THE ARTISTRY AND IDEOLOGY OF COMPOSITE NARRATIVES: READING I SAMUEL

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Summary

This thesis investigates both the aim and the artistry of biblical historiography by closely studying narrative doublets that appear in the first book of Samuel. Each doublet offers at least two accounts of what seems to be the same event: the origin of the monarchy (I Samuel 8-10); David's arrival to Saul's court (I Samuel 16-17); and David sparing Saul's life (I Samuel 24 & 26). Guiding this project are the following questions: How were multiple sources or traditions combined to form the composition we read today? To what extent were the later sources aware of the older ones and responding to them? Why were multiple accounts of the same events preserved, and what are the literary, ideological and historical implications for generating such a composite document?

This thesis is comprised of five chapters: (1) Introduction includes the goal of the project, an overview of I Samuel, and background on the related research, incorporated commentaries, and employed methodologies; (2) I Samuel 8-10 Exegesis; (3) I Samuel 16-17 Exegesis; (4) I Samuel 24 & 26 Exegesis; and (5) Conclusion. Combining a source critical approach with literary analysis, each exegesis investigates the artistry and ideology of the individual sources as well as that of the composite unit generated. The concluding chapter reflects on the insight gained regarding the religious and political concerns of the various authors who contributed to I Samuel, the artistic and ideological processes by which their material came together, and the ultimate value of reading the finished product – the received text – as both composite and coherent.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I. Core Questions

As a student and teacher of the Bible, my encounters with ancient texts (anywhere in the biblical canon) consistently prompt two central questions: (1) What can these texts accurately teach us about the past? (2) How did the various sources and stories come together to form this incredible composition that we have received from our ancestors and will pass down to the next generations? These two core questions are certainly not the only questions that biblical texts raise for me, but more often than not, they motivate much of my investigation. Only after placing textual material in historical and literary context do I feel that I can authentically explore the contemporary meaning and resonance of that text.[1] Asking what these ancient texts reveal about the past and the process of writing about the past also points to a third underlying question, which is perhaps *the question*: What is the ultimate purpose of the Bible? Posed differently, how did the composers of the Bible approach their work, and can that approach give us insight into how they understood the Bible's purpose as well as their own?

This thesis aims to respond to these questions by exploring them within a controlled amount of material within the historical books found in the Prophets section of the Hebrew Bible. The first book of Samuel in particular offers a fruitful body of work in

[1] Of course, raising these two questions does not guarantee conclusive answers, as there will always be much we do not know, and simply cannot know, about ancient Israel and biblical historiography. Regarding the latter, the writing technology of the biblical authors continues to limit our ability to piece together the past. In contrast to other ancient Near Eastern cultures that utilized clay or stone as their primary writing surfaces, some of which have endured and thus preserved different versions of core documents, the Israelites' use of quickly disintegrating parchment has made it much more difficult to infer the compositional history of biblical books and narrative units.

which to explore questions about the aim and the artistry of biblical historiography. A distinct literary feature that I Samuel shares with the book of Genesis is the inclusion of multiple narrative doublets: two accounts of what appears to be the same event. In Genesis, narrative doublets are preserved in different ways: the two creation accounts (Gen. 1-3) appear side by side (what Jeffrey Tigay terms "composite"); the two accounts of the flood (Gen. 6-9) are interwoven or interpolated (what Tigay terms "conflated");[2] and the sister-wife accounts (Gen. 12:10-20; 26:6-11) are repeated in successive generations. Given these attested editorial methods for combining distinct sources, one primary aim of the following project is to investigate the literary artistry of the narrative doublets found in I Samuel and to answer the question: How were multiple sources or traditions combined to form the composition we read today? That query prompts other questions: What distinct narrative sources have been brought together? To what extent were the later sources aware of the older ones and responding to them? Why were multiple accounts of the same events preserved, and what are the literary, ideological and historical implications for generating such a composite document?

II. An Overview of First Samuel

The first book of Samuel may be most simply described as having three main sections: (1) The Rise of Samuel (chs. 1-7); (2) The Rise of Saul (chs. 8-15); and (3) The Rise of David and the Fall of Saul (chs. 16-31). The first section begins with Samuel's birth story and his subsequent dedication to the priesthood. The rise of Samuel's prominence as priest, prophet and chieftain corresponds with a parallel decline, and really

[2] Jeffrey H. Tigay, ed., *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 1.

collapse, of the house of Eli the priest, Samuel's mentor. This correspondence between one Israelite leader's rise and another's fall establishes the defining framework, and perhaps ideological purpose, of the whole book. Also contained within this first section about Samuel's career is the Ark Narrative (chs. 4-6). This material recounts the capture and return of the Ark of the Covenant, and more broadly helps to establish the book's military context of continuous battles between the Israelites and the Philistines.

The second section of I Samuel – The Rise of Saul (chs. 8-15) – begins when the elders of Israel come to Samuel, who has grown old and whose sons have not followed in his virtuous ways, and request a king to rule over them. Despite Samuel's resistance, God tells the prophet to listen to the people, and then directs that same prophet to appoint Saul son of Kish to be the first king of Israel. Saul leads his first military victory and then is officially made king by the people at Gilgal. Soon afterward, however, Saul makes two significant mistakes: he fails to fully obey Samuel's orders to wait for him to make an offering in Gilgal, and then God's instruction to destroy Amalek. Even if Saul's errors reflect good intentions, he learns from Samuel that, as a result of these missteps, his tenure as king will not last.

After God rejects Saul as king, the narrative enters its third and final section – the Rise of David (chs. 16-31) – by introducing David son of Jesse. Samuel anoints David privately, and then David is soon brought to Saul's court to serve as his personal musician and armor bearer. David rises in fame when he defeats Goliath the Philistine in a duel. As David attracts the affection of those around him, including Saul's son Jonathan and Saul's daughter Michal, Saul begins to grow more and more threatened by him. Jonathan warns David about Saul's jealousy, and he flees for safety. Much of the

remainder of I Samuel recounts Saul's growing animosity toward David and David's growing power. David gathers an army of men around him in the land of Judah, and then Saul chases David through the wilderness areas near Ein Gedi and Ziph. Samuel dies, and David acquires additional enemies, such as Nabal, and also additional wives, such as Nabal's wife Abigail. As a strategy for protecting himself from Saul, David spends some time living among the Philistines, but then a full-fledge war breaks out between the Philistines and the Israelites. Saul's sons die, and Saul falls on his own sword.

III. Introduction to Methodology & Related Research

This project employs two main approaches to reading and interpreting the selected passages from I Samuel: source critical analysis and literary analysis.

A. Source Critical Analysis

Source critical analysis continues to serve as a popular scholarly approach to biblical criticism, though it is no longer as dominant as it once was. Based on fundamental differences in vocabulary, style and content, scholars seek to identify distinct sources within the biblical material that were combined by later editors and redactors. In addition to dividing the biblical text into earlier written documents, this approach aims to understand the different contexts and orientations that gave rise to the individual sources.[3] For instance, source critical scholars who advocate for what is known as the Documentary Hypothesis argue that the five books of the Torah are comprised of four main sources, which were originally separate, more or less complete

[3] Marc Zvi Brettler, *How to Read the Jewish Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 34.

documents and only later woven together. These documents are known as J (Jawyeh or Jehovah), E (Elohist), P (Priestly), and D (Deuteronomist). They each display distinct characteristics, including vocabulary, theology, content, concerns, and divine names employed. They are also each attributed to different "schools," rather than individuals; their precise dating remains a subject of debate.[4]

While the Documentary Hypothesis's implications for the Torah have certainly received the most attention inside and outside of scholarly circles, the source critical approach has been applied to all of the books of the Bible, and it operates as the predominant interpretive style reflected in the *Anchor Bible* series of biblical commentary. Within this series, P. Kyle McCarter Jr.'s 1980 commentary on I Samuel reflects the most current source critical reading of the material. Building on the research that preceded his own, McCarter identifies in I Samuel three main layers of source material (from latest to earliest): (1) The Deuteronomistic History; (2) The Prophetic History; and (3) The Oldest Narrative Sources. Starting with the latest source layer, the Deuteronomistic History extends well beyond I Samuel, for it begins with the book of Deuteronomy and continues through II Kings. McCarter argues that the Deuteronomist's hands likely did minimal editing on the first book of Samuel, for the older sources seem to have arrived to the Deuteronimistic editor already "in accordance with a 'proto-Deuteronomistic' viewpoint."[5] McCarter does point to I Sam. 8:8 (to be discussed in

[4] For further discussion of source criticism and the Documentary Hypothesis, see: Brettler, *How to Read*; Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003); Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987); William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[5] P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *I Samuel* (1 vol.; AB 8; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 15. A note about language: Throughout this thesis, I refer to "the Deuteronomistic

chapter 2) as a likely Deuteronimistic addition, explaining: "The insertion was meant to associate the people's behavior with the pattern of repeated apostasy that Deuteronomistic theology found throughout the history of Israel."[6] He also reads the first account of David's refusal to take Saul's life (I Samuel 24, to be discussed in chapter 4) as associated with this later source:

> Though partially constructed of older materials this passage is fundamentally a tendentious retelling of the old story in c 26, putting Saul in a most unfavorable light and showing him openly acknowledging David's future kingship…there are also explicit connections made with subsequent parts of the Deuteronomistic history.[7]

In addition to adding new or reworked material, this latest layer imposes a structure on the earlier sources, one that supports their incorporation into the larger history.[8]

Known as the Prophetic History, the middle source layer in I Samuel asserts a prophetic perspective and a deep suspicion of the institution of monarchy. While not all scholars agree that the Prophetic History represents an independent literary unit, some argue that the prophetic writer reworked older sources to produce a continuous and competing history about the origin of the Israelite monarchy.[9] Not surprisingly, a

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editor," "the prophetic writer," "the author of the Prophetic History," etc. This preference for the singular – rather than referring to a school of authors – reflects a convention prevalent in McCarter's writing as well as my own attempt to be consistent. How many authors were involved at a given phase of writing and editing continues to be a topic of debate, given our limited data. For the sake of this investigation, speaking about the literary artistry of an individual seemed more appropriate, though his (and it likely was a "he") ideology certainly reflects that of a larger group.

[6] McCarter, 16.

[7] McCarter, 17.

[8] McCarter, 17. Deuteronomistic additions to I Samuel 7 mark off the end of the story of a judge, while those to I Samuel 8-12 mark off the transition period between the age of the judges and the age of the kingship.

[9] McCarter explains that almost all scholars agree with Artur Weiser regarding this material's prophetic perspective; however, Weiser's argument against this material's existence as any kind of literary unit meets less agreement. In contrast to Weiser on this

defining feature of the Prophetic History is the central prophet of the book: Samuel. McCarter observes: "Everywhere [the prophetic writer] introduced the dominant figure of the prophet Samuel, whose activity became the organizing feature of his work."[10] For instance, the first section of I Samuel (chs. 1-7) incorporates much prophetic material, for it focuses on the life and career of Samuel *before* the institution of monarchy has been established. Revealing the source layer's ideological agenda, this opening section begins with the miraculous birth of the prophet Samuel, not King Saul, and generally emphasizes the "effectiveness and sufficiency of prophetic leadership."[11]

In the second section of I Samuel (chs. 8-15), the Prophetic History recounts the origin of the monarchy from a prophetic, and thus more reluctant and critical, perspective. In doing so, this material aims to protect the ongoing role of the prophet, and to establish what will be the important power dynamic and division of responsibilities between later prophets and kings of Israel. The prophetic material of this section can be divided into two main categories: (1) The opening chapter in I Samuel 8 (to be discussed in chapter 2) represents original material that the prophetic writer added in order to emphasize the people's demand for a king (rather than divine initiative), and thus to introduce the monarchy in negative light from the very beginning. (2) As an alternative to original material, what follows in I Sam. 9:1-10:16 (also to be discussed in chapter 2) contains prophetic interpolations into an old folktale about the first king of Israel, with the most significant insertion being the figure of Samuel himself and the concept of a prophet anointing the king. This section of I Samuel then proceeds to

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issue, Georg Fohrer speaks of the prophetic material as a "stratum" and Bruce C. Birch interprets it as an "a complete pre-Deuteronomistic edition" (18).

[10] McCarter, 18.

[11] McCarter, 19.

alternate between prophetic material (original or reworked) and older, preserved Saul stories.[12] The third and final section of I Samuel (chs. 16-31) narrates the story of David's rise, furthers the theme of God's selection of the king. This material seems to reflect minimal reworking by the prophetic writer.[13]

As will be discussed in the exegeses that follow, the Prophetic History is defined by a grave reluctance toward the monarchy and a desire to protect the prophet's power. McCarter describes this material, which views kingship as limited by prophetic authority, as "distinctly northern."[14] Some scholars even identify this middle source layer of I Samuel with the northern Elohistic source (E), prominent in the five books of the Torah.[15] While the Prophetic History is understood to pre-date the Deuteronomistic History, it still would need to be late enough to know at least the early period of the monarchy and express bitterness toward the institution. McCarter further suggests that this prophetic material was probably written during or shortly after the fall of the Northern Kingdom (end of 8th Century BCE). If that was indeed the case, the author's background could have been northern, which meant he could have drawn on the teachings of the northern prophetic circles, but his orientation would have been to the south – the new source of his hope and Israel's future. Thus, that particular timing would make more reasonable a northern author's support for David's right to succeed Saul.[16] Moreover, while it would

[12] McCarter, 20. I Sam. 10:17-27a is prophetic, at least in its final form; I Sam. 10:27b – 11:15 is drawn from the old Saul complex with only slight revisions; I Samuel 12 (Samuel's address) is a key passage in the prophetic history; I Samuel 13-14 is from the Saul complex kept more or less in tact; and with I Samuel 15, the prophetic writer concludes the section as he began it, with his own original material.
[13] McCarter, 21.
[14] McCarter, 21.
[15] McCarter mentions Karl Budde (22).
[16] McCarter, 21-22.

be imprecise to describe the Prophetic History as "proto-Deuteronomistic," many scholars place the origin of Deuteronomistic law and theology in northern prophetic circles, and that common geographic source would help to explain the affinities between these two layers of material. This would also explain the need for only slight revisions of the prophetic material by the later Deuteronomistic editor.[17]

Finally, the oldest material incorporated into I Samuel, which the prophetic writer sometimes reworked, sometimes left alone, and sometimes challenged with his own version, is known as the Oldest Narrative Sources. More specially, the three narrative complexes have been labeled: the Ark Narrative, the Saul Cycle, and the History of David's Rise. The Ark Narrative (I Sam. 4:1b-7:1 & II Sam. 6) falls beyond the scope of this study, but the latter two will provide the basis for much of the analysis to follow and represent the oldest sources under investigation. Regarding the content of the Saul Cycle (found within I Samuel 9-15), an account of Saul's birth has mostly been lost, but elements of it were likely incorporated into Samuel's birth story.[18] As mentioned above, I Sam. 9-10:16 reveals significant prophetic reworking, but at its core, preserves an old folktale: Saul went looking for asses, and met a seer who revealed to him that he would become king. As a contrast, I Sam. 10:27b-11:15 survives in a more original form. McCarter dates the Saul Cycle to the later part of the 9th century, though some of the

[17] McCarter mentions E. W. Nicholson, H.W. Wolff and G. von Rad (22). For a discussion of the relationship between I Samuel 8, the book of Hosea, and the Deuteronomistic History, see also Peter Machinist, "Hosea and the Ambiguity of Kingship in Ancient Israel," *Signs of Democracy in the Bible*, (The 1994 Resnick Lectures at Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester, Chappaqua, NY, 1995), 25-63.
[18] McCarter notes the similarities between I Sam. 1:1 & 9:1 (26). For a discussion of the evidence linking Saul to the birth story attributed to Samuel, see McCarter, 65-66. See also Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 109.

material (like the tale of the asses) may have been even earlier. He also points to similarities between the Saul Cycle and the Samson story.[19]

The History of David's Rise (I Samuel 16-31) may reveal the least amount of reworking by prophetic or Deuteronomistic hands, but it still presents as a heterogeneous collection of traditions. Various materials from different periods and places were likely brought together for the purpose of legitimizing David's succession.[20] As a helpful example of the heterogeneity and multi-vocality even within the oldest sources composing the History of David's Rise, chapter 3 of this thesis will explore the conflation of two different versions of the David and Goliath Epic. At the time of the writing of the Septuagint, only one of these two versions appears to have been available to the Greek translator. As a result, what has been preserved in the shorter Greek account has helped source critical scholars to identify and separate the two versions that were later combined (after the Greek translation) to form the edited Hebrew account of I Samuel 17 that we have inherited in the Masoretic Text and continue to read today.[21]

B. Literary Analysis

In response to the decades of scholarship focused on discovering and distinguishing the many pretexts of the Bible that were ultimately combined to form the composite text we read today, some scholars have adopted a different approach to reading and interpreting the literary features that define a given biblical text. Despite the

[19] McCarter, 27. Saul has more in common with Samson than Samuel does, which makes it more likely that Saul and Samson had parallel Nazarite birth stories. See McCarter, 65.
[20] McCarter, 28.
[21] Emanuel Tov, "The Composition of I Samuel 16-18 in the Light of the Septuagint Version," in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (ed. Jeffrey H. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 97-120.

duplications in content and inconsistencies in style, these scholars attribute great agency and artistry to the editors who crafted the completed compositions, and they seek to analyze how the literary features give meaning to the whole, rather than signal the presence of individual sources. The forefather of biblical literary analysis, Robert Alter, describes the approach as involving the following: "the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else."[22] Regarding the purpose of literary analysis, Alter explains that paying critical attention to the narrative form supports readers to extract the theology and religious character of the Bible in a more nuanced way. "To scrutinize biblical personages as fictional characters is to see them more sharply in the multifaceted, contradictory aspect of their human individuality, which is the biblical God's chosen medium for His experiment with Israel and history."[23] Ultimately, Alter believes and illustrates in his analysis of I Samuel (as well as in his analysis of the five books of Torah and other parts of the Bible) that the religious vision and messaging of the Bible draw their depth, subtlety and power from the artistry of narrative prose. Only by investigating the literary artistry of a given narrative will its full wisdom be revealed. [24]

In addition to Alter, Adele Berlin, Robert Polzin, and Andrea L. Weiss each employ a literary approach to studying the Bible, and their scholarship will be incorporated into the following exegeses.[25] Explaining his particular orientation, Polzin

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[22] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (USA: Basic Books; 1981), 12.
[23] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 12.
[24] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narative*, 22.
[25] See Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1983); Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary*

states in the introduction to his literary commentary on I Samuel that his analysis does not differentiate between author and redactor; instead he focuses on the text as a whole as we have inherited it.[26] Polzin argues that the various ancient witnesses to I Samuel were more similar than different, and that devoting time and energy to distinguishing the "pre-texts" only takes away from the more crucial matter of global interpretation of the "real text."[27] As the title of his commentary (*Samuel and the Deuteronomist*) conveys, Polzin is most interested in the artistic mind and hands of the final author of the material, whom he identifies as the Deuteronomist. His close reading of the narrative material explores the various literary devices and theological messages developed by that the final author in discussion. Polzin argues for reading the narrative material as a coherent whole, and he operates with this premise:

> …the text of 1 Samuel makes sense, however worked-over the text is scribally and hermeneutically, and however deficient it is text-critically. Perhaps this sympathetic attitude will gloss over or excuse a number of textual warts or obvious genetic defects, but such mistakes are, in my opinion, a fair price to pay for trying to redress a lamentable neglect of an ancient treasure. That-which-is is certainly as valuable as all the valuable might-have-beens upon which biblical scholars continue to focus their attention. Many who have read the Bible down through the ages have understood this.[28]

Study of the Deuteronomic History; *Part Two: 1 Samuel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Andrea L. Weiss, *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose Narrative: Metaphor in the Book of Samuel* (Boston: Brill, 2006).

[26] Polzin, 6.

[27] Polzin, 1.

[28] Polzin, 17.

C. Historical Approach

While source critical analysis and literary analysis represent the two main interpretative approaches employed in this project, the work of one more scholar has been uniquely valuable in my investigation of I Samuel specifically and biblical historiography in general. Drawing on tools from a range of different biblical orientations, Marc Zvi Brettler is probably best categorized as employing a historical contextual approach. His research and writing often explore questions about historicity and historiography. In *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, he argues in his opening section that all history is created: events transpire, but people create historical texts for ideological, theological, and didactic reasons. Given this reality, he encourages us to study how the texts might have functioned in antiquity – to study the texts themselves and not the events behind them.[29] He defines history not as a reconstruction of the past but as "a narrative which is influenced by its authors' religious and political ideologies."[30] Along these lines, he identifies four main factors responsible for the production of ancient Israelite biblical texts: "the use of typologies, the interpretation of earlier texts, what others have considered literary shaping, and ideological influence."[31] From the ancient Israelite perspective, there was no distinction between myth, legend or history; however, we do not know what the ancient Israelites considered to be literature. In his own analysis, Brettler prefers to investigate the function of literary devices employed in a given narrative in serving a larger ideological purpose.[32]

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[29] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 1.
[30] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 3.
[31] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 5.
[32] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 12-18.

In Brettler's chapter devoted to "Ideology in the Book of Samuel," he explains that monarchies in other ancient Near Eastern societies would propagate "official" versions of stories throughout the kingdom and also would attempt to suppress others. The central purpose seemed to be not preserving the facts but inculcating certain beliefs.[33] In line with this apparent ideological agenda, the Assyrian Annals, which are the best-known genre of Mesopotamian historical inscriptions, appear to have been revised annually.[34] Brettler explains that the ideological nature of compositions may be revealed either by internal study of the final product (and how it was revised over time) or by comparing various texts that deal with the same episode (narrative doublets). Regarding the ideology of the book of Samuel, Brettler argues that the book contains two histories: "one is interested in secular ideology, namely politics, while the other focuses on religious ideology, namely theology."[35] The book of Samuel also reflects the era in which the authors and editors lived: one of competing royal ideologies between a pro-Saul camp and a pro-David camp. "The likely vitality of [a] pro-Saul ideology explains why 'David as proper King' was so extensive and needed to make its arguments repeatedly with such tenacity – it was fighting a continued ideological battle."[36] Taken altogether, Brettler's concern about the ideological factors driving historiography helpfully informs the discussion to follow about the impact of compositional history and literary artistry on ideological messaging.

[33] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 91-92.
[34] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 94.
[35] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 99.
[36] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 111.

IV. An Overview of the Subsequent Chapters

The following three chapters each explore a different unit of I Samuel containing a narrative doublet: Chapter 2 covers the origin of the monarchy (I Samuel 8-10); Chapter 3 covers David's arrival to Saul's court (I Samuel 16-17); Chapter 4 covers two parallel accounts of David sparing Saul's life (I Samuel 24 & 26). In each chapter, I investigate the artistry and ideology of biblical redaction, and I combine a source critical approach with literary analysis by employing the following methodology: I begin by dividing each narrative unit according to the delineations made by source critical scholars; then I present a literary analysis (including a structural outline and investigation of key words, use of dialogue, relationships to other texts [inter-textuality], etc.) to determine whether each identified source can actually stand on its own as an independent narrative with unique literary features and ideological messages. In other words, my methodology first inquiries: Do the source critical divisions hold up literarily? What are the defining literary and ideological features of each source? Next, I proceed to read and interpret each unit as a coherent whole, specifically analyzing the resulting artistry and ideology of the composite work: How does the whole unit come together? What happens to distinct literary features when they are brought together? Are new literary features formed? What main message comes through? The concluding chapter will explore the implications of the artistry and ideology of these composite narratives for our approach to reading the Bible more generally. By studying the various techniques and effects of bringing together multiple perspectives, we can gain insight into the motivations and goals of biblical historiography.

Chapter 2: I Samuel 8-10 Exegesis

Introduction

Scholars who employ a source critical approach to reading the book of Samuel argue that two distinct source layers constitute this unit of I Samuel 8-10 narrating the selection of Saul as the first king of the Israelites: (1) I Samuel 9-10:16, at its core, originates from an older, "somewhat secular" narrative complex about Saul.[1] McCarter describes I Sam. 9-10:16 as belonging to the "Saul Cycle: a loose collection of materials about Saul's early career [that] was among the resources of the author of the prophetic history of the rise of the monarchy."[2] (2) I Samuel 8 & 10:17-27 reflects later, more theologically-charged source material, which McCarter attributes to the "Prophetic History," the author of which likely inserted the figure of Samuel into ch. 9.[3] It should be noted that at least one verse in this three-chapter unit (I Sam. 8:8) reveals the hand of the Deuteronomistic editor.[4] McCarter explains that Deuteronomistic hands seem to have done minimal editing on the book of Samuel in general, since the sources arrived to that editor already in accordance with "a proto-Deuteronomistic viewpoint."[5] In contrast to this type of source critical reading, those who employ a literary approach read the various layers as integrated into a coherent, or coherent enough, whole. They opt to give

[1] Samuel Sandmel, *A Tentative Syllabus for Bible One* (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, compiled circa 1951), 18.
[2] McCarter, 26.
[3] McCarter, 18-20.
[4] McCarter, 16. Throughout the second section of I Samuel focused on Saul (chs. 8-15), there are several appearances of the Deuteronomistic source, including I Sam. 12:6-15; 13:1-2; 14:47-51.
[5] McCarter, 15.

preference in their analysis to the text that has been inherited for ages, rather than to theoretical pre-texts.

In response to these two different schools of interpretation, the following exegesis aims to combine a source critical reading with literary analysis. I will begin with a close textual analysis of the literary devices and ideological messages of each of the two dominant source layers, as defined and delineated by the source critics. Then, the final section will provide a literary analysis of the unit as a whole, exploring the methods by which the multiple traditions have been brought together and the resulting effects on the dominant literary features of each component part. This final section will also investigate the possible literary and ideological implications of reading the unit as both composite and coherent.

Part 1. The Prophetic History: I Samuel 8 & 10:17-27

A. Structural Outline

The People Demand a King (I Samuel 8:1-22; 10:17-27)

I. Samuel Grows Old (8:1-3)
   a. Samuel appoints his sons as judges to succeed him (vv. 1-2)
   b. Samuel's sons do not follow in his ways (v. 3)

II. The Elders Demand a King (8:4-5)
   a. The elders gather together and approach Samuel (v. 4)
   b. They demand a king to govern them (v. 5)

III. Samuel Consults the King of Kings (8:6-9)
   a. Samuel does not approve of the elders' demand (v. 6)

b. God explains that the people have rejected God, not Samuel (vv. 7-8)

c. Samuel must heed the people's desire but also warn them (v. 9)

IV. Samuel Warns about the "Custom of the King" (8:10-18)

a. The king will take your sons and daughters to serve him (vv. 10-13)

b. The king will take your assets, and you will become his slaves (vv. 14-17)

c. God will not answer your cries (v. 18)

V. The People Refuse to Listen (8:19-22)

a. The people reiterate their desire to have a king (vv. 19-20)

b. Samuel reports what he has heard to God (v. 21)

c. God once again instructs Samuel to listen to the people (v. 22a)

d. Samuel delays immediate action and sends the people home (v. 22b)

VI. The People Get What They Asked For (10:17-27)

a. Samuel summons the people to stand before the God (vv. 17-19)

b. Saul son of Kish is chosen by lot but cannot be found (vv. 20-21)

c. The people ask God once again (v. 22a)

d. God directs the people to Saul hiding among the baggage (vv. 22b-23)

e. Samuel announces Saul as God's chosen one (v. 24)

f. Samuel reiterates and records the "Custom of the King" (v. 25a)

g. When Samuel sends the people home, some support Saul and others scorn him (vv. 25b-27)

B. Literary Analysis

I. Samuel Grows Old (8:1-3)

These opening verses of ch. 8 begin to establish many of the key words and prominent themes that define this material from the Prophetic History. The very first verse opens with a problem: זָקֵן שְׁמוּאֵל - "Samuel has grown old" (v. 1). This reality raises questions about the future leadership of the Israelites, and Samuel's first instinct is to appoint his sons as his successors. In presenting the problem as well as the first proposed solution, v. 1 introduces three key words:[6] (1) Samuel is זָקֵן ("old"), and he will not be able to lead the Israelites as their judge for very much longer. (2) Aware that his tenure is coming to a close, Samuel attempts to establish a dynasty: וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־בָּנָיו - "He appoints his sons." (3) Like Samuel, his sons serve as שֹׁפְטִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל - "judges of Israel." This chapter of prophetic material will utilize the full interpretive range of the root שׁפט, and the resulting artistic and ideological implications will be closely analyzed in turn. Regarding this first usage, *HALOT* helpfully defines שֹׁפֵט as a "someone concerned with the law, a judge in the narrow sense," or in the wider sense of the word, as "a ruler, governor."[7] The office in discussion likely attended to civil, military and judicial affairs,

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[6] For a discussion of the literary function of key words, see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 93-95.

[7] L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson; 4 vols; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994–1999), 4:1624. Raymond Dillard explains that the accounts of the individual judges in the book of Judges (שֹׁפְטִים) follow this "fairly stable framework": In response to the Israelites' evil behavior, God punishes them in the form of oppression by a foreign nation. The Israelites then cry out to God who chooses and empowers a judge to deliver them. A period of peace follows, during which the deliverer judges Israel (Raymond B. Dillard, "Judges, Theology of," in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* [ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996], 434). Despite the above argument that biblical judges both "deliver" and "judge," Brettler

making a concern for justice a component of the role but not the sole focus. Returning to the second key word and the action of appointing, placing or designating for oneself, the verb שִׂים (לשׂוּם) emerges as a central motif in this unit as a whole.[8] *HALOT* explains that שִׂים can describe the action of changing or making one thing into something else.[9] In the case of his sons, Samuel's action of "appointment" turns them into judges. In a few verses and using the same verb, Samuel will be asked to "appoint" (שִׂימָה) a king (v. 5).

Although Samuel attempts to establish a dynasty of judges through his sons Joel and Abijah (v. 2), the narration quickly informs the readers that Samuel's plan faces real problems: לֹא־הָלְכוּ בָנָיו בִּדְרָכָו – "His sons do not follow in his ways" (v. 3). As "judges" (שֹׁפְטִים) who are supposed to ensure justice, but v. 3 explains that they actually "take brides and pervert justice" (וַיִּקְחוּ־שֹׁחַד וַיַּטּוּ מִשְׁפָּט). What becomes Samuel's failed attempt to establish a dynasty of judges echoes Eli's failed attempt to establish a dynasty of priests (I Sam. 2:22ff). In both cases, these appointments are not ordained by God, though the priestly office tended to be inherited by blood. Also in both cases, when the reader learns that the successful father has grown old (I Sam. 2:22; 8:1), they also learn that his two sons are corrupt and not ideal candidates for succession (I Sam. 2:12-17, 22-25; 8:3). Similar to the judges' perversion of justice in this chapter, in the case of Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas, they pervert the role of the priests by taking boiling meat from

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argues that translating שֹׁפֵט as "judge" generates a misnomer. People were led by שֹׁפְטִים, and these leaders had little to do with judicial matters. "The term is better rendered as 'chieftains,' local or tribal leaders who responded to crises and led their tribe – or in some cases, several tribes – to battle" (*How to Read,* 112). Given the importance of the wordplays involving this term throughout this chapter, I ultimately chose to translate שֹׁפֵט as "judge" but imply with that title the role of a ruler, governor or chieftain.

[8] For a discussion of the literary function of motifs, see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* 95.

[9] *HALOT*, 3:1324.

the cooking pots before the suet has turned into smoke. More explicitly, these corrupt priests would take people's sacrifices for themselves, rather than fulfilling their assigned function of directing people's offerings to God (I Sam. 2:12ff). According to the opening chapters of I Samuel, God ultimately punishes the house of Eli and appoints Samuel to serve as the next priest. As a result, when readers of the narrative reach ch. 8, they may suspect a similar break in the line of succession upon hearing about Samuel's old age and his son's impropriety. The author of this source layer seems to articulate a mistrust of hereditary succession,[10] an issue that will continue to challenge the stability of the monarchy.

II. The Elders Demand a King (8:4-5)

In contrast, or perhaps in response, to Samuel's proposed solution to the question of future Israelite leadership, זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ("the elders of Israel") propose their own solution to the aging Samuel. Verse 4 describes them as "gathering together" (וַיִּתְקַבְּצוּ) and "approaching Samuel at Ramah" (וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־שְׁמוּאֵל הָרָמָתָה); the particular verb וַיִּתְקַבְּצוּ appears in this *hitpael* form only eight times in the Bible, and four of those occurrences are in the book of Samuel (I Sam. 7:7; 8:4; 22:2; II Sam. 2:25). Importantly, this verb seems to always connote gathering for trouble (Josh. 9:2; I Sam. 22:2; 2 Sam. 2:25; Is. 44:1), and never gathering for positive purposes. In this way, the attitude of the prophetic writer toward the future monarchy quickly comes into the fore.

[10] Moshe Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Revivim Publishing House, 1985), 63.

