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# Nocturnal Intrusions and Divine Interventions on Behalf of Judah. David's Wisdom and Saul's Tragedy in 1 Samuel 26

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**Abstract**
A literary strand of narratives about Saul in 1 Samuel emerged in a process of rewriting Israelite-Judean history. 1 Sam 26* and a number of other episodes (1 Sam 10:8; 10:17-27; 13:7a-13a; 14:24-46; parts of 1 Sam 9; 1 Sam 16:1-13; 16:14-23; 17*; 1 Sam 28*, 31*; 2 Sam 1*) present the first Israelite king as a figure that was informed by Greek tragic heroism. More specifically, the themes and the formation of the characters in the story of David's nocturnal intrusion in 1 Samuel 26 are set side by side with the post-classical drama *Rhesus*. 1 Sam 26 is understood as a narrative comment on Saul's destiny in prophetic tradition. Saul's tragic heroism is described with *skl* "to act foolishly" 1 Sam 26:21b. Also, Qohelet's royal travesty in Eccl 1:12-2:26 alludes to this notion of Saul as a tragic king who acts foolishly *(skl)*. He is contrasted with his glorious opponent David who succeeds *(śkl)* in all his endeavours.

**Keywords**
1 Sam 26, tragedy, heroism, Greek, king Saul, Rhesus

## 1. Greek Tragedy and the Reinvention of the Figure of the Biblical Saul

In the past decades, numerous scholars have described the first Israelite king as a tragic hero. Parallels between Hebrew narratives and Greek tragedy have been consistently drawn.[1] Generally speaking, these attempts chose two

[1] This is not the place for a comprehensive overview of the history of scholarship about Greek tragedy in biblical narratives. See for a general approach W. Baumgartner, "Israelitisch-Griechische Sagenbeziehungen", in W. Baumgartner (ed.), *Zum Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt, Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Leiden, 1959), pp. 147-178, p. 149 on 2 Sam 23:13-17; pp. 152-153 on Jephtah; p. 164 on 1 Sam 21:11-16; pp. 164-165 on 2 Sam 11:24-27 and Bellerophontes. For the parallels between Uriah and Bellerophontes, see J. Schick, *Das Glückskind mit dem Todesbrief: Vol. 1 Orientalische Fassungen, Vol. 2 Europäische Sagen des Mittelalters und ihr Verhältnis zum*


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different objectives and, consequently, different methodological approaches. Wholesale approaches focus on Saul's character and his destiny in general, in suggesting a tragic personality of the first Israelite king. They concern themselves with elaborating on the statement of the universal historian Leopold von Ranke, who called Saul "the first tragic personage in the history of the world".[2] For instance, a recent attempt compares Saul's tragic heroism in 1 Samuel to the five stages of Aristotelian tragedy. Saul commits a fateful error (10:8; 13:7a-15), which is followed by a terrible act (15:15-20:21). The turnabout or change is reported in 15:27-35, and the stages of recognition on Saul's part in 18:8, 28-29. His suffering follows in 19-27 and 28-31.[3] Such interpretations of an overall tragic pattern are most fascinating. Naturally, beginning as these theories do with the hero's tragic character, the literary development of the narrative tradition is of less interest. Also, a proper definition of "tragedy" and "tragic" in a specific Greek sense and a suitable definition of the topic in a biblical sense naturally remain unsolved quandaries.

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*Orient* (Corpus Hamleticum, 1. Abteilung; Berlin, 1912; Leipzig 1932); H. Gunkel, *Das Märchen im Alten Testament* (Tübingen, 1917; repr., Frankfurt, 1987); D. M. Gunn, *The Story of King David. Genre and Interpretation* (JSOT.S 6; Sheffield, 1978); A. A. Fischer, "David und Batseba. Ein literarkritischer und motivgeschichtlicher Beitrag zu II Sam 11", *ZAW* 101 (1989), pp. 50-59; P. Frei, "Die Bellerophontessage und das Alte Testament", in B. Janowski et al. (eds.), *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament im 2. und 1. vorchristlichen Jahrtausend* (OBO 129; Göttingen/Fribourg, 1993), pp. 39-65; T. Naumann, "David als exemplarischer König. Der Fall Urijas (2 Sam 11) vor dem Hintergrund altorientalischer Erzähltraditionen", in A. de Pury/T. C. Römer (eds.), *Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids. Neue Einsichten und Anfragen* (OBO 176; Göttingen/Fribourg, 2000), pp. 136-167, esp. pp. 139-145. A comprehensive attempt to point out Saul's tragedy is offered by W. L. Humphreys, "The Tragedy of King Saul: A Study of the Structure of 1 Samuel 9-31," *JSOT* 6 (1978), pp. 18-27, who points to a literary layer of "The Tragedy of King Saul" in 1 Sam 9:1-10,16*; 11:1-15; 14:1-7a,15b-23; 14:1-46; 15:4-9,13,20-21:24-26:30-31, 34-35; 17:12, 14,17-23a,24-25,30,48,50,55-58; 18:2,20,22-25a,26-27; 18:6-9a; 19:1-7,11-17; 26:1-8,10-14a,17-22,25b; 28:3-15,19b-25; 31. Especially for the heroic suicide and cremation in 1 Sam 31 as genuinely pointing to Hittite and Greek sources, and for comparative patterns, see W. L. Humphreys, "The Rise and Fall of King Saul: A Study of an Ancient Narrative Stratum in 1 Samuel", *JSOT* 18 (1980), pp. 74-90. Another more general approach on tragedy in biblical narrative is given by J. C. Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative. Arrows of the Almighty* (Cambridge, 1992); Y. Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative.* Translated from the Hebrew by Jonathan Chipman (Leiden, 2000).

[2] L. von Ranke, in: G. W. Prothero (ed.), *Universal History. The Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks* (New York, 1885), p. 43.

[3] Y. Amit, "The Delicate Balance in the Image of Saul and its Place in the Deuteronomistic History", in C. S. Ehrlich and M. C. White (eds.), *Saul in Story and Tradition* (FAT 47, Tübingen 2006), pp. 71-79, esp. pp. 73-77, and Y. Amit, *Hidden Polemics* (see note 1), pp. 173-176. See on the tragic aspects of Saul among others Exum, *Tragedy* (see note 1), pp. 16-42.

On the other hand, numerous detailed *tragic motifs* and themes of selected narratives exist. Consider Gerhard von Rad's famous judgement on 1 Sam 13:2-14:46 (esp. on 14:29-30): "Israel never again gave birth to a poetic production which in certain of its features has such close affinity with the spirit of Greek tragedy".[4] Many illuminating parallels between storylines have been drawn. As a consequence of the focus on single narratives, such investigations refrain from reconstructing an overall character of Saul that takes into consideration his behaviour in various episodes. When it comes to proving a specific influence of western storylines, critics of such parallels may rightly argue that the isolated single episodes are purely accidental. Or, the "tragic" motifs can then be considered to be ubiquitous and, that being the case, they are no proof for any direct dependence of biblical texts on Greek drama. As a result, one may hardly claim the adoption of tragic motifs from the west.[5] For various reasons, many scholars are still reluctant to posit that the biblical narratives used Greek sources, and that the authors of the narratives in the Book of Samuel were acquainted with fifth century Greek tragedy. This debate includes questions about the narratives' time of origin. It has been suggested that the parallels between biblical and western Greek cultures may have been due to influences of (late Bronze Age) Hittite[6] literary traditions on early Greek ones. Given the huge gap between such an early and such a late dating of the Greek influences on narratives in the books of Samuel, the time frame for an influence of western ideas on the Hebrew Bible requires attention. Besides, establishing a date for these "tragic" narratives about Saul is of interest in a debate about his historical nature. Here, the claim of Greek influence on the narratives may help to specify the nature of Israelite historiography in relation to Greek drama. One reason for the reluctance to establish a direct link between Greek and Hebrew narratives was an *a priori* interest in the biblical stories which were understood as sources that, in parts, could be directly related to the epoch of the beginning of the Israelite monarchy.[7] Generally speaking, the reluctance to

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4) G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, vol. I* (translated by D. M. G. Stalker; New York, 1962), p. 325.

5) On the influence of Mesopotamian, Anatolian and Syrian sources on Greek literature, including Hesiodic and Homeric poems down to Pindar, Bacchylides and Aeschylos, see among others M. L. West, *The East Face of Helikon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 1997).

6) See esp. Humphreys, "Rise" (see note 1), pp. 80-86.

7) The direct relationships between Greek and Israelite Historiography in the general parallels were emphasized by e.g. J. Van Seters, *In Search of History. Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, 1983), pp. 8-54. On the comparison between the ideas of primary history in Greek and Hebrew Historiography, see S. Mandell and D. N.

reconstruct an "early kingship" which is chronologically set around the 10th century is growing,[8] as is a (mostly German) consensus on the fact that the Deuteronomistic History was the first attempt to combine older sources in Josh-2Kings. This fosters the understanding that the context of the narratives on Saul in a dynastic history of Judean kingship is of particular importance. Within this context, the narratives about the early kings are foundational myths in that they project the narrators' contemporary reality back into the epoch of the early monarchies of Israel and Judah. That said, the impact on their understanding and on their literary development becomes evident.[9] Having realized their important place in the framework of a dynastic history of Judah and in a non-deuteronomistic literary context, a particular parallel between fifth century Greek drama and narratives of the early kingship in Israel is apparent. Both deal with a distant, mythic past in order to engage in the current issues of their authors, and both tackle problems of later epochs with respect to the primeval dynastic history. The formation of Saul's tragic character in the days of the early kingship show primarily an interest in reflecting subsequent historical situations in this figure.

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Freedman, *The Relationship between Herodotus' History and Primary History* (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, 60; Atlanta, 1993). For other attempts to correlate Greek and Hebrew narratives, see J. P. Brown, *Israel and Hellas* (BZAW 231; Berlin, 1995); F. J. Nielsen, *Herodotus and the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT.S 251; Sheffield, 1997); J. W. Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel. Herodotus's* Histories *as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible* (JSOT.S 345; Sheffield, 2002). Especially with respect to David see S. J. Isser, *The Sword of Goliath. David in Heroic Literature* (SBL 6; Leiden, 2003), pp. 80-83, 87-98.

8) This is not the place for an in-depth presentation of the history of Israel, see among many others the recent survey of T. Krüger, "Theoretische und methodische Probleme der Geschichte des alten Israel in der neueren Diskussion", *VF* 53 (2008), pp. 4-22. I limit myself to mentioning the recent synthesis in the textbook of J. M. Miller, J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (London/Louisville, 2006, second edition), pp. 125, 129-130. They understand the narratives in 1-2 Samuel as "folk legends" with the three main tendencies to disparage Saul, to glorify David and to present Samuel as Yahweh's spokesman.

9) Generally speaking, current scholarship rejects the notion that these narratives originate from large "source documents", such as the History of David's Rise or the Succession Narrative, that date partly from the time of the early monarchy. Critical approaches question a genuine deuteronomistic development of Sam/Kings in the sense of Martin Noth. See the trends in research that are presented by T. Veijola, "Deuteronomismusforschung zwischen Tradition und Innovation (III)", *ThR* 68 (2003), pp. 1-44. For a redactional critical approach to 1 Sam 10:17-11:15, see for instance R. Müller, *Königtum und Gottesherrschaft. Untersuchungen zur alttestamentlichen Monarchiekritik* (Tübingen, 2004), pp. 148-176. On earlier literary stages of Sam and Kings that formed a pre-deuteronomistic unit, see among others T. C. Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History. A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London, 2005), pp. 91-103.

