King Asa and Hanani the Seer: 2 Chronicles 16 as an Example of the Chronicler’s View of Prophets and Prophecy

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1 Introduction

It is beyond any doubt that the author of the Book of Chronicles, henceforth referred to as ‘the Chronicler’, has left his particular mark(s) on the narrative about King Asa as it was found by him in 1 Kings. There are several clues to substantiate this claim.1

• First, whereas 1 Kgs 15:9–24 runs to a total of sixteen verses, the Chronicler’s account fills no less than forty seven verses (2 Chr 14:1–16:14).2
• Second, the Chronicler’s narrative has a remarkable structure. Whereas 2 Chronicles 14–15 at great length describe the positive aspects of Asa’s kingship over thirty four years, in Chapter 16 – which by the way fills a remarkably short period of seven years –, the negative sides of this king are brought to the fore.
• Third, in 2 Chronicles 16 the Chronicler has adopted the sequence of the verses as handed down in 1 Kgs 15:17–24. However, already at first glance one can observe that he has remodeled it in order to create a new text of his own, as can be demonstrated in the following chart:

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1 This traditional point of view, however, is questioned by a group of scholars putting up a case for the view that Chronicles does not depend on Samuel-Kings, but that both are rewritings of an older common source. And even the question is posed whether or not there might have been an expansion or, what’s more, a re-editing of the Book of Samuel and the Book of Kings in the times of the Chronicler or even afterwards. See, e.g., G. Auld’s contribution to this volume, and U. Becker, H. Bezzel (eds), Rereading the relecture? The Question of (Post)chronistic Influence in the Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel (FAT 2. Reihe 66), Tübingen 2014.

• Fourth, both in the positive and in the negative part of the Asa narrative the Chronicler has inserted addresses by prophetic figures who elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible are completely unknown. A prophecy by a certain Azariah son of Oded is found in 2 Chr 15:1–7, whereas in 2 Chr 16:7–10 a seer called Hanani is addressing King Asa. In both of these episodes we come across the Chronicler’s most significant theological signature(s).

2 Chronicles 16

For several reasons, the narrative of 2 Chronicles 16 appears to be a good example to demonstrate in what way the Chronicler brings his political and theological intentions to light. More specifically, Hanani’s speech appears to be a fine example of the Chronicler’s method of working and his theology. Attention will be paid to the structure of his address, its context, and some of its connection threads.

This episode is structured into three parts:

(1) 16:1–6 The alliance of Asa and Ben-Haddad against Baasha
(2) 16:7–10 Disapproval by the seer Hanani
(3) 16:11–14 The final years of Asa; peculiarities relating to his funeral

Whereas both the first and the third part can be linked with the Chronicler’s Vorlage (1 Kgs 15:17–22 and 1 Kgs 15:23–24), the middle section is not. Therefore, attention will first be paid to the way the Chronicler has adopted and/or reworked his source material.