

Name: Cat Quine

Affiliation: University of Nottingham

Email: cat.quine@nottingham.ac.uk

Abstract: Why were the brothers of king Ahaziah at Beth-Eked in Israel, following the deaths of king Ahaziah and his northern ally, king Joram? This paper takes a closer look at the events of Beth-Eked in 2Kgs 10:13-14 and proposes that the brothers of Ahaziah represent a Judahite delegation seeking to maintain שלום with the Omrides in response to Jehu's coup. If so, then Olyan's observation of the ironic use of שלום in 2Kgs 9 should be extended to 2Kgs 10. In addition, it suggests that Jehu's slaughter of the Judahites at Beth-Eked was the major turning point in the breaking of the Omride-Judahite alliance, rather than the initial deaths of the two kings.

Keywords: Omride-Judahite alliance, Jehu's coup, Beth-Eked, 2 Kings 9-10

Jehu's Slaughter of Judah's Royal Family at Beth-Eked (2 Kings 10:13-14): A Closer Look

2Kgs 10 narrates that Jehu travelled from Jezreel to Samaria and whilst en-route, he met forty-two brothers of king Ahaziah of Judah at Beth-Eked (2Kgs 10:13). Jehu ordered the brothers to be taken alive and then had them slaughtered (2Kgs 10:14). Much has been written about Jehu's relation to the Omrides¹ and his violent coup against them,² including the matter of whether he or Hazael of Aram killed Joram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah,³ his

¹ This question arises from the Assyrian inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, which refer to Jehu as "son of Omri." Although once thought to be an example of Assyrian misunderstanding of Israelite politics, Schneider argues to the contrary; Tammi J. Schneider, "Rethinking Jehu," *Biblica* 77 (1996) 101–107, while Na'aman proposes that it may have been a deliberate choice on behalf of the Assyrians to portray Jehu – their vassal – in a positive light and thus legitimise his reign, see Nadav Na'aman, "Jehu Son of Omri: Legitimizing a Loyal Vassal by his Overlord," *IEJ* 48 (1998) 236–238.

Alternatively, Čapek suggests that Jehu may, indeed, have been of Omride descent: Filip Čapek, "Balancing Evidence about Jehu and Joash in Ancient Near East Texts – Critical Reassessment," *Communio Viatorum* 56 (2014) 23–34.

² E.g., Amitai Baruchi-Unna, "Jehuites, Ahabites, and Omrides: Blood Kinship and Bloodshed," *JSOT* 42 (2017) 3–21; Michael S. Moore, "Jehu's Coronation and Purge of Israel," *VT* 53 Fasc. 1 (2003) 97–114; Hannelis Schulte, "The End of the Omride Dynasty: Social-Ethical Observations on the Subject of Power and Violence," *Semeia* 66 (1994) 133–148.

³ The existence of the Aramean inscription from Tel Dan stele, which claims that Hazael killed Joram and Ahaziah has resulted in much debate about the historicity of both sources. In general, scholars have tended to give priority to the Aramean version of events; e.g., Nadav Na'aman, "The Story of Jehu's Rebellion: Hazael's Inscription and the Biblical Narrative," *IEJ* 56 (2006) 160–166; Shuichi Hasegawa, "The Historiographical Background for Jehu's Claim as the Murderer of Joram and Ahaziah," *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute* (2011) 5–17; Erhard Blum, "The Relations between Aram and Israel in the 9th and 8th Centuries BCE: The Textual Evidence," in *In Search for Aram and Israel: Politics, Culture, and Identity*, eds. Omer Sergi, Manfred Oeming and Izaak J. de Hulster, ORA 20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016) 37–56. However, Robker quite rightly notes that we should be as suspicious of propagandistic bias in the inscription as in the biblical Jehu narratives;

