The Composition of Nathan's Oracle to David (2 Samuel 7:1–17) as a Reflection of Royal Judahite Ideology

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*In loving memory of my father,
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Nathan's oracle in 2 Sam 7:1–17 incorporates two main themes: Yahweh's central sanctuary in Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty.[1] Scholars have disputed the origin of these themes and consequently the extent of the Deuteronomistic redaction of the oracle. Some scholars attribute the entire oracle to the Deuteronomistic

[1] For a comprehensive survey of the research of Nathan's oracle, see P. Kyle McCater, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (AB 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 210–17. For more recent discussions, see A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC 11; Dallas: Word, 1989), 111–23; Antti Laato, "Second Samuel 7 and Ancient Near Eastern Royal Ideology," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 244–69; Donald F. Murray, *Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension: Pragmatics, Poetics and Polemics in a Narrative Sequence about David (2 Samuel 5.17–7.29)* (JSOTSup 264; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 160–99; Gary N. Knoppers, "David's Relations to Moses: The Context, Content and Conditions of the Davidic Promises," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Day; JSOTSup 270; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 91–118; Mark K. George, "Fluid Stability in Second Samuel 7," *CBQ* 64 (2000): 17–36; Stephen Pisano, "2 Samuel 5–8 and the Deuteronomist: Textual Criticism or Literary Criticism?" in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi;

author/editor of the book of Samuel.[2] Others assume that the two main themes of the oracle are pre-Deuteronomistic, and they therefore ascribe only several editorial verses to the Deuteronomist.[3] A third approach argues that at least one of the two main themes should be attributed to the preexilic Deuteronomist, and the other to a pre-Deuteronomistic scribe or to an exilic Deuteronomistic editor.[4]

In any case, setting the royal dynasty and the temple at the heart of royal ideology was common practice in ancient Near Eastern kingdoms. In light of this and since the temple and the Davidic monarchy seem to occupy a major role in biblical historiography, as well as in the prophetic literature and in biblical poetry, we may assume that the role of the temple and the dynasty in the royal Judahite ideology was not only a Deuteronomistic issue but was addressed also by pre- and even post-Deuteronomistic scribes.

In this article I will demonstrate that Nathan's oracle to David underwent three redactions, each representing the worldview of the Judahite elite in a different period. This observation enables us to assess the evolution of the royal ideology in Judah throughout Judean history.

JSOTSup 306; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 258–83; Antony F. Campbell, *2 Samuel* (FOTL 8; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 46–80; Michael Avioz, *Nathan's Oracle (2 Samuel 7) and Its Interpreters* (Bible in History 5; Bern/New York: P. Lang, 2005), 13–70; Thomas Römer, *The So Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 146–47.

[2] E.g., Rolf A. Carlson, *David, the Chosen King: A Traditio-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel* (trans. Eric J. Sharpe and Stanley Rudman; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964), 97–118; Dennis J. McCarthy, "II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomic History," *JBL* 84 (1965): 131–38; John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 271–75; Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis,* vol. 3, *Throne and City (II Sam. 2–8 & 21–24)* (SSN 27; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 207–34.

[3] E.g., Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 241–60; Timo Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der Deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia, Sarja B, 193; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975), 69–78; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (ConBOT 8; Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 48–59; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 191–230; Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth-Century Document (1 Samuel 1–2 Kings 10)* (CBQMS 17; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986), 46–80; idem, *2 Samuel*, 70–78; Mark A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 132–37; Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 290.

[4] E.g., Henry Preserved Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1951), 297–98; A. D. H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile: A Redactional Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (London: SCM, 1983), 102–5; Heinz Kruse, "David's Covenant," *VT* 35 (1985): 140–64; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 115–22; Römer, *Deuteronomistic History*, 146–47.

I. The Early Layer of the Oracle
(2 Samuel 7:1a, 2–3, 11b)

The narrative introduction to the oracle (vv. 1–3) raises the temple issue in a manner that is wholly positive, causing the negativity of vv. 4–7 to come as a surprise. This is the basic argument for implementing a diachronic reading of the text by attributing the positive and the negative attitudes toward David's initiative to different authors. Scholars who favor a synchronic reading rely on v. 4 to argue that Nathan's positive reply was just a human error; they emphasize the total dependence of the prophet on God and recall other prophets who acted without clear instructions from God (e.g., Samuel in 1 Sam 16:6–7).[5] On the other hand, v. 4 may be seen as an editorial insertion meant to transform the positive attitude of an earlier layer in the oracle into a negative rejection, by stressing that the prophet is just a mediator of God's word and does not act independently.[6] Further support for this argument may be found in v. 11.

The awkward shift from the use of direct speech in the first person in v. 11a to indirect speech in the third person in v. 11b is frequently noted. This sudden shift cuts off Yahweh's long speech in the first person, which starts in v. 4. The only other reference to Yahweh in the third person appears in v. 3. It may be argued, therefore, that v. 11b originally continued v. 3.[7] On this account, the original form

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[5] Some scholars dismiss the contradiction between Nathan's positive attitude to David's initiative (v. 3) and its rejection (vv. 4–7) as a basis for a diachronic interpretation of the oracle. They argue, for instance, that vv. 5–7 do not contradict vv. 1–3, since they allude only to a postponement of the temple project and not to its total rejection. See Carlson, *David*, 112–13; Van Seters, *In Search*, 273. Others argue that Nathan's positive attitude in v. 3 is just a polite and formal response to the king, not necessarily Nathan's considered opinion, and certainly not Yahweh's opinion (Martin Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967], 257; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 241–42; Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 166–67). See the critique of this interpretation in McCarter, *II Samuel*, 196–97.

[6] See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 222–23; Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 79; idem, *2 Samuel*, 76; Campbell and O'Brien, *Unfolding*, 290; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 115–16.

[7] Cross suggests reading v. 11b in the first person as well and corrects the text as follows: ואגיד לך כי בית אבנה לך ("And I make known to you that I will build a house for you"). He bases this correction on his attempt to identify consistent typology throughout the chapter (*Canaanite Myth,* 256). Cross treats the text quite freely, and his suggestion is therefore no more than an assumption. Fokkelman (*Narrative Art,* 228–29), Robert Polzin (*David and the Deuteronomist: 2 Samuel* [A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History, pt. 3; Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993], 73), and Murray (*Divine Prerogative,* 185) treat v. 11b as a rhetorical device in which one moves from a representation of speech toward its analysis and interpretation. Hence, Nathan's reporting of God's word in indirect discourse in v. 11b serves as a summary statement or a headline of the direct, quoted words of God in vv. 12–16. These suggestions solve the grammatical difficulty by adopting literary-rhetorical tools and avoiding a diachronic reading of the text. It should be noted, then, that only the diachronic reading of

of the oracle has been reconstructed as comprising vv. 1–3 (excluding v. 1b, which will be discussed below) and v. 11b.[8] In light of this, the whole of the original oracle was positive: the king, sitting in his house, expresses his intention (implicitly) to build a house (= temple) for Yahweh (vv. 1a, 2). He is encouraged by Nathan, who goes on to declare that Yahweh will build a house (= dynasty) for David (vv. 3, 11b). It is likely that the original oracle to David was positive in character and included the symmetry between God and David, corresponding to the close links between temple projects and dynastic promises in the ancient Near East.[9] In this case the negativity of vv. 4–7 can be explained as a result of a redaction.

