“Do Not Reject Your Mother’s Teaching?!” - The Function of Micah’s Mother in Judges 17

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Abstract

This paper examines the function of Micah’s mother in Judges 17-18; how her actions contribute to our understanding of the ‘mother-son’ relationship and the cultus in the book of Judges; and finally, how her actions foreshadow future perspectives on the introduction of idolatry in the Deuteronomic History. These concerns will be addressed by taking a literary approach with particular focus on the characterization of mother and son as presented through their actions, dialogue, narrator comments and irony.. Caveat lector! The present story is an exception to the proverbial saying: “Hear, my child, your father’s instruction, and do not reject your mother’s teaching; for they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck” (Proverbs 1:8).

I. Introduction

The first female figure in the book of Judges is a young woman named Achsah. As her story ends we find her riding upon donkey back to her father Caleb’s home to request springs of water. These springs would allow her to sustain her new household on the fringe of the Negeb. The closing of her narrative brings thoughts of optimism to readers regarding both the future for her household and for Israel. The book of Judges closes with the story of another woman, the unnamed Levite’s concubine. At the end of her story, the concubine, like Achsah, journeys by donkey back to her master’s house. Yet there is no optimism reflected in the concubine’s ride, for it is her raped, abused and lifeless body that hangs over the donkey as the Levite brings her home. Achsah’s story represents the apex of Israel’s vision and expectations for a future in the Promised Land; the story of the Levite’s concubine is the nadir.

Between apex and nadir we find a prolific procession of female characters. How precisely, do the women of Judges fit into this overall picture of decline?” posits Danna Nolan Fewell in The Women’s Bible Commentary. Her response is succinct, “The construction and destruction of female characters and their relationship form a pattern that mirrors the deterioration of Israel’s relation to Yahweh.” Amidst this downward spiral of female characters is the nameless mother of Micah, a woman who is deceptively constructed as a virtuous mother, only to be instantaneously deconstructed by a few choice words. Her unexpected deconstruction is paralleled by a ‘deterioration of Israel’s relation to Yahweh’ in the private sphere of family worship.

The story of Micah’s mother is found in Judges 17:1-4, a scene which serves as the Prologue to a larger narrative unit extending throughout Chapters 17 and 18. These chapters, along with Chapters 19-21, form a supplement to the book of Judges and have been extensively analyzed in respect to text-critical issues, their place in the textual history of the book of Judges, and their function, especially in relation to cultic matters, within the book of Judges and the Deuteronomic History. The present study revisits the story of Micah’s mother, employing a literary approach which focuses on the
characterization of mother and son as presented through their actions and dialogue, narrator comments and, in particular, the use of irony. This analysis will reveal that the role of Micah’s mother in Judges 17-18 is not marginal, peripheral or incidental to the narrative, rather her actions contribute to a negative impression of the ‘mother-son’ relationship and of the cultus in the book of Judges, as well as foreshadow future perspectives on the introduction of idolatry in the Deuteronomic History. Caveat lector! The present story is an exception to the proverbial saying: “Hear, my child, your father’s instruction, and do not reject your mother’s teaching; for they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck” (Proverbs 1:8).

II. The Story

“There was a man in the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micayehu.” So begins our story in Judges 17:1. We are immediately introduced to our protagonist Micayehu/Micah, a man whose name meaning ‘Who is like the Lord’ portents great expectations for the reader. Our expectations will not be realized; he is not like the Lord, he is ‘a man,’ “a man from the hill country of Ephraim,” a designation that emphasizes his ordinary nature. This ordinariness subtly suggests what is about to transpire could very well happen to any man in Israel. The events about to transpire occur in ‘the hill country of Ephraim,’ a popular setting for the heroic stories of Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jephthah, and Samuel and the following unfortunate episodes involving the Levite’s concubine, Eli and Saul. In particular, the heroic nature of the preceding stories set in ‘the hill country of Ephraim,’ might by inference lead the reader into this same set of expectations, a complacency that our story will be once again follow the script of victorious combat.

In verse two we meet Micah’s mother, designated simply as ‘his mother’ in the clause, “He said to his mother.” Nameless, our only expectations come from our preconceptions of what the term ‘mother’ evokes. Our narrator then begins in media res with a dialogue between son and mother; a dialogue that will be interrupted by the narrator’s comments. In verse two Micah says to his mother:

The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and even spoke it in my hearing, that silver is in my possession; I took it.