relationship with the Arameans,⁴ and the legitimation of his bloodshed via recourse to prophetic fulfilment⁵ and his zeal for Yahweh.⁶ Yet, the events at Beth-Eked have not attracted a similar level of attention, despite their potential repercussions for our understanding of the relationship between Israel and Judah during this period of royal upheaval. The words of the Judahites to Jehu in 2Kgs 10:13 (וַנֵּרַד לְשָׁלוֹם בְּנֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ וּבְנֵי הַגְּבִירָה) usually translated as either “we have come down to visit the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother” or “we have come down (to enquire/ask about) the welfare of the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother,” create an image of Judahite princes innocently wandering around Israel seemingly unaware of the dramatic events that have unfolded.⁷ Jehu has them killed and the narrative moves on, as do most commentators. This paper argues, however, that we should pay closer attention to the claim that Judahite princes were present in Israel immediately following the death of their own king and that of their northern ally. The first section below observes the intertwining of history and literature in 2Kgs 9-10. The second section then takes a closer look at 2Kgs 10:13-14 and reconsiders the words of the Judahites to Jehu, proposing that וַנֵּרַד לְשָׁלוֹם could be interpreted in a political sense as coming down for peace or seeking to restore order. We also discuss Olyan’s observation of the ironic use of שָׁלוֹם in 2Kgs 9 and propose that his conclusions should be extended to 2Kgs 10. Moreover, 2Kgs 10:13-14 may be deliberately drawing on the שָׁלוֹם motif in 2Kgs 9. The final section then considers the implications of such a reading, arguing, in particular, that although the passage is a literary construction, it probably preserves a memory of a Judahite delegation seeking to maintain the Omride-Judahite alliance after the deaths of Joram and Ahaziah that was slaughtered by Jehu.

1. Literature and History Intertwined

Before we turn to 2Kgs 10:13-14 specifically, a few comments should be made on 2Kgs 9-10 more generally, for there is no question that 2Kgs 9-10 is a highly propagandistic piece of literature that narrates Jehu’s rise in dramatic and, at times, folkloristic fashion.⁸ Moreover, observations of numerous literary techniques are not limited to 2Kgs 9-10, but have been readily identified throughout material pertaining to the reign and downfall of the Omrides

see Jonathan Miles Robker, *The Jehu Revolution: A Royal Tradition of the Northern Kingdom and Its Ramifications*, BZAW 435 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 265–274; 292–295.

⁴ So, for example, William M. Schniedewind, “Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu’s Revolt,” *BASOR* 302 (1996) 75–90; 83–85; Robker, *The Jehu Revolution*, 292–295; David T. Lamb, *Righteous Jehu and his Evil Heirs: The Deuteronomist’s Negative Perspective on Dynastic Succession*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 102–110.

⁵ E.g., Susanne Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa. Die Erzählungen von der Jehu-Revolution und die Komposition der Elia-Elisa-Erzählungen*, BWANT 152 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001); Marsha White, “Naboth’s Vineyard and Jehu’s Coup: The Legitimation of a Dynastic Extermination,” *VT* 44 Fasc. 1 (1994) 66–76; Nadav Na’aman, “Prophetic Stories as Sources for the Histories of Jehoshaphat and the Omrides,” *Biblica* 78 (1997) 153–173.

⁶ Lamb, *Righteous Jehu*, 95–97.

⁷ Fritz even proposes that the group of princes had been in Israel for communal educative purposes; Volkmar Fritz, *1&2 Kings: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 288.

⁸ Garcia-Treto even views the texts through the lens of carnivalization: Francisco O. Garcia-Treto, “The Fall of the House: A Carnavalesque Reading of 2 Kings 9 and 10,” *JSOT* 46 (1990) 47–65.

