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Saul and David, Israel and Judah: The Book of Samuel as Paradigmatic History

Stephen Germany | ORCID: 0000-0002-7259-2063

Faculty of Theology, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland

stephen.germany@unibas.ch

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Abstract

This study makes the case that within the books of Samuel-Kings as a whole, the book of Samuel presents two nested iterations of paradigmatic history, each of which anticipates the subsequent monarchic history with a distinct thematic focus. The more detailed of these two iterations—the story of Saul’s and David’s reigns in 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 24—typologically anticipates the subsequent history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah as narrated in 1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 25. This paradigmatic “preview” of the fates of Israel and Judah is further condensed in the stories about Eli and Samuel in 1 Sam 1–8, which anticipate elements from 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 24, the book of Kings, and beyond.

Keywords

Saul – David – kingdom of Israel – kingdom of Judah – historical typology

Within the biblical narrative of the monarchic period recounted in the books of Samuel and Kings, nearly the same amount of space is dedicated to narrating the reigns of Israel’s first two kings, Saul and David, as is given to the reigns of all of Israel’s and Judah’s subsequent kings combined.¹ This observation already hints at the special role that Saul and David play in the larger

1 The narratives about Saul and David in 1 Sam 9:1–1 Kgs 2:11 span 1,391 verses, while the narrative history of the monarchy from Solomon to Zedekiah in 1 Kgs 2:12–2 Kgs 25:30 spans 1,427 verses.

biblical account of kingship in Israel and Judah. In this study, I will argue that, within the received form of the books of Samuel-Kings, the book of Samuel presents two nested iterations of *paradigmatic history*, each of which anticipates the subsequent monarchic history with a distinct thematic focus.² The more detailed of these two iterations—the story of Saul’s and David’s reigns in 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 24—typologically anticipates the subsequent history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah as narrated in 1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 25 (and beyond).³ This paradigmatic “preview” of the fates of Israel and Judah is further condensed in the stories about Eli and Samuel in 1 Sam 1–8, which reflect more abstractly on the concepts of monarchy and hereditary leadership.⁴

1 Israel and Judah in 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 24

The idea that the biblical figures of Saul and David stand symbolically for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, respectively, has increasingly been observed in scholarship on the book of Samuel. Already over half a century ago, Friedrich Mildenberger suggested that a “reviser” of the Saul-David traditions attempted to explain the fall of the northern kingdom and the continuation of the Davidic monarchy in Judah through the narratives of certain events in the lives of Saul and David,⁵ and this idea has slowly gained in prominence, especially since the turn of the millennium. For example, Reinhard Kratz concluded that in certain texts in the book of Samuel that were written after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE, “Saul has become a cipher for the house of Israel, David a cipher for the house of Judah,” whereby the transferal of Saul’s kingship to David reflects northern Israel’s cultural survival in the Judahite

2 For reflections on the narratological and historiographic function of analogical linkages between biblical texts, see Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 114, 269. For a review of earlier scholarship focusing on macrostructure and meaning in the book of Samuel, see Borgman, *David, Saul, and God*, 16.

3 For a useful discussion of typology in the context of ancient literature, see Kaplan, *My Perfect One*, 17–29, who notes that typology can be considered a subcategory of allegorical interpretation focusing on historical events (*ibid.*, 17, 25). While some interpreters use the term “allegory” for narratives that can be correlated to events described elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Rosenberg, *King and Kin*, esp. 1–46, and Sperling, *Original Torah*, 28), here I will use the more specific term “typology.”

4 Given the constraints of space, this study will restrict itself to synchronic observations, although its diachronic implications are significant (see “Conclusion” below). For my analysis of the literary development and historical background of the book of Samuel, see Germany, *Kingmakers and Kingbreakers*.

5 Mildenberger, “Saul-David-Überlieferung,” 58.

state.⁶ Similarly, Alexander Fischer has hypothesized a post-722 BCE redaction in the book of Samuel that reworked older traditions about Saul and David in order to depict David as Saul's successor and to offer a new "political home" to the members of the former northern kingdom.⁷ Klaus-Peter Adam took this idea further, showing in more detail how the Saul-David narratives in the book of Samuel serve as an anticipation of the later relationship between Israel and Judah during the time of the divided monarchy.⁸ Nevertheless, prior scholarship has generally not appreciated how thoroughly this paradigmatic function of Saul and David as symbols for Israel and Judah defines the deep narrative structure of the book.⁹

When viewed in terms of the relationship between Saul and David, 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 24 can be divided into three main sections: (1) the story of David's rise and Saul's fateful demise (1 Sam 9–31); (2) David's consolidation of power in the wake of Saul's death (2 Sam 1–9); and (3) the story of the turbulent remainder of David's reign (2 Sam 10–24 [+ 1 Kgs 1–2]).¹⁰ As I will argue below, these three sections can be correlated to three major periods in the later history of Israel and Judah: (1) a time when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah existed alongside each other (1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 17); (2) a time when the northern kingdom of Israel had been subsumed within the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Judah alone remained as an independent kingdom (2 Kgs 18–25); and (3) the period of Judah's exile and return (as reflected in a number of other biblical texts).

