

*New Beacon Bible Commentary



1 & 2 KINGS
A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition

Karen Strand Winslow



BEACON HILL PRESS
OF KANSAS CITY

Copyright 2017 by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City

Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City
PO Box 419527
Kansas City, MO 64141
www.BeaconHillBooks.com

ISBN 978-0-8341-3561-1

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Cover Design: J.R. Caines
Interior Design: Sharon Page

Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotations are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*® (NIV®). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Emphasis indicated by underlining in boldface quotations and italic in lightface quotations.

The following version of Scripture is in the public domain:

The King James Version of the Bible (KJV).

The following copyrighted versions of Scripture are used by permission:

The *New JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* (NJPS), © 2000 by The Jewish Publication Society. All rights reserved.

The *New Revised Standard Version Bible* (NRSV), copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. All rights reserved. Emphasis indicated by italic.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Winslow, Karen Strand, 1952- author.

Title: 1 & 2 Kings / Karen Strand Winslow.

Other titles: First and Second Kings

Description: Kansas City, MO : Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2017. |

Series: New Beacon Bible commentary | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016058162 | ISBN 9780834135611 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible. Kings—Commentaries.

Classification: LCC BS1335.53 .W56 2017 | DDC 222/.507—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016058162>

The Internet addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers in this book are accurate at the time of publication. They are provided as a resource. Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City does not endorse them or vouch for their content or permanence.

CONTENTS

<i>General Editors' Preface</i>	11
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	13
<i>Abbreviations</i>	15
<i>Bibliography</i>	19
<i>Table of Sidebars</i>	23
<i>Maps</i>	23
INTRODUCTION	25
A. Overview of Content	25
B. Authorship, Sources, Date, Provenance, Audience, Occasion, Purpose, Sociological/Cultural Issues, Textual History	27
C. History and Geography of the Period	29
D. Geography, Settlement Patterns, Statehood and Extent of Israel's Boundaries according to the Biblical and Extrabiblical Texts and Archaeology	32
1. Geography and Settlement of the Land	32
2. The Extent of Jerusalem's Domination according to Archaeologists	35
3. Using the Bible with Archaeology	39
4. Inscriptions	39
E. Genre, Structure, Literary Outline	40
F. Theological Themes	41
G. Hebrew Text Traditions	43
COMMENTARY	45
<i>THE BOOK OF FIRST KINGS</i>	45
I. SOLOMON'S ASCENSION AND REIGN: THIRD AND LAST KING IN THE UNITED MONARCHY; SETTING: JERUSALEM: 1 KINGS 1:1—11:43	45
A. Solomon Ascends to the Throne of David (1:1-53)	47
1. Abishag Attends to a Dying David (1:1-4)	49
2. Adonijah "Assumes" the Throne (1:5-10)	50
3. Nathan and Bathsheba Persuade David to Name Solomon King (1:11-40)	52
4. Adonijah Responds to Solomon's Accession (1:41-53)	54

B. Solomon Eliminates His Opponents (2:1-46)	56
1. David Orders Solomon to Keep the Law and to Avenge Him (2:1-12)	57
2. Bathsheba Requests Abishag for Adonijah's Wife (2:13-25)	61
3. Solomon Establishes His Reign (2:26-46)	61
C. Solomon Expands Israel (3—11)	65
1. Solomon Marries and Asks Yahweh for Wisdom (3:1-15)	67
2. Solomon Displays His Wisdom to All Israel (3:16-28)	70
3. Solomon Adds Officials, Land, Wealth, and Honor (4:1-34 [4:1—5:14 HB])	71
4. Solomon Builds a Temple for Yahweh (5:1—6:38 [5:15—6:38 HB])	73
5. Solomon Builds Royal Houses (7:1-12)	78
6. Solomon Completes the Temple (7:13-51)	79
7. Solomon Dedicates the Temple of Yahweh (8:1-66)	82
8. Yahweh Warns Solomon of Covenant Conditions (9:1-9)	92
9. Solomon Repays Hiram of Tyre (9:10-14)	94
10. Solomon Enslaves Canaanites for His Building Projects and Hires Israelites as Soldiers and Foremen (9:15-28)	95
11. Solomon Parades Wisdom and Wealth to the Queen of Sheba (10:1-13)	99
12. Solomon Acquires Silver, Gold, and Horses from Egypt (10:14-29)	101
13. Solomon Worships Other Gods and Yahweh Responds (11:1-13)	103
14. Yahweh Raises Adversaries against Solomon (11:14-25)	107
15. Ahijah Promises Jeroboam an Enduring Covenant with Conditions (11:26-40)	108
16. Solomon Dies and Is Buried (11:41-43)	109
II. THE DIVIDED MONARCHY AND FALL OF ISRAEL: I KINGS 12:1—2 KINGS 17:41	111
A. Jeroboam Becomes King over the Tribes of Israel (12:1—14:20)	111
1. Israel Requests a Lighter Yoke but Rehoboam Promises a Heavier Yoke (12:1-11)	113
2. Israel Rebels and Makes Jeroboam King (12:12-24)	114
3. Jeroboam Builds Two Golden Calves to Keep Israel from Jerusalem (12:25-33)	116
4. The Man of God Prophesies against Jeroboam's Apostasy (13:1-34)	119
5. Ahijah Prophesies against Jeroboam's Dynasty (14:1-20)	123
B. Kings of Judah and Israel (14:21—16:28)	127
1. Rehoboam, Abijam, Asa Rule Judah (14:21—15:24)	127
2. Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri Rule Israel (15:25—16:28)	132