The elders of Israel assess the problem just as the narrator had previously stated, for the say to Samuel: הִנֵּה אַתָּה זָקַנְתָּ וּבָנֶיךָ לֹא הָלְכוּ בִּדְרָכֶיךָ - "Look,[11] you have become old, and your sons have not followed in your ways" (v. 5). After articulating the problem, the elders then introduce an alternative solution and a noteworthy wordplay. The elders charge Samuel, who "appointed his sons as judges" (וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־בָּנָיו שֹׁפְטִים) in v. 1, to now: שִׂימָה־לָּנוּ מֶלֶךְ לִשְׁפְּטֵנוּ כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם - "appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations" (v. 5). With these words, the elders challenge Samuel's appointment of a new generation of judges, and begin to establish Samuel's legacy as the final judge of Israel. The pairing of the two words מֶלֶךְ ("king") and לִשְׁפְּטֵנוּ ("to judge us") also introduces a core tension of this prophetic source layer. שׁפט is not an easy root to translate precisely and succinctly, because it can describe "settling a dispute," (Ex. 18:16; Num. 35:23; Deut. 1:16), "helping a vulnerable party get justice," (Is. 11:4; Ps. 72:4; Prov. 31:9), "passing judgment" (Deut. 25:1; I Sam. 3:13), or "governing or ruling over a group of people" (Judg. 3:10; I Sam. 4:18 & 7:6). What is clear, however, is that up until this point in the entire biblical narrative starting with the book of Genesis, שֹׁפְטִים ("judges," "chieftains," or "leaders") are involved in matters of מִשְׁפָּט ("law" or "justice"),[12] but now the elders of Israel want a king to fill this role. As a result, ch. 8 introduces not only the new paradigm of the monarchy but also the new power of the prophet to challenge and limit a king's control. Throughout the book, Samuel operates as

[11] Berlin explains: "Often a statement of perception includes the word *hinneh* (הנה), which is known to sometimes mark the perception of a character as distinct from that of the narrator." The term הִנֵּה functions "to internalize the viewpoint" and provides "a kind of 'interior vision' " (62).

[12] Discussion of the full interpretative range of מִשְׁפָּט appears in footnote #14.

a priest (I Sam. 3:1), a judge (I Sam. 7:17) and a prophet (I Sam. 3:20), but never a king. In this unit in particular (I Samuel 8-10), the prophetic material, not surprisingly, will highlight his role as a prophet who reluctantly responds to the people's forceful request for a king, a request that is "evil in Samuel eyes" (וַיֵּרַע הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי שְׁמוּאֵל; v. 6).

III. Samuel Consults the King of Kings (8:6-9)

Like a good prophet, Samuel responds to the elders' request for a king by praying to God. When v. 6b repeats the phrase מֶלֶךְ לְשָׁפְטֵנוּ, the narration replaces the imperative phrase שִׂימָה־לָּנוּ ("appoint for us") with תְּנָה־לָּנוּ ("give us"). This shift in language could be read as further revealing the author's negative judgment of the elders as very demanding, but perhaps more revealing is God's response. When God speaks to Samuel in v. 7, God responds to the elder's demand by commanding Samuel to heed their request: שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל הָעָם - "Listen to the voice of the people." This idiom (שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל) connotes "heeding" or "obeying" and operates as an important motif in this prophetic source: Samuel is supposed to listen to the Israelites (vv. 7, 9, 21 & 22), but the Israelites refuse to listen to Samuel (v. 19). By instructing Samuel to listen to the people, God also takes Samuel off the hook; the decision is up to God, not Samuel. God then interprets the situation as a rejection of God, not Samuel: כִּי לֹא אֹתְךָ מָאָסוּ כִּי־אֹתִי מָאֲסוּ מִמְּלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם – "For it is not you they have rejected, but Me they have rejected from reigning over them" (v. 7). After all, God is supposed to be the King of the kings, so why would the Israelites need a mortal king? This perception of rejection, however, is only articulated by God, and not by Samuel, the people, or the narrator. In spite of this perceived

rejection, God instructs Samuel to heed their desire to be like the other nations, and to not stand between the people and the monarchy they seek.

Literary and source critical scholars have identified the commentary that follows in v. 8 as a possible editorial insertion by the Deuteronomistic editor, for the verse's language and concerns echo the style and ideology of other Deuteronomistic material.[13] Supporting this interpretation, none of the key words established in the first seven verses of this prophetic material appears in v. 8, but then many of them reappear in v. 9. God reiterates that Samuel should "heed their request" (שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָם) but also warn them about: מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם – "the custom[14] of the king that will reign over them." Here the wordplay that began in v. 5 with מֶלֶךְ לְשָׁפְטֵנוּ evolves into a new iteration with the phrase מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ. The people are no longer satisfied with the current governance structure, and they are particularly unhappy with the behavior of the newest generation of שֹׁפְטִים ("judges"), who are supposed to ensure מִשְׁפָּט ("justice" and "law") but do just the opposite. As this verse begins to reveal, however, the alternative institution they request

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[13] Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 42. See also McCarter's discussion of characteristic Deuteronomistic expressions: (1) מִיּוֹם הַעֲלֹתִי אֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה – "From the day I brought them up from Egypt until this very day" is very similar to language in II Kings 21:15. (2) The notion of "abandoning YHWH" (וַיַּעַזְבֻנִי) also appears in Deut. 31:16; Josh. 24:6 & 20; Judg. 2:12f. (3) The concern about "serving other gods" (וַיַּעַבְדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים) appears frequently in the Deuteronomistic History, i.e. Deut. 7:4; Josh. 23:16; Judg. 10:13; I Kings 9:6 (157).

[14] מִשְׁפַּט has a wide interpretative range. *HALOT*'s definitions include: "fair decision," "judgment," "case to establish justice," "law," "sense of justice," "measure," "manner of life, style," "practice," or "custom" (2:651-2). In explaining the phrase מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ, Alter argues can that the term מִשְׁפַּט can refer to "habitual behavior" or "practice" (*The David Story,* 42). I chose to translate the term as "custom" to most succinctly and clearly convey the notion of habitual practices or behaviors. It is also worth noting the use of the phrase מִשְׁפַּט הַכֹּהֲנִים (I Sam. 2:13) to introduce the corrupt behaviors or customs of Eli's scoundrel sons.

– מֶֽלֶךְ (“a king”) – will have its own מִשְׁפַּט (“custom” or “practices”). This is where the wordplay takes full effect: the king’s מִשְׁפַּט (as in “custom”) may prove to be even more unjust and corrupt, rather than protective of מִשְׁפָּט (as in “justice” and “fairness”). Whether or not the phrase itself connotes negative judgment, Samuel’s presentation of מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּֽלֶךְ that follows will make his mistrust of monarchs unquestionably clear.

In addition to the use of key words and resulting wordplays, it is important to note that dialogue constitutes a critical literary feature of this prophetic source layer. Dialogue allows the characters involved to express themselves directly, rather than communicating through their actions or through the narrator’s descriptions alone. In fact, the dominant activity in this prophetic source is speech.[15] If we position speech as a contrast to action, then Samuel – the central character in the scenes in discussion – appears inclined to delay action (to appoint a king) by prolonging speech. As will be discussed in the next section, his explanation of the “custom of the king” will continue for eight verses. A challenge that arises with such an emphasis on speech, however, is that the readers necessarily do not get access to all of the information communicated and need to negotiate the inherent ambiguity of reported dialogues. For instance, when the narrator reports that “Samuel prays to YHWH” (וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה) in v. 6b, the reader does not learn the content of his prayer. Then, in v. 9, God instructs Samuel to warn the people about מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּֽלֶךְ (“custom of the king”) but what exactly God means by מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּֽלֶךְ remains unknown. Furthermore, when v. 10 states that “Samuel reported all of the words of YHWH to the

[15] The following verses report direct speech: I Sam. 8:5, 7-9, 11-20, 22 & 10:18-19, 22, 24, 27; and these verses report indirect speech: I Sam. 8:6, 10, 21 & 10:25. Overall, the majority of the source is composed of direct and indirect dialogue.

people" (וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֵת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה), the verse does not indicate that he *only* reported the words of God. Samuel may have added his own material.[16]

Along with conveying direct and indirect dialogues between characters, this source layer may also convey an inter-textual dialogue. Scholars suggest that Samuel's speech (vv. 10-18) is in conversation with Deut. 17:14-20, a passage which describes the role, responsibilities and restrictions of Israelite kings.[17] Although the term מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ is not employed in the Deuteronomy passage, these verses about the kingship do begin with very familiar phrasing: אָשִׂימָה עָלַי מֶלֶךְ כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם – "I will set a king over me, as do all the nations" (Deut. 17:14). This echoing of language raises important questions about this material from the Prophetic History: Did the author(s) of Deuteronomy know this prophetic material? Was the prophetic writer familiar with the oppressive practices of King David and King Solomon? From where exactly does the critique of the monarchy derive?

III. Samuel Warns about the "Custom of the King" (8:10-18)

Samuel's speech to the people[18] is tightly crafted and full of allusions. It is a prophetic speech in that Samuel's predictions about the future Israelite kings ultimately prove to be true. Moreover, as mentioned above, the narrator prefaces Samuel's eight-verse speech by pronouncing its divine origin: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֵת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה – "Samuel reported all of the words of YHWH" (v. 10). Also in this initial verse, the narrator

[16] For further discussion about dialogue and repeated speech, see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, specifically these chapters: (4) "Between Narration and Dialogue" and (5) "The Techniques of Repetition."
[17] McCarter, 161-62.
[18] Although it is the elders who request a king (vv. 4-5), God refers to the will of the people (v. 7), and then Samuel addresses the people here in v. 10.

describes Samuel's audience as: הָעָם הַשֹּׁאֲלִים מֵאִתּוֹ מֶלֶךְ – "the people asking him for a king" (v. 10). By depicting the people here as "asking" (הַשֹּׁאֲלִים), the narrator seems to soften the portrayal of the people, who had been previously presented as using imperative language ("appoint for us" in v. 5, and "give us" in v. 6) associated more with demands than requests. Perhaps most significant, however, is that the word choice of הַשֹּׁאֲלִים operates as a subtle foreshadowing: the Israelite's first king will be named שָׁאוּל, a name that shares its root with the verb "to ask" (שאל). More ironic is the reality that, after God repeatedly tells Samuel to "listen to the people," Samuel does precisely the opposite: he launches into an eight-verse speech. The tension between the conflicting wills of Samuel and of the people continues to mount.

Although the elders twice demand a מֶלֶךְ לְשָׁפְטֵנוּ, neither Samuel nor God ever describe a king as functioning as a judge or establishing justice. Rather, God refers to the king as one "who will *reign* over them" (אֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם; v. 9). Samuel then reinforces this important distinction in language at the beginning of his speech; he introduces the "custom of the king that will *reign* over you" (מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיכֶם; v .11). His speech provides an extended jab at the people's poor judgment in requesting a king in place of a judge. Instead of attending to the needs of the people and ensuring justice, the "custom of the king" will be just the opposite. As an example of the artistry of his rhetoric, Samuel epitomizes the custom of the king with two simple verbs: וְיִקַּח וְשָׂם (v. 11). Together these two verbs convey how the king will "take" (וְיִקַּח) what belongs to others and "designate for himself" (וְשָׂם לוֹ) those goods. This same verb (שׂים) that described Samuel's attempt to establish a hereditary monarchy by "appointing his sons"

(וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת־בָּנָיו; v. 1) now conveys a second meaning. A king has the right to conscript men, use men, or compel men to do his work. The phrasing that opens v. 12 (וְלָשׂוּם לוֹ) means more specifically "to place responsibility upon them to do his work,"[19] and the 4-fold repetition of the third-person masculine singular pronominal suffix emphasizes that all of these young men – the Israelites' sons – will have to "plow *his* fields, reap *his* harvest, and make *his* weapons for *his* chariots." The rhetoric is anything but subtle.

After describing to the people the seven different roles that the king will assign to "your sons whom he will take" (אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם יִקָּח), Samuel then explains in v. 13 that the king will also "take your daughters" (וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֵיכֶם יִקָּח) to work as perfumers, cooks and bakers. It is unlikely that the total number of roles listed turned out to be ten by chance. Rather, this detail reveals the refined nature of the speech, as does the list of ten assets (vv. 14-17) that the king will take from the Israelites and distribute to his servants and courtiers. After employing the verb יִקָּח ("he will take") four times and the verb יַעְשֵׂר ("he will take a tenth") two times within the span of eight verses, the sentiment is clear: the custom of the king is to take for his own benefit all that is valuable to the Israelites. The choice of the word יַעְשֵׂר also draws attention to the motif of tens, but here the notion of tithing is perverted. A tenth of the people's agricultural goods will no longer go to the Temple or to those in need, but to the king's lackeys.

Developing this motif of "taking and re-designating" (יִקָּח וְשָׂם), Samuel's rhetoric systematically builds toward its climax in the two concluding verses of the speech (vv. 17-18). In the first six verses of the speech, Samuel explains to the people the extent of the king's reach into their possessions: "He will take your sons" (אֶת־בְּנֵיכֶם יִקָּח; v. 11),

[19] *HALOT*, 3:1321-1326.

"take your daughters" (וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֵיכֶם יִקָּח; v. 13), "take your best fields, vineyard, and olive groves" (וְאֶת־שְׂדוֹתֵיכֶם וְאֶת־כַּרְמֵיכֶם וְזֵיתֵיכֶם הַטּוֹבִים יִקָּח; v. 14), "take a tenth of your seeds and vineyards" (וְזַרְעֵיכֶם וְכַרְמֵיכֶם יַעְשֵׂר; v. 15), "take your slaves – your best males and females – and your asses," (וְאֶת־עַבְדֵיכֶם וְאֶת־שִׁפְחֹתֵיכֶם וְאֶת־בַּחוּרֵיכֶם הַטּוֹבִים וְאֶת־חֲמֹרֵיכֶם יִקָּח; v. 16), and "take a tenth of your flocks" (צֹאנְכֶם יַעְשֵׂר; v. 17). The 12-fold repetition of the second-person masculine plural possessive pronominal suffix (כֶם) reinforces quite elegantly how the king will seize the people's possessions – the items that are "yours" (כֶם). Then, after establishing this significant repetition, Samuel introduces a break in the pattern in v. 17b. According to Samuel, once the king takes all of the Israelites' stuff, then they themselves will be acquired: וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לוֹ לַעֲבָדִים – "you all will become his slaves" (v. 17).

The discussion of "servitude" (לַעֲבָדִים) in v. 17 introduces an important theological message. The phrasing (וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לוֹ לַעֲבָדִים) may sound familiar, but Samuel's strong warning switches the recipient of the Israelites' service to a mortal king. This is problematic, because, according to Lev. 25:55 (the earlier appearance of this language), the Israelites should only be servants of God: כִּי־לִי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים – "For it is to Me that the Israelites are servants." The continuation of this verse in Leviticus provides the core explanation for God's exclusive claim: "They are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt" (עֲבָדַי הֵם אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם). No mortal king in any generation can make a similar claim. Then, as an ultimate, unfortunate consequence of the people's servitude to a mortal king, rather than to the King of kings, Samuel threatens in v. 18: וְזַעַקְתֶּם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא מִלִּפְנֵי מַלְכְּכֶם אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתֶּם לָכֶם – "A day

will come that you all will cry out because of your king whom you chose for yourselves;" וְלֹא־יַעֲנֶה יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא – "But YHWH will not respond to your cries on that day." The language here also points back to the Exodus by alluding to the "crying out" (זעק) of the Israelites in Egypt: וַיֵּאָנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ - "The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out" (Ex. 2:23). Distinct from the Egyptian context in which God heard their cries and remembered the covenant (Ex. 2:24), however, Samuel explains that the people's cries about their king will not be heard by God. The people will be cut off from God. Similar to the allusion to the Leviticus verse above, this inter-textual reference provides a striking contrast in order to reinforce the theological point that appointing a king will disrupt the covenant and leave the Israelites abandoned by their divine protector.

IV. The People Refuse to Listen (8:19-22)

Despite Samuel's valiant effort and stern warning, the narrator explains in v. 19: וַיְמָאֲנוּ הָעָם לִשְׁמֹעַ בְּקוֹל שְׁמוּאֵל – "The people refused to listen to Samuel." The people refuse to do precisely what God charged Samuel to do – to listen to the people and heed their will (שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל הָעָם; vv. 7 & 9). As a result, there has been an abundance of talking but an absence of listening. The people do not respond directly to any of Samuel's warnings but simply return to their earlier insistence on having a king "like all of the [other] nations" (כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם; v. 20). Verse 20 also lists features that the people especially desire in a king: וְשָׁפְטָנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ וְיָצָא לְפָנֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם אֶת־מִלְחֲמֹתֵנוּ - "Our king will rule us, go out before us, and fight our wars." These roles mentioned have previously either been

filled by God or assigned to prophets or judges to fulfill on God's behalf.[20] In other words, the current system of leadership and governance had sufficiently provided these judicial and military functions, as least on an as needed basis; thus, the people's insistence on adopting a new institution reflects their growing mistrust of the new generation of judges, the growing threat of the Philistines, or perhaps most likely, their growing desire to be "like all of the [other] nations" (כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם; v. 20). While any of these explanations could be argued as valid and practical, the prophetic writer does not appear to find much merit in them.

The reader encounters the first positive description of listening in v. 21 in which the narrator reports: וַיִּשְׁמַע שְׁמוּאֵל אֵת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הָעָם - "Samuel heeded all of the words of the people." Then somewhat surprisingly, the narration continues: וַיְדַבְּרֵם בְּאָזְנֵי יְהוָה – "He spoked them in the ears of YHWH" (v. 21). Why would God need Samuel to repeat and relay their words? This redundant communication could be interpreted as an illustration of Samuel's reluctance and his desire to delay action. Perhaps he chooses to repeat the people's response in order to buy some time. Alternatively, his communication to God of the people's sentiment could be read as parallel to Moses' role on Mt. Sinai, when Moses communicates that the Israelites have agreed to do all that God has spoken (Ex. 19:8). In contrast to the scene at Sinai, however, the Israelites here have refused to take seriously the prophetic message, i.e. all that Samuel has spoken about the custom of the king. Despite this clear presentation of the Israelites' disobedient (in

[20] Moses' description of his successor describes the next leader of Israel as "someone who shall go out before them (אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא לִפְנֵיהֶם) and come in before them" (Num. 27:17); Deborah describes God as "marching before you" (יְהוָה יָצָא לְפָנֶיךָ) in a military context; and often the Ark of the Covenant, as a representation of God's power and protection, travelled in front of the Israelites in the wilderness (Num. 10:33ff) and in military situations (I Sam. 4:5ff).

"refusing to listen" in v. 19) and disloyal (in "rejecting YHWH" in v. 7) behavior, God appears less judgmental than Samuel or the narrator. God ultimately accepts the people's request, even though God interprets it as a form of rejection and does aim to warn them through Samuel's speech. After Samuel's words fail to deter them, God is ready to deliver on their desire. For the third time, God instructs Samuel: שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָם – "Listen to their voice." God then elaborates: וְהַמְלַכְתָּ לָהֶם מֶלֶךְ – "And make them a king" (v. 22). God's repetition of the root מלך here seems to underscore that, in the battle between the two leadership models, the institution of "monarchy" (מלך) has prevailed over the previous institution of "judges" (שפט). Even with this apparent victory for the kingship, the chapter closes with Samuel refusing to listen, or at least delaying his obedience to God's instruction. He continues to display his reluctance and resistance by sending everyone home. The prophet has spoken, but his artistic rhetoric failed to change the minds of the people. They have not been persuaded that the potential costs of a kingship will outweigh the potential benefits. In the end, no real action has occurred on the ground.

What has been accomplished, however, is that the prophetic writer has successfully opened the unit in which the first king of Israel is crowned with a strong warning against the custom of kings. The unit leads with anti-monarchal ideology, though scholarly disagreement exists about the basis for this anti-monarchal attitude. McCarter argues that the author must be responding the abusive taxation and conscription practices of the early kings David and Solomon.[21] Alternatively, Alter suggests that the author's mistrust of kings may have come from their knowledge of earlier Canaanite

[21] McCarter, 158.

culture in which kings took advantage of taxation and conscription.[22] At the heart of this difference in opinion is a disagreement about the historical context out of which this part of narrative emerged. Furthermore, this opening scene of the unit succeeds in establishing a prominent, though shifting, role for the prophet. Samuel may serve as the final judge of Israel, but he is by no means the last prophet. He demonstrates the custom of the prophet, in contrast to the custom of the king, in communicating God's word to the people. He may struggle to obey all of God's instructions with immediacy, but he conveys a commitment and loyalty to God as the King of all kings.

V. The People Get What They Asked For (10:17-27)

If we read according to the divisions made by the source critics, the original prophetic material resumes with I Sam. 10:17. After sending everyone home from Ramat, Samuel eventually summons the Israelites to Mitzpah and proceeds to follow God's instruction to make the people a king. Before announcing the king, however, Samuel's declaration of God's words revisits some earlier themes. For instance, God reminds the people: אָנֹכִי הֶעֱלֵיתִי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם – "I brought Israel up from Egypt" (v. 18). This reminder echoes both the language and sentiment conveyed in ch. 8: מִיּוֹם הַעֲלֹתִי אֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם – "from the day I brought them up from Egypt" (I Sam. 8:8). This repeated reference to the Exodus from Egypt reinforces the theological message that the Israelites should only serve God. Samuel's opening speech also returns to the equation of requesting a king to rejecting God, for he reiterates to the Israelites: וְאַתֶּם הַיּוֹם מְאַסְתֶּם אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – "Today you all have rejected your God" (I Sam. 8:7).

[22] Alter, *The David* Story, 42.

Importantly, the same verb מאס ("to reject"), which appears twice in I Sam. 8:7, occurs here in v. 19. This kind of repetition of language and ideology supports the argument that these two scenes come from the same source.

After making both God and Samuel's attitude crystal clear, Samuel proceeds in v. 20 to "bring forward all of the tribes of Israel" (וַיַּקְרֵב שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת כָּל־שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) and systematically "select by lot" (וַיִּלָּכֵד)[23] the first king of Israel. Employing this selection method achieves multiple effects. On the one hand, McCarter explains the Israelites themselves would have understood the outcome of such a lottery as divinely ordained, so this method gives credibility and legitimacy to the selection.[24] This would then bolster public support, i.e. "This guy is God's choice." The reader, however, may have a different reaction upon learning about the technique employed. As several scholars note,[25] in other biblical contexts, the verb לכד describes the drawing lots among the tribes in order to identify culprits (Josh 7:16; I Sam 14:41f). Thus, the appearance of this particular verb (לכד) adds a strong negative association to this historic event. In keeping with Samuel's delayed, reluctant style,[26] the king of Israel is not selected by the drawing of one lot but of a series of lots, which serves to slowly build the suspense. First, the tribe of Benjamin is chosen (v. 20), then the clan of Matrite (the smallest clan of

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[23] *HALOT* defines לכד in the *qal* form as "catch," "overthrow," "select by lot," or when used with מְלוּכָה, "to take over the kingship, assume control" (I Sam. 14:47). In the *nifal* form, the verb can mean: "to get captured," "to overpowered" or "to be selected by lot" (2:530). The same verb appears to describe casting lost in I Sam. 14:41ff, and in that context, תָּמִּים (as in "urim and tummim") is explicitly mentioned, and thus points to the divine element of this selection method.

[24] McCarter, 193.

[25] Alter, *The David Story*, 58; McCarter, 249-50; Polzin, 103-4.

[26] See discussion in the above section: IV. The People Refuse to Listen (8:19-22).

Benjamin), and then Saul son of Kish (v. 21). Adding to the drama, when Saul is selected, the narrator reports: וַיְבַקְשֻׁהוּ וְלֹא נִמְצָא – "They sought him, but he was not found" (v. 21). When God needs to be consulted once again in v. 22, this occasion allows for a nice wordplay. In order to track down שָׁאוּל בֶּן־קִישׁ ("Saul son of Kish") they need to וַיִּשְׁאֲלוּ־עוֹד בַּיהוָה ("ask again of YHWH").

Next, in the course of three verses (vv. 23-25), "the people" (הָעָם) are mentioned seven times. This intense repetition emphasizes that Saul will serve as the king over all the people. The elders of Israel may have been the first to raise the idea, but Samuel summons the whole nation to Mitzpah to crown the king. The people not only approve the king but cheer: יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ – "Let the King live!" or more idiomatically, "Long live the King!: (v. 24). In v. 25, Samuel once again explains to the people the custom of the king, but here a slight variation of the phrase from ch. 8 appears and more literally connotes "custom of the kingdom" (מִשְׁפַּט הַמְּלֻכָּה). Possibly alluding to Deut. 17:18, Samuel writes down these practices on a scroll, which he places before God. Chapter 10 then concludes in the same fashion that ch. 8 did, with Samuel sending everyone home (v. 25b). This time, however, action has occurred. Saul has been publically named king, though the final two verses (vv. 26 & 27) succeed in foreshadowing future trouble. The reader knows that all of the conflict has not been resolved, division remains, and Saul's support begins as tenuous.

Taken altogether, this source material from the Prophetic History (I Samuel 8 & 10:17-27) consistently presents God as less reluctant than Samuel to give the Israelites what they have asked for: a mortal king. Samuel comes across as obstinate and unsympathetic to the people's desire, while God comes across as more resigned to the

inevitability of a king. Even though the people's demand represents a rejection of God as sole sovereign, God fulfills their desire. It may seem surprising that this prophetic material would present its prophet in less than glowing light, but in terms of furthering the author's agenda, the truth of the prophet's message likely outweighed the sweetness of his characterization. Plot-wise, this source layer coheres as two related scenes in which the people gather together before Samuel and God to deal with the matter of establishing a monarchy. The time lag between scenes could be explained as an illustration of Samuel's hesitancy, a desire for a location change from Ramah to Mitzpah, or a need to gather all of the people, not simply the elders.[27] Moreover, placing these scenes before and after the older material from the Saul Cycle allows the Prophetic History's anti-monarchal material to both open and close the unit. Perhaps with the knowledge of how the Israelite monarchy would falter and fail in the future, the prophetic writer filled the introduction of the first king with hesitation, warning and theological concern. Ideologically, this source layer also holds together. From beginning until end, Samuel's resistance to establishing a monarchy is clear, as is God's interpretation of the people's desire as a rejection of God's reign. This source also conveys the author's desire to protect the power and prominence of the prophet within the new monarchal system. Even as the people seek to replace Samuel's office (as judge, chieftain and ad hoc leader of the people) with a king, Samuel plays an instrumental role in the enduring processes of divine communication and divine selection of Israelite kings.

Literarily, the prophetic source layer of this unit holds together fairly well but not perfectly. Chapter 8 introduces several key words, specifically in the form of contrasting

[27] See footnote #18: there seems to be inconsistency within ch. 8 about who exactly came to Ramah.

pairs: שׁפט vs. מלך and לקח vs. שׂים. The first pair illustrates the historic transition underway from the era of "judges" (שׁפט) to the era of "kings" (מלך). Perhaps as a demonstration of the progress made in that historic shift by the end of ch. 10, מלך appears prominently in v. 24 to communicate the people's central ideological sentiment: יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ ("Long live the King!"). In contrast, the one appearance of the root שׁפט in that same scene (I Sam. 10:17-27) is in conjunction with kingship, specifically part of the idiom: מִשְׁפַּט הַמְּלֻכָה ("custom of the kingdom"; v. 25). Regarding the second word pair, the dynamic between לקח and שׂים gets highlighted in Samuel's speech (I Sam. 8:11-18) and brilliantly conveys the heart of the author's mistrust of monarchy. Although Samuel's speech presents as a highly refined literary unit, its defining wordplay between לקח and שׂים does not reappear in the second half of ch. 10. Despite that literary inconsistency, ch. 8's references to the Exodus from Egypt (explicitly in I Sam. 8:8, and implicitly in I Sam. 8:18) are echoed in I Sam. 10:18, and the same verb (מאס) appears in I Sam. 8:7 and 10:19 to describe the people's "rejection" of God.

Another key phrase of ch. 8 is שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל: God instructs Samuel to "listen to the voice of the people," even though they do not listen to him. After occurring four times in ch. 8, however, this phrase does not appear at all in the continuation of the prophetic source in ch. 10. Like the discontinuation of the wordplay between לקח and שׂים, the absence of this key phrase can serve as data against the literary coherence of the source layer. Alternatively, the absence of the phrase may emphasize the point: Samuel has taken the instruction to heart, is heeding the request of the people, and does not need to be reminded once again to שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל. In a similar way, we could read the shift in

grammar used to describe the people's request as a demonstration of another shift that has occurred. In ch. 8, the people demand a king more than once, and their language always appears as imperative constructs, emphasizing the boldness of their request: "appoint for us" (v. 5) and "give us" (v. 6). They are demanding, not asking. Then, in the scene in ch. 10, the narrator reports that "they asked again of YHWH": וַיִּשְׁאֲלוּ־עוֹד בַּיהוָֹה. Only by "asking" (שׁאל), rather than demanding, do they truly get what they have been wanting: King Saul (שָׁאוּל). In this regard, the wordplay makes a theological point. On the one hand, these shifts in style or patterns may simply be attempts to explain away the literary inconsistencies within the source. On the other hand, however, the scene in ch. 10 presents real movement in the plot development, and the literary choices should reinforce that movement or break in pattern.

Overall, this material from the Prophetic History holds together with regard to ideology and plot development, but the relationship between the literary features in ch. 8 and those in ch. 10 is less convincing. Also, if we base the literary analysis on McCarter's understanding of the compositional history of the unit, then we should assume that the author of the larger Prophetic History knew the older material from the Saul Cycle (i.e., I Samuel 9-10:16). Rather than constructing an independent, original narrative about the anointment of Saul to compete with the pro-monarchal Saul tradition, more likely the prophetic writer consciously added onto the older material. Especially given McCarter's argument that the author of the Prophetic History also inserted Samuel into the older narrative about Saul, it becomes more accurate to talk about the compositional history of this unit was one of accretion, not of conflation. Taking all of this into consideration, the literary merits of this prophetic source layer as an independent

story become less important, for that may have never been the intention. What is unquestionable, however, is that the literary analysis of this source layer (I Samuel 8 & 10:17-27) will serve and structure the comparison between the older layer (I Samuel 9-10:1-16), and that between the separate layers and the complete unit as a whole.

Part 2. The Saul Cycle: I Samuel 9-10:1-16

A. Structural Outline

Saul Searches for She-Asses and Returns Anointed (I Samuel 9:1-27;10:1-16)

I. Kish Sends Saul to Search for She-Asses (9:1-3)

- a. Kish the Benjaminite has a good-looking, tall son named Saul (vv. 1-2)
- b. Kish sends his son with a lad to look for his lost she-asses (v. 3)

II. Saul and the Lad Negotiate Their Search (9:4-10)

- a. They pass through many places but do not find the animals (v. 4)
- b. Saul considers returning home (v. 5)
- c. The lad suggests that they seek help from the man of God (v. 6)
- d. Saul worries they have nothing to bring the man of God (v. 7)
- e. The lad finds a quarter shekel and Saul agrees to go (vv. 8-10)

III. Saul Consults the Maidens (9:11-13)

- a. Saul and the lad find maidens drawing water (v. 11)
- b. The maidens say they will find the seer in town if they hurry (v. 12-13)

IV. Samuel Finds Saul (9:14-20)

- a. As Samuel comes toward Saul, God confirms his identity (vv. 14-17)
- b. Saul asks Samuel where he might find the seer (v. 18)

c. Samuel reveals his identity as the seer, invites Saul to eat, and informs Saul that the she-asses have been found (vv. 19-20a)

d. Samuel begins to reveal Saul's destiny with cryptic questions (vv. 20b-21)

V. Samuel Hosts Saul for a Meal (9:22-24)

a. Samuel seats Saul and the lad at the head of the table (v. 22)

b. Samuel serves Saul a special portion (vv. 23-24)

VI. Samuel Slowly Starts Sharing with Saul (9:25-27)

a. Samuel and Saul speak on the roof (v. 25)

b. Samuel causes Saul to hear the word of God (vv. 26-27)

VII. Samuel Anoints Saul (10:1-16)

a. Samuel anoints Saul as prince (v. 1a)

b. Samuel predicts three encounters for Saul (vv. 1b-7)

c. Samuel tells Saul to wait for him in Gilgal (v. 8)

d. All the signs comes to pass (vv. 9-13)

e. Saul shares only part of Samuel's prophecy with his uncle (vv. 14-16)

B. Literary Analysis

I. Kish Sends Saul to Search for She-Asses (9:1-3)

This older source layer from the Saul Cycle begins with a classic genealogical introduction that establishes Saul's ancestry and his affiliation with the tribe of Benjamin. Interestingly, the opening verse (v. 1) does not actually mention Saul but focuses on his father Kish, describing him as a גִּבּוֹר חָיִל – a construct noun which *HALOT* translates as

"a brave man."[28] Regarding the component parts, גִּבּוֹר often refers to someone who is mighty and vigorous, such as a military hero,[29] while the term חַיִל can apply to a wealthy landowner or military man and convey both strength and competence.[30] By introducing Kish with this idiom, the narration establishes Kish as a man of power and status. He may reside in the smallest, least powerful tribe, but he deserves to be taken seriously. Verse 2 then informs the reader that this גִּבּוֹר חָיִל has a son named Saul. Whether or not Kish has other sons does not appear to be of interest or concern, for the verse goes on to offer three descriptive phrases about Saul's physical appearance: (1) בָּחוּר וְטוֹב – a phrase which does not appear elsewhere in the Bible and which *HALOT* translates as "young and handsome."[31] (2) וְאֵין אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל טוֹב מִמֶּנּוּ – "There was no one among the children of Israel as pleasing as him." This phase designates Saul as without peer, but the precise meaning of טוֹב ("good," "pleasing" or "beautiful") remains a bit ambiguous. Reading טוֹב as an indication of Saul's beauty would be in line with the above description ("young and handsome"). It is also worth noting that Moses is described as טוֹב (Ex. 2:2), which some interpret as a description of his beauty,[32] and that Joseph's good looks receive attention as well (Gen. 39:6). (3) מִשִּׁכְמוֹ וָמַעְלָה גָּבַהּ מִכָּל־הָעָם – "From his shoulders and above taller than all of the people." Saul's "goodness" is beyond

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[28] *HALOT*, 1:311. The idiom גִּבּוֹר חָיִל appears 32 times in the Bible, 25 of which appear in the book of Chronicles. Representing the idiom's main appearances before the book of Chronicles, David (I Sam. 16:18), Boaz (Ruth 2:1), Jeroboam (I Kings 11:28), Naaman (II Kings 5:1), and Jephthah (Judg. 11:1) are each described like Saul as גִּבּוֹר חָיִל.
[29] *HALOT*, 1:172.
[30] *HALOT*, 1:311.
[31] *HALOT*, 1:118. בָּחוּר alone connotes the status of a young man, in the sense of being fully grown but still unmarried. See also *HALOT*, 2:370-71. טוֹב alone describes "goodness" but could apply to merriment, usability, beauty, kindness or morality.
[32] *NJPS*; See also *HALOT*, 2:371.

comparison, perhaps because he stands head and shoulders above everyone else. Taken altogether, these physical descriptions of Saul set him up as a strong and handsome young man and an attractive candidate to serve as Israel's first king. Through this extensive presentation of his features, the opening verses effectively launch at least the beginnings of a campaign to rally support for Saul.

