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THE ROLE OF THE ANECDOTE WITHIN SAMUEL-KINGS AND CHRONICLES

An Analysis

by

Jon A. Sommer

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination.

1998

Referee, Professor David B. Weisberg

CONTENTS AND OUTLINE OF AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE ANECDOTE WITHIN SAMUEL-KINGS AND CHRONICLES

Digest

"The Role of the Anecdote within Samuel-Kings and Chronicles" examines the function of the anecdote within the Deuteronomistic History and the book of Chronicles. Individual anecdotes are analyzed and their particular role within the text is then determined.

The introduction offers a definition for the term and provides a survey of the historical development of the anecdote. It was used by the ancient Greeks in biography and eventually found its way into most Western societies. However no anecdotes are known to exist in Asian cultures prior to their involvement with European nations. It is also believed that no anecdotes existed in the literature of the ancient Near East independent of the Hebrew bible. The anecdote did not start to receive its modern definition until the eighteenth century. And it is the modern definition that is used by the author of this thesis in examining the biblical anecdotes.

The second chapter examines eight individual anecdotes. Most biblical anecdotes appear in the books of Samuel. Some also appear in the books of Kings and in Chronicles. The majority of the anecdotes, however, concern David, but there are some about Saul and Solomon. There is also an anecdote about Michal and another about Jehu. Each story is analyzed according to its literary structure, and its political function within the text is determined.

The third chapter is a review of the criteria used to either accept or reject certain candidates as anecdotes. Three specific stories that were determined to not be anecdotes are examined in order to illustrate the unique nature and definition of the anecdote. Though each account appears to be an anecdote in many respects, they lack specific qualifying elements. The stories of David and Bathsheba, David and Hanun, and Ehud son of Gera are examined in this chapter.

In the fourth chapter, the political role of the anecdote is considered. It is suggested here that the inspiring qualities of the anecdote served the political, religious, and communal objectives of King Josiah and also of later redactors. The biblical anecdotes, in idealizing particular aspects of their subject's character, play a key role in the books in which the centralization of worship in Jerusalem is an ideal. The thesis closes with general conclusions wherein the author ultimately concludes that biblical anecdotes function as an ideal within an ideology. It is the literary device through which the ancient Israelites and all succeeding generations understood the characters of the three kings of the United Monarchy.

Acknowledgments

This thesis would have been impossible to write without the support and kindness of numerous people. Dr. Alexander Rofé helped me originally find this topic as a personal interest in 1996 during his visit to the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. The staff at the Klau Library at the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion deserve a heartfelt thanks for their assistance. Dana Fredrickson was invaluable for her efforts to retrieve materials for me from numerous libraries around the country. For nearly a year she ensured that I always had at least one copy of any text I requested. Dr. Susan Einbinder, through her course in Modern Hebrew Literature, introduced me to Frank Lentricchia's *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, which proved to be a most valuable text in my research of anecdotes.

Thank you to my friends John Bush and Bruce Pfeffer who provided both moral and technical support. My family has shown me great caring and guidance. Thanks to my parents, Nancy and Allen, and my sister, Leslie, and my grandmother, Anita, for their constant concern and unqualified love.

And last, but certainly not least, I owe a special debt of gratitude to my thesis advisor Dr. David Weisberg. His kindness, wisdom, knowledge, compassion, and guidance are greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten by this author. He is a true gentleman. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with him. I hope to learn again under the benevolent tutelage of this scholar and rabbi.

J.S.

Cincinnati, Ohio
March 2, 1998

CHAPTER I: DEFINING THE ANECDOTE

The anecdote is thought to be primarily the product of Western civilization and to have distinct stages of development, most of which antedate the biblical period. Further, the national traits that give birth to anecdote may be less marked in other cultures. For example, whereas England and the United States are replete with literary anecdotes few if any are known to have existed in China or Japan prior to their involvement with Western culture. Anecdotes from Asian societies tend to be either moral parables-- bits and pieces of wisdom literature-- or extended episodes. Peasant and desert societies are also thought to rarely produce anecdotes and almost none are known in the Near and Middle East. Indeed, there seems to be a near total absence of anecdotes among the known writings and inscriptions found among the excavations of Near Eastern societies that were contemporary with the biblical period.[1] However, the biblical cannon itself appears to be a singular exception among these Near Eastern texts in that it does contain anecdotes, some of which meet the criteria of "modern" anecdote.

The term anecdote comes from the Greek *anekdota*, meaning things not given out. However, in Hebrew the anecdote is defined as: a joke (**בדיחה**) or an interesting story (**חקדה מעניין**).[2] A brief modern definition of anecdote understands it as a small gossipy narrative generally thought of as an amusing, biographical incident in the life of a famous person whose

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1 Dr. Alexander Rofe citing Dr. Samuel Greengus at the Hebrew Union College in a conversation with the author.

2 Reuben Alcalay, *The Complete English-Hebrew Dictionary* (Israel: Massada Ltd, 1990), p. 138.

'biography's broad outline has long been a matter of public record[3] . The Webster's *Tenth New Collegiate Dictionary* informs us that an anecdote is "a usually short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident."[4] However, these definitions are incomplete unless we understand them according to their historical development.

The contemporary anecdote may well have its roots in classical Greece. As noted, the term itself derives from the Greek *anekdota*. The Italian scholar Arnaldo Momigliano, in his *Development of Greek Biography*, speculates that the anecdote's founding father may have been the Peripatetic biographer Aristoxenus of Trarentum (born c. 370 BCE):

> (Aristoxenus) was the man to produce a new blend: learned, yet worldly; attentive to ideas, yet gossipy. Perhaps he was also the first to make anecdotes the essential part of biography. We are so used to considering anecdotes the natural condiment of biography that we forget that just as there can be anecdotes without biography so there can be biography without anecdotes.I suspect that we owe to Aristoxenus the notion that a good biography is full of good anecdotes.[5]

Yet it is not easy to distinguish between anecdote and other literary genres, like parable or episode. The seventh century B.C.E. Greek poet Archilochus composed satires against his prospective father-in-law, Lycamber, so powerful that the man and his daughter both hanged themselves. His satires

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3 Frank Lentricchia, *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 199f), p. 429

4 *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.*

5 Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography; Four Lectures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 76.

were short and independent of a larger literary context and still they were episodic rather than anecdotal.

The anecdote tends to be anti-official. It has had attached to it the connotation of gossip or even secrecy. This reputation may derive from the Byzantine historian Procopius, who called his sixth-century scandalous account of the Emperor Justinian *Historia Arcana* ("Secret History") or *Anecdota*.[6]

Considerably later, in the eighteenth century, the French broadened the term to make it apply to "any interesting circumstance". It is at this time that the suggestion of amusing triviality now begins to emerge. When James Boswell was completing his *Life of Johnson* he told a colleague that it would contain many anecdotes; 'which word', he added, 'Johnson always condemned as used in the sense that the French, and we from them, use it, as signifying particulars'.[7] However, in his *Dictionary* (1755) Samuel Johnson held to the classical definition of anecdote as 'something yet unpublished; secret history'. Yet, eighteen years later as he wrote the fourth edition, he had already become aware of another meaning: 'It is now used, after the French, for a biographical incident; a minute passage of private life.' This second definition, which Johnson only reluctantly acknowledged, was beginning to become accepted. The original meaning of 'something yet unpublished' continued to be dominant, even after Johnson's death in 1784.

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6 Richard Atwater, ed., *Secret History/Procopius* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963).

7 Marlies K. Danziger and Frank Brady, *Boswell, the Great Biographer, 1789-1795* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1989), p. 148

Though Boswell notes the evolution of the anecdote during Johnson's time, he also highlights its early value as an illuminator of character. This value was first classically formulated by Plutarch whom Boswell identifies as an early biographer who incorporated anecdote into his works[8] :

> Nor is it always in the most distinguished achievements that men's virtues or vices may be best discerned; but very often an action of small note, a short saying, or a jest, shall distinguish a person's real character more than the greatest sieges, or the most important battles.[9]

Nietzche was confident that one needed only three anecdotes in order to arrive at an accurate picture of an individual. William Ellery Channing believed that only one anecdote about a person is equivalent to "a volume of biography." These assertions, however, may be exaggerated, for unless an anecdote is held up against the entire history of a person's life it may well be anomalous. But a sufficient quantity of them may give a somewhat accurate accounting.

The question of anecdotes within the Bible was informally considered by Dr. Alexander Rofé. During his visit to the Cincinnati campus of the Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion, he suggested that an examination of Biblical anecdotes be undertaken. The author of this thesis believes that it is important to select a sufficient number of candidates in order to formulate a theory about the anecdote's function within the canon. Therefore a minimum of ten candidates to be examined was set.

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[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid. p. 151

Most biblical anecdotes are found within two text groupings. The Deuteronomistic History (namely Samuel-Kings) appears to contain the largest number of anecdotes. Antony Campbell understands the Deuteronomistic History in the following terms:

> The immense literary achievement of the Deuteronomic History was realized in very close proximity to (the) final crumbling of Israel's political freedom. At the earliest, it was written in support of Josiah's reform. If so, it was looking at the fate of the northern kingdom in 722, the very close call suffered by the south in 701, and it sought to rally Israel to the cause of reform and renewal in order to restore a kingdom like David's and avoid the fate of conquest and exile. At the latest, it was written in the very time of exile, and it sought to understand and explain how this bitter fate had come upon God's people. In either case, it is written at quite critical moment in Israel's history. The moment is critical not only for Israel's existence, but also for Israel's faith. The Deuternomist assembled the great traditions of Israel's past and organized them in order to interpret Israel's present. [10]

I and II Chronicles also hold a few candidates, though they do not match the quantity found in Samuel-Kings. By definition, an anecdote is biographical and therefore concerns an historical figure. Though there is doubt concerning the existence of the three kings of the United Monarchy, there is also a consensus in the community of biblical scholarship that these individuals *may* have existed:

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[10] Antony Campbell, *The Study Companion to Old Testament Literature* (Wilmington, Michael Glazier Inc., 1989), p. 145.

> While the Bible has much to say about David, it [is] obvious... that none of the biblical material pertaining to him submits easily to critical historical inquiry. By the same measure, any attempt to describe the 'historical' David will involve a great deal of subjective judgement...[11]

Given this possibility our research formally begins with Saul, but earlier biblical personalities are also discussed. Even a cursory examination reveals that certain anecdotes served a propagandistic purpose. The redactors may have retained these anecdotes in support of political, national, and social objectives.

This thesis utilizes the New JPS translation of the *Tanakh*.. For the Hebrew text the Koren Publishers edition of the *Holy Scriptures* will be photocopied into the text of the thesis.

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[11] J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, The Wesminster Press, 1986), p. 159.

CHAPTER II: CATALOGUING AND ANALYSIS OF ANECDOTES

A. The Deuteronomistic Anecdotes

The Deuteronomistic History includes anecdotes about the three rulers of the United Monarchy. What was the intention of the Deuteronomistic historian? What lessons were they trying to communicate? And how did the following anecdotes serve these ends? Scholars argue for two editions of the Deuteronomistic History. The first edition had two central themes: the sin of Jeraboam and the faithfulness of David. This edition includes within it the United Monarchy and was composed during the time of Josiah. The History, which runs from Deuteronomy through II Kings, is overlaid with an ambiguity that alternates between inevitable disaster and hope, of blessing and curse. But salvation can only be achieved through a sincere commitment to Deuteronomistic reform. Frank Moore Cross notes:

> Thus, there is both threat and promise, and so a platform for the Josianic reform. 'In this edition the themes of judgment and hope interact to provide a powerful motivation both for the return to the austere and jealous God of old Israel, and for the reunion of the alienated half-kingdoms of Israel and Judah under the aegis of Josiah.'[1]

The Josianic reform appears to look back to the golden age of David's monarchy as an historical ideal. This ideal is dramatized through anecdotes about David. Saul, on the other hand, receives no favorable treatment.

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[1] Apud: Antony F. Campbell, *The Study Companion to Old Testament Literature* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1989) p. 237

Solomon is also controversial. His marriage to foreign wives and his excesses are harshly judged. But by building the Temple, he gives a spiritual unity to Israel. This is crucial for the Deuteronomistic Historian. Yet there are no anecdotes about Solomon's construction of the Temple. Rather the anecdotes that relate to Solomon focus upon his reputed wisdom.

1. I SAMUEL 11:1-15

א וַיַּעַל נָחָשׁ הָעַמּוֹנִי וַיִּחַן
עַל־יָבֵישׁ גִּלְעָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל־אַנְשֵׁי יָבֵישׁ אֶל־נָחָשׁ כְּרֹת־לָנוּ
בְּרִית וְנַעַבְדֶךָּ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם נָחָשׁ הָעַמּוֹנִי בְּזֹאת אֶכְרֹת
לָכֶם בְּנַקֵּר לָכֶם כָּל־עֵין יָמִין וְשַׂמֹתִי חֶרְפָּה עַל־כָּל־
יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו זְקֵנֵי יָבֵישׁ הָרֶף לָנוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים
וְנִשְׁלְחָה מַלְאָכִים בְּכֹל גְּבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִם־אֵין מוֹשִׁיעַ אֹתָנוּ
וְיָצָאנוּ אֵלֶיךָ: וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים גִּבְעַת שָׁאוּל וַיְדַבְּרוּ הַדְּבָרִים
בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשְׂאוּ כָל־הָעָם אֶת־קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ: וְהִנֵּה שָׁאוּל בָּא
אַחֲרֵי הַבָּקָר מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל מַה־לָּעָם כִּי יִבְכּוּ
וַיְסַפְּרוּ־לוֹ אֶת־דִּבְרֵי אַנְשֵׁי יָבֵישׁ: וַתִּצְלַח רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים עַל־
שָׁאוּל בְּשָׁמְעוֹ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ מְאֹד: וַיִּקַּח
צֶמֶד בָּקָר וַיְנַתְּחֵהוּ וַיְשַׁלַּח בְּכָל־גְּבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַמַּלְאָכִים
לֵאמֹר אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנּוּ יֹצֵא אַחֲרֵי שָׁאוּל וְאַחֲרֵי שְׁמוּאֵל כֹּה יֵעָשֶׂה
לִבְקָרוֹ וַיִּפֹּל פַּחַד־יְהוָה עַל־הָעָם וַיֵּצְאוּ כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד: וַיִּפְקְדֵם
בְּבֶזֶק וַיִּהְיוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אָלֶף וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה שְׁלֹשִׁים
אָלֶף: וַיֹּאמְרוּ לַמַּלְאָכִים הַבָּאִים כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְאִישׁ יָבִישׁ
גִּלְעָד מָחָר תִּהְיֶה־לָּכֶם תְּשׁוּעָה בְּחֹם הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים
וַיַּגִּידוּ לְאַנְשֵׁי יָבִישׁ וַיִּשְׂמָחוּ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אַנְשֵׁי יָבִישׁ מָחָר נֵצֵא
אֲלֵיכֶם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לָנוּ כְּכָל־הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם:

Nahash the Ammonite marched up and besieged Jabesh-gilead. All the men of Jabesh-gilead said to Nahash, "Make a pact with us, and we will serve you." But Nahash the Ammonite answered them, "I will make a pact with you on this condition, that everyone's right eye be gouged out; I will make this a humiliation for all Israel." The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite, so that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel; if no one comes to our aid, we will surrender to you." when the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and gave this report in the hearing of the people, all the people broke into weeping.

