

UZZIAH LIKE HIS SON:
PORTRAITS OF UZZIAH IN THE MASORETIC TEXT AND THE SYRIAC
PESHITTA OF CHRONICLES

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ABSTRACT: The various textual witnesses reveal more than one portrait of Uzziah. Two distinctive portraits of Uzziah emerge, one within the Masoretic tradition and another in the Syriac Peshitta. The present article aims to explore these portraits in order to demonstrate the shape of each portrait of Uzziah in light of Jotham and to determine what these portraits reveal about the nature of the textual transmission of the account of Uzziah in Chronicles.

KEYWORDS: Uzziah, Jotham, Masoretic Text, Syriac Peshitta, Chronicles

Introduction

In 2 Chronicles 26, the Hebrew Bible presents a tragic picture of King Uzziah. Uzziah begins his reign as a dedicated follower of Yahweh, but by the end of his reign, he suffers terribly from a skin disease because he violates the cultic sanctity of the Jerusalem temple and the Aaronic priesthood. The final image of Uzziah portrays him as isolated from the temple, abdicating his royal responsibilities to his son Jotham, and buried apparently beyond the city of David. In contrast, the brief account of Uzziah's son Jotham in 2 Chronicles 27 depicts a lifelong righteous king who does not violate the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple. Despite the contrast, Jotham's account bears numerous parallels to Uzziah's account. Some of those similarities present Jotham as continuing and extending his father's work. These similarities bear significance for the portrait of Uzziah and his relationship to Jotham. However, a look at the various textual witnesses reveals more than one portrait of Uzziah. Two distinctive portraits of Uzziah emerge, one most sharply within the Masoretic tradition while another in the Syriac Peshitta. This article aims to explore these portraits to reveal the shape

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of each portrait of Uzziah in light of Jotham and to determine what these portraits reveal about the nature of the textual transmission of this passage in Chronicles.

A Portrait of Uzziah in Light of Jotham in the Masoretic Tradition

Looking at the Hebrew Bible, one may notice the following similarities in language and theme between the accounts of Uzziah and Jotham. First, the Chronicler uses the same language to characterize their reigns: 'he did what was upright in the eyes of YHWH just as his father [Amaziah in 2 Chronicles 26:4 or Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 27:2] did...' However, regarding Jotham, the text continues by stating that he did not enter the temple; therefore, Jotham does not fail in the area where his father Uzziah did. Second, the Chronicler speaks of both kings' commitment to YHWH even though the Chronicler uses different language in each case. For Uzziah, the Chronicler states that Uzziah 'set himself to seek God during the days of Zechariah' (2 Chronicles 26:5 NRSV) while for Jotham, he states that Jotham 'ordered his ways before the LORD his God' (2 Chronicles 27:6 NRSV). Despite the different expressions, the Chronicler portrays the same theme: the king's devotion to YHWH. Even so, one gets a sense of escalation from Uzziah to Jotham since the Chronicler qualifies Uzziah's devotion as occurring during the days of Zechariah but provides no qualification for Jotham's devotion.

Third, both kings fight victoriously against neighboring enemies. Uzziah fights against the Philistines, Arabs, and Meunites (26:6–7) whereas Jotham fights against the Ammonites (27:5). Fourth, both kings receive tribute from the Ammonites. The narrative does not specify the amount or the frequency of the tribute that the Ammonites give to Uzziah (26:8), but it presents the tribute as the result of Uzziah's victories over the neighboring nations. On the other hand, the text specifies the amount Jotham receives from the Ammonites as well as the fact that he receives it each of three years (27:5). Presenting the amount and the timeframe suggests some escalation from Uzziah to Jotham (see Johnstone 1998: 170; although see Klein 2012: 387).

Fifth, both kings make repairs within Jerusalem, fortifying the city further. Uzziah rebuilds towers at several gates as well as a section of Jerusalem's wall (26:9), a section destroyed during his father's reign (25:23) while Jotham rebuilds the temple's upper gate as well as extensive work on an inner section of Jerusalem's wall (27:3), further extending his father's work in Jerusalem. The use of the term 'extensively' to describe Jotham's activity points in the same direction (Klein 2012: 386). Sixth, both kings build cities. Uzziah builds cities near the Philistines (26:6) while Jotham builds cities in the hill country of Judah (27:4). Seventh, both kings build towers beyond Jerusalem. Uzziah builds towers in the wilderness (26:10). On the other hand, Jotham builds towers and forts within the forests of Judah (27:4). Eighth, following

the comments about tribute, the Chronicler describes both kings as ‘growing strong’ using the Hebrew root *חזק* (Uzziah, 26:8//Jotham, 27:6).

