

THE STABLE BUT DYNAMIC NATURE OF BIBLICAL WORSHIP: REFLECTIONS FROM 1 & 2 CHRONICLES

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What qualifies as worship seems to differ from one congregation to another. Just looking at the Sunday morning worship service among Southern Baptists reveals a diversity of experiences: a miniconcert of a professional recording artist, a corporate prayer of repentance, a standup comedy routine, a children's sermon, a singing sermon, a clip from a popular movie, a seasonal drama, interpretive dance, congregational singing, choral singing, a praise band performance, a recitation of the Nicene Creed, a time of financial offering, a time of public financial commitment, spontaneous congregational testimonies, small group prayer times, baptism, the Lord's Supper, a personal interview with a member of the congregation, a retelling of a biblical story, an expository sermon, a thematic sermon, a Fourth of July celebration, a magic show, a time of public confession of personal sin, a flannel board presentation, a bells concert, a puppet show, and probably much more. This diversity makes me wonder whether anything goes in worship these days.

To address this issue, I offer some observations from the Old Testament, specifically 1 and 2 Chronicles. Although Chronicles may not seem like a natural choice for this task, it recounts a history of Israel focused on Israel's worship.¹ Therefore, it provides a look at what God has accepted

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¹To elaborate on the choice of Chronicles, I mention three features of the book that make it a helpful resource. First, from the genealogies in the beginning to the words of Cyrus at the end, the book highlights the significant role that the Levites and priests play performing their worship practices at the Jerusalem temple. Second, Chronicles stresses proper worship. On numerous occasions, Chronicles records how YHWH punished someone for improper worship. Therefore, it may provide some principles for distinguishing appropriate from inappropriate worship. Third, since Chronicles is a picture of Israel's history, it can provide insight into how Israel's worship developed over time if it did develop.

and rejected in the course of Israel's history.²

I. NARRATIVE SNAPSHOTS TO CONSIDER

Chronicles records several narratives that are helpful for the topic. I offer snapshots of some of them to start the discussion. For the first snapshot, Chronicles recounts a disastrous event within Israel's history of worship. One of the first narratives in Chronicles describing David's reign recounts Israel's failed attempt to transfer the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chr 13:1–14). The narrative begins by recounting that David and the people decided to bring the ark to Jerusalem. The people placed the ark on a new cart pulled by oxen. Uzzah and his brother Ahio guided the animals as they headed to Jerusalem. When one of the oxen stumbled, Uzzah stretched out his hand to steady the ark so that it would not fall to the ground. When he did so, God became furious with him and killed him. David responded in fear and decided to abandon this attempt to bring the ark.

For the second snapshot, Chronicles recounts a different aspect of David's reign. In Jerome's introduction to his Latin translation of Chronicles, he characterizes some of the material as a "forest of names."³ At first, one may think of this forest as the chapters of genealogy introducing Chronicles (1 Chr 1–9); however, another list of names occupies several chapters in the middle of the narrative account of David's reign: 1 Chr 23–27. These chapters outline David's work to organize the priests and Levites into various divisions and expanded roles. David organized the priests into twenty-four divisions and assigned some of the Levites various roles.⁴

The third snapshot also comes from David's reign. During David's second attempt to transfer the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, David appointed certain Levitical families to serve as musicians. These musicians

²For a look at the importance of the temple in determining whether a king's reign is upright or wicked, see Troy Cudworth, "The Temple Context for the Law in Chronicles," *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 21 (2021), <https://jhsonline.org/index.php/jhs/article/view/29591>.

³Jerome, *Chron.*, Praef. 3.

⁴When speaking of the Levites, some confusion may arise because the term *Levite* may refer to three distinct groups: 1) generally to a member of the tribe of Levi (including priests), 2) more specifically to other members of the tribe of Levi excluding the priests (although including musicians, guardians, etc.), or 3) most specifically to members of the tribe of Levi who serve as the assistants to the priests (excluding musicians, guardians, etc.). I find it useful to call this third, most specific group "cultic Levites," following the suggestion of Jonker; Louis C. Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, *Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 148–49. When David organized the tribe of Levi in 1 Chronicles 23–26, he recognized the following roles: priests, cultic Levites, musicians, guardians, officials, and judges.

first processed with the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:16–24). Once the ark lay in Jerusalem, David appointed some musicians to perform regularly before the ark (1 Chr 16:4–6, 37–38) and others to perform regularly before the altar of sacrifice (1 Chr 16:41–42). In this way, David introduced music into Israel's worship.

The fourth snapshot comes from the reign of Hezekiah. After Hezekiah reinstated Israel's ritual worship at the Jerusalem temple (2 Chr 29:35), he invited all Israel, including the northern tribes, to observe Passover in Jerusalem (2 Chr 30:1–5). Hezekiah, in consultation with the people, determined to observe Passover in the second month because few people were in Jerusalem and the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient numbers (2 Chr 30:3).

