of an altar will prevent the obliteration of God's people.

2. The drought announced in 1 Kgs 17 and interrupted after the ceremony of 1 Kgs 18 is another motif that directly places the actions of Elijah against the

idolatry to sexual immorality and mentions Jezebel by name: "But I have a few *things* against you: that you have there those who hold fast to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. But I have against you that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, the one who calls herself a prophetess, and teaches and deceives my slaves to commit sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. And I have given her time in order to repent, and she did not want to repent from her sexual immorality" (LEB).

background of the covenant renewal. As a result of Israel's abandonment of the covenant the land would not see rain for a long period. The disruption of the normal cycle of rain would bring about an opportunity for Israel to acknowledge her sin and prove that Baal was not responsible for the rain.

After Yahweh's manifestation on Mt. Carmel and the subsequent confession of the people, God would bring rain to the land again (1 Kgs 18:1). The clause **וְאֶתְנָהּ מָטָר** ("I will give rain"), which appears nine times in the OT, has a strong connection with the covenant, particularly in contexts where blessings (or the lack of them) are conditioned on covenant faithfulness. For instance, the promise of rain in due season is found in Deut 11:13–14 while the lack of rain is emphasized as divine discipline for disobedience in Deut 28:24. In his prayer, Solomon says that in the context of the breaking of the covenant rain would only be poured down at again under the condition of the people's repentance (1 Kgs 8:36 cf. 2 Chr 6:27). Significantly, in light of 1 Kgs 8:36, the divine initiative to send Elijah is a manifestation of God's grace. In this sense, the prophet is the divine instrument to lead the people to a position where they could experience repentance by recognizing Yahweh as the only true God. Although God needs to intervene in 1 Kgs 17–18, rain indeed comes only after the people's response (1 Kgs 18:39–40).

3. The gathering of all Israel is another important motif present in other covenant renewal ceremonies.⁵³ As mentioned in chapter 2, the gathering (**קָבֵץ**) of all Israel

⁵³ The valence **אָתְּ-כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל + קָבֵץ** appears only four times in the HB. All of them, except 2 Sam 28:4, appear in other covenant renewal ceremonies (1 Sam 7:5; 2 Sam 3:21; 1 Kgs 18:19).

(אֶת־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל) has covenantal overtones that echo the great gathering of Israel in Mizpah (1 Sam 7:5), for instance. Besides the reunion in Mizpah, the verb קָבַץ with the grammatical object אֶת־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל (“all Israel”) appears also in 2 Sam 28:4 when Saul summons all Israel to battle against the Philistines and in 2 Sam 3:21 when Abner pledges to gather all Israel to make a covenant with David.

Interestingly, both motifs (battle and covenant) are present in 1 Kgs 18. In 1 Kgs 18, the battle is spiritual, and it involves the struggle for the people’s hearts as they choose between Yahweh and Baal. The phrase also echoes the reunion of all Israel at the foot of Mt. Sinai in Exod 19 and 24. In drawing a parallel with the reunion of all Israel in other key covenantal moments in the history of OT redemption, the narrator ascribes considerable theological import to the event on Mt. Carmel.

4. An additional allusion to the covenant renewal motif appears in the material used by Elijah to build the altar in 1 Kgs 18:30–31. Here the use of twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the son of Jacob (שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים) (בְּמִסְפַּר שְׁבַטֵי בְנֵי־יִעֲקֹב) reminds of the great reunion in Gilgal (Jos 4) where the Israelites “took twelve stones” (וַיִּשְׂאוּ שְׁתַּיִם־עֶשְׂרֵה אֲבָנִים) from the Jordan river “according to the number of the tribes of Israel” (לְמִסְפַּר שְׁבַטֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) (Jos 4:8). The close verbal resemblance is hardly coincidental.
5. One important aspect of the contest on Mt. Carmel is the use of narrative echoes of the covenant ceremony in Exod 24. Usually, these echoes are marked by key verbal repetitions. As referred to in chapter 2, the repetition of the verb עלה, which occurs seven times in six verses (1 Kgs 18:41–46) is an important clue left

by the narrator calling the attention of the reader to another passage with a high concentration of “going-ups,” viz. Exod 24 (cf. vv. 1, 2, 9, 12, 13, 15, 18).

Although the concentration of “going-ups” could not be enough to draw a parallel between the two passages, it works as a hermeneutical key inviting the reader to look more closely at the two passages. When these passages are examined, several other correspondences can be identified. Due to their pertinence, these parallels are repeated here: (i) Moses “draws near” to Yahweh alone (וַיִּגַּשׁ) (v. 2 cf. 1 Kgs 18:20, 30, 36); (ii) after Moses shares with the people all the words, all the people answer him (וַיַּעַן כָּל־הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד) (Exod 24:3; 1 Kgs 18:24); (iii) Moses builds an altar accompanied by twelve memorial stones (וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ תַּחַת הַהָר וּשְׁתֵּים עָשָׂרָה) (Exod 24:4; cf. 1 Kgs 18:31); (iv) Moses sacrifices bulls (פָּרִים) (Exod 24:5; cf. 1 Kgs 18:33); (v) Moses goes up with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy to participate in a communion meal where they eat and drink (וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׂתּוּ) (Exod 24:11 cf. 1 Kgs 18:41–44); (vi) a cloud covers the mountain (וַיִּכַּס הָעָנָן אֶת־הָהָר) (Exod 24:15 cf. 1 Kgs 18:44); and, (vii) the sight of the glory of Yahweh was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel (אִכְלֹת בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָר לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֵשׁ) (Exod 24:17 cf. 1 Kgs 18:38).

6. Finally, there is a remarkable verbal parallel between the fiery consumption of the sacrifice in 1 Kgs 18:38–39 and Lev 9:24 when the Israelite sanctuary cult is inaugurated. In Lev 9:24, fire comes from Yahweh (וַתֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה) upon the altar, consuming (וַתֹּאכַל עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ) the sacrifice (אֶת־הָעֹלָה וְאֶת־הַחֲלָבִים). As all the people see (וַיֵּרָא כָּל־הָעָם) the divine manifestation, they react immediately by

shouting for joy and falling on their faces (וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם). It seems that in both cases the fire from heaven signals a new beginning for Israel, the inauguration of a new era. Such a new era is associated with the divine-human covenant, and it is always conditional upon the people's ongoing response of faith. In both cases, human failures take place after these crucial covenant events: Nadab and Abihu, newly consecrated priests/ministers, fail to act only according to God's ritual instructions (Lev 10:1–2), and Elijah, God's minister, fails by running away from Jezebel (1 Kgs 19:1–4).

The presence of these major redemptive-historical themes of the new exodus and the covenant in the narrative of Elijah is an additional indication that already in the OT text predictive import has been inscripturated. Typology is not merely the fruit of the inspired imagination of the NT author. In their reading of the OT, the NT authors are only following the Christological flow that goes from Genesis to Malachi through the waymarks left by their predecessors, the prophets.

Recurring and Unfinished Narratives

The last category of typological indicators to be mentioned here is that found in recurring and unfinished narratives. According to Beale, such narratives possess a forward-looking nature that point to the messianic era.⁵⁴ As they share unique characteristics, these patterns might easily have been identified long before the NT era.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Beale, *Handbook*, 22.

⁵⁵ Beale, *Handbook*, 22.

In the case of the Elijah typology, the following discussion presents three instances of this phenomenon.

Crisis and Failure

In 1 Kgs 19, the reader meets Elijah in his moment of weakness and failure. As discussed before, the change from chapters 17–18 to chapter 19 is drastic. In his discouragement (probably prompted by physical and emotional burnout), the prophet let his eyes be fixated on himself instead of focused on God’s larger plan. The result is evident in his flight from Jezebel and his subsequent request to die. Apparently, although Yahweh restores Elijah’s place as a prophet, God accepts his resignation and instructs him to anoint a substitute. There is no doubt that Elijah is “up and running” again in 1 Kgs 21, but the episodes in chapter 19 clearly show that Elijah is neither “the prophet” promised by God in Deut 15 nor “the man” whose expectation dates back to the first son born to Adam and Eve (Gen 4:1).

In fact, in his flight to the desert Elijah is repeating the same mistake of his ancestors. As a failure to trust in God in face of the threat imposed by the Canaanites, the Israelites rebel against Yahweh at Kadesh (Num 13, 14). Then they delay God’s original plan and ultimately are replaced by the new generation. They wander through the desert and away from the promised land for forty years. And despite their rebellion, God still sustains their lives through food and protection. The same experience is found in Elijah’s life. Looking to himself, Elijah fails in trusting in Yahweh in the face of Jezebel’s threat. Then he flees, interrupting the momentum created by God’s manifestation on Mt. Carmel. For this reason, God’s plan is delayed, and Elijah starts a journey to which Yahweh has not called him. His time of wandering away from the promised land also

shares the number forty (albeit days instead of years). In the end Elijah also is replaced by Elisha who lives to see his predecessor's mission completed. Considering this pattern, Elijah's words are true: he is not better than his ancestors (1 Kgs 19:4).

Beale observes that "the literary clustering of repeated commissions and failures is evidence of a type within the OT itself."⁵⁶ Such clustering can be found in most of the great figures in the OT who very often are also Christological types. For instance, this seems to be the case with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and Hezekiah. Common to all these men is their failure in decisive moments of their stories that stalls God's plans for his people. In each case, their spiritual fiasco makes evident that God's people should wait longer for the fulfilment of Gen 3:15.

Any messianic hope connected with these characters ended in frustration. The same happens with Elijah. It is significant that chapter 19 is the place where most of the parallels with Moses' narrative are found. In this respect, because of their failure both prophets had to choose a substitute who would carry forward their original mission. However, as the biblical canon develops, it becomes clear that even their substitutes can fail in instituting a complete and definitive change. After every failure, there is a renewal of hope in God's final intervention to bring his promises to completion. Only the Messiah brings about God's intention to its fulfilment.

Messianic Expectation

Quite often recurring and unfinished narratives advance eschatological/messianic expectations. For instance, the exodus motif, which is one of the most recurrent ones in

⁵⁶ Beale, *Handbook*, 21.

the OT,⁵⁷ appears with eschatological overtones that culminate with the song of Moses in Rev 15:3–4. Each new exodus in the OT renews the hope of the final deliverance.

In the case of Elijah, the number and nature of the miracles or wonders performed during his ministry most likely would have created eschatological expectation. Pyper observes that “both Elijah’s and Elisha’s stories exhibit strange features that breach the most fundamental of boundaries in the Hebrew Bible, that between life and death.”⁵⁸

Such a manifestation of divine intervention in nature meets parallels only during the exodus story. Aptly, Kim considers the exodus from Egypt and the Elijah-Elisha cycle “the two major OT miracle periods.”⁵⁹ Gilmour also remarks that “miracles that interfere with nature in such a dramatic way are not recorded in the time between Moses/Joshua and Elijah/Elisha, greatly exalting these prophets.”⁶⁰ Such a cluster of miracles in the Elijah and Elisha narratives point to the importance of the time in which they were ministering.

Thus, it would not be surprising if Elijah’s contemporaries (especially the faithful remnant) shared certain eschatological optimism probably with messianic overtones since “this hope for the yet-to-come is fundamentally based on the arrival of the Messiah of

⁵⁷ See: R. Michael Fox, ed., *Reverberations of Exodus in Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014); Ninow, *Indicators of Typology*, 2001; Isbell, *The Function of the Exodus Motif*; Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus*.

⁵⁸ Pyper, “The Secret of Succession,” 64.

⁵⁹ Kim, “The Literary and the Theological Functions of the Miracle Narratives,” 276. In his article, P. Peter Dubovský also compares the concentration of miracles found in the narrative of Moses-Aaron with that of Elijah-Elisha. P. Peter Dubovský, “From Miracle-Makers Elijah and Elisha to Jesus and Apocrypha,” *SBS* 12 (2020): 28.

⁶⁰ Gilmour, *Juxtaposition and the Elijah Cycle*, 85–86. Kim concurs with Gilmour saying that “these patterns of Elijah and Elisha miracle narratives show remarkable parallels to those of Moses and Joshua and help to differentiate the Elijah and Elisha narratives from other miracle narratives, which contain sparse miracles.” Kim, “The Literary and the Theological Functions of the Miracle Narratives,” 134.

YHWH who will transform the bronze of the past into the gold of the future, ushering in the ‘last days’ as the Second and Greater Moses, David, etc.”⁶¹

The New Elijah in Malachi

Finally, the last example of a recurring or unfinished narrative connected to Elijah concerns the prophecy about his return in Mal 3:23, 24 [4:5, 6] where the prophet is mentioned by name. In his classification, Bird identifies three kinds of types: office-types, action-types, and person-types. In the last category, he includes only David and Elijah. He explains a person-type as “an historic individual whose office and name are *explicitly* stated to be a prefiguration (i.e., a type) of one in the future (i.e., antitype) who will perform the same or similar functions and hold the same or similar office.”⁶² He adds that “what separates the person-type from the office-type is that, in the former, the actual *name of the actual individual is said to be shared by the antitype.*”⁶³ David is mentioned by name as a future shepherd of Israel in Ezek 34:23-24 and Elijah as a future prophet Mal 3:23.

To understand the prophecy of Elijah’s return and how it advances somehow in a surprising way this person-type requires a consideration of the function of Elijah in the context of Mal 3:23–24, the possible reason behind Malachi’s choice of Elijah as the forerunner of the day of Yahweh/coming of Messiah, and the identity of this new Elijah.

⁶¹ Bird, “Typological Interpretation,” 38.

⁶² Bird, “Typological Interpretation,” 40.

⁶³ Bird, “Typological Interpretation,” 40.

The Function of Elijah

The return of Elijah before the day of Yahweh is mentioned in the epilogue of the book of Malachi.⁶⁴ As is widely agreed, the book is formed by six speeches or prophetic disputations where Yahweh exposes his people's hypocrisy. Each question forms the background for the general content of the book.⁶⁵ Malachi's prophecy closes with a concluding exhortation,⁶⁶ which invites the people to remember (זָכְרוּ) the instruction of Moses (תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה) (Mal 3:22). In the second part, Malachi announces the coming of Elijah before the day of Yahweh with the mission to bring back the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the hearts of the sons to their fathers in order to prevent the land from

⁶⁴ Although I am aware of the extensive debate about the redaction of Malachi, in this short analysis I will deal only with the final form of the text. The integrity of the book as it stands today is defended by Beth Glazier-McDonald and Sheree Lear. See: Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Mal'ak Habberit: The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," *HAR* 11 (1987): 95–96 and Sheree Lear, "The Relationship of Scriptural Reuse to the Redaction of Malachi Genesis 31-33 and Malachi 3.24," *VT* 4 (2005): 649. See more on the redaction of Malachi, particularly the epilogue, on Fanie Snyman, "Once Again: Investigating the Three Figures Mentioned in Malachi 3:1," *VE* 3 (2006): 1032, 1041–1042; D. L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi* OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1995), 206–212; Paul L. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 176; Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic Authority, Form Problems, and the Use of Traditions in the Book of Malachi*, BZAW 288 (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2000), 290–291; Jonathan Gibson, *Covenant Continuity and Fidelity: A Study of Inner-Biblical Allusion and Exegesis in Malachi*, LHBOTS 625 (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 27.

⁶⁵ Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen suggest the following division: 1:2–5 (God's love); 1:6–2:9 (Unfaithful priests); 2:10–16 (Divorce); 2:17–3:5 or 6 (divine justice); 3:6–12 (tithe); 3:13–21 [Eng. 4:3] (the day of judgment). Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, NAC 21A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 227.

⁶⁶ The function of the epilogue in the larger canonical context has also been a matter of debate. Three main views have been defended: Malachi's epilogue is the conclusion for the whole OT. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1977), 85–89. Malachi's epilogue is the conclusion for the Prophets. Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 388–396. Malachi's epilogue is the conclusion only for the book of Malachi. Stephen B. Chapman, "A Canonical Approach to Old Testament Theology? Deuteronomy 34:10-12 and Malachi 3:22-24 as Programmatic Conclusions," *HBT* 25 (2003): 121–145; Lotta Valve, "The Case of Messenger-Elijah: The Origins of the Final Appendix to Malachi (3:23-24)" in *'My Spirit at Rest in the North Country' (Zechariah 6.8): Collected Communications to the XXth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Helsinki 2010*, ed. Matthias Augustin and Hermann Michael Niemann (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2011), 93–103. It is difficult to decide which position is correct. However, it is possible to conclude that at least providentially (if not intentionally) Mal 3:22–24 is a fitting conclusion for the OT canon.

being stricken with a curse.⁶⁷ Thus, while the first admonition is straightforward (see the use of the imperative זָכְרוּ), this second exhortation is more indirect. In order to avert the curse (חָרָם), they would need to allow a work of restoration (הַשִּׁיב) to take place in their own lives.

The function of Elijah is closely related to the time of his arrival, which is the focus of verse 23. The divine discourse in verse 23 opens with the interjection הִנֵּה followed by a participle (שֹׁלַח). The construction is classified by Waltke and O'Connor as an exclamation of immediacy⁶⁸ that in the context connotes “an ominous imminency.”⁶⁹ In this case, the imminence of the action does not define the timing of the fulfillment nor its urgency given that the original audience of Malachi would not see the actual fulfillment of this prophecy. Rather, the interjection + participle signals the unexpected, surprising character of the future event. Yahweh, who is the referent of the independent personal pronoun אֲנִי, promises to send Elijah to his people. Although Yahweh addresses the priests directly in other passages of Malachi (cf. Mal 1:6; 2:1, 7), the context here suggests that the referent of the pronominal suffix -כֶּם is Israel as a whole.

Elijah and My Messenger

Elijah is referred to as מְלָאָכִי (“my messenger”) in Mal 3:1. The connection of מְלָאָכִי in verse 1 with Elijah in verse 23 is supported by linguistic and contextual

⁶⁷ Based on the mention of Moses and Elijah in the epilogue of Malachi, Gane instructively concludes that Torah is prophetic, and the Prophets are Torah. Roy Gane, “The Gospel according to Moses and Elijah,” *AUSS* 7 (2010): 7.

⁶⁸ O'Connor and Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 675–676.

⁶⁹ Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25D (New Haven, CT; London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 2008), 265.

parallels. First, they are introduced in the same way: (i) an exclamation of immediacy initiated by the particle הַגִּיהָ; (ii) an expressed pronominal reference (a 1cs pronominal suffix in verse 1 and a 1cs independent pronoun in verse 23); and (iii) the participle of שִׁלַח are followed by a direct object identifying who is being sent (in the first case “my messenger” and in the second “Elijah”).

Table 16. Introduction of the Messenger and Elijah

3:1	הַגִּיהָ שִׁלַח מִלְאָכִי
3:23	הַגִּיהָ אֶנְכִי שִׁלַח לְכֶם אֶת אֵלֶיָּה הַנְּבִיא

Second, the context of each verse appears to be the same. Yahweh is the subject of each of the participles, and his actions are identical in both verses: he is about to send someone. Although the indirect object is not indicated in verse 1 as it is in verse 23 (לְכֶם), it seems evident that the work of מִלְאָכִי (“my messenger”) is also on behalf of God’s people as represented by the original audience of Malachi. The timing of the sending of Elijah in verse 23 and of מִלְאָכִי (“my messenger”) in verse 1 is also the same. The character identified as מִלְאָכִי in verse 1 appears to prepare the way before Yahweh (וַיִּפְנֶה־), who is coming to his temple (הָאָדוֹן יָבוֹא אֶל־הַיְכָלֹ). His coming to his temple coincides with the coming of the messenger of the covenant (וּמִלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם), “and the messenger of covenant in whom you take pleasure, he is coming”). The conclusion is that the messenger of the covenant is distinct from “my messenger.” In addition to the fact that the messengers are characterized differently (מִלְאָכִי “my messenger” versus מִלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית “messenger of the covenant”), the messenger called simply מִלְאָכִי (“my messenger”) appears before the the day of Yahweh, which is the time of the coming of מִלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית (“the messenger of the covenant”). Thus, “my

messenger” is sent by Yahweh to prepare the way for the “messenger of the covenant.”

The mention of “the day of his coming” (יום בואו) in verse 2 confirms that the context of the sending of מְלַאכֵי is the time before the day of Yahweh.

The coming of the day of Yahweh (בוא יום יהוה) is also the context of the sending of Elijah in the epilogue of Malachi. If this is the case, his work of reconciliation and conversion involving fathers and sons in verse 23 explains what “preparing the way” actually means in verse 1. Thus, the messenger announced in verse 1, who is identified as Elijah in verse 23, comes before the day of Yahweh to prepare the way for his coming. It seems evident that “preparing the way” does not imply literal road work, but a work concerning the ways of life as Mal 3:23 makes clear.⁷⁰ When both verses are read together, they can shed light on the identity and nature of the work performed by the prophet who precedes the day of Yahweh.

The Interpretation of the Prophecy of Mal 3:1–6

The prophecy of Mal 3:1 is prompted by the fourth prophetic disputation introduced in 2:17, where the prophet confronts Judah⁷¹ with the accusation that they have wearied God by questioning his ability or willingness to establish justice.⁷² Then

⁷⁰ According to Allen P. Ross, “way” has become an idiom; but it was originally an implied comparison between a road or way and one’s conduct in life, that is, the habits and practices. Allen P. Ross, *Malachi Then and Now: An Expository Commentary Based on Detailed Exegetical Analysis* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 134.

⁷¹ Note the plural הוֹגְעֵתֶם (יגע).

⁷² The verb “to weary” “can also refer to emotional disturbance (i.e., a sense of being annoyed) or exhaustion resulting from the persistent stresses, sorrows, and trials of life (cf. Pss 6:6; 69:3; Isa 49:4; Jer 45:3). In the sense of having diminished physical or emotional energy, the Lord cannot become ‘weary’; he is a source of strength to the weary (Isa 40:28–31). But since being ‘weary’ may imply prolonged and often unpleasant activity that is soon to stop, the verb can be used figuratively of God. His weariness represents the fact that God’s patience is near an end, as it had also been in Isa 43:22–24, a passage to which Malachi may be alluding.” Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 371–372.

Malachi repeats the people's words: "Everyone who does evil *is* good in the sight of Yahweh, and in them he delights." "Where *is* the God of justice?" (LEB). The divine answer is the prophecy found in the rest of the section (3:1–6).

The prophecy of Mal 3:1–6 has received much attention within the history of interpretation. This is particularly true concerning the identity of the participants mentioned in 3:1, which has been considered "an interpretative crux"⁷³ or even "a riddle."⁷⁴ There is no need here for a full exegesis of the passage, but a few notes regarding the identity of מְלַאֲכֵי ("my messenger") in 3:1 and the nature of his mission are in order.

The first participant to be identified is the speaker who is the subject of the verb שָׁלַח and the referent of the pronominal suffix in הִנְנִי. His identity is clarified at the end of verse 1 by the expression אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת ("Yahweh of hosts says"). In response to the people's outcry for justice, Yahweh affirms that judgment is on the way. However, his people are asking for something for which they are not prepared. In verse 2, Malachi asks "And who *can* endure the day of his coming? And who *is* the one who can stand when he

⁷³ Glazier-McDonald, "Mal'ak Habberit," 94.

⁷⁴ Valve, "The Case of Messenger-Elijah," 97. The major issue in the passage is the identification of the participants mentioned in Mal 3:1. Richard M. Baylock identifies three major positions in the history of the interpretation regarding their identity and their number: one-person approach; two-person approach (Yahweh and a forerunner identified as "my messenger" and "messenger of covenant"); three-person approach (three divine beings). Richard M. Baylock, "My Messenger, the LORD, and the Messenger of the Covenant Malachi 3:1 Revisited," *SBJT* 20 (2016): 73–74. An excellent bibliography about the different interpretations of Mal 3:1 is provided by David Miller. See: David M. Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," *NTS* 53 (2007): 3–5.

appears?” (LEB; emphasis supplied).⁷⁵ Such a reality demands a work of preparation that is carried out by a future prophet identified as “my messenger”.

The second participant is identified as מְלַאֲכִי (“my messenger.”) Although this is also the name of the prophet to whom the book is attributed, it is evident that מְלַאֲכִי here does not refer to Malachi, but a future individual whose work would be accomplished before the coming of Yahweh. In general, the prophets were recognized as God’s messengers representing him before his people. The connection of “my messenger” with Elijah confirms the prophetic nature of his work.

The sending of the messenger in Mal 3:1 (הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ מְלַאֲכִי) echoes the sending of the messenger in Exod 23:23; 32:34 (בְּיַלְדֵי מְלַאֲכִי לְפָנָיִךָ). However, the context here is different. While in the exodus the sending of the messenger represented protection for the people (he would prepare the way for the Israelites), in Mal 3:1 the sending of the messenger prepares the way for Yahweh himself. To the unfaithful Israelites, his sending is indeed a threat – the day of condemnation is arriving (cf. 3:5). Like the day of Yahweh, his sending is good news for the genuine Israelites and bad news for the unfaithful (Amos 5:18; Mic 4:5–7).

The image of preparing a way for the Lord appears also in Isa 40:3; 57:14 and 62:10. However, while Isa 57:14 and 62:10 also echo the exodus tradition, only in Isa 40:3 is the use parallel to Mal 3:1. In both cases, Yahweh is coming as a king whose arrival requires preparation. In Isaiah, the unidentified herald (קוֹל “a voice”) calls the

⁷⁵ E. Ray Clendenen observes that the hiphil carries the meaning ‘endure’ in Jer 10:10 and Joel 2:11 . . . [and] points out that the combination of the interrogative מִי and the root כּוֹל is unique to these two passages. . . . The question ‘Who can stand when he appears?’ is used almost exclusively of the Lord in his wrath (1 Sam 6:20; Jer 49:19//50:44; Neh 1:6; Pss 76:7[8]; 130:3). E. Ray Clendenen, “Messenger of the Covenant in Malachi 3.1 Once Again,” *JETS* 62 (2019): 92–93.

people to “clear the way of Yahweh! Make a highway smooth in the desert for our God! Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill shall become low, and rough ground be like a plain, and the rugged ground like a valley-plain” (Isa 40:3–4) (LEB). In Malachi 3:1 and 24, this voice (קול) is identified as that of “my messenger” and Elijah, respectively.⁷⁶

The imagery apparently “comes from an ancient Near Eastern custom of sending messengers ahead of a visiting king to inform local inhabitants of his coming in order for them to pave the way (remove all obstacles) for the monarch.”⁷⁷ Evidently, clearing the way should not be understood literally.⁷⁸ Hill observes that

clearing the way before Yahweh’s epiphany means removing the ‘obstacles’ of self-interest, spiritual lethargy, and evil behavior embedded in the people of God. This was the task of Yahweh’s messenger, preparing the “processional way” by turning Israel away from their own wicked and covetous ways (Isa 57:17) so that the people of God might be called a ‘holy people’ and Zion might be known as a ‘city not abandoned’ (Isa 62:10–12).⁷⁹

Yahweh, who speaks in the first person in the first two clauses of verse 1, now speaks in the third person in the last part of the verse. The clause אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת in the end of verse 1 confirms that Yahweh is still the speaker up to this point. The change in speech mode from first to third person should not surprise the reader of the Prophets.⁸⁰ In

⁷⁶ Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 384–385.

⁷⁷ Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, Mal 3:1.