Although the list contains several elements, admittedly, many of these elements are common to the good kings in Chronicles. Chronicles records that virtually every good king does what is upright in YHWH’s eyes (Asa, 14:2; Jehoshaphat, 20:32; Joash, 24:2; Amaziah, 25:2; Hezekiah, 29:2; Josiah 34:2). Almost all are said to seek YHWH or some similar expression for devotion to YHWH (Asa, 14:4; Jehoshaphat, 17:4; Hezekiah, 31:21; Josiah, 34:3). Almost all good kings in Chronicles experience some type of military victory (Abijah, 13:15–18; Asa, 14:8–15; Jehoshaphat, 20:22–24, Amaziah, 25:11–13; Hezekiah, 32:21–22). Others receive some type of gift or tribute from neighboring nations (Jehoshaphat, 17:11; Hezekiah, 32:23). Most grow strong, at least over their own kingdom (Abijah, 13:21; Jehoshaphat, 17:1; Amaziah, 25:11; Hezekiah, 32:5). However, for these two kings, the number of specific, even verbal, connections and the escalation or extension of Uzziah’s work to Jotham’s suggest more commonality between the two kings than just the general features of being good kings. Their reigns are tied more closely together.

At the same time, the Masoretic Text also carries themes that are unique to Uzziah, even in the positive stage of his reign (26:1–15). Two themes deserve special mention. First, the Masoretic text preserves a play on Uzziah’s other name, Azariah. This play on the name Azariah takes place by using the verb ‘to help’ which forms the first part of the name Azariah (*עזר*). This verb occurs three times in the positive stage of Uzziah’s reign: verses 7, 13, and 15. Furthermore, the use of the verb presents a contrast to the high priest named in verse 17: Azariah (see Williams 2024: 470–71, for further details). As a result, one of the features of Uzziah’s reign in Chronicles is this play on the name Azariah through this theme of helping.

Second, the Masoretic text presents elements that are unique to Uzziah among all kings in Chronicles. In 26:10, the text describes Uzziah as one who loved the soil, that is, agriculture. Chronicles does not describe any other king in these terms. Even such agricultural development is rare (only David is similar in 1 Chronicles 27:25–31; Klein 2012: 374). Regarding Uzziah’s military preparations, only Uzziah provides such a complete inventory of weapons and armor among all kings in Chronicles (26:14; only Asa comes close by supplying shields, spears, and bows; 14:8). Furthermore, the ingenious devices set up on the perimeter of Jerusalem (26:15) occur nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible (for an explanation regarding such devices, see Klein 2012: 376; Williams 2024: 469). They apply only to Uzziah. These elements help round out the portrait of Uzziah, Jotham, and their relationship in the Masoretic text.

The portrait of Uzziah that emerges from the Masoretic Text consists of three elements to note. First, on the one hand, during the positive period of Uzziah’s reign,

the text closely connects Uzziah to Jotham to show his son carrying on and extending his work. Second, on the other hand, during that same period, the text presents elements unique to him even as it develops themes common among good kings (such as economic development and military preparation). Third, the text presents a portrait that plays off the king's other name Azariah.

The Portrait of Uzziah in Light of Jotham in the Syriac Peshitta

Having described the portrait that emerges from the Masoretic Text, I will turn to another portrait of Uzziah, the one presented in the Syriac Peshitta. In general, the accounts of Uzziah's reign and Jotham's reign are shorter in the Syriac Peshitta than in the Masoretic text. Several verses, or pieces of verses, are not preserved: in chapter 26, verses 6b–8a, 11b, 14–15a, 17b–18a, and in chapter 27, verse 8. Furthermore, the Peshitta preserves several readings different from the Masoretic text. The examination will proceed by addressing minuses and then addressing variant readings. The focus will remain on those passages that affect the portrait of Uzziah, especially in light of Jotham.

