

The Synchronistic Excerpt from the Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah

The frame sections in the books of Kings constitute the most important source for the history of Israel during the era of the monarchy. They pass down the sequence of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, and provide the history with its chronological scaffolding. As long as the two monarchies existed side by side, the beginning of each reign is related in each given case to the year in the reign of the neighbouring king. This is regularly followed by the judgment about the king's godliness. For all else the reader is pointed to the "Book of the Chronicles" (סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים) of the kings of Israel or the kings of Judah. The king's death, burial, and the succession to the throne ends the account.

It is not difficult to detach this schematic arrangement from the rest of the text and then to perceive that, unlike the frame to the book of Judges, it is not simply redactional, but rests on source-based information, indeed that it itself constitutes a pre-redactional source. The regular pointer to "the rest" (יְתֵר), which can be found in the information about the respective king in the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings" shows that we are meant to understand this as an excerpt. It does not purport to document the history of the kings completely, but confines itself to a particular viewpoint, then pointing for everything else to the *Vorlagen*. It is accordingly not meant to be a substitute for these. The schematic outline is a secondary source – in fact an excerpt.

The sources to which the excerpt points are divided into "the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" and "the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah." We can also see this from the fact that the information given differs slightly. The king's age on his accession and the name of the queen mother is provided only for the kings of Judah. These details were probably not included in the Northern Kingdom's documents. "It must therefore be admitted that he [i.e., the author of the excerpt] took the different formulas from different sources, the one type from Judean records, the other one from records of Israelite origin."¹ The information about the king's death and burial

¹ Shoshana R. Bin-Nun, "Formulas from Royal Records of Israel and of Judah," *VT* 18 (1968): 414–32, esp. 421.

also varies in the two accounts. “The sources of the author’s information may have varied considerably.”²

The excerpt has dovetailed the two sequences of rulers chronologically. This cannot already have been the case in the *Vorlagen*. “The kings of Israel had no reason to note which kings were ruling in Judah in their own time, nor had the kings of Judah any need to record who their opposite numbers in Israel were, and when these changed.”³ It was only from time to time that the two kingdoms were closely linked. Indeed they were more often even at enmity with each other, to the point of open conflict. So the synchronisms cannot derive from the respective royal chronicles, but must go back to the author of the excerpt. Some of the discrepancies in the chronology as it has been transmitted have probably crept in through these subsequent calculations.

II

With regard to the composition of the excerpt, there are two possibilities. Either it was already available to the redactor of the books of Kings, that is to say the Deuteronomistic historian (this was the view maintained by Otto Thenius,⁴ later especially by Alfred Jepsen,⁵ and latterly also by Christof Hardmeier).⁶ Or the author of the books of Kings himself made use of his sources in this way. Abraham Kuenen favoured this possibility: “The framework cannot be separated from the detailed accounts it now includes; it must therefore also surely have been designed for this purpose from the outset, but in this case it must also be ascribed to the author of the book of Kings, who used it for that end.”⁷ Martin Noth especially adopted the second solution, and in doing so found many successors.⁸ In his view, the excerpt is the work of the

² Baruch Halpern and David S. Vanderhooft, “The Editions of Kings in the 7th–6th Centuries B.C.E.,” *HUCA* 62 (1991): 179–244, esp. 194.

³ Franz Rühl, “Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda,” *DZGW* (1894/1895): 44–76, esp. 44.

⁴ Otto Thenius, *Die Bücher der Könige* (KEH 9; Leipzig: Weidmann, 1849), III–VI.

⁵ Alfred Jepsen, *Die Quellen des Königsbuches* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1953), 30–54. On pages 30–36 Jepsen presents a reconstruction of the “Synchronistische Chronik S.”

⁶ Christof Hardmeier, “Umriss eines vordeuteronomistischen Annalenwerks der Zidkijazeit,” *VT* 40 (1990): 165–84; see also Melanie Köhlmoos, “‘Die übrige Geschichte’: Das ‘Rahmenwerk’ als Grunderzählung der Königebücher,” in *Behutsames Lesen: Festschrift Christof Hardmeier* (ed. S. Lubs a.o.; ABG 28; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 216–31.

⁷ Abraham Kuenen, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Bücher des alten Testaments*, I,2 (trans. Th. Weber; Leipzig: Reisland, 1890; Dutch original 2nd ed., 1887), 65.

