
BOOKS OF KINGS

Approximate date: before 562 B.C.E. (Right; some conservative-moderate; some Left); mid-to-late 500s B.C.E. (some conservative-moderate; some Left)

Time period: Solomon's reign, the division of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, and their judgment and dispersion

Author: Jeremiah (Right); Israel's court historians and further editors (some conservative-moderate); an unidentified prophet or an unknown exile from the Southern Kingdom (some conservative-moderate; Left)

Location of author: Land of Israel (Right, some conservative-moderate); Jerusalem, Babylon, and/or Land of Israel (some conservative-moderate, Left)

Target audience and their location: people of Israel during the Divided monarchy (Right, conservative-moderate); Jewish religious leaders during the reign of King Josiah and/or Jewish exiles living in Babylon or returning from Babylon (Left)

People:

David, Abishag, Adonijah, Haggith, Joab (son of Zeruiah), Abiathar the priest, Zadok the priest, Benaiah (son of Jehoiada), Nathan, Shimei (son of Gera), Rei, Solomon, Bathsheba, Kerethites, Pelethites, Jonathan (son of Abiathar), Achish (son of Maacah), Solomon's officials (1 Kings 4:2-6), Solomon's governors (1 Kings 4:8-19), Philistines, those whom Solomon was more wise than (1 Kings 4:31-32), Hiram, Sidonians, Adoniram, men of Gebal, Hiram, Jakin and Boaz (the Temple pillars), Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, queen of Sheba, Arabian kings, Arameans, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Ashtoreth (deity), Molech (deity), Chemosh (deity), Hadad, Queen Tahpenes, Genubath, Rezon (son of Eliada), Hadadezer (king of Zobah), Jeroboam (son of Nebat), Zeruah, Ahijah, Shishak, Rehoboam, Shemaiah, Josiah, Abijah (son of Jeroboam), Naamah, Abijam, Maacah (daughter of Abishalom), Asa, Baasha, Ben-Hadad (son of Tabrimmon, son of Hezion), Jehoshaphat, Nadab (son of Jeroboam), Jehu (son of Hannai), Elah, Zimri, Arza, Omri, Tibni (son of Ganath), Shemer, Ahab, Jezebel (daughter of Ethbaal), Hiel, Abiram, Segub, Elijah, widow of Zarephath, Obadiah, Hazeal, Jehu (son of Nimshi), Elisha (son of Shaphat), Naboth the Jezreelite, Micaiah (son of Imlah), Zedekiah (son of Kenaanah), Ahaziah, Azubah (daughter of Shilhi), Jehoram, Baal-Zebub (deity), Joram, Jehoram, Meshah, Gehazi, Naaman, Rimmon (deity), Ahaziah (Southern Kingdom), Athaliah, Jehu (son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi), Bidkar, Jehonadab (son of Recab), Jehosheba, Joash, Jehoiada (priest), Mattan, Ziblah, Beth Milo, Jozabad (son of Shimeath), Jehozabad (son of Shomer), Amaziah, Jehoash, Jeroboam (II), Jehoaddin, Jonah (son of Ammitai), Yaudi (person or place, *debated*), Zechariah, Azariah/Uzziah, Jecoliah, Jotham, Shallum (son of Jabesh), Menahem (son of Gadi), Pul/Tiglath-Pileser III, Pekahiah, Peka (son of Remaliah), Argob, Arieah, Hoshea (son of Elah), Jerusha (daughter of Zadok),

Rezin, Ahaz (son of Jotham), Uriah (priest), Hezekiah, Abi (daughter of Zechariah), Shalmanezer, Adrammelech (deity), Anammelech (deity), Nehushtan (bronze serpent), Sennacherib, Eliakim (son of Hilkiyah), Shebna, Joah (son of Asaph), Isaiah (son of Amoz), Tirhakah, Nisroch (deity), Adrammelech (Assyrian prince), Shadrezer, Esarhaddon, Merodach-Baladan, Baladan, Manasseh, Hephzibah, Amon, Meshullemeth (daughter of Heruz), Josiah (king), Jedidah (daughter of Adaiah), Shaphan (son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam), Hilkiyah (priest), Acbor (son of Micaiah), Asaiah, Huldah (wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah, son of Harhas), Nathan-Melech, Neco, Jehoahaz, Hamutal (daughter of Jeremiah), Eliakim (son of Josiah)/Jehoiakim, Zebidah (daughter of Pedaiah), Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiachin, Nehushta (daughter of Elnathan), Mattaniah/Zedekiah, Nebuzaradan, Seraiah (priest), Zephaniah (priest), Gedaliah (son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan), surviving army officers (2 Kings 25:23-24), Evil-Merodach

