CHAPTER TWO

TEARING THE KINGDOM:
THE JEROBOAM CYCLE IN 1 KINGS 11-14

The Jeroboam cycle in the MT contains several difficult passages which are crucial for any understanding of the composition of the book of Kings and the DH. This chapter will focus on three key passages in the cycle in an effort to characterize the role of the Jeroboam cycle in the book of Kings.

AHIJAH'S ORACLE (1 KINGS 11:29-39)

Noth's treatments of this text illustrate its difficulty. In Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien (1967:72) he argued that it contained an earlier prophetic story about Ahijah's encounter with Jeroboam which Dtr had revised for inclusion in his History. But in his later commentary on Kings (1968: 245-246, 258-262) Noth took all of vv 29-39 as Dtr's work based on 1 Sam 15:27b-28.

It is widely agreed that Deuteronomistic language abounds in this oracle: v 32a - "for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I chose from all the tribes of Israel;" v 33b - "they (sic, see below) did not walk in my ways doing what is right in my sight, my statutes and ordinances, like David his father;" v 34b - "for the sake of David my servant whom I chose because he kept my commandments and statutes;" v 36b - "so that David my servant will always have a fiefdom1 before me in Jerusalem, the city which I chose for myself, to place my name there;" v 38 - "if you listen to all that I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight, keeping my statutes and my commandments as did David my servant, I will be with you and will build a sure house for you just as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you."

At the same time, these verses present some obvious difficulties.2 There are a few widely recognized glosses (cf. Debus 1967:11): the plural verbs in v 33a, (cf. Plein 1966:18; Provan 1988: 99 and n. 18), the reference to "ten tribes" at the end of v 35b, and v 39 (see below). In addition, vv 32 and 34 are problematic and have frequently been taken, in whole or in part, as addi-

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1 See Hanson (1968) for this meaning of "יִהוּדָה.
tions. The most common way of explaining the literary unevenness of the oracle in the light of its Deuteronomistic nature is to posit redactional levels behind it. This has been done in two ways. As mentioned, Noth argued in Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien that Dtr edited an earlier prophetic story (cf. Nelson 1981:109-116). Others (e.g., Provan 1988:101-105; Würthwein 1985:139-144) have found multiple Deuteronomistic editions within the passage.

The most obvious difficulty in the passage concerns the number of fragments of Ahijah's robe (12) in v 30 compared with the number of tribes accounted for (11) in vv 31-32. But this problem is not solved by positing an earlier "prophetic" version of this oracle. It pervades the entire oracle. Dtr could easily have changed the numbers, but he evidently understood the relationship of the tribes of Israel in such a way that he did not see a contradiction here.

Scholars have proposed a number of explanations along these lines (cf. Nelson 1981:110-111). Noth's view, for example, was that the oracle assumed Judah's continuation with the Davidic house and that Benjamin was the "one tribe" to go with Rehoboam (1967:72, n. 7; cf. Grønbæk 1965:425). Another explanation (Gordon 1963:90) is that Levi is the "missing tribe" because of its dispersement in both Israel and Judah. Finally, Van Seters has pointed out (private communication) that the DH elsewhere indicates that Simeon was understood to be assimilated within Judah (Josh 19:1-9; 21:4, 9; Judg 1:3-21 - but note the reference to Benjamin in v 21). Whatever the correct explanation, this difference does not require and is not smoothed by the reconstruction of an underlying prophetic source for the oracle.

In addition to the problem of numbers, other disturbances are evident in this oracle and have led scholars to argue for levels of Dtr redaction. Most recently, Provan (1988:99-105) has contended that additions in vv 32, 34b-35, and 38b-39 come from a later, exilic redaction of Kings with a "Messianic" interpretation of the Davidic promise. Provan's literary evaluation is well founded. On both literary and form critical grounds v 32 is problematic. It breaks the connection between Ahijah's announcement in v 31 and the basis for it in v 33. Similarly, the judgement that vv 38b-39 are secondary is supported by their absence from the Old Greek (cf. Debus 1967:11n).

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3 The references to Benjamin in 12:21-24 cannot be used to support this view, since those verses are a later addition to the account of the division, as Noth recognized (1968:269; cf. Debus 1967:34). The statement in 12:20 that only the tribe of Judah followed the house of David seems to preclude this interpretation. Also, the explanation that Rehoboam gets one tribe so that David may retain a fiefdom in Jerusalem (11:32, 36) indicates that Judah is meant as the "one tribe."

4 Nelson's explanation that the OG translator was motivated by pedantic logic and piety to omit these verses is not convincing (1981:115).