Saul was just coming from the field driving the cattle; and Saul asked, "Why are the people crying?" And they told him about the situation of the men of Jabesh. When he heard these things, the spirit of God gripped Saul and his anger blazed up. He took a yoke of oxen and cut them into pieces, which he sent by messengers throughout the territory of Israel, with the warning, "Thus shall be done to the cattle of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel into battle!" Terror from the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man. Saul mustered them in Bezek, and the Israelites numbered 300,000, the men of Judah 30,000. The messengers whohad come were told, "Thus shall you speak to the men of Jabesh-gilead: Tomorrow, when the sun grows hot, you shall be saved." When the messengers came and told this to the men of Jabesh-gilead, they rejoiced. The men of Jabesh then told (the Ammonites), "Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and you can do to us whatever you please."

The next day, Saul divided the troops into three columns; at the morning watch they entered the camp and struck down the Ammonites until the day grew hot. The survivors scattered; no two were left together.

The people then said to Samuel, "Who was it said, Shall Saul be king over us?' Hand the men over and we will put them to death!" But Saul replied, "No man shall be put to death this day! For this day the Lord has brought victory to Israel."

Samuel said to the people, "Come let us go to Gilgal and there inaugurate the monarchy." So all the

> people went to Gilgal and there at Gilgal they declared Saul king before the Lord. They offered sacrifices of well-being there before the Lord; and Saul and all the men of Israel held a great celebration there.

The Ammonites threaten the men of Jabesh-gilead with slavery and mutilation. In his commentary on Samuel, George B. Caird suggests that the "object of Nahash on this occasion was not plunder but ridicule. The reason for gouging out the right eyes was not, as some have thought, to disable the men for war but to put disgrace on all Israel."[2] An appeal is therefore sent to the scattered tribes of Israel. Saul demonstrates his leadership by gathering the tribes and defeating the Ammonites. The account concludes with Samuel's call for a gathering at Gilgal in order to inaugurate the monarchy (v. 14) . Now Saul not only possesses a regal appearance (I Samuel 9:2), but he has shown that he has the character to go with it. The tale bears many characteristics of a true anecdote. It is not too complex or integral to Saul's overall biography, it stands on its own, and the account pithily captures Saul's leadership qualities in an entertaining manner.

Yet, the traditions of the monarchy were preserved in and edited by Jerusalem circles, which were sympathetic toward David and not Saul.[3] Presumably Saul, a Benjaminite, is sometimes portrayed negatively in order to enhance the prestige of David. But this account appears to cast Saul in a favorable light. Therefore, why was this anecdote preserved?

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[2] George B. Caird, *The Interpreter's Bible: Volume II* (New York: Abington Press, 1953), p. 939.
[3] Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1986), p. 215

A standard argument suggests that the tale was too well known to edit from the text. Further, most scholars consider this part of the *pro-Saul* source, found in 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16 and 11: 1-15. The books editors joined the pro-Saul and anti-Saul sources and edited them into a text that gives both sides of the account.

However, this anecdote could also fit into the anti-kingship tradition. Repetition is a common tool of OT narrators; and its use here challenges the classic pro-Saul understanding of this account. A similar story is repeated in Judges 19:1- 20:48; it begins with a legend reminiscent of that in Gen. 19:1-29. But the protagonist Lot is replaced with an anonymous wandering Levite. The Levite is invited to stay at the home of a man from *Gibeah of Benjamin*. When the residents of Gibeah surround the house and demand that the Levite be released to them for their pleasure, the man refuses. In his place the Levite's concubine is sent out. She is ravaged and killed by the townsfolk. Except for the death of the concubine, the story, up to this juncture, mirrors the experiences of Lot in Sodom.

The Levite then retrieves her body and cuts it into 12 sections, sending the pieces to the different tribes. The gesture serves to unite the clans, much as it did when Saul divided the oxen. All unite except for Benjamin, which gathers to protect Gibeah. During the ensuing battle the Benjaminites inflict a painful loss on Israel, slaughtering over 22,000 men. The battle rages for three days before Gibeah and the rest of Benjamin are finally routed at a great cost to Israel.

Benjamin's betrayal would not be forgotten. And at what better time to remind Israel of this event than when Saul the Benjaminite, who is from *Gibeah*, is inaugurated? However, as Henry P. Smith notes, there may be more than one village with that same name.[4] Nevertheless, an account that is popularly understood to describe a triumphant moment for Saul, appears to point rather to his questionable origins. Not only is the reader immediately reminded of the events at Gibeah, but there is a further and more insidious association. Saul's village Gibeah, or at the very least its name, is linked with Sodom. Gibeah, like Sodom, violated what bound all of Israel-- a common sense of law and decency. Therefore Saul's early triumph apparently foreshadows his eventual transgression of those same boundaries. It appears that the Jerusalem redactor, through repetition, deftly makes a veiled condemnation of Saul at a crucial moment in his career.

2. I Samuel 19: 11-17

וַיִּשְׁלַח שָׁאוּל מַלְאָכִים אֶל־בֵּית
דָּוִד לְשָׁמְרוֹ וְלַהֲמִיתוֹ בַּבֹּקֶר וַתַּגֶּד לְדָוִד מִיכַל אִשְׁתּוֹ לֵאמֹר
אִם־אֵינְךָ מְמַלֵּט אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ הַלַּיְלָה מָחָר אַתָּה מוּמָת: וַתֹּרֶד
מִיכַל אֶת־דָּוִד בְּעַד הַחַלּוֹן וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבְרַח וַיִּמָּלֵט: וַתִּקַּח מִיכַל
אֶת־הַתְּרָפִים וַתָּשֶׂם אֶל־הַמִּטָּה וְאֵת כְּבִיר הָעִזִּים שָׂמָה
מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו וַתְּכַס בַּבָּגֶד: וַיִּשְׁלַח שָׁאוּל מַלְאָכִים
לָקַחַת אֶת־דָּוִד וַתֹּאמֶר חֹלֶה הוּא: וַיִּשְׁלַח
שָׁאוּל אֶת־הַמַּלְאָכִים לְרְאוֹת אֶת־דָּוִד לֵאמֹר הַעֲלוּ אֹתוֹ
בַּמִּטָּה אֵלַי לַהֲמִתוֹ: וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים וְהִנֵּה הַתְּרָפִים אֶל־
הַמִּטָּה וְכְבִיר הָעִזִּים מְרַאֲשֹׁתָיו: וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל
אֶל־מִיכַל לָמָּה כָּכָה רִמִּיתִנִי וַתְּשַׁלְּחִי אֶת־אֹיְבִי וַיִּמָּלֵט
וַתֹּאמֶר מִיכַל אֶל־שָׁאוּל הוּא־אָמַר אֵלַי שַׁלְּחִנִי לָמָּה אֲמִיתֶךָּ:

[4] Henry P. Smith, *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Samuel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904) p. 74.

> That night Saul sent messengers to David's home to keep watch on him and to kill him in the morning. But David's wife Michal told him, 'Unless you run for your life tonight, you will be killed tomorrow.' Michal let David down from the window and he escaped and fled. Michal then took the household idol, laid it on the bed, and covered it with a cloth; and at its head she put a net of goats hair. Saul sent messengers to seize David; but she said, 'He is sick.' Saul, however, sent back the messengers to see David for themselves. 'Bring him up to me in the bed,' he ordered, 'that he may be put to death.' When the messengers came, they found the household idol in the bed, with the net of goat's hair at its head. Saul said to Michal, 'Why did you play that trick on me and let my enemy get away safely?' 'Because,' Michal answered Saul, 'he said to me: ' Help me get away or I'll kill you.'

The passage qualifies as an anecdote in many respects. It exists independently of its context, it is humorous, and it is brief. Anecdotes are sometimes characterized by their descriptions of moments in the intimate lives of individuals. Indeed, Henry P. Smith suggests that Saul's messengers come for David on the couple's wedding night:

> The first question is: what night is meant? No reference has been made to night at all. But the most natural interpretation is that David's wedding night is intended...The crises comes when the hate parvenu actually takes his bride to his house. This will be the time to strike; David will be unsuspicious, his friends will have dispersed after the marriage feasting. Dramatically nothing could be more effective.[5]

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[5] Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Books of Samuel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), p. 178.

However there are three prominent characters in the account, each with distinct personalities. Saul appears baffoonish in having been tricked while both Michal and David are depicted as clever in eluding Saul. This chapter and the following contain various accounts of Saul pursuing David , which may suggest that I Samuel 19: 11-17 is another in a series of stories about David or even Saul. [6]

But the account revolves not around David (or Saul for that matter) but Michal. It is she who plants the idol in the bed after David flees. She disguises it, and then successfully deceives Saul's messengers. And in the end Michal again tricks Saul by telling him that she acted under duress. It is an anecdote about Michal, contrary to its overall context. The passage epitomizes Michal's devotion to David and her love for him as described in the previous chapter.[7] The passage also ascribes to Michal the craftiness for which David himself is already noted.

3. I Samuel 21: 11-16

An anecdote is usually a "short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident"[8] in the life of a famous person whose general biography is well known. . The following episode describes a brief and

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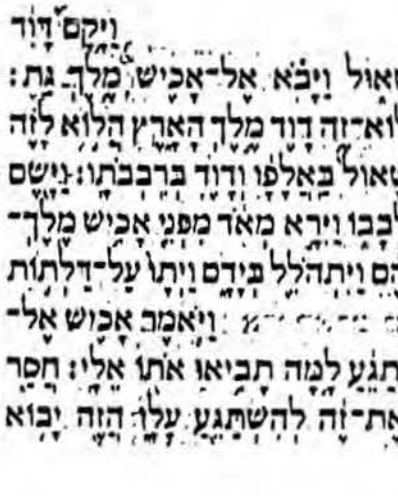
[6] It may be argued that David's success as a fugitive from a tyrannical monarch expresses a desire on the part of the country's citizens to be able successfully to elude monarchical oppression. In this sense the anecdote, as Bruno Bettelheim might assert, functions like a national fairy tale, in that it is a literary device by which the Israelite audience can see their hopes acted out.

[7] "Now Michal daughter of Saul had fallen in love with David." (I Samuel 18:20)

[8] *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*.

amusing incident in which David, while fleeing from King Saul, encounters King Achish of Gath:



וַיָּקָם דָּוִד
וַיִּבְרַח בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא מִפְּנֵי שָׁאוּל וַיָּבֹא אֶל־אָכִישׁ מֶלֶךְ גַּת׃
וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי אָכִישׁ אֵלָיו הֲלוֹא־זֶה דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ הָאָרֶץ הֲלוֹא לָזֶה
יְעֻנּוּ בַמְּחֹלוֹת לֵאמֹר הִכָּה שָׁאוּל בַּאֲלָפָו וְדָוִד בְּרִבְבֹתָו׃ וַיָּשֶׂם
דָּוִד אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בִּלְבָבוֹ וַיִּרָא מְאֹד מִפְּנֵי אָכִישׁ מֶלֶךְ־
גַּת׃ וַיְשַׁנּוּ אֶת־טַעְמוֹ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם וַיִּתְהֹלֵל בְּיָדָם וַיִּתְו עַל־דַּלְתוֹת
הַשַּׁעַר וַיְיֹרֶד רִירוֹ אֶל־זְקָנוֹ׃ וַיֹּאמֶר אָכִישׁ אֶל־
עֲבָדָיו הִנֵּה תִרְאוּ אִישׁ מִשְׁתַּגֵּעַ לָמָּה תְבִיאוּ אֹתוֹ אֵלָי׃ חֲסַר
מְשֻׁגָּעִים אֲנִי כִּי־הֲבֵאתֶם אֶת־זֶה לְהִשְׁתַּגֵּעַ עָלָי הַזֶּה יָבוֹא
אֶל־בֵּיתִי׃

That day David continued on his flight from Saul and he came to King Achish of Gath. The courtiers of Achish said to him, "Why, that's David, king of the land! That's the one of whom they sing as they dance:

Saul has slain his thousands;
David, his tens of thousands."

These words worried David and he became very much afraid of King Achish of Gath. So he concealed his good sense from them; he feigned madness for their benefit. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate and let his saliva run down his beard. And Achish said to his courtiers, "You see the man is raving; why bring him to me? Do I lack madmen that you have brought this fellow to rave for me? Should this fellow enter my house?

The story highlights David's cunning. He displays an ingenuity similar to that employed by Michal in I Samuel 19. A clever deception, once again, affords him time to make good his escape.

In a humorous twist that lends credibility to David's ruse, Achish accuses the courtiers of bringing David to him, when in fact it appears that it was David who brought himself before the King. Perhaps Achish assumes that a drooling, scratching madman does not have the ability to find his way around. Yet in a later episode Achish[9] gives refuge to David[10] when he again flees from Saul. This time Achish uses him to raid and plunder, and the king trusts David enough to consider employing him in a battle against Israel. It is only Achish's advisors who, knowing David's reputation, that prevent David's participation. However, if I Samuel 21: 11-16 is to function as an anecdote, it must, at its core, illuminate David's character. This is best achieved if King Achish, acting as a foil to David's cunning, is truly duped.

But what motivates David to feign madness? David brings himself before King Achish and the courtiers recognize David, proclaiming: "That's the one of whom they sing as they dance: Saul, has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands." Upon hearing this David becomes afraid. David, the notorious enemy of the Philistines, apparently fears recognition. But Achish is already aware of David's military prowess: the number of losses inflicted

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[9] He appears to be a succesor to the Achish in vv. 11-16., though H. P. Smith believes that this is the same Achich king of Gath who was David's overlord in his later career.

[10] The relationship between Israel, Gath, and King Achish should also be considered in addressing this textual difficulty. The city of Gath is Philistine. But Gath is sometimes also a place of refuge for those fleeing Israel. In I Kings 2: 39 Shimi's servants run to Gath. David and his men stay in Gath, under King Achish's protection, while fleeing from Saul in I Samuel 27. But Israelite battles against the Philistines are also waged there. Samuel conquers it, as do King David and King Uzziyyahu. When the ark is captured by the Philistines in I Samuel 5:8 it is held in the city of Gath.

by David is not unknown to the king of Philistine. Indeed, David should have already been recognized by Achish. Therefore what apparently concerns David is the effect this song will have on Achish. It is noteworthy that Saul's earlier reaction upon hearing the same verse was rage and jealousy:

> [Saul was] distressed and greatly vexed about the matter. For he said, 'To David they have given tens of thousands, and to me they have given thousands. All that he lacks is the kingship!' From that day on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.[11]

David presumably recognizes that King Achish, like Saul, might also regard him as a potential political usurper if he remains in Gath. Therefore David feigns madness, for surely a madman cannot be a threat. Achish is taken in by David's performance, and David escapes.