(1Kgs 16–2Kgs 11). Irony has been detected in multiple places, including the motif of disguise (1Kgs 20; 22),⁹ the non-specific prophecy that Yahweh would give Ramoth-Gilead into the hand of (an unnamed) king (1Kgs 22),¹⁰ the death of Jezebel,¹¹ and the motif of שלום.¹² The chance arrow that kills the king of Israel¹³ and the repeated use of round numbers (thirty-two kings 1Kgs 20:1, cf. thirty-two captains 1Kgs 22:31; seventy sons of Ahab 2Kgs 10:1, 7; forty-two brothers of Ahaziah 2Kgs 10:13 cf. forty-two boys mauled by bears 2Kgs 2:24)¹⁴ also indicate the literary nature of the texts at our disposal.¹⁵ Moore recently observed the parallels between Jehu’s purge and Anat’s purge in KTU 1.3, which he proposes may have formed the basis for the narrative construction of 2Kgs 9-10.¹⁶ Finally, in combination with the numerous literary features found in 2Kgs 9-10, the textual history of these chapters is unclear, with some advocating that, in their current form, they are a combination of two main sources with some later additions.¹⁷ At least a core of the material of the Jehu narrative, if not most of it, however, is usually dated either to Jehu’s reign or that of his successors.¹⁸ Although we must be aware of the literary nature of these texts, I maintain, however, that they can still provide historical insights, though these should remain tentative.¹⁹ Interestingly, though the number of Ahaziah’s brothers in 2Kgs 10:13 is suspiciously round, most commentators retain 2Kgs 10:13-14 as probably historical, noting no significant evidence of glosses or redactional additions within it, other than the addition of אל-בוור.²⁰ The unfamiliar setting of 2Kgs 10:12-14 – in Beth-Eked of the shepherds (בית-עקד הרעים) – may also add weight to the possibility of the historicity underlying the passage. Beth-Eked cannot be

⁹ Richard J. Coggins, “On Kings and Disguises,” *JSOT* 50 (1991) 55–62.

¹⁰ Wolfgang Oswald, “Ahab als Krösus: Anmerkungen zu 1 Kön 22,” *ZTK* 105 (2008) 1–14.

¹¹ Cat Quine, “On Dying in a City-Gate: Implications in the Deaths of Eli, Abner, and Jezebel,” *JSOT* 40 (2016) 399–413.

¹² Saul M. Olyan, “Hašālôm: Some Literary Considerations of 2 Kings 9,” *CBQ* 46 (1984) 652–668. We will return to Olyan’s work below in the discussion of לשלום in 2 Kgs 10:13.

¹³ Jerome T. Walsh, *I Kings*, Berit Olam (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 356; Jeffries M. Hamilton, “Caught in the Nets of Prophecy? The Death of King Ahab and the Character of God,” *CBQ* 56 (1994) 649–663: 653.

¹⁴ Aarnoud R. van der Deijl, *Protest or Propaganda: War in the Old Testament Book of Kings and in Contemporaneous Ancient Near Eastern Texts (1)*, SSN 51 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 157–159; Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 11 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 113–114.

¹⁵ For an in-depth literary analysis of 2 Kgs 9-10 see Robker, *The Jehu Revolution*, 18–69.

¹⁶ Moore, “Jehu’s Coronation.”

¹⁷ E.g., Ernst Würthwein, “Die Revolution Jehus: Die Jehu-Erzählung in altisraelitischer und deuteronomistischer Sicht,” *ZAW* 120 (2008) 28–48; for a detailed redactional analysis see Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa*.

¹⁸ So Nadav Na’aman, “Historical and Literary Notes on the Excavations at Tel Jezreel,” *Tel Aviv* 24 (1997) 122–128: 125; Yoshikazu Minokami, *Die Revolution des Jehu*, ATG 38 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 124–65; Baruch Halpern and André Lemaire, “The Composition of Kings,” in *The Book of Kings: Source, Composition, Historiography and Reception*, eds. André Lemaire and Baruch Halpern, VTS 129 (Leiden: Brill, 2010) 123–153: 145–148.

¹⁹ In agreement with Na’aman, “Prophetic Stories.”

