

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Kings, Lecture 1

© 2012, Dr. Robert Vannoy, Dr. Perry Phillips, and Ted Hildebrandt

Introduction – Title Authorship and Date

Course Introduction

I'm not going to do a whole lot more than read this tonight for this introductory section of the course. I want to do that with the handout because some of this is a bit complex, and I thought it would probably be easier for you to have it in written form than for you to try to take notes. Once we get into the book of Kings itself and the content, I'm not going to do that, and you'll have to rely on your own note taking. But for this introductory material I gave you the handout.

A. Title: Kings

First thing I wanted to discuss is the name. The Hebrew title is “Malakim,” which is “Kings.” There’s no evidence that the book was divided into two parts in the Hebrew text until the edition of the Hebrew Bible published by Daniel Bomberg, 1516-1517, in Venice. The division of the book into two parts was introduced by the Septuagint. That’s the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which combined Kings and Samuel in to one great history work titled “First, Second, Third, Fourth Book of Reigns,” or “Kingdoms.” Jerome altered this in the Vulgate to “One, Two, Three, Four Kings.” The division of the material into two parts has continued to the present in both Hebrew and modern language editions of the Bible. I think that’s something worth knowing, particularly since you may see that reference to “One, Two, Three, Four Kings,” which was the title used by Jerome in the Vulgate. In the Roman Catholic tradition those titles are still used, so you may look up a commentary or you may come across it in your reading sometime, that the reference to “3 Kings” and wonder what it is. “3 Kings” would be the same as our 1 Kings, because you see in the Vulgate Samuel was called First and Second Kings and then Kings is called Third and Fourth Kings, because

in the Vulgate Samuel and Kings were sort of used as a unit: One, Two, Three, Four.

In Hebrew tradition the books of Samuel are called Samuel and Kings called Kings, and that's what we follow. But originally, both those books were one unit. There's one book of Samuel and one book of Kings. The division into two was only done in the Septuagint, but then via the Septuagint came back into these later editions of the Hebrew texts, so that our present Hebrew text you get two books of Kings, and two books of Samuel. But that really was not original.

It's clear, however, that the material of the two books constitutes and original unity. The division occurs at a rather arbitrary, although appropriate place after the deaths of Ahab in 1 Kings 22:37 and Jehoshaphat in 22:30. Now Ahab was king in the north and Jehoshaphat king in the south. You get the deaths of two major kings right in that last chapter of First Kings so it's an appropriate place. But it lets the account of the reign of Ahaziah of Israel, that's 22:51-53, overlap the end of First Kings and the beginning of Second Kings. The same is true with Elijah whose life is narrated in 1 Kings but whose translation to heaven is narrated in 2 Kings. So the division is somewhat arbitrary, but at a reasonably appropriate place.

When taken as a unit the book assumes a well-defined place in the Old Testament canon among the former prophets. The "Former Prophets": that's traditional Jewish nomenclature or designation for what we usually call the historical books. But the Former Prophets, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings together describe a history of pre-exilic Israel in Canaan. They began after the death of Moses and end with the death of Nebuchadnezzar succeeded by Evil-Merodach who brought Israel's independence to an end. Kings describes the end of David's rule, the United Kingdom under Solomon and the Divided Kingdom in its entirety.

B. General Content – 3-Fold Structure

Alright, B is: “General Content.” Kings describes the last period of the history of pre-exilic Israel. It begins with the death of David and divides naturally into three major sections. The three sections are: 1 Kings 1-11, which is a description of the rule of Solomon under whom the kingdoms of Israel and Judah are united. Second, 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 17 give the history of the Divided Kingdom until the downfall of Israel, that is, the Northern Kingdom with the capture of Samaria by the Assyrians. That runs from 1 Kings 12 through 2 Kings 17--the second major section. Third is 2 Kings 18-25 where you have the Kingdom of Judah until the destruction of Jerusalem with two supplements concerning Gedeliah (2 Kings 25:22-26) and Jehoiachin (2 Kings 22:25, 27-30). Now, when I say the kingdom of Judah *until* the destruction of Jerusalem, that is the kingdom of Judah subsequent to the fall of Samaria in the north on to the end, from 722-721 B.C. down to 586 B.C. So those are the three major sections.

