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THE EMERGENCE OF THE ISRAELITE MONARCHY

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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Dedicated to the memory of Samuel L. Jacobs, ל"ט .
From earliest memory he was there for us. His love was
constant; his support and confidence in us knew no bounds.
For having known him in his lifetime, and for the memories
of him that we will carry throughout our own, we are truly
blessed.

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INTRODUCTION

The story of the emergence of the monarchy in Ancient Israel is one of the richest and most exciting of the entire Bible. In a relatively short period of time - perhaps only half a century - Israel was transformed from a loose confederation of tribal groupings into a powerful unified empire ruled by a dynastic monarchy. The abundance of biblical material covering the birth of the monarchy bespeaks the period's importance to Israel's subsequent national, political, and religious development. Though this metamorphosis took place within half a century, it was by no means a smooth transition. Rather, the text tells of fierce opposition to the monarchy; bloody rebellions; fatal palace intrigues; an old guard leadership reluctant to relinquish its power; and of a God that is ambiguously presented, at first in opposition to, and then cautiously supportive of the monarchy.

This fascinating and complicated transition is the focus of this study.

We begin in the time of the Judges (1200 - 1000 BCE). During this period the Egyptian Empire to the south-west was in decline while Assyrian hegemony was confined to Mesopotamia in the east. The power of the Canaanites in Palestine was in a state of collapse. These three factors created a power vacuum making possible the consolidation of

the Israelite tribes and the subsequent creation of the monarchy. In this period the Mediterranean coast was invaded by the Philistines. Eventually the growing Philistine threat caused most of the Israelite tribes to unite under Israel's first king, Saul. He reigned from approximately 1020-1005 BCE. David ruled for the next forty years, from 1005-965 BCE. His son Solomon similarly reigned for forty years, from 965 to 925 BCE.¹

The Books of Samuel are the primary source for this study. Samuel is a highly complex work, composed of numerous sources, styles, points of view, degrees of antiquity, and authorship. There is though a sense of overall unity to the work, commonly attributed to a Deuteronomic editor. Masterfully woven together, the work contains: narrative units (the predominant kind of literary unit in Samuel); poetry; oracles; and court lists and annals.² Norman Gottwold proposes that the Deuteronomic compiler had six major blocks of material available to him. These are: "the story of the boyhood of Samuel, the story of the ark, the Mizpah-Ramah story of the rise of the monarchy, the Gilgal story of the rise of the monarchy, and the court history or succession story of David. In addition, he had access to court archives with lists and annals, some

1. The above chronological summary was culled from, Harry M. Orlinsky, Ancient Israel. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960. pp. 146-147.

2. Encyclopedia Judaica, 1st ed. (1972), s.v. "Samuel, Book of," by Norman K. Gottwold, p. 790-791.

unattached poems and oracles, and a number of single (or paired) narratives concerning David which had not been drawn into any of the larger blocs."³

The editorial work of the Deuteronomic author most probably took place during the seventh century BCE. Many of the individual units of the work are commonly reported to have been composed very soon after the events they describe, sometimes during the lifetime of the main characters.

The body of this study is divided into three chapters. One of the stylistic characteristics of the work of the Deuteronomic author seems to have been a chronological presentation of the events. I have therefore taken my cue from the Deuteronomist, finding it most expedient to divide this work into three historical periods, each representing a stage in the development of the monarchy.

Therefore, Chapter One examines the factors which led Israel, at the end of the period of the Judges, to ask for a king; the election of Saul; his reign; and ends with Saul's fall from Yahweh's favor. The biblical text covered in this chapter begins with the closing chapters of Judges and concludes with I Samuel 15:35. All three chapters will begin with a survey of the relevant biblical text.⁴

Chapter Two begins with Saul's fall and concludes with

3. Ibid., p. 795.

4. All of the English translation of the Hebrew biblical text is taken from The Prophets, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978.

the latter years of David's reign. During this crucial period, David transformed Saul's infant, ill-defined monarchy into a powerful dynastic empire. Covered in this chapter are Saul's loss of the kingdom, David's rise to power, and the relationship of the revolts of Sheba and Absalom to the power of the old guard leadership.

The final chapter examines the nature of the dynastic monarchy founded by David, ending with II Kings 2. We will look at the vast differences between the kingships of David and Saul, particularly at the powerful and innovative ideology of the House of David.

Chapter 1

TRANSITION FROM LOOSE TRIBAL CONFEDERATION TO MONARCHY

This chapter will examine the first stage of Israel's transition from a tribal confederacy to a dynastic monarchy. We will begin with the passages in the latter chapters of the book of Judges, where we find Israel's initial articulation of a need for a king, and conclude with I Samuel 15:35 which presents - from one particular point of view - the end of Saul's kingship.

Following a survey of the biblical text, this chapter will include: an examination of the tribal confederacy; the figure of the judge; the articulation of the need for a king; the choice of Saul; and the nature of his reign.

SOURCES

Our sources for studying the period of the emergence of the monarchy are limited. We find that "we are almost totally dependent on the first book of Samuel, with some

small help from other biblical sources. Of extra-biblical evidence, there is none, nor has much been contributed by archeology."¹ The text of I Samuel is composed of multiple sources. Many incidents are recorded more than once, often from varying points of view, one contradicting the other. Although this multiplicity of sources has led some to conclude that "it is impossible to identify or classify them"², there is general agreement that I Samuel consists of two somewhat parallel traditions of the emergence of the monarchy.

Roland de Vaux characterizes these two as: one tradition which is in favor of the monarchy (I Sam 9:1-10, 16; 11:1-11, 15, continued in chapters 13 and 14), and a second tradition opposed to the monarchy (I Sam 8:1-22; 10:18-25, continued in chapters 12 and 15). In the first tradition, the monarchy is founded through God's initiative; in the second account, the people themselves are responsible.³

Albrecht Alt describes the latter as the work of the

1. Benjamin Mazar, gen. ed., The World History of the Jewish People. (Israel: Jewish History Publications Ltd., 1961), Abraham Malamat, ed., The Age of the Monarchies: Political History. (Jerusalem: Massada Press Ltd., 1979), Matityahu Tsevat, "The Emergence of the Israelite Monarchy." p. 61.

2. Ibid.

3. Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions, trans. John McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), p. 94.

Deuteronomist. It is characterized by the logical coherence of its presentation of events; an overriding theological explanation of all significant incidents; and a clear lack of concern for history qua history. The other source - de Vaux's pro-monarchy narratives - are "markedly closer to the facts and seem to be so little effected by the theological trends of later times."⁴ It is now commonly accepted that many of the incidents described in these earlier narratives were most likely composed not long after the events themselves.

The period of the Judges is commonly dated at approximately 1200-1000 B.C.E. while the central events of the emergence of the monarchy "can be placed within the eleventh century B.C.E., no earlier than the year 1080 and no later than the year 1000."⁵

SURVEY OF BIBLICAL TEXT

Judges 17:1 - 21:25: The central message of the final five chapters of the book of Judges is succinctly expressed in a phrase repeated four times:⁶ וְלֹא הָיָה מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

4. Albrecht Alt, Essays on Old Testament History and Religion (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967), p.241.

5. Tsevat, p. 61.

6. Judges 17:7; 21:25; and in slightly different form in 18:1 and 19:1.

מֵאֵלֶּךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, אִישׁ הָיָה בְּעֵינָיו יָשֵׁר.

"In those days there was no king in Israel, a man did that which was right in his own eyes." This statement, clearly written after the establishment of the monarchy, describes a situation in which there was no central authority. The phrase appears before or after stories of tribal disunity, idolatry, and lawlessness.

Chapters 19-21, which begin and end with this phrase, tell the story of a "certain Levite" which contains several points relevant to our discussion. This Levite, taking his concubine from her home in Bethlehem, lodge in Gibeah. There

אֲנָשִׁים בְּדֹעַיִם, men of the town, "a depraved lot", demand that the Levite's host send him out לְיָדָם, "that we may know him."⁷ The host declines and instead sends out the concubine. The "depraved men" abuse her throughout the night until, by morning, she lay dead.

The story is a close parallel to Genesis 19, with an important twist. In Genesis 19, unlike Judges 19, the townspeople are successfully turned away. One of these traditions may well be a conscious play on the other. Either way, Genesis 19 presents an episode which has a just ending through God's intervention. Here, in this lawless and kingless period, there is no enforcer of justice.

Two observations should be made concerning the closing

7. Judges 19:22.

chapters of Judges: one is that they appear to be pro-Davidic, and the other is an apparent pro-Judahite bias. The first is the more obvious of the two. The chapters contain stories of idolatry, cultic abuse, illegitimate sanctuaries, sexual lawlessness, tribal disunity and Israelite warring against Israelite. The message seems to be, "The old system is not working, we need a king."

The pro-Davidic bias is a bit more subtle. We read that the source of the evil goings on in chapter 19 is Gibeah, and that the villains of chapters 19-21 are the Benjaminites. Saul was from Gibeah, and he was a Benjaminite.

Samuel 1-7: The opening chapters of I Samuel continue the theme of the need for a king. The abuse of the priestly office by Eli's sons, and the loss of the Ark to the Philistines at Eben-ezer all continue to lay the groundwork for the subsequent request for a king in chapter 8.

I Samuel 8: This is a crucial chapter in the story of the emergence of the monarchy. The chapter opens with the call for a king.

וַיִּתְקַבְּצוּ כָּל זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּבְאוּ
 אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל בְּרָמָה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אַתָּה זָקֵן
 וְבָנֶיךָ עֹשִׂים בְּפִרְיָם, חָתֵם שָׂמָּה עָלֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ עֲשֵׂאֵנוּ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם.

All the elders of Israel assembled and came to Samuel at Ramah, and they said to him, 'You have grown old, and your sons have not followed your ways. Therefore appoint a king for us, to govern us like all other nations.' (8:5)

The perspective of the text here is that the notion of a centralized monarchy came from the tribal elders themselves. Samuel was "displeased" with the matter and turned to God who replied,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל
 שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל הָעָם כִּי אָמְרוּ אֵלֶיךָ כִּי לֹא אֵלֶיךָ
 מֵאִסּוּ כִּי אֹתִי מֵאִסּוּ מֵאֵלֶיךָ דֹּעִים כִּי כָל הַמִּדּוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר-
 מִיּוֹם הִשְׁלַחְתִּי אֹתָם מִצִּרְיִם וְעַד-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְדָבַרְתָּ וְיִזְכְּרוּ
 אֵלֶיךָ אֲחֵרִים בְּן הַחַדְדוֹשִׁים אִם לֹא

And the Lord replied to Samuel, 'Heed the demand of the people in everything they say to you. For it is not you that they have rejected; it is Me they have rejected as their king. Like everything else they have done ever since I brought them out of Egypt to this day - forsaking Me and worshipping other gods - so they are doing to you. Heed their demand; but warn them solemnly, and tell them about the practices of any king who would rule over them. (8:7-9)

These verses, though clearly against the idea of a king for Israel, carefully express this displeasure from the mouth of Samuel and not from God. After all, it is the form of leadership which Samuel embodies that is being rejected. At this point, the tribes are independent militarily and in all other ways except for their worship of Yahweh. Samuel, as judge/seer-priest is presented as the leading common denominator of the tribes. It is he whose power is threatened. God's response is ambiguous in that he both condemns and accepts the idea at the same time. It is as if the author of these verses had to strike a balance between the partial rejection of his authority by the tribal elders,

and the inevitability of the monarchy. Thus, even though these verses demonstrate that the call for a king came from the people, it also is shown to reflect God's reluctant will.

