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The Characterisation of David in the Samuel Narratives.

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The Characterisation of David in the Samuel Narratives.

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS IN THEOLOGY

in the subject

OLD TESTAMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

PROMOTER: PROFESSOR P M VENTER

November 2009

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SUMMARY

At the beginning of 1 Samuel, Israel is an insecure affiliation of tribes with little unity and loyalty. They are led by ineffective Judges and worship under a corrupt Priesthood. At the mercy of their enemies, Israel struggles economically. This study begins with a look at Israel and the factors that contribute to the establishment of the monarchy. It follows Saul's tragic reign and David's rise as God's chosen king.

Our study then follows the life of David who in Biblical depiction is narrated in relation to other characters. Special attention is given to David's relationship with Saul and Jonathan because they are key relationships and they contribute to the development of David's character within the Samuel narratives. In 1 Samuel David is portrayed as one who has experienced great trials and sheer torment, yet he maintains an internal compass that always points to God. David finds a place of deeper security, where he develops a trust and hope in God that extends beyond his external realities.

In 2 Samuel, David and his family are portrayed as having little or no wisdom, showing themselves to be capable of deception, immorality and barely being able to keep a grasp of the throne or the kingdom. The narratives describing the war against the Ammonites, David and Bathsheba, Amnon and Tamar, Absalom's revolt and David's return to the throne all testify to this fact and their interrelatedness contribute to the portrayal of David as king. In the final analysis, it is established that despite his sin and shortcomings, the narrator, by using other characters either in contrast to David, or in line with David, presents David as "a man after God's own heart" (Ac 13:22).

KEY TERMS

Adversary, advocate, consecrate, diptych, enmity, juxtaposition, paradoxically, parenthetically, pericope, pro-homosexual, triptych.

A NOTE ABOUT THE SPELLING OF WORDS AND BIBLE TRANSLATIONS USED IN THIS STUDY

The Oxford English spelling is used in this study. However, in the case of quotations, the spellings of words have been preserved in their original form. With regard to Bible translations, unless otherwise stated or in quotes, all Bible verses come from the New International Version (NIV).

DECLARATION

I, Sabashnee Mandy Pillay, herewith declare that “The Characterisation of David in the Samuel Narratives” is my own work and that all the resources I used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

_____ _____

Sabashnee Mandy Pillay Date
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Promoter: Professor P M Venter

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No work of this magnitude can be a solo effort, least of all this one. I sincerely acknowledge my indebtedness to the following:

- ✧ Dr Charles De Jongh – for inspiring me to do this study.
- ✧ Lionel Hendricks, Gavin Johnston, Jacques Rothmann, Sean Tucker, Piff Pereira, Peter Christofides and Michael Miller – for your support, prayers, ideas and motivation.
- ✧ Professor P M Venter – for your patience, guidance and encouragement.
- ✧ To my mom - thank you for your commitment to God and your fervent prayers.
- ✧ To my family - Pam, Rose, Preven, Bash, Raj, Claude, Amore and Ethan – thank you for teaching me that patience and perseverance is the best way to get the job done.
- ✧ To Moroesi Tsoai – you have truly been a pillar of strength and I am so grateful that we are friends. Thank you for "strengthening my hand in God" (1 Sm 23:16).
- ✧ Janine Els, Heather Neary, Nicky Rothmann, Leah Haw, Sue Matthis, Sarah Crossett, Kelli Patchin, Kimberly House, Rose McNair, Rachel Ayoub and Sandra Daniel - for all your hard work in editing and proof reading.
- ✧ To all my friends who have lifted me up in prayer, encouraged me in the Lord and supported me through the tough times, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Each of you has been a God send.

This study is dedicated with deep gratitude and love to Uncle Lionel, whose passion and love for the Old Testament was truly inspirational. Thank you for believing in me.

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CHAPTER 1: THE PROPOSAL

1 THE PROBLEM

This study is undertaken in order to understand the character of David through his portrayal/characterisation in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. A number of complex images of David have emerged as a result of historical critical analyses of the books of Samuel through the history of Israel. This study is motivated by the fact that a picture or pictures of David have appeared which have done much to elucidate the true meaning of the nature of the relationships David shared with others.

2 AIM OF STUDY, HYPOTHESIS & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aim of study

The study will specifically approach the characterisation of David in the Biblical narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel. David is at all times narrated in relation to other characters. He never stands on his own. By using other characters either in contrast to David, or in line with David, the narrator presents David as “a man after God’s own heart” (Ac 13:22).

Of particular interest is David’s relationship with Saul and Jonathan. While much of the focus will be on David’s characterisation, special attention will be given to Saul’s character because he contributes to the way in which the Bible presents David to the reader. With regard to Jonathan, focus will be given to the sections that follow the relationship between David and Jonathan in Biblical literature with the purpose of finding a Christian ethical interpretation for God pleasing same gender relationships.

The relationship between two people of the same gender has become a burning ethical issue in present society. There are many Biblical examples of relationships between members of the same gender. However, this study focuses on David and Jonathan because it is in many ways an unlikely friendship, yet it was a significant one for the people of Israel and for David.

2.2 Hypothesis

This study will proceed from the following hypothesis:

A characterisation of David in relation to the other characters found in the books of Samuel. The techniques of narrative analysis provide a useful heuristic strategy for probing the characters of the Samuel narratives. David is divinely chosen to be the successor to Saul who has a personal vendetta against him. However, Saul's pursuit of him refines his character and he becomes the king in whose line the Messiah will years later descend. The nature of the relationship between David and Jonathan as it is presented in the narratives of First Samuel presents a model for God pleasing same gender relationships. While David's actions are at times questionable, he possesses an ambivalent attitude to both the people and God with whom his own mission is irrevocably linked.

2.3 Methodology

The researcher will use the process of Narrative Analysis to conduct an exegetical and theological investigation of the narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel. The discussion will therefore employ the techniques of characterisation, a sub-discipline of Narrative Theory. Clarification concerning characterisation and other relevant aspects of Narrative Theory will be provided in chapter 2.

3 OUTLINE OF STUDY

The study will proceed according to the following outline:

Chapter 2 - Narrative Criticism: Characterisation as an Aspect of Narrative Analysis. The discussion on characterisation enables the reader to arrive at a portrait of David as determined by the textual units that comprise the Saul Cycle, the Saul–David Cycle and the David Cycle.

Chapter 3 – Overview of the Books of Samuel. In chapter 3 attention is given to aspects of the books of Samuel, such as, historical background, author, date, purpose and theological themes.

Chapter 4 – The Saul-David Cycles. In chapter 4 attention is given to the following:

- Saul's character in the section the Saul Cycle.
- David's character in relation to Saul, Jonathan and other minor characters in the section the Saul–David Cycle.
- Finally, David's character, after his ascension to the throne in the section the David Cycle.

This chapter serves to establish the profile of Saul, David and Jonathan's characters by concentrating on various aspects of the unfolding narrative.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions. In this chapter attention is given to the conclusions reached based on the work covered in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2: NARRATIVE CRITICISM - CHARACTERISATION AS AN ASPECT OF NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

1 INTRODUCTION

The ensuing study follows the development of David's character in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. In order for us to understand his development we need to study the narratives in which his story is found. Narrative, is "the predominate mode of expression in the Hebrew Bible (Berlin 1983:13). Scholes & Kellogg (1966:4) further comment, "it can be distinguished from other literary modes or text-type(s) by the presence of a story and story teller, as well as by logic of event sequence, performed by characters in a setting and told by a narrator" (Chatman 1990:114).

" The narratives of the Old Testament belong partly to the traditional category and partly to genuine fact–bound history" (Licht 1978:14-15). However, in many cases the narratives of the Old Testament do not present fact bound history, but rather offer an imaginative construct of events that form a story-world in which the reader is invited to participate. Hendricks (1998:10) observes, "The portrayal and development of the characters within the story world form a particular and pivotal aspect of the story's engagement with the reader." "The key elements in a narrative are the scene, the point of view, the dialogue and rhetorical devices such as repetition, inclusion and chiasm. Each element assists the interpreter to more adequately understand what was the meaning and purpose for including each episode narrated in Scripture" (Kaiser & Silva 1994:68).

Other important elements include setting, characters and plot. They need to be considered when hearing the story. All these elements put together are the vehicle by which to communicate a larger truth to be understood in the story. "The setting of a narrative, or historical context, involves physical (specific places, objects, or activities), cultural (customs, social values, belief systems, worldview, attitudes) and temporal (political, national, world events) dimensions. These must be considered in relation and interaction with the characters and plot" (Bratcher 2006:s.p).

2 TYPES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

"Literary Criticism is a broad field that encompasses a variety of different methodologies and is best understood in contrast to Historical Criticism which has been the dominant mode of Biblical studies for more than a century" (Powell 1993:11). Whereas Historical Criticism is concerned with history as suggested by its name, Literary Criticism is concerned with the story or narrative. This approach asks the question, "What happens in the Biblical narrative?" The focus lies in the world of the text itself as opposed to the world behind the text. "Literary interpreters of the Bible argue that any work of literature creates a world and the reader enters that world created by the text" (Powell 1993:11). The meaning of the text is found within the world created by its story.

Literary Criticism is an approach to Scripture that as risen as a corrective or reaction to modern predominance of the Historical Critical method. "The historical approach is criticized

for focussing on the reconstructed history behind the text and thereby missing the multi-layered meanings resident within the text" Gresham (2006:s.p). In order for us to follow the development of David's character, we will discuss certain aspects of characterisations, which have a direct bearing upon the narratives in 1 and 2 Samuel such as:

- *The Narrator*
- *Story and Discourse*
- *Point of view*
- *Events*
- *Plots and Characters*
- *Time and Space.*

Currently, there are four forms of Literary Criticism that are being employed in studies. Narrative Criticism along with Rhetorical Criticism, Structuralism and Reader Response come from Literary Criticism. Whilst we are primarily interested in Narrative Criticism, it might be helpful to define the other three methods before we continue. Gresham (2006:s.p) defines them as follows:

2.1 ***Rhetorical criticism***

"A method which uses classical rhetorical theory to analyse argumentative techniques within the Biblical writings, giving attention to how the author uses style, language, emotion and logic to persuade the reader."

2.2 Structuralism

"This is a method that reads the Biblical writings in light of universal literary structures. It interprets Biblical characters, themes and events in terms of their roles and functions within a certain structural grid or universal grammar."

2.3 Reader response

"This method critically analyses the Biblical text in light of the experience of the reader. It interprets the text in light of the questions, expectations and surprises that the reader experiences proceeding through the text. It also emphasises the active role of the reader in determining the meaning of the text." The last method is Narrative Criticism that is said to be unknown to secular literary scholarship. Narrative Criticism developed in the field of Biblical studies. Scholars of Biblical studies view it as an "independent, parallel movement in its own right" (Powell 1993:19).

By definition Narrative Criticism is a method whereby an analysis of structure, theme, plot, sequence, timing of events, characterisation and the use of literary techniques such as irony, humour and repetition are conducted as ways of developing the story and its significant themes for the sole purpose of understanding what that work of literature is all about.

(Goodacre 2004:s.p)

While Rhetoricalism and Structuralism take different approaches to the idea of the reader, narrative critics usually speak of an implied reader when speaking of the reader. The focus of Narrative Criticism is the implied author, narrator, characters, plots and themes. One of the major contrasts with Redaction Criticism is over the author. Where Redaction

Criticism attempts to focus on the historical author, Narrative Criticism focuses on the implied author, that is, the author implied by the text itself.

> *Further, Narrative Criticism focuses on the entire communication that contains all three components namely, the sender, the message and the receiver and hence is complete in itself. Narrative Criticism moves from being a pragmatic type of criticism to a more objective type of criticism because of the concept of implied reader and author. There are some Reader Response critics who object to the concept of an implied author, saying that the concept is inattentive to certain hermeneutical realities.*

(Powell 1993:19-21)

3 ASPECTS OF CHARACTERISATION

There are several aspects which contribute to characterisation. Several are found in the books of Samuel and are briefly mentioned below.

3.1 The narrator

The narrator, who is sometimes called an agent, "is not the author and must not be confused with the implied author" (Chatman 1974/5:147), but is "the linguistic subject - a demonstrable, recognisable entity immanent in the narrative itself" (Chatman 1974/5:312), this is seen in the fact that the "authors make use of narrators to tell their stories for them" (Deist 1982:73). Bal (1985:119) adds, "a narrative text is a text in which a narrative agent (or narrator) tells a story." Du Plooy (1986:108) concludes, "narrators fall into two main categories, the objective (or external) narrator and the direct (or internal) narrator who sometimes forms part of the story."

It is believed by Biblical scholars that the external narrator dominates the Old Testament. Berlin (1983:57-58) observes, "He is frequently intrusive – commenting continually, seeking to influence the reader's point of view." Deist (1982:75) agrees with Berlin's statement pointing out that the narrator's frequent intrusion is seen in "his apparent foreknowledge (omniscience) concerning the thoughts and feelings (inner world) of the characters. Thus he is able to make evaluative (reliable) judgements."

3.2 Story and discourse

Narrative Criticism is concerned with a particular type of literature. A narrative may be broadly defined as any work of literature that tells a story. Fewell (1981:22) observes, "Despite its very definite focus on plot, characters and themes etc, a narrative is basically a discourse, "a piece of writing designed to communicate certain knowledge to its audience." (Du Plooy 1986:296, cf also Chatman 1990:9) add, each narrative has two parts:

- *A story, which consists of the contents and chain of events which are chronologically and logically ordered and include causality.*
- *A discourse, which is the expression, the means by which the content is communicated. Story "designates the narrated events in the text in their chronological order, together with the participants in these events" (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:3, cf also Du Plooy 1986:301). This definition is developed further below:*

Story is the 'what' that is depicted and discourse is the 'how.' Story is the specific story itself - the substance drawn from

the form - which consists of certain events (actions and happenings) - the content of the narrative expression, whereas the actual structured form of the narrative transmission is the narrative discourse and consists of elements such as characterisation, setting, time and point of view.

(*Chatman 1974/5:295-314)*

Story refers to the content of the narrative i.e. "What is it about?" In a story you will find things like events, characters and settings. The interaction of these three elements is what is called the plot. Discourse refers to the rhetoric of the narrative i.e. "How the story is told!" When told with the same basic events, characters and settings they can produce very different narratives. Aspects explored in stories and discourses are point of view, narration, symbolism, irony and narrative patterns.