⁷⁸ The expression “clear/prepare the way” appears only five times in the OT, and almost all of them are found in the prophets with a figurative sense (Isa 40:3; 57:14; 62:10; Mal 3:1). The only exception is Job 24:18, where the expression is found in an obscure context involving the actions of an adulterous man. In any case, in Job the verb פָּנָה is qal and means “to turn” instead of “to clear/prepare.”

⁷⁹ Hill, *Malachi*, 267.

⁸⁰ This phenomenon where God speaks about himself in the third person is called illeism. See: Andrews S. Malone, “God the Illeist Third-Person Self-references and Trinitarian Hints in the Old Testament,” *JETS* 52 (2009): 518. However, the presence of illeism does not prove or deny a trinitarian reading of the passage, as Andrews S. Malone correctly implies. In his thorough analysis of participant-

this way, it is natural that the next title introduced refers to Yahweh: and suddenly Yahweh, who you are seeking will come to his temple (וּפְתָאֵם יְבוֹא אֶל־הַיְכָלֹ הָאֵדוֹן אֲשֶׁר־). The identification of הָאֵדוֹן with Yahweh here is confirmed by the fact that all occurrences of אֵדוֹן with a definite article refer to Yahweh throughout the OT. Indeed, except in Mal 3:1, all of them are accompanied by the Tetragrammaton, which usually is an apposition to אֵדוֹן.⁸¹ The fact that the Lord is coming to “his temple” (הַיְכָלֹ) leaves little doubt that אֵדוֹן here refers to Yahweh.⁸² Thus, the work of מְלַאֲכִי (“my messenger”) precedes the actual coming of Yahweh to his temple. In the context, Snyman suggests that “‘Lord’ is used here to emphasize the lordship of God over against the priests as human beings.”⁸³

However, the identity מְלַאֲכִי הַבְּרִית (“messenger of the covenant”) is a matter of more debate in the Malachi scholarship. However, today, most scholars still support the view that מְלַאֲכִי הַבְּרִית is another title for הָאֵדוֹן or Yahweh.⁸⁴ The uniqueness of the

reference shifts in the book of Jeremiah, Glanz classifies this linguistic phenomenon as objectivization. Glanz, *Understanding Participant-Reference Shifts*, 322–325.

⁸¹ For instance: Exod 23:17; Deut 10:17; Isa 1:24; 10:16. See Text-Fabric query results in section [“The Distribution of הָאֵדוֹן in the HB”](#) of my jupyter notebook.

⁸² When the 3ms pronominal suffix is attached the noun הַיְכָלֹ in reference to the temple, Yahweh is always its referent. For instance: 2 Sam 22:7; Jer 50:28; Ps 27:4. See Text-Fabric query results in section [“The Referent of 3ms Pronominal Suffix in הַיְכָלֹ”](#) of my jupyter notebook.

⁸³ Snyman, “Once Again,” 1039. Moskala admits that the reference to in Mal 3:1 may point directly to Christ. See: Moskala, “Trinitarian Thinking in the Hebrew Scriptures,” 271.

⁸⁴ One exception is Petterson, who argues that “in all instances, a ‘messenger’ is an appointed delegate of a higher authority, even in the case of ‘the Angel of the Lord,’ who, though divine, serves on behalf of Yhwh as his visible presence.” Anthony R. Petterson, “The Identity of ‘The Messenger of the Covenant,’ in Malachi 1 3:1 – Lexicon and Rhetorical Analyses,” *BBR* 29 (2019): 282. For this reason, he insists that מְלַאֲכִי הַבְּרִית cannot refer to הָאֵדוֹן. However, in light of the doctrine of trinity, submission can be functional instead of ontological. The case of ‘the angel of Yahweh’ is one example of functional submission. Ontologically speaking the Angel as a divine being is not less than God. Otherwise, he would be a semi-god, and that is not the case. Thus, the example provided by Petterson seems to hinder his own conclusion. See pages 304–305 for more on the Angel of Yahweh.

expression מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית precludes any comparison with other occurrences outside Mal

3:1. But two clues can help the reader to ascertain the identity of מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית. First, there is a clear parallelism (ABCBCA) between אֲדוֹן and מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית.

A בּוֹא יְבֹא (“and he will come suddenly”)

B הָאֲדוֹן (“the Lord”)

C אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מְבַקְשִׁים (“who you are seeking”)

B’ מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית (“the messenger of the covenant”)

C’ אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם חֹפְצִים (“in whom you are taking pleasure”)

A’ הִנֵּה־בָּא (“Behold, he is coming”)

The parallelism is both semantic and grammatical. The coming of הָאֲדוֹן (“Lord”) and מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית (“messenger of covenant”) (B/B’) are described with the same root בּוֹא accompanied by particles or adverbs that denote urgency (A/A’). Even more significant is the presence of the two relative clauses that qualify הָאֲדוֹן and מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית (C/C’). From a grammatical point of view, both clauses are almost identical. The only difference is the use of the participle מְבַקְשִׁים (“seeking”) in C and the adjective חֹפְצִים (“delighting”) in C’. While both are nominal clauses, the first one uses a participle as a predicate complement (PreC), the second one uses an adjective as a predicate complement (PreC). From a semantic point of view, the verb בִּקֵּשׁ and the adjective חֹפֵץ are also related. This parallelism indicates a close relationship between הָאֲדוֹן and מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית. It is true that this does not automatically entail that both הָאֲדוֹן and מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית share the same identity. However, the context suggests that this is the case here.

At this point, the second clue can be found. The relative clauses that qualify הָאֲדוֹן and מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית are directly connected with the people’s question about God’s justice in 2:17, where they accuse Yahweh of delighting (חֹפֵץ) in the evil ones. Now the one in whom they take pleasure (אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם חֹפְצִים), who is identified in 3:1 as מְלַאֵךְ הַבְּרִית, is

coming. Thus, the use of irony here shows the direct connection between Yahweh and the מְלֹאֲדֵי הַבְּרִית.⁸⁵ Besides, the God of justice whom they⁸⁶ are seeking (הַמְשַׁפֵּט אֱיִה אֱלֹהִי) in 2:17 is coming in 3:1 where he is identified as הַאֲדֹנָי.⁸⁷ Aptly, Clendenen comments that “Malachi presents us, however, with one who is both God and God's messenger, who comes regarding the covenant. A similar relationship may be said to exist in the OT between Yahweh and his promised Messiah.”⁸⁸ The same enigma is found in the NT. Speaking about it, Douglas Stuart remarks, “How can he be sent by God and also be God in the flesh? The answer, to the partial extent that humans can comprehend it, is found in the doctrine of the Trinity. The Messiah is God the Son who serves the will of the Father, yet also has equality with the Father. God is both Father and Son, and both Father and Son are Spirit as well.”⁸⁹ This is confirmed by the fact that the Messiah is also called “Everlasting Father” in Isa 9:5 (Engl. v.6) because he created the world (cf. John 1:3; Heb 1:2).

⁸⁵ The irony is reinforced through the double use of הִנֵּה (‘look’ 2x) at the beginning and toward the end of Mal 3:1 that “introduce assertions that are contrary to the people’s expectation.” Petterson, “The Identity of ‘The Messenger of the Covenant,’” 285. Cf. Cynthia L. Miller-Nau and Christo H. J. van der Merwe, “HIH and Mirativity in Biblical Hebrew,” *HS* 52 (2011): 53–81.

⁸⁶ “The use of the pronoun ‘you’ [plural] (אַתֶּם) is emphatic, indicating that Malachi’s response is directed toward those making the complaint. In addition, the use of הַאֲדֹנָי rather than יְהוָה is also appropriate given the irony, for in reality those who complain are not seeking Yhwh at all.” Petterson, “The Identity of ‘The Messenger of the Covenant,’” 285.

⁸⁷ This helps to overcome the ambiguity regarding the subject of אֵלֹהִים in the phrase “he is coming” (הַיְהוָה־בָּא), which according to Clendenen has six possibilities. Clendenen, “Messenger of the Covenant in Malachi 3:1,” 90–91. Hill instructively comments, “as is often the case, popular expectation for the outcome of the Day of Yahweh is tragically mismatched with the reality of the event.” Hill, *Malachi*, 271.

⁸⁸ Clendenen, “Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1,” 97.

⁸⁹ Douglas Stuart, “Malachi” in *The Minor Prophets: A Commentary on Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, ed. Thomas Edward MacComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 1353.

If this interpretation is correct, the conjunction וּ (and the messenger of covenant”) functions epexegetically, defining the identity of הַמְּלַאכֵי הַבְּרִית.⁹⁰ Once וּמְלַאכֵי הַבְּרִית is identified with הַמְּלַאכֵי and Yahweh himself, מְלַאכֵי (“my messenger”) should be understood as a distinct person who prepares the way for God’s arrival. This arrival is identified in 3:2 as יוֹם בּוֹאֵי (“the day of his coming”). Likewise, in 3:23 Elijah is also sent before the day of Yahweh (בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה לְפָנָי).

When all titles in 3:1 are identified, the message of Malachi’s fourth disputation becomes clear. In Mal 2:17 the people complain about God’s justice that seems to favor the evil ones; what leads them to ask, “where is the God of justice?” In response, God says that he is suddenly coming to administer the justice they are longing.⁹¹ However, before he comes, his people need to be prepared. For this reason, he is about to send his messenger with this specific mission. Once the messenger completes his work, Yahweh is ready to come. When the Lord comes, he will purify his people (3:2b-3). This is the only way to prepare a people to endure the day of his coming (3:2a). As a result of this work of purification, the offering of Judah will be acceptable once again. Only then does Yahweh approach his people for judgment against the transgressors of the covenant (3:5). The fourth disputation closes with the divine assertion that he has not changed. His merciful nature is the only thing that has prevented Israel from being completely obliterated (3:6).

⁹⁰ Hill adds that “often the epexegetical *waw* is rendered in English with ‘that is,’ but in this context the emphatic meaning of ‘yea’ or ‘even’ seems preferable (‘... The Lord, *even* the angel of the covenant ...;’).” Hill, *Malachi*, 269.

⁹¹ The adverb may have quantitative (“soon”) or qualitative (“suddenly”) sense. Andrews S. Malone, “Is the Messiah Announced in Malachi 3:1?” *TB* 57 (2006): 220. The unexpectedness of the fulfillment seems to be the most important nuance here.

It is interesting to see the eschatological sequence unfold in the fourth disputation of Malachi: (i) the messenger prepares the way for the coming of Yahweh; (ii) the actual coming of Yahweh through the “messenger of covenant;”⁹² (iii) a work of purification as a second step in the preparation of the remnant;⁹³ (iv) the remnant becomes acceptable to Yahweh; and (v) God comes to judge the wicked. It seems that this sequence fits appropriately the general eschatology found in the New Testament fulfilment: (i) the work of the forerunner; (ii) the coming of Jesus inaugurating the eschaton; (iii) a work of purification of God’s people during the investigative judgment; (iv) the remnant becomes ready; (v) the final judgment at Jesus’ second coming.

The Interpretation of Mal 3:23–24

In the final part of Mal 3, the work of preparation is more specifically designated. The messenger here is identified as Elijah⁹⁴ and his mission is defined as “to turn the heart of the fathers back to the sons and the heart of the sons back to the fathers” (וְהָשִׁיב יְהוָה)

⁹² In his commentary Hill addresses the issue about what covenant is referred to in this title. He provides four clues that indicate that this is a reference to the new covenant: “first, Malachi’s audience has already alluded to this new covenant in their dispute with the prophet over divine justice. Second, the eschatological context of the fourth disputation is firmly established. Third, even if the prophet spoke sarcastically of the people’s expectant desire for divine intervention, such anticipation is difficult to explain if Malachi refers only to Yahweh’s past covenant initiatives. Fourth, the allusion to Ezek 43:1–5 and the return of the divine presence to the Temple hints at the ‘new covenant’ era.” Hill, *Malachi*, 289.

⁹³ The work of purification is depicted in familiar terms. Camden M. Bucey notes that “the refining and purifying in Malachi 3:1–4 should be read against the backdrop of the prophetic corpus. The theme is common to Isaiah (Isa. 40:19; 41:7; 46:6; 48:10), Jeremiah (Jer. 6:29; 9:6; 10:9,14; 51:17), Daniel (Dan. 11:35; 12:10) and Zechariah (Zech. 13:9). Jeremiah, however, is the only prophet to speak of launderer’s soap in conjunction with the refinement process.” Camden M. Bucey, “The Lord and His Messengers: Toward a Trinitarian Interpretation of Malachi 3:1–4,” *CP* 7 (2011): 158.

⁹⁴ The connection between “my messenger” in 3:1 and Elijah in 3:24 is also picked out by the NT authors. Petterson remarks that “the Synoptics quote Mal 3:1 with reference to John the Baptist’s identity and role (Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27). In Matthew and Luke, John is identified as “the Elijah who was to come” (Matt 11:14; Luke 7:27). In this way, they link Mal 4:5 with ‘my messenger’ in 3:1. Petterson, “The Identity of ‘The Messenger of the Covenant,’” 290.

(לְבַ-אָבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים וְלֵב בָּנִים עַל-אָבוֹתָם).⁹⁵ The clause, which is characterized by certain vagueness and ambiguity if translated literally “and he will turn,” has generated much discussion in the history of interpretation of the passage. Several views have been advocated concerning the actual meaning of the expression in this context. In his commentary on Malachi, Anthony R. Petterson summarizes four major views.⁹⁶

The first maintains that Malachi 3:24 refers to an analogy of Yahweh as father and Israel as sons.⁹⁷ However, the plural of אָב (“father”) seems to prevent this interpretation. The second view holds that the prophet has in mind the reconciliation of all human relationships.⁹⁸ Petterson observes that although “this is certainly possible, there may be more going on in terms of the different generations of Israelites.”⁹⁹ A third view argues that the enigmatic phrase “refers to reconciliation between generations of Israelites in conflict, probably on account of the younger people being influenced by the invasion of a world thought of a different culture.”¹⁰⁰

A fourth way to understand the relationship between fathers and sons is in terms of the broader scope of the covenant community. In this sense, fathers and sons should be

⁹⁵ The suggestion that the preposition עַל here means “with” lacks evidence. In no other instance where the preposition is the complement of שׁוּב (hiphil) does the preposition have the sense of “with” (e.g. to – Gen 29:3; Isa 46:8; Jer 23:10; Ezek 29:14; on/upon – Exod 15:19; 2 Sam 16:8; 1Kgs 2:32; Ps 94:23; against – Isa 1:23; Ezek 38:12; Amos 1:8; over – Jer 6:9; Prov 20:26).

⁹⁶ Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, AOTC 25 (Nottingham, U.K.; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity, 2015), 385–386.

⁹⁷ Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 385.

⁹⁸ Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 385.

⁹⁹ Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 385.

¹⁰⁰ Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 385.

understood with reference to ancestry where the sons are the present and the fathers are the generation of the exodus who entered into the covenant with God in the Sinai. In her study on the passage, Caryn A. Reeder concludes that “the ‘fathers’ of Mal 3:24 are the ancestors of Israel, and the ‘sons’ are the audience of the prophet. In this case, as with Levi and his descendants in Mal 2:4-9, the audience conflicts with their ancestors by not respecting and honoring God as they did.”¹⁰¹ Apparently, the context of Mal 3:24 supports this assumption. In Mal 3:4 the result of God’s work of purification is the restoration of Israel’s sacrificial system that would become legitimate again “like in the days of old and like in former years” (עוֹלָם וּבְשָׁנִים קִדְמוֹנִיּוֹת בְּיָמַי). This expression usually refers to the time when Israel enjoyed God’s favor, more specifically during the exodus when his acting was unambiguously visible.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, there are at least three problems with this view. The first relates to the fact that since the ancestors are dead, there is no way for them to turn their hearts to their sons. The second problem is that this view implies that the ancestors were faithful while the present generation is not. According to Malachi, this is not the case (Mal 3:7). Indeed, not only the generation of the exodus was unfaithful but as a rule all the subsequent Israelite generations also acted unfaithfully toward Yahweh. Malachi’s generation is still recovering of the consequences of the bad choices of their ancestors. The last issue relates to the timing of its fulfilment. The work of reconciliation promoted

¹⁰¹ Caryn A. Reeder, “Malachi 3:24 and the Eschatological Restoration of the ‘Family,’” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 703.

¹⁰² Except Mic 5:1, all the occurrences of the phrase refer to the same period. See: Deut 32:7; Isa 51:9; 63:9, 11; Amos 9:11; Mic 7:14. See Text-Fabric query results in section “[Days of Old](#)” of my jupyter notebook.

by the new Elijah is in the future. Since this mission is accomplished before the day of Yahweh in the future, his contemporary generation is not in view here.

A last view defends the idea that the language requires restoration of literal genetic relationships between fathers and sons.¹⁰³ In favor of this position is the paralleled hope of an eschatological restoration of genetic familial bonds expressed in other texts such as Mic 7:5–6 and 4 Ezra 6:24–28. Furthermore, some scholars point out that the actual ministry of Elijah has as a background the appalling breaking of relationship between father and sons when Hiel the Bethelite supposedly offered his two sons Abiram and Segub as foundation sacrifices (1 Kgs 16:34). It is evident that human sacrifices, especially child sacrifice, is seen in biblical tradition as a patent sign of the breaking of covenant. However, it is not clear if this is the case in 1 Kgs 16:35.¹⁰⁴

Although this background is questionable, the idea that the turning of hearts between sons and fathers includes the restoration between actual sons and fathers should not be dismissed. This seems to be the most natural reading of the passage. However, whether this restoration involves social, religious, or familial aspects, as well as whether this includes the society on a larger scale (covenant community in general) or is restricted to family ties is a matter of debate.

¹⁰³ For instance, Gane affirms that “reconciling parents and children is an important example of restoring relationships. Elsewhere, Malachi is concerned about other relationships, such as between husbands and wives (2:13-16), his people and their ancestors (2:1-12), and the people and their divine father (1:6).” Gane, “The Gospel according to Moses and Elijah,” 11.

¹⁰⁴ The passage does not mention a child sacrifice. And if the passage is a fulfilment of Joshua’s curse, the author’s argument requires that their death is a divine punishment and not a voluntary foundation sacrifice. See: Jônatas de Mattos Leal, *Texto, Pré-Texto e Pós-Texto: Gênesis 9:20-27 e Juizes 11:29-40 à luz da Hermenêutica Gadameriana* (Cachoeira, Brazil: CePlib, 2017), 105.

Petterson’s modified version of the fourth view seems to provide the best explanation, for it takes into account all the issues mentioned above. In his opinion, Malachi sees in the present “fathers having their descendants cut off on account of sin,”¹⁰⁵ and addressing this issue, the phrase refers “to a future reconciliation of generations.” According to him, “Elijah will seek to restore covenant faithfulness across the generations with fathers honoring the law of Moses in a way that benefits their sons, and sons honouring the law of Moses in a way that honours their fathers.”¹⁰⁶ In a similar fashion, Mignon R. Jacobs proposes that “the turning of the ancestors and descendants conveys the father’s receptivity to the children in passing on the legacy, while the children’s turning to the father denotes their receiving of the legacy.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, the concept of “fathers and sons” includes at the same time fathers and sons who are genetically related (also grandparents and grandchildren) and all the covenant community (including mothers, daughters, relatives in general, and even neighbors), who will experience an intergenerational restoration in preparation for the day of Yahweh.

It is interesting that although the idiom “to turn the heart of someone back to someone else” is unique, the phrase alludes to Elijah’s prayer in 1 Kgs 18:37 where he says: “that this people may know that you, O Yahweh, are God and that you yourself have turned their hearts back again.” In this context, the turning of hearts (וְאַתָּה הִסַּבְתָּ אֶת־לִבָּם אֶת־רַנְיֹתָ) implies repentance and abandonment of idolatry in the context of the renewal of covenant. Thus, it would not be surprising at all if the same sense is found

¹⁰⁵ Petterson, Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi, 386.

¹⁰⁶ Petterson, Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi, 386.

¹⁰⁷ Mignon R. Jacobs, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 334.

here. Compare Deut 30:1–2, where Israel’s future repentance after Yahweh’s discipline is described in terms of “turning, restoring, or taking (*šûb*) God’s instruction to one’s heart.”¹⁰⁸

The choice of family language, which appears also in other eschatological contexts within the book of Twelve (cf. Mic 7:5–6 and Joel 2:28), is intriguing. One possibility is advanced by Peterson:

A curse could, according to normative covenant traditions (e.g., Ex. 20:5–6), extend over several generations. If one links this understanding to Israel’s experience in the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C.E., namely, of living a disrupted existence because of the “sins” of the fathers, one can imagine that the issue involves nothing less than Judean Yahwists’ relationship to their ancestors (see also Pss. 78 and 106). . . Without the integrity between generations, Israel would not be Israel. The covenant community extends both among people at one time and among people over time. In Mal. 4:6, the author worries about this latter feature of the sons of Jacob.¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, the phrase “fathers and sons” also alludes to the Elijah cycle in 1 Kings 19. In his moment of discouragement, Elijah recognizes, “I am not better than my fathers (אֲבוֹתַי)” (1 Kgs 19:4). Here, the word clearly has the sense of “ancestor.” In prayer, the prophet recognizes the failure in his own experience in reproducing the faith God wanted him to exert. In a certain sense, Elijah’s speech is not an exaggeration; he is indeed not better than his ancestors. As mentioned before, in going toward the desert without God’s direction for forty days (forty is not a coincidence),¹¹⁰ Elijah is repeating the failure of his ancestors. Even when he reaches Mt. Horeb, God questions him: what are you doing here?

¹⁰⁸ Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 462.

¹⁰⁹ Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, 231.

¹¹⁰ See pages 306–307; 461–462.

Thus, when the mission of Elijah in Mal 3:24 is seen in light of this web of intertextual connections, his task become clearer. In preparing the way for Yahweh, the new Elijah is to promote repentance and reform. On one hand, the Israelites need to abandon sin as the language of “turning” implies. On the other hand, they need to come back to the old practices of following God’s direction and trusting him as fathers (an older generational as a whole) honor God’s law benefiting their sons (a younger generation as a whole) and sons honor their fathers by keeping God’s law.

Thus, although the restoration of relationships includes genetic ties, they go beyond that to include “the family of God, the nation of Israel.”¹¹¹ In this sense, fathers and sons should be understood both in the literal and in the broader sense of the covenant community. Evidently, such a restoration on the horizontal level among fellow participants in the covenant community also involves a restoration in a vertical level between God and his people.¹¹² Using the same language found in Mal 3:24, God appeals to his people in 3:7: “Return (שׁוּבוּ) to me and I will return (וְאָשׁוּבָה) to you.” Thus, ultimately the mission of the new Elijah in Malachi is to promote the restoration of broken relationships in the context of the covenant on the horizontal and vertical levels.¹¹³ Fishbane remarks that “events on a family level bring to a climax the figure of

¹¹¹ Reeder, “Malachi 3.24 and the Eschatological Restoration,” 696.

¹¹² In the same fashion, Taylor and Clendenen conceive of the father-son relationship on several levels: “the immediate family, the larger family of God’s covenant people, and also between the contemporary children of the covenant and the men of faith at the nation’s inception. This multilevel interpretation fits that of the angel Gabriel.” Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 463

¹¹³ Glazier-MacDonald observes that “the axis around which Malachi’s prophecy revolves is the covenant concept, the relationship between Yahweh and Israel initiated at Mt. Sinai (cf. 2:5, 8, 10; 3: 1, 7). This is the theme by which he binds together Israel’s history, past and present. Like both his prophetic predecessors and the Deuteronomists, Malachi created a covenant paradigm as an overview of Israel’s history.” Glazier-MacDonald, “Mal’ak Habberit,” 99. The centrality of the covenant in Malachi is also explored by Steven L. Mackenzie and Howard N. Wallace. See: Steven L. Mackenzie and Howard N. Wallace, “Covenant Themes in Malachi,” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 549–563.

divine-human (father-child) relations found elsewhere in the book (Mal. 1:6; 3:17).

Healing between parents and children is thus part of the nation's reconciliation with their God, and the textual ambiguity imbeds a profound and double-edged point."¹¹⁴

Why Elijah?

At this point, it is pertinent to question why Elijah is chosen to represent the forerunner of Yahweh. As shown in the first part of this chapter, there is strong evidence pointing to the messianic character of Elijah's ministry. However, in Malachi, Elijah is not interpreted as a direct messianic type. Here he becomes the type of the forerunner for the day of Yahweh that the NT authors clearly indicate as having been inaugurated at the coming of the Messiah—Jesus Christ. Thus, in light of the canonical development, it is appropriate to ponder about the reasons behind this change and why Elijah fits in this innovative role advanced by Malachi.

Before any further consideration, it should be remembered that the evolving of the Elijah motif from 1 and 2 Kings to Mal 3 is one example of how scriptural exegesis advances revelation. It does not represent a departure of previous revelation, but it takes the reader a step further towards the full disclosure of God's redemptive plan. In fact, "Scriptural exegesis of Scripture is an engine of progressive revelation."¹¹⁵ In this section, I will examine the development of the Elijah motif from the Former to the Latter Prophets.

¹¹⁴ Fishbane, *Haftarot*, 365.

¹¹⁵ Schnittjer, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament*, xvii. See also: Bergland, "Reading as a Disclosure of the Thoughts of the Heart;" Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*.

First, the mission of the forerunner in Mal 3 shares several similarities with that of Elijah in the Northern kingdom. Elijah is called by God to prepare his people's hearts for a great manifestation of his presence among them, which was only paralleled by the events witnessed by the exodus generation. In this sense, not only his acting on Mt. Carmel but also his role during the larger narrative of the drought is part of this process. At that time, Israel stands at a decisive crossway and a decision needs to be made. Elijah condemns idolatry, calling the people to repent and act accordingly. In the context of the breaking of the covenant, his burden is to reconcile the people with Yahweh. As he succeeds, they are willing to abandon idolatry as their participation in the killing of Baal's prophets demonstrates. In the end, the aim of Elijah's work is quite similar to that assigned to the forerunner in Malachi: to turn hearts back to God (1 Kgs 18:37). In both cases, this represents a renewal of the covenant. However, Elijah is not able to complete the work of reformation initiated on Mt. Carmel. This takes me to the next reason for the return of Elijah in Mal 3.

Second, Elijah has a work to complete. In the pinnacle of Elijah's ministry, the prophet fails in meeting the divine expectation and flees for his life without God's direction. In the peak of his downheartedness, he wishes to die and insists that he does not intend to keep going. In his mercy, God reaches the prophet in the depth of his depression and restores his ministry. At this point, Elijah himself needs "to return" (לָשׁוּב לְדַרְכָּךָ) (1 Kgs 19:15). However, in a certain sense, God accepts his resignation and commands him to choose Elisha as his substitute (1 Kgs 19:15). Elijah ends his ministry without fulfilling God's instruction to anoint Ahaziel and Jehu (1 Kgs 19:15), major

instruments used by Yahweh to eradicate the cult to Baal in the Northern kingdom. It will be only Elisha who will fulfill these commands, although in an indirect way.

Thus, Elijah leaves the scene with his work unfinished. In his recognition that he is not better than his fathers (ancestors), Elijah makes evident that the work of reconciliation is not completed yet. In this sense, Elijah's experience echoes that of Moses who also leaves the scene without seeing the fulfillment of his commission. Both Moses and Elijah are forerunners for Joshua and Elisha, who carry out the original charges of their predecessors. As forerunners, Moses and Elijah see the fulfillment of God's promises only from afar.

