

[2 Sm 12:7-10, 13](#)

Nathan said to David:

“Thus says the LORD God of Israel:

‘I anointed you king of Israel.

I rescued you from the hand of Saul.

I gave you your lord’s house and your lord’s wives for your own.

I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah.

And if this were not enough, I could count up for you still more.

Why have you spurned the Lord and done evil in his sight?

You have cut down Uriah the Hittite with the sword;

you took his wife as your own,

and him you killed with the sword of the Ammonites.

Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house,

because you have despised me

and have taken the wife of Uriah to be your wife.’

Then David said to Nathan,

“I have sinned against the LORD.”

Nathan answered David:

“The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin:

you shall not die.”

Jerome Biblical Commentary

(D) Nathan’s Parable and David’s Penitence (12:1-31). 1-6. This simple and beautiful parable of the ewe lamb draws David into an untenable position (vv. 5-6). **7-15.** After David has risen to the bait, the words ring out: “you are the man.” David had apparently taken over Saul’s harem (v. 8), and now, he has taken the wife of one of his soldiers. **10.** The rest of the court story (Amnon, Absalom) bears out the statement that the sword shall never depart from David’s house. **11.** Cf. 16:21-22; it is so explicitly stated that we may suspect it is an editorial addition. **13-14.** David’s frank confession is an acknowledgement of sin “against the Lord.” The child will die, because “you have scorned the Lord” (not, as in the [MT](#), “the enemies of the Lord”). **15-23.** The description of David’s penitence is in line with his simplicity (cf. 6:21-22) and his sense of realism (vv. 20-23). He sought to ward off the death of the child, but he failed; he fully expects to go to Sheol (v. 23), but this is the “land of no return,” as the ancients called it. **24-25.** The birth of Solomon (Jedidiah, “beloved of the Lord”) is recorded as an indication of the Lord’s pardon. We have the first inkling that Solomon will succeed to the throne at the end of a bloody and sad history (and against heirs with better rights to the throne). **26-31.** This section closes out the campaign against the Ammonites. Joab has captured the water supply (v. 27, “city of waters”) of Rabbah and invites David to capture the capital and make it a royal city (“lest it be called by my name”). **30.** Instead of “their king,” one should read Milcom,” the Ammonite divinity. **31.** The MT has suggested a bizarre massacre, effected with workmens’ tools; a slight change in the text would indicate that David put the people to work at the kilns—i.e., forced labor

[MT](#) Masoretic Text (of the Hebrew Bible)

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Haydock's Catholic Commentary

Notes & Commentary:

Ver. 1. *Unto him*, after the birth of the child. A whole year had nearly elapsed, and David continued blind and impenitent. The spirit of prophecy had left him; and, though he was clear-sighted, and equitable enough to punish the faults of others, he could not discern his own picture, till Nathan had removed the veil. The prophet acted with the utmost prudence, and did not condemn the king till he had pronounced sentence on himself. It is commonly supposed that the interview was private. St. Chrysostom believes that the chief lords of the court were present; which would enhance the discretion of Nathan, as well as David's humility. (Calmet)

Ver. 3. *Daughter*. All these expressions tended to shew the affection of the owner for this pet lamb. (Haydock) --- In Arabia, one of the finest is commonly fed in the house along with the children. (Bochart, Anim. T. i. B. ii. 46.) --- It is not necessary that every word of this parable should have been verified in Bethsabee. (Calmet) --- Many things are usually added for ornament. (Menochius)

Ver. 4. *To him*. This wanton cruelty caused David to pronounce him deserving of death; as simple theft was punished with only a four-fold restitution, Exodus xxii. 1. Judges sometimes diminish, and at other times increase, the severity of the law, according to the dispositions of the offenders, which lawgivers could not exactly foresee. (Calmet)

Ver. 6. *Fold*. Septuagint, "seven-fold," which Grabe corrects by the Hebrew. (Haydock) -- David lost four of his sons; the first born of Bethsabee, Amnon, Absalon, and Adonias; and saw his daughter Tamar, (Calmet) and his ten inferior wives, dishonoured, in punishment of his crime. (Menochius)

Ver. 7. *The man*, against whom thou hast pronounced sentence, and who has treated thy neighbour with still less pity. (Haydock)

-----*Mutato nomine de te
Fabula narratur.*----- (Horace)

Ver. 8. *Wives*. We know of none that David married. But, as king, he enjoyed alone that privilege. (Grotius) (Chap. ii. 7., and xvi. 21.) --- *Unto thee*. Hebrew, "I would have given thee such and such." (Calmet) --- Septuagint, "I will moreover give thee like unto these;" a continuation of prosperity. (Haydock) --- This singular love, which God was still disposed to manifest unto David, touched his heart with peculiar force. (Salien)

Ver. 10. House. What a dismal scene opens itself to our view during the remaining part of David's reign! (Haydock) --- Scarcely one of his successors was free from war; even Solomon was disturbed by the rebellion of Jeroboam, &c., and many of David's family and descendants came to an untimely end, ver. 6. (Calmet) --- Six sons of Josaphat, all Joram's, except one, Josias, the children of Sedecias, &c., 4 Kings xxv., &c.

(Worthington)

Ver. 11. I will raise, &c. All these evils, inasmuch as they were *punishments*, came upon David by a just judgment of God, for his sin; and therefore God says, *I will raise, &c.* But inasmuch as they were *sins*, on the part of Absalom and his associates, God was not the author of them, but only permitted them. (Challoner) --- God permitted the wicked prince to succeed for some time, that he might punish David. (Calmet) --- *Neighbour*, most dearly beloved. To be treated ill by such a one, is doubly severe, Psalm liv. 15.