C. Ahab's Apostasy and Elijah's Prophecy (16:29—22:53 [22:54 HB])	136
1. Ahab Marries Jezebel and Establishes Baal Worship (16:29-34)	140
2. Elijah Predicts Drought and Revives the Widow's Son (17:1-24)	140
3. Elijah Reveals the Power of Yahweh and Anoints Elisha (18:1—19:21)	143
4. Ahab Defeats the Arameans (20:1-43)	152
5. Jezebel Murders Naboth and Gives His Vineyard to Ahab (21:1-29)	154
6. Ahab Wars with the Arameans and Dies (22:1-40)	157
7. Jehoshaphat Rules Judah and Ahaziah Rules Israel (22:41-53 [41-54 HB])	161

THE BOOK OF SECOND KINGS 165

D. Prophetic Ministries of Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs 1:1—13:24)	165
1. Elijah Denounces Ahaziah before Ascending to Heaven (1:1—2:12)	165
a. Elijah Denounces Ahaziah (1:1-18)	165
b. Elijah Ascends to Heaven (2:1-12)	167
2. Elisha Dons the Mantle of Elijah, Helps Prophets and Mothers, Confronts and Replaces Kings (2:13—9:13)	169
a. Elijah's Authority Resides in Elisha (2:13-25)	169
b. The Revolt of Moab (3:1-27)	171
c. The Destitute Widow (4:1-7)	174
d. The Shunammite and Her Son (4:8-44)	175
e. The Healing of Naaman, the Aramean (5:1-27)	178
f. The Lost Ax Head (6:1-7)	185
g. Chariots of Fire (6:8-23)	186
h. Famine in Israel Caused by Ben-Hadad's Final Siege (6:24—7:20)	188
i. Restoration of the Shunammite's Land (8:1-6)	193
j. The Murder of Ben-Hadad (8:7-15)	194
k. The Kings of Judah, Jehoram and Ahaziah (8:16-29)	197
l. Jehu Anointed King of Israel (9:1-13)	199
3. Jehu Slaughters Ahab's Family, Judah's Royalty, and Baal Worshippers (9:14—10:36)	201
4. Athaliah Murders Her Grandsons and Claims the Throne of Judah for Six Years (11:1-21 [1—12:1 HB])	209
5. Joash of Judah Repairs the Temple (12:1-21 [2-22 HB])	213
6. Elisha Dies after Prophesying Limited Victory for Israel over Aram (13:1-25)	215
E. The Dynasties of Israel and Judah until Assyria Invades (14:1—17:41)	219
1. Judah Has a Few Good Kings (14:1-22; 15:1-7, 32-38); Israel's Kings Follow in the Sins of Jeroboam (14:23-29; 15:8-31)	220
a. Amaziah's Reign in Judah (14:1-22)	220
b. Jeroboam II's Reign in Israel (14:23-29)	223

c. Azariah's Reign in Judah (15:1-7)	224
d. The Reigns of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah of Israel (15:8-31)	225
e. The Reign of Jotham in Judah (15:32-38)	227
2. King Ahaz of Judah Alters the Altar after Submitting to Assyria (16:1-20)	227
3. Assyria Captures Samaria and Deports Israelites (17:1-6)	230
4. Israel Is Destroyed for Sinning against Yahweh Their God and Ignoring His Prophets (17:7-23)	232
5. Assyria Resettles Israel with Other Captives, and Syncretism Prevails (17:24-41)	234
III. JUDAH TO THE BABYLONIAN EXILE: 2 KINGS	
18:1—25:30	239
A. Hezekiah Serves Yahweh and Is Besieged by Assyria (18:1—20:21)	241
1. Hezekiah Ascends to the Throne of Judah and Does Right like David His Father (18:1-8)	241
2. Assyria Captures and Exiles Israel (18:9-12)	243
3. Yahweh Delivers Jerusalem from Assyria (18:13—19:37)	243
4. Yahweh Heals Hezekiah (20:1-11)	248
5. Hezekiah Receives Babylonian Envoys; Isaiah Responds (20:12-21)	250
B. Manasseh and Amon Abandon Yahweh and Rebuild the Local Shrines (21:1-26)	251
C. Josiah Reforms Judah according to the Book of the Law (22:1—23:30)	256
1. Josiah Hears the Words of Yahweh (22:1-20)	258
2. Josiah Responds to the Words of Yahweh (23:1-30)	261
D. Egypt Controls Judah (23:31-37)	271
E. Babylon Takes Exiles, Overruns Judah, and Razes Jerusalem (24:1—25:30)	272
1. Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin Face Nebuchadnezzar (24:1-17)	274
2. Zedekiah Rebels and Jerusalem Falls to Babylon (24:18—25:21)	277
3. The Aftermath of Judah's Exile to Babylon (25:22-30)	281
a. From Gedaliah to the Flight to Egypt (25:22-26)	281
b. Epilogue (25:27-30)	282