In the second section, the history of the two kingdoms is not given in separate narratives, but rather in a parallel fashion. Beginning with Jeroboam I, the technique utilized is to describe the reign and activities of a certain king and then move to all the kings in the other kingdoms that were contemporary with it and then work back and forth that way. The composition of the book is characterized by the setting of the description of each king in the framework of introductory and concluding formulae. The introductory formula usually contains the following six elements: age of succession, length of reign, place of rule, mother’s name, assessment of the reign, and synchronization. That is, he began to reign in such-and-such year of a king in the other kingdom. It synchronizes with that. The concluding formula usually contains a supplemental source, such as: “The rest of the acts of so and so can be read in some other place.” A death announcement, place of burial, name of successor.

1. Introductory Framework Formulae for Each King

An example of this framework is with Rehoboam in 1 Kings 14:21: He was forty-one years old when he became king, he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, his mother's name was Naamah, she was an Ammonite. In 14:29-31 you read, "As for the other events of Rehoboam's reign and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? And Rehoboam rested with his fathers and was buried with them in the city of David. And Abijah his son succeeded him as king." So you see those kinds of formulas at the beginning and at the end of the reign are pretty standard all the way through for each of the kings. They don't all contain all those elements, but usually they contain a pretty good number of them.

Beginning with Abijah, another element is introduced into the introductory formula, namely that of synchronization with the rule of another kingdom. 1 Kings 15:1: Abijah was the second king in the south; Rehoboam was the first, then Abijah. Of Abijah it says, "In the 18th year of the reign of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah." So that's your first synchronization. Jeroboam was the first king in the north, and in the 18th year of his reign Abijah begins to reign in the south. With Nadab of Israel in 1 Kings 15:28 and Asa of Judah, 1 Kings 16:10-11, Elah's year of death are also synchronized.

2. Evaluation of Each King

The most important element in the introductory and concluding formula, however, is the judgment, or evaluation, of the king according to the criterion as to whether or not he was faithful to the Lord and to the covenant, or fell into idolatry. Because the kings of Israel, which is the Northern Kingdom, all participated in the calf worship at Bethel and Dan, they are all said to have "walked in the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat who made Israel to sin,"--1 Kings 15:34. Only with Joram, 2 Kings 3:2, and Hoshea, 2 Kings 17:2, does the judgment include some commendation. So you see with the northern kings, because right after the division

of the kingdoms Jeroboam set up those calves at Bethel and Dan but those northern kings, all of them walked in the way of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, in idolatrous sin.

Assessment of the kings of Judah is somewhat more nuanced, but even when in general there are things in their activities that meet approval, there remains the fact that they have not removed the high places. Unqualified praises are given only to Hezekiah and Josiah--2 Kings 18:24, 2 Kings 22:3 and 23:8.

Five kings are given qualified approval: Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Azariah, and Jotham. With those five kings it says they were basically good kings but they didn't remove the high places. So there's that qualification. If you look those texts up you can see that. The strongest disapproval is given to Ahab of the Northern Kingdom, 1 Kings 16:29-34, and Manasseh in the south, 2 Kings 21.

3. Debate Over Dating the Formulae

Those are the formulae that introduce and conclude the descriptions of the reigns of the various kings. It is generally accepted that these framework formulae are the works of the author himself even though he may have gleaned details of the information contained in them from the archives of the court. Difference of opinion exists, however, with respect to the time of their origin. Look at *Uberlich Geschichte* 1943." That's *Traditions Historical Studie*, by Martin Noth. English translation is *Deuteronomistic History*, it was translated in 1981. It's a very influential writing. Martin Noth suggests that these introductory and concluding formulae are the latest material in the book of Kings and constitute the final framework in which earlier material was set.

On the other hand, Alfred Jepsen, *The Sources of the Books of Kings*, 1956, adopts exactly the opposite standpoint. He says the framework material is the oldest material of the present book of Kings, stemming from what he designates as "the synchronistic chronicle" of Israel and Judah including material from the annals of both kingdoms. He ascribes its composition to a priest living at about the

end of the Divided Kingdom period. This provided the structure within which later editors inserted all sorts of material from other sources. Jepson regards the chronicle as the core of the present book of Kings containing in condensed form the history of both kingdoms till the time of Hezekiah. More detailed discussion of this would take us too far astray. I don't want to get too much involved in that kind of thing.

