

RECONSIDERING THE COMPOSITION OF THE STORY OF SOLOMON'S
DREAM AT GIBEON (1 KINGS 3:4-15)*

Michael Avioz

Verses 4-15 in 1 Kings 3 describe God's revelation to Solomon in a night dream at Gibeon. In the dream, God encourages Solomon to ask for all that he desires. Solomon asks for wisdom, and God promises him wisdom, wealth, respect and longevity. Numerous scholars find indications for a late date of composition in the narrative of Solomon's dream at Gibeon; a fact suggesting it be attributed to the Deuteronomistic redaction. In what follows I shall review the various suggestions and evaluate them while suggesting my own view for the composition of 1 Kings 3:4-15.

The Various Proposals for the Redactional layers of 1 Kings 3:4-15

When speaking of the redactional layers found in 1 Kings 3:4-15, scholars have pointed to idioms, phrases and concepts characteristic of the Deuteronomistic redaction. However, these scholars do not agree on the distinction between the ancient redactional layer and the Deuteronomistic layers of the narrative. Burney¹ ascribes vv. 10, 12, 14-15 to the Deuteronomistic redaction, and considers vv. 5, 6, 8 the editor's expansion. According to Martin Noth², vv. 5, 13 and 14 are additions and vv. 6-7 are editorial expansions. Verses 10 and 15 he believes to be later additions. John Gray³

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¹ C.F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), 29-30.

² *Könige. 1. Teilband: 1-16* (BKAT IX,1; Neukirchen-Vluyn : Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), 44-45.

³ *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (2nd edn; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963).

attributes vv. 14-15 to the Deuteronomistic redaction. Helen Kenik⁴ attributes the whole story to the Deuteronomistic redaction. These are only a few examples.⁵

Some critics have pointed out the apparent tension between the stipulation of longevity in v. 14 and the unconditional formula of the Davidic promise in 2 Samuel 7.⁶ These scholars consider God's promise of long life to Solomon ("And if you will walk in my ways," v. 14) one of the markings of the Deuteronomistic redaction because of the stipulation found in it.⁷ This type of conditionality appears in Deuteronomy (11: 13-21; 32: 46-47) and in 1 Kgs 2:4; 6:12; 9:4-7; 11:38.

Evaluation

As I have shown elsewhere,⁸ the Davidic Covenant has been conditional from its very beginning (2 Sam 7:14). The conditionality is in effect connected to the matter of

⁴ *Design for Kingship: The Deuteronomistic Narrative Technique in 1 Kings 3: 4-15* (SBLDS, 69; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 57-119.

⁵ For other opinions, see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon), 244-46, 250-57; T.N.D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (ConBOT, 8; Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 239-40); G.H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings* (NCB; Grand Rapids, MI: Eardmans, 1984), 121-22; S.J. De Vries, *1 Kings* (WBC, 12; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 47; D.M. Carr, *From D to Q: A Study of Early Jewish Interpretation of Solomon's Dream at Gibeon* (SBLMS, 44; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 14-29, 32.

⁶ R.D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1987), 35. According to Weinfeld (*Deuteronomistic School*, 3-4), the stipulation relates to Solomon and his offspring equally, which is based on Deut 17:20 ("so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children"). In contrast, I.W. Provan thinks the stipulation refers only to Solomon. See his *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW, 172; Berlin/New York: W. de Gruyter, 1988) 100, n. 20. Still, Provan's evidence from the book of Deuteronomy that long life refers to one generation only is unpersuasive because the subject of kingship is not discussed there.

⁷ See Weinfeld, *Deuteronomistic School*, 246, n. 4; F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 275-89; Kenik, *Design for Kingship*, 163, and the literature cited in n. 116 there; Carr, *From D to Q*, 23, 69. Kenik does not view this verse as a later addition, but thinks the entire story is a unified work, whose composition is ascribed to the Deuteronomistic redaction.