1.1 *Saul's Demise and the Fall of Northern Israel (1 Sam 9–31)*

If one follows this analogy further, a number of additional details in the book of Samuel relating to king Saul can be interpreted as anticipating the fate of Israel

6 Kratz, *Die Komposition*, 187–188 (quote from the English translation, 181).

7 Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, 283. For similar proposals that the Saul-David narrative reflects a post-722 BCE historical context and thus a reflection on the relationship between Israel and Judah, see Finkelstein, "Saul," 366; Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, 47*–51*; Bodner, *1 Samuel*, 116; Wright, *David*, 10, 47; Bezzel, *Saul*, 236; Na'aman, "Memories," 325 n. 62; and Sykora, *Unfavored*, 118. In contrast, Edelman, "Saulite-Davidic Rivalry," 71, and Sergi, "Saul," 35–36, 49, critique such an interpretation, albeit unconvincingly in my view.

8 Adam, *Saul und David*, 10, 20–21, 95, 161.

9 For example, Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, 47*–51*, attributes the recasting of Saul and David as symbols for Israel and Judah to a late eighth-century "Court Narrator" ("Höfischer Erzähler") who drew on extensive earlier traditions, and Wright, *David*, 10, considers that the number of passages in the book of Samuel in which Saul and David symbolize Israel and Judah "is relatively minimal."

10 Although 2 Sam 21–24 stands apart from the main plotline of the book of Samuel, this unit nevertheless fits well within a reading of the book of Samuel as a whole as reflecting the fates of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (see below).

as described in the book of Kings. Saul's cultic transgressions toward the beginning of his reign (1 Sam 13:7b–15a; 1 Sam 15) anticipate his eventual demise, just as the cultic sins of the northern Israelite kings are treated as the cause of the end of the northern kingdom and the exile of its population (2 Kgs 17:5–18, 21–23).¹¹ Due to Saul's cultic transgression in 1 Sam 13:9–10, Yahweh declares that Saul's "house" (i.e., dynasty) will not be established (v. 14).¹² Similarly, the failure of the kings of northern Israel to maintain a longstanding dynasty is a *Leitmotiv* in the book of Kings: Unlike the kingdom of Judah, which is able to maintain a single, continuous dynasty throughout its existence (cf. the reference to a "sure house" for David in 2 Sam 7), the kingdom of Israel is plagued with recurring coups (likewise linked with the kings' cultic transgressions) that prevent dynastic continuity. The specific connection between Saul and later northern Israelite kings is reinforced by the statements that both Saul and his son Ishbaal reigned for two years (1 Sam 13:1; 2 Sam 2:10), a foreboding anticipation of the pattern of two-year rule followed by a coup that is reported for two later northern Israelite kings, Nadab (1 Kgs 15:25–27) and Elah (1 Kgs 16:8–10).¹³ In addition, there are strong literary links between the fates of Saul and the northern Israelite king Ahab: Both kings fail to follow a divine command to wipe out an enemy (1 Sam 15; 1 Kgs 20), and both kings are mortally wounded by an arrow in battle following an episode in which they disguise themselves (1 Sam 28; 31; 1 Kgs 22:1–38).¹⁴

Yet the historical typology that lies below the narrative surface of 1 Sam 9–31 extends beyond the figure of Saul himself; it also includes David as well as Israel's main aggressor, the Philistines. In fact, the three-way interactions between Saul, David, and the Philistines in the book of Samuel's depiction of the events leading up to Saul's death (1 Sam 27–31) correspond closely with the events surrounding the end of the northern kingdom of Israel in the late

11 See also 1 Sam 28:17–19, where Samuel posthumously explains to Saul that because of Saul's failure to carry out the ban against Amalek (1 Sam 15), "Yahweh has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David." The connection between the end of Saul's kingship and the end of the northern kingdom of Israel is strengthened on a lexical level by the recurrence of the root $\text{ד}^{\prime}\text{ל}^{\prime}\text{מ}$ in 1 Sam 10:19; 15:23, 26; 16:1, 7; 2 Kgs 17:15, 20 (see Heinrich, *David und Klio*, 86).

12 Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 15–17, finds further hints of the connection between cultic sins and the fall of the northern kingdom in the reference in 2 Sam 1:19 to Saul's and Jonathan's deaths on "high places."

13 Along similar lines, see Adam, *Saul und David*, 56–57; Gilmour and Young, "Saul's Two Year Reign," 152–153.

14 For a detailed discussion of these connections, see Kim, "Ahab and Saul."

eighth century BCE as described in the book of Kings.¹⁵ Just as one of the Philistines' primary roles in the book of Samuel is to bring about Saul's death in battle (1 Sam 31),¹⁶ allowing David to take over the kingship of "all Israel," the Assyrians' defeat of the northern kingdom allowed Judah to become the main center of Yahwistic culture and thus to represent, in its own way, "all Israel."¹⁷

This is most evident in the description of Saul's death in battle against the Philistines in 1 Sam 31. For example, 1 Sam 31:7 states that after the Philistines defeated Saul in battle, the Israelites to the north of the Jezreel Valley and beyond the Jordan "forsook their towns and fled; and the Philistines came and occupied them." This detail serves no clear purpose within the immediate narrative context, yet when it is read in light of an analogy between the Philistines and Assyrians, it can be understood as a typological counterpart to the statement in 2 Kgs 15:29 that Assyria occupied the northern regions of Israel as well as its territory in Gilead several years before the complete dissolution of the northern kingdom. Likewise, the Philistine-Assyrian analogy helps to explain the repeated references in the book of Samuel to conflicts between Israel and the Philistines in the Jezreel Valley (1 Sam 25:43; 29:1, 11; 2 Sam 2:9; 4:4), which do not fit well with the overall biblical picture—or with the archaeological evidence—of the Philistines as inhabiting the southern coastal plain. Indeed, elsewhere in the Bible, Jezreel is consistently associated with the northern kingdom of Israel and the fragility of its dynasties.¹⁸ In this respect, the location of Saul's decisive battle with the Philistines relatively far to the north in Jezreel has more symbolic than historical import.¹⁹

