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**“Jehoiakim Slept with his Fathers...” (II Kings 24:6) – Did He?**

## **“Jehoiakim Slept with his Fathers...” (II Kings 24:6) – Did He?**

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### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The variety of reports about the circumstances of the death and burial of Jehoiakim, along with the striking contradictions that exist among them, has no parallel in the history of Judah. According to 2 Kgs 24:5-6, the king died peacefully and “slept with his fathers.” A similar description appears in the LXX version of the parallel account in 2 Chr 36:8. There a comment is added, “he was buried in the garden of ‘Uzza’”.<sup>1</sup> The Luc. version of 2 Chr 36:8 seems to carry the same meaning but expands yet further, adding that Jehoiakim was buried “with his fathers.” The MT 2 Chr 36:8 does not contain any of these comments about Jehoiakim’s death and burial place. Moreover, the impression from MT 2 Chr 36:6 is that the king met an entirely different fate. He did not die in Jerusalem at all, but was exiled from it (“...and he [Nebuchadnezzar] bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon”).<sup>2</sup>
- 1.2. In contrast to all these traditions, Jeremiah prophesies (22:18-19) that no one will lament for the king, and that “with the burial of an ass he shall be buried, dragged and dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem” (cf. 36:30). Josephus in *Ant.* X, 97 advances an echo of Jeremiah’s prophecy, along with an attempt to reconcile it with a description of the Babylonian siege in 2 Kings. According to this text, the Babylonians put Jehoiakim to death, and his body was cast in front of the walls of Jerusalem, with no burial.
- 1.3. The existence of multiple and contradictory reports about Jehoiakim’s death and burial place has led to a considerable scholarly controversy on the matter of how to

reconstruct the historical circumstances surrounding his death and burial. This situation is actually exacerbated by the description of the Babylonian campaign and the precise chronological data about this period in the Babylonian chronicles, despite the fact that they allow us to reconstruct the chronology of the campaign to suppress Jehoiakim's revolt, define quite precisely the time of his death, and raise various hypotheses regarding the circumstances that led up to it.

- 1.4. The purpose of this article is to reconstruct the historical circumstances pertinent to the end of Jehoiakim's rule. To that goal, I will analyze the various descriptions of the king's death. This analysis leads to the conclusion that he died a natural death even before the Babylonian army reached Jerusalem and that he was buried in his forefathers' burial tomb. Moreover, I will contend that the omission of any reference to his place of burial in the book of Kings was deliberate and stemmed from the author's historiographic distress that resulted from the curses against the king that Jeremiah uttered prior to Jehoiakim's death. Later writers were forced to cope with the absence of a description of the king's burial and tried to explain it in various ways, according to their own conceptual attitudes and historical worldviews.

## **2. Eleven years of Jehoiakim's rule: historical background**

- 2.1. Jehoiakim was appointed king by Necho II, King of Egypt, upon the latter's return from the battle in Haran, three months after he had killed Josiah at Megiddo (August/September 609 BCE).<sup>3</sup> Necho's action rendered null and void the rule of the younger brother Shalum/Jehoahaz,<sup>4</sup> who was anointed king after the death of their father Josiah (2 Kgs 23:30).<sup>5</sup> Nothing is known of events in Judah during the first four years of Jehoiakim's rule. During these years the Egyptians firmly

established their rule over Syria and Palestine, in preparation for the decisive struggle with the Babylonians over control of the Euphrates region. The proximity of the Kingdom of Judah to Egypt and the latter's control of the entire region did not allow the tiny kingdom any leeway for either political or military maneuvering. One may assume that Jehoiakim had no choice, but to remain loyal to Egypt.<sup>6</sup>

- 2.2.** The great upheaval of 605 BCE had an impact on Judah.<sup>7</sup> The armies of Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptian legions at Carchemish and broke through into Syria. Egypt's rule over other territories in Syria and Palestine was challenged. One must assume, however, that the actual subjugation of Judah to Babylon took place during the Babylonian campaign into Syria and Palestine (the 'Ḫattu-Land' in the Babylonian chronicles) in the second half of 604 BCE, after five years of Jehoiakim's reign as an Egyptian vassal.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.3.** Nebuchadnezzar's policy was to maintain the geopolitical arrangements that he found before him when he conquered the area.<sup>9</sup> He allowed Jehoiakim to remain as king of Judah, even though King Necho II of Egypt had appointed him. This measure reflected the premise that a king who had accepted the Egyptian yoke was probably clever enough to accept the Babylonian yoke too. It is conceivable that the Babylonians hoped that these actions would preserve the stability of the region. Moreover, they could have anticipated that the kings whose rule they confirmed would feel gratitude towards the Babylonian king, and that such gratitude would lead to loyalty towards the new sovereign.
- 2.4.** The rapid takeover of Ḫattu-Land by the Babylonians, and the Egyptian retreat from the region, left the small kingdoms along the coast and the interior regions with no room for maneuvering. One may assume that the first three years of Babylonian rule were quiet. Although there is no information about events in Judah

during that time, it seems that Jehoiakim remained loyal to Nebuchadnezzar (“and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years...;” see 2 Kgs 24:1).<sup>10</sup> Only the failure of the Babylonian invasion into Egypt in the month of Kislev (November/December 601 BCE),<sup>11</sup> undermined the Babylonian control of the area. At that time, Necho II had an opportunity to renew his influence on the region. Against this background, one may understand the brief report about Jehoiakim’s rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar in 2 Kgs 24:1 (“Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him”). It is hard to imagine that Jehoiakim’s revolt have taken place without the support of Egypt. Moreover, although we have no information about the historical circumstances of the period, it is clear that if Egypt did return to a position of influence in the region, then Jehoiakim, most likely, had no choice, but to offer his loyalty to his former master.<sup>12</sup>