Third, although Elijah and Moses share the fate of unfinished missions, only Elijah could *return*, for only he evades actual death. It is true that Moses's death is involved in mystery that the NT seeks to explain (Jude 9), but in any case, his body was buried, and any idea of a resurrected Moses is not clear in the OT. However, the unambiguous evasion of death by Elijah when God takes him to heaven provides an opportunity for his return. Thus, it is probable that his ascension plays a role in Malachi's prophecy about the return of Elijah before the great and terrible day of Yahweh, perhaps pointing to the angels/messengers in Rev 14, who are God's people who see Christ return without dying.

Finally, the last aspect to be considered is the actual role of Elijah as a forerunner in his narrative. After the divine manifestation by fire on Mt. Carmel and the renewal of the covenant probably ratified by a covenant meal with the participation of king Ahab, Elijah charges him to get prepared in order not to be obstructed by the heavy rain (1 Kgs 18:44). As the rain starts, "the hand of Yahweh was on Elijah; he girded up his loins and

ran before Ahab until the entrance of Jezreel” (1 Kgs 18:45). The first clause of verse 44 (וַיֵּדְיָהוָה הָיְתָה אֶל־אֱלֹהֵינוּ) makes clear that God empowered Elijah to go before the king.¹¹⁶ In this capacity, Elijah goes as a forerunner preparing the way to the king, perhaps prefiguring the work of the new Elijah who prepares the way for Yahweh, the universal king. Furthermore, in this role Elijah also is proclaiming the arrival of the king. There are high expectations regarding the future, but they only last until the arrival of Ahab at the palace. Although the office of kingship per se involves messianic anticipation, I do not intend to advance here any direct typology between Ahab and the Messiah. However, Elijah’s role as the royal forerunner in this passage may provide some historical background for his function as the one who prepares the way as the forerunner to the true king of Israel.

When all these clues are taken into consideration, it becomes more evident why Malachi would find in Elijah a fitting precursor of the last great prophet before the day of Yahweh.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ The same phrase but with the preposition על appears several times in the book of Ezekiel referring to the divine power enabling the prophet to receive visions (Ezek 1:3; 3:22; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1).

¹¹⁷ In his article, Valve finds several intertextual links between Mal 3:1–6 and the narrative of Elijah. However, most of these “touching points” are not convincing. There is only space here for three examples that can illustrate his approach. First, “the noun צרפת ‘Zarephath’/‘Sarepta’ could be construed as qal perfect feminine 3. Sg of the root צרף ‘refine’, and the locative צרפתה (which is the only grammatical form in which the name of the town occurs in 1 Kings 17:9, 10) as the same form plus feminine singular accusative suffix (...) Be that as it may, however, the phrase כאש מצרף could, if wished, be understood as ‘like a fire from (=מ) Zareph(ath),’ or perhaps still better, ‘like a man from Zareph(ath),’ as the words אש and אֵשׁ are also homonymous.” Valve, “The Case of Messenger-Elijah,” 98–99. Second, “The pilpel of the verb כול is not either very common, and it is far more often used in the meaning ‘provide with food, care for’ than ‘endure, bear.’ In the first meaning, the verb is used twice in 1 Kings 17. (. . .) If one wishes to retain the proper translation of את, a rendering of the type ‘But who can care for/support the day of his coming’ could perhaps also be reasonable for an ancient reader as a hint at 1 Kings 17.” Valve, “The Case of Messenger-Elijah,” 100. Third, “there is still a further, albeit only slight, point of resemblance between Malachi 3:1–5 and 1 Kings 17. This is the somewhat haphazard mention of ‘the widow and the orphan’ in Mal 3:5, which might have been considered syntax-breaking, even if it is necessarily not so in biblical language.” Valve, “The Case of Messenger-Elijah,” 101.

The Identity of Elijah in Malachi

After determining the time of “Elijah’s” arrival, his function and mission, the last question to be addressed is the actual identity of Elijah in Mal 3:1, 24. By identifying him, the reader can determine when Malachi’s prophecy is fulfilled. This is the task ahead in the last part of this chapter.

It is evident that the Gospel writers understood the prophecy of Malachi typologically and saw in John the Baptist its fulfilment (Mark 1:1–4; 9:11–13; Matt 3:1–4; 11:14; Luke 3:3–6; 7:24–27). However, before exploring the motif of Elijah in the NT, it is appropriate to examine its development during the intertestamental period in order to evaluate how innovative is the inspired understanding of the NT authors about the return of Elijah in the ministry of John the Baptist – the prophet who prepared Israel for the day of Yahweh as inaugurated in Jesus’s first coming.

The Pseudepigraphal literature contains few mentions of Elijah. In the Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah, Elijah is “the prophet of Têbôn of Gilead” who reproves Ahaziah and prophesies his death as result of divine punishment. Ahaziah prefers to hear the false prophets and, as a consequence, he kills Micaiah.¹¹⁸ In Enoch 70, Enoch’s ascent is described in terms of Elijah’s.¹¹⁹ One possible allusion to the deliverance of Elijah may be present in 1 Enoch 89:51-59.¹²⁰

In 2 Baruch 77, the author affirms that his letters would be sent to Babylon “by means of a bird” (77:17). Immediately afterward, Baruch recalls how in the biblical

¹¹⁸ Robert Henry Charles ed., *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon 1913), 2:161.

¹¹⁹ Charles, *Pseudepigrapha*, 2:235.

¹²⁰ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 384.

account God has providentially used birds to assist his children. At this point, Elijah's experience is alluded to: "Yea, also the ravens ministered to Elijah, bearing him food, as they had been commanded" (77:24).¹²¹

Finally, in 4 Ezra 7:108 Elijah is mentioned among other important Israelites figures (such as Abraham, Samuel, David) as an intercessor in the case of the end of the drought and resurrection of the widow's son. As is seen, all mentions or allusions to Elijah are connected with his historical career. There is no mention of Elijah's return or an indication of eschatological connection with him.

In the Apocryphal books of the LXX, Elijah is mentioned in 1 Maccabees and Sirach. Recalling "the deeds of the fathers which they did in their generations (1Mac 2:51),"¹²² the author of 1 Maccabees refers to the exceeding zeal for the Law displayed by Elijah, who as a result was taken up into heaven (1 Mac 2:28). Once again, the reference to Elijah is past and not future.¹²³

The use of Elijah by Sirach is more relevant. In 48:1–9, Sirach's author in poetic terms describes the prowess of the "prophet like fire, whose word was like a burning furnace" (48:1). The poetry continues praising Elijah who by the Word of the Lord challenged nature and kings. However, Sirach goes beyond the past and points to a future return of Elijah: "¹⁰Who art ready for the time, as it is written, To still wrath before the

¹²¹ Charles, *Pseudepigrapha*, 2:521.

¹²² Robert Henry Charles, *Apocrypha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 1 Mac 2:51, Logos Edition.

¹²³ Some suggest that 1 Maccabees 4:46 and 14:41 may refer to Elijah. See: Darrel B. Bock, "Elijah and Elisha," *DJG* 203.

fierce anger of God, To turn the heart of the fathers unto the children, And to restore the tribes of Israel.¹¹ Blessed is he that seeth thee, and dieth” (48:10-11).¹²⁴

In terms of content, the dependence of Ben Sirach on Mal 3:24 is evident in the mission of Elijah that includes settling the anger of God and turning the heart of fathers unto children. Since “to restore the tribes of Israel,” is included in “as it written,” the phrase can be considered an interpretation of Mal 3:24. Apparently, for Sirach’s author “to restore the tribes of Israel” might be considered the logical consequence of the new Elijah’s mission. Another possibility is that the author has been influenced by the Greek version of Mal 3:24 that translates the Hiphil of שׁוּב as ἀποκαθίστημι (“to restore,” “to reestablish”).¹²⁵ Nevertheless, as the “turning” of hearts is mentioned before, this is a new element anyway. Interestingly, just before affirming that Elijah had already come, Jesus declares that he would “restore all things” (ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα) (Mark 9:12 cf. Matt 17:11).¹²⁶

In conclusion, it may be said that the hope for the return of Elijah is not a central or even recurrent theme in the Pseudepigraphal and Apocryphal literature. However, such an expectation can be clearly found in at least one representative of this literary corpus. Therefore, “though the evidence is not as overwhelming as many have assumed, the probability remains that at least some within early Judaism understood the coming of Elijah as an event preceding the arrival of Messiah.”¹²⁷ It seems evident that the idea of a

¹²⁴ Charles, *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*, Sir 48:10–11, Logos edition.

¹²⁵ William Arndt, “ἀποκαθίστημι,” *BDAG* 111–112.

¹²⁶ Another important representative of this period literature is the works of Flavio Josephus. In his writings Josephus has not much to say about Elijah besides a summary of his career as a prophet. See: *Antiquities* 8.13.1–8 §§316–62.

¹²⁷ Bock, “Elijah and Elisha,” 204.

literal return of Elijah is based on a literalistic reading of Mal 3:23–24. This informed the later Jewish tradition (see discussion below).

The only direct reference to Elijah in the DSS occurs in 4Q558. The papyrus, which consists of 146 fragments, is dated to the second half of the first century BCE and was published by Jean Starcky in 1963.¹²⁸

The fragment where Elijah is mentioned reads as follows:

1 [...] evil [...]
2 [...] their [...] who ... [...]
3 the eighth as an elected one. And see, I [...]
4 to you I will send Eliyah, befo[re ...]
5 po[w]er, lightning and met[eors ...]
6 [...] and ... [...]
7 [...]again ... [...]
8 [...] ... [...]¹²⁹

As can be seen, the fragmentary condition of the manuscript does not allow much elaboration regarding Qumranic ideas on Elijah's role in the eschatological scenario.

Besides the fact that the fragment contains an Aramaic citation of Mal 3:23, "all that one can say about Elijah from 4Q558 is what we already know about him from the final verses of the book of Malachi – that is, that Elijah will come in the end-time."¹³⁰

However, it is possible to affirm that Malachi's promise of the return of Elijah was on the apocalyptic "radar" of the community behind 4Q558.

¹²⁸ Brenda J. Shaver, "The Prophet Elijah in the Literature of the Second Temple Period," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2011), 164.

¹²⁹ Florentino García, Tigchelaar Martínez, and Eibert J. C., eds., *4Q558 4Qvision^b ar Frag. 2 Col. II.*, The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (Leiden, The Netherlands; New York, NY: Brill, 1997–1998), 1115.

¹³⁰Shaver, "The Prophet Elijah," 168.

Another passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls that has been connected to Elijah is 4Q521.¹³¹ Pioneers in the study of the manuscript like Émile Puech and John Collins have identified the messiah (or messiahs) mentioned in line 1 as the redivivus Elijah.¹³² There is no space or need here for a full exegesis of 4Q521,¹³³ but a few remarks will suffice to address some key issues.

¹³¹ Already in his preliminary edition in 1991, Puech suggested the title “Une Apocalypse Messianique” (A messianic Apocalypse) for the manuscript. Émile Puech, “Une Apocalypse Messianique (4Q521),” *RQ* 15 (1992): 475–522. Whereas “Apocalypse” describes the genre, “Messianic” elucidates the content. Collins, in his turn, suggests “An Eschatological Psalm” as title to 4Q521. John J. Collins, “A Herald of Good Tidings: Isaiah 61:1-3 actualization in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*. Craig A. Evans, Shemaryahu Talmon, and James A. Sanders, eds. BIS (Leiden, The Netherlands; New York, NY: Brill, 1997), 236.

¹³² A translation of the most preserved column of 4Q521 reads:

1. [for the hea]vens and the earth will listen to his messiah
 2. [and everything th[at] is in them will not turn away from the commandments of the holy ones.
 3. Be determined you who are seeking the Lord in his work.
 4. Will you not in this find the Lord, all those who hope in their heart?
 5. For the Lord seeks out the loyal ones and the righteous ones he calls by name.
 6. And His Spirit hovers upon the poor and he renews those who trust in his force
 7. Truly, he honors the loyal ones upon the throne of the eternal kingdom
 8. releasing prisoners, opening the eyes of the blind, and raising those who are bow[ed down].
 9. And fo[re]ver I will cling [to those who h]ope, and in his loyalty [...]
 10. And the fruit of a good work will not delay to man,
 11. And the Lord will perform glorious acts that never have taken place as He said.
 12. For he will heal the deadly wounded, the dead will live again, and he will announce good news to the oppressed.
 13. And the [poor] he will safis[fy], the exile he will guide, and the hungry he will enrich.
 14. [...] and all of them
 15. [...]
- Frag. 2 Col. II

¹³³ See my exegesis on 4Q521 in Jônatas de Mattos Leal, “The Hope for the Return of Elijah in 4Q521: An Assessment of the Available Evidence” (Paper presented to Roy Gane as an assignment for the class OTST885 Topics in Dead Sea Scrolls, 2018). Many studies about the manuscript have been produced. Some are mentioned here: Émile Puech, “Messianic Apocalypse,” *EDSS* 543–544; Émile Puech, “Some Remarks on 4Q246 and 4Q521 and Qumran Messianism” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Thechnological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, eds. Donald W. Parry and Eugene Ulrich, STDJ (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 1999), 545–565; Gaye Strathearn, “4Q521 and What It Might Mean for Q 3-7,” in *Bountiful Harvest: Essays in Honor of S. Kent Brown*, eds. Andrew C. Skinner, D. Morgan Davis, Carl Griffin (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2011), 395–424; James D. Tabor and Michael O. Wise, “4Q521 ‘On Resurrection’ and the Synoptic Gospel Tradition: A Preliminary Study,” *JSP* 10 (1992): 149–162; Michael O. Wise, James D. Tabor, “The Messiah at Qumran,” *BAR* 18 (1992): 60–61, 65. Benjamin Wold, “Agents of Resurrection in 4 Q521, the Sayings Source Q and 4Qpseudo-Ezekiel,” (Paper presented at Durham University’s Seminar for the Study of Judaism in Late Antiquity, Durham, UK, 2010), 1–16; Marc Philonenko, “Adonai, le Messie et le Saoshyant. Observations nouvelles sur 4Q521,” *RHPR* 82 (2002): 257–384; Arstein Justnes, *The Time of Salvation: An Analysis of 4Qapocryphon of Daniel ar (4Q246), 4Qmessianic Apocalypse (4Q521 2), and*

More recently, due to the condition and limitation of the evidence in 4Q521 many scholars prefer to take a more cautious position than that held by Puech and Collins regarding the place of Elijah in 4Q521.¹³⁴ One example is Lidija Novakovic, who affirms that in 4Q521 the messianic figure appears somewhat in the background.”¹³⁵ She adds, “we can conclude that it is virtually impossible to clarify with greater precision the role and character of God’s Messiah in 4Q521 frg. 2 2.1, because the text does not specify the relationship between God and his Anointed...”¹³⁶

In short, despite much debate around the few mentions to Elijah during this period, it seems clear that the hope for the return of Elijah is not a central or even recurring theme in the extant documents of this period. This is consistent with the evidence as found in Philo and Josephus.¹³⁷ However, the idea that such a hope did not

4Qtime of Righteousness (4Q215a), EUS 23 (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2009), Willem-Jan de Wit, “Expectations and the Expected One: 4Q521 and the Light It Sheds on the New Testament” (MA thesis; Universiteit Utrecht, 2000): Collins, “A Herald of Good Tidings,” 225–240.

¹³⁴ For instance, James C. VanderKam, “Messianism in the Scrolls,” in *The Community of the Renewed Covenant: the Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Eugene C. Ulrich and James C. VanderKam, CJAS 10 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 215–216; Wold, “Agents of Resurrection in 4Q521;” de Wit, “Expectations and the Expected One.”

¹³⁵ Lidija Novakovic, “4Q521: The Works of the Messiah or Signs of the Messianic Time?,” in *Qumran Studies: New Approaches, New Questions*, ed. Thomas Davis and Brent A. Strawn (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2007), 230.

¹³⁶ Novakovic, “4Q521,” 220.

¹³⁷ Regarding Philo, there is only one mention to Elijah in his “Questions and Answers on Genesis” on I:86 where Philo points to the fact that besides Enoch and Moses, only Elijah had been “ascended from the things of earth into heaven.” See: Charles Duke Yonge with Philo of Alexandria, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 809. In Pseudo-Philo, Elijah is also mentioned only in passing when the author identifies Elijah with Phineas (48:1). M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 210. Regarding Josephus, a considerable amount of time dedicated to the Elijah narrative, but his role in connection with the Messiah is left out. Josephus’s relationship with Rome may explain such an omission. Louis H. Feldman observes that “because of his [Elijah] close association with the Messiah, whose principal achievement will be to create a truly independent Jewish state, we should not be surprised to find that he is depicted as strongly opposed to the Roman Empire.” Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Elijah,” *SJOT* 8 (1994): 63, 64. For this reason, Josephus, “like the rabbis, was in a dilemma as to how much importance to give to Elijah and how to treat him.” Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Elijah,” 65. Feldman

exist during this period is an argument from silence. The evidence from this period is enough to affirm that in the late part of the Second Temple Judaism the return of Elijah signals the arrival of the time of fulfillment, calls the people to reconciliation, and brings judgment. In his dissertation, David M. Hoffeditz summarizes the three main kinds of references to Elijah during this period: (i) Elijah's significance as a historical figure; (ii) the character of Elijah who is invited to be emulated; and (iii) Elijah's eschatological role.¹³⁸

To conclude this short summary of references to Elijah between Malachi's prophecy and the NT, the last thing to be addressed is whether the concept of Elijah as a forerunner is new to the NT or not. On this issue, scholars are divided again.

Faierstein represents those who believe that the concept of Elijah as a forerunner is a *novum* in the NT. According to him, "almost no evidence has been preserved which indicates that the concept of Elijah as forerunner of the Messiah was widely known or accepted in the first century C.E."¹³⁹ In the same vein, David Miller affirms that "Malachi itself makes no reference to a Messiah, and there is no clear pre-Christian literary evidence for the belief that Elijah's future task consisted of preparing the way for the

concludes that Josephus "was careful neither to denigrate nor to aggrandize the character of Elijah excessively." Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Elijah," 85.

¹³⁸ David M. Hoffeditz, "A Prophet, a Kingdom, and a Messiah: The Portrayal of Elijah in the Gospels in Light of First-Century Judaism" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2000), 35–63.

¹³⁹ Morris M. Faierstein, "Why Do the Scribes Say That Elijah Must Come First," *JBL* 100 (1981): 86. Likewise, Rikva Nir affirms that there is "no evidence that in first century CE, Judaism conceived of Elijah as forerunner of the messiah or any other eschatological figure. This belief was the progeny of Christianity and is entirely a Christian innovation." ... The affinity of Elijah with the messiah's appearance first comes up in late Talmudic sources already influenced by how Christianity conceived of the messiah." Rivka Nir, *The First Christian Believer: In Search of John the Baptist*, NTM 38 (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Phoenix, 2019), 78.

Messiah.”¹⁴⁰ However, the idea that Malachi conceives of the new Elijah coming before the day of Yahweh, but not before the Messiah, seems odd. Is there a day of Yahweh without a Messiah? Both notions come together. The day of Yahweh marks on the one hand the decisive and definitive divine intervention to deliver his people and to condemn their oppressors and on the other hand it signals the arrival of judgment against nominal Israelites.¹⁴¹ However, such an intervention happens through the agency of God’s Anointed.¹⁴²

In response to Fairstein, Alison presents five reasons why he thinks that we are not dealing here with a NT *novum*. First, if the idea of Elijah as the forerunner of Messiah is a Christian development, why would Jesus’ followers attribute it to the scribes? (Matt 17:10; Mark 9:11) Rightfully, Alison points out that only a few novel eschatological concepts emerged within the early church. Then, “a plausible explanation of why the Christians attributed to the Scribes their own reinterpretation of the Elijah expectation is necessary.”¹⁴³

Second, Alison points to at least one rabbinic source where the idea of Elijah as the messianic forerunner is evident. In the middle of a discussion about the legality of a

¹⁴⁰ Miller, “The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement,” 1. Rikk E. Watts and Snyman also claim that Mal 3:1 is not Messianic. See: Rikk E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 119; Snyman, “Once Again,” 1043.

¹⁴¹ Garrets explains that the day of Yahweh “refers to a decisive action of Yahweh to bring his plans for Israel to completion. This action may be an act of punishment or of salvation for Israel, but in either case it carries forward the purposes of God” (cf. Amos 5:18). D. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 306.

¹⁴² Petterson affirms that “reading Malachi against the wider expectations of the Twelve (and other OT literature), the Gospel writers naturally associate the coming of Yhwh with the coming of the Messiah.” Petterson, “The Identity of ‘The Messenger of the Covenant,’” 290–292.

¹⁴³ Dale C. Alisson, “Elijah Must Come First,” *JBL* 103 (1984): 256.

nazirite (Nazir) drinking wine on the eve of the Sabbath, it is written in the *Babylonian Talmud*: “Well, since you assume that Elijah wouldn’t come, the Messiah also wouldn’t come that day, why not permit [the Nazir’s] drinking wine on the eve of the Sabbath? Elijah wouldn’t come that day for the stated reason, but the Messiah may come, since, at the moment the Messiah comes, everybody will become Israel’s servants [so they’ll do the work of preparing for the Sabbath]! (b. ‘Erub 43:a-b).”¹⁴⁴ At this point, Anthony Ferguson agrees with Alison that this passage indicates that the dating of the Elijah forerunner concept is early, possibly pre-Christian. He adds that “If Fairstein’s suggestion is correct—that Christians originated this concept—then Fairstein must convincingly account for the appearance of this concept in later rabbinic work. However, he does not.”¹⁴⁵

Third, Alison confirms the natural connection between the day of Yahweh and the coming of the Messiah as mentioned above. He says that “If, however, one believed (as did many first-century Jews) in a Messiah who would come on the day of the Lord, then, by the following simple logic, the idea of Elijah as forerunner would almost inevitably be read into the text. Since the Messiah is to come on the day of the Lord and since Elijah is to come before that day, it follows that Elijah must come first.”¹⁴⁶

Fourth, Alison argues that the scarcity of references to Elijah as the precursor of Messiah in the early rabbinic literature may represent a Jewish reaction to the Christian

¹⁴⁴ Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, vol. 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 206.

¹⁴⁵ Anthony Ferguson, “The Elijah Forerunner Concept as an Authentic Jewish Expectation,” *JBL* 137 (2018): 144.

¹⁴⁶ Alison, “Elijah Must Come First,” 257.

claim that Elijah had already come through the ministry of John the Baptist. This could explain the playing down of Elijah as the messianic precursor in this tradition.

Finally, he warns that having in mind the fragmentary nature of the available evidence “it is always hazardous to conclude too much from arguments mostly about silence. For the same reason, if the NT attributes a certain opinion to the Scribes that is not clearly discernible in extant Jewish documents, that in itself is no sufficient reason to disbelieve the NT, which is, after all, one of our best sources for first-century Judaism.”¹⁴⁷

Despite the debate around the evidence in the Second Temple literature outside the OT, Mal 3:1, 24 seems to offer enough warrant for the NT writers. Ferguson argues that “the Elijah forerunner concept can be divided into two beliefs: (1) the belief that Elijah will precede the day of the Lord and (2) the belief that the messiah will appear on the day of the Lord. Although Mal 3:23-24 [Eng. 4:5-6] does not establish both of these tenets, it does establish the first.”¹⁴⁸ Ferguson also convincingly shows how “the second tenet of the Elijah forerunner concept was an authentic Jewish expectation prior to the rise of Christianity.”¹⁴⁹ He concludes saying that “although no direct pre-Christian textual evidence exists, there is abundant circumstantial evidence that indicates that the concept originated among Jews. . . . I argue that, although early direct evidence supporting Jewish

¹⁴⁷ Alisson, “Elijah Must Come First,” 257–258.

¹⁴⁸ Ferguson, “The Elijah Forerunner Concept,” 133.

¹⁴⁹ He mentions the following texts as evidence for his claim: 4QpIsaa (4Q161) 7-10, III, 22 (cf. Isa 11); 4QM (4Q285) 7,2-4 (cf. Isa 10:34-11:1); Psalms of Solomon 17; (Tg. Isa. 11:1)]. Ferguson, “The Elijah Forerunner Concept,” 133

origins is lacking, Jewish origins are still more likely because of early and late circumstantial evidence.”¹⁵⁰

The evidence coming from the NT confirms the historical claim of Ferguson. The concept of a returning Elijah is found in the question of the Pharisees to John the Baptist: Are you Elijah? (John 1:21). This is only confirmed by the fact that even the uneducated crowd confuses Jesus and John the Baptist with Elijah (Mark 8: 27–28; 15:34–36; Matt 16:13–14; 27:46–49; Luke 9:18–19). Since such an idea would have taken some time to reach the general population of Palestine it seems obvious that the belief of a return of Elijah before the day of Yahweh based on the reading of Mal 3 is pre-Christian.

Partial Summary

At this point, it is useful to draw a conclusion concerning what has been discussed in this chapter so far. The text-empirical exegesis carried out in chapters 4–6 revealed a web of intertextual connections that demonstrates how Elijah is interpreted as a partial antitype within the OT. In this context, he is presented as a new Moses, new Joshua, and new David, who are clearly regarded as OT types. In addition to that, the prophet’s ministry echoes the experience of Israel during the exodus. Elijah is also introduced as the mediator of a new covenant (two major redemptive-historical events). Finally, the presence of crisis and failure combined with a frustrated messianic expectation makes his narrative unfinished, as is the case of other messianic types in the OT. This is even more marked by his mysterious ascension. All these aspects found in the account of his life leave little doubt that Elijah’s narrative has messianic import and predictively points to the future Messiah.

¹⁵⁰ Ferguson, “The Elijah Forerunner Concept,” 127.