I Samuel 8:10-18: Here Samuel relates to the people "all of the words of the Lord" concerning the kingship that they have demanded. In short, he will take for himself countless young men and women to do the work of the kingdom; and he will take vast amounts of their material wealth for himself. He closes with, וְצִקְתֶּם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

מֵעֲבֹנֵי מַעֲבָבִים אֲשֶׁר בְּחִירְתֶּם לָכֵן, וְלֹא
וְלֹא יִצְנֶה יְהוָה אֹתְכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא.

"The day will come when you cry out because of the king whom you yourselves have chosen; and the Lord will not answer you on that day." This one verse uses the second person plural ending five times, making it quite clear as to who wanted a king and who will pay the price.

I Samuel 8:19-20: Yet, the people responded, וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעָם לְשֹׁמֵר בְּקוֹל שְׁמוּאֵל, וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַל כִּי אִם-מֶלֶךְ יִהְיֶה
עָלֵינוּ וְהָיָה אֲנִיכֵנו כְּכָל-הָעַמִּים, וְשִׁפְטָנוּ מֵעַבְדֵּנוּ
וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַל גִּבּוֹר וְלָחֶם מֵעַבְדֵּנוּ.

"But the people would not listen to Samuel's warning. 'No,' they said. 'We must have a king over us, that we may be like all the other nations: Let our king rule (וְשִׁפְטָנוּ) over us and go out at our head and fight our battles.'"

The people state here the three things they want from a king: to make them like the other nations; to act as a supra-tribal judge; and to be a military leader. Even though the book of Judges would have us think that Israel already had a supra-tribal judge and a national military leader within the existing system, this request indicates that this was not necessarily so.

Chapter 8, which telescopes what must have been a long drawn out conflict, is presented as if the entire matter took place at this one meeting at Ramah. Three positions are expressed: A] The elders, who absolutely insist on having a king. Yet, although they are insistent, they are not rebellious. They work through the existing structure. That is, they ask Samuel, who asks God, who concedes. B] Samuel, representing the 'old guard', is against the idea. A king, he pleads, would be a great burden to the people. He expresses strong displeasure. C] God's words are somewhat ambivalent. He comes across almost as rubber-stamp approval to a situation already out of his hands. The major opposition comes from Samuel, not God. This text appears to recognize the eventual adoption of the monarchy and therefore presents God with just enough ambivalence to keep the door open and imply that it was divinely ordained.

I Samuel 9-10: Here Saul is introduced. God says to Samuel, the day before Saul arrives, ביום ההוא בא אליך איש ויש בו רוח עז ואתה תמנה אותו
אשר אומר לך כי הנה אנכי משיח אותו לפני

וְהִנֵּשִׁית אֶת דָּוִד מִן הַמָּדְבָר, כִּי רָאִיתִי אֶת דָּוִד בְּבֵית יִצְחָק.
 יו"ל

"At this time tomorrow, I will send a man to you from the territory of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him ruler⁸ of My people Israel. He will deliver My people from the hands of the Philistines; for I have taken note of My people, their outcry has come to Me." (9:16) As if this were some transitional stage, the term מֶלֶךְ is not used. Samuel is to anoint Saul as מֶלֶךְ over the people. The implicit statement is that although God has ordained this anointing, it is a response to the desires of the people.

We are now presented with two different traditions of Saul's coming to the kingship. The first is a private, seemingly secret anointing (9:22-10:16), and the second is a public acclamation at Mizpah (10:17-10:27).

9:22 10:16: A) 9:22-25 Samuel brings Saul into a chamber at the "high place" (in a city whose name is never mentioned) for a meal. Thirty men are invited. Saul is seated at a place of honor and given a special portion of meat. There is no mention of the kingship.

B) 9:26-10:1 Next morning, the two leave town. Samuel asks the servant to move on so that he can speak with Saul in private. Samuel pours oil on Saul's head, kisses him and says, הִנֵּנִי מֶלֶךְ דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
 "The Lord herewith anoints you ruler over his own people."

 8. For a thorough discussion of the term מֶלֶךְ see Halpern, pp. 1-11.

C) 10:2-8 Samuel tells Saul of a number of signs that he will encounter. In seven days he will meet Saul in Gilgal where he will make sacrifices.

D) 10:16 In this closing verse of this secret anointing process we encounter the root שָׁמַח for the very first time in relation to Saul. When he arrives home, his uncle asks him what Samuel said. Saul told him all, וְכָל

וְכָל הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לִּי שְׁמוּעַל.
"But, he did not tell him anything of what Samuel had said about the kingship."

10:17-10:27: A) 10:17-19 In this version Samuel gathers the people at Mizpah and berates them once again in a manner similar to chapter 8. Here the claim is made that by requesting a king the Israelites have rejected the God who took them out of Egypt.

B) 10:20-23 The people are told to stand according to their clans and tribes. Then by a series of lotteries - first the tribe of Benjamin, then the clan of the Matrites, and finally Saul - the king is chosen.

C) 10:24 Samuel presents Saul to the people,
וַיַּעֲמֵד שְׁמוּעַל אֶת שָׁאוּל בְּעֵינֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל.
"And all the people acclaimed him, shouting, 'Long live the king!'"

D) 10:25-27 The chapter ends with Samuel "expounding to the people" וַיִּכְתֹּב שְׁמוּעַל אֶת חֻקֵּי הַמְּלָכִים, "the rules of the monarchy", which he wrote down and deposited "before the

Lord". We are not told the exact content of these rules.

I Samuel 11: This chapter tells of Saul's victory at Jabesh-gilead. The tone of the text is once again very pro-Saul. In vs. 14 Samuel, who otherwise plays no role in the story of this battle, calls the people to the shrine at Gilgal where they are to וַיַּחַדְּשׁוּ אֶת הַמְּלוּכָה,

"renew the monarchy".⁹ Vs. 15a reads, וַיָּבֹאוּ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּמְלְכוּ אֶת-סָאֹל בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִלְגָּל. וַיִּזְבְּחוּ שָׁמָּה עֹלֹת וַיִּזְבְּחוּ שָׁמָּה עֹלֹת וַיִּזְבְּחוּ שָׁמָּה עֹלֹת

"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." This may well be a third tradition of Saul's coming to the throne.

I Samuel 12: The text now reverts once again to an anti-monarchy stance. The entire chapter is a speech in which Samuel reminds the people, once again, of all that God has done for them. Their desire for a king is called רָעָה, "wicked". (vs. 19) In this long speech, Samuel is reasserting his (and God's) authority. One senses that the people have really taken to their new king and that Samuel has found it necessary to remind them exactly who is in control. Saul's name is not mentioned once throughout the chapter, although Samuel does mentions "God's anointed". Perhaps then this speech is not directed only at Saul, but

9. See Halpern, p. 51.

at the institution of the monarchy itself, a message to all of Israel's kings.

True authority belongs to God and then to the prophet or seer-priest who speaks in God's name. The king is a mere mortal who must know his place in this hierarchy, at the bottom. 12:1 says, וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה שְׁמַרְתִּי
בְּקִלְכֶם עֲבַדְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר אֲמַרְתֶּם ע' וְאַתֶּם יְדַעְתֶּם מֶלֶךְ
"Then Samuel said to all Israel, 'I have yielded to you in all you have asked of me and have set a king over you.'" That is, Samuel made the king, implying that his is a higher authority.

Chapters 13-15 represent a subtle change in tone. That is, the position of the text shifts from being anti-monarchy to being more specifically anti-Saul. It is not the kingship that is so much under attack here as it is Saul's ability to fulfill his role according to God's/Samuel's wishes. In 15:23 Saul is told, וְעַתָּה מֵאַתָּה הִתְרַחַצְתָּ
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְיִמְאָסְךָ מִמֶּלֶךְ
"Because you rejected the Lord's command, He has rejected you as king." Saul is surprised at God's words stating twice (15:13 and 15:20) that he thought he had fulfilled God's commands.

One gets the feeling that Saul's real crime was in being too popular with the people, and in taking too much cultic responsibility. In chapter 13 he performed sacrifices at Gilgal without Samuel's permission. There too

he is told that his kingship would end. (13:14) In that same verse, God says he has already appointed another to be king. (David?) Now, in chapter 15, Saul is once again was ready to perform sacrifices without Samuel.

The author wants us to believe that Saul's authentic kingship came to an end here, when God rejected him. This probably reflects a Davidic reworking of the text. For we know that following this rejection he continued to rule for many years. It was only his death on Mt. Gilboa that truly opened the door for David.

STRUCTURE OF THE TRIBAL ORGANIZATION

IN THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

To understand the factors which led to the institution of the monarchy in Israel, we must first look at the structure and institutions of the tribal organization, how it bound the tribes together, and its limitations. In addition, it would be helpful to have a working definition of the position of judge.

Malamat, in his article on charismatic leadership lists the common characteristics of the biblical judges. These are: A] An ongoing period of oppression, lasting for many years before the appearance of the judge; B] "Direct contact with transcendental powers and identification with the

symbols held most sacred by the people"¹⁰; C] Sometimes there is a public sign of the relationship between the judge and Yahweh; D] The judges are appointed ad hoc, and their position is non-hereditary and non-transferable; E] "The authority of charismatic leadership, by nature, is not dependant on social class or status, nor on age group or sex."¹¹; F] Their actions are not connected to any specific shrine; and, G] The relationship between the judge and the people is based on emotion and personal reverence.

Surprisingly, the text shows that the judges shared very few characteristics with each other. "Some (e.g., Gideon) rose to their task at the behest of a profound experience of divine vocation; one (Jepthah) was no better than a bandit who knew how to strike a canny bargain; one (Samson) was an engaging rogue whose fabulous strength and bawdy pranks became legendary."¹² They are presented in what appears to be a rough chronological order, but individually they cannot be precisely dated.

For many years, the predominant theory of the political structure of the tribes has been that put forth by Albrecht

10. Abraham Malamat, "Charismatic Leadership in the Book of Judges," in Magnalia Dei, The Mighty Acts of God, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), p. 161.

11. Ibid., p. 162.

12. John Bright, A History of Israel, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 171.

Alt and Martin Noth, by whom it had "become all but axiomatic in the reconstruction of the period of the Judges in ancient Israel . . . that the tribes of Israel constituted an amphictyony, a confederation of tribes established at and bound together by a central religious shrine."¹³ Alt and especially Noth, in pursuing the Greek amphictyonic model, focus on two characteristics of the Israelite tribal system. These are, the concept of a central shrine, and the number of member tribes - either six or twelve.

Noth indicates that the common features of the ancient Greek model are

that a cult observed in common formed the center and that the members of these associations used to meet for particular festivals at the central shrine, in fact that certain cults were entirely sustained and administered by such associations of twelve or six tribes. There seem therefore to have been quite practical reasons for the fixed and constantly maintained number twelve (or six), inasmuch as the members of these associations had to assume responsibility for the upkeep of the common shrine¹⁴ and its worship in a monthly or bi-monthly rota.