COMMENTARY

THE BOOK OF FIRST KINGS

I. SOLOMON'S ASCENSION AND REIGN: THIRD AND LAST KING IN THE UNITED MONARCHY; SETTING: JERUSALEM: I KINGS 1:1—11:43

I
KINGS

1:1—
11:43

OVERVIEW

We learn in 2 Sam 12:24 that Solomon was the second son of Bathsheba and David, the first, the son of David's adultery, having died as a newborn (vv 15-23). Yahweh loved Solomon, naming him Jedidiah, as he conveyed to Nathan the prophet (v 25). Nonetheless, this son is always called "Solomon" (Hebrew: *Shlomo* [šĕlōmō] from *Shalom* [šālōm]), man of peace, the name his mother and/or father gave him (NIV: "they"; in the Hebrew text, the read version is "she called him," while the written is "he called him" [v 24]). The traditional Hebrew text, which is used as a basis for translation (along with several versions of the Greek text [LXX]) is called the Masoretic Text (MT). The MT records the ancient practice of reading the Scriptures aloud to the congregation by the vowels placed under the consonants and notes in the margin. "She called" is in the margin here. The read version is usually the more traditional, known text because the written version could have been miscopied or intentionally changed (as is probably the case here).

The story of Solomon's reign begins in 1 Kgs 1 when his older brother, Adonijah, who assumed he would be king, held a great feast and did not invite Solomon. At the urgent prompting of Nathan and Bathsheba, a failing David named Solomon king and ordered him to kill men against whom David held grievances. Before doing so, Solomon killed his brother Adonijah (ch 2) and thus he began his "peaceful" reign violently.

Solomon married the daughter of the king of Egypt before asking Yahweh for wisdom at the high place of Gibeon (ch 3). Pleased with this request, God also promised riches and honor. The remainder of this narrative section outlines Solomon's administration, the extent and wealth of his empire, his alliances with other nations, his fame as a wise man, conscripting laborers from Israel and Syria, building his home, then erecting and dedicating the temple to Yahweh (chs 4—8).

After these things, Yahweh appeared again to Solomon, reminding him of covenant obligations and promises (ch 9). Solomon continued building, using forced labor from Israel and slaves from other nations (ch 9). The visit from the Queen of Sheba and another report of Solomon acquiring horses and chariots from Egypt (ch 10) emphasize his fame as a wise and wealthy ruler, who was also ignoring Yahweh's requirements for a king of Israel (Deut 17:14-17).

The narrator seems to favor Solomon's achievements until the all-important summary of Solomon's reign in 1 Kgs 11. This sharply accuses Solomon of apostasy before prophesying adversaries during his lifetime and a divided kingdom after his death. However, a closer reading shows that throughout chs 3—11, the author retains a tone of cool judgment, peppered with qualified praise. By describing Solomon's marriage to an Egyptian, acquiring horses from Egypt, instituting forced labor, building his own house in twice the time it took to build Yahweh's house, and amassing great wealth, the storyteller has implicated Solomon as a king who failed to keep the statutes for a king of Israel set forth in Deut 17:14-17. Thus, even before his foreign wives "turned his heart after other gods" (1 Kgs 11:4), we notice a third king of Israel who began his reign in humility, increased in prowess, and then set himself outside of the covenant laws of Yahweh. In this way Solomon's reign is comparable to those of Saul (1 Sam 9—10; 13—31) and David (1 Sam 16—17; 2 Sam 11—12).

As noted in the Introduction, scholars posit multiple redactions of Kings that may explain differences in authorial perspectives on Solomon throughout these chapters. However, in chs 3—11 the narrator (final redactor) is circumspectly progressing toward ch 11 (where his overtly disappointed stance is similar to that found in Neh 13:26). God's appearances to Solomon in 1 Kgs 3 and 9, and the notice that Yahweh loved him (2 Sam 12:24) make Solomon's apostasy all the more egregious. "The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice" (1 Kgs 11:9).

Furthermore, Solomon's turning away from the law of God did not necessarily begin when he was old. Before we are told he loved God and walked in God's ways, we are told that he made covenants with the king of Egypt sealed by marrying Pharaoh's daughter, whom he kept in the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of Yahweh. Even the order of that statement in 1 Kgs 3:1 implies a perspective on Solomon's priorities: his own house is listed first (thirteen years to build [1 Kgs 7:1]), then Yahweh's house (seven years to build [1 Kgs 6:37]).