The recurrence of Elijah in Mal 3 only confirms this assumption. Here the new Elijah is an eschatological figure connected with the day of Yahweh, and consequently, the coming of the Messiah. However, Malachi develops the typology of Elijah in a surprising way. The future Elijah is not presented as a type of the Messiah, but a type of his forerunner. He would come to prepare Israel for the eschaton. Although such an element seems at first glimpse unexpected, a closer look at his narrative contains clues about his character as a forerunner that could have been seen in advance. These narrative clues and textual evidences are summarized in the table below:

Table 17. Old Testament Verbal and Narrative Indicators of Typology in the Narrative of Elijah

Types and Antitypes within the Old Testament	
A New Melchizedek	Lack of proper prophetic introduction (cf. 1 Kgs 12:22; 11:29; 12:22; 2 Kgs 14:25)
	No patronymic name
	Obscure origin as a “sojourner” (1 Kgs 17:1)
A New Moses (Narrative Analogies)	Identity as sojourners (1 Kgs 17:1; Exod 2:15)
	Flight from a wicked king (1 Kgs 17:3; Exod 2:11–15)
	Personal confrontation with mighty king and no harm (1 Kgs 17:3; 18:10; Exod 10:27–29)
	Role in the renewal of the covenant (1 Kgs 18; Exod 24)
	A forty-days-and-forty-nights experience culminating in a personal meeting with Yahweh (1 Kgs 19:8; Exod 24:18)
	Meeting with Yahweh on Mt Sinai (1 Kgs 19:9–18; Exod 3:2)
	Similar theophanic Experience (רִיחַ; עֶבֶר; אֶשׁ; רָעַשׁ) (1 Kgs 19:11-13 Exod 19:9ff; 20:18ff; 34:6; Deut 4:9ff; 5:24ff)
	Failure and discouragement (1 Kgs 19:4; Num 11:15)

Table 17 — Continued

	The choosing of a successor (1 Kgs 19:15–21; Num 27:18–23)
	Mystery in “death” experiences (2 Kgs 2:4–8; Deut 34:1–6)
A New Moses (Singular connection with Yahweh)	Blurring of identity between the prophets and Yahweh (1 Kgs 17:13, 15, 22; Exod 7:1)
	Standing before Yahweh in a special relationship with Yahweh (1 Kgs 17: 1; 18:15; Deut 34:10)
	Straightforward conversation with Yahweh: “Why have you brought trouble (hiphil of רעע)?” (1 Kgs 17:20)
	The word of Yahweh in the prophets’ mouth (1 Kgs 17:24; Deut 18:18)
	Public recognition of their special relationship with Yahweh (1 Kgs 17:24; 18:36; 2 Kgs 1:13; Exod 14:1)
A New Joshua	The expression “According to the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of Joshua/Elijah” in the immediate context (1 Kgs 16:35; 17:16)
	God’s “obedience” (1 Kgs 17:22; Josh 10:14)
	Journey from Gilgal to Bethel (2 Kgs 2:2–6; Jos 6, 7, 10)
	The crossing of the Jordan (1 Kgs 2:7–8; Josh 3:1–17)
A New David	The use of the oath formula אִם + חַיִּיהוָה (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:10; 1 Sam 25:34; 26:10; 2 Sam 14:11)
	Expanding the borders of Israel (1 Sam 24)
	Flight from a wicked kings (the use of סתר) (1 Sam 20:5, 24)
Recurrence of Major Redemptive-Historical Events	
A New Exodus – Elijah as the new Israel	Experience of exodus: הלך + מן (1 Kgs 17:3; Gen 12:1; 26:16; Exod 10:28); פנה + ל (1 Kgs 17:3; Deut 1:40; 2:3).
	God’s provision (כול) (1 Kgs 17:5; Gen 45:11; Neh 9:21; Ps 55:23)

Table 17 — Continued	
	Exodus' food (לֶחֶם + בֶּשֶׂר) (1 Kgs 17:6; Exod 16:3)
	Acting according to the word of Yahweh (1 Kgs 17:5; Josh 8:8, 27)
	The covenant pattern (1 Kgs 17; Num-Josh)
	God's obedience (1 Kgs 17:22; Num 21:3, Deut 1:45)
	Failure Experience (1 Kgs 19; Num 13–14)
Mediator of a New Covenant	Idolatry as the need for a renewal of the covenant (1 Kgs 18; Exod 32-34)
	The breaking and the covenant and its consequences (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:1; Deut 11:13–14; Deut 28:24)
	The gathering of all Israel (1 Kgs 18; Sam 7:5; Exod 19, 24)
	The use of twelve stones (1 Kgs 18:30–31; Jos 4:8)
	The covenant ceremony (1 Kgs 18:20, 24, 30, 31, 33, 36, 41–44; Exod 24:2–5, 11, 15, 17)
	The fiery consumption of the sacrifice (1 Kgs 18:38–39; Lev 9:24)
Recurring and Unfinished Narratives	
Crisis and Failure	1 Kgs 19:1–8; Gen 9:20–21 (Noah); Gen 16:2–4; Gen 20:1–5 (Abraham); 2 Sam 11–12 (David); 2 Kgs 11:1–8 (Solomon); 2 Kgs 20:12–19 (Hezekiah)
Messianic Expectation	Cluster of Miracles and wonders (1 Kgs 17:1, 4–6; 10–16; 17–24; 18:30–38; 41–46; 19:5–7; 9–18; 2 Kgs 1:10–12; 2:8; Exod 4:1–12; 7:8–12:30; 14:21–24; 15:23–25; 17:5–7; 8–16; Num 11:1–3; 21:8–9, 13–18)
The New Elijah in Malachi	The coming of a new Elijah (Mal 3:1, 23)

In light of all the textual evidence presented so far, the presence of Elijah's typology in the NT is not the result of inspired eisegesis. The NT's authors are only

picking up “the network of Old Testament texts established by the prophets.”¹⁵¹ In fact, Hill suggests that already in the context of Mal 3:23–24 there are signs that Elijah should be understood typologically. He says,

the appeal to the idealized personages of Moses and Elijah in the appendixes along with the intertextual citations linking the Torah and Prophets by way of theological summary and even the spelling of the name Elijah (i.e., the more uncommon *’ēlīyā* for the expected *’ēlīyāhū*) all suggest a typological approach to an interpretation of the postscript.¹⁵²

In the last part of this chapter, I will briefly explore how the NT authors, particularly the Gospels, identify and indicate the fulfilment of Elijah’s typology in the life and ministry of John the Baptist.

The Typological Fulfillment of Elijah in the New Testament

D. L. Bock points out that “Elijah is the fourth most frequently cited OT figure in the NT (Moses, eighty times; Abraham, seventy-three times; David, fifty-nine times; Elijah, twenty-nine times).”¹⁵³ This by itself indicates that Elijah is considered a prominent character by the NT writers. Walsh identifies four different contexts in which Elijah appears in the NT.¹⁵⁴

In the first, the NT authors remember his acts in the OT such as the punishment against the two captains and their fifty soldiers (Luke 9:54 cf. 2 Kgs 1:9–12), his

¹⁵¹ Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 122. More specifically dealing with Elijah, Ferguson notes that Malachi 3:23–24 is evidence of an important expectation that, when taken together with other expectations, makes the Elijah forerunner concept a reasonable inference long before the rise of Christianity. Ferguson, “The Elijah Forerunner Concept,” 134.

¹⁵² Hill, *Malachi*, 384.

¹⁵³ Bock, “Elijah and Elisha,” 204.

¹⁵⁴ Jerome T. Walsh, “Elijah,” *ABD* 2:465.

complaint against Israel (Rom 11:2–4 cf. 1 Kgs 19:18), and his prayer shutting down the heavens for the three-year drought (Jas 5:17–18 cf. 1 Kgs 17:1).

In the second context, Elijah functions as a paradigm for Christ’s ministry whether explicitly (Luke 4:25–26) or implicitly (Luke 7:11–16; cf. 1 Kgs 17:10, 17–24.). Many authors have called attention to this theological and literary device particularly in Luke.¹⁵⁵

The next context in which the prophet appears in the New Testament is through the idea of Elijah as a helper for the oppressed. This is evident in the spectators’ misinterpretation of Jesus’ exclamation at the cross (Mark 15:34–36; Matt 27:46–49). Probably, such a concept of Elijah results from later tradition already popularized in the early part of the first century AD.

Finally, “the most important and prominent trait of Elijah in the NT is his role as the precursor of the Messiah.”¹⁵⁶ In this capacity, John the Baptist is seen as the typological fulfilment of the eschatological messenger promised in Mal 3:23–24. Although the use of the Elijah motif in the NT is multifaceted, the typological aspect will be the focus of the next section.

John the Baptist and Elijah: The Biblical Data

Regarding the relationship between John the Baptist and Elijah, there is widespread consensus that “all Synoptics present John as an Elijah-like figure, who comes to prepare

¹⁵⁵ For instance, see: Jonathan Huddleston, “What Would Elijah and Elisha Do? Internarrativity in Luke’s Story of Jesus,” *JTI* 5 (2011): 265–282; John S. Kloppenborg and Jozef Verheyden, *The Elijah-Elisha Narrative in the Composition of Luke* (London, U.K.: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

¹⁵⁶ Walsh, “Elijah,” 2:465.

the way for the Messiah Jesus.”¹⁵⁷ Generally speaking, most authors would agree that, at least on the literary and discourse level,¹⁵⁸ “John the Baptist figures as the embodiment of Elijah the prophet.”¹⁵⁹ This is not to say that there is no variation of emphasis in the presentation of John in the four distinct Gospels.¹⁶⁰ In any case, Jesus himself explicitly connects John the Baptist with Elijah (Mark 9:11–13; Matt 11:13–14; 17:10–13; cf. Luke 1:17).¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Joel Marcus, *John the Baptist in History and Theology* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2018), 5.

¹⁵⁸ Many authors who agree that the Synoptics set John clearly in the Elijah tradition would not admit that such a relationship is found on the historical level. In historical-critical scholarship, John the Baptist as depicted in the Gospels is a Christian caricature of a Jewish prophet whose ministry has been distorted to fit the Christian purpose to exalt Jesus as the promised Messiah. For instance, Rikva Nir affirms that “the figure of John the Baptist (...) is filtered through a Christian prism. ... [Thus], it is impossible to reach the real historical John the Baptist.” Nir, *The First Christian Believer*, 258–259.

¹⁵⁹ Nir, *The First Christian Believer*, 71. For more authors who reflect this consensus, see: Gary Yamasaki, *John the Baptist in Life and Death: Audience-Oriented Criticism of Matthew’s Narrative* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 143; Donald Stephen Black, “John, Elijah, or One of the Prophets: How the Markan Reader Understands Jesus Through John/Elijah” (PhD diss., University of St. Michael College, 2012), 21; Sanghee Michael Ahn, “Old Testament Characters as Christological Witnesses in the Fourth Gospel,” (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 97; Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Elijah,” *BEB* 689–692; Anthony R. Meyer, “John the Baptist,” *LBD* Logos edition; Markus Öhler, “Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of The Kingdom of God,” *JBL* 118 (1999): 464–466; Beek, “Moses, Elijah, and Jesus,” 4; Tom Shepherd, “Narrative Role of John and Jesus in Mark 1:1–15,” in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels*, ed. Thomas R. Hatina, LNTS 304 (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2006), 1:153, 157 (via narrative strategies); Marvin W. Meyer, “Was John the Baptist Elijah? Interpreting the Gospel Evidence,” *RJ* 32 (1982): 19; Bock, “Elijah and Elisha,” 204–205; Michael Tilly, *Johannes der Tauffer und die Biographie der Propheten: Die synoptische Taufferuberlieferung und das jüdische Prophetenbild zur Zeit des Taufers*, BWANT 7 (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 1994); Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*, SHJ (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 261–316; M. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction*, JSNTSup, Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT, 1993), 230.

¹⁶⁰ Steven J. Stiles observes that “the Gospels’ genre greatly affects the way in which each Gospel writer characterizes John the Baptist.” Steven J. Stiles, “John the Baptist, Critical Issues,” *LBD* Logos edition.

¹⁶¹ B. III Witherington recognizes that “what is certain is that the Gospel tradition indicates that Jesus interpreted John the Baptist as an Elijah figure. B. III Witherington, “John the Baptist,” *DJG* 385.

The importance of John the Baptist¹⁶² for the fourfold testimony of Jesus in the Gospels cannot be overstated.¹⁶³ Today there are yearly celebrations of John in different religious traditions such as “the Eastern Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Islam (as well as forms of Islamic mysticism such as Sufism), and Baha’ism.”¹⁶⁴ A small group called Mandeans located in parts of Iran and Iraq still revere him as the true Messiah claiming that he is directly connected with the original movement inaugurated by John the Baptist himself.¹⁶⁵

Elijah appears in the four Gospels with the important task of preparing the way for Jesus’ ministry. The Gospels data about John the Baptist can be summarized on the following table.

Table 18. John the Baptist: Biblical Data

	Mark	Matt	Luke	John
The announcement and birth of John the Baptist			1:5-25	

¹⁶² He is identified in the Gospels and Acts as Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων – John the Baptizer (e.g. Mark 1:4), Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής – John the Baptist (e.g. Matt 3:1), Ἰωάννην τὸν Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν – (e.g. Luke 3:2), or only Ἰωάννης – John (e.g. John 1:9).

¹⁶³ The importance of John is underscored by Witherington: all evangelists associate John with the beginning of the Gospel; In Matthews and Luke, Jesus claims that John was more than a prophet, indeed the greatest human being (Mt 11:11/Lk 7:28 and Mt 11:9/Lk 7:26); only the deaths of Jesus and John receive more detail treatment in the NT (cf. Mk 6:14–29); the impact of John’s ministry is lasting as indicated by the existence of followers long after his death (Acts 18:25; 19:1–7); Jesus submit himself to the baptism of John (Mark 1:9–17; Matt 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–23); the populace opinion confused Jesus with a resurrected John (Mark 8:27–28; Matt 16:13–14; Luke 9:18–19); Jesus only begins his ministry in Galilee after John’s death. Witherington, “John the Baptist,” 383.

¹⁶⁴ Meyer, “John the Baptist,” Logos edition.

¹⁶⁵ See: Kurt Rudolph, “Mandaeism,” *ABD* 3: 500–502.

Table 18 — *Continued.*

	Mark	Matt	Luke	John
The ministry of John the Baptist before Jesus (prophetic fulfillment, his way of life, his preaching, reach, his role as forerunner)	1:2-8	3:1-12	3:1-20	1:6-8, 15, 19-36 (several elements missing here while others are added.
The baptism of Jesus	1:9-17	3:13-17	3:21-23	
The question of John the Baptist (are you the one?)		11:1-6	7:18-23	
Jesus' eulogy of John the Baptist		11:7-15 (John is Elijah)	7:24-30	
John's imprisonment and death (narrative flashback)	6:14-29	14:1-12	9:7-9	
Popular opinion about Jesus – is he the resurrected John?	8:27-28	16:13-14	9:18-19	
Jesus' explanation about the coming of Elijah	9:9-13	17:9-13		
Jesus' appeal to John's authority	21:23-27			

There is no need of a complete and detailed exposition of John's life here, since many others have already done that work.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, the literature on John the Baptist is

¹⁶⁶ See: Paul W. Hollenbach, "John the Baptist," *ABD* 3:887–899; Ernst Bammel, "Baptist in Early Christian Tradition," *NTS* 18 (1971): 95–128; W. H. Brownlee, "John the Baptist in the Light of Ancient Scrolls" in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. Krister Stendahl (New York, NY: Harper, 1957), 33–53; J. P. Meier, "John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 99 (1980): 383–405; Catherine M. Murphy, *John the Baptist: Prophet of Purity for a New Age* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003); Meyer, "John the Baptist," Logos edition; P. Parker, "Jesus, John the Baptist, and the Herods," *PRS* 8 (1981): 4–11; Elwell and Beitzel, "John the Baptist," *BEB*: 1200–1204; Joan E. Taylor, "John the Baptist," *EDEJ* 819–821; Sherri Brown, "John the Baptist: Witness and Embodiment of the Prologue in the Gospel of John" in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*, ed. Christopher W. Skinner (London, U.K.: T&T Clark, 2013), 147–164; F. Stanley Jones, "John the Baptist," *EDB* 727–728; Leon Morris, "John The Baptist," *ISBE* Revised Edition 1108–1111; A. Blakiston, *John the Baptist and His Relation to Jesus* (Manassas, VA: The Century Press, 1912); F. F. Bruce, "John, the Baptist," *NBD* 593–594; Russell

vast.¹⁶⁷ At this point, a brief tour d’horizon of the biblical data will suffice to show the close relationship between John and Elijah. The present analysis will examine the final form of the NT text as it stands today, for purposes of this study, now it stands in relation to the OT text.¹⁶⁸

In Luke, the announcement and birth of John the Baptist is in many respects parallel to the birth narrative of Jesus.¹⁶⁹ In this way, Luke establishes a close relationship between John and Jesus,¹⁷⁰ and since Elizabeth and Mary are cousins, John and Jesus are

Benjamin Miller, “John the Baptist,” *ISBE*:1708–1711; Stephen A. Cummins, “John the Baptist,” *DJG*² 436–445; W. Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

¹⁶⁷ In his dissertation, Black divides the different approaches to John in historical criticism, source criticism, form criticism, redactional criticism and narrative criticism. Black, “John, Elijah, or One of the Prophets,” 3–47. Good summaries of the development of historical studies on John can be found in J. Reumann, “The Quest for the Historical Baptist” in *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings*, ed. J. Reumann (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1972), 181–199; Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*, 12–32.

¹⁶⁸ See pages 133–136. Many of critical studies try to separate the historical John from his Christian or supposed mythological portrayal. Marcus’ thought is representative of these studies. He says, “there is more diversity in modern studies about the Baptist than assumed, more optimism than warranted about recovering knowledge of him historically, and more reason to suspect we cannot throw real light on him than even in the case of Jesus.” Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 2.

¹⁶⁹ The sequence of the events runs almost identical. Both births are miraculous (Elizabeth was barren and advanced in age and Mary was a virgin) (Luke 1:7, 31, 34) and are announced by an angel who also determines the name by which each child should be called (Luke 1:11–13, 26–31). The account of both deliveries is followed by a visit to the infants (Luke 1:57–58; 2:15–18). Luke reports the ceremony of circumcision in the temple for both John and Jesus (Luke 1:59–64; 2:21–24). In both cases the account is also followed by a prophecy about their future (Luke 1:67–79; 2:25–38). Finally, both birth narratives close with a note about the way they were growing (Luke 1:80; 2:51–52).

¹⁷⁰ Critical studies on John often conjecture a supposed rivalry between Jesus and John and focus on how the first Christian writers downplayed John to exalt Jesus. For instance, see Daniel S. Dapaah, *The Relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth: A Critical Study* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005); Taylor, *The Immerser*. For more critical studies that display the same assumption, see: M. Goguel, *Au seuil de l’évangile: Jean-Baptiste* (Paris, France: Payot, 1928); C. H. Kraeling, *John the Baptist* (New York: Scribner, 1951); J. Steinmann, *Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition* (New York, NY: Harper, 1958); J. Becker, *Johannes der Täufer und Jesus von Nazareth* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener, 1972); J. Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation, Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte* (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 1989); R. L. Webb, *John the Baptist and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* (Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1991); W. B. Tatum, *John the Baptist and Jesus: A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1994); Charles H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1964). In his book J. Leonard Farmer interprets John and Jesus as social reformers. See: J. Leonard Farmer, *John and Jesus in their Day and Ours* (New York, NY: Psycho-Medical

also blood relatives. In the angel's announcement of John's birth to his father Zechariah, the heavenly being declares that the child would grow to fulfill his prophetic task "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:16–17).¹⁷¹ Indeed, by clear allusion to Elijah's narrative and Mal 3, the angel draws a direct line between the ancient prophet and John: "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to prepare for the Lord a people made ready" (Luke 1:16–17 LEB).

After a long period of deafness as punishment for his incredulity, Zechariah, who was also a priest, breaks his silence right after confirming the name of his newborn as

Library, 1956). However, the assumption that Jesus and John the Baptist were engaged in competing ministries in their lifetime is based on speculative arguments with no historical evidence. Such a view has been debunked by W. Wink who argues that the Gospel testimony exalts John as the beginning of the gospel of Jesus assigning to him extremely high esteem and positive religious significance. See: Wink, *John the Baptist*, 113–114.

¹⁷¹ The expression "in the spirit and power of Elijah" is very enlightening. As mentioned before, Elijah and David are the only person-types advanced in the OT. They are the only types which are directly referred by name in later texts (Ezek 37:24–25; Mal 3:23–24). Although Jesus is a new Moses, there is no text in the OT in which the typological fulfilment is indicated by his actual name. However, like in the case of David, the fulfilment of the Elijah typology does not entail an Elijah *redivivus*. When the messiah is described in terms of a new David, naturally no one would expect the messiah to be the actual resurrected David. Markus Öhler disfavors the label, "Elijah *redivivus*," since the prophet never died but was only translated into heaven alive. Markus Öhler, *Elia im Neuen Testament: Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung des alttestamentlichen Propheten im frühen Christentum*, BZNW 88 (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 1997), 3. His point is valid because the term literally denotes a dead person being brought back to life. Christine E. Joynes suggests Elijah *reditus* or returning Elijah as a more appropriate term. Christine E. Joynes, "A Question of Identity: 'Who Do People Say that I Am?' Elijah, John the Baptist and Jesus in Mark's Gospel," in *Understanding Studying and Reading: New Testament Essays in Honour of John Ashton* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 16. The belief that Elijah would come in person or in a kind of physical incarnation in the first century might explain the denial of John the Baptist in 1 John 1:21 where in response to the question "Are you Elijah?," John says "I am not." Other attempts to explain John's denial are evaluated by Henricus Pidyarto Gunawan in Henricus Pidyarto Gunawan, "Jesus as the New Elijah: An Attempt to the Question of John 1:21," *SCS* 9 (2010): 33–36. What seems clear is that in light of the nature of the evidence, the interpreter's presuppositions play a major role in explain John's denial. In any case, the angel's speech in Luke 1:17 makes clear that John the Baptist acts like Elijah, but he is not Elijah *redivivus*. As Sergius Bulgakov observes, "in a certain sense, John is also Elias, though Elias is not John. The Forerunner somehow contains Elijah, but transcending him and without coinciding with him." Sergius Bulgakov, *The Friend of the Bridegroom: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Forerunner* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 115.

John, following the angel's instruction. Filled with the Holy Spirit the father utters a hymn of praise that also contains prophetic elements regarding the future of the child. In it, Zechariah highlights his son's future as a prophet of the Most High sent before His coming to prepare a way for the Lord, and thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1, which are mingled in Luke 1:76.

Following the pattern of Jesus, the Gospel writers do not put forward information about what happened from John's infancy to the beginning of his ministry.¹⁷² The next time John appears in their narrative is in the desert, where many were coming to hear his call for repentance and to be baptized as a sign of their new life resulting from the forgiveness of sin (Mark 1:4-5 cf. Matt 3:1-2; Luke 3:3, 7). Echoing the words of the angel to Zechariah, Mark opens his Gospel pointing to the fulfillment of the eschatological expectations of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 in the ministry of John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-3 cf. Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). The close connection with Elijah is also reflected in his clothing and his ascetic and solitary outdoor way of life (Mark 1:6; Matt 3:4).

¹⁷² In the recent past, many have suggested that John the Baptist was a member of the Qumran community prior his public ministry. The main arguments relate to the area where he developed his ministry (in the vicinity of the Essene community), his ascetic life style, the nature of his preaching, and his baptism ritual. Markus even speculates that "one of the reasons why John left the Qumran community may have been his growing conviction that he, rather than the present leader of the group, was the true "Teacher of Righteousness," the eschatological Elijah." Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 55. However, Dapaah points to the weakness of this position, which in recent times most scholars have generally abandoned. There is no mention of John in the DSS; no connection of John the Baptist with the Essenes in Josephus' works, the baptism of John finds no parallel in the daily immersion carried at Qumran, concern with ritual purification is not found in John's discourse. Dapaah, *The Relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth*, 52. For more about the relationship between John and the Essenes, see: S. L. Davies, "John the Baptist and Essene Kashruth," *NTS* 29 (1983): 569-571; Leonard F. Badia, *The Qumran Baptism and John the Baptist's Baptism*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980; Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran: On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2002).

All four Gospels record the preaching of John the Baptist, whose message contains language of judgment and a call to repentance at the same time (Matt 3:1, 7–12; Luke 3:7–17; John 1:23–34).¹⁷³ Since the “time has come,”¹⁷⁴ his message is eschatological and urgent: the kingdom of heaven is at the door (Matt 3:1). Thus, the natural consequence of seeing John fulfilling the prophecies of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 is that the time of visitation has arrived, and repentance is the only way to get prepared for it. The baptism experience is the external mark of the interior transformation so needed. Naturally, John’s task is pointing to the one who is coming after him, whose sandal strap John is not worthy even to undo (Mark 1:7; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:26). Especially in the Gospel of John, his work as a witness to Jesus is at the center of his prophetic ministry (John 1:19, 33–34).

The account of John’s ministry is followed by the beginning of Jesus’s ministry. The reader of Mark knows that John is imprisoned by Herod right before Jesus’ public ministry begins in Galilee (Mark 1:14). However, in retrospect, the Synoptics provide more detailed information about the incident that led to John’s execution (Mark 6:14–29; Matt 14:1–12; Luke 9:7–9). The most elaborate picture of John’s detention and subsequent death is offered by Mark. Mark evokes striking parallels in the characterizations of Ahab/Herod, Jezebel/Herodias, and Elijah/John the Baptist.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷³ Mark is more indirect in his presentation of John’s actual words, which appear only in Mark 1:7–8 where John speaks about the imminent emergence of Jesus. The number of words for the Baptist’s preaching in the other three Gospels is similar: Matthew 127 words, Luke 147 words, John 146 words (considering the text of the UBS5).

¹⁷⁴ I refer here to eschatological time, the existence of which I am initially assuming, but I will substantiate it later in this study.

¹⁷⁵ See: David M. Hoffeditz and Gary Eugene Yates, “Femme Fatale Redux: Intertextual Connection to the Elijah/Jezebel Narratives in Mark 6:14-29,” *BBR* 15 (2005): 199–221; Barbara Baert, “The Dancing Daughter and the Head of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29) Revisited: An Interdisciplinary Approach,” *LS* 38 (2014): 5–29; Jean Delorme, “John the Baptist’s Head – The Word Perverted: A Reading

structures of power in the characterization of Herod, Herodias, and John the Baptist in Mark 6:14–29 advance the “unexpected” nature of God’s kingdom in light of the interaction between Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah as seen in 1 Kgs 17–21. The narrative analysis of the NT passage reveals a narrator’s intentional strategy of silencing John,¹⁷⁶ and hereby reinforces the contrast between the type and antitype fulfilment of the Elijah–John typology. By highlighting the discontinuity between the prophets, Mark’s author reaffirms one of the major paradoxes of his gospel, namely, the unexpected nature of the kingdom of God as a reality already manifested in the present, but not yet completely revealed.

During his time in prison, John also struggles with doubts regarding the nature of his mission, and consequently the character of Jesus as the Messiah. His hesitation is expressed through his disciples whom he sends to Jesus, asking if he was “the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” (LEB) (Matt 11:3 cf. Luke 7:19). Jesus’s reply demonstrates that his acts testify in favor of his messiahship as the fulfilment of the promises involving the servant of Yahweh in Isaiah (Matt 11:4–6 cf. Luke 7:22–23).

of a Narrative (Mark 6:14-29),” *Semeia* 81 (1998): 115–29. Else K. Holt, “... Urged on by his wife Jezebel’ — A Literary Reading of 1 Kgs 18 in Context,” *SJOT* 9 (1995): 83–96; Anne Létourneau, “Jézebel: Généalogie d’une Femme Fatale,” *Science et Esprit* 66 (2014): 189–211; Abraham Smith, “Tyranny Exposed: Mark’s Typological Characterization of Herod Antipas (Mark 6:14-29),” *BI* 14 (2006): 259–93.

¹⁷⁶ The narrator’s strategy reflects a planned intent of silencing John. In almost each aspect of the narrative, John is a mere blank. In terms of settings, he is away from the scene of the feast and outside the palace. In terms of dialogue, his voice is only heard in his rebuke of Herod’s unlawful marriage. In terms of structure, the girl Salome and her mother Herodias are in the center. Jean Delorme, “John the Baptist’s Head – The Word Perverted: A Reading of a Narrative (Mark 6:14-29).” *Semeia* 81 (1998), 118. The spotlight is far from the prophet: “John is entirely passive, says nothing, decides nothing.” M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 179. Compared to other accounts of martyrdom in the Judeo-Christian tradition, several elements are missing. The narrator does not provide any “interpretative scene in which John confronts his persecutors and prophesies divine judgment on them with his dying breath; nor does he explicitly hold John’s martyrdom up as a model for imitation or otherwise attempt to make sense of it; [finally, there is no] element of divine compensation for the outrage John has suffered.” Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New Haven, CT; London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 2008), 404.

