CHAPTER SIX

A TIME FOR EVERYTHING:
DATING THE DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY

The most difficult and controversial issue in the study of the DH is that of determining its date, or more precisely, the date of its primary edition (DtrH). The date that one accepts for this level fairly well determines one's understanding of the work's purpose and method of composition. Given the history of scholarly debate, it would be foolish and arrogant to presume that this chapter could resolve the issue once and for all. What I hope to do is to focus on the central questions in the debate and to set the issue in its proper perspective in the context of our present concern with the model of the DH's composition.

It is important to recognize, first of all, that the evidential base for addressing this question is very narrow. The debate has focused almost exclusively on the book of Kings. In part, this is because the end of the DH is allegedly the location where literary, structural, thematic, and theological differences indicative of redactional levels would emerge most clearly (cf. Nelson 1981:27-28). It is where pre-Noth scholarship built the strongest case for a double redaction and where the regnal formulas, which have figured so largely in the discussion, are found. But it is also true that outside of Kings there appears to be very little material in the DH that gives any indication of date.

What follows is a summary and critique of the three settings that are most frequently proposed for the composition of DtrH: the reign of Hezekiah, the reign of Josiah, and the exile.

IN THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

The arguments for a date during the reign of Hezekiah depend heavily on the regnal formulas for evidence. The development of these arguments is principally the work of two scholars whose approaches are quite distinct.1 First,

1 Quite a few scholars have hinted at the existence of a Hezekian DtrH (see Introduction), but only Weippert and Provan have put forth detailed arguments for it. Halpern and Vanderhooft are preparing another case for this date, expanding on Weippert's argumentation. Macy's observations of changes in the regnal formulas, mentioned in the Introduction, merit special mention here. These changes constitute important evidence, but they can all be explained by other means than redactional
Helga Weippert (1972) analyzed the regnal formulas for Northern and Southern kings according to various schema which she detected within them. The first such schema, IS1, was used for Southern kings from Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:43-44) to Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:2b, 4), mostly for kings judged to be righteous. This schema contained the elements ובו בְּעֵית יוֹהֵה, a comparison with the king’s immediate predecessor, and the statement that the בְּעֵית were not removed, but the people still sacrificed and burned incense (piel of בְּעֵית and בְּעֵית, respectively) on them. A second schema, IS2, occurred for evil kings of Judah during the same period. It consisted of the expression מלכי ישראל בְּעֵית + וַחֲלֹא בּוֹרְרֵךְ. A third schema, IN, used for Northern kings from Jehoram (2 Kgs 3:2a, 3) to the end of the kingdom (2 Kgs 17:22) used the phrase ובו בְּעֵית יוֹוהִי followed by לא רַם מְלֹא אֲשֵׁר מָט אֵל שֵׁר חָזְקֵי אִישׁיָּוֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל. Weippert assigned these three schemas to a single redactor, R1 who came from Israel but worked in Judah during Hezekiah’s reign. The destruction of the North forced him to describe all of its kings as evil under the influence of Jeroboam. He was influenced by Hezekiah’s policy of cultic centralization to remark on the handling of the בְּעֵית by Southern monarchs.2

Two additional schemas were the work of a second redactor, RII. The schema IIS was employed for Southern kings before Jehoshaphat and from Hezekiah to Josiah. It used the expression ובו בְּעֵית, but was distinguished from IS1 by its further reference to David either as בני או as בני. It could also be expanded by the use of מלכי או or כּוֹרֵךְ. The examples of schema IIN do not all share one typical element. This schema is very similar to IN, but there are three features that distinguish it: the expression מלכי או + וַחֲלֹא (hiphil) with יִשְׁרָאֵל (Qal), and the use of בְּעֵית, noun or verb. This schema further differs from IS1 in its lack of the phrase לא רַם מְלֹא. In contrast to R1, RII stresses the culpability of individual kings, the worship of foreign gods as opposed to non-centralization of the cult, and the comparison of shifts. The absence of the expressions "with his fathers" and "in the city of David" from the death and burial formulas for Judahite kings from Hezekiah on could reflect a change in actual burial practice (Bin-Nun 1968) or in the records used by Dtr as sources. The reference to burial "in the garden of Uzza" for Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:18) and Amon (21:26) may be due to more precise knowledge or be theologically motivated. In any case, the base of evidence is very small. There are only four sets of regnal formulas from Hezekiah to Josiah, and three of those kings, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah, are exceptional in some way in Kings. The disappearance of the queen mother’s name from Chronicles’ accession formulas for Judahite kings following Hezekiah, may indicate the availability of different sources for the royal records. Whatever the reason for the change in Chronicles, Kings betrays no editorial change at this point.

2 Barrick (1974) suggests an important modification to Weippert’s analysis by adding 1 Kgs 15:14 and 2 Kgs 18:4 to the level of R1, which he then sees as running from Asa to Hezekiah, inclusive.