4. Closer Division – United Kingdom – 1 Kings 1-11

When we look closer at the first major division, 1 Kings 1-11, we find it divides into introductory material, chapters 1 and 2, and a conclusion chapter 11. Between these two sections, chapters 3-10, center on “A” Solomon’s wisdom, chapters 3 and 4. “B” is building of the temple and the palace, chapters 5-9; and “C” his prosperity and wealth, chapter 10. The reader notices immediately that the author has arranged this material to place the dark side of Solomon’s life and activities in the final chapter. This arrangement is not strictly chronological, as can be seen especially by 11:14ff. which for the most part refer to events much earlier than the preceding and following verses. Well, that’s the structure of that first section. 1 Kings 1-11 is about Solomon and the end of the United Kingdom.

5. Second Division – 1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17 – Divided Kingdom

The second major division, 1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17, contains a history of the Divided Kingdom period. This runs from the death of Solomon to the Assyrian exile of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. This is by far the largest of the three sections. The division of this material into, I should say subsections, is much more difficult than with the material relating to the reign of Solomon. In the first section there is one king in about a 40 year period of history. The second major division, 1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17, contains a history of the Divided Kingdom from the death of Solomon to the fall of Samaria. In the second section there are numerous kings in the two kingdoms and more than 200 years of history.

In only one instance is there simultaneous succession in the two kingdoms. Mainly when Joram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah were killed on the same day by Jehu. 2 Kings 9:21-28. The revolution of Jehu thus provides one major point of division for this section, 2 Kings 9. See the outline of sections 2 and 3.

The question is how to divide the material further. Here's something quite different that calls for our attention. In a great deal of the remaining material the prophets Elijah and Elisha assume a predominant place. These two men provide points of orientation for many of the narratives. The time of Elijah begins with 1 Kings 17:1 and the time of Elisha was 2 Kings 2:1. This then gives us three major points of orientation for 1 Kings 12- 2 Kings 17. 1) 1 Kings 17, Elijah; 2) 2 Kings 2:1, Elisha; 3) 2 Kings 9, Jehu. Those are the three sub-divisions of 1 Kings 12 -2 Kings 17.

Try to break that down, it's kind of hard because of all the synchronization, the rules of kings in the north and kings in the south. But I think it's kind of three things you might say you can hang something on: 1 Kings 17 is Elijah, 2 Kings 2 is Elisha, and 2 Kings 9 is Jehu. Jehu is a significant figure. So these divisions give you some sort of major dividing points.

With respect prior to Elijah, an appropriate dividing point is the conclusion of 1 Kings 14. Chapters 12-14 handle the history of Jeroboam I and Rehoboam, the first two rulers of the Divided Kingdom. Chapters 15-16 handle both of their successors up to the time of the first appearance of Elijah. Chapters 17-19 have Elijah as their center of focus. Chapter 20-2 Kings 1 contain stories of Elijah interspersed with stories of Ahab's wars with the Syrians of Damascus. 2 Kings 2-8 center around the ministry of Elisha, and 2 Kings 9-10 describe the revolution of Jehu.

6. Final Days of Judah – 2 Kings 18-25

2 Kings 11-14 deal with the reigns of Joash and Amaziah of Judah and the contemporaneous kings of Israel. 2 Kings 15-17 deal with the last days of the

Northern Kingdom with the contemporary kings of Judah.

Then the final major section, 2 Kings 18-25, concerns the final days of the Kingdom of Judah, beginning with the reign Hezekiah and including the significant reigns of Manasseh and Josiah. Okay, so much on general content. That gives you some idea of the material that's covered in 1 and 2 Kings.

C. Authorship and Sources

1. Jeremiah et al.

“C” is “Authorship and Sources.” First, authorship. The question of who wrote 1 and 2 Kings has long been a matter of discussion with little solid evidence to justify a basis for reaching a conclusion. In the Mishnah, Jeremiah is credited with the authorship of 1 and 2 Kings. Although this is not impossible, it seems highly unlikely. Few, if any, modern scholars accept this as a reliable tradition. Although Gleason Archer in his *Introduction* regards it as possible that Jeremiah was the author of all but the last chapter, which is interesting. Whoever wrote it had to have sourced the last event in Kings which is the death of Jehoiachin, 2 Kings 25:27-30. While his death is not explicitly mentioned, the text speaks of provision at the king's table as long as he lived. How long he lived we do not know. We do know that Jehoiachin was released from prison in the 37th year of the exile in the year Evil-merodach succeeded Nebuchadnezzar as king in Babylon. This is 562 B.C., or about 25 years after the fall of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25:27. You look at 2 Kings 25:27 you read: “In the 37th year of the exile of Jehoiachin, King of Judah, in the year of Evil-merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin from prison on the 27th day of the 12th month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of other kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.” Now, that's the 37th year of his exile, or 562 B.C.