⁸ Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (trans. J. Doull, J. Barton a.o.; JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1981; German original 1943), 63–68.

author of the Deuteronomistic History, who compiled it in the course of putting into shape the whole work as we have it today.⁹

Jepsen rests his thesis about the excerpt's pre-redactional origin on the Babylonian Chronicle as a possible parallel. This chronicle is also synchronistically arranged, relating to each other the succession of reigns in Assyria and in Babylon.¹⁰ Jepsen deduces from this that synchronism of the kind found in the frame sections of the books of Kings was widespread at the time. Interpreted in this way, the schematic outline of the kings of Israel and Judah cannot be an excerpt. Jepsen reads the "Synchronistic Chronicle," as he calls it, as a primary source. But the parallel example does not measure up to what is required of it. The Babylonian Chronicle is not a typical example of the historiography of the time. The synchronisms are due to Assyria's paramount position over against Babylon in the eighth/seventh centuries.

Moreover Jepsen has to make one essential qualification. Since he believes that the synchronisms are constitutive, the "Synchronistic Chronicle" cannot have been taken beyond the end of the Northern kingdom of Israel. In his view, the work was written towards the end of the eighth century as a reaction to the downfall of the Israelite monarchy; the era that followed, down to the fall of Jerusalem, was the supplement of another hand.¹¹ But the literary caesura which would be the presupposition for this assumption cannot be detected. The "frame" structure runs to the end without a join.

Finally, Jepsen's hypothesis would mean that the references to the source which suggest that the work is an excerpt have to be the work of another hand. He ascribes them to the redactor of the books of Kings, who by so doing was pointing to other of his *Vorlagen*, which document the wars and the building works which some of these references mention.¹² This solution is improbable from the outset. "It is ... certainly not essential, but would surely be most natural, to read the final formula of the epitomist – that is the advice to the reader to turn for the rest of the history of the previously mentioned king to certain sources – as a pointer to the particular book from which he has taken his incomplete excerpts."¹³

⁹ With this presupposition, Ernst Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige. I. Kön. 17–2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11,2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 505–15, offers a reconstruction of the "Deuteronomistische Grundschrift des Königsbuches (DtrG)."

¹⁰ Jepsen, *Die Quellen des Königsbuches*, 115; Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: Augustin, 1975), 69–87.

¹¹ Jepsen, *Die Quellen des Königsbuches*, 38.

¹² Jepsen, *Die Quellen des Königsbuches*, 54–60.

¹³ Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs* (4th ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963; orig. pub. 1876–78), 296.

Unlike Jepsen, Noth recognizes that the frame is an excerpt. He however presumes that the author is the writer of the Deuteronomistic History. “He himself remarks repeatedly that he has taken only certain specific details from the ‘Books of the Chronicles’ and that the reader can find the rest of the information on the ‘acts’ of each particular king in the ‘Book of the Chronicles’ for himself. His intention then ... is to write not the history of individual kings but the history of the whole monarchical period, the catastrophic end of which was evident.”¹⁴ The yardstick, in his view, was the catastrophe towards which everything drew. Starting from this end, the Deuteronomist decided on the historical details he thought worth recording, and the way the kings were to be judged. His whole interest, according to Noth, is concentrated on the judgments about their godliness. “The repetitive monotony of these judgments merely shows that he is really attempting a verdict on the whole monarchical period. Certainly there are some exceptions to the unfavourable judgment he passes. However, they are qualified and isolated and serve only to suggest that the monarchy *per se* could have been a positive factor in Israel’s history but in fact served only as a catalyst in its downfall.”¹⁵ This guiding supposition has meanwhile proved to be false. Today we know that the first redactor of the Deuteronomistic History by no means addressed his work to “the catalyst in its downfall.” Timo Veijola has shown that, on the contrary, his thrust was towards the reintroduction of the monarchy.¹⁶

III

With this presupposition, the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive; their correct features can be combined. As Noth maintains, the framework of the books of Kings is indeed to be understood as an excerpt, and not as a primary source. But, as Jepsen believes, this excerpt emerges as being a source which was available to the Deuteronomist.