The fifth snapshot relates to Josiah's reign. After Josiah's reform and the discovery of the Law scroll within the Jerusalem temple, Josiah decided to observe Passover (2 Chr 35:1). The celebration took place in Jerusalem. Josiah and his officials provided the sacrifices (2 Chr 35:7–9), and the priests and Levites acted as representatives for the various families, performing the sacrifices and distributing the meat to the families (2 Chr 35:11–14).

Of these snapshots, only the first has negative results. The other four snapshots are positive pictures of piety. One often overlooked difference between the first snapshot and the remaining four is the role of the king. When Uzzah touched the ark, he did not act according to the command of King David. However, in every other case, the Davidic king, whether David himself or one of his descendants (e.g., Hezekiah and Josiah), commanded Israel's worship practices. Perhaps, the Chronicler is describing a situation similar to the end of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel, so everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6; 21:25).

The observation suggests that the Davidic king is the key to proper worship. However, one more snapshot from Chronicles requires attention. After King Uzziah of Judah became wealthy and influential because of God's blessing on him,⁵ he became proud and decided to offer incense within YHWH's temple (2 Chr 26:16). As the king entered the temple with the censer in his hand, the priests confronted him. They warned Uzziah that God would not reward him for offering incense in the temple because only the priests are appointed for that task. The king responded in anger, and when he did so, God immediately punished him with a skin disease

⁵The account of Uzziah's reign (2 Chr 26) highlights that God helped Uzziah gain military victory, wealth, and renown (see vv. 5, 7, 15).

that broke out on his forehead.⁶ This skin disease rendered Uzziah ritually unclean so that he had to leave the temple immediately. Uzziah remained diseased throughout his lifetime such that he never returned to the temple.

Uzziah's case demonstrates that the Davidic king is not the key to proper worship. If the king is not the key, then what is? A natural answer would be the Law of Moses: If the people obeyed the Law of Moses, then their worship would lead to blessing, but if they disobeyed the Law of Moses, then their worship would end in disaster. However, the situation is not quite so simple in Chronicles. To demonstrate this situation requires a closer look at the narratives beyond just snapshots.

II. CLOSER LOOK AT THE NARRATIVES

1. *Uzzah's Death and the Ark.* The narrative of Uzzah's death as he touched the ark presents an account of God's terrifying power and destroying punishment. What went wrong? How does Chronicles hint at the reasons for this disaster? The simple answer is that Uzzah touched a holy object, God's ark, and, therefore, he died. However, examining how this failed attempt compares to Israel's later successful attempt to transfer the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:1–29) provides further insights into what went wrong.

Several contrasts point to the reasons for the failed attempt. First, for the successful attempt, David prepared a tent for the sole purpose of housing the ark (v. 1). David made no such preparations for the failed attempt. Second, David commanded the priests and Levites to prepare themselves to bear the ark on their shoulders using poles, following Mosaic regulations (compare vv. 14–15 to Exod 25:14; Num 7:9). For the failed attempt, David did not reserve a special role for the priests and Levites even though they were among those invited to bring up the ark. Third, David organized an entire procession of Levitical singers and guardians and placed them under the supervision of the Levite Chenaniah (v. 22).⁷ For the failed attempt, the people made no preparations for the Levitical

⁶Although the traditional translation of the term used in Hebrew (צָרַעַת) is "leprosy," the Hebrew term can refer to a variety of skin diseases sharing common visible symptoms, not just leprosy (technically known as Hansen's disease).

⁷Chenaniah's role is not clear because the term used to describe the area of his supervision is ambiguous. The Hebrew expression reads כְּמִשְׁאָר. English translations treat the word as referring to the singing; however, the term more often refers to a load or burden. I would argue that Chenaniah is overseeing the whole procession. As Kleinig states, "He was therefore responsible for both the physical and musical 'transportation' of the ark"; John W. Kleinig, *The LORD's Song: The Basis, Function, and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles*, JSOTSup 156 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1993), 47n1.

transfer of the ark. Fourth, the people performed sacrifices before the ark as it moved to Jerusalem (v. 26), whereas during the failed attempt no sacrifices took place. These differences point both to the care that David took to bring the ark during the successful attempt and to the people's obedience in following Mosaic regulations regarding the transport of holy vessels such as the ark.

Examining the contrasts between the two attempts highlights the different consequences for how this service to God was carried out for both attempts. At the same time, the two narratives do not present all matters of Israel's worship as responsible for the different outcomes. The narratives do not point to the people's activity before the ark as a reason for the tragedy. During Israel's failed attempt, David and the people celebrated before the ark with music (1 Chr 13:8). Mosaic Law does not command such celebration, calling into question its appropriateness. However, the same language describes how David acted before the ark during the successful attempt (1 Chr 15:28–29); therefore, the activity of musical celebration does not constitute a reason for the failed attempt.

The narratives describing the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem highlight the danger of improperly worshiping God. On the one hand, they point to matters that the Chronicler presents as important for proper worship: 1) careful attention to the matters of worship and 2) obedience to the stipulations of the Law. On the other hand, they present no condemnation for the people's efforts that extend beyond what the Law requires. For instance, the organized procession of priests and Levites is not required by the Law, and the use of music is not addressed in Mosaic stipulations.

