

The Deuteronomistic History: Response to Catastrophe (1 and 2 Kings)

Lecture 14 Transcript

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Overview

The tension between covenant theology, emphasizing the conditional Mosaic covenant from Mt. Sinai, and royal theology emphasizing the unconditional covenant with David in his palace on Mt. Zion, is traced. Following Solomon's death, the united kingdom separated into a northern and a southern kingdom (named Israel and Judah respectively), the former falling to the Assyrians in 722 and the latter to the Babylonians in 586. Analysis of the Deuteronomistic School's response to these historical crises and subsequent exile to Babylonia is evidenced through redaction criticism.

1. The Uncompromising Honesty of the Story of David

saw in Nathan's statement or pronouncement or prophecy to David last time.

[1] *Professor Christine Hayes:* We were talking last time about the establishment of the monarchy or kingship in Israel and I want to say a little bit about some of the features of Israelite kingship, and today I'll be coming back frequently to the Israelite notions of kingship and royal ideology. But to start off: one of the most important things to realize is that the king in Israel was not divine, as he was in Egypt, or even semi-divine. Occasionally, he offered sacrifice but he didn't play a regular role in the cult. Israelite royal ideology was heavily indebted to Canaanite royal ideology. You have similar language that's applied to the kings of Israel. The king is said to be appointed by the deity or deities to end wickedness, to enlighten the land, he is the channel of prosperity and divine blessing for the nation. All of this is true of Canaanite kings as well, and the king, as we've seen, is spoken of as God's son. That doesn't imply divinity. It's a metaphor, the metaphor of sonship. It was used for the Canaanite gods as well, and it expressed the special relationship between the king and the deity. It was the same relationship as was found between that of a suzerain and a vassal, and in our suzerainty treaties, also, the vassal is the son of the suzerain. It's a kind of adoption, and what it means is that the one who is metaphorically the son is to serve the father loyally, faithfully, but is also susceptible to chastisement from him. And that's what we

[2] Michael Coogan points out that the notion of the sonship of the king was revolutionary [see note 1]. It was a deliberate effort to replace an earlier understanding according to which the entire nation of Israel was God's son. You remember during the plagues in Egypt when God refers to Pharaoh as having oppressed His son, Israel, His firstborn. As Yahweh's son, the king now is standing between God and the people as a whole. And we're going to return in a moment to this new royal ideology and what's really going to be a very tense juxtaposition with the covenant theology. But first I want to say a little bit more about the characters of David and Solomon before going into the way royal ideology was later developed.

[3] In the Bible, David is second only in importance and in textual space to Moses; the amount of space that's devoted to him, is second only to Moses. There are three characteristics of David which stand out, and the first is that he's described as being quite proficient in music and poetry and so we'll see that later tradition is going to attribute to him not only the invention of various instruments but also the composition of the Book of Psalms. It seems to make sense that he would be the composer of the Book of Psalms in that he has a reputation for poetry and music. He is also credited with great military and tactical skill and confidence. He deploys his army on behalf

of Israel but he also, once he is king, deploys his army within Israel against his rivals. Third, he is depicted as a very shrewd politician. And it was David who created permanent symbols of God's election of Israel, God's election of David himself, God's election of David's house or line or dynasty to rule over Israel in perpetuity. It is said that he conceived the idea of a royal capital. He captured the city of Jebus, Yebus — it was a border town so it was free of any tribal association. I guess it's sort of like Washington, D.C.; it's not located really within any one tribe; and he captured this and built it up as the city of David. The city was going to be renamed Jerusalem and it would become understood as the chosen city, the place where God caused His name to dwell: as Deuteronomy said, there would be a place where God would choose to cause His name to dwell. And so Jerusalem becomes a symbol of God's presence, it becomes a symbol of Israel's kingdom, the monarchy; it becomes a symbol of the dynasty of David. It is referred to as the City of David. David transfers the Ark to this city and so he makes it the home to the ancient witness of the covenant, the Sinaitic Covenant. The added implication is that the Davidic dynasty has inherited the blessings of the covenant. It is somehow fulfilling the promise to the patriarchs, which is also associated with the nation of Israel at Sinai. He planned a temple that would become the permanent resting place for the ark and a cultic center for all Israel but the building of this temple was left to Solomon so we'll discuss it and its symbolism when we get to Solomon. But according to the biblical record it was still David who made the chosen dynasty, the chosen city, what would eventually be the temple, into permanent and deeply interconnected symbols of the religion of Israel. And it's really with David that the history of Jerusalem as the Holy City begins.