⁸ M. Avioz, *Nathan's Oracle (2 Samuel 7) and Its Interpreters* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 30.

longevity given that it is the exclusive sanction of the deity. Riches and honor can be achieved by Man, but not so longevity. God conditions longevity upon Solomon's behavior.⁹ His words emphasize the issue of loyalty indirectly to Solomon. Solomon stresses more God's obligation to the covenant, whereas God underscores Man's obligation to the covenant.¹⁰ The analogue from Psalm 21 may also be added, which is considered a regnal hymn and reveals many links to 1 Kings 3. In Ps 21:5 it says "He asked life of thee; thou gavest it to him, length of days for ever and ever," and v. 8: "For the king trusts in the LORD; and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved." In other words, longevity, as well as the subsistence of the royal dynasty itself, depends upon the faith of the king in his God.¹¹

The phrase "great steadfast love" appears only in Gen 19:19, Num 14:19, and Ps 108:5, and therefore should not be considered Deuteronomistic.¹² Similarly, the language "sat on the throne" is not necessarily Deuteronomistic. The words "a son to sit on the throne" conclude the story of the Succession Narrative¹³ described at length in 1 Kings 1-2.

In order to claim that verse 6 of our story is Deuteronomistic, the aforementioned scholars compare it to 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:20, 25; 9:4-5. However, as

⁹ See Zalewski, *Solomon's Accession*, 161; and similarly A. Frisch, 'The Narrative on Solomon's Reign in the Book of Kings' (PhD dissertation; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University [Hebrew]), 253.

¹⁰ Eslinger finds in the dialogue between God and Solomon a conflict over the question: who is beholden to whom? Solomon emphasizes God's obligation to the covenant, while God emphasizes Solomon's obligation. See L.M. Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God* (JSOTSup, 84; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 133, n. 20 and p. 137. These particulars are not exact. Verse 14 essentially reiterates what has been said in verse 6: God also refers to David's act of following God faithfully. Just as David's righteousness earned him a covenant with God, so too will Solomon be worthy of the divine promise's realization if he follows the path of his father, David. Therefore, the argument above claims that Solomon refers to this matter indirectly.

¹¹ See A.R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (2nd edn; Cardiff: University of Wales, 1967), 122-23. Johnson finds an echo in this hymn to a covenant making between the God and king.

¹² See Kenik, *Design for Kingship*, 58, n. 1.

¹³ See Kenik, *Design for Kingship*, 115.

opposed to these biblical sources, 1 Kings 3 does not discuss the dynasty or the future of the House of David, but Solomon alone. 1 Kings 3 deals with David's throne, whereas the others deal with the throne of Israel. Here, it is the son of David; there, the House of David. Thus, our story should be compared to 1 Kgs 1:48, which is considered pre-Deuteronomistic.¹⁴ God's promise to Solomon does not include a reference to the future generations, nor does it articulate the fate of the dynasty if Solomon were to act according to the covenant's conditions. This is only expressed in 1 Kings 8 and 1 Kings 9. This appears to stem from the fact that 1 Kings 3-7 deal with the establishment of Solomon's kingship up through the temple's establishment. After the temple is erected, its existence and that of the dynasty are bound together by Solomon's conduct. Nevertheless, the author does not examine in the narratives dealing only with Solomon the consequence of Solomon's conduct on the fate of the temple and dynasty.¹⁵

In my opinion, this story should not be assigned to the layer of late redaction.¹⁶ There are linguistic and thematic parallels between the story of

¹⁴ Zalewski, *Solomon's Accession*, 160. Cf. G. Fohrer, "Der Vertrag zwischen König und Volk in Israel," *VT* 71 (1959), 1-22, esp. 10.

¹⁵ See also Fohrer, "König und Volk," 7.

¹⁶ Similarly, Gray (*1 & 2 Kings*, 121; barring vv. 14-15); M. Garsiel, "King Solomon's Trip to Gibeon and His Dream," in *Dr. Baruch Ben-Yehudah Jubilee Volume*, ed. B.Z. Luria (Hebrew; Tel-Aviv: The Israelite Society for Biblical Research, 1981), 181-218. The insubstantiality among scholars who think there is a Deuteronomistic redaction in the story is exemplified in Kenik's research. Since it is impossible to find parallels in the Deuteronomistic literature to all of the expressions that appear in the story, she argues that while these phrases are ancient, the Deuteronomist edited them to suit his own needs. This claim seems too untenable and arbitrary since there is really no way to know, according to this principle, what is considered a Deuteronomistic phrase and what is not. Take for example, the conjunction עֲשֵׂה חֶסֶד ("show steadfast love") which appears in many biblical passages not considered Deuteronomistic (Gen 21:22-24; 24:12, 14; 39:21; 1 Sam 20:8, 14-16; 2 Sam 9:1, 3, 7; 10:2; 22:51 (=Ps 18:15)). But this fact does not deter Kenik (*Design for Kingship*, 58-70). It seems this is what prevented Carr (*From D to Q*) from attributing these words to the Deuteronomistic redaction. Weinfeld (*Deuteronomistic School*) does not include the combination עֲשֵׂה חֶסֶד ("show steadfast love") in the lexicon of Deuteronomistic phrases, but he nevertheless believes that vv. 5-14 are Deuteronomistic) from claiming that the Deuteronomist uses this phrase to portray God's loyalty to the covenant with David. She

