

# REVISITING VON RAD'S LEVITICAL SERMON

THE CHRONICLER'S ALLUSIONS TO AUTHORITATIVE WRITINGS ON THE LIPS OF KINGS AND PROPHETS

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## 1. Introduction

<p>“Because you <b>relied on</b> (בַּהֲשָׁעָךָ עַל-) the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on (בַּהֲשָׁעָךָ עַל-) the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. <b>For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth</b> (כִּי יְהוָה עֵינָיו מְשַׁטְטוֹת בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ) to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. <b>You have done a foolish thing</b> (נַסַּכְתָּ עַל-זוֹאת), and from now on you will be at war.” (2 Chronicles 16:7b-9)</p>	<p>שַׁעַן e.g. Isaiah 10:20; 30:1</p> <p>“Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven <b>eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth</b> (עֵינָיו יְהוָה הַמָּה מְשַׁטְטִים בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ) will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel?” (Zechariah 4:10)</p> <p>“<b>You have done a foolish thing</b> (נַסַּכְתָּ),” Samuel said...” (1 Samuel 13:13)</p>
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“The phrase with close verbal parallels ‘the eyes of Yahweh range throughout the earth’ does not share other contextual elements... As such, it seems more like a shared figure of speech. Another shared common single term ‘you have acted foolishly’ seems like a coincidence.”

(Schnittjer, *Old Testament Use of Old Testament*, 784)

## 2. The So-Called “Levitical Sermons” (Those so identified by Von Rad are marked by\*.)

2 Chronicles	Reign	Speaker	Possible Allusions/Influence
II.12:5–8	Rehoboam	The prophet Shemaiah	Leviticus 26:40–45; Jeremiah 5:19, 12:7, 16:11, etc...
* II.13:4–12	Abijah	Abijah	Exodus 40:22-29; Leviticus 24:1-9; Numbers 3:10-13, 18:19; Judges 9:4; 2 Samuel 7:16
II.14:7, 11	Asa		
* II.15:2–7	Asa	Azariah son of Oded	Jeremiah 29:13-14, 31:16; Hosea 3:4; Zechariah 11:6
* II.16:7–9	Asa	Hanani the Seer	1 Samuel 13:13; Isa 10:20, 31:1; Zechariah 4:10
II.19:2–3	Jehoshaphat	Jehu the Seer	
* II.19:6–11	Jehoshaphat	Jehoshaphat	Deuteronomy 1:17, 10:17, 16:18-19, 17:8-11; 2 Samuel 12:24; Zephaniah 3:5
II.20:6–12	Jehoshaphat	Prayer of Jehoshaphat	
* II.20:15–17	Jehoshaphat	Jahaziel son of Zechariah	Exodus 14:13-14; 1 Samuel 17:47
* II.20:20	Jehoshaphat	Jehoshaphat	Isaiah 7:9
II.20:37	Jehoshaphat	Eliezer son of Dodavahu	
II.22:12-15	Jehoram	Letter from Elijah	
II.24:40	Joash	Zecariah son of Jehoiada	Leviticus 26:40–45; Jeremiah 5:19, 12:7, 16:11, etc...
* II.25:7–9	Amaziah	A man of God	
II.25:15–16	Amaziah	A prophet	
II.26:18	Uzziah	Azariah the Priest	Numbers 16:39; Leviticus 10:1, 10–11
II.28:9–11	Ahaz	Oded the Prophet	
* II.29:5–11	Hezekiah	Hezekiah	Leviticus 24:1-4; Jeremiah 20:4, 29:18
* II.30:6–9	Hezekiah	Hezekiah	Many allusions, see below.
* II.32:7–8	Hezekiah	Hezekiah	Joshua 10:25; Isaiah 7:14, 8:10; Jeremiah 17:5

“We must therefore go on to ask whether it is likely that the Chronicler himself invented this mode of instruction, expressly for the purpose of putting over his own point of view. But he really is quite the last person whom we should credit with the creation of anything, let alone a new literary form! We are thus driven back to the position of assuming that he relies upon a model, that is to say, upon forms which were well known and in common use in that Levitical tradition in which he himself was at home.”

(Von Rad, *The Levitical Sermon in 1-2 Chronicles*, 40)

### 3. Intertextual Approaches

Therefore, the anger of the Lord has fallen on Judah and Jerusalem; he has made them an object of **dread and horror and scorn** (לְזוֹעָה לְשִׂמָּה וְלִשְׂרָקָה), as you can see with your own eyes. (2 Chronicles 29:8)

I will pursue them with the sword, famine and plague and will make them **abhorrent** (לְזוֹעָה) to all the kingdoms of the earth, a curse and an object of **horror, of scorn** (וְלִשְׂרָקָה וְלִשְׂמָה) and reproach, among all the nations where I drive them. (Jeremiah 29:18; also Jeremiah 15:4; 18:16; 19:8; 24:9; 25:9, 18; 28:18; 34:17; 29:18; 51:37)

### 4. Oral Culture and Associative Referentiality

Moses, Joshua, and War traditions:

<p><b>Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged</b> because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. (2 Chronicles 32:7)</p>	<p>Joshua said to them, “<b>Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous.</b> This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight.” (Joshua 10:25; also 1:6–7)</p>
<p><b>Do not be afraid or discouraged</b> because of this vast army. <b>For the battle is not yours, but God’s.</b> Tomorrow march down against them... You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; <b>stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you,</b> Judah and Jerusalem. <b>Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.</b> Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you. (2Chronicles 20:15-17)</p>	<p>Moses answered the people, “<b>Do not be afraid. Stand firm</b> and you will <b>see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.</b> The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. <b>The Lord will fight for you;</b> you need only to be still.” (Exodus 14:13-14)</p>
<p>Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! <b>Have faith</b> (הִתְאַמְּנוּ) in the Lord your God and <b>you will be upheld</b> (וְתִתְאַמְּנֵנוּ). (2 Chronicles 20:20)</p>	<p>All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; <b>for the battle is the Lord’s,</b> and he will give all of you into our hands.” (1Samuel 17:47)</p> <p>If you do not <b>stand firm in your faith</b> (וְלֹא תִתְאַמְּנוּ), you will <b>not stand at all</b> (וְלֹא תִתְאַמְּנוּ). (Isaiah 7:9)</p>

“Listen to me Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. [Jeremiah 29:13–14.] For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law. [Hosea 3:4.] ... In those days it was not safe to travel about, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil. One nation was being crushed by another and one city by another, because God was troubling them with every kind of distress. [Zechariah 11:6] But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded. [Jeremiah 31:16]” (2 Chronicles 15:2-3, 7)