

Historical Books

Kings—Esther

United Kingdom		Divided Kingdom	
Saul (1025-1005?)		Judah	
David (1005-965?)		Israel	
Solomon (968-928)		Jeroboam (928-907)	
Divided Kingdom			
Judah	Israel		
Rehoboam	Jeroboam (928-907)		
Abijah			
Asa	Nadab		
	Baasha		
	Elah		
	Zimri		
Jehoshaphat (867-846)	Omri (882-871)		
	Ahab (873-852)		
	Ahaziah		
Jehoram	Jehoram		
Athaliah	Jehu		
Joash			

United Kingdom		Divided Kingdom	
Saul (1025-1005?)		Judah	
David (1005-965?)		Israel	
Solomon (968-928)		Jeroboam II (788-747)	
Divided Kingdom			
Judah	Israel		
Rehoboam	Jeroboam (928-907)		
Abijah			
Asa	Nadab		
	Baasha		
	Elah		
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	Ahab (873-852)		
	Ahaziah		
Jehoram	Jehoram		
Athaliah	Jehu		
Joash			

Babylonian-appointed governor Gedaliah rebels; final destruction (582)

1-2 Kings					
1 Kgs 1-11	1 Kgs 12-16	1 Kgs 17-2K1	2 Kgs 2-10	2 Kgs 11-17	2 Kgs 18-25
Solomon	Division	Elijah	Elisha	Israel	Judah
Succession, Brutality, Wisdom, Temple, Violations	Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Bethel-Dan, Ahijah's Prophecy	ANE Prophets, Ahab, Carmel, Ben-Hadad, Naboth, Ahaziah	Elijah's Translation, Miracles, Jehu Dynasty Installed	"Assyrian Crisis," Sargon II, Destruction	Reforms (H/J), Manasseh, Sennacherib, Isaiah, Destruction

1-2 Kings

1 Kgs 1-11	1 Kgs 12-16	1 Kgs 17-22	2 Kgs 18-25
Solomon	Division	Tiglathpileser III (Assyria), Rezin (Syria), Pekah (Israel)	Judah
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1-2 Kings

• Critical Issues

- Sparse archeological evidence for David's kingdom
 - ~Tel Dan inscription only evidence for David's reign
 - ~Extent of kingdom lacks archeological support
 - ~Supported: disparate economic conditions of 8th cent.
- Nature of Josiah's reforms: religious or political
 - ~Cult centrality creates better census, more effective military conscription
 - ~Likely produced the religious movement that produced the D author

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Wealth concentrated in hands of a few; majority of Judeans falling into overwhelming debt

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1-2 Kings

• Critical

- Sources
 - ~Mentioned: Book of Proverbs of Solomon, Books of the Annals of Kings of Israel
 - ~Elijah/Elisha traditions (some contradicting D theology)
- D Writer contributions
 - ~Formulaic negative evaluation of kings
 - ~Solomon speech, exile premonitions
 - ~Arrangement, editing of source material to fit themes

To illustrate ANE prophet's profile as miracle worker, not just soothsayer

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1-2 Kings

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1-2 Kings

• Theological Themes

• Consummates D themes

- ~Anthropology: covenant relationship, but failure primarily fault of kings
- ~Kingship: polemic against kingship comes to climax (primarily cultic infidelity)
- ~Wisdom: polemic against wisdom (even Solomon's wisdom leads to sin)

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Example: centralized worship requirement impossible for Northern kings to fulfill

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1-2 Kings

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Dynastic Davidic promise converted to conditional on covenant performance; left with just an invitation to dinner at foreign king's table

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1-2 Kings

Deuteronomistic History Retrospective

- God/Anthropology: unilateral promise, bilateral covenant, retributive justice
- Polemic #1: David-Zion
 - ~ Sustained, brutally honest, negative image as constantly sinful, ignominious demise
 - ~ Rejects D-Z promise of righteousness through one, requires righteousness of all
- Polemic #2: Wisdom: hints dropped everywhere wisdom not what cracked up to be