Therefore, he defined the Israelite tribes as "an ancient

13. Harry M. Orlinsky, Essays in Biblical Culture and Bible Translation, chap. 4, "The Tribal System of Israel and Related Groups in the Period of the Judges," pp. 66-77 (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1974), p. 66.

14. Martin Noth, The History of Israel, 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 88.

15. Ibid.

Israelite amphictyony."¹⁵ The number twelve we see in the tradition of the twelve tribes. The question of the central shrine is a bit more difficult since throughout the book of Judges several "central" shrines are mentioned.¹⁶ Noth explains this difficulty by reasoning that, "In all probability the divine throne of the sacred Ark formed the center of worship."¹⁷

de Vaux agrees that the model is useful for our understanding of the tribal federation "provided we do not press it too far and try to find all the features of the Greek amphictyonies in the Israelite federation."¹⁸

The amphictyonic model is appealing in that it provides us with a comprehensive, structural explanation of the goings on of the Israelite tribes. Yet the use of the model raises more questions than it answers. Harry Orlinsky, who finds even the cautious use of the model by de Vaux unacceptable, adamantly rejects the entire theory. He writes,

no amphictyonic league ever met at a shrine to decide a course of action or to pick a 'Judge.' One will go through all twenty-one chapters of the book of Judges and fail to find a mention of Shiloh, or Shechem, of Bethel, or Ramah, of Beth-Shean, or Gilgal, or any other shrine, at which a confederacy of two, or six, or twelve, or any number tribes met as an amphictyony. This is

16. Such as Bethel, Shechem, Gilgal and Shiloh.

17. Noth, p. 91.

18. de Vaux, p. 93.

an outstanding anomalous phenomenon ¹⁹ in the midst
of an allegedly existing amphictyony.

He continues, arguing that an objective reading of the book
of Judges "gives expression, more than once, to the
statement that the period of the Judges was one in which
there was no central authority in the land, and when each
Israelite group did whatever it wished, without recourse to
any central authority, religious or political. The Hebrew
expression is: וְלִי שֹׁמֵר וְלִי שֹׁמֵר

וְלִי שֹׁמֵר וְלִי שֹׁמֵר (17:6 and
21:25)." ²⁰ Martin Cohen concurs with this view stating that
the "tribes, insofar as can be determined from the evidence
available, vigorously maintained their autonomy." ²¹

Thus far we have established what the Israelite tribes
were not. This then leads to the question, what did the
tribes have in common? What was it that bound them
together? Fortunately, on this question there seems to be a
general consensus among scholars. This consensus being that
two factors existed which gave the tribes a degree of unity:
their common worship of Yahweh, and the common external
threat which each of the tribes - though never all at the
same time - faced.

19. Orlinsky, p. 70.

20. Ibid., pp. 71-72.

21. Martin A. Cohen, "The Role of the Shilonite Priesthood
in the United Monarchy of Ancient Israel," H.U.C.A. 36
(1965): p. 63.

The common worship of Yahweh manifested itself in supra-tribal celebration of feasts at a central sanctuary, around the Ark; a common law, and assemblies "to condemn violations of this customary or written law (Jos 24:26), the 'infamies', the 'things which are not done in Israel' (Jg 19:30; 20:6,10; cf 2 S 13:12)." ²² Alt adds that the foreignness of the worship of Yahweh to the "civilized regions of Palestine" ²³ contributed to a sense of unity amongst the tribes.

Yet, even with these two unifying factors, the nature of leadership proved to be a major stumbling block in the way of stronger national unity. The leadership of the judges was supra-tribal; therefore, one might think that it could lead to national unification. But, the charismatic nature of that leadership made that impossible. The supra-tribal aspect of the leadership was that individuals became a judge

not by virtue of an authority given to them by their own tribe. . . but on the strength of the sudden appearance of a personal gift and power which was regarded in Israel simply as a charisma, a free gift of Yahweh to the individual. . . It is, however, inherent in the nature of such charismatic leadership that it allowed no institutional consolidation, and, above all, that it could not be transferred to, or inherited by, another person. ²⁴

22. de Vaux, p. 93.

23. Alt, p. 233.

24. Alt, p. 231-232. See also, Malamat, p. 161.

Therefore, this form of leadership was incapable of providing any permanent kind of national unity.

Scholars have suggested that Israel's desire to have a king to be "like all the other nations" may suggest that during the period of the judges the surrounding nations were highly organized with developed monarchies. But the evidence seems to point to a situation not unlike that which existed among the Israelites at the dawn of the monarchy.²⁵

What we find then is that during the period of the judges, the tribes formed a loose confederation, "a body without any organized government and lacking real political cohesion."²⁶

DAWN OF THE MONARCHY

It was the "external military threat" mentioned above which finally moved the Israelite system of leadership to evolve from the temporary, ad hoc rule of the savior-judge to a form of leadership which could provide permanent military defense on a national, supra-tribal basis. The Philistines were most likely encouraged in their attempts to dominate the tribes by the "imperfection in the political

25. See de Vaux, pp. 91-92, and Orlinsky, p. 73.

26. de Vaux, p. 93.

27. Alt, p. 235.

organization of the Israelites".²⁷ Ultimately, the occasional, spontaneous union of several tribes was insufficient in repelling the Philistines. According to Alt, the Philistines were not attempting to take total possession of the tribal territories; rather they wished to establish their "overlordship . . . with the practical aim of exploiting the husbandry and agriculture of the mountain regions by exacting tribute. They would be a ruling military class; the Israelites and Canaanites would be their subjects."²⁸ The mounting intensity of this attempt at overlordship on the part of the Philistines was the catalyst which finally transformed Israel into "an organized state in the highest sense of the word."²⁹ Scholars seem to be in agreement that the advent of the monarchy was primarily the result of Philistine threat and not of any internal forces.

The first recorded attempt at founding a kingdom was that of Abimelech, Gideon's son by a Shechemite concubine (Judges 9). "But, it was so poorly founded, and conceived on lines so remote from Israelite ideas and betraying such an overwhelmingly large Canaanite influence, that he could never have brought about an amalgamation and replacement of the Israelite system of tribes in a greater national

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 237.

30. Ibid., p. 232.

structure."³⁰ The story of the offer of kingship to Gideon (Judges 13:22ff.) "is not historically acceptable."³¹

SAUL: LAST OF THE JUDGES AND FIRST OF THE KINGS

When the Israelites finally reached the point at which the tribes recognized the need for a supra-tribal military leader, Saul son of Kish was their choice. There is general agreement that Saul's emergence and rise to national prominence was very similar in many ways to that of the judges that preceded him. But there are scholarly disagreements concerning Saul's election: Was Saul's ultimate election as king a revolutionary change from the old system, or did it constitute an organic outgrowth of that system?; Did "the people" play the central role in his election, as depicted in the gathering of the clans at Mizpah and Gilgal, or, was it the old guard leadership who were primarily responsible?

The following discussion is based on five passages from I Samuel which describe the founding of the monarchy:

1. The gathering of the people at Ramah (8:4-22).
2. The anointing of Saul son of Kish the Benjaminite (9:1-10:16).
3. The assembly at Mizpah (10:17-27).

31. Ibid., p. 232.

4. The battle of Jabesh-gilead (11:1-11).
32⁵. The assembly at Gilgal
(11:14-12:25).

The early stories of Saul, depicting his initial rise to power are, again, very similar to those of the judges. All of the crucial characteristics of the "judge" are there; Saul was a charismatic leader, endowed with the spirit of Yahweh, whose role was primarily military, and who received popular sanction. The story of the battle of Jabesh-gilead, in particular, is very reminiscent of the stories of the judges.

From this reasoning comes the notion that the monarchy

was not created **ex nihilo** as a revolutionary eruption of a new form of government without roots in the preceding social system. On the contrary, the nascent monarchy was imbued with the same values which had been basic to the social leadership in Israel from its very beginning: a charismatic, authoritative mission based upon a pragmatic military democracy.³³

Similarly, Matityahu Tsevat suggests that we put the battle of Jabesh before Mizpah. In doing so, Samuel's choice of Saul makes more sense in that he is presenting to the people not only a military hero, but one who had attained that status "in the traditional style of a judge-chieftain."³⁴

32. Tsevat, p. 64.

33. Talmon, p. 9.

34. Tsevat, p. 66.

Alt follows this line of thought in suggesting that when the Israelites made Saul king, they were not imitating other nations; rather they were expanding upon an organically Israelite idea, that of the judge. In Saul's case, though, there were two developments: the leadership role was no longer tribal or multi-tribal but national; and, he would not lead in only one battle or crisis, but would stand ever-ready to fight the Philistines.³⁵ Alt focuses on that same battle at Jabesh as the turning point from judge to king. For the most part, the entire episode reads like a traditional story of a judge. But here,

the acclamation of the people, was added to the designation of God which had always been sufficient by itself in the past. This finally completed the process by which the nation-state came into being and finished for ever all that had gone before.³⁶

A minority point of view is that Saul's election was a dramatic break with the past, that it represented a "radical change both in the system of government and in the people's self image and religious outlook."³⁷ But this seems to be a simplistic assessment of the text. For though I do agree that the advent of the monarchy, in the long run, did indeed represent a "radical change" in Israel's life, this change

35. Alt, p. 255-256.

36. Ibid., p. 253.

37. Tsevat, p. 65.

did not occur in one moment at Mizpah or Gilgal. Rather, this transition was a gradual one which was not fully realized until the latter part of David's reign.

There are two opposing points of view as to the role of the people in Saul's election. One view is succinctly expressed by M. Tsevat who writes that

. . . the real key to what happened is to be found in the gathering of the clans at Ramah (8:4-24) and perhaps also the assembly at Mizpah (10:17-27). . . it is simple historic reasoning that the monarchy could not have arisen without intensive involvement of the people in the inter-tribal consultations and conclaves. No issue so important had come up since the conquest of Canaan. . . It was a historic turning point. How could so extraordinary an innovation possibly have met with instant and unanimous approval? Obviously it could not. Some would be in favor, some against, and some undecided. The only way to resolve the issue was through meeting and discussion.³⁸

Martin Cohen argues that, "The role of the people in the selection of Saul . . . is generally overplayed."³⁹ He describes a crisis of authority - following the destruction of the sanctuary at Shiloh, the capture of the Ark, the murder of Eli's sons and the old priest's death - in which Samuel the diviner-priest is presented as a judge. But, Cohen suggests, this title was used in memory of a tradition of the judges who preceeded Samuel, who were, in fact, warrior heroes. Yet Samuel's importance derived not from

38. Ibid.

39. Cohen, p. 68.

any military role, but "from his actual position as the Shilonite seer-priest."⁴⁰

Therefore, Cohen suggests, to combat the growing Philistine threat, the tribal elders, and not the people themselves, "found it necessary to appoint a leader who, like Samuel, could command the loyalty of all the Israelites, but who, unlike him, could lead their troops into battle against the Philistines."⁴¹ Cohen's reason for the need for a king does not differ from that mentioned above, the Philistine threat. Yet he differs in claiming that Saul's election did not come about by popular demand, rather by carefully orchestrated design on the part of the "old guard", the traditional tribal leadership. He writes:

For the vested interests of the tribal leadership of ancient Israel, the monarchy was understandably the lesser of . . . two evils. Yet the decision to create the monarchy could not have come without reluctance and regret. The pages of the Book of Samuel reflect . . . the concomitant fears that the new institution, created to serve the interests of the old guard, might by its favored position one day crush the old order completely.⁴²

Therefore, Cohen concludes, in the face of possible destruction at the hands of the Philistines, the old guard, with Samuel as their representative, created the monarchy.