The key can be found in the references to the sources. What does the term תָּרַח “the rest” refer to? If the excerpt were to go back to the Deuteronomist, as Noth supposes, the judgment about the godliness (which undoubtedly goes back to the redactor) would be a part of the schematic outline, and it is there that the main emphasis would lie. We should have to read the references as

¹⁴ Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 63.

¹⁵ Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 63–64.

¹⁶ See Timo Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (AASF B 193; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1975); idem, *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (AASF B 198; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1977).

meaning that “King so-and-so did what was evil/right in the eyes of Yahweh, and the rest can be read in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel/Judah.” This is what Kuenen already maintained: “By pointing each time to this writing, the author of the books of Kings shows that he intends to present *something different* from what was to be found in those books. ... In *his* writing – that is to say in our books of Kings – ... the focus of the observation was ... *the history of the religion*.”¹⁷ Wellhausen’s comment was similar: “The writer who composed this skeleton of the book of Kings is heart and soul in favor of Josiah’s reformation.”¹⁸

If however the excerpt was a pre-redactional source, the judgments about the kings’ godliness were added later. In this case the main weight lies on the succession of the rulers, and the references mean: “King so and so reigned so and so many years, and the rest can be read in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel/Judah.”

Three points speak in favor of the second possibility. The first is the wording. The common form of the source reference is *וְיִתֵּר דְּבָרֵי אַבְיָם וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה* “The rest of the acts of Abijam, and *all* that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?” (1 Kgs 15:7; also 14:29; 15:31; 16:14; 2 Kgs 8:23; 12:20; 15:6, 21; 23:28; 24:5). In most cases this form is somewhat expanded, but occasionally abbreviated. Instead of the form *הֲלוֹא־הֵם* or *הֲלוֹא־הֵמָּה* “are they not,” which expects an affirmative answer, *הִנֵּם* “behold they are” is also used (1 Kgs 14:19; 2 Kgs 15:11, 15, 26, 31). Instead of “The rest of the acts of the king, and *all* that he did (*וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה*),” there can also be “The rest of the acts of the king, *and* what he did (*וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה*)” (1 Kgs 16:5 [MT]; 2 Kgs 20:20), or “The rest of the acts of the king *that* he did (*אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה*)” (1 Kgs 16:27; 2 Kgs 1:18; 14:15; 15:36; 16:19; 21:25). In all cases the note means that attention is being drawn for the *total* reign of the king to the sources on which the excerpt is based. The exceptions in the cases of Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:18)¹⁹ and Zechariah (2 Kgs 15:11), where the relative clause is missing, can be understood if this is the premise, and the same is true of the cases in which the relative clause mentions particular events (1 Kgs 14:19; 16:20; 22:46; 2 Kgs 15:15; 20:20). The reign of the king as a whole included his religious policy. That too belonged to the “rest.” It follows from this that the pointers to the sources do not start from the judgments about the godliness. It is the extracted “date” scaffolding which the references expand by referring to the *Vorlage*.

¹⁷ Kuenen, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung* 1,2, 68.

¹⁸ Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, 294. More recently, Erik Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (OTS 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996), has made Josiah’s reform the starting point.

¹⁹ See, however, the Greek text.

Second, this is proved by the fact that the kings Elah (1 Kgs 16:8–10, 14) and Shallum (2 Kgs 15:13–15), who only ruled very briefly, are left without any judgment about their religious behaviour.²⁰ At the same time the pointer to the source appears in both cases (1 Kgs 16:14; 2 Kgs 15:15). “The rest” can only link up with the dates of their respective reigns.

The third reason emerges from the other details which are occasionally mentioned in the source references. Particular strength (גְּבוּרָה) is ascribed to nine kings: Asa (1 Kgs 15:23), Baasha (16:5), Omri (16:27), Jehoshaphat (22:46), Jehu (2 Kgs 10:34), Jehoahaz (13:8), Joash (13:12; 14:15), Jeroboam II. (14:28) und Hezekiah (20:20). Of these Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehu and Hezekiah are judged favourably; Baasha, Omri, Jehoahaz, Joash and Jeroboam II. unfavourably. In the case of the sharply condemned Ahab, numerous building projects are mentioned (1 Kgs 22:39), this time without the term גְּבוּרָה. These references direct the reader with special emphasis to the *Vorlage* from which the excerpt is drawn. The information coincides more or less with what we know about the importance of the kings from Assyrian inscriptions and archaeological findings. They show that the interest of the author of the excerpt was very much a historical one. The religious behaviour, on the other hand, is entirely ignored. This is a clear indication that the author of the source references cannot have been the same as the writer who formulated the godliness judgments. Each of them has pursued his own purpose, and the two cannot necessarily be reconciled.