As the incident with Uzzah reveals, the Law of Moses provided an important written source for regulating Israel's worship. This point of view makes sense because beginning with the Ten Commandments, the Law lays out stipulations prohibiting certain worship practices, promoting other practices, and providing proper procedures for even others. A common thread running through these stipulations is that they intend to distinguish what is holy from what is mundane. Violating these stipulations, as Uzzah did by touching the ark (Num 4:15), resulted in God's immediate wrath. Therefore, one would expect that obeying the Law would provide the firm parameters for Israel's worship. However, Chronicles recounts instances in which Israel's worship deviates from the legal stipulations of the Law, but their worship is still acceptable, even honorable. Furthermore, Chronicles records elements of Israel's worship not addressed in the Law of

Moses. A look at these deviations and additions to the Mosaic stipulations regarding Israel's worship helps to address the issue of what is appropriate or inappropriate in worship from the viewpoint of Chronicles.

2. *Timing of Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chronicles 30)*. The timing of Hezekiah's Passover raises questions about the role of Mosaic Law in regulating Israel's worship. Mosaic Law commands the observance of Passover on the fourteenth of the first month (Exod 12:5; Lev 23:5; Num 9:3, 5; 28:16; cf. Deut 16:1). The month of Passover is emphasized in Mosaic Law because it is the month in which God brought the people out of Egypt, even reorienting their calendar to this event (see Exod 12:1–3; also Deut 16:1–8 mentions only the month, not the day).⁸ Despite the importance of observing Passover in the first month, Hezekiah, along with all the people, determined to observe Passover in the second month. The circumstances help explain the decision. Following Ahaz's reign, Hezekiah needed to restore worship at the Jerusalem temple, which he did quickly (2 Chr 29:36). As a result, few people were in Jerusalem, and few priests were consecrated for the task (2 Chr 30:3). For these reasons, Hezekiah delayed observing Passover. Although delaying Passover seems reasonable in such conditions, the people still did not obey the Law as commanded.

However, the Law provides a caveat for the timing of Passover. Under certain conditions, the Law allows one to observe Passover in the second month: If a person becomes unclean or is too far away on a journey to observe Passover, then he may observe Passover in the second month on the fourteenth day (Num 9:6–12). The caveat arose because even though some individuals could not participate because of uncleanness caused by a dead body, they did not want to miss out on the observance. Although Hezekiah and the people delayed Passover for everyone, their situation resembled the conditions for observing Passover in the second month according to the Law. They wanted to observe Passover, but they did not have enough sanctified priests for the offerings or enough people in Jerusalem. As a

⁸Exodus 12:2 describes the month of Passover as the head (רֵאשִׁית) of months. Durham argues that this designation is a wordplay such that the expression has two intended senses: 1) the first month of the year and 2) the most significant month of the year (John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 [Waco: Word, 1987], 153). The syntax of the expression supports Durham's claim regarding the significance of the month, see Helmut Utzschneider and Wolfgang Oswald, *Exodus 1-15*, trans. Philip Sumpter, IECOT (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2015), 236–37. There are linguistic and historical issues regarding how this verse relates to Israel's calendar. See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1974), 206, for a brief summary of those issues.

result, the timing of the observance was disrupted although Hezekiah and the people found an analogous case in Mosaic Law to justify their modification of the normal timing for this worship practice.

3. *Performance of Josiah's Passover (2 Chronicles 35)*. In many ways, Josiah's Passover corresponded closely to what the Law stipulates. Josiah observed Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, following the timing dictated by the Law (see above). Passover lambs were sacrificed, and the people, organized by their families, presented the burnt offerings to YHWH "according to what was written in the scroll of Moses" (v. 12).

Despite these similarities, other elements of Josiah's Passover differed from Mosaic stipulations. In the Law, Passover is largely a household celebration whereby the people are to bring their own sacrifices and eat them together. In Josiah's Passover, Josiah and his officials provided the sacrifices (vv. 7–9), and the priests and Levites acted as representatives for the various families, performing the sacrifices and distributing the meat to the families (vv. 11–14). Even though Mosaic Law does not assign these specific tasks for the priests or Levites, the Chronicler comments that they are to be done "according to YHWH's word through Moses" (v. 6).⁹ Therefore, how Israel celebrated Passover under Josiah deviated in some respects from what Mosaic Law stipulated, but it still took place in a proper manner.

These differences between what the Law commands and what Josiah observed could lead one to doubt that the Chronicler knew the laws in the form preserved today¹⁰ or doubt that Josiah rightly observed the laws.¹¹ However, one may explain these similarities and differences another way. The Chronicler mentions repeatedly that various authorities validated Josiah's practices. The account mentions the authority of David and Solomon (v. 4), the authority of David and his musical prophets Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (v. 15; also see 1 Chr 25:1–2, 5; 2 Chr 29:30;

⁹Although one could interpret the phrase "according to YHWH's word through Moses" in v. 6 as referring to the entire verse, the phrase modifies only the immediately preceding words "for your brothers to act" since Mosaic Law does not require that the Levites sacrifice the Passover lambs; Ralph W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*. Hermeneia. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 520.

