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**MOSHE GARSIEL,
THE BOOK OF SAMUEL: ITS COMPOSITION,
STRUCTURE AND SIGNIFICANCE AS A
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SOURCE**

THE BOOK OF SAMUEL: ITS COMPOSITION, STRUCTURE AND SIGNIFICANCE AS A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SOURCE

MOSHE GARSIEL
BAR ILAN UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

The book of Samuel treats a crucial period in the history of the Israelites—the transition from the period of the judges, represented by the last two judges, Eli and Samuel, to the period of the united monarchy, represented by the first two kings, Saul and David. The book, as is seen even at first sight, is a unique combination of historiography, literary poetics and ethical and theological perceptions. In order to reassess these and other characteristics of the book and its significance, a reexamination of the different approaches to the questions of the stages of the book's composition, and its literary and ideological structure is necessary. Such analyses were presented, to some extent, by early exegetes and medieval commentaries, and were intensified and enriched by new methods and perspectives in modern scholarship. In the last two decades, the historical value of the book once again became a subject of bitter disagreement in the light of archaeological findings (or the lack thereof).

In this article,¹ I intend to review some of the main findings and conclusions of past and present scholars, and integrate some of them with various new conclusions. This reassessment and integration—so I hope—will bring about a better understanding of the development of the book and its present historiographical and

¹ This article is a further elaborated and updated version of my previous articles that had been published in Hebrew in *Beit Mikra* 54 (2009), 21–69; and *Hidushim Be-Heger Yerushalaim* 15 (2009), 45–87. The current publication was completed in the summer of 2009 when I stayed as a visiting scholar at Cornell University. I am grateful to Professor Ranon Katzoff (Bar Ilan Univ.) for reading the article draft and making many helpful observations.

ideological structure, while suggesting a more balanced method to evaluate its historical information.

THE BOOK'S COMPOSITION IN EARLY EXEGESIS AND MEDIEVAL COMMENTARIES

In the book of Samuel itself, there is no explicit statement regarding the book's authorship and the way it was composed.² The earliest apparent reference to this issue appears in 1 Chr 29:29, where it concludes the history of David and his reign: "The acts of King David, early and late, are recorded in the history of Samuel the seer, the history of Nathan the prophet, and the history of Gad the seer, together with all the mighty deeds of his kingship and the events that befell him and Israel and all the kingdoms of the earth." Are these references to the traditional book of Samuel? Obviously not, for the following reasons: (a) The book of Samuel was well known to the author of Chronicles and his audience. From it the author of Chronicles took blocks of material integrating them in his new book, at times making just tiny changes and at other times making long and meaningful changes. There is no point, then, in a reference to the book of Samuel, which was already well known to his public. (b) This reference speaks about the first and the last acts of David. The latter presumably include the stories about David's old age, the struggle between Solomon and Adonijah, David's will and its execution. Yet these topics are not part of the traditional book of Samuel, but rather are included in the first two chapters of the first book of Kings. Furthermore, the book of Samuel does not deal with "the events that befell ... all the kingdoms of the earth," except for the few events where the leaders of Israel fought against their neighboring countries or made peace with them. It seems that the book of Chronicles refers to ancient writings that had a much wider scope than that of the traditional book of Samuel. (c) Chronicles refers to three ancient prophetic books that treated the early and late times of David. This description does not fit the traditional book of Samuel that opens with stories about Eli and his sons, Samuel's birth and how he became a national leader, and continues with the kingdom of Saul, and only then moves on to David's early and late deeds. (d) It is clear that Chronicles refers to three different ancient writings attributed to three different prophets: Samuel, Nathan and Gad. These ancient sources included more material than that in the book of Samuel. On the other hand, the passage in

² There are, however, some vague *references* in the book of Samuel to ancient writings—1 Sam 10:25: Samuel wrote the rules of the monarchy in "a book" and laid it before the Lord, that is in the shrine of Mizpah; in 2 Sam 1:18, there is a reference to "the book of *Yashar*." The latter is also referred to in Josh 10:13. In LXX to 1 Kgs 8:13 the version is: "Book of *ha-Shir*."

Chronicles is consistent with other passages in the same book according to which prophets of various times took part in writing various chapters of the early historiography of Israel.³ These ancient writings, according to Chronicles, served as sources for the biblical authors. However, these formulaic references to ancient prophetic sources do not necessarily mean that the author of Chronicles had indeed gained hold of these documents, when he wrote his history of Israel in biblical times.

The Babylonian Talmud takes a similar yet different approach. According to the sages, Samuel the prophet wrote part of his book (that is the book of Samuel), and after his death, Gad and Nathan completed it.⁴

The medieval commentator Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508) follows Chronicles' approach and develops it further. In his opinion, the three prophetic writings listed in Chronicles served as sources for a later editor of the book of Samuel. As he does with respect to the book of Joshua, Abarbanel points at anachronisms in the book of Samuel, especially the formulaic expression "to this day" (*'ad ha-yom ha-zeh*). These anachronistic expressions indicate that certain customs, facts or objects survived till the later days of the final editor (see 1 Sam 5:5; 6:18; 7:2; 9:9; 27:6; 2 Sam 6:8). Abarbanel attributes the final editorial work to the prophet Jeremiah, who based his work on the earlier writings of Samuel, Nathan and Gad. Jeremiah incorporated their works into his, and added more material in his final edition of the book of Samuel.⁵ However, in his commentary to 1 Sam 9:9, Abarbanel suggests also another possibility—that the final editor was Ezra the Scribe.⁶ Through these observations, Abarbanel anticipated modern critical views which ascribe the final shape of the book of Samuel to a late editor or editors.

THE COMPOSITION STAGES OF THE BOOK OF SAMUEL IN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

Various theories have been suggested in modern scholarship regarding the development of the book of Samuel. I will discuss only briefly some of the main and fundamental approaches.⁷ Several

³ Compare Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1993), 22–23.

⁴ Tractate *Baba Bathra*, 14b–15.

⁵ See Abarbanel's Introduction to the Early Prophets, in *Nevi'im and Ketubim: with all the Commentaries of the Mikraot Gedolot*, vol. A (Jerusalem: Even Yisrael Institute, 1992; Heb.), 10–11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. B, 145.

⁷ For various reviews, cf. O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 268–281; A. Weiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961), 157–170; G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press,

scholars found in the book of Samuel a scheme of parallel sources similar to that which was found in the Pentateuch and in the books of Joshua and Judges. The phenomena that brought them to apply the method of source analysis in the book of Samuel are rather the same as in the former books—parallel motifs or stories; discrepancies; differences in theological and social conceptions; change of literary genres and styles; awkwardness in the text sequence; and so on. Julius Wellhausen, the prominent exponent of this method, posited two main interwoven parallel sources that combined to make up most of the book of Samuel—the first more natural and realistic, hence should be the earlier one, and the second containing theological and schematic components, hence should be regarded as the later one.⁸ Other scholars developed this approach in different ways.⁹ At a later stage, in this view, these hypothetical sources underwent editorial changes by the Deuteronomistic School. R.H. Pfeiffer made an attempt to reconstruct the earlier (E and J) sources of the book of Samuel and to delineate the sparse Deuteronomistic editorial work that completed the book.¹⁰ This school of historical literary criticism compares biblical books to a rope that is made of interwoven strands. To extend the metaphor, the scholar's task is to unwind the rope and separate its strands; or if one puts it in a less figurative way, the scholar's mission is to analyze the book's different sources and the editorial layers, and to establish their different dates and characters. The basic assumption of this method is that historiographical and theological elements as well as ideas and conceptions that were integrated in the sources and the editorial layers would better reflect the later times of its late authors and editors rather than the earlier historical times of the topics of narration.

Regarding the book of Samuel, this approach suffers from conspicuous shortcomings—the attempts to separate parallel, sequential, and vital stories (sources) in this book proved to be arbitrary and unconvincing. Furthermore, the assumption that the sources and editorial layers reflect later historical periods and

1968), 215–227; J.A. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 185–197; W.S. Lasor, D.A. Hubbard and F.W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 227–253; R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1970), 695–718; T. Longman III and R.B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006), 151–166; J. Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David*, (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 1–52.

⁸ J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1886), 235–307.

⁹ See, e.g., K. Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel* (KHC, 8: Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1902), passim; O. Eissfeldt, *Old Testament: An Introduction*, 268–281.

¹⁰ R.H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1948), 242–368.

events does not hold water. As I will demonstrate later, very rarely does the book of Samuel display anachronistic glosses, and when this does happen they were added by later editors and are short and limited in scope. The theory of parallel written sources as main components in the development of biblical books was also criticized by scholars who attribute greater import to oral transmission in the development and forming of the biblical texts. These scholars regard the “written parallel sources” process as unrealistic as well as anachronistic for the biblical period.¹¹ One may also doubt if the figure of the “Redactor” or “Editor,” as depicted in biblical scholarship, is not unrealistic and anachronistic for the periods in which the Hebrew Bible came into being.¹²

These and other doubts regarding the hypothetical theory of the parallel sources brought many scholars to support an alternative—the “fragments theory”. According to this theory, the basic principles of which were proposed by Hugo Gressmann,¹³ the first stage in the book of Samuel’s development was an intensive collection of various fragmentary pieces of information, among them oral traditions, local sagas about early heroes, archival documents, etc. These collections were crystallized and became cycles of stories relating historical topics. Several scholars, indeed, tried to analyze such hypothetical cycles in the book of Samuel—A.F. Campbell explored the collection of stories relating to the Ark of the Covenant;¹⁴ B.C. Birch dedicated his research to the rise of the Israelite monarchy;¹⁵ J.H. Grønbaek devoted his to the story cycle of David’s rise to power;¹⁶ Leonhard Rost concentrated on the continuous struggle between many rivals for the succession to David’s throne.¹⁷ These story cycles and other editions were summarized by

¹¹ Compare Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville, Ky., Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 113; D.M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii–viii.

¹² Cf. J. Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), passim.

¹³ H. Gressmann, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels*² (Vol. 1 of *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), passim.

¹⁴ A.F. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4–6, 2 Sam 6): A Form-Critical and Tradition-Historical Study* (SBLDS, 16; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975).

¹⁵ B.C. Birch, *The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy: The Growth and Development of 1 Sam. 7–15* (orig. Diss. Yale University, 1970; SBLDS, 27; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976).

¹⁶ J.H. Grønbaek, *Die Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids (1. Sam. 15–2. Sam. 5); Tradition und Komposition* (Acta theologica Danica, 10; Copenhagen: Prostant Apud Munksgaard, 1971).

¹⁷ L. Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David* (transl. of *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982).

A Weiser, who unlike Rost, preferred to define the latter large cycle as the court history of David's rule.¹⁸

The studies of the development of the story cycles created the impression that the book of Samuel is a product of the combination of sequential story cycles, and that it is a worthwhile endeavor to trace back the development of the early traditions that eventually became the main components of the final book. This endeavor was dubbed *traditio-historical analysis*. In Scandinavian scholarship the main effort was placed on the study of oral traditions that had been handed down from one generation to the next. R.A. Carlson applied such a method in his study of 2 Samuel.¹⁹ Other scholars suggested two more story cycles—the stories concerning Samuel which were preserved in the holy compound at Gilgal, and the “Appendix” at the end of the book (2 Samuel 21–24).²⁰

ARGUMENTS CONCERNING THE BOOK'S LATENESS AND ITS HISTORICAL UNRELIABILITY

The problem of dating the composition of the book of Samuel and determining the type and number of its authors and editors has become a major issue for historians who are interested in the period of the rise of the Israelite monarchy. The basic assumption shared by many scholars was and still is, as I have said, that late materials tend to reflect the opinions and knowledge of their late authors or editors rather than those of the historical period of the narrative. This assumption, however, is simplistic and over-generalized. After all, it is often the case that historical information written by late but meticulous historiographers proves reliable; while in other instances writers who recorded events of their times are patently biased. Court scribes everywhere over-glorified kings and their achievements and excused their failures. The writer's date, then, is hardly a perfect touchstone for determining historical reliability.²¹ Yet, the question of dating the time of writing or editorial work is still very important, since often later authors or editors lacked access to early sources that perished during the passage of time or were simply not available to them.

In the last two decades serious doubts were raised among archaeologists and historians regarding the historicity of the rise of the Israelite monarchy as depicted in the book of Samuel. The common argument is that most of the book's materials came from late sources and that part of it was composed by the Deuteronomistic

¹⁸ For a summary of the different cycles and other editions compare Weiser, *Introduction*, 162–170.