40. Ibid., p. 66.

41. Ibid., p. 67.

42. Ibid., p. 67.

Yet, it was to be understood that Saul and the monarchy were subservient to Samuel and the tribal leadership. Samuel was the spokesman of Yahweh, and Saul was to be the instrument of Yahweh's will as interpreted by Samuel.

SAUL'S REIGN: INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATIONS

The text offer us very little information concerning the governing organs of Saul's reign. It appears as if the internal affairs of the tribes were left to the tribal leadership. There is no evidence of Saul or any member of his court playing a role in the governing of any individual tribe. The main, and perhaps sole function of the monarchy in that period was military. In this sense we see how this early form of monarchy was a transitory continuation of the old system. "Transitional" is perhaps the most appropriate word to describe Saul's kingdom. Alt writes that Saul's court was

comparatively little altered from the primitive forms of its historical origin. . . It had not yet established a definite policy with regard to its monarchical leader; and it constantly gives the impression of being a transitional stage, of which one may well doubt whether it should count as the conclusion of the previous period⁴³, or the beginning of the following one.

At the gathering of the people at Mizpah (I Samuel

43. Alt, p. 266-267.

10:17-27) Samuel read to the people a document called "the rules of the Monarchy" (ספר חוקי המלוכה). Tsevat assumes that its content defined "the role of the king in a society governed by God."⁴⁴ Because of the unique nature of the document, and the fact that no details are supplied, Tsevat proposes that "there really was a 'law of the monarchy;' its historicity cannot be called into question."⁴⁵

Thus far we have established the major, and perhaps sole, function of Saul's kingship: he ruled the national army. In this role he was both similar to and different from a judge. Yet, in this same realm, the military, we find the major innovation of Saul's reign: the development of a standing professional army. To maintain a sustained and effective defensive posture it was necessary for Saul to "supplement the army with troops who were better trained, and in particular, better adapted to guerilla warfare; the tradition tells how he gathered round himself a body of retainers permanently at his disposal, and led them in undertakings in which no part was played by the tribal conscripts."⁴⁶

We end this discussion of Saul's transitory kingship

44. Tsevat, p. 67.

45. Ibid., p. 67.

46. Ibid., p. 258.

not because his reign ended at the conclusion of I Samuel 15, but the text, from this point on shifts in focus to the character of David. We shall do the same.

Chapter 2

DAVID'S RISE AND REIGN

Chapter two will cover the period from Saul's fall to the latter years of David's reign. This period is one of the most exciting and vividly depicted of the entire Bible. In this relatively short period of time, David transformed the ill-defined, 'judge-like' monarchy of Saul into a firmly established dynastic monarchy, ruling a vast empire whose borders ran well beyond the traditional tribal boundaries.

The biblical text describing this period begins with chapter 16, a transitional narrative in which the רוח ה' יצא מִסָּאֻל, "spirit of the Lord", departs from Saul and enters David. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this transferring of divine 'backing' is reported to have taken place many years before Saul's death and David's eventual taking of the throne. But, it is appropriate to begin our discussion with chapter 16, for it is here that David comes to occupy center stage. Saul, who even in the earlier chapters of I Samuel was not presented in a sustained positive light, becomes a secondary and often tragic figure. The biblical authors, from this point on want us to focus on the career of the son of Jesse. We will end with II

Samuel 8, after which the Succession Narrative, the subject of our final chapter, begins.

In the present chapter, after a survey of the biblical text, we will discuss: Saul's loss of the kingdom; David's rise to power; and the relationship of the revolts of Sheba and Absalom to the power of the 'old guard' leadership.¹

SOURCES

Whereas the material available for studying the period of the emergence of the monarchy was limited, the "Davidic era offers the most comprehensive and detailed account of any period in biblical history. In common with the great kingdoms of the ancient Near East, the Davidic court employed scribes trained to record the manifold needs of the growing prosperous state."² Hayim Tadmor continues:

. . . the main source for the Davidic period is the narrative centered around David himself, recounting David's origins, his struggle against Saul for the throne (I Samuel 18-26), his reign, and finally the tragic struggle for succession among his sons (II Samuel 10-20). This narrative is unique in the historical literature of the ancient Near East. Written realistically and with a rare

1. Although the stories of the revolts are found in the section of the biblical text to be surveyed in chapter three of this paper, they are most appropriately discussed in the context of this chapter.

2. Hayim Tadmor, "The Period of the First Temple, the Babylonian Exile and the Restoration," in A History of the Jewish People, ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 94.

literary talent, it gives the reader an insight into the social life of the royal household.³

As one reads through the Books of Samuel and Kings, one is struck by the variety of literary styles. Albrecht Alt places this biblical material into three literary/historical phases. He describes the Samuel/Saul material as "essentially a form of historical saga"⁴; the stories of David's rise begin "in the anecdotal style of heroic saga" . . . but turn into "a more continuous description without digression"⁵; and finally, with the Succession Narrative, begins the "creation of a genuine historian".⁶

SURVEY OF BIBLICAL TEXT

I Samuel 16: The chapter, containing the first of two versions of David's entry into Saul's court, opens with a repetition of God's rejection of Saul's kingship and Samuel's journey to Bethlehem to anoint a son of Jesse. Samuel responds to God's command with, כִּי אִם יִשָּׂא

לֵאמֹר אִם יִשָּׂא יִמָּוֶת.
"How can I go? If Saul hears of it he'll kill me." This statement could only mean that even though God has rejected

3. Ibid.

4. Alt, p. 267.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

Saul through his agent Samuel, Saul must still be in a commanding position for the old seer-priest to be so concerned.

I Samuel 16: At the very same moment that
וְהַיְהוָה נִלְכָּד בְּרוּחַ יְהוָה מֵהַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְהַיְהוָה
"the spirit of the Lord gripped David from that day on", we
read, וְרוּחַ יְהוָה נִסָּע מֵעַל סָאֻל
"Now the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul".
(16:13+14) The author of this narrative wants to make it
clear to us - even though Saul reigns for years to come and
David is still a youth - that from a divine perspective,
this is the moment at which Saul's kingship ended and
David's began. In a sense, this taints all subsequent acts
of Saul with an element of illegitimacy. It should be noted
that in vs. 13 Samuel anointed David with oil, one of the
essential symbols of Israelite kingship.

The divine role is one of the most noticeable features
of chapter 16, as evidenced in the centrality of the
transferring of the "spirit of the Lord". There is no
question that David's kingship is divinely ordained. God
has a hand in David's landing in Saul's court, as if to say
that David's role in the court, his rise to power, and his
eventual taking of the throne were all manifestations of a
divine plan and not a result of the aspirations of an
ambitious individual.

I Samuel 17: This chapter contains the well known story

of David's entry into Saul's court by his victory over the Philistine champion. Of note is v. 54 which reads, וַיָּקֵם

313 אֶת־רֹאשׁ הַפִּלִּשְׁתִּי וַיֵּבֵאוּ יְרוּשָׁה וְאֶת־כְּלָיוֹתָיו
בִּשְׁמֵרָתוֹ.

"David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; and he put his weapons in his own tent." It is curious that David would bring this trophy to a Jebusite city. Many years would pass before David would capture Jerusalem. This may indicate that this version of David's victory over Goliath originated well after David became king of Israel, after he had obtained the Jebusite city.⁷ Or perhaps it is the insertion into an earlier tradition by a later redactor.

I Samuel 18: In this pro-David chapter, two telling reasons for David's growing popularity and success are given. 18:12 offers a divine reason: וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה אִתּוֹ

מֵעַתָּה וְעַד הַיּוֹם כִּי הָיָה יְהוָה אִתּוֹ וַיִּנְצֵל אֶת־דָּוִד מִיַּד שָׁאוּל.

"Saul was afraid of David, for the Lord was with him and had turned away from Saul." 18:16 explains that וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל

וְיְהוּדָה אֲהָבִים אֶת־דָּוִד כִּי הָיָה אִתָּם וַיִּמְרֹץ אֶת־רֹאשׁ הַפִּלִּשְׁתִּי.

"All Israel and Judah loved David, for he marched at their head." The first case informs us that David's success is a result of Yahweh being with him. The second case presents a

7. II Samuel 22 presents another tradition about who killed Goliath. V. 19 reads, "and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite." This may well be the original tradition, ascribed to David in his later years.

"this worldly" reason. David is loved by the people, he is visible, leading them in battle. The image is that he was accessible and spent time amongst the people. This may stand in contrast to Saul who, because of his abrupt changes in mood, was not as available to his people.

I Samuel 20:31 + 23:17: These two verses testify to the as yet ill-defined nature of kingship in Israel. The matter of dynastic kingship is hinted at here; but sometimes these hints contradict one another. In 20:31 Saul says to Jonathan, כִּי כֹסֶם הָיָה אִתְּךָ בֶּן-יֵשׁוּעַ דָּדְךָ-הַזֶּה

לֹא יִהְיֶה כִּי־יָמוּת וְאַתָּה תִּהְיֶה מֶלֶךְ.

"For as long as the son of Jesse lives on earth, neither you nor your kingship will be secure." This verse takes for granted, at least in Saul's mind, that Jonathan would succeed his father. 23:17 implies a different understanding of succession. Jonathan says to David, לֹא יִהְיֶה כִּי־יָמוּת

וְאַתָּה תִּהְיֶה מֶלֶךְ וְאִתְּךָ אֶבְיָד וְאֶתְּךָ אֶבְיָד וְאֶתְּךָ אֶבְיָד.

"Do not be afraid: the hand of my father Saul will never touch you. You are going to be king over Israel and I shall be second to you; even my father Saul knows this is so." Jonathan's words imply a situation in which popular acclaim and divine election will be enough to ensure that David will succeed Saul. The fact that Jonathan is the king's son does not seem to be an obstacle. This method of election - popular acclaim, proven military leadership, and divine choice - is strongly rooted in the traditional manner by

which judges were chosen. I Samuel 23:1-6: This narrative has David already acting like a king. In the opening verses of chapter 23 David and his men save Keilah from the Philistines. David is commanded to wage battles and speaks directly with God in a manner in which Saul is no longer capable. Since Samuel anointed David, the text treats him as if he were already king.

I Samuel 26:16: Throughout the remainder of Saul's reign, David, at times, appears to be laying the groundwork for his own kingdom. In 26:16 David, for the third time, admonishes anyone who might endanger the life of "the Lord's anointed". This phenomenon is found throughout I and II Samuel. Whatever role David may have actually played in Saul's decline and fall, the text, at times defensively, bends over backward to clear David of any complicity.

I Samuel 28: This chapter illustrates the above phenomenon. With the help of the "woman who consults ghosts" (28:7), Saul contacted Samuel's spirit which proceeded to reiterate the reasons for Saul's loss of the kingdom. He is told that it is the will of God that he and his sons will lose their lives the next day in battle. Thus, it is made perfectly clear that his death was the will of God, and that David played no role whatsoever.

