# Covenant Faith and Qohelet’s Questions

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My title riffs on the title of a lecture on “The Wisdom Movement and Israel’s Covenant Faith” by David Allan Hubbard and on two sentences in it, “Proverbs seems to say, ‘Here are the rules for life; try them and find that they will work.’ Job and Ecclesiastes say, ‘We did, and they don't.'”[[1]](#footnote-1) Proverbs is close enough to Israel’s covenant faith to use the name Yahweh for God, and its assumptions about rules resemble those of the covenant that we are to consider. I use the word *covenant* to denote a formally-sealed commitment between two parties. But it is a tricky word. In British English it can denote a one-sided commitment; people “covenant” their charitable giving, whereas in United States English they “pledge” it. And United States English uses *covenant* more in political contexts; the word has complex political and cultural connotations. In Bible translations, *covenant* usually renders the Hebrew word *bərît*, but *bərît* can also be translated by words such as treaty, contract, pledge, or obligation, and can denote a two-way relationship or a one-sided one. In the Septuagint, *diathēkē* is the usual translation of *bərît*, though translators occasionally use *sunthēkē* in passages suggesting an agreement between two parties; the New Testament regularly uses *diathēkē*. The Vulgate usually uses *foedus* but sometimes words such as *pax* or *amicitia*. A further complication (or perhaps a simplification) is that both Testaments see the relationship between God and his people as covenantal in the sense of involveing a definite ongoing commitment between the two parties, even where the words *bərît* or *diathēkē* do not occur.

The framework of thinking implied by the word *theodicy* is a modern one that has become prominent in Old Testament study only in recent decades.[[2]](#footnote-2) While it can obscure an understanding of the Old Testament, it can also illumine it. Differences between a modern and an Old Testament worldview can give modern readers some insight on the culture-relative nature of our framework. Theodicy is an aspect of our mental horizon that overlaps enough with the Old Testament’s horizon for it to provide a way into understanding an aspect of it and also into broadening our horizon.

Within the Old Testament, Deuteronomy and the books that follow are among the works that are especially confident about an understanding of God’s ways and of the propriety of them, and thus about the question of theodicy, while Qohelet questions the possibility of such understanding. Neither deals with the wider question of theodicy, of how evil comes to exists and how it relates to the will and power of God. Both focus on the human experience of blessing and calamity and the possibility of understanding its relationship to whether we act faithfully or faithlessly. It is thus possible to set them over against each other, though the thesis of this essay is that both resist an unequivocal or binary understanding.

## Covenant Faith

While Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers work with the concept of covenant and sometimes use the word, the word itselfis most prominent in Deuteronomy. Covenant is the framework for portraying the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Deuteronomy leads into the account of Israel’s story in Joshua to Kings, which is a “Deuteronomistic History” where Deuteronomy states the principles of Yahweh’s relationship with Israel and Joshua to Kings tells Israel’s story in light of that statement.[[3]](#footnote-3) The relationship of Yahweh and Israel is indeed a mutual *bərît*; Yahweh blesses Israel as Israel lives by Yahweh’s instructions, but afflicts them if they do not. The answer to the problem of theodicy is then that there isn’t a problem. This framework of thinking appears elsewhere in the Old Testament, especially in Jeremiah and Chronicles, but Deuteronomy to Kings is its classic articulation. It finds clear expression in Yahweh’s address that opens Joshua, in the account of a confirming of the covenant in Joshua 24, in the framework for telling Israel’s story in Judges, in Samuel’s address in 1 Samuel 12, in the commentary on the fall of Samaria in 2 Kings 17, and in the recounting of the reigns of kings in 1 and 2 Kings.

At the same time, there is variety in the form of the narrative, in the difference (for instance) between the short stories in Judges, the songs of praise near the beginning and end of Samuel, the extensive narrative about David in 2 Samuel 11 – 20, and the linked stories about Solomon in 1 Kings 1 – 11. One implication is that an author has not simply created this work as a whole but has assembled earlier material and set it in a framework. In examining its exposition of the covenant faith, we will consider both the material that directly reflects that Deuteronomistic framework and also the rest of the material that the work includes. In their theological perspective as well as their form, the successive books vary in how Deuteronomistic they are; Israel’s covenant faith as presented in the Deuteronomistic History as a whole is more nuanced than a bald summary of the Deuteronomistic framework indicates.