[4] Now the biblical assessment of David is initially relatively positive, and this changes shortly after his ascension to the throne. Beginning in 2 Samuel from about chapter 9 to 20 and then on into the first couple of chapters of Kings, you have a stretch of text which is often referred to as the Court History or the succession narrative of David. The critical question that drives this particular historical fiction is the question of succession: who will succeed David? He has many children but one

by one his sons are killed, or they're displaced or disqualified in one way or another, until finally there is Solomon. There are lots of wonderful major and minor characters in this drama. It's a very complex drama, lots of intrigue and passion, but the material in this section also presents a rather unusual portrait of David. He's weak, he's indecisive, he's something of an anti-hero. He stays home in the palace while other people are off leading battles and fighting the wars. He enters into an illicit relationship with a married woman, Bathsheva (or Bathsheba). He sees to it that her husband is killed in battle to cover up his affair. It's this combined act of adultery and murder that earns him a sound scolding from Nathan, the prophet Nathan — we'll come to that when we talk about prophets next week. But God punishes him with the death of his son. And it's really from this point on in the story that we see David losing control over events around him; his control declines. He is indecisive on the whole question of succession and that leads to all kinds of resentment and conflict as well as revolts.

[5] There's one revolt, which is a revolt in support of his son, Absalom. That's a revolt that the Deuteronomistic historian also indicates was a punishment for his affair with — for David's affair with Bathsheba. But during this revolt David flees from his enemies, he's stripped of his crown, he's degraded. When Absalom is killed David weeps for his son uncontrollably and this only angers his own supporters who fought so earnestly against Absalom in his [David's] defense; it's a very poignant moment. But by the end of the story, David is almost completely impotent, and senile even. The prophet Nathan and Bathsheba plot to have Bathsheba's son, Solomon, named the successor of David and there really is no point at which there's any divine indication that Solomon has won divine approval, no divine indication that he is the one. It happens through palace intrigue, particularly with Bathsheba and Nathan. But the northern tribes — there are signs throughout the story of the hostility of the northern tribes and that's a warning sign, that's a warning sign of future disunity.

[6] This whole court history is just a wonderful, masterful work of prose. You're going to be reading something from a book by a fellow named Meir Sternberg, which is I think just a wonderful study of the Bathsheba story [see

note 2]. Some speak about all of this unit as being authored by the J source. You need to know that source theory has undergone so many permutations. There really isn't any standard view but I think the idea that the sources J, E, P and D extend beyond the Pentateuch is now generally no longer accepted so you will sometimes see people talking about the J source as going all the way through the end of Second Kings and being in fact — J is the author of the court history. But for the most part I think most people think of the source theory as applying to the Pentateuch, and beyond that we talk about the Deuteronomistic historian redacting older earlier sources. I'll talk a little bit more about some of those sources as we move through the later books, the books of the former prophets.

2. *Tensions in Kings I and II*

- [7] The court history has an array of very richly drawn characters. They act out all sorts of scenes of power and lust and courage and struggle. There's crime, there's tender love. It's a very realistic sort of psychological drama. It's also striking for its uncompromising honesty. We don't see anything like that really in the work of any contemporary historian. David is depicted in very, very human terms. The flattery and the whitewashing that you find in other ancient Near Eastern dynastic histories is lacking here. The flattery and whitewashing that we get for example in Chronicles, the books of Chronicles, are really just a retelling of the material here in the former prophets and they clean up the picture of David. There's no mention of Bathsheba in there. So you do have that kind of whitewashing as part of the historiography of the Book of Chronicles, but it's lacking here. All of the flaws, all of the weaknesses of David, a national hero — they're all laid bare.
- [8] Implicitly perhaps, that is a critique of kinship. It is perhaps a critique of the claim of kings to rule by divine right. The author here seems to be stressing that David and, as we shall see, Solomon (he's quite human, Solomon's quite human) — they are not at all divine. They're subject to the errors and flaws that characterize all humans.

- [9] As we move out of Samuel now and into 1 and 2 Kings, we see that these books, [1 and 2] Kings, contain the history of Israel from the death of King David until the fall of Judah in 587, 586, and the exile to Babylonia. These books also appear to be based on older sources. Some of them are explicitly identified. They will refer sometimes to these works, which evidently were subsequently lost but they'll refer to the Book of the Acts of Solomon or the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel, or the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah. Annals and chronicles were regularly maintained in royal courts throughout the Ancient Near East. There's no reason to think that this wasn't also done in a royal setting in Israel. These annals generally listed events, important events in the reign of a given king. They tended not to have much narrative to them and the beginning of the first 16 chapters of 1 Kings has that kind of feel, not a lot of narrative, and [it's] really reportage of events.
- [10] Beginning in 1 Kings 17:17-22, and the first nine chapters of 2 Kings, there's a departure from that [...] annal style, annal genre [of] the reporting of events in the reign of a king. You have more developed narratives in those sources and these narratives generally feature prophets. So it's going to lead very nicely into our study of Prophets beginning on Monday. Some of the narratives evidently would have circulated independently, particularly the stories, probably, about Elijah and Elisha, these zealous Yahweh-only prophets. They were probably local heroes and these stories circulated independently, but they've come to be embedded in a framework that conforms those sources to the ideology and religious perspective of the Deuteronomistic historian.
- [11] 1 Kings 2 is the death scene. It has David's deathbed instructions to his son, Solomon. He tells Solomon to kill all of his rivals and opponents and in verse 12 we read, "And Solomon sat upon the throne of his father, David, and his rule was firmly established." And it seems that at this point the three crises that we noted in the Book of Samuel, at the opening at 1 Samuel, the three crises we noted are resolved. The crisis in succession is resolved. David is succeeded by his son,

Solomon, and all of the kings of Judah for the next 400 years in fact, until the destruction in 586, all of these kings will be of the line of David. The military crises seem for now to have been resolved. We've had lots of military and diplomatic successes and Israel seems to be secure. And also the religious crisis that we mentioned is resolved. The Ark was retaken from the Philistines, it's been brought to Jerusalem, it's been installed in Jerusalem, and now a magnificent temple is planned that will house the Ark and be a site for the central worship of all Israel.

