of Samuel and Kings. In the past scholars from Wellhausen (1871) to McCarter (1980) found numerous instances where a corrupt or edited reading of the HB could be emended with the LXX. More recently, attention has been paid to the possibility of using the LXX, including its Latin witnesses, as documented evidence in literary and redaction critical studies on Samuel-Kings (Trebolle; Schenker; Hugo).

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**Tuukka Kauhanen**

See also → Kings (Books); → Samuel (Books and Person)

**Kingdoms, Northern and Southern**

→ Israel, People of; → Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

**Kings (Books)**

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

II. New Testament

III. Judaism

IV. Christianity

V. Literature

VI. Visual Arts

VII. Music

VIII. Film

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

1. **Content and Structure.** A single work in two parts, 1–2 Kings has three sections: the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs 1–11), the divided kingdom (1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 17), and the kingdom of Judah alone after Israel's fall (2 Kgs 18–25). Each section has its own structure. Solomon's reign is built around the building and dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 5–8). The division of the kingdom after Solomon is explained as punishment for serving other gods introduced by his many foreign wives.

For the divided kingdom, the account alternates between Israel and Judah with each king dated by his regnal year. The opening and closing regnal formulas for each king furnish a framework for any narrative set during that king's reign. The kings of Israel are all judged evil for perpetuating the "sin of Jeroboam" by maintaining the royal shrines that he established at Dan and Bethel. The principle of cultic centralization that Jeroboam violated was not instituted until the composition of Deuteronomy in the late seventh century, some 300 years after Jeroboam. Still, it provides the explanation for Israel's fall in 722 BCE and for Judah's survival until 586 BCE. A prophecy – fulfillment scheme further supports the etiology. The promise to David of an enduring house (dynasty) explains Judah's continuation under Davidid rule despite Solomon's apostasy (1 Kgs 14:29–39) and evil kings (1 Kgs 15:2–3; 2 Kgs 8:19). In contrast, the overthrow of each of Israel's royal houses is foretold by prophets in oracles that use the same language to predict the slaughter of the potential male heirs and their nonburial (1 Kgs 14:7–18; 16:1–4; 21:20–24; 2 Kgs 9:7–10).

The third main section dealing with the remaining kings of Judah follows the order of their reigns: Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah. The accounts for Hezekiah and Josiah are the longest, reflecting the author's interest in their religious reforms. Second Kings ends with Jerusalem's destruction and the exile of Judah in 587/586 BCE followed by notices about Gedaliah's brief tenure as governor and Jehoiachin's release from Babylonian prison in ca. 562 BCE.

2. **Date and Composition.** The book of Kings has been the main theater for debates on the date and composition of the Deuteronomistic History. Noth dated the Dtr History to 562 BCE. European scholars have tended to maintain this as the primary edition (DtrG[Grundschrift]) of Kings, while perceiving, with Smend, a series of subsequent Dtr layers focused on prophecy (DtrP) and law (DtrN). North Americans have generally followed Cross in positing an earlier, Josianic edition (Dtr²) – or an even earlier Hezekian one – as predecessors of the exilic work (Dtr³). Some recent scholars have begun to question the thesis of a Dtr History, arguing that its constituent books had independent origins. But a revised Dtr History theory yields a more cogent picture (Römer).

Official archives and prophetic tales seem to be the two main sources behind Kings. The regnal formulas that provide the book's structure refer to "Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel/Kings of Judah," and annals are well attested for other ancient Near Eastern kings. Still, no annals have been found for any king of Israel or Judah. Religious evaluations in the regnal formulas would not derive from annals but are the work of the Dtr author of Kings. Thus, while Dtr may well have used official sources of some kind, their exact nature remains unclear.

The prophetic stories do not all appear at the same level of writing. The antidyntastic oracles are well integrated into the Dtr framework. Thus, in 1 Kgs 14:1–13, the answer to the inquiry of Jero-
boam’s wife about her sick son is delayed by the oracle against the dynasty, and in 2 Kgs 9:1–10, the prophet disobeys the order to flee after anointing Jehu in order to deliver the oracle against the royal house. In both cases, Dtr used older prophetic stories as the forum for his etiological oracle against the sitting dynasty. Most of the prophetic tales in Kings, though, are post-Dtr additions. This includes the legends about Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets in 1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13, except for Elijah’s oracle in 1 Kgs 21:20–24∗ (Rofé; McKenzie: 81–100).

