

1-2 Kings: Single Prophets, Polygamous Kings and Lady Wisdom

1-2 Kings constitutes the fourth and final volume of the Deuteronomic (or Deuteronomistic) History (DH; → Ch. 40) and received its final editing during the exile (560 B.C.), after the release of King Jehoiachin of Judah, jailed by the Babylonians (562/61 B.C., 2 Kings 25:27-30). However, most scholars agree that the first edition took place under King Josiah (640-09 B.C., 2 Kings 22), as an instrument of his reform.¹ Contrary to Martin Noth, who insisted in a single principal exilic writing (ca. 560 B.C.), those who affirm that the principal writing was a first edition prior to the exile point to several texts that presuppose the existence of the Temple and of the Davidic dynasty (1 Kings 8:8, 13-44; 11:39; 15:4-5; 2 Kings 8:18-19).

The Deuteronomic focus is reflected above all in the criterion of judging (as good [+] or bad [-]) all the kings: avoid idolatry and respect the centralization of sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem. This is a fundamental teaching of → Deuteronomy (12:2-3, 29-31), but after the division of the kingdom, it was promoted by only two kings of Judah: ++Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.) and ++Josiah (640-09 B.C.). This centralization of worship in Jerusalem was rejected by all of the Northern kings, since they followed in the steps of Jeroboam I, who established Bethel as the alternative worship center. Thus, according to Kings, the principal cause of the fall, both of Samaria (722/21 B.C.; 2 Kings 17:7-18, 21-23) and Jerusalem (587/86 B.C.; 2 Kings 17:19-20), was simply idolatry and disobedience of the mandate of Deuteronomy to centralize worship in Jerusalem. The evaluation of each king (+good, -bad, +-mixed) and the interpretation of the history of both kingdoms was done based on this fundamental teaching of Deuteronomy (see – Manasseh, 2 Kings 21:10-15; 24:3-4).

Nevertheless, modern historians insist that *historic causality is complex*. Therefore, an interpretation that focuses solely on a religious factor, overlooking those of a social-economic-political character and the appearance and fall of surrounding empires, is too simplistic, if not totally mistaken. Therefore, in terms of its literary genre, scholars commonly conclude that 1-2 Kings provides us with a theological/religious reading of history – a long *sermon* with abundant historical illustration – rather than a scientific historical work. The theological interpretation of history is evident in abundant references:

- to God's faithful love (*khesed*) for ++David, the paradigm of good (1 Kings 11:12-13, 36; 15:4-5; 2 Kings 8:18-19; 19:34; 20:5-6; to David's love for God, 1 Kings 3:3; 11:4, 6, 38; 15:3, 11; Ted Jennings 2005:37-66);
- to idolatry and high places (worship centers outside of Jerusalem), with King –Jeroboam I, the paradigm of evil (1 Kings 12:25–14:20; 15:25-26, 33-34; 16:1-2, 7, 19, 26, 31; 21:22; 22:52-53; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:29; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28).

This Deuteronomic theology/ideology entered into crisis with the tragic death of Josiah in the battle of Megiddo (609 B.C.), since this king, the most zealous for reforms, died young, while – Manasseh, the most reviled and idolatrous king, enjoyed the longest reign (45 years). That is, the paradigmatic king for obedience appears to suffer the curses of the covenant (Deut. 28:15-62),

while the most wicked king enjoyed the blessings (Deut. 28:1-14)! To resolve this apparent contradiction, → Chronicles attributes a late repentance to –Manasseh (→ 2 Chron. 33:9-17; see Job, Ecclesiastes, Psalm 73).

In addition to the paradigms of ++David (good) and –Rehoboam (evil), another decisive factor in the theological/religious reading of history in Kings are the oracles of the prophets and their fulfillment, which point out the omniscience and sovereignty of Yahweh in relation to the historic process (2 Kings 17:7-23). The most spectacular case is the man of God (anonymous) portrayed as predicting the reform by +Josiah and even naming the king some 300 years before his reign (640-609 B.C.; see 1 Kings 13:1-3, fulfilled in 2 Kings 23:15-18). The DH commonly speaks of a prophet as a “man of God” (70 times; only 10 additional times in the other books).²

Biblicists usually conclude that the name of +Josiah in 1 Kings 13:2 was a marginal gloss that a scribe later mistakenly copied as part of the text (NJB note, 1 Kings 13:2). The prophets normally address their contemporaries, and when speaking of concrete situations in the future, refer to the near future (see the naming of Cyrus in → Second Isaiah 44:28–45:1, when his conquests had already begun). Coherent with the conclusion that the literary genre of Kings is not scientific history is the genre identification of many narratives about the prophets (Elijah, Elisha) as “prophetic legends” or “folklore.” Contrary to popular opinion, miracles are not scattered throughout the Bible like salt and pepper, but are concentrated in three periods:

- Exodus 1-17 (the ten plagues, passing through the Sea of Reeds, the manna and the water from the rock);
- The prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha in 1-2 Kings;
- The ministry of Jesus in the four Gospels (especially the healing miracles).

Traditionally the church has utilized the biblical narratives of miracles as “apologetics” – evidence that supports the veracity of the faith, employing the philosophical categories of “natural/supernatural” (of Aristotle, St. Thomas and deism), which are alien to biblical vocabulary and theology. Since the early twentieth century (see Hermann Gunkel), investigators have raised the question of the *literary genre* of biblical narratives, since some seem to reflect reliable observations of eyewitnesses while others appeared centuries later and seem to represent non-historic literary genres, such as sagas or prophetic legends (Elijah and Elisha). Many would insist that, as in the case of Jesus’ parables, a saga or legend may be “true” and edifying, but its theological value does not depend on its historical “authenticity.” (Sagas and legends may contain an historical nucleus, however difficult to delimit.) Given the difficulty/impossibility of determining the degree of “authenticity” of such accounts, recent commentaries concentrate on the literary, ideological and theological dimensions of the books.³

The large number of miracles associated with Elijah and Elisha present the problem in its sharpest form, since these prophets lived in the ninth century B.C. while the books of 1-2 Kings were written in their final form three centuries later (sixth century B.C.), after 562 B.C. (2 Kings 25:27-30). Moreover, the seven notable parallels between the ministries of the two prophets would appear to suggest an intentional symbolism:⁴

The seven parallels (in the same order) between the Elijah and Elisha cycles

Elijah (1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2)	→	Elisha (2 Kings 3–13)
1 Elijah drinks from a brook, 17:2-6		Elisha drinks from a brook, 3:9-20
2 Multiplies oil, meal for the widow, 17:8-16		Multiplies oil for the widow, 4:1-7
3 Revives a boy, 17:17-24		Revives a boy, 4:8-37
4 Hunger, a miracle produces conversion, 18:20-39		Leprosy, a miracle and conversion, 5:1-27
5 Jezebel, takes vow, pursues Elijah, 19:1-3		King, takes vow, pursues Elisha, 6:8-32
6 Jezebel and false witness take land (Naboth), 21:1-29		King and witness return land, 8:1-6
7 Elijah sends oracle to dying king, 2 Kings 1:1-18		Oracle to dying king, 8:7-15

The Judges (1200-1030 B.C.)