David's behavior before King Achish may have been understood in relationship to prophesy. Insanity (שגעון) in other passages is associated with prophets. In II Kings 9:11 Elisha is called a madman (המשגע) by Jehu's officers. And in Jeremiah 29:26 we read: "The Lord appointed you priest ... to exercise authority... over every madman (איש משגע) who wants to play the prophet." In his madness, David scratches at the doors of the gate and allows saliva to run across his beard.[12] This performance appears

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[11] I Samuel 18:8-9

[12] Among the kings of the United and Divided Monarchies, the incident is most reminiscent of Saul in I Samuel 10: 9-12. Here Saul's behavior inspires the question: "Is Saul too among the prophets?" Saul appears to experience a genuine ecstatic state, David only mocks one. Though the redactor may not have intended it, David appears to almost parody Saul's famous ecstatic experience.

extreme, and therefore it may be argued that this is a mocking of the ecstatic state.[13] G. C. Caird appears to support this assertion:

> The suggestion has been made that this story was originally the sequel to the story of Saul and David at Ramah (19: 18-24), since then David would have got his idea of feigned madness from watching the ecstatic frenzy of the prophets.[14]

The qualities of cleverness and ingenuity that allow David to become a great leader are central to this anecdote. He artfully deceives the king of Philistine. Yet, as this account illustrates, an anecdote does not need to be about an individual's most distinguished achievements. The person's character may also be discerned from an action of small note or a jest. These can distinguish a person's real character more than the greatest sieges, or the most important battles. [15]

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[13] To parody ecstasy may have been unthinkable during earlier stages of development of Israelite society. In the time of the Judges, for example, prophesy was Israel's bond of unity and strength. However, later, David's imitation of an ecstatic state may have been considered amusing after Israel became a nation-- when it possessed a monarchic form of government and the role of the prophets in relationship to the ruling establishment was more ambivalent.

[14] Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible: Volume II* (New York: Abington Press, 1953), p. 987.

[15] Marlies K. Danzinger and Frank Brady, *Boswell, the Great Biographer, 1789-1795* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1989), p. 148

4. II Samuel 6:20-23

וַיָּשָׁב דָּוִד לְבָרֵךְ אֶת־בֵּיתוֹ וַתֵּצֵא מִיכַל בַּת־שָׁאוּל לִקְרַאת
דָּוִד וַתֹּאמֶר מַה־נִּכְבַּד הַיּוֹם מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר נִגְלָה הַיּוֹם
לְעֵינֵי אַמְהוֹת עֲבָדָיו כְּהִגָּלוֹת נִגְלוֹת אַחַד הָרֵקִים: וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד ס
אֶל־מִיכַל לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר־בִּי מֵאָבִיךְ וּמִכָּל־בֵּיתוֹ לְצַוֹּת
ס אֹתִי נָגִיד עַל־עַם יְהוָה עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשִׂחַקְתִּי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: וְנִקַּלְתִּי
עוֹד מִזֹּאת וְהָיִיתִי שָׁפֵל בְּעֵינָי וְעִם־הָאֲמָהוֹת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתְּ
ס עִמָּם אִכָּבֵדָה: וּלְמִיכַל בַּת־שָׁאוּל לֹא־הָיָה לָהּ יֶלֶד עַד יוֹם
פ מוֹתָהּ:

David went home to greet his household. And Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "Didn't the king of Israel do himself honor today--exposing himself today in the sight of the slavegirls of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself!" David answered Mihal, "It was before the Lord who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the Lord's people Israel! I will dance before the Lord and dishonor myself even more, and be low in my own esteem; but among the slave girls that you speak of I will be honored." So to her dying day Michal daughter of Saul had no children.

Michal despises David for exposing himself before the common people of Israel. She expresses her disapproval through sarcasm: "didn't the king of Israel do himself honor today-- exposing himself today in the sight of the slave girls of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself!" But David, instead of being contrite, gloats about his selection over Saul's family as king, and vows to persist in dishonoring himself. David adds that he will not be abased, but rather will be honored among the handmaids. The

passage concludes that until her death Michal had no children. True to the anecdote genre, II Samuel 6: 20-23 is not integral to the overall narrative and it illustrates a particular aspect of the subject's personality. In this example, it is David's wit and cunning that are again highlighted.

Michal's sarcasm is easily recognized, but the humor in David's response is sometimes overlooked. George B. Caird suggests that David "trusts the common sense of the maids and their religious loyalty to understand what he has been doing and will do again."[16] But vv. 21-22 may simply be more suggestive and ribald than some commentators acknowledge: David announces that he "will dance before the Lord and dishonor myself even more...but among the slavegirls that you speak of I will be honored." It is the slave*girls* who are specifically mentioned. David apparently intends to turn religious zeal into an indiscreet joke. He may be respected by the *female* servants (אבבדה) not because of his religiosity, but because of what his zeal reveals.[17]

Michal responds with sarcasm to David's immodesty. And his response to her is typically understood to be one of anger.[18] But David rarely expresses anger.[19] Rather, the adage "don't get mad, get even" seems truer to his established character. [20]

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[16] Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible: Volume II* (New York: Abington Press, 1953), p. 1082

[17] It's noteworthy that the marriage of David and Michal both begins and "ends" with vulgar references. In order for David to win Michal's hand from Saul he is required to present 200 Philistine foreskins. Their relationship ends when David exposes himself.

[18] Ibid. p. 1082

[19] II Samuel 12:5 is a notable exception.

[20] See I Samuel 24:5

Further, whereas Saul tends to be temperamental, David is typically depicted as even natured. Saul's explosiveness is a foil for David's calm calculating personality. Therefore it is more likely that David does not react to Michal out of anger, but rather his response is deliberate and methodical. He replies to her by first noting that God chose him in place of her father's family, declares that he will continue to violate royal decorum (to the delight of the maid servants), and then ultimately leaves her childless. David effectively meets Michal's sarcasm and successfully challenges her assumed position of superiority.

A similar exchange is found in a series of anecdotes about Sir Winston Churchill. In one account, a particular female member of Parliament berates him for his vulgar public behavior. Ultimately Churchill's wit, like that of King David, vindicates him:

> At a dinner party one evening, there was a heated exchange between Churchill and a female MP. At the end of the exchange the lady scornfully remarked,
>
> "Mr. Churchill, you are drunk."
>
> "That may be true, but you madam," replied Churchill, "are ugly, and I shall be sober in the morning."

The repartee found in II Samuel 6 is known to the anecdote genre.

Whatever love Michal expressed for David in previous passages is replaced in II Samuel 6 by contempt and disdain. Earlier, whatever love Saul once felt for David was replaced by hatred and fear. Michal is not behaving as David's wife but as his opponent. David Clines notes, in *Telling Queen Michal's Story*, that Michal is acting like a true daughter of Saul, and the

narrator has spelled this out by writing 'Michal daughter of Saul' in the two places where her criticism of David is expressed (vv.16,20)[21]

Neither Saul nor Michal "ultimately tolerate either the behavior David inspires in other women of Israel or the self-proclaimed, divinely inspired behavior which he displays before them."[22] Saul's love for David turned to hate when he heard the women of Israel sing, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands'. And now that David has acquired Saul's kingdom, Michal in turn despises David because he does not exhibit appropriate kingly decorum. However, in spite of his indiscreet behavior and Michal's hostility toward him , David acquires a position of status among the common citizens of Israel. The anecdote captures David's cunning and wit, and depicts him as a man of the people who earns a respect never accorded to Saul.

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[21] David Clines and Tamara Eskenazi, *Telling Queen Michal's Story* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), p128.
[22] Ibid., p. 118

5. I Kings 3: 16-28

אָז תָּבֹאנָה ׀ טז
שְׁתַּיִם נָשִׁים זֹנוֹת אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲמֹדְנָה לְפָנָיו: וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה יז
הָאַחַת בִּי אֲדֹנִי אֲנִי וְהָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת יֹשְׁבֹת בְּבַיִת אֶחָד וָאֵלֵד
עִמָּהּ בַּבָּיִת: וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְלִדְתִּי וַתֵּלֶד גַּם־הָאִשָּׁה יח
הַזֹּאת וַאֲנַחְנוּ יְחָדָו אֵין־זָר אִתָּנוּ בַּבַּיִת זוּלָתִי שְׁתֵּינוּ בַּבָּיִת: וַיָּמָת בֶּן־הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת לַיְלָה אֲשֶׁר שָׁכְבָה עָלָיו: וַתָּקָם יט
בְּתוֹךְ הַלַּיְלָה וַתִּקַּח אֶת־בְּנִי מֵאֶצְלִי וַאֲמָתְךָ יְשֵׁנָה וַתַּשְׁכִּיבֶהוּ
בְחֵיקָהּ וְאֶת־בְּנָהּ הַמֵּת הִשְׁכִּיבָה בְחֵיקִי: וָאָקָם בַּבֹּקֶר כ
לְהֵינִיק אֶת־בְּנִי וְהִנֵּה־מֵת וָאֶתְבֹּנֵן אֵלָיו בַּבֹּקֶר וְהִנֵּה לֹא־
הָיָה בְנִי אֲשֶׁר יָלָדְתִּי: וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה הָאַחֶרֶת לֹא כִי בְנִי הַחַי כא
וּבִנֵךְ הַמֵּת וְזֹאת אֹמֶרֶת לֹא כִי בִנֵךְ הַמֵּת וּבְנִי הָחָי וַתְּדַבֵּרְנָה
לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ זֹאת אֹמֶרֶת זֶה־בְּנִי הַחַי וּבִנֵךְ הַמֵּת כב
וְזֹאת אֹמֶרֶת לֹא כִי בִנֵךְ הַמֵּת וּבְנִי הָחָי: וַיֹּאמֶר כג
הַמֶּלֶךְ קְחוּ לִי־חָרֶב וַיָּבִאוּ הַחֶרֶב לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ כד
גִּזְרוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַחַי לִשְׁנַיִם וּתְנוּ אֶת־הַחֲצִי לָאַחַת וְאֶת־
הַחֲצִי לָאַחַת: וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־בְּנָהּ הַחַי אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי־ כה
נִכְמְרוּ רַחֲמֶיהָ עַל־בְּנָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר ׀ בִּי אֲדֹנִי תְּנוּ־לָהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד
הַחַי וְהָמֵת אַל־תְּמִיתֻהוּ וְזֹאת אֹמֶרֶת גַּם־לִי גַם־לָךְ לֹא יִהְיֶה
גְּזֹרוּ: וַיַּעַן הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר תְּנוּ־לָהּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד הַחַי וְהָמֵת לֹא כו
תְמִיתֻהוּ הִיא אִמּוֹ: וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּט אֲשֶׁר כז
שָׁפַט הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּרְאוּ מִפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי רָאוּ כִּי־חָכְמַת אֱלֹהִים
א בְּקִרְבּוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט: וַיְהִי הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה מֹלֵךְ עַל־כָּל־
ב יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Later two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. The first woman said, "Please, my lord! This woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. On the third day after I was delivered, this woman also gave birth to a child. We were alone; there was no one else with us in the house,

> just the two of us in the house. During the night this woman's child died, because she lay on it. She arose in the night and took my son from my side while your maidservant was asleep, and laid him in her bosom; and she laid her dead son in my bosom. When I arose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, it was not the son I had borne."
>
> The other woman spoke up, "No, the live one is my son, and the dead one is yours!" But the first insisted, "No, the dead boy is yours; mine is the live one!" And they went on arguing before the king.
>
> The king said, "One says, 'This is my son, the live one, and the dead one is yours'; and the other says, 'No, the dead boy is yours, mine is the live one.' So the king gave the order, "Fetch me a sword." A sword was brought before the king, and the king said, "Cut the live child in two, and give half to one and half to the other."
>
> But the woman whose son was the live one pleaded with the king, for she was overcome with compassion for her son. "Please, my lord," she cried, "give her the live child; only don't kill it!" The other insisted, "It shall be neither yours nor mine; cut it in two!" Then the king spoke up. "Give the live child to her," he said, "and do not put it to death; she is its mother."
>
> When all Israel heard the decision that the king had rendered, they stood in awe of the king; for they saw that he possessed divine wisdom to execute justice.

The anecdote's ability to capture a sense of character is well illustrated within the bible, and the story of King Solomon and the two prostitutes (I Kings 3:16-28) is a premier example. In this anecdote two prostitutes approach King Solomon, each claiming to be the mother of the one surviving child. The king renders his decision to cut the live child in half and to give one portion to each of the two disputing women. This shocking decision brings about the discovery of the child's true mother and the

passage concludes with. "When all Israel heard the decision that the king had rendered, they stood in awe of the king; for they saw that he possessed divine wisdom to execute justice." (v. 28) It is a story that emphasizes Solomon's reputed wisdom. James A. Montgomery suggests that it is a judicial wisdom that is ascribed to Solomon: "Indeed the corresponding word for Heb. ' wisdom here, *hokmah*, in the Arabic *hukm* means a judicial judgment[23] Solomon's wisdom is also born out in other passages.[24]

The tale bears most of the characteristics of a true anecdote. The account pithily captures King Solomon's reputed wisdom and it does so in an entertaining manner and it is not too complex or important to qualify as an anecdote. The account stands on its own, independent of the rest of Solomon's history and even possesses humor and an element of the unexpected which are hallmarks of many modern anecdotes.

But there is also perhaps a second moral to this anecdote. The moral offers an ideal, namely that of a king of Israel who ought to be wise. Norman H. Snaith notes:

> (The story) is a typical example of that Oriental wisdom which is concerned with the actual business of living rather than with abstractions. The Hebrews valued particularly that astuteness which reveals a thorough knowledge of human character both in strength and in weakness. It is a type of wisdom which often becomes a very worldly wisdom.[25]

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[23] James A. Montgomery, *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Kings* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 110

[24] "The Lord had given Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him. There was friendship between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty." (I Kings 5:26). Also see: I Kings 5:9-14

[25] Nolan B. Harmon, ed.., *The Interpreter's Bible: Volume III* (New York: Abington Press, 1954), p. 46

When a figure, as Solomon, is considered exemplary, the anecdote becomes a concentrated representation of the idealized story that a culture would like to tell about itself. As Frank Lentricchia notes in *Terms for Literary Study* :

> The teller of anecdotes has to presume the cultural currency of that large, containing biographical narrative which he draws upon for the sharp point he would give his anecdote, whose effect is ultimately political: to trigger a narrative sense of community that the anecdote evokes by evoking the master biography. In evoking the master biography, anecdote helps us to remember. And remembrance, so triggered is the power which sustains by retrieving the basic cultural fiction.[26]

Lintricchia cites the example of one of America's founding fathers, George Washington. Washington's character, like Solomon's, is captured in a famous anecdote. One day, when he was a little boy, George Washington chopped down a cherry tree in his father's orchard. His father, discovering the felled tree, called after the lad and said , "Do you know who killed this cherry tree?" Little George Washington was silent for a moment and then replied, "I cannot tell a lie; you know I cannot tell a lie. I cut it with my hatchet." His father immediately forgot his anger in his pleasure at his son's truthfulness. The message is clear: the government and the people are honest for the founding of the United States was honest, " the relationship of government and the people who elect it is transparent, sincere because the origin of the US was honest. The father of our country, and our first president, could not tell a lie."[27] Similarly, King Solomon as the last ruler of the United Monarchy not only leaves the indelible stamp of his character

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[26] Frank Lentricchia, *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 429

[27] Ibid.

on that institution, but his wisdom as illustrated in the anecdote may reflect what Israelite society would have liked to believe about its mythic origins.