There is often a disagreement concerning the origin of the earliest form of the oracle in the pre-Deuteronomistic sources of the book of Samuel,[10] since it could fit well into both the History of David's Rise (1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 5 or 7) and the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 7–20 and 1 Kings 1–2).[11] The hypothesis about dif-

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the oracle provides the grammatical solution to this difficulty, as suggested above, while also explaining the sharp contrast within the text itself.

[8] See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 223; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 115.

[9] Many scholars have demonstrated the close links between kings and sanctuaries in the ancient Near East, e.g., Victor A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTSup 115; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 106–29. Mesopotamian kings frequently made records of temple projects connecting their service to the gods to an expectation for personal rewards, including the ongoing rule of their offspring. There was a widely understood association between the erection of a temple by a king and the hope of divine sanction of the continuing rule of him and his descendants. On this issue, see also Tomoo Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel: A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-Dynastic Ideology* (BZAW 142; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1977), 81–99; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 224, with further literature; Laato, "Second Samuel 7," 248–60, and further discussion below.

[10] Following Leonhard Rost's study *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids* (BWANT 3; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926; Eng. trans. *The Succession to the Throne of David* [trans. David M. Gunn and Michael D. Rutter; Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship 1; Sheffield: Almond, 1982]) it became quite common to identify three to four early narratives (pre-Deuteronomistic) in the book of Samuel. For a recent survey of the research on these narratives, see Walter Dietrich and Thomas Naumann, "The David-Saul Narrative," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville; Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 276–318; Serge Frolov, "Succession Narrative: A Document or a Phantom?" *JBL* 121 (2002): 81–124. For a comprehensive study of these narratives and the recent critique about the early narratives theory, see Walter Dietrich, *The Early Monarchy in Israel: The Tenth Century B.C.E* (trans. Joachim Vette; Biblical Encyclopedia 3; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 237–50.

[11] Gwilym H. Jones (*The Nathan Narratives* [JSOTSup 80; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 15–16), following Rost (*Succession,* 35–56), argues that Nathan's oracle in 2 Sam 7:1–17 is the opening clause of the Succession Narrative. Contrary to that, others argue that Nathan's oracle is the peak of the History of David's Rise, while its links to the Succession Narrative are a result of the Deuteronomistic redaction (see Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 43–45; Van Seters, *In Search*, 275–77; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 218).

ferent pre-Deuteronomistic narratives in the book of Samuel is highly criticized today because of the difficulties in assessing their extent and contents and in interpreting the textual relations between them.[12] Furthermore, there is no agreement regarding the genre of these early narratives, their message, or the ideology they represent.[13]

Recent study of the pre-Deuteronomistic narratives in the book of Samuel emphasizes that these supposedly different sources share plots, narratives, and ideological motives that were set against the same historical and chronological background.[14] At present, therefore, scholars argue for the unity of the pre-Deuteronomistic narrative in the book of Samuel, calling it "The History of the Early Monarchy."[15] It has been noted that the various explicit and implied narrative elements that form continuity in the current text may derive from completely separate stories or story cycles about the heroic David. These stories do not fall into the category of texts produced by royal scribes as we know it from other ancient Near Eastern kingdoms. The various characters and stories, the dialogues, and the intimate details appearing in this narrative clearly demonstrate that it is a collection of accounts, tales, and legends about the early Judahite kings that cover a long period of time.[16]

[12] See Dietrich and Naumann, "David-Saul Narrative," 293; Frolov, "Succession," 90–93; Dietrich, *Early Monarchy*, 228–50.

[13] For different suggestions, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Theme and Motive in the Succession History (2 Sam XI, 2ff) and the Yahwist Corpus," in *Volume du Congrès: Genève, 1965* (VTSup 15; Leiden: Brill, 1966), 44–57; Arthur Weiser, "Die Legitimation des Königs David: Zur Eigenart und Entstehung der sogen. Geschichte von Davids Aufstieg," *VT* 16 (1966): 325–54; James W. Flanagan, "Court History or Succession Document? A Study of 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2," *JBL* 91 (1972): 172–81; David M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (JSOTSup 6; Sheffield: Almond, 1978); Niels Peter Lemche, "David's Rise," *JSOT* 10 (1978): 2–25; P. Kyle McCarter, "The Apology of David," *JBL* 99 (1980): 489–504; Keith W. Whitelam, "The Defense of David," *JSOT* 29 (1984): 61–87; James S. Ackerman, "Knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2," *JBL* 109 (1990): 41–64; Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Bible and Its World; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 57–106.

[14] See Dietrich and Naumann, "David-Saul Narrative," 305–7; Dietrich, *Early Monarchy*, 239–45.

[15] See Nadav Na'aman, "Sources and Composition in the History of David," in *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (ed. Volkmar Fritz and Philip R. Davies; JSOTSup 228; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 170–86; idem, "In Search of Reality behind the Account of David's Wars with Israel's Neighbors," *IEJ* 52 (2002): 200–224; Stanley Isser, *The Sword of Goliath: David in Heroic Literature* (Studies in Biblical Literature 6; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 44–45, 141–84; Dietrich, *Early Monarchy*, 263–316.

[16] Lemche ("David's Rise," 2–25) and Gunn (*Story*, 38, 59–62) emphasize the literary character of the early narratives about David in the book of Samuel and subsequently conclude that the stories should be regarded not as official historical records but as a collection of entertaining stories and tales. Isser (*Sword,* 181–84) suggests that these early narratives were literary traditions

The story of David as a heroic figure coming from the fringes of society and becoming a king (1 Samuel 16–1 Kings 1) is framed in the History of the Early Monarchy by the stories of Saul and Solomon. The stories about Saul (1 Samuel 9–31) emphasize his failure to found a royal dynasty (hence the focus on Jonathan and his heirs), while the stories about Solomon recount his coronation as David's legitimate heir. Thus, the main plot of the History of the Early Monarchy deals not just with David himself but also with the foundation of the Davidic dynasty, and it ends, therefore, with the coronation of David's legitimate heir (1 Kgs 2:45–46).[17]

In light of this, we can assume that the early layer of Nathan's oracle (2 Sam 7:1a, 2–3, 11b) was part of the unified pre-Deuteronomistic narrative about the foundation of the Davidic monarchy. This background clarifies the role of the earliest form of Nathan's oracle in the History of the Early Monarchy. By providing divine legitimacy to David and to his successors, it serves the main purpose of the narrative. Examining the role of Nathan in this narrative may strengthen this argument. In each of his three appearances in the History of the Early Monarchy he assures David's dynasty: in 2 Samuel 7 he promises David a royal dynasty; in 2 Samuel 12 he declares the death of Bathsheba's firstborn and blesses her second son, David's heir, Solomon; in 1 Kings 1 he is directly involved in the coronation of Solomon. Nathan's characterization is identical in all three stories: he is portrayed as an advisor to the king who can influence David's deeds by means of support (2 Samuel 7) and criticism (2 Samuel 12) and by using sophisticated rhetoric (including promises [2 Sam 7:11b]; parables [2 Sam 12:1–4]; and manipulation [1 Kgs 1:11–30]). His main role is to provide divine legitimacy for the Davidic dynasty and to guarantee its existence.

