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THE BOOK OF KINGS IN RECENT RESEARCH (PART I)*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines recent trends in the study of the book of Kings in the 1990s and in the beginning years of the third millennium. It focuses on issues pertaining to: composition and redaction; structure; sources; purpose; and date of the book. After a survey of recent commentaries, the studies on the book of Kings are presented in various circles and contexts, such as the Deuteronomistic History, the relation of the book of Kings with other biblical sources, and several disciplines, including text criticism, history and historiography, archaeology, cult and religion, society, and literary criticism. The second part of this article, scheduled to appear in a subsequent issue of *Currents*, will deal with specific literary units of the book of Kings.

Introduction

A variety of research and commentaries dealing with the book of Kings have been published in the last two decades. An examination of the narratives of the book of Kings instantly clarifies the phenomenon: the book describes the deeds of 40 kings and almost 400 years of Israelite history. Furthermore, the book includes important theological topics such as: the temple; the Davidic covenant; centralization of the cult in Jerusalem; the relationship between prophets and kings; and the phenomenon of miracles. The interaction of Bible and archaeology, together with the close links between the book of Kings and other historiographic and prophetic books, have also added to the growing interest in this book.

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A discussion of the book of Kings cannot be limited to the material within the book, but must also refer to other relevant issues: Israelite history; biblical historiography; archaeological research; textual criticism; and Israelite religion. The first part of this article will summarize the main studies written on the compilation and redaction of the book, and its date and purpose, accompanied by an examination of contemporary methods in the research of the book of Kings. The second part of this article (to be published in a future issue of *Currents*) will discuss the research devoted to specific literary units in the book of Kings.

Commentaries on the Book of Kings

Recent commentaries on the book of Kings belong to various series, and have been prepared by scholars from a variety of disciplines. They are written for different groups of readers, with very different assumptions. These differences are immediately apparent from the prefaces of the various commentaries.

In 1984 and 1991, B.O. Long published a two-part commentary on the book of Kings in the Forms of the Old Testament Literature series. His aim is to present a form-critical analysis of each unit within the book of Kings. The biblical text is commented on unit by unit, with the following headings: Text, Structure, Genre, Setting, Intention, and Bibliography.

In 1983, a Modern Hebrew commentary series was initiated in Israel under the title 'The World of the Bible'. Approximately 120 scholars have participated in this series. In each volume, two editors collaborated and wrote most of the commentary. When required, they were aided by experts to resolve specific problems. The series includes illustrations, reconstructions of relevant ancient Near Eastern documents with Hebrew translations, together with a commentary based on contemporary research. Each volume also includes a concise bibliography. The book of 1 Kings (1994) was edited by Garsiel alone, and the volume on 2 Kings (1994) by Oded and Kochman.

Other commentaries emphasize the importance of narratives within the book of Kings for Christian believers (Provan [NIBC] 1995a; Fretheim 1999; Seow [NIB] 1999; Brueggemann 2000). These commentaries pay little attention to the formation and editing of the book, but stress literary and theological issues. This literary and theological focus is found also in the commentaries of Rice (ITC; 1990) and Provan (OTG; 1997). An exception in this category is, however, House (NAC; 1995), who discusses the compilation and editing of the book together with its historical

background. The commentary written by Mulder (of which 1 Kgs 1–11 has been published) appeared in the HCOT series in 1998. The aim of the series is to deal with the history of interpretation of the book of Kings, including ancient versions and translations, along with ancient Jewish interpretations.

The commentaries, which appeared in the Berit Olam series, emphasize the literary aspect (Walsh and Cotter 1996; Cohn *et al*. 2000). The various narrative units are discussed from the largest to the smallest unit. Emphasis is placed on structure, literary design, repetition, and analogy.

The Anchor Bible commentary (Cogan and Tadmor 1988; Cogan 2001a) places special emphasis on the historical, philological and archaeological aspects of the narratives in the book of Kings, and on their contribution to the comprehension of the book. Wiseman (1993) uses a similar approach (within a more limited framework) in his commentary, which is part of the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series. The commentary by Fritz (2003) was translated from German for the Continental Commentary series. Fritz combines an historical approach with literary and archaeological materials, and also tackles issues connected with the compilation of the book.

The new commentaries to the book of Kings pay insufficient attention to the classic Jewish interpretation of the Bible (with the exception of Cogan and Tadmor 1988). In 1995, Cohen, of Bar-Ilan University, published the *Mikra'ot Gedolot 'Haketer'* (Rabbinic Bible) on the book of Kings. The biblical text is based on the Aleppo Codex, and is accompanied by scientific editions of the classical medieval commentators such as Rashi, Ralbag, Qimhi, and others. Schwartz (1998: 114) emphasizes the importance of the use of rabbinic literature as a tool for biblical exegesis. In his discussion of the phrase *maštin be-kir* (male [literally: 'one who pisses against a wall']), he comments: 'Biblical tradition provides no additional information. Rabbinic tradition, though, may be of some help, in spite of the relative lateness of this material.' Berlin and Brettler are the editors of a new biblical commentary in one volume—*The Jewish Study Bible* (2004). The commentaries on all of the books have been prepared by Jewish scholars from Israel and abroad, placing a special emphasis on classical Jewish commentaries on the Bible. Zevit prepared the commentary on the book of Kings. The publisher's explanatory material notes that the commentary includes individual introductions to each book, the Jewish Publication Society English translation of the Bible, a verse-by-verse commentary, tables and maps. The series will also include historical surveys of Jewish biblical commentary.