We also know that Jeremiah was called to be a prophet in the 13th year of King Josiah. In Jeremiah 1:2 you read there, “The word of the Lord came to him in the 13th year of Josiah, son of Amon, King of Judah.” When he was still very young, Jeremiah says, “I’m only a child,” in Jeremiah 1:6. Josiah began to reign in 640 B.C. If we assume that Jeremiah was 20 years old when he was called to be a prophet, then at the time of Jehoiachin’s release he would have been 85 years old. See, 640 B.C. is the 13th year of Josiah. If Jeremiah was 20 years old then, his birth would have been at 647 B.C. And if you compare 647 with 562, which is the year of the expression of the release of Jehoiachin that would have made Jeremiah 85 years old at the point in time that Jehoiachin is released. If we add five more years of time in which Jehoiachin enjoyed his new status, being released there from prison, we come to about 90 years of age for Jeremiah.

While it’s not impossible for Jeremiah to have lived this long to have written in 1 and 2 Kings, it does not seem likely for various reasons. First, E. J. Young points this out in his *Introduction*, page 188, that it seems likely that the account of the deportation and imprisonment of Jehoiachin was written in Babylon, but Jeremiah was taken to Egypt. Remember, after Jerusalem was taken, Jeremiah went to Egypt--Jeremiah 43:1-8. Second, the last chapter of Jeremiah, chapter 52, is very similar to 2 Kings 24:18-25, 30, but Jeremiah 51:64 reads, “The words of Jeremiah end here.” See, the last phrase of that chapter is “the words of Jeremiah end here,” and then in chapter 52 you have a description of the fall of Jerusalem, which is very similar to what you have in the book of Kings. It appears that Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 24:18-25, 30 are derived from a common source that was not written by Jeremiah. There are minor verbal differences in the two accounts. Archer, who argues for Jeremiah’s authorship, finds evidence for this in the fact that Jeremiah’s not mentioned in 1 and 2 Kings. I guess he feels that Jeremiah would not have drawn attention to himself as the author and therefore excludes any reference to himself, and that’s an indication that he’s the writer. This is an argument from silence, however, and is hardly compelling. The names

of other prophets are also unmentioned. For example, Ezekiel who was taken captive at the same time as Jehoiachin. Jonah is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25. So some prophets are mentioned, but some aren't; so I don't think you can draw much of a conclusion from the fact that Jeremiah is not mentioned as evidence that he is the author. So there's little hard evidence to establish Jeremiah as the author of Kings.

2. Literary Critical Deuteronomistic Editions of Kings

Among the literary-critical school there are those who have attempted to find the JEDP sources extended on through Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and on into Kings. This has little following today, although Otto Eissfeldt is an advocate of the view. This pre-Deuteronomistic material is then regarded as restructured and added to by the Deuteronomistic editor or editors. The generally accepted critical idea is that there were two Deuteronomistic editions of Kings. One at about 600 B.C., variously viewed as either shortly before or shortly after the death of Josiah and then a revision with editions composed during the exile by 550 B.C. This view requires extensive separation of original material from later interpretations, the details of which we cannot discuss here. As R. K. Harrison *Old Testament Introduction* notes, "The extent of the disagreement among those who accept the postulate of two Deuteronomic editors is an indication of the basic weakness of the theory" (p. 731). That issue has created just an enormous argument in the literature. Analyzing Kings, critics try to separate the original material and the later Deuteronomic editing of the material. What is the more original material and, supposing there were two editions of this Deuteronomistic editing of the material and separating out the first from the second, it is really enormously complex material with a lot of disagreement. Everybody writing a book on that has different conclusion as far as how each passage is identified as what. It seems to me the author was someone in the line of the prophets. We don't know the author; the author's anonymous, but that's exactly what the prophets did. Kings is really

a prophetic interpretation of history. And it seems like there must have been a prophet to pull this material together, but we just don't know who.

