Saul, Doeg, Nabal and the “Son of Jesse”: Readings in 1 Samuel 16—25

By

Joseph Lozovyy

Ph.D. Thesis
The University of Edinburgh
2006
TO MY PARENTS
DECLARATION

I declare that I have composed *Saul, Doeg, Nabal and the “Son of Jesse”: Readings in 1 Samuel 16—25* and that it is my own work, that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for any other degree or professional qualification, and that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Joseph Lozovyy
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<tr>
<td>ASV</td>
<td>American Standard Version (1901)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DB</td>
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<tr>
<td>EJud</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia Judaica, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971)</td>
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<td>HB</td>
<td>The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)</td>
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<td>HDR</td>
<td>History of David’s Rise</td>
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<td>Josephus Ant.</td>
<td>Josephus’ Jewish Antiquities</td>
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<td>JPS</td>
<td>Jewish Publication Society OT (1917)</td>
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<td>KJV</td>
<td>King James, or Authorized Version (1611)</td>
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<td>LXX</td>
<td>The Septuagint</td>
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<td>LXXB</td>
<td>The Codex Vaticanus, a major uncial manuscript of the Septuagint</td>
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<td>The so-called Lucianic manuscripts of the Septuagint</td>
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<td>LXX−</td>
<td>LXX &lt; MT (+ Q)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LXX+</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS, MSS</td>
<td>manuscript, manuscripts</td>
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<td>MT</td>
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<td>MT+</td>
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<td>NASB</td>
<td><em>The New American Standard Bible</em> (1977)</td>
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<td>NET</td>
<td><em>The NET Bible</em> (The New English Translation)</td>
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<td>NKJV</td>
<td><em>New King James Version</em> (1982)</td>
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<td>OG</td>
<td>The Old Greek translation</td>
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<td>RSV</td>
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<td>Syr.</td>
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<td>Targ.</td>
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<td>TNK</td>
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<td>Vulg.</td>
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<td>YLT</td>
<td><em>Young’s Literal Translation</em></td>
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<td>AJT</td>
<td><em>Asia Journal of Theology</em></td>
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<td>AnB</td>
<td>Analecta Biblica Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>ArtS</td>
<td>The Artscroll Tanach Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATD</td>
<td>Acta Teologica Danca Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td><em>Bulletin of American School of Oriental Research</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BETL</td>
<td><em>Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>Biblische Gestalten Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td><em>Biblica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BI</td>
<td>Biblical Interpretation</td>
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<td>BR</td>
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<td>BS</td>
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<td>BTB</td>
<td><em>Biblical Theology Bulletin</em></td>
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<td>BWANT</td>
<td>Beitrage zur Wissenschaft vom alten und neuen Testament</td>
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<td>BZ</td>
<td>Biblische Zeitschrift</td>
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<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<td>CBOT</td>
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<td>ETL</td>
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<td>YJS</td>
<td>Yale Judaica Series</td>
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<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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This dissertation examines some of the stories in 1 Sam. 16—25 with the particular focus placed on Saul, Doeg, Nabal and the “son of Jesse.” It seeks to discover new meaning in the structure as well as in the characters’ functions in the narratives by studying the stories synchronically and diachronically.

One of the mysterious characters in 1 Samuel that has puzzled many a scholar is Nabal the Calebite. This study offers a new scrutiny of his person by paying closer attention to the elements of Nabal’s characterization in 1 Sam. 25 and by considering the role of the geographic setting in providing a contextual backdrop against which the actions of all of the characters of the narrative in general and Nabal in particular can be better understood. Additionally, in order to perceive who Nabal really was and to penetrate deeper into the nature of his abuses of the “son of Jesse,” an attempt is made to read the story against the background of the political environment during the latter period of Saul’s reign.

Much in the same way this work studies the function of the character of Doeg the Edomite in 1 Sam. 21 and 22. A few elements of Doeg’s characterization contribute to the mystery of his person. This work aims to offer a solution to the puzzle of Doeg’s identity and explain the nature of his relationship with King Saul as well as his role in 1 Sam. 21—22 by focusing on three areas of his characterization: his Edomite origin, his particular business in Nob and his official status in Saul’s court.

The phrase the “son of Jesse” is quite important in 1 Samuel and serves a particular purpose in the thematic development in the second half of the book. Viewed against the background of the Saul/David relationship, it underscores the superiority of the Davidic person in advancing the divine plan for the nation of Israel. Saul’s negative use of the phrase is a sign of his rebellion against Yahweh. Equally, Doeg and Nabal, who join the king in persecuting David, infuse the phrase with additional negative elements.

The determination of the historical context for the making of the book(s) of Samuel is the key to understanding the multilayered messages embedded in the stories. All of the main characters in 1 Sam. 16—25 appear to be typical, as the events themselves are carriers of the deep meaning. This study makes an attempt to determine the purposes of the writer(s) of the book(s) of Samuel by paying closer attention to the various patterns in the structure of 1 Sam. 16—25. The roles of history and ideology in making these stories are also considered with the proposal that the making of the book(s) of Samuel after the Exile (5th c. B.C.) might have been instigated by the writer’s desire to create the context needed for further development of the messianic ideas.
FOREWORD

My interest in the stories of the books of Samuel began several years ago when I was a student at Dallas Theological Seminary. Numerous lively discussions in classroom about King David stirred my personal interest about that character. Among the numerous narratives in the books of Samuel, a few stories in the book of 1 Samuel were especially attractive. The story of 1 Sam. 25 appeared particularly striking. This was due to the fact that, while the story is well known, it is also in many ways unusual, unique and even controversial. The plot of the story is more dynamic and more complex than surrounding stories. The action of the story moves forward, though in a slightly different manner. It breaks the familiar pattern and offers another perspective on the behavioral pattern of the king in waiting; it gives an insight into his psyche and it paints a portrait of a very aggressive person. This portrait of David is not completely unfamiliar to the reader, to be sure. The reader has already seen him courageously looking the trouble in face (ch. 17). However, since the moral issues that are being dealt with in this story constantly bordering on the extreme (from courtesy to scorning; from wrath to love), some problems are imbedded in it as well. The triangular relationship between David, Abigail and Nabal is not well balanced and is particularly wanting on the side of Nabal. The narrator criticizes him from the outset but supplies no details as to what the character has done, while the actions of the other two are praiseworthy on one level while open to criticism on another. One of the goals of this study, therefore, was to undertake a more thorough investigation of the story and all of the actions of the characters in it.

In the process of this study, similar questions have arisen about another character who also was southerner – Doeg the Edomite. Just as is the case with Nabal, David does not have a face-to-face encounter with this character either. The contact between the two happens through the intermediary agents. Inasmuch as a modern reader wants to know who Doeg was, this person is a “riddle wrapped in mystery inside an enigma.” His close association with Saul and his action as the executioner of the religious order presented a sufficient ground for further inquiry into his mystifying character and into the significance concealed in his actions.
Furthermore, both stories seemed to share a few common features on different levels. Both Doeg and Nabal were southerners; they showed similar attitude toward the “son of Jesse,” even the phraseology in their speeches is alike. The intricacies of their relationship with Saul begged to be investigated.

I began my inquiry into their relationship to King Saul under the working title “Doeg, Nabal and Saul: Readings in 1 Sam. 21, 22 and 25.” As the research continued, however, it became increasingly clear that one cannot get a complete picture of what is going on in these stories without acknowledging multiple literary ties of these stories with earlier material in 1 Samuel. When a particular focus was placed upon the usage of the phrase the “son of Jesse,” it became apparent that the narrator’s development of this phrase needed to be investigated. Naturally, the scope of the study had to be broadened to include the stories starting with 1 Sam. 16. After a close investigation of the stories in 1 Sam. 21 and 22, it also became evident that these stories are thematically dependant on the material in the preceding chapter 20, but the actions described in the latter chapter are also thematically connected to chapter 19 and 18, but these, in turn, depend on the material in ch. 17 and 16.

Consequently, to state the purpose of the present thesis a new title was adopted: “Saul, Doeg, Nabal and the ‘Son of Jesse’: Readings in 1 Samuel 16—25.”

Several acknowledgements are in order at this time. Many thanks are due to the supervisors who advised me through the process of writing this thesis. From the very start Professor Dr. Graeme A. Auld was the encourager and overseer of the entire work. The necessity for validation and proof has been one of the greatest lessons he taught me in performing this academic exercise. I am grateful to him for convincing me of the importance of a working knowledge of German in the academic studies of the Hebrew Bible and for his suggestion that take advantage of the opportunity to study at the University of Tübingen, Germany. In this, special thanks Dr. Nick Adams is in order as well.

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Edinburgh,
December 18, 2006
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introductory Remarks

“To know wisdom and instruction, to discern intricate utterance” – begins the writer of the book of the Proverbs. Wisdom was always sought-after in all cultures at all times. It had a unique place in the life of ancient Israel where wisdom and knowledge were thought to be divine in origin (Pr. 2:6; 8:22-31). In that culture it was understood that mortal men were the recipients of this gift only in so far as they were able to gain it from the Creator. It was believed that a proper relationship with that source ensured the reception of divine wisdom and enlightenment (Pr. 1:7a; cf. Ps. 27:1) and taught that those who had a special favor of the Creator would receive His insight into the secret things – the things that would adequately explain the existence and life, its purpose and destiny. “The sayings of the wise are like goads, like nails fixed in prodding sticks. They were given by one Shepherd,” says Ecclesiastes 12:11 (TNK). The ability to comprehend the tongue of the wise men was also a gift in its own right. The latter, however, had to be sharpened through disciplined learning and patience. “To understand a proverb and enigmatic saying, the words of the wise and their riddles” was the task of every serious student who stepped on the road toward wisdom and knowledge, for “only Fools (יִלָּכֵּים) despise wisdom and instruction” (Pr.1:7).

One should not suppose, however, that only a certain portion of the Hebrew Bible labeled as “wisdom literature” is the storehouse of biblical wisdom. Every part of HB is skillfully formed by sophisticated and thorough thoughtfulness of the ancient writers; the narrative portions of HB are skillfully and intelligently shaped. However, if the writers of Hebrew “wisdom literature” searched out delightful words (דברי-רפיים) pregnant with meaning in order to present the truth in a very succinct manner (Eccl. 12:10), the writers of the Hebrew narratives spelled out
the truth in the true-to-life stories. Wisdom in those narratives, therefore, is spread out over vast territories of biblical texts and needs to be collected piece by piece. Indeed, the narratives of HB can be perceived as an artful mosaic in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. A patient investigation can move a student of the ancient texts one step closer to the discovery of wisdom concealed in the narratives. It will bring one nearer to the realization that the apparently “still text” manifests liveliness when one learns that separate units of narrative are able to interact with each other in a very unique way. In other words, the narratives of HB are a very vibrant expression of Hebrew thought and wisdom, but a great deal of good judgment and discernment is required in order to recognize and to explain their function in a composition.

The purpose of this work is an attempt to expose some of these meaningful elements embedded in the stories of 1 Sam. 16—25. It is the intention of this writer to demonstrate that the material in question was carefully selected by the ancient writer(s), that every individual unit serves its own purpose, and that the laconicism is a well-thought-through part in the narrators’ storytelling – it sustains the narratives individually and ensures their communication with each other on multiple levels. As such, it speaks of unity and purpose. It is that voice of biblical wisdom that cuts through the mysterious darkness of time and history (cf. Eccl. 7:24) and continues speaking to a modern reader with the energy and power that causes one to grow in appreciation of the talents of the biblical narrative-wisdom writers who were being led by one Shepherd.

The primary focus of this work is the analysis of the function of four characters: Saul, Doeg, Nabal and David, the son of Jesse, in 1 Sam. 16—25. Within that portion of the book of 1 Samuel, special attention will be paid to the characterization of Doeg and Nabal. Their unique closeness with King Saul will establish a platform on which their individual antagonistic attitudes toward the “son of Jesse” will be analyzed.

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1 Speaking about the “wisdom literature” and its relationship with narrative portions in the HB it is of some importance also to recognize the relationship between the book of Samuel and Psalms. The correspondence between the texts under this investigation is striking (1 Sam. 21, 22 ↔ Ps. 52; 1 Sam. 25 ↔ Ps. 53; 1 Sam. 26 ↔ Ps. 54).
As a way of introduction to the discussions that will follow, recent approaches in studying the narratives in 1 Sam. 21, 22 and 25 will be reviewed. The story of 1 Sam. 25 in particular generated a lot of interest and lively discussions among the students of HB in the last few decades. It appears to be a good place to start this study as well. A brief summary of scholarly views about 1 Sam. 25 will expose some of the complexities associated with the readings of the narratives in the book(s) of Samuel. The discussion about the difficulties and tensions in studying the stories in 1 Sam. 21 and 22 will follow and the intricate complexity associated with different readings of the text in MT, versions of LXX, Q and Josephus will be noted.

Various Approaches to 1 Sam. 25

The following is a brief survey of the most common approaches in the study of 1 Sam. 25: the historical/critical and the literary approach.

A. Historical/Critical Approaches to 1 Samuel 25

Throughout the years scholars have tried to determine the main point of the story in 1 Sam. 25. Several factors influenced their interpretative decisions. On the one hand, comparing this narrative with the rest of the material of 1 Samuel some noted that the story seems to be out of place and, as a comprehensive literary unit, it does not necessarily have special allegiances to the ideological presentation of the rest of the material in 1 Samuel. Thus, not only the note about Samuel’s death and David’s journey to the wilderness of Paran are thought to be out of place; the story itself breaks a familiar pattern of portraying David as an innocent person and is the first to expose a dark side in his character. Consequently, many thought that a much more appropriate place for this sophisticated portrait of David was to hang it on a

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wall that was designated for the redaction material.  

Polzin comments: “If ‘these chapters (24, 25, 26) show David being saved from himself, or rather from the consequences of deeds potentially disastrous to his own interests,’ and if in all three chapters ‘David refrains from violence against an enemy,’ then, indeed, such repetition inclines many interpreters to fond thoughts of redaction.”

On the other hand, others were convinced that 1 Sam. 25 is encased in 24—26 by design, as the numerous links with the contiguous chapters indicate. Having noted this relationship, some were led to conclude that all three chapters “comprise a narrative unit that, like Abigail herself, has discretion and good judgment, quite apart from any literary-historical considerations.” However, as can also be gathered from more recent discussions, the acknowledgement of the existing literary links between all three chapters does not completely solve the puzzle; a consensus about the story’s point is yet to be reached.

Considering the amount of time invested in the research in the book(s) of Samuel, one might think (as some do) that by now the majority of scholars agree about the broad areas of the composition of 1 Sam. 25, namely, 1) that “it is a relatively self-contained, unified account representing a tradition predating the Deuteronomistic History,” 2) that it has been mainly influenced by the so-called “Ancestral Narratives,” and 3) that it was introduced in the text primarily for apologetic reasons in the corpus of the HDR. The facts, however, witness to the contrary. Not only do scholars continue to debate the above mentioned points and the extent of literary unity of the material that constitutes the books of Samuel, but also many a student of the narratives in the book(s) of Samuel undertake literary

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3 Nübel does not believe that 1 Sam. 25 belongs with chs. 24 and 26 but was inserted to blur the parallelism of the contiguous stories. He rather thinks that ch. 25 is closer to ch. 23 through the geographical reference of “Maon” (Hans-Ulrich Nübel, Davids Aufstieg in der frühe israelitischer Geschichtsschreibung [Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universitat, 1959], 40-41). In his assertion he follows Otto Eissfeldt, Die Komposition der Samuelisbücher (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1931), 19.


5 Ibid., 205.


7 Zakovitch sees 1 Sam 25 mirroring 2 Sam. 11f, through which young David is compared with King David (cited by Johannes Klein, David versus Saul: Ein Beitrag zum Erzählsystem der Samuelbücher, BWANT 8 [Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2002], 163). Klein finds parallels between Abigail’s speech and the speech of the woman of Tekoa in 2 Sam. 14 (Ibid.: 164).
analysis to see if that approach is able to give answers to the source-critical questions.

Biddle’s recent article “Ancestral Motifs in 1 Samuel 25: Intertextuality and Characterization” can be taken as an example of the latest development. While he speaks about these three areas mentioned above, on which he thinks scholars agree, he still wants to offer “an alternative understanding of the account” undertaking a literary analysis and identifying some parallels between the book of Samuel and Genesis. First, he questions the historical value of 1 Sam. 25 because the story appears to be complex, which “seems more consistent with literary artifice than oral tradition.” He thinks that “with respect to the intriguing question of the direction of dependence, the intertextual intricacies embodied in 1 Sam. 25, and in particular the resulting ironic portrayal of David, suggest patriarchal tradition.”

He proceeds to conclude that the redactor who was responsible for including chapter 25 in 1 Samuel was not at all interested in “exonerating” David. Finally, having identified a unique parallelism between certain stories of Genesis and 1 Sam. 25, he goes on to question 1 Sam. 25 being the work of either J or J/E. Biddle is quite certain that “allusions to the AN betray dependence on the text of Genesis in an advanced stage of its development or the reverse, on one hand, and a level of literary artifice, on the other, that seems to suggest a very deliberate literary effort.” Thus, based on the literary parallels and relations that he identified, he joined some interpreters who suggested Samuel’s dependence on Genesis. Others, however, see it the other way around.

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid. Italics are mine.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 636. Italics are mine.
Indeed, many similarities between the material of Genesis and Samuel are striking, but all of the parallels that exist between Genesis/Samuel, Samuel/Kings and Chronicles need to be examined on the individual basis. While these parallels are interesting, it is far from certain that there are sufficient grounds to claim dependence. Biddle’s own admission, in my opinion, is important. He says that if one is to understand the relationship between Genesis and Samuel in terms of “political allegory” then, noting the links between various parts of Genesis and the 1 Sam. 25 narrative, “1 Samuel 25 would have been the source for almost the entirety of the Jacob account!”¹⁵

How are the sources of 1 Sam. 25 to be ascertained or how can the time when it was written be determined? It must be acknowledged at the outset that the question of the influences and processes in forming the biblical literary compositions is too complex to explain in a paragraph or two. Nevertheless, the fact that Biddle is resolved to turn to literary analyses to make a judgment about the time of the composition is worth noting. Each of the steps that he takes that eventually leads him to his conclusion, however, is underpinned by unwarranted assumptions. Biddle thinks 1 Sam. 25 to be completely the work of a Deuteronomistic theologian, who invented the story to “undercut the surface-level portrayal of David found in 1 Sam. 24 and 26.”¹⁶ He says that “the only historical datum distillable from the account is David’s marriage to Abigail,”¹⁷ and yet he fails to demonstrate why the rest of the story has to be considered fictional.

Secondly, Biddle does not explain why the apparent parallels with selected Genesis narratives must be a proof that one account is dependent on the other. He may identify Nabal with Laban, but he does not offer any further suggestions as to how the unenviable qualities of one of the characters of Genesis should help a reader to solve the mystery of Nabal’s identity, or how this identification helps one to better understand Nabal’s function in the story and vice versa.

Further, Biddle fails to demonstrate how and why David’s actions in 1 Sam. 25 are damaging to his overall portrait. Consequently, the subsequent

¹⁶ Ibid., 636-37.
¹⁷ Ibid., 636
discussions that lead to his conclusion about the time of 1 Sam. 25 composition are far from convincing. He says that “no clear pattern of interpolations or editorial changes is evident” in this story, and yet, affirming the fact that David and Abigail are historical, Biddle says that the author has altered the information about “the name of Abigail’s husband to the ridiculous Nabal/Churl, thereby personifying a major theme of the account.”18 If the writer of 1 Sam. 25 had to alter the name of Abigail’s real husband, then that implies that there was a real person whose name had to be altered. Consequently, if the writer knew the story firsthand, then he could have known the real person’s name, but that would imply an early composition, which Biddle tries to disprove. If, however, the writer changed the name from the source he had in his possession (written or oral), he has redacted it – the fact which Biddle finds hard to accept.

More importantly though, while Biddle recognizes the existing literary ties between the book(s) of Samuel and Genesis, he still is not sure about the main point of the 1 Sam. 25 story. What is worth noting, however, is that the conclusion he arrives at did not come as the result of his understanding of the role external factors may or may not have played in forming and introducing the story to the book of 1 Samuel (for instance, how Jacob’s story helped the writer of Samuel to create the portraits of the main characters in 1 Sam. 25, if Samuel’s dependence on Genesis is assumed). Neither is he able to locate the story’s center of gravity by attempting to approach the composition from the standpoint of a Deuteronomistic editor.

Still, the theories about the composition of 1 Sam. 25 affect to some extent the way the narrative is being handled. Thus, some scholars suggest that since the stories of 1 Samuel were most likely circulated as independent oral traditions,19 which were later combined in one book to give them some aesthetic form, links between contiguous stories, if they exist at all, are only incidental. So, 1 Sam. 25

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rather illustrates the disjointedness of the material in 1 Samuel.\textsuperscript{20} Therefore, 1 Sam. 25 as “a self-contained narrative unit which achieves its dramatic effect by the skillful interweaving of dialogue and by contrasts of character[s]”\textsuperscript{21} and, as such, a “masterpiece of Hebrew narrative,”\textsuperscript{22} can stand on its own and needs to be studied independently. Nonetheless, as Fokkelman rightly noted, “there has as yet been no satisfactory answer to why it is such a masterpiece.”\textsuperscript{23} Making this comment, Fokkelman most likely had literary features of the narrative in mind, which he also tried to address, scrupulously analyzing every one of its 144 lines and making an attempt to fit each word into one single structure of 1 Sam. 25. Even so, his comment could be taken as applicable to a larger question of the narrative’s inclusion in the 1 Samuel account.

\section*{B. Literary Approaches to 1 Samuel 25}

Almost a century ago some scholars studying the narratives of HB were quite convinced that “the books of Samuel offer a \textit{locus classicus} for testing the worthlessness of the so-called literary method.”\textsuperscript{24} How times have changed. Since Alter published his work \textit{A Literary Approach to the Bible} (1975), the field of biblical narratives has seen a dramatic shift in scholarly focus. Since then, many substantial works have been produced dealing with literary features of the biblical texts.\textsuperscript{25} The studies of the biblical stories in terms of the narrative’s settings, plot, 

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{20} Koch, \textit{The Growth of the Biblical Tradition}, 132-56.
\item\textsuperscript{24} Harold M. Wiener, “Review of L. Rost: \textit{Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids},” \textit{JPOS} 7, no. 3 (1927): 135-41, [137].
characterization, etc., resulted in the discovery of the textual elements that were previously unaccounted for and offered a fresh perspective on the familiar texts.

One of the most preferred tools in studying biblical narratives, and especially the books of Samuel, was the tool of the so-called “narrative analogy.” This is not at all surprising, because HB is full of metaphors – an abridged form of analogy. It is often said that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Perhaps it is one of the reasons why biblical writers often have not merely supplied the facts in a story, but rather told it in such a manner that their audience would grasp ideas and truths as well as facts. Fischer explains the worth of analogies as a significant part of human experience:

Analogies are . . . useful and ornamental in the articulation of ideas. They can do so in an internal way, by promoting an unconscious or inchoate inference into the realm of rationality within a single mind. And they also operate externally, as a vehicle for the transference of thought from one mind to another. Analogies can brilliantly reinforce a reasoned argument. They suggest and persuade, inform and illustrate, communicate and clarify. They are versatile and effective pedagogical tools.

Fischer concludes: “Without analogies, creative thought and communication as we know it would not be merely impracticable but inconvincible.”

The proper understanding of the role and function of the narrative analogies in HB, therefore, can help to discern and comprehend the scope of the
message of the biblical writers. As it turns out, the overall value of the text increases proportionally to the recognition of multiple layers of meaning, sophisticatedly operating in a given narrative segment.

In the biblical scholarship of previous years narrative analogy was defined as “a device whereby the narrator can provide an internal commentary on the action which he is describing, usually by means of cross-reference to an earlier action or speech.”

Though this approach was not a novelty in literary critical studies, it was adopted by biblical scholars only in fairly recent times. As a tool it was especially preferred by critical scholars who were trying to penetrate through the surface-structure analysis. In hope of the discovery of additional layers of meaning in the text, the relationships within larger literary units were also sought.

The use of narrative analogy in biblical scholarship, which gained popularity in the biblical studies after Gordon’s initial study “David’s Rise and Saul’s Demise: Narrative Analogy in 1 Samuel 24—26” (1980), was already anticipated in Alter’s earlier work: *A Literary Approach to the Bible* (1975). With regards to the 1 Sam. 25 narrative, however, it was first put into practice, to some extent, by Levenson in his “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History” (1978). The latter writer, calling narrative analogy to aid, states: “In a proper consideration of any narrative unit, the critic must ask why the unit is placed where it is and where other units comment upon it, implicitly or otherwise.” Nevertheless, it was Gordon who noted its practical usefulness especially when a student of the text faces interpretative challenges of any given narrative segment. Looking at 1 Sam. 25 in its relationship with the surrounding material, he was convinced that the role of 1 Sam. 25 in the book of Samuel was more than just to “blur” the parallelism of the contiguous stories. Applying narrative analogy techniques to the study of 1 Sam. 25 and its neighboring stories, he discovered that “narratives [were] made to interact in ways which may not be immediately apparent.”

Gordon noted that various themes in chs. 24 and 26 continue developing even in ch. 25 despite the fact that Saul himself

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29 Two decades before Gordon published his article, Nübel was certain that “K. 25 ist jetzt zwischen K. 24 und 26 geschoben, um die Parallelität zu verwischen” (Nübel, *Davids Aufstieg*, 41).
is absent from the story.  

He tried to demonstrate that in ch. 25 Nabal was functioning in Saul’s stead. In Gordon’s own words,

Narrative analogy, we submit, provides an important clue to the relationship between 1 Samuel 25, which tells the story of Nabal, and the contiguous chapters, which treat of David’s sparing of Saul. The point can be expressed in the simple equation: Nabal = Saul. Saul does not vanish from view in 1 Samuel 25; he is Nabal’s alter ego. 

The years that followed saw a renewal of interest in literary studies of 1 Sam. 25. Though not everyone was immediately taken by this approach (see below), the majority of OT scholars had to agree with Gordon that “at some point we shall take refuge in analogy.” If statistics can give any insight into the matter, this “refuge” in the last two decades has seen not a few visitors. The existence of

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31 Whether independently from Gordon or otherwise, Gunn also noted: “While the episode treats the action of David only and not Saul, the King is continually the object of thematic reference. Thus Saul, though absent, is never far distant” (King Saul [1980], 96).


34 Gordon, “David's Rise and Saul's Demise,” 63. Italics are mine.

35 Some used narrative analogy in their study of 1 Sam. 25 more extensively, while others noted only some parallels. Nevertheless, the list can be represented as follows: Gunn, “The Fate of King Saul,” 96; Berlin, Characterization in Biblical Narrative, 84; R. P. Gordon, I & 2 Samuel
multiple literary ties between the character of Saul and Nabal seemed significant enough to convince at least some that the key to understanding 1 Sam. 25 has been found. Thus, it was thought that the main purpose of 1 Sam. 25 was discovered with the help of the adjacent stories.36

Among those who came to appreciate the uses of narrative analogy in studying 1 Sam. 25, there was a group of scholars who thought that the purpose of chapter 25 was precisely the opposite. Thus, some believed that it was 1 Sam. 25 that shed light on the neighboring stories. The story’s significance was not that it blurred the parallelism of the contiguous stories, but rather that it clarified the relationship. Berlin had to say this about 1 Sam. 25 and its relationship to the neighboring chapters:

The plot, as well as the characters, is unrealistic. It could be reduced to: ‘fair maiden’ Abigail is freed from the ‘wicked ogre’ and marries ‘prince charming’. This suggests that this is not just another episode in the biography of David, but an exemplum. Chapter 25 presents more abstractly the theme found in chapters 24 and 26—David has the power to kill but declined to use it.37

Thus, it can be seen that as far as the uses of narrative analogy go, the role of 1 Sam. 25 was seen as a two-way street, as it were – an understanding that affirms the existence of intricate connections and parallels within the 1 Sam. 24—26 stories. What these discussions demonstrated is that narrative analogy can be a helpful and useful tool in discovering the multifaceted dimensions of the narrative texts of HB.

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36 Walter Dietrich and Thomas Naumann (Die Samuelbuccher, 107), called 1 Sam. 24—26 a “trilogy.” The latter also employ the term “Triptichon” (102). So also Klein, David versus Saul, 163. 37 Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, 31. Italics are mine.
In underscoring usefulness of narrative analogy techniques, the mischief of this particular approach which arises out of its abuses shall be stated also. These can be detected if one carefully analyses the process of narrative analogy used by Gordon and as well as by those who adopted this approach. It is not my purpose to give a detailed critique of the work of the latter writers. I will confine myself here only to focusing on the step that led to some false conclusions.

The problem is not with the method itself. All of the analogous relationships that have been outlined seem to be informative, helpful and useful. The problem sometimes arises when too much stress is put on apparent similarities between Saul and Nabal while ignoring the significant differences between them. Consequently, the identification of Saul with Nabal in 1 Sam. 25 led straight to the fallacy of the perfect analogy, which, according to Fischer, “consists in reasoning from a partial resemblance between two entities to an entire and exact correspondence.”

Now if Gordon was willing to “take refuge” in narrative analogy and stop there, others were compelled to take a further step, and conclude that the story of 1 Sam. 25 is nothing but an allegory. Thus Green, in her analysis of 1 Sam. 24—26, in which she believes “the middle chapter is [a] careful dialogue with its two surrounding chapters,” states that “as syntax suggests, it goes disjunctive and lateral rather than forward, and so makes an odd fit between the stories involving pursuit of Saul and David.” She continues: “The prominence of pursuit, especially in ch. 25, makes more obvious the more subtle dance enclosing it, shows more boldly the unthinkable: the slaying of the reigning king, especially by his successor.” As it appears, a leap from what Berlin called an “exemplum” to Green’s “allegory” was not very significant after all. Green does not stop here, but continuing in the same direction, she makes an even bolder suggestion that “the material of ch. 25 is the dream of Saul… He dreams it and others act in it in relation to him,” comparing 1 Sam. 25 with 26. Again, it is important to note that this conclusion puts too heavy an emphasis on the similarities between Nabal and Saul. When too much stock is

38 Fischer, Fallacies, 247.
39 Green, “Enacting Imaginatively the Unthinkable,” 4-5.
40 This language was first employed by Jobling, (1 Samuel, 92, 152, 158) and so also by Biddle (“Ancestral Motifs,” 636) and Green (How Are the Mighty Fallen, 393).
41 Green, “Enacting Imaginatively the Unthinkable,” 6-7.
placed on the existing resemblances between Saul and Nabal at the expense of ignoring the existing differences between them, it inevitably leads to the fallacy of the perfect analogy — an erroneous inference that since Saul and Nabal are similar in some respects, in 1 Sam. 25 they are, therefore, one and the same in all respects.

Perhaps these considerations, led many a student of the text, early on, to exercise more discernment in considering the benefits of this particular approach. Nicol, for example, thinks that Gordon “lays too forceful a stress on the role identification of Nabal and Saul.” He, in my opinion, rightly observes that “Nabal is no cipher for Saul.” He also says that one must view Nabal only as “a subject who must choose between Saul and David.” Fokkelman too rejects Gordon’s idea “that psychologically Saul and Nabal are geminate’ and that Nabal is a ‘reflex,’ ‘the alter ego’ of Saul.” He considers Gordon’s arguments “weak,” as he finds the Nabal identification with Saul “too simplistic.” He goes on to say that, “1 Samuel draws a many-sided portrait of Saul, while Nabal is disqualified by the narrator in advance in v. 3.”

Now this discussion comes full circle to where it began: What is the best approach in studying 1 Sam. 25? How can one know which analogies to choose and how does one discern which is better? Strictly speaking, there are no “bad analogies,” but only the misuse of it that arises out of faulty inference or motive. In other words, there is such a thing as a “false analogy.” Nevertheless, it begs the question: Why is this story in the book of Samuel and what is its function? Would not the stories of 1 Sam. 24 and 26 be as clear as they are without the help of 1 Sam. 25? Conversely, why would chapter 25 have to depend either on 24 or 26 or both for its meaning? As a self-contained literary piece, does 1 Sam. 25 have its own self-contained point? If so, what is it and what is the criteria that would guide one’s search for better answers?

While the established practical benefits of narrative analogy applications in biblical scholarship speak for themselves, one cannot but agree with Fischer who

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44 A “bad analogy” would constitute only an analogy that failed to demonstrate any agreement, affiliation, similarity or parallel, etc. between two different objects.
45 See Fischer, Fallacies, 243-59.
said: “Any intelligent use of analogy must begin with a sense of its limits… If there
were no dissimilarities, we would have an identity rather than an analogy.”

Narrative analogy should be used as an auxiliary to a search for meaning. For in
biblical research, just as in any other discipline, the first question that needs to be
asked is not whether such and such a thing is possible, but rather if such and such a
thing is meaningful, followed by the next important question: “To what end?”

In light of these considerations and before any new approach to studying
1 Sam. 25 can be undertaken, the scope of the existing views in the interpretation of
1 Sam. 25 needs to be briefly analyzed. Broadly speaking, coming to the field of 1
Sam. 25, scholars bring along three sets of different lenses, as it were. It is
commonly held that the purpose of the story is to tell readers something about David
or Abigail or even Nabal. The emphases on each of these characters also provide a
platform on which discussions are set up. Depending on which one of the three
positions one assumes, the next step, to look beyond the literary features, appears
either necessary or less so. For the sake of brevity, this discussion will be limited
only to a summary of the most popular arguments.

1. David as the Hero of the Story

One of the most popular positions is the one that continues to read the
story from David’s perspective. However, there are some differences of opinion as
to how one is to view David in this particular instance. Some see him in a more or

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46 Ibid., 258-59.
47 Only the most common views will be examined in the main text. Among more general
views is the explanation that the story is about “how God protects or restrains his own” (C. F. Keil,
The Books of Samuel, KDCOT, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866-91; reprint, Hendrickson,
1996], 526; J. Carl Laney, First and Second Samuel [Chicago: Moody Press, 1982], 74; Howard F.
Vos, 1, 2 Samuel, Bible Study Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], 83; Dale Ralph Davis,
1 Samuel [Fearn: Christian Focus Publ., 2003], 208). Mowvley says that this chapter illustrates the
tension between the justice and the love of God (Harry Mowvley, 1 & 2 Samuel, The People’s Bible
Commentary [Oxford: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 1998], 112). Evans thinks it continues the
development of the theme of power and its exercise (Evans, 1 and 2 Samuel, 112). Miscall notes that
the story “is not so much about the restraint of power as about the exercise of power under the thin
veil of a rhetoric of restraint” (Peter D. Miscall, J Samuel: A Literary Reading [Bloomington: Indiana
University Press, 1986], 156). Cartledge states that the 1 Sam. 25 is about names (Tony W. Cartledge,
1 & 2 Samuel [Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2001], 298). Payne does not explicitly state his view about
the purpose of the story, but affirms that “David was no criminal,” though he also says that his actions
in the story were “morally wrong” (David F. Payne, 1 & 2 Samuel, DSB: OT, vol. 9 [Louisville:
Westminster John Knox Press, 1982], 130). Chafin, more broadly, suggests that 1 Sam. 25 illustrates
physical needs of the future king living in the wilderness (Kenneth L. Chafin, 1, 2 Samuel, ed. Lloyd
less positive light saying that he “almost” committed a criminal act here; others view him definitely in a negative light affirming the fact that his actions are condemnable. Without going into great detail, each of the major views will be analyzed in turn.

a) Positive Views

Trying to determine the purpose of the story, scholars highlight different sides of David. Defending David’s actions in this story Greßmann interprets the entire story from the perspective of the *Holy Wars* David was fighting.\(^{48}\) Thus, after David left the king’s court and was able to gather a significant body of people around himself, he continued to fight the Lord’s battles, fulfilling his responsibility. Most likely David viewed this duty as a divine assignment and as a privilege, both of which moved him to action; he did not view it necessarily from the standpoint of King Saul’s favor (cf. 1 Sam. 18:17).\(^{49}\) Greßmann also notes that just as in the case of Keilah and its inhabitants whom David was defending from attack by the Philistines, so now David was defending the flocks of Nabal in the wilderness of Judea.\(^{50}\) Greßmann’s observation is important to this thesis and will be further explored in due course.

Some view the story of 1 Sam. 25 as an excerpt from the HDR material, which also contains some additional elements (Abigail’s speech; vv. 28-31) that “looks beyond the history of David’s rise to the Deuteronomistic presentation of the dynastic promise to David in 2 Samuel 7.”\(^{51}\) Examining the narrative from political and theological standpoints, some maintain that the main portrait of David sustained no damage, though it came close to it. Further, looking at HDR thematically, McCarter is certain that it contains clear apologetic material in which “the author is speaking to one possible charge of wrongdoing after another in an attempt to demonstrate David’s innocence in the series of events that lead to his succession.”\(^{52}\) Consequently, pondering the main purpose of 1 Sam. 25 within HDR, McCarter

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\(^{48}\) Hugo Greßmann, *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments: die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetic Israels (von Samuel bis Amos und Hosea)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), 103. Stoebe seems to agree with Greßmann on this point (Stoebe, *Das erste Buch Samuelis*, 456).

\(^{49}\) The text of 18:17-19 is lacking in LXX\(^{8}\) but is represented by 1QSam.

\(^{50}\) See also Burton and Coffman, *Commentary on First Samuel*, 297-99.


\(^{52}\) Ibid.: 499.
concludes that it stands “in contrast to the many places earlier in our story in which he was saved from some external danger; these chapters (24, 25, 26) show David being saved from himself, or rather from the consequences of deeds potentially disastrous to his own interests.”

It should be mentioned that though McCarter notes some connections between contiguous chapters and 1 Sam. 25, he finds no need to turn to narrative analogy techniques to elucidate the point of the story. So, he summarizes the purpose of 1 Sam. 25 as being “about the education of a future king.”

Whitelam, likewise, sees no evil in David’s character in 1 Sam. 25. Though he does not state the purpose of 1 Sam. 25 up front, he examines David’s action in this story against the background of “the moral decline” of the kingdom of Saul that continues to gain momentum. Time and again Saul failed to focus his zeal in a proper place: instead of carrying out a complete destruction of Amalek, he destroyed Nob. From this angle Whitelam sees Abigail’s plea to David to withdraw his sword from Nabal’s household as central in importance to this story. By listening to the voice of godly advice, David proved to be a better leader than King Saul. So, according to Whitelam, the story was included in the book for comparative purposes.

Kessler too sees no evil in David’s character in 1 Sam. 25. He writes, “We find no narrative clue in 1 Samuel 25 that David’s deportment is illegitimate.”

To sustain this point, he mentions two others. First, he says that “David’s response to Nabal is rooted in categories of shame and honor.” In other words, David had a right to defend himself in light of Nabal’s grievous verbal assault on top of breaking the oriental laws of hospitality. Second, leaning on the work of Gordon, he believes that by way of narrative analogy the purpose of 1 Sam. 25 is recoverable: “David did not take the law into his own hands,” when he realized that bloodguilt “for anyone—even for a Nabal—could cast a shadow over David’s throne at a later stage.” So if one is to summarize the purpose of 1 Sam. 25 according to Kessler, the story

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53 P. Kyle McCarter, I Samuel: A New Translation, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 400. Italics are mine. By employing this word “saved” McCarter implies that at least David intentions were morally wrong. See also Cartledge, 1 & 2 Samuel, 292.
54 McCarter, I Samuel, 401. Italics are mine.
illustrates David’s right to defend his honor; he had a legitimate reason to get angry, though he overreacted a bit, for which he should not be judged. Kessler’s view appears to be somewhat contradictory, but he seems to be comfortable with it.

Others, however, believe that the point the narrator is trying to make in 1 Sam. 25 is to tell his audience how David got one of his wives.58 Ackroyd calls 1 Sam. 25 “a vivid and romantic story” which tells “how David came to marry the beautiful Abigail, formerly the wife of Nabal ‘the churl’.”59 Along somewhat similar lines Stoebe notes that the material of this narrative had its origin in a so-called “Family Story” and as such its purpose was to tell something about one of David’s wives. He says: “Es geht in dieser Familiengeschichte darum, zuzeigen, wie David eine Frau findet, wer und wie diese Frau ist, die eine ebenso für David wie für Nabal ausweglose Situation geistesgegenwärtig meistert.”60 Newsome seems to be in agreement with these two when after discussing the place and role of 1 Sam. 25:1a he says, “The balance of chap. 25 (vs. 1b-44) is devoted to a description of the manner in which David claimed as his bride a woman of the south, Abigail.”61 He shows solidarity with Stoebe’s view that “those who were responsible for first circulation and preservation of this story were probably interested in it primarily from a genealogical point of view,” but later Deuteronomistic editors injected it with a theological message. Gordon also seems to maintain the same when he says, “Ostensibly this chapter is about David’s acquisition of one of his wives, but it serves a far more important function in the way that it plots a decisive point in David’s psychological development.”62 To inquire into David’s psyche he is resolved to turn to the familiar narrative analogy techniques (see below).

60 Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuelis, 454. Though, to be sure, Stoebe also probes other possibilities which will be touched on later. Klein cites Willi-Plein who believes that this episode is “ein verbindendes Element der Davidhausgeschichte” (Klein, David versus Saul, 163).
However, why would this story (acquisition of the wife) should be viewed as central and was given the space of an entire chapter in 1 Samuel in light of the fact that Abigail’s role does not seem to go beyond this story is puzzling. The proposal that the main purpose of 1 Sam. 25 is about David’s marriage to Abigail seems to bring a certain misbalance to the rest of the book, and detours the main line presentation. Furthermore, at the end of the chapter the name of David’s other wife is given – Ahinoam of Jezreel about whom close to nothing is known.

Perhaps this was one of the reasons which caused other scholars to take another step and to make an attempt to penetrate through the literary layer in search of secret motives in David’s heart that he might have had when he married Abigail. Thus, David’s marriage to the widow of the Calebite chieftain is thought to have been a calculated political maneuver to attain the kingship at Hebron.63 Dealing with the issue of marriage with Abigail (and perhaps for the reasons stated above that not one but two of David’s wives are mentioned in the story), Levenson and Halpern also tried to include Ahinoam in their equation in an attempt to discover the purpose of 1 Sam. 25.

Jobling, however, looks at the role of both Abigail and Ahinoam from a different angle and suggests this:

Piecing together the allegorical correspondence between Saul and Nabal, and David’s taking in the same chapter another wife with the same name as Saul’s (Ahinoam in 25:43), I suggested that what the chapter may really be “about” is David’s stealing Saul’s wife—with her active collaboration, the Abigail story would seem to say.64

63 Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 24-28; Jon D. Levenson, and Baruch Halpern, “The Political Import of David’s Marriages,” JBL 99, no. 4 (1980): 507-18. Also see Halpern, David’s Secret Demons, 77. Schicklberger, however strangely, maintains that while Nabal and Abigail themselves were southerners, in the story they idealize the dwellers of the northern kingdom. He also maintains that the place like Carmel has less to do with the town in Judah, and more with the Mt. Carmel in the North (Franz Schicklberger, “Die Davididen und das Nordreich: Beobachtungen zur sog. Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids,” BZ 18 [1974]: 261). How he reconciles this with the note on the wilderness of Maon, where the action takes place, is hard to say. Nicholson too maintains that through his marriage with Abigail, David “allies himself with the northern peoples in addition to his alliance with Saul’s family” (Sarah Nicholson, Three Faces of Saul: An Intertextual Approach to Biblical Tragedy, JSOTSup 339 [London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002], 193, italics are mine).

64 Jobling, I Samuel, 152, 158.
Thus, Jobling appears to imply that not only Nabal stands in allegorical parallel to Saul, but also Abigail stands in allegorical parallel to Ahinoam. However, as was noted above, there are problems with interpreting the characters in 1 Sam. 25 allegorically.

b) Negative Views

While it is unnecessary and redundant to list here every reason why some scholars view the character of David negatively, for the purposes of this work a sketch of the views will suffice. The attacks on David in 1 Samuel in general and in 1 Sam. 25 in particular come either directly, from a general negative perception of his portrait acquired through the reading of Samuel and Kings or indirectly, through a comparison of this chapter with the material that lies immediately before and after it. The particular elements of David’s portrait in this story are used to interpret his actions elsewhere.

The attacks on David begin with labeling his character – a work that inevitably affects other persons that were at any time and in any way associated with him or showed any solidarity and support. This literary reconstruction follows by coloring his portrait quite outside of the lines permitted by the text. For this job dark colors are usually preferred. Since the general portrait of David in HB seems to some too good to be true, David’s story is being read “between the lines” in order to fill the gaps of this highly “exaggerated” stereotype. Halpern, for example, quite deliberately sets out to contemplate David’s portrait “as his enemies saw him.” He highlights the inward qualities of David by inserting subtle titles such as “murderer” and “traitor” among the more familiar “messiah” and “king.” Of a similar opinion is Ishida, who believes that David was causing constant problems in Saul’s kingdom, thus making it necessary for Saul to wage a war against this “opportunist” and a

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65 Cargill sees David as a “bandit” not only here in 1 Sam. 25 but everywhere else, as he thinks that the biblical portrait of David serves the purposes of ideological and theological propaganda (Jack Cargill, “David in History: A Secular Approach,” Judaism 35 [1986]: 211-22). See also Halpern, David's Secret Demons, 77.

66 Thus Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, 30.

67 Halpern, David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King, xv. However, he does take the fact into account that while “murderer” and “traitor” would have been among the preferred titles of David’s enemies, “messiah” and “God’s chosen king” would have been avoided.
“rebel.” Despite his cunning acts (23:22), serpent-like shrewdness, and lying tongue (20:6; 21:3[2]), God still chooses the “bandit,” and then protects and defends this ruthless “Mafioso.” What is more, when David clearly crossed the moral lines, instead of punishing him, God strikes the innocent for the sake of His chosen one. David thanks Him for it; innocent people (like Nabal) suffer. Viewed from this perspective, the “good” does not look good anymore; “evil” is no more evil, because the retribution of Nabal is not decided on moral grounds. As a result of such a reading “against the grain” the moral quality of what traditionally was thought to be “positive” elements of David’s characterization is also being questioned. This exercise of reconstructing David’s character changes the entire panorama of how the characters and their actions are perceived. When things are thus turned around, all of David’s enemies appear as victims of his unrestrained passion and drive for power backed up by divine favoritism. It must be noted, however, that this view is maintained by suppressing other elements, such as the fact that not only Nabal’s words, but also his name, epitomize sin.

c) Narrative Analogy

Most often, however, David’s actions in 1 Sam. 25 are looked at through the lens of narrative analogy. Many observe a seeming reversal in the exceptionally good presentation of David. When the mask of piety is stripped from his face, he appears to be a man who is ready to kill for a grudge. The camp of scholars who see narrative analogy as one of the most helpful aids to recover the purpose of 1 Sam. 25 is divided on those who view David negatively, and those who adopt a more positive view.

The use of narrative analogy applied to 1 Sam. 25 that resulted in a negative view of David is summarized in the statement of Biddle who says that “1 Sam. 25 undercuts and deconstructs the surface-level portrayal of David found in 1

69 See Goldingay who compares David’s shrewdness with that of the serpent of Eden in the account of 1 Sam. 21. He continues to hold a cynical view of David in 1 Sam. 25 (John Goldingay, *Men Behaving Badly* [London: Paternoster Press, 2000], 151-67, [156]).
72 Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 98, 101, 102.
73 McKenzie, *King David*, 45
In it one may observe, as Levenson puts it, “the very first revelation of evil in David’s character” when he turns against Nabal to harm him, and is only spared by the wise advice of Abigail. Narrative analogy techniques in 1 Sam. 24—26 allow readers to see Nabal of ch. 25 as Saul’s “alter ego.” Through a list of similarities both from the text (such as 3000 sheep [13:2; 24:3(2); 26:2]; “feast like the feast of the king” [25:36]; David’s addresses Saul by calling him “my father” [24:12(11)], to which Saul responds “my son” [24:17(16); 26:17, 21, 25], and to Nabal by presenting himself as “your son” [25:8]; the use of the similar language such as the “son of Jesse” [20:27, 30, 31; 22:7, 8, 13; 25:10]; and the similarities of attitude towards the runaway servants who “break away from their masters” [22:6-8; 25:10]) and by comparing the contexts of this chapter (speeches of David and Abigail) with the contiguous material indicate, some scholars argue, that Nabal functions as Saul’s surrogate in 1 Sam. 25. The comparison between these two is done in a variety of ways: through identification of Nabal with Laban and then Laban with Saul; through finding similarities of David with Jacob in the Laban/Jacob story in which David is also compared with Esau and then by comparing David with Nabal and Saul, but most commonly going straight from Saul to Nabal by identifying one with the other. Others, however, are more cautious and note only some elements that are indicative of some sort of relationship between the two. This observation often led to the conclusion that by planning to attack Nabal, David essentially intended to strike Saul. It must be noted, however, that while one may

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74 Biddle, “Ancestral Motifs,” 637. He, however, also notes that the motifs of the story extend “beyond 1 Sam. 24—26” (see Ibid.: n. 26). He thinks that “Pro-David and anti-David are insufficient categories” (635).  
75 So Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 23.  
76 Cf. 2 Sam. 13:27 in the LXX and 4QSam text. LXX reads: kal. ephihsen Abessalwm poton kata.ton poton tou/basilw]. DJD reconstructs: ἐφίθησεν Ἀβεσσαλὼν παντὸς τοῦ βασιλέως. The longer reading is missing in MT, Targums, Siriac and Vulgate. The consideration of space in the reconstructed text by DJD explains the shorter reading by accidental omission in MT: poton, because “the reconstructed words fit well in line 22 of the 4QSam fragment” (DJD, 4QSamuel, 150).  
77 Garsiel, The First Book of Samuel, 129-33; Biddle, “Ancestral Motifs,” 625-26, 631. Exum (Tragedy and Biblical Narrative, 106) draws a comparison between Abner and Nabal based on the latter origin, reading 2 Sam. 3:8 with 1 Sam. 25:3.  
78 Jobling, I Samuel, 152; Kessler, “Sexuality and Politics,” 413-14; Exum, Tragedy and Biblical Narrative, 106.  
79 Gunn (The Fate of King Saul), after noting multiple similarities between Saul and Nabal, cautiously asks: “Are we then to see Nabal as another Saul?” (96); Garsiel, The First Book of Samuel, 129-33; Bergen, 1 & 2 Samuel, 251-52; Baldwin, 1 & 2 Samuel, 147; Leithart, “Nabal and His Wine,” 527; Leithart, “David's Threat to Nabal,” 22; McKenzie, King David, 96-97.
agree that 1 Sam. 25 highlights the issue of David’s attitude toward all those who were antagonistic towards him, and not King Saul only, it is rather questionable that this technique alone is versatile enough to extract a clear meaning from the text without clouding other issues that are equally important in the narrative. Thus, for example, it is not at all clear what caused such reversal in David’s character; in chs. 24 and 26 he restrains others while in ch. 25 he himself needs to be restrained.

Through the same lens of narrative analogy one may see David coming close to making a big mistake, but emerging innocent. Just as in the surrounding chapters when he restrained himself from harming Saul, David shows restraint here. A substantial work in this regard was done by Gordon.80 Most of those who adopt a more positive view of David and choose the same approach, follow in his steps.81 David continues to be on the rise, being providentially guided by God, while the influence of Saul’s rule keeps declining.

In summary, the majority of scholars believe that narrative analogy helps to amplify the significance of the 1 Sam. 25 story. The problems become apparent, as was noted above, when too much unwarranted weight is put on the analogous relationship between Saul and Nabal. As a result, analogy leads to identity, but the latter gives way to allegory.

2. Abigail as the Heroine of the Story

A few scholars paid a close attention to Abigail’s distinctive role in the narrative.82 Some perceive her speech (the longest speech by a woman in the OT [153 Heb. words])83 as “the dramatic center of this story.”84 It is the key character

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80 Gordon continued to marshall his views in the subsequent publications: 1 & 2 Samuel, 64-65 and in 1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary, 181.
on whom the rest of the material of the chapter depends. Her greatest achievement is that she “calls David back to himself, his real self, and helps David recover his true identity.”\textsuperscript{85} She is able to neutralize the volatile situation through her hearty persuasion. Some concentrate just on that and suggest that 1 Sam. 25 is about the bad effects one wicked influence (Nabal) has on good people (David), and how a godly influence (Abigail) reversed the process. Barber concluded that “the theme of 1 Samuel 25 is \textit{the power people have to produce an effect in the lives of others}.\textsuperscript{86} Abigail’s rhetoric wins the day and so, she is the heroine of the narrative.\textsuperscript{87}

Bach believes that “the story of Abigail is a self-contained narrative unit” in which Abigail becomes “the focus of her own narrative.”\textsuperscript{88} She is a wall to her household and “the mother-provider of transformation.” She knows her time, sees her opportunity, so much so that even her husband Nabal cannot keep her “shut up in his house, within her own limits.”\textsuperscript{89} Biddle also thinks that the purpose of 1 Sam. 25 is not a celebration of “a greedy sender and taker” David, but rather a portrayal of “Abigail as the hero of the account.”\textsuperscript{90}

Van Wolde notes that Abigail’s speech plays the central role in the narrative. However, she views Abigail only as the \textit{means} to the goal in the story. Noting that a study of Abigail’s multidimensional speech “has consequences for the exegesis of 1 Sam. 25 and can explain why this story of David and Abigail is in the book of Samuel,” she is persuaded that Abigail’s speech holds the key to the understanding of the goal, namely \textit{the nature of the relationship between Saul and David}. Making a few important observations in the end about how the Saul/David correlation could be viewed against the background of general battle which Yahweh fights, she ends up leaning on familiar narrative analogy techniques, identifying Nabal with Saul.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 120.
\textsuperscript{86} Cyril J. Barber, \textit{The Books of Samuel}, vol. 1 (New Jersey: Loizeaux, 1994), 262. Italics are mine.
\textsuperscript{87} The rabbinic literature always praises the exceptional qualities of this woman and elevates her to the rank of the prophetess. Rabbis deemed her to be the most important wife of David and one of four most beautiful women in the Scripture (\textit{b. Megillah}). See Bach, “The Pleasure of Her Text,” 51-52.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 41-42.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{90} Biddle, “Ancestral Motifs,” 617, 634.
\textsuperscript{91} Van Wolde, “A Leader Led by a Lady,” 355-75.
However, not everyone sees this heroine in a positive light. As is the case with David, her character appears to some too good to be taken at face value. Her persuasiveness is interpreted as being nothing short of “knowledge of male nature.”\textsuperscript{92} Against the thematic background “How should one deal with one’s enemy,” some believe that the main purpose of the storyteller is to show how this clever and apparently strikingly beautiful woman could manipulate both David and Nabal. Her courageous stand in the gap for her household is also perceived as an indication of marital infidelity.\textsuperscript{93} She betrays her husband who suffers a stroke “because he has been dishonored,”\textsuperscript{94} or so it is explained. This gives others an opportunity to slip in a suggestion that just as David, being driven by opportunistic motives, seeks marriage with Abigail, so the latter sees new potential under the wing of God’s chosen dygn. Hence, her highly sophisticated speech is nothing short of a crafty implanting of her own idea in David’s mind of how to get rid of Nabal for the advantage of them both. Nabal needed to die; so, naturally, “she had a hand in his death.”\textsuperscript{95} Since she alone had direct access to him, she is “the prime suspect.”\textsuperscript{96} Nabal’s death “would be impossible unless she is responsible for it.”\textsuperscript{97} Therefore, the only way to solve this “murder mystery” is to conclude that “David was behind Nabal’s death, but the biblical story suggests that it was a conspiracy.”\textsuperscript{98} However, as Youngblood rightly notes, “It is very unlikely that David would have been eager to marry any woman known for disloyalty, even though she was wealthy and beautiful, since such a treacherous woman in the royal chambers would be a constant threat.”\textsuperscript{99} Nevertheless, in the minds of those who adopt a cynical view of David, the “holy Mafioso,” this thought does not appear to be out of the ordinary. Such a cunning and crafty type as Abigail seems to be a nice addition to the band of treacherous outlaws. In fact, this thought is rather a welcome one if one wants to climb on Nabal’s chair in order to see what he saw.

\textsuperscript{92} Garsiel, “Wit, Words, and a Woman: 1 Samuel 25,” 168.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 163, 165.
\textsuperscript{94} Stansell, “Honor and Shame,” 64.
\textsuperscript{96} McKenzie, *King David*, 100.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 101. Carmichael thinks that “she had a hand in his death” but explains divine action as an intervention on Abigail’s behalf (Carmichael, *Law and Narrative in the Bible*, 172-73).
\textsuperscript{99} Youngblood, *1, 2 Samuel*, 759.
3. Nabal as the Hero of the Story

Some think that the incident recorded in 1 Sam. 25 is an example of the kind of injustice many innocent victims suffered from the attacks of David’s gang. Consequently, a few scholars think that Nabal’s response to David’s request was very sound. Nabal had to protect his possessions as well as the wellbeing of his household from unwelcome intruders. There are always a few around who target the rich men to feast themselves. Therefore, it would be simply wrong for Nabal to reward anyone for a service he never asked for. So, when “ten little Indians”100 with “sharp haircuts and bulges under their jackets”101 appeared on the threshold of Nabal’s business, he had every right to refuse to pay “protection money” to the gangsters.102 So, Nabal was not an evil person; David was. Neither Nabal’s characterization by the narrator, nor Abigail’s “flattery” or Nabal’s servants’ “dressing up a racket in the interests of practical survival,” can be trusted. They all conspired against Nabal. Sadly, and quite unjustly, “Nabal is doomed because, unknown to him, he stands in the way of God’s favorite.”103

As has been mentioned above, some quite deliberately set out on the quest of defending Nabal and the social structure he represented. Indeed, this perspective appears to have a momentary glimpse of truth when one is invited to feel what Nabal might have felt when David’s intrusion upset his comfortable life and in some way became the cause of his death. This, however, is achieved by suppressing other material that cries out against that man. The evil in Nabal’s character could be seen in a variety of ways, most of which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Having examined this view in terms of the larger context, one may be inclined to conclude that the reason why a positive view of Nabal is attempted is because he in some way is being identified with King Saul, and the latter too appears to be the victim of a “capricious deity.”104

100 Halpern, David’s Secret Demons, 77.
101 Goldingay, Men Behaving Badly, 161
102 See McKenzie, King David, 97.
104 See Gunn, The Fate of King Saul, 96, 102-03.
The Stories in 1 Samuel 21 and 22

The history of interpretation of the Nob episode (1 Sam. 21:1-10; 22:6-23) is not as rich as the case is with Sam. 25. Nevertheless, the interpretative issues found in it are no less problematic or any less significant than those in the latter narrative. Students of the text have to deal with difficulties and tensions associated with the fact that the story is somehow “sliced” into two parts. Does this mean that there was one story originally? Did these parts come from one and the same source? Can it be sustained that they must follow each other chronologically without a break, or is the chronological distancing of one part from the other the decisive element in the proper understanding of the story? The meaning of the narratives in 1 Sam. 21 and 22 would change dramatically if the intermediate material (21:1-10—22:5) is taken out of the interpretative equation. Did the gaps in the story occur as the result of incidental omission or are they there by design? If so, can the significance of this “design” be elucidated? Finally, can the story’s present position be defended and explained or a more suitable place for it in the book of 1 Samuel should be searched out, as some insist?

In what follows, a few elements that cause some difficulty in interpreting the stories of 1 Sam 21 and 22 will be highlighted. Then, a quick overview of the literary approaches in studying 1 Sam. 21 and 22 will follow and a brief analysis of the scholarly views on the matter will be added in closing.

A. Difficulties and Tensions in Studying 1 Sam. 21 and 22

Were the stories of 1 Sam. 21 and 22 originally one or did they exist as two independent traditions? Newsome maintains that “the account of David’s visit to Nob and the consequent murder of the priests who lived there formed a single narrative.” He thinks that “the story, which breaks off at 21:10, resumes at 22:6.” One, however, has to wonder in what sense then David and his men were “discovered” (22:6). If these stories were part of the same tradition, would it not be more natural for readers to expect the story resuming after 21:10 with something like: “then Doeg the Edomite went to Gibeah”? Indeed, that is what Newsome

105 From here on these texts will be referred to simply as 1 Sam. 21 and 22 stories, unless otherwise specified.
106 Newsome, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 71.
believes took place. He does not count either the note about David’s flight to Achish (21:11[10]) or 22:1-5 as an important element in the understanding of the story as the whole, yet goes on to reason that the essence of “Saul’s ‘discovery’ is that David has left Gibeah with a party of armed men, that he is, in effect, in open rebellion against Saul’s authority. Saul’s questioning of his men (vs. 7-8) would then be understood as an effort to discover where David had gone.”

However, there are two problems with this explanation: 1) Saul summoned Ahimelech to find out what Ahimelech had done, not where David had gone; 2) it is hard to understand why would Saul question other servants, for, as Newsome explains, Doeg “had left Gibeah with David’s band, but who had turned back with their departure from Nob, steps forward to supply Saul with the information he seeks” (22:9-10). This could be at least part of the reason why Newsome himself senses that something is missing from the equation. He is compelled to conclude, therefore, that “some element in the original story was dropped out with the introduction of the material in 21:10—22:5.” Unfortunately, he does not explain why any part of the story was dropped and why a single story had to be sliced into two and placed at a distance from each other, if indeed it originally existed as one.

Others, however, think that the arrangement of those stories in the text only points to the existence of various traditions. Conroy comments:

The section does not offer a straightforward chronicle of events; if it did, then the Nob units should be placed together, since the intervening material (21:10—22:5) necessarily implies the passage of a considerable period of time. Clearly, then, the author of the story of David’s rise has collected various traditions here and structured them according to literary criteria.

Commenting on the source-traditions, Stoebe says that the existence of various traditions does not necessarily preclude that both were contemporaneous. He

\[\text{\footnotesize 107 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 108 Ibid., 72. It is not clear what exactly Newsome means when he says that Doeg “left Gibeah with David’s band.” Was he originally part of David’s group? 21:8[7] and 22:22 does not seem to allow this.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 109 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 110 Conroy, 1-2 Samuel, 74. Italics are mine.}\]
maintains that 21:2-10 represents an earlier tradition (E), though both did not come into existence too far apart.111

Herzberg, likewise, noting the differences in the language such as “consecrated bread” (לָחֵם כֹּרֶשׁ) or the “bread of the Presence” (לָחֵם הָעֵד) (21:5, 7[4, 6]) vs. “provisions” (ירדנה) or “bread” (לָחֵם) (22:10, 13), concludes that that happened as the result of conflation of different source traditions. He is certain that the inquiry in the sanctuary did take place. However, he is quite puzzled by the fact that this seemingly important detail is absent from chapter 21. Nevertheless, he grants some relationship between these source traditions by saying that in the second story Doeg mentions only the most important points to the king. He goes on to say that “as far as any other discrepancy is concerned, it can, in fact, hardly be explained, except perhaps by pointing out that the narrative [ch. 21] does not really have a conclusion, but ends before David receives or takes the sword.”112 However, having assumed that Doeg’s testimony was true, he begins to look for the “missing part,” but, not surprisingly at all, cannot find it in the text. So he concludes that originally the story “contained David’s request to the priest to inquire of the Lord for him—while they were standing right in front of the ephod,” which was later replaced by a simple note about the Edomite’s presence in the sanctuary (v. 7[8]).113 Doeg’s appearance in the text of 1 Sam. 21 story, according to Hertzberg, “form[s] the end of the pericope. In that case … it might have become unreadable or have otherwise been lost, and then perhaps have been put after v. 6 because in v. 6, as in v. 7, the phrase 'before the Lord’ appears.”114 Thus, Herzberg tries to come up with the explanation of how the important variables in his interpretative formula got missing. It is important to note, however, that his conclusion is built on the assumption that Doeg’s deposition was true to the facts since he was able not only to see what took place in Nob, but also to overhear the conversation between Ahimelech and David.115 The text, however, is silent about that too. Consequently, the question is:

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111 Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuelis, 391.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., 180.
Should this mysterious silence of the text be taken as a gap? Or, rather, in reality there was never any inquiry.

Others concentrate their attention on certain elements that seem to suggest the work of a later redactor. Smith, for instance, is confident that the note about the “provision” and “the sword of Goliath” in 22:10 is a later insertion (a filled gap?). He does not elaborate on this and does not explain why these elements, so central in the story, had to be inserted later. If it was the difference in the language in both stories that puzzled him (as it does many a modern scholar), then it clearly exposes his (and others’) underlying assumptions about the words and works of the characters in the narrative.

Similarly, Robinson thinks that 1 Sam. 22:17 is a later interpolation, since he finds it hard to believe that none of Saul’s guards would obey the king’s order without facing consequences. He goes on to suggest that “a later redactor, standing in either the Deuteronomic or the Priestly tradition, who thereby could not see how any Israelite could lay his hands on the priests, or why an Edomite was told to kill the priests, probably introduced this verse here.” Robinson thinks that 22:20-23 was not a part of the original story either, as v. 19 too was “subsequently added in the light of some later happenings where it was Saul who ordered the destruction of the village.” However, Hertzberg noted earlier that in v. 19 we have the remnant of a special tradition according to which the real punishment was not the massacre at Gibeah, but the sacking and destruction of Nob, and that Saul set out to carry out the punishment immediately after Doeg’s betrayal, without first summoning Ahimelech.

These discussions highlight some difficulties and tensions in studying the Nob episode. There are some gaps in the text, no doubt, but then there is a debate: Are these gaps incidental or are they there by design? It seems to this writer that the

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116 Smith, Samuel, 206.
118 Hertzberg, 1 & 2 Samuel, 188. Italics are mine
main trouble is not so much with filling the gaps, but with identifying the real ones! Fischer puts his finger on this common problem when he states that “valid empirical proof requires not merely the establishment of possibility, but an estimate of probability. Moreover, it demands a balance estimate of probabilities pro and con.” Since one has to deal here more with probabilities and less with certainties, a degree of subjectivity is inherent in each interpretation. The scholarly subjectivity can be reduced by digging deeper into the text, but it can never be eliminated. Nevertheless, a student of the text is on much firmer ground if he starts with the available text and with the assumption that its arrangement is purposeful. This presupposition builds on a “concrete” text; it causes one to look deeper into the story, sharpen the focus in identifying the real gaps, ease the burden of gap filling, and make the reading of the narratives more enjoyable and fruitful.

B. Literary Approaches to 1 Sam. 21 and 22

While many interpretative issues that underlie the text of 1 Sam. 21 and 22 will be discussed in the Chapter III of this work, only the general outline of the views and approaches to study the characters’ roles in those stories will be noted presently. Broadly speaking, these stories illustrate the struggle between King Saul and the “son of Jesse.” The narrator underscores the tension of this conflict by bringing to the story supporting characters such as Ahimelech and Doeg. Everything these characters say (or do not say) and do (or do not do) inevitably contributes to the already extant Saul/David problem.

Generally, various interpretations of characters’ actions in the stories of 1 Sam. 21 and 22 are guided by three determining questions: 1) Did David lie to Ahimelech? 2) How extensive was Ahimelech’s knowledge about the Saul/David conflict? 3) Did the inquiry take place and was Doeg telling the truth? Depending on what answers one gives to these questions, David’s character may appear to be darker or less so. The same could be said about the character of Saul, Doeg and Ahimelech. Since the character of David is the focal point in those stories, the existing views could be outlined accordingly.

1. Negative Views of David

The greater majority of scholars believe that the text clearly presents David in a negative light. His deceiving tongue robs his character of noble qualities. He is a liar without an excuse.\textsuperscript{120} What is worse, he tries his dirty trick on the priest of Yahweh, which results in the loss of many innocent lives.

Other interpreters, however, try to find at least some excuse for David by saying that as a refugee he probably did not know whether or not he could trust the priest with his “real” story, and so he had to \textit{invent} one right on the spot.\textsuperscript{121} Some say that David resolved to use deceit because he was hungry.\textsuperscript{122} So, he lied both about his mission and about the purity of his company.\textsuperscript{123} Consequently, when Ahimelech offered David help he was left in the dark about the true nature of David’s plans. The priest’s later confession to the king that he knew nothing of the matter great or small is often cited as proof that the priest was deceived (22:15).\textsuperscript{124} His trembling when David appeared at the threshold of the sanctuary seems to evidence his own ignorance in the matter. So, the priest offered David help in good faith, which this sorry fugitive abused. David’s confession to Abiathar later (22:22) is another indication that he was deceptive when he came to the sanctuary while his real intention was to inquire about the will of God.\textsuperscript{125}

By reading the story with such a view, the facts of Doeg’s testimony are thus being elevated. About this Edomite, Meier says that the text gives “arguably a positive predisposition on the writer’s part. Doeg is in the vicinity of Yahweh’s


\textsuperscript{121} Baldwin, \textit{1 and 2 Samuel}, 137.

\textsuperscript{122} Chafin, \textit{1, 2 Samuel}, 172.

\textsuperscript{123} Newsome, \textit{1 Samuel, 2 Samuel}, 71.

\textsuperscript{124} However, Ahimelech’s admittance that he was being deceived by David puts him in the same camp with Saul, who was also deceived about David being absent from his table. But in such a case it is even more difficult to find a sensible explanation to why Saul would execute all of the priests. More on this later.

sacred precinct, and he is there because of a commitment to Yahweh.”126 Thus he is able to tell King Saul the whole truth and nothing but the truth.127 Mauchline is of similar opinion that “the narrator puts no moral judgment on Doeg.”128 Doeg reported only what he saw and the facts that he gave were true.129 Hertzberg adds: “We are not to assume that Doeg is therefore to be accounted a liar, especially as even Ahimelech himself returns to the point (22:15).”130 On this assumption that Doeg’s testimony was true to the facts, many believe that the inquiry indeed took place,131 though it is not recorded. Meier goes on to theorize that the “missing part” of “the priest’s oracle-inquiry was narrated (as other oracle inquiries in Samuel) but lost through scribal error.”132 Friedmann too lays an emphasis on inquiry by saying that when Ahimelech inquired on David’s behalf, he sinned, albeit innocently.133 The priest consciously supported the rebel, though he was on the service of the king and was bound by the law to disclose to Saul any rebellious act against the kingdom.134 So, it looks as though David is as guilty as Ahimelech. Consequently, from this it can be inferred that Doeg told the truth and Saul was justified in condemning the priests.

Others, however, are more cautious and try to spread the blame for the tragedy in Nob more or less evenly. While blaming David for his deceiving practices, a good deal of the blame is pinned on Saul. Thus, Miscall says that “Saul’s crime in the episode is blatant,”135 he “failed on every count,”136 for it was he who ordered a complete destruction of Nob,137 and as such he is the one who is

126 Meier, “The Heading of Psalm 52,” 145-150, [147].
127 Chafin, I, 2 Samuel, 179.
128 Mauchline, 1 and 2 Samuel, 158.
129 Barber, The Books of Samuel, 239.
130 Hertzberg, I & 2 Samuel, 178.
132 Meier, “The Heading of Psalm 52,” 149.
134 Some equate Ahijah (Yahweh’s relative) of 1 Sam. 14:18 with Ahimelech (King’s relative). See Vos, I, 2 Samuel, 75; Burton and Coffman, Commentary on First Samuel, 255; Robinson, Let Us Be Like the Nations, 115.
135 Miscall, 1 Samuel, 36.
136 Payne, I & 2 Samuel, 119.
137 Vos, I, 2 Samuel, 78.
ultimately responsible for this act.” Some, to be sure, try to exonerate Saul. Roberts, for instance, says that “there is a little doubt that the pro-Davidic spin-doctors who edited this narrative intended its readers to come to just such a judgment of Saul.” In his mind David and Ahimelech are to be blamed. Upon examining the story against the background of Mari text, Roberts concludes that

in Israel, just as in Mari, a mediator who provided divine intelligence for a rebel against the king would have been regarded as a co-conspirator in the rebellion, and the king would have expected an oracle priest to report any suspicion of conspiracy against the king that arose in the course of an oracle inquiry.\textsuperscript{139}

Hence, when Saul ordered the execution, “it was permissible for a king to behave in this way with a city whose leader had helped a rebel against the kingdom.”\textsuperscript{140} Reis says that “Ahimelech connives with David to deceive Doeg.”\textsuperscript{141} If Doeg is to be associated with Saul, the priest was also deceiving the king.