¹⁰See Judson R. Shaver, *Torah and the Chronicler's History Work: An Inquiry into the Chronicler's References to Laws, Festivals, and Cultic Institutions in Relationship to Pentateuchal Legislation*, BJS 196 (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1989), 114–17, 124–28.

¹¹See Christine Mitchell, "The Ironic Death of Josiah in 2 Chronicles," *CBQ* 68, no. 3 (July 2006), 427–31, who suggests that Josiah may have observed Passover improperly by expanding the role of the Levites.

35:15),¹² the authority of the king, that is, Josiah (v. 16), the authority of what Moses wrote (v. 12), and the authority of YHWH's commandment as delivered by Moses (v. 6, also see above). The Chronicler's portrayal suggests that authorities beyond just the Law of Moses also regulated Israel's worship. These additional authorities are tied to Israel's additional institutions of the Davidic dynasty and Jerusalem temple. As a result, this "account respects the authority of the Law while affirming the authority of the king (David or Josiah) to adapt specific ritual applications (such as the role of the priests and Levites, the addition of musicians, etc.) to address changing circumstances."¹³

To gain a clearer sense of the relationship between Josiah's Passover and Passover in the Law, I will closely examine the specific language associated with one of the authorized activities: the cooking of the Passover sacrifices. The Law of Moses contains two commands regarding the cooking: 1) in Exod 12:8–9, the law commands the people to eat the meat roasted (צָלָה), not raw or boiled in water (נָא וְרָשָׁל מְרֻשָּׁל בְּמַיִם), and 2) Deut 16:7 commands the people to cook (וּבִשְׁלָה) the meat.¹⁴ There is some tension between the commandments because the same word (בִּשַׁל) is used, but Exodus prohibits it while Deuteronomy commands it. However, Chronicles resolves any tension by combining the commands when he recounts the event in the following way: "They cooked [בִּשְׁלָה] the Passover in fire [בְּאֵשׁ]."¹⁵ In this way, the people did not violate the command in Exodus and followed the command of Deuteronomy. Therefore, the specific language of the Law

¹²When Chronicles recounts how David organized the musicians, it uses the term "prophesying" (*Niphal* נִבְּא) to describe Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (1 Chr 25:2, 5–6). Because of the prophetic nature of their music, David trusted them as seers and their songs were divinely inspired (and preserved in the Psalter).

¹³Joshua E. Williams, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, Kerux Commentary (Grand Rapids: Kregel), forthcoming.

¹⁴There is debate regarding the meaning of the verb בִּשַׁל. Most often when the verb בִּשַׁל occurs, it clearly refers to boiling meat rather than roasting (Ben Zvi gives a number of reasons for understanding the verb as "to boil" rather than the general sense of "to cook"; Ehud Ben Zvi, "Revisiting 'Boiling in Fire' in 2 Chronicles 35:13 and Related Passover Questions: Text, Exegetical Needs and Concerns, and General Implications," in *Biblical Interpretation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Peter J. Haas, LHBOTS 439 [New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 240–41); however, one may argue that the word בִּשַׁל refers to food preparation in general and boiling in particular only when stated that the preparation takes place with water (so Benjamin Kilchör, "בִּשַׁל – Das Essen ist bereit," *ZAW* 125, no. 3 [2013], 483–86, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/zaw-2013-0030/html>). Understanding the verb in a general sense helps alleviate the tension between the laws in Exodus and Deuteronomy; however, there are other means for alleviating the tension. For instance, one could argue that Exodus 12 presents the regulations for the first observance as the people were fleeing Egypt while Deuteronomy 16 presents regulations for future observance (note that Deut 16:7 looks forward to the place that YHWH chooses). In either case, the issue does not affect what the Chronicler is doing in combining the language of both passages.

informed the worship practice so that the Chronicler could affirm that this cooking took place as prescribed (v. 13, כִּמְשֻׁבֵּי), that is, according to how Israel understood the way the Mosaic stipulations related to one another regarding this issue.¹⁵

4. *Organization of Priestly and Levitical Groups.* Chronicles records in considerable detail how David organized the priests and Levites (1 Chr 23–26). What is important to note in this context is David’s activity is not commanded nor anticipated in Mosaic legislation. David’s innovations in priestly and Levitical organization affected Israel’s worship. The grouping of worship personnel into divisions affected which personnel would perform their duties at what time. The expansion of roles supplemented Israel’s ritual service by synchronizing certain musical activities with sacrifices¹⁶ and required Levitical guardians to preserve the sanctity of the temple precincts (e.g., 2 Chr 23:19) and to be present during ritual observances (e.g., during Josiah’s Passover the guardians maintain their posts, 2 Chr 35:15). In other words, David’s activity introduced new elements into Israel’s worship practice and refined the regulations regarding which personnel could serve at the sanctuary at what time.