¹⁹ R.A. Carlson, *David, the Chosen King: A Traditio-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964).

²⁰ See, e.g., Longman III and Dillard, *Introduction*, 155–156.

²¹ I. Provan, V.P. Long and T. Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 56–62.

school responsible for the monumental work of editing the history of Israel. This school was active from the time of King Josiah's reform, continued its work during the Babylonian exile, and completed it in the Persian Period (though there are varying opinions about the work's nature and times). Another argument had already been raised earlier by the Scandinavian school, which tended to perceive Biblical literature as a product of continuous oral, rather than written, transmissions, and thus its historical parts should be regarded as unreliable. This argument was supported more recently by archaeologists and historians who claimed that written findings from Iron Age I and Iron Age IIa are scarce. The corpus of written findings, they argued, began to grow gradually only from the second half of the eighth century BCE and onward. This implies that literacy in the tenth and ninth centuries BCE was very limited and developed gradually only later and in accord with the development of urbanization and the established monarchy in Israel and Judah. This hypothesis about the gradual development of literacy in Israel brought about the hasty conclusion that the Biblical texts began to be written down no earlier than the second half of the eighth century BCE, and that the writing process continued even much later—into the Second Temple period. Hence, the book of Samuel would have been composed several hundred years after the events that are portrayed in it.²² According to radical views, the book of Samuel consists at best of oral traditions that were handed down from one generation to another. In the passage of time and the multiplicity of transmitters the oral traditions underwent gradual growth. Many traditions were altered, others were invented. Some scholars jumped to the even hastier conclusion that the biblical story about the rise of the monarchy as depicted in the book of Samuel should be regarded as a complete myth, far from any historical reality.²³ These undermining conclusions call for reinvestiga-

²² See, e.g., N. Na'aman, "In Search of Reality behind the Account of David's Wars with Israel's Neighbors," idem, *Ancient Israel's History and Historiography: The First Temple Period* (Collected Essays, Vol. 3; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 38–61, esp. 38–39; I. Finkelstein and N.A. Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 53, 86, 94, 123, 126–128, 132–134.

²³ This skeptical approach has especially found an anchor in Scandinavia and the UK, and its followers were dubbed by their opponents: "minimalists", or even "nihilists". For the former approach, see, for instance, T.L. Thompson, *The Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden/New York: Brill, 1992); P.R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOTSup, 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); K.W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996); N.P. Lemche, *The Old Testament Between Theology and History: A Critical Survey* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). For the views of those who oppose this approach, see,

tion of how the book of Samuel came into being: the time of its composition, its authors, and the dating of its materials.

THE BOOK OF SAMUEL'S HISTORICAL PLATFORM: THE IMPORT OF THE TEXT TESTIMONY

Were the book of Samuel, its sources, traditions, and its massive editorial work composed relatively late—in the seventh century BCE, in the Babylonian exile, or in the Second Temple period—as deemed by various scholars? Or, were the book's main parts written very close after the time of the events, as maintained by other scholars?²⁴ In this section, an examination of Biblical materials attesting to the book's closeness to the events, and to its relative historical reliability will be given.

The major part of the book deals with David, from his adult life until he became a great king ruling over a united kingdom and neighboring countries. The book contains many positive descriptions of David's achievements as well as extensive and detailed critical descriptions of his transgressions and punishments.²⁵ The climax of the positive descriptions is, of course, Nathan's vision promising David a "house," that is, a ruling dynasty, "forever" (*'olam*), which means it would last an unimaginably long time.²⁶ This expression occurs in this literary unit seven times (1 Sam 7:13, 16, 24–26, 29), granting unconditional validity to the promise. This

e.g., H.H. Shanks, "Is the Bible Right After All?—BAR Interviews William Dever, Part Two," *BAR* 22, No. 5 (1996), 30–37; W.G. Dever, "Archaeology, Ideology, and the Quest for an 'Ancient' or 'Biblical' Israel," *NEA* 61 (1998), 39–52; idem, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did they Know it?—What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001); B. Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 57–103; idem, "David Did It, Others Did Not: The Creation of Ancient Israel," T.E. Levy and T. Higham (eds), *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science* (London/Oakville, Conn.: Equinox, 2005), 422–438; Provan, Long and Longman III, *Biblical History of Israel*, esp., 51–74; K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), esp. 81–158.

²⁴ See, e. g., Y. Kaufmann, *מכבשונה של היצירה המקראית - From the Kiln of the Bible's Creation* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1966; Heb.), 169–179.

²⁵ Some scholars tend to emphasize the criticism that is directed against David, see, e.g., Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, passim; S.L. McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), passim; while Y. Zakovitch suggested a more reserved evaluation by saying that the book of Samuel keeps the right balance between approval and criticism. See his book: *David: From Shepherd to Messiah* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1995; Heb.), 170. This matter will be addressed later.

²⁶ See J.B. Licht, "*'olam*," *Encyclopaedia Miquait*, vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1971; Heb.), 100–106.

vision is a central pillar in the ideology of the book of Samuel and its influence is well attested in the later books of Kings and Chronicles as has been widely demonstrated in Michael Avioz's dissertation and book.²⁷ It is surprising that in Nathan's vision, as it is stated in the book of Samuel, no limiting conditions are attached to the promise given to David granting him "dynasty forever."²⁸ Only in the book of Kings, which was composed much later, there are explicit time stipulations. There one finds that the promises concerning the dynasty, the people's safety, and the temple survival are made conditional and dependent on the behavior of the future king(s) and his people.²⁹

In Nathan's vision, as conveyed in the book of Samuel, there is only half a verse which seems at first sight to disturb the harmony: "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he does wrong, I will chastise him with the rod of men and with the affliction of mortals" (2 Sam 7:14). From the context it is clear that a sinning king will not be the cause for breaking the promise of eternal duration of David's dynasty. The punishments here are described in terms of a loving father who chastises his beloved son who failed him (cf. Proverbs 13:24).³⁰ This warning likely reflects the events of sin and punishment that transpired in the late parts of David's and Solomon's reigns. Indeed, the immediately subsequent verse removes any doubt regarding the stability of the House of David by a declaration: "But I will never withdraw My favor from him as I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed to make room for you. Your house and your kingship shall ever be secure before you; your throne shall be established forever" (vv 15–16).

These optimistic, unconditional, and everlasting promises raise serious questions—if the authors or the editors of the book of Samuel wrote their parts of the text from the seventh century BCE to the second century BCE, according to the various scholarly opinions, how is it that these "late" writers and editors did not take care to prepare their audience to deal with the catastrophes that devastated the "House of David", the "House of the Lord", and the united kingdom? Had the writers or editors been working on their texts for several hundred years after the time of David, they

²⁷ Cf. M. Avioz, *Nathan's Oracle (2 Samuel 7) and Its Interpreters* (Bern/New York: P. Lang, 2005), passim.

²⁸ See R.P. Gordon, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich., Regency Reference Library, 1986), 240; P.K. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB, 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 206–208.

²⁹ Compare 1 Kgs 2:4; 5:25; 6:12–13; 8:25–26, 33–34, 44–53; 9:2–9; 11:11–12, 29–40; 2 Kgs 17:1–23; 21:2–16; 23:26–27.

³⁰ See J.T. Willis, *First and Second Samuel* (Living Word Commentary – Old Testament, 6; Austin, Texas: Sweet, 1982), 331; M.H. Segal, *The Books of Samuel: Edited and Interpreted with a Detailed Introduction* (Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sefer, 1964; Heb.), 280; McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel*, 207–208.

could have found many ways to prepare their audience for the traumatic events that would befall them and to the fact that Nathan's promises would be breached. One should bear in mind that these scholarly approaches adamantly attribute to late authors "anachronistic" way of writing, that is to say, ideas and attitudes appropriate to the time of the authors, not to the times of the events described.

I shall now present several traumatic events that the late "anachronistic" authors and editors of the book of Samuel failed to address explicitly or at least implicitly. First, the late authors and Deuteronomistic editors failed to prepare their audience to the traumatic schism of the united monarchy. In this terrible rupture, David's grandson, King Rehoboam, was left with only 3 tribes (Judah, Benjamin and Simeon). So bitter was the blow that the "House of David" had been dealt, that the later book of Kings addresses it as if only one tribe was left under Rehoboam's reign (1 Kgs 11:13, 30–36). Unlike the book of Kings that struggled with the schism apologetically, by explaining it as an outcome of King Solomon's sins, the book of Samuel seems to be totally ignorant of it. It seems that neither the authors nor the editors took any care to address the event that crashed Nathan's vision as well as the whole conception of the book of Samuel. Both later writers and editors who viewed historical occurrences from their later perspective—as has been claimed by many scholars—should have explained to their audience the split of the Davidic united monarchy, especially by inserting a few explicit conditions to Nathan's vision. This question raises serious doubts about the "anachronistic" way with which the writers and editors of the book of Samuel handled the materials that were at their disposal.

Second, neither in Nathan's vision nor in the rest of the book of Samuel does one observe any "anachronistic" warning or explanation of another traumatic occurrence—Shishak's military campaign that posed a real threat to both kingdoms, Judah and Israel. In the light of this traumatic event, how naive are the promises made in Nathan's vision, especially the one granting the nation of Israel peace and security forever: "I will establish a home for My people Israel and will plant them firm, so that they shall dwell secure and shall tremble no more. Evil men shall not oppress them any more as in the past" (2 Sam 7:10). The "anachronistic" writers and editors should have known better and attached to the promise some conditions that would explain future devastating events. The lack of any restrictions on Nathan's promises and other glorious declarations in the book of Samuel clearly supports the contrary assumption that most of the book was composed before either of these traumatic events. A comparison of the silence on these matters in the book of Samuel to the approach found in the later book of Kings is instructive. There the writers (or editors) were well aware of the discrepancy between past promises and future fulfillments (or the lack thereof), and inserted a historical perspective by

attaching conditions to the promise of endurance of the house of David and the people of Israel, on their right to the promised land, and even on the survival of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.³¹

Needless to say, the book of Samuel lacks any historical perspective on other traumatic events which devastated Israel or Judah, such as the destruction of Samaria and the mass deportation of the citizens of the kingdom of Israel; Senacherib's military campaigns in the kingdom of Judah, including the siege and destruction of Lachish and the heavy siege of Jerusalem; Jehoiachin's exile to Babylon with the elites of the citizens of Judah; the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and more massive deportations from the ravished land of Judah. None of these or other events during the exile and Second Temple period left any mark or hint in the book of Samuel. One must, then, challenge the common scholarly opinion about the "late" writers and editors—aside from a handful of insignificant late glosses, to be discussed below, where in the book of Samuel are their so-called anachronisms?

Furthermore, the book of Samuel does not take any notice of important kingdoms that operated in the region from the ninth century BCE on. Egypt is not mentioned in the book as a great power of the time, but as a remote memory of when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. Assyria and Babylon are not mentioned even once; neither are the kingdoms of Persia, Greece, and Rome. There are no "anachronistic" interferences in that department from our "late" writers and editors. The book concentrates mainly on early neighboring kingdoms and their relations with Israel in the times of the last two judges and the first two kings.

