

## **Dr. Robert Vannoy, Kings, Lecture 4**

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### **Text of Kings, Deuteronomistic History, Major Emphases**

Text of Kings in the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX)

Well, let's look through the text section then, and then what I just circulated we'll pick up beginning with verse 15 and go on. Now all of this material is just introductory types of things as far as I put it on the handouts. Remember last week we discussed the names, general content, structure of book, authorship, sources, age of composition, and then page 13 we come to "text." So let's look at the text section first, and then we'll go on to the new handout. R. K. Harrison's *Introduction to the Old Testament* says the Hebrew text of kings contains numerous corruptions, and for purposes of reconstruction, the Septuagint version is an invaluable aid. It is shorter than the Masoretic text and thought to preserve more reliable variances. In general, the LXX is based on a purer form of the Hebrew than that which is now extant. Fragments of the books of Kings were recovered from the caves of Qumran and seem to support the view that there once existed a Hebrew text that was closer, for the most part, to that underlying the Septuagint than that underlying the Masoretic text, and which in certain instances, is superior to both.

For example, what appears to be a second account of the disruption of the kingdom was interpolated after 1 Kings 12:24 of the Septuagint version. It narrated the events connected with the death of Solomon and the reign of Rehoboam and furnished an account of the revolt of Jeroboam with some repetition of material from 1 Kings 11 and 12. Sweet tells that this interpolation constituted a second and distinct rescension of the disruption story, resting equally with the first on a Hebrew original. Whatever the value of this particular account may be, there is no doubt whatever that the Septuagint and occasionally the Lucian rescension of it, are indispensable for textual study of the book of Kings.

Now that's rather technical material. I don't want to get into the discussion of the text of Kings. The text of Kings in some respects is similar to the text of Samuel; it's very complex because there are obviously, in the course of transmission, some errors that have

crept into the text. It also seems quite obvious that the Septuagint is based upon a different Hebrew tradition as far as backgrounds, and the present Hebrew text is based on the Masoretic text, so comparing points of difference as far as textual matters becomes a highly technical matter. It's a complex matter, and I think in most cases there's a lot of uncertainty whether in a given case you prefer the Septuagint reading over the Masoretic reading. Let's not get the wrong impression that the text of Kings is something that's completely unreliable. I would say that these differences are usually minor points that affect no substantive understanding of the text. In some cases, for example, you'll have a noun with an article and some Hebrew text but without the article in the Septuagint. So a lot of the variances are very minor things of that sort, but there are differences, and it does appear that in certain cases the Septuagint may preserve a preferable reading.

While Harrison, to continue here, is undoubtedly correct in assigning an important role of the Septuagint in textual studies of Kings generally, there is one area in which it appears this does not hold, namely that of chronology. It was long thought that the chronologies of Kings were completely unreliable. Apparently, the translators of the Septuagint shared this viewpoint and frequently altered numbers in the text in an attempt to eliminate some of these problems. Edwin Thiele, in *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* has demonstrated that the Masoretic text, correctly understood, has preserved accurately the chronological data which, even though not understood, was transmitted correctly through centuries of time.

### Synchronization of the Chronology of the Kings of the North and South

I just mentioned that I think in the last class that we had the synchronization of the reigns of the kings of the north and the south. When you try to work that out by simply adding up the numbers, they get out of synchronization for a long time, for hundreds of years. That's been something for which there was no resolution until Edwin R. Thiele wrote this book, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, and worked out a way to resolve those differences. But you see the point being made: In spite of the fact that the reigns

apparently didn't synchronize, they were retained in the text, which is really a testimony to the accuracy of the transmission of at least that part of the text. You would expect something to happen, something like with the Septuagint, some modification if it was an apparent problem of synchronization. So it seems that at least in that area the Masoretic text has preserved the preferable text. As Grey *1 and 2 Kings*, page 45, says, "The numbers of Septuagint represent efforts at harmonization of chronology of notorious complexity. Usually they simply complicate the problem and reveal ignorance of the systems of dating in Israel and Judah. Once you understand the systems of dating, many of these difficulties of synchronization disappear." But until that was discussed by Thiele, there was very little understanding of the problem.