3. History. Kings is our only ancient biblical source for the history of Israel’s and Judah’s monarchy (the author(s) of Chronicles used Kings and is therefore not independent). The etiological purpose of Kings and the place of prophets in it show that its interest is primarily theological rather than historical. Thus, despite Omri’s historical importance, shown in archaeological remains and extrabiblical sources where Israel is known as the “house of Omri,” Kings devotes but a single, non-formulaic verse to his reign (1 Kgs 16:24). The account of Abah’s reign (1 Kgs 16:29–22:40) is much longer, but is mostly about Elijah and Jezebel with little on the king’s accomplishments. Some of Kings’ historical data are contradicted by other sources: (1) The battle stories in 1 Kgs 20:22 depict Abah as weak militarily and at war with Aram (Syria), while contemporary Assyrian inscriptions portray him as a formidable ally of Aram. In Kings, these two chapters are out of place and originally concerned a much later king. (2) In contrast to 2 Kgs 9, where Jehu assassinates the kings of both Israel and Judah, the Tel Dan inscription credits its author, probably King Hazael, with those slayings. Did Hazael exaggerate for propagandistic effect or is Kings mistaken in its description of Jehu’s religious zeal? (3) The account of Sennacherib’s invasion in 2 Kgs 18 differs from the Assyrian version not only in outcome but also in having Sennacherib invade twice. This is likely the result of the combination in Kings of different versions of the same event. Thus, historical information in Kings must be judiciously balanced against literary and theological considerations.

4. Text and Chronology. Where the Old Greek is extant in LXX∗ (1 Kgs 2:12–21; 29) or can be reconstructed from the Old Latin, the text often varies markedly from the MT and is more coherent (Trebolle). The variants include lengthy Greek pluses (e.g., 1 Kgs 12:24a–2) whose origins are intensely debated by scholars. The chronological data often vary widely as a result of the MT and QG following different systems (Miller, Shenkel). The Dead Sea scroll fragments for Kings are sparse and do not vary much from the MT.

5. Theology. Kings’ theology resembles those of Deuteronomy and the Prophets. YHWH is in control of history. The destruction of Israel and Judah was due to the failure to obey YHWH’s word in Torah and prophetic revelation. No explicit hope for the future is expressed. It is uncertain, but also open. The remnant of Israel can only hope that YHWH will act again on behalf of his people; but as Dunn notes, this would be somewhat pathetic. It is more likely that Paul is reminding his readers of his credentials to offer authoritative interpretations of Scripture and perhaps also to pave the way for a comparison between himself and Elijah. He begins by asking whether they know the Scripture where Elijah “pleads with God against Israel” (11:2) and then quotes from either 1 Kgs 19:10 or 14 in the form, “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, I alone am left, and they are seeking my life” (11:3). This appears to be Paul’s own summary and departs significantly from the language of the LXX. He omits the first part of Elijah’s complaint (“I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant”) and the final phrase (“to take it away”), adds a vocative

II. New Testament

There are only two quotations from the books of Kings in the NT, both in Rom 11. Paul is seeking to refute the idea that the inclusion of the Gentiles implies that God has rejected his people. He begins by citing his own background as an “Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin” (11:1). This sounds like Paul is citing himself as evidence that God has not rejected his people; but as Dunn notes, this would be somewhat trite. It is more likely that Paul is reminding his readers of his credentials to offer authoritative interpretations of Scripture and perhaps also to pave the way for a comparison between himself and Elijah. He begins by asking whether they know the Scripture where Elijah “pleads with God against Israel” (11:2) and then quotes from either 1 Kgs 19:10 or 14 in the form, “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, I alone am left, and they are seeking my life” (11:3). This appears to be Paul’s own summary and departs significantly from the language of the LXX. He omits the first part of Elijah’s complaint (“I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant”) and the final phrase (“to take it away”), adds a vocative
address “Lord” (perhaps taken from the earlier lament in 19:4), and reverses the order of killing the prophets and tearing down altars. Although Elia-
jah’s words are undoubtedly a damning indictment of Israel, the text does not specifically say that they are aimed against (κατά) Israel and this might re-
fect Paul’s own situation.

The second quotation is a summary of 1 Kgs 19:18 (“Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him”), which Paul quotes in the form, “I have kept for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal” (11:4). His point is that at “the present time there is a rem-
ant, chosen by grace” (11:5), just as there was in Elijah’s day, and this should give rise to hope. There is debate as to whether the number 7,000 is signif-
cant for Paul, perhaps as a symbol of “all Is-
rael” (11:26), though it might simply be a detail from the text he is quoting. As Byrne notes, this is different from the ‘remnant’ idea in Rom 9:27–
28, for “in the earlier passage, the existence of the ‘remnant’ (οὐκολομημένον, v.27) served simply to indi-
cate the numerical diminishment of Israel accord-
ing to the flesh, here the motif stands as a pledge of the continuing fidelity of God” (Byrne: 330).