Furthermore, a closer look at another literarily and ideologically central juncture of the book, Samuel's speech denouncing the behavior of the future king (1 Samuel 8), shows (once again) that it reflects a very naive and primitive conception of the monarchy, its establishment and activities. By no means does it reflect a developed kingdom, with a comprehensive bureaucracy, with much road and city building operations, with problematic relations between the people and the administration, with diplomatic relations with the neighboring countries, and so on. The picture which the reader confronts in Samuel's speech is quite different and, one may say, out of touch. In his portrayal, the people's main occupations are agriculture and animal husbandry; no large-scale urbanization is depicted. The portrait does not include the image of the later tyrant kings who built luxurious palaces, roads, fortified cities, and who

³¹ Compare 1 Kgs 2:4; 5:25; 9:4–5. These texts include stipulations of observing God's way in order to ensure the survival of David's house. The following texts, 8:33–34, 44–53; 9:6–9, place conditions to the Israel's rights of their land and they even raise the possibility of exile depends on Israel's behavior. Furthermore, the latter text raises even the possibility of the destruction of the temple.

subjugated the citizens to forced labor (and sometimes even killed many innocent people). It seems that this speech reflects early fears that the type of kingdom to be adopted by the Israelites would be analogous to and in accord with those of the Canaanites and other neighboring kingdoms, as attested in the archives of Ugarit, 'Alalah, and El-Amarna.³² The critical stand for justice and against bribery and distortion of justice in this literary unit (vv 1–5) should not be regarded as a later Deuteronomistic addition (cf. Deut 16:18–20), since the yearning for justice was also common in earlier times. Pharaoh Horemheb (14th century BCE), for instance, appointed judges and warned against justice distortion and bribery.³³ Daniel, King of Ugarit, is depicted as a judge who “sits by the gateway... Takes care of the case of the widow, defends the need of the orphan.”³⁴ It seems that the ostrakon from Khirbet Qeiyafa, dated to the early 10th century BCE deals, with similar matters.³⁵

Even though the book of Samuel is interested mostly in the theological aspects of the period, close studies of descriptions of war in the book reveal that they contain reasonable data of historical, geographical, and strategic aspects, which add support to the assumption that they reflect historical events, even if in some cases, due to theological views or legendary way of narration, some parts of the story were exaggerated or twisted. Consider the following:

1. The battle of the Israelites against the Philistines at Ebenezer (1 Samuel 4) makes sense, since it took place around the entrance to the hilly route that leads from Aphek to Shiloh. The description is in accord with archaeological findings in Aphek, Shilo and *Izbet Šarṭah*.³⁶
2. The battle of the Israelites against the Philistines in Mizpah (ch. 7) took place on the route that descends from Mizpah to the present village of *Ras Karkar*, in the vicinity

³² See Zafira Ben-Barak, *The Manner of the King and the Manner of the Kingdom: Basic Factors in the Establishment of the Israelite Monarchy in the Light of Canaanite Kingship* (Diss.; Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1972; Heb.).

³³ See S.E. Loewenstamm, *Encyclopaedia Miquit*, 5, col. 630 (Heb.).

³⁴ See S.B. Parker (ed.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBLWAW, 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 58, 68.

³⁵ According to a personal communication with Gershon Galil who intends to suggest a new reading of the inscription.

³⁶ For more details, see M. Kochavi, “Canaanite Aphek and Israelite Even-Ha’ezer,” *Cathedra* 27 (1983), 4–18 [Heb.]; M. Garsiel and I. Finkelstein, “The Westward Expansion of the House of Joseph in the Light of the *Izbet Šarṭah* Excavations,” *TA* 5 (1978), 192–198 [A Hebrew enlarged version of this article appeared earlier in *Bar-Ilan* 14–15 (1977), 58–69]; I. Finkelstein, “Israelite Settlement in the Foothills, 13th–10th Century B.C., in the Light of Excavations at *Izbet-Šarṭah*,” *Cathedra* 27 (1983), 33–38. [Heb.]; M. Garsiel, *The Rise of the Monarchy in Israel: Studies in the book of Samuel*, vol. 1 (2nd ed; Raanana: The Open University of Israel, 2008; Heb.), 97–114.

of which one should look for the biblical *Beit Kar* (Beth car; 7:11). This battle once again demonstrates geographical strategy and fits archaeological findings as well as site identifications.³⁷

3. The battle of Michmas has been analyzed by various scholars with some differences. But there is, however, a wide agreement about the validity of its military strategy, its site identifications, and topographical descriptions.³⁸
4. The battle of the Elah Valley and the duel between David and Goliath (2 Samuel 17) have been analyzed from different points of view. But the assessment about the validity of the general reality of the story should prevail, despite the legendary elements and textual problems.³⁹
5. King Saul's last war, as depicted in the last chapters of 1 Samuel and the first chapter of 2 Samuel, fits as well the strategy and geographical description.⁴⁰
6. The descriptions of the contest between twelve young men from each side, Joab's and Abner's, and the war that followed between the two armies (2 Sam 2:12–32) demonstrate the author's knowledge of Gibeon, its famous pool and his familiarity with the area of the eastern desert as well as the way leading from there to Mahanaim in Trans-Jordan.⁴¹
7. The description of David's wars against the Philistines in

³⁷ For more details, see M. Garsiel, "The Battle of Mizpa (1 Sam 7)—Between History and Historiography," Y. Hoffman and F. Polak (eds), *A Light for Jacob: in Memory of J.S. Licht* (Jerusalem: Bialik and Tel Aviv University, 1997; Heb.), 78–89.

³⁸ For further details, see Z. Kallai, "The Wars of Saul," J. Liver (ed.), *The Military History of the Land of Israel in Biblical Times* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 1964; Heb.), 134–138; M. Garsiel, "The Battle of Michmas: a Historical Literary Study (1 Sam 13–14)," U. Simon and M. Goshen-Gottstein (eds), *Studies in Bible and Exegesis*, vol. 1, *Arie Toeg in Memoriam* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan Univ., 1985; Heb.), 15–50; idem, *The Rise of Monarchy*, vol. 2, 17–68.

³⁹ For more details and literature, see Kallai, "The Wars of Saul," 138–140; for the above and more issues such as Goliath's armor or the Elhanan—David identity question, see M. Garsiel, "The Valley of Elah Battle and the Duel of David with Goliath: Between History and Artistic Theological Historiography," G. Galil, M. Geler, and A. Millard (eds), *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded* (VTSup. 130; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 391–426; Idem, "The Four Sons of Rephaim who Fell in Combats with David and his Heroes," *Beit Mikra* 54 (2009), 39–61 (Heb.; an Eng. Summary p. 7*).

⁴⁰ See Kallai, "The Wars of Saul," 141–144; Garsiel, *The Rise of the Monarchy*, vol. 2, 275–285.

⁴¹ For a detailed analysis, see Garsiel, *The Rise of the Monarchy*, vol. 3, 34–41.

the Valley of Rephaim (2 Sam 5:17–25) has been analyzed from different points of view.⁴²

8. The failed operation to conquer Rabbat Ammon is described subtly from a literary standpoint (2 Samuel 10–12). But the text does reflect a sophisticated multi-stage plan for a conquest of a fortified city.⁴³
9. It is reasonable to assume that the detailed description of Absalom's and Sheba son of Bichri's rebellions (chapters 14–24) were taken from a royal archive or survived in the report of an eye witness.

It is untenable that realistic details of wars and conflicts such as these were composed by authors remote in time and place from the events and detached from written sources and eyewitnesses' testimonies. It is particularly hard to believe that these materials were composed by an author living at the end of the seventh century BCE, in the Babylonian exile, or in the Persian Period or even later. In most of these times access to the relevant geographical areas was very limited due to political and military constraints. The last stage of the period of the united monarchy seems to be by far a more appropriate time for authors to find sources for their specific subjects; when they would be familiar with the large stretches of land on both sides of the Jordan River and in the far North or the Negev, making it possible for them refer to specific details of landscape.

Furthermore, the following lists of episodes give the impression of having derived from ancient chronicles, annals, or archives: David's wars against the trans-Jordanian and Aramaean kingdoms (2 Samuel 8, 10, 12:26–31) are described concisely; they contain no miracles, exploits of heroes, glorification of the king's achievements, legendary characteristics, and the like. These accounts appear to have been taken, with some modifications from archives or royal annals. The author (or authors) presumably had access to these documents by virtue of his position or connections. The same is true of other lists—the early and late lists of David's ministers and their functions (8:16–18; 20:23–25); the lists of David's wives and sons, those born in Hebron and those in Jerusalem (3:1–5; 5:13–16). The lists of David's warriors with some descriptions of their exploits recounted in the “appendix” of the book (21:15–22;

⁴² For different views, cf. S. Yeivin, “Saul's Wars,” J. Liver (ed.), *Military History*, 152–156; M. Garsiel, “David's Warfare Against the Philistines in the Vicinity of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5,17–25; 1 Chron 14,8–16),” G. Galil and M. Weinfeld (eds), *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography: Presented to Zecharia Kallai* (VTSup, 81; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 150–164.

⁴³ See M. Garsiel, *The Kingdom of David: Studies in History and Inquiries in Historiography* (Tel Aviv: Don, 1975; Heb.), 116–123; idem, *The Rise of the Monarchy*, vol. 4, 54–59.

23:8–39) attest that these materials were taken by an early author from either royal archives or early traditions.⁴⁴

Reports on the building of Jerusalem, the treaty with Hiram, king of Tyre, and the latter's help in building David's palace imply that the author had access to archives or early reliable traditions. It is hard to believe that an author who lived several hundred years later would dare to credit the foreign king of Tyre with the honor of offering massive help to David to build his palace in Jerusalem. It is far more reasonable to assume that one is dealing with an earlier author who is relying on royal archives. The same is true of other bits of information regarding foreigners in King David's service. David included foreigners as ministers in his government, and as warriors in the elite unit named "the warriors of David." Furthermore, he enlarged his army with a division of Cherethites and Pelethites (most of whom were probably Philistines) and promoted their commander, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, to serve as one of his ministers (8:18; 20:23). David reinforced this division by adding a battalion of Gittites (from the Philistine regnal city of Gath) and entrusted their commander, Ittai, to serve as a commander of a third of his army which went out to put down Absalom's rebellion (15:18–22; 18:2). These texts were composed early and were based on royal archives, though in a few instances, later copyists or Deuteronomistic editors took the liberty to "polish" away a few signs of "idolatry" in the book. More on this will be discussed below.

Some scholars have discerned an apologetic tendency in the cycle of stories dealing with David's rise to the monarchy, and interpret it in various ways.⁴⁵ However, more comprehensive examination of the book of Samuel and the first two chapters of 1 Kings reveals conflicting tendencies in the stories dealing with David—admiration and glorification, apologetic and defensive approaches against accusations, bitter and open criticism of David's sins and punishments, and subtle and concealed criticism of his behavior. These conflicting attitudes reflect an undecided author (or authors), who harbors both admiration for and criticism of David. It seems that the author (or authors) was involved emotionally with the debate regarding the riddle—who really is the true David? This tilts the scales toward the conclusion that the author was close in time and connections with David and his various activities.

⁴⁴ For an analysis of this list and more literature, see, Garsiel, *The Rise of the Monarchy in Israel*, vol. 3, 135–150; 159–161.

⁴⁵ Cf. P.K. McCarter, Jr., "The Apology of David," *JBL* 99 (1980), 489–504; idem, *I Samuel: A New translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB, 8; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980) 27–30; Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 94–103; McKenzie, *King David*, 32–36.

By the same token, it seems that the author is emotionally and ideologically involved in the ongoing debate regarding the merits and faults of monarchy as a matter of principle, a debate that continued to impassion the people even after the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. His attitude is especially recognizable in the description of the bitter argument between Samuel and the people on this topic (1 Samuel 8). This attitude can be recognized throughout the description of the two first kings, which I discuss below in Section G. The author's stand against monarchy seems to reflect the contemporary relevance of the question of monarchy—this was not yet a matter of “ancient history,” but a vital, controversial issue. In the eyes of the author the issue was first and foremost a theological problem of replacing the Kingdom of God with a flesh and blood monarch. Furthermore, from a sociological perspective, there was another issue ensuing—the replacement of the tribal social structure under the leadership of the Judges with the monarchy and its bureaucracy. The opposition to the establishment of the monarchy and the open as well as the subtle and tacit criticism of the kings' behavior attest that the author lived in a period that still made comparison between the past period of the Judges and the current monarchy.

The book of Samuel presents literacy in the time of the united monarchy as a rather common trait. Samuel committed his second speech reviewing “the rules of the kingdom” to writing and placed the document in the shrine at Mizpah (1 Sam 10:25). This document was meant to be a binding testament for generations to come, and indeed, the entire scene is based on the presumption that people could read and write. The same is implied by the narrator's reference that David's lament over Saul and Jonathan was written on the Book of Jashar (2 Sam 1:18).⁴⁶ In another episode, one is told that David wrote a letter (*sefer*) and placed it in the hands of Uriah (11:14–15). The logic of the scene requires that only David and Joab would be privy to the nefarious content. One must, then, assume that both David and Joab were literate. In David's governments (8:16–17; 20:24–25), one finds the positions of a recorder (*maṣṣkir*) and a scribe (*sofer*). Later, in Solomon's government, there were two scribes in this position (1 Kings 4:3). These texts attest to the activity of royal correspondence expanding into different areas.

Correspondingly, the book of Kings refers to the book of the Acts of Solomon as an older source (1 Kings 11:41). It was understood that the author refers to an earlier official book based on chronicles, annals and reliable traditions that presents King Solomon, his glorious acts, and especially his wisdom which became a magnet drawing many wise men, scholars, authors, and scribes to share the spiritual and literary activities that took place in Jerusalem

⁴⁶See above, footnote 2.