[12] But the resolution of these crises came at a cost. They produced fundamental changes in Israelite society. From a loose confederation of tribes — however idealistic that picture was — but from a loose confederation of tribes united by a covenant, we've now got a nation with a strong central administration, it's headed by a king. And that king seems to enjoy a special covenant with God. Rather than charismatic leaders who rise as the need itself arises and then fade away; we now have permanent kings from a single family. And preserved in the biblical sources is a tension, a tension between the old ideas of the covenant confederation, what we might call covenant theology, and the new ideology of the monarchy. This new royal ideology combines loyalty to God and loyalty to the throne, so that treason or rebellion against God's anointed is also apostasy, it's also rebellion against God Himself. The two become conflated.

[13] There's a scholar named Jon Levenson, I've talked about him before in connection with the covenant at Sinai, but in this wonderful book called *Sinai and Zion* [see note 3] he really juxtaposes these two ideologies. He points to this deep tension between the covenant theology and the royal ideology. In covenant theology, Yahweh alone is the king. He's got a direct suzerain-vassal relationship with the people. So Israel is the subject of covenant theology. The covenant theology therefore implies almost automatically a somewhat negative view of the monarchy and that's what we've seen here and there, in the Book of Judges and in Samuel. Monarchy is at best unnecessary and at worst it's a rejection of God. Nevertheless, despite that resistance or that critique, monarchy, kingship, is established in Israel, and Levenson sees the royal ideology that developed to support this

institution as a major revolution in the structure of the religion of Israel. Where the Sinaitic Covenant was contracted between God and the nation, the Davidic covenant is contracted between God and a single individual, the king. The covenant with David — another scholar, Moshe Weinfeld, whom I've mentioned before as well, he describes the covenant with David as a covenant of grant. This is a form that we find in the ancient Near East also. It's a grant of a reward for loyal service and deeds. And so God rewards David with the gift of an unending dynasty. It's a covenant of grant. He grants him this unending dynasty in exchange for his loyalty. And the contrast with the covenant at Sinai is very clear. Where Israel's covenant with God at Sinai had been conditional — it's premised on the observance of God's Torah [and] if there's violation, then God will uproot the Israelites and throw them out of the land — the covenant with David, by contrast, with his dynastic house (and by implication with David's city and the temple atop Mount Zion), that covenant will be maintained under all conditions. Remember the passage that we read of Nathan's prophecy last time. So the royal ideology fostered a belief in some quarters, and we'll see this in the next few weeks, a belief in the inviolability, the impregnable nature of, David's house, dynasty, the city itself, the chosen city, the sacred mountain, the temple. We'll return to this idea in later lectures. So you have this deep tension lining up Israel's covenant at Mount Sinai, which is conditional, on the one hand, with God's covenant with David, which is centered on the temple and palace complex at Mount Zion, and which is unconditional and permanent.

[14] Scholars have tried to account for these two strands of tradition in Biblical literature in different ways; the covenant theology with its emphasis on the conditional covenant with Moses contracted at Sinai; the royal ideology and its emphasis on the unconditional covenant with David focused on Mount Zion. One explanation is chronological — that early traditions were centered around the Sinai event and the covenant theology. They emphasize that aspect of the relationship with God, and later traditions under the monarchy emphasize royal ideology. Another explanation is geographical. The northern kingdom, which if you'll recall and we'll talk about in a moment, the northern kingdom is going to break away

from the southern kingdom (Davidides will not rule in the northern kingdom) so the assumption is that the northern kingdom, which rejected the house of David — they de-emphasize a royal ideology and its focus on Zion and the house of David, and they emphasize the old covenant theology and the Sinai theology. And by contrast the southern kingdom, in which a member of the house of David reigned right until the destruction, the southern kingdom emphasized Zion and its attendant royal ideology.

that the two are going to be held in tension and work together to check one another.