Three observations are important to keep in mind as one examines this change in Israel’s worship practices. First, even as David organized the priests and Levites into new administrative groupings, he drew on the Pentateuchal picture of the Levitical tribe, organizing the personnel by genealogy.¹⁷ Furthermore, as Chronicles describes the expanded responsibilities, it characterizes their primary tasks according to Pentateuchal legislation. In 1 Chr 24:19, it draws on Deut 10:8 to specify the priestly duties. In 1 Chr 23:26, it draws on Num 3:5–8; 18:2–7 to specify the Levitical duties. Therefore, the innovations draw on previously prescribed practice. Second, the organization of the personnel took place at a pivotal moment in Israel’s history. With David, YHWH established a new monarchical dynasty and declared that Jerusalem would be the place he chose as the site for the temple. This moment introduced a new authority within

¹⁵See William Schniedewind, “The Chronicler as an Interpreter of Scripture,” in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, by M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 173–78, for interpretation of כִּמְשֻׁבֵּי in this context as “interpretive tradition.”

¹⁶Regarding synchronizing music with the sacrifices, see John W. Kleinig, *The LORD’s Song: The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles*, JSOTSup 156 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic), 108–114.

¹⁷See Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, 150.

Israel's worship in the Davidic king and a new permanent location for this sanctuary, formerly a tabernacle but now a temple.¹⁸ The change from a mobile tabernacle to a larger permanent temple appears to justify some changes in Israel's ritual worship. For instance, after David recognized that the Levites would no longer need to carry the ark, he expanded their responsibilities to other areas of service (1 Chr 23:25–32). The shift to the Jerusalem temple prompted and justified David's action.

Third, David's reorganization of the sanctuary personnel and specification of new job responsibilities did not contradict Mosaic legislation but refined it. As mentioned, David did not abolish the genealogical organization of the priests and Levites, but he placed within that structure the priestly and Levitical divisions as well. Furthermore, David did not abolish the Levitical duties, but he redirected their duties to other ways in which they could assist the priests since they no longer had the chance to carry the ark and the other implements found within the sanctuary (tabernacle or temple; see 1 Chr 23:25–32). By doing so, he maintained the role of the Levites as priestly assistants, a role that the Mosaic Law grants them (e.g., Num 3:6–9).¹⁹ As a result, at a crucial moment in Israel's worship, that is, the building of the Jerusalem temple, David refined the worship personnel's organization provided by the Law of Moses and redirected some of that personnel's duties without violating Mosaic stipulations.

5. *Introduction of Levitical Music.* Perhaps the most striking addition that David introduced to Israel's worship is music. The Law of Moses depicts the Tabernacle as "a sanctuary of sacrifice and silence," but because of David, Chronicles depicts the Jerusalem temple as "a sanctuary of sacrifice and song."²⁰ The Pentateuch does address the matter of music in one passage: Num 10:2–10. The passage recounts how God commanded Israel to make trumpets for the priests to use for the following reasons: 1) to assemble the people to the sanctuary, 2) to signal the people to set out from their camps, 3) to warn the people of an incoming military attack, and 4) to call attention to the people's offerings before God on special

¹⁸Regarding the Davidic king's authority related to Israel's worship, see 1 Chr 17:14 in which God promises to appoint the Davidic descendant within God's house, indicating that the Davidic king plays some role in regulating the worship of all Israel. Regarding Jerusalem as the site for God's sanctuary, see e.g., 1 Chr 23:25; 2 Chr 6:6.

¹⁹David's words closely resemble the language of the Law of Moses in assigning the Levites the role as assistants to the priests. See especially 1 Chr 23:28 in relation to Num 3:7–9.

²⁰Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 12A (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 429.

occasions.²¹ Three observations regarding these regulations require notice: 1) they restrict the music to trumpets, 2) restrict the use of the trumpets to the priests, and 3) restrict their use to special occasions. According to this passage, the trumpets play a role in Israel's life as a community but quite a limited role in their worship.

In contrast, when David introduced music into Israel's worship, he included singing along with playing various instruments (harps, lyres, cymbals, etc.), assigned Levites (not Aaronic priests) to play them, and included them in the regular service at the sanctuary. Music became a significant, regular feature of Israel's worship. At the same time, David did not overturn the Mosaic regulations. The priests continued to play the trumpets as the Law prescribed (see 1 Chr 15:24; 16:6; 2 Chr 5:12; 29:26). This evidence confirms that David introduced a significant innovation into Israel's ritual worship but not entirely unprecedented within the Law.

