“The Sweet Singer of Israel”
David as Musician in Samuel, Chronicles, and Psalms

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Summary

Number of Chapters: 3

The contribution of this thesis: This thesis gives a systematic overview of Biblical traditions concerning David as musician. It describes the evolution of David's musical identity from Samuel through Chronicles and finally through Psalms. This study serves two main purposes: first, it gives insight into the origins of Jewish music. Additionally, by focusing on one element of David's personality that runs as a thread through all three Biblical books, it helps us to understand David's changing image through the Biblical books and how it sets the stage for the plethora of rabbinic literature about David.

The goal of the thesis: My goal in writing this thesis was to understand the origins of the legend of David as musician. David's story as a musician has inspired thousands of years of interpretation, commentary, Midrash, art, and music, and I wanted to understand what has made him such a fascinating character to so many people. I also wanted to explore what seemed to me to be conflicting traditions about David in different sources. Finally, I wanted to get a sense of how the David story helped to influence the development of Jewish liturgical and secular music.

How it is divided: The thesis is divided into three chapters, each of which explores David as musician in one of the three Biblical books. One chapter is devoted to David in Samuel, one to David in Chronicles, and one to David in Psalms.

Materials used: I used a combination of primary and secondary sources. The Biblical texts themselves were certainly the primary basis of the thesis. I also used some rabbinic and medieval material, primarily in the forms of Midrash and parshanut. My secondary materials fell mostly three categories: books and articles specifically about King David, books and articles about each of the three Biblical books I wrote about, and books about Jewish music, particularly Jewish music in Biblical and early rabbinic times.

Introduction

David, melech Yisrael, chai, chai, v'kayam . . .

One of the first songs I remember learning as a child is a setting of this text from the Talmud: *David, King of Israel, lives and endures.* And it is true - David's legacy endures to the present day; people of all faiths connect to David as one of Israel's greatest leaders, as the quintessential poet and musician, as the chosen one of God, and even as a Messianic figure. But there have been many great leaders in Israel; why is it David who endures? As Joel Baden writes, "These words obviously cannot be used to describe a mere king from three thousand years ago. Nor, for that matter, would they be appropriate for any other character from the Hebrew Bible: we would never say that Moses lives and endures, or Abraham or Jacob, or Isaiah. All of these figures also have legends attached to them, but David is uniquely timeless."[1]

What is it that makes David "uniquely timeless"? Some suggest that it is his multi-dimensional, fully-formed personality, which is unique among Biblical characters; David experiences and expresses the full breadth of human emotion in a way we do not see in other Biblical characters. Or, perhaps it is the combination of his greatness and his flaws; in the words of David Wolpe, "A minor crack in character makes the vessel seem that much more precious."[2] And, of course, we cannot underestimate the impact David's stirring poetry and music on his legacy. It is probably the combination of all these factors and others that contribute to the continuing fascination with King David. That said, this larger-than-life David whose legacy endures until today was not necessarily conceived as such. Instead, David's character has developed over time, from the original David of the Book of Samuel, through the later Biblical

[1] Joel Baden, *The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 4.
[2] David Wolpe, *David: The Divided Heart* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014) Kindle, Introduction.

books of Chronicles and Psalms, and still further in rabbinic literature, Christian interpretation, medieval Jewish commentary, and even contemporary art, music, and poetry. Each of these sources brings one piece of the David story, combining to form this "uniquely timeless" David.

Many Biblical scholars look with disdain at the way later texts, both Biblical and Rabbinic, change the image of the David presented in the Books of Samuel. David Wolpe laments that, "Chronicles is Samuel made boring."[3] Jouette Bassler writes that the rabbis and writers of the New Testament "were primarily interested in using David to promulgate their own views."[4] Jonathan Kirsch deplores the fact that "Today, David has been scaled down to the cartoonish figure of a little shepherd boy who slays the mighty warrior Goliath with a slingshot."[5] Perhaps, however, the study of David's changing image through the ages provides us valuable insight into how the Jewish people have related to David at different points during our history. This study may give us little information about the historical David, but it can tell us a great deal about our ancestors and ourselves. Our consideration how different groups of people relate to David through different era leads us to a bigger question: how does the way we relate to our formative stories change as our circumstances and identities evolve? The David story provides a unique opportunity to answer this question: the Bible alone gives three different portrayals of David, in the Books of Samuel, Chronicles, and Psalms. Each book portrays a very different David, a David reflective of the kind of figure that would best relate to the people of that time.

David's musical identity – his musical output and patronage – certainly goes a long way in helping David remain relevant through the generations. His poetry timelessly speaks to

[3] David Wolpe, *David: The Divided Heart*, Introduction.
[4] Jouette M. Bassler, "A Man for All Seasons: David in Rabbinic and New Testament Literature," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 40, no.2 (1986): 156.
[5] Jonathan Kirsch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), 4.

people on a deeply emotional level, and it inspires each new generation of poets and musicians to make David's works their own. In addition to providing insight into the origins of the Jewish and liturgical music traditions, studying David's identity as a musician in the three Biblical books gives us a unique perspective on the development of the legend of David. While many episodes involving David in only one or two Biblical books, music serves as a unifying thread through all three Biblical books. However, David is a very different kind of musician in each book: in Samuel, David's music and poetry comes mostly in the form of personal expression; in Chronicles, David never appears as an actual musician himself, but instead serves as a patron and organizer of cultic music; finally, the David of Psalms leaves behind a huge body of poetry that endures in Jewish and Christian liturgy to this day. David's musical activity in each book is reflective of larger characterizations of David's personality, and helps to accomplish the different ideological goals of the various authors of the different books. This study will examine David as musician in Samuel, Chronicles, and Psalms, and will consider both how David functions as an inspiration for the nascent field of Jewish music, and how his musical qualities and output reflect changes realities in the Israelite community through Biblical and Temple times.

David and Musician and Poet in the Books of Samuel

The Books of Samuel give us our first introduction to David. The David of Samuel is a complex individual: he is a great leader, a devoted servant of God, but also fully human: he has flaws, and he sometimes makes poor choices. David's musical identity is one of the elements of his personality that most stands out: it is a quality that makes him unique among Biblical figures, and it also helps to propel the story forward and give us insight into other elements of David's personality. Thus, studying David as a musician provides a window into the larger David story.

There are two main facets of David's musical identity: David as musician and David as poet. David as instrumentalist and musician is actually unique to the Books of Samuel, as the David of Chronicles and of Psalms is a patron of music and a poet, respectively, but never actually appears again as a musician himself. Thus, David as musician in Samuel provides the overwhelming amount of background we have on David's skills as a singer and harpist, while David's poetry in Samuel is only a jumping-off point for his poetry in later texts. This chapter will examine David as musician and poet in the Books of Samuel, considering both the historical and literary contexts as a method of understanding what this first depiction of David represents in the larger David story. We will also explore how David's music in the Books of Samuel paves the way for the development of Jewish music.

David as Musician

David's Introduction(s) in 1 Samuel 16 and 17

Our first introduction to David as an active character comes in chapter sixteen after Samuel has anointed David (David serves mostly in a passive role in the story of his anointment). We learn that, after David's anointment, God's spirit departs from Saul and enters

David. An evil spirit replaces God's spirit within Saul, and his servants suggest he bring in a musician, specifically someone who plays the lyre, to ease his suffering. An unnamed servant recommends David, who is not only a skilled musician, but also shows courage, military prowess, eloquence, and beauty; most notably, the servant tells Saul that God is with David. Saul agrees to bring David to his court. When he hears David play, he "loves" him and also makes him his arms-bearer. We learn, whenever the evil spirit tormented Saul, David would play for him, and he would find relief (1 Samuel 16).

David's playing the lyre for Saul is a classic example of music therapy. Music therapy was already a prevalent healing method in societies throughout the ancient world, and we can see that it must have been a generally accepted technique in ancient Israel as well: the fact that there seems to be no question about using music to calm Saul's spirit suggests that music was a trusted healing method in Israel at that time.[6]

Kyle McCarter suggests that perhaps David learned musical skills so that, as a youngest son without expectations of an inheritance, he would have a profession that would allow him to work for a wealthier citizen.[7] The text, however, contains no mention of practical considerations, or even of David's musical background before he entered into the service of Saul; by the time we meet David, we are told he is already a skilled musician (1 Sam. 16:18). To the contrary, it seems the authors of the Books of Samuel want readers to connect David's musical gifts directly and solely to God; David's musical talents are part of his charisma, defined in a Biblical context as "the sudden appearance of a personal gift and power which was regarded in Israel simply as charisma, the free gift of Yahweh to the individual, and which therefore swept

[6] Jonathan Friedman, *Music in Biblical Life: The Roles of Song in Ancient Israel* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland and Company, 2013), 58-59.
[7] McCarter, P. Kyle, Jr., "The Historical David," *Interpretation* 40, no. 2 (April 1986), 119.

the populace along with it."[8] In order to fully appreciate David as God's anointed, we must regard his musical abilities as a part of his charisma, understood in its Biblical context as a gift from God. Rabbi David Kimchi, in his commentary on the Books of Samuel, takes the connection between God and David's musical abilities even further: he suggests that it was not until the divine spirit took hold in him that David began uttering songs and praises, or perhaps, in other words, that David had no musical abilities before God's spirit entered him.[9]

Highlighting David's musical abilities serves as a particularly effective vehicle of introduction. Alfred Sendrey goes as far as to claim that, "It is questionable whether David would ever have become king of his people and fulfilled his historical role, if his artistry had not opened him the way to the suffering King Saul. The meteor-like rise of David from the simplest life to highest honors would have probably never materialized without his musicianship."[10] As we see later, David's musical healing is only one of his introductions to Saul and, along with David's eloquence, beauty, courage, and skills as a warrior, is only one of the qualities that David has to recommend himself to Saul.[11] Still, David's musical skills do a great deal to justify his kingship and endear him to both the reader and to Saul. As Jonathan Friedmann writes, "exceptional musicians can exude a certain magnetism that draws people in and wins them over."[12] Additionally, David's musical abilities are an effective tool in showing that God's spirit has departed from Saul and entered David (i.e. that, without God's favor, Saul's days as king are numbered). Music therapy is not only a method of bringing about physical and emotional healing but, particularly in ancient cultures, was considered to have a "quasi-magical

[8] Albrecht Alt, quoted in Jonathan Kirsch, *The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel* (New York: Balentine Books, 2000), 7.
[9] Rabbi David Kimchi on 1 Sam. 16:13.
[10] Sendrey, quoted in Friedmann, *Music in Biblical Life,* 64.
[11] See 1 Sam. 16:18.
[12] Friedmann, *Music in Biblical Life,* 66.

efficacy" in healing spiritual ailments.[13] The departure of God's spirit from Saul manifested itself in him as the spiritual ailment of an evil spirit (1 Sam. 16:15). David's skills as a musician (a sign of God's spirit within him) uniquely poise him to enter Saul's court in order to help ease his suffering. Thus, David's musical abilities serve a two-fold purpose in the development of the plot: they symbolize a concrete manifestation of God's favor (and of God's withdrawing favor from Saul), and they give David an ironic entrée into Saul's court.