- 2.5.** Only after three more years, in the month of Kislev (between mid-December 598 and mid-January 597 BCE) Nebuchadnezzar set out to re-establish his rule in the Hattu-Land.<sup>13</sup> The conquest of ‘the city of Judah’ (i.e., Jerusalem) stood at the center of this Babylonian campaign. According to the Babylonian chronicle, Jerusalem surrendered to the Babylonians on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Adar (March 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>, 597 BCE).<sup>14</sup> At that time, the three-month reign by Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim came to an end.<sup>15</sup> The young king went into exile, and Nebuchadnezzar appointed in Jerusalem a new king “of his own choice (lit. – heart),” namely, Zedekiah.<sup>16</sup> Nebuchadnezzar also levied a heavy tax on the city and returned to Babylon.<sup>17</sup>
- 2.6.** The Babylonian chronicle shows that from the beginning of the Babylonian campaign, at some stage in the month of Kislev, until the city surrendered on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Adar, three months at most had passed. In light of this information, one may

assume that the Babylonian campaign was initially intended to suppress the revolt by Jehoiakim. If we accept the chronological delineation of the three months of Jehoiachin's rule,<sup>18</sup> then Jehoiakim was still alive when the Babylonians planned their campaign and he died close to its beginning, or immediately after the Babylonian force set out.<sup>19</sup>

- 2.7.** The Hebrew Bible does not offer any clear-cut information about the circumstances leading to the death of Jehoiakim. It is hard to ignore, however, the chronological juxtaposition of events. One must remember that since the king of Judah violated his vassal's oath to Nebuchadrezzar, his death was one of the only resolutions that could have brought about the salvation of Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup> Against this background, one may wonder whether Jehoiakim's death was due to natural causes, and its timing—just as the Babylonian army set out on its Jerusalem campaign—was a mere coincidence, a testimony to historical fate. Or did those who understood that his death was the only way that would allow Jerusalem to be spared destruction murder the king? Or, alternatively, did Jehoiakim take his own life? There is no unequivocal answer to these questions but an analysis of the Biblical descriptions shows that there is no evidence supporting the latter alternatives. Jehoiakim's death may have, and most likely, died of natural causes, as it will be shown below.

### **3. Biblical Descriptions of the Death of Jehoiakim**

#### **3.1 Do the curses of Jeremiah (22:18-19; 36:30) reflect historical reality?**

- 3.1.1.** Jer. 22:13-17 contains a report of the prophet's sermon of exhortation for the injustices practiced by Jehoiakim. Following this admonition, Jeremiah prophesizes about the retribution that is to befall the king. Verses 18-19, with supplementary text based on the LXX version,<sup>21</sup> read: "Therefore thus Yahweh has said of

Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah: [Woe to this man!] They shall not lament for him, “Alas, my brother, and alas, my sister!” They shall not [burn spices] for him, “Alas, lord, and alas [lady!] With the burial of an ass he shall be buried, dragged and dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem”. Similar words were said of the king also in 36:30, namely, “therefore thus Yahweh has said concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall not have anyone sitting on the throne of David and his corpse shall be thrown out to the heat by day and to the frost by night”. At least the first part of the curse did not materialize, for Jehoiachin ascended the throne upon the death of his father.<sup>22</sup> The lack of fulfillment of these words proves that they were uttered before the king’s death, and perhaps during the first five years of Jehoiakim’s rule, even before the subjugation to Babylon.<sup>23</sup> They certainly do not reflect the events as they actually occurred.<sup>24</sup> The prophet was not describing an actual reality that he personally witnessed, but was cursing the king and prophesying the punishment that is destined to befall him.

**3.1.2.** Jeremiah’s words and the language of his curses correspond to those in the dtr. law, namely those who do not heed the word of God “to obey to all of his commandments and statutes“ (Deut. 28:15) are cursed with “your dead body shall be food for all of the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away” (verse 26). Threats of this kind are quite common in dtr. historiography,<sup>25</sup> in the prophetic literature,<sup>26</sup> and in Psalms.<sup>27</sup> There is, however, a close connection between the words of Jeremiah and the punishment as defined by the Deuteronomistic law.<sup>28</sup> The curse against Jehoiakim also corresponds to well-known images in neo-Assyrian literature of the ultimate fate of rebels and treaty violators.<sup>29</sup>

### **3.2 What were the circumstances of Jehoiakim's death according to 2 Kgs 24:6?**

#### **Does the absence of a description of his burial reflect the historical reality?**

##### **3.2.1.** The description of the last years of the kingdom of Judah in 2 Kgs 23:26- 25:21

expresses the idea that the process of deterioration that led to the destruction of the kingdom accelerated since the death of Josiah. Because the composition of this work was written *ex post facto*, and with knowledge of the outcome of events, a worldview was shaped in which the die had already been cast in the time of Manasseh and even the righteous king Josiah was unable to change the fate of the kingdom.<sup>30</sup>

##### **3.2.2.** According to the viewpoint of the author of the book of Kings, the last four kings

of Judah were wrongdoers. All of them are given negative evaluation in the introductory formulas of their respective reigns (see 2 Kgs 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19). Nonetheless, there is no doubt that to the author, Jehoiakim was the worst offender of all these kings. He was the link that connected the sins of Manasseh—i.e, the reason for God's decision to put an end to the kingdom of Judah—and the destruction that took place at the end of the days of Zedekiah. The author created the textual link by adding theological explanatory notes that connected the sins of Manasseh (21:1-9) with the decision of God to destroy Judah (verses 10-16), and with the sins of Jehoiakim (24:2-4).<sup>31</sup> In addition, a second theological explanatory comment that associated the sins of Jehoiakim with the revolt of Zedekiah, which was the last step on the path to the destruction,<sup>32</sup> was added in 24:20.

