DEUTERONOMY–KINGS *as* EMERGING AUTHORITATIVE BOOKS

A Conversation

Edited by
Diana V. Edelman

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The Case of the Book of Kings

Thomas Römer

Introduction: How Authoritative Was the Book of Kings in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods?

What is the book of Kings about? Is it about monarchy, about good kings and bad kings? And which idea about kingship does this book want to promote? Or, is Kings rather about prophets? Half of the book of Kings is, in fact, dedicated to stories about prophets. Or is the book about YHWH's wrath against Israel and Judah, since the book ends with the collapse of Samaria and Jerusalem?

Should we speak of one or two books of Kings? The division between 1 Kings and 2 Kings is indeed somewhat artificial since it splits up the stories of the Israelite king Ahaziah and those of the prophet Elijah. Nevertheless, this division is already presupposed in the Greek version of Kings, which, however, counts the two books of Kings as 3 and 4 Reigns. This indicates that for the Greek translators, Kings should not be separated from the book of Samuel, called in Greek 1 and 2 Reigns. And indeed, there is no clear break between these books because they narrate the story of the Israelite and Judahite monarchy from its beginning until its end. 1 Kings opens with the last days and the death of David, whose story is told in the books of Samuel. One may therefore ask whether the book of Kings ever was intended to be read on its own or always in connection with Samuel.

The authority of Kings in the Persian period was not "canonical" in the sense that the book would already have reached a definite form. The important differences between the Greek and the Masoretic texts of Kings are probably best explained by the assumption that the Greek text depends in many cases on a Hebrew *Vorlage* different from the Masoretic text. According to the work of A. Schenker and others, the Hebrew text that underlies the LXX in many cases preserves an older textual tradition than

the Masoretic version of Kings.[1] It is not necessary for our topic to decide whether the Masoretic text is a new edition of the *Vorlage* used by the Greek in order to integrate theological corrections into the older text, as argued by Schenker, or whether the LXX and MT constitute two competing textual traditions during the Persian period.[2] It is obvious in any case that during the Persian and early Hellenistic periods there was no "fixed" edition of Kings. The fixing did not take place earlier than the Hasmonean period: according to LXX 3 Reigns 2:35, the king has the power to establish the "first" or high priest ("as for Zadok the priest, the king appointed him to be high priest in the room of Abiathar"), whereas in 2 Kgs 2:35, the king can only replace a priest with another priest ("and the king put the priest Zadok in the place of Abiathar.") This diminution of the king's prerogative may reflect the situation of Simon Maccabeus who, after having been appointed high priest by King Demetrius, was then established in this charge by the assembly of the people and the priests (according to 1 Macc 14:41–49 this happened in 140 B.C.E.).[3]

The ongoing revision of the text of Kings points to an ambiguous status of authority: on the one hand, the story of the monarchy was considered an important tradition to be kept and transmitted; on the other hand, the story itself remained open to different interpretations. This is also shown by the fact that during the end of the Persian period or the beginning of the Hellenistic era, an alternative account of the history of the monarchy was published in the book of Chronicles. It is an account that transforms the Judahite kings into founders of the cult and liturgical chiefs and which reinterprets theologically "difficult" texts of Samuel

1. Adrian Schenker, *Septante et texte massorétique dans l'histoire la plus ancienne du texte de 1 Rois 2–14* (CahRB 48; Paris: Gabalda, 2000); see also Philippe Hugo, *Les deux visages d'Elie: texte massorétique et Septante dans l'histoire la plus ancienne du texte de 1 Rois 17–18* (OBO 217; Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

2. Frank H. Polak, "The Septuagint Account of Solomon's Reign: Revision and Ancient Recension," in *Xth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Oslo 1998* (ed. Bernard A. Taylor; SCSS 51; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 139–64; Jobst Bösenecker, "Text und Redaktion: Untersuchungen zum hebräischen und griechischen Text von 1 Könige 1–11" (Th.D. diss; University of Rostock, 2000); Percy S. F. Van Keulen, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative: An Inquiry into the Relationship between MT 1 Kgs. 2–11 and LXX 3 Reg. 2–11* (VTSup 104; Leiden: Brill, 2005).