II Samuel 1: II Samuel opens with an entire chapter dedicated to the task of assuring us that David played no part in Saul's death. In 1:2 an Amalekite comes to David in

Ziklag to inform him of Saul's death.⁸ 1:14-16 reads:

אֵיךְ עָלָה יָדָאָה אֶשְׁכַּח יָדְךָ עֲשֵׂה אֶת-מִשְׁחָה יְבוּס וְיָקְרָא דָוִד
עָלָה אֶת מִבְּנֵי דָוִד וְיֹאמְרוּ עִלָּה-בָּהּ וְיִכְבְּדוּ וְיִמָּחַ וְיֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵינוּ דָוִד
דָּמָךְ עַל רֹאשְׁךָ בִּי פִיךָ דָּבַר בְּךָ עָלָה אֶת-מִשְׁחָה יְבוּס.

"How did you dare," David said to him, 'to lift up your hand and kill the Lord's anointed?' Thereupon David called one of the attendants and said to him, 'Come over and strike him!' He struck him down and he died. And David said to him, 'Your blood be on your own head! Your own mouth testified against you when you said, 'I put the Lord's anointed to death.'" That is: a) No one, under any circumstances, may ever raise his hand to do harm to a king; and b) Let the record show that you, and not I, are responsible for the death of Saul.⁹

II Samuel 2: David is told by God to take his people from Ziklag to Hebron. After a time, וְהָיוּ אֵלָיו
וְהָיוּ דָוִד וְיִמָּחַ וְיֹאמְרוּ עִלָּה-בָּהּ וְיִכְבְּדוּ וְיִמָּחַ וְיֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵינוּ דָוִד.

"The men of Judah came and there they anointed David king over the House of Judah." It should be noted that the process by which David becomes king here is much "cleaner" than that which Saul encountered. Whereas Saul's initial

8. It is ironic, and perhaps purposely so, that an Amalekite helped to kill Saul in light of the king's fatal sin in I Samuel 15 of allowing Agag, the Amalekite king, to live.

9. Similarly, see II Samuel 3:28-34.

10. When Saul was anointed, [I Samuel 9:16+10:1] his initial

status was unclear, as was his title,¹⁰ David is immediately called מלך, "king".

II Samuel 5:1-3: Finally, the elders of the tribes of Israel come to David at Hebron and make him their king. In these verses are found three central elements required to install a king: a) 5:2, divine election; b) 5:1+3, popular acclamation; and c) 5:3, anointing.

SAUL'S DECLINE AND DEFEAT

The biblical text offers two reasons for Saul's ultimate rejection and the fall of his house. Both of them are cases in which Saul disobeyed the command of Yahweh, yet one is left suspecting that these two cases are contrived pretexts for God's turning from Saul.

The first reason is in I Samuel 13:8ff. Samuel had ordered Saul to wait for him at Gilgal for seven days, after which he would appear and "present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being."¹¹ Saul waited the seven days at Gilgal, but Samuel did not arrive. So, in Samuel's stead, Saul presented the burnt offerings. This apparently was enough of a crime for Samuel to declare, "You acted foolishly in not keeping the commandments that the Lord your God laid upon you! Otherwise, the Lord would have title was שׂר, "leader" or "prince".

11. I Samuel 10:8.

established your dynasty over Israel forever. But now your dynasty will not endure. The Lord will seek out a man after his own heart, and the Lord will appoint him ruler over His people, because you did not abide by what the Lord commanded you."¹²

The second pretext for Saul's defeat is found in I Samuel 15. In 15:3 God sends Saul and the army to attack Amalek. He is told, "Spare no one, but kill alike men and women, infants and sucklings, oxen, and sheep, camels and asses!" Saul followed the divine command except that he decided to spare Agag, the best of the animals and "all else that was of value". (15:9) Saul assumed that he had properly obeyed the Lord (15:13+20), stating that the spoils he had kept were to be offered as sacrifices to God. Nevertheless, as a result of his transgression, Samuel told him, "The Lord has this day torn the kingship over Israel away from you and has given it to another who is worthier than you." (15:28)

It is most interesting to keep in mind the sins that David will commit in the years to come, many of which are clearly of a more grievous nature than those of Saul. Yet, in the case of David, no matter how severely he is punished, there is never a divine threat that he or his seed will lose the kingdom.

12. I Samuel 13:13+14.

If there was in fact any connection between these acts of Saul and Samuel's rejection of him, we may assume that it was a matter of Saul stepping out of the bounds of his limited role as king. The cultic realm was Samuel's, and the seer-priest may well have seen Samuel's offer of sacrifices as a threat to his own authority. In addition, these traditions explain the fact that Saul did not found a dynasty while David did. The above may not provide a satisfactory explanation for Saul's defeat and loss of his kingdom, but it does demonstrate the powerful stamp of the Davidic court on the biblical text.

Hayim Tadmor presents a more probable explanation for Saul's decline than the above offered by the text. He proposes a two-stage interpretation in which Saul's handling of the infant monarchy caused strife between himself and the traditional leadership of the tribes. "Indeed, the final period of Saul's reign is marked by the struggle between an increasingly tyrannical king and the traditional leadership that had formerly ruled. In the biblical narrative this opposition appears in the form of antagonism between Saul and Samuel."¹³ This internal strife caused a weakening in Israel's national unity which was perceived by the Philistines, and led them "to believe that the time had come

13. Tadmor, "Period of the First Temple", p. 93.

14. Ibid., p. 94.

to strike a final blow at Saul and his kingdom."¹⁴ Tadmor continues:

It seems that the Philistines employed a completely new stratagem. They sent their forces to the weakest point in Saul's kingdom, the remnants of the Canaanite cities in the Jezreel and Beth-shean valleys. . . . Saul had no alternative but to join battle in the foot-hills of the Gilboa range . . . His army was defeated, and he, along with his sons, met a heroic death. . . . The outcome of the defeat was that Saul's kingdom was split in two. While the area across the Jordan and in the mountains remained faithful to Saul's son Eshbaal and Saul's general and strongman, Abner, in the south David was appointed king of Judah.¹⁵

DAVID'S RISE TO POWER

There are two traditions of David's climb to the throne of Israel and Judah. One of these

portrays David's kingdom as the continuation of Saul's, with the same charismatic aspect. God, who had rejected Saul, chose David as king over his people (I S 16:1). Hence David was anointed by Samuel (I S 16:12-13), as Saul had been; the spirit of Yahweh took hold of David (I S 16:13) as it had done Saul. This tradition expresses the deep religious sense always attached to power in Israel; but it bears no direct relation to actual history.¹⁶

Alt elaborates on this religiously idealized version which stresses the continuity between the kingdom's of Saul

15. Ibid.

16. de Vaux, p. 95.

and David. This particular tradition serves the purpose of depicting David's rise to power as having followed the same pattern as did Saul. That is, "a military monarch on the national level, whose authority is in the end based on Yahweh's designation, can only prove his legitimacy by warlike deeds at the head of the national army, and can only attain complete recognition by the acclamation of the people."¹⁷ Thus, Alt claims that this particular tradition is "a fiction designed to make the historical facts fit a previously accepted theory."¹⁸

This leads Alt to the conclusion that David's kingdom was really much more revolutionary than the text implies. He brings attention to the crucial fact that after breaking with Saul, all of the rest of David's story takes place outside of the territory of Israel proper. "However unusual it may appear at first glance, it was David's rise to power outside Israel, in consequence of his following his own individual course of action, that brought the Kingdom of Israel into his grasp after Saul's defeat. . ."¹⁹

This "individual course of action" is broken down into three stages. The first step in David's acquisition of power was the development of his band of mercenaries in the

17. Alt, p. 73.

18. Ibid., p. 278.

19. Ibid., p. 274.

western and southwestern borders of Judah. These mercenaries "owed allegiance to him and to him alone, and, like him, to no permanent state system."²⁰ The second stage in David's climb to power involved his accepting the fief of Ziklag from the prince of Gath. Here he became a small feudal prince, "admittedly, of course within the system of Philistine domination and by acceptance of the duties of a vassal."²¹ Next, David attained an even higher position when he took his mercenary army to Hebron where he eventually became the king of Judah.

Therefore, in this formative stage, David's kingdom was not at all like Saul's. Rather, "the new establishment was built entirely around David's person and the powerful position he had already attained, and so perhaps could never have come into being without him; the establishment of himself and of his mercenaries in Hebron and the neighboring towns was the starting-point for everything that followed."²²

Martin Cohen, in his discussion of the role played by the Shilonite priesthood and the traditional tribal leaders in the formation of the Israelite monarchy, gives less credit than Alt to David himself in his rise to power,

20. Ibid., p. 274.

21. Alt, p. 275.

22. Ibid., p. 276.

emphasizing instead the power of the priesthood.²³ According to Cohen, the traditions we have in I Samuel 13 and 15, depicting Yahweh's rejection of Saul, in fact reflect the historical rejection of Saul by the tribal leaders and the Shilonite priesthood. In spite of this rejection, as previously noted, Saul remained king until his death. Nonetheless, the Shilonites were left with the task of finding a replacement for Saul. The old guard had created the monarchy to combat the Philistine threat, and that threat still existed. Therefore,

they could not abandon the idea of a centralized military government. . . and a united leadership continued to be their best defense. The elders of Israel were therefore compelled to seek another military leader. Like Saul, he had to be a man of battle experience and proven leadership. He had to possess a magnetic personality to woo the support and loyalty of the motley and centrifugally oriented elements that constituted the tribes of Israel. Above all, the elders had to find an individual whose power was even weaker than Saul's had been on the day of his investiture that they might maintain control over him at²⁴ least until the military emergency had passed.

David the son of Jesse was their choice. He was part of Saul's inner circle but not related to the king; he was an accomplished military hero; and finally, he was from Bethlehem, from a small, insignificant tribe.²⁵

23. See pp. 24-26 of this paper for discussion of Cohen's theory of the Shilonite role in Saul's election.

24. Cohen, p. 76.

25. Ibid., p. 79.

There is a significant difference between Cohen and Alt on the point of David's power and status at the time he became king of Israel. Cohen claims that David was chosen by the Shilonites because his 'power was weaker than Saul's had been on the day of his investiture'. Yet Alt stresses that David was, at that point in time, significantly powerful in his own right. That is not to say that one can rule out the possibility of collusion in a palace coup between David and the Shilonites. But, he was, after all, the king of Judah and the commander of a significant personal army of six hundred mercenaries. These two facts make it hard to believe that David was simply a pawn in the power politics of the Israelite tribes. Alt's argument that David's election to the kingship of Israel was mainly the result of the personal power he had already attained is much more persuasive than Cohen's suggestion that David was chosen as a pawn. The truth may well lie somewhere in the middle. David, a man of substantial military, political, and personal power conspired with the traditional leadership.

THE POWER OF THE "OLD GUARD" IN DAVID'S REIGN

Although many scholars agree that Israel's traditional tribal leadership played a significant role well into the period of the monarchy, the degree and nature of that role is highly debated. At one end of the spectrum is S. Talmon

who writes, "It seems that there developed intuitively non-institutionalized means of socio-political checks and balances which succeeded in renewing the balance of power between the king and the people."²⁶ In contrast to this portrayal of a near passive traditional leadership in the period of the early monarchy is that of Hayim Tadmor who depicts the old guard as the power behind the revolts of Absalom and Sheba.