(5:9–14; 10:1–13; 23–24).⁴⁷ The reliability of the book of Kings has been established on different occasions from extra-biblical documents, and its references to the ancient sources, the book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and the book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, have been accepted seriously. One should include the Book of the Acts of Solomon in the same category. In sum, the book of Kings attests that there was enormous literary activity in Jerusalem under Solomon's reign.

Examination of themes and language leads to similar conclusion that the book of Samuel was compiled very early.⁴⁸ One cannot find in the book any significant influence of the Aramaic language that later became an international means of correspondence (compare, for instance, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). Neither can one find Persian influence (compare the book of Esther). Needless to say there is no influence of Hellenistic or Roman motifs and language on the book of Samuel (compare the writing of the Sages). On the other hand, comparisons to Ras Shamra texts show significant similarities.⁴⁹ Though this wide range of comparisons calls for separate comprehensive research that cannot be provided here, it is quite clear that the book of Samuel is closer to earlier Canaanite literature rather than to those of later times.

THE LIMITED INFLUENCE OF THE DEUTERONOMISTIC EDITORIAL WORK ON THE BOOK OF SAMUEL

After identifying the ancient and reliable nature of many materials in the book of Samuel, a reexamination of the issue of the Deuteronomistic involvement in the contents of this book is necessary. Thomas Römer offered a comprehensive survey of the varying scholarly approaches to the Deuteronomistic editorial work within the Former Prophets.⁵⁰ It is beyond the scope of the present study to deal with this broad issue. Rather, our specific interest is whether or not the later Deuteronomistic historical school interfered heavily with the earlier contents and messages of the book of Samuel.

It is true that the book of Samuel was well integrated in the chronological sequence established by the Deuteronomistic historiographers—the book was placed between the book of Judges and the book of Kings as depicting the transitional period—the end of

⁴⁷ See J. Liver, "The Book of the Acts of Solomon," *Bib* 68 (1967), 75–101.

⁴⁸ For other arguments of this kind, cf. Halpern, "David Did It, Others Did Not."

⁴⁹ Cf. L.R. Fisher, S. Rummel (eds), *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible*, vols. I, II, III (AnOr 49–51; Rome, Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1972–1981), passim.

⁵⁰ For a survey and literature, see T. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2005), passim, see esp. 3–43.

Period of the Judges and the beginning of era of the united (and then divided) monarchy. However, at this point our main concern is to determine whether this book was also exposed and subordinated to the main themes and ideas that characterize the 'model' deuteronomistic compositions—Deuteronomy, the other books of the Former Prophets, and the book of Jeremiah. The following three examples will be helpful in determining the level of exposure to deuteronomistic editing in the book of Samuel

The attitude toward monarchy

The issue of monarchy should be very high on the agenda of any society that is subordinated to a rule of a king and his establishment. Surprisingly, the Book of Deuteronomy dedicated only seven verses to the future king (Deut 17:14–20). It is said that God will only choose a king from the Israelites, and the king is not allowed to keep many horses, women, silver and gold. He should write a copy of the book of Deuteronomy, read it, and follow its rules. In spite of its terseness, most of the early commentators felt that the book's attitude toward the notion of monarchy is positive as long as the king observes the above rules. Only Abarbanel, in his commentary to the above text, is skeptical as to whether this section should be regarded as a positive commandment. In the book of Kings a clear distinction is drawn between righteous and wicked kings. David's kingship is represented in this book as a model of the former (with one exceptional remark, miniscule and vague, referring to his sin in the case of Uriah the Hittite—1 Kgs 15:5).⁵¹

The book of Samuel, however, differs from both books in its vehement opposition to monarchy⁵² and the dynastic principle, on the grounds that the kingship of a human being undermines the rule of God. The main idea of the final shape of the book is clear—to present two excellent candidates for kingship and to demonstrate how such good men would stumble and entangle themselves in a web of transgressions. I have discussed this elsewhere at some length,⁵³ and will return to it later in the last section below. On this negative perception of the monarchy there is agreement between the book of Samuel and the major part of the Book of Judges, which opposes the monarchy, especially in the

⁵¹ For David as a model of a righteous king, cf. 1 Kgs 1:37; 3:14; 9:4; 11:4, 6, 13, 32–38; 14:8; 15:5, 11; 2 Kgs 8:19; 16:2; 18:3; 20:5–6; 22:2.

⁵² See M. Tsevat, *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible* (New York/Dallas: Ktav Publishing House/Institute for Jewish Studies, 1980), 77–99, esp. p. 78.

⁵³ See M. Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat-Gan: Revivim, 1985), passim; idem, *The Rise of the Monarchy in Israel*, vol. 2, 217–218, 247–248; vol. 2, 310–311; vol. 4, 66–67, 246–261.

stories of Gideon and Abimelech, and Jotham's parable. In the appendix to the latter book, however, a later editor challenges the anti-monarchic line that dominated the major part of the book, and adds stories of corruption demonstrating the urgent need for a king in Israel (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).⁵⁴ Even in such a major issue, then, as the establishment of monarchy in Israel the Deuteronomistic editor did not impose his opinions on the book of Samuel.

Denunciation of idolatry and worship of foreign Gods

One of the most important themes in the Deuteronomistic literature is its relentless campaign against all kinds of idolatry. This stand is prominently repeated in Deuteronomy;⁵⁵ it occupies only a small part of Joshua,⁵⁶ a rather significance place in the pragmatic speeches of Judges, but also in the Gideon cycle and the episode of Micha's statue;⁵⁷ and, finally, becomes a major issue in the books of Kings and Jeremiah.⁵⁸

The book of Samuel, however, addresses the issue of idolatry rather tersely and only in a few verses, all of which are limited to Samuel's activities and treats the issue mostly as a problem of the past. Only in 1 Sam 7:3–4 is it regarded as an actual issue that needed immediate care. However, in 12:10 it is a reference to early times; in 12:21 Samuel adds a vague warning: "Do not turn away to follow worthless things (*tohu*), which can neither profit nor save but are worthless (*tohu*)!" Was Samuel referring to "idols," as does Isa 44:9,⁵⁹ or was he thinking of Saul, the chosen king, the main subject of Samuel's speech? The same ambiguity occurs in Samuel's earlier speech when he creates an analogy between idolatry of the past and the worship of a king (1 Sam 8:7–8). The development is now clear: The worship of the king is tantamount to idolatry—both displace the worship of the true God. In Samuel's eyes the kingship of flesh and blood was the more urgent issue; that of idolatry disappeared

⁵⁴ For a different view regarding that the general direction of the book is positively leading toward the solution of monarchy, cf. Y. Amit, "On Conclusions, Particularly Inappropriate Ones," S. Vargon et al (eds), *Studies in Bible And Exegesis: Presented to Moshe Garsiel* (Vol. IX; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2009; Heb.), 53–54.

⁵⁵ Cf. Deut 4:15–29; 5:7–9; 6:13; 7:4, 5, 16, 25; 8:19; 9:12–21; 11:16; 12:2–4, 29–31; 13:3, 7, 8, 14; 27:15; 29:15–25; 31:16–20; 32:16–17.

⁵⁶ It is concentrated in Joshua's final and prominent speech to the people (Josh 24:14–16, 20–21, 23.)

⁵⁷ See Judg 2:2–3, 11–13, 17, 19; 3:6–7; 5:8; 6:10, 25–32; 8:27; 10:6, 10, 13–16; 17:3–6; 18:14, 17–31.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., 1 Kgs 11:4–10, 33; 12:28–33; 13:32–34; 14:9, 15, 23–24; 15:13; 16:31–33; 18:17–40; 19:18; 21:26; 2 Kgs 1:1–17; 3:2; 6:18–29; 11:18; 13:6; 16:3–4; 17:9–17, 29–41; 21:3–7, 21; 23:4–20, 24; Jer 1:16; 2:8, 11, 20–23, 27; 3:7–13; 7:6–9, 16–18, 31; 8:2; 9:13; 10:2–15; 11:12–17; 16:11, 20; 17:3; 19:4–6, 13; 25:6; 32:29, 34–35; 44:3, 8, 17–25.

⁵⁹ Compare McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 217.

from other texts of the book. Furthermore, David's house contains idols (*terafim*—19:13, 16). After the first battle of Refaim Valley, David plays with the place name of "*Baal-Perazim*" as referring to "The Lord [who] has broken through my enemies before me as waters break a dam"; yet amazingly names that place Baal-perazim (2 Sam 5:20). The text reflects an ancient equation between Baal and God—and it escaped the Deuteronomistic editor! So is the case when in the immediately following verse the narrator adds: "The Philistines abandoned their idols there, and David and his men carried them off" (5:21). What the editor failed to do, the author of Chronicles did in his amendment: "They abandoned their gods there, and David ordered these to be burned" (1 Chr 14:12). The book of Samuel also tells without any inhibition that David built his palace with a massive help from King Hiram of Tyre (2 Sam 5:11), incorporated foreigners in his government, administration, and appointed them to army commands as well as to his elite units.⁶⁰

Since almost the whole of Deuteronomistic literature is engaged in a relentless campaign against the Canaanites and their idols, it is astonishing to find that the late editors of the book of Samuel hardly interfered with its contents on this issue.⁶¹ This is again a significant concession on the part of the Deuteronomistic editors to the received text of the book.

The Deuteronomistic School and its demand of centralizing sacrificial cult

Another major concern of the Deuteronomistic School is that the worship and sacrifices should be performed only in a central place

⁶⁰ See B. Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies*, (eds S. Ahituv and B.A. Levine; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 86–87, 126–138.

⁶¹ Only on a petty issue, one may find a touch of zealotry in the amendments of the theophorical name component of *Baal* found in the name of Eshbaal, Saul's son, (cf. 1 Chr 8:33; 9:39) that was changed to Ishbosheth (2 Sam 2:10 et al.). Jonathan's son's name, Meribbaal (1 Chr 8:34) was changed to Mephibosheth (2 Sam 4:4, et al.). The name of Jerubbaal, who is Gideon (Judg 7:1) was changed to Jerubbosheth (2 Sam 11:21). The name Jerubbaal remained, however, unchanged in Samuel's speech (1 Sam 12:11), even though the narrator could have easily used the other name—Gideon. If the common explanation of zealotry is accepted, the latter instance would show inconsistency in the campaign against the Baal and that is demonstrated also in the name derivation of Baal Perazim. Therefore the emendations should be ascribed to an inconsistent copyist or editor. But another explanation may replace the common one—all the texts deal with people who are connected with the monarchy: Saul's son and grandson, and Abimelech. The name change of all the three might be a deliberate change of the putative anti-monarchic author.

that has been chosen by God. This unequivocal command is repeated many times in Deuteronomy.⁶²

The Book of Joshua shares the same concern. The book deals with major events, such as the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, the mass circumcision, the Passover celebration, the miraculous capture of Jericho, the other wars in the central mountain, in the South and in the North. But in all these events the narrator does not say a word about any sacrifices taking place, even though Eleazar the high priest and the Ark of the Covenant were present at the Israelite camp (Jos 3:6; 18:1; 19:51). Furthermore, Joshua designated several holy places such as Gilgal, where the standing stones taken out of the Jordan River were erected (4:20ff); Shiloh, where the Tabernacle of the Congregation was erected (18:1); Shechem, where a sanctuary of the Lord existed (24:26). Joshua designated the Gibeonites to be servants to the altar; but the narrator immediately adds a reservation that it is for the future holy place that God would choose (9:23,27). Yet, these special occasions and holy places notwithstanding, the book of Joshua does not tell us about any sacrifices that took place at those times and places. The only exception is the sacrifice on Mount Ebal which is regarded as a unique and justified act since it was performed according to the laws of Moses (8:30–35). The requirement of a unique central shrine is prominently described in the story of the two and a half tribes who returned to their inheritance in Trans-Jordan. They erected an altar near the Jordan. This act was regarded by Joshua as a rebellion against God and a cause for an all out war between the Israelite tribes. The trans-Jordanian tribes explained that the new altar was intended as a memorial monument and not for sacrificing, and thus averted the war (22:9–34).