(Menochius)

Ver. 12. Sun, publicly, chap. xvi. 22. How abominable soever this conduct of an unnatural son must have been to God, he says, *I will do this*; because, when he might have prevented it by a more powerful grace, or by the death of the delinquent, he suffered him to carry his infernal project into execution. (Haydock)

Ver. 13. Sinned. His confession was sincere, and very different from that of Saul, 1 Kings xv. 24. "The expression was the same; but God saw the difference of the heart." (St. Augustine, contra Faust. xxii. 27.) --- *Sin.* He has remitted the fault and the eternal punishment, and he has greatly diminished the temporal chastisement, and will not inflict instant death, as he seemed to have threatened, ver. 10. (Calmet) --- "The speedy remission shewed the greatness of the king's repentance." (St. Ambrose, Apol. 2.)

Ver. 14. Occasion. Literally, "made" almost, in the same sense, as God threatened to do, what was effected by Absalom, ver. 12. David did not co-operate with the malice of infidels; but he was responsible for it: in as much as he had committed an unlawful action, which gave them occasion to blaspheme God, as if he had not been able to foresee this scandalous transaction. Thus God and religion are often vilified, on account of the misconduct of those who have the happiness to be well informed, but do not live up to their profession: but this mode of argumentation is very fallacious and uncandid. It ought, however, to be a caution to the servants of the true God, never to do any thing which may have such fatal consequences; and alienate the minds of weak men for the truth. --- *Die.* Thus infidels would see, that God did not suffer David to pass quite unpunished. (Haydock)

Ver. 15. Of. Hebrew, "it was sick" (Calmet) of a fever.

Ver. 16. A fast, (jejunavit jejunio) denotes, with more than ordinary rigour. (Salien) --- *By himself.* Hebrew, "he went in, and lay all night upon the ground." (Haydock)

Ver. 18. Day. After his birth, when he had received circumcision; (Salien) or on the 7th day since the commencement of his malady. (Calmet; Menochius)

Ver. 23. To me. No instance of any one being raised from the dead had yet occurred; though David did not disbelieve its possibility. (Menochius)

Ver. 24. Wife. She had partaken in his affliction and repentance. The Jews say that David told her the divine oracle, which is mentioned [in] 3 Kings i. 13, 17., that her next son should succeed to the throne. Salien (the year of the world 3000) supposes that he was conceived in May, two months after the death of Bethsabee's first-born, and came

into the world about the time of the Passover. --- *Solomon*, "the pacific." See 1 Paralipomenon xxii. 9. (Menochius)

Ver. 25. *Amiable to the Lord.* Or beloved of the Lord. In Hebrew, *Yedideya*. (Challoner) -- *Loved him*, is not expressed in Hebrew, "because of the Lord." (Haydock) --- Theodotion, "in the word, or agreeably to, the order of the Lord." Solomon never went by the name which God here gives him, (Calmet) except in this place. (Menochius) --- It shews the gratuitous predilection which God had for him; but affords no proof of his predestination to glory, of which there is too much reason to doubt. (Calmet)

Ver. 27. *The city of waters.* Rabbath, the royal city of the Ammonites, was called *the city of waters*, from being encompassed with waters. (Challoner) See chap. v. 8. --- The Hebrew in the preceding verse seems to insinuate, (Haydock) that "he had taken the royal city." But he was only on the point of doing it, or had, perhaps, made himself master of some part of it. Here the Hebrew, "I have taken," may be explained in the same sense, unless *the city of waters* were the lower part of Rabbath, lying on the Jaboc. Junius translates, "He cut off the waters, which entered the city;" and Josephus favours this explanation. It seems the siege lasted about two years. (Calmet) --- Antiochus took this city, by depriving the inhabitants of water. (Polybius v.)

Ver. 28. *Take it.* The higher, and more impregnable part; which honour Joab reserved for David.

Ver. 30. *King.* Hebrew, *Malcam*, "their king." Moloc, "king," or the chief idol of the Ammonites. It was forbidden to use the ornaments of the idols on Chanaan, but not of other nations. This crown might be worth a talent, on account of the gold and precious stones; (1 Paralipomenon xx. 2.; Sanchez; Bochart,) or it might weigh so much as almost 87 pounds, (Calmet) or above 113 pounds English. (Haydock) --- such immense crowns were sometimes suspended for ornament, over the throne; as Benjamin of Tudela says was done by the emperor Commenes. Pliny describes one of nine pounds; and Athenæus (v. 8,) another of 80 cubits, or 40 yards (Haydock) in circumference. (Calmet) --- The idol, or the king of Ammon, (Menochius) might have one of the like nature, suspended. The Rabbins say David caused it to hang in the air by means of a load-stone; as if it would attract gold! (Calmet)

Ver. 31. *Sawed.* Hebrew, "he put *them* under saws, and under rollers of iron, and under knives," &c. (Haydock) --- The Jews say that Isaias was killed by being sawed asunder; to which punishment St. Paul alludes, Hebrews xi. 37. (Menochius) --- *Brick-kilns*, or furnaces, Psalm xx. 10. (Muis) --- David and his companions were thrown into the fiery furnace, Daniel iii. 6, 11., and Esther xiii. 7. (Calmet) --- Some condemn David of excessive cruelty on this occasion. (Tirinus; Sanctius) --- But the Scripture represents his conduct as irreproachable, except in the affair of Urias; (3 Kings xv. 5,) and at this distance of time, we know not the motives which might have actuated him to treat his enemy with such severity. The Ammonites had probably exercised similar cruelties on his subjects. See 1 Kings xi. 2., and Amos i. 13. (Calmet) --- They had shamefully violated the law of nations, and had stirred up various kings against David. (Menochius) --- Salien blames Joab for what may seem too cruel. But, though he was barbarous and vindictive, we need not condemn him on this occasion, no more than his master; as we are not to judge of former times by our own manners. (Haydock) --- War was then carried on with great cruelty. (Calmet)

Word Biblical Commentary (non-Catholic) (Extensive)

In contrast to the passive role the king has played thus far in the incidents recorded from his reign, he initiates the repair of the temple in Jerusalem and introduces a new form of payment for the temple's upkeep. 2 Chr 24:17–22 contains additional historical material concerning the relationship between the king and Jehoiada the priest. Most commentators regard this additional material as being good historical tradition.