The temple is not the central issue in Nathan's role in the History of the Early Monarchy, and it is also marginal in the original form of the oracle (2 Sam 7:1a, 2–3, 11b). This factor is evidence for the pre-Deuteronomistic date of the early oracle and correlates with the religious situation in the History of the Early Monarchy, which depicts a time before a cult of Yahweh with exclusivist characteristics was institutionalized.[18]

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about the golden age of the Israelites' early kings, some representing folktales and legends through which residents of Judah understood and celebrated their past (see also Dietrich, *Early Monarchy*, 263–314). This approach to the early literature in the book of Samuel bridges the gap between the unity of the narrative in 1 Samuel 9 to 1 Kings 2 and the different perspectives and traditions identified in it.

[17] This conclusion clarifies the figure of Saul in the History of the Early Monarchy: David's successful establishment of a royal house is depicted in the light of Saul's failure to establish one (Whitelam, "Defense," 71–75; Dietrich and Naumann, "David-Saul Narrative," 310; Frolov, "Succession," 81–124; Dietrich, *Early Monarchy*, 249–50). Against this background, the role of Jonathan and his successors, Saul's heirs, comes to light as they themselves ratify the foundation of the house of David and legitimize it (1 Sam 18:3–4; 19:1–7; 20; 2 Sam 4:4; 9:1–13; 19:18–31).

[18] See Isser, *Sword*, 64–65. To support this conclusion it should be mentioned that the

The absence of developed urban centers and epigraphic finds in Iron Age I–IIa Judah weakens the possibility that the composition of this narrative took place in the time of David and Solomon. According to archaeological evidence, literacy spread in Judah only in the eighth century B.C.E.—particularly in its second half.[19] Nevertheless, royal inscriptions from the kingdoms surrounding Judah are known from the second half of the ninth century B.C.E. (e.g., the Mesha stele from the Moabite kingdom and the Dan inscription of Hazael, king of Aram Damascus, which even mentions the kingdom of Judah as "Beth-David"—the house of David).[20] These royal inscriptions clearly demonstrate that royal scribal activity took place in the second half of the ninth century—at least in the royal courts of the region—and that literacy was spread mainly in royal courts. We may hypothesize, therefore, that royal scribes were active in Jerusalem (at least for administrative purposes) as early as the second half of the ninth century. This time is probably the *terminus post quem* for the composition of the History of the Early Monarchy. On the other hand, the earliest dating for the Deuteronomistic ideas (the eternity of the Davidic dynasty; the idealization of David's character; the cult centralization; and the primary importance of Jerusalem) is the late eighth to seventh centuries B.C.E. This constitutes the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the History of the Early Monarchy.

Nadav Na'aman argues that the political reality in the History of the Early Monarchy correlates with that of the second half of the ninth century B.C.E. Consequently, he dates the narrative to the late ninth to early eighth centuries.[21] Identifying the main plot of the narrative with the foundation of the house of David

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History of the Early Monarchy reflects the sociopolitical reality of the early days of the monarchy in the Iron Age I–IIa (local heroes active in small towns and villages; outlaw bands and mercenaries; wars and rivalry between local leaders and communities; see also Na'aman, "Sources," 170–86; idem, "In Search of Reality," 200–224). Furthermore, the realistic representation of David (cf. 2 Samuel 11–12) does not accord with his idealization in the Deuteronomistic history (and see, e.g., the apologetic approach of the Deuteronomist to the Uriah tradition in 1 Kgs 15:4–5). In light of this, we should ascribe the History of the Early Monarchy to a pre-Deuteronomistic author.

[19] See David W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archeological Approach* (JSOTSup 109; Sheffield: Almond, 1991), 147–49; Nadav Na'aman, *The Past That Shapes the Present: The Creation of Biblical Historiography in the Late First Temple Period and after the Downfall* (Jerusalem: Ornah Hess, 2002), 17–25.

[20] For the phrase "Beth-David" in the Dan inscription, see Nadav Na'aman, "Beth-David in the Aramaic Stela from Tel Dan," *BN* 78 (1995): 17–24, with further literature. For recent discussion of the Mesha stele, see André Lemaire, "The Mesha Stele and the Omri Dynasty," in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe; Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 421; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 135–44; Nadav Na'aman, "Royal Inscription versus Prophetic Story: Mesha's Rebellion according to Biblical and Moabite Historiography," in ibid., 145–83, with further literature.

[21] See Na'aman, "Sources," 170–86; idem, "In Search of Reality," 200–224; idem, "In Search of the Ancient Name of Khirbet Qeiyafa," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8 (2008): 5–6.

(who rose to kingship after the removal of the former royal dynasty of the Saulides) strengthens Na'aman's argument. The political affairs in Jerusalem in the second half of the ninth century and in the first half of the eighth century B.C.E. might have triggered the need for this literary work.

Athaliah and two Davidic kings (Joash and Amaziah) were murdered during this period, one after the other (2 Kings 11–14). Although the biblical account offers no information about the circumstances of these political murders, they seem to attest to instability faced by the Davidic monarchy. Athaliah was later to be perceived as a complete stranger to the Davidic dynasty and identified with a foreign royal house (the Omrides from the north or even the Phoenicians). These events probably raised questions regarding the legitimacy of the royal dynasty and, therefore, provide a suitable backdrop for the composition of a narrative about the foundation of the Davidic dynasty.[22] This historical background also explains the importance of Nathan's role in providing divine legitimacy to David and his successors. On this basis we may date the early form of Nathan's oracle to David in 2 Sam 7:1a, 2–3, 11b to the first half of the eighth century B.C.E.