The Philistine-Assyrian analogy in 1 Sam 31 also provides a plausible interpretive framework for the episode in 1 Sam 27 in which David seeks refuge with the Philistine king Achish of Gath during his flight from Saul. Here, the depiction of David as Achish's "servant" (v. 5) can be compared to Judah's status as an Assyrian vassal during the period surrounding the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel. Just as Judah is able to successfully protect itself from aggression by

15 On the Philistine-Assyrian analogy in the book of Samuel, see also Hensel, "Ark Narrative(s)," 187, who considers that the Assyrians lurk in the background of the story of the Philistines' capture of the ark in 1 Sam 4–6.

16 See Jobling, *1 Samuel*, 102, 222.

17 On the structural correspondence between 1 Sam 31 and 2 Kgs 17, see also Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, 283–284.

18 Cf., e.g., 1 Kgs 18:45–46; 21:1, 23; 2 Kgs 8–10. See also Hos 1:4–5, where Yahweh tells Hosea to name his son Jezreel, "for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."

19 Against Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, 321, and Sergi, "Saul," 47, both of whom take the location of the battle in Jezreel as evidence of tenth-century realities.

Israel by submitting to Assyria (2 Kgs 16:5–9), so too is David able to protect himself from Saul by becoming a servant of the Philistine king Achish.²⁰ If one follows this analogy further, the fact that the narrative in Samuel goes out of its way to distance David geographically from Saul's fateful encounter with the Philistines (1 Sam 29) can perhaps be understood as a claim that Judah had no complicity in the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria.²¹

1.2 *David after Saul's Death, Judah after Israel's Fall (2 Sam 1–9)*

Whereas the typological function of Saul and David in 1 Sam 9–31 largely revolves around connections to particular events surrounding the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel as described in the book of Kings, the typological aspects in 2 Sam 1–9 take on a more reflective quality and can be understood as claims about Judah's reaction to the fall of Israel.

In 2 Sam 1, David is informed of Saul's and Jonathan's death, whereupon he and his men mourn for Saul and Jonathan "and *for the house of Israel*, because they had fallen by the sword" (v. 12). David's mourning for the "house of Israel" (and note David's association with the "house of Judah" in 2 Sam 2:4) clearly indicates that here Saul symbolizes the northern kingdom of Israel more broadly.²² On a rhetorical level, David's actions advance the claim that Judah did not celebrate the fall of its erstwhile aggressor but instead empathized with its population—a powerful message for influencing the attitudes of the former inhabitants of the northern kingdom and their descendants who were later integrated into the Judahite state.²³

Recognizing the symbolic function of Saul and David is also fundamental to understanding a number of episodes in 2 Sam 2–4. For example, the establishment of Ishboshet as king over the north in 2 Sam 2:8–10 anticipates Jeroboam's schism from the house of David in 1 Kgs 12.²⁴ Moreover, the conflict between the "house of Saul" and the "house of David" in 2 Sam 2:12–4:12 can be seen as an anticipation of the frequent state of war between Israel's and Judah's early kings as described, for example, in 1 Kgs 15:7 (between Abijam and

20 Cf. Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, 284, and Adam, *Saul und David*, 74, 78–81, 191. These dynamics between Israel, Judah, and Assyria in 2 Kgs 16 fit well with the twofold narrative function of the Philistines in 1 Sam 27–31 observed by Jobling, *1 Samuel*, 235: the Philistines "bring about the death of Saul and his sons" but also "provide David with a refuge from Saul for the last crucial part of Saul's life."

21 Similarly, Wright, *David*, 10, speaks of texts in Samuel that serve to "exonerate David's name."

22 Cf. Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 15.

23 For the archaeological evidence attesting a sharp rise in Judah's population at the end of the eighth century, see Finkelstein, "Saul," 362–364.

24 See Bezzel, "Der 'Saulidische Erbfolgekrieg,'" 174.

Jeroboam) and 1 Kgs 15:16, 32 (between Asa and Baasha). Yet the description of this conflict does more than simply anticipating later narratives; it also *inverts* the power dynamic between Israel and Judah described in the book of Kings: In 2 Sam 3–4, the “house of David” becomes ever stronger and the “house of Saul” ever weaker (2 Sam 3:1).²⁵

In 2 Sam 5–8, the narrative continues to build upon the Philistine-Assyrian analogy observed already in 1 Sam 27 and 31. Just as Judah, following the end of the northern kingdom of Israel, manages to survive the Assyrian onslaught during the reign of Hezekiah through divine support (2 Kgs 18–19), so too does David seemingly effortlessly overcome the Philistines following Saul’s disastrous defeat by them (2 Sam 5:17–25; 8:1).²⁶ The typological connection between David in 2 Sam 5–8 and Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18–19 is reinforced by similar language describing Yahweh’s support of each king²⁷ as well as through the description of both kings successfully attacking the Philistines.²⁸ This analogy between David’s and Hezekiah’s defeat of the Philistines strengthens the typological link between 2 Sam 1–9 and the biblical depiction of the period following the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 2 Kgs 18–25.