With v. 3, the reader learns of the presenting problem that will propel the plot forward: Kish's she-asses are lost, so he sends Saul to find them. Looking more closely at the context and language, however, reveals that much more must be in store. For instance, as Katharine Dell points out, if Kish is as wealthy and powerful as the opening verse seems to imply, then why would he be so concerned about a few lost she-asses? Why would he send his son, as opposed to one of his servants, to find them? Is this some kind of trial engineered by Kish to test his son's abilities?[33] Along these lines, the premise of sending one's beautiful son out to the flock serves as the first of many allusions to the Joseph cycle (Gen. 37:13), which will each be discussed in turn. When Kish instructs Saul to "go and look for the she-asses" (לֵךְ בַּקֵּשׁ אֶת־הָאֲתֹנֹת; v.3), Kish's language introduces a key word בַּקֵּשׁ ("to seek" or "to demand"), a linguistic connection to the Joseph cycle, and a central motif of the story: seeking. Moreover, Kish's particular phrasing of קַח־נָא אִתְּךָ ("Take, pray, with you") brings to mind the opening of the Akedah (Gen. 22:2). All of a sudden, the reader begins to anticipate where this divinely guided plot may be headed. Or, for those who know what will become of Saul, this opening premise of lost she-asses sets up a humorous and almost romantic narrative arc: a

[33] Katharine J. Dell, "Incongruity in the story of Saul in 1 Samuel 9-15: a methodological survey" in *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of Robert Gordon* (ed. Geoffrey Khan and Diana Lipton; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 50.

young man goes looking for asses and comes home a king.

II. Saul and the Lad Negotiate Their Search (9:4-10)

As the counterpart and desired outcome of seeking, "finding" (מצא) the she-asses must necessarily be delayed in order to drive the plot. The structure of v. 4 quickly makes it clear that this search effort will not be easily resolved: the four-fold repetition of the verb עבר ("to pass" or "to cross") emphasizes Saul and the lad's extensive traveling; and the alternation of the phrase וְלֹא מָצָאוּ ("they did not find") with וְאַיִן ("there was nothing") emphasizes Saul and the lad's unsuccessful seeking. In conjunction with v. 3, the pairing of בַּקֵּשׁ and מָצָא strengthens the allusion to the Joseph cycle, for in the Genesis material, a unnamed man "finds" (וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ) Joseph and asks him: "What are you seeking? (מַה־תְּבַקֵּשׁ; Gen. 37:15). Soon Joseph "finds" his brothers (וַיִּמְצָאֵם; Gen. 37:17) who later claim to "find" (מָצָאנוּ) his tunic (Gen. 37:32). Beyond establishing this second key word (מָצָא), v. 4 also introduces what will be a progression of travel verbs that structure this section of the story, beginning here with the already mentioned repetition of the verb עבר.

After Saul and the lad's extended effort of passing through the regions of Ephraim, Shalisha, Shaalim, and Benjamin without finding anything, v. 5 reports that Saul arrives in Tzuf and contemplates giving up and going home. He relays to the lad accompanying him his concern: פֶּן־יֶחְדַּל אָבִי מִן־הָאֲתֹנוֹת וְדָאַג לָנוּ – "Lest my father cease [from worrying] about the she-asses and worry about us" (v. 5). When Saul conveys this growing fear, it is as if he knows the Joseph story and the terrible anguish suffered by

Jacob (Gen. 37:33ff). As yet another parallel to the Joseph cycle, nameless individuals will prove instrumental in moving Saul and the plot forward, just as the nameless "man" (אִישׁ) approaches Joseph and directs him to his brothers and the fateful scene at the pit (Gen. 37:15ff). In this scene with Saul, the nameless "lad" (נַּעַר) may accompany him from the beginning, but he is the one who refuses to let Saul give up and go home. The nameless lad is the one who first mentions the individual who will turn out to be Samuel. The lad explains that there is a אִישׁ־אֱלֹהִים ("man of God") who may be able to help them on their search, for he explains: כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יְדַבֵּר בֹּוא יָבֹוא - "Whatever he says will surely come to pass" (v. 6).[34]

The exchange between Saul and the lad continues for a total of five verses (vv. 5-10, excluding the explanatory note in v. 9 which appears to be a later editorial comment) and introduces several literary devices that define this source layer of material. Robert Polzin argues that this dialogue serves as the first of four different dialogues that provide the core structure of ch. 9.[35] In each dialogue, "a character's question generates a predictive response," which subsequently comes true. With each successive dialogue, "the magnitude of the predictive power" increases, culminating with a "truly prophetic" conversation between Saul and Samuel.[36] In addition to having common structures, these dialogues also share common language. In the current scene under consideration with Saul and his lad, the word הִנֵּה ("look" or "behold") appears three times, as do two iterations of phrase יַגֶּד לָּנוּ ("tell us"). This language will reappear in subsequent

[34] Translation from Alter, *The David Story*, 47.
[35] Dialogues include: (1) Saul and his lad (vv. 5-10); (2) Saul, his lad, and the maidens (vv. 11-14); (3) Samuel and God (vv. 15-17); (4) Samuel and Saul (vv. 18-21).
[36] Polzin, 92.

dialogues to convey the shifting of perspectives as well as the ongoing revelation of information (or not) to individuals.[37] Verse 8 also introduces the verb לַעֲנוֹת ("to answer" or "to respond"), which will continue to reinforce the fact that each dialogue includes both a question, mostly explicit but sometimes not, and then a response. In the lad's response to Saul in v. 8, he announces: הִנֵּה֩ נִמְצָ֨א בְיָדִ֜י רֶ֤בַע שֶׁ֙קֶל֙ כֶּ֔סֶף – "Look, found in my hand is a quarter shekel of silver." In communicating that new information, the lad reinforces the motif of "finding" (נִמְצָא), and also responds to Saul's expressed concern about having nothing to bring the man of God (v. 7). Now with a gift in hand, Saul's excuse no longer holds. In fact, Saul expresses a sense of urgency, saying: לְכָ֥ה ו֖נֵלְכָ֑ה – "Come, let us go!" (v. 10). Appearing nine times in this dialogue between Saul and the lad, הלך ("to go" or "to walk") replaces עבר as the dominant travel verb.

As mentioned above, the "man of God" (אִישׁ־אֱלֹהִים) in discussion turns out to be Samuel, but as McCarter suggests, in an earlier version of this folktale about Saul, a nameless man of God or "seer" (רֹאֶה) may have revealed to Saul that he would become king.[38] This certainly seems feasible and would explain the various titles attributed to Samuel, but here we enter the murky territory of trying to decipher or conjecture how exactly the author of the Prophetic History inserted Samuel as well as the accompanying style and ideology, into this earlier story about the rise of Saul. This is not an easy task, given that we lack independent versions of either tradition. What is easier to decipher, however, is the insertion of v. 9 as a later editorial comment and perhaps an attempt to

[37] *HALOT* defines הִנֵּה as an "interruptive interjection" that can "call attention" to information that follows, "introduce a new, unsuspected moment," or follow verbs of perceiving (1:252). See also footnote #11.
[38] McCarter, 26.

harmonize, or at least acknowledge, the multiplicity of titles given to Samuel within one passage: man of God, seer, and "prophet" (נָבִיא).

III. Saul Consults the Maidens (9:11-13)

Saul's new sense of urgency comes right in time, for they will need all the energy they can muster to ascend to the town. עלה ("to go up") now operates as the dominant travel verb, with the root appearing eight times in the next 16 verses (vv. 11-26). As Saul and his lad "go up the ascent to the town" (הֵמָּה עֹלִים בְּמַעֲלֵה הָעִיר), they do not find the she-asses or the man of God, but v. 11 reports: וְהֵמָּה מָצְאוּ נְעָרוֹת יֹצְאוֹת לִשְׁאֹב מָיִם – "They find young maidens going out to draw water." These unnamed individuals will prove to be very helpful, if not instrumental, in furthering the plot along, though it is Saul and his lad who prompt the next dialogue, asking: הֲיֵשׁ בָּזֶה הָרֹאֶה - "Is there a seer here?" (v. 11). The women's response then reinforces key words and literary devices introduced earlier in the chapter. They begin to "respond" (וַתַּעֲנֶינָה) in v. 12, saying: יֵשׁ הִנֵּה לְפָנֶיךָ – "Yes, look, [he is] ahead of you." They then add to the growing sense of urgency, as they continue their response, saying: עַתָּה כִּי הַיּוֹם בָּא לָעִיר ׀ מַהֵר – "Hurry, now, for today he comes to the town" (v. 12). The women also twice predict in v. 13 that Saul and the lad will "find the seer" (תִּמְצְאֻן אֹתוֹ), as long as they hurry and reach him before he goes to the high place.

In addition to reinforcing the key words mentioned above, this dialogue introduces some new literary features. First of all, this scene in which a young man who has left home encounters young women on their way to draw water initially appears to be a type-scene, thus positioning Saul as a hero in the making about to be betrothed, like

Jacob and Moses (Gen. 29:2ff; Ex. 2:16ff).[39] Different from the well scenes elsewhere in the Bible, here Saul does not meet his wife, though he is slowly meeting his destiny. Another literary device employed in this scene is the dramatic tension created by the chatty women who offer Saul an extended response while simultaneously insisting that he hurry. In support of this categorization of their conversational style, observe that Saul's three-word question in v. 11 (הֲיֵשׁ בָּזֶה הָרֹאֶה) prompts a two-verse, 44-word response from the women, which contains several repetitions and provides more information than Saul's question necessarily required (vv. 12-13). In general, this older material from the Saul Cycle comes across as more verbose than the prophetic material, and perhaps this quality points to the oral origins of the ancient folktale. Later in ch. 10 (discussed below), Samuel devotes seven long verses to his prophecy for Saul (I Sam. 10:2-8), and his attention to detail – in predicting specific numbers of people, gifts for Saul, and conversations – seems to further demonstrate the strength of his prophetic powers. In this scene, however, the long-winded nature of the women's comments presents less positively, perhaps comically, and mostly adds to the drama of the ongoing search. As Alter notes, at this point in the unfolding plot, it has become clear that the future king is searching for Samuel, and not the other way around.[40] This seems to be an interesting result of the conflation of two stories, furthering the intensity of Samuel's reluctance.

[39] For further discussion of this type-scene in general and its appearance in I Samuel 9, see Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 52-62.
[40] Alter, *The David Story*, 49.

IV. Samuel Finds Saul (9:14-20)

In the next scene comes the much-anticipated discovery of Samuel by Saul and vice versa. This scene also discloses God's role in the elaborate quest and God's plans for Saul. After v. 14 sets the stage with Samuel about to cross paths with Saul and the lad, v. 15 begins a three-verse update from the narrator (vv. 15-17), in which the narrator informs the reader that everything about to unfold had been revealed by God to Samuel a day before "Saul's arrival" (בְּוֹא־שָׁאוּל; v. 15). The three occurrences of the verb בוא ("to come"; vv. 14-16) establish "coming" or "arriving" as the new dominant mode of travel. Regarding Saul's arrival, God explains to Samuel: אֶשְׁלַחْ אֵלֶיךָ אִישׁ מֵאֶרֶץ בִּנְיָמִן – "I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin;" וּמְשַׁחְתָּו לְנָגִיד עַל־עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל – "and you will anoint him prince over My people Israel" (v. 16). God's words confirm that Saul was in fact "sent" on a divine mission when his father sent him to search for the lost she-asses. God then elaborates: וְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־עַמִּי מִיַּד פְּלִשְׁתִּים – "He [the prince] will save My people from the hand of the Philistines;" כִּי רָאִיתִי אֶת־עַמִּי כִּי בָּאָה צַעֲקָתָו אֵלָי - "for I have seen [the plight of] My people, their outcry has come to Me" (v. 16).

With these words, God provides a divine perspective on the situation, which differs in noteworthy ways from the prophetic material discussed earlier (I Samuel 8 & 10:17-27). For instance, here God mentions the growing threat of the Philistines, which has yet to be mentioned explicitly and may be the most historically accurate explanation for the shift in governance structure. God also remarks that the Israelites' "crying out" (צַעֲקָתָו) did in fact reach God, which is what the prophetic material warns will not happen in the future (I Sam. 8:18). Also in v. 16, God employs a different term for the

anointed monarch. In contrast to the prophetic material, which repeatedly references a "king" (מֶלֶךְ), here God uses the term "prince" (נָגִיד). God then describes the function of the office, saying: זֶה יַעְצֹר בְּעַמִּי – "This one will restrain My people" (v. 17). This language differs from the prophetic material's emphasis on verbs like "reigning" (מלך) or "judging" (שׁפט). In the midst of these important differences, however, God's language mirrors one literary feature used in the prophetic material: the repetition of the term הָעָם ("the people"; I Sam. 10:23-25). Here God mentions "My people" (עַמִּי) four times in two verses (vv. 16-17), seemingly to emphasize God's desire to protect and maintain a relationship with God's people – the Israelites. In both contexts, the repetition of the term highlights the national scope and significance of the matter at hand.

Although God's language and perspective presented here may differ from the material presented in the prophetic source, this dialogue between God and Samuel reinforces many of the key words established earlier in ch. 9. Starting with הִנֵּה, this term calls attention to an unexpected moment in v. 14 and to new information in v. 17. God also "responds" (עָנָה) to Samuel in v. 17, and the act of responding will continue into the next dialogue (vv. 19 & 21). Another familiar phrase appears after God identifies Saul in v. 17, and then Saul approaches Samuel to ask: הַגִּידָה־נָּא לִי אֵי־זֶה בֵּית הָרֹאֶה – "Tell me, pray, where is the house of the seer?" (v. 18). Having Saul pose this question to Samuel – the very seer he seeks – either helps to emphasize Saul's naivety or adds yet another comic moment to the story. While Saul may have no idea about the significance of the conversation he has initiated, the narrator floods v. 18 with allusions to the Joseph cycle and thereby prepares the reader for the importance of the moment. For instance, "Saul

approaches Samuel" (וַיִּגַּשׁ שָׁאוּל אֶת־שְׁמוּאֵל), and that particular verb choice creates a verbal link to the scene in which Judah "approaches" (וַיִּגַּשׁ) Joseph to plead the brothers' case and in which Joseph ultimately reveals his identity (Gen. 44:18ff). In the current scene between Saul and Samuel, Samuel first reveals his own identity (אָנֹכִי הָרֹאֶה – "I am the seer;" v. 19) and will slowly begin to reveal Saul's new identity in the next verse (v. 20). In his question to Samuel (הַגִּידָה־נָּא לִי – "Tell me, pray"), Saul also echoes Joseph's question to the nameless man (Gen. 37:16). The allusion is effective, because both Joseph and Saul make innocent requests for information, which end up becoming crucial turning points in their emerging careers as national heroes.

After divulging his identity as "the seer," Samuel offers Saul an invitation to eat with him. Then he promises: וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בִּלְבָבְךָ אַגִּיד לָךְ – "All that is in your heart, I will tell you" (v. 19). The theme of revelation continues to build in v. 20 when Samuel informs Saul that the she-asses have been "found" (נִמְצְאוּ), even though Saul has not yet mentioned the animals to him. Samuel proceeds to speak more cryptically, subtly revealing information only in the form of indirect questions: וּלְמִי כָּל־חֶמְדַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל – "For who is all of the desire of Israel?" הֲלוֹא לְךָ וּלְכֹל בֵּית אָבִיךָ – "Isn't it you and all of your father's house" (v. 20)? Echoing Samuel's הֲלוֹא ("Isn't?"), Saul then "responds" (וַיַּעַן) with: הֲלוֹא בֶן־יְמִינִי אָנֹכִי מִקְּטַנֵּי שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִשְׁפַּחְתִּי הַצְּעִרָה מִכֹּל־מִשְׁפְּחוֹת שִׁבְטֵי בִנְיָמִן - "Aren't I a Benjaminite from the smallest tribe of Israel, and my clan the youngest of all the clans in the tribe of Benjamin?" וְלָמָּה דִבַּרְתָּ אֵלַי כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה – "Why did you say such a thing to me?" (v. 21). While the use of questions here in these two verses of the story continues a major literary feature of this source layer in general, these questions do not

function in the same way that the earlier questions do. They do not invite dialogue. They do not prompt "predictive responses," for Samuel does not even respond to Saul's questions. At this point, it remains unclear to the reader how much Saul understands about his future. Like the Joseph cycle, here the reader holds more knowledge about the details of the plot than some of the central characters do. While the reference to the tribe of Benjamin in v. 21 offers yet another connection to the Joseph cycle,[41] Saul's response to Samuel also resembles Moses' response to God at the burning bush: "Who am I to lead the Israelites?" (Ex. 3:11). The continued inter-textuality with Genesis and Exodus operates as a major literary feature of this layer of older source material.

V. Samuel Hosts Saul for a Meal (9:22-24)

Since Samuel will not fully respond to Saul's questions until ch. 10, the remaining interaction between Saul and Samuel in ch. 9 includes more symbolic actions than revelatory speech. Beginning in v. 22, Samuel "takes" (וַיִּקַּח) Saul and his lad to a festive meal at "the high place" (הַבָּמָה). By "taking" Saul, Samuel is finally taking action, rather than trying to slow down the unfolding course of events. The meal ostensibly takes place at the high place, because the people have offered a sacrifice there. Samuel needs to consecrate the sacrifice before they consume it (v. 13). That said, this particular setting is more that circumstantial. In the chapter that involves much traveling (i.e. passing through, going, coming and going up), a scene that takes place at the high place presents as a geographic and narrative climax point. Within this elevated setting, Samuel then seats Saul and the lad at the "head of the table" (מָקוֹם בְּרֹאשׁ) filled with 30 distinguished

[41] Benjamin plays a prominent role in the Joseph cycle, since he is the only other son of Rachel, Jacob's beloved.

guests (v. 22). Saul appears to be the honored guest, for all of these details point to the significance of the meal and Saul's treatment. Adding to the symbolism, Samuel announces in v. 23 that he had "set aside" (שִׂים אִתָּה) a special portion of food, which he has the cook "serve to Saul alone" (וַיָּשֶׂם ׀ לִפְנֵי שָׁאוּל) in v. 24. Like Benjamin at Joseph's feast (Gen. 43:34), Saul gets a special portion, though he still may not understand the reason behind his special status. Samuel merely explains: כִּי לַמּוֹעֵד שָׁמוּר־לְךָ – "for [this portion] has been kept for you for the appointed time" (v. 24). While Samuel continues to be withhold details, his word choice is subtly instructive: a מוֹעֵד ("set time") connotes a divinely appointed time or meeting.

VI. Samuel Slowly Starts Sharing with Saul (9:25-27)

After symbolically sealing their relationship by eating together,[42] Samuel, Saul and the lad eventually "go down" (וַיֵּרְדוּ) from the high place. With that description, v. 25 introduces one final travel verb (ירד) to bring the chapter to a close. In contrast to the urgency that escalated earlier in the chapter before Saul found Samuel, Samuel has continued to delay speaking openly to Saul about his destiny. Only as Samuel escorts Saul "down" (יוֹרְדִים) and out of town does he ask Saul to send the lad ahead of them so that they can speak privately (v. 27). Samuel then announces: וְאַתָּה עֲמֹד כַּיּוֹם – "And you, stand now;" וְאַשְׁמִיעֲךָ אֶת־דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים – "I will cause you to hear the word of God" (v. 27). With those words, the chapter closes. Saul has been kept in the dark about the

[42] Significant events happen to biblical heroes over meals: Three messengers announce Sarah's conception to Abraham over a meal (Gen. 18:1ff); Esau sells his birthright over a meal (Gen. 25:29ff); Jacob receives Isaac's blessing over a meal (Gen. 26:1ff); Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers over a meal (Gen. 43:16ff).

true purpose of his journey for the entire chapter, and this delayed revelation of Saul's fate to be the first king of Israel serves multiple purposes. In addition to the comic effect discussed earlier in the analysis, the continued delay serves to emphasize Samuel's reluctance as well as Saul's innocence. Saul is by no means campaigning for the position; he does not even know that it exists. Saul may come across as a bit naïve, but his lack of awareness while rising to power will serve as a strong contrast to David's clear awareness and even opportunism during his own rise to power.

VII. Samuel Anoints Saul (10:1-16)

With the opening of chapter 10, Samuel finally answers Saul's question from I Sam. 9:21: "Why did you say such a thing to me?" He answers by "taking" (וַיִּקַּח) a jug of oil, pouring it on Saul's head, and declaring: הֲלֹוא כִי־מְשָׁחֲךָ יְהוָה עַל־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְנָגִיד – "Has not YHWH anointed you over His inheritance as prince?" (v. 1). The stylistic choice to make such a major announcement in the form of a question either reveals Samuel's continued uncertainty about establishing a monarchy or provides a connection to their earlier conversation in which the two men exchanged a series of questions framed by the interrogative הֲלֹוא ("Isn't?" in I Sam. 9:20-21). Despite the reluctance and indirectness displayed by Samuel in the previous chapter (I Sam. 9:14; 20; 24-27) and even in this moment of anointment, Samuel begins to reveal his prophetic powers with a new intensity as this source layer continues into ch. 10. He proceeds to predict three encounters that Samuel will have, and by providing extensive details about what will occur, his prophetic abilities come through clearly. In describing the first two encounters in vv. 2-4, Samuel continues the motif of seeking and finding; he makes a point to predict

that Samuel will "find" (וּמְצָאתָ) the two men at the tomb of Rachel, and that the three men at the Terebinth of Tabor will "find" him (וּמְצָאֻךָ). Despite the reinforcement of that motif, however, occurrences of key words and literary features that defined the beginning of this source layer in ch. 9 diminish significantly starting with Samuel's prophecy of the third encounter and then continuing through the realization of that prophecy (vv. 5-13). The main exceptions are the three appearances of the word הִנֵּה (vv. 8, 10 and 11) to narrate the ongoing revelation of new information, and one occurrence of ענה in v. 12 to introduce a response to a question about Saul's identity as a prophet. Overall, the stylistic coherence between ch. 9 and the beginning of ch. 10 is not very strong, for the two sections lack unifying literary features like key words, use of dialogue, and relationships to other biblical texts.

On the one hand, it seems feasible that this presentation and realization of three predicted encounters (vv. 2-13) could represent a separate, old folktale about young Saul. The dominant motif of the "spirit of God" (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים or רוּחַ יְהוָה) gripping Saul (vv. 6 and 10) aligns him more to past judges like Gideon or Samson (Judg. 3:10; 13:25) than to future kings, which further supports an earlier, folkloric origin. On the other hand, this material does contribute to the larger story of Saul. An important detail of the overall plotline appears in v. 8 when Samuel instructs Saul to wait for him to offer sacrifices at Gilgal. Failing to fully adhere to this instruction will contribute to Saul's fall (I Sam. 13:8ff) and influence the future direction of the narrative. This passage also offers an additional explanation for the desire of the author of the Prophetic History to insert the figure of Samuel into this unit. If Saul himself can operate as a king and as a prophet, as described in vv. 9-13, from where would come the balance of power? Who would

deliver the warning about the less innocent ways of the king? Given these potential concerns, one way of approaching this passage (vv. 2-13) could be to read it as a conflation: material demonstrating Samuel's unparalleled prophetic capabilities (by the prophetic writer) was inserted into an old folktale about Saul's ability to go into ecstasy and prophesy (from the Saul Cycle). Since it is Samuel who precisely predicts Saul's experience of prophecy, his power is not only reinforced but also protected.

In the concluding verses of this source layer (vv. 14-16) that lead up to the public crowning of Saul (vv. 17-27), the reader suddenly encounters Saul's uncle, not his father, who very much wants to know what Samuel has told him. Despite this surprising twist in the plot and characters, these final verses introduce some continuity at the level of language at least. Like the dialogues in ch. 9, this one also begins with a question that elicits a response (v. 14). As another connection to ch. 9's literary features, iterations of the phrase הַגִּֽידָה־נָּ֥א לִֽי (“Pray, tell me”) appear three times within vv. 15-16 alone, and this intense repetition returns to the forefront the theme of revelation and knowledge: Who knows what? Who reveals what? Who remains uninformed? Verse 16 reports that Saul shared with his uncle, saying: הַגֶּ֤ד הִגִּיד֙ לָ֔נוּ כִּ֥י נִמְצְא֖וּ הָאֲתֹנֹ֑ות – “[Samuel] verily told us that the she-asses had been found;” וְאֶת־דְּבַ֤ר הַמְּלוּכָה֙ לֹא־הִגִּ֣יד לֹ֔ו אֲשֶׁ֥ר אָמַ֖ר שְׁמוּאֵֽל – “But the matter of the kingdom he did not tell him that which Samuel had said.” It is worth noting here the first appearance of the term הַמְּלוּכָה (“kingdom”) in this source layer, which may suggest the creation of a seam or transition from one source layer to another. More importantly, this verse also represents the first time Saul, since entering the narrative, operates with more information than others. Like Samuel, he chooses to reveal some details and withhold others.

With that short exchange with this uncle, the Saul Cycle's introduction to the first king of Israel comes to a close. While one might assume this oldest material about the first king would paint him in the most positive light, the narrative presents Saul more ambiguously than that. On the one hand, this material presents Saul as the attractive, tall son of a powerful and important man (I Sam. 9:1-2). Saul comes across as unassuming, and like other Israelite leaders before him, he falls into his role rather than campaigning for it. Upon hearing inklings of his selection, Saul protests his unworthiness (I Sam. 9:21). His origins in the smallest tribe and the humblest clan within that tribe help to emphasize "the miraculous nature of his rise to the throne."[43] The allusions to the Joseph cycle that dominate this material also reinforce the national significance of this story about a hero in the making. From this perspective, one could argue that the Saul Cycle material presents the first king as humble and worthy. On the other hand, however, it is possible to read the same material as painting Saul in a much less glowing light. If he cannot find she-asses, why should the Israelites believe in his ability to fight the Philistines? If he is easily defeated and dependent on the determination of his lad (I Sam. 9:5-9), what reason do the Israelites have to be confident in his courage and character? Moreover, the reference to his origins in the tribe of Benjamin could remind the reader of the horrific events at the end of the book of Judges (ch. 21), and thus that tribal association would raise more suspicion than intrigue. From this perspective, it is not clear that Saul is strongest candidate for the position or that the authors of the tradition believe he will succeed. As discussed at the end of Part 1, it is impossible to know the extent of the prophetic writer's editing of this older material from the Saul Cycle.

[43] McCarter, 180.

Perhaps those revisions contribute to this ambiguous presentation, given the Prophetic History's anti-monarchal attitude. What is clear, however, is the folkloric quality of this extended tale of seeking and finding and the possible orality of this older material about the first king of Israel. Finally, this material may read as less theologically charged than the prophetic source, but God is certainly involved in the plot. The divine intervention occurs more in the background, providing one more connection to the Joseph cycle.

Part 3. The Coherent Whole: I Samuel 8-10

Literary Analysis

When read as a coherent whole, the predominant themes of this unit include the emerging dynamic between the kings and prophets of Israel as well as the shared reluctance of both the first king and the prophet who crowns him to establish a monarchy for Israel. Starting with the latter, the mistrust of the monarchy that defines the material from the Prophetic History (I Samuel 8 & 10:17-27) combined with the Saul Cycle's (I Samuel 9-10:16) presentation of the first king as perhaps overly humble and hesitant produces an overall sentiment of real reluctance. The people may want a king and demand one, but neither God nor Samuel actively pushes this new direction. Samuel and Saul may not exactly work together to stall the announcement of a new king, but neither rushes the other along. Presenting kingship in a very negative light, Samuel's language establishes the tone of not simply reluctance but rejection throughout ch. 8, especially through his declaration of the custom of the king. In addition to – or perhaps in conjunction with – his words, Samuel's predominant action is to delay action, starting in ch. 8 and continuing through ch. 9. He sends the people home, rather than heeding their

demand (I Sam. 8:22). Then, for the first half of ch. 9 (vv. 1-13), when Saul and the lad persistently seek to find the she-asses and then the seer, the narrator never mentions Samuel's effort to seek out Saul. It is as if Samuel is waiting for the designated king to find him. In this regard, the motif of seeking and finding that defines the story of Saul's selection seems to add irony to the unit as a whole: Saul and the lad work hard to find some lost animals, and then all of their determination culminates in a much larger discovery.

Once Saul does find Samuel, Samuel does not reveal Saul's destiny immediately. The revelation of Saul's designation as king is a slow, drawn-out one that further emphasizes Samuel's reluctance to establish a monarchy. Samuel does not seem to have anything against Saul, in particular, and that is an important differentiation to note. When Samuel eventually does communicate Saul's new role, he only does so through questions (I Sam. 9:20 & 10:1). What better exemplifies reluctance than making prophetic pronouncements in the form of questions? Providing a nice stylistic and thematic parallel to Samuel's behavior, Saul not only responds to Samuel with questions in I Sam. 9:21 but also hides in the baggage when the lottery indicates that he will be king in I Sam. 10:21-22. Between the two of them, the lack of confidence in this plan, as conveyed by their words and actions, is really remarkable. Importantly, when read as a coherent, linear whole unit, the ordering of the source material certainly influences the overall tone and ideological messaging. The opening negativity of the prophetic material in ch. 8 affects how the reader interprets the more ambiguous actions and characterizations of Saul: What could be read as a miraculous rise to power in ch. 9 alone comes across more as a set-up for failure when read after ch. 8; Saul's innocence and

worthiness start looking more like incompetence and hesitancy; and moments of urgency in ch. 9 are slowed down by ch. 8's desire for delay.

In addition to embodying a general reluctance toward the new monarchy, Saul and Samuel come to symbolize, over the course the unit, the two competing offices of authority in ancient Israel. The persisting prominence of the prophet will ultimately provide an important balance of powers, or at least the Prophetic History and the Deuteronomist School aim to establish that norm. In this regard, the unit represents the slightly messy transition from the era of judges to the era of monarchy when power and position remained up for grabs. Helpfully demonstrating the transition in motion, each chapter of this three-chapter unit presents a different dynamic between the prophet Samuel and the new office of the king. For instance, in the first stage of the progression (ch. 8), the dynamic is defined by the presence of confrontation and the absence of conversation. The people demand a king, speaking only with imperatives and never with question words. They want to invest their hope and trust in a mortal leader, like all the other nations, and they refuse to take seriously Samuel's prophetic warnings. Not only do they reject Samuel but they also, and more significantly, reject God – the King of kings. Despite the repetition of the phrase שְׁמַע֙ בְּקֹ֣ול, no one listens or obeys.