A look at the Chronicler's account of the ark's successful transfer may provide insight into what brought about this innovation in Israel's worship. When David and all Israel successfully transferred the ark to Jerusalem, they placed it in a tent which David prepared to house it. At the same time, the tabernacle with its implements, including the altar, remained at Gibeon. As a result, Israel's worship was divided between the tent in Jerusalem where the ark lay and the tabernacle in Gibeon where the altar remained. As this division of worship took place, David introduced music to accompany the ark. He first called on the Levites to appoint musicians to process with the ark during its transfer (1 Chr 15:16–24). After they deposited the ark in Jerusalem, David appointed musicians to offer praise and thanksgiving before the ark (1 Chr 16:4–6, 37–38). Since David's tent did not contain the altar or other items used for service in the tabernacle, the Mosaic Law did not provide another means of worship. In this void, David introduced music as a means of worship beyond the scope of Mosaic legislation but not contrary to it.²²

²¹Even though the text describes the occasion as “your day of rejoicing” (יְמֵי בְהִתְחַמֵּשׁוּ), it elaborates this time as the appointed holy days (מִיָּדְעִינִי) and beginnings of months (מִיָּשְׁדֵי חֳדָשִׁים). The Law commands that these holy days be times of rejoicing (Deut 16:14). See Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 306.

²²Please note that I am not claiming that David introduced the music for this reason. I am only pointing out the context in which he introduced music. Furthermore, whatever David's reasons for introducing the music, Chronicles highlights the important roles that prophecy plays regarding Israel's musical worship. For instance, Chronicles refers to the heads of the Levitical musicians as those who prophesy (1 Chr 25:2–3) and reiterates that David and the prophets determined the place of the Levitical musicians within the service of YHWH at the sanctuary

Then, David extended the role of the musicians to include worship at the tabernacle. Immediately following the record of David's appointing musicians before the ark, Chronicles records that at the tabernacle in Gibeon David left the priests so that they could offer the regular offerings upon the altar, as required by Mosaic Law (1 Chr 16:39–40). Only after mentioning the duties of the priests to offer sacrifices on the altar does Chronicles mention that musicians accompanied them (1 Chr 16:41–42). In other words, the introduction of musical worship began as an appropriate means of worship in the absence of options commanded by the Law. From there, it joined the regular worship as regulated by Mosaic Law. It became an integral part of Israel's service to God rendered at the sanctuary, including the later temple. When Hezekiah restored the service of YHWH's temple (2 Chr 29:35), he not only restored the proper sacrificial rituals, ensuring the purity of the temple and its implements, but he also required the performance of musical worship along with the making of the sacrifices (2 Chr 29:27–31).²³ Therefore, the measures that David took to address a specific historical condition became a precedent justifying the use of such a practice within Israel's continuing worship.²⁴

6. *Uzziah's Leprosy (2 Chronicles 26)*. When Uzziah went to offer incense in the temple, he violated the Law of Moses. The Law clearly requires that only the Levitical priests offer incense in the sanctuary (Exod 30:1–8; Num 16:40 [17:5 HB]; 18:1–7). Even as a Davidic king, Uzziah was not allowed to overrule the Mosaic stipulations regarding proper worship, specifically offering incense within the sanctuary. The text does not condemn Uzziah because he violated the timing, procedure, or practice of the offering; there is no indication that he did. Furthermore, since the high priest warned that the act would not bring honor to Uzziah, he implied that Uzziah intended to make his offering for God's glory and his own benefit. Despite Uzziah's partially proper practice and sincere intention, God punished him severely with a lifelong disease that required his isolation from others (see v. 21). God obviously considered Uzziah's direct violation of the Law of Moses

(2 Chr 35:15).

²³See also Kleinig, *The LORD's Song*, 108–114, for the details regarding how the musical worship integrated into the rituals of offering sacrifices.

²⁴In fact, David's precedent did more than justify later practice; it required it (see 2 Chron. 35:4). See also Simon J. De Vries, "Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles," *JBL* 107, no. 4 (December 1988), 626–31, <https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/sblpress/jbl/article/107/4/619/183758>.

as unacceptable worship and punished him for it.

Uzziah's illness warns against assuming authority to violate directly what God has commanded. Again, in this way, Uzziah's deviation from Israel's practice differs from the other examples. Unlike David, Hezekiah, or Josiah, Uzziah directly violated what God had commanded. Furthermore, God punished Uzziah because his act violated the special role of the priests for making an incense offering. In fact, the high priest uses the language of holiness in his warning to Uzziah: only the priests are sanctified (הַמְקֻדְּשִׁים, from the root קִדַּשׁ "to be holy") to offer incense. In other words, what Uzziah did violated God's holiness by disregarding God's choice to appoint only the priests to enter the sanctuary to offer incense. In this way, Uzziah's case resembles Uzzah's case; both violate God's holiness in some aspect: Uzzah by touching a holy object; Uzziah by performing a rite reserved for the holy priests.

III. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE CLOSER LOOK

The passages examined above share several threads in their treatment of Israel's worship. A look at these common threads regarding the deviations and innovations in Israel's worship will hopefully clarify how the Chronicler understood what constituted appropriate and inappropriate worship. These common threads are as follows: 1) appropriate worship respects God's holiness, 2) the deviations and innovations in Israel's worship are formed from previous practice, 3) the shift from tabernacle to temple prompted these changes, and 4) the establishment of the Davidic dynasty introduced another authority into Israel's worship.