If the judgment about the king’s godliness did not belong to the excerpt, this invalidates all the hypotheses which see in the variations of the judgments the criterion for a step-by-step expansion of the framework of the books of Kings, indeed of the Deuteronomistic History as a whole.²¹ The two levels

²⁰ The theological commentary 1 Kgs 16:11–13, which includes a judgment about Elah’s godliness is the work of a later hand, see Walter Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte* (FRLANT 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 23–24, 37, 59–60, and Ernst Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige. Kapitel 1–16* (ATD 11,1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 195.

²¹ That is especially true of Helga Weippert, “Die ‘deuteronomistischen’ Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher,” *Bib* 53 (1972): 301–39; Halpern and Vanderhooft, “The Editions of Kings,” 199–212; and Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah*. The theories about a block-like growth of the whole work also do not sufficiently take into account the possibility that the godliness judgments have caused the late theologians to make multifarious additions. These additions must first be recognized and excluded. The remaining nuances can have been inserted intentionally. At all events they coalesce into an intelligible overall picture. See Christoph Levin, “Die Frömmigkeit der Könige von Israel und Juda,” in *Houses Full of All Good Things: Essays in Memory of Timo Veijola* (ed. J. Pakkala and M. Nissinen; Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 95; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 129–68, repr. in *Verheißung und Rechtfertigung: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, vol. 2 (BZAW 431; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 144–77.

must be carefully distinguished. The excerpt from the annals forms, in its own way, a continuous literary unit. If it constitutes the basis of the present account, this extends exactly as far as the excerpt – that is to say, up to the end of the monarchy. With this, early dates for the Deuteronomistic redaction – seventh or even eighth century – are irreconcilable.

IV

Thenius already saw that the synchronistic excerpt was already available to the redactor as a source: “The *summary account* contained in our books is an extract from this work [i.e., the סִפְּר דְּבַרֵי הַיָּמִים], but it cannot have been made for the first time – this is a circumstance hitherto overlooked – by our concipient [i.e., the Deuteronomist] ... *it must have already been available to him*, for had it been fabricated by him himself, the extracts and the complete repetition of what was already existent would indisputably be distinguishable *only* by their greater or lesser detail, and it would have sufficed for the concipient to draw attention once and once only to his source; but as things are, the excerpt with its regularly recurring formulas, and especially with the appeal *each time* to the history of the kings, presents itself as a work *separate* from the concipient himself, and woven by him into his account.”²²

In the case of the framework to the books of Kings too, the Deuteronomist “like an honest broker” has assumed “a favourable view of the material in the traditions.”²³ He selected his sources, put them together and explained them in accordance with his own views. The pattern is dislocated only at a single point. For the end of the kings Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah, and the beginning of Jehu’s reign, the redactor has allowed a source originating from elsewhere to be heard: the story about Jehu’s putsch (2 Kings 9–10). For this, the annals excerpt has been interrupted between 2 Kgs 8:26 and 10:34. The note about the putsch 9:14, the item about the burial 9:28, and the synchronism 9:29 were incorporated into the story. Wellhausen deduces from this dovetailing that the excerpt from the annals was related to the narratives: “Since, now, the detailed accounts did not themselves originally have the epitome as their premise, the epitomiser must be seen as the person who adopted them, and shaped his excerpts in accordance with them from the outset; that is to say, to put it in other words, he is the real author of the book of Kings.”²⁴ But the exception does not determine the whole.

²² Thenius, *Die Bücher der Könige*, V.

²³ Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 84.