The Place of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History

The scholarly approach to the book of Kings in particular and the Deuteronomistic History in general is inevitably influenced by Noth's classic research, written in 1943 and translated into English in 1981. In his opinion, the book of Kings is an integral part of the Deuteronomistic History, which is characterized by special phraseology, structure, and ideas. This composition is thought to include the books from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings. Noth's contribution to the different aspects of the Deuteronomistic hypothesis is discussed and evaluated in the collection of articles edited by McKenzie and Graham in 1994. In most cases, Noth's approach is accepted. However, there are differences of opinion regarding the scope of the Deuteronomistic History, the date of its compilation, the extent of the author's source materials, the scope of the later additions, and the stage at which they were added. There are also differences of opinion regarding the intentions of the author. Nevertheless, according to Knoppers (2000), there is still a future for Noth's theory of the Deuteronomistic History.

In contrast to this consensus, recent publications present the thesis that the book of Kings is to be regarded as a part of the 'Primary History' or an 'Enneateuch', namely, the books of Genesis through 2 Kings (Mandell and Freedman 1993; Otto 2000).

Composition and Redaction

Noth and his school contend that the book of Kings, as part of the Deuteronomistic history, was edited once, in the middle of the sixth century BCE, shortly after the release of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, from the Babylonian prison (2 Kgs 25.27-30; see Noth 1981: 98). Recent research, however, has attempted to distinguish between early and late stages of redaction of the text of Kings. Cross (1973) and his disciples (called 'the double redaction school') identify two separate stages of editing, labeled Dtr1 and Dtr2 (McKenzie 1991; Knoppers 1993 and 1994; Friedman 1995). Geoghegan (2003) discusses the phrase 'until this day' in the Deuteronomistic History and concludes: '[there] existed a preexilic, even Josianic, edition of the DH' (2003: 225). In Geoghegan's opinion, the presence of the expression 'until this day' in relation to the sacrificial cult, and to specific places, suggests that the first edition was written in Josiah's period. In contrast, according to the group of scholars of 'the Göttingen School', the book was edited three times (Ben-Zvi 1991; Schmitt 1997; Dietrich 1999,

2000). Eynikel (1996) identifies three levels of editing in the book of Kings: the first edition was prepared in the time of Hezekiah; the second was revised in Josiah's period; and the third edition was edited in the Exilic period and included all the Deuteronomistic material. Eynikel's claim is based on the regnal formulae in the book of Kings.

This subject has been summarized by O'Brien (1989); Cortese (1990); Weinfeld (1992); Talstra (1993); Knoppers (1993); Eynikel (1996); Begg (1999); Römer and de Pury (2000); Na'aman (2002). An attempt to distinguish between early and later levels in a systematic manner may be found in Campbell and O'Brien (2000). The reader may consult the collection of articles edited by Knoppers and McConville (2000) for the methods and reasoning of these three schools.

However, another group of scholars feel that the distinction between stages of editing is invalid, since one cannot identify significant differences in language, style or ideas. Person (2002: 147; cf. 25) points out: 'the redaction critical method has no basis for distinguishing the work of one from the other'.

Wilson (1995, 1999, 2000) discusses the problems involved in the choice of criteria for distinguishing between the different redactions of the book of Kings. He claims that the scholars who adhere to the theory of multiple redactions ignore the general literary structure of the book. The book of Kings is not a collection of formulae of different types, and there is room for a discussion of the central theological themes expressed within the book. A similar approach is presented by Lohfink (1999).

Westermann (1994) suggests that one could see the book of Kings as an independent work with unique features, in spite of its similarity to the rest of the Deuteronomistic History. This approach is also found in Auld (1999, 2000); Linville (1998); and Knauf (2000). McKenzie (1991) and Friedman (1995) point out that the term 'Deuteronomistic school' is indeterminate and therefore unclear. It is not clear who the authors of the Deuteronomistic History were, nor why they wrote these books. One can do no more than distinguish between author and editor. Albertz (2000) identifies the authors with the family of Hilkiah, the high priest, who wished to promote an anti-Babylonian policy.

Rösel (1999; 2000) claims that it is impossible to find a common 'Leitmotiv' in the Deuteronomistic canon, and argues that one ought not to assume, as Noth had, that there was only one editor. Certain topics, such as the renovations of the temple (2 Kgs 12.1-17; 2 Kgs 15.32-38), are unique to one or the other of these two books. There are also ideological

differences among the books from Deuteronomy through Kings regarding certain subjects. In Rösel's opinion, the Deuteronomistic canon has more diversity than unity. In this regard, Knoppers (2001) points out differences between Deuteronomy and Kings in the treatment of the monarchy.

The Sources of the Book of Kings

The author of the book of Kings mentions three sources that he used: 'The Book of Acts of Solomon' (see Na'aman 1997b: 162-71; 1997c), 'The Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel' (e.g., 1 Kgs 14.19) and 'The Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (e.g., 1 Kgs 14.29)'. Presumably, there was an additional oral source—the prophetical narratives—which was recorded at a later period (Rofé 1988; McKenzie 1991; Dietrich 2000). Na'aman (1997b) argues that one can find a historical kernel in some of the prophetic narratives, such as the war against Mesha (2 Kgs 3), and the rebellion of Jehu (2 Kgs 9–10).

The nature of the 'Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and of the Kings of Judah' was recently studied by Cogan (1999) and Haran (1999). Haran (1999) claims that these sources are not annalistic, but have a more narrative nature. He suggests that the material had no official status, but rather was based on royal archives. The Deuteronomist, who lived many years after the events, could not have had access to these sources, and could not have known what had happened in Israel or in Judah. In Haran's opinion, we are faced with a literary convention. The Deuteronomist took the material from his sources, using standard conventions, and adapted it to his purposes.