3.3 Point of view

Abrams (1957:165) describes point of view as "the mode established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, actions, settings and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction." On the other hand Chatman (1974/5:150-158) defines it in this way, "point of view is the physical place, ideological situation or practical life-orientation to which narrative events stand in relation." Point of view is defined in Biblical literature as follows:

… [P]oint of view has emerged as an ideological crux and force… [W]hich always forms a combination of perspectives

– such as the divine, the quasi-divine or narratorial and the human views…[S]ome theoretical approaches to point of view are akin to Biblical geneticism in fragmenting the text into bits of discourse and seeking to assign each to its appropriate originator… [W]hatever else point of view may be or do; it entails a relation between subject and object, perceiving mind and reality.

(Sternberg 1985:129-185)

In a narrative, the story can be viewed from different points of view. Scholes and Kellogg (1966:240) have divided point of view into the following three categories:

- *The point of view of the characters*
- *The point of view of the narrator*
- *The point of view of the audience (reader)*

In the Bible, the discourse operates with three basic relationships that constitute point of view. These are between narrator and characters, narrator and reader, reader and characters and in order for the text to be understood it is important that these relationships be reconstructed as far as possible. An author may choose to describe his characters from the point of view of other characters, he may use his own point of view, and he may even involve the point of view of a third person.

(Hendricks 1998:12)

Point of view in the Samuel narratives are important because they help us understand how each character viewed the other and

in doing so reveal aspects of characterisation which contribute to the overall study.

3.4 Events

Every story has an event or events. They are described as the happenings that occur in a story without which a story cannot exist. One must pay attention to the manner in which the events are presented when considering events. One should also consider kernel events (essential events), satellite events (minor events), order, duration, frequency, causation and conflict. The books of Samuel are saturated with these types of events. Several will be explored in the ensuing study.

3.5 Plot and characters

Dickson (2006:63) claims, "The indispensable link between plot and characterisation is generally accepted in narrative literary studies."

> *Plots and characters cannot be separated; they belong together so closely that if we develop the one we shift others. The characters are the visible face of the plot: they get it moving, they feel it, they dress it up; without them the plot is reduced to a skeleton. Narratives present the reader with characters functioning at different levels. The narrative itself generates, more or less distinctly, a hierarchy of major roles, subordinate roles and walk-ons.*
>
> *(Hendricks 1998:14)*

Dickson (2006:64) concludes, "character roles are classified in relation to their importance to the plot as heroes/heroines, foils and agents." This aspect of characters will be given more attention later on in this chapter.

3.5.1 Plot

A plot is "a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality" (Forster 1962:87) and is "constructed as a meaningful chain of interconnected events, which serve to arouse the reader's interest and involvement" (Bar–Efrat 1989:93). The reader is involved in filling in gaps and interacting with the text (Chatman 1974/5:304). Scholes & Kellogg (1966:239) add, "Plot is the only indispensable skeleton which when fleshed out with character and incidents provide the necessary clay into which life is breathed." "As a pattern of events taking place in a particular period of time, plot is inextricably bound to characters on at least two accounts. Characters initiate, endure and are affected by events and characters like real people, are shaped by their temporality" (Fewel 1981:21).

3.5.2 Structures and elements of plot

Du Plooy (1986:42) defines plot as being, "not merely a particular synthesis of particular materials of characters, thought and action, but such a synthesis endowed necessarily, because it imitates in words a sequence of human activities, with a power to affect our opinions and emotions in a certain way." "A good plot presents a variety of interesting events whereby tension, surprise and the ingenious manner in which the entire story unfolds is brought to a satisfactory conclusion" (Scholes & Kellogg 1966:211).

The greater part of the story usually occurs in the middle, where the narrative comes to its climax as it does in 1 Samuel 16:13-14. *"Moreover, the middle acts as a point of departure for the development of the characters" (Hendricks 1998:18-19). The plot may develop as a series of inner and/or outer conflicts where the central character may come to maturity after a number of conflicts with himself or other characters. This is seen in the development of David's character from being a young shepherd boy to becoming king of Israel.*
The road to the throne is tainted with obstacles and yet he matures and grows into the king that God wants him to be (1 Sm 16–2 Sm 9). The end "is clearly marked–for instance by the death of the protagonist" (Bar-Efrat 1989:130-131). In the case of David, we know that Saul dies in the battle on Mount Gilboa and David ascends the throne in Judah and after war with the house of Saul (2 Sm 2:1-4:12), David finally becomes king of both Israel and Judah.

3.5.3 Significant literary devices in the development of the plot

Intrigue, suspense and dramatic irony, all present techniques, which may engage the reader in a dynamic process of interaction with the unfolding of the story. "Intrigue refers to the problem and/or tension that is thrown in a story when the characters begin to act and speak within the world of that story and so come into conflict with that world. Intrigue, is one of the essentials of narrative art, with each line making its own contribution, often catching the reader by surprise" (Deist 1982:101-104).

Suspense, another of the literary devices used by the narrator can be described as, "where the reader is uncertain of what is going to happen to the characters with which he has established a bond of sympathy" (Abrams 1957:160). The use of dramatic irony in a narrative "is where the narrator shares with the reader knowledge which the character is ignorant to. The character acts in a way grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or expects the opposite of what fate holds in store" (Abrams 1957:82, cf also Wales 1989:263).

Repetition of words and their roots is a stylistic feature often found in Biblical narratives. "There are various kinds of repetition and its purpose is determined by the position in the text or the function it fulfils" (Bar–Efrat 1989:211–212). The repetition of the Hebrew word hesed, meaning loyal love is a good example of this in the Samuel narratives (1 Sm 18, 20 and 2 Sm 1). Lastly, Flashback is another literary device employed by the narrator in the Samuel narratives. Bal (1985:54, cf also Abrams 1957:130 and Chatman 1974/5:63) state, "Flashback falls into that category of chronological deviation, directing the reader to an event in the past. 1 Samuel 9: 15-16 is an example of flashback in our study."

3.5.4 Characters

Characterisation is a technique whereby the narrator portrays his characters in a narrative. Deist (1982:92–101) claims, "characterisation in the Old Testament is on the whole purely an instrument for the purposes of intrigue, while also serving as a vehicle for the narrator's point of view." Berlin (1983:32–41) states, "characterisation in the Bible is accomplished through the use of and combination of several techniques along the text continuum, such as inner life, speech, actions and contrast."

Characters are the actors in the narrative. They carry out the different activities that make up the plot. They are described by Du Plooy (1986:321) as "artistically sketched people on paper within fictive reality as complete personalities." Wenham (2004:26) adds, "Old Testament narrative texts manifest the ideals of the implied authors but often not on their sleeve. We find characters that are complex, who combine vices and virtues in ways which mean we simply cannot assume that whatever a character does is approved

by the narrator." Characters can be portrayed in varying degrees of complexity. There are four types of characters described by Fewel (1981:22-24), they are listed below.

3.5.4.1 Agent characters

These are the simplest kind of characters who play only a minor role in the narrative. They don't have very distinguishing characteristics. Their role is basically to keep the plot moving. The most common kind of agent found in Biblical narrative is the messenger/agent who rarely has personality, but who, by transferring knowledge from one character to another is integral to the ongoing of the plot. The servant travelling with Saul (1 Sm 9), Michal (1 Sm 19), Abigail (1 Sm 25), Abishai (1 Sm 26), the Amalekite (2 Sm 1) and Joab all are examples of this type of character. In some cases, like in the case of Joab, these characters may play more than one type of character.

3.5.4.2 Flat (static) characters

They are "one sided and predictable and their sole purpose is to carry the narrator's message" (Deist 1982:98-99). They "don't stand out as individuals" (Berlin 1983:23), but "reflect a particular trait or quality" (Nel 1995:192). Flat characters "are stereotypical characters that contain nothing surprising" (Bal 1985:81) and can be described in "a single phrase or sentence" (Abrams 1957:24).

3.5.4.3 Full fledged (active) or round characters

These are the most complex characters and they reveal many different character traits. Most of the time they display characteristics that real people (Berlin 1983:23) would display.

(Bal 1985:93, cf also Alter 1981:126) assert, "Often their level of complexity varies as the story progresses." Characters who are agents in one scene can be round characters in other scenes. Dickson (2006:65) concludes, "These characters display more than one trait and experience growth and development throughout the narrative." Both Saul and David fall into this category.

3.5.4.4 Foil characters

They, according to Dickson (2006:66), "highlight through contrast a trait(s) of another character. Generally, foils appear only to enhance the qualities of other characters." Examples of this would be Samuel and Eli's sons (1 Sm 2-3), Saul and Jonathan (1 Sm 13-14) and David and Abishai (1 Sm 26). In constructing a character the Biblical narrative often speaks directly to the reader. The most prevalent technique used in characterisation in Biblical narratives has to do with showing and telling. This can be explained as follows, we get to know characters in the same way we get to know people in real life, that is, by watching and listening to them and observing how other people respond and react to them.

With regard to narratives we are sometimes even "privy to their inner thoughts and this is an example of where the narrator's telling merges with showing" (Fewell 1981:23). Other techniques employed in constructing and reconstructing characters are comparison and contrast. This is a technique employed in various places in the ensuing study and is crucial to the development of the characters.

3.5.5 Setting

The setting provides the context for the characters and events. They designate when, where and how the actions take place. The setting can be characterised as possessing certain descriptive qualities. They serve a variety of functions. They can be symbolic, help reveal characters, determine conflict or provide the structure for a story. "In narratives there are different kinds of settings that may be employed, such as, special settings, temporal settings or social settings" (Powell 1993:70-73).

In 1 Samuel 11:14-15, the people of Israel gather at Gilgal. This is an important geographical location because it was here that the Israelites first camped after they entered the Promised Land and the place where they first renewed the covenant in the land (Js 4-5). "For this reason that site would have stimulated the people's remembrance of God's faithfulness to them and His plans for them as a united nation" Constable (1967:45). Gilgal in this way became a significant geographical indicator. It marked three important meetings between Samuel and Saul. The first is Saul's reaffirmation as king (1 Sm 11:12-15). The second occurs when Samuel rebukes Saul for offering sacrifices (1 Sm 13:11-15) and the last is when God rejects Saul for saving Agag, the Amalekite king (1 Sm 15:8-9).

3.5.6 Time and space

Chatman (1974/5:313-315) points out, "it is clear that the fundamental dimension of narrative is time, or more precisely successively, that is, time as seen as the compass in which successive events occur."

> In narrative, we must observe that there is not one but two-time scales. We must distinguish between the inner time of the content (time represented in the story) from outer and discourse time, the time it takes the audience [reader] to peruse the story... [T]he first we call story-time and the second discourse-time... [I]t is the story-time that distinguishes narrative from other discursive structures.
>
> (Chatman 1974/5:313-315, cf also Du Plooy 1986:40)

Vandermoere (1976:47-79) points out, “both physical and psychological growth and development of the character, implies time.” “Since the narrative is revealed to the reader gradually, the author can exploit the reader’s temporary ignorance in order to heighten interest and tension” (Bar-Efrat 1989:141). “One of the functions of time is setting, that is, the occasional need of the narrator to designate the particular sequence of events, or the temporal distance between them” (Vandemoere 1976:49). Examples of the use of time/setting, is Saul’s search for the donkeys which lead him to Samuel and David’s arrival on the scene in 1 Samuel 17, coming to deliver food to his brothers but in turn delivers Israel from their cunning enemy, the Philistines.

Bar-Efrat (1989:184) asserts, “In Biblical narrative space is shaped primarily through the movement of characters and the reference to places”. In his view, “space exists as a background to the events in which the plot unfolds and is therefore only vaguely sketched” (Bar-Efrat 1989:194-195). Moreover, Hendricks (1998:21) adds, “Biblical narratives are dominated by movement[s], which constitute a central structural element, serving as the focal point of the plot.” By contrast, Vandemoere (1976:32-46) argues that space plays a more significant part in the development of the plot. He remarks, “[space] in the narratives are not merely geographical facts, but are regarded as literary elements in which significance is embodied.” Biblical narratives are dominated by movement and space and may also be called upon to create an appropriate atmosphere, announcing what is to come. Samuel’s farewell speech is an example of this (1 Sm 12).

4 CONCLUSION

In the ensuing study we will see how these aspects of characterisation help us understand each of our characters. The study will now follow a course of analysis within each of the cycles presented in 1 and 2 Samuel. For our study we will focus on the three cycles that have particular relevance to our topic. Using the information gathered in this chapter, we will firstly analyse the Saul Cycle, secondly the Saul-David Cycle and thirdly the David Cycle. However, before we begin our research into the three cycles we must first seek to understand the books in which our narratives appear and for

this we will conduct a brief study on the overview of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel.

CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL

1 INTRODUCTION

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel witness to one of the most crucial periods of transition in the history of ancient Israel. At the opening of 1 Samuel, Israel is a loose federation of tribes, experiencing both external threat from the militarily superior Philistines and internal crisis because of the corruption of the priestly house of Eli at Shiloh, where the Ark was maintained and covenant traditions were preserved. However, at the conclusion of 2 Samuel, an emerging monarchy is firmly established under David. He has weathered various threats to the integrity of the kingdom and is preparing to establish a hereditary dynasty in Israel.

(Keck, Petersen & Long 2003:949)

The events which bring about the transition to monarchy provide some of the most dramatic stories in the Old Testament. They not only narrate vivid events but also introduce us to some of the most remarkable characters in Biblical history. “Samuel, Saul and David, whose stories overlap, dominate the pages of the books of Samuel. Moreover, even the supporting cast is remarkable for the variety of sharply drawn characters that flesh out the pages of these stories - Hannah, Eli, Jonathan, Michal, Abigail, Joab, Abishai, Abner, Bathsheba, Nathan, Amnon, Absalom, Tamar and Mephibosheth, to name only a few” (Keck et al 2003:949).

Beyond all the drama that unfolds, the books of Samuel make it clear that God is at work in these turbulent times and interwoven in this reality are the stories of Prophets, kings, battles, heroes, heroines, violence, romance, loyalty and betrayal. On the surface, it may seem that the struggles are purely politically driven, but we will discover that these narratives testify to the ultimate power of the Lord, acting in and through characters and events to bring Israel to a new future in keeping with His purposes.