People mentioned:

Absalom, Abner (son of Ner), Amasa (son of Jether), sons of Barzillai, house of Eli, Uriah the Hittite, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses

Places:

Stone of Zohelath, En Rogel, Gihon, Gilead, Bahurim, Jordan, Hebron, Jerusalem, Kidron Valley, Gath, Gibeon, Egypt, Tiphsah, Gaza, Dan, Beersheba, Lebanon, Tyre, Sukkoth, Zarethan, Lebo Hamath, Wadi of Egypt, Galilee, Land of Cabul, Hazor, Megiddo, Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, Tadmor, Ezion Geber, Elath, Edom, Red Sea, Ophir, Kue, Moab, Midian, Paran, Damascus, Aram, Zeredah, Shechem, Peniel, Bethel, Dan, Samaria, Tirzah, Ramah, Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Kinnereth, Geba, Gibbethon, Kerith Ravine, Kishon Valley, Jezreel, Desert of Damascus, Abel Meholah, Aphek, Ramoth Gilead, Ekron, Gilgal, Jericho, Mount Carmel, Desert of Edom, Kir Hareseth, Shunem, Baal Shalishah, Abana and Pharpar (rivers of Damascus), Dothan, Zeir, Libnah, Beth Haggan, Gur, Ible-am, Zimri, Beth Eked, Aroer, Arnon Gorge, Bashan, Sur Gate, Silla, Valley of Salt, Sela (became Joktheel), Beth Shemesh, Ephraim Gate, Corner Gate, Lachish, Sea of the Arabah, Gath Hopher, Assyria, Janoah, Kedes, Upper Gate, Kir, Halah, Gozan, Habor River, towns of the Medes, Babylon, Cutha, Avva, Sepharvaim, Succoth Benoth, Nergal, Ashima, Nibhaz, Tartak, Upper Pool, Washerman's Field, Arpad, Hena, Ivvah, Haran, Rezech, Eden, Tel Assar, Nineveh, Ararat, Garden of Uzza, Jotbah, Bozkath, Topheth, Valley of Ben-Hinnom, Rumah, Riblah

Places mentioned:

Mahanaim, Shiloh, Horeb

Key Themes and Events:

1 Kings: as David is growing old, his son Adonijah sets himself up as king, although David has decreed that Solomon would be king / David instructs those loyal to him to march Solomon down to Gihon, declaring that he is king / Adonijah, fearing for his life, recognizes Solomon as king / David issues a charge and some important instructions to Solomon before he dies / Adonijah requests David's consort Abishag as his wife, so considering it a claim against his throne, Solomon has him executed / Solomon follows his father's instructions, having his enemies dealt with / King Solomon asks the Lord to give him wisdom / King Solomon arbitrates a dispute between two prostitutes over