First, for the minus 6b–8a, the Masoretic text recounts three main points: 1) Uzziah built cities around Ashdod, 2) God helped Uzziah against the Philistines, Arabs, and Meunites, and 3) the Ammonites (see above regarding Meunites) paid Uzziah tribute. Notice that these three points all contribute significantly to the Masoretic portrait of Uzziah and Jotham. For the relationship between Uzziah and Jotham, city-building and Ammonite tribute draw close connections between the two kings. Regarding Uzziah himself, the theme of God's helping (26:7) is also absent.

Second, for the minus 11b, the Masoretic text lists the officials responsible for recording the muster of soldiers. The Syriac does not preserve the names of the officials. Admittedly, Chronicles includes numerous names, and in comparison to the Masoretic text, the Peshitta preserves many of the names. However, one section of names is omitted in several Peshitta manuscripts: 1 Chronicles 26:13–27:34. As a result, the Peshitta translator may, for whatever reason, determine to leave out such a list (see Phillips 2006: 265). Without the list of names, the description of Uzziah's military muster is more generic.

Third, for the minus 14–15a, the Masoretic text describes two aspects of Uzziah's military preparation. He equipped his soldiers with a full range of weaponry and armor. Second, Uzziah made ingenious devices developed for the defensive structures of Jerusalem. In both cases, the Masoretic text presents the unique characteristics of Uzziah and his reign. Without this information, the portrait of Uzziah becomes more generic.

Fourth, for the minus in 27:8, the Masoretic text repeats the chronological information for Jotham. The Peshitta only presents the chronological information in

the introduction to Jotham's reign. The effect of this minus is difficult to determine although its absence may focus on Jotham's positive theological evaluation. The final words of the account before the conclusion are that Jotham 'made firm his ways before the Lord his God' (27:7). At the same time, the minus changes the structure of Jotham's account. In the Masoretic text, the chronological information regarding Jotham occurs at the beginning and end of the account (27:1, 8), creating an *inclusio* for the account. In the Peshitta, such a structure of Jotham's account is not present.

Regarding variant readings, the focus again will be on passages that address the portrait of Uzziah, especially in light of Jotham.

In 26:5, two variants arise. The beginning of the verse reads, 'He [Uzziah] prayed before him [YHWH]'. In contrast, the Masoretic Text reads, 'He set himself to seek God.' In other passages, the Peshitta exhibits the tendency to introduce prayer into different contexts of devotion (Weitzman 1992: 147–73; Dirksen 1995: 19). The variation between the Peshitta and the Masoretic text is minor; they both contain expressions of piety.

The latter part of 26:5 in the Masoretic text reads, 'when he sought YHWH, God prospered him.' The Peshitta uses a different expression: 'YHWH made all his ways firm.' This phrase appears immediately following the standard formula for introducing a king: the chronological information and the assessment of the king's reign. The Peshitta does not appear to preserve the first part of the Masoretic Text ('when he sought YHWH'), perhaps because it seemed redundant (see Phillips 2023, 246). What the Peshitta does preserve is the same term of 'making firm' at the end of Jotham's reign, immediately before the standard conclusion; however, in this case, it applies to Jotham: 'Jotham grew strong because he made firm his ways before the Lord his God.' The Masoretic text contains a corresponding reading: 'Jotham became strong because he ordered his ways before YHWH his God.' In this case, the Peshitta's variant reading corresponds, although not precisely, to the expression used at the end of Jotham's reign. The word usage creates an *inclusio* around the accounts of Uzziah and Jotham. This correspondence does not occur in the other textual witnesses.

In the latter part of verse 8, the Peshitta reads 'he multiplied making war' while the Masoretic text reads, 'he became very strong.' The Peshitta reading may reflect a misunderstanding of the *Vorlage*, reading 'exceedingly' (עַד־לְמַעַלָּה) as 'war' (לְמַלְחָמָה) and thereby creating this variant (Phillips 2023: 246). The variant presents a slightly more militaristic picture of Uzziah since the Masoretic Text also speaks of the Ammonite tribute.

