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1 Kings

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Book Overview - 1 Kings

by *Arend Remmers*

1. Author and Time of Writing

The two books of Kings originally formed one book only in the Hebrew Bible. The translators of the Septuagint introduced the separation into two books and this separation was made also in the Vulgate. In the Hebrew manuscripts of the OT the division into two books first appeared in the 15th century. It was first used in a Hebrew print of the Bible by Daniel Bomberg. The two books of Kings are called the 3rd and 4th book of Kings in the Septuagint as well as the Vulgate.

The author of the two books is not mentioned. According to Jewish tradition in the Talmud the author was the prophet Jeremiah. It is remarkable to see the text of 2 Kings 24:18-20 nearly repeated word by word in Jeremiah 52.

Strikingly Jeremiah's name does not appear in the descriptions of the lives of king Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, whereas Isaiah and other prophets who lived before this time are mentioned.

In various places reference is made to books, which contain more about the life of the king in question on which the writer may have based his accounts on. Reference is made for example to the book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41), then several times to the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:19; 2 Kings 15:31) and to the book of the chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings 14:29; 2 Kings 24:5). Besides that the record of the life of Hezekiah or Isaiah 36; Isaiah 37; Isaiah 38; Isaiah 39 is to a large extent rendered in 2 Kings 18; 2 Kings 19; 2 Kings 20. The author of the books of Kings was able to use these "references" under the guidance of the Holy Spirit while writing his godly inspired work.

The events recorded in the two books of Kings embrace the time of the last days of David (around 970 BC) down to the 37th year of Jehoiachin's captivity in Babel (around 561 BC). This period covers around 400 years. The composition of the books of Kings therefore can at the earliest have been written or concluded during the Babylonian captivity.

2. Purpose of Writing

The two books of Kings form the chronological sequence of the history of the people of Israel in Canaan in the sequence Joshua, Judges, First and Second Samuel. The description of the kingdoms in Israel (which was started in the books of Samuel) is carried on to the Babylonian captivity. The

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books of Kings tell us more about the ten tribes (Israel) while the second book of Chronicles tells us more about the history of the two tribes (Judah).

After David's death Solomon (hebr. "peace") is the new king in Israel. He is a type of Christ, who is the true king of peace. Together David and Solomon portray Christ in His rejection and in the following glorious reign of peace. After the death of Solomon the kingdom of Israel is divided into two parts. In the north of Palestine arises the ten-tribe-kingdom (Israel) under Jeroboam and in the southern part remain the two tribes Judah and Benjamin with the capital Jerusalem (Judah) under the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon.

The history of the 19 kings each over Israel and Judah (without queen Athalia) is the report of the second decline of the people of God. After Israel's salvation out of Egypt and its introduction into Canaan under Moses, Aaron and Joshua, the people declined the more and more from God despite of priesthood and the office of judges. By introducing the kingdom under David God made a new beginning with His people but after a short time the decline started again. The first period ended with the people's rejection of Jehovah (1 Samuel 8:7) and in the second period Israel had to be rejected of God (2 Chronicles 36:16).

God repeatedly sent prophets to the people who tried to bring them back to the Lord. Amongst the prophets Elijah, Elisha and Isaiah ought to be mentioned especially. Elijah was the prophet of judgment and eight miracles are reported of him. Elisha was the prophet of grace and 16 miracles are reported. Isaiah was the prophet of the Messiah. The expression "man of God" appears over 50 times in the books of Kings. This is why the two books bear especially a *prophetic* character while the books of Chronicles have a priestly character.

God's judgment on all 19 kings of the northern ten - tribe - kingdom was "he did evil in the sight of the Lord". Amongst the kings of Judah a few were faithful to Jehovah, especially Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. The revivals among the people of God led by these kings may be compared to the revivals in Christendom (e.g. reformation in the 18th/19th century).