However, more enlightening is what Jesus says after the departure of John's disciples. In his words to the multitude, Jesus affirms that John is more than an additional prophet; he is the messenger promised in Mal 3:1 (Matt 11:7–15; Luke 7:24–30). In Jesus' speech, he also conflates Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3, confirming what had been already said by the narrator of Mark 1:2; Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4 and by John the Baptist himself in John 1:2. As the prophet who prepares the way of the Lord, the forerunner is evaluated by Jesus as the greatest of those born of women (Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28). He is the last prophet sent to Israel, closing an era and opening the eschatological day of Yahweh in its inaugurated fashion (Matt 11:13, Luke 16:16). The fact that Jesus sees in John the fulfilment of Mal 3:1 would be enough to establish the link between Elijah and the forerunner. However, Jesus goes further to affirm explicitly that John the Baptist is Elijah (Matt 11:14).

The impact of John's ministry was so widespread that the crowd would confuse Jesus with the presumed John the Baptist *redivivus* (Mark 8:27–28 cf. Matt 16:13–14; Luke 9:18–19). Such a portrayal is harmonious with that found in the passing note about John in Josephus, the only other source about the forerunner in the first century besides the NT. Josephus regards John as “a good man and [who] had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice justice toward their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing join in baptism” (*Ant* 18.5.2). Indeed, Josephus notes that “to some of the Jews the destruction of Herod's army seemed to be divine vengeance, and certainly a just vengeance, for his treatment of John, surnamed the Baptist” (*Ant* 18.5.2).¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ The complete passage in Josephus reads: “(116) Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; (117) for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to

The last time John the Baptist surfaces in a significant way in the Synoptic Gospels is in connection with the transfiguration.¹⁷⁸ Although all the Synoptics document the transfiguration (Mark 9:2–8; Matt 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36), only Mark and Matthew record the dialogue between Jesus and the three disciples when they were coming down from the mount. Still pondering whether the experience on the mount is an additional sign of Jesus’ messiahship, the disciples ask him: “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” (LEB Mark 9:11). Jesus’s answer in Mark 9:12–13 affirms at least three important things about the fulfillment of Mal 3 in relation to the promise of a new Elijah. First, the new Elijah would not come in person as the *redivivus* prophet like the apparent widespread popular opinion implied. Elijah had already come, although even the disciples, at that point, had not recognized his coming. The appearance of Elijah on the mount with Moses is not interpreted by Jesus as the fulfillment of Mal 3:1, 23–24.¹⁷⁹

come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. (118) Now, when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late. (119) Accordingly, he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod’s suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God’s displeasure against him (Josephus Ant 18.5.2 §116–119).” Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 484. For more on Josephus’ testimony about John the Baptist, see: John P. Meier, “John the Baptist in Josephus: Philology and exegesis,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 225–237; Marco Rotman, “The ‘Others’ Coming to John the Baptist and the Text of Josephus,” *JSJ* 49 (2018): 68–83; Johannes Tromp, “John the Baptist According to Flavius Josephus, and His Incorporation in the Christian Tradition,” In *Empsychoi Logoi – Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van Der Horst*, (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), 135–149.

¹⁷⁸ After that, John is mentioned in the Synoptic tradition only in Matt 21:23–27 where Jesus alludes to the divine authority of John’s baptism when facing the opposition of the chief priests and the elders of the people.

¹⁷⁹ However, there is no doubt that the presence of Moses with Elijah on the mount only strengthens the links between the two prophets as I have indicated earlier in the chapter.

Second, the new Elijah would not only prefigure the forerunner of the Messiah in power but also in weakness. The suffering of the forerunner foreshadows the suffering of the Messiah. Third, John the Baptist is the new Elijah. In the phrase “they did to him whatever they wanted, just as it is written about him,” Jesus refers to the cruelty that led John the Baptist to death in the hands of Herod and his court. In the parallel episode written by Matthew, the narrator makes this explicit, closing the episode by saying, “Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist” (LEB Matt 17:13).

This brief overview of the biblical data about John the Baptist seems to confirm the scholarly consensus that he is viewed, at least by the Synoptics,¹⁸⁰ in the context of

¹⁸⁰ The differences between the presentation of John the Baptist in the Synoptics and in the fourth Gospel cannot be ignored. Wink provides an example of a common approach to the issue in the scholarly literature. According to him, “the [fourth] evangelist. . . sharply contradicts the earlier tradition [of the Synoptics] that John was Elijah. For him the idea of a forerunner is anathema.” Wink, *John the Baptist*, 89. For a similar approach, see also: Nir, *The First Christian Believer*, 187; Martinus J. J. Menken, “The Quotation from Isa 40:3 in John 1:23,” *Biblical* 66 (1985): 204; Meyer, “Was John the Baptist Elijah?,” 19; Carl R. Kazmierski, *John the Baptist: Prophet and Evangelist* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), 117. The apparent vacuum left by the fourth evangelist regarding John the Baptist as the New Elijah, has led some to think that in his Gospel Jesus is the New Elijah. For instance, Gunawan tries “to prove that the Fourth Gospel wants to depict Jesus as the New Elijah.” Gunawan, “Jesus as the New Elijah,” 36. Based on what he calls “total parallelism” he tries to find correspondences that go beyond verbal parallelisms to include also “the immediate context, the structure of the various elements of the stories, the plot, the attitudes and reactions of individuals involved in the stories, the situation or background of the stories, etc. Ibid, 37. However, his list of parallels is problematic. It counts on coincidental parallel or minutiae without theological or narrative relevance. For instance, he draws a parallel between the Sidonian (1 Kgs 17:7–24) and Samaritan (John 4:1–42) women. He also finds a correspondence between the identity and sickness of the widow’s son in 1 Kgs 17 and Lazarus in John 11. Regarding the identity, the dead in 1 Kings 17 is the son of a widow who hosts Elijah. Similarly, in John 11 Lazarus is the brother of Martha and Mary, namely two sisters who presumably often host Jesus (cf. Lk 10:38–42). Regarding their way of death, both become very sick and in a short time die. Another problem in his approach is his dismissal of Mal 3:23–24 as a later addition, which he completely ignores even being a key passage for the NT authors in respect to the nature of John the Baptist mission. Thus, the grounds for Gunawan’s conclusions do not seem stable. Even if we assume that John the Baptist is not the eschatological Elijah, we still cannot affirm that Jesus is described in terms of Elijah in the fourth Gospel. See: J. Louis Martyn, “We have found Elijah” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity; Essays in Honor of William David Davies*, ed. Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA: Brill, 1976), 187–197. However, the discontinuity between the Synoptics and John concerning John the Baptist should not be overemphasized. Besides other emphases and purposes, perhaps John’s approach in his Gospel may reflect a polemics between the remaining disciples of John the Baptist and the evangelist’s original audience. Thus, John emphasizes the role of John the Baptist as a witness and makes clear the distinction between him and Jesus. Ahn, for instance, suggests that the fourth evangelist was refuting the budding Gnostic

the Elijah tradition. He is the new Elijah who fulfills the prophecy of Mal 3. The implications of this attestation of Jesus' identity are monumental: he is the Lord and the messenger of the covenant who comes to inaugurate the day of Yahweh.¹⁸¹ Once it has been shown that John the Baptist is the fulfilment of the prophecy found in Mal 3:1, 23–24, the next issue to be addressed is the nature of this fulfilment. Does the biblical data support the idea that such a fulfilment is typological? Determining the answer to this question is fundamental and essential.

The Typology of the Messianic Precursor

At this point, it is beneficial to go back to Davidson's definition of typology mentioned in the first chapter. According to him, typology is

the study of certain OT salvation-historical realities (persons, events, or institutions) which God specifically designed to correspond to, and be prospective-predictive prefigurations of, their ineluctable (*devoir-être*) and absolutely escalated eschatological fulfillment aspects (inaugurated/appropriated/consummated) within NT salvation history.¹⁸²

As also mentioned before, the advantage of Davidson's proposal is that it allows the elements of typology to emerge from the biblical text itself. Once this is recognized,

movement by his downplaying of John the Baptist at that particular point in the Gospel of John. Ahn, "Old Testament Characters", 105–106. In any case, it should be noted that John's presentation as the forerunner does not contradict that view found in the Synoptics. As in the Synoptics, John is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As he prepares the way for Jesus, John the Baptist identifies himself with the voice in the desert in the same fashion that the Synoptics also do (John 1:23). Meyer observes that "while John denies that he is corporeally the prophet Elijah, it is undeniable that the four Gospel narratives associate them with each other." Meyer, "John the Baptist, Logos edition." The fourth gospel also adds important information about John's ministry, especially regarding his ministry of preaching. As mentioned before, the writer of John lets the reader know more of the statements of John the Baptist than either Matthew and Mark.

¹⁸¹ Regarding the Gospel of Mark, Black remarks that in the book "John, as Elijah *redivivus*, provides reasons to believe that Jesus is the Christ." Black, "John, Elijah, or One of the Prophets," i.

¹⁸² Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 421.

the interpreter also can reverse this approach and use this definition to identify other typological relationships between the OT and NT. From this definition, at least four clear criteria to identify typology come out: historicity, correspondences, prefiguration, and escalation.¹⁸³ These criteria must be applied to the case of Elijah to see if the relationship of John the Baptist with Elijah can be considered typological.

Historicity

The first criterion implied in Davidson's definition to identify the use of typology in the NT is historicity. According to him, "the OT τύπος is assumed [by the NT author] to be a historical reality as it is set forth in Scripture."¹⁸⁴ The NT use of Elijah tradition clearly assumes its historicity. In Luke 4:24–26, Jesus draws a comparison between himself and Elijah in terms of the unwillingness of Jesus' own countrymen of Nazareth in accepting his claims. In verses 25 and 26, he says: "there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut for three years and six months while a great famine took place over all the land. And Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath *in the region* of Sidon, to a woman *who was* a widow" (LEB).

In Rom 11:2–5 Paul recalls Elijah's accusation against Israel, denouncing her idolatry, and the subsequent answer from God about the existence of a remnant. In Paul's

¹⁸³ These are very similar to the essential characteristics of a type as defined by Beale (i) analogical correspondence; (ii) historicity; (iii) forward-pointing; (iv) escalation; and (v) retrospection. Beale, "Finding Christ," 29. The major difference is Beale's use of retrospection. Although many types ended up being recognized backwards, the evidence found in Elijah typology and in other cases as mentioned in the first chapter is that the prophetic nature of the OT type was already available for the original reader even though the contours of the future fulfillment were not clear. Thus, although retrospection is part of the process of recognizing types from a later perspective, it is not an essential element of typology. At any rate, it is also not clear how retrospection could be used as a criterion to identify types.

¹⁸⁴ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 398.

argument, there is still a remnant selected by grace and kept by God himself. The apostle makes an analogy between Elijah's time and his own time. Another prayer of Elijah is mentioned in James 5:16–18, where the apostle argues that the prayer of a righteous person is effective to promote healing. He appeals to the example of Elijah, “who was human being with the same nature as us” (v. 17 LEB). He continues saying that “he prayed fervently for it not to rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the earth produced its fruit (LEB James 5:17–18).

In all these instances, not only the existence of Elijah but also the historicity of the stories as recorded by the OT narrator of 1 and 2 Kings is assumed. It seems evident that the arguments of Jesus, Paul, and James would lose their strength if they and their original audience did not believe in the historicity of these stories. In addition to that and coming back to the Synoptics, the scene of transfiguration where Elijah and Moses appear to Jesus only confirms the veracity with which the OT narrative was regarded by the NT author and naturally Jesus himself.

Correspondences

Another fundamental element in the identification of typological relationships between the OT and the NT is the presence of legitimate correspondences. This criterion is somehow related with the previous one since these correspondences need to be historical. At the same time, these parallels need to be genuine and not only coincidental or imaginative. That is why the interpreter is required to keep in mind sound criteria to distinguish real allusions or parallels. Such criteria involve verbal and contextual parallelism as well as theological significance. However, it must be admitted that such an

endeavor is not only scientific but also artistic. As an art, the process of defining true correspondences is not formally exact, to which disagreement among scholars widely and often testifies. In the end, common sense and good judgment should never be lacking.

The most obvious correspondences between Elijah and John the Baptist are in order. First, their clothing and lifestyle were described in similar terms. While Elijah was characterized as “a hairy man” (NKJV) or “wearing a hairy garment” (ESV) (בַּעַל שֵׁעָר), John is described as dressing in camel’s hair (Mark 1:6). Independently on how the interpreter understands the expression בַּעַל שֵׁעָר in 2 Kgs 2, their “hairiness” somehow distinguished both characters to the point that, contrary to the regular practice, the biblical narrator found such a detail important to mention. Their style of clothing also reveals their austere and self-denying outdoor way of life. Both characters lived solitary lives with itinerant ministries in the intersection between the desert and city. Regarding John’s looks, Jesus notes the contrast between him and those found in the rich courts of his time, “But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are in splendid clothing and luxury are in the royal palaces” (Luke 7:25 LEB). John’s diet composed by locusts and wild honey also characterizes him as an itinerant man of the desert.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ The mention of locusts and wild honey as the basic diet of John the Baptist during his stay in the wilderness is intriguing. Regarding the locusts, although the consumption of locust was common in antiquity (not only available for poor Bedouins but even requested in Assyrian royal banquets), “to an audience that did not eat grasshoppers, John’s food may have come across as foreign (for example, non-Roman) or barbaric.” James Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 196. In any case, in his study on the topic, James Kelhoffer suggests that “there is a connection between a diet of grasshoppers and wilderness topography prior to the Gospel of Mark.” Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist*, 196. In any case, it should be noted that the consumption of locusts was permissible according to Levitical law (Lev 11:21–22). Another possibility is that the Greek word ἀκρίς (“locust”) refers to the seed pods of the locust tree, which was native to the Mediterranean. See: “The Lost Gospels of Jesus,” <https://www.gospelsofjesus.com/2015/07/gospel-of-matthew-chapter-three.html>. However, this interpretation has been rejected by most biblical scholars more recently. For instance, according to BDAG, “the widespread notion that the ἄ. Were carob pods (St. John’s-bread) is supported

A second point of contact between Elijah and John the Baptist is their message, which could be summarized in two points: denouncing of sin and calling to repentance. An obvious objection to this idea is that these two aspects are found in the work of all the prophets in Scripture. However, the coming of judgment in John's preaching alludes to the punishment of all the unjust with fire (an important motif in Elijah's cycle). Thus, "John as the immediate forerunner of God provides the last possibility to escape the wrath of the Lord."¹⁸⁶ Likewise, through his ministry Elijah is trying to avert the destruction of God's people to which the widespread idolatry would inevitably lead them. Thus, their call to repentance happens in the context of the announcement of a future judgment over the people of Israel, which will separate the righteous from the wicked. As a result of their opposition against the political powers of their era, they face persecution. It is significant that in both cases, the wives of Ahab and Herod are the ones pressing the antagonism and seeking the lives of Elijah and John, respectively.

A third correspondence between the two prophets involves the geographical area of their activities and their association with the Jordan river. Öhler observes that the place where John is baptizing in the Gospel narrative "is also known by the pilgrim of

neither by good linguistic evidence nor by probability." William Arndt, "ἀρχίς," *BDAG* 39. See: William David Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2004), 1:296; John Nolland, *The gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, U.K.: Eerdmans; Paternoster, 2005), 139; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, U.K.: Eerdmans; InterVarsity, 1992), 55; D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 102. Concerning the "wild honey," there is an ambiguity in many ancient texts about the meaning of honey without an accompanying reference, which "may refer to the activity of bees or to the produce of trees (for example, dates, figs, or sap/gum)." Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist*, 196. However, he concludes that "despite the exegetical ambiguity concerning John's honey, the description of it as 'wild' indicates that whatever sweet substance John consumed was not as pleasing or highly esteemed as cultivated bee honey." Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist*, 197.

¹⁸⁶ Öhler, "The Expectation of Elijah," 472.

Bordeaux as the place where Elijah went up to heaven. It is possible that John wanted to signal his role as the returned Elijah with the choice of this location.”¹⁸⁷

The fourth correspondence relates to the moment of discouragement where the two prophets question their mission and identity. While Elijah sought to end his ministry (and life) when he thought that his ministry was a failure, John became doubtful about Jesus’ identity as the Messiah, which would also indicate the failure of his ministry, since he was the forerunner. Curiously, in both cases the prophets experience profound disappointment when they are facing persecution by political power led by female characters. Despite their despair, Elijah and John are vindicated. While Elijah keeps his ministry and is later taken to heaven without experiencing death, John is praised by Jesus as the greatest man of all time (which should include a comparison with Elijah).

Finally, and maybe most importantly, both prophets left successors who completed in a broader way their original mission. In the case of Elijah, it is Elisha who would take important steps to eradicate Baal worship from the northern kingdom, delaying for a time the impending destruction. Evidently, having in mind the provisory and precarious nature of the type, Elisha’s success is not permanent and much less definitive. As history attests, the practice of idolatry persisted in Israel and finally led to its destruction. In the case of John the Baptist, and on a much larger scale, it is Jesus who gives continuity to John’s work. As mentioned before, Jesus starts his ministry when John leaves the scene. Jesus carries on the message proclaimed by John about the imminent coming of the kingdom of heaven. For instance, in Matthew’s Gospel John’s and Jesus’ preaching are the same: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near!”

¹⁸⁷ Öhler, “The Expectation of Elijah,” 472.

(Μετανοεῖτε· ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) (Matt 3:2 cf. 4:17). According to the Gospel of John, Jesus also engaged in baptizing like John the Baptist (John 3:22).

Differently from Elisha, whose ministry resulted in provisional reform, Jesus accomplishes definitive results that cannot not be reversed (Dan 9:24–27).

Although there is no agreement among scholars about the self-awareness of John the Baptist as the promised Elijah of Mal 3:23–24,¹⁸⁸ and consequently, the antitypical fulfilment of Elijah, it is not improbable that John was aware of his role as the new Elijah. However, the narrator of John has control over how he introduces and characterizes his protagonist. It is the narrator’s description of John that creates explicit correspondences indicating the authorial intent to draw a parallel between Elijah and John the Baptist (e.g., his clothing, lifestyle, and the location of his activities. Furthermore, in the announcement of his birth, the angel had already made explicit his role as the new Elijah (Luke 1:17). In his question to Jesus: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” (LEB Luke 7:19), John seems to allude to Mal 3:1. Indeed, Öhler observes that “the third chapter of Malachi, which reaches its culmination in the announcement of Elijah’s return, should be read from John’s time perspective almost like his personal history of calling.”¹⁸⁹

The above historical correspondences are an additional indication that John the Baptist is seen as the typological fulfilment of Elijah. Although the correspondences by themselves are not enough to determine the presence of a typological relationship, when

¹⁸⁸ Among the authors defending John’s self-awareness as an Elijah-like figure are Öhler and Marcus. See: Öhler, “The Expectation of Elijah,” 472; Marcus, *John the Baptist*, 61. Among those denying this possibility are Joachim Jeremias and J. A. T. Robinson. See: Joachim Jeremias, “Ηλ(ε)ίας,” *TDNT* 2: 937; John Arthur Thomas Robinson, “Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection,” *NTS* 4 (1958): 265.

¹⁸⁹ Öhler, “The Expectation of Elijah,” 472.

they are seen in the cumulative case that is being built in this section, such parallels are important pieces of the puzzle.

Excursus: Is not Jesus a New Elijah?

The role of the Elijah tradition in Luke has been a cause of debate in recent years, and some voices have been raised to advance that Jesus is the new Elijah in the gospel.¹⁹⁰ Others have also argued for the same idea in the Gospel of John, though with less persuasive impact.¹⁹¹ That Elijah plays an important role in the Gospel is clearly supported by “dozens of quotations, allusions, and echoes.”¹⁹² Indeed, according to Jeremy D. Otten “no author takes greater interest in Elijah than does Luke.”¹⁹³ While Otten himself defends a more literary model to approach the issue,¹⁹⁴ in his review of literature he has

¹⁹⁰ For instance, Richard B. Hays, “The Future of Scripture,” *WTJ* 46 (2011): 34–38; Wink, *John the Baptist*, 42–45; F. Danker, *Luke* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), 29; J. D. Dubois, “La Figure d’Elie dans la Perspective Lucanienne,” *RHPR* 53 (1973): 155–176; A. Hastings, *Prophet and Witness in Jerusalem* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1958), 75; John C. Poirier, “Jesus as an Elijahianic Figure in Luke 4:16–30,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 349.

¹⁹¹ See footnote 180 above.

¹⁹² Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 1.

¹⁹³ Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 1.

¹⁹⁴ Other literary approaches include those carried out both by Thomas Brodie and John Nolland. See: Thomas Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge*, 79–98 and John Nolland, “Recurring Themes in the Book of the Twelve: Creating Points of Contact for a Theological Reading,” *Int* 61 (2007): 125–136. In his study of the Elijah motif in Luke, Otten hopes to lead the discussion beyond “the either/or mentality of one-to-one correspondence in order to recognize the richer literary aspects at play in the Lukan narrative.” Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 5. Although he recognizes the connection between John and Elijah, which he considers undeniable, he also recognizes the connection between Jesus and Elijah. However, he argues that use of the Elijah motif in Luke “is not primarily tied to typology or prophecy fulfillment, but rather serves a theological purpose.” Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 159–160. He defends that “Luke’s use of Elijah is far more complex and theologically rich than is often assumed.” Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 163. And he concludes that “Luke is drawing on a common association between Elijah and the OT concept of remnant (cf. 1 Kgs 18:22; 19:10, 14), with the result that the Elijah motif serves in particular as a means for signaling and developing the theme of remnant theology.” Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 7. A similar view also has been suggested by Craig A. Evans, who says that in those passages in Luke where the Elijah/Elisha references and allusions are clearest, the theme of election is present, if not paramount.” Craig A. Evans, “Luke’s Use of Elijah-Elisha and the Ethic of Election,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 82. This view is further elaborated in Otten’s dissertation.

identified five proposals that advance the more traditional model of fulfilment: (i) the deliberate denial of any connection between John the Baptist and Elijah in favor of an Elijah-Jesus association;¹⁹⁵ (ii) the connection with John and not with Jesus;¹⁹⁶ (iii) the idea that Luke prefers the identification of Jesus as the Elijah redivivus, but keeps the connection between John and Elijah because of the emergence of such a link in early Christian tradition;¹⁹⁷ (iv) the concept that Luke associates Jesus with the Elijah of 1 and 2 Kings and John with the Elijah of Malachi;¹⁹⁸ and finally, (v) the notion that “Luke does retain the identification of John with Elijah,” but does so “freed from any literalistic misunderstanding” so that he is also “free to use Elijah-typology to describe the ministry of Jesus without any sense of logical impropriety.”¹⁹⁹ Fundamentally, within the fulfilment model, all the disagreement concerns the ways in which the parallels between Jesus and Elijah are interpreted.

Elijah is mentioned by name in only four passages of Luke’s Gospel. In Luke 4:25–27, Jesus compares his own predicament with that of Elijah and Elisha in the context of Israel’s resistance to the prophets sent by God. In this case, it seems clear

Another recent proposal to deal literarily with the apparent ambivalence in Elijah’s use by Luke is found in Huddleston, “What Would Elijah and Elisha Do?,” 265–281.

¹⁹⁵ Wink, *John the Baptist*, 42–45; Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1960), 20–27.

¹⁹⁶ I am very much inclined to question Otten’s assumption that only a minority of scholars defend this position. He quotes Raymond Edward Brown, “Jesus and Elisha,” *Perspective* 12 (1971): 85–104. See footnote 159 above for more scholars who defend the identification of John the Baptist with Elijah.

¹⁹⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Gospel according to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 213–214.

¹⁹⁸ José Severino Croatto, “Jesus, Prophet like Elijah, and the Prophet-Teacher like Moses in Luke-Acts,” *JBL* 124 (2005): 451–465.

¹⁹⁹ Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 4. This idea is advocated by Howard I. Marshall. See: Howard I. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, CEP (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 147.

enough that Jesus is using Elijah's example to illustrate the common rejection of prophets found in Israel's history. In Luke 9:8, 19, Elijah appears again in the popular confusion between Elijah and Jesus. Besides the fact that the crowd is extremely unreliable as to their conclusions in the Gospels, it is evident that as the gospel story advances, Luke shows that the people were wrong about Jesus' identity. At this point, such a comparison with Elijah serves to indicate who Jesus is not but not the contrary. In Luke 9:20, Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah corrects the crowd's misunderstanding about him. The final mention of Elijah is found in Luke 9:30 when he appears with Moses in the transfiguration. It is not necessary to point out that there is no parallel between Elijah and Jesus here.

However, there are other alleged allusions to Elijah throughout the Gospel. In his enlightening article, Robert J. Miller indicates the major eight passages that allude to or echo Elijah's discourse.²⁰⁰ Many other alleged parallels considered vague and problematic by Miller are left out in his discussion. These correspondences usually include incidental and/or superfluous details with little or no verbal similarity.

In Luke 3:16–17, John apparently attributes to Jesus the eschatological role of Elijah. However, the passage refers to the work of the Lord (הַאֲדֹנָי) or Messenger of the Covenant (מְלַאֲכֵי הַבְּרִית) in Mal 3:2–3 and not to the eschatological messenger. Thus, John is not referring to the messenger (מְלַאֲכֵי) of Mal 3:1. Another alleged allusion is found in the number of days Jesus fasted in the desert (Luke 4:1–2), However, the number forty in connection with the desert is also found in Moses and Israel's exodus narratives. Indeed,

²⁰⁰ In this section I mention only seven of them. When addressing an apparent echo of 2 Kings 4:29 in 10:1–12 (Jesus' instructions to the seventy about greeting no one on their way), Miller seems to mistake Elisha for Elijah. For this reason, this supposed parallel is left out. Robert J. Miller, "Elijah, John, and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke," *NTS* 42 (1988): 612–613.

the use of Scripture in the temptation narrative points to the fact that Jesus is reliving the experience of God's people. However, here the true Remnant of Israel is victorious where the first one failed. As Elijah encapsulated the experience of Israel, the number forty also appeared in connection with him.

One of the most persuasive cases for a true parallel between Jesus and Elijah is the resurrection of the only son of a widow in Luke 7:11–16, which contains verbal correspondences with 1 Kgs 17:23. Contextually, the crowd, like the widow, confesses the true nature of Jesus as a great prophet (προφήτης μέγας). However, it is really difficult to decide whether the parallel is between Jesus and Elijah or Jesus and Elisha, who also performed a very similar miracle. Besides, Miller observes that “The raising at Nain is an Elijah-style’ miracle, but the acclamation of Jesus as a prophet in v. 16 echoes Deut 18. 15. Jesus acts like Elijah but is hailed by the people as the Prophet-like-Moses.”²⁰¹ In this way, “by combining allusions to Elijah and Moses, Luke accents Jesus’ prophetic status without specifically identifying him with Elijah.”²⁰²

In his inquiry, John the Baptist asks Jesus whether he was “the one who is to come” (Σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος). Interpreters sometimes understand this as a reference to the eschatological Elijah. However, the expression may refer to the Lord or Messenger of Covenant (interpreted in the Gospels as the Messiah). The eschatological Elijah antecedes the Lord or Messenger of Covenant who is also to come (see the repetition of בּוֹיָא in Mal 3:1–2, 23–24). Although Jesus does not give a direct answer, he formulates his response by alluding to the work of the Servant in Isaiah (Isa 35: 5-6; 29:18; 61:1). In the end,

²⁰¹ Miller, “Elijah, John, and Jesus,” 615.