[15] Well, Levenson rejects both of these explanations. He says it isn't that one is early and one is late, it isn't that one is northern and one is southern. We find the Sinai and the Zion traditions in early texts and late texts. We find them in northern texts and in southern texts. In the south, David's house was criticized just as roundly as it was criticized in the north, and emphasis was placed on the Sinai covenant over against the royal ideology in the south as well as in the north. So the two traditions he said coexisted side by side, they stood in a dialectic tension with one another in Israel. And eventually they would come to be coordinated and work together, we'll see that more towards the end of the lecture. But he says that the Zion ideology will take on some of the aspects of the legacy of Sinai. Mount Zion will soon be associated with the site of God's theophany or self-revelation; it will become a kind of Sinai now permanently in Jerusalem. It would become the site of covenant renewal. It will be seen as the place where Torah goes forth, and that's an idea of course originally associated with Sinai — that's where God's instruction or Torah went [out] first. But all of these features will be collapsed or telescoped or brought into Mount Zion and the temple complex. But eventually, he says, it's not simply that the Sinai covenant theology was absorbed into the royal ideology and Mount Zion, because the entitlement of the house of David will eventually be made contingent on the observance of God's Torah. The king himself, we will see, is not exempt from the covenant conditions set at Sinai. And even though he would never be completely deposed for violating the Sinaitic Covenant he will be punished for his violations. The two will work in tandem. It's an idea that we'll return to. We'll see it more clearly as we get towards the end of this lecture. But for now keep in mind

[16] Now David's son, Solomon, is given mixed reviews by the Deuteronomistic historian. He ascends to the throne through intrigue, as I said, there's really no indication of a divine choice or approval, but he's said to reign over a golden age. His kingdom is said to stretch from Egypt to the Euphrates. He made political alliances and economic alliances throughout the region. He would seal these alliances with marriages. He married a daughter of Pharaoh. He married the daughter of the king of Tyre in Phoenicia and so on. The text claims that he built a daunting military establishment: he put a wall around Jerusalem, there were fortified cities — Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer — these were bases for his professional army. It's said that the army featured a very expensive chariot force. He also had accomplishments in the realms of industry and trade. He exploited Israel's natural position straddling the north-south trade routes and was able to bring great wealth to the state in that way. The daily supplies that were needed to maintain Solomon's very lavish court are detailed in 1 Kings, so it seems to have been an extraordinarily elaborate court. He developed a merchant fleet. He seemed to work closely with the Phoenicians and the Phoenician King Hiram in developing a merchant fleet and exploited trade routes through the Red Sea. All sorts of exotic products are listed as coming in to Jerusalem from Arabia and the African coast. We have the famous story of the visit of the queen of Sheba. This could possibly be the Sabean territory in South Arabia and there may be some basis in fact given these trade routes and how well traveled they were at this time. And of course, he is known for his magnificent building operations.

[17] Many scholars assume that given this tremendous wealth this would have been a time for a flowering of the arts, and so it's often been maintained that this would have been the time for the early traditions, biblical traditions, early traditions of the nation to be recorded, perhaps the J source. People date it to the tenth century, the time of Solomon. But we should be a little skeptical of this grand picture because archaeologists have found that Jerusalem was a small town; it was a very small town really until the end of the eighth century [when] suddenly it absorbed many refugees from the fall of the northern kingdom. Remember Israel

is going to be destroyed in 722, so refugees fleeing southward will greatly expand Jerusalem; we have archaeological evidence of that. But there are very few material remains that attest to a fabulous empire on a scale that's suggested by the biblical text. Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer, the three places that are mentioned as fortified military bases, these have been excavated. They do show some great gateways and some large chambers, even some stables, but archaeologists differ radically over the dating of these lairs. Some date them to the time of Solomon, some see it as later. Most concur that Israel was probably at this time the most important power in its region, but still it would have been small and relatively insignificant compared to, say, Egypt or Mesopotamia, some of the great civilizations at either end of the Fertile Crescent. But it would have been the most important state in that area and probably was able to have some dominance over some neighboring areas as well.

find it in the religion of Israel as well, specifically in connection with Mount Zion. The cosmic mountain in ancient tradition was understood to be the meeting place of the gods like a Mount Olympus, for example—it's a cosmic mountain. But it was also understood to be the axis mundi, that is to say the juncture or the point of junction between heaven and earth, the meeting place of heaven and earth, the axis around which these worlds met or were conjoined. In Canaan — in Canaanite religion the Mountain of Baal, which is known as Mount Zaphon, was conceived precisely in this manner. And Levenson points out tremendous commonalities of language and concept in connection with the Mountain of Baal, the Mountain of El, and the Mountain of Yahweh. In fact, the word "Zaphon," Mount Zaphon is used to describe God's mountain in the Bible in one particular passage. So the temple on Mount Zion came to be understood as sacred space much like the cosmic mountains of other traditions. It's described as a kind of paradise sometimes, almost a Garden of Eden. It's described as the place from which the entire world was created. It's also viewed as a kind of epitome of the world, a kind of microcosm, an entire microcosm of the world. It's also seen as the earthly manifestation of a heavenly temple. The temple came to represent an ideal and sacred realm. And we also see it as the object of intense longing. Many of the Psalms will express intense longing: if I could just sit in the temple, if I could just be in that space, that sacred space — we see it in the Psalms. In a passage describing the dedication of the temple—it's in 1 Kings 8 — Solomon explains that the temple is a place where people have access to God. They can petition to Him and they can atone for their sins. It is a house of prayer, he says, and it remained the central focal point of Israelite worship for centuries.