In 26:10, rather than addressing cisterns and cattle, as the Masoretic text does, the Peshitta refers to castles and possessions. Likely, for these readings, the Peshitta has read the Hebrew words 'cistern' and 'cattle' according to similar roots and then ren-

dered them with a proper Syriac cognate (see Phillips 2023: 247). This phenomenon does occur elsewhere in the Peshitta (Frankl 1872: 505–509; although see Greenberg 2002: 23–24). This variant focuses the verse on Uzziah's military power rather than focusing on his economic development of the land as the Masoretic text.

The last part of verse 10 raises another variant. Whereas the Masoretic Text reads, 'he loved the soil,' the Peshitta reads, 'he had great wealth.' In the Masoretic Text, this expression contributes to the unique characteristics of Uzziah's portrait. In the Peshitta, the unique expression is replaced with a generic expression regarding wealth.

In 26:13, the Masoretic Text describes Uzziah's army as ready to help him, reinforcing the theme of helping described above. The Peshitta condenses verse 13 significantly, and in so doing, removes any language regarding helping the king. As with the minus for verse 7 discussed above, '[t]here seems to be little reason why the Syriac translator or the scribe responsible for his *Vorlage* would have omitted it [this expression] on purpose' (Shepherd 2016: 73).

Finally, the last phrase of 26:15 in the Masoretic Text reads, 'he was marvelously helped until he became strong.' In contrast, the Peshitta reads, 'he became very rich.' The first part of the Masoretic Text's expression is not preserved in the Peshitta. This expression is the third occurrence of the theme of helping in the Masoretic account. The Peshitta reading avoids all three occurrences.

As far as the shift from power to wealth, this reading may reflect the Syriac translator's own tendency regarding wealth and poverty. The Syriac translator for Ben Sira 'introduces a negative remark about riches' in some passages (van Peursen 2007: 92). Something similar is likely occurring here as the Peshitta 'has turned the reason for Uzziah's iniquity to his wealth rather than his power' (Phillips 2023: 247). This variant corresponds to the Peshitta variant in verse 10 as well. As a result, the Peshitta's portrait of Uzziah focuses more on his wealth than his power as the Masoretic Text does.

Regarding the minuses, one can draw three conclusions regarding the Peshitta's portrait of Uzziah, Jotham, and their relationship: 1) Uzziah is not as closely related to Jotham as the Masoretic Text presents him, 2) Uzziah's reign is more generic than in the Masoretic Text, and 3) there are no obvious theological reasons for omitting these texts if they were found in the Peshitta's *Vorlage*. At the same time, the absence of 1 Chronicles 26:13–27:34 may help explain the absence of official's names in verse 11.

Looking over these minuses and variant readings, I would characterize the Peshitta's portrait of Uzziah in the following ways. First, the Peshitta presents an account of Uzziah that does not correspond as closely to Jotham. Several features of the Masoretic portrait closely connecting Uzziah to Jotham are lacking. Second, the Peshitta presents a more generic portrait of Uzziah. The Peshitta does not preserve

the names of specific officials, nor does it preserve the characteristics of Uzziah that make him unique among the other kings described in Chronicles. Third, the Peshitta lacks entirely the theme of help found in the Masoretic Text. Fourth, the Peshitta's portrait focuses more sharply on Uzziah's military activities. Fifth, the Peshitta re-works the picture of Uzziah's piety and future trouble in light of themes significant elsewhere. His piety appears in his prayers while his future trouble emerges from his wealth. Finally, the Peshitta structures the account of Uzziah and Jotham differently, containing an *inclusio* around both accounts whereas the Masoretic text contains an inclusion around only Jotham's account.

