

## Prophets and *coup d'état* in the Kingdom of Israel\* (Preliminaria)

IZABELA JARUZELSKA

Adapting the modern term *coup d'état* to the ancient Hebrew form of state, that is monarchy, in which the throne succession was hereditary, I understand this notion as the taking of a power by people who were not sons of their predecessors<sup>1</sup>. The history of the Kingdom of Israel, i.e. the northern part of the former monarchy of David and Solomon, known in the period (931-722 B.C.) as Israel in contrast to Judah, which was the Southern Kingdom (931-587 B.C.), names nine usurpers to the throne<sup>2</sup>. In this work I am going to concentrate on those, whose ascension to the throne according to the tradition, has been connected with some involvement of prophets. Their interference was particularly notable in the rebellion of Jeroboam I (10<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and Jehu (9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), whereas there is no evidence of their intervention when Omri took the power or in the period of frequent plots, in the period of decline of the Kingdom of Israel i.e. in the second

\* The study reported in this paper was possible thanks to the grant 'The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation' and the invitation of Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris. I wish to express my gratitude to both institutions.

<sup>1</sup> The notion *coup d'état* in the context of antiquity seems inadequate. Historians of the ancient Near East more often use the notions usurpation, palace coup, revolt. J. Z a b ł o c k a, *Historia Bliskiego Wschodu w starożytności* (History of Ancient Near East), Wrocław 1987, pp. 169, 270, 280, 329 etc.

<sup>2</sup> In the light of the data from the book of Kings, the following rulers were not sons of their predecessors: 1) Jeroboam I: 1 Kgs 11,26-27.28-39; 11,40; 12,15; 12,20; 14,1-20; 2) Baasha: 1 Kgs 15,26-30; 3) Zimri: 1 Kgs 16,9-14; 4) Omri: 1 Kgs 16,16-22; 5) Jehu: 2 Kgs 9-10; 6) Shallum: 2 Kgs 15,10; 7) Menahem: 2 Kgs 15,14; 8) Pekah: 2 Kgs 15,25; 9) Hosea: 2 Kgs 15,30. If we assume that Tibni ruled for some time competing for power with Omri, as indicated by J.A. S o g g i n (*Tibni, King of Israel in the First Half of the 9th Century B.C.*, in: *Old Testament and Oriental Studies*, *Biblica et Orientalia* 29, Rome 1975, pp. 50-55), then the number of such cases increases to 10.

half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. However, Hosea's comments directed against the leaders of the monarchy, whom he condemns for taking the power by force, prove that the question of *coups d'état* deeply concerned the prophets till the end of the Northern Kingdom<sup>3</sup>. In this contribution I will analyse the role of these men in ascension to the throne of the following usurpers: Jeroboam I (931-914 B.C.), Baasha (909-886 B.C.), Zimri (885 B.C.) and Jehu (841-814 B.C.). I will also try to reconstruct Hosea's attitude (ca. 752-724 B.C.) towards the *coups d'état*<sup>4</sup>.

The main source of information on the *coup d'état* in the region of our interest is the Bible, in particular the book of Kings, although the Assyrian sources provide a parallel version of the ascension to the throne of the last king of Israel<sup>5</sup>. The analysis must be performed taking into regard the problem of literary genre, because the texts are of different historical value. Only a small part of the material on the rebellions comes from the King's archives (*the book of the acts of Solomon*<sup>6</sup>, *the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel*<sup>7</sup>, *the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah*<sup>8</sup>), whereas the majority of indications come from the narrations describing remarkable achievements of prophets, e.g. Elijah and Elisha. The narrations were developed in order to preserve the traditions related to these heroes. Although the book of Kings was edited long after the events it describes, probably at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>9</sup>, it is based on the traditions from the period of the monarchy<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The role of prophets in the palace coups in Israel is reflected in the response of the priest Amaziah to the words of the prophet Amos, prophesising that Jeroboam II will be killed by the sword. The priest interprets the words of Amos as a plot (*qšr*) (Am 7,10).

<sup>4</sup> Chronology of ruling of the Israel kings after A. L e m a i r e, *L'histoire du peuple hébreu*, Paris 2001 (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). The period of activity of Hosea after H.W. W o l f f, *Hosea. A Commentary on the Book of Hosea*, Hermeneia, Philadelphia 1974, p. xxi.