Still, some scholars find it necessary to put a question mark over the words of Doeg’s testimony. Payne says that Doeg “told the truth, but it was not the whole truth by any means.” Though he does not specify which part of his testimony was thus “omitted,” he views Doeg as a “malicious and self-seeking” person who tells Saul what he wished to hear “rather than give an accurate and balanced account.”\textsuperscript{142} Bodner argues that Doeg spoke “because he has been successfully duped” by David and the priests, “and also because he is made aware that his personal interests and position in the court of Saul are threatened by the rise of David.” He agrees with Reis that “he comes forward with a more lethal case than the narrative supports.”\textsuperscript{143} So, how solid was Doeg’s deposition? Fokkelman undertakes a detailed examination of both pros and cons of whether the inquiry in Nob took place, but is content to drop the discussion: “I therefore seek a way out by leaving the

\textsuperscript{138} Laney, \textit{First and Second Samuel}, 68.
\textsuperscript{140} Friedmann, \textit{To Kill and Take Possession}, 132.
\textsuperscript{141} Reis, “Collusion at Nob;,” 59.
\textsuperscript{142} Payne, \textit{1 & 2 Samuel}, 116.
\textsuperscript{143} Bodner, \textit{David Observed}, 32.
dilemma and withdrawing from the compulsion of having to choose between the two options.”

2. Positive and “Semi-Positive” Views of David

Some view David in 1 Sam. 21, 22 stories in a more favorable light. It appears as though David comes to Ahimelech as a fugitive and tells him in so many words that he needs the priest’s help. Ahimelech seems to accept David’s explanations as far as his mission was concerned and is willing to supply David with the holy bread on the condition that he and his men kept themselves ritually pure. David reassures the priests that he and his men are ritually clean. Brueggemann comments: “It may be that David plays loosely with the priestly distinction of clean and unclean but presumably he does not lie.”

Fokkelman, however, believes that the narrative of 1 Sam. 21 “gives a new providential dimension to the lie with which David saves himself.” He maintains that “the King who sends David out is God and the secret mission has David’s kingship as its long-term-aim.” He goes on to explain that “the placing of the variant ‘my Relative is King’ in cap. 21 draws our attention to the fact that the patent to the monarchy lies with God and that it is he who will decide the outcome of the struggle between Saul and David for the kingship in Israel.” As for Ahimelech, the priest only hears that “it is king Saul who has sent David on a secret mission. But we know more and hear differently.” So, in this story David looks more like a person of whom sometimes people say: If he does not lie, he does not tell the whole truth.

Something similar is proposed by Polzin. He thinks that David’s speech is “double voiced,” and as such it is to be compared with Jonathan’s speech to the lad in the field, who “knew nothing” of the secrecy between David and Jonathan (20:39), or even David’s earlier lie about his absence from Saul’s table. David’s

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144 Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 415. He admits, however, that the position that denies that the inquiry took place is more attractive “because it is the simplest.” The only problem he finds with it is 22:15a, “where Ahimelech himself appears to imply that he really did inquire of Yahweh for David” (390).

145 Brueggemann, First and Second Samuel, 154. Italics are mine.


147 Polzin, Samuel and Deuteronomist, 194-95.
“deceptively simple rather than simply deceptive” voice essentially speaks the truth — the depth of which no one except Jonathan and David can comprehend.

Taking the idea from Jonathan’s statement “for the Lord has sent you away” (20:22), Polzin says that all of David’s subsequent journeys need to be looked at through this lens. He explains:

David is the king whom the divine king has secretly sent to rule over Israel, so that against this background David’s words, while deceptive to anyone not in on the secret, are still profoundly double voiced: they are false in their obvious meaning, but true to a few people in the story and to all of the Deuteronomist’s audience outside it. “The king [not Saul, but the LORD] has charged me (היה) with a matter and said to me, ‘let no man know anything of the matter about which I am sending you (сылר) and with which I have appointed you (ת uywy)’” (v. 2).

Polzin goes on to say: “These words reverberate with those that Samuel earlier spoke to the very man about whom Ahimelech thinks David is speaking: ‘The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and has appointed him (דוע) to be prince over his people’ (13:14).” Thus, Ahimelech, according to Polzin, does not belong to those “few people” who can comprehend a deeper meaning of David’s words. The priest assumes that David was dispatched by King Saul and, as before, he is willing to supply any need Saul’s son-in-law has.

Bergen seems to have similar views as can be seen from his statement:

David’s answer may be taken as self-serving deception or as a shrewd but honest use of language…. What he failed to clarify in his opening words to Ahimelech, however, was the name of the king to which he was referring. If it was King Yahweh (cf. 8:7; 12:12), and I am inclined to believe it was since David is elsewhere recorded referring to God as king (cf. Pss. 5:2; 20:9; 24:7-10; 29:10; 68:24; 145:1), then David was telling the truth.

Leimbach, however, finds these ideas hard to accept. He is certain that when David speaks of the “king’s mission” he means only King Saul’s mission, and
not Yahweh’s. Newsome also notes that the priest helps David because he was simply unaware of the recent changes in the Saul/David relationship. To such an assumption Fokkelman responds: “I cannot imagine that the leading priest was ignorant of the growing deterioration in the relationship between Saul and David.” He concludes that “the source of Ahimelech’s anxiety is none other than the source of anxiety in 16:4, where we were told with the same expression that the elders of Bethlehem were awaiting Samuel in alarm: it is the shadow of Saul over the land, it is the terror side of the royal power.”

Ackroyd takes a different approach to explain Ahimelech’s “trembling.” By comparing 21:2[1] with 16:4, he suggests that the term denotes not “fear” but “reverence.” He says that Ahimelech trembling is simply “the awe of the priest at the presence of the coming chosen king. Ahimelech is unconsciously offering homage to David.” Robinson goes on to say that Ahimelech’s “trembling” was “an acknowledgment of the coming of the holy one into his presence.”

The Hebrew word "trembling," is otherwise used six times in the OT; in all but one instance (Judg. 7:3) it indicates “trembling” because of the holiness of the object involved. “Eli was trembling for the ark of God” (1 Sam. 4:13), and people trembled at the word of God (Ezra 9:4; 10:3; Is. 66:2, 5). The trembling of Ahimelech could have also been a holy trembling.

With that understanding in mind some came to the conclusion that being in such an awe of this “holy one,” Ahimelech also inquired for him of the Lord, as he himself later seems to admit it. Hence some went on suggesting that the articles

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153 Leimbach, *Die Bücher Samuel*, 93.
154 Newsome, *1 Samuel, 2 Samuel*, 74.
156 Ibid., 353-54.
157 Ackroyd, *1 Samuel*, 170. Also Chafin, *1, 2 Samuel*, 172.
158 Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations*, 115. Italics are mine.
159 Ibid. According to my study, however, the word "trembling" appears forty five times in the HB, out of which eighteen times in Genesis—Kings: Gen. 27:33; 42:48; Ex. 19:16, 18; Lev. 26:6; Dt. 28:26; Judg. 7:3; 8:12; Ruth 3:8; 1 Sam. 4:13; 13:7; 14:15; 16:4; 21:2; 28:5; 2 Sam. 17:2; 1 Ki. 1:49; 2 Ki. 4:13.
160 Chafin, *1, 2 Samuel*, 172; Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations*, 121. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 228, assumes that inquiry took place. Youngblood (*1, 2 Samuel*, 734) too, on the basis of Ahimelech’s admittance (v. 15).
David received from the priest can be taken as a proof that Ahimelech made an inquiry for David on that day. Smith asks:

> How could Ahimelech give David bread which was only to be eaten by priests? The answer seems to be given in 1 Sam 22:10. An eyewitness stated that Ahimelech first inquired of the Lord, probably by Urim and Thummim, before he gave provisions to David. Thus it would appear that God himself authorized giving David these provisions.\(^\text{161}\)

Along somewhat similar lines Edelman allows that some sort of sacred service might have taken place at Ahimelech’s quarters when David visited him. She suggests that “the propositional phrase הָעֵדֶּשֶׁת indicates that David is interested in something that has been entrusted to the charge of the priest, introducing once again the theme of power in the use of the term הָעֵדֶּשֶׁת.” She goes on to say that David “was after something more significant than food, the transfer of some form of power from the priest to himself, even though his need for food for his mission would have been natural.”\(^\text{162}\)

Despite various hints some commentators find in the text to validate Doeg’s testimony, others think that the Edomite’s deposition about the inquiry was unfounded. For one thing, Ahimelech admitted the facts of Doeg’s statement “with the exception of the statement that he had inquired of the Lord for David.”\(^\text{163}\) Brueggemann too maintains that “the third element of Doeg’s statement, however, is false,” since it is not reported in 21:1-9.\(^\text{164}\) Miscall says that “Doeg may have fabricated the charge to make the accusation as damaging as possible.”\(^\text{165}\) Conroy believes that “the text puts the real blame on Doeg” despite the fact that David

\[^{161}\text{Smith, I & 2 Samuel, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 2000), 265. Italics are mine.}\]

\[^{162}\text{Edelman, King Saul in the Historiography of Judah, 164, italics are mine. She, however, does not spell out what sense is hidden in this phrase: “the transfer of some sort of power,” though she later admits that the way Ahimelech responds “leaves the ambiguity of Doeg’s charge concerning his consultation of Yahweh on David’s behalf unresolved” (178). She, in my mind, ends up with the same suspicion as Doeg (she puts a big emphasis on the sword of Goliath), who accused the priests by mentioning the objects that in his mind were highly suggestive of the inquiry.}\]

\[^{163}\text{Blaikie, The First Book of Samuel, 346.}\]

\[^{164}\text{Brueggemann, First and Second Samuel, 159.}\]

\[^{165}\text{Miccalk, 1 Samuel, 135.}\]
admits the blame, for, as others explain, Doeg was a “known troublemaker” and was detained in the sanctuary for some crime.

This understanding caused some scholars to theorize not only about who this “troublemaker” really was but also about his end. The character of Doeg the Edomite has long occupied the minds of the rabbinic scholars, who have also tried to devise ways to round up this seemingly incomplete story. In more recent times too, some were compelled to raise this issue of Doeg’s demise and propose some answers. In this a suggestion has been made to consider a close connection between this story and Ps. 52 where Doeg’s false testimony is emphasized (vv. 1-4) and divine judgment anticipated (vv. 5-7).

In summary, some scholars believe that the text allows a two level reading. In the ultimate sense David tells the truth, but somehow Ahimelech missed it. Responding to David’s request positively Ahimelech was acting in ignorance. Others maintain, however, that Ahimelech was well aware of the strained relationship between Saul and David and that on that day he was running away from the king. This knowledge notwithstanding, he accepted and helped David. Yet others say that the help was offered precisely because Yahweh ordered it – thus assuming that the inquiry took place. Additionally, it not only implies that David told Ahimelech the truth, because Yahweh would seem to have approved his story, but also that the priest has been able to discern a deeper meaning of David’s story about his “secret mission” when he was giving him the consecrated bread as the sign of divine approval of David’s mission.

As these views are being considered, however, one seeming inconsistency in the reasoning of some scholars needs to be noted. It is not at all certain if there is a need to separate David’s immediate audience (Ahimelech) from the audience of the narrator (“Deuteronomist’s audience”) in order to make sense of David’s story about

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166 Conroy, 1-2 Samuel, 76.  
167 Evans, 1 and 2 Samuel, 101. Also Burton and Coffman, Commentary on First Samuel, 258.  
168 Rabbinic discussion about Doeg’s character could be found in Appendix II.  
his mission. In fact, the view of Fokkelman, Polzin and others’ that David “both
does and does not inform [Ahimelech] about the mission”\textsuperscript{171} underscores the fact that
David told the truth. Consequently, it is hard to see which one of David’s words is to
be counted as a “lie.” Ahimelech does not blame David for deceiving him (cf. 2
Sam. 19:26); he refuses to accept Saul’s accusation on different grounds, as will be
demonstrated later. Also, Fokkelman’s perception of David as God’s chosen servant
running on divine mission, conflicts with his view of David as a “liar.” He says that
David’s status in the eyes of Ahimelech was such that “only holy bread and the
unique weapon sanctified by its position by the ephod … [were] good enough to
support the man.”\textsuperscript{172} He thinks that Ahimelech admits inquiring of Yahweh on
David’s behalf not only on previous occasions but also when Doeg was there the last
time (22:15). If so, the priest must have also been familiar with at least a general
outline of the divine attitude toward David and especially about the strains in the
Saul/David relationship – which Fokkelman affirms. Consequently, it is hard to see
how the priest could have missed the “secret” meaning of David’s words.

The same could be said about the view that explains Ahimelech’s
“trembling” as simply being the priest’s reverence of the “holy one.” If Ahimelech
intuitively accepted David as such, he would have probably known intuitively what
David was talking about, and that on the “deeper level,” if indeed such a reading is
allowed.

If David’s words carried a deeper meaning, it would not have been hidden
from Ahimelech. Consequently, there was no need to have an inquiry in order to
release the sacred items. Moreover, there seems to be yet another and more
favorable way to harmonize David’s words with his later confession and Doeg’s
testimony with Ahimelech’s defense as will be demonstrated in the following
chapters.

\textbf{MT, LXX, Q and Josephus in 1 Sam. 16—25}

The lack of agreement between MT and LXX has always presented a real
challenge in studying the book(s) of Samuel and made the reconstruction of the near
original text notoriously difficult. The discovery of some fragments of Samuel
\textsuperscript{171} Fokkelman, \textit{The Crossing Fates}, 355.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
scrolls in the last century in Qumran introduced a third major player. This situation while in many ways eased the reconstruction process of the near original text, complicated it in other ways. The lack of agreement among these versions puts a burden on decision-making, to say the least.

Before the relationship between different witnesses to the book(s) of Samuel will be discussed, a few words need to be said about the scrolls of the book(s) of Samuel found in the Qumran library. Four distinct scrolls are extant designated as 4QSama\(^a\) (4Q51), 4QSamb\(^b\) (4Q52), 4QSamc\(^c\) (4Q53) and 1QSam (1Q7). In what follows, a few distinctive characteristics of these scrolls and their relationship with the Greek texts of Samuel will be reviewed. The correlation between MT, Josephus and various witnesses of Q, LXX will also be considered using the example of 1 Sam. 17 and 18.

### A. Samuel Scrolls in Qumran

Of the four Samuel scrolls found in the Qumran library, 4QSama\(^a\) contains the fullest text. Cross dates the scroll around 50-25 BC.\(^{173}\) In the portion of 1 Samuel under investigation in this work the following passages are extant: 17:3-8, 40-41; 18:4-5; 20:37-40; 22:10-11; 24:3-5, 8-10, 14-23; 25:3-12, 20-21, 25-27, 38-40. According to DJD, “the orthographic practice of 4QSama\(^a\) corresponds in a general way to the orthography of Ezra-Nehemiah; comparable also is the usage in Chronicles (although Chronicles on occasion uses distinctly archaic spellings), and the Samaritan Pentateuch.”\(^{174}\) As to the scroll’s relationship to the Septuagint, Ulrich has demonstrated in his earlier work that 4QSama\(^a\) and LXX share 14 “striking readings” against MT and agree in 110 additional readings against MT.\(^{175}\) He also notes that “there are approximately two dozen instances in the scroll where M [MT] and G [LXX] share a reading against 4Q [4QSama\(^a\)]”\(^{176}\) and lists 18 instances in

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\(^{176}\) Ibid., 132.
which 4QSama agrees with MT against LXX.\textsuperscript{177} All this suggests that while 4QSama\textsuperscript{a} and LXX stand in the same textual tradition, the two witnesses are nonetheless distinct.\textsuperscript{178} How both are related will be shown below.

4QSam\textsuperscript{b} is considered to be the oldest of the four scrolls, which unfortunately survived in fairly poor condition. Among the twenty three extant fragments, twenty are of some interest to this study: 16:1-11; 19:10-13, 15-17; 20:26—21:3, 5-7, 8-10; 22:8-9, 23:8-23. Cross dates 4QSam\textsuperscript{b} at around 250 BC.\textsuperscript{179} The editors of DJD summarize distinctive characteristics of 4QSam\textsuperscript{b} as follows:

4QSam\textsuperscript{b} exhibits 142 superior readings, of which ninety are in agreement with the Old Greek represented either by LXX\textsuperscript{B} or LXX\textsuperscript{L} or both. 4QSam\textsuperscript{b} is in agreement with MT seventy-eight times, of which sixty-three readings are superior (or original), nine unclassified, and six considered inferior.

The editors of DJD conclude that “in overwhelmingly large number of cases, the readings of 4QSam\textsuperscript{b} agree with the Old Greek when it is superior, but agree with the Masoretic tradition when it is superior.”\textsuperscript{180} Thus, 4QSam\textsuperscript{b} seems to preserve a high proportion of original readings.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 140-46. Tov, however, notes that “the agreement between 4QSama\textsuperscript{a} and LXX is smaller than suggested by Ulrich, and the amount of disagreement is larger than indicated. At the same time the number of unique and independent readings of 4QSama\textsuperscript{a} is larger than suggested by Ulrich” (Emanuel Tov, “The Textual Affiliations of 4QSama\textsuperscript{a},” in The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint, VTSup 72 [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 273-83). Tov’s main critique of Ulrich’s work is that it does not take into account the patterns 4QSama\textsuperscript{a} ≠ LXX\textsuperscript{B} and 4QSama\textsuperscript{a} ≠ LXX\textsuperscript{L}.

\textsuperscript{178} Tov’s comment is in order here: “Despite the positive evidence for the close relationship between 4QSam\textsuperscript{a} and the LXX, the two sources provide independent texts. 4QSama\textsuperscript{a} should not be reconstructed or supplemented as if it were the Hebrew text from which the LXX was translated. See Emanuel Tov, The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint, VTSup 72 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 275. Quite a different opinion was expressed by Fincke, who suggested that 4QSama\textsuperscript{a} was itself the Vorlage of the shorter Septuagint Version of 1-2 Samuel (paper read to the SBL International Meeting 2003 (Dead Sea Scrolls and Hebrew Bible section) cited by A. Graeme Auld, “The Story of David and Goliath: A Test Case for Synchrony plus Diachrony,” in David und Saul im Widerstreit: Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit; Beiträge zur Auslegung des ersten Samuelpinches, ed. Walter Dietrich, OBO 206 [Fribourg; Göttingen: Academic Press; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004], 119.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 220.

\textsuperscript{180} DJD, 4QSamuel, 223.

\textsuperscript{181} An important study of Cook demonstrated the textual closeness of this scroll to LXX in 20:26—21:5. He lists the following number of agreements:

\begin{align*}
4Q &= \text{LXX} \neq \text{MT}: 13 \\
4Q \neq \text{LXX} &= \text{MT}: 2 \\
4Q \neq \text{LXX} \neq \text{MT}: 2 \\
4Q &= \text{MT} \neq \text{LXX}: 8 \\
4Q \neq \text{MT}, \text{LXX unknown}: 7
\end{align*}

Only a few scraps from five passages in 4QSam\textsuperscript{c} have survived, one of which was not identified and only the first one in the group (25:30-32) falls within the scope of the interests of this thesis. “Since it was copied by a member of the community,” DJD editors concluded that it “must be placed within the Hasmonaean-Herodian period, between c. 150 BCE and 68 CE,” but “palaeographically it can be dated to approximately the first quarter of the first century BCE.”\textsuperscript{182} As for the scroll’s relationship to LXX, it is almost equally close to MT and LXX (in 2 Sam. 14—15, according to Tov, LXX\textsuperscript{l} probably reflects OG tradition).\textsuperscript{183} According to DJD, “LXX eleven times follows 4QSam\textsuperscript{c} against MT, seven times it follows MT against 4QSam\textsuperscript{c}, is twice independent of both, and ten times cannot be documented or determined with confidence.”\textsuperscript{184}

Out of four passages extant in 1QSam, only one fragment is of special interest to this work: 1 Sam. 18:17-18. This fragment is dated around the first century AD but before AD 70.\textsuperscript{185} The reading preserved here is very fragmentary; it contains only three words in two lines, which were reconstructed as follows:

\[
\text{בבל[א]ים ולחל[מ]ותו} \quad \text{v. 17}
\]

\[
\text{שאול[ל]} \quad \text{v. 18}
\]

These verses, however, are absent from LXX text. The detailed study of this fragment is yet to be published.\textsuperscript{186}

To summarize, in general, LXX seems to be closer to 4QSam\textsuperscript{MSS} than to MT text. However, the unique readings found in each version of 4QSam\textsuperscript{MSS} and LXX seem to indicate that they have seen their own independent growth and developments. It also needs to be noted that in 1 Sam. 16—25 only a few readings preserved in the QSam scrolls overlap (1 Sam. 20:37-40 [4QSamb]; cf. 2 Sam. 14:14, 18-19, 33; 15:1-7 [4QSam\textsuperscript{ac}] and 2 Sam. 23:21-22 [4QSam\textsuperscript{a} and 1QSam]) and

\textsuperscript{182} DJD, 4QSamuel, 248. See also Ulrich, “Biblical Text,” 85.


\textsuperscript{184} DJD, 4QSamuel, 253-54.

\textsuperscript{185} DJD I (1955), 11, 64. In the subsequent volume (DJD XXXIX [2002], 369ff), however, this scroll is not dated.

\textsuperscript{186} A very brief discussion on these verses by Barthélemy appears only in DJD I, 11, 64.
some of the words do not correspond precisely. Nevertheless, it is possible to surmise from the available data that all of the QSam manuscripts stand in the same general tradition of the Hebrew text, which was also the source for the OG of the Septuagint. As to the unique readings of each of the scrolls that indicate individual developments, it might have been, as DJD explains, due to “cross-fertilization between Hebrew textual traditions current in Palestine.” This incredible variety of different texts created a textual crisis in the land which made the establishment of the authoritative text urgent. The rabbinic scholars and scribes of the first century BC selected a single local textual tradition out of a pool of diverse texts – a forerunner of MT. The influence of this authoritative text could be noted even in the Codex Vaticanus in which the OG translation was replaced by the Rabbinic Recension also known as kaige Recension (see below) in an attempt to bring that text closer to the developing MT tradition.

B. The Septuagint Versions of 1—2 Samuel (1—2 Reigns)

One of the most important versions of the Septuagint is the Codex Vaticanus (LXXB). LXXB was written in the first half of the fourth century A.D. and represents the text of one of those recensions of the Bible which were current in the third century A.D. It is believed that it also belongs to the family of manuscripts utilized by Origen in his Hexapla (early third c. AD). This manuscript is commonly held to be the best OG witness in 1 Sam.1:1—2 Sam. 9:13. However, in the so-called kaige section (2 Sam. 10:1—24:25), LXXB has seen “the influence of the Rabbinic textual tradition of the first century CE and later.” The multiple manuscripts circulating in Palestine at that time made necessary the establishment of

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187 See, DJD, 4QSamuel, 81, 234, 154-55, 264-65. Unfortunately, none of the readings can be compared with the earliest 4QSam.
188 DJD, 4QSamuel, 25.
190 The Codex Alexandrinus (LXXA) is not discussed here since it is commonly thought to be of limited usefulness in the reconstruction of OG. It shows systematic revisions to bring it in conformity with the text of MT. See McCarter, I Samuel, 9 and Sir Frederic Kenyon, Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts, Revised and Enlarged Edition ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958), 120-21.
191 See Ibid., 105-08.
192 McCarter, I Samuel, 9.
193 DJD, 4QSamuel, 25.
an authoritative manuscript. This question of the recensional activity exemplified in the καίγε section of LXX⁶ is beyond the scope of the present inquiries, but must be borne in mind. As was noted above, this manuscript stands closer to the Q textual tradition, in the available readings, than to MT. It is also fuller than the MT text, though it too “suffered from frequent haplography.”¹⁹⁴ This version most likely comes from the same line of manuscripts as the scrolls of the books of Samuel in the Qumran library. However, it also preserves a number of unique readings, which is a witness to its own independent development.

The chief witness for the so-called Lucianic Recension (LXX¹) is the miniscules boc₂e₂. These manuscripts contain two strata.¹⁹⁵ According to Cross, a substratum contains a proto-Lucianic revision of OG to bring it into conformity with the Hebrew text like 4QSam⁴.¹⁹⁶ Tov agrees with Cross that LXX¹ contains no more than two layers. However, while affirming the fact that the second layer must be attributed to the historical Lucian, he believes that the substratum contains “either the Old Greek translation or any single Old Greek translation,” e.g. a translation which preserved Old Greek elements. Consequently, he sees no particular reason to regard that substratum recensional.¹⁹⁷ In his support Tov mentions the following three points (among others) which witness to the OG in the substratum of boc₂e₂. They can be summarized as follows:

1. The comparison of the substratum of boc₂e₂ with testimonies of other witnesses such as 4QSam⁴, the various fragments of the Vetus Latina, the substratum of the Armenian translation, the text quoted by Josephus, by Pseudo-Philo and by various Church Fathers evidences the OG substratum in boc₂e₂.

2. In the synoptic section of Samuel and Chronicles, the Greek Chronicles agrees with the OG in Samuel. This is especially evident

¹⁹⁴ McCarter, I Samuel, 9.
¹⁹⁵ McCarter (I Samuel, 7) believes that LXX¹ contains three distinct layers of strata: 1) basic stratum of OG; 2) proto-Lucianic stratum which contains “distinctive Lucianic readings;” and 3) additions by the church father Lucian around 300 AD.
in the ḫàīḡē section, which in boc₂e₂ contains a large number of OG readings.

(3) Since this proto-Lucianic revision normally left OG unrevised, one may as well characterize the substratum of boc₂e₂ as OG rather than the “Proto-Lucianic revision.”¹⁹⁸

Tov also notes that “certain characteristics of boc₂e₂, which scholars have always assigned to the historical Lucian, were actually extant in Lucian’s Vorlage.”¹⁹⁹ How can LXX⁴ be characterized in relationship to other MSS in the non-ḫàīḡē sections? Tov answers: “in the non-ḫàīḡē section the substratum of boc₂e₂ always represents the Old Greek, while the other MSS as a rule reflect the Old Greek, but at times their text has been retouched.”²⁰⁰ If Tov is right in his analysis, one may conclude that LXX⁴ is not of “limited usefulness.”²⁰¹ Its readings should be carefully analyzed and considered especially when it agrees with LXX⁹ and/or QSam and/or Josephus and when it offers its own unique readings in the OG layer.

C. The Text of Samuel in MT, LXX, Q and Josephus

According to ancient tradition, the Greek translation of the Torah originated in Egypt in the mid third century BC by the request of Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) who occupied the throne of Egypt from 285 to 247 BC.²⁰² More recently Collins, upon examining the Letter of Aristeas, writings of Josephus and Philo, suggested that the translation of the Pentateuch most likely occurred as the result of an agreement between Ptolemy II and the Jews in 291 BC.²⁰³ She argued convincingly that “the translation could not have arisen from the needs of the Jews,” and it was not accomplished in order that the Jews in Diaspora could make use of the Greek text during their services in the synagogues of Alexandria. Nevertheless, there is general consensus that the Greek translation of the Torah was made in Egypt.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.: 104-06.
¹⁹⁹ Ibid.: 107.
²⁰¹ So McCarter, I Samuel, 9.
Scholars differ in opinions, however, as to when and where the rest of the Bible was translated into Greek. Cross, for example, suggested that the Greek translation was taken from the Egyptian family of manuscripts, as opposed to Palestinian or Babylonian. He writes: “There is evidence that the Septuagint of Samuel and Kings was translated from an Egyptian Hebrew text that separated from the Old Palestinian textual tradition no later than the fourth century B.C.”204 As to the origin of MT, Cross maintains that at least the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets represent “the local text of Babylon which emerged in the fourth to second centuries B.C.” and somehow managed to stay aloof from the textual tradition of Palestine and that of the “fuller Egyptian text.”205

Tov, on the other hand, argued that even though the translation of some of the books was undertaken in Egypt, “one should not describe their Hebrew Vorlage as Egyptian, because the scrolls from which the translations were made may have been imported from Palestine.”206 From the Letter of Aristeas it can be learned that the Hebrew scrolls of the Torah were brought from Palestine to Egypt specifically for translation. There is no direct evidence that there ever was an Egyptian family of Hebrew manuscripts nor is there support for the supposition that the entire Bible was translated there. However, there are reasons to believe that the text used for the Greek translation of the Former Prophets in general and the books of Samuel in particular was closely related to the one from which Q scrolls derived. The examination of a few fragments from 4QSam\textsuperscript{b} convinced DJD editors that the data “strongly support[s] the view that the Old Greek was translated, presumably in Alexandria, from a Hebrew manuscript that was closely affiliated with the Old Palestinian text, such as that preserved in this old Samuel manuscript.”207

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[206]{Tov, \textit{Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint}, 185.}
\footnotetext[207]{DJD, \textit{4QSamuel}, 223. See also Frank M. Cross, “The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran,” \textit{JBL} 74 (1955): 147-72; Cook, “4QSam\textsuperscript{b},” 442-54.}
\end{footnotes}
As to the Hebrew of 4QSam, Cross thinks that it “reflects the so-called Lucianic recension preserved in the Greek minuscules boc₂e₂ and Itala.” As was noted above, 4QSam seems to stand with LXX against MT and LXXB particularly in the section. Cross notes that whenever 4QSam and LXX agree, the readings reflect the proper “Proto-Lucianic revision” (or possibly OG, as was noted above) “in a Hebrew text of the first century B.C., four centuries before the Syrian Father to whom the recension is attributed.”

Further, it must be observed that the Greek text in the quotations of Josephus stands closer to the text which underlies 4QSam, which indicates that he used the OG translation, which was closer to LXX rather than LXXB. However, as Cross also noted, there are some rare instances (for example a paragraph before 1 Sam. 11:1; 28:1) when Josephus stands together with 4QSam against all other witnesses.

Ulrich, comparing the synoptic material in Samuel and Chronicles, observes:

Comparison of the parallels in Chronicles with Q and MT of Samuel shows that C [MT of Chronicles] also used as a source a text of Samuel significantly closer to Q than to MT. Since C demonstrates greater dependence upon the Q text type than upon the MT text type, and since the OG shows close and frequent affiliation with Q against MT, we must draw the conclusion that Q was not just some aberrant manuscript deviant from the widespread norm which was MT, but rather that it represented a text type influential in Judah during the fourth century B.C.E. (Chronicles), perhaps in Egypt around the end of the third century (the Old Greek translation), and again in Judah during the early (4QSam²) and middle (4QSam) parts of the first century B.C.E. and the early century C.E. (the early, developed Greek text used by Josephus and revised by Proto-Theodotion and Aquila).

According to Cross, however, the discernible OG elements in the substratum of LXX are Palestinian. Still, it is remarkable that a Greek translation of a Palestinian family never went through the revision like the “Egyptian” text of LXXB (in its section). Moreover, as Cross noted, it is difficult to understand

209 Ibid.
210 See Ulrich, The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus, 190-91.
why the Proto-Masoretic tradition was chosen by Rabbinic Recension “in view of the excellence of the Old Palestinian text-type, available at least at Qumran.”

In summary, it must be emphasized that despite all these different readings preserved in MT, Q and LXX, they are sufficiently close to each other to allow the possibility that these textual traditions ultimately derived from a single source. The theory that originated with Albright and was developed by Cross that there were three families of texts, Tov observes, “is based mainly on analogy with the textual transmission of other texts (especially the LXX and the New Testament) and on some internal evidence.” Consequently, agreeing with Tov that it is unlikely that there ever was an Egyptian family of Hebrew text, one may say that the theory of two families of texts (Babylonian and Palestinian) can be characterized as being based on analogy with the textual transmission of the Talmud. There must have been only one family of the manuscripts with all the literary developments which were complex and coherent in equal measure, at early stages of the growth of the biblical text. The divergences that occurred later, while introducing changes in the form of longer expansions (especially in Q) and haplography (especially in MT), still preserved the older core stratum. Additionally, the divergence between all Hebrew witnesses – MT, OG Vorlage and Q – may indicate, as Cook suggests, that a scribe copying each scroll may have consulted other scrolls which contained different readings. This would explain the great diversity of readings in the manuscripts. “That is why they are none of them identical, and yet all of them seem to draw their readings from the same limited pool.”

D. 1 Samuel 17—18 and its Versions

The substantial differences between the MT and LXXB versions are found in chapters 17 and 18. In chapter 17 the Greek version lacks 402 words that are found in the MT longer text and adds 29 words that are absent in MT. In chapter 18

215 Tov, Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint, 185.
216 Cook, “4QSam9,” 454.
217 Ibid.
218 Compared to these, the differences in other chapters are minor and do not effect the meaning of the stories in question. These will be considered when the relevant verses of the passages in question will be discussed in the following chapters of this work.
the MT is 216 words longer than LXX but contains 8 fewer words than the Greek version. Thus, LXX lacks 39 of the 88 verses in these chapters, which amounts to LXX being 44 percent shorter than MT. In addition to these, Tov lists other differences:

1. LXX lacks 24 shorter elements in these chapters, ranging from one to five words.
2. LXX reflect 44 variant readings.
3. LXX contains 17 additions.

Which version is closer to the original and how can these differences be explained? Was the text originally as long as the MT version and subsequently shortened by the later editor and/or translator of the LXX or was the original text closer to the shorter LXX, while the MT text is evidence of later interpolation?

Opinions are normally divided into two groups. Wellhausen in 1871 suggested that 17:12-31, 55—18:5 represented an independent tradition which was interpolated into the main text by a later editor. McCarter opines that the sum-total of the MT pluses in 1 Sam.17:1—18:30 “can be seen to form a more or less complete narrative of their own.” He thinks that the MT additions “circulated for some time independently before its appropriation by a redactor to fill its present position.” From this perspective it may appear that the Hebrew text underlying the OG did not have the pluses of MT. This understanding led some to conclude that the shorter version is more original.

Others suggested that the Greek translator deliberately created a shorter, smoother story by omitting the following conflicting details:

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220 Ibid., 19-22; Tov, The Greek and Hebrew Bible, 333, 357-62.
221 Wellhausen, Der Text der Bücher Samuelis, 104-05.
(1) David’s introduction to Saul’s court (16:19-23) assumes Saul’s acquaintance with him, whereas the king’s question about David’s parents in 17:55-58 pictures him as though he was unfamiliar with the son of Jesse.

(2) In 18:17-19, Saul offers David his daughter Merab in marriage, but in the following verses (20, 27) David marries Saul’s second daughter Michal. The tension between these two accounts is apparent which might have motivated the translator to omit the former.

(3) In 16:21 Saul made David his armor-bearer. Consequently, at a time of military conflict, one would expect to see David by Saul’s side instead of going back and forth from Saul “to tend his father’s flock in Bethlehem” (17:15).

Not all the conflicting details have thus been removed, however. 17:33-40 presents David as a youth and shepherd, not knowledgeable in war, while in chapter 16:21 he is Saul’s armor-bearer. One would expect Saul to choose for himself a soldier, or at least a trainee – worthy of the position as the royal armor-bearer. Jason, after studying the David and Goliath story, opines that “the longer Hebrew text is the original in the discrepancy [just mentioned] which remains in the Septuagint reading.” He concludes that “if verses 17:12-31, 17:55-58, and 18:1-5 had been a mechanical addition, a ‘patch’ or a ‘secondary’ story inserted into the ‘main’ story, it would have been impossible to analyze the entire text as a complete literary unit …,” which he succeeded in doing.

Others noted that the MT text is not only longer, but also more complex. This complexity contributes to the unity of the story. Gooding

224 On the other hand, 16:21 can be either an anachronistic detail (cf. 18:5 with 12-13) or a literary device setting up the audience for things to come.
argues that “the combined version is the original version, which someone with a very literalistic, unimaginative mind has truncated, thinking thereby to improve it by removing doublets and discrepancies.” He concludes that “a pedantic sense of time-tabling has contributed to the truncation.”

McCarter, however, finds it “quite difficult to understand why an editor who was removing contradictions so boldly would not remove them all.” Tov too presents a compelling argument against the shortening of the story. He says that considering the translator’s fidelity to the original Hebrew text throughout, it is very unlikely that he would truncate the longer story.

The study of Rofé was aimed to demonstrate that the story must have been originally as long as MT as well as to suggest the date of its composition. He attempted to show that the LXX shorter version was neither harmonized, nor abridged, but rather “the harmonization was achieved by means of a comprehensive abridgment.” Thus, Rofé seeks an answer to why a redactor tried to eliminate at least some of the “contradictions.”

The above mentioned views received a response in the article by Auld and Ho. These writers paid closer attention to the “artistic qualities” and the function of the longer text, while maintaining that the shorter version is more original. Their own contribution consisted in demonstrating that the MT pluses in 1 Sam. 17—18 most likely did not come from an independent source. Their analysis of the David and Goliath story convinced them that “there were never two versions of the same story . . . combined by a redactor, but a making of an original story about David and Goliath, and then a remaking of it so that it conformed more fully to the pattern of an existing Saul story.” They suggested that the story was created on the basis of the already existing material which was reworked by a later redactor.

Eleven points have been identified on which Saul and David could be contrasted:

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228 Gooding, “Textual Problems,” 82.
232 Ibid., 122.
234 Ibid., 37-38.
background for errand as an introduction of each hero (9:3a/17:16).
an errand changes the heroes’ fates (9:3b/17:17-18).
Saul’s failure and David’s success in their errands (9:4/17:20-23).
each of the characters’ questions (9:7/17:26).
the question about the paternity of the future king (10:10, 11-12/17:55-58).
the opportunity of obtaining kingship (9:20/18:17, 19).
the characters’ threefold disclaimer (9:21/18:18).
the coming and departing of the spirit (10:10/18:10-12).
people’s reaction in receiving the newly elected leaders (10:27/18:30).

Dietrich argues that the story of 1 Sam. 17 is by no means monolithic. He
thinks that this must have been also felt by the translator of the Septuagint. The
Hebrew text, he explains, preserves two ancient independent narratives combined
together: one about an unknown slingshot-soldiers and another about the victory of
the shepherd David over Goliath. Dietrich suggests that the compiler of these stories
pursued a theological goal and so, he merged both traditions together in order to
emphasize the divine involvement in Israel’s military conflicts.235

As evident from more recent publications, scholars are seeking middle
ground in their attempt to find a better solution to these problematic differences in
MT and LXX versions. Today a combination of synchronic and diachronic studies
seems to be a more preferable approach. In the latest volume David und Saul im
Widerstreit: Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit the essays by Auld236 and

235 Walter Dietrich, “Die Erzählungen von David und Goliath in 1 Sam 17,” ZAW 108
236 A. Graeme Auld, “The Story of David and Goliath: A Test Case for Synchrony plus
Diachrony,” in David und Saul im Widerstreit: Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit: Beiträge zur
Auslegung des ersten Samuelbuches, ed. Walter Dietrich, OBO 206 (Fribourg; Göttingen: Academic
Press; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 118-28
Klein should be particularly noted. They demonstrate that without resigning their preferences as to which version is closer to the original LXX or MT, one is able to engage in studying the existing biblical texts (synchrony), whilst also posing questions about the intentions of the biblical writers (diachrony).

With that in mind, if one is to evaluate these studies, the approach of Barthélemy, Jason, Gooding, Rofé and van der Kooij seems to be more synchronic rather than diachronic. It focuses on the final product, as it were, demonstrating that the longer text is logically coherent and a connected story. In light of the evidence they compile one may be led to agree that the role of the MT pluses in 1 Sam. 17—18 is more than just filling in the gaps of the earlier shorter version. At the same time one should not dismiss the Greek shorter version by saying that it was truncated. Still, the questions persist: How does one account for such different readings in these versions? Was LXX based on a Hebrew short original? Are the major MT pluses evidence of a later interpolation? Time and space do not permit for an extended analysis here and it is beyond the scope of the present thesis. However, in light of the above discussions in this section, a few observations about the text of 1 Sam. 17—18 in these versions need to be made.

1) LXX seems to agree more often with Q against MT. However, because of the highly fragmented nature of Q the consistency of closeness between LXX and Q can be judged only at the places where Q reading is extant. One may assume that Q may have agreed with LXX where Q text is not extant, but caution should be exercised in such cases. More careful attention, however, should be paid to the disagreements between Q and LXX wherever possible. Thus, for example, 4QSam seems to contain some verses that are absent from LXX: portions of four

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238 The approach of Rofé needs to be commented on. He also pays attention to some external factors that seems to help in discerning the editorial hand in the story.

239 Tov sees only one alternative: “The working hypothesis, that the short version of the story found in the LXX is based on a short Hebrew original, is more acceptable if the alternative view, that it is an abridgement by the Greek translator cannot be sustained” (Tov, The Greek and Hebrew Bible, 348).
words in 18:4-5 were identified and reconstructed. These verses relate Jonathan is stripping himself of his princely regalia and giving it, along with weapons, to David as a gift after his victory over Goliath. These verses, however, need at least v. 3 or v. 1 or vv. 3+1 or, indeed, vv. 1-3. Thus, logic dictates that the text that contained vv. 4-5 may also have contained vv. 1-3 or at least some of them.

2) Lust cites Hippolytus (II c. AD) who in his commentary on 1 Sam. 17:1—18:8 (preserved in two Georgian manuscripts) seems to be in agreement with LXXB text in all of its omissions but retaining some of its additions (in 17:8, 10, 36, 37, 43b, 49, but not in 17:5 and 43a). However, Hippolytus mentions 18:1b, 3-4. Lust, after examining the relationship between Hippolytus and LXXB, concluded that “he used a Greek text very close to LXXB, but including 18:1. (3)-4, verses,” which somehow fell out of LXXB by parablepsis. Thus, not only 4QSama, which as was noted above stands closer to LXXL, contained 18:1-5, but OG might have originally contained these verses also.

3) Despite the highly fragmented nature of the QSamMSS, at least one scroll (1QSam) supports the MT reading in 18:17-18. This could mean one of two things: either the material underlying the text in this scroll contained these verses and as such its underlying Hebrew text approximated closely the MT or this scroll was corrected toward a more authoritative MT early in the first century AD. Cross, however, is certain that “there exists at Qumran no evidence whatever of true recensional activity.” If he is right, the second possibility can be ruled out, making it more probable that the Vorlage of 1QSam contained a near original text which included 18:17-18.

4) Scholars agree that Josephus employed a copy of a scroll which contained either Proto-Lucianic substratum (Cross) or any Greek text (Tov) that was

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240 DJD (4QSamuel, 80) reconstructs it as follows:

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close to LXX\textsuperscript{L} in its discernible OG substratum.\textsuperscript{244} Now Josephus (Ant. VI. 175-192) follows the shorter Greek text elsewhere but includes a brief paraphrase of 17:12-31, which, according to Lust, “he renders in his own style.”\textsuperscript{245} Some characteristics of Josephus’s “style” need to be noted. As a rule, he paraphrases the Bible, following the Greek text closely, though sometimes he slightly expands it. In 17:12-31, however, he leaves out some important details (vv. 24-27; Ant. VI 178-179), e.g. no royal promise about giving a daughter in marriage to the winner of the single combat with Goliath is mentioned, nor does Josephus say anything about Saul’s daughter Merab (18:17-19; cf. Ant. VI 196-200). Now these verses are also lacking in LXX! If one is to assume that the text used by Josephus was a short Greek text, then where did he get “extra” material? Two answers are possible: either the Greek text which Josephus used throughout contained these few verses or, as Lust suggests, he “used both the Hebrew text of the Bible and the Greek translation.”\textsuperscript{246} However, if Josephus used the Hebrew text of the Bible which text was it? If MT was the only Hebrew version that contained these verses, as commonly assumed, why did he paraphrase only some of it leaving other material out? Would he not be also aware of the pluses in MT elsewhere (he makes no mention of 17:55—18:5)? Ulrich too thinks that it is highly unlikely that Josephus would use any Hebrew text:

with regard to the question whether he used additional manuscripts in Hebrew or Aramaic as a supplementary source, when all the specific instances are examined for which Hebrew or Aramaic influence has been claimed, not one single example proves clear and persuasive.\textsuperscript{247}

It can be concluded, therefore, that the Greek version which Josephus had before him contained some (but not all) of the verses that are found in the MT longer text.


\textsuperscript{245} Lust, “David and Goliath,” 7.

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 16 n. 15.

\textsuperscript{247} Ulrich, “Biblical Text,” 90. He goes on to say “For the Books of Samuel the scholarly consensus that Josephus continuously and predominantly used a Greek Bible as the source for his narrative in The Jewish Antiquities is fully corroborated” (92-93). See also Ulrich, The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus, 165-91.
5) The Greek text is not uniformly shorter; sometimes it offers several variant readings and at other times it expands MT.\textsuperscript{248} If it is to be supposed that LXX\textsuperscript{B} is closer to the original, then it also seems possible that an editor, who expanded the shorter text by “making” the David and Goliath story longer as in the MT pluses, must have also shortened it at places. However, this kind of editorial decision, if true, is too difficult to explain.

6) The available evidence does not support a supposition that OG was as short as LXX\textsuperscript{B}. Indeed, if Q and the Hebrew text underlying OG shared a similar Vorlage, which could be inferred by recognizing that Q = LXX ≠ MT, then OG might have been longer than LXX\textsuperscript{B}.\textsuperscript{249} Thus, OG must have contained longer readings preserved in Q (18:4-5 [4QSama\textsuperscript{g}], 17-18 [1QSam]).

7) The text of MT, Q and reconstructed OG is sufficiently close to each other to consider the possibility that all of them originally derived from one common source. While it is unknown whether the writer of the book(s) of Samuel brought different sources into one and arranged them according to the literary principle himself or whether the writer/editor of Samuel worked with one written source in which the earlier oral and written traditions were already compiled in one document, which later became the source for subsequent interpolations, the literary complexity of the Hebrew text in both versions (Q and MT) exposes significant similarities in thematic directions as well as theological developments of the text. The split between these Hebrew versions, therefore, must have occurred early on, but necessarily after the compilation of the ancient source traditions into one.

All that said, it must be emphasized that the picture of the Greek shorter text is not as sharp as one would want it to be. 1 Sam. 17—18 is the one and only instance in the book(s) of Samuel (perhaps with the exception of one paragraph before 1 Sam. 11:1 [4QSama\textsuperscript{g} = Josephus = LXX\textsuperscript{L}(?)] where the Greek version is 44 percent shorter than its MT counterpart; this is the one exception. One can only hope

\textsuperscript{248} In total it contains 44 variant readings and 17 plusses. See Tov, “The Nature of the Differences between MT and LXX,” 19-22.

\textsuperscript{249} See Lust, “The Story of David and Goliath,” 11, 24-25.
that future studies of the sources that were used for the translation of LXX would
shed more light on these and similar issues.\textsuperscript{250}

Meanwhile, each version will be read individually, the differences
compared and answers to alternative readings where it is relevant suggested. An
analysis of the MT, Q and LXX readings will appear in the subsequent discussions
where particular instances will be considered.

\textbf{The Need for the Present Study}

The review of the recent studies of the 1 Sam. 25 narrative reveals that
while different literary approaches dealing with the biblical text proved to be helpful,
useful, and illuminating in many respects, the above mentioned critical approach that
primarily relies on the narrative analogy techniques to distill the sense of the story
leaves readers with problems:

(1) The analogous relationship between Nabal and Saul has been
established. However, if Nabal is not to be identified with Saul,
there is a need to find better answers to explain the nature of their
relationship and what numerous literary parallels in the text may
signify.

(2) If Nabal’s character is not merely a “mask” that Saul wears in 1
Sam. 25, alternative ways need to be sought to explain the
significance of this story as well as its place in 1 Samuel.

(3) If allegorical interpretation of 1 Sam. 25 is denied, more satisfactory
answers need to be sought that would explain the significance of
Nabal’s person and his role in the narrative. Additionally, Abigail’s
role in the story and the significance of her prophetic speech needs
to be adequately explained.

The same could be said about the history of interpretation of 1 Sam. 21
and 22. Doeg the Edomite is the key character for the proper understanding of these

\textsuperscript{250} It is not entirely impossible that the same ancient texts originally written in proto-Semitic
and used for transferring the writings into modernized Hebrew square script (ca. 5\textsuperscript{th}—4\textsuperscript{th} c. B.C.) were
the main source from which the Greek Bible was translated (ca. 3\textsuperscript{rd} c. B.C.).
stories. His close association with King Saul is established firmly by the text. However, there are several issues of his characterization that are quite problematic. The interpretation of the entire narrative (in chs. 21 and 22) largely depends on one’s perception of who Doeg was. The better one gets acquainted with him, the better one can perceive 1) what really took place in Nob and later in Gibeah and 2) the significance of this character in 1 Samuel as the whole.

The importance of Doeg and Nabal is highlighted not only by way of their sharing many similarities with King Saul, but also through their attitude towards the “son of Jesse.” When the stories in 1 Sam. 16—25 are read closely, the question arises: Is the “son of Jesse” employed by the writer of the book(s) of Samuel only to underscore that David is not yet a “name” in his own right and/or “has no hereditary rights” or is there something else hiding behind this phrase? What is more, why are Doeg and Nabal the only two southerners who join Saul in their use of this phrase pejoratively? In trying to find answers to these questions, the texts in 1 Sam. 16—25 should be closely studied in order to see what this phrase signifies and what importance it has to the understanding of the passages in question.

Finally, by noting certain patterns in the structure of 1 Sam. 16—25, an inquiry needs to be made into various reasons that led the author/editor of these stories to focus only on these characters in that portion of 1 Samuel. Additionally, the extent of the ideological forces and the role of the sociopolitical environment that influenced the writer(s) to include them in the book(s) need to be carefully considered.

The Approach Taken Here

The purpose of this study is to investigate the narratives in 1 Sam. 16—25 with a particular focus drawn on Saul, Doeg, Nabal and the “son of Jesse” in order to find possible solutions to the apparent problematic issues that have already been mentioned and to offer a fresh perspective on the significance of the stories in

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question. The following is simply a description of the guidelines of the investigative procedure.

A. Limitations

1) The physical constraints of this work do not allow for a very detailed discussion of all of the issues in the process of study. So the discussions will be limited to arguably the main questions pertinent to this thesis, allowing a small amount of digression at places where it seems especially important and necessary for the development of the argument.

2) This work is not a quest for ancient Israelite history. However, it is reasonable to assume that some historical data as well as the ideological and theological layers are uniquely merged together and presented in the form of this literary masterpiece that is 1 Samuel. In analyzing the stories in 1 Sam. 16—25 an attempt will be made to read the text employing both synchronic and diachronic approaches, whilst affirming the fact that literary empiricism and sound reasoning are not only compatible, but should always lead the discussion in biblical studies.

3) This study does not claim to be a complete analysis of the 1 Sam. 16—25. This work is primarily concerned with the issues of characterization of the two main characters Doeg and Nabal, their relationship to King Saul and their attitude toward David the “son of Jesse.” The characterization of other persons will be studied only in passing, paying attention chiefly to the key points where they come in close contact with the main characters or highlight the points of comparison and contrast between them.

4) Some of the text-critical issues in the book(s) of Samuel have already been discussed above. This investigation will follow the MT text throughout but compare it closely with the texts of LXX versions and that of a few available

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253 Fokkelman is of the opinion that history is “permanently swallowed-up and ever-unknown” (Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 389), but see a good response to this presupposition by Baruch Halpern, The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).
readings in the Samuel scrolls from Qumran. The writings of Josephus will also be consulted at relevant places. Only some disagreements that have implications to the understanding of the text will be discussed in detail, the evidence for each reading will be weighed and considered, while other issues will receive only brief comments.

B. The Text and the Reader

A few words need to be said about the making of 1 Samuel. Just as the case is with knowing the past, which is “remote and exceedingly mysterious” (Eccl. 7:24), so it is with the processes of transmission, compilation, recording, edition, expansion, and re-editing. The modern reader can only theorize about the forces and multidimensional causes that have influenced the creation of the material and shaping it into the present form. At the end of the day one must admit that no matter how scientific an approach was and what method was employed to learn how the text came into existence, all of the attempts are marked by subjectivity and uncertainty. Nevertheless, as Conroy notes, “the effort is worth while if it makes its practitioners better readers, more alert to and more appreciative of the texts.” Therefore, while keeping in mind the role of various causes that led to creation of the book(s) of Samuel, this study attempts to make sense of the texts as we have them.

With that in mind, we dive into the study of the texts in 1 Sam. 16—25 hoping to discover what we can and as much as we can. So the text will be approached without theorizing much about the primary source(s) whatever it/they might have been: stories circulating as oral traditions or as a written document at the writer’s disposal. The main concern here is the function of the text as it is being encountered presently. On that platform the logical sequence of the events will be reconstructed, based on the details found in the text itself. By suggesting new relationships and parallels between various thematic elements in the 1 Sam. 16—25 narratives, closer attention will be paid to the presumably essential issues pertinent to the present thesis.

254 For the discussion on the making of the book(s) of Samuel see Appendix VIII.
C. Procedures

The main discussion will be conducted in the central four chapters, with the conclusions to follow in the last.

By using synchronic approach, a detailed analysis of Nabal’s character will be undertaken (Chapter II). Here the character of Nabal will be examined in terms of his name, reputation, greatness, status and origin. A close attention will be paid to the significance of the geographical places where the action of the story takes place. In this, the variant readings in different versions will be compared and evaluated. The discussions in the chapter will be finished with an inquiry into the nature of the Saul/Nabal relationship. The questions raised here will receive their fuller answers in Chapter IV and V.

Much in the same way, by using synchronic approach in Chapter III, the characterization of Doeg the Edomite in 1 Sam. 21 and 22 will be analyzed as well as the problematic issues of Doeg’s identity will be tackled in three major areas: 1) his “Edomite” origin, 2) his “detention” in the house of Yahweh, and 3) his title and occupation in Saul’s service. A new reading which would appear to be smoother and more agreeable within the larger scope of the book(s) of Samuel will be suggested. Doeg’s function in the story as Saul’s servant and as the eyewitness, accuser, and executioner will be considered by scrutinizing the facts of his testimony that resulted in the destruction of the population of Nob. Finally, an inquiry will be made into the intricate nature of the Doeg/Saul relationship. The questions raised here will be dealt with in the following chapters.

By using the same synchronic approach, a particular focus will be placed on the ideological and theological layers in 1 Sam. 16—25. Here the characters of Saul, Doeg and Nabal will be compared and contrasted in their attitudes toward the “son of Jesse.” Closer attention will be paid to the significance concealed in the latter phrase and its purpose in 1 Samuel by looking at the phrase’s function in the speeches of Saul, Doeg and Nabal. The scope of observation will be broadened to include the story of David’s anointing, to consider the significance of his friendship with Jonathan and to expose some striking relationships between various stories in 1 Sam. 16—25.
Chapter V is an exercise in *diachrony*. By noting the function of individual units within each story, an attempt will be made to discern the writer/editor’s purpose in molding various traditions into his work so as to ensure the transmission of his message.

This study will be concluded with general observations on the accomplishments of the work undertaken and with a look ahead at the different avenues of possible developments and interests in advancing similar studies in the future.

It is hoped that this work will lead readers on a journey of discovery of new elements in the familiar stories that would shed more light on the structure and purpose of the narratives in 1 Sam. 16—25.
CHAPTER TWO

NABAL THE CALEBITE

Introductory Remarks

One of the most mysterious characters in the book of 1 Samuel is Nabal the husband of Abigail, the Carmelitess. The persona of this man is as peculiar as his name. His past is unknown, nor is the history of how he got his name. As the story is being read, it is possible to pick up a few additional details if careful attention is paid to his speech and to the testimonies of other characters. The rest, however, is left for inference. Was he simply rich or did his greatness go beyond his material possessions? The names by which he is called in the narrative “Nabal” and a “worthless man” have an array of negative connotations, which are also consistent with the way he handles himself in the story. His wife Abigail said that her husband’s deeds can hardly be detached from his name: “Nabal is his name and folly is with him” (v. 25). What was exactly that “folly,” which followed after Nabal’s as a shadow? Was it his lack of attention to the oriental law of hospitality that became the cause of his downfall as described in 1 Sam. 25 or was it Nabal’s sins from his past that finally caught up with him? Yet, he is called "אֲבַדֵּל מָנָא, “a very great man.” This phrase is quite weighty. It puts Nabal in the same category with the men of great character in Israel’s history.¹ Hence is the question: Who was Nabal the Calebite, really?

In this chapter an attempt will be made to penetrate through the layer of literary constructs to infer what is hidden beneath the surface of the literary layers of the story. To do that, the details of Nabal’s characterization will be examined and a close attention will be paid to the context which may point to additional avenues in uncovering with the mystery of Nabal’s identity.

¹ For example, in Ex. 11:3 narrator calls Moses by that name: הָאָרָד מֵתֶשׁ מְדֹּרֶל מַאֵר.
Characterization of Nabal

The narrator begins the story by introducing Nabal thus:

אש בקנין ומעשה בכרמל והאיש נabal ולו כל פם שלשה אלפים ולבקה נabal ויהי.

There was a man in Maon², whose activity was [flocks³ were] in Carmel; and the man was very great, and his flock was three thousand and a thousand goats; and he was about shearing his flock in Carmel. And the name of the man was Nabal . . . and he was a Calebite (1 Sam. 25:2-3).⁴

With this brief introduction the narrator sets up the stage for the actions in the story. Before the geographic setting will be examined and the significance of the place names where that great man lived and had his business will be investigated, Nabal’s name shall first be studied, although in his presentation the narrator put it at the end.

A. Nabal’s Name

In this section, the uses of the word נבל in HB will be noted and then the context of the story will be carefully looked at, which may prove to be helpful in determining the significance concealed in that person’s name.

1. The Meaning of נבל and נבל

It is widely known that in HB the term נבל, translated as “fool,” designates not “naivety and harmless simpleton,” but rather folly in the biblical sense of the word which is used in close association with dishonor, stupidity, dullness of heart, insensitivity to God’s law, wickedness and sin.⁵ Thus, some passages speak of

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² MT = LXX. LXX reads ἐν τῇ θερμῇ, “in the desert.” See a discussion below.
³ LXX reads ποιμήν αὐτοῦ, “his flock,” cf. v. 7b.
as an embarrassment to his father (Pr. 17:21), a glutton (Pr. 30:22), an atheist who ridicules the very existence of God (Ps. 14:1, 53:1), and a hoarder of a fortune by injustice (Jer. 17:11). In addition, the term נבל has two connotations attached to it: sexual perversion and rebellion against God. Most of the time in the scripture, with the exception of Josh. 7:15, it describes sexual misconduct. Thus, the word is used in the story about Dinah’s rape (Gen. 34:7); four times it is employed in the story of the Levite at Gibeah (Judg. 19:23, 24; 20:6, 10). In the story of 2 Sam. 13:12 Tamar calls Amnon’s proposal as “the disgraceful thing” (ןבלת), and warns him that he would become like one of the fools (ןבליים) in Israel, if he forces himself upon her. Jeremiah 29:23 captures both meanings when he writes, “they have acted foolishly (ןבלת) in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives, and have spoken words in My name falsely, which I did not command them.” Isaiah 32:6 speaks of the fool (נן) “who utters nonsense (ןבלת), [whose] heart devises wickedness, to practice ungodliness and to speak error against the Lord.”

Roth, on the other hand, suggests that נבלת denotes “sacrilege.” However, in essence both meanings are not too far apart. He, who transgresses the law of God by being sexually perverse or committing sacrilege, is acting foolishly, because by his deeds he will bring divine judgment on himself. In this respect Psalm 14=53 is directly applicable to the Nabal of this story, if not dedicated to him altogether.6

2. Other Explanations

Some made attempts to amend the word to read נבל, “a wineskin or jar,” a word on which a pun is made in v. 37. While it is possible to associated

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6 Levenson notes that the term corresponds to Ps. 14 = 53 and describes the heart of an “atheist” (Jon D. Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 13). But at the closer examination of the context of those Psalms one may come to the conclusion that more than just the heart of an atheist is in view. According to Midrash Shocher Tov as well as the Midrash Tehillim נבל in Ps. 53 should be understood not as an adjective, but as a proper noun referring to Nabal the Calebite (Carmelite).
Nabal’s name with his drunken orgies later (cf. LXX v. 36), it is unlikely that that name would describe simply the person’s drunkenness.\(^7\) The word folly (בֶּלַח), with which Nabal’s name is associated (v. 25), may indicate that that person’s evil went beyond his drinking habits. Further, Nabal is said to be “a worthless man” (בֵּן חָלֵיל, v. 17), which probably describes the corruptness (רָשָׁע) of his moral state, and that is in line with the meaning of בֶּל, as discussed above. In addition, as though to underscore his unenviable personal quality, the narrator compares Nabal with his wife Abigail, who was “of good understanding” as if to say that everything she was, he was not.\(^8\) Therefore, it does not seem to be accidental that this mismatched couple is characterized by two antonyms “good” (משָׁם) and “bad” (רָשָׁע); their actions demonstrate that too.

The verb nabal, “to wither, fade” or the noun niblā, “corpse, carcass” do not seem to be better choices, in the present context either.\(^9\) Among other suggestions is the Arabic word nabula, “to be distinguished,” and nabala, “to be gracious, honorable,”\(^10\) but, as has been pointed out by some scholars, it has no cognate in Hebrew.\(^11\) As for the Akkadian usage of the root בָּלַח, which carries the notion of “tearing out,” it is doubtful, as demonstrated by Roth, that it can be connected with the Northwest-Semitic,\(^12\) nor that the term nablu, “flame” is the morphological equivalent of the Hebrew name.\(^13\) It is likely, therefore, that בֶּל in this case simply means a “fool” with all the negative connotations attached thereto.

The matter of this particular characterization of that person caused scholars to wonder whether בֶּל really is a personal name, for it seems inconceivable that parents would give their child such a dreadful name.\(^14\) Some concluded,

\(^7\) Though, of course, it is possible especially when compared with 1 Sam. 1:15-16.


\(^9\) McKenzie favors the latter and goes on theorizing that Abigail functions more or less as an assassin of her husband through the deal she sealed with David. Therefore v. 25 is a revelation of her true intentions in that she reassures David that her husband is as good as dead (McKenzie, King David, 100).

\(^10\) cf. BDB, p. 614


\(^12\) Roth, “NBL,” 397.


\(^14\) McKenzie (King David, 97) after Levenson and Halpern (“The Political Import of David's Marriages,” 507-18), theorizes that Nabals real name was Jether or Ithra. He tries to reinforce his
therefore, that Nabal was a metaphoric name rather than his literal name. Indeed, this seems to be the case when Nabal’s reputation is considered.

**B. Nabal’s Reputation**

If Nabal’s name introduces the character to the story, the other words by which he is described serve as a commentary on Nabal’s character. Thus, the perversion of his moral state is hinted at by the phrase: נָבָל, “wicked man” (v. 17; lit. “son of worthlessness”). The terms נָבָל or נָבָלָת are applied in the scripture to people who have committed horrible crimes. It is used to describe:

1. the wicked people, who seduce Israelites to serve idols (Deut. 13:14[13]);
2. the Benjaminites, who raped the Levite’s concubine at Gibeah and plunged the tribes into a civil war (Judg. 19:22; 20:13);
3. once it is used by Hannah in her defense before Eli when she insisted that by no means was she בַּת בַּל פָּלָת, “a daughter of worthlessness” (1 Sam. 1:13) when the priest thought that the woman came to the sanctuary drunk;
4. the sons of Eli, who desecrated the office of the priesthood (1 Sam. 2:12);
5. the people who refused to acknowledge Saul’s leadership (1 Sam. 10:27);
6. David’s selfish soldiers, who acted unjustly and did not want to share their spoils with those who had remained in the camp (1 Sam. 30:22);

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**Reading by mentioning two passages:** 1 Chr. 2:17 names Jether as the father of Amasa, Abigail’s son and 2 Sam. 17:25 mentions Ithra the Ishmaelite as the husband of David’s sister, Jether and Ithra being two variant spellings of the same name. However, this explanation is based on erroneous identification of two women as one and the same. It seems very unlikely that David would have married his own sister (cf. Lev. 18:9).

15 Ben-Meir, “Nabal, the Villain,” 250.
16 Heb. בָּת בַּל פָּלָת. Surprisingly, there were men like Nabal in David’s band. Though by this note the narrator seems to imply that not everyone was like him, still it gives an insight into the community of the outlaws.
(7) Sheba son of Bichri, who incited rebellion against David (2 Sam. 20:1);  
(8) the false witnesses against Naboth the Jezreelite (1 Kgs. 21:10; 13);  
(9) the wicked men who gathered around Jeroboam (2 Chr. 13:7).

So Nabal’s name is added to the list of biblical characters who transgressed the commandment and brought on themselves divine judgment.  

C. Nabal’s Greatness

It is a point of some significance that Nabal’s possessions are described before his name. In fact, his name comes almost as an afterthought: ושֵׁם נַבָּע נִבֵּל, “now the man’s name was Nabal …” (v. 3). By putting it last, the narrator may have wanted to underscore the fact that his name is of secondary importance to who he was. Garsiel notes that Nabal’s “enormous wealth outweighs his very personality and that his whole being rests and depends on his possessions.”

A few English versions share the same understanding of the phrase (ודאש נבּא) seeing Nabal’s greatness exemplified in his riches: “and the man was very rich.” The phrase occurs in the scripture rarely. It is used to describe:

1. Moses (Ex. 11:3): דָּם מֵהֶשֶׁה נַבּוּל נִבֵּל מֵאֲרָ֖י מִשְׂרָ֣י מְעִיָּ֑ה נַבּוּל, “the man Moses [was] very great (esteemed greatly) in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of Pharaoh’s servants.”
2. It characterizes Barzillai, the Gileadite from Rogelim (2 Sam. 19:32-33 [31-32]): וַאֲרָ֖י מְעִיָּ֑ה נַבּוּל ... נַבּוּל, “and Barzillai [was] a very great man.”

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17 He is called תָּשְׁמֶר instead of more common נבּוּל נִבֵּל.
20 The exceptions are KJV “and the man was very great” (also JPS; Geneva Bible renders the phrase “and the man was exceeding mighty”).
It describes Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram (2 Ki. 5:1):

Now Naaman, captain of the armies of the king of Aram was a great man in the eyes of his master.” The same is also described as “a valiant warrior.”

Job’s name can be mentioned here as well (Job 1:3): “and that man was greater than all the sons of the east.”

It is likely that the phrase describes Moses’ personal charisma as a leader as well as the esteem he had in the eyes of everyone who knew him. In Barzillai’s case, it underscores his greatness in terms of material possessions, out of which he was able to provide for David and his men when they were on the run from Absalom. As to Naaman, he may have been as rich as Barzillai (cf. 2 Ki. 5:5, 9). However, while the political status of the latter is not known, the former was “the captain of the armies of the Syrian king.” Therefore, it can be understood that he was also very valuable in the eyes of the Aramean king as a great warrior. The greatness of Job is communicated by way of comparison. It consisted of his possessions (7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants) and, as such, of his fame among the men of the east, as well as his great moral quality (Job 1:8).

Thus, the phrase carries a range of meaning and the intent of the exact meaning largely depends on the context in which it occurs.

Now when Nabal’s characterization as is set against that background, one must stop and ponder the significance of the phrase in the given context. In search of an answer one may also be lead to entertain the possibility that Nabal was not simply a very rich sheep farmer; he, more likely, was a man of great status in the community – the status that depended not only on his riches.

**D. Nabal’s Status**

When one attempts to peel off a few literary layers in the story in the attempt to get a closer look at Nabal, it becomes increasingly clear that Nabal’s
possessions are only a smokescreen (though an important one, the literary significance of which will be discussed below) to mask who that man really was. Nabal’s riches are not the focal point of the story, but it gives David sufficient grounds to initiate the dialogue.21

Fokkelman observes that the man who is described as Nabal in 1 Sam. 25 could be thought of as “the boss of the district.” For “this man ha[d] such a large stock of cattle (v. 2), that it is hardly feasible that there is any one to equal him in the neighborhood: we might say ‘the land would not be able to bear the two together,’ looking at Gen. 13:6 and 36:7.”22 Barber noted that Nabal’s numerous flocks “must have given him a virtual monopoly in the area.”23 Levenson says, “If his three thousand sheep and one thousand goats (1 Sam. 25:2) are not a gross exaggeration, then it was perfectly true that his feast was ‘fit for a king’ (v. 36), for he must have been at the pinnacle of social status.”24 Biddle suggested that Nabal was Saul’s representative in the area.25 Grønbaek also noted that Saul must have had a special interest in Carmel, since he had chosen that place to erect his monument.26 McKenzie added that “Nabal was an important political figure, the closest thing there was at the time to the king of Judah.”27 Finding multiple literary ties between the person of Saul and Nabal, Green after Polzin28 concluded that “Nabal is not just the person Saul but the king(ship) itself,”29 for he shared “the royal shepherd identity” with the monarch.30 By looking at the story from a similar perspective, Boyle suggested that David was approaching Nabal keenly aware of his status. She says,

21 The force of the story does not suggest that David was making an attempt to steal from Nabal either (cf. Pr. 19:1). Had that been his motive, he could have easily taken advantage of the situation earlier in the wilderness (vv. 7, 8, 15, 16). Furthermore, neither this story nor later texts give the reader any reasons to suspect that he plundered Nabal’s property. Moreover, sending his men with the request, David is counting on Nabal’s grace (!x; v. 8) to give what he had available at the moment. Ironically, this was the quality Nabal lacked.

22 Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 476. Similarly, Baldwin views Nabal as “‘lord’ of the district,” though she does not say what this phrase implies (Baldwin, 1 and 2 Samuel, 148).

23 Barber, The Books of Samuel, 265.


26 Grønbaek, Die Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids, 172. Along somewhat similar lines, de Vaux reminds that “the royal estate was managed by stewards (1 Chr. 27:25-31), and worked by the labour of state slaves and the levy of free men (1 Sam. 8:12)” (Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions, trans. John McHugh [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961], 167).

27 McKenzie, King David, 97.


29 Green, “Enacting Imaginatively the Unthinkable,” 11, n. 11.

30 Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 396.
“The phrase ‘to ask the of’ someone was a customary personal greeting, but it rarely occurs as such in scripture. There it is usually a formula of diplomatic negotiations.”

So, Nabal could have been a royal official and was treated as such. In addition, David presents himself as Nabal’s son: (v. 8). This too may have had diplomatic overtones. It is also possible to interpret David’s phrase with which he concludes the request “your son David” as being synonymous with a more common expression: “At your service!”

In summary, the note about Nabal’s greatness may indicate that he was a person of high status – perhaps even Saul’s official in the area. He was a “very great” person in the land, and that is how the narrator probably wants his audience to perceive Nabal. But it is interesting to note that the narrator deliberately shuts the door leading to Nabal’s identity, and yet the door seems to be open leading to Nabal’s origin.

E. Nabal’s Origin

There are reasons to believe that 1 Sam. 25:3 speaks of Nabal’s origin – he was a Calebite ( Caleb), the being “the usual patronymic termination.”

About Nabal’s origin, Stoebe comments:

Die Angabe, daß er ein Kalibbiter gewesen sei, klappt nach, ist aber als Ausdruck judäischen Überlegenheitsgefühls nicht spätere Glosse, sondern muß aus eine Zeit stammen, in der das Wissen um solche Gegensätze noch lebendig war.