##### **3.2.3.** The guilt of Manasseh and Jehoiakim and the desire to absolve Josiah of all blame is also reflected in the introductory formulas of the last four kings of Judah.<sup>33</sup> In the introductory formula of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, collective blame is directed at the kings of Judah who preceded them, rather than at their father Josiah (“and he did

evil in the sight of Yahweh according to all that his fathers had done,” see 2 Kgs 23:32,37). In contrast, the blame in the introductory formula of Jehoiachin is directed at Jehoiakim, his father (“and he did evil in the sight of Yahweh according to all that his father had done,” see 2 Kgs 24:9).<sup>34</sup> This is even more striking in the introductory formula of Zedekiah. Here Jehoiakim, his brother, is accused directly (“and he did evil in the sight of Yahweh according to all that Jehoiakim had done,” see 2 Kgs 24:19).<sup>35</sup>

**3.2.4.** Jeremiah also came out against the sins of Jehoiakim (22:13-17). He blamed the king and stated: “But you eyes and a mind for nothing but gain, for shedding innocent blood, for oppression and the cruel misuse of power”(v. 17). Nevertheless, it seems that the major problem confronting the author of the Book of Kings was that Jehoiakim was the only king of all the last four kings of Judah who did not meet his punishment at the hands of a foreign king through exile and death on foreign soil.<sup>36</sup>

**3.2.5.** In historiographic terms, the author solved this problem through his report of the attack of the ‘bands’ against Jehoiakim. This attack was an attempt to suppress the rebellion, before the arrival of the main Babylonian forces headed by Nebuchadrezzar. One may then assume that even before the arrival of the main Babylonian forces, auxiliary forces were sent against Judah. According to 2 Kgs 24:2 these forces included bands of Chaldeans,<sup>37</sup> Aramaeans,<sup>38</sup> Moabites and Ammonites.<sup>39</sup> These auxiliary forces compelled some of the residents of Judah to flee from the border areas to Jerusalem.<sup>40</sup> Only at a later stage did the main Babylonian army arrive, as stated “and Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came against the city when his officers were besieging it” (2 Kgs 24:11).

**3.2.6.** The story, however, portrays the actions of the ‘bands’ not as the prelude to the conquest of Jerusalem in the time of Jehoiachin, but as Jehoiakim's punishment and as that which led him to his death.<sup>41</sup> For that reason the report in Kings claims that Yahweh is the one who sent the bands against Jehoiakim (“And Yahweh sent against him...”).<sup>42</sup> Moreover, these bands were sent to Judah with the aim of “destroy them” (24:2). Verses of theological explanation (vv 2-4) were added to the basic account of this punishment. They connected the punishment, linguistically and conceptually, to the divine judgement against Judah that is presented as a consequence of the sins of Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:11-16), and the continued wrath of the LORD (23:26-27). These verses lead directly to the description of Jehoiakim’s death.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the death of Jehoiakim is presented as a result of divine retribution.

**3.2.7.** This characterization of his death reinforces the assumption that Jehoiakim did indeed die in Jerusalem, and from the author’s viewpoint, a ‘natural’ death. For one may assume that if he had information on other, special historical circumstances that attended the king’s death, it would have been described here as conclusive evidence of his sins and the punishment that befell him.

**3.2.8.** Moreover, the author’s awareness of the place and circumstances of Jehoiakim’s death explains why the description of the years of his reign ends with the same standard closing formula, like most of the Judean kings, and unlike the other three among the four last kings of Judah. Nonetheless, despite the uniform nature of most parts of the formula in Jehoiakim’s case,<sup>44</sup> there is a conspicuous change in the fourth part of it, i.e., at the point in which the king’s death is reported<sup>45</sup> along with his burial in a definite site, usually with his fathers.<sup>46</sup> The usual formula is only partially cited. His death is reported (“and Jehoiakim slept with his fathers”, 2 Kgs 24:6a), but any reference to the burial or the site of his grave is omitted. There are

also no additional comments about any events that may have been associated with his death.<sup>47</sup> These facts reinforces the position that, from the author's point of view and insofar as he knew the circumstances of Jehoiakim's death, the king died a natural death, which was not associated with any unusual circumstances.<sup>48</sup> One may assume that if his death had not been of natural causes—that is, if he had met a fate similar to those of his father Josiah and his grandfather Amon—then a report about the circumstances of his death would have been included in the closing formula of the account of his reign in Kings.<sup>49</sup>

**3.2.9.** There is no explanation, however, for the lack of reference to his burial and his gravesite in the closing formula. The omission may be a reflection of the historical reality and relate it to the events that were taking place in the Jerusalem area at that time, when various bands of mercenaries were preparing the way for the onslaught of the Babylonian army.<sup>50</sup> However, even if we accept this explanation, it is still unclear why the reference to the burial is missing from the account, and particularly so since such a reference could have served the theological inclinations of the author towards Jehoiakim, by demonstrating the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy and highlighting the punishment that the king incurred because of his sins.

**3.2.10.** Some scholars have explained the omission of the reference to the king's burial by maintaining that the details were unknown to the author when he wrote of these events in Babylon, after being sent into exile with the exile of Jehoiachin.<sup>51</sup> This explanation seems forced and somewhat problematic. It is doubtful whether methodologically it would be correct to explain gaps in information and missing details in this case to the lack of sources available to the author and his lack of knowledge. Even if we accept the premise that the book was written by one of the exiles sent to Babylon with the exile of Jehoiachin, it is still hard to accept his lack

of knowledge of the matter. For these events occurred only a few months before the city surrendered to the Babylonians and the people went into exile. The author should have had knowledge of, even from what he had personally witnessed or heard.<sup>52</sup>

**3.2.11.** If the lack of reference is not the result of a copyist's error or an omission, it is preferable to explain it in terms of the historiographer's aim. It is hard not to draw a parallel between the omission of a description of Jehoiakim's burial and the author's inclination to depict him as a sinner who is justly punished by God, and to further connect these themes with Jeremiah's grim prophecy, according to which "with the burial of an ass he shall be buried, dragged and dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (22:19, also cf. 36:30). This is the place where the author could emphasize the punishment of the sinful king. He could not describe it in his closing formula because insofar as he knew the details of the burial, it simply was not so. However, omitting a description of the burial from the formulaic ending leaves a gaping vacuum in the description, which the readers could not ignore or avoid connecting with the words of Jeremiah. Furthermore, it would seem that from the author's viewpoint he could not have acted differently, for if he had described Jehoiakim's burial and thus contradicted Jeremiah's curse, he would also have had to explain why the prophecy was not fulfilled.