Deuteronomy itself first recalls the way Yahweh looked after Israel on its journey from Horeb to the border of Canaan, lays out his consequential expectations of Israel in general terms and in terms of many specifics, then describes blessings that will follow from fulfilling these expectation and (at greater length) troubles that will follow from not doing so. It also incorporates some hints of recognition that the link between faithfulness and blessing is not infallible. It refers to the Israelites having previously been in an iron smelter, a household of serfs, that was characterized by disease (e.g., 4:20; 5:6, 15; 6:12, 21, 7:8, 15; 8:14; 26:6 – 7), with no suggestion that they had deserved this. It notes that Yahweh engages in testing or proving or disciplining (8:1 – 6): in causing undeserved trouble, though with a positive aim. Most intriguing are some statements about the reason Moses may not enter Canaan. While in one passage it is because he and Aaron broke faith with Yahweh (32:51; cf. Num 20:1 – 13), elsewhere Yahweh is angry with Moses “on your account” (*‘al dibrêkem* 1:37; 3:26; 4:21).[[4]](#footnote-4) One might conflate the two “explanations” and infer that the people led Moses into breaking faith. But the statements are separate in the text hints, and “on your account” rather implies that Moses cannot evade the guilt attaching to the nation, which prohibited the exodus generation from entering the land.

Within the set of rules that dominate Deuteronomy, the directives about handling the consequences of debt (15:1 – 18) are instructive for our purposes. They presuppose that people get into economic trouble, with no implication that it issues from their wrongdoing. It hardly fits with Yahweh’s promises of blessing. Moses adds that if Israel lives by the entire commandment he is giving, there will be no needy people. But his directives implicitly recognize that they will not do so, and that some people will suffer. Israel then needs to follow the directives, to enable people in trouble to get back on their feet.

Deuteronomy thus implicitly recognizes that life works in a more complex way than its promises say. The link between wrongdoing and suffering is qualified in four ways. Yahweh’s response to suffering may not be “you deserved it” but “I’ll get you out of it.” Yahweh may bring suffering to achieve some end for himself and for his people. Suffering like blessing may issue from being part of a wider whole. And suffering is a challenge to human action to counter its effects.

Joshua begins and ends by reiterating an emphasis on keeping Moses’s instruction and promising that success will follow, and the closing chapters incorporate reference to a covenant. But the main body of the book makes no allusion to the operation or non-operation of this principle. Nor does it indicate that the Canaanites’ waywardness explains Yahweh’s wanting their defeat and slaughter. The Rahab story perhaps implies that he might exempt cities that were prepared to acknowledge Yahweh, and the Gibeonites escape annihilation both because they recognize what Rahab recognizes and because Joshua falls for their ploy in pretending not to be Canaanites. Otherwise, the stories’ focus lies on Yahweh’s freedom and power to do as he wishes; they offer no rationale for his action. Their anti-theodic implication will find explicit expression in Paul’s comments on whether God acts in a way that is not right, acts with *adikia*: he’s God, so shut up (Rom 9:14 – 21).

In contrast, Judges initially works explicitly with the negative version of the Deuteronomistic principle: Israel does what is bad in Yahweh’s eyes, and he sends them trouble. The pattern changes midway through the book. Samson’s story implies exceptions, as people have experiences they do not deserve: Samson’s mother had been unable to have a baby, and his first wife and her father get killed. Much worse are the horrifying stories of Jephthah’s daughter and of the Levite’s wife (Judges 11; 19).

First and Second Samuel almost begin by asserting that “those who honor me I will honor” (1 Sam 2:30) and offer an extended illustration of this Deuteronomistic principle in their account of David’s life; his song of praise near the end of his story (2 Sam 22) affirms it. For most of his story he is a model of trust in and commitment to Yahweh, and he attains the position of king, completes the Israelite hegemony over Canaan, and establishes Jerusalem as its capital (he is deceptive and violent, which clashes with some recent Western ideals, but it does not conflict with Deuteronomic ideals or receive negative judgment in the narrative). Then he commits adultery and murder and his story unravels.

