

Themes in Kings

1. Deuteronomist historians compile and edit two versions: one around 621 BCE to account for fall of northern tribes (Israel) and survival of Judah, the second around 550 BCE during exile, to explain why Judah also fell to Babylonians. **Chronicles** basically retells/ revises Samuel-Kings, ending on more positive note: Persian King Cyrus directs exiles to return from Babylon to Judah to rebuild the temple (ca 539 BCE).
 - a. Sources include records that no longer exist, i.e. Acts of Solomon, Acts of Kings of Judah
 - b. All redactors are Judean (southern), so Judean kings look better than Israel's kings
2. Tabernacle vs. Temple: where does God live?
3. Covenant: eternal or dependent on future obedience?

Yahweh: I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt...I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ...The Lord will make you a house..... **2 Samuel 7.**

Solomon: But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built. Regard your servant's prayer...that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, "My name shall be there....If someone sins...then hear in heaven" (repeated refrain) **1 Kings 8.**

Yahweh: Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. **2 Samuel 7**

Yahweh: If you turn aside from following me, your or your children...then I will cut Israel off from the land that I have given them; and this house that I have consecrated I will cast out of my sight....This house will become a heap of ruins. **1 Kings 9**

4. Younger son theme—Bathsheba secures the throne for Solomon, who murders his rivals (brothers) as well as general Joab—loyal holdover from David's reign.
5. Solomon's achievements (Ch. 10) and excesses (Ch 11).

This is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of Yahweh and his own house. . . . All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel, their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the Israelites were unable to destroy completely—these Solomon conscripted for slave labor, and so they are to this day. . . . Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. **1 Kings 9**

For when Solomon was old, his wives (700 wives + 300 concubines) turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to Yahweh his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon followed Asarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites....Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites. **1 Kings 11**

6. Civil war: Jeroboam (Israel) and Rehoboam, the first divided monarchs. Series of monarchs told from southern (Judean) point of view.
7. North: Showdown: Ahab/ Jezebel vs. Elijah. Elijah wins; publicly ascends to heaven (2 Kings 2.1-12).
8. South: Queen Athaliah and King Joash
9. North: Elisha and Jehu; butchering of Baal worshippers (2 Kings 10:18-27). Despite his zeal, Jehu is "not careful to follow the law of Yahweh the God of Israel."
10. North: Conquest of Israel by Assyria (ch.17). Priest of Yahweh teaches Assyrian settlers how to worship to avoid plague; supposed origin of Samaritans (probably false, but prejudice lingered).
11. South: Last days of Judah (18-20), Manasseh's disloyalty (21; redactor 2), Josiah's reforms (22-23—redactor 2, including discovery of the book of Deuteronomy); Fall of Jerusalem and razing of Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (24-25) in 587 BCE. Priests and artisans are exiled to Babylon; peasants flee to Egypt.
12. Redactor 2: praises Hezekiah, who repels an Assyrian invasion, and Josiah's reforms (redactor 1 lived in this time and probably "wrote" or at least framed Deuteronomy, Joshua, Samuel, & 1st draft of Kings). Blames Manasseh's fascination with foreign religions for ultimate fall of Judah.

Highlights: Kings and Prophets

Kings

Glorious kingdom of Solomon culminates with construction of the Temple. However, his building projects impose a heavy burden of taxation and forced labor on Israelites which angers northern tribes, eventually resulting in a split between northern 10 tribes (Israel) and southern 2 tribes (Judah). Kings alternates narrative between north and south; however, 2 sets of southern redactors impose a southern point of view of events:

- The first set of redactors, around the reign of Josiah in 622, blames fall of north to Assyria (721 BCE) on idolatry and rural worship practices. They believe the south has escaped because of Josiah's reforms.
- The second set, writing after the south has fallen to Babylon in 587, searches events for a cause of Yahweh's desertion and finds one in the idolatry of the Judean King Manasseh (687-642).