In contrast to the absence of real dialogue in the first stage of the transition, ch. 9 – representing the second stage – draws it structure from a series of dialogues, each prompted by a question and each propelling the plot forward. The presence of real exchange replaces the confrontation atmosphere of ch. 8 with a more collaborative attitude. The prominence of questions emphasizes the uncertainty of the main individuals involved, and yet God does have a plan unfolding. All of the allusions to the Joseph

cycle throughout ch. 9 help to reinforce this theme, for both here and in the Joseph cycle, the hand of God is instrumental in moving the plot along. While Samuel's resistance and reluctance remain present in ch. 9, Samuel is positioned as the one who will reveal to Saul his destiny to be king. Establishing this function of the prophet helps to provide continuity and protect the office of the prophet, as the power distribution changes. Then, as the third and final step of the progression, ch.10 presents Samuel as wielding incredible prophetic abilities and also wielding the authority to anoint (v. 1) and appoint (v. 24) Saul as King of Israel. Samuel's status has not only been protected but possibly enhanced. As a result, the enduring ideology of the chapter seems to communicate that God compassionately responds to the people's desire for a king but strategically places much power and authority in the enduring office of the prophet. By combining the warnings of the prophetic material with the story of Saul's surprising and even comic rise to power, the unit as a whole seems to set up Saul's limited success as king as resulting more from the inherent failings of the monarchal system than from his own limitations.

Supporting the thematic through-lines of the unit is a noteworthy literary feature: the number of contrasts emphasized by the various key words and motifs across the three chapters. As has been discussed, the prophetic material creates wordplays with שׁפט and מלך, and uses the contrast between שׂים and לקח to epitomize the custom of the king. Although these contrasting pairs do not make their way into the Saul Cycle material, at least not in a significant way, that older source layer has its own powerful contrasts: seeking vs. finding, questioning vs. responding, hurrying vs. delaying, ascending vs. going down, what is revealed vs. what is unknown, etc. The overall effect of employing this many contrasting motifs and language throughout the unit seems to highlight the core

contrast in consideration: king vs. prophet. In this way, the overall literary artistry of the narrative, rather than any one particular feature, very much supports the ideology of the narrative.

Despite the presence of one overarching literary feature (i.e. contrast), however, it becomes more difficult to identify specific, common key words, motifs or allusions that hold the whole unit together. As outlined and discussed in Parts 1 & 2, there are the many literary and stylistic differences between source layers and even within layers. Given this reality, the evolution, rather than continuity, of literary features may ultimately bring more meaning and coherence to the unit as a whole. Just as the modes of interaction between the office the prophet and the office of the king progress over the course of the unit from confrontation to dialogue to prophetic pronouncement, the literary features progress as well. For instance, what begins in ch. 8 as a symbolic competition for prominence between two key words (שׁפט vs. מלך) resolves itself over the course of the unit; by ch. 10, the root שׁפט only appears once in the context of the "custom" of the king. The motif of seeking and finding, which distinguishes the Saul Cycle and specifically ch. 9, does make its way into the prophetic material toward the end of ch. 10. After Saul has exerted much energy looking to find the she-asses and the seer, the search changes direction by the end of the unit. There is a break in the pattern: now Saul is sought and found. When Saul is chosen by the lottery in I Sam. 10:21, the text reads: וַיְבַקְשֻׁהוּ וְלֹא נִמְצָא – "They sought him but he was not found." In addition to illustrating his shared reluctance with Samuel, the description of Saul hiding in the baggage allows for an interesting development of the seeking and finding motif.

Given that the motif of seeking and finding appears both of the source layers, this literary detail raises important questions about the artistry of conflation: Did the author of the Prophetic History, or later redactors, aim to stylistically and thematically connect the new layer to the older one? Did they have a goal of adapting their language and motifs in order to enhance the literary coherence of the unit as a whole? For instance, Saul's physical appearance, specifically his noteworthy stature and shoulders, receives attention throughout the unit and across the layers. The most elaborate description occurs when the Saul Cycle material first introduces Saul (I Sam. 9:2), but then his shoulders are mentioned again when he leaves Samuel for his three predicted encounters (I Sam. 10:9). Recall that very few literary features continued from ch. 9 into the beginning of ch. 10. Then, when Saul is discovered and stood amidst the people (10:23), once again the text points out that stood taller than the people from the shoulders upward. Here the description from the Saul Cycle has penetrated the prophetic material. On the one hand, Saul's height may have been the quality that followed him everywhere he went, so any story would want to mention how he stood head and shoulders taller than everyone else. On the other hand, however, the author of the Prophetic History, in inserting his material into the narrative, may have exercised some real artistry by incorporating key motifs and language into the new material. Of course, these speculations become difficult to test, but they highlight the challenge of only reading the unit as a series of layers or only reading as a coherent whole. Perhaps most effective is to read the layers as forming a unified, or unified enough, whole. The whole does become more meaningful than the sum of the individual layers.

Chapter 3: I Samuel 16-17 Exegesis

Introduction

Source critical Bible scholars, including McCarter as well as Emanuel Tov, have identified several distinct sources that were brought together to form the received Hebrew text of I Samuel 16-17, which we read today in the standard version known as the Masoretic Text (MT).[1] This unit narrates David's anointment by Samuel, his arrival in Saul's court, and his defeat of Goliath the Philistine. McCarter attributes to "The Prophetic History"[2] the first passage of the unit describing David's anointment by Samuel (I Sam. 16:1-13). This passage opens the extended narrative about David's succession of Saul as the king. Although McCarter identifies no other signs of prophetic reworking in the rest of I Samuel 16-31, the prophetic writer's insertion of his own material at the very beginning of David's story has lasting theological implications. The prophetic message shapes the unfolding plotline: God and Samuel the prophet have come to accept the monarchy, as long as God is the one to choose the king.[3]

The older material that follows (I Sam. 16:14-17:58) McCarter attributes to "The History of David's Rise" (HDR),[4] but even this material can be sub-divided into separate sources with help from the Septuagint (LXX). The LXX represents a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, for which the translation process began in Alexandria in the 3rd

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[1] Scholars known as the Masoretes are credited for "setting" the received Hebrew text we read today, which includes vowels, chanting symbols, and white spaces between words. This process took place between the 6th and 10th century CE and included the examination of many different manuscripts.
[2] See chapter 1 of this thesis for background information about this source.
[3] McCarter, 20-21.
[4] See chapter 1 for background information about this source.

century BCE and likely continued for a few centuries. In some instances, the Greek translation "reflects a revision or abridgement of the Hebrew text." In other cases, however, the LXX simply reflects "a more original form of the Hebrew text of [a given] episode" than what we read in the later Hebrew text of the MT.[5] With regard to the unit in discussion, the LXX appears to contain a significantly shorter account of the events conveyed in I Sam. 16:14-18:30; the LXX's version is about half as long as the MT's version.[6] McCarter and Tov both argue that the LXX reflects an earlier version of the Hebrew text, rather than an abbreviated one, recounting David's arrival in Saul's court and defeat of Goliath. They also agree that only the following verses of the MT appear in the LXX: I Sam. 16:14-23; 17:1-11, 32-40, 42-48a, 49, 51-54 (which will be referred to as "Version 1"). Based on Tov's close analysis of material, he explains that the Greek translator produced a relatively literal translation, and therefore was not likely to abridge it.[7] As a result, Tov understands the LXX's version to be an accurate reflection of only one of the sources later compiled by the editor of the final Hebrew version, which eventually becomes the MT. Thus, the LXX provides us with a rare view into the compositional history of I Samuel. To the other source narrating David's defeat of Goliath, McCarter and Tov assign the following verses: I Sam. 17:12-31, 41, 48b, 50, 55-58 (which will be referred to as "Version 2"). These verses were incorporated into the MT, though Tov contends that it cannot be known whether this version of the episode ever existed in a fuller form.[8] As will be mentioned at various points in the following

[5] Tov, 97-98.
[6] The analysis here will focus only on the material through the end of chapter 17.
[7] Tov, 98.
[8] Tov, 120.

analysis, McCarter appears more comfortable making conjectures about the way in which an independent form of Version 2 may have read.[9]

In contrast to the source critical approach of McCarter and Tov, literary critical scholars, including Alter and Polzin, argue for the merits of reading the received text as a coherent whole. They recognize the existence of separate sources and earlier versions but choose to focus on the final form. For instance, Alter describes the different introductions to David contained within these chapters as contradictory and even untidy but ultimately providing "a montage of viewpoints arranged in sequence."[10] Regarding the inconsistencies within I Samuel 17, Polzin makes this case: "It simply will not do to dismiss these verses with a redactional shrug; such an attitude robs the story of its esthetic brilliance and ideological complexity."[11] In response to these two schools of interpretation, the following exegesis aims to combine a source critical reading with literary analysis. I will begin with a close textual analysis of the literary devices and ideological messages of each of the individual layers of material, as defined and delineated by the source critics: (1) The Prophetic History: *Samuel Anoints a New King* (I Samuel 16:1-13); (2) The History of David's Rise: *David Arrives in Saul's Court* (I Samuel 16:14-23); (3) The History of David's Rise: *David & Goliath Epic – Version 1* (I Samuel 17:1-11, 32-40, 42-48a, 49, 51-54); and (4) The History of David's Rise: *David & Goliath Epic – Version 2* (I Sam. 17:12-31, 41, 48b, 50, 55-58). The extra division made between I Sam. 16:14-23 and I Sam. 17:1-11ff aims to aid the comparisons between the various source layers – between the two halves of chapter 16, between the

[9] McCarter, 303-9.
[10] Alter, *The Art of Biblical* Narrative, 154.
[11] Polzin, 172.

two versions of chapter 17, and between chapter 16 and chapter 17. In the final section, I will then provide a literary analysis of the unit as a whole, exploring the methods by which the multiple traditions have been brought together and the resulting effects on the dominant literary features of each component part. This final section will also investigate the possible literary and ideological implications of reading the unit as both composite and coherent.

Part 1. The Prophetic History: *Samuel Anoints a New King* (I Samuel 16:1-13)

A. Structural Outline

Samuel Anoints a New King (I Samuel 16:1-13)

I. God Sends Samuel to Jesse the Bethlehemite (16:1-5)
   a. God announces the selection of a new king (v. 1)
   b. God instructs Samuel to conceal his true purpose for coming to Bethlehem (vv. 2-3)
   c. Samuel invites Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice (vv. 4-5)

II. God Rejects the First Seven Sons (16:6-10)
   a. God warns Samuel not to focus on appearance or stature (vv. 6-7)
   b. God does not choose any of Jesse's sons who pass before Samuel (vv. 8-10)

III. God Chooses David to be King (16:11-13)
   a. At Samuel's request, Jesse fetches his youngest son from the flock (v. 11)
   b. God instructs Samuel to anoint the handsome, ruddy David (v. 12)

c. The spirit of God grips David from that day forward (v. 13)

B. Literary Analysis

I. God Sends Samuel to Jesse the Bethlehemite (16:1-5)

The opening verse of the passage introduces several key words and literary features that define this source layer: the prophetic introduction to David. First of all, the scene commences with a dialogue between God and God's prophet Samuel; dialogue will dominate the layer and contribute to what Alter describes as a "vertical perspective." For the next 13 verses, all of the significant exchanges will occur between God and Samuel, while dialogue between human characters will be kept to a minimum.[12] In speaking to Samuel, God begins by criticizing him for continuing to mourn for both Saul *and* for God's rejection of Saul's reign. The verb מאס ("to reject") employed here in v. 1 echoes God's language with Samuel in earlier material attributed to the Prophetic History, specifically I Sam. 8:7 when the Israelites initially request a king. Moreover, in this passage, מאס is paired with בחר ("to choose" or "to select"), and these contrasting key words play off one another to symbolize the tension between God's "rejection" (מאס) of Saul and God's "selection" (בחר) of David. When the prophetic writer paired these same two verbs in a previous scene depicting Samuel's public appointment of Saul (I Sam. 10:17-27), the tension at play was different. The tension existed between God and the people. Before Samuel announced Saul as the king, he told the gathered Israelites that

[12] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* 149.

they were "rejecting" (מאס) their God (I Sam. 10:19) by demanding a human king; nonetheless, God had "selected" (בחר) a king for them (I Sam. 10:24). The reoccurring use of these key words provides evidence for the continuity of the prophetic writer's style and also for the evolution of the ideology. As mentioned in the introduction, the idea of a human king became more acceptable over time, but only as long as the king remained God's selection.

Similar to the story of God's selection of Saul (I Sam. 9:1ff), the narration here introduces the new king's father before the king himself. God announces that God is sending Samuel to Jesse in Bethlehem with a horn full of oil. Distinct from the story of Saul's selection, however, is God's language in this verse: כִּי־רָאִיתִי בְּבָנָיו לִי מֶלֶךְ - "I have seen a king *for me* among his sons" (v. 1). With Saul, God never takes personal claim or possession of the king like God will with David. The particular language used here establishes from the very beginning a greater commitment on God's behalf to the monarchy in general and to the next monarch specifically. The vertical perspective of this prophetic layer will continue to emphasize God's direct language and involvement, and thus increase the perceived legitimacy of Samuel's actions and David's election as king.[13] Moreover, the use of the verb ראה ("to see") to convey God's choice or selection of David in v. 1 also introduces a key motif of the layer: vision and appearance.

Upon hearing God's command, Samuel responds in v. 2 with fear and question: "How can I go? Saul will hear and kill me." God then proposes a plan for Samuel to conceal the true purpose of his visit to Bethlehem by arriving with a heifer and announcing: לִזְבֹּחַ לַיהוָה בָּאתִי - "To sacrifice to YHWH I have come" (v. 2). The verb

[13] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 149 & 152.

בוא ("to come") will appear seven times in this source layer and serve as yet another key word. Polzin argues: "The narrative distance between 'coming' and 'going' represents the ideological distance between appearance and reality."[14] בוא also operates in relation to the verb שׁלח: those in power "send" (שׁלח) for others to "come" (בוא).[15] After God "sends" (אֶשְׁלָחֲךָ) Samuel to Bethlehem in v. 1, his "arrival" (וַיָּבֹא) in v. 4 signifies his obedience. Then, once Samuel is in a position of power vis-à-vis Jesse and the elders, Samuel "invites" (וַיִּקְרָא) them to "come" (וּבָאתֶם) with him to the sacrifice (v. 5). קרא is the last key word introduced in this opening section. Appearing three times in the course of three verses (vv. 3-5) and then again in v. 8, the verb connotes "greeting" or "inviting" in the context of this source layer. In the different sources constituting ch. 17, however, the verb will carry a very different military meaning.

II. God Rejects the First Seven Sons (16:6-10)

Once Jesse and his sons "arrive" (בְּבוֹאָם) to the scene with Samuel, the plot that unfolds emphasizes the difference between what God can see and what God's seer – Samuel – can see. Samuel's vision first falls on Jesse's oldest son Eliav, and he quickly assumes that Eliav is the one God has chosen, saying: אַךְ נֶגֶד יְהוָה מְשִׁיחוֹ "Surely, before YHWH is His anointed" (v. 6). God then responds by warning Samuel about his inaccurate perception: אַל־תַּבֵּט אֶל־מַרְאֵהוּ וְאֶל־גְּבַהּ קוֹמָתוֹ כִּי מְאַסְתִּיהוּ - "Do not look at his appearance or stature, for I have rejected him" (v. 7). This warning not only critiques Samuel's judgment but also establishes several important contrasts. First, God's

[14] Polzin, 159.
[15] This dynamic is quite apparent in II Samuel 11.

comment clarifies from the beginning that this selection process will not follow the norm of selecting the firstborn son. Second, in the ancient Near East, kings were often selected for their height, so God's comment here critiques the practice of other nations.[16] As a third point, the mention of "stature" (גְּבַהּ קוֹמָתוֹ) positions Eliav as the new Saul (I Sam. 9:2; 10:9 & 23) who needs to be rejected.[17] As a final point, this comment by God foreshadows the limited advantage that height gives to Goliath when David defeats him in the next chapter.

To confuse matters, however, God's apparent discrediting of appearance and stature goes against the norms within the Bible up to this point, for the text always emphasizes the appearances of heroes on the rise (i.e., Joseph in Gen. 39:6, and Moses in Ex. 2:2). This pattern will soon apply to David as well. The remaining half of the v. 7 helps to resolve this emerging contradiction between God's attitude and biblical norms, as God explains: כִּי ׀ לֹא אֲשֶׁר יִרְאֶה הָאָדָם - "For not as the human sees [does YHWH see]." God then elaborates: כִּי הָאָדָם יִרְאֶה לַעֵינַיִם וַיהוָה יִרְאֶה לַלֵּבָב - "For the human sees with the eyes, and YHWH sees with the heart." Given the distinction presented, the issue may reside less with appearance in general (מַרְאֵהוּ) and more with who sees and how: God's vision with the heart prevails over human vision with the eyes. Although Polzin chooses to read the vision motif as drawing attention to the discrepancy between illusion and reality,[18] I would agree more with Alter's reading. He interprets the vision motif combined with other literary devices as emphasizing the theological and vertical

[16] Adriane Leveen, class discussion (HUC-JIR, New York, NY, October 17, 2013).
[17] McCarter, 277.
[18] Polzin, 152.

perspective of the layer:[19] God has the clearest vision; God's vision is superior to that of God's prophet or seer; thus, God is directing the plot. Moreover, this attention to differing perceptions creates a potential thematic link back to I Samuel 8, in which a disconnect exists between God and Samuel's perception of a king and the people's perception of the institution.

The next three verses (vv. 8-10) follow a highly patterned, even formulaic, structure.[20] In age order, Jesse's sons each "pass before Samuel" (וַיַּעֲבֵרֵהוּ לִפְנֵי שְׁמוּאֵל), and each time Samuel responds: גַּם־בָּזֶה לֹא־בָחַר יְהוָה - "Also this one YHWH has not chosen." These verses establish a pattern of God not choosing – a pattern that David will soon break. The repetition of the verb בָּחַר also reinforces the theological message of this layer and its relationship to the public selection of Saul as king (I Sam. 10:17-27). In both cases, the Prophetic History recounts the appointment of the king as a product of divine selection (I Sam 10:24 & 16:12), not the result of popular acclaim as presented by the oldest traditions about Saul.[21] Moreover, these verses set up David to be the "7th plus 1" son, and neither the motif of seven nor the motif of the youngest son disrupting the birth order would have been missed by the ancient Israelite audience. Taken altogether, these various literary features set up the grand appearance of David.[22]

III. God Chooses David to be King (16:11-13)

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[19] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 149.
[20] The literary structure and features of this scene share elements with the scene recounting God's selection of Samuel in I Sam. 3:1-18. That material is also attributed to the prophetic writer.
[21] McCarter, 277-78.
[22] Given that the text never mentions or names Jesse's other four sons between Shamah and David in birth order, this omission serves as evidence for the adoption of a motif of seven, as opposed to the reality of "7 plus 1" sons.

When Samuel asks Jesse if he has any more sons, Jesse explains that his youngest is out tending the flock. Despite what will emerge as the many differences between David and Saul, right here during his entrance into the plot, David resembles his predecessor remarkably. Both David and Saul are missing from the scene at the climatic moment of their divine selection and need to be sought: God finds Saul hiding in the baggage (I Sam. 10:21-22), and Samuel has to send for David who is offsite and thus out of sight (v. 11). David's introduction as a young man tending to his father's flock also places him in the company of Joseph (Gen. 37:2) and Moses (Ex. 3:1), who similarly start as shepherds tending the flock and wind up with big futures. After Samuel "sends for" and "brings" home David (וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיְבִיאֵהוּ), he enters the scene and receives this depiction by the narrator: אַדְמוֹנִי עִם־יְפֵה עֵינַיִם וְטוֹב רֹאִי - "ruddy, with beautiful eyes, and a handsome appearance" (v. 12). As McCarter explains, "divine favor usually has physical symptoms,"[23] and divine favor is exactly what David receives. Based on this initial introduction, however, the reader has no reason to believe that David as done anything to earn his appointment as king. He is simply, or quite miraculously, the recipient of divine selection, and his selection is symbolized in two ways. Ritually, God instructs Samuel to anoint him with oil (v. 12), and he does so in the midst of his brothers (v. 13). Then v. 13 continues to report: וַתִּצְלַח רוּחַ־יְהוָה אֶל־דָּוִד מֵהַיּוֹם הַהוּא וָמָעְלָה - "The spirit of YHWH gripped David from that day forward." With that language, the prophetic layer makes explicit that God is now with David.

Overall, this description of David's divine selection holds together as an independent narrative complete with its own key words, defining use of dialogue, and

[23] McCarter, 276.

relationships with other texts. In addition to alluding to other Israelite heroes like Joseph and Moses, this source layer alludes several times, through key words and literary motifs, to the Prophetic History's account of Saul's appointment as king (I Sam. 8 & 10:17-27). The combination of literary and theological similarities supports the hypothesis of the source critics that attributes these two stories to the same tradition. In favor of this reading, McCarter argues that the layer in discussion (I Sam. 16:1-13) represents yet another "prophetic reworking of older materials about the early history of the monarchy." He elaborates with the following interpretation:

> We are being prepared to understand the decline in the fortunes of Saul and the corresponding rise in those of David in light of the prophetic theology of kingship as developed in the preceding chapters. Hereafter the prophetic writer who shaped this material will be content to remain out of sight, letting the older narrative pass by without comment, except when he makes a brief appearance in c[hapter] 28. What follows immediately belongs to the old story of David's rise to power.[24]

Part 2. The History of David's Rise*: David Arrives in Saul's Court*

(I Samuel 16:14-23)

A. Structural Outline

David Arrives in Saul's Court (I Samuel 16:14-23)

I. The Spirit of God Turns Away from Saul (16:14-17)

   a. An evil spirit terrifies Saul (v. 14)

   b. Saul's concerned servants seek a musician to comfort him (vv. 15-17)

   c. One servant praises the merits of a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite (v. 18)

II. Saul Sends for David (16:19-23)

   a. Jesse sends David bearing gifts (vv. 19-20)

[24] McCarter, 278.

b. Saul loves David very much and makes him his armor bearer (vv. 21-22)

c. David's music comforts Saul (v. 23)

B. Literary Analysis

I. The Spirit of God Turns Away from Saul (16:14-18)

This older source layer from the HDR describing David's arrival in Saul's court quickly differentiates itself from the material that precedes it by introducing a new key word and by shifting to a "horizontal perspective" dominated by human dialogue. God's direct speech and action are not involved in the story, but God's spirit operates as a key motif. Verse 14 opens: וְרוּחַ יְהוָה סָרָה מֵעִם שָׁאוּל וּבִעָתַתּוּ רוּחַ־רָעָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה - "The spirit of YHWH had turned away from Saul, and an evil spirit from YHWH now terrified him." The term רוּחַ יְהוָה ("spirit of YHWH") first appears in the book of Judges to describe God's selection and support of certain judges (Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29), and occurs most prominently in the Samson story (Judg. 13:25; 14:6; 14:19; 15:14). Starting in v. 15, the slightly different term רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים ("spirit of God") is employed to describe the evil spirit now terrifying Saul (רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים רָעָה in vv. 15 & 16; רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים in v. 23). Without the modifying adjective רָעָה, however, the term itself does not have a negative connotation: רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים describes the spirit of God that sweeps over the water in the Creation story (Gen. 1:2), aids Joseph's divination (Gen. 41:38), endows Bezalel with skill and knowledge (Ex. 31:3), and interestingly, allows the non-Israelite Balaam to prophesy (Num. 24:2). The two terms do not appear to have distinct meanings, for Saul is the recipient of רוּחַ יְהוָה in Samuel's prophecy (I Sam. 10:6) and then of רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים in the realization of that prophecy four verses later (I Sam. 10:10). Therefore, the decision

to use two different but related terms (רוּחַ יְהוָה to symbolize God's new support of David and רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים רָעָה to symbolize God's rejection of Saul) may be an attempt to clarify and intensify the contrast between David and Saul's positions. Moreover, the mention of רוּחַ יְהוָה at the very end of the previous passage (v. 13b) could be interpreted as the prophetic writer's effort to provide a transition from one source to another.

In addition to describing רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים as רָעָה, the inclusion of the verb וּבְעָתַתְהוּ furthers the point that this new spirit with Saul is not desirable or helpful but terrifying. *HALOT* defines בעת as: "to terrify someone" or "to frighten someone."[25] Of the root's 16 appearances in the Bible, eight of them occur within the book of Job (3:5; 7:14; 9:34; 13:11), supporting the word's negative connotation. Contextualizing the appearance of an evil, terrifying spirit, McCarter explains that, according to ancient tradition, a person who has been touched by a divine spirit can never be free again.[26] McCarter also points out that the material comprising the HDR never provides a reason for God's abandonment of Saul. In contrast, the prophetic material in ch. 15 and in the beginning of ch. 16 recounts Saul's theological missteps in Amalek, Samuel's announcement of God's rejection, and God's selection of a new king. All of this material prepares the reader to understand God's abandonment of Saul from a prophetic point of view, while nothing as explicit appears in this older, HDR material.[27] The text merely presents what God does without explanation. Overall, this opening verse sets up the stark and growing contrast between Saul's impotence and David's abilities and advantages.

[25] *HALOT*, 1:107.
[26] McCarter, 280.
[27] McCarter, 282.

According to this account of David's rise, Saul's servants have more insight and take more initiative than Saul himself. They seek to address Saul's terrified state and propose a solution: to bring in a musician to comfort Saul. They say: וְנִגֵּן בְּיָדוֹ וְטוֹב לָךְ - "He will play, and it will be good for you" (v. 16). In addition to reflecting the ancient belief that music could be used to confront demons,[28] the language used by the servants introduces another key word of the story, albeit an ironic one. David's playing of the lyre will be described as טוֹב ("good") twice more in the coming verses (v. 17 & 23). His playing is good for Saul in the short term, because it brings him comfort by turning away the "evil spirit" (רוּחַ הָרָעָה). Over time, however, David's presence and abilities will not be good for Saul at all. By highlighting the insight and initiative of Saul's servants, these verses also connect thematically to I Sam. 9:5-10, a scene in which Saul's lad demonstrates much more determination and competence than the future king himself in the search for the lost she-asses.

Still unaware of what the future will bring, Saul approves of his servants' suggestion and orders: רְאוּ־נָא לִי אִישׁ מֵיטִיב לְנַגֵּן וְהֲבִיאוֹתֶם אֵלָי - "See for me, pray, a man who plays well and bring him to me" (v. 17). Saul's phrase רְאוּ־נָא לִי echoes God's communication to Samuel in v. 1, with both speakers employing the unusual meaning of ראה to convey the act of "selecting" or "choosing."[29] This repeated language serves to create a linguistic linkage between the prophetic layer and this older one, thus suggesting some literary unity between the two halves of ch. 16. When one of Saul's servants shares

[28] McCarter, 281.

[29] *HALOT* provides as the 12th (out of 16) definitions of ראה "to choose, select something for oneself" (3:1159). This usage also appears in Gen. 22:8 & 41:33; Deut. 12:13; II Kings 10:3. Despite this less common meaning employed here and in v. 1, I chose to translate the verb more literally in order to highlight the motif of vision and appearance.

his knowledge of David, he furthers the motif, explaining: הִנֵּה רָאִיתִי בֵּן לְיִשַׁי בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי – "Look, I have seen the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite" (v. 18). Unlike God's response to Samuel in v. 7, however, here Saul does not question the accuracy of his servant's vision. He will respect and even act upon it.

With the continuation of v. 18, Saul's servant praises David's many merits by offering a detailed list: "He knows how to play (יֹדֵעַ נַגֵּן), a brave man (וְגִבּוֹר חַיִל), a man of war (וְאִישׁ מִלְחָמָה), discerning in speech (וּנְבוֹן דָּבָר), an attractive man (וְאִישׁ תֹּאַר), and YHWH is with him (וַיהוָה עִמּוֹ)." With this list, Saul's unnamed servant continues to reveal impressive insight, though the reader never learns when exactly the servant saw David or how he acquired all of this information. Interestingly, the servant in this scene comes across as taking more initiative than Saul himself and also knowing much more information about David than Samuel did in the previous scene attributed to the prophetic layer. Given his comment that "YHWH is with him," the unnamed servant operates, at least momentarily, as a seer himself. His detailed description also repeats information from v. 1 by introducing David not by his own name but as a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite; the list remains consistent with v. 12 by presenting him as attractive and with v. 13 by explaining that God is with him. Moreover, although Saul is never presented as a גִּבּוֹר חַיִל, the narrator introduces his father this way (I Sam. 9:1). Less consistent is David's depiction as "a man of war." If that were truly the case, he would have been assigned to combat position, not to the role of armor bearer (v. 21). Only after David proves his prowess in his duel against Goliath in the coming chapter will that

descriptor make more sense.[30] Similarly, the lad describes David as "discerning in speech" (נְבֹן דָּבָר), but he will not say a word until ch. 17. Although this phrase נְבֹן דָּבָר does not appear elsewhere in the Bible, other Israelite heroes, with the exception of Moses, certainly demonstrate the ability to be clever and persuasive with words.[31] Interpreting the assortment of qualities presented here in v. 18, Alter reads the whole verse as a later insertion aimed to cohere the qualities of David presented in chs. 16 and 17,[32] and I would agree with his assessment. As referenced above, this description seems to foreshadow qualities in David that the reader will see in the subsequent chapters. Thus, the ultimate artistry of the verse lies in the way in which this presentation of David begins to shape the reader's perception before David proves himself to that same reader.

II. Saul Sends for David (vv. 19-23)

Symbolizing both Saul's remaining power as a king to beckon others as well as his growing impotence and dependence, the verb שלח ("to send") appears four times in this next scene. Saul "sends" (וַיִּשְׁלַח) messengers to Jesse, and they relay this message from Saul: שִׁלְחָה אֵלַי אֶת־דָּוִד בִּנְךָ אֲשֶׁר בַּצֹּאן - "Send me David, your son that is with the flock" (v. 19). With these words, Saul demonstrates knowledge of two qualities of David that his servants did not convey in the verses above: his name, and his responsibility as shepherd for his father's flock. This line connects to the prophetic layer, though Samuel's anointment of David seemingly remained a secret unknown to Saul. Jesse then

[30] Saul describes Goliath as אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה in I Sam. 17:33, and Hushai will describe David to his son Absalom with this term in II Sam. 17:8.
[31] McCarter points to Jacob, Joseph and Esther to support this claim (281).
[32] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 150.

responds to the message with action, not words: Jesse "sends" (וַיִּשְׁלַח) David with bread, wine, and one kid goat (v. 20) – the same three items carried by the men Saul meets in his second predicted encounter (I Sam. 10:3-4).[33] When David "arrives" (וַיָּבֹא), he instantly wins Saul's affection, for the narrator reports: וַיֶּאֱהָבֵהוּ מְאֹד וַיְהִי־לוֹ נֹשֵׂא כֵלִים -"He loved[34] him very much, and he was an armor bearer for him" (v. 21). Alter explains that the position of "court lyre player" did not exist, so they had to place David in a role that would keep him close to Saul, such as armor bearer.[35] Most striking is Saul's instant affection for David, for the text states Saul's love for David two verses before explaining that David's music succeeded in bringing Saul comfort (v. 23). Saul's love can also be interpreted as political loyal to David,[36] though this loyalty will soon be undermined by Saul's suspicion and his multiple attempts to eliminate David as a threat.

The passage closes by reiterating the dynamic between God, David and Saul in v. 23: "When the evil spirit of God was upon Saul, David would take his lyre and play. Saul would find relief (וְרָוַח לְשָׁאוּל), and it would be good for him (וְטוֹב לוֹ). The evil spirit would turn away from him (וְסָרָה מֵעָלָיו רוּחַ הָרָעָה)." The verb used to describe Saul "finding relief" (וְרָוַח) provides a nice wordplay with the key word of this passage: רוּחַ. Similarly, the repetition of the word טוֹב to describe David's music reinforces the mounting tension: In this layer of the story, David is introduced as a

[33] These may simply be the standard three gifts brought to important people.
[34] David will be the recipient of not only Saul's love but also the love of Saul's children Jonathan and Michal (I Sam. 18:1 & 20) and the love of Saul's kingdom of Israel and Judah (I Sam. 18:16). The ironic element of this growing motif is that, despite all of the love and affection that David receives, the biblical text never reports that David "loves" (אהב) anyone.
[35] Alter, *The David Story*, 99.
[36] McCarter, 282.

solution to Saul's troubles but ultimately becomes Saul's main problem. Finally, the phrase that closes the chapter repeats the language of v. 14 that opens this source layer: וְרוּחַ יְהוָה סָרָה מֵעִם שָׁאוּל. This inclusio reinforces the heart of the matter: The spirit of God has turned away from Saul. Even though David's music can cause the evil spirit to turn away from Saul, nothing can bring back רוּחַ יְהוָה – God's support and selection. As explained by the prophetic source, רוּחַ יְהוָה now resides with David.

The above analysis of the key words, dialogue style, relationships to other texts, and theological messaging supports the reading of the source critical scholars that this passage's introduction to David (I Sam. 16:14-23) served as the original introduction to David (in the older HDR material) before the prophetic layer (I Sam. 16:1-13) was placed before it. Supporting this theory, the key words change from the first half of ch. 16 to the second half. After ראה operates as the key word in the prophetic layer and establishes the theme of vision, and a different key word (רוּחַ) defines the HDR layer. While it is true that the phrase רוּחַ יְהוָה appears in the final verse of the prophetic layer (v. 13), that verse could have been inserted (either by the prophetic writer himself or by a later redactor) to create a thematic link and narrative transition between the two layers. Similarly, ראה does appear in the older layer (vv. 17-18); however, if literary scholars like Alter already identify reworking in v. 18,[37] it seems feasible that v. 17 was also revised for the sake of unifying the whole chapter. Taken all together, the dynamic between these two distinct but slightly overlapping key words may helpfully illustrate the process of constructing a composite narrative from separate sources.