- 1 **Othniel**, Judges 3:7-11 (oppression: Mesopotamia, 3:8);
- 2 **Ehud**, 3:12-30 (oppression: Eglon, King of Moab, 3:14);
- 3 *Shamgar*, 3:31 (“delivered” Israel from the Philistines; implicit oppression)
- 4 **Deborah** (with Barak), 4:1–5:31 (oppression: Canaanite, 4:3)
- 5 **Gideon**, 6:1–8:35 (oppression: Midianite, 6:1);
Gideon’s son Abimelech, 9:1-57 (tyrant, violent oppressor, 9:22)
- 6 *Tola*, 10:1-2 (“delivered” Israel; implicit oppression without specifying the enemy)
- 7 *Jair*, 10:3-5 (no oppression or liberation; “judged”)
- 8 **Jephthah**, 10:6–12:7 (oppression: Ammonites, Philistines)
- 9 *Ibzan*, 12:8-10 (no oppression or liberation; “judged”)
- 10 *Elon*, 12:11-12 (no oppression or liberation; “judged”)
- 11 *Abdon*, 12:13-15 (no oppression or liberation; “judged”)
- 12 **Samson**, 13:1–16:31 (oppression: Philistines, 13:1)

- 13 **Samuel**, prophet, judge, priest (1040-1010 B.C.); → Paul

United Monarchy (P = Polygamist)

- P1** –Saul (1030/1010 B.C.), from the tribe of Benjamin, resides in Gibeah
P2 ++*David* (1010-970 B.C.), of the tribe of Judah, capture of Jerusalem (1000 B.C.)
P3 +-Solomon (970-931 B.C.), construction of the Temple (I Kings 6)

Divided Monarchy (1 Kings 12–2 Kings 17 + 18:9-12 // 2 Chronicles 10–36

Judah (south), Davidic Dynasty

+2 good; 6 +–; 12 –bad

Israel (north), five? Dynasties

–19 kings, all bad

- P1** –Rehoboam (931-913 B.C.)
10:1–12:16 // 1 Kings 12:1-33; 14:21-22, 25-38
- P2** –Abijam/Abijah (913-911)
13:1-22 // 1 Kings 15:1-2, 6-8
- 3** +–**Asa** (911-870)
14:1-16:14 // 1 Kings 15:11-24
- 4** +–**Jehoshaphat** (870-848)
14:1-16:14 // 1 Kings 15:11-24
- P5** –Jehoram (848-841), 21:6,14,17; Athaliah +
others;21:1b-20//1 Kings 22:50b; 2 KINGS 8:17-24
- 6** –Ahaziah (841), death by order of Jehu
22:1-9 // 2 Kings 8:25–10:14
- [7 –**Athaliah** (841-835), **usurper, only queen**]
22:10–23:21 // 2 Kings 11:1-20
- P8** +–**Joash** (835-796) + priest, Jehoiada
24:1-27 // 2 Kings 11:21–12:21
- 9** +–**Amaziah** (796-781)
25:1-28 // 2 Kings 14:2-13, 15-20
- 10** +–**Azariah/Uzziah** (781-740) Isaiah
26:1-23 // 2 Kings 15:1-7
- 11** +–**Jotham** (740-736) Micah
27:1-9 // 2 Kings 15:33-38
- 12** –Ahaz (736/716), son/s, 2 Ki 16:3/2 Ch 28:3
28:1-27 // 2 Kings 16:1-20
- 13** ++**Hezekiah** (716-687) Sennacherib (701)
29:1–32:33 // 2 Kings 18:1-6, 13-37; 19:14-19,
35-37; 20:1-3, 12-21; 21:1 wife;
+ Is. 36:1-22; 37:14-20, 36-38; 38:1-3; 39:8
- 14** –**Manasseh** (687-642) 2 Chr. 33:6, sons
33:1-20 // 2 Kings 21:1-10, 17-18
- 15** –Amon (642-640)
33:21-25 // 2 Kings 21:19-24
- P16** ++**Josiah** (640-609); wives, 2 Kings 23:31, 36
34:1–35:27 // 2 Kings 22:1–23:30, + 1 Esdras 1
- S?17** –Jehoahaz (609, 3 months)
36:1-4 // 2 Kings 23:30-35, + 1 Esdras 1:34-38
- 18** –Jehoiakim (609-597)
36:5-8 // 2 Kings 23:36-24:7, + 1 Esdras 1:39-42
- P19** –Jehoiachin (598/597, 3 months); wives, 24:14
36:9-10 // 2 Kings 24:8-17, + 1 Esdras 1:43-46
- 20** –Zedekiah (597-587/86)
36:11-21 // 2 Kings 24:18–25:21, + Esdras 1:46b-58
- Jeroboam I** (931-910 B.C.)
- Nadab (910-909)
- Baasha (909-886)
- Elah (886-885) and Zimri (885 – 7 days)
- Omri (885-874)
- Ahab (874-853) Elijah
- Ahaziah (853-852)
- Jehoram (852-841) Elisha
- Jehu (841-814)
- Jehoahaz (814-798)
- Joash (798-783)
- Jeroboam II (783-743) Amos, Hosea
- Zechariah(743, 6 months)
- Shallum (743, 1 month)
- Menahem (743-738); –Pekahiah (738-737)
- Pekah (737-732)
- Hoshea (732-724)
- Fall of Samaria (722/21)**
- Zephaniah, Jeremiah
- First deportation (598)
- Fall of Jerusalem (587/86)**

Outline, 1 Kings 1-22

1 +--Solomon succeeds ++David, 1-2

- 1.1 Adonijah and Solomon compete for the throne
- 1.2 Solomon consolidates the kingdom; deaths of Adonijah, David and Shimei

2 History of +--Solomon, 3-11

- 2.1 In his revelatory dream Solomon asks for wisdom, 3:1-15
- 2.2 Two prostitutes experience the Solomonic wisdom, 3:16-28
- 2.3 Solomon's administrative officers, 4:1-28
- 2.4 Solomon's prosperity and wisdom, 4:29-34
- 2.5 Preparations for the temple's construction, 5:1-18
- 2.6 Construction of the temple, 6:1-38
- 2.7 Solomon constructs his palace, 7:1-51
- 2.8 Transfer of the ark; the glory of God fills the temple, 8:1-13
- 2.9 Speech and dedicatory prayers for the temple, 8:14-66
- 2.10 God's second appearance to Solomon, 9:1-9
- 2.11 Other activities: with Hiram, forced labor (*corvée*), sacrifices, ships, 9:10-28
- 2.12 The Queen of Sheba visits Solomon, 10:1-13
- 2.13 Solomon's riches and military might, 10:14-29
- 2.14 Solomon's 700 wives and 300 concubines, 11:1-13
- 2.15 Adversaries, Jeroboam's rebellion, Solomon's death, 11:14-43

3 Two kingdoms, Judah, south + Israel, north: political secession + religious schism, 12-16

- 3.1 Political secession: --Jeroboam opposes the succession of --Rehoboam, 12:1-19
- 3.2 Religious schism: --Jeroboam installs golden calves in Bethel and Dan, 12:25-33
- 3.3 A young prophet condemns the altar at Bethel, 13:1-10
- 3.4 The young prophet, deceived by an old prophet, killed by a lion, 13:11-34
- 3.5 Ahijah prophesies against --Jeroboam, 14:1-20
- 3.6 --Rehoboam reigns in Judah, 14:21-31
- 3.7 The reigns in Judah of --Abijam and +-Asa, 18:1-15
- 3.8 Reigns in Israel of --Nadab, --Baasha, --Elah, --Zimri, --Omri and --Ahab, 15:25-16:34

4. The Elijah cycle , 17-22 (northern); → 2 Kings 1-2, Elisha (northern)

- 4.1 The great drought: Elijah fed by the crows, 17:1-6
- 4.2 Elijah and the widow of Zarephath: flour and oil, resurrection of her son, 17:7-24
- 4.3 Elijah encounters Obadiah and sends him to --Ahab, 18:1-15
- 4.4 Elijah against 450 prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, 18:16-40
- 4.5 Elijah announces to --Ahab the end of the drought, 18:41-46
- 4.6 Elijah meets with God on Mount Horeb/Sinai, 19:1-18
- 4.7 Elijah designates Elisha as his disciple and successor, 19:19-21
- 4.8 Aram/Syria (King Ben-hadad) starts a war against Samaria (--Ahab), 20:1-34
- 4.9 Sons of the prophets: a sadomasochistic game and denunciation of --Ahab, 20:35-43
- 4.10 Naboth's vineyard, 21:1-29
- 4.11 Aramean war II: the false prophets vs. Micaiah, 22:1-28
- 4.12 --Ahaziah succeeds --Ahab (Samaria); +-Jehoshaphat reigns in Judah, 22:29-55

