The Book of Kings in Recent Research (Part II)

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ABSTRACT

In the first part of my article (*CBR* 4.1 [2005]), I surveyed the research conducted on various, diverse aspects of the book of Kings, starting in the early 1990s and until 2004. In this article, I will focus on research dealing with the characters appearing in the book of Kings, using this classification: kings, beginning with David; prophets, especially Elijah and Elisha; and women, including Jezebel, the widow of Zarephath, and Shunammite woman. The different studies represent current trends in Bible research today: rejection of the historical reliability of the narratives, on the one hand, and, on the other, its acceptance; male voices and female voices; and diachronic methods and synchronic methods. In addition, many scholars call for multi-disciplinary methodologies that combine, for example, literary and sociological methods.

Keywords: Anonymous women, Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic/Deuteronomist, Elijah, Elisha, King, prophecy/prophesy/prophet, Solomon.

The Kings in the Book of Kings

The Solomon Narratives (1 Kings 1–11)

The structure and boundaries of the Solomon narratives. The question of the boundaries of the Solomon narratives was widely explored in the early 1990s, and continues to be discussed today. Scholars differ as to whether 1 Kings 1–2 is to be viewed as the conclusion of the 'Succession Narratives' commenced in 2 Samuel 9, or whether it is to be viewed as part of the Solomon narratives. The proposal to view the so-called Succession Narrative (2 Sam. 9–20 and 1 Kgs 1–2) as a unified literary source is attributed to Rost (1982; German original: 1926). However, this sug-

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gestion was dismissed by a large number of scholars. Theoretically, the presence of David, Bathsheba, and Nathan in 1 Kings 1–2 can lead to the conclusion that this is a direct continuation of the narrative in the Book of Samuel. On the other hand, the depiction of these characters in 1 Kings 1–2 appears to be different from the depiction in the book of Samuel. Once scholars determined that the narratives about Solomon's kingship do not commence in 1 Kings 1, their beginning was assigned to 1 Kings 3. These matters were recently discussed by Seiler (1998), Stoebe (1999), De Pury and Römer (2000), and Wansbrough (2004).

Scholars also differ as to where the narratives end, and as to their internal structure and organizing principles. In this connection, it is recommended to consult the discussions of the following scholars: Brettler (1991); Frisch (1991a; 1991b); Parker (1988; 1991; 1992a; 1992b); Walsh (1993); Williams (1999); Särkiö (1996); Olley (2003).

In the course of these discussions, broader methodological issues arise, such as how to determine the structure and boundaries of biblical narratives. Clearly, these issues are tied directly to each scholar's position regarding the Solomonic narratives' content and theme.

Evaluation of the period of Solomon's kingship in the book of Kings. Scholars also differ over how to evaluate the character and period of Solomon in the book of Kings. The prevalent view is that chs 3–10 (or 1–10) describe the days of Solomon's kingdom as a time of calm, peace, and economic and political prosperity; whereas chapter 11, which describes Solomon's sins, takes a different tone, and proceeds to criticize him (Parker 1988; 1991; 1992a; 1992b; Frisch 1991a; 1991b; Knoppers 1996).

Viviano (1997) accepts this view. In her opinion, this description was intended to show that the people of Israel could have continued their period of glory if only Solomon had continued to obey God. She demonstrates this by comparing the description of Solomon with the description of the days of Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Saul, and David.

Lemaire (1995) emphasizes the importance of the motif of wisdom in the Solomon narratives in 1 Kings 3–11 as part of the shaping of Solomon's image as an ideal king. This motif finds expression in the 19 occurrences of the root of the Hebrew word for wisdom, *hkm*. The theme of wisdom appears in: the narrative of the Dream at Gibeon and in the judgment of Solomon regarding the two harlots (1 Kgs 3); the trade relations that Solomon established with the peoples of the region; his world renown;

the proverbs and songs he wrote; the multiple building projects attributed to him; and in his political marriages. Lemaire claims that this method of shaping Solomon's image is pre-Deuteronomistic. Walchi (1999) also concludes that the descriptions of Solomon's wisdom were written earlier, comparing them to parallel descriptions from the ancient Near East. He distinguishes between the earlier and later layers in 1 Kings 1–11, using the source-critical method.

Jobling (1997) and Glatt-Gilad (1997) warn against interpreting the descriptions of forced labour as criticism of Solomon. Jobling writes that 'we read about the corvée, or about unlimited accumulation of wealth, with distaste' (1997: 490). This kind of reading modernizes the text, since it overlooks the historical circumstances of Solomon's times.

Several scholars oppose this view, claiming that the critical description of Solomon is dispersed among other narratives, in addition to 1 Kings 11 (Newing 1994; Sweeney 1995; Walsh 1995; Särkiö 2000; Barrick 2001a).

Walsh (1995) argues that 1 Kings 1–5 contains criticism of Solomon's kingdom: Solomon adopted a policy of political liquidations (1 Kings 2), and imposed heavy levies on the people (1 Kgs 4–5).

Schafer-Lichtenberger (1995) applies Max Weber's sociological theory (Weber 1952) to the Solomon narratives. In her opinion, Solomon does not fit the model of the 'ideal type', and is not portrayed as the appropriate successor to David. This contrasts with Joshua, who is represented as the ideal successor to Moses.

Oblath (2000; cf. Särkiö 2000) argues that Solomon is being compared to Pharaoh, the oppressor of his people. Hays (2003) claims that, using the literary technique of irony, the book of Kings presents more criticism of Solomon than praise. Hayes concludes by saying that 'The subtle narrator of 1–2 Kings has not come to praise Solomon but to bury him' (2003: 174). Provan (1999) argues that in the Solomon narratives, Solomon is portrayed as someone who forgets that wisdom is only useful when accompanied by the fear of God.

Frisch (1999) focuses on the 'midrashic name derivations' of Solomon, arguing that they contribute to the evaluation of his character in Kings: šalom ('peace', 1 Kgs 4.24); šelamim ('peace offerings', 1 Kgs 3.15); vatišlam ('the work was finished', 1 Kgs 7.51); yerušalayim ('Jerusalem', 1 Kgs 8.1); lev šalem ('heart wholly true', 1 Kgs 8.61).

Torijano (2002) examines the presentations of King Solomon as a magician and astrologer, starting from the Hebrew Bible, and tracing them through the second century CE. Berger (1997) investigates the stance

toward Solomon's wisdom among Jewish mediaeval commentators. One of the most intriguing questions he deals with is how the apparent contradiction between Solomon's wisdom and his transgressions can be reconciled.

Solomon's rise to the throne (1 Kings 1–2). The book of Kings, as it now stands, presents very dramatic, telenovela or soap opera-style material for scholars. Vermeylen (2000) offers a conspiracy theory, according to which David may have been murdered and his will fabricated, so that Solomon could rule in his stead. The rivalry between Solomon and Adonijah is dealt with at length by Ishida (1999).

One of the intriguing characters in the opening narratives of Kings, as well as in Samuel, is Joab. Bietenhard (1998) analyses the stories of Joab sociohistorically, synchronically, literarily, and also diachronically. She examines Joab's role, responsibilities, and characterization, as well as the levels of redaction in the Joab stories. Other studies of Joab have been undertaken by Wesselius (1990); Nicol (1993); Schley (1993); Bodner (2002).

Solomon's dream at Gibeon and the judgment of Solomon. Carr (1991) compares the narrative of Solomon's dream at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3) with parallel passages from the ancient Near East. He also addresses the question of the relationship between the narrative in the book of Kings and the parallel passage in the book of Chronicles, and how original and later layers can be distinguished. In addition, he analyses the retelling of this story in other biblical and extra-biblical sources.

Husser (1999), Walchi (1999) and Fidler (2005) all deal with Solomon's dream within the broader framework of dreams in the Bible and in the ancient Near East. One of the questions arising from this dream is whether it should be defined as dream incubation. Another issue is the narrative's aim.

Van Wolde (1995), Rendsburg (1998) and Garsiel (2002) examine the narrative on Solomon's judgment in the case of the two prostitutes. According to these scholars, the main question is the identity of the real mother in the narrative. The two women in the narrative are anonymous, and it is difficult to know to whom Solomon gives the baby in the end—to the plaintiff or to the accused? Moreover, it is difficult to know the basis of Solomon's judgment.

Van Wolde writes that 'the readers do not yet know whether the first or the second woman is this mother, and they never will' (1995: 638). In

contrast, Rendsburg's conclusion is more resolved: 'Woman B…is the innocent woman and the mother of the living child. Woman A is the guilty party' (1998: 541). Walsh (1995: 479) shares this conclusion.