3. Peculiarities

a) Stone of Moabites (2 Kings 3)

In 1868 the German missionary Klein found a stone in Dibon (a town in Moab, East-Jordan land) with the inscription of Mesa, king of Moabites (compare 2 Kings 3). On this stone Mesa recorded in ancient Hebrew letters his disputes with King Jehoram of Israel. This stone dating to the time 840 BC is probably the most ancient extra biblical written testimony for the absolute correctness of the Old Testament accounts on historical facts. (This stone can now be seen in the Louvre, Paris.)

b) The Kings of Israel and Judah after the Division of the Kingdoms

Kings of Israel	Time of Reign BC	Kings of Judah	Time of Reign BC	Other Kingdoms
Jeroboam I.	931-910	Rehoboam	931-913	Shishak (Egypt), around 924
Nadab	910-909	Abijam or Abijah	913-911	
Baasha	909-886	Asa	911-870	Benhadad I. (Syria), around 900
Elah	886-885			
Zimri	885			
Omri	885-874			
Ahab	874-853	Jehoshaphat*	872-848	
Ahaziah	853-852			Shalmaneser III. (Assyria) 859-824
Jehoram	852-841	Jehoram	848-841	

Jehu	841-814	Ahaziah	841	
		Athaliah	841-835	
Jehoahaz	814-798	Joash or Jehoash	835-796	
Jehoash or Joash	798-782	Amaziah	796-767	Benhadad II. (Syria) 796-770
Jeroboam II.*	793-753	Azariah* or Uzziah	791-740	
Zachariah	753-752			
Shallum	752			
Menahem	752-742	Jotham*	750-732 (751-735)	Tiglath-Pileser III. (Assyria) 745-727
Pekahiah	742-740			
Pekah*	740-732 (752-732)	Ahaz	735-716 (742-726)	Shalmaneser V. (Assyria) 727-722
Hoshea	732-722	Hezekiah	716-687 (728-697)	Sargon II. (Assyria) 722-705
Israel carried into Assyrian captivity	722/721	Manasseh*	697-642	Sennacherib (Assyria) 704-681
		Amon	642-640	Esarhaddon (Assyria) 680-669
		Josiah	640-609	
		Jehoahaz	609	Nebuchadnezzar (Babylon) 605-562
		Jehoiakim	609-598	First Captivity to Babylon 605
		Jehoiachin	598-597	Second Captivity to Babylon 597
		Zedekiah	597-586	Third Captivity to Babylon 586

Jerusalem taken and
destroyed 586

* =Co-regent with predecessor or successor

() = The years in brackets give alternative calculations.

c) Origin of the Samaritans (2 Kings 17)

After bringing the ten tribes of Israel into Assyrian captivity in the year 722 BC the King of Assyria brought foreign people into Israel and let them live in the towns of Samaria (2 Kings 17:24 f). They apparently mixed with the remaining Israelites and remained faithful to their idol worship. By order of the Assyrian king one of the captured priests of Israel was brought back to point the heathen resettler to Jehovah.

But they would not give up their own idols but retained the character of a mixed people ('mixed multitude', Exodus 12:38). Later the Samaritans built an own sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and took over the Pentateuch as binding Holy Scripture.

After the Babylonian Captivity the Samaritans would have liked to help rebuilding the temple but the Jews refused their help (Ezra 4:2-3). The refusal and enmity between Jews and Samaritans is also apparent in the gospels of the NT.

Until the very day about 400 "Samaritans" remain living around Nablus (actual Arabic name for the old Shechem).

4. Overview of Contents

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II. 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 17 : The Divided Kingdom

Chapter	12	The Division of the Kingdom under Rehoboam and Jeroboam
Chapter	13	The Man of God out of Judah and the Prophet of Bethel
Chapter	14	Reign of Jeroboam and Rehoboam
Chapter	15	Reign of Abijam and Asa in Judah Reign of Nadab and Baasha in Israel
Chapter	16	Reign of Elah, Zimri, Omri and Ahab in Israel
Chapter	17	Elijah by the Brook Cherith and at the Widow in Zarephath (compare Luke 4:25-26)