There remains a great deal of work to be done on assessing the text of Kings. See the article, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," by Bruce Waltke in *The Biblical Criticism: Historic, Literary and Textual*, Zondervan, 1978. So I just mentioned that about the texts so you'd have at least some idea of that question.

Let's go on to that new handout. Thiele is in print now in the new edition, a more recent edition than the early edition. He also wrote a sort of brief, popularized summary of his larger work. It was published, and I think it was called, *The Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, and that's a little paperback that was really a good summarization of the larger work; but that little paperback is not still in print, unfortunately, but the larger work is.

### Deuteronomistic History

The Deuteronomist theology of history in the last 35 or 40 years has seen a complete, a complex, and an ongoing debate arise over the nature and purpose of what has been termed the "Deuteronomistic History." Much of this debate concerns the theological aim, or purpose, of the historian, or historians, who composed this history. Remember I mentioned last week that term "Deuteronomistic History." You can use that term in what I would view as a legitimate way, and it can also be used in a way that I think violates a high view of Scripture. The term itself was made popular by Martin Noth, that is his idea that

there was a writer living in the exilic period who was then influenced by the book of Deuteronomy. Of course, Noth understood the book of Deuteronomy not to be Mosaic but to be from 621 B.C., the time of Josiah, shortly before the exile. But this writer living in the exile was influenced by the theology of Deuteronomy and then composed the entire corpus of material moving from the book of Deuteronomy all the way to the end of 2 Kings. But Deuteronomy was a preface, you might say, to his work. It contains his theology that he wanted reflected in the rest of the work, so then Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are all said to be influenced by this Deuteronomistic history.

It represents the history of the entire period of Israel's history in Canaan, written from the perspective of an agronomist theologian, that's the Deuteronomistic History. Now, consider the consequences. It forces you to understand much that is written in that history is not reliable historical writing because he's distorted history with recorded views that fit this theological mold. He is writing late, projecting his theology back on earlier times, and in doing that he's forcing things to conform to that pattern that in reality never occurred. It seems to me that that view is something that's incompatible with the Bible as Scripture.

However, you can use this term to reflect something that I think is true, and that is, the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings do reflect the theological ideas of the book of Deuteronomy. I don't think there's any question about that. The point is, Deuteronomy should be placed where the Bible places it, in the time of Moses, explaining the relationship of the Lord to his people in the Sinai Covenant. That relationship is what governed the course of events down through the centuries. So the writers, which I would not view as one writer living in the exile, but the writer of the book of Joshua, the writer of the book of Judges, the writer of Samuel, the writer of Kings, were all people that moved in that stream of thought.

So when they constructed their history of those various periods, they told this story, as things happened, and things happened as they had been programmed, you might say, from the book of Deuteronomy. The Lord said if you are obedient, there'll be blessing; if

you turn away, there's going to be cursing. Israel's history reflected that, happening over the centuries. So in that sense you can say there's a legitimate way in which you can talk about the Deuteronomic theology of history, but let's go a bit further with it.

### Character, Purpose and Emphases of Kings

#### A. Writer gives a History of the Kings of Israel and Judah from a Covenantal Perspective

One is the character and purpose of 1 and 2 Kings as seen by its emphases and structure. In general, I think the following observations can be substantiated from reflection on 1 and 2 Kings:

A. The writer gives a history of the kings of Israel and Judah from a covenantal perspective. The guiding thesis is that the welfare of the nation depended on the obedience of the king and the people to their covenantal obligations as defined in the Mosaic Covenant. I think that's a fundamental principal of the book of Kings I think that equally applies to the material of Joshua, Judges and Samuel. When you come to Kings, you're talking about the Kingdom Period, and you have a history of that period from a covenantal perspective. The guiding thesis is the welfare of the nation depends on the obedience of the king and the people to their covenantal obligations.

#### B. Prophetic Assessment of Israel's History Based on a Covenant Principle

B. The analysis of Israel's history from this covenantal perspective can be found throughout Joshua to 2 Kings. These books are collectively called "The Former Prophets" in Jewish tradition. There's a very real sense in which these books can be said to contain a prophetic assessment of Israel's history, based on a covenant principle. I think that term "Former Prophets" is a good designation, for what we normally call the historical books.