1[11:21] בן שבע שנים יהואש “Joash was seven years old.” This verse is numbered 11:21 in the English versions, which follow the numbering from [G](#). The suggestion that it should be placed after v 2 (see *Notes* above) is not to be followed.

The presence of the number seven (**שבע**) in various forms throughout these chapters is most intriguing, but probably accidental. In 11:2 Jehosheba rescues the young prince; the overthrow of Athaliah takes place in the *seventh* year of her reign (11:4); coincidentally, Joash is *seven* years old at the time (12:1[11:21]); he became king in the *seventh* year of Jehu (12:2[1]); and his mother came from Beer *Sheba*.

2[1] בשנת שבע ליהואש “in the seventh year of Jehu.” Athaliah and Jehu were contemporaries, although the latter reigned for much longer. They were at opposite ends of the religious spectrum, yet the manner in which they assumed their respective thrones has much in common, the ultimate effect upon the life of their people similar.

וארבעים שנה “forty years.” Although this is often used as a general figure, there is no reason to doubt its accuracy. When he died Joash would have been at the reasonable age of forty-seven. Montgomery's suggestion (*Kings*, 427) that Joash's reign should be reckoned from the death of his father, and that the forty years should include the seven of Athaliah, is attractive. It would, as pointed out by Montgomery, reduce the difference between the Israelite and Judean chronologies in their calculations of the period between Jehu and the fall of Samaria, a difference of some twenty years. However, this does not take into account the seven years of Jehu which preceded the reign of Joash. See E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 68–72; Shenkel, *Chronology and Recensional Development*, 78–80.

ושם אמו צביה “his mother's name was Zibiah.” Such references to the king's mother are regular features of the Judean regnal formula (cf. 14:2; 15:2; etc.). The

name **צביה** means “gazelle” and is fitting for someone from the area of Beer Sheba. A masculine form is found in Isa 13:14, and it reappears as a proper name in the Murabbat Papyrus (B. 2). See Gibson, *Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* 1:31–32.

3[2] כל ימיו “all his days.” See *Notes*. Some versions, in keeping with 2 Chr 24:2, suggest that the king's uprightness was of a limited duration. But 2 Kgs 12 knows of no lapses in the king's behavior, and the text should stand.

אשר הורהו יהוידע “as Jehoiada had taught him.” Jehoiada's role is interesting; he emerges here as a guardian and tutor of the king. In 2 Chr 24 Jehoiada even chooses

wives for Joash. That this phrase is a marginal note is suggested by Burney, *Notes*, 313. Jehoiada appears to have lost his initial influence over the king since, with minor exceptions, Jehoiada does not take a very prominent role in this incident.

4[3] רק הבמות לא סרו “the high places were not removed.” Whether any wrong is implied in this statement is not clear. In spite of Robinson’s assessment of this statement as expressing “partial editorial approval” of Joash (*The Second Book of Kings*, 117) there is no hint given here that these “high places” were for pagan worship.

No reference is made to the “other gods” (**אלהים אחרים**) so common in deuteronomic condemnations of the monarchy. The reference is of the same order as 1 Kgs 3:2 and 15:14, and may be an observation on the state of affairs in Judah before the centralization of worship under Hezekiah and Josiah.

5–17[4–16] The narrative which follows concerning the repairs to the temple has distinct parallels with the narrative in chap. 22. The stylistic similarities can be explained by common authorship and common subject matter. This incident describes the inauguration of a new method of financing the upkeep of the temple after the failure of the priests to carry out needed repairs. The system was used until the exile, and after the return was organized on a more regular basis (Neh 10:32).

5[4] ויאמר יהואש אל הכהנים “now Joash said to the priests.” An interesting feature of this whole project of repair is that it was initiated by the king himself. The same holds true for the early stages of Josiah’s reform (22:3–7). In the period before the exile it appears that the king was the superior of the Jerusalem priesthood (see H. Ringgren; *Israelite Religion*, 211).

The syntax of this verse is obscure, and attempts have been made to emend it, at least

by the omission of the phrase **כסף נפשות ערכו** “the money reckoned for each individual” which is regarded as a “gloss” (Burney, *Notes*, 313–14) or “Epexegete” (Ehrlich) on the previous phrase. The general meaning of the verse is plain and, maintaining the text as it stands, we offer the following interpretation. The king orders the priests to combine, for the purposes of the temple repair, five sources of income, four of which are mentioned in this verse. **כסף הקדשים** “money of the holy things” is presumably the money set aside for the manufacture and purchase of the sacred utensils of the temple. Its use for the repairs to the temple throws light on v 14. [neb](#)’s “all the silver brought as holy gifts” is not necessary. It would duplicate the latter part of the verse. The **כסף עובר איש** “the money reckoned against each person currently” is, literally, “the money of the crossing over of a person,” an expression which has caused some debate. It has its background in the regulation which appears in Exod 30:13–14 governing the census of Israelites. That Exod 30 is generally regarded as late (cf. B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, [OTL](#) [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974] 529) need not indicate that the regulation itself is late. In the period of the monarchy, during which time taxation, a standing army, and other reorganization were introduced, some form of enumeration would have been necessary. In Exod 30:13–14 the **כסף עבר** is the

money taken from each person who is counted (cf. neb). In the post-exilic period, the tax was levied annually (cf. Neh 10:32).