2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“After the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, the people of Israel experienced the normal range of problems that face colonizers of newly occupied territory. However, exacerbating their situation was not only the resilience of the conquered but also the moral, spiritual and military failures of the conquerors” (Pfeiffer 1962:554). Repeatedly, they rebel against the covenant that God has established with them at Sinai bringing about divine retribution. This is followed by restoration that results from their repentance that lasts only until they rebel again. This dreary cycle is repeated over and over again in Israel’s long history.

By the end of the book of Judges the situation in the land had become excruciating, anarchy reigned. “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (Jdg 17:6; 21:25). A series of Judges, “provided little more than a holding action against Israel’s enemies within and without and they were both numerous and varied. More than three centuries of settlement (Jdg 11:26) did little to improve Israel’s situation.

> If theocracy implemented by divine charisma were the hallmark of the period of the Judges (Jdg 8:28-29), theocracy that was mediated through the divinely sanctioned monarchy would characterize the next phase in the history of the Israelites. In the days of the Judges *Israel had no king* (Jdg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) and it was becoming apparent to many that they desperately needed one? Judgeship did not end with Samson, however. The Priest Eli and the Prophet Samuel

> both served as Judge (1 Sm 4:18; 7:6, 15, 17). Not until the accession of Saul did the people have a king in the truest sense of the word - and even then they expected him to 'judge' them (1 Sm 8:5-6, 20).
>
> (Pfeiffer 1962:555)

During this time of great transition Samuel had the tremendous task of directing and rebuilding the religious and social structures in Israel in order to bring about unity among the people. It can be said that the call of Samuel points to a decisive moment in the history of Israel and in the development of the theme of the kingdom of God. He was to be God's instrument in bringing stability in Israel during this time of national crisis.

Many have claimed that the importance of his role is second only in importance to the Exodus experience. He finished the work of the Judges and opened the way for the kings in Israel. He also laid the foundation for the office of Prophets and developed it to the level of the Priesthood and the kingship. It was from his time on that the Prophets continued and fostered the spiritual life of Israel and were the instruments through whom God communicated with His people.

3 LITERARY CONTEXT

Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings constitute the first half of the section of the Prophets, which is found in the middle section of the Hebrew Bible. The designated name for them is the *Former Prophets* and as such, "they present a carefully selected series of narratives that summarize the history of God's people during a period spanning well over eight centuries: from the beginning of the conquest of Canaan (1405 BC) to the end of the monarchy and beyond (56 BC) to the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoaichin king of Judah [2 Ki 25:27]" (Pfeiffer 1962:555).

Kline (1963:s.a) observes, "it has long been recognised that the four books of the Former Prophets expand on the parenetic exhortations of Moses enshrined in the book of Deuteronomy, which in itself is a covenant renewal document of the first order." One of the many interrelationships shared by the five books is the theology of monarchy, which is summarised by Dillard (1985:100) who says, "Deuteronomy also provided for the day that the people would want a king (Dt 17:14-20), so the [Deuteronomic] historians report what life was like both without a king (Joshua and Judges) and with a king (Samuel and Kings); it is largely a record of the disobedience of the people and the faithfulness of God."

4 DIVISIONS OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL

Originally, 1 and 2 Samuel was one book. This was also true of 1 and 2 Kings. The Talmud references to the books allude to a single book, which concurs with the Hebrew manuscripts from Qumran, which include a single scroll.

Keck et al (2003:950) believe, “the division of the books into two books was probably introduced by the Greek translators. This was done perhaps to create a scroll that was of a manageable size.”

In the Septuagint manuscripts, the books are divided into 4 books titled 1-4 Kingdoms. Jerome later adopted this division in his Latin Vulgate translation. However, “it wasn’t until sixteen centuries later in the Bomberg edition of A.D. 1517 that the Hebrew Bible made the division of Samuel and Kings into two books each” (Crenshaw 1986:129, cf also Malick 1979:4 and Bright 2000:8).

> The decision about the place at which to divide the books was undoubtedly influenced by the custom of concluding books with the death of a major figure (e.g. Joseph/Genesis; Moses/Deuteronomy; Joshua/Joshua). Thus the division of the books of Samuel was placed after the death of Saul. It is curious, however, that the two versions of Saul’s death are separated by this division (1 Sm 31; 2 Sm 1). The retention of the name ‘Samuel’ for the divided arrangement also creates the anomaly of a 2 Samuel named after the prophet Samuel, who does not appear at all in the book.
>
> (Keck et al 2003:950)

5 NAME, AUTHORSHIP & DATE

5.1 Name

The name of the books can be attributed to the role the prophet Samuel played in the first 25 chapters. “The Hebrew word Samuel has had many interpretations. However, the meaning first suggested by the German Hebrew scholar, Genesis, ‘The Man of God,’ still seems to hold first place among Biblical scholars” (Pfeiffer 1962:273). Tsumura (2007:2) adds, “the title ‘Samuel’ most likely refers to Samuel not as author but as a key figure, the one who established the monarchy in Israel by anointing Saul and then David; Samuel was the king–maker in the history of ancient Israel.”

> Among the Jews he was regarded a national leader, second only to Moses. As Moses delivered Israel from Egypt, gave them the Law and brought them to the very borders of the Promised Land, so Samuel was sent of God to deliver Israel when the nation’s fortunes seemed almost hopeless. Spiritually and politically, the nation appeared virtually lost at the end of Eli’s judgeship (1 Sm 4:12-22). Under Samuel came a wonderful spiritual renovation and new hope (1 Sm 7).
>
> (Jenson 1968:6-7)

Therefore, it seems reasonable that they would name the books after such a man of God.

5.2 Authorship

“ Scholars have long studied the problem of authorship of the books of Samuel” (Tsumura 2007:11) and admittedly, with the current evidence one cannot confirm accurately who wrote the book. One reason for this suggested by Tsumura (2007:11) is that, “the books appear to have been recorded at different stages.” However, “there are many theories about the authorship of First Samuel including the Deuteronomic history held by many scholars today” (Malick 1979:3).

In line with Hebrew tradition, Fuentes (1979:s.a) observes, “the inspired writer of the first book was the prophet Samuel himself, at least up to chapter 25, where his death is described. The rest of the book and the entire second book are believed to be attributed to two other Prophets, namely Gad and Nathan.” Scholars agree that it is possible that Samuel was compiled from the writings of the Prophets Samuel, Gad, and Nathan. This argument seems probable because Scriptural evidence shows that their works were preserved within the nation (1 Chr 29:29; 1 Sm 10:25; 2 Sm 1:18).

Still another theory states that there is evidence the books of Samuel were written after the death of Solomon (1 Sm 27:6). Malick (1979:4) believes, “Ezra wrote chapters 1-25, using an early original of Samuel and various writings from the time of David to produce a survey of the period from the start of the monarchy up to the end of David's reign, a period of some one hundred and fifty years.”

(Gunn 1991:32) asserts, “Gressmann’s ‘fragmented hypothesis’ which claims various short narrative units, was eventually combined by an editor and has remained influential among scholars.” Brueggemann (2003:131) adds, “it is a widely held view that the books of Samuel are, in the final form of the text, a compilation of several independent ‘sources’ that have been arranged to generate a certain perspective on the Davidic transition from tribal society to modest beginnings of the monarchy.”

> Various suggestions of authorship or co-authorship include Abiathar, an attendant of David; Nathan and Gad (1 Chr 29:29); and pupils from Samuel’s school of Prophets. The detailed and vivid account of the happenings with which these books abound, indicates that most of the narrative was written by men living at the time these things occurred rather than that the authors lived at a much later date.
>
> (Jenson 1968:7-8)

5.3 Date

As is the case with many other Old Testament books, the date of writing is not exactly known. “Part of the difficulty in determining the date lies in the fact that most portions of the two books deal with events that occurred after Samuel’s death. The early part of 1 Samuel could have been written about 1000 B.C.

the remainder some thirty to fifty years later" (Pfeiffer 1962:273). "The textual clues seem to place the writing of the books sometime during the divided monarchy and yet before the fall of the northern kingdom" (Malick 1979:5). Jenson (1968:8) adds, "Granting the possibility of Samuel being one of the authors, the two books were written sometime between 1025 and 900 B.C." However, Tsumura (2007:32) argues, "they probably worked around a time no later than the 10th century, that is, the early period of Reheboam's reign in light of the comment regarding the city of Ziklag. 'So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since'" (1 Sm 27:6). This not only speaks of a time after the divided monarchy, but of a time when there had been *kings* in Judah. There does not seem to be any indication in the text that the northern kingdom had fallen. Nevertheless, the general consensus among commentators is that it is best to place the writing of Samuel sometime after the divided monarchy (913 B.C.) but before the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.).

6 PURPOSE OF 1 & 2 SAMUEL

> From the beginning of the book of Joshua to its end, Joshua and the Israelites are commanded to obey the 'Book of the Law' (Js 1:8; 23:6), probably Deuteronomy (Js 8:31, where Dt 21:5-6 is cited along with Ex 20:25; Js 14:9, which echoes Dt 1:36). Although the conqueror of Canaan, Joshua knows full well that the Lord gives the victory (Js 1:2-3, 5, 9, 11, 13, 15; 2:9-11, 14, 24; 3:10). He thus prefigures the coming, whose kings are to submit to divine leadership as they rule over Israel under God.
>
> (Pfeiffer 1962:557)

This theme permeates the book of Judges too. Like Joshua, the Judges foreshadow the kings who would rise up and succeed them. In the books of Samuel monarchy becomes a reality. The three dominant figures are Samuel, who is commonly known as the kingmaker, Saul, the futile king and David, who is God's choice to lead Israel and from whom the Messiah would be born.

> According to the Deuteronomist the political success or failure of a king was entirely dependent upon the degree to which Israel obeyed the covenant. A king through fulfilling his responsibility as the covenant administrator could thus only achieve political success. Given this view, it is also clear that military success was not a major accomplishment of a king, but the act of Yahweh in His role as protector of the people. The king's role in this was to trust Yahweh to deliver and then to be obedient to His word.
>
> (Hughes, Godfrey & Boyd 1985:100)

The books of Samuel have historical purpose then in showing that monarchy was a gracious gift of God to His chosen people. Their desire for a king (1 Sm 8:5) was not in itself inappropriate, despite Samuel's initial displeasure (1 Sm 8:6).

> Israel's sin was not that they asked for a king, but that they asked for a king to lead them into battle (1 Sm 8:20). In other words, they refused to believe that the Lord would grant them victory in His own time and according to His own good pleasure (contrast 2 Sm 8:6, 14). They were willing to exchange humble faith in the protection and power of 'the Lord Almighty' (1 Sm 1:3) for misguided reliance on the naked strength of 'the fighting men of Israel' (2 Sm 24:4).
>
> (Pfeiffer 1962:558)

It can be said that another purpose of 1 and 2 Samuel is to provide a history of the establishment of the monarchy and the establishment of the Davidic line. In the words of Brueggemann (1990:4), "the books of Samuel present the radical transformation that occurred in the life of ancient Israel when they ceased to be a marginal company of tribes and became a centralized state."
This extraordinary transition caused radical and drastic social reconfigurations of social power. "Firstly, there was the 'eclipse of Shiloh' and the eventual transfer of its cultic primacy to Jerusalem. Secondly, there was the conversion of Israel from a tribal league to a unified kingdom capable of exercising imperial power over neighboring states" (Henry s.a:251). These are, in the words of Gordon (1986:3), "tectonic shifts which determined the contours of Judah in particular for the next four centuries."

7 LITERARY FORM

" For the most part the books of Samuel are composed of prose narratives that serve well in presenting a continuous and historical account of the advent, establishment and consolidation of monarchy in Israel" (Pfeiffer 1962:556). Various literary units can be identified within the larger whole of the books. The birth and call of Samuel (1 Sm 1-3), the Ark Narratives (1 Sm 4:1-7:17), the rise of Saul (1 Sm 8-12), the decline of Saul (1 Sm 13-15), the rise of David (1 Sm 16:1–28:2), David's ascension to kingship (Over Judah, 2 Sm 1:1–3:5; David's ascension over Israel, 2 Sm 3:6–5:16), David's reign (2 Sm 5:17-8:18), Court History (2 Sm 9-20) and Epilogue (2 Sm 21-24).
It is important to note that there has been extensive debate concerning the parameters of many of the units. Over the years Biblical scholars have subjected various sections of the books of Samuel to close reading in order to uncover aspects of Samuel's delicate literary structure. Some patterns have been found like in the Epilogue, in which the song of David (2 Sm 22) and David's last words (2 Sm 23:1-7) are located between two war narratives (2

Sm 21:15-22; 2 Sm 23:8-39) that are in turn framed by the account of divine wrath against Israel (2 Sm 21:1-14; 2 Sm 24).

> Second Samuel 1-20 displays a four-part architectonic structure that is impressive indeed. David's accession to kingship over Judah (2 Sm 1:1-3:5) ends with a four verse listing of the sons born to David in Hebron (2 Sm 3:2-5); David's accession to kingship over Israel (2 Sm 3:6-5:16) ends with a four verse listing of the sons born to David in Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:13-16); David's powerful reign (2 Sm 5:17-8:18) and David's court history (2 Sm 9-20) each end with a four verse roster of his officials (2 Sm 8:15-18; 20:23-26). A symmetrical literary edifice of such magnitude can hardly be accidental. When poetry punctuates the corpus here and there, it does so in memorable and striking ways. David's lament for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sm 1:1-17) not only underscores his genuine esteem for Saul and his heartfelt love for Jonathan but also serves as a means of opening the second book of Samuel on a poignantly lyrical note. The Song of Hannah and the Song of David remind us that the two books were originally one by framing their main contents, by opening and closing in similar ways and by highlighting the messianic horizons of the Davidic dynasty through initial promise (1 Sm 2:10) and eternal fulfillment (2 Sm 22:51).
>
> (Pfeiffer 1962:558)

8 CONTENTS OF 1 & 2 SAMUEL

Childs (1979:271-277) regards "1 Samuel 13:1 and 2 Samuel 1:1 as formulas marking major divisions in this material. The division of the original book into separate books recognised the structural significance of 2 Samuel 1:1. The language of 2 Samuel 21:1 is similar to that which was used in Ruth 1:1 to set off an historical appendix which is dischronological." Based on these indicators, the text of the books of Samuel falls into four main divisions. The first main division focuses on the transition to monarchy (1 Sm 1-12). The section begins with Samuel's birth and ends with his valedictory address. The text shows two major subsections within this first main division. The first subsection appears in the first seven chapters and shows the end of the era of the Judges. The phrase "when Samuel grew old" in 1 Samuel 8:1 clearly marks the beginning of the second subsection. This section focuses on the interaction between Saul and Samuel. Saul is selected by God and is anointed both privately and publicly by Samuel. Finally, after his victory over Ammon, the people embrace him. Samuel then gives his farewell speech in 1 Samuel 12 which marks the end of the first main division.