We often think of history as a detached, objective kind of chronicling events. But I think real history writing always involves perspectives. A historian is assessing what went on according to certain criteria, judging things, and writing down whatever the starting

point is. The writers of these books of Joshua to 1 and 2 Kings are bringing this covenantal perspective to their assessment of what was going on in Israel. That's reflected, I think, of a prophetic interpretation, you might say. It's a telling of the significance of what was going on. It is a prophetic interpretation, which I would say, is an inspired interpretation. It's in that sense, God's own view of what the significance of these events were that we have before us.

History is a very mysterious thing. If you try to assess significance or meaning of events, and how God is at work and what God is doing in history, you have many different opinions. You ask one person, it'd be one thing, and everybody else it'd be something else. It can be a very elusive thing. Unless you have the divine word that interprets, I think it's very hard to understand exactly how to assess what's going on. That's what we have in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings; it is an inspired interpretation of history.

### C. Covenantal Standpoint of Kings' Author/Compiler

C. The selection and character of the material incorporated in 1 and 2 Kings must be understood and assessed in connection with the covenantal standpoint of its author/compiler. Now, I say author/compiler simply because I think the author of 1 and 2 Kings was someone who used sources. We talked about that last week. He had a variety of sources at his disposal; he utilized them, put them together, and created this book, but he did that in a unified way; so you may call him the author/compiler. The purpose of the author was not to present a political, economic history of Israel's kingdom period in accordance with principles of modern, secular historiography. It wasn't his purpose. The writer gives a covenantal, rather than politico-economic, judgment on the significances of various kings and their actions.

For example, from the standpoint of the secular historian, Omri was one of the most important kings of the Northern Kingdom. But his reign is dismissed in six verses, 1 Kings 16:23-28. Omri's mentioned in Syrian records a hundred years after his time as an important king in the Northern Kingdom. You might expect an Israelite to give a lot of

press to Omri. He established Samaria as the capital of Northern Kingdom and established a dynasty that lasted quite a long time. He was an important king. It's not given a great deal of interest by the writer of Kings: six verses.

In a similar way, the important role of Jeroboam II of the north is briefly treated in 2 Kings 14:23-29. Jeroboam II brought the Northern Kingdom to its height in a political, economic sense, even extending its borders way, way to the north. But Jeroboam isn't of a great deal of significance as far as the writer of the Kings is concerned.

### Josiah as an Example

As another example, the author tells us nothing of the first 18 years of the reign of Josiah but begins a description of his rule with the reformation begun in the 18th year of his reign. 2 Kings 22:3 follows. There are a couple chapters there on the reformation of Josiah, when he called Israel back to the Lord and observed the Passover. Important political events in the ancient near east involving Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and a major shift in geo-political power of Syria to Babylon are ignored except as it's related to Josiah's death. In the time of Josiah, you had a major transition of power going on in the ancient world. That transition of power was the shift from Assyrian domination to Babylonian domination. Egypt became involved in that shift of power. But you see, that's one of those turning points of major importance as far as political history might be concerned. Kings doesn't even mention it. Kings says anything about it. The only reason you get any hint of anything like that is because Pharaoh Neco of Egypt went up to assist the Assyrians.

Josiah, for whatever reason, Kings doesn't tell us that either, but he went out to try and stop Neco and he was killed, and we're told of how he was killed in this battle with Pharaoh Neco, but that's the only reason it's brought up. There's no attempt to assess what was going on in the international, political scene. Nothing is said of the motives that caused Josiah to oppose Pharaoh Neco. Rather, the concern is whether the kings had notable deviations from the covenant or notable renewals of the covenant. These receive the most attention. Someone like Josiah, someone like Hezekiah, who had reformations, renewals

of the covenant, they get a great deal of attention. Then you get someone like Manasseh or Ahab who turned away from the covenant and led the people into idolatry. They too could get a great deal of attention. But the Kings who get the most attention, you see, are those kings who display notable favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward covenant responsibilities; they are the ones who get the most attention.

