History and Historiography

Historical Books = Former Prophets + Chronicles & Ezra-Nehemiah = Deuteronomistic History + Chronistic History

DtrH source of ChrH, but other early sources include:

- earlier book of Joshua (Josh 2-11)
- ark story (1 Sam 4-6; 2 Sam 6)
- rise of David (1 Sam 16-2 Sam 5)
- throne succession narrative (2 Sam 9-20, 1 Kgs 1-2)

also specifically mentioned sources such as:

- Book of Jashar
- Acts of Solomon
- Annals of the Kings of Israel
- Annals of the Kings of Judah

what is history?

- positivistic definition: "history seeks to discover 'how it really was'"

however, past only selectively known and only selectively interpreted—important to note that all history involves interpretation, both in selection of material and in description of people & events—political, cultural, religious biases/points of view—historie vs. geschichte

modern historians usually try to use sources critically—e.g., Lorenzo Valla proved inauthenticity of Donation of Constantine in 1440—sources include written records, oral traditions, archaeology, scientific dating methods (e.g., to determine date of solar eclipse)

earliest attempts at history include king lists, royal annals, inscriptions of great events

historiography, or the writing of history, has two main concerns: to narrate the past and to make judgments about it—including:

- selection of material (what is in? what is out? why?)
- organization (e.g., chronological scheme, themes, repeated patterns, relation of certain events to others (either simply laid end to end or explicitly tied to one another in the text))
patterns of causation (geography, climate, technology, sociological factors, political factors, underlying goal or providential cause)

historiography explores the past in order to influence the present—"history is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past" (Huizinga)

good to generally explain something about the present on the basis of the past—addressed to the future—"[history] composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time" (Thucydides)

Israel's historical books differ in at least three ways from modern attempts to write history:

1. corporate rather than individual enterprise
2. little evidence of authors evaluating their sources critically (except in selection?)
3. explicitly theological explanations often given rather than more immediate cause & effect

no OT event or personality mentioned in ancient sources outside Israel until 9th C B.C.E. (Omri, Ahab)

goal of DtrH & ChrH explicitly theological, attempting to persuade readers to think about themselves, their current situation, their heritage, & their God in a certain way

when reading historical books, must consider two levels of historical context: period being described and period of actual composition

overview of historical books:

- Joshua-Judges: traditions of Israel's origin & emergence in the land
- Samuel: state building, emergence of monarchy
- Kings, Chronicles: monarchies of Israel & Judah (ChrH only Judah)
- Ezra-Nehemiah: restoration beyond exile

tools for reading historical books:

- reading as story (literary criticism): character development, plot, point of view, irony
- identification of traditional genres (form criticism): letters, hymns, lists, historiography, annals, genealogies, etc.
- identification of traditional themes (tradition history): Zion tradition, Yahweh as divine warrior, prophetic tradition
- recognition of editorial concerns (redaction criticism): structure of narrative, transitional elements, comparison of parallel accounts
• discovering historical development of the text (source criticism): vocabulary, style, theological outlook, duplications, inconsistencies

• seeing text as part of a larger whole (canonical criticism): theological themes, canonical concerns, David as model king, divine providence