The rabbinical scholars also believe that it is a reference to his origin. Radak writes that Nabal descended from the tribe of Caleb:

The LXX’s reading o` a;nqrwpoj kuniko,j, “the man was dog-like” or “churlish” in place of yblk of MT, seems to be closer to qere. The 4QSam

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32 A comparison can also be made with Job. 29:16: אֲנִי אֲבֵּךְ לַאֲפֶרִים, “I was a father to the needy.”
33 See Driver, Notes on the Hebrew Text, 196.
34 Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuels, 454.
35 See Scherman, I - II Samuel, 160.
reading here is unclear [...]租赁. 37 DJD reconstructs the word to read with LXX, MT (qere), Targums, Syriac, and Vulgate, and supplies the following explanation:

The confusion of waw and yod is frequent, particularly in the Early Herodian period when the two are indistinguishable in some hands. The original reading, and probably that of 4QSam, is כַּלֶּב, ‘Calebite’. The town of Carmel (Tel el-Kirmil), seven miles south of Hebron, is in the district of Caleb. Confusion with Carmel in the north has led to the misunderstanding in the text of some traditions. 38

Others, however, say that kethib reading והא כַּלֶּב, “and he was like his heart,” seems to make better sense, and possibly could be an attempt to harmonize the meaning of his name with his actions. 39 The kethib reading might have arisen from recognition of some kind of relationship between Nabal of 1 Sam. 25 and that of Ps. 53. Thus, some scribes, seeing a relationship between the 1 Sam. 25 story and Ps. 53:2[1]: “the fool (בֶּל) has said in his heart (כַּלֶּב), ‘There is no God,’” may have wanted to harmonize both texts. 40 Whatever the case is, these considerations do not seem to alter the meaning of the text significantly. The reading that Nabal was כַּלֶּב, “like his heart,” does not introduce anything new into the passage. With such a reading the text would simply mean that “Nabal was being himself” or acted in accordance with his nature.

Van Wolde argues, however, that this name כַּלֶּב occurs only once in HB and only here. She points out that “when elsewhere in the books of Samuel and Chronicles reference is made to Nabal, he is referred to as ‘Nabal the Carmelite’, viz.

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37 In 4QSam the verse is almost completely lost except for a few words that give some indication that they belong to this verse: [...] משליות וראית כַּלֶּב [...]. See DJD, 4QSamuel, 87; Fincke, The Samuel Scroll from Qumran, 100, 317.
38 DJD, 4QSamuel, 87. Stoebe also noted that “Ketib is nicht ein Versuch, witzig zu sein, sondern ein vielleicht auf der Grundlage einer mechanischen Verschreibung von ו to ח entstandenes Mißverständnis, des den digentlichen Sinn nicht mehr erkannte und ihn als “hündisch” deute” (Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuels, 446, n. 3f).
40 It is interesting to note that rabbis mention only Ps. 53 and not Ps. 14, though it is commonly believed that these Psalms are a doublet.
That, of course, is true. In fact, the reconstructed text of 4QSama by DJD, also seems to indicate that the space consideration in 1 Sam. 25:4 “argues for the inclusion of the gentilic as in LXX.”

So, it may have read: … (4QSama,43) instead of … (MT). Van Wolde, however, goes on to say that “the lexeme, ‘dog’, is widely used and known” in HB. She suggests that through this type of characterization the narrator is “poking fun at Nabal: he presents Nabal as belonging to the ‘tribe of dogs.’”

Scherman cites rabbinic scholars Ralbag and Abarbanel, both of whom see this note as a reference to Nabal’s base character: “He was like a dog, that does not share its food even with others of its own species.” However, it does not seem to this writer that “a Calebite” and “the Carmelite” readings (if one is to assume that the latter reading was part of the original and not a later gloss) are necessarily at odds with each other if the history of Caleb’s name(s) is considered seriously (see Chapter V).

It appears now that all three perspectives mentioned above fit the context of the story. Indeed, Wilson may be right noting that, “biblical scholars debate the legitimacy of one perceived pattern over another, asking—which did the writer intend? The answer may be both—perhaps all!” Thus, Nabal lived and had his business in the geographical area that historically belonged to the tribe of Caleb (Nu. 32:12; Josh. 14:14; Judg. 1:15, 20). This fact coupled with Nabal’s riches and status

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41 Van Wolde, “A Leader Led by a Lady,” 357. She, however, overlooks the fact that in 1 Chr. 3:1 it is not Nabal but Abigail who is called so (מַלְתַּת הַקָּרְם = LXX ἀβγαία τῆς καρμηλίας). Similar reading is found, in 2 Sam. 3:3 where LXX also omits “wife of Nabal the Carmelite” (אשהַל הַקָּרְמִיל) and makes the similar reference to Abigail (τῆς ἀβγαίας τῆς καρμηλίας). 4QSama 2 Sam. 3:3 stands closer to the LXX here reading מַלְתַּת הַקָּרְמִיל instead of מַלְתַּת נָבָל represented by the MT. DJD explains that “the indication of מַלְתַּת הַקָּרְמִיל as opposed to אֲשֵׁר (אשה), and limitations of space, make the reading of אשה an improbability in 4QSama” (DJD, 4QSamuel, 109). See also Fincke, The Samuel Scroll from Qumran, 126: 33, 8.
42 DJD, 4QSamuel, 87.
43 LXX reads: … ὥσπερ ἡ ἡγεμόνος τοῦ Ναβαλ τῆς Καρμηλίας …
44 Van Wolde, “A Leader Led by a Lady,” 356-57. She also says that since the definite article is absent it is an indication that the origin is not in view. But the absence of the definite article may also indicate that the narrator deliberately downplays Nabal’s origin as though he is trying to conceal something. Leimbach, however, believes that the LXX reading in this instance is groundless (Leimbach, Die Bücher Samuel, 106).
45 Scherman, I - II Samuel, 161.
allowed some to entertain the possibility that perhaps Nabal was a Calebite chieftain.\footnote{Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 24-28; Levenson and Halpern, “The Political Import of David’s Marriages,” 507-18.}

The reading that Nabal was “dog-like” also fits the story. On his way to destroy Nabal’s household David makes a promise to destroy everyone who takes his name (lit. “one that urinates against the wall,” v. 22). As a rule the phrase is translated “every male,” but in the strict sense it would apply to animals, and especially to dogs.\footnote{Miscall, I Samuel, 155. See also Scherman, I-II Samuel, 165, who cites Targums that renders the phrase: “one whose emotions resonate against the wall of his heart,” thus making a reference to human beings. But the fact that this note probably goes beyond “every male” could be seen from a simple fact that Abigail was to be harmed too: כְּפַר (v. 34).} Therefore, David is making a pun on Nabal’s origin and his entire household. He likens Nabal and his fellow Calebites to a pack of dogs, and intends to destroy them all – all those, who so “disrespectfully” treated the “wall” of their protection (cf. v. 16). It is interesting to note that the reading that Nabal was “dog-like” recalls some words of David’s conversation with Saul in 24:14[15]:

“Whom are you perusing? A dead dog . . .?” It is hard to miss this ironic allusion with the description of Nabal in 1 Sam. 25 as “dog-like.” By the end of this story this “barking/screaming (יָנַק; v. 14) dog” Nabal, dies. When this “dog” was thus screaming, David thought he was worth putting to death (25:22). Abigail, however, tried to convince David that the trip was not worth it because Nabal’s days were numbered – he was as good as dead (v. 26). Consequently, as David himself had said earlier in his conversation with Saul, the dead dog is not worth pursuing and so, he withdraws.

Incidentally, this perspective may offer new insights into the particulars of David’s intention in the matter. He was probably intending to destroy the entire tribe of the Calebites (dogs) that were in Carmel at the time, for which a group of 400 armed men was called. He was not making a trip to kill one man – Nabal, for, as Levenson rightly noted, Nabal “would hardly be an example of his shedding innocent blood”!\footnote{Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 23.}

The explanation that Nabal was “like his heart” is consistent with the context as well. Weiss pointed out that Nabal’s characterization as a “hard/harsh
“man” (דָּוָאָה כָּפָה) is a decisive element in telling the 1 Sam. 25 story and establishes a link with the description of Nabal becoming as hard as stone when his heart died within him (25:37). Thus, the description of Nabal as “hard man” and him being “like his heart” communicates from the outset that he was a corrupt man. His stony heart, which refused to respond positively to the request of the needy, and his inability to accept advice proved to be a fitting stone in the slingshot of divine justice (v. 29).

So, it is very likely that this sufficiently ambiguous word כָּפָה, served the narrator’s multiple purposes. With one word he hit several targets.

**Geographic Setting**

Geographic setting helps to reveal additional layers of meaning in narratives. Bar-Efrat writes: “places in the narratives are not merely geographical facts, but are to be regarded as literary elements in which fundamental significance is embodied.” Below, the significance of Paran, Maon and Carmel will be examined and the text critical issues that may shed additional light on 1 Sam. 25 considered.

**A. Paran or Maon?**

The literary significance of David’s move to the wilderness of Paran (v. 1b) is sometimes discussed in connection with the rest of the story of 1 Sam. 25. This issue is of some importance if 1 Sam. 25:1 is to be connected with the following material in the chapter. Most of the time, however, it is the text critical question found in these verse that invites scholarly discussions. MT says that David went “to the wilderness of Paran” (אֲלֵי הַנָּחָל Paran). LXXB reads εἰς τὸν ἴρον Μαών. Since the same place, Maon, appears in v. 2, some are in favor of emending the text in v. 1b, thus creating a bridge with the following verse.

It is important to keep in mind that the text does not give David’s exact location before he went down (ירד) to the wilderness. Some assume that he and his

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52 LXX reads: τὸν ἐπίκοον = שֵׁם, “Simeon,” probably also trying to harmonize with “Jeshimon,” but see the discussion below. 1 Sam. 25:1-3 has not survived in any of the QMSS.
company attended Samuel’s funeral\textsuperscript{53} in Ramah,\textsuperscript{54} where they were last seen before disappearing into the wilderness again. However, as Driver notes, it is more probable that David came down from some unnamed higher spot in the Judean Mountain (הר ירדן) to the wilderness.\textsuperscript{55} Nevertheless, the various readings in 25:1b necessitate harmonization.

1. Argument for Maon

There seem to be legitimate reasons to suppose that David’s company did not wander too far south since the events of 1 Sam. 23 and 25 probably did not happen far apart from each other sequentially.\textsuperscript{56} 1 Sam. 23:24b says that “David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon\textsuperscript{57},” where they were on the run from King Saul. The name “Arabah” is normally used to designate the wilderness flatlands, in part or wholly referring to the depression of the Jordan Valley. It stretched for more than a hundred miles from Mt. Hermon and included sides of the river Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the region slightly to the southwest as far as the head of the Gulf of Aqabah.\textsuperscript{58} So, the context of 1 Sam. 25:1 would be taking the reader to the northward extension of the flatlands near the Gulf. In addition, 1 Sam. 23:14f seems to assume that the wilderness of Ziph and Maon

\textsuperscript{53} Scholars note that the phrase, “whole Israel” that attended Samuel’s funeral would naturally include both Saul and David, since there is no marked contrast in 25:1 to separate it from the previous clause. Thus, some say that “an amnesty was proclaimed, and that David availed himself of this to attend the prophet’s funeral” (W. H. Rigg, \textit{The First Book of Samuel} [London: The Religious Tract Society, 1920], 242). Rabbis note that “after attending Samuel’s funeral, David resumed his flight,” for he had attended the funeral secretly, but “seeing that so many people were flocking to mourn Samuel, David may have feared that some of them would see him and report his whereabouts to Saul,” and so he went down to the wilderness (so Scherman, \textit{I - II Samuel}, 161). However, if David was still very cautious with Saul, it seems highly improbable that he would come to a funeral only to run away from it.

\textsuperscript{54} Wiener identifies Ramah or Ramathaim of Samuel as modern Beit Rima, located ca. 60 km north from Carmel as crow flies (Harold M. Wiener, “The Ramah of Samuel,” \textit{JPOS} 7, no. 3 [1927]: 109-11; \textit{Tübingen Bibelatlas auf der Grundlage des Tübingen Atlas des Vorderen Orients}, ed. Siegfried Mittmann & Götz Schmitt [Tübingen: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001]).

\textsuperscript{55} Driver, \textit{Notes on the Hebrew Text}, 195.

\textsuperscript{56} Eissfeldt is of the opinion that the narratives of 1 Sam. 25:2-43 and 23:1-12 must follow one another sequentially (Eissfeldt, \textit{Die Komposition der Samuelisbücher}, 19).

\textsuperscript{57} The location of Jeshimon is unknown except generally as a “wasteland” (cf. Nu. 21:20; 23:28).

refer to approximately the same area, and 1 Sam. 25:7, 16, and 17 presuppose that David remained in the region of Maon for some time. As for the MT reading, Alter believes that “unless there is some other place called Paran, it would refer to the Sinai desert, where it would make no sense for David to go and where he could scarcely be if he and his men are engaged with Nabal’s shepherds in Judea.” He is in agreement with McCarter who says that the wilderness of Paran is “simply too far away to figure into the narrative at this point.” Both represent a group of scholars who favor the LXXB reading.

2. Argument for Paran

The sending of the twelve spies into Canaan was from the wilderness of Paran (Nu. 13:3). They inspected the hill country in the Negev, traveling as far as Rehob in the wilderness of Zin (13:17). They also visited Hebron (v. 22). After 40 days of espionage in the land of Canaan they returned to Kadesh, which was in the wilderness of Paran (Nu. 13:26). However, according to other passages, Kadesh was in the wilderness of Zin (Nu. 20:1). So it is quite possible that the wilderness of Paran extended far north and integrated part of the wilderness of Zin. Nielsen proposed that Kadesh was located farther north in the neighborhood between Edom and Amalek, directly west of Petra. So, if 25:1 is to be viewed as an introduction to the following story, the MT reading would not be at odds with the plain sense,

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59 The town of Maon (modern Khirbet Main) was located five miles south of Ziph (modern Tel Zif), twelve miles southwest of Keilah (cf. 1 Sam 23:6f), and the wilderness of Maon would thus most likely have been south of the wilderness Ziph.

60 Robert Alter, The David Story: A Translation with Commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel (London: W. W. Norton, 1999), 152.

61 McCarter, 1 Samuel, 388.

62 Of the same opinion are Goldman, Samuel, 149; Hertzberg, 1 & 2 Samuel, 198-99; Winter, Studies in Samuel, 295-97; Ackroyd, 1 Samuel, 190; Laney, First and Second Samuel, 72; Conroy, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 79; Chafin, 1, 2 Samuel, 192-93; Cartledge, 1 & 2 Samuel, 291; Davis, 1 Samuel, 205-07; Payne, 1 & 2 Samuel, 129; Klein, 1 Samuel, 245; Vos, 1, 2 Samuel, 83; Gordon, 1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary, 182; Youngblood, 1, 2 Samuel, 765.

63 The wilderness itinerary of Nu. 33 (MT) makes no reference to Paran, though the LXX includes the wilderness of Paran and identifies it with Kadesh (Nu. 33:36).

64 Nielsen believed that “Mount Sinai must . . . be situated in the region south of the Dead Sea, east of Kadesh, where the Amalekites lived in tents to the west of the Araba-valley towards the southern border of Palestine: while Midianites lived to the east of the Araba-valley, south of Moab” (Ditlef Nielsen, “The Site of the Biblical Mount Sinai,” JPOS 7, no. 4 [1927]: 187-208, [191-92]). He goes on to say that “Edom did not, as at the height of its glory, extend to the northern point of the Gulf of Akaba, and did not in those days reach Kadesh to the west nor Mount Hor to the south” (192). He believes that ha-sela, e.g. Petra, was the southern border of Edom (193). Thus, he identifies Mt. Sinai with Petra (194, 198).
namely, the Paran wilderness may have extended farther north in the southern Judah and, therefore, was on the border with the wilderness of Maon. Alternatively, if the wilderness of Paran was reaching only the borders of Judah’s southern extremity, then, perhaps, David went down to a place where, as Stoebe noted, Saul was no longer in control. So the LXXB could simply be harmonizing v. 1 with v. 2 where the same word appears. The suggestion of Kitto that David may have moved first to the wilderness of Paran, only to return later to the wilderness of Maon (cf. v. 2) is quite probable.

It seems that both readings (LXXB and MT) do not do injustice to the context of the story, though the greater majority of the scholars prefer “Maon” reading. It should be noted, however, that if one favors one choice before the other based merely on geographic proximity of Maon wilderness to the place of Nabal’s residence without considering the place’s role in the thematic development of the story, the particular significance of either reading is somewhat minimized. However, when the focus is placed on the thematic development of the story, then it becomes evident that there are no reasons why “Maon” reading is to be preferred. For one thing, the text does not insist that the events of 25:2ff follow right after 25:1 without a break. Some time may have passed between these events. However, they are closely related thematically. Kitto could be right in suggesting that David’s company traveled as far south as the wilderness of Paran (25:1b) only to appear later near Carmel (25:2; cf. v. 7b). David might have had particular interests in the area of Paran, although the text does not elaborate on it. However, it can be deduced from the fact that later David would continue to make raids on the Canaanite settlements.

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65 Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuelis, 451. Among others who favor the MT reading are: Batten, A Commentary on the First Book of Samuel, 194-95 (with some reservations); Mauchline, 1 and 2 Samuel, 167.
66 Laney, First and Second Samuel, 72.
67 John Kitto, Palestine from the Patriarchal Age to the Present Time (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier & Son, 1927), 241.
68 It is improbable that David’s gang came to Nabal straight from the funeral (even if they have attended Samuel’s funeral) as some rabbinical scholars assume.
69 Stoebe also notes that this mention of Paran invites passages like Nu. 12:16; 13:3 to expand its significance in the present context – the sending of twelve spies into Canaan (Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuelis, 451). Favoring “Paran” reading Bergen also sees it as a purposeful attempt of the narrator to underscore “the fact that David’s life is deliberately presented as a parallel to the history of Israel; This portion of David’s life is more closely parallel with Israel if he, like Israel, spent time in the Desert of Paran (cf. Num 10:12ff.)” (Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 243). Rudman observes a link between this story and Gen. 20-21 narratives, through this note (Rudman, “The Patriarchal Narratives in the Books of Samuel,” 41-42).
in that region, fighting the enemies of Yahweh (1 Sam. 27:8-11; 30:26-31). When one looks at the note with this understanding in mind, the name of the place appears to be more purposeful for the development of the 1 Sam. 25 story. It allows the comparison of 1 Sam. 25 themes with other events described earlier in 1 Samuel, rather than just creating a link merely based on geographic proximity. The geographic setting of 1 Sam. 25 echoes Saul’s earlier military expedition to Amalek and his stop at Carmel on the way home. Now it is believed that some of the territory of the Paran wilderness was occupied by the Amalekites (cf. Gen. 14:7; 25:18; Nu. 13:29; 1 Sam. 15:7). This note, therefore, might have been intended to inform the narrator’s audience that David retraced the route of Saul’s failed Amalekite campaign before he appeared at the threshold of Nabal’s residence at Carmel. Consequently, if one notes David’s descent to the wilderness of Paran, it would help to expand the horizon in terms of the larger context of the book of Samuel, whilst keeping the focus on the characters of Saul and David for comparative purposes.

Further, the mention of Samuel’s name in the text (25:1a) adds an additional element to this comparison. Eissfeldt, seeing the role of Samuel as David’s Schutzpatron, notes the relationship between Samuel’s death and the rest of the story in that David has lost in Samuel his friend and protector; to Saul he appears merely as a ghost (ch. 28). This perspective views David in need of a trusted spiritual leader and advisor. Indeed, the phrase, “And Samuel died” (1 Sam. 25:1), can be explained as laying the emphasis on the loss of the leader and spokesman in the face of Samuel, because, as it was told earlier in the book, “the whole of Israel was listening to Samuel’s words” (4:1a), therefore, “all Israel gathered together and mourned for him” (25:1).

However, the mention of Samuel’s name in 1 Sam. 25 draws the reader’s attention to the difference in his relationship with Saul vs. his relationship with David, rather than emphasizes similarities. Samuel communicated divine will to Saul (cf. 15:1), but not to David, though the latter sought the seer’s audience too (19:18). In this regard the mention of Samuel’s name in 25:1 increases the contrast between David and Saul in a particular way: if Saul had to be told what he had to do

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70 See Appendix IV.
71 Eissfeldt, Die Komposition der Samuelsbücher, 17.
(15:1-3), in David’s case Samuel is simply not there, and yet the latter descends to
the area of Paran without necessarily being told by the prophet (25:1b; cf. 22:5; see
27:8-12 with 15:1-3). What is more, the pinnacle of Saul’s “successful” campaign
was his monument at Carmel; David and his band also make a stop at that place.
What happened at Carmel on that day echoes Saul’s past failures – a background
against which the portrait of his rival is being displayed. In this regard “Paran”
rather than “Maon” allows one to perceive these themes in 1 Sam. 25 more clearly.

B. Maon: the Wilderness or the Town?

The opening phrase of v. 2 contains details about the place where the
action of the story takes place: "there was a man in Maon ….”72 The
LXXL, however, reads: kai. ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ ἐν τῷ ἔρημῷ “and there was a man in the
desert.”73 The LXXL reading here is reminiscent of the somewhat similar
appearance of the phrase in 23:24, ἐν τῷ ἔρημῷ Μαών, 23:25 ἐν τῷ ἔρημῷ Μαών
and ἐν τῷ ἔρημῷ Μαάν (so also in 25:1),74 with the only difference that in 25:2
the proper name is lacking. It is uncertain whether the text under investigation is an
example of harmonization with the earlier text or if it does preserve a different
tradition, or even if it is an example of incidental omission. So, either Μαάν dropped
off the LXXL or ἔρημῳ = πρόπερι was missing from the LXXL Vorlage, or else the
LXXL explicates the implicit message of MT.

On the surface it may appear that the narrator has the town of Maon in
mind. The town by the name of Maon appears in Josh. 15:55. Presumably, the
settlement in the mountains of Judah, and perhaps the surrounding region as well,
was named after a person by the same name – Maon – a descendant of Caleb or a

72 According to BDB יִתְנָה means “residence,” “dwelling place” or “habitation” (732-33).
73 LXXL with MT reads: ἐν τῷ Μαών.
74 Greek versions give different readings here as well: LXXA reads Μαάν, LXXB - Μαάν,
LXXL Θέηκοον = Μαών, and Josephus (Ant. 6.280): Θήσειμος = Σήμος. McCarter explains that
was added to read more familiar name Σήμος, “Simeon,” which could have occurred under the
influence of אֲשֶׁר יִתְנָה, “the Jeshimon” (McCarter, I Samuel, 378). It is not entirely impossible that that
reading preserved a tradition that refers to the area in the southernmost part of Palestine, which was
traditionally thought to be the territory of the tribe of Simeon. If so, it would be in the border with, if
not a part of, Paran wilderness.
place name associated with his posterity (cf. 1 Chr. 2:45). As some assume, it is to that town the narrator of 1 Sam. 25:2 makes a reference.\(^75\)

It is important to keep in mind, however, that neither LXX\(^B\) nor MT makes it absolutely transparent whether the *town* or the *wilderness* is intended. At the same time LXX\(^L\) reading (אכ h|אכ忄 h 메) is not unsubstantiated. The context makes it clear that the action does not take place at the town of Maon; David does not make his vow (v. 22) as he “pounds toward Maon.”\(^76\) His company was in the wilderness (בֵּית מָה; v. 4) of Maon, as the context suggests. David heard “in the wilderness” (בֵּית מָה) that Nabal was shearing his sheep (v. 4). Though his location is not specified in the text, it is nonetheless clear that he sent his men from a neighborhood. So, Maon in v. 2 most likely refers to the wilderness where David’s company camped at the time.

Furthermore, David commanded his men to go up to Carmel (נהר קְרָמֶל; v. 5), e.g. to make a trip from the wilderness to Nabal’s residence. In v. 7, however, David informs Nabal that his shepherds were with David’s men and they were treated kindly so that the shepherds experienced no loss, “all the days they were in Carmel.” The same is repeated by one of Nabal’s servants who informed Abigail about Nabal’s shepherds’ experience when “all the time [they] were with [David’s men] tending the sheep” (v. 16). So, the phrase that David employs: “with us” (and the servant’s: “with them”) and “in Carmel” coupled with the place David’s company was (בֵּית מָה) rather suggest that the town of Carmel was in or near the wilderness of Maon. It is there the conflict between Nabal and David takes place. Therefore, if one has to choose between two readings, it seems that the context insists on reading the wilderness of Maon with LXX\(^L\). MT= LXX\(^B\) implies


\(^76\) So Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 398, 401. Of similar opinion is Roger L. Omanson and John E. Ellington, *A Handbook on the First and Second Books of Samuel*, 2 vols., UBS Handbook Series, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 2001), 516. Rabbis also assume that Maon here is the reference to a town which could be seen from the following: “when the needy in Maon asked for charity, Nabal would reply that he gave in Carmel, because that was where he earned his money. When people in Carmel asked for help, he would say that he gave in Maon, because that was where he lived” (Scherman, *I - II Samuel*, 161, italics are mine).
it; LXXL spells it out.\(^77\) To further sustain this point a few additional remarks may be mentioned:

1. If the town of Maon was Nabal’s residence one would expect him to maintain his “business” at the place of his residence instead of “commuting” to the next town.\(^78\)

2. Nabal’s wife as well as his entire household were with Nabal at Carmel when the incident occurred (vv. 17, 21, 22, 25b, 34b).

3. Nabal was holding a feast in his house where David sent his men earlier, e.g. in Carmel (v. 5).

Therefore, either (a) Nabal had multiple homes at multiple locations or (b) the place-name “Maon” is designed to validate Nabal’s origin (cf. 1 Chr. 2:45). However, considering the narrator’s laconicism, it would be unnecessary to mention the location of Nabal’s “second” house if the action was never to take place there. As for the second option, Carmel would speak as much of Nabal’s origin as Maon. Therefore, it seems more likely that (c) “Maon” here is designed to provide a literary background against which the following actions of the characters need to be interpreted. For in that wilderness of Maon (“Dwelling Place”), in the town of Carmel (“Vineyard Land”), Nabal (“Fool”) maintained his business.

**Narrative Analogy and 1 Samuel 25**

The definition adopted by Gordon\(^79\) in his literary analysis of 1 Sam. 24—26 helpfully outlines the general uses of narrative analogy techniques in studying the narrative portions of HB. However, while emphasizing similarities in a given analogous relationship, the differences need to be stressed as well.

\(^77\) It is likely that LXXL here is an example of an interpretative addition, flowing out of what Tov calls “contextual exegesis,” e.g. the LXXL spells out what MT seems to imply. See Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, ed. Ora Lipschitz and Alexander Rofe, JBS, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Simor, 1981), 82-83.


Scholars have observed the place of 1 Sam. 25 in a larger “narrative segment” of 1 Samuel. This segment, which some call “a wilderness cycle,” is popularly thought to begin at 23:14 and end with David’s move to the Philistines (27:1).80 Within that segment the focus is brought on chapters 24—26. Numerous parallels between Saul and Nabal in these stories, viewed through the lens of the narrative analogy, appeared to be significant enough to allow role identification between Nabal and Saul. Among the most noted similarities are the following nine:

1. Just as Saul pursues David in the wilderness of Maon (23:24), the clash between Nabal and David also takes place in the wilderness of Maon (25:3).
2. Just as Saul’s servants, his daughter Michal and his son Jonathan, help David behind Saul’s back, so Nabal’s servant(s), even his wife Abigail, work together behind Nabal’s back.
3. Characterization of Nabal in terms of his possessions, which may or may not be also indicative of his status, and his feast on a royal scale allows the role identification with King Saul.
4. The mention of Carmel brings both characters closer together: Nabal can be viewed as living at Saul’s “address” – the place which was, in some way, associated with Saul’s campaign in Amalek (15:12).
5. Nabal’s speech and attitude towards runaway slaves in general and David in particular mimic the attitude of King Saul.
6. The theme of “evil and good” that recurs within the triptych identify various points of comparison between Nabal with Saul.
7. Both King Saul and Nabal become the objects of David’s mercy, though with slight variations.
8. Both Saul and Nabal are similar in their ingratitude toward David for his services.
9. The actions of Saul and Nabal are similar in many respects when they are examined against the background of the motif of pursuit and

80 Ibid., 40.
persecution of David. These characters also become the objects of David’s lawsuit (cf. 24:12-15; 25:39).

These similarities between two characters appear significant enough to view 1 Sam. 25 as a helpful literary prism, which broadcasts the Saul/David conflict in more distinct colors. The most important link that ensured such a reading was the figure of Saul, who in that story was equated to Nabal.

However, the dissimilarities should not be overlooked. This discontinuity between the character of Nabal and Saul, gets in the way of counting 1 Sam. 24—26 as a triptych. Whilst not dismissing numerous links with the surrounding material, the significant differences militate against the story’s dependence on the contiguous chapters. As for 1 Sam. 25 relationships to other stories in 1 Samuel, various links exist with the material that lies beyond the adjacent stories. Before alternative explanation can be considered a few dissimilarities between Saul and Nabal need be noted:

(1) The role identification of Saul with Nabal is a “one-way street”: it works only when Nabal is likened to Saul, not vice versa. Nabal’s characterization would hardly fit Saul: Saul might have admitted his foolishness (only in 26:21b, not in ch. 24), but the narrator never calls him a “worthless man” not even after what happened in Nob.

(2) The role identification does not explain what triggered the change of attitude in David toward Saul/Nabal. Perhaps one could view this story as the narrator’s device by which he reveals David’s psychological struggle with the house of Saul in general. However, if the house of Nabal stands for the house of Saul, this is hard to sustain, since at a later time David searches out Mephibosheth “from the house of Saul” to show him kindness (2 Sam. 9).81

(3) David’s attack on Nabal (ch. 25) vs. his “attack” on Saul (chs. 24 and 26) underscores the differences rather than discovers

81 It is especially seen in this last story in which the key phrases בֵּית נָבָלָל, נְגֵר נָבָל, מִזָּרְפֶּד הָאָרוֹן, and נִמְנָר נָבָל are at the heart of the narrative’s composition.
similarities. David hurries up to Carmel in order to attack Nabal (25:13), but runs away from Saul (alone: 19:10, 18; 20:1 cf. v. 36; 21:10; and with his band: 23:14b, 26b; 27:1). He restrains his men from harming Saul, while in ch. 25 he needs to be restrained himself.

(4) David sought to partake of food from Nabal’s table of festivity (v. 8). As a contrast, he preferred to stay away from Saul’s table even when he was expected to attend the festivity (20:24-29).

(5) Though Abigail picks up the theme of “evil and good” and speaks against David’s enemies, she mentions no names (vv. 26b, 29). Commenting on her words, Garsiel says that “in terms of the larger story in chapters 19—28, the only seeker of David is Saul: Saul is as Nabal, and Nabal as Saul.”82 However, a much larger crowd of those who disfavored David could easily be included in Abigail’s words: Doeg, the Philistines, the people of Keilah, the Ziphites, and now Nabal.

(6) Nabal died in his house (vv. 36-38), which could hardly prefigure the death of Saul, who died on the battlefield having fallen on his sword and/or with the help of the Amalekite (1 Sam. 31:4; 2 Sam. 1:10).83

(7) After Nabal’s death David praises God (1 Sam. 25:39); after Saul’s death he mourns (2 Sam. 1:11-27).

(8) If Nabal=Saul, the character of Abigail gets in the way most of the time. Perhaps her actions in the story could be understood as the presence of the “Lady Wisdom,” who meets David and awakens the spirit of sobriety within him. However, every time her character appears in the subsequent stories the narrator seems to insist on treating her as a real person, which is the preferable way of viewing her in 1 Sam. 25 as well.84

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82 Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel*, 211. Italics are mine.
83 Some think that Nabal’s death in some way prefigures Saul’s. However, Samuel’s death in the beginning of the story creates a much closer parallel with Nabal who also died in his own house.
84 Some uses of such a comparison cannot be denied, as it is applicable not only to David but also to Nabal and Saul. Thus it could be said that the reason why Nabal was the way he was because
The actions of David – a born killer (cf. 16:34-36) who, as some say, might have enjoyed doing it – in 1 Sam. 25 are not in any way worse (if not a little better) than his actions described elsewhere in the book (18:27; 27:9) to warrant a conclusion that this story is “a proleptic glimpse within David’s ascent, of his fall from grace.” When this picture is applied to the Saul/Nabal figure, problems emerge.

Although Nabāl, just like Saul, was a recipient of David’s mercy, the restraining force as well as the reasons why David showed that mercy, in each case was different.

Not only had David shown kindness to Saul (ch. 24 and 26), but Saul showed kindness to David by suspending his pursuit at the moment when David’s band was most vulnerable in the cave (ch. 24; cf. 23:7; 27:1). This act of Saul’s kindness toward David finds no parallel in Nabāl. Within that segment, David’s actions should rather be compared with the actions of Abigail in 1 Sam. 25: the latter had the same effect on David in 1 Sam. 25 as David had on Saul in contiguous stories. However, this leaves no room for Nabāl in the equation.

The list of differences could be prolonged, but these establish the pattern: narrative analogy helps to highlight many important literary themes in 1 Sam. 25. Problems emerge, however, when one reaches the conclusion that 1 Sam. 25 is an example of literary mirroring. As it appears, the difficulties arise not out of the recognition of tensions in the relationship between David and Saul; the problem is with Nabāl’s character when he is identified with Saul.

85 So Nicholson, Three Faces of Saul, 193.
86 Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 24.
87 In that regard Nabāl of 1 Sam. 25 is more comparable with Hanun of 2 Sam. 10 who humiliated David’s ambassadors.
Now if Nabal is not to be identified with Saul, it becomes apparent that the 1 Sam. 25 story plays a quite different role in 1 Samuel than previously assumed. Yet, the narrator tells his story in such a manner that makes one wonder if, perhaps, all these numerous literary links point only to the fact that the reason why the identification of Nabal with Saul is possible to begin with, is because both were so closely related in real life as to ensure a successful comparison of both characters in a variety of ways and on multiple levels. In what follows, an inquiry will be made into the nature of that relationship based on the multiple literary parallels that exist between them.

Looking for the Answers

If in the minds of some scholars literary analysis is “only the first step toward mastery of the text,” and in the process of the recovery of “historical meaning of the passage” they become an “obstacle,” others are convinced that “the text’s artistry is in no way an obstacle to historical reconstruction but rather a necessary, perhaps even primary means of producing it….” One may agree with Polzin that the overall value of the stories is magnified precisely because the literary relationships are being recognized. Thus, the meaning behind the literary constructs of the story needs to be searched out. The following discussion will focus on a few elements of Nabal’s characterization inferring the significance of that person in Judah during the kingship of Saul.

A. Was Nabal a Calebite Chieftain?

Some perceived Nabal as one of the richest persons in Judah at that time of Saul’s reign. As such, he would have been a person with enormous political power in the community. This, in turn, caused the suggestion that Nabal was a Calebite chieftain. That led to the conclusion that 1 Sam. 25 illustrates David’s political maneuvering – an important step towards his kingship in Hebron. This intriguing conjecture was somehow supposed to explain David’s attack on Nabal as

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88 Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 24.
89 Polzin, Samuel and the Deuteronomist, 269, n. 15.
well as the motives behind his proposal to Abigail and as such to help the understanding why the story is in the book to begin with. However, several objections to this inference need to be stated:

1) It assumes that as the Calebite chieftain Nabal would have had natural political control in the entire region of Judah and that David had sought to gain the political power by destroying Nabal. After such maneuver, nothing would stand in David’s way of becoming the king of Judah. Claiming Nabal’s wife would have given him an additional political leverage.

However, as the following stories illustrate, that was not the case. If the desired political power was obtained through this marriage, somehow it was never put to use. David continued running away from Saul nor did he use it to his advantage later.

2) The theory implicitly hints at the Southern independence from North. Indeed, this supposition would theoretically explain why David was eager to obtain the control of the South with his headquarters at Hebron. That, in turn, would mean that he was intending to do so by disregarding Saul’s rule over both the North and the South.

However, this understanding conflicts with the general context which makes no suggestion, implicitly or otherwise, that David was interested in the kingship while Saul – the anointed one – was the king of the entire territory of Israel. Abigail too, insisted on David’s showing restraint, patiently awaiting Yahweh’s timing. Further, David’s reign over Judah for seven years and six months was only a

91 Levenson sees Hebron as “the capital of the Calebite patrimony” (Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 25). Ishida notes that Calebites belonged to the confederacy of six southern tribes: Judah, Calebites, Othnielites, Jerachmeelites, Kenites, and Simeon all of which comprised the “greater Judah” (Tomoo Ishida, The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel: A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-dynastic Ideology [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977], 65. See also R. E. Clements, Abraham and David: Genesis 15 and its meaning for Israelite tradition [Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1967], 43). Yet others think that the Calebite tribe had its own independent history and were never a part of six-tribe confederacy (Walter Beltz, “Die Kaleb-Traditionen im Alten Testament,” BWANT 98 [1974]: 66). Furthermore, it is not at all certain whether or not there ever was an independent southern confederacy. At the same time one cannot deny that there was a territorial difference between Israel and Judah, noting how easily both were separated during the conflicts between David and Saul, Absalom and David, Sheba the son of Bichri and David, Jeroboam and Rehoboam. There are reasons why Israel was normally thought of consisting of two houses: the House of Judah and the House of Joseph (cf. 2 Sam. 19:20).
temporary measure to help the South to defend their territory from constant raids of the ancient tribes, since Ish-bosheth was limited in his power and effectiveness.

3) It places too much stock on Abigail’s political importance in David’s eyes. Supposedly, she was an indispensable asset, because as a wife of the man of great political power, and coming from the tribe of immense political significance, she herself allegedly was the lady with power. However, it is not readily evident that she was the key in David’s obtaining the kingship in Judah later. David went to live in Hebron having been instructed by Yahweh (2 Sam. 2:1-2). Only then the men of Judah came to anoint David as king over the house of Judah (v. 3).

4) It suppresses the fact that the discussion about David’s kingship at Hebron never surfaces in 1 Sam. 25. Furthermore, Abigail’s prophetic speech envisions David as the ruler of Israel (נְבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל; v. 30), e.g. the entire state, not Judah only.

5) The lack of David’s interest in Nabal’s possessions (even his “estate” at Carmel) after the death of the Fool, militates against the theory. If the seizure of Nabal’s possessions were an important step in David’s political maneuvering, one would expect that the discussion about Carmel in connection with David would surface again, but it never does. In that respect there are more notes on Ziklag than on Carmel.

6) The narrator made Carmel the focal point of his attention in 1 Sam. 25, not Hebron. Through various points of Nabal’s characterization, numerous parallels between Carmel and Gibeah, Nabal and Saul can be noted. Scholars were able to observe that Nabal “mimics” Saul by his words and actions. Thus, Nabal does not express his own original views, but only doubles the negative opinions about the “son of Jesse” expressed earlier by King Saul and by Doeg. This rather hints at Nabal’s lack of political independence, whatever his political office might have been.

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92 Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 25-27.
93 This we will discuss in detail in Chapter IV.
For these and other reasons the significance of the character of Nabal needs to be re-examined in search of better explanations of what his literary closeness to Saul signifies.

B. Saul’s Monument and Nabal’s Residence

It is likely that Saul’s monument at Carmel was erected to commemorate his victory over the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:12). Why he chose the land of Judah for such project, instead of any other place in the North, even Gibeah – his royal residency, is intriguing. What was exactly the purpose of Saul’s monument at Carmel? A closer look at the general context of 1 Samuel may give some insights into the reasons that caused another military clash between Israel and Amalek.

In 1 Sam. 15 the narrator gives theological grounds of the war (vv. 1-3). However, the assignment was given not simply to test Saul’s obedience to Yahweh. The Amalekites were a constant problem in Judah. They were plundering the land before Saul’s campaign and they did not cease to attack the South after it (1 Sam. 27:8-11; 30:1-5). For some reasons the Amalekites avoided the direct military conflict on the battle field. However, their leading the guerilla warfare proved to be quite effective. The military solution to this problem in the South became both inevitable and necessary.

From divine initiative in this instance and from the scale of the conflict itself (200,000 foot soldiers, presumably the confederacy of the northern tribes of Israel, and 10,000 men of Judah were recruited [15:4]) it can be deduced that the problem with the Amalekite constant raids in the South was no less serious than with the attack of Nahash (1 Sam. 12:12 with 11:1-3; cf. 9:15-16). The devastation of the southern tribes from those raids was great. One may assume that these circumstances resulted in Judah’s crying out for help. As before (9:15-16), God designated Saul to deal with this problem. 1 Sam. 14:48 summarizes Saul’s military achievements in the southern borders of his kingdom thus: “And he showed valor (خروجו) and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them.” The monument at Carmel, therefore, probably celebrated both Israel’s deliverance and the deliverer – King Saul. Besides its symbolic value, Saul’s monument had a more important function: it was a sign of his dominion in the
The erection of the monument at Carmel echoes Samuel’s placing Ebenezer between Mizpah and Shen to commemorate Israel’s victory over the Philistines (7:12). Now, if Ebenezer signified Yahweh’s particular involvement in delivering Israel, Saul’s setting up the monument for himself (15:12) paraded his own achievements as the deliverer of the people. If Ebenezer called for Israel’s allegiance to Yahweh, the monument at Carmel might have called for the allegiance to King Saul.

This act of Saul at Carmel can be compared with David’s bringing Edom into subjection (2 Sam. 8:13). Some scholars think that the note about David “making a name” (יְדֹוֶת רוּחַ) for himself, is most likely a reference to a monument.94 Such “name,” however, would have had no power all by itself. If the monument was a sign of sovereignty and dominion, the full obedience to the monarch and to his policies had to be enforced. For this reason David stationed his garrisons/prefects in Edom.

As far as the practical significance of the royal sign went, it is likely that something similar was done by King Saul at the town of Carmel. It was a visible reminder of who their sovereign was. Consequently, it is quite possible that Carmel became the command post in Judah from which Saul would oversee the welfare of the southern territory of his kingdom.

These considerations may cause one to wonder about the particular involvement of the person like Nabal in the policies of King Saul in the region. As

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94 Driver thinks that ידֹוֶת here is a reference to a memorial or monument. He compares the phrase ידֹוֶת ... with the similar phrase יְדֹוֶת רוּחַ in 1 Sam. 14:48. He goes on to say that David’s erected the monument upon “his return after the victory, when his ‘fame’ would have been already made” during the campaign (Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text*, 217). McCarter believes that ידֹוֶת (2 Sam. 8:13) is equivalent to יד, “hand” in v. 3, but also adds: “The question we cannot answer is whether the ‘name’ David makes is a victory monument like the ‘hand’ of v. 3 or a cult object of some kind, perhaps even an idol, made from portions of the sanctified booty” (P. Kyle. McCarter, *2 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, AB [Garden City: Doubleday, 1984], 251). Stoebe also thinks that ידֹוֶת könnte tatsächlich ‘Denkmal’ bedeuten” (Hans Joachim Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuels: Mit einer Zeittafel von Alfred Jepsen*, KAT, vol. VIII 2 [Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1994], 245). Halpern states that “the reference is widely acknowledged, is to a monument” (Baruch Halpern, “The Construction of the Davidic State: An Exercise in Historiography,” in *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*, ed. Volkmar Fritz and Philip R. Davies [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 67). He goes on to say that the double repetition of the phrase that David placed garrisons (עין בף) in Edom “is to stress that the entire country was under David’s rule” (68). The word בף, according to BDB, can mean “pillar,” “prefect,” “garrison” or “post.” Thus, David’s making a ידֹוֶת, “monument” in Edom, was most likely accompanied by establishing the עין בף, the royal representation across the country.
was previously noted, Nabal’s characterization makes him comparable to Saul. However, what do all these similarities may imply? The literary closeness of Saul to Nabal hints at their affiliation on political level. This perspective would explain a number of things: Nabal’s negative attitude toward the “son of Jesse,” the manner in which Nabal processed David’s request as well as why David consciously avoided the town of Carmel. Why was David taking such precautions if it was not for the history of political affiliation of that place with the reign of King Saul and other reasons as will be demonstrated below? It would also explain why David showed no interest in Nabal’s possessions and his property even after the Fool was no more.

Now if Nabal was “the boss of the district,”95 Saul’s representative in the area – “the closest thing there was at the time to the king of Judah,”96 what implications does the analogy of Nabal sharing “the royal shepherd identity” with the monarch97 have for the understanding of the 1 Sam. 25 story? What was the nature of Nabal’s חמסה, “business” at Carmel?

C. The Nature of Nabal’s Business

The piece of the ground where Saul erected the monument would have been considered the royal property. If one assumes that Nabal was Saul’s official, the piece of the ground with the royal monument at Carmel (“Vineyard Land”), where Nabal had his business, can be viewed as an illustration of new royal policies: Israel’s king was to take the best of the people’s fields, their vineyards and their olive groves, and give them to his servants (1 Sam. 8:14, 15). This latter text which describes the “new rules of a king” may be understood not as a prescription of the policies of Israel’s future kings in general, but as the narrator’s description of the policies of King Saul in particular (cf. 22:7). Furthermore, what at the later stage became the role of the Levites in the assigned Levitical cities and the Cities of Refuge, namely, “supervision of royal estates and the collection of taxes,”98 Saul might have been accomplishing through his relatives and close friends – his official representatives. If Saul had any personal property in the South (and in all likelihood

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95 Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 476.
96 McKenzie, King David, 97.
97 Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 396.
he had), Carmel may well have been that property. If so, then there must have also been a person who would function as royal guardian. Now, if the royal sign at Carmel meant anything at all, then that guardian could have had enough political power to be counted as the royal governor/prefect who, as the royal political ally, would also enforce the law. Now in order for such an official to be successful in this sort of business, military force would have been necessary.

The context of the story seems to allow for the supposition that Nabal had troops with him stationed at Carmel. This has already been noted earlier by Jobling when he said that “Nabal was right in thinking that he had a measure of David” when he scorned him. Jobling continues:

The reader of 1 Samuel 25 is justified in asking why David, who manages quite nicely to restrain himself from killing his enemy in chs. 24 and 26, cannot do so here without help. The suspicion arises that the entire theme of Abigail’s saving David from bloodguilt cloaks another possibility: that she saved him from a beating, or worse, at Nabal’s hands.99

The “beating at Nabal’s hand” necessarily implies that Nabal had more troops on his side than David’s force of 400 men marching to Carmel. Only the greater force would have ensured the outcome of the battle in Nabal’s favor. Indeed, the text itself may give a little hint about the number of Nabal’s troops at Carmel:

1) The narrator tells about Nabal’s flocks consisting of 3000 sheep and 1000 goats. On the one hand, this detail appears to be an illustration of Nabal’s greatness in terms of material possessions. On the other hand, one may suspect that sheep and goats somewhat deflect the attention, thus leading into thinking that it was all about sheep and farming. However, this note can carry a multiplicity of meanings. Indeed, the text says that Nabal was also shearing his sheep and goats at Carmel. However, the number of Nabal’s flocks is also reminiscent of the number of Saul’s troops (13:2; 24:2[2]; 26:2). Is it possible that this is another point at which Nabal can be compared with Saul? If so, what would it mean? Are these round numbers? Is it an incident that these numbers correspond? If the correspondence is purposeful, what would be the purpose of characterizing Nabal this way? Was he a

99 Jobling, I Samuel, 156-57. Italics are mine.
military commander too? Is Nabal comparable with Saul merely by the appearance of the like numbers or is there something else hidden behind the sheep?

The literal and figurative uses of the term “shepherd” in the HB will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. It will suffice to mention presently only one passage which may shed some light on the issue at hand. Predicting the coming of the northern armies to battle against Zion, Jeremiah 6:1-3 says: “Shepherds (רִיעָן) and their flocks (שֵׁרְכוֹן) will come against her . . . they will graze each in his place/portion” (v. 3). The figurative language of the text speaks of military commanders as shepherds, of their troops as sheep and military campaigns as grazing – thus achieving a literary contrast by painting a battle scene using the pastoral colors.

Along with this, another important factor needs to be brought into this equation. According to 1 Sam. 15:4 before the Amalekite campaign King Saul summoned his people and counted them in Telaim (תֶל־אָלְמָא).100 Perhaps the place received its name from a particular way of numbering the armies in accordance with the command of Ex. 30:12 which prescribes the ransom payment upon the numbering of the people in order to avoid plague (cf. 2 Sam. 24//1 Chr. 21). In keeping with this directive, lambs, corresponding to the number of troops, would be counted instead of troops themselves. Were the sheep in Carmel kept strictly for this reason?

Moreover, why in addition to 3000 sheep, 1000 goats are mentioned because, as commonly believed, these are round numbers is intriguing.101 What would be the purpose of this detail, especially if it is true that goats and sheep would comprise one flock? Without putting too much stock in this analogy, the question needs to be asked: Is it possible that the narrator gives a little hint here that just as 3000 sheep stand for Saul’s troops in Israel, 1000 goats stand for his troops in Judah?

100 The place name תֶל־אָלְמָא, “Telem” in the Negev of Judah (Driver, Notes, 93) appears in Josh. 15:24. MT vocalizes it בֵּית לַזִּכָּה, “with the lambs” (see McCarter, J Samuel, 261). LXX reads: Γαλγαλοὶ.

101 The text says that his flock (לְנָץ) was 3000 and 1000 goats (שֵׁן). Some say that goats were considered to be a part of a flock (לְנָץ) (John C. Schroeder George B. Caird, Ganse Little, “The First and Second Books of Samuel,” in IB [New York: Abingdon Press, 1953], 1012). Later the text says that Nabal was shearing (שָׁנַע) his flock (לְנָץ; v. 4). Presumably, it would include goats as well. So, it is possible that Nabal had a flock of 3000 heads, of which 1000 were goats. Stoebe, however, expressed a doubt whether it was so (Das erste Buch Samuelis, 446).
The narrator has already used a similar division earlier speaking about Israel’s army under the leadership of Saul and Jonathan (13:2; cf. 15:4 and 11:8). In the latter texts the numbers of sheep/troops comprised one “flock” (cf. 1 Ki. 22:17). The fact that a similar division appears in the 1 Sam. 25 story stirs a new interest.

2) If Nabal was a mere farmer, David calling 400 of his men to arms seems to be an overreaction. The same force was used to engage in more aggressive campaigns (cf. 1 Sam. 30:10). When one reads about David’s army marching to Carmel, one may conclude that he carefully calculated Nabal’s capabilities and expected a vigorous resistance from his troops at Carmel. If Nabal had a significant number of men with him (1000 being a round number) it would explain why David had to call his entire force to arms.

3) The language of 1 Sam. 25 suggests that Nabal’s status in the area exceeded the status his riches alone would secure him in the community. Nabal most likely was the man of great power and authority. This authority most likely derived from other place; it was anchored at some important political office.

From the testimony of Nabal’s servant it is possible to deduce that the behavior of Nabal described in 1 Sam. 25 was not a single case. The servant complained to Abigail that her husband was “such a wicked man” (ךְּרֶבֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל; v. 17) that no one was able to talk to him. Abigail did not seem to have been surprised at this at all, for she knew her husband too well (v. 25). However, one has to ask: Was it Nabal’s ability to scream at which he had no equal? Did Nabal lack sound reason or was he simply wicked and brutal? There are reasons to believe that he was not stupid; he was evil. It is not difficult to perceive Nabal as being cruel not only in his speech, but also in the exercise of his power and authority. Earlier in the story David suggested that Nabal would talk to his servants, being certain that they would speak favorably of him. The inquiry, however, never took place for the reasons the servant just gave. Instead of talking to Nabal, the servant told everything to Abigail and urged her to act quickly.

102 Against Goldingay, Men Behaving Badly, 160.
4) In his treating David’s men harshly, Nabal shows his disregard of the oriental law of hospitality. Dishonoring that law would be criminal. That did not seem to bother the Fool at all. Now, if Nabal had access to higher political authorities, he would be immune from punishment (cf. 2 Sam. 21:1-9). Thus it would explain a number of things: 1) how Nabal had gotten his name; 2) why the servant and Abigail got worried about the potential massacre at Carmel; and 3) why David got so frustrated, having been mistreated by Nabal, and why he praised God for punishing the Fool, for his reaction may expressed the attitude many oppressed souls who suffered similar mistreatments from the hand of Nabal.

5) As one tries to create a composite portrait of Nabal, one detail in his speech needs to be noted as well. Nabal says that the number of slaves who run away from their masters is on the rise (v. 10b). This word רָבַּעַר (qal. pf. 3cp. from בָּרָאִים), which all of the English versions, with one exception, translate as an adjective “today there are many servants who break away” – is a verbal form. The word carries the idea of multiplication: “today servants have multiplied (or become many).” What did Nabal mean by this?

In the array of possibilities of an answer, one deserves to be considered here: the multiplication (רָבַעַר) of slaves might have been used to underscore the formation of the band at the cave of Adullam (22:2) as well as subsequent gathering around David of every debtor, distressed and discontented soul. Thus, when Nabal treated David’s men harshly, he was not merely declining a request, but was openly despising the men in “distress” and he was attacking their leader. Nabal says: “Today servants have multiplied who are each breaking away (~ycir>P) from

103 See Appendix I.
104 LXX πεπλήμμενοι.
105 YLT renders the phrase: “to-day have servants been multiplied who are breaking away each from his master.”
106 This word הָׁסַּמְרָט (Hithp. participle m.p.) “breaking away” is used only here (25:10). It is of some interest to note that in the books of Samuel the word שָׁמַר is most often used in connection with David. Out of nine occurrences it appears once as an introductory note (1 Sam. 3:1) in connection with Samuel and divine visions that were infrequent (יָשֵׁב); once it is used in connection with King Saul and his servants at the place of the woman of Endor (1 Sam. 28:23), where they “urged him” (עָשָׁב יָשֵׁב) insisting on his eating some food; twice it is used in connection with Absalom (2 Sam. 13:25, 27), who “insisted,” “urged,” “broke through with” (עָשָׁב) his father to let Amnon come along; and five times in connection with David: Once it appears in the speech of Nabal describing David’s actions as a runaway slave (1 Sam. 25:10); twice in
their masters” (v. 10b). Driver notes that in this context “the idea of ‘slaves’ is virtually limited by the words דודים, which shew that the speaker has only a particular class of them in view.” In the book of 1 Samuel up to the point of Nabal’s speech, there are only two servants about whom it is said that each of them has “escaped” (ו월) and “fled” (יווה) from Saul: David and Abiathar. The running away of the rest of the group is subsumed in that group of “distressed and discontented” men (22:2). Thus, the fleeing of David and Abiathar is used metonymically: one of Saul’s runaway generals and the priest created a social habitat for all sorts of discontented and distressed folk running away from their masters.

Speaking thus, Nabal may well have included himself in the equation, thinking of himself as the lord who suffered some losses in more recent times. They “broke away” from their masters, אָנֵה עַלְמֵן אֲנָתָי, literally “each of them broke away before the face of his masters” denoting each individual escaped at different times. The construct אֲנָתָי (“his masters,” mp + 3ms suffix) is in plural, which, as is sometimes noted, in this distributive sense, is odd. Most often the translation is influenced by the contextual reading of the MT text (and LXX) in which it is understood that the master is one – King Saul – from whom they break away, e.g. they rebel against King Saul.

It is worth pausing here to see what additional insights in the matter of the running slaves in Saul’s kingdom other text may give. According to 1 Chr. 12:1-6 those who joined David’s forces were the relatives of King Saul as well as many other Benjaminites – “the mighty men who helped [David] in war.” Though the

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2 Sam. 5:20 in David’s prayer which says: “The Lord has broken through my enemies as the breaking of waters. Therefore, the name of that place was called Baal-perazim” (גָּלַל הָאָרֶץ לֵאמֹן מַגְּרִית). The other two instances of the word are found in 2 Sam. 6:8 in connection with the death of Uzzah, when “David burned with anger, because the Lord broke through (ץ) [with] outburst (ץ) against Uzzah. And that place was called ‘Perez-Uzzah’ to this day.”

DJD reconstructs the word used in 4QSam with different spelling: הָמְחָה (DJD, 4QSamuel, 87). LXX reads ἀπερρυθμένη.

107 Driver, Notes on the Hebrew Text, 197-98.
108 In 1 Samuel this term is used only of David (19:10, 12, 17, 18 – when he escaped from Saul and 22:1 – from Gath) and Abiathar (22:22)
109 The term is used four times in 1 Samuel. Three times it is said that David “fled” and escaped (19:12); from Saul in Naioth (20:1); and from Doeg (Saul) in Nob (21:11[10]). It is said once about Abiathar, who escaped Saul/Doeg’s sword (22:20).
110 LXX has it in singular: εἰς τοῦ προσφωνειν 

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reasons for their defection are unknown, one might assume that King Saul’s rapid loss of popularity and power was one of them. These “Saul’s brethren” (1 Chr. 12:2b) – a special force of archers – joined David in Ziklag (1 Chr. 12:1; cf. 1 Sam. 27:1-7). The unification of this group illustrates how deep Saul’s problem was when even some of his own kin had nothing more to expect from the sovereign.

Now, Nabal may have been referring to this very problem. In fact, he could have included himself into the equation as well. If Nabal had a military force with him stationed at Saul’s “address” at Carmel, then some of them may have defected from Nabal. If Nabal was the way the narrator characterizes him, they would have had every reasons to be “discontented and distressed” and to run away from their master Nabal. Now according to Mazar, some Calebites were found even among David’s military elite, how much more among his regulars. Mazar also notes that the majority of David’s mighty men, who gathered around him when he was still considered to be an outlaw, were Bethlehmites and some families of Caleb in southern Judea. He goes on to say that the number of David’s troops (400 and later 600 men), comprised the core group of his military force (in reality the size of the band could have been much larger).

Along the same lines, one other text needs to be mentioned. 1 Chr. 12:29 says that when David was anointed as king in Hebron, 3000 sons of Benjamin (Saul’s kinsmen) joined him. These 3000 men mentioned here probably should not be viewed as the representatives of “the whole house of Benjamin” (2 Sam. 3:19b), but rather as that special military force of Saul mentioned in 1 Sam. 24:3[2] and 26:2. It is likely that this group was persuaded by Abner to join David at Hebron (2 Sam. 3:19-20; cf. 1 Sam. 26:2, 5, 14, 15). The power struggle between Saul and David

111 Mazar, “The Military Elite of King David,” 313.
112 Mazar believes that out of thirty heroes, thirteen were from Bethlehem and its environs (Bethlehem, Metopha, Harod Tekoa, Husha, and Sobah); five are from various cities in the Judean mountains or from families of Caleb in Southern Judea (Arab, Gilo, and Carmel [Josh. 15:51-55], and the Calebite families Korah [1 Chr. 2:43] and Maacah [1 Chr. 2:48; 4:19]); one from Beth Haarabah in the Judean Desert near Jericho; two are from the tribe of Simeon (Kabzzeel and Beth-Pelet [Josh. 15:21, 27]); five from Benjamin (Gibeath, Anathoth, Bahurim, and the Ahoah family [1 Chr. 8:4]); two from Ephraim (Pirathon [Judg. 12:13-15] and Nahale Gaash [Josh. 24:30]); and two from Dan (Shaalbim/Shaalabbin [Judg. 1:35; Josh 19:42; 1 Ki. 4:9]; Gizoh). Mazar goes on to say that “It would appear that this list reflects a period of time in the history of David’s kingship when the area of his realm was still concentrated mainly over Judah. This was the period of his rule in Hebron” (Benjamin Mazar, “The Military Elite of King David,” VT 13 [1963]: 318).
113 The similar number of troops is mentioned in Judg. 18:11; 1 Sam. 13:15; 2 Sam. 15:18.
was not only about the territory each man controlled, but also about the military force each of them possessed. So, if per chance some of the troops stationed at Carmel joined David after Nabal’s sudden “departure,” then it could clarify why Saul resumed his pursuit of David in ch. 26. If it is true that Carmel was Saul’s political base, than Saul would be very sensitive about what happened there. Besides, what happened in Carmel may not have been the only instance, but a snapshot of the very problem Nabal referred to. That, in turn, may explain why Saul thought it was necessary to fight this rebel in the first place (23:8; 23; 25); his own servants were leaving him to join David. His concern was not at all unfounded when he heard that David was discovered (22:6) right after the band of the partisans went to Judah (v. 5). The note about the gathering of a significant military force around David in that context sounds so much weightier, as Saul’s execution of the priests of Nob only shows the magnitude of the problem in Saul’s mind. Thus, the stories of 1 Sam. 21—27 can be perceived as illustrating the steady weakening of Saul’s power to the advantage of his rival. Consequently, his acknowledgment of David’s future kingship when Saul encountered him both times (24:21[20]; 26:25) was not a momentary glimpse of a sound reason; Saul was looking reality in the face. If his people would keep leaving him and joining David, a natural transfer of power would occur.

As for the Nabal and his business at Carmel, the story of 1 Sam. 25 can be another illustration of the rapid weakening of Saul’s power to the advantage of his enemy, for what happened at Carmel was one of the most deadly (if not the final) blows to Saul’s power and rule in the South. From this perspective, 1 Sam. 25 depicts the turning point in the political struggle between the House of Saul and the House of David.

6) As is often observed, the note about Saul taking David’s wife Michal and giving her in marriage to another (25:44) may indicate that Saul wanted to prevent David making any hereditary claims to the throne. However, it may serve a very different purpose. There seems to be a hint in the text: that which Nabal was trying to do all along unsuccessfully, namely, to prevent David from becoming the
next king.\textsuperscript{114} Saul did by giving Michal to Palti. By this last act Saul was mimicking Nabul when he publicly dishonorized David, proclaiming him to be unworthy to continue as the king’s son-in-law. Saul might have thought that to prolong his relationship with his runaway son-in-law and “bandit,” was causing damage to his image as the king (cf. 18:8). So, by giving Michal to another, Saul made an attempt to put all gossip to rest that David was still on the king’s payroll, as it were, doing the king’s “business” in Judah (cf. 21:3\textsuperscript{[2]} with 20:28-29).\textsuperscript{115} If Nabul was Saul’s official, one of his assignments could have been to do everything in his power to discredit David.\textsuperscript{116} Now, if the essence of Nabul’s answer was to point to the lack of David’s hereditary rights not only to the throne, but also to the freedom of the city, then it would explain why Abigail, while unable to help David much in that regard, made every attempt to reassure the king in waiting, that one day Yahweh would give David an “enduring house” (\textit{!man tyb}), since, in the process of fighting “the battles of Yahweh” (\textit{hwhy twmxlm}), both his father’s house as well as his own was forfeited (v. 28; 19:11-17). It is likely, therefore, that this very reassurance and not Abigail’s gift was one of the reasons why David suspended his attack, and why in light of this reassurance, Yahweh’s intervention brought comfort to David’s distressed heart.\textsuperscript{117} 

It can be concluded that it is quite possible that Nabul played some part in this whole affair between the house of Saul and the house of Jesse, for it is clear from his speech that he is eager to put David before the fact of Jesse’s family misfortune. Vargon notes that “Nabul’s attitude to David cannot only be ascribed to the man’s miserliness and evil, but is an expression of the objections of the house of Caleb to

\textsuperscript{114} Rabbinical traditions note that Nabul had personal political motives. Thus, being a descendant of Caleb, “Nabul considered himself more qualified for the throne than David” (\textit{Yerushalmi Sanhedrin} 2:3). Scherman cites Be’er Moshe who says, “Nabul was more than an arrogant, heartless miser. He considered himself to be the one who should have been first in the line to succeed Saul. Moreover, he was one of those who derided David as a descendant of Moab and therefore unqualified to be a Jewish king” (see Scherman, \textit{I - II Samuel}, 163). It is interesting to note that rabbis make similar observations about Doeg the Edomite. See Appendix II.

\textsuperscript{115} As has been already briefly noted above, after ch. 24/25 David does not call Saul “my father” anymore, but only “my Lord” and “my Lord the King.” Thus, it is another indication that ch. 24 and 26 can hardly be a doublet.

\textsuperscript{116} The similar observation rabbis make about Doeg: “Said R. Nahman b. Samuel b. Nahman, ‘[Doeg] took away the civil rights [of David] and made him an outlaw, as one who was dead, so that it was permitted to shed his blood, and his wife was made available to anyone’” (Midr. \textit{Gen. R. XXXII: f}).

\textsuperscript{117} The discussion about whether or not Yahweh’s intervention can be decided on moral grounds can be found in Appendix VI.
the revolt of David’s family against Saul.” While Vargon does not go any further in his reading, his point is well taken: the battle between Nabal/Saul and the “son of Jesse” goes deeper of the initial impression. In chapters IV and V of this thesis an attempt will be made to advance this thought.

Summary

The close reading of 1 Sam. 25 discovered both depth and color in, what seems to be at first, a faded sketch of Nabal’s portrait. It is unlikely that he was simply a rich and villainous sheep owner who randomly abused people when he was predisposed to do so. Beneath the surface of his short but pointed characterization, another layer of his mysterious persona is perceivable. Considering the nature of the Saul/Nabal affiliation, it was noted that the greater context allows viewing both as more closely related than was previously noted. This perspective provides an additional insight into the nature of David’s clash with Nabal; it amplifies the significance of David’s presence in Judah; it focuses on particular details of the Saul/David conflict. It also indicates that the thematic strands in the story of 1 Sam. 25 extend far and beyond the contiguous stories in the book of 1 Samuel.

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CHAPTER THREE

DOEG THE EDomite

Introductory Remarks

The persona of Doeg the Edomite is no less mysterious than that of Nabal the Calebite. At first glance his characterization appears to be straightforward and clear: he was one of Saul’s servants – the chief shepherd who for some reason or other, came to the House of Yahweh in Nob. There he saw David and later was able to tell Saul about his experience. However, when the investigative process is brought full circle, one is compelled to reconsider who that person really was. In 1 Sam. 21 Doeg functions as Saul’s “eyes;” in ch. 22 he brings into the open the news about the secret meeting of Ahimelech with David. He speaks of it as though it was a political conspiracy between the priest and the fugitive. The king sentences Ahimelech and the rest of the priesthood of Nob to death. Doeg the Edomite puts an exclamation point to Saul’s pronouncement by exterminating the entire population of Nob (v. 19). Everyone, save Abiathar who managed to escape, was slaughtered mercilessly (v. 20; cf. 23:6). Who was this shepherd who did not hesitate to raise his sword against the priests of Yahweh?

In this chapter the main focus will be on the character of Doeg the Edomite and on his function in 1 Sam. 21 and 22 stories. Whenever one approaches these texts, one is struck by the network of interpretative problems, which in part are caused by the gaps in the story. An attempt will be made to identify the gaps and to fill them where possible as well as to reconstruct a storyline by paying a close attention to clues and details in the story that will also help to perceive more clearly the peculiar nature of Doeg’s association with King Saul.

Doeg the Edomite in Biblical Tradition

Apart from an epigram in Ps. 52:2, Doeg’s name appears five times and always in the book of 1 Samuel. The etymology of his name is unknown. Some
suggest that it is a “shortened form of a theophoric name with confessional and/or trusting character ‘God cares about/ has cared about.’”

It is of some relevance to note that in 1 Samuel MT offers two different spellings of his name. The first two times (21:8; 22:9) his name is spelled בַּד. The following two times (22:18, 22) it is spelled בַּד. Ps. 52:2 combines the two forms in one, it seems, spelling it בַּד. It is unclear what these differences signify. Either they represent different source traditions or else they are in the text by design (cf. 22:9 with vv. 18, 22). Feuer thinks that “the name בַּד literally means ‘the worrier,’ revealing the defect in Doeg’s character.” Auld notes that Doeg’s name has a parallel with the early story of Saul, where the same verb describes “a concern of Saul’s father about his lost donkeys, and then his long-absent son (10:2).” Bodner suggests that there might be an intentional play on words: “Ahimelech the priest is ‘worried’ because Doeg (‘worry’) is lurking in the sanctuary confines on that day.” Garsiel cites rabbinic sages who give the following explanation: “the Holy One, blessed be He, ‘sits and worries בַּד lest such a son go forth to bad ways.’” He goes on explaining that by mentioning Doeg’s presence at the sanctuary the first time, “the author wished to hint at his concern (לְחָד) over Ahimelech’s fate.”

Garsiel also mentions another rabbinical interpretation which suggests that Doeg’s name derives from the word “fish” since he was “caught like a fish בַּד and thus was obligated to murder the priests since everyone else had refused (Sanh. 10.2 V:1). It seems that rabbinical scholars had the text of Eccl. 9:12 in mind, for it speaks of a man (לְחָד) who does not know his time, and therefore, is “like fish

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1 Ulrich Hubner, “Doeg,” in ABD, 220.
2 Qere reads בַּד as in Ps. 52:2.
3 Feuer, Tehillim, 666.
5 Bodner, David Observed, 30.
6 Garsiel, Biblical Names, 220. Garsiel suggests that one must read Kethib (בַּד) instead of Qere (בַּד) – an exercise which might give some insight into the author’s desire to coordinate between the form of Doeg’s name and with his act of slander.
7 בַּד – “fish” occurs nineteen times in the HB: twelve times in the singular (Gen. 9:2; Nu. 11:12; Neh. 13:6 [בַּד]; Job 12:8; Ps. 8:9; Ez. 38:20; Hos. 4:3; Jonah 2:1(x2); 2:11; Hab. 1:14; Zeph. 1:3) and seven times in the plural (בַּדִּים: 1 Ki. 5:13; 2 Chr. 33:14; Neh. 12:39; Job 40:31; Eccl. 9:12; Zeph. 1:10).
8 בַּד – “to be anxious” seven times as a verb (1 Sam. 9:5; 10:2; Ps. 38:19; Is. 57:11; Jer. 17:8; 38:19; 42:16) and six times as a noun (בַּד): Josh. 22:24; Pr. 12:25; Jer. 49:23; Ez. 4:16; 12:18, 19).
caught in a treacherous net.” This interpretation views Doeg as a victim of his own words and actions.8

A. The Characterization of Doeg the Edomite

The narrator introduces the character thus:

Now, there a man from Saul’s servants was on that day, detained before the Lord; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, mightiest of the shepherds that belong to Saul (1 Sam. 21:8).

This simple introduction presents a number of interpretative challenges seen in three areas: (1) Doeg’s origin as the Edomite (הָדָּמִים), (2) his detention before the Lord in Nob (הֵיהָר יְהוֹיָדָא), and (3) his description as the mightiest of the shepherds that belonged to Saul (אַבְרָךְ הָרָעִים אֱסֹר לְשֵׁאֲלָה).

I. Doeg’s Edomite Origin

According to MT, Doeg was the Edomite (הָדָּמִים). LXXB, however, reads: ὁ ὅπλός τοῦ Ιδωμαίου = ηθάρωμι = the Aramean.9 This text-critical issue often invites scholarly discussions. Some think that the correct reading in this instance is uncertain (see below). However, an examination of the evidence demonstrates that MT = LXXL tradition slightly outweighs the testimony of LXXB. Another look at the uses of ὁ ὅπλός τοῦ Ιδωμαίου and τὸν Ιδωμαίον in LXX as well as ἡθάρωμι and ἡθάρωμι in MT as applied to personal names produces the following results:

The word ὁ ὅπλός (LXX) = ἡθάρωμι (MT) occurs ten times in LXXB but six times in MT and LXXL:

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8 In following the rabbinical traditions, Feuer says that when Abner and Amasa refused to harm the priests, “Saul turned to Doeg and said, ‘Why do you stand still? You already smote the priests of Nob with your tongue; rise now and smite them with the sword!’ Doeg then single-handedly slaughtered the entire city of Priests” (Feuer, Tehillim, 668).
9 LXXB reads, ὁ ὅπλός τοῦ “the Syrian.” Josephus (Ant. 6.244) and LXXB seem to be in agreement. It is likely that both followed an ancient MSS that represented the same tradition. MT=LXXL: ἡθάρωμι, “the Edomite.”
(1) Four times o` Su,roj (LXXB) = ymrh is used in connection with Doeg (1 Sam. 21:8; 22:9, 18, 22). However, both MT and LXX read t on l doumai on. There is nothing in the contexts of these passages that would aid in determining which reading is superior. The word stands alone.

(2) The term ymrh = t on l doumai on (LXXBL) appears six times in HB:

(a) Five times it is used to describe both Laban and Bethuel (Gen. 25:20 [x2]; 28:5; 31:20; 24): ymrh !bl (Laban tou/ Su,rou) and ymrh lawtb (Baqouhl tou/ Su,rou), both of whom were from Mesopotamia, (~ra !dpm; evk th/j Mesopotamia).

(b) Once it is used to describe Naiman the Syrian of Damascus (2 Ki. 5:20): ymrh !m[n (Naiman tou/ Su,rou).

Thus, the LXXB consistently translates ymrh as o` Su,roj. When Doeg is called Syrian in 1 Sam. 21 and 22, it is an exception.