The story of Elijah saying to Ahab that “there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word” (1 Kgs 17:1) is referred to three times in the NT. For James, it is an example of the principle that the “prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective” (Jas 5:16), though this is not a feature of the original story. In order to apply the story to his readers, James says that Elijah was “a human being like us” (δύονομοτῆτις), though it is unclear if this is a reference to frailty (so NJB). Luke’s interest is that “when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land” (Luke 4:25), God sent Elijah to help a widow who lived outside of Israel (1 Kgs 17:8–24); this is followed by a reference to Elisha healing Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs 5:1–5). In Revelation, John records a vision of two witnesses who will prophesy for 1260 days and “if anyone wants to harm them, fire pours from their mouth” and they “have authority to shut the sky, so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying” (11:5–
6). It is interesting that all three of these passages refer very specifically to three and a half years, whereas 1 Kgs 18:1 speaks only of “in the third year of the drought.” It would appear that, by NT times, this was an established tradition, perhaps drawn from the half-week of Dan 7:25.

The question of whether John the Baptist is Eli-
jah is both affirmed (Matt 11:14) and denied (John 1:21) in the New Testament, though these passages are drawing on Malachi rather than the books of Kings. However, many scholars have suggested that the description of John’s clothing in Mark 1:6
(“Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist”) is an allusion to 2 Kgs 1:8, where the description, “A hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist” is enough to tell the king that the prophecy of his death comes from none other than “Elijah the Tishbite.” Others find the link tenuous and suggest that Mark is sim-
ply referring to John as a prophet and ascetic.

David and Solomon are mentioned in Stephen’s speech concerning the building of the temple (Acts 7:45–47), beginning with a reference to David’s de-
sire to build a house for God (1 Kgs 8:17) and then to Solomon, who actually built it. There follows a statement that “the Most High does not dwell in houses” (Acts 7:48) and a quotation from Isa 66:1, which could imply that Stephen thinks the whole enterprise was a mistake. Indeed, it is interesting that Luke traces Jesus’ genealogy through David and Nathan (Luke 3:31) rather than David and Sol-
omon (Matt 1:6–7); this might suggest that he in-
tends a criticism of Solomon (see Doble: 181–207). However, Solomon is well aware that “even heaven and the highest heaven” cannot contain God, “much less this house that I have built” (1 Kgs 8:27) and so it is probably a critique of what the temple has become rather than of Solomon himself. There are two further references to Solomon in the Gospels. The first is an illustration of God’s care for the world, asserting that not even “Solomon in all his glory” was clothed like the “lilies of the field” (Matt 6:28–29). The second is a judgement on the scribes and Pharisees who insist on seeing signs, whereas “the queen of the South ... came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon” (Matt 12:42). This is a reference to the queen of Sheba’s visit in 1 Kgs 10:1–10.

We have already noted Elisha’s healing of Na-
man the Syrian, and it is probable that the feeding miracles in the Gospels have been influenced by 2 Kgs 4:42–44, where Elisha feeds a crowd of one hundred people with twenty barley loaves. Note the following parallels (1) a man/boy has a small num-
ber of loaves; (2) Elisha/Jesus commands that it be used to feed a large crowd; (3) the question is raised as to how such a small quantity can feed so many; (4) the command is reiterated and the people are fed; (5) there is some left over.

Lastly, we might mention the reference in the book of Revelation to the battle of Armageddon (16:16). There have of course been many attempts to understand this reference, but as the author tells us that it is a Hebrew name, our starting point should probably be Mount (Har) Megiddo. This is the place where King Josiah died in battle (2 Kgs 23:30); it is remembered as a place of mourning (Zech 12:11).

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III. Judaism

1. Chronicles. Most scholars consider the biblical book of Chronicles to be the first Jewish text to make use of Kings as a source (for an alternative view see Auld who claims that Kings and Chronicles are contemporaneous and depend on a common source). Composed between the 5th and 3rd centuries BCE, Chronicles retells the story of the Judean kings by lifting many passages directly, omitting many others entirely, incorporating material not found in Kings, and refocusing the narrative on David, Solomon, and the temple cult. If Kings places the blame for catastrophe primarily on the sins of the kings of Israel and Judah, Chronicles adopts the prophetic view that the sins of the entire nation brought about its ultimate downfall. While Kings carefully alternates between the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah in order to represent the simultaneity of events in the two kingdoms, Chronicles abandons this scheme and deals with the breakaway regime in Israel only to the extent that it affects the legitimate kingdom of Judah. Thus the prophetic tales of Elijah and Elisha, whose confrontations with northern monarchs constitute the heart of Kings, do not appear in Chronicles, and most kings of Israel are not mentioned by name. Even king Ahab of Israel, whose apostasy and pursuit of Elijah are a major target of Kings (1 Kgs 16:29–33; 18:1–21:29), comes into play only in relation to his alliance with Jehoshaphat of Judah (1 Kgs 22:1–39; 2 Chr 18), while Jehoshaphat’s reign in Chronicles is expanded to four chapters (2 Chr 17–21).