The most dominant, current idea with respect to authorship is Martin Noth's Deuteronomistic History theory. See Martin Noth *Deuteronomistic History* published in English in 1981. According to Noth, a Deuteronomistic-historic collective of ancients sifted the material for kings and arranged it according to the principles of a Deuteronomistic theology of history. In his view there was just one author for the entire corpus of material from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings. See, that really builds on the old Wellhausen view that the Book of the Covenant found in the temple at the time of Josiah was the book of Deuteronomy. It had largely been ignored or lost. But not just that, it had been composed in the time of Josiah in an attempt to centralize worship in Jerusalem. The book of Deuteronomy wasn't really around until the time of Josiah. But in any case, the Deuteronomistic historian added, in Noth's view, Deuteronomy 1-4 as an introduction to his entire history, as well as Deuteronomy 29-30. He also compiled Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings as a theological presentation governed by the ideals of the materials of Deuteronomy. This means, that for Noth, 1 and 2 Kings was the work of a single author living in the exilic period. This author utilized various traditions and sources at his disposal to present the history of the Monarchial Period in Israel's existence as a nation as in tune with the Deuteronomistic perspective. In Noth's view, the framework in 1 and 2 Kings was created at the same time as the narrative material was molded into a unified composition. The author of the framework is the same as the author/editor of the narrative material. The work is a carefully planned treatise from the hand of a single author.

Now, with respect to that, there's no problem with that. The other aspects of this theory have a lot of problems with it but at least he sees a unified plan to the book. And he sees the influence of Deuteronomy in the book. There's general agreement among critical scholars today that 1 and 2 Kings is a history work governed by a Deuteronomistic viewpoint by means of which the actions of the

various kings of Israel and Judah are assessed.

3. Discussion of Deuteronomistic Critical Approach and Vannoy's Response

While we may agree with this characterization of the book, it is well to keep a distinction in mind when using the term "Deuteronomistic" or "Deuteronomic." In critical circles the term usually rests on the presupposition that the book of Deuteronomy was composed shortly before the reformation during the reign of Josiah and provided the basis for this reformation. The ideas of Deuteronomy are considered new and revolutionary, ideas arising in Israel fairly late in the Monarchial Period. The time of Josiah is just shortly before the end of the Southern Kingdom, 586 B.C. There are, of course, serious objections to such a viewpoint. Emphasis in Deuteronomy on obedience to the law with the resulting blessing or curse is not just Deuteronomic, it is covenantal in Exodus and Leviticus, just as much as in Deuteronomy. Of course, what these critical scholars would say is that Exodus and Leviticus were, for the most part, later, or pre-exilic material. It gets very complicated if you don't accept the biblical material as is presented to us, with Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy as originally from the time of Moses.

The Critical school however also makes much of what is viewed as a Deuteronomic requirement of centralization of worship in Jerusalem, which necessitated the destruction of the high places throughout the land. This centralization requirement is supposedly taught in Deuteronomy 12 and came into existence around 621 B.C. Now, that's a subject of discussion in its own right whether Deuteronomy 12 really requires a single sanctuary, that the only legitimate worship being permitted at one central altar and all other altars being *per se* illegitimate. I don't think that's what Deuteronomy says, but that's the view of this approach.

In a critical view, this requirement then became a primary standard by which each king was judged. It must be noted, however, that it's not so clear that

Deuteronomy 12 requires centralization of worship. And in addition, when one accepts the general critical position on Deuteronomy and the date of its authorship, then one must view the evaluation of the earlier kings by this late standard as an artificial and distorted way of assessing their reigns. In other words, if Deuteronomy wasn't around till the time of Josiah, how could you assess the reign of say, Rehoboam, first king of the Southern Kingdom, on the basis of Deuteronomy if Deuteronomy doesn't exist in 931 B.C.? How could you assess Rehoboam's reign on the basis of Deuteronomy if Deuteronomy didn't exist until 300 years later in 621 B.C.?

So, if you accept this critical position and the date 621 for Deuteronomy then you must view the evaluation of the earlier kings by this late standard as an artificial and distorted way of assessing their reigns. A Deuteronomistic history writer must be viewed as more interested in his theology than in the facts of history. So his writing becomes a theological history in the sense that his theology requires distortions of what actually happened. For example, Wellhausen made the following statement concerning the division of the kingdom and the establishment of worship centers at Bethel and Dan by Jeroboam I: "As for their departure from the Mosaic cultus observed at Jerusalem, on the other hand, it was first alleged against them as a sin only by the later Jews. At the time, religion put no obstacle in the way of their separation; on the contrary, it actually suggests it promoted it. The Jerusalem cultus had not yet come to be regarded as the alone legitimate one. That instituted by Jeroboam at Bethel and at Dan was recognized as equally right. Images of the deities were exhibited at all three places, and indeed at every place where a house of God was found." In other words, the actual situation, in Jeroboam's time is alleged to have differed greatly from the representation of it found in the Deuteronomistic history.