First and Second Samuel also offer the most systematic set of contrasts with the Deuteronomistic principle.[[5]](#footnote-5) These begin right at the beginning: Yahweh closes Hannah’s womb, for no apparent reason except (one may eventually infer) what he plans to achieve by it. Hannah’s own song of praise speaks of people who are hungry, infertile, poor, and needy, with no implication that they deserve it, though with a declaration that Yahweh reverses it. The Philistines attack the Israelites on a number of occasions and sometimes defeat them (e.g., 1 Sam 4; 17; 19), without there being any explanation such that Judges routinely provides. Gadites and Gileadites get gruesomely maimed, and the priests of Nob and their families get slaughtered (1 Sam 10; 22).

Saul’s story as a whole suggests subtle reflection on our theme. Samuel twice announces that Saul will cease to be king because he has rejected Yahweh’s instructions (1 Sam 13:13 – 14; 15:22 – 26). Yet Saul’s action on the first occasion seems understandable and on both occasions not very terrible; the stories will be paralleled by the apparently disproportionate calamity that comes on the people of Beth-Shemesh and on Uzziah (1 Sam 6 and 2 Sam 6). Notwithstanding Samuel’s announcement, however, Saul continues as king for a considerable period. And in the narrative as a whole, it’s hard to be clear on the interaction between Saul’s incompetence and personal failings, Yahweh’s withdrawal of his spirit and sending of a bad spirit, and the possibility that his appointment was itself an act of chastisement on Israel. However we consider the issues that Saul’s story raises, it is not simply an illustration of the Deuteronomistic principle.

For all its broad clarity, David’s story also raises a question. When he acknowledges his wrongdoing, Nathan says that Yahweh has made his wrongdoing pass or go (*‘ābar* hiphil; 2 Sam 12:13). The unusual formulation recurs in connection with the aftermath of a census (24:10; cf. 2 Chron 21:8). Where does the wrongdoing go? Nathan’s announcement concerning the death of David’s son raises the chilling possibility that it passes to the child, who will pay the penalty for the father’s wrongdoing, though the other occurrences of the unusual formulation (Job 7:21; Zech 3:4) do not suggest that the wrongdoing needs to go somewhere in such a sense. Yet the expression fits implications of the story of David’s family. Yahweh has not said he will “carry” David’s wrongdoing (*nāśā’*, the usual word for “forgiveness”). While he will not require David’s death (2 Sam 12:13), David, his family, and the child are indeed going to “carry” it, bear its consequences, pay the price for it. Similar dynamics apply in connection with the census story where the verb recurs (2 Sam 24:10 – 14). If that story’s opening (2 Sam 24:1) refers to an unexplained outburst of Yahweh’s anger, it is an instance of something contrasting with the Deuteronomistic principle, but it is more likely an anticipatory summary of the consequences of David’s wrongdoing, which was what issued in Yahweh’s anger.

First and Second Kings compare with Judges more than with Samuel. Solomon’s story almost begins with Yahweh’s promise to relate to him on the Deuteronomistic basis, and things work out accordingly. A qualification going back to Yahweh’s promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 says that Yahweh will moderate the chastisement he brings to Solomon and his dynasty. This moderation continues through 1 and 2 Kings: Yahweh allows Abijam to rule because David had been upright, “except in the thing about Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings15:5). Conversely, because of Ahab’s repentance disaster will not come in his day, though it will come in his son’s day. Like Judges, Kings includes events that clash with the Deuteronomistic principle, such as the death of prophets at the hand of Jezebel and the death of Naboth (1 Kings 18 – 21). Two subsequent instances are the long reign of Manasseh and the early death of the faithful Josiah, though the “problem” of the former is at least partially solved by seeing Manasseh’s faithlessness as finding its redress in the subsequent fall of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kgs 21:10 – 16).[[6]](#footnote-6) It is thereby that Manasseh’s story can form part of an exposition of “the logic in history” that is the Deuteronomistic History’s concern,[[7]](#footnote-7) part of its act of praise at the justice of the judgment of God,[[8]](#footnote-8) which by its nature is thus in our terms an exercise in theodicy.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Israel’s covenant faith as expounded in Deuteronomy to Kings thus has a framework principle for approaching theodicy, but also tells many stories implying other possibilities.