Outline, 2 Kings 1–25

1. The Elisha cycle, 2 Kings 1–13 (primarily Israel, northern)

- 1.1 Elijah prophesies the death of –Ahaziah, 1:1-18
- 1.2 Elisha witnesses the ascension of Elijah to heaven, 2:1-13
- 1.3 Three miracles of Elisha: separates and purifies the water, curses mockers, 2:14-25
- 1.4 Elisha prophesies the defeat of Moab, whose king sacrifices his son, 3:1-27
- 1.5 Elisha and the widow: the miracle of the oil, 4:1-7
- 1.6 Elisha raises the son of a rich Shunammite woman, 4:8-37
- 1.7 Elisha purifies the pot of poisoned stew, 4:38-41
- 1.8 Elisha heals Naaman of leprosy, Gehazi collects, 4:38-41
- 1.9 Elisha makes a borrowed axe head float, 6:1-7
- 1.10 Elisha curses, deceives and captures Syrian troops, 6:8-23
- 1.11 Elisha and the hunger and siege of Samaria, 6:24–7:2
- 1.12 Elisha, four lepers and the lifting of the siege, 7:3-20
- 1.13 A king and Gehazi (faithful witness) return land to the Shunammite woman, 8:1-6
- 1.14 Elisha orders a lie; Hazael kills the king of Aram/Syria, 8:7-15
- 1.15 Two ungodly kings (**Judah**): –Jehoram (848-841 B.C.) and –Ahaziah(841), 8:16-29
- 1.16 Disciple of Elisha anoints –Jehu as king of Israel, 9:1-13
- 1.17 –Jehu conspires and kills two kings: –Joram (Israel) and –Ahaziah (Judah), 9:14-29
- 1.18 –Jehu assassinates: Jezebel, 70 sons of –Ahab, relatives of –Ahaziah, 9:30–10:17
- 1.19 –Jehu assassinates the worshipers of Baal and destroys the temple, 10:18-27
- 1.20 Reign of –Jehu, (841-814 B.C.), 10:28-36
- 1.21 Reign of –Athaliah (841-835), mother of –Ahaziah, in **Jerusalem**, 11:1-20
- 1.22 Reign of +–Jehoash (Judah); –Jehoahaz and –Jehoash (Israel), 11:21–13:13
- 1.23 Elisha prophesies against Aram/Syria, dies, bones have miraculous power, 13:14-21

2. The two kingdoms up to the fall of Samaria, north (722/21 B.C.), 2 Kings 14–17

- 2.1 +–Amaziah, king of **Judah** (796-81 B.C.) and –Jeroboam II, Israel (783-43), 14:1-29
- 2.2 +–Azariah (**Judah**, 781-740), –Zechariah, –Shallum, –Menahem, –Pekahiah and –Pekah (Israel), 15:1-31
- 2.3 +–Jotham (740-736) and –Ahaz (736-716) in **Judah**, 15:32–16:20
- 2.4 –Hosheah (732-724), fall of Samaria (722/21); cause: idolatry, 17:1-23
- 2.5 Origin of the Samaritans, 17:24-41; → John 4

3. The Kingdom of Judah, south: the final years (until 587/86 B.C.), 2 Kings 18–25

- 3.1 ++Hezekiah (716-687), Sennacherib invades (701), 18:1–20:21; → // Isaiah 36–39
- 3.2 Two wicked kings: –Manasseh (687-642) and –Amon (647-640), 21:1-26
- 3.3 ++Josiah (640-609): reform and tragic death (prophetess Huldah), 22:1–23:30
- 3.4 –Jehoahaz (609), –Jehoiakim (609-598), –Jehoiachin, *deportation I* (598 B.C.), 23:31–24:17
- 3.5 –Zedekiah (598-587/86), siege and plundering, *deportation II* (587/86), 24:18–25:21
- 3.6 Gedaliah, governor of Judah (587/86), assassinated, 25:22-26
- 3.7 Jehoiachin (in exile) liberated by King Evil-merodach of Babylon (562-61), 25:27-30

Nabonidus (559-539 B.C.), last Babylonian emperor.

Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylon, 539 B.C.; edict in 538 allows Jews to return to Jerusalem.
Reconstruction of the Temple, 520-515; 458, Ezra; 444, Nehemiah; 333, Alexander the Great.

1. The poor and oppressed. As David Pleins notes, the DH does not focus on the problem of a poor *class* as such but considers the destiny of two entire nations (their prosperity, decline and final exile).⁵ It seeks to warn against the threat of the exile (first edition of the History under King Josiah) and then explains the cause of the catastrophe (final exilic edition, 560 BC). Nonetheless, the final edition appeared among the *impoverished* exiles in Babylon, who had lost all their land and their belongings, while those who stayed in Judah also were the “*poor*” (*dal*) of the land (2 Kings 24:14 and 25:12). If the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple were caused by the failure of the kings in failing to centralize worship in Jerusalem and thus avoid idolatry, then history implies that the loss of land and the impoverishment of the exiles were due primarily to political leaders who tolerated idolatry. If it would be mistaken to suppose, especially in modern democratic nations with a division of powers (executive, legislative, judicial), that the blame for the successes and failures always rest in one leader (president), then we may suspect that historic analysis of causality in Kings is also too simplistic. Nonetheless, Kings shows how certain leaders and their decisions and policies may have decisive consequences in any age.

1.1. Solomon’s *corvée* (forced labor; Hebrew: *mas*). In his denunciation of the judges’ project to abandon their governing responsibilities and establish a monarchy, Samuel had specifically warned how monarchies enslaved multitudes (meaning that Israel would return to the state of slavery it suffered in Egypt, Ex. 1:11-14; 5:1-19; cf. 1 Samuel 8:12-17). Thus, beginning with Solomon, Kings shows how the prophecies of Samuel were fulfilled. The *corvée* (*mas*) of Solomon recruited 30,000 men of Israel for forced labor during periods of three months (1 Kings 5:13-18, 27-32). According to Kings, only foreigners suffered permanent slavery (*mas ‘obed*), while Israelite men were exempted (1 Kings 9:15-25; 2 Chron. 2:2, 17-18; 8:7-10).⁶ Perhaps in certain sources the descriptions of forced labor and slavery are presented without criticism as something normal in the monarchies, but in the context of the DH, given the previous denunciation of Samuel (as well as the story of the Exodus), the condemnation is implicit.

1.2 Elijah and Elisha: Miracles for the poor/impoverished. As Marsha White points out: “Elisha appears as an itinerant holy man, traveling from group to group and performing miracles in response to pleas for help from his *poverty-stricken disciples*.”⁷ Of the 18 narratives of miracles performed by Elijah and Elisha, eight obviously respond to the needs of people who are poor, impoverished and otherwise needy.