### Manasseh as an Example

Manasseh, 2 Kings 21:1-19, is an example of deviation from the covenant. Here again, it is his covenant disobedience that is emphasized rather than the political features of his reign as, for example, his involvement in Assyrian politics in Egypt, which is passed over all together in 2 Kings. It is known to us only from Assyrian records where Manasseh is mentioned in a text from Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. You see, when Kings treats Manasseh's reign, it doesn't get into what his involvement was in the international and political scene. He was involved because these Assyrian records reference it. Kings doesn't tell us anything about it. Kings tells us about the way in which he turned away from the Lord and Manasseh's deportation to Babylon. He was deported to Babylon by the Assyrians; there was a struggle for the control over Babylon at the time between Babylonians and Assyrians, and this was the beginnings of the rise of Babylon. But Manasseh's deportation to Babylon and his later repentance is only related in 2 Chronicles 33:10 -13. We're not even told about it in Kings.

Ahab is another ruler given extensive treatment, not so much because of extraordinary political importance, but because of the serious threats to covenant fidelity that arose in Israel during his rule.

On the positive side, Hezekiah and Josiah are given extensive treatment because of their involvement in covenant renewal. It is in this perspective that all the kings of the north are said to have done evil in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin. Jeroboam son of Nebat is the first king of the northern Divided Kingdom period, and he set up those golden calves in Dan and in Bethel.



All the kings in the north subsequent to him followed in that practice, and so they're said to have done evil in the eyes of the Lord.

Alright, that was “C” which the basic idea there is that the selection and character of material incorporated in Kings must be understood from this covenantal perspective. It's not a political-economical sort of assessment of the kingdom period in Israel – it's a covenantal assessment.

#### D. The Author Stresses the Interrelationship between Prophecy and Fulfillment

D. The author stresses the interrelationship between prophecy and fulfillment in the historical developments in the experience of the nation Israel. There's a lot of emphasis on prophecy and fulfillment. In other words, things have happened in Israel's historical experience. We're told in advance, and then they came to pass. As Gerhard von Rad, *The Deuteronomistic Theology of History and 1 and 2 Kings*, in “The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays,” has pointed out, prediction and fulfillment pervades the whole book of Kings. He lists eleven instances of this in which normally the fulfillment is introduced with some expression such as, “According to the word of the Lord which he spoke by the mouth of [a given prophet],” or some similar fulfillment citation. You come across that eleven times. The result of this emphasis in the book of Kings is that the history of this period is presented not as some chaotic combination of happenstance produced by the accidental confluence of certain events, but rather the course of Israel's history is determined by a sovereign God who rules all of history and is guiding Israel's own historical destiny in accordance with his purposes.

Now that's a perspective on history, that there is a God who controls history and who can say in advance that this or that is going to come to pass, and it does. You find that kind of sequence in Kings: prophecy and fulfillment as you move through this period of history.

### E. Prophets Themselves as Messengers of the Covenant Have Prominence

E. Not only does prophesy and fulfillment play an important role in the structure of the book of Kings, the prophets themselves in their role as messengers of the covenant are given prominence. Elijah and Elisha are given extensive coverage in their attempts to turn the people away from idolatry and return them to covenant obedience. Elijah and Elisha probably receive more attention in the books of Kings than any other two single individuals. They are very prominent; there is a lot of material devoted to the ministry of both Elijah and his successor Elisha. Other prophets whose ministries are referred to include: Ahijah, 1 Kings 11:29; Shemiah, 1 Kings 12:22; Jehu, 1 Kings 16:1; Micaiah, 1 Kings 22; Huldah, 2 Kings 22:14; Jonah, 1 Kings 14:23-27; and Isaiah, 2 Kings 19. You notice, only the last two, Jonah and Isaiah, are what are called canonical, or writing, prophets, who have given us a book of Scripture that bears their name. The other prophets, they may have written, they may not, but if they did it wasn't preserved and included in the canon of Scripture. But there is a great emphasis on prophets and the role of prophets in calling the kings to obedience to the way of the covenant.

### F. Lord's Promise to David Mixed in with Obedience/Disobedience to the Covenant

F. While the writer emphasizes Israel's obedience or disobedience to her covenant obligations as of decisive significance for historical destiny, at the same time he recognized the far reaching significance of the Lord's promise to David--that his dynasty would endure forever. This divine commitment to the house of David and the city of Jerusalem, in which he caused his name to dwell, was also a factor in the determination of Israel's historical experience. This is noticeable, in the references to the "lamp," which the Lord had promised to David.