Garsiel (2002) reaches the opposite conclusion, and claims that the plaintiff is the woman telling the truth (Woman A in the Rendsburg sigla). Some indications of this are that the plaintiff speaks first, she talks more at length, and her way of talking is more polite.

Lasine (1991) argues that the world-upside-down motif, expressing reversal of fate, finds expression in the Solomon narratives. The aim is to show that God is the one behind the events, and it is he who sets them in motion. Auld (1993) has also studied this matter, comparing the versions of the story of Solomon's dream at Gibeon in 1 Kings 3 and in 2 Chronicles 1. Auld concludes that the book of Chronicles does not depend on Samuel-Kings, but Samuel-Kings, and Chronicles, depend on a shared, third source.

Solomon's preparations for the building of the temple. A number of studies discuss the background to the negotiations between Solomon and Hiram, King of Tyre, in preparation for the building of the temple (Sand 2002; M.S. Moore 2004b), and compare them with their parallels from the ancient Near East. These studies also investigate the interests of both Solomon and Hiram in establishing political relationships, as well as the nature of the treaties. M.S. Moore deals specifically with the technical words denoting covenant-making in 1 Kings 5: 'Peace', 'brother', 'love', *bĕrît* ('to make a desire'). These parallels may reinforce the approach that views this story as historically reliable. However, Särkiö (1994: 74-76, 88-92) assigns most of this story to the Deuteronomistic redaction.

Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 8). Solomon's prayer is usually considered in conjunction with the question of the importance of the temple and the Davidic kingdom (Knoppers 1995). Scholars disagree regarding the date of the prayer. Those scholars advocating an early date argue that there is no justification in emphasizing the centrality of the temple if the subject under discussion is the period after the destruction of the temple, and the Exile (O'Kennedy 1996; 2000). Talstra (1993) analyses the prayer using a combination of diachronic and synchronic methods, and conducts an itemized linguistic analysis of special terms appearing in the prayer. McConville (1992) finds a message of hope for the exiles in the seventh unit of Solomon's prayer (vv. 46-53). Hoppe (2001) claims that the main

aim of Solomon's prayer is to stress the notion that one can lead a religious life even without the temple. The Deuteronomist expresses this by representing the temple not as a place of sacrifice but, rather, as a place of prayer. Hints of criticism against Solomon's kingship can also be found in the prayer. When Solomon says 'for there is no man who does not sin' (1 Kgs 8.46), Linville (1998: 136) has rightly noted that Solomon's statement casts a shadow on Solomon himself. Solomon's prayer is also a source of dispute regarding the so-called 'Name Theology'. Does 'the Name of the Lord' mean the physical presence of God in his temple in Jerusalem; or, does it mean only that his name rests on the temple? Does he dwell in heaven or on earth? Richter (2002) challenges the perception that 'Name Theology' in biblical thought evolved from immanence to transcendence. Instead, she argues that this idiom is borrowed from cuneiform sources corresponding to the Akkadian *šuma šakānu*, with the meaning 'to place the (written) name (on a monument)'. According to this interpretation, God does not physically reside in the temple. Instead, the temple is primarily and essentially not a place of divine presence, but a monument owned by YHWH, commemorating to perpetuity the Divine Warrior King's victory over his and Israel's enemies. This permits him to claim dominion over the newly conquered land where it stands, and to demand the allegiance of his people, whom he has freed from subjugation. Van Seters (2004) argues that *l*^{e}*šakkēn š*^{e}*mô šām* ('cause His Name to dwell there') refers to either the Deuteronomic Code, or to the Decalogue, both of which bear the deity's (inscribed) name. The presence of such texts vindicates the centralization of worship in Jerusalem as the 'place' in which such texts were deposited. The temple of Solomon is said to have been built for the ark that contained the Decalogue.

Solomon's demise (1 Kings 11). 1 Kings 11 blames King Solomon for committing various sins. Scholars usually connect Solomon's sins with the law of the king in Deut. 17.14-20 (Frisch 1991b; Parker 1992a; Sweeney 1995; Hays 2003: 156-57). In contrast, Knoppers (2001) claims that 'wives, wealth, and horses are not pivotal concerns in the Deuteronomistic evaluations of monarchs' (2001: 409). Solomon is mainly blamed for building high places for the gods of his foreign wives, and for worshipping these gods (2001: 410; cf. Knoppers 1994, 1996). To be sure, mixed marriages were, in particular, regarded as the arbiters of national fate in Second Temple sources; yet, the Deuteronomistic editors may be viewed as the ones who paved the way for this development.

Edelman (1995) doubts the historical validity of the stories of Hadad and Rezon, the 'Satans' bothering Solomon in 1 Kgs 11.14-25. In her view, these stories were invented by the Deuteronomist in order to show that Solomon was punished according to the oracle of doom delivered to him in 1 Kgs 11.11-13. To these two 'bad guys', the Deuteronomist adds a third—Jeroboam.

The Days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam

Frisch (2001) discusses the description, in the books of Kings and Chronicles, of Jeroboam's part in bringing about the division of the kingdom. In 1 Kings 11, Jeroboam is described positively by way of the analogy between the prophecy made to him by Ahijah the Shilonite, and Nathan's prophecy (1 Kgs 11; 2 Sam. 7). Jeroboam's anointment as king is described as the fulfilment of Ahijah's prophecy. The narrator also produces parallels between Solomon's pursuit of Jeroboam, and Saul's pursuit of David. Solomon is parallel to Saul, while Jeroboam is parallel to David.

On the other hand, 2 Kgs 17.21 presents Jeroboam in a negative light: the Division of the Kingdom is not described as the result of Divine but, rather, of human action. In 2 Chronicles 13, Jeroboam is portrayed as someone who revolted against the House of David and himself brought on the Division.

Ash (1998) claims that this critical description of Jeroboam stems from the narrator's use of the 'ideology of the founder' genre, according to which a king whose kingdom fails is represented as a 'wicked' king. This is also the situation with Saul and Baasha. In Ash's opinion, this is within the scope of literary shaping alone, and has no historical basis.

Oblath (2000) argues that the biblical account of the Exodus reflects the times of Solomon and Rehoboam. It was, however, written as a polemic against Solomon and Rehoboam. He finds parallels between Moses and Pharaoh, on the one hand, and Jeroboam, Solomon and Rehoboam, on the other. According to Oblath (2000: 35-36), the king's corvée in Exod. 1.11 parallels Solomon and the slavery he imposes on Israel in 1 Kgs 5.15, 28. When speaking of Pharaoh, Oblath argues, the book of Exodus alludes to Solomon.

Weisman (1998) analyses the children's appeal to Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12.1-18) from a literary aspect, finding elements of satire in the narrative. He argues (1998: 108) that the word *kotoni* in 1 Kgs 12.10 means 'my little part' rather than 'my little finger' (NSRV). The use of this particular phallic image is meant to convey contempt against the people of Israel

who came to Shechem to make a covenant with Rehoboam, and to enthrone him over them. Weisman concludes that 'the narrator who employed this expression, which Rehoboam himself eschewed in his reply, used it as political satire aimed against the "children" who appear tough and violent in their words but prove weak and powerless in their deeds' (1998: 109). By accepting the 'children's' advice rather than their elders', Rehoboam is introduced as a foolish king.

Machinist (1995) deals with the meaning of the word *sibbâ* ('turning around'), appearing in 1 Kgs 12.15. He compares it with both ancient Near Eastern and Muslim sources, concluding that there was a 'common Near Eastern tradition for how to conceive of the vicissitudes of political rule in human history' (1995: 120).

The House of Ahab

Conroy (1996) points to the parallels between Ahab and Hiel from Bethel (1 Kgs 16.29-34). Both build, and both also lose their sons (Ahab's sons are Ahaziah and Jehoram). The narrative's reference to Bethel and Jericho hints at the Elijah and Elisha narratives in 2 Kings.

Holt (1995) suggests that in 1 Kings 18, as in other narratives on Ahab, there is a tendency to do away with Ahab's guilt and to impose it on Jezebel. The story blames both the Baal worshippers and Jezebel for the drought, while freeing Ahab from any responsibility.

In 1 Kgs 21.27-29, it is stated that Ahab has repented, and that his punishment is postponed. In contrast, according to 1 Kgs 22.38, Ahab is the one who is punished. Stipp (1995) uses the 'block model' hypothesis regarding the composition of the Deuteronomistic History to argue that 1 Kgs 22.1-38 was not present in the original text of Kings. Stipp assumes that there were two layers of redaction in the composition of the Deuteronomistic History: the first edition (Dtr1) is pre-exilic and was composed in Josiah's days; while the second edition (Dtr2) is post-exilic (see also Nelson 2005: 333).