<sup>5</sup> The Assyrian version differs from the biblical version. Tiglath-pileser III declares in his summary inscriptions (Summ. 4: 17, Summ. 9: r. 10), that he put Hosea on the throne. He adds that he put him on the throne after removing Pekah, the predecessor of Hosea (Summ. 4: 17). H. T a d m o r, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III. King of Assyria*, Jerusalem 1994, pp.140-141; 188-189; for the alternative interpretation of [...] -du-<sup>l</sup>x<sub>1</sub><sup>l</sup>-<sup>l</sup>x<sub>2</sub><sup>1</sup>-ma in Tiglath-pileser III's summary inscription (Summ. 4: 17) see Tadmor, *ibidem*, pp. 140-141. *cf.* the intervention of Tiglath-pileser III in putting on the throne Panamu II, the king of Sam'al (743-740 B.C.) as indicated by the inscription Bar-rakkab made to honour his father Panamu II, l. 7 (J.C.L. G i b s o n, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions, II, Aramaic Inscriptions*, Oxford 1975, nr 14); E. Lipiński, *The Arameans. Their Ancient History, Culture and Religion*, Leuven 2000, p. 244; *cf.* S. P a r k e r, *Appeals for Military Intervention: Stories from Zinjirli and the Bible*, BA 59 (4), 1996, pp. 213-223.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kgs 11, 41.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Kgs 14, 19 and *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kgs 14, 29 and *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> *Traduction œcuménique de la Bible*, Paris 1976, p. 618.

<sup>10</sup> M. C o g a n, *The History of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel: History or Reconstruction after the Fact*, in: *The Controversy over the Historicity of the Bible*, (eds.) L.I. Levin-A. Mazar, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 90-96, (Hebr.).

## I. THE REBELLION OF JEROBOAM SON OF NEBAT THE EPHRAIMITE

In the light of the biblical account, Jeroboam's attempts at taking power were stimulated by the compulsory works organised under the rule of Solomon to accomplish great construction projects (1 Kgs 11,27). Jeroboam, whose mother was a widow (*cf.* below) was in charge of the works imposed on the northern tribes (*the House of Joseph*), so on his compatriots. He descended from the circles closest to the king, as indicated by his title of the *Solomon's servant* ('*bd lšlmh*) (1 Kgs 11,26)<sup>11</sup>.

The description of the rebellion is very brief<sup>12</sup>. The allusion to the revolt against Solomon is given in the expression that *he raised his hand against the king* (*wyrm yd bmlk*) appearing in a direct context of these compulsory works (1 Kgs 11,26. *cf.* 11,27a)<sup>13</sup>. The interpretation of this expression as a revolt is justified on the grounds of a comparison with the expression *he held out his hand against* (*šlḥ yd b*), used in the biblical Hebrew in the double meaning of *to hit/to hurt* (1 Kgs 13,4) and *to plot/to scheme* (1 Sam 24,7.11), similarly as in the Aramaic language, e.g. on the inscriptions from Sfire in Syria<sup>14</sup> (stele I B: 1.

<sup>11</sup> The term 'servant' ('*bd*'), whose original meaning was close to that of the 'slave' (in the Hebrew Bible there is no separate term describing this category) indicates someone who is in the relation of submission to a higher authority. In the Bible and in the light of Hebrew seals this word has been frequently used to describe a minister of the king. I. J a r u z e l s k a, *Amos and the Officialdom in the Kingdom of Israel*, Poznań 1998, pp.102-103.122-126. Besides, the name of the chief person in charge of organisation and control of the compulsory works is given in the list of members of the king's cabinet in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 4,6).

<sup>12</sup> Although according to the Septuagint (3 Kgs 12,24a-z) Jeroboam was in command of 300 chariots and 300 cavalry (3 Kgs 12,24b), this information is not reliable as it comes from the Midrash treated as secondary with respect to the Hebrew version (TM). According to Z. Talshir, this Greek fragment described by her as an alternative variant was originally written in Hebrew. Z. Talshir, *The Alternative Story, 3 Kingdoms 12, 24 A-Z*, Biblical Studies 6, Jerusalem 1993, pp.17.24-25. Also according to some contemporary commentators Jeroboam had some military potential. I.H. R e v i v, *Military Elite and Politics: Dismal Episodes in the History of the Northern Kingdom*, in: *Sha'arei Talmon. Studies in the Bible, Qumran and the Ancient Near East presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, (eds.) M. Fisbane – E. Tov – W.W. Fields, Winona Lake 1992, p. 94\*, (Hebr.). This supposition is supported by some cases of *coup d'état* in Israel organised by military leaders, e.g. Zimri (1 Kgs 16,9) (*cf.* below).

<sup>13</sup> According to D.W. Gooding, this expression means 'intention of rising a rebellion'. D.W. Gooding, *The Septuagint Rival Versions of Jeroboam's Rise to Power*, VT 17, 1967, p. 183. It must be emphasised that these verses, similarly as 1 Kgs 11,27b-28.40, have been omitted in the book of Chronicles. Their author, who idealised Solomon, on purpose disregarded the details pointing to the existence of opposition to his rule.

<sup>14</sup> H. T a w i l, *Two Notes on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Inscriptions*, CBQ 42, 1980, p. 33.