²⁰² Miller, “Elijah, John, and Jesus,” 616.

Jesus provides an unequivocal answer by identifying his miracles as signs of the time. The allusions to Isaiah only confirm that his answer is “yes, I am the one who was to come, the true Servant of Yahweh.”

Another interesting parallel is the ascension of Jesus, for which Luke uses the same word in Luke 9:51 that describes Elijah’s ascension in 2 Kgs 2:11 (*ἀναλαμβάνω*). Nevertheless, Miller observes that “Judaism also knows of ascensions by Enoch and Moses.”²⁰³ Furthermore, the immediate context suggests that Jesus is not Elijah, as Miller also notes: “any implication in the *ἀνάληψις* that Jesus is Elijah is counteracted by Luke 9:54–55, when Jesus vetoes the disciples’ desire to call down fire from heaven. Note that it is James and John, not Jesus, who are compared to Elijah. Here Luke clearly distances Jesus from Elijah, since Jesus repudiates an Elijah role even for his disciples.”²⁰⁴

In the third pronouncement of Jesus about the challenges of discipleship, some have identified another allusion to Elijah. In response to a prospective disciple, who asks to say farewell to his parents before he can follow Jesus, he says: “No one who puts his hand on the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God!” However, even if the phrase alludes to 2 Kgs 19:19–21, the most obvious reference is to Elisha’s experience and not to Elijah’s.

The last parallel pointed out by Miller is found in Jesus’ affirmation: “I have come to cast fire on the earth (Luke 12:49).” The problem with this idea is that the fire motif in the OT is also connected with Yahweh. And it is often present in the context of the day of Yahweh. Besides, even if the phrase alludes to Elijah casting fire on earth, the

²⁰³ Miller, “Elijah, John, and Jesus,” 616.

²⁰⁴ Miller, “Elijah, John, and Jesus,” 616.

context is completely different. Miller observes that “Elijah used fire to punish an idolatrous act (2 Kings 1), but Jesus uses it to bring division to families. Hence this is not an Elijah role. In a sense, it is quite the opposite, for Elijah is a reconciler of families (Mal 4. 5–6, Sir 48.10 – echoed in Luke 1.17).”²⁰⁵

In light of the previous evaluation about the connection between Jesus and Elijah in Luke it seems inappropriate to abandon the “common conjecture in Lukan scholarship that the author of the Third Gospel presents John the Baptist as an eschatological prophet.”²⁰⁶ Burnett Clint remarks that by the use of “numerous prophetic allusions, motifs, and echoes, Luke presents John as the eschatological Elijah (the prophet and genesis of the restoration of Israel).”²⁰⁷

However, even if some of the analogies mentioned above can be considered legitimate correspondences between Elijah and Jesus, this does not automatically entail a direct typological relationship between the two or the idea that Luke sees them in terms of typological fulfilment. Öhler observes that “Luke creates analogies between Jesus and Elijah, but he denies that Jesus is the eschatological Elijah.”²⁰⁸ Miller is right when he affirms that in Luke Jesus is not Elijah but is *like* Elijah. Thus, “Luke’s association of Jesus with Elijah does not amount to a specific or distinctive Elijah-Jesus typology. That which Jesus

²⁰⁵ Miller, “Elijah, John, and Jesus,” 617.

²⁰⁶ Clint Burnett, “Eschatological Prophet of Restoration: Luke’s Theological Portrait of John the Baptist in Luke 3:1–6” *Neotestamentica* 47 (2013): 1. In the same vein, Sanders concludes that “there is in any case no reason to doubt the depiction of John as an eschatological preacher.” E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1985), 92.

²⁰⁷ Clint, Burnett, “Eschatological Prophet of Restoration,” 2.

²⁰⁸ Öhler, “The Expectation of Elijah,” 467–468.

has in common with Elijah, he also shares with Elisha and Moses. (...) the association of Jesus with Elijah serves the important but limited purpose of enhancing Jesus' prophetic status."²⁰⁹

Prefiguration

As discussed in the first chapter, one of the most fundamental differences between traditional and all the forms of neo-typology is the view about the presence and nature of prefiguration in the biblical typology. In his study on the hermeneutical τύπος passages, Davidson concludes that typology as found in these texts "is not only retrospective but consists of divinely designed, predictive prefiguration."²¹⁰

The prophetic element of the OT type has already been inscriptured in the biblical text. For this reason, the original audience could have grasped this predictive import through clues left by the inspired authors. Once most of the clues were found when the readers compared one previous revelation with a more recent one, it is only natural that they would become more evident as the canon grew. Two important points need to be emphasized again here. First, only the Christ event was able to reveal the messianic import of the OT in its full force. Second, in the history of interpretation some types were recognized only retrospectively (epistemological retrospection). But these facts do not preclude the existence of prophetic import in the original context and the possibility of recognition of this import by the original audience.

In the case of Elijah, I have already pointed out some clues left by the narrator that could have led the original audience to realize that Elijah was more than a prophet and his experience pointed beyond himself. There is no need to examine them again at

²⁰⁹ Miller, "Elijah, John, and Jesus," 621.

²¹⁰ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 407.

this point. However, from the NT perspective there is also a recognition of the prophetic nature of the original narrative of Elijah. The NT authors offer two indications that are briefly reviewed below.

The first one is the explicit reference to John the Baptist as the fulfilment of Mal 3:1, 23–24. Indeed, all the Synoptics consider John’s ministry as the fulfilment of Mal 3:1 (Mark 1:2–3; Matt 11:10; Luke 7:27). This is made unambiguously clear through the use of direct quotations of the OT text. In each instance the citation formula contains the perfect of γράφω which is very often found introducing formal quotations in the NT: Mark 1:2 – Καθὼς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ἡσαΐα τῷ προφήτῃ (“Just as it is written in the prophet Isaiah”); Matt 11:10 – οὗτός ἐστιν περὶ οὗ γέγραπται (“It is this about whom it is written”); Luke 7:27 – οὗτός ἐστιν περὶ οὗ γέγραπται (It is this about whom it is written).²¹¹ In all cases, the characters who make the connection between Elijah and John based on Mal 3:1 are reliable. In Mark, the quotation formula comes from the narrator’s own words located in his prologue to the Gospel. In Matthew and Luke, the citation comes from Jesus himself. By contrast, the connection between Jesus and Elijah is usually found in the unreliable opinions of the masses, which are generally the product of conversation and conjecture (Mark 8:27–28; Matt 16:13–14; Luke 9:18–19).

Another interesting aspect regarding the fulfilment of Mal 3:1 in connection with John the Baptist is how the NT authors also identify in him the fulfilment of Isa 40:3

²¹¹ A good overview of the use of OT quotations in the NT is provided by Walter C. Kaiser Jr. See: Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, 1–16. See also: Michael J. Vlach, *The Old in the New: Understanding How the New Testament Authors Quoted the Old Testament* (The Woodlands, TX; Sun Valley, CA: Kress Biblical Resources and The Master’s Seminary Press, 2021).

(Mark 1:2; Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23).²¹² This is just the natural result of the NT authors' exegesis of Mal 3:1, which in the original context combines and reworks Exod 23:20 and Isa 40:3. The key theme that pervades all three passages is the exodus, although both Isaiah and Malachi present the topic from a different perspective. While Exod 23:20 deals with Israel's exodus, Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1 are concerned with the God exodus. Due to Israel's sins, Yahweh had departed from Jerusalem temple, and now they prophesy his return. Indeed, Mal 3:1 is already dealing with a delayed exodus. The promises entailed in Isa 40:1–5 will have to wait longer than Malachi's generation expected. Rikk E. Watt instructively notes that

All this suggests that Malachi sees the delayed second exodus as an ironic recapitulation of the first. Whereas in the first exodus Yahweh sent his messenger to prepare Israel's way by destroying the idolatrous nations (Exod. 23:22–23), now the messenger prepares Yahweh's way, and it is faithless Israel who, having become like those nations, is under threat (Mal. 4:5–6; cf. 2:3). The problem for Malachi is not Yahweh's tardiness, but rather Israel's all-too-familiar disobedience. Echoing Exod. 23:20, he warns that Yahweh will send his messenger, "Elijah," to prepare Isa. 40:3's delayed new-exodus way by purifying Israel's priestly leaders and reconciling his faithless people to "the fathers." But they must obey him lest Yahweh, when he comes, smite the land with a curse (Mal. 4:6).²¹³

²¹² While Isa 40:3 is mentioned in the Synoptics by the narrator through a direct quotation, in the fourth Gospel, John the Baptist speaks in the first person: Ἐγὼ φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Εὐθύνατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου (John 1:23). Compare with Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου in Mark 1:3 Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4–6.

²¹³ Watts, "Mark," 118.

The Synoptics' authors identify the voice crying in the desert,²¹⁴ which in turn is made known by Malachi as the messenger, as John the Baptist.²¹⁵ The clear implication is that in Jesus Israel can experience the new exodus that in light of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 represents Yahweh's return to his people. Another crucial repercussion of the use of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 in reference to the ministry of John the Baptist concerns the serious position of Israel. Rikks additionally observes that

there would be no need for a messenger were it not for Israel's faithless condition. Elijah might have been expected to destroy the Gentiles, but Malachi warns that it is Israel who is at risk. Jesus, whom John heralds, is the one who inaugurates Israel's longed-for salvation (Isa. 40:3), but there is the danger that Yahweh's offered salvation will become a curse (Exod. 23:20/Mal. 3:1).²¹⁶

Unfortunately, as the Gospels narrative makes clear, through the rejection of the proclaimer and the proclaimed, "Yahweh's coming in Jesus results in a curse ([Mark] 11:13–14, 20–21; cf. Mal. 4:5–6) and the temple's destruction. Nevertheless, God's new-exodus plan will not be thwarted. He will build a new people-temple around Jesus

²¹⁴ There is a divergence between the Masoretic tradition and the LXX regarding the first clause of Isa 40:3. While MT has קוֹל יְהוָה יִרְדֵּף פְּנֵי דְרָדָה בְּמִדְבָּר פָּנּוּ דְרָדָה יְהוָה ("a voice crying, 'Prepare in the desert the way of Yahweh'"), the LXX has φωνή βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου ("a voice crying in the desert, 'Prepare the way of Yahweh'"). Although the MT reading seems to be contextually preferable, both readings are possible (especially keeping in mind the lack of word divisions in ancient manuscripts). All the Gospels follow the LXX in this case.

²¹⁵ The illusive way by which the herald is referenced in Isa 40:3 points to the fact that the message is more important than the messenger. See: John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 51. To Joseph Blenkinsopp and John D. W. Watts the apparent disembodied voice represents prophetic proclamation. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, rev. ed., WBC 25 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 609. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 19A (New Haven, CT; London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 2008), 181. See also: Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah III*, HCOT (Kampen, The Netherlands: KOK Pharos, 1997), 1:56–60.

²¹⁶ Watts, "Mark," 119.

([Mark] 12:10–11), including both faithful Jews and later believing Gentiles from all four corners of the earth ([Mark] 11:17b; 13:27; 15:39).”²¹⁷

In addition to the direct quotations indicating the fulfilment of Mal 3:1, Luke also alludes to Mal 3:23–24. In the announcement of John’s birth, the angel defines the nature of his mission in terms of turning the sons of Israel to the Lord (καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπιστρέψει ἐπὶ κύριον τὸν θεὸν αὐτῶν) (Luke 1:16), the hearts of the father to the children (ἐπιστρέψαι καρδίας πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα), and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous (ἀπειθεῖς ἐν φρονήσει δικαίων) (Luke 1:17). Although the verbal parallel is not exact (the LXX has ἀποκαθίστημι instead of ἐπιστρέφω), the angelic statement clearly evokes Mal 3:24, and through his expansions (sons to the Lord and disobedient to the wisdom) may clarify what is included in the concept of fathers and sons in the original context. The angel also alludes to Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 by the use of καὶ αὐτὸς προελεύσεται ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ (and he will go before him). In this context, the heavenly messenger interprets the preparation in terms of readiness for the coming of the Lord, namely, Jesus Christ (ἐτοιμάσαι κυρίῳ λαὸν κατεσκευασμένον) (Luke 1:17).

The second indication of the prophetic character of the Elijah cycle is found in the enigmatic saying of Jesus in Mark 9:12–13. In this passage, the disciples on their way back from the mountain where they had witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration approach Jesus asking why the scribes say that Elijah would come first. Their question is rooted in the fact that the event leaves no room for doubt regarding the true identity of Jesus as the Messiah. Even Jesus, recognizing the implication of the scene, commands them to tell no

²¹⁷ Watts, “Mark,” 120.

one about what they have just seen (at least for now) (Mark 9:9). Thus, their logics prompts them to ask, “if Jesus is the Messiah, where is Elijah?” It is also interesting to note that they did not interpret Elijah’s appearance on the mount as the fulfillment of Mal 3:1, 23–24.

In his answer, Jesus affirms the scribes’ position, saying that indeed Elijah does come first and restore all things (Ἡλίας μὲν ἐλθὼν πρῶτον ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα).²¹⁸ In the next sentence Jesus shows what the scribes were missing and, consequently, the disciples as well. In the Scriptures, the prophecies about the Messiah include images of glory and suffering. Since the images of a suffering Messiah are available in the OT, this should not have caught the disciples or the scribes by surprise. However, as they insistently limit their focus only to the glorious facets of the Messiah, many contemporaries of Jesus remain unable to recognize his true identity. Then, Jesus proceeds to give a practical and fresh example: the new Elijah had already come, but they had not recognized his arrival (ἀλλὰ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι καὶ Ἡλίας ἐλήλυθεν). This happened because they had focused on the glorious aspects of Elijah and rejected what the Scripture had said about his sufferings. In this case, the forerunner is not only pointing to Jesus’ own sufferings but also to the misinterpretation of his true identity and the people’s lack of ability to discern who he really was. According to Jesus, “they made with him whatever they wished, just as it was written about him” (καὶ ἐποίησαν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἤθελον, καθὼς γέγραπται ἐπ’ αὐτόν) (Mark 9:13).

²¹⁸ The idea defended by Joel Marcus that Jesus is not affirming that Elijah restores all things, but questioning finds little support due its lack of grammatical and textual warrant. See: Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 644.

It is in these final words of Jesus to his disciples that the enigmatic nature of his saying resides. What has perplexed interpreters is the fact that there is no direct reference in the OT to the sufferings of the new Elijah. Several attempts have been made throughout the history of interpretation to solve this puzzling issue. A small sample of them are provided here.

Some scholars suggest that the reference should be understood in the context of the “pervasive scriptural motif, namely, the rejection of the person and message of the prophet, which sometimes involves the threat or even the actuality of his death.”²¹⁹ In this approach, Jesus is not referring to any particular passage or portion of the OT. What he has in mind is the general destiny of the righteous in the fallen world. However, the common fate of the righteous in the OT is just too imprecise or broad in nature to fulfill what Jesus consider to be written about John (καθὼς γέγραπται ἐπ’ αὐτόν). The specific nature of Jesus’ language seems to preclude this as the appropriated interpretation.

In his attempt to deal with the issue, Joel Marcus opens himself to this same criticism According to him, Mark is reinterpreting the concept of Elijah as the Messiah’s forerunner in terms of the concept of a suffering Messiah. (...) The implicit syllogism becomes clear: since Jesus is a suffering Messiah, his forerunner must be a suffering Elijah.²²⁰ Addressing this position, I must agree with R. T. Frances when he says that

²¹⁹ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 432. The same idea is also defended by Kent Brower. See: Kent Brower, “Elijah in the Markan Passion Narrative,” *JSNT* 5 (1983): 95.

²²⁰ Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (London, U.K.; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004), 106; Craig A. Evans and Stephen A. Cummins uphold the same idea. Anthony Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Dallas, TX: Word, 2001), 44. Stephen A. Cummins, “Integrated Scripture, Embedded Empire: The Ironic Interplay of ‘King Herod, John and Jesus in Mark 6:1–44,” in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels: The Gospel of Mark*, LNTS 304, ed. Thomas R. Hatina (London, U.K.: T&T Clark: 2006), 44. The convoluted nature of their argument is illustrated by Cummins when he affirms that “John the Baptist suffers at the hands of

Marcus' argument is "complicated and speculative."²²¹ It is difficult to understand why Jesus would apply to John something that had been said about Jesus, especially when Jesus had already mentioned the things written about himself in the previous sentence (cf. verse 12 *καὶ πῶς γέγραπται ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* "and how is it written concerning the son of man...?"). The perfect of *γράφω* appears twice in the passage, once referring to the things written about the son of man and the other referring to the things written about "him" (namely, John the Baptist).

R. J. Bauckham suggests the existence of a tradition about the martyrdom of Elijah in circulation in Jesus' times. According to Bauckham, Jesus is alluding to this tradition when he says that the execution of John the Baptist happens typologically in accordance to what was written (Mark 9:13). Bauckham adds that this tradition forms the basis for the imagery of Rev 11.²²² Even if Bauckham were successful in demonstrating the antiquity of this tradition and its widespread nature (which is not the case), it is very hard to accept the premise that Jesus would put a human originated tradition side by side with the specific reference to the messianic prophecies regarding his suffering in the previous sentence. A similar attempt to cope with Mark 9:13 is offered by Taylor, who seeks to explain the origin of Jesus' saying about the suffering Elijah by appealing to the identification of the Messiah of Aaron with Elijah in the DSS, connecting him to an

an unwitting Herod because he is participating in the paradoxical outworking of God's purposes through a crucified King Jesus." Cummins, "Integrated Scripture, Embedded Empire," 44.

²²¹ Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, UK: Eerdmans; Paternoster, 2002), 359.

²²² Richard J. Bauckham, "The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?," *JBL* 95 (1976): 447–448.

atoning figure that would suffer at the hand of the people who spread lies about him.²²³ Again, it is hardly probable that Jesus would refer to the Qumran tradition as Scripture. The verb *γράφω* is exclusively used in the NT to refer to the OT Scripture, even if a conflation of scriptural passages is questionable. Besides, the connection of Elijah with the priestly Messiah of the Manual of Discipline and the Damascus Document is highly debatable.

Another path to understanding the passage is through the Elijah/John typology. In this sense, “1 Kings 19 is typologically predictive of the maltreatment of Elijah.”²²⁴ Although the narrative of 1 Kings by itself seems not enough to establish this typological link, the whole complex of the Elijah/John typology helps to substantiate this view. In addition to that, the account of John the Baptist’s death in Mark 6:17–29 seems to support this link. According to Austin Farrer, “St. Mark proceeds to give the story of John’s martyrdom in a such a way as to bring out its similarities with the sufferings of Elijah on the one side, and with the passion of Christ on the other side.”²²⁵ He aptly summarizes the parallel between the two stories saying, “the Baptist attacks the association of a new Ahab with a new Jezebel. Herod, like Ahab, ‘goes softly’ under rebuke and pays the prophet some measure of respect (1 Kings XXI, 27–29). Herodias is as implacable as Jezebel and plots his death (1 Kings XIX, 2).”²²⁶ Thus, “His bold confrontations with

²²³ Taylor, *The Immerser*, 286.

²²⁴ Morna Dorothy Hooker, *The Gospel according St Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 221.

²²⁵ Austin Farrer, *A Study on St Mark* (London, U.K.: Dacre, 1951), 92.

²²⁶ Farrer, *A Study on St Mark*, 92.

Ahab and Jezebel prefigure John's open challenge to Antipas and Herodias; the difference is that Herodias will succeed where Jezebel failed."²²⁷

The evidence regarding the use of Mal 3 in connection with John's ministry and Jesus' remarks regarding the prophetic import of Elijah narrative, using fulfilment language, point to the *devoir-être* nature of the prophet's cycle in 1 and 2 Kings. The correspondences between Elijah and John then are not just historical coincidences, but they are destined and anticipated to happen in order that what was written about Elijah may be fulfilled.

Escalation

In his definition, Davidson also reaffirms the traditional concept that the nature of the historical correspondence involves "an absolute *Steigerung*."²²⁸ The concept of escalation is well illustrated by the metaphor of "shadow" used by the author of Hebrews to explain the relationship between the Levitical system of offerings and sacrifices, including festivals and rituals, which pointed to the Jesus event and its actual accomplishment in Christ. Such escalation not only involves epistemological aspects of the original prediction but also employs an elevation and intensification from type to antitype: a *crescendo* from local to universal, from provisory to definitive, from temporal to eternal, and from the human to the divine sphere.

²²⁷ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 359. France concludes that "The scriptural basis claimed in v. 13 is found not in any explicit prediction, but by a typological reading of the Elijah stories of 1 Ki. 17–19, 21 as a model for what was to happen on his return. There we see Elijah as the typical martyr figure, driven by his faithfulness to God's commission into potentially fatal conflict with the royal house (1 Ki. 19:2–3, 10, 14)." France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 359.

²²⁸ Davison, *Typology in Scripture*, 417.

Escalation is also present in Elijah typology. While Elijah intervened in a critical moment of Israel's history in order to promote a reform, John the Baptist appears in the most critical moment of history, also called by Paul as "the fulness of time" (Gal 4:4). Indeed, his ministry takes place at the decisive moment of history. Jesus recognizes the importance of John's ministry saying, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matt 11:13, Luke 16:16). Thus, he is the point of transition of the old aeon to the new one, the era of the kingdom of God. While Elijah prepares the way for Elisha's ministry, John the Baptist prepares the way for Yahweh himself, in the person of the Messiah.

Such an escalation is already indicated in the prophecy of Malachi, where the messenger identified in 3:23–24 as a new Elijah is charged with the mission to prepare the way for Yahweh in the day of his coming. The day of Yahweh is a well-known theme in the OT eschatology, and there is no need or space to expound on it here.²²⁹ In this day, Yahweh intervenes in a definitive and decisive way in favor of the true Israel, bringing judgment against the wicked and vindicating the righteous (Joel 1, 2; Amos 5:18–20; Isa 13; 34; Zeph 3; Zech 12:1–13:6). In the day of Yahweh, he would establish his eternal kingdom through the Messiah who would rule all the earth as a new Davidic king (Isa

²²⁹ See: J. D. Barker, "Day of the Lord," *DOTP* 132–143; Craig A. Blaising, "The Day of the Lord: Theme and Pattern in Biblical Theology," *BS* 169 673 (2012): 3–19; Shimon Bakon, "The Day of the Lord," *JBQ* 38 (2010): 149–156; Paul R. House, "Endings as New Beginnings: Returning to the Lord, the Day of the Lord, and Renewal in the Book of the Twelve," *SBLSP* 41 (2002): 258–284; R. Dennis Cole, "The Day of the Lord Is Coming: Mal 2:17-3:5, 4:1-6," *TE* 36 (1987): 126–137; Yair Hoffmann, "The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature," *ZAW* 93 (1981): 37–50; J. D. Nogalski, "The Day(s) of YHWH in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. P. L. Redditt and A. Scharf, BZAW 325 (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2003), 192–213; J. Barton, "The Day of Yahweh in the Minor Prophets," in *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays: Studies in Honour of Kevin J. Cathcart*, ed. C. McCarthy and J. F. Healey, JSOTSup 375 (London, U.K.: T & T Clark, 2004), 68–79; J. A. Everson, "The Days of Yahweh," *JBL* 93 (1974): 329–337.

11:1–10; Ezek 37:24–28). In the history of interpretation, the connection between the day of Yahweh and the manifestation of the Messiah is found and established already in the Jewish thought during the intertestamental period.²³⁰

Such a connection is confirmed by the NT authors. In the Gospel Christ comes to inaugurate the kingdom of God.²³¹ In fact, “eschatology lies at the heart of Jesus’ message and indeed at the heart of all the NT.”²³² In his message, “Jesus did not relegate God’s reign to the future. He explicitly announced its presence (Lk 11:20) and indirectly indicated its arrival by speaking of the defeat of Satan (Lk 10:18; 11:22), a secret presence (Mk 4:11–12, 26–29), new wine (Mk 2:22), and a joy opposed to fasting (Mk 2:18–20).”²³³

George Ladd is one of the most influential scholars in the field to emphasize the inaugurated nature of NT eschatology. He remarks that “John had announced an imminent visitation of God which would mean the fulfillment of the eschatological hope and the coming of the messianic age. Jesus proclaimed that this promise was actually being fulfilled.”²³⁴ It is clear that “in the New Testament, eschatology applies to

²³⁰ Pss. Sol 17:22; The Rule of Community (1 Qsa 1:1f; 2:11ff); War Scroll (1 QM). See: Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark*, 75.

²³¹ See: J. Bergman Kline, “The Day of the Lord in the Death and Resurrection of Christ,” *JETS* 48 (2005): 757–770; Mark D. Vander Hart, “The Transition of the Old Testament Day of the Lord into the New Testament Day of the Lord Jesus Christ,” *MJT* 9 (1993): 3–25.

²³² Dale C. Jr. Allison, “Eschatology,” *DJG* 206.

²³³ Allison, “Eschatology,” 207.

²³⁴ George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 111. Ladd rejects the consistent eschatology (Albert Schweitzer, Weiss), the realized eschatology (Dodd, Jeremias, and Robinson) and the noneschatological interpretation. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 3–44.

everything tied to Jesus' first and second comings. He is seen as the fulfilment of promises God made in the Old Testament."²³⁵

In this way, as the new Elijah, John the Baptist appears just before the day of Yahweh in its inaugural phase to proclaim it in connection with the coming of God's agent who would trigger the events leading to the beginning of the last stage of human history. In this sense, John's work goes beyond Elijah's task in his original context. There is indeed an absolute *Steigerung* in the relationship between the OT type and its NT antitype.

Excursus: Is Elisha a Type of Christ?

The escalation found in the historical correspondence between Elijah and John the Baptist may lead the reader to question about the relationship between Elisha and Jesus. The logic may be framed as follows: (i) Elijah prepared the way for Elisha as did John for Jesus; (ii) if Elijah is a type of John the Baptist; (iii) then Elisha is a type of Jesus. Although the Elijah–John typology seemingly could allow for such a hypothetical syllogism, the issue at stake is whether the reader can find textual warrant to underpin this deductive argument in the OT and NT or not.