whose son belongs to whom / Solomon possessed considerable wealth, sustaining his kingdom on a daily basis / Solomon demonstrated a wisdom beyond that of his contemporaries / Solomon renewed David's alliance with King Hiram of Tyre, securing a supply of timber for building the Temple / Solomon spends seven years building the Temple / Solomon spends thirteen years finishing his palace / Hiram is brought in as a bronze craftsman, to fashion some of the ornate details of the Temple / the Ark of the Covenant is brought into the Temple, and the glory of the Lord fills it / King Solomon declares a great prayer of praise to the Lord, imploring Him that this Temple will be a place where His people can partake of His mercy / the Lord warns Solomon not to disobey Him, lest the Temple be destroyed and the people be scattered because of idolatry / Solomon compensates Hiram with twenty sub-standard towns in Galilee / King Solomon leads Israel into becoming a formidable regional power / the queen of Sheba makes a special visit to King Solomon's court / King Solomon becomes extremely rich / King Solomon marries many (hundreds of!) wives and falls into idolatry / God says that Israel will be divided, as a result of Solomon's sin, but not during his lifetime / God raises up various foreign adversaries against King Solomon / the Prophet Ahijah tells Jeroboam that ten of Israel's tribes will be given to him after King Solomon's death / Jeroboam escapes to Egypt when King Solomon hears of this word / Solomon dies and is succeeded by Rehoboam / Rehoboam becomes king over Israel, pledging to make its conscripted labor even more difficult than Solomon his father / all of the people except the tribe of Judah follow after the newly-returned Jeroboam / a huge army from the Southern Kingdom is amassed to retake the north, but the Lord prohibits it / a prophet from Judah speaks against Jeroboam's religion, being mauled to death by a lion on his return journey / Jeroboam's wife goes to meet Ahijah, to plead for her son's life / Ahijah says Jeroboam's son will die / Ahijah says Jeroboam's dynasty over the Northern Kingdom will not last / the Southern Kingdom falls into idolatry under Rehoboam / Shishak of Egypt attacks Jerusalem and takes away as spoil all of Solomon's wealth / Abijah becomes ruler of the Southern Kingdom, ruling for three years / Abijah commits the same sins as his father / Asa succeeds Abijah as ruler of the Southern Kingdom, and purges a great deal of idolatry, being loyal to the Lord / King Asa enters into an alliance with Ben-Hadad of Aram, who attacks the Northern Kingdom / Nadab, Jeroboam's son, succeeds him as leader of the Northern Kingdom / Nadab is killed by Baasha, who in turn kills all of Jeroboam's family / Baasha becomes ruler of the Northern Kingdom / the Prophet Jehu says that the House of Baasha will not last because it promoted rebellion against the Lord just like the House of Jeroboam / Elah succeeds Baasha as ruler of the Northern Kingdom, only to be overthrown by Zimri / Zimri kills off all of Baasha's family, and makes himself ruler of the Northern Kingdom / upon hearing of the deposition of Elah by Zimri, the Northern Kingdom army declares its leader Omri as king / Zimri lights the royal palace afire, killing himself, having ruled only seven days / Omri becomes ruler of the Northern Kingdom, establishing his palace at Samaria / Ahab succeeds Omri as king, marrying Jezebel of the Sidonians, and practicing more evil than his predecessors / the Prophet Elijah tells King Ahab there will not be rain / the Prophet Elijah is fed by ravens at the Kerith Ravine / food is provided for the widow at Zarephath / the Prophet Elijah cries out to the Lord, for the widow's son to be returned to life / the Prophet Elijah tells Obadiah to tell King Ahab that he has arrived, in spite of Jezebel killing off the prophets of the Lord / the Prophet Elijah issues a challenge to the prophets of Baal to meet him at Mount Carmel / Baal does not answer the cries of his

servants / a fire from the Lord consumes Elijah's sacrifice / the people who witness the fire cry out to the Lord / the Prophet Elijah flees to Horeb, with Jezebel intending to kill him / the Lord appears to Elijah, instructing him to return via the desert of Damascus / the Prophet Elijah is to anoint Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as his successor / Elijah places his cloak on Elisha, and Elisha becomes Elijah's attendant / Ben-Hadad of Aram prepares to attack Samaria / Ahab defeats Ben-Hadad during the first round of conflict / Ahab defeats Ben-Hadad during the second round of conflict, yet allows him to return to Damascus alive / a prophet of the Lord condemns King Ahab / Queen Jezebel deceptively takes Naboth's vineyard away from him, inventing false charges against him / the Prophet Elijah decrees that Ahab's dynasty will fall because of rebellion against the Lord, and the manipulative actions of Jezebel / the Prophet Micaiah gives a negative word to King Ahab, after inquiring whether or not a Northern-Southern Kingdom alliance should take Ramoth Gilead / King Ahab is told such an enterprise will bring about his death / Ahab goes into the battle against Aram in disguise, but is mortally wounded in combat, bleeding to death / King Jehoshaphat of Judah has a relatively prosperous reign / Ahaziah succeeds Ahab as ruler of the Northern Kingdom, continuing the legacy of evil / 2 Kings: King Ahaziah dies without any heirs, because he consulted Baal-Zebub / fire from Heaven is reigned down upon two squads of fifty soldiers sent to Elijah; the third group pleads mercy from him / Elijah is taken up into Heaven via a whirlwind, leaving behind his anointing upon Elisha / Elisha returns to Samaria, with some evidences of the power God has granted to him along the way / Joram succeeds Ahaziah as ruler of the Northern Kingdom, and was not as evil as King Ahab, removing the sacred stone of Baal / the Moabite king rebels against the Northern Kingdom, refusing to send them their allotment of sheep and wool / Kings Joram and Jehoshaphat join together against Moab, defeating the Moabites on the field of battle after the Prophet Elisha intervenes / a soldier's widow pleads for Elisha's help, and he instructs her to pour (multiplying) oil into as many jars she can find, selling the oil to pay her debts / the Shunnamite's son is restored to life / when there is a famine in Gilgal, no one is harmed by eating (poisonous) gourds / one hundred people are adequately fed by twenty loaves of bread / Naaman, leader of the armies of Aram, goes to the king of Israel to be cured of leprosy / Naaman is incensed when the Prophet Elisha does not meet him personally, but washes in the Jordan according to his instruction / upon being healed, Naaman places his trust in the Lord / Gehazi, Elisha's servant, is struck down with Naaman's leprosy when he takes money from him, even though Elisha refused it / an iron axhead floats in the Jordan River when lost / the blinded Arameans are captured by Elisha, and when their sight is restored they stop their raiding / Samaria is besieged by Aram, and the people resort to cannibalism / the Prophet Elisha says that food relief will come / the Aramean army force flees its camp, allowing the people of Samaria to swarm in and take their supplies / the Shunnamite woman's land is restored to her / Hazael meets the Prophet Elisha, who tells him he will do great harm to Israel / Hazael assassinates Ben-Hadad of Aram, becoming king himself / Jehoram becomes ruler of the Southern Kingdom, falling into sin because of marrying a daughter of Ahab / the Edomites rebel against Judah / Ahaziah succeeds Jehoram as ruler of the Southern Kingdom, whose mother was Athaliah / the Prophet Elisha anoints Jehu as king, who will be responsible for the downfall of Ahab's dynasty, and for avenging the murderous rampage of Jezebel / Jehu is responsible for the deaths of both Joram of the Northern Kingdom and Ahaziah of the Southern Kingdom / Jezebel's eunuchs throw her out a