The second main division is in 1 Samuel 13:1 where the kingship is now in place. This division is terminated with the death of Saul in 1 Samuel 31. This

section also has two subsections within it. The first shows the account of Saul's disastrous reign, which comes to a climax in 1 Samuel 16:13-14 where the Spirit of God leaves him. The remaining chapters, which form the second subsection, show the rise of David and Saul's desperate attempts at killing him.

The third main division (2 Sm 1-20) focuses on the forty-year reign of David. And it has three subsections. The first subsection is in 2 Samuel 1-7 and it highlights the establishment of David's throne. This section concludes with God's covenant with the line of David. The second subsection is concerned with the development of David's kingdom, both its territorial expansion and internal organisation. David and Bathsheba's sin (2 Sm 11) marks a turning point in the narrative. This section ends with a prophetic word condemning David's adultery and pronouncing a period of turmoil for the king (2 Sm 12).

The third subsection shows David's decline. Israel's king is now experiencing one set of problems after another for he is under a divine curse (2 Sm 12:11) and it ends with David establishing himself once again as the king Israel (2 Sm 20-21). The fourth and final main division is seen in the Appendix or Epilogue to the David narratives. It is made up of the last four chapters of Second Samuel. These chapters are carefully crafted to present a highly reflective and theological interpretation of David's whole career.

9 OUTLINE OF 1&2 SAMUEL

Tsumura (2007:74-81) suggests a very detailed analysis of the books of Samuel in order for the reader to grasp the entire literary structure and flow of the narrative discourse in the books. He particularly divides 1 Samuel into three major stories. Firstly, the "Story of Samuel" with the embedded story of the Ark (1 Sm 1:1-7:1). Secondly, the "Story of Saul" (1 Sm 7:2-15:35); and lastly the "Story of Saul and David" (1 Sm 16:1–31:13). I have included a final section, the "Story of David" (2 Sm 1-24) the outline for this section has been adapted from various commentaries.

1. "Story of Samuel" – with the embedded story of the Ark (1 Sm 1:1–7:17)
    (a) Birth of Samuel (1 Sm 1:1-2:36).
    (b) Call of Samuel (1 Sm 3:1-21).
    (c) Story of the Ark (1 Sm 4:1-7:11).
    (d) Judgeship of Samuel (1 Sm 7:2-17).
2. Transition to Monarchy (1 Sm 7:2-8:22).
    (a) The Philistine threat (1 Sm 7:2–17).
    (b) The nation asks for a king (1 Sm 8:1-22).
3. "Story of Saul" - Israel has a monarchy (1 Sm 9:1–15:35).
    (a) Saul made king (1 Sm 9:1-11:15).

(i) Saul meets Samuel (1 Sm 9:1-27).
(ii) Anointing of Saul (1 Sm 10:1-8).
(iii) Election of Saul at Mizpah (1 Sm 10:17-27).
(iv) Saul's first war (1 Sm 11:1-13).
(v) Making Saul king at Gilgal (1 Sm 11:14-15).

(b) Samuel's farewell speech (1 Sm 12:1-25).
(c) Saul's reign (1 Sm 13:1-15:35).
(i) Saul and the Philistines (1 Sm 13:1-23).
(ii) Saul and Jonathan (1 Sm 14:1-46).
(iii) Saul and the Amalekites (1 Sm 15:1-35).

4. "Story of Saul and David" (1 Sm 16:1-31:13).
(a) David's introduction to the royal family (1 Sm 16:1-23).
(i) David's anointing (1 Sm 16:1-13).
(ii) David at Saul's court (1 Sm 16:14-23).
(b) David and Goliath (1 Sm 17:1-54).
(c) Saul, Jonathan and David (1 Sm 17: 55-18:5).
(i) Jonathan's first covenant with David (1 Sm 18:1-5).
(d) David becomes Saul's enemy (1 Sm 18:6-30).
(i) David's popularity with the people (1 Sm 18:6-9).
(ii) Saul's first direct attempt to kill David (1 Sm 18:10-16).
(iii) Saul's indirect attempts to kill David (1 Sm 18:17-30).
(e) Saul attempts to kill David again (1 Sm 19:1–20:42).
(i) Jonathan attempts to protect David (1 Sm 19:1-7).
(ii) Michal's attempt to protect David (1 Sm 19:11-17).
(iii) God's deliverance at Ramah (1 Sm 19:18-24).
(iv) David's concern for his own safety (1 Sm 20:1-11).
(v) Jonathan's second covenant with David (1 Sm 20:12-17).
(vi) David and Jonathan's plans (1 Sm 20:18-23).
(vii) Saul's anger over David's absence (1 Sm 20:24-34).
(viii) David's final departure from Gibeath (1 Sm 20:35-42).
(f) David escapes Saul (1 Sm 21:1–26:25).
(i) Saul's slaughter of the Priests (1 Sm 22:6-23).
(ii) David rescues Keilah (1 Sm 23:1-14).
(iii) David in Ziph (1 Sm 23:15-23).
(iv) David in Maon (1 Sm 23:24-29).
(g) David, Nabal and Abigail (1Sm 24-26).
(i) David's first sparing of Saul's life (1 Sm 24).
(ii) David spares Nabal's life (1 Sm 25).
(iii) David's second sparing of Saul's life (1 Sm 26).
(h) David in Philistia (1 Sm 27:1-30:31).

(i) Saul and the witch of Endor (1 Sm 28:3-25).
(ii) David and the Philistine leaders (1 Sm 29).
(iii) David destroys the Amalekites (1 Sm 30).
(i) The death of Saul and Jonathan (1 Sm 31:1-13).

5. "Story of David" (2 Sm 1-24).
   (a) David's victory over the house of Saul (2 Sm 1-4).
   (b) David mourns for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sm 1:1-27).
   (c) War between David and Ishbosheth (2 Sm 2:1–4:12).
6. David's reign (2 Sm 5-7).
   (a) David unites the kingdom (2 Sm 5:1-25).
   (b) David brings the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sm 6:1-23).
   (c) God's covenant with the house of David (2 Sm 7:1-29).
7. David's victory over the enemies of God (2 Sm 8-10).
   (a) David defeats Moab, Philistia, Zobah and Syria (2 Sm 8:1-18).
   (b) David and Mephibosheth (2 Sm 9:1-13).
   (c) David defeats the Ammonite-Syrian alliance (2 Sm 10:1-19).
8. David and Bathsheba: An interlude as a note of intrigue (2 Sm 11-12:25).
   (a) David commits adultery and murder (2 Sm 11:1–12:23).
   (b) Birth of Solomon (2 Sm 12:24-25).
9. David's decline (2 Sm 12:26-19).
   (a) Rape of Tamar and death of Amnon (2 Sm 13:1-39).
   (b) Rebellion of Absalom (2 Sm 14:1–19:43).
10. David returns to the throne (2 Sm 20-21).
   (a) Rebellion and death of Sheba (2 Sm 20:1-14).
11. Appendix (2 Sm 21-24).
   (a) The Gibeonites avenged (2 Sm 21:1-14).
   (b) Defeat of the Philistines (2 Sm 21:15–22).
   (c) David's Psalm of Praise (2 Sm 22:1-23:7).
   (d) David's men (2 Sm 23:8-39).
   (e) David numbers the people (2 Sm 24:1-25).
   (f) David's death (2 Sm 24:1-25).

10 INCONSISTENCIES IN 1 & 2 SAMUEL

The narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel present a number of difficulties to the reader. These difficulties are what commentators call "parallel accounts, incongruities and discrepancies" (Archer 1982:314, cf also Baldwin 1988:15). Crenshaw (1986:129) explains, "Some of the most notable duplicates are the explanations for the origin of the popular saying, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' The manner in which David first came to Saul's court and the flight

from it. The death of Samuel and Saul and the accounts of David's refusal to slay king Saul when the opportunities presented themselves." A few will be discussed below.

10.1 Kingship (1 Sm 9)

The *thematic tension* as Crenshaw (1986:129) calls it, which has got the most attention, is that of *establishing kingship in Israel*. Certain views regard this in a positive light and others in a negative light. We do know that the request for a king displeased Samuel; Smith (2000:119) "this was evil in the eyes of Samuel." There are several reasons for this stated below:

> Firstly, he (Samuel) may have seen it as a rejection of his own leadership. Secondly, he may have felt that a visible ruler, while not entirely subverting their theocratic government, would necessarily tend to throw out of view their unseen King and Leader namely, Yahweh. Thirdly, Samuel must have been displeased by the fact that the elders were determined to have a king without consulting the will of God. Lastly, the elders demanded the wrong kind of king. They did not ask for a man after God's own heart, but for a king like all the nations.
>
> (Smith 2000:119-120)

Bright (2000:40) adds, "the account of Saul's election comes to us in two (probably originally three) parallel narratives, one tacitly favorable to the monarchy, the other bitterly hostile." We read the first account in 1 Samuel 9:1 to 1 Samuel 10:16 which tell us how Saul was privately anointed by Samuel in Ramah, it continues in 1 Samuel 13:3–15. "Woven with this narrative is the originally separate account (1 Sm 11) of Saul's victory over Ammon and his subsequent acclamation by the people at Gilgal. The other strand (1 Sm 8; 10: 17-27; 12) where Samuel having yielded to angry protests to popular demand, presiding over Saul's election at Mizpah" (Bright 2000:40).

> Saul's election was by prophetic designation and popular acclamation (1 Sm 10:1; 11:14). The fact that he was of a tribe both centrally located and immediately threatened, yet so small that jealousies would be kept to a minimum may have influenced the choice. But still Saul was elected primarily because of his victory over Ammon (1 Sm 11), where he exhibited charismatic gifts as had the Judges before him.
>
> (Bright 2000:188)

10.2 Saul's rejection (1 Sm 13 & 1 Sm 15)

There are also conflicting accounts of Saul's rejection. Both 1 Samuel 13 and 15 record his rejection. Similar problems occur with the explanation of Saul's decline.

10.3 David's introduction to the royal family (1 Sm 16)

Sources do not give us any clues as to when David first came to the attention of Saul. Bright (2000:192-193) points out, “in 1 Samuel 16:14-23 he (David) is among the young men to whom Saul was accustomed to attach himself (1 Sm 14:52); but he seems to have become known only when he fought against Goliath (1 Sm 17:1–18:5). Bosman & Loader (1987:140) add, “the exact circumstances that brought David to Saul’s court are unclear; competing traditions about him as a fighter and as a musician have not been reconciled in the final narrative of those early years.” However, it is also possible that in Saul’s state of mind he did not acknowledge David as anything special until his defeat of Goliath. Nevertheless, it is clear that David won fame and position (1 Sm 18:13), the friendship of Jonathan and Saul’s daughter Michal in marriage (1 Sm 18:20, 27).

Further, chapter 17 of 1 Samuel has some contextual and textual difficulties that have confounded commentators. (McDonald s.a:s.p) agrees, “firstly, it is difficult to reconcile Saul’s previous love of David (1 Sm 16:21-22) and his later ignorance of David’s identity (1 Sm 17:55-58).” Alter (1981:147) suggests, “That chapters 16 and 17 demonstrate the writer’s binocular vision of David providing different perspectives on David’s fitness for the throne. He argues that this is an important narrative technique, used also in the twin accounts of creation in Genesis 1 & 2.” Brueggemann (1990:120) similarly claims, “These chapters offer a threefold introduction of David as shepherd boy, musician and warrior. The question of historical credibility takes a backseat to the literary function of the passages in these interpretations.”

10.4 Philistine battle (1 Sm 21 & 1 Sm 27)

David’s presence in Philistia in chapters 21 and 27 of 1 Samuel has various explanations. However, the most popular is that David was among the Philistines to benefit Israel. Several commentators agree that the author of the books of Samuel used this occasion to stress that David had nothing to do with the destruction of the Saulide Dynasty. Also, it is clear that in these chapters David is on the run from Saul; his presence there could be attributed to this fact. With David among the Philistines Saul may have been reluctant to pursue him, knowing that taking on David then, would also mean taking on the Philistines.

> At the time of Saul’s death, David had taken refuge among the Philistines. The author stresses that David had not abandoned his king or his homeland. Rather, it was for self preservation that David sought refuge among the Philistines (1 Sm 27:1).While among the Philistines, David, furthered Israel’s security in the Promise Land under the guise of fighting for the Philistines (1 Sm 27:8-12) and enriched the towns of Judah with the plunder from war (1 Sm 30:26-31).

(Deffinbaugh s.a:s.p)

Therefore, David could not be accused of conspiring against Israel, or Saul. In fact, upon hearing of the death of Saul, David is recorded as being grief-stricken (2 Sm 1:11-13).

10.5 David's marriages (1 Sm 19)

David becomes Saul's son-in-law twice in 1 Samuel 18. Commentators attribute this to Saul's initial offer of Merab to David. Scripture records that Saul, instead of giving Merab to David, as promised; he gives her to another man. Later in the same chapter, David is recorded to have won the hand of Saul's other daughter, Michal.

10.6 David spares Saul's life (1 Sm 24 & 1 Sm 27)

David refuses to take Saul's life when he has the opportunity both in chapters 24 and 27 of the first book of Samuel. Throughout, what is known as the *pursuit narratives*, David is given the opportunity on several occasions to take Saul's life, but he is determined that he will not be the one to kill God's anointed. This is one instance of David's greatness of character.

10.7 Saul's death (1 Sm 31, 2 Sm 1 & 1 Chr 10)

There are three accounts of Saul's death. The first, in 1 Samuel 31, the second in 2 Samuel 1 and the third in 1 Chronicles 10. "Although, all three accounts are of Saul's death, they are written in different styles, have some contradictions among each other and seem to convey different messages" (Brooks 2005:92). Commentators concur that the third version in Chronicles is similar to the first version in 1 Samuel 31, albeit with subtle differences.