2. Ben Sira. The early 2nd-century BCE book of Ben Sira, as the rabbis later called it, limns the major figures of Kings in its hymn praising but also critiquing famous ancestors (Sir 44–50) beginning with Enoch and ending with the author’s own contemporary, the high priest Simon. From Kings Ben Sira includes Nathan, David, Solomon, “foolish Rehoboam,” Jeroboam, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Isaiah, and Josiah, but concludes his portrait of Josiah with the note: “Except for David and Hezekiah and Josiah, all of them were great sinners, for they abandoned the law of the Most High; the kings of Judah came to an end” (49:4). Ben Sira relies on Kings for most of these descriptions, such as Solomon’s wealth, wisdom, and foreign wives, but sometimes follows Chronicles instead as in his attribution of the establishment of the temple service to David. Though Ben Sira was preserved in Greek in the LXX and thus not part of the Jewish canon, Hebrew manuscripts of the text found in the Cairo Genizah indicate that it was valued in Jewish circles.

3. Josephus. In his Antiquities Josephus retells and expands the tales of Kings aiming to show that the scriptures are trustworthy history and are supported by non-Jewish evidence. Sennacherib’s movements surrounding his unsuccessful capture of Jerusalem are traced in non-biblical sources all the better to support the strength of Hezekiah’s prayer in holding off the Assyrian threat. Josephus’ editorial additions to the descriptions of the kings stress not only their virtues and vices but also the workings of divine reward and punishment. Solomon, for instance, receives more than 200 paragraphs dedicated not only to his wisdom but to his courage, temperance, and piety as well. Jeroboam, on the other hand, is portrayed as the exemplar of wickedness. Yet Josephus also complicates character showing the evil king Ahab sincerely repenting and attributes the successful king Uzziah’s fall from grace and painful leprosy to his self-righteousness and impiety. Josephus’ treatment of the prophets often downplays their miracles while underscoring the fulfillment of prophecy in real historical time. So he emphasizes, for example, Elijah’s correct prediction of a drought but omits the tale of his walk across the Jordan river and of the chariot that took him up to the sky.

4. Rabbinic Literature. In rabbinic literature Kings as a book plays no specific role, but like the other books of the Early Prophets, receives voluminous commentary in the Middle Ages from exegetes such as Rashi (1040–1105), David Kimhi (1160–1235), Gersonides (1288–1344), and Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508). The book’s characters and events, however, are frequently cited and interpreted in both halakhic and aggadic material even if Yalqut Shimoni (12th–13th cent.) is the only midrashic collection devoted to all of Kings. Elijah is an especially favorite of the rabbis because of his superhuman knowledge. He can discover lost objects or the wishes of a dead person. As well, halakhic puzzles which cannot be solved are left “until Elijah comes.” Essentially Elijah becomes rabbinized. Later he speaks to individual rabbis and can disclose divine purposes and plans. In their stories of royal times, the rabbis integrate the Later Prophets into the history narrated in Kings even though in the biblical text itself only Isaiah (and a single verse referring to Jonah son of Amittai) appears out of all the classical prophets. Thus the rabbis anticipate modern critical scholarship’s interest in setting the prophets in the historical context largely provided by Kings.

5. Medieval Judaism. Among medieval thinkers Maimonides (1138–1204) and Isaac Abarbanel are especially concerned with kingship, and the books of Kings play some part in their deliberations. For Maimonides kingship is a central element of his fu-
turistic hope. In the “Laws Concerning Kings and Wars” in his Mishneh Torah Maimonides takes Moses and David as models of humility, which he sees to be the primary check on royal power. The just king, he says, is to serve his subjects and not wield his power over them. He refers to the advice offered to and rejected by Rehoboam by the elders to be a “slave (‘ched’)” to the people (1 Kgs 12:7) in favor of the bad counsel proffered by his contemporaries. A legitimate king, according to Maimonides, follows the Torah and fights the Lord’s battles. Here he cites the prophet Ahijah’s charge to Jeroboam upon his appointment as king to “keep my laws and commandments” (1 Kgs 11:38). Abarbanel, on the other hand, who lost his own position in the court of Portugal when the Jews were exiled, viewed kingship skeptically. For him the biblical judges and prophets were faithful to God, but the sins of the kings warranted. For instance, why the prophecies of the kings of Israel and Judah brought on the exile. In the messianic age, not monarchy, but judges will prevail.