The current study intends to combine the more detailed and the general approach to Saul's tragedy. First (Part 2), I mention the specific tragic details of the narrative of 1 Sam 26. The following part (3) directs attention to a literary layer of Saul as a tragic hero. I argue that parts of the narratives about Saul emerged in a process of rewriting early Israelite-Judean history in which the first Israelite king becomes a figure that is informed by Greek drama and its themes. The substantial sequence of narratives which explains Saul's destiny in a manner which is proximate to Greek tragedy is 1 Sam 10:8; 10:17-27; 13:7a-13a; 14:24-46; parts of 1 Sam 9; 1 Sam 16:1-13; 16:14-23; 17*; 1 Sam 26*; 28*; 31* and 2 Sam 1*. This literary layer offers an *interpretatio graeca* of Saul. The narrator is familiar with themes and motifs of Greek tragedy that indicate a direct influence of western culture. Since *symposia* provided an important framework (the "Sitz im Leben") for performances of post-classical Greek drama in the form of anthologies,[10] they influenced the biblical narratives about Saul. Narratives that mediate this notion of Saul as a tragic hero cannot be dated earlier than the fifth or fourth century BCE. Some concluding remarks (Part 4) describe the specific background of Saul's description as a tragic hero with a glance at Qohelet's considerations about kings.

## 2. Saul's Intention to Kill David and David's Nocturnal Intrusion (1 Sam 26)

Before pointing out the formation of the characters in 1 Sam 26, I briefly reflect on the literary structure of the narrative and on its relation to 1 Sam 24.

### *Literary Repetition*

In addition to the figures' character, which is of great importance for their conception, I shall also briefly focus on the literary structure of the suggested layer of tragic narratives. Both 1 Sam 24 and 26 talk about the same topic, i.e. an unexpected reversal of the roles in Saul's pursuit: Saul is persecuted by David. Such a thematic repetition in different episodes is found several times in 1 Samuel. It leads to a more general consideration of the narratives

[10] Typically, on these occasions no entire 5th century plays were performed. Instead, since classical times anthologies of the plays were memorized. Professional *tragodoi* played these anthologies in variations before a smaller audience, e.g. on the occasion of *symposia*, see K.-P. Adam, "Saul as a Tragic Hero. Greek Drama and its Influence on Hebrew Scripture in 1 Samuel 14,24-46 (10,8; 13,7-13a; 10,17-27)", in *David* (ed. A. G. Auld and E. Eynikel; BEThL; Leiden, 2008; forthcoming).

especially in 1 Sam 16-2 Sam 1. The characteristically doubled episodes must be viewed in conjunction with their mode of origin. Significantly, in many cases, one episode was successively placed predominantly ahead of an existing narrative. This structure serves introductory or explanatory purposes for the events that (in most cases) are still to follow in the current arrangement.[11] Often the preceding narratives have their origin in the episodes that follow later.[12] In the reading of the overall narrative in its latest form, this redoubling of stories leads to the typical episodic character and to the consistent repetition.[13] This is obvious in the sequence of narratives in 1 Sam 16-20: David's arrival at Saul's court 1 Sam 16:14-23 // 17:1-58 and 18:2; David's rise 18:5 // 18:12a, 13-16; Saul throws the spear 18:10-11 // 19:9-10 // 1 Sam 20:33; David's marriage to Michal 18:20,21a(?),22-26a,27,(25b?) // 18:17a,18,19, 21b,26b,28,29; David's victory over the Philistines 19,8 // 18:30; David flees from Saul 19:11-17 // 20:35-42; Jonathan trying to reconcile David and Saul 20:1b-7,10,12,13,24-34 // 19:1,4-7.[14]

Besides this literary peculiarity, the inner cohesion between the different narratives' must be explained. If one puts this repetitive literary structure in

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11) Preceding narratives naturally affect the reader's comprehension. The passage which introduces a figure shapes the recipient's perception of the following appearances of that figure. This "primacy effect" makes the introductory passage of a figure quite important, see H. Grabes, „Wie aus Sätzen Personen werden…: Über die Erforschung literarischer Figuren", *Poetica* 10 (1978), pp. 405-428, and see on this redactional technique among others T. J. Willis, "The Function of Comprehensive Anticipatory Redactional Joints in 1 Samuel 16-18," *ZAW* 85 (1973), pp. 294-314, especially on 1 Sam 18:5,9-11 see pp. 306-310.

12) See e.g. 1 Sam 20:33 and 19:9-10 and 18:9-10 (MT, omitted in LXX); 1 Sam 29 and 27:1-28:2 and the episode in 1 Sam 21:1-14, and in more detail, see K.-P. Adam, *Saul und David in der judäischen Geschichtsschreibung. Studien zu 1Samuel 16 - 2Samuel 5* (FAT 51; Tübingen, 2007), pp. 73-82.

13) Presented with this literary structure, scholars in the first half of the 20th century interpreted the doubled or tripled episodes as a proof of a theory positing (at least) two sources for the first book of Samuel. See esp. O. Eissfeldt, *Die Komposition der Samuelisbücher* (Leipzig, 1931), p. 55. Eissfeldt was the fiercest among the critics of Rost's Succession Narrative as a literary unit, suggesting instead a theory of two sources which he explained in detail for the first book of Samuel and, with less emphasis, also for the second book of Samuel, see Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1964³), pp. 360-368; see also K. Budde, *Die Bücher Richter und Samuel. Ihre Quellen und ihr Aufbau* (Giessen, 1890), pp. 167-276; idem, *Die Bücher Samuel* (KHC; Tübingen, 1902); G. Hölscher, *Geschichtsschreibung in Israel. Untersuchungen zum Jahvisten und Elohisten* (Lund, 1952), pp. 364-379.

14) H. Schulte, Die *Entstehung der Geschichtsschreibung im Alten Israel* (BZAW 128; Berlin, 1972), pp. 115-117. On the scholarship history of literary repetitions, see Adam, *Saul und David* (see note 12), pp. 4-16.

conjunction with the narratives' coherent theme, Saul's attempts to kill David form the overarching topic of a sequence of narratives in 1 Samuel 18-27. The particular episodes do not always explicitly express this thematic thread, but its relevance for their composition is apparent. Among the stories, the descriptions of David's flight especially emphasize Saul's intention to kill the Judean courtier David.[15] Geographically, David's flight from Saul is mainly set in Judah's south, in the Judean desert.[16] Without going into details, the narratives describing David as a fugitive generally grew over a longer period and their literary development needs to be assessed. To rough this out, it stands to reason that Saul's open pursuit (in 1 Sam 23:1-14 and 1 Sam 24) represents an earlier literary stage than, for instance, the pursuit of David at Saul's court (19:1-17). Episodes that vary existing stories are placed in front of them and the latter episodes never allude to the aforementioned ones. Saul's pursuit ends with David fleeing to Achish of Gath in 1 Sam 27:1-4. Hence, most of the doubled episodes appear as "Fortschreibungen" on the basis of later narratives. At first glance, 1 Sam 26 seems to be an exception to this rule. It appears to be a resumption of an interrelated, partly already existing narrative in chapter 24 that was transformed into a story about Saul as a tragic hero. The literary development of the narrative does not fall within the main scope of this study but will be briefly reconsidered below (Part 3).

As to the context of 1 Sam 26, it is clear that 1 Sam 18-26 forms a sequence of independent episodes that are essentially held together by the overarching theme of Saul's intention to kill David. Pursuit, the intention to kill and blood guilt are the crucial elements behind the actual narrative. Both 1 Sam 24 and 26 report an unexpected reversal of the roles in Saul's pursuit:[17] When Saul pursues David in the region of Siph (1 Sam 26:1-2), David hides in the desert

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15) See Adam, *Saul und David* (see note 12), pp. 97-122.

16) See e.g. Siph Josh 15:24 (1 Sam 26:1-2; 23:14-15,19,24); Maon Josh 15:55 (1 Sam 23:25; 25:1-2); Karmel Josh 15:55 (1 Sam 25:2); Aphek Josh 15:53 (1 Sam 29:1); En-Gedi Josh 16:62 (1 Sam 24:1-2). The list of southern parts of the Judean border in Josh 15 did not originate before the 7th century. See J. C. de Vos, *Das Los Judas. Über Entstehung und Ziele der Landbeschreibung in Josua 15* (VT.S 95; Leiden, 2003), pp. 527-528. 1 Sam 22:1-5 describes a digression to Adullam and Moab.—Some of the geographic names cannot be localized. Given the settlement history of the Negev, Ziklag is a hopeless case, despite the effort of V. Fritz, "Der Beitrag der Archäologie zur historischen Topographie Palästinas am Beispiel von Ziklag", *ZDPV* 106 (1990), pp. 78-85 and others; see the critical remarks of J. Vermeylen, *La Loi du plus fort. Histoire de la rédaction des récits davidiques de 1 Samuel 8 à 1 Rois 2* (ETL 154; Leuven, 2000), p. 161. In the literary record of Judah, this village or fortress is mentioned as a part of the southern border of Judah according to Josh 15:21-62.

17) See on the relationship between 1 Sam 24 and 26 below.

and, during a nocturnal raid on Saul's camp, is able to steal Saul's javelin and jug, but refrains from doing any harm to the Israelite king. After the action that is described in V 1-7,12, an elaborate conversation between David, Abner and Saul follows in V 13-25. The judicial question of guilt due to intentional killing[18] that forms the punch line of both 1 Sam 24 and 1 Sam 26 in their latest form[19] is the theme of the dialogues. In this argument, 1 Sam 26 puts the main stress differently from 1 Sam 24. Saul's confession of sin (*ḥṭ'ty / l'-'r' lk ʿwd*) in 1 Sam 26:21 follows a description of his acts: "I have acted foolishly *(hsklty)* and have committed a great unconscious fault *('šgh hrbh m'd)*". With this wording, the overall setting of 1 Sam 26 predetermines a certain bias. The narrative confronts Saul's *tragic* heroism with Yahweh's explicit help to David. This is first shown by the verb *skl* in the description of Saul. Semantically, this root implies guilt that is not incurred by consciously or voluntarily committing a wrong action.[20] The narrative of 1 Sam 26 does not, however, reduce itself to the notion of unconsciously incurred guilt, but describes a direct divine intervention. The plot is based on this divine intervention in favour of the Judeans. At night, when David creeps into Saul's camp, Yahweh causes Saul's deep sleep (*trdmt yhwh* 1 Sam 26:12). This explains why he and his men are unable to notice David's intrusion, but are instead at the intruders' mercy. Both the fact that David is able to steal Saul's spear and jar and his sparing of the "anointed of Yahweh" (1 Sam 26:8-11) are part of the general narrative's pro-Davidic bias. Likewise, David may then blame Abner for his lack of care (26:14-15a) and Saul for his unnecessary pursuit of a righteous person.[21] In the end, the desperate Saul must eventually bless the future (Judean) king David, while his actions turn out to be disastrous for his own future.[22]

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18) Both narratives are informed by a discussion of Ex 21:12,13-14 and its parallels about the intentionality of murder. They form important examples for the relationship between law and narrative. The only case of murder and the search for asylum that is reported is Joab in 1 Kings 2:5-7, 28-33. For asylum at the altar, see also Adonia 1 Kings 1:50-53. On the discussion of Ex 21:12, see among others recently B. Jackson, *Wisdom—Law: A study of the Mishpatim of Exodus 21,1-22,16* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 120-171.