There are others who think that the author of Kings used dedicatory building inscriptions from the period between Jehoash and Josiah (Redford 1992: 323-37; Hurowitz 1992: 228-33). Na'aman (1998b) claims that in the descriptions of Joash's rule in 2 Kgs 11.4-20 and 2 Kgs 12.5-17, and in the description of the altar of Ahaz (2 Kgs 16), one can identify remnants of ancient sources. He also concludes that the sources available to the author of the book of Kings treated the Kings of Judah more accurately than did those describing the kingdom of Israel (1999). In Parker's opinion (2000), there is no evidence for the claim that the author of the book of Kings was familiar with dedicatory building inscriptions, but one may assume that they had lists of kings. These lists were sufficient for their purpose—to demonstrate the antiquity and continuity of the royal house of David. This conclusion assumes that 'royal interests were not

particularly close to those of the authors of Kings' (2000: 376). The similarities between the biblical text and contemporary inscriptions may, in his opinion, be ascribed to 'common court ideology and language' (2000: 368).

The Book of Kings in the Light of Biblical Sources

Another aspect of the question of sources for the book of Kings is its relation to other biblical sources. The narratives regarding Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18–20) are paralleled in Isaiah 36–39 and 2 Chronicles 29–32; and that concerning Zedekiah (2 Kgs 25) has parallel texts in Jeremiah 52 and 2 Chronicles 36. The crucial question is: which version of the narratives is the earliest? Were the two narratives derived from a common older source, which has since been lost? (Seitz 1989; 1991; Person 1997; Na'aman 2000b).

Several scholars have emphasized the differences in purpose between the prophetic books and Kings. Terblanche (2000) claims that Jeremiah is not mentioned in the book of Kings, since Jeremiah and Kings differ in their attitude toward the significance of cult. Applegate (1998) compares the different descriptions of Zedekiah in Kings, Jeremiah and Chronicles. Kasher (2001) draws our attention to different approaches in the description of the relationship between Isaiah and Hezekiah in Kings, Isaiah and Chronicles (cf. Olley 1999).

Studies on the Latter Prophets frequently refer to the book of Kings, since it is an important source (together with the book of Chronicles) for reconstructing the historical background of various prophecies (Hogenhaven 1990; Irvine 1990; Ben Zvi 1993; Gallagher 1999: 1-21; Vargon 2000; Malamat 2001).

The relationship between the books of Chronicles and Kings has been discussed extensively in recent research (Kleinig 1994; Talshir 1996b; Smelik 1998; Graham *et al*. 1997, 2003; Graham and McKenzie 1999; Kalimi 2000; Kelly 2002; Raney 2003). The question is how to reconstruct biblical events: is it preferable to conflate accounts in Chronicles and Kings, or should each source be presented separately within the context of the book and the author's intentions? (Lipschits 2002–2003).

Another question is: where is the information most reliable—in Kings or in Chronicles? Galil (1999) claims that each case should be considered separately. On the other hand, it is problematic to regard the narrative in Chronicles as historically more reliable, without taking into account the

author's intentions. Jones (1994) claims that a comparison of the treatment of the reign of Abijah/Abijam in Kings to its treatment in Chronicles reveals apparently reliable details. These were included in Chronicles and omitted in Kings because they were not consonant with the ideological approach of the author of Kings (see also Lowery 1991). Auld (1994) claims that the authors of Kings and Chronicles used a common source, but this opinion is not generally accepted.

The Structure of the Book of Kings

Attempting to determine the structure of the book of Kings is difficult. Unlike Joshua or Judges, which are built around characters and deeds, the book of Kings includes many subjects, and is complicated by the frequent transitions from the Kingdom of Israel to the Kingdom of Judah and back. 1 Kings 1–11 is generally regarded as treating Solomon's reign (although this is also disputable, and will be treated in the second part of our article). The real problem begins with 1 Kings 12. Talshir (1996a) criticizes the various suggestions for determining the structure of the book from 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17. In her opinion, only the synchronization between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah can help us to divide the book into thematic units.

Another structural factor is the introductory and concluding formulae appearing in the reign of each king: theological evaluation, the source citation, and the death and burial formulae. These formulae have been the subject of intensive study in terms of Kings' editorial history (Provan 1988; Halpern and Vanderhooft 1991; Glatt-Gilad 2001).

Wilson (2000) finds two unifying themes in the book of Kings: (1) The service of God in Jerusalem is the only legitimate rite, and one should therefore not enter into treaties with other nations, which may draw one into idol worship; and, (2) repentance may delay evil decrees, but does not eliminate them.

The Purpose of the Book of Kings

The purpose of the book of Kings must inevitably be connected with the purposes in individual narratives, such as the stories of Solomon, the prophetic narratives, and so on. These will be discussed separately in the second part of this article. This section will treat the general message of the book.

Many scholars have rejected Noth's conclusion regarding the negative message of the book of Kings. Noth claims that the aim of the book of Kings in particular and the Deuteronomistic narrative in general was to explain the chain of events leading up to the destruction of the temple and exile from the land of Israel. However, this claim is not consistent with other subjects highlighted in the book: the covenant between God and David; the significance of repentance; and the central position of Jerusalem. These subjects may reflect an optimistic view (Talstra 1993; McConville 1998; Galil 2001b).

Solomon's Prayer is generally regarded as a keystone for revealing some of the main ideas in the book of Kings: repentance and its significance, the Davidic covenant, and the pivotal role of the temple (McConville 1992; Knoppers 1995b; both reprinted in Knoppers and McConville 2000; Japhet 1999; O'Kennedy 2000; Hoppe 2001).