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1-2 Kings

Deuteronomistic History Retrospective

- Polemic #3: 8th Cent. Prophets (Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Jeremiah)
 - ~ Prophets' social critique advanced wrong criterion for judgment
 - ~ Judgment exclusively retributive justice via covenant (Torah)
 - ~ Used Elijah/Elisha traditions to constrain independence of prophetic speech
- Deuteronomistic History—deeply ironic
 - ~ Story contradicts its own vision of retributive justice God, cooperating humans
 - ~ Requires artifices of less severe punishments, multiple second chances
 - ~ Theological legacy: provoked challenges (Y, Wisdom) into New Testament itself

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1-2 Chron, Ezra-Nehemiah

1 Ch 1-9	1 Ch 10-29	2 Ch 1-9	2 Ch 10-36	Ezra 1-6	Ezra 7-10 +	Neh 1-7 +
Genealogies	David	Solomon	Judah	Return	Ezra	Nehemiah
Judah First, David/Levi Dominance, + Northern Tribes	David Glorified, Sanitized	Solomon Sanitized, Temple Construction, Dedication	Judah Focus, Cultic Fidelity Sanitized	Return, Temple, Opposition, Haggai, Zechariah	Memoirs, Royal Letter, Preparations, Inter-marriage, Rededication	Memoirs, City Walls, Sanballat, Obligations, Violations

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1-2 Chron Ezra-Nehemiah

David Glorified, Sanitized

- Acclaimed as king by all Israel, and takes Jerusalem immediately
- Growth of prestige, power has no parallel
- Sanitizes story of dancing before ark
- Sanitizes story of Uzzah's death = due to wrong ark personnel
- Sanitizes reign (all positive, dynasty, administration, military, etc.)
- Sanitizes Solomon's succession (choice of all people, not bloody)
- Summary: sanitizes account in Samuel, privileges Levites

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1-2 Chron, Ezra-Nehemiah

Reigns of Judah's Kings Sanitized

- Abijah converted into heroic guardian of Davidic kingdom
- Extensive rather than cursory attention to Jehoshaphat
- Hezekiah's reform advanced over even that of Josiah
- Manasseh repents of his rank apostasy (exile posterchild for D)
- Spreads out blame for exile to people and priests as well as kings

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1-2 Chron, Ezra-Nehemiah

Persian foreign policy main reason for return in waves, first Sheshbazzar, then Zerubbabel rededicating altar, 2nd temple (522)

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First return (445-443) with city wall commission, later return to find community violations

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1-2 Chron, Ezra-Nehemiah

Signatories to Religious Obligations

- Inter-marriage prohibition
- Sabbath observance
- Sabbatical Year debt relief observance
- Firstfruits, firstborn observances
- Tithing observance

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1-2 Chron, Ezra-Neh

• Critical Issues

• Relationship of Chronicles to Ezra-Nehemiah

- ~Little consensus on common authorship (yes? no? one? group?)
- ~Close relationship seems apparent in implied author/readers
- ~Common interests stronger than differences (which might be different times)

• Question of sources in 1-2 Chron

- ~Genealogical notices dependent on existing Pentateuch, etc.
- ~Hebrew of Samuel-Kings, but sanitized, rearranged

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1-2 Chron, Ezra-Neh

• Critical Issues

• Question of sources in Ezra-Nehemiah

- ~Memoirs patterned on Persian administrative activity
- ~Persian decrees, letters of official business (note use of Aramaic)

• History and evidence of return in Ezra-Nehemiah

- ~Reconstruction from books possible with some certainty
- ~Zerubbabel, Joshua from Zechariah's dated speech (Zech 4:9; 521/520)
- ~Ezra's mission from seventh year of Artaxerxes (465-422; = 458)
- ~Nehemiah thirteen years after Ezra = 445

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Persian-era Judah provides setting for
fixation on intermarriage as a temple tax, temple
economy, national survival issue

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1-2 Chron, Ezra-Neh

• Theological Themes (David, Temple, Torah)