19) See this topic also in the dialogue between David and Abishai V 8-11.

20) See on this Adam, "Saul as a Tragic Hero" (see note 10).

21) 26:18. Furthermore, David's claims to be justified by Yahweh. 26:23-24 emerge from a pro-Davidic bias.

22) Saul is guilty, 1 Sam 26:21 *ḥṭ'ty / r'*. Saul's guilt refers not to a specific situation, but rather to guilt as a result of Saul's actions overall.

*The Structure of the Episode and Some Pecularities*

The structure of the episode may best be explained as a sequence of acts of espionage committed in two camps. The narrative's initial point is comparable to the exposition in a drama. It reports an act of espionage by the Siphites. V 1 talks about the Siphites who have been searching for David and tell Saul in Gibea about his whereabouts. The following scene in V 2-3a tells about Saul's pursuit of David with 3000 soldiers in the desert of Ziph and about Saul's camp in Gibea-Hachila. In the third scene, an elaborate tri-partite act of espionage in the Siphites' camp is mentioned: first, when David has realised Saul's whereabouts (V 3b), he sends out spies (V 4a), second, he investigates the foreign camp himself (V 5a). Finally, he intrudes together with Abishai into the foreign camp (V 7-12). The third scene portrays the plot entirely from the point of view of David and his men. This point of view is predominant throughout this scene. The fourth scene (V 14-25a) may be subdivided in two dialogues: First, a shorter dialogue between David and Abner (V 14-16), then, V 18-25a, Saul and David enter into a lengthy dialogue about Saul's intention to kill David. A short note about David's and Saul's retreat (on his way/to his location) concludes the narrative in V 25b.

The narrative makes intensive use of direct speech (V 1,6,8-11,14-25a). Besides the predominance of direct speech, the fact that it consists of four separate scenes makes it reasonable to label it a dramatic narrative. The ratio of the actual plot to the dialogues with direct speech uneven. The plot is merely reported in V 2-5.7.12-13 and 25b. The rest of the narrative is dedicated to a sophisticated dialogue between David and his two opponents Abner and Saul. With the main part of the dialogues at the end of the episode, the stress of the narrative as a whole is shifted to its last part. The judicial discourse about the intentionality in the case of homicide has already been mentioned above. This is clearly the main focus of the narrative and the dialogues in V 8-11 and 18-25a. That said, two dialogues stand out most noticeably, however, since they do not allude to this judicial question of guilt and innocence in the case of homicide.

First, the dialogue between David and Abner in V 14-16, David's assignment of guilt to Abner since he has not guarded Saul against nocturnal intrusions.[23] This admonishment has nothing to do with the judicial aspects of intentionally committed killings. Nor is it motivated by an attempt to elaborate on the

[23] For different reasons F. H. Cryer, "David's Rise to Power and the Death of Abner: An Analysis of 1 Samuel xxvi 14-16 and its Redaction-Critical Implications", *VT* 35 (1985), pp. 385-394, esp. pp. 387-388, takes V 14-16 as a secondary interpolation. An important reason for this is the different use of the word *ʿm*.

character of Abner. He is not a main character of the narratives and there is a great need to explain why David would accuse Abner of being negligent with respect to his role as one of Saul's guards.

The second dialogue that has nothing to do with the intentionality of homicide is the short scene about David's choosing of a companion in V 6. While the lengthy final dialogue between Saul and David tackles the complicated questions about intentionality and guilt, V 6 is entirely occupied with David looking for a companion. This detail is striking in the context of the plot. There is no reason why this choosing of a companion must be explicitly told. At most, one could think of the short dialogue of V 8-11 when Abishai is in the role of the blood-thirsty avenger (V 8) and David rejects him in his lengthy answer (V 9-11). But the fact that David argues with Abishai about the killing of Saul does not explain why the choosing of a companion must be told in a separate scene, especially when the narrative's plot is so short. Furthermore, the selection scene is missing in the parallel plot in 1 Sam 24. Both elements of the plot, the reproach of Abner and the author drawing attention to the choosing of the companion, require an explanation.

To these peculiarities of the two dialogues that are not motivated in the plot can be added further conspicuities.

a) The nocturnal setting of the whole episode that is explicitly mentioned in V 7 is one of the special features of this episode. Furthermore, the sophisticated espionage in the run-up of the episode is another peculiarity that is not motivated by the intentionality. The fact that David makes three attempts to find out Saul's whereabouts is peculiar. Certainly, it has its counterpart in a tri-partite act of espionage by the Siphites (23:19,25 and 24:2). But this does not explain why an act of espionage is so important that it is necessary to tell it.
b) The narrative's tone or humour. The twinkle in the author's eye has long been noted:[24] the extremely well-equipped Saul with 3000 men (V 2) is handed over to David, who is portrayed as a type of a guerrilla warrior. These comical details are even more prominent in 1 Sam 24. Just as Saul is relieving himself, he is handed over to David.
c) Humans' guilt and the role of God in the narrative. The fact that a Yahweh-sleep fell upon the camp of Saul sheds a peculiar light on the whole episode. Noticeably, this is the narrator's only comment that leaves the plot in order to elucidate it. Formally, the fact that it is a com-

[24] See for instance F. Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel* (ZBK; Zürich, 1981), p. 164.

ment on the plot is of the highest significance. As a consequence, its function is important for its understanding. A further peculiarity with respect to its style is that the Yahweh-sleep is not sent by Yahweh. Instead, the sentence's logical subject is the sleep. Hence, the sleep into which Saul and his men fall is not, or at least not directly, caused by Yahweh. Rather the "Yahweh-sleep" seems to underscore how deep the sleep was. This ambivalent focus on the "sleep" as the logical subject corresponds to Saul's ambivalent admission of guilt with a first clear confession of sinning *(ḥṭ')* and committing evil *(r")* in V 21a. Opposed to this is the sentence in V 21b when Saul indicates that he has acted "foolishly" and unwittingly "acted wrong". The second part of this statement clearly revokes the confession of sin and is in sharp contrast to the confession of sins.

These peculiarities of the plot certainly need to be explained. They become more evident by taking a look at the parallels in the plot about Dolon in the tenth book of the *Iliad* and in the plot of the post-classical drama *Rhesus*.

*Parallels in the Episode about Dolon in the* Iliad *and in the Drama* Rhesus

While, at first glance, a relation to a separate external source may seem unlikely, a close look makes it plausible that 1 Sam 26 was influenced by an outside source. Its characters and its plot, especially the nocturnal intrusion, closely parallel the stirring tale about the spy Dolon and about Odysseus' and Diomedes' killing of the Thracian ally Rhesus in the 10th book of the *Iliad*.[25] The thematic focus of the version of the tenth book of the *Iliad* is on a nocturnal raid by the spy Dolon and on an act of counter-espionage by Odysseus and Diomedes in the Trojan camp. All the scenes are set at night. The Achaeans carry the day: they kill the Thracian king Rhesus, immediately in the night after his arrival in the camp. The scenes are set predominantly in the camp of the Achaeans and the epic recounts solely the events in the camp of the Achaeans.

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[25] This episode did not originally form part of the *Iliad*. G. Danek, *Studien zur Dolonie* (Wien, 1988), suggests on the basis of statistics and linguistic investigations, that the poem was not composed by Homer, but shortly after the *Iliad* by another author. A separate origin of this poem (by Homer) and the integration into the *Iliad* by Peisistratos is also indicated by scholium T and 10,8. See also J. Grethlein, *Das Geschichtsbild der Ilias. Eine Untersuchung aus phänomenologischer und narratologischer Perspektive* (Hypomnemata 163; Göttingen, 2006), p. 253 note 105. The text and the translations are cited from A. T. Murray, *Homer. The Iliad*. Vol. 1 (Cambridge MA/ London, 1988).

Agamemnon decides to send out spies to the Trojan camp and Diomedes is allowed to choose from seven candidates. He opts for Odysseus, since "Pallas Athene loveth him" (*Iliad* X 245). A short scene in Hector's camp gives an account about Dolon's sending off (X 300-339). Unerringly, Diomedes and Odysseus detect this counterspy who has been sent out by Hector from the Trojan camp. They interrogate him and, Dolon, avid for fame but a cowardly character, immediately reveals the arrival of the Thracian king Rhesus with his troops and his legendary Thracian horses. Diomedes and Odysseus kill the spy (X 340-464) and hasten into the camp of the Trojans and their allies. With the help of Athena, Diomedes then kills Rhesus and eleven of his men while Odysseus seizes the Thracian horses. Warned by Athena, both heroes flee from the camp of their enemies without being recognized (X 465-513). Together with the legendary horses, they are joyfully welcomed by Nestor and bring a thanks offering to Athena (X 527-579).

Another, partly parallel version of the plot is found in the post-classical drama *Rhesus*.[26] The drama is based on the myth of Dolon and takes its plot somewhat further. Unlike the tenth book of the *Iliad*, the *Rhesus* is set mainly in Hector's camp. As in the epic, the main scene is the two heroes' intrusion into the enemies' camp where, with the help of Athena, they kill Rhesus. Athena appears as *dea ex machina* shortly before Rhesus is killed, and the two Achaens escape. The most striking differences between this and the plot of the epic may be summarized as follows (see also the table below):

1. King Rhesus plays the lead as a warrior armed to the teeth. He shares this leading role with Hector.
2. The drama portrays the events from the Trojan point of view. The play is set entirely in the Trojan camp. The nocturnal raid and the staggered

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[26] The *Rhesus* was transmitted as a part of the Euripidean corpus, now counted among the pieces of "minor tragedians", see B. M. W. Knox, "Minor Tragedians", in B. M. W. Knox and P. E. Easterling (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature,* Vol. I Part 2, *Greek Drama* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 87-93, see pp. 90-91. See also C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Tragedy and Athenian Religion. Greek Studies Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Lanham MD, 2003), p. 482. See the text of the drama in I. Zanetto, *Euripides. Rhesus* (Stuttgart/Leipzig, 1993). See on the discussion about the authenticity of Rhesus recently F. Jouan, *Euripide, Tragédies, Tome VII, 2e partie, Rhésos* (Paris, 2004), pp. IX-XVI. On the relationship between the myth of Dolon and the drama *Rhesus*, see M. Fantuzzi, "The Myths of Dolon and Rhesus from Homer to the 'Homeric/Cyclic' Tragedy RHESUS", in F. Montanari et A. Rengakos (eds.), *La poésie grecque: metamorphoses d'un genre littéraire* (Entretiens Tome III (52), Genf, 2006), pp. 135-182. A recent commentary on *Rhesus* is A. Feickert, *Euripidis Rhesus. Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Studien zur klassischen Philologie 151; Frankfurt/M., 2005).

reactions of the Trojan warriors aghast at the sight of the bloodstained attack among the Thracians, in particular, are meticulously described. Inflamed with rage, Hector accuses the watchmen of a lack of guardedness against foreign intruders.