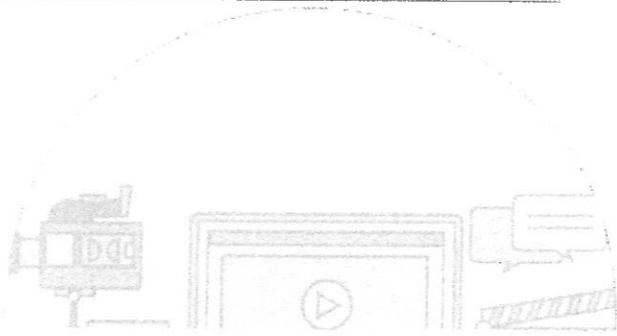
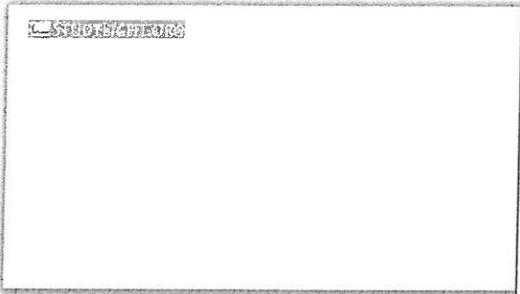
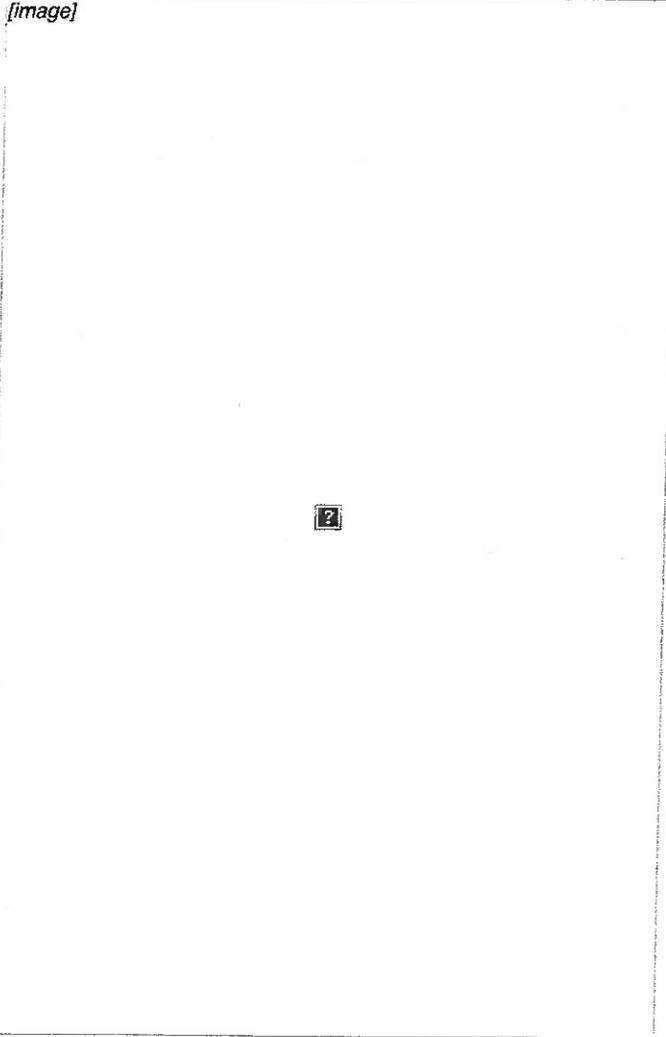
- Chapter 18 Elijah on Mount Carmel
- Chapter 19 Elijah on Mount Horeb
- Chapter 20 Ahab's Battles against Syria
- Chapter 21 Ahab and Naboth's Vineyard
- Chapter 22 Ahab's last Battle against Syria and his Death

The Divided Kingdom (Israel and Judah)

(The names of places on this map are given in the German spelling - however, most of those should be recognisable..., perhaps except for:

[image]

Totes Meer = Dead Sea, and Mittelmeer = Mediterranean).





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