Galil (2001b) claims that the book of Kings should be studied in the context of the Deuteronomistic History in general, but should also be compared with the book of Jeremiah. In Galil's opinion, the author wants to teach his readers that in spite of the destruction of the temple and the exile, hope remains for the exiles to return to their land and renew the covenant with their God.

Other scholars have highlighted allusions in the book of Kings to the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7, especially in 1 Kings 2–11 and in 2 Kgs 8.19 (McKenzie 1991; Knoppers 1993: 21-27; Provan 1995b; Gakuru 2000; Pietsch 2003). The widespread approach is that in the book of Kings, a supplementary condition was added to references to the Davidic covenant, which had previously been presented as unconditional. The addition was intended to reconcile the divine promise to David with the bitter reality following the destruction of the temple. Lohfink (2000) raises the question of whether the Deuteronomist cites in these cases the promise to David from 2 Samuel 7, or whether he was referring to a new promise given to David's successors, since the older promise was no longer valid. In this regard, scholars deal similarly with the meaning of the story of Jehoiachin's release from prison (2 Kgs 25.27-30): does this story reflect hope for the renewal of the Davidic kingship? (Becking 1990; Granowski 1992; Gerhards 1998; Murray 2001).

The centrality of prophets and prophecy in the book of Kings can be proved by the fact that more than a third of this book is dedicated to the description of Elijah and Elisha. To this, one may add emphasis in the book of Kings on the fulfilment of prophecies (Weinfeld 1992: 200-209; Weippert 2000).

Frisch (2000) points to the significance of the 'Exodus motif' in 1 Kings 1–14. In his opinion, this motif exemplifies and underscores the nature of the relationship between God and his people: on the one hand, the people of Israel are committed to their God; but on the other hand, God is also commited to His people. It is against this background that divine forgiveness for the sins of the people should be understood.

The question of the purpose of the book of Kings has also been raised in connection with the story in 2 Kgs 17.24-41: does it reflect an anti-Samaritan polemic, or perhaps a criticism against the Israelite and Judean kings? (Walsh 2000; Becking 1997b, 2000; Jobling 2003).

The Text of the Book of Kings

The contribution of textual criticism to the study of the Bible is well known and recognized. In the case of the book of Kings, textual criticism is of special importance, both for the reconstruction of the text and chronology of the book, and for the solution of various hermeneutical problems. A systematic comparison of the different variants is found in Mulder's commentary (1998).

In his book, Person (1997) deals with parallel narratives in Kings, Isaiah and Jeremiah, comparing them with the text in the Septuagint in an attempt to reconstruct the earliest text of the narratives 2 Kings 18–20 // Isaiah 36–39; 2 Kings 25 // Jeremiah 52.

Below is a list the different studies made on the various witnesses of the biblical text of Kings:

- Qumran: Trebolle-Barrera (1995).
- Septuagint: Willis (1991); B.A. Taylor (1993); Talshir (1993, 2000, 2001); Fernández Marcos (1994, 1995); Galil (1997); Shaw (1997); Schenker (2000).
- Josephus: Spottorno (1995); Begg (1993; 2000).
- Peshitta: Williams (2001).

The Date of Composition of the Book of Kings

Many scholars agree that the earliest date for the composition of the book of Kings is the beginning of the sixth century BCE, since the last event referred to is the release of Jehoachin from imprisonment in 562 BCE (2 Kgs 25.27-30). Scholars generally assume that the book of Kings had been compiled by 539 BCE. Within these chronological boundaries,

attempts have been made to reconstruct the historical events that led to the book's formation, but scholarly consensus has not been reached on all issues (for example, the question of whether the Judean Exile took place in 587 or 586 BCE has not been clearly resolved). The ascription of dates is not easy, since, in addition to the descriptions of wars, the book is replete with miraculous events (a third of the book!). Futhermore, Solomon's reign occupies a disproportionate number of chapters (11 of the 47 chapters), within the book of Kings. Scholars generally assume that the book of Kings had been compiled during the first temple period—probably between the time of Hezekiah and Josiah, and the beginning of the Babylonian exile (between the eighth and the sixth centuries BCE) (for a summary and discussion see Van Keulen 1996: 3-52; Eynikel 1996: 7-31; Na'aman 1999; 2002).

Linville (1998) challenges the accepted views regarding the time of composition of the book of Kings, suggesting alternatively that one should study the book within the framework of the Persian era. He claims that the material is not historical, but rather paradigmatic. The narratives are written for the purpose of defining an Israelite identity in exile. The exile did not destroy the nation's identity, but rather rebuilt it. Linville argues that the author of Kings uses the term 'Israel' as referring both to the Northern and Southern Kingdoms in order to present the ideal of a unified nation under one God and one temple. The story of Josiah is to be understood as a paradigm of the political and religious model of a 'king/priest' in the Persian era.

Person (2002) also follows this late dating. Person contends that the Deuteronomic History demonstrates support for Zerubbabel, and opposition to a rebellion against Persia.

The Book of Kings and History

The history of Israel and Judah in the monarchic age is discussed, in general, in chapters of books dealing with Israelite history (Ahlström 1993; Coogan 1998; Knoppers 1999; Shanks 1999; Boshoff 2000; Perdue 2001; Barton 2002).

A number of scholars have discussed the question of whether or not the book of Kings in particular and the Deuteronomistic History in general could be treated as a historical source (V.P. Long 1994, 1999; Brettler 1995; Grabbe 1997, 2000; Knoppers and McConville 2000). Does the religious orientation of the book of Kings make it useless as a historiographi-

cal source? Na'aman (2002) claims that since the Deuteronomist uses ancient sources and treats them with respect, the Deuteronomist can be treated as a historian. In his opinion, the Deuteronomist was responsible for the construction of a historical national consciousness in the first temple period.