Finally, just as 1 Sam 29 emphasizes that David had no involvement in Saul’s death, so too does David’s care for Saul’s descendant Mephibosheth in 2 Sam 9²⁹ reflect a conciliatory stance toward the north, perhaps making a claim that Judah supported individuals from the former northern kingdom who settled in Judah after Assyria’s annexation of Samaria.³⁰

1.3 *Challenges to David’s Reign and Judah’s Exile (2 Sam 10–24)*

Despite the “apologetic” tendencies of many passages in 1 Sam 16–31 and 2 Sam 1–9 toward David with respect to his relationship to Saul (and, by

25 For an interpretation of 2 Sam 2–4 in light of the depiction of later relations between Israel and Judah in the book of Kings, see further Adam, *Saul und David*, 43–45.

26 For a similar observation, see Adam, *Saul und David*, 40.

27 In the report of David’s conquest of neighboring nations, 2 Sam 8 twice states that “Yahweh delivered David wherever he went” (וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶת דָּוִד בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר הָלַךְ) (vv. 6, 14); similarly, 2 Kgs 18:7 states that Yahweh was with Hezekiah and that “wherever he went out, he prospered” (וַהֲיָה יְהוָה עִמּוֹ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא יִשְׁכִּיל).

28 Compare 2 Kgs 18:8, where Hezekiah “attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory,” with 2 Sam 5:17–25, which culminates in the statement that David defeated the Philistines “from Geba as far as Gezer.”

29 On the text’s ambivalence as to whether Mephibosheth is Saul’s or Jonathan’s son, see Dietrich, 2 *Samuel* 9–14, 28–30.

30 There is an additional intertextual connection between 2 Sam 9:7, 10, 13 and the report about Jehoiachin’s exile in 2 Kgs 25:29; on this, see Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 103, and Dietrich, 2 *Samuel* 9–14, 33–34.

extension, toward Judah with respect to its relationship to the north), the book of Samuel does not present David in exclusively positive terms. In fact, the last major section of the book, beginning in 2 Sam 10, depicts the latter part of David's reign as a time of internal challenges to David's rule.³¹ This "dark side" of David's reign in the latter part of 2 Samuel can be understood, in my view, as anticipating the fate of Judah after the Babylonian conquest in 586 BCE.³²

For example, in the judgment against David for his sin in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan delivers a divine word to David in which Yahweh declares that "the sword shall never depart from your house" (2 Sam 12:10). Whereas in the context of the chapters that follow, this can of course be understood as an anticipation of the Absalom cycle (2 Sam 13–19),³³ the reference to David's "house" (בית) also implies a reference to the Davidic *dynasty* spanning multiple generations (cf. 2 Sam 7). In this respect, David's transgression can be regarded as a sort of "original sin" that is passed down over generations, ultimately leading to the end of the kingdom of Judah.³⁴

This paradigmatic quality of the "dark side" of David's reign is also in evidence at several points in the story of Absalom's rebellion and David's flight and return in 2 Sam 15–20. A strong case for a postmonarchic (i.e., post-586 BCE) background to the story of Absalom's rebellion in 2 Sam 15–20 has been made by Alexander Fischer, who argues that the present shape of the narrative of David's "exile" to Transjordan and his return to Jerusalem reflects the dissolution of the kingdom of Judah in the early sixth century and the exile of part of

31 On the more negative portrayal of David in 2 Sam 10–1 Kgs 2, cf. Carlson, *David*, 25 and passim (who speaks of "David under the curse"); Würthwein, *Thronfolge Davids*, 11–31, 43–47; Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 112; Keys, *Wages of Sin*, 127–141, 181–183; and Hartenstein, "Solidarität," 138. This is not to say that every detail in these chapters is critical of David; indeed, McKenzie, "So-Called Succession Narrative," 128–129, speaks of a "subtle defense of David" at several points in 2 Sam 13–20. Yet this "defense of David" is embedded within a generally negative portrayal of the latter part of David's reign.

32 Cf. Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 55–56, who argues that the negative portrayal in 2 Sam 9–1 Kgs 2 serves "to turn an exilic Israel away from a centuries-old glorification of kingship." Considering that Polzin has the Babylonian exile in view, reference to "an exilic *Judah*" would be more precise here.

33 Cf. Gilmour, *Representing the Past*, 200–202; Blenkinsopp, "Another Contribution," 36–42; and Wilson, *Kingship and Memory*, 139.

34 Cf. Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 125–126, who interprets 2 Sam 12:10–12 not only against the background of the Absalom story but also as an anticipation of the division of the kingdom under Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12) and ultimately of the end of the kingdom of Judah (2 Kgs 24–25).

its population.³⁵ Indeed, a number of additional details in 2 Sam 15–20 support its function as typologically anticipating the postmonarchic history of Judah.

For example, David's decision not to bring the ark with him during his flight from Jerusalem (2 Sam 15:24–29) could perhaps allude to the absence of the physical symbol of Yahweh's presence for Judahites who were exiled in Babylon.³⁶ In the same passage, the fact that Zadok and Abiathar remain in Jerusalem may suggest that this text seeks to portray Zadokite priests as belonging to a tradition connected to the population that remained in the land rather than to the exiled community in Babylon (see further 2 Sam 15:35–36, where Zadok and Abiathar are depicted as Davidic loyalists who stay behind as “moles” in Absalom's court).