25,27,34; stele II B, l. 6) from the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the mention of Jeroboam's widowed mother deserves particular attention. Israel Eph'al has recently pointed to the appearance of the expression 'a widow's son will seize the throne' in the literature of Mesopotamia used in the meaning of overthrowing of the ruling dynasty<sup>16</sup>. In the light of these common Semitic expressions, the allusion to Jeroboam's mother being a widow becomes not just a biographical detail but should be understood as the words the biblical author used to emphasise that he was a usurper<sup>17</sup>. The probability of Jeroboam's rebellion against Solomon is enhanced by the context, that is by the reference to the rebellions which took place in Edom (1 Kgs 11,14-22) and Damascus (1 Kgs 11,23-24) and whose historical authenticity is commonly accepted<sup>18</sup>. Although the course of events remains unknown to us, the attempt at removal of Solomon failed, Jeroboam had to escape to Egypt to save his life (1 Kgs 11,40)<sup>19</sup>.

After Solomon's death, when his son Rehoboam succeeded to the throne, (1 Kgs 11,43), the second phase of the revolt took place. Rehoboam went to Shechem, the main centre of the northern tribes (*cf.* Josh 24), so that the people of Israel could *make him king (lhmlky)* (1 Kgs 12,1). This going to Shechem should be put in the context of the specificity of the political system of ancient Hebrews. It should be noted that David became first the king of Judah, and only later also the king of Israel (2 Sam 2,4; 5,2-3)<sup>20</sup>. The people gathered in Shechem

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33; A. L e m a i r e – J.-M. D u r a n d, *Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré et l'Assyrie de Shamshi-ilu*, Hautes Études Orientales 20, Genève-Paris 1984, p. 89.

<sup>16</sup> I. Eph'al after E. L e i c h t y, *The Omen Series šumma izbu*, Locust Valley, N.Y. 1970, 77:49-50, 128:77', 137:85'; *cf.* J. Nougayrol, *Nouveaux textes sur le zihhu (II)*, RA 65, 1971, p.71: 14'. I. E p h ' a l, *On the Common Literary Expressions of the Ancient Semites*, in: Moshe Weinfeld *Festschrift*, Eisenbrauns, forthcoming.

<sup>17</sup> I. Eph'al gives other expressions like e.g. 'son of *muškenu(m)*', 'son of nobody' etc., *ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> According to N. Na'aman, the account of three revolts against Solomon comes from the old annals, described by this author as the 'Early Chronicle of Israel Kings'. N. N a ' a m a n, *The Past that Shapes the Present. The Creation of Biblical Historiography in the Late First Temple Period and After the Downfall*, Jerusalem 2002, p. 93, (Hebr.); *cf.* the rise of Damascus kongdom in the light of 1 Kgs 11,14-25. A. L e m a i r e, *Les premiers rois araméens dans la tradition biblique*, in : *The World of the Arameans I. Biblical Studies in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion*, (eds.) P.M. Michèle Daviau – J.W. Wevers – M. Weigl, JSOT.S 324, Sheffield, pp. 130-135.

<sup>19</sup> J.A. Montgomery supposes that the narration on the Solomon rebellion belonged to the original text but had been later replaced by the fragment on the meeting of Jeroboam with Ahijah (*cf.* below). In support of this opinion is an artificial separation of the mention of Jeroboam exile to Egypt (1 Kgs 11,40) from the verses on the 'rising a hand against Solomon' (1 Kgs 11,26b-28). J.A. M o n t g o m e r y, *The Book of Kings*, ICC, Edinburgh 1951, reprint 1986, p. 242.

<sup>20</sup> *Cf.* Solomon's taking the throne over Israel and Judah (1 Kgs 1,35). The mention concerning Judah appears also in the Septuagint and in later codes. The separation between Israel and Judah is evidenced by the expression that under Solomon's rule 'Judah and Israel dwelled safely, each in their own vineyard and under their fig tree' (1 Kgs 5,5).

presented a petition to Rehoboam asking for a reduction of the contingent of the duties imposed (1 Kgs 12,4)<sup>21</sup>, but the king refused. Then the people declared independence, asked for Jeroboam to come and 'made him king' (*wymlykw wt'*) over Israel, which meant breaking up of the short-term union with Judah in the period of David and Solomon ruling (1 Kgs 12,20).

The structure of biblical account suggests a certain role of prophet Ahijah from Shiloh, an important sanctuary in the territory of Ephraim from which Jeroboam came, in initiating Jeroboam's revolt<sup>22</sup>. The prophet went to meet Jeroboam and performed a symbolic gesture in front of him (1 Kgs 11,29-39): he tore his own dress into twelve parts and handed out ten of them to Jeroboam. This gesture prophesied the fall of Solomon's rule over ten tribes (1 Kgs 11,29-31)<sup>23</sup>. Ahijah also prophesied that Jeroboam would become king and would start the everlasting dynasty (1 Kgs 11,37-38). The fact that the episode with the dress appears between the words of rising a hand against Solomon and the description of Jeroboam's escape to Egypt, could suggest that the prophet could have inspired the division of the monarchy and have something to do with Jeroboam's taking the power. This opinion is represented by Josephus<sup>24</sup>. However, a careful analysis of the biblical report on the meeting in Shechem reveals that Ahijah did not take part in this meeting and most important was the role of the people. First of all the people are described as a partner in the negotiations with Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12,1-16). The king announces his decision rejecting the petition to the people (1 Kgs 12,14). The people announce secession (1 Kgs 12,16) and put Jeroboam on the throne (1 Kgs 12,20). It is worth noting that the presence of Jeroboam in Shechem is not quite clear. In the light of the verses 1 Kgs 12,3-12 he took part in the negotiations with Rehoboam, whereas according to 1 Kgs 12,2 he was in Egypt at that time and came back only in response to the people's request (1 Kgs 12,20)<sup>25</sup>. However, even if he was in Shechem, according to 1 Kgs 12,3-12, he was subordinated to the will of the people.