1 Samuel 16's account of David is actually the first half of a two-part introduction to David. What follows is perhaps the most legendary story about David. The Israelites are at war with the Philistines. The giant, Goliath, has challenged the Israelites to choose one man to fight him. If the Israelite wins, the Philistines will become slaves to the Israelites; if Goliath wins, the Israelites will become slaves to the Philistines. David arrives on the scene, ostensibly to deliver food to his brothers and their commanders. When he learns of Goliath's challenge, he offers to fight Goliath himself, and eventually kills Goliath using only his slingshot. When Saul witnesses David's victory, he asks his commander, Abner, a strange question: "Whose son is the lad, Abner?" (1 Sam. 17:55).[14] Saul clearly became acquainted with David in chapter sixteen, when he served as Saul's personal music therapist and arms bearer. Why does Saul now appear not to know who David is?

Scholars believe that these two stories represent two separately composed traditions of the beginning of David's relationship with Saul.[15] It is difficult to determine which story came earlier, though some scholars consider chapter sixteen's introduction to be the older of the two.[16]

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[13] Ibid., 60.
[14] All translations of Samuel in this chapter are from Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel.*
[15] Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 110-111.
[16] McCarter, qtd. in Kirsch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel*, 49.

It is notable, however, that the redactor chose to keep both accounts in the narrative, despite their contradictory accounts of David's introduction to Saul. While each story presents David in a different way, the two stories serve similar functions: both serve as David's introduction to Saul, both show that Saul is pleased with David, and both highlight the dramatic irony of the situation: Saul is unknowingly encouraging the presence of the man who has already replaced him as God's anointed. Finally, in both accounts, David's success is suggestive of God's favor. Despite their similar literary functions, however, the two accounts highlight different, but equally favorable element of David's personality: chapter sixteen shows us a peaceful, devoted servant of God, and chapter seventeen shows us a fearless warrior. As mentioned previously, one of the most compelling aspects of David is his multi-faceted, fully-formed personality.[17] For the Biblical redactors, perhaps it seemed valuable for the reader's first impressions of David to encompass both of these qualities. According to Joel Baden, "If David playing the lyre is an image of faith expressed in words, David defeating Goliath is an image of faith expressed in action. Taken together, they present a complete picture of the authentic man of God, one as emotionally insightful as he is physically courageous, all parts of his character testifying to his devotion."[18] These two most legendary qualities of David, musician and warrior, will remain intertwined throughout the Biblical and Rabbinic traditions.

1 Samuel 18-19: **Saul's attempts to kill David**

In chapters eighteen and nineteen, we encounter two parallel episodes in which Saul attempts to kill David while David is playing the lyre. The two episodes are very similar in plot and language: in both, an evil spirit from God seizes Saul while David is playing the lyre. Saul

[17] Wolpe, *David: The Divided Heart*, Introduction.
[18] Baden, *The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero*, 21.

attempts to kill David by throwing his spear at him, but both times David eludes Saul. Biblical scholars consider these two events to be a doublet, or a repetition of the same event in two different contexts; it is probably representative of the inclusion of two different sources reporting the same event. The repetition of this story has a powerful effect on the reader: Saul's "compulsive repetition" shows his worsening state of madness."[19]

The events and language of the two episodes help to confirm the message of the text: Saul has lost his mind and is acting irrationally toward David. The first episode is preceded by an event that begins to ferment Saul's distrust of David. At the beginning of chapter eighteen, when David and Saul are returning from their victorious battle against the Philistines (and after David's incredible defeat of Goliath), the Israelite women come out to greet Saul and David, dancing and singing, "Saul has struck down his thousands and David his tens of thousands!" (1 Sam. 18:7). It is this song of the Israelite women, which appears to elevate David's accomplishments over Saul's, that begins to sow the seeds of Saul's discontent.[20] Ironically, it is music performed by the Israelite women that incites Saul's suspicion of David's music; the authors highlight the cause and effect through the parallel use of the word "hicah" – the women sing that "Saul has *struck* down his thousands" on the battlefield, and soon thereafter, Saul attempts to "*strike* down" David as he plays his lyre (1 Sam. 18:11).

The back and forth nature of these two episodes also displays the continuing connection between David's musical ability and his military might (both signs of God's favor). In his jealousy, Saul reacts to David's skillful playing by trying to assert the military prowess that

[19] Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*, 119.
[20] Joel Baden questions whether the song of the Israelite women really was meant as a comparison between David and Saul. According to Baden, "Biblical poetry regularly uses increasing numbers in parallel clauses, which often are to be read not as a comparison, but as a distributive equation" (*The Historical David: the Real Life of an Invented Hero,* 62). In other words, perhaps the song was meant to amplify both David's and Saul's accomplishments, not to compare the two. If this is the case, it only serves as a clearer indicator that Saul is losing his mind.

seems to have deserted him. When we are first introduced to David's music, we learn that David plays the lyre "with his hand" (1 Sam. 16:23). It seems unusual that the text would have included this word, "*b'yado,*" which John Arthur Smith suggests is part of an idiom referring to the playing of this type of plucked-string instrument.[21] The word "*b'yado"* reappears to describe David's playing in both chapters eighteen and nineteen, but it is also used to describe Saul's reaction: in both chapters, while David plays, Saul's spear is "in his hand" (1 Sam. 18:10 and 19:9). Saul attempts to kill David, first with his own spear, and then by sending him into battle with the Philistines to achieve what seems an impossible task (to collect a hundred foreskins of killed Philistines); yet, these efforts to kill Saul only serve as yet another opportunity for David to show his military might, first by eluding Saul's spear, and then by once again returning victorious from battle with the Philistines, having killed not one hundred, but two hundred Philistines. Chapters eighteen and nineteen serve as a means to once again highlight these two contrasting elements of David's personality that help to create a fully-formed character and also to show God's total support of David.

As we have seen, the text presents a picture of Saul losing his mind, acting irrationally against an innocent David who has done nothing (at least consciously) to provoke him. Some scholars, however, question whether Saul's suspicions were entirely unjustified and whether David's behavior was completely innocent and genuine. Baden points out that "Saul was the first king of a small and fragile nation. His kingship was maintained by sheer force of will and the promise of continued military success. He had every right to be concerned about the succession of his line – as he was the first king, there was no established dynastic protocol."[22] Jonathan Friedmann moves beyond circumstantially justifying Saul's paranoia, suggesting that

[21] John Arthur Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 155.
[22] Baden, *The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero*, 67-68.

David intentionally changed the timbre of his music after he earned David's trust; perhaps David began introducing a different kind of music, meant to drive Saul crazy rather than heal him, in order that David might usurp the throne.[23] These interpretations suggest that the episodes when Saul attempts to kill David contribute to the apologetic tone of the entire story of David's rise to power; they help to justify David's kingship by showing that that Saul is unfit to rule.

David Dancing during the Transportation of the Ark to Jerusalem

Once David has conquered the Philistines and consolidated his rule, he moves to create a new capital in Jerusalem. David justifies his choice of Jerusalem as his new capital and cultic center by transporting the Ark from Kiryat-Jearim to Jerusalem. Establishing the ark as a royal symbol rather than solely as a national cultic symbol helps to cement David's kingship by implying God's support. Sending the ark to Jerusalem would not have been an obvious choice, as it had historically been kept in Shiloh, and most recently been in Kiryath-Jearim while the area was under Philistine occupation.[24] Creating a ritual for the transportation of the ark would have helped to give validity to moving it. David dresses and acts in the role of priest, in order to encourage his people to associate their religious practices with the monarchy. Thus far, music has been the representation both of David's faith in God and of God's support of David's kingship, so it would be only natural that the ceremony David instates for this process would include music. Music has also already been established as a means of achieving a state of ecstasy: in 1 Samuel 10, and 1 Samuel 19, Saul and David, respectively, encounter bands of prophets. In the first case, the author tells us explicitly that the prophets use instruments to induce their states of ecstasy (1 Samuel 10:5). In the second case, we do not hear of music

[23] Friedmann, *Music in the Hebrew Bible,* 108.
[24] Baden, *The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero*, 166-169.

specifically, but we can likely assume (and guess that early readers would have assumed) that achieving ecstasy would have involved music then, too.[25] Including dance as a part of the musical accompaniment only heightens the sense of connection to God: Jonathan Friedmann explains that "dance is a conduit for mystical union," as participating actively in art intensifies its emotional and spiritual effects, and the physicality of dance in particular helps to add to the sense of ecstasy. In other words, "artistic expression plus physical activity equals spiritual ecstasy."[26] The musical elements of this ritual help to reinforce David's connection to God, and David's serving in the role of priest helps to set the stage for his role in encouraging the development of ritual music in later traditions.