1. *Respects God's Holiness.* Chronicles recounts two disastrous events of worshipping God. Both accounts deal directly with God's holiness. Although holiness is a difficult term to define, in this context, I am using the term to refer to a special status.²⁵ What is holy is distinct from the mundane so that it requires careful, special treatment. The examples of Uzziah and Uzzah communicate that anyone who does not respect God's holiness suffers. This holiness extends to his appointed vessels (i.e., the ark), his appointed personnel (the priests and Levites), and his appointed place (e.g., the Jerusalem temple). Uzzah violated a holy object by touching

²⁵For recent treatments of the root קִדַּשׁ in Biblical Hebrew, see Peter J. Gentry, "The Meaning of 'Holy' in the Old Testament." *BSac* 170 (October 2013): 400–17, and David J.A. Clines, "Alleged Basic Meanings of the Hebrew Verb *qds* 'Be Holy': An Exercise in Comparative Hebrew Lexicography." *VT* 71 (2021): 481–502.

the ark when the oxen stumbled. Uzziah violated the holy space and the holy personnel by attempting to usurp their holy duties in the holy space. The issue of holiness is hard to miss in these negative examples. However, holiness is also an issue for David, Hezekiah, and Josiah. When David appointed guardians for the future temple, he appointed them to protect the holiness of God's holy space and vessels (see 1 Chr 16:37–42). Furthermore, David respected the status of the priests and Levites when he selected Levites to serve as musicians. In Chronicles, this activity contrasts to the activity of Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom. Jeroboam drove out the Levites by appointing priests from anyone willing to pay for the position (2 Chr 13:9). Furthermore, David maintained the Levites' role as assistants to the priests even though the form of that assistance changed with the building of the Jerusalem temple. Like David, Hezekiah and Josiah also respected God's holiness in ensuring that the proper personnel (priests and Levites) carried out the proper procedures (slaughtering the animals and splattering the blood) in the proper places (within the sacred precincts of the Jerusalem temple).

2. *Formed from Previous Practice.* One of the repeated observations from the narratives discussed above is deviations or innovations in Israel's worship practices are based on previous practices, especially those from the Mosaic Law. First, in the case of Hezekiah, the Law allows for an alternative date to observe Passover. Even though the Mosaic Law provides different conditions for this alternative date and only applies the alternative to individuals rather than the nation, the concerns that gave rise to the alternative date for observance still applied in the case of Hezekiah and the people: the people wanted to observe Passover but there were not enough sanctified priests or participants in Jerusalem. Therefore, Hezekiah and the people extended the original application of the alternative timing even though they did not apply it within the same circumstances. For Josiah's Passover, the people again extended the previous practice specified in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and they combined and reapplied the same underlying principles within a different historical circumstance. For instance, the priests properly cooked the sacrifices and distributed the meat to the families. During the reign of David, David refined Israel's previous worship practice regarding its personnel, as outlined in Mosaic Law, by organizing the priests and Levites into various divisions and various roles (e.g., musician, guardian, etc.). Also, during the reign of David, David

extended the sparse information in the Mosaic Law regarding music to apply it to the Levites, specifically the Levitical singers, and the use of various instruments.

The survey of passages from Chronicles reveals that the Law of Moses takes center stage in regulating Israel's previous worship. However, Israel did not look only to the Mosaic stipulations. When David organized the divisions of priests and Levites, he followed the traditional genealogical shape of these groups. This genealogical shape comes from the Pentateuch, but it does not derive from Mosaic stipulations. Furthermore, it appears that David's ad hoc provision for the worship at the tent where the ark of the covenant was housed became a permanent statute for Israel. One may see this same use of precedent when talking about the Passover celebration although this precedent was not discussed above. During Hezekiah's Passover, the Levites assumed a greater role because of unique circumstances, that is, many participants were unclean so that they could not slaughter the sacrifices themselves (2 Chr 30:17). As a result, the Levites killed the animals while the priests sprinkled the blood (2 Chr 30:16). During Josiah's Passover, Josiah carried over many of the ad hoc provisions of Hezekiah's Passover to finalize the form of Passover.²⁶ In this way innovations or deviations in Israel's worship practices derived from and built upon those previously sanctioned.

3. *Shifts from Tabernacle to Temple.* Another common feature that stands out from the narratives is that the shift from a movable tent as the sanctuary to a permanent temple as the sanctuary resulted in some shifts within Israel's worship. This point becomes explicit and obvious in two passages in Chronicles: 1 Chr 23:25–32 and 2 Chr 35:3. These two passages recount how the Davidic king (David and then Josiah) reassigned the Levites to different tasks because they no longer needed to carry the ark, the tabernacle, or any of its implements (as required by Mosaic Law). Therefore, the shift of the sanctuary's form created an opportunity for the king to introduce changes into Israel's worship practices. David also introduced music at this crucial time. When Israel's worship was divided between the tent in Jerusalem and the tabernacle in Gibeon, he brought music into worship when the Mosaic Law did not provide other means of worship.