<sup>21</sup> The northern tribes could have been angry over taking some of their territory (the region of Kabul in the territory of Asher's tribe) ceded to Phoenicia to cover the cost of trade with king Hiram. B. Halpern, *The Uneasy Compromise: Israel Between League and Monarchy. Traditions in Transformations. Festschrift Honouring F.M. Cross*, (eds.) B. Halpern – J.D. Levenson, Winona Lake 1981, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> The archaeological excavations in Shiloh provide evidence of the development of the city in the Iron II period, after the destruction in the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C., which could support the possibility of Ahijah activity at this sanctuary (1 Kgs 11; 14). NEAEHL, p. 1369.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 15,26.

<sup>24</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, VIII, 209; cf. H. Weippert, *Die Ätiologie des Nordreiches und seines Königshauses (1 Reg 11, 29-40)*, ZAW 95, 1983, p. 344; W. Dietrich, *Prophezie und Geschichte. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk*, Göttingen 1972, p. 55.

<sup>25</sup> The Chronicler attempts to settle the difficulty by inserting the detail about his return from Egypt (2 Chron 10,2). According to the parallel version of the Septuagint Jeroboam came back

Thus the question arises what was the role of Ahijah, knowing that the role of the people was the most important. The gesture and the words of Ahijah sanction precisely the division of the monarchy and ascension of Jeroboam to the throne. The episode of their meeting belongs to the genre described in the biblical studies by *legitimising legend*<sup>26</sup>. The permanent element of such a linguistic construction is the formula justifying the kingship, appearing also in the narration on Jeroboam: *I will take you and ....you will rule over my people Israel* (1 Kgs 11,37) recalling the words addressed to David: *I have taken you from the pasture where you were following sheep to be leader (ngyd) over my people Israel* (2 Sam 7,8)<sup>27</sup>. Another motif is the promise of an everlasting dynasty, given also to Jeroboam: *I will establish your house for ever as I did for David and I will give Israel to you* (1 Kgs 11,38; cf. 2 Sam 7,12-16).

The institution of divine legitimisation of power won not by the throne succession within a dynasty appeared in the ancient Near East. Hazael king of Aram (ca. 843-805/803 B.C.)<sup>28</sup>, referred to in the Assyrian sources as *son of nobody*<sup>29</sup> – of a meaning parallel to that of *son of a widow* – as he was an usurper, declares on the fragments of the Tel Dan stele (l.4) (9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) that Hadad, god of the kingdom of Aram, made him king: *...[and] Hadad made me king me... ([w]yhmkk. hdd[.]' [yty.] 'nh.)*<sup>30</sup>. Similarly Zakkur king of Hamath (ca. 807-780 B.C.) of Aramaean origin<sup>31</sup>, who destroyed the Anatolian dynasty ruling the country in the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>32</sup>, writes on a stele that *Baalšamyin*, the main god worshipped in his kingdom made him king (l.3 cf. l.13)<sup>33</sup>. André Lemaire does not exclude that these Aramaean rulers quote the words of court prophets addressed to them<sup>34</sup>.

from his exile to Sarira (Mount of Ephraim) (3 R 11,43 and also 3 R 12,24 b-d). See the analysis of this topic Z. T a l s h i r, *The Image of the Septuagint-Edition of the Book of Kings*, 'Tarbiz' 59, 1990, p. 300, (Hebr.).

<sup>26</sup> H. W e i p p e r t, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. below.

<sup>28</sup> P. G a r e l l i – A. L e m a i r e, *Le Proche-Orient asiatique*, t. I: *Les empires mésopotamiens. Israël*, Paris 1997, p. 319.

<sup>29</sup> RIMA 3, p. 118.

<sup>30</sup> A. L e m a i r e, *Prophètes et rois dans les inscriptions ouest-sémitiques* (IX<sup>e</sup>-VI<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.), in: *Prophètes et rois. Bible et Proche-Orient*, (ed.) A. Lemaire, *Lectio divina*, hors série, Paris 2001, pp. 87-88.

<sup>31</sup> E. L i p i ń s k i, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 299.

<sup>33</sup> A. L e m a i r e, *Prophètes et rois...*, p. 93. Lemaire is right to note in this context that another West Semitic king Mesha did not declare that Chemosh – the main national god – made him king since he took the throne after his father. *Ibidem*, p. 106; N. Na'aman, interpreted the words of Mesha as a sanction of power. N. N a ' a m a n, *The Royal Inscription and the Prophetic Story: The Mesha Revolt in the Historical Perspective*, 'Zion' 66, (1) 2001, p.15, (Hebr.).