3. Schenker, *Septante*, 146–47.

and Kings, like the long reign of the bad king Manasseh, for example. The Chronicler did not draw on the present MT of Samuel-Kings but on an earlier textual tradition dealing with the history of the Israelite and Judahite monarchies. I will not enter into the complicated discussion about the relationship between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.[4] Suffice it to point out that the existence of an alternative history that, contrary to Kings, does not end with the fall of Jerusalem and exile but with an appeal by the Persian king to rebuild the temple and to go up to Jerusalem indicates a "relative" authority for the Book of Kings.

Another point in which the authority of Kings is restricted is the fact that Kings (as well as Samuel) constructs a purely Judean discourse. Contrary to the books of the Pentateuch, and in a certain way also to the book of Joshua, Samuel–Kings excludes the "Samaritans" from the "true Israel." The focus on Jerusalem as the only legitimate place of sacrificial worship and the very negative account of the foundation of Yahwistic sanctuaries in the north provides the book of Kings with a polemical, anti-northern perspective. Even if most of the narrative material in Kings predates the construction of the Gerizim sanctuary, there is no doubt that 1 Kgs 12 and other condemnations of the northern cult are meant in the context of a Judean audience in the Persian period to allude to the competing sanctuary in the province of Samaria.[5] The existence of Gerizim seems to be presupposed by the MT, which, contrary to LXX, introduces in 1 Kgs 12:31 the strange

4. Even if the thesis of A. Graeme Auld (*Kings Without Privilege: David and Moses in the Story of the Bible's Kings* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994]) about a shared common text from which the authors of Kings and Chronicles drew has not found many followers, there is a growing awareness that the Chronicler's source was not the present book of Kings. See David M. Carr, "Empirische Perspektiven auf das Deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk," in *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke. Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur "Deuteronomismus"-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (ed. Markus Witte et al.; BZAW 365; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 1–17; and Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29* (AB 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004). Auld's proposal has been adopted, for example, by Raymond Person (*The Deuteronomistic History and the Books of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral World* [SBLAIL 6; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010]).

5. Contrary to the commonly held view that this sanctuary was built around 300 B.C.E., recent archaeological evidence points to its existence in the Persian period. For details, see Ephraim Stern and Yitzhak Magen, "Archaeological Evidence for the First Stage of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim," *IEJ* 52 (2002): 49–57.

expression בית במות,[6] "the house of the high places" or "a house (as bad) as high places," which may well contain an allusion to the Gerizim sanctuary.[7]

These introductory remarks show that the authority of Kings is restricted and partial: it restricts its discourse to Judeans in Yehud and in Babylonia. But even for these addressees its authority is limited: the text of Kings is not fixed yet, and there is an alternative account of the monarchy in Chronicles. Let us see now how the book constructs authoritative discourses.

An Authoritative Discourse ...

The story of Joseph in Gen 37–50 constitutes an open theological discourse. With the exception of Gen 39, which may constitute a late insertion, the narrator gives no information about the divine project or intervention. God only appears in the speeches of the story's protagonists (Joseph, his brothers, the king of Egypt ...). The reader is, therefore, free to decide whether he agrees with these statements or whether he prefers to understand the story differently. The reader finds nothing of the sort in Kings. Here, the addressees are confronted with a narrator who knows everything about YHWH. He knows which king offended his god and which king's behavior pleased the deity. The narrator constructs a discourse about divine anger that begins with Solomon and culminates in the destruction of Jerusalem. The narrator knows that it was YHWH who had sent Solomon's enemies (1 Kgs 11:9–25) and that the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem resulted from YHWH's anger: "Therefore YHWH was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight" (2 Kgs 17:15); "Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so angered YHWH that he expelled them from his presence" (2 Kgs 24:20). Using this narrative strategy, the "omniscient" narrator establishes his authority over the audience, which has no choice but to understand the events as presented and interpreted. The only places where some freedom is left to the reader involve traditional material, like the court intrigue at the beginning of the book in which YHWH does not intervene directly (1 Kgs 1) or some of the Elisha stories that lack theological comments. One can also include the end of Kings, where the narrator becomes astonishingly silent.