Furthermore, the accusations made in 2 Sam 16:5–14 by Shimei, “a man of the family of the house of Saul,” as David is leaving Jerusalem (“Yahweh has avenged on all of you the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned,” v. 8) can be interpreted as a (literarily contrived) northern Israelite explanation of Judah's exile as a consequence of Judah's alleged complicity in the dissolution of the northern kingdom.³⁷ In contrast to texts such as 1 Sam 29; 2 Sam 2; and 2 Sam 9, which seek to demonstrate that David did not play a direct role in Saul's demise and that he treated Saul's descendants with respect, this passage takes a more critical stance toward the question of David's involvement in Saul's death (and, by extension, Judah's involvement in Israel's downfall). Even more striking is David's response to Shimei's cursing

35 Fischer, “Flucht und Heimkehr Davids,” 65; anticipated in idem, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, 309. For a similar conclusion, see Rudnig, *Davids Thron*, 315–317, and Wright, *David*, 119, although they hypothesize that the story of David's flight and return is part of a later layer of expansion within 2 Sam 15–20, which I find questionable (for a similar critique, cf. Dietrich, “Das Ende der Thronfolgegeschichte,” 59–66; Blum, “Solomon,” 63–64; and Na'aman, “Game of Thrones,” 96). For a postmonarchic contextualization, see further Aurelius, “Davids Unschuld,” 396–400, and Adam, “Motivik,” 199–200. In contrast, Blum, “Solomon,” 66–67, suggests that 2 Sam 15–20 reflect an early ninth-century BCE context; Sergi, “United Monarchy,” 334–335, proposes an eighth-century context; and Na'aman, “Game of Thrones,” 101, proposes a seventh-century context, arguing that the motif of exile and return is—exceptionally—a secondary theme in the narrative (ibid., 99). Hutton, *Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 376, notes that “[a]fter the event of the exile, the narratives of flight and return would have provided hope for the Judahite community,” although he does not see this as the *raison d'être* of the original story, which he regards as much older (ibid., 201–211).

36 Cf. Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 159.

37 Cf. Wright, *David*, 138. Baden, *Historical David*, 247, similarly observes that Shimei's behavior reflects “[t]he reluctance of the north to see itself as part of David's kingdom,” although he does not link this to the historical situation after the fall of the northern kingdom, dating the text instead to the time of David himself.

in vv. 9–12: Whereas Abishai, one of David's warriors, finds Shimei's cursing intolerable, David himself grants that it is in some sense justified (v. 11). In David's response, Shimei is explicitly called a Benjaminite, which suggests that Shimei's accusation may reflect tensions between Benjamin and Judah during the time in which the text was written (based on the considerations mentioned above, most likely the postmonarchic period).

The story of Shimei continues in 2 Sam 19:16–23, part of a carefully staged description of David's return to Jerusalem following Absalom's death. Shortly after the rest of the tribes of Israel have expressed their support for David's return (2 Sam 19:9–10), Shimei reappears on the scene alongside 1,000 Benjaminites, who accompany the people of Judah as they come down to Gilgal to facilitate David's return across the Jordan. Now, Shimei asks for forgiveness for his previous treatment of David, which David grants him. Given the typological function of the story of David's flight and return in 2 Sam 15–20 as a literary reflection of Judahites' exile and return during the sixth century BCE, then Shimei's actions both before and after David's stay in Mahanaim can perhaps be understood as part of a discourse on the relationship between Benjamin and Judah at various points during the postmonarchic period. Against this background, 2 Sam 19:9–10 can be understood as a call to accept Benjaminites as part of the Yahwistic community in Persian-period Yehud, despite the tensions hinted at between Benjamin and Judah at the time of the exile. When the Shimei episodes are read in this light, then Abishai's repeated objection to Shimei's actions and David's reprimanding of Abishai (2 Sam 19:21–22) could further suggest that this more conciliatory approach to Benjamin in Persian-period Yehud encountered opposition from certain Judahite elites, to which 2 Sam 19:16–23 seeks to respond.³⁸

Two subsequent episodes during David's return from exile in 2 Sam 19 can also be understood as reflections on Judah's relations with various groups after the return of the Golah community during the Persian period. In 2 Sam 19:24–30, David has another encounter with Saul's descendant Mephibosheth, in which he asks Mephibosheth why he did not accompany David into exile. Mephibosheth responds by stating that he was prevented from doing so by one of his servants. This statement points the reader back to 2 Sam 16:1–4, where the perspective is quite different. There, Mephibosheth's servant Ziba comes out with provisions for David and his entourage during their journey into exile. When David asks where Mephibosheth is, Ziba responds that Mephibosheth stayed behind in Jerusalem, thinking that he would be able to restore Saul's kingdom in David's absence. Upon learning this, David transfers

³⁸ Cf. Wright, *David*, 138.

all of Mephibosheth's possessions to Ziba. Shortly thereafter, David declares that Mephibosheth and Saul's servant Ziba (cf. 2 Sam 9:9–12; 19:17b) will "divide the land,"³⁹ whereupon Mephibosheth voluntarily cedes his half to Ziba as well. Although the specific historical background of this passage remains obscure, at least one purpose of the episodes in 2 Sam 16:1–4 and 19:24–30 may be to make it clear that the last traces of "kingship" in the north—including possible aims to exert a certain degree of autonomy in Benjamin during the neo-Babylonian period (cf. 2 Sam 16:3)—have been irrevocably forfeited.