Kings credits **Elijah** with *six* miracles (*italics* indicates God’s option for impoverished):⁸

- *1 Fed by the ravens, drinks water from a supposedly dry stream bed (1 Kings 17:1-5)
- *2 Provides flour and oil to the widow of Zarephath and resurrects her son (17:7-24)
- *3 Defeats the prophets of Baal, invoking fire from heaven (18:1-46)
- *4 En route to Horeb, God feeds him with bread cakes and water (19:1-18)
- *5 Invokes fire from heaven against the invading soldiers (2 Kings 1:1-18)
- *6 Without dying is taken up into heaven in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire (2:1-12)

Elisha, however, performs *twelve* miracles (he asked for and received a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, 2 Kings 2:9-10):

- 1 Parts the water of the Jordan River (2 Kings 2:13-18; → Moses, Ex. 14; → Joshua 3);

- *2 *Purifies the water of a bitter spring (2:19-21);*
 - 3 Curses 42 jeering delinquent youths who are then mauled by two she-bears (2:23-25);
 - *4 *Provides oil for widow of one of the sons of the prophets and her two children (4:1-7);*
 - 5 Resuscitates the son of a wealthy Shunammite woman (4:8-37);
 - *6 *Purifies a poisoned pot of stew for the sons of the prophets (4:38-41);*
 - *7 *Feeds one hundred men (4:42-44);* → feeding of the 5,000, Mark 6;
 - 8 Heals Naaman, Aramean commander, of leprosy (5:1-19);
 - 9 Miraculous knowledge concerning the dishonesty of his assistant, Gehazi (5:20-27);
 - *10 *Makes a borrowed and lost hatchet head float (6:1-7);*
 - 11 Punishes with blindness and captures invading Aramean troops (6:8-23);
 - 12 Body resuscitated by Elisha's bones (13:20-21);
- (cf. the posthumous letter from Elisha to King Jehoram, 2 Chron. 21:12-15).

See Elisha's prophecy that announces the end of the famine in besieged Aram (7:1-2, 17-20).

1.3 Jezebel and Ahab violently seize Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-28; cf. 2 Kings 9:21-37). The narrative about Naboth's vineyard, in which the prophet Elijah denounces the violent oppression of Jezebel and Ahab, is without doubt one of the most important texts for expounding the Bible's teaching about the poor. However, as David Pleins notes, Naboth is not poor, but instead is a small land owner in a neighborhood next to the royal palace.⁹ (See Num. 26:5-9 and Lev. 25:23). The vocabulary of poverty does not appear in the text – nor in Samuel's denouncement of the monarchy (1 Samuel 8), nor in the description of how Solomon uses slaves (*corvéé*) in the construction of the temple and other works (1 Kings 5:13-18; 9:15-22; 12:1-7). Pleins even concludes: "Elijah did not defend the poor like an Amos or a Micah would have."¹⁰ However, Elijah showed solidarity with the widow of Zarephath and her son, who was at the point of death, during a drought that caused a famine (1 Kings 17:8-24). Incidentally, although in need because of the famine, the widow and her son were not poor since they had their own two-story house (1 Kings 17:17, 19, 23). Pleins concludes that the purpose of Kings and the DH is not to defend the poor but rather protect landowners threatened by tyrannical kings.¹¹

Nevertheless, the fact that the final edition of the DH was produced during the exile as literature for exiled and impoverished landowners implies an "option for the impoverished," though not for the "poor" in the sense of the class defended by Amos and Micah, in the eighth century BC. Furthermore, the poor, defended in so many biblical texts, represent a group in the larger class of the weak, which commonly suffer injustice and violent oppression (→ 2 Corinthians). Therefore, proper exegesis of the texts should not create a dichotomy between the poor and others considered vulnerable who suffer oppression but should see the poor as a common manifestation of the larger group. The narrative concerning Naboth affirms his paradigmatic character because it unmasks the cruel and tyrannical selfishness of an elite class and the common mechanisms (bribed false witnesses) that betray and mock judicial processes. His murder also makes clear the reason why the Ten Commandments say: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16 // Deut. 5:20; Ex. 23:1; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Mat. 19:18; Rom. 13:8-10). False witness (obtained through bribery) is a common mechanism of murderous violence. At times the oppressed (like the emigrating patriarchs of → Genesis) manage to succeed solely through deception and lies; and for this reason the concern of the Bible is to prohibit the false testimony of the rich, not the subterfuges of the poor and oppressed.

The Naboth narrative is also basic to understanding the Bible because, as Walter Brueggemann points out, the dramatic conflict between Yahweh and idolatry (Elijah against the 450 prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18) is a conflict between the values represented by Jezebel's pagan prophets and the prophets of Yahweh, the God of the → Exodus.¹² In one sense, then, fundamentalists are correct when they insist that tolerance is not the only or absolute value in the Scriptures (be it the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament or the Koran). However, they are commonly mistaken when they promote intolerance in the forms of xenophobia, racism, machismo, sexism, heterosexism and homophobia, instead of defending the rights of women and oppressed vulnerable minorities. Elijah and his God were “intolerant” because they opposed injustice and violent oppression, a kind of intolerance that is uncommon among those fundamentalist groups that proudly proclaim themselves to be “pro-life” even though they tolerate and even promote oppression, violence and death against women, the poor and sexual minorities.

1.4 Descriptions of oppression and liberation in 1-2 Kings. Even though the technical vocabulary is very rare in 1-2 Kings (see the “poor” (*dal*) of the land, 2 Kings 24:14 and 25:12, cited above), in addition to the concrete descriptions, such as famine in the prophetic narratives, the vocabulary for oppression and liberation is much more common and usually implies an experience of poverty/impooverishment.¹³

1 Kings

King David freed from all Philistine oppression (*tsarah* I), etc. (1:29)

David's oppressions (*'anah*) (2:26)

Solomon's prayer: if someone harms (*khata'*, sins against) a neighbor (8:31)

An enemy besieges (*tsarar* I) Israel (8:37)

God humbles (*'anah*) David's descendants (11:39)

The prophet Micah jailed by Ahab (*lachats*, twice, 22:27)

2 Kings

Israel oppresses Moab (3:4-5; taxes as a means of oppression)

King of Aram oppresses (*lachats*, twice) Israel, Yahweh is liberator (13:4-5)

King Hazael of Aram oppresses (*lachats*) Israel, Yahweh liberates (God's pact, 13:22-23)

Yahweh, liberator from Egypt; idolatry, anger, oppression (*'anah*), exile (17:7, 18-20)

Sennacherib oppresses Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:17-37 // Is. 37-39; but 2 Kings 18:14-16 without // in Isaiah)

Day of oppression (*tsarah* I; 19:3)

Tribute to Pharaoh (a mechanism of oppression, 23:33-35)

See also Solomon's *corvée*, 1.1 above; a detailed investigation is needed of the mechanisms and metaphors of oppression (see “yoke” and “little finger” in 3.3 below). 2 Kings 3:19 indicates the need of rest for the land as in the year of jubilee (→ Leviticus 25, ecology).

2. Women: Queens, mothers, prophetesses, prostitutes (*poor*) and Lady Wisdom. With the centralization of power under the monarchy, the freedom and status that women enjoyed under the → **Judges** diminished, although the difference was not so noticeable in the daily life of the women in the villages.¹⁴ Although peasant women lost power under the monarchy, a queen mother in the royal palaces could frequently exercise decisive power. Thus, when Bathsheba presented herself to King David, she was the one who kneeled down (1 Kings 1:16), but when her son Solomon presented himself before her, he kneeled (1 Kings 2:19). The tendency of → 1-2 Samuel to present **women in pairs**¹⁵ (→ Luke) is also characteristic of 1-2 Kings:

- David's two women: Abishag and Bathsheba, 1 Kings 1:1-53;
- Two prostitutes, single mothers, 1 Kings 3:16-28;
- Two cannibal mothers, 2 Kings 6:24-31;
- Two ungodly queens: Athaliah, 2 Kings 8:16-19 (wife of Jehoram in the south); 11:1-16, 1 Kings 16-21 (wife of Ahab in the north);
- Naaman's wife and her Israelite slave girl, 2 Kings 5:2-4

Kings also commonly links **women with prophets**. Unmarried prophets help weak women (see Nathan with Bathsheba, below) or *poor* women (three women, five miracles):

- Elijah and the widow of Zarephath: flour and oil, resurrection, 1 Kings 17:8-24
- Elisha and a widow: oil, 2 Kings 4:1-7
- Elisha and the rich Shunammite woman: birth and resuscitation of her son, 2 Kings 4:8-37; her land returned, 8:1-6

Claudia Camp suggests that "The miracle story functions as a genre of empowerment, shared among such persons [peasants or pious elite] to encourage their own initiative in the face of despair."¹⁶ The increasing oppression and impoverishment among the peasants under the monarchy probably provided the impulse for the narratives of the miracles of the prophets.¹⁷

2.1 Queens. The Bible names five foreign queens: of Sheba (1 Kings 10), Vashti and Esther of Persia, Tahpenes of Egypt (1 Kings 11:19-20) and Candace of Ethiopia (advised by the eunuch of → Acts 8:27). Although Solomon received the queen of Sheba (single) with great honor, Israel did not approve of autonomous queens. Consequently, Athaliah, who took the throne of Judah after the death of her son Ahaziah and reigned for seven years, was considered illegitimate (2 Kings 11:1-16).