window at Jehu's command, and her corpse is trampled by horses / nothing is found of Jezebel's corpse when Jehu says she should be buried / Jehu sees to the elimination of Ahab's family, and the death of those loyal to him / Jehu deceives the prophets and ministers of Baal, in order to kill them / the Lord is pleased with Jehu's actions, even though he does not purge the Northern Kingdom completely of idolatry / the territory of the Northern Kingdom is steadily eroded / Jehoahaz succeeds Jehu as ruler of the Northern Kingdom / Athaliah tries to eliminate the royal family of Judah, upon hearing that her son is dead / Joash is hidden from Athaliah / Athaliah rules for six years as queen of Judah / Joash is anointed as king by Jehoiada the priest in front of the palace guards / Athaliah is taken outside of the Temple and is executed / Jehoiada sees that Baal worship is purged from Judah, and that the people are incensed over the idolatry / Joash becomes ruler of the Southern Kingdom, even though not all Baal worship was removed / King Joash oversees a repair project of the Jerusalem Temple / King Joash is assassinated / Amaziah succeeds his father as ruler of the Southern Kingdom / Jehoahaz of the Northern Kingdom falls into idolatry / the Northern Kingdom is dominated by Ben-Hadad of Aram / Jehoahaz sought after the Lord, and the Northern Kingdom was relieved from Aram, even though it continued in sin / Jehoash becomes ruler of the Northern Kingdom, continuing the idolatry / Jeroboam (II) succeeds Jehoash as ruler of the Northern Kingdom / Jehoash does not follow the Prophet Elisha's instructions, and does not completely defeat the Arameans / the Prophet Elisha dies / King Jehoash is able to retake captured towns from the Arameans / King Amaziah follows the example of his father Joash, doing good and obeying the Lord, yet not tearing down the high places / King Amaziah eliminates those who assassinated his father, but not their sons / Jehoash of Israel defeats Amaziah of Judah in battle, taking a great booty from Jerusalem / King Amaziah is assassinated in Lachish / Azariah (Uzziah) succeeds his father Amaziah as ruler of the Southern Kingdom / King Jeroboam II extends the influence of the Northern Kingdom back to some of what it was / Zechariah succeeds Jeroboam II as ruler of the Northern Kingdom / Azariah ruled as a good king over Judah, yet did not remove the high places / King Azariah is struck with leprosy, with his son Jotham ruling as regent / Jotham succeeds Azariah as ruler of the Southern Kingdom / Zechariah rules over the Northern Kingdom for six months, but is assassinated by Shallum / Shallum becomes ruler of the Northern Kingdom / Shallum is assassinated by Menahem / Menahem becomes ruler of the Northern Kingdom, engaging in gross evil / King Menahem thwarts the invasion plans of Pul of Assyria, by bribing him / Menahem dies and is succeeded by his son Pekahiah / Pekahiah rules over the Northern Kingdom for two years, being assassinated by Pekah / Pekah becomes ruler of the Northern Kingdom / during the reign of King Pekah, Assyria gains substantial parts of the Northern Kingdom / King Pekah is assassinated by Hoshea / Jotham succeeds Azariah/Uzziah as ruler of the Southern Kingdom / King Jotham obeys the Lord, but fails to remove the high places / the Southern Kingdom faces some regional opposition / Ahaz becomes ruler of Judah, following after the detestable ways of the nations / the kings of Israel and Aram besiege Judah, forcing King Ahaz to seek an Assyrian alliance / Tiglath-Pileser complies with Ahaz' request by conquering Aram / Ahaz meets Tiglath-Pileser in Damascus, and while there sees an altar that he orders Uriah the priest to replicate / Hezekiah succeeds Ahaz as ruler of the Southern Kingdom / King Hoshea of Israel did great evil in the eyes of the Lord, but not like those who had preceded him / Hoshea fails to send Shalmaneser of Assyria his due tribute, and sends envoys to Egypt / Shalmaneser besieges Samaria, and

