Overview of the book of 1 Kings

The author of 1 Kings is unknown. Whoever this inspired writer was he must have lived and wrote during the days of Judah's Babylonian captivity due to the book ending during these days.

The book of 1 Kings begins with the historical record of David's death and ends with Ahaziah's two year reign over Israel (970 to 844 BC). Half of 1 Kings covers the rise and fall of Solomon. The second half of the book looks to the characters of the kings of Israel and Judah as well as the prophets Nathan, Ahijah, Elijah, and Micaiah.

The obvious objective of the book is to reveal the historical record of God fulfilling his promise to David made at 2 Samuel 7:12-16. Through the 126 years of 1 Kings we find God's kingdom at its zenith of power and riches under Solomon. Solomon's initial dedication to Jehovah was unquestioned. Solomon's request for wisdom over fame and fortune was admired by God (1 Kings 3:1-15). The Lord grants the king great fame and fortune in addition to his request for wisdom. Solomon goes on to write many proverbs, psalms, the book of Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. The king erects a beautiful temple unto the Lord and dedicates it with great sacrifices. Through time; however, the king fell away from the Lord. The king had 700 wives and 300 concubines, "and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of David his father" (1 Kings 11:4-5). Due to Solomon's failure to obey Jehovah the glorious kingdom of Israel would loose its world power status and begin its gradual decline.

Jehovah made manifest His divine displeasure with the direction Israel was going by tearing His kingdom into two (Israel and Judah). Solomon's son Rehoboam was the first king over Judah and Jeroboam was the first king over Israel. The two nations, that were once one, went in two different moral directions. Jeroboam set a wicked and
sinful precedence for reigning in Israel that every king after him would pattern themselves after. Jeroboam goes down in history as one who not only rebelled against Jehovah but actually tried to usurp the authority of God. The king of Israel erected calves for Israel to worship at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:29-30). Jeroboam established his own priesthood from men who had no family ties to the tribe of Levi or Aaron (1 Kings 12:31). The common descriptive phrase of the kings of Israel came to be, "and they walked in the sins of Jeroboam."

The first two kings of Judah, Rehoboam and Abijam his son, were wicked. The last two kings of Judah recorded in 1 Kings, Asa and Jehoshaphat, were righteous. Asa and Josiah combined for reigns of 66 years. During these years there were seven ungodly men reigning in Israel. One of these men was Ahab. Ahab, "did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him" (1 Kings 16:30). While under Solomon Israel reached a pinnacle of faith, power, and wealth it was under Ahab that Israel meets the pinnacle of sin. The prophet Elijah comes on the scene at 1 Kings 17 through end of the book and deals with the wicked king of Israel.

When one backs up and views the book as a whole we may conclude that the book is illustrating God's patience and mercy. Though Israel continued to reach new heights in sinfulness the Lord continues to meet their rebellion with acts of mercy. The Lord sends them prophets that they might repent (see 1 Kings 18:21). 2 Kings 13:23 records, "But Jehovah was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet." Though men like Ahab set the record for filthiness, idolatry, covetousness, robbery, murder, and selfishness the Lord exercises mercy upon the king when he was humbled (see 1 Kings 21:27-29).

A valuable lesson that we may all learn from studying 1 Kings is that God is indeed merciful and patient. The apostle Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Another valuable lesson is that God's mercy and patience will one day run out on man. Ahab was given chance after chance as he was an eye witness to God's power and divinity yet he continued to reject the Lord. Ahab eventually dies with the prophets words coming to pass that the dogs would lick up his blood (1 Kings 22:37-40). The author of Hebrews writes, "And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).
A Mother's Advise to her Beloved Son

1 The words of king Lemuel; the oracle which his mother taught him.

2 What, my son? and what, O son of my womb? And what, O son of my vows?

3 Give not thy strength unto women, Nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; Nor for princes [to say], Where is strong drink?

5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, And pervert the justice [due] to any that is afflicted.

6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, And wine unto the bitter in soul:

7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, And remember his misery no more.

8 Open thy mouth for the dumb, In the cause of all such as are left desolate.

9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously, And minister justice to the poor and needy.