The word t on l doumai on (LXXBL) also occurs six times in HB. The MT uses it to describe two persons:

(1) Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam. 21:8; 22:9, 18, 22; Ps. 52:1[2]) and.

(2) Hadad the Edomite (A der t on l doumai on [LXX]; it looks like here is another confusion in n and r, Hadad the Edomite (1 Ki. 11:14).

Thus, it should be noted that LXXB follows MT every time except when it describes Doeg in 1 Sam. 21 and 22. So, Doeg’s origin as the Edomite/Aramean presents a special case in the Scripture. Nevertheless, as it appears, LXXB is a little inconsistent in describing Doeg throughout the Bible. While in 1 Sam. 21 and 22 he is called o` Su,roj = hmrh, in Ps. 52 he is Dwhk t on l doumai on = Dwhk hmrh.
Thus, two readings ימדא and ימדא in 1 Sam. 21:8, 22:9, 18, 22 might have arisen out of common confusion of similar looking letters ר and ש. The LXX translators could have read ימדא, “the Aramean,” instead of ימדא, “the Edomite” in 1 Sam. 21 and 22. Although McCarter says that this confusion of the letters “renders the correct reading uncertain,”10 it is likely that MT=LXX ל rather than LXX ל preserves the original reading in 1 Sam. 21 and 22. Furthermore, as Stoebe noted, the similar substitution of Edomites for Arameans occurs in 2 Ki. 16:6, where geographical position of Elath presupposes Edom instead of Aram.11 2 Sam. 8:13 is another example of the letter confusion: MT reads ימדא, while LXX ינ המדא תונ לע סדוקולאא.12

Now if Doeg was the Edomite, his presence in the sanctuary of Yahweh raises red flag. For one thing, it is very unusual to find an Edomite going to the sanctuary of Yahweh, especially if the history of hostility between Israel and Edom is considered. Hertzberg remarks that the mention of Doeg’s origin as an “Edomite” highlights the tensions in the “brotherly” relationships between the two neighboring nations.13 Klein observes, “His Edomite nationality marks him as a potential sinister character.”14 Even after this brief introduction, when readers do not yet know what to expect from this character, his presence in the sanctuary of Yahweh, as Alter notes, already sounds “a certain dissonance.”15 Thus, on one hand the Edomite’s appearance in the sanctuary of Yahweh is problematic for some, but apparently not for the others,16 and on the other hand, the narrator is silent about a number of other things which make the readers wonder about what is hidden behind this character.

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10 McCarter, I Samuel, 348; see also Emanuel Tov, The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research, 140.
11 Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuelis, 394.
12 In the portion of 1 Sam. 22:10—23:9, only 4QSam contains some fragments of 1 Sam. 21:3-10, in which the portion in question is not extant. For details see DJD, 4QSamuel, 239.
14 Klein, I Samuel, 213. Also Chafin, 1, 2 Samuel, 173.
15 Alter, The David Story, 132.
At least three explanations are given to Doeg’s characterization as the “Edomite”: a) it indicates his race, b) it denotes his place of residence and c) it is only used strictly for the purposes of characterization.

a) It Points to Doeg’s Race

Some say that Doeg’s introduction as an Edomite, points to his race. Viewed from this perspective, it does not seem that the narrator had a particular agenda in calling the man the Edomite (דארם), because Doeg just happened to be one. Some, therefore, explain that the foreigner Doeg was hired by King Saul, just as the Cherethites and Pelethites were in the service of King David (cf. 2 Sam. 8:18); he was mercenary in Saul’s employ. Others suggest that Doeg was taken captive during Saul’s campaign in Edom (1 Sam. 14:47), thus a prisoner of war, and either was promoted to the post of the chief of Saul’s shepherds or was simply allowed to retain the high position he once held in Edom. Viewing Doeg as a foreigner who most likely was not a member of Israel’s community creates problems, however. Would non-member of Israelite community be permitted to enter Yahweh’s House?

overlooked, however, is that Amaziah “brought Edomite/Seirite gods” to his place and worshipped them (2 Chr. 25:14, 20). The tenor of that passage condemns Amaziah’s actions of worshipping idols which in no way could be compared with Yahweh worship: 1) Israel was explicitly forbidden to worship any other god and/or image (Ex. 20:3-5; Deut. 5:7-9); 2) Even if one supposes that both nations worshipped the same deity the question why Yahweh would punish Amaziah for worshipping Him in the face of Qos is puzzling (2 Chr. 25:20). Sometimes Deut. 33:2 is cited as the evidence that “the Lord who came from Sinai and dawned from Seir” and Qos must be viewed as one and the same (cf. Judg. 5:4; Hab. 3:3). However, “God marching from Seir” does not necessarily preclude that He, who was worshipped at Seir, as popularly explained, now was coming down to receive Israel as his “firstborn” (Ex. 4:22). Moreover, the characterization of Doeg is such that it invites readers to view him negatively, just as the actions of Saul the king of Israel in the same narrative are certainly presented in a negative light.

17 Smith, I & 2 Samuel, 266.
18 Most likely both groups were some kind of political refugee coming with David out of the land of the Philistines (cf. 1 Sam. 30:14). However, nothing is known about their participation in Israel’s cultic life.
20 Bergen, I, 2 Samuel, 223.
b) It Points to Doeg’s Residence

Others say that the “Edomite” only points to the place of Doeg’s residence. Radak suggested that Doeg was an Edom born Israelite. By giving this answer Radak probably intended to resolve the problem of the Edomite being allowed to enter the House of Yahweh and for other reasons which cannot be discussed presently. Suffice it to say that his explanation did not gain much popularity.

c) It Points to Doeg’s Characterization

Yet others propose that Doeg’s characterization as the “Edomite” is a literary device through which his words and actions need to be interpreted. The Edomite origin of Doeg arguably would induce negative emotions among the native readers and listeners, who would have been familiar with the history of hostility between Israel and Edom. Midrash Shocher Tov “unpacks” the villainous character of the Edomite in the narrative of 1 Samuel as follows:

(1) Doeg was called the Edomite [derived from אדום, red] because he was envious of David who was called עז, ruddy (1 Sam. 16:12). In his envy Doeg the Edomite was joined by Ziphites, Nabal the Carmelite and the men of Keilah;
(2) he was called the Edomite [related to דם, blood] because he marred himself with the blood of the priests (1 Sam. 22:18);
(3) he was called the Edomite because he instigated Saul to destroy David, saying to Saul “he deserves to die” (1 Sam. 20:31);
(4) he was called the Edomite because he “forbade Saul to shed the blood of Agag, King of Amalek;”
(5) he was called the Edomite because “his superior scholarship enabled him to דאום, redden with shame, the faces of those who argued the

24 Fokkelman believes that the “Edomite” was chosen by the narrator to give him the name indicative of his character. However, he, in my view unnecessarily, also concludes: “The character Doeg is a creation of the narrator, and the words he says are put in his mouth by his maker” (Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 388).
law with him. During the debates, Doeg would use his superior arguments to reduce his opponent to silence [דָּרָשׁ];

(6) he was called the Edomite because “he was like Edom who disparages Israel. Just as Edom seeks vengeance, so Doeg seeks vengeance against David.”²⁵

In focusing on the particular way the narrator characterized Doeg, one is led to pose a question: If the narrator introduced Doeg’s origin only for the purposes of characterization knowing that this name would evoke negative emotions among his audience, and he had done so arbitrarily, why would he give Doeg a general designation “the Edomite” instead of calling him “the Amalekite,” which would appear to be even better choice especially since he had used it before and the term has an additional “sting” to it?²⁶ Perhaps the narrator had only so much room to work with the characterization of Doeg and for other reasons as shall be demonstrated later.

2. A Question of Doeg’s Detention

The narrator says that Doeg the Edomite was נָּסַת לָחוֹד יְהוָה, “detained before the Lord” (1 Sam. 21:8[7]). Depending on what significance scholars assign to Doeg’s origin, different answers are given to what Doeg’s detention (נָּסַת)²⁷ in Nob might mean. These discussions could be divided into three categories: he was detained for a) non-religious reasons, b) religious reasons and c) the term is used as a literary device for the purposes of his characterization.

²⁵ Feuer, Tehillim, 667. For the discussion on Doeg’s character in the rabbinic literature see Appendix II.
²⁶ In the book(s) of Samuel the name “Edom” appears only once in 1 Sam. 14:47 and twice in 2 Sam. 8:14; “Edomite” describes only Doeg (1 Sam. 21:8; 22:9, 18, 22); “Edomites” appears only once 2 Sam. 8:14. However, the name “Amalek” appears five times (1 Sam. 15:2, 3, 5, 20; 28:18); “Amalekite” three times (1 Sam. 30:13; 2 Sam. 1:8, 13); and “Amalekites” thirteen times (1 Sam. 14:48; 15:6 (2x), 7, 8, 15, 18, 20, 32; 27:8; 30:1, 18; 2 Sam. 1:1).
²⁷ LXX²⁸ reads ηὑντομον. The LXX uses ηὑντομον translating נָּסַת quite consistently.

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a) Detention for Non-Religious Reasons

Alter has suggested that Doeg might have been detained before the Lord at the sanctuary from participation in the cult, as “the verb is derived from the same root as the one used for ‘taboo’ in verse 6.” Alter admits that it could be interpreted either that Doeg was: (1) detained for some unknown purpose or (2) detained from something, though he favors the latter. However, he does not specify what Doeg’s detention from the cult would mean practically or even what the cause was of such a detention: was it self restriction, as in v. 6[5] or a restriction issued by the priest who did not allow Doeg to enter the Tabernacle? Moreover, as some have pointed out, if indeed Doeg was restrained from participation in the cult, one would expect to find מָלַא אֵין יֶהוָה.

b) Detention for Religious Reasons

Since Doeg was allowed to enter the House of Yahweh, it can be supposed that he was likely a Yahweh worshipper and, therefore, a member of the community of Israel since he was detained לפני יְהוָה, “before the Lord.” The text does seem to allow a possibility that Doeg took part in some activity in the House of Yahweh that had religious connotations. At least five reasons which attempt to explain what sort of business brought Doeg to Nob can be mentioned here.

1) Reception of an Oracle

Mowinckel suggested that Doeg was visiting the sanctuary because he was receiving an “incubation oracle” from the deity. This was supposedly obtained through a priest. However, if indeed that was the reason for his coming to Nob, then he probably did not get any oracle from the priest on that day, for if he did, it is highly unlikely that he would have accused the priest later. Even if Doeg thought

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29 Alter, The David Story, 132.
30 See Meier, “The Heading of Psalm 52,” 147.
31 While more views exist, only five will be discussed in the main body of the work. Among other views are:
(1) Fulfillment of a Vow (Goldman, 131; Smith, 266; Vos, 76); (2) Punishment (Bergen, 223; Baldwin, 138); (3) Purification (Keil, 512; Mauchline, 151; Schroeder, 971) or other ceremonial purposes (McCarter, 349), or he had some bodily blemish which required an examination of the priest (Reis, 61); (4) Constrained by the Divine Will (Ackroyd, 171).
that Ahimelech should not have supported David, he could have restrained himself at least, just as other servants of Saul had done. On the other hand, if Doeg was not able to get anything from the priest but somehow perceived that David had gotten his wish done, his accusation of the priest as well as his willingness to put the priestly families to sword was done out of sheer jealousy and hatred. Incidentally, it would make him comparable with King Saul, for the Scripture contains no explicit record of Saul obtaining an answer from Yahweh through the medium of the priest.33

2) Act of Penance

Some have said that Doeg was detained in the sanctuary because of the penance.34 Hertzberg thinks that the process of obtaining absolution caused Doeg a great deal of irritation and led him to punish the priests later. However, Hertzberg does not explain the nature of the penance. One might reason that if it was true that (a) Doeg went to the sanctuary on his own accord, being instigated by his guilty conscience, irrespective of the nature of the guilt, then it is rather strange that he who was so conscious of his guilt the first time was so careless acquiring the blood guilt by slaying the same priest from/through whom he hoped to obtain his absolution in the first place. If, however, (b) he went into the sanctuary by the recommendation of King Saul, it is difficult to accept this as plausible too, because no person would recommend a place where he knows one could get spiritual healing and later render it useless. It seems unlikely that Saul would have ordered the execution of the priests if he knew they were important and useful. The tenor of the story, however, suggests that it was otherwise.

3) Observance of a Sabbath or a Holy Day

Some say that Doeg was detained in the sanctuary in view of the approaching Sabbath or some other holy day.35 Since the narrator mentions the holy bread (לחם קדוש; v. 5 [6]) or the bread of the presence (לחם ה sito; v. 7[8]; Lev. 23:11)

33 One can note that as early as 1 Sam. 13:11-14 Saul might have fallen out of the divine favor. In 14:19 he came close to inquiring of the Lord, but then he stopped the priest. Later he inquired of God again, but He did not answer him (14:37). The only answer Saul seems to have gotten was through casting of lot (14:41), but even here it is rather questionable whether it was the result the direct involvement of God.

34 So Hertzberg, I & 2 Samuel, 181; Bergen, I, 2 Samuel, 223.

35 Barber, The Books of Samuel, 233-34.
which was customarily removed from the presence of the Lord in the sanctuary on Sabbath, and since Ahimelech the priest offered it to David freely – it can be understood that the events of the story took place either on a Sabbath or on the following day. Kutsch believes that הרכָה denotes a religious holiday when a person was supposed to “zurückhalten von der Arbeit,” e.g. “feiern lassen.” 36 Taking this word with the following phrase לֵעָם יְהוָה he believes that it means “einen – arbeitsfreien – Tag feiern vor Jahwe im Heiligtum begehen.”37 One would suppose that if these events took place on a Sabbath, then it would mean that on this day Doeg was constrained by the circumstances of time, being compelled to observe that day with Pharisaical strictness.38

Meier develops this possibility a little further. He explains that “the unique phrase in 1 Sam. 21:8 is the verbal counterpart to an infrequent noun קָרָה (eleven times in the Bible) which seems to have designated a cultic occasion marked by some type of restraint upon the worshipers.”39 This, of course, had been noted earlier by Kutsch.40 Meier goes on to suggest that Doeg’s detention had something to do with his active involvement in the קרָה-assembly.

Indeed, in the Scripture the word קרָה appears in connection with certain religious festivals such as Sukkoth (cf. Lev. 23:33-36; Deut. 16:8). However, this explanation assumes that the legislation to observe this holiday was in place in the 10th c. B.C. However, according to Neh. 8:17 the celebration of the Festival of Booths had not been celebrated since the days of Joshua until after the Exile: “And the entire congregation of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them. The sons of Israel have not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day.”41

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37 Ibid.: 67.
38 Stoebe does not think that this explanation of Kutsch helps much to solve the problem: “die Deutung ‘ein freien Tag feiern’ nicht befriedigt, auch literarkritische Problem der Stellung des Verses nicht klärt” (See Stoebe, Das erste Buch Samuels, 394).
40 Meier does not cite Kutsch, “Die Wurzel קרה im Hebräischen,” 65.
41 Emphasis added.
4) King’s Business

Edelman thinks that מנהל here simply means “constrained.” She acknowledges some connection of this term with the one in v. 6[5]. She goes on to conclude that Doeg is being constrained by the business of King Saul in Nob. However, she hazards no particulars by what sort of royal assignment Doeg was constrained. Edelman does not believe that Doeg was a member of the community of Israel, but rather, thinks that his presence in Nob was purely secular in character. Her explanation may sound appealing. However, Edelman does not consider the implications of the phrase that is highly suggestive of religious character: לפני יהוה “before Yahweh” which seems to have a great deal to say on the nature of Doeg’s detention in Nob.

5) Professional Business

In contemplating the aforementioned reasons, one other possibility may be considered here. Doeg’s title אביו ורבם אשת לשביא, “chief of Saul’s shepherds,” may indicate that as a professional herdsman his detention in Nob before the Lord had something to do with his professional occupation. Viewed from this perspective, his detention was not necessarily a reflection on his active and personal participation in worship at the sanctuary of Nob. His involvement in the service may have only been limited to bringing a supply of sacrificial sheep to the House of Yahweh – thus, “before the Lord.” His presence in Nob, therefore, may speak of the period of time that he had to be there until all of the sheep were examined and accepted by the priests. On that occasion he was held up by his professional business rather than worship. He was thus shut up within the enclosure of the sanctuary. This explanation is not at odds with the narrator’s later description of his aggressive actions in Nob (see below). This view also leaves room for a potential development of antagonism between Ahimelech the priest and Doeg the Edomite.

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42 Edelman, King Saul, 166.
43 For the study of the appearances of this phrase in HB see Appendix III.
44 Other scholars note the same: Ackroyd, 1 Samuel, 171; Ahlström, The History of Ancient Palestine, 453. Gordon believes that “shepherds and sheep could be associated with temple affairs” (Gordon, 1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary, 171). But Blenkinsopp suggested that Doeg held a cultic office, based on the analogy with נבי and his designation as אביו ורבם אשת לשביא (Joseph Blenkinsopp, Gibeon and Israel: The Role of Gibeon and the Gibeonites in the Political and Religious History of Early Israel [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972], 126, n. 48).
is Employed as a Literary Device

As has been noted above, the word “detained” (דלטלי) shares the same root with the word (דלטלי) in the phrase (כ אמאsense דלטלי ודלטלי) (v. 6[5]), which Alter renders: “why, women are taboo to us.” Miscall notes that there is a play on David’s statement who says that he and his men stayed away from women. Along somewhat similar lines, Bodner suggests that David’s men hiding at “such and such a place” (דֶּלֶטַלְיֵו) – those men to whom women were taboo – creates a parallel with the one who was lurking in the sanctuary. He concludes, therefore, that David was sending Ahimelech a signal “that he was aware of the ‘such and such a one’ (דֶּלֶטַלְיֵו) in the sanctuary.”

It is of some significance for the present study to note that in the books of Samuel and Kings appears thirteen times, four of which are in the Niphal stem:

1. Once it is used of Doeg in the above mentioned text;
2. Twice it appears in 2 Sam. 24:21, 25 in connection with the plague that came as the result of David’s taking the census: David wanted to buy the threshing floor from Araunah the Jebusite where he intended to build an altar so that “the plague might be held back from the people.” Indeed, when the sacrifice was offered on the altar “the plague was withheld from Israel.”
3. Once the word is used by Solomon in his prayer of dedication of the temple (1 Ki 8:35//2 Chr.6:26). Addressing Yahweh, he pleads with the Lord to hear the prayer of the people when the heavens would be shut up or closed, thus producing no rain, as the result of the people’s sin.

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45 Alter, The David Story, 132.
46 Miscall, I Samuel, 132.
47 Bodner, David Observed, 28. Omanson and Ellington suggest that these words could be interpreted as a “pseudo-quotation” or “a summary substitute by the author of a longer conversation” (Omanson and Ellington, A Handbook on the First and Second Books of Samuel, 456).
In light of these uses, the references in the book of Numbers should be noted. Three times the term appears in the Niphal stem to describe the intercession of Aaron the priest who stood between the people and the plague (נ国际合作; Nu. 17:13[16:48]; 17:15[16:50]) as well as the involvement of Phinehas who caused the plague to stop when he executed a sinning couple at Baal Peor (Nu. 25:8; cf. Ps. 106:30). In these cases the job of restraining (נ国际合作) the plague belonged to God.

It is significant to note that in the above mentioned passages the subject of国际合作 is most often国际合作 (plague) with two exceptions in 1 Sam. 21:8[7], where the subject is Doeg and in 1 Ki.8:35//2 Chr.6:26, where the subject is “heavens” (国际合作). These two instances are sufficiently similar containing only a slight difference. In Doeg’s case the free agency was restrained, in other instances – an abstract force. There, God’s full control of nature is assumed. Yahweh was in charge of shutting up the heavens, so that it would produce no rain, or opening the heavens and commanding the rain to fall upon the earth just as with preventing the plague from spreading. Although in Doeg’s case determining the cause of the restraint is more complex, one needs to keep in mind God’s ability to exercise His power over free agency, inanimate objects and abstract forces. Consequently, Doeg’s restraint can be explained as coming from the outside but manifesting itself on the inside. In either case God would be doing the restraining. Consequently, it is quite possible that somehow Doeg was withheld, shut up or restrained by God Himself (therefore,国际合作 in Nob. One might say that Yahweh prevented Doeg from causing premature destruction of the place when His king was visiting it.

Having highlighted this minor detail, Doeg’s menacing appearance in Nob can thus be viewed as appearing in parallel with the outbreak of the pestilence that “overtakes people as a flood” – the problem which David was ready to face when he asked the priest for a weapon; the problem (Doeg “worry”) which/who God restrained when David was visiting Ahimelech on that day. Later, however, the restraining force of Yahweh was withdrawn and the sword of Doeg swallowed the entire population of Nob in accordance with the oracle of 1 Sam 2:31-33.

48 Cf. 1 Sam. 25:38: “Yahweh struck Nabal, and he died.”
49 It is of some relevance to mention here 1 Chr. 12:1 where国际合作 appears. Doeg was restrained before the Lord国际合作 in Nob; David was restrained from before Saul国际合作 in Nob; David was restrained from before Saul国际合作).
Of the three options, the option “a”: Doeg’s detention or, rather, “restriction” from participation in the cult seems the least attractive because taken with the phrase אברר הערוס אברר לשבאלו, “chief of the shepherds that belong to Saul,” it is likely that he, as Saul’s official, was allowed to participate in some capacity in a cultic activity together with the king. Furthermore, if he was restrained by the priest from participation in the cult, it would be more natural to read לוהו יהוה. The other two possibilities (“b” and “c”) are more striking. When both explanations are combined together they extend the range of meaning and establish a chain of literary comparisons and parallels in the book of Samuel.

3. Doeg’s Position in the Court of King Saul

MT says that Doeg was one of Saul’s servants (אֵ公園 מַעְבִּרְךָ שָׁאוּל; 21:8[7]) and then announces his occupation: אברר הערוס אברר לשבאלו, “chief of the shepherds that belong to Saul.” LXX reads that Doeg was nemwn taj hmionouj Saoul, “tender of Saul’s mules” (also Josephus Ant. 6.244). Similarly, in 1 Sam. 22:9 in the place of הַּאֵלֵי תַּעֲרֹת יִתְנָא וַעֲרָפַת שָׁאוּל (MT), LXX reads: Dwhk o’Suraj o’kaqesthwj epi.taj hmionouj Saoul, “Doeg the Syrian who was in charge of Saul’s mules.” It is of some relevance to note here that 1 Sam. 21:8[7] is the only instance where the Septuagint translates ἁμιονοῦς as nemwn. As a rule nemwn, “tender,” in LXX corresponds to ידא, “shepherd.” So is the case with hmionouj, “mules,” which most often corresponds to סֶרֶף (1 Ki. 10:25; 18:5; 2 Chr. 9:24), once to הדירם (Gen. 45:23), but never to הדירים except in 1 Sam. 21:7[8] and 22:9.42 4QSam is of no help either. The only letters that survived in v. 8 are: [...] אֵקרן נֶמַע [...] The editors of DJD admit:

50 In the HB ryba always denotes a great physical strength and often compared with that of bulls or stallions/steeds (LXX: ταυρός or ἄρος). Out of 23 appearances of the term in the HB, six times it denotes human strength (Job 24:22; 34:20; Ps. 76:6; Is. 10:13; Is. 46:12; Lament. 1:15); once, perhaps, it denote an angelic strength (Ps. 78:25; followed by some English versions after the LXX [77:25]: αρτόν αγγέλων εἰς γένος ᾿Αγγέλου), which might be an interpretation of the MT לָחָץ אֲנָגָלֶים רְאוֹב נָא; and six times it speaks of God as Γεωργαύς τοῦ Ἱς, “the Mighty One of Jacob” (Gen. 49:24 [LXX: δούς τοῦ λακώνα]: Ps. 132:2 [LXX: τό γεώργιον λακων]; Is. 49:26 [LXX: Ἰερώνιον λακων]; Is. 60:16 [LXX: γεωργιον Ἰσραήλ]) and as Γεωργαύς τοῦ θεοῦ αἰματος Ἰσραήλ, “the Mighty One of Israel” (Is. 1:24 [LXX: οἱ ἱσχύς Ἰσραήλ]). So, it may give some insight into Doeg’s characterization as אברר הערוס אברר לשבאלו.

51 In the LXX nemwn = ידא (15x).

52 In the LXX hmionouj = סרף (14x); = מַעְבִּיר (3x); = אֵקרן (2x).
Neither the Hebrew nor Greek traditions provide plausible readings. We suspect that the text once read רְבָּא. רְבָּא is an animal name used of military nobility and cannot be easily construed with either shepherds (MT) or mules (LXX, Old Latin). It may be that graphic confusion has altered רְבָּא to רְבָּא. In any case, we have not reconstructed this line in 4QSam.53

Upon examining these options, it is hard to be certain which reading is more original, what gave rise to the alternative readings or even if there is a connection between them. It is unknown, therefore, whether LXX contains a scribal error both times or, as McCarter suggested, the Greek text may represent an alternative reading, whereas רְבָּא is thus not represented at all."54 In his translation McCarter reads רְבָּא (the chief), rather than נְפֶמֶן (tender), while emending the second word to read רְבָּא. However, רְבָּא can hardly correspond to either רְבָּא, רְבָּא or רְבָּא, even if the emendation of the latter is allowed (see below).55

In making an inquiry into Doeg’s leadership position in King Saul’s court, a few minor but important details must be kept in mind. In 22:6, all of Saul’s servants stand around the king (וֹלֵדְו נְפֶמֶן וּלָצְבָּא; cf. v. 7).56 Later, Saul orders רְבָּא, who stood by him (וֹלֵדְו נְפֶמֶן; v. 17a) to strike the priests. The same רְבָּא, who are now called by a more general רְבָּא, refused to raise their hands against the priests of Yahweh (v. 17b). Then the same order was given directly to Doeg who was earlier described thus: רְבָּא, “and he was stationed

53 DJD, 4QSamuel, 239.
54 McCarter, 1 Samuel, 348.
55 To accommodate the LXX reading, Budde makes some alterations in the Hebrew text to read רְבָּא (Budde, Die Bücher Samuel, 149).
56 Cf. LXX: ὀ’ κατοικήσαντος ἐπὶ ταῖς ἡμεραῖς Σαύου. The word נָשָׁב (Ni. Ptsp. ms) + נָשָׁב occurs 11 times in HB. It is used of Abraham’s servant standing by the spring (Gen. 24:13, 43); of Yahweh standing on the staircase in Jacob’s dream (Gen. 28:13); of Moses standing on top of the mountain (Ex. 17:9); of people standing before Moses (Ex. 18:14); of Balaam standing by/over his offering (Nu. 23:6, 17); of Samuel presiding over the prophetic procession (1 Sam. 19:20); of Doeg standing by/over Saul’s servants/mules (1 Sam. 22:9); of Yahweh standing on the wall (Am. 7:7) and over the altar (9:1). It is of some interest to note that the construct κατοικήσαντος + ἐπὶ occurs 13 times in the books of Kings (LXX). With the exception of one passage (4 Ki. 10:3; “to set on the throne”) the phrase means to be set over or be set in charge of a group of the prophets (1 Ki. 19:20); as a nation’s ruler (2 Ki. 6:21; 15:4); over military force (17:25; 18:1); as provincial officials (3 Ki. 2:35; 4:7; 11:28; 4 Ki. 25:22); in charge of workmen (3 Ki. 5:30); in charge of security (4 Ki. 7:17).
by/over/against the servants of Saul” (22:9). Doeg proceeds to execute the population of Nob. Contextual considerations most often cause some scholars to emend the word in 21:8[7] from נָעָם to נְחִימָה (or to a more neutral נַחֲמָה [DJD]), for the term “shepherd” seems to be at odds with Doeg’s role as the executioner. Others, however, questioned the need for such an emendation since Doeg’s title as chief of shepherds is multifaceted and in the text could serve more than one literary purpose. The arguments on both sides are examined in the following sections.

a) Literal Sense

It should be born in mind that the decision to make the adjustment in reading the text in question is influenced primarily by the context as well as by one’s understanding of what “the Edomite” signifies and what his detention in the sanctuary mean. Nevertheless, the arguments on both sides are given as follows:

1) Doeg was Saul’s Mighty Bodyguard

Some are convinced that the story would make better sense if one sees Doeg’s role as נַחֲמָה of Saul. Some said that “Doeg attained his important position in the court of Saul after having held a senior appointment in Edom before his arrival in Israel.” Therefore, “his title נַחֲמָה was the title of his Edomite office” and not necessarily his office in the service of Saul. A number of scholars proposed that Doeg was “a mercenary bodyguard of Saul.” Mauchline calls him “Saul’s most courageous courier.” Alter states that the Edomite service in the court of Saul “reflects the enlistment of foreign mercenaries in the new royal bureaucracy.” Perhaps these explanations are implicated by the later phrase that describes Doeg standing נָעָם (22:9), which some take to mean that he was placed over or

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57 Edelman is of the opinion that נָעָם here carries the meaning of “against” and suits the context better. She says that “the preposition conveys a sense of both physical and psychological opposition. Doeg is standing apart from the other servants, which is logical in light of his previous introduction in 21:7 as a head royal shepherd, a position that would not have made him a regular attendant of the king at the court” (Edelman, King Saul, 175, italics are mine).
59 Peterson, First and Second Samuel, 111.
60 Mauchline, 1 and 2 Samuel, 151.
61 Alter, The David Story, 132.
put in charge of Saul’s servants, the runners. Baldwin suggests that אֵיתֶר should be rendered “mighty,” “violent” or “obstinate,” because in the story he acts as Saul’s fierce warrior and as an executioner. Because יַרְבָּה were “part of the king’s entourage and formed a kind of escort team to go before the royal chariot,” Doeg’s position as the mightiest of the runners seems to be a more preferable reading. Driver opined that in the present context mighty “does not well agree with יַרְבָּה, might or heroism being hardly a quality which in a shepherd would be singled out for distinction.”

Fokkelman draws his attention to 1 Sam. 22:6 where יָרְבָּה should be understood as an all inclusive group who stood before Saul on that day. He explains that where the phrase “the servants of Saul” occurs it has two meanings in 1 Sam. 22: (a) ordinary meaning, e.g. “courtiers,” (תֵּרֵבָּה) as in 22:6, and (b) in the narrower meaning “bodyguard,” (תֵּרֵבָּה; v. 17a), who were יִרְבָּה יִתְלֵל (v. 17b). He goes on to say,

since politicians and palace servants are not so practiced in murdering by their own hand, Saul does not ask the entire group of couriers to carry out the execution, but only the military men amongst them … I therefore yield to the emendation that Doeg is ‘the strongest of the bodyguard,’ hence of the יַרְבָּה, in 21:8. I see no part for ‘herdsmen’ in 22:6-7.

However, it is erroneously supposed that since Doeg is described as a shepherd, he, therefore, was a lowly shepherd – a position which would be incompatible with his description as אֵיתֶר. Doeg’s position as the “mightiest of the shepherds of Saul” does not mean that he was not a military commander any more than Saul’s engagement in agricultural activity (1 Sam. 11:5) “does not preclude the possibility that he [Saul] was already a recognized military leader” or that Mesha was

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62 See de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 221; Blenkinsopp, Gibeon and Israel, 61, 126 n. 48; McCarter, 1 Samuel, 348, 360. Gordon entertains the idea “was placed over” and points to the similar construction in 1 Kings 4:7 “over all Israel” (לְכָל אֲנָשָׁי). Even so, he sees no reason to emend יַרְבָּה to יִרְבָּה. According to rabbinic tradition, Abner and Amasa, Saul’s lieutenants, were there on that day as well, and that Doeg was asked to strike the priests after the first two refused (Midr. Gen. R. XXXII).
63 Baldwin, 1 and 2 Samuel, 138.
64 Klein, 1 Samuel, 213. Also de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 123-24.
65 Driver, Notes on the Hebrew Text, 140.
a lowly king of Moab since he was a sheep breeder (2 Ki. 3:4). Nor is there
evidence that in Saul’s court a political office was incompatible with military might.
At the time of Saul’s reign there was probably no “politician” among Saul’s staff,
who at the same time was not a warrior (cf. 1 Sam. 14:52).

Secondly, from 22:17-18 it is evident that Doeg was not one of מנהיגי who
refused to obey Saul’s command to execute the priests. To distinguish him from
other servants of Saul, he is never even called a “servant” שבט in the narrative of
22:6-23. This information is borrowed from the previous story (21:8[7]). In chapter
22 Doeg seems to occupy a discrete position among those present in Gibeah. When
all of Saul’s servants disappoint the king (v. 17b), Doeg the Edomite fulfills Saul’s
bidding. However, runners refused to obey Saul’s order not because they were unfit
for the job, unlike Doeg the “almighty,” but probably because they were not willing
to rise against the priesthood of Yahweh.

Thirdly, the decision to emend the text comes quite apart from
considering the figurative sense and the function of the phrase in the larger context.
David, who was a shepherd literally, was to obtain a title as the shepherd of God’s
people (1 Sam. 16:11, 19; 2 Sam. 5:2). It is likely, therefore, that Doeg’s title
denotes his position as a ruler in Saul’s kingdom, as will be demonstrated later. In
this light, the DJD’s proposal that the alteration from מנהיג to מנהיג was caused by
graphic confusion is questionable: the phrase אבר המנהיגי would not sit
comfortably with the following אבר המנהיגי אבר לאבר. If the figurative sense is
considered (as it should), it will become clear that מנהיג must be retained.

2) Doeg was Chief of Saul’s Shepherds מנהיג

Some believe that the emendation of the text is unnecessary. Edelman
comments: “The frequently adopted emendation altering מנהיג to מנהיג on the basis
of 22:17 lacks textual support and misses the clearly intended irony.” She explains:
“Doeg’s position as head shepherd of Israel parodies the use of this occupation to
describe the office of kingship.” Edelman, King Saul, 165-66. Gordon too says that “MT is not indefensible.”

68 Edelman, King Saul, 165-66.
69 Gordon, I & 2 Samuel: A Commentary, 171
Although both Edelman and Gordon read a figurative sense into the phrase too, still, it is not entirely impossible that Doeg’s job may have had something to do with real sheep – the matter which, as was suggested above, might have brought him to Nob the first time.

In summary, those who are in favor of reading, do so by putting a heavier stress on Doeg’s actions as an executioner. Those, however, who prefer to read, consider that Doeg’s role as an executioner is not at odds with his characterization as the head shepherd of Saul. Considering both views, there seems to be no pressing need to emend the text as MT may even contain a fuller sense as will be shown in the following discussion.

b) Figurative Sense

Doeg’s title as “chief of shepherds that belonged to Saul” may denote a more important responsibility in the service of the king. A few possibilities can be considered here:

1) “Shepherds” as a Class of Functionaries

Gibson cites the Ugaritic text where the analogous term רְבָּן נְכֶרֶם “chief of shepherds,” appears together with רְבָּן חַטְטֵינָה, “chief of priests.” However, it should be noted that in that text the phrase רְבָּן נְכֶרֶם borrows its sense from the preceding רְבָּן חַטְטֵינָה. Without it the figurative sense of the following phrase would not be self evident. Nevertheless, Gibson suggests that these terms could be understood as terms applied to “a class of functionaries appearing frequently in administrative documents.” As evidence he cites Amos 1:1, which says that Amos was וֹעֵבֶר נְכֶרֶם, “among the shepherds from Tekoa.”

However, this term נְכֶרֶם does not have to be understood necessarily as a technical term referring to a ruling class. The same term נְכֶרֶם (LXX transliterates: ἀρσιόμος) is also used of King Mesha of Moab in 2 Ki. 3:4, where a plain sense is more preferable, meaning that he was either a “sheep-master,” “sheep-owner” or

71 Ibid.
“sheep breeder.” He paid the King of Israel a tribute of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.

2) A “Shepherd” as a Military Title

Aster maintains that there is no particular reason to suppose that “chief of shepherds” is evidence of a textual error. He compiled evidence from the Hittite and Akkadian texts to demonstrate a borrowing of vocabulary from Mesopotamia or Hatti. Following Tsevat he concludes that Doeg’s designation must be understood as a military title. Aster suggests that Doeg’s office must be compared with that of Joab and Benaiah who were in the service of David and Solomon.73

3) A “Shepherd” as a Ruler.

In ancient Israel the office of a ruler was often compared to the function of a shepherd. Consequently, one name sometimes implied the functions concealed in the other title. Thus, David as was to shepherd God’s people (2 Sam. 5:2//1 Chr. 11:2; 2 Sam. 7:7// 1 Chr. 17:6; Ps. 78:71, 72; cf. Ezek. 34:23; 37:24). In 1 Ki. 22:17//2 Chr. 18:16 the people of Israel are pictured “as sheep who had no shepherd” when their king was killed. The governing role of Cyrus the Persian was also described in a similar term (Is. 44:28). The prophet Jeremiah calls the one in authority (presumably a ruler) who dared to challenge God’s rule, a shepherd (Jer. 49:19; 50:44; cf. 51:23). Micah speaks of, “seven shepherds and eight leaders/princes of men” who “will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword” (Mich. 5:4-5), where “shepherd” = “leaders/princes of men.” Nahum equates the shepherds of the king of Assyria to his nobles (Nah. 3:18). Zechariah pronounces a woe against “a worthless shepherd” among the rulers of Israel who does not care for the flock – the people (Zech. 11:5, 15-17).

Shepherd-like skills of rulers, Israel’s prophets, often compared and contrasted with that of Yahweh. He was pictured as the King of His people and as

It is possible therefore, that Doeg’s title is indicative of his office as a ruler. His characterization as אב JsonResponse elevate him to a position of prominence in the court of Saul. As such, he may have been one of Saul’s chief rulers or governors in his kingdom. It is most likely that he also was a warrior. There was a reason why David asked Ahimelech for a weapon; there was a reason why Saul turned to Doeg when he thought that the priests should be executed. It is not at all impossible that he had a small force of his own when he went on slaughtering the citizens of Nob. The text of Jer. 6:1-3 may shed some light on Doeg’s position. Jeremiah warns about the coming of evil (רעה) and great destruction (נזר נזר נזר) from the north, and describes the invasion of the nation as follows: “shepherds and their flocks (העירות והערויות) will come to it, they will pitch their tents around (ה מהמ) it, each will graze (לכין) [with the sword (?); cf. 2 Sam. 11:25 (בוחל)) whatever he finds at hand (אמהל)].” If Doeg occupied the post as one of Saul’s high ranking officials, then his title as a “chief of shepherds of Saul” would most naturally set him apart from the rest of the servants of Saul present in Gibeah (1 Sam. 22:6, 7, 9, 14, 17).

B. Looking for the Answers

Who was Doeg the Edomite? What was he doing in Nob? What exactly did he see there and how firm were the facts of his deposition? What was the nature of his relationship with King Saul? By raising these questions one may agree with Campbell who observes: “It seems likely that there is more happening in this story than meets the eye.” In what follows, the implications of some of the elements in Doeg’s characterization discussed above will be re-evaluated.

1. Doeg’s Identity

Before a theory could be advanced about who Doeg was, a few general comments are in order. The Scripture traces the origin of the nation of Edom to Esau, Jacob’s brother (Gen. 25:19-34). It continues to use the language of brotherly

74 Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 225.
relationship in describing the affiliation between the two nations – Edom and Israel (Nu. 20:14; Deut. 2:4; Mal. 1:2). The first tension between these nations was revealed during the conquest (Nu. 20:17-21). Edom’s refusal to allow Israel to pass through their territory had bitter consequences to which the prophets Amos and Obadiah make allusions (Amos 1:11; Obad. 1:10). The tension has never dissipated. Edom remained Israel’s eternal enemy. However, certain Edomite tribes, such as the Kenizzites – the Calebites and the Othnielites – sojourned with the sons of Israel and later assimilated in Judah completely.

In order to comprehend how the term the “Edomite” might have been used by the writer of 1 Samuel, the diachronic analysis of the stories in question is imperative. This will be attempted in Chapter V. The interests of this chapter are limited to examining the function of the term the “Edomite” within the world of the story itself, apart from considering the implications of the stories for the wider audiences. Nevertheless, in order to perceive Doeg’s role in 1 Sam. 21 and 22 more clearly, it must be acknowledged that Doeg is a negative character. He is such not because he was an Edomite or was characterized as such, but despite this fact. His designation as the “Edomite,” however, only saturates the colors of his negative portrait.

In the Scripture the name “Edomite” is used most often in a pejorative sense. To call someone an “Edomite” was to pun on his name. Therefore, if the narrator wanted to describe a misdeed of one of the members of Israel’s community who had his ancestral roots in Edom, the name “Edomite” would seem to be an appropriate choice. This does not mean that the term was deliberately “invented” by the writer/editor of 1 Samuel. Rather, it would be possible for the writer of those stories to call a certain member of Israel’s community this way, thereby pushing him ideologically aloof from Israel – back to the camp of the “Edomites,” Israel’s antagonists. Because the term “the Edomite” is broad enough, it can easily include certain clans that joined Israel during the conquest and lived on their territory in the south of Judah as full fledged members of Israel’s community. If per chance Doeg

75 Meier, however, does not think that there is an “anti-Edomite strain in the books of Samuel.” He believes that Saul’s victories over Edom (1 Sam. 14:47) as well as the subjugation of this nation by David (2 Sam. 8:13-14) are described in the context of victories over other nations and is too general to deduce from it how deep was the antagonism between Israel and Edom (Meier, “The Heading of Psalm 52,” 147).
came from one of those tribes, calling him the Edomite after what he did in Nob would attract the historically shaped negative elements from the Edom/Israel relationship without doing an injustice to the ethnicity of the character himself. With that in mind, further inquiries into Doeg’s identity can now be made.

Doeg’s title as the head of Saul’s shepherds is not at odds with his actions. The reading that he was the chief/mightiest of shepherds (רָםָרִים) is to be retained, because it extends the range of literary parallels thus creating additional layers of meaning. To advance the argument a little further, closer attention needs to be paid to the following details in the storyline:

David asked Ahimelech for a weapon (v. 9[8]) as soon as Doeg was introduced into the story (v. 8[7]). Later, when the news about the execution of the Ahimelech’s house was brought to David’s hearing, the first thing that came to his mind was the name of Doeg the Edomite’s (22:22). As one inquires into David’s psychological state when he visited Ahimelech, one has wonder about the basis of his concern in Nob (21:9). If Doeg was the head (mightiest) of Saul’s runners (רָמאָרִים) – “the head of Saul’s internal security,”76 he had to be near Saul most of the time. However, this is hard to reconcile with the context of the stories. Further, as Saul’s chief bodyguard, his job was not only to “inform” Saul but to “stop” David. The one who held that position would have been sufficiently informed about Saul’s attitude toward David (19:1, 11-17, 20-22; 20:31, 33). If Doeg was the chief bodyguard of Saul, he would have known what he had to do when he saw David; the latter would have known about Doeg’s capabilities too. However, in that case the note on David’s “suspicion” that Doeg would tell Saul is totally superfluous and would raise more questions: Why did Doeg not try to stop David right there and then when he “saw” him? Even if David was too strong for Doeg to handle alone or if he managed to slip away before Doeg could do anything, why did he not inform Saul immediately about the son of Jesse coming to Nob, but delayed with his report?77

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76 Aster, “What Was Doeg the Edomite's Title?,” 357-58.
77 The period of several months must have passed before the actions of 21:10 – 22:6 to take place: (1) David’s trip to the Philistines, (2) his escape to the cave of Adullam, (3) coming of his family and gathering of all distressed around him and the formation of the band, (4) his trip to Moab with his parents, (5) the message of the prophet Gad, (6) David’s departure to Judah and only then (7) the breaking of the news about David’s discovery.
Now if Doeg was the head of the shepherds of Saul, e.g. a ruling official – a governor in Saul’s kingdom, two explanations of David’s suspicion are possible:

a) As one of the important servants of Saul, Doeg would have sat at the king’s table regularly. If he was leaving Nob on the same or the following day, then, considering the close proximity of Nob to Gibeah, he would have reached the royal residence in no time. Further, there are reasons to believe that the stories of 1 Sam. 20 and 21 are related analeptically or they are an example of “delayed exposition.” Thus, the actions in 1 Sam. 21:2-10[1-9], describe what transpired in the intermediate period when David was waiting to hear from Jonathan in accordance with their plan (20:18-19). If Doeg had gone to the king’s palace, he would have had opportunity to inform Saul as soon as he saw the king, as he would have been at the royal palace, when the absence of David was openly discussed at the dinner table (20:24-34). Doeg would not have hesitated to inform the king about Jonathan’s plot with David (cf. 22:9). Therefore, it seems unlikely that on that day Doeg went to see the king – something David might have suspected would happen.

b) When David found out about Doeg’s presence in Nob, his worry would seem more realistic if Doeg was one of Saul’s officials whose residence was not in Gibeah. His Edomite origin rather suggests that Doeg was a southerner. In that case he did not have to be a regular attendant at the king’s court. David’s presence in Nob was noted by Doeg but left unreported because, perhaps, there was no pressing need to report this encounter, and a brief sight of the king’s son in-law at the sanctuary at the time only arouse his curiosity but gave him no reason to be concerned. (If that was the case, then all the more, there are reasons to doubt that Doeg witnessed Ahimelech making inquiry for David. For if there definitely was an “illegal” inquiry made on David’s behalf, Doeg could have been blamed for not reporting it immediately [cf. 22:8]). Later, however, things changed. The report about David’s “discovery” in Judah (22:5) caused Saul to worry. Doeg told the king that he saw David in Nob. Why he alone broke the silence is intriguing. Bodner

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78 See Baldick, Literary Terms, 9.
79 So Bodner, David Observed, 28-36.
80 So also Edelman, King Saul, 175.
suggested that the reason why Doeg spoke was because “his interests [were] tied to Saul.” Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, there are clues in the text that may suggest that Doeg was an “interested” party in the political affairs of Saul’s kingdom. As such, he may well have been Saul’s high-ranking official who had everything to lose from David’s activity in Judah. The following considerations can support this supposition:

(1) The fact that Doeg did not go straight to Gibeah to inform Saul, but informed him some time later, suggest that Doeg was willing to share this information with Saul only, when the political situation had changed and the cause of the problem needed to be discussed.

(2) The description of Doeg as chief of shepherds, as well as the context of the narratives, suggests that Doeg was not a mere shepherd. In fact, it seems that he was more than just a military commander. If Doeg was simply one of Saul’s generals it is hard to see the place and role of Abner and Amasa, Saul’s chief military generals in that group (cf. 14:50b). Even if these generals were absent on that day, still, it is highly improbable that Saul would first address his officials of a lower rank, only to hear their refusal, and then turn to a general of a higher rank Doeg. Nevertheless, Doeg’s high rank may indicate his political office as a “shepherd-ruler.” This understanding is not at odds with his being a warrior; it rather demands it. His position in the king’s court would most naturally assume everything that was expected of a military commander. As such, there would have been nothing in the way of Saul asking Doeg to be the executioner.

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81 Bodner, *David Observed*, 30.
82 Some of the rabbinic sources picture Doeg talking to Abner, and at another time, he is put in the place of Abner altogether when Saul inquires about David’s origin after the battle with Goliath (*b. Yeb. 70a*).
2. Doeg’s Testimony

1 Sam. 21:8[7] does not say much about Doeg’s actions. The narrator simply states that Doeg was there – in Nob – on that day detained before the Lord. However, his proleptic appearance in the sanctuary the first time sets up the stage for what comes later. Saul’s condemnation of the priests depends on Doeg’s report recorded in 1 Sam. 22:9-10. It is these words that cause scholars to theorize about what happened in Nob earlier.

a) The Extent of Doeg’s Knowledge

Reis says that since Doeg was in the sanctuary, he also had a chance to overhear the conversation between Ahimelech and David.83 This claim is objectionable, however: Doeg’s report to Saul was not based on what he “heard” but only on what he “saw” (יָדֵר). The word שומן does not appear in connection with Doeg at all. While it is possible that his “overhearing” the conversation between Ahimelech and David is assumed in the story, still, it is more likely that what he reported to Saul came as the result of his deduction. Two things that Doeg mentions as though they had happened in sequence without interruption – provisions and the sword – are separated by the parenthetical note that announces his presence (21:8[7]). Doeg probably saw Ahimelech sending David away with the items that he mentioned. His testimony about the provisions was quite vague (he could have recognized the sword of Goliath by its size), which rather suggests that while he saw something, he heard nothing!

1) What did Doeg See Happen in Nob?

Depending on how one interprets David’s answer to the priest’s first question (v. 3[2]), one can reason that either a) David knew nothing of Doeg being in the sanctuary and was alarmed only when he saw him and so, he asked the priest for a weapon or b) Ahimelech was in “collusion” with David to deceive Doeg or else c) the priest warned David about the enemy and supplied David’s needs, but David himself never saw Doeg in Nob. Each scenario can be looked at in turn.

83 Reis, “Collusion at Nob,” 62-63. Of similar opinion are: Lewis, I & 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, 56; Brueggemann, First and Second Samuel, 155; Fokkelman The Crossing Fates, 354; Scherman, I-II Samuel, 145; Bodner, David Observed, 25-26.
a) Ahimelech, knowing that Doeg was in Nob when David paid him a visit, got worried but decided to withhold that information from David. The look of worry on Ahimelech’s face and his question alarmed David and caused the fugitive to fabricate a story. When both men were thus facing each other, each tried to hide something from the other. When David saw Doeg, however, he really got worried. Thinking that he might have to fight his way through the exit, he asked for a weapon whilst trying to keep Ahimelech in the dark about his plans. At that moment Ahimelech understood that there was no royal mission but that David was on the run from Saul. The priest, however, decided to supply the provisions and the weapon anyway. Doeg was observing the whole scene.

However, the lack of any explicit indication in the text that David saw Doeg, rules this possibility out.

b) Reis thinks that David connived with Ahimelech to deceive Doeg. She says that David lies “to mislead Doeg, not Ahimelech.” Thus, she assumes that not only David and Ahimelech knew that Doeg was in Nob, but also that he was listening nearby. Reis theorizes that the reason why Ahimelech gives David everything he asked for is because he is afraid for political reasons. If he helps David, he could be charged with treason and “they both would be executed as conspiring traitors.” She says that Ahimelech is also afraid because he is in a quandary, for no matter how he answers, he would encounter “Saul’s wrath if he grants asylum and David’s wrath if he refuses.” Bodner agrees with Reis that “David uses . . . ambiguous designation to discourage Doeg from potentially going to the place to verify the story.” Thus, Reis and Bodner view the speeches of David and Ahimelech as being directed toward Doeg, for the latter had to be deceived. Their plan apparently worked, for Doeg’s distorted deposition before Saul, is his pay back to the priest for deceiving him.

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84 Some say that David’s lie to Ahimelech is his “first moral blemish which we find in him” (Krummacher, *David, the King of Israel*, 121). But from this perspective Jonathan son of Saul must be blamed too (1 Sam. 20:28-29), so also Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 38:24-27).
85 Reis, “Collusion at Nob,” 66.
86 Ibid., 62, 64, 67.
88 Ibid., 32-33.
However, there seems to be a problem with this explanation too. If David was trying to mislead Doeg by saying that he was on the king’s secret mission, he would be exposing himself as soon as he asked for a weapon: Since when has it become a military officer’s practice to go out on a secret mission without proper equipment? David said: “the king’s matter was urgent” (v. 10[9]). Does this also mean that none of his men had any weapons with them either? This is hardly convincing! Furthermore, if Ahimelech was concerned for his own life when he came out to meet David, one would expect him to ask this question: “Do you come peaceably?” (בָּשָׁם שָׁלוֹם). However, he asks him quite a different question, “Why are you alone and no one with you?” (מִי שָׁלֹם וּלְאָדָם אָנָּא אֶלּוּ אֵין) as though David had never traveled alone before. Bodner thinks it is highly significant that Ahimelech speaks first. He says that Ahimelech does not want Doeg to be alerted if David starts “trumpeting his innocence.” 89 But, the fact that David does not “trumpet” his innocence before the priest and does not tell Ahimelech “all that Saul has done to him” (cf. 19:18; 20:1) can be taken as a proof that he is not yet “running” from Saul per se, but rather is “hiding” at “such and such a place” (21:3[2]), e.g. by the stone Ezel (20:19) until the appointed time as agreed with Jonathan (20:18-23).

c) The context of the story suggests that David probably did not see Doeg in Nob at all, for neither in 21:10[9] nor in 22:22 does the word רבים אָסַר appear in connection with David. How did he know (דַּעְשֶׁה) then that Doeg was in Nob (22:22)? While it is possible that 21:9[8] implicitly indicates that the encounter was mutual, it seems more reasonable to suppose that he was forewarned by the priest. Bodner notes that “the manner in which the priest initiates the dialogue between them implies that they not only have a relationship, but are allies as well.” 90 One may reason, therefore, that not only David “knew” that Doeg would definitely tell Saul, Ahimelech knew that just as well. From the perspective of the story’s plot, the parenthetical note about Doeg’s presence in the sanctuary (21:8[7]) not only gives the story a little twist by introducing an enemy and eyewitness at the crucial moment of David’s conversation with Ahimelech, but also, as Bodner noted, clarifies the

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89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 27.
nature of Ahimelech’s worry when he discovered David on the threshold. Wherever Doeg (“worry”) appears in the narrative, he spreads “worry” all around him. Thus, when David came to the priest, Mr. “Worry” was already there. Instead of sending David away, Ahimelech received him and supplied his need as he might have done on previous occasions. It seems both possible and likely, therefore, that Ahimelech was much better informed about the complications in the Saul/David relationship than Jonathan was (cf. 20:2).

The fact that David was on the run from King Saul was not a secret (1 Sam. 19:18). In his attempt to catch David, Saul “distinguished himself by uncovering himself before his servants” and before Samuel (1 Sam. 19:23-24; cf. 2 Sam. 6:20), which also caused a renewal of a proverb: “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (19:19-24).91 This proverb is a rather ironic portrayal of Saul as someone who “possessed” the insight of a prophetic Seer, but who had to rely on the insights of others (cf. 26:19b). As the story of 1 Sam. 22 relates, before condemning the priests he relied on the insight of a different “seer” – Doeg the Edomite who saw David coming to Nob.

The royal protocol demanded David’s presence at the king’s table during the holiday of the new moon. So, when Ahimelech saw David alone at the threshold on a day when Saul’s son in-law should have been sitting at the king’s table, he would have known for certain that there could have been no “secret mission of the King.” The only mission David had at the time was to keep as far away from Saul as possible.

One can deduce from the larger context that when Saul fell out of divine favor, it resulted in his alienation from the priesthood. Being the paranoid king he was, he had to question their loyalty. Ahimelech must have known that if David would encounter one of Saul’s loyal confidants like Doeg the Edomite, sparks would

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91 Perhaps this understanding caused some scholars to conclude that the 1 Sam. 21 story needs to be put in sequence after chapter 19. This was suggested by Wellhausen (Die Composition des Hexateuchs, 250). There was some difference in opinion as to exactly what point the story in question needs to be placed. Some thought 19:10b would be a more appropriate place (Cornill, Kittel, Nowack [cited by Stoebe, 1 Samuel, 391]), while others thought the context of 19:17 suits it better, namely, David’s flight from his house with the help of his wife Michal. Smith, for instance, believes that when David was already on the run he had quite a lot of time to acquire food and weapons – precisely the elements that he lacks in the story. His hasty escape from his house “seem to justify the connection immediately with 19:17” (Smith, 1 Samuel, 196-97). Herzberg gives much similar reasons for placing 1 Sam. 21:2[1] after 19:17 (Herzberg, I & II Samuel, 178). But see the response of Stoebe, (Stoebe, I Samuel, 391).
fly. At the same time he was willing to supply David everything necessary – the holy bread and the “sacred” sword.\textsuperscript{92} Thus, the priest was making a very bold step. One may be inclined to conclude, therefore, that Ahimelech’s fear when he saw David, his lack of fear when he gave David the sacred objects, his bold defense before the king later, as well as the “surprising” survival of Abiathar with the ephod, indicate that just as David had to adjust his plans after he learned about Doeg from Ahimelech, so the priest had to arrange the survival of both his posterity and the priestly line. For if Ahimelech suspected nothing, then the disappearance of Abiathar with the religious relic would be difficult if not impossible to explain.

Doeg probably had observed the interaction between the priest and David from a distance. The context suggests that the conversation between David and Ahimelech took place in secrecy, at the quarters of the priest. It was done behind closed doors and out of Doeg’s sight. The narrator’s audience knows what had transpired between David and Ahimelech inside. However, this most certainly was hidden from the sight of the eyewitness. He could only observe the difference when David entered and when he left the house. The unfolding of the 1 Sam. 22 story reveals that Doeg definitely noticed some items in David’s hands when the latter left the audience of the priest.

Why would David not kill Doeg on that day? One of the answers could be: David probably did not see Doeg on that day to begin with. Furthermore, what David said he knew (22:22), he (and the priest) had only suspected then (21:8[7]). Most likely David did not know where exactly Doeg was and it would have been foolish to look for him. His speedy flight from the sanctuary might have also been caused by the thought that Doeg would go straight to Saul and inform him about his discovery. This would have blown Jonathan’s cover, because it would have proven that David did not go to Bethlehem to have a family sacrifice. Instead, he was visiting Ahimelech. Since Nob was close to Gibeah, Saul’s soldiers would have appeared at Nob in no time. In that case the only right decision for David was to run for his life and to spare trouble for the priests, which he did. It is doubtful, however, that the thought ever crossed David’s mind that Saul would order the execution of

\textsuperscript{92} An object that was placed behind the sacred relic (ד'אב הָאָמֶלֶךְ) in the sanctuary would have been considered a holy relic. However, it was given away for practical use just as the holy bread was.
the priests. If David had only known that Saul would order the execution, he would
not have thought twice about eliminating Doeg right there and then, since that was
certainly David’s practice at later times (27:11).

McCarter, commenting on David’s confession (22:22), says, “David now
realizes the consequences of his selfishness and deceit and acknowledges a
permanent responsibility to Abiathar.” 93 Indeed, his permanent responsibility to
Abiathar he acknowledged, but he did only what he had to do under the
circumstances. In the light of the later developments, namely, Saul’s slaughter of the
priesthood, the prospect of killing Doeg on that day might have been a thing worth
doing, despite the fact that neither David nor Abiathar probably knew that it was
Doeg who killed the priests. Again, nothing David had said or done would have
changed the outcome, for Doeg could not have heard their conversation. What David
is confessing then is that he had given Saul reason to suspect conspiracy in Nob in
light of his absence from the king’s table and not visiting Bethlehem, which brought
about the execution of the priests and the destruction of the town – something that
David could have neither foreseen nor prevented.

2) The Five Loaves of Bread in Doeg’s Testimony 94

The subject of Ahimelech giving David five loaves of holy bread is often
discussed. The arguments range from those who concentrate on the sacred nature of
the bread to those who are more interested in the number of loaves David received
from the priest. Coming to Nob, David inquired about the food for himself and for
his men. Responding to his request, Ahimelech reminded David that he was in the
sanctuary of Yahweh, not in commons of the king, but wait, there is (םי)95 bread!
However, it is special bread (21:6[5]). The following parenthetical note (v. 7[6])
reminds readers about the ordinances concerning the consecrated bread. According
to the ceremonial law, the bread of the presence (לחם הענין) consisted of twelve
loaves of pure flour, which were put in the Holy Place before Yahweh (Ex. 25:30;
35:13; Lev. 24:5-9). In accordance with the same law, this bread, which was

94 For the discussion of the literary significance of the sword and the spear in 1 Samuel see
Appendix V.
95 Youngblood (I, 2 Samuel, 728) notes that the word is found in a rare emphatic position
here in the MT text, “but only bread of the presence there is” (לחם הענין הָלָךְ).
replaced each Sabbath, was to be eaten only by the priests of Yahweh. They carried their services before the Lord (לֶפַץ יְהוָה) and therefore only they could eat this, “the bread of the face/presence” (of God).

Auld observes that “by the normal rules the priest’s clarification that there was only holy bread there should have put an end to the matter. However, in awe of David, Ahimelech backtracks and cites another ruling within his priestly competence…” David claims that he is in the state of ceremonial cleanness in accordance with the rule (cf. Ex. 19:15b) as such he is able to take this holy bread. In fact, he says that by having this holy bread with him, his entire trip would be (וִדִּק) “set aside,” sanctified or blessed. Ahimelech gives him the bread.

Some scholars conclude that Ahimelech, “entrusted with the spiritual leadership of his people, failed both God and man.” He compromised and therefore rendered himself unworthy to carry on his priestly services, for, “if Ahimelech had truly been God’s spokesman he would have known David’s duplicity.”

In Ahimelech’s defense, however, others say,

The principle underlying both was, that when a ceremonial obligation comes into collision with a moral duty, the lesser obligation is to give place to the heavier. The keeping of the Sabbath free from all work, and the appropriation of the showbread to the use of the priests alone, were but ceremonial obligation; the preservation of life was a moral duty.

Scherman cites rabbinical scholars who suggest that there were two kinds of holy bread in the sanctuary: (show-bread) and (thanksgiving offering). According to Moshe Kimchi, since anyone who was not a priest by eating holy bread was liable to, death through the hand of Heaven, Ahimelech gave David a “thanksgiving offering” rather than the show bread. However, as ben-Kimchi later noted, the tenor of the passage insists that it was indeed the holy bread. There was a reason why the priest inquired about the ceremonial state of those who were about to eat holy bread.

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96 Hentschel opines that as opposed to the post-exilic rule (Lev. 25:5-9; 1 Chr. 9:32) laymen were allowed to eat holy bread, provided they were ceremonially clean (Hentschel, Saul, 146).
97 See de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 422.
98 Auld, “1 and 2 Samuel,” 224.
99 Keller, David, 117.
100 Blaikie, The First Book of Samuel, 334.
101 See Scherman, I - II Samuel, 139.
Stoebe, however, wonders if it can be taken as an indication that David was lying, because five loaves, “für einem Mann zuviel, für eine Mannschaft zuwenig wären.”\(^{102}\) The modesty of the amount of bread notwithstanding, looking from Ahimelech’s perspective it was a rather generous gift. One can only wonder what his excuse was when other priests showed up to break twelve loaves and found only seven: What happened to the other five loaves if they “für einem Mann zuviel wären”?

Nevertheless, as McCarter also noted, “the incident is cited in the New Testament as an instance of an *excusable violation* of cultic regulations (Mt. 12:3-4; Mk. 2:25-26; Lk. 6:3-4).”\(^{103}\) However, it is rather questionable that it was this “violation” that raised a red flag in Doeg’s (and Saul’s) mind since when he testifies before Saul he uses simple “provisions” (דריהם; 22:10) instead of more specific הלם. Perhaps there is also a hint about how hard the facts in Doeg’s deposition were.

### b) The Key Point in Doeg’s Testimony

Doeg’s testimony before King Saul the narrator describes as follows:

> רואתי את בניך של הנב国立 אלהי צ potrà: ושלום של בתו של אתי פיר העץ של ואחר כך פיר העץ של של פיר

I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the Lord for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine (vv. 9-10).

These are the only words of Doeg in the Scripture. It is important to note the facts Doeg mentions and also the order of their appearance in his statement. According to his deposition, the priestly *inquiry* was followed by giving away the *provisions* and the *sword*. Doeg’s accusation, however, revolves around the *inquiry*, not the objects obtained from the priest.

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\(^{102}\) Stoebe, *Das erste Buch Samuelis*, 395. Similarly, Philbeck comments: “These young men, however, did not actually exist; they were a part of David’s lie” (Philbeck, *1-2 Samuel*, 64).

\(^{103}\) McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 349. Italics are mine.
1 Sam. 21: 4[3] says that David asked for five loaves of bread. One may assume that David received only what he asked for (v. 7[6]). He also obtained the sword of Goliath (v. 10[9]). In Doeg's testimony, however, the "holy bread" (ךָרְצֹל נְדוֹם) was substituted by mere "provisions" (צים נדום). This may suggest that Doeg knew nothing of the holy bread, for, as was suggested previously, he could not have seen their distribution because it must have happened behind the closed doors. The sword of Goliath could have been identified easily by its size since Doeg could have known that the famous sword was kept in the sanctuary. These objects are mentioned by Doeg only to sustain his main point – the inquiry! Saul (כ Abyss) too seems to have been very interested in the inquiry (כ Abyss), because when questioning the priest he uses bread (ךָרְצֹל; 22:13), instead of either provisions (ץ נדום) or the holy bread (ךָרְצֹל נְדוֹם), and sword (ךָרְצֹל נְדוֹם) instead of the sword of Goliath (ךָרְצֹל נְדוֹם).

The narrator, however, is completely silent about Ahimelech making an inquiry for David. Why was the question of the inquiry so central in the mind of Doeg? Reis, after discussing the disagreements among the interpreters on this very issue, concludes that Ahimelech “could not have done so.” I concur. Why then was Saul focusing on the inquiry?

It seems that the only sensible answer to this question can be found if one looks at these stories in retrospect. David was probably too “successful” with his band in Judah. Though there was no hard evidence to prove that Ahimelech was an initiator of David’s activities in Judah, both Doeg and Saul probably agreed that David’s campaigns in the South had to be traced back to Ahimelech’s inquiry. They were not too far from the truth, however, for indeed 1 Sam. 22:5 says that David was directed to go to Judah by the divine will communicated to him through Gad the...
prophet. The helping hand of the priesthood (22:17b: ֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיַעֲרֵב), as Saul suspected, in that case was absent. However, with the help of his friend Doeg, Saul concluded that David’s successes in Judah had to be explained by his obtaining divine guidance of some sort. Since David was seen in Nob, the suspicion arose about the inquiry there. Thus, it would have appeared that the priests were involved and as such both the priest and David were blameworthy. Though Ahimelech denied the charge, his defense fell on deaf ears.

Was Doeg deliberately “fixing” the facts or was he simply misinterpreting them? If he had a chance to overhear the conversation, then he, being a “shrewd perjurer,” as Bodner calls him, was deliberately lying to Saul. If he only saw some of what took place between Ahimelech and David in Nob, then he misunderstood and misinterpreted their actions. The sword which David received from Ahimelech was perceived to be the divine answer which came as the result of the priestly inquiry: “Take the sword and fight your enemies!” Consequently, the priestly “inquiry” in Doeg’s statement came as the result of his deduction. Moreover, if he carried a grudge against the priests, it was a very convenient way to channel his anger. The way Doeg framed his entire testimony, he could have been certain that it would be impossible for anyone to disprove. Moreover, Doeg’s aggression against Nob rather suggests that somehow he was interested in Nob’s destruction. Consequently, by giving the false statement, he was misleading Saul into believing that the priests of Nob were plotting with David, and as such he was both a lying witness and vicious enemy of the religious order.

Hertzberg, however, questions Doeg being a liar. He also entertains the possibility that chapter 21 represents an independent source of the narrative, which “does not really have a conclusion.” The “missing” part of the 1 Sam. 21:2-10[1-9] story he finds in the report of Doeg “and he inquired of the Lord for him” (22:9).

There is nothing in the text, however, that would suggest that there is a gap to begin with. However, this illusionary gap is filled by envisioning the inquiry taking place at the very moment of Doeg’s introduction. In other words, Doeg walked into the crime scene. He witnessed Ahimelech inquiring of the Lord for David. Indeed, in chapter 21 Doeg’s menacing presence brings up an element of

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108 Bodner, David Observed, 33.
surprise to the scene. Hence, it would seem that the text gives room to suppose that
David must have asked for a weapon when he realized that the eyewitness could
deliver the news about the “conspiracy” to Saul. However, as was already
emphasized, there is no evidence that David even saw Doeg. He says later that
somehow he “knew” that Doeg was in Nob, but that does not necessarily mean that
their encounter was mutual. Further, inquiries would most likely take place in a
private place. Whatever Doeg saw, he probably could not have seen that.

Moreover, in chapter 22 Doeg is presented in a negative light. He accuses
the priest of some wrongdoing. Ahimelech, however, categorically denies the
charge. The challenge is thus between two men; Ahimelech’s word stands against
Doeg’s. It is important to note that Ahimelech was not the only one who was
accused. Eighty-five priests were condemned to death. Consequently, it is hardly
possible that he, who was “blameless” in his words, would have been “guilty” in his
works. If Doeg did not give a second thought about slaughtering the priests (and
their families), most of whom may have even known that David was in Nob on that
day, how much more slandering them before the king!

Friedmann, however, says that Saul was right to execute Ahimelech since
the priest “had sinned (albeit innocently).” He says that “it was permissible for a
king to behave in this way with a city whose leader had helped a rebel against the
kingdom.” Friedmann’s whole argument hangs on the fact that Saul is never
explicitly charged for this deed later in the Bible – which is true. Unfortunately he
offers no real answer to how to resolve this quandary: Friedmann says that Doeg is
the only one among Saul’s servants who “had no qualms,” but he gives no
explanation to why he thinks Doeg acted this way when others refuse.109 To say that
Doeg was not an Israelite is not the reason enough in light of Saul’s words: “Listen,
you Benjaminites. Do you really think that this Judean will give you who are from
the tribe of Benjamin . . .?” Why would the Edomite chief of shepherds step forward
after such a speech is hard to tell.

Roberts, examining the story against the background of Mari texts, also
concludes that Saul was justified in annihilating the entire “city of rebels.” He thinks
that Ahimelech does not deny the charge. So he assumes that he must have had

109 Friedmann, To Kill and Take Possession, 128-33.
accepted it. Roberts takes this as an indication that the priest “was familiar with the loyalty oath in use at Mari.”

Greenfield, likewise, interprets the story with the background of “Sefire Treaty” inscriptions and concludes that “we must compare לְגֵה תַּהֲרַת הָרָדָה to the Hebrew לְגֵה הָרָדָה which is used for the total annihilation of a city, as can be seen in Deut. 13:16; Josh. 11:11.” He goes on to say, “An excellent example of a rebellious city which was treated this way was the priestly city of Nob.”

However, there is no evidence that the Eliade priesthood was bound by the proposed form of a vassal treaty, nor by any other treaty, for that matter. At the early stages of the monarchy the priesthood seems to have maintained the primacy in Israel, as can be gathered from the interactions between Samuel and Saul. Moreover, as the narrator tells us, Saul had ordered the execution despite the absence of the evidence of priestly conspiracy against Saul.

More importantly, though, closer attention needs to be paid to Ahimelech’s unusual behavior before and after the introduction of Doeg in the narrative. When the priest came to greet David (21:2[1]), he was trembling with fear. What was he afraid of? If he was afraid of David, as some suggest, it is difficult to reconcile his earlier posture in Nob with his later words of defense in Gibeah. At the royal court Ahimelech commends David: David is faithful; he has the king’s daughter as his wife; he is captain of the royal bodyguard; he is highly respected in the king’s house. Why is the priest praising David instead of complaining to the king that he was deceived by the king’s treacherous son-in-law? It is possible to reason that the priest was afraid both of David and of Saul. However, the general context seems to rule that possibility out too.

Now, if the priest worried for David when he appeared on his threshold alone, being aware of the recent facts of Saul pursuit of David and that the king’s confidant Doeg was there, then his actions are understandable. In fact, one can see that during the trial in Gibeah the priest made an attempt to talk sense into Saul’s mind, but failed just like Jonathan earlier (20:32-33).

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3. Ahimelech’s Defense

Ahimelech’s words of defense before the king are sometimes discussed. Thus, either a) Ahimelech questions the validity of the charge that he just started making inquiries for David in general or b) he denies the charge that he was making (or began to make) inquiries on David’s behalf on that day. Edelman notes that “the lack of a morphologically defined conditional tense in Hebrew makes both translations possible.”