deports many of the Northern Kingdom Israelites / the Northern Kingdom is said to have gone into exile because of the severity of its sin against the Lord, and His great forbearance in giving the people an ample chance to repent / the Southern Kingdom of Judah is said to have been *more loyal* to the Lord, but still bereft with sin / Samaria is resettled by Assyria with deportees from other places, who bring their own religious practices with them / the beginning of the “Samaritans” is seen, as the deportees learn about the Lord, but refuse to give up many of their heathen practices / Hezekiah becomes ruler of the Southern Kingdom / Hezekiah obeys the Lord, smashing down the high places, and he is given success / Sennacherib of Assyria captures the fortified cities of Judah, forcing Hezekiah to send him a huge tribute to stop his assault / Sennacherib’s field commander threatens the security of Jerusalem / King Hezekiah goes to the Prophet Isaiah, seeking his council in light of what to do regarding the crisis with Assyria / the Prophet Isaiah says that Sennacherib will fall / King Hezekiah cries out to the Lord, pleading that He will respond to the insults levied against Him / the Prophet Isaiah sends a message to King Hezekiah, which details the fall of Sennacherib / Sennacherib’s own sons assassinate him when he returns to Nineveh / Hezekiah is deathly ill, but Isaiah tells him that God will grant him fifteen more years of life / envoys from Babylon are shown state treasures and state secrets by King Hezekiah / the Prophet Isaiah tells King Hezekiah that one day his people will be taken off to Babylon / Manasseh succeeds Hezekiah as ruler of Judah / King Manasseh leads Judah into significant idolatry and rebellion against the Lord / Manasseh dies and Amon succeeds him as ruler of Judah / Amon continues the evil practices of Manasseh / Amon is assassinated by government officials, and is replaced by his young son Josiah / the Book of the Law (Deuteronomy) is discovered in the Temple / God’s judgment against Judah will be delayed because of Josiah’s openness to the message of God’s Torah / King Josiah has the Torah read publicly to the people of Judah, urging them to all renew the covenant that the Lord has made with them / King Josiah begins a radical campaign of defiling all of the high places and idolatrous locations of worship throughout his realm / King Josiah calls the people to remember the Passover once again / King Josiah is killed on the field of battle against Pharaoh Neco / Jehoahaz becomes ruler of Judah, and plunges it back into idolatry / Pharaoh Neco seizes Jehoahaz, placing Jehoiakim (his other name) as leader of Judah / King Jehoiakim becomes a vassal of the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar / raiders are sent against Judah, as God’s punishment for the sin of Manasseh / Jehoiachin becomes ruler of Judah, being king for three months / Nebuchadnezzar attacks Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple / Jehoiachin and leading figures from Judah are taken to Babylon / Nebuchadnezzar places Jehoiachin’s uncle, Mattaniah (Zedekiah), as king of Judah / King Zedekiah continues the evil of his predecessors / Nebuchadnezzar lays total siege to Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple / Zedekiah’s sons are killed before him, his eyes are gouged out, and he is dragged off bound to Babylon / the rest of the remaining people, save the poor, are deported to Babylon / the articles from the Temple are taken away as booty by the Babylonians / the priests of the Temple are executed / Gedaliah is appointed by Nebuchadnezzar over the remains of Judah, but is assassinated by army officers / the officers escape to Egypt / the new Babylonian ruler, Evil-Merodach, frees Jehoiachin from prison and gives him a place of honor within the Babylonian court

Key Scriptures: 1 Kings 2:2-4; 3:6-13; 4:29-30, 34; 8:27-30, 41-42; 9:4-9; 11:1-2, 4-6, 11-13, 29-33; 12:20-22, 28-29; 18:16-18, 25-29; 19:1-2; 21:17-19, 23-26; 2 Kings

1:7-15; 2:9-12; 5:8-16; 6:15-17; 9:6-10, 17-26, 32-37; 10:30-31; 17:7-20, 23, 24-28, 34-41; 19:14-19; 20:14-19; 21:2-6; 22:11-13, 15-20; 23:21-33 / **The United Kingdom (1 Kings 1:1-11:43); The Divided Kingdom (12:1-22:53); The Divided Kingdom (2 Kings 1:1-17:41); The Surviving Kingdom (18:1-25:30)**