Let's look at couple of his references so you can see what I'm talking about. 1 Kings 11:36: "This is the time of the division of the kingdom and the Lord says, "I will give one tribe to his son, [that is, Solomon's son] so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my name." When Solomon

turned away from the Lord, and Jeroboam rebels at the time of that succession of Rehoboam to the throne of Judah, the Lord says he is going to preserve the line of David by giving the tribe of Judah to Rehoboam. The reason for that is so that, “David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem.” The reason for it is God had promised David that eternal dynasty, and that promise has an effect on the course of history. The Lord preserved the throne of David because of his promise.

Look at 15:4: “Nevertheless, for David’s sake, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong. For David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and not failed to keep any of the Lord’s commands all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.”

You see, that verse should be read with what comes before. We’re talking about Abijah and you read in verse 3, “Committed all the sins his father had done before him. His heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of David his forefather had been. Nevertheless, for David’s sake, the Lord gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him.”

You see, the point I’m trying to make is that promise to David is also a factor in the way in which the course of Israel’s history develops. There are a number of other references to that 2 Kings 8:19 being another one. It also appears in more general references to the promise to David (1 Kings 8:20, 25; 9:5), and the impact which this has on specific historical developments in Judah’s later history. See 1 Kings 11, 12, and 13:11-32. The writer of Kings is very much aware that another thing that was an important factor in the course of Israel’s history was the promise that the Lord had given to David.

#### G. Life and Reign of David is Ideal Standard by which the Lives of Later Kings are Measured

G. Not only does the writer of Kings emphasize the divine promise to David and his house and the influence this had on Israel’s historical experience, but he also uses the life and reign of David as the ideal standard by which the lives of later kings are measured.

And that's where we come across that phrase frequently, we just read one of them, but let me just pick one here arbitrarily. Look at 15:11 because that's in the same chapter we're open to 15:11 is: "Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done." See, that kind of an expression where someone does something for which they are commended, and then a comparison is made to David as the standard by which the kings are judged, David being the ideal--that's frequently done. In this the writer shows a positive attitude toward the institution of kingship in general, and that of David specifically. I don't think you can say that the writer of Kings has a totally negative attitude towards kingship. Now, it's true that the kings consistently fall short of the ideal, and they are condemned for that, but that doesn't mean that the writer has a totally negative view of kingship. That's reflected, I think, in the way in which he speaks of David.

#### H. Purpose to Explain to a People in the Exile the Reason for Humiliation Because they Broke the Covenant

When all of these factors, I don't remember how many of them it was, but A through G are taken together, it seems clear that 1 and 2 Kings is written to explain to a people in exile that the reason for their condition of humiliation is that they were a covenant-breaking people. Remember that it's written in exile. They've undergone judgment, and here's the explanation why as they look back on their history. I think it's very clearly explained to them. God is holy and just in bringing the exile upon them.

We see this concerning the Northern Kingdom in 2 Kings 17:6-23. Let's look at that. I think that's an important chapter because that's the downfall of the Northern Kingdom, and when that comes to pass, the explanation is given as to why the Northern Kingdom went into exile. You read in the first 5 or 6 verses how the Assyrians came, invaded Samaria, captured it, and then deported the Israelites to Assyria.

Look at verse 7: "All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. They worshipped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the

Lord had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. The Israelites secretly did things against the Lord their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns. They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. At every high place, they burned incense as the nations whom the Lord had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the Lord to anger. They worshipped idols, though the Lord had said ‘You shall not do this.’ The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: ‘Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets.’”

#### 1. Prophets Calling them Back to the Covenant

See, that was the function of the prophets, hauling them back to the covenant, hauling them back to obedience to the law. “But they would not listen, and were as stiff-necked as their fathers who did not trust in the Lord their God.” And there’s verse 15, “They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers, and the warnings he had given them.” That’s the heart of it. “They rejected his decrees and the covenant.” They followed idols; they imitated the nations. Verse 16: “They forsook the commands of the Lord.” Verse 18: “So the Lord was angry with Israel, and removed them from his presence.” That’s the issue, and the book of Kings explains to a people in exile why they’re in this situation in which they find themselves.