Some authors have pointed to several parallels between Elisha and Jesus, which include even their names: “My God is Salvation” (Elisha) and “Yahweh is salvation” (Jesus) respectively. In a broader sense, Wolfgang Roth and Thomas L. Brodie maintain

²³⁵ Darrel L. Bock, “The Doctrine of the Future in the Synoptic Gospels” in *Eschatology: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Approaches*, ed. D. Jeffrey Bingham and Glenn R. Kreider (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academics, 2016), 197. See also: Bruce Waltke, “The Kingdom of God in Biblical Theology,” in *Looking into the Future: Evangelicals Studies in Eschatology*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 15–27; Darrel L. Bock, “The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology,” in *Looking into the Future: Evangelicals Studies in Eschatology*, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 28–60; Lewis A. Muirhead, “Eschatology,” *DCG* 528–536; R. S. Schellenberg, “Eschatology,” *DJG*² 232–239.

that the Gospels, especially Mark, follow the conceptual-narrative paradigm of the Elijah-Elisha cycle.²³⁶ In their research they go beyond particular parallels to argue that “the Elijah-Elisha narrative was a literary model for the Gospels.”²³⁷ The major problem with both authors’ approach is that their general model is built upon many forced parallels based on incidental or trivial similarities. For instance, Roth finds echoes of the twelve stones chosen by Elijah in the appointment of the twelve apostles and compares the kissing of Baal by the idolatrous Israelites with the kissing of Judas betraying Jesus.²³⁸

Another interesting group of parallels between Elisha and Jesus is indicated by Raymond Brown in his article entitled “Jesus and Elijah.” Among these parallels are: the place where their ministry started (2 Kgs 2:14–15 cf. Mark 1:9; Matt 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–23); the continuation between the ministries of Elijah and Elisha and those of John and Jesus (John 3:22–26); Elijah’s disciples follow Elisha as John’s disciples follow Jesus (John 1:35–39); the general nature of the ministry of Jesus, who mingled with the people and helped those in need (note the contrast between Elijah and Elisha—1 Kgs 17:5; 2 Kgs 1:9 cf. 2 Kgs 4:38; 6:1–2—and between John and Jesus—Matt 11:16–19) (Luke 15:2); the categories of miracles accomplished by Elisha and Jesus.²³⁹

²³⁶ Wolfgang Roth, *Hebrew Gospel: Cracking the Code* (Oak Park, IL: Meyer Stone, 1988).

²³⁷ Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge*, xi. Using the Roman-Hellenistic imitation as a paradigm to interpret the data, Brodie concludes that Luke-Acts is “a systematic rewriting and updating of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative in 1 and 2 Kings” as the title of his dissertation suggests. See: Thomas L. Brodie, “Luke the Literary Interpreter: Luke-Acts as a Systematic Rewriting and Updating of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative in 1 and 2 Kings” (Phd diss., Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1987).

²³⁸ Roth, *Hebrew Gospel*, 92, 110.

²³⁹ Raymond Brown, “Jesus and Elisha,” *Perspective* 12 (1971): 88–90.

Furthermore, Brown shows similarities between several miracles performed by Elisha and Jesus: the healing of Naaman and the ten lepers in Luke 17:11 (cf. 2 Kgs 5); the multiplication of bread (2 Kgs 4:42–44; John 6:1–15); and the resurrection of the son of a widow (2 Kgs 4:18–37; Lk 7:11–17). The author also aptly dismisses other incidental and trivial parallels.²⁴⁰ Although Jesus' miracles were greater (*Steigerung*), this is very significant because nobody but Elisha performed this cluster of kinds of miracles in the OT.

In the end, the quality and amount of these parallels cannot be easily dismissed. However, legitimate historical correspondences are but one of the criteria used to identify typological relationships. Further research is required to determine if these correspondences should be understood in typological terms. For instance, does the original narrative of Elisha or later Scripture contain typological indicators? Besides the clear parallels, does the NT provide textual warrant for an Elisha-Jesus typology? Naturally, these issues are beyond the scope of this research. However, establishing the Elijah-John typology may provide a hint in this direction.

Elijah Typology in Salvation History: The Threefold Eschatological Fulfillment

The last aspect to address within this study is how the Elijah typology plays out in salvation history through its threefold eschatological fulfillment.²⁴¹ Based on the familiar

²⁴⁰ Brown, "Jesus and Elisha," 91–92. One example of a forced parallel regarding Elisha and Jesus' miracles is the comparison between the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–34; Matt 8:14–15; Luke 4:38–41) and the resurrection of the Shunamite's son (2 Kgs 4:18–37). See: Walter T. Wilson, "The Uninvited Healer: Houses, Healing and Prophets in Matt 8:1–22," *JSNT* 35 (2013): 53–72.

²⁴¹ For more on the concepts of salvation history and eschatology as they are used here, see Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London, U.K.: SCM, 1967), 74–83.

tension between “already and not-yet”²⁴² found in NT eschatology, Davidson has convincingly shown that “the salvation-historical perspective of the NT involves three aspects in the eschatological fulfillment of the OT expectations,”²⁴³ which he defines as (i) “inaugurated” eschatology at the first advent of Christ; (ii) “appropriated” eschatology in the church (corporeally, individually, and sacramentally); and (iii) “consummated” eschatology in conjunction with the Parousia.²⁴⁴ Since not every type in Scripture will find its fulfillment in all three stages, it is appropriate to inquire into the Elijah typology to see whether it will or not. This endeavor can shed light not only on the past aspect of the Elijah typology, but also on its present and future facets, providing an opportunity for theological reflection on its relevance for the modern reader of Scripture.

Inaugurated Eschatology

In its inaugurated phase, all the OT eschatological expectations, including genuine types, meet their fulfillment in the earthly life of Christ, as the embodiment of Israel. In his reading of the NT, Ladd aptly concludes that “all the epochs which make up salvation history are oriented towards the happening of the decisive event, the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The *whole* salvation history present in God’s plan is latently contained in this one event. All the preceding history of salvation tends towards the

²⁴² Oscar Cullmann observes that “the new element in the New Testament is not eschatology, but what I call the tension between the decisive ‘already fulfilled’ and ‘not yet completed,’ between present and future.” Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, 172. See also: George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, 3rd ed. (London, U.K.: SCM, 1962).

²⁴³ Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*, 396. See also Richard M. Davidson, “Israel and the Church: Continuity and Discontinuity—I,” in *Message Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), 2: 399; Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 40.

²⁴⁴ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic of Biblical Typology,” 40.

occurrence of this period.”²⁴⁵ In Christ, the last days have begun, and the day of Yahweh is no longer a future prospect but a present reality (Act 2:14–21).

In terms of Elijah typology, much has already been said about its fulfillment during this inaugurated stage. For this reason, only a few summarizing remarks are in order. Before his birth, God chooses John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah to announce the arrival of God’s kingdom. The angel defines his mission with clear Elijianic overtones, indicating that he is the new Elijah, the promised messenger of Mal 3:1, 23–24. In terms of theological significance, John the Baptist functions as a messianic identifier²⁴⁶ in the sense that accepting John as the new Elijah is embracing “a whole package of eschatological fulfillment in Jesus, for which most of those listening to Jesus were not ready.”²⁴⁷

In the spirit of Elijah, John fulfills his mission through his bold ministry in three major ways. First, he preaches repentance and urges the people to leave their sins (Luke 3:7–14). As an external mark of this internal purification and new experience with God, he calls them to participate in a baptismal ritual. Second, he denounces the religious formalism of his age (Luke 3:7–9) and openly addresses and criticizes the sinful behavior of those in powerful position (Mark 6:17–19). It is clear that by combining accusation and the call for repentance, John was promoting spiritual reformation that aims to prepare Judah for the day of Yahweh which was about to break in an unexpected way. It was time to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their

²⁴⁵ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 166.

²⁴⁶ Hoffeditz, “A prophet, a Kingdom, and a Messiah,” 93–104.

²⁴⁷ K. Litwak, “Elijah and Elisha,” *DJGSE* 229.

fathers. Lastly, John fulfills his mission by preparing the way to the Messiah. This is the emphasis of the fourth evangelist who presents John as a witness pointing to the one of whom he was not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal (John 1:26–27).

When Jesus appears, he begins “the time of fulfillment predicted by John.”²⁴⁸ However, prefiguring the destiny of the Messiah, John is rejected as the new Elijah by most of the religious leaders and scholars of his time as well as by the crowd as a whole. Although being recognized as a just and holy man, he is taken to prison and subsequently executed by means of a scheme. The rejection of the new Elijah does not mean anything else than disaster for Judah. However, God’s plan of salvation cannot be frustrated. As his plan unfolds, still another new Elijah is required.

In Jesus’ most explicit reference to the role of John as the new Elijah, there is an apparent tension between past, present, and future. In Mark 9:11–12, Jesus not only agrees with the scribal notion of a returning Elijah but also expands it.²⁴⁹ In this expansion, Jesus says that in fact “Elijah coming (aorist participle active of ἔρχομαι) first restores (present indicative active of ἀποκαθίστημι) all things.”²⁵⁰ However, Elijah has

²⁴⁸ Clinton Wahlen, “Israel in Prophecy from a New Testament Perspective,” in *Eschatology from an Adventist Perspective: Proceedings of the Fourth International Bible Conference, Rome June 11–20, 2018*, ed. Elias Brasil de Souza et al (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2021), 185. Wahlen points to five ways Jesus, through his preaching and teaching, fulfills John’s predictions about him.

²⁴⁹ France notes that the particle μέν in the first clause alerts us that Jesus will not simply repeat what the scribes are saying but will add his own distinctive angle to the teaching about Elijah. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 358.

²⁵⁰ The use of the participle here seems to be temporal. If the action of ἔλθων is antecedent, the present ἀποκαθίστάνει is most likely futuristic. Another possibility is to understand the participle as an attendant circumstance type. Although the present tense of ἀποκαθίστάνει does not prevent this, it makes less likely (most attendant circumstance participles are followed by an aorist as the main verb). See: Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 535–537; 640–646. In parallel passage in Matthews 17:11–13, the author uses the future of ἀποκαθίστημι instead of the present.

already come (perfect indicative active of ἔρχομαι) (past). In Matthew this tension is even more visible. The narrator turns the participial phrase Ἡλίας μὲν ἐλθὼν πρῶτον ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα found in Mark into two coordinate clauses (Ἡλίας μὲν ἔρχεται καὶ ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα) (Matt 17:11). Thus, in Matthew Jesus says that Elijah indeed comes (present indicative middle/passive of ἔρχομαι) (present) but he changes the tense of ἀποκαθίστημι to affirm that Elijah “will restore” (ἀποκαταστήσει) (future indicative active) all things. The use of language here suggests that “Elijah is a type which appears now in John and will reappear again before the day of the Lord?”²⁵¹ In this sense, John the Baptist’s ministry does not exhaust the fulfilment of Malachi’s prophecy.²⁵² If this understanding is correct, a two-phased fulfilment of Elijah typology should be expected.

Appropriated Eschatology

Davidson defines appropriated eschatology as “the derived spiritual aspects of fulfillment in Christian Israel (the church) as the Body of Christ in the time between Christ’s first and Second Coming.”²⁵³ The rejection of Jesus as the Messiah opens the way to the church, which will keep his work going during the time between the inaugurated and consummated phases of the eschatological fulfilment (Matt 28:18–20). Thus, the second coming of Jesus becomes the blessed hope of the early church (Titus 2:13) and one of the key themes in the apostolic preaching (1 Cor 15:51–57; 1 Thess 4:16–17; 2 Peter 3:8–13). Now, the church becomes the messenger preparing the way for

²⁵¹ Bock, “Elijah and Elisha,” *DJG* 205.

²⁵² Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary, TNTC 2* (London, U.K.: InterVarsity, 2017), 212.

²⁵³ Davidson, “Israel and the Church,” 399.

Jesus' second coming when all biblical prophecies, including Mal 3:1–5, 23–24, will find their consummated fulfillment.

In addition to this unique aspect of the early church message, there are other signs that the work of the new Elijah continues through the mission of the disciples immediately before and after Jesus' ascension. Otten identifies some of them in Luke: as Eliajanic messengers, the disciples prepare the way for Jesus' momentous entry into Jerusalem. He also suggests several points of contact between Philip's mission to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26–40) and Peter's healing of Aeneas and Tabitha (Acts 9:32–43) and the Elijah-Elisha cycle. Another parallel is found in Peter's visit to Cornelius (Acts 10) where Otten finds allusions to the Naaman account (2 Kgs 5).²⁵⁴ Finally, Otten points out that "in raising Eutychus, Paul emulates Elijah in bringing the word of the Lord to Gentiles who will listen, rather than to the 'many in Israel' (cf. Luke 4:25–27)."²⁵⁵

Eduardo La Serna also finds Elijah-like marks in Paul's ministry. He explores three examples: the relationship of Paul with the day of Yahweh, his experience of being caught up to heaven, and the tunneling of Paul's zeal after his Damascus encounter with Jesus when he stayed in Arabia, which the author connects with Mt. Sinai (Gal 4:25).²⁵⁶ Serna concludes that even if one cannot prove that Paul saw himself as a new Elijah, "there are enough elements to consider that it is highly probable that he saw himself immersed in this tradition."²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 161–162.

²⁵⁵ Otten, *I Alone Am Left*, 162.

²⁵⁶ Eduardo La Serna, "¿Pablo, el Precursor? Pablo y las Tradiciones sobre Elías," *RV* 75 (2013): 173–179.

²⁵⁷ La Serna, "¿Pablo, el Precursor?," 179.

Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that the church continues the mission of the messenger by preaching and acting in the spirit of Elijah as it prepares a people for the second coming of Jesus. As a result, Elijah provides a paradigm for the church.

This view is confirmed by the presence of the Elijah motif in the book of Revelation, where an Elijah-like work is carried out during the time of the church (the ecclesiological phase of typology). In Rev 11:1–13, the prophetic ministry of the two witnesses bears close resemblance to that of Moses and Elijah representing the Torah and the Prophets (Rev 11:3–6). According to Ranko Stefanovic, among the more persuasive interpretations of the two witnesses are the ones that identify them as the Bible or as the people of God. In the first interpretation, according to which the two witnesses are regarded as the Scriptures, Jesus himself notes that the OT does “bear witness” of him (John 5:39; cf. Luke 24:25–27, 44). In the same fashion, “the New Testament bears witness to the life, work, and words of Jesus and his sacrificial death and his post-resurrection ministry on behalf of his people. Furthermore, the message of God is presented in Revelation as the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:2, 9).”²⁵⁸ In the second case, the two witnesses represent God’s people whose paramount commission is to witness about Jesus. This is explicitly declared by Jesus as the mission of his disciples (cf. John 15:27; Luke 24:48 cf. Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32), who were supposed to preach the gospel before the end “for a witness to all the nations” (Matt

²⁵⁸ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 352.

24:14). As they carry out this mission, God's people suffer persecution in the time of the end (2:13; 6:9; 12:11; 17:6; 20:4).²⁵⁹ Stefanovic aptly observes that

These two identifications should not be seen as necessarily exclusive. It is through the preaching and teaching of the church that the Word of God is manifested. The two witnesses should thus be understood as representing God's people in their kingly and priestly function (cf. Rev. 1:6; 5:10), whose primary task is like that of Joshua, Zerubbabel, Moses, and Elijah—to bear prophetic witness to the apostate world.²⁶⁰

It does not seem coincidental that the two witnesses dressed in sackcloth prophesy for 1260 days (3 ½ years). During this period, the holy city would be trampled (42 month = 1260 day = 3 ½ years) (Rev 11:3). The witnesses have authority to shut the sky so that it does not rain during the time of their prophesying (Rev 11:6). It seems clear that this is alluding to the 3 ½ years of drought prophesied by Elijah (James 5:17). Another echo of Elijah's narrative is found in the witnesses' ability to consume their enemies with fire coming out of their mouths (Rev 11:5 cf. 2 Kgs 1:9–14). Jon Paulien has convincingly argued that as part of an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, this prophecy is sandwiched in between descriptions of John's day and the last days, that is, during the appropriated phase of eschatology/typology.²⁶¹ The witnesses (God's people) would carry out the command of Rev 10:11, prophesying on John's behalf during a period of fierce

²⁵⁹ Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 352–353. See also: Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh, U.K.: T&T Clark, 1993), 273–283.

²⁶⁰ Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 353.

²⁶¹ Jon Paulien, "The 1260 Days in the Book of Revelation," in *Eschatology from an Adventist Perspective. Proceedings of the Fourth International Bible Conference Rome, June 11-20, 2018* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2021), 302–303. In his essay, Paulien also shows that in Revelation all the seven references to the "1260 days" refers to the same period of time between John's day and the last days. The concept appears in three different forms: "1260 days" (11:3; 12:6), "42 months" (11:2; 13:5); and "times, time, and half a time" (Rev 12:7, 14). This period is referred to in Dan 7:25 to designate the time of dominance of the little horn.

persecution (cf. 12:13).²⁶² The use of the Elijah motif here points to the fact that the church would accomplish its mission in the spirit of Elijah and in the end would be victorious, even in the midst of trials.²⁶³

Therefore, there seems to be enough biblical evidence for a fulfilment of the Elijah typology in the appropriated stage of its fulfilment. As a paradigm for God's messengers in the time of the church, Elijah points to the spiritual boldness required from them and the seriousness of their mission. He also provides a framework for their message. Gane appropriately remarks that "the eschatological messages of Mal 4 and Rev 14 concerning relational, ethical restoration to harmony with God and his principles are basically the same."²⁶⁴ Finally, Elijah typology also should provide encouragement for them. Although persecution is to be expected, God will not abandon them; no matter how depressed or discouraged his people can be, they can always hear the "still voice of silence" calling them.

²⁶² Traditionally, this period has been interpreted by Adventist scholars as the time of papal supremacy stretching from around 538 AD to 1798. A good summary is presented by Paulien. See: Paulien, "The 1260 Days," 296–298. See also: C. Mervyn Maxwell, "The Mark of the Beast," in *Symposium on Revelation: Exegetical and General Studies, Book 2*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, vol. 7 of *Daniel and Revelation Committee Series* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 72–77.

²⁶³ Tom Shepherd argues that there are "rich symbolic linkages that the two witnesses have in the rest of Revelation." Tom Shepherd, "The Little Book and the Two Witnesses," Class notes from GSEM 511 – Daniel and Revelation. Keneth Strand observes that "the book of Revelation places a pervasive emphasis on 'two witnesses' that constitute a unity in their divine activity—namely, 'the word of God' and 'the testimony of Jesus Christ.'" Keneth Albert Strand, "The Two Witnesses of Rev 11:3–12," *AUSS* 19 (1981): 134. Thus, "the Moses-Elijah Motif connects the Last Day people of God who keep God's commandments and have the testimony of Jesus (12:17, 19:10) with the long line of historical demonstrations of faithfulness to God through the centuries." Shepherd, "The Little Book and the Two Witnesses," classroom notes. By tracing Moses-Elijah motif throughout Revelation along the lines of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev 1:1-3, 9; 6:9-11; 11:3-13; 12:10-11, 17; 19:9-10; 20:4), Tom Shepherd identifies four patterns: a consistent pattern of connection with God and Jesus Christ; a consistent pattern of faithfully living out the Gospel, unafraid in a hostile world; a dual pattern of reaction: (i) from the world and Satan – persecution, even to the point of death and (ii) from God – blessing, protection, reward; and a pattern of definition or association that suggests that: (i) Moses represents the Word of God and the Commandments of God and (ii) Elijah represents the Testimony and the Prophetic Spirit.

²⁶⁴ Roy Gane, "The Gospel according to Moses and Elijah," 14.

Consummated Eschatology

Finally, according to Davidson “the apocalyptic consummation and final ushering in of the age to come at the second advent of Christ and beyond” represents the consummated stage of biblical eschatology.²⁶⁵ The natural consequence that follows the previous analysis of the inaugurated and appropriated phases of the Elijah typology is that an eschatological Elijah should be expected in the time of the end. Nir recognizes this implication, saying that “John as Elijah will also precede the second coming of Jesus. The eschatological John is on the threshold of the ‘kingdom of heaven,’ the prophet Elijah who is to come”²⁶⁶ In this sense, “Elias’ vocation and mission is unique among all the prophets and saints. It begins in the Old Testament, is vividly recalled at the beginning of the New Testament and will see its fulfillment at the end of time.”²⁶⁷

The evidence for the consummated fulfillment of Elijah typology again comes from the book of Revelation. First, there is a connection between the “earth beast” power in Rev 13 who is able to make fire come down from heaven before the people (v. 13) and Elijah on Mt. Carmel, who also by God’s power makes fire come down before the people (1 Kgs 18:38–39). Thus, the beast functions as a counterfeit Elijah message/experience just before the end. Like in 1 Kgs 18, the issue here is the same: a battle around who is the true God, in other words, who deserves worship. In the time of the end, God’s people

²⁶⁵ Davidson, “The Eschatological Hermeneutic,” 40.

²⁶⁶ Nir, *The First Christian Believer*, 95.

²⁶⁷ Pascal P. Parente, “Ascetical and Mystical Traits of Moses Elias,” *CBQ* 5 (1943): 190.

will have to trust only in the word of God, despite their senses being agitated by the signs and wonders accomplished by the confederation of evil.²⁶⁸

These two conflicting kinds of worship that appear in the final part of the redemptive history recall the time during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel that led to the dramatic confrontation on Mt. Carmel. According to Paulien and LaRondelle, “the messages of the ‘three angels’ of 14:6–12 function as the end-time Elijah who calls for a return to the faith of Israel. The purpose of the appeal is to create a remnant.”²⁶⁹ The last Elijah succeeds in preparing this remnant that goes beyond the 7,000 faithful Israelites during Elijah’s day to reach the symbolic number of 144,000 described as the true Israelites who overcome the powers of evil and stand on Mount Zion (14:1). As the contents of the three messages attest, the last Elijah will work to restore true worship (14:7). His message culminates in Rev 14:9–10 with “God’s final appeal to choose whom we will serve, to whom our personal loyalty belongs. The voice of Elijah intends to restore true worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24), and in this way to prepare a people to meet their God and Savior with an informed conscience.”²⁷⁰ Like the first Elijah, “the last Elijah is not an innovator but a restorer.”²⁷¹ His mission is to restore the everlasting gospel (Rev 14:6).

Finally, Elijah typology appears again in Rev 16 where the nations are gathered to get ready for the last battle between God and his enemies, “the battle of the great day of

²⁶⁸ Stefanovic has shown the connection between the three frogs of the 6th plague and the beasts of Rev 13. Stefanovic, *Revelation*, 499–500.

²⁶⁹ LaRondelle and Paulien, *The Bible Jesus Interpreted*, 148.

²⁷⁰ LaRondelle and Paulien, *The Bible Jesus Interpreted*, 153.

²⁷¹ LaRondelle and Paulien, *The Bible Jesus Interpreted*, 150.

God Almighty” (Rev 16:14). This eschatological gathering, which is announced in the context of the sixth plague, happens in “the place called in Hebrew Armageddon” (Rev 16:16). The term “Armageddon” (Ἀρμαγεδών) has been a matter of intense debate, and interpretations favor the reference to the city known in the OT as Megiddo or a problem of transmission caused by scribal corruption.²⁷² The exegesis of the passage favors the first option.²⁷³ If this is the case, the expression “Armageddon” means “mount of Megiddo.” Megiddo is not a mount (it is not a valley either), but it refers to a city. According to William Shea, “Megiddo was located at the foot of the northern slope of what modern geographers of Palestine commonly have called the Carmel range of mountains.”²⁷⁴ Thus, he argues that “mountain of Megiddo” is a reference to Mount Carmel.²⁷⁵ Thus, John is merging a reference to the Megiddo area, an ancient battleground (Judg 5:19–21; 2 Kgs 9:27; 23:29–30) with the spiritual battle on Mt. Carmel when Elijah faced the false

²⁷² Andrew J. Coutras, “Armageddon,” *LEB Logos Edition*. See more on: Hans K. LaRondelle, “The Etymology of Har-Magedon (Rev 16:16),” *AUSS* 27 (1989): 69–73; Meredith G. Kline, “Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium,” *JETS* 39 (1996): 207–222; John Day, “The Origin of Armageddon: Revelation 16:16 as an Interpretation of Zechariah 12:11,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, eds. Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce, and David E. Orton (Leiden, The Netherlands; New York, NY: Brill, 1994), 315–326; Eric H. Cline, *The Battles of Armageddon: Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley from the Bronze Age to the Nuclear Age*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000; Eric H. Cline, “Why Megiddo?” *BR* 16 (2000): 22–31.

²⁷³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, U.K.: Eerdmans; Paternoster, 1999), 838; Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), Rev 16:16; David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC 52B (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 898. Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 38A (New Haven, CT; London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 2014), 660. “The main support for the Megiddo hypothesis comes from the term’s similarity in form to the most common spelling of Megiddo in the Septuagint (Josh 17:11; Judg 5:19; 2 Kgs 23:29–30; 1 Chr 7:29), which is Μαγεδδω (*Mageddō*). The most notable differences are the duplication of the *delta* (δ, *d*) and the lack of a terminal *nu* (ν, *n*).” Coutras, “Armageddon,” Logos edition.

²⁷⁴ William H. Shea, “The Location and Significance of Armageddon in Rev 16:16,” *AUSS* 17 (1980): 160.

²⁷⁵ Attempts to find a place named Armageddon have been made since the earlier church. See: Jon Paulien, Armageddon (Place) *ABD* 1:394–395.

prophets of Baal. Shea has pointed to some parallels between this battle in Revelation and that found in 1 Kgs 18: (i) use of the power of civil state to persecute; (ii) the image of an impure woman to represent an apostate religion; (iii) the role of false prophets; and (iv) conflict settled by fire and not actual battle.²⁷⁶ Thus, the connection between 1 Kgs 18 and Rev 16:16 is not only geographical but also historical. The battle of Armageddon should not be understood literally, but in spiritual terms.²⁷⁷ What is at stake is the “religious-moral nature and the cosmic dimension of this universal war.”²⁷⁸ This is supported by the context of Revelation 16. Paulien suggests that “the battle of Armageddon serves as the climax of the spiritual war over worship outlined in chapters 13 and 14.”²⁷⁹ Thus, the final battle in the cosmic conflict will represent the antitype of what happened with Elijah on Mt. Carmel. Evidently, the fact that this is a spiritual battle does not mean that there are no physical and literal ramifications. For in the end, what is at stake in this spiritual battle is the eternal destiny of each individual.

In the final outcome of this battle, another echo of Elijah is found. In 1 Thess 4:13–17, Paul refers to the second coming of Christ. In verse 17, he affirms that the saints alive at the occasion will meet the Lord in the air. They “will be snatched away at the same time together with them in the clouds for a meeting with the Lord in the air, and

²⁷⁶ Shea, “Armageddon,” 161–162.

²⁷⁷ According to Beale, “that ‘Armageddon’ is not literal is evident from the observation that OT prophecies of the final battle of history place it, without exception, in the immediate vicinity of the city of Jerusalem and Mount Zion or its surrounding mountains.” Beale, *Revelation*, 838. See also: Jon Paulien, *What the Bible says about the End-Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 131–138.

²⁷⁸ Hans K. LaRondelle, “The Biblical Concept of Armageddon,” *JETS* 28 (1985): 22.

²⁷⁹ Jon Paulien, *Armageddon at the Door* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008), 60.

thus we will be together with the Lord always” (1 Thess 4:17 LEB).²⁸⁰ In this way the first Elijah’s ascension foreshadows the experience of the last Elijah in its consummated phase.

Summary

In the present chapter, I sought to deal with the central issue of this research. Based upon the initial hypothesis that the NT understood the Elijah-John relationship in typological terms, I examined the original narrative of Elijah to see if any typological indicators could be found therein. Then, from the findings of the previous chapter where I engaged in a text-empirical analysis of the whole cycle of Elijah, I identified some special features that point to the predictive nature of his narrative. The prophetic nature of the Elijah narrative is confirmed by the use of his tradition in Malachi, whose reliance thereon expands and clarifies the eschatological role of this Yahwistic champion.