No matter which alternative one follows, one thing is clear, בָּאָד needs to be interpreted idiomatically, since it is obvious that David’s visit of Ahimelech and the summoning of the priest to Gibeah did not take place on the same day. Furthermore, Ahimelech denies the charge. He states emphatically that he has nothing to do with this the so-called organized “rebellion” against the king of which he stands accused. Thus, if Ahimelech is being accused of inquiring of God on David’s behalf in general (option “a”), then in his mind this inquiry should not be treated as a crime or any differently than any other inquiries that he had made on David’s behalf in the past. So, Saul’s allegations would appear to be ridiculous. If, however, Saul accuses Ahimelech of beginning to make the inquiry on David’s behalf on that day (option “b”), thus emphasizing conspiracy from the standpoint of Ahimelech’s religious duty and his support of the rebel, then Ahimelech seems to rule out that possibility too: “Absolutely not! Let not the king place anything on his servant, or on all my father’s house, for your servant knows nothing of this matter, small or great” (v. 15). David’s particular discovery, or rather, his successes in Judah, did not happen as the result of the priestly inquiry. The narrator informed his audience beforehand that David’s activity in Judah came as the result of his obedience to the divine command communicated through Gad the prophet (v. 5).

Nevertheless, it is this “inquiry” in Doeg’s statement that became the sole reason for the execution of the priests. Doeg said: “He inquired of the Lord for [David].” Saul said, “you [Ahimelech] have inquired of God for [David],” to which Ahimelech responded: כיָלְאָיָי, “Absolutely not!” or “What nonsense!” Ahimelech does not deny the fact that he gave David provisions and the sword. He denies the

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112 Edelman, King Saul, 178.
113 Ibid.
part about the inquiry; he denies any conspiracy! After such a categorical refusal of the priest, Saul states a different reason: “because they [priests] knew that he was fleeing and did not bring it to my hearing” (v. 17). This was the truth, but why he chose the priesthood to become the object of his wrath and not any of the Benjaminites is surprising. Perhaps Saul was irritated by the fact that David had the favor of the priesthood. Now he makes sure that David has no further guidance. By noting Saul’s ruling against the priests, the role of Doeg, who seems to have been the main ideological force of the entire procedure, also needs to be observed.

4. Doeg and Saul

As Saul’s high ranking official and as the chief of shepherds in the royal court, Doeg might have been the head of a particular district in Saul’s kingdom. The one who would hold this position was probably responsible not only for providing food for the king’s table, not only for wool to expand the royal revenue, but also for the regular supply of lambs for the sacrifices in the sanctuary of Yahweh (cf. Lev. 23:37). The kingship of Israel was inseparably connected with the priesthood just as sheep farming was an important part of ancient Israelite economy and culture.

Though it is impossible to be certain that at this early stage of Israel’s monarchy the system of caring for the king’s table was as complex as in the days of King Solomon, still there are reasons to believe that Saul made every attempt to make his kingdom compatible with that of other nations. After hundreds of years living in disunity, Saul had a difficult task of establishing a new and more sophisticated system of economics and government. King Saul, no doubt, was also trying to create a system of representatives in all of the tribes and geographic regions (cf. 2 Sam. 8:13, 14) to ensure that his rule is uniform in all corners of his kingdom. Along with the assigned territories, the king would also give his officials certain rights and privileges (22:6-8) in return for their dedicated service. The king

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114 In Israel sheep farming played a significant role in economic, social and religious life. For instance, King Saul was careful to bring a lot of sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord (1 Sam. 15:21). King Solomon offered 120,000 sheep at the dedication of the Temple (1 Ki. 8:63). Beside other animals that he required for his table, Solomon’s deputies had to provide 36,500 sheep a year (1 Ki 4:23; 2 Chr 7:5). On top of that there was a tribute that other nations had to pay. King Mesha, of Moab, was laid under a tribute to Ahab of 100,000 lambs a year, and the wool of 100,000 rams (2 Ki 3:4).
depended on the loyal performance of his officials just as they very much depended on the security of the royal establishment. The prosperity of the entire kingdom depended on the organizational stability and function on this governmental machine.

Now it is important to consider once more the background and the reasons for the meeting in Gibeah (22:6). Verse 5 relates that David’s band was advised to be more proactive in Judah. David and his men, whose numbers had increased to 400 men, went south and settled in the forest of Horeth (יִּרְמֵא הָדוֹר). The following section begins with the narrator’s note: "Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered" (v. 6a). Because this verse mentions not only David, but also his men, the entire story needs to be examined in light of the note of v. 5.

David’s activity in Judah must have worried Saul, not just the fact that someone had seen David in those areas. Thoughts of a civil war that would shatter his project of solidifying his monarchy and ensuring a successful rule for his son (20:31), no doubt, came to his mind. Saul describes David’s action as “rising up” against him and “lying in ambush;” he pictures the rebel as the one who was actively engaged in undermining the foundations of his kingdom. What is more, that was happening in Judah where David was especially popular.

It must be remembered that in the early stages of his career, Saul established himself as an able military leader and commander. Through military engagement with the Philistines he was able to clear the Aijalon Pass (1 Sam. 13:2-14:46), thus removing an obstacle between Israel and Judah which guaranteed Benjaminites access to Transjordan. Saul was also involved in specifically southern campaigns delivering “Israel from the hands of those who plundered them,” namely, the Amalekites (14:47-48). This deed no doubt brought him a great deal of popularity – (the establishment of the monument may have been followed by a

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115 LXX reads Πολεῖ Σάρικ, “in the city of Saric.” It represents not the不准 reading. Similarly, the name of the place is represented by סארך, rather than ס党工委.

116 Thomas renders היה ויהיו מתים "had been said farewell to" (see D. W. Thomas, “A Note on ניחש in 1 Samuel XXII. 6,” JTS 21 (1970): 401-2). However, this rendering in terms of the immediate context seems to make little sense.

celebration with local people). Later, however, his interests in protecting the territory of Judah from foreign intrusions diminished. In fact, after the story of 1 Sam. 15 nothing is said about Saul ever returning to the same regions militarily, save when he was chasing after David (1 Sam. 23, 24, 26), though it is evident from the text that the Amalekites continued to plunder the southern towns (30:1-3; 14). Did Saul assign someone else to guard the southern borders of his monarchy? It would have been a wise decision and in reality Saul may have done so. However, it was probably less than effective, as one can gather from later passages. Saul himself was more involved in guarding the northern territory of his kingdom. 1 Sam. 23:27 illustrates that though Saul considered David’s band to be a problem, he could not ignore his responsibility of defending his land in the North from the Philistine intrusion. At the same time, David was engaged in fights with the Philistines too (23:1ff). As was suggested in the previous chapter, it is not at all improbable that Saul’s inability to wage war within the entire territory of his kingdom left the South vulnerable. This problem was probably the main cause of the formation of the Davidic guerilla force. It had to deal with the problem of foreign intrusion in Judah (cf. 2 Sam. 23:13-16). Though a large number of armed rebels wandering around in Judah was most likely caused some controversies among local people (23:19-23), since in the time when the band was not fighting they needed to find means of sustenance and probably often relied on local community support (25:5-8), in general David’s protection of the inhabitants of Judah was thought to be a positive thing. David, therefore, continued to emerge as the guardian of the land, not Saul. Later this became the main reason why David was anointed as the king in Hebron.

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118 This could be gathered from the general tone of the passage (15:12b). “It was told to Samuel” (לֵאמֵר לְשֵׁם אֲבִיאֶל), most likely he was invited by Saul to come and join him in celebrating his victory in Amalek (cf. v. 13), rather than simple “Samuel heard” (לֵאמֵר אֲבִיאֶל). The prophet, however, proceeded to Gilgal to meet Saul there (15:12b-13).

119 The way the narrator highlights this point in the end is fascinating. 1 Sam. 11:1-11 records the conflict between the men of Jabesh-gilead and the Ammonites. It is when “the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily” (v. 6) the great deliverance has been accomplished. This theme of Saul’s former accomplishments echoes in 1 Sam. 31:11-13, when the people of Jabesh-gilead paid a tribute to Saul with his sons. Thus, what could have been the distinctive signature of his entire career, turned out to be a single autograph remembered only by few.

120 Clements also thinks that when David was made the king of Judah, his kingship “was primarily a military leadership given to him at a time of great crisis” (Clements, Abraham and David, 48).
The fact that this attitude among the locals was on the rise is evident in the account of one of Nabal’s servant(s): “These men were very good to us … we sustained no loss during the entire time we were together” (1 Sam. 25:15). 1 Sam. 27 gives us even more details about David’s actions in the south of Judah:

Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites; for they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur and as far as the land of Egypt. And David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels and the clothing (27:8-9).

This was David’s doing “all the time he lived in the country of the Philistines” (v. 11b). If his actions can be described in these terms while he was living in foreign lands, how much more was it true of him when he was in his homeland? Furthermore, he did not collect the spoils for himself and his people only, but he was winning friends by sending them gifts (30:26-31). Now it is a known fact that “a man’s gift makes room for him ...” (Pr. 18:14), and that “the generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered” (Pr. 11:25). The report about David’s life among his own people in the land of Judah is not unanticipated; the response of Abigail upon receiving the news from the servant is only natural. To put it plainly: the people of the land liked this “rebel” and what he was doing.

Of course, David’s increase in popularity alone would not cause Saul and his representative in the South worry. A history of debtors, discontented and distressed men uniting in small bands is as old as the history of centralized authority. Where there is a sovereign there is a rebel. Experience shows that the general public could be swayed easily either way and pay allegiance to anyone if it cost them nothing. However, wherever a cost is involved in the form of taxes or otherwise, people are quick to put on their practical pecuniary hats and defend their own rights with great vigor, giving all the reasons why they should not put another coin where they feel it does not belong. David was useful to the inhabitants of the land of Judah, Saul was not. People were willing to sustain David, rather than send their offerings
somewhere to the North. People were willing to pay allegiance to David, not to Saul – the sort of attitude that would cause a great deal of trouble to any political official anywhere.

It would seem that Saul’s concerns upon hearing about David’s “discovery” were valid only if he was absolutely sure that David’s activity in Judah had a direct effect on his sovereignty there. It is possible, of course, that Saul, being aware of the oracle about David’s kingship (cf. 2 Sam. 3:9-10), would be equally concerned as soon as he found out about David’s band in Judah. However, quite realistically, Saul might have known about the formation of the band in Adullam early, perhaps even from the same source he found out about the covenant between Jonathan and David. Therefore, it would seem that the report about David’s “discovery” in v. 6 was very different in nature – it had something to do with his “setting an ambush” in Judah.

From the context of 1 Sam. 22 it is possible to conclude that Saul was disturbed greatly by the news. One may reason that Saul’s worry would have been valid only if somehow the news came from a very reliable source (cf. 23:22) from one of his posts in Judah that somehow was affected by “David’s ambush.” The official complaint was probably seasoned with political flavors and brought to him by someone who shared the same interests with the monarch. Anyone who would lie in ambush against his officers on his territory would be conspiring against the king. Furthermore, if that representative of Saul was unable to do his job and to wage an effective war with Israel’s enemies in the South, he could have easily blamed David’s band for getting in the way. But who could that have been?

If the story is examined closely, the text itself seems to isolate one person among the rest. His name is Doeg the Edomite. The idea of “worry” embedded in Doeg’s name permeates in the entire account. Where Doeg comes – there comes worry. In 1 Sam. 21 he caused both Ahimelech and David to worry. In the following chapter he brings Saul the news about David’s “discovery” in Nob and in Judah. As such he appears to be both active and passive source of Saul’s worry. His unique position among the rest may indicate that he was a member of Saul’s elite group. As such, he might have been picked by Saul to represent the king and to

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121 On the Edomite relationship with the Amalekites see Appendix IV.
enforce his rule in a certain corner of his kingdom. As an Edomite and a member of Israel’s community he would most likely come from the South. So it is likely that he was designated as the “head” over “thousands of Judah.” This perspective is able to elucidate not only why Saul criticized Benjaminites (22:7-9), not only why Doeg accused the priesthood of Yahweh, but also why he was the only one who rose against the population of Nob.

Of course, since the text specifically does not say who brought the news to Saul and a simple phrase is employed (לְאֵלָה כְּלָל), it could have been anyone; the king became worried and called for a staff meeting. As to Doeg, he just happened to be there. However, when one attempts to examine Doeg’s role in the context of 1 Sam. 22, it becomes increasingly clear that Doeg most likely was the one who brought the report.

A special position of Doeg’s speech in the narrative needs to be noted. His report is more than just an “incidental” statement. It does not appear that he is in Gibeah by chance. His speech it is strategically positioned between Saul’s accusation of his servants and the king’s accusation of the priests that led to their execution; it functions as a literary bridge between the cause and effect; it is a hinge on which the entire story revolves. It looks both forward and backward: his testimony “unpacks” Saul’s charge of his servants (vv. 7-8) and it is aimed to damage the priesthood (vv. 10-16). Therefore, his few words could be viewed as a “sample” or as an outline of his extended report. This indicates that Doeg must have had a good dose of personal interest in the whole matter – he, as was previously noted, was the ideological force behind the entire court-procedure in Gibeah. If he was an important political figure in Saul’s kingdom in the southern regions, he would have been upset with David’s activities in Judah. If he saw David coming to Ahimelech, he might have guessed about the direct cause of the rebel’s success – Ahimelech. In fact, it is possible to deduce from his eagerness to carry out Saul’s command, as nothing short of his being exasperated with the priests in a no lesser measure than Saul himself - but why?

If one supposes that he was just a disinterested bystander who happened to remember what he saw in Nob some time ago – no sensible answer could be found

122 So Hertzberg, 1 & 2 Samuel, 187.
either to why he is so ferocious with the house of the priests or to David’s comment about Doeg’s report (22:22). However, if he was the one who brought Saul his complaint, the mystery of his character becomes more lucid. He is not a Benjaminite – it is clear; he is not among those whom Saul is rebuking – it is evident. Though Doeg is estranged from the rest by his origin, he finds himself standing closer to the king in his ideology, being Saul’s loyal supporter, his right hand in the land of the South.

Summary

The way one may read 1 Sam. 22 is as follows: Doeg the Edomite, one of Saul’s governors from the South, brought the news about the “successes” of David’s band in the land of Judah. He is there to discuss the breach in the national security and to put his finger on the “problem,” as it were. The guilty party is exposed and the entire priesthood of Nob is sentenced to death. When the time came to carry out the sentence everyone is shocked and steps back: Saul’s rebuke and the fact that one of his runaway slaves has been “discovered” in the land of Judah gives them no sufficient grounds to intrude into God’s territory and execute the Levitical priests and the anointed high priest. To them it is an outrageous sin – a taboo (cf. Deut. 33:8-11).

Commenting on Doeg’s destroying the entire population Bergen notes that this kind of mass execution, elsewhere termed herem, was authorized in the Torah only for use against non-Yahwistic peoples living in Canaan who would otherwise teach the Israelites to sin against the Lord (cf. Deut. 20:17-18). The perpetration of this act against a city of Aaronic priests – those who taught Israelites to avoid sinning against Yahweh – was an unspeakable crime.

Bergen goes on to say, “Saul’s stunning inversion of the revealed will of the Lord in this instance is consistent with the text’s portrayal of Saul as a king ‘such as all the nations have’ (8:5).” Here, though, is where the tension of the story escalates: Doeg had his hands bloodied with innocent blood, yet the story seems unfinished.

Scholars of old, who wrestled with this issue of bloodguilt in this chapter, were compelled to search out the narrative’s ending. Studying Ps. 52 in connection
with 1 Sam. 22 Childs was moved to conclude that the psalmist gives an answer to a question which the Samuel’s narrator leaves unanswered, namely, the fate that had befallen Doeg for his evil deeds.\textsuperscript{124} Lengthy discussions on the character of Doeg the Edomite in the rabbinical writings also illustrate the extent sages were willing to go to in their attempt to explain away the actions of Doeg in Nob as well as to theorize about his end.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{124} Childs, “Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis,” 145. Ketter thinks that it is Saul who is guilty as he also believes that Ps. 52 is about Saul’s guilt (Ketter, “Die Samuelbücher,” 143, 145).

\textsuperscript{125} The summary of their discussions could be found in the Appendix II.
CHAPTER FOUR

SAUL, DOEG AND NABAL vs. JONATHAN AND THE “SON OF JESSE”

Introductory Remarks

In HB the phrase יַעֲקֹב יְשֵׁשָׂה, “son of Jesse,” occurs 17 times: eight times in 1 Samuel (see below); two times in 2 Samuel: in the speech of Sheba (2 Sam. 20:1), and in the heading of David’s farewell song (2 Sam. 23:1); in 1 Ki. 12:16//2 Chr. 10:16 it refers to the Davidic House when Israel separated from Judah during the Rehoboam’s reign; in 1 Chr. 10:14 the phrase identifies David as the recipient of the kingdom which was taken away from Saul; it occurs in the speech of Amasai, who joined David in the stronghold (1 Chr. 12:18); in a reference to the Davidic rule over Israel (1 Chr. 29:26); and in Solomon’s psalm (Ps. 72:20). It is also used once in connection with Eliab, Jesse’s son and David’s eldest brother (2 Chr. 11:18).

In the book(s) of Samuel this phrase appears in a positive sense only once in the last song of David, the “son of Jesse” (2 Sam. 23:1). Other times the phrase occurs eight times negatively. Six times it is used by King Saul (20:27, 30, 31; 22:7, 8, 13), once by Doeg (22:9) and once by Nabal (25:10). Only these three employ this phrase pejoratively in 1 Samuel, and four (with Sheba the son of Bichri) in the entire corpus of the books of Samuel. It does not seem to be coincidental that on the lips of the two Benjamites King Saul and Sheba the phrase has strong political overtones. In fact, Sheba’s speech in 2 Sam. 20:1 stands in parallels with Saul’s address to his fellow Benjamites in 1 Sam. 22:7. This phrase is also employed much in the same way by two southerners – Doeg and Nabal. It is quite remarkable that one of the men from each group is being characterized as a “worthless men” – Nabal (נָבָל הָבָל) and Sheba (שֶׁבָּה בָּלָה). The speeches of the latter two expose the similarity of pattern and parallelism: the phrase the “son of Jesse” follows David’s name.¹ This is not how it appears in the speeches of Saul and Doeg.

¹ Nabal: “Who is David?
    And who is the son of Jesse” (1 Sam. 25:10)
Sheba: “We have no portion in David,
    Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse” (2 Sam. 20:1).
One may suspect that some significance is concealed in the phrase and how it is being used. Clines, however, thinks that Saul uses it only to show that David is not yet a “name” in his own right. As to Nabal, he believes that he employs it to “strengthen his expression of contempt” and that in his speech the phrase appears simply as a “poetic device.” Pyper only slightly differs from the conclusion of Clines. He says:

‘Son of Jesse’, then, appears in the text always in contexts where David’s authority and his significance are being put in doubt. His biological origins are only alluded to where his claim to social status and particularly his claim to the throne is being challenged. When David is referred to as Jesse’s son his lack of any hereditary claim to the throne is brought to the foreground.

One may agree with Pyper that David’s “biological origins are alluded to where his claim to the throne is being challenged.” What is interesting, however, is that it is restricted to the persons who use the phrase pejoratively in the books of Samuel. Why this is the case will be developed at some length in the next chapter. It should only be noted presently that when it comes to the hereditary claims to the throne, it is Saul, not David, who has to work extra hard. In his attempt to install his successor, Jonathan, Saul tries as hard as he can, not realizing that he fights against impossible odds. He does it anyway. To his own mischief, however, Saul resolves to fight back Yahweh’s plan for Israel to the very end.

As a contrast, the hereditary claim to the throne or rather the lack thereof, does not seem to be an obstacle for David. His anointing came as the result of divine order (16:1); his designation as the king of Israel came from above (cf. Is. 66:1), for Israel’s kingdom belongs to Yahweh (8:7). It can be argued, therefore, that the repetition of David’s biological origins neatly packed in the phrase the “son of Jesse” is not brought to the front in order to question his authority and significance, but rather it is used in the effort to highlight David’s advantageous position in Yahweh’s program for His people. This phrase is the key to the understanding of the narrator’s purpose in demonstrating the importance of David as Yahweh’s king for the nation of Israel. In order to advance the argument in this respect, the usage of the phrase the “son of Jesse” in the book of 1 Samuel will be explored by observing its formation

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2 Clines, “Personal Names,” 284-86. Clines does not discuss Doeg’s use of this phrase.
3 Pyper, David as Reader, 175. Italics are mine.
and evolution and by contemplating the intended message embedded in the phrase when it is used by Saul, Doeg and Nabal.

**Saul vs. David the “Son of Jesse”**

The phrase “סָם יְשֵׁי” most often appears in the section where the narrator’s focus is drawn on Saul’s relationship with Jonathan (1 Sam. 20, 22). In his article “Saul, Jonathan and the ‘Son of Jesse,’” Lawton explores various elements in the triangular relationship between Saul, Jonathan and David. He argues that the vacuum in the Saul/Jonathan relationship is momentarily filled when David appears on the scene and takes Jonathan’s place. Lawton says that this closeness between Saul and David in their father/son relationship persists to the very end, despite Saul’s jealousy of David. Having noted this displacement, Lawton goes on to suggest that “the narrator’s development of the Saul-Jonathan-David triangle, serves his larger purpose of showing that David is the legitimate successor to Saul.”

One may agree with Lawton that in some sense David functions as a royal heir-substitute. Indeed, David could be perceived as being the son King Saul should have had. On closer inspection, however, the development of numerous themes alongside each other shows that the issues the narrator raises are much more complex than Lawton seems to suggest. David is not a mere substitute for Jonathan. Before the two had a chance to meet, the divine program of selecting the new king was already underway (16:1). Consequently, neither the lack of his authority and significance nor the absence of his hereditary right to the throne really matters. David does not need to draw near Saul in order to become his “son” to be the legitimate successor. He does not have to fight for the kingship nor does he have to stay away from the battle field in order to “protect” his position as the new king-elect (17:32ff). All he needs to do is to claim it, for it was taken away from Saul (15:23-28) and given to him by Yahweh (16:13-14). If there is anyone who has to fight for the dynasty it is Saul. It should be noted, therefore, that when the spotlight is brought on the fractured relationship between Saul and Jonathan, David is by no means the direct cause of the problem. Nor was it his cunning plan to supplant Israel’s throne. His temporary appearance in Saul’s court, however, helps to expose

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the inward battle and frustration of the rejected Saul, to highlight the tension in
king’s relationship with Jonathan and to underscore the superior quality of Jonathan
who alone recognizes God’s new anointed king and pledges his allegiance to him.
King Saul, however, being fully aware of the fact that he had lost divine favor,\(^5\)
attempts to draw David into the whirlpool of his cunning devices by insisting on
adopting David into his own family through marriage with Michal. Saul’s project,
however, is doomed to failure. Lawton is right to note that one of the “sons” must
succeed the throne. It must be borne in mind, however, that Saul did not inherit the
kingship of Israel, nor was he promised a dynasty. Quite to the contrary, he was
informed by Samuel that the kingdom of Israel was taken away from him and given
(היהוה רthroat) to his better neighbor (15:28). Moreover, as will be demonstrated later, the
narrator goes out of his way to show that David by no means was the son of Saul; he
was the son of Jesse! It can be argued, therefore, that the narrator’s purpose
throughout the book is to keep reminding his audience that there are irreconcilable
differences between these two families. The union between the two Houses (Saul’s
and David’s) is as superficial as it is momentary. War between them is inevitable
and it does not cease even when both Saul and Jonathan leave the stage (cf. 2 Sam.
3:1). Within this conflict the narrator draws a continuous line tracing the covenantal
relationship between the house of David and the line of Jonathan, thus showing early
on, that the future of the house of Saul depends wholly on David’s grace toward the
9:1-9).

Saul’s attempt to demonstrate his personal supremacy over Yahweh’s
choice, when he decides to make David his son in-law, increases the contrast
between himself and his son. In their attitudes towards the “son of Jesse,” Saul and
Jonathan are poles apart. At the same time, the frequent mention of David’s
ancestral affiliation packed in the phrase the “son of Jesse” is not designed to
compare Jesse’s son and the next runner up to the throne of Israel – Jonathan the son
of Saul, but rather serves as a point of entry into the ongoing discussion about
David’s becoming the King of Israel.

\(^5\) Bodner, however, thinks otherwise (David Observed, 14).
The text highlights the striking differences between David – the person of God’s choosing – and Saul – the people’s choicest candidate. This can be observed on at least two levels: the narrator highlights the internal qualities of Saul’s and David’s – their “heart,” and underscores the importance of the origin of these characters in the divine program. How this is being achieved in the text is demonstrated in the following discussions.

A. A Matter of the Heart of God’s Elect

In 1 Sam. 9:2, 15-16 and 10:23-24 Saul’s outward appearance, his exceptional stature is at the heart of his selection as king. When Samuel was sent to the house of Jesse, however, he was rebuked for thinking that the criterion for selecting the new king is physical appearance (16:7). Reading this, one may get the impression that Yahweh chose Saul using different methods than he did choosing David.

This seeming tension is easily resolved when the differences in the strategy of choosing Saul and David are noted. The narrator makes it clear that the request for a king came because of the diminishing role of Samuel as a military leader (cf. 1 Sam. 7) due to his older age and because of the inability of his sons to fill their father’s shoes (8:5). Thus, Saul came to the scene during the time of Israel’s leadership crisis.

However, when one pays more careful attention to the various elements of Saul’s election, one learns that it was not a simple process. 1 Sam. 8—12 analyzes the matter from various angles. On the surface it appears as though God complied with the demand of the people when He commanded Samuel to listen to ( testimun) the voice of the people three times (8:7, 9, 22) and to appoint them (דומע) a king (מלך). However, upon closer inspection of the texts that specifically deal with this issue, it becomes evident that not only was Saul not God’s choice for a king, strictly speaking he was not even anointed by Samuel to be Israel’s king (מלך). While 9:15 says it was Yahweh who selected Saul, from the following verse one can

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6 From 1 Sam. 15:11 it can be argued that despite the fact that the word מָלָךְ is not mentioned in 9:15, it is substituted by a synonym – מָלֹם. On the other hand, the message of 15:11 could be understood as reflecting human perspective, namely, Yahweh has rejected Saul whom people wrongly assumed God had chosen to be מָלָךְ. This perspective may explain Samuel’s confusion and why he later thought Eliaab was the chosen one (see below).
learn that Yahweh’s decision to raise Saul as a ruler (תniest) in Israel came as the result of the people crying out (פשיעות) to Him. The natural tendency for readers and listeners is to connect Israel’s crying out in 1 Sam. 9:16 with people’s demand in 8:5. At closer inspection, however, it does not appear to be the case.

The term נזע, “outcry” or “cry of distress,” occurs ten times in the books of Genesis through Chronicles and only in Genesis, Exodus and the book of 1 Samuel. It is used to describe the outcry against the Sodomites (Gen. 18:21; 19:13). It illustrates the exceedingly great cry of Esau, begging his father to bless him (Gen. 27:34). It describes the people’s crying out to Yahweh for deliverance in Egypt (Ex. 3:7, 9); the cry of the Egyptians after the 10th plague (Ex. 11:6; 12:30). The term is used as a warning against Israel oppressing their widows and orphans who may “cry out” to Yahweh and He would answer with vengeance (Ex. 22:22). It describes Israel’s cry after they have been defeated by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:14). Lastly, it appears in the passage under consideration (9:16). It can be observed, therefore, that the selection and anointing of Saul was the direct result of the people’s crying out for deliverance from the Philistine oppression and not their demand for a king (8:5).

Further, 1 Sam. 12:12 connects the demand for a king with the attack of Nahash the Amonite (11:1). However, when God had sent Saul to Samuel, he said this: “he shall deliver my people (א建设用地) from the hand of the Philistines” (9:16). Despite the fact that the people have rejected (athon; 8:7) Yahweh to be their king, He did not reject them. God’s response in allowing a king to be appointed in Israel was designed to teach the people a lesson – He gives them the candidate according to their standard (8:5, 20). Saul’s outward appearance – his size, meets people’s criterion for the warrior-king. Saul’s high stature made him look like the kind of king “all the nations” (כל הדתים) would have. Eslinger rightly observes: “God chooses the giant Saul and Samuel points out his immensity with a view to winning acceptance for their puppet king from the people.” He goes on to say:

Convinced that they are getting their secularized warrior-king, a man of obvious qualification to lead them in victorious battle (cf. 8:20), the Israelite
people are duped and they accept a king whose mandate is firmly under the control of the old theocratic regime.\(^7\)

1 Sam. 12:13 emphasizes that Saul was the choice of the people at the expense of their rejection of Yahweh (8:7; 10:19; 12:12). Indeed, this premature move (cf. Deut 17:14) on the part of the nation was a great evil (רַעְשֵׁנָה כְּרַשָּׁה; 1 Sam. 12:17, 19, 20) which was added to the list of the people’s transgression/sin (חַטָּאוֹת; v. 19). The true nature of Yahweh’s “compliance” with the people’s demand is best expressed in Hosea 13:11: “I gave you the king in my wrath ….” Therefore, because Saul was the choice of the people, his physical appearance was his \textit{forte} and it continued to be to the very end.

When Samuel was sent to anoint David to be the next king, there was no particular leadership crisis from human perspective. People got what they wanted: King Saul was head and shoulder higher than an average Israelite and as far as people were concerned, Saul was a valiant warrior (cf. 2 Sam. 1:22-23) and quite successful in his military achievements as king. The campaign in Amalek was nothing but successful as far as the human achievements went. Saul was good enough and who could wish for a better one. However, this was not how things were seen from above. Yahweh’s perspective differs drastically from that of mortals. The selection of David as Saul’s successor or rather substitute came as the result of the crisis seen from divine perspective. Not only was Saul not God’s choice as the king of Israel; he was disobedient and so, he had to be replaced. Consequently, no one except Yahweh thought that the time had come for a new candidate to enter the stage (16:1).

The contrast between the election of Saul and David is seen when one reads about God’s command to Samuel to go to the house of Jesse in order to anoint the one whom Yahweh had spotted (יָתְרָה; lit. “seen”) – a king (מֶלֶךְ) for Himself (16:1). For the first time Samuel was sent (אֳלֶלוֹת) to designate Yahweh’s king. Yahweh advances His plans for the nation by giving Israel not what they \textit{asked for}, but what they \textit{needed}. The people’s voice was not the factor and the allocation of

Yahweh’s king was not accomplished throwing a lot, as was the case with Saul (10:20). David’s anointing as the king was not a national event, in the sense that the candidate had to be approved by the public. From the beginning and to the end the initiative belonged to God. A paradox in relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel should be noted: God cares for Israel enough to grant them the deliverer – Saul at the time of great national crisis, but initiates a secret installment of His king, not willing to perform a public replacement of Saul. Curiously, the same sentiments are found later in David who refuses to cut off Saul (cf. 24:6-7[5-6]).

The sharp contrast between Saul and David is underscored in the narrator’s description of the inward qualities of both men. This is another key difference between the two candidates. The condition of ‘heart’ of each person is central to their performance as Israel’s leader. The text emphasizes the change of Saul’s “heart” as he is being sent away on the divine mission. Eslinger notes: “God does not find Saul’s “heart,” however submissive, totally acceptable. So he intervenes directly and gives Saul another heart (רָשׁ בּ, 10:9) to ensure that Saul has the divinely approved psychological profile.”8 However, it is a temporary gift. Indeed, it appears to be of secondary importance as it comes after the description of Saul’s physique. In describing David, however, the narrator accentuates his intrinsic qualities before some features of his physical appearance are mentioned. Such characterization seems to insist on David’s advantageous position before Saul. He was not “made” to be the deliverer; he was born to be Israel’s leader and king. Saul was granted a new heart for as long as his mission would last. When this gift is withdrawn from him, he returned to be the same grim person he was before his anointing to be Israel’s deliverer from the Philistines. As for David, the set of desirable internal qualities are in place even before he was anointed as king (16:7).

The advantage of David’s inward qualities before that of Saul is illustrated in the stories that surround David’s anointing. In 1 Sam.16 the narrator calls attention to the fact that physical appearance is not at the top of the divine list of prerequisites for a successful leader. To show that, the writer brings forward three characters Samuel, Eliab and Saul in order to contrast human insights with divine perspective.

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8 Ibid., 345.
In 1 Sam. 16 the position of the prophet Samuel needs first to be explained. Originally he was against the idea of the monarchy (8:6). However, he seemed to have become impressed with Saul (10:24). Perhaps he thought that Saul would suit the needs of the nation in crisis and so, when Saul was later rejected he was the one who got disappointed; he grieved (יהלע) over him (15:35; 16:1). Nevertheless, as Kessler noted, in 1 Sam. 16 the prophet Samuel is rebuked for this twice: for his slowness (v. 1) and for rushing things (v. 7). Thus Yahweh has shown to Samuel that his insight as the “seer” (ריהוא) was way off target. It was no different than the insight (ריהוא) of common men when Samuel’s eyes suddenly fell on Eliab and he thought that one “giant” (Saul) will be replaced with another (Eliab) (v. 6). Now the prophet’s slowness in v. 1 becomes clear: Samuel did not seem to know exactly why the new candidate was needed when Saul was still alive (cf. v. 2). The reader may remember that in presenting Saul before the people the prophet accentuated his superior height among the rest of the people (10:23) and then says, “Do you see (ריהוא) him whom Yahweh has chosen? Surely there is none like him among all the people” (v. 24). The phrase “do you see” placed in opposition to “Yahweh has chosen” indicates Samuel’s unwarranted assumptions about why Saul was sent to the prophet to begin with (9:15). Yahweh’s statement in 16:7 that “God sees (ריהוא) not as man, for man looks (ריהוא) at the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks (ריהוא) at the heart” outlines the difference between divine and human perspectives and is designed to straighten Samuel’s view. Eslinger rightly notes: “God is higher than man and so God judges his prospective officers by internal psychological standards. His omniscience allows him access to the heart of man, a province of human existence off-limits to members of that same species.” Just as any other common person, Samuel required divine guidance before the new candidate could be spotted.

10 It occurs seven times in ch. 16 (vv. 1, 6, 7 (x3), 17, 18).
11 The MT text seems to be defective here: בלא את לא ארא אלהים ונראה, “because not as sees the man.” The space consideration in 4QSam b suggests a longer reading. DJD reconstructs it as follows: יציל לא ארא אלהים ונראה, “for not as man sees does God see,” and explain that the phrase נרא אלהים, “appears to have fallen out of MT by haplography owing to homoiarkton” (4QSamuel, 227-28). LXX also preserves longer reading: o ουκ ειμι εαυτη αναγινωσκω εαυτη ο το εαυτη, “for not as man sees does God see.”
The striking similarity in the description of the physical stature of Saul and Eliab suggests that in 1 Sam. 16 Eliab functions as an “alter-Saul.” They share a few similarities in their characterization. About Abinadab, Shammah and others it is only noted that they did not become the object of divine choice (לארשיב), where as in the case of Eliab a very strong “I have rejected him” (נפקנוה) is used (16:7). The latter phrase recalls the rejection of King Saul in 15:23: “Because you have rejected (סמא) the word of Yahweh, He has also rejected you (אִימָצָא) from being king.” In turn, the characterization of Eliab serves as a subtle commentary on King Saul. Both were rejected because their “heart” was not right in them. The superiority of their stature cheated them of their boasting too, for neither Saul nor Eliab dared to step forward to face Goliath. One may say, therefore, that just as the rest of Israel, their heart was failing them for fear of the giant (17:32). They were failing to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines (cf. 9:16).

Eliab’s speech in 17:28 recapitulates divine opinion about him and, by extension, the opinion about Saul. Eliab thinks that he can read his brother’s mind. While some commentators take note of Eliab’s words arguing that “David will continue throughout his career to act out of a heart that seems very black indeed,” it is often overlooked that the one who shares this opinion of David was earlier dismissed by Yahweh Himself. Eliab’s insight into David’s heart, therefore, cannot be trusted. As the story of 1 Sam. 17 illustrates, what moved David was not wickedness of heart and pride but his special insight into the real nature of the conflict between the armies of Israel and the Philistines. Goliath defied not the armies of Saul, though it might have appeared to be so (17:8); he defied the armies of the living God (vv. 26, 45). Eliab’s description of David’s “evil heart” (רָע לְבָן), therefore, is an ironic portrayal of his own moral condition, for which he was rejected earlier. Commenting on Eliab’s rejection, Rose notes:

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14 Bodner, however, argues that “Eliab is used by the Deuteronomist to signal a warning sign about David’s problematic heart” (Bodner, David Observed, 12). He opines that “the text is entirely silent on the matter of Eliab’s feelings” (14), but does not seem to take into account his feelings in 17:28. This verse is lacking in LXX but Josephus does make a reference to Eliab’s feelings toward David (Ant. VI, 178).
15 Eslinger, “A Change of Heart,” 357. See also Gunn, The Fate of King Saul, 77-78; Marcus, “David the Deceiver and David the Dupe,” 163-83.
Eliab in fact shows himself to be unfit for the throne by virtue of his heated and prejudicial response to, and the hasty and unfounded conclusions he formulated about, David’s presence at the camp (17:28). This man, the one of Samuel’s choosing, would hardly have served Israel well.  

King Saul also judges David by his outward appearance. He thinks that the youth is unfit to face Goliath, but, as Gooding notes, “Saul is wrong. What is needed is not military experience …. What is needed is faith in, and experience of, God’s direct help against impossible odds in situations of extreme danger.”

By letting Saul express his opinion in this matter, the narrator illustrates that Saul has no insight into spiritual matters. He offers David his own armor (17:38), clearly overlooking the fact that while it would fool some because on the battlefield the youth would have appeared, as Gooding noted, “as an alter Saul,” it would also have looked ridiculous on the youth who could not have boasted about the immensity of his stature.

Nevertheless, the narrator does not overlook David’s physical qualities altogether. One might think that appearance did matter to God after all. The note on David’s looks in 16:12, however, may be interpreted as another illustration of the fact that human beings have no direct insight into another person’s “heart” but can only observe personal attributes and from them infer a person’s intrinsic qualities (cf. 17:28). Accordingly, when Samuel was directed toward David, he looked and saw a boy of handsome appearance, thus once again proving that man sees not as God sees (16:7).

The subsequent characterization of David by one of Saul’s servants follows the same pattern. He starts with the external qualities of David stating that the son of Jesse was a skillful musician (נָבִיא הר маָךְ), a mighty man of valor (רֶוֶם מַלְאֹה), a warrior (חַיִּים יַד), one prudent in speech (רֶוֶם דִּבָּר), a handsome man (חַיִּים רֶוֶם) and then adds: “Yahweh is with him” (יְהוָֽה יְשָׁרֵד; 16:18). While the reader may

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18 Ibid.
19 Rose draws his attention to the fact that this remark יְשָׁרֵד also describes Joseph’s success, who by this quality “epitomized the Egyptian scribal ideal” (Rose, “The 'Principles' of Divine Election,” 64).
associate the latter phrase directly with v. 13b, which describes the spirit of Yahweh coming mightily upon David, Rose is probably right in suggesting that in the present context the phrase “seems to express the idea ‘successful issue.’” In other words, Saul’s servant makes an effort to reassure the king that the accompanying presence of Yahweh would guarantee success of the talent such as David at the royal court.

However, for the reader who is familiar with the story of David’s election, this note can sound as an implicit suggestion that the accompanying presence of Yahweh, who providentially orchestrated these events, would certainly guarantee David’s ascent to the throne occupied by Saul. This is especially clear in light of the unenviable condition Saul found himself in – rejected by Yahweh, tormented by the evil spirit and in need of the “musical therapy.” This seems to have been the main reason why right after David’s anointing he is placed into the royal court. He is there not only to offer help for the king; he is there to take over. Rose offers an important insight into the matter:

When certain men in Israel, including the king, choose David for reasons of their own, without being aware of it they have chosen the man elected by YHWH. This act furnishes the initial opportunity through which YHWH exhibits the character of his intentions with respect to the anointing of a king for his people. What David is able to do for Saul, having been selected for a specific task, is in a sense an objective demonstration of what YHWH in principle intends for Israel through his establishment of the Davidic monarchy.

Thus, by making his audience aware of these evaluations, the narrator shows a striking contrast between the insight of men and the perspective of God, between the role of physical appearance and inward reality, between the strategy of choosing Saul and David.

The same principle is further illustrated in 1 Sam. 17: the shaft of Goliath’s spear was enormous – like a weaver’s beam, but David came to meet him with a stick. The giant’s size was immense, but David was a youth. Goliath had a

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20 Ibid., 65. Rose also notes that this phrase attests to “David’s steady progress in his attainment to the throne (17:37; 18:12, 14, 28; 20:13; 2 Sam. 5:10).  
21 Ibid., 51.  
22 MT: “six cubits and a span.” LXX=4QSam₄: “four cubits and a span” paints the portrait of Goliath as a slightly-above-average man – Saul’s equal. A man of such size would carry the armor.
low view of Israel’s God, but David exemplified the superior view of Yahweh. David’s heart for God, therefore, set him apart in his immediate family, in Saul’s court and among the rest of Israel (cf. 17:11, 24 with 17:32, 40b, 48b). Is it any wonder that the person of David caused the leadership to ask the question: “Whose son is this youth, Abner?” And Abner said: “By your life, O king, I do not know” (17:55).

B. The Origin of God’s Elect

When Yahweh desired to designate the new king of Israel in the place of Saul, He sent Samuel to the house of Jesse the Bethlehemite (1 Sam. 16:1). In Saul’s court David’s name appears closely connected to the name of his father Jesse (16:18). Jesse’s name is mentioned four times in the space of five verses in this chapter (vv. 18-22). When Jesse releases David to Saul, he pays his allegiance to king Saul by sending him a gift, which was delivered “by the hand of David, his son” (דִּבְרֵי דָּוִד; v. 20). At first site it may appear that Jesse’s name figures in the narrative only to show that the youth’s is dependent on the decisions of his father. The importance of the latter point notwithstanding, it seems that Jesse is brought to the forefront for a more significant reason, namely, to establish David’s ancestral affiliation.

The narrator continues focusing on David’s lineage in the following chapter. Right after Goliath’s challenge and before David makes his appearance on the scene, the audience receives the most detailed information about David to this point: David is the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse (17:12). This information is mirrored in David’s answer to Saul’s question about his ancestry (vv. 55-56).23 By taking into account the sequential progression of the story, the four-fold mention of Jesse’s name at the court of Saul in the previous chapter (16:18-22) should not have occasioned this question. Why was it raised then?

Lawton says that the question flags “the beginning of Saul’s anxiety about David, to hint at a foreboding that this young man might supplant him and his

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23 LXX⁹ lacks these verses.
family.” He believes that the narrator wanted to show that “Saul is jealous of Jesse, wishing that David were his own son.”

Edelman suggests that “the question echoes the one asked about Saul in 10:12 by his fellow townspeople after he prophesied among the prophetic band.” She says that seeing divine power at work in David’s life, Saul might have begun to suspect that “David has a new adoptive divine father, Yahweh, as Saul already believes—Yahweh himself will be with you (v. 37, cf. Ps. 2:7).”

Others noted that by raising the question about David’s paternity, Saul was seeking additional information about his family, for if he would emerge as a winner in the single combat with Goliath, Saul would have to keep his word about giving his daughter in marriage (17:25). So, the king simply wanted to learn more about his would-be in-law.

There seems to be yet another reason why this question about David’s ancestry was raised at the end of the “David and Goliath story.” Saul’s question of Abner about David’s parents is significant (17:55). Abner said that he did not have an answer for the king. His ignorance in this episode is noteworthy when it is examined against the background of his actions later. Abner was present at Saul’s

26 Edelman, King Saul, 134-35.
27 Ralbag (cited by Scherman, I-II Samuel, 117); Gooding, “Textual Problems,” 79-80; Baldwin, 1 Samuel, 129. This verse is lacking in LXX and Josephus.

Several rabbinic scholars offer the following explanations: When David refused to wear Saul’s armor, the king was sure that he would not be able to fight Goliath and the one who was going forth toward the Philistine, whom he could not recognize from such a great distance, must have been someone else. Therefore he asked Abner who it was (Mahari Kara). Seeing that David was approaching Goliath fearlessly, Saul assumed that he must come from a family tradition of brave warriors, and he asked if the elderly Jesse had been such a warrior when he was young. Abner also did not know (Radak). Knowing that Jewish monarchy would eventually emerge from Judah’s son Peretz, Saul wanted to know if David was a descendant of Peretz, in which case he would be a threat to Saul, or if he descended from Zerach, in which case he would merely be a distinguished leader, but no more. This was the question to which Abner had no answer (Yevamos 77b). Cited by Scherman, I-II Samuel, 117-18.

28 Willis, however, thinks that “this argument fails to take seriously the situation described in 16:18-22, where Saul’s servant recommends David to Saul as Jesse’s son, where Saul asks Jesse’s permission to let David come to his court for an interview, where Jesse sends Saul a present by David and where Saul secures Jesse’s permission to take David a permanent member of his court” (John T. Willis, “The Function of Comprehensive Anticipatory Redactional Joints in I Samuel 16—18,” ZAW 85 [1973]: 298). Willis proposes that a redactor wished to convey to his audience the idea of divine election of David, “prefaced this material [chs.17—18] by his own introduction in which he summarized the major relevant themes of the traditions which he was preserving, viz., 16:14-23” (302). Still, Willis fails to explain why Saul poses this question at the end of the duel (17:55-58) and not when he was offering David his armor (17:32f).
court when David’s absence was discussed (20:25; see below). Later, he was instrumental in causing the unification of the North with the South at Hebron. The confederacy of the tribes was sealed by the covenant (2 Sam. 3:12-13). In the latter story Abner makes an important statement:

May God do so to Abner and even more so, if as Yahweh has sworn to David, I do not do this for him, to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to establish David’s throne over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba (2 Sam. 3:9-10).

Now, when Saul asked Abner about David’s ancestry in 1 Sam. 17:55, Abner brought David before Saul instead of collecting the information about the youth himself and delivering it to Saul. By so doing he gave Saul a chance to recognize the hero himself. Saul asks, אָן הַיָּה הַגַּזְפָּר, “Whose son are you, young man?” David answered: מִי יִבְשָׂר כַּט בֶּהְלֵם, “I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite” (17:58).

David’s answer, however, did not cause Saul to see the larger implications of who the youth was. The chapter ends with Saul’s silence which is broken by Jonathan’s response in the following. Jonathan quickly recognizes who David was.29 King Saul, however, accepts David only as his servant (18:5) but almost immediately responds with a sharp remark against those who recognize his rival. When the women of Israel came out to greet the royal party with joy and musical instruments, they placed David above King Saul in their song. Saul’s immediate reaction: “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. What more can he have but the kingdom?” (v. 8), makes a strong suggestion that he had grasped all of the implications of who David was when he answered Saul’s question. Stubbornly, Saul refused to acknowledge David.

In the narrative David’s answer to Saul’s question (17:58) serves at least three purposes, which when taken together create a stronger argument for his superiority before Saul, which the king could not have missed:

(1) It puts an emphasis on David’s origin – he is a son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem; he is from the tribe of Judah.

(2) It draws attention to David’s lineage – he is a son of Jesse – thereby emphasizing the significance of Jesse in David’s ancestral affiliation. From that point on, this information about David’s family and his ancestry, neatly packed in a firmly solidified formula, the “son of Jesse,” continues to appear in the subsequent stories without any loss of significance or further qualification: David is a Bethlehemite of Judah and is tightly connected to his family living in Judah.

(3) It creates inclusio of the “David and Goliath” story by highlighting the heroic act of the son of Jesse and makes it comparable with the heroic act of Saul’s son Jonathan in 1 Sam. 14:1-46.

The latter point requires a further explanation in light of frequent debates about the purpose of the 17:12 note in the narrative, because it seems redundant and/or out of place. However, the arrangement of the material in the “David and Goliath” story is strikingly similar to the arrangement of the story of Jonathan’s attack on the Philistines in 1 Sam. 14. Just as the case is with the “David and Goliath” story, which begins with re-citing of David’s lineage (17:12), the narrator underscores the fact that Jonathan was the son of Saul (יוסף בְּנוֹ; v. 1), and that despite the fact that this information about Jonathan was already given a few verses earlier (13:16, 22). At the end of that story Jonathan’s parentage is emphasized by the three-fold utterance of Saul: “Jonathan my son” (יוסף בְּנוֹ; vv. 39, 40, 42). So, Jonathan’s name at the beginning of the story and the emphasis on his ancestral affiliation at the end, brackets the narrative of 14:1-46 thus putting an emphasis on the heroic act of the son of Saul.

From the perspective of the arrangement of the material in 1 Sam. 17, Saul’s inquiry about David’s parents in 17:55-58 brings the “David and Goliath” story in conformity with the pattern established in Jonathan’s story earlier. For one thing, it emphasizes the fact that the victory in the valley of Elah was accomplished not by Saul’s son, as before, but by the son of another, whose name was Jesse. This signals the shift in Yahweh’s program of redeeming Israel; the House of Saul has no longer a part in it.
Further, the close similarity of Jonathan’s and David’s heroic acts provides a context for understanding the closeness between them. It can be noted here that some of the details of the story in 1 Sam. 14 foreshadow Saul’s attitude towards David as well. If Jonathan’s victory over the Philistines almost resulted in Saul’s intentions to put his own son to death (14:44), how much more David’s heroic act in the valley of Elah would result in Saul’s persecution of the “son of Jesse” (19:5ff).

The close relationship between David and Jonathan will be discussed at length in the next section; here it should only be noted that when the talks about the father/son relationship reappear in 1 Sam. 20, the question of David’s origin is brought to the forefront again. In his conversation with Jonathan, David refers to Saul as המלך, “the king” and אביך, “your father” (20:3, 6, 8) echoing similar phraseology from 14:27-29 (cf. אביך, by Jonathan, 20:9, 12-13), while stating that Bethlehem is his hometown, because that is where his entire family (בֵּית הַמַּשֶּׂה) lives (v. 6). These literary elements seem to serve several purposes:

1. Through this note the town of royal residence – Gibeah is being contrasted with the hometown of the “son of Jesse” – Bethlehem.
2. The semantic construction “son of” (vv. 27, 30, 31) compares and contrasts Jonathan with David. While Jonathan’s origin on the lips of the frustrated father is of questionable repute (Jonathan is the son of a twisted, rebellious girl (Jonathan is the son of a twisted, rebellious girl (לָשָׂדִית, מֵתוֹדִית, v. 30),\(^\text{30}\)) and as such, harmful to the portraits of both the father and the son, the fatherhood of the “son of Jesse” the Bethlehemite, though used pejoratively by Saul, sustains no damage.
3. The mention of Bethlehem in this instance is a link with the following story (see below). Both Jonathan and David agreed to inform the king that if he so desired, he could seek the son of Jesse in Bethlehem. Once, however, the “son of Jesse” could not be found either in his hometown (22:1-2) or in Nob (22:9), it was only fitting

\(^\text{30}\) LXX: νείκος κοραίς αὐθημολούτων, “thou son of traitorous damsels” (Brenton).
for Saul to search out the “son of Jesse” among all the thousands of Judah (23:23).

(4) Jonathan’s mention of David’s family who live in Bethlehem meets a particular response of the king. Saul’s words illustrate that his rage is not directed toward one person, but toward the entire house of Jesse the Bethlehemite. The narrator’s note about David’s family joining him (22:1) proves that the household of Jesse was very much attuned to the misfortunes of the “son of Jesse” at the hands of King Saul.

More importantly, though, David’s origin is being contrasted with the origin of Saul. Surprised at Samuel’s words about him becoming the king-elect of Israel, Saul says, “Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel . . .” (9:21)? Two things immediately stand out in this statement. First, the question “Am I not a Benjamite?” sounds almost like the phrase “Am I not the Philistine?” (17:8). As was previously noted, Saul’s extraordinary size among his fellow countrymen would most naturally put him in the same category with the Philistine giant. It does not seem to be coincidental, therefore, that Saul’s characterization in some respects is similar to Goliath’s. Secondly, the phrase “from the smallest of the tribes of Israel,” echoes the earlier story of Judges 20—21. During the civil war at the city of Gibeah, the tribe of Benjamin was reduced to a small remnant of 600 men (20:47). Saul was a descendant of one of those survivors. By planting this detail in the lips of the king-elect, the narrator causes his audience to review the former history of tribal conflict in Israel and seriously consider the role of this Benjamite in the providential work of Yahweh in Israel’s history. The history of the civil war in Israel which resulted in the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin, is bracketed by the phrase: “In those days there was no king in Israel . . .” (19:1; 21:25). This phrase links the end of the book of Judges with the story of Israel’s asking for a king in 1 Sam. 8:5: “Appoint us a king to judge us like all the nations.” It does not seem to be coincidental, therefore, that the first leader was selected from the tribe of Benjamin. Saul’s origin inevitably
links him with the history of trouble among the tribes. Saul was a gift to the people of their own asking in more ways than one.

Now, when one pays attention to the origin of Saul, and to the parallels between the stories about the king in 1 Samuel with the stories in the book of Judges and when one compares all these elements with the origin of David, one begins to see the advantages the “son of Jesse” had before Saul. At the beginning of the book of Judges, Judah’s preeminence is emphasized when the answer is given to the question of who was to be the leader in the conquest of the land: “And Yahweh said, ‘Judah shall go up. Look, I have given the land into his hand’ (Judg. 1:2)! The superiority of the tribe of Judah among the tribes of Israel is thus being underscored. Consequently, David’s origin neatly packed in the phrase the “son of Jesse” makes its own, albeit silent, argument for the preeminence of his election and the superiority of his position, backed up by the voice of the history of Judah’s supremacy among his brothers. This truth appears to be central in the writings of the Chronicler who states: “for Judah prevailed over his brothers, and the leader is from him …” (1 Chr. 5:2; cf. Gen. 49:10 with Ez. 21:27; Zech. 10:3-5). In the book of 1 Samuel the same supremacy of the Davidic House is seen through Jonathan’s unique friendship with David.

Jonathan and David

Before the first meeting between David and Jonathan took place, the narrator has already been preparing the stage by presenting Jonathan in a more favorable light than his father. Jobling argued that as early as 1 Sam. 14 the narrator paints the portrait of Saul as a rejected king, while presenting Jonathan “as a charismatic hero approved and empowered by Yahweh.” He notes that the striking difference in Jonathan’s and Saul’s perspective is seen in their words: while the former gives credit to Yahweh for giving Israel the victory over their enemies (v. 12), Saul focuses on avenging his personal enemies (v. 24). Jobling goes on to say that the point of such a comparison and contrast is to show that Saul “as the rejected one, has been replaced by Jonathan as the one through whom Yahweh acts on Israel’s behalf;” so much so that the reader is left with a question as to whether or not
Jonathan is the man after Yahweh’s heart. Jobling, however, also notes that despite Jonathan’s exaltation in 1 Sam. 14, the attentive reader would still note that the implications of 1 Sam. 13:13-14 rule out the possibility of Saul establishing a dynasty. Jobling continues: “What, then, can the exaltation of Jonathan mean? This question receives no answer in 14:1-46. The answer is undoubtedly to be sought in the mediatory role which Jonathan is later to play in the transition from Saul’s kingship to David’s.”

After the story of 1 Sam. 14:1-46 Jonathan is strangely absent and inactive until he suddenly reemerges in 18:1. It is as though he is waiting for the appropriate moment to show up. It is as though he looks for someone until he sees him marching triumphantly from the valley of Elah. Only then Jonathan reappears on the scene. Edelman notes that in retrospect, Jonathan “seems to have understood the import of the duel with Goliath completely and acted with quick shrewdness. He seems to have recognized that David had passed his test as 헴 by killing Goliath ….”

Against this background it is worth noting the pattern of Saul’s inactivity following his rejection, which is compensated by the heroic acts of Jonathan and David. After Saul’s failure in Gilgal and his rejection (13:13-14), Jonathan delivers Israel (14:45); after Saul’s rejection following his failed Amalekite campaign (15:20-29), his inactivity is offset by David’s deliverance of Israel (17:47). It is also worth mentioning here that both Jonathan and David have attributed their victory to Yahweh (14:6, 8-14; 17:45-46). This becomes significant because both entered into a covenant of Yahweh (20:8). Their individual unity of focus is validated by the narrator’s bringing both men together in the narrative. It also explains the nature of their friendship. A few additional elements need to be noted:

Despite the fact that David was introduced to Saul’s court as a sort of “musical therapist” as early as 1 Sam. 16, Jonathan seems to take special notice of him only later (18:1-4). Thus, as soon as David finished his conversation with Saul

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32 Ibid.: 376.
33 Ibid.
(17:55—18:1), the focus is brought on Jonathan’s actions. The narrator mentions four things:

1. Jonathan knit (נַעֲזֶבָתָה) to David (18:1).
2. Jonathan loved David (vv. 1, 3).
3. Jonathan made a covenant with David (v. 3).

The attentive reader should consider three important factors in trying to comprehend the overall significance of the Jonathan/David friendship: A) Jonathan’s seemingly emotional response and his “love” of David, B) the structure and design of 1 Sam. 18:1-4 as the means that convey the narrator’s message, and C) the nature of the covenant.

A. The “Love” Factor in the Jonathan/David Relationship

When the story is first read, the tendency is to think that the phrase, רָאָה הַמֶּה יְהוּדָה יִתְנַפָּשׁ, “and Jonathan loved him as his soul/life” (18:1), speaks either of his affection toward David strictly on physical level or because of David’s extraordinary heroism.34 The first possibility, however, can be safely ruled out.35 As was just noted, David did not become the object of Jonathan’s interests when he first appeared in Saul’s court. The narrator is very careful not to say a word about them then. This gap in the story does not appear to be incidental either. Consequently, the emotional factor on the level of what one might call “chemistry” in its extreme form, is not an issue. Nor does it seem likely that Jonathan became David’s admirer for his putting the Philistines to shame on the battlefield. Although this is how CEV understood verse 3, “Jonathan liked David so much that they

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34 See Omanson and Ellington The First and Second Books of Samuel, 387.
promised to always be loyal friends,”36 the narrator clearly lays a double emphasis on Jonathan’s “love” for other reasons, as will be demonstrated below.

Thompson argued that the verb love (בָּחַה) in the Jonathan/David narratives in isolation may be interpreted on a purely personal level. By examining contexts in which the word occurs, he also suggests that it may have political overtones.37 He cites Moran’s earlier work who demonstrated that the word בָּחַה, “love,” in the political sense appears in a wide range of Near Eastern Texts.38 One may conclude that when the same word is employed by the narrator to describe Israel’s attitude toward David in general (18:16) and that of Saul’s servants (18:22), the word “love” conveys the idea of corporal acceptance of David as an official political figure, the spokesman for the masses. Thompson also suggests that this word “love” carries political overtones even when it is used of Saul’s love for David in 16:21.

However, there are reasons to call the latter suggestion into question. The tenor of the story in 1 Sam. 16 indicates that David’s activity in Saul’s court was limited to his activity only as Saul’s personal servant and not yet as a political officer. Saul’s “love” of David in his court was probably designed to accentuate the fact that David was a very likable person, just as the servant told Saul. Nevertheless, Thompson goes on to suggest that despite some ambiguity of the meaning in the latter passage, the appearance of this term elsewhere in the narrative in the political sense may indicate that “the narrator is preparing us for the later political use of the term.”39

Ackroyd agrees with Thompson’s observations but also offers a “footnote” by saying that though the usage of the term “love” in a political sense is attested from an early date, the “emotional sense” should be read into it as well, for it is “the subtlety of an author or compiler who, in drawing together older traditions, binds them skillfully into a larger unity by the use of link words and overtones of

36 So also NET Bible.
39 Thompson, “Love in 1 Samuel,” 335.
meaning.” 40  In reading both political and non-political meanings in the word “love” as it appears to describe Jonathan’s attitude toward David, Ackroyd draws his attention to the significance of the word ณฏ. He notes that “the biblical usage of this root in Qal is divided between the literal sense of ‘bind,’ ‘tie’ and a political sense of ‘conspire.’ The Piel has the former sense; the Hithpael the latter.” In Niphal it occurs only in 1 Sam. 18:1 and Neh. 3:38, where it refers to the joining of sections of a wall. Ackroyd goes on to say,

On the basis of the usage in the other forms, we cannot a priori decide whether the primary sense in 1 Sam. 18:1 is ‘bind’ or ‘conspire’, but it would seem proper to suggest that the use here of another term which has both a non-political and a political meaning is a further indication of the way in which an overtone is being imparted to what might at first sight appear to be a straightforward piece of narrative. The same root is used in 1 Sam. 22:8 and again in 22:13, another example of a word used and then echoed at a later stage. 41

This is an important observation, which shall be recalled later.

B. The Design of 1 Sam. 18:1-4

In trying to discern the nature of Jonathan’s friendship with David as conveyed in the narrative, the narrator’s purpose in arranging the events and details need to be contemplated. The chiastic arrangement of Jonathan’s actions in 18:1-4 underscores the importance of the covenant and adds a new dimension to his “love” of David. It was not devoid of “emotional sense” of which tears testified later (20:41; cf. 2 Sam. 1:17-27), but its greater significance within the scope of the message the narrator is trying to convey to his audience should be considered once the following structure of the passage is noted:

A  The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David (v. 1b).
   B  Jonathan loved him as himself (v. 1c).
      X  Then Jonathan made a covenant with David (v. 3a).
      B’ Because he loved him as himself (v. 3b).
   A’ And Jonathan divested himself of the robe… and gave it to David…(v. 4).

41 Ibid., 213-14.
It does not seem to be a superfluous detail when the narrator gives the reason for Jonathan’s covenant with David: "because he loved him [David] as his soul" (18:3). For one thing, it demonstrates that Jonathan was motivated by love rather than fear. Furthermore, the same phrase occurs later when the question of the covenant surfaces again: “because he [Jonathan] loved him, because he loved him as he loved his own soul” (20:17). It is noteworthy that every time Jonathan’s love toward David is stated, the covenant is also mentioned. What is the significance of this covenant and how does it function in the story?

When one reads 17:55—18:4 it may appear as though the covenant makes an odd fit in 18:3. Indeed, from the standpoint of the sequential progression of the story, the covenant making as soon as David “finished talking to Saul” (v. 1) in view of everyone in the valley of Elah would seem to be unreasonable and unlikely. Why then does the narrator mention it there? A similar question can be asked about the covenant in 1 Sam. 20. How does it function there especially since David’s statement in 20:8 (ךָּדָֽ֑בָּרָֽתָּ הַיּוֹ֣ד הַמַּעֲשָׂ֑מָה יִ֓שָּׁרְאֶל) implies that the covenant has already been made?

In order to find sensible answers to these and similar questions, several themes that are skillfully intertwined in the narrative need to be noted. In what follows, the function of the covenant between Jonathan and David described in 18:3 will be analyzed. In this, the goal will be to demonstrate that when the covenant reemerges in the subsequent passages it functions not so much as an illustration of the transfer of power from the “house of Saul” to the “house of David” which was mediated by Jonathan, but rather it is a literary prism which highlights the prominence of the one whom God Himself had chosen.

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42 As a contrast, Edelman, taking an occasion from Jonathan’s asking for a kindness toward his house (20:14-17), thinks that Jonathan is afraid that David might “attempt to take the throne by force” (Edelman, King Saul, 158).

43 Baldwin, however, suggests that the covenant was made “on the spur of the moment, in the glow of David’s victory” (Baldwin, 1 Samuel, 129).

44 Jobling argues that the kingship passes from Saul to David by mediation of Jonathan (The Sense of Biblical Narrative, 20, 30). However, the text makes it equally clear that by no means does the power to rule reside in the house of Saul. Moreover, as I have argued above, Saul was not God’s choice to be Israel’s king. In that sense Jonathan’s role as a mediator is unnecessary.
C. The Nature of the Covenant

The scope of the covenant is far reaching: it has broad national and political ramifications. This can be noted when the narrative is examined in retrospect. The narrator’s arrangement of the story is not devoid of theological considerations. Jonathan makes the covenant with David by invoking Yahweh to be the witness (20:16; cf v. 8) thereby taking into account Yahweh’s plan for the nation of Israel in general (cf. 14:12) and Israel’s kingship in particular (cf. 13:13-14). Jonathan’s covenant with the house of David (תֵּלֵד הָדוֹד), indicates that it has a far reaching significance which will outlast the covenanters themselves (20:16). The mention of Yahweh’s name five times in the space of five verses (vv. 12-16) underscores the magnitude of their covenant. Yahweh’s name appears not only in some formulaic sense; He is asked twice to be actively involved in cutting off every one of David’s enemies (этому דוד; vv. 15-16). Yahweh is called upon to surround the Davidic house by a wall of protection. Having bound himself with the Davidic house Jonathan envisions the security of his own posterity as well.

It is important to realize that by taking the initiative to enter into a covenant relationship with David, in many respects Jonathan functions as his father’s foil. His response of recognition of Yahweh’s chosen candidate to the throne of Israel in 1 Sam. 18:3 counterbalances Saul’s lack of desire to do the same either in 1 Sam. 16 or in 17:58. This can be noted if closer attention is paid to the function of certain details in 16:12-23 as well as to the sequence of their appearance:

When David was anointed to be Israel’s leader, the spirit of Yahweh came upon him mightily (v. 13). At the same time the spirit of Yahweh was withdrawn from Saul and he was given the evil spirit instead (v. 14). Providence then moved David into Saul’s court. A question arises: If Saul was rejected and given a different spirit, why would Yahweh arrange for David’s moving into a “foreign” environment? Several reasons can be mentioned:

1) It illustrates how David gained access to the royal court.
   a) It was orchestrated by the work of Providence and not by David’s own opportunistic insistence.
b) It was done at the request of King Saul and as the result his servants’ recommendations.

2) It illustrates why David gained access to the royal court:

a) While the royal establishment is devoid of God’s spirit, Yahweh’s spirit pays Saul a visit in the person of David the musician who is also able to provide divine council in Saul’s court (17:32-37; cf. contrast in 28:5-6).

b) In the physical realm, it shows David in control of Saul – the evil spirit would “depart” (גָּדַע, וַיִּבְלֶב) when David played the instrument (v. 23). In the spiritual realm, it illustrates that David is able to keep the evil spirit in check, thus, once again, preparing the stage for the confrontation between David (forces of good) and Goliath (forces of evil).

c) By moving David into Saul’s court, King Saul, who himself used to possess the spirit of Yahweh, could recognize David as God’s anointed and accept him. However, he refuses to do so even after the battle, though that might have been an anticipated move (this can be gathered from the women’s song which accentuated David’s superiority over Saul [18:7]; the same song is repeated in the Philistine courts later where the stress is laid on the rhetorical question: “Is this not David the king of the land?” [21:12(11)]).

Thus, when David was introduced to the royal court, Saul was given a chance to officially recognize David and gradually vacate his office. When the women of Israel sang their song (18:7), when David gained popularity with people (18:15-16), when Jonathan recited David’s achievements (19:5), when he later praised him in the royal court (20:32), as also did Ahimelech (22:14) and when the king himself encountered David both times (24:21[20]; 26:21-25) – Saul was given a chance to resign. He did not do so. After acknowledging David as the successor of the throne, he goes to his own house (24:23b[22b]; 26:25b). The fact that Ish-bosheth the son of Saul went on occupying the throne after Saul’s death (2 Sam. 2:8-
9) in order to prolong the war between the House of Saul and the House of David (3:1), proves that the old establishment had no intention of giving up the office. Nevertheless, there are clear indications that the old administration understood the significance of David’s rise, as indicated in Abner’s speech later (2 Sam. 3:9-10).

Now when the narrator mentions the covenant between Jonathan and David the first time (18:3), he underscores striking differences between Saul and his son in their individual responses to Jesse’s son. Jonathan’s “love” of David stands in sharp contrast to Saul’s envy, suspicion and hatred of the “son of Jesse.” After the question about David’s origin was raised (17:55, 58a) and the answer was given (v. 58b), as soon as David finished speaking to Saul (18:1a), Jonathan makes his move. His response comes after the words that concluded David’s session with Saul: “I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite” (17:58b). The arrangement of the following material by the author of the story makes a strong suggestion to the reader that Jonathan responds having heard this statement of David. Jonathan’s response also underscores the fact that his decision was not gradual, nor was it an outworking of his own cunning plan to neutralize the rising “threat.” If by his heroic actions in 1 Sam. 14 he demonstrated that he was a man after Yahweh’s own heart, here Jonathan begins to see Yahweh’s secret plan revealed to Samuel earlier: “I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I saw among his sons a king for myself” (16:1). Jonathan’s response was as genuine as it was passionate, unlike the deception and gradual admittance of defeat by his father Saul. The narrator illustrates that Jonathan’s “love” of David, the “Beloved,” was as authentic and as strong as his love of self. If David was the chosen one of Yahweh, his personal success as well as the endurance of his dynasty was guaranteed by Yahweh. For Jonathan to love David, therefore, was similar to loving his own life—safely secured by the bounds of the covenant. Consequently, there seems to be a subtle connection between Jonathan’s “knitting” (ךַּשֵּׁךְ) to David, which culminated in the covenant making, and Saul’s making allegations of the “conspiracy” (ךַּשֵּׁךְ) because of the covenant (22:8). There the king began to understand that his son’s friendship with the “son of Jesse” went much deeper than he suspected and that some

45 On the meaning of David’s name see Mauchline, 1 and 2 Samuel, 129-130; Gordon, 1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary, 151-52.
sort of “conspiracy” took place early on when Jonathan gave his royal items to David.

When the discussion about the covenant surfaces the second time (22:16), it shows that its scope exceeds Jonathan’s personal short-term interests. If the first mention of the covenant (18:3) appears in the context of the national recognition of David – his achievements made him immediately identifiable as having marks of royalty, noted by Jonathan (v. 3) and by Saul (v. 7) – the second mention of the covenant in ch. 20 focuses on the role of Jonathan who would not break up with David even when the latter breaks free from Saul and from the old establishment. Consequently, the attack on David’s life (םש) is inseparably connected with an attack on Jonathan’s as well (20:3). Saul’s attempt to strike Jonathan down with his spear (20:33) proves the validity of David’s concern in v. 3, as the entire chapter illustrates that just as David’s life depended on Jonathan’s performance before his father Saul, so Jonathan’s life depended on David’s before Yahweh both literally (in Nob [see below]) and figuratively (at Yahweh’s heavenly court sealed by the words of the covenant).

Furthermore, David was introduced into Saul’s court by the recommendation of a young man who informed Saul that he had seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite (16:18). When David decides to leave Saul’s court and goes back to Bethlehem, Saul stops calling him by his first name and refers to him using the phrase by which he was introduced into his court: יִבְשֵׁי, the “son of Jesse.” When David was welcomed by Ahimelech at his place, Doeg, who happened to be there on that day, reported to Saul: וַיַּלְאָה אֲלֵםֶלִישׁ בַּא בַּנֵּה, “I saw the son of Jesse, coming to Nob” (22:9). Thus, David’s introduction in the court of Saul as well as his appearance in the court of Yahweh in Nob, which was noted by Doeg – both were done by Saul’s servants using the phrase, which underscores the preeminence of David as the king of Israel chosen by Yahweh, and that despite the fact that his God-given right as the king of Israel was not yet fully exercised (it was limited to his function as the warrior and defender of God’s people).

In bringing the attention to the covenant mentioned in ch. 20, it should also be noted that it appears along with the theme of “partaking food from the king’s
table,” thus once again highlighting a certain aspect of the covenant. Speaking to Jonathan, David says that he “ought to sit down (שָׁכַב) with the king to eat” (20:5). In verses 24 and 25 Saul’s own position is emphasized by the double repetition of his sitting down (ישָׁת) as well as the double mention of his seat (כְָּסִים). His royal place is also qualified by “as usual” (כְָּסִים) and “by the wall” (קָרָא). In this, Abner’s place also needs to be noted. He is next to the king just as he was in 17:55-58. He sat down (יֹשֵׁב) by Saul’s side. David’s place, however, was left vacant (יִשָּׁב). His empty seat in Saul’s court illustrates his break with the current administration. David intentionally avoids the king’s table, although he is expected to show up.