II. The Deuteronomistic Layer
(2 Samuel 7:1b, 4–6a, 8–9, 11a, 12–16)

The Deuteronomistic redaction of Nathan's oracle represents the main stage of the oracle's composition. The Deuteronomist supplemented the dynastic promise that was part of the original oracle with his new temple theology. Furthermore, he gave a new interpretation to the dynastic promise—as an everlasting promise to the Davidic monarchy. By doing this, he focused the royal ideology of Judah on two themes: Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty, setting Nathan's oracle as the base of the Deuteronomistic History.[23] The positive view of the Davidic dynasty and the temple theology expressed in it support a preexilic date for the Deuteronomistic redaction of the oracle, most likely in the late seventh century B.C.E. during the reign of Josiah.[24]

The first correlation between the temple and the dynasty is found in v. 1b with the theme of "rest from enemies," which occurs also in v. 11a. This theme is linked to the Deuteronomistic temple theology by associating the central sanctuary in

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[22] See Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period,* vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 118.

[23] See Knoppers, "David's Relations," 100–101.

[24] The everlasting promise to the Davidic dynasty in 2 Sam 7:1–17 is one of the basic arguments used by scholars who date the first redaction of the Deuteronomistic History to the days of Josiah, which I follow. See, recently, Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 272–95; Römer, *Deuteronomistic History*, 45–106; Na'aman, *Past*, 55–60, with further literature.

Jerusalem with a promise for the security of Israel in its land (Deut 12:5–11). It occurs also in Joshua (21:43–45; 22:4; 23:1) and Judges (3:1), where security is linked to proper worship of Yahweh, as it is in Deuteronomy.[25]

In Nathan's oracle, the theme of "rest from enemies" offers an indirect explanation for David's failure to build a temple for Yahweh. Verse 11a promises the rest as a future reward, and since David's age was a time of war, as demonstrated in 2 Samuel 8–20, no blame could be placed on the king for not carrying out his plan to build a temple.[26] This point is expressed clearly in Solomon's speech during the preparations for his temple-building project (1 Kgs 5:17–19). The Deuteronomist, who praised David as a role model for all future kings of Israel and Judah, had to explain how it came to be that David was denied the building of the temple, while his son Solomon was granted this privilege.[27]

The explicit banning of David from the temple project in vv. 5–7 should be divided, in my opinion, into two different redactional layers: vv. 5–6a are part of the Deuteronomistic redaction, while vv. 6b–7 represent the language and worldview of a post-Deuteronomistic scribe, which will be discussed below. The phrase "since the day I brought up the children of Israel from Egypt, even to this day" (v. 6a) is most likely a Deuteronomistic expression.[28] The phrase עבדי דוד ("my servant David") in v. 5 is linked in the Deuteronomistic History to the survival of the Davidic monarchy by recalling Nathan's oracle (2 Sam 3:18; 1 Kgs 11:32, 33, 36, 38; 14:8; 2 Kgs 19:34; 20:16) and should therefore be ascribed to the Deuteronomist as well.[29]

In vv. 5–6a, David's building the temple is disallowed ("Will you build a house for me to *dwell in*?"), and the kind of house he had in mind for Yahweh ("a house to *dwell in*") is rejected from the outset (**"**For I have not *dwelt in* a house since the day I brought up the children of Israel from Egypt, even to this day").[30] From David's initiative alluded to in v. 2 ("See now, I *dwell in* a house of cedar, but the ark

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[25] Most scholars agree in attributing the theme of "rest from enemies" to the Deuteronomistic ideology (see, e.g., Carlson, *David*, 99–104; Mayes, *History*, 104–5; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 204–5, 217–20; Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 75–76, 80; idem, *2 Samuel*, 75; O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History*, 133; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 116; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 209; Pisano, "2 Samuel," 273–74). The theme of "rest from enemies" occurs also in Mesopotamian building inscriptions as a basic condition preceding the building of a temple (Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 88); see further discussion below.

[26] For the translation of the verb והניחותי in v. 11a as a future promise for rest ("I shall give you rest"), see n. 34 below.

[27] See also McCarter, *II Samuel*, 220; Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 80.

[28] See Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 341; Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 56; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 120.

[29] See McCarthy, *II Samuel 7*, 132; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 354; Van Seters, *In Search*, 276; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 118; Pisano, "2 Samuel," 280.

[30] See also Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 170–72.

of God *dwells in* tent curtains") it is deduced that he meant to build a house for Yahweh to *dwell in*, while according to the Deuteronomistic temple theology, Yahweh needs a house only for his name.[31] It is for this reason that David's plan was rejected (vv. 5–6a), and the right to build an appropriate house for Yahweh passed to his son (v. 13: "He shall build a *house for my name*"). The theology conceiving of the temple as a house for the name of Yahweh is commonly ascribed to the Deuteronomist.[32] Since the main concern of vv. 5–6a and 13 is the *house for the name of Yahweh* as opposed to a house for Yahweh to *dwell in*, it seems that these verses represent the Deuteronomistic ideology and should be ascribed to the Deuteronomist.[33]

Verses 8–9 and 11a precede the original dynastic promise given in v. 11b with references to God's favors toward David in the past (vv. 8–9a) and in the future (vv. 9b, 11a).[34] They provide a brief résumé of David's rise to power, emphasizing that the initiative was Yahweh's (vv. 8–9). David's proposal to build a house for Yahweh is then underlain by a reminder that David's success is due to Yahweh alone. This rhetorical addition before the original promise in v. 11b conveys a Deuteronomistic message by breaking the symmetry between Yahweh and David that was formed in the original oracle, all the while highlighting the divine election of David.

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[31] On this subject, see also Naʾaman, *Past*, 45.

[32] Most scholars agree that the theology presenting the temple as a place for the name of Yahweh should be ascribed to the Deuteronomist. See Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 106; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 206, 222; Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 80; O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History*, 133; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 114, 119; Naʾaman, *Past*, 44–45.

[33] The rhetorical link between v. 5 and v. 13 is often noted. Verse 5 poses a question: "Will *you* [David] build a house for me [Yahweh] to *dwell* in?," which is answered in v. 13: "[No!] *He* [David's heir] will build a house *for my* [Yahweh's] *name*." See also Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 52; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 205, 230; Kruse, "David's Covenant," 142–43; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 118–19; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 216.

[34] In v. 9, a sequence of verbs with *waw* consecutive begins: two future verbs—ואהיה ואכריתה—which would normally be translated in the past time ("*I have been* with you wherever you have gone and *have cut off* all your enemies from before you") and one perfect verb, which should be translated in the future tense ועשיתי ("and *I will make* you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth"). The past tense verbs are, therefore, a direct continuation of the retrospective view of Yahweh's favors to David from v. 8, while the future tense verb constitutes a divine future promise to David. This promise is met in 2 Sam 8:13 after the account of David's war with the Aramaeans. According to this account, the Deuteronomist argues that even David's "great name" among his enemies is a result of Yahweh's will (unlike the phrase in 2 Sam 8:13 stressing that David has made the great name for himself). The perfect verb with *waw* consecutive והניחותי in v. 11a should be translated in the future as well ("I shall give you rest") not only on grammatical grounds (perfect verb + *waw* consecutive) but also since the overall context of the verse points to the future of David and his royal dynasty. Thus, vv. 8–9a are an account of Yahweh's past favors to David by which he ascended the throne, and vv. 9b, 11a mention God's future promises to David, giving a context to the original dynastic promise from v. 11b.