The Nature of the Masoretic Text

Comparing Uzziah's portrait in the Masoretic Text to that of the Peshitta, the Masoretic Text preserves unique elements of Uzziah's reign and elements associated with Jotham which contribute significantly to portrait of Uzziah that emerges. On the one hand, Uzziah embodies a good king in unique ways. On the other hand, his son Jotham continues and extends his work. One specific connection most sharply draws these two accounts together and portrays Jotham as exceeding his father Uzziah: the tribute of the Ammonites for Uzziah (26:8) and Jotham (27:5). However, if one looks at all the manuscript evidence, one finds that some manuscripts and versions do not present the relationship as sharply as Codex Leningradensis. In particular, the reading of 'the Ammonites' in 26:8 is not shared among all witnesses. The LXX preserves a reading reflecting the Meunites (המעונים) rather than the Ammonites (העמונים). According to Kennicott (1776: 2,711) two Masoretic manuscripts preserve the consonantal text for 'the Meunites' and two others preserve a mixed form of the Ammonites and Meunites (העמעונים). Furthermore, as examined above, the Syriac Peshitta does not preserve verses 6b–8a. As mentioned, by preserving the Ammonite tribute to Uzziah, virtually all the Masoretic tradition creates a distinctive link between the reigns. Furthermore, this link does more than just compare the two kings to one another; it shows how Jotham extends his father's work.

It would be easy to overlook such a minor variation in the textual tradition, especially when the variants resemble each other so closely. However, since the Peshitta presents a slightly different portrait of Uzziah through its minuses and variations within the text, the Masoretic tradition for these passages deserves a closer look.

To gain a view of the Masoretic Text regarding Uzziah in relation to Jotham, I will attempt to uncover signs of textual disruption either among the Masoretic witnesses themselves, by comparing the versions, or looking at readings that call for possible emendation. The focus will be on the first part of Uzziah's reign (verses 3–10) and Jotham's reign (verse 1–9). These verses preserve the elements of each reign that correspond to one another.

Second Chronicles 26:5 preserves three readings within the Masoretic tradition (see Kennicott 1776: 2,711; de Rossi 1788: 198–99; Ginsburg 1926: 878). The reading preserved among most manuscripts and in Leningradensis is בִּירָאָת ('in seeing'). A few other Masoretic manuscripts preserve the reading בִּירָאָת ('in fearing'), an unusual form of the infinitive construct of יָרָא. The next most common reading, preserved in about a third of Masoretic manuscripts and among the versions, is בִּירָאָת ('in fear of'), the construct form of the noun יִרְאָה ('fear'). These variant readings show that the Masoretic text is not uniform in this case.

One can explain this variety in the Masoretic tradition. The two most common readings are both grammatically correct and sensical. Furthermore, those two readings require only one shift in the consonantal text: the second most common reading has a *y* as the second consonant. The omission of such a letter is easy to understand, especially when the letter can also serve as a *mater*. The vocalization of the two readings follows the consonantal text. Furthermore, the least common reading is a mixed form, preserving the vocalization of 'in seeing' but the consonantal text of 'in fear of'. Such variants could easily arise accidentally in the transmission of the text.

Second Chronicles 26:7 presents several readings regarding the location of the Arabs. The Masoretic text preserves the reading Gur-baal, a unique placename in the Hebrew Bible (although about half a dozen manuscripts do not preserve a *maqef*, Kennicott 1776: 2,711). The LXX preserves a reading of *petras* or similar form ('rock'), pointing to a Hebrew reading of צִוּר ('rock') probably preserved in its *Vorlage* (see Gottlieb 2016: 51). The Latin preserves Tur Caaba, a form more easily associated with צִוּר than בָּעַל. The Aramaic reflects either גִּזֹּר or גִּדֹּר (see Gottlieb 2016: 61). As a result of these readings, Rudolph (1955: 282) suggests that the form should be בִּגְגֶר. The variety of readings suggests that there may be some disruption in textual transmission. The rest of the verse in the Masoretic text may strengthen this sense of disruption. The end of the verse in Leningradensis reads 'and the Meunites' (וְהַמְּוִנִים). A few Masoretic manuscripts read וְהַעֲמוֹנִים ('and the Ammonites'; see Kennicott 1776: 2,711; de Rossi 1788: 199; Ginsburg 1926: 879). Even regarding the elements in which the Masoretic tradition is uniform, the text gives a sense of disruption. One would expect at the end of the verse, and in fact the versions preserve, parallelism in the expressions naming Uzziah's enemies: God helped him against the Philistines (עַל־פְּלִשְׁתִּים), and against the Arabs (וְעַל־הָעֲרָבִים), and against the Meunites (וְעַל־הַעֲמוֹנִים). As a result, these verses demonstrate a sense of disruption in the Masoretic text because the Masoretic tradition is not uniform and, where the uniform tradition differs from the versions, it likely does not preserve the original readings.