כסף נפשות ערכו “the money reckoned for each individual” is, literally, “the money of persons, according to his reckoning.” Rather than being a gloss on the previous phrase, and therefore superfluous, it represents another source of income for the temple, namely the tax levied against persons who offered their services to the temple (cf. Lev 27:1–33). **איש כסף אשת יעלה על לב** “money which people voluntarily” indicates the voluntary offerings which would have been given on a less regular basis.

The phrase **על לב** “upon a heart” is rare, elsewhere associated with the verb **אמר** “say” (2 Sam 19:8; Isa 40:2). That all four of these sources of income were directed to the repairs of the temple shows the sad state of the building. 2 Chr 24 places the blame for this at the feet of Athaliah and her family, but the reluctance of the Jerusalem priests to act upon the orders of the king would suggest too that they shared in the blame.

6[5] איש מאת מכרו “each from his income.” The **MT** pointing demands the translation “acquaintance” or something similar, which Fricke (*Das Zweite Buch von den Konigen*, 160) interprets as associates of the temple personnel. But not only is it unlikely that each priest dealt only with one “friend” (cf. the remarks of Skinner, *The Books of Kings*, 344), but that each man should use a friend as a source of income is even more unlikely. Reference to the supposed Ugaritic parallel of “temple tellers” (cf. Montgomery, *Kings*, 429) is enticing, but too distant a connection to be of any real value. A simple repointing of the consonants offers the translation of “income” (cf. *Notes*). Even the priests’ own personal sources of income were redirected to the repair of the temple

יחזקואתבדק “let them repair the damage.” Montgomery’s assertion that the reference to the priests’ activity at this point conflicts with the mention of the workmen in v 15b is unfounded. It ignores the failure of the priests and the new measures taken as a result of that failure.

27[6] בשנת עשרים ושלש שנה “by the twenty-third year.” This is the year of the king’s reign, therefore when Joash was thirty years old. No indication is given when the repairs were initiated, but the impression is that the priests neglected their orders for a considerable time. 2 Chr 24 omits any mention of the lapse. The verse reflects the status of the priests in the pre-exilic period compared to their increased status after the exile. Cf. L. Rost, in *Wort und Geschichte*, 151–56.

8[7] The king’s strong words to both Jehoiada and the other priests again shows the authority the king had over the priests in this matter. **כסף מאת מכריכם אל**

תקתו “you shall take no monies from your incomes” is a denial of access to the regular income of the priests and demonstrates the urgency with which the king regarded the matter of the repair of the temple.

9[8] לבלתי קחת כסף ... **ולבלחי הזק** “not to take any money ... nor to make repairs.” This represents a reduction of the responsibilities of the priests. They are to be

no longer responsible for the regular receipt of money offerings, presumably those listed in v 5[4], nor for the repairs of the temple.

10[9] ויקחו ... ארון אחד “and ... took a single chest.” The general meaning of the verse is sure, but the pointing of the phrase **אָרֹן אֶחָד** is difficult (see *Notes*). The box was used as a receptacle of the silver brought into the temple, although that is not explicitly stated. To speak of coins at this time is quite anachronistic, since the earliest evidence for coinage in the Bible is Ezra 2:69. It was known earlier in the Aegean (cf. H. Hamburger, “Money,” *IDB*, 3:423–35).

אצל המזבח בימין בבוא. The precise location of the box for the collection has been the cause of much debate and subsequent emendation of the text. The text reads “near the altar on the right side as one enters the temple.” McKane (*ZAW* 71 [1959]260–65) has demonstrated that the text can stand in its present form and,

following de Groot, identifies the **מזבח** as the “threshold altar” which was situated in the inner court of the temple. This understanding would be supported by the fact that the box was placed in the charge of the **שמרי הסף** “keepers of the threshold.”

11[10] ספר המלך “the king’s secretary” reappears again in chap. 22, and his presence indicates the way in which the king governed the affairs of the temple.

והכהן הגדול. Taken as “the high priest,” the phrase is to be seen as an anachronism (cf. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 211), notwithstanding the appeals to the Ugaritic *rb khnm* “high priest” by Montgomery (*Kings*, 429). Since the term is unique to 2 Kgs (22:4, 8; 23:4) it is not to be regarded as an indication of the man’s professional status. The term **גדול** can be translated as “great” or “noble,” and could equally well be an indication of a person’s character. (Cf. the **אשה גדולה** “woman of substance” of 4:8.)

ויצרו וימנה את הכסף. Literally, “they bound up and counted the money,” which seems to reverse the logical order (cf. the use of **צרר** “to bind” in 5:23). If MT is allowed to stand, then it is thought that “ring money” is involved, i.e., bracelets (so Barnes, *II Kings*, 60; Hamburger; *IDB* 3:424). A further suggestion is to change the verbal root to read **וַיִּצְרוּ**, from **יצר** “to form” (see Montgomery, *Kings*, 429). The advantage of the first suggestion is that it retains MT, but the difficulty is that it presupposes a kind of currency for which there is little evidence at this time. The second suggestion owes much to C. C. Torrey (*JBL* 55 [1936]247–61), who argued for a reading of **ויצר**, to be translated as “temple foundry worker.” The evidence gathered is late. The parallels cited are taken from Herodotus’ description of an Egyptian custom (*Book* iii. 96) and the application of the evidence is to the second, not the first temple. If MT stands, then the context might aid the interpretation of the use of the term **צרר**. In 1 Kgs 7:15 it is stated of Hiram **ויצר את** “and he cast two pillars.” There G translates

the verb with ἐχώνευσεν, which is translated into English as “melted down” or “cast,” and is reserved elsewhere for the usual Hebrew word 2) צתך Kgs 22:9). While in v 11[10] G offers ἐσφιγξαν “they bound tight,” the previous translation suggests that in certain specific contexts the term צרר can indicate the casting of metal and may be used as a synonym for נתך. The neb translation of “melted down” would support this. Such an interpretation would accommodate the foundry in the temple, while allowing the MT to stand.