The contrast between the two groups is further sharpened by Jonathan’s unusual rising up (יָדָע) from the table (v. 25b). This note distinguishes his position in the royal court and places him in the same camp with David. His actions at the king’s table are repeated emphatically when on the following day he “arose (יָדָע) from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat (לְאָכָל) food/bread (יַפְּאָר) on the second day” (v. 34). These decisive actions of Jonathan mark his final ideological break with the old establishment with his father as the king. In fact, in the world of the narrative, he never speaks with his father again. At the summit meeting in Gibeah Saul expresses his irritation on account of Jonathan causing the king’s servant to rise up in rebellion (יָדָע; 22:8). Hence, one can see that Jonathan’s rising up (יָדָע) from Saul’s table literally, was interpreted by Saul as being inseparably connected with Jonathan’s causing David to rise up (יָדָע) in rebellion figuratively. However, the narrator arranged the events this way to draw his audience’s attention to the fact that Saul’s suspicion of conspiracy is nothing but Jonathan’s (and later Ahimelech’s) active acknowledgement of Yahweh’s candidate. Saul’s suspicion of conspiracy rather underscores the depth of his own unrealized conspiracy to destroy David and his associates.

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46 LXX reads: καὶ προῆλθεν τῷ Ἰωνάχας, “and he [Saul] went before Jonathan.” Some versions translate it as “he [Saul] sat down . . . opposite Jonathan” (NIV) and so NET: “the king sat down . . . with Jonathan opposite him,” relying on McCarter’s emendation: נִשְׁתָּת, “and he was in front” (McCarter, I Samuel, 338). Although some think that נִשְׁתָּת in the present context “gives no sense” (Mauchline, 1 and 2 Samuel, 147), it seems to sharpen the contrast between Jonathan and the royal court and as such speaks of a design. Gordon suggests that נִשְׁתָּת here could be taken to mean “stood in attendance” (Gordon, 1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary, 167).
David’s and Jonathan’s break with the king and his staff as well as their unwillingness to take part in the activity to “sit” and to “eat” at the table with the king is noteworthy. With their conscious decision to stay aloof from Saul’s court, a new chapter opens, in which their bold step from the “old” establishment into the “new” environment is highlighted. Fokkelman notes:

Two camps are presented to us: the establishment is firmly seated and is pinned down by the narrator in exact positions (by the wall/next to the other), while youth remains in movement. David is not there at all and it is striking that v. 25b finds it sufficient to disclose a minimum about Jonathan. The extreme brevity of this line suggests that Jonathan has not come willingly at all and that the object of his coming is not to share bread with his father.47

The far reaching implication of the covenant mentioned in 20:16 can further be seen from the perspective of the story in 2 Sam. 9. Mephibosheth (Meribaal), Jonathan’s son, was summoned to eat at King David’s table. This was done in order to show kindness to the house of Saul and for Jonathan’s sake (vv. 1, 7; cf. 2 Sam. 21:7) and on account of their covenant.48 Fokkelman observes: “Because his father Jonathan ‘ate no bread’ at the royal table and in this became equal to David, Meribaal may henceforth ‘always eat bread’ at the court and to that extent be equal to king David.”49 The word of Jonathan: “You shall be the king over Israel and I will be next to you” (23:17) came true in the life of his son. Thus, partaking food distributed in the king’s palace denoted the ideological union with the monarch and his policies, while staying away from the table of the king was a sign of mutiny (1 Sam. 22:8; cf. 2 Sam. 16:1-4, 24-30).

It should also be noted that while the “old” is to be associated with Saul’s table and, therefore, his kingship, the “new” is to be associated with the table of Yahweh. Being away from Gibeah, Saul’s residence, David found an alternative source of sustenance in the presence of Yahweh at Nob. This signifies that David had access to a higher source of sustenance, which, in some way, can also be regarded as an enduring one. This thought will be developed further later.

47 Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 326.
48 The phrases the “house of Saul,” the “son of Saul” and the “land of Saul” predominate in the narrative of 2 Sam. 9:1-13.
49 Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 325.
The mention of the covenant between Jonathan and David for the third time (23:17) reiterates and summarizes the already highlighted themes of the previous passages (18:3; 20:16; 22:7). Thus, the future of Jonathan’s house is safeguarded by the assurance of David succeeding as the king of Israel in accordance with Yahweh’s will. Consequently, even Saul’s plea about the future of his house in 24:21-22[20-21] could be seen as an outworking of his knowledge of the nature of his son’s covenant with the “son of Jesse” (יהוָה שֵׁאלוּ אֶת דוֹבֶר, 23:17b).

Thus, in 18:1-4 the narrator makes an implicit suggestion that Jonathan was keenly aware of who David was. The text does not seem to allow a possibility that Jonathan possesses superior knowledge than his father does. If anything, Saul would have been the one who was more attuned to the appearance of his replacement (cf. 13:14). However, the text highlights two different responses of the father and the son based on the same information about David both possess. Jonathan realized that “kingship was not meant as a gift to the individual, to feed his arrogance and vanity, but as a gift to the nation, to whom the king’s duty was to act as shepherd.”

It should be added that not only the kinship in general, but the king himself was the gift of Yahweh to the nation (cf. Ps. 78:71). While Jonathan’s name may suggest that he was the one – יְהוָה, “Yahweh’s gift” – the text of 1 Sam 16:1 highlights the fact that it was the “son of Jesse” who was anointed to be Yahweh’s king. Consequently, by his act of gift-giving Jonathan lives up to the meaning of his name when he does homage to the one who is a real gift of Yahweh to the nation (cf. Ps. 2:12). Edelman observes rightly that Jonathan’s name underscores divine action in giving and “should be seen as another deliberate move to symbolize Jonathan’s acceptance of divine will and his readiness to serve as a vehicle for its implementation.”

In this act, therefore, Jonathan highlights Saul’s own shortsightedness and rebellion, which was growing day by day. Though Saul thought that he could see things better than Jonathan, he was blinded by his own rebellious attitude. He might have inquired about David’s ancestry (17:55-58), but David’s answer did not produce in him the same results as it did in Jonathan (18:1, 3-4). The king decided to keep David close by (18:2) as before (16:22), but rather that exposed his own

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50 Payne, 1 & 2 Samuel, 83.
51 Edelman, King Saul, 155. See also Jobling, The Sense of Biblical Narrative, 12; Gordon, 1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary, 159.
insecurity. His jealousy packed in the phrase: “What more can he have but the kingdom?” (18:8, 9), sounds like an ironic admittance of the inevitable. The fuming king may shame and disown his son publicly (20:30), but Saul’s characterization of his son, as Edelman notes, is “a misplaced self-characterization,” since it was he who became twisted and rebellious in his plans to fight back.

In the chapter where everyone else seems to love David (18:1, 3, 16, 20, 22), Saul is the only one who does not.\(^52\) His attempt to arrange David’s marriage with Michal, therefore, is nothing but his secret plan to destroy the king-elect and to thwart Yahweh’s plans (18:21). Such an attitude only amplifies his failures and his own disgrace. Jonathan, however, having recognized divine motion in David’s favor, makes sure that he and his house are sheltered in Yahweh’s plan for the Davidic house (20:13b). Once Jonathan is thus adopted into the house of David (cf. 23:17), he calls a curse on all those who rise against it (20:15b-16). That includes his father and foreshadows the doom of his house, just as Abigail’s words against David’s persecutors anticipate Nabal’s downfall (25:26b).

**Saul, Doeg and Nabal vs. the “Son of Jesse”**

The contrast between Saul and Jonathan in their attitudes towards David is the background against which the roles of Doeg and Nabal in their negative attitudes toward the “son of Jesse” must be examined. Their own contribution to the already existing conflict between the houses of Saul and David is significant as they expose the essence of “old” monarchical system.

**A. Doeg vs. the “Son of Jesse”**

Doeg’s role in the narratives of 1 Sam. 21 and 22 and the portrayal of his attitude toward the Davidic future house seems to be quite broad. Doeg appears on the scene at the very moment when the theme of the partaking of the food is being developed. The decisive step of David from the “old” to the “new” has already been noted and Doeg’s role within the world of the narrative has been sufficiently discussed in the previous chapter. Here Doeg’s role from the perspective of Saul’s administration – the representatives of the “old” needs to be highlighted.

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\(^52\) Also noted by Gordon (Ibid., 159).
Doeg is the first one among Saul’s servants who was destined to observe David’s break with the “old” and his entrance into the “new” phase of his life as Yahweh’s king when he saw David coming to Nob. Thus, he could observe the “where” and the “how” the new moon was being celebrated: it was not in Bethlehem (20:28) it was in Nob (21:2[1]). He could witness the distribution of provisions in Yahweh’s house. He could see how and why it was distributed and by whom. Finally, he was the first one among the “old” administration to observe the apparent ties between Bethlehem and Nob.

There seems to be a much closer thematic relationship between Bethlehem in 1 Sam. 20 and Nob in 1 Sam. 21 and 22. As far as the timetable of the events of 1 Sam. 20:24-34 and 1 Sam. 21:2-10[1-9] is concerned, both events occur at the same time. As was proposed earlier in this work, when Jonathan was explaining David’s absence from the royal banquet, David was taking a trip to Ahimelech the priest of Nob. Doeg the Edomite also happened to be there on that day. In order to see the relationship between the various elements in these stories, the use of the words רָאָה and לֶחֶם in 1 Sam. 20—22 needs to be explained.

In these narratives the above mentioned words are being used with a double meaning. According to the plain sense, the word רָאָה “brother” in 1 Sam. 20:29 (רָאָה sg. or רָאָה, pl.) refers to David’s brother or brothers, e.g. his family living in the town of Bethlehem in Judah. This is how the message was conveyed to King Saul and how it was, perhaps, understood by him. However, when one reads the following story in 1 Sam. 21, one may suspect that another sense might have been intended, as shall be seen.

The same should be noted about the use of the word לֶחֶם, which means “food” or “bread.” The latter term appears quite frequently in 1 Sam. 20—22. In 1 Sam. 20 it refers to the food at Saul’s residence (vv. 24, 27, 34). In the story of 1 Sam. 21, however, the word refers specifically to the food David asked the priest for (לֶחֶם and לֶחֶם, “five loaves of bread” v. 4). It occurs twice in the speech of Ahimelech (v. 5) to differentiate between the “common bread” (לֶחֶם הָאָרֹן) and the “holy bread” (לֶחֶם הָבֵית) and three times as an explanatory note about the ceremonial law concerning the bread of the presence in the sanctuary of Yahweh (v. 7). Once it is
used by Saul who sentences Ahimelech to death for supporting David and giving him 
food/bread (22:13).

At closer inspection of how these terms are being employed in the stories, it becomes evident that the narrator uses these plays on words to compare and contrast the places where the food was being served with the persons who do the serving. Thus, for instance, the name of the priest whom David meets in Nob gives a clue: he is Ahimelech (אַהֲמִלְכָּא, אַהֲמִלְכָּא), whose name means “my brother is king.” Before Ahimelech’s name is mentioned in ch. 21, however, Jonathan was trying to explain to Saul that David’s brother, commanded (תָּשָׂר) him to take part in the family sacrifice in the town (ביתיר). Jonathan went on to report David saying: אַהֲמִלְכָּא, אַהֲמִלְכָּא, אַהֲמִלְכָּא, אַהֲמִלְכָּא, אַהֲמִלְכָּא, “let me get away/escape that I may see my brothers” (20:29). On the surface, the message is quite plain: David wanted to see his family in Bethlehem of Judah. However, there seems to be another layer of meaning. Jonathan’s words appear to be double-voiced. In his story David’s “brother” is not Eliab or Abinadab or Shammah, etc., it is none other than Ahimelech, the “king’s brother.” Since in the mind of Jonathan David was one day to become king (20:13-17; cf. 23:17), Jonathan was saying that David went to see “his brother,” namely, the “brother” of the “Yahweh’s king” (David; 16:1) whose name was Ahimelech of Nob. There the daily sacrifices took place in which David probably intended to take part – at the house of Yahweh in Nob. As for the town of Bethlehem – “house of bread/food” – indeed, David went to the house where לֵוִית, לֵוִית, bread/food, could be obtained. So, because לֵוִית, the “holy bread,” was distributed willingly by Ahimelech in the House of the Lord and given freely to David, the sanctuary of Yahweh in Nob became the house of bread – the “Beth-Lehem” of David.

David’s story to Ahimelech is similarly fashioned. In Nob David asked the priest for food. The priest gave him the holy bread. Now it is important to grasp the role of these five show-breads (לָהַם הָעֵטָנֶים). 1 Sam. 20 relates that instead of sitting at the king’s table and eating “before” Saul, David chose to stay in the field (20:5, 24). If one is to observe the parallels of the mention of this “field” (שדה) with

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53 Although Green does not discuss the literary significance of these breads, she notes, “The resonance between the issue of eligibility to eat the bread which is kept before YHWH and to eat at the king’s table (20:24-26) can scarcely be accidental” (Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 349).
its similar mention at 19:2-3, one may conclude that the field in both contexts is a reference not to some general location, but rather to a specific “secret” place. According to the agreement between David and Jonathan, the secret meeting was to take place on the third day at a certain “marker stone”\(^54\) (אֱלֹהִים הָאָדָם), known to no one but them. However, from 20:19 it can be surmised that Jonathan knew that David would not be hiding by that stone for three days, but would be going elsewhere, and would return to the appointed place on the third day. Consequently, the note, “and you will come to the place where you concealed yourself on the day of the deed,” may give a clue that Jonathan knew where David would be going. The note of 20:39, "only Jonathan and David knew about the matter," is another indication that the knowledge of what each of them would be doing was quite thorough. Thus, Jonathan most likely knew that for the next day or two David would be paying a visit to Ahimelech in Nob. The town was much closer to Gibeah – Saul’s residence, than Bethlehem was.\(^55\) So, when David came to the priest and told him that his men were hiding at a certain “undisclosed location” (ונֶמֶלֶת וְנַלַּפַּה), he may well have been referring to that specific place – the “marker stone.”

The phrase ונֶמֶלֶת וְנַלַּפַּה which is employed in 1 Sam. 21:3[2] also occurs in Ruth 4:1 and 2 Ki. 6:8. In the former passage it refers to a specific relative – kinsman redeemer mentioned earlier in that book (3:12-13), in the latter – to a specific location known to both war parties (Arameans and Israelites) in the days of Elisha the prophet. Here too, speaking to Ahimelech, David was most likely making a reference to a specific place.\(^56\) Indeed, he might have told the priest exactly where he was hiding, but the ambiguity of the language in the story conceals the details and preserves the secrecy of the plan.

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\(^{54}\) Thus Scherman, *I - II Samuel*, 133.

\(^{55}\) This would also give an answer to a question posed by Greßmann and Stoebe who wondered about why David would come to Nob when in two more hours he could have easily reached his hometown Bethlehem and got the needed supply of food there.

\(^{56}\) LXX reads καὶ τοῖς παιδαρίοις διαμενομνημόναι εἷς τοῦτοι τοὺς λόγους τοῦ πιστοῦ, Fellani M aemwni, “And I have charged my servants to be in the place that is called, The faithfulness of God, Phellani Maemoni” (LXX, Rahlf’s). While Fellani corresponds to דְּלֵּל, M aemwni shows closer dependence on מְאֶםְנִי, which would underlay pιστι the place “so-called God’s faithfulness,” which is absent from MT. LXX\(^4\) also adds λόγου pιστι, the place “so-called God’s faithfulness,” which is absent from MT.

\(^{57}\) Hence, Stoebe’s rendering of the term “überall und nirgends” is hardly satisfactory (Stoebe, *Das erste Buch Samuelis*, 396).
Further, Ahimelech’s statement of condition before the holy bread was distributed (21:5-7[4-6]) is equally double-voiced. According to the plain meaning, the priest seem to inquire about the ceremonial state of David’s men before they could eat holy bread; they had to abstain from women, just as the nation of Israel had to have been consecrated for two days during which they had to stay away from women before meeting with God on the third day (Ex. 19:10-15). However, there seems to be yet another layer of meaning here. The words of the priest can be understood as a subtle reference to a specific woman – Saul’s daughter and David’s wife Michal. The clue to this is found in the opening phrase which accentuates David’s appearance on the threshold of the priest alone (לְפָנָיו; 21:2[1]). Before distributing the bread, Ahimelech might have wanted to learn more about his relationship with Saul’s house through Michal. Curiously, Michal appears later again in a similar context. When David was bringing the ark of Yahweh to Jerusalem, she looks out of the window and sees David dancing before the Lord (לְפָנָיו; 2 Sam. 6:16), because David “shamelessly uncovered himself in the eyes of his servants’ maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself” (v. 20). Instead of giving Michal the rationale for his behavior, namely, dancing in a priestly outfit, David mentions God choosing him above Saul and above all his house. Then he adds: “therefore I will celebrate before Yahweh” (v. 21). Gelander offers the following commentary on the latter episode:

Since this lack of understanding is manifested by the representative of the House of Saul, it gives the author an additional opportunity to present the contrast between the two houses, with the House of Saul again appearing in a negative light … The author takes advantage of every opportunity to cast aspersions on the House of Saul, by means of juxtaposed antithetical analogies, such as the very act of bringing up the Ark – something which Saul neglected to do throughout his reign … The references to promises made by the Lord obviously carry a theological message; i.e., that David was preferred over Saul because of his greater faith. On the other hand the lesson implicit in the analogies is basically a political one.58

In Nob too, David chose to celebrate the day of the new moon not in the house of Saul, but before Yahweh in the sanctuary of Nob.\textsuperscript{59} Once he told the priest that he had not been polluted by being with a woman, he was freely offered the sacred bread by the “king’s relative.”\textsuperscript{60} He was given the holy bread that ought to have been eaten before the presence of the Lord (לֶחֶם יְהֹוָה), since it was the bread of the Presence (of God). Thus, David was fed from the table of his heavenly King supplied by the “king’s relative” Ahimelech. Ironically, when the king-elect did not show up at the dinner table of Saul, the king said to himself: מָצָא הָאֲדֹנָי מָצָא אֹתָךְ מָצָא כַּעֲדֹתָיו, “It is an accident, he must not be pure; surely he is not purified” (20:26; cf. similar response of Michal who thought that David’s actions were not kosher; 2 Sam. 6:20). Yet, David was supplied by Ahimelech the priest the holy bread from the table of the heavenly King!

Having noticed how these parallel themes operate in the stories, the roles of Jonathan and Ahimelech in their attitudes toward David deserve a comment. By responding to David’s need positively, Ahimelech in reality met the expectations of David’s and Jonathan’s plan. When the priest gave David whatever he asked for, he entered into their secret plan. Consequently, Jonathan’s rising up from the table of the king and his refusal to partake of the food from the king’s table, which was also interpreted as causing David to rise in rebellion (22:8), made a strong suggestion to Saul and to Doeg that Ahimelech played a part in the conspiracy from the very beginning. However, since neither Doeg nor Saul specifically mention “holy bread” in their accusation, it can be concluded that Saul’s suspicion had arisen only from Doeg’s story who could not have comprehended the deeper meaning of David’s coming to the sanctuary nor could he understand the role of Ahimelech, who had shown David his support and in this role acted as a substitute for the king-elect’s brother – the one who supposedly invited him to take part in the family sacrifices (20:6).

A close attention needs to be paid to yet another subtle detail in the narrative. As soon as Doeg appeared on the scene in 21:9\[8], David asked for a

\textsuperscript{59} Another parallel between the stories in 1 Sam. 21 and 2 Sam. 6 can be noted, namely, the distribution of food/bread.

\textsuperscript{60} The narrator’s note about Michal the daughter of Saul having no children to the day of her death seems significant (2 Sam. 6:23). It demonstrates that the “old” establishment comes to its end.
weapon, אוֹת אֶפֶשׁ חֲתָרָה קַנְיָה אַרְדָּה, “Is there not a spear or a sword at your hand?” While scholars only note the “reversal of the usual order of “sword and spear” to “spear and sword,” which would immediately catch the audience’s attention,”61 the significance of the phrase in this particular context is left unexplained: If David’s chief interest is in the sword, why mention a spear? However, the implication of this detail are elucidated when it is noted that in David’s question both objects appear in the order of their application to bring about the destruction of David’s supporters. Thus, when David was at the quarters of the priest, neither Saul’s spear nor the sword of the executioner was put to use. The mention of these items in David’s question in this particular order, therefore, is a proleptic glimpse of the time when these weapons would be employed in exactly this order: unknown to David, but on his account, the spear was thrown at Jonathan (20:33) and the sword was raised against Ahimelech’s household (22:19).

Against this background, the significance of Saul’s loyalist Doeg and his role in the narrative can be better discerned. King Saul thought David went to Bethlehem. David’s family joined him in 22:1 in Adullam, most likely running away from Saul. Ahimelech’s son Abiathar joined David in the end of the story (22:20-23). Two families are thus being identified in their misfortune from the hand of Saul, just as Bethlehem was in some sense identified with Nob, as was previously noted. Doeg saw the “son of Jesse” coming to Nob (22:9). By raising his sword against the population of Nob, therefore, Doeg expressed the same attitude toward this “house of bread” as well as the “son of Jesse” as Saul most likely had expressed toward both (22:23; cf. 23:23; 22:1 with 24:22). The place associated with food and provision was being destroyed on account of the one who was accustomed to visit it (22:22; cf. 21:2[1] with 22:15). Consequently, the relatives of “Yahweh’s king” had to seek a place to hide from Saul and his supporters.

Doeg’s role in the narrative may have intended to bring yet another dimension to the conflict between the House of Saul and the House of David. Earlier the narrator said that David was given the spirit of Yahweh (רוח יهوו; 16:13). As a contrast an evil spirit from Yahweh (רוח דָּרֶךְ מֶאת אַלֶּה יְהוּ; יִהוּ) tormented Saul. The stories in 1 Sam. 21 and 22 could be viewed as an illustration of the latter note. Throughout

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61 Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 360.
these narratives Doeg the Edomite functions almost as the embodiment of the evil spirit from Yahweh that was sent to Saul. He came from before Yahweh (לארץ יהוה) and delivered news that infuriated the king. Thus, figuratively, this “evil spirit” rose against the place where the “voice of Yahweh” could be heard. Accordingly, David’s presence in Nob, when Doeg (“worry”) was there, can be interpreted as having the same restraining effect on the Edomite as his playing music before Saul during his earlier days at the king’s court (16:23).

If King Saul struggled with the “son of Jesse” for the office of the king of Israel, Doeg as the chief of the shepherds of Saul is illustrative of a similar struggle for the office of the “shepherd.” Although Saul is never called a shepherd, his office as Israel’s king can be viewed as being such anyway. Therefore, the comparison of Doeg’s title with Saul’s royal office seems valid. However, in his antagonism toward the one whom Yahweh had chosen, Doeg epitomizes that “worthless” shepherd (Zech. 11:17) who would spare neither a man nor a beast.

If the achievements of King Saul and Doeg the Edomite are placed on the same platform, it becomes evident that their negative attitude toward the “son of Jesse” as well as “shepherds” of the people of Israel, the priests, highlights the struggle of the “old” establishment and the office of the shepherd with the office of the new king and shepherd – David, who would shepherd God’s people with integrity of heart and would lead them with skilful hand (Ps. 78:72). Already by the end of 1 Sam. 22 the sharp contrast between Doeg and David is illustrated in that David receives and takes care of Abiathar. Later, he marries Abigail the widowed wife of Nabal, thus demonstrating the same qualities as Yahweh – “a father of the fatherless and a defender/judge of widows” (Ps. 68:6[5]). In this regard Saul’s pronouncement of the death sentence over the priests stands in such contrast with the later words of David as the king: “Behold it is I who sinned and (I the shepherd) have done wrong. But these sheep (הצאן, lit. the flock) what have they done? Let your hand be against me and against my father’s house” (2 Sam. 24:17). The role of Doeg the Edomite in the story helps to see this distinction more clearly.

62 A striking parallel of this is found in 2 Sam. 24:1/1 Chr. 21:1. In Chronicles the “anger of Yahweh” is embodied in Satan inciting David to number the people that resulted in Yahweh sending a plague, which was later restrained.

63 This plus is attested in 4QSama (... וַיָּפֶשׁ אֵלֶּא...; as reconstructed by DJD, 4QSamuel, 192-93), LXXε and Josephus, Ant VII, 328.
B. Nabal vs. the “Son of Jesse”

Nabal expresses his attitude toward the “son of Jesse” in the following manner:

מחר ות TimeSpan 하고 רומ עבדים עבדים עבדים עבדים ולא נמצאו אולדות אתלה
ואיתם מי אונ פפתה אונ מי פפתה אונ מי פפתה אף מי אל ידעתי אונ מי ידעתי אונ מי

Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? Today servants have become many who are breaking away each from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearsers and give it to men of whom I do not know where they are from? (25:10-11)

In trying to discern the implications of the phrase in Nabal’s speech, Pyper is certain that the question makes “a disparaging reference to David’s biological paternity.” Yet he admits: “The question still remains, however, as to why this suggestion of a filiative relationship between Nabal and David arises in the text at all.” Without making an attempt to find an answer to his own question, Pyper still expresses his suspicion that “there is more to the matter than this.” When Nabal’s words are examined against the background of the greater context, at least three levels on which the significance of his words can be interpreted is readily identifiable: personal, political and theological.

Of the three persons who develop a negative attitude toward the “son of Jesse” in the book of 1 Samuel, Nabal could be perceived as being the closest to the family of Jesse by virtue of him residing in Judah. His Calebite origin, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, may signify an even closer connection with Ephratha (cf. 1 Chr. 2:19, 24) and as such makes him even more closer to “the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah whose name was Jesse” (17:12). In this light, how is the last phrase in Nabal’s speech to be understood “I do not know where they are from?” How can his personal negative attitude toward the “son of Jesse” be

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64 4QSam reading is uncertain here due to various sorts of damage. The LXX reads οινον μου, ‘my wine.’ Though it is hard to know which reading is closer to the original, it is possible to see that scribes sought to harmonize this verse with the subsequent verses. Thus, the very items that were sought by David’s servants and were denied by Nabal in order to give to his shearsers at the feast (v. 10) – the feast in which he himself took part to the extent that he became drunk (v. 36) – these items Abigail took as a gift to David (v. 18).

65 Pyper, David as Reader, 176.

66 For further discussions on this point see Appendix VII.
explained? The answer to these questions might be found when the following factors are considered:

1 Sam. 16:1-6 implies that Jesse was a man of some prominence and status in Bethlehem of Judah, which could have been hereditary (cf. Ruth 4:21-22). From a general context of 1 Sam. 16—25 one may assume that David’s victory in the valley of Elah improved both his personal status in the community of Israel and the status of his father’s household (17:25). Though the text does not state explicitly that Saul kept his promise, later developments indicate that he probably did, though he always had ulterior motives (18:25b; cf. 17:55-58; 18:17c [LXX–]67). However, once David started losing the king’s favor, such a change in the relationship affected everything that was covered by this unwritten “agreement” (18:24-26; cf. v. 17b). Saul’s disfavor would most naturally have visited Jesse’s house as well. Saul was searching for David everywhere (cf. 23:23) and would have most likely searched for him in Bethlehem, since that is where Jonathan said David went (20:28). 1 Sam. 22:1 reports that David’s brothers and his father’s household joined David in the cave of Adullam.69 Though the text does not give specific reasons why they came to David, from the subsequent verses it can be gathered that in some way they shared the lot of those who were in distress, in debt and discontented in Saul’s kingdom (22:2). One of the reasons why David took his parents to the king of Moab (1 Sam. 22:3-4) must have been his desire to move them farther away from the harmful reach of Saul (cf. 27:1), thus once again indicating that David’s family coming to Adullam was not a mere visit. Though the cause of their coming down (ירידים) is indicated by

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67 IQSam contains 1 Sam. 18:17-18.
68 One can gather from the larger context of 1 Samuel that Saul, who began to dread David right after the “unsuccessful” victorious parade that wounded his ego (18:16), was reluctant to give David one of his daughters in marriage. On the other hand, David might have had personal reservations (18:23b; cf. v. 18) so that Saul had to insist on David marrying his second daughter Michal (18:21). Accepting the challenge and the condition for the prize (18:25), David agrees. From a larger context one can gather that certain royal prizes were promised as a condition of David’s continuous successes against Israel’s enemies (father’s house made free in Israel and a marriage with king’s daughter: 17:25 [MT+]; [4QSama may have contained this verse originally, but it fell prey to cave worms or the ravages of time. After 4QSama 17:3-8 the text resumes at 17:40-41]). Once the agreement was “broken,” when David ran away from Saul’s court (19:10b), the royal “favor” was withdrawn, as the ongoing story illustrates. Saul also had to lead Israel’s armies himself.
simple, “and they heard” (1 Sam. 22:1b), the general context and subsequent verses suggest that their coming to the cave was a direct result of the growing conflict between the House of Saul and the House of Jesse. The same could be inferred from one other verse: after David spared Saul’s life in the cave (24:8[7]) Saul pleads with David: “So swear now to me by Yahweh … that you will not destroy my name from my father’s household” (#.אזרחי特点是; 24:22[21], emphasis added). In his appeal Saul might actually have given away his own intentions concerning the household of Jesse. The annihilation of the entire population of Nob because of their support for David illustrates how serious the situation was.

The adversity of Jesse’s family may also have been caused by the Philistine presence in Bethlehem at the time (2 Sam. 23:13-14). Be that as it may,
the entire household of Jesse had to vacate their residency and, as refugees, come to David.

This background may offer an insight into the force of Nabal’s personal attitude toward the “son of Jesse.” He might have used the fact of Jesse’s family misfortune and, perhaps, their loss of property in order to inflict more emotional pain on all those “landless” men of lower class “who did not possess full civic right and needed special protection.” Pyper notes: “To be identified as ‘son of Jesse’ implies a whole set of social parameters which form a boundary to who David can be.” Indeed, Nabal could have looked at David who lost everything in Bethlehem as well as what he used to have in Gibeah (19:18 with 20:24-27) and say: “Who is this son of Jesse? … I do not know where they are from” (25:10-11). Is he the royal son-in-law? Then what is he doing living in the wilderness? Is he the son of Jesse? But, who is this Jesse, and where is he now? In fact, Nabal’s insults of the “son of Jesse” might have been even more substantial. Garsiel suggests that David’s greeting of might have been misinterpreted by Nabal deliberately:

To [Nabal], the word shalom might, as a midrashic play on names, refer to Salmon, one of David’s forefathers and founder of his hometown, Bethlehem. What David meant as a greeting Sounds a warning bell in Nabal’s ears, as if David’s intention were to bring him and his entire household under the power of David’s clan…. His refusal is in insulting terms, to boot. After explicitly mentioning David’s father Yishai, [Nabal] implicitly refers to his other ancestors. The word תינכט (slaves) is a stinging allusion to David’s grandfather Obed, the word ביטא (breaking away) hints at his famous ancestor Perez, and the word ללחם (my food) at his hometown Bethlehem. Nabal’s response is thus doubly insulting: he turns down David’s request and mocks his family.

73 MT reads למל יבֵי עֲבֵד. LXX omits לְמֵל חַיִי עַבֵּד. But the force of the verse remains the same.
74 Thus de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 124-25. It is not known whether Jesse’s family ever received their property back. As one reads the story it appears that they probably did not. If that was the case, in his answer Nabal is aiming at Jesse’s recent dispossession. Kings would take possession of property left vacant by their owners leaving the country, as could be seen from the story of the Shunamite (2 Ki. 8:1-6).
75 Mazar, “The Military Elite of King David,” 310.
76 Pyper, David as Reader, 172. Italics are mine.
Nabal's insults definitely touched a nerve. In turn David attempts to inflict as much pain on Nabal's household as he is able to: he mocks Nabal's lineage viewing them merely as a pack of dogs (those urinating against the wall)\(^78\) and plans to wipe out the population of Carmel completely (vv. 22, 34).

Secondly, Nabal's words and his actions could be viewed from the standpoint of him maintaining a political alliance with King Saul. Fokkelman observes: “it cannot now be considered coincidence that the monarchy comes on to the agenda in Ch. 25 both in respect of David and in respect of Nabal, the boss of the district.”\(^79\) Philbeck notes: “Although it is nowhere explicit, our author seems to imply that Nabal’s rebuff to David is politically motivated.”\(^80\) The analogous relationship between Nabal and Saul in 1 Sam 25 has already been discussed. It should be stressed once more here that while Nabal is not an allegorical representation of Saul, he expresses his attitude toward the “son of Jesse” standing on the same political platform as King Saul. In the second chapter of this thesis, the possibility of Nabal being an important political figure in Saul’s kingdom – his right hand in Judah, was contemplated. By standing on the same political platform as Saul, Nabal may have felt that he had a right to answer David’s men with authority. One of his servants described the force of Nabal’s answer to David’s men thus: “Behold David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, but he scorned them” (v. 14). He literally “flew upon them” (מַעַט).\(^81\) Ben-Meir notes, “This creates an image of a bird of prey which swoops down on its innocent victims and devours them.”\(^82\) In the mind of the reporting servant his master was not a victim, he was a predator.

Now viewing Nabal’s answer through the political lens of King Saul’s policies, Nabal’s words might have been designed to express the deepest nature of

\(^78\) Leithart (“Nabal and His Wine,” 525-27), suggests that Nabal does just that when Abigail breaks the news about what happened the night before (25:37).
\(^79\) Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 476.
\(^81\) LXX reads ἐξεκλίνειν απὸ, ‘turned away from them.’ Perhaps Old Greek read מַעַט, instead of מַעַט בְּרֹאשׁ. Driver, who is in favor of MT here, notes that the whole thrust of the passage focuses, “on the expression of Nabal’s feeling.” However, both readings could easily be taken as reflective of Nabal’s feelings with the only difference that LXX communicates the idea in a figurative way, e.g. he did not respond positively to them, and the MT focuses more on the force of Nabal’s speech: “he screamed at them.”
\(^82\) Ben-Meir, “Nabal, the Villain,” 250.
Saul’s attitude toward the “son of Jesse” who went to pursue David’s band in the wilderness of Maon (23:25). Saul’s giving David’s wife Michal in marriage to another after Nabal’s death (25:44) could also be interpreted as the mirror image of David taking Nabal’s wife in marriage. Years later the words of Nathan the prophet recalled the works of Yahweh on David’s behalf in giving him his master’s wives (2 Sam. 12:8), thus bringing to memory the story of David obtaining Nabal’s wife Abigail by Yahweh’s intervention (1 Sam. 25:32, 39). As such, the story of 1 Sam. 25 would be the closest illustration of the transfer of power from the House of Saul to the House of David as described in 2 Sam. 12 and viewed through the story of 1 Sam. 25.

Thirdly, Nabal’s speech can be read theologically. Two perspectives should be noted here: Saul’s and Abigail’s. The opening words in Nabal’s speech about the paternity of the “son of Jesse” echo Saul’s question about David’s lineage (17:55-58). Nabal, however, was not inquiring about David’s ancestry but openly ridiculing and scorning the one whom Yahweh Himself selected among the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite (16:1). Nabal’s disparaging words demonstrate that he was not afraid to disdain “Yahweh’s king.” Just as certain worthless men (יושב רע) would not present gifts to Saul (10:22 with 9:16), thus disregarding Saul as divinely appointed deliverer of the nation, this worthless man (חביר רע), Nabal, withheld his generous hand from David not realizing that the “rule” of “Yahweh’s king” touched even his household in the form of the protective services.83

Twice the text says that when David camped around Nabal’s possessions, the Fool have lost nothing (25:7, 15), as other households might have. Now by ridiculing David, Nabal, the “dog” ( לכלב), the harsh (זרע), stony-hearted fool (לב החרד), brought on himself the wrath of Yahweh.84 The wealth which he accumulated and the beautiful and wise wife he married – all this was taken away from him and given to his neighbor the Bethlehemite whom he had counted as a “nobody.”

The latter observation reveals two additional elements in which Nabal functions as Saul’s alter ego: after King Saul had commemorated his victory over the Amalekites by erecting a monument at Carmel (15:12), Yahweh took the

83 See McCarter, I Samuel, 229.
84 A good discussion about the significance and the effect of metaphors in Nabal’s characterization is found in Weiss, Metaphor in Samuel, 121-32.
kingdom away from him and had given it to his better neighbor (v. 28). Immediately after that incident, the “neighborhood” as well as the “neighbor” was identified as the “son of Jesse” the Bethlehemite (16:1, 12). Incidentally, this “son of Jesse” was in the neighborhood of Carmel when the request was sent to the house of Nabal. The Fool, however, processed David’s request as Saul would most likely have done (cf. 16:2).

Nabal’s attitude toward the “son of Jesse” could also be examined from the perspective of his wife. In evaluating Abigail’s contribution to the story, Jobling concludes that she has several roles: she keeps David from danger, contributes to the theme of David’s wife-getting and predicts David’s future. Jobling explains that when Abigail speaks of the enduring dynasty of David, it is she, not Nabal, who functions in Saul’s stead (24:20-21, 26:25), “so that Saul is split into two.”85 Thus, Saul’s rebellion is depicted in Nabal’s portraiture and the king’s acknowledgment of David as God’s king – in Abigail’s.

Abigail’s distinctive role offers another perspective from which her husband’s words and actions can be evaluated. She balances up the negative attitude toward the “son of Jesse” which predominates in the surrounding stories. Jobling rightly notes that “the narrator seems to want to provide in ch. 25 not an allegorical parallel to chs. 24 and 26, but contrastive relief. In this story, at least, David is unambiguously ‘on top.’”86 This, however, was largely due to Abigail’s intervention in the narrative. She pays homage to God’s elect (cf. Ps. 2:12) and lightly esteems Nabal. Thus, Nabal and Abigail, husband and wife, offer two contrasting views on divine choice (cf. 1 Sam. 2:30). At the end, one is praised and the other dies. It is no accident, therefore, that Nabal’s odd name appears in Ps. 14=53 epitomizing everyone who actively denies the very existence of Yahweh – His active involvement in Israel’s future – and in the end perishes in his folly.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to show that the phrase the “son of Jesse” in the book of 1 Samuel is used as a technical phrase. It contains various decisive elements which are essential to the understanding of the narrator’s message in the

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85 Jobling, 1 Samuel, 152.
86 Ibid., 157.
later portion of the book(s) of Samuel. The formation of the phrase begins with Yahweh’s appointment and Samuel’s anointing of David, the son of Jesse. It continues through David’s introduction in Saul’s court, and is solidified through the number of questions and statements about David’s ancestry. When Saul, Doeg and Nabal use the phrase pejoratively, however, their verbal attack is ultimately turned against Yahweh who put His seal of approval on David. Consequently, this conflict is not merely between two men; it is a war between two houses on the one level and between two ideological systems (old and new) on the other. In this, the role of Jonathan, among other things, highlights Saul’s active rebellion and attempt to frustrate Yahweh’s plan in installing His king – David. The same could be said about Abigail in Nabal’s household.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE BOOK(S) OF SAMUEL AND ITS WRITER(S)

Introductory Remarks

The coherence of the stories in 1 Sam. 16—25 that was observed in the preceding discussions raises questions about the composition of the book(s) of Samuel. Did these books come into existence through the process of “more or less random accumulation of unrelated sources or traditions,” 1 or rather can the coherent arrangement of the stories in question be attributed to the work of a writer/editor (or a team thereof) who used the source material, available at the time, selectively? If the arrangement of the material was purposeful, is it possible to determine the writer’s purpose? Why, for instance, of all the characters in 1 Samuel, do only Saul, Doeg and Nabal use the phrase the “son of Jesse” pejoratively? Can some of the difficulties that were encountered in the process of the synchronic analysis of these stories be resolved diachronically?

In answering these and similar questions and in order to offer a fresh perspective on the stories in 1 Sam. 16—25, the significance concealed in the origins of the main characters in those stories needs to be carefully analyzed and the function of these characters in terms of their broader roles examined.

The task in this chapter is thus four-fold: 1) to pay closer attention to the origins of Nabal and Doeg and to evaluate their roles in the stories in 1 Sam. 21, 22 and 25, 2) to detect and to study the function of a few literary layers that seem to have certain “time tags” attached to them, which can suggest the timeframe in which the stories were written, 3) to approximate the most likely time period when the making of the book(s) of Samuel occurred and 4) to contemplate one of the possible causes and reasons behind the composition of the book(s) of Samuel.

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The Calebites in Biblical Tradition

In his monograph Die Kaleb-Traditionen im Alten Testament Beltz isolates the source which he believes was the main carrier of that Calebite tradition into HB. Several observations he makes about the relationship between the tribe of Calebites and the tribe of Judah have relevance for the purposes of this thesis. A brief review of some of the points he makes will suffice.

Building primarily on Eissfeldt’s earlier works, in identifying the source behind the Calebite tradition (L or J), and on Meyer’s work, in the historical analysis of the tribe in HB, Beltz isolates the material where he thinks the strands of the Calebite tradition are especially evident: 1) the report about the possession of the land (Nu. 13/14); 2) the report about the division of the land (Josh. 14:6ff; 15:13-19); 3) the genealogical correlation between the Calebites and the tribe of Judah (1 Chr. 2 and 4).

Approaching the first group of texts, Beltz deals with the question of Calebite origin. He says that as the head of the tribe, Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite (the Edomite), led his people to join Israel in the wilderness. Studying the list of the twelve spies sent into Canaan, Beltz is convinced that among the twelve names only one group of names – Caleb the son of Jephunneh (Judah), Igal the son of Joseph (Issachar) and Joshua the son of Nun (Ephraim) – represents an earlier tradition, since these names contain a theriophoric element. He adds that each of the names in that list has to be studied individually, as they have less connection with historical tribes they stand for, but contain more foreign elements that are indicative of the exilic influence. He concludes that these lists cannot be from older traditions except the names of Caleb, Igal and Joshua, Beltz is sure, were drawn from the

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3 Meyer, Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämmel, 400-09.
5 Ibid., 77.
6 Caleb the son of Jephunneh (מלך and שלם) – the dog, the son of “he will lead back;” Igal son of Joseph (ילג and משיח) – he will deliver, the son of “he increases;” Joshua the son of Nun (שלום and יוחנן) – salvation, son of fish (Ibid., 12-13).
7 Ibid., 16.
8 Ibid., 15-17.
Calebite tradition. So, Nu. 13—14 appears to him to be a theological or political fiction, rather than a story that reflects historical reality.

The significance that Beltz finds in the second group of texts (Josh. 14:6-15; 15:13-19) is that it describes Caleb as a sovereign nomadic prince, who defends his rights before Joshua, fights for his own territory in southern Canaan, and is successful in his quest. The fact that Joshua is not referred to in the text as a spy, Beltz takes as a clue that this story has seen the hand of a later redactor. The placement of Caleb with the leaders of Judah was rather designed to illustrate that both tribes historically relied on each other for military support. Thus, the story is intended to tell how the tribe of Caleb, through their faithfulness, received a place and earned special respect from the Israelites, as the story itself explains how this semi-nomadic tribe of Caleb came to be associated with Israel and settled among the sons of Judah in the vicinity of Hebron where they continued to maintain their own sovereignty and even took primacy before the twelve tribes.

Next, Beltz turns to 1 Chr. 2 and 4 texts. By examining the genealogical lists of 1 Chr. 2 and finding Caleb’s name among the descendants of Hezron in the genealogy of Judah, he comes to the conclusion that the compiler of the lists must have been driven by certain ideological interests when he inserted Caleb’s name among other tribal leaders. Beltz is persuaded by this when he compares the list of 1 Chr. 2 with the list of the “proper” Calebite genealogy in ch. 4. He cites Meyer who states that in post-exilic times the tribe of the Calebites in their national and religious relationship with the Israelites was still considered הַשָּׁלֹחַ, yet privately and politically they shared the same rights with the rest. In support he cites Ezek. 47:21f. Beltz agrees with Meyer that the Calebites’ status as a semi-nomadic group helped them to escape captivity. Thus, in order to demonstrate the dependence of one tribe on the other the compiler of the lists interlinked many of the Calebite place names with the proper names in the genealogy of the tribe of Judah. Reading the above mentioned texts of Numbers and Joshua from that perspective and noting Caleb’s special place in those stories, Beltz goes on to suggest that by giving Caleb a privileged place in

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9 Ibid., 17.
10 Ibid., 32.
11 Ibid., 34.
12 Ibid., 40-41.
13 Ibid., 42-43.
the genealogy of Judah the purpose of the redactor was to give hope and reassurance to those returning from the Exile.\textsuperscript{14}

In his thesis Beltz emphasizes the Calebites’ sovereignty and independence as a tribe dwelling on Judah’s territory.\textsuperscript{15} Speaking about the relationship between the two, he suggests that from a political standpoint (taxation and military assistance) the tribe of Caleb might have belonged to the district of Jerusalem. He suggests that after 587 B.C., they became the majority occupants of the city. As such, they appeared to the Deuteronomist as a worthy example of faith in Yahweh.\textsuperscript{16} Israel-Judah’s faith in their God became the ground for their return to Jerusalem. Therefore, when Chronicles recounted Israel’s history, the Calebite contribution to Israel’s history-making had to be mentioned. As in the time of the wilderness sojourn so right after the Exile, the Calebites’ “faith” paved the way for them to be included in the “Holy History” of the nation.\textsuperscript{17}

Beltz’s thesis has one attraction. His reading of the stories of the book of Numbers and Joshua against the background of exilic and post-exilic times is interesting. What is doubtful, however, is his suggestion that the later redactor, having acquired the Calebite traditions, inserted these stories into the Hexateuch essentially after the composition of the Hexateuch with some theological and sociological purposes in mind. Furthermore, his argument that the tribe of the Calebites disappeared during the Babylonian Exile, being overcome by Edom when their allies were absent and, having been driven into the whirlpool of the conflict between Egyptians, Babylonians, and Medes, ceased to exist as an entity,\textsuperscript{18} flies in the face of his earlier statement that the Deuteronomist was using the example of the tribe to give Israel hope. If, during the Exile, the Calebites themselves were disappearing as an entity, their example could have hardly been used to encourage Israelites who also were dispersed among the nations.

Nevertheless, the idea that a post-exilic writer with an agenda expounded Calebite traditions in HB seems to be not only possible but likely. Indeed, if the Calebites played such a prominent role in Israel’s history in its initial stages and

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 44-46.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 67-68.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 99.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 69-70.
again during the Exile and after, then it becomes clear why the exceptional deeds of Judah’s friends and neighbors needed to be noted and stressed with renewed force. So the writer might have used the Calebite traditions and placed a much stronger emphasis on their faith in Yahweh throughout Israel’s history. He also found a way to highlight the particular moments in the relationship between this group and the tribe of Judah. Thus, in Nu. 13 and 14 the point of Caleb’s faithfulness and the divine favor was underscored. In Josh. 14 and 16 the independence of the tribe as well as its close relationship with the tribe of Judah, especially in military campaigns, was emphasized. The Chronicler placed a significant stress on Caleb’s contribution when he compiled the genealogical lists that were so important for the returnees from the Exile (cf. Ezra 2; Neh. 3, 7, 11). For the demonstration of their loyalty to the exiles, the Chronicler paid the tribe a tribute by mentioning the name of their forefather among the fathers of the tribe of Judah (1 Chr. 2). At the same time, the Chronicler preserved the Calebite’s independence as a tribe, as can be seen in another list that follows (1 Chr. 4:15ff).

The attention the post-exilic writers paid to Caleb in HB and the consistency with which he reworked the key points of the Calebite tradition in the Hexateuch is significant. It is noteworthy that throughout the Hexateuch nothing negative is said about that tribe. It seems likely that these writers, having a particular agenda, made sure that there was nothing in the accounts of the biblical narrative that would raise red flags in including the tribe in the genealogy of the sons of Israel. So much so that in the post-exilic times this semi-nomadic tribe could find their identity only in the tribe of Judah.

Now if that was the case, one would also have to wonder if, perhaps, certain passages in the book of 1 Samuel that reflected the relationship between the Calebites and Judah/Israel were not ignored. In the following section the use of the Calebite tradition by the writer(s) of Samuel will be contemplated and the ideological and theological message embedded in certain stories considered.

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19 For the discussions about the significance concealed in the Chronicler’s engrafting the tribes forefather Caleb onto the genealogical tree of Judah see Appendix VII.
Before the discussion can be further advanced, two things need to be restated for the sake of clarity: 1) the Calebites played an important role in Israel’s history and tradition; and 2) the Calebite traditions were considered to be both significant and valuable in Israel after the Exile, which can be gathered from the particular attention the Chronicler paid to them. When these two factors are recognized, it helps to discover a new dimension in the roles of two characters in 1 Sam. 25 and offer fresh perspective on the function of this story in Samuel’s corpus.

In order to navigate the following investigation, a question needs to be raised: If at the time of the Chronicler the tribe of Caleb was so important that it was necessary to solidify the union between Judah and Caleb officially in writing by engrafting the Calebite forefather onto the genealogical tree of Judah, is it not both possible and likely that other writers, Chronicler’s contemporaries, were equally prepared to address this socio-political trend in their own works? Insuggesting an affirmative answer to this question, an attempt is made to demonstrate that one of the purposes of the writer of 1 Samuel 25 was to accentuate the Calebites’ peculiar relationship to the Davidic House. On closer examination of the 1 Sam. 25 narrative it becomes increasingly clear that the individual roles of Nabal and Abigail are magnified proportionately to the readers’ recognition of their strategic importance, viewed against the background of the socio-political environment in Israel during the Second Commonwealth.

Once the existing links between the Calebite traditions and the book of 1 Chronicles are recognized, a few existing links between them and 1 Samuel needs to be noted too. In this, the note of Nabal’s origin as a “Calebite” deserves a comment. A few particular details in 1 Chr. 2 and 4 may offer a perspective on Nabal’s origin as conveyed by the *qere* reading of MT. Commentators have noted that the genealogical line of 1 Chr. 4:1 is traceable to 2:50-55. Five names in the genealogical list of Judah “are not another version of 2:3-5, but a vertical genealogical tree, descending from Judah to Shobal, following the order of generations as recorded beforehand in 2:4, 5, 9, 19, 50.”20 However, what dismays the commentators is the name Carmi (כָּרַם), which appears in the place where one

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would expect to find Caleb (blk). Commenting on this apparent problem Japhet says
that “since all these verses are from one hand and reflect the Chronicler’s specific
understanding of the genealogical system, the form ymrk reflects, not a deviating
tradition or an early confusion, but simply a textual corruption of blk, or more
possibly, of ybwlk, as proposed by many.” 21 However, not only the evidence for such
an emendation is lacking (the MT’s ymrk is in agreement with the LXX’s Carmi), but
also there seems to be no particular need to emend the text. The problem can be
easily resolved if it is allowed that Carmi was simply Caleb’s second name. 22
Therefore, a connection between Carmi (ymrk) and Carmel (lmrk), one of Calebite
towns in Judah, can thus be explained. 23 Curiously, in the lists of the cities on the
territory of Judah, Maon, Carmel, and Ziph are mentioned. While Maon and Ziph
are found in the list of the descendants of (or town names that belonged to) Caleb in
1 Chr. 2:42, 45; 4:16, Carmel is not. Nevertheless, there is general consensus among
scholars that Carmel was a Calebite town. According to 1 Sam. 25:2, Nabal, who
had his “business” in Carmel, was a Calebite. Some scholars were resolved to
emend the text to read “like his heart” (kethib wblk) because this is the only time
where the term yblk appears and the same Nabal everywhere else is called
“Carmelite” (1 Sam. 30:5; 2 Sam. 2:2; 3:3) and so is Abigail (1 Sam. 27:3; 1 Chr.
3:1). 24 Indeed, this explanation coheres with Nabal’s characterization as a harsh and
stony-hearted man. Still, if one assumes that the name of the town Carmel had
anything to do with Caleb’s alternative name “Carmi,” then the designation of Nabal
as “the Carmelite” or of his wife as “the Carmelitess” does not in any way alter the
significance concealed in Nabal’s origin. In that sense a Calebite would simply
mean a Carmelite, and vice versa. If one has to choose between the two names,
however, it seems that “a Calebite” (yblk) would be a better choice in telling the 1
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See Ibid. BHS suggests to read blek'w> or yb;luk.W; cf. yb'WlK. 2:9. The LXX reads Caleb.
In the HB double names are not uncommon: Abram/Abraham; Sarai/Sarah; Esau/Edom;
Jacob/Israel, Gideon/Jerubbaal, Solomon/Jedidiah, Judith/Adah, Mahalath/Oholibamah (Esau’s
wives).
23
This has also been noted by the rabbinical sages. Some say that Caleb’s second name
Carmi (from, ~rk, a vineyard) was given to him because of the grapes the spies brought with them
from the land of Canaan. For the discussions on the significance of the Caleb/Carmi name and the
symbolism of wine in the Chronicler’s presentation see Moshe Eisemann, Divrei Hayamim I: 1
Chronicles: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and
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22

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Sam. 25 story for a number of reasons: 1) it becomes the perfect target for David’s phrase (משה יתב), 2) it intentionally bypasses the symbolism that is associated with the more positive name “Carmi/Carmelite” and 3) it serves a definite ideological purpose, as shall be seen.

Now if Nabal was a Calebite (הלל), if to this point nothing negative is said about this tribe – the fact which led to the tribe’s engrafting onto the genealogical tree of Judah, would not the story of 1 Sam. 25 cause a significant damage the relationship between Judah and the Calebites? Indeed, that would be the case if it would not have been for the neutralizing effect Abigail’s deed have in the story. Abigail was destined to prevent the destruction of her own household and, most likely, the entire Calebite community living in that area. Her appearance in 1 Sam. 25, therefore, is not simply an important element in the development of the story’s plot. In 1 Sam. 25 she has the role of counterbalancing Nabal’s attitude towards David, the future king, and towards the Davidic House – the enduring dynasty. She is that needed link of such great importance theologically (by making prophetic utterances) and politically (by becoming David’s wife) that without her the relationship between the House of David and the Calebites would have been left in obscurity.

Moreover, there are reasons to view the roles of both Nabal and Abigail as representatives of larger groups who voice different attitudes towards David. Both of them give two contrasting statements that come from the same family and the same tribe. With that picture in mind the reader is asked to consider the broader implications of Abigail’s deeds and her prophetic speech.

A. The Key Points in Abigail’s Speech

Some difficulties surface when one takes the words of Abigail’s speech at face value. From the standpoint of the story’s plot, the main issue comes to this: Is she seeking to defend Nabal or is she publicly supporting David’s interests? Levenson tries to find a middle ground by suggesting that Abigail, for her part, has to be careful neither to exculpate Nabal nor to appear disloyal to him … In other words, while overtly defending him, she
covertly dissociates herself from him, so that by the end of her address only she appears as the potential beneficiary of David’s change of heart.\textsuperscript{25} Fokkelman, for his part, reacts to such an assessment by saying: “That immediately sounds too subtle, since Abigail’s pronouncements on her husband in 25abc are destructive.”\textsuperscript{26} He tries to find a better solution in a “balanced” literary structure of the composition instead.

From the standpoint of the sequential progression of the events in the book(s) of Samuel, Abigail’s speech seems problematic because she speaks of the enduring house of David in the way that appears to be premature, for neither David’s throne, nor his kingdom was yet firmly established. Thus, she utters the phrase before the enduring house was even promised (2 Sam. 7). The only oracle about the Davidic throne that seems to have been in place early on, was the one mentioned by Abner in 2 Sam. 3:9-10. This means that the prophetic elements in Abigail’s words most likely reflect a later perspective.

Throughout the years a few explanations of the prophetic nature of her speech have been offered. Mettinger summarizes them as follows: “There are only two alternatives to be taken into serious consideration: either that this passage is Deuteronomistic or that it derives from the author of the HDR.” He himself holds that Dtr redactor edited vv. 28-31 (as he did vv. 24b-26 and vv. 32-34),\textsuperscript{27} as opposed to the HDR writer.\textsuperscript{28} More recently, scholars who noted several intertextual elements in 1 Sam. 25, attempted to send this narrative through a literary filter of the so-called Ancestral Narratives (AN),\textsuperscript{29} thus adding a third option to the number.

These opinions notwithstanding, there seems to be yet another and more favorable way of explaining the futuristic nature of Abigail’s speech. On close examination of some of her words, it rather looks as though the writer of the 1 Sam...

\textsuperscript{25} Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 19
\textsuperscript{26} Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 496, n. 39.
\textsuperscript{29} Some theorized that Genesis was a form of writing about dynasty from a theological perspective (Walter Brueggemann, “David and His Theologian,” CBQ 30 [1968], 175-76).
25 was guided not so much by some political propaganda. Rather, by allowing Abigail to speak thusly, he addressed the issues that were rooted in the questions of social politics of his day and time as well as theology.

Before examining her words in detail, several general comments are in order. Abigail’s speech is at the heart of the narrative. She steps into the explosive situation thus creating a buffer zone between David and Nabal’s household, e.g. the Calebites. To destroy Nabal, David would have to go “through” her; the praise for saving many innocent lives at Carmel belongs to her. In what follows, five essential parts of her address will be analyzed briefly.

1. Call to Apply Judgment and Discernment

Abigail begins her speech with an apology. Speaking for her household, she acknowledges the guilt of Nabal’s mistreatment of David’s men. Thus, she accepts her personal responsibility, but only in principle – she did not see the young men David had sent (v. 25b). She is also quick to point out the difference between the guilt of one man and the rest of the household: “Let my lord not pay attention to this worthless man, to Nabal, for as his name is so is he; Fool is his name and folly is with him” (v. 25a). She expresses the same idea as the narrator does in the beginning of the story (v. 3). Nabal’s guilt is his alone, but the rest of the community is acquitted.

From the perspective of the story’s plot, the narrator elevates Abigail above her husband: she is the defender of the community; she is their protective wall. From the perspective of the post-exilic community, it was important to show the difference between cases of unfaithfulness of single individuals both in the pre- and post-exilic times and the general positive attitude of the Calebite community at large towards the Davidic House, something that endured throughout the history of their mutual coexistence. Abigail became that link that safeguarded a proper relationship between the tribes and ensured a strong connection of the House of Caleb with the Davidic House.
2. Warning to the Enemies of God’s People

Having separated the “worthless man” from the rest of the community, Abigail goes on to group the rest of David’s enemies together with Nabal: “Now then, my lord, as Yahweh lives and as you live, since Yahweh has restrained you from shedding blood and avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who are seeking evil for my lord be/become like Nabal” (v. 26). Two problematic elements in that statement can be named here: a) “since Yahweh has restrained you” (אֶלְמֹנָה מִנְכֶךָ יְהוָה) and b) “let your enemies … be/become like Nabal” (וּתִשָּׁה יִשְׂרָאֵל נַבַּל). It is obvious that Abigail could not have known whether her words had the intended effect or not until she heard David’s response: “Behold, I have listened to you and granted your request” (v. 35b). It is possible that she (and the servant) only suspected or envisioned Nabal’s demise based on who he was (or had done) and so, she could have spoken about the demise of David’s enemies. However, it is improbable that she could have known the particulars of Nabal’s end, to wish that the same kind of death would befall David’s enemies. If one reads Abigail’s speech from a later perspective as applicable to the Calebite community at large, her speech may carry additional meanings:

First, both Abigail and David agree that it was Yahweh who restrained David (vv. 26, 34). Abigail’s intercession kept the entire clan from extermination. Her stepping into the explosive situation saved the day and ensured peaceful coexistence between the two tribes. Reading the story from the perspective of the post-exilic community, the theme of divine intervention is thus emphasized. Yahweh intervened on David’s behalf by striking Nabal (v. 38). As the result, the entire community was saved. Abigail’s character did not suffer any damage either. Consequently, it was only fitting for David to make the next step by proposing to Abigail. So, Abigail emerged not only as a defender of the interests of the Davidic house, but also as a hinge that secured the close relationship between the Calebite tribe and the Davidic dynasty. Her actions and words were worth remembering.

Second, in Abigail’s “wish” to see the end of David’s enemies in light of what had happened to Nabal seems to make better sense if it is read against the background of the post-exilic community that was praying to God to intervene on its behalf and to do away with the enemies just as He has done with Nabal. From this
perspective the name “Nabal” receives a much wider significance. This can be seen in terms of a broader use of this name that appeared elsewhere in the HB (Ps. 14=53; 52; esp. Ps. 137:7).

Finally, the passage was designed to give readers hope. Just as Abigail found her identity in David (v. 39b), the post-exilic Calebite community residing in Jerusalem could find their identity in Judah – the point stressed by the Chronicler who engrafted the Calebites onto the genealogical tree of Judah.

3. “An Enduring House”

It has been long recognized that the “prophetic” nature of Abigail’s words regarding the dynastic promise to David’s house (vv. 28-31) appears to be a later addition.\(^{30}\) Indeed, Abigail seems to be the first one to express this idea openly, which also caused many to wonder how she could, as a non-Israelite and not in a proper sense a prophetess, deliver the message about the Davidic dynasty.\(^{31}\) Without taking much time to examine this verse in great depth, three strands in verse 28 can be isolated: a) the enduring/sure house (םלוה; הָיוֹדֵה); b) the battles of the Lord (םלוה; הָיוֹדֵה); and c) the avoidance of disaster (םלוה).

As was discussed earlier, it seems likely that the statement about the “house,” taken in the context of Nabal’s verbal assault, was made to encourage David as the son of Jesse, in light of the lack of his hereditary claims at the time. One can now see how these elements function to reflect the sentiments of the post-exilic Calebite community living in Jerusalem. A “house” became “an enduring house,” to stress the idea of the dynastic endurance of the house of Judah that in the post-exilic time came to stand for the entire nation of Israel. Thus, while the northern-Israelite royal line ceased to exist with the dispersion of the ten tribes, the royal line of Judah demonstrated its endurance in the face of Zerubbabel (1 Chr. 3:19; cf. Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7 with Hag. and Zech.).

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\(^{30}\) McCarter opines that 1 Sam. 25:28-31 is “drawn directly from nathan’s oracle in 2 Samuel 7, the cornerstone passage in the Josianic history of the Kingdom” (McCarter, 1 Samuel, 401).

\(^{31}\) Cooke writes: “One should not rule out the possibility that the poetic prophecies concerning the Davidic dynasty and the father-son relationship between Yahweh and David’s seed are part of a prophecy which stemmed from near the time of David himself and which later came to be thought of in eschatological terms” (Gerald Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” *ZAW* 73 [1961]: 203). From this it does not follow, however, that this prophecy was necessarily a part of the same tradition on the basis of which 1 Sam. 25 was written.
The example of David’s “battles” in the context of 1 Sam. 25 can be seen in his protection services and wars against foreign intrusions – “the enemies of the Lord” (1 Sam. 30:26b). David’s relocation to the land of Judah came as the result of the word of Gad the prophet (1 Sam. 22:5). Hence, his activities in the land as well as his continuous successes were probably viewed as being endorsed by Yahweh (cf. 1 Sam. 23:2, 4; 30:26b). Nevertheless, this phrase יָיִן יַהֲウェָה יִנְדַע, “because the battles of Yahweh my lord is fighting,” may also underscore the divine initiative and interest in establishing the Davidic line as well as defending His people before their enemies upon Judah’s return to the Promised Land (cf. Hag. 2:21-23; Zech. 4:6). In this sense the association between the two phrases “an enduring house” and “the battles of Yahweh” should not be understood only in their cause/effect relationship. The persistence with “the battles of Yahweh” would not guarantee “an enduring house” for David. Rather, when “Yahweh had given [David] rest on every side from all his enemies,” then the promise of an enduring house was given (2 Sam. 7:1; 11). Therefore, in a proper sense both “battles of Yahweh” (cf. 1 Sam. 17:47b) and “enduring house” had to be understood as coming from one and the same source, i.e. from Yahweh’s promise to defend his people. This idea is reflected in the LXXLB: οὕτως ὁ Κυρίων θεοῦ τῶν οἰκίων ημῶν καταλείπει “Because my lord’s battle does the Lord fight.”

The “evil,” which in the present context was directed towards the Calebites of Nabal’s household and was stopped, may have been expanded to endure “all your days” (יָמִים; lit. from your days), e.g. all the days, or as long the Davidic House would stand. Thus, it is possible to see that through this theological spiral the writer wanted to show the fortitude of the Davidic house and its relationship with the diverse post-exilic community living in Jerusalem.

4. “The Bundle of the Living”

This phrase יְהִי נַפְשׁוֹ אַל-פָּרָה בְּעֵרָה הָיוּדָה אֲלָדִיכֶם is usually interpreted to have eschatological connotations, because, as often explained, “the

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32 McCarter, however, believes that by this phrase Abigail underscores that David “has no evil in him now in consequence of anything he has ever done” (McCarter, 1 Samuel, 399). This phrase, however, follows in 며 in which would hardly indicate a completed action.
bundle/pouch of living” is the equivalent of “Book of the Living” (קְסֶםָה חֲדָשִׁים). Abigail seems to be looking beyond the establishment of the enduring house and straight into the World to Come. However, the phrase seems to make a better sense if it is read with the aspirations of the post-exilic community in mind. It envisions primarily not the future of one person – David, but rather the entire House of David returning from the Exile. This explanation seems to be in harmony with the warning of Amos the prophet issued to the house of Jacob:

Behold, the sovereign Lord is watching the sinful nation, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth. “But I will not completely destroy the family of Jacob,” says the Lord. “For behold, I am giving a command and I will shake the family of Israel together with all the nations. It will resemble a sieve being shaken, but not even a grain/bundle (תַּחַרַת) will fall to the ground (Amos 9:8-9).

Amos predicted that only the righteous remnant would be preserved but the wicked would perish. Consequently, one can see that Abigail “fretted” not so much about the hypothetical danger David was in, but rather the real danger the House of David was facing in the Exile and thereafter. A few “worthy” ones were preserved and returned to their land; they comprised the “bundle of the living,” whereas all wicked ones were “slung out” from the land.

5. Call to Memory

Abigail concluded her speech by calling David to remember her (v. 31). Levenson reads into the last phrase of Abigail’s speech (v. 31) a very intimate sense: “She offers victuals to David’s men; to David, she offers herself.” If, however, one reads this concluding statement against the background of the post-exilic community, the call to memory is a meaningful one. The Calebite community of Jerusalem extends the call to the House of David to remember what God had done in the past in which the tribe of Caleb played a significant part. If that memory is kept in proper

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33 Ibid.
34 Against Klein, 1 Samuel, 251.
36 Levenson, “1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,” 19. Rabbinical sages too interpret these words of Abigail as a subtle suggestion of marriage. However, they are quick to point out that that suggestion was only hypothetical, since it would have been possible only in case of Nabal’s death (Megillah, 14b).
perspective, there could be no grounds to reject the remnant of the Calebites from accepting them as brothers in the faith(fulness).

**Nabal and Abigail: The Characters’ Representative Nature**

The reading of the 1 Sam. 25 story along the suggested lines discovers a new dimension of the significance in the function of the characters in the story. Both Nabal and Abigail appear to be typical characters; they are illustrations of attitudes towards the Davidic House. Earlier it was noted that Nabal’s negative actions are counterbalanced by Abigail’s favorable words and actions in the story. The arrangement of the events in the story conveys meaning as well. Thus, it is quite significant that Nabal receives support neither from his wife nor from his servants. The servant’s refusal to inform Nabal about David’s protective services in the wilderness because Nabal was too wicked for anyone to speak to him (25:14-17), echoes the silence of the Benjaminites in Saul’s presence and their refusal to obey the king’s command (22:17). Abigail’s secret meeting with David echoes Jonathan’s numerous secret meetings and support of his friend. In terms of intertribal ties and the characters’ analogous relationships it can be observed that both Saul and Nabal in the world of the story are separated from their surroundings: Saul was separated from the Benjaminites, Nabal – from the Calebites in his household. The significance of their tribal affiliation becomes clear when it is recognized that after the Exile the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Caleb united together into one nation. This thought will be developed later. Suffice it to say now that Nabal, who denied the very existence of Yahweh, can be viewed as a representative for certain groups of people who were antagonistic towards the Davidic House, while the rightful heir, David, was temporarily dispossessed. Abigail – a woman of good understanding – represents a different group of people who wholeheartedly accepted the line and offspring of Jesse, and in return, like Abigail, were accepted into the House of David.

Further, the story makes it clear that outside of David’s indelicate remark about מַשֵּׁהוּ (משהוּ) – an expression which equates humans and dogs and would apply to the semi-nomadic tribe of the Calebites that bore the same name37 – the difference

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between the tribes of Judah and Caleb is indiscernible. Both tribes stand together ideologically and theologically. Only Nabal the churl pays his allegiance to Saul, King of Israel. In his attempt to destroy David, Saul ended up annihilating the population of Nob. When Abigail went to stop David, therefore, she tried to prevent him from becoming like Saul and “his bloody house” (2 Sam. 21:1; cf. 1 Sam. 22:21) – the sin for which Saul was later destroyed. By speaking this way, Abigail was stressing one point, if nothing else, that the well being of her own tribe was dependent on David’s action of protection, not bloodshed, as she did not perceive the future of her own tribe without the tribe of Judah. It is noteworthy that after Yahweh had intervened on David’s behalf (and on Abigail’s as well, as her “prophecy” came true), whenever her name is mentioned in the books of Samuel the narrator always speaks of her as “wife of Nabal (אֱלֹהִי) the Carmelite” (1 Sam. 27:3; 30:5; 2 Sam. 2:2; 3:3, but not in 1 Chr. 3:1). Does this note appear throughout the book(s) of Samuel every time simply to remind a reader about Abigail’s unfortunate associations with that churlish man? Hardly! Was it not to emphasize her origin through this subtle attachment for the sake of the Calebite community at large? Consequently, for the post-exilic community Abigail was seen as one of the links that secured the existence of her own tribe with the tribe of Judah.

1 Samuel 17—22 and its Author(s)

The significance of literary interrelations between some of the stories in 1 Sam. 17—22 was noted in the previous chapter. Here more attention is paid to the implication of some of the notes in the stories, which from the standpoint of the synchronic analysis are problematic but can be explained diachronically. In what follows, two things will be discussed: (1) the chronological and theological implications of the note about the sword of Goliath in 1 Sam. 17:54 and 21:10[9]; and (2) the ideological aspects of the Edomite’s presence in the narratives of 1 Sam. 21—22.

38 There are textual variants for “Carmelite(ss) in these passages:
1 Sam. 27:3 (MT): אֱלֹהִי נַבַּל תֵבוֹל תָּמְלַח יָבִי הָעֵנָה (LXX): Αβιγαία ἡ γυνὴ Ναβάλ τοῦ Καρμήλιου.
1 Sam. 30:5 (MT = LXX): אֱלֹהִי נַבַּל תֵבוֹל תָּמְלַח יָבִי הָעֵנָה (LXX): τοῦ Καρμήλιου.
2 Sam. 2:2 (MT = LXX): אֱלֹהִי נַבַּל תֵבוֹל תָּמְלַח יָבִי הָעֵנָה (LXX): τοῦ Καρμήλιου.
2 Sam. 3:3 (MT): וֹאֲלֹהִי אֱלֹהִי נַבַּל תֵבוֹל תָּמְלַח יָבִי הָעֵנָה (LXX): Αβιγαία τῇ Καρμήλιῳ.
A. 1 Sam. 17:54 and 1 Sam. 21:10[9]

In the previous chapter a few thematic parallels between Bethlehem and Nob exemplified in the speeches of Jonathan and David in 1 Sam. 20—21 were observed. Some additional ties can be highlighted here. The link between 21:10[9] and 17:54 points to a subtle connection between Nob and Jerusalem. This has already been recognized by scholarship in the years past. Grønbaek, for instance, thought that 17:54 refers to “the tent of David which housed the ark of the covenant, or to Solomon’s temple, because of the parallelism with Jerusalem in the preceding line.”39 Willis, however, connects 17:54 directly with 21:10 and says:

In the light of the fact that David later went to Nob and got the sword of the Philistine from the sanctuary there (21:10; 22:9-10), it is probable that the person(s) responsible for 17:54 had the Nob sanctuary in mind. If this is the case, then the second line in 17:54 anticipates the story of David’s flight to Ahimelech and the priests at Nob (1 Sam. 21—22). Its purpose is to call the reader’s (or hearer’s) attention to the significance of David’s relationship to the Elide priesthood of the Shiloh sanctuary, which had been transferred to Nob after the Philistine rout of Shiloh (cf. I Sam. 4:10-11; Jer. 7:12-15; 26:6).40

1 Sam. 17:54 lists two things: Goliath’s head and his armor. The former the narrator links with Jerusalem, the latter – with David’s tent. Fokkelman says that “this verse must be a gloss in view of its bold anachronism, which comes out even more sharply if we read v. 57.”41 Indeed, the note in 17:54 presents a chronological problem because the city of Jerusalem was not in the Israelite possession until it was captured by David much later (2 Sam. 5:6-9). Herzberg suggests that 17:54 “intends to state what finally became of the head of the Philistine that David slew.”42 Such an answer, however, creates other difficulties, which synchronically seem impossible to resolve. Thus, for instance, if Jerusalem was captured much later, where was the Goliath’s head kept all this time? Why is it linked to the city of Jerusalem and not to any other place? While it is theoretically possible that 17:54 came from some independent source tradition, the highly selective use of the available sources by the

40 Willis, “Redactional Joints,” 305.
41 Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 727.
42 Hertzberg, 1 & 2 Samuel, 154.
author of 1 Samuel rather suggests that unless there was a specific purpose for it, it is unlikely that he would have ever inserted the note at a place where it would seat most uncomfortably, thus causing some disturbance to the surrounding material.