Walsh (1992) deals with the literary cohesion of 1 Kings 21. He argues that the motifs of eating and drinking symbolize life and death.

Hauser (2002) presents the use of ambivalence in 1 Kings 22 as a literary technique. According to Hauser, 'Ambivalence results when the writer purposely has two or more significantly different options which vie with one another during a portion of the narrative' (2002: 144). The reader doesn't know for sure whether the Lord is with Ahab or against him. Will Ahab's repentance following the Naboth affair change God's

attitude toward him? To make things even more complicated, the narrator informs us that Ahab asks for the Lord's advice by means of the prophets. Is this the way evil kings act? Things are clarified only by his death in the battle against Aram. Thus, ambiguity strengthens the negative evaluation of Ahab as a disobedient king.

Amit (2001: 126-37, 138-47) claims that the aim of the Naboth narrative in 1 Kings 21 is to criticize Ahab for unjustifiably taking what belongs to one of his subjects. The Deuteronomist leads his readers to this conclusion by interweaving the Naboth story in the Elijah narratives.

Coggins (1991) focuses on Ahab's disguise during his battle with Aram (1 Kgs 22). His disguise illustrates his will to survive in spite of Micaiah's woe oracle in 1 Kgs 22.21-26. The wife of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14.1-4) and one of the prophets in 1 Kgs 20.35-43 are also described as disguising themselves. Other scholarly treatments of 1 Kings 22 are to be found in Hamilton (1994); Brenneman (2000); Dafni (2000); Bodner (2003).

Roberts (2000) argues that 'in the older sources Ahab appears in a light which is at least more ambiguous, if not more favorable' (p. 643). One such positive description of Ahab finds expression in 1 Kings 18.41, where a ceremony of covenant-renewal involving Elijah, Ahab and God is described. Thus, Ahab fulfils his role as king.

Weisman (1998) analyses the encounter between Ahab and Ben-Hadad, king of Aram (1 Kgs 20.1-21). Ahab employs a satiric parable in v. 11 by which he ridicules Ben-Hadad, thus demonstrating his calm: Ahab is not impressed by Ben-Hadad's threats.

The legal aspects of the affair of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kgs 21) are explored by Sarna (1997), Thiel (1999) and Friedmann (2002). Among the issues discussed: the rights of the king in Israel compared with those of the ancient Near East; and whether or not Ahab had the legal right to inherit Naboth's vineyard. White (1994) argues that the Naboth's story is modelled according to the scheme of the David-Bathsheba affair in 2 Samuel 11–12. In her opinion, the original story of Naboth is found in 2 Kgs 9.25-26.

Etz (1996) and Barrick (2001b) study the genealogy of Ahaziah and Jehoram, kings of Judah.

Jehu

How does the author of the book of Kings appraise the character of Jehu? Does he view him as a negative character, or as an ideal character? The question arises because, on the one hand, he eradicates the worship of

Baal; but, on the other hand, his methods are problematic. He attacks the sick Jehoram, deceives him, and causes much bloodshed.

Tomes (2000) argues that the complexity of the Jehu narrative stems from the fact that it is composed of several layers. In the older layer, Jehu is represented as someone fighting Baal, but in the later layer, his actions are represented as cruel.

M.S. Moore (2003) is of the opinion that the Jehu narrative must be read as a sophisticated parody. Its satire is aimed at the religious traditions of Israel's enemies.

Garcia-Treto (1990) argues that the narratives on Jehu's fight against Baal are more than narratives aimed merely at denouncing the Northern kingdom. In his opinion, the Jehu narratives must be read within the setting of the whole of the Deuteronomistic history. He argues that these narratives hint at the rise and fall of the house of David.

White, Schneider, and Gugler investigate the historical aspects of Jehu's kingship. White (1994; 1997) doubts the possibility that Jehu's coup against the house of Omri was related to a prophetic movement active in the ninth century BCE. In her opinion, this was primarily a military coup. She claims that Jehu only attacked the Baal worshipers because the Baal cult had not penetrated all strata of the population. Gugler (1996) studies the historical background of the Jehu coup, using biblical and archaeological sources. Schneider (1995) is of the opinion that Jehu was the son of Omri from another woman. This can explain the references to him as Omri's son in Assyrian inscriptions. His anointment as king, in fact, represents a succession struggle between him and the successors of his half-brother, Ahab. Dietrich (2001) claims that two traditions are interwoven in the Jehu narratives: a prophetic narrative, describing Jehu's activities in Samaria, and a historiographic source, in which Jehu's actions in the whole of Israel are described.

Barré (1988) offers a detailed form-critical analysis of 2 Kings 9–11, focusing on its process of redaction. According to him, 'the account was arranged in a way that would encourage a comparative reading of Jehu's and Jehoiadah's coups' (1988: 139).

Joash

Dutcher-Walls (1996) offers a thorough literary analysis of the Joash narrative. She points out the contrast between the non-legitimization of Athaliah, and the legitimization of Joash, on the strength of the latter being of the house of David. In her opinion, Joash is represented as an

ideal king. Analogies between the coronations of Solomon and Joash legitimize Joash as the Davidic king (1996: 77-82, 85, 93). This aim is furthered by comparisons drawn between Joash's and Josiah's religious reforms (1996: 94-95). Dutcher-Walls also examines the relationship between state and religion in the Joash narrative. It is worth noting that her monograph is the only detailed rhetorical study of Joash in recent years—most other recent studies focus on the Joash inscription (see Avioz 2005: 16-17; Na'aman 1998). Schulte (1997) considers Joash's sister, Jehosheba, to be a *qĕdēšâ* ('sacred prostitute'). In her view, this hypothesis may explain why Jehosheba hid her brother in the bedroom (2 Kgs 11.2), and how she could hide him for six years in the temple. B.O. Long (1996) argues that a better understanding of the Joash narrative would be gained by regarding it as focusing on the theme of protecting the temple from profanation. All the events in this story take place in the temple: Joash's hiding; Joash's coronation while under the protection of Jehoiadah the priest; the removal of the Baal from the temple; and the killing of Athaliah.

Ahaz

Most studies of Ahaz focus on the historical or religious aspects of his kingship. Very few, if any, analyse the literary aspect. Smelik (1998) compares the description of Ahaz in 2 Kings 16 with that in 1 Chronicles 28. The description in the book of Kings is ambivalent and more realistic. The criticism of Ahaz is only present in the redaction layer: in the original narrative, the author does not use prophetic orations to criticize Ahaz for his actions. This stands out when compared with the critical description of Solomon (1 Kings 11) and of Manasseh (2 Kings 21). In Chronicles, the Ahaz narrative is shaped negatively, leaving no doubt as to the chronicler's opinion about Ahaz's actions.

Hezekiah

Many scholars claim that the biblical description of the days of Hezekiah, representing his kingship as one of prosperity and thriving, does not fit in with the historical description, according to which harm was caused to Judah as a result of the Sennacherib campaign. Thus, the biblical description is viewed as one intended to create a narrative analogy between Hezekiah and Ahaz: Ahaz caused Judah's servitude to Assyria, while Hezekiah succeeded in releasing Judah from this servitude (Na'aman 1995).

Knoppers (1992) focuses on the 'incomparability fomulae', which praises those monarchs who please the Deuteronomist: Solomon (1 Kgs 3.13; 10.23); Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18.5); see Josiah (2 Kgs 23.25). Each of these kings is praised for different reasons: 'Solomon is lauded for unparalleled wisdom and wealth, Hezekiah for unparalleled trust, and Josiah for unparalleled reforms' (1992: 413). In his opinion, these formulae do not point to the redactional layers of the Deuteronomistic history but are, rather, remnants of the pre-exilic edition.

Olley (1999) and Rudman (2000) examine the literary aspect of 2 Kings 18–20. Olley views the Hebrew root *bth* ('trust', 'rely on'), as a keyword in the Hezekiah narratives. Rudman indicates that the Rabshakeh's speech in 2 Kgs 18.17—19.9 is 'full of prophetisms'. The Rabshakeh and his men 'stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Fuller's Field' (2 Kgs 18.17). That is the same place where Isaiah stood in Isa. 7.5 during the Syro-Ephraimite war! In this way, the Rabshakeh is presented as an 'anti-Isaiah'. The Rabshakeh even uses the messenger formula, 'thus said the Lord', in order to make it clear that the true God of Israel is Sennacherib. The Rabshakeh is also presented as a false prophet when he actually argues that he is divinely commissioned. He is challenging the God of Israel, and Hezekiah's response will determine the future of Judah.