In the book of Kings even some of the righteous kings are criticized for the Israelites under their reign continuing to sacrifice at the high places.⁶³ The climax of the book is King Josiah's reform and covenant with the people, after which the local shrines and high places were destroyed and contaminated even in the area that formerly belonged to the kingdom of Ephraim (2 Kgs 23:1–30). Josiah reached the peak according to the concluding summary of the Deuteronomistic author of the book of Kings: "There was no king like him before who turned back to the Lord with all his heart and soul and might, in full accord with the Teaching of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him." (23:25). It is noteworthy, however, that the Deuteronomistic editor did not impose his critical attitude on important occasions of sacrifice that are described in the book of Judges.⁶⁴

⁶² See Deut 12:5–14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23–25; 15:20; 16:2, 6–7, 11, 15–16; 17:8, 10; 18:5–6; 26:2; 31:11.

⁶³ See 1 Kgs 3:2–3; 22:44; 2 Kgs 12:4; 15:4,35.

⁶⁴Cf. Judg 2:5; 6:24–26; 11:31; 13:19–20; 20:26; 21:4.

In the book of Samuel the lack of Deuteronomistic editorial intervention is even more prominent. The book of Samuel elaborately describes quite a few sacrifices that took place in various places.⁶⁵ Once again, the Deuteronomistic editor did not change the text according to his belief, and did not even add critical comments to accompany the original texts. It is clear, then, that the Deuteronomistic editorial work was inconsistent—in some books it was active and in others it became inactive even when inappropriate contents and ideas were expressed in the text under the scrutiny of the editors.⁶⁶

THE BOOK OF SAMUEL'S COMPILATION IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

It has been mentioned above that some archaeologists and historians, the “minimalists,” have challenged any early date for the compilation of the book of Samuel as well as its historicity on the two main grounds: (a) The Land of Israel has been the object of intensive archaeological research since the late nineteenth century CE. In terms of settlements and urbanization in the tenth century BCE, the archaeological findings in Jerusalem, the Judean Region, and other regions of the country are rather scanty. Some scholars believe that the urban infrastructure for a polity such as the great kingdom of David and Solomon as depicted in the books of Samuel and Kings was completely lacking. (b) The sparse assemblage of inscriptions that the archaeological spade unearthed from the periods of Iron Age 1 and Iron Age 2a attest that literacy in the tenth and ninth centuries BCE was undeveloped and scarce. Only later in the late eighth century BCE, and in tandem with the development of the urbanization and the monarchic administration in Israel and Judea, do written remains gradually increase. On this archaeological interpretation, the book of Samuel must have been written several hundred years after the period it narrates. The time of Josiah (the late seventh century BCE) seems to be the earliest suggestion for the book of Samuel's composition. Others would take it even a lot later—to the second century BCE.⁶⁷

Is indeed the archaeological spade the best tool for deciding definitively the date of the compilation of the book of Samuel, its structure, aim, and *Sitz im Leben*? With all due respect to archaeo-

⁶⁵ See 1 Sam 1:3,21; 6:14; 7:9; 9:12; 10:8; 11:15; 13:9; 14:34–35; 15:15; 16:2–5; 2 Sam 6:13,17; 15:7–12; 24:25.

⁶⁶ Not a few scholars have reached a similar conclusion about the paucity of the Deuteronomistic influence on the book of Samuel. E.g., Soggin, *Introduction*, 189; Weiser, *Introduction*, 168; M. Haran, *Biblical Collection: Its Consolidation to the End of the Second Temple Times and Changes of Form to the End of the Middle Ages*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Bialik/Magnes, 2004; Heb.), 285–287.

⁶⁷ Compare the literature mentioned above in notes 22–23.

logical research and its contribution to biblical scholarship, some claims made in the former discipline are egregiously inflated.

I begin with some general comments regarding the limits of archaeological research and its ability at this stage to summarize all remains of the past. Indeed, there has been archaeological activity in the Holy Land for almost a hundred and fifty years. But one should bear in mind that in the early decades of this activity excavations in most important sites were done without professional knowledge and with unfit manpower. These excavations brought about unimaginable destruction to those sites, and much evidence was destroyed forever. Things changed for the better with the excavation at Tel Beit Mirsim by W.F. Albright (1926–1932), who was regarded then as the founder of modern biblical archaeology, and Yigael Yadin's excavations at Hazor (1955–1958), where prominent Israeli scholars obtained their field training. However, even later, some excavations did not meet the new standards and others remained unpublished or were published by an assistant after the death of the director.

Furthermore, most strata of any typical mound underwent disturbances in the past—alterations in buildings, reconstructions, enemy devastations, and the like. Archaeologists often “rejoice” when a ware assemblage had been caught between floor and ceiling of a collapsed house and is now successfully unearthed. In most cases, however, old or new inhabitants clear off old ruins and use the stones and other materials for the new subsequent construction. As a matter of fact, whenever a multilayered mound is dealt with, one should expect that the upper layer inhabitants will have done intensive works of clearing, filling, digging cisterns, water supply systems, storage and garbage pits, sewer and drainage canals. These and other development projects disturb the layer sequence and cause a headache for the researcher. Treasure hunters contribute their large share of damage to ancient sites and their contents. Among disturbances that are not human-made are heavy rains that can sweep houses and even parts of city walls away down a hill (cf. Mic 1:6). Trees and subterranean animal life contribute to the disturbance. Modern roads, cities, settlements, and all sorts of ground and soil projects may damage ancient ruins. On the other hand, sacred sites, cemeteries, mosques, and churches, are out of bounds for archaeological excavation. These and other problems should make it clear that archaeology is a very complex and complicated discipline and that the archaeologist is particularly liable to misjudgments.

Furthermore, most archaeological digs uncover less than a tenth of the site's area. One can only imagine what is hidden within the uncovered area. There are many sites that remain undiscovered and many known sites that remain unexcavated. Area survey is important to gather preliminary data, but it cannot replace the archaeological spade.

Is archaeological research ready for an encompassing summary of the historical picture of settlements, towns and cities of the tenth and ninth centuries BCE? Does it have all the necessary data to determine the non-existence of a polity like the united monarchy? The answer is that though archaeology has indeed come a long way since the late nineteenth century CE it still has an immeasurably long way to go! That does not mean that at this stage archaeologists should not be allowed to contribute their opinion on the subject at issue or any other subject. Having said that, one should caution: in terms of encompassing data, archaeologists may offer only tentative assessments based upon current preliminary finds (or the lack thereof). These assessments are of course liable to be altered in the wake of future research (like all other disciplines).

Unlike the “minimalists,” another group of scholars, called “maximalists,” have found positive evidence supporting some aspects of the biblical description of the united monarchy:

(a) The name of David or the House of David is probably mentioned in three foreign documents: Shishak’s list of conquered cities (926 BCE), the Mesha stela (the beginning of the second half of the ninth century BCE) and the Hazael stela (c. 841 BCE).⁶⁸ These inscriptions attest that even many decades after his death, David was well known to neighboring dynasties as a great king and founder of a dynasty.

(b) The inscription of Shishak delineates his military campaign in the southern Levant. Some of the names of conquered places are missing, others are damaged and unreadable; but many have been identified.⁶⁹ All in all, parts of the military itinerary have been reconstructed, and it is clear that Shishak major strike was directed against the kingdom of Israel. However, the kingdom of Judah lost at least some fortified settlements in the Negev, and perhaps even more in the hill country and the coastal plain, but their names are missing or unreadable in the inscription. The appearance of Shishak at Gibeon served as an enormous threat to Jerusalem, and King Rehoboam had to bribe the Egyptian king extravagantly to turn away from the kingdom of Judah (1 Kgs 14:25–26; 2 Chr 12:2–12). This attests to significant polities that existed in the attacked regions, for otherwise why would Shishak bother to cross

⁶⁸ See Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 92–93, 615 (figure 13).

⁶⁹ For Shishak’s itinerary and campaign, see Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (2nd ed., Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 323–330; B. Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period*, 139–150; Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 32–34; 496–497; A.F. Rainey and A.S. Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta’s Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), 185–189; A. Lemaire, “Tribute or Looting in Samaria and Jerusalem: Shoshenq in Jerusalem?” G. Galil, M. Geller and A. Millard (eds), *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Busteny Oded* (VTSup, 130; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 167–177.

the Sinai Peninsula desert and the Negev and to assault about 160 townships in this vast area, and then boast about his conquests.⁷⁰

(c) Of special interest are the results of archaeological excavations (and surveys) and their evaluation in Jerusalem,⁷¹ Motza, the mounds of the Beth-Shean valley, the Negev region, Arad, Beer-sheba, Hazor, Gezer, Megiddo,⁷² Lachish, Sorek valley sites,⁷³ mounds in Ayalon valley,⁷⁴ Tirzah,⁷⁵ the widespread nature of the IA 1 settlements in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh,⁷⁶ the Canaanite Philistine port of Dor,⁷⁷ Sharayim,⁷⁸ and Tel Bethsaida.⁷⁹

⁷⁰ This argument was raised by A. Mazar in his debate with I. Finkelstein. See I. Finkelstein and A. Mazar (B.B. Schmidt ed.), *The Quest for Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel* (SBLABS, 17; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 123–133.

⁷¹ See Eilat Mazar, “Excavations at the City of David (2006–2007),” E. Baruch, A. Levy-Reifer and A. Faust (eds), *New Studies on Jerusalem*, vol. 13 (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan Univ., 2007; Heb.), 7–26 (Eng. Summary 17*–18*). Compare A. Faust, “On the Date and Function of the Large Stone Structure in the City of David,” E. Baruch, A. Levy-Reifer and A. Faust (eds), *New Studies on Jerusalem*, vol. 15 (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan Univ., 2009; Heb.), 29–43 (Eng. Summary p.8*).

⁷² See Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did they Know it?*, 127–138; Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 146–150.

⁷³ See A. Mazar, “The Spade and the Text: The Interaction between Archaeology and Israelite History Relating to the Tenth-Ninth Centuries BCE,” H.G.M. Williamson (ed.), *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel* (Proceedings of the British Academy, 143; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 2007), 143–171 (esp. 151–159); On the Sorek Valley cf. also S. Bunimovitz and Z. Lederman, “The Early Israelite Monarchy in the Sorek Valley: Tel Beth-Shemesh and Tel Batash (Timnah) in the 10th and 9th Centuries BCE,” A.M. Maeir and P. de Miroschedji (eds), *“I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times”: Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, Vol. 2 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 407–427.

⁷⁴ See S.M. Ortiz, “Deconstructing and Reconstructing the United Monarchy: House of David or Tent of David (Current Trends in Iron Age Chronology),” J.K. Hoffmeier and A. Millard (eds), *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 121–147.

⁷⁵ See Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know it?*, 142.

⁷⁶ See A. Zertal, *A People Was Born: The Mount Ebal Altar and the Emergence of Israel* (Tel Aviv: *Yedi‘ot Aḥaronot/Sifre ḥemed*, 2000; Heb.), passim; R.K. Hawkins, “The Survey of Manasseh and the Origin of the Central Hill Country Settlers,” R.S. Hess, G.A. Klingbeil and P.J. Ray Jr. (eds) *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 165–179, esp. 179.

⁷⁷ See E. Stern, “Dor” in *NEAEHL*, vol 1, 358–361; vol.5, 1697–1699.

⁷⁸ See Y. Garfinkel and S. Ganor, “Khirbet Qeiyafa: Sha’arayim,” *JHS* 8 (2008), article 22, available at <http://www.jhsonline.org>

These excavations (and surveys) yielded eleventh and tenth centuries finds, the accumulation of which indicates that there was indeed the infrastructure and conditions for the existence of a polity like the united monarchy described in the books of Samuel and Kings.

The debate between “maximalists” and “minimalists” brought to public attention the fact that archaeological research is still unable to provide an accurate and secure synchronization between archaeological strata, sub-strata, and the finds of Iron Age 1 – 2, on the one hand, and the historical chronology of the united and divided monarchy, on the other. To be sure, the typology of the finds may indeed help us to identify more or less the possible historical period. But one should always bear in mind that the process of replacement of one type of ware by a new one may have taken place at different times among various settlements and towns and even within the same town itself, between one clan (or family) and another. Replacement of ware might be faster or slower due to ethnic and political tensions or good relations⁸⁰ or even differences of faith and ideology. A tendency to conservatism or an urge for renovation may affect the decision to purchase new ware. Such a decision may also be a function of standard of living or depend on different potters or merchants. In terms of using material culture, it is not easy to find strict and rigorous rules of human behavior that applied to the various ancient societies of the southern Levant.⁸¹

Carbon-14 analysis may help in dating ancient organic items, but it cannot provide the exact duration of a stratum.⁸² Under these circumstances it is no wonder that a wide range of disagreement exists between the most prominent archaeologists when they face the issue of identifying the exact stratum of the united monarchy.