A. Solomon Ascends to the Throne of David (1:1-53)

BEHIND THE TEXT

Because 1 Kings continues the story of David and the establishment of a monarchy in Israel, 1 and 2 Samuel, Judges, Joshua, and Deuteronomy are all relevant to understanding 1 and 2 Kings. The early audiences of this book were aware of the traditions found in these books, as well as those about the patriarchs (1 Kgs 18:36), Moses (1 Kgs 18:4), and Horeb (1 Kgs 19).

Especially pertinent to 1 Kgs 1—11 are several Deuteronomistic passages: Deut 17:14-20 (as mentioned above), 1 Sam 8:11-18, and 2 Sam 7. In the latter, the prophet Nathan conveyed this promise to David: "The LORD himself will establish a house for you . . . I will raise up your offspring to succeed you . . . I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever . . . Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me" (2 Sam 7:11-13, 16). This raises expectations not only for David's immediate successor, Solomon, but also for a lasting Davidic dynasty. Since 1—2 Kings concludes with the throne and all Jerusalem in ruins, the unconditional nature of Yahweh's promise to David is questioned and qualified, not only in Kings and in Chronicles' subsequent retelling of the story, but in the Psalms and Latter Prophets.

As literary critics have noted, 1 Kgs 1—2 concludes the larger narrative complex that began in 2 Sam 9—20 (Eissfeldt 1965, 270, 271, 277). The intervening chapters (2 Sam 21—24), which recount incidents, songs, and people connected to David's reign, seem to interrupt an otherwise coherent document. In 1926 Leonhard Rost labeled 2 Sam 9—20 with 1 Kgs 1—2 "the Succession Narrative," because he understood it as a political document explaining how Solomon achieved the throne (DeVries 1985, 8-9). Other scholars who label this section "The Court History of David" more persuasively claim that "the theme of the end cannot be cast over the entire work, which incarnates other important meanings" (Long 1981, 79; Ackroyd 1981, 383).

The court history part I (2 Sam 9—20) features characters that reappear in 1 Kgs 1—2 to place Solomon on his father's throne. The story of an established King David in 2 Sam 9—20 is framed by the closing verses of 2

Sam 8 and 2 Sam 20, which are nearly parallel synopses of his reign over all the tribes. Second Samuel 8 ends with a summary of David's reign and a list of the king's military commanders (Joab and Benaiah), the recorder and secretary, and the priests (Zadok, David's sons, and Abiathar, son of Ahimelek [the MT reverses father and son here, but in every other place, Abiathar is called the son of Ahimelek, who is the son of Ahitub]; see 1 Sam 22:3-20; 23:6; 30:7; and 2 Sam 20:25). Second Samuel 20 concludes by listing Joab, Benaiah, Zadok, and Abiathar. This list also includes Adoram, who is in charge of forced labor, and suggests connections between David's census (2 Sam 24) and the *corvée* (forced labor), which divides the kingdom later. All of these characters named here figure prominently in the 1 Kgs 1—11 account of Solomon's accession and reign. The first three sons born to David at Hebron—Amnon, son of Ahinoam of Jezreel (1 Sam 25:43); Kileab, son of Abigail (1 Sam 25:1-42); and Absalom, son of Maakah—participate in this story by their absence, which makes Adonijah the eldest as David lay dying (see 2 Sam 3:2-5).

The court history includes the cryptic narrative about how David acquired Bathsheba (daughter of Eliam) as a wife, which is followed by Nathan's proclamation of Yahweh's verdict on David's adultery and murder of Bathsheba's husband. "Therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife" (2 Sam 12:10 NRSV; see 11:1—12:15). Second Samuel 12:24-25 reports that Solomon was conceived when David consoled Bathsheba after the death of their first son (whose death was part of the judgment against David). Nathan the prophet was sent to announce that Yahweh loved Solomon (Jedidiah). According to 2 Samuel, Solomon was Bathsheba's second son after Nathan (see 2 Sam 5:14-16), but 1 Chr 3:1-8 lists Solomon as the fourth son of Bathshua (daughter of Ammiel).

David practiced a policy of noninterference with several of his sons, if not all his children, although their violent and subversive actions disturbed him. He did not punish Amnon for raping Tamar (2 Sam 13—14). The LXX adds a reason: *because he loved him for he was his firstborn*. This led to Absalom avenging Tamar himself by killing Amnon. Compare this to Jacob in the case of Dinah's rape and the response of Simeon and Levi (Gen 34), which is like that of Absalom. Although Jacob was disturbed by Dinah's brothers' slaughter of the Hivites, he could not do anything about it after the fact. David could have, but failed to bring Absalom to justice for his murder of Amnon and sought to protect him, even when Absalom attempted to overthrow his father (2 Sam 13—18). Joab, David's military chief, killed Absalom (2 Sam 18).

The court history reports another rebellion against David, that of Sheba, which Joab and a wise woman of the northern Israelite city of Abel suppressed. In pursuit of Sheba, Joab killed Amasa, whom David had appointed as commander of the army in Joab's place (2 Sam 20:1-22). Amasa had been Absalom's military chief in the latter's conspiracy against David!