[18] I just want to mention three things about Solomon, things that he's noted for. One is that he's praised for his wisdom and because, again, the biblical text praises him for his wisdom later tradition will find it convenient to attribute the Book of Proverbs to him as well as the Book of Ecclesiastes. These are two works that belong to the genre of wisdom literature we'll be talking about later in the semester. Second, in addition to being praised for his wisdom, he's praised for constructing the temple and in fact the primary focus of all of the biblical material, or the biblical story of Solomon, is the building of the temple, the dedication of this temple for the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. He continued the close association of the cult and the monarchy, the religious and political leadership, by constructing this magnificent new temple within the palace complex and he himself appointed a high priest. So the juxtaposition of the house of the king and the house of the deity on Mount Zion was quite deliberate. And this hill, even though geographically it's very small, becomes in the mythic imagination of Israel, this towering and impregnable mountain.

[19] Levenson again argues that Zion came eventually to take on the features of the cosmic mountain. The cosmic mountain is a mythic symbol that we find in the ancient Near East. The cosmic mountain has these powers or potencies that are universal and infinite and we

[20] So his great wisdom, his great virtue in constructing the temple notwithstanding, Solomon is very sharply criticized for, among other things, his foreign worship. His new palace complex had a tremendous amount of room for his harem, which is said to have included 700 wives. Many of them were foreign princesses, many of them would have been acquired to seal political alliances or business alliances, noblewomen. 700 wives and 300 concubines, as well as various officials and servants. Now of course these numbers are

likely exaggerated, but Solomon's diplomatic alliances likely necessitated unions that would of course have been condemned by the Deuteronomistic historian. He is said to have loved foreign women, from the nations that God had forbidden and he succumbed to the worship of their gods and goddesses, which is really the key point. The whole fear of a foreign spouse is that one will be led to or will support the worship of foreign deities, and so Solomon is said to have built temples for Moabite gods and Ammonite gods. This all may point to a general tolerance for different cults in Jerusalem in the tenth century and in the ninth century. This may not have been an issue in Jerusalem in the tenth and ninth century, but it's an issue for the later Deuteronomistic editor. They have no tolerance [for] this.

[21] So Solomon's primary flaw in the Deuteronomistic historians' view is his syncretism, which is prompted by his marriages to these foreign women who brought their native cults to Jerusalem. His religious infidelity is said to be the cause of the severe problems and ultimately the division of the kingdom that will follow upon his death. In order to support this tremendous court and harem, as well as the army and the bureaucracy, Solomon did introduce heavy taxation as well as the *corvée*, which is forced labor or required labor on state projects. So you have this developing urban structure, complex developing, bureaucratic urban structure that's now being superimposed on the agricultural life, and that leads to all sorts of class distinctions and class divisions between officials, bureaucrats, merchants, large-scale landowners who are prospering perhaps, smaller farmers and shepherds who are living at more of a subsistence level. So you have divisions between town and country, between rich and poor. And this is a great change from the ideals of the tribal democracy, some of the ideals that some of you looked at when we were talking about legal texts, where there seemed to be these economic blueprints for bringing about economic equivalence through sabbatical years and jubilee years and so on. In short, the list of social and economic ills that were enumerated by Samuel (in 1 Samuel 8, when he was trying to persuade the people from establishing a monarchy), that list of ills — you'll have a standing military, a standing army you'll have to support, you'll have to do labor

for the state, you're going to have all kinds of taxes and special levies, you're going to be virtually enslaved — many of these things seem to have been realized, the Deuteronomistic historian would like us to believe, in the reign of Solomon.

[22] Moreover, as we've already seen, the very institution of monarchy itself didn't sit well in some quarters because centralized leadership under a human king seemed to go against the older traditions of Hebrew tribal society, united by covenant with God, guided by priests, prophets, occasional judges inspired charismatically. So already before Solomon's death, the northern tribes were feeling some alienation from the house of David. They're resenting what they perceive to be Solomon's tyranny.

3. The Separation of the Kingdom Following Solomon's Death

[23] So let me give you a brief timeline of what happens from the death of Solomon down to the destruction. And on one of the earlier handouts I gave you, there is a list of the kings north and south. This is not something you need to memorize and I'm certainly not going to stress it, but if you want to keep score, that's a list that you can refer to. So, when Solomon died in 922 the structure that had been erected by David and Solomon fell into these two rival states and neither of them of course is going to be very strong. You have the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom referred to as Judah, each with its own king: Jeroboam in the north, Rehoboam in the south. Sometimes they're going to be at war with one another, sometimes they're going to work in alliance with one another, but 200 years later, from 922 down to 722, 200 years later the northern kingdom of Israel will fall to the Assyrian empire.