6. LXX: "he made houses on the high places."

7. Schenker, *Septante*, 103–6.

... But a Book with an Open Beginning and an Open End

As mentioned already, the book of Kings opens with what is properly an ending, since 1 Kgs 1–2 concludes the account of the succession to David that begins in 2 Samuel. Even if, in Kings, David is the founder of the divinely favored dynasty and the one with whom all his successors are compared, he first appears in Kings as old and lacking vigor. The book begins with a weak and dying David and ends with the last Davidic king living comfortably in Babylonian exile. This framework, which is made up of two kings who depend on others (David on his servants, Jehoiachin on the Babylonian king), creates an ambiguous depiction of the Davidic dynasty. The concluding passage in 2 Kgs 25:27–30 allows different and contradictory interpretations,[8] as is shown by the ongoing discussion of these verses. Was Jehoiachin's "rehabilitation" the last event known by the author, who had no specific purpose when reporting this fact from about 562 B.C.E., as argued by M. Noth: "this event—even though of little interest to the story as such—is still part of the description of the destiny of the Judean kings?"[9] Or, was his intention to underline that the Davidic dynasty had come to an end? Or, to the contrary, was this passage added to foster messianic expectation about the restoration of the Davidic dynasty?[10]

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8. See, among others, Thomas Römer, "La fin du livre de la Genèse et la fin des livres des Rois: ouvertures vers la Diaspora. Quelques remarques sur le Pentateuque, l'Hexateuque et l'Ennéateuque," in *L'Ecrit et l'Esprit: Etudes d'histoire du texte et de théologie biblique en hommage à Adrian Schenker* (ed. Dieter Böhler, Innocent Himbaza and Philippe Hugo; OBO 214; Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 285–94; Ronald E. Clements, "A Royal Privilege: Dining in the Presence of the Great King," in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim, and W. Brian Aucker; VTSup 113; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 49–66; Serge Frolov, "Evil-Merodach and the Deuteronomists: the Sociohistorical Setting of Dtr in the Light of 2 Kgs 25,27–30," *Bib* 88 (2007): 174–90.

9. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1943; 3rd ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 87; ET = *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; 2nd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 117.

10. Gerhard von Rad, "Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den Königsbüchern (1947)," in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (TB 8; Munich: Kaiser, 1958), 189–204; Erich Zenger, "Die deuteronomistische Interpretation der Rehabilitierung Jojachins," *BZ* NS 12 (1968): 16–30. According to Jakob Wöhrle, the text wants to rehabilitate Jehoiachin and to legitimate Zerubbabel as the continuation of the Davidic dynasty ("Die Rehabilitierung Jojachins. Zur Entstehung und Intention

The interpretation of these verses depends very much on how one reads the book of Kings. If one reads 2 Kgs 25 as the ending of an Enneateuch, one would probably see it in a negative light: from the exile out of Eden to the exile out of the land.[11] If one takes into account that Kings has become part of the Nevi'im (Prophets), then one should not read 2 Kgs 25 as an absolute ending but more as a transition to the prophetic oracles concerning an ideal king in Isaiah or the idea of a new David in Ezekiel. According to this view, 2 Kgs 25:27–30 had been conceived not as an end but as a transition to the prophetic corpus.[12] This alternative also raises the important question whether the book of Kings was really conceived as an independent book or whether it was part of a larger library presupposing knowledge of the surrounding books on the shelf. If one tries to read 2 Kgs 25:27–30 as the conclusion to the book of Kings solely, then one may understand it to endorse acceptance of the situation of the Exile, or even of the Diaspora.[13] As I have argued elsewhere, the fate of Jehoiachin recalls the ascension of "Diaspora-heroes" such as Joseph, Daniel, and Mordecai.[14] The book of Kings concludes, then, with the acceptance of the loss of political autonomy and of a foreign power that may treat the Judeans well. Such a Diaspora perspective is also visible in Solomon's inauguration prayer in 1 Kgs 8, where the temple is assigned the function of a *kiblah* for those living outside the land. Nevertheless, the book of Kings is also very much concerned with the question of monarchy.