As a scholar influenced by Renaissance trends, Abarbanel was also concerned about questions of biblical authorship, dating, and lexicography. He wondered, for instance, why the prophecies of the Later Prophets were not incorporated into the books of the Early Prophets and instead made into separate books. He followed rabbinic tradition (BBB 15ab) in attributing to Jeremiah the authorship of Kings, but also insists that Jeremiah intended to create an accurate history from the diverse sources that he used. Abarbanel contrasts Kings with Chronicles, in which the characters of David and Solomon are burnished with extra, non-historical material.

6. Liturgy. The most direct way in which the books of Kings enter into the lives of Jews in the pews is through haftarah (prophetic) readings on sabbaths and festivals, which are linked on a lexical or thematic level to the designated Torah portion of the week. Although the selection of haftarah texts has varied widely over time and community and between the annual and triennial cycle of Torah readings (see “Haftarah”), those from Kings now number sixteen. Of those, six concern Solomon and the Temple and five the prophets Elijah and Elisha. While most haftarot come from the Later Prophets and offer consolation, those from Kings mainly present historical or thematic parallels. Thus the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman (2 Kgs 4:1–37) accompanies the Torah portion encompassing Sarah’s miraculous conception and Isaac’s equally miraculous escape from sacrifice (Gen 18–22). Both portions focus on divine intervention to overcome sterility and death and thus celebrate together the survival of the family against all odds. Unlike the Torah, which is read in sequence week by week and repeated year by year, the narrative of Kings thus enters the “synagogue Bible” only as snippets of a select few sections. In Reform communities, where the haftarah is not regularly read at services, Kings is barely known.


Robert L. Cohn

IV. Christianity

In the patristic and medieval Latin tradition, the books of 1–2 Kings were considered part of the Samuel–Kings sequence, commonly called 1–4 Regum, or, alternatively, 1–4 Regnorum in the LXX tradition (see “Kingdoms, Books of”). In his preface to his own translation of these books (the so-called Prologus Gallatus), Jerome points out that a better name for the books of Kings would be 1–2 Mala- chim, after the Hebrew tradition, rather than 3–4 Regum. Notwithstanding, the latter nomenclature prevailed throughout the Middle Ages.

The books of Kings contained descriptions of several historical figures, such as Solomon, Elijah and Elisha, and Zechariah and Ahab, that spoke to the Christian imagination, and not just to exegetes, but also to artists and poets. The stealing of Naboth’s vineyard by King Ahab was the subject of a homiletic treatise by Ambrose of Milan (De Naturis), Eli-jah came to epitomize monastic virtue, while Jeze- bel embodied evil woman. The building of the Temple by Solomon received an extensive allegorical commentary by the Anglo-Saxon scholar Bede, who had also commented on the building of the tabernacle by Moses. Following this tradition were several medieval commentators, such as Andrew and Richard of Saint Victor, and the Premonstratensian abbot Adam of Dryburgh.

While episodic, homiletic treatments of these texts exist, no author in the patristic period wrote a continuous historical commentary on these books. Isidore of Seville offered a number of allegorizations of these books that became standard interpre-
tations throughout the medieval period, namely the Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum. The first continuous commentaries were written in the Carolingian period, by Angelomus of Luxeuil, Hrabanus Maurus, and Claudius of Turin. Other notable commentaries include those by Remigius of Auxerre, Andrew of Saint Victor, and Denys the Carthusian, the Postillae of Hugh of Saint Cher, and Nicholas of Lyra, and, in the early modern period, Cornelius a Lapide and Jean Calvin.

One of the chief exegetical difficulties in the books of Kings involved the number of years reigned by the kings of Judah and Israel. The books provide many chronological indications concerning the reigns of these kings, as well as statements about their synchronicity. These statements do not completely align, however, and at times they contradict each other. Jerome was aware of these discrepancies, and expressed concern about them in his letter to the priest Vitalis (PL 22.676A). In the 12th and 13th centuries, exegetes such as Andrew and Richard of Saint Victor, Peter Comestor, and Peter John Olivi devoted exegetical treatises to solving these contradictions that are still discussed in modern scholarship.