The celebratory atmosphere comes to a screeching halt when David comes home to his wife, Michal. Michal has witnessed this ritual from the window and "scorned [David] in her heart" (2 Sam. 6:17). When David returns, Michal berates him: "How honored today is the king of Israel who has exposed himself today to the eyes of his servants' slavegirls as some scurrilous fellow would expose himself!" (2 Sam. 6:20). David snaps back: "Before the Lord, Who chose me instead of your father and instead of all his house, to appoint me prince over the Lord's people, over Israel, I will play before the LORD!" (2 Sam. 6:21). Then, we learn that Michal forever remained childless (2 Sam. 6:23).

This disturbing episode serves a larger purpose in the story of David's rise to power; it represents the final stage both in cementing David's kingship and in the fall of Saul's line. It mirrors two earlier incidents in which Saul engages in prophecy: the first comes just after Saul has been anointed king; David encounters a band of prophet-musicians and enters into a state of ecstasy himself (1 Sam. 10). The second occurs soon after David and Saul are introduced to one

[25] Friedmann, *Music in the Hebrew Bible, 123.*
[26] Ibid., 32-33.

another, Saul attempts to kill David while David plays the lyre. Michal advises David to flee. While giving chase to David, Saul encounters a band of prophets, who presumably use music to help achieve their prophetic states.[27] A spirit of God possesses him, and he enters into a state of ecstasy. Much is parallel between the three stories: Saul and David enter into states of ecstasy, the ecstasy is accompanied by music, and in 1 Samuel 19 and 2 Samuel 6, both Saul and David undress. The end results for Saul and David, however, are very different: in both stories involving Saul, his state of ecstasy ends in a derisive comment: "Is Saul, too, among the prophets?" (1 Sam. 10:11 and 1 Sam. 19:24). David's state of ecstasy, on the other hand, seems to encourage a similar state in the Israelites accompanying him. Furthermore, when Michal questions David's behavior, David reminds Michal that he was chosen over Saul for the kingship; we then learn that Michal, referred to here as "Saul's daughter" rather than as "David's wife" never conceives, thus ending all possibility for the continuation of Saul's line and reinforcing David's kingship.[28] It is striking that music creates a stark contrast between David and Saul: when Saul engages in music and prophesy, he is ridiculed and his kingship diminished. David's musical skills and charisma, on the other hand, reinforce his true connection to God and his rightful kingship, and they inspire the rest of the nation.

That said, Michal's skepticism is not necessarily totally off-base. It is not at all beyond the realm of possibility that David would have exposed himself while wearing the ephod, a short garment which would have only barely covered him.[29] In fact, the entire episode is not without questionable undertones. The verb used to describe the Israelites' singing, dancing, and instrumental playing at the beginning of the first procession is *m'sachakim*, which carries with it

[27] In 1 Sam. 10, the first episode involving Saul and prophecy, the prophecy is accompanied by music. There is reason to guess that music may have been involved in this case as well, as "prophecy in Israel was largely a musical phenomenon" (Friedmann, *Music in the Hebrew Bible*, 123).
[28] Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*, 228.
[29] Ibid., 227.

"undertones of all sort of eroticism and intoxication."[30] Kirsch call the entire "spectacle . . . eerie and grotesque," citing the connotations of David whirling in a "frenzy," clad scantily, as "the ram's horn shrieked, the cymbals clanged, the woodwinds droned."[31] Even though the ark is successfully transported into Jerusalem, the reader's perception of the episode will inevitably be at least partially colored by the traumatic mystery of Uzzah's death, as well as by David and Michal's harsh encounter. Once again, we see that David is human[32], that "the logic of the larger story's moral and historical realism requires that no triumph should be simple and unambiguous," that even David's musical ability, the quality most readily associated with David's faith in and connection to God, is not immune to human failings and weaknesses.[33]

David as Poet

David's Laments

Thus far, the reader has experienced David's skills as musician, but David's lament for Saul and Jonathan following their deaths at the beginning of the second book of Samuel, as well as his lament for Abner in chapter three, give us our first glimpses of David as poet.[34] David's lament over Saul and Jonathan serves as a moment of literary transition, "as the David-Saul story becomes the David story,"[35] and David becomes empowered with the gift of poetry to add to his gift of music. It is unclear whether David was actually the author of these laments; they may

[30] Joachim Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archaeological, Written, and Comparative Sources* (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 107.
[31] Kirsch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel,* 162-163.
[32] Ibid., 165.
[33] Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*, 229.
[34] Ibid., 198.
[35] Ibid.

also have been composed and added by Biblical authors or editors, or could even have been pre-existing, independent poems adapted to fit into the text.[36]

Regardless of the true authorship of these poems, it is important to recognize what David's laments represent for the reader and how they contribute both to the creation of David's image in later traditions and to the development of the Jewish way of expressing grief. David's lament for Saul and Jonathan is the first canonical appearance of the *kinah* – "a formal expression of deep sorrow in poetry and song."[37] Other characters have mourned lost loved ones, such as Jacob, who mourns Rachel's death (Gen. 23:2), but different verbs describe their mourning, and no Biblical character who appears in the canon before David recites such a stylized and personal expression of grief.[38] The *kinah* becomes "a prominent feature of similar accounts in post-biblical literature,"[39] as well an important expression of communal lament in the Jewish tradition, particularly on the Ninth of Av. It also develops into the eulogy customarily recited for the dead in the Jewish tradition.[40] David's laments contribute to the tradition that David was the author of the psalter. Kirsch suggests that "the undeniable grace and power of the elegy inspired the pious tradition that David was the author of the Psalter in its entirety" but, considering the fact that a significant portion of the psalter is devoted to lament, perhaps the simple fact that David is the first Biblical character to recite such a lament contributes to the

[36] Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity,* 138. The composition of laments was common to funeral of the wealthy, and there was also a "national repertory of cultic laments" in Israel. Smith suggests that David's laments may be taken or adapted from those in that repertory, or from another independent poem already known in Israel. It was also common among Biblical authors to ascribe anonymous texts to well-known Biblical figures, in order to give those texts additional legitimacy.

[37] Ibid., 135

[38] For a list of the verbs used to denote mourning and grief in the Bible, see: Paul Wayne Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 109.

[39] Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, 139.

[40] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Kinah" (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007).

tradition of his authorship.[41] Later, as cultic music becomes more and more associated with David, these laments, along with David's psalm of Thanksgiving to God in chapter twenty-two, will become part of the "national repertory of cultic laments in Israel and Judah."[42]

Some scholars are suspicious of the David's motives in lamenting Saul, Jonathan and Abner. David would have had strong reasons to desire the deaths of Saul, his political rival, and Abner, Saul's military commander (whose newfound loyalty to David must have seemed dubious). Thus, David would also have had strong reasons to exonerate himself of any suspicion of blame in the deaths of these three men; in his attempts to establish his kingship, David would not have wanted those loyal to Saul to suspect David had a hand in their deaths. A sincere, effusive expression of grief would have been helpful in convincing both the Israelite people and the reader that their suspicions were unfounded.[43] And, what better way to express his grief than through music, God's gift to David, which thus far has symbolized God's support of David's kingship and David's inextricable connection to God? Especially striking is the fact that David recites beautifully-composed, poetic laments for Saul, Jonathan, and Abner but expresses his grief in completely different ways after the deaths of Absalom and his first son with Bathsheba. David's lament for Absalom consists only of David painfully repeating his son's name, and David's reaction death of his son with Bathsheba is jarring in its seeming lack of grief. One cannot help but question the contrast between David's formal, stylized, perhaps over-the-top laments for Saul, Jonathan, and Abner, and his more genuine-seeming, perhaps

[41] Kirsch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel*, 127.
[42] Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, 138.
[43] Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel,* 216.

unplanned reactions to the deaths of his sons.[44] According to Joel Baden, David's lament for Saul and Jonathan "reaches the extreme limits of the Biblical apology."[45]

David as Psalmist

Towards the end of the second book of Samuel, we encounter David's psalm of praise to God. We learn that David utters these words "on the day the Lord rescued him from the clutches of his enemies and from the clutches of Saul" (2 Sam. 22:1). Much seems unusual about this song of praise: first, it seems out of place chronologically, most obviously because it mentions Saul, who has long since died. Additionally, the language and tone seem to be out of character for the David we have come to know throughout the Books of Samuel. In this song, David portrays his relationship with God as personal in a way we have not seen through the rest of the books, and he expresses a level of certainty in God's support of him that seems inconsistent with his earlier perspectives on God.[46] Most striking is David's portrayal of himself as totally blameless, a recipient God's blessing because of his own merit: "The Lord dealt with me by my merit, by the cleanness of my hands requited me" (2 Sam. 22:21). It seems difficult to reconcile this portrayal of a perfectly righteous David with the David of the rest of Samuel, who, though confident, never seems wholly certain of God's favor, and is not averse to admitting his own wrongdoing (as in his affair with Batsheva).

There are several different theories regarding the authorship of this song, which reappears with slight variations as Psalm 18. Some ascribe it to David himself, citing the scholars who

[44] Steve Weitzman, "David's Lament and the Poetics of Grief in 2 Samuel," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 85 (1995): 357.

[45] Baden, *The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero*, 114.