Alt identifies David's use of the military as the central cause for the revolts. Whereas Saul had used the national army solely for defense purposes, David's use of the armies for the offensive "conquest of the states east of the Jordan"²⁷ was the source of Israel's dissatisfaction with the king. Alt explains:

All would have been well if the new conquests which were being made with the aid of the armies directly benefited the kingdoms of Israel and Judah as the annexation of the country west of the Jordan had done. But, the political result was rather that the neighboring states which were conquered and made subject to David in one way or another continued as before to be separated from Israel and Judah. . . . To send conscripted armies into the field time after time, perhaps year after year, for such a purpose made demands on the kingdoms which as time went by became increasingly difficult to fulfill. In short the bow had been bent too far; however well it suited David personally to strive after a complete and perfect control over the whole of Palestine, it did not

26. Talmon, p. 23.

27. Alt, p. 297.

28. Ibid., p. 296-297.

suit ~~the~~ individual interests of Israel and
Judah.²⁸

He concludes that this tension was the source of the revolts of Absalom and Sheba.

John Bright writes that the rebellions were the result of "a mass of indefinable grievances", adding that "it is unlikely that the majority of Israelites supported Absalom."²⁹

Tadmor concurs that the power of the people and their institutions is evident in the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba.³⁰ He notes first that there is no reason to doubt the reliability of the sources, which, he writes, could well have been recorded by eye-witnesses.³¹ The crux of his argument is based on an examination of who it was, during the rebellion, that supported David, and who supported Absalom.

According to Tadmor, the text shows that Absalom was supported by: שְׂכָנֵי לְפָנָיו, the tribal and clan elders; שְׂכָנֵי עֵינָיו, that is, the army; and צְבָא יְהוּדָה, the army of Judah. The latter two are the national army. David, on the other hand, was left with only

29. Bright, p. 205.

30. II Samuel 15-20.

31. Hayim Tadmor, "'The People' and The Kingship in Ancient Israel: The Role of Political Institutions in the Biblical Period," in Jewish Society Throughout the Ages, eds. H. H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger (New York: Schocken Books, 1973) p. 49.

319 '928, understood to be his personal mercenaries. Those who rallied around Absalom were, according to Tadmor and others, the old guard leadership. Tadmor writes further that we should examine

the very appearance of "the men of Israel" and "the elders of Israel" as consultative bodies to the king. This phenomenon evokes special interest, since it is a complete innovation as compared with the custom followed in the time of David. Neither of the two terms is mentioned even once in the historical narratives describing David's kingship . . . Consulting the warriors and the elders was by no means a symbolic act or a casual change in the decision making procedure initiated by Absalom. It was, we submit, the very essence of the rebellion.³²

Tadmor differs with Alt on the question of the source of the dissatisfaction of the people towards the monarchy. Alt proposed that it was David's military excursions east of the Jordan, whereas Tadmor suggests that it was a combination of mounting jealousy on the part of the tribal leadership who had lost so much power, and "the aloofness of the king from the people and the fading of the image of the king as a 'judge' to whom any citizen could come to obtain justice."³³

Yet, no matter what the source of the dissatisfaction, there resulted a coalition made up of the armies and the tribal elders with Absalom at their head. Tadmor assumes

32. Tadmor, "The People and the Kingship," p. 53-54.

33. Ibid., 54.

that it was Absalom who initiated the coalition, reviving "the authority of the bodies latent since the days of Saul."³⁴ When David finally decided to fight his son, he was "compelled to organize an essentially new army (I Sam. 18:1), apparently of the men of Gilead, the only district in his kingdom which remained loyal and extended him broad support".³⁵

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

Chapter 3

THE UNITED MONARCHY

By the end of David's reign the transition was complete; in a little over one generation, the loose confederation of tribes was transformed into a powerful dynastic state. Major innovations had occurred in the form of national leadership and in that leadership's relationship to the worship of Yahweh. The king that the people had requested in I Samuel 8:5, initially unwelcomed by Yahweh, was now "firmly established"¹ under Solomon, with Yahweh's promise that the Davidic line would be established forever.² We will look at several areas of innovation under David, including: the Succession Narrative; the acceptance of a dynastic monarchy; and the development of the Davidic royal ideology which inextricably bound the House of David to the kingship of Judah.

1. I Kings 2:12.

2. II Samuel 7:16.

SOURCES

We begin with II Samuel 7, in which David has successfully consolidated his power and his hold on the kingdom. Chapter 7 contains a firm statement of covenant between David, his progeny and Yahweh. The newly defined relationship between the people, Yahweh, and David is vastly different from anything that had come before. Then, in II Samuel 9 the Succession Narrative begins, the account of the "complicated events which led to Solomon's inheriting power".³ The Succession Narrative ends with I Kings 2.

Albrecht Alt emphasizes the historicity of the Narrative based on the fact that these many chapters have in common the theme of succession. At no time is succession explicitly presented as the central theme of any of the individual chapters, "But the very fact that it consciously subordinates the whole account to this one point of view shows that it is the creation of a genuine historian, who conceals rather than reveals his historical purpose, especially by his expert handling of a narrative style based on that of the saga in the arrangement of the individual scenes."⁴

Tomoo Ishida dates the composition of these narratives

3. Alt, p. 268.

4. Ibid.

to the first half of Solomon's reign.⁵ One reason for this early date of composition is that only at the beginning of Solomon's reign could there have been any need for legitimation. Once his hold on the kingdom was established no such legitimation would have been necessary. Moreover,

the narrator's candid attitude towards the disgraceful conduct of the members of David's house, such as adultery, his murder of Uriah or Amnon's rape of Tamar, would also indicate the same early years. It appears that these scandals were still too fresh in the memory of the general public to be concealed, when it was composed.⁶

Ishida writes further that he is convinced that the author of the Succession Narrative was a supporter of Solomon, most probably a follower of Nathan. He comes to this conclusion by way of an examination of Nathan's role in the Narrative⁷ which seems to show that the prophet's purpose in the text is to reinforce the claim that the "name and throne of Solomon were superior to those of David."⁸ In II Samuel 7⁹ - the prophecy about the perpetuation of David's line - God says to David,

5. Tomoo Ishida, "Solomon's Succession to the Throne of David - A Political Analysis," in Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Winona, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1982), p. 187.

6. Ibid.

7. II Samuel 7 and 12:1-25

8. Ibid., p. 187.

9. Most scholars begin the Succession Narrative with chapter 9.

When your days are done and you lie with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own issue, and I will establish his kingship. He shall build a house for My name . . . (7:13a)

That is, Solomon built the Temple which David could not. In the second instance, in chapter 12, Ishida notes the contrast of the image of Solomon as the favored of the Lord (12:24+25) to that of David, cursed by God (12:10+11). Moreover, chapter twelve makes it clear that the curse David brought upon himself through his adultery with Bathsheba and Uriah's murder was settled with the death of Bathsheba's first child. Solomon would be cleared of any connection to these sins of his father. Therefore, Ishida concludes, the authorship of these chapters must be attributed to a follower of Nathan.

SURVEY OF BIBLICAL TEXT

II Samuel 7: An eternal covenant-like relationship between God, David, David's line, and Israel is set up here, a relationship that would have been unheard of in the days of Saul. This chapter has several striking features. For example, previous statements of God's covenantal relationship with Israel have been two-party agreements between the people and God. Yet here, the promise of eternal divine protection has a third party, David and his seed. Vss. 23-24 invoke the Exodus and restate the promise in its

two-party phase. וְאִי כְּצֶמֶחַ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִכְרֹחַ אֶת הַכֹּהֵן.
אֲלֵכֶּם עֲפֻרֹת-לֹא מָדַם וְלִשְׁמֹעַ לֹא שָׁם וְלִדְמוּת עֲבַד הַגּוֹיִם וְלִמְלָכִים.
לְאֹרֶזְכָּךְ מִפְּנֵי צֶמֶחַ אֲשֶׁר בְּדִמְיוֹתֶיךָ מִמְּצִירִים אֱלֹהִים וְאֵלֶיךָ יִתְבַּח וְלֹא
יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵךְ עֲבַד דָּד-צִוְיָם וְאֶת-הַיְּהוָה הֵיחָד עֲבַד לְעֹלָמִים.

"And who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth, whom God went and redeemed as His people, winning renown for Himself and doing great and marvelous deeds for them [and] for Your land --- [driving out] nations and their gods before Your people, whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt. You have established Your people Israel as Your very own people forever; and You, O Lord, have become their God."

The remaining four verses of the chapter graft the Davidic monarchy, the third party, onto this previous covenant. Verse 26 ties together the two notions when it states

וְיִשְׁבַּח שְׁמֶךָ דָּד-צִוְיָם לְעֹלָמִים לְעֹלָמֵי דָבָר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ.
יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵית דָּוִד צִוְיָם יְהוָה דָּבָר יְהוָה.

"And may Your name be glorified forever, in that men will say, 'The Lord of Hosts is God over Israel'; and may the house of Your servant David be established before You."

It should be noted that the term "eternal" is used eight times in this brief chapter. There is no room for doubt that God's relationship with the House of David is a permanent one.

The methods which David himself employed in his own rise to power may well have been part of the motivation

behind the composition of this chapter. Verse 15 reads,

וְלֹא־אֶסְרֹף מִיְּדִי כִּי־יִסְרֹף מִיְּדִי כִּי־יִסְרֹף מִיְּדִי
אֶסְרֹף מִיְּדִי

"But I will never withdraw My favor from him as I withdrew it from Saul to make room for you." That is, it must be understood that another can never come along and do to you that which you did to Saul. What was alright for you is not alright for another.

* II Samuel 11: This chapter is a distinct turning point in the attitude of the text toward David. Up to this point he had done no wrong. Yet, here we open with וַיְהִי עַל־שְׁמוֹנֶה

בַּשָּׁנָה לָאֵלֶּם דָּוִד בָּאֵת בְּמַלְאָכָיו וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדָא אֶת־יָאֵל וְאֶת־דָּוִד
דָּוִד וְאֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּחֲזִק אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְרָךְ
וַיִּבְרָךְ וַיִּבְרָךְ

"At the turn of the year, the season when kings go out [to battle], David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him, and they devastated Ammon and besieged Rabbah; David remained in Jerusalem." This not too subtle remark - the first of its kind regarding David - implies that, had David had gone out to battle like all kings, he may well have avoided the grave sins which followed. The chapter ends with, "But the Lord was displeased with what David had done." This is a noticeably mild reproach for one who had committed adultery and murder; especially in light of the transgressions for which Saul reportedly lost his kingdom.

II Samuel 12: Here David is punished for his crimes. Nathan the prophet plays a similar role in this episode to

that played by Samuel when he berates Saul. Yet, there are several fundamental differences. 1) Here, the crime is more severe, but the punishment is less so. 2) Nowhere is David's kingship questioned or threatened, whereas Saul lost his kingdom. From this we can deduce that David's power is much more firmly established than Saul's, at least in relation to the prophet. Even though Nathan speaks in the name of God, and although David must take him seriously, the balance of power between the two leans much more heavily in the king's favor than it did in Saul's time.

The entire chapter is a response to David's sins. It seems to say, "Yes, we know he did wrong, and he'll be duly punished." The curse of verses 10-12 provide a theological explanation for the events of the upcoming chapters. It explains Tamar's rape; Amnon's murder; the death of Bathsheba's baby; Absalom's and Sheba's rebellions; and Absalom's death.