The court history does *not* include any mention of which son should rule Israel after David's death. Adonijah, David's son by Haggith, was David's oldest remaining son when 1 Kings begins. He was born in Hebron, as were his now deceased elder brothers (Amnon, Kileab, and Absalom) and younger brothers (Shephatiah and Ithream) (2 Sam 3:2-5; 1 Chr 3:2). In 1 Kgs 1:11-31, Adonijah, Nathan, and Bathsheba are center stage strategists by turn who seek to fill the throne of Israel soon to be vacated by a failing David. He had not told anyone who the next king should be.

I. Abishag Attends to a Dying David (1:1-4)

IN THE TEXT

■ **1-4** As the drama of 1 Kings opens, the lights on King David are rapidly dimming. The book begins by depicting David as very old, very cold, and impotent. *Old and well advanced in days* is a phrase used only about the childless Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:11) and Joshua (Josh 13:1; 23:1).

The pericope about Abishag, the beautiful Shunammite maiden brought by David's servants to warm him in his bed (*to be his attendant* [*sokenet*]), sets the stage for Adonijah's move. It illustrates David's advanced age and disorientation and affirms that his days of sexual potency were over. A *sokenet* is someone who benefits, profits, is useful to, or is used by another. See Ps 139:3 describing Yahweh's familiarity with the ways of the psalmist. Here David did not "know" her physically; soon we learn that he did not "know" about Adonijah's feast, interpreted as a claim to the throne.

Situated at the beginning of this story, Abishag's appearance also demonstrates the connection between David's physical prowess and his ability to rule. The king's servants saw that even a beautiful virgin could not compel the king to sexual potency, although they retained her to serve him in other ways. She will serve the conclusion of the story about Adonijah. In 2 Kings another woman from Shunem enters the narrative to sustain the prophet Elisha, providing him with a place to stay in her home (4:8-37).

The author proceeds to tell a story as a scriptwriter and comes close to providing stage directions. As readers of a script, we must not fall for the schemes of the characters as we watch their words and maneuvers. Information found in the dialogues is not giving us more details on what actually happened but is showing us the character's intentions and rhetorical skill. Rarely in Kings do we hear the narrator's take on Yahweh's or the characters' intentions, memories, or thoughts, but we can observe—as in a play—what the characters do and say and how they relay the messages they are given. When the narrator does provide commentary or judgment, we should be all the more attentive to the perspective offered.

2. Adonijah “Assumes” the Throne (1:5-10)

BEHIND THE TEXT

Nathan’s confidence in approaching Bathsheba and her confidence in going to David suggests she was David’s primary wife. The background for the 1 Kgs 1—2 narrative is supplied by 2 Sam 11—12, where we observe an indolent King David, rising from his afternoon nap while all the other kings and his own armies are at war. From his elevated palace patio, he saw Bathsheba bathing and inquired after her. Even after learning she was the wife of one of his mighty men, David used his authority as king to shun the law of Yahweh and commit adultery. When he learned she had thus become pregnant, he brought back her husband, Uriah, who refused to sleep with his wife while the armies of Yahweh were camped in the fields. David’s next ploy was to have Uriah carry a note to Joab, which instructed Joab to have Uriah killed in battle. As distasteful as this was to Joab, he obeyed after a fashion. Bathsheba became a widow, whom David then married. The child of David’s adultery died, but Solomon was born soon afterward. Bathsheba, Uriah, and Joab were pawns in the hands of a lustful, scheming, murderous king.

Yahweh was not pleased. He sent Nathan to convict David with a parable (2 Sam 12), which the callous king did not understand, until Nathan pronounced: “You are the man!” (v 7). He proceeded to describe the consequences of David’s sins: “Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own” (v 10). Although David recognized his sin, the consequences came. The narrator construes the subsequent events in David’s life as outcomes of or related to his sins, including the birth and reign of Solomon. Without David committing adultery and murdering Uriah, Bathsheba would not have become his wife. Without Bathsheba, Solomon would not have been born. Without Bathsheba’s intervention with Nathan, David would not have named this younger son to succeed him. On one level, Solomon is an example of God bringing good out of evil (see Gen 50:20), and it fits the pattern of an unexpected younger-son leader, exalted by God. However, on another level, he is an illustration of the sword continuing to reside in David’s house (1 Kgs 2).

Unlike David’s other wife, Abigail (1 Sam 25), Bathsheba could not stop David from killing her husband, but she could save her son Solomon by placing him on the throne of Israel. The possibility that Solomon was endangered by Adonijah and his supporters has some precedent in the conspiracy of David’s son Absalom, who went to great lengths to wile the throne away from his father, taking over David’s palace and wives, then fighting David, until he was killed by Joab (2 Sam 15—18).

Although we know from 2 Sam 12:24-25 that Yahweh loved Bathsheba’s Solomon, naming him “Beloved of Yahweh,” we find no hint that David swore

to Bathsheba that Solomon would succeed him in all of the court history. We are to understand that Nathan was convinced he and Bathsheba were doing what was required to save Solomon and themselves.