These verses use explicit Deuteronomistic phrases and ideas such as *nāgîd* (v. 8),[35] the "rest from enemies" and the "period of the judges" (v. 11a).[36]

Verses 12–16 reinterpret the original dynastic promise from v. 11b as an everlasting promise to the Davidic dynasty. Its first mention is in v. 13 ("He [David's heir] shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever"), in which the Deuteronomistic temple theology is incorporated explicitly with the Deuteronomistic theme of the enduring dynastic promise. This observation implies that the everlasting promise should be ascribed to the Deuteronomistic redactor. Scholars who tend to minimize the role of the Deuteronomistic redactor in 2 Sam 7:1–17 have argued that v. 13 (or even just v. 13a) is a Deuteronomistic insertion into an early layer of the oracle in vv. 12, 14–16 that already contained the everlasting promise (in v. 16: "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before me forever; your throne shall be established forever"). These scholars have interpreted the meaning of the expression in v. 12 . . . זרעך אשר יצא ממעיך ("your seed that will issue from your loins") as a general reference to David's descendants. According to this view, only with the insertion of v. 13 by the Deuteronomistic redactor was the general reference narrowed to the individual Solomon.[37] This interpretation opens the way to arguing that the everlasting

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[35] For different suggestions about the origin of the title *nāgîd,* see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 201–2, 228–29; Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 48–63, 86; O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History*, 132; Carlson, *David*, 52–55; Veijola, *Ewige Dynastie*, 129–89, 141; Mayes, *History*, 103–4; Van Seters, *In Search*, 275; Na'aman, *Past*, 107. There is a dispute over the origin of the title *nāgîd*. McCarter, Campbell, and O'Brien, for instance, ascribe it to a pre-Deuteronomistic prophetic author, while Carlson, Veijola, Mayes, Van Seters, and Na'aman ascribe it to the Deuteronomist. This title is given to Saul in his accession stories (1 Sam 9:16; 10:1) and in his rejection by Samuel (1 Sam 13:14); to David as the leader chosen by Yahweh (1 Sam 25:30; 2 Sam 5:2; 6:21); to Solomon in his coronation story (1 Kgs 1:35); and to Jeroboam and Baasha when they were rejected by the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite (1 Kgs 14:7; 16:1). It is also given to Hezekiah in his prayer (2 Kgs 20:5). Indeed, the title *nāgîd* usually appears in the prophetic word of God, but its occurrences in nonprophetic speeches also (Abigail's speech in 1 Sam 25:30 and David's in 1 Kgs 1:35) imply that it should not necessarily be ascribed to a "prophetic redactor." On the other hand, it should be noted that *nāgîd* is often found as a Deuteronomistic cliché (e.g., 1 Kgs 14:7; 16:1). It is possible that the Deuteronomist found it in the early stories about Saul in 2 Sam 9:16; 10:1 (see also Wolfgang Richter, "Die Nagid-Formel," *BZ* 9 [1965]: 71–84) and used it in his composition by loading it with a new meaning—applying it to founders of royal dynasties who were chosen/rejected by God through a prophetic word. For a comprehensive survey of the research of this issue (albeit with different conclusions), see Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 151–84; Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 281–301.

[36] Even scholars who minimize the Deuteronomistic redaction of Nathan's oracle ascribe v. 11a to the Deuteronomist. See, e.g., Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 254; Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 52–54; Mayes, *History*, 103–5; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 204–5, 230; Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 75–76; idem, *2 Samuel,* 74–76; O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History*, 133; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 120–21; Campbell and O'Brien, *Unfolding*, 290.

[37] See, e.g., Hans W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (trans. John S. Bowden; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 286–87; Smith, *Books of Samuel,* 300; Nelson, *Double Redaction*,

promise is a pre-Deuteronomistic idea. The noun זרע ("seed") is used as a general reference to descendants,[38] but in v. 12 the "seed" is described particularly as אשר יצא ממעיך ("that will issue from your loins"), indicating the immediate descendant of the person to whom the sentence is addressed. This expression occurs in this form only in Gen 15:4 and in 2 Sam 16:11, and in both cases it refers to the immediate descendant as an heir.[39] It seems therefore unnecessary to argue that only v. 13 identifies the seed of David with Solomon; this is done already in v. 12. Consequently, it seems that vv. 12 and 13 both belong to the Deuteronomistic layer of the oracle, which presents the reign of Solomon and the temple building as the realization of Nathan's oracle.

The everlasting promise is mentioned in vv. 13 and 16, while vv. 14–15 in between formulate the terms of this commitment by employing an adoption formula depicting Yahweh's relations with David's successor. According to these terms, the disobedience of David's heirs will not bring divine chastisement (like the divine rejection of the Saulides mentioned in v. 15: "But I will not withdraw my favor from him as I withdrew it from your predecessor Saul, whom I removed from my presence"), but a kind of "paternal correction" (v. 14: "And if he does wrong, I will correct him with the rod of humans and with human chastisements"). Thus, the use of the father–son terminology is linked to the granting of an enduring dynasty; Yahweh assures David that his throne will be confirmed forever.[40] This assurance sets Nathan's oracle as a founding text and is used by the Deuteronomistic redactor to explain the whole history of the Davidic monarchy and its survival (1 Kgs 11:13–14, 32–34, but also in 2 Kgs 8:18–19). The entire Deuteronomistic History is thus presented as the realization of Nathan's oracle. Therefore, there can be little doubt that the everlasting promise to the house of David should be attributed to the worldview of the preexilic Deuteronomistic school.

106–7; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 205–6; Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 80; idem, *2 Samuel*, 76; Campbell and O'Brien, *Unfolding*, 290; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 121–22; Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 198; O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History*, 132.

[38] See Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 188–91.

[39] Murray (*Divine Prerogative,* 189–90) examined all the biblical occurrences of expressions with the formula "possessive adjective + *offspring after* + personal pronoun" and concluded that the context in all instances makes it clear that the expression has a collective reference. Hence, he concluded that the particular expression employed in 2 Sam 7:12 to define David's offspring clearly indicates a collective sense for the term, speaking about David's descendants in general. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the exact expression describing David's seed as אשר יצא ממעיך ("that will issue from your loins") occurs only in Gen 15:4 and in 2 Sam 16:11, where it is clearly indicating the immediate descendant as a *son* of the verse's main character. Genesis 15:4 refers to Isaac, Abraham's immediate descendant, and 2 Sam 16:11 refers to Absalom, David's immediate descendant.