3. Athena plays an extraordinary leading part.[27] She acts on stage, informing Odysseus about Rhesus' arrival at the Trojan camp (596-608). According to the plot of the *Iliad* version, this information is given by Dolon. Also, Athena commands Diomedes to kill him (620) and, when Diomedes likewise considers killing Hector, she rebukes him for this intention.[28]

*Table 1.* Main differences and parallels between *Iliad* X and *Rhesus*

| | ***Iliad* Book X** | ***Rhesus*** |
|---|---|---|
| **Point of view** | Camp of the Achaeans (predominantly) | Camp of the Trojans |
| **Athena's role** | No active role/lead<br>Addressee of prayers<br>Hurries Diomedes and Odysseus along | Active role/lead<br>Informs<br>Commands Diomedes to kill<br>Facilitates the killing of Rhesus: appears as Cypris/Aphrodite to Alexandros/Paris |
| **Leads** | Dolon<br>Diomedes/Odysseus | Rhesus/Hector<br>Diomedes/Odysseus |
| **Search for a companion** | Diomedes chooses Odysseus (*Iliad* X 219-245) | – |
| **Accusation of the watchmen** | – | Hector accuses the watchmen (808-819) |

Above all, however, Athena's intervention is vital to Odysseus' and Diomedes' military success. The guard Alexandros/Paris in Hector's camp is vigilant owing to rumours about nocturnal spies. But Athena renders him harmless so that

27) Her role in the myth of Dolon is rather short. She hurries Diomedes and Odysseus along after having killed Rhesus and having seized the Thracian horses.

28) This would have been more than fate had decided for him (634: οὐκ ἂν δύναιο τοῦ πεπρωμένου πλέον).

the two Achaeans may accomplish their bloody work unhindered. The manner in which she removes the obstacles in their way is spectacular: Athena dupes Paris by appearing as Cypris/Aphrodite. Paris deludes himself that she is, in fact, his tutelary goddess and he thinks himself safe (642-668). Ultimately Athena spurs on Diomedes and Odysseus to remove themselves to a safe place since the Trojans are awakening (669-674). In a dramatic way it is reported how the two spies are able to escape in the hurry-scurry of the awakening Trojan guards (675-730). The watchmen in charge fear the impending reproaches and Hector's furious admonishments follow.

Seven main similarities may be distinguished on the level of the plot and the formation of the characters between the biblical narrative and the Greek play. To these, a further, formal similarity must be added. The particular similarities require different degrees of attention. The first three comparative features are related to the narrative's setting and its beginning:

1. *The nocturnal setting of an intrusion into the enemy's camp.*
2. *The espionage in two camps that are at enmity.*
3. *The search for a companion (not reported in Rhesus).*

These three similarities between both plots concern peculiar elements of 1 Sam 26.

The nocturnal setting clearly adds a specific atmosphere. It emphasizes the excitement of the espionage between the two camps for the drama's spectator. The fact that the entire drama and the narrative are set at night is a decisive external detail among the similarities between 1 Samuel 26, the post-classical Rhesus and, the myth of Dolon in the 10th book of the *Iliad*. Providing a specific framework for the uncertainty of the deceptions and the sudden changes of the poem in the *Iliad*,[29] the nocturnal setting adds to the dramatic atmosphere of the events.

The search for a companion in the myth of Dolon in the *Iliad* superimposes a specific notion. Diomedes chooses Odysseus since he is beloved by Athena, and this foreshadows the importance of the goddess during their attack on the Thracians in the Trojan camp. Compared to the more elaborate motif of a selection out of 7 candidates in the *Iliad* (X 219-254, cf. the selection of Dolon in Hector's camp, *Iliad* X 300-332), the search for a companion in 1 Sam 26:6 is much shorter and David can only choose from two candidates. It stands to reason that the more elaborate plot, in which the selection formed a more

[29] See Grethlein, *Ilias* (note 25), p. 253, note 106, and F. Klingner "Über die Dolonie", *Hermes* 75 (1940), pp. 337-368, esp. pp. 360-362.

integral part of the narrative, was known to the biblical authors and their audience or readers. While the relevance of the search for a companion is not entirely clear from the short plot in 1 Sam 26, it is more relevant in the tenth book of the *Iliad*. The character of Dolon, the spy selected, is described as a proud spirit thirsting for glory (*Iliad* X 316-324). He is the type of volunteer whose action is motivated by unpure afterthoughts. His cowardly character becomes apparent when he openly gives away all the secrets in the hope of mercy when Diomedes and Odysseus get hold of him during his mission and kill him (*Iliad* X 411-457). This selection of Dolon has its counterpart in Diomedes' selection of "godlike Odysseus, whose heart and spirit are beyond all others eager in all manner of toils; and Pallas Athena loveth him" (*Iliad* X 243-245, transl. A. D. Murray). The characters of both selected spies are explored in detail "on stage" in the myth of Dolon. If the biblical narrative in fact presupposes such a Greek version, the short selection scene in 1 Sam 26:6 has the framework it needs in order to be understood correctly. The character of the bloodthirsty spy who volunteers is maybe informed by a character with an ambivalent motivation like Dolon and, on the other hand, is comparable to the more favourably portrayed Diomedes, who is eager to kill the Thracian king and his men (*Iliad* X 487-488). If this is correct, the biblical narrative rigorously streamlines the original plot.

*4. Corresponding characters cannot only be seen in the spies David / Abishai and Odysseus / Diomedes, but also in the leading toles of Saul / Rhesus (and Hector).*
Furthermore, one may add that the role of the goddess Athena must be seen as corresponding to the part of the Judean god Yahweh in the dramatic narrative.

As to the characters of the *Rhesus*, in the performance as a stage play, their behaviour was a fascinating theme. The play presents a variety of fighting men with different attitudes towards the war. The ethical interest of the play centres on the virtues and vices of military leaders. It juxtaposes a strong and proud military warrior with a cunning hero who enters his camp as a spy. The Trojan Hector is a brilliant but hasty and impetuous warrior. Aeneas, his subordinate chieftain, stands in contrast to the imprudent leader, urging caution and suggesting that espionage should precede any major military decision (86-130). The Thracian king Rhesus mainly boasts about the success of a frontier warrior whose ambitions have no limits: "But a single span of sunlight will be enough for me to destroy the towers, fall on the fleet, and kill the Achaeans. On the day after that I shall leave Ilium and go home, having cut short your labours. . . . I shall smash the Achaeans and put an end to their loud boasting, even if I

have come at the eleventh hour". (448-450). Rhesus is "a prototype of the *miles gloriosus*, or braggart soldier of the incipient genre of New Comedy".[30] His appearance with his spear on stage was impressive, when he is described by the chorus, "majesty in his look.... his mighty body clad in gold,... the boastful clanging of the bells which ring out from his shield straps" (368-369; 382-386). This elaborate display of his military prowess is a constituent element of the post-classical burlesque buffoonery style. In terms of its contents, however, Rhesus' military prowess is in clear contrast to the fact that he lets his troops fall asleep while neglecting even the most basic precautions, even without advising a sentry to keep watch.[31] Saul, who in the end is defenceless and could have been killed while sleeping, resembles this Thracian king, proud of his military prowess. The development of the two characters of Rhesus and Saul within the plot makes evident their similarities, however the resemblances between the two are not only illustrated by their personalities, but also by the description of each figure. Both Rhesus and Saul trust in their military power. For Saul, this is illustrated by the emphasis on his javelin.[32] Clearly, this symbol of his trust in military power corresponds to Rhesus' two-pronged javelin.[33] Of course, the military prowess of a royal leader is a conventional attribute. But the contrasting of the proud military hero to the cunning spy makes this feature more particular. Even more specifically, the fact that the military equipment does not prevent Rhesus from being killed, or Saul from being disarmed, adds an exacting note to this general trait of a military leader.

In contrast, the plot with its setting of nocturnal espionage emphasizes David's stock characteristic trait in 1 Sam 26. His knowledge and cleverness single him out as a pathfinder who, sure of his aim, finds the way to his enemy's camp. This nocturnal intrusion onto the hostile site that is not known from any

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30) E. Hall, "Introduction", in *Euripides. Iphigenia among the Taurians, Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus, translated with Explanatory Notes by James Morwood* (Oxford, 1999), pp. ix-xlviii, xxvii.

31) See Hall, "Introduction" (note 30), pp. xxvii, and *Rhesus* 525-527; see also the watchmen's sleep 554-555 and the reproachful remarks of the charioteer in 762-779:

> For when Hector had pointed us to where we were to lie and told us the watchword, we went to sleep in exhaustion after our march, and no night guards were set out for our army. We did not place our armour in good order or hang the goads over the horses' yokes, since our king had heard that you were winning... No, we simply flung ourselves down and slept. (translation by J. Morwood).

32) *ḥnyt* 1 Sam 18:10,11 (MT); 19:9,10 (2x); 20:33; 21:9; 22:6; 26:7,8,11,16,22 (2x).

33) "Brandishing your two-pronged javelin", *Rhesus*, 374-375 (translation by J. Morwood).

other play, provides a thrilling theme for a dramatic performance[34] and for the contrast between the two protagonists.

Three further correspondences concern the level of the actual plot:

*5. The killing or sparing of the victims on the occasion of an intrusion into the defenceless enemy's camp.*

This is the most blatant difference between the Greek and the biblical storyline. While in the *Rhesus* and in the myth of Dolon, the intruders kill the hostile king, David spares Saul. This significant difference to the Greek plot is part of the discussion between David and Abishai in V 8-11. That said, it is most important that it is not Odysseus but Diomedes who kills Rhesus and eleven of his men according to the *Iliad* version (*Iliad* X 486-489), while Odysseus drags away the corpses so that the horses might easily pass through. In the *Rhesus*, Odysseus and Diomedes agree that Odysseus will be looking for the horses while Diomedes is going to kill the Thracian king (621-625). The comparison with the Greek parallel makes the discourse about who shall kill the opponent in 1 Sam 26:8-11 an important contribution to a topic that is also discussed in the presupposed plot and, hence, is motivated by this older storyline.[35]

*6. The reproaches to the watchmen in charge.*

These are not reported in the *Iliad* version of the myth of Dolon, since it is mainly set in the camp of the Achaeans. The reproach after the enemy's nocturnal intrusion clearly points to Hector's deficits. Hector accuses the watchmen, who claim to have watched with wakeful eyes during the night (820-831). In the end, it dawns on the charioteer that these accusations may not be justified since there may have been divine intervention.[36] A corresponding reproach

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34) Before the intrusion, the selection of a companion is reported. See Diomedes' selection of a companion in *Iliad*, 222-247. The same motive is found in 1 Sam 26:6. While Diomedes selects Odysseus as a companion from among several volunteers, David asks Ahimelech and Abishai to join him.