[37] See earlier discussion in I. The Spirit of God Turns Away from Saul (16:14-18).

Regarding the use of dialogue in the prophetic layer as compared to the HDR layer, the dominant dialogue in the prophetic layer is vertical – between God and God's prophet Samuel. The resulting theological message conveys that God is in control of the prophet's actions and the direction of the plot. Most crucially, God selects the king for Godself: כִּי־רָאִיתִי בְּבָנָיו לִי מֶלֶךְ (v. 1). In the prophetic layer, the only speech that comes from a mouth that is neither divine nor prophetic is the fear-ridden question that the elders raise to Samuel upon his arrival in Bethlehem (v. 4) and Jesse's response to Samuel when he asks if there are any other sons (v. 11). In contrast, the main speakers in the HDR layer are Saul's servants. They speak more than Saul, and more than Samuel – the central figure of the Prophetic History – who is completely absent from this introduction to David. This detail further supports the source critics' division of the material. The HDR's introduction to David embodies a "horizontal perspective," dominated by human dialogue and void of prophetic or divine speech, and this perspective will continue into ch. 17, which highlights David as a rhetorician.[38] Moreover, the turning away of "God's spirit" (רוּחַ יְהוָה) from Saul is the central theological message of the HDR layer, just as the spirit of God gripping Saul had been an important theological motif in I Sam. 10:1-16. This HDR material demonstrates a thematic connection to the older Saul Cycle (I Sam. 9-10:16), while the prophetic layer exhibits a clear relationship with earlier material in the Prophetic History (I Sam. 8; 10:17-27).

Taken altogether, these important literary differences between the two halves of ch. 16 should not be overlooked. Alter may read the anointment of David (I Sam. 16:1-

[38] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 152.

13) and David's arrival in Saul's court (I Sam. 16:14-23) as flowing coherently from one to the other,[39] but the significant differences between the two passages' key words, dialogue styles, and theological messages, as presented above, does not fully support his argument. Despite these significant discrepancies within ch. 16, however, the two layers are consistent in their presentation of David as a passive recipient who never utters a word and only takes action in the form of taking up his lyre. Chapter 17 will offer a striking contrast to this depiction.

Part 3. The History of David's Rise: *David & Goliath Epic – Version 1*

(I Samuel 17:1-11, 32-40, 42-48a, 49, 51-54)

A. Structural Outline

Saul's Armor Bearer Slays Goliath (I Samuel 17:1-11, 32-40, 42-48a, 49, 51-54)

I. The Israelites and the Philistines Prepare for War (vv. 1-11)
   a. The armies stand on opposite hillsides with a valley between them (vv. 1-3)
   b. Goliath comes forward with massive armor and weaponry (vv. 4-7)
   c. He taunts the Israelites to send a warrior to fight him (vv. 8-11)

II. David Convinces Saul that He Can Fight the Philistine (vv. 32-39)
   a. David offers to fight the Philistine champion (v. 32)
   b. Saul calls David unfit to compete with a man of war (v. 33)
   c. David boasts his slayings of predators and protection from God (vv. 34-37a)

[39] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 147.

d. Saul acquiesces and dresses David in his own armor (vv. 37b-38)

e. Unable to walk, David abandons Saul's armor (v. 39)

III. David Defeats the Philistine (17:40, 42-48a, 49 & 51)

a. David comes forward with a stick, sling and stones (v. 40)

b. The Philistine taunts and curses David (vv. 42-44)

c. David retaliates, emphasizing that God is with him (vv. 45-47)

d. David strikes down the Philistine and cuts off his head (vv. 48a, 49 & 51)

IV. The Israelites Defeat the Philistines (17:52-54)

a. The Israelites chase the Philistines into a ravine (v. 52)

b. The Israelites loot their camp (v. 53)

c. David takes the Philistine's head to Jerusalem (v. 54)

B. Literary Exegesis

I. The Israelites and the Philistines Prepare for War (17:1-11)

Chapter 17 opens in a military, political setting. In contrast to the intimacy of ch. 16 with Samuel's private anointment of David (I Sam. 16:1-13) and then Saul's consultation with his servants (I Sam. 16:14-23), the narration of ch. 17 enters a very public realm. It is also a very descriptive realm. Compared to the typical terseness of biblical narrative, this chapter recounting the duel between David and Goliath includes a remarkable amount of detail (Version 1 in particular). The narration devotes an unusual amount of attention, in the form of language and number of verses, to the physical setting, the physicality of the individuals involved, and also the dialogues between individuals. For instance, the narrator dedicates the first three verses of the chapter to

setting the scene, seemingly to encourage the audience to imagine the landscape in which the dramatic plot will unfold. The narrator begins by presenting the enemy's mounting threat: "The Philistines gathered their camps for war" (v. 1). Next comes the Israelites' response: וְשָׁאוּל וְאִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ נֶאֶסְפ֔וּ וַיַּחֲנ֖וּ בְּעֵ֣מֶק הָאֵלָ֑ה וַיַּעַרְכ֥וּ מִלְחָמָ֖ה לִקְרַ֥את פְּלִשְׁתִּֽים - "Saul and the men of Israel gathered and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and they prepared for war against the Philistines" (v. 2). Throughout ch. 17 and three times in Version 1 (vv. 2, 8 and 48a), the root קרא will be employed to offer a different meaning from ch. 16. No longer describing "greeting" or "inviting" one another, here לִקְרַ֥את conveys positioning the Israelite army "against" the Philistines.

It should also be noted that the two opening verses are dominated by converted imperfect verbs to depict completed actions: both armies gathered, set up camps, and prepared for war. After those details have been established, however, the narration switches in v. 3 and employs verbs in the participle form to depict habitual or continuous action: וּפְלִשְׁתִּ֞ים עֹמְדִ֣ים אֶל־הָהָר֗ מִזֶּה֙ וְיִשְׂרָאֵ֣ל עֹמְדִ֔ים אֶל־הָהָ֥ר מִזֶּ֖ה וְהַגַּ֣יְא בֵּינֵיהֶֽם - "The Philistines were standing on the hill on one side, and Israel was standing on the hill on the other side, with the ravine between them." Now prepared and positioned, both armies עֹמְדִ֣ים ("remain standing"), waiting for the other side to either attack or to lower their defenses. The shift to participle verbs suggests the extended duration of these events, which generates a sense of suspense: this standstill cannot continue forever, so something is going to happen soon; the audience should brace themselves. Verse 3 also introduces the use of demonstrative pronouns (i.e., מִזֶּ֖ה), which operate as a defining literary feature of ch. 17. Supporting the descriptive style of the narration, the frequent use of demonstrative pronouns by the narrator and individuals alike helps to distinguish people

and places and to draw attention to certain details. They will also have the effect of inserting a derogatory, combative tone into dialogues between individuals.[40]

Now with the stage set, Goliath enters the scene in v. 4 when he comes forward into the space "between" the two camps (בֵּינֵיהֶם). Presented as אִישׁ־הַבֵּנַיִם, this term refers to the military set-up and defines the champion warrior as "the man between" – the man who goes out between opposed battle lines to engage in a duel.[41] After describing him in relation to the spatial context of the story, v. 4 also introduces the champion by name, "Goliath his name from Gath" (גָּלְיָת שְׁמוֹ מִגַּת), and by his impressive stature, "his height six cubits and a span" (גָּבְהּוֹ שֵׁשׁ אַמּוֹת וָזָרֶת). Although his height and general appearance will continue to be a motif in subsequent verses, this verse will be the only mention of Goliath by name in Version 1 of the account (and only one of two references to his name all of ch. 17). The narrative instead will repeatedly refer to him as "the Philistine" (הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי), a detail that supports source critical scholars' theory about the gradual, compositional development of this epic (to be discussed in Part 5). Following his initial introduction, the next three verses focus entirely on Goliath's armor and weaponry; they produce a graphic description that Alter deems as "Homeric" and "untypical of the Hebrew Bible."[42] The overall effect of the narration's emphasis on the scale and weight of Goliath's accessories is to paint him as a hulking, intimidating creature. This introduction also sets up what will be the surprising, ironic ending of the story: none of Goliath's many physical advantages will protect him from defeat. Close

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[40] Polzin, 164; 172-73. More research is necessary to determine the relative uniqueness of these two literary features identified by Polzin: (1) Switching from completed to continuous actions to introduce a scene; (2) Using demonstrative pronouns for derogatory purposes.
[41] Alter, *The David Story*, 101; McCarter, 290.
[42] Alter, *The David Story*, 101.

readers may also notice that, even with thorough coverage and protection offered by his armor, Goliath's face and forehead remain exposed, a factor that will lead to his demise.[43]

After the first seven verses provide a physical description of the landscape and the central Philistine enemy, v. 8 introduces the opening dialogue. It is the Philistine who initiates communication: וַיַּעֲמֹד וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־מַעַרְכֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל - "He stood and called out against the Israelite battle lines." Here the root קרא introduces Goliath's challenge to a duel. He first insults the Israelites by calling them "slaves of Saul" (עַבָדִים לְשָׁאוּל), which doubles as a theological jab,[44] and then he taunts them to "choose a man" (בְּרוּ־לָכֶם אִישׁ) to fight him (v. 8). Importantly, in ch. 16, twice a speaker commands others to "choose" or "select," and both times the verb employed is ראה (I Sam. 16:1 & 17). Here, however, the operative verb is ברה,[45] which represents a switch in linguistic style or diction from one chapter to the next. Next, Goliath elaborates to establish the all-or-nothing terms of the duel (v. 9), and his concluding comment introduces a key word: אֲנִי חֵרַפְתִּי אֶת־מַעַרְכוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה - "I have insulted the Israelite battle lines today" (v. 10). Defined by *HALOT* as "to taunt" or "to reproach,"[46] the verb חָרַף appears just twice in the Bible before this chapter (Judg. 5:18 & 8:15) to describe mocking, and then five times in I Samuel 17 itself. Looking at the whole David and Goliath Epic, the operative definition seems to be "insult," because Goliath's provocations evolve from the

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[43] McCarter, 292.

[44] Recall the theological discussion of ch. 8 in which God equates appointing a king to rejecting God, for the Israelites should only serve God, not a mortal king. Then, in Samuel's speech about the "custom of the king," he warns the Israelites that they would eventually become slaves to that mortal king (וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לוֹ לַעֲבָדִים; I Sam. 8:17).

[45] *HALOT* defines ברה is a denominative verb derived from the noun בְּרִית, meaning "enter into a בְּרִית with someone: commission him as your representative" (1:155)

[46] *HALOT*, 1:355.

aggressive intimidations here to explicit theological critiques later (v. 43). They bear more weight than "taunting" or "mocking." As Alter explains, Goliath's harsh words will also be described by the noun חֶרְפָּה (v. 26), conveying an "insult, disgrace, shame… that only a victorious champion can 'take away.'"[47] Concluding what proves to be a lopsided dialogue between Goliath and the battle lines of Israel, v. 11 conveys: "Saul and all of Israel heard these words of the Philistine, and they were dismayed and very scared." They respond with fear not words. The conversation closes, and the scene changes.

II. David Convinces Saul that He Can Fight Goliath (17:32-39)

According to the source critical scholars' divisions, Version 1 of the David and Goliath Epic is a continuation of I Sam. 16:14-23. As a result, David is already a known entity to Saul. He serves as Saul's armor bearer (I Sam. 16:21), and presumably would have followed Saul when the army went to war. Given David's position, one can also assume that he would have stayed by Saul's side and heard with him Goliath's challenge to a duel. While this reading supposes a certain narrative continuity and logic not made explicit in the text itself, these assumptions are plausible. In fact, for the plot to resume smoothly from v. 11 to v. 32, these assumptions are essential.[48] After v. 11 reports Saul and the Israelites' fearful response, v. 32 then reports a contrasting response with David volunteering to fight. The assumptions stated above help to account for David's presence and knowledge of the situation, even though he is not mentioned in the first eleven verses

[47] Alter, *The David Story*, 102.
[48] Recall that Version 1 represents the source incorporated into LXX's account of the David and Goliath Epic, and that source does not include vv. 12-31 later found in the MT. Thus, the narrative analyzed here jumps from v. 11 to v. 32.

(of the Version 1 or ch. 17). David's response in v. 32 initiates his first reported dialogue with Saul: אַל־יִפֹּל לֵב־אָדָם עָלָיו עַבְדְּךָ יֵלֵךְ וְנִלְחַם עִם־הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הַזֶּה - "Let no man's heart fail him. Your servant will go and fight that Philistine." With these words, David speaks for the first time in this version of the narrative, and he launches what will be a series of eloquent speeches that confirm his description as נְבוֹן דָּבָר ("discerning in speech," I Sam. 16:18). Moreover, his offer to Saul includes the verb הלך ("to go" or "to walk"), which will serve as another key word in Version 1 (and ch. 17 as a whole) that emphasizes the differences between Saul and David. For instance, Saul will want both of them to stay put and not "go" anywhere (v. 33), but David will seek to "go out" (הלך; vv. 37 & 39) and take action (vv. 40 & 49). Illustrative of this dynamic, Saul responds to David's offer to fight Goliath by expressing his concern about David's lack of military experience: כִּי־נַעַר אַתָּה וְהוּא אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה מִנְּעֻרָיו – "For you are a lad and he is a man of war from his youth" (v. 33). This categorization of David conflicts with his description in I Sam. 16:18 as "a man of war" (אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה) but remains consistent with his appointed status in I Sam. 16:21 as an armor bearer.

Completely undeterred by Saul's reluctance, David launches into a four-verse speech in which he boasts about his prowess as a shepherd who slays the lions and bears that attack him. After remaining silent and fairly passive throughout the various sources that compose ch. 16, David quickly establishes himself as a rhetorician and man of action, serving as the subject of many physical and powerful verbs. Although David may not open his persuasive speech with a theological angle, he closes with one when he declares in v. 37: יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הִצִּלַנִי מִיַּד הָאֲרִי וּמִיַּד הַדֹּב הוּא יַצִּילֵנִי מִיַּד הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הַזֶּה - "YHWH who has saved me from the hand of the lion and from the hand of the bear will

save me from the hand of this Philistine." Throughout Version 1, David will invoke God, rather than be directed by God; this defining feature helps to differentiate the HDR material here from the Prophetic History's vertical perspective. David's theological invocations also transform a folkloric formula about a (future) king fighting a monster into a monotheistic message about the power of God to help the small, inexperienced David defeat the Philistine giant.[49] Another noteworthy feature of David's rhetoric is his use of demonstrative pronouns when referring to Goliath, for this style of speech continues the literary feature introduced in vv. 1-11. Here the pronouns convey a sense of disregard and even disrespect: וְהָיָה הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הֶעָרֵל הַזֶּה כְּאַחַד מֵהֶם - "*That* uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them" (v. 36); הַוּא יַצִּילֵנִי מִיַּד הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הַזֶּה - "[YHWH] will save me from the hand of *that* Philistine" (v. 37). After David concludes his impressive speech, Saul responds: לֵךְ וַיהוָה יִהְיֶה עִמָּךְ - "Go, and may YHWH be with you." With those four Hebrew words, Saul reinforces the growing contrast between the active, eloquent David and the passive, terse Saul. His remarks also maintain the theological lens of the drama.

Despite his terseness with words, however, Saul expands his response to David's long speech with symbolic action. The narration reports: וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ שָׁאוּל אֶת־דָּוִד מַדָּיו –

[49] Alter argues: "The motif of the unknown man who astonishes his elders and slays the dread[ed] giant is common to many folkloric traditions" (*The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 150). McCarter explains: "Some scholars even assume a cultic background for the account: here, they say, is the ritual battle of the king and the chaos monster, the forces of order and destruction…Many of the symbolic elements that gave such ritual battles their appeal all over the ancient Near East are also present here…and this fact must account at least in part for the popularity of the present story" (297). Moshe Garsiel also comments: "…the story of the duel between David and Goliath manifests a great resemblance to Homer's epics (late 8th century B.C.E.), the Iliad and the Odyssey, especially in terms of weaponry and the 'representative duel' " ("The Valley of Elah battle and the duel of David with Goliath: between history and artistic theological historiography," [*Homeland and Exile*, ed. G. Galil et al.; New York: Brill, 2009], 405).

"Saul dressed David in his battle garb" (v. 38). Including this mini scene (vv. 37b-39) with Saul dressing David in his own armor achieves multiple purposes: (1) After Version 1 devotes three verses (vv. 5-7) to a description of Goliath's massive armor and intimidating weaponry, vv. 38-39a here present David as transforming into "a man of war" (אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה) himself. In contrast to his earlier comment in v. 33, Saul is now willing to see David in this active military role. (2) Dressing David in his own battle garb symbolizes as transfer of Saul's royal role and power. David is slowly becoming the new Saul – the next king. (3) This scene furthers an emerging motif about clothing: Saul previously tore Samuel's cloak after learning that God had rejected him (I Sam. 15:27). Later, in a different encounter, David will cut the corner of Saul's cloak, in lieu of killing him (I Sam. 24:5). Adding to the significance of the transfer of royal battle garb and its associated authority, the reappearance of the key word הלך reinforces the growing tension between Saul and David. Once Saul has dressed him, David declares in v. 39: לֹא אוּכַל לָלֶכֶת בָּאֵלֶּה - "I cannot walk with these." In removing all of the armor, David emphasizes his desire to walk or move (הלך), in contrast to Saul's apparent willingness to stay back at camp and not put himself in danger. David's rejection of Saul's gear also suggests a rejection of Saul's help or even his approach to leadership. As a final point about this interaction, it is worth noting that, given Saul's height and stature, his gear would have been too big for David. Despite that reality, neither the narrator nor David himself draws attention to the difference in size between them. Both speakers employ the verb נסה to emphasize David's lack of familiarity with the gear: "I cannot walk with these, because I am not used to it (כִּי לֹא נִסִּיתִי; v. 39). Drawing renewed attention to his

lack of military experience at this very moment sets up the reader to be even more surprised by his easy victory.

III. David Defeats the Philistine (17:40, 42-48a, 49 & 51)

Having ditched Saul's armor and thus concluded their exchange, David then grabs his shepherd weapons: a stick, a sling and stones (v. 40). Adding to the drama of the impending duel, the contrast is striking between the simplicity of David's chosen weapons and the heaviness of the armor and weaponry worn by Goliath and Saul. After reporting David's approach toward Goliath in v. 40, the narration continues with v. 42:[50] וַיַּבֵּט הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי וַיִּרְאֶה אֶת־דָּוִד כִּי־הָיָה נַעַר וְאַדְמֹנִי עִם־יְפֵה מַרְאֶה – "The Philistine looked and saw David, and he despised him, for he was a lad and ruddy with a beautiful appearance." This mention of David's "ruddiness" and handsome looks corresponds with the depiction of David in prophetic material: וְהוּא אַדְמוֹנִי עִם־יְפֵה עֵינַיִם וְטוֹב רֹאִי – "He was ruddy, with beautiful eyes, and handsome to look at" (I Sam. 16:12). This attention to Goliath's vision, or visual perception, also echoes the general theme about vision and appearance in the Prophetic History's introduction of David. Looking ahead as well as backward, the language here foreshadows another theme in David's life, for Goliath will not be the only one who despises David: Michal will "despise" (וַתִּבֶז) David after he dances the Ark to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:16), and then Nathan will employ this same, harsh verb twice when he reprimands David for having Uriah killed (II Sam 12:9f).

David may approach Goliath, but the Philistine is the first to speak. In v. 43, Goliath mocks David, specifically for his unsophisticated weaponry, saying: "Am I a dog

[50] Recall that, based on the source included in the LXX, Version 1 only includes selected verses of the MT. See Introduction.

that you come to me with a stick?" He then deepens the effect by "cursing David by his gods" (וַיְקַלֵּל הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי אֶת־דָּוִד בֵּאלֹהָיו). Interestingly, the narrator does not report the direct speech of Goliath's curse, but just the mention turns their dialogue from mockery to theology. David retorts in v. 45: "You come to me with a sword, a spear and a javelin, and I come to you in the name of YHWH of hosts, God of the battle lines of Israel that you insulted" (וְאָנֹכִי בָּא־אֵלֶיךָ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי מַעַרְכוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר חֵרַפְתָּ). This language returns to the theme of "insult" (חֵרַפְתָּ), but more significantly, this verse provides a helpful distinction between the image of God presented in ch. 16 (רוּחַ יְהוָה – "the spirit of YHWH" that grips David) with the military God invoked here by David (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת – "YHWH of hosts"). In his speech (vv. 45-47), David claims the name of God as his most precious weapon. About this explicit theological message, McCarter argues:

> At this point, then, the central theological assertion of the story is most explicit, and it is easy to understand why the tradition of David's victory over the Philistine has a special appeal to the little nation that struggled through most of its existence in conflict with vastly more powerful neighbors.[51]

Through his speech, David also expands the realm and stakes of the duel. It is no longer just about David and Goliath, or even the Israelites and the Philistines. In v. 46, David claims that God will deliver Goliath into his hand, and "all the earth shall know that Israel has a God." This reference to "knowing" (ידע) God, which continues into v. 47, sounds reminiscent of the Exodus story (Ex. 5:2) and of prophetic texts (Is. 12:4f; 43:10; 45:3ff). Taken altogether, the theological lens that David first introduced in his exchange with Saul becomes the focus of his verbal confrontation with Goliath. This

[51] McCarter, 294.

dialogue could even be considered the beginning of royal ideology in which the king represents God and acts for God.[52] At the very least, David is proving his faith to God, to the Israelites, to the original Israelite audience, and to today's reader.

Eventually, all of the talking stops, and the physical duel begins. Despite what may initially seem like a choppy, interrupted report of the action, the two and a half-verses included in Version 1 (vv. 48a, 49 and 51 as defined by the LXX text) present a coherent description of what culminates in Goliath's defeat: As the Philistine "draws near to attack David" (וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּקְרַב לִקְרַאת דָּוִד) in v. 48a, David draws a stone from his bag and slings it. With this first shot, David strikes the Philistine on his exposed forehead, and he falls to the ground (v. 49). Then David runs over to Goliath, not wasting any time, and uses the Philistine's own sword to decapitate him (v. 51a). As a reminder of the public nature of the duel with the two armies watching in suspense, the narrator then explains that the Philistines begin to flee once they see that their warrior is dead (v. 51b). As a testament to Version 1's coherence, reading vv. 48-52 without interruption to include vv. 48b and 50 only adds emphasis, rather than any vital details. In contrast, vv. 48b and 50 will prove essential to the flow and coherence of Version 2's account of the duel.

IV. The Israelites Defeat the Philistines (17:52-54)

Version 1 of the David and Goliath Epic concludes with the Israelites chasing the Philistines to their death in the ravine (v. 52). The Israelites loot the abandoned Philistine camps (v. 53), and David takes the Goliath's head as his personal booty to Jerusalem. Overall, Version 1 of the David and Goliath Epic – the only version appearing in the

[52] Leveen, class discussion.

LXX – presents as a coherent literary unit. The account begins and ends by focusing on the larger war between the Israelite and Philistine armies. The heart of the passage, however, is composed of three exchanges focused on individuals: (1) Goliath confronts the Israelites (vv. 8-11). (2) David confronts Saul (vv. 32-39). (3) David confronts Goliath (vv. 40-51). These three highlighted exchanges devote many verses to impressive rhetoric. In a story absent of prophetic or divine speech, human speech plays a central role. David's rhetoric in particular adds a strong theological lens to the narrative. In addition to the attention given to dialogue, Version 1 devotes much attention to visual features, such as Goliath's physical appearance and the physical staging of the war. This is a defining quality of the version, which ultimately highlights the upset achieved by David the underdog. Despite the apparent advantage of Goliath's intimidating size and heavy armor, David's faith prevails. That is his secret weapon in the duel. David declares that God - יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת – will deliver Goliath into his hand, and considering how the plot unfolds, God seems to do just that. The elegance of striking Goliath down with one shot certainly supports an argument for divine intervention in combat. As a result, the enduring ideological message of the duel becomes this: the physical advantages of height, weaponry, and military might simply cannot compete with the support of יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת – the God of Israel. Through this great epic about the young man who will become King David, the Israelite's national identification with the underdog continues.

In addition to its coherence as a literary unit, this version's relative compatibility with the HDR material in I Sam. 16:14-23 further supports the source critics' divisions. As mentioned above, when David approaches Saul and offers to fight the Philistine, their

interaction seems to reflect an already established relationship, rather than a first meeting. Also consistent with I Sam. 16:14-23, David's position as Saul's armor bearer would be necessary to explain why David was even with the army in the Valley of Elah in the first place. Stylistically, Version 1 continues the horizontal perspective of I Sam. 16:14-23 and its emphasis on human dialogue, as opposed to the vertical perspective of I Sam. 16:1-13 dominated by God's direct speech and direct involvement in the plot. As noted above, however, the depiction of God varies significantly from I Sam. 16:14-23 to I Samuel 17; the focus on the spirit of God quickly turns into a military description of God. Perhaps most significantly, David is characterized in ch. 16 as a passive, quiet young lad upon whom action occurs, whereas the characterization of David in Version 1 of ch. 17 presents just the opposite. Version 1 depicts David as a pro-active, eloquent, fearless and skilled shepherd boy who takes advantage of a risky opportunity and rises among the ranks of Israel. He holds a confidence and boldness that Saul clearly lacks. Interestingly, this version never explicitly states David's motivation for engaging in the duel with the Philistine champion. The text never mentions his desire to rise in rank. Perhaps the silence surrounding this aspect of David further suggests the theological bent of the story: David's faith motivates him; he seeks to remove the insult against Israel and Israel's God.

Part 4. The History of David's Rise: *David & Goliath Epic – Version 2*

(I Samuel 17:12-31, 41, 48b, 50 & 55-58)

A. Structural Outline

Jesse the Bethlehemite's Son Slays Goliath (I Sam. 17:12-31, 41, 48b, 50, 55-58)

I. David and the Philistine Each Establish Their Territory (17:12-16)

a. Jesse's three oldest sons follow Saul to fight the Philistines (vv. 12-13)

b. Jesse's youngest son David attends to Saul and to his father's flock (vv. 14-15)

c. The Philistine champion provokes the Israelites twice a day for 40 days (v. 16)

II. Jesse Sends David to the Battle Lines (17:17-22)

a. Jesse wants David to bring provisions and check on his brothers (vv. 17-19)

b. David arrives as the armies deploy against each other (vv. 20-22)

III. David Seeks to Fight Goliath (17:23-31)

a. Goliath comes forward and frightens the Israelites (vv. 23-24)

b. David learns of Goliath's insult and the reward for his defeat (vv. 25-27)

c. David's oldest brother reproaches his behavior (vv. 28-29)

d. David confirms the reward for defeating the Philistine (v. 30)

e. Saul fetches David (v. 31)

IV. David Defeats the Philistine (17:41, 48b & 50)

a. David runs to meet the Philistine (vv. 41 & 48b)

b. David kills the Philistine with sling and stone (v. 50)

V. Saul Meets David (17:55-58)

a. Neither Saul nor Abner recognizes David (vv. 55-56)

b. David introduces himself as the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite (vv. 57-58)

B. Literary exegesis

I. David and the Philistine Each Establish Their Territory (17:12-16)

When reading Version 2 of the David and Goliath Epic as an independent account, the opening verses helpfully introduce the central characters: David is the son of Jesse from Bethlehem; David is the youngest of Jesse's eight sons; and Jesse's three oldest are Eliav, Avinadav, and Shamah (vv. 12-14). While all of these biographical details correspond with the introduction to David in the prophetic material (I Sam. 16:1-13), the references to Ephrathah and to Jesse's old age only appear in this source's introduction. Describing Jesse as "old" (זָקֵן) furthers a well-established motif of I Samuel. In previous chapters, when the narrator mentions that an individual has become old (Eli in I Sam. 2:22; Samuel in I Sam. 8:1), a regime change soon takes place. As a result, placing this detail in the opening verse of this version of the David and Goliath Epic seems to foreshadow what will soon come of Saul's dynasty. These opening verses also introduce a key word featured in both Version 1 and Version 2: הלך ("to go" or "to walk"). The root הלך appears five times in the course of three verses and establishes a theme about movement: The oldest sons "go" to war (vv. 13-14); David "goes" back and forth from Saul to his father's home (v. 15); but Saul will not "go" anywhere. In addition to movement, size will serve as a central motif and a source of contrast between characters. The description in v. 14 of David as הַקָּטָן ("the youngest" or "the smallest") and his brothers as הַגְּדֹלִים ("the oldest" or the "biggest") not only reinforces the theme of birth order (to be disrupted) but also introduces the theme of big and small that comes to epitomize David's duel with Goliath.

In addition to the function of הלך in establishing contrasts between characters, the different conjugations of הלך help to illustrate the narrative style of these opening verses. Similar to the introductory verses of Version 1, the verses here begin by describing completed actions to set the stage and then transition to participle constructs. After vv. 13-14 establish that the oldest sons הָלְכוּ בַּמִּלְחָמָה ("went to war"), v. 15 introduces continuous behavior: וְדָוִד הֹלֵךְ וָשׁוֹב מֵעַל שָׁאוּל לִרְעוֹת אֶת־צֹאן אָבִיו בֵּית־לָחֶם - "But David would go back and forth from [attending to] Saul[53] to tend to his father's flock in Bethlehem." Importantly, both Alter and McCarter read v. 15 as an attempt to harmonize the two versions of the account: one in which David is already with Saul, and one in which David is still home with Jesse.[54] This acknowledgement of later revisions is necessary, because a core premise of this account is that David and Saul do not meet until *after* the duel with Goliath. Nevertheless, David is not the only one exhibiting habitual, continuous movement. The narration cleverly mirrors David's back-and-forth movements with Goliath's who travels back and forth for a different purpose: "The Philistine would come forward each morning and evening" to provoke the Israelite army

[53] וְדָוִד הֹלֵךְ וָשׁוֹב מֵעַל שָׁאוּל – The most literal translation would be something like, "And David would go and return from Saul's presence." The Hebrew does not give any indication of the degree of interaction between Saul and David. Alter translates the Hebrew as: "And David would go back and forth from Saul's side" (*The David* Story, 103). *NJPS* reads: "and David would go back and forth from attending on Saul." I chose to go with the less literal notion of "attending to Saul" in order to draw the parallel between "attending to Saul" and "tending his father's flock." Ultimately, I agree with the commentators who read v. 15 as a later editorial attempt to harmonize the two versions.

[54] McCarter, 303; See also Alter, *The David Story*, 103. After agreeing with McCarter that the wording of this verse attempts to harmonize the two episodes, Alter offers another way to interpret the language: David's back and forth movement could have been between Bethlehem and the front (מֵעַל שָׁאוּל) to bring provisions to his brothers. If this were the case, Saul and David would not necessarily know each other at this point in the narrative.

(v. 16). Both versions of ch. 17 open with similar narrative styles that first set the stage and then transition to more of a present-tense presentation, which helps to bring the audience along with the plot.

II. Jesse Sends David to the Battle Lines (17:17-22)

With the opening premises established, the plot now begins to develop. The narration moves to a dialogue between Jesse and his youngest son David, and Jesse uses particular language that alludes to significant moments in the book of Genesis. For instance, in v. 17, the phrase קַח־נָא לְאַחֶיךָ ("Take, pray, to your brothers") would have resonated in the ears of an Israelite audience and reminded them of God's command to Abraham: קַח־נָא אֶת־בִּנְךָ – "Take, pray, your son" (Gen. 22:2). This allusion accurately suggests that Jesse is not sending David on a normal errand but one with national consequences. Similarly, Jesse instructs David in v. 18: וְאֶת־אַחֶיךָ תִּפְקֹד לְשָׁלוֹם - "Find out about your brothers' wellbeing." This language echoes that of Jacob who sends Joseph to check on his older brothers, saying: רְאֵה אֶת־שְׁלֹם אַחֶיךָ – "See how your brothers are faring" (Gen. 37:14). In addition to raising the expectations for the consequences of David's trip to the battle lines, Jesse's language, according to Alter, includes a slight jab at Saul. Jesse's desire to send basic foodstuffs – grain, bread and cheese – could be an indication that Saul is not sufficiently providing for his army.[55]

In this version of the David and Goliath Epic, when David receives his marching orders, the reader does not know where the Israelites are fighting or against which enemy, so before David arrives on the scene, v. 19 helpfully situates the war against the

[55] Alter, *The David Story*, 103.