²⁰ אל-בוור is missing from one Hebrew manuscript, the LXX, and some Targum manuscripts. Although Robker questions why it was added (*The Jehu Revolution*, 29 n. 68), I suggest it was a redactional addition adding a degree of similarity between 2Kgs 10:13-14 and Jer 41:7-9. The latter contains a narrative about Ishmael’s uprising against Gedaliah and slaughter of the delegation visiting from Shechem and Shiloh. Stade (B. Stade, “Anmerkungen zu 2 Kö. 10–14,” *ZAW* 5 [1885] 275–97) thought the passage was an addition, but most commentators since him retain it as integral.

identified with any certainty, but the contrast of this seemingly rural location with the major fortified cities Jehu is otherwise associated with (Jezreel and Samaria) suggests a historical memory behind the text.²¹ Beth-Eked is not remembered in 2Kgs 10 for what it was, but for what happened in it. As Beth-Eked does not appear elsewhere in the biblical texts and seems to have no ideological significance, it seems that there was probably some tradition connected with it, concerning the execution of some of Judah's royal family.

2. 2 Kings 10:13-14: A Closer Look

2Kgs 10:12 opens dynamically, with a sequence of three verbs (ויקם ויבא וילך) narrating Jehu's movement from Jezreel (10:11) to Samaria via Beth-Eked of the shepherds. In 2Kgs 10:13 Jehu then "finds" (ויהוא מצא) the brothers (or relatives) of king Ahaziah of Judah at Beth-Eked. Jehu seemingly does not recognise them, for he asks, "who are you?" The brothers reply, stating that they are relatives of Ahaziah, and they have come down for the purposes of שלום with the sons of the king and the queen mother – ונרד לשלום בני-המלך ובני-הגבירה. In 2Kgs 10:14 Jehu then orders his (otherwise unmentioned) subordinates to take the brothers alive (תפשוּם חיים). The text confirms that they were, indeed, taken alive (ויתפשוּם חיים) and they were then slaughtered [at the cistern] of Beth-Eked, forty-two men in total, and that Jehu did not leave any alive. Long rightly notes that the obscurity of these events is partially due to the lack of connection between these events and those elsewhere in 2Kgs 9-10.²² However, the command to "take them alive," finds a parallel in 1Kgs 20:18-21 which likely indicates a literary connection between the two texts, to which we shall return below.

In any case, as elsewhere, Jehu is the main protagonist of the passage, portrayed dynamically and in control of events. Despite the lack of actions or sins committed by the brothers of Ahaziah, no one questions Jehu's order to slaughter these members of the Judahite royal household. As Lamb observes, Jehu's murder of the brothers causes some tension between the promise to David and the judgement on Ahab.²³ According to the biblical texts, Jehu was responsible for the deaths of several hundred people,²⁴ a tradition perhaps recalled in Hos 1:4-5. The justification for this level of violence is not always clear, though the murder of Ahaziah's brothers may either have been for political convenience or a fulfilment of bringing an end to the house of Ahab (1Kgs 21:21). If the latter is the case, the brothers of Ahaziah are presumably supposed to be viewed by the reader as partially Ahabite/Omrive via the

²¹ Both Jezreel and Samaria were strongly fortified in the ninth century, and both were closely associated with the Omrides. Indeed, although the establishment of Samaria permitted Omri to establish a dynasty and improve international relations (D.N. Pienaar, "The Role of Fortified Cities in the Northern Kingdom During the Reign of the Omride Dynasty," *JNSL* 9 [1981] 151–158), Napier proposes that Jezreel may have been equally as strong as, if not stronger than Samaria under the Omrides; B.D. Napier, "The Omrides of Jezreel," *VT* 9 (1959) 365–378. The proposed identification of Beth-Eked with either Beit Qad or Kefar Ra'i remains unlikely (e.g., O. Odelain and R. Séguineau, "Beth-Eked," in *Dictionary of Proper Names and Places in the Bible*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell [London: Robert Hale, 1982], 69); cf. Fritz, *1&2 Kings*, 288; Melvin Hunt "Beth-Eked," *ABD*¹ (1992) 685.