35) The discourse on judicial issues about bloodguilt in 1 Sam 26:8-11 and in related parts of the narratives shows a number of parallels to a comparable discourse about the judicial treatment of homicide in fifth century Greece. See on the framework of the latter M. Gagarin, *Drakon and Early Athenian Homicide Law* (New Haven/London, 1981), and, with respect to Aischylos' *Eumenides*, see A. H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylos Eumenides* (Cambridge/New York et al., 1989), pp. 13-17.

36) 850-855: "For which of our foes could have made their way through the darkness and discovered the ground where Rhesus was sleeping unless one of the gods had informed the killers? This is a plot! (ἀλλὰ μηχανᾷ τάδε)", as indeed Athena had, see 598-642 (translation by J. Morwood).

is passed on to Saul's military commander Abner whom David accuses of having neglected his duty as a watchman for his king, Saul (1 Sam 26:15-16a). David's accusation of Abner in 1 Sam 26:14-16 is clearly a false charge in the plot and is most strange. Owing to its setting in the Achaeans' camp, the epic leaves this aspect out. It forms however an important part of the *Rhesus*: The watchmen are summoned because they have fallen short of having properly guarded the camp. Again, it is noticeable that the motif in the biblical account is very short, while the Greek drama elaborates intensely on it.

*7. The openly expressed direct divine intervention in favour of the intruders.*
To this, a *formal* parallel about the direct divine intervention must be added. It consists in Athena's *apostrophe* when Paris appears on stage while the goddess is still talking and explains to the spectators why her victim is at this moment not able to hear her. The form of Athena's comment must be seen within the dramatic setting and in its pragmatic function within the play. The spectators find it implausible that while Paris is on stage he is going to be deceived by Athena, who at that very moment is about to talk to Diomedes. This is why Athena must explain to the audience that Paris is not going to hear anything in this situation (*Rhesus* 639-641). Comparable to an implicit direction for the staging in the drama's main text, here, a figure on stage explains the dramatic action which is to follow.[37] The fictionality of the dramatic presentation is briefly interrupted in order to give an explanation to the audience. The narrator's comment about the sleep in 1 Sam 26:12b can be compared to this form of explanation by an actor's *apostrophe*: It briefly leaves the level of the fictional plot and gives an explanation to the audience. In a pragmatic sense, the *apostrophe* of a person has the function of a communication of the actors to the spectators. Read on a theological level, this is a statement about a direct divine intervention in favour of one of the two battling parties. The point on the theological level is: it is *not* Yahweh who is responsible for David's nocturnal intrusion: the logic subject of the action is the Yahweh-sleep (26:12b).

To this, formal peculiarities can be added. With regard to its outward appearance, more parallels between late Greek drama and the biblical narrative con-

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[37] See on the implicit direction for the staging in the main text M. Pfister, *Das Drama* (München, 1977, [8]1994), pp. 299-306. Further aspects of comparable divine interventions are explicitly mentioned: Athena indicates that the Trojans may be alerted by their gods (*Iliad* X 511). This has the function of an implicit direction for the staging since the Trojans wake up immediately afterwards.

tribute to the episode's elaborate dramatic character. One of the post-classical features of the 4th century *Rhesus* is the increased number of speaking roles: eleven. Correspondingly, in 1 Sam 26 the character of Abishai is added (while a comparable figure is lacking in 1 Sam 24).

More formal similarities are: The drama naturally consists of a sequence of dialogues and the narrative uses mainly direct speech. *Rhesus* is the shortest extant tragedy (996 lines), with a rapid succession of short scenes. This is also true for the sequence of short episodes about Saul in most of 1 Samuel. In *Rhesus,* the shortness and excitement of the scenes and the characters that have been indicated are special features that shape the way in which the play was performed and that indicate the play's character as a post-classical drama:[38] The performance was rather pretentious. *Rhesus* has complicated entrances and exits (lines 565-681)[39] requiring professional actors. With its unusual amount of interventionist advice, criticism, and support from the chorus, this play uses the chorus as an important figure with short and rather rapid interactions. This play was highly successful supposedly not only because of these rapid interactions. The nocturnal, military masculine atmosphere of the war situation, with watch fires, disguises and scouts must also have been very appealing to an audience which had experienced war. With this, the play offers exciting scenes.

The divine interaction in the play corresponds to the above-mentioned contrast between the two heroes. Here, the post-classical nature of the play *Rhesus* is evident on a more theological level. *Rhesus* deploys a conflation of different modes of divine interaction not known hitherto in 5th century drama. For example, Athena appears on stage at the heart of the play, and a muse carries Rhesus' corpse. The muse only partly behaves like a *dea ex machina* of the type known to us. Lamenting and cursing, she performs actions that in Euripidean tragedies only human characters perform. The shift in the divine roles in the tragedy is also evident in Athena's biased interference. Such an intervention was apparently not perceived as problematic by the writer.[40] As to the divine involvement on behalf of David in 1 Sam 26, this is most apparent in David's ability to deceive Saul which is caused by divine interference. Noticeably however, it is not Yahweh himself who enables David to steal Saul's spear and his

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38) The lack of gnomic pronouncements likewise points to a post-classical date of origin.

39) E. Hall, *Introduction* (see note 30), p. xxvii, suggests that the script was meant for enactment by expert actors. This would correspond to a post-classical date of the play, when professional *tragodoi* performed Greek drama.

40) See Sourvinou-Inwood, "Tragedy" (see note 26), p. 482.

jar. Instead, at the critical moment, a "Yahweh-sleep" fell on Saul and his men (*trdmt yhwh nflh ʾlyhm* 1 Sam 26:12).[41] This theological level is an important parallel to the form of Athena's intervention in *Rhesus*. Beyond the story's plot, here, it becomes apparent that its relationship to history is important as a framework of the narrative. *Rhesus* alludes to Athenian history in that it deliberates over Greek national identity and expresses a view on foreigners. This obvious relation between a historical reality and the drama as it is displayed on stage sheds new light on the play's intention. The characters are not arbitrarily connected to their respective ethnic backgrounds. When the Thracian military leader boasts with *hubris* and the Athenians defeat him, the play relates Athen's historical hostility towards the kings of Thrace. The portrayal of Rhesus is consonant with the views of Athenian citizens at the time, endorsing the notion that Greeks, on stage represented by Odysseus and Diomedes, were better warriors than the Trojans and Thracians. This play has a clear cut bias[42] and its Athenian viewpoint also shapes the divine interference by Athena in favour of the Greeks. In the same way that the play represents Athenian identity and a Greek viewpoint on its foes, the drama unfolds its Greek identity by describing Athena's divine intervention at the play's culminating point. This is significant for a comparison of *Rhesus* and 1 Sam 26. The two Greek heroes, securing Athena's goodwill, complete their intrusion and their ruthless killings. Yet at the same time, the play provides a variation on the Greek warrior's superiority and the superiority of their Gods.

Turning to 1 Sam 26 and 24, the notion of God's involvement in favour of one of the two parties is expressed in the narrator's comments in 1 Sam 24, which is independent of 1 Sam 26 and has no extra-biblical parallel. Yahweh engages in favour of the Judean David against his opponent Israel. The specific instances of God's involvement are when, in 1 Sam 23:14, God does not give David into Saul's mercy, but Saul is given into David's mercy, 1 Sam 24:11a: "You see how Yahweh has given you into my mercy". 24:19 reiterates this, focusing on David's decision to spare Saul: "Yahweh had decided to give me into your mercy, but you didn't kill me". Within the larger discourse about the legal aspects of homicide, the narrative 1 Sam 24 alludes to the Judean god Yahweh as a judge in 24:5: "Do what you consider to be right!" Saul's confes-

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41) Notably, no subject is mentioned, while this sleep, *trdmh*, clearly is connected with Yahweh in Gen 2:21 and Is 29:10 (the spirit of a deep sleep). An explicit subject is lacking in Gen 15:12; Prov 19:15; Job 4:13 (=33:15). The verb *rdm* is attested in late post-exilic Hebrew in Jonah 1: 5,6; Prov 10:5; Judges 4:21; Ps 76:7 and in Daniel 8:18; 10:9.

42) Hall, "Introduction" (see note 30), p. xxvii.

sion of his guilt likewise suggests a divine legal council, with Yahweh being called upon as a judge in 24:13 and 24:16. Besides, the demand to swear by Yahweh in 24:22 suggests a forensic context.[43] 1 Sam 24, in which Saul ends up at David's mercy, also alludes to the form of a lawsuit, which is informed by an effort to settle the relationship between two protagonists by means of a forensic trial. 1 Sam 26 takes these questions one important step further with the explicit remark in V 12b about the divine help: "No one was seeing or knowing or waking. All of them were asleep since a Yahweh-sleep had been fallen on them." The subtle intervention of Yahweh, who, noticeably, is not the logical subject of the sentence, is decisive for the setup of the whole plot. Thus, a gradually differing form of divine intervention is a striking parallel.

Within the play *Rhesus*, Athena's divine involvement in favour of the Greeks is a most informative notion for an episode taken from the *Iliad* and reinterpreted in a theatre play. This biased view of divine interference indicates a specific perception of a "national" history. And, naturally, neither *Rhesus* nor 1 Sam 26 questions the respective God's role in favour of one of the conflicting parties. In 1 Sam 26 it is obvious that, while he does not intercede directly, Yahweh is on David's, i.e. on the Judeans' side, as Athena intervenes in *Rhesus* for Hellas' heroes. As is the case on the theological level, the formation of the characters and the constellation between them are comparable to the post-classical drama *Rhesus*. The divine involvement in favour of the Judeans (the Achaeans) and against the enemies adds another parallel.[44] Both relying on their military force, Rhesus and Saul are overruled by the divine intervention in favour of a weaker enemy.

Focusing on the close parallels between these plots, a difference between them appears even more evident: Diomedes kills Rhesus, whereas David spares Saul. This is the result of an explicit debate between David and Abishai (26:8-11). This feature of the plot is part of an idealization of David that stands out more distinctly given the close interrelation between the narrative and the play.[45] Within the Saul-David narratives in 1 Samuel, David, as opposed to

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43) The first version of the encounter between David and Saul alludes to the protagonists' lawsuit in 24:18 *ṣdq* and 24:20 alludes to the good and the bad path.

44) On a comparable pro-Athenian divine intervention of Athene, see Sophokles, *Aias*, 50-117.

45) The instances that give a messianic reason for David's reluctance to touch Saul in 26:9b,11a,23b are presumably later additions of a messianic redaction that were also inserted in 24:7aβ.b, see for the secondary character in 1 Sam 24 Budde, *Samuel* (see note 13), p. 161. On the contrary, P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel. A New Translation with Introduction Notes and Commentary* (Anchor Bible; New York, 1980), p. 387, adheres to a source model for both narratives, suggesting 24:2-5a,7-11,17-20,23b as a traditional source of 1 Sam 24.

Saul, shows no intention to kill the Israelite king, even if this would merely be an act of self-defence against his oppressor, and even though it is explicitly noted that God has delivered Saul into David's mercy, which would justify David's killing of Saul.[46] While its composition, the constellation between the figures, and the biased divine intervention are informed by the post-classical drama *Rhesus*, the character of David in this narrative serves as the paramount example in a legal discourse and in a forensic setting concerning the killing of a person.