Mandell and Freedman (1993), and more recently Wesselius (2002), compared the 'Primary History' (Genesis–Kings) as a whole to the work of Herodotus.

The Historical Validity of the Book of Kings

Recently, there has been a lively debate as to the reliability of biblical narratives. This question is especially relevant to the book of Kings, which spans 400 years of Israelite history, from the end of the reign of King David to the release of Jehoachin from his imprisonment in Babylon. We shall focus here on studies that have direct connection to the monarchic age.

In 1997, Handy edited a book entitled *The Age of Solomon*, which examines the historical value of the description of King Solomon's age in the book of Kings. Among the studies that deal with this subject are Gelinas (1995); Knoppers (1997); Van Seters (1997); Ash (1995; 1999); Blakely (2002); and Silberman (2003).

Many scholars do not accept the historical validity of Hezekiah's reform, due to the existence of Deuteronomistic phraseology in the description of that reform (Na'aman 1995a; Swanson 2002). Fried (2002) points out that there are no archaeological findings confirming the historical reliability of Hezekiah's and Josiah's reforms. In her opinion, these stories were composed in the second temple period as a warning for Zerubbabel (see further Handy 1995; Niehr 1995; Uehlinger 1995; Van den Berg 2001).

Issue 8 of *Biblical Interpretation* (2000) is devoted to this subject; its titles begin with the question that historians usually do not ask: 'What if…?' These articles were reprinted in a book, edited by Exum (2000). Other studies are: Grabbe (1997; 2000); V.P. Long (1999); Sprinkle (1999); Finkelstein and Silberman (2000); Provan (2000); Dever (2000, 2001a; 2001b); Kitchen (2002); Zevit (2002); Oded (2003).

The Chronology of the Book of Kings

One of the most complex questions in the research devoted to the book of Kings is the chronology of the monarchic period. In the last 30 years,

considerable effort has been expended in the attempt to reconstruct chronologically the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah. Scholars use biblical and post-biblical sources, translations and ancient Near Eastern documents. The final results vary, depending on the relative importance ascribed by each scholar to the Masoretic text and to the Septuagint.

The classic textbook for Old Testament chronology is Thiele's (rev. edn 1983). In his recent article 'Chronology, Hebrew Bible' (1992), in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Cogan concisely summarizes the chronological problems in the book of Kings, and explains the different approaches adopted by scholars. The principal issues underlying research in biblical chronology are: co-regencies; two different New Year start dates (Nisan and Tishri); accession and non-accession methods of calculating the length of reigns; and the inclusion (sometimes) of co-regency years in the total reigns.

There are contradictions between the Masoretic text and that of the Septuagint. Some scholars believe that the contradictions between dates can be resolved by assuming two calendars: postdating and antedating. These scholars reject the Septuagint and base their conclusions on the Masoretic text. Larsson (2002) claims that the Masoretic text should be accepted, but without the two-calendar assumption. He opposes emendations of the text, since any emendation creates new chronological problems. Additional studies: Hughes (1990); Na'aman (1990); Barnes (1991); McFall (1991, 1992); Galil (1996; 1997); Younger (1999); Goldberg (1999); Hayes (2001); Hooker (2001); Tetley (2002; 2004); Becking (2003); Kelle (2003).

The Contribution of Inscriptions to the Understanding of the Historical Background to the Book of Kings

Na'aman (1999) has written an important survey of the contribution of external inscriptions to the understanding of the historical background of the book of Kings. He points out that 'The history of the monarchical period until the early-eighth century BCE should be studied mainly on the basis of archaeological evidence and extra-biblical sources' (1999: 4). In his conclusion, he states: 'it is not possible to reconstruct the history of Israel in the late-tenth-ninth centuries on the basis of the biblical text alone' (1999: 16). However, this does not mean that the Bible and the inscriptions do not contradict each other. In that case, the scholar should decide which source contains the most reliable description (Na'aman 1997c, 1998a, 1998c; Van der Kooij 2000).

Among recent collections of inscriptions and documents from the ancient Near East, we may mention Ahituv (1992), Avigad and Saas (1997),

Deutsch (1999), and Hallo and Younger (1997–2002). We will present the main studies on inscriptions and documents relevant to the reconstruction of the history of the monarchical period:

- The Mesha inscription: Dearman (1989); P.D. Stern (1992); Na'aman (1997a); Sprinkle (1999); Emerton (2002).
- Shishak/Shoshenaq campaign: Na'aman (1998c); Clancy (1999); Schipper (1999); Kitchen (2001); Finkelstein (2002).
- The Tel Dan inscription: Ehrlich (2001) and Athas (2003). Additional references are mentioned in their comprehensive bibliography.
- Assyrian inscriptions: Na'aman (1990, 1993, 1995c, 1998a, 2000a); Hayes and Kuan (1991); Becking (1992); Kuan (1995); Younger (1998, 1999, 2002); Galil (2001a, 2002); Grabbe (2003).
- The Jehoash inscription: Cross (2003); Knauf (2003); Eph'al (2003a).
- Other related studies will be mentioned below in the next sections.

Archaeology and the Book of Kings

Surveys of the current situation in archaeological research with regard to the book of Kings may be found in introductions, encyclopedias, collections of articles and professional journals (Mazar 1990; Ben-Tor 1992; E. Stern 1993, 2001; Levy 1995; Silberman and Small 1997; Dever 2000, 2001a; Ofer 2001).