Important characters (see table of events in Divided Kingdom on Harris pp. 196-7)

South (Jerusalem)	North (Samaria)	Prophets
Solomon		
Rehoboam I	Jeroboam I 922-901 BCE	
	Omri 876-869	
Queen Athaliah 842-837	Ahab, Jezebel, 869-850	Elijah (Israel)
	Jehu 842-815	Elisha (Israel)
	Hoshea 732-724	Isaiah & Micah (Judah)
Hezekiah 715-687 (decisive battle in 701)		
Manasseh (687-642)	Sargon II of Assyria 721-705	
Josiah 640-609		Jeremiah (Judah)
Jehoiakim 609-598		
Jehoiachin 598-597		
Zedekiah 597-587		Ezekiel
Nebuchadnezzar/ Gedaliah governor		Jeremiah taken to Egypt

Prophets

3 key Crises:

1. Assyrian invasion
 - a. **Amos** – reverses “Day of Yahweh” from celebration to apocalyptic judgment
 - b. **Hosea** – uses metaphor of his own marriage to discuss Baal worship. Stresses Yahweh's *hesed* (loving devotion) like a betrayed spouse.
 - c. **Isaiah** (1st) – associated with Davidic family; denounces abuse of poor; predicts Davidic heir will eventually establish universal peace and justice.
 - d. **Micah** – rural villager who condemn rich urban landowners who “skin” and “devour” the poor
2. Babylonian exile
 - a. **Zephaniah** – begins with threat of Yahweh's universal apocalypse; sentence repealed because of Josiah's reforms
 - b. **Nahum** – gloats over fall of Assyria to Babylon
 - c. **Habakkuk** – ponders Yahweh's fairness as he awaits Judah's fall to Babylon
 - d. **Jeremiah** – says Babylon is Yahweh's instrument to punish Judah for abuses of poor. Highly critical of temple cult and Davidic family; unpopular for counseling submission to Yahweh's instrument.
 - e. **Ezekiel** – says Yahweh is too holy to abide with unjust Judeans. Envisions glorious rebuilt sanctuary and “new Jerusalem.”
3. Post-exilic readjustment
 - a. **Isaiah** (2nd) – refers to Yahweh as the only God. Envisions a triumphant return to Jerusalem.
 - b. **Haggai** – argues that wealth of nations will follow if Hebrews rebuild Temple.
 - c. **Zechariah** – mystic visions re: Yahweh's messianic intentions for Israel.
 - d. **Joel** – Apocalyptic visions of the “Day of Yahweh”. Calls for repentance. Foresees climactic outpouring of divine on all humanity.
 - e. **Malachi** – Anonymous prophet. Predicts a coming judgment on “Day of Yahweh.” Predicts “messenger”(malachi) in form of reappearance of Elijah to purify Temple cult.
 - f. **3rd Isaiah** (55-66)– sharply critical of restored community's religious failures.
 - g. **“Jonah”** “moral fable contrasting Jonah's narrow view of divine justice with Yahweh's universality and compassion. Examines the value of “unfulfilled” prophecy.

Themes of Prophets:

- Apocalypse or Judgment
- Atonement and Punishment
- Messianic expectations (*malachi* or messenger—return of Elijah or Christ)
- Purification of Worship
- Abuses of Poor
- Temple Restoration and eventual restored, peaceful kingdom.

Jonah as critique of prophets:

- Jonah turns and runs from Yahweh, even as everyone else—Assyrians, Sailors, Storms, Fish, bushes, and animals—hurries to obey him.
- Prophet called to prophecy a doom he knows will be averted, yet he has a tantrum when he is proven correct.
- Jonah is depicted as rejoicing in prophesied vengeance and destruction of Nineveh, despite the fact that it contains thousands of innocent or clueless people and animals, and threatening to die without a bush for shade.
- Tells us the real end of prophecy should be mercy, not joy in others' sufferings. God reproves Jonah through a simple question: "Are you right to be angry?"