We can summarize the comparative evidence. Similarities are the rather conventional elements of the descriptions of warriors, like the portrait of Hector and Rhesus, and the intrusion into an enemy's camp. The combination of these conventional motifs with the more specific ones, like the divine intervention in a sleep, adds evidence for an influence of this post-classical play on the biblical narrative. The close parallels between 1 Sam 26 and *Rhesus*, including the presumed dramatic presentation and its plot, indicate that the play or its plot was known in some form to the Judean historiographers. The formal similarities between the biblical account of Saul as a tragic figure and parallel 4th century works also point to Greek influence. Post-classical features of *Rhesus* have led scholars to the general opinion that all this "seems to bear witness to a post-classical phase of tragedy, one which has abandoned fifth-century ideals of artistic economy for a lavish, varied display of individually exciting scenes".[47] The striving for an ideal of "variety", ποικιλία, corresponds to a standard for tragic poetry as it is expressed in a fragment of a satyr play from

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46) David's reluctance to kill Saul must be seen in relation to a discourse about the legal status of the narrative's figures. Saul intends to kill David; this forms a major part of the narratives' structure which is related to the law in the covenant code Ex 21:12, and, more precisely, to its interpretation in Ex 21:13-14, where the intention to kill another person is decisive for the respective legal status; see on this above note 18. The paramount significance of this topic may be seen in the narratives' characters, such as the figure of Joab, who is eventually killed since his asylum at the altar is refused due to his intentional killing of Absalom and Amasa 1Kings 2:5-6; 2:28-34. The narratives emerge from this conflict in numerous literary layers. This partly redactional character of the theme of Joab's guilt was already suggested by E. Würthwein, *Die Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids—theologische oder politische Geschichtsschreibung?* (ThSt (B) 115; Zürich, 1974), p. 45, with his suggestion of a secondary insertion of Amasa and the murder of Absalom into the narratives that had reinforced a contrast between David and Joab. On the redactional additions concerning the figure of Joab, see, among many others, the suggestions of S. Bietenhard, *Des Königs General. Die Heerführertraditionen in der vorstaatlichen und staatlichen Zeit und die Joabgestalt in 2 Sam 2-20; 1 Kön 1-2* (OBO 163; Göttingen/Fribourg, 1998), pp. 212-330; summary pp. 320-331. For a synchronic reading, see M. Eschelbach, *Has Joab Foiled David? A Literary Study of the Importance of Joab's Character in Relation to David* (Studies in Biblical Literature 76; Frankfurt, 2005), pp. 57-65.

47) Knox, "Minor tragedians" (see note 26), p. 91.

Astydamas: "the clever poet must offer the complicated bounty, as it were, of a luxurious dinner. . . ."[48] Stylistically, one may consider whether these post-classical features are likewise to be applied to the biblical narratives with the short episodes about Saul's pursuit of David. This is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to indicate that the time frame for a date of origin of the characteristic elements of the biblical narrative that are mentioned above is the (late) Persian or Hellenistic periods.

*Provisional Assumptions about Greek Parallels in the Deuteronomistic History and the Literary Relationship between 1 Sam 26 and 1 Sam 24*

Before I reconsider the larger literary context of the episodes about the figure of the tragic king Saul, and, especially, the relationship between 1 Sam 26 and 24, I shall point out three features of narratives in the Deuteronomistic History with Greek parallels. First, the narratives with Greek parallels may be easily isolated from their respective narrative contexts.[49] Second, the Deuteronomistic History is their current context, but they contrast with its theology.[50] Thirdly, they are all very short.[51] They limit themselves to reproducing only a plot's main story line. The main characters appear in a sketchy form. Details, byplays and minor characters are left out. It seems plausible that the biblical writers had only to touch lightly upon a certain plot in order to make the audience understand it, and, hence, the plots appear as concise citations of a known tradition.

Assuming that 1 Sam 26 was inspired by the *Rhesus*, this sheds new light on the narrative's relationship to 1 Sam 24.[52] A number of proposals were made

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48) B. Snell, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta 4* (Göttingen, 1971); translation of Knox, "Minor Tragedians" (see note 26), p. 91.

49) See for instance the Antigone-motif in 2 Sam 21:1-14 and, for a recent treatment, see F. Hartenstein, "Solidarität mit den Toten und Herrschaftsordnung. 2 Samuel 21,1-14 und 2 Samuel 24 im Vergleich mit dem Antigone-Mythos", in M. Bauks, K. Liess, P. Riede (eds.), *Was ist der Mensch, dass du seiner gedenkst (Psalm 8,5)? Aspekte einer theologischen Anthropologie. Festschrift für Bernd Janowski zum 65. Geburtstag* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2008), pp. 123-143.

50) See for instance the question of T. C. Römer, "Why Would the Deuteronomists Tell about the Sacrifice of Jephta's Daughter?" *JSOT* 77 (1998), pp. 27-38. The only connection of 1 Sam 26 (and 24) to dtr theology is that the guilt of Saul (1 Sam 24:18; 26:21a) in his intention to kill David provides a reason for Saul's overall demise as some sort of punishment for his evil acts. However, the deliberate divergent judgement about his actions as unwittingly committed "mistakes" in 26:21b, and the motif of the Yahweh-sleep add a specific tragic notion to his character.

51) Consider for instance the narrative about Jephta's daughter in Judges 11:30-40, 1 Sam 26 or 2 Sam 21:1-14.

52) The relationship between both narratives would require further considerations, including

so far. K. Koch suggested a shared basic narrative ("Grunderzählung") that grew independently into 1 Sam 24 and 1 Sam 26, the former being still closer to the basic narrative than the latter.[53] J. H. Grønbaek put forward the idea of two originally independent narratives that were assimilated in an oral form and that were deliberately placed one after the other by the narrator of the history of David's rise.[54] W. Dietrich likewise assumed two independent narratives that, in their written form, were redactionally enlarged at significant places and harmonized by the narrator of the history of David's rise,[55] and H.-J. Stoebe opts for a dependence of 24 on 26.[56] Recently, J. Conrad has partly questioned the dependence of 1 Sam 26 on 1 Sam 24, suggesting as a basic literary layer a short humoristic anecdote and seven subsequent literary additions, including influences of 1 Sam 26 on 1 Sam 24.[57] I limit myself to preliminary observations. If the plot of the narrative was adopted from an extra-biblical Greek context, it stands to reason that its essential motif of the counter-espionage in 1 Sam 26 is in connection with the hostile espionage that is reported in 1 Sam 23:19 with the first betrayal by the Siphites. If so, then, essentially, four reasons corroborate the possibility that 1 Sam 24 was derived from 1 Sam 26:

a) 1 Sam 26 makes no explicit allusions to 1 Sam 23-24. No reference is made to the preceding admission of guilt nor is Saul's immediate change of mind after having realized that he has acted badly (24:18) a topic in the narrative in 1 Sam 26.[58]
b) The beginning of the narrative 1 Sam 26:1 is almost identical with 1 Sam 23:19: "The Siphites came to Saul in Gibeah saying: 'David is hiding … on the hill of Hachilah, … opposite Jeshimon.' " If 26:1 depends

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1 Sam 25. The literary relationship between both narratives is seen in different ways, see the overview until 1995 in W. Dietrich/T. Naumann, *Die Samuelbücher* (EdF 287; Darmstadt, 1995), pp. 104-106.

53) K. Koch, *Was ist Formgeschichte? Methoden der Bibelexegese* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1981[5]), p. 175.

54) J. H. Grønbaek, *Die Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids (1.Sam. 15-2.Sam. 5). Tradition und Komposition* (AThD 10; Kopenhagen, 1971), pp. 163-169.

55) W. Dietrich, "David in Überlieferung und Geschichte", *VF* 22 (1977), pp. 44-64, esp. p. 56.

56) H.-J. Stoebe, "Gedanken zur Heldensage in den Samuelbüchern," in: F. Maass (ed.), *Das ferne und das nahe Wort*. Festschrift für Leonhard Rost (BZAW 105; Berlin, 1967), pp. 208-218, esp. pp. 212-214.

57) J. Conrad, "Die Unschuld des Tollkühnen: Überlegungen zu 1 Sam 24", in R. Lux/U. Schnelle (eds.), *Ideales Königtum: Studien zu David und Salomo* (ABG 16; Leipzig, 2005), pp. 23-42: basic literary layer 24:1*.3b*.4.5b.8b.23bβγ; influences of 1 Sam 26 on 1 Sam 24 in V 3abα*.9aβ.10.17aβγ.

58) See K. Koch, *Formgeschichte* (see note 53), p. 174.

on 23:19, one would expect it to refer to 1 Sam 23:19 in some way. Moreover, David's tri-partite counter-espionage in Saul's camp 1 Sam 26:4,5,7-12 corresponds a tri-partite act of espionage against David in 1 Sam 23:19.25; 26:1.

c) Within the overall plot it seems strange that David hides a second time near the Siphites after they have already betrayed him once.

d) Saul is portrayed as an even more ridiculous character in 1 Sam 24 compared to 1 Sam 26. An aggravation in the formation of the plot from 26 to 24 is more plausible than a compensation.[59]

This would roughly suggest a redactional development of 1 Sam 24 on the basis of a basic plot in 26*. This literary development would correspond to the similar cases in 1 Sam in which rewritten narratives were placed in front of older versions, as has been suggested above.

## 3. Saul's Vita Told in a Sequence of Tragic Narratives

I propose that a number of episodes in the first book of Samuel, connected to each other by their common understanding of Saul as a tragic figure, belong to a literary layer informed by Greek tragedy. Specifically, these are: Saul's election by lot (1 Sam 10:17-27), his untimely offering at Gilgal (1 Sam 10:8 and 13:7-14b), his hasty vow that almost results in the sacrifice of his son Jonathan (1 Sam 14:24-46), Saul's madness as a form of tragic heroism (1 Sam 16:14-23), David's nocturnal intrusion into Saul's camp (1 Sam 26*), Saul's necromancy involving Samuel (1 Sam 28:3-25*), and his heroic suicide on the battlefield of Gilboah reported by a messenger (1 Sam 31*; 2 Sam 1*). If these narratives were influenced by tragedy, it seems plausible that the offering scene in 1 Sam 9:22-25 alludes to a sacrificial meal that was likewise influenced by Greek practice. It is also conceivable that Saul's encounter with the ecstatic prophets in 1 Sam 10:2-13 refers critically and almost ironically to the ecstatic behaviour of someone who pretends to be driven by a prophetic spirit.