[40] See also Smith, *Books of Samuel,* 300; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 207–8; Knoppers, "David's Relations," 99.

The Deuteronomistic themes incorporated into the genre of an oracle given to the king through a prophet have no parallel in ancient Near Eastern sources. Indeed, some of the themes in Nathan's oracle occur also in other ancient Near Eastern royal ideologies,[41] but these ideologies do not include the explicit everlasting divine promise to the reigning king. Royal building inscriptions from Mesopotamia dated to the seventh to sixth centuries B.C.E. have many similarities to Nathan's oracle: In both sources the "rest from enemies" is a basic condition preceding the building of the temple; the king seeks the divine will; and the king's loyalty to his god is demonstrated through the building of a temple and is associated with the prosperity and duration of his reign and his dynasty.[42] Clearly, Nathan's oracle does not fall into the literary genre of the royal building inscriptions, since it speaks the divine word of God to the king through a mediator, while the Mesopotamian building inscriptions present the plea of a king to his god. In terms of literary genre, Nathan's prophecy can be compared with the Assyrian prophecies, which include all the themes that occur in Nathan's oracle except the building of the temple.[43] The comparison of Nathan's oracle with the Mesopotamian temple-dynasty ideology strongly suggests that the Assyrian royal ideology had a great impact on the Judahite-Deuteronomistic royal ideology, as it is demonstrated in 2 Sam 7:1–17. Moreover, it ratifies the date of the Deuteronomistic redaction to the late seventh century B.C.E. This conclusion should come as no surprise, since many scholars have demonstrated the strong impact of the Assyrian culture on the

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[41] Among these is the divine confirmation needed for the temple's building, the association of "rest from enemies" with temple building, and the close links between temple buildings and reigning dynasties. See Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 81–99; Avraham Malamat, "A Mari Prophecy and Nathan's Dynastic Oracle," in *Prophecy: Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer on His Sixty-fifth Birthday, 6 September 1980* (ed. J. A. Emerton; BZAW 150; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 68–82; Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 116, 136–64; Laato, "Second Samuel 7," 244–69; Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 266–68. Siegfried Herrmann compared Nathan's oracle with the Egyptian *Königsnovelle* ("Die Königs-novelle in Ägypten und Israel," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl Marx Universität, Leipzig 3: Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe* 1 [1953–54]: 51–62). This comparison has been highly criticized by subsequent scholars; see, e.g., Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 247–49; Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 83–84; Veijola, *Ewige Dynastie*, 71–72; Van Seters, *In Search*, 271; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 212–15; Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 166–67. Weinfeld compared it with royal grant covenants and vassal treaties from the ancient Near Eastern kingdoms ("The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 [1970]: 184–203), but this comparison is criticized by Knoppers, mainly on account of the difference in genres: the royal grant covenants are legal documents, whereas Nathan's oracle is a divine word of God given to the king by a prophet. See Knoppers, "Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?" *JAOS* 116 (1996): 670–97.

[42] For a detailed analysis, see Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 87–90; Laato, "Second Samuel 7," 255–56.

[43] See also Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 90–92.

Deuteronomistic ideology.[44] Nevertheless, Nathan's oracle in its present form, incorporating the temple project with a divine promise to the enduring reign of the royal dynasty, is a unique Deuteronomistic creation that has no parallel in the ancient Near Eastern texts.

III. The Post-Deuteronomistic Layer
(2 Samuel 7:6b–7, 10)

The dynastic promise to David evaporated shortly after it was conceived by the Deuteronomist. The Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and particularly of the temple in 586 b.c.e. brought with it an end to the house of David. The Davidic dynasty was not revived with the building of the Second Temple in the Persian period, and the monarchical institution as a whole lost its place in the Persian province of Yehud. This historical reality serves as the background of the third stage in the literary development of Nathan's oracle.

Verses 6b–7 accentuate the dissonance between Yahweh's residence in a tent-tabernacle, enabling the deity to "move about" (v. 6b: "but I have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle"), and David's proposed temple, which would impose restrictions on the divine freedom (v. 7: "Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"). Many scholars argue that this dissonance explains the divine rejection of David's proposal to build Yahweh's temple.[45] However, it does not necessitate the rejection of the idea of the temple itself, but rather a rejection of the strong link between the monarchy (particularly the Davidic monarchy) and the temple. According to vv. 6b–7, David's pretentious proposal to build a cedar house for Yahweh, had it received divine authorization, would have become a joint undertaking and not the sole prerogative of the king.[46]

Frank Moore Cross suggests that these ideas represent premonarchic, nomadic traditions.[47] However, since none of the biblical material can be linked to such an early tradition, it seems unreasonable that they were integrated into the royal ideology of Judah, later finding their way into the Deuteronomistic ideology. Some

[44] See Römer, *Deuteronomistic History*, 67–106; Na'aman, *Past*, 43–44, with further literature.

[45] E.g., Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 285; Van Seters, *In Search*, 274; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 199–200, 225–26; Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 217; George, "Fluid Stability," 19–23; Campbell, *2 Samuel*, 73.

[46] See also Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 254; Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 171–75.

[47] See Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 244–45; for a critique of this suggestion, see Mettinger, *King and Messiah,* 53–54.

scholars attribute these verses to a Solomonic scribe or to the Deuteronomist himself.[48] One should be cautious, however, with attributing anti-temple or anti-monarchic ideas to royal scribes, since the temple and the dynasty were set at the heart of the royal ideologies of the ancient Near Eastern kingdoms. Moreover, the divine election of David and his house, together with the divine election of the Jerusalemite sanctuary as the sole cult place for Yahweh are among the fundamental themes of the Deuteronomistic ideology.

In light of this, some scholars suggest attributing the anti-temple and anti-monarchic themes to a pre-Deuteronomistic prophetic redactor.[49] Indeed, some prophets expressed anti-temple or anti-monarchic views in the monarchic period (cf. Jeremiah 7; Amos 5:18–25), and it is reasonable to assume that prophets were at least partially responsible for the scribal activity and prophetic legends that were later used as historical sources for the Deuteronomist.[50] These prophets, however, came from the fringes of society and did not hold central power positions in the royal court; this enabled them to attack the royal institutions. The writing and redaction of a comprehensive literary work, summarizing the history of a kingdom by creating periodization and analyzing historical circumstances, could hardly be the work of prophets outside the circles of power. These activities should rather be attributed to royal scribes. Since it is doubtful that historical literary works composed by royal scribes included anti-temple or anti-monarchic themes, we should look for the origin of these themes to the postmonarchic period when the house of David no longer ruled over Judah.[51]

Verse 6b reinforces the notion that Yahweh's tent and tabernacle preceded the

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[48] Mettinger ascribed these verses to a Solomonic scribe (*King and Messiah,* 53–54). Carlson (*David,* 112–13) and Kruse ("David's Covenant," 142–48) ascribed them to the Deuteronomist.

