THE RISE OF SOLOMON IN THE ANCIENT ISRAELITE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Isaac Kalimi

1. Introduction

This study investigates the succession of Solomon to King David's throne according to two ancient Israelite historical writings. The first and earlier account is found in what is named in modern scholarship, since the work of Leonhard Rost in 1926, "David's Throne Succession Narrative" (or the “Court History”)—a source that was incorporated within the large complex of the Deuteronomistic history, particularly in Samuel–Kings.¹ The second and later account is found in the Chronistic history, that is, the book of Chronicles.

¹ Usually it is considered that the account includes 2 Sam 9–20 + 1 Kgs 1–2; see the survey by Rofé 2009, 23–30. For a different opinion, however, see Kalimi 2010, 567 note 5. For a critical survey of various approaches on “Succession Narrative,” see Ishida 1999, 102–107. Ishida shows that, in fact, there is “no effective method for controlling these anarchic postulations” (p. 104). Timo Veijola (1975) proposed to distinguish a threefold redaction of the text in 1 Kgs 1–2, written in the time of the exile (for what purpose?). Thilo A. Rudnig (2006), for his part, suggested that the very small basic version of the story from Solomon’s time (10th century B.C.E.) went through more than thirteen redactions and saw several "additions," comprehensive re-workings, and numerous very late glosses. This whole process took place particularly in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, until the 3rd century B.C.E. (Fortunately, there are several fragments of Samuel–Kings among the Dead Sea Scrolls—usually dated to ca. mid 3rd century B.C.E.—what probably caused Rudnig to stop where he stops; otherwise, who knows until when these "continuous redactions" would have been extended). This kind of *ad absurdum* "scholarship" touches the unbearable. One might wonder if there is any other example of such a superfluous literary process in (ancient or non-ancient) world literature? How it is possible that one of the earliest and most beautiful and superb historical works of the ancient Israelites could have been composed through such a process? Is there any anachronism from the Persian or Hellenistic periods in the story under review? Is there any late linguistic element (e.g., Late Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Persian or Greek words, syntax, and so forth) in the story? Why when it comes to Israelite literary legacy, some scholars (for other similar approaches, see Ishida 1999, and below note 4) choose to act in such unscholarly and irresponsible ways? In contrast, it is worth mentioning that there are some similarities between the biblical Succession Narrative and some ancient Near Eastern royal historical writings (see in detail, Ishida 1999, 107–136; however see also below note 41). For an additional critical review of Rudnig’s book, see Dietrich 2012, 267–272.
The first two chapters of Kings are very closely related and neither of them can stand by itself; in fact, Solomon’s succession was finalized with the fulfillment of what is called “David’s testament” and the removal of his potential rivals (1 Kgs 2:1–46a); this matter in Kings and its counter account in Chronicles will be scrutinized as well.

The present study follows the well-established and widely accepted view in historical-biblical scholarship that the books of Samuel–Kings were composed some time earlier than the book of Chronicles and that the major Vorlage of the Chronicler for the parallel texts in his book was Samuel–Kings.

2. The Rise of Solomon

2.1 The Deuteronomistic History

2.1.1 The Last Days of David: Personal and Political Crisis
The opening literary unit in Kings (1 Kgs 1:1–4) serves as an exposition to the central story that immediately follows, which is the succession of Solomon to the throne and “David’s testament” and its fulfillment (respectively 1 Kgs 1:5–53; 2:1–46a). In this unit the narrator notifies his potential audience of the factual setting behind the story that he is going to narrate,