6. II Kings 10:18-28

וַיִּקְבֹּץ יֵהוּא אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר
אֲלֵהֶם אִחְאָב עָבַד אֶת־הַבַּעַל מְעַט יֵהוּא יַעַבְדֶנּוּ הַרְבֵּה׃
וְעַתָּה כָּל־נְבִיאֵי הַבַּעַל כָּל־עֲבָדָיו וְכָל־כְּהֲנָיו קִרְאוּ אֵלַי אִישׁ
אַל־יִפָּקֵד כִּי זֶבַח גָּדוֹל לִי לַבַּעַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִפָּקֵד לֹא יִחְיֶה וְיֵהוּא
עָשָׂה בְעָקְבָּה לְמַעַן הַאֲבִיד אֶת־עֹבְדֵי הַבָּעַל׃ וַיֹּאמֶר יֵהוּא
קַדְּשׁוּ עֲצָרָה לַבָּעַל וַיִּקְרָאוּ׃ וַיִּשְׁלַח יֵהוּא בְּכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּבֹאוּ
כָּל־עֹבְדֵי הַבַּעַל וְלֹא־נִשְׁאַר אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־בָא וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית
הַבַּעַל וַיִּמָּלֵא בֵית־הַבַּעַל פֶּה לָפֶה׃ וַיֹּאמֶר לַאֲשֶׁר עַל־
הַמֶּלְתָּחָה הוֹצֵא לְבוּשׁ לְכָל עֹבְדֵי הַבָּעַל וַיֹּצֵא לָהֶם הַמַּלְבּוּשׁ׃
וַיָּבֹא יֵהוּא וְיהוֹנָדָב בֶּן־רֵכָב בֵּית הַבַּעַל וַיֹּאמֶר לְעֹבְדֵי הַבַּעַל
חַפְּשׁוּ וּרְאוּ פֶּן־יֵשׁ־פֹּה עִמָּכֶם מֵעַבְדֵי יְהוָה כִּי אִם־עֹבְדֵי
הַבַּעַל לְבַדָּם׃ וַיָּבֹאוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת זְבָחִים וְעֹלוֹת וַיֵּהוּא שָׂם־לוֹ בַּחוּץ
שְׁמֹנִים אִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּלֵט מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי
מֵבִיא עַל־יְדֵיכֶם נַפְשׁוֹ תַּחַת נַפְשׁוֹ׃ וַיְהִי כְּכַלֹּתוֹ ׀ לַעֲשׂוֹת
הָעֹלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יֵהוּא לָרָצִים וְלַשָּׁלִשִׁים בֹּאוּ הַכּוּם אִישׁ אַל־יֵצֵא
וַיַּכּוּם לְפִי־חָרֶב וַיַּשְׁלִכוּ הָרָצִים וְהַשָּׁלִשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ עַד־עִיר
בֵּית־הַבַּעַל׃ וַיֹּצִאוּ אֶת־מַצְּבוֹת ׀ בֵּית־הַבַּעַל וַיִּשְׂרְפוּהָ׃ כו
וַיְתִצוּ אֵת מַצֶּבֶת הַבַּעַל וַיִּתְצוּ אֶת־בֵּית הַבַּעַל וַיְשִׂימֻהוּ כז
לְמְחָרָאוֹת עַד־הַיּוֹם׃ וַיַּשְׁמֵד יֵהוּא אֶת־הַבַּעַל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל׃ כח

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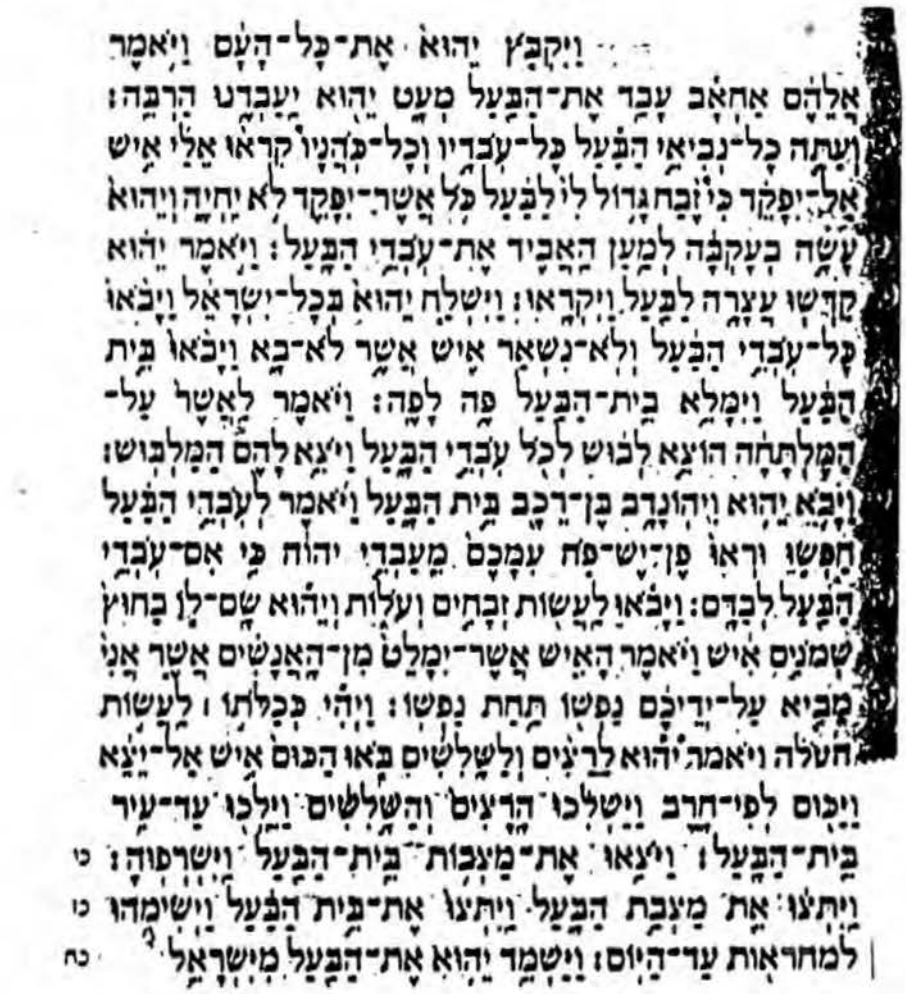

וַיְקַבֵּץ יֵהוּא אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר
אֲלֵהֶם אַחְאָב עָבַד אֶת־הַבַּעַל מְעַט יֵהוּא יַעַבְדֶנּוּ הַרְבֵּה׃
וְעַתָּה כָּל־נְבִיאֵי הַבַּעַל כָּל־עֲבָדָיו וְכָל־כְּהֲנָיו קִרְאוּ אֵלַי אִישׁ
אַל־יִפָּקֵד כִּי זֶבַח גָּדוֹל לִי לַבַּעַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִפָּקֵד לֹא יִחְיֶה וְיֵהוּא
עָשָׂה בְעָקְבָּה לְמַעַן הַאֲבִיד אֶת־עֹבְדֵי הַבָּעַל׃ וַיֹּאמֶר יֵהוּא
קַדְּשׁוּ עֲצָרָה לַבָּעַל וַיִּקְרָאוּ׃ וַיִּשְׁלַח יֵהוּא בְּכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּבֹאוּ
כָּל־עֹבְדֵי הַבַּעַל וְלֹא־נִשְׁאַר אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־בָא וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית
הַבַּעַל וַיִּמָּלֵא בֵית־הַבַּעַל פֶּה לָפֶה׃ וַיֹּאמֶר לַאֲשֶׁר עַל־
הַמֶּלְתָּחָה הוֹצֵא לְבוּשׁ לְכָל עֹבְדֵי הַבָּעַל וַיֹּצֵא לָהֶם הַמַּלְבּוּשׁ׃
וַיָּבֹא יֵהוּא וְיְהוֹנָדָב בֶּן־רֵכָב בֵּית הַבַּעַל וַיֹּאמֶר לְעֹבְדֵי הַבַּעַל
חַפְּשׁוּ וּרְאוּ פֶּן־יֵשׁ־פֹּה עִמָּכֶם מֵעַבְדֵי יְהוָה כִּי אִם־עֹבְדֵי
הַבַּעַל לְבַדָּם׃ וַיָּבֹאוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת זְבָחִים וְעֹלוֹת וְיֵהוּא שָׂם־לוֹ בַּחוּץ
שְׁמֹנִים אִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּלֵט מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי
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הָעֹלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יֵהוּא לָרָצִים וְלַשָּׁלִשִׁים בֹּאוּ הַכּוּם אִישׁ אַל־יֵצֵא
וַיַּכּוּם לְפִי־חָרֶב וַיַּשְׁלִכוּ הָרָצִים וְהַשָּׁלִשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ עַד־עִיר
כא בֵּית־הַבַּעַל׃ וַיֹּצִאוּ אֶת־מַצְּבוֹת בֵּית־הַבַּעַל וַיִּשְׂרְפוּהָ׃ כו
כז וַיְתַצּוּ אֵת מַצְּבַת הַבַּעַל וַיְתַצּוּ אֶת־בֵּית הַבַּעַל וַיְשִׂימֻהוּ כז
כח לְמְחָרָאוֹת עַד־הַיּוֹם׃ וַיַּשְׁמֵד יֵהוּא אֶת־הַבַּעַל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל׃ כח

Jehu assembled all the people and said to them, "Ahab served Baal little; Jehu shall serve him much! Therefore, summon to me all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers, and all his priests: let no one fail to come, for I am going to hold a great sacrifice for Baal.

Whoever fails to come shall forfeit his life." Jehu was acting with guile in order to exterminate the worshipers of Baal. Jehu gave orders to convoke a solemn assembly for Baal, and one was proclaimed. Jehu sent word throughout Israel, and all the worshipers of Baal came, not a single one remained behind. They came into the temple of Baal, and the temple of Baal was filled from end to end. He said to the man in charge of the wardrobe, "Bring out the vestments for all the worshipers of Baal"; and he brought vestments out for them. Then Jehu and Jehonadab so of Rechab came into the temple of Baal, and they said to the worshipers of Baal, "Search only worshipers of Baal." So they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. But Jehu had stationed eighty of his men outside and had said, "Whoever permits the escape of a single one of the men I commit to your charge shall forfeit life for life."

When Jehu had finished presenting the burnt offering, he said to the guards and to the officers, "Come in and strike them down; let no man get away!" The guards and the officers struck them down with the sword and left them lying where they were; then they proceeded to the interior of the temple of Baal. They brought out the pillars of the temple of Baal and burned them. They destroyed the pillar of Baal, and they tore down the temple of Baal and turned it into latrines, as is still the case. Thus Jehu eradicated the Baal from Israel.

II Kings 10:18-28 is more integral to the overall narrative than a standard anecdote. The historical reality underlying this anecdote is established, yet as Dr. Alexander Rofé notes, the episode is also "naively non-historical."[28] In *The Prophetical Stories* Dr. Alexander Rofé offers the following analysis of II Kings 10: 18-28:

[28] Dr. Alexander Rofe, *The Prophetical Stories* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1988), p. 80

> The story of the eradication of Baal worship (10:18-28) also has an anecdotal flavor. The categorical distinction between servants of God and servants of Baal is naively non-historical. In reality, the people worshipped both the Lord and Baal, or united the two in a syncretistic rule, i.e., they assigned to the Lord some of Baal's attributes. The impression of non-historicity is strengthened by the description of Jehu masquerading as an adherent of Baal. Surely his origins and ideological allegiance were public knowledge. In any event, it is difficult to imagine that an author who thrice portrayed Jehu as relying of the Lord's word to Elijah (9:25-26, 36-37; 10:10) would at the same time portray him as attempting to disguise himself as a worshipper of Baal. But on the other hand the historical reality underlying this anecdote... is not to be doubted: Jehu did indeed destroy the temple of Baal (10:27) and purge Israel of the Baal worship (10:28).[29]

The episode captures Jehu's righteous character and serves to popularize Jehu's deed by making it memorable. To this end, the relationship between Baal worship and the worship of the Lord is polemiscized, and it gives an idealized account of how Jehu eliminated what was later considered the pernicious enemy of Israel-- Baal worship.

B. The Chronicler Anecdotes

There is scholarly disagreement about the authorship and date of the two books of Chronicles. Edward L. Curtis dates the Chronicler to the close of the fourth century:

> ...since I and 2 Ch. originally were joined to Ezra-Nehemiah, the period of the Chronicler can also be

[29] Ibid.

> determined from those books. The list of the high priests given in Ne. 12 extends to Jaddua, who according to Josephus (Ant. xi. 7, 8) was high priest in the time of Alexander the Great. Darius is referred to as ther Persian (Ne. 12:22) in a way that suggests that the Persian kingdom had already fallen and that the time of Alexander (338-323 B.C.) had been reached. Thus the close of the fourth century B.C., or 300, may be confidently given as the period of the Chronicler.[30]

Buckner B. Trawick notes that the majority opinion asserts that I and II Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah were all written by the same person, probably a Levite, between 332 and 250 B.C.E.[31]

Trawick also notes that the Chronicler intended to present an idealized narrative:

> His purposes were to recall the priests and Levites to a more zealous performance of their official functions, to inspire in the people a greater devotion to God, and to stress the importance of Temple worship in Jerusalem according to the ancient book of laws.
>
> His method is to idealize the "good old days," the glorious times of David and Solomon, and then to demonstrate the evils which befell the kingdoms when the later kings and the people ceased to worship God and obey his commandments.[32]

To this end in I and II Chronicles David is depicted more as a religious leader. Further, the stories that negatively portray David (namely David's affair with Bathsheba) are whitewashed out of the text. Similarly, no

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[30] Edward L. Curtis and Albert A. Madsen, *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and ExegeticalCommentary on The Book of Chronicles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910) p. 6

[31] Buckner B. Trawick, *The Bible as Literature* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1970) p. 138.

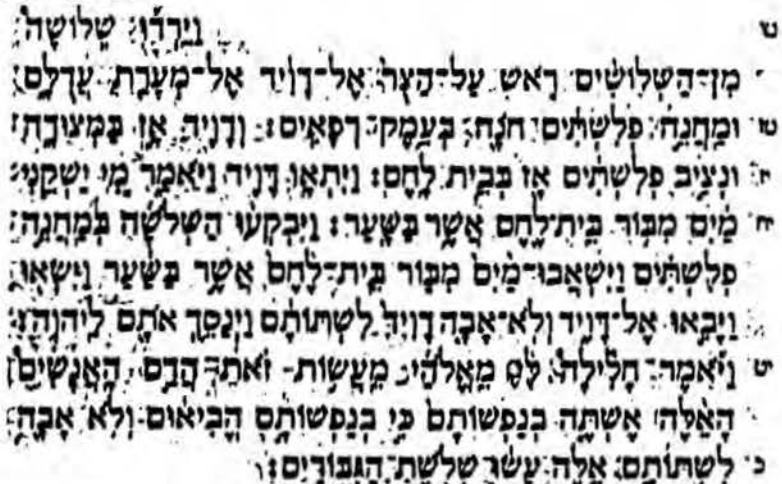
[32] Ibid., p. 139.

mention is made about Solomon being led into idolatry by his numerous wives. Rather the compilers idealize Solomon's wisdom: "No mention is made of the intrigue by which he (Solomon) came to the throne, or of his idolatries or troubles near the close of his life."[33] Further, the Chronicler, with the Priests' Code as his guide and drawing on Samuel and Kings, attempted to give a more complete and consistent history:

> He made more universal the connection between piety and prosperity, and wickedness and adversity, heightening good and bad characters and their rewards and punishments, or creating them according to the exigencies of the occasion. Thus grandeur is added to David by lists of warriors who came to him at Ziglag and of hosts who made him king at Hebron. On the other hand, his domestic troubles, his adultery, and the rebellion of Absalom are passed over in silence.[34]

The following anecdotes are highly idealized perspectives of David and Solomon.