Philistines in the Valley of Elah. The narration then communicates David's eagerness to get to the military action. There is no mention of a verbal response by David to his father, but he certainly demonstrates no reluctance or hesitation. Echoing the language of Gen. 22:3, which describes Abraham's response to God after being commanded to sacrifice Isaac, the narrator reports: וַיַּשְׁכֵּם דָּוִד בַּבֹּקֶר – "David rose early in the morning" (v. 20). The verse continues: וַיִּטֹּשׁ אֶת־הַצֹּאן עַל־שֹׁמֵר – "David left the flock with a guard." The verb נטשׁ will appear three times in this version of ch. 17, but never in Version 1. Moreover, David will always be the subject of this verb, meaning "leaving," "throwing down," or "handing over." This recurring motif supports the image of David presented by this version of the material: This youngest son of Jesse is an eager opportunist who entrusts to others his father's flock (vv. 20 & 28) and his gear (v. 22) in order to get to the frontlines of the battle.

Adding further excitement and urgency to the scene, the narrator mentions that David arrives just when the army is "going out to the battle line and shouting a war cry" (v. 20). His timing could not be better, for the two armies are now preparing to take action after a 40-day standoff (v. 21). As is the case in Version 1, this version employs the verb קרא in a military context, meaning "to come against," as opposed to the verb's function in ch.16 to describe "greeting" or "inviting." After David "leaves" (וַיִּטֹּשׁ) his gear with a guard, v. 22 describes him as "running" (וַיָּרָץ) to the battle line where he immediately finds out about his brothers' wellbeing. Here it is worth noting that David may be eager and opportunistic, but he does not forget about his father's assignment. Interestingly, at this point in the story, Jesse has been the only individual to speak. Dialogue has been minimal as the narration focuses on action.

III. David Seeks to Fight Goliath (17:23-31)

Despite the lack of speech earlier in this account, this third sub-unit is dominated by both direct and indirect speech, beginning with the latter. In v. 23, the narrator conveys that David is speaking with his brothers (וְהוּא ׀ מְדַבֵּר עִמָּם) when Goliath makes his daily provocation to the Israelites. In mentioning the Philistine warrior, v. 23 also refers to his name and birthplace (גָּלְיָת הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי שְׁמוֹ מִגַּת), which were not included in the earlier reference to him in v. 16. In each version of the account, Goliath is only referred to once by name (v. 4 and here in v. 23). In both cases, his name is mentioned when he is introduced as אִישׁ הַבֵּנַיִם (literally, "the man between," or more idiomatically, "the champion"). In all other instances, David's nemesis is called "the Philistine" (הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי). This parallel pattern may provide support for the original independence of these two versions; McCarter further argues that, when Version 2 stood alone, the Philistine would have likely been introduced here for the first time.[56] Moreover, in this version of the David and Goliath Epic, in stark contrast to Version 1, direct speech never comes out of the mouth of Goliath. Instead, this version refers to his insult with the narrator's summarizing remark: וַיְדַבֵּר כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה – "He spoke the same words as before," or more literally, "he spoke according to those words" (v. 23). McCarter explains that this phrasing indicates a "redactional condensation." He speculates that in the independent form of this version, the Philistine's challenge would have been reported here in full.[57] In support of this theory, similar redactional condensation will appear again in Version 2 to refer to David's words as well as those of the Israelite troops, thus becoming a tag of the

[56] McCarter, 304.
[57] McCarter, 304.

source, if not a defining key phrase of its own. Following this indirect report of Goliath's challenge, the v. 23 closes with: וַיִּשְׁמַע דָּוִד – "David heard." This small detail seems to reveal a lot about David. David has heard Goliath's insulting provocation and is considering the challenge. His hearing about the reward in particular seems to motivate him later on. His response is intrigue, not fear – the prevalent reaction among the Israelites reported in v. 24. Interestingly, the narration in v. 24 suggests that "seeing Goliath" (בִּרְאוֹתָם אֶת־הָאִישׁ), as opposed to hearing his words, causes the Israelites to flee and be frightened. The reference to vision here (and also in v. 25) helps to further a motif from the prophetic material (I Sam. 16:1-13).

The first direct speech in this sub-unit comes from an unnamed Israelite in v. 25. This anonymous individual provides important information to David, specifically about the grand reward offered by the king to whoever can strike down the Philistine: great fortune, the king's daughter in marriage, and tax-exempt status for his father's household. The description of the reward offered by the king does not come from the king himself. It is conveyed through the mouth of an anonymous man of Israel. Not surprisingly, this presentation of Saul is consistent with earlier depictions of his lack of initiative and dependence on others.[58] Next, David's verbal response to the tempting reward represents David's first direct speech in Version 2 (and in I Samuel when ch. 17 is read altogether); his words offer a clear indication of David's characteristic greed. Having just heard the man list the various components of the reward, David asks for the information to be confirmed: מַה־יֵּעָשֶׂה לָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַכֶּה אֶת־הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הַזֶּה - "What will be done for the man who strikes down that Philistine?" (v. 26). David's desire to double check information

[58] See chapter 2.

that has just been communicated suggests his desire to calculate personal risk versus personal benefit. Although he does invoke אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים ("the living God") at the end of the verse, his faith in God and desire to remove the insult from Israel come across as largely secondary to his desire to benefit personally. Following David's request for confirmation, another "redactional condensation" appears, conveying the repetition of information to David: וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הָעָם כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה לֵאמֹר כֹּה יֵעָשֶׂה לָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַכֶּנּוּ – "The troops said to him with the same words, saying: 'This will be done for the man that strikes him down.'" Here, this unusual phrasing starts functioning not as simply a remnant of the editing process but as a literary technique of its own: repeated speech.

Given the increased amount of speech in this sub-unit, both repetition and the opportunity to overhear operate as helpful literary devices employed in the service of the plot and character development. For instance, with v. 28, the narrator mentions that Eliav, David's oldest brother, has just "overheard" (וַיִּשְׁמַע) the exchange between David and the troops. Eliav is not pleased with his youngest brother's behavior and proceeds to reproach him for leaving his father's flock in order to come see the war. His language is harsh, especially when he says: אֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־זְדֹנְךָ וְאֵת רַע לְבָבֶךָ - "I know your impudence and the evil of your heart" (v. 28). Eliav employs uncommon language in his reproach as opposed to standard insults,[59] which has the effect of intensifying the severity of his claims. David's reaction, in the form of two questions (v. 29), seems to confirm his own surprise at his brother's outrage, or perhaps his own defensiveness. While this exchange between Eliav and David may be the only hint that David's relationship with

[59] זְדֹנְךָ – Of this noun's eleven appearances in the Bible to describe arrogance (Jer. 49:16), insolence (Prov. 13:10), and impudence (Deut. 17:12), this is its only appearance with a possessive suffix. This is also the only appearance of the phrase רַע לְבָבֶךָ.

his older brothers was strained like Joseph's with his brothers, it is a powerful allusion to include moments before David enters the dangerous, life-threatening duel with Goliath. Just as readers can hold both sympathy and dismay toward Joseph, David's behavior in this scene may elicit the same, conflicting response. On the one hand, this exchange seems to present David as the undeserving receptacle of Eliav's raw emotions triggered perhaps by the reversal of primogeniture. On the other hand, it becomes difficult to maintain only sympathy for David when he turns away from his brother to confirm once again the nature of the threat and reward in discussion (v. 30). At this point, it seems like David is only asking for trouble. David's repeated interest in the duel with the Philistine eventually gets "overheard" and relayed to Saul: וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ֙ הַדְּבָרִ֔ים אֲשֶׁ֥ר דִּבֶּ֖ר דָּוִֽד (v. 31). In contrast to Eliav's response, Saul does not become angry with David. Instead, Saul holds him to his expressed interest and sends him off to fight the Philistine. McCarter notes, however, that v. 31 seems entirely redactional to smooth the two versions together. When this one account stood alone, Saul would not have met David until the end.[60] No matter what, the transition from v. 30/31 (David talking about fighting) to v. 41 (Goliath approaching David) is certainly the roughest transition in Version 2.

IV. David Defeats Goliath (17:41, 48b & 50)

In contrast to Version 1's depiction of David's defeat of Goliath (analyzed above), the two and a half verses included here in Version 2 serve as an extremely bare account of the duel. The details are minimal: As the Philistine drew closer to David (v. 41), "David hastened and ran to the battle line to meet the Philistine"

[60] McCarter, 304.

(וַיְמַהֵר דָּוִד וַיָּרָץ הַמַּעֲרָכָה לִקְרַאת הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי; v. 48b). Despite the sparse description, however, the narration devotes two verbs to convey David's speed (וַיְמַהֵר and וַיָּרָץ). This inclusion reinforces the theme of David's eager movement in contrast to Saul's lack thereof (Saul has been on the frontline for 40 days without doing anything!). Once David and Goliath are positioned "against" (לִקְרַאת) one another, only one verse describes David's miraculous victory. Verse 50 communicates that David prevailed over Goliath with sling and stone, and not with sword, but this version neither mentions Goliath's decapitation nor David's invocation of God's protection. From beginning to end, Version 2 never bears the theological lens that defines Version 1.

V. Saul Meets David (17:55-58)

Despite what this version lacks, it does include a dramatic and much-anticipated introduction of David to Saul. After he impressively defeats the Philistine champion, Saul and Abner turn to one another in hope of identifying the young lad who just slew their enemy. Verse 55 reads rather comically in this regard. The Israelites have just been saved from servitude to the Philistines, and the two men in charge of the army (and the nation) have no idea who did it. Over the course of four verses (vv. 55-58), the phrase בֶּן־מִי ("whose son?") appears three times. In the concluding verse of the chapter (v. 58), Saul finally gets an answer: "The son of Jesse." With these words, Version 2 forms an inclusio, opening with an introduction of David son of Jesse (v. 12) directed *toward the audience* and closing with another introduction of David son of Jesse (v. 58) directed *toward Saul*.

Comparing Version 1 & Version 2

Comparing the literary features of Version 2 presented above to those of Version 1 (Part 3) supports, for the most part, the compositional history put forward by the source critical scholars. Version 1, captured on its own in the LXX, reads as a coherent and independent account of the David and Goliath Epic. Version 2 displays distinct literary features from Version 1, such as key words, use of dialogue, and relationships to other texts, but it lacks the same degree of narrative coherence and independence. Since our only access to Version 2 is through the MT, and thus in its conflated form, this discrepancy in version coherence seems reasonable. McCarter's speculations about an original, fuller form of Version 2 before the conflation process help to resolve some of the narrative's roughness, such as the lack of any transition from v. 30/31 to v. 41. However, since we can neither access a fuller form of Version 2 nor confirm that it ever existed in a fuller form,[61] the strongest support for the source scholars' divisions lies in the distinct literary features and ideological messages of the two versions.

The two versions of the David and Goliath Epic share several key words: הלך, קרא and חרף. In both versions, הלך establishes an important contrast between Saul's passivity and David's initiative. In Version 2, in particular, הלך also illustrates the dynamic between David and his older brothers who initially follow Saul to war (הָלְכוּ) before David himself gets sent to the scene. In both versions, the use of קרא reinforces the military setting of ch. 17, in which battle lines deploy "against" one another and David goes out "against" the Philistine. The consistent use of this verb across the chapter establishes a helpful difference in diction between ch. 16 and ch. 17. Furthermore, חרף

[61] Tov, 120.

appears in both versions and represents Goliath's insulting challenge to the Israelite army – the insult that David's victory removes. Despite this overlap in defining key words, however, Version 2 exhibits some unique language and phrasing that supports its distinct origins. First of all, the verb נטשׁ appears three times in Version 2 and never in Version 1. This verb illustrates David's willingness to "leave" valuable belongings (animals and gear) with others in order to pursue more promising and exciting opportunities. נטשׁ symbolizes, to some extent, Version 2's emphasis on David's opportunism and greed, in contrast to Version 1's emphasis on David's faith and rhetoric. Another distinct linguistic feature of Version 2 is the occurrence of phrasing like כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה (v. 23) and כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה (v. 27). As mentioned above, McCarter defines these references to, rather than repetitions of, direct speech as "redactional condensation." Given that these phrases only appear in Version 2, their existence could be read as evidence of the conflation process that would have demanded such references in order to avoid too much repetition of direct speech.

Version 1 is not only full of direct speech but also dominated by eloquent speeches. Goliath is the first to offer a speech (vv. 8-10), but then David prevails as the central rhetorician who gives an impressive, persuasive speech to Saul (vv. 34-37) followed by a highly theological speech to Goliath (vv. 45-47). In addition to presenting David as "discerning in speech" (נִבוֹן דָּבָר; I Sam. 16:18), a characteristic that will continue to define him throughout his life, his speeches help to articulate the central theological message that defines Version 1: David's secret weapon is God - יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת; the support and protection of the Israelite's one God allows Saul's small, inexperienced armor bearer to defeat the enormous Philistine warrior. Version 2 lacks not only

examples of David's impressive eloquence but also the clarity of theological messaging that comes through his speeches. In contrast in Version 1, either as a result of the conflation process or as an indication of distinct literary styles, Version 2 includes more indirect speech than direct speech and incorporates patterns of repeated speech as well as overhearing. These indirect forms of communication – hearing, repeating and relaying – ultimately define the dialogue style of Version 2. They also help to reinforce the characterizations of both David (who asks for multiple confirmations of the reward promised for defeating the Philistine; vv. 27 and 30) and Saul (who needs information relayed to him; v 31).

In addition to differences in their use of dialogue, Version 1 and Version 2 display distinct narrative styles for the most part. As discussed above, Version 1 devotes attention, language and verses to physical descriptions. For example, the narration dedicates three verses to setting up the military landscape (vv. 1-3), four verses to depicting Goliath's physical appearance (vv. 4-7), and then twelve verses to the actual duel between David and Goliath (vv. 40, 42-48a, 49 & 51). In contrast, three sparse verses describe the duel in Version 2. In general, the theme of physicality emphasized in Version 1 is underplayed in Version 2. What the two narratives do share is a common approach to opening their accounts. Both Versions 1 and 2 begin by establishing some basic context in the form of completed actions (i.e., verbs in the perfect conjugation). Then, after a few verses, the narration moves incorporate more participle verbs, which give the audience the sense of watching the dramatic plot unfold.

Supported by their distinct literary features, Version 1 and Version 2 present differing ideological messages. Version 1, read in conjunction with the HDR's account

of David's arrival in Saul's court (I Sam. 16:14-23), presents this overall message: Saul's armor bearer David defeats Goliath and rises to power, because God is with him. In contrast, Version 2 presents this overall message: Jesse's youngest son and the shepherd of his flock rises to power and prominence far above his older brothers, because he takes bold action when presented with a tempting but life-threatening opportunity. The theology of Version 2's messaging is less explicit, for it relies primarily on allusions to Genesis and Exodus. Regarding the political or royal ideology conveyed, Version 1 begins with Saul's introduction to his rival and successor (assuming we read Version 1 as a continuation of I Sam. 16:14-23), and Version 2 concludes with that introduction. The timing of the introduction does not affect the messaging as much as it affects the drama produced. In Version 1, Saul's biggest threat emerges from right under his nose; the one who initially brings him comfort will ultimately undo him. In Version 2, the drama emerges from delaying the much-anticipated meeting. Neither Saul nor David has any idea whose son has defeated the Philistine champion. In both cases, however, David is brought to Saul (I Sam. 16:21; 17:57).

Saul's passivity and dependence on others is a prominent feature of both versions. Saul represents inaction. In Version 1, the narrative depicts him as fearful of the Philistine (v. 11) and as trying to deter David from fighting the Philistine (v. 33). Saul takes initiative only when he attempts to dress David in his battle garb, perhaps hoping that the troops will recognize the royal gear and think he is actually the one entering the duel. Alternatively, this initiative by Saul may be part of his larger strategy of keeping David close to him and treating him as an adopted son of sorts. In Version 2, Saul is largely absent from the plotline until the very end. Verse 31 reports that David's words

(of interest in fighting the Philistine) are told to Saul. Only later do the two men officially meet after David has defeated Goliath, and Abner brings David to Saul. Both versions – individually and combined – paint Saul in a rather negative, uninspiring, and anti-heroic light. Already clearly declining in power and prominence, he operates as a foil for the rising star of Israel: his successor David.

While the two versions of the David and Goliath Epic present rather consistent presentations of Saul, they are less consistent about David. As explored at various points in the analysis above, Version 1 emphasizes David's rhetorical abilities and his strong faith in Israel's God. These are clearly and highly desirable qualities in the future king of Israel. In addition to his general attractiveness, David represents the ultimate underdog with whom the Israelite people of all eras can identify. Despite his multiple roles as shepherd boy, court lyre player, and armor bearer, what he lacks is military experience, and he quickly defies everyone's expectations with his miraculous, one-stone strike-down of Goliath. With that one throw, he seems to win over the hearts of the Israelite people. Taken altogether, Version 1 comes across as unquestionably pro-David text. More nuance and ambiguity enters the picture with Version 2's portrayal of David's eagerness and emerging greed (which will become more apparent in II Samuel). His motivation for dueling the Philistine is quite clear: he wants the reward. The reader does not have to infer anything about his motivation for endangering his life, which is not the case in Version 1. As has been acknowledged already, it is more complicated to assess the overall message and tone of Version 2, since we do not necessarily have the complete story before us. That said, its presentation comes across as less theological; David is a bold opportunist who is willing to take risks. His brothers, specifically the eldest Eliav,

do not appreciate these qualities in their brother, and this dynamic certainly places David in the company of Joseph. He, too, will disrupt the birth order of his family as he rises in power over the people.

Part 5. The Masoretic Text: *God's Newly Anointed King Defeats Goliath* (I Samuel 16:1-17:58)

Literary Analysis

Any attempt to read I Samuel 16 & 17 together as a unified, coherent whole must grapple with this core question: When exactly does Saul meet David? Do they meet at the end of ch. 16 (v. 21), or at the end of ch. 17 (v. 58)? Posing the question differently, if David has been serving as Saul's armor bearer and beloved court lyre player, why does Saul not recognize his servant after he slays Goliath? Polzin, who advocates strongly for reading the received text as a coherent whole, suggests that Saul's inability to recognize David at the end of ch. 17 could be a hint about the onset of Saul's madness (presenting here as memory loss).[62] Alternatively, Saul's repeated questioning, "Whose son?" (vv. 55-58) could be interpreted not as an indication of memory loss but as a form of coercion. Saul, realizing David's potential to be a legitimate threat, wants David to renounce his allegiance to his birth father Jesse and pledge himself completely to his royal father Saul.[63] While I am not particularly convinced by either explanation, Polzin's multiple responses to this central interpretative challenge demonstrate that a range of approaches exists beyond source criticism for handling the inconsistencies, ambiguities and redundancies posed by the material in chs. 16 and 17.

[62] Polzin, 162.
[63] Polzin, 175.

Although reading the entire unit together may require looking past, or at least creatively at, the textual irregularities, doing so allows new themes to come to the surface and other motifs to bolster new strength. Regarding the latter, the motif of vision certainly defines and distinguishes the prophetic material narrating Samuel's anointment of David (I Sam. 16:1-13), but an attention to appearance and visual perception continues throughout the whole unit. When one of Saul's servants describes David to Saul later in ch. 16, he describes David as אִישׁ תֹּאַר ("an attractive man," v. 18). Then, in ch. 17, the narrator pays particular attention to Goliath's appearance, carefully noting his impressive height as well as the various materials of his armor and components of his weaponry (vv. 4-7). Even with the focus on speech in both versions of ch. 17, visual impressions continue to elicit strong responses. For instance, after Goliath insults the Israelite army, v. 24 reads: וְכֹל֙ אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל בִּרְא֥וֹתָ֖ם אֶת־הָאִ֑ישׁ וַיָּנֻ֣סוּ מִפָּנָ֔יו וַיִּירְא֖וּ מְאֹֽד - "All the men of Israel, when they *saw* the man they fled from him and were very frightened." Similarly, before Goliath even begins to exchange taunts with David, the narration in v. 42 communicates Goliath's reaction to David's appearance alone: "The Philistine looked and saw David (וַיַּבֵּ֥ט הַפְּלִשְׁתִּ֖י וַיִּרְאֶ֣ה אֶת־דָּוִ֑ד), and he despised him; for he was a lad and ruddy with a beautiful appearance (וְאַדְמֹנִ֖י עִם־יְפֵ֥ה מַרְאֶֽה)." Further examples of the prominence of vision in this unit include Eliav's critique of David for wanting to come "see" the war (v. 28), and then Saul's "watching" of David go out against the Philistine (v. 55). In all four sources analyzed, either ראה operates as a key word or the act of visual perception operates as a defining action. Given the data available, it becomes difficult to speculate whether the prophetic writer intentionally drew upon a subtle theme

present in the older material and then amplified it in his own material, or if the continuation of the motif is merely a coincidence.

Regarding new themes that emerge when the whole unit is read and analyzed together, the verb סור "to turn aside" may get overlooked in the individual sources but becomes a central thematic through-line for the collective unit. The verb first appears in I Sam. 16:14 to explain: "The spirit of YHWH had turned away (סָרָה) from Saul." This verse follows the announcement that: "The spirit of YHWH gripped David from that day forward" (v. 13). As a result, סור comes to symbolize the intensifying dynamic between David and Saul, specifically God's selection of ("turning toward") David and rejection of ("turning away from") Saul. Later in ch. 17, this verb will reappear in a new context when David asks the troops in v. 26: "What will be done for the man who strikes down that Philistine and turns aside that insult from Israel (וְהֵסִיר חֶרְפָּה מֵעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל)?" David will soon become the man who succeeds in striking down the Philistine and turning aside his insult, but before he does, Saul will try to dress David in his own armor (v. 38). When David quickly realizes that the armor inhibits his ability to walk, his "removal of the armor" (וַיְסִרֵם דָּוִד מֵעָלָיו) serves as a symbolic rejection or casting off of Saul's help (v. 39). David also threatens to literalize the metaphor of "turning aside the insult" when he says to Goliath in v. 46: וְהִכִּיתִךָ וַהֲסִרֹתִי אֶת־רֹאשְׁךָ מֵעָלֶיךָ - "I will strike you down and remove your head." If רוּחַ represents divine protection and favor and רֹאשׁ represents political or military power, then the verb סור successfully combines the theological and political authorities that shift away from Saul and toward David over the course of these two chapters.

When reading the unit as a coherent whole, the combination of the distinct literary styles, rather than the consistent use of key words or dialogue, can also provide structure and meaning. For instance, ch. 16 depicts young David as a passive recipient of both divine and royal selection. He does nothing to deserve his special treatment. He neither speaks nor takes action, except for making music with his lyre. In contrast, ch. 17 presents David as an eager young man of action and eloquence. He is both the dominant speaker and the subject of many different, highly physical verbs. Given these contrasting presentations, some have categorized ch. 16 as an introduction to David "the private person," and ch. 17 as an introduction to David "the public figure."[64] Alter takes this categorization further and argues that the inclusion of two different versions of David's introduction to the plot (and to Saul) not only allows for the incorporation of different aspects of David's character but also influences how the audience understands his election as king. Chapter 16 presents David's election as unambiguously divine with the spirit of God descending upon him, while ch. 17 presents David's election as the result of his proving his manhood and ascending through his own bold action.[65] Overall, Alter makes a helpful argument for including multiple and even inconsistent perspectives:

> The monotheistic revolution of biblical Israel was a continuing and disquieting one. It left little margin for neat and confident views about God, the created world, history, and man as political animal or moral agent, for it repeatedly had to make sense of the intersection of incompatibles…The biblical outlook is informed, I think, by a sense of stubborn contradiction, of a profound and ineradicable untidiness in the nature of things, and it is toward the expression of such a sense of moral and historical reality that the composite artistry of the Bible is directed.[66]

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[64] Alter discusses the interpretation of Kenneth R. Gros Louis (*The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 148).
[65] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 147-152.
[66] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 154.

Alter acknowledges the inconsistencies and incompatibilities, and he embraces them as sources of rich and more realistic meaning. In line with Alter's argument above, the source critics' speculations about the compositional history of this unit can add historical, theological and textual value to our reading. For instance, with regard to ch. 17, McCarter proposes at least four stages of growth for the story about David defeating the Philistine: (1) The foundation story recounted an Israelite victory over the Philistines near Socoh. Saul led the victory, but his young armor bearer played a prominent role and ultimately overshadowed the king. This story was incorporated into the earliest material that would come to be known as the History of David's Rise (HDR). (2) The foundation story was then replaced almost entirely by a popular legend about David defeating the Philistine champion. This inserted legend exhibited a highly stylized and idealized form. (3) Certain details, such as the name of the Philistine and the description of the shaft of his spear, were adopted from a similar legend about Elhanan that appears in II Sam. 21:29ff. At the end of this stage, Version 1 had been produced. (4) Later, a complete alternative account (Version 2) about David's arrival and victory over Goliath was interpolated into some manuscripts.[67] Regarding this later conflation process, McCarter makes an important point that, even if Version 2 did not enter the primary narrative until much later, its date of composition was not necessarily late.[68]

Working with this four-stage progression, it seems reasonable to follow that the story about David's arrival to Saul's court (I Sam. 16:14-23) originated on its own and was incorporated into the early HDR material. While the chronology proceeds smoothly enough from David's arrival in Saul's court into David's participation in the war with the

[67] McCarter, 298.
[68] McCarter, 308.

Philistines (Version 1 of ch. 17), the two accounts are by no means dependent on one another. It would also be feasible to insert another episode between them. Regarding Version 2 of the David and Goliath Epic, this account seems to be less aware of the tradition about David's arrival in Saul's court as a musician, and hence its dramatic meeting between the two men at the end of the duel. Moreover, the prophetic material (I Sam. 16:1-13) ends up framing all that follows but could have been added much later. We cannot confirm the exact compositional history or know the origins of all of the different material fragments, but beginning to understand the differences between the sources – their distinct presentations of David, literary styles, folkloric formulas, and theological messages – allows the richness of the unit as a whole to come through. Those involved in shaping the composite artistry of this unit demonstrate a desire to smooth over and even unify some inconsistencies between source traditions; at the same time, they also convey a comfort in allowing the distinct styles and ideologies to operate side by side, and a willingness to live with the obvious conflict about the initial meeting between David and Saul. Overall, given David's ultimate centrality in the national Israelite narrative as well as his early divisiveness within Israel, it is not surprising that many different traditions exist about his initial appearance and rise to power. The editorial decisions to incorporate these multiple traditions, and even allow them to conflict, suggests the power of a composite narrative to unify the national identity.

Chapter 4: I Samuel 24 & 26 Exegesis

Introduction

Representing a distinct form of narrative doublets, the parallel accounts of David sparing Saul's life contained within I Samuel 24 and 26 are neither conflated nor placed side by side in the larger narrative. Instead, they are presented as independent events, each as their own chapter and with an entire chapter between them. The narrative distance between the two accounts, however, does not conceal the common structure they share. In both accounts, Saul's pursuit of David causes him to flee into the wilderness. Saul learns about David's general location, but then David is the one who sneaks up on Saul. Although David's men seek to kill Saul, David prohibits them from doing any harm to "YHWH's anointed." David opts to perform a symbolic action, which he then uses as evidence of his innocence and piety when he reveals himself to Saul. Saul responds to David by admitting his own guilt and offering a blessing, in one form or another, to David. Both accounts conclude with the two rivals parting ways.

In addition to their common structure, these two accounts share many of the same linguistic features and ideological angles, and thus present as very much related. Given these similarities, the two chapters read in sequence come across as both repetitive and contradictory, especially since the narration in ch. 26 displays no awareness of what has occurred in ch. 24. These features and others discussed below lead source critical scholars, including Brettler and McCarter, to read ch. 24 as a revised version of ch. 26's

account. Brettler further argues that ch. 26 is based on an even older, lost source, so both accounts demonstrate degrees of dependence on the source that preceded them.[1]

Given the many shared qualities of the two chapters, it becomes the responsibility of scholars and readers alike to determine how to best read the two accounts together: Should they be read from a source critical perspective, as independent narratives with a shared theme but representing distinct authorial agendas? Or, should they be understood from a literary perspective, as components of a coherently whole unit (chs. 24-26) in which each chapter intentionally builds one what came earlier? The following exegesis aims to combine both approaches – a source critical reading with literary analysis. I will begin with a close textual analysis of the literary devices and ideological messages of each of the individual accounts, ch. 24 and ch. 26, as delineated by the source critics. In the final section, I will then provide a literary analysis of the unit as a whole, exploring the methods by which the multiple traditions have been brought together and the resulting effects on the dominant literary features of each component part. This final section will also investigate the possible literary and ideological implications of reading the unit as both composite and coherent.

Part 1. I Samuel 24:1-23

A. Structural Outline

David Spares Saul's Life: Saul Acknowledges the Next King (I Samuel 24:1-23)

I. Saul Seeks David (24:1-4)

[1] Marc Zvi Brettler, "The David Tradition," in *Israel in Transition 2: From Late Bronze II to Iron IIA (C. 125—850 BCE): the Texts* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe; London: Continuum International Publishing, 2011), 46.

a. Saul learns that David is hiding in the wilderness of Ein Gedi (vv. 1-2)

b. Saul takes 3000 select men to look for David (v. 3)

c. To relieve himself, Saul unknowingly enters the cave where David sits (v. 4)

II. David Sneaks Up on Saul (24:5-8)

a. David's men declare that YHWH has delivered Saul into his hand (v. 5a)

b. David stealthily cuts the corner of Saul's cloak (v. 5b)

c. Feeling remorse, David forbids his men from laying a hand on YHWH's anointed (vv. 6-8a)

d. Saul exits the cave unharmed (v. 8b)

III. David Confronts Saul (23:9-23)

a. Following Saul, David calls out to the King and bows in respect (v. 9)

b. David declares his innocence and implies Saul's guilt (vv. 10-16)

c. Saul recognizes David's voice and admits his guilt (vv. 17-19)

d. Saul blesses David and acknowledges his future kingship (vv. 20-21)

e. Saul asks David to swear to protect his seed and his name (vv. 22-23a)

f. The two men part ways (v. 23b)

B. Literary Analysis

I. Saul Seeks David (24:1-4)

The opening verses of ch. 24 set up the context for what will be an unusual encounter between Saul and David. This encounter occurs in the midst of Saul's ongoing pursuit of David, which began in ch. 18. Afraid and threatened by David, Saul "seeks

David's life" (לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ; I Sam. 23:15). Just prior to the scene in discussion, Saul had been chasing after David in the wilderness, but his pursuit was interrupted upon his learning that the Philistines had invaded. At the very end of ch. 23, the narrator explains: וַיָּשָׁב שָׁאוּל מִרֹדֵף אַחֲרֵי דָוִד וַיֵּלֶךְ לִקְרַאת פְּלִשְׁתִּים – "Saul turned back from chasing after David, and he went to meet the Philistines" (23:28). Chapter 24 opens during this break in the chase: וַיַּעַל דָּוִד מִשָּׁם וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּמִצָדוֹת עֵין־גֶּדִי – "David went up from there, and he stayed in the strongholds of Ein Gedi" (v. 1). His respite, however, is a brief one, because in the very next verse, the narrator reports that "Saul turned back from [chasing] after the Philistines" (שָׁב שָׁאוּל מֵאַחֲרֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים) and learned of David's new location in Ein Gedi. Echoing the language of I Sam. 23:28, v. 2 introduces the key word אַחֲרֵי ("after") and the overall motif of chasing, pursuing or following after that defines this chapter. For the most part, Saul is the one chasing "after" David, but this word אַחֲרֵי will be employed in other ways to reinforce the motif.

Upon learning David's new location, Saul moves into action, though not alone. The narrator states: וַיִּקַּח שָׁאוּל אִישׁ בָּחוּר מִכָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל – "Saul took 3000 select men from all of Israel" (v. 3). This particular depiction indicates that Saul's men are not only large in number (שְׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים) but also have been "selected" (בָּחוּר) from an even larger pool (מִכָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל). In reading this verse, Alter points out that David "commands a guerilla band of about six hundred men; so he is outnumbered five to one and is facing elite troops."[2] Thus, seven chapters after his remarkable defeat of Goliath, David remains in the position of the underdog being pursued: וַיֵּלֶךְ לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־דָּוִד וַאֲנָשָׁיו – "And [Saul]

[2] Alter, *The David Story*, 147.

went to seek David and his men" (v. 3). Although the two rivals each travel with an entourage, the dynamics change once both enter the cave. Saul becomes much more vulnerable, entering the cave alone and physically exposed: וַיָּבֹא שָׁאוּל לְהָסֵךְ אֶת־רַגְלָיו - "Saul entered to cover his feet" (v. 3). Many translations interpret the expression "to cover his feet" as a euphemism for "to relieve himself,"[3] and this impetus for entering the cave begins to establish what will be an overall degrading presentation of Saul in this chapter (more so than in ch. 26). Not only does this premise put him in an embarrassing and exposed situation before his rival, but it also implies that Saul only finds David by accident. Given the incidental nature of his arrival, it appears that Saul is without a single one of his 3000 men and perhaps without a weapon on him. In contrast Saul's increased vulnerability, David – the one being pursued – remains hidden with his men in the protective cave. He now has the advantage; he is in a position to capture and even kill the king. After all of Saul's seeking of David, it will be David who sneaks up on Saul.