1. The books’ first and last answer is indeed that national disaster is Yahweh’s response to national wrongdoing, and in between they can portray individual calamity as Yahweh’s response to individual wrongdoing.
2. They implicitly acknowledge that this answer does not cover everything they report, and they have no explanation for happenings such as the suffering of Jephthah’s daughter and of the Levite’s wife, and some Israelite reversals.
3. They may presuppose that such events can issue from the wilfulness of people acting against Yahweh’s intentions, as Ezekiel speaks of Yahweh bringing Nebuchadnezzar to take Tyre but of Tyre frustrating his efforts (26:1 – 21; 29:17 – 20). Apparently Yahweh does not choose to exercise sovereignty that he possesses.
4. While they offer no justification for the slaughter of the Canaanites and may presuppose that the Canaanites deserve it, as is asserted elsewhere, their own implication is that Yahweh is God and can do as he wishes. The same logic may apply to the opaque aspects of Yahweh’s dealings with Saul, which relate to the entire monarchic project and not just to his individual relationship with Yahweh.
5. Their general understanding of Yahweh would question any inference that he needs no moral justification for his actions, but would assume that he need not feel compelled to provide it.
6. Their story is set in the context of Yahweh’s promises to the ancestors, his getting Israel out of Egypt, his meeting with them at Sinai, and his taking them through the wilderness. Yahweh’s generous and powerful acts in the past make it possible to live with more problematic acts in the present.
7. Some calamities come as exercises in discipline that imply not wrongdoing but a desire to prove people in the sense of showing that they are faithful or of giving them opportunity to grow into more faithful people.
8. Sometimes Yahweh’s answer to the problem of suffering is to do something about it, as he did in respect of the Israelites being turned into serfs in Egypt; Hannah’s song of praise says that he takes action for poor and needy people.
9. Sometimes Yahweh’s answer to the problem of suffering is to expect people themselves to do something about it. If there are needy people in Israel, Israelites are to support them and help them back onto their feet.
10. Trouble can issue not from people’s own wrongdoing but from their being bound up in the bundle of life with a family or people engaged in wrongdoing.
11. A variant on this possibility is that Yahweh can delay bringing trouble, as happens in both Ephraim and Judah, possibly with the hope that the next generation may turn from wrongdoing.

The variety in these ideas supports the idea that Deuteronomy to Kings is not so much a Deuteronomistic History as a Deuteronomic debate.[[10]](#footnote-10)

## Qohelet’s Questions

Qohelet’s teaching has converse implications to the perspective of the Deuteronomistic History.

Qohelet comprises the words of a “son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1) who is in a position to testify to wide-ranging achievement , reflection about issues, and enjoyment of life (1:12 – 2:26). Although the book doesn’t name Solomon, its opening chapters make one think of him. This in itself makes Qohelet a suggestive companion to the Deuteronomistic History, of whose framework theology Solomon constitutes a noteworthy example. But making this link carries an irony, because Qohelet questions the convictions the Deuteronomistic History expresses. “Solomon” disparages the emptiness of the things he tested. They are “merely breath” (*hebel;* 1:2): something flimsy and insubstantial, and also fleeting and ephemeral. Qohelet makes no mention of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel, nor indeed does it make mention separately of covenant, of Yahweh, or of Israel. And it questions any possibility of understanding the basis of God’s dealings with us, as Deuteronomistic theology thinks it can. In Qohelet’s time in the Second Temple period, Chronicles provides an updated version of the Samuel-Kings story and fills in some of the fissures in the way the Deuteronomistic theology works out. Manasseh repented and Josiah ignored a word from God (2 Chron 33 – 35), which explains the length of Manasseh’s reign and Josiah’s early death. While Chronicles thus encourages people to believe that it is indeed possible to see how Yahweh works, Qohelet would shake the confidence of people who think this way.

Studying theodicy, Qohelet implies, is like pursuing wind (1:14, 17). As something twisted such as a tree branch can’t become straight, so something missing can’t be counted (1:15): and an understanding of the big picture concerning what the world is about or how human life works is missing, in the sense of inaccessible to humanity. Things happen when they happen: birth and death, crying and laughing, war and peace (3:1 – 8). We don’t control them and we can’t see how they fit into some bigger picture. God put the notion of time as a whole (*‘ȏlām*) into the human mind, but did so with frustrating results because he didn’t give humanity the means of understanding that big picture of God’s activity in the world (3:11).

As you do not know what the way of the wind is,

like the bones in a full womb,

So you do not know the deed of God

who does everything. (11:5)

Qohelet rules out the idea that a positive afterlife will make it possible for things to be put right for the victims of wrongdoing. He takes the regular Old Testament view that human life ends up in the thin part-life of Sheol, and makes explicit the basis for accepting that view: just look at what remains of grandma the next time you open the family tomb. We have no evidence for the contrary view, about which some of his contemporaries may have been wondering (3:19 – 21).