#### **4. The Sources for the Reference to Jehoiakim's Exile (2 Chr 36:6), and to his Burial in the Garden of 'Uzza (LXX version of 2 Chr 36:8)**

**4.1.** According to the description in 2 Chr 36:6-7, Nebuchadrezzar exiled Jehoiakim. The text states: "[Nebuchadnezzar] bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon. And Nebuchadrezzar carried some of the vessels of the house of the

LORD to Babylon...”.<sup>53</sup> Various scholars have claimed that this account provides reliable historical information that supplements the information in 2 Kings 24.<sup>54</sup> They found such corroboration for their position in Dan. 1:1-2. The text there states: “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadrezzar came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And Yahweh gave Jehoiakim the king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God...”

- 4.2.** It seems, however, that the description in the book of Daniel relies on that in 2 Chronicles. Moreover, the date reported in Daniel does not correspond to the well-grounded historical reconstruction of the days of Jehoiakim. One may assume it was taken from 2 Kgs 24:1, and certainly it cannot be used as the basis for any historical reconstruction.<sup>55</sup>
- 4.3.** The description in Chronicles is brief, slightly contradicting the information available from the other biblical sources. It should be treated as a secondary description that its only source is the account in Kings, and which designed to express historiographic and ideological aims that belong to a time much later than that of the events themselves.<sup>56</sup> Many scholars have noted that the Chronicler made extensive use of descriptions of the death and burial of kings and fashioned them to comply with his own worldview, and to serve as a testimony to direct divine retribution for the deeds of the kings.<sup>57</sup> Not only he wished to shape the description of the last kings of Judah to fit the basic principles of his doctrine of reward and punishment, but also wished to draw a parallel between the fate of Jehoiakim and that of Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.<sup>58</sup> According to the picture he presented, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin were exiled from their land (2 Chr 36: 4; 6; 10). One should assume

that in spite of the general description of the punishment of Zedekiah in collective terms (verses 17-20), his fate was well known to the Chronicler and to his readers.<sup>59</sup> Because of this, there is also no description of the death and burial of the last four kings of Judah. It seems that the Chronicler wished to leave the fate of the House of David as an open question.<sup>60</sup> According to his doctrine, as soon as these kings were exiled from their land, there is no longer any reason to be preoccupied with their fate.<sup>61</sup>

- 4.4.** It is not clear what is the source of the tradition in the Luc. version on 2 Chronicles regarding the burial of the king in the garden of ‘Uzza and of its reliability. Some scholars assigned great reliability to the tradition, particularly in view of the fact that it contradicts Jeremiah’s prophecy.<sup>62</sup> However, it seems that it should be seen instead as the later addition by someone who was trying to create a correspondence between the description of Jehoiakim’s burial and Jeremiah’s prophecy, according to which the king was given an ass’ burial outside of the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>63</sup> The additional comment in the Luc. version according to which Jehoiakim was buried “with his fathers” was written by someone who was trying to integrate the secondary tradition with the information stating that Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:18) and Amon (21:26) were buried in the garden of ‘Uzza.

## **5. Summary**

- 5.1.** An attempt to synthesize all of the accounts of the death and burial of King Jehoiakim, together with the chronological manipulations regarding the date of his death, can serve as a basis for fascinating historical reconstruction. However, an independent investigation of every source, together with an evaluation of its time, the purpose for which it was written, and the level of historical reliability, are a

precondition for any reconstruction, and at times can take the sting out of such reconstruction.

- 5.2.** In the case of the death of Jehoiakim, it seems that the simplest and least speculative reconstruction of all that is the most likely and most appropriate for the complex of historical data that have been preserved. Insofar as the author of the description in the Book of Kings knew about events in Judah in the last years of the kingdom, the king's death was not attended by any unusual circumstances. He died after an eleven-year reign and was buried in Jerusalem, exactly on the eve of Nebuchadrezzar's campaign, which was aimed at suppressing the revolt and destroying the city. His death saved the city from destruction and enabled the small kingdom an additional eleven years of rule.
- 5.3.** Did secret events take place in the royal palace that were unknown to the residents of the city? Was Jehoiakim's death the result of a sophisticated conspiracy whose perpetrators or circumstances were not revealed and not known to his contemporaries? This may be the case, but it is better to remember that there is no contemporary information of that kind, and later accounts of it are filling in the gaps and try to create harmony between the lacunae in the Book of Kings and the curses of the prophet Jeremiah as to the fate of the sinner king.