²² Burke O. Long, *2 Kings*, FOTL 10 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 137.

²³ Lamb, *Righteous Jehu*, 93–94.

²⁴ Lamb, *Righteous Jehu*, 85–86.

intermarriage of Athaliah and Jehoram of Judah, which may explain the reference to “brothers of (the half-northern) Ahaziah” rather than, for example, “sons of David/princes of Judah.” Consequently, because the reader is aware of Yahweh’s judgement on the Ahabite/Omride royal line from other narratives, they accept Jehu’s slaughter of the Judahites. The anti-Omride stance of the biblical editors explains why such a narrative was preserved – for it added to the author’s desire to eradicate any positive memory of Omride Israel and their alliance with Judah.²⁵ If, however, the narrative preserves any form of historical memory, as well it might, then the question arises: why were members of Judah’s royal family present in Israel following the uprising against the king of Judah and his northern ally?

According to the biblical text, the brothers of Ahaziah tell us the reason they are in Israel: ונרד לשלום בני-המלך ובני הגבירה. This phrase is often translated “we have come down to visit/[enquire about] the welfare of the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother”²⁶. Differently, some translations give “we have come down to greet”²⁷ or “we have come down to pay our respects.”²⁸ The reading of ונרד לשלום as “inquiring about welfare” may be reached via comparison of the function of לשלום here and in 1Sam 17:18 (ואת-אחיד תפקד (לשלום) and Jer 38:4 (דרש לשלום לעם הזה).²⁹ Additionally, in Genesis–Numbers, לשלום regularly appears as a greeting or salutation.³⁰ Hobbs, however, offers an alternative translation, reading לשלם “to avenge” (Piel infinitive construct) instead of MT’s לשלום.³¹ Hobbs’ reading is interpretively tempting but lacks any textual support for its re-pointing of the text. What follows here, however, suggests that even without changing the text, connotations of the Judahites avenging – or perhaps better, responding – to Jehu’s coup may be present. Notably, in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History, although לשלום still functions in the realm of greetings, it is often more related to the political sphere, carrying connotations of right order for Israel’s well-being.³² Given the context of the passage is one of alliances, warfare, and assassinations, it seems that we should permit that לשלום here may have more political overtones than a simple greeting or welfare visit.

²⁵ For the anti-Omride views and editorial moves of the authors of 1-2Kgs, see, in particular, Omer Sergi, “The Omride Dynasty and the Reshaping of the Judahite Historical Memory,” *Biblica* 97 (2016) 503–526.

²⁶ E.g., “we have come down to visit” (NRSV; also Fritz, *I&2 Kings*, 282); “we have come down (to inquire) after the welfare of,” (Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 104). “שלום,” *TDOT*¹⁵ (2006) 29–30 follows Würthwein in viewing לשלום in 2Kgs 10:13 as a shortened form of שאל לשלום.

²⁷ NIV; also John Gray, *I&II Kings* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 501.

²⁸ CJB; JPS.

²⁹ “שלם,” *BDB* (1991 repr. 1906) 1022–1023. In 1Sam 17, David is sent to find out about the welfare of his brothers on the battlefield, while in Jer 38:5, “seeking the peace of this people” refers more generally to the outcome of Jeremiah’s prophecies rather than a specific action undertaken by the prophet. There are similarities between the three texts, though it has to be said that, in comparison to ונרד, דרש and פקד, דרש seem better able to carry the sense of “visiting” or “seeking” the peace or welfare of a person or group of people.

³⁰ “שלום,” *TDOT*¹⁵ (2006) 26–27.

³¹ T.R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, WBC 13 (Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1985), 128.

³² “שלום,” *TDOT*¹⁵ (2006) 29.