12[11] על יד “into the safekeeping,” literally, “hand.” Here the hand is the symbol of power or safekeeping. The priests delegated the responsibility of the money to laypersons specially designated for the task at hand.

לחרשי העץ ולבנים “to the carpenters and builders.” The list of workmen to whom the payment was made illustrates again the sad state of repair to the temple. Their skills would be applied to a wide range of damage. The only other occasions on which such an army of skilled workmen was assembled were the building of the temple (1 Kgs 5) and during the repairs under Josiah (2 Kgs 22).

14[13] לא יעשה בית יהוה “but there were not made for the temple.” The ambiguity of this clause is indicated by the various translations: “But there was not made for the house of the LORD ...” ([rsv](#)); “They did not use the silver brought into the house of the LORD to make silver cups ...” (neb). The difficulty is aggravated by the omission of the phrase **בית יהוה** “the temple” in many of the versions. Montgomery regards the phrase as an intentional gloss, but apart from the fact that the phrase is used very often in the chapter adverbially (cf. vv 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 [4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16]), to suggest that it is a gloss in this instance does not explain its function in the sentence. The context implies that the total income of the temple, with a few exceptions, was diverted toward the repair of the building (v 15[14]), including the **כסף הקדשים** “silver for holy things” (v 5[4]). Because of the urgency of the repairs, manufacture of the utensils used in the temple temporarily ceased. A similar list of items is found in 1 Kgs 7:20. **ספות כסף** “silver basins” are receptacles for use in worship (Exod 12:22). The derivation of **מזמרות** is unknown, although it is normally translated as “snuffers.” **מזרקות** “bowls” is from the root **זרק** “to scatter” (Exod 27:3), and the **חצרות** are the ceremonial trumpets.

16[15] ולא יחשבו “nor was an accounting asked.” The workmen were chosen because of their obvious honesty and trustworthiness. The implication is that the priests were not as reliable as the workmen in their handling of the project.

17[16] כסף חטאות וכסף אשם “money from the guilt offerings and money for sin offerings.” Two sources of income are exempt, but no reason is given other than that they belonged to the priests. The **כסף אשם** and the **חטאות כסף** are unusual

terms and reference to them is omitted from 2 Chr 24. Lev 5:15–19 describes a ritual by which an offender shall (a) offer a guilt offering at a certain value, (b) make restitution to the person offended, (c) pay one-fifth of the restitution price as a tax for the priests. The possible late date for this regulation might exclude it as a precedent for the terms used in v 17[16]. Nowhere is the tax levied designated by either of these terms. Exod 30:16

refers to **כסף הכפרים** “the atonement money,” a tax levied on the Day of Atonement. Again, the possible lateness of the regulation might rule it out of the discussion of the terms in v 17[16]. De Vaux’s suggestion (*Ancient Israel* 1:429–30) that the money is either payment for faults similar to those expiated by sacrifice, a tax on sacrifice, or payments made instead of sacrifice only illustrates the confusion that surrounds the terms.

לכהנים יהיו “because it belonged to the priests.” The practice of reserving some parts of offerings for priests is found in Lev 2:3; 4:13.

18–22[17–21] The end of Joash’s reign is dealt with abruptly by the writer. The extensive temple repairs are to little or no avail since the kingdom is eventually saved from Syria at the expense of the temple treasures. For reasons unstated, Joash dies as ignobly as his predecessor, murdered by two of his own people.

18[17] אז יעלה חזאל “then Hazael attacked.” After two successful attacks on Damascus by Shalmaneser III in ca. 840 and 837 b.c. (cf. *ANET*, 280), Hazael was left alone by Assyria. Judging by 10:32–33 he began to expand his power in the west to protect that border of his kingdom. His expansion to the Philistine Plain represented a serious economic and military threat to Judah, since the trade routes were in danger of being lost. The expansion of Hazael is not dated, although it must have taken place after the temple repairs begun in Joash’s twenty-third year (ca. 814 b.c.).

גת על גת “and he fought against Gath.” Gath is identified with Tell es-Safi (so R. A. S. Macalister, *Excavations in Palestine During the Years 1898–1900* [London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1902] 63–68) or as Tell Sheikh el Areini (so B. Mazar, “Tell Gath,” *IEJ* 6 (1956) 258–59). Tell es-Safi (Tel Zafit) is approximately thirty kilometers west and south of Jerusalem, and Tell Sheikh el Areini (Tel Erani) is located to the north and west of modern Kiryat Gath. Biblical Gath was one of the five major Philistine cities, and played a prominent role in earlier Israelite history. See Stinespring, *IDB* 2:355–56. With the other cities nearby, it held a crucial position on the southern coastal plain. This incursion of Hazael into the south is quite possibly connected with the chaotic state of affairs in the north after the death of Jehu and the accession of his son Jehoahaz (cf. 13:1–3).

לעלות על ירושלם “to attack Jerusalem.” This would have been a natural move for Hazael to have made, since it was to his advantage to remove Jerusalem as a threat from his rear, regardless of the material gains.

19[18] Without a fight, Hazael had gained much. Joash stripped the valuables from the temple to pay off the threatening Syrian.

21[20] ויקמו עבדיו “now his servants took action.” The end of Joash is not explained, and even the overtly theological explanation of 2 Chr 24:24–27 does not

explain the political motivation for the dissatisfaction with Joash and the plot against him.