The function of David's flight and return in 2 Sam 15–20 as a typological anticipation of Judah's exile and return in the neo-Babylonian and Persian periods is further developed in the episode of David's encounter with Barzillai the Gileadite in 2 Sam 19:32–40 [EV 31–39]. When David is about to cross the Jordan during his return from exile, Barzillai the Gileadite (who has already shown his support for David in exile at Mahanaim; 2 Sam 17:27–29) comes out to meet David and to escort him over the Jordan. During the encounter, David invites Barzillai to move to Jerusalem, although Barzillai politely turns down his offer, stating that he is too old and that he wishes to die in his own town. Within the framework of David's exile and return in 2 Sam 15–20 as a typological anticipation of Judah's exile and return during the neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, the figure of Barzillai the Gileadite in 2 Sam 19:32–40 can be understood as symbolizing Yahweh-worshippers in the diaspora who chose to continue living outside the land even after the return of the Golah community during the Persian period. As for the story's rhetorical aims, David's blessing of Barzillai at the end of the encounter suggests that the author of 2 Sam 19:32–40 accepted this reality rather than criticizing it.⁴⁰

The final episode in the story of Absalom's rebellion and David's flight and return is the story of the Benjaminite Sheba ben Bichri's rebellion against David's rule in 2 Sam 20. From the very outset, this story invites the reader to draw a connection with the subsequent story of Jeroboam's schism from the house of David (under Rehoboam) in 1 Kgs 12, as is made clear from Sheba's declaration, "We have no portion in David, no share in the son of Jesse! Everyone to your tents, O Israel!" (2 Sam 20:1). This declaration clearly evokes the wording of 1 Kgs 12:16 and implies that "the people of Israel"—understood here as the northern tribes in contrast to "the people of Judah" (2 Sam 20:2)—had

39 *Which* land is not stated explicitly, but presumably the territory associated with the "house of Saul" is in view here, i.e., either Benjamin or the territory of the former northern kingdom of Israel more generally.

40 For further discussion, see Germany, "Gilead in 2 Samuel."

already rebelled against Davidic rule during the time of David himself.⁴¹ Yet one can rightly ask whether the story does more than simply anticipate the later “divided monarchy.” Rather, might its position at the end of 2 Sam 15–20 suggest that it has something to say about the relationship between Judah, Benjamin, and Samaria during the Persian period?⁴² The fact that Sheba is described as a Benjaminite may suggest that the Judahite authors of this chapter perceived Benjamin (perhaps symbolizing Persian-period Samaria, given that Sheba is called “a man of the hill country of Ephraim” in 2 Sam 20:21) as resistant to Judean claims to predominance at that time.⁴³ From this perspective, the insistence of the wise woman of Abel Beth-maacah that she is “one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel” (v. 19) and Joab’s commitment not to destroy the entire city in the process of capturing Sheba (v. 20) suggests that the author of this passage took a conciliatory approach toward the north in general, despite the opposition to challenges against Judah’s predominance by individual northern (Samaritan?) leaders.

The last four chapters of the book of Samuel (2 Sam 21–24) stand, to a certain extent, outside of normal narrated time and have often been described as an achronological “appendix” to the book. While it is true that these chapters interrupt the narrative and thematic continuity between 2 Sam 10–20 and 1 Kgs 1–2, their placement at the end of the book of Samuel is far from haphazard, and in many respects, they are very much in line with the depiction of the “dark side” of David’s reign in 2 Sam 10–20.⁴⁴ Yet these chapters also have the larger literary horizon of the book of Samuel as a whole in view, inviting the reader to compare David’s sins and failures with those of Saul.⁴⁵

41 On the connection to 1 Kgs 12:16, see Dietrich, “Das Ende der Thronfolgegeschichte,” 56–59; Adam, “Motivik,” 187; and Na’aman, “Source and Composition,” 344.

42 In contrast, Sergi, “United Monarchy,” 339; Na’aman, “Source and Composition,” 346; and Leonard-Fleckman, *House of David*, 129–131, propose much earlier dates for the story of Sheba’s rebellion.

43 Curiously, Blenkinsopp, “Another Contribution,” 42, argues that one can detect in 2 Sam 20 “an anticipation of the disconnect between Judah and Benjamin immediately preceding and subsequent to the disaster of 586 BCE,” yet he ultimately claims that 2 Sam 11–20 + 1 Kgs 1–2 “contains no hint of a post-disaster situation” and instead proposes to date these chapters to the late monarchic period (*ibid.*, 58).

44 Also noted by Brueggemann, “2 Samuel 21–24,” esp. 394; Keys, *Wages of Sin*, 139; Klement, *II Samuel 21–24*, 81–82; and Hartenstein, “Solidarität,” 138.

45 See Dietrich, “David in Überlieferung und Geschichte,” 43 (noting a connection between 2 Sam 24:10 and 1 Sam 15:24); Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 211; Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 586; and Edenburg, “2 Sam 21–24,” 207 (noting a connection between 2 Sam 24:10 and 1 Sam 26:21). On the links between 2 Sam 21:1–14 and 2 Sam 24, see Hartenstein, “Solidarität,” 136–138; Campbell, “2 Samuel 21–24,” 350; and Kipfer, *Der bedrohte David*, 254–255.