[24] The Assyrians come down to the border of the southern kingdom, to Judah, and Judah remains viable but it is reduced to vassal status. It is tributary to this new world power. Finally, Judah will be destroyed about 150 years later — about 587, 586. The Babylonians, the neo-Babylonian empire, they have conquered the Assyrians and they assume control over the ancient Near East and take the southern

kingdom. Now the story of the northern kingdom, Israel, that is presented in Kings, is colored by a Judean perspective, and it is highly negative and highly polemical. So Solomon was succeeded by his son, Rehoboam, but the ten tribes of the north revolted when he refused to relieve their tax burden. They came to him and asked if they could have some relief and he answered them very harshly, so they revolted and a separate kingdom was set up under the rule of the Israelite Jeroboam, just at the end of the tenth century. So divided now into these two kingdoms, they begin to lose power, probably losing any control they may have had over outlying territories.

[25] So let's focus first on the northern kingdom of Israel. The area was more divided by tribal rivalries and religious traditions than Judah. You have ten tribes in that region. Jeroboam didn't seem to be able to establish a very stable rule. 1 Kings 12 tells us of Jeroboam's effort to break the connection with the traditional religious center of Jerusalem in the south. He establishes his own government at Shechem — that was a place that was already revered in Hebrew tradition. This is where we have the covenant renewal ceremony by Joshua, so it's already a somewhat sacred site. So he establishes his capital in Shechem, and then he establishes royal shrines, one in the southern part of Israel and one in the northern part of Israel; on each of the borders, north and south of the kingdom, in Dan and Bethel (Bethel in the south and Dan in the north). A golden calf is placed in each shrine according to the text, and this is viewed by the Deuteronomistic historian as a terrible sin. Indeed, the story is written in a manner that deliberately echoes the story of the golden calf that was made by Aaron in Exodus 32. There are linguistic echoes that make it very clear that we are supposed to view this as a sin as great as the sin of Aaron. It may well be that if Jeroboam did in fact do this that he was a good Yahwist and was just trying to establish alternate sanctuaries for Yahweh that would rival Jerusalem's. But the Deuteronomistic historian wants to see this as another instance of idolatry, and therefore, deliberately echoes the primordial cultic sin of the golden calves when talking about Jeroboam's activity. It brands his cultic center as illegitimate idolatry. Jeroboam is represented by the biblical writer as having

made unacceptable concessions to Canaanite practices of worship, and so he is criticized for this. Despite his best efforts, his kingship is fairly unstable, and in fact in the 200-year history of the kingdom, the northern kingdom of Israel, we will have seven different dynasties occupying the throne. There was great material prosperity in the northern kingdom. I've just picked out a few kings to highlight so these are not to be understood to be necessarily in order, I've just picked out a few highlights, but the rule of Omri was a time of some material prosperity and his son, Ahab. Ahab was the first part of the ninth century.

[26] Omri is an interesting person because he's the first king from either kingdom to be mentioned in sources outside the Bible. We have a large stone referred to as the Moabite Stone and in this stone, which boasts of a military defeat, there's the boast that Omri of Israel was defeated. Omri bought and fortified Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and archaeology does reveal that this was in fact quite a magnificent city at this time. But again, the Deuteronomistic editors are going to judge him as evil. He's disobeyed God. His son, Ahab, also comes in for bad press. Ahab is also mentioned outside the Bible. We have an inscription of an Assyrian king who describes a coalition of Israelites and Aramaeans who fought against the Assyrians, and Ahab is mentioned in that inscription. Omri and Ahab were clearly very powerful and influential in the region. They are even mentioned outside the Bible. Ahab and his Phoenician wife, Jezebel, seem to have established a very extravagant court life in the capital of Samaria, and for this they are also going to be condemned by the Deuteronomistic editors. Jezebel was Phoenician and when Jezebel tried to establish the worship of her Phoenician Baal as the official cult of Israel (she built a temple to Baal in Samaria) the prophets Elijah and Elisha preach a kind of holy war against the monarchy. Now we're going to come back to these very zealous Yahweh-only prophets of the north when we talk about prophecy next time. Ahab and Jezebel meet a very tragic end and there will be a military coup. A military coup led by an army general, Jehu, in about 842. These are all kind of approximate years, you know — different books will give the — they'll differ by five years one way or the other but it's our best effort at reconstructing things

based on some of these outside extra-biblical references that give us a firm date and then we can kind of work around those.

[27] So the army general Jehu in about 842 led a military coup. He was anointed king by the prophet Elisha and he had a very bloody revenge on Jezebel. Jezebel and the priests of Baal were all slaughtered, the text says, as well as every worshipper of Baal in Samaria; they were all slaughtered. By the eighth century you have the new Assyrian empire on the rise, and in 722 the Assyrian king Sargon reduced Israel to the status of a province. And we have an inscription by Sargon that confirms the biblical report of this defeat. And in this inscription Sargon says, “[I besieged, conquered]” Samaria “...led away as prisoners [27,290 inhabitants of it.... [The town I] re[built] better than (it was) before and [settled] therein people from countries which [I] myself [had con]quered.” So: population transplanting. “I placed an officer of mine as governor over them and imposed upon them tribute as (is customary) for Assyrian citizens” [Pritchard 1958, 1:195; see note 4]. So there’s a basic agreement between this and the biblical account. Many of the governing class, the wealthy merchants, many tens of thousands in all, were carried off to northern Mesopotamia and they were lost to history. These are the ten lost tribes of Israel. There would have remained behind some Hebrew farmers and shepherds, they would have continued their old ways, but as was consistent with their policy, the Assyrians imported new peoples to repopulate this area and to break up any local resistance to their rule and this would then become the province of Samaria. And this ethnically mixed group would practice a form of Israelite religion, but the Deuteronomistic editor does not view it as legitimate and ultimately these Samaritans were going to be despised by the Jews of the southern kingdom, the Jews of Judah. They were seen as foreign corruptors of the faith. They were always ready to assist Judah’s enemies against Judah, so they felt very little kinship and very often the Samaritans would join against, [with] those attacking Judah. So there was tremendous rivalry between the Jews of Judah and the Samaritans. Hence, the New Testament story makes sense — this was a hated person, this good Samaritan.