Brooks (2005:93) helps us understand this situation better with this example, "the Chronicler arranged 1 Chronicles 10:6 is such a manner that the word 'died' appears at its beginning and its end. Moreover, he replaced 'his armour bearer and all his men' (1 Sm 31:6) with 'all his house' (1 Chr 10:6). Thus, indicating that Saul's whole dynasty came to an end." The version in 2 Samuel 1, however, is open to some difficulties.

> The earlier account in 1 Samuel 31 contradicts the account given by the Amalekite. There, we are told that Saul committed suicide, whereas the Amalekite says that he killed Saul. In 1 Samuel 31 three sons are listed among the dead, whereas, in the Amalekites report there is no mention of Saul's other sons, nor is there any mention of the armour bearer; only Jonathan is said to have died.
>
> (Brooks 2005:74)

Commentators attribute these inconsistencies to the view that the books of Samuel were not all the work of a single author and thus present to us different accounts and points of view. McDonald (s.a:s.p) comments, "Two

separate sources or traditions are commonly postulated to explain these and other discrepancies. However, the question remains as to why the final redactor has not done a better job of ironing out the difficulties."

10.8 David numbers the people (2 Sm 24 & 1 Chr 21)

There are discrepancies with these two chapters. The account of David numbering the fighting men of Israel in 2 Samuel 24 indicates that God had caused David to take the census. However, the account in 1 Chronicles 21 states that, "Satan rose up against Israel and caused David to take the census." The account in 2 Chronicles 21 plainly states that God was displeased with David's actions and that God punished Israel as a result of this. There are various interpretations of these verses, many of which suggest that God had allowed Satan to tempt David in this way, the purpose for God's actions here are unexplained. However, whatever the reason for the census, David's repentance that follows is genuine and results in the restoration of Israel once again.

11 THEOLOGICAL THEMES OF 1 & 2 SAMUEL

> In terms of the political scene, Israel at the beginning of 1 Samuel was a loosely organized federation of anemic tribal territories scarcely able to keep the Philistines and other enemies at bay. By the end of 2 Samuel, however, Israel under David had become the most powerful kingdom in the eastern Mediterranean region, strong at home and secure abroad. As far as the religious picture is concerned, the opening chapters of 1 Samuel find Israel worshipping at a nondescript shrine presided over by a corrupt Priesthood. However, the last chapter of 2 Samuel record's David's purchase of a site in Jerusalem upon which the temple of Solomon, one of the most magnificent buildings in the ancient world, would soon be erected. Sweeping change, then, is a hallmark of the Samuel narratives. Change guided and energized by the Lord himself through fragile vessels of the likes of Samuel, Saul and David.
>
> (Pfeiffer 1962:560)

11.1 Prayer

"The book of First Samuel opens with prayer and Second Samuel closes with prayer. There is also a great deal of prayer in between" (McGee 1982:121). In this way the books of Samuel share a purpose with the whole canon of Scripture. Through this theme of prayer many lessons are learnt.

11.2 God's choosing and anointing

"God's major act in 1 and 2 Samuel is His electing or choosing" (Martin 1984:309). "The Lord's elective purposes embrace Samuel (1 Sm 1:19-20),

Saul (1 Sm 10:20-24) and David (1 Sm 16:6-13). As the theological centerpiece of the Deuteronomic corpus, 2 Samuel 7 describes the choice of the Davidic dynasty, through which the future kings of Judah (including the Messiah) would come (Pfeiffer 1962:560-561).

11.3 God's Kingship

The key to understanding the theological significance here is to view it as the author of Samuel develops and connects the themes of God's presence and Kingship. Biblical tradition shows that God is the King of humankind. "No human king can assume kingship except as the deputy of the divine King. This view is expressed clearly; even in the pre-monarchic period (Ex 15:18) 'The Lord will reign forever and ever'" (Tsumura 2007:69).

Commentators concur that the creation narrative shows that humans were created as *royal*, unlike the other ancient Near Eastern traditions, where only kings represented *deities*. In Biblical tradition humans are made in the image of God and therefore we are made "deputies of the King of the universe" (Tsumura 2007:70). So when Israel requests a king in 1 Samuel 8, Saul is given to them to be "a vice-regent or deputy" (Tsumura 2007:70).

God is still the one who holds the life of the nation in His hand. He provides life in barrenness to Hannah. Through the covenant made with Aaron He determines the continued leadership of the nation through the Priesthood, but later exalts Samuel over Eli and his sons because they dishonor Him (1 Sm 2:29-4). He also chooses to deliver the nation through Saul (1 Sm 9-13), Jonathan (1 Sm 13-14) and then David (1 Sm 17; 27; 30)" (Malick 1979:19). So even though He allows Israel a human king, He demands that both Israel and their king fear and serve Him.

Malick (1979:22) adds, "God is the one who either delivers the nation into the hands of their enemies or provides for their deliverance (1 Sm 4:3 with 1 Sm 7:9-13; 11:13; 14:6-10; 17:46; 28:19). Regardless of whether the nation's rule is mediated through Judges or kings, God is the one to be served, feared and trusted, because it is He who is the true ruler of the nation."

11.4 The rise of the kingdom

> We have recorded in these books the change in government of Israel from a theocracy to a kingdom. Of great significance is God's covenant with David given to us in 2 Samuel 7. The rise of the kingdom is of particular importance. First and Second Samuel record the origins of this kingdom which continues as a very important subject throughout both the Old and New Testaments. The first message of the New Testament was the message of John the Baptist: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near' (Mt 3:2). The kingdom of which he spoke is the kingdom of the Old Testament, the kingdom that begins in the

> books of Samuel. This kingdom we find has a very historical basis, an earthly origin and geographical borders. This kingdom has a king and its subjects are real people.
>
> (McGee 1982:121)

11.5 God's names

"Just as the message of the books is contained in seed form within the first two chapters of First Samuel, so is the writer's theology of God seen in the revelation provided through the use of His names" (Malick 1979:20). Within the first chapter God is presented by the use of the following names.

11.5.1 The Lord of Hosts (1 Sm 1:3, 11)

God's sovereignty is asserted from the very beginning, not only in the Song of Hannah (1 Sm 2:6-10) but also in His title, "So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the Ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim" (1 Sm 4:4).

11.5.2 God (1 Sm 1:12, 14, 19, 20, 21, 26, & 28)

> Samuel often employs the name of God, but the only time that God is connected with Saul is at the end of his anointing when it is written that, 'the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul....' (1 Sm 16:14). In contrast to Saul, it is God who is identified with Hannah, Samuel, Jonathan and David throughout the books. It is only when God's people trust in Him that they are allowed to experience the character of God as it is manifested in His names; however, these names reflect the outworking of God's hand for the nation even if they force it to be hidden at times.
>
> (Tsumura 2007:70)

11.5.3 The God of Israel (1 Sm 1:17)

According to Malick (1979:21), "this title portrays the way in which God will demonstrate Himself to resolve the tensions of His people in battle both in covenant relationship with them and as Ruler of the nation."

11.6 God's reversal of the natural

"From Hannah to the death of Saul there is a proclamation that the Lord reverses the natural order of life to exalt His people from the hand of evil as they place their trust in Him" (Malick 1979:24). God delivers Hannah from the ridicule of her barrenness. When Samuel is older he is revered over Eli and his sons even though they are the religious power of Israel at the time.

Jonathan is exalted over his father in battle, wisdom and in the eyes of the people because Saul put his confidence in natural strength (1 Sm 11:3-14) instead of God. "Saul, though the king of Israel, is rebuked by Samuel the Prophet as he proclaims that the Lord has taken the kingdom from his hands.

David, though the youngest of the house of Jesse is exalted to the position of king" (Smith 2000:130).

11.7 God's guidance

God's instruction through Moses to the people was given to guide them. 2 Samuel 6 gives us an account of the consequences of neglecting God's guidance. We read of David finally bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem. However, at his first attempt he fails. 2 Samuel 6:8 reads, "Then David was angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah." In the midst of his confusion, David submits to the higher authority of God. God's outburst of anger in this chapter surrounds the aspect of Israel obeying the Law given to them.

There were specific instructions for moving the Ark and in the excitement of finally bringing it back; both the Priests and David neglected to follow the guidance for such events recorded for them in the Law. However, David's second attempt is successful because he humbled himself before God and consulted the Law with regard to how the Ark should be moved. Nevertheless, the consequences of neglecting God's guidance is felt when Uzzah is struck down. Positively though, examples of God's guidance are summed up below:

> Romans 8:28 reads, 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who are called according to His purpose.' This summarizes well what the author of 1 Samuel means to convey to the readers. God is the one who guided providentially the lives of the God chosen individuals such as Hannah, Samuel and David. He guided each life in a unique and special way. Even the life of Saul was in God's providential care (1 Sm 9:16), even though God rejected him for his failure to obey the commandments of the Lord (1 Sm 13, 15).
>
> (Tsumura 2007:70)

While the course of life differs for each individual, God remains the same. The books of Samuel abound in illustrations of this. A few examples are identified here. Firstly, God uses Hannah's hardships with Peninnah (1 Sm 1) to bring blessing to her and then later to all of Israel through her son, Samuel. Secondly, God orchestrates the meeting between Saul and Samuel (1 Sm 9) opening the way for kingship in Israel. Thirdly, David's task in bringing his brothers food on the battlefield allows him to fight Goliath (1 Sm 17) and free Israel from the Philistines. Therefore, Tsumura (2007:71) concludes, "ordinary life becomes most meaningful and it is there that God 'works for good.'"

11.8 God is gracious

Firstly, regardless of Israel's disobedience God rescues them from the hands of their enemies on several occasions throughout the books of Samuel. Secondly, we see God's grace to Hannah in her time of distress (1 Sm 1-2).

Thirdly, we see God's grace in the life of Jonathan (1 Sm 13-1 Sm 31). Through the grace of God Jonathan is able to see in David what Saul was not able to comprehend. God raises Jonathan to support David and to spiritually transfer kingship to David through their first covenant with each other. Jonathan not only transferred kingship to David but also reared a monumental friendship that lasted beyond Jonathan's death. Fourthly, it is God's grace in David's life that reminds him that Saul is His anointed; and this knowledge allows David to refuse to lay a hand on Saul, even when the opportunities present themselves.

11.9 God is judicious

Saul's disobedience ultimately affects his descendants who, with the exception for Mephibosheth, either die violently or live with the shame of barrenness (Michal in 2 Sm 6). Similarly, God brings David's sin upon his family in that the baby conceived in sin dies along with Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah. His daughter, Tamar, is raped. David's concubines are taken in Absalom's public bid for the throne. All this happened to show that although spiritual forgiveness is provided, the consequences of sin are still felt.

12 CONCLUSION

The books of Samuel begin with Samuel and end with David. "These two figures make 'a frame around the dark, problematic figure of king Saul'" (Tsumura 2007:72). Samuel, Saul and David are central figures in the history of the kingdom of God and "much of the message of the Bible is embedded in their lives and in their struggles; and all three, each in their own way, are forerunners and heralds of the real King" (Hertzberg 1964:20).

Brueggemann (2003:144) asserts, "the books show the inescapable ways in which the God of the Bible is known and seen to be at work in, with and under human life, in quite particular ways and very often quite subservient to the choices and conduct of human agents." The story ends with an explanation of the selection of the threshing floor of Araunah. This sacred altar later becomes the site for Solomon's temple. Bosman & Loader (1987:143) state, "this is an appropriate ending of the books of Samuel, because the episode exalts the religious dimensions at the expense of the historical, a tendency we have observed throughout the stories about Samuel, Saul and David." In conclusion Brueggemann (2003:131) affirms, "The books of Samuel occupy a place within the Deuteronomic history, an extended narrative designed to trace the life of Israel from land entry (in the book of Joshua) to the land lost (in the books of Kings)."

CHAPTER 4: THE SAUL - DAVID CYCLES

1 THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ISRAEL'S STORY BEGINS

" During the early centuries in what the Romans later called Palestine, the Israelites were loosely ruled by 'Judges' who seemed to exercise a limited amount of judicial, legislative and even military control over the otherwise independent Israelite tribes against non-Israelite oppressors or aggressors and then faded again into history" (Larue s.a:s.p). Bright (2000:184) points out, "the crisis that brought the Israelite tribal league to an end set in motion a chain of events which within less than a century transformed Israel totally and made them into one of the ranking powers of the contemporary world."

1.1 "Story of Samuel"- with the embedded story of the Ark (1 Sm 1: 17:17)

1 Samuel 1 marks Samuel's beginning as the lead character in Israel's story. Chapters 1-7 introduce the first major section of the book beginning with Samuel's birth and showing his establishment as the foremost leader in Israel. Brueggemann (1990:9) points out, "he (Samuel) acts as the bearer of God's word (1 Sm 3:19-21) and as the administrator of justice (1 Sm 7:17). Indeed, Samuel is characterized as responsible for the life of Israel in every respect."

This first main section is divided into four smaller literary units, which will be individually discussed in detail. With regard to the first seven chapters of 1 Samuel, Brueggemann (1990:9) explains, "together they bear witness to the

faith and life of Israel. Samuel embodies ancient Israel's traditional covenantal commitments, which were as important for the public and political life of Israel as for the faithful practice of religious Yahwism."

This section also introduces God as one of the key characters in Israel's story. These pericopes show the contrast between obedience and disobedience to God. In the ensuing study we will see how this motif is interwoven into both 1 and 2 Samuel.