Before I focus on the narratives about David's pursuit in Saul's camp in 1 Samuel 26, I briefly summarize the results of Saul's tragic heroism in some scenes that depend on Greek models of tragic heroism. Saul's encounter with Samuel (1 Sam 10:8), Samuel's two conditions, and Saul's premature performance of the offering (1 Sam 13:7a-13a) portray the first Israelite king as a

[59] Contra H. Schulte, Die *Entstehung der Geschichtsschreibung im Alten Israel* (BZAW 128; Berlin, 1972), p. 129, who suggests that 1 Sam 26 corrects the coarseness of 1 Sam 24.

tragic figure. Due to limitations of space I am not able to give individual proof of the tragic influence, but merely outline this with respect to the theme of lot-casting in 1 Sam 14 and with respect to 1 Sam 17. More specifically, I suggest that the narratives on lot-casting, 1 Sam 14:24-46 and 1 Sam 10:17-27, are informed by the popular Greek mode of assigning official positions.[60] First, casting lots was a divinatory technique widely used in popular knucklebone games. Second, the narratives clearly avoid naming Yahweh as the subject of this action.[61] This is made clear by the use of the *nif'al*-form of the verb *lkd* that refrains from pointing out a logic subject of the phrase "Saul is hit".[62] This avoidance of statements about Saul's destiny relating to Yahweh may be compared to 1 Sam 26:12b. Furthermore, homologies between the Hebrew terminology for an unwitting guilty act[63] are evident in Saul's hasty vow in

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60) In 1 Sam 10:17-27 the election is carried out by the people, while the prophet's role is reduced to presenting Saul as the king elected by lot to the people. Samuel's remark "See, whom Yahweh has chosen?" in 10:24 is in contrast to the concept of the divine election of the Davidic king. It comments critically and, most probably, ironically on Saul's kingship. This is suggested for three reasons: First, it is a question, and the reason for the interesting character of Saul is that Saul is peerless (V 24aß "since nobody of the people equalled him"), which refers formally to the statement about Hezekiah's (2 Kings 18:5) and Josiah's (2 Kings 23:25) peerlessness. However, unlike these two Judean kings, Saul's peerlessness is based on his high stature (V 23b), a symbol of his power, which, however, does not guarantee his military and general royal success. Secondly, as is clear from the divinatory act, Saul's election has nothing to do with the (prophetically transmitted) word of Yahweh in 1 Sam 16:8-10 but, on the contrary, it is only done on behalf of the people's wish. Thirdly, the apparently positive dynastic/Davidic election (*bḥr*) is mentioned as part of an overall salvation history in 2 Sam 6:21; 1 Kings 8:16; Ps 78:70; 1 Chr 28:4; 1 Sam 16:8-10; see also for Solomon 2 Chr 28:5 and Serubbabel in Hag 2:23. In contrast with this, Saul's election is never referred to in a comparable context of a salvation history. Rather, 2 Chr 6:5-6 seem to comment polemically on Saul's "election" and an ironic use of the king's election (*bḥr*) is also apparent in Hushai's comment in 2 Samuel 16,18. An interpretation as an essentially positive comment on Saul is also tentatively questioned by R. Müller, *Königtum* (see note 9), pp. 165-168.

61) The reluctance to use lots as a divinatory method has long been noticed, see e.g. J. Lindblom, "Lot-Casting in the Old Testament", *VT* 12 (1962), pp. 164-178, p. 167. Lots are mainly attested in post-exilic priestly biblical material, see on *lkd* and its meaning in this context, W. Groß, *lkd* (*TWAT* 4; Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 573-576. The late literary origin of narratives reporting the casting of lots presumably indicates a Greek influence for this divinatory method.

62) 1 Sam 14:41-42 and compare the same verb used 3 times for lot casting 1 Sam 10:20-21. See on the understanding of the *Nif'al* as "agensloser Manifestativ" E. Jenni, "Aktionsarten und Stammformen im Althebräischen: das Pi'el in verbesserter Sicht", in J. Luchsinger, H.-P. Mathys, M. Saur, Ernst Jenni (eds.), *Studien zur Sprachwelt des Alten Testaments II* (Stuttgart, 2005), pp. 77-106, esp. pp. 80-83.

63) On this topic, see also Part 4 below.

1 Sam 14:24-46 that results in the sacrifice of his son.[64] Beyond that, the formation of Saul's character points to a Greek origin. The complex narrative exhibits a particular interest in the tragic figure's character as such which is typical for Greek drama. As to the narrative's genre, 1 Sam 14:24-46 indicates that the Hellenistic influence also concerns the form of the narrative that is similar to a performed play: The grouping of a hero and chorus, a characteristic opposite pair in Greek tragedy, is a model apparent in the interaction between Saul and the people in the role of the chorus in 1 Sam 14:24-46.[65] Showing Greek drama's impact on the narrative's main character, and considering the influence of drama that was intended to be performed on stage provides important information about the form, mode of origin, and formation of the characters in the biblical narrative. This contributes to our knowledge of the Greco-Judean cultural interaction (presumably) in the 4th century.

The formative constellation of Saul versus David[66] shaped some of the more elaborate narratives that show Greek influence. Such is the case with the theme of single combat in 1 Sam17. It has long been understood that it is prominent in classical Greek Homeric literature and, before, was known in the Hittite culture.[67] The short account of 2 Sam 21:19 and many details of 1 Sam 17 indicate that it most likely emerged from a Persian[68] or Hellenistic background. While a Mycenean origin of these was suggested earlier on the basis of the weapons of the Philistine warrior, this was refuted by K. Galling who rejected the notion that Goliath's spear *(ḥnyt)* was influenced by a comparable Greek

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64) This theme, prominent in Greek drama as, for instance, in Iphigeneia, has parallels in the episode in Judg 11:30-40 about Jephtah. On the influence of the offering theme of Iphigeneia by Agamemnon, see for instance T. C. Römer, "Jephtah's Daughter" (see note 50), pp. 33-36. The importance of the Greek parallels is disputed. This importance is played down and a pre-dtr growth of the narrative (with W. Richter) from 11:30-32,34-40 is favoured, emphasizing the role of the daughter, by W. Groß, "Jiftachs Tochter", in Frank-Lothar Hossfeldt et al. (eds.), *Das Manna fällt auch heute noch: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theologie des Alten, Ersten Testaments* (HBS 44; Freiburg, 2004), pp. 273-293, esp. pp. 272, 279. The theme of the sacrifice would require further study.

65) See especially the people's role in 1 Sam 14:40-46.

66) See on this e. g. J. Klein, *David versus Saul. Ein Beitrag zum Erzählsystem der Samuelbücher* (BWANT 158; Stuttgart, 2002), pp. 40-118.

67) On single combat, see already R. de Vaux, "Les combats singuliers dans l'ancien testament", *Bib* 40 (1959), pp. 495-508, and K. Galling, "Goliath und seine Rüstung," in H. W. Anderson et al. (eds.), *Volume du congrès Genève 1965* (*VT.S* 15; Leiden, 1966), pp. 150-169, p. 152.

68) A. Rofé, "The Battle of David and Goliath: Folkore, Theology, Eschatology", in J. Neusner et al. (eds.), *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 117-151; E. Aurelius, "Davids Unschuld. Die Hofgeschichte und Psalm 7", in: M. Witte (ed.), *Gott und Mensch im Dialog. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (BZAW 345/I; Berlin, 2005), pp. 391-412.

weapon with an ἀγκύλη, a slip-knot of the javelin, which was not known in Greek iconography prior to the 7th century BCE.[69] The coat of mail as armour *(šrywn qšqšym)* had its origins in Mesopotamian-Syrian culture and the bronze helmet *(kwbʿ)* had Urartean and Assyrian predecessors.[70] The *kydwn* was a weapon which was known from Mesopotamia and Syria.[71] All in all Goliath's weapons are a combination of different armours. With this combination of different weapons in the narrative, the author intends to make him appear as an almost invincible threat, in order to make David's miraculous victory appear to be more eminent.[72] The focus on the contrast between Saul, who is unable to slay the warrior, and the victorious David, may be compared to the focus on the tragic hero in Greek drama. It is also evident on the level of the narrative's structure and the layout of the characters: in its setting, it presumes the fear that arises in Saul[73] as a result of David's fame and that in the end leads to Saul's weakness for which he compensates by pursuing David.[74]

Pointing out a sequence of tragic narratives makes it necessary to also mention a main obstacle to this interpretation of the close affinity between them with concepts and themes found in Greek tragedy. The parallels between biblical narratives and Greek drama may be of a purely coincidental character and may be explained by the fact that they touch upon general issues appearing in Israelite and Greek culture. If the themes of the narratives are singled out, they may well be understood to be general. Pulled out of their context, the themes of the narratives are: the intention of killing a foe in a nocturnal raid, the heroic suicide on the battlefield, and the hero's state of mind that is related to madness as a form of tragic heroism. The interpretation of the hero in sacrificial terms as in 1 Sam 10:17-27 and in 14:41-42 when Saul and his son are affected by the lot, may be accidental. Besides the themes and motifs, the briefness of the episodes in 1 Samuel and their arrangement as scenes consisting predominantly of dialogues does not necessarily indicate any relation to the form of anthologies of post-classical drama. Taken by themselves, all these possible points of contact seem to be either too general or too unspecific to

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69) Galling, "Goliath" (see note 67), p. 159.

70) Galling, "Goliath" (see note 67), pp. 161, 163.

71) See among others O. Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8, 18-26; Ex 17, 8-13; 2 Kön 13, 14-19 und 1 Kön 22, 11* (Fribourg/CH, 1974).

72) See among others Galling, "Goliath" (see note 67), p. 167.

73) See in 1 Sam 18:8-9,15.

74) Especially when Saul throws the spear at him in 1 Sam 18:8-9; 19:9-10. This theme is of relevance for the narratives that report David's flight, which extend in the current narrative from the pursuit at the court to David's final escape to Achish, 1 Sam 19:1-27:4.

prove a cultural contact. The authors of the books of Samuel may have had Greek tragedy in mind when they described Saul's destiny, but one may also argue that the idea of the tragic hero was developed independently in the society and religion of Judah. However, the overlap of Hebrew narratives with genuine Greek thoughts as they can be grasped in their post-classical form in late Persian and Hellenistic times, gives the impression that they are more than purely random points of contact. The sum of the evidence adduced in the narratives points to an influence. Four main themes indicate Greek influence in Hellenistic times or are in close dialogue with Greek culture: first, the motif of the vow;[75] second, the casting of lots as a means of divination; third, care about the dead that presupposes a general solidarity of the living with the dead;[76] and fourth, Saul's suicide as a form of untimely death.[77] Within the biblical cultural framework, all of these narratives are related to the Judean conception of Yahweh and his superior position that is opposed to the Greek pantheon and its form of involvement in human affairs. Noticeably, in the non-deuteronomistic parts of the narratives, Saul as a tragic figure becomes involuntarily guilty, and, this is opposed to descriptions and judgements of the proper deuteronomistic literary layers and to the Chronicler's version and his comments.[78]

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75) See e.g. 1 Sam 14:24 and for an overview A. Wendel, *Das israelitisch-jüdische Gelübde* (Berlin, 1931), and idem, *Das freie Laiengebet im vorexilischen Israel* (Leipzig, 1931); and see H. D. Preuss, "Gelübde II Altes Testament" in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 12 (Berlin, 1984), pp. 302-304; T. W. Cartledge, "Vows in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East", *JSOTS* 147 (Sheffield, 1992), pp. 11-35, 137-199; H. Tita, *Gelübde als Bekenntnis. Eine Studie zu den Gelübden im Alten Testament* (OBO 181; Göttingen/Fribourg, 2001), pp. 48-232, and C. A. Keller, "ndr geloben", *THAT* 2 (München, 1976), pp. 39-43, O. Kaiser, "ndr", *TWAT 5* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 261-274.