• Covenant with David

- ~Clear focus: extensive coverage, consistent sanitizing
- ~Clear agenda: not David as much as legitimating, establishing temple and cult
- ~Kingship is doomed from outset, so not threat to Persia or effort to incite rebellion

• Temple in Jerusalem

- ~List of returnees dominated by priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers
- ~Reframing Uzzah's death as cultic violation
- ~Return is all about temple in Jerusalem

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- ~Return is all about temple in Jerusalem

economy engendered, personnel employed, religious purity enforced, communal identity redefined

1-2 Chron, Ezra-Neh

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Torah of God

- ~Chron-Neh accounts for 20% of "Torah" occurrences in Hebrew Bible
- ~Temple focus is Torah driven

1-2 Chron, Ezra-Neh

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David to Solomon:
"keep the Law of your Lord God" (1 Chron 22)

1-2 Chron, Ezra-Neh

Theological Themes

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"The Chronicler, in this sense, signals the early triumph of the Torah in postexilic Judaism, its growing influence over virtually all religious imagination" (KH: 176).

Esther

Esther 1-2	Esther 3-5	Esther 6-7	Esther 8-10
Introduction	Crisis	Resolution	Conclusion
Persian Court, Ahasuerus's Demand, Vashti Dethroned, Mordecai Saves King, Esther Chosen	Prime Minister Promotion, Refused Obedience, Genocide Threat, Esther's First Request, Gallows	Mordecai Rewarded, Esther's Second Request, Haman's Ironic Gallows Execution	Plot Inversions, Mordecai Decrees Feast of Purim

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Haman's property goes to Esther; Haman's office goes to Mordecai, and Haman's genocide plan goes to Jews, though limited by one or two days.

Esther

• Critical Issues

• Textual history

- ~Masoretic versus Greek translations (six editions)
- ~Generate more overtly pious characters and introduce God explicitly into story
- ~Greek Alpha Text: substantial omissions, including Purim texts

• Date

- ~Disposition of Alpha Text: pre-Masoretic or later recension
- ~Pre-Maccabean (positive attitude to Gentile rulers), even earlier (no Hellenization)
- ~Late Persian period, Hebrew like Chronicler's, so around 400

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Pre-Masoretic: then would have to take into account more methodically; if later, not such a big deal

Esther

• Critical Issues

• Historiography

- ~ Only superficial veneer of verisimilitude
- ~ Too outlandish of hyperbole to ignore
- ~ Disparate accounts not well seemed together (Mordecai, Esther, Vashti)
- ~ Names may have Babylonian allusions (Mordecai = Marduk; Esther = Ishtar)
- ~ More like instructive tale setting out to inspire and entertain

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Half-year banquet of king, Jews permitted to slaughter enemies indiscriminately

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Esther

• Critical Issues

• Association with Purim Feast

- ~ Affiliation of story and feast not really that strong
- ~ Feast not particularly religious in character
- ~ Later Jewish tradition: purpose was only to provide occasion for drink-fest

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Esther

• Masoretic Text Theological Theme—Divine Providence

- Mordecai's overhearing of the plot against the king
- Mordecai's famous comment to Esther ("such a time")
- Haman's family's comment: inherent power of Jewish people (Esther 6:13)

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Esther

• Greek Additions Text Themes (not all theological)

- Addition A (dream, dragon, river of deliverance)
- Addition B (Mordecai's intercessory prayer)
- Addition C (Esther's intercessory prayer)
- Addition D (entertainment, name God)
- Addition E (Mordecai's decree, God's lordship, even over foreign kings)
- Addition F (interprets A; river = Esther, Mordecai/Haman = two dragons, etc.)
- Clarity to God's providential role in Masoretic text, importance of religious individuals

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Esther

• View of Gentiles and Israelites

- Disdain for hostile Gentiles
- Non-hostile Gentiles are gullible, manipulatable without Jewish assistance
- God's preference for his chosen people
- Not even the most scheming Gentiles can undo God's designs for God's people

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