Within this “appendix,” 2 Sam 24 in particular contributes to the typological function of the book of Samuel as a whole. In 2 Sam 24:1–17, David’s decision to conduct a census—which in a certain sense is a fulfillment of Samuel’s earlier warning about “the ways of the king” (cf. 1 Sam 8:11–12)—leads to a divine punishment against the entire people (2 Sam 24:15). This, in turn, can be compared to the collective disaster of the destruction of Jerusalem and exile that—in the biblical presentation—the people of Judah experience as a result of the cumulative sins of Judah’s kings. Indeed, the triad of punishments from which David is asked to choose following the census—“sword,” “famine,” and “pestilence”—is closely linked to the destruction of Jerusalem in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel,⁴⁶ thereby foreshadowing the end of the kingdom of Judah as described in the last chapter of the book of Kings (2 Kgs 25).⁴⁷

This proposed typological function of the story of the census and plague in 2 Sam 24:1–17 as an anticipation of the end of the kingdom of Judah also has significant implications for interpreting the report about David’s building of an altar to Yahweh on the threshing floor of Arauna in 2 Sam 24:18–25. While it is undeniable that the story, on a narrative level, serves to anticipate Solomon’s building of the (first) temple only a few chapters later in the book of Kings, on a typological level it can also be understood as a foreshadowing of the construction of the *second temple* after the fall of the kingdom of Judah and the return from exile during the Persian period.⁴⁸ In this respect, the episode gives the book of Samuel a conclusion similar to that found in the book of Chronicles, which ends not only with a report of the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile (2 Chr 36:19–20a) but ultimately with a view to the return from exile and the construction of the second temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr 36:20b–23).⁴⁹

2 Monarchy in Miniature: 1 Samuel 1–8

In the preceding sections, I have shown the extent to which the narratives about Saul and David in the book of Samuel serve as an anticipation of the

46 See Kipfer, *Der bedrohte David*, 282, and Edenburg, “2 Sam 21–24,” 220.

47 On (at least parts of) 2 Sam 24 as an anticipation of the fall of the kingdom of Judah, see Mathys, “Anmerkungen zu 2 Sam 24,” 245; Hartenstein, “Solidarität,” 138; Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 621; Kipfer, *Der bedrohte David*, 283; and Edenburg, “2 Sam 21–24,” 220.

48 For a Persian-period contextualization of 2 Sam 24:18–25, cf. Schenker, *Der Mächtige*, 38 (comparing this passage with Ezra 3:3); Zwickel, *Der salomonische Tempel*, 30–31; Mathys, “Anmerkungen zu 2 Sam 24,” 230–231; and Edenburg, “2 Sam 21–24,” 215.

49 Note especially the language of “going up” (עלה) in 2 Sam 24:18 and the theme of the “land” (הארץ) in 2 Sam 24:25, both of which also appear in 2 Chr 36:20b–23. On the link between 2 Sam 24:18–25 and Chronicles, cf. Isser, *Sword of Goliath*, 176 (with reference to 2 Chr 3:1), although he misses the typological connection with the return from exile.

later respective histories of Israel and Judah as recounted above all in the book of Kings (but also with certain structural affinities to the book of Chronicles, especially in 2 Sam 24). Yet the received form of the book of Samuel is, of course, more than a story about Saul and David alone. It is also a story about Eli and Samuel (1 Sam 1–8), whose biographies anticipate both the story of Saul and David in the remainder of the book of Samuel and the subsequent narrative of the monarchic period in the book of Kings. As Robert Polzin has aptly put it, this first section of the book of Samuel forms “an overture to the entire monarchic history” and a “*mise-en-abyme* of the coming history of royal Israel.”⁵⁰ While there is no question that 1 Sam 1–8 (like the remainder of the book) has a complex history of composition, here it is only possible to make a few select observations on the level of the received text.⁵¹

As has often been noted, the demise of the “house” of Eli and Yahweh’s replacement of Eli by Samuel in 1 Sam 1–8 is analogous to Saul’s failure to establish a dynasty and Yahweh’s replacement of Saul by David in 1 Sam 9–31.⁵² Among other similarities, both Eli and Saul receive divine judgments against their respective dynasties in which the prospect of a perpetual succession is shattered (compare the use of עָד עוֹלָם in 1 Sam 2:30–36 and 1 Sam 13:13–14; see further 1 Sam 15:22–29), and both figures die in the context of a battle with the Philistines and also lose their sons in the process.⁵³ Furthermore, Samuel and David are also placed in parallel through their role in similar accounts of renewed confrontation with the Philistines after their predecessors’ deaths (compare 1 Sam 7:7–14 and 2 Sam 5:17–25): Both episodes open with a report that the Philistines “heard” about new circumstances in Israel, both contain an etiology of a place name, and both emphasize the idea of Yahweh fighting on behalf of Israel, with human agency playing a subsidiary role.

Yet beyond anticipating the Saul-David narrative in the book of Samuel, 1 Sam 1–8 also has overtones with the depiction of the dual fates of Israel and Judah as described in the book of Kings. For example, the statement that Eli’s sons refused to “listen” (שָׁמַעַ) to their father after he urged them to turn away from their transgressions against Yahweh (1 Sam 2:22–26) can be compared to the explanation for the dissolution of the northern kingdom in 2 Kgs 17:7–18, which states that the Israelites would not “listen” (שָׁמַעַ) to the warnings of the prophets to turn away from their cultic sins and were thus removed from

50 Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 64, and idem, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 46, respectively.