Her response is the converse, “May my son be blessed by the Lord!” ‘What is taken,’ the narrator relates, is returned in verse three: “Then he returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother.” Once again, and for the last time, ‘mother’ speaks: “I consecrate the silver to the Lord from my hand for my son.” For what purpose? For the antithesis of Israel’s covenantal law: “to make an idol of cast metal (pesel umassekhah).” The narrator relates the completion of events in verse four:

So when he returned the money to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver, and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into an idol of cast metal; and it was in the house of Micah.
We then read the narrator’s summary in verse five, followed by a familiar refrain in verse six:

This man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and teraphim, and installed one of his sons who became priest. In those days there was no king in Israel, all the people did what was right in their own eyes.

Micah’s story will continue in Chapters 17 and 18, yet his mother will disappear. Micah will acquire a Levite to replace his son as priest in his shrine. The idol and the Levite will be taken unexpectedly by the Danites as they migrate northwards. Micah and his entourage, being no match for the Danite force, will relinquish the idol and the Levite. The Danites will move on to take the unsuspecting Canaanite city of Laish, rename it Dan, and establish the ancient cultic center of Dan. Our focus, however, is on what can be discerned, both stated and implied, from the initial dialogue and narrator comments in respect to our characters, their relationship, and how this information contributes to our understanding of the cultus in its immediate and extended context.

III. Characterization and Irony

We learn that mother possessed 1100 pieces of silver. Whether this amount makes her affluent has been much debated; although the yearly wage of ten pieces of silver offered by Micah to the Levite in verse ten suggests that 1100 pieces were a significant sum. No mention is made of her husband, Micah’s father, which by inference might suggest she was a widow, an affluent widow at that. She would belong to that class of women so often deemed among the lowliest of Israel, “the widow, the orphan and the sojourner.” Her affluence contradicts our usual expectations of the poor widow in biblical literature.

On learning of her loss, we as readers may initially be sympathetic. Her utterance of a curse is excusable, reflecting a natural human response. On discovering that her son Micah is the thief, our compassion is extended further toward ‘mother.’ Our esteem for the nameless mother rises, when, as a sign of forgiveness, she blesses her son, the thief. The altruistic nature of ‘mother’ peaks as we learn that the very money stolen from her will now be consecrated to the Lord. But the esteem we hold for this mother will instantly be lost when we learn of the purpose of the consecrated money - “to make an idol of cast metal (pesel umassekhah) on behalf of my son.” Her character is further tainted when we learn that of the 1100 pieces of consecrated silver only 200 are given to the silversmith. Was this amount his fee? Or did she add insult to transgression by holding back some of the consecrated money? The answer lies in conjecture.

Micah’s mother, as noted, speaks but twice. Ironically, both utterances drawn from the parlance of cultic activity - a formula of blessing and an act of consecration - yield the antithesis of covenantal law. In particular she breaks the Second Commandment “You shall not make for yourself an idol (pesel) . . .” (Exodus 20:4) and admonitions found in Leviticus 19:4, 11. The use of the term massekah also evokes allusions to Exodus 32 where massekah is the term used of the Golden Calf. (Ironically, in rabbinic literature Micah is charged with having fashioned the Golden Calf.) The conjoining of these two terms certainly adds negative connotations to the one who commissioned it - Micah’s mother.

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But son Micah is by no means virtuous. He openly admits his thievery; breaking not only the Eighth Commandment “Thou shalt not steal,” but in stealing from his mother he also transgresses the Fifth Commandment “Honor your father and your mother.” Why he chose to return the silver may derive more from the fear of his mother’s curse, which the text is specific to note was pronounced in his hearing, than from feelings of guilt or remorse. Youthful folly cannot be held responsible for his crime; for in verse five we learn that he has sons, one of whom is old enough to be initiated as the priest of his shrine. We might also posit the question: “What kind of role model does Micah as father serve for his own sons?” Is Micah an exemplar of our proverb: “Hear, my child, your father’s instruction!”?

Micah not only breaks two major commandments, but by willingly accepting the idol from his mother he, like his mother, breaks the Second Commandment as well: “You shall not bow down to them or worship them.” In her discussion of the book of Judges in A Women’s Bible Commentary, Fewell quizzes: “What kind of mother leads her son into idolatry?” What Fewell and other commentators fail to note is that the son, Micah, willingly accepts the introduction of idolatry. He is no more coerced into idolatry than Adam was coerced to eat of the fruit of the tree by Woman.