These variants can be explained through accidental means. The variants related to Gur in Gur-baal require only the shift of a single consonant: either *g* to *z* (as

represented in LXX), 𐤆 to 𐤁 (if the original reading is Gezer), or 𐤆 to 𐤁 (if the original reading is Gerar). Furthermore, the place name Gur-baal may represent a different understanding of which words belong together. For instance, an original reading of 'against the Arabs dwelling in Gur and against the Meunites' (הַיִּשְׁבִּים בְּגוּר וְעַל־הַמְּוִנִים) could easily become the reading of the Masoretic text, with the insertion of a waw following עַל (see also Rudolph 1955: 282; Klein 2012: 367).

Second Chronicles 26:8 provides another reading involving the Meunites and the Ammonites. As mentioned above, almost all Masoretic manuscripts preserve the reading 'the Ammonites' (הָעַמּוֹנִים). The Aramaic and Latin traditions agree with the Masoretic text. However, LXX preserves a reading of 'the Meunites,' corresponding to the end of verse 7. Within the context, the Meunites fit better than the Ammonites since the Ammonites are located east of Jerusalem while the other countries are located to the south and west (Dillard, 1987: 204, 206; Japhet 1993: 880; Klein 2012, 367). Furthermore, the reading in the Masoretic text is unusual because Chronicles never elsewhere refers to the Ammonites as a people using this term; it always refers to the people as בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן ('sons of Ammon'). There is one exception: 2 Chronicles 20:1. In this case, the reading הָעַמּוֹנִים also appears to preserve a reading that is not original because the expression בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן occurs immediately before it as a distinct group: הָעַמּוֹנִים בְּנֵי־מוֹאָב וּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן וְעִמְקָהֶם (The sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon and with them the Ammonites...). All this evidence indicates that the Masoretic text has not preserved an original reading (however, see Levin 2017: 252, who argues for the Ammonites on historical grounds rather than textual ones).

This variant could easily arise through a common, unintentional scribal mistake: metathesis. The difference between the readings is a transposition of the consonants מ and ע and a variant vocalization: הָעַמּוֹנִים << הָעַמְּוִנִים. Such a metathesis is also more likely since 'the Meunites' has occurred closely in the context.

Second Chronicles 26:6 offers some challenges for interpretation and may reveal some underlying textual issues. The text recounts that Uzziah fought against the Philistines and provides three cities in which Uzziah breached their walls: Gath, Yavneh, and Ashdod. Gath and Ashdod are well known as Philistine cities; however, Yavneh is not. In contrast, the Syriac and Aramaic preserve a reading of Gaza, another location associated with the Philistines (cf. Josh: 11:22; 15:47; 1 Sam. 6:17; Jer. 25:20; Amos 1:7–8; Zeph. 2:4; Zech. 9:5–6). In fact, Gottlieb (2020: 14) has argued that the Aramaic *Vorlage* preserved the reading Gaza (in contrast to Weitzman 1999: 119). In this case, the Masoretic text is certainly the more difficult, but it is still plausible. As a result, it likely represents the best reading.

However, the presence of Yavneh may have had an influence on the remainder of the verse. Jabneh (יַבְנֵה) consists of the same consonants as the word יָבִינָה ('he built'),

which occurs in the latter half of the verse. The similarity between *יבנה* and *ויבנה* requires one to take a closer look at the word *ויבנה*. What one might expect following a statement that Uzziah destroyed the defenses of several cities is a statement that Uzziah plundered these cities, especially since the following verses speak of other nations paying tribute to him (see Klein 2012: 367). Rudolph (1995: 282, 285) suggests a possible emendation in the latter part of the verse. One can imagine how an original reading of *ויבז הערים* ('he plundered the cities') became *ויבנה ערים* ('he built cities') under the influence of *יבנה* in the previous part of the verse (notice the similarity of *ב* and *נ* and the placement of *ה*). The reconstructed reading ties the two parts of the verse together more closely, explains why the III-*ה* root *בנה* retains the *ה* even though it occurs in the *wayyiqtol* (aka preterite, impf. with *waw*-consecutive) and corresponds to other places in Chronicles where similar activity takes place (cf. 2 Chronicles 14:14 [HB 13]). Even if one does not accept the reconstructed reading fully, the spelling of *ויבנה* at least calls into question whether or not something has taken place during the transmission process to obscure an original reading in this passage.