This forces Wellhausen to question the actuality of the whole story of the man of God out of Judah who spoke against Jeroboam's altar in 1 Kings 13. See that man of God out of Judah in 1 Kings 13 goes off and condemns that altar at

Bethel. Well, if in that early time there wasn't any idea of centralization of worship, which Wellhausen felt was required by a Deuteronomy that didn't exist at that time, why would the man of God out of Judah go on up and condemn worship at the altar at Bethel? Well, Wellhausen doesn't think he did. He thinks that's a construct from a later time trying to read back to the theology of Deuteronomy over time. This story is developed to suggest that this idea was an ancient idea, when in fact it was not. So this forces Wellhausen to question the actuality of that whole story, which he does. He doesn't think it ever happened.

Elsewhere, Wellhausen can say of the Deuteronomistic revision of 1 and 2 Kings, "This revision is, as we expect to find, alien to the materials that the work is founded on, so that it does violence to them." He speaks of the facts of the book, not only being judged, but also framed in accordance with the Josianic book of Deuteronomy. This was all done in order to give a theological explanation to people in exile for their condition. But this means that wherever Deuteronomic ideas and viewpoints were found in the texts prior to the time of Josiah, they were regarded as secondary insertions and distortions of what actually happened. So much for authorship for the moment. We'll come back to that later.

4. Annals of the Kings Used as Sources

Because 1 and 2 Kings spans such a long period of time, it is natural to expect that the author utilized various sources of historical material which were at his disposal. It seems to have been a history of the kings of Israel and the history of the kings of Judah, which is frequently referred to as "the book of the annals of the kings of Israel" or the book of the annals of the kings of Judah."

Look at 1 Kings 14:19. You get this reference that is used quite regularly. 1 Kings 14:19 says after discussing Jeroboam, "The other events of Jeroboam's reign, his wars and how he ruled, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel." So the writer refers his readers to another source, which presumably was something accessible if someone wanted to get more information. 1 Kings

15:23 gives you the other source: “As for the other events of Asa’s reign, all his achievements, all he did and the cities he built, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah.” There are 33 references to those two sources through the books of 1 and 2 Kings. There were quite a few references. So when you get to the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, that’s the north. It can’t refer to Chronicles. It seems like there are two sources, probably court records or something like that, that had been kept in some way and were accessible and known. There are a number of sources mentioned in Chronicles, too. And it may be that the writer of Chronicles had some access to 1 and 2 Kings--that’s possible because Chronicles is written later.

The question, of course, rises concerning the nature of these two sources. It is to be noted that reference to them begins only after the division of the kingdom, and that presumably they were sources which began at that point in time. It is not so clear, however, whether they were the official court annals or some sort of history written by someone who had access to the official court annal. Those in favor of the last view say that the matter of reference to them presupposes that they were accessible to everyone who might desire to consult them. This could not be said of official court annals. Yet, who knows how accessible such material might have been? It might also be questioned whether official court annals were to have contained the record of a plot to gain the kingship. 1 Kings 16:20 says, “As for other events of Zimri’s reign and the rebellion he carried out, are they not written in the books of the kings of Israel?” We don’t really know much about what these sources were, but they are repeatedly referred to.

For the history of Solomon another source was used, referred to in 1 Kings 11:41 as “the Book of the Annals of Solomon.” Here it is even more difficult to determine the character of who is writing. Some say it was purely a pragmatic, propagandistic sort of work. Others say it was a history, which contained exclusively a political account of Solomon’s reign. Others say it was broader in content than simply political material. There are lengthy discussions on this issue,

but no grounds on which to draw a solid conclusion. But there's another source, the Book of the Annals of Solomon that is referred to there in 1 Kings 11:41. It is highly probable that the author of Kings had access to other sources that he does not specifically mention. This is especially the case for material in Kings that one would not expect to be derived from court annals as, for example, the extensive narratives concerning the prophets Elijah and Elisha. It is not possible to determine if material of this sort is derived from some single source or from various separate prophetic accounts.