2.2 Queens and queen mothers. In Israel and Judah the queen mothers exercised significant authority in the power struggles and intrigues in the palace (see Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, below). After the division of the kingdom, 1-2 Kings underscores the importance of the queen mothers in Judah by naming them in all cases except two (Joram and Ahaz) of the 19 kings (cf. the 11 queen mothers named in → Chronicles).¹⁸

King	Mother	Texts
1 –Rehoboam (922-913 BC)	Naamah	1 Kings 14:21 // 2 Chron. 12:13
2 –Abijam (913-911)	Maacah	1 Kings 15:2 // 2 Chron. 12:2
3 +– Asa (911-870)	Maacah (grandmother)	1 Kings 15:10, 13 // 2 Chron. 15:16
4 +– Jehoshaphat (870-848)	Azubah	1 Kings 22:42 // 2 Chron. 20:31
5 –Jehoram (849-843)	???	---
6 –Ahaziah (841, death by Jehu)	Athaliah	2 Kings 8:26 // 2 Chron. 22:2
[7 – Athaliah (841-835, only queen)	Omri, grandfather	11:1-20; 8:16-19 // 2 Chron. 22:2
8 +– Jehoash (835-796) + Jehoiada	Zibiah	2 Kings 12:1 // 2 Chron. 24:1
9 +– Amaziah (796-781)	Jehoaddin	2 Kings 14:2 // 2 Chron. 25:2
10 +– Azariah/Uzziah (781-740)	Jecoliah	2 Kings 15:2 // 2 Chron. 26:3
11 +– Jotham (740-736)	Jerusha	2 Kings 15:33 // 2 Chron. 27:1
12 –Ahaz (736-716)	???	---
13 ++ Hezekiah (716-687)	Abi	2 Kings 18:2 // 2 Chron. 29:1
14 – Manasseh (687-642)	Hephzibah	2 Kings 21:1
15 –Amon (642-640)	Meshullemeth	2 Kings 21:19
16 ++ Josiah (640-609)	Jedidah	2 Kings 22:1
17 –Jehoahaz (609, 3 months)	Hamutal	2 Kings 23:31
18 –Jehoiakim (609-597)	Zebidah	2 Kings 23:36
19 –Jehoiachin (597, 3 months)	Nehushta	2 Kings 24:8 Deportation (597 BC)
20 –Zedekiah (597-587/86)	Hamutal	2 Kings 24:18 Fall of Jerusalem

2.3 Bathsheba, Uriah and the prophet Nathan (1 Kings 1:1–2:25). Although Bathsheba was very beautiful, her husband Uriah preferred to sleep with the royal guard of David’s palace and cover up his preference with the traditional military celibacy (2 Sam. 11:6-13; see 1 Sam. 21:4-5). Perhaps, aware of her husband’s preference (“sexual orientation”), Bathsheba took advantage of his absence to take her bath on the rooftop of the house (not inside, which was the custom), where King David (but not the other neighbors) could observe her from his new palace (2 Sam. 11:1-5). Later, in the final decision concerning David’s successor, Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan collaborated to assure the triumph of Solomon (son of Bathsheba) against Adonijah, his older half-brother. Taking advantage of David’s senility, Bathsheba and Nathan manipulated the king and were able to convince him that he had made an oath that Solomon, his youngest son, would be his successor. Because they were in a weaker position, Nathan and Bathsheba invented the account of the supposed vow (see the tricks of the matriarchs and patriarchs in vulnerable situations, women and emigrants in → Genesis).¹⁹

2.4 Jezebel and Elijah. The lesbian biblicist Phyllis Tribble appropriately classified Queen Jezebel and the prophet Elijah as “the odd couple”, since the fundamental conflict that Kings describes is not between King Ahab and the prophet, but between Elijah and the infamous wife of the king (1 Kings 16:31; 18–19; 21; 2 Kings 9; → Rev. 2:20-23). As Tribble points out, the DH contrasts Jezebel and Elijah in every aspect:

Jezebel

Fanatical evangelist for Baal
 Foreigner (from Tyre)
 Woman (married to King Ahab)

Elijah

Jealous prophet of Yahweh
 Israelite of the Israelites
 Man (single)

Rules from her palace
Exercises tyrannical monarchic power
Kills and threatens to kill
Violent and shameful death

Itinerant ministry
Instrument of miraculous divine power
Revives and flees to save his life
Carried up to heaven in God's chariot

Although she is the incarnation of evil, Jezebel demonstrates that in the ancient patriarchal societies a capable woman could be as strong and exercise as much authority as men did. Her authority is evident from the fact that Jehu, founder of the following dynasty, had to kill her to establish his kingdom – and she confronted her death with admirable dignity and courage (2 Kings 9:30-37). Transsexual biblicist Victoria Kolakowski analyzes the role of gender in the narrative of Jezebel's death, focusing on the presence of the eunuchs. These palace functionaries sided with Jehu and tossed Jezebel from the palace window to her death, after which dogs ate her flesh (fulfilling Elijah's prophecy against her). According to Kolakowski, Jezebel represents "the quintessential foreign woman of power...for the patriarchal Subject the quintessential Other, to be feared and blamed."²⁰ She then concludes that Jezebel in effect had castrated the men of Israel (including her husband Ahab, whose cowardly example Jehu followed. The eunuchs, thus, reflect the condition of men in Israel under Jezebel (castrated): they must collaborate with Jehu and kill Jezebel to recover their full humanity. By allowing the eunuchs to kill Jezebel, Jehu empowers them, as thus also, indirectly, so does Yahweh.

Although 1-2 Kings names 17 queen mothers of Judah (of the 19 kings, it leaves unnamed only the mothers of Jehoram and Ahaz), of the 18 kings of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, 1-2 Kings only names Jezebel (mother of Ahaziah and Jehoram; 1 Kings 16:31; 22:51; 2 Kings 3:2; 9:22) and the widow of Zeruah, mother of Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26). The good King Asa had to take his mother Maacah's position away from her because she had made an image of Asherah (1 Kings 15:13 // 2 Chron. 15:6). In the final analysis most scholars conclude that the goddess Asherah was commonly worshipped along with Yahweh, even in Judah, since archeology has discovered abundant proofs of worship of this goddess during the entire period of the monarchy, including in Jerusalem.²¹ In parallelism with Kings, → Chronicles names 11 of the queen mothers, ending with Hezekiah; however, beginning with Manasseh, Chronicles stops naming the queen mothers.

2.5 The wife of Jeroboam I, the prophet Ahijah and the ill prince (1 Kings 14:1-18).

This prophetic legend names all the characters except the woman: King Jeroboam, Abijah (his sick son who dies), and Ahijah (who had prophesied the schism and the reign of Jeroboam). As Adele Berlin points out, the woman is a mere literary vehicle, disguised and nameless, who functions only as the voice of the king and of the prophet, but without speaking – and the prophet addresses her only as "the wife of Jeroboam" (1 Kings 14:5).²²

2.6 The prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-22 // → 2 Chron. 34:22-28). When the high priest Hilkiyah and the scribe Shaphan take King Josiah the book of the law that Hilkiyah had discovered in the temple (→ Deuteronomy), the king ordered them to consult with *Yahweh*. Without thinking twice, the authorities left to consult with *Huldah*, prophetess of the temple, "wife of Shallum," the man in charge of the king's clothes, who lived nearby. Since the Hebrew Bible includes few references to prophetesses, it is notable that, faced with such a crisis, the authorities consulted with a woman and that Kings and Chronicles (almost identically) present

this as something totally normal. One might ask if three of the four prophetesses named in the Hebrew Bible are intentionally presented with a negative dimension:

- Miriam criticizes Moses and is punished by Yahweh with leprosy (→ Numbers 12);
- *Deborah*, the only woman judge and the only prophetess without faults (→ Judges 4–5);
- Noadiah allies herself with the enemies of Nehemiah (→ Neh. 6:14);
- Huldah promises the pious Josiah that he will die “in peace,” but he was killed in the battle of Carchemish (2 Kings 23:28-30 // 2 Chron. 35:20-27).