[46] Kirsch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel*, 261.

date the poem to David's era based on the language, which was typical of the time.[47] Others ascribe it to the author of the David story, though some would suggest that certain sections were later additions, such as verses twenty-one through twenty-five (claiming that David's merit brought on God's support) and verse fifty-one (which references the eternal continuation of David's line); according to this perspective, these additions were the work of authors or redactors with more theological goals.[48] Still others believe that the song was composed entirely separately from the David story and inserted later.[49]

Whatever its origins, this song helps us to understand of the significance of David's musical abilities in the Books of Samuel, and also represents a shift in our tradition's general portrayal of David. Throughout the Books of Samuel, David's musical abilities have hinted at David's faith and at a close connection to God. Here, however, the text makes this connection explicit: David uses the medium of music as a way to strongly proclaim his faith in God and his belief in God's eternal support.[50] David's use of music as a form of prayer helps to set the stage for the conception of David as patron of cultic (and later, Temple) music. This psalm also serves as a text that sets the stage for a new image of David in later Biblical and rabbinic texts. We can see the author encouraging the transition from the multi-dimensional, both great and flawed David of the Books of Samuel, to the almost flawless, superhuman, character who will become a messianic figure and who symbolizes the eternal image of strength and faith. In the words of Jonathan Kirsch, "David may yet be alive, but the mortal David is already being eclipsed by the transcendental David, the shimmering theological icon who will loom so large in

[47] Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel,* 336.
[48] Ibid., 339 and 344.
[49] See Kirsch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel*, 262-263. Some believe that this Psalm resulted from the combination of two earlier songs.
[50] K.L. Noll, *The Faces of David* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 120.

the messianic yearnings of both Judaism and Christianity. As far as the late biblical author is concerned, David is as good as dead already, and only the symbolic David really matters."[51]

Conclusion

The Jewish tradition has overwhelmingly associated David's musical identity with the "sweet singer of Israel" identified in the introduction to David's last words (II Sam. 23:1). In many ways, the David of the Books of Samuel is that sweet singer; he is given the gift of music from God, and he uses his talents to heal, to unite a nation, to declare his faith in God, and to express the depth of human emotion. David's musical experiences in the Books of Samuel, together with other qualities of David established in these books, help to set the stage for the expansion of his musical identity in Chronicles and Psalms, as well as in the rabbinic tradition: for instance, the David who sings a psalm of Thanksgiving to God will become the author of the entire psalter, and the David who creates a musical ceremony for the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem will become the patron of cultic and Temple music.

Yet, just as David's identity is more complex than the often-romanticized picture portrayed in later traditions, so too is David's musical identity more multifaceted. We question whether David sometimes used his talent of music therapy to aggravate rather than heal; we wonder to what extent David's laments were true expressions of grief, and to what extent they were displays of political savvy; we consider the possibility that, as Michal expresses, David's dance before the ark was not totally honorable.

David Wolpe writes of David's multi-dimensional character: "David is the first person in history whose tale is complete and vital, laced with passions, savagery, hesitation, betrayal, charisma, faith, family – the rich canvas of a large life. He is capable of great acts, expressions

[51] Kirsch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel*, 263-264.

of lasting piety, and of startling cruelty."[52] And, perhaps, it is David's humanness that most endears us to him as a hero: we look up to David, and at the same time we see a piece of ourselves in him. David's expression of his musical gifts mirrors and helps display his other qualities, both positive and negative, and it serves as a piece of David's complex and compelling personality.

[52] Wolpe, *David: The Divided Heart*, Introduction.

David as Musician in Chronicles

Introduction and Relevant Background on Chronicles

Chronicles provides a history of the Israelite people, from the time of Adam through the edict of Cyrus, but through a different lens than the Pentateuch and the prophetic books. It focuses on the development of cultic ritual during the time of David and its continuation (or neglect) throughout the reigns of the monarchs who succeeded David. Although scholars cannot identify exactly when Chronicles was written, most agree that it was composed in the fourth century, during the mid-late Persian period and the Second Temple period.[53] With the destruction of the First Temple, a number of Israelites went into exile. Following the edict of Cyrus, a small group of the ruling elite who had been in exile returned to the land. Although the Israelites built the Second Temple, the dynamics at play among the Israelites were not so simple: many Israelites had remained in the land following the destruction of the First Temple, and it was not at all obvious to them that the returning elite of Israel should dictate religious affairs.[54] During this time, the Temple was relatively small, and the Israelite people did not always readily provide support. In order to encourage that support, the Chronicler tries to help validate the Temple's existence and customs among the Israelite people. The Chronicler attempts to legitimize the Temple and its cultic practices by rooting it in a long history, originating with David. Thus, while Chronicles ostensibly describes the establishment of religious ritual by David and its continuation during the time of the First Temple, it is in reality a better description of Second Temple norms and practices.

Much of Chronicles focuses on David, though the focus is less on David's personal story, and more on his role as organizer and patron of cultic ritual. Since the Chronicler's goals in

[53] Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Bretter, ed., *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1713.
[54] Marti J. Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press), 124-125.

telling this story are different from those of the authors of Samuel, much of what we read about David differs, both in details and in themes, from what we read about him in Samuel; additionally, some material seems to have no basis in what we know about David from Samuel, and other material from Samuel makes no appearance at all in the David narrative of Chronicles. Scholars debate: are we to assume that the intended reader of Chronicles would have known David's story from the book of Samuel? Or, was Chronicles intended to be the authoritative history of David's life? Though some scholars do believe that Chronicles was meant to be read wholly independently of Samuel, most believe that the Chronicler presupposed some knowledge of the events of the books of Samuel.[55] It seems probable that the David of the books of Samuel would have lent credibility to the David of Chronicles, particularly when it comes to David's musical legacy. When it comes to David's role as the authoritative voice in Temple music, it would be difficult to see the David of Chronicles as totally independent of the David of the books of Samuel; it would seem more logical to view the David of Chronicles as actually building on the David of Samuel.

There are several themes that the Chronicler emphasizes throughout the book, a few of which are relevant to this study of David as musician: first, the Chronicler attempts to establish historical continuity, when it comes to both cultic ritual and to the presence of the Israelite people in their land. Additionally, the Chronicler wishes to present these cultic practices and institutions as divinely-ordained, and thus emphasizes a system of direct divine reward and punishment regarding the proper practice of cultic ritual. Finally, the Chronicler wants to present an image of a unified Israelite people, all supportive and observant of cultic practices as established by David and perpetuated by his successors.

[55] Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible,* 1713-1714.

Historical Truths and Untruths

In Temple times, sacrifice was the backbone of cultic ritual.[56] We do not know how music became associated with Temple worship, but we do know that it was considered an essential accompaniment to sacrifice.[57] It helped to beautify the sacrificial rite, inspired joy and devotion among its participants, and had a powerful unifying effect on the Israelite people.[58] According to later sources, sacrifices were actually invalidated if they were not accompanied by music.[59] Thus, a discussion of the origins of Temple ritual, such as that of Chronicles, would not have been complete without a discussion of the music that would accompany it.

David's musical role in the book of Chronicles is overwhelmingly that of patron and organizer of cultic music to accompany sacrificial ritual. He appoints a group of Levites to take charge of religious song (1 Chronicles 6:16 and 1 Chronicles 25:1-7), and "to invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel" (1 Chronicles 16:4).[60] He instructs them on how to execute the ritual, including what instruments to use (1 Chronicles 15:16, 1 Chronicles 16:5-6, 2 Chronicles 29:27) and potentially what songs to sing (1 Chronicles 16:7-36, 2 Chronicles 29:30). According to the Chronicler, the musical ritual established by David becomes the standard for the First Temple, and subsequent monarchs are evaluated in terms of how well they uphold the standards set up by David.

Historically, Chronicles cannot be viewed as a reliable depiction of music in the First Temple or the time period immediately preceding it. Pre-exilic sources discuss the role of the Levites in other ritual duties, but nowhere do they mention the Levites as having any role in

[56] Alfred Sendrey, *Music in Ancient Israel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969), 169.
[57] Friedmann, *Music in Biblical Life*, 119.
[58] Ibid., 119-122
[59] Sendrey, *Music in Ancient Israel,* 169.
[60] All translations of Chronicles in this chapter are taken from: Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1983. This group of Levites include some who will become known in the Psalm superscriptions, such as Asaph and Ethan.

ritual music.[61] In fact, some scholars suggest that it was actually the prophets who served as musicians in the First Temple.[62] Additionally, the few sources that are considered more reliable depictions of First Temple ritual do not mention David at all.[63] Also, while scholars may feel comfortable considering the book of Chronicles a more accurate description of Second Temple ritual, the fact that the book was written several hundred years after David's death forces the reader to question whether David even had a role in establishing these rituals.

While we may not be able to know with any certainty what music looked like in the First Temple, or what role David had in the establishment of the musical system for the First or Second Temples, it is perhaps more important to consider why the Chronicler has ascribed the establishment of Temple music to David in the first place. Much of the musical activity described in Chronicles (e.g. the guilds of Levitical musicians, the detailed descriptions of the instruments to be used) has no precedence in pre-exilic Biblical texts. Yet, at the same time, legitimating the Second Temple necessitates creating an historical link between the Second Temple and the earlier, uncontroversial First Temple (whose ritual David supposedly established even before the Temple was constructed). David has authority as both musician and leader, so the Chronicler attaches David's name to the creation of Temple ritual; David's connection to the ritual helps to legitimate it, not as an innovation by the ruling class recently returned from exile in Babylonia, but as a tradition steeped in a long history.

[61] John Arthur Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2011), 56.
[62] Ibid., 69
[63] Ibid., 38-50. Smith cites Amos, First Isaiah, I Kings 10, and a particular group of Psalms as probably giving more accurate information about First Temple practice. None of the sources cited by Smith actually mention David's legacy in the creation of First Temple ritual.