[28] So if we turn our attention now to the southern kingdom of Judah: Judah was comprised of the two remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and it enjoyed internal stability for the most part. It remained loyal to the house of David ruling in Jerusalem. Shortly after Israel fell in 722 to the Assyrians, the Judahites — whose king at that time was King Hezekiah, so the king Hezekiah had to agree to terms with Assyria. They became subject allies or vassals of Assyria. But Hezekiah began to prepare for rebellion, began to make alliances with neighbors and this prompted the Assyrians to march in and lay siege to Jerusalem. This would have happened about 701, and this siege is described in Assyrian sources, so we have independent records of this from Assyrian sources. We read there: “As to Hezekiah, the Jew,” — of Yehud, right? the Jew — “he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts,” etc. “I drove out...200,150 people.... Himself I made prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage” [Pritchard 1958, 200]. But eventually the Assyrians actually withdrew the siege, Judah was able to withstand the siege, preserve their own kingship. The Assyrian empire is going to fall in 612 — this is the fall of Nineveh you may have heard of at some point — and they will fall to the rising Babylonians, the neo-Babylonian empire. It’s the neo-Babylonian empire that will succeed in felling Judah under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 587 or 586. The walls of Jerusalem are dismantled, many members of the governing classes, wealthier classes, are going to be carried off into exile in Babylonia. And that the Hebrews didn’t fade into oblivion after the loss of political independence and their geographical base, is due in large part to the interpretation of events provided by the Deuteronomistic school.

4. Historiosophy of the Deuteronomistic School

[29] So we need to talk a little bit about that ideology and why it had the historical effect that it had. As I mentioned before, Deuteronomy isn’t just the capstone of the Pentateuch’s narrative, it’s also the first part of a longer literary history. Martin Noth was the German scholar who first argued for this, argued that the composition and authorship of

Deuteronomy has more in common with what follows in some sense than what precedes it. And he argued that we should understand this to be a unit, the product of a particular School. Since this Deuteronomistic School is looking back at the history of Israel up to and including the defeat and exile of the Israelites in 587 or 586, the final form of the work of the Deuteronomistic School — the final form must be post exilic. It's post-586, but there are of course various layers within that larger work that we can't really date with precision.

[30] I just want to say something about the scholarly methodology that led to the conclusion that there is such a thing as a Deuteronomistic School. That method is redaction criticism. And we've already discussed the goals and the methods of other types of criticism: source criticism or historical criticism. We've talked a little bit about form criticism and tradition criticism. But redaction criticism grew out of a kind of weariness with some of these other forms of biblical criticism and their constant fragmentation of the biblical text into older sources or into older genres or into older units of tradition in order to map out a history of Israelite religion. These other methods seem to pay very little attention to the text in its final form and the process by which the text reached its final form. So redaction criticism rejects the idea that the person or the persons who compiled the text from earlier sources did a somewhat mechanical scissors and paste job, didn't really think too much about the effect they were creating by putting things together. Redaction criticism assumes and focuses on identifying the purpose and the plan behind the final form of the assembled sources. It's a method that wants to uncover the intention of the person or the persons who produced the biblical text in roughly the shape that we have it, and what was intended by their producing it in the shape that we have. So redaction criticism proceeds along these lines and this is how it first developed.

[31] First you can usually identify linking passages, that is to say passages that kind of join narrative to narrative or unit to unit, in an attempt to make the text read more smoothly or just to ease the transition from one source to another. And these linking passages are assigned to R for redactor. Also assigned to R are any interpretative passages. That means passages that stand back to comment on the text or

interpret the text in some way. Any place where the narrator turns to directly address the audience. So for example, when you have a verse in which the narrator turns and says, "That was when the Canaanites were still in the land," that would seem to be from the hand of a redactor putting the sources together. When you have an etiological comment, that is to say a comment of the type, "And that is why the Israelites do such and such ritual observance to this day," that also seems to be written from the perspective of a compiler of sources, someone who's putting the text together. There are also some passages that vindicate or justify or otherwise comment on what's about to occur, or passages that summarize and offer an interpretation or justification of what has just happened. We'll see that in 2 Kings 17; we also saw that in the Book of Judges. We had this prospective summary saying: this is what's going to happen — there's going to be sin, they're going to cry out, there'll be, you know, God will raise up someone, they'll deliver them and then they're going to fall back into sin again. So these are comments that are looking forward to tell us what it is we're about to read and if you join all such passages together and assign them to R you very often find that there are tremendous stylistic similarities in these passages. They use the same rhetoric over and over again or you'll see the same point of view and it's very often a point of view that isn't in the source materials that they're linking together. And this is how one arrives at some understanding of the role of the redactor in the final production of the text, how the redactor has framed our understanding of the source materials that he has gathered.