The actions of Micah as thief and ‘mother’ as commissioner of an idol create uncomfortable feelings for the readers. But it is our knowledge that the inappropriate actions of both are directed against one another AND more importantly that the relationship between characters is the most nurturing of family relationships, that of ‘mother-child,’ that turns discomfort to shock for the readers. It is none other than irony, that unexpected reversal of tantalizing expectations of a son named Micah and ‘his mother’ that makes our story so intriguing and so appropriate to its volatile social setting in the period of the Judges. Micayehu, “Who is like the Lord,” is certainly not “like the Lord.” Micah, a son, a father, is a thief, a profession no parent wishes for their child. He is neither a blessing to his mother, nor a role model for his sons. Mother, a widow (?), the image of the oppressed, is wealthy and certainly not the apotheosis of ‘mother;’ her teachings - idolatry - are certainly not ‘fair garland or pendants for adornment.’ The characterization of Micah and mother reflect the deconstruction of this most special parental bond. Placed in the context of other ‘mother-child’ relationships in the biblical text, an even more poignant image of deterioration obtains. No other mother-son relationship depicts such outright disrespect of child for parent or parent for child.

Contrast yielding irony, however, is not restricted to the character and relationship of our protagonists, but is inherent in the vocabulary of the Prologue of Chapter 17 and in the ensuing events. Silver is taken (lqḥ) and returned (šub); mother utters a curse (‘alyt), then a blessing (berakhah); covenantal law is acknowledged by a blessing (berakhah) and a consecration (haqadeš hiqdašti) to the Lord, then wantonly broken by the antithesis of covenantal law, the commissioning of an idol (pesel umassekhaḥ). All the silver is consecrated to the Lord, but then part is withheld. Micah’s non-Levitical son is installed as priest, using the very language for the ordination of the Levites (Exodus 28:41; Leviticus 8:27) and then replaced by an official Levite; the Levite who had been a sojourner, is asked to settle down with Micah; Micah finds security in his idol and the Levite, but then loses his security to the Danites. Characterization, vocabulary and ensuing events all yield irony.
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Of all contrasts, however, it is the contrast in dialogue, or more accurately the break in dialogue, that is most pronounced and destructive to our perception of family and family cultic life during this period. We saw that Micah’s admission of thievery was countered by his mother’s words of blessing (v. 2) - son spoke, mother responded; but mother’s consecration of silver to the Lord on behalf of her son for a molten idol was countered by silence. Acquiescence by silence speaks louder than any words. No refusal is forthcoming from Micah - mother spoke, son did not verbally respond. Micah’s silent acceptance is confirmed by the narrator at the end of verse four with the words “and it [the molten idol] was in the house of Micah,” and in verse five when the narrator summarizes “this man Micah had a shrine and HE MADE an ephod and teraphim, and installed one of his sons, who became priest.” Mother commissioned the idol; son not only maintained the idol, but installed a priest and added cultic accoutrements.

The narrative in all its detail has enticed the readers into one set of expectations, but ever so quickly and ever so subtly our expectations have been deconstructed by incongruity. It is this very incongruity that makes readers realize that what we expected of family and cult towards the end of the period of the Judges is not what we obtained; but these perspectives may indeed represent a glimpse of what Israelite society was like. As readers we have to determine whether our episode was preserved because it is paradigmatic of similar households, relationships and cultic activity at this time, or whether our story is an exception, demonstrating what might continue to occur if Israelite society does not make changes in her political, social and religious spheres.

IV. Beyond the Immediate

Contrast within the story of Micah and his mother provides a striking example of the breakdown of this most precious parental relationship. Perhaps the sanctity of the mother-son relationship is what led rabbinic commentators to give a name to our nameless mother of Micah – Delilah. While the connection of Micah’s mother with Delilah may be the product of legend, the equation is tantalizing. Admonitions against the power and influence of foreign women be they wives, mothers or seductresses, are not uncommon in the Hebrew Bible. In rabbinic thought, Micah’s mother as a foreigner, specifically as Delilah, may soften the harshness of the breakdown of the ‘mother-son’ relationship; making the initiator of idolatry a foreign woman may lessen the severity of the sin. It is not an Israelite mother who introduces idolatry and gets her Israelite son to willingly follow, it is a foreigner - it is Delilah!