Theological Summary: In the division of the Hebrew Bible, the Books of Kings (Heb. *melakim*, מְלָכִים) are simply a single book. The division into two texts came via the production of the Septuagint in the Second Century B.C.E., with what we know today as 1&2 Kings originally being designated as 3&4 Kings. When the designation of the first two books as 1&2 Samuel came, the latter two books became listed as 1&2 Kings.¹ This division was followed by Jerome's Latin Vulgate and was slowly adapted over time by Jewish Bibles as a matter of convenience.²

The Jewish theological tradition places 1&2 Kings among the Former Prophets, something to seriously be considered by any reader of the text because of the significant number of prophets listed in its account.³ Christian tradition places 1&2 Kings among the Historical Books. While 1&2 Kings surely contain Biblical history, these books take on a distinctly prophetic character⁴ in light of their content and warnings.

1&2 Kings take us from the beginning of the reign of King Solomon to the Southern Kingdom's exile to Babylon, covering a period of about 400 years. Much attention is given to the rise of Solomon, and the chaos that appears to ensue following his death. It details the accounts of the Northern Kingdom's rebellion against God, and its eventual exile by Assyria. Kings also records the up-and-down rebellion and loyalty to God by the Southern Kingdom, and its eventual exile to Babylon.

The division of Kings into 1 Kings and 2 Kings is at an arbitrary place in the text, appearing after the deaths of King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 22:37) and Jehoshaphat of the Southern Kingdom (1 Kings 22:50). The purpose of the text was to provide Jews in Babylonian exile a recorded history of Israel from the reign of King David to the present time, including the period of the Divided Kingdom. We see in its record that the Northern Kingdom is portrayed as having exclusively wicked kings, and the Southern Kingdom likewise has mostly wicked kings, with a handful of exceptions.

1&2 Kings does present some chronological issues regarding the dating of various monarchs from the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, and what can appear to be overlapping reigns.⁵ Scholars have been trying to synchronize these reigns for many years based on extant data from the Ancient Near East, and have made various proposals.⁶

¹ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 719.

² E. Ball, "Kings, Books of," in *ISBE*, 3:30; Ziony Zevit, "1 Kings," in *Jewish Study Bible*, 668.

³ Dillard and Longman, 149.

⁴ J. Barton Payne, "Kings, 1 and 2, Books of," in *NIDB*, 570.

⁵ S. Szikszai, "Kings, I and II," in *IDB*, 3:30; P.R. Ackroyd, "Kings, I and II," in *IDBSup*, 518; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 733-735; Ball, "Kings, Books of," in *ISBE*, 3:36; Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," in *EXP*, 4:10-12.

⁶ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 735-737; William Sanford LaSor, "1&2 Kings," in *NBCR*, pp 321-323; Patterson and Austel, in *EXP*, 4:13-17; Steven W. Holloway, "Kings, Book of 1-2," in *ABD*, 4:75-76; Dillard and Longman, pp 156-157.

Jewish tradition accredits authorship of Kings to the Prophet Jeremiah (b.*Bava Batra* 15a),⁷ arguing that Jeremiah was a contemporary of Josiah.⁸ Many conservatives today espouse some kind of Jeremianic authorship or involvement in the text of 1&2 Kings.⁹ Against this is the fact that Jeremiah was taken to Egypt (Jeremiah 43:6-7), and the author of 1&2 Kings demonstrates an innate knowledge of Babylon.¹⁰ We can rightly assert that the author of Kings was familiar with the themes of Deuteronomy. He was undoubtedly a Judahite from the Southern Kingdom, but it is debated whether or not the text was composed immediately before or during the exile to Babylon.

1&2 Kings is a text that was compiled from various distinct sources.¹¹ These include “the book of the acts of Solomon” (1 Kings 11:41), “the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel” (1 Kings 14:19), “the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah” (1 Kings 14:29). These would have all been court annals from the royal archives of the Southern Kingdom, possibly mentioned by the author of Chronicles (1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 20:34; 24:27; 26:22; 32:32). These are all sources that have been lost to history, but whose archival traditions are present in 1&2 Kings.

Most conservative scholars place the composition of 1&2 Kings sometime in the Sixth Century B.C.E., prior to the end of the Babylonian exile of the Southern Kingdom, during the reign of Evil-Merodach (2 Kings 25:27-30). The author of 1&2 Kings may be rightly assumed to be an unidentified prophet,¹² given the character of his writing, but who ultimately is anonymous.¹³ A pre-exilic composition of most of Kings is supported by various references “to this day,” including the polls used to carry the Ark of the Covenant (1 Kings 8:8), conscripted labor (1 Kings 9:20-21), Israel in rebellion against the House of David (1 Kings 12:19), and Edom in rebellion against Judah (2 Kings 8:22). These factors may point to some kind of authorship prior to King Josiah, and many conclude that much of 1&2 Kings had already been compiled prior to the exile, later to be redacted with additional information.