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von 2 Kön 24,17–25,30," in *Berührungspunkte: Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und seiner Umwelt. Festschrift für Rainer Albertz zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* [ed. Ingo Kottsieper, Rüdiger Schmitt, and Jakob Wöhrle; AOAT 350; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008], 213–38).

11. Bernard Gosse, "L'inclusion de l'ensemble Genèse–II Rois, entre la perte du jardin d'Eden et celle de Jérusalem," *ZAW* 114 (2002): 189–211.

12. Konrad Schmid, "Une grande historiographie allant de Genèse à 2 Rois a-t-elle un jour existé?" in *Les dernières rédactions du Pentateuque, de l'Hexateuque et de l'Ennéateuque* (ed. Thomas Römer and Konrad Schmid; BETL 203; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 35–46 (42–43).

13. Donald F. Murray, "Of All Years the Hope-or Fears? Jehoiachin in Babylon (2 Kings 25:27–30)," *JBL* 120 (2001): 245–65; Jeremy Schipper, "'Significant Resonances' With Mephiboshet in 2 Kings 25:27–30: A Response to Donald F. Murray," *JBL* 124 (2005): 521–29.

14. Thomas Römer, "Transformations in Deuteronomistic and Biblical Historiography: On 'Book-Finding' and Other Literary Strategies," *ZAW* 109 (1997): 1–11.

A Discourse about Good Kings and Bad Kings and the Limitation of Royal Authority

The book of Kings begins with the picture of a "united kingdom" under Solomon and David, a Judahite united monarchy, with Jerusalem as the capital and the place of the only legitimate sanctuary. The "schism" that occurs after Solomon's death is presented as divine punishment for Solomon's behavior. Despite this punishment, the Jerusalemite temple remains the only legitimate sanctuary, and the foundation of Yahwistic sanctuaries by Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12) is presented as the original sin of the north. In the context of the end of the Persian period, this story about the splitting away of the northern tribes was certainly understood as a means of depreciating the legitimacy of the competing sanctuaries in Samaria.

At the very beginning of the book, the figure of King Solomon combines the positive and the negative behavior of Israelite and Judahite kings. These two perspectives are bookmarked by two divine manifestations in 1 Kgs 3 and 9. First Kings 3–8 presents the positive part of Solomon's reign: his wisdom and especially, the construction of the temple in Jerusalem. YHWH's second speech to Solomon evokes the possibility of his drifting away from YHWH's commandments. In fact, 1 Kgs 9:10–11:43 views Solomon negatively: he integrates many foreign women in his harem and builds sanctuaries for their divinities. Even if the story of the Queen of Sheba was originally written to enhance Solomon's glory, the context in which it now stands transforms the narrative into an example of Solomon's mingling with foreign women. Through the story of Solomon, Kings constructs a segregationist ideology that compares with some texts in Ezra and Deuteronomy (see the prohibition of mixed marriages in Deut 7; 12:2–7; Ezra 9–10). Apparently, this ideology reflects a social option in the Persian period: to construct the identity of nascent Judaism through segregation. Solomon appears as a negative example, showing the consequences of the nonrespect of segregation: Solomon's misbehavior provokes YHWH's anger and introduces a series of divine punishments, the final outcome of which is the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem. According to Kings, kingship is in crisis from its very beginning.

After Solomon's death and the splitting up of his empire, the accounts of the reigns of the northern and Judahite kings are constructed stereotypically. The book affirms the authority of the narrator over all the kings; he is able to pronounce theological judgments on every king. Kings is not much interested in the political achievements of various rulers. For that

it refers to a range of annals, which the audience is theoretically able to consult.