7. I Chronicles 11: 15-19



[33] Ibid. pp. 9-10
[34] Ibid. p. 9

> Three of the thirty chiefs went down to the rock to David at the cave of Adullam, while a force of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold, and a Philistine garrison was then at Bethlehem. David felt a craving and said, "If only I could get a drink of water from the cistern which is by the gate of Bethlehem!" So the three got through the Philistine camp, and drew water from the cistern which is by the gate of Bethlehem, and they carried it back to David. But David would not drink it, and he poured it out as a libation to the Lord. For he said, "God forbid that I should do this! Can I drink the blood of these men who risked their lives?"-- for they had brought it at the risk of their lives, and he would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three warriors.

The context of the passage suggests that this is a tale about "the three warriors." The account is embedded in a chapter that describes the exploits of David's soldiers, and for the most part it repeats II Samuel 23. The anecdote is preceded by a list of David's warriors, and then it is followed by an account of Abishai, the head of another three. But the contents of the story suggest that it is about David, and, like any good anecdote, it is also independent of its context:

> The compiler of 2 S. probably though that the actors of this story were the three mighty men just mentioned, but since they are three of the thirty chief and the thirty have not yet been mentioned, they are probably entirely different and the story is out of its original connection.[35]

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[35] Edward L. Curtis and Albert A. Madsen, *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Books of Chronicles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 188

Other than the conclusion to this anecdote (v.19) which states that this was an exploit of the three warriors-- and another verse that briefly mentions them penetrating the Philistine camp, retrieving the water, and returning-- the account says little about the warriors. The rest concerns David.

David is portrayed as righteous. He is not willing to sacrifice the lives of his men on account of a personal whim, and therefore refuses to drink the water. Instead he offers it as a sacrifice to the Lord. I Chronicles 18:14 states that David treats his subjects fairly: "David reigned over all Israel, and David performed true justice and righteousness among all his people." Our anecdote illustrates this righteousness.

Further, the gesture made by the three warriors, though noble, is unrealistic-- thus reinforcing the story's anecdotal flavor. An anecdote does not need to be true, for it lies between fiction and non-fiction. It offers sufficient detail to make it plausible, but remains vague enough to almost qualify as a short myth or legend. We might argue that the warriors would have drawn enough water for themselves and also for some of the thirty chiefs. This would have been only practical as they prepared themselves for battle. Food and water are important for sustaining troops, as Jonathan notes in I Samuel 14:30: "If only the troops had eaten today of spoil captured from the enemy, the defeat of the Philistines would have been complete."

Given the non-historical nature of the story, its tangential relationship to the overall narrative, and its relative brevity, I Chronicles 10: 15-19 appears to be an anecdote about David's righteous character. Throughout I and II Chronicles David's religious leadership is emphasized.

8. II Chronicles 1: 7-13

This episode may be read as a fairly tale. In one respect it is similar, for example, to the story of Cinderella in that Solomon's humility, modesty, and inherent wisdom earn him a reward beyond earthly expectations. But the episode is not a fairy tale, as it concerns a recognized historical figure.

Nevertheless the account does possess fairy tale type qualities, and its fanciful description of Solomon's divine reward is meant to emphasize Solomon's reputed wisdom which "excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt." Antony F. Campbell notes that the "storyteller was gifted with the insightful eye of one who is wise, as well as with a remarkable capacity for literary expression."[36] In this respect the anecdote is similar to the episode found in I Kings 3: 16-28, in which Solomon renders his famous verdict to divide the child in two.

The episode of II Chronicles 1:7-13 is, however, a reworking of the passage found in I Kings 3: 4-13. But in this earlier version the term "wisdom" is not used. Bernhard Anderson notes, in *Understanding the Old Testament*, that the Chronicler sometimes excerpted passages from Samuel-Kings word for word. At other times they rewrote the tradition according to their interests:

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[36] Antony F. Campbell, *The Study Companion to Old Testament Literature* (Wilmington: Michael Glazer, Inc., 1989) p. 221

> ... they were primarily *interpreters* of the past, who selected the materials that would emphasize aspects of the tradition that were relevant to their own time.[37]

Anderson concludes that "(for the Chronicler) the community was to have its center in the Temple... this liturgical interest is one of the major motifs of the Chronicler's work."[38] This liturgical concern is expressed in II Chronicles 1: 7-13. The Chronicler, in his reinterpretation of this story, adds that the Tent of Meeting happens to be at Gibeon when Solomon visits the shrine. W. A. L. Elmslie notes that it would not suit the Chronicler to record that an initial act of Solomon had been to sacrifice at the high place of Gibeon.[39] The historical interpreters were careful both in guarding Solomon's image and protecting the sanctity of Jerusalem.

Further, whereas in I Kings Solomon asks for an understanding mind and the ability to distinguish between good and bad, in Chronicles Solomon specifically asks for-- in a word--wisdom (חכמה). The Chronicler condenses the relatively wordy petition found in I Kings into a succinct request. Curtis and Madsen note that this passage is just two-thirds as long as that in Kings, "and has been condensed with much skill, gaining force."[40] And in rewriting and condensing the episode, the Chronicler captures Solomon's reputed wisdom:

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[37] Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1986) p. 512

[38] Ibid. p. 513

[39] Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible: Volume III* (New York: Abington Press, 1954) p. 444

[40] Edward L. Curtis and Albert A. Madsen, *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Books of Chronicles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 316

That night the Lord appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask, what shall I grant you?" Solomon said to God, "You dealt most graciously with my father David, and now You have made me king in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let Your promise to my father David be fulfilled; for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Grant me the wisdom and the knowledge to lead this people, for who can govern Your great people?" God said to Solomon, "Because you want this, and have not asked for wealth, property, and glory, nor have you asked for the life of your enemy, or long life for yourself, but you have asked for the wisdom and the knowledge to be able to govern My people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to you, and I grant you also wealth, property, and glory, the like which no king before you has had, nor shall any after you have." From the shrine at Gibeon, from the Tent of Meeting, Solomon went to Jerusalem and reigned over Israel.

In crafting II Chronicles I: 7-13 from I Kings 4- 13 we have an intertextual example of how a biblical anecdote is created. Frank Lintricchia notes that the curious thing about anecdotes is that, though they appear to depend on a stable outside narrative, they in fact work at critical turning points of cultural crises when the outside narrative seems to be slipping away and its binding power has nearly disappeared. For the Chronicler this appears to be precisely the case. The episode may have been rewritten for a community in transition.[41] It perhaps needed the unifying and inspiring power of well crafted anecdotes. And the Chronicler therefore not only retains I Kings 3: 4-13, but rewrites it to achieve specific political and communal ends.

Lintricchia notes that the anecdotalist desires to resuscitate the social and historical bonding whose *absence* is the trigger for his story telling:

> The anecdotalist's act of memory is generative, critical, and cautionary: his implication is always let us remember together, take it to heart, see the bigger picture. The anecdotalist... knows what he wants he can't achieve alone; his largest hope is to engender an engaged readership whose cohesion will lie in a common commitment to a social project, the sustaining of life in the collective narrative. [29]

The Chronicler captures the essence of Solomon's reputed wisdom in this reworked anecdote. He hopes to engender "a readership whose cohesion will lie in a common commitment to a social project." The social project is

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[41] I and II Chronicles may have been composed in the early post-exilic period around the time of the building of the Second Temple (520-515 B.C.E.).

[29] Frank Lintricchia, *Critical Terms for Literary Sudy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 430-431

the unification of Israelite society, by sustaining the memory of its mythic origins in the sacred literature of Israel.

CHAPTER III: THE ROAD NOT TRAVELED

Few works of literary criticism or terminology mention the anecdote. In discussions with both professors of Literature and with lay individuals it has become evident to the author that the anecdote is commonly understood to be little more than "a joke". This, of course, is not the case. The anecdote has a specific definition and only an exclusive group of short stories or episodes meet the anecdote's selective criteria. But given the paucity of works that seriously treat the anecdote genre it may be concluded that it is still dogged by this undeserved reputation.

Texts that do treat the term customarily offer only brief definitions. Included among those that give a cursory examination is the *Dictionary of Literary Terms* by J. A. Cuddon and *Literary Terms and Criticism* by B. Peck. And even these texts sometimes use rather broad definitions. But perhaps the most notorious is Edmund Fuller's *Thesaurus of Anecdotes* which includes short stories quoted from both fictional characters and historical figures. He also qualifies jokes as anecdotes:

> A young lady on her way to business was standing in a crowded New York bus going down Fifth Avenue one morning. She was worrying over the age-old problem of whether or not her slip was showing. Unable to twist around sufficiently to see, she put the question directly to a small boy standing next to her. "No ma'am," he inform her politely. A few blocks farther she alighted and started to move briskly along crowded fifth Avenue. Then, to her horror, she was hailed by the voice of the little boy, calling to her as the bus went by, yelling at the

top of his lungs, "Your slip is showing now, lady, it's showing now![1]

In researching biblical anecdotes it is important to have a precise definition. But whose definition can be used? The question is challenging. The biblical redactors unconsciously discovered the anecdote, but they never contemplated or formulated its principles .

As outlined in the introduction, the anecdote has a long history and a significant evolution. The French defined the term as any amusing incident. But this again is too broad a definition to be useful. One might also look to the sixth century historian Procopius. In this collection of stories, about the Byzantine monarch Justinian I, many of the accounts would be, by a modern definition, too broad and too integral to qualify as anecdotes. But after all, Procopius wrote at a time closer to the ancient Israelites. One might assume that his use of anecdotes would be more in accord with that of the biblical authors.

But this reasoning is ill-considered. Culture and national history are perhaps as great a gulf for Procopius as they are for us. Yet, it is the modern definition that is most useful in researching biblical anecdotes. Why? Though anecdotes were written in Rome and Greece, the art was not discussed nor the principles formulated until the eighteenth century. The storytellers, authors, and redactors of the bible were ignorant of the rules. Yet without giving a name to this literary device, they effectively used it. They created, incorporated, and applied the anecdote in modern ways. In

[1] Edmund Fuller, ed., *Thesaurus of Anecdotes* (New York: Crown Publisher, 1942), p. 127

his essay *In Place of an Afterword-- Someone Reading* Frank Lintricchia offers perhaps the most exhaustive modern analysis of this unusual literary device. And the definition he employs suits the ancient anecdotes under our consideration.

Lintricchia begins his analysis with the standard definition of an anecdote: "a small gossipy narrative generally of an amusing, biographical incident in the life of a famous person." He then observes that the anecdote both binds and activates the community with its cultural power. But when the relation of the teller of the anecdote to a potential audience ceases to be unified by a single myth, anecdotes lose their rhetorical power. Similarly, in determining which anecdotes would be included in this thesis, it was necessary to examine their value to the contemporary society. This process can be problematic, as the relationship between the teller of the anecdotes and the audience has sometimes long been lost. Lintricchia explains this difficulty, drawing from a personal anecdote concerning his grandfather:

> One day, my grandfather, my mother's father, at age seventy-nine, while rocking and smoking (but not inhaling) on his front porch in Utica, New York, in mid-August heat (which he disrecognized by wearing his long johns), directed his grandson's attention (who was then about thirteen) to the man sitting on *his* front porch across the street: not rocking or smoking but huddled into himself, as if it were cold, age eighty. Gesturing with cigarette in hand toward "this American," as he called him (in Italian he inserted between "this" and "American" a salty adjective which is difficult to translate), all while nodding, and in a tone that I recognized only later as much crafted, he said: *La vecchiáia è'na carógna.* A story of biographical incident, maybe funny as it stands, for sure funny if you can translate the Italian, but representative? Probably

> only in the mind of yours truly. You don't, because through no fault of your own you probably can't, get the point (what really is this anecdote of?), though some in my family would-- as would many first-generation Italian Americans, some fewer of the second generation, and fewer yet of my generation. My mother's father is dead and those who remember him (and immigrants like him) in the right way with necessary specificity, where do I find them? Soon this will be an anecdote for me alone because soon it will have no claim whatsoever to being what all we anecdotalists want our stories to be-- a social form which instigates cultural memory: The act of narrative renewal and the reinstatement of social cohesion....
>
> So when the relation of the teller of anecdotes to a potential audience ceases to be unified by a single myth, anecdotes will become (alas!) autonomous, a story for itself alone, not a literary form whose genealogy, in parable and fable, underwrites an equation of literary and social forms as forms of instruction... The anecdotes about George Washington are of course ceaselessly renewed by the political process of American history, though in post-Watergate America the one about the cherry tree may have lost much credibility. But who will renew my grandfather's cultural story? For whom can my grandfather's biography be important? What might it mediate? Who, anyway, makes an anecdote work-- its first author or its cultural authorizer (who is rarely the first author), who by providing us with its mediations thereby both binds and activates us collectively with its cultural power?[2]

Lintricchia offers a comprehensive treatment of the term. But in using his definition, in combination with that of others, a number of potential candidates have been eliminated. This section cites examples that illustrate the criteria used to accept and reject certain episodes.

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[2] Frank Lintricchia, ed., *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp 429-430

II Samuel 11:1- 12:25

The story of David's encounter with Bathsheba has an anecdotal flavor. One year during the time when the kings go out to fight, David remains in the capital and orders his army to go out and battle the Ammonites. While at home, looking out from his palace, David sees a beautiful woman bathing. He discovers that her name is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David disregards the fact that she is married and brings her to his palace and makes Bathsheba his mistress. When she informs him that she is pregnant, David gives the order for Uriah the Hittite to be placed in the heat of battle and that the other soldiers should retreat so that Uriah will be killed. Just as planned, Uriah dies and David then marries Bathsheba.