In addition, we should also consider the role of שלום in 2Kgs 9, where it appears multiple times at key junctures, to the extent that Olyan considers it a *leitwort* of the chapter.³³ Olyan views 2Kgs 9 as distinct from 2Kgs 10³⁴ so does not continue his analysis of שלום in 2Kgs 9 into the following chapter, but to do so is enlightening. Olyan’s analysis of שלום in 2Kgs 9 reveals an irony in the use of the term: throughout 2Kgs 9 the Omrides are connected with the term שלום yet Jehu causes disruption and bloodshed in order to restore correct (i.e., non-Omride) שלום.³⁵ For our purposes, the most notable occurrences of שלום in 2Kgs 9 come immediately before Jehu murders an Omride. Thus, as Jehu approaches Jezreel, Joram’s messengers and, eventually, Joram himself, repeatedly ask Jehu “is it peace?” (2Kgs 9:17, 18, 19, 22)³⁶ before Jehu kills Joram on the plot of Naboth to “repay” (ושלמתי) the Omrides for the blood of Naboth (2Kgs 9:26).³⁷ Jezebel then also asks Jehu “is it peace?” before she is killed by him (2Kgs 9:31). In this light, we should surely consider the fact that the words of the brothers of Ahaziah involve שלום, right before Jehu kills them.³⁸ Although שלום is multivalent, the parallels with other royal deaths in 2Kgs 9 suggest that we should translate ונרד לשלום in 2Kgs 10:13 as something like “we have come down for peace (with) the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother,” which more closely links the deaths of the Judahites with Joram and Jezebel’s deaths.

The “sons of the king” are usually interpreted as referring either to Ahab or Joram and “the queen mother” to Jezebel. However, neither Jezebel nor any other woman associated with the northern kingdom in 1-2Kgs is called גבירה and, in addition, Jezebel is dead at this point, having been killed in 2Kgs 9:30-37.³⁹ It is possible therefore, that as Jezebel is not named explicitly, the גבירה could refer to the *Judahite* queen mother, who in this case would be Athaliah. Given that it was Athaliah’s son Ahaziah who was killed in the uprising and Athaliah was alive at this point and would shortly be in power (if she was not already), this phrase could imply that Athaliah had sent this delegation to Israel. Thus, it seems that we should understand that the brothers of Ahaziah were not in Israel innocently (ignorantly?) checking on the welfare of certain individuals but were in Israel seeking שלום in light of Jehu’s coup. Quite how this expedition was presented or enacted remains unclear. שלום can be used in the sense of peace in contrast to warfare implying victory (e.g., Judg 8:9; 1Kgs 22:27–28) which might suggest that a Judahite military force went to Israel under the command of the princes.⁴⁰ Alternatively, שלום can refer more broadly to a re-establishment of

³³ Olyan, “Hašālôm.”

³⁴ Olyan, “Hašālôm”: 653 fn.2.

³⁵ Olyan, “Hašālôm”: 654.

³⁶ Olyan notes that this could have a double meaning, referring to Jehu’s intentions as well as to the state of events on the front line in Ramoth-gilead, where Jehu ought to have been; Olyan, “Hašālôm”: 664.

³⁷ Olyan persuasively views 2Kgs 9:26 as the central verse for understanding the שלום motif; “Hašālôm”: 657–659.

³⁸ Admittedly, the parallel is not exact – a clearer case could be made if 2Kgs 10:13 used שלום in an interrogative sense. Nevertheless, it seems that there is, at least, an allusion being made, and it may be that the parallel is not exact because 2Kgs 10:13-14 is a later text drawing from the motifs of earlier chapters.

³⁹ If גבירה here refers to Jezebel, then this is the only such reference in 1-2Kgs.

⁴⁰ Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 128.

the right order of things.⁴¹ As the previous order of things was Omride rule over Israel and the Omride–Judahite alliance made between the neighbouring kingdoms, it seems likely that, whichever way we look at it, the Judahites were in Israel seeking to maintain or uphold the Omride–Judahite alliance. This interpretation is strengthened if the “queen mother” is read as Athaliah.