> Every assertion of chapters 1-3, from the gracious birth of Samuel (1 Sm 1:3-28), to the dream theophany (1 Sm 3:1-10), to the final statement of Samuel's authorization (1 Sm 3:19-21), witness to the decisive role of Yahweh in Israel's new beginnings. Every actor in the entire Samuel narrative, Hannah, Samuel, Saul, David and many lesser players, are all creatures of God's intended future. These chapters disclose how it is that Yahweh reshapes Israel's historical process for the sake of new king and the coming kingdom.
>
> (Brueggemann 1990:10)

1.1.1 Birth of Samuel (1 Sm 1:1-2:36)

> 1 Samuel 1 is presented as a conventional birth narrative, which moves from barrenness to birth. Laid over that plot is a second rhetorical strategy, which moves from complaint to thanksgiving. With the use of this second strategy the birth narrative is transposed and becomes an intentional beginning point for the larger Samuel-Saul-David narratives. Hannah's story begins in utter helplessness (silence); it anticipates Israel's royal narrative, which also begins in helplessness. As Hannah moves to voice (1 Sm 2:1-10), so Israel's narrative moves to power in the historical process. Both Hannah's future and Israel's future begin in weakness and need and move toward power and well being. The narrative of 1 Samuel 1 functions to introduce the theological theme of 'cry-thanks' which appears in the larger narrative in terms of Israelite precariousness and Yahweh's powerful providence. Our chapter corresponds canonically to 2 Samuel 24, which portrays David in the end (like Hannah) as a needy and trusting suppliant. The two chapters witness to vulnerable faith and together they bracket Israel's larger story of power.
>
> (Brueggemann 1990:48)

In the previous chapter we discussed the state of Israel as a nation. Now a change in Israel's history occurs when Samuel appears on the scene. (Provan, Long & Longman 2003:201) note, "the book of 1 Samuel opens with the homely tale of two rival wives, the one barren but loved by her husband, the other fertile but mean spirited and irritating." Hannah's misery leads her to

God with whom she pleads for a child. God hears her cry and as promised, she conceives, and bears a son, Samuel. After she weans him, she takes him to live in the temple with Eli, in fulfillment of the promise she made to God. "And she made a vow, saying, 'O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head'" (1 Samuel 1:11). In fact, as Provan et al (2003:202) affirm, "the child grows to become the most significant individual in Israel's shift from tribal confederacy to monarchy."

We observe in these first few chapters the history of the "last two judges in Israel, namely, Eli and Samuel, who were not, as the rest, men of war, but Priests" (Gordon 1986:56). In chapter 2 the narrator focuses the reader's attention on the story of Eli's house, which has been defiled by his wicked sons. Under Eli and his sons (1 Sm 2:22-25; 1 Sm 4:17-18) the Judgeship of Israel disintegrated exposing the deterioration of God's people. As far as the Priesthood is concerned, the decay in the house of Eli was grave. Eli's sons seemed to be unhappy with the offerings assigned to them as Priests according to the Mosaic Law (Lv 7:28-36). As a result they took matters into their own hands.

Smith (2000:60-61) observes that the sins of Hophni and Phinehas were fourfold. "Firstly, they robbed the people of the portions of the sacrificial animal which was assigned to them. Secondly, they took the sacrificial meat prematurely (Lv 7:23-25, 31; 17:6). Thirdly, they would accept no compromise from the people and fourthly, in doing so, they caused the people to despise the sacrificial ritual." In 1 Samuel 2:27-36 a *man of God* prophesies that Eli and his sons will die on the same day.

The narrator's emphasis on the disobedient sons of Eli stand in direct contrast to the obedient Samuel, who, "in contrast to the sacrilege of Shiloh's priests" (Smith 2000:62-64), is painted in a positive light as one of devoutness, goodness and faithfulness. "Samuel would succeed and become a channel of God's blessing. This contrast points to events in the future between Saul and David. Eli's sons would fail and become a source of frustration to Eli and to the Israelites and ultimately perish" (Constable 1967:14).

Heater (1991:120) explains, "this section [1 Sm 2:11-4:1] poignantly illustrates the theme of 'Hannah's song' as it is epitomized in 1 Samuel 2:7, 'The Lord sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts.' For it is under the auspices of God who has determined the ruin of Hophni and Phinehas that Samuel makes his mark."

1.1.2 Call of Samuel (1 Sm 3:1-21)

It is against this backdrop that Samuel is called into the position of Judge, Priest and Prophet. The Hebrew word *(naar)* used to describe Samuel in verse one is used elsewhere when referring to a teenager (1 Sm 17:33). We can assume from this that Samuel is a teenager serving in the temple with Eli. The narrator's emphasis in 1 Samuel 3:1 "in those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions", is deliberate. His intention is to make the reader aware of the actual spiritual state of Israel and in doing so he highlights the importance of Samuel's call.

The verse "… [I] reveal myself to him in visions…." (Nm 12:6), is used by the narrator to contrast Samuel's spiritual state with that of Eli's who is old and cannot see well (1 Sm 3:2, 5, 6; 4:15). In 1 Samuel 3 "Samuel's self-discipline in getting up three times in response to what he thought was Eli's call is commendable. His selfless, willing obedience qualified him to receive the ministry that God entrusted to him (Gn 22:1, 11; Ex 3:4; Is 6:8; 1Tm 1:12)" (Constable 1967:18).

Hodges (1994:1-4) suggests that 1 Samuel 3:7, which reads, "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him," is an indication that Samuel was an unbeliever. However, Constable (1967:18) argues that it means, "the boy had not yet come to know Yahweh as he was about to know Him, having heard His voice speaking directly to him." Confirmation of this is given in Scripture when we find evidence that shows that Samuel knew God and worshiped Him (1 Sm 1:28), however, this would be the first time God would directly communicate to Samuel.

1 Samuel 3:19 to 4:1 summarises Samuel's continuing ministry as prophet (Heb: *nabbi*). Samuel's obedience qualified him for the task set before him by God. This is confirmed by the phrase, "He let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Sm 4:20). Classen (1980:9) concludes, "this was a metaphor taken from archery (Js 21:45, 23:14; 1 Ki 8:56). The arrow that falls to the ground fails to reach its target. In contrast, all of Samuel's words hit their mark. They were effective because God found him to be a reliable bow."

1.1.3 Story of the Ark (1 Sm 4:1-7:11)

In 1 Samuel 4 Israel is at war with the Philistines and the Ark is brought from Shiloh into the military camp of Israel in hope that God's presence would produce a victory. However, this was not to be, the outcome was utter defeat and Israel's army is left in shambles. The prophecy spoken over the house of Eli is fulfilled when his sons die and the Ark is captured by the Philistines (1 Sm 4:11).

According to Israelite belief, the Ark with the mercy seat was the throne of God amidst His people; the Ark typified the presence of God. Eli dies upon receiving the message that his sons have died, the Ark is stolen and, God

later punishes the Philistines for taking the Ark (1 Sm 5). Eventually, the Ark is brought to Kirjath-Jearim where it remains (1 Sm 6:1-7:2) until David, during his reign, brings it back to Jerusalem. In the meantime "the Philistines proceed to occupy the land. Shiloh is taken; the shrine of the tribal league destroyed and Philistine garrisons were placed at strategic points (1 Sm 10:5; 13:3, 23)" (Bright 2000:186).

1.1.4 Judgeship of Samuel (1 Sm 7:2-17)

As already established the Philistines were Israel's major enemy (Jdg 3:3; 13:5; 14:4). Tsumura (2007:36) points out, "they especially appear in the stories of Samson (Jdg 14-15), which are probably set in the 12th century. Later, about the mid 11th century BC, the Philistines won a major conflict with Israel during the time of Eli (1 Sm 4:1-10)." Bright (2000:185-186, cf also Tsumura 2007:14) agree, "the decisive blow struck sometime after 1050 BC near Aphek, at the edge of the coastal plain."

> Brief as the portrait of Samuel is here, it gives us a glimpse of the ideal ruler. He had been provided by God and trained by Him; he now showed himself able to read the minds of the people and capable of rebuking them effectively. He was decisive in word and action and he was fully in touch with God. Nor is his concern to provide justice purely coincidental. Yet the irony was that such a ruler was precisely the man whom Israel rejected, as chapter 8 will show.
>
> (Payne 1972:39)

1.2 Transition to Monarchy (1 Sm 7:2-8:22)

This literary unit marks the second major section of the book.

1.2.1 The Philistine threat (1 Sm 7:2–17)

The theme of God preserving His people without the need for a king (Jdg 21:25) is evident throughout the book of Judges. This theme is continued in 1 Samuel chapters 1-7, where God delivers His people from their enemies. Israel's neighbouring enemies have been reduced to the Philistines, who were established along the Mediterranean coast and were formidable and "finally, they embarked upon a program of conquest that brought to Israel utter disaster" (Bright 2000:184).

It becomes apparent to Israel that if they wish to continue to exist as a nation the tribes need to combine forces and present a united front. Scholars agree that it was in the interest of the Philistines to rid themselves of Israel in order to control the land bridge that included Syria, Phoenicia and Canaan. Tsumura (2007:35) offers another reason for Philistine invasion suggesting "the purpose for the Philistines extending control in Canaan was not only to

dominate the native inhabitants but also to control the vital overland routes by establishing military posts and garrisons (1 Sm 13:3; 2 Sm 23:14)."

> By the time of Samuel the strain of living as a theocracy was proving more than the people felt able to bear in the face of external pressures. In their feelings of anxiety and vulnerability in the face of Philistine aggression they wanted to rely no longer on the seemingly ad hoc nature of the Lord's protection through randomly raised Judges. Paradoxically, then, out of fear of the nations around them, they chose to adopt the ways of the nations around them–centralized and militarized government. They opted for monarchy.
>
> (Wright 2004:229)

1.2.2 The nation asks for a king (1 Sm 8:1-22)

"The divisions of the next few units alternate between negative and positive attitudes towards the monarchy. 1 Samuel 8:1-22 (negative); 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16 (positive); 1 Samuel 10:17-27 (negative); 1 Samuel 11:1-11 (positive); 1 Samuel 11:12–12:25 (negative)" (Youngblood 1992:611). In the pericopes that follow the narrator skillfully contrasts the blessings of obedience to God and the curses that come with disobedience. Chapters 8-12 record the positive aspects of Saul's reign and open and close with warnings from Samuel.

Israel begins to desire a solution to their political and military troubles outside of God. In 1 Samuel 7:13 the narrator tells the reader that "throughout Samuel's lifetime the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines." However, 1 Samuel 8:1 reads "when Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Judges over Israel." Two verses later we are told, "… [h]is sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside to dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice" (1 Sm 8:3).

1 Samuel 8:4, introduces the transition to the overall narrative, we read that the Israelites approach Samuel and demand a king. It is in the opinion of (Smith 2000:119, cf also Clements 1993:122-124) that their (Samuel and God's) concern was not monarchy per se, but rather, it was the anti-monarchial sentiment they perceived in Israel's request for a *king* like *the other nations*.

> The origins of monarchy in Israel are laid before us in a narrative, which subtly and intentionally interweaves two understandings of the process (1 Sm 8-12). On the one hand, the demand for it arises from the retrograde desire of the people to be like the other nations by having a king. Their reasons at first sight seem unexceptionable: leadership against their enemies and the protection of justice (1 Sm

> 8:3-5). On the other hand Samuel and (Yahweh) interpret the request as a rejection of direct theocracy.
>
> (Wright 1995:226)

Ehrlich (2006:39) adds, "the importance of this transition is echoed by the different voices pro and con monarchy in the Old Testament itself and it is evident as scholars differentiate between the pre-monarchic and the monarchic eras of the history of Israel." Throughout chapters 8 to 12 of 1 Samuel there is a tension between the people's sinful desire for a king and God's plans to install His monarch. "… [L]eaving aside all differences in detail, most scholars agree that the introduction of kingship in Israel came about quite reluctantly and late and that the resistance against it was finally overcome because of the military threat posed by the Philistines" (Ehrlich 2006:39).

In Deuteronomy 17:14-20 God makes a provision for kings to rule His people. This point will be expanded on in a later section. On the one hand, it expresses the people's dissatisfaction with God's provision of the Judges and on the other hand, it verbalises a desire to *be like all the nations*. "God's purpose for Israel was that they would be different from the nations, superior to them and a lesson for them (Ex 19: 5-6)" (Constable 1967:36).

This was not the first time Israel requests a different form of government. They had done so in the time of Gideon as well (Jdg 8:22-23). However, "God saw this demand as one more instance of apostasy that had marked the Israelites since the Exodus" (Constable 1967:36). "The rejection of Samuel was the rejection of godly leadership; the choice of Saul was the choice of ungodly leadership. In many ways Saul was a foil for the godly David, just as the sons of Eli were a foil for Samuel" (Heater 1991:139).

" There are sources that deny the monarchy its originality and see it as an imitation of pagan nations. In a sense it was an institution foreign to Israel, while common elsewhere and therefore suggested to them by their environment" (Bright 2000:189). Nevertheless, Israel's monarchy was certainly a unique one. While it may have borrowed characteristics from the neighbouring kingdoms, it was as Bright (2000:189) describes it, "a phenomenon characteristically Israelite."

2 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE CYCLES (1 Sm 9-2 Sm 24)

In this section we will discuss the Three Cycles that dominate the Samuel Narratives.

2.1 "Story of Saul"- Israel has a monarchy (1 Sm 9:1–15:35)

The importance of this textual unit is that it marks the beginning of the third major section of First Samuel. Brueggemann (1990:71) points out, "the key actors in the kingship theme are Yahweh and Samuel. Saul is only a passive

recipient." However, whilst this is true at the beginning of the narrative the reader is soon introduced to another major role player in the person of Saul.
By divine instruction Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of Israel. Ehrlich (2006:40) comments, "The lasting conflict necessitated and facilitated the development from tribal society to a monarchic structure, in other words, the introduction of the monarchy in Israel and the establishment of Saul as the first king."

2.1.1 Introduction to the Saul Cycle

So it was, after, "about 200 years of only marginal success in occupying land in Israel, the Israelites united to form a single state under a single monarchy" (Brueggemann 1990:30). Saul is a key character and will soon become Israel's leader. The narrator seeks to demonstrate the transfer of authority from Samuel to Saul but Saul's acceptance of kingship is slow. Nevertheless, his authority is soon demonstrated (1 Sm 11:1-11) and his actions are an expression of his faith in God's veracity, they also serve as the basis upon which God establishes Saul as king.

2.1.1.1 Saul made king (1 Sm 9:1-11:15)

At this point in the narrative God is the key figure manoeuvring the characters and developing the plot as it moves along. He introduces characters where necessary; like the girls who lead Saul and his servant to Samuel. In the meantime, though, the opening scenes of chapter nine present Saul as the ideal man to lead the people from a human viewpoint.

Saul is the son of a Jew named Kish from the tribe of Benjamin. Harrison (1970:183) describes him "as being one with a commanding appearance physically." Throughout First Samuel, Saul is depicted as a round character, "changing during the unfolding of the story and capable of surprising the reader" (Bal 1985:93, cf also Alter 1981:126). The following literary unit is divided into five sub-divisions and are discussed below.