However, with the help of the diachronic approach, the problem can be resolved. Earlier it was noted that when various theological aspects of David’s kingship in Jerusalem are considered, it becomes evident that his victory over the Philistine was an important anchoring point which validated him as the one on whom divine seal of approval rests – the key factor that eventually led him to the kingship in Jerusalem. The significance of this victory was recognized by Jonathan (18:1-5). His covenant with David that followed immediately, stressed its theological significance. Now what is true of Jonathan within the world of the narrative, is true of the author of the story in communicating his ideological message by this structure. Consequently, it is plausible to suppose that 17:54 may not have reflected any of the ancient traditions, but rather was a *creation* of the writer of the book(s) of Samuel in order to make a clear ideological point.

This verse functions as a theological signpost that draws readers’ attention to the implications of David’s victory over Goliath. It establishes a connection between David’s anointing as King Saul’s replacement (16:13) and his victory over the Philistine (ch. 17). This was the first big step on the road to David’s recognition by the people of Israel (18:7). Just as the decapitated Dagon before the ark of the God in Ashdod accentuated Yahweh’s superiority over the foreign gods (5:1-4); just as the Philistine lords demonstrated their superiority over Israel forces by cutting off Saul’s head and displaying it throughout their land, so David as Yahweh’s king showed his superiority over the Philistine forces in the valley of Elah. However, the national recognition of David as the king is mentioned later (2 Sam. 5:1-3) after which the conquest of Jerusalem and his kingship in Zion followed (5:6-10). The ideological point of the author of the story can now be perceived: it was Goliath’s head in David’s hand – a sign of his victory with the help of Yahweh – that paved his way to his kingship in Jerusalem.

Further, 17:54 says that David put Goliath’s armor in his tent (הַצֵּדָה). This note seems to be a later gloss too, for the sword was later found in Nob (21:10[9]). Driver explained that the reference is to David’s tent “when he was on
duty with Saul (18:2-5 etc.).” However, the same verse also mentions the head of Goliath. Three verses later, however, David is found standing before Saul with Goliath’s head in his hand, but there is not mention of the sword. So, if both items mentioned in v. 54 were with David, why is there no mention of Goliath’s armor in v. 57 if indeed David was about to put them in his tent?

Willis suggests “to consider the waw at the end of הלא as a remnant of or an abbreviation for an original היהוה, and to read הלא יהוה, ‘in the tent of Yahweh.’” McCarter offers a similar explanation. Gordon, however, notes that “this scarcely requires that his tent originally referred to Yahweh’s tent-shrine. Nor have we grounds for assuming that the Nob shrine was a tent.”

However, even the plain reading – “his tent” (וּלָּהָבוֹן) – is not without its problems if 17:54 is read synchronically. The difficulty in solving it persists even if it is supposed that it refers to David’s tent before his appointment by Saul as a military commander in 18:2. For if David was going back and forth from Saul to tend his father’s flocks at Bethlehem (17:15), and it is clear from the context of ch. 17 that his tent was nowhere near the battleground when the Philistine came forth with his challenge, where exactly was “his tent”? In Bethlehem, Gibeah, Jerusalem? How is this problem to be resolved?

Willis suggests that a redactor responsible for inserting 17:54 into the text made it anticipatory. He says that 17:54a (Goliath’s head) anticipates 2 Sam. 5:6-9; 17:25 (conquest of Jerusalem) and 17:54b (Goliath’s armor) anticipates 1 Sam. 21—22 (the retrieval of Goliath’s sword in Nob). Willis goes on to say that the entire 17:54 needs to be attributed to the same redactor. He concludes that “the redactor responsible for this anticipatory gloss is not the final redactor of the books of Samuel, since he must have included a tradition about David bringing the giant’s head to Jerusalem, which the final redactor has deleted for some unknown reason.”

If that was so, however, one has to wonder why this redactor, in order to solve this problem, by deleting some of the material, created another by failing to remove it completely. The question remains, therefore, why this information was so

43 Willis, “Redactional Joints,” 304.
44 McCarter, I Samuel, 294-95.
45 Gordon, I-II Samuel: A Commentary, 158. See also Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 727.
46 Willis, “Redactional Joints,” 305. Italics are mine.
important to the writer of the book(s) of Samuel that he included it in his work? What goal was he pursuing? Why, in the place where “Nob” is expected, does the text read “his tent” and why does Jerusalem appear in the same verse? This is not to deny the fact that Goliath’s sword eventually was placed in Nob. Indeed, the context of 1 Sam. 21:10[9] suggests that in Nob David was after the particular sword. Consequently, the writer of the book(s) of Samuel was probably less concerned with how the sword got there but with where David collected it. In this regard, the significance of Nob and what happened there later has to be seen in light of David’s victory over the Philistine. This seems to be highly important when it is recognized that the tabernacle of Nob was later transferred to Jerusalem.

Commenting on the appearance of Jerusalem in 17:54, McCarter notes: “In view of the Nob connection and the impropriety of the reference to Jerusalem we may ask with several scholars if Jerusalem has displaced Nob here.” He also says that “the story of the contest with the Philistine must have been nurtured for a long time in Jerusalem, the City of David.” McCarter later adds that “there is also some evidence to suggest that the tradition belonged originally to Nob.” However, a question arises: Did the writer of the books of Samuel want merely to preserve the inherited traditions (or traces thereof) or, rather, being guided by some ideological and theological pursuits he composed it himself on the basis of the source traditions he had inherited? All three places, Bethlehem, Nob and Jerusalem, were highly important in creating a theological and ideological platform on which the Davidic person as Yahweh’s king would stand. The writer of these stories linked these places by the theme of David’s victory over Goliath. There are reasons to assume, therefore, that the purpose of 1 Sam. 17:54 has less to do with the transmission of this tradition “which the tradent(s) had inherited dealing with what ultimately became of the Philistine’s head, which was considered to be such a great war trophy,” and more with establishing the relationship between David’s tent, where the trophy was laid, Yahweh’s Tabernacle in Nob, where it was later found, and the

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47 See Edelman, King Saul, 167.
48 McCarter, I Samuel, 294-95
49 Ibid., 296, n. 3.
50 Willis, “Redactional Joints,” 303.
city of David – Jerusalem. For in the city of Jerusalem, Bethlehem (David’s town) and Nob (Yahweh’s sanctuary) were later assumed.

So, the parallels between 1 Sam. 17:54 and 21:10[9] as well as 2 Sam. 5:6-9, 17-25 appear to be not so much as “anticipatory” in nature, but rather as a two-way theological bridge which allows one text to comment on the other. Thus, for instance, the note of 21:10[9] looks back on the validation of David as Israel’s leader through his victory over Goliath and looks forward to David conquering Jerusalem after which the bringing in of the arc of the covenant followed. The writer who created these literary links must have been one and the same and the note of 17:54, which sits uncomfortably in the text, causes the readers to consider the significance of David’s victory in relationship to Bethlehem, Nob and Jerusalem.51

Some important ties between 1 Sam. 17:54 and 21:10[9] as well as other stories in the HB can now be mentioned. There are some meaningful parallels between the latter texts and Gen. 14:18-20. Ahimelech’s giving of the holy bread to the son of Jesse is reminiscent of Melchizedek, king of Salem the priest of God Most High, greeting Abraham with bread and wine. It is possible that one of the purposes of the writer of the book(s) of Samuel was to highlight parallels between Abraham and King David. By establishing a thematic relationship between the sanctuary of Nob and the city of Jerusalem, the theological significance of the Davidic figure realizing the “vision” of the king of Salem is emphasized. For Melchizedek assumed two offices in one person, as the king and priest of the God Most High, and as such he foreshadows the Davidic king who in similar fashion would assume double office (Ps. 110:4; cf. 2 Sam. 6:14; 7).

B. 1 Samuel 21—22

In determining the overall purpose of 1 Sam. 21—22, the character of Doeg the Edomite is the key. However, as was already noted in Chapter III, his origin presents some challenges for the interpreters when the text is studied synchronically. Some say that his ethnic origin is not an issue and, therefore, his presence in the sanctuary is not problematic, for “there is no anti-Edomite strain in

51 Gelander says that 2 Sam. 5:6-8(9) “underscores the theological aspect of the capture of Jerusalem” instead of the military one (Gelander, David and His God, 120-28).
the books of Samuel." Others, taking into account theological and ideological dimensions of the story, think that his origin may clarify his actions whilst creating other problems. Thus, his ethnicity may explain why he had no restraint in executing the priests, but not why he was admitted in the House of Yahweh. This led some to propose that Doeg’s origin was “updated” later. Edelman says that such an “ethnic slur” would be particularly meaningful to later audiences. The nature of the editorial “updating” is examined in more detail elsewhere. It will suffice to note here that the modern reader needs to recognize the presence of multiple layers of meaning in the narratives and consider the effect each of them would have on multiple audiences leaving at different times.

The purpose of the following discussion is to try to isolate each of the layers and note their individual and mutual significance. Just as the case is with the characters in 1 Sam. 25, Doeg the Edomite is typical character and functions in representative capacity as Israel’s enemy. In his role, Doeg the Edomite saturates the colors of the foreign animosity toward the Davidic House, Israel’s cultic center, as well as the nation of Israel in general. This can be perceived on several levels:

1) The conflict between Saul and David is not simply between the two persons; it eventually grows into a full scale war between two ideological systems. On the pages of 1 Samuel this war is displayed against the theological background of Yahweh’s rejection of Saul’s House and His favor of the House of David. Various thematic ties of Bethlehem with Nob and between the families of Ahimelech and David were already identified. Here it may be added that the execution of Ahimelech’s entire House (22:17-19), and the demise of Jesse’s household mentioned a few verses earlier (21:1), illustrates the closeness between both families on yet another level: it is noteworthy that these are the only two households in 1 Samuel to become the victims of Saul’s wrath. Both families suffered because of Saul’s war against the “son of Jesse.” So, in the world of the story Doeg not only emerged as King Saul’s closest ally, but also appeared to be the driving force in this

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52 Meir, “The Heading of Psalm 52,” 147.
53 So Edelman, King Saul, 19.
54 Ibid.
55 See Appendix VIII.
ideological warfare. As such, he is the persecutor not only of the House of Ahimelech, but also of the House of David.

Consequently, within the plot of the story, Doeg the Edomite can be viewed as completing Saul’s intentions concerning the two houses or three: the House of Yahweh, the House of David and the House of Ahimelech. In considering the later audiences who would have been particularly attuned such an “ethnic slur” that is the Edomite, Doeg’s exterminating the priesthood would immediately resonate with the nation’s experience of the destruction of Jerusalem and profanation of the Temple.

Now Doeg’s closeness to Saul throughout the narrative can be looked at from a different angle: at that moment of the trial, somehow Saul assumed the Edomite perspective as Israel’s enemy. Against the background of Israel’s struggle with the nation of Edom later, the story of Saul’s persecution of the Davidic House with the help of Doeg the Edomite could have been viewed as a parallel to Edom’s persecution of the House of Judah (cf. Obad. 1:10). It was previously noted that in the story of 1 Sam. 22 Saul’s behavior among the rest of the Benjaminites (and/or Israelites) is singled out, in that he first accused his own countrymen of conspiracy and then completely relied on the Edomite’s testimony in accusing and sentencing the priests. On that day in Gibeah, only two men were in the right: Saul and Doeg. When Doeg blamed the priesthood for their showing support to the “son of Jesse,” none of the Benjaminites but King Saul seems to have accepted his story as true.

Along with this, it should be observed that the refusal of the Benjaminites to support Saul in his quest of exterminating the servants of the House of Yahweh is quite significant when examined against the background of the post-exilic time. There, Judah and Benjamin comprised the remnant of those returning from the Exile. If Judah (the House of David) was the leader (cf. 1 Chr. 5:2), Benjamin was its strongest supporter. From this perspective, the behavior of the Benjaminites during the trial in Gibeah is explained and exonerated.

2) In 1 Sam. 21 and 22 Doeg the Edomite functions as Israel’s arch-enemy. The Edomite was the only one among Saul’s servants who had no restraint

56 “Judah and Benjamin” appear once in 1 Ki. 12:23, and eleven times in 2 Chronicles (11:1, 3, 10, 12, 23; 15:2, 8, 9; 25:5; 31:1; 34:9).
to follow Saul’s orders in executing the priests of Yahweh. Commentators note that Doeg’s non-Israelite origin allowed him to act violently against Israel’s cultic center, for this taboo would not affect him. However, it seems that Doeg raised his sword against the House of Yahweh not because he was a foreigner (as though every foreigner would act likewise), but precisely because he was Israel’s enemy. Only an enemy would take advantage of the situation and wipe out the entire population of the town sparing neither man nor beast. As is often noted, this act of complete extermination of Nob echoes Saul’s campaign in Amalek (15:2). There, however, at least something was spared (15:21). Doeg did not spare anything! By obliterating one of the towns in Israel, the Edomite functions as the enemy of the nation. Israel and Edom were continuous adversaries throughout most of their history: in the early stages of the conquest (Nu. 20:2-21), during the united monarchy (1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Sam. 8:13) and during the Exile (Jer. 49:7-22; Lam. 4:21-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:15; 36:5; Joel 4:19 [3:19]). In examining the character of Doeg the Edomite who depicts this struggle, his portrait painted in the stories of 1 Sam. 21 and 22 offers no alternative view. Edelman makes a similar observation:

The equation drawn here between Amalek and Edom almost certainly provides clues about the situation of the intended audience. Amalek appears as a historical entity in narratives dealing with the periods before the 7th century BCE. Edom, by contrast, became a symbol of treachery in the closing years of the Judahite monarchy when it sided with neo-Babylonia during the two attacks on Jerusalem and refused to give asylum to Judahite refugees. Both are associated with the same geographical region, allowing their equation. The audience reacting to Doeg must be late monarchic, exilic or post-exilic.57

3) By attacking Israel’s cultic center, Doeg was leading a war with the House of Yahweh. Saul’s sentencing of the priests and Doeg’s execution, both of which arose out of suspicion of the priests providing David with political guidance by making inquiries for him, must be viewed as ultimately challenging Yahweh (cf. Ps. 2).58 Their deeds interpreted against the background of 1 Sam. 2:9-10: “For not by might shall a man prevail; those who contend with Yahweh shall be shattered,”

57 Edelman, King Saul, 180, n. 2.
58 Fokkelman suggested that by this wicked act of ordering the execution of innocent priests, Saul took his vengeance on Yahweh (Fokkelman, Crossing Fates, 404).
expose their guilt. In this, the very sentencing of Ahimelech should also be noted. Polzin and Edelman observe that Saul’s condemnation of the priests echoes his condemnation of Jonathan (14:44) and contrasts it with that of David (19:6).\[^{59}\]

Polzin says that “in Jonathan’s case, Saul’s sentence is short-circuited by the people” (14:46).\[^{60}\] The same can be noted about Jonathan’s defense of David (19:5-6). As for the priests, the lack of a mediator, human or divine, is extraordinary (cf. 23:14b; 25:38). The absence of any intercessor in this instance, however, echoes the words of Eli’s warning issued to his sons the priests: “If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against Yahweh, who can intercede for him” (2:25)? Right after these words the oracle regarding the destruction of Eli’s house followed (2:27-36). A number of scholars noted that the destruction of Nob fulfilled that oracle.\[^{61}\] From this it does not follow, however, that since the entire population of the town was destroyed the people in it somehow were guilty. Nevertheless, the readers and listeners of those stories in the book of 1 Samuel must have been able to note the pattern: If Yahweh was true to His word and the Elide priesthood perished, what can be said about those who continue to contend with Him by applying their heavy hand on His inheritance? Indeed, about Saul, the Chronicler said: “So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the Lord … Therefore He killed him and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse” (1 Chr. 10:13, 14). As to Doeg the Edomite, one of the answers could be: his open-ended story could be compared with the anticipation of Edom’s downfall expressed in the writings of the prophets:

\begin{quote}
ואיררה לחרבט תשלח היהת מחסם בני יהודה אשר ספסר בנס ayrק אראסמס
\end{quote}

And Edom will become a desolate wilderness,  
Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah,  
In whose land they have shed innocent blood (Joel 4:19[3:19], emphasis added).

\[^{60}\] Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 199.  
\[^{61}\] Ackroyd (179); McCarter (366); Klein (226); Vos (78); Gordon (174); Fokkelman (380, 388, 409, 410); Brueggemann (161); Edelman (178-180); Youngblood (736); Barber (240).
It seems likely that by linking Doeg the Edomite with the ideological and political pursuits of the House of Saul, the writer wanted to emphasize the surety of the downfall of the nation of Edom – a long-standing enemy of Israel. This theme can be discerned most clearly when the stories are read from the perspective of a post-exilic community, in which a stronger emphasis was laid on the history of the struggle between the Davidic House with the surrounding nations and especially Edom.  

4) If Saul and Nabal are illustrations of a domestic attitude towards the Davidic House, Doeg voices a foreigner’s opinion about it. It is noteworthy that right after the appearance of this foreigner in the House of God (21:8[7]), or as was cautiously suggested, in the place which in numerous ways came to be associated with the place of David’s own residence, the story about Achish follows (vv. 11-16[10-15]). Dismissing David’s sanity (cf. 2 Sam. 6:20), the king of Gath poses the following question: הֲרָא הָאָרֶץ אֵלֵּיהַ, “This one, shall he enter into my house?” (cf. 2 Sam. 5:7-8). Achish does not allow David to enter his house, nor does he welcome David later (1 Sam. 27:2-6). Strangely, this fact does not seem to affect their relationship, but rather helps it (29:6). Their master/servant relationship (27:12) was intact for as long as both respected each other’s territory (27:8-11; 29:9-10).

Now it is not entirely impossible that Doeg’s presence in the sanctuary is a literary device which helps to illustrate a similar truth on a quite different level. Unlike David, who was not permitted to enter the house of the foreigner, Doeg was allowed to enter the house of Yahweh, which ultimately led to disaster. When these stories are read together, they can be polemical. The rhetorical question of Achish in the story: “Shall this one enter my house?” (21:16[15]) can be applied to the entire chapter of 1 Sam. 21: If Achish never allowed David to enter his house, what should have been done with Doeg entering Yahweh’s? The intended lesson of these stories for the returning exiles must have been clear – no foreigner should be allowed to enter the precincts of the Temple.

62 Assis argued that in the prophetic corpus Edom was chosen to stand for all other gentile powers hostile to Israel (Elie Assis, “Why Edom? On the Hostility Towards Jacob's Brother in Prophetic Sources,” VT 56 [2006], 1-20).
63 And that despite the fact that Achish was duped both times.
The application of this principle can be seen in the story of Ezra 4:2. The helping hand of the foreigners during the construction of the Second Temple was refused. The same can be observed in Nehemiah 13, where this truth appears again but with a sharper accent. The foreigners had to be excluded from Israel altogether (v. 3) and expelled from the house of Yahweh (vv. 4-9). This can be noted again in the writings of the prophets. Thus, prophesying about Israel’s restoration Zechariah concludes: “וְגַם הַמַּאֲכָלָה יְהוָה בִּירָמִי תָּקְלָתָה, יִהְיֶה בִּירָמִי בְּיְרוּשָׁלָיִם בֵּית אֶלֶף הָיוּם" (Zech. 14:21).

**History and Ideology in 1 Samuel 16—25**

The stories in 1 Sam. 16—25 have been artfully compiled together by the ancient writer(s). They are an example of a harmonious blend of coherent simplicity and structural complexity of the material and message. A careful look at the narratives in 1 Sam. 16—25 from various perspectives reveals that the stories are not told for their own sake. The multilayered ideological and theological strata carry the message concealed in the texts. The characters in those narratives – their words and actions – are more than what they appear to be, as the events themselves are the carriers of the deep meaning.

Having examined some of the characters in greater detail, it is necessary to step back and take a broad look, to view what is being portrayed in this one section (chs.16—25) of the grand literary canvas that is 1 Samuel. Upon reading these stories, it may leave one with an impression that there are two major camps present. In one camp there is Saul, Doeg and Nabal, and in the other – David, Jonathan, Ahimelech and Abigail. However, on further perusal it becomes clear that the clustering of characters is much more complex than it first appears. One character in particular is unlike the others and draws attention to himself. David is the key figure, but not merely because his person dominates in these stories. The king of Yahweh’s choosing and the Davidic dynasty is the focal point of the narrator. Curiously, while David is being portrayed as unable to find a resting place and establish himself anywhere in Saul’s kingdom (cf. 26:19), he can move freely anywhere in the world of the narrative without for a moment loosing contact with the One whose king he is (16:1). As such, David is the only character in these stories
who does not have to take sides, for he is the chosen one. The rest of the characters, however, have to make up their minds about whose side they are to be on. Their decision, however, is not made in an ideological and/or theological vacuum. The recognition of divine program for the nation and the matter of Israel’s kingship is at the heart of their decision-making. Remarkably, they show their true color by their individual attitude toward David, the son of Jesse.

The preeminence of David above all other characters is significant not only within the plot of 1 Samuel, but also because of its implications for the broader audience. In 1 Samuel the writer begins developing the Davidic figure with the introduction of the shepherd boy in 1 Sam. 16. As David makes his appearances at different places and reveals his qualities in different contexts, he causes people to respond either positively or negatively. When other characters in those stories make up their minds about the Davidic person, they act not only for themselves; they have been carefully selected by the author to express the attitudes of larger groups.

In focusing on certain details in 1 Sam. 16—25, it is noticeable that literary stratification of distinct character groups has a certain pattern. The relationship between these character clusters, however, needs to be carefully nuanced. In what follows, the reader is asked to consider the significance of the following six or seven patterns and the relationships between various character strata, that underpin the structure of 1 Sam. 16—25:

1) Two groups are in place when it comes to expressing attitudes toward the Davidic figure. Saul, Nabal and Doeg are on the one side, and Jonathan, Abigail and Ahimelech are on the other. Four of these six characters are family related (Saul and Jonathan; Nabal and Abigail) and two are unrelated (Doeg and Ahimelech). However, comparison of the latter two is still valid on the literary, theological and ideological levels (see below). Here it just needs to be noted that the words and works of three negative characters (Saul, Nabal and Doeg) in the narrative of 1 Sam. 16—25 are nicely balanced by the parallel appearance of three positive ones (Jonathan, Abigail and Ahimelech).\(^{64}\) Such a balanced picture does not seem to be

\(^{64}\) It should be noted here that Abner is quite an important character. He is the only one (from the old establishment) who attempts to change sides later and is counterbalanced by the appearance of Joab. He survives the downfall of the House of Saul and pays his allegiance to David.
2) David’s family is under attack from two other families that share many similarities: the family of King Saul and Nabal’s family. The latter two families share numerous traits, which makes it possible to identify various analogous relationships between characters. Thus, Saul is analogous with Nabal and Jonathan with Abigail. The negative attitude toward David is exemplified in words and works of Saul and Nabal. Nabal ridicules the family of the “son of Jesse” by his aggressive verbal assault. That, however, seems minor in comparison to Saul’s public, national mockery of Jesse’s family when he takes his daughter, Michal, away from David and unapologetically gives her in marriage to another (1 Sam. 25:44).

However, the assault on David’s family from the houses of Saul and Nabal is not a united front. Jonathan and Abigail gladly join themselves to this “runaway” slave. Inner tensions and disagreements split these two families. As a result, those who are against David succeed only temporarily. The House of Saul is destined to collapse and so is Nabal’s. However, those characters who managed to attach themselves to David while he was on the run, reap phenomenal benefits. Thus, the son of Jonathan – Mephibosheth – is “adopted” into David’s family when he receives a regular place at David’s table, as one of his sons (2 Sam. 9:11) and Abigail becomes David’s wife (1 Sam. 25:39-42). Ironically, the House of Saul is remembered only through Mephibosheth, “crippled in both feet;” the memory of Nabal survives through his former association with Abigail, now David’s wife. In this, both continuity and discontinuity can be noted: some representatives from the antagonistic party are welcomed into the House of David and eventually assimilated into it; those, however, who persecuted David fail and cease to exist. Thus, two
families made up of two teams are divided within themselves and move towards two divergent destinies.

3) In 1 Sam. 16—25 four households are present: the household of Saul, the household of the “son of Jesse,” the household of Ahimelech and Nabal’s household. The first and the last must be grouped together as the second and the third are closely connected. As the leaders of their own households Saul and Nabal expose a unique ideological similarity. The same can be said about the household of the “son of Jesse” and the household of Ahimelech. The latter two can be compared on various levels, not the least of which is the persecution they experience from the hands of Saul.

These four households can be looked at from a different angle, which reveals meaningful perpendicular relationships. Just as the House of Saul is comparable with the House of the “son of Jesse” on the level of the kingship, the comparison of Nabal’s household with that of Ahimelech exposes some connections on a more personal level. This is especially noticeable when one pays attention to the differences in David’s attitude towards each of these households. Thus, David is unable to protect Ahimelech’s household from disaster. He claims some responsibility for bringing about the death of every person in the household of Ahimelech (22:22). However, addressing Nabal, David claims the responsibility for protecting Nabal’s possessions in the wilderness, but later promises to completely destroy that which he was protecting. The implications of these links between these two households are beyond the scope of the present analysis, but need to be noted, for the relationship between those stories seems to run much deeper. Suffice it to say that as far as the similarities in the literary relationship between these two households are concerned, each of these two makes a “contribution” to the House of David. Ahimelech survived by his son Abiathar; Nabal – by his wife Abigail. Remarkably, when these two come under David’s care, they help to expose a few Yahweh-like traits in David’s character. By receiving them, David demonstrates that he is “a father of the fatherless and a judge of the widow” (cf. Ps. 68:6[5]). The implications of this principle are far reaching and would have been meaningful for the post-exilic community gathering around the “Davidic House” in Jerusalem.
4) When the House of Saul and the House of Nabal are examined in their relationship to the House of David, it becomes clear that whenever discussions about “house” (בית) surfaces in the speeches of their representative members, the term denotes dynasty. Thus, when Jonathan entered into the covenant relationship with the House of David, he accentuated the longevity of the Davidic dynasty instead of his father’s (20:16). The seed planted by Jonathan was harvested by his son Mephibosheth at the table of King David (2 Sam. 9). The same can be noted in Nabal’s household: Abigail speaks of the enduring House of David (25:28) and enters it by marrying David. In this it can be seen that David was viewed both by Jonathan and Abigail as the head of a dynasty, which had a definite future. This in itself is quite remarkable that Jonathan and Abigail attached themselves to a “nobody,” holding firmly to certain promises associated with the Davidic figure. Their particular relationship with David secured the place of their families in the household of David in the years to come. However, their honoring the person of David has much greater implications once their representative role is recognized. By showing David their support, they become instrumental in advancing divine plans for the nation of Israel as a whole.

5) The characters’ grouping in terms of their tribal affiliation is significant. All of the major players in the 1 Sam. 16—25 stories come from three tribes of Israel or four: Judah, Benjamin, Levi and Caleb. Now, if Saul’s negative opinion about David in 1 Sam. 16—25 is counterbalanced by Jonathan’s friendship with David, Nabal’s low opinion of David is compensated by Abigail’s response. Saul and Jonathan were the Benjaminites, Nabal and Abigail – the Calebites. These two tribes (Benjamin and Caleb) through their representative members express their attitude toward the Davidic dynasty. As for Israel’s priesthood and the Levites, as represented by the household of Ahimelech in the world of the story, their close affiliation with the Davidic House in the city of Jerusalem has not undergone a transformation: in the city of Jerusalem the House of Yahweh and the House of David were linked. 2 Sam. 7 – the story of the two houses – finds an additional support here when it is compared with Ezra 1:5. The latter passage reveals that the restoration of the House of David after the Exile began as soon as the House of
Yahweh in Jerusalem was being rebuilt with the help of the heads of the households of Judah, Benjamin and the priests and the Levites, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred. Thus, it can be seen that after the Exile, only Judah, Benjamin and the Levites comprised the remnant of Israel. To their number the tribe of Caleb (“those whose spirit God had stirred”) has to be added as well. The latter tribal group apparently was the welcoming party that received the returning exiles. Consequently, this deed secured their position in the House of Judah or more specifically in the Davidic House (1 Chr. 2, 4). It is remarkable that no other tribes of Israel but these (Judah, Benjamin, the Levites and the Calebites) are represented by the main characters in the 1 Sam. 16—25 stories. The author’s particular attention only to these characters is hardly incidental. This pattern is highly suggestive of the fact that the stories in 1 Sam. 16—25 were tailored to fit the particular needs of a specific audience. Analysis shows that a message embedded in these stories would especially resonate with the people living in Jerusalem after the Exile.

6) One particular thread in this line of parallels – Doeg vs. Ahimelech – must now be considered. Within the world of the story, these are the only two who are unrelated, unlike other characters. This is a mismatch. However, such an apparent misbalance in the story may have served the author’s purposes of representing certain aspects of historic national reality, namely, the Edomite aggression against Jerusalem with the temple at its heart.

In the world of the 1 Sam. 21—22 stories, Ahimelech’s hospitality is not adequately compensated. Ahimelech’s apparently favorable attitude towards Doeg when he visited Nob the first time does not stop him from destroying Nob, but rather becomes the direct cause of it, thus exposing treacherous nature of Doeg’s character. In that regard Doeg’s presence in the House of Yahweh in 21:8[7] is offset by the following story, in which another foreigner – Achish – does not allow David to enter his house (v. 16[15]) without incurring his wrath later. Strangely enough, it even helps David’s peaceful coexistence with Achish (ch. 27). Not so with Doeg’s and his visitation of Nob. His deeds described in 1 Sam. 22 appear to be the consequence of his being allowed into the precincts of the House of Yahweh in the first place.
This leads to another point: Doeg’s murderous acts in Nob are left uncompensated. This pattern is quite significant when it is examined against the background of Edom’s attacks on Jerusalem. In 1 Sam. 21 and 22 Doeg’s is being portrayed as the enemy of both David and Ahimelech. It can even be said that he is the enemy of both houses: David’s and Yahweh’s. This role of Doeg needs to be nuanced.

The fact that Doeg was the enemy of the House of David can be seen from the following: he executes the priests after the king issues the following statement: “because their (priests’) hand also is with David…” (22:17). The “helping hand” of the priests to David should be noted and examined against the background of David obtaining the bread of the presence of Yahweh (1 Sam. 21:7[6]). Later, he also danced before the Lord while wearing the priestly outfit, as the ark of the covenant was being transported to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:14).67 This function of King David in a priestly capacity has its own significance in showing the continuity between him and Melchizedek – thus making a subtle link with the forefather Abraham. This parallel was most probably on the mind of the psalmist when he proclaimed that as the King of Jeru(Salem) (cf. Ps. 76:3[2]), David assumed the office of the priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4).

Doeg also functions as the enemy of the House of Yahweh in general. The antagonism between Edom and the House of David=House of Yahweh is clearly illustrated in the story of Doeg’s intrusion in the affairs of peaceful life of the priestly town. Doeg wielding his sword against the House of Yahweh in Nob illustrates and anticipates the fall of Jerusalem. Consequently, just as Doeg’s “unfinished” story awaits divine involvement, the deed of the nation of Edom against the Kingdom of Judah awaits the answer to the prayer of Ps. 137:7: “Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said: ‘Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation.’” So it is in the story of 1 Sam. 22, which ends on a hopeful note: amongst the total destruction there are still survivors. One may say that the stem was still left for a shoot to spring and blossom later (cf. Is. 6:13).

67 Auld draws the attention to the fact that the linen ephod, which was Samuel’s uniform at the tabernacle (1 Sam. 2:18), “may be an early hint of a connection with the later king David” (A. Graeme Auld, Samuel at the Threshold. Collected Essays of Graeme Auld, SOTSMS [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004], 175-76).
7) Now, if the attitude towards David is expressed through the representative function of the main characters in 1 Sam. 16—25, and if the phrase the “son of Jesse” has messianic connotation attached thereto, then it is possible to see that each of the characters in those stories functions in yet another capacity. These stories have their significance not only when they are understood against the background of Israel’s history and tradition, not only in their reflecting current trends in the author’s reality in the post-exilic times, but also in their ability to project the principles taken from these stories on the screen of the messianic future. Thus, the characters of Saul, Doeg, Nabal, Abigail, Ahimelech and Jonathan can be viewed in their typical roles, that express the attitudes of general groups of people in the nation of Israel toward the idea of “a shoot springing from the stem of Jesse” (Is. 11:1; 10). While there was the “branch” which guaranteed the nation’s future in the face of Zerubbabel (Zech. 3:8; 4:6-9; 6:12; Hag. 2), there was a particular need to speak of the resurrection and reappearance of a Davidic figure who would shepherd God’s people (cf. Jer. 30:9, 21; Ez. 34:23-25; 37:23-24; Hosea 3:5). Therefore, the phrase דוד בן ישי, “David, the son of Jesse,” might have become the banner of the messianic expectation.

By displaying these familiar stories against this post-exilic theological, messianic background, the writer(s) of the book(s) of Samuel were able to show that the continuous story of struggle and survival of the Davidic House was an indispensable part of the nation’s existence on the one hand, and on the other, the nation’s future – its rise and fall – was in the hands of the Almighty. In this way these stories were written for future generations to cherish, repeat, remember and transmit for as long as the hope for the coming of the one to “whom the obedience of the peoples” was promised (Gen. 49:10) would endure.

So, the biblical writers believed that it was insufficient for the people of Israel – the remnant community – to simply rejoice in the fact that the nation survived the Exile and came back to the Promised Land. The prophets’ role was to implant into people’s minds the idea of the emergence of the Davidic figure without whom the restoration of the nation and the Davidic Kingdom would be incomplete.

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68 Thus, this phrase דוד בן ישי could be viewed as a decisive element in understanding the Messiah’s title דוד בן דוד.
and unimaginable (cf. Ezek. 34:17ff). In this light the stories of 1 Sam. 16—25 may have been designed to become polemic as well. Just as those who persecuted the “son of Jesse” have seen their downfall, those who shun the idea of the messianic national star (cf. Nu. 24:17-18) would equally see their end through divine intervention (Jer. 30:7-9; Ez. 20:38; Zeph. 3:11-12). Those, however, who wholeheartedly receive the idea, would take part in the future glories of the House of David (cf. Zech. 13:1-7).

Conclusion

A closer reading of the stories in 1 Sam. 16—25 reveals various layers of meaning inherent in those stories. The significance is concealed in the structure of the texts. It is evident that these stories are able to communicate truth on multiple levels and may have been designed to reach multiple audiences.

The examination of those narratives from the above mentioned perspective may lead one to conclude that messianic expectations, which were particularly fertile in the post-exilic time, may have given a particular incentive to the making of the book(s) of Samuel. If the above analysis is correct and the observations are valid, namely, that the book(s) of Samuel emerged in the 5th c. B.C. and that the Davideic person is at the heart of the messianic movement, then it seems reasonable to conclude that the book(s) of Samuel may have been written by the process of looking backward (with admiration of David) and forward (with anticipation of David’s re-appearance). As such, the main purpose for selecting the stories in the book(s) of Samuel and for arranging the material in particular way was not to recite Israel’s “history” or to reconstruct the outline of the “historical David” – the fact which no one of the narrator’s audience would probably negate. Rather, the main reason for composition of the book(s) of Samuel was to accentuate the significance of the Davideic person, thereby creating the context needed for the development of the messianic ideas.

Consequently, if the past was meaningful to the writer(s) of the book(s) of Samuel just as the future was significant, then it becomes clear that the ambiguity and complexity of the material in Samuel’s corpus is a tribute to the ingenuity of its authors and their ability to fuse together past, present and future in one coherent and

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meaningful whole, thus underscoring the fact that in God’s plan for Israel, the nation’s journey is as important as the destiny.
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

By way of summary of the study just terminated, a few concluding remarks need to be made as well as a few shortcomings highlighted in light of the selective nature of the above analysis. Additionally, a brief summary of the discussions which led to this thesis are reported as well as suggestions made for a few avenues of study that may be worth pursuing in future.

Looking Back

The analysis of some of the stories in 1 Sam. 16—25 led to the conclusion that the complexity of the individual stories in that section as well as the unique relationship between them has a wider spectrum of significance. Besides a surface-level, obvious role, each of the characters in those stories operated in their typical capacity representing larger groups. They voice different attitudes toward the Davidic House. In order to expose the multidimensional value of 1 Sam. 16—25, these stories were read on three levels:

1) against the background of the story-world of David and Saul as it is portrayed in HB (Chapters II and III).

2) by focusing on the development of the phrase the “son of Jesse,” on its function in 1 Samuel and on the significance of its appearances in the speeches of Saul, Doeg and Nabal (Chapter IV).

3) with an attempt to discern the writer’s purposes in carefully selecting the characters and arranging the stories by creating certain intricate structural patterns (Chapter V).

A brief sketch of the general outline of the research in 1 Sam. 25; 21—22; 17—18 introduced the discussion. The main task in Chapter I was four-fold: 1) to review various approaches to the studies of the narratives in 1 Sam. 16—25; 2) to analyze various proposals dealing with difficulties imbedded in those stories; 3) to
highlight the accomplishments of past research, thereby 4) setting up a platform for the new discussion.

The early section of the chapter examined historical critical and literary approaches to studying 1 Sam. 25. Three major perspectives were examined, each of which focused on the role of one of the individual characters: David, Abigail and Nabal.

The section that followed, highlighted difficulties and tensions in studying the stories in 1 Sam. 21 and 22. A brief survey of the literary approaches to these narratives was added, with the focus placed on the mysterious role of Doeg the Edomite as well as on some problematic issues that surround his characterization. The different approaches were evaluated and scholarly verdicts in the matter listed.

The next section summarized the relationship between MT, versions of LXX, Q and Josephus in 1 Sam. 16—25. Using the example of the 1 Sam. 17—18 story, the peculiar nature of the Greek shorter text was considered and some observations on the nature of the relationship between MT, LXX, Q and Josephus were offered.

The purpose of Chapter II was to undertake a detailed analysis of the character Nabal in 1 Sam. 25. Using the synchronic approach, Nabal’s character has been evaluated against the background of the political reality during the latter days of Saul’s reign.

In the first part of the chapter the focus was placed on Nabal’s characterization in 1 Sam. 25. It was noted that the negativity embedded in his name (לֹּא) is sustained by his reputation as a worthless man (ְרֵהַלָּליים). Noting the way the narrator described Nabal, considerations of the kethib reading בְּלָק, the man was “like his heart” as well as כַּֽאֲנָם צַֽהֲרוֹן, “the man was dog-like,” were made. In addition to these, closer attention was paid to the significance of qere reading בְּלָק, “the man was a Calebite,” though a more detailed discussion on the implication of the latter reading was postponed until Chapter V.

Next, attention was turned to the role of the geographic setting. In trying to comprehend the significance of places like Paran, Maon, and Carmel, the text critical issues of various readings were considered. It was noted that the term “Paran” (v. 1), is not too difficult a reading, and as such is to be preferred to “Maon.”
for it serves a definite purpose in the narrative; it places more weight on the significance of David’s role as the one who fulfils his calling as the deliverer of Israel, and invites other themes to color his conflict with Nabal. The discussion on the text-critical issues of “in Maon” in v. 2 followed and the LXX reading, “in the wilderness” considered. It was demonstrated that the textual and contextual evidence indicates that “Maon” in this verse refers not to the town, but to the wilderness, because the action of the story most definitely takes place in the nearby town of Carmel in Judah. Turning attention to the place of Nabal’s residence, the literary significance of Carmel in the book of 1 Samuel was examined. It was noted that this place not only recalls the history of Israel’s successes through the achievements of Caleb, which speaks of Yahweh’s faithfulness, but also was closely linked with the “success,” or rather misfortune of King Saul in one of his southern campaigns (15:12).

The comparison of King Saul and Nabal the Carmelite by previous scholarship convinced some that in the story Nabal functions as Saul’s alter ego. While affirming all the positive uses of narrative analogy in biblical studies here and pointing to the particular areas in which Nabal is comparable to King Saul, the view was challenged, which encourages an allegorical reading of the story by insisting on a complete identification of Nabal with Saul at the expense of overlooking striking differences. Listing the number of dissimilarities, it became apparent that Nabal does not surpass all other characters in symbolism.

This led to the proposal of a new solution to deal with the problem of Nabal’s identity. Nabal’s role was seen through the prism of political environment in Saul’s reign and a hypothesis developed about the nature of the Saul/Nabal relationship. Thus, considering Nabal’s characterization in terms of his origin, status, greatness as well as by bringing the geographic setting into this equation, a new way to interpret the nature of Nabal’s “business” was offered. The latter observation led to the suggestion that Nabal was an important political figure in the southern region of Saul’s kingdom. The conclusions reached in this chapter, prepared the way for discussions in the Chapter IV, where more attention was paid to the various elements of Nabal’s speech.
In Chapter III, using synchronic analysis, the function of the character of Doeg the Edomite in the narratives of 1 Sam. 21 and 22 was investigated. In the first part of this chapter the focus was placed on Doeg’s characterization. The main task here was to tackle the problem of his origin, his position in Saul’s court and his detention in the sanctuary of Yahweh in Nob in order to probe deeper the nature of his relationship with King Saul.

Doeg’s origin created many difficulties in interpreting the story. Tension was felt between the two acts: his presence in the House of Yahweh and his execution of Yahweh’s priests. It was concluded that synchronic analysis offered no clear and definitive solution to this problem.

Doeg’s title is both interesting and puzzling. It is puzzling because it seems to be incongruous with his later actions, which also caused some to try to emend the text to see him as Saul’s “mighty bodyguard” (ץראה) rather than “chief/mighty of his shepherds” (ץראה). It is interesting that his characterization as Saul’s shepherd extends the range of meaning and makes Doeg’s title figuratively comparable with Saul’s office as king, and as such it furthers the contrast when he is compared with David as the skilled shepherd of Israel. It was underscored that Doeg’s role in these narratives is more extensive than at first appears and more complex.

With that in mind, the third element of his characterization – his being detained in the sanctuary – was examined. It was demonstrated that the phrase “before the Lord” (לפני יהוה) carries religious connotations. Having considered numerous proposals to solve the mystery of his detention in Nob, it was suggested that his presence in the sanctuary had more to do with his professional business and with him bringing sacrificial sheep to the Lord’s house in Nob.

Next, an attempt was made to evaluate elements in Doeg’s characterization against the background of the political environment of Saul’s kingdom. Thus, by selecting and bringing together several elements from three areas of his characterization – his Edomite origin, his position in Saul’s court and his presence in the sanctuary – a more or less balanced solution to the puzzle of Doeg’s identity was sought. This analysis led to the conclusion that the general context
allows the view of Doeg as Saul’s political partner – his governor in the South. The observations and conclusions made in this chapter were carried over to the next.

The purpose of Chapter IV was to investigate the function of the phrase the “son of Jesse” in the book of 1 Samuel with a particular focus placed on how it was used in the speeches of Saul, Doeg and Nabal. It was noted that in 1 Samuel only these three used the phrase pejoratively. In order to show that the phrase is charged with theological and ideological information, close attention was paid to the evolution of the phrase in 1 Sam. 16—17. It was shown that the election of David as king, drastically differs from that of Saul: while in the case of the latter the people were the main cause, in the case of the former the initiative belonged totally to Yahweh.

Similarly, it was demonstrated that the text contrasts the origins of Saul and David in order to show David’s superiority in Yahweh’s plan for the nation. Saul was a Benjaminite. David’s Judahite origin speaks of his advantages since he descends from the tribe that both historically and prophetically was the object of divine favor. The narrator’s accent on both Jesse’s name and his hometown Bethlehem, highlights the advantages of Davidic figure in divine plan, seen through a formulaic usage of the phrase the “son of Jesse.”

Saul’s negative attitude toward the “son of Jesse” is contrasted to Jonathan’s love of David. Thus, on the one hand, Jonathan functions as Saul’s foil: he responds to David as Saul should have responded. On the other, Jonathan’s acts of submission before God’s choice, foreshadow the submission of the house of Saul before David with the help of Abner, and anticipate Israel’s acknowledgement of David as their king (2 Sam. 3—5). In order to show Jonathan’s function in his relationship with David, a closer look at his role in the 1 Sam. 20 story was taken. In emphasizing the significance of the covenantal union between them, it was noted that Jonathan’s sophisticated explanation of David’s absence from the royal table is much the same as David’s story in Nob. When both chapters are studied together and when more careful attention is paid to the words in the speeches of David, Jonathan and even Ahimelech, various difficulties dissipate while revealing a hidden meaning embedded in the play on words in the characters’ speeches whilst hinting the thematic nearness between Bethlehem and Nob.
The latter observations brought the discussions about Doeg the Edomite full circle. Against this background, the speeches of Jonathan and David in 1 Sam. 20 and 21, Doeg’s own role in the story of 1 Sam. 22 was studied. This examination led to the conclusion that the ambiguity that predominates in the stories of 1 Sam. 21 and 22, on the one level, and the presence of the hidden message, on the other, illustrates the foggy nature of Saul’s and Doeg’s suspicion of conspiracy. Additionally, the way these stories are told, vividly illustrate the power of the Edomite’s lie which caused the destruction of many innocent lives.

In a similar way Nabal’s speech was examined with the particular focus placed on the dynamics of his verbal assault of David. Nabal ridiculed David’s ancestry and scorned him personally. It was concluded that Nabal’s attitude toward David stands in parallel to Saul’s refusal to acknowledge David as Yahweh’s king.

In Chapter V, 1 Sam. 16—25 was examined diachronically. An attempt was made to learn about the purposes of the biblical writers in selecting the traditional material that would best reflect the nation’s hopes and aspirations. The task was four-fold: (1) to pay closer attention to the function of Nabal’s and Doeg’s origins in forming additional strata of meaning in the stories in question, (2) to detect and to evaluate the function of a few literary layers that are reflective of a later writer’s perspective, (3) to approximate the most likely time period when the writer was working on many of the stories in the book(s) of Samuel and (4) to expose a few structural patterns in the text and to suggest an interpretation thereof.

An effort was made to answer the following question: Why of all characters in 1 Samuel do only Saul, Doeg and Nabal use the phrase the “son of Jesse” pejoratively? The sociopolitical perspective of the post-Exilic times on these stories offered some answers to this question. The relationship between Israel and the Calebite community in Jerusalem during and after the Exile looked particularly intriguing. Analysis led to the conclusion that the focus on Nabal and Abigail by the writer of 1 Samuel is significant, as both seem to represent larger groups of people, and as such they voice different opinions about David, the “son of Jesse” in Exilic and post-Exilic times.

A similar approach was undertaken in regards to the character of Doeg the Edomite. The “ethnic slur” appears to have a particular time-tag attached to it.
Doeg’s role in 1 Samuel was examined against the background of the antagonism between Israel and Edom. It was suggested that the character of Doeg functions as an embodiment of Edom’s antagonism toward the nation of Israel. Against that background the metaphorical significance and ideological closeness between Nob, Bethlehem and Jerusalem was noted and the proleptic nature of Doeg’s intrusion into Yahweh’s House considered.

Finally, attention was given to the question of the making of the book(s) of Samuel. It was suggested that the likely period when the author/editor wrote the book(s) of Samuel using the ancient source traditions was ca. 5th century B.C. or the period of time when messianic expectations were particularly vibrant. This, in turn, led to the suggestion that the making of the book(s) of Samuel might have been prompted by the desire to create the context needed for further development of the messianic ideas.

Looking Ahead

A few avenues for future studies that might be worth perusing should also be mentioned here. Firstly, a close examination of the characters of Doeg and Nabal, hints at a much closer relationship between the two. There are a sufficient number of literary parallels in the text that are very suggestive of the fact that the relationship between Doeg and Nabal is possible not only by noting their individual relationship with Saul (be it literarily or seen through the lens of their likely political affiliation). As can be noted from their characterization, both are comparable in their origin, occupation and status as well as other characteristics both possess. A study of literary parallels between Doeg and Nabal might be necessary in order to see what this closeness might signify and what bearing this insight might have on the understanding of these stories in 1 Samuel.

Secondly, the parallels between the stories in 1 Sam. 21—22; 25 and Ps. 52 and 53=14 were noted only in passing. The same seems to have been the case with previous studies. However, the entire triptych of Ps. 52—54 shows close connection with these stories. A more detailed study of the relationships and parallels between the content of these psalms and 1 Sam. 21; 22; 25; and 26 may prove to be necessary, as it may give additional insights into the character’s role in 1
Samuel. If it is true that the scope of Ps. 53 is more than just a general description of a person who denies the very existence of God and all of its lines are dedicated to one person – Nabal, the husband of Abigail, then perhaps the content of this psalm might contain some crucial information that would shed more light on the story of 1 Sam. 25. Furthermore, even an initial examination of the material in Ps. 52 and 53 reveals many interesting references that are comparable with the details found in the stories of 1 Samuel with one striking difference that some of the content in Ps. 52 may closely resonate with the reader of 1 Sam. 25 and certain details in Ps. 53 would be illuminating to the reader of 1 Sam. 21—22. However, a more detailed study of all these relationships and parallels is needed in order to see whether or not these corresponding elements are there by design. Equally necessary is a study to explain the appearance of this doublet Ps.53(=14) after Ps. 52 (the chronology which corresponds to the 1 Sam. 21, 22 and 25 stories) to see if such an order is purposeful or merely incidental.
APPENDIX I

TEMPORAL SETTING OF 1 SAMUEL 25

The law of hospitality was revered as sacred in the Orient. Nomadic people were always conscious of the bareness of the wilderness and of the fact that the provision of food was often a matter of life and death. Travel was seldom and in most cases was done out of necessity rather than for pleasure. Hence, one of the most peculiar features of Eastern hospitality is that “it commanded the most devoted service to be rendered to those who are passing strangers, and have none of the claims that belong to kinship and acquaintance. . . . It is an appeal to what is noblest and best in the human heart.”¹ The arrival of the stranger showed that whatever his trouble might have been, God had so far favored him, and therefore he was entitled to similar treatment from his host.²

In Israel hospitality was especially encouraged. This was due in part to commands of the Scripture: “And you shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Ex 22: 21). “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Lev 19:33-34). So, in Israel to care for strangers was not a courtesy, but an obligation.

The extent to which a host felt responsibility toward his guests is illustrated in a number of ways. For example, Lot sought to protect his guests from the hostile crowd to the extent that he was willing to give his own daughters to the crowd (Gen 19:1-11). A similar example is found in Judges 19:22-30. The widow at Zerephath was willing to share the last meal with Elijah (1 Ki 17:10-16).

Because Israel had received protection from God, they were to give protection to others. Therefore, it was a sin to refuse to share one’s food with the poor and needy (Job 31:17; Is 58:7). Consequently, a man’s worth and piety was

² Ibid., 138.
readily seen by his hospitality (Job 31:32). Moreover, to share a meal with another person meant to be at peace with him (Gen 26:28-30).

Since ancient times the laws of hospitality changed little. In Babylonian Talmud five acts are listed as bringing future reward: honoring parents, deeds of love, hospitality, establishing peace, and studying of Torah (b. Kiddushin 39B), though some rabbis thought the practice of hospitality was more important than the study of the Torah (b. Shab. 127A). So revered was the law of hospitality in the Orient, that even a person under a death sentencing and protection of the house was not refused hospitality. This law seems to be operative even in modern days.

Mackie tells a story that occurred in the late 19th century near Tripoli in Syria that demonstrates a strong sense of duty before the law of hospitality and responsibility to protect the life of a guest:

A man had committed manslaughter, and in his flight from the avengers of blood came to the mountain hut of a shepherd. The shepherd was absent with his flock, and the fugitive begged and received protection in the name of God from his wife and young son. Half an hour afterwards the house was surrounded by horsemen. Their law of courtesy made it impossible for them to enter the only room of the house which was sacred as being the women’s apartment, and they demanded that the criminal should be brought forth. The poor woman came to the door holding by the hand her son, twelve years of age, and said, “I cannot surrender my guest, but take my only son and kill him instead.” Her resolute chivalry so impressed them that after a short pause they told her that for her sake the fugitive was pardoned and free. Then they rode away.

In this context this was most likely the meaning of David’s words in Psalm 23:5: “Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies,” that is to say, he was under the divine protection in accordance with the law of hospitality even in the house of his enemies. That is why Jael’s murder of Sisera (Judg 4-5) although viewed as a patriotic act, is an illustration of how low the nation fell in one of Israel’s darkest periods of history, when the hostess killed her guest, and such profanation of the law of hospitality was approved by the public.

On the other hand, the lack of hospitality was always condemned. The Ammonites and Moabites were condemned for the lack of hospitality (Deut 23:4), as
Benjaminites were (Judg 19:15, 18; cf. Josephus Ant. V.2.8), and the Sodomites are referred to as “haters of strangers” (Josephus Ant. 1.11:1).³

Taking these examples of hospitality in ancient Israel, especially Deut. 23, the significance of 1 Sam. 25 is amplified. Some literary devices are at work here as well. The passage of Deut. 23:7 says: “You shall not detest an Edomite for he is your brother; you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord.” The thrust of the passage is not aiming at the nations of Edomites or Egyptians in general, but rather at the particular group of Edomites and Egyptians who sojourned with Israel.

Consequently, the command to give a fair treatment of particular ethnic groups among Israel, including those of the Edomites, might give us some insight into how it is being practiced in the story of 1 Sam. 25. Sending his greeting of peace David was acting in accordance with the laws of hospitality written in Torah. He does not abhor the Calebite who is the member of the community. While respecting particular Edomite elements, such as the Calebites, the Jerahmeelites (25:7-8; cf. 30:14; 26-31), he could care less about the Amalekites who were making raids on Israel. David is keeping the commandment by protecting possessions of the Calebite while Nabal is breaking it by abhorring his “brother” Israelite (25:8). This is a big shift in the historical development of the southern states. In the beginning Caleb and Othniel the Kenizzites played a prominent role in the history of the Conquest of the land. The “successes” of the tribe of Judah in the area were due to ethnic leadership there without which Judah would appear to have nothing to boast about before other tribes. Judahites equally failed while Caleb and Othniel demonstrated the ability to command attention by their different spirit as well as military victories. Now the odds have changed. It is a Judahite who leads while a Calebite is unable to defend his own flocks, let alone territory before his enemies roundabout. Therefore it was only fitting for David to come back to Hebron, the Calebite center, to reign, thus establishing once and for all that Judah must receive the allegiances of his brothers and to put his hand “on the neck of his enemies” (Gen. 49:8).

3 Ibid., 40.
DOEG THE EDOMITE IN THE RABBINIC LITERATURE

The rabbinic material in the period from the first century up to the early sixth century AD shows a great deal of interest in the biblical character of Doeg the Edomite. However, the statements about him in their writings are quite controversial. On the one hand he is spoken of as a wicked man who deserves to be punished; on the other, he is presented as the Torah scholar. In his article “Doeg the Edomite: From Biblical Villain to Rabbinic Sage,” Richard Kalmin traces the history of the growth of Doeg’s character in the rabbinical tradition. Kalmin looks at the development of Doeg’s character in the statements of Tannaitic rabbis by comparing it with the Amoraic accounts. Thus, in the Tannaitic earlier material Doeg the Edomite is presented in a traditionally negative light, only to be elevated to the level of rabbinical sage in the Amoraic writings of later times. While it is beyond the scope of this study to give a detailed treatment of every statement made by rabbis regarding the person of biblical Doeg, some of the discussions coming from the pen of these writers are worth noting. In what follows we will trace the evolution of rabbinical ideas concerning the character of Doeg the Edomite.

Because of his outrageous sin against the priests of Yahweh at Nob, the Mishna places Doeg along with Balaam, Ahitophel, and Gahazi in the category of “four ordinary folk” who “have no share in the world to come” (m. Sanh. 10.2F). Sages say that his evil character seems to trouble even Yahweh when he “worried that he [Doeg] would not fall into evil practices.” So, Mishnaic material ordinarily views him as a negative character. In the Talmudic material, however, the character of Doeg goes through the stages of development. There, one can observe, for

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2 Taanaim lived between the first and early third centuries AD in the land of Israel under Roman rule. Palestinian Amoraim between early third to the early fifth centuries AD, also under Roman rule. Babylonian Amoraic statements are attributed to the rabbis who lived in Babylonia under Persian rule between early third and early sixth centuries AD.
instance, that the responsibility for the massacre in Nob is being shifted from one person to another. At one point Jonathan is blamed for being the cause of the slaughter: “Had Jonathan only brought David two loaves of bread, Nob, the city of priests, would not have been put to death, Doeg the Edomite would not have been troubled, and Saul and his three sons would not have been killed” (b. Sanh. 104A).

At another point David is blamed for it: “Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to David, ‘How long will the sin committed [against Nob] be concealed in your hand. On your account, Nob was put to death, the city of priests . . .’” (b. Sanh. 95A).

The major shift in how Doeg is being viewed could further be seen in that both the Babylonian and the Palestinian Talmud begin to present Doeg in a new light. Thus, he is placed alongside with Ahitophel as a person of great learning and wisdom. Such great students of the Torah were they, that, said R. Ammi, “Four hundred questions did Doeg and Ahitophel raise concerning the ‘tower flying in the air’, but could not answer any one of them” (b. Sanh. 106B). Further, the sages begin to regard Doeg as a great Torah student because on several occasions he is found in the sanctuary asking numerous questions about Torah and giving answers. However, he “studied Torah without feelings of faith, as an empty cultural or academic pursuit,” Feuer says.

The contrast between Doeg and David is noted in the spelling of their personal names. Doeg is called יָדָג, ‘red’ but David was דָּוִד, ‘ruddy.’ Smitten by hatred and fear of David the son of Jesse, Doeg was tormented by anxiety and worry, which was also noted in the alternative spelling of his name גֵּד (b. Sanh. 106b). In the book of Chronicles, David’s name is spelled differently too: דַּוִד. This spelling has the numerical value of twenty-four, thus alluding, no doubt, to David’s setting up twenty-four priestly watches in Jerusalem’s Temple. Rabbis explain that “this change of spelling was in response to David’s request that even the numerical value of his name not be the same as Doeg’s.” Hence, rabbis say, is the significance of David’s prayer: “Make for me an [extra] תּוָא, letter [lit. sign] for the good, so that my enemies may see and be shamed” (Ps. 86:17).

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3 Feuer, Tehillim, 667.
4 Cited by Feuer: Ibid., 666.
Next, whenever Doeg mentions David’s name, he is always jealous of his rival. This begins as early as David’s introduction to the court of Saul. Some rabbis identified the servant, who recommended David as a skillful musician to Saul, with Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam. 16:18), but then add: “And said R. Judah said Rab, ‘The entire verse was stated by Doeg only as vicious gossip’ (b. Sanh. 93b). Thus, even here Doeg, the worrier, was provoking Saul to jealousy.

Some, however, say that Doeg’s envy of David began only after the son of Jesse escaped from Saul. According to Zevachim 54b, on the night when David first fled from Saul and came to Samuel, the prophet Samuel gave him a scroll of secret traditions concerning the construction of the Temple in place of the Tabernacle. When Doeg found that out, he became very jealous of David. So, sages say, “And on that account Doeg the Edomite was jealous of David [who had chosen the site for the Temple], as it is written, ‘Because envy on account of your house has eaten me up’ (Ps. 69:10)” (b. Zeb. 54bF).

Doeg’s foreign spirit as the Edomite and as the enemy of God’s people is highlighted in the writings of the sages when they view him as being the cause of Saul’s disobedience that led to his downfall. Thus, as Saul’s chief advisor, he convinced the king to spare the life of Agag, the king of the Amalekites/Edomites. In order to persuade the king, Doeg quoted Lev. 22:28: “But, whether it is an ox or a sheep, you shall not kill both it and its young in one day” (Midr. Teh. 52:4). On other occasion, however, he uses his superior scholarship to slander David before the king (Yeb. 76b-77a). Addressing King Saul in the presence of all of his servants in Gibeah, he makes a case against David and all of his supporters in Nob by saying this:

Ahimelech has made David king even while you are still living. For, although inquiry may not be made of the Urim V’Tumim on behalf of any man except the king, members of the court, or one upon whom the needs of the public depend; nevertheless, inquiry was made on behalf of David! When Doeg said this, a spirit of malicious envy entered Saul. Ahimelech sought to defend himself, saying, “. . . This was not the first time, for it has long been my custom to inquire on behalf of David.” This explanation infuriated the King even more, and he issued a death sentence against Ahimelech (1 Sam. 22:17).5

5 Ibid., 668.
At one time Doeg questions in front of Saul the legitimacy of David’s right to be a lawful member of the community of Israel, since he is a descendant of Ruth the Moabitess – the people group of whom it is said that they cannot become full-fledged Israelites even in the third generation (Deut. 23:8-9): “Said Doeg the Edomite to Saul, ‘Rather than asking concerning [David] whether or not he is worthy of the throne, ask whether he is worthy even of entering the community of Israel or not’” (b. Yeb. 70A). When a discussion about David’s relationship with Moabites thus arose in king’s court, Saul sent Abner to inquire of Samuel. “When [Abner] came to Samuel and his Court, [Samuel] said to him: ‘Whence have you this? Not from Doeg? Doeg is a heretic and will not depart from this world in peace . . . ’” (Midrash Rabbah [Ruth IV:6]).

At another time Doeg declared David’s marriage with Michal invalid, and induced Saul to marry her to another. Moreover, Doeg and Ahitophel, sages say, disregarded the sanctity of marriage:

This one [Ahitophel] permitted fornication and murder: For he advised Absalom, “Go in unto your father’s concubines” (2 Sam. 16:21).

That one [Doeg] permitted fornication and murder: Said R. Nahman b. Samuel b. Nahman, “He took away the civil rights [of David] and made him an outlaw, as one who was dead, so that it was permitted to shed his blood, and his wife was made available to anyone” (Midr. Gen. R. XXXII:I).

Through this the rabbinical sages wanted to show that Doeg was not a peaceful competitor, but was carrying murderous thoughts against his rival David.

Whenever Doeg is “teaching” (in the Sanctuary), he always looks down on David:

The Israelites came and asked David, “In regard to the showbread, what is the law as to its overriding the restrictions of the Sabbath?” He said to them, “Arranging it overrides the restrictions of the Sabbath, but kneading the dough and cutting it out do not override the restrictions of the Sabbath.”

Now Doeg was there, and he said, “Who is this one who comes to teach in my presence?” They told him, “It is David, son of Jesse.” Forthwith, he went and gave advice to Saul, king of Israel, to kill Nob, the city of the priests (y. Sanh. 10:2 V:1).
In response to Doeg’s murderous attitude towards him, David prays to Yahweh: “Lord of the world, let Doeg die.” God answers to him that Doeg must first expel his Torah before he can die. In reply David asks God to hasten Doeg’s demise by removing Torah “from [Doeg’s] belly” (*b. Sanh. 106B*).

Though Doeg is spoken of as one who achieved greatness in his Torah knowledge, he is always depicted as a sinful Sage, whose great learning of Torah did not save him:

> “Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Doeg, ‘Are you not a hero in Torah-learning? Why do you boast in mischief? Is not the love of God spread over you all day long?’”

And said R. Isaac, “What is the meaning of the verse of Scripture, ‘But to the wicked God says, ‘What have you to do to declare my statutes?’ (Ps. 50:16)?”

> “So the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the wicked Doeg, ‘What have you to do to declare my statutes? When you come to the passages that deal with murderers and slanderers, what have you to say about them?’ (*b. Sanh. 106B*).

Thus, Doeg began to loose ground only after he started forgetting his learning. Elsewhere it is said that his and Ahitophel’s “study of Torah did not ‘protect them’ from punishment for sin” (*b. Sot. 21A*). Thus, his life was cut short only after “Three injurious angels were designated for Doeg: one to make him forget his learning, one to burn his soul, and one to scatter his dust among the synagogues and school houses” (*b. Sanh. 106B*). Doeg’s abandonment of Torah teaching caused his own pupils to raise against him:

Doeg was teaching his students; as they absorbed what he said, he forgot his own wisdom, bit by bit. When his students finally realized that he was falsifying and distorting the law, they tied ropes to his feet and dragged him away (*Yalkut Shimoni, 1 Sam. 131*).

However, R. Mesharsheya said, “Doeg and Ahitophel did not know how to reason concerning traditions” (*b. Sanh. 106B*). Consequently, both Doeg and Ahitophel persecuted David because they “misinterpreted a verse of the Scripture” (*b. Sot. 21A*). Having done so, these “wise men” sealed their doom. As a result,
“what they wanted was not given to them, and what they had was taken away from them” (*Midr. Gen. R. XX:V*). Right after quoting Ps. 55:24 “Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,” R. Yohanan says that “Doeg lived only for thirty-four years, Ahitophel for thirty-three” (*b. Sanh. 69B*). Elsewhere rabbis said that when Doeg was studying Torah in God’s sanctuary, “Fire came out of the holy of holies and burned all around [Doeg]” (*v. Sanh. 10:2 V1S*).  

It is of some importance to note that at one point some rabbis made an attempt to identify Doeg the Edomite with Saul: “For Saul it is written, ‘And wherever he turned about, he vexed (ןֶּפֶשׁ) them (1 Sam. 14:47) . . . .” Sages go on asking the question: “How do we know that this was Doeg?” And then give this answer:

It is written here, “then one of the servants answered,” meaning, “one who was distinguished from the other young men,” and there it is written, “Now a man of the servants of Saul was there that Day, detained before the Lord, and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, head herd[s]man that belonged to Saul” (1 Sam. 21:8; *b. Sanh. 93A*).

So, Saul “vexing” his enemies and Doeg “vexing” his are identified as both attacking their enemies in a similar fashion. Both carry a grudge against David, both attack the priests.

To summarize these sayings of rabbinical sages, it should be noted that it is not completely clear why rabbis, who at first condemn Doeg, later develop such a great interest in his person and elevate him to the position of a sage. Perhaps his standing as Saul’s advisor at Gibeah (1 Sam. 22) caused rabbis to put him in the same category with Ahitophel. Another reason could be that Doeg was once found lurking in the sanctuary of Yahweh in Nob. What was he doing there if not studying Torah? In fact, even in a much later tradition Doeg is spoken of as the Head of a Sanhedrin (*אֵלֶּהַדֶּרֶך, chief of shepherds*) who “possessed considerable knowledge

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6 Kalmin, "Doeg the Edomite," 402.
7 According to one commentary Doeg did not die but was sent into exile on account of David: Said R. Judah, “How long will the sin committed [against Nob] be concealed in your hand . . . on your account, Doeg the Edomite was sent into exile . . . .” (*b. Sanh. 95A*). But it just demonstrates the desire on the part of the sages to find some kind of resolution to the story of 1 Samuel 22 and to complete the otherwise incomplete story.
Consequently, more often than not Doeg is presented as Saul’s “advisor” working on the background shaping and forming Saul’s attitude toward those with whom he had to deal decisively. Doeg slanders David, instigates Saul to take Michal away from him, causes son of Jesse to go into exile, and motivates the king to strike his son-in-law down and all those who are supposedly on the side of the rebel.

One other point should be noted and it is the fact that the rabbinical sages often depict Doeg as the defender of the Amalekites/Edomites. And no wonder, because Doeg was the Edomite. Thus, it is noteworthy that when sages condemn Doeg, they place him in close proximity with King Saul and often view both as partners in crime. Some, to be sure, also tried to emphasize Doeg’s treacherous character when they explain that it was none other but he who stood by Saul’s side at the moment of his death. He was also as cunning as a snake when he tried to win David’s favor by bringing the royal articles from the Mt. Gilboa down to David’s camp. David, however, smote the villain:

“And so was the case with David: And David said to the youth who told him [that Saul and Jonathan had died], Where do you come from? And he said, I am the son of an Amalekite convert (2 Sam. 1:13).”

Said R. Isaac, “He was Doeg the Edomite.”

“And David said to him, Your blood be upon your own head (2 Sam. 1:16).”


Reading through the rabbinical writings, one can observed a history of development of Doeg’s character from a biblical villain to rabbinical sage. Again, it is not clear why rabbis speaking about Doeg’s great Torah learning put him in the category of the persecutors of Israel. It could be that his person was designed to contrast true knowledge of Torah with cleverness of false teachers of the Scripture in general, who perverted true knowledge studying the same texts. Taking into account the period in which his character went through a process of considerable

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8 Ibid., 667.
transformation, it is also possible that Doeg became a case study to issue a warning against the growing Christian interest as well as overall domination of Gentiles in the studies of Jewish Torah. In the rabbinical writings, the biblical prophecies against Edom were often applied to the oppressing power of Rome that presented a considerable threat to the “House of David” which at the time was in the “wilderness” of exile away from their land and without the Temple.

But it is also sensible to assume that the reason why rabbinical sages decided to focus on Doeg, of all biblical personages, and devised various ways of “punishing” him, was because they sensed a problem in letting the only known biblical priest slayer get away with his sin. Reading their writings one cannot help but notice that they consciously sought to resolve the moral problem of his bloodguilt acquired in Nob. So, they tried to create some parallels between his demise and the demise of Saul. He acted as the king’s advisor; he was the one who performed his bidding. It is interesting to note that he is also presented as the foreigner who defends the interests of the Amalekites – the enemies of God’s people – the very people whom David fought. In addition, if Saul has taken his own life by falling on his sword, it seems only fitting to place Doeg by Saul’s side in his most desperate hour. For it was Doeg’s advices, according to sages, that blinded Saul’s sound judgment that resulted in Saul’s disobedience in Amalek, his ultimate rejection, and death. Consequently, discussing Doeg’s character, sages apparently wanted to underscore the need for the justice for his grievous sin against God’s people, the Levitical priests with their families. However, while they were willing to discuss Doeg’s status in the community of Israelites, they did not dispute his fate. Doeg’s life has been cut short. He did not live to the half of his days.

Thus, by speaking of Doeg as a Torah scholar on the one hand, and by gradually transforming him into a villainous monster who in the end was destroyed by the divine intervention on the other, the rabbinical scholars found a way to counterbalance the incongruity of the biblical portraiture of Doeg – his presence in the Sanctuary and his later massacre of the Holy place – with the necessity of the divine justice for his evil acts – something that they found lacking in the text of the book of Samuel.
APPENDIX III

THE PHRASE הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The phrase הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי occurs 212 times in the Hebrew Bible: Joshua (8x), Judges (3x), 1 Samuel (14x), 2 Samuel (8x), 1 Kings (8x), 2 Kings (4x) 1 Chronicles (6x), 2 Chronicles (9x), Psalms (4x), Isaiah (2x), Jeremiah (2x) Ezekiel (5x), Daniel (1x), and the Pentateuch (138x) out of which 3 times in Genesis: as a description of Nimrod, who was “a mighty hunter before the Lord,” which was probably employed to underscore his cultic role rather than his physical strength (10:9); Abraham’s standing before the Lord in his intercession for Lot’s family (18:22); Isaac’s promise of blessing his son Esau הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי in return for his favorite dish (27:7). The greater majority of times the phrase appears in the book of Exodus (21x), Leviticus (57x), Numbers (34x) and Deuteronomy (23x), where the texts have to do with the religious service in the Tabernacle before the Lord, e.g. in the sanctuary where the Ark of the Covenant was stationed.