Notice the way verse 18 continues; because this chapter is in the context of the fall the Northern Kingdom. Of course, the writer’s living in exile, he’s living at the time when the Southern Kingdom had done the same thing. And so, look what he says, “Only the tribe of Judah was left, and even Judah did not keep the commands of the Lord their God.” You see, it’s the same judgment that comes on Judah. Even Judah did not keep the commands of the Lord their God, they followed the practices Israel had introduced. Therefore, the Lord rejected all the people of Israel. The explanation of chapter 17 is really an explanation of

why it's not applied just to the north, but equally to the south. And that's the issue. They rejected the covenant. So he afflicted them, gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence; that's speaking of Judah, the Southern Kingdom. Okay, so we see this concerning the Northern Kingdom in 2 Kings 17:6-23. We see it with respect to the Southern Kingdom in 2 Kings 17:18-20 in those two verses we just looked at.

2 Kings 21 tells us about the reign of Manasseh. And when you read of the reign of Manasseh, the most wicked of the kings of the south, the Lord says because of Manasseh, exile for Judah is inevitable. It's going to come, it's determined, it's set. Subsequent to Manasseh, you find with Josiah a reformation, but it's not enough. It's too late at that point because the judgment has been determined. In 2 Kings 22 and 23 the reformation under Josiah is viewed as too little and too late (See 2 Kings 23: 26 and 27). Verses 26 and 27 say, "Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke Him to anger. So the Lord said, 'I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, 'There shall my Name be.'" Even the fact that he had caused his name to dwell in the temple in Jerusalem was not something that in some automatic way was going to guarantee the continued survival of Judah as they persistently turned away from him. So the book then is basically a retrospective analysis of Israel's history, given to explain the reasons for the destruction of Jerusalem and the experience of exile.

This does not mean, however, that all is lost and that there is no hope for the future. The writer keeps the promise to David in view throughout the history. In spite of Israel's disobedience and the resulting realization of the curses of the Sinai Covenant, the implications of his promise to David for Israel's future are not worked out or commented upon. But the promise is prominent in the book of Kings as a basis upon which Israel may look to the future with good reason for hope rather than despair. It is in this connection that von Rad in his article "The Problem of the Hexateuch" says of 2 Kings 25:27-30--that's the very last section of the book where Jehoiachin, who had been taken to Babylon and put in

prison is released from prison in Babylon. Von Rad says-- "Obviously, nothing is said here in strictly theological terms. But a carefully measured indication is given an occurrence referred to which has immense significance for the Deuteronomist since it provides a basis upon which Yahweh could build further if he so willed. At all events the reader must understand this passage to be an indication of the fact that the line of David has not come to an irrevocable end." At the end of the book, the line of David is still intact. Jehoiachin is still alive; he's been released from prison. You don't know what's going to happen beyond that. The writer doesn't speculate. Alright, that was all under this heading, "The Character and Purpose of 1 and 2 Kings as Seen in these Emphases and Structure."

## 2. Deuteronomistic History of Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad

Let me just give you some idea of the kinds of emphases you see and how that reflects on the purpose of the book. Alright, "2" "Some Brief Comments on the Approaches to the Deuteronomistic History Advocated by Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad." First Martin Noth, he was the originator of this whole "Deuteronomistic History" in the technical sense of the term. Martin Noth proposed the idea that all of Deuteronomy to 2 Kings was the work of a Deuteronomistic historian of the Exilic Age. Most view, however, this Deuteronomistic history completely lacks a vision for the future. The only interest is in the past. He sees no eschatological dimension in the work, and says that the Deuteronomic historian nowhere affirms or insinuates that the history of Israel can have a continuation beyond the disaster brought upon them by God because of their sin. It is a finished history. He notes that 2 Kings 25:27-30 contains no reference to future restoration, nor does it in any view lend itself to such an interpretation. This negative outlook Noth views as consistent with Deuteronomy, which pronounced curses for disobedience.