Botha (2000) examines Hezekiah and Josiah, arguing that the author of the book of Kings described them positively because of their concern for God's honour. This theme appears in the speech of the Rabshakeh, when he speaks insultingly about God (2 Kgs 18). The reaction of Hezekiah and his men is recorded as appropriate and as welcomed: they tear their cloths. God's response to the Rabshakeh's insults, uttered through Isaiah, promises a harsh reaction against Assyria (2 Kgs 19.20-34).

Van der Kooij (2000) argues that the narrative in 2 Kings 18–19 is a literary unit in light of the motif of the withdrawal and return home of Sennacherib.

Manasseh

Scholars insist that the description of Manasseh as a wicked king is tendentious. A note of the length of his reign (55 years—longer than any other king of Israel or Judah) can demonstrate the Deuteronomist's selectivity in representing the days of Manasseh, for he only describes the negative aspects of his kingdom, providing a salient description of all types of idolatry. In actual fact, archeological research shows that his was a time of prosperity and thriving (Gutman 2001).

Scholars differ as to whether the author intended to make an analogy between Manasseh and Ahab (Schniedewind 1993) or, rather, between Manasseh and Jeroboam (Lasine 1993a). Both Ahab and Manasseh are associated with Baal and Asherah. Both persecute prophets and shed the blood of innocent people.

The research method employed by Van Keulen, who wrote a book (1996) on the Manasseh narratives, combines the diachronic and synchronic methods. He examines both the structure and style of the Manasseh narrative, as well as the ways in which it was created. He also examines its historical reliability and intention, compared with the book of Chronicles.

In Schmid's opinion (1997), the passages in 2 Kgs 21.3-16; 23.26-27; and 24.3-4 were written by 'Gola theologians'. Their aim was to blame Manasseh for the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, rather than the kings or the people. Similarly, Lasine (1993a: 182-83) writes that, by portraying Manasseh as a villain, the author helps his exilic audience to cope with their crisis of faith.

Halpern (1998) seeks to answer the question of why the Deuteronomist imputes the disaster of exile and destruction to Manasseh. His answer is: 'The exilic edition of Kings blames Manasseh for Josiah's death' (1998: 513).

The Days of Josiah

Sweeney (2001) points out Josiah's importance in Deuteronomistic literature and in the post-Exile period. Josiah had an ambitious programme for religious reform and national restoration. He removed pagan worship from different sites in Israel, centralized worship at the temple of Jerusalem, and attempted to reunite Israel and Judah as an independent monarchy under the rule of the royal house of David. Sweeney argues that early forms of the book of Deuteronomy, the so-called Deuteronomistic History, and much of the prophetic literature (Isaiah; Hosea; Amos; Micah; Jeremiah; Zephaniah; Nahum; cf. Habakkuk) were written or edited to support the description of King Josiah's reform, and to present him as the righteous Davidic monarch who would realize the divine promise of security for the land and people of Israel. Sweeney's book follows Laato (1992) in stressing the importance of Josiah in the Bible.

Hoppe (1998) examines the contradiction between Huldah's prophecy (2 Kgs 22.18-20) and the description of Josiah's death (2 Kgs 23.29-30). The latter presents a challenge for the Deuteronomist: in spite of the fact

that Josiah kept the Lord's commandments, he died in battle. The narrative's aim is to encourage the people to follow in his footsteps, even if the results of this path are unclear. The path of repentance is the only possible way, even though it promises nothing.

Delamarter (2004) discusses the accounts of the death of Josiah through various texts and translations. These include the two biblical texts (2 Kgs 23.29-30 and 2 Chron. 36.20-25), as well as texts from the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Septuagint, and Vulgate, and from early rabbinic writings. The evidence suggests that the later tradents may have been wrestling with the problem of evil that lies at the core of the biblical accounts of the death of Josiah. Laato (2003) concludes that, according to the Deuteronomist, Josiah died for the sins of his people.

The Last Kings of Judah

The essence of the discussion on the reign of the last four Kings of Judah (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah) focuses on historical questions discussed in the first part of this article (see, most recently, Lipschits 2005). Only the figures of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah have been studied from a literary perspective: Zedekiah, by Applegate (1998); and Jehoiachin, by Granowski (1992). The descriptions of these characters have been compared with their parallels in the books of Jeremiah and Chronicles.

As for the question of the orientation of the narrative on Jehoiachin's release from prison (2 Kgs 25.27-30) that appears at the end of the book, Gerhards (1998) and Murray (2001) are of the opinion that this narrative contains no messianic assumptions, or anticipations of the renewal of the kingdom. The narrative's intention is to bring an end to the Davidic kingdom, due to its breach of the covenantal kingdom.

The Prophets in the Book of Kings

In his 2004 study, Ben-Zvi characterizes the attitude of the biblical author toward the prophets mentioned in the book of Kings. Ben-Zvi examines the differences between these prophets and the 'classical prophets'. Collins (1993: 133-39) notes that the Deuteronomistic History casts the prophets as heirs of Moses. In the book of Kings, this can especially be shown in the Elijah–Elisha narratives.

The Elijah Narratives

1 Kings 17–19. Beck (2003) claims that, in the narrative on the duel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18), the

author stresses geographical aspects and employs irony in order to express his scorn of Baal worship. For example:

a. The narrative only mentions water when Elijah pours water generously on the altar. Instead of quenching the fire, the water intensifies it;
b. When it finally rains, the Baal worshipers are not there to see it;
c. Mount Carmel is renowned as a fertile area with plentiful rain. Thus, Mount Carmel becomes an ideal place to worship Baal, the god of rain. But, there of all places, there is no water.

Britt (2002), examining the divine revelation to Elijah in 1 Kings 19, compares it to other biblical revelations in which the prophet is silent. The veil of Moses and the mantle of Elijah separate sacred from profane, but they also indicate the suspension or withdrawal of the prophet and his divine message. Britt specifically compares Moses (Exod. 34) with Elijah. The connection between the narratives is not an analogy between Elijah and Moses. Rather, these two narratives, just like other biblical narratives, belong to one type scene, whose recurring elements are: crisis, theophany, commissioning or recommissioning of the prophet, and the enactment of the new divine plan. A comparison between Moses and Elijah shows a number of similarities. However, special attention must be paid to the criticism of Elijah, who prefers to focus on himself, rather than on the people. Hauser and Gregory (1990) find irony in the comparison between Elijah and Moses. This point is taken by Olley (1998) as well. He points out the various ways in which the narrator questions Elijah's zealous behaviour. Robinson calls Elijah a 'tetchy and arrogant prima donna of a prophet' (1991: 535). Elijah's egocentric characterization is suggested also by Gregory (1990: 102-103).

Conversely, Simon (1997) argues that neither 1 Kings 17–18, nor 1 Kings 19, criticizes Elijah as a zealot. In his opinion, ch. 19 endorses the mandatory fight against the worship of Baal.

Lasine (2004) considers Elijah's life as a 'narcissistic fantasy' (2004: 136). In 1 Kings 17–18, Elijah feels secure and invulnerable to dangers. He declares that there will be rain only when he will order it. He shows no interest in the widow's son he revives. That is typical behaviour for narcissistic healers. The narcissism is a defence against death. This reality is flawed when Jezebel declares that she will kill Elijah (1 Kgs 19.2). It undermines Elijah's calmness, as he understands that he is vulnerable, too.

The cohesiveness of the Elijah narratives is in great debate. Hauser (1990: 81) writes that these stories form 'a tightly-written narrative which skillfully interweaves the struggle between Yahweh and Baal'. This assertion will hardly be accepted by scholars who adhere to the diachronic method (see the discussions of Robinson 1991, Vorndran 1996, Blum 1997, Hoffken 1998 and Keinänen 2001).

Scholars also examine the question whether the story in 1 Kgs 19.19-21 is part of the narrative cycle on Elijah or, rather, represents an introduction to the Elisha narratives. See the discussions of Gregory (1990: 154), Willmes (1991), Simon (1997) and Shemesh (2000). Hauser (1990: 65-76) argues that the theophany in 1 Kings 19 aims to criticize Elijah for not functioning as Israel's protector. Other studies on Elijah have been conducted by Smelik (1990), Crüsemann (1997), Hoffken (1998) and Kaltner (2004).