ויכו את יואש בית מלא “and they struck down Joash at Beth Millo.” The exact location of the death of Joash is a mystery. 2 Chr 24:25 has Joash wounded and helpless after a battle with the Syrians, but Kings nowhere refers to such a battle. The “Millo” is derived from the verb **מלא** “to fill.” It has been interpreted in two ways. Either it refers to the filled terraces supporting the steep slopes of the Kidron wall of the Ophel (see K. Kenyon. [EAEHL](#) 2:595–96; B. Mazar, “Jerusalem in the Biblical Period,” in *Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. Y. Yadin [Jerusalem: Exploration Society, 1976] 4, 6–7); or it is the district which was expanded after the death of David to the north and west of the Ophel, the city of David (see G. A. Barrois, “Millo,” *IDB* 3:382–83.) In either case, what is meant by the “House of Millo” is unknown. **הינרד סלא** “at the descent of Silla” presents another difficulty. The “descent of Silla” or any other reference to “Silla” in the [OT](#) is lacking.

ויזבד בן שמעת ויהוזבד בן שמר [21]22 “it was Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer.” For the suggested emendations of these names see *Notes*.

The name **יהוזבד** “Jehozabad” means “gift of Yahweh” or “endowed by Yahweh” and is common in later OT literature (cf. 2 Chr 17:18; Ezra 8:33). Similarly, Elizabad occurs

in 1 Chr 12:12. The patronyms of the two men are interesting. The ending of **שמעת**

“Shimeath” is extremely rare in the OT, although other forms such as **שמע** and

שמעיה are found (cf. Josh 15:26; Gibson, *Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* 1:61–62).

According to Noth (*Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 38), Assyrian and Arabic names

commonly end with “-ath,” and this might suggest a foreign origin. **שמר** “Shomer” is

nowhere else found in the OT as a proper name. 1) **שמר** Kgs 16:24) and 1) **שמריהו**

Chr 4:37) are known, and the Samarian ostraca contain the name **שמריו** (cf. Gibson,

Syrian Semitic Inscriptions 1:8). The Arad letters contain a longer form **שמריהו**

(Gibson, *ibid.*, 53). The difficulties with these names are illustrated by the interpretations offered by 2 Chr 24:26.

The chapter closes with the customary ending, although the final resting place for Joash differs from that mentioned in 2 Chr 24.

Excursus: The Account of Joash’s Reign and the Account of Idri-mi of Alalakh

M. Liverani ([VT](#) 24[1974] 438–53) has suggested an ingenious inspiration for the full account of the reign of Joash contained in chaps. 11 and 12 of 2 Kings. He notes some striking parallels between the form, style, and plot of 2 Kgs 11–12, and the form, style, and plot of the self-serving account of the rise to fame of Idri-mi of Alalakh. The latter account was carved on a statue of this fifteenth-century king and first published in 1949. A new translation is to be found in [ANESTP](#), 557–58, by A. L. Oppenheim. The account tells the following story. Through some misfortune Idri-mi’s family was forced to flee

their homeland, and he eventually left his family to settle in the land of Canaan. There he was subsequently recognized by some of his countrymen and, after sufficient time (seven years), he had built up enough forces to land near Mount Cassius on the coast of Syria. At this time his brothers joined him. For a further period of time (seven years), he was oppressed by the Hurrians, but in the seventh year he won the favor of the king of the Hurrians and entered into an alliance with him. He then was able to become king of Alalakh and embark upon a campaign of expansion. Having established himself, he introduced a series of cultic and social reforms. The account ends with the invocation of blessing and a note to the effect that the reign lasted thirty years.

Liverani identifies the style of the inscription as propaganda, and mentions several parallels in the [ANE](#). On the basis of the similarities with the account of the reign of Joash in 2 Kgs 11–12, he concludes that the biblical account is based on such an attempt at political self-justification (propaganda), and that the original model for the biblical account was written on a statue dedicated to Joash.

There are clearly some similarities between the two accounts. Liverani's analysis of the Idri-mi inscription is as follows:

1. Crisis in the form of a revolt, and the flight of the family.
2. Sojourn for seven years in another land, while the throne was occupied by a usurper.
3. Recognition of Idri-mi by his countrymen, and the beginning of the amassing of power to return to the throne.
4. In the seventh year Idri-mi takes his throne by force of arms.
5. The people are content.
6. A covenant with god is made in the presence of the people.
7. Cultic reforms are carried out.
8. The length of the reign is given as "thirty years."

The style is theatrical and the document is clearly propaganda. Although there are some obvious similarities between the two accounts, that the account of Joash's reign is dependent in any way upon the Idri-mi inscription must be viewed with suspicion. The most telling objection concerns the temporal distance between the two documents. There are also some marked differences in the account and, in addition to the similarities, the peculiarities of Joash material must be explained. First, the order of events is slightly different and is interrupted at 12:1–3[11:21–12:2] and 12:18–22[17–21]. In vv 1–3[11:21–12:2] the length of reign is mentioned. To be noted also is that such figures are a common feature of these editorial comments on the reigns of various kings. The Joash account contains reference to two covenants, a feature which gave rise to the doublets noted above (see *Form/Structure/Setting* for chap. 11). Further, the balance of the two accounts is far from the same. In the Idri-mi inscription the reference to the cultic changes instituted is almost in passing, obviously not an important element of the restoration to power. Furthermore, these changes are not so much reform as restoration of the old cult. Far more space is devoted to the social reforms he carried out. In the biblical account of Joash's reign the cultic changes are described in detail and are in two parts. In 11:18 the Baal temple is destroyed, but not at the initiative of the king, who is too young, but the priest. In 12:5–17[4–16] a reform in the system of financing the upkeep of the temple is inaugurated. In 2 Kgs

11–12 there is no attempt to approach the inclusive survey of beneficial acts found in the Idri-mi account.