Music as Unifier

As mentioned above, one of the Chronicler's main goals is to present a unified Israel; thus, the involvement of "all Israel" in establishing Temple ritual becomes a theme throughout Chronicles. David figures prominently as organizer of music, but not as musician; instead, David encourages musical involvement in the larger Israelite community, not just among the Levites, but also among the entire people. For instance, in describing the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem, the first reference to David's musical rejoicing is almost identical to the one in Samuel: both state that "David and all Israel were making merry before God," with a multitude of instruments (2 Sam. 6:5 and 1 Chronicles 13:8). However, the ways the two books contextualize this section create two very different perspectives on the involvement of the entire Israelite people in this ritual. The beginning of this episode in Samuel suggests David as the main actor and instigator in the transfer of the ark: we learn only that David assembled a group of Israelites to move the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1-2). The Chronicler, on the other hand, goes to great lengths to show that the transfer of the ark was an act planned and agreed upon by the entire Israelite people: we learn that David consulted with Israelite officers and asked for the approval of the people before moving ahead with bringing the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 13:2-3).

The second episode of transferring the ark to Jerusalem (after the death of Uzzah delays the process by a few months) further highlights the way the Chronicler plays down David's role as musician in comparison to the authors of the books of Samuel. In Samuel, we learn that, after the David hears that the house of Obed-Edom, who has been safeguarding the ark, has been blessed, *David* brings the ark to Jerusalem, *David* offers a sacrifice, and *David* dances before God (2 Sam. 12-14); the episode culminates in Michal's disdain for what she (and perhaps to

some extent the reader) perceives as an excessive and self-serving performance on David's part. In any case, here we see that David's musical gifts are an important piece of his charismatic leadership, of what makes him unique as the extraordinary leader of Israel.

In Chronicles, however, although David organizes this second stage of the transfer of the ark, he seems to be a lesser actor in the actual ritual. The vast majority of 2 Chronicles 15 describes David directing and organizing the Levitical music that would accompany the transfer of the ark. The action of moving the ark feels communal in this chapter: "David and the elders of Israel and the commanders of thousands" express their joy in moving the ark (1 Chronicles 15:25); "David and all the Levites . . . and the singers" were dressed in fine clothing (1 Chronicles 15:27); "All Israel" brings the ark to Jerusalem with musical accompaniment (1 Chronicles 15:28). Only at the end of the chapter do we learn that David was "dancing and making merry," and Michal's disdain for David's actions seems unjustified, as David's musical expression here seems to be just a small part of the communal celebration, not an individual expression (1 Chronicles 15:29) of ecstasy. It is unclear from this description whether David even has a unique role as musician in this ceremony, or whether he becomes just a participant in the musical ritual he organizes for the Levites.

In Chronicles, music serves as a way to highlight the unity of the Israelite people in following God's plan, rather than a way to display David's own talents as a reflection of his personal relationship with God. This emphasis on the unity of "all Israel" and de-emphasis on David's own charismatic leadership is characteristic of the book of Chronicles. We saw above that, as opposed to the authors of the books of Samuel, when the Chronicler relates the story of the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem, the musical ritual is more community-centric than David-centric. Similarly, in discussing David's organization of the Levitical music system, the

Chronicler tells us multiple times that it was not just David who designated the Levitical musicians but, for example, "David and the chiefs of the service" (1 Chronicles 25:1, or "David and Gad the king's seer and Nathan the prophet" (2 Chronicles 29:25).

As mentioned previously, the time period in which Chronicles was written was one that followed a turbulent time of destruction and exile for the Israelite people, and the reestablishment of the Temple cultus was not necessarily an obvious priority of the entire people.[64] In attempting to legitimate the Temple and its ritual by entrenching it in a long history, the Chronicler believed it was important to show that, even in the early days before the construction of the Temple, the Israelite people shared a consensus about the creation of religious ritual; in the early days of the ritual, according to the Chronicler's presentation, there was no tension surrounding its creation, as the entire Israelite people was united in following God's instruction in their method of worship.[65] In order to convincingly highlight this unity among the Israelite people, David must appear less the charismatic leader we encounter in the books of Samuel and more the consensus builder and advisor; rather than standing out as an exceptional and complex individual, David becomes a more one-dimensional representation of the ideal leader helping to facilitate the ideal form of worship. In the words of Marti Steussy, "The Chronicler's David is paradigmatic rather than unique – a quintessential Israelite in solidarity with all worthy Israelite leaders."[66] Thus, the Chronicler removes and changes references to David's personal musical expression and also includes other Israelite leaders, as well as the Israelite people, in a more prominent role.

[64] Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power*, 124-125.
[65] Mark A. Throntveit, "Was the Chronicler a Spin Doctor? David in the Books of Chronicles," *Word and World* 23, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 9 and Steussy, *David: Portraits of Biblical Power*, 124-125.

[66] Steussy, *David: Portraits of Biblical Power*, 125.

David as Facilitator of God's Will

In response to those who might question the legitimacy of the Temple and its ritual, the Chronicler makes clear through David's leadership that the cultic ritual, including its music, was ordained by God. The text of Chronicles emphasizes that, while David organizes the cultic ritual, he is actually just making known the will of God, "for the ordinance [of the Levitical musicians] was from the Lord through His prophets" (2 Chronicles 29:25).

In order to reinforce the idea that God ordained the cultic ritual, the Chronicler emphasizes a doctrine of divine reward and punishment for carrying out or not carrying out ritual appropriately. In Samuel, the reader never learns why God punished Uzzah for handling the ark; we know only that, immediately before the oxen carrying the ark stumble, "David and all the House of Israel danced before the ark" (II Samuel 6:5). In the Chronicler's portrayal of the episode, this verse describes the salient misstep that brings on punishment; David tells the Levites, "Because you did not carry it the first time, the Lord our God broke forth upon us, because we did not care for it in the way that is ordained" (1 Chronicles 15:13), and he then gives them instructions on how to conduct the musical ceremony properly. This time, "God helped the Levites who were carrying the ark" (1 Chronicles 15:26). David realizes that it is not his spontaneous devotion that God desires, but rather a specific ritual, the content of which is his responsibility to transmit to the people.[67] When the people follow God's instruction, they are rewarded with God's help, but God is also quick to punish in response to ritual that does not follow God's standards. It is, perhaps, not coincidental then that immediately upon setting up the ark in its tent in Jerusalem, David appoints the Levitical singers and instructs them on how to properly praise God through music (1 Chronicles 16:4-7).

[67] Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 293.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that the Chronicler seems to equate cultic music with prophecy. 1 Chronicles 25 is dedicated to listing the Levitical musicians, along with David's instructions to them and their tasks. The Levites named are repeated referred to as "seers," and their activity as "prophesying." 2 Chronicles 29 recalls David's appointment of the Levitical musicians in the context of Hezekiah's reign, and here Asaph is referred to as a seer (2 Chronicles 29:30), as are both Gad and Nathan, and we learn that, as mentioned above, "the ordinance [of the Levitical singers] was by God through God's prophets" (2 Chronicles 29:25).

Sara Japhet writes that "the singers are called 'seers' first of all because they are regarded as composers of the Temple psalmody, probably already seen as the product of divine inspiration."[68] It would naturally follow, then, that David is fulfilling God's command by appointing these singers.[69] While Japhet's reasoning for why the Levitical singers were considered prophets makes sense, it is still unclear how this tradition originated, and how David figures into it. In the prophetic books, prophecy is the primary means of connecting to God and receiving God's messages; most significantly, prophecy "witnessed to the belief that the Deity was actively concerned for his people."[70] As we saw in the previous chapter, music figures prominently into the prophetic tradition, because of its power "to foster human-divine contact, emotionalize holy words, and call the people to urgent pronouncements."[71] Though prophecy was not directly connected to cultic ritual, bands of prophets were often found near cultic centers, and were thus associated with religious ritual.[72] With such a strong history of musical prophecy in Israelite tradition, it seems natural that the Chronicler would want musical prophecy

[68] Ibid., 440.
[69] Ibid.
[7070] Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity,* 56.
[71] Friedmann, *Music in the Hebrew Bible*, 124.
[72] Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity,* 57.

to play a role in creation of institutionalized worship; referring to the Levitical musicians as prophets would give a sense of divine legitimacy to the institution of cultic musicians.

There seems to be some link here between the musical prophecy of the Levites in Chronicles and musical prophecy in the books of Samuel, and David is an essential piece of this connection. Alfred Sendry suggests that Samuel actually set up formalized schools of prophecy, that David learned the art of musical prophecy from Samuel during his stay at Ramah (the location of Samuel's original prophetic school), and that he then used his newfound knowledge to instruct the Levitical musicians.[73] There is no historical evidence to back up Sendry's claims, and his progression actually conflates the books of Samuel and Chronicles.[74] Still, perhaps Sendry's theory provides a window into the Chronicler's thought process in emphasizing this connection between David as organizer of cultic music and musical prophecy; if we assume that readers of Chroniclers are familiar with the traditions of the books of Samuel, then we can see David as the connector who helps the Chronicler make the jump from the musical prophets of Samuel to the Levitical musicians. In the books of Samuel, David has gained credibility as a divinely-inspired musician, with a close connection to prophecy. The Chronicler wishes to create an authentic-seeming transition from the more loosely organized, spontaneous art of musical prophecy, to the more regimented, ritualized art of Levitical music, while maintaining the sense connection between musicians and God. David's authority, as divinely-inspired musician and divinely-ordained monarch, makes him the natural organizer of Levitical music and prophecy.

[73] Sendrey, *Music in Ancient Israel*, 482-489.
[74] Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity,* 56. As mentioned previously, some scholars suggests that it was actually prophets who served as musicians in the First Temple, not Levites. According to this theory, David actually would have had no role in appointing the Levitical musicians.