Frans van Lieu

V. Literature

Given its episodic nature, the books of Kings has more frequently been deployed and adapted in parts than as a whole, its evocative individual stories being rendered for literary, typological, and political purposes into numerous re-tellings. Theologically, the covenant and the monarchs’ repeated failures of fidelity are the driving force of the books. However, no part of the Bible is more political, or failures of fidelity are the driving force of the books. However, no part of the Bible is more political, or politically relevant to contemporary politics. By no means uniform, they range from stately royalist defences of the uninterrupted succession of kings, even when a dynasty was razed, to fierce exegetical republicanism which used the books, together with Judges and Samuel, to argue that kingship had rendered itself an illegitimate form of government, that brought God and his prophets to despair. The French Huguenot writer, Guillaume de Saluste Du Bartas, produced a barnstorming and much-admired pair of works, the Sermoines (1578–84), the latter of which, La Seconde Sermoine (1584), retold the stories of Kings in gruesome and lurid fashion across two long poems Le Schisme and Le Decadence. Du Bartas was widely admired and imitated across Europe. Scottish and English responses inaugurated a tradition of writing paraphrases of the tales of Kings, in prose and poetry, including Joseph Hall’s vast Contemplations upon the Historic of the Old Testament (1612–26), who transposed Judean and Israelite history with subtlety into political morality tales. Others inflected their retellings to note quite how regularly the kings were pernicious. Hezekiah Woodward’s The Kings Chronicle (1643), for instance, re-told the tales as political catastrophes. However, the most fre-
quently and disturbing re-readings of the books of Kings were those many that relayed how frequently regicide and the destruction of kingly dynasties was the apparently quotidian fate of monarchs.

Here too, the exegetical tradition, was a Europe-wide phenomenon, tracing the frequent biblical acts of regicide as political precedent for the overthrow and killing of monarchs. From the radical Protestant works, such as the anonymous Vindiciae, contra Tyrannos (1579) and George Buchanan’s De Jure regni apud Scotos (1579), through to the radical Jesuit, Robert Persons’ A conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of England (1595), writers discovered in their scriptural reading how tenuous the right to the crown might be. The assassinations of Henri III (1589) and of Henri IV (1610) in France, were felt by many to be all too closely linked to such scriptural rhetoric. Similarly, in the English Civil War, biblical kingship was seen to embody all the tyrannical qualities that contemporaries saw in Charles I, and later in Cromwell. From John Milton’s Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (1649), to Edward Sexby’s Killing Noe Murder: Briefly Discours’d in Three Quaestions (1657), the book of Kings provided the common stock of political tales and constitutional language, quite different to the typological readings of the patristic and scholastic era, albeit this kind of reading lost its lustre and its currency, this kind of reading lost its lustre and its currency, because of the elision with the NT figure called Jezabel. Ahab, Elijah – with the louche and loose figure of Jezebel, and the attribution of blame and malice, has often figured in retellings of this part of Kings, and not infrequently, Jezebel is given a better press. Tom Robbins, Skinny Legs and all (1990), has its heroine sceptically deconstructing the biblical tale on which she is based and Margaret Atwood, both in The Robber Bride (1993) and in The Handmaid’s Tale (1985) produced compelling Jezebelian typologies. The book of Kings remains among the lesser-known portions of the Bible, but its reception is nevertheless a potent and interesting one.

The complex interaction of males – YHWH, Ahab, Elijah – with the louche and loose figure of Jezebel, and the attribution of blame and malice, has often figured in retellings of this part of Kings, and not infrequently, Jezebel is given a better press. Tom Robbins, Skinny Legs and all (1990), has its heroine sceptically deconstructing the biblical tale on which she is based and Margaret Atwood, both in The Robber Bride (1993) and in The Handmaid’s Tale (1985) produced compelling Jezebelian typologies. The book of Kings remains among the lesser-known portions of the Bible, but its reception is nevertheless a potent and interesting one.

The book of Kings has an extensive literary legacy too, albeit this involves the afterlives of particular tales. The European tradition is rich, including dramas such as Miguel Venegas, Tragedia Cai Nomen Inditum Achaus (ca. 1561), Juan Bonifacio (attrib.), Tragedia Jezabelis and Racine, Athalie (1691). Biblically-based drama was banned from the English stage before the heyday of Tudor and Stuart theatrical output, but the interwoven stories of Jezebel, Ahab and Elijah nevertheless has a long history of literary transformations, the most potent of which, though it is primarily allusive, is Lady Macbeth, scolding her husband into theft and murder and the subsequent unmasking of the crime. Biblically-based drama was banned from the English stage before the heyday of Tudor and Stuart theatrical output, but the interwoven stories of Jezebel, Ahab and Elijah nevertheless has a long history of literary transformations, the most potent of which, though it is primarily allusive, is Lady Macbeth, scolding her husband into theft and murder and the subsequent unmasking of the crime. Biblically-based drama was banned from the English stage before the heyday of Tudor and Stuart theatrical output, but the interwoven stories of Jezebel, Ahab and Elijah nevertheless has a long history of literary transformations, the most potent of which, though it is primarily allusive, is Lady Macbeth, scolding her husband into theft and murder and the subsequent unmasking of the crime. Biblically-based drama was banned from the English stage before the heyday of Tudor and Stuart theatrical output, but the interwoven stories of Jezebel, Ahab and Elijah nevertheless has a long history of literary transformations, the most potent of which, though it is primarily allusive, is Lady Macbeth, scolding her husband into theft and murder and the subsequent unmasking of the crime. Bibliographically, the extraordinary Kings cycles in the so-called Moralized Bibles of the 1220s–40s (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cods. 1179 and 2554; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 270b; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France MS lat. 11560; London, British Library MS Harley 1526–
The above examples are exceptional. More often, Kings were a component of monumental pictorial cycles. The earliest known example comprises the Samuel and Elijah sequences interspersed in the biblical cycle of the house synagogue of Dura Europos, Syria (ca. 245–56 CE). Like all of the synagogue’s content, these depart from scriptural order, perhaps to highlight contemporary messianic themes. Early Christian examples of material gleaned from Kings, like the 4th-century David scenes on the wooden doors of San Ambrogio, Milan, are clearly governed by typological concerns, even if the application of such frameworks is not systematic. This is also the case for the 1, 3, and 4 Kingdoms’ content described by Prudentius. In a poem of ca. 400, he provided a list of captions for a putative cycle of biblical paintings reminiscent of the murals known to have adorned the nave walls of Old St. Peter’s, Rome (cf. Davis-Weyer: 25, 28–29). Kings imagery gradually became a cypher for secular power: the David cycle in the Monastery of Müstair, Switzerland, while typological, tacitly celebrated Charlemagne, its patron, while the stained glass devoted to Kings in Louis IX’s famous Sainte Chapelle in Paris (1239–48) pictured the monarch’s scriptural predecessors in contemporary terms.