In the book of Samuel, 13 situations when the phrase is used can be identified. It describes: (1) Hannah’s worship הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי (1:12, 15, 19); (2) the fear of the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh of the Lord’s wrath due to their irreverence toward the Ark of the Covenant (6:20); (3) the praying and fasting of the people after Samuel’s preaching, which presumably took place in the sanctuary where the Ark was (7:6); (4) the assembly of the people הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי when the king was about to be chosen (10:19) and then anointed (11:15), which then resulted in the writing of new rules of the king, which was placed הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי, again, presumably in the sanctuary where the Ark of the Covenant was (10:25); (5) Samuel’s speech הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי recounting all of the deeds of the Lord among His people (12:7); (6) the slaughter of king Agag הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי at Gilgal (15:32), where presumably the Ark of the Covenant, which was most likely taken along, was present there as well (15:33); (7) Doeg’s presence at the sanctuary in Nob (21:7); (8) David and Jonathan’s covenant in the forest of Horeth הָיֹתִי מִבְּלִי נַעֲרֵי הָיוֹתִי, which may have involved a religious object like the ephod, which Abiathar brought (23:18; cf. v. 6), since the phrase does not appear in
other instances where their covenant making is mentioned (cf. 20:16); (9) David’s curse upon those who persecute him without a reason (26:19); (10) David’s covenant making with the leaders of Israel in Hebron (2 Sam. 5:3); (11) David’s celebration when he was bringing the Ark of the Covenant into his city (6:5) which was accompanied by sacrifices (6:17) and his dancing (6:14, 16, 21); (12) David’s seating when he received a promise of the Lord to build him a dynasty (7:18); (13) the execution of the descendants of Saul by Gibeonites, who hanged them on the mountain (21:9).

Thus, in the HB the phrase has something to do with religious worship and God. In the book of Samuel the phrase denotes the appearance before the Lord in a particular sense, either in the sanctuary, where the Ark of the Covenant was present, or simply wherever that relic might have appeared. Similarly, it is possible to see that the ephod could have been used as the religious object to substitute for the Ark, since both came from the sanctuary, and through both, a person could be admitted into the presence of the Lord (see 8). The more difficult passage (see 9) is David’s curse of his persecutors. Even there, though, it is possible to interpret it as having deeper meaning than just an expression of pure emotion under the circumstances or a simple wish. Hence, it could be understood as David’s specific desire to stand before the Lord (in the sanctuary) pleading with Him to repay his enemies, as can be seen in David’s Psalms. Further, David’s covenant making in Hebron (see 10) could have involved a religious object as well. The text does not say whether the leaders of Israel brought the Ark of the Covenant with them, though the latter is not entirely impossible, or, again, the ephod was thought to be a sufficient object itself. The more problematic passage is 2 Sam. 21:9 (see 13), though it is possible to view it as a sort of offering to God for those who were considered to be Gibeonites’ enemies. So the execution was a “sacrifice” of sorts to fulfill justice and achieve equilibrium for the past sins of the house of Saul.
APPENDIX IV

WHO WERE THE BIBLICAL AMALEKITES?

Who were the Amalekites? There is no general consensus among the biblical scholars concerning the origin of that ancient tribe that played such a significant role in Israel’s early history. The information available about the Amalekites is scanty; extra-biblical material does not bring more light on the history of existence of this relatively obscure ancient nation either. The only source of information about this nomadic tribe is found in the Hebrew Bible. They populated the wide desert region spreading from the north Arabia, the land of Midianites and Ishmaelites (cf. Gen. 25:18), to the land of Negev (Nu. 13:29), all the way “from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt” (1 Sam. 15:7). From a few passages in the Scripture one can get a picture that this group of nomadic people migrated constantly in search of pasture lands for their flocks and precious water sources that were scarce in those regions. This deficit of water supply often became the cause of intertribal conflicts (cf. Gen. 26:18-22). Most likely this became the major reason of the conflict between Israel and Amalek in the wilderness (Ex. 17:8). The unwelcome presence of Hebrews in the area interfered with the Amalekite access to their water sources as well as with their trade routs. A hot conflict between both groups had to be decided in a battle field. Israel’s victory in that mini war temporarily neutralized the Amalekite threat in the wilderness and gave Israel possession of Kadesh-Barnea.

In the pages of the Bible, the Amalekites appear again later when in alliance with Canaanites (Nu. 13) and in a league with the Midianite tribes and the “sons of the east” (הָעֲרָבִים; Judg. 6:3, 33; 7:12) they made their raids in the land of Israel. So strong was their dominance in certain parts of Israel at times, that according to Judg. 12:15 they penetrated as far north as the land of Ephraim and settled there. Therefore that portion of the land at some point of history was known as “the hill country of the Amalekites” (הָרֶשֶׁת אֲמָלֵיקִים). However, as a rule they settled
around Mt. Seir. The entire area near Seir came to be known as “the fields of the Amalekites” (תפארת אמאליקים; Gen. 14:7).

The latter note, however, raised questions in the minds of some about the origin of the Amalekites. Is the Amalekite appearance in that text merely anachronistic editorial note referring to the later Amalekites, the descendants of Amalek, the grandson of Esau, or are the Amalekites of Gen. 14:7 a completely different group that predates the Patriarchs? Along the same lines Nu. 24:20 is often quoted which speaks of Amalek as “the first of the nations.” Several scholars believe this note indicates that the Amelekites were an ancient group that predates the patriarchs. Some even equate them with the ancient inhabitants of the land of Melukhkha, whose name was inscribed in the cuneiform dated back to the late third millennium (ca. 2250-2000 BC). However, Landes notes, “This identification is based on the false notion that Melukkhka was the Sinai Peninsula and W Arabia region, whereas it was probably located in NW India, as shown by discoveries in Babylonia, the Persian Gulf, and the W coast of India.”

At first glance, this discussion may seem to be trivial. Nevertheless, since the issue of the Amalekite origin often becomes the key question when one tries to understand Israel’s relationship to its neighbors, and since according to Gen. 36:12 Amalek not only seems to have some ancestral relationship to Edom but also dwelt on its territory, there is a need to revisit this issue of Amalekite origin not to solve the problem completely, but to make an attempt to clarify some debatable points that

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2 Ibid., 101.
would in some, albeit minor, way provide a perspective in solving other problems that have to do with the Amalekite origin.

 Scholars agree that the name “Amalek” is non-Semitic. According to Gen. 36:12//1 Chr. 1:36 Amalek was the son of Timna the concubine of Eliphaz, the son of Esau. Timna was a Horite. Nevertheless, the latter text says that Amalek was a descendant of Esau=Edom. Some, however, question whether the text helps us to make a clear distinction. They maintain that the purpose of the genealogy of Gen. 36 is not clear and, therefore, Gen. 36 should not be viewed as the list establishing Edomite genealogy, but rather as a list of the nations with whom Esau=Edom came in close contact. Thus, again it is questionable whether Gen. 36 is able to elucidate the origin of the Amalekites. However, biblical record of Gen. 36:10-30//1 Chr. 1:35-42 presents the genealogical lists of the sons of Esau and the sons of Seir in a straightforward manner. The genealogical organization of the above mentioned passages is noteworthy:

**Sons of Esau vs. Sons of Seir the Horite (Gen. 36:10-30; 1 Chr. 1:35-42)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sons of Esau</th>
<th>Sons of Seir the Horite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>from Adah</strong></td>
<td><strong>from Besemath</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliphaz</td>
<td>Reuel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Teman</td>
<td>1. Nahath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Omar</td>
<td>2. Zarah</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Korah</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Gatam</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **from Timna** |
| 7. Amalek |

1. Lotan
2. Shobal
3. Zibeon
4. Anah
5. Dishon
6. Ezer
7. Dishan

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4 Macpherson, "Amalek, Amalekites,” 77-78.
5 Many agree that the genealogical lists in 1 Chr. 1:35-42 is largely dependent on Gen. 36:10-30, of which the inclusion of the Sons of Seir speaks.
6 These are only the sons of Esau from three of his wives mentioned in Gen. 36: Adah, Basemath, and Oholibamah. According to Gen. 26:34, Esau married Judith and Basemath the Hittites, and Gen. 28:9 he married Mahalath. It is probable that Judith and Mahalath are alternative names for Adah and Oholibamah. This could also be seen from 1 Chr. 1:35 which mentions only these sons of Esau.

7 1Chr. 1:36 reads יִשְׁמָע הָעָבָד instead of יִשְׁמָע הָעָבָד in Genesis.
8 1Chr. 1:36 reads Timna in the place of Korah. According to some rabbinic explanations since Timna and Korah are similar in meaning the one was changed to another “as the need arose.” For fuller discussions on this change see Moshe Eisemann, *Divrei Hayamim I: 1 Chronicles: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*, ed. Yehezkel Danziger, ArtS (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1987), 10-11.
Now, these lists of names are quite interesting. The writer differentiates between the Horites and the Edomites. He states that the Horites were “the inhabitants of the land” (שַׁעַר הַמָּרָא; Gen. 36:20), most likely stressing the fact that they comprised the indigenous population who occupied the land when Esau and his family moved into the area. However, it is important to note that Amalek appears in the list of the sons of Edom, not in the list of the sons of Seir. Therefore, if the Amalekites predate Esau/Edom occupation of the land, one would expect the writer to somehow demonstrate that in the genealogical lists. However, nothing in the arrangement of the list suggests that. Amalek appears in the list of the descendants of Esau and not in the list of the “inhabitants of the land” the sons of Seir the Horite.

Now Gen. 32:3 indicates that Esau moved into the area of the “land of Seir, the country of Edom” which became the place of his permanent residence. In Gen. 14:6 we read that that land was the residence of Horites. Deut. 2:12, 22 in parenthetical notes (both times) affirm that: “The Horites formerly lived in Seir, but the sons of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the Lord gave to them.” Apparently the conquest of the land by the sons of Esau was a slow process. Unlike the Israelites, who were forbidden to intermarry with the Canaanite population, the sons of Esau followed the example of their father who married Judith/Adah and Besemath the Hittitess (Gen. 26:34) and Mahalath/Oholibamah, Ishmael’s daughter (Gen. 28:9). The son of Judith, Eliphaz, had a Horite concubine by the name Timna who bore him Amalek. At least some connections between the descendants of Esau and Horites are implied in the biblical texts when the land of Edom (Esau), and the land of Seir are identified (Gen. 36:8-9, 43). This may also explain the place of Amalekites within the larger family of the descendants of Esau the Edomite. Yet it is quite obvious from Gen. 36 that the writer, compiler, or final editor, made every effort to underscore the fact that Amalek, even if he had some Horite blood, was of the Edomite stock, not of the Horite. If, therefore, a biblical writer did not intend to establish genealogical lineage of the descendants of Esau but simply to include in the list most of the ethnic group with whom sons of Esau came

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9 Bartlett, however, differentiates between the land of Seir and the land of Edom though affirms that in the minds of the OT writers both are not always distinguished (Bartlett, “The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom,” 7).
in close contact, as some have supposed, then it is rather strange that he divided the list the way he did: 1) descendants of sons of Esau (Gen. 36:10) and 2) descendants of sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land (Gen. 36:20). Equally, it is not clear why the writer “departed” from his original purpose of listing the Horites and Amalekites together in the early text (Gen. 14:6-7. if indeed the Amalekites were an ancient Horite tribe, that is) and then inserted them in separate lists in Gen. 36. So, there is every reason to conclude that Gen. 36 preserves the genealogical lists of the descendants of both Esau and the Horites; these need not be confused and should be kept separate. Therefore, the appearance of an Amalekite name in Gen. 14:7 should be interpreted as an editorial note reflecting a later perspective for the purposes of clarification, rather than the naming of some ancient tribe with the similar name.10

This fact, however, raises another question about the Edomite/Amalekite relationship. The Scripture identifies Edom with the land of Seir where the descendants of Esau have settled. However, as has been demonstrated by Bartlett, the name Edom and Edomites often is a reference to a larger group of people who occupied a geographical area South, South-east of the Palestine.11 It would naturally include all of the tribes of the sons of Esau as well as the remnant of the indigenous tribes of the sons of Seir. Therefore, speaking about the geographical territory of Edom and Amalek, one could say that the Amalekites “shared” the Edomite territory, or even better, they, being the descendants of Esau, occupied their portion of the land in the country of Edom. Among other sons of Esau, Scripture mentions Kenizzites, Jerahmeelites, Calebites, and Othnielites12 who, as some believe, settled in the

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10 The similar anachronism appears in the same passage Gen. 14:14 which states that Abraham and his small army attempting to rescue his nephew Lot, pursued the Mesopotamian Kings “as far as Dan.” Most scholars agree that the use of this name reflects a later perspective, since the Danites entered the territory of Northern Palestine at a much later time. The fact that the name predates Abraham’s great grand son Dan should not make one suppose that some ancient place with the similar name is in view. “By inserting this name a scribe has clarified the location of the region” (NET Bible).
12 Scholars believe that the tribe of the Kenizzites was the descendants of Kenaz son of Eliphaez the Edomite (Gen. 36:11, 15; cf. 1 Chr. 1:36, 53; 4:13, 15). For the discussion of the relationship between these tribes and the Edomites see H. H. Rowley, From Joseph to Joshua: Biblical Traditions in the Light of Archaeology (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 130-63; Bartlett, “The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom,” 2-7. For the discussion about the confederacy of the tribes in southern Palestine see Martin Noth, The History of Israel, 55-58.
Among the chiefs of Edom the chief of Amalek is mentioned (Gen. 36:16). What is interesting, however, is that in Scripture Amalek as an individual tribe is mentioned more often than other Edomite tribes. Amalek appears to be more vigorous than other nations when they stand in conflict with Israel and in the biblical records; for one reason or another they are treated independently from Edom. Why this is the case is not absolutely clear. Equally, it is not certain whether in the eyes of Israelites during their wandering in the wilderness, the Amalekites were viewed as a nation that was different from the Edomites. The Scripture seems to treat Amalek separately from Edom every time they appear on the pages of the Bible. The book never presents them as one and the same. This factor might have played a role in the reasoning of some scholars who viewed the Amalekites as unrelated to the Edomites. Yet the biblical evidence also seems to indicate that the two were related nonetheless.

Why does the Bible make a distinction between Edom and Amalek then? Perhaps there were some theological reasons for making this distinction. It is also possible that by the time of Israel’s Exodus that particular tribe of Edom managed to isolate themselves from the rest, much like Ishmaelites at the time of Abraham, so much so that they were viewed by many as a separate, isolated nomadic tribe. Sarna believes that “the tribe of Amalek had been a late and subordinate adherent to the twelve-tribe Edomite confederation.” He allows a possibility that they were “forced out of [their] habitat and pursued a nomadic existence in the Negeb and Sinai Peninsula.” In Ex. 17:8-16 the Amalekites seemed to initiate the attack on Israel completely on their own, quite independently from the rest of the neighboring tribes. There is not a hint in the text that they acquired any military support from their neighbors, or at least that is the impression one gets from reading these texts. Nu. 13:29 reports that the Amalekites were living in the Negev with Canaanites. From Ex. 17:14-16 it is clear that the Amalekites were not of the Canaanite stock, but they

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13 Some believe, however, that the penetration from south of all these tribes, including the Kenites, took place during the conquest (Noth, The History of Israel, 76-77). These tribes, who allegedly kept the purity of Yahwism in the shrine at Hebron, also introduced Yahwism to the wondering Israelites and led them into the conquest of the Land (see Rowley, From Joseph to Joshua, 130-63; Clements, Abraham and David, 37-43).

14 The name “Amalek” appears twenty five times in the HB; “the Amalekite” three times; “the Amalekites” twenty three times.

simply lived among them there as could be seen from Nu. 14:25, 43, 45. One may assume that that is where they were “forced out,” as Sarna proposes. However, the fact that Gen. 36:17 mentions “the chief of Amalek” along with the rest of the chiefs in the land of Edom strongly suggests that the Amalekites were not forced out of the land and that they were not “a late and subordinate adherent” to the Edomite twelve-tribe confederacy, but rather an early and constant member of a southern Edomite alliance (cf. Nu. 24:20).

It is possible, of course, to suppose that the compilation of the list in Gen. 36 occurred at a later date. But this explanation would only reinforce the suggestion which notes a closer relationship between Edom and Amalek. Many agree that the compilation of the genealogical lists of Edom could not have been done at a much later date than X c. B.C.16 If, therefore, Amalek got its place in the confederacy of Edom by that time, then King Saul’s attack on Amalek and its “capital city” (1 Sam. 15:5) would have been interpreted as an assault on the whole confederacy of Edom. Furthermore, in a general statement about Saul’s military achievements and in the list of the nations against whom he fought, Edom appears (1 Sam. 14:47). In the same list the Amalekites are mentioned as well (v. 48). Some commentators wondered about the literary significance of the Amalekite appearance in the latter text right before the following chapter that tells the story of Saul’s failure in Amalek. Was Saul successful in Amalek or did he fail? McCarter says that the Amalekites – “the archetypal plunderers in biblical tradition,” in this text stand for “raiding bandits in general.”17 Though this statement about the Amalekites is generally true, there is no inconsistency in the text which mentions military successes of Saul and so, there is no need to look for other senses except the plain one, namely, Saul was successful against the Amalekites as one of the Edomite tribes (14:47; 15:7). His failure, however, was moral. Could it be that Saul’s military achievements at Edom are merely a general statement of his military campaign against Amalek?

Furthermore, 1 Chr. 4:42f says that Simeonites, though at a much later time during the days of Hezekiah, “went to mount Seir . . . and they smote the remnant of the Amalekites that escaped, and dwelt there unto this day.” This point

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17 McCarter, I Samuel, 256.
suggests that the Amalekites as a nation were quite at home anywhere within the boundaries of the country of Edom in mount Seir.\textsuperscript{18}

This relationship between Amalek and the rest of the Edomite tribes is worth noting because while they appear to be distinct from Edom, in reality they were not different from the rest of the tribes who lived on the Edomite territory.\textsuperscript{19} In Massah and Meribah (Ex. 17:1-7), where the Israelites were experiencing the lack of water and accompanying thirst, it is quite possible that the Amalekites became the primary cause of that in the wilderness. Ex. 17: 8 says that Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim, but Deut. 25:17 supplies an additional detail of this incident stating that the Amalekites were causing trouble by their constant attacks at the back of Israel’s camp. Thus, Israel was traveling through the northern parts of Sinai Peninsula, e.g. going through the Amalekite territory; Amalek was attacking them because Israel provoked them by using their water sources; Israel fought back.

Numbers 20:2-13 record a similar incident. Israel was thirsty and got their water again at Meribah. After a miraculous provision of the water, Moses sent messengers with the request to the king of Edom asking for a safe passage through his territory (v.14). Several chapters earlier (Nu. 14:43-45) one can read about Israel’s failed attempt to force their way into the land of Canaan from the south when they were crushed by the Amalekite and the Canaanite forces at Hormah. Perhaps on this repeated occasion (ca. 38 years later) Israel’s intention was to make another attempt to penetrate the land of Canaan from the south going straight through the Edomite territory from Kadesh. However, the reaction of the Edomite king was similar to that of the Amalek in Ex. 17, “Edom, however, said to him, ‘You shall not pass through us. Lest I come out with the sword against you . . . And Edom came out against him with a heavy force and with a strong hand. Thus, Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through his territory; so Israel turned away from him’” (Nu. 20:18, 20, 21). There is a parade of a significant Edomite force, but no military conflict recorded. Glatt-Gilad notes that “the phrase וֹנֵשָׁר מֹשֶׁה אָחוֹן בָּנֵי שֵׁשָּׁם in Deut. 2:8a is

\textsuperscript{18} Bartlett suggests that Seir corresponds to “the mountainous region between Kadesh and the Arabah” (Bartlett, “The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom,” 6).

\textsuperscript{19} Though it is likely that other ethnic groups dwelt on their territory, such as Kenites (cf. 1 Sam. 15:6), it is improbable that they possessed any of the territory on which they lived. Only the tribal groups who could lay claim for a certain portion of the ground would be included into the Edomite confederacy.
taken to mean not that the Israelites continued on past the main artery through the Arabah after marching through Edomite territory peacefully and unobstructed, but rather that they were forced to depart from the area prematurely, as in Num. 20:21b: "וַיְלַהָרְבָּם לָשֶׁנֶּא אֶל מֶלֶךְ אֲרָבָּאָה." From the context of Nu. 20:14-21 it is possible to gather that again the water became the main reason of that conflict (v. 17, 19). Amalek stood in their way; Edom stood in their way. So, in all likelihood, Israel was chased out of those lands both times. Is it possible that Edom played an active role in standing in Israel’s way the first time as well?

Some would point out that Deut. 23:7, which forewarns Israel to honor their brotherly relationship with Edom, is an indication that Israel at all times was to maintain friendship with the neighboring state. To others this note seems to serve a different purpose since it appears as though it is a later addition to the text. It is beyond the scope of this study to deal with this particular issue; suffice it to say that this specific note of Deut. 23:7 is not too difficult a text to necessitate an acquisition of a different perspective from a different point in time in order to comprehend the text’s role and significance. The note seems to be specific enough about the inclusion of the Edomites and the Egyptians into the community of Israel. Therefore, the difficulty could be resolved if one understands it as being applicable not to every Edomite and Egyptian but only to those ethnic elements (Edomites: Kenizzites: Calebites, Othnielites; Jerehmeilites and Egyptians) who sojourned with Israel at the time of the exodus (Ex. 12:38) and took a share in their inheritance in the Promised Land.

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21 The parallel passage Deut. 2:2-8 indicates that there was no military conflict between Israel and Edom and that Israel got what he requested. For the discussion on this see David A. Glatt-Gilad, "The Re-Interpretation of the Edomite-Israelite Encounter in Deuteronomy II," *VT* 47, no. 4 (1997): 441-55.
22 Noth says that “Edom was situated in a remote spot with no direct frontier with the Israelites, so that there was no occasion for hostilities,” though others believe otherwise (Noth, *The History of Israel*, 154).
APPENDIX V

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PHRASE ‘A SWORD AND A SPEAR’ IN 1 SAMUEL

As soon as Saul disobeys the divine order (13:8-14a), the fitting substitute is immediately promised (13:14b); as soon as Saul is rejected (15:28), David is anointed to be the next king (16:1-12); as soon as the Spirit of the Lord departs from Saul (16:14), it abides in David (16:13); as soon as David receives national recognition (18:7-8), Saul’s persecution of his rival begins (18:9). The conflict between King Saul and David is built around particular themes that dominate the major portion of the book of Samuel. One of those is the theme of *a sword and a spear*.

This theme first appears in the context of the military conflict between the Philistines and the Israelites. We are told that during the Philistine domination there was no blacksmith (חרם) found in Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears” (1 Sam. 13:19). During the early military conflict between the two nations only Saul and his son Jonathan had *a sword and a spear* (חרם וחרות; 13:22). It is noteworthy that on another occasion, during a similar conflict with the Philistines, Saul offers David his armor (17:38), which David does not accept, for he was not used to it (v. 39). Perhaps the size was the factor too. He takes five stones in his shepherd’s bag and a sling instead. These five stones became symbolic of the divine deliverance of Israel through David, for as he explained to his opponent the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and a spear (חרים ואחרות) . . .,” but “not by sword or by spear the Lord delivers (בחרים ובחרות מהוהי; מ增至ים והוהי) (17:45, 47; emphasis added). When David approaches his enemy, the narrator emphatically states that “there was no sword in David’s hand” (חרים אים ברדרו; 17:50).1 When David thus prevailed (ריהוב) against the Philistine, however, he took his sword (חרים אים ברדרים) and decapitated him (v. 51). When

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1 LXXMiss lack the phrase.
David came back from the battle field he brought the weapons (אָמַס חֲלֵיו) of the Philistine with him (17:54b). Thus, the sword of Goliath became a symbol of Israel’s military superiority over their enemy the Philistines.

Once the Israelites realized that the Philistine’s weapon had turned around and defeated their enemy, the sword of Goliath probably became an object of Saul’s personal boasting as the leader of Israel. The sword of Goliath became symbolic of Yahweh’s superiority over the Philistine deities as well, for the Philistine “sword” was defeated by the Israelite “slingshot.” Eventually, the sword found its way into the sanctuary of Yahweh in Nob (21:10[9]), just as the armor of Saul was later placed in the temple of Ashtaroth after he was slain in the battle, emphasizing Israel’s defeat (31:10). In this respect, the motif of the enemy’s death brought about by his own weapon is thus being emphasized.

Nevertheless, the sword of Goliath turned out to be “double-edged” when it came to the relationship between David and Saul. While an object of national boasting for the newly established monarchy, it also became the object of struggle and rivalry for Saul in his relationship with the retriever of that relic. Once the sword had been obtained, the sweetness of glory quickly turned sour. Upon glorious return from killing the Philistines when women sang a song, which received a ready acceptance and popularity among Israelites and beyond (cf. 21:12[11]; 29:5), "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (18:7), Saul expressed his highest disapproval of both the song and the growing popularity of David.

Now it becomes clear that when David was permitted to remove this important relic from the sanctuary of the Lord in Nob (21:9[8]), it was interpreted by Saul that David was plotting against him personally. It is also possible that Saul saw this unauthorized removal of the now “sacred” object from the sanctuary as a potential attack on national security. For, as the ongoing story illustrates, as long as the sword of Goliath was in the sanctuary, the Philistines were “under control,” but when it was removed and never returned, it led to renewed conflicts with the Philistines (23:1, 28; 28:1).

The sword was an important object in the sight of David himself. He obtained it with God’s help. This trophy signified his trust in the Lord and Yahweh’s
ability to deliver Israel through David. Having obtained the sword from Ahimelech² David says: “There is none like it; give it to me” (21:9). Edelman observes: “[David’s] description of the sword recalls Samuel’s statement concerning Saul at his public designation as נתי in 10:24, (There is none like him among the people). . . , highlighting through the associations his status as Yahweh’s נתי as he strikes out on his own, cut loose from ties to the Saulide court.”³ Only David is not cut loose empty handed. He holds the sword in his hand, and with it he is going to strike the enemies of Yahweh as before with the power of the sword that came straight from the sanctuary of Yahweh and presented to him by the priest himself with five loaves of sacred bread. The importance of both could further be seen in that five stones and a sling – the choice weapon of the Benjaminites (Judg. 20:16) – signify David’s time in the service of King Saul, but five loaves of holy bread and the “sanctified” sword – in the service of Yahweh. Pondering the significance of the latter one cannot fail but notice that this motif of the sword and seeking the provisions by the fugitive David recurs again later, in the story of 1 Sam. 25.

The conflict between Saul and David in terms of military weaponry can also be seen through another object – King Saul’s spear (הָשָׁרֶם). In fact, the spear as a weapon came to be closely associated with King Saul in the book of 1 Samuel. It is described by the narrator as a symbol of his military power as it later became also a symbol of his personal insanity and rage.⁴ He threw it at David on several occasions (18:11; 19:10) and at Jonathan (20:33) when the latter spoke favorably of David. Next we read about Saul sitting with his spear under the tamarisk tree⁵ with the spear

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² LXXB reads Abimelech. LXXL = MT - Ahimelech.  
³ Edelman, King Saul, 167.  
⁴ Out of nineteen uses of the word “spear” in the book of 1 Samuel, it is used twice to describe the armor of Goliath (17:7 (2x), it appears twice in David’s instructive speech before Goliath (17:45,47); once used of David when he inquires of Ahimelech about “spear or a sword” (21:8), one time of Abishai who intends to use a spear to nail Saul to the ground (and may be Saul’s own spear – the same one, which on that occasion was taken by David; 26:8), and thirteen times of Saul (13:22; 18:10, 11; 19:9, 10 (2x); 20:33; 22:6; 26:7, 11, 12, 16, 22). Thus, in 1 Samuel a “spear” most often appears in connection with Goliath and King Saul.  
⁵ Barr suggests that הָשָׁרֶם, “tamarisk tree” is a reference to a sacred place (James Barr, "Seeing the Wood for the Trees? An Enigmatic Ancient Translation," JSS 13 [1968]: 11-20). Fokkelman (The Crossing Fates, 380-81) notes a parallel between Saul sitting in Gibeah under the tamarisk tree (יהוָה הָשָׁרֶם) before the execution of the priesthood took place, and his sitting under a pomegranate tree (יהוָה הָשָׁרֶם) in the beginning of the story (14:2), which ended with his condemnation of Jonathan (14:44). He comments, “Saul’s sitting comes immediately next to Jonathan’s disappearing without authorization and the chapter reports to us how this proto-David receives the death penalty for this
in his hand (22:6). This menacing sight of Saul indicates his readiness to use it again. Consequently, when Ahimelech speaks favorably of David, readers may expect the irritated Saul to throw it at the priest to silence him. Strangely, he does not! He looks around for someone who could do that for him. He finally finds Doeg who would not object. The anointed priest and the entire population of Nob die by the edge of Doeg’s sword (vv. 18-19).

The motif of a sword and a spear appear again at the moment of Saul’s death. The narrator tells us that when Saul’s army had been defeated by the Philistines, in his most desperate hour Saul “took his sword and fell on it” (31:4; emphasis added). When the story was related to David by the Amalekite, however, he told him, “I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and behold, Saul was leaning on his spear (2 Sam. 1:6). It is hard to miss the point the narrator must have been intending by emphasizing the presence of both the sword and the spear at the moment of Saul’s death, for these two instruments of war form the scope of Saul’s entire career as Israel’s leader (1 Sam. 13:22 with 31:3; 2 Sam. 1:6). Now, on Mount Gilboa, he was pierced by his own sword, yet he was “leaning” on his own spear, while life was still lingering in him (v. 9), and in such a miserable state he gave up his kingship.

Both of the objects mentioned may have also served yet another purpose. From the larger context of the book of Samuel it is evident that both Goliath’s sword and Saul’s spear had a symbolical significance when it came to Israel’s conflicts with the Philistines. The sword of Goliath was won in the valley of Elah in Judah (17:1-3), so Goliath’s sword represented Judah’s breaking off shackles of the Philistine oppression. The sword laying wrapped up in a cloth in the sanctuary of Nob (near Gibeah) speaks of Saul’s inactivity in Judah. That might have been the chief reason why it was taken by David in order to fight the Philistines in Judah. The story that immediately follows (21:11-16[10-15]) indicates where the sword was taken to (22:5). However, the choicest weapon of Saul – his spear – was with him when he tried to defeat the Philistines in Shunem by Mount Gilboa which is 50 miles north from Gibeah in Israel (28:4). David’s taking of Saul’s spear (26:11) may signify his

from Saul himself, mainly because he, Saul, had not been informed.” Fokkelman concludes that “the subtle link 14:2a-22:6b introduces and enriches . . . a hidden theme: the downfall of the house of Eli.”

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intentions to come to Saul’s aid (28:1-2 with 29:5). However he returned the spear to Saul (26:22), which may mean that Saul had to face the Philistines alone (28:5-6).

Now back to 1 Sam. 22: when the issue of David’s discovery was discussed, Saul was sitting under the tamarisk tree with his spear in his hand (22:6). After the sword was thus “stolen” (in order to fight the Philistines in Judah), Saul might have thought that David was going to attack him and so he was not willing to let go of his spear, which stands for his control of Israel. Ironically, five chapters later David manages to steal it too but then returns it (26:12). The latter move illustrates that David would not gain the kingship of Israel by force; it foreshadows the days when he would be anointed as the king of Israel by the Israelites’ own initiative (2 Sam. 5:1-4). By taking the spear away from Saul, David also deprives Saul of the opportunity to impale him and others. Thus, when David keeps stealing the articles of war from Saul – the same articles that seemed to be so very important (cf. 13:22) – he, metaphorically, deprives him of the ability to withstand the Philistine attacks, for, as the narrator told us earlier, “the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul” (14:52). When the sword was stolen, the Philistines renewed their attacks; when the spear was stolen – Saul was finished. In the end, Saul is found on Mt. Gilboa defeated by the Philistines, fallen on his sword and leaning on his spear.
APPENDIX VI

NABAL’S DOWNFALL

Just as Proverb 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling,” Nabal’s calamity is closer to him than he realizes, yet he spends his time in festivity:

THEN ABIGAIL CAME TO NABAL; AND BEHOLD, HE HAD A FEAST IN HIS HOUSE, LIKE THE FEAST OF A KING. 1 AND NABAL’S HEART WAS GOOD IN HIM, FOR HE WAS VERY DRUNK; SO SHE DID NOT TELL HIM A THING EITHER SMALL OR GREAT UNTIL THE MORNING LIGHT. BUT IT WAS IN THE MORNING, WHEN THE WINE LEFT NABAL, HIS WIFE TOLD HIM THESE THINGS, AND HIS HEART DIED WITHIN HIM SO THAT HE BECAME AS STONE.  AND HE ENDURED FOR ABOUT TEN DAYS; THEN THE LORD STRUCK NABAL, AND HE DIED (1 SAM. 25:36-38). 3

Thus, “whatever you find at hand” (v. 8) to feed the needy in the wilderness went into Nabal’s own belly. Verse 37 says that “when the wine left Nabal”4 and he had to stand in the light of divine justice, he was found wanting. Whether it was a stroke of apoplexy or something else caused by a number of things

1 LXX reads καὶ ἐδοκεὶ ἀνεβῆλεν ὁ ἄρχων, καὶ ἐπιθύμησεν ἐπὶ τῆς μεθάνης τοῦ βασιλέως, “he had a drunken orgy in his house as a drunken orgy of a king.” It is interesting to note a parallel of this text with 2 Sam. 13:27 [MT-] is represented only by LXX and possibly by 4QSam5. LXX reads: καὶ ἐσωθίσθη Ἀβέσσαλων ποτὸν κατὰ τὸν ποτὸν τοῦ βασιλέως, “and Absalom made a drunken orgy as a drunken orgy of the king.” Though in 4QSam6 the majority of the verse is missing due to damage, the arrangement of the lines of the verses suggests its closeness to LXX. Fincke reconstructs it as follows: $\text{lkm htmkm htm lmvb}$, “and Absalom made a wine feast as the feast of the king” (cf. MT 1 Sam. 25:36: $\text{lkm htmkm htm lmvb}$). See Fincke, The Samuel Scroll from Qumran, 213, 309. DJD suggests the following reconstruction: $\text{lkm htmkm htm lmvb}$ (DJD, 4QSamuel, 147).

2 LXX reads εὔχεν χείραν, when he “came to senses.”

3 These verses are not extant in 4QSam6.

4 Peter Leithart suggests that this phrase should be taken with vv. 22, 24 “… not a man who urinates against the wall.” Consequently, v. 37 he pictures Nabal urinating on the wall (lit. and fig. cf. v. 17) when Abigail breaks the news (Leithart, "Nabal and His Wine," 525-27; Leithart, "David's Threat to Nabal," 18-23, 59).
or combination thereof – he felt cheated by his wife, or he felt dishonored, or simply the sudden fear and the realization of the impending disaster – the text does not explain. It is equally possible that there was no visible external cause of Nabal’s newly acquired condition. Nabul might have been as fit as a fiddle and so, the only explanation that could have been found is the supernatural intervention of God, who gives life and takes it away. The narrator says that his heart “became as stone” — a fit object to be put in the sling of divine justice (v. 29). By his drunkenness, gluttony and, no doubt, many other sins, he has “fattened his heart for the day of slaughter” (James 5:5; cf. Jer. 17:11). The narrator describes his death as a process of two stages: first his heart died in him, and then he died himself. He was frozen in this state for ten days, thus suffering each day for his insulting of each of the ten messengers sent by David.

This issue of God striking Nabal still perplexes a few. Thus some, applying their “educated common sense,” conclude that since the account includes “specific divine activity,” it can be called “unreliable” because “it seems

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5 Stansell, “Honor and Shame in the David Narratives,” 64.
6 Boyle argues that Nabal’s failure of heart and stony transformation was not caused by a physical cause but is an illustration of his obstinate disobedience to the law. And when it is said that his heart “became like a stone” it is an indication of his refusal to listen to the words of advice either of his servants (v. 17) or of his wife (v. 37) (“The Law of the Heart” 417-19). However, it must be remembered that Nabal has hardened his heart not after his servants or even his wife tried to talk to him, but he had a “stony” heart even before he met David’s men, as evidenced in his rough answer. The narrator said earlier that he was a harsh/hard man. Though it is possible to take hyh as a reference to the state of his heart, yet it seems that the scripture points to his newly acquired condition, namely, physical failure of his heart, and, as such, it does not intend to illustrate his moral condition. Boyle says that Nabal hardened his heart himself as in Zech. 7:11, which gave an opportunity to Yahweh to strike him dead. But by the same argument it can be said that on another occasion the Lord had “hardened the heart of the pharaoh” (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 14:4) and of the Egyptians (Ex. 14:17). Furthermore, the text does not say that Nabal had hardened his heart, but simply views it as a natural occurrence given the circumstance, “his heart died within him,” e.g. he suffered a stroke, just as “the wine had gone out of Nabal,” e.g. he became sober.

7 It is interesting to note the feasts in the book(s) of Samuel that immediately followed by someone’s death: Nabal (1 Sam. 25:36); Abner (2 Sam. 3:20); Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28-29); Adonijah (1 Ki. 1:41; 2:24-25).
8 Whether incidentally or by design, the narrator tells about a period of ten days during which Nabal was paralyzed. There seems to be a parallel with the number of men sent from David that endured Nabal’s insults. As though to justify injury inflicted on them, Nabal was first paralyzed for ten days and only then he died, being struck by God. Rabbinical sages, however, interpret the significance of ten days as follows: “And it came to pass after the ten days the Lord smote Nabal. How come these ten days here? – R. Nahman said in the name of Rabbah b. Abbhu: These are the ten days between New Year and the Day of Atonement” (Rosh HaShana 18a).
unbelievable, or at least very unlikely."\(^9\) God acting on behalf of David the "deceiver" and "bandit"\(^10\) is immediately suspected:

Admirers of David and/or clients of his dynasty wrote the records and interpreted remembered events in ways that they believed appropriate and effective for their purposes. But those purposes did not include the preservation of a historical record that would meet the standards of persons not sharing their theistic outlook.\(^11\)

Others, who believe that in studying the HB theistic language is still preferable, are perplexed by this idea that Samuel’s God acts on the side of those who exemplify less admirable qualities. Gunn, for instance, looking at the divine activity throughout Saul’s career exclaims: “If we are to condemn Saul for his jealous persecution of David, how much more is *Yahweh to be condemned* for his jealous persecution of Saul!” He goes on to say: “It is tempting to say that this is the human face of God – but to say that is perhaps to denigrate man, and that is not something this Old Testament story does; rather we might say that here we see the *dark side of God.*”\(^12\) Gunn concludes:

It is tempting for Christians to read the Old Testament in terms of what I might call the “optimistic” God of Christian theology – the God who is the embodiment of the absolute and the abstract, the all-good, all-just. . . . But the Old Testament affords us, throughout the Saul story and others, glimpses of God in other forms. In the story of Saul, as in that of Job, we are at some distance from the innocuous God of the ethical absolutes: God can pour out his favour upon Israel, upon David, and even upon Saul; but he can also be unpredictably terrible, jealous of his own status, quick to anger and impatient of the complexities of human action and motivation.\(^13\)

It must be acknowledged that the “omniscient” narrator, from whom readers learn about the actions of God in the story, does not spell out everything to his audience. Rarely do we read about the motives of characters’ hearts that move them to action and so, readers sometimes have to deduce from other factors such as where the narrator and his God stands on this or that issue. In attempting to discern this “hidden” *information* it should not be overlooked that the biblical text was not

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\(^9\) Cargill, "David in History," 212.
\(^10\) Ibid., 214.
\(^11\) Ibid., 222.
\(^12\) Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 129. Italics are mine.
\(^13\) Ibid., 131. See also Nicholson, *Three Faces of Saul*, 106-07.
designed to be as a “religious bulletin” where both parties – human and divine – express their converse opinions; it is rather a tool of communication. The explanation of Yacobi is helpful here:

Communication cannot be defined without reference to the viewpoint of the transmitter … In the act of communication, one organism can be thought of as wielding a tool (verbal or otherwise) in order to mould the representation of ‘facts’, ‘skills’ or ‘priorities’ in another.14

Biblical writers intended to provoke some changes in the behavioral patterns of their audiences. If a reader, therefore, is to engage with the text, it must be accepted that the narrator of that text is reliable. Yairah Amit’s observation is in order:

The sophisticated judgmental option regarding the unreliability of the narrator or author is, of course, typical of modern literature, which is influenced by the realistic way modern reality is perceived. Biblical literature was addressed to an audience whose reading habits were usually less sophisticated and, since religious literature deals with a set of recommended values, it could not permit itself unlimited license in questions of reliability. The distinction between good and evil is central to this literature, and in order for each reader to grasp and live by its messages, the reader must assume from the start that “the narrator is always right.” God, too, must be reliable, otherwise how would the unsophisticated reader know when to believe and accept His demands and judgments?15

Therefore, when the biblical characters are described in a certain way, to grasp what the narrator is trying to communicate, his words need to be taken at face value. Thus, when the text describes Nabal as a person who was harsh and evil in his dealings and that he was “too worthless for anyone to speak to him” – this characterization must be accepted as reliable for proper understanding of the story (to be certain that communication between writer and reader occurred). Equally, when God strikes Nabal dead, the whole issue needs to be looked at from the perspective of those whose voices are reliable, namely, the narrator and his God. Sternberg comments:

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The Bible therefore postulates a narrator with such free movement through time and space, the public and the private arena, that he invests his dramatizations with the authority of an omniscience equivalent to God’s own. Since this omniscience itself ultimately goes back to God, such tactics of validation may not survive logical analysis—but then rhetoric never does, or else there would be no need for it. Its proof lies in the swallowing, and the Bible’s art makes resistance difficult, certainly to the implied audience of believers. And whether or not interpreters share this belief, they cannot make proper sense of the narrative unless they take the narrator’s own omniscience as an institutional fact and his demonstration of God’s omniscience as a[n] informing principle.16

When the narrator says that God struck Nabal and he died, the judgment should be made from the constant of divine position – God is just, in order to evaluate Nabal’s character – this villain was punished for the evil he has done. What kind of evil it was the text does not say. However, the reader has no grounds to question the validity of the text.

Yet despite that fact, the judgment that crushed the Fool’s head so quickly causes many a reader to wonder whether Nabal’s punishment really suited his “crime.” It can be suggested that a common assumption that Nabal suffered divine retribution for whatever he did or did not do in the 1 Sam. 25 story, needs to be abandoned. The sum total of Nabal’s sin(s) concealed in his name was accumulated over time. The sin(s) for which he was punished in the story is not named but implied in 1 Sam. 25 from the outset. The narrator informed his audience that Nabal was evil even before he had a chance to deny David’s request and the reader cannot help but to trust the text assuming that divine judgment suited Nabal’s crime. Nabal became evil not because he denied David’s request; he denied it because he was evil.

APPENDIX VII

THE CHRONICLER AND THE POST-EXILIC WRITERS

While it is beyond the scope of the present work to give a detailed account of the extent of the work of the Chronicler and his contemporaries throughout HB, a quick review of the key points pertinent to this work may prove to be useful. When the pattern in the way the writers of HB handled the Calebite traditions is observed, an agenda is noticeable. Thus, for example, in the book of 1 Chronicles whenever Caleb appears in the genealogical lists (1 Chr. 2:2-9, 18; 4:1), he stands as the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, thus appearing consistently as the third generation member in the genealogical lists of Judah.

This positioning of Caleb as the third generation Judahite in HB deserves attention. The implications of this pattern can be seen readily when it is examined against the background of the Deut. 23:8[7] text, which lays down the rule of how Israel was to treat the Egyptians and the Edomites. There it is stated that in the third generation these peoples could be accepted as full fledged members of Israel’s community. As is often explained, this text contains a general command of how Israel was to treat its neighbors. However, in light of the selective nature of the list (Egypt and Edom) and for other reasons (see below), it seems more probable that the command had only particular groups in view. Exodus 12:38 reports that the company that left Egypt during the Exodus was mixed (בַּעַמ; cf. Nu. 11:4). It is likely that the command of Deut. 23:8[7] was concerned with the non-Israelite elements that sojourned with the sons of Israel. It can be assumed that it was directed toward certain Edomite (and Egyptian) elements that sojourned with Israel, one of which was the Kenizzites. The rest of Edom was probably not in view, for as the ongoing story illustrates, Edom was antagonistic towards Israel throughout Israel’s history. The groups that joined Israel, however, were most likely promised a share of blessing once the word of Yahweh came true for Israel (cf. Nu. 10:29-32). Kenites, as it appears, were not included in that group, though the invitation to join in had been extended to them too (v. 30). Nevertheless, they remained Israel’s allies (1 Sam. 15:6; 30:29). When one reads the genealogical lists of Judahites in 1 Chr. 2
and 4 with that understanding in mind, one has to wonder if, perhaps, the name of Caleb the Kenizzite was inserted in the genealogical lists of Judah having the command of Deut. 23:8[7] strictly in mind. The writer stressed the connection of 1 Chr. 2 and 4 with Deut. 23:8[7] by making Caleb’s case a matter of exceptional privilege, namely, the third generation Judahite, because when the latter joined Israel, according to earlier narratives, he was only the first generation alien among them.

The Chronicler was not alone in his interests in the Calebite traditions. Other biblical writers had an equal share in these interests. This can be detected upon closer investigation of Gen. 15:16. The background of that text is Yahweh’s covenant making with Abraham. One of the items in Yahweh’s promise to Abraham is the inheritance of the land of Canaan by his seed (15:7-8, 18; cf. 13:14-18). During the vision Yahweh revealed to Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for four hundred years (15:13). Then Yahweh said: “in the fourth generation they shall return here,” e.g. in the land of Canaan (v. 16). The mention of the Kenites and the Kenizzites in that context (15:19; cf. 13:7b) is of some interest for this thesis, for Caleb was the Kenizzite, which also raises the question about the note’s overall purpose as well as the time of its composition.

Lohfink, after Cazelles, supposes that the list in Gen. 15:19-21 represents the names of the peoples who were not Abraham’s contemporaries, but rather of his posterity. He argues that as far as the source of the list is concerned there are only two possibilities: 1) military source and 2) the source that represents the interests of Abraham’s descendants.1 Since the ethnic elements that appear in that list lived on the territory of Judah, Lohfink takes it as a clue to conclude: “So wird man mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit sagen können, daß die Liste von Gen. 15:19-21 aus jüdischer Perspektive geschrieben ist.” He explains:

So haben die kenisitischen Kalebiter zwar eine Genealogie, die sie in den Stamm Juda einordnet (Nu. 13:6; Judg. 1:10-15; 1 Chr. 2:9-18). Aber der Stammvater Kenas erscheint zugleich als edomitischer Häuptling (Gen. 36:11, 15, 42; 1 Chr. 1:36, 53). Hinter den Erzählungen in Nu. 13f scheint

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eine Überlieferung zu stehen, die erklären will, wieso die Kalebiter ihr Gebiet unmittelbar von Süden aus eroberten. ²

Some, however, think that Gen. 15 reflects “the political aspiration of David’s and Solomon’s time … and the promise of mastery over the Canaanite peoples, including the Kenites and the Kenizzites, who up to the time of David still comprised separate ethnic entities in Judah.”³ Mazar notes that “It is not by chance that the author of the book of Samuel was careful to distinguish between the Kerethite Negev and the Negev of Judah and its sub-groups (1 Sam. 30:14), which parallels the distinction in the same passage between the land of the Philistines and the land of Judah (1 Sam. 30:16).”⁴ It is important to remember that in the same text the Negev of Caleb is mentioned. Hence, the connection of this passage with Gen. 15:19 is possible through Caleb the Kenizzite.⁵

Weinfeld is of the opinion that “the extent of the promised land in Gen. 15:19-21, and especially the Kenites, Kenizzites and Kadmonites mentioned there, also point to a Davidic background”⁶ Discussing the grant of Hebron to Caleb, he also draws attention to linguistic similarities between Yahweh’s covenant with Caleb and the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. He goes on to say that “as in the Abrahamic-Davidic covenants and in the grants of the Ancient Near east, so also in the Caleb gift we find the conventional formulae of conveyance in perpetuity: ‘to you and your descendants forever’” (Josh. 14:9). Looking at the covenant of grant with Caleb from a tradition-historical standpoint he admits that “we don’t know whether the grant reflects an authentic historical fact of the times of the conquest or is rather a back projection of later times.”⁷ His views seem to be in agreement with Clements’ earlier observation that the city of Hebron was the birthplace of tradition for all three

² Ibid., 67-71.
⁴ Ibid., 78.
⁵ Others expressed their doubts about the Davidic date for the composition of the Patriarchal narratives. Wagner, for example, comes to the conclusion on the basis of the literary study of Abraham’s story that “the evidence clearly suggests an exilic or post-exilic setting for the pre-P patriarchal traditions” (N. E. Wagner, "Abraham and David?", in Studies on the Ancient Palestinian World, ed. J. W. Wevers and D. B. Redford, TSTS [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972], 130, 140).
⁷ Ibid., 200-01.
covenants with Abraham, David and Caleb. After David made Jerusalem his capital, the same older traditions came to be associated with Jerusalem, although about Calebite association with the latter city one can learn only from post-exilic sources. Therefore, Weinfeld’s conclusion that “the tradition of the grant of Hebron to Caleb had been transmitted by the same circle which transmitted the tradition of the Abrahamic-Davidic covenants” seems plausible. This needs to be kept in mind when the following is considered.

By mentioning Israel’s contemporaries the Kenizzites and the Kenites in Gen. 15:19-21, the writer might have wanted to bring these tribes to the forefront when the promise about the land was being given to Abraham. He emphasized their claims to certain portions of the ground by creating parallels between the place where the reception of the covenant with Abraham took place (most likely “by the terebinths of Mamre, which are in Hebron” – the place of Abraham’s residence at the time [13:18]) and the city of Hebron which Caleb received from Yahweh by covenant for his faithfulness (Nu. 14:24). In this way Abraham’s faith towards God (Gen. 15:6), which moved Yahweh to make a covenant with the nation’s forefather, could be compared with the faith(fulness) of Caleb, which also resulted in Yahweh’s promise to give him the land, on which he had set the foot (Nu. 14:24; cf. Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:9, 13-15).

However, there is something else going on here, which is quite significant. As was noted, Caleb, though an alien, in the genealogical lists of Judah appears as the third generation member, which is in accord with Deut. 23:8[7]. This fact, when noted, may resolve the problem associated with interpreting Gen 15:16, which, in turn, is a commentary on the importance of the Calebites in Israel’s history and tradition. This is seen when Gen. 15:16 “in the fourth generation they shall return here” is compared with Nu. 14:30, “Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun” (cf. Nu. 14:34, 38; 26:65; 32:12). The harmonization of Gen. 15:16 note (four generations) with v. 13 (400 years) is difficult. Many commentators have

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8 Clements, Abraham and David, 25-46

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interpreted one generation (יְהֵרָה) here to mean “a lifespan,” e.g. one generation is being equated to 100 years. Some note the exceptional nature of this text, because everywhere else, it seems, one generation is equivalent to no more than 40 years added to the 20 or 30 years of age or the age when a person was considered to be an adult (cf. Nu. 32:11 with Deut. 1:35). Yet the text of Gen. 15:16 insists that the nation of Israel would enter the land in the fourth generation. The problem, however, can be resolved by reading the passage against the background of the aforementioned texts. When the Chronicler decided to engraft Caleb onto the genealogical tree of Judah, he made him the third generation after Judah and the son of Hezron (1 Chr. 2:9, 18; 4:1). As commentators note, “the linkage is patently artificial since Caleb is not directly attached to the patriarch Judah or his sons but to Hezron.” So this genealogical construction is the creation of the Chronicler; otherwise, as some note, one would have to deal with another difficulty that Hezron fathered Caleb when the former was 170 years old. However, if one takes the note of Gen. 15:16: “in the fourth generation …” with Nu. 14:30: “surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh …” and again, “Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh …” (Deut. 1:35-36), the apparent links between these texts are hard to miss. Thus, only Caleb (as the third generation representative of Judah) and Joshua were allowed to enter the land, whereas the rest of Israel entered the land in the fourth generation, because the generation of Caleb and Joshua had died in the wilderness (Nu. 14:38; 26:65; 32:11-12). One may wonder, therefore, if the note of Gen. 15:16 was written to make it anticipatory. The writer of this note demonstrated that the reception of the land is in some way dependent on the faithfulness of the recipient of the promise – like Abraham, like Caleb – the theme that was at the forefront of the theological perception of the returnees from the Exile.

Along the same lines one other detail needs to be noted. Some commentators say that “the replacement of Nahshon, the leading chieftain of Judah

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10 See R. L. Harris, "Generation," in ZPEB (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 678.
11 Milgrom, Numbers = Ba-midbar, 392.
12 Japhet, I & II Chronicles, 72.
13 See Eisemann, Divrei Hayamim I, 23.
(Nu. 1:7; 2:3; 7:12, 17; 10:14) by Caleb, first among the scouts and later as representative of the tribe of Judah (34:19), reflects the ascent of David: in the earlier genealogies, David is a descendant of Nahshon (I Chr. 2:9-17), and, in what is clearly later material, he descends from Caleb (1 Chr. 2:50-51)." Indeed, it appears as though David was really dependent on the Calebite political support in his ascent to the throne of Judah and then Israel. When David had received the oracle (2 Sam. 2:1), he, his men and their families went and lived in “the cities of Hebron” (הָעָרָיִם הַזֶּכֶר; v. 3; cf. Josh. 21:12//1 Chr. 6:56). This observation caused some to theorize that David’s marriage with Abigail was a very shrewd political maneuver. However, the fact that in the text (2 Sam. 2:4) Judah plays the central role rather suggests that the opposite was the case. The purpose of 1 Chr. 2:50-51 was not to stress “the ascent of David” on the throne of Hebron through his relationship with the Calebites. Quite the contrary is the case. By inserting Caleb in Judahite genealogy, the Chronicler demonstrated the tribe’s relationship with, even its dependence on, the House of David! In that respect the character of Abigail plays a decisive role. Her presence in 1 Sam. 25 does not help David in his ascent to the throne of Hebron, as Levenson and Halpern have suggested. Rather, she defends the interests of her household before David and, by extension, before the tribe of Judah. In terms of the broader context her character is rather designed to establish a link between her household and the house of David – the fact which would be especially meaningful to the Calebite community during the exilic and post-exilic times.

Meyer noted that the Calebites, who comprised quite a significant nomadic population in southern Judah, retreated further north, during Israel’s Exile, under the pressure of Edom and occupied the area surrounding Jerusalem including the town of Bethlehem. They were the ones who welcomed the returning exiles to

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14 Milgrom, Numbers=Ba-midbar, 392. Italics are mine.
15 More recently this idea was developed by Levenson, "1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History,"11-28; Levenson and Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Marriages," 507-18. However, this has been debated long before Levenson (see H. Winckler, Geschichte Israels in Einzeldarstellungen, I, [1895]: 25, cited by Clements, Abraham and David, 47. See also Meyer, Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme, 408, n. 2).
16 While Abigail and Ahinoam are mentioned often together as two of David’s wives, the latter appears before Abigail most of the times including when David went to Hebron (2 Sam. 2:1-2). However, the importance of Abigail is highlighted only in 1 Sam. 25, whereas Ahinoam was as little as only mentioned in the end (v. 43).
17 Meyer, Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämmе, 402.
their homeland. Further, 1 Chr. 2:24 points to a connection between Caleb and Ephrathah. Japhet notes that “Ethnologically, Ephrathah would be a non-Judahite element, established in the area of Bethlehem and Tekoa, which was amalgamated with the already Judah-affiliated Hezronite and Calebite families to form the dominant ethnic factor in the area.”\(^\text{18}\) This would indicate that there was much closer contact between Judahite and Calebite families in Bethlehem. The similar connection between Bethlehem and Ephrathah can be noted in the text of 1 Sam. 17:12 where David’s father, Jesse, is called the Bethlehemite of Ephrathah (cf. Mich. 5:2).\(^\text{19}\) This might have been another link that would strengthen the affiliation between Judah and Caleb.

Now when Israel was returning from the Exile there was no pressing need to officially legitimate Israel’s claims to the land. However, there was a need for the Calebites, who probably comprised the majority of the population around Jerusalem at the time of Israel’s return, to defend their rights (like Caleb before Joshua) and to legitimize their presence in the land in light of the multiple foreign elements that populated the land and needed to be dealt with (cf. 2 Ki. 17:24-33 with Ezra 4:1-5).

\(^{18}\) Japhet, \textit{I & II Chronicles}, 82

\(^{19}\) This text along with the phrase the “son of Jesse” once again point to their eschatological significance.
APPENDIX VIII

THE MAKING OF THE BOOK OF 1 SAMUEL

Is it possible to determine when 1 Samuel was made? Did it come into existence through a long and continuous process and as the result of a combined effort of many writers making their contribution to this work at different periods of time or was it written by one author/editor (or a team thereof) who composed this “masterpiece” at one time using numerous sources available to him? While fuller answers to these questions are well beyond the limitations of the present work, a few observations pertinent to the study of 1 Sam. 16—25 are in order. In the next section, some of the criteria the adherents of the so-called Deuteronomistic History often use in dating the material in 1 Samuel will be examined and concluding observations made.

A. The Deuteronomistic History

Ever since the first publication of Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I (1943),¹ where Martin Noth marshalled his theory of the Deuteronomistic History (DH) – “the large-scale history written to Deuteronomistic specifications” from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings,² this idea to a larger degree occupied the minds of the OT scholarship. Although Noth’s theory, as Gordon notes, “has met with something less than universal acclaim,” it continued to be quite popular, though it has seen numerous modifications. If Noth believed that there was one exilic editor responsible for the whole DH, others thought that there were at least two editions. Cross differentiated between two strata in DH: the pre-exilic core (Dtr₁) and the exilic redaction (Dtr₂). Smend, however, thought that the whole work of the DH is exilic and that “particular prophetic and ‘nomistic’ redactions (DtrP and DtrN) took place at a later stage.”³ However, as Wilson observes:

¹ English translation appeared in 1991 under the title The Deuteronomistic History, JSOTSup 15.
² Gordon, 1 & 2 Samuel, 15.
Although a growing number of scholars agree that much of the Hebrew Bible is Deuteronomistic, they do not agree on what makes it Deuteronomistic. A variety of criteria have been employed to identify Deuteronomistic influence, but to date there is no consensus on what makes a particular passage Deuteronomistic.⁴

What makes 1 Samuel Deuteronomistic? McCarter lists nine instances in 1 Samuel which he thinks are indicative of the Deuteronomistic editorial work, four of which fall within the scope of this work, and three are of some interest to this thesis (1 Sam. 17; 20:11-17, 23, 40-42 and 25:28-31). According to him, these either contain “characteristically Deuteronomistic clichés” or appear to be “devices of the Josianic historian.”⁵

As a way of illustrating how the “Deuteronomistic” material in 1 Samuel is being handled, the passages mentioned above will be examined. The intention of the following analysis is to demonstrate that the presence of the alleged Deuteronomistic material is not distinctively “Deuteronomistic” and that the claims of the proponents of the theory are a matter of conjecture and the arguments they advanced in their favor cannot be determinative.⁶

1. The David and Goliath Story

The editorial hand of the Deuteronomist in 1 Sam. 17, McCarter describes as follows:

The popular Jerusalemite story of David’s victory over a Philistine champion overlies the old battle report that originally stood at this point in the history of

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⁴Robert R. Wilson, "Who was the Deuteronomist? (Who Was Not the Deuteronomist?): Reflections on Pan-Deuteronomism," in Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism, ed. Steven L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 268 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 78. A new phenomenon of the Pan-Deuteronomism can be observed in the OT studies today. A discussion on this trend in the OT studies is found in the collection of essays in Those Elusive Deuteronomists among which the following should be especially noted: A. Graeme Auld, "The Deuteronomists and the Former Prophets, or What Makes the Former Prophets Deuteronomistic?,” in Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism, ed. Steven L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 268 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 116-26; Norbert Lohfink, "Was There a Deuteronomistic Movement?,” in Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism, ed. Steven L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 268 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 36-66.

⁵McCarter, I Samuel, 16-17.

David’s rise to power. Though the precise extent of the secondary material cannot be determined and the time of its incorporation cannot be said with certainty to have been Josianic, it does share some features with the kind of Deuteronomistic expansion found in subsequent passages.7

However, the argument that this popular story was incorporated into the book by the Josianic historian is not as firm as it is portrayed. For one thing, the inconclusive character of the problem that has to do with the divergent nature of variant texts should prevent one from making conclusive statements. Nor can anything illuminating be said about the source material itself, at the present state of knowledge. Was this “popular” story based strictly on historical facts or were the facts used more or less loosely by the writer in his pursuits to expand the literary and theological spectrum of significance of the Davidic figure in Israel’s history? Is it certain that this was the “popular Jerusalemite story” or, as McCarter himself indicates elsewhere, could at least the story about David and Goliath’s sword have “belonged originally to Nob”?8 In his view of how the story of David and Goliath reached its present form, McCarter allows for a later addition when he says that there existed two alternative traditions about David’s early days in Saul’s court. So, according to him, the second account (17:12-31, 41, 48b, 50, 55-58), which describes David’s early days in court, “may have belonged to the idealized David traditions that had long circulated in Jerusalem and, assuming that they continued to be cherished in royalist circles in the Exile, survived into the postexilic period.”9 However, why this co-existing alternative tradition was not used by the Josianic historian and why it would have been preserved in “royalist circles” in the Exile is left unexplained. It is unclear how it was possible for an exilic writer to merge both traditions so neatly without altering or completely obliterating the goals of the earlier Josianic writer. Even if the collation of two alternative accounts is theoretically plausible, still, a modern critic has no way of assessing the extent of a later editor’s work. By closely examining the extant biblical narratives, it is virtually impossible to determine where the Josianic historian left off and where the exilic editor picked

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7 McCarter, I Samuel, 16. Later McCarter seems to be more positive about Josianic historian writing this story or at least the first part of it which included the following verses: 17:1-11, 32-40, 42-48a, 49, 51-54 (McCarter, I Samuel, 308-09).
8 Ibid., 296.
9 Ibid., 309.
up. Therefore, one can only theorize about the purposes of the so-called Deuteronomistic writer in compiling different traditions during the first (Dtr$_1$) or second (Dtr$_2$) stage of the making of the book(s) of Samuel.

Rofé (and others)$^{10}$, for instance, demonstrated that from the standpoint of linguistic evidence orthography, lexicon and idioms, semantics, morphology and syntax all point to a post-exilic time. That applies to the material which is attributed both to Dtr$_1$ and to Dtr$_2$. Rofé concludes that as far as the syntax goes, the language of 1 Sam. 17 approximates closely to the language of the book of Chronicles.$^{11}$ If one is to establish the historical timeframe for the making of the David and Goliath story, one must recognize that indeed the time-frame is broad enough to allow different periods in Israel’s history (pre-exilic, exilic or post-exilic) to become the Sitz im Leben for the composition of the story. However, since it is impossible to learn about the causes that led to the story’s introduction to the Samuel corpus and because there is no way of knowing the character of the source traditions which were used by the author of Samuel, the story can only be analyzed in its final form. Only then can some objectivity be achieved in deducing the Sitz im Leben.

2. The David and Jonathan Story

McCarter takes Jonathan’s explicit statements about David’s future kinship (1 Sam. 20:11-17, 23, 40-42) as indicators of the Deuteronomistic expansions.

Two possible explanations offer themselves: 1) either the idea of the covenant making between Jonathan with the House of David was the result of later Deuteronomistic invention or 2) there always existed a tradition about the covenant making between Jonathan and David, which somehow was not available to Dtr$_1$ or was overlooked or even ignored by him, but not by Dtr$_2$.

There are problems with both scenarios, however. If the story regarding the covenant between the two was a product of authorial invention, then not only is it difficult to understand what was the nature of Jonathan’s relationship with David, but also all other stories that make use of this covenant need to be treated as equally fictitious. This perspective would expose further problems. Thus, for instance, the

$^{10}$ See pp. 34-54 of this thesis.
story of Mephibosheth, which heavily depends on this covenant, would be redundant and incomprehensible, and would expose no honorable quality in David who showed Jonathan’s son his favor because of the terms of that covenant (2 Sam. 9) and later spared his life, being guided by the same principles (21:7). Therefore, if the note about the covenant was a product of the authorial invention, it would have hardly served the purpose of the Josianic historian in his attempt to uplift the exceptional qualities of David. Furthermore, it does not seem likely that in the Josianic time the royal line experienced pressure from the House of Saul, nor was there a need to validate the Davidic throne relying on Jonathan’s predictions.

If, however, the tradition surrounding this covenant was as old as the “core” of the story in 1 Sam. 20, then it is impossible to tell why this significant element was left off by the Josianic historian (Dtr₁) and why it attracted the attention of the Deuteronomistic historian in the Exile (Dtr₂).

Moreover, the note about the covenant between the two friends is no more significant to the Davidic future kingship (1 Sam. 20) than the story of the anointing of David to be Israel’s king (1 Sam. 16), which, according to some, was included in the work of Dtr₁. As was demonstrated previously, the story of 1 Sam. 20 exposes complex and coherent interconnections with the material in 1 Sam. 18—23. In 22:8 Saul grieves because no one informed him of the covenant made between his son and the son of Jesse. Contextually, he seems to refer to its last mention in 20:16, not in 18:3, though, as was demonstrated earlier, both passages are thematically related. So, it can be argued that these verses in ch. 20, which the proponents of DH often attribute to the hand of the exilic editor, were an indispensable part of the story to begin with. Without them the rest of the material would be a collection of unrelated stories and as such would hardly serve the purpose of the Josianic historian. Once again, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the stories themselves were composed within the same time frame (ca. 5th century B.C.) on the basis of the ancient source traditions.

3. The David and Abigail Story

The Deuteronomistic insertion of 1 Sam. 25:28-31 into the main story is summarized by McCarter as follows:
The insertion transforms David’s future wife into a kind of prophetess, who foresees the dynastic promise to the house of David in phrases that explicitly anticipate the Josianic rhetoric of the oracle of Nathan, which now stands at the end of the history of David’s rise in II Samuel 7.12

As was noted in Chapter V, when the nature of Abigail’s words are contemplated seriously, there are reasons to believe that her prophetic predictions, go beyond the timeframe suggested by the narrative itself. Nevertheless, the question should be asked: Is it certain that these notes were first written by the Josianic historian? That is not to say that it is virtually impossible for the note to have appeared then. Rather, if the notes were added later to the earlier tradition and can be traced back to the time of Josiah, why did the Josianic historian choose Abigail to deliver such an important prediction and beat Nathan to it (2 Sam. 7)?13 It would probably have been fitting to choose a more substantial figure to reassure David about the future house Yahweh would build for him. Previously it was suggested that in 1 Sam. 25 Abigail seems to be the key figure in uniting the Davidic House with the tribe of Caleb. Now while it is plausible that the future predictions made by Abigail could have been added by an editor of the 7th century B.C., considerations of Abigail’s broader role in the narrative may indicate a later date for the “insertion” of this note into the narrative of 1 Sam. 25. As was already suggested, 5th century B.C. appears to be a more attractive period when the entire story was composed.

Along with this, one other example can be mentioned that helps further illustrate the point under consideration. Edelman draws attention to the detail with the chronological implications found in 1 Sam. 22:9, 18-19, namely, the Edomite origin of Doeg. She explains: “Such an ethnic slur would be particularly meaningful to an audience at the end of the 7th century, when the Edomites were already beginning their incursions into southern Judah.”14 More recently, however, Assis suggested that in the prophetic corpus Edom stands as a representative of the neighboring gentile powers that dominate Israel. So, “the object of the anti-Edomite prophecies was to contend with the loss of the national identity of Judah, the people

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13 MacCarthy, for example, mentions 1 Sam. 25, but conveniently avoids discussing its implications for 2 Sam. 7 (Dennis J. McCarthy, “II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History,” *JBL* 84 [1965]: 133).
14 Edelman, *King Saul*, 18-26, [19].

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chosen of God.” The argument goes that “the anti-Edomite oracles were meant to instill into the hearts of the people that, despite the destruction, Israel is still the chosen people and the sins of Edom against Judah will not remain unpunished.” Edelman’s observation that Doeg’s Edomite origin might have intended to strike a negative note among the audience, and that the modern readers’ awareness of the historical political background may help to guess the purpose of the writer of those stories, are welcome. However, by considering the conclusions of Assis it must also be said here that the marginal target for dating this note with “chronological implications” is quite broad: the Edomite origin of Doeg would induce negative emotions among the audience living in the 7th century B.C. just as sharply as it would in the exilic and post-exilic time, which Edelman elsewhere admits.

B. Dating the Material in 1 Samuel

In light of the above discussion, a few guidelines for dating the material in the book of 1 Samuel can be now mentioned:

1) At the present state of knowledge, no definitive answer can be given about the nature of the sources used to compose the books of Samuel. It seems reasonable to suppose that the source traditions themselves may have originated in approximately the same time period the stories themselves describe. However, nothing more specific can be said about the character of the “building blocks” (oral or written) of the book(s) of Samuel.

2) It is unknown how many editorial stages (if any) there were before the book(s) of Samuel reached its/their present form. In his recent monograph, Frolov makes an important observation about the effects of an editor’s work on any given literary composition. He says that “every redactor is first and foremost a reader; as

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such, he or she experiences the text ‘only as a series of changing viewpoints, each one restricted in itself.’” Then he says:

Any redactional intervention is therefore an attempt to (re)organize the text from one of these viewpoints, which in turn is likely to disorganize it in other respects, regardless of the redactor’s skills as a reader and an author.19

Even if it is supposed that there was the first edition of the book(s) of Samuel (Dtr1), the modern critic has no way of knowing what it might have looked like before the work of the Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr2). This is not to deny the existence of the earlier sources that became the “building blocks” for what today is known as the books of Samuel, but to call into question the sets of criteria that are often used to differentiate between the editorial stages in these books. Speaking regarding the works of editors in HB, Geller rightly observes: “To assess an editor’s skill one must know what he did.”20 Without that particular knowledge the modern reader can only evaluate the material in the Samuel corpus from the standpoint of the final product.

3) Before contemplating various causes that led the writer(s) of the book(s) of Samuel to select and arrange the material, modern readers must first try to grasp the message of the text in its totality. Without considering the relevance of the text to multiple audiences, without discovering the message of the text in its final form using both synchronic and diachronic approaches, certain portions of the text will appear to be problematic instead of revelatory.21 Thus, for example, the note about the Edomite’s appearance in the sanctuary creates difficulties when the story is analyzed synchronically. However, this seeming “problem” can be viewed as crucial elements in explaining the note’s relevance to the broader audience. Consequently, this issue cannot be fully resolved by saying that it was the work of a redactor – the answer which focuses only on one aspect of the problem without solving the problem completely.22

19 Ibid., 33-34.
21 A good discussion on the importance of grasping the multidimensional value of the text of the book(s) of Samuel is found in the Introduction of Polzin’s Samuel and the Deuteronomist (1-17).
22 For example, one would have to explain whether or not the “Edomite” was strictly a redactional element. If, however, it was not “redactional” but “original” and the effect it had on later
4) Closer examination of the material in the book(s) of Samuel reveals that it is not made of seamless literary fabric; some sophisticated literary tailoring was involved. A number of details throughout the book seem to go beyond the time-frame suggested by the narratives themselves. Despite the fact that the idea of multiple editorial stages is theoretically plausible, the complexity of the material as well as the intrinsic coherence of the “later” additions with the “early” traditions suggests that it was a single composition rather than an editorial patch-work. Thus, for instance, the note of 17:54 and its relationship with 21:10[9]; the ethnic slur that is associated with Doeg’s Edomite origin in 21:8[7] and 22:9, 18-19; Abigail’s words about the “enduring house” in 25:28 and the rest of her speech, can be explained with a much lesser difficulty if it is allowed that the entire composition of the book(s) of Samuel was written by a single author/editor (or a team thereof) who, from the height of his time, could oversee Israel’s history and tailor together the ancient traditions by his own theological observations. In that sense the explanatory notes found throughout the text, which are often attributed to the “omniscience” of the narrator, can simply be the author’s own insights.

5) The interconnectivity of the larger units in the book(s) of Samuel speaks in favor of a single composition. As was demonstrated previously, even what appears to be an ambiguous text serves its purpose if the relationships between the individual literary units are viewed from this perspective.


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