I Samuel 15: In the opening six verses of the chapter, Absalom cleverly "won"¹⁰ away the hearts of the men of Israel" (15:6). Several scholars write that Absalom used, or was used by, the old guard leadership in his rebellion against his father. This opening scene in chapter 15 certainly corroborates that theory. For here Absalom invokes the

10. Hebrew word _____ is used; literally, "he stole". This perhaps is a more appropriate image, in that he "stole" the hearts of the men of Israel from his father.

pre-monarchical image of the judge. The Hebrew root ספ is used four times in these few verses as Absalom offers the "men of Israel" a personalized, immediate form of justice no longer available to them from the king.

II Samuel 20:23-26: After the recounting of the revolts, the following list of David's administration is given.

_____ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל כָּל-כֹּצֵבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל .

"Joab was commander of the whole army of Israel;"

_____ וַיֹּאמֶר בֶּן-יְהוֹיָדָע עַל-הַכֹּרֶתִים וְעַל-הַפִּלִּיתִים .

"Benaiah son of Jehoiada was commander of the Cherethites and the Pelethites;"

_____ וַיֹּאמֶר עַל-כֹּנָסִים .

"Adoram was in charge of forced labor;"

_____ וַיֹּאמֶר בֶּן-אֲחִילֻד הַרְבֵּי .

"Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder;"

_____ וַיֹּאמֶר שֵׁבֶר .

"Sheva was scribe;"

_____ וַיֹּאמֶר זָדוֹק וַאֲבִיָּאֶתָר כֹּהֲנִים .

"And Zadok and Abiathar were priests."

_____ וַיֹּאמֶר עִירְיָא בֶּן-יֵשׁ בִּירָה הַיֵּירִי .

"Ira the Jairite also served David as priest."

II Samuel 22+23: The poems of these two chapters¹¹

11. Chapter 22 appears again as Psalm 18, with a number of variations.

dramatically represent the eternal covenant between God and the Davidic line. Chapter 22 follows a psalm-like pattern of praise of God; the psalmists perilous situation; God's using his great powers to rescue the psalmist; and God's granting great powers to the psalmist to defeat his enemies. In the final verse, the eternal covenant between God and David's seed is explicitly stated. It reads

מִצְדָּתִים יִשְׁדָּרֻם מַלְכֵנוּ וְדָוִד חֲסִדֵינוּ עֲדָתוֹ
וְעַדְדָנוּ יִשְׁדָּרֻם עֲדָתוֹ.

"Tower of victory to His king, Who deals graciously with His anointed, with David and his offspring evermore."

Similarly, 23:5 - reported to be the "last words of David" (23:1) - reads: כִּי-עַל-כֵּן בֵּיתִי דָם-אֵלֶּךָ

כִּי בֵיתִי עוֹלָם שֶׁמֶלֶךְ עָרוּכָה בְכֶם וְעַדְדָנוּ

"Is not my House established before God? For he has granted me an eternal pact, drawn up in full and secured."

I Kings 1: As David lay on his death bed, two parties formed around the two candidates for succession. In Adonijah's camp were Joab, Abiathar, and the Men of Judah. With Solomon were Zadok the priest, Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei, Rei, and "David's own fighting men" (1:8). In 1:6 we are told of Adonijah that, וְהָיָה אַחֲרֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם

"He was the one born after Absalom." This may imply that there was certainly some understanding that the oldest surviving son would inherit the throne. Yet, though primogeniture may have been a contributing influence to the

actions of Adonijah and his party, it could not have been the sole condition for succession. If it had been, there would have been no question. But, we shall see that other factors were involved.

The language of this chapter is hardly objective. We are asked to believe that Adonijah actively conspired with his allies, while Solomon and his allies passively became a group by virtue of having been left out. Whereas Adonijah invited most of the court etc., to his sacrificial feast (1:9), we read:

וְאֶת־בְּנֵי־הַמִּלְחָמָה לֹא־יָדָעוּ וְאֶת־נָתָן הַנָּבִיא וְאֶת־בְּנֵי־הַמִּלְחָמָה לֹא־יָדָעוּ. "But, he did not invite the prophet Nathan, or Benaiah, of the fighting men, or his brother Solomon."¹²

Solomon acts as cleverly as his father had acted in the days of Saul. All of this maneuvering for the throne is a dirty business, therefore Solomon is depicted as having taken no active part. But, of Adonijah it is said in verse 5,

וְאֶת־אֲדֹנִיָּה בֶן־חַגִּית הָיָה מְבָאֵשׁ וְהוֹדָה וְהָאָמָלִים מְבָאֵשׁ. "Now Adonijah son of Haggith went about boasting, 'I will be king!'" Compare this to the passive stance attributed to Solomon in verses 33-35 where he is put on his father's mule, taken down to Gihon, anointed by Zadok and Nathan, acclaimed king by the people, and brought back to the palace

12. The same is implied in 1:8; 1:10; and 1:26.

to sit on his father's throne. Solomon is made king whereas Adonijah declares himself king. Adonijah's claim to the throne is illegitimate. Solomon's claim is legitimated by virtue of the process he went through. That is: appointment by David; participation of priest and prophet; anointing with oil; shofar blown; and popular acclamation. Perhaps David's appointment is the most important of the above elements, for when Abiathar's son Jonathan tells Adonijah the news, he begins with, "Alas, our lord King David has made Solomon king!" (1:44)

I Kings 2: Following the chronological order of events, we see that Solomon may have at first acted as a kind of prince regent.¹³ He was declared king in 1:39, but David did not actually die until 2:10. Therefore we may assume that a period of time elapsed during which father and son ruled together. It appears to have been a time of consolidation, during which David helped Solomon tie up the loose ends of his own reign. Actually, chapter 2 is characterized by the theme of consolodation. In the first twelve verses, David, on his death bed, instructs Solomon to kill Joab and Shimei son of Gera. In verse 10 David dies, and immediately in verse 12 we are told, וַיִּשְׁלֹם לְיִשְׁרָאֵל. "And his (Solomon's) rule was firmly established." In the second half of the chapter,

13. See de Vaux, p. 101.

Solomon carries out David's last requests, adding a significant name or two to his father's list.

The final verse of I Kings 2 summarizes what is perhaps the author intended to be the central message of the Succession Narrative, וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוֹשָׁפָט בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׂרָאֵל

"Thus the kingdom was secured in Solomon's hands."

THE SUCCESSION NARRATIVE

One of the major concerns of scholars in examining the Succession Narrative is certainly an attempt to discern "What really happened?" Yet most scholarly inquiry pertains to the purpose of the Narrative. What is its central theme? Why was it written? In the introduction to his article¹⁴ on the Succession Narrative, Kiyoshi Sacon summarizes four common approaches to understanding the theme.

The first is the political interpretation which claims that "Solomon's succession of David's throne"¹⁵ is the central theme of the whole narrative. "This well known view interprets the theme in terms of the question 'Who shall sit upon the throne of David?' as given in the final section (1 K 1:20) of the SN. This view, which sees in all of the

14. Kiyoshi K. Sacon, "A Study of the Literary Structures of 'The Succession Narrative,'" in Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Winona, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1982).

15. Ibid., p. 28.

preceeding chapters 'the steady elimination of the alternative possibilities', was followed by von Rad and many others during the 1940's and 1950's."¹⁶

The second approach is again a political one, yet it denies that there is only one unified purpose. For example, these scholars see anti-Davidic and anti-Solomonic tendencies in the present form of the narrative.

A third approach sees one theme which recurs four times (II Samuel 11:2-17; 12:15b-25; 13+14; 15-20; and I Kings 1-2). This is "the theme of 'sin externalized in a sexual form which leads to death.'"¹⁷

Lastly, there are various scholars who believe that the theme is not at all connected with the question of succession. One, for example, sees one section with David under curse, and another with David under blessing. Yet another sees this material not as 'The Succession Narrative', but as "The stories of David" containing "stories of the royal family of David with David and Joab as the two main characters."¹⁸ Sacon's own theory is that

This historical writing depicted in a series of concentric structures is an eloquent representation of a contradictory process in full tension between the external national expansion in a relatively short period as the result of successful wars and the internal insecurity with

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 29.

18. Ibid.

massive problems and conflicts in a period^{19f} of uncertainty shortly after Solomon's succession.

Tomoo Ishida has developed a compelling political analysis of the Succession Narrative, which he sees as "a narrative composed with the definite purpose of defending the legitimacy of Solomon's kingship."²⁰ Two factors lead Ishida to conclude that the "narrative as a whole was composed from a certain political standpoint"²¹; one is the highly political nature of the text, and the other is the relatively consistent and coherent storyline which runs throughout.

He focuses his discussion on the 'two camps' struggle of I Kings 1+2. Whereas the text itself implies active political maneuvering on the part of Adonijah to become king in the place of Solomon - David's true choice²² - Ishida claims that any political maneuvering which took place was executed by Solomon.

If Solomon's supporters had stood idle, Adonijah would have been king. The narrative clearly tells us that the one who changed the current was not Adonijah but Solomon. In other words, Solomon gained his designation as David's successor by challenging the existing order supported by the regime whose nominal ruler was doting David, and whose strong-man was Joab,

19. Ibid., p. 54.

20. Ishida, p. 175.

21. Ibid., p. 176.

22. See p. 56 of this study.

commander-in-chief of the army.²³

According to Ishida, when Nathan says to Bathsheba, "You must have heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has assumed the kingship without the knowledge of our Lord David" (I Kings 1:11), and similarly when Nathan says to David, "Yet now Adonijah has become king, and you my lord the king, know nothing about it" 1:18), this is actually a fabricated coup d'etat. That is, Nathan turned Adonijah's actions - which were simply the cocky boasts of a young prince whom everyone expected to assume the throne (2:15+22) - into a plot to usurp that throne from his brother. "The feast which Adonijah gave at En Rogel was nothing but another demonstration of his intention to be king as the legitimate successor to David, just as was his preparation of 'chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him' (1:5)."²⁴

This fabrication is partially revealed in the contradiction between Nathan's and Bathsheba's claim that David had earlier promised that Solomon would inherit the throne (1:13, 17, 30) and their statements to David in 1:20 and 1:27 which do not assume that such a promise has been made.

Evidently, there was neither pledge nor designation, but the indecision of a senile king who was vaguely expecting that the eldest son

23. Ibid., p. 176-179.

24. Ibid., p. 179.

would be designated as his successor. If Solomon's supporters had stood idle, Adonijah would have been king. The narrative clearly tells us that the one who changed the current was not Adonijah but Solomon.²⁵

Martin Cohen also understands the "two camp" struggle of I Kings 1 and 2 as a matter of palace intrigue. Yet, in his approach, he examines the motivation of Joab and Abiathar in their support of Adonijah. His fits this episode into the greater context of his theory that the main conflicts we encounter throughout the early monarchy are the result of the tensions between the traditional tribal leadership and the increasingly powerful monarchy. Thus, Joab's and Abiathar's support for David's eldest son represented a conservative effort on the part of the old guard. He reasons that at that juncture, their only alternative

. . . was to support a hereditary monarchy, for such a monarchy is less prone to upset the precedents, traditions and institutions of its predecessors. Furthermore, however despotic it may wish to become, the monarchy remains forever subordinated to the principle of succession. Practically, this means that opponents of the policies of the reigning monarch can prepare long before his death to alter these policies by influencing his successor.²⁶

One of the striking features of II Samuel is the sudden shift in its attitude towards David in chapter 11. Ishida

25. Ibid., p. 179.

26. Cohen, p. 90.

sees this shift²⁷ as the work of Solomon's supporters. He argues that the criticism is waged at David the king, and not David the man. Thus, the stories of his mishandling of Absalom's rebellion; Uriah; Amnon's rape of Tamar; etc., are meant to demonstrate David's decreasing ability to rule, and Joab's increasing role in picking up the slack. Ishida argues that this leads to the conclusion that Solomon needed to take over. This last point is not clear. For though these stories of David's debacles could lead one to conclude that a new king was necessary, it could just as well have been Adonijah.