2 Kings 1. Tängberg (1992) argues that Ba'al Zĕbūb in 2 Kings 1 means 'Baal (statue) with flies (ornament)'. He compares a description of the mother goddess, Nintu, of whom it is stated that 'she wears a fly'. Steenkamp (2004) compares the story of Elijah and King Ahaziah in 2 Kings 1 with the opening story on Elijah in 1 Kings 17. Their common theme is polemic against Baal, rather than against the authenticity of the prophet.

The Elisha Narratives

General overview. What is the aim of the Elisha narratives as a whole? Bergen (1999) states in the introduction to his book that 'the Elisha narrative provides a negative judgment on prophetism and confines prophets to a rather limited scope of action in the narrative world' (1999: 11). The figure of Elisha is opposed to the ideal figure of the prophet. Instead of accomplishing the prophetic mission, 'Elisha wanders the countryside doing miracles' (1999: 176). Bergen argues that the prophets in these narratives are not represented as a political alternative, posing a threat to the king's authority. On the contrary, the prophet is politically subordinate to the king.

A more positive evaluation of the Elisha narratives is suggested by R.D. Moore (1990). He argues that the Elisha narratives are meant to show how God saves his people in one of the most difficult eras of Israelite history: in 2 Kings 5–7, God's miraculous acts save Israel from the Aramaean threat. This thesis raises the key question regarding Elisha's role in these narratives. If divine help is the main issue, why would the author emphasize Elisha's role and activity?

Becking (1994) investigates the meaning of the name 'Elisha'. He refutes the thesis that Elisha's name means 'Sha (the name of a Canaanite deity) is my god', and agrees with the prevalent view that it means 'God saves/helps' (e.g., R.D. Moore 1990: 147; Garsiel 1991; Zipor 1998).

Satterthwaite (1998) is of the opinion that the Elisha narratives in 2 Kings 2–8 are coherent. He argues that these narratives were paralleled to the Joshua narratives, in the hope that Elisha's achievements would be seen as identical to Joshua's: just as Joshua captured the land of Israel, Elisha must capture the faith of the northern tribes and return them to God. This hope, however, is frustrated.

Avraham (2004) explores the term *bene hannebi'im* ('sons of the prophets'). This group appears mainly in 2 Kgs 4.38-44 and in 2 Kgs 6.1-7. Avraham examines this term from a social-anthropological angle. In his opinion, it refers to a small egalitarian commune living together modestly in Gilgal under Elisha's protection. This group does not live in permanent locations; rather, it sojourns in various places between Jericho and the Jordan, with the aim of distancing itself from urban society. He compares this phenomenon with other reclusive communities, such as the cult of the Essenes from Qumran, and the Franciscan order.

Several scholars (e.g., Long and Sneed 2004; see Coote 1992) seek to determine the historical background of those Elisha narratives that are set in events of the time, such as: the war of the three kings against Moab (2 Kgs 3.4-27); the healing of Naaman of his leprosy (2 Kgs 5); the siege on Dothan (2 Kgs 6.8-23); the siege on Samaria (2 Kgs 6.24–7.20); and the prophecy to Hazael (2 Kgs 8.7-15). For additional bibliography, see Avioz (2005).

Another subject of interest is the evaluation of the narratives' historical and biographical reliability, as well as that of the connection between Elisha and Elijah (Rofé 1988; Hill 1992; Kissling 1996). For example, Kissling evaluates the 'reliability', that is, the consistency, of the portrayals of Elijah and Elisha. When a character's speech and/or actions 'do not convey the narrator's point of view and therefore do not have the narrator's moral or ideological approval, the character is said to be unreliable in that particular instance' (1996: 20). Judging from other stories about prophets in Kings, the figures of Elijah and Elisha are not necessarily to be regarded as reliable, that is, as representative of the narrator's point of view. While Elijah is portrayed as human, full of strengths and weaknesses, Elisha emerges as a 'decidedly less trustworthy character' (1996: 149). He uses miraculous power destructively in the slaying of the 42

youths (2 Kgs 2.23-25), and deceives Hazael, king of Syria (2 Kgs 8.7-15). In contrast, one may get the opposite impression to that offered by Kissling, when comparing the deaths of Elijah and Elisha. Elijah does not die; rather, he is taken to heaven by storm (2 Kgs 2). Conversely, Elisha gets ill and dies (1 Kgs 13.14-21).

The Elisha narratives and diachronic research. Scholars have tried to reconstruct the formation of the Elisha narratives cycle. Among the pertinent questions are:

> Did the narratives undergo Deuteronomist editing, or were they left intact?
> Where were the narratives compiled?
> Did the Elijah narratives influence the Elisha narratives, or vice versa (McKenzie 1991: 67-100)?

Otto (2001; 2003) approaches the Elijah and Elisha narratives from the diachronic aspect. In her opinion, only a few narratives can be attributed to the ancient editing layer of the book of Kings—the narratives about Naboth's vineyard (1 Kgs 21), Ahaziah's death (2 Kgs 1) and the story of Jehu's coup (2 Kgs 9–10). The remaining narratives in 1 Kgs 16.29–2 Kgs 10.36 are post-Deuteronomistic expansions, added in the later stages (fifth century BCE), when additional aims of the authors were integrated.

Lehnart (2003) uses both diachronic and synchronic analysis to determine pre-Deuteronomistic text components. In his view, prophets are placed over kings, and stylized as actual saviour figures. This development is examined in conjunction with the extensive prophetic traditions of Samuel, Elijah and Elisha. Other studies have been made by Mommer (1993) and Thiel (1995a).

a. *Second Kings 2*. Rösel (1991) deals with the question of whether 2 Kgs 2.1-18 should be viewed as part of the Elijah cycle or as part of the Elisha cycle. M.A. O'Brien (1998) discusses the overall characterization of both Elijah and Elisha in 2 Kings 2. Though Elijah and Elisha are presented here as major prophets, they come under criticism. After Elijah's departure, Elisha is helpless, and does not know how to proceed from this point onward.

More specifically, Marcus (1995: 43-65) is of the opinion that the narrative genre on Elisha's cursing of the 42 boys in 2 Kgs 2.23-25 is a satire on Elisha, the bald prophet. However, he disregards the issue of a relationship between this story and other Elisha narratives, noting that this story possibly has a totally different agenda.

b. *Second Kings 3*. Hasel (2002) examines an interesting question in the narrative of the war of the three kings against Mesha (2 Kgs 3): how can Elisha's order to fell the trees of Moab be reconciled with the command not to fell trees in wartime (Deut. 20.19-20)? The reason, in his opinion, is that Moab was not one of the peoples against whom the command in Deuteronomy 20 was directed. Long and Sneed (2004) approach this story from a socio-literary perspective. In line with a recent trend in biblical studies, they claim that literary and sociological methods should be combined when reading biblical narratives. In their opinion, the purpose of the story in 2 King 3 is to criticize the Omride king, who did not win the battle because the Omride kings were wicked. Burns (1990) examines the reason for the withdrawal of the Israelite kings from the battlefield at the end of this story.

c. *Elisha and the Shunammite woman (2 Kgs 4.8-37)*. The story of the Shunammite woman is the most widely studied of all the Elisha narratives. Scholars differ as to whether the narrative expresses criticism or praise of Elisha. Does the story put the Shunammite woman at its centre, or on the margin?

Simon (1997: 227-62) holds that, while the story in 2 Kgs 4.8-37 is critical of Elisha, the story in 2 Kings 8 should be considered 'a corrective epilogue', in which a more positive view of the prophet is presented. Roncace (2000), however, argues that these stories have a great deal in common. In both narratives, the motifs of food and the home are present, as well as the prophet's appearance and disappearance. Both narratives are critical of the prophet, and prefer the Shunammite woman to him. In 2 Kings 4, Elisha promises a son without being asked; and, in the second narrative, is not by the Shunammite woman's side to help her in her distress. She solves her needs herself. Thus, Ronsace disagrees with Simon's claim (1997) that 2 Kings 8 is a narrative presenting a rectification of the critical description of Elisha in 2 Kings 4. According to Ronsace, 2 Kings 8 does not correct the negative evaluation of Elisha; rather, the Shunammite woman is elevated at the expense of the prophet.

Amit (2003) is of the opinion that the narrative criticizes Elisha as a prophet and demonstrates the limitations of the prophetic role (cf. Renteria 1992; Kissling 1996: 196, 198-99; Shields 1993; Simon 1997: 228, 255-58). She reaches this conclusion after examining the place of the narrative of the birth of the Shunammite woman's son among the biblical narratives belonging to the literary type of miracle births. According to Shields (1993) and Fewell (2000), the narrative is written from a patriarchal stand-

point, according to which barrenness is a state of lack. However, this story leads its readers to the conclusion that women do not necessarily want to have children! The message of the story is, in Amit's opinion, 'to inform readers through the ages that a prophet, no matter how revered by society, remains a man, and the distance between him and God is immense' (2003: 292).

