

UNIT 4: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this unit is to give you a general overview of the Book of Joshua through to 2 Kings.

Your reading is directed as follows:

Overview: Scholars have long noted that the disparate stories and narratives contained in the large body of material in Joshua-2 Kings appear to have been edited into the corpus's final form with ideological motives in mind; essentially, the aim is to provide a theological explanation for the catastrophic fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Thus, it is the final editing of this corpus of material that this the primary interest of this module unit. The name generally given to this process is Deuteronomistic History [DH] and the scribes responsible for the process are known collectively as the Deuteronomistic Historian. The reason for the name is that scholars have long thought that the editorial activity in Joshua-2 Kings reflects the style and themes of the Book of Deuteronomy.

- There is a very fine introduction to DH by Herman Spieckermann in chapter 20 of the *Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Leo Perdue) and this is where you are advised to begin your reading.
- You will also find a useful description in Gary Knoppers, 'The Deuteronomistic History', in D.N. Freedman (ed.), *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 341-42.
- Since this article presupposes that you are familiar with the themes and theological preoccupations of the Book of Deuteronomy, you may want to browse through Collins's essay on Deuteronomy in his *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), in order to try to identify some similarities especially in style.

On a more general note, you should find the classic work by John Barton on Old Testament Theology illuminating regarding the theological agenda of the Hebrew Bible authors in general: John Barton, 'Old Testament Theology', in John Rogerson (ed.), *Beginning Old Testament Study* (London: SPCK, 1998), 94-113.

Specific Reading

One of the most colourful and interesting stories found in Joshua-2 Kings is of course the long narrative of King David. It is interesting to read through one aspect of his life to see how his story has been edited and his life and actions assessed in the light of the Deuteronomistic redaction - in particular, the so-called Succession Narrative which not only portrays David's final years but also deals with the question as to who will succeed him on the throne (2 Samuel

11 - 1 Kings 2). If you have not done so already, you will find it a rewarding experience to read through this entire section, perhaps also searching for some additional reading material from the sources listed at beginning of this module.

- You will find initial reading material about the Succession Narrative in Jerome T. Walsh's chapter, 'Solomon Succeeds to the Throne of David', in his commentary on 1 Kings (Liturgical Press, 1996) (linked to this unit).
- A very readable book on how the character of David is presented in relation to Saul is Paul Borgman (*David, Saul and God*).
- Finally, you will find the excerpt from Ian Provan's commentary on the Books of Kings very illuminating about the editorial arrangement of the book: Iain W. Provan, *1 & 2 Kings* (Old Testament Guides; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 27-44.

So, in this unit, the most important reading is the primary biblical text of 2 Samuel 11 – 1 Kings 2, reading it from the point of view of how the lives and actions of David and his sons are assessed and evaluated in the light of Deuteronomistic theology.