Remarkably, the earliest extant illustrated biblical codex was may have been a standalone book of Kings. Judging from its surviving folios, the 5th-century Quedlinburg Itala (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. theol. lat. fol. 485) once contained some 100 illustrations that modelled ideologies of Christian power and entertained elites, not unlike an exquisite set of silver Byzantine plates engraved with David’s battle against Goliath (629–30; now divided between the Metropolitan Museum, New York and the Museum of Antiquities, Nicosia) and the uniform that is the 11th-century Byzantine codex Vatican Gr. 333. The 104 painted miniatures of the latter cover 1–4 Kingdoms, as do the twelve repoussé images of the coronation chalice of Trzesnieszno (ca. 1180, Cathedral Treasury, Gniewno). The inscription on the chalice’s rim likens the king to David, Elijah, and Christ. Isolated Kings material might also evoke conflicts between regnum and sacrae sanctorum. The ink wash sequence of David and Saul that precedes a manuscript of Peter Lombard’s Psalms Commentary (ca. 1163–70, Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek Bibl. 59) allegorizes the contentious relationship of Emperor and Pope. Visual orchestrations of David’s life also focused on his romantic pursuits, as on a Middle Byzantine ivory “nuptial” casket (9th cent., Palazzo Venezia, Rome, see fig. 10) or, on the other hand, a series of David and Bathsheba tapestries purchased by King Henry VIII of England (Château d’Écouen, Museum, Paris) thought to reflect Henry’s wish to divorce his first wife.

Owing to its attribution to David, the Psalter was an important site for Kings material. An extensive David frontispiece cycle precedes the Psalms in the Cistercian Bible of Stephen Harding (1109, Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale MSS 13–15). David sequences were also integrated within “prefatory” cycles of devotional Psalters; in the Psalter of Basil II (11th cent., Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana Cod. Marc. gr. 17), scenes from David’s life supplied the Byzantine Emperor with models of pious rule. Occasionally, such cycles were integrated into the Psalm text at liturgical divisions, for example in the exquisite decorated initials of the Ingeborg Psalter (ca. 1200, Chantilly, Musée Concéde MS. 9 olim 1695). Expenses incurred for the extensive, unfinished Kings cycle woven through the margins of an early 14th-century English manuscript (New York Public Library, Spencer MS 26) may have led to the ruin of Prior John Tickhill, its patron. Two centuries later, the Flemish “Master of the David scenes” painted an extensive David cycle in the margins of another churchman’s prayer book, the Breveary of Cardinal Domenico Grimaldi (ca. 1520, Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana MS lat. I 99).

Artists of the Renaissance and Baroque periods frequently explored Kings, but favored anecdotal moments over sequential narratives. The supremacy of David as a subject is evident across media; a series of engravings of David and Goliath by the 16th-century Netherlandish artist Maerten van Heemskerck, for instance, saw several printings. Densely illustrated Kings sequences reemerged in the 19th century with the burgeoning taste for grand illustrated Bibles like Gustave Doré’s English Bible of 1866, while the aure of Marc Chagall re-envisions Kings from a modernist, Jewish perspective.