Next, the issue of literacy in ancient Israel will be addressed and, in particular, the following question: Could the book of Samuel have been composed in the middle of the tenth century BCE, during King Solomon’s reign? Long and intensive archaeological research has yielded very little in the way of written finds dating to the tenth century BCE. Can this negative evidence be relied on to determine that the book of Samuel and other books could not have been composed in ancient Israel before the end of the seventh century BCE or even much later? Before examining the written finds, it is necessary to determine what writing materials and tech-

⁷⁹ See R.A. Freund, *Digging through the Bible: Understanding Biblical People, Places, and Controversies through Archaeology* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009); 108–110; R. Arav, “Bethsaida,” *NEAEHL*, vol.5, 1612–1614.

⁸⁰ See Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 142.

⁸¹ Cf. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did they Know it?* 69–72.

⁸² For opposing views and different interpretations of the carbon tests, cf. the seminar papers in T.E. Levy and T. Higham (eds), *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating*.

niques were used by the Israelites. Did they use materials and writing techniques that had a chance to survive a time span of about 3000 years?

In ancient Israel scribes used papyrus for writing. This technique was widely used in Egypt, and many decades of Egyptian rule in Israel must have left trained Israelites skilled in the practice of writing on a papyrus scrolls. There are, however, only two circumstantial bits of evidence to this. First is a papyrus found at Wadi Murabba'at, which is dated to the early half of seventh century BCE, contained a letter that was written on the top of earlier writing.⁸³ The second is an assemblage of many bullas that have been found in various places. Papyrus or leather scrolls (parchments), it seems, were rolled, bundled and sealed with the bullas. The bullas tend to survive—the papyri and skins do not.⁸⁴ Other organic materials, such as wood and palm leaves, have no better chance of long duration in the climate of most of the regions of the Land of Israel.⁸⁵

Another widespread system with many variations is the writing on clay tablets, plastered stones or walls (cf. Deut 27:2–4), and plastered or painted boards. The scribe may use sharp implements for incision or use ink or even a combination of both. In the climate of the Land of Israel, however, hot and cold weather would cause the material to expand and shrink causing the mortar or lime plaster to crumble. A wall collapse may also cause damage to any inscription written or incised on its mortar. The Balaam inscription found at Tel Deir 'Alla was written on such a collapsed plastered wall and much effort was required to piece it back together.⁸⁶

Ink writing on pottery shards has just a little bit better chance to survive. But it has other problems—in many cases clay shards are broken in collapsed houses or under other various instances of heavy pressure. The ink tends to fade in the wet climate of the region, and compounded with minerals and soil it disappears. Even incised clays suffer from some similar problems—the incised letters might be ground or filled in with minerals or dirt.

In addition to all this, the quantity of pottery in any dig is enormous. It is almost impossible to discern an inscription during the dig itself. The pottery pieces are dirty and even the washing

⁸³ Cf. E. Stern, *NEAEHL*, vol. 3, 833–835.

⁸⁴ See M. Noth, *The History of Israel* (2nd ed., London: Black 1960), 47; J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (Jerusalem/Leiden: Magnes Press, 1982), 70.

⁸⁵ For miscellaneous organic materials that served as writing means, see survey and literature in June Ashton, *Scribal Habits in the Ancient Near East: c. 3000 BCE to the Emergence of the Codex* (Studies in Judaica, 13; Sydney: Mandelbaum Publishing, 2008), 20–42.

⁸⁶ See G. van der Coij, in *NEAEHL*, vol. 1, 338–342; Vol. 5, 1885; G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscription: Corpus and Concordance* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991–2004), 227.

afterward does not clean them meticulously. For most of the inscriptions that have been found, there is a typical “story” attached of how lucky the archaeologists were in finding the inscription and how close they were to just missing it.

The point is that the scarcity of written materials found in the Land of Israel and dated to the tenth century BCE cannot be used as a basis for an assessment of total illiteracy in this period which would then be (and has been) used to refute an early date for the compilation of the book of Samuel. One must bear in mind that writing began in Sumer and Egypt as early as the end of the fourth millennium BCE. In the second millennium, in both important civilizations, Mesopotamia and Egypt, one can find literary writings in various types and genres, and in other parts of the Levant, other writing systems flourished. In the same millennium, the simple alphabetic system began to develop—in cuneiform style in Ugarit, and in a pictographic style in Sinai and Canaan. In the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE the latter developed into the elegant linear Phoenician abecedar as in the regnal inscriptions of the kings of Byblos. The Land of Canaan/Israel was located in the middle of these great and developed civilizations and cultures and on the main roads that connected them. No wonder that in administrative centers that dominated the caravan roads and passages, the various neighboring cultures’ influence was clearly felt. Many cuneiform tablets were found in sites such as Hazor, Taanach, and Megiddo.⁸⁷ In Aphek, a writing assemblage consisting of variety of genres and languages was unearthed.⁸⁸ This is just one indication (among many others) that there was widespread Egyptian influence in the Land of Canaan, especially in the sea ports, along the international roads, and the main urban centers. The strategic and central position of the Land of Canaan, which dominated the international road under Egyptian rule, demanded a high degree of literacy in various languages. The El-Amarna letters of the fourteenth century BCE testify to the professional scribes working in Canaanite city states and assisting their rulers in their correspondence with the Egyptian overlords.

Evidence for literacy in ancient Israel can also be found in Iron Age 1, a+b.⁸⁹ The first example, an incised ostrakon, was

⁸⁷ See W. Horowitz, T. Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan: Cuneiform Sources from the Land of Israel in Ancient Times* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2006), 15–19.

⁸⁸ See I. Singer, “Aphek’s inscriptions,” *Cathedra* 27 (1983), 19–26 (Heb.).

⁸⁹ Cf. R.S. Hess, “Literacy in Iron Age Israel,” V.P. Long, D.W. Baker and G.J. Wenham (eds), *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of “Biblical Israel”* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 83–88; idem, “Writing about Writing: Abecedaries and Evidence for Literacy in Ancient Israel,” *VT* 56 (2006), 342–346. For a more reserved approach, cf. C.A. Rollston, “The Phoenician Script of the Tel

found in 'Izbet Ṣāṭa, near Aphek, in what was a small Israelite site. On its fifth line, an example of the alphabetic letters being used was provided which served as a model for the exercise in the four lines above it.⁹⁰ Since the site served as a shepherd's settlement in its earlier phase (twelfth century BCE) and later became (in the 11th century BCE) an agricultural village,⁹¹ the ostrakon testifies that literacy was in demand even in small settlements of the Iron Age 1. Since the ostrakon was found in a storage pit next to the central four-room house, I tend to date it to the eleventh century BCE. The Gezer Tablet of the tenth century BCE is another testimony to writing practice. Yet more evidence of abecedary practice was found on a grindstone which was reused and integrated later in a wall of a central construction at Tel Zayit (biblical Libnah) and dated no later than the mid-tenth century BCE.⁹² The Khirbet Qeiyafa (*Sha'arayim*) ostrakon is probably another testimony to writing practice, dated to the turn of the eleventh to the tenth centuries BCE.⁹³ These findings attest to literacy and learning in the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE and probably demonstrate scribal activity in various areas.

The literacy of military commanders serves as a second example of various levels of literacy in Ancient Israel. Several dozen arrowheads bearing incised inscriptions were found at el-Khader (near Bethlehem),⁹⁴ and at other sites in the Land of Canaan/Israel, and Lebanon. Some of them are known from private collections and a few are suspected as forgeries. According to F.M. Cross, these arrows belonged to high-ranking commanders.⁹⁵ It seems that the arrows were employed in training ranges and that their owners

Zayit Abecedary and Putative Evidence for Israelite Literacy," R. Tappy and P.K. McCarter (eds), *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 62–63.

⁹⁰ See A. Demsky, "The 'Izbet Ṣāṭa Ostrakon: Ten Years Later," I. Finkelstein, *'Izbet Ṣāṭa: An Early Iron Age Site near Rosh Ha'ayin, Israel* (BAR International Series, 299; Oxford :B. A. R., 1986), 186–197.

⁹¹ On this settlement, see M. Garsiel and I. Finkelstein, "The Westward Expansion of the House of Joseph in the Light of the Izbet Sarta Excavations," *TA 5* (1978), 192–198.

⁹² For the excavation, identification and inscription, see Tappy and McCarter (eds), *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan*, esp. 4, 11.

⁹³ See H. Misgav, Y. Garfinkel, S. Ganor (with comment contributions by A. Demsky, A. Yardeni, S. Ahituv), "Khirbet Qeiyafa's Ostrakon," D. Amit, et al (eds), *New Studies on Jerusalem and Its Vicinity* (Jerusalem 2009; Heb.), 111–132; Gershon Galil, suggested an interesting reading of this ostrakon which attests that it is an Israelite scribal exercise (based on personal communication; to be published soon by Galil).

⁹⁴ See B. Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies*, 87–88, 92, n. 29.

⁹⁵ See F.M. Cross, *Leaves from an Epigrapher's Notebook: Collected Papers in Hebrew and West Semitic Paleography and Epigraphy* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 195–220, 303–308.

would retrieve them for reuse. Hence they incised their names on the arrowheads. Jonathan, King Saul's son, illustrated how such training was carried out (1 Sam 20:18–23, 35–41). The quantity of these items is relatively large and indicates that even low-ranking officers as well as elite warriors⁹⁶ were using inscribed arrows. The inscriptions were expertly incised in order to survive the grinding impact with sand, stones, trees, and the like, and indeed they survived to this very day. That in the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE commanders and elite soldiers were using writing as a means to prove their ownership of arrows or spears means it is possible to attribute to these commanders and elite warriors basic literacy.

The third example, the literacy of the priests, shows that they mastered at least basic literacy. The HB attributed the knowledge of God's laws to priests and designated them to teach it to the people of Israel (e.g. Deut 17:8–13; 31:9–12; 33:10).⁹⁷ Several short inscriptions dated to the tenth century BCE (a couple may be dated even earlier and related to an earlier ancient high place or *bamah*) were found in the archaeological context of the ancient sanctuary of 'Arad (Stratum XI).⁹⁸

Additional inscriptions dated to Iron Age 1 and 2a have been found in various sites. These findings are either badly damaged or the ink has faded and is now illegible. Thus only a few words remain, e.g., a name or part of name, or even a single letter. Such items came from Lachish,⁹⁹ Kefar Veradim,¹⁰⁰ Khirbet Rosh Zayit,¹⁰¹ Mizpah,¹⁰² Tel Amal,¹⁰³ Tel Batash,¹⁰⁴ Khirbet Tanin,¹⁰⁵ El-Muntar,¹⁰⁶ the Ophel,¹⁰⁷ Beth Shemesh,¹⁰⁸ Tel Rehov,¹⁰⁹ Reva-

⁹⁶ See B. Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies*, 92.

⁹⁷ On the priests' teaching function, see M. Haran, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem, 1962; Heb.), 27–29. On the literacy among the elites, cf. also I. M. Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence," *V/T* 48 (1998), 408–422.

⁹⁸ See Y. Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions* (Jerusalem, 1981), 101, 98–101.

⁹⁹ See Cross, *Leaves from an Epigrapher's Notebook*, 293–296.

¹⁰⁰ Y. Alexandre, "A Canaanite—Early Phoenician Inscribed Bronze Bowl in an Iron Age IIA-B Burial Cave at Kefar Veradim, Northern Israel," *Maarav* 13 (2006), 7–41, esp. 24–32.

¹⁰¹ See Z. Gal and Y. Alexandre, *Horbat Rosh Zayit: An Iron Age Storage Fort and Village* (IAA Reports, 8; Jerusalem, 2000), 133–134.

¹⁰² See C.C. McCown, *Tell En Nasbeh: Archaeological and Historical Results*, vol. 1 (Berkley, 1947), 187, pl. 57:26.

¹⁰³ F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, et al, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven and London, 2005), p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁵ Zertal, *A Nation Was Born*, passim; G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance* (Cambridge et al 1991), p. 116.

¹⁰⁶ Zertal, *A Nation Was Born*, 293.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 178.