The story captures David's cleverness. He, once again, ingeniously eliminates his competition (see Chapter 2: II Samuel 6: 20-23). He is resourceful in disposing with Uriah the Hittite. However, if the story ended here it might qualify as an anecdote. An anecdote, by definition, revolves around one episode. But the story continues with Nathan's parable and rebuke of David, and concludes with the death of David's son and the birth of another. The tale has three distinct segments:

וַיְהִי לִתְשׁוּבַת הַשָּׁנָה לְעֵת ׀ צֵאת *
הַמְּלָאכִים וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד אֶת־יוֹאָב וְאֶת־עֲבָדָיו עִמּוֹ וְאֶת־כָּל־
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּשְׁחִתוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וַיָּצֻרוּ עַל־רַבָּה וְדָוִד יוֹשֵׁב
בִּירוּשָׁלִָם: וַיְהִי ׀ לְעֵת הָעֶרֶב וַיָּקָם דָּוִד מֵעַל :

מִשְׁכָּבוֹ וְיִתְהַלֵּךְ עַל־גַּג בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּרְא אִשָּׁה רֹחֶצֶת מֵעַל
הַגָּג וְהָאִשָּׁה טוֹבַת מַרְאֶה מְאֹד: וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיִּדְרֹשׁ לָאִשָּׁה
וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא־זֹאת בַּת־שֶׁבַע בַּת־אֲלִיעָם אֵשֶׁת אוּרִיָּה הַחִתִּי:
וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד מַלְאָכִים וַיִּקָּחֶהָ וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ
וְהִיא מִתְקַדֶּשֶׁת מִטֻּמְאָתָהּ וַתָּשָׁב אֶל־בֵּיתָהּ: וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה
וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתַּגֶּד לְדָוִד וַתֹּאמֶר הָרָה אָנֹכִי: וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד אֶל־יוֹאָב
שְׁלַח אֵלַי אֶת־אוּרִיָּה הַחִתִּי וַיִּשְׁלַח יוֹאָב אֶת־אוּרִיָּה אֶל־
דָּוִד: וַיָּבֹא אוּרִיָּה אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁאַל דָּוִד לִשְׁלוֹם יוֹאָב וְלִשְׁלוֹם
הָעָם וְלִשְׁלוֹם הַמִּלְחָמָה: וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד לְאוּרִיָּה רֵד לְבֵיתְךָ וּרְחַץ
רַגְלֶיךָ וַיֵּצֵא אוּרִיָּה מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתֵּצֵא אַחֲרָיו מַשְׂאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ:
וַיִּשְׁכַּב אוּרִיָּה פֶּתַח בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת כָּל־עַבְדֵי אֲדֹנָיו וְלֹא יָרַד
אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ: וַיַּגִּדוּ לְדָוִד לֵאמֹר לֹא־יָרַד אוּרִיָּה אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר
דָּוִד אֶל־אוּרִיָּה הֲלוֹא מִדֶּרֶךְ אַתָּה בָּא מַדּוּעַ לֹא־יָרַדְתָּ אֶל־
בֵּיתֶךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר אוּרִיָּה אֶל־דָּוִד הָאָרוֹן וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וִיהוּדָה יֹשְׁבִים
בַּסֻּכּוֹת וַאדֹנִי יוֹאָב וְעַבְדֵי אֲדֹנִי עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה חֹנִים וַאֲנִי
אָבוֹא אֶל־בֵּיתִי לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׁכַּב עִם־אִשְׁתִּי חַיֶּךָ וְחֵי
נַפְשֶׁךָ אִם־אֶעֱשֶׂה אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל־אוּרִיָּה
שֵׁב בָּזֶה גַּם־הַיּוֹם וּמָחָר אֲשַׁלְּחֶךָּ וַיֵּשֶׁב אוּרִיָּה בִּירוּשָׁלַם בַּיּוֹם
הַהוּא וּמִמָּחֳרָת: וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ דָּוִד וַיֹּאכַל לְפָנָיו וַיֵּשְׁתְּ וַיְשַׁכְּרֵהוּ
וַיֵּצֵא בָּעֶרֶב לִשְׁכַּב בְּמִשְׁכָּבוֹ עִם־עַבְדֵי אֲדֹנָיו וְאֶל־בֵּיתוֹ לֹא
יָרַד: וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַיִּכְתֹּב דָּוִד סֵפֶר אֶל־יוֹאָב וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיַד אוּרִיָּה:
וַיִּכְתֹּב בַּסֵּפֶר לֵאמֹר הָבוּ אֶת־אוּרִיָּה אֶל־מוּל פְּנֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה
הַחֲזָקָה וְשׁוּבֻתֶם מֵאַחֲרָיו וְנִכָּה וָמֵת: וַיְהִי

בְּשֻׁשַׁן יוֹאָב אֶל־הָעַיִד וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־אוּרִיָּה אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר
יָדַע כִּי אַנְשֵׁי־חַיִל שָׁם: וַיֵּצְאוּ אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר וַיִּלָּחֲמוּ אֶת־יוֹאָב
וַיִּפֹּל מִן־הָעָם מַעַבְדֵי דָוִד וַיָּמָת גַּם אוּרִיָּה הַחִתִּי: וַיִּשְׁלַח
יוֹאָב וַיַּגֶּד לְדָוִד אֵת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה: וַיְצַו אֶת־הַמַּלְאָךְ
לֵאמֹר כְּכַלּוֹתְךָ אֵת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ:
וְהָיָה אִם־תַּעֲלֶה חֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאָמַר לְךָ מַדּוּעַ נִגַּשְׁתֶּם אֶל־
הָעִיר לְהִלָּחֵם הֲלוֹא יְדַעְתֶּם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יֹרוּ מֵעַל הַחוֹמָה: מִי־
הִכָּה אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ בֶּן־יְרֻבֶּשֶׁת הֲלוֹא אִשָּׁה הִשְׁלִיכָה עָלָיו
פֶּלַח רֶכֶב מֵעַל הַחוֹמָה וַיָּמָת בְּתֵבֵץ לָמָּה נִגַּשְׁתֶּם אֶל־הַחוֹמָה
וְאָמַרְתָּ גַּם עַבְדְּךָ אוּרִיָּה הַחִתִּי מֵת: וַיֵּלֶךְ הַמַּלְאָךְ וַיָּבֹא
וַיַּגֶּד לְדָוִד אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר שְׁלָחוֹ יוֹאָב: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְאָךְ אֶל־
דָּוִד כִּי־גָבְרוּ עָלֵינוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּצְאוּ אֵלֵינוּ הַשָּׂדֶה וַנְּהִי
עֲלֵיהֶם עַד־פֶּתַח הַשָּׁעַר: וַיֹּרוּ הַמּוֹרִים אֶל־עֲבָדֶיךָ מֵעַל
הַחוֹמָה וַיָּמָתוּ מֵעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְגַם עַבְדְּךָ אוּרִיָּה הַחִתִּי
מֵת: וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל־הַמַּלְאָךְ כֹּה־תֹאמַר אֶל־
יוֹאָב אַל־יֵרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה כִּי־כָזֶה וְכָזֶה תֹּאכַל
הֶחָרֶב הַחֲזֵק מִלְחַמְתְּךָ אֶל־הָעִיר וְהָרְסָהּ וְחַזְּקֵהוּ: וְתֹאמֶץ
אֹתָּהּ אוּרִיָּה כִּי־מֵת אוּרִיָּה אִישָׁהּ וַתִּסְפֹּד עַל־בַּעְלָהּ:
וַיַּעֲבֹר הָאֵבֶל וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיַּאַסְפָהּ אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַתְּהִי־לוֹ
לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ בֵּן וַיֵּרַע הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה דָּוִד בְּעֵינֵי
יְהוָה: וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֶת־נָתָן אֶל־דָּוִד וַיָּבֹא אֵלָיו
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ שְׁנֵי אֲנָשִׁים הָיוּ בְּעִיר אַחַת אֶחָד עָשִׁיר וְאֶחָד רָאשׁ:
לָעָשִׁיר הָיָה צֹאן וּבָקָר הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד: וְלָרָשׁ אֵין־כֹּל כִּי אִם־
כִּבְשָׂה אַחַת קְטַנָּה אֲשֶׁר קָנָה וַיְחַיֶּהָ וַתִּגְדַּל עִמּוֹ וְעִם־בָּנָיו
יַחְדָּו כִּפְתּוֹ תֹאכַל וּמִכֹּסוֹ תִשְׁתֶּה וּבְחֵיקוֹ תִשְׁכָּב וַתְּהִי־לוֹ
כְּבַת: וַיָּבֹא הַלָּךְ לְאִישׁ הֶעָשִׁיר וַיַּחְמֹל לָקַחַת מִצֹּאנוֹ וּמִבְקָרוֹ
לַעֲשׂוֹת לָאֹרֵחַ הַבָּא לוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־כִּבְשַׂת הָאִישׁ הָרָאשׁ וַיַּעֲשֶׂהָ

א וַיָּשִׂימוּ לוֹ לֶחֶם וַיֹּאכַל: וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲבָדָיו אֵלָיו מָה־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה
אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָה בַּעֲבוּר הַיֶּלֶד חַי עֲמֹת וַתֶּבְךְּ וְכַאֲשֶׁר מֵת הַיֶּלֶד
ב קַמְתָּ וַתֹּאכַל לָחֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר בְּעוֹד הַיֶּלֶד חַי צַמְתִּי וָאֶבְכֶּה כִּי
ג אָמַרְתִּי מִי יוֹדֵעַ יחנני יְהוָה וְחַי הַיָּלֶד: וְעַתָּה ׀ מַת לָמָּה זֶּה
אֲנִי צָם הַאוּכַל לַהֲשִׁיבוֹ עוֹד אֲנִי הֹלֵךְ אֵלָיו וְהוּא לֹא־יָשׁוּב
ד אֵלָי: וַיְנַחֵם דָּוִד אֶת בַּת־שֶׁבַע אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב
עִמָּהּ וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן ויקרא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שְׁלֹמֹה וַיהוָה אֲהֵבוֹ:
ה וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיַד נָתָן הַנָּבִיא וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יְדִידְיָהּ בַּעֲבוּר
ו יְהוָה:

Yet the story, though longer than an anecdote, stands on its own. It is not integral to the surrounding text. And it contains a moral that may have been important to Israelite society. David's deeds, though outrageous, serve to illustrate Israel's belief about its relationship with God. Antony Campbell suggests that David, in his private life, is guilty of homicidal and sexual transgressions. In the public life of the kingdom, his family will be pursued by homicidal and sexual violence:

> Here there is evidence for the widespread conviction in Israel that human acts have their inevitable consequences. There are two ways, at least, of understanding this conviction. One attributes the consequences to the judicial act of God, judging the sinner guilty and apportioning the penalty.[3]

As we have seen with Solomon, the behavior and character of the king reflects upon the national character of the people. Though not an anecdote, it acts and functions as one. Only its structure bars it from inclusion.

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[3] Antony F. Campbell, *The Study Companion to Old Testament Literature* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1989) p. 267

I Chronicles 19: 1-5

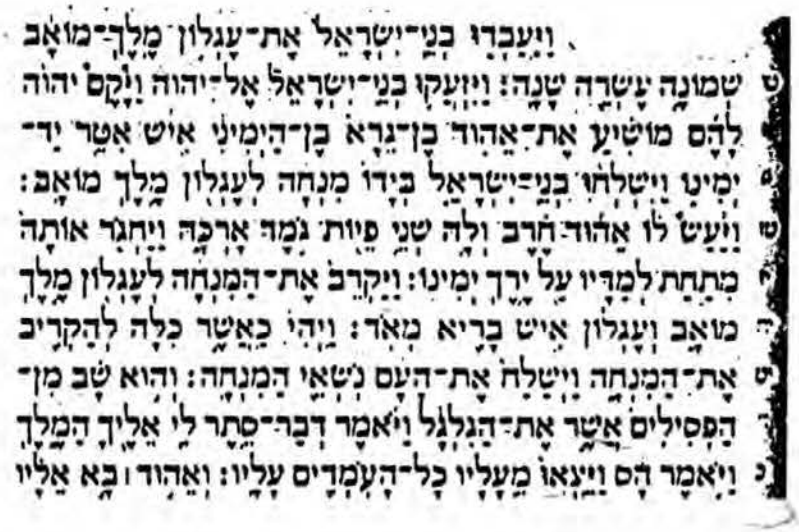
א וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי־כֵן וַיָּמָת נָחָשׁ מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן וַיִּמְלֹךְ בְּנוֹ תַּחְתָּיו׃
ב וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִיד אֶעֱשֶׂה־חֶסֶד עִם־חָנוּן בֶּן־נָחָשׁ כִּי־עָשָׂה אָבִיו
עִמִּי חָסֶד וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִיד מַלְאָכִים לְנַחֲמוֹ עַל־אָבִיו וַיָּבֹאוּ
ג עַבְדֵי דָוִיד אֶל־אֶרֶץ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן אֶל־חָנוּן לְנַחֲמוֹ׃ וַיֹּאמְרוּ
שָׂרֵי בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן לְחָנוּן הֲמְכַבֵּד דָּוִיד אֶת־אָבִיךָ בְּעֵינֶיךָ כִּי־
שָׁלַח לְךָ מְנַחֲמִים הֲלֹא בַּעֲבוּר לַחְקֹר וְלַהֲפֹךְ וּלְרַגֵּל הָאָרֶץ
ד בָּאוּ עֲבָדָיו אֵלֶיךָ׃ וַיִּקַּח חָנוּן אֶת־עַבְדֵי דָוִיד וַיְגַלַּח וַיִּכְרֹת
ה אֶת־מַדְוֵיהֶם בְּחֶצְיָ עַד־הַמִּפְשָׁעָה וַיְשַׁלַּח׃ וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיַּגִּידוּ
לְדָוִיד עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁלַח לִקְרָאתָם כִּי־הָיוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים
נִכְלָמִים מְאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁבוּ בִירֵחוֹ עַד אֲשֶׁר־יְצַמַּח
זְקַנְכֶם וְשַׁבְתֶּם׃

Sometime afterward, Nahash the king of the Ammonites died, and his son succeeded him as king. David said, "I will keep faith with Hanun son of Nahash, since his father kept faith with me." David sent messengers with condolences to him over his father. But when David's courtiers came to the land of Ammon to Hanun, with condolensces, the Ammonite officials said to Hanun, "Do you think David is really honoring your father just because he sent you men with condolences? Why, it is to explore, to subvert, and to spy out the land that his courtiers have come to you." So Hanun seized David's courtiers, shaved them, and cut away half of their garments up to the buttocks, and sent them off. When David was told about the men, he dispatched others to meet them, for the men were greatly embarrassed. And the king gave orders, "Stay in Jericho until your beards grow back; then you can return."

This is a difficult story to eliminate as an anecdote. It is brief and it illustrates David's honorable character. Immediately preceding this passage, I Chronicles 18:14 states that David "reigned over all Israel, and David executed true justice among all his people." The story depicts a just and compassionate king, and indeed appears to be an illustration of v. 14. But the story is integral to the entire chapter; which outlines the disintegration of the Ammonite-Israelite diplomatic relationship.

Hanun's thoughtless gesture precipitates an escalation in troop movement on both sides and the rallying of allies (vv. 6-11). Shortly thereafter, in "the season when kings go out to battle" Joab led an army that devastated the land of Ammon (I Chron. 20: 1). Hanun's insult therefore set in motion a chain of events. If relations had remained as they were under Nahash, Israel and the Ammonites probably would not have engaged in battle. Though the story appears to be an anecdote, its function within the text indicates otherwise.