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## 7. Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The place is mentioned as the burial place of kings Manasseh and Amon in 2 Kgs 21:18, 26, respectively). On the identification of this place, see the comprehensive discussion in Barkay 1977: 75-92.
- <sup>2</sup> The absence of any comment about Jehoiakim's death and burial in the MT version makes the impression that the king died in exile, while according to the LXX version one can understand that he was held in Babylon awhile and then released and permitted to reign again in Jerusalem. See: Curtis and Madsen 1910: 520-521.
- <sup>3</sup> The short Biblical description of the three months of Jehoahaz' rule and the appointment of Jehoiakim by the Egyptians corresponds with the information in the Babylonian Chronicle from the year 17 of Nabopolassar (B.M. 21901, Rev. 1. 66-75). According to this source, the Egyptian army fought alongside the Assyrians over the city of Haran in Tammuz 609 BCE. The war ended after three months (Elul 609 BCE) without results, and when the Babylonians arrived to assist the city, the Assyrians and Egyptians retreated. See: Wiseman 1956: 19-20, 62-63; Grayson 1975: 19, 96, 140-141.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. 2 Kgs. 23:31 to verse 36 and to 1 Chr 3:15, and see the suggestions made by Albright 1932: 92; Malamat 1950:220; 1968: 140-141; Liver 1959: 6-7; Rudolph 1955:28; Miller & Hayes 1986: 402; Cogan & Tadmor 1988: 305; Seitz 1989: 72-73, 87, n. 95; Ahlström 1993: 767.

<sup>5</sup>See on this subject: Liver 1959: 51-53; Cogan & Tadmor 1988: 291, and compare: 2 Sam. 5:3, 17; 12:7; 19:11; 1 Kgs. 1:4, 39, 45; 5:15; 19:15,16; 2 Kgs 9:3, 6, 12.

<sup>6</sup>For a reconstruction of the historical proceedings of this period, see Lipschits 1999a: 467-487, with further literature.

<sup>7</sup>Jeremiah's prophecy (46:1-12) dated to that year expresses the strong impression made by the Egyptian defeat of Babylon. For a general discussion and different opinions as to the sources of the prophecy and its time, see Holladay 1989: 312-313. For a discussion on the time of the prophecy and its historical background, see *ibid*: 316-318, with further literature.

<sup>8</sup>Wiseman 1956:28; 1985:23; Miller & Hayes 1986:406; Cogan & Tadmor 1988:308; Ahlström 1993: 781; Lipschits 1999: 467-469. Worschech's attempt (1987: 57-63, and see also Hyatt's opinion 1956:280) to pre-date the subjugation of Judah to 605 BCE should not be accepted. This opinion is based on a inconclusive agreement between later accounts, whose reliability is doubtful and does not comply with the historical reconstruction of events that took place in this period of time. The scholars' attempt to date the subjugation later to 603 BCE is not sufficiently substantiated. This suggestion was supported by Pavlovsky & Vogt (1964: 345-346); Oded (1966:103-104); and Malamat (1968: 141-142). For a critique of this, see Na'aman (1992: 41-43).

<sup>9</sup>On Nebuchadrezzar's policy in the 'Hattu-Land', see Lipschits 1999a: 468-473; 1999b: 115-123.

<sup>10</sup>Lipschits 1999a: 469-470; 1999b: 115-116.

<sup>11</sup>One can suppose that Nebuchadrezzar's army suffered a sharp defeat in a face-to-face battle conducted against the army of Necho II army, and retreated to Babylon.

A brief description of this battle is given in Chronicle B.M. 21946 Rev. l. 7, and see: Wiseman 1956: 28, 70-71; Grayson 1975: 20, 101.

<sup>12</sup>This historical situation was understood well by Josephus (*Antiq. X*, 88).

<sup>13</sup>See the description in Chronicle B.M. 21946, Rev. l. 11 (Wiseman 1956: 32-33, 72-73; Grayson 1975: 20, 102).

<sup>14</sup>See the description in Chronicle B.M. 21946, Rev. l. 12 (Wiseman 1956: 33-35, 72-73; Grayson 1975: 20, 102). The mention of the date when Jerusalem was conquered attests to the importance the event had for the writers of the Babylonian Chronicle (Wiseman 1991:232).

<sup>15</sup>The name of the Judean king who surrendered to Nebuchadrezzar is not mentioned in the Babylonian Chronicle (B.M.21946, Rev. l. 13, and see Wiseman 1956: 33-35, 72-73; Grayson 1975: 20, 102) however, according to 2 Kgs 24:12, it was Jehoiachin, and he is also the one who was taken into exile.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the Babylon Chronicle, B.M. 21946, Rev. l. 13, and see Wiseman 1956: 33-35; 72-73; Grayson 1975: 20, 102. The description in the Babylonian Chronicle corresponds to the description in 2 Kgs 24:17, according to which “And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his uncle king in his place, and he changed his name to Zedekiah”. This comment is parallel in language and content to 23:34, where the coronation of Eliakim by the Egyptians is described and the changing of his name to Jehoiakim. This parallel is not coincidental, as will be discussed in following. The author of the Book of Kings wishes to use it to connect the two events, just as he linked the exile of Jehoahaz to Egypt with the exile of Jehoiachin to Babylon. In this way he also creates a cross reference where both kings who were crowned in Judah without the approval of the foreign rulers (Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin) were taken into exile after a three-month reign, and the two kings who were appointed in their place

by the foreign rulers (Jehoiakim and Zedekiah) ruled for eleven years, rebelled against the sovereign ruler, and brought about the greatest catastrophes in the history of Judah: Jehoiakim brought about the exile of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah brought about the destruction of the Temple.

<sup>17</sup> Compare the Babylonian Chronicles, B.M. 21946, Rev. 1. 13, and see Wiseman 1956: 33-35, 72-73; Grayson 1975: 20, 102.

<sup>18</sup>The description in 2 Chr 36:9 should not be accepted whereby Jehoiachin ruled for three months and ten days, as this is apparently a textual error (Green 1982: 105; Redford 1992: 459; and literature in n. 140.) In light of this, the attempt by Thiele (1956: 22, 168, and see also Horn 1967: 15; Green 1982: 103) to set the date of Jehoiachin's ascent to the throne on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Marheshvan (December 8<sup>th</sup>, 598 BCE) should not be accepted. It is also hard to accept the opinion of Green (ibid: 106) whereby the first two days of the month of Adar, prior to the surrender of Jerusalem, were considered the third month of Jehoiachin's reign, which means that Jehoiakim died during the month of Tevet. We do not have enough information to determine that the beginning of the month was counted like the whole month in the kingdom of Judah. If Jehoiachin did indeed ascend the throne immediately after the death of his father and reigned for three months, it is preferable to assume that the meaning of this information is that Jehoiakim died in the beginning of Kislev, and it is doubtful if one can date it more precisely.