Solomon's dream at Gibeon and ancient Egyptian, Hittite, Sumerian and Acadian sources.¹⁷ Among the sources that Zalewski mentions: the goddess Anath; Danel and Aqhat¹⁸; the prologue and epilogue of Hammurabi Laws; Kilamuwa's inscription from the ninth century BCE; and Azatiwada King of the Danunites and Sefire's inscriptions from the eighth century BCE. Tiglath Pileser I's (1115-1077 BCE) inscription may also be added to this list. This king vouches for himself as the listening shepherd, the chosen and loved-one of the gods, and that he was given their divine legitimation to rule.¹⁹ These parallels teach that the concept of divine revelation to a king, in which the kingdom is bestowed with legitimacy and its

does, however (*Design for Kingship*, 105-106) take pains arguing that נֶעַר קָטָן ("little child") is a Deuteronomistic phrase, which appears in the book of Jeremiah as well (Jer 1:6). Against the claim of a link between Solomon's dream and Jeremiah's revelation, see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomistic School*, 252, n. 4. Weinfeld rightfully argues that any similarity to the text in Jeremiah is superficial only, and that the contexts in which the phrases are used, differ. Moreover, in Jeremiah's commissioning, God tells him that he had been chosen at birth and therefore there is no connection to his age at the time of the commissioning, whereas Solomon is young at the time of his coronation and this fact certainly is significant for him. Likewise, God does not tell Solomon that he was chosen prior to his birth as he said to Jeremiah. For the meaning of נֶעַר in Jer 1 see most recently, B.A. Strawn, "Jeremiah's In/effective Plea: Another Look at נֶעַר in Jeremiah I 6," *VT* 55 (2005), 366-77.

¹⁷ See Zalewski, *Solomon's Accession*, 152-56; C.L. Seow, "The Syro-Palestinian context of Solomon's dream," *HTR* 77 (1984), 141-52; R. Fidler, "Dreams Speak Falsely?": *Dream Theophanies in the Bible: Their Place in Ancient Israelite Faith and Traditions* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 341-60. Zalewski mentions the following motifs: the king's revelation dream; bestowal of gifts to kings by gods: judicial wisdom, longevity and fortune; the phrase "a son to sit on the throne". Zalewski also accepts parts of Herrmann's theory which looks for parallels between the royal Egyptian novella and the 1 Kings 3:4-15. See S. Herrmann, "The Royal Novella in Egypt and Israel," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. G.N. Knoppers and J.G. McConville (translated from German; SETS 8. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 493-515. For a summary of the parallels, see Carr, *From D to Q*, 31-40. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Carr does not accept the conclusions of scholars wishing to avail themselves of these extra-biblical sources in order to claim the antiquity of the Gibeon revelation dream story.

¹⁸ For translation see S.B. Parker ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Writings from the Ancient World, 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 51-54, 58, 68.

¹⁹ See the discussion in V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Buildings in Light of Mesopotamian and North-west Semitic Writings* (JSOTSup, 115; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); D.F. Murray, *Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension: Pragmatics, Poetics and Polemics in a Narrative Sequence about David (2 Samuel 5.17-7.29)* (JSOTSup, 264; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

stability is guaranteed, was a familiar one, long before the writing of the story on Solomon.

To conclude, I find the story in 1 Kings 3 to be a reliable reflection of the ancient source from which it was taken. There is no compelling reason not to regard the story in 1 Kings 3 as a composition of the tenth century BCE.