So live your present life with enjoyment and energy, “because there’s no acting or reasoning or knowing or being smart in Sheol, where you are going” (9:10). Life under the sun is insubstantial and fleeting, yet this is not reason to despair of it or turn one’s back on it. It is reason to enjoy it as what it is. Qohelet develops such an exhortation six or seven times, urging readers to focus on the value of food, drink, work, looking good, and relationships. They are not of ultimate significance, but they are God’s gifts, and they are worth enjoying.

Qohelet recognizes the principle that things turn out well for people who live in awe of God (translations traditionally have “fear God” for the verb *yārē’*,but this gives the wrong impression) and do not turn out well for faithless people. They will not last long (either they won’t live long or they won’t do well for long). But alongside that principle is the empirical fact that things can work out the opposite way: the faithful may die young, the faithless live long (8:12 – 14). So don’t fool yourself that you can ensure living a long life by being obsessively faithful or obsessively sensible. Be easy-going; don’t spoil your life that way – but don’t be incorrigibly faithless or stupid, either, which will also spoil your life (7:15 – 18). As a faithful or smart person engaging in acts of service, your life is in God’s hand, and you cannot know whether you will be on the receiving end of love or hostility (9:1; the verse may refer to God’s attitude or to that of other human beings). Both faithful and faithless end up with the same experience (*miqrâ*, a euphemism for death; 9:2 – 3).

Someone who digs a pit falls into it,

someone who demolishes a wall—a snake bites him.

Someone who quarries rocks is hurt by them,

someone who splits logs is endangered by them. (10:8 – 9)

The race does not belong to the quick,

the battle does not belong to the strong.

Neither does bread belong to the smart,

nor does wealth belong to the insightful,

Nor favor to the knowledgeable,

because time and accident happen to all of them. (9:11).

Qohelet overstates, in an opposite hyperbole to the Deuteronomistic one, and at other points it makes statements indicating that it recognizes such statements to be hyperbolic. While achievement, thinking, and enjoyment are ultimately “merely breath,” people should not discount their interim and partial value. It is smarter to be smart than stupid (7:19; 8:1).

Qohelet almost closes with a repetition of its opening dictum that everything is merely breath (12:8). But some endnotes follow; all or some may be additions to the original author’s work or may be part of it. They first affirm the work of the teacher and urge readers to come to terms with his tough teaching. It resemble spurs with which a rider drives and directs an ox or horse; without them, the animal will not go the right way or do anything useful (12:11). While one book of teaching like Qohelet is thus useful, however, a library-full would be a bad idea (12:12).

And finally:

Everything has made itself heard. Live in awe of God and keep his orders, because this is everyone’s. Because God will make every deed come to a ruling, with everything that has hidden, whether good or bad.(12:13 – 14)

These last sentences form a startling contrast with most of what has preceded. Qohelet commended living in awe of God (e.g., 8:12), but did not speak of keeping his orders, which is, indeed, Deuteronomistic language (e.g., Deut 4:2). Whereas the reference to God making things come to a ruling (*bәmišpāṭ*) is almost unique (it recurs only in Job 14:3), Qohelet has spoken of God examining human deeds and making decisions according to whether they are good or bad, but made this allusion only in order to question it. It fits Deuteronomistic theology, but it also fits the way prophets speak; Isaiah refers to Yahweh coming to a ruling (Isa 3:14; this expression recurs only in Ps 143:2). Readers need to take Qohelet seriously and not avoid the sharp edge of his teaching, then, but they also need to set it in the context of the Torah and the Prophets. They should not read the Torah and the Prophets in a way that avoids the questions Qohelet raises; they should not treat Qohelet as the last word on a relationship with God.

As the Deuteronomistic History, then, has a framework conviction but qualifies it, so does Qohelet, though it manages only three qualifications.

1. Life does not work out fairly and we will never be able to work out its meaning or the rationale for the way life works.
2. Gaining understanding is still better than being stupid.
3. Food, drink, work, looking good, and relationships are good gifts from God.
4. The Torah and the Prophets still tell us how to live and to think.