¹⁰⁸ *NEAEHL*, vol. 5, 1647.

dim,¹¹⁰ Khirbet Radana,¹¹¹ Azor,¹¹² Manachat (Jerusalem),¹¹³ and Gath.¹¹⁴ Only small remnants of writing have remained to the present, however, they prove the existence of literacy in various parts of the Land of Canaan/Israel. Unfortunately, the means, materials, and technique that were used in these and many other inscriptions left them with extremely slim chances of survival after about 3000 years. Nonetheless, despite the scanty amount of evidence and its poor shape, the geographical range reveals intensive effort to teach and pass down the knowledge of alphabetic writing from one generation to the next in various places of the land. The fact that signs of literacy were found even in small and remote villages attests that literacy may have existed even without linkage and correlation to the development of urbanization and a central establishment.¹¹⁵

Some scholars raise another argument for illiteracy in Israel of the tenth century BCE. Several hundred seals or seal imprints and bullas have been found in the Land of Israel (part of them without provenance). Almost all of the earlier ones (of the tenth and ninth centuries BCE) bear only emblems, while the latter ones (from the eighth to sixth centuries BCE)¹¹⁶ show a sweeping shift from emblems to writings or to a combination of emblems and writings. This shift from non-epigraphic to epigraphic seals may indicate a parallel development of literacy and statehood.¹¹⁷ However, the three abecedary documents and other inscriptions discussed above show that literacy might have developed independently without the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 2015.

¹¹⁰ Cross, *Leaves from an Epigrapher's Notebook*, 299–302.

¹¹¹ NEAEHL, vol. 4, 1253–1254; Cross, *Leaves from an Epigrapher's Notebook*, 297–298, 330.

¹¹² NEAEHL, vol. 1, 129.

¹¹³ L.E. Stager, “An Inscribed Potsherd from the Eleventh Century,” *BAJOR* 194 (1969), 45–52; Cross, *Leaves from an Epigrapher's Notebook*, 336–337.

¹¹⁴ See A.M. Maeir, S.J. Wimmer, A. Zukerman and A. Densky, “A Late Iron Age I/Early Iron Age II Old Canaanite Inscription from Tell eš-Šāfi/Gath, Israel: Palaeography, Dating, and Historical-Cultural Significance,” *BAJOR* 351 (2008), 39–71.

¹¹⁵ David Carr reached a similar conclusion in his discussion of the Tel Zayit abecedary inscription. See D.M. Carr, “The Tel Zayit Abecedary in (Social) Context,” Tappy and McCarter (eds), *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan*, 117–126. See also Hess in n. 89 above.

¹¹⁶ See, e.g., N. Avigad, M. Heltzer and A. Lemaire, *West Semitic Seals: Eighth-Sixth Centuries BCE* (Haifa, 2000); R. Reich and Eli Shukron, “Two Hebrew Seals and Two Hebrew Bullae from the City of David in Jerusalem,” *Eretz-Israel* 29, *Ephraim Stern Volume* (Jerusalem, 2009; Heb.), 358–362 (Eng. Sum. p. 293*).

¹¹⁷ Cf. N. Na'aman, *The Past that Shapes the Present: The Creation of Biblical Historiography in the Late First Temple Period and After the Downfall*, Yeriot (Jerusalem, 2002, Heb.), esp. 23–24.

so called ‘necessary linkage’ to the development of statehood.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the shift from emblems to writings upon seals may be interpreted in a different way. While in earlier time there were relatively few individuals who needed seals, and these could have been recognized just by their emblem, later on, in the eighth to sixth centuries BCE, the remarkable increase of newly wealthy individuals as well as of state officials and dignitaries made it harder for them to be recognized by emblems alone, and hence they shifted to writing beside the emblem or remained content with just having an inscription of name and title.

Actually, the issue of the book of Samuel’s compilation does not depend on intensive and widespread literacy. An alternative possibility is that only a few scribes had an access to the book, and that from time to time some copies were added by scribes. Along with the slow growth of the written copies of the book, its contents were read or passed orally to the public by the scribes who owned copies.¹¹⁹ In other words there was probably a double process of transmission—scribes copying the book, and scribes reading and teaching it orally. Both were linked to the scribal community. On the one hand, it helped to sustain the original version and promoted the public awareness of the book and its contents, and, on the other hand, sometimes the oral transmission brought about parallel motifs and errors. The latter may explain blunders in the traditional text or differences between it and other ancient versions.

There is yet more archaeological evidence that may support a relatively early compilation of the book of Samuel. Dever drew attention to the *pim* weight mentioned in 1 Sam 13:21 as an indication that the book of Samuel was compiled no later than the seventh century BCE, since after that this weight was replaced.¹²⁰ Additionally, the description in 1 Samuel of the Philistine monopoly on metal weaponry and agricultural tools (13:19–23) is correct only for the eleventh century BCE. Later the pendulum swung and the Israelites were well equipped in terms of metallic weaponry and tools.¹²¹ This suggests that the book of Samuel was composed no later than the tenth century BCE.

Intensive archaeological excavations at the Philistine city of Gath (Tel Şafit) revealed a flourishing city in the Iron Age 1 and Iron Age 2a, which was destroyed at the late ninth century BCE probably by King Hazael of Aram (2 Kgs 12:18). After this destruc-

¹¹⁸ This argument has lately been discussed by S.L. Sanders, “Writing and Early Iron Age Israel: Before National Script, Beyond Nation and States,” Tappy and McCarter (eds), *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan*, 103–104.

¹¹⁹ A similar general outline has already been suggested by Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, passim.

¹²⁰ See H. Shanks, “Is The Bible Right After All?— BAR Interviews William Dever, Part Two,” *BAR* 22/5 (1996), 34.

¹²¹ See, e.g., *NEAEHL*, vol. 5, 1647, 1688.

tion, the city never regained its earlier prominent position,¹²² and Ekron (Tel Migne) took its place. This fits the fact that references to Gath and Githites are confined mostly to the book of Samuel and the first chapters of the Book of Kings, again supporting the conclusion that the book of Samuel was written not much later than the ninth century BCE.¹²³

Finally, another point of interest for the dating of the book of Samuel is the data given within the text concerning the wide range of settlements that existed in the Negev in the time of King Saul, and that their inhabitants had enough wealth to be coveted by raiders who carried out considerable war spoils from these settlements (cf. 1 Sam 27:10; 30:1, 14–16, 19, 22, 26–31). These descriptions would have to have been written not much later than the time of the united monarchy, since the Negev fortresses and settlements were destroyed in Shishak's military campaign (926 BCE),¹²⁴ and according to archaeological research, the Negev hills subsequently remained desolate until the Persian Period;¹²⁵ and even then it were not inhabited intensively.¹²⁶

THE FORMATIVE STAGES OF THE BOOK OF SAMUEL AND ITS IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

In the light of the above literary, historical and archaeological considerations, it seems to me that there is no possibility other than to attribute most of the significant composition of the book of Samuel to the tenth century BCE, though some small changes took place much later. In my opinion, the book was developed in four stages by different authors, copyists and editorial work as suggested below:

The first stage: The story of David's life and kingdom

The genesis of the book was probably a distinct story concentrating on David, his life and kingdom, from his boyhood till his death. However, upon the historical foundations was built a theological and ethical superstructure that turned the whole into a didactic story with a message concerning God's providence and judgment as well as His unique relations with the Israelites and their leaders. This narrative probably began with David's appearance in the

¹²² See A.M. Maeir, *NEAEHL*, vol. 5, 2079–2081; idem, “The Historical Background and dating of Amos vi 2: An Archaeological Perspective from Tell es-Safi/Gath,” *VT* 54 (2004), 323.

¹²³ See I Singer, “The Philistines in the Bible: A Reflection of the Late Monarchic Period?” *Zmanim* (2006; Heb.), 74–82; Garsiel, “The Valley of Elah Battle and the Duel of David with Goliath,” 404–410.

¹²⁴ See Provan, Long and Longman III, *Biblical History of Israel*, 60.

¹²⁵ See R. Cohen, *NEAEHL*, vol. 3, p. 1126.

¹²⁶ A. Negev, *NEAEHL*, vol. 3, p. 1133.

Israelite military camp on the northern ridge overlooking the Elah brook, his courageous one-on-one combat with Goliath, his fast promotion to a chief commander in King Saul's elite troops, and the fast deterioration in his relationship with the king. This part of the story is based partly upon popular oral traditions and partly upon written sources.

The main part of the narrative elaborately described David's kingdom, his national and military achievements, his religious actions as well as events relating to his family life (public and private). The final part recounted David's last years, Solomon's accession to the throne after a campaign against his rivals, David's will, and King Solomon's consolidation of his reign (1 Kings 1–2). In these parts, the early author relied mainly upon royal annals and other archives, but also used personal memories of participants in historical activities as well as second-hand information transmitted orally. However, this author did not intend to write history *per se*. Neither did he mean to glorify David's achievements, clear him of all his failures, and legitimize his kingship, as has been suggested by many scholars. It can be assumed that this author took upon himself a different mission: to write religious history. In my judgment, the author was part of the circle that gathered around Nathan the prophet and clung to his teaching. That is why this first version is so distinguishable in its prophetic, ethical and theological points of view. At the same time, it focuses on Nathan as a close prophetic advisor to David who brought him God's instructions about his future dynasty, chastised him concerning his transgressions in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah, and later served as the main supporter of Bathsheba and Solomon in the latter's struggle to gain the kingship.

Due to his close relationship with Nathan, the first author enjoyed easy access to chronicles, archives, and personal knowledge of the King's entourage and other high rank officials and army officers. He took advantage of his wide range of knowledge to write a sophisticated story about the king and other personalities, attaching to it a subtle analysis demonstrating how those important people acted and how they were rewarded or punished by God in accordance with their behavior and actions. At first glance, it seems that David is the main hero of the story. But after a close reading and comprehensive literary analysis, one discovers that the true hero is God, who acts directly or indirectly according to His strict laws of providence to repay the historical personalities what they deserved. In his version, the author described his master, Nathan the Prophet, as God's representative and true messenger.

Indeed, a literary analysis reveals cycles of reward and retribution that affected the fate of David and other prominent individuals. As long as David acted in accord with moral and religious principles, his military and national achievements were remarkable. Once he sinned in his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, and manipulated the death of the betrayed husband in the

war, almost nothing is told about his national achievements,¹²⁷ but much is said about David suffering retribution in accordance with the principle of “measure for measure” (*lex talionis*). David, who intentionally caused Uriah’s death “by the sword of the children of Ammon,” was foretold by Nathan the prophet that “the sword shall never depart from your house” (2 Sam 12:9–10). This prophecy came true when David’s sons, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, were killed by their rivals. David, who exploited his royal position and committed an adulterous act with a helpless married woman,¹²⁸ suffered that his daughter Tamar was raped by her half brother Amnon (ibid ch. 13), and David’s concubines were raped by his son Absalom (17:21–22) exactly on the same roof from which David had seen Bathsheba bathing and coveted her (11:2). Adonijah asked Bathsheba to help him get Abishag the Shunammite, and when King Solomon heard the request, he ordered the execution of Adonijah.

Joab, the former commander in chief of David’s army, was executed according to David’s will because of his treacherous killings of his rivals, Abner and Amasa (1 Kgs 2:5, 28–34). In accord with this will, also Shimei was executed, on charge that he had cursed King David (2:8–9, 36–46). God, who recompenses every one as he deserves, is behind the fate of David’s sons, Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah—they passed away not only as punishments to David, but also because of their own sins.¹²⁹ On the other hand, Bathsheba, the victim of David’s illicit desire, was rewarded that her son would be David’s successor an outcome guaranteed by the actions of Nathan the prophet. Indeed, the narrator creates a pun on Nathan’s name as well as on that of Jonathan the son of Abiathar when he has the latter quote King David’s declarative blessing of Solomon as his successor: “And further, this is what the king said, ‘Praised be the Lord, the God of Israel who has this day provided (*ntn*) a successor to my throne, while my own eyes can see it’” (1:48). This declaration serves as the climax of, and put an end to the campaign between Adonijah and Solomon. The verb *ntn* is employed here as a pun on both Jonathan’s and Nathan’s names and enhances David’s declaration backed by God’s blessing. (The play on Nathan’s name is only one of many in this episode.¹³⁰)

It seems to me that this early account of David’s life and kingdom was written after David’s death and after King Solomon

¹²⁷ On the subjugation of David’s wars chronology to reward and retribution principles, see Garsiel, *The Kingdom of David*, 87–92.

¹²⁸ On Bathsheba’s position in the story, see M. Garsiel, “The Story of David and Bathsheba: A Different Approach,” *CBQ* 55 (1993), 253–256.