David as Musician and Poet in Chronicles

In order to understand the David of Chronicles as musician, it is important to recognize what his musical identity lacks. In emphasizing David's role as patron of music, Chronicles largely de-emphasizes David as a musician and poet in his own right. The Chronicler begins his account after Saul's death, thus leaving out any reference to David playing the lyre or serving as a "music therapist" for Saul. The Chronicler's motivations for leaving out this material were probably more related to wanting to de-emphasize Saul, but the omission does contribute significantly to deemphasizing David's own creativity and musical skills. Most references to David and music in Chronicles are to David as organizing and commissioning music for the cult; it is questionable whether Chronicles ever actually refers to David as a musician himself. We do find reference to the "instruments of David," but it is not made clear whether these are instruments David himself played, or whether these are just the instruments David instructed the Levites to use (2 Chronicles 29:26, 27).

Chronicles also minimizes David's role as poet. Nowhere in Chronicles do we see a definitive presentation of David's poetry. The one potential reference we see to David's poetry comes once the Israelites have brought the ark to Jerusalem: "On that day David first appointed that Thanksgiving be sung to the Lord by Asaph and his brethren" (1 Chronicles 16:7). A combination of Psalms 96 and 105, as well as a concluding doxology follow.[75] Yet, although the composition of the psalms has traditionally been attributed to David, from the text alone, it is unclear what David's role was in their composition and performance. Did David compose and perform them as part of his commission of Asaph and the other singers? Or, did Asaph and the singers compose and perform them after their inspiration from David? Or, were Asaph and the

[75] Japhet, *I & 2 Chronicles,* 316

singers performing David's compositions in response to his instructions? It is not at all clear whether this is actually a reference to David's poetry.

In fact, the Chronicler seems to go out of his way not to include examples of the stylized, emotional poetry which plays such a large role in the formation of David's musical identity in the books of Samuel. David gives several speeches in Chronicles which would have seemed to lend themselves naturally to the poetry David is famous for; surprisingly, the Chronicler opts to present these speeches in prose. For example, when David expresses a desire to build a house for God, God tells David (by means of Nathan) not to build it, but at the same time, makes him a promise that his line will endure forever. David responds with a prayer that is "the suitable means to express feelings that are rather complex."[76] The reader would probably expect that the David she has come to know in the books of Samuel would express these complex emotions through poetry, but he instead utters his prayer in prose.[77] Even David's farewell speeches in 1 Chronicles 28-29, expressed in poetry in 2 Samuel 23, are here expressed in prose.[78] It seems curious that, given David's reputation as a masterful poet, the Chronicler would choose to set David's words in prose, even during moments that would naturally have lent themselves to poetry.

Perhaps the Chronicler also saw prominently featuring David's personal, spontaneous musical expression as antithetical to legitimizing a cemented, routinized Temple ritual. David's musical and poetic expression in the books of Samuel are generally spontaneous, not part of a ritual that could serve as a repeatable model: for instance, in Samuel, David dances before the ark "with all his might," in an ecstasy inspired by the joy of the moment (2 Sam. 6:14). In Chronicles, on the other hand, the musical celebration is joyful, but it is much more structured

[76] Ibid., 336.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 484

and measured; the "correct" version of this ceremony, described in 1 Chronicles 15, involves a formalized ritual including Leviticial music and sacrifice, and could thus be more easily replicated by the Israelites as part of their Temple ritual. In portraying music as ritualized rather than spontaneous, the Chronicler has the opportunity to present the actual rituals of the Second Temple and thus to legitimate them within an historical context. David necessarily becomes less of an actor in these rituals, as their replication must be dependent not on a single individual, but instead on a group of Levites assigned to the task throughout the generations.

Eric Werner writes, "All Temple music, regardless of its period was no more than an accessory to its sacrificial rite."[79] It is difficult to know whether this statement is fully historically accurate, but it does seem to perfectly capture the Chronicler's view of music: the purpose of music is to bring joy, as well as to inspire personal and communal connection to a Temple ritual that could lose some of its impact upon becoming too routinized;[80] music has less of a role as a personal expression of devotion, and including David's spontaneous musical expressions could perhaps detract from the Chronicler's main goal of validating Temple ritual. Sara Japhet writes that "the proper establishment and maintenance of legitimate YHWH worship . . . involves the smooth running of Temple ritual according to the rules set down by Moses and David."[81] The "smooth running of Temple ritual" necessitated an organized musical system; the more frequently and singularly the Chronicler presents this routinized, regulated form of music as the "correct" way to worship, the more effective he hopes to be in legitimizing Temple ritual in his own time period.

[79] Werner, qtd. In Friedmann, *Music in Biblical Life,* 119.
[80] Friedmann, 119-121.
[81] Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*, trans. Anna Barber (Winona Lake, Ind. : Eisenbrauns, 2009), 216

Conclusion

The Chronicler must walk a fine line: on the one hand, the goal of the book of Chronicles is to help legitimate the Temple and its ritual, not to reinstate the defunct monarchy.[82] At the same time, David's reputation as Israel's great leader and favorite of God makes him the perfect vehicle through which to validate Temple ritual; in other words, "nothing less than the full authority of an idealized and divinely inspired David could suffice" in fully legitimizing the practices of a controversial institution. Thus, the Chronicler must find a way to give David a prominent role in the organization of Temple ritual, without distracting too much from his main purpose. Perhaps it is this balance that the Chronicler tries to strike in his portrayal of David as musician: David becomes a powerful patron and organizer of music, but is not personally the focus of most of the musical activity in the book.

David's musical role is more limited in Chronicles than in Samuel, but it still contributes significantly to both David's legacy and to the development of Jewish music. Marti Steussy asserts that, in the book of Chronicles, David's "legacy of worship and music, carried forward especially by the Levites, far outweighs the legacy of his throne."[83] David does not stand out in the book of Chronicles as a musician or poet himself; however, his role as organizer and patron of Temple ritual and music is the main aspect of the David story emphasized in the book. Chronicles establishes David as a patron and an organizer of music, a reputation which will figure prominently into the discussion of David as author of Psalms and help color the rabbinic perception of David. Additionally, David's appointment and organization of the Levitical singers represent a fundamental change in the role of music in Israelite religion: "[Music] ceased

[82] Simon J. DeVries, "Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107, no. 4D (1988), 637-638.

[83] Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power,* 126.

to be merely the sounding upshot of the common experience. It was elevated to an *art* . . . The 'song of praise' developed into the tone-symbol of faith in God and of the worship of the Eternal."[84] In other words, music became an indispensable part of religious ritual. Perhaps, then, we can think of the David of Chronicles as the father of liturgical music.

So far, we have considered presentations of David as musician in the books of Samuel and Chronicles. Combined, these two portrayals of David, one of inspired servant of God and charismatic leader of Israel, and the other of organizer and patron of Temple music and ritual, come together to help inform our next topic: David as author of Psalms.

[84] Sendry, *Music in Ancient Israel,* 169.

David as Musician in Psalms

Introduction

The Book of Psalms is one of the Jewish tradition's oldest and most enduring sources of liturgy: the psalms served as musical accompaniments to sacrifice in the Temple, and have continued to make up a significant portion of the Jewish prayer service on weekdays, Shabbat, festivals, and life cycle occasions. There is other stirring poetry written in the Bible; why have the Psalms endured as our main source of liturgical poetry? Perhaps some of the impact of the Book of Psalms comes from the Psalter's relationship to David. This chapter will explore the traditions regarding David as author and patron of Psalms, including the potential motivations for ascribing the Psalms to David, as well as the impact of Davidic authorship on their historical continuity. Finally, this section will explore how the image of David as musician in Psalms relates to the images of David we have explored in Samuel and in Chronicles.

Legends of David in the Psalms

The tradition of Davidic authorship of Psalms begins with other Biblical sources. The Books of Samuel present the quintessential Israelite musician and poet, and the Book of Chronicles presents the authoritative voice in cultic ritual and liturgy. Additionally, both of these sources include Psalm texts that are associated with David, in Samuel as a song of Thanksgiving to God (II Sam. 22), and in Chronicles as part of David's commissioning of the Levites (I Chronicles 16). These two texts seem a fitting starting point from which to ascribe authorship of Psalms to David.[85]

[85]Berlin and Brettler, *Jewish Study Bible,* 1281.