[49] E.g., McCarter, *II Samuel*, 225–29; Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 75–76; idem, *2 Samuel*, 76. Campbell suggests that one of the sources for the Deuteronomistic History was a Prophetic Record (PR), which contained much of the material found in 1 Samuel 1–2 Kings 10 and was composed by a prophetic circle in Israel after Jehu's usurpation in the late ninth century B.C.E. (Campbell, *Of Prophets*, 17–124, but see also O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History,* 129–226; Campbell and O'Brien, *Unfolding,* 24–32). The hypothesis of a pre-Deuteronomistic source containing stories of the early Judahite kingdom and the ninth-century B.C.E. kingdom of Israel presupposes the existence of the united monarchy in the tenth century B.C.E. It takes for granted that the text composed in the northern kingdom of Israel incorporated stories about Judah (David's stories) and about Israel (the Omrides and the Jehu accounts). Recent archaeological research and biblical criticism seem to support the argument that the united monarchy is a Deuteronomistic fiction that is not grounded in the political reality of the tenth century B.C.E. (see Na'aman, *Past*, 116–18). Thus, it is hardly likely that a single narrative incorporating the histories of Israel and Judah was composed in the late ninth century in the kingdom of Israel. For further criticism of the theory of a Prophetic Record in regard to David's stories, see Dietrich and Naumann, "David-Saul Narrative," 310–13.

[50] On that issue, see Nadav Na'aman, "Prophetic Stories as Sources for the Histories of Jehoshaphat and the Omrides," *Bib* 78 (1997): 153–73; idem, *Past*, 95–97.

[51] See Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 115, 118–20; Polzin, *David*, 77; George, "Fluid Stability," 17–36.

Solomonic temple in Jerusalem. The tent and tabernacle as two elements of Yahweh's sanctuary appear only in the Pentateuch and are commonly ascribed to the Priestly source.[52] There is no other mention of the tent-tabernacle sanctuary outside the Priestly source, nor in the Deuteronomistic history.[53] On this basis I argue that vv. 6b–7 represent the post-Deuteronomistic redaction of Nathan's oracle and should be dated to the Persian period.[54] The tent-tabernacle theology demonstrated in the Pentateuch gives further support to this view.

Reviewing the tent-tabernacle building narrative in Exodus 25–31, 36–40 reveals close relations to their appearance in Nathan's oracle. According to Exod 25:8; 40:34–35, the tent and the tabernacle were made for Yahweh to *dwell in*. They were built (Exodus 36–40) precisely according to divine specifications given to Moses on Mount Sinai by Yahweh himself (Exodus 25–31). Only then did God's glory fill the tabernacle (Exod 40:35–36). The central element in the tent-tabernacle theology is, therefore, the presence of Yahweh among his people. The destruction and the exilic experience resulted in the community's need of Yahweh's presence in the midst of his people. Thus, the Deuteronomistic temple theology of the "house for the name of Yahweh" was revised and the tent-tabernacle was conceived of as the dwelling place of the deity.[55]

As Yahweh's dwelling place, the tent-tabernacle sanctuary was his private domain, and it had to be built in a way that would make Yahweh eager to occupy it (Exod 25:8–9); this is the reason for the detailed instructions given to Moses (Exodus 25–27). Therefore, Yahweh's servants, the priests, were to comply with the regulations he had laid down, to be properly clothed, and to meet his everyday needs, as is fit for a king (Exodus 28–30).[56] From this point of view the biblical ref-

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[52] E.g., Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1974), 529–30; Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus,* vol. 3, *Chapters 20–40* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Kampen: Kok, 2000), 310; Jean Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 146.

[53] The tent and tabernacle as two different elements of the same sanctuary occur in Exod 26:7, 12–13; 35:11; 36:14; 39:32–33, 40; 40:19, 22, 24, 29, 34–35; Lev 17:4; Num 3:7, 8, 25, 38; 4:25, 31; 9:15. According to these biblical references, the ark of Yahweh was placed inside the tabernacle, which was made of expensive cloths. The tabernacle lay inside the tent, which was made of goatskins.

[54] McCarter has already noted that the biblical references to the tent and the tabernacle as two elements of Yahweh's sanctuary occur mainly in the Priestly passages of Exodus 26 and 38, which "attained their present form no early than the sixth century B.C.E." But, since he attributes the main themes in Nathan's oracle to a pre-Deuteronomistic scribe and not to a Priestly writer, he concludes that the reference to the tent-tabernacle in 2 Sam 7:6b points back to a "cult object" in use in the pre-temple times (*II Samuel*, 200).

[55] See Childs, *Exodus*, 537; Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Interpretation*;* Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 275; Houtman, *Exodus*, 322; Ska, *Introduction*, 157–58.

[56] See Fretheim, *Exodus*, 263–65; Houtman, *Exodus*, 322; Israel Knohl, *Biblical Beliefs* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2007), 98–99.

erences to Yahweh's tent-tabernacle convey a clear theocratic message: Yahweh is the sole sovereign of his people, their only king, who dwells among them; the people are his loyal subjects.

This theology fits the historical reality of the Persian period in the fifth to fourth centuries B.C.E., when Judah was a small province on the margins of the great Persian Empire. Its community was centered on the sanctuary of the cult of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Without a flesh-and-blood king and with the disappearance of the Davidic monarchy, the Priestly source presented the people with a new ideology the main theme of which was God's kingship over the people. By doing so, it actually disregarded one of the two central elements of the Deuteronomistic ideology: the people had to give up the centrality of the dynasty and to reshape the royal ideology around the temple theme alone. Moreover, they had to justify the existence of the temple without the dynasty, which had once been so closely related to it. To do this, the story of the building of the sanctuary was projected into the ancient past of the Israelites, highlighting that they had become God's people through the Sinaitic covenant. The divine initiative and instruction concerning the sanctuary emphasized its divine authorization. According to this theology, the divinely inspired tent-tabernacle preceded the Solomonic temple, which was built as a result of human initiative (2 Sam 7:1–3; 1 Kgs 5:17–19) and through human actions (1 Kgs 5:16–6:38). Taking this into consideration, it seems that the mention of the tent-tabernacle in Nathan's oracle fits well into this post-Deuteronomistic ideology. The challenging of the king's privilege (and his obligation) to build a temple for his deity in v. 7 by dismissing human initiative, along with the anti-Davidic tone of this verse, should be ascribed to a post-Deuteronomistic scribe of the Persian period. At this time Yahweh's cult in Jerusalem was no longer perceived through the lens of the Davidic monarchy, and, in this regard, v. 7 might even provide an implied explanation for the demise of the Solomonic temple.