In general, most scholars are inclined to the latter position. H. H. Rowley labels these sources as prophetic biographies. He says how many of these were used we cannot say. But in addition to the cycles of stories dealing with Elijah and Elisha and Isaiah we find the story of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22. It seems to me besides the official court annals, the writer must have had access to some sort of material that dealt with Elijah and these prophets, and utilized all that material together in writing this book. But we don't have a lot of hard evidences to know precisely what these sources were and how many of them there were.

3. Date of Composition

Third, date for composition. It must have been written after the announcement of the release of Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon and, by implication, his position of honor there in Babylon until his death. We do not know the date of Jehoiachin's death. But in any case, it was subsequent to the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the succession of Evil-merodach's coming to the throne, about 562 B.C. So sometime, probably not too long after 562 is the earliest the book could have been written because it includes that material.

There are considerations, however, that have caused some to regard the final material in the book as added to an earlier original composition. In a number of instances certain things from the pre-exilic period are said to continue in existence "to this day." This is thought by some to indicate a composition in pre-

exilic time. For example, in 1 Kings 8:8 we read about the poles that were used to carry the ark. These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the holy place in the front of inner sanctuary but not outside the holy place, and “They are still there today.” See that’s said in 1 King 8:8. After the destruction of the temple and the loss of the ark, this was no longer the case.

We read in 1 King 9:20-21 that Solomon conscripted people left from the Hittites, Ammorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites for a slave force “as it is to this day.” This, by nature of the case, applied as long as the kingdom of Judah continued to exist. The statements in 1 Kings 12:19 that Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David “to this day,” and 2 Kings 8:22 that Edom has been in rebellion against Judah “to this day,” presupposed the continued existence of the Kingdom of Judah. Other similar references are less problematic but, nevertheless, taken together they seem to fit better with a writer who lived in Palestine in pre-exilic time than one in Babylon in post-exilic time.

If one accepts the possibility of pre-exilic work added to in post-exilic time, then the question is when did the pre-exilic work come into existence? When one notices that reference to the source the Annals of the Kings of Judah, is cited with reference to the rule of King Jehoiakim but is absent with respect to his successors, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. Then there is some reason to assume that the first composition occurred in the period between the death of Jehoiakim and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. In other words, in the very last years before the captivity. The conclusion is then described as one living in exilic time. While this is a possible viewpoint on date and authorship, it rests largely on the “to this day” statements. An alternative is to take these statements as those of the original source rather than the final compilation of Kings.

Note 2 Chronicles 5:9 compared with 1 Kings 8:8. 2 Chronicles 5:9 says, “These poles were so long,” that’s the poles that carry the ark, “that their ends extending from the ark could be seen from in front of the inner sanctuary but not from outside the Holy place, and they are still there today.” 1 Kings 8:8, “These

poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary but not from outside the holy place, and they are still there today.”

Now note 2 Chronicles 5:9 compared to 1 Kings 8:8. Chronicles was certainly post-exilic. Yet the wording is the same. The most probable explanation is that the chronicler simply quoted his source, namely 1 Kings. Why could not the compiler/author of Kings have done the same with his sources? This would alleviate the problem of positing a redaction of an earlier book of Kings by an exilic editor and retain the unity of the composition by a single author living in exile utilizing the various sources that were at his disposal. In other words, the “to this day” statements could be the statements of the source that the writer simply quotes, not that the “to this day” extended on into that exilic period.

If you don’t say that, you almost have to say that part of the book was written before the exile; but this last section dealing with Jehoiachin’s imprisonment and release, that was added later by an editor. But a way around that is this suggestion. The *terminus ante quem*, before which, is the end of the Babylonian captivity, 539 B.C. There’s no mention of this end and no hint that it’s imminent. The book must then have reached its final form prior to this time. Although this is an argument from silence, which often is not convincing in this case the return from captivity is of such enormous significance that the author who related it would hardly have been able to be silent about its end, if it had already materialized. It seems quite certain that the end of captivity was not yet in sight, and there’s no hint of it.

I think I’ll stop at this point, I have another handout to go a bit further with some of this introductory material that we’ll look at probably the first hour of next week and then we’ll get into the book of Kings.

Transcribed by Kate Tortland
 Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt
 Final edit by Dr. Perry Phillips
 Re-narrated by Dr. Perry Phillips

