
by

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For Frank Moore Cross
in friendship and respect

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The ‘Book (sepher) of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah’ is referred to fifteen times by our Books of Kings (the first time in 1 Kgs. xiv 29) and the ‘Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel’ eighteen times (the first reference being 1 Kgs. xiv 19). The ‘Book of the Acts (dih’rê, but LXX L + ημερων = hayyâmîm l’, i.e. the Chronicles) of Solomon’ (1 Kgs. xi 41) seems to have been a book of the same kind as the first two, but confined to the reign of Solomon. The Books of Kings refer to these books in a standard and schematic formula: ‘And the other events of PN’s reign’—sometimes adding some deed of his (e.g. with respect to Jeroboam son of Nebat [1 Kgs. xiv 19], to Asa [1 Kgs. xv 23], to Baasha [1 Kgs. xvi 5], to Zimri [1 Kgs. xvi 20])—‘are recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel’ (or ‘of the Kings of Judah’). Just what were these ‘chronicles’ and what purpose did they serve?

Some scholars say that they were annals, pure and simple, i.e. an official record of the events of the king’s reign.¹ Yet it is evident that

¹ Scholars had already reached this conclusion in the 19th century. For our time see, e.g. A. Jepsen, Die Quellen des Königsbuches (Halle [Saale], 1953 [1956]), pp. 54-60; T.N.D. Mettinger, Solomonic State Officials (Lund, 1971), pp. 38-40. Mettinger opines that the annals were one chronicle written in two columns (on the model of chronicles in the Akkadian literature). Jepsen classifies the archive-derived material in Kings into ‘a synchronistic chronicle’ (S) and ‘annals’ (A). J.A. Montgomery (The Books of Kings, ICC [New York, 1951], pp. 43-44) also shares the opinion that the Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and of Israel were official annals. He believes, however, that
the greater part of the material of the Books of Kings is narrative or literary, and definitely not annalistic in character. Moreover, from the manner in which reference is made to these two ‘chronicles’, it would seem that access to them was open to anyone who wanted. This has led other scholars to the conclusion that the ‘Books of the Chronicles’ were not annals but books of literature in the form of unofficial historical surveys that were based on annal-like records. According to this suggestion, there was indeed a link between the Deuteronomistic editors and the royal annals, but an indirect one, mediated through the Books of the ‘Chronicles of the Kings’. What the Deuteronomistic editors took from those ‘Books’ was mainly annalistic items (e.g. the names of the mother of the Judaen Kings) and chronological data, on which skeleton they proceeded to construct the canonical Books of Kings.

To Montgomery goes the credit for first pointing out the distinct annal-like (his word is ‘archival’) character of the matters mentioned in our Books of Kings with reference to the Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah. These references to ‘the other events in [so-and-so]’s reign’ are occasionally supplemented by annal-like items, such as ‘the might’ of the king and his achievements (1 Kgs. xv 23; xvi 27; xxii 46; 2 Kgs. xiv 28, etc.), his feats of construction (1 Kgs. xv 23; xxii 39; 2 Kgs. xx 20), his revolt against his predecessor (1 Kgs. xvi 20; 2 Kgs. xv 15), the illnesses of his old age (1 Kgs. xv 23; cf. 2 Kgs. xv 5). Montgomery also puts his finger on statements loosely connected to their context, whose content and wording also suggest annals material (e.g. 1 Kgs. ix 25, ‘and he kept the House in repair’; also 1 Kgs. xxii 49-50; 2 Kgs. i 1; xv 19-20, etc.). A date which belongs to the context and precedes the event to be narrated also indicates, in Montgomery’s opinion, the archival character of the report in question. Instead of the date there may come expressions such as ‘then’,