A second post-Deuteronomistic insertion may be found in v. 10. This verse cuts off the references to God's favors to David from vv. 8–9 and shifts the focus to the people of Israel as recipients of God's favors.[57] The focus returns to David only in v. 11a, indicating that v. 10 is likely to be an insertion into the Deuteronomistic text. The future tense of v. 10 points to a far future, when the people of Israel are planted in their land and Yahweh grants them peace and prosperity.[58] The verb

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[57] Smith, *Books of Samuel,* 299; Mayes, *History*, 103–5.

[58] The verbs in v. 10 continue the sequence of perfect verbs with *waw* consecutive started in v. 9b (see n. 34 above). The verbs ושמתי and ושכן in v. 10 are followed by two ordinary imperfect (future tense) verbs, both preceded by the negative ולא ("and not"). Therefore, we would expect a translation in the future tense to be required. Yet the predicted deeds seem to be things accomplished in the past. McCarter, following Anthony Gelston, solved these difficulties by interpreting the noun מקום ("place") in v. 10 as a cult place and not as the promised land. Thus, the translation in the future tense is consistent with the idea that in 2 Sam 7:1–17 the temple is a promise (McCarter, *II Samuel*, 202; Anthony Gelston, "A Note on 2 Samuel 7," *ZAW* 84 [1972]:

ונטעתיו ("I will plant") and the phrase שכן תחתיו ("will dwell under/within") are typical of the consolation prophecies of Amos, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.[59]

Thus, v. 10 can be seen as a supplement to God's favors to David mentioned in vv. 8–9, with a future commitment to the whole of the people of Israel. In this way, it presents the Davidic promise in the context of the redemption of Israel. Through David's career, Yahweh had been working for the welfare of Israel. In this suggested scenario David is only one link in the ongoing relationship between Yahweh and his people.[60] This presentation of the Davidic promise reflects the theology of the Persian-period temple community. Consequently, it seems that v. 10 was inserted by the above-mentioned post-Deuteronomistic author of the Persian period. Lacking royal independence and facing the failure of the Davidic dynasty, this author justified the existence of the temple without the dynasty, all the while postponing the fulfillment of a purportedly unkept promise to a faraway future.

IV. Summary

The composition of Nathan's oracle in 2 Sam 7:1–17 in three different literary stages (pre-Deuteronomistic, Deuteronomistic, and post-Deuteronomistic) reflects the evolution of the royal ideology in Judah in the monarchic and post-monarchic periods.

The earliest stage of the oracle's composition (2 Sam 7:1a, 2–3, 11b) is positive in character. It provides divine legitimacy to the Davidic dynasty as part of a literary composition dealing with the foundation of the Davidic monarchy. Since

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92–94). Murray examines the occurrence of the verbs from v. 10 in biblical literature and concludes that they are always linked to the people of Israel and never to the temple; therefore, it is "the people of Israel" and not the "place" that are the subject of v. 10. The noun "place" does not necessarily indicate a "cult place," but rather is usually a general reference to a geographic location bearing a metaphoric meaning: "place" as a location provides security and prosperity (Murray, "*MQWM* and the Future of Israel in 2 Samuel VII 10," *VT* 60 [1990]: 298–320). In the same way, Brueggemann interprets "place" as a symbolic place representing the anticipated rest from enemies (*First and Second Samuel*, 255).

[59] The notion of God "planting the people of Israel" occurs in Jeremiah's consolation prophecies given in times of distress (Jer 24:6—associated with the exile of Jehoiachin; 31:28 and 32:41, during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem; 42:10, after the murder of Gedaliah son of Ahikam). In this context the expression "to plant the people of Israel" means that God will take care of his people Israel in the future and give them a place of security and prosperity. The verb נטע ("plant") occurs also in Jer 2:21; 11:17 in which metaphorical language compares the future relation of God with his people Israel to the planting of olives or vineyards (see Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 121; a similar metaphor may be found in Amos 9:14–15). The expression ושכן תחתיו ("to dwell under") occurs in Ezek 17:23, where it indicates a future of security and rest (see also Murray, "*MQWM*," 305–6).

[60] See Murray, "*MQWM*," 317–19; idem, *Divine Prerogative*, 182–85.

this early oracle focused on the Davidic dynasty, the temple theme was marginal to it and should therefore be ascribed to a pre-Deuteronomistic scribe. The political history of Judah and its neighboring kingdoms during the late ninth to early eighth centuries B.C.E. provides a suitable background for the composition of the original oracle, which highlighted the divine legitimacy of the house of David at a time of political and royal instability in Judah (2 Kings 12–14) as well as in Israel and in Aram-Damascus.

The second stage of the literary composition of Nathan's oracle was undertaken by the Deuteronomist, who supplemented the dynastic aspect of the original text with his cultic interest (2 Sam 7:1b, 4–6a, 8–9, 11a, 12–16). By doing so, he gave the oracle its final form and uniqueness, creating two focal points for the royal Judahite ideology, which now centered on the incorporated themes of the temple and the dynasty. Thus, the Deuteronomistic redaction set Nathan's oracle as the founding text of the whole history of the Davidic (and the Israelite) monarchy, which was now arranged in the Deuteronomistic pattern of prophecy and fulfillment. The main ideological concepts of the Deuteronomistic history were laid down at the crucial moment in the narrative, as early as the foundation of the monarchy, presenting David as a role model who set the standards for all the Judahite and the Israelite kings who followed him.

The central place of the Jerusalemite temple, associated with the everlasting promise to the Davidic monarchy, could not have been perceived before the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and Sennacherib's campaign to Judah in the late eighth century B.C.E. The Deuteronomistic redaction of Nathan's oracle should be dated to the late seventh century together with the first redaction of the entire Deuteronomistic History. It clearly reflects the optimistic atmosphere in the days of Josiah. The centralization of the cult in Jerusalem and the fact that by this time the house of David had enjoyed a long and stable tenure give the historical background of the temple-dynasty theology expressed in the Deuteronomistic layer of the oracle.

Nevertheless, these hopes were dashed shortly thereafter in the Persian period. The restoration of the Jerusalem cult was carried out with no reference to the Davidic monarchy, and the Persian province of Yehud became a temple-cult-centered community lacking monarchical institutions. As a result, the legitimacy of the temple was no longer affiliated with the royal dynasty and was instead projected to a premonarchical period, when Israel came to be Yahweh's people through the Sinaitic covenant. Consequently, the post-Deuteronomistic redactor (probably the Priestly writer) inserted vv. 6b–7 and 10 into the Deuteronomistic form of Nathan's oracle, changing its focus once again by disregarding the importance of the dynasty for the temple building. Nevertheless, he did not entirely ignore the role of the Davidic dynasty in the history of Israel but interpreted the everlasting promise as a commitment to the future redemption of the people of Israel.