On the other hand, as Claudia Camp shows, the book discovered in the temple could have been a fraud, until the prophetess Huldah

authorizes what will become the core of Scripture for Judaism and Christianity. Her validation of a text thus stands as the first recognizable act in the long process of canon formation. Huldah authenticates a document as being God’s word, thereby affording it the sanctity required for establishing a text as authoritative, or canonical.²³

Walter Brueggemann emphasizes that the narrative teaches how the book of Deuteronomy prevailed over the *temple* (represented by the high priest Hilkiah) and over the monarchy (Josiah). But when Brueggemann adds that the Law also prevails over *prophecy*, he seems to ignore the implications of the text that Claudia Camp points out concerning the original and decisive role of the prophetess Huldah. Brueggemann recognizes that Huldah’s prophecy is allied with the Torah since, like Deuteronomy, Huldah rejects idolatry and insists in the exclusive worship of Yahweh: “Thus Torah and prophecy are companions and allies in the uncompromising vision of this narrative”²⁴ (see Deuteronomy 13; 18:14-22).

Today we have the irony that many biblical feminists question the traditional canon of the Scriptures (books primarily written and canonized by males), which, according to the judgment of many, is a great heresy. But if the Bible itself presents a dialectical relationship between Law/Scripture and prophecy, and if the process of canonization was initiated by a woman, how can we reject the possibility of reevaluating the history of the canonization process in the traditional patriarchal cultures, and perhaps even accepting modern prophecies?²⁵ One significant difference between the parallel narratives about Huldah is that 2 Chron. 34:14 refers to the discovered book as the Law of Yahweh “given by Moses” and thus evidently refers to the entire Pentateuch (cf. Deuteronomy in 2 Kings 22).²⁶ If this is so, however, then Chronicles presents a second step in the historic process of canonization, which augments even more the authority of the prophetess: Huldah establishes the canonical status of the entire Pentateuch, not just some primitive version of Deuteronomy!

3. Sexual minorities: Single Prophets, polygamous kings, widows, prostitutes....

3.1 Single prophets in the communities of “the sons of the prophets.”²⁷ David Pleins calls the power acts on the part of the prophets (their miracles) “shamanism as politics.”²⁸ He affirms that, especially in the figures of Elijah and Elisha, we can see “the integral role that the anthropological phenomenon of shamanism appears to play in the overall fashioning of DH’s social vision.”²⁹ Research in the social sciences distinguishes between spiritual *possession* and

the role of the shaman as a mediator of spiritual power. The shaman is an inspired prophet and healer, a charismatic religious figure, since he or she controls the spirits and usually incarnates them.³⁰ The *berdache* of Native American communities are similar, spiritual leaders with “two spirits” (masculine and feminine) who represent various sexual minorities.³¹ In Samuel and Kings, almost all male prophets are *single* spiritual leaders (“shamans”; cf. Huldah and the few married prophets: Samuel, Saul and → Isaiah, Is. 36–39 // 2 Kings 18–20; → Is. 7:3; 8:3, 18; → Ezekiel, widow; → Hosea and prostitute wife; cf. below, widow of a prophet, 2 Kings 4:1–7).

- **Samuel** (1 Samuel 8–12; see his genealogy in 1 Chron. 6:33–34). Although married, Samuel was a leader in a school of the sons of the prophets, ascetic communities where men, almost always single, prophesied accompanied with music and where it was common to see them fall into trances (1 Sam. 19:18–24; → 1–2 Samuel).³²

- **Saul**, married, encountered a group of ecstatic prophets (1 Sam. 10:5–13). After being rejected by God, Saul went out in search of Samuel, “and the spirit of God came upon him. As he was going, he fell into a prophetic frenzy until he came to Naioth in Ramah. He too stripped off his clothes, and he too fell into a frenzy before Samuel. He lay naked all that day and all that night. Therefore it is said, ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’” (1 Sam. 19:23–24; cf. 10:9–11). David, also in ecstasy, scandalously danced, almost naked, while bringing the ark of Yahweh to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:14–16, 20; → Isaiah 20).³³

- **Elijah**, single (1 Kings 17–22, 2 Kings 1–2), associated with the sons of the prophets (2 Sam. 2:5, 7); denounced Ahab (1 Kings 17–21), spoke against Ahaziah (2 Kings 1:2–16; 1 Kings 18:4, 13, 22!?!; 19:1, 10; cf. 22:1–28; of Baal, 18:16–29, 40; 2 Kings 10:19).

- **Elisha**, single (2 Kings 2:3–9:7). As Marsha White indicates, conventicles, or communities of the “sons of the prophets,” existed in Bethel, Jericho, Gilgal, Samaria and Mount Carmel (2 Kings 2:1–5)³⁴:

- They did not live with wives and children but with other disciples (see 6:1–7, the loaned ax head that floated; cf. a possible exception: Elisha and widow of a prophet, 2 K. 4:1–7);
- Celibacy was not obligatory (see 2 Kings 4:1–7, a widow, below);
- They shared meals (4:38–41, a poisoned pot of stew); cf. the prophets of the court, 3:13;
- Youth were included (5:22), such as Elisha’s servant (9:1–13, esp. v. 4);
- Their spiritual director (1 Sam. 19:20) was called “father” (1 Sam. 10:12; 2 Kings 2:12; 6:21; 13:14; cf. Mat. 23:9).

3.1.1 Twelve prophets in Kings *without a wife* // *in Chronicles* (AB12 lxxv–lxxvii)

[**Samuel, 1 Samuel 8–12**; see genealogy only in 1 Chron. 6:33–34.]

- **Ahijah** (1 Kings 11:29–39; 12:25–13:32; 14:1–20) prophesies to Jeroboam: his kingdom and the death of his son;
- Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:22–24) prophesies to Rehoboam and tells him not to make war against Jeroboam;
- A “man of God” denounces Jeroboam, killed by a lion (1 Kings 13:1–10, 11–34);

- Wife of Jeroboam asks **Ahijah** to heal her son (1 Kings 14:1-18; see 15:29-30; 11:1-40; 25:12-13:32);
- Jehu (1 Kings 16:1-7) condemns Baasha and his house;
- **Elisha** (1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 1-13), associated with the sons of the prophets;
- One of the sons of the prophets (1 Kings 20:35-43) condemns Ahab (with sadomasochistic behavior);
- **Micaiah** (1 Kings 22:1-28) predicts the failure of Ahab and Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 17-19, 21; 2 Kings 1:1-2:18; cf. 2 Chron. 21:12-15) his war;
- Jonah supports the imperial expansion of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23-25); → Jonah;
- Isaiah denounces Assyria (2 Kings 18:13-19:37; 20:1-19);
- The servants of Yahweh, his prophets, denounce Manasseh (21:10-15).