The period under discussion (1000–586 BCE) is termed Iron IB and Iron II by archaeologists. Finkelstein (1996; 1999a) suggests a 'low chronology' for this period. In his opinion, all the archaeological findings previously attributed to the tenth century BCE (the United Monarchy) should belong to the ninth century (the age of Omri and Ahab). One of the reasons for this suggestion is the lack of archaeological layers attributable to the ninth century BCE (see also Knauf 2002). This approach is rejected by Mazar (1997); Zarzeki-Peleg (1997); Ben-Tor (2000); and Bunimovitz and Faust (2001). In their opinion, the Iron Age begins in the twelfth century BCE, whereas Iron Age II commences in the tenth century BCE. The absence of findings from the ninth century BCE can be ascribed to the economic and political stability in this period, which left no destruction strata to be found.

Scholars are divided on the question of our ability to integrate the biblical sources with the archaeological findings. In his survey of the king-

doms of Israel and Judah, Holladay (1995: 369) states: 'I have tried to develop the analysis—and some synthesis—solely on the basis of the archaeology itself'. In contrast, King and Stager (2001) work to create a dialogue between archaeological remains and biblical texts (see further Dever 2001b).

Many biblical sites related to Iron Age II (and usually mentioned in the book of Kings) have been excavated and discussed: Jerusalem (Ariel *et al*. 2000; Ahituv and Mazar 2000; Vaughn and Killebrew 2003; Thompson 2003); Meggido (Ussishkin 1997; Zarzeki-Peleg 1997; Halpern 2000; Finkelstein, Ussishkin and Halpern 2000); Hazor (Ben-Tor and Ben-Ami 1998; Finkelstein 1999a); Gezer (Dever 1998); Jezreel (Zimhoni 1997; Oredsson 1998); Beth Shemesh (Bunimovitz and Lederman 1997, 2003); Lachish (Ussishkin 1996; Barkay 1996); Beth Shean (Mazar 2001); Tel Rehov (Mazar 1999; Mazar and Camp 2000); Mizpah—Tell en-Nasbeh (Zorn 2003); Samaria (Tappy 1992, 2001; Zertal 2001, 2003).

Finkelstein (1994) stresses the contradiction between the biblical accounts of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18–20) and Manasseh (2 Kgs 21) and the archaeological finds. According to the book of Kings, there was no king as good as Hezakiah (2 Kgs 18.5-6), so much so that 'the LORD was with him and he prospered' (v. 7). Manasseh, on the other hand, is presented as the worst of all kings (2 Kgs 21.10-16), causing Judah to suffer under YHWH's wrath until 'the ears of all who hear of it will tingle' (v. 12). The archaeological discoveries show just the opposite: they teach us that Hezakiah's policy left Judah devastated, while there was an economic and political recovery in Manasseh's days. A similar view, concerning Ahaz and Hezekiah, is held by Na'aman (1994).

Other studies on the findings from the monarchic age are listed below according to the periods described in the book of Kings. Most of them analyse both the biblical texts and the archaeological finds:

- The age of Solomon: Handy (1997); Halpern (2000); Niemann (2000); Dever (2001a); Knauf (2002); Blakely (2002); Silberman (2003).
- The Assyrian Exile of the northern kingdom: Na'aman (1990, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000a); Becking (1992, 2002); Younger (1998, 1999, 2002; 2003); Galil (2001a); E. Stern (2001); Tetley (2002).
- The kingship of Hezekiah: Sennacherib's campaign to Judah: Bates (1999); Gallagher (1999); Hess (1999); Shea (1999); Vaughn (1999); Cogan (2001a); Blakely and Hardin (2002);

Grabbe (2003); The Siloam tunnel: Rogerson and Davies (1996); Norin (1998); Faust (2000a); Knauf (2001); Reich and Shukron (2002); Hezekiah's inscription ('Belonging to Hezekiah'): Cross (1999); Lubetski (2001).

- The days of Manasseh: Finkelstein (1994); Gane (1997).
- The Babylonian Exile: Oded (1995, 2000); Barstad (1996); Smith-Christopher (1997); Stern (2000, 2001); Lipschits and Blenkinsopp (2003); Faust (2003).

Cult and Religion in the Book of Kings

While the book of Kings includes a detailed description of the temple built by Solomon and the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah, it also includes many descriptions of idol worship connected with the worship of Baal, the cult of Asherah, and other religious practices (Halpern 1993).

A historical survey on the subject of ancient Israelite religion is found in Albertz's monumental work (1992, 1994). The reader may also consult the survey article of Gnuse (1999), the collection of articles edited by Shanks and Meinhardt (1997) and Gittlen (2001), and the introduction to the second edition of M.S. Smith's book (2003).

Solomon's temple and its architecture, together with parallel descriptions from the ancient Near East, have been discussed by Hurowitz (1992, 1994, 1995, 1998), Bloch-Smith (1994), Zwickel (1999) and Hertzog (2000). Since there are no remains of this temple, scholars attempt a reconstruction on the basis of excavations of other temples, such as 'Ain Dara (Monson 1999; 2000), Arad (Herzog 2001) and Ekron (Dothan 2002).

According to the book of Kings, one of the consequences of the split between Israel and Judah was that the tribes of Israel worshiped Jeroboam's calves at Bethel and Dan, while in Judah the people continued to worship God in Jerusalem. The studies of Toews (1993) and Knoppers (1995a) treat the question of whether this mode of worship was in line with ancient religious traditions.