3. Implications

The above analysis suggests that the brothers of Ahaziah were seeking peace or order in Israel when Jehu slaughtered them. Given the references to שלום by other Omrides in 2Kgs 9, it seems that we should align this word with an Omride agenda that Jehu sought to overturn. While the Omrides and Judahites looked for peace, Jehu ironically brought chaos and violence in order to subvert their aims and restore true שלום.⁴² It seems, therefore, that the brothers of Ahaziah came to Israel following the deaths of Joram and Ahaziah in an attempt to continue the Omride–Judahite alliance, as well they might, given that Jehu had killed their king and that of their northern ally. Historically, the Omride–Judahite alliance was greatly beneficial for Judah,⁴³ and, as Judah supported the northern kingdom in wars against other nations (e.g., Aram in 1Kgs 22; 2Kgs 8; 9; Moab in 2Kgs 3), it seems perfectly plausible that they would have supported Israel in internal conflicts as well, especially when their own king was killed by the usurper. To this we might add that although there may have been discontent with the Omrides in Israel that allowed Jehu to overthrow them,⁴⁴ the six-year reign of Athaliah in Judah (2Kgs 11) suggests that Judah maintained its pro-Omride allegiance for at least a few years following Jehu’s coup.⁴⁵ Thus, it seems likely that there is a historical memory preserved in 2Kgs 10:13-14 of the Judahite royal family travelling to Israel in search of continuing שלום with the Israelite royal family, when Jehu killed them at Beth-Eked. Such events seem historically plausible and are clearly suggested by the text itself. Continuing שלום could imply a military response seeking to kill Jehu,⁴⁶ though it need not have been military necessarily – it could have been more of a diplomatic delegation seeking to clarify

⁴¹ Interestingly, the term שלום is not connected with the sons of Ahab/sons of the king killed in 2Kgs 10:1-11 although, as the narrative stands, the sons of the king do not appear to be in a position to offer any resistance to Jehu; the active agents are the officials in charge of the sons. Perhaps שלום was used by the author to refer to those actively resisting Jehu or pursuing the Omride agenda.

⁴² Olyan, “Hašālôm”: 654.

⁴³ E.g., Sergi, “The Omride Dynasty”: 506–509.

⁴⁴ Schulte, “The End of the Omride Dynasty”: 137.

⁴⁵ Omer Sergi, “Queenship in Judah Revisited: Athaliah and the Davidic Dynasty in Historical Perspective,” in *Tabou et transgressions: Actes du colloque organisé par le Collège de France, Paris, les 11–12 avril 2012*, eds. Jean-Marie Durand, Michaël Guichard and Thomas Römer, OBO 274 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015) 99–111: 108–110; Athalya Brenner-Idan, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative*, Cornerstones (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 29–31.

⁴⁶ So also, Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 132. I agree with Hobbs that the narrative presents a southern response to events in the north but disagree with his re-pointing of the text. In arguing for a military interpretation of the brothers “avenging” Ahaziah, Hobbs notes that they may have taken an “inconspicuous route” which is why they were “found” at Beth-Eked (Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 128–129). This is entirely possible as it might explain the reference to “Beth-Eked of the shepherds,” though ultimately, we cannot know for sure.

the situation in the northern kingdom ahead of a formal response to, or even negotiation with, Jehu. In truth, we cannot know for sure, but whichever possibility one prefers, this state of affairs suggests that the Omride-Judahite alliance was not brought to a complete end with the deaths of kings Joram and Ahaziah. Rather, Judah sought to maintain its interests in Israel following the deaths of the kings. Only Jehu's slaughter of the Judahites at Beth-Eked seems to have ended any notion of a continued alliance, for after 2Kgs 10:13-14 Israel and Judah are never again found in alliance or, even, on positive terms in 1-2Kgs.