Liberal scholars place 1&2 Kings among the last of the so-called “Deuteronomistic histories” of Joshua, Judges, and 1&2 Samuel, indicating that its author places a significant importance of the themes of Deuteronomy 28.¹⁴ This follows the propositions of German higher critic Martin Noth,¹⁵ who suggested that Joshua-Kings (and possibly even

⁷ “Jeremiah wrote the book that is called by his name, the book of Kings, and Lamentations” (b.*Bava Batra* 15a; *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*).

⁸ LaSor, in *NBCR*, 320.

⁹ Patterson and Austel, in *EXP*, 4:5-6.

¹⁰ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 720; Payne, “Kings, 1 and 2, Books of,” in *NIDB*, 570; Dillard and Longman, pp 149-150.

¹¹ Szikszai, “Kings, I and II,” in *IDB*, 3:31-34; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 725-729; LaSor, in *NBCR*, 320; Ball, “Kings, Books of,” in *ISBE*, 3:30-31; Holloway, “Kings, Book of 1-2,” in *ABD*, 4:71; Zevit, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 670.

¹² LaSor, in *NBCR*, 320.

¹³ Payne, “Kings, 1 and 2, Books of,” in *NIDB*, 570.

¹⁴ Szikszai, “Kings, I and II,” in *IDB*, 3:30-31; Zevit, in *Jewish Study Bible*, 669.

¹⁵ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 731-732; Holloway, “Kings, Book of 1-2,” in *ABD*, 4:71-72; Dillard and Longman, pp 154-155.

Deuteronomy-Kings) were originally a single work written to chastise the Southern Kingdom in Babylonian exile.

Conservatives, in response, do recognize the importance of Deuteronomy on 1&2 Kings, and specifically parts of it on the Josianic reforms,¹⁶ but do not consider it a work of a so-called Deuteronomist in the late periods of the Southern Kingdom.¹⁷ Instead, conservatives largely advocate that the themes of Deuteronomy were quite common in ancient Hebrew theology. “The term ‘Deuteronomic’ can only be applied unexceptionably to Kings in the sense that the author recognized, with Moses (Deut. 28:1ff), that obedience to God brought blessing, while disobedience resulted in calamity” (Harrison).¹⁸

It was quite common for earlier liberals to import themes of the JEDP documentary hypothesis (see **Genesis** entry for a summarization of the JEDP documentary hypothesis) of the Torah into 1&2 Kings.¹⁹ Some used the descriptions seen of the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom to apply theological values to the so-called E and J sources, with E representing the view of Israel’s God from the Northern Kingdom and J representing the view of the Southern Kingdom.²⁰ This, as should be expected, radically affected their views of the Pentateuch. Most liberals today, however, have abandoned this method and have adopted some variation on Noth’s view of Kings’ relative unity.

Surprisingly, liberal scholars will affix some kind of valid historicity to the claims of 1&2 Kings, even though there are many who believe that some of its claims are overstated.²¹ Liberals and conservatives are closer on the dating of 1&2 Kings than any other Tanach texts up to this point in the Hebrew canon.²² It is interesting, though, that there are some conservatives who advocate that Joshua-Kings should be thought of “as a single literary work” (Dillard and Longman).²³ At the very least, this can help the lay reader to see a much larger picture of the rise and fall of Israel’s kingdom.

The text of 1&2 Kings has been subject to some editing and alteration over the centuries. The Greek Septuagint text of 1&2 Kings is shorter compared to the Hebrew Masoretic Text, with the Dead Sea Scrolls indicating that the LXX is probably closer to the original Hebrew.²⁴ Each textual variance must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

When reading Kings, it should be self-apparent that its author writes with a definite geopolitical bias in regard to the monarchs he describes,²⁵ largely reflecting the views of the Southern Kingdom. This is largely motivated by a covenantal view of God’s favor toward those

¹⁶ Payne, “Kings, 1 and 2, Books of,” in *NIDB*, 570; Ball, “Kings, Books of,” in *ISBE*, 3:33-34.

¹⁷ LaSor, in *NBCR*, 320.

¹⁸ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 732; cf. Patterson and Austel, in *EXP*, 4:4-5.

¹⁹ Ball, “Kings, Books of,” in *ISBE*, 3:30-31; Holloway, “Kings, Book of 1-2,” in *ABD*, 4:71; Dillard and Longman, pp 152-153.

