**Joshua through Kings (The Deuteronomistic History)**

**A Brief Outline**

**Joshua.** After Moses dies, Joshua leads the Israelite campaign to conquer the land occupied by the Canaanites. The end of the book repeats a refrain that runs throughout Joshua: in order for the Israelites to win and keep their land, they must worship Yahweh, God of Israel, alone.

**Judges.** After the death of Joshua, God raises up a series of judges-- military leaders who lead the tribes against their enemies. The stories follow a set pattern: the Israelites turn to other gods; Yahweh punishes them by strengthening their enemies; the Israelites cry out for help; and in response Yahweh sends a judge to deliver them. After the judge dies, the people again disobey, starting the whole cycle of reward and punishment again. The book ends with the criticism that "there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes."

**1 Samuel.** The book begins with the birth of Samuel, Israel's last judge. Samuel anoints Israel's first king, Saul, and then David his successor. David is anointed as king in chapter 16, but Saul remains on the throne until the very last chapter of the book. The stories trace David's steady rise to power and Saul's steady decline. In the very last chapter, Saul and Jonathan die in battle against the Philistines.

**2 Samuel.** After David laments the deaths of Saul and Jonathan and after his officers kill most surviving members of Saul's family, David is acclaimed king. He captures Jerusalem, makes it his capital, and brings the ark of the covenant to the city. God declines David's offer to build the deity a temple in Jerusalem, leaving that task to David's son but rewarding David's intentions by promising that kingship will follow through David's line (the "covenant with David," 2 Samuel 7). Chapters 11-24 trace the political and family crises of David: his military successes and defeats, his taking of Bathsheba, the rape of his daughter Tamar, and his private and public conflict with his son Absalom.

**1 Kings.** The book opens with David on his deathbed and with the selection of Solomon as the next king. It narrates Solomon's accomplishments as well as the fact that his many foreign wives led his heart astray. In respect for his father, Solomon's kingdom remains intact during this lifetime, but after his death, the nation splinters into a northern kingdom (Israel) and a southern one (Judah). The prophet Elijah and the narrator rail against the northern kings for deserting the Davidic monarchy and the Jerusalem temple.

**2 Kings.** The narrative traces the fates of the northern and southern kingdoms. The north falls to the Assyrian armies in 721 BCE as punishment for its sinfulness. For similar reasons, the south falls to the Babylonian armies in 587 BCE .