51 For a compositional analysis of 1 Sam 1–8, see Germany, *Kingmakers and Kingbreakers*, with reference to further literature.

52 See, e.g., Berges, *Die Verwerfung Sauls*, 27–30; Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, 189; MacDonald, “David’s Two Priests,” 253.

53 For similar observations, see Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, 189–190.

Yahweh's sight.⁵⁴ In addition, the use of the image of “tingling (צל"ל) ears” in 1 Sam 3:11 prior to the impending disaster in 1 Sam 4 forms a link with the judgment against Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 21:11–15, a passage which itself explicitly places Judah's fate in parallel with that of northern Israel.⁵⁵

The paradigmatic function of 1 Sam 1–8 is also evident in the story of the loss and “exile” of the ark in 1 Sam 4:1b–7:2. In its present form, this story anticipates the destruction of the Jerusalem temple described in 2 Kgs 25 and the subsequent exile of part of Judah's population in Babylonia through several details in the text.⁵⁶ First, the report of Ichabod's birth in 1 Sam 4:19–22, in which Ichabod's name is connected to the “glory” (כבוד) departing from Israel (1 Sam 4:22), is suggestive of the manifestation of Yahweh's כבוד in exile as described in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:28; 3:23). Second, the mocking description of the fate of the helpless statue of Dagon in 1 Sam 5:2–4 corresponds to the polemic against foreign cult statues attested in postmonarchic biblical texts such as Deutero-Isaiah.⁵⁷ Lastly, certain details in 1 Sam 4:1b–7:2 relating to the return of the ark from Philistine territory correspond to the book of Ezra's depiction of the reestablishment of the sacrificial cult in Jerusalem during the Persian period. For example, the sacrifices made at Beth-shemesh in 1 Sam 6:13–15 (and the role of the Levites in those verses) can be compared with the sacrifices made on the provisional altar built by the returnees in Ezra 3:1–7. In addition, both 1 Sam 6:19–20 and Ezra 4:1–5 describe the opposition of certain groups to the return of the ark and of the Golah community, respectively. In light of these connections, perhaps it is no coincidence that a figure named Eleazar plays a role both in tending to the ark in Kiriath-jearim (1 Sam 7:1) and in the restoration of the temple cult after the exile (Ezra 8:33).⁵⁸

54 See Brettler, “Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2,” 608.

55 See Fischer, “Samuel und das Gotteswort,” 486–487 (although he thinks that 1 Sam 3:11 predates the composition of 1 Sam 4–6).

56 Cf. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 66; Smelik, “Hidden Messages,” 55; Nihan and Nocquet, “1–2 Samuel,” 292; Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 140–141; Fischer, “Samuel und das Gotteswort,” 486; and Edenburg, “Radiance (of Yahweh),” 170. Evidence of literary growth in the ark narrative leads some scholars to postulate an earlier historical setting for the original narrative; see, e.g., Römer, “Katastrophengeschichte,” 268–274; Finkelstein and Römer, “Old Israelite Ark Narrative,” 176–183 (ninth/eighth century BCE); Knittel, *Das erinerte Heiligtum*, 93 (post-722 BCE); Hensel, “Ark Narrative(s),” 186 (post-722 BCE).

57 Cf. Hensel, “Ark Narrative(s),” 181, with reference to Isa 40:19–20; 42:17; 44:9–20; 46:1–2; 48:3–5.

58 Thus, the horizon of the biblical “master narrative” that is encapsulated in 1 Sam 1–8 includes not only the monarchic period but also the return from exile, a phenomenon observed in other parts of the book of Samuel as well (e.g., 2 Sam 19; 20; and 24; see above).

3 Conclusion

In its received shape, the book of Samuel can be understood as a work of “paradigmatic history” that anticipates the later history of monarchic (and postmonarchic) Israel and Judah twice over, first in more general terms in the narratives featuring Eli and Samuel in 1 Sam 1–8 and again in more detail in the narratives about Saul and David in 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 24. Within the combined narrative arc of Samuel-Kings, the story of kingship thus takes on a tripartite concentric structure in which each nested unit reflects the larger whole:

<i>“All Israel”</i>	<i>Saul & David; David alone; David’s “dark side”</i>	<i>Israel & Judah; Judah alone; Judah’s exile</i>
1 Sam 1–8	1 Sam 9–31; 2 Sam 1–9; 2 Sam 10–24	1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 17; 2 Kgs 18–25

Considering that the deep structure of the Saul-David narrative in 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 8 foreshadows the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel (722 BCE) and that both 1 Sam 1–8 and 2 Sam 9–24 connect to and depend upon the narrative foundation laid in the Saul-David narrative, this means that the formation of the book of Samuel began in the late eighth century BCE at the earliest. Moreover, given the extensive engagement with the theme of exile and return within 1 Sam 1–8 and 2 Sam 9–24, the formation of these parts of the book of Samuel should be understood primarily against the background of the postmonarchic period, that is, after the end of the kingdom of Judah in 586 BCE. Although this does not exclude the possibility that certain isolated traditions or historical memories have their origins before 722 BCE (such as the role of David as the founder of a royal dynasty in Judah), long-standing attempts to use the book of Samuel to reconstruct the historical circumstances of the time in which its narratives are set have failed to appreciate the book’s literary function as “paradigmatic history” and have therefore also missed the opportunity to interpret many of the book’s details against the background of the late monarchic and postmonarchic periods, when the vast majority of texts in Samuel were most likely written.

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