<sup>19</sup>On this subject, see: Wiseman 1956: 33. One should not accept the hypothesis whereby Nebuchadrezzar set out on his campaign after the death of Jehoiakim, with the aim of crowning a king in Judah accountable to him (Noth 1958: 138: and see in contrast Wiseman 1985: 32). The Babylonians would not have been able to deploy themselves for such an extended and complex campaign within such a short period

of several days, and it is doubtful whether the death of the rebellious king would have provided an excuse for the foray by Nebuchadnezzar and his army from Babylon. The chronological and historical reconstruction made by Seitz (1989: 118-119) are also problematic, since they have no support in the text.

<sup>20</sup> The conjecture by Albright (1932: 90-91) and Bright (1959: 327; 1965: xlix) whereby Jehoiakim was murdered in order to save the city from destruction is based on this reasoning, although it is speculative and has no basis in the historical facts, nor does this hypothesis contain any explanation of why the author did not mention the matter of murder nor why he chose, of all things, to omit the description of the burial. On this subject see also the discussion in following. Green (1982: 107-108) went one step further and raised the possibility that the murder had been committed when the Babylonians besieged the city, and that the king's body had been thrown over the city walls. The difficulty with this theory is similar, and in addition – it offers no explanation for the three months that Jehoiachin ruled before he surrendered and was sent into exile.

<sup>21</sup> Following the LXX version, many scholars add at the beginning of the prophecy: “Woe to this man!” and correct the repetition of the ‘lament’ to ‘burn’ (compare to MT version and the LXX version in 34:5). See: Dahood 1961: 462-464; Bright 1965: 137-138; Rudolph 1968: 86; Thompson 1980: 477, 480; McKane 1986: 532-533; Holladay 1986: 592, 597-598, and *ibid.* additional suggestions for emendation and a bibliography. Cf. also to the abridged version of the eulogy on the man of God in 1 Kgs 13:30.

<sup>22</sup> Perhaps that is the reason that a parallel prophecy was pronounced also about Jehoiachin (Jer. 22:30).

<sup>23</sup>This point was summarized well by Holladay (1986: 594; 1989: 254), but in contrast to this opinion there are scholars that dates these curses much later, and see, e.g., Carroll 1986: 265-266. On this subject see also Wessels 1989: 232-249. The prophecy cannot be connected to the revolt by Jehoiakim, which took place after the failure of the Babylonian invasion of Egypt (countering Seitz 1989: 117; Ahlström 1993: 790-791).

<sup>24</sup> It is hard to accept a historical reconstruction that was made only on the basis of this prophecy by Jeremiah (Albright 1942: 50; Weiser 1969: 191; Green 1982: 108). It is no less difficult to accept the attempt by Malamat (1950: 221; 1968: 141) to combine the prophecy by Jeremiah and the LXX vers. and the Luc. vers. with 2 Chr 36:8, and to reconstruct a burial that took place under harsh siege conditions in the garden of 'Uzza outside the walls of Jerusalem. On this subject, see the critique by Seitz 1989: 114.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Sam 17:44, 46; 1 Kgs. 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; 2 Kgs. 9:10, 36. Cf. also to 2 Sam 21:10.

<sup>26</sup>This appears mainly in the words of Jeremiah (7:33; 8:2; 9:21; 14:16; 16:4, 6; 19:7; 22:19; 25:33; 34:20; 36:30, and cf. also to 15:3) with a faint allusion in Is. 5:25 and with a detailed image in Ezek 39:17-20.

<sup>27</sup>Ps. 79:2-3; 83:13.

<sup>28</sup>On this, see Hillers 1964: 69.

<sup>29</sup>On this subject see: Hillers 1964: 68-69; Cogan 1971: 29-34; Oded 1992: 93. For the modern-day parallel see Joüon 1937: 335-336. Cf. to the prophecy of Ezekiel (17: 16-18, 19-20) on the fate of Zedekiah after he violated his treaty with Nebuchadrezzar.

<sup>30</sup>Blaming Manasseh for the destruction is one of the central salient characteristics of the Dtr2, and may also be compared with the explicit blame directed at Manasseh in Jer. 15:4 (Smelik 1992: 166-168). For a summary discussion on the connection between the Dtr2 and 2 Kgs 17, see Lowery 1991: 172, and n. 1. On the connection to 21:8-16, see McKenzie 1984: 126-144. Van Keulen's book (1996) focuses on this idea.

<sup>31</sup>This is not the place for a linguistic and conceptual discussion of the theological explanatory comments on the sins of Jehoiakim, but except for an explicit mention of the sins of Manasseh (24:3), the principal connection to the sins of Manasseh is the sending of the 'bands' (raiding parties) against Jehoiakim, with the objective of "destroy them according to the word of Yahweh, which he spoke through his servants the prophets" (24:2, and cf. to the title of the destruction prophecy in 21:10) and in the reference to the sin "for the innocent blood which he shed and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood" (24:4 and cf. to 21:16). On the connection between 24: 2-4 and 21:10-16, see Cross 1973: 286; Nelson 1981: 88; O'Brien 1989: 270; Van Keulen 1996: 183-189.

<sup>32</sup>For an explanation of Zedekiah's rebellion and God's decision to destroy Judah, the author inserted a short comment "for this came about because of the anger of Yahweh upon Jerusalem and Judah, until he rid himself of them..." (24:20).