76) The episode of Rizpah 2 Sam 21:1-14 focuses on this issue. Presumably, it is informed by the plot of Sophocle's *Antigone*.

77) On suicide in tragedies and the importance of the motivation for the author's value judgement, see E. P. Garrison, "Attitudes toward Suicide in Ancient Greece", *TAPhA* 121 (1991), pp. 1-34 , esp. pp. 20-33, and on suicide in despair and out of necessity, see also A. J. L. van Hooff, *From Autothanasia to Suicide. Self-killing in Classical Antiquity* (London/New York, 1990), pp. 85-96. Saul's suicide adds to his character as a tragic hero, however the wish to die a honorable death does not depreciate him.

78) Whether a pro-Davidic account in the books of Samuel in a hypothetical earlier, pre-Hellenistic form offered the possibility of interpreting the first Israelite king's destiny in terms of tragedy, or whether the character of the tragic Saul was newly created, is beyond the scope of this article.

## 4. Qohelet's Considerations about Kings

Further important arguments to corroborate the Greek influence on the formation of the character of Saul in Judean historiography are extant in biblical parallels for the formation of his character. The perception of Saul's tragic destiny in late Persian or Hellenistic times is not limited to the books of Samuel. It likewise appears in Israelite wisdom, more specifically in Qohelet's reflections on royal roles. At the beginning of this book, in the first section 1:3-4:12[79] Qohelet considers "knowledge" in a specific, namely a royal, framework in his "reflections of king Qohelet"[80] or the "royal travesty" in 1:12-2:26. In this section, Qohelet identifies himself with Solomon and reflects in retrospect on the Judean and Israelite royal history and on his predecessors on the throne, i.e. on the kings Saul and David. In this section Qohelet uses the terms *śkl* and *skl* several times. While dressing up as a king, he describes two opposite kings, and his account clearly relates to Saul and David. With the two homonymous roots Qohelet points out a contrast in the execution of royal duties. His efforts as a king read like a reflection about the Judean and Israelite kingship, as Qohelet indicates in the opening of this passage (1:12-13):

> (12) Qohelet, I, became king over Israel in Jerusalem.
> (13) Then I intended to research and find out by wisdom all that was done under heaven.
> This is a bad business, God has left it to people to be busy with it. . . .
> (16) I thought: look, now I am greater and wiser than anyone who was (ruler) over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge.
> (17) So I intended to understand what wisdom is and to understand what blindness *(hllt)* is and folly *(śklt)*.[81]

As shown above, such a form of "folly" is related to the formation of the tragic character of Saul, who acted foolishly (1 Sam 13:13a; 26:21).[82] The close connection between Qohelet's views and the narratives about Saul and David is

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79) On the different divisions suggested for this first part of Qohelet, see T. Krüger, *Qoheleth. A Commentary* (Hermeneia; transl. O. C. Deal; Minneapolis, 2004=idem, *Kohelet (Prediger)* [BK 19; Neukirchen, 2000], p. 45 note 1.

80) It is framed by the question of "gain" *(ytrn)* in view of the totality of human toil *(ʿml)* in general (1:3) and in question of the special effort in one's activity (3:9). While 1:3-11 forms a poetically stylised prelude, the section of 3:1-8 is a poem on human activity on the horizon of changing times, see Krüger, *Qoheleth* (see note 79), p. 45.

81) The text spells incorrectly *śklwt*.

82) See above in part I on *skl* in 1 Sam 26:21b.

given in the fact that Qohelet dresses up as the king of Jerusalem and puts himself in Solomon's place in this royal travesty in Qoh 1:12-2:26. Qohelet's perception of his two predecessors indicates that in Hellenistic times, Saul was in fact understood in a way comparable to a tragic hero in Greek drama, who unintentionally, not voluntarily, incurred guilt.[83] I suggest that the balance between his wrong decisions that cause guilt and the fact that he was not aware of committing a guilty act is a typical mode of description of the tragic hero. This image corresponds to characters of a popular form in post-classical Greek drama as it was present in 4th century and in later Hellenistic Levantine culture: Qohelet in King Solomon's role reconsiders the fate of his two predecessors and he is an example for the perception of Saul as a tragic hero in Hellenistic Judaism.

Furthermore, it is apparent in Qohelet's considerations to what extent Saul's character as a tragic hero in late Persian or Hellenistic times is intertwined with the opposite figure, David. The character of both heroes is evident on a larger literary scale when it comes to the process of making decisions and when it comes to the consequences that emerge from these decisions. While David is said to be successful, Saul is a "tragic" hero, unwittingly and unconsciously making wrong decisions. The word pair *śkl* and *skl* describes the destiny of both heroes and is illustrated by corresponding narratives, e.g. Samuel's and Saul's encounter at Gilgal (1 Sam 13:7b-13a),[84] in which Saul is accused of having acted foolishly (13a), as opposed to the smart David described in 1 Sam 18 (including partly in additions to MT), as having a successful royal performance.[85] David's perfect heroism clearly has implications for the literary growth in which Saul as the opposite figure is set apart from him. Throughout the Saul-David-narratives, the formation of the tragic character of Saul is shaped by David, who features as his opposite character. This is the case as defined by their actions and, in the development of the literary tradition, it likewise is obvious in their difference in physical size. Especially in the narratives about David as a young man this feature of the two figures corresponds to the difference in size between Judah and Israel.[86] David is described as a small (still young) man (1 Sam 16:11-12) with beautiful eyes,[87] whereas Saul is large

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83) See on this more detailed Adam, "Saul as a Tragic Hero" (see note 10).

84) This part of the narrative is not dtr; while V 13b-14 are dtr.

85) See the five instances of *śkl* in 1 Sam 18: ("To be smart, wise, successful") 1 Sam 18:5a MT *yśkl*; 1 Sam 18:14 *mśkl*, LXX: Δαυιδ… συνίων; 1 Sam 18:15 *mśkl m'd*, LXX: συνίει σφόδρα; 1 Sam 18:30 *śkl* (*qal hapaxlegomenon*) MT; 1 Sam 18:5,30 MT; 18:14,15 MT/LXX.

86) Here the characters' descriptions are of an allegoric nature.

87) 16:12: LXX καὶ οὗτος πυρράκης μετὰ κάλλους ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἀγαθὸς ὁράσει κυρίῳ·

(1 Sam 10:23), a contrast that is presupposed by 1 Sam 17:1-18:5. Looking at the literary growth of narratives about Saul and David, it is noticeable that the dichotomy between the two heroes is inspired by the figure of David, while Saul serves mainly as an anti-figure that is described in contrast to the Judean king.[88] The contrast between the two figures is closely related to Judean identity in an Israelite-Judean history, and it was still influential long after Israel had ceased to exist, developing then an anti-Samaritan touch.[89] Within the books of Samuel, a prophetic, pro-Judean view on history is perceptible, with Samuel serving as an ideal royal figure from the point of view of writers in the tradition of the Judean prophets.[90] The narratives about Saul as a tragic hero have a critical attitude towards the foreign divinatory means used in Persian and Hellenistic times, as it is apparent in 1 Sam 10:17-27 and 1 Sam 28:3-25.[91] The Greek influences also indicate this date of origin of the narratives portraying Saul as a tragic hero, which clearly is in conflict with an alleged early language of the first book of Samuel.[92] This is not the place to deal with

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Hebrew: *wh' 'dmwny 'm-yph 'nym wṭb r'y* . The description of a person with "beautiful eyes" has close parallels in Greek poetry. See also twice in the Song of Songs 1:15; 4:1. With the opposite term, the "evil eye", many Greek traditions link the notion that harm or damage may be caused by a glance, which is found unequivocally at many points. See R. P. H. Greenfield, "Evil Eye", in: Nigel Wilson (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece* (New York, 2006), pp. 284-285. For the "beautiful face", Καλλιπρόσωπε παίδιον, see Anakreon, Fragment 1, line 3, in D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci, Alcmanis tesichori ibyci Anacreontis Simonidis Corinnae, Peotarum Minorum reliquias, Camina Popularia et Convivialia quaeque adespota feruntur* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), p. 172; see also G. Davenport, *7 Greeks. Archilochos, Sappho, Alman, Anakreon, Herakleitos, Dogenes, Herondas* (New York, 1995; [1]1976), p. 136.

88) This is evident in the prophetic narratives of 1 Samuel, e.g., in the episodes 1 Sam 19:18-24, 16:1-13 and 10:17-27; the character of Saul is composed as an anti-figure to David.

89) Israel could then be used as a metaphor for Samaria. The identification of Samaria with foreign, namely Greek influence, is comprehensible on the basis of its apparent cultural effect in the findings from *Wadi Daliyeh*. See especially the style of the sealings in M. J. W. Leith, *Wadi Daliyeh I. The Wadi Daliyeh Seal Impressions* (DJD XXIV; Oxford, 1997). Anti-Samaritan polemics likewise form the background of Zech 11:14, Sir 50:25-26. Likewise, polemics against Samaritans can be found in notes on certain sites, e.g. in Lus (*Ḫirbet Lōze* 1756.1786), according to Judg 1:26 a new foundation on the Garizim, see E. Gass, *Die Ortsnamen des Richterbuchs in historischer und redaktioneller Perspektive* (ABDPV 35; Wiesbaden, 2005), p. 82.

90) See for instance Samuel as the decisive figure in 1 Sam 12*.

91) See on the latter K.-P. Adam, "1 Sam 28: A Comment on Saul's Destiny from a Late Prophetic Point of View", in *Revue Biblique* (forthcoming).

92) See e. g. the assumptions of McCarter, *I Samuel* (see note 45), p. 22, dating the History of David's Rise to the 8th century; see also W. Dietrich, *Die frühe Königszeit in Israel. 10. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Biblische Enzyklopädie 3; Stuttgart, 1997), pp. 230, 267 dating the "history of Israel and Judah" partly to the 8th/7th century with core units dating from the 10th century.

the evidence for early language in detail, nor with the opposite claims that there are indications for rather late language in the books of Samuel.[93] Instead, it is a crucial result of this investigation and of the comparison with the writings of Qohelet that the formation of the characters, the plot and the terms used to describe the figures of the episodes of Saul's tragic heroism, are a testimony of literary activity that stands in a prophetic tradition within Judean historiography in Hellenistic times that obviously makes use of forms and motifs of Greek culture.

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Also, some expressions were thought to be old, like 1 Sam 9:9 "seer". However, their critics have raised issues about the dating of the book. A. Verheij, *Verbs and Numbers* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica 28; Assen/Maastricht, 1990), demonstrating by statistical analysis of verbal forms and their use in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles that the proofs of lateness of the language of Chronicles may be applied as well to Samuel and Kings; see on the language also J. Barr, *Spelling in the Bible* (Schweich Lectures; Oxford, 1989); and A. G. Auld, *Samuel at the Threshold: Selected Works of Graeme Auld* (SOTS; Edinburgh, 2004), pp. 81-96 on 1 Sam 17:1-18:6 as a later MT variant; pp. 109-116 on 1 Kings 3; pp. 176-181 esp. on 1 Sam 3.

93) See on this recently R. Rezetko, *Source and Revision in the Narratives of David's Transfer of the Ark: Text, Language and Story in 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13,15-16* (LHBOT 470; London, 2007).