(i) Saul meets Samuel (1 Sm 9:1-27)

The narrative begins with the theme of kingship and a counter theme of Saul as a boy looking for his father's lost donkeys (1 Sm 9:1-14; 1 Sm 10:14-16). Brueggemann (1990:70) points out, "while this counter theme sets the shape of the narrative; it is also the invisible working of Yahweh for the monarchy that provides the interest and dynamic of the narrative."

This pericope begins with the narrator going to great lengths to describe what happens to Saul before his meeting with Samuel. This allows the reader to see the development of Saul's character as he makes the journey toward the throne of Israel. The narrator's lengthy description has its purpose in showing us the appropriateness of Saul to be king of Israel. Further, the account in this literary unit shows that Saul meets all the requirements of an ideal king as outlined in the book of Deuteronomy. Bazak (1997:s.p) gives us a summary of the requirements for kings as outlined by Moses in Deuteronomy and emphasises how Saul fulfils the set requirements. In doing so he shows how Saul's character is depicted in this section.

Firstly, Deuteronomy 17:15 states, "Be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite." In keeping with this, the chapter opens with a brief description of Saul's lineage. "There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin" (1 Sm 9:1).

Secondly, Deuteronomy 17:16 states, "The king moreover must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself."

> In numerous places, Scripture censures the phenomenon of trust in the power of horses, which stands in opposition to trust in God (Ps 20:7). The narrator points out that Saul is not a man of horses and that it is for donkeys that he is searching. Donkeys do not provide their riders with a sense of power and therefore the leaders of Israel often appear riding on a donkey (Gn 22:5; Ex 4:20).
>
> (Bazak 1997:s.p)

As with Jesus in the New Testament, riding on a donkey is presented as contrary to riding on a horse and it testifies to the rider's humility. In our context, the search for the donkeys gives expression to Saul's humility as opposed to unwarranted insolence and self-possession.

Thirdly, Deuteronomy 17:17 states, "He must not take many wives or his heart will be led astray." Scripture shows that Israel was a polygamous nation and the destructive influence of multiple wives is evident in the bitter rivalry between Leah and Rachel. Later, we will also see how this affects the members of David's court. With regard to Saul, however, 1 Samuel 14:50,

states, “His wife’s name was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz,” indicating that he only had one wife.

Fourthly, Deuteronomy 17:17 states, “He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.” “This requirement is understandable in light of the negative influence of excessive wealth on decision making in general and that of the king in particular” (Bazak 1997:s.p). In our story, “Saul says to his servant, ‘If we go, what can we give the man? The food in our sack is gone. We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?’ The servant answered him again. ‘Look’ he said, ‘I have a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us which way to take’” (1 Sm 9:7-8). This encounter shows that Saul’s servant had more money than he did. While we know from Scriptural evidence that Saul’s father Kish was a man of standing, nothing is said of his wealth or the lack thereof. One could assume that he was a man of some wealth from his status of being ‘a man of standing’ (1 Sm 9:1). The narrator uses this incident to draw the reader’s attention to Saul’s modesty. This motif is carried on through the reign of Saul.
Lastly, Deuteronomy 17:20 states, "… [A]nd not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right and to the left.” This quality finds special expression in Saul's attitude toward his servant. All through the journey, Saul seeks advice from his servant, always referring to him as his equal. He also listens to his advice and never speaks to him with arrogance. Particularly moving is Saul's statement, "Come, let’s go back or my father will stop thinking of the donkeys and start worrying about us” (1 Sm 9:5). Again the narrator draws the reader’s attention to Saul’s humility. The underlying motif of Saul’s indecisiveness is not yet obvious to the reader but the narrator hints at it in this section of the text.

In 1 Samuel 9:5 the narrator’s use of direct definition reveals Saul’s inner life; his concern for his father’s peace of mind is laudable. It shows characteristics of a humble and sensitive person. These are characteristics that would be an asset in a king (1 Sm 9:5). His desire to give Samuel a gift for his help is admirable. Saul’s concern here stands in direct contrast to his actions in chapter 13, where he shows a total disregard for social decorum and offers the sacrifice before Samuel arrives. However, in this scene, Saul demonstrates an appreciation for social decorum. A further glimpse at his personality is revealed in his humble actions of asking the girls for directions (1 Sm 9:11-14), a practice not common in the ancient Near East. All of these expressions demonstrate how appropriate Saul was to serve as king of Israel.

In the wake of this positive description, however, the hopes that had been placed in Saul do not materialise. This picture is more complex. Together with the positive elements in Saul's personality, a certain trait emerges that will lead to his downfall. In contrast to the positive picture painted here, one can also interpret these events in another way. The description of Saul in contrast to the servant is one “who cannot stick to his goal and has subordinated himself to the dominant personality of his servant” (Bazak 1997:s.p). Alongside the modesty that characterises Saul in this account is his hesitancy to avoid fulfilling the task that they were sent to do. It is his servant who demonstrates persistence and creativity and refuses to reconcile himself with Saul's readiness to return home empty handed. It is this quality of Saul that will cause him to falter later in his reign.

We have now dealt with the character of Saul as it is reflected in the story of his search for the donkeys. Within this story and various events throughout the course of the chapter, we find the element of chance. The very process of Saul going in search of donkeys and finding the monarchy, has, turned into a popular saying. “The root *mem-tzadi-alef (find)* seems to be the keyword in the story, appearing seven times. This root generally denotes coincidence and does so in our story” (Bazak 1997:s.p). By chance, the servant *finds* a quarter shekel of silver in his hand, without which Saul and his servant would have had to go home without meeting Samuel and by chance, on their way to the city they *find* the girls who help them get in touch with Samuel.

These elements are related to the plot in that they add to the suspense of what is about to unfold. The narrator’s purpose here is to emphasise that Saul is still oblivious to what awaits him when he finally meets Samuel. His servant, here, is portrayed as a foil that stands in direct contrast to Saul who is depicted here in terms of his actions. In the same way, later on in the narrative, Saul is compared to David in much the same way as the servant is compared to him here.

Despite the appearance of chance it eventually becomes clear that everything had been carefully planned out in advance. This becomes evident when the narrator, who draws the attention of the reader to a past event, interrupts the story. “Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed this to Samuel; about this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people, from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has

reached me" (1 Sm 9:15-16). The timing of the meeting within the story is perfect and all that the Lord has revealed to Samuel is fulfilled.

" They went up to the town and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming towards them on his way up to the high place" (1 Sm 9:14). Saul is totally oblivious to God's plans and accepts Samuel's invitation to the high place (1 Sm 9:19). So far, Saul is a model for the rest of Israel. He emulates a leader; not only is he pious and righteous but he is also God-fearing. When Samuel asks him, "And on whom is all the desire of Israel turned? If not on you and all your father's house?" (1 Sm 9:20), Saul's response is "but am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?" (1 Sm 9:21).

In 1 Samuel 9:25 we are told that Samuel and Saul spoke on the "roof of his house," the narrator gives us no clue as to what they speak about. One could assume that the conversation revolved around the kingship. However, Henry (1969:298) suggests that, "Samuel now convinced Saul that he was the person God has fixed upon for the government and of his own willingness to resign." This choice emphasises the primary message of the chapter, which is the need for modesty, humility and the recognition that the king is subject to God's command. If we were for now to ignore the earlier negative contrast between Saul and his servant then this concurs with our findings of Saul thus far. Humility is a basic component of Saul's personality.

(ii) Anointing of Saul (1 Sm 10:1-8)

The anointing of Saul (1 Sm 9:1-10:16) has two important components in common with that of David's in 1 Samuel 16:1-13, these being that both anointings were done secretly and conducted by Samuel. "Anointing with oil was symbolic in ancient Israel as it showed a consecration to service" (Constable 1967:39). At this point in Israel's history, "there were only two things anointed with oil, the priests and the Tabernacle" (de Vaux 1997:271). Constable (1967:39) emphasises, "the oil symbolized God's Spirit and anointing with oil represented endowment with that Spirit for enablement" (1 Jn 2:27).

de Vaux (1997:152) adds, "in the Near East a representative of a nation's god customarily anointed the king whom the people from then on viewed as the representative of that god on earth." Anointing with oil means that the recipient was being set apart for God and not for his own selfish gain. The emphasis on being set apart points to the motif of disobedience which Saul soon falls prey to. From the events that have just transpired it can be assumed that Saul

understood that “he was being set apart by Samuel, as God’s vice-regent” (Brueggemann 1990:20). If we are to follow this line of assumption then Saul’s disobedience in chapter 13 stands in contrast to this knowledge. Saul’s action in chapter 13 shows that he took this similarity between kings and Priests one step further.

> Beginning with Saul, kings were similar to Priests in Israel as far as representing God and receiving divine enablement. Samuel’s kiss was a sign of affection and respect since now Saul was God’s special representative on earth. Samuel reminded Saul that the Israelites were the Lord’s inheritance; another comment Saul unfortunately did not take to heart (1 Sm 9:13).
>
> (Constable 1967:39)

After anointing Saul with oil Samuel sends him off, informing him of various incidents that would take place on his way home (1 Sm 10:1). The series of temporal indicators demonstrate external and substantive developments in the narratives. Externally, the first sign involves two people, the second sign involves three people, and the third sign involves a group of Prophets. Within this framework mention is also made of four musical instruments - "lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps” (1 Sm 10:5). Along with the theme of progression, the status of people grows from the first to the last sign i.e. from ordinary men to Prophets.

Substantively, there is development in the contact that Saul has with various people. In the first sign, they talk to him; in the second sign they give him two cakes of bread; and in the third sign, he joins the group of Prophets and begins to prophesy with them. The narrator, in these encounters, points the reader’s attention to the physical developments in Saul’s character. “The implication is that the signs present themselves to Saul in a gradually ascending manner” (Bazak 1997:s.p) and symbolise the development that takes place in his personality. Further, they point to the development that occurs within the plot of the narrative.

Immediately after his anointing Saul is sent to the tomb of Rachel on the border of Benjamin. Bazak (1997:s.p) observes, “The significance of this geographical setting is that it clarifies Saul's right, as a member of the tribe of Benjamin, to serve as the first king of Israel and it ‘comes by virtue of the mother of his ancestors–Rachel.’” Henry (1969:301) refutes this, saying that the purpose for this geographical indicator is that “he must be reminded of his own mortality and now that he had a crown before him, he must think of his grave, in which all his honour would be laid in the dust.” The author’s reason

for this specific place is unclear; however, it is here, “that he will meet two people who will tell him two things. First, that the donkeys have been found and second, he is informed of the change that came over his father, who had begun to worry more about him than his donkey’s” (Bazak 1997:s.p).

The second part of the sign again reveals Saul’s inner character. "Come and let’s go back or my father will stop thinking of the donkeys and start worrying about us” (1 Sm 9:5). “The assumption that at a certain stage Kish would begin to worry more about Saul than about his donkeys proves that Saul was familiar with his father's way of thinking; this familiarity should have brought Saul to say that his father would worry especially about Saul” (Bazak 1997:s.p). However, Saul includes his servant when he speaks of his father’s concern.

Against this background, Saul's refinement is more apparent and in this way the narrator show that Saul's discretion is what underlies God's choosing him as king. The second sign expresses development in society's estimation of Saul. As stated above, Saul meets people on their way to offer a sacrifice and suddenly they present him with some of the food that they are carrying–two cakes of bread.

> Giving bread expresses recognition of a person's elevated status, as when Melchizedek offered bread to Abraham (Gn 14:18). This incident stands in contrast with what is reported at the end of the chapter, "But some troublemakers said, how can this fellow save us? They despised him and brought him no gifts. But Saul kept silent–implying that giving a present involves recognition of him as king.
>
> (Bazak 1997:s.p)

The third sign is different in its very essence from the two previous signs. Here Saul undergoes an internal process that affects his personality. “The Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you and you shall prophesy with them and shall be turned into another man” (1 Sm 10:6). The Spirit of God coming upon Saul is part of the essence of his kingship, as is stated in the next chapter, in the war fought against Nahash the Ammonite, "… [W]hen Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him with power and he burned with anger” (1 Sm 11:6). While the third sign shows the internal change in Saul it is also an external sign of God being with him.

The story of the signs ends with two short epilogues. The first tells of the origins of the expression, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sm 10:12). The saying is repeated in 1 Samuel 19:24 when Saul is in pursuit of David. In order for us to understand it clearly we will have to examine these parallel accounts. The first account in 1 Samuel 10 relates to the beginning of Saul's career, when the Spirit of God fell mightily upon him and at this particular time he achieves true prophecy. Saul's ability to achieve prophecy surprised those around him, "What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the Prophets?" (1 Sm 10:11). This deep impression followed from the sudden transformation of an ordinary person into one who is part of a group of Prophets and his achievement of prophecy. Larue (1997:5) concludes, "Saul's selection was of a divine plan," and these encounters testify to this fact. Further, through these events the narrator stresses that God's hand is in all that has transpired.

In contrast chapter 19 finds Saul in his decline and in a very difficult emotional state, "Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him" (1 Sm 16:14). In this chapter, Saul merely *prophesies*, but he does not reach the Spirit of God. This tragic *prophesying* leads the king of Israel to behave inappropriately, "… [A]nd he lay down naked all that day and all that night" (1 Sm 19:24). Here the saying, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sm 10:12), does not express admiration. "Is Saul, king of Israel, counted among those people who engage in frantic behaviour in order to reach prophecy, but fails to achieve it?" (Bazak (1997:s.p).

The two sayings, which originate in parallel but opposite situations, describe the entire reversal that passes over Saul–from the great moments at the beginning of his career until the difficult moments at the end. It seems that these two stories are meant to establish a framework in order to demonstrate Saul's great fall. This radical transformation in his character shows that this change is dire and his own doing, unlike his anointing which was God's doing. The story of the signs concludes with another short epilogue. Saul's meeting with his uncle. It seems that the purpose of this story is to teach about Saul's modesty, which finds expression in him not telling his uncle everything that had happened (1 Sm 10:16). At this juncture Samuel intends for Saul's anointing to be kept secret. An examination of Saul's personality shows that the dominant characteristic found is not modesty, but absolute fidelity and subordination to Samuel. He is certainly found in this incident as one with much integrity. Unfortunately, Saul will not be able to maintain these traits for long.

(iii) Election of Saul at Mizpah (1 Sm 10:17-27)

In the opening scenes of this chapter Samuel gathers all of Israel at Mizpah and opens the assembly with sharp words of rebuke in which he repeats the main ideas that he had expressed in chapter 8.