In addition to these matters, there are many other possible parallels to the restoration of power as depicted in 2 Kgs 11–12. The general plot of each is the unjust exile of a person who is to become very important in the later history of his people, either as a leading official or as king. The restoration of that person takes place at a decisive moment in life. It involves recognition, then firm acceptance of his status. Timing is of the essence; in some cases the restoration to power begins a new phase in the ongoing history. Such a story is that of Jacob (Gen 25–50), who at one point in his life is forced to work for periods of seven years (Gen 29:15–20) before the tribal patriarchs are born. Joseph's adventures (Gen 37–50) follow a similar pattern, as does the nonbiblical story of Sinuhe (*ANET*, 18–22). But the narrative plot which has the most similarities with the story of Joash is the biblical story of David's early days and his struggle to become king of all of Israel (1 Sam 16–2 Sam 7). Although he was the designated heir to the throne, David was exiled and spends time as an outlaw. Finally, after the death of Saul, David and his men begin the process of the restoration of power and the crown to David. David becomes king at Hebron over Judah and, finally, after reigning in Hebron for "seven years and six months" (2 Sam 5:5), he takes Jerusalem and becomes king over the whole land. Important in this whole process is the making of a covenant between David and representatives of the people before Yahweh (2 Sam 5:3). Apart from the obvious changes this implied in the social structure of Israel, certain far-reaching cultic reforms were made. The Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6) and the wish is expressed for the construction of a temple (2 Sam 7), but this is postponed temporarily.

It is far more likely that a biblical narrative from the same body of material (the Former Prophets) would provide the model for subsequent biblical narratives, rather than a text such as the Idri-mi inscription which is so far removed from 2 Kgs 11–12 both geographically and temporally. Liverani's theory must be rejected. While both texts are characterized by a certain amount of "theatricality," this is a characteristic not unique to these texts; and in the case of 2 Kgs 11–12, the extent of it is rather limited.

The parallels with the rise of David are more obvious, but caution must be exercised here too lest too much be concluded. The length of the two narratives provides one of the clearest differences between the rise of David and the reign of Joash. Both accounts are "composite" in that they draw material from various traditions and that any similarity in overall plot is due more to the compiler than to any pre-existent sources. (On the David story cf. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 63–66; B. C. Birch, *The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy*, [SBLDS 27](#) [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976].) Common authorship would explain the similarities of style, and common theme—the success of the Davidic monarchy—would be sufficient motivation.

Eplanation

The detail devoted to the temple repairs of Joash is noteworthy when it is compared to the absence of detail concerning the rest of his long, forty-year reign, and the cryptic way in which the events surrounding his death are reported. The reasons for the detail are to be found in the nature of the sources used for the account of the temple repairs (see *Form/Structure/Setting* on 12:5–17[4–16]), but the precise selection of such an

event, to the exclusion of so many other possibilities, is motivated by the concerns of the “deuteronomist.” The opening verses offer the legitimacy to the reign of Joash which was denied to Athaliah. The length of reign, the name of his mother, and the synchronization of his accession with the northern monarch (vv 1–2) are the badges of legitimacy. The dynasty is once again placed on a regular footing.

The system of temple repairs introduced by Joash (vv 5–17) is quite thorough. The king takes the responsibility of the repairs out of the hands of the priests because of their lax attitude toward their duty and places it in the hands of those who do the work. The general oversight of the fund raising is placed under the control of “the king’s secretary” (v 11), who was also responsible for the allotment of funds to the workmen. The most farreaching implication inherent in such a move by the king is the restricting of the priests’ power and control, with a proportionate increase in the power and control of the king over the temple affairs. The centralizing of authority thus begun is continued by subsequent Judean kings: Hezekiah, with his abolition of worship outside the capital city (2 Kgs 18:4), and Josiah, with his purge of Judean religion (2 Kgs 22–23). The system of temple financing inaugurated by Joash was still in effect during the reform of Josiah (2 Kgs 22:3–7).

The repairs and the new system of financing were to little avail because of the attack by Hazael into the southwestern reaches of Judah. The circumstances that allowed such an attack are unknown but were probably the result of the uncertainty following the death of Jehu in Israel in 815 b.c. (see *Comment* on 12:18[17]). Hazael’s designs on his western neighbors had already become apparent (cf. 10:32–33). Joash emptied the palace and temple treasury to pay the bribe to Hazael and effectively robbed the temple of any further income for repairs.

In the deuteronomistic presentation of the history of the monarchy Joash plays a minor role. He is the first king of the restored dynasty and his activities regarding the temple are worthy of mention. But nothing else is, save his untimely death. His reform was an eventual failure; his unusual death passes with little comment from the writer. Two other reformers who followed continue his work, but serious questions are raised about Hezekiah’s integrity (cf. 2 Kgs 20:19) and, like Joash, Josiah dies before his time (2 Kgs 23:29–30). Their reforms do not stop the tide of judgment.

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12:1–3 As a prelude to the description of Joash’s major works, the author offers a mostly favorable assessment of the king’s work. Joash becomes king when seven years old (2 Kgs 11:21), which is Jehu’s seventh year, then rules forty years in Jerusalem (ca. 835–796 b.c.). His mother was not only *not* a northerner, but she was, in fact, from Beersheba, the southernmost part of Judah. His reign could have lasted longer, but 2 Kgs 12:20 states that his own servants kill him and place his son on the throne. Thus, he comes into power as a result of a *coup*, and he dies due to the same type of activity. According to the author, Joash governs well during his tenure, mostly because of Jehoiada’s instruction. Patterson and Austel correctly observe that in light of 2 Chr 24:17–22, which says that after Jehoiada’s death Joash allows outright idolatry to

flourish, 1 Kgs 12:2 “is ominous in tone ... and a reminder of the need for personal faith.”¹²⁰ Quite significantly, the author credits a priest, not a prophet, with helping the king obey the Lord. This fact indicates that the writer values spiritual renewal in its various forms, not just when change arises from the prophetic movement.

Despite Jehoida’s positive influence, however, Joash does not completely reform the religious scene, for he fails to remove the local high places that dot the landscape. As has been noted, 2 Chr 24:17–22 states that Joash eventually countenances Asherah worship as well. Still, the text seems to stress what the reader must surely appreciate: regardless of his flaws, Joash is a big improvement over the southerners influenced by the house of Ahab.