Yet, I use the term "historical memory" because, as noted above, there is a high degree of literary artistry in 2Kgs 9-10 as a whole and we must also note the resonances between 1Kgs 20:18-21 and 2Kgs 10:13-14. 1Kgs 20:18-21 narrates part of the battle between Ahab and Ben-Hadad of Aram, wherein the Arameans were encamped outside Samaria drunk. The Aramean scouts report men coming out of Samaria and Ben-Hadad says "if they have come out for peace, take them alive, if they have come out for war, take them alive" (1Kgs 20:18).⁴⁷ The use of the phrase "take them alive" (תפשוּם חיים) in this chapter parallels Jehu's order to "take them alive" (תפשוּם חיים) in 2Kgs 10:14, which itself stands in a rather odd contrast to the immediate slaughter of the brothers once they were taken alive (2Kgs 10:14b). Although we could posit that Jehu ordered the Judahites to be taken alive to prevent fighting, or so that their slaughter could be tidily kept within the (later inserted) cistern of Beth-Eked, it seems more likely that this is another case of literary similarities between parts of 1Kgs 16–2Kgs 11. Given the similarities between the words of Jehu and the words of Ben-Hadad, combined with the similar use of the שלום motif from 2Kgs 9, and the rather round number of the brothers, it seems that the portrayal of events in 2Kgs 10:13-14 is more literary than historical. It may even be a later addition to the text of 2Kgs 9-10 that was integrated via the use of language and themes drawn from chapters around it.⁴⁸ Regardless of the transmission history of the text, however, there is probably a memory of a historical event underlying the passage, due to the mention of the otherwise unknown Beth-Eked and the likelihood that Judah did respond to Jehu's coup, probably seeking to maintain the Omride-Judahite alliance that had been so beneficial for them. Jehu's ironic overturning of the Omride שלום also suggests that the author of 2Kgs 10 used שלום to indicate that the brothers of Ahaziah were in Israel to further Omride–Judahite interests. According to the authors of 2Kgs, this aim justified their slaughter.

4. Conclusions

In sum, it seems that 2Kgs 10:13-14 is a literary construction preserving a historical memory of the Judahites responding to Jehu's coup, seeking to preserve the Omride-Judahite alliance. They met Jehu at Beth-Eked and were slaughtered, seemingly ending any chance of a

⁴⁷ Once again, although the events of 1Kgs 20 and 2Kgs 9-10 are quite different, the person using the term שלום is the one who suffers misfortune.

⁴⁸ Perhaps added in order to emphasise that the Judahite claimants to the throne were dead, explaining why Athaliah took the throne. If the verses are a later addition then this may also account for the fact that the sons of Ahab/sons of the king killed in 2Kgs 10:1-11 are not connected with the שלום motif.

continued alliance. This suggests that the Omride-Judahite alliance did not end with the initial deaths of kings Joram and Ahaziah but continued as long as Judah desired to maintain the connection. Only once Jehu slaughtered the Judahites at Beth-Eked did the alliance between Israel and Judah end.⁴⁹ The words uttered by Jehu and the Judahites in 2Kgs 10:13-14 are likely a literary construction, derived in part from 1Kgs 20:18 and in part from the use of the **שָׁלוֹם** motif in 2Kgs 9. As Olyan observed, in 2Kgs 9, Jehu used chaotic violence to subvert the **שָׁלוֹם** looked for by the Omrides and restore correct **שָׁלוֹם** to the land. I propose that 2Kgs 10:13-14 does the same; the Judahites went to Israel seeking to continue the **שָׁלוֹם** between Israel and Judah, whether through military or diplomatic means, and were found by Jehu who used violent ends to establish a correct state of **שָׁלוֹם**. Rather than through the deaths of Joram and Ahaziah, it seems that it was only through the slaughter at Beth-Eked that the Omride–Judahite alliance was finally ended.

⁴⁹ Although Athaliah's reign must have involved some political support and may have reflected some hope on Judah's part for a restored alliance, the text does not present it that way portraying her instead as a solitary individual imposing her tyrannical rule over Judah.