Once these typological indicators were identified, I examined the trajectory of understanding Elijah’s significance from his original cycle in Kings to its fully developed NT interpretation. The analysis of the NT data provided about John the Baptist confirms that its authors understood him (and not Jesus) to be a fulfilment of Malachi in its typological structure. Thus, the NT use of the OT is not based upon imaginative or spiritual exegesis that in any way contradicts the original meaning or intent of the Scriptures.

In the last part of the chapter, I explored in greater detail the typological fulfilment of Elijah in salvation history. At this point, it is clear that John the Baptist did

²⁸⁰ W. Hall Harris III et al., eds., *The Lexham English Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 1 Th 4:17.

not exhaust the eschatological significance of Elijah. As is the case with several other eschatological expectations in OT, the Elijah typology finds its fulfilment in three phases: inauguration (past), appropriation (past and present), and consummation (future).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Findings

The historical-critical evaluation that typology was doomed to disappear due to the predominance of the rationalistic worldview proved to be wrong. In fact, typology is alive and well. This does not mean that any kind of consensus around the topic has been reached. In fact, scholarship is more divided on the topic than ever. Since the last two major historical surveys on typological studies were carried out by Davidson and Ninow, there have been new developments in the field. My intention in the first part of this research was to bring their work up to date by exploring these recent developments beginning at year 2000.

The survey of what has been published on typology in the last twenty years showed that the field remains divided between the Traditional and Post-Critical Neo-Typology approaches. In its turn, each approach has also evolved into distinct emphases. Traditional approaches have been split between retrospectivists and prospectivists. Both groups agree that typology is rooted in historical correspondences intended by God to point forward to the gospel realities triggered by the incarnation of the Messiah in an escalated fashion.

The main disagreement resides within the hermeneutical aspect of the prophetic element. Prospectivists emphasize the prophetic nature of typology whose predictive element was available to be known by the original author or/and audience. They contend that as a form of messianic prophecy, types had the objective of encouraging faith by pointing forward to God's promises of redemption through his special agent. If these types could only be identified retrospectively, their value to the OT reader is seriously in question. Since God did not employ his messengers as writing machines, most times divine and human authorial intention spheres have coincided, even though sometimes the divine intent was not exhaustively recognized by the human instrument. The search for typological indicators in the OT is not only valid but necessary to establish in a more objective way the existence of typology. While prospectivists admit that typology has sometimes been recognized only retrospectively, they affirm that the predictive element is present in the OT nonetheless. In this case, the recipients just failed to recognize beforehand, as they were "foolish and slow in heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25).

Most often, retrospectivists maintain that although the prophetic element may be present in the original context of the OT, it can only be known looking backwards from the perspective of the Christ event. In this way, while retrospectivists may admit that typology is predictive, it is always recognized only retrospectively. What the NT author sees from the perspective of the cross and resurrection would not have been grasped by the OT authors and the original audience. In this context, Christ is the hermeneutical key used to read into the OT what its authors have not consciously intended. Therefore, retrospectivists maintain that the search for typological indicators in the OT is in vain.

The second major current in typology scholarship has suffered more drastic developments. In the Post-Critical Neo-Typology approach, two emphases have flourished in the last two decades. In the literary emphasis, typology is a literary phenomenon that is activated by use of the *intellectus spiritualis* of the interpreter. As a tool, typology helps the reader to create correspondences between the OT and NT. As a literary phenomenon, such correspondences do not need to be historical since typology is only an allegorical foreshadowing. In terms of theological emphasis, authors have advocated for a return to allegory as practiced in the precritical period. Usually, typology becomes figural reading where the primacy of the text is replaced by the precedence of the reader. Likewise, theological correspondence takes the place of historical correspondence. In both cases, typology is not predictive and for this reason it can be identified only when viewed backwards and retrospectively.

A comparison of continuities and discontinuities between the present survey and those carried out by Davidson and Ninow showed how typology has evolved. The revival of interest in the topic, as has been pointed out previously, has not faded away throughout these years. On the one hand, authors influenced by traditional approaches have published a large amount of literature exploring typological relationships both between the OT and NT and inside the OT itself. On the other hand, publications repudiating typology have considerably decreased, giving place to a new phase in typological studies.

A very important development during this period was the rise and strengthening of figural or spiritual reading that changed the contours of the Post-Critical Neo-Typology approach. The emergence of theological emphasis as described in chapter 2 brings with itself the emergence of three surprising aspects in the study of typology in the

last two decades. The first is not only an admission of the value of precritical exegesis, but is even a call to its return and its practice in the academic milieu of biblical studies. This has been prompted by a renewal of interest in Patristics, as some have considered a return to the classics, or *ressourcement*. In a certain sense, this is a predictable reaction to the rigid naturalism of the historical-critical approach made possible by the post-modern intellectual mindset. A second aspect, which is closely related to (if not resulting from) the figural or spiritual reading, is the conflation of allegory and typology. As I have shown, there is a frequent and perhaps even fearless (I would say) call for a return to allegory in the context of figural or spiritual reading.

The third aspect, also closely connected with the conflation of allegory and typology, involves the ecumenical ramifications occasioned by the figural and spiritual interpretation. It is rather ironic that one of the major causes of the division between Catholics and Protestants in the dawn of the Reformation, namely, hermeneutical divergences regarding the literal and spiritual senses of Scriptures, is becoming today a bridge of rapprochement between the two groups. It is really striking to see how the rule of faith and the role of an authoritative body establishing acceptable reading (usually appointed by a community of believers) are resurfacing in the hermeneutical vocabulary of biblical studies.

Independent of the burgeoning of new ideas about and practices of typology, some of the central issues are still actively debated today. For instance, it is surprising that even after many years the key issue continues to be the nature of biblical typology, as reflected in the plethora of suggestions regarding the most basic but also the most complicated issue involving the topic, namely, its definition. Although I started this

research intellectually open to the possibility of formulating a new definition of typology or even refining an existing one, I must conclude that, at least for now, there is no need for this. At this point, I acknowledge that Davison's definition of typology is still relevant today for at least two reasons. First, it is comprehensive enough to include all the major aspects related to the phenomenon found in the NT and OT. Second, it allows its elements to arise from the biblical text itself. In fact, although different proposals have been made that emphasize different aspects of typology, in essence most of them share the same elements. In light of the present work, any definition should include at least four elements: (i) historicity, (ii) correspondence, (iii) prefiguration, and (iv) escalation. In fact, within the boundaries of the traditional approach, most definitions include them already in one way or another.

In face of the emergence of figural or spiritual reading, the distinction between allegory and typology has become an indispensable discussion. While the proponents of the Traditional approach defend a clear distinction between the two, proponents of the Post-Critical Neo-Typology approach conflate them blurring any meaningful differentiation.

Another crucial issue in the debate involving typology in the last two decades concerns the relationship between intertextuality and typology. There is a consensus that typological studies are heavily dependent on the identification of reuse of Scripture within Scripture by which significant patterns in salvation history can be discerned and linked. The problem is that much confusion has been generated by the lack of clarity in the use of the term intertextuality. In my short discussion on this topic in Chapter 2, I suggest that what most scholars name intertextuality would be better termed as reuse, a

more neutral nomenclature that encompasses an ample range of use of Scriptures in other parts of Scriptures, such as quotations, allusions, echoes, etc.

Another problem involving reuse and typology is the lack of clear criteria to determine what constitutes the intentional reuse of Scripture. This deficiency of more objective textual and literary benchmarks has led to a multiplication of alleged correspondences that, in its turn, creates superfluous and accidental parallels, leading people to see patterns where arguably there are no meaningful patterns. Consequently, typology is discredited as a form of eisegesis, based on the imagination of the interpreter. Establishing sound criteria is fundamental, but criteria by themselves do not automatically yield solid results. As an art, by definition, exegesis does not have mathematical precision. For this reason, in addition to more objective criteria, familiarity with the text through a repetitive engagement with Scriptures is crucial to provide interpreters with scriptural sensibility and common sense.

The issue involving intertextuality is directly connected with the question of authorial intention. In this regard, there is division within each current or emphasis as studied in the second chapter, whether involving prospectivists or retrospectivists, or whether involving literary or theological proponents. Notwithstanding the divergences, the growing number of evangelical authors like Hamilton have shown concrete evidence that typology is based on intentional patterns found in the canonical literary development that is based on the acting of God within history. Such intentionality is crucial for the validity of typology as a legitimate phenomenon in biblical tradition. It is evident that authorial intent is always a matter of probability, for even if it is possible to determine it with any degree of certainty, it would be very difficult to confirm it or prove it

empirically. However, this fact should not prevent interpreters from pursuing the search for authorial intention if they allow the text itself to be the controlling guide. Usually, enough clues have been left in the text so that readers can discern them in order to establish with different degrees of probability authorial intention regarding deliberate use of correspondences and patterns. It should be mentioned here that in some cases authors wrote more than they knew, so that the authorial intent is ultimately found in God as the Author, whether or not the human author was aware of the typological connections. However, as I pointed out before, the evidence has shown that this is more the exception than the rule.

Finally, the question involving predictive/prophetic import needs to be addressed here. Indeed, the issue is in the core of this research. It is evident that this is also closely related to the matter of authorial intention. It seems clear that whether the interpreter conceives typology in predictive terms or not, such acceptance or denial depends on more than hard evidence. This is one place where presuppositions play a large role. There is little doubt that believing and unbelieving perspectives affect the way someone views or understands the nature of typology.

If one accepts the predictive nature of typology, this prospective element becomes an essential aspect of typological interpretation. In this context, it is surprising to see scholars advocating the predictive nature of typology and at the same time denying the possibility of identification of types before the arrival of antitypes. This leads me to the question the utility of predictive prophecy or typology that can only be recognized as such after its fulfilment. If by prospective markers, one understands a kind of clue embedded in the text to assist readers to figure out what comes next, such a clue needs to

be efficient. In other words, if clues are left in the text without the possibility to be discovered, what are they for? The Elijah typology provided a good opportunity to show how such clues can be found in the OT text before type meets antitype.

The initial hypothesis that typological indicators can be found in the original context of the OT has been indicated in studies involving other biblical characters like Adam, Joseph Joshua, David, and so forth. However, it needed to be tested in the case of Elijah. The first step to do that was the exegesis of the Elijah cycle. Since typology is rooted in exegesis, this is a crucial methodological step. At the outset, I approached the text with no pre-understanding or pre-determination of whether I would find any indicators there or not. Although Elijah typology is quite clear looking backwards from the NT perspective, the looking forwards from the OT perspective was not clear. For this reason, I did not select a specific portion of the Elijah narrative to explore the presence of typological markers. I had to examine the entire Elijah cycle in detail to find them or even to see if in fact they were present at all. The decision to keep all the exegetical analysis in the second part of this study (chapters 3–5), instead of selecting only the portions with more potential to find typological indicators, was important to let the reader see what was left out and what was included in the third part of this research, where I point out the indicators that I found. In this sense, my intention is to provide a practical illustration of how interpreters should approach the OT when looking for typological pointers or clues. Therefore, this research serves as a methodological exercise toward achieving this aim.

The exegetical methodology in the second part of this dissertation was not esoteric. The analysis involved historical, linguistic, and literary elements taken into

consideration in the canonical context. One particular emphasis was the close observation of the text itself. Hence, I consider this endeavor as a text-phenomenological reading of the passages in question. In this sense, the text-empirical exegesis seriously considered the linguistic and textual properties when determining the biblical meaning. Another important aspect of this empirical inductive procedure was the close attention to the poetics of the biblical narrative. This allowed me to collect the rhetorical patterns and terminological, semantic, and thematic connections/interruptions present in the text. At first, no typological indicators were pointed out, but Chapters 3 through 5 became my data pool supplying the elements necessary for the third part of this research where the Elijah typology is considered.

The procedure in the third part (Chapter 6) took two steps in different directions: from the OT to the NT and from the NT to the OT. In the first part, referring to the data pool of Chapters 3–5, I allowed the markers of typology to emerge from the narrative of Elijah. Following Beale’s strategy to find types in the OT, the material was organized in three groups: (i) the understanding of a later person as an antitype of an earlier person within the OT (e.g. Joshua as a second Moses); (ii) the recurrence of major redemptive-historical events that in some fashion are repeated in various places in the OT and share unique characteristics; and (iii) recurring and unfinished narratives (open-ended toward the future).

First, the exegesis of his narrative reveals that Elijah’s story is stylized according to those of earlier characters in the redemptive history. As the lives of these memorable characters are “relaunched” through the prophet’s career, messianic expectation probably reemerged among his contemporaries. When the original audience of 1 and 2 Kings

looked at Elijah's ministry in light of previous revelation, the parallels of his life with the life of earlier characters undoubtedly became evident and the typological import of his ministry could have been identified. Although the range of probability differs significantly, there is enough evidence to suggest that Elijah is presented as a new Moses, a new Joshua (stronger probability), as well as a new Melchizedek and perhaps a new David (weaker probability).

Second, the reader of the Elijah cycle can find at least two obvious recurring themes from the redemptive-historical stream of Scripture. In the first, Elijah is modeled according to Israel in the time of the exodus. As a prototype of Israel, the prophet passes through three stages. In the first stage Elijah is faithful to God complying with all his commands. During this time, he receives God's care and miraculous provision. In the second stage, Elijah fails, taking a way to which God has not called him. But still God does not abandon him and provides for his physical needs. In the third, Elijah is restored to his role as a prophet crossing the Jordan toward his extraordinary ascension by overcoming the wicked power that was seeking his life. The second theme is found in 1 Kgs 18 where Elijah is clearly mediating a new covenant. Such a covenant constitutes another merciful offer of grace granting to the wayward Israel a new opportunity. This is made clear through several intertextual (reuse) links between the renewal of the covenant in 1 Kgs 18 and other previous episodes where covenant making is in view. This is particularly true regarding the Sinaitic covenant in Exodus.

Third, the presence of recurring and unfinished elements in the narrative of Elijah attests to its forward-looking nature that points to the messianic era. The dialogic relationship between previous and later revelation in the context of the canon forms a

flow of interconnections that at the same time pours into the Elijah cycle and then out of it into the rest of Scripture. As is the case in other famous narratives of the Bible, Elijah's story contains crises and failures that function as a thrust and frustration for messianic expectations, the vicious cycle of which is broken only with Jesus. The messianic expectation is further advanced in the Elijah cycle through the extraordinary wonders performed by God through his prophet that have parallels only in the careers of Moses and Joshua.

The unfinished aspect of the Elijah cycle is even more evident in Mal 3 where the prophet is referred to as the coming messenger preparing the way for Yahweh. Here Elijah functions as a person-type who points to the eschatological work of the preparation of hearts for the day of Yahweh. Therefore, the passage of Malachi is crucial for the understanding of the Elijah typology that reveals his function and mission as well as giving the reader important clues regarding his identity in the fulfilment phase. The reuse of Elijah in the last book of the twelve prophets is in itself strong evidence of the typological character of Elijah. As was shown, the choice of Elijah is not accidental. The image of the prophet in Malachi fits his role in 1 and 2 Kings. In their turn, the NT authors simply followed the limit of the link web of patterns already identified and explored by Malachi. In this case, although the appearance of John the Baptist came in an unexpected way, his role as the forerunner of the messiah can be seen as a clear fulfilment of OT expectations.

This leads to the second part of Chapter 6, where the typological fulfilment is examined. As I proceeded in the OT part, the treatment of the topic started with an analysis of the biblical data. The data analysis showed a close relationship between Elijah

and John the Baptist that is understood properly in terms of fulfillment. The nature of this fulfillment was considered in light of the basic elements of typology as defined by Davidson: historicity, correspondence, prefiguration, and escalation. My analysis showed that all four elements clearly can be found in the relationship between the narratives of Elijah and John the Baptist.

Finally, in the last part of Chapter 6, I inquired into the place of Elijah typology in salvation history and concluded that its eschatological fulfillment is threefold. In the inaugurated phase, John the Baptist fulfills the role of Elijah as he functions as the messenger proclaiming the first coming of Yahweh in the person of Christ. However, as both the forerunner and the messiah are rejected, the door of the appropriated phase is open. Now the ministry of proclamation is transferred to the church. This becomes evident in the disciples' preaching of the second coming of Christ for which they waited during the span of their lives. In the subsequent years, the church continued the work of the apostles in the spirit of Elijah. In the historical part of Revelation, the mission of the heralds of the second coming of Christ is described in Elijanic terms (Rev 11:1–6). During the 1260 days the remnant fulfilled his mission in times of fierce trial witnessing “dressed in sackcloth” (Rev 11:3). The Elijah typology reappears in the consummated phase of its eschatological fulfillment. The last battle between good and evil evokes the conflict between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. The same issue is at stake in the end, namely, who deserves to be worshiped. In this spiritual battle for human hearts, God again will use his instruments to proclaim his true character as the only true God who is both creator and redeemer. In the spirit of Elijah, they will proclaim the three

angels' messages preparing the way for the second coming and calling the remnant to be prepared. At that point, the mission of the last Elijah will be finished.

Implications

In light of these findings, there are three areas in which implications for typology scholarship should be pointed out: theory, theology, and practice. From the theoretical point of view, this research confirms the predictive nature of typology. The initial hypothesis that typological indicators could be found in the Elijah cycle was verified to be true. Based on the present analysis, types are prospective, and their prophetic character may be discerned in the original context of the OT. Thus, Christians should see the OT for its own merit addressing real people who as original recipients of the promises could see the hand of God in history preparing the way to his ultimate intervention. They could be encouraged by the hope that their expectations would meet definitive fulfilment. It is true that the message of the OT speaks to every generation until the end of the ages, but the idea that the predictive character of the OT types was inaccessible to the original audience before the first coming of Jesus makes typology pointless in the primary context. The evidence exposed here suggests not only the existence of typological markers in the OT but also the fact that such clues could have been picked up before the first coming of Christ. Whether, and to what extent, this actually happened in the case of the Elijah typology, it is difficult to prove.

Another important theoretical implication is that in view of its predictive nature, any definition of typology should include this predictive dimension. The prospective character of typology entails the fact that types are not imaginative or spiritual creations of the NT writers (the words "imaginative" and "spiritual" have surprisingly become

synonymous in figural approaches of the Bible). Definitions that do not include this dimension fail to comply with the evidence flowing from Scriptures.

A final theoretical implication concerns the methodology for identifying types in the OT. The task of finding gospel promises in the OT is by nature exegetical. For this reason, exegesis is the first step in the process. The interpreter should approach the text to understand it independently from any typological nuance. This enterprise should include an attentive consideration of the text and all its empirical data (e.g. participants, syntax, text-grammatical hierarchy, discursive dynamics, space- and time-markings in texts, and lemma distribution). Attention to the poetic aspects of the text, including narrative features and structure is also consequential to unveil the textual intention. Based on this empirical data, the interpreter then can read the text in light of the whole canon of the OT to identify patterns that form the raw data of typological relationships. When seen in light of the flow of redemptive history, these patterns reveal the predictive import that can be recognized by clues left by the writers.

From the NT perspective, it is also imperative to check whether all elements of typology are present in the relationship between type and antitype, especially when typology is not explicitly specified. Typology is only one way in which the OT appears in the NT, and for this reason, parallels between both testaments should not be automatically regarded as markers of typology. For instance, there are certain links between Jesus and Elijah, mainly in Luke. However, not all elements that are essential to establish typology are present. Although some correspondences may exist, they are not substantial enough or the textual intention of linking them typologically cannot be determined with any degree of confidence. Although close examination may in the future

contradict this notion, the prefiguration found in the original context of the Elijah cycle seems to point more to the forerunner than to the Messiah himself. This illustrates the importance of identifying in the relationship between type and antitype all essential elements: historicity, correspondence, prefiguration, and escalation.

The second group of implications concerns the theological aspects of this study. Here I want to highlight the contribution of this analysis for the theological discipline, especially for understanding the OT eschatology and the nature of the predictions involving the Messiah. First, the intentional aspect of the patterns created by the authors of the OT has a literary and theological facet where the theological aspects of the text are conveyed by its literary features. From the literary point of view, OT writers were attentive to the divine working in history and intentionally told their stories in a way that the audience would discern typological patterns. However, since they were not creating the parallels, God was the one conducting history in a way that these patterns could be discerned. Thus, God is acting in history in a consistent way. Although types are described in literary terms through the written record of Scriptures, types are not literary inventions. And since God has history in his hands, knowing the end from the beginning, he knows and reveals in advance at least in part what will happen. Curiously, while typology exists only because divine sovereignty and consistency in history exist, typology in its turn reveals divine sovereignty and consistency in history.

Second, since God has worked in the past in a way similar to how he works in the present and will work in the future, there is value in learning from the past. In one of the most important passages on typology in the NT, Paul explains that the past is the key to face the present and avoid the shortcomings of our forefathers (1 Cor 10:1–13). God's

patterns in history as revealed in the use of typology throughout Scriptures not only establish his supremacy and autonomy over history but also reveal his long-suffering mercy with persistent human sinfulness. The vicious cycle of crisis and failure is only broken by Christ in whom all the eschatological expectations of the OT are inaugurated.

Third, the connection between past and present is not only historical but theological. In a certain sense, recognizing such a connection is pivotal to appreciate the significance of the OT as the background to the NT. History is the stage where God reveals his love for humankind. Such a revelation develops in different stages that are closely related to the distinct manifestation of the eternal covenant between God and his creation. These manifestations form the backbone of typology.

Finally, the last implication involves the contemporary relevance of this study for God's people today. The threefold fulfilment of the Elijah typology sheds light on the mission of God's people at the time of the end. In fact, Elijah provides a paradigm of action to the church that is called to complete the mission of John the Baptist in the spirit of Elijah. The spirit of Elijah represents a challenge for modern messengers preparing the way to the second coming to engage boldly and uncompromisingly in the mission to preach the arrival of the kingdom of God, now in its consummated phase. The Elijah message in the last days as represented in Mal 3:1, 23–24 and in the third angel's message involves judgment and "a renewal of love for each other."¹ This call for love is indicated in the fact that Elijah would come to restore the hearts of people to each other (Mal 3:23–24). According to Gane, "the third angel's message also calls for love: God's commandments are based on love for God and our fellow human beings (see Matthew

¹ Roy E. Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment? The Good News about Christ's work in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Nampa, ID; Oshawa, ON: Pacific, 2006), 126.

22:37–40).”² Thus, “Malachi and John’s third angel call us to repent of our uncooperative unlove that fragments our unity and thereby dilutes our witness for Christ in the world.”³

The Elijah and John the Baptist model also includes persecution which in a fallen world is the natural consequence of following and living out God’s ways. However, they also remind us that in the middle of their struggling they were not alone. God was empowering his messengers to face all challenges, even if this would include suffering and death. Thus, the Elijah typology provides encouragement to the messengers living before the second coming to fulfil their mission in a hostile world. As forerunners of the second coming, God’s people are called to prepare the way for the Lord, announcing his coming, preparing hearts for the day of judgement by the preaching of justification by faith (repent for the kingdom of God is near) and urging his people to come back to the faith of their spiritual ancestors. In the consummation phase of the Elijah typology, the nations are figuratively gathered on Mt. Carmel (Armageddon = Mt. Megiddo) for the last battle between good and evil. At this point, the inhabitants of the world need to decide who they will worship: either the false trinity of Rev 13 or the true God, creator of the heavens and earth. Again, there is no place for divided loyalty. In this crucial time, the last Elijah is called to fulfill his mission. According to Revelation, these will be difficult times in which the last prophetic call is made to humanity. The last Elijah needs to be prepared and able to prepare a faithful remnant “before the coming of the great and awesome day of Yahweh” (Mal 3:23), now in its consummated phase.

² Gane, *Who’s Afraid of the Judgment?*, 127.

³ Gane, *Who’s Afraid of the Judgment?*, 128.

Further Research

Regarding further research, I suggest that the field would benefit from an updated review of literature tracing developments and studies in the years ahead. As I brought current the previous surveys of Davidson and Ninow, this research profited from the comparison of continuities and discontinuities.

In addition to that, a study about the relationship between Elisha and Jesus in light of the relationship between Elijah and John the Baptist would also shed further light on the Elijah typology. It would also help to determine if this relationship should be understood in typological terms.

Another area to be explored is the duo-pattern Moses-Joshua, David-Solomon, and Elijah-Elisha. Although this research dealt with first and the latter, a more in-depth study could elucidate the nature of biblical typology in these patterns.

Finally, I invite scholars to carry out similar studies with other characters in order to verify the existence of typological indicators in other narratives involving such as figures as David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Esther and others. The search for typological indicators should be an ongoing and essential step in identifying of types in the OT. Such an endeavor could elucidate the relationship between them and their antitypes.

APPENDIX A

Phrase Function

Adju	Adjunct
Cmpl	Complement
Conj	Conjunction
EPPr	Enclitic personal pronoun
ExsS	Existence with subject suffix
Exst	Existence
Frnt	Fronted element
Intj	Interjection
IntS	Interjection with subject suffix
Loca	Locative
Modi	Modifier
ModS	Modifier with subject suffix
NCop	Negative copula
NCoS	Negative copula with subject suffix
Nega	Negation
Objc	Object
PrAd	Predicative adjunct
PreS	Predicate complement with subject suffix
PreC	Predicate complement
Pred	Predicate
PreO	Predicate with object suffix
PreS	Predicate with subject suffix
PtcO	Participle with object suffix
Ques	Question
Rela	Relative
Subj	Subject
Supp	Supplementary constituent
Time	Time reference
Unkn	Unknown
Voct	Vocative

Clause Types

AjCl	Adjective clause
CPen	Casus pendens
Defc	Defective clause atom
Ellp	Ellipsis
InfA	Infinitive absolute clause
InfC	Infinitive construct clause
MSyn	Macrosyntactic sign
NmCl	Nominal clause
Ptcp	Participle clause
Reop	Reopening
Unkn	Unknown
Voct	Vocative clause
Way0	Wayyiqtol-null clause
WayX	Wayyiqtol-X clause
WIm0	We-imperative-null clause
WImX	We-imperative-X clause
WQt0	We-qatal-null clause
WQtX	We-qatal-X clause
WxI0	We-x-imperative-null clause
WXIm	We-X-imperative clause
WxIX	We-x-imperative-X clause
WxQ0	We-x-qatal-null clause
WXQt	We-X-qatal clause
WxQX	We-x-qatal-X clause
WxY0	We-x-yiqtol-null clause
WXYq	We-X-yiqtol clause
WxYX	We-x-yiqtol-X clause
WYq0	We-yiqtol-null clause
WYqX	We-yiqtol-X clause
xIm0	x-imperative-null clause
XImp	X-imperative clause
xImX	x-imperative-X clause
XPos	Extraposition
xQt0	x-qatal-null clause
XQtl	X-qatal clause
xQtX	x-qatal-X clause
xYq0	x-yiqtol-null clause
XYqt	X-yiqtol clause
xYqX	x-yiqtol-X clause
ZIm0	Zero-imperative-null clause
ZImX	Zero-imperative-X clause
ZQt0	Zero-qatal-null clause
ZQtX	Zero-qatal-X clause

ZYq0	Zero-yiqtol-null clause
ZYqX	Zero-yiqtol-X clause

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