²⁰ Szikszai, “Kings, I and II,” in *IDB*, 3:34; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 730-731.

²¹ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 729.

²² Patterson and Austel, in *EXP*, 4:3.

²³ Dillard and Longman, 152.

²⁴ Szikszai, “Kings, I and II,” in *IDB*, 3:35; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 737; LaSor, in *NBCR*, 322; Ball, “Kings, Books of,” in *ISBE*, 3:35; Patterson and Austel, in *EXP*, 4:10; Holloway, “Kings, Book of 1-2,” in *ABD*, 4:73-74; Dillard and Longman, 156.

²⁵ LaSor, in *NBCR*, 321; Holloway, “Kings, Book of 1-2,” in *ABD*, 4:79.

who obey Him, with the Southern Kingdom being favored by God much more than the Northern Kingdom. However, the author of 1&2 Kings does demonstrate how both Israel and Judah are judged by God for their sin. He details the major problem of asceticism, where practices to honor the Lord are mixed with foreign religious customs from the Canaanites. The author of 1&2 Kings also recognizes that the monarchs of Israel and Judah play an important role in God blessing or judging the people.

1&2 Kings teach us much about what can happen to a nation or group of people when sin is allowed to enter in and flourish. A continual theme of the text is that obedience to God is necessary in order to not be punished by Him. Some theologians, particularly Noth, saw a largely pessimistic message in 1&2 Kings of its author chastising his fellow Israelites for the exile. Others, particularly Noth's colleague Gerhard Von Rad, saw distinct rays of hope in 1&2 Kings with God's promises to Ancient Israel and King David as a message of future restoration.²⁶ The debate that continues today in Kings' scholarship is whether 1&2 Kings is a message about what Israel did wrong, or a declaration of Israel's guilt toward God.²⁷ "[T]he author writes to demonstrate conclusively to his readers both the necessity of the believer's keeping his covenantal obligations before God and the history of those most responsible for leading God's people in their stewardship of the divine economy" (*EXP*).²⁸

1&2 Kings asks many questions regarding Ancient Israel as a regional power, particularly among the various other powers of the Ancient Near East.²⁹ Its characters and stories play well into the teachings of Yeshua and the Apostles, and as such cannot be ignored.³⁰

There is probably more discussion of 1&2 Kings in a few distinct sectors of today's (very) broad Messianic community than 1&2 Samuel, largely due to its amount of historical passages recording the division of Israel into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. (How truly historical and fact-conscious some of these discussions are is a matter to dispute.) Questions of the influence of Deuteronomy on the text, however, are often not considered, although they should be a natural extension of one's "Torah observance." It is necessary for any interpreter of 1&2 Kings to understand it in light of 1&2 Chronicles, which was composed after the exile, and is written asking somewhat different questions than 1&2 Kings.

Anyone examining 1&2 Kings needs to pay close attention to the humanity of each of Israel's leaders, notably the gross sin and idolatry of King Solomon. There are many lessons to be learned from 1&2 Kings that speak profoundly to our modern world.

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²⁶ Ball, "Kings, Books of," in *ISBE*, 3:37.

²⁷ Dillard and Longman, 161.

²⁸ Patterson and Austel, in *EXP*, 4:7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:3.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON KINGS:

- 1. Summarize the life of King Solomon and his great accomplishments. What factors do you believe contributed to both his rise and fall?**
- 2. Which parts of Solomon's reign impress you the most? Which parts do not impress you?**
- 3. Why and how did the Kingdom of Israel split after the death of King Solomon? What did Jeroboam do to solidify the split between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms?**
- 4. Looking at the parallel histories of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, what are some similarities and differences that you notice?**
- 5. What do you consider to be the most important features of the ministry of the Prophet Elijah?**
- 6. Who were King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, and why are they significant in the Biblical narrative?**
- 7. What do you consider to be the most important features of the ministry of the Prophet Elisha?**
- 8. How was idolatry able to enter into both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms?**

9. What do you believe are some of the most positive actions of the kings of Israel and Judah? What do you believe are some of the most negative actions?

10. How and why was the Northern Kingdom exiled?

11. How was Samaria resettled after the destruction of Israel/Ephraim?

12. How significant do you believe were the reforms initiated by King Josiah? (additional question: Do you think today's Messianic movement might have some "Josianic" qualities?)

13. How and why was the Southern Kingdom exiled?

14. How thorough was the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple at the hands of the Babylonians?

15. What lessons might today's Messianic community learn by listening to the message of 1&2 Kings?

REFLECTION ON KINGS' PLACEMENT IN THE CANON

Write two short paragraphs about what struck you about reading the Books of Kings: