

Lecture 17: The Divided Monarchy; Tales of the Prophets.

Reading:

The Northern kingdom:

- 1 Kings 12 (rebellion of Jeroboam; golden calves at Dan and Bethel);
- 1 Kings 13:1-10, 33-34 (man of God confronts Jeroboam);
- 1 Kings 14 (Ahiah the Shilonite announces doom to Mrs Jeroboam; Shishak king of Egypt attacks Rehoboam);
- 1 Kings 18 (confrontation between Elijah and priests of Baal on Mt Carmel);
- 1 Kings 21 (Naboth the Jezreelite; Elijah forecasts doom to Jezebel and Ahab);
- 2 Kings 2 (death of Elijah; succeeded by Elisha);
- 2 Kings 4 (miracles of Elisha);
- 2 Kings 14:23-29 (prosperous reign of Jeroboam II);
- 2 Kings 17:1-23 (downfall of the northern kingdom, 721 BCE; reflections of Dtr);

The Southern kingdom:

- 2 Kings 18:1-16 (good king Hezekiah; forced to pay tribute to Assyria);
- 2 Kings 18:17-19:37 (the Assyrians threaten J'lm and insult the Lord; prophecy of Isaiah, prayer of Hezekiah; deliverance of J'lm);
- 2 Kings 20 (illness of Hezekiah; Hezekiah and the emissaries of Babylon);
- 2 Kings 21 (reign and sins of Manasseh; doom for J'lm);
- 2 Kings 22-23 (good king Josiah; cleansing of the temple; God's fury endures);

Kugel 519-535.

Consider:

- According to the book of Kings what caused the downfall of the northern kingdom?
- How did Jerusalem escape capture by the Assyrians – or did it?
- Why in the end did Jerusalem fall to the Babylonians?
- How would you characterize Elijah and Elisha – what kind of “prophets” are they?

Two topics today:

- Divided monarchy; the historiography of Dtr;
- Tales of the Prophets;

The divided monarchy; the historiography of Dtr.

The Deuteronomistic narrative:

- David founded a divinely approved royal dynasty; his son Solomon built the divinely approved temple;

- Reign of Solomon: height of fame, power, glory, wisdom (marries daughter of Pharaoh; Queen of Sheba; “cut the baby in half!”);
- After Solomon’s death the kingdom split in two: Jeroboam in the north (chief tribe is Ephraim), Rehoboam continuing the Davidic dynasty in the south (chief tribe is Judah);
- The narrator explains the split on both theological and sociological grounds: punishment for sin of idolatry and result of the foolish policy of Rehoboam;
 - ♦ Modern scholars argue that the split was caused by a host of political /social factors; not clear how united the monarchy ever was;
 - ★ Even under David there were rebellions and unrest; Absalom;
 - ♦ Solomon: oppressive taxation, corvée, maladministration;
 - ♦ Northerners resist dynastic pretensions; northerners never establish a dynasty; longest dynastic reign in northern kingdom is only four generations (house of Yehu) (southern kingdom 16+);
 - ♦ Northerners resist idea of temple; Bethel and Dan seem to have been altar shrines, rather than temples;
- Although the split was divinely ordained and is punishment for Solomon’s sin, according to Dtr the northern kingdom was inherently sinful (“sin of Jeroboam”), when Jeroboam set up two altars and golden calves in Bethel and Dan, thus rejecting the Deuteronomic ideal of one temple for the one God;
- in addition Dtr frequently accuses the northern kingdom of idolatry (worship of foreign gods, notably Baal), thus rejecting the Deuteronomic ideal of monolatry.
 - ♦ MBS: Jeroboam and his successors did not see themselves as sinners;
 - ♦ Dtr applying criteria that are either anachronistic or debated within the Israelite community;
- Deuteronomic cover-up! long and prosperous reign of Jeroboam II (786-746).

Southern kingdom:

- Some kings were righteous (notably Hezekiah and Josiah), but most were not, because “the high places were not removed.” Worst idolater was Manasseh (687-642) (although he also reigned the longest!!);
- God protects his city, king, and temple: Hezekiah:
 - ♦ 2 Kings 18:14-16 Hezekiah must pay tribute to the king of Assyria (confirmed by Assyrian records);
 - ♦ miraculous story (historicity much debated by MBS) that follows explains why Jerusalem did not fall to the Assyrians;
 - ♦ Arrogance of the Assyrians explains why God has to see to it that they fail (Isaiah); cf. Isaiah 10;

- ♦ Manasseh idolatry might perhaps be explained as Assyrian loyalty (cf. Ahaz 2 Kings 16:10-18) or perhaps seeking more divine protection against the Assyrians (cf. Jeremiah 44:15ff);
- ♦ Remember: Assyrian treaty forms in Deuteronomy.

Dtr: in both kingdoms the effects of sin carry through the generations:

- The northern kingdom falls because of the sin of Jeroboam;
- The southern kingdom falls because of the sin of Manasseh;

Tales of the prophets: Elijah and Elisha.

- Cycle of prophet stories squeezed awkwardly in the narrative;
- Elijah and Elisha: non-literary prophets, primarily holy men, miracle-workers;
- Some duplication in Elijah / Elisha stories; model for some Jesus stories;
- There are prophets everywhere in society, both of God (1 Kings 18:4) and of Baal at court (1 Kings 18:19);
- *Bene ha neviim*, “the sons of the prophets”, better “members of prophetic guilds” (2 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 4:1,38 etc.);
- Elisha just a miracle worker; no moral or ethical content (except Naaman story 2 K 5:15 “now I know that there is no God in all the land except in Israel”);
- In contrast Elijah anticipates literary prophecy in two dramatic stories:
 - ♦ 1 Kings 18: YHWH vs Baal:
 - ★ Which god can send fire and rain?
 - ★ Contest of gods also in Exodus narrative.
 - ♦ 1 Kings 21: Naboth: social justice;
 - ♦ In both stories Elijah speaks truth to power like the literary prophets: confronts the king, the queen, the priests of Baal (all 450 of them!).