All kings are judged on two criteria, which are taken over from the book of Deuteronomy: the acceptance of the Jerusalemite temple as the only legitimate temple and the exclusive veneration of YHWH. From this perspective, all northern kings are systematically blamed (although with some differentiation)[15] for pursuing "Jeroboam's sins," that is, the royal Yahwistic sanctuaries in the north. The southern kings are judged according to their conformity to David's behavior; they are "to do what is right in YHWH's eyes like David." YHWH is often labeled David's "father." Interestingly, in the context of Kings it is not quite clear in which sense David is to be taken as a model. The basis of emulation is only indirectly stated in David's testament to Solomon, where he exhorts his son to respect the *tōrâ* of Moses, and in Solomon's speeches in 1 Kgs 3 and 8 in which he praises David's exemplary loyalty towards YHWH. Even if some Judahite kings receive pass-marks, none conforms to the Davidic standard except Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:3–6) and Josiah (2 Kgs 22:2). The others are accused of tolerating Yahwistic sanctuaries outside Jerusalem, which are called "high places" in the narrative. Despite Hezekiah's very positive image, there are some discrete criticisms in the account of his reign: he submitted to the Assyrian king and plundered the Jerusalemite temple in order to pay his tribute (18:13–16). The somewhat strange story about a Babylonian embassy (20:12–19) includes a prophetic oracle to Hezekiah that announces the exile of the royal family and the transfer of the temple's treasures to Babylon. Therefore, Josiah remains the best of all Judahite kings, not because of major military achievements but because of his submission to the book of the Law, as we will see later. In contrast to some good kings, the book of Kings also constructs very bad kings, the worst of all being Manasseh, who appears in some texts as the king solely responsible for Jerusalem's fall (2 Kgs 21:10–15; 24:34).

By constructing a cultic history of the Israelite and Judahite monarchy in which all kings are submitted to theological evaluation, the editors of Kings claim authority to judge all kings and kingship in general. There is no coherent discourse about the main actor responsible for the end of Israel and of Judah; some texts blame the people, others the kings

15. For details, see Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 155–57.

in general, and still others Manasseh. Even so, the book of Kings argues that kingship finally failed and that another authority is needed. This discourse fits well in the second half of the Persian period, when the leading economic and intellectual forces of nascent Judaism accepted the loss of political autonomy.

The Authority of the Prophets

At least in the Hellenistic period, Kings (as well as with Joshua, Judges, and Samuel) was considered to be a "prophetic" book, since it was integrated into the collection of the Nevi'im. The book of Kings contains an important number of passages mentioning prophets and also lengthy prophetic stories. It is even framed by stories about prophets. First Kings 1 mentions the prophet Nathan, who plays a major part in Solomon's ascension to the throne, and the final destruction of Judah is introduced with a reference to YHWH's servants, the prophets, who had announced the divine judgment (2 Kgs 24:2). Prophetic appearances have different functions.

(a) Some prophets pronounce divine oracles, usually oracles of punishment, and their fulfillment is expressly stated (e.g., Ahijah's oracle against Jeroboam's house is fulfilled in Baasha's revolt, 1 Kgs 15:27–29). Through this pattern of oracle/fulfillment, the editors of Kings demonstrate that YHWH's words always come to pass.

(b) The appearance of the prophet Isaiah in 2 Kgs 18–20 creates a cross-reference with the scroll of (Proto-) Isaiah, since Isa 36–39 contains a parallel account of the prophet's activity under Hezekiah. The same holds true for the book of Jeremiah: 2 Kgs 24–25 have a parallel in Jer 52, even if Jeremiah is not mentioned in these chapters. The Talmud considers Jeremiah to be the author of the book of Kings. These cross-references make the book of Kings a forerunner to the books of Isaiah and of Jeremiah and indicate they all belong together in the "prophetic library."