Micah’s mother as Delilah may be the product of fanciful speculation by early rabbinic schools, but behind their imaginings may lie a perspective that serves to connect our story with what precedes and follows. Robert Polzin argued that “a particular passage ‘makes sense’ if it repeats compositional patterns already encountered in what precedes it and foreshadows perspectives that lie ahead.” Robert Alter noted, “the matrix of allusion is often a sense of absolute historical continuity and recurrence, or an assumption that earlier events and figures are timeless ideological models by which all that follows can be measured.”

In its immediate context, the story of Micah and his mother makes sense because it illustrates specific spheres in which Israelite society has deteriorated, namely the
character of widow, mother, son, the mother-son relationship and religion. In serving as the Prologue, it naturally provides the necessary background details and the initial conflict that will unfold in the remainder of Chapter 17 and into Chapter 18. Beyond the immediate context, our attention may first be drawn to comparison of our ‘mother-son’ relationship with ‘mother-son’ relationships that precede; however, most intriguing is the cultic activity represented in our story. It is in reference to cultic activity that our story can indeed ‘make sense’ in what has preceded and what will follow. In addressing this topic the most difficult obstacle is determining the nature of the cultus as inferred by the events in our Prologue.

Most commentators and scholars of Israelite religion view our passage as an example indicating that personal family shrines were a common feature of Israelite religion during the period of the Judges. Gerstenberger goes so far as to see in our story “a later echo of the original clan religion.” He poses many penetrating questions regarding the nature of this family shrine. Unfortunately, he does not answer the most telling question of all? Does the molten idol represent Yahweh or a pagan god? Within the context of the period of the Judges another response to his unanswered question may be found. After the death of Joshua, the book of Judges (2:10-13) speaks of Israel’s severed relationship with the Lord of their ancestors; how a new generation grew up who did not know the Lord, how they worshipped the Baal and the Astartes, how they abandoned the Lord. Throughout the period of the Judges, Israel confronted with the Canaanite religion, gives in to paganism. But Israel apparently did not wholly abandon the Lord, for it is to Him that she will repeatedly cry when suffering the oppression of those Canaanites who were not displaced in the Conquest. Micah’s domestic shrine may be influenced by the Canaanite culture around him, more so than a reflection or echo of the patriarchal clan religion. But more importantly Micah and mother’s story might also reflect an early, if not the earliest, example of religious syncretism of Yahwism and the Canaanite culture. Belief in Yahweh and possession of pagan objects coexist in Micah’s story: Micah’s name evokes Yahwistic connections, his mother’s speech evokes Yahwistic connections; mother’s commissioning of a molten idol indicates pagan connections, Micah’s acceptance of these articles indicates pagan connections. Acceptance of both Yahwism and paganism might suggest syncretism was present in our domestic shrines during the period of the Judges.

The intrusion of idolatry (possibly syncretism) into the cultus provides a thematic link between our story and those stories depicting the state of the cultus later in the Deuteronomic History. So, for example, we find echoes of details from Micah’s story in I Kings 12 where Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom builds his first capital Shechem located in none other than the hill country of Ephraim. Jeroboam goes on to establish the shrines of Bethel and Dan, each with a golden calf. Jeroboam also sets up high places with non-Levitical priests. His mother, a widow, is mentioned by name, Zeru’ah. But it is not just the continuity of these details that allows our story to ‘make sense,’ rather it is the gender relations depicted in our story in relation to the intrusion of idolatry that provides a unique and dynamic link with the Deuteronomic history. While gender knows no distinction in its support of Yahwism or paganism - Micah and his mother are equal advocates of both - it is Micah’s mother who initiates idolatry and Micah who willingly accepts and officiates over the shrine. Thus, it is woman who
initiates and man who officiates. It is this compositional pattern of woman and idolatry that is repeated in the Deuteronomic History to follow.