Second Chronicles 27:8 presents the final textual variant to examine. Even though the Masoretic text preserves this verse here, the LXX and Syriac do not preserve the verse. This variant is a nearly verbatim duplication of 27:1. The parallel account in 2 Kings 15 (after verse 37) also does not preserve the verse at the end of Jotham's reign. At the same time, this verse in Chronicles corresponds verbatim to 2 Kings 15:33a, not mentioning Jotham by name (see Allen 1974: 1,218). Most often, Chronicles includes this type of information in the introduction to a king's reign; however, sometimes Chronicles delays mentioning the information until the conclusion; however, the repetition of such chronological material in the introduction and conclusion of a king's reign only occurs for Jehoram's reign (Klein 2012: 388). For such a short passage, this reading is especially unusual and may point to some disruption in the transmission process.

How the variants arose for this verse presents a couple of options. If the verse is original, then the witnesses that do not preserve this verse may have omitted it because it is out of place and redundant in such a short account of a king's reign. Admittedly, the verse does create an *inclusio* around Jotham's reign, perhaps intended to arrest the reader's attention to focus on the theological evaluation of Jotham (Johnstone 1998: 170). However, if the verse is not original, it may have originated as a way to distinguish the information about Jotham from the information about Ahaz. In 2 Chronicles 28:1, Ahaz is twenty years old when he becomes king and reigns sixteen years. In contrast, Jotham is twenty-five years old when he becomes king and reigns sixteen years. Perhaps the similarities between the chronological information of the two kings inspired a scribe to include the verse (Rudolph 1955: 286).

Looking back over the Masoretic text of these accounts, a few observations arise. First, the Masoretic tradition is not uniform for these accounts. The variance is especially prominent in verses 6–8 which describe Uzziah's wars, won through divine aid, the tribute he received, and his growing power. These verses also contain close correspondences to Jotham. Second, within these passages, a small number of Masoretic readings appear to be unlikely. This observation applies to passages where there is significant manuscript evidence supporting the reading, even one (26:6) in which there is no direct contrary manuscript evidence. In other words, most of the manuscript evidence for these accounts is quite uniform and stable. At the same time, especially verses 6–9 present issues that could point to some form of textual disruption within the Masoretic tradition. Third, most of the variants can be explained as unintentional scribal errors, especially errors involving small shifts in the consonantal text (e.g., metathesis).

Relating the Masoretic Text and the Syriac Peshitta

Evaluating the significance of the Masoretic Text readings requires a wider look at the nature of the Peshitta for Chronicles. Generally, the Peshitta agrees with the Masoretic Text, most deviations being the result either of translation practices or of influences from the Targums or LXX rather than reflecting a different working *Vorlage* (for a detailed treatment, see Weitzman 1999: 15–129).

In Chronicles, the situation is quite different. There are numerous deviations between the Peshitta and MT, including many minuses of material, some pluses, a little bit of rearrangement as well as quite a bit of variation within specific verses, much like what has been examined above. It is not clear how to interpret this evidence. Two options appear most readily. On the one hand, these variations could demonstrate that the Peshitta translator is working with a malformed Hebrew *Vorlage* (Weitzman 1999: 61–67) even though such a proposal cannot explain variant readings in numerous passages, especially passages where the Peshitta clearly preserves a reading corresponding to the Masoretic Text but includes more (see Dirksen 1995: 18–19). On the other hand, these variations may reveal an alternative literary edition of Chronicles already found within the Peshitta's Hebrew *Vorlage* (Shepherd 2016: 64).

Taken individually, the readings discussed regarding the Masoretic Text may suggest that the Peshitta's *Vorlage* suffered from some textual corruption. The disruptions noticed in the Masoretic Text could reflect disruptions that made their way in the Peshitta's *Vorlage*. The fact that much of the disruption occurs in verses 6–8 would seem to confirm this picture. If such were the case, then other variants noticed in the Peshitta would be attributable to the Peshitta's translation technique and theological tendencies (as observed above).