<sup>34</sup> A. L e m a i r e, *Prophètes et rois...*, p. 105.

The legitimising significance of the Ahijah prophecy is also manifested in the words describing Jeroboam as a successor of David: ...*I appointed you as a leader (ngyd)*<sup>35</sup> *over my people Israel and I tore away the kingdom from the House of David and gave it to you, but you have not been like my servant David.....*(1 Kgs 14,7; cf. 1 Kgs 11,39). Similar cases of inclusion of a usurper or a founder of a dynasty to the honourable line of predecessors are known from ancient Near East. Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.)<sup>36</sup> king of Assyria, on the so called Black Obelisk, describes Jehu king of Israel (cf below) as the son of Omri, contrary to the facts. Most probably Jehu was a vassal of the Assyrian king, who by descending him from Omri, wanted to sanction his ruling<sup>37</sup>.

The political tradition of Israel, although it reflects ancient Near Eastern formulae, which testifies to its historical background, bears some specific characteristics. The king enjoyed the support of YHWH as long as he obeyed the Law, as indicated by the words addressed to Jeroboam: *If you pay heed to my commands, if you conform to my ways and do what is right in my eyes; observing my law and my commandments, as my servant David did, I will be with you. I will establish your family for ever as I did for David and I will give Israel to you* (1 Kgs 11,38). This principle was shown operative also in another tradition related to Ahijah. In this tradition Ahijah acts as an opponent of Jeroboam I. When the king's son took ill, the prophet prophesied the child's death and destruction of the whole dynasty being a consequence of Jeroboam's worship of other gods (1 Kgs 14,1-14). The evidence of Jeroboam's sin were the calves erected by him in Bethel and Dan, and some modifications in the cult (1 Kgs 12,26-33)<sup>38</sup>. The Ahijah prophecy is contradictory to the earlier support he gave to this ruler. According to the commentators, the prophet's words concerning the end of the Jeroboam dynasty reflect the opinion of later editors of the book of Kings from Judah<sup>39</sup>. These editors charged king Jeroboam with the responsibility

<sup>35</sup> According to B. Halpern this term refers to an official designated by YHWH for a king. The author explained that nomination was prior to the main battle, in order to confirm his rights to become king. B. Halpern, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72 and earlier bibliography.

<sup>36</sup> P. G a r e l l i – A. L e m a i r e, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>37</sup> N. N a ' a m a n, *Jehu Son of Omri: Legitimizing a Loyal Vassal by His Overlord*, IEJ 48, 1998, pp. 236-238; cf. The years of Pekah's rulership counted from the death of king Zechariah (749 B.C.), in order to present the former as a direct successor of Jehu. N. N a ' a m a n, *Historical and Chronological Notes on the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Eighth Century B.C.*, VT 36, 1986, p. 78.

<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that the message about the illness of Jeroboam's son appears directly after Jeroboam's operations in the sphere of the cult and the prophecy against Bethel (1 Kgs 12-13).

<sup>39</sup> W. D i e t r i c h has assumed the verses 11,7-11 as secondary. W. D i e t r i c h, *op. cit.*, p. 52. Cf. a description of the rulership of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, as 'the cursed days' in 4Q398, fragments 11-13, l. 2.

for the division of the monarchy of David and Solomon. The earlier approval of Ahijah was rooted in the background of the socio-economic revolt. Jeroboam the Ephraimite was supported by the people and Ahijah because he represented the interests of down-trodden compatriots. This is probably the reason why Jeroboam remained in the tradition as the one who 'raised his hand against the king' and not as the organiser of the 'plot' (*cf.* below)<sup>40</sup>.

## II. THE USURPATION OF BAASHA SON OF AHIJAH

Baasha's revolt against Nadab, son of Jeroboam, is described by the verb *qšr* (*to plot*), in contrast to the usurpation of Jeroboam. The revolt was justified by the deeds of Nadab who *did what is evil in the eyes of YHWH and followed the way of his father and the sin he caused Israel to commit. Baasha ....inspired against him, struck him down...at Gibbethon of the Philistines. And Nadab and all Israel were besieging Gibbethon. Baasha killed him... and became king in his stead. And as soon as he started to reign, he struck down all the House of Jeroboam. He did not leave a soul belonging to Jeroboam until he destroyed it according to the word of YHWH proclaimed by his servant the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite* (1 Kgs 15,26-29). The end of the first royal dynasty is presented as fulfilment of the word of YHWH (1 Kgs 15,29). Similarly, another prophet, Jehu son of Hanani, attributes Baasha's success to YHWH's intervention: *I raised you from the dust and made you a leader (ngyd) over my people Israel* (1 Kgs 16,2a). However, the very description of winning the throne does not contain any allusions to this prophet (1 Kgs 15,27-28). As indicated by this fragment, the revolt took place during the siege of Gibbethon, a Philistine city in the former territory of the Danites (Josh 19,41-46), which enhances its military character<sup>41</sup>. It cannot be excluded that a background of the coup was Nadab's defeat in the battle, because a repeated siege of Gibbethon by the Israelites is mentioned later in relation to Omri's taking the power (1 Kgs 16,15-16). Moreover, the allusion to the origin of Baasha of the tribe of Issachar, like the earlier reference to Jeroboam of the tribe of Ephraim, suggests the influence of the differences of interests among the groups of tribes, known from the pre-monarchic period, on the later struggles for power<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> It seems that the Ahijah support of Jeroboam in the first phase of the rebellion could result from a strong tendency among prophets to protect the down-trodden social classes.