The expression *'iššâ gedôlâ*, in 2 Kgs 4.8, is usually translated as 'wealthy woman' (RSV; NRSV) or 'great woman' (JPS). Tropper (2002) argues that the phrase *'iššâ gedôlâ* in 2 Kgs 4.8 signifies an 'older woman'. He presents inner Hebrew evidence where *gādôl* means 'old' when referring to sons, daughters, brothers and sisters. Other scholars who studied the narrative are van Dijk-Hemmes (1994) and Jobling (1999).

d. *Elisha, Naaman, and Gehazi (2 Kings 5)*. In 2 Kings 5, there is a set of hierarchies: Naaman is 'great', but his master is greater; the young girl from Israel is 'little', and her mistress, Na'aman's wife, is in charge of her; Elisha is also 'great', but God is above him; Na'aman is too proud to admit Elisha's superiority, but once he does so, he is cured of his leprosy.

D.P. O'Brien (1996) analyses Elisha's refusal to accept presents from Na'aman. After reviewing the various solutions put forth to that problem, he concludes that 'the fact a foreigner [Na'aman]…can make the climactic confession of faith in Yahweh in such contrast with Israel's king and people bodes ill for the Northern Kingdom' (1996: 457).

e. *Second Kings 6*. Three different narratives are contained in 2 Kings 6. The first (2 Kgs 6.1-7) is a short legend about Elisha (Rofé 1988: 70-74); the second (vv. 8-23) deals with the Arameans' failure to kidnap Elisha (see Rofé 1999); in the third (vv. 24-33), the wronged cannibal mother approaches the anonymous king of Israel with her case. Although Jehoram is mentioned in 2 Kings 3 and 2 Kings 8, there is no direct indication that the king in 2 Kings 6 is the same king. For this reason, Rofé does not accept the suggestion that the king in this narrative is Jehoram, but instead suggests that the king may be identified as one of the kings from the dynasty of Jehu.

Lasine (1991) views the narrative of Jehoram and the women (vv. 24-33) as an inverted image of Solomon's judgment in 1 Kings 3. According to Lasine, the aim of the story in 2 Kings 6 is to criticize Elisha for not being active on behalf of his people. Pyper (1993) wrote an article in response, claiming that the figure of the king is criticized in both 1 Kings 3 and 2 Kings 6. Lasine (1993b) replies that he has examined both stories from a broader perspective, and has compared them, not with each other,

but rather with ancient Near Eastern documents, and with Greek and modern societies.

Hens-Piazza (2003) examines this narrative through a combination of diachronic, synchronic and postmodern methods, giving the reader an active role in interpreting the narrative. Alongside the literary analysis, she also enumerates another intention (2003: 77)—to 'provoke a dialogue about violence'. She views the cannibal mothers in the narrative as victims: in ancient Israel, motherhood was part of a woman's self-definition, and when they eat their children, they lose their identity. They are victims of a violent, patriarchal society, and of political struggles between the king and the prophet. Further discussions can be found in Zipor (1998); Lanner (1999).

In v. 19, Elisha deceives the Aramaean soldiers coming to seize him. Shemesh (2002) deals with the troublesome issue of lies told by prophets in the Bible. She also refers to Elisha's lie to Hazael in 2 Kgs 8.10. In her conclusion, she states that 'the prophet, formally speaking, has not actually lied, i.e., uttered an outright falsehood', as the prophet's lies are condemned neither by God nor by the narrator.

f. *Elisha's death (2 Kings 13.20-21)*. The concluding narrative on Elisha is found in 2 Kgs 13.20-21. Since it is very short, I shall cite it in full from the NRSV translation: 'So Elisha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year. As a man was being buried, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha; as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet'.

Zakovitch (1992a) considers this story as humorous. The reader does not know who raised whom from the dead. Is it Elisha who made the Moabite man come to life, or vice versa? This and other ambiguities created by the narrator lead Zakovitch to conclude that this story is a 'comedy of errors'. The ancient storyteller did not wish his readers to worship Elisha's place of burial, and the omission of its location serves this goal.

The literary genres of the Elijah–Elisha narratives. The main contribution of recent research on the prophetic narratives on Elijah and Elisha is focused on determining their literary genres. This issue is strongly debated among scholars. Rofé (1988) proposed viewing them as prophetic legends, their purpose being to praise and adore the figures of the prophets.

Simon (1997) sorts the narratives. Contrary to Rofé's unified view, he classifies them in separate literary genres, based on their links to other biblical stories. For example, the narrative about the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4 belongs to the genre of 'miraculous birth stories'. Simon does not, however, classify the narrative about Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 17–19), which Rofé considers to be an epic (1988: 195-96).

According to one opinion (most recently, Woods 1994), the Elijah and Elisha narratives are polemics against the Canaanite religion, and are intended to free the people of Israel from the influence of Baal worship. The recurrent themes connected with this ideological struggle are fire, rain, grain and oil, the granting of the son, the cure, resuscitation, the ascension to heaven, and the river. What is attributed to Baal must be attributed to the God of Israel. Elijah's duel on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18) is specifically referred to in this context. R.D. Moore (1990) criticizes this approach. He argues that such themes are common in Yahwistic tradition (for example, Deut. 32.29), and are not specific to the Elijah and Elisha narratives (1990: 118). Moore contends that the centre of the Elisha stories is 'Yahweh's subtle action in history which delicately interfaces with humble human initiatives' (1990: 120).

Todd (1992), Hill (1992) and Renteria (1992) argue that the purpose of the Elijah narratives is to criticize the house of Omri. The narratives reflect a conflict between, on the one hand, the royal family and those close to it, and, on the other hand, the farmer classes bowing under the yoke of royal taxes. As a result of the numerous wars, many women were widowed, and encountered grave financial problems. These weak groups saw Elisha as a true leader.

Satterthwaite (1998) claims that the Elisha narratives in 2 Kings 2–8 have an internal logic. He places special emphasis on the parallels between Elisha and Joshua, from which an antithesis emerges between the times of these two leaders.

The Elijah and Elisha narratives and their parallels. Collins (1993: 136-37) and Levine (1999) examine the parallels between Elijah and Elisha. The shared motifs in these narratives create analogies using similitudes and contrasts. On the one hand, Elisha's miracles are similar to Elijah's. On the other hand, they emphasize the deep differences in character between the master and his student. Collins (1993: 133-35) and Simon (1997) point out the analogies between Elijah and Moses. Another set of parallels is between Moses/Joshua and Elijah/Elisha.

Siebert-Hommes (1996) studies the parallels between the narrative on Elijah and the widow, in 1 Kings 17, and the narrative on Elisha and the Shunammite woman, in 2 Kings 4. Here are some of the parallels:

> 1. There are three characters in each narrative—a prophet, a woman, and a child.
> 2. In both narratives, the prophet lodges with the woman, having a roof chamber and bed in her house.
> 3. In both narratives, the son is sick and dies, and this leads the woman to turn to the prophet for help. The child is laid on the prophet's bed. The prophet prays to his God, lies upon the child, and resuscitates him.

Lasine (1991) examines the parallels between the narrative in 2 Kgs 6.24-33 and the Solomon narrative in 1 Kgs 3.16-28, finding criticism of the king but, at the same time, understanding for his situation.

Stipp (1999) compares 1 Kgs 17.17-24 and 2 Kgs 4.8-37. He concludes that while the Elijah narrative in 1 Kings 17 emphasizes Elijah's sovereignty as a wonder worker, the similar Elisha narrative in 2 Kings 4 characterizes Elisha as inferior to Elijah, presenting him in his moment of crisis, hesitant and struggling to be believed.

Brodie (2000) argues that the Elijah–Elisha cycle was shaped to follow the sequence of narratives of the primary history, Genesis through 2 Kings, which also includes narratives that follow the Elijah–Elisha cycle. Brodie suggests that the Elijah–Elisha cycle parallels the narratives in the primary history, implying that prophets are more appropriate than kings to be spokespersons for God.

It can be assumed that not all readers will be convinced by the parallels that Brodie finds, since they are sometimes based on his creativity, and not on objective criteria.