²⁴ Wellhausen, *Compositon*, 297; also Kuenen (see above p. 184). Wellhausen also points to the transition from the retrospective frame of Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 12:25–30 to the (late) narrative about his death in ch. 14, from the introductory frame for Ahab in 1 Kgs 16:29–33 to the Elijah stories from ch. 17 onwards, as well as from the story about the Aramean war in

V

If the synchronistic excerpt was already existent, this raises the question about the sources on which it was based. Noth was convinced that the two “Books of the Chronicles of the Kings” to which the compiler – in his view, the Deuteronomist – refers were not identical with the royal annals. “These ‘Books of the Chronicles’ were, clearly, written at a time when the period which they treated was already over and done with, whereas the official annals must have been composed while the events were still happening.”²⁵ It is certainly true that the perspective which determines the frame of the books of Kings is not the same as the perspective in the annals. “The combination of the accession to the throne with the length of the king’s reign before relating further details and even before the notice of his death is illogic and unusual in a chronicle.”²⁶ The schematic outline is more reminiscent of a list of kings rather than of a running chronicle.

Nevertheless it is hardly useful to assume that there was a further literary level between the annals and the synchronistic excerpt. For the “Books of the Chronicles of the Kings” must have been not a single work but two different ones. It would be a hardly explicable coincidence if they had been put together in an identical fashion from the annals at the courts of Samaria and Jerusalem. If we consider the official character of the two “Books of the Chronicles of the Kings” and, moreover, remember that the “Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel” must have been brought to Jerusalem at the downfall of the Northern kingdom under probably difficult circumstances, everything suggests that nothing other than the annals are meant.

Bin-Nun supposes that the frame pattern was put together by authors of the books of Kings from an Israelite and a Judean list of kings.²⁷ This raises the same objection as the one that has to be levelled against Jepsen’s “Synchronistic Chronicle”: the two lists of kings would have contained hardly anything more than is still extant in today’s text. The combination of the lists would not have been an excerpt. The references to the source could not have been part of the original framework, and would have to be related to a further *Vorlage*. But as we saw above, this is highly unlikely.²⁸

1 Kgs 22:1–38, in which Ahab is said to have met his death, to the retrospective frame for Ahab in 22:39–40. None of these examples is characteristic of the redactor’s working.

²⁵ Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 63.

²⁶ Bin-Nun, “Formulas from Royal Records,” 423.

²⁷ “Formulas from Royal Records,” 424.

²⁸ See above p. 185.

Moreover, no hypothesis of this kind is required. For the author of the excerpt, it would also have been the case that “the period of time treated in each case was already before him as something finished and done with.” The synchronistic excerpt itself can be understood as a list of the kings of Israel and Judah that was compiled subsequently.

VI

Kuenen has disputed the independence of the excerpt on the ground that “It must surely be considered almost inconceivable that the history of the two kingdoms was ever treated in so dry and scanty a way as would be the case if the ‘epitome’ were an independent writing.”²⁹ But the regular references to the original sources convey to the reader that the combination of the two sequences of rulers is not intended to add up to a complete account. They are not merely information about the source; they are also a demand that for the complete picture of the history the sources themselves should be looked at.

There must have been a special reason for compiling an excerpt of this kind, and this reason is not difficult to deduce from what the excerpt itself has added to its sources: it has linked together the series of kings of Israel and of Judah. The purpose was evidently to let the history of the two monarchies appear as a unity. For this, the dates provided a sufficient scaffolding. For everything beyond that, the annals were still available. The sole exception to this rule is the reign of the queen mother Athaliah and the enthronement of Joash of Judah, which are reported in 2 Kgs 11. Because here the continuity of the dynasty was at stake, the author of the excerpt has reproduced the account given in the annals.

The programme which can be deduced from this maintains a policy which – probably following the breakdown of the Assyrian hegemony in the last third of the seventh century – claimed for the kings of Judah the right to represent the whole of Israel, united north and south, for this purpose maintaining that Israel and Judah constituted a twofold unit. In so far the synchronistic excerpt from the annals is a historiographical pendant to the *Shema*, with which in the religious sector the identity of the northern and the southern Yahweh is asserted, and thereby and simultaneously the unity of Israel and Judah under the name of “Israel”: “Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is a single God” (Deut 6:4). At the same time it is also a pendant to the original Deuteronomy, which draws the cultic-political conclusion from the unity of north and south by restricting the court’s official cult to Jerusalem.

²⁹ Kuenen, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung* 1,2, 66.

The annals excerpt can have been written only at a time when there were still ambitious kings in Judah, and an intact archive. That is the grain of truth in the hypotheses which assume that a first version of the Deuteronomistic History was made during the era of the monarchy – with however being true only for the pre-redactional sources; it does not apply to the redaction, which for cogent reasons can be dated only after the end of the monarchy.