²⁶See Louis C. Jonker, *Reflections of King Josiah in Chronicles: Late Stages of the Josiah Reception in 2 Chr 34f*, *Textpragmatische Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel 2* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 2003), 57–60.

4. *Acknowledges Davidic Dynasty's Limited Authority.* A final common feature that one finds across the narratives is that as long as the Davidic king does not violate Mosaic prohibitions, he carries authority to deviate or innovate Israel's worship. David does so when he divides the priests and the Levites into various divisions and assigns the Levites expanded roles as guardians, musicians, and other administrative capacities. David also does so when he introduces music into Israel's worship. On more than one occasion later, Chronicles points to David's authority to justify the way in which Israel worshiped.²⁷ Hezekiah also appears as an authority figure when he commands Passover to take place within the second month. In this case, he does not act alone because he requests the people's input, but his authority still stands behind the deviation in practice. For Josiah's Passover, Josiah's authority becomes a key element of the entire observance as demonstrated by the comment that Passover took place according to the king's command (2 Chr 35:16). In this case, the evidence suggests that the authority of the Davidic king plays a role in innovating Israel's worship; however, the case of Uzziah qualifies that authority. Uzziah demonstrates that even the Davidic king cannot violate God's holiness without paying a serious penalty.

VI. CONCLUSION

By examining these narratives from Chronicles, I have attempted to show that Israel's worship was not static. Rather, it was dynamic based on certain changing circumstances. At the same time, these narratives reveal that such dynamic elements of Israel's worship were not chaotic or haphazard. Certain commonalities among the narratives point to stable principles that governed how Chronicles characterizes the events. These two aspects of Israel's worship as presented in Chronicles may provide some guidance in evaluating whether worship is a matter in which anything goes or is restricted to only what the Bible prescribes.

When Jesus came in the flesh, he addressed many aspects of worship. He highlighted elements otherwise ignored and ignored elements otherwise highlighted. His coming brought about significant changes in how the people of God worship. In some ways, Chronicles already anticipates such changes. It associates changes in worship with changes in the form of the sanctuary and assigns the Davidic king a role in such changes. At the same time, Chronicles does not anticipate all that would be transformed

²⁷See especially the reigns of Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:25, 30) and Josiah (2 Chr 35:4, 15).

in Jesus's coming. For instance, its emphasis on obeying Mosaic Law does not carry over as an emphasis within the Church. Therefore, one must be careful when trying to apply to contemporary practice all that Chronicles highlights.²⁸

Despite such caution regarding applying Chronicles, the passages examined have something important to say about worship practices in today's churches. I offer two areas that I find particularly significant.

First, appropriate worship respects God's holiness, that is, his special status that requires special treatment. As holy, he is the source of unimaginable blessing or unprecedented devastation. Therefore, one must respect his status and recognize that worship is serious business. However, this point concerns the attitude toward worship rather than the mood of the worship. When David prepared to transfer the ark the second time, he took great care in ensuring that there was a place prepared for it (1 Chr 15:1), the proper personnel accompanied it (1 Chr 15:3–13), and the people were protected from approaching it too closely (thus the role of the guardians in verses 18, 23, and 24). At the same time, David and the people were filled with joy (see vv. 25–29) because God's holy presence, if respected, would be a source of tremendous blessing for them individually and as a nation. At other times, people felt shame during their worship because they were not prepared for it (see 2 Chr 30:15 for a case involving the priests and Levites). In both cases, the worshipers treated worship as serious business even though the mood varied greatly. Such variation seems appropriate today as well.

Second, it is wise to remember previous practices both from God's written revelation and his appointed leaders. Chronicles would warn against both maintaining practices when they no longer function as they did (like the Levites carrying the ark) and introducing practices that bear little to no resemblance to the previous practices of the Christian tradition. Our contemporary culture highly values novelty. Sometimes such a value can make its way into the churches such that the churches look for new ways

²⁸I would also be careful about viewing David's role in worship as typological within Chronicles. I have argued that David plays an important role in innovating Israel's worship; however, it does not appear that Chronicles intends to cast David individually as a type of the coming Messiah. The Chronicler's presentation of David functions as a model for the Davidic king and is therefore representative to a degree. However, the Chronicler repeats that God refused to let David build the temple. Furthermore, the narrative regarding Uzziah and its significance for the position of the Davidic king within Israel's worship does not suggest a simple correlation to Jesus. Taken as a whole, Chronicles does not portray the Davidic king in such typological terms for this specific issue.

to engage God as they understand it. However, in Chronicles innovation is always tied to tradition. In other words, there is a balance in worship between innovation and preservation with the result that worship is both dynamic and stable.

What Chronicles presents is a warning against treating worship flip-pantly while recognizing that changing circumstances may lead to changes in worship practices that honor God by treating his presence as holy, forming new practices from previous revelation, and respecting proper authority.