II. David Sneaks Up on Saul (24:5-8)

"Sitting in the far end of the cave" (בִּיַרְכְּתֵי הַמְּעָרָה יֹשְׁבִים), David's men are the first to speak up, saying: הִנֵּה הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ – "Here is the day about which YHWH said to you:" הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן אֶת־אֹיְבֶיךָ [אֹיִבְךָ] בְּיָדֶךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ לּוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר יִטַב בְּעֵינֶיךָ – " 'Behold, I will place your enemy in your hand, and you shall do to him whatever is pleasing in your eyes' " (v. 5). By attributing these words to David's men, and not David

[3] McCarter, 383; Alter, 147; *NJPS.* In her explanation of the expression, Weiss points to other biblical passages in which רֶגֶל ("leg" or "foot") stands for "penis" and in which euphemisms employ the opposite verb in order to sanitize the language. Thus, "to cover his feet" becomes "to uncover his penis" (194-95).

himself, the narrator helps to protect David's innocence from the very beginning of the scene. The inclination to harm belongs to them, not him. David's restraint is especially impressive in light of the promise referenced here from God to David, though that promise has never been mentioned before in the narrative.[4] Its inclusion, however, does effectively begin to establish the theological angle of the chapter: God is on David's side, not Saul's. The language of "placing your enemy in your hand" echoes David's taunting of the Goliath and Philistines, as he had said: כִּי לַיהוָה הַמִּלְחָמָה וְנָתַן אֶתְכֶם בְּיָדֵנוּ – "For the war belongs to YHWH, and He shall place you all into our hand" (I Sam. 17:47). First mentioned in v. 5, יד ("hand") will operate as a key word symbolizing power and the shifting power dynamic between Saul and David in this chapter.[5] Further developing this theme, David exercises his newfound power at the end of v. 5: וַיָּקָם דָּוִד וַיִּכְרֹת אֶת־כְּנַף־הַמְּעִיל אֲשֶׁר־לְשָׁאוּל בַּלָּט – "He arose to cut the corner of Saul's cloak in secrecy." The root קום ("to arise for action," "to stand," or "to be established") will also occur frequently in this chapter to depict empowered action and movement.

David's cutting the corner of Saul's cloak carries many connotations. First, Saul himself "seized the corner of Samuel's cloak and torn it" (וַיַּחֲזֵק בִּכְנַף־מְעִילוֹ וַיִּקָּרַע), upon hearing that the kingship had been "torn away" from him (I Sam. 15:27). Then, prior to his duel with Goliath, David and Saul had a symbolic exchange over a different form of outerwear – Saul's gear (I Sam. 17:38f). Saul tried to dress David in his armor, but then David rejected and removed it all, claiming that he could not walk. As a third and related layer of meaning, Everett Fox explains: "In ancient Near Eastern practice, the hem of a

[4] McCarter, 383.
[5] For a discussion of each appearance of the hand metaphor, see Weiss, 205-11.

cloak or robe was a personal sign, used for identification."[6] Taken altogether, David's choice to cut Saul's cloak may spare Saul his life but serves to symbolically strip Saul of his power, his identity, and his kingship. The inclusion of the word בַּלָּֽט ("in secrecy") at the end of the verse brings further shame to Saul by reminding the audience of his lack of awareness. He still has no idea that he has company!

Immediately following David's decisive cut of the cloak, the narrator remarks: וַיְהִ֗י אַֽחֲרֵי־כֵ֛ן וַיַּ֥ךְ לֵב־דָּוִ֖ד אֹתֽוֹ – "It happened afterward that David's heart struck him down" (v. 6). Here אַֽחֲרֵי provides both a transition in time and a linkage between action and consequence, and thereby expands the semantic range of this key word. Moreover, the specific language and imagery employed in this verse is especially fitting to describe David's sudden remorse or change of heart. David is often the subject, and never the object, of the verb נכה ("to strike down"), but here he becomes "conscience-stricken."[7] Literally, "David's heart strikes him;" figuratively, he beats himself up over what he has just done.[8] David then communicates his concern with theological language. He says to his men: חָלִ֣ילָה לִּ֗י מֵיהוָה֮ אִם־אֶֽעֱשֶׂ֣ה אֶת־הַדָּבָ֣ר הַזֶּ֔ה לַֽאדֹנִ֖י לִמְשִׁ֣יחַ יְהוָ֑ה לִשְׁלֹ֤חַ יָדִי֙ בּ֔וֹ – "Forbid me from YHWH if I should do this thing to my lord, to YHWH's anointed, to send my hand against him" (v. 7). As Weiss explains, here the hand motif extends well beyond the initiative of "sending one's hand" and points to the completed action of harming or killing another.[9] Regarding David's expression of piety, Alter explains that his words also reveal self-interest, for David too is "YHWH's anointed" and hopes to

[6] Everett Fox, *Give Us a King! Samuel, Saul and David: A New Translation of Samuel I and II* (New York: Schocken Books, 1999), 118.
[7] McCarter, 384.
[8] Weiss, 198.
[9] Weiss, 208.

enjoy the same degree of protection and sanctity in the future.[10] His reiteration of Saul's status at the close of the verse ("for he is YHWH's anointed" - כִּי־מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה הוּא) seems to confirm Alter's reading. Verse 8 then closes the scene by explaining that David "does not permit his men to rise up against Saul" (וְלֹא נְתָנָם לָקוּם אֶל־שָׁאוּל) and that Saul "arises from the cave" (קָם מֵהַמְּעָרָה) and continues on his way unharmed. The double occurrence of קום draws attention to the shifting power dynamics at play between David, his men, and Saul.

This sub-unit of the chapter is structured by the dialogue between David and his men, and the combination of action and restraint that then results from their exchange of words. David's men are always referenced as אֲנָשָׁיו ("his men"); they speak to him collectively (v. 5), and he speaks to them as a collective (vv. 7-8). No individual men receive particular attention or credit, but the words attributed to this collective group do seem to move David to action in v. 5. Then in v. 8, David's words inhibit further action: וַיְשַׁסַּע דָּוִד אֶת־אֲנָשָׁיו בַּדְּבָרִים. Here the narration employs the verb וַיְשַׁסַּע, which has a disputed meaning in this specific context. The root itself refers to "splitting" or "tearing," and Alter opts to understand the verb as describing the way in which David uses words to create a barrier of sorts between his men and the king.[11] His words have power, and they effectively persuade, or at least prohibit, his eager men from doing any harm to Saul.

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[10] Alter, *The David Story*, 148.

[11] Alter, 148; *HALOT* points to various interpretive possibilities for this unusual expression (וַיְשַׁסַּע דָּוִד אֶת־אֲנָשָׁיו בַּדְּבָרִים), including: "David calmed the men with words," "David broke the men to pieces with words," and "David completely restrained the enthusiasm (verve) of his people" (4:1609). See also Weiss (198-200) who explores the possible meanings of "tear apart his men with words." She argues that David does not appear to "reproach" his men, but that the "tearing" might more accurately connote the act of "persuading" with speech. Moreover, the surprisingly violent tone of the expression further emphasizes the forceful will of David's men.

Overall, dialogue proves to be an effective form of communication, even as David and his men maintain a low profile in the cave. Perhaps their seemingly animated speech draws further attention to Saul's obliviousness. Given the way caves create echoes, how did he not hear them?

III. David Confronts Saul (24:9-23)

Once Saul exits the cave, any attempts at secrecy and reduced speech volume cease, for David follows after Saul: וַיָּקָם דָּוִד אַחֲרֵי־כֵן וַיֵּצֵא מִן־הַמְּעָרָה – "David arose afterward and went out from the cave" (v. 9). The key word אַחֲרֵי appears three times in v. 9. In addition to describing "following after" in time, אַחֲרֵי connotes "following after" in space: וַיִּקְרָא אַחֲרֵי־שָׁאוּל לֵאמֹר אֲדֹנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ – "[David] called out *after* Saul, saying, 'My lord, the King!' " Then, Saul "looks behind him" (וַיַּבֵּט שָׁאוּל֙ אַחֲרָ֔יו) to see David bending to the ground and prostrating himself. David's humble language and calculated actions depicted here reveals his smart strategy: both his words and body communicate deference. Making himself known to Saul certainly makes him vulnerable to attack, but presenting himself in a most respectful manner helps to influence Saul's reaction. Once he catches Saul's attention, David launches into a seven-verse speech in which he flexes his well-established rhetorical muscles. David's well-crafted speech incorporates many of the chapter's key words and also introduces a few more motifs. The long speech contrasts with the dialectic style in the previous sub-unit, but it also includes repeated speech within it, which gives the effect of dialogue within the monologue. David opens the speech to Saul with an accusatory question: "Why do you listen to people's words, saying, 'Look David seeks to harm you?' " (הִנֵּה דָוִד מְבַקֵּשׁ רָעָתֶךָ; v. 10). With this

question, David reinforces the motif of "seeking" (מְבַקֵּשׁ) and introduces a new key word רע ("harm" or "evil") that Saul will further develop in his response to David.

In the next two verses of the speech, David employs the root ראה ("to see") four times to reinforce his main point: Can't you *see* that I do not intend to harm you? Also four times in two verses, David uses the term יָדִי: "YHWH placed you into *my hand* today;" "I said 'I will not send *my hand* against my lord, for he is YHWH's anointed' " (v. 11); "See the corner of your cloak in *my hand;*" and "Know and see that in *my hand* there is no evil or rebellion" (v. 12). Highlighting the artistry of the author, David's words utilize the hand motif both literally and figuratively. In addition to employing these two motifs to clearly make the case that, despite his opportunity and ability, he intends no harm to Saul, David adds some ambiguity to his tone when he refers to Saul as "my father" (אָבִי; v. 12). On the one hand, David's use of the term could be part of his strategy to overwhelm Saul with displays of respect, persuade him of his innocence, and simultaneously succeed in overpowering him. On the other hand, his use of the term could reveal more genuine desperation on David's part – what Alter describes as "an attempt to reach back to the moment of affectionate intimacy in their relationship."[12] After all, Saul is David's father-in-law. Either way one reads David's address of "my father," his tone only gets stronger and sharper as the speech continues. Having made the case in v. 12 for his demonstration of mercy at Saul's moment of exposure, David begins to contrast his innocence with Saul's guilt: יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וְנָקְמַנִי יְהוָה מִמֶּךָּ – Let YHWH judge between me and you, and let YHWH avenge me of you" (v. 13). Between invoking God's judgment and claiming God's involvement in "placing Saul into his

[12] Alter, *The David Story,* 149.

hand" (v. 11), David's theological language achieves at least two ends. First, he elevates their rivalry to the divine realm, and thereby implies that the rivalry will ultimately be settled by a power stronger than either one of them. Second, David's language, which echoes his theological rhetoric from ch. 17, furthers his presentation as an innocent, pious man of faith. He has divine selection and protection, and each time he refers to Saul as "YHWH's anointed" (מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה), he somewhat ironically draws attention to his own very same status.

Next, when David claims "my hand will not be against you" (וְיָדִי לֹא תִהְיֶה־בָּךְ) in v. 13 and then again in v. 14, his explicit assertion of innocence includes an implicit accusation of Saul's guilt. David's language here echoes Saul's own words when he devised to kill David by sending into battle: אַל־תְּהִי יָדִי בּוֹ וּתְהִי־בוֹ יַד־פְּלִשְׁתִּים – "Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him" (I Sam. 18:17). David's accusation grows in strength when he quotes an ancient proverb to call Saul a "wicked man" from whom "wickedness comes forth" (מֵרְשָׁעִים יֵצֵא רֶשַׁע; v. 14). He then launches a series of accusatory questions that emphasize the "following after" motif: אַחֲרֵי מִי יָצָא מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרֵי מִי אַתָּה אֹחֵר אַחֲרֵי כֶּלֶב מֵת אַחֲרֵי פַּרְעֹשׁ אֶחָד רֹדֵף – "*After* whom does the King of Israel come forth? *After* whom do you chase? *After* a dead dog? *After* a single flea?" (v. 15). This series of questions exemplifies the stylized and slightly underhanded nature of David's speech. He may be explicitly humbling himself before the "King of Israel" by equating his own status to that of lowly "a dead dog" or even "a single flea," but he is also launching a critique at Saul. Weiss explains:

> ...the utterance becomes more dynamic because of the interplay between equivalence and contrast. While a dog and flea share the trait of a lowly status, the creatures differ in various respects, including the fact that,

> unlike a dead dog, a flea is difficult to capture. Thus, through this cleverly crafted utterance, David criticizes Saul for two misconceptions: belittling David's personal status and underestimating his military prowess.[13]

Overall, David accuses Saul of unreasonably seeking the life of an innocent man. Boasting of his innocence, David closes the speech by invoking God, once again, to judge between Saul and David: וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְדַיָּן וְשָׁפַט בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ – "Let YHWH be arbiter and judge between me and you" (v. 16). Like a lawyer presenting his final argument, David closes the case by reiterating that justice is on his side.

In a classic use of contrastive dialogue, Saul responds to David's seven-verse speech with four words: הֲקֹלְךָ זֶה בְּנִי דָוִד – "Is that your voice, my son David?" (v. 17). With these four Hebrew words, however, Saul's response achieves a great deal. First of all, his question shifts the tone entirely. Saul's words transport the reader from David's courtroom to Isaac's deathbed. Saul's language echoes that of the confused, nearly blind patriarch about to bestow his blessing, who says: הַקֹּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב - "The voice is the voice of Jacob" (Gen. 27:22). Such an allusion succeeds in eliciting the reader's sympathy, after Saul has been attacked as wicked and unjust. Second, Saul's reference to David as בְּנִי ("my son") comes across much less ambiguously than David's reference to Saul as "my father" (v. 12). Again, this language positions Saul as parallel to the figure of Isaac, who asks: אַתָּה זֶה בְּנִי עֵשָׂו – "Are you my son, Esau?" (Gen. 27:24). Whether or not the events in either context unfold according divine plan, here Saul, like Isaac, is being manipulated. Also like Isaac, Saul's vision is impaired. Initially, he had not see David in the cave, and now becoming overwhelmed by their interaction, Saul "lifts up his voice and cries" (v. 17). With that description, the allusion is complete, for Saul's eyes have

[13] Weiss, 203.

become blind, like Isaac's, with tears.[14] This detail leads to the third layer of intrigue embedded in this verse. After David's rhetorical focus on vision and sight (ראה), why this shift to sound and voice? Why does Saul only recognize David by voice and not by sight, once they are outside of the cave? David may have initially called out to Saul, but they have presumably been standing before one another for several moments during the course of David's extended speech. This disconnect between David's speech and Saul's response points to ch. 24's dependence on ch. 26 (which will be discussed more below).

After his bout of tears, Saul then launches into an uncharacteristically long, five-verse response to David (vv. 18-22). The key word of his response is טוֹבָה ("good"), a clear contrast to the theme of evil or wickedness that dominated David's words. Confirming David's own political angle, Saul emphasizes David's innocence and his own wrongdoing. He declares to David: צַדִּיק אַתָּה מִמֶּנִּי – "You are more right than I;" כִּי אַתָּה גְּמַלְתַּנִי הַטּוֹבָה וַאֲנִי גְּמַלְתִּיךָ הָרָעָה – "For you have dealt me good and I have dealt you evil" (v. 18). Here Saul's language echoes Judah's words about Tamar: צָדְקָה מִמֶּנִּי – "She is more right than I" (Gen. 38:26). His use of the pronouns אַתָּה ("you") and אֲנִי ("I") also helps to emphasize the contrast being set up between David and Saul. Intensifying that contrast, Saul then uses the word טוֹבָה three more times in the next two verses: David has only "done *good* to him," even when God delivered him into David's hand (v. 19). David then sent him off on a "*good* path," so in return, God should repay him in "*goodness*" (v. 20). Having responded to David's explicit references to his evil and wicked behavior, Saul next confirms David's implicit reference to his own status as YHWH's anointed. For the first time in the narrative, Saul acknowledges David's future

[14] Alter, *The David Story,* 151.

as king: וְעַתָּה֙ הִנֵּ֣ה יָדַ֔עְתִּי כִּ֥י מָלֹ֖ךְ תִּמְלֹ֑וךְ – "Now, behold I know that you will surely reign;" וְקָ֨מָה֙ בְּיָדְךָ֔ מַמְלֶ֖כֶת יִשְׂרָאֵֽל – "and the kingship of Israel will endure in your hand" (v. 21). The chapter's recurring motif of יד as a symbol of power appropriately appears one last time in this verse to connote the reign of a king. Similarly, the verb קום reappears to describe the kingship of Israel "rising to power," "being established" and/or "enduring" in David's hand.

Furthering ch. 24's depiction of Saul as degraded, defeated and vulnerable, his final words request that David swear to continue his demonstrated mercy and protection: וְעַתָּ֗ה הִשָּׁבְעָ֤ה לִי֙ בַּיהוָ֔ה אִם־תַּכְרִ֖ית אֶת־זַרְעִ֣י אַחֲרָ֑י וְאִם־תַּשְׁמִ֥יד אֶת־שְׁמִ֖י מִבֵּ֥ית אָבִֽי - "Now swear to me by YHWH if you should cut off my seed after me or if you should destroy my name from the house of my father" (v. 22). Ideologically, his words acknowledge that his political reign is coming to an end, and literarily, his language returns to the image of "cutting." Just as God "tore" the kingship away from Saul and David "cut" the corner of his cloak away, now Saul fears the "cutting off" (תַּכְרִית) of his seed. Apparently ready to cede his own career, Saul is most concerned about his descendants and his legacy. The narration then confirms that David does in fact "swear to Saul" (v. 23), but does not include any direct speech on David's behalf. With that matter resolved, the two men part ways: Saul to "his home," and David with his men to "the stronghold" (v. 23). Despite the significant words exchanged between the two rivals, no major changes have appeared to taken effect. David is still on the run, while Saul remains in power, with a permanent residence. In a chapter that highlights the contrasts between Saul and David, this closing verse epitomizes just that. Despite the power shifting into David's hand, Saul continues to reign and enjoy protection.

Overall, ch. 24 reads as a highly stylized chapter, artfully constructed with powerful key words and literary allusions. The references to previous scenes in I Samuel as well as to language employed in Genesis suggest a high degree of knowledge of earlier sources by the author of the account. This chapter is also dominated by direct speech with both David and Saul demonstrating elegant rhetorical abilities. Somewhat ironically, they both use high register rhetoric to boast their humility and even degrade themselves. In terms of the theology of the chapter, David and his men make a case for God's "hand" at work in the unfolding plot. For instance, since Saul had been seeking them, they seek safety in a cave at the opening of the chapter. They do not seek Saul, but then God delivers Saul right to them. Explaining this surprising turn of events, David's men remind him of God's promise, and in doing so, according Alter, they "exhibit a certain theological presumptuousness."[15] They seem to know that David has been secretly anointed. Their suggested knowledge helps to remind the reader of what has occurred earlier in the narrative, and by the end of this chapter, Saul reveals his own knowledge of the David's divine selection.

Part 2. I Samuel 26:1-25

A. Structural Outline

David Spares Saul's Life: Saul Blesses David in their Final Meeting (I Samuel 26:1-26)

I. Saul Seeks David (26:1-4)

a. The Ziphites tell Saul that David is hiding in the wilderness of Ziph (v. 1)

b. Saul takes 3000 select men to look for David (vv. 2-3a)

[15] Alter, *The David* Story, 147.

c. David sees that Saul has come after him (vv. 3b-4)

II. David Seeks Saul (26:5-13)

a. David and Avishai arrive at Saul's camp and find him sleeping (vv. 5-7)

b. Avishai offers to kill Saul with one strike (v. 8)

c. David forbids harming Saul but commands Avishai to take Saul's gear (vv. 9-11)

d. David himself takes Saul's gear and leaves without notice (v. 13)

III. David Confronts Saul's Troops (26:14-23)

a. David reproaches Abner for not properly protecting Saul (vv. 14-16)

b. Saul recognizes David's voice (v. 17)

c. David insists on his innocence toward Saul (vv. 18-20)

d. Saul admits his guilt (v. 21)

e. David returns Saul's gear and requests blessing from YHWH (vv. 22-24)

f. Saul blesses David (v. 25a)

g. The two men part ways (v. 25b)

B. Literary Analysis

I. Saul Seeks David (26:1-4)

The parallel account contained within ch. 26 opens at a different moment in the pursuit of David by Saul. In contrast to ch. 24, which begins during a brief respite for David as Saul chases after the Philistines, ch. 26 opens with the Ziphites approaching Saul to ask: הֲלֹוא דָוִד מִסְתַּתֵּר בְּגִבְעַת הַחֲכִילָה עַל פְּנֵי הַיְשִׁימֹן – "Isn't David hiding in the hill of Halichah opposite the wasteland?" (v.1). The language and information conveyed

here closely resembles that in I Sam. 23:19, which first introduces Saul's pursuit of David in the wilderness of Ziph. With v. 2, the two chapters begin to more closely align in language and in action: Saul "arises" (וַיָּקָם) and heads into the wilderness "with him 3000 select men of Israel to seek David" (וְאִתּוֹ שְׁלֹשֶׁת־אֲלָפִים אִישׁ בְּחוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־דָּוִד). The language here is nearly identical to I Sam. 24:3. The phrase שְׁלֹשֶׁת־אֲלָפִים may be commonly used in military contexts, but this phrase only appears in conjunction with a passive form of בחר in these two accounts. Similarly, the verb בקש itself is not unusual, but a proper noun only appears after the phrase לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת here, in ch. 24, and in II Sam. 5:17 (and its parallel in I. Chr. 14:8).[16] In terms of notable differences in the openings of the two accounts, the location has moved from Ein Gedi in ch. 24 to Ziph here in ch. 26. Also here the narration refers to David only, not David with his men.

Parallel to the order of events in ch. 24, Saul may be the one pursuing David, but David is the first to realize their proximity to one other. When Saul encamps in the wilderness, David "sees that Saul has come after him" (וַיַּרְא כִּי בָא שָׁאוּל אַחֲרָיו; v. 3). Here it is helpful to note the references to "sight" (ראה) and "following after" (אַחֲרֵי). These two dominant motifs that operate in ch. 24 do appear in this account; however, what were key words in ch. 24 only occur a few of times each in ch. 26. Having spotted Saul's camp, David then takes a calculated risk: he sends spies to confirm what his vision has detected (v. 4). This decision to send spies demonstrates caution and control on David's part. He does not jump to impulsive action. In ch. 24, in contrast, David did not have this option. He had to respond quickly to the narrow window of opportunity, given Saul's errand, and to the pressure of his men. The scenario here allows him to deliberate.

[16] Brettler, "The David Tradition," 42.

Although Alter characterized David's calling out to Saul in ch. 24 as a "calculated risk,"[17] David's action in this moment of this account comes across as even more restrained. He wants to know "for certain" (אֶל־נָכוֹן) about Saul's whereabouts (v. 4).

II. David Seeks Saul (26:5-13)

Whatever restraint or caution David exhibits in v. 4 disappears in the next verses. He now takes initiative and seeks out his rival. David "arises" (וַיָּקָם) and goes toward Saul's camp: וַיַּרְא דָּוִד אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר שָׁכַב־שָׁם שָׁאוּל וְאַבְנֵר בֶּן־נֵר שַׂר־צְבָאוֹ - "David saw the place where Saul and Abner ben Ner the commander of his army lay [sleeping]" (v. 5). As a helpful contrast to David's action of "arising" (וַיָּקָם), the narration then reiterates that Saul is "lying down" (שֹׁכֵב) with his troops encamped around him (v. 5). Importantly, Abner is not involved in the scene by the cave in ch. 24, for Saul is alone in that account. Here Saul is depicted as vulnerable once again, but the responsibility of Saul's men, especially Abner, to protect the king receives a significant amount of attention. The specific reference to Abner in v. 5 reads as an initial introduction, given the inclusion of his father's name and his official position. This background information seems oddly placed, since Abner's formal introduction already appeared in I Sam. 14:50. Details like this suggest ch. 26's later insertion into the Samuel narrative, a component of the compositional history to be explored below. Nevertheless, after David solicits Avishai's company in v. 6, the two men then go down together to Saul's camp in v. 7, and again the narration describes Saul as "lying asleep" (שֹׁכֵב יָשֵׁן). Repeating the verb שׁכב, this depiction not only reinforces the fact that this sneak attack takes place in the

[17] Alter, *The David* Story, 148.

darkness of night but also effectively presents Saul in a passive, vulnerable and prone position. Verse 7 also adds the detail: וַחֲנִיתוֹ מְעוּכָה־בָאָרֶץ מְרַאֲשֹׁתָו [מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו] – "And his spear thrust into the ground by his head." Given that *BDB* suggests that מְעוּכָה is "a reference to emasculation,"[18] the overall image presented may not be as degrading as Saul heading into the cave to relieve himself but certainly suggests Saul's passivity and even impotency.

Similar to the scene in the cave when David's men refer to a previous promise by God to deliver David's enemy into his hand (I Sam. 24:5), David's man Avishai is the first to mention divine intervention this scene: סִגַּר אֱלֹהִים הַיּוֹם אֶת־אוֹיִבְךָ בְּיָדֶךָ – "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand" (v. 8). Interestingly, the language here corresponds with Saul's language used to describe David's mercy in I Sam. 24:19. In contrast, Avishai shows no mercy toward Saul. Eager to seize the opportunity, which he understands as provided by God's helpful intervention, Avishai offers to strike Saul and defeat him with one blow. His promise "to not need a second [strike]" (וְלֹא אֶשְׁנֶה לוֹ) may be a subtle reference to David's divinely supported defeat of Goliath with one stone (I Sam. 17:49). David then uses the next three verses (vv. 10-12) to respond to Avishai's bold offer. In many ways, David's language matches his parallel pronouncement against doing any harm to Saul in ch. 24. For instance, his description in v. 9 of "sending one's arm against YHWH's anointed" (שָׁלַח יָדוֹ בִּמְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה) corresponds with his language in I Sam. 24:7. The formula David employs in v. 11 (חָלִילָה לִי מֵיהוָה - "Forbid me from YHWH") also appears in I Sam. 24:7; and this phrase only appears outside of these two

[18] *BDB*, 590; Using the same root (מעך) Lev. 22:24 seems to refer to crushed testes, and Ezek. 23:3 explicitly refers to squeezed breasts.

parallel accounts one time, in I Kings 21:3. Moreover, the phrase מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה, which establishes an important theme in both chapters, somewhat surprisingly only appears eleven times total in the Bible, seven of which are contained within I Sam. 24 & 26. Shared vocabulary alone does not prove the relatedness of two texts, but much of the shared vocabulary in chs. 24 and 26 involves unusual idioms that do not occur frequently elsewhere; this strongly supports the "genetic" relationship between these two accounts.[19]

In addition to the significant linguistic overlaps with his language in ch. 24, David's speech to Avishai here does include some unique elements. For instance, David does not echo Avishai's language of "striking down" (נכה) from v. 8 but asserts: אַל־תַּשְׁחִיתֵהוּ - "Do not destroy him" (v. 9). His language could refer to mutilation or defacement, which would have been forbidden given the king's sacrosanct status.[20] Just as David emphasized the protected status of YHWH's anointed for both pious and self-interested reasons in ch. 24, here too David seems to encourage Avishai's respect for the special status of the king, which will serve him in the future. Next David anticipates Saul's death: חַי־יְהוָה כִּי אִם־יְהוָה יִגָּפֶנּוּ אוֹ־יוֹמוֹ יָבוֹא וָמֵת אוֹ בַמִּלְחָמָה יֵרֵד וְנִסְפֶּה - "As YHWH lives, YHWH will strike him down, or his day will come to die, or in war he will go down and perish" (v. 10). This reference to Saul's death did not appear in any form in ch. 24 and accurately predicts his death in battle in ch. 31. This foreshadowing represents one of the only inter-textual allusions of this chapter.

Bringing the scene to a close, David reiterates his innocence and then commands Avishai: וְעַתָּה קַח־נָא אֶת־הַחֲנִית אֲשֶׁר מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו [מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו] וְאֶת־צַפַּחַת הַמָּיִם וְנֵלֲכָה לָּנוּ –

[19] Brettler, "The David Tradition," 42.
[20] McCarter, 407.

"Now take, pray, the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go" (v. 11). The mention of Saul's head here and earlier in v. 7 alludes to the larger motif that operates throughout the book of Samuel and symbolizes the ongoing uncertainty about who exactly will "head" (ראשׁ) the Israelites.[21] Building on that underlying imagery, the spear mentioned here serves as a symbol of kingship, while the water is a symbol of life.[22] David is now in the process of symbolically taking the kingship from Saul, but Saul himself will take his own life in ch. 31. Despite David's clear command in v. 11 and no apparent resistance from Avishai, the narrator notes in the next verse that David himself "takes the spear and jug of water from the head of Saul" (v. 12). Commentators like David Kimchi offer reasonable explanations for this clear discrepancy between David's speech and his subsequent action, such as David changing his mind and not wanting Avishai to approach the king, lest he be unable to restrain himself.[23] In contrast, Brettler does not try to resolve the discrepancy but interprets it as an indication that ch. 26 "is not pristine" and likely "based on an earlier, lost source."[24] When details do not make sense in a particular source but do make sense in another text, this type of discrepancy often suggests that the element in discussion has been borrowed from the earlier source to shape the later one. In this scenario, Brettler infers that David himself taking the spear and jug must echo an earlier telling of the account; this kind of imperfect

[21] Examples of the head motif include: Dagon's decapitation (I Sam. 5:4); Saul's anointment (I Sam. 10:1); David's anointment (I Sam. 16:13); Goliath's decapitation (I Sam. 17:51).
[22] Alter, *The David* Story, 164; With regard to the symbolism of the spear, Saul throws his spear at David in two earlier scenes (I Sam. 18:11 & 19:10), but both times David eludes Saul. Later a young man will report to David about Saul's death, explaining that he saw Saul leaning on his spear (II Sam. 1:6).
[23] Alter, *The David Story*, 165.
[24] Brettler, "The David Tradition," 46.

borrowing of elements between related accounts will be discussed again in the next section with regard to Saul's recognition of David's voice.

The scene at Saul's camp then concludes when David and Avishai make a smooth departure. None of Saul's troops "saw or knew or woke up": כִּי כֻלָּם יְשֵׁנִים – "For everyone was sleeping;" כִּי תַרְדֵמַת יְהוָה נָפְלָה עֲלֵיהֶם - "since YHWH's deep slumber had fallen upon them" (v. 12). McCarter explains תַּרְדֵמָה as "a very deep sleep or even trance that elsewhere is most often divinely imposed."[25] Although David has clearly taken more initiative in this account than in ch. 24 in seeking out Saul, this reference to divine involvement in the transpiring events supports the theological agenda common to both accounts: David has God's support and protection; God is with David, not Saul. Moreover, this particular description of divine intervention comes not from David but from the narrator, which offers a different, and arguably stronger, degree of credibility. The language here may reflect the author's ideological agenda, but at least it cannot be completely discounted as yet another example of David's exaggerated rhetoric, which he employs to proclaim his innocence, piety, and dependence on God.

III. David Confronts Saul's Troops (26:14-23)

After establishing a safe, significant distance between himself and Saul's camp, David "calls out" (וַיִּקְרָא דָוִד; v. 14). He calls out not to Saul directly but to his troops, specifically his main commander Abner, saying: הֲלוֹא תַעֲנֶה אַבְנֵר – "Won't you answer, Abner?" (v. 15). David's provocative taunt gets an immediate response by Abner, who poses his own aggressive question: מִי אַתָּה קָרָאתָ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ – Who are you that you have

[25] McCarter, 408; תַּרְדֵמָה also appears in Gen. 2:21 & 15:12; Is. 29:10.

called out to the king?" (v. 15). David then presents a series of rhetorical questions to reproach Abner, culminating with: "Why have you not guarded your lord the King? For one of the troops came to destroy (לְהַשְׁחֵית) the King your lord" (v. 16). By addressing and reproaching Abner, David seems primarily concerned with the responsibility of those surrounding the king to protect him as well as his special status. This consciousness and concern on David's part operates as a subtle foreshadowing of his own internal betrayals and rebellions down the road. In the next verse, David spreads the guilt beyond Abner alone to the collective: כִּי בְנֵי־מָוֶת אַתֶּם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־שְׁמַרְתֶּם עַל־אֲדֹנֵיכֶם עַל־מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה – "For children of death you all are that you all have not guarded your lord, YHWH's anointed" (v. 16). Culminating these three verses of provocation, David concludes his attack with actual evidence of their guilt. Similar to this courtroom style in ch. 24, he presents leading questions, rather than direct statements: וְעַתָּה | רְאֵה אֵי־חֲנִית הַמֶּלֶךְ – "Now, see, where is the spear of the king?" [מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו] וְאֶת־צַפַּחַת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מְרַאֲשֹׁתָו – "And the jug of water that was by his head?" (v. 17). His direction to "see" (רְאֵה) corresponds with his language in ch. 24, though this is the only instance of the imperative form in this chapter.