IN THE TEXT

■ **5-6** David's eldest remaining son, Adonijah (fourth born), assumed that he would be the next king, habitually exalting himself. By juxtaposing the account of David's impotence, unrelieved by Abishag, the text implies that Adonijah made a move to assume the throne because David's death seemed imminent. The narrator's practice of citing Adonijah's mother underscores the competition between Haggith and Bathsheba. "Haggith" is a name derived from *hgg* as is the noun "feast," whereas Bathsheba means "daughter of the oath." Both names foreshadow the events of this chapter.

Adonijah would have been expected to succeed David from the human perspective, for he was the remaining firstborn, was handsome, and would not expect any objections from the king, because his father had never *grieved him* (v 6) by questioning him at any time about anything (perhaps including Adonijah's assumption that he would be king). However, because of the stories of Amnon and Absalom, we are suspicious about Adonijah's looks and David's practice of neglecting to guide him. Handsome Adonijah reminds us of his handsome brothers, all of whom were now dead. Furthermore, we know from David's anointing story (1 Sam 16) and the Genesis accounts of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Ephraim that elder brothers are often set aside in favor of younger brothers.

■ **7-8** Adonijah conferred with Joab, David's general and nephew (2 Sam 2:13-32; 3:22-31; 8:16; 10; 11:1, 6-25; 12:26-31; 18; 19:5-7 [6-8 HB]; 20; 24), and Abiathar, one of David's priests (1 Sam 22:20-23; 23:6-9; 30:7; 2 Sam 8:17; 15:24, 29-36). These strong supports were eventually toppled by the shrewdness of the prophet Nathan and Bathsheba, Solomon's mother.

■ **9-10** Adonijah held a sacrificial feast, to which he invited the royal officials and all of his brothers except Solomon. Notice that the text says: **He invited all his brothers, the king's sons . . . but he did not invite . . . his brother Solomon**, thereby drawing attention to the exclusion of *this* brother and their rivalry. The other brothers of Adonijah were not in danger, especially since they all chose to eat and drink at his feast. Adonijah also pointedly excluded the prophet Nathan and Benaiah, a warrior of valor whom David had placed in charge of his bodyguard and who was the commander of the Kerethites and Pelethites (2 Sam 23:20-23; see also 2 Sam 8:18; 20:23; 1 Chr 27:5-6).

Although Adonijah probably expected his father to affirm his celebration and confirm him as king (as Joab and Abiathar did), the narrator does not say that Adonijah proclaimed himself king. In the next section, Nathan will report to both Bathsheba and David that Adonijah did so (in the shape of questions).

3. Nathan and Bathsheba Persuade David to Name Solomon King (1:11-40)

IN THE TEXT

■ **11-14** This section plays like a carefully crafted drama with stage directions. In the first scene, after noticing that Adonijah had invited some of the court principals to a sacrificial feast but not others, the prophet Nathan contacted Bathsheba. Her task? Compel David to place her son Solomon on the throne immediately. In so doing, Nathan orchestrated Adonijah's downfall.

Whereas in 2 Sam 12:1-14 and 25, Nathan was sent by Yahweh with words against David, here Nathan acts on his own initiative by *asking* Bathsheba if she had heard a report that Haggith's son had become king without David knowing it. By naming Adonijah's mother, Nathan raised the issue of rivalry between wives of David. He advised her to ask the king if he had not sworn to her that her son Solomon would succeed him. Nathan's move in response to Adonijah's feast may be for the sake of their survival, not ambition for the throne itself. In any case, Solomon's survival required that David name him to the throne.

Nathan also told Bathsheba to ask David why Adonijah had become king, although they both affirmed that David did not know about this. David could not know about this, because, in the first place, Adonijah was not king; and, in the second, David was not aware of much, including Adonijah's feast for his supporters (1 Kgs 1:11). Nathan and Bathsheba's recital of what David did not know (vv 11, 18) and later what David had not allowed Nathan to know (supposedly [v 27]) underlines his neutralized position already foreshadowed by the disclosure that the king did not know Abishag (v 4).

■ **15-21** Although Nathan told her to ask questions (vv 11-13), when the next scene opens, Bathsheba entered, bowed, knelt, and made statements. **You yourself swore to me . . . "Solomon your son shall be king after me . . ." But now Adonijah has become king, and you, my lord the king, do not know about it** (vv 17-18). She did not ask as per Nathan: "Why then has Adonijah become king?" (v 13). In biblical literature, differences between the original message and the report are significant (see 2 Sam 11, the foundation for this account).

By asserting that David had previously sworn to her *by Yahweh your God* that Solomon would be king, the woman once victimized by David's lust and position persuaded him to swear that Solomon would sit on David's throne. Bathsheba then declared to David that *all the eyes of Israel* were on the aged king, waiting for David to announce his successor (1 Kgs 1:20). She verified that she and *her* son would be counted offenders and thus endangered when David died. She was counting on the closeness of their ties, as Nathan had, that David would be motivated to act out of concern, first for her and

then for her son. Bathsheba made pronouncements that stirred David to act kingly. She did not ask questions.