However, looking at the portraits of Uzziah in the Masoretic Text and the Peshit-

ta reveals a more complicated situation. As demonstrated above, the two witnesses present slightly different portraits of Uzziah. Examining how these individual textual variants shape the contours of each portrait reveals that something more than unintentional scribal errors are at play. That such errors would produce two portraits with such distinctive features is unlikely. The fact that the Peshitta entirely lacks both the theme of helping and the unique characteristics of Uzziah's reign speaks against a malformed Hebrew *Vorlage* for the Peshitta resulting from accidental scribal errors. The loosening of the connection between Uzziah and Jotham moves in the same direction. Instead, the two portraits appear to reflect variant literary editions of the same passage. Admittedly, some of the variation is still due to the translation technique and theological tendencies found within the Peshitta (e.g., 26:5, 10). Furthermore, a malformed Hebrew *Vorlage* may account for some variants in the Peshitta of Chronicles although none obviously so for Uzziah's portrait. Overall, however, some form of a varying edition of Uzziah's account best explains the pattern of differences between the portraits of the Masoretic Text and Peshitta.

Both portraits of Uzziah make sense and present an overall similar picture of the king. In the larger context of 2 Chronicles 26–27, both portraits present a righteous king who suffers a tragic end because he violates the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple. At the same time, each portrait presents the positive part of Uzziah's reign in a distinctive way. The portrait in the Masoretic text appears more developed for three reasons. First, the textual connections to Jotham's account through similar themes and phrasing, such as the Ammonite tribute (26:8), produce a portrait in which Jotham continues and extends his father's work. Second, the portrait presents Uzziah as a good king both with generic elements characteristic of good kings in Chronicles but also with features unique to him. Third, the use of the "help" theme and its play on Uzziah's other name (Azariah) points to a thematic development within the portrait. At the same time, structurally, the Masoretic text presents Jotham's reign as a distinct unit marked off by an inclusio of chronological information. As a result, the connections between the two accounts are more thematic.

The portrait in the Peshitta presents a shorter, simpler, and more generic account of Uzziah. This simpler account still clearly presents Uzziah in a positive light for the first part of his reign even though it lacks some of the unique features of the Masoretic text. At the same time, the Peshitta's portrait connects the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham together. Rather than using thematic means to tie the accounts together, it more clearly highlights the inclusio around the two accounts whereby the piety of Uzziah and Jotham are mentioned at the beginning of Uzziah's reign and the end of Jotham's reign.

Further work will be required to determine the origin and development of such

editions as well as their relationship with one another. Whether the Masoretic text represents a second edition of Chronicles (Shepherd 2016: 76–77) or the Peshitta preserves an edition on the way to becoming Chronicles (of course, these are not the options), this investigation may at least provide some help in consider these editions. Methodologically, the analysis demonstrates that an examination of the evidence requires more than a look at the variants in isolation (see van der Kooij 1988: 569–581). In this case, noticing the literary shape of each account shifts the probabilities for which explanations are most likely. Even though common unintentional errors in transmission can explain many variants in the passage observed, the explanations lose explanatory power once one considers the larger context.

Regarding the characteristics of these editions, three observations emerge, especially about the Masoretic text. First, the Masoretic text harmonizes closely elements of both Uzziah and Jotham to present a portrait in which Jotham carries on and extends Uzziah's work. Such harmonization is in line with other father-son pairs in Chronicles (notably, David and Solomon). If and to what extent this harmonization is characteristic of one edition over the other requires further investigation, but one sees it clearly in the Masoretic accounts of Uzziah and Jotham. Second, the Masoretic text presents a more developed portrait of Uzziah by elaborating on features unique to the king. Furthermore, this developed portrait is not just a matter of interpretive detail nor the result of duplication (except for 27:8) but of introducing new material into the passage. Third, the Masoretic text develops a literary theme around a single, repeated term: "help." Furthermore, this strategy involves a play on a king's name, resembling other passages in Chronicles (e.g., Solomon in 1 Chronicles 22:9). As one considers the nature of the Masoretic text and the Syriac Peshitta, these observations provide an inventory (although limited) of features to notice and examine.

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