Judges 3: 15-28


וַיַּעַבְדוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֶגְלוֹן מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב
שְׁמֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה: וַיִּזְעֲקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיָּקֶם יְהוָה
לָהֶם מוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־אֵהוּד בֶּן־גֵּרָא בֶּן־הַיְמִינִי אִישׁ אִטֵּר יַד־
יְמִינוֹ וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָדוֹ מִנְחָה לְעֶגְלוֹן מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב:
וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ אֵהוּד חֶרֶב וְלָהּ שְׁנֵי פִיוֹת גֹּמֶד אָרְכָּהּ וַיַּחְגֹּר אוֹתָהּ
מִתַּחַת לְמַדְיֵו עַל יֶרֶךְ יְמִינוֹ: וַיַּקְרֵב אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה לְעֶגְלוֹן מֶלֶךְ
מוֹאָב וְעֶגְלוֹן אִישׁ בָּרִיא מְאֹד: וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כִּלָּה לְהַקְרִיב
אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה וַיְשַׁלַּח אֶת־הָעָם נֹשְׂאֵי הַמִּנְחָה: וְהוּא שָׁב מִן־
הַפְּסִילִים אֲשֶׁר אֶת־הַגִּלְגָּל וַיֹּאמֶר דְּבַר־סֵתֶר לִי אֵלֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ
וַיֹּאמֶר הָס וַיֵּצְאוּ מֵעָלָיו כָּל־הָעֹמְדִים עָלָיו: וְאֵהוּד וּבָא אֵלָיו

וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב בַּעֲלִיַּת הַמְקֵרָה אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ לְבַדּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵהוּד דְּבַר־
אֱלֹהִים לִי אֵלֶיךָ וַיָּקָם מֵעַל הַכִּסֵּא: וַיִּשְׁלַח אֵהוּד אֶת־יַד
שְׂמֹאלוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַחֶרֶב מֵעַל יֶרֶךְ יְמִינוֹ וַיִּתְקָעֶהָ בְּבִטְנוֹ:
וַיָּבֹא גַּם־הַנִּצָּב אַחַר הַלַּהַב וַיִּסְגֹּר הַחֵלֶב בְּעַד הַלַּהַב כִּי לֹא
שָׁלַף הַחֶרֶב מִבִּטְנוֹ וַיֵּצֵא הַפַּרְשְׁדֹנָה: וַיֵּצֵא אֵהוּד הַמִּסְדְּרוֹנָה
וַיִּסְגֹּר דַּלְתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה בַּעֲדוֹ וְנָעָל: וְהוּא יָצָא וַעֲבָדָיו בָּאוּ
וַיִּרְאוּ וְהִנֵּה דַלְתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה נְעוּלוֹת וַיֹּאמְרוּ אַךְ מֵסִיךְ הוּא
אֶת־רַגְלָיו בַּחֲדַר הַמְקֵרָה: וַיָּחִילוּ עַד־בּוֹשׁ וְהִנֵּה אֵינֶנּוּ פֹתֵחַ
דַּלְתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־הַמַּפְתֵּחַ וַיִּפְתָּחוּ וְהִנֵּה אֲדֹנֵיהֶם נֹפֵל
אַרְצָה מֵת: וְאֵהוּד נִמְלַט עַד הִתְמַהְמְהָם וְהוּא עָבַר אֶת־
הַפְּסִילִים וַיִּמָּלֵט הַשְּׂעִירָתָה: וַיְהִי בְּבוֹאוֹ וַיִּתְקַע בַּשּׁוֹפָר
בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם וַיֵּרְדוּ עִמּוֹ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָהָר וְהוּא לִפְנֵיהֶם:
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם רִדְפוּ אַחֲרַי כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה אֶת־אֹיְבֵיכֶם אֶת־
מוֹאָב בְּיֶדְכֶם וַיֵּרְדוּ אַחֲרָיו וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן
לְמוֹאָב וְלֹא־נָתְנוּ אִישׁ לַעֲבֹר:

Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord, and the Lord raised up a champion for them: the Benjaminite Ehudson of Gera, a left-handed man. It happened that the Israelites sent tribute to king Eglon of Moab through him. So Ehud made for himself a two-edged dagger, a *gomed* in length, which he girded on his ride side under his cloak. He presented the tribute to King Eglon of Moab. Now Eglon was a very stout man. When (Ehud) had finished presenting the tribute, he dismissed the people who had conveyed the tribute. But he himself returned from Pesilim, near Gilgal, and said, "Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you." (Eglon) thereupon commanded, "Silence!" So all those in attendance left his presence; and when Ehud approached him, he was sitting alone in his cool upper chamber. Ehud said, "I have a message for you from God"; whereupon he rose from his seat. Reaching with his left hand, Ehud drew the dagger from his right side and drove it into (Eglon's) belly. The fat closed over the blade and the hilt went in after the blade-- for he did not pull the dagger out of his belly-- and the filth came out.

> Stepping out into the vestibule, Ehud shut the doors of the upper chamber on him and locked them. After he left, the courtiers returned. When they saw that the doors of the upper chamber were locked, they thought, "He must be relieving himself in the cool chamber." They waited a long time; and when he did not open the doors of the chamber, they took the key and opened them-- and there their master was lying dead on the floor! But Ehud made good his escape while they delayed...

The episode lies in the realm between short story and anecdote. It cannot be completely eliminated as anecdote. But its place in the genre is difficult to determine-- particularly as a *biblical* anecdote. It is, for the most part, a completely secular account. It's introduction (vv. 13-15) helps to blend it into the text, but it still stands as an independent narrative. This is, as discussed above, one criterion of a good anecdote. Further, the episode revolves around a single event and is graphic in its detail. The description of Eglon as a very "stout man" is stressed. He is so obese that rolls of fat enclose over the sword driven into his belly. The suspense is developed when the messengers deliver a tribute to Eglon and then leave without incident. As Edmund Fuller notes: "The telling of an anecdote in a speech or conversation requires a certain amount of 'build up,' serving first to settle upon the speaker any wandering attention, and then to maintain this attention and keep it at a maximum for the climax of the story."[4] It is easy to envision an ancient Israelite story teller building suspense among his audience as he begins this story. But then Ehud returns to kill the king, and escapes.

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[4] Edmund Fuller, *Thesaurus of Anecdotes* (New York: Crown Publisher, 1942), p. vii.

Antony F. Campbell suggests that there are traces of a faith context in the ironic "message from God" (v 20): "It is confirmed by the rallying cry in v 28: 'Follow me, for the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand.'" [5] In Ehud's slaughter of Eglon there is an intimation that God's will can be discerned. Further, the redactor of the text has placed this account in a framework that encourages religious interpretation.

Then why is this not an anecdote? Religion still remains periphery to the account, its placement in the text only *suggests* a religious interpretation. Further, the larger biography of Ehud is unknown. We do not know if this story illustrates a well-known aspect of Ehud's personality. For example, was he, like David, a particularly crafty fellow? As illustrated in the anecdote about Lintricchia's grandfather, no audience remains to interpret the anecdote's significance. It is amusing and entertaining, but too much information has been lost to count this as a biblical anecdote. It is for these reasons that the author has reluctantly included the story in this chapter.

Exodus 4: 24-26

כד וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בַּמָּלוֹן וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ
יהוה וַיְבַקֵּשׁ הֲמִיתוֹ: כה וַתִּקַּח צִפֹּרָה צֹר וַתִּכְרֹת אֶת־עָרְלַת
בְּנָהּ וַתַּגַּע לְרַגְלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי חֲתַן־דָּמִים אַתָּה לִי: כו וַיִּרֶף
מִמֶּנּוּ אָז אָמְרָה חֲתַן דָּמִים לַמּוּלֹת:

At a night encampment on the way, the Lord encountered him and sought to kill him. So Zipporah took a flint and

[5] Antony F. Campbell, *The Study Companion to Old Testament Literature* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1989) p. 185.

> cut off her son's foreskin, and touched his legs with it, saying, "You are truly a bridegroom of blood to me!" And when He let him alone, she added, "A bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision."

The preceding is one of the more perplexing accounts in the Pentateuch. But the story tells us something about the strength of Zippporah's character. It is similar to anecdote #2 in that the subject of the narrative is female, and the event apparently takes place on the couple's wedding night. Further, the story contains an element of intimacy.

J. C. Rylaarsdam[5] suggests that the story originally included a demon who was attempting to take Moses' life, and it was Zipporah's quick-witted presence of mind that helped them avoid the attack. Her sharp phraseology, quick reaction, and almost surly gesture of casting the foreskin at her husband's feet suggest an unusually strong personality-- not unlike that of Israelite Judge Deborah. And the fact that it is Zipporah-- a woman-- who performs the circumcision only adds to the mystery. Further, she calls her husband a "bridegroom of blood" twice, and clarifies her initial statement by noting that he is bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision. This suggests that their may be a hidden double meaning or pun in what she says. The episode illustrates Zipporah's unique character, but we do not know much about her broader biography, and therefore it is difficult to determine if this is an actual anecdote.

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[5] Nolan B. Harmon, *The Interpreter's Bible*, (New York: Abington-Cokesbury Press, 1952)

CHAPTER IV: THE POLITICS OF THE ANECDOTE

As noted in the introduction, the anecdote apparently has no antecedents in the literature of the Near East. It is therefore tempting to credit the creation and original use of the anecdote to the native genius of the ancient Israelites. The Japanese, for example, had their own literary inventions-- the *waka* and the *haiku*. Both are indigenous styles of poetry to Japan, and the Japanese were conscious of the fact that these were a product of their own culture. However, with the bible we have no indication that the Israelites were aware of their own literary inventions. Further, given the many influences that penetrated Israelite society, it is possible that this medium-- the anecdote-- was borrowed from other cultures. Perhaps it was because of their geographical location-- being a land bridge between numerous nations and cultures-- that Israel became acquainted with this genre. Maybe they brought it from Babylonia. Or maybe it entered Israelite society through the influence of Hellenism.

Whatever its origins the anecdote's principles were undefined, however its fundamental nature would have been well understood. An anecdote by itself is not told around a campfire. One does not sit down to listen to an anecdote for it is too short. The stories of the Exodus, of Joseph, or Ruth would require a sitting. An anecdote is brief, to the point, and can be told in passing, in conversation, or in a speech. The anecdote grabs its audience's attention, and then almost as quickly it releases them, leaving them with a lasting impression of its subject's character. Within a written text anecdotes

are concise. The biblical editors may have been attracted to the anecdote precisely because it is easily grasped by the reader.

Often what the anecdote specifically brings to a biography is humor. Humor can be pivotal or periphery to a legend or fairly tale, but it is frequently central to the anecdote. At the risk of being anachronistic, the anecdote appears at times to function as comic relief for the sometimes desperate stories that fill the canon. We don't have to look much further than the account of Ehud and Eglon[1] to understand that here is an account that offers a humorous twist to a serious religious concern.

The humor of the biblical anecdotes can also have popular appeal. When David feigns madness in front of Achish, the Israelite reader may see himself represented in the story. The reputedly heroic David acts like a common madman to escape execution. There is no divine intervention to facilitate his escape, he uses just his natural wits. Joseph interprets dreams, Moses performs miracles, but David drools. Again, as when he exposes himself before the people, his behavior is less than regal-- it is in fact anti-heroic. The audience can therefore more easily identify with David's character.

But most importantly the anecdote captures a particular aspect of an individual's personality. For example, we might say that Saul is depicted as volatile, David as clever, and Solomon as wise. This, of course, does not do justice to the complexities of their personalities. But the anecdote is not concerned with complexity, it paints the large picture. It captures the person

[1] Though not counted in this thesis as an anecdote, it possesses many of the qualities of one.

in one broad brush-stroke. For example, President Calvin Coolidge was known as a solemn man given to few words. The fact that Coolidge was an avid angler, cigar smoker, and member of the National Press Club is irrelevant, or at best periphery, to an anecdote. Let us consider the following:

> A lady sitting next to Coolidge at a dinner tried to coax him into talking to her. "I have made a bet, Mr. Coolidge, that I could get more than two words out of you."
> "You lose," said Coolidge.

The anecdote is a relatively uncomplicated literary device and is, as mentioned earlier, the decoration on biography. Because of its simplicity it offers clear insight into the subject's personally. Friedrich Nietzche, for example, believed that few anecdotes were needed in order to achieve an accurate picture of a person's personality.

We have several anecdotes about the rulers of the United Monarchy. There are more however about David than about Saul or Solomon. The United Monarchy split apart following Solomon's death. In its place emerged two smaller kingdoms which would exist alongside each other for nearly two hundred years. The northern kingdom took the name Israel and the southern kingdom called itself Judah. It is in the southern kingdom of Judah that the unique historical and cultural demands become evident. The southern redactors of the Deuteronomistic History had specific goals and employed the anecdote to support social and political objectives. Namely the editors

were interested in centralizing worship in Jerusalem. Cultic matters were of primary concern, and they wanted to preserve the distinctive elements of Israel's faith while strengthening Josiah's own claim to be the legitimate Davidic king of Israel. They drew from an idealized past to provide the necessary models for their reform:

> Josiah's reform... represented a break with Assyria, whose cultural influence had been deeply impressed upon Judah during the reign of Menasseh. Religiously, it involved a repudiation of what in those days might have been called "modernism": the attempt to conform to the religious fashions of the Assyrian empire and to blend Israel's religion and other religions into a coat of many colors. Josiah's reform was essentially conservative, for it sought to return to and conserve the distinctive elements of Israel's faith, rather than capitulate to the cultural pressures of the world. The reform was based on the conviction that unless people repudiated the syncretism that sapped their vitality, Judah would go the way of the Northern Kingdom, which had been destroyed because the sacred past... had been forgotten.[2]

To this end some scholars believe that an attempt may have been made to discredit Saul in the text, as he represents the old tribal order. Whereas David is the young and vigorous progenitor of a dynasty that continues through Josiah.

David is simultaneously glorified and humanized. The anecdotes about David make him into a figure with which the common individual can identify-- and this is the political genius of the editors. David is an eternal

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[2] Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1986), p. 375

hero because he comes from humble origins and acts like a common man but becomes king. He establishes a dynasty patterned after the Covenant of Sinai, fights great battles, and expands Israel's territory. He is righteous in the eyes of God. Yet, when he exposes himself before the ark he is a common man (anecdote #4), when he feigns madness he is a common man (anecdote #3) , and when he scurries out his bedroom window he is also a common man (anecdote #2). The editor uses the anecdote to propagandize the idea that David is a man of the people who is energetic in his exploits. But David's popularity is gained at the expense of his predecessor Saul:

> David represents the youth and vigor of the new national order within which Israel was to find a new unity and was to search for a new formulation of its historic faith. Saul himself belonged more to the old period than to the new age that was coming with historical inevitability. But Saul's rejection by Samuel put him outside the sanctions and supports of the old regime; and David's popularity was a constant reminder that Saul could not enter the new.[3]

This is not to suggest, however, that David's character and personality are inventions of the Deuteronomistic historian. Many of the anecdotes had probably long captured the imagination of previous generations. But the accounts are colored by the political biases of circles sympathetic to David:

> ...the narratives of I Samuel are now dominated by the bias of historians of the southern kingdom of Judah, and Saul is put in an unfavorable light in order to enhance the prestige of David, who founded the dynasty of Judah. We must remember that all the traditions of the

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[3] Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1986), p. 214

> monarchy were preserved and edited by Jerusalem circles, which were sympathetic toward David.[4]

Anderson contemplates what would happen if we had a historical narrative written in circles sympathetic to Saul, perhaps written by members of Saul's own tribe Benjamin. Saul might have emerged as a heroic figure who, "like Hamlet was the victim of baffling, uncontrollable circumstances and the dark depths of his own sensitive and passionate nature."[5] But it is appropriate that the reformers should look to David as their model. David ushered in a new stage of Israel's development, and was visionary in his plan to build the Temple. Similarly Josiah, presented with the newly discovered book of Law, also sought to lead Israel through a national religious reformation.