<sup>33</sup>See Nelson (1981: 36-41); Halpern & Vanderhooft (1991: 209-210), and contrast with Provan (1988:48-49).

<sup>34</sup>This is the only standard formula in the description of the reign of the last four kings of Judah. See: Nelson 1981: 39; Halpern & Vanderhooft 1991: 209.

<sup>35</sup>This is the only time that the king's brother is mentioned in the introductory formula of one of the kings of Judah.

<sup>36</sup>Jehoahaz was exiled to Egypt and apparently died there (2 Kgs 23:33-34; Jer. 22:10-12); Jehoiachin was exiled to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:11-12, 15-16), and lived there many years (2 Kgs 25:27), but never returned to Judah ; Zedekiah was punished by the Babylonians in the harshest way of all of them; after his sons were murdered before his eyes, his eyes were plucked out and he was exiled to Babylon (2 Kgs 25:6-7).

<sup>37</sup>On the appearance of the name in the Bible and Mesopotamian sources, see Cogan & Tadmor 1988: 306, with further bibliography.

<sup>38</sup>In some versions, the names appear as ‘Edom’ rather than ‘Aram’. This would seemingly complete the mention of all the Trans-Jordan kingdoms. Although some of the scholars prefer to accept the correction (Stade, Closterman, Benziger, etc. and see also: Burney 1903: 365; Montgomery 1951: 554), the parallel combination of the army of the Chaldeans and the army of Aram in Jer. 35:11, in the prophecy that is connected with the days of the suppression of Jehoiakim’s rebellion, reinforces specifically the Massoretic Text. Aramaic tribes dwelled close to Babylon and therefore it is no wonder that the armies of Aram fought together with the Babylonian army. A similar reference to the forces of Chaldeans and Arameans is found in Assyrian texts. On this subject see: Montgomery 1951: 552 (although in my opinion his historical reconstruction should not be accepted); Cogan & Tadmor 1988: 306.

<sup>39</sup>Cf. to Jer. 35:1, 11. One should be very doubtful about the premise that the words of Zefaniah (2: 8-11) were spoken during this period. On the complex composition of this section and alternative dates for the time of its parts, see Vlaardingerbroek 1999: 142-145, and for a detailed analysis of these verses, see Ben Zvi 1991: 164-176.

<sup>40</sup> This is the background of the prophecy of Jeremiah 35, according to whose title was said in the days of Jehoiakim. The prophecy and the story (esp. v. 11) corresponds well, both linguistically and in terms of the historical background to the description in 2 Kgs 24:2.

<sup>41</sup> The invasion of the ‘bands’ is described again together with the ascent of Nebuchadrezzar (24:10-11) after the closing formulaic of Jehoiakim (verses 5-6), a comment on the changed geopolitical situation in the region (verse 7), and the introductory formula of Jehoiachin (8-9). In light of this, it seems that one must draw a parallel between the invasion of the bands according to the description in 24:2 and the invasion of the servants of Nebuchadrezzar and the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem according to the description in verse 10, before the arrival of Nebuchadrezzar in the city, when ‘his officers were besieging it’ (verse 11). On this subject see also Van Keulen (1996:186).

<sup>42</sup> Based on the LXX vers. Gray (1964: 757) and Würthwein (1977: 468, n. 2) contended that the word ‘God’ was added in verse 2 and that the subject of the verse is Nebuchadrezzar, continuing verse 1. Beyond the linguistic problematics with this assertion (Cogan & Tadmor 1988: 306), it ignores the conceptual message of the text that connects it to 21: 10-16; see the discussion in Barthélemy (1982:421-422) and also: Dietrich 1972: 60; O’Brien 1989:270, n. 144; Van Keulen 1996: 186-188.

<sup>43</sup> See: Dietrich 1972: 22-26; Cross 1973: 286; Nelson 1981: 88; O’Brien 1989: 270; Seitz 1989: 176; Cortese 1990: 189; McKenzie 1991: 125-126; Van Keulen 1996: 148-149, 183-191. I am not relating here to the disputes over the uniformity of the text. In my opinion verses 2-4 all belong to Dtr2, however, this is not the place to argue against the opinion summarized in Van Keulen’s essay (ibid.) whereby verse 4 is a later addition.

<sup>44</sup>The first part in the closing formula “And as for the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and all that he did” (24:5a) is standard, and is similarly to most of the closing formulas in the book of Kings (cf. e.g. to the formula of Amon in 21:25-26 and that of Josiah in 23:28-30). There is no such additions as in the closing formulas of Hezekiah (20:20-21) and Manasseh (21:17-18). The second part of the formula – “are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah” (24:5b) is also standard, and this book is mentioned for the last time in the Book of Kings (Nelson 1981: 85-86, and further literature in n. 151; Cogan & Tadmor 1988: 307, with further literature). The third part of the formula is missing, and it is not unusual, for similar to a large part of the closing formulas, the author chose not to add details here about the last fate of the king (cf. e.g. to the extensive description of the circumstances of Joiaiah’s death (23: 29-30a) at this part specifically). The fifth part (“And Jehoiachin his son became king in his place” verse 24:6b), is also standard, except for the comments in 2 Kgs 1:18, 10:36, which were brought together at this point for editing reasons, and except for the comment added in the closing formula on Josiah (23: 30b), which is testimony to the great importance that the author assigned to the circumstances of Jehoahaz’ ascent to the throne.

<sup>45</sup>On the expression “And he slept with his fathers” see the comprehensive discussion of Alfrink 1943: 106-118. On the significance of this expression, see also Tromp 1969: 168-171.

<sup>46</sup>The burial of the kings is almost always mentioned in the closing formula. In the case of kings who were murdered and not brought to burial, the fourth part of the formula is totally missing, and in the case of the murder of sons of the king and the end of the dynasty, the fifth section is also missing. Almost in every case of the murder of a king of Israel, there is some treatment of the circumstance of their death.