The next development in the tradition of Davidic authorship comes with individual psalms themselves, in their superscriptions. Almost half of the psalms include some sort of Davidic attribution, most frequently "Mizmor l'David," usually translated as "a Psalm of David," but also other, more enigmatic titles such as "Shiggaion l'David" (Psalm 7), "Michtam l'David" (Psalm 16), and "L'David maskil" (e.g. Psalm 32). Thirteen psalms also include superscriptions tying the texts of the psalms to events in David's life. Additionally, a Psalms scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls ascribes 3600 psalms to David.[86]

These superscriptions provide a solid basis for Davidic authorship of at least half of the psalms, but the rabbis began to extend David's role in Psalms even further: in Pesachim 117a, Rabbi Meir is quoted as saying, "All the praises that are stated in the Book of Psalms, David uttered all of them, as it is said (Ps. 72:20): 'The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are concluded (*kollu*); read *kollu* ('are concluded') as if it were *kol ellu* ('all of them')."[87] Many later commentators perpetuated the tradition of full Davidic authorship of Psalms, with some going even further to suggest that the entirety of the book was revealed to David as a prophecy: Saadia Gaon writes:

> [The Book of Psalms] was revealed to the best of kings, the prophet David, peace be upon him, the chosen [of God]: 'I have found David, [my servant; anointed him with my sacred oil]' (Psalm 89:21) . . . He began to prophesy from the time he was anointed: "[Samuel . . . anointed him . . .] and the spirit of the Lord gripped David from that day on" (I Samuel 16:13).[88]

Marti Steussy suggests that the progression from David as author of some of the psalms to David as author of the entire Psalter comes from commonalities throughout the Psalter: "Although we have identified characteristics and tendencies in [the Psalms with Davidic superscriptions], they

[86] Ibid.
[87] Translation from Alan Cooper, "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalms Interpretation" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 254.
[88] Saadia Gaon, trans. in Sokolow, M. "Saadia Gaon's Prolegomenon to Psalms," qtd. in Cooper, "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalms Interpretation," 255.

have more than enough in common with the other psalms to establish continuity through the collection."[89]

Agreement over Davidic authorship of the entirety of Psalms was not necessarily universal. In Bava Batra 14b-15a, it is written that David "wrote the Book of Psalms by means of [*al yedei*] ten elders." Alan Cooper asserts that the meaning of *al yedei* is unclear, and that this text leaves open the possibility of multiple authors of Psalms.[90] In the introduction to his commentary, Abraham Ibn Ezra references a "great controversy" among the sages regarding the authorship of Psalms, with some asserting that all the psalms were both prophetic and composed by David, and others asserting that David did not author them.[91] Still other sages did not necessarily ascribe Davidic authorship to all of the psalms but did regard David as the patron of the Psalter.[92]

While there has never been total consensus as to Davidic authorship of the Book of Psalms, it has been a widely-accepted and well-established tradition for millennia. As we will see below, however, history provides little evidence for Davidic authorship of any of the Psalms, let alone the entire Psalter.

History of David in the Psalms

In reality, it is unlikely that all the psalms were composed by David, or even that David served as patron for the composition of the entire book. Evidence suggests that the psalms were actually composed over the course of several centuries, perhaps as early as Davidic times, but certainly ranging from pre-exilic times through destruction of the First Temple, the Babylonian

[89] Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power*, 173.
[90] Cooper, "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalms Interpretation," 254.
[91] Ibid., 262.
[92] Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power*, 173.

exile, and Second Temple times, as late as the fourth or fifth century BCE.[93] It is not impossible that some of them could have been written by David, but individual psalms, particularly the early ones, are difficult to date; the psalms mention few specific people or events, and even some of the potentially later psalms use archaic language.[94] It is most likely that various authors composed a large body of texts, some of which were later incorporated into a compilation that became our Book of Psalms[95]; scholars believe that a priestly group was responsible for compiling the Book of Psalms in the Second Temple period, probably for purpose of creating an authoritative body of psalms to be used in worship.[96]

The Davidic superscriptions, then, were most likely not original to the psalm texts, but were actually editorial additions. There are some scholars who argue the possibility that the superscriptions were original (and, in turn, that we cannot rule out Davidic authorship of at least some of the psalms); still, there are multiple issues that lead the majority of scholars to agree that the superscriptions were added later.[97] First, we cannot be certain of what the word "l'David" actually means: Jonathan Friedmann suggests that the most accurate and historically logical translation is "of David," and that the superscription denotes a claim of Davidic authorship.[98] Still, there are several other potential meanings of "l'David," including "to David," "for David," "in the manner of David," and "suitable to David"; none of these possibilities necessarily imply a claim of Davidic authorship.[99]

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[93] Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007), Introduction and Berlin and Brettler, *Jewish Study Bible*, 1282.
[94] Friedmann, *Music in Biblical Life*, 127.
[95] Cooper, "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalms Interpretation," 254.
[96] Friedmann, *Music in Biblical Life*, 116.
[97] Ibid., 129.
[98] Ibid., 130.
[99] Alter, *The Book of Psalms,* Introduction.

Even if we assume that the superscriptions do claim Davidic authorship, there are additional historical inconsistencies that challenge this concept. First, some of the contextual details in the superscriptions do not actually match the events detailed in the psalms they introduce. For instance, the superscription of Psalm 60 describes a poem written by David on the occasion of a great military victory; the text of the psalm, however, is one of lament, in which the speaker cries out to a God who has abandoned him.[100] Also, different versions of the Book of Psalms attach Davidic superscriptions to different psalm texts: for instance, a Psalms scroll found in the Dead Sea Scrolls attributes Psalms 104 and 123 to David, while the Masoretic text does not.[101] These inconsistencies suggest that perhaps the superscriptions were not original to the psalm texts, and thus cast doubt upon the belief that David authored them.

In all likelihood, when the editors of Psalms added Davidic superscriptions, they were following in an established tradition of attributing anonymous texts to well-known, respected figures, in order to give them authority and legitimacy as divinely-inspired works.[102] In this case, their tactic has helped the Psalms stand the test of time: as Friedmann writes, doubts regarding "the precise dating and authorship of the individual psalms did not have a significant impact on their liturgical value."[103] On the contrary, despite their historical inaccuracy, the Davidic superscriptions added a level of gravitas and a long-term staying power to the Book of Psalms.

If we are to assume that Davidic was not, in fact, the author of Psalms, we must consider what motivations editors and later sages would have had to ascribe the Psalms to David, and what impact the idea of Davidic authorship would have had on readers. Both ancient texts and

[100] Steussy, *David: Portraits of Biblical Power*, 161.
[101] Berlin and Brettler, *Jewish Study Bible,* 1281.
[102] ibid., 1282.
[103] Friedmann, *Music in Biblical Life*, 130.

modern scholars agree that the tradition of Davidic authorship, combined with the texts of the Psalms themselves, help to make the Psalms universally applicable. They speak to all people for all time; as it is written in Midrash Tehillim, "All that David says in his Book of Psalms applies to himself, to all Israel, and to all the ages."[104] They relate to the Jewish people's personal and communal identities: Steussy discusses the ways in which we can view Psalms:

> Psalms as a community's story, and Psalms as the unfolding of a personal spirituality."[105] The Psalms speak to the depths of the human experience; Jamie Grant writes, ". . . the psalms express every emotion conceivable . . . and the whole point is that this expression of human emotion directed towards God is available to be adapted to a wide variety of circumstances.[106]

Finally, the Psalms speak to the past, present, and yearned-for future; Cooper writes, "The 'David' of the psalms is both a king of yore and the longed-for Messiah, signifying past and future orientation that are reified in historical/biographical readings and prophetic/eschatological interpretations, respectively."[107] Clearly, scholars agree that it is their universal applicability that has given the Psalms their lasting power. I would like to argue that the editors of the Psalms, as well as later sages who ascribe the entirety of the Psalter to David, create the universal David of Psalms by synthesizing the two different images of David that appear in Samuel and in Chronicles, as well as by adding an additional, futuristic layer, thus helping to create the larger-than-life, all-encompassing image of David that endures to this day.

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[104] Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 18:1, qtd. in Cooper, "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalms Interpretation," 255.
[105] Steussy, *David: Portraits of Biblical Power*, 173.
[106] Jamie A. Grant, "The Psalms and the King," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. David Firth and Philip S. Johnston (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 110.
[107] Cooper, "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalms Interpretation," 255.

The David of Samuel in Psalms

As we saw earlier, the David of the book of Samuel is complex, flawed, and fully human, as evidenced by his music and poetry. He appeals to readers on a personal level: they admire and aspire to his leadership qualities and, at the same time, identify with his failures and challenges. The David of Samuel experiences the full breadth and depth of human emotion: he creates an eloquent expression of mourning in response to the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1), but also finds himself almost speechless with grief after the death of his son, Absalom (2 Samuel 19:1); he reaches the heights of ecstasy during the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem as he dances before God (2 Samuel 6:15), but soon after descends into a dark anger in response to Michal's criticism (2 Samuel 6:21-22); he expresses perfect confidence in God's support and in his own faithfulness (2 Samuel 22) but also wonders whether God has forsaken him when Absalom tries to usurp the throne (2 Samuel 16:10-12).

The David of the Psalms, too, expresses the gamut of personal human emotion. Over a quarter of the psalms are texts of lament[108]; all people can relate to the feeling of abandonment that comes from having reached their lowest points. As we read in Psalm 69:

> Rescue me, God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I have sunk in the slime of the deep, and there is no place to stand. I have entered the watery depths, and the current has swept me away; I am exhausted from my calling out. My throat is hoarse. My eyes fail from hoping for my God (Psalm 69:2-4).[109]

Another group of psalms are characterized as psalms of thanks, expressing the tremendous sense gratitude and joy one feels after experiencing success, as in Psalm 30: "I shall exalt you, Lord, for you drew me up, and you gave no joy to my enemies" (Psalm 30:2). Still other psalms, particularly those characterized as psalms of trust, express a sense of contented faith in God: we read the oft-cited Psalm 23,

[108] Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power*, 135.
[109] All translations of Psalms in this chapter come from Alter, *The Book of Psalms*.

> The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. In grass meadows He makes me lie down, by quiet waters guides me. (Psalm 23:1-3)

It would be difficult to find an emotion to which one of the Psalms does not speak in some way.[110]

Just as in the Books of Samuel, the David of Psalms continues to express complete faith in God, even through difficult times. As Psalm 23 continues:

> Though I walk in the vale of death's shadow, I fear no harm, for you are with me. (Psalm 23:3-4).

Since the Psalms were meant to be used in large part as liturgy, it would be necessary for the Psalm texts to balance a genuine expression of emotion with a clear faith in and devotion to God. The use of Davidic superscriptions are helpful in lending authenticity to this balance, as they mirror the personal expression of a paradigmatic leader of Israel; the David of the Books of Samuel also expresses both sincere emotion and total faith in God.