<sup>41</sup> J. A. M o n t g o m e r y, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

<sup>42</sup> P. M. M c n u t t, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, London 1999, p. 172; T. I s h i d a, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, BZAW 142, Berlin 1977, pp. 174-177. A valuable analysis of the conflicts among the tribes has been performed by B. Halpern, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.



The information on the plot at Gibbethon, implying that Baasha alone won the throne comes from the royal archives<sup>43</sup>, whereas the legitimisation of the coup confirmed by the words of the prophet (1 Kgs 15,29) is a later addition<sup>44</sup>.

### III. THE REVOLT OF ZIMRI

The rebellion of Zimri against Elah son of Baasha is justified by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani as a consequence of the sins of Baasha and Elah (1 Kgs 16,2-4; cf. 16,7; 16,12-13). The details on the revolt of Zimri who was in charge of 'half of the chariotry' (*mḥšyt hrkb*), killing Elah in Tirzah in the house of the palace butler (1 Kgs 16,9-10), come from the royal annals<sup>45</sup>. The information on Zimri being a high rank military officer makes this coup similar to classical palace coups based on the military power of the usurper. A relation between the assassination of Elah, almost immediately after his taking the throne, and the defeat of his father in the war with Judah which held an alliance with the Aramaeans, cannot be excluded (1 Kgs 15,17-21)<sup>46</sup>. Verses 1 Kgs 16,11-13 justifying the Zimri revolt as a fulfilment of the word of the prophet Jehu son of Hanani, should be assigned to later editors<sup>47</sup>, working on the history of Israel and Judah in the exilic and post-exilic period, at least to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. These verses sanctioning the extermination of royal houses by the prophecy indicate that such a justification of plots and acts of violence accompanying them must have been answering the needs of Jewish exiles after the fall of the monarchy<sup>48</sup>. However, a detailed analysis of the situation is beyond the scope of this work.

### IV. THE REVOLT OF JEHU SON OF NIMSHI

Jehu was a high rank military officer (*šr hyl*) in the army of king Joram son of Ahab. According to the biblical account he was anointed king by the order of YHWH, addressed to Elijah (1 Kgs 19,15-16). The anointment was made by an

<sup>43</sup> A. Šanda, *Die Bücher der Könige*, Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Münster 1911, t. I, p. 395; W. Dietrich, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>45</sup> D. Noël, *La critique du pouvoir dans les livres des Rois. Thèse pour l'obtention du doctorat en science théologique du 3ème cycle avec spécialisation en sciences bibliques*, Institut Catholique de Paris 1985, p. 246; W. Dietrich, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> T. Shida, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>47</sup> D. Noël, *op. cit.*, p. 246; W. Dietrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>48</sup> It should be mentioned in this context that the texts on the bloody conquest of Canaan by the Israelites originate from the same late tradition of the period of Babylonian exile and the Restoration (6<sup>th</sup> B.C.). The aim of the texts was to emphasise the significance of the pre-monarchic period, when all the Israelites under the command of Joshua came to the Promised Land.

anonymous prophet from the circle of the so-called sons of prophets (*bny hnb'yym*) by the order of Elisha (2 Kgs 9,1-6; cf. 2 Kgs 9,12) in Ramoth-gilead during the war with the Aramaeans (1 Kgs 8,28). This was the legitimisation of the revolt of Jehu who was proclaimed king by Joram's officers ('*bdy 'dnyw*) (2 Kgs 9,11-13). The text also describes the second phase of his career beginning with a plot (*wytqšr*) (2 Kgs 9,14). Jehu kills Joram who was wounded earlier in battle, and taken to the residence in Jezreel. Moreover, Ahaziah king of Judah who came to visit Joram was also killed. Then Jehu killed Jezebel, Ahab's wife, his 70 sons and royal officials (2 Kgs 10,11) and finally he killed all the priests and prophets of Baal in the Baal temple (2 Kgs 10,18-28).

There are significant doubts as to the historical reliability of the description of this second stage, especially doubtful is the killing of Joram and Ahaziah. As implied by the Tel Dan stele<sup>49</sup>, these two monarchs were killed by Hazael king of Aram, who invaded the territory of Israel in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>50</sup>. This evidence is consistent with the texts of 2 Kings, saying that Joram was killed by Aramaeans (2 Kgs 8,28 cf. 1 Kgs 22,31.35). Furthermore, the number 70 of Ahab's murdered sons raises questions about the historicity of other elements in the accounts of Jehu's murders<sup>51</sup>. Of course, acts of violence cannot be excluded, the more so that some references to the killings in Jezreel are made by Hosea (1,4), the prophet who lived in the period closer to these events than the editors of the book of Kings.