In contrast to the parallel scene in ch. 24, here David calls out to Saul's camp from a considerable distance and proceeds to wake up Saul and his troops in the middle of the night. Saul would not have been able to see David, which provides a perfectly reasonable explanation for his response. The narrator reports that "Saul recognized David's voice" (וַיַּכֵּר שָׁאוּל אֶת־קוֹל דָּוִד) and said: הֲקוֹלְךָ זֶה בְּנִי דָוִד – "Is that your voice, my son David?" (v. 17). More significant than the occurrence of identical language (I Sam. 24: 17) is the fact that this question about David's voice makes much

more sense here in ch. 26. Thus, it becomes reasonable, if not necessary, to suggest that the language was borrowed from this scene and inserted into ch. 24. This detail then provides evidence in support of the source critics' suggestion that ch. 24 represents a later, revised version of the present account. In other words, ch. 24 appears to be dependent on ch. 26. Chapter 24 has borrowed many literary features from ch. 26: some of which become amplified in ch. 24, and others, like this question about David's voice, do not make complete sense in ch. 24 when read on their own.

Continuing to follow the parallel structure of the two accounts, David then confirms his identity and proceeds to speak directly to Saul, proclaiming his innocence. He begins with leading questions: "Why is the lord chasing after (אַחֲרֵי) his servant? For what did I do? And what evil is in my hand (וּמַה־בְּיָדִי רָעָה)"? (v. 18). While the hand motif and theme of good vs. evil are not as fully developed in this account, David's speech does mention them. What is consistent in the dialogue style in both accounts is the employment of questions, by David in particular. This rhetorical style comes across as deferential and humble at times (i.e., v. 8), but it mostly has a passive aggressive effect. Ultimately, this style of speech epitomizes the power play in motion: David is ready to seize power but cannot do so completely, so he often leads with questions, rather than statements. David then shifts his tone slightly when he equates his being chased beyond Israel's borders with being forced to worship other gods (v. 19). In doing so, he makes his most pious argument of both chapters combined. He concludes by asking for mercy and comparing himself to a flea: כִּי־יָצָא מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־פַּרְעֹשׁ אֶחָד - "For the King of Israel came forth seeking a single flea;" כַּאֲשֶׁר יִרְדֹּף הַקֹּרֵא בֶּהָרִים - "like he would chase a calling bird in the mountains" (v. 20). This closing comment that

compares David's insignificance and evasiveness to those of a flea corresponds with David's language in I Sam. 24:15; however, the reference to a "calling-bird" is unique to this chapter. Like a flea, a calling bird also resists easy capture,[26] and this specific term (הַקּוֹרֵא) also operates as a wordplay by echoing Abner's earlier retort to David's "calling out" (קָרָאתָ) to the king (v 14).

Saul responds to David by admitting his guilt and pleading to David, saying: חָטָאתִי שׁוּב בְּנִי־דָוִד – "I have sinned. Return, my son David" (v. 21). Saul promises to "do no more evil" to David (לֹא־אָרַע לְךָ), and David offers to send back the spear to Saul (v. 22). David then seemingly takes advantage of Saul's remorse, by reiterating his decision not to "send his hand against YHWH's anointed" (v. 23) and asking for God's protection and blessing (v. 24). In those two verses, David invokes God's name four times, and this rhetorical choice both demonstrates his faith and reveals a theological agenda on the author's behalf. Saul brings the dialogue to a close by offering a blessing: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּנִי דָוִד גַּם עָשֹׂה תַּעֲשֶׂה וְגַם יָכֹל תּוּכָל – "Blessed are you, my son David. Yes, you shall surely do much, and yes, you shall surely prevail" (v. 25). Importantly, in this account, Saul never acknowledges David's future as king, though he does refer to David as "his son" three times. Like the account in ch. 24, the scene ends with the two rivals parting ways: David still on the run, and Saul returning to his permanent residence. Distinct from the previous account, the conclusion of this scene represents the last words shared between them. The two men will not speak or meet again before Saul's death in ch. 31.

[26] Weiss, 204.

As I have demonstrated above, reading chs. 24 and 26 side by side as independent accounts reveals that the two chapters exhibit very similar structures and much shared language. Regarding their common structure, Brettler clarifies that not all narratives with shared structures are related (i.e., not all flood narratives are related). In this case, however, chs. 24 and 26 represent neither a larger genre nor a type-scene with an expected, set structure, so we can reasonably conclude that they are structurally more similar to each other than to any other stories.[27] There are still some important differences to note: (1) Chapter 26 contains more back-and-forth dialogue between David and Saul, in contrast to David's extended speech to Saul in ch. 24. (2) David more actively seeks out Saul in ch. 26, in contrast to Saul accidently bringing himself into David's cave in ch. 24. (3) David takes his symbolic action of cutting Saul's cloak and then verbally refuses to harm God's anointed in ch. 24; but in ch. 26, David first verbally refuses to harm Saul and then takes Saul's spear and water jug. The symbolic items taken in the two scenes each have royal significance, but the difference in the order of action points to the distinct circumstances of the two scenes (as discussed earlier). In terms of the shared language contained within the two accounts, not all shared vocabulary is significant. As mentioned above (and further detailed by Brettler), however, many of the shared idioms that occur repeatedly in these two chapters of Samuel do not appear frequently outside of these accounts. Taken altogether, the literary analysis above agrees with the findings of scholars like McCarter and Brettler: "[T]he very strong verbal and structural similarities suggest that the two chapters are related genetically."[28]

[27] Brettler, "The David Tradition," 40.
[28] Brettler, "The David Tradition," 43.

Regarding how exactly the two accounts are related, the above literary analysis also supports the prevailing interpretation of source critical scholars: Chapter 26 represents an older source, while ch. 24 appears to be a revised version of that older account of how David spared Saul's life. Evidence for the more revised nature of ch. 24 takes several forms. For instance, the analysis above reveals the presence of many more key words and inter-textual allusions in ch. 24 than in ch. 26. What became key words in ch. 24 are mostly present in ch. 26, but they do not occur nearly as frequently and thus do not develop into motifs and themes of their own. The presence of inter-textual allusions also suggests that ch. 24 was more "integrated" than ch. 26 into the larger Samuel narrative, and for this reason, Brettler argues that ch. 24 may have entered the book of Samuel earlier than ch. 26 even though it represents a later version of the account.[29] Recall the odd and redundant introduction to Abner in ch. 26, which serves as evidence against that account's integration and perhaps for its extended history outside of the HDR compilation. Also in line with the above analysis, McCarter argues that ch. 24 is "told in a highly tendentious way, recalling by its expansive flowery speeches the extended insults and threats of the tale of David's single combat with the Philistine champion in c 17."[30] David's innocence and piety are emphasized, while the depiction of Saul is especially degrading. McCarter ultimately describes ch. 24 as "more overstated and exaggerated in comparison to ch 26,"[31] and attributes ch. 24 "not to the older history of David's rise to power, but to the series of later expansions and elaborations."[32] In his introductory remarks about the various source layers constituting I Samuel, McCarter

[29] Brettler, "The David Tradition," 46.
[30] McCarter, 386.
[31] McCarter, 387.
[32] McCarter, 386.

goes so far as to describe ch. 24 as later retelling by the Deuteronomist based on older materials.[33]

The more stylized literary features of ch. 24 support its strong theological and political agenda, which is epitomized by Saul's explicit acknowledgement of David's future as king. Recall that the chapter begins by re-emphasizing David's position as the underdog being sought by Saul and his many, elite troops. David and his men are not seeking Saul; rather, they are seeking refuge in a cave. The pro-David slant of the story becomes even more explicit by the depiction of Saul entering the cave not to seek out David but to relieve himself. This unexpected and even comical scenario serves to highlight Saul's growing vulnerability and David's growing power. David's men also operate as a foil, for they want to jump at the opportunity to kill Saul. David, in contrast, demonstrates restraint, thereby protecting his innocence. He thinks on his feet and sends a strong message to Saul, but he does nothing to jeopardize his reputation. Moreover, the description of David in I Sam. 24:6 as "conscience-stricken" after only cutting Saul's cloak furthers the case for David's innocence and morality. David's highly stylized verbal and body language (in vv. 9-16) also conveys an explicit message to Saul and the reader about his piety and humility; as the analysis above exposed, however, digging a bit deeper into his communications reveals a more manipulative, self-interested edge to David's behavior. Consider, for instance, David's repetition of the term "God's anointed" or his self-comparison to a flea. Despite these less pure aspects of David's emerging characterization, Saul himself reinforces the contrast between his own "badness" and David's "goodness." With his verbal and body language, Saul

[33] McCarter, 17.

unambiguously communicates his guilt, remorse, and sense of growing vulnerability (vv. 17-22). Given Saul's seemingly acceptance of David's growing worthiness and imminence, this chapter – in plot and in character development – helps to further position David as the future king.

In contrast to ch. 24, ch. 26's characterizations of Saul and David read as less stylized and polarized, which reduces the strength of the political message. First of all, ch. 26 presents David as taking initiative, rather than simply responding to the surprise appearance of Saul in the cave (in ch. 24). Saul may be pursuing David, but both men are strategically negotiating the ongoing chase and alternating turns on the offensive. They come across more like equals in this chapter: David is less of an underdog, for he himself has spies to send to Saul's camp and then chooses to take the risk to sneak into Saul's camp at night (vv. 3-7). Regarding Saul's characterization, ch. 26 presents him in a less degrading fashion, which helps to level the dynamic between them. In this account, Saul's vulnerable position is that of sleeping, rather than relieving himself. He is not alone either, for his men surround him. This difference draws attention to a new theme that does not exist in ch. 24: the loyalty and protection of the king's men. In fact, when David initially "calls out" in ch. 26 (vv. 14-15), he directs his reproachful words to Saul's men, not to Saul himself. David's rhetoric to Saul is shorter and less elevated than in ch. 24. Similarly, while Saul acknowledges his sin in ch. 26, he does not articulate such an extreme contrast between the outgoing King of Israel and the incoming one. He is much less specific and less effusive about David's imminent future; he does not ask David to protect his seed and reputation. In line with the reduced political message of ch. 26, the theology is subtler. God intervenes through the deep slumber that falls upon Saul's camp

and seemingly enables David's undetected visit (v. 12). This differs from the explicit theology communicated in ch. 24 when David's men point to an earlier promise by God to deliver Saul into David's hand. In both instances, the incorporated theology reveals the author's agenda to communicate that God is with David, not Saul. Arguably, however, the approach in ch. 26 comes across as less blatant and more artful. Overall, ch. 26 presents a less striking contrast between Saul and David, and thus a less aggressive political message. Taking these various literary and ideological differences into account, ch. 24 certainly reads as a "more overstated and exaggerated" version of ch. 26, and this analysis supports the compositional history suggested by source critical scholars.

Part 3. The Coherent Whole: I Samuel 24 & 26

Literary Analysis

If one follows the plotline alone, the linear narrative contained within I Samuel 24-26 reads as repetitious, contradictory, and also inconsistent. After having chosen to spare Saul's life in ch. 24 in favor of a symbolic action that demonstrated his innocence and respect for the king, why would David respond in the same exact way (symbolic action over physical harm) when Saul continues to pursue him in ch. 26? Why would David need to remind his men again in ch. 26 about the protected status of "YHWH's anointed"? Why do neither Saul nor David acknowledge the previous encounter in the cave when they exchange words once again in ch. 26? And how could Saul pursue David's life in ch. 26 after having acknowledged his future as the King of Israel in ch. 24? Given these real issues, the plot of ch. 26 does not appear to naturally build on that which precedes it in ch. 24, at least not initially. However, after closely examining

certain literary features and ideological messages that unify the two accounts and also relate to the material in ch. 25, a path does begin to emerge for reading the unit as a coherent whole.

As a start, several key words and motifs help to structure the relationship between the three chapters. For instance, "seeking" (בקשׁ) operates as a clear motif throughout, with Saul seeking David in chs. 24 and 26 and with Nabal acting as a "stand-in" for Saul in ch. 25.[34] Despite being sought by others over and over again, David does not turn into an overzealous seeker himself. Though he certainly comes close to crossing the line, David succeeds "in avoiding any action that would later jeopardize the integrity of his rule."[35] Starting in ch. 24, David does not seek out Saul himself, for Saul accidently finds him. David then demonstrates both mercy and restraint, which provokes Saul to admit his own guilt in their rivalry, to ask God to repay David's acts of goodness, and to acknowledge David's promising future as king. In ch. 25, David almost launches an attack on Nabal (who stands in for Saul), but Nabal's wife Abigail stands in for David as the persuasive speaker. She successfully reminds David about the importance – theologically and politically – of refraining from unnecessary aggression. Taking into consideration Saul's strongly stated remorse in ch. 24 followed by David's demonstrated instinct to fight in ch. 25, it becomes less surprising that David takes a more aggressive approach in ch. 26 upon learning that Saul continues to seek his life and has set up his camp nearby. By resuming his pursuit in ch. 26, Saul's actions discredit his previous words of resolve and respect, so David should not be critiqued for discounting them.

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[34] Polzin, 206; בקשׁ appears in these verses of the unit: I Sam. 24:3 & 10; I Sam. 25:26 & 29; I Sam. 26:2 & 20.
[35] Polzin, 205.

Overall, David's impressively succeeds in maintaining restraint in the face of his seekers, even if he requires Abigail's encouragement and demonstrates increased initiative and action as the unit progresses.

Supporting this motif of seeking is the repetition of the term אַחֲרֵי ("after") throughout the unit, appearing ten times in ch. 24, three times in ch. 25, and three times in ch. 26. As discussed in the above analysis, this key word is most robustly developed in ch. 24. Once so prominently established at the beginning of the unit, echoes of the motif are more easily detected in the later chapters. The key word יד ("hand") follows the same pattern: it appears 11 times in ch. 24, and then continues at a diminished but still noteworthy rate of five times in ch. 25 and six times in ch. 26. One could argue that a key word should either ramp up in frequency or become subtler across a unit. Otherwise the reader will begin to feel unnecessarily bombarded, and the elegance of the artistry would be lost. As an inverse of the treatment of יד and אַחֲרֵי, the narration builds up the prominence of the term בְּנִי across the unit. Saul refers to David as בְּנִי ("my son") only once in ch. 24 but then three times in ch. 26. Importantly, its one appearance in ch. 24 is pronounced and receives much attention in Saul's four-word response to David's extended speech. Having established that seed in ch. 24, the term grows in significance as Saul calls David "his son" repeatedly in ch. 26. This building frequency could suggest Saul's building regret and even desperation. By calling David "his son," perhaps Saul aims to dissolve their rivalry for good and return to their earlier intimacy and affection. If this is the case, it makes sense that his use of the term increases as the unit progresses.

An idiom that demonstrates equal prominence in both ch. 24 and ch. 26 is מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה ("YHWH's anointed").[36] This term helps to unify the chapters not only linguistically but also ideologically. As discussed above, ch. 24 may be a more overstated and exaggerated presentation of the material, but both of the chapters reveal a strong bias for David – for David's faith, his innocence, and his legitimacy as the next, divinely appointed king of Israel. Regarding the agenda of the author, Brettler expresses the majority opinion: "there is little debate within biblical scholarship about the function of the [History of David's Rise], and of chapters such as ch. 24 and 26—they are apologetic texts that play a key role in legitimating David as Saul's successor."[37] The authors who contributed to the HDR were committed to presenting as clean a record as possible for David, though his record is not perfect. David is not flawless. In addition to including in ch. 24 indications of David's inclination to act manipulatively and from self-interest and in ch. 26 a depiction of David as more aggressive, the inclusion of the entirety of ch. 25 supports any case for the relative honesty within the pro-David ideology of the HDR. Ch. 25 reports a less than glowing moment for David: After having his request for special treatment denied by the boorish Nabal, David wants to launch a disproportionate response in the form an aggressive, violent attack. It takes the persuasive rhetoric of the smart and beautiful woman – Abigail who demonstrates a manipulative humility not unlike David's – to cool down David's temper.

Coming after David's more immature and impulsive depiction in ch. 25, ch. 26 begins to read more like a necessary reinforcement, rather than a repetition. Chapter 26

[36] The term appears three times in I Samuel 24: twice in v. 7 and once in v. 11. The term appears four times in I Samuel 26: vv. 9, 11, 16 and 23.
[37] Brettler, 47.

returns to the larger ideological agenda and helps to reinforce the more positive qualities demonstrated by David – God's anointed – in ch. 24. As a result, the inclusion of ch. 25 in the three-chapter unit offers helpful insight into the editor's general approach to redaction. Perhaps the editor of the unit wanted to preserve multiple perspectives and accounts about David's complicated rise in power, but also made sure to end the unit on a positive note. Beginning and ending with positive accounts about David – the one being pursued and demonstrating admirable restraint – helps to emphasize important themes in support of David's legitimacy. Moreover, incorporating both accounts, despite their similarities, allows fuller characterizations of both David and Saul. David's humility and piety become more complex, as he begins to reveal his aggressive and manipulative inclinations. Saul's decline is presented as degrading (when he goes to relieve himself) and also peaceful (when he lays sleeping at camp surrounded by his men). Similarly, Saul both requests David's protection and offers him blessing. With only one account (ch. 24 or ch. 26 alone), these presentations would be less rich and complex, and Saul's fickleness toward David less apparent.

Reading the three chapters as a progression, rather than repetition, can also help to resolve some other discrepancies. For instance, regarding Saul's acknowledgment of David's future in ch. 24 followed by a lack of any such acknowledgment in ch. 26, one could argue that the ideological messages of the two chapters are consistent but demonstrate a shift in focus. Chapter 24 communicates an important political message that both David's men and his rival know about his secret anointment. With that established, ch. 26 communicates new details about Saul's imminent death, which will create an opening for God's more recently anointed one (מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה). Abner's presence

in ch. 26 also begins to establish future dynamics in Israelite leadership. As another illustration of the slow but steady transition in power, ch. 25 reports Nabal denying any knowledge of David son of Jesse (v. 10), but then Abigail demonstrates her knowledge of David's future as king (v. 30). The three-chapter unit illustrates that David's new status may be imminent and growing in acknowledgement, but it is not yet self-evident to all in Israel.

Naming an important theological question posed by the material in this unit and in the book of Samuel as a whole, Polzin asks: Why does it take so long to depose Saul? Is it providential delay? If so, what is the significance?[38] He then attempts to answer these questions by suggesting that Saul's reign previews not only David's reign but also that of every king of Israel: "Once Israel rejects God by demanding a king (8:7), it will take the rest of the History to describe the slow and painful process of God rejecting Israel."[39] In this regard, the extended pursuit of David by Saul, the multiple times that David spares Saul's life, and the prolonged deposal of the first king of Israel all support a consistent theological message: instituting a human king was never a good idea, and will continuously and relentlessly cause political havoc and instability. Thus, the repetitive literary and ideological features of chs. 24 and 26 only help to reiterate the Israelites' experience of repeated struggle. They have trapped themselves in a broken system of monarchy. Therefore, we are best served by ultimately reading this unit as both composite and coherent. The editors of the narrative used the related accounts to support their ideological agenda. They did not ignore the close relationship between the sources

[38] Polzin, 213.
[39] Polzin, 214.

but took advantage of the way in which they could operate together to both demonstrate the progression of the plot as well as the futility of the emerging monarchy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Following Brettler's charge to study the biblical texts themselves and not the events behind them,[1] my investigation of narrative doublets in the first book of Samuel has revealed a great amount about biblical historiography: the religious and political concerns of the various authors who contributed to the composite work, the artistic and ideological processes by which their material came together, and the ultimate value of the finished product – the text we have received and continue to read today. At a methodological level, the combination of source critical and literary analysis proved to be very effective. Studying the literary features of the material allowed me to first test the delineations of the source critical scholars and to then explore the methods employed for combining those multiple sources. Moreover, as articulated by scholars like Alter and Brettler, the literary artistry of a given narrative reveals and supports its larger ideological purpose. This observation proved to be true at the both the source and composite levels of the texts analyzed.

The Artistry of Composite Narratives

As for the results of my investigation of the artistry of combining multiple sources, in all three cases, literary analysis of the selected units in I Samuel suggested the existence of more than two sources. In other words, these narrative doublets may initially appear to be two versions of one episode, but underneath that presentation, more than two traditions interact and constitute the received text. My study of the HDR (History of

[1] See chapter 1, pg. 13.

David's Rise) material in I Samuel 16-17 (see chapter 3) illustrates this principle most clearly, though elements of I Samuel 8-10 (chapter 2) and I Samuel 24 & 26 (chapter 4) suggest the existence and influence of more than two source layers in those units as well. In addition to the multiplicity of sources incorporated, my textual analysis explored the multiplicity of methods for creating a composite narrative. Exemplifying the "conflation" method in which one source layer is interpolated into another, I Samuel 9-10:16 offers the least concrete data about the process employed, because we lack an earlier, independent and uncompromised version of the Saul Cycle story. One can only speculate about the prophetic re-workings of, or insertions into, the older material about Saul going out to search for the she-asses and coming home a king. In general, the paucity of preserved, earlier renditions of biblical accounts makes the conflation method the most difficult one to study. For this reason, the discrepancy between the sources incorporated in the LXX's (Septuagint) version of I Samuel 17 and those incorporated into the MT's (Masoretic Text) version of that same narrative offers rare insight into the conflation process. As for the editorial function of blending two sources together, conflation seems like the best method for combining multiple accounts of remarkable events that the reader would struggle to believe occurred more than once (i.e., David's defeat of Goliath, Samuel's anointment of the first king of Israel, or Noah's ark and the flood in Genesis 6-9). This is especially the case when the two (or more) versions of the episode are more similar than different with regard to the main plotline.

In contrast to the conflation process, the method of staggering parallel accounts appears to work well for less exceptional scenes. While the structural, linguistic and plot parallels between I Samuel 24 & 26 are very strong, it is not beyond the logic of the

narrative that twice David found himself in a position to slay Saul but chose not to do so. The same reasoning applies to the repetition of the sister-wife episodes over the course of two generations in the book of Genesis (12:10-20; 26:6-11). As the third and final method explored, positioning two sources side-by-side (what Tigay calls "composite"[2]) works well for combining the prophetic material in I Samuel 8 & 10:17-27 with the revised Saul Cycle material in I Samuel 9-10:16, and for combining with prophetic material in I Samuel 16:1-13 with the HDR material that follows (in I Samuel 16:14-23 and then in I Samuel 17). As illustrated by these particular units, what is critical in the success of the composite method is enough distinction in the plotline from one source to another; this then allows for a chronological progression of the material. For instance, I Samuel 8's presentation of the people's demand for a king reasonably precedes the search story (Saul for Samuel and Samuel for Saul) captured in I Samuel 9. While either source could stand alone, they also work fairly well together. This compatibility applies to the competing accounts of David's arrival to Saul's court (I Samuel 16-17) and of the creation story (Genesis 1-3). Overall, the first step in constructing a composition out of multiple sources is determining the most appropriate method for combining those materials.

The next step in the artistic process of combining sources involves the manipulation of key words, use of dialogue, and other literary motifs present in the individual source layers. As my analysis of I Samuel 8-10 discovered, one common literary feature that unifies the whole unit is the prominence of contrasts (between key words like "to take" [לקח] and "to appoint" [שׂים], and between motifs like "seeking"

[2] Tigay, 1.

[בקשׁ] and "finding" [מצא]; however, beyond that overarching theme, it seems to be the evolution, rather than the continuity, of literary features that provides meaning and coherence to the unit as a whole. In the next unit (I Samuel 16-17), literary analysis exposed the existence of some common key words across multiple sources (such as הלך, קרא and חרף), as well as the emergence of new motifs (like vision and the act of "turning aside") when one looks at the unit as a whole. What becomes difficult to determine in either unit is the degree of intentionality by later authors and editors in reinforcing these various literary elements. For instance, did the prophetic writer make a point to incorporate the motif of Saul's stature in his own material in order to establish some literary continuity? Or was that quality about the first king of Israel so entrenched in the Israelite psyche that any and all material would naturally mention it? Given the data available, it is impossible to answer definitely.

Despite the apparent manipulation, or at least artistic interaction, of key words and motifs that occurs in the process of combining sources, other literary features like dialogue style and inter-textuality seem less affected by the compilation process. They continue to operate as clear tags of the difference sources. For instance, the sources attributed to the oldest narrative material – the Saul Cycle and HDR – consistently demonstrate allusions to narratives in Genesis and Exodus, specifically about rising national heroes like Jacob, Joseph and Moses. In contrast, the prophetic sources consistently demonstrate relationships to each other, to the book of Deuteronomy, and to other prophetic material. The different dialogue styles similarly help to highlight the different sources; this is especially apparent in the "vertical perspective" of I Sam. 16:1-

13 and the "horizontal perspective" of I Sam. 16:14-23.[3] In addition to demonstrating many of the same literary dynamics at play in the first two units analyzed, the particular features of I Samuel 24 & 26 support the theory proposed by the source critics that ch. 24 represents a later, revised version of ch. 26; thus, the key words, motifs, rhetorical style, and inter-textuality of ch. 24 are all more exaggerated than the comparable elements present in ch. 26. Given the order of the two stories, ch. 26 serves as to reinforce, rather than introduce, these features. Taken altogether, the literary analysis conducted of the individual sources generally supports the hypotheses and delineations of the source critical scholars and also offers some insight into the process of combining multiple sources with distinct literary features of their own. The authors of later sources seemed to have known and responded to the material that preceded them, and this knowledge likely influenced their stylistic choices. Moreover, both the manipulation and maintenance of distinct literary features across the sources of a unit allows close readers to approach the material as both composite and coherent.

The Ideology of Composite Narratives

By combining a source critical and literary approach to reading biblical texts, I deepened my understanding of the ideological motivations for, and implications of, combining multiple sources. Because the Bible in general and the first book of Samuel in particular were composed gradually over the course of centuries, the narrative material reflects an evolution of ideologies as well as a progression of concerns and anxieties present in the Israelite psyche. In other words, as the Israelite experience developed, the

[3] See chapter 3.

national narrative had to expand and elaborate with it. This process is evident in the composite structure of I Samuel 8-10 that incorporates more secular, political material about the rise of the first king of Israel as well as later, more theologically charged material. The anti-monarchal perspective of I Samuel 8 most obviously represents a response to the Israelites' lived experience.[4] Importantly, even as ideologies evolved, the Bible continued to retain the older ideas and narratives. A defining characteristic of the biblical authors and editors is their reluctance to remove material; they simply added new layers to the older sources, even if they disagreed with them. They seemed to be quite intentional, however, about where they inserted new material. As my analysis of I Samuel 8-10 and I Samuel 16-17 highlights, the prophetic writer must have known what he was doing when he inserted his material before the older accounts. His original material sets the ideological tone of the whole unit, largely influencing the reader's reception of the narrative that follows.

In recording the shifting ideas and beliefs of the ancient Israelites, composite narratives also record the messiness of significant national transitions: from one model of governance to another, and from one king to another. As mentioned in chapter 1, the first book of Samuel reflects the eras in which the authors and editors lived and in which royal ideologies continued to compete. My investigation of the material supports that characterization, specifically this argument made by Brettler: "The likely vitality of [a] pro-Saul ideology explains why 'David as proper King' was so extensive and needed to make its arguments repeatedly with such tenacity – it was fighting a continued

[4] As discussed in chapter 2, the anti-monarchal material in I Samuel 8 could be responding to the practices of early Israelite kings or to neighboring Canaanite kings that predate the Israelite kingdom. It depends on when one dates the material.

ideological battle."[5] Even within the pro-Saul and pro-David camps, different traditions endured and different stories about their heroes were perpetuated. As all three units illustrate, combining multiple sources allows for more complex presentations of national emblems like Samuel, Saul and David. Moreover, these composite characterizations speak to the value, if not the necessity, of incorporating multiple and even competing ideologies when working to foster a unified national identity.

On top of deepening my understanding of the artistry and ideology of composite sources, studying the material in I Samuel also highlights the dynamic between them: how the literary artistry of biblical narratives supports the articulation and propagation of their ideology. As one example, the wordplays developed in I Samuel 8 between שׁפט ("judge") and מלך ("king") beautifully communicate the battle between governance structures present in Israelite society and theology. As another example, the incorporation of the key word נטשׁ ("to leave" or "to throw down") in Version 2 of the David and Goliath Epic becomes a subtle but successful motif emphasizing David's opportunism and greed – two qualities not established in Version 1 which stresses David's faith and rhetoric. In addition to these specific examples of the dynamic between artistry and ideology is the overarching principle apparent in all three of the units studied: composite narratives are necessarily inconsistent and even contradictory, and this literary untidiness reflects the ideological untidiness that ancient Israelites experienced. All three units studied support Alter's perspective, as referenced in chapter 3: "The biblical outlook is informed…by a sense of stubborn contradiction, of a profound and ineradicable untidiness in the nature of things, and it is toward the expression of such a

[5] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 111.

sense of moral and historical reality that the composite artistry of the Bible is directed."[6] The authors and editors of the biblical material exhibit considerable comfort with inconsistency, for that was the reality of their lives.

Implications for Reading the Bible

My investigation of the composite narratives in I Samuel now informs both my general approach to reading the Bible and my specific understanding of the way we construct the stories we tell about our own lives. Starting with the former, as I concluded in my discussions of the individual units, I believe we gain the most value from reading biblical material as both composite and coherent. If we only focus on the individual sources, we fail to see the sophisticated artistry and ideological complexity of the whole. If we only focus on the coherent whole, however, we fail to see the evolution of ideas, contexts and styles captured by the distinct sources. Katharine Dell, in her work entitled "Incongruity in the story of Saul in 1 Samuel 9-15: a methodological survey," similarly advocates for the merits of combining a literary reading of the whole with a critical investigation of the sources. She argues that only by doing so can we fully appreciate the richness of the narrative recounting the rise and fall of Saul:

> The incongruities…cannot be fully understood without a diachronic reading that takes into account the development of the text, and yet it is interesting that a synchronic reading, in picking up these incongruities, is able to incorporate them into the sense of an overall authorial intention and tragic genre.[7]

[6] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 154.
[7] Dell, 61.

I believe that the methodology I have employed in this thesis allows and encourages the reader to just this: to fully appreciate the richness of the narratives by first breaking down the received biblical text into its component parts, then rebuilding the literary artistry and ideology of the composite material, and then taking away a coherent yet complex theological message from the text as a whole.

This embrace of incongruity and contradiction is not unusual in the Jewish library. When readers approach rabbinic texts, the multi-vocality of the material quickly becomes the expectation – the defining norm, not the exception. Yet, readers of those texts also succeed in discerning the larger message articulated through multiple legal opinions or the coherent structure of a compilation of interpretations. Given this normative approach to studying rabbinic texts, we should not hesitate to apply the same orientation to biblical material. Brettler argues against the prevailing tendency to seek harmony in composite biblical material, for he explains: "…[S]ince Jewish biblical theology begins with the *critical* study of biblical texts, and thus highlights the many voices of the text, we must not harmonize texts and traditions and may extend the rabbinic model beyond its original scope."[8] This empowering acknowledgement of the many voices in biblical texts can certainly enrich our reading of the books of the Torah in which distinct priestly and Deuteronomistic perspectives enter the narrative and legal material of the older J and E sources. But whatever book of the Bible lies open before us, it is likely that the interaction between the parts (the sources) in creating the whole (the received text) will prove most rewarding. In his commentary on the book of Ezekiel, Moshe Greenberg models this process of reading, for he first remarks: "Enough tensions

[8] Marc Zvi Brettler, "Biblical History and Jewish Biblical Theology," *JR* 4 (1997), 577.

remain to render plausible the guess that not all the elements of this vision were from the first united." Then he proceeds to explore the process of compilation:

> But they have been put together with some art; he who did so must be supposed to have recognized the incompatibility of those elements upon which the modern critic bases his analysis, yet what was conveyed by the composition as a whole overrode considerations of consistency and total coherence.[9]

Creating Our Own Composite Narratives

Employing such an approach to reading the Bible not only affords us a more authentic lens on the concerns and considerations of the biblical authors, but also endows us with helpful tools and techniques for constructing our own stories. At the personal, communal, religious and national levels, we all participate in the process of telling stories about ourselves; and none of those stories are univocal. At the personal level, consider the story you tell yourself about your childhood or about the path you pursued to your chosen career: What are the different traditions incorporated into the master narrative? What editorial insights and explanations have you added to the original material over the years? Even stories with one author can reflect evolving ideas and attitudes. Then, at the national level, consider what would happen if a historian or biography asked three people to describe the rise of our current president, Barak Obama, and then compiled the three perspectives into one recorded narrative. Undoubtedly, that author would have to artfully combine different and even contradictory characterizations of President Obama, as well as potentially competing versions of episodes that have come to define him. Given President Obama's centrality in the national narrative as well as his divisiveness within

[9] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (AB 22; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 199-200.

the country, not unlike King David's, it would not be surprising that many different traditions exist about his background, his traits, and his rise to power. Moreover, like the editors of Bible, anyone involved in crafting a collective narrative – about a period in history, about the political climate, or about a congregation's mission – knows the necessity of incorporating multiple traditions and perspectives, and allowing them to coexist or even contradict. Ultimately, composite narratives unify collective identity. At a personal level, people are more likely to identify with and propagate a collective narrative when they hear their own story within it. At a societal level, when we artfully allow multiple, even conflicting voices to coexist, we all benefit from the resulting diversity, resilience and realism. The ancient Israelite authors as well as the early rabbis understood the inherent value of embracing diverse perspectives, and our study of Bible remains incomplete, I believe, until we embrace this lesson ourselves.

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