Among the parallels Brodie finds are:

- Noah's flood || Elijah's drought (1 Kgs 17–18);
- Deborah || Jezebel;
- Abimelech || Naboth (both were stoned);
- Saul's pursuit of David (1 Sam. 21–27) || Ahaziah's search for Elijah (2 Kgs 1).

While these examples may be considered unconvincing, other cases should be taken more seriously:

- Moses' flight into the wilderness (Exod. 3) may be compared with the flight of Elijah to Horeb (1 Kgs 19);

- The Jordan crossing by Joshua (Josh. 3) resembles the crossing by Elijah (2 Kgs 2).

According to Brodie, the conclusion that should be drawn from these parallels is that the Elijah–Elisha stories were intended to imply that the prophets are the true spokesmen of God, rather than the kings (2000: 66). For a full summary of Brodie's parallels, see his chart (2000: 32).

The miracles in the Elijah–Elisha narratives. Zakovitch (1990; 1992b) and Kasher (1993) are the only biblical scholars in recent years to characterize the miracle narratives in the Bible in general, and in the Elijah–Elisha narratives in particular. Zakovitch classifies the phenomenon of miracles according to several criteria, among which we find the following:

> (a) Who generates the miracle?—the prophet, God, or both? On the one hand, the story in 2 Kings 6 presents Elisha as solving the problem of the lost ox by himself; on the other hand, life will not return to the child of the Shunammite woman until Elisha prays to the Lord (2 Kgs 4.32-36).
> (b) Control mechanisms:
> 1. The state of nature is reversible and the duration of the miracle is limited (2 Kgs 4.1-7);
> 2. A miracle within a miracle (2 Kgs 6.1-7);
> 3. When people doubt the prophet's ability to perform miracles, the wonder-maker gains more respect from those present when he finally succeeds (2 Kgs 4.42-44; 7.2).
>
> (c) Punitive miracles—miracles by which those harming the prophet are punished: Elijah and Ahaziah's messengers (2 Kgs 1.9-14); Elisha and the 42 youths (2 Kgs 2.23-25); Gehazi's leprosy (2 Kgs 5.27); the death of the royal officer (2 Kgs 7.17-20).

Other issues discussed both in Zakovitch's monograph (1990) and in his ABD article (1992b) are miracle and magic, miracle and retribution, and miracles connected with life and death. Kasher specifically studies the issue of the moral stipulations necessary for a miracle to be performed (1993: 220-22). He examines whether, in order to benefit from the prophet's miraculous acts, a person should behave in a specific moral or religious manner. In the Elijah narratives, no religious or moral stipulations are mentioned; while in the Elisha narratives, such stipulations are mentioned only twice—in 2 Kgs 4.1-7 and in vv. 8-37.

Blenkinsopp (1999) compares the Elisha narratives with the Talmudic narratives on Hanina ben Dosa, a first-century *tanna* (a rabbi mentioned in the Mishnah). The recurring motifs in these narratives are a lack, an

appeal to the prophet, and the solution of the lack through the liquidation of the lack. The narratives focus on healing.

Becking (1996) examines the use of magic in the narrative (2 Kgs 4) on the resuscitation of the son of the Shunammite woman. Elisha's action is against the law, according to Deut. 18.10-11, and so it follows that he operated prior to the law quoted in the book of Deuteronomy. In his time, the first half of the monarchic period, Israelite religion was polytheistic, while the book of Deuteronomy represents a monotheistic period.

Overholt (1996) uses cultural anthropology to understand the roles of Elijah and Elisha as prophets. He has located connections between the Elijah–Elisha cycles (mainly 1 Kgs 17.17-24 and 2 Kgs 4.8-37) and the role of the shamans, who derive their power from contact with divine and supernatural powers. The unusual elements in the Elijah and Elisha narratives (resuscitations, healings, controlling wild beasts) indicate that a form of shamanism was part of the diversity of Israelite religion that was preserved in the Deuteronomistic story. A similar comparison is suggested by Lasine (2004).

Other Prophets

Several known and unknown prophets are mentioned in the book of Kings: Nathan (1 Kgs 1; see Jones 1990; Ishida 1999; Bodner 2001); Ahijah (1 Kgs 11); Shemaiah the man of God (1 Kgs 12.22); the 'man of God' from Judah, who prophesied against Jeroboam's altar, and the old prophet from Bethel (1 Kgs 13.1-32; see also 2 Kgs 23.15-18); Jehu son of Hanani (1 Kgs 16.7, 12); several unnamed prophets who interacted with Ahab during his successful campaign against Aram (1 Kgs 20.13-22; 20.28, 35-40); Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Kings 22; see Hauser 2002; Moberly 2003); the young prophet who prophesied to Jehu (2 Kgs 9.4-10); Jonah the prophet from Gath-Hepher (2 Kgs 14.25); Hulda (2 Kgs 22.14); and Isaiah (2 Kgs 19–20).

We begin with Ahijah the Shilonite. Viberg (1998) studies the symbolic act of tearing the robe in 1 Kgs 11.29-39, comparing it to the encounter of Samuel and Saul in 1 Samuel 15. He differentiates between the original core of the story and its Deuteronomistic additions.

Among the prophetic narratives in Kings, the narrative of the man of God from Judah (1 Kgs 13) has been studied the most in recent years. This narrative is considered to contain many difficulties. Van Seters (1999) finds 16 difficulties in this story, and concludes that '[The difficulties] are the result of a lack of literary skill by the author' (p. 233). Van Winkle

(1996) argues that the Jeroboam narrative represents him as a foil for Josiah's character. The central theme of the narrative in 1 Kgs 12.25–13.34 is obedience to the word of God, and its breach by Jeroboam (1996: 106, 112). The Deuteronomist portrays Jeroboam both as idolater and 'foreigner', no longer part of the covenantal community (1996: 110).

Bosworth (2002) examines this narrative, using Protestant theologian Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatic*s (1957). Barth views the narrative holistically and synchronically (1957: 393-409), in complete contrast to most scholars of his time, whose approach was diachronic. Barth notes the connection between the story and its context.

Jaruzelska (2004) examines the question of the involvement of Ahijah the Shilonite, Jehu ben Hanani, Elijah and Elisha in the ascensions to the throne of Jeroboam and Baasha, Zimri and Jehu ben Hanani. She focuses on the tension between early and classical prophecy in the differences between Hosea's more critical attitude toward the kingship in general, and the earlier prophets' attitudes on the fitness of specific Israelite kings to rule.

Other studies are: Eynikel (1990); Reis (1994); Marcus (1995); Simon (1997: 131-54); Mead (1999).

Women in the Book of Kings

The issue of women in the book of Kings should be dealt with within its broader context—the status, role and evaluation of women in the Bible. Some of the questions usually raised by scholars are: How are women represented in the biblical texts? What do we know about their personal lives? Should the biblical writers be defined as androcentric or even misogynous? Who is considered a 'good' woman? For the answers to these and other questions (see the full list in Exum 1995: 69-70), some recent general studies in this field are worth noting: Bellis (1994); Aschkenasy (1998); Bach (1999); Brenner (2000); Fuchs (2000); Frymer-Kensky (2002). Also of interest are Reinhartz's study of anonymous women in the Bible (1998), and the dictionary *Women in Scripture* (Meyers, Craven and Kraemer 2000).

Many women are mentioned in the book of Kings: Abishag and Bathsheba (1 Kgs 1–2); the two harlots who bring their case to Solomon (1 Kgs 3); Solomon's many wives (1 Kgs 11); Taphath, the daughter of Solomon (1 Kgs 4.11; see Tawil 1999); the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10); the wife of Jeroboam (Schmidt 2000; Branch 2004); the widow from

Zarephath (1 Kgs 17); Jezebel (1 Kgs 18–2 Kgs 9); the wife of one of the sons of the prophets (2 Kgs 4.1-7); the Shunammite woman (2 Kgs 4.8-37; 8.1-6); the young Israelite girl in 2 Kings 5 (see Brueggemann 2001); the cannibal women who approach the king of Israel (2 Kgs 6.24-33); Athaliah and Jehosheba, the sister of Joash, king of Judah (2 Kgs 11–12); Huldah (2 Kgs 22). Nearly all of these women are considered to be minor characters. Most are anonymous. They may be classified according to different categories—for example, Israelite women versus foreign women, or women who speak versus women who remain silent (Branch 2004).

In fact, these minor characters convey the real message of the stories in which they are incorporated. Note, for instance, R.D. Moore's assertion in regard to the young Israelite girl mentioned in 2 Kings 5: 'The words of kings have come to nothing, while words from lowly persons have prevailed' (1990: 77; cf. Branch 2004).