As already mentioned, the gesture of anointment sanctions the rulership of Jehu, according to the principles of legitimisation by prophets given to usurpers, known in the Near East<sup>52</sup>. Jehu's rise to power fits the complex situation of the Northern Kingdom. He won the power probably as a result of Joram's defeat in the war with the Aramaeans, because after the king was injured there was no

<sup>49</sup> A. B i r a n – J. N a v e h, *An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan*, IEJ 43, 1993, pp. 81-98; A. B i r a n – J. N a v e h, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment*, IEJ 45, 1995, pp. 1-18.

<sup>50</sup> N. Na'aman, following E. Lipiński, considers the version on the stele from Tel Dan more probable. N. Na'aman, *The Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan in the Historical Perspective*, EI 26, 1999, pp. 115-117, (Hebr.). According to A. Lemaire, the biblical version is closer to the historical reality. In his opinion this inscription shows the characteristics of the royal commemorating inscriptions intended to glorify the king. That is why Hazael wanted to claim the murder of two kings to himself. A. L e m a i r e, *The Tel Dan Stela as a Piece of Royal Historiography*, JSOT 81, 1998, p. 11; A. L e m a i r e, *Prophètes et rois...*, p. 88.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. The number 70 appearing on the inscription of Bar-rakkab in honour his father Panamuwa II, l. 3. J.C.L. Gibson, *op. cit.*, nr. 14; The Tel Dan stele, l. 5. A. B i r a n – J. N a v e h, *The Tel Dan Inscription...*, pp. 12-13. 16.

<sup>52</sup> Jehu needed the support of the prophets to win and keep the throne. G.W. A h l s t r ö m, *King Jehu — A Prophet Mistake*, in: *Scripture in History and Theology. Essays in Honor of J. Coert*, (eds.) A.L. Merrill – T. W. Overholt, Pittsburg 1977, p. 58.

leader able to continue the war. Some connections to the earlier defeat of Joram in suppressing a Moabite rebellion can also be indicated<sup>53</sup>. According to Tomoo Ishida, Jehu was a common usurper who plotted against the legal king<sup>54</sup>. The history of Jehu originally relating to the domain of politics has been transformed by a biblical historiographer who adopted a critical position towards Omri and Ahab<sup>55</sup>. The latter was charged with the sin of idolatry, likewise his wife, Jezebel, the Phoenician princess. It should be emphasised that Elisha orders an anonymous prophet from the group of *prophets' sons* to anoint Jehu for king, which may be considered as a political act *par excellence* (2 Kgs 9,3), whereas this anonymous prophet also legitimises Jehu's crimes. In his speech (2 Kgs 9,7-10b) he refers to the words of Elijah concerning the aim of Jehu's mission, that is the elimination of Baal worshippers (1 Kgs 19,18) and of the Ahab dynasty (21,17-26). This expression of this representative of *prophets' sons* is treated as a later adaptation<sup>56</sup>. It cannot be excluded that in the course of redaction the description of the bloody crimes of Jehu was aggravated and presented as expression of his zeal to serve YHWH (2 Kgs 10,16) and fulfilment of the word of the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 10,10)<sup>57</sup>. The criticism of Ahab is rather surprising, as indicated by Edward Lipiński, because he was the first king of Israel whose children bore Yahwistic names<sup>58</sup>.

## V. HOSEA'S ATTITUDE TO THE PLOTS

Although it is difficult to assess the historical value of the bloody deeds of Jehu, the earlier mentioned allusion to the 'blood of Jezreel (*dmy yzr' 'l*), which will be revenged over the House of Jehu' (Hos 1,4), reflects the criticism of his actions related to taking the power. The statement of Hosea can be treated as

<sup>53</sup> T. I s h i d a, *op. cit.*, p.172.

<sup>54</sup> T. I s h i d a, *The People Under Arms in the Struggles for the Throne*, in: *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, SHCANE 16, (eds.) B. Halpern – M.H.E. Weippert, Leiden-Köln-Boston 1999, p. 73; G.W. Ahlström interprets the *coup d'état* by Jehu in terms of political revolution, which did not originate from religious dissatisfaction. G.W. A h l s t r ö m, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>56</sup> S. T i m m, *Die Dynastie Omri*, FRLANT 124, Göttingen 1982, p. 137; W. D i e t r i c h, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> In W. Dietrich's interpretation, the same hand appears in the oracles against the royal house: 1 Kgs 14,7-11; 1 Kgs 16,1-4; 1 Kgs 21,20b-24; 2 Kgs 9,7-10a. He points to the similarities in the approach, structure and terminology. W. D i e t r i c h, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> The personal communication. Cf. differentiation between Ahab's priests (2 Kgs 10,11) and Baal's priests (2 Kgs 10,19).

protest against the use of violence in political life<sup>59</sup>. The prophet mainly condemns the acts of usurpation of power taking place in his times, unveiling different ways of legitimisation of the power won<sup>60</sup>. In his opinion, although the rulers try to justify their ascension to power by God's legitimisation, they are not rulers in the real sense of YHWH will: *They make kings (hmlkw) but not by my will; they set up officers (hšyrw) but without my knowledge* (8,4a). It is possible that the verb *to make king (lhmlk)* is a legitimising formula known from Aramaic inscriptions, according to which it is the domain of the main god of the country to legitimise usurpers as kings (*cf.* above)<sup>61</sup>. Then the above verse could be interpreted as expressing the prophet's criticism for making appearances of legality.