The deviations from the schematic pattern also point to a date in the seventh century. From Solomon (1 Kgs 11:43) to Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:20), the death and burial of the kings of Judah are noted in one and the same way: וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִם־אֲבוֹתָיו וַיִּקָּבֵר עִם־אֲבוֹתָיו בְּעִיר דָּוִד “He slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David.”³⁰ This is intended to underline the continuity of the Davidic house. From Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:21) onwards the notes about the burials become irregular. From Amon (2 Kgs 21:19) onwards the queen mother’s place of origin is added to her name. The most probable reason for these deviations is that the author of the excerpt knew details of this kind from contemporary tradition. This change has occasionally been used as a further argument in favor of a sequence of redactions – but wrongly so.³¹

VII

The point where the excerpt from the annals begins cannot be determined with certainty. The period before the separation of Israel and Judah was evidently not included. Chronicle-like information about kings Saul (1 Sam 13:1), Ishbaal (2 Sam 2:10–11), David (5:4–5; 1 Kgs 2:10–11) and Solomon (11:41–43) do not provide the framework for the narrative material, but are inserted into the narrative itself,³² probably by the Deuteronomistic historiographer. The lack of dates, or their strikingly approximate character, suggests that for these details there were no sources. It is only from Jeroboam I. onwards (1 Kgs 14:19) that the excerpt can be pinpointed with certainty.

Its end is clearer. The last source reference has to do with the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 24:5).³³ The accession of his successor Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, is still described in the same way, as is also the rule of Gedaliah, so that the account includes the end of the Judean kingdom:

³⁰ See Halpern and Vanderhooft, “The Editions of Kings,” 189–90.

³¹ Thus Halpern and Vanderhooft, “The Editions of Kings,” 194–99.

³² See Reinhard Müller, *Königtum und Gottesherrschaft* (FAT II 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 157.

³³ See here the points raised by Kuenen, *Historisch-kritische Einleitung* I,2, 93.

^{24:18}Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. [...] ²⁰[...] And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. ^{25:1}In the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it. [...] ²So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. ³On the ninth day <of the fourth month> [...] ⁴a breach was made in the city. [...] ⁶They captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, <who> passed sentence upon him [...] ⁷[...] and bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon. [...] ²²And the people who remained in the land of Judah, [...] he appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, over them. [...] ²⁵But in the seventh month, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of the royal family, came, and ten men with him, and they beat Gedaliah and he died. (2 Kgs 24:18, 20b; 25:1a, 2–3aa, 4aa*, 6, 7bβγ, 22aa, b, 25a).³⁴

These very last events can hardly have found their way into the original annals excerpt. It is more probable that they were added subsequently to the work, which was itself composed under Josiah or Jehoiakim. For this a detectible literary caesura is not the necessary prerequisite.

The information about the destruction of Jerusalem (25:8aa, b–9a) and the rehabilitation of Jehoiachin (25:27 [except בַּשָּׁנָה הַלְלוּ]) is written in a clearly different style. It was probably taken from the documents of the Babylonian branch of the Davidic house and was added later.³⁵

Abstract

The framework of the books of Kings is based on a combined excerpt from the annals of the kings of Israel and the annals of the kings of Judah. The purpose of this source is to show in retrospect Israel's and Judah's history as a unity. Most probably this official document states the claim of the kings of Judah to represent Judah and Israel as a common entity. Because the authors had access to the kings' archives, this document must have been written in the time of the monarchy, i.e., in the last third of the seventh century. By way of this argument we may escape the dilemma to decide upon a pre-exilic origin of the books of Kings (Kuenen, Cross) on the one hand or the exilic dating of the Deuteronomistic redaction (Noth, Smend) on the other. Applied to the distinction between (pre-exilic) source and (exilic) redaction, both options are correct.

³⁴ Regarding the analysis of the text see Christoph Levin, "The Empty Land in Kings," below 195–220, esp. 204–9 and 214–17. The assertion that the information about Zedekiah's captivity derives from the temple archives (thus Levin, "Die Frömmigkeit der Könige von Israel und Juda," 137 [= 151]), should be corrected: it belongs to the annals excerpt.

³⁵ See Levin, "The Empty Land in Kings," below 209–14 and 217–19.