3.1.2. Ten prophets in DH (Samuel-Kings) with a wife // in Chronicles (M = married; S = single)

M1 Samuel (1 Samuel 1; 3; 7:3-6; 8:1-22; 9:1-10:27; 11:1-13; 12:1-25; 13:8-15; 15:1-35; 19:18-24; 28:3-25); last judge (1 Sam. 7:6, 15); home in Ramah (7:16-17); makes a sacrifice (7:7-9); sons are corrupt (8:1-3); see genealogy only in 1 Chron. 6:33-34;

S2 Nathan (2 Sam. 7:1-7 // 1 Chron. 17:1-15; 2 Sam. 12:1-25 and Psalm 51:1; 1 Kings 1:1-40; 2 Chron. 29:25); without genealogy or place of birth; with Bathsheba conspires against Adonijah;

S3 Gad (1 Sam. 22:5; 2 Sam. 24:11-14, 18-19 // 1 Chron. 21:9-12, 18-19; 2 Chron. 29:25; 1 Chron. 29:29);

S4 Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:21-24 // 2 Chron. 11:2, 4; 12:5, quid pro quo; 12:7);

S5 Ahijah of Shiloh (1 Kings 11:29-31; 12:15; // 2 Chr. 10:15?; 1 K. 14:2-18; 15:29-30);

S6 Micaiah, son of Imlah, under Ahab (1 Kings 22:8-28 // 2 Chron. 18:3-27; see 1 Kings 20:35-43; ninth century B.C.);

S7 Elijah (1 Kings 17-19, 21; 2 Kings 1:1-2:18; cf. 2 Chron. 21:12-15, only reference to Elijah in Chronicles, a posthumous letter from Elijah to King Jehoram; NJB 21:12 note e;

S8 Jehu, son of Hanani; Hanani warns Asa, 2 Chron. 16:7-9; see 19:2-3;

M9 Isaiah (two sons, Is. 7:3; 8:3, 18; 2 Kings 19-20 // Is. 36-39; see 2 Chron. 32:20, 32)

M10 Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20 // 2 Chron. 34:22-28), wife of Shallum; cf. Noadiah, Neh. 6:14.

3.1.3. 39 Prophets only in → Chronicles (without parallels in DH)

S1 Amasai (1 Chron. 12:16-18), chief of 30, spirit came upon him, pledged their support for David;

M2(-6) Asaph, prophesied under the direction (“hands”, Hebrew) of David, and his four sons under the direction of their father (1 Chron. 25:1-2; 2 Chron. 29:30);

M7(-13) Jeduthun supervised the prophecies of his six sons (1 Chron. 25:3);

M14(-29) Heman, David’s seer (*khozeh*), supervised the prophecies of his 14 sons (1 Chron. 25:4-6);

S30 Iddo (2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22), seer and prophet mentioned as the source of Chronicles;

S31 Azariah, son of Oded (2 Chron. 15:1-7);

- S32** Jahaziel, a Levite, prophesied to Jehoshafat (2 Chron. 20:14-17);
- S33** Eliezer, prophesied against Jehoshafat (2 Chron. 20:37);
- S34** Zechariah, son of the priest Jehoiada, killed in the temple (2 Chron. 24:20-22; → Luke 11:51);
- S35** Oded, prophet of Samaria, achieves the liberation of the enslaved Jewish captives (2 Chron. 28:9-15);
- S36** Asaph, seer (*khozeh*) of King Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:30);
- S37** Jeduthun, seer (*cose*, 2 Chron. 35:15-16);
- M?38** King Neco of Egypt prophesied to Josiah (2 Chron. 35:22);
- S39** Jeremiah (2 Chron. 36:20-22 // Ezra 1:1).

In general, the prophets alluded to in Chronicles differ from those mentioned in Kings because the former focus more on issues of worship, declare immediate punishments and lack the declarations against injustice, oppression and violence (see Naboth, 1 Kings 21). However, both in Kings and Chronicles we can note a dialectic between the laws of the accepted traditions (Deuteronomy and the entire Torah) and the relecturas (rereadings) and later applications (see the adaptations in the Passover of Hezekiah). Later, when the oracles of the prophets were accepted as Scripture in a canon, one can see a similar dialectic between law-prophets and wisdom that attempts to discern the “good way,” guided by the received Scriptures.

3.2 Widows and single women

- Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-24), example of the solidarity of the prophets.
- Single men with women and the poor. Cf. Elisha and the rich, married Shunammite (2 Kings 4:8-37; 8:1-6).
- Elisha and the widow of one of the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 4:1-7). Although the sons of the prophets almost always appear to be single, celibacy was not an absolute requirement in their communities (see Peter, the only married one among the apostles of Jesus, and Priscilla and Aquila among Paul’s colleagues). We do not know if in the case of this widow her husband had left her in order to live in one of the communities of men (→ Luke 14:26; 18:29).
- The widow Zeruah, mother of Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26).
- The queen of Sheba (single/widow, 1 Kings 10:1-13 // 2 Chron. 9:1-12).

3.3 Polygamous and impotent kings with concubines; → see Chronicles

- King Solomon with his 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:1-13). Although for Chronicles many wives, as well as many children, are evidence of God’s blessings, this proof of the Solomon’s great riches (if not his wisdom) remains covered in Chronicles.
- Abishag (1 Kings 1:1-4, 15). Procured by the palace servants to establish that David was *impotent* (another sexual minority) and to help Adonijah usurp the throne.

3.4 Eunuchs, *saris(im)*, nine times in Kings, twice in Chronicles (→ Deut. 23:1; Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel). In the nine references to eunuchs (*saris/im*) in Kings, the tendency of the translations is to make them disappear, with the result that the reader does not know that

the reference is to a sexual minority (also in the two references in Chronicles and one in 1 Samuel. The prejudices of the translators, especially in Kings, thus leave a large number of eunuchs (sexual minorities) as “disappeared”; → Mathew 19:12 and literature cited.

- 1 Sam. 8:15. Samuel prophesies that Israelite kings would have eunuchs and slaves.
- 1 Kings 22:9 // 2 Chron. 18:8. Ahab calls a eunuch (close to him) to bring the prophet Micaiah.
- 2 Kings 8:6. The king of Israel assigns a eunuch to the case of the woman (land restored; Elisha).
- 2 Kings 9:32. Jehu commands and two or three eunuchs throw Jezebel from the window.
- 2 Kings 18:17. Sennacherib sends three officials (gentiles); the second is a eunuch (NRSVSB note).
- 2 Kings 20:18. *Isaiah to Hezekiah: some of your sons shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.*
- 2 Kings 23:11. *Josiah’s reformation: a eunuch has a room in the temple (→ Deut. 23:1!).*
- 2 Kings 24:12, 15. King Jehoiachin with his eunuchs and slaves are exiled to Babylonia (598 BC).
- 2 Kings 25:9. Nebuzaradan, servant of King Nebuchadnezzar, burns the temple.
- 1 Chronicles 28:1. David convenes the eunuchs of the palace, among others, to explain his plans for the construction of the temple (were they the architects?).

See *Obadiah*, palace administrator (eunuch / single?); Ahab sends him on a mission (1 Kings 18:1-15).

3.5 Male prostitutes (*qadesh*, not “sodomites”) in the temple (→ Deut. 23:17-18). In addition to the Sodom story in Genesis 19, the laws in Deuteronomy 23:17-18 mislead the reader to believe that they condemn “sodomites” as sinners, since older translations, such as the King James Version, mistranslate *qadesh* as “sodomite”. The same error is repeated in 1 Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46, 2 Kings 23:7 and Job 36:14. People who use exclusively such old translations easily suppose that the Hebrew Scriptures contain six condemnations of “sodomites”, although the original Hebrew spoke only of *qadeshim* (“consecrated” male prostitutes), without referring to their sexual orientation.

- 17 There must be no female sacred prostitute (*qedeshah*) among the women of Israel, and no male sacred prostitute (*qadesh*; cf. King James Version, “sodomite”) among the men of Israel.
- 18 You must not bring the wages of a female prostitute (*zonah*) nor the earnings of a ‘dog’ (*keleb*) to the house of Yahweh your God, whatsoever vow you may have made: both are detestable to Yahweh your God (Deut. 23:17-18).