Qohelet has been characterized as skeptical, cynical, pessimistic, and nihilist, but it stops short of a thoroughgoing affirmation of any of these attitudes. The complex character of its thinking has been seen as issuing from a redactional process whereby a thoroughly pessimistic work has had its skepticism qualified by more orthodox statements. Conversely, one might hypothesize that Qohelet starts from orthodox statements that it quotes in order to disagree with them. But alternatively, as the Deuteronomistic History has been described as a debate, Qohelet may been described as a dialogue.[[11]](#footnote-11)

## Conclusions

Some of us as human beings appreciate a sense that the answers to questions are clear and that we know how life works. We may like binary oppositions such as objective and subjective, society and individual, order and chaos, religious and secular, traditional and modern, mind and emotion. Deuteronomistic theology and skepticism are examples of such a binary. Such antitheses facilitate understanding, though also hinder it. Other human beings appreciate a sense that things are fuzzier than such antitheses imply. I suspect there were Israelites who liked working with binaries and (for instance) trusted the principle that God blesses the faithful and that trouble reflects unfaithfulness, and there are Christians who live on that basis. Perhaps there were Israelite theologians who worked that way; analysis of the redaction history of the Deuteronomistic History, of Jeremiah, or of Qohelet can be predicated on that basis, and it is impossible to disprove the results. But what we actually have in these works is an interweaving of perspectives, a debate or a dialogue. If it issued from a redactional process, one is grateful to the agencies that brought these works to the rich entities that they are.

## For Further Reading

Freedman, David Noel. “The Biblical Idea of History.” *Interpretation* 21 (1967): 32 – 49.

Goldingay, John. *Ecclesiastes*. Forthcoming Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021.

Kim, JimYung. *Reanimating Qohelet’s Contradictory Voices: Studies of Open-Ended Discourse on Wisdom in Ecclesiastes*. Biblical Interpretation Series 166. Leiden: Brill, 2018.

Noll, K. L. “Deuteronomistic History or a Deuteronomic Debate? (A Thought Experiment).” *JSOT* 31 (2007): 311 – 45.

Rose, Martin. “Deuteronomistic Ideology and the Theology of the Old Testament.” In Albert de Pury et al., ed., *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 306, 424 – 55. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.

1. David Allan Hubbard, “The Wisdom Movement and Israel’s Covenant Faith,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 17 (1966): 3 – 33 (6). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. David Noel Freedman published a study of “The Biblical Idea of History” in 1967 with which the following study of the Deuteronomistic History overlaps, but it was too early to use the word *theodicy*. The same applies to Martin Noth’s work of 1943, “a type of theodicy” (Walter Dietrich, “Martin Noth and the Future of the Deuteronomistic History,” in Steven L. McKenzie and M. Patrick Graham, ed., *The History of Israel’s Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 182 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994],153 – 75 [173]). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This understanding goes back to Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1943); English translation, *The Deuteronomistic History*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981). Study of the Deuteronomistic History has become complex, convoluted, and controverted; see, e.g., Albert de Pury et al., ed., *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 306 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Thomas Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History* (London: T & T Clark, 2007). The discussion focuses on the redactional process behind the work. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. All scriptural translations are my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. On the broader question of Samuel and the Deuteronomistic History, see Cynthia Edenburg and Judith Pakkala, ed., *Is Samuel among the Deuteronomists?*, Ancient Israel and Its Literature 16 (Atlanta: SBL, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Marvin A, Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 426 – 30). It seems less plausible to see Josiah’s early death as an act of mercy to spare him from seeing the fall of Jerusalem (Sweeney, *I & II Kings*,439 – 43). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Rose, “Deuteronomistic Ideology and the Theology of the Old Testament,” 447. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962): 1:343; cf. Gerhard von Rad, “Gerichtsdoxologie,” in Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament (Munich: Kaiser, 1973) 2:245 – 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. John Barton, “Historiography and Theodicy in the Old Testament,” in Robert Rezetko et al., ed., *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, Vetus Testamentum Supplement 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 27 – 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. Noll, “Deuteronomistic History or a Deuteronomic Debate?” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See, e.g., Kim, *Reanimating Qohelet’s Contradictory Voices*. In taking up Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of dialogue, Kim notes (19) that Robert Polzin also applied it to the Deuteronomistic History in *Moses and the Deuteronomist: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges* (New York: Seabury, 1980). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)