[32] And the Deuteronomistic historian who is responsible for the redaction of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges and so, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, provides not just a history in the sense of documenting events as they occur (as if there's ever documentation without interpretation) but provides a strong interpretation of history, a philosophy of history. He's trying to ascertain the meaning of events, the larger purpose and design, something we've called a *historiosophy*. And we find the Deuteronomists' interpretation of Israel's history in the preface to the Book of Deuteronomy, we find it in editorial comments that are sort of peppered throughout Joshua through Kings, and we especially find it in the

summary of the entire unit that is contained in 2 Kings 17. Before we read that passage, we need to think about what it was that prompted the Deuteronomist to adopt a particular interpretation of Israel's historical record.

[33] The Deuteronomistic historian was attempting to respond to the first major historical challenge to confront the Israelite people and the Hebrew religion. And that was the complete collapse of the Israelite nation, the destruction of God's sanctuary, and the defeat and exile of the people of the Lord and God of history. The calamitous events of 722, but especially 587, raised a critical theological dilemma. God had promised the patriarchs and their descendants that they would live in His land. He had promised that the house of David would stand forever but here the monarchy had collapsed, the people were defeated and they were in exile. So the challenge presented by this twist of history was really twofold: Is God the god of history, is he omnipotent, is he capable of all, can he in fact impose and effect His will, and if so then what about his covenant with the patriarchs and his covenant with David? Had he faithlessly abandoned it? Well, that was unthinkable. Then if he hadn't faithlessly abandoned his covenant with his people and with David, he must not be the god of history, the universal lord of all. He wasn't able to save his people.

[34] Neither of these ideas was acceptable to the Deuteronomistic school. It was a fundamental tenet of Israelite monotheism that God is at once the god of history, capable of all, whose will is absolute, whose promises are true and at the same time a god of faithfulness who does not abandon his people, he is both good and powerful. So how could the disasters of 722 and 586 be reconciled with the conviction that God controlled history and that He had an eternal covenant with the patriarchs and with David? The historiography of the Deuteronomistic school is the response of one segment of the Israelite community, we'll see another response when we turn to the Prophets, but the basic idea of the Deuteronomistic School is that God's unconditional and eternal covenants with the patriarchs and with David do not preclude the possibility of punishment or chastisement for sin as specified in the conditional Mosaic covenant.

[35] So you see how both ideas are going to be important to hold in dialectic tension: both theologies, the covenant theology as well as the patriarchal and royal theology. So this is because although God is omnipotent, humans do have free will, they can corrupt the divine plan. So in the Deuteronomistic history the leaders of Israel are depicted as having the choice of accepting God's way or rejecting it. God tries to help them. He's constantly sending them prophets who yell at the kings and tell them what it is God wants of them, but they continue to make the wrong choice. They sin and ultimately that brings about the fall, first of Israel and then of Judah and it's the idolatrous sins of the kings that does it. With the deposition and the execution [correction: death; see note 5] of the last Davidic king, Zedekiah, the Deuteronomistic school reinterpreted the Davidic Covenant in conditional terms on the model of the Sinaitic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, according to which God's favor toward the king depends on the king's loyalty to God, and in this way the fall of the house of David could be seen as justifiable punishment for disobedient kings or rulers like Manasseh. (We'll come back to him.) Remember the Davidic Covenant that Nathan proclaimed in 2 Samuel 7 explicitly said that God would punish and chastise his anointed. That's what it means to be a son, to receive correction, discipline and punishment. I'll have to finish these thoughts on Monday and see specifically how they interpret and understand the history of what happened in a way that enabled certain segments of the population to see this as in fact proof of God's strength and faithfulness. And then we'll turn to prophecy on Monday.

[36] [end of transcript]

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[37] Notes

[38] 1. Michael Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 278.

[39] 2. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington; Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 186-222.

- [40] 3. Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Harper: San Francisco, 1987)
- [41] 4. The punctuation in this quotation follows Pritchard's format, in which square brackets mark restorations of the text, and parentheses mark textual interpolations added to ease understanding.
- [42] 5. According to the biblical text, Zedekiah witnessed the execution of his children, had his eyes put out and was imprisoned until his death.
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[43] References

- [44] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations have been quoted from "Tanakh: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text." Copyright (c) 1985 by The Jewish Publication Society. Single copies of the JPS biblical citations cited within the transcripts can be reproduced for personal and non-commercial uses only.
- [45] Pritchard, James B., ed. 1958 (rpt. 1973). *The Ancient Near East. Volume I: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.