The New Jerusalem Bible note f. on Deut. 23:19 points out: “Sacred prostitution was a feature of Canaanite religion, compare Baal of Peor, Numbers 25, and had affected Israel, 1 Kings 14:24; 22:47; 2 Kings 23:7; Hos. 4:14. ‘Dog’ is an opprobrious term for male prostitute”—without anachronistically importing our modern concept of sexual orientation.

Some modern investigators question whether the Bible is accurate when it portrays the prostitution referred to as cultic rather than secular.³⁵ However, such doubts, even if confirmed, would not undermine the fact that older versions blatantly mistranslated a Hebrew term for prostitution as “sodomite.” Thus, in **2 Kings 23:7** we read how in King Josiah’s reformation, he commanded the high priest Hilkiah to break down “the houses of the **male temple prostitutes** that were in the house of the LORD, where the women did the weaving for Asherah” (see similarly, 1 Kings 14:24 with NRSV note; 15:12; 22:46). **Job 36:14** says “They die in their youth / and their life ends in *shame*” (NRSV, note a: “Heb *ends among the temple prostitutes*”; cf. KJV, “sodomites”).

The Hebrew Bible often warns Israelite youth and men to abstain from sexual relations with prostitutes (→ Proverbs). However, no one would dream of misinterpreting such texts as divine condemnations of “heterosexuality” —although this is precisely the error of those who seek to find in the six references to “male cultic prostitutes” (mistranslated as sodomites”) a condemnation of “homosexuality.” Thankfully, all modern translations correct this grave error and make clear that the six texts refer specifically to “prostitutes,” not to “sodomites”, “homosexuals” or “heterosexuals” (see “temple prostitute”, NRSV; “temple prostitute...female prostitute...male prostitute”, NIV; “sacred prostitute...sacred prostitute...prostitute...dog,” NJB).

Many only want to ask if any text in the Bible condemns all persons of a homosexual orientation or those who have homoerotic sexual relations in whatever form (most recently, Robert Gagnon).³⁶ More revealing questions would focus on *homophobia* instead of homosexuality: Is there evidence of *homophobic and heterosexist prejudices* in the translations and traditional interpretations of the Scriptures? How have heterosexist and homophobic prejudices distorted the translations and interpretations of the Bible? → Jude; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:10. And how have we used the Bible as an excuse to practice discrimination, oppression and violence against sexual minorities instead of manifesting to them God’s love and inviting them to participate in inclusive communities? What would people of heterosexual orientation say if the references in the Bible to “pagan cultic prostitutes” were translated as “heterosexuals”?

3.6 Two prostitutes (*zonoth*), single mothers, and King Solomon, 1 Kings 3:16-28; → Rahab in **Joshua**. As Elaine Goodfriend points out,³⁷ the narrative concerning two mothers who appeal to Solomon in their fight over their two baby sons, one dead and one alive, has several functions:

- to illustrate the faithfulness of Yahweh in answering the king’s prayer, giving him exceptional wisdom to govern the people with justice;
- to demonstrate that the divine wisdom given to Solomon implies that justice reaches even to the most marginalized sectors of Israelite society;
- to demonstrate the character of one of the mothers (probably the first, who presented the complaint) as a woman of profound compassion (*rakhamim*, from the Hebrew *rekhem*, womb) and a spontaneous disposition to sacrifice personal interests in order to save the life of her child.

In addition, the account reveals a tolerance and respect for the rights of prostitutes, evident in many texts of the Bible but almost never seen in institutionalized religion (→ Rahab in Joshua, Matthew, Luke, Hebrews, James). Both churches and Western society have had the policy of

punishing prostitutes as being guilty of crimes, without condemning the men who exploit them (→ 1 Corinthians 5, where Paul blames the Christian men who visit prostitutes). The two prostitutes in this narrative could be lesbians rejected by their families since they live together, but this probably is for economic necessity. At any rate, they illustrate well the multiple identities of many people since they are *women*, are *poor* and are a type of *sexual minority*. When churches receive divine wisdom, instead of ignoring the poor, maintaining women in an inferior status and promoting injustice, oppression and violence against sexual minorities, they will follow the good example of King Solomon (→ Psalm 72, “of Solomon”).

3.7 Two cannibalistic mothers, during a siege and hunger in Samaria, appeal to the king (2 Kings 6:24-31; see cannibalism in Lev. 26:29 and Jer. 19:9). A great deal of modern political effort pretends to defend “family values,” but defenders start from the presupposition that the traditional heterosexual family is holy, good and just and that in order to defend and strengthen it, it is necessary to prescribe laws which discriminate and punish sexual minorities. This narrative could help such families to consider “the log in one’s own eye” (Mat. 7:3-5), since

- they seek to protect children from supposed abuse by gay men when almost all child abuse occurs within the family and the guilty ones are members of the same family (fathers and mothers, brothers – see the son of David who rapes his half-sister (Amnon and Tamar, 2 Samuel 13);
- they chastise single mothers with their children, even though many are in impossible situations because they have been abandoned by irresponsible husbands who remain without legal punishment;
- they endeavor to prohibit gays and lesbians from marrying, while condemning them for supposed “promiscuity”.

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Endnotes

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- ¹ De Vries 1985/2004; Nelson 1981; 1987; Provan 1995; O'Brien y Campbell 1999. NJB Introduction, 243-44
- ² Pleins 2001:112, citando TDOT, *ish*, 233-35
- ³ Brueggemann 2000; Walsh 1996; Cohn 2000
- ⁴ Robert Cohn 2000:92
- ⁵ Pleins 2000:105-111, 152, nota 29.
- ⁶ Steven Tuell 2001:122-123; ver Walter Brueggemann (2000:59); Gottwald HB 1985:322; Jerome Walsh 1996:100-01, 122-125).
- ⁷ White, Marsha (2000:398)
- ⁸ David Pleins 2001:112-113
- ⁹ Pleins 2001:115.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Walter Brueggemann 2000:209.
- ¹³ (Hanks 1982/83; Pons 1981; Kim 1981)
- ¹⁴ Camp 1998:103; David Pleins 2001:115-119, "Women in DH"
- ¹⁵ Jobling 1998:181-184
- ¹⁶ Claudia Camp 1998:103
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 1998:103.
- ¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann 2000:32; Linda Schearing, "Queen". ABD V [1992], 583-586).
- ¹⁹ Claudia Camp 1998:104-05
- ²⁰ Kolakowski 2000:105, citing the interpretation of Dana Nolan Fewell and David Gunn; see also 108.
- ²¹ Saul Olyan 1988; Claudia Camp 1998:103; Steven Holloway 1992:79-80
- ²² Adele Berlin (WS, 2001:271-272
- ²³ Claudia Camp 2001 WS:96
- ²⁴ Ibid., 2000:549.
- ²⁵ See Deirdre Good WBC 1998:475-81; Dianne Bergant "Canon", DFT 1996:35-36
- ²⁶ Williams 402; Japhet 1030
- ²⁷ H. P. Müller (1998), *nabi'* (Prophet), TDOT IX, 129-150, esp. 142-143; NISB and HCSB, 1 Kings 20:35 and 2 Kings 2:3 notes; NJB 2 Kings 2:3 note c .
- ²⁸ David Pleins (2001:111-115.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 111.
- ³⁰ Pleins 113, citing I. M. Lewis
- ³¹ Walter Williams 1986.
- ³² ABD 5:483
- ³³ Concerning prophetic ecstasy see 1 Sam. 10:5-6, 19, 11-12; 19:20, 24; 1 Kings 22:12.
- ³⁴ Marsha White, 2000:398
- ³⁵ See "Prostitution" and "Cultic Prostitution" in The Anchor Bible Dictionary, New York: Doubleday, 1992, V:505-513, esp. 507-509; → Joshua, Rahab.
- ³⁶ Robert Gagnon 2001
- ³⁷ Elaine Goodfriend (*Women in Scripture*, 2001:268-269