The claim that David swore that her son would be king is presented here as a ruse of Nathan's, enforced by Bathsheba, to coerce the king to name Solomon to be his successor. This becomes more apparent as the story unfolds. We are to understand that Nathan was convinced he and Bathsheba were doing what was required to save Solomon and themselves.

■ **22-27** The next scene opens when Nathan entered David's chambers while Bathsheba was still speaking; she did not leave. Nathan bowed to the ground, then *questioned* the king, which serves to verify part of what Bathsheba had reported: that Adonijah was king, performing kingly functions of sacrifice and feasting with his supporters who were saying: **Long live King Adonijah** (v 25). This is *not* in the narrator's report of the feast, but only in Bathsheba and Nathan's reports to the king. We are not to understand that Nathan is providing a particular that the narrator did not supply, but that Nathan is purposefully adding this provocative element to *provoke* the king to act. Nathan was also careful to attest to the truth that he, David's **servant**, along with Zadok, Benaiah, and Solomon, David's **servant**, were not invited. Nathan "wondered" if King David brought this about without telling his **servants**: himself and Solomon.

Nathan, however, *did not* attempt to corroborate Bathsheba's claim that David had promised her that Solomon would be king; this was something only Bathsheba could have known. Since we know that Nathan told Bathsheba to inform ("remind") David that her husband had made this oath to her, we also know that this was Nathan's scheme to save their lives, which would have been endangered if David confirmed Adonijah as his successor. Adonijah's mistake, then, was in not inviting Nathan and Solomon to join the festivities, thereby reinforcing a division between two competing groups.

■ **28-35** The king is then shown to muster himself and rise to this indubitably royal occasion, convinced by Bathsheba's claims concerning a previous oath and the potential threat to her. He believed her and followed her lead in "remembering" his oath, credible within a relational context. He did not wonder what would then happen to Adonijah, the son he never disciplined or guided. He clearly made his choice for Bathsheba and her son over Haggith and her son.

David grasped the strength to respond to the crisis presented to him by Bathsheba and Nathan and imperiously began ordering people about. He called Bathsheba to himself and swore (for the first time) by Yahweh that he would cause Solomon to sit on his throne (vv 29-30). He took an oath for the sake of the "daughter of an oath" (Bathsheba). She responded by bowing low again, kneeling, and honoring him with her gratitude and blessing: **May my lord King David live forever** (v 31). This is not intended to be ironic but to reflect her deepest blessing on his posterity, not himself personally.

David told her to call for a trio of kingmakers: priestly (Zadok), prophetic (Nathan), and military (Benaiah) leaders. These were the very men

Nathan had told him were not invited to Adonijah's recent feast, and all of whom would have been counted as offenders if David had chosen to support Adonijah's claim to the throne. Nathan, no doubt, was also still in the room, but King David told Bathsheba to call him, as if he was not. The narrator shows us David's confusion, but he also depicts David's ability to respond to this crisis and perform the crucial function that he had heretofore neglected. David's directives were clear. He told Nathan and Zadok to settle Solomon on the royal mule, anoint him at the spring of Gihon, blow the trumpet, and follow him to David's own throne, where he would sit as ruler (*nāgīd*) over Israel and Judah in David's place (v 35). David gathered his waning strength to designate this younger son, Solomon, to be the next king of Israel and Judah.

■ **36-40** Benaiah (his name means "Yahweh has built") responded to David's appointment of Solomon with a prayer that Yahweh would confirm David's choice and bless him with an even greater throne. Zadok was silent but obedient, taking Solomon with Nathan and Benaiah's troops, the Kerethites and Pelethites, to the Gihon spring, anointing him, sounding the trumpet, claiming Solomon to be king and rejoicing. The Gihon is a spring associated with the founding of the city of Jerusalem and appears in Gen 2:13 as one of the rivers watering Eden. Solomon's coronation thus occurred at the center of the Judahite world.

4. Adonijah Responds to Solomon's Accession (1:41-53)

1:36-50

IN THE TEXT

■ **41-48** David avoided naming a successor until his hand was forced, but he made no apologies for placing Solomon on the throne instead of Adonijah. This fact was not lost on Adonijah and his guests when they learned the news.

Jonathan arrived at Adonijah's feast while the trumpet was blasting (vv 41-42), which followed the anointing and preceded the people's proclamation, Solomon's occupation of the throne, and the congratulations in David's room (vv 47-48). Yet Jonathan reported the king's proclamation as if he had been in David's bedchamber, at the Gihon spring, and in the throne room; and had returned to David's bedchamber to watch David bow and bless Solomon. Thus, Jonathan reported as if he had already witnessed everything, serving here as an omniscient narrator and emphasizing the irrevocability of Solomon's ascension to the throne.

■ **49-50** When his guests therefore scattered, Adonijah sought asylum at the **horns of the altar** (v 50) and an oath from Solomon, perceiving that Solomon would count him as an offender. This gives further credence to the precarious positions of Nathan, Bathsheba, and Solomon if David had supported Adonijah, the elder brother, who had assumed he would be king. If Adonijah feared for his life when his brother was named king, so also Solomon's life may have been in danger if Adonijah became king at David's death.