(c) Most prophetic narratives were integrated in the book of Kings during the Persian period to foster the prophetic character of the book. These stories often have a prophet confront a king and claim that prophetic authority stands above royal authority. Prophetic authority culminates in the figure of Elijah, who is constructed as a second Moses: he travels forty days and nights to Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Kgs 19), and like Moses in Exod 33, he is granted a private theophany. This theophany in 1 Kgs 19 criticizes or corrects the Mosaic one (and also the one of 1 Kgs 18): contrary to the Sinai theophany, YHWH does not appear accompanied

by thunder, lightning, and earthquake but in "a sound of sheer silence" (19:12). In the end, Elijah surpasses Moses. The latter's death (Deut 34) is more than remarkable since he is buried by YHWH himself and his grave remains unknown. Elijah, however, does not experience death but ascends to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kgs 2). The importance given to Elijah in the book of Kings prepares for the idea of his return, which is expressed at the end of the prophetic collection in Mal 3:22–24.

(d) In the last chapters of the book an anonymous group of prophets appears, who are characterized as YHWH's servants.[16] Their function is to exhort the people to obey YHWH's law: "Yet YHWH warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law that I commanded your fathers and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets'" (2 Kgs 17:13). They announce the imminent fall of Israel and Judah due to the failure of the people and the kings to respect *tōrâ* (2 Kgs 17:23; 21:10–12; 24:2). These passages prepare for the idea of YHWH's continuous sending of prophets, who are rejected by his people, an idea that can be traced from the book of Jeremiah (Jer 7:25–26; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4) into the New Testament (especially in Luke).[17] Most of these passages transform the prophets from messengers of doom into preachers of the law, whose aim is to exhort the audience to change their behavior to avoid divine punishment. In the context of the Persian period, this new function given to the prophets can be understood as an attempt to redefine prophetic activity after the events of 587 B.C.E., which were understood as accomplishments of the prophecies of doom and which raised the question of the function of the prophets.

The book of Kings constructs a prophetic authority that is ranked above royal authority. Prophetic authority, however, is also relative and depends on the final authority of Moses and the Torah.

16. As a collective, the expression occurs for the first time in the book in 2 Kgs 9:7. Individually, the title "servant" is attributed to Ahijah (1 Kgs 14:18), Elijah (18:36), and Jonah (2 Kgs 14:25).

17. Odil Hannes Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum* (WMANT 23; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1967).

The Authority of Moses and the (Book) of the Torah

David's testament to Solomon, which opens the history of kingship in Kings, provides criteria by which the reader is to evaluate the history of the two kingdoms: "keep the charge of YHWH your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn" (2 Kgs 2:2).

In the book of Kings, Moses is mentioned ten times;[18] in six of these passages Moses appears as the mediator of the law, three other mentions in 1 Kgs 8 relate to the Horeb covenant (v. 9: stone tablets; vv. 53 and 56: Israel's adoption as YHWH's people), and a final one mentions a bronze serpent made by Moses (2 Kgs 18:4). The first king who explicitly respects the Mosaic book of the law is Amaziah,[19] who "did not put to death the children of the murderers; according to what is written in the book of the law of Moses, where the Lord commanded, 'The parents shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the parents; but all shall be put to death for their own sins'" (2 Kgs 14:6). Although this passage contains a quotation from Deut 24:16, this does not necessarily mean in the context of the late Persian period that the משה תורת was considered to be only the book of Deuteronomy; it already could allude to some kind of Pentateuch. The next king who respects the Law of Moses more fully is Hezekiah: "he was loyal to YHWH; he did not depart from following him but kept the commandments that YHWH had commanded Moses" (2 Kgs 18:6). In contrast, the fall of Samaria that took place during his reign happened because the Israelites "did not listen to the voice of YHWH their God but transgressed his covenant, all that Moses, YHWH's servant, had commanded; they neither listened nor acted (conformingly)" (18:12).

In order to underline Manasseh's infamous behavior, the editors inserted a "quotation" of a YHWH-speech to David and Solomon that does not exist in the book of Kings and appears to be a summary of a sampling of topics from Solomon's speech on the occasion of the inaugu-

18. See also Philip Davies, who comments on the different uses of Moses in Kgs and Chr ("Moses in the Book of Kings," in *La construction de la figure de Moïse - The Construction of the Figure of Moses* [ed. Thomas Römer; TransSup 13; Paris: Gabalda, 2007], 77–87).