Hosea condemns the *coups d'état* of his times because of the use of violence. He says to his audience: *they elevate the king (mlk) with their wickedness and officials (šrym) with their treachery* (7,3). This verse seems to be a parallel to verse 8,4a: the noun *king (mlk)* corresponds to the verb *make kings (hmlkw)*, and the noun *officials (šrym)* corresponds to the verb *to appoint officials (hšyrw)*. In the two cases the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun in plural appears as subject of the sentence.

In contrast to Ahijah and Jehu son of Hanani, who (as Giorgio Buccellati indicates) do not condemn the usurpers for taking power but for their religious attitude<sup>62</sup>, Hosea directly undermines their groundless aspirations for power and resort to violence in taking the throne. This prophet approaches the revolts as acts belonging to the political sphere. He proves he is a keen observer of the world of power<sup>63</sup> and brings his own original contribution to the problems of palace coups in ancient Israel. His evidence is the more important as, except the revolt of Jehu, he was talking about his contemporaries.

<sup>59</sup> According to A. Caquot, the prophet does not accept the rule that the aim sanctions the means. A. Caquot, *Osée et la Royauté*, RHPH 41, 1961, p. 128 and bibliography therein.

<sup>60</sup> I. Jaruzelska, *Amos et Osée face aux rois d'Israël*, in: *Prophètes et rois. Bible et Proche-Orient*, (ed.) A. Lemaire, Lectio divina, hors série, Paris 2001, pp. 157-175.

<sup>61</sup> In some contexts the use of the verb *mlk* ('to reign') in the Hifil conjugation means to put to the throne as a result of a revolt, e.g. in the context of the Edom's rebellion against Judah (2 Kgs 8,20).

<sup>62</sup> G. Buccellati, *Cities and Nations of Ancient Syria. An Essay on Political Institutions with Special References to the Israelite Kingdoms*, Roma 1967, p. 206.

<sup>63</sup> I have emphasised the role of Hosea as a biblical theoretician of state matters in *Ozeasz o królu i urzędnikach. Prorok a polityka* (Amos and Royal Officials in the Eighth Century B.C., An Essay on the Biblical Theory of Society), in: *Żydzi i judaizm we współczesnych badaniach polskich*, Conference proceedings, Kraków, 24-26 November 1998, (eds.) K. Pilarczyk – S. Gašiorowski, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Komisja Historii i Kultury Żydów Polskich, Kraków 2000, pp. 407-414, in particular p. 414.

## CONCLUSIONS

The intervention of prophets in the context of *coups d'état* was manifested mainly by legitimisation of the usurpers power through their designation for rulers, among others by the gesture of anointment. The probability of involvement of prophets in the ascent to the throne of usurpers, in particular in the revolts of Jeroboam and Jehu, is strengthened by the similar role of prophets in the ancient Near East.

It seems that the editors, under the influence of later theological concepts, transformed the historical institution of royal power legitimisation into religious justification of the acts of violence connected with the *coups d'état*. Therefore the historicity of extermination of the kings' dynasties is rather doubtful.

A comparative analysis of the description and interpretation of events by the editors of the book of Kings and Hosea's condemnation of legitimisation of violence in the attempts at taking power, illustrates the diversity of opinions expressed in the Bible on the same question. This comparison also reveals that the justification of violence in political life belongs to the later tradition.

Most probably the palace revolts in the Northern Kingdom were results of socio-economic conflicts, the military defeats of dethroned monarchs, struggle for power of different groups related to traditional tribal territories, etc. Detailed analysis of the role of the conflicting socio-economic situations in the Northern Kingdom, or their entanglements, requires further studies.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.
BA	'Biblical Archaeologist'.
CBQ	'The Catholic Biblical Quarterly'.
EI	'Eretz Israel'.
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments.
ICC	The International Critical Commentary.
IEJ	'Israel Exploration Journal'.
JSOT	'Journal for the Study of the Old Testament'.
JSOT.S	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series.
NEAEHL	<i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , (ed.) E. Stern, 4 vols. Jerusalem 1993.
RA	'Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale'.
RHPR	'Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses'.
RIMA	<i>The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods</i> .
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East.
TOB	<i>Traduction œcuménique de la Bible</i> , Paris 1976.
VT	'Vetus Testamentum'.
WO	'Die Welt des Orients'.
ZAW	'Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft'.