In Albrecht Alt's discussion of Solomon's accession, he is not concerned with questions of palace intrigue or with the legitimacy of Adonijah's claim. Instead, he contrasts the method by which David is chosen with the ways in which Saul and David came to the throne. According to his argument, there was absolutely no alternative to dynastic designation. He writes, ". . . there was no place here for the decisive element of an ideal charismatic monarchy, which we found in the case of Saul, and which we saw applied fictitiously even in David's case; it was not Yahweh who chose Solomon as David's successor, but David who did it entirely on his own accord."²⁸ de Vaux agrees that David's choice of Solomon was the decisive factor in the latter's

27. See p. 53 of this study.

28. Alt, p. 304.

accession. He explains that

. . . primogeniture was a title to the succession, but appointment by the king was also required (2 Ch 21:3), for the king was not bound to choose his eldest son. Though Adonias, the eldest surviving son of David, hoped to be king (I K 2:15 and 22) and was supported by a whole party (I K 1:5-9; 2:22), a rival party supported Solomon (I K 1:10). It lay with David to choose his successor (I K 1:17, 30).²⁹

Alt reasons that this was the only possible arrangement "that could deal with the practical necessities of the system."³⁰ In other words, it would have been impossible to have let David die and then wait for Yahweh to choose a successor.

These "practical necessities" which required dynastic succession are: a) The city-state of Jerusalem could accept no one except a member of the House of David in that it was his personal property; b) Judah would almost certainly have rejected an Israelite king; c) The mountainous states in the east and west owed personal allegiance to David; d) and "finally, of course, there were David's mercenaries, the most important military force in the country. They would have been primarily at the disposal of David's descendants."³¹ Therefore, Alt concludes that "only a dynastic succession could prevent the immediate collapse of

29. de Vaux, p. 101.

30. Alt, p. 304.

31. Ibid., p. 305.

the kingdom as a whole after David's death. It would not have been possible to return to the ancient Israelite institution of a charismatic monarchy."³²

ACCEPTANCE OF THE DYNASTIC PRINCIPLE

No one disputes the fact that by the time of Solomon's enthronement the dynastic principle had been firmly established. After Solomon's death, Rehoboam's right to succeed his father was not contested. The Davidic line continued to rule in Judah for many centuries. Yet, the text does not provide us with a clear understanding as to when that principle took hold. Whereas we can confidently state that the the dynastic principle became an established fact sometime between Saul's election and Solomon's accession, scholars disagree as to when - within that period - the principle became commonly accepted.³³

At one extreme we find Alt who argues that the phenomenon of David - who was not of Saul's tribe, and was in a state of feud with Saul - becoming king of Israel "is an eloquent testimony to the lack of any idea of dynastic

32. Ibid., p. 305-306.

33. As to the acceptance of primogeniture we can say even less. If it ever became an established principle, it occurred later than our period. It is expressly mentioned only once, in II Chron. 21:3.

34. Alt, p. 278.

continuity in the Israelite conception of the monarchy. .
."34 He offers Abner's unsuccessful attempt to make Ishbaal
king as evidence, reasoning that he was too far removed from
the two primary qualifications of the 'judge', divine
selection and military prowess.

The attachment of a monarchy to a dynasty was
not yet an established fact in the conscience of
the people, and when a new man appeared who was a
charismatic leader and seemed worthy of a homage
and military service that Saul had been accorded,
no one in Israel had any serious difficulty about
. . . abandoning the existing royal family and
vesting all the authority of the infant nation in
a new leader.³⁵

At the other extreme is S. Talmon who argues that "from
the days of Saul the right of succession within the royal
family was considered the norm."³⁶ Evidence of the
existence of the dynastic principle in Saul's time is found
in I Samuel 20:30-31 which reads, "Then Saul's anger was
kindled against Jonathan and he said unto him . . . 'as long
as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, you shall not be
established, nor your kingdom.'" Also, one can argue that
even though Ishabaaal's kingdom failed, the mere fact that
Abner unhesitatingly made him king is evidence that the
principle was, to some extent, operative. That David became
king of Israel is proof only that the combination of his
mercenary army, his kingship of Judah, proven military

35. Ibid., p. 266.

36. Talmon, p. 16 and 17.

expertise, and perhaps the mere power of his personality, were stronger than the not fully established dynastic principle in the hands of the unimpressive scion of the destroyed House of Saul.

In the later part of David's reign, the process of succession was certainly unresolved. This unresolved state was the cause of the wars of succession among his sons. But note that no one ever questioned whether or not David's successor would be one of his sons. That was assumed.

Therefore, we can conclude that a tendency towards dynastic succession was already operative in Saul's time. That Jonathan would have inherited his father's kingdom was not a foreign notion. Moreover, Ishbaal's short-lived kingdom demonstrates some assumption of a dynastic monarchy. David's accession to the thrones of Judah and Israel do not preclude the existence of a dynastic principle; rather it only demonstrates that the principle - like Saul's kingship itself - was not yet firmly established. By the end of David's life, there can be no question that a dynastic monarchy was fully operative. Perhaps the process of succession was not yet satisfactorily developed; but that the new ruler would be chosen from among the sons of the king was not questioned.

DAVIDIC ROYAL IDEOLOGY

One cannot overstate the revolutionary transformation that took place in ancient Israel in David's lifetime. As significant as the emergence of the monarchy was in Saul's day, within a single generation David laid the foundation of a religious and political ideology, the ramifications of which are still being experienced in our own day. This chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the ideological and political innovations which were introduced in David's reign and, to some extent, fulfilled by Solomon.

The substance of this ideology can be found in II Samuel 7:8ff; 22:51; and 23:5, David's so-called last words. In these few verses is found the new covenant between Yahweh and David in which God promises that David's descendants would rule over Israel forever, with Yahweh's assurance and protection. In II Samuel 7:14 Yahweh promises that he will accept each of David's descendants as his own son.³⁷ This new covenant dispensed with the need for a prophet/priest figure like Samuel to act as intermediary between the king and Yahweh. The new relationship allowed for transgressions on the part of the king without destroying the covenant.³⁸ Therefore, the Davidic line could survive the same type of transgressions for which Saul had lost his kingdom.

37. See Note #169 in Alt, p. 306.

38. II Samuel 14+15.

Actually, the memory of the fate of Saul's kingship and descendants seems to have been a factor in the formulation of this ideology. For the conditions of this eternal covenant are not only looking to ensure the future, but perhaps look also to preventing a recurrence of past actions. Of II Samuel 7, Martin Cohen writes, "All David had to do . . . was to recall the circumstances of his own elevation to kingship."³⁹ This direct covenant between David and God made it impossible for another to do to one of his descendants what he himself did to Saul. The ideology is such that any non-Davidic claim to the throne - including any made by a descendant of Saul - would automatically be deemed illegitimate. The fate of the Davidic line was from then on inextricably bound to that of the nation.

This ideology manifested itself in the structure of the United Kingdom, especially in the choice of its capital. Jerusalem was not tied to any traditional cultic site of either Judah or Israel. It lay neutrally between the two; was captured by David's personal mercenaries; and was populated only by David's family and officials. It was, in fact, the personal possession of David and his family.

The new Davidic covenant with Yahweh was strengthened by David's moving the Ark to Jerusalem and the eventual construction of the Temple. Thus, David bound himself and

39. Cohen, p. 88.

his family to the central cultic object in the worship of Yahweh. Also, by building the Temple for the Ark - a permanent and eternal home - the implicit statement is made that Israel's history, signified by the Ark, was destined to come to this stage. Whereas Saul was primarily a military leader, David made himself the central figure in Israel's military structure, political administration and, as we have seen, the worship of Yahweh. It was Yahweh's will that David become king, build his capitol in Jerusalem, and that his son build Yahweh's house. In one generation Israel's ancient covenant with Yahweh became eternally bound to House of David.

SUMMARY

In the closing chapters of Judges, the people of Israel call for a king. They are primarily responding to the increasing military threat of the Philistines against which the old system of the savior-judge was no longer a sufficient deterrent. The old guard leadership, represented by Samuel, was initially supportive of the monarchy, but only so long as it was limited to a military role and continued to respond to their authority. One of the main factors in Saul's loss of his kingdom seems to have been his overstepping the bounds of this military role, usurping cultic responsibilities, and making steps towards dynastic rule.

Yahweh's attitude toward the early monarchy is presented in a delicately ambiguous manner. The writers of this text - composed later, when the monarchy was an established fact - had the task of reflecting both Yahweh's (and the traditional tribal leader's) dissatisfaction with the new institution, while at the same time granting it reluctant support. Therefore, the most severe criticism and condemnation of the monarchy is placed in the mouth of Samuel and not Yahweh.

Saul is also ambiguously portrayed. There are two probable reasons for this. The text we have is, to a great

extent, a product of the Davidic court; therefore, to legitimize David's house, Saul's loss of the kingdom must be shown to be the result of Yahweh's will. Also, Saul's infant monarchy was ill-defined. He was as much the last of the judges as he was the first king. The lack of an operative dynastic principle - a notion which existed in Saul's time but which was not yet commonly accepted - made the future of Saul's house even more tenuous. He had no supra-tribal administration to speak of except the standing army, the one major innovation of his reign.

The text shifts it's focus to David many years before he becomes king, and before Saul dies. Therefore a long period of Saul's reign is presented in the background of the story of David's rise to power. What we do read of Saul concerns his break with Samuel and his decline.

One tradition stressed in the text has David's rise to power follow a pattern similar to that of the judges. Yet another more convincing tradition portrays David's rise to power as a process of years of political and military maneuvering. This involved the building of his band of mercenaries, his years as prince of the fief of Ziklag, then his move to Hebron where he became king of Judah. From this substantial power base, he was in a good position to take the kingship of Israel from the ineffectual Ishbaal.

Next David conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and made it his capital. Based in this neutral city, his

personal possession, David could easily rule both Israel and Judah. The "United Kingdom" was not one unified kingdom, rather it was an artificial union of states joined only in their allegiance to the person of David and his line.

Under David, the principle of dynastic rule was firmly established, but the specific process of succession was not yet clear. The notion of primogeniture seems to have existed, but was not decisive. David's choice of Solomon was probably the predominant factor in his accession.

Perhaps the most indelible innovation of David's reign was the reworking of Israel's covenantal relationship with Yahweh which placed the Davidic line as an indispensable third party. From that point onward, the fate of Judah would be inextricably bound to that of the House of David.

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