In I Kings 11:1 we learn that “Solomon loved many foreign women” and his wives turned away his heart after other gods (11:4f). In I Kings 14:21 Rehoboam son of Solomon came to reign over Judah; his mother is Naamah the Ammonite. During his reign Judah did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. In I Kings 15:12 King Asa of Judah removed his mother from her regal position as queen mother because she made an image for Asherah. But the text also adds that Asa did not remove the high places though his heart was still to the Lord (15:14). In I Kings 16:31 Ahab of Israel takes Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal of the Sidonians as wife. With Jezebel we have the apotheosis of foreign woman transmitting the evils of paganism. In II Kings 8:25 Jehoram of Judah comes to the throne. His mother was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel. The text is specific to note that Jehoram walked in the “way of the house of Ahab . . . for he was son-in-law to the house of Ahab” (II Kings 8:27). On the death of her son Jehoram, Athaliah destroys the rest of the royal family, save one son, Joash, who is spirited away by the priest Jehoiada. Athaliah will subsequently be put to death (II Kings 11:16), at which time a new covenant is made between the Lord, the king and the people, and notably pagan elements are purged from the land (II Kings 11:17f). If only we could make a similar connection of these mothers and the presence of idolatry, a further connection with Micah’s mother would obtain. If mother in our story is the initiator of idolatry and this association convincingly continues in the Deuteronomic History, blame for religious indiscretion can be subtly directed by the male hand toward woman. If the woman is foreign - as the Rabbis saw in Micah’s mother, as the text states with Solomon’s wives and, in particular, in his successor Rehoboam’s Ammonite mother, the guilt can also be directed away from Israelite women to foreign woman.

V. Final Thoughts

Whether or not Micah’s mother is foreign, she is present in this biblical narrative. We did not need her in this story. Our narrative might just as well have begun with a modification of the narrator’s summary in verse five:

There was a man named Micah who lived in the hill country of Ephraim. He had a shrine with an idol. He made an ephod and teraphim, and installed one of his sons who became his priest.

But she is a woman present in a male-dominated narrative; she needs to be acknowledged and explained. She is not marginal, peripheral or incidental in her relationship to her son or to the confines of the Prologue. The ramifications of her actions extend beyond the Prologue. As a mother whose actions interact with the family cultus,
we are compelled to compare her with other biblical mothers and the state of the cultus throughout the biblical narrative. It is her actions with regard to the cultus that create a negative impression of her as mother. This impression contradicts our past perceptions of mother and may very well unjustly influence our future perceptions of a biblical mother, in particular, when mother comes into contact with the cultus, either by her actions or by her mere presence in a narrative that speaks of the cultus.

The story of Micah, his idol and his further adventures with the tribe of Dan is most often remembered as a narrative that depicts the origin of the great cultic center of Dan. It is a story that “has become a polemic piece in the Deuteronomic compilation.”

Until now Micah’s mother has scarcely been noted as playing any part in this narrative. Given her unfavorable role, perhaps contemporary women might wish she had been left in the shadows of her son Micah. But in reintroducing her to contemporary society we must not be impolite and now neglect her son Micah who willingly ‘did not reject his mother’s teachings.’

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6 Micayehu is used in 17:1,4; Micah is used in 17:5,9,10,12,13; 18:2,3,4,13,15,18,22, 23,26,27,31. See also Polzin’s literary treatment of Micah’s story in Moses and the Deuteronomist, pp. 195-200.
7 This verse ends with the phrase “and now I will return it to you,” over which much discussion has obtained. Most modern commentators place it at the end of Micah’s words in verse two. (See note 10 below.) The ancient versions follow the Hebrew.
8 Polzin (p. 195) calls this verse the ‘kernel’ of Chapter 17 because it “forms a perfect summary of what precedes and follows in the chapter.”
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11 “Judges.” In The Women’s Bible Commentary, p. 68.


The Talmud (Sanhedrin 101a) but briefly refers to Micah: [he was called] Micah, because ‘he was crushed [nkh] in the building’. Micah’s crushing refers to the legendary practice of the Egyptians forcing the Israelites to build their own children into the walls if they did not make enough bricks, hence ‘Micah’ and ‘crushed’ both derived from the root nkh ‘to crush, smite.’ Moses interceded on behalf of Micah, who related that this practice was to weed out those who were destined to be wicked. Micah was released. The proof of his wickedness was the construction of the idolatrous shrine. The Mekilta relates that Micah was also involved in building the golden calf. See also Louis Ginzberg, The Legend of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America): IV, 49-50; VI, 209-210.

13 This association is based on the proximity of Micah’s story immediately after the Samson and Delilah episode, and the amount of money Micah’s mother possessed, 1100 pieces of silver, being the same as the payment recorded to Delilah from each of the Philistine lords in Judges 16:5.

14 Phyllis Bird notes, “The Old Testament attack on foreign wives is indirect testimony to the independence and power of women within the family sphere despite the formal structures and symbols of patriarchal power. It reflects the power of influence that wives may exert over husbands as well as the important educational role of the mother in transmitting basic religious values and wisdom essential for life. It also reflects fear of foreigners, and more particularly the foreign woman, who in Proverbs becomes the symbol for the immoral, seductive, and predatory woman, the embodiment of evil.” (Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel. Overtures to Biblical Theology [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997]: 56.)