Hezekiah's and Josiah's reforms are examined from religious, historical and archaeological points of view (Na'aman 1991, 1995b; Lowery 1991; Laato 1992; Dever 1994; Niehr 1995; Rainey 1994; Handy 1995; Borowski 1995; McCarter 1997; Arneth 2001; Sweeney 2001; Barrick 2002; Fried 2002).

The question of whether Israelite religion in the monarchic age was influenced by foreign factors has been treated by a few scholars. Cogan

(1993) examines the influence of the Assyrian religion on Judah, with especial reference to the period of Ahaz. In his opinion, the appearance of the Assyrian cult in Judah (which was an Assyrian vassal for about 100 years) was not the result of the use of force by the Assyrians, but a choice made by the elite who chose to adopt the contemporary Aramean-Assyrian culture. The book of Kings includes criticism of the worship of the gods of Canaan and of Aram by Davidic kings, but there is no criticism of the adoption of the Imperial Assyrian cult. This issue is also treated by Oded (1993); Borowski (1995); Smelik (1997); Arneth (2001); Swanson (2002).

Recent studies distinguish between popular and official religion. Among the questions discussed: can the book of Kings teach us whether the Israelite religion was monotheistic or polytheistic? Did most Israelites worship idols or serve God? (Ackerman 1992; Becking 1997a; Berlinerblau 1999; Becking *et al*. 2001; Oeming and Schmid 2003).

Scholars discovered that the site at Kuntillet Ajrud in Sinai was active between the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, and the site is therefore important for the study of biblical worship in the monarchical period. Considerable attention has been paid to the inscription: 'To Yahweh and his Asherah' (Binger 1997; Hadely 2000).

Most scholars assume that the Bible portrays the official religion. Berlinerblau (1999) doubts this assumption. If the Bible presents the official cult, why is the monarchy treated so negatively? He argues that the Bible presents a minority view. They are God's faithful flock, at a time when most of the nation is polytheistic and syncretic.

Among the cultic terms mentioned in the book of Kings that have been discussed by scholars we find: *bâmâh*, *môlek*, *ba'al*, *aðtôret*, *massçbôt*, *mizbehôt*, *qadeš-qadešim* (J.G. Taylor 1993; Wiggins 1993; Woods 1994; Emerton 1994, 1997; Barrick 1996, 2002; Bird 1997; Keel 1998; Day 2000; Zevit 2001; LaRocca-Pitts 2001).

Israel and its Neighbors in the Book of Kings

In the book of Kings we encounter a number of nations who relate to Israel through wars or otherwise. Different studies examine varied aspects of the relations: the ideological aspect; the economic aspect; the military and religious aspects. A general survey of this subject was written by Oded (2002), and may also be found in several chapters in the collection of essays edited by Sasson (1995). Na'aman (1993) and Elgavish (2000) have written on the military aspects of the relationship between the king-

doms of Israel and Judah. We list below the main studies written on Israel's neighbours in the monarchic age:

- Moab: Dearman (1989); Smelik (1992); P.D. Stern (1992); Na'aman (1997a); Emerton (2002); Hasel (2002).
- Aram: Axskjold (1998); Na'aman (1995b); Yamada (1995); Bietenhard (1998); Galil (2000); Kuan (2001); Dion (1997); Lipinski (2000); Shavitsky (2003).
- Assyria: Becking (1992); Na'aman (1993; 1995c; 2000a); Gane (1997); Gallagher (1999); Younger (1998, 1999, 2002, 2003); Bates (1999); Kelle (2002); Grabbe (2003).
- Egypt: Redford (1992); Currid (1997); Na'aman (1992, 1998a); Ash (1995); Schipper (1998, 1999); Galpaz-Feller (2000); Kitchen (2001); Hoffmeier (2003).
- Babylonia: Malamat (2001); Lipschits and Blenkinsopp (2003); Eph'al (2003b).
- Tyre and Sidon (the Phoenicians): Katzenstein (1997); Markoe (2000).

Society and Monarchy

Studies on the monarchic age also make use of social-scientific criticism of the Old Testament (Jamieson-Drake 1991; Matthews and Benjamin 1993; Chalcraft 1997; Carroll 2000). A general survey of the structure of the ancient Israelite society is found in the monographies of Reviv (1993), Bendor (1996), Perdue (1997) and McNutt (1999). Reviv (1993) and Perdue (1997) list the changes that occurred in Israelite society in the monarchical period, such as the dissolution of tribal frameworks as a consequence of centralized administration (1 Kgs 4.7-19), and the integration of traders and sailors into the royal administration (1 Kgs 9–10). The process of urbanization created local interests, which were in conflict with traditional tribal politics. Among the many changes between the monarchic and the pre-monarchic ages, scholars mention economic changes, changes in the pattern of settlement, religion, law, and administration. Reviv (1993) divides early Israelite society into three classes: higher class, middle class and lower class. In the higher class were included *sar ha-ir* ('governor of the city') and *ašer al ha-bayit* ('minister of the royal house') and *am ha-arets* ('people of the land'). The introduction of a monarchy created social gaps between the rich and the poor. The stories of Elisha reflect the poverty in which the people of ancient Israel lived (2 Kgs 4.1-7, 38-41).

Bendor (1996) treats the basic terms describing the structure of Israelite society in a thorough manner. McNutt (1999) provides a diachronic description of the Israelite society in biblical times.

Schulte (1995) sees the monarchy's favoritism toward the elite as the reason for this situation. According to Schulte, the fall of the Omrides (as described in 2 Kgs 9–10) was due to the opposition of the people, who could stand neither the luxury of the royal court, nor the foreign practices that had been introduced into their land. This situation was not solved by Jehu's revolt, since he cared only for his personal interest, just as had the Omrides.