Abishag

Stone (1996: 127-33) interprets Adonijah's request for Abishag in 1 Kings 2 as an attempt to restore some of his social honour, lost when Solomon ascended the throne. Ishida (1999: 131-33; 178) explores Abishag's legal status. Abishag's title is *sōkenet* (1 Kgs 1.2, 4). In Ishida's view, her status was both David's nurse and his concubine, even though David never had intercourse with her. Adonijah tried to take advantage of the ambiguity of Abishag's status. His request for Abishag was aimed at paving his way to David's throne: seizing her meant that Adonijah was the actual king. Asserting one's claim to the throne by seizing the previous king's concubine(s) is a practice known to us from the ancient Near East. The reader is reminded of Absalom's similar act in 2 Sam. 16.21-22. Thus, Adonijah is presented as canny and wicked.

Bathsheba

M.S. Moore (2004a) refutes the opinion of scholars who argue that Bathsheba was, in fact, a stupid woman. He compares her to Anat in the Canaanite epic of Aqhat, and explores the socio-literary context of Bathsheba's actions. Moore argues that the historical and literary disciplines should not be seen as anthithetical but rather as complementary. Agreeing with this evaluation, Pleins (1995: 128) includes Bathsheba among the manipulative women of Genesis-Kings. She cooperates with Nathan in making Solomon David's successor, even at the cost of the shedding of blood. In contrast, others (Stone 1996: 127-33; Aschkenasy 1998: 112)

present Bathsheba as manipulated by Adonijah, who thinks that she is stupid enough to help him with his intriguing. Still others have pointed out analogies between Rebecca and Bathsheba: both mothers deceive their husbands in order to force them to choose the younger son (Pleins 1995: 127-28). Klein (2003: 55-71) thinks that in order to get a better understanding of Bathsheba's character, we should first evaluate her character in 2 Samuel 11–12. She suggests that Bathsheba tempts David by bathing on her roof, where she knows he will see her. So, when readers reach the story in 1 Kings 1 about her involvement in Solomon's accession to the throne, they are not at all surprised.

The Queen of Sheba

Issue 13.1 (2004) of the *Journal for Semitics* is devoted to the Queen of Sheba. In addition, Lassner (1993) explores the legends and interpretations connected with the Queen of Sheba in Jewish and Muslim sources, beginning his survey with the Hebrew Bible and continuing up to the Middle Ages.

Jezebel

It is not surprising that most of the articles on Jezebel have been written by women. Gaines (2000) notes that the attitude toward Jezebel is as 'the bad girl of the Bible' (2000: 13). In harmony with this line, Aschkenasy (1998: 15) compares Jezebel to Lady Macbeth. Pippin (1994: 196) writes that 'the complex and ambiguous character of Jezebel in the Bible serves as the archetypal bitch-witch-queen in misogynist representation of women'. However, Gaines notes that under closer inspection, it emerges that 'her character might not be as dark as we are accustomed to thinking' (2000: 13). According to Gaines, several factors influence her negative casting:

1. She did not convert to Judaism, like Ruth the Moabite;
2. She is a strong woman, who sticks to her opinions and does not remain silent, like other women in the Bible;
3. She views the king as an omnipotent ruler. All this led the Deuteronomist to blacken her character.

McKinlay (2002) also examines the Deuteronomist's hostility toward Jezebel. Instead of focusing on her personality, the Deuteronomist presents Jezebel's makeup (2 Kgs 9.30). McKinlay suggests that Jezebel's story should encourage openness and responsibility to others. Appler (1999) examines the imageries of food in the narratives on Jezebel and

Ahab. Baal is unable to supply them with food. They eat and drink while the whole nation suffers from drought. When Ahab goes out to search for food, his intention is to find grass and save the animals (1 Kgs 18.5). In the duel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, the latter themselves become an oblation when they cut their own flesh. God also eats. In Naboth's vineyard, the matter of food is the subject of discussion several times: during the negotiations to purchase the vineyard (1 Kgs 21); in Ahab's refusal to eat; and in the fast proclaimed during Naboth's trial. The vineyard is an allegory of Israel, whom Ahab wants to eradicate.

Jezebel's being thrown out through the window and the blood spattering out of her body are 'measure for measure': she has shed blood, and therefore her blood is to be shed. After the dogs devour her, all that remains of her are her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands. This is an allusion to the Canaanite goddess, Anat, whose symbols were skulls around her neck and hand parts around her waist. The allusion to the dogs that eat Jezebel is ironic since, according to Greek mythology, dogs accompanied the dead to their burial. According to the Bible, dogs are unclean, as is Jezebel.

Aschkenasy (1998: 15-16) and Seeman (2004: 24-26) examine the motif of the woman looking out through the window, in connection with Jezebel. This motif appears also in connection with Sisera's mother (Judg. 5.28) and Michal (2 Sam. 6.16). Scholars differ regarding the significance of the motif. Some see it as an expression of the goddess of fertility, which the Deuteronomist viewed as an abomination. Aschkenasy writes that 'Jezebel at the window becomes a paradigm of the female existence in general by suggesting man's fear of the woman's sexual powers, the association of these powers with evil, and the inevitable defeat of a woman who tries to step out of her fixed place "at the window" and participate in the male sphere' (1998: 16). Seeman (2004) notes that women at the window appear in contexts that signal the downfall of despised kin groups and political regimes.

According to Trible (1995a; 1995b), the author creates a contrast between Elijah and Jezebel in these themes: their name, their origin, their gender, their dress, and their passing. She finds intriguing analogies between the ideal woman in Proverbs 31 and Jezebel!

Dutcher-Walls (2004) examines the ideologies of the ancient storytellers as recoverable in 1 Kings 16 through 2 Kings 9. She employs two methodologies: narrative criticism, and sociological analysis, concluding that:

> Jezebel has functioned for the storytellers as the prime negative example of what not to do as a leader of God's people…they have used her portrait as the ideal vehicle for depicting the worst a member of God's people could be, and the worst a royal powerholder could do. For those who accept the theology the storytellers are promoting, Jezebel's gruesome death, predicted by the prophets, is only what she has long deserved for all her evil. And those who read her story are well warned to amend their ways and truly listen to the word of God the storytellers themselves offer through the writing of their tale (2004: 152).

Other treatments of Jezebel are by Pyper (2002); Zlotnick (2001); Bail (2003).

Huldah

Edelman (1994) suggests that Huldah was a prophetess of the goddess Asherah. The post-exilic redactors, seeking to make the narrative conform to their language and beliefs, changed the original narrative. In spite of the fact that the narrator does not give us details concerning Hulda's private life, Weems (2003) tries to fill this gap, using her imagination: one minute, Huldah is a young mother angry at the sudden visit of Hilkia and Shaphan; the next, she's an old woman disturbed by two young men coming for advice after finding the book of the law in the temple. Her role is to emphasize the gloomy fate awaiting Judah, pointing out that even the pious King Josiah is blind to its coming. Brenner's recent collection of fictitious autobiographies (2004) includes a chapter titled: 'I am the Rat: Huldah the Prophet'.

The main interest in Huldah is in the oracle she delivers to Josiah (Glatt-Gilad 1996; Halpern 1998; Hoppe 1998; Nelson 2005: 329-30). She tells Josiah that he will not live to see the Exile, and this is fulfilled. However, her prediction that Josiah will die peacefully is problematic, due to his tragic death on the battlefield. This discrepancy leads to contrasting conclusions among scholars. For example, Nelson (2005: 329) concludes that 'a post-586 horizon has been superimposed over earlier pre-609 wording. This editorial process resulted in an incomplete revision of the original oracle'. Alternatively, there is also the possibility that what was meant in Huldah's oracle was that Josiah will be buried honorably (Provan 1988: 147-49).

Conclusion

In the two parts of my article on the book of Kings, I have aimed to provide as comprehensive a review as possible of the findings of the relevant

research conducted over the past 15 years. Due to the extensive amount of written material, it has been impossible, understandably, to refer to all the studies written. I have not, for instance, included dissertations. These can be found, among other places, in the bibliographies compiled by Mills (2001; 2002a; 2002b). The different studies represent the variety of current trends in biblical research: rejection of the historical reliability of the narratives, on the one hand, and, on the other, its acceptance; male voices and female voices; diachronic methods and synchronic methods. At the same time, many scholars call for multi-disciplinary methodologies that combine, for example, literary and sociological methods.

I conclude by hoping that the material referred to in both parts of my article will help students, scholars and commentators as they conduct future interpretations and research on the book of Kings.

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