17 See note 10 above.

18 Yahweh the Patriarch, p. 75.

19 So, for example, Micah’s name both in its full form Micayehu, and in the hypocoristicon Micah, is a conscious albeit ironic device by the author/narrator that Yahweh is known; furthermore, Micah’s mother blesses her son “by the Lord” (17:2) and consecrates the silver “to the Lord” (17:3). When Micah installs his non-Levitical son as priest he uses the parlance of Levitical ordination “to fill the hand” (17:5). When Micah replaces his son with a Levite, once again using the parlance of ordination, he demonstrates his knowledge of covenantal law; security is best achieved by following the precepts of Yahwism. The ephod found in Micah’s shrine is certainly among the cultic accoutrements of Israelite religion, but teraphim and a molten idol belong to the realm of pagan worship (Gen. 31:19, 34-35; Exod. 20:4; 32:4). See, for example,

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Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas: From Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Vol. I. (University of Chicago Press, 1978): 184-186; and J. Andrew Dearman, *Religion & Culture in Ancient Israel*. (Hendrickson Publishers, 1992): 142-144, for a discussion of syncretism in Israel’s religion. The question that remains, however, is whether our story indicates that not only syncretism existed but whether the idol is meant to represent the Lord himself. Commentators prefer to think of this molten image as a pedestal upon which the presence of the Lord rests, much like the bronze bulls of later Northern Kingdom shrines. Support for either assertion is subjective. Micah and his mother were not alone in the belief that the idol, ephod, teraphim and presiding Levite were acceptable cultic expressions and efficacious for future security. The Danites’ capture of these items and establishment of the cultic shrine at Dan suggests their significance.

20 With Ahab as with Solomon it is a foreign woman as wife that brings about apostasy. With Micah, Rehoboam, Asa and Ahaziah, mother is the culprit. Of Rehoboam, as son of Solomon, who married numerous foreign wives, it is not unexpected to find his mother specifically identified as foreign. Of Micah, Asa and Ahaziah we have no such certainty.

21 See the introductory formulas of the following Judahite kings, with mothers’ names in parentheses. I K 14:21 Rehoboam (Naamah the Ammonite); I K 15:4 Abijam (Maacah daughter of Abishalom); I K 15:9 Asa (Maacah daughter of Abishalom); I K 22:41 Jehoshapat (Azubah daughter of Shilhi); II K 8:16 Jehoram (no mother mentioned, but married daughter of Ahab); II K 8:25 Ahabiah (Athaliah, granddaughter of Omri); II K 11:1 Joash (Athaliah = grandmother, but under care of priest Jehoiada) /II K 12:1 Jehoash (Zibiah of Beersheba); II K 14:1 Amaziah (Jehoaddin of Jerusalem); II K 15:1 Azariah (Jecoliah of Jerusalem); II K 15:32 Jotham (Jerusha daughter of Zadok); II K 16:1 (no mother mentioned); II K 18:1 Hezekiah (Abi daughter of Zechariah); II K 21:1 Manasseh (Hezibiah); II K 21:19 Amon (Meshullemuth daughter of Haruz of Jotbah); II K 22:1 Josiah (Jedidiah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath); II K 23:31 Jehoahaz (Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah); II K 23:36 Jehoiachin (Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah); II K 24:8 Jehoiachin (Nehusta daughter of Elhanan of Jerusalem); II K 24:18 Zedekiah (Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah). Ironically, in the Annals of the Kings of the North, (the region infamous for apostasy), fathers at times are noted but not mothers. The completeness of the Judahite Annals’ formulas (king, father, mother, length of reign and evil and good ways) may indeed reflect a proclivity on the part of the Deuteronomic Historian toward Judah. The standardized formula may also be used as a device to reinforce the hereditary kingship of the South as opposed to the power by charisma and/or force in the kingship of the North.

22 In “Young Man Josiah,” Lowell K. Handy notes that the native cities of the mothers of Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz and Jehoiachim, were located in the Galilee. With the destruction of the northern kingdom in 722BC, this region would now have been under the purview of Assyria and resettled by foreigners, hence ‘mother’ in these cases might be deemed foreign. (Paper delivered at the Midwest joint meeting of AOS/SBL/ASOR. Marquette University. Milwaukee, Wisconsin. February 15-17, 1998.)