19. Amaziah belongs among the kings who were not too bad but who tolerated the high places (14:3–4).

ration of the temple:[20] " '...I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land that I gave to their fathers, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.' But they did not listen; Manasseh misled them to do more evil than the nations had done that the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel" (21:8–9).

This passage prepares, in contrast, for the final appreciation of King Josiah: "Before him there was no king like him, who returned to YHWH with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him" (2 Kgs 23:25). This is the final mention of Moses and the Torah in the book of Kings, and Josiah is the only king who conforms to the *whole Torah* of Moses. Indeed, the entire account of Josiah's reign is about the discovery and the installation of the "book of the law" in the temple in Jerusalem. Interestingly, this book of is not explicitly identified as the Mosaic Torah; this equation occurs only in the final comment about Josiah's achievements.

Josiah is also the only king who is portrayed to fulfill the loyalty prescription of Deut 6:4–5 literally: 2 Kgs 23:25 is the only exact parallel to Deut 6:5 in the Hebrew Bible:

Deut 6:5	וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל־מְאֹדֶךָ
2 Kgs 23:25	אֲשֶׁר־שָׁב אֶל־יְהוָה בְּכָל־לְבָבוֹ וּבְכָל־נַפְשׁוֹ וּבְכָל־מְאֹדוֹ

For centuries, the book found in the temple has been identified with the book of Deuteronomy. The cultic reforms undertaken by the king correspond to the Deuteronomic laws of centralization, the prohibition of foreign cults, and of YHWH worship outside Jerusalem. This equation of Deuteronomy with the book of the law may have been the intention of the first version of the book-finding account. In a Persian period setting, however, one may ask, as does E. Ben Zvi, whether the identification with the book of Deuteronomy is the only possibility.[21]

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20. Thomas Römer, *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (OBO 99; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag ; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 370–71.

21. Ehud Ben Zvi, "Imagining Josiah's Book and the Implications of Imaging It in Early Persian Yehud," in *Berührungspunkte. Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte*

In the narrative context, the finding of the law book is somewhat astonishing since there is no story in Kings or elsewhere that tells how this book had been lost. This could be an indication that the book of the law comprises more than the book of Deuteronomy—probably the entire Pentateuch or a "proto-Pentateuch." The following observations support this idea: Josiah's public reading of the book parallels Ezra's public reading of the Law. The eradication of the cult of Molech (23:10) is not based on a law in Deuteronomy but on prohibitions in the book of Leviticus (18:21; 20:2–5). Equally, the *tĕrāpîm* (23:24) are not mentioned in Deuteronomy but appear as "pagan idols" in Genesis (31:19, 34–35). The expression "the book of the covenant"[22] appears in Exod 24:7 but not in Deuteronomy. Thus, the discovery appears to be a new invention: the Pentateuch, which, in the second half of the Persian period, becomes the real foundation of nascent Judaism, at least in the view of the intelligentsia in Babylon and in Yehud.

This new foundation replaces the traditional markers of religious identity: temple, prophet, and king. In fact, 2 Kgs 22 transforms the literary *topos* of the discovery of the temple's foundation stone that is largely attested in royal inscriptions. In 2 Kgs 22 the foundation stone is replaced by the book, which has become the "true" foundation of YHWH's cult. In 2 Kgs 23 Josiah purifies the temple of all cultic symbols and transforms it into a proto-synagogue, a place where the book of the Law is being read to the people. The replacement of the traditional sacrificial cult by the reading of the Torah in 2 Kgs 22–23 constitutes a strategy underlining the importance of the written scroll. The editors of Josiah's reform prepare for the transformation of Judaism into a "religion of the book." Second Kings 22–23 in its final form is about the disappearance of the king in favor of the book. As F. Smyth has said, "The kingship accomplished through the rigor of the Torah of YHWH has no other future but the lasting peace of the tombs. ... There remains the scribe, the true servant of the book to be read."[23]

Israels und seiner Umwelt: Festschrift für Rainer Albertz zu seinem 65. Geburtstag (ed. Ingo Kottsieper, Rüdiger Schmitt and Jakob Wöhrle; AOAT 350; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008), 193–212.