12:4–16 Joash’s commitment to religious change is best seen in his attempts to repair the temple. The description of these attempts is quite straightforward, almost bland in comparison to other stories in 1, 2 Kings, and unfolds in nine parts.¹²¹ In the first three scenes the king orders certain money be used for repairs (vv. 4–5). Next he discovers that the repairs have not been made (v. 6) and holds the priests in charge responsible for the delay (vv. 7–8). By now the temple is well over a century old and surely needs attention. Besides, 2 Chr 24:7 informs us that Athaliah’s sons were looting it for Baal worship. Jones observes that until this time the temple expenses were met by the royal treasury, but Joash has transferred this obligation to the private sector.¹²² Joash is not satisfied with the priests’ progress in raising money, however (v. 8; cf. 2 Chr 24:5–6), and decides to take it out of their hands.

Because the priests fail to do their assigned task, in the next three segments Joash has Jehoiada institute a collection box system for collecting money (v. 9),¹²³ which thus raises the needed funds (v. 10; cf. 2 Chr 24:9–11, which adds that the box’s presence and purpose was broadcast throughout the land), which in turn allows money to be distributed to workmen (vv. 11–12).

Finally, the text states that no money was made available for the manufacture of temple utensils until the temple repairs were finished (vv. 13–14 and 2 Chr 24:14), that the workmen were completely trustworthy (v. 15), and that certain monies were not allocated for the repairs (v. 16).¹²⁴ Part of this money that is not used for repairs is earmarked for the priests. It is hard to imagine that separatist Yahwist priests received any such subsidy during previous reigns, so this innovation alone signals a new day in Jerusalem’s religious life. R. Hubbard notes that these developments are historically significant in at least two ways.

First, it represented a major change in the procedures for handling Temple funds, which lasted until the Exile. Second, it reflected a shift of power over Temple affairs from the priests to the king. The project reminds the readers that God honored fidelity toward His temple.¹²⁵

(4) Joash Placates Syria (12:17–18)

¹⁷About this time Hazael king of Aram went up and attacked Gath and captured it. Then he turned to attack Jerusalem. ¹⁸But Joash king of Judah took all the sacred objects dedicated by his fathers—Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah, the kings of Judah—and the gifts he himself had dedicated and all the gold found in the

treasuries of the temple of the LORD and of the royal palace, and he sent them to Hazael king of Aram, who then withdrew from Jerusalem.

12:17–18 Once again Syria interrupts Judahite plans, this time through invasion and direct threat of conquest. During an otherwise unknown campaign,¹²⁶ Hazael overruns the Philistine city Gath. Gray suggests that the Syrian's purpose may have been to control the southern trade routes.¹²⁷ Whatever his reasons, Hazael turns against Jerusalem, the capital of such old Syrian foes as David and Jehoshaphat. Given Syria's power, the threat is real.

To avoid the invasion, Joash plunders the temple treasuries to buy Hazael's retreat. Asa employed a similar strategy in 1 Kgs 15:18 when Ben-Hadad threatened him, and Hezekiah will use it when the Assyrians move against him (cf. 2 Kgs 18:15). Ironically, what Joash collected in 2 Kgs 12:4–16 he now spends. Indeed, the temple will never be safe from such usage. Judah's overall policy of appeasement emerges and resurfaces repeatedly in the rest of the history.

(5) Joash Dies (12:19–21)

¹⁹As for the other events of the reign of Joash, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ²⁰His officials conspired against him and assassinated him at Beth Millo, on the road down to Silla. ²¹The officials who murdered him were Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer. He died and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. And Amaziah his son succeeded him as king.

12:19–21 Joash's career does not end as grandly as it begins. After forty years in power (cf. 2 Kgs 12:1) two of his officials murder him. No reason for the assassination is given here, but 2 Chr 24:17–25 offers more details on the matter, perhaps in order to explain what "the annotations on the book of the kings" (2 Chr 24:27) omits. The Chronicler says that after Jehoiada's death Joash allows idol worship, has a man (Zechariah, son of Jehoiada) stoned for opposing his acceptance of idolatry, and, as a result of these moral failures, is severely wounded by the Syrians in battle. His officials finish him as he lies recovering. Joash becomes so unpopular at the end of his life that he is denied burial in the tomb of his ancestors. His son Amaziah takes his place.

The decline in Joash's character is tragic. He does not fulfill his potential. Hubbard observes, "Once a promising, God-fearing young ruler, Joash died a disappointment. By bribing Hazael with Temple treasures, he tarnished his one great achievement, the Temple restoration."¹²⁸ Perhaps his problem was that he never learned to make solid decisions on his own. Honeycutt writes, "In the final analysis the individual, under God's leadership, must make his own decisions, create his own integrity, and achieve his own destiny."¹²⁹ Besides these flaws, Joash becomes proud and disloyal, even to the extent that he kills his mentor's son for preaching his mentor's message. It is hard to imagine a sadder case of moral failure.

¹²⁰ Patterson and Austel, "1, 2 Kings," 221.

¹²¹ Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 149.

¹²² Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 2:490.

[123](#) Patterson and Austel explain that the box itself could not actually be “beside the altar” but as 2 Chr 24:8 clarifies was “against the altar wall at the entrance that lay to the right side of the altar, or the southern entrance to the middle court” (“1, 2 Kings,” 222).

[124](#) Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 149.

[125](#) Hubbard, *First and Second Kings*, 185.

[126](#) Montgomery and Gehman, *Kings*, 430.

[127](#) Gray, *1 and 2 Kings*, 533.

[128](#) Hubbard, *First and Second Kings*, 185.

[129](#) Honeycutt, “2 Kings,” 258.

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