Now, if you know Deuteronomy, you might say: "What about Deuteronomy 30?" This says the Lord's going to bring about repentance, and when they do, the diaspora returns. Noth views Deuteronomy 30:1-4 as a later addition. It's all from the critical series. When a passage like that doesn't fit with the theory it's always said not to have originally

been there. It seems clear that in this viewpoint there is a failure to give sufficient attention to the Davidic promise, and its function in the narratives of Kings. I think that's something that's overlooked. It's assessment is so negative, and yet that Davidic theme that runs through the book is something positive. Now admittedly, those kings who came in the line of David didn't live up to the ideal, but nevertheless that promise remains intact. "I will give you a dynasty that endures" goes back to 2 Samuel 14:7.

#### Von Rad & Heilsgeschichte [Salvation History]

Let's go on to von Rad. Both Noth and von Rad are modern, rationalistic, critical scholars, and not evangelical scholars. While expecting Noth's literary thesis of a Deuteronomistic historian, von Rad disagrees with Noth's view of the aim or purpose of the world. Central to von Rad's view of the Deuteronomic history is the theology of the "Word of God,"--his terminology--which he finds in it. This word is first proclaimed in Deuteronomy and then repeated in the rest of the material. That which happens is the effect of this sufficient word. It is the functioning of this word, which makes history into *heilsgeschichte*, "the history of salvation." *Heils geschichte* is a German term for the "history of salvation." This word, however, is both condemning (as seen in curses like Deuteronomy 28:15 and following) and liberating (as seen in the Messianic promise of 2 Samuel 7). Both are equally efficient in history. What has happened and what will happen in Israel's history depends on this two-fold word, which he basically sees as law and gospel, and not on the events themselves. For this reason, Israel's history is open toward the future. The end of 2 Kings leaves room for the possible future fulfillment of the Messianic promise.

The Deuteronomistic history, then, does not have a negative purpose only as with Noth, but is open to the possibility of the restoration of the Davidic house. Von Rad's view seems to do justice to the content of Joshua through Kings better than does Noth's; however, his approach involves a number of assumptions that rob the material of true and abiding value to us as something on which we can ground and strengthen our own faith. I



think this is important. For Von Rad *historie* and *heilsgeschichte*, two German terms refer to two different kinds of history. *Heilsgeschichte* is “salvation history, and *historie* “history” in the sense of what happened. *Heilsgeschichte* is not history in the sense of what happened: It’s a believed history, a confessed history. *Historie* is history in the sense of what happened. For von Rad *heilsgeschichte* and *historie* are sharply disconnected. His interest is not in *historie*, in what happened but in the confessional *heilsgeschichte* that he finds in Old Testament historical narratives. This ultimately means that historical narratives of Joshua to 2 Kings do not tell us a great deal about what actually happened. They tell us what a certain theologian living in the exile believed about the theological significance of Israel’s past and what implications this may have for the future.

For example, in speaking of the alleged mandatory standard of cultic unity, which is applied to all the kings of the kingdom period by the Deuteronomistic historian, the view of someone like von Rad, in fact, it is a widespread view, is this writer has this ideal that Deuteronomy required centralization of worship. There was only one legitimate place of worship, and that was Jerusalem. All the kings of the whole period would be assessed on whether or not they conformed to that standard of centralization of worship.

Now, their approach assumes that idea of centralization of worship didn’t arise until the time of Josiah and the law book that was found in the temple there. It is supposedly compiled during the time of Josiah and alleged to be Mosaic--when it actually wasn’t--with the specific purpose of concentrating power to Jerusalem by the prophets and priests of Jerusalem by confining all legitimate worship in Jerusalem. According to von Rad’s scheme, that goes way back to Wellhausen: that movement in Israel’s history from many places of worship to a single place of worship culminated in the time of Josiah. So you see what’s going on here: In speaking of “the alleged mandatory standard of cultic unity which is applied to all the kings of the kingdom period by Deuteronomistic historian,” von Rad says, “Admittedly it was unknown in the Monarchic Period.” That is that demand for centralization of worship because it didn’t come until 621 BC.

Further he says, “In every period of history, the past is always, to some extent,

misjudged by the subjective application of standards that have become binding on a later age.” That is what he is saying has happened all through this history. This late standard has been applied to kings who have lived prior to the time in which the standard existed. They are being judged by a standard that didn’t even exist in the time in which they lived. He says, “In every period the past is always, to some extent, misjudged by the subjective application of standards that have become binding on a later age.” Yet he goes on to say that, “This quote does not mean that there can be any doubt of the objective rightness, and indeed of necessity, of making such judgments.”