¹²⁹ For a further comprehensive discussion of the retribution principles in the story of David, see J. Jacobs, *Measure for Measure in the Storytelling Bible* (Alon-Shevuth: Tvunot, 2006; Heb.), 173–200.

¹³⁰ See M. Garsiel, “Puns upon Names as a Literary Device in 1 Kings 1–2,” *Bib* 72 (1991), 380–386.

began building the holy temple in Jerusalem. The author, an admirer and disciple of Nathan the prophet, indeed attributes to his master Nathan the prophetic promise of an eternal dynasty to David and to his successor who would build God's house. Nathan seems also to serve as Solomon's tutor, and in God's name adds to the young lad the name Jedidiah, which means God's beloved (2 Sam 12:24–25). However, the author of this story sees in Nathan an example of both courage and moral stature, demonstrated when he chastised David for his outrageous sins against Bathsheba and Uriah (12:1–15). The author also takes the side of Nathan when the latter acted to assure that Solomon succeeded David to the throne, which served as a compensation to Bathsheba for her anguish in the past.

The second stage: a subtle story criticizing monarchy and dynasty

The second stage in the composition of the book of Samuel occurred, in my opinion, a few years before King Solomon's death. By that time various levels of society nursed bitter resentment against the king for the immense amount of compulsory labor that was requisitioned in building the temple and the king's luxurious palace, in fortifying Jerusalem and many other cities and fortresses, and in building a house for Pharaoh's daughter and various high places so as to provide the king's wives and concubines means whereby they could worship their own gods. The people also resented Solomon's hedonistic banquets and other pleasures that he shared with dignitaries and even with foreign kings and one queen. The king and his officials put various levels of society under a heavy yoke, and the king's officers were chastising the workmen with whips (1 Kgs 12:11–14).

Many felt betrayed by the monarchic regime that had been adopted by their forefathers three generations earlier. Indeed, after Solomon's death it seems that the people were asking to abolish the monarchy (12:16). But very quickly the people reconsidered the situation and understood that they could not reverse the wheels of history and that there was no way back to the tribal society system. Consequently they declared Jeroboam as the king of most of the tribes of Israel. But even earlier, the resentment against King Solomon intensified gradually and encompassed even elite groups as is attested in the following events: Jeroboam, a charismatic prominent leader of the house of Joseph, attempted to revolt against the king and had to flee to Egypt. Earlier, Ahijah the Shilonite, had met Jeroboam and delivered him God's message about his destiny to be a king over the ten tribes (11:26–40). The meeting between the prophet and the usurper took place on a road outside Jerusalem; only the two of them were there. This situation infers, on the one hand, that people resented being under the yoke of King Solomon. But, on the other hand, they were very cautious in taking actions

openly against it. Jeroboam, eventually had to flee to Egypt and seek asylum there.

It seems to me that the second author came from the circle of the sages and scribes, who were very active in Solomon's time; and that he reshaped and enlarged the earlier version of the book of Samuel and provided it with new anti-monarchic message. This suggestion is based upon the superb use of poetics and special literary devices that marks the work of the second author. The second author shared with his contemporaries the terrible disappointment and resentment of their king and of the monarchy; and he took his predecessor's earlier text and moderately edited it. His major changes, however, were to add the stories of Eli and Samuel and the earliest stories about King Saul to the first manuscript. I assume that this author is also responsible for removing from the book the stories about Solomon's succession to the throne and David's will and its execution (these stories appear in 1 Kings 1–2). But at the same time, this author probably added at the end of his new version of the book the miscellaneous materials (or the most of it) that contemporary scholars call the "Appendix" (i.e., 2 Samuel 21–24).

Not only did the second author change the structure of the book, but he also replaced its main theme and message. He somewhat decreased the dominance of the retribution theme, by the removal of the stories of Solomon's accession to the throne which contained the closure of some of stories in the retribution circles (though he left intact many other episodes that were related to this theme). Yet, there is a remarkable shift from the issue of retribution to the criticism of the "kingdom of men" that undermines the kingdom of God. This shift of theme becomes conspicuous especially in Samuel's speech about "the practice of the king" (1 Samuel 8), in which Samuel assaults the absolute monarch who "takes" from his people whatever is dear in their hearts for himself and sometimes even for his servants. The assault on monarchy replaces here the conventional Biblical assault on idolatry (8:7–8). Samuel's speech, as well as his farewell speech (1 Samuel 12), became the solid foundations of the opposition toward monarchy and they served as a counter-balance to Nathan's speech that glorified King David as a great warrior and promised him everlasting dynasty and peace for the Israelites (2 Sam 7). But even Samuel repeatedly failed when he became too enthusiastic about the external appearance of the candidates for kingship (1 Sam 10:24; 16:7).¹³¹ He was also criticized (like his predecessor Eli) as being accountable for the sins of his sons (1 Sam 8:1–5). As will be shown later, this will turn out to be a major argument against the principal of dynasty in the whole book.

¹³¹ Garsiel, *The First book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures*, 107–115.

I assume that the second author tried to be moderate and cautious in his writing. On the one hand, he wanted to express his views against monarchy and the dynasty system; but, on the other hand, he restricted the work's time frame to King David's reign by omitting the stories about Solomon's accession to throne. Yet, even moderate proliferation of the book was too dangerous. Therefore, I suggest that the author produced only a few copies which he kept secretly in his home or maybe he also shared with trusted family members or close friends who shared his resentment of the monarchical regime.

A literary analysis of the reedited book reveals a subtle network of comparative structures and analogies that serve as a basis for opposing the monarchical regime and the dynastic principle in choosing the new king.¹³² The earlier version was now prefaced with a short description of the two last judges, deliberately in order to create an analogy between the last two judges and the first two kings: All the four blundered and failed when they applied the principle of dynasty. The last two judges erred severely in regarding their sons as their successors, for this was a big step toward dynastic monarchy. Indeed, both judges were charged with being accountable for the wrongdoings of their sons (1 Sam 2:12–16, 22–36; 3:11–14; 8:1–5).

The first two kings seemed to be excellent candidates blessed by the spirit of God (10:6–10; 11:6; 16:13–14), yet they failed in their reign. Saul faltered relatively very early—at the eve of the battle of Michmas (13:8–14) and David transgressed severely in his affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11–12). Furthermore, both kings erred when the issue of dynasty became relevant. Indeed, King Saul had an excellent son, Jonathan, who was killed with his father and other two brothers about whom nothing is known; eventually, his weak and indecisive son, Ish-bosheth, succeeded the late king. King David had two elder sons, Amnon and Absalom, both of whom were regarded at different stages candidates to succeed David. Yet both proved to be villains. In this analogy, the author intended to deliver a clear message that, as demonstrated in both the cases of the last two judges and the first two kings, the principle of dynasty is a blind and hazardous mechanism. Finally, even the best candidates to the throne, such as Saul and David, failed when they attained the absolute power of kingship.

I tend to think that this second author also added to the earlier version of his predecessor the last chapters of the book, as we know it, the so-called “Appendix” (2 Samuel 21–24). These chapters have been discussed widely in the scholarly literature.¹³³ At first

¹³² For elaborative discussion of these devises, see *idem*, *ibid*, *passim*.

¹³³ For a comprehensive discussion, see H.H. Klement, *II Samuel 21–24: Context, Structure and Meaning in the Samuel Conclusion* (Frankfurt am Main/New York: P. Lang, 2000).

glance, these appear to be materials that were gathered without a chronological order. Two units deal with David's warriors, two are David's hymns, and two episodes recount events of famine and pestilence, neither favorable to David. In the first, he allowed the Gibeonites to impale the late King Saul's descendants (21:1–14); in the second, he made a severe mistake in ordering a census (ch. 24). Furthermore, in these added chapters, the second author partly restored Joab's and Abishai's dignity and military honor, which were taken from them in the early version, where they were denounced for their killings of innocent commanders, and Joab had eventually been executed. Here, at the conclusion of the second stage of the book's compilation, the second author implied that Joab was the chief commander of the elite unit named "the warriors of David" (23:8–39).¹³⁴ He appears as a good counselor who tried to discourage David from carrying out the census (24:1–4). As for his brother Abishai, the second author described how he saved David's life when a giant Philistine was about to kill him (21:15). The author also recounts that Abishai was the commander of the team of petty officers in the elite unit of "the warriors of King David." Abishai led his team to the mission to draw water for King David from the cistern next to the gate of Bethlehem, while the area was guarded by a Philistine garrison (23:13–19).¹³⁵ These small bits of information about the two brothers' good services contain indirect and subtle criticism of King Solomon for executing Joab.

Furthermore, the omission of the story of David's old age conceals an important chapter in Nathan's efforts in favor of Solomon's enthronement. By the same token, the second author introduced the stories about Samuel, and made a point of concentrating on his speeches denouncing the "manner of the king" (1 Samuel 8) and his farewell speech in which he indicated that he preferred the rule of the judges over the reign of a monarchy (ch. 12). While in the earlier version of the first author, the prophecy of Nathan regarded David's future son (to be known later on as King Solomon) as God's adopted son (2 Sam 7:11–15), Samuel's speech about the manner of the king denounces the future kings in general. The sophisticated reader may compare Samuel's speech with King Solomon's activity and find unflattering analogies to the latter. Nonetheless, the second author, as mentioned earlier, was very careful not to express explicitly his criticism against King Solomon.

¹³⁴ For a discussion of Joab's command on this elite unit, see Garsiel, *The Rise of the Monarchy in Israel*, vol. 3, 139–147.

¹³⁵ For comprehensive discussion of this exploit, see Garsiel, "David's Warfare," 150–164.

The Third stage: scribes copied and transmitted both versions

It seems to me that the second enlarged edition of the book, with its substantial additions as well as the short omission of Solomon's accession, would have been hidden initially and unknown to the public. The author and the small circle of family members or close friends, presumably, were entirely aware of the potential danger in disclosing the enlarged book. Only after King Solomon's death, would the author or his friends feel sufficiently secure to allow themselves to add a few more copies. I suppose that subsequently a few of the copies gradually would find their way into the circle of sages and scribes who added a few copies in each generation and took the responsibility of preserving the book and passing it on as a cultural heritage. The major task of transmission was carried out, though, orally; scribes who had an access to a written copy read the story from the text or memorized it and taught it to the wide public. At the beginning, both versions, namely the shorter (and early) version and the longer (and later) were in circulation. In the long run, however, the earlier version gradually fell out of circulation. During this stage, lasting for several centuries, there may have been disruptions in the transmission of the text and even duplicate accounts of a single event. Close to the end of this stage, the author of the book of Kings, who wrote his book in the period of the Babylonian exile, "redeemed" the episodes of Solomon's accession and David's will from the earlier version and added it as an opening to the description of Solomon's kingship which opens the book of Kings.

The fourth stage: the Deuteronomistic light editing of the second version

The fourth stage began with the completion of the Deuteronomistic book of Kings during the Babylonian exile. The author, who wanted to begin his book at the point after the conclusion of the second edition of the book of Samuel, took from the earliest stage of this book the story of Solomon's accession and positioned it at the opening of his book. The Deuteronomistic editor (or editors), however, took the second version of the book of Samuel and placed it between the book of Judges and the book of Kings as an account of the transitional period between the period of the Judges and that of the united monarchy. In this editorial stage of the Deuteronomistic history some actualizing remarks were added to the book of Samuel (as well as to the other historiographical books) including hints of actualization to later times. Such is the case with the remark: "Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: therefore Ziklag belongs to the kings of Judah to this day" (2 Sam 27:6). However, the editor(s) did not intervene heavily in the book of Samuel and did not change its descriptions and messages.

IN SUM

The book of Samuel contains ancient and original materials, and both main versions were composed as early as the tenth century BCE. But the earlier of the two versions was edited and integrated within the latter enlarged one, and eventually lost its separate existence. Despite some late additions, minor changes, and even copyists' errors; despite the slight and limited interventions of the Deuteronomistic editorial work; and despite the difference in the theological and social agenda of its two earlier authors, the book of Samuel in its last version still remains the earliest comprehensive source which integrates various original documents and testimonies of ancient time and especially of the transition from the period of the Judges to the period of the united monarchy.

Therefore, it would be very unwise to ignore this significant book or belittle its wide-ranging testimony. The book of Samuel should be considered as a vitally important document for the period at issue. However, scholars should read it cautiously and critically, employing a clear cut distinction between history (as an academic discipline) and the ancient biblical, theological, and poetic historiography which, based on its unique conceptions and principles, is fundamentally different in its aims.