Josiah's objective was to centralize worship in Jerusalem. The biblical text suggests that Josiah was presented with a Book of Law (perhaps a version of the Deuteronomic text) by Shaphan the secretary of Hilkiah the high priest, who reported finding the book in the Temple. Shaphan read the book to Josiah. After consulting Huldah, Josiah, using the text as his guide, implemented his reforms.

The proposed reforms were an ideal, however, but the political realities in Israel that, under Hezekiah, originally necessitated the centralization of worship in Jerusalem no longer existed when Josiah came to power:

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[4] Ibid., p. 215
[5] Ibid., p. 215

> The idea of centralization had already emerged, of course, in the days of Hezekiah. Thus when the Deuteronomic corpus was put into effect at the time of Josiah's reform, the concept was in the text awaiting enforcement. For Hezekiah, the move toward centralization was a defensive maneuver. He wished to associate Yahwism so closely and exclusively with Jerusalem that the people throughout the land would fight loyally to defend the royal city. Conditions were different under Josiah. The priests of Jerusalem would have had their reasons for favoring centralization, and it was perhaps under their influence that the idea was written into the Deuteronomic materials from the beginning. Times were different now, however, and the need to strengthen national defense on the basis of a centralized place of worship was no longer an issue. Thus even if Josiah pushed the idea, it seems not to have met with overwhelming success.[6]

With the weakening of Assyrian influence in the region and a laissez faire style of governance by the Egyptians, Hilkiah the High Priest, and perhaps Josiah too, may have felt that the time was ripe to revive the old ideology.

It is unclear as to who may have written the Book of Law found in the Temple. But scholars have speculated that the Book was a "pious fraud", perhaps written by one of the Temple scribes or priests. Perhaps Josiah himself participated in the manufacturing of this document. Conveniently, Josiah was able to use this newly "discovered" text to institute his sweeping reforms. Under the reinstitution of these laws Sacrifice to Yahweh was to be confined to the central sanctuary, and people would now also have to make pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the great religious festivals.

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[6] J. Maxwell Miller, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press., 1986), p. 399.

Josiah, using this document to add legitimacy to these changes, may have also enhanced the character's of David and Solomon in order to undergird the Deuteronomic Reformation. By emphasizing his association with David and Solomon, Josiah combines within himself two types of leaders. The first is that of a true leader who is attempting to implement a complicated and delicate series of reforms. Usually this person works behind the scenes and sets the administration's agenda. The second is that which Miles Copeland calls a "handsome front man"-- someone whose personality and mythos can excite the population. It appears that Josiah may have believed that the personalities and myth of David and Solomon could be instrumental in galvanizing the people.

In his book *The Game of Nations* , Miles Copeland labels the two types of leadership as the 'Naguib style' and the 'Nasser style'. These styles are a way of explaining the Egyptian people's receptivity in the mid-twentieth century to public communication as an instrument of social change. Naguib was an Egyptian general who projected what for Egytians during the 1950's was an image of a lovable and kindly old crook. "He was the sort of idol Egyptians tend to fall back on in their quieter moments between sprees of violence incited by more austere leader types."[7] But his style in thinking and speaking could be attributed to an image that was carefully constructed by others. Most notably this was accomplished by author Leigh White, who actually wrote many of the wise sayings attributed to Naguib. In this sense the 'Naguib style' is similar to the anecdotal David or Solomon.

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[7] Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicoloson, 1969), p. 98.

But while the 'Naguib style' makes a nice national figure-head, the 'Nasser type' is more managerial:

> As Nasser, before the coup, took a good look at his country, he saw people who didn't really want anything, who weren't really motivated in any direction. He saw that it was necessary to surround them with an environment which would stimulate the motivation; the 'leader' was merely a part of the environment...And it was not necessary to Nasser that he be the leader himself, so long as he could engineer the environment and retain control of it... Nasser wanted a figurehead, and Naguib could have stayed on indefinitely as long as he was content to remain one. And 'engineering an environment', rather than Hitler-type leadership, is the Nasser style.[8]

Both styles are evident in the biblical text. The anecdotes about David and Solomon tell of a need for a 'Naguib style' leadership. But clearly during the time of Josiah there was also a 'Nasser' type who could operate in the background and dispassionately directed the various stages of religious reform.

Similarly, in order to engineer the environment and therefore stimulate and motivate the people, Nasser found it neccessary to create a myth-- he needed to decide what traditions to institute. Nasser dispassionately decided upon what myth to adopt. His new myth would eventually become the aspirations and convictions of his people. In Nasser's case, after displacing General Naguib, he set himself up as the symbol of the downtrodden who could 'humiliate those who humiliate the Arabs.'

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[8] Ibid., p. 99

From Nasser's example it becomes clear that a national leader can potentialy present to his people any kind of propoganda in order to motivate them to move in a particular direction. And we perhaps see this same process at work with Josiah's Deuteronomic Reformation. Truth is almost irrelevant, or at best secondary, to these efforts. The "pious fraud" -- the Book of the Law-- and the manipulation of the characters of David and Solomon may have served Josiah's purposes in much the same way as myth and General Naguib did for Nasser.

Later redactors of the Deuteromomic material remained committed to the project of centralization. And they perhaps further enhanced the image of David and Solomon through later revisions. The anecdotes offer idealized accounts of the monarchs' personalities. And their ideal characters are central to an ideal theology. The reformers and redactors understood the key role that anecdotes played in presenting their reforms to a public that was still attracted to foreign modes of worship.

From this we may conclude that a tool of this reformation was propaganda. Leaders have at their disposal an array of techniques to motivate the public. Richard Lambert notes in *Propaganda*, that the essence of propaganda is to influence people to do or to think things which they would not do or think if left to themselves.[9] The Romans were early masters of propaganda:

> The Imperial Roman Empire between 50 B.C. and 50 A.D. applied systematic propaganda techniques that utilized all of the available forms of communication and symbology to create an extremely effective and extensive

[9] Richard S. Lambert, *Propaganda* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1939), p. 9

> network of control. The resulting image of Imperial Rome remains strong even today... The Roman Emperors developed their propaganda strategies to meet a very real need. The geographic extent of far-flung conquests had created a difficult problem of control and necessitated the development of a strong, highly visible centralized government. The wealth and power that had come with the conquests were used to maximum advantage as vast sums of money were spent on symbolizing the might of Rome through architecture, art and literature, and even the coinage. [10]

Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnel note however, in *Propaganda and Persuasion* , that propaganda, particularly in the realm of religion, is not necessarily negative:

> When considering the effect of long-range propaganda activities, there have been no more successful campaigns than those waged by the great proselytizing religions of Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. Although each of these great religions has used different strategies to achieve its purpose, they have all relied upon the use of charismatic figures, heavy symbolism, a simple and incessant moral philosophy, and an understanding of their audience's needs. In each case the new religion had to find a way to replace the existing religious beliefs, and to win over the minds and hearts of the populace. To examine the propaganda tactics of a religion in no way demeans it; on the contrary, it provides a clear example that not all propaganda messages are negative, but are often aimed at some positive social or political purpose.[11]

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[10] Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnel *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications 1986), p. 40

[11] Ibid., p. 42

From the start, propaganda was associated with religion. The Catholic Church, for example, was deliberate in its use of propaganda to counter the effects of the Reformation. A Commission of Cardinals was set up by Gregory XIII. (1572-85), charged with spreading Catholicism and regulating ecclesiastical affairs in heretic, schismatic, or heathen lands. A generation later Gregory XV. in 1622 made the Commission permanent, as a sacred congregation *de propaganda fide*.[12] This first propagandist institute was therefore simply a body charged with improving the spread of a group of religious dogmas.

Similarly the Deuteronomistic Historian and Chronicler desired to counter what they perceived to be the corrosive effects of foreign religious practice. To underscore the validity of their reforms they relied upon the use of charismatic figures-- particularly those drawn from the past. The redactors either altered, omitted, or rewrote events to suit their objectives. By modern criteria this might be classified as historical falsification or revisionism:

> Historical falsification and revisionism are two distinct yet interrelated propaganda techniques. Because historians rely heavily on written records to gain their understanding of the past and establish facts, any alteration of written documents, through destruction, alteration, or fabrication will affect the conclusions. Historical falsification is the creation of a version of the past through the fabrication or deliberate destruction of records. Revisionism refers to view of the past based on altered records or on distorted interpretations of records.[13]

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[12] Richard S. Lambert, *Propaganda* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1939), p. 7

[13] Robert Cole, *The Encyclopedia of Propoganda*: Volume I (Armonk: Sharpe Reference, 1998), pp. 321-322

But the power of the biblical anecdote lies in its ability to link the intellectual and emotional dimensions of the mind through symbolism. Each biblical anecdote relies on an image, concentrated ideal, or slogan (see chart below) in order to galvanize its audience. Symbols embody the cultural myths of the group it serves to represent. The use of symbols in propaganda is defined as "a form of emotional shorthand through which the recipient is able to recapitulate instantly all previous knowledge, experiences, and feelings that have been attached to a symbol."[14] For example, in anecdote #1, the symbol could be Gibeah. Gibeah is the town in which the inhabitants repeated the anti-social behavior originally displayed by the residents of Sodom. The association is immediate for the reader. Gibeah is also the town from which Saul hails. Gibeah, as a powerful symbol of moral degradation, is employed in anecdote #1 to make a quick and immediate condemnation of Saul.

Conversely, the song in anecdote #3 is a powerful and positive slogan. Achish's courtiers ask if David is not the one about whom the Israelites sing: "Saul has slain his thousands, but David, his tens of thousands?" (I Samuel 21: 12). The symbol (in this case it is a song) acts to praise David, and is repeated several times in the text. Immediately prior to this account a priest offers David Goliath's distinctive sword. The anecdotes context suggests that David brings it with him to Gath. The sword is another powerful symbol of David's might, and it may hold certain emotional associations for the ancient reader.

[14] Ibid., Volume III, p. 757

Similarly, with Solomon, Wisdom seems to be the outstanding symbol of his monarchy. Yet, Wisdom as a symbol is abstract. The symbols found in the anecdotes of the Deuteronomistic Historian are predominantly concrete: an idol, Baal, Gibeah, the ark of the covenant, etc. And this accords with the History's attention to the day-to-day concerns of historical figures. Conversely, the Chronicler anecdotes appear to use more abstract symbols--David's righteousness and Solomon's wisdom. The Chronicler's history is a theologized version of the older material, and more commonly employs intangibles, as the following chart indicates:

	Book	Protagonist	Story	Symbol	Verses
Anecdote #1	I Samuel	Saul	Saul defeats the Ammonites.	Gibeah	15
Anecdote #2	I Samuel	Michal	Michal helps David escape from Saul's messengers.	Household idol	7
Anecdote #3	I Samuel	David	David escapes from Achish of Gath by feigning madness	Song and Goliath's sword	6
Anecdote #4	II Samuel	David	Michal despises David for exposing himself before the ark	The ark of the covenant	4
Anecdote #5	I Kings	Solomon	Solomon demonstrates his wisdom by determining who is the infants real mother	Wisdom	13
Anecdote #6	II Kings	Jehu	Jehu eliminates the followers of Baal	Baal	11
Anecdote #7	I Chronicles	David	David does not accept the offer of water	David's righteousness	5
Anecdote #8	II Chronicles	Solomon	Solomon appeals to God for wisdom	Solomon's wisdom	7

Clearly, the redactors of the biblical text saw the political usefulness of the anecdote. And the anecdote itself provides an early example of how the Deuteronomistic Historian and the Chronicler used a particular literary structure to propagandize their social and political objectives.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The anecdote has a long historical development. It was used in ancient Greek literature, and it eventually found its way into the literature of most European societies. The French, English, and Irish used the anecdote more frequently than almost any other Western nations. It is unclear as to why this is the case, but perhaps it can be attributed to their respective national characters. It may certainly be argued, particularly in the case of the Irish and French, that there is a love of story telling. It is an oral art. And as we know, the oral tradition of Rabbinic Judaism has it roots in ancient Israel. The aggadot of our tradition include a number of great short stories and parables:

> It is reported of King David that when he finished the book of Psalms, he became so arrogant that he said to the Holy One, 'Master of the universe, is there anyone in the world who has uttered as many songs as I?' In that instant, a frog confronted him and said, 'Do not be so arrogant-- I utter more songs than you."[1]

But it is unknown whether anecdotes developed in Israel or were borrowed from other cultures. What is known, however, is that the unique political and historical circumstances of Israel in the biblical period provided fertile ground from which a variety of literary genres could flourish.

There are stories in the Bible that have anecdote-like qualities but ultimately don't function as anecdotes within the text. The story of David and Bathsheba, for example, captures a particular aspect of King David's

[1] Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua H. Ravnitzky, *The Book of Legends* (New York: Schoken Books, 1992), p. 778

personality but it is too long and complicated to qualify as an anecdote. The story of David and Hanun is too integral to the overall context to be an anecdote. And the stories of Ehud son of Gera and of Zipporah and the circumcision may well be anecdotes but the overall biography of those respective characters is unknown. Therefore these stories are not regarded by the author of this thesis as biblical anecdotes.

Those stories that do qualify as biblical anecdotes are located in the books of Samuel and Kings as well as in I and II Chronicles. In order to qualify as an anecdote each episode has to meet a certain set of criteria. The ancient Israelites used the anecdote but did not formulate its principles. In fact, no attempts to define the anecdote were made until the eighteenth century. At that time it began to be understood as a small gossipy narrative thought of as an amusing biographical incident in the life of a famous person whose biography's broad outline has long been a matter of public record. This definition still stands today. But it is Frank Lentricchia in his book *Critical Terms for Literary Study* who identifies the anecdote's relationship to cultural ideals and myth. Through Lentricchia's definition we can understand the biblical anecdotes ability to capture aspects of the personalities of key historical figures in ways that could hold the imagination of the ancient Israelites. Further, in order for an anecdote to properly function it had to have an audience who understood its broader message. The anecdote must be independent of it overall context and ought to capture the essence of its subject's character. Anecdotes are also relatively brief and often contain elements of humor.

The characters of David and Solomon particularly became what Lentricchia calls "concentrated ideals"-- they embodied myths and ideals that the Israelite culture wanted to believe about itself. These concentrated ideals were perhaps used by King Josiah and later redactors of the text as they sought to centralize worship in Jerusalem. It is unclear as to whom may have written the Book of Law found in the Temple. But scholars have speculated that the Book was a "pious fraud", perhaps written by one of the Temple scribes or priests. Perhaps Josiah himself participated in the manufacturing of this document. Conveniently, Josiah was able to use this newly "discovered" text to institute his sweeping reforms. Under the reinstitution of these laws Sacrifice to Yahweh was to be confined to the central sanctuary, and people would now also have to make pilgrimages only to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the great religious festivals.

As we learn particularly from the example of the mid-twentieth century Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, a national leader easily can tell his people almost anything he pleases. Similarly, King Josiah could have perpetrated his "pious fraud." And by extension, it may also be asserted that the characters of Saul, David, and Solomon were reinvented to buttress the Deuteronomic Reformation. The anecdotes present idealized versions of their personalities, therefore the biblical anecdotes appear to offer an inspiring ideal within an ideology.

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