■ **51-53** Adonijah's demand while **clinging to the horns of the altar** (v 51) prompted Solomon to appear and speak onstage for the first time. Clearly, Adonijah was on notice to monitor his aspirations and mind all of his behavior. The spotlight will remain on King Solomon, to whom Adonijah must bow. But Adonijah did not stay home.

FROM THE TEXT

With Solomon's accession, we are reminded of the younger sons in Genesis, who overcame their elder brothers through guile, sheer determination, abuse, and/or providential circumstances. These occurred in scenes in which their fathers and often mothers were prominent. Consider Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, and Joseph's sons over all of Leah's sons. For both Isaac and Jacob, their mothers had a hand in the younger brother's advancement. Sarah cast out Ishmael and Hagar; Rebecca initiated the deceit required for Jacob to "steal" Esau's blessing. Like David, Isaac was very old, blind in fact; and Rebecca used his handicap to convince him that Jacob was Esau. Similarly, Nathan and Bathsheba used David's senility to compel him to name Solomon king.

Consider also the means by which Ephraim was placed over Manasseh. In Gen 48:14-20, Jacob brusquely performed the firstborn's blessing on Ephraim, Joseph's younger son. Establishing a younger brother as the inheritor of promises and property countered convention. Solomon had an older brother with the right of primogeniture. Could the younger-brother narratives of Genesis function as a defense of Solomon's claim to the throne? The traditions about David remind us of other stories in Genesis. The explicit parallels lead some scholars to argue that certain Genesis accounts of the patriarchs were written to parody David's weaknesses. (See Rendsburg 1986; Emerton 1979, 403-15; and Emerton 1976, 79-98.)

By the events that unfold in this chapter and the next, we might infer that David should have named his successor sooner. His failure to do so must be added to his neglect of other matters, such as bringing—in his own lifetime—justice for the murders of Abner and Amasa by Joab (2 Sam 2—3; 20). However, David probably expected his oldest remaining son to be king after he died. Furthermore, David had reason to worry about fratricide and patricide. He had lost Amnon and Absalom violently, and Absalom had nearly stolen the kingdom from him while pursuing him to the death.

In any event, David seemed to have been stunned to inaction following his adultery, murder, and confrontation with Nathan. We are told only what the narrator wants us to know, but he implies an omission on David's part, left ultimately to interpreters to puzzle out.

Although noted above, the contrast between 1 Kgs 1:11-40 and 2 Sam 12:1 in regard to God's initiative with Nathan is worth emphasizing here. In 2 Sam 12, Yahweh sent Nathan to confront David after he had killed Uriah

and acquired a pregnant Bathsheba. In 1 Kgs 1, God did not send Nathan to approach Bathsheba or David. Whereas Yahweh told Samuel to anoint Saul and David (1 Sam 8:22; 10:1-2; 16), David responded to the orchestration of Nathan and Bathsheba to order the anointing of Solomon. God was remarkably absent from all of these proceedings, except when used by the characters to stand behind alleged and authentic oaths (1 Kgs 1:17, 29-30).

After 2 Sam 12, God did not appear again as a speaking figure or through a prophet until he appeared to Solomon in a dream at Gibeon in 1 Kgs 3:5-14. Neither did any character consult God for wisdom or direction, although Benaiah (who became Solomon's "hit man") called upon God to ordain David's appointment and to be with King Solomon (1:36-37). As it turned out, the warning that the sword would not depart from David's house (see 2 Sam 12) may have also implied that God would withdraw into the background until called upon. On the other hand, we must not forget God's promise to David in 2 Sam 7:12: "When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom."

B. Solomon Eliminates His Opponents (2:1-46)

BEHIND THE TEXT

2:1-46

This chapter has three sections: David's charge to Solomon followed by his death (vv 1-12), Bathsheba's visit to her son to relay Adonijah's request for Abishag as his wife (vv 13-22), and Solomon's response (vv 23-46). This includes killing Adonijah, banishing Abiathar the priest, as well as fulfilling David's orders to punish Joab and Shimei.

David's last words to Solomon echoed those of Joshua to Israel when he prepared to "go the way of all the earth" (Josh 23:11-14). Joshua 1:7-9 and Deut 17:14-20 also stand behind David's charge to his son and successor, Solomon, "man of peace." In these passages, Yahweh spoke through Moses and Joshua, counseling the leaders of Israel to be strong (*hāzaq*) and keep the Law mediated through Moses. The prosperity and continued existence of Israel—and now Solomon—depended upon reading and observing all that is in the Torah of Moses; this is the repeated message of the Deuteronomist (→ Introduction).

When Yahweh promised David an enduring dynasty in 2 Sam 7, he promised that he would establish David's own son forever. This passage describes the founding occasion for the Davidic covenant clearly refers to Solomon, who would build a house for Yahweh. The wrongs of this son are mentioned, which implies ignoring the commandments, but the book of the law is not specified in 2 Sam 7, as it is in later evocations of this covenant. Although this son would be punished for his sins, he would not be removed from the throne, according