VII. Music

The lives of kings, queens, and prophets from the books of Kings have inspired numerous works in music, among them 18th- and 19th-century oratorios, motets, instrumental works, African American Spirituals, and popular songs from the 20th century. Character portrayals include King Solomon, the prophet Elijah, King Ahab and his consort Queen Jezebel, the prophet Elisha, Queen Athaliah, King Hezekiah, and Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia.

George Frideric Handel’s oratorio Solomon (HWV 67, 1748; rev. 1759), based on 1 Kgs 3–11 and 2 Chron 1–9, and Josephus’ Jewish Antiquities, is a well-known work that recounts various episodes from King Solomon’s life, including the consecration of the temple in scene 1/act 1, and in scene 2 the extra-biblical conversation between Solomon and his unnamed Queen “from the Nile” following their marriage (1 Kgs 3:1), it also includes references to the palace which Solomon was building (1 Kgs 3:11; 9:24). The next episode highlights the wisdom of Solomon (act 2) with a retelling of the story of the two harlots who claimed the baby as their own (1 Kgs 3:16–28). Act 3 features the Queen of Sheba, and the well-known sinfonia, “The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba.” Other well-known works inspired by the Queen of Sheba include the cantata for mixed chorus and orchestra (The Destruction of Sennacherib), based on a poem of the same name by Lord Byron, and in two oratorios by the same composer, Elijah. Works inspired by the Prophet Elisha include the oratorio Naaman by Michael Costa (1864), Elijah (HWV 52) by Handel to a libretto by Samuel Humphreys. It tells the story of Athalia who ordered the murder of all the males of the royal household, and her grandson Joash, who escaped and remained hidden in the temple for six years (2 Kgs 11:1–3). The oratorio concludes with the brutal death of Athalia, which is treated off-stage.

Events such as the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian King Sennacherib and the slaughter of the Assyrian army by the angel of death (2 Kgs 18:13–19:37) were retold by Modest Mussorgsky in a cantata for mixed chorus and orchestra (The Destruction of Sennacherib), based on a poem of the same name by Lord Byron, and in two oratorios by the same name Hezekiah by Philip Armes (1878) and later by John Truman Wolcott (1908), both based on the account of the story from Isaiah (Isa 36–37).

The story of King Hezekiah also enjoyed a reception in music from the early 18th century, in a work for harpsichord entitled Hikia agonizzante e risanato (Sonata No. 4) in Biblical Sonatas (Biblische Historien) (1700) by Johann Kuhnau based on 2 Kgs 20, and in a dialogue motet Ezariah (date unknown) by Carissimi based on the account of the story in Isa 38.

The best known work based on the story of the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar from 2 Kgs 24–
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25 features in the opera Nabucco by Giuseppe Verdi (1841) to a libretto by Temistocle Solera (1815–1876) based on the play Nabuchodonosor by Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornu (premiered 1836) and a ballet adapted from the play, Nabuchodonosor, ballo storico by Antonio Cortese (premiered 1838). Although the opera libretto is based primarily on Jeremiah, it also derives from 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Daniel, and the Psalms.


**Siebhd Dowling Long**

**VIII. Film**

The books of Kings start with King David on his death-bed and end with the exile of his dynasty to Babylon. In between thirty-nine kings and one queen, rule the people of the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah. Strangely though, few of these monarchs have been portrayed on film. Even the death of David is oddly absent; in films about him featuring only in The Story of David (dir. David Lowell Rich/Alex Segal, 1976, US/IT/DE) and the thirty-hour Rei Davi (dir. Edson Spinello, 2012, BR, King David). Strangely rather than covering his death in their 1997 film David (dir. Robert Markowitz, 1997, US), the Bible Collection only included the episode in Solomon (dir. Roger Young, 1997, UK/CZ/FR/IT/DE/US). Indeed David’s final days actually feature more in films about his most famous son.

Amongst the other rulers of Israel and Judah, it is Solomon that has proved to be the most popular, featuring in at least twenty-five productions. The earliest, Pathé Frères film Le Jugement de Solomon (FR), goes back to 1904 covering the king’s famous intervention in a dispute between two mothers. The same story was adapted three more times in the next eight years, and in practically all of the film depictions of Solomon ever since. However Solomon’s enduring popularity would appear to owe at least as much to the popularity of the Queen of Sheba as it does to the man himself. Continuing the tradition of the biblical operas of the 19th century, Solomon’s meeting with Sheba’s ruler first appeared to owe Saba Melikesi (dir. Louis Feuillade, 1911, The Son of the Shunamite) the only real film about Elisha. The remainder of 2 Kings featuring the gradual deterioration of the divided kingdom is perhaps best captured by Marc Connelly and William Keighley’s 1936 film The Green Pastures (US). Instead of portraying any ruler in particular, it condenses them all into a single king who has set his face against God and is persecuting the similarly generic prophet who speaks out against him.


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