22. The MT reads "this book of the covenant" and suggests an identification of "the book of the covenant" with "the book of the law." The LXX and Vulgate (and a Hebrew manuscript) read, however, "the book of this covenant."

23. Françoise Smyth, "When Josiah Has Done His Work or the King Is Properly Buried: A Synchronic Reading of 2 Kings 22.1–23.28," in *Israel Constructs Its His-*

The strange oracle of Huldah announcing that Josiah will die *bĕšālôm*, which seems to be contradicted by the account of Pharaoh killing him at Megiddo, has surprised many an exegete. An audience in the late Persian or early Hellenistic periods could have understood this oracle in the sense that the pious Josiah was spared seeing the destruction of Jerusalem (22:20b). However, they could equally have understood it to indicate that, after the introduction of the book of *tōrâ*, kingship was no longer necessary and could vanish "peacefully." After creating room in the temple for the reading of the book, the king, who was the traditional mediator between God and humans, became dispensable. Josiah's death is accompanied by a caesura that compares with the caesura after Moses' death:

Deut 34:10	וְלֹא־קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה
2 Kgs 23:25	וְאַחֲרָיו לֹא־קָם (מֶלֶךְ) כָּמֹהוּ

With Josiah, kingship disappears and gives way to the Mosaic Torah that becomes the new authority, to which not only kingship but also prophecy must submit. Why would the officials of the king seek the prophetess Huldah when the king has already understood the meaning of the book? When a king wants to ask his God about war or other affairs, he usually consults a prophet directly (see, e.g., 1 Kgs 22). But here a prophetess is asked to comment on the meaning of the book to Josiah. Huldah appears in this passage and in the parallel one in 2 Chr 34 as the interpreter of the book and not as an independent prophetess. The passage apparently makes the prophet dependent on a book; the same thing happens to Jeremiah in Jer 36.

This evolution makes sense in the context of the Persian period, during which Judaism was confronted by eschatological hopes. Many prophets of salvation heralded the restoration of the Davidic kingship and, in the mind of the lay people and priests who accepted integration into the Persian Empire, threatened the peace of the province of Yehud. To fight against these movements, they tried to limit prophecy to the one transmitted by

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tory: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research (ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi; JSOTSup 306; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 343–58.

the book. This is how the idea arose that prophecy came to an end in the Persian period. The Talmud contains the following idea: "since the day the temple was destroyed, divine inspiration has been taken from the prophets and given to the sages" (*Baba Bathra* 12b).

The editors of Kings were close to those who began to constitute a prophetic collection in order to limit prophecy to written prophecy, a collection that later would become the Nevi'im. However, the main authority that Kings constructs is the book of the Law of Moses, the Pentateuch, or a forerunner to it.

Conclusion: The "Deuterocanonical" Authority of the Book of Kings

The narrative strategy of the book of Kings leaves very few spaces open to interpretation and so constructs a strong sense of authority for the book. The narrator or the editors know about YHWH's will and plans that finally lead to the fall of Samaria and Judah. In the context of the Persian or early Hellenistic period, the authority of Kings is, nevertheless, limited: the text is not yet fixed, and there is a competing history in the book of Chronicles. It is not at all clear if Kings was ever meant to be read separately or only conjoined in a sequence with Samuel or some of the prophetic scrolls.

Kings constructs a hierarchy of authority: the kings are judged according to their cultic behavior, which must conform to dominant Deuteronomic themes like cult centralization and the exclusive worship of YHWH or more generally to the *tōrâ* commanded by Moses. The prophets are depicted as standing above the kings and at the end of the book, become "preachers of the law." Prophetic authority is also limited by the book: prophecy can only be commentary on and actualization of the book of the law. The report of Josiah's reform shows that the main authority is the book of Mosaic Law, which, at the end of the Persian period, probably represents the Pentateuch. By submitting kings and prophets to the Mosaic Law, the book of Kings constructs itself as a "deutero-canonical" authority, a book that reads the story of the monarchy with the authority of the "canonical" or "proto-canonical" Torah.