Note the objectivity is ascribed to the theologian’s judgment, not to the facticity of the events being reported. I think that’s his problem. If you are going to talk about objectivity in some way that is meaningful, it seems to me you must talk about the objectivity of the facts. He’s not talking about facts in the sense of what happened. He’s talking about the objectivity of this judgment, which is the subjective application of the law before it existed. He’s trying to get some kind of objectivity into something that is obviously not that, at least as I understand what he is saying.

He further speaks of “the obvious deficiencies of the Deuteronomistic historian’s historical writing (*Old Testament Theology*, p. 336). He says, “The Deuteronomist no longer had at his disposal sound standards for many of the events of the past, but his concern is only with the theological significance of the disasters that had befallen the two kingdoms. It is this concern that had elicited this perspective on history.”

Elsewhere, von Rad speaks of the Deuteronomistic historian working with a wide variety of traditional materials. He says, “Often this material did not readily accommodate itself to the Deuteronomist’s basic theological attitude. For example, the material pertaining to the Davidic covenant,” von Rad says, “is wholly undeuteronomic. But the Deuteronomic historian did not exclude it on this account.”

### Deuteronomic History Versus Davidic Covenant

The reason it is undeuteronomic is the material about David is positive. The idea is

the people influenced by Deuteronomy were against kingship because kingship inherently violated the kingship of the Lord. The material about David is positive so it doesn't fit with the Deuteronomistic theology.

I think that is a misconstrual in itself, but that's the way he is reading it. What he says is, "That material of the Davidic covenant is wholly undeuteronomic but the Deuteronomic historian did not exclude it on this account. This reflects the idea that there is a basic conflict between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants, each reflecting a different tradition and different interests." That's von Rad's view. You have two different traditions here that are not to be harmonized, so then you posit a conflict between the Sinai covenant and the Davidic covenant.

He says in *The Problem of the Hexateuch*, "In taking up this strongly established tradition, the Deuteronomist has moved right away from his native climate of the book of Deuteronomy whence his theological viewpoint originated. The wide extent to which the Deuteronomist employs his traditions shows that the Deuteronomistic traditions could not hold its grounds here. The obviously very powerful Messianic conception had broken in upon it and demanded a hearing." So this writer, working with these different traditions, were both so strong that he was not able to exclude the Davidic things, so he tries to incorporate it, but it is in tension against the Deuteronomistic theology; at least that is von Rad's view.

When one understands von Rad's negative attitude toward the historicity of the historical narratives of Joshua through Kings, one is forced to conclude that his stress on the functioning on the word of God in Israel's history [and he often talks about it], is not something that has a reality to it as reported, but rather it is a theological construct of the Deuteronomistic theologian. The functioning of the word of God is really just a construct of the Deuteronomistic theologian in von Rad's view.

#### Vannoy's Analysis of Historie versus Heilgeschichte

I think you can take a lot that he says about the word of God and its function in a

legitimate way and really learn something from it--if you can separate it from his construction that gives it a totally different significance. This division between *heilsgeschichte*, “confessional history,” and *historie*, in the sense of history or things that actually happen, is the major problem with von Rad’s approach to Old Testament literature. Although much can be learned from von Rad’s theological analysis of the Old Testament, it must be gleaned from him and transposed into an approach that avoids the inherent conflict that von Rad’s system fosters between historical truth and religious truth. For von Rad, historical truth and religious truth work on two different levels. It seems to me the biblical model is religious truth is founded on historical truth; the two work together.

But von Rad is giving a theological construct. He’s simply attributing historical references to the writer who lived in the exile and that writer is representing Israel’s history in such a way that the word of God had a prominent role and function in determining the course of Israel’s history as he wrote the history. But it is a confessed history; it is a theological construct. He’s not talking about something that actually happened in reality in that sense.

Transcribed by Nathan Levad, Peter Lee, Moriah O’Neil, Valerie Plichta, Erika Sanderson,  
Charaliz Isaac and edited by Peter Story  
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