The thirteen superscriptions that include mention of events in David's life are mostly in line with scenes from the Books of Samuel. As we saw previously, these superscriptions may be problematic historically, but they can also assist the reader in relating personally to the Psalms. Steussy argues that, rather than limiting the applicability of the Psalms, the fact that the superscriptions do not always entirely match the psalm texts helps people to consider them more broadly: "The headings invite us to consider the psalms in Davidic contexts, but their loose fit leaves the psalms open to other applications."[111]

[110]The characterization of Psalms as lament, thanks, and trust comes from Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power*, 132-33.
[111] Ibid., 161-62.

The David of Chronicles in Psalms

The Book of Psalms appeals to all people on a personal, emotional level, using the David of Samuel, with his reputation as poet and musician, as a vehicle for people to make their own connections. At the same time, Psalms also features the David of Chronicles who, as a patron of music, focuses on the establishment of the cultic rite and on the communal Israel.

The David of Psalms helps to reinforce the establishment of cultic music and ritual as set forth by the David of Chronicles. In many ways, the Book of Psalms complements Chronicles, both by reinforcing the specifics of the rituals described in Chronicles, and by filling out details left out by Chronicles. The texts of the Psalms themselves represent a significant development in the process of cementing and standardizing Temple ritual. Though David specifies many details regarding who was to implement Temple ritual and what instruments were to be used, he never actually specifies what texts were to be sung or with what melodies. The Book of Psalms, then, represents an effort by the priestly class to standardize a set of texts to be used in Temple ritual. Since it was David who lent legitimacy to the elements of cultic ritual established in Chronicles, it is only natural that editors of Psalms would have wanted to give this same legitimacy to the actual songs to be used in the ritual by adding superscriptions attributing some of these texts to David. Additionally, some Psalms are attributed to those commissioned by David, such as Asaph (e.g. Psalm 82) and Ethan (e.g. Psalm 89). The Psalm texts themselves also refer to the rituals prescribed by David: for instance, Psalms 115 and 118 both refer to the special role of the priests in executing Temple ritual; Psalm 118 even seems to imply the special musical and liturgical role of the Levites: "Let the house of Aaron now say: forever is His kindness" (Psalm 118:2-3).[112]

[112] Alter, *The Book of* Psalms, Introduction.

If we see the David of Samuel as helping to bring a personal voice to the Book of Psalms, then we can see the David of Chronicles as helping to bring the communal voice he promotes in Chronicles. Jonathan Friedmann writes, "the Psalter was . . . integral to the social aims of facilitating interpersonal bonding and communication, imparting behavior and doctrinal guidelines, and instilling a collective mission and consciousness."[113] Some of the Psalm texts are communal texts; Steussy designates twenty-two Psalms as communal.[114] Perhaps more notable, however, is the way in which the more personal Psalms are canonized as communal prayer; we can see the Psalter as giving communal voice even to personal prayer. Additionally, it is likely that many psalms were often performed antiphonally, in order to encourage participation on the part of the congregation.[115] Though we cannot know with certainty how exactly the Psalms were recited, many of the Psalms do appear to have been composed with congregational responses in mind. For instance, if we look at Psalms 113-118, the group of psalms that comprise the Egyptian Hallel, we can see several place that seem to suggest congregational participation: Psalm 113 begins with "Hallelujah. Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the Lord's name" which appears to be a call to the worshippers; it is followed by what appears to be a congregational response: "May the Lord's name be blessed now and forevermore."[116] The Egyptian Hallel also appears to conclude with a congregational verse affirming the rest of the Psalm: "Acclaim the Lord, for He is good, forever is His kindness" (Psalm 118:29).[117] The responsorial style of many of the Psalms helps to include the larger community in worship, and attributing the Psalter to David makes sense in light of his goal of unifying the Israelites in Chronicles.

[113] Friedmann, *Music in Biblical Life*, 152.
[114] Stuessy, *David: Portraits of Biblical Power*, 132-133.
[115] Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, 98-99.
[116] Berlin and Brettler, *Jewish Study Bible,* 1410.
[117] Ibid.

The David of Psalms and the Future

We have seen that the David of Samuel and the David of Chronicles combine to create the David of the Psalms. So far, we have considered the David of Samuel as the voice of personal prayer, and the David of Chronicles as the voice of communal prayer. Perhaps there is an additional lens through which to consider the place of each of these images of David within the Psalter. To the editors of the Psalter, perhaps the David of Samuel represents the past, the legacy of a great man and leader whose actions and poetry make up an essential part of Israelite identity. To those living in Second Temple times, the David of Chronicles would then represent the present, the way in which the Israelites use the legacy of King David to establish ritual for the Temple. Part of the reason that the Psalter has endured to our present day is because, as we read in Midrash Tehillim (cited above), the Psalms apply to all of Israel for all time. In order to remain relevant and universally applicable, then, the Psalter must also address the future.

The Psalms speak to the future of the Israelite people, both as individuals and as a community. They speak to Israelites who are experiencing exile, providing them with promises of a future return to Zion:

> When the Lord restores Zion's fortunes, we should be like dreamers. Then will our mouths fill with laughter and our tongues with glad song (Psalm 126:1-2).

They speak to God's eternal protection of Israel:

> For the Lord is good, forever His kindness, and for all generations His faithfulness" (Psalm 100:4-5).

They speak to God's promise of an eternal future for the Davidic monarchy:

> I have sealed a pact with my chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant. Forever I shall make your seed stand firm, and make your throne stand strong for all generations (Psalm 89:4-5).

Some interpreters read these futuristic passages as Messianic, while others believe there is not sufficient evidence to do so.[118] Either way, the Psalms certainly speak not only to the past and present of the Jewish people, but also to the future. The tradition of ascribing the Psalms to David helps to legitimate the promises of the Psalms by using the name of Israel's great and trusted leader. At the same time, David's association with these futuristic Psalms also helps to add an element of continuity to David's own image.

Conclusion

The David of Samuel and the David of Chronicles each bring a piece of the Davidic image that, combined, will make up pieces of the David whose fame will endure to the present day. The David of Samuel is a human figure, one who relates to each person in his expression of the full range of human emotion, and represents in important figure in the Jewish past. The David of Chronicles is basically one-dimensional, but serves an important function in building community and fulfilling the needs of Second Temple Jews. It is the Book of Psalms that synthesizes these two images and adds another facet to David's character, one that speaks to the future. It is this David, to whom people can relate on a personal, communal, and national level, and who resonates as a figure of the past, present, and future, who becomes the David of legend.

[118] Steussy, *David: Portraits of Biblical Power*, 146-158 goes through several Psalms and explains how they could be interpreted as Messianic. Marc Brettler ["Jewish Theology of the Psalms," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 489] gives an overview of scholarship on this question, but doubts that the Psalms can be authentically interpreted as Messianic.

Conclusion

The Books of Samuel, Chronicles, and Psalms combine to give the rabbis a rich David on from which to build. David's musical identity, which is a common thread in all three books, will serve as the basis for much of the rabbinic literature about David. As discussed previously, the Book of Psalms helps to bring together elements of David from both Samuel and Chronicles. That said, there are still a number of contradictions and disparate elements of the David story between the three books that remain unresolved. The question for the rabbis becomes how to deal with these differences: must they reconcile difficulties, or can they allow seemingly contradictory elements to exist simultaneously? Can David show human flaws, or must the David of legend be perfect?

The rabbis do not take a consistent approach to writing about David.[119] In some cases, they actively reconcile conflicting images of David in order to emphasize what they consider the more favorable portrayal of David. For instance, was David's dancing during the transportation of the ark showy and self-indulgent (as hinted in Samuel), a symbol of solidarity with the community (as in Chronicles), or part of an act of total devotion to God (as in Psalm 132)?[120] The rabbis address this contradiction in Numbers Rabbah: when Michal scorns David, David replies:

> Your father's house seeks its own honor and puts aside the honor of heaven, but I put aside my own honor and seek out the honor of heaven . . . As it says (in Psalm 131:2): "Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother." Just as the weaned child is unashamed to reveal himself before his mother, so too have I stilled myself before You; I am not embarrassed to degrade myself before You for Your glory (Numbers Rabbah 4:20).

[119] Bassler, "A Man for All Seasons: David in Rabbinic and New Testament Literature," 156.

[120] Psalm 132 does not mention David dancing during the transportation of the ark, but it characterizes the entire act as one of complete devotion.

In this case, the rabbis directly address the less favorable portrayal of David from the book of Samuel and actually read the more flattering portrayals of Chronicles and Psalms into the episode from Samuel, thus implying that the episode from Samuel is not actually contradictory at all.

Still other rabbinic portrayals of David seem to feel more comfortable with David's human qualities, and with allowing conflicting depictions of David to co-exist. Perek Shirah shares a story about what happened after David finished composing the Book of Psalms:

> It is said that when King David finished writing the Book of Psalms, he became overly proud. He asked God, 'Is there any being in the world who utters song as I do?" At that moment, a frog happened by and said to David, 'David, do not be so proud, for I utter even more songs than you…'" (Yalkut Shimoni, Psalms, chapter 150).

The David of Psalms is, for the most part, seen as perfectly righteous. Here, the rabbis seem to feel comfortable bringing in the human David of Samuel, one who, despite being a great leader and poet, can be prone to arrogance or self-importance (as we saw above in the discussion of David's dance during the transportation of the ark). These two images of David do conflict, and choosing to incorporate a more human David could be seen as degrading his image. At the same time, perhaps this David, one with both great qualities and flaws, is more relatable to the reader.

As we can see, there is not necessarily one best way to use our existing David traditions in order to keep the David story relevant for the future. What is apparent, however, is that the portrayals of David in the books of Samuel, Chronicles, and Psalms offer a plethora of possibilities. Perhaps this is why David, King of Israel, continues to live and endure to this day. Our tradition gives us a wealth of stories and limitless possibilities for interpretation, which allow David's story to speak in some way to all people, through the generations.

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