Cf. e.g. the fate of the following kings and the closing formula on them: Nadab (1 Kgs 15: 31-32; Elah (16:14), Zimri (16:20), Zechariah (2 Kgs 15: 11-12); Shallum (15:15); Pekahiah (15: 26); Pekah (15: 31). Exceptional in this context is the closing formula on Ahaziah, and apparently the omission of a description of the death and burial in the closing formula (2 Kgs 1:18) is connected to Elijah's prophecy "From the bed upon which you have gone up you shall not come down, but you shall certainly die" (verses 4, 16). Because of the exiling of Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah it is clear why the description was omitted regarding their death and burial; however, one must note that the closest parallel to the closing formula of Jehoiakim is that of Hezekiah, of whom no description of burial is given either.

<sup>47</sup>As mentioned previously and to be discussed in following, a partial description appears in the LXX vers. to 2 Chr 36:8, and the complete formula appears in the Luc. vers. on this verse. In this light one can understand why scholars raised the possibility that the description of the burial in 2 Kgs was omitted as a result of homoioteleuton or even purposely deleted under the influence of Jeremiah's words (22: 19) (Stade, Wolhausen, Benziger, and see in Burney 1903: 365; Nelson 1981: 86; and literature in n. 152, p. 144). However, it seems that the LXX vers. here is secondary, and certainly one may not rely on the Luc. vers. (Montgomery 1951: 553; Cogan & Tadmor 1988: 307). On this subject, see also the suggestion by Seitz (1989: 116-120) and also see the discussion below.

<sup>48</sup>O'Brien 1989: 201-202, and n. 95, as against the opinion of Seitz 1989: 109-110. The circumstantial arguments raised by Seitz in supporting the theory of an unnatural death (the fact that Jehoiakim was only 36 years old and the timing of his death three months before the city fell to the Babylonians) could serve the author as cogent evidence of the punishment of Jehoiakim for his sins. The fact that there is no

treatment of any kind attests to the exact opposite, and to the problem that the author had because Jehoiakim died peacefully in his own bed.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. e.g. the closing formula on Amon (21:25-26) and on Josiah (23:28-30).

<sup>50</sup>Montgomery (1951: 553) accepted the version of the description on 2 Kgs and conjecture that because of the siege laid by Babylon, Jehoiakim could not have been given a proper burial outside of the city walls. However, if this was indeed the case, then according to this theory it is not clear why the author ignored the subject, especially considering the fact that it corresponded to his theological evaluation of Jehoiakim and to Jeremiah's curse.

<sup>51</sup>This is claimed by Gray (1964: 753-754), after other scholars (see literature there). Seitz (1989: 117-118) also supported this solution and even expanded upon it and used it to explain additional lacunae in the description of Jehoiakim's revolt and the Babylonian siege that preceded the exile of Jehoiachin.

<sup>52</sup>I find unacceptable the attempt by Seitz (1989: 117-118) to solve the problem by historical speculations about the various reasons why the author did not have knowledge of what fate the king met. The burial of a king is an event of great importance, especially if it carried out at the height of a siege, and when the death of the king brought about the surrender of his heir and the rescue of the city from destruction.

<sup>53</sup>See the comparison made by Willi (1972: 106. n. 118; 212, n. 29) between this description and that in 2 Chr 33:11, and his contention that the source of both descriptions is in 2 Kgs 25:7. On this see also Green 1987: 82-83.

<sup>54</sup>See: Baumgartner 1926: 51-55; Yeivin 1948: 30-48; Green 1982: 108; Mercer 1989: 179-192; For additional literature, see Japhet 1977: 311, n. 355; and see also the various reconstructions presented by Seitz (1989: 106). In contrast, see Begg

(1987: 82-83) and the arguments made by Japhet (1993: 1065-1066), which deny the historical reliability and emphasize the ideological background and its historiographic tendentiousness.

<sup>55</sup>In the third year of Jehoiakim (606 BCE) Nebuchadrezzar was still heir apparent and his father Nabopolassar was king of Babylon. This was one year before the decisive battle between Babylon and Egypt, only after which Babylon began to firmly establish its rule in Syria (605 BCE), so that it is not logical that already at this stage, Nebuchadrezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. Moreover, in Jer. 36 the presence of Jehoiakim in Jerusalem is reported in the fourth and fifth years of his reign, so that it is not possible that he had been exiled earlier. On the difficulties in dating 'the third year' see Efron 1974: 311. On suggestions for emendation and explanation on the source of this number, see Young 1949: 268; Noth 1954: 282, n. 2; Delcor 1971: 59-60; Clines 1972: 20-21; Porteous 1979: 32.

<sup>56</sup>Curtis and Madsen 1910: 521; Japhet 1977: 311-315; 1993: 1060-1077 (and esp. pp. 1062; 1064-1066); Williamson 1982: 412.

<sup>57</sup>Rudolph 1955: xx; Japhet 1977: 314-315. On this subject, see Ackroyd 1967: 510-515. This point was summarized well in Begg 1987: 81-82; and Seitz 1989: 112-113.

<sup>58</sup>Mosis 1973: 205-208, 213; Williamson 1982: 412-418, and see the critique in Begg 1987: 80-81.

<sup>59</sup> I agree to the assumption that the punishment of the last Davidic king described by the Chronicler in collective terms because of the importance of the expectation of the renewal of the Davidic monarchy in his ideology (Japhet 1993: 1071-1072).

<sup>60</sup>Begg 1987: 79, 81; Japhet 1993: 1072.

<sup>61</sup>See: Japhet 1977: 314-315; 1993: 1066.

<sup>62</sup>For a summing up of this position see Nelson 1981: 86, and *ibid.* previous literature.

<sup>63</sup>See, for instance, Gray 1964: 753.