The Royal Administration of Israel and Judah

Fox (2000) reconstructs the history and structure of the royal administration in Israel and Judah. She uses biblical, epigraphic, and ancient Near Eastern sources, and concludes that the introduction of certain court positions in Israel and Judah reflected local needs, rather than foreign influences. Among the terms she analyses: *mazkir* (herald), *sofer* (scribe), *asher al ha-bayit* (minister of the royal house), *yo'etz* (advisor to the king), *nitzavim* (prefects)*, ebed ha-melekh* (servant of the king). She also considers the status of the women of the court (*mâlkâ* [queen] and *gebîrâ* [queen mother]). Several scholars, mostly women, examine the status of the *gebîrâ* in ancient Israel and its relation to the 'queen-mother' (Ben-Barak 1991; Ackerman 1993; Spanier 1998; C. Smith 1998; Avishur and Heltzer 2000; Bowen 2001; Solvang 2003).

C. Smith (1998) reconsiders the question of Queenship in Israel. The title *mâlkâ* (queen) appears only in 1 Kings 10 with regard to the Queen of Sheba, and the verb *mlk* is used only with regard to Athaliah. She argues that Bathsheba, Athaliah and Jezebel enjoyed a high and powerful status as queens, and their queenship was not merely a formal title, as it may seem (cf. Solvang 2003).

Differences Between Israel and Judah

Scholars have pointed out numerous differences between Israel and Judah. Many believe that the differences were not restricted to territory and capital cities, but also included burial customs (Bloch-Smith 1992; Barkay 2003), weights and measures and economic policy (Kletter 1998; Fox 2000), and royal administration (Fox 2000; Avishur and Heltzer 2000).

Scholars view the kingdom of Israel as more economically developed than Judah (Finkelstein 1999b). Broshi and Finkelstein (1992; cf. Finkel-

stein 1994) estimate that the population of Israel and Judah was about 460,000; 350,000 of them were in Israel, and 110,000 in Judah. The growth of the population of Judah in the eighth century BCE was due to two main factors: the immigration of Israelites who came to Judah after the Assyrian Exile in 721 BCE; and Sennacherib's devastation of the Shephelah cities in 701 BCE (see further Na'aman 1993; Faust 1999, 2000b; Ofer 2001; Zertal 2001; Blakely and Hardin 2002; Reich 2003).

Another difference discovered by scholars is the different dialects of Hebrew spoken in the kingdoms. Rendsburg (2002) is the most well-known advocate of this opinion. He analyses those sections of the book of Kings devoted to the northern kingdom of Israel, including the material concerning the prophets Elijah and Elisha, aiming to present the lexical and grammatical features that distinguish Israelian Hebrew (the dialect of the north) from Judahite Hebrew (the dialect of the south = standard biblical Hebrew).

Most of the material may be found, in the opinion of Schniedewind and Sivan (1997), in 1 Kings 17; 1 Kings 20; and 2 Kgs 23.4-6. They deal with earlier articles by Rendsburg on the subject, and claim that he 'exaggerates the evidence for Northern Hebrew' (1997: 335; cf. Young 1995). In their opinion, there is a need to establish accepted criteria for the identification of 'Northernisms', for example: syntax, morphology, Aramaic influence, phonology, and special verbal forms.

The Literary Approach to the Book of Kings

Another approach to biblical research in general and the book of Kings in particular is the literary approach. This approach considers the narrative in its final form. Scholars of this school of criticism are interested in literary features such as plot, structure, artistic devices, stylistic analysis, characterization, forms and genre, audience, message, and function and purpose (Watson and Hauser 1994).

Research in this field generally concentrates exclusively on two sections in the book of Kings, which constitute together more than half of the book: the stories of Solomon (1 Kgs 1–11), and the stories of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13). These two units will be dealt with thoroughly in the second part of this article.

Watson and Hauser (1994) have edited an annotated bibliography entitled *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, which includes works published up until 1993. These works treat the books of the Bible from a literary point of view; pages 59-61 are devoted to the book of Kings. Walsh and

Cotter (1996) and Cohn (2000) present a coherent close reading of the book of Kings, focusing on its narrative strategies and its compositional characteristics. Two studies (Lasine 1992; Granowski 1992) emphasize the significance of using intertextuality as a tool for revealing the intention of the author of Kings in portraying Jeroboam and Jehoiachin.

Puns upon names in the book of Kings are discussed by Garsiel (1991) and Frisch (1999). Weisman (1998) studies the narratives in the Bible, including the book of Kings, where he discovers 'political satire'. From the book of Kings he analyses the war between Hadad and Ahab in 1 Kings 20; Sennacherib's campaign in 2 Kings 18–19; and the parable of Joash in 2 Kgs 14.8-10.

The literary approach is also to be found in the collections of articles edited by Brenner (1994, 2000), focusing on feministic readings of the book of Kings. Additional literary studies written on specific narratives in Kings are: Hauser and Gregory (1990); Dutcher-Walls (1996); Rudman (2000); Hauser (2002).

Conclusions

Recent research on the book of Kings and its larger context has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the book, its themes, purpose and milieu. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done, especially on those kings who did not arouse much scholarly interest, such as Amaziah, Jotham, and Uzziah from Judah, and most of the Israelite kings. Furthermore, it seems that more and more scholars recognize that too much emphasis has been laid upon the diachronic aspects regarding the composition and redaction of the book of Kings, and less on the synchronic aspects focusing on the book in its extant form. This imbalance is beginning to be redressed as new scholarship continues to find new ways to approach the book of Kings. In Part 2 of this study, we shall examine recent scholarship dealing with specific literary units of the book of Kings.

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