> This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says, "I brought Israel up out of Egypt and I delivered her from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed her. But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said, 'No, set a king over us.' Now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans.
>
> (1 Samuel 10:18-19)

This geographical locator is important in Israel's history as it is here at Mizpah that Israel gathered before their battle with the Philistines in 1 Samuel 7. As Scripture records they go out to war against the Philistines and defeat them under Samuel's leadership. These events, showing Samuel's effective leadership, would be engraved in the memories of the people as they gather now to hear his speech.

After opening with words of rebuke, Samuel moves on to choose a king. He does not inform the people who the chosen king is and the selection is done by way of a lot. Commentators agree that Samuel used this method of election so the people would know that it was God and not Samuel who chose their king. "Saul's rise to kingship over Israel took place in three distinct stages: He was (1) anointed by Samuel (1 Sm 9:1-10:16), (2) chosen by lot (1 Sm 10:17-27), and (3) confirmed by public acclamation (1 Sm 11:1-15)" (Youngblood 1992:623).

Saul's anointing by Samuel was private; in contrast, his choice by lot was public. However, once chosen Saul is nowhere to be found. Saul's actions can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, we can appreciate Saul's humility, the fact that he does not push himself ahead and that he tries to the best of his ability to avoid being chosen. On the other hand, Saul's conduct displays excessive humility that is unbefitting a king. Constable (1967:41) argues, "Saul's actions can be attributed to the fact that he was humble, since there are other indicators of this quality in chapters 9 and 10."

The chapters concluding words, "…[B]ut Saul kept silent," (1 Sm 10:27), can also be understood not only to Saul's credit as reflecting his humility, but also to his discredit as pointing to excessive humility. A king is expected to act assertively and not pass by the honour due to him. Baldwin (1988:90) adds, "There seems to have been a modesty that was combined with a shy temperament." Wood (1979:81) concludes, "If Saul was an ambitious person, he would have been at the centre of activity; and even if he was only an average person, he would at least have been available on the fringes of the crowd. Saul, however, had hidden himself, so that he would not be found."

In the final analysis, God gave Israel a man with great personal strengths such as wisdom, humility, sensitivity and physical attractiveness. His gift of Saul was a good gift, as are all of God gifts to His people. However, while Saul did not lack the qualities necessary to succeed, he did lack the ability to make good choices.

(iv) Saul's first war (1 Sm 11:1-13)

Ehrlich (2006:54) observes, "Saul's role and authority as a leader developed under the eyes of the Philistines." Shortly after Saul was chosen by lot, the Ammonites made an attempt to subdue Jabesh-Gilead in Transjordan and Saul was immediately informed of the emergency. "His dramatic display of leadership resulted in an Israelite victory over the Ammonites and the rescue of Jabesh-Gilead (1 Sm 11), which did much to heighten his prestige" (Harrison 1970:184). Ehrlich (2006:54) adds, "Saul's victory demonstrated the importance of such forceful leadership. His success on the city's behalf and consequently similar expectations from other tribes (or the tribal league) led to the introduction of the monarchy in Israel."

This episode is similar to many of the episodes in the book of Judges, but with two important differences. All of Israel is involved in this war and Saul is publicly reaffirmed as king. "Admirably, Saul sought no personal revenge on those who had initially failed to support him (1 Sm 10:27). Furthermore, he gave God the glory for his victory (1 Sm 11:13) and he was not self-serving at this time" (Constable 1967:45).

(v) Making Saul king at Gilgal (1 Sm 11:14-15)

Ehrlich (2006:60-61) tells us, "the term 'nagid' is crucial in understanding the portrait of Saul in the Deuteronomic History, meaning 'designated one.' It apparently arose as a military title and thus connotes military leadership (Saul is to save the Israelites from their enemies (1 Sm 9:16; 10:1))." Saul's first act as king was to rescue the Israelites from the Ammonites in 1 Samuel 11. In

this pericope Saul is a man of faith, confidence, courage and resolution. The Spirit of God is on Saul in this section and the narrative clearly shows a changed man.

Commentators are unclear as to which Gilgal is referred to in this section of the text. It could be the Gilgal near Jericho or the Gilgal a few miles north of Bethel.

> The Gilgal north of Bethel would have been closer since most of the activities recorded in these first chapters of 1 Samuel (at Ramah, Gibeath and Mizpah etc) were near Bethel. Yet the Gilgal near Jericho was the Israelites first camp after they entered the Promised Land and the place where they first renewed the covenant in the land (Js 4-5). For this reason that site would have stimulated the people's remembrance of God's faithfulness to them and His plans for them as a united nation.
>
> (Constable 1967:45)

Gilgal thus is a significant geographical indicator marking three important meetings between Samuel and Saul. The first is Saul's reaffirmation as king (1 Sm 11:12-15). The second occurs when Samuel rebukes Saul for offering sacrifices (1 Sm 13:11-15) and the last is when God rejects Saul for saving Agag the Amalekite king (1 Sm 15:8-9). "Saul's early career was such as to justify the confidence reposed in him, this in particular since he was able to deal the Philistines a telling blow that gave Israel respite and new hope" (Bright 2000:188).

2.1.1.2 Samuel's farewell speech (1 Sm 12:1-25)

1 Samuel 12-15 parallel skillfully with 1 Samuel 8-11. Each section begins with warnings to the people about the disadvantages of requesting a king (1 Sm 8-12) and ends with Saul leading Israel in battle (1 Sm 11 and 15). This parallel structure used by the narrator intensely sets off the contrast between Saul's early reign and his subsequent failures. In this pericope the aspect of time is emphasised in Samuel stepping down only when Saul is ready to assume the position of king.

After calling the assembly Samuel acknowledges his fairness as a Judge (1 Sm 12:1-5). Then he recounts God's numerous interventions on behalf of His people (1 Sm 12:6-11), "Samuel not only cleared his own character, but set an example before Saul, while he showed the people their ingratitude to God and to himself (1 Sm 12:12-19)" (Henry 1969:323). Samuel also assures the people that despite all of this, God has not rejected them and that he, Samuel,

will continue to pray for them and instruct them in the right way (1 Sm 12:20-23).

Samuel concludes his address with the motif of obedience to God and a warning to serve Him wholeheartedly (1 Sm 12:24-25). Commentators agree that like Joshua, Samuel led the whole nation in seeking after God. Samuel's speech has many similarities with Joshua's farewell address at Shechem in Joshua 24. Samuel's exit as leader marks the end of the era of Judges in Israel and opens the way for the era of Israel's kings.

2.1.1.3 Saul's reign (1 Sm 13:1-15:35)

Saul was not a wealthy monarch; the accounts of his kingship imply that he was no wealthier than any tribal leader. Ehrlich (2006:53) asserts, "there is very little material about Saul apart from David." However, from the sparse information we have, Hooker (2008:4) observes, "Saul was not a standard Near Eastern king; he seemed to have predominately been a military leader. There are no accounts of him exercising monarchical power outside of military exploits."

> Saul's whole reign was spent at war (1 Sm 14:7-52). Aside from his battles with the Philistines, a victory over Amalek is described in an isolated narrative (1 Sm 15), which include one account of Saul's break with Samuel. As far as the internal structure of Israel, this remained unchanged. The tribal organization was left as it was; no administrative machinery or bureaucracy was developed. Saul had no large harem, no officer save his kinsman Abner, who commanded their tribal levies (1 Sm 14:50) and no splendid court; his seat at Gibeath was a fortress rather than a palace.
>
> (Bright 2000:189-190)

Ehrlich (2006:54) refutes this adding "the years of Saul's reign saw the intensification of economic and political development in Israel." However, while he may have succeeded to a certain extent in unifying the nation and organising the fighting men, it was, in fact, David who successfully unified the nation's army. Crucial to Saul's story is his hand in ridding the nation of occult practices (1 Sm 28:3). This factor plays an important role at the end of his life and points to the extent of his degeneration as the king and leader of God's people. In the first years of his reign, Saul acted according to God's will, showing himself worthy of having been chosen. He gained for himself the people's love and was soon recognised publicly for his many victories over the enemies of Israel. Saul undertook to free Israel from the power of the Philistines at Geba, defeating them with only 3000 men (1 Sm 13:1-2). He also waged war against the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites (1 Sm 14:24, 47).

(i) Saul and the Philistines (1 Sm 13:1-23)

Saul's story, which begins in chapter 9, is picked up again in chapter 13. The lack of evidence of Saul's life history is seen in the sudden appearance of his son Jonathan in chapter 13 as a young warrior. Larue (1997:8) points out, "no traditions of Saul's marriage and home life remain and even the details of his age and length of reign have been lost" (1 Sm 13:1).

We pick up the narrative again in chapter 13 where Israel's struggle with the Philistines continue but is interrupted by a note designed to prepare the reader for the fall of the house of Saul (1 Sm 13:7-15). Bright (2000:191) claims, "His (Saul) position placed him under the fearful strain of having to exhibit charismatic qualities not once in a dramatic effort, but continuously." Even though Israel had occasional victories, this was not enough to provide independence from the Philistines. It seemed that, "Saul could never build a dependable fighting force and keep it in the field" (Bright 2000:191).

In 1 Samuel 13:3 we read that Saul's son Jonathan successfully attacks the Philistine outpost at Geba. This galvanises the Philistines into action. They gather a large army and march to Mishmash. Saul, however, remains at Gilgal with a much smaller army. Samuel had told Saul to wait until he came to perform the sacrifice. However, when all his men start to run in fear, Saul is reluctant to wait for God's intervention, so he performs the sacrifice himself. Just as he finishes, Samuel arrives and condemns his actions.

> In Hebrew, this denunciation revolves around a play on the root word *tsawah,* meaning *command* or *appoint*. By failing to keep the appointment with Samuel, Saul simultaneously failed to accomplish what God expected from His appointed king. The result is that Saul's son would therefore not succeed him, rather, God would appoint 'a man after His own heart' (1 Sm 15:13-14; Ac 13:22).
>
> (Bazak 1997:s.p)

Samuel's departure is symbolic of the broken relationship between Saul and himself. The narrator goes on to tell of how the Israelites fail in battle, presumably because of Saul's disobedience (1 Sm 13:16-18). Saul's army begins to dwindle and the enemy continues to move freely around Israelite territory.

(ii) Saul and Jonathan (1 Sm 14:1-46)

Larue (1997:13) affirms, "To ensure divine support for an attack, Saul vowed that none of the men should eat that day until the Philistines were routed." "The Philistines had a technological advantage over Israel (1 Sm 13:16-22) but Jonathan was undaunted. He said to his armour-bearer, 'Come, let us go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act

on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few (1 Sm 14:6)'" (Bazak 1997:s.p). Jonathan had faith in God and God worked through him to start a panic in the Philistine army (1 Sm 14:7-15).

Jonathan, unaware of the vow imposed by his father, falls prey to it. The penalty for this is death and Saul is not hesitant to follow through with his punishment, relenting only when it appears that Jonathan had gone against his command by mistake. The narrator in 1 Samuel 14 guides the reader to commiserate with Jonathan who is now emerging as the next major character, albeit briefly so. "Armed with courage Jonathan goes out to destroy Israel's attackers. This was a characteristic befitting a crown prince. It is fortunate for Saul that he has an accomplished, courageous and even pious son, Jonathan" (Dietrich & Vette 2007:45).

In this cycle the narrator presents Jonathan in direct contrast to his father Saul. In doing so he reveals the depth of Jonathan's personality and his heart for the things of God. While Jonathan seeks to serve his God and country Saul remains in Gibeath, evidently in the defensive. He is comfortable and secure in Gibeath, surrounded by his soldiers, whereas, Jonathan is vulnerable and in a difficult position with only the support of his amour-bearer. Jonathan was launching out in faith to obey God, but Saul was resting comfortably and failing to do God's will. "In contrast to Saul, Jonathan had a true perception of God's role as Leader and Deliverer of His people (1 Sm 14:6). He viewed the Philistines as unbelievers whom God wanted to exterminate. He believed that God would work for His people in response to faith, as He had done repeatedly in Israel's history" (Constable 1967:52-53).

The story of David and Jonathan's friendship is foreshadowed in 1 Samuel 14. "Jonathan is the intermediary who legitimized and legalized the transfer of power from the house of Saul to the house of David" (Dietrich and Vette 2007:45). In order for Jonathan to do this he had to replace Saul during his lifetime and the events of 1 Samuel 14 symbolise this replacement. Jonathan does not literally but spiritually replace Saul when he defeats the Philistines, the task which was Saul's as leader of the people and king of Israel. This section of Saul's story closes with a summary of his activities and a few words about his family.

(iii) Saul and the Amalekites (1 Sm 15:1-35)

Constable (1967:48) asserts, "This section documents Saul's disobedience to the revealed will of God that results in his disqualification as Israel's king." Saul's ineffectuality is now becoming blatantly obvious. "Now Saul's true character was unfolding. Several years had passed in successful military operations against troublesome neighbours and during those years Saul had been left to act in great measure of his own discretion. Now a new test

presented itself which would clearly reveal Saul's unworthiness to fill the office of the theocratic monarch in Israel" (Smith 2000:199). Saul's final rejection came when he disobeyed God, who had asked him to destroy the Amalekites. His examination before Samuel and sentence passed upon him; notwithstanding the many frivolous pleas he made to excuse himself was evidence of his decline. When Saul spared Agag and allowed the people to plunder the Amalekites, he committed essentially the same sin as Achan had when he took gold and silver from Jericho.

> To appreciate this fact, we need to understand an important concept to the ancient Israelites - the 'cherem.' The Hebrew verb 'cherem' means 'utterly destroy.' The related noun, 'cherem,' means 'something that has been devoted to destruction,' even 'consecrated for destruction by God'. When God declared something to be 'cherem,' he intended it to be totally destroyed. This concept underlies the stories of both Achan and Saul. Joshua said that the entire city of Jericho was to be 'cherem,' devoted to destruction by God (Js 6:17). Joshua warned the Israelites quite specifically, 'But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction [Hebrew: cherem], by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it' (Js 6:18).
>
> (Bazak 1997:s.p)

Achan disobeyed this command. He stole from among the cursed things, or things that had been doomed by God for destruction and consequently became doomed for destruction himself. Until the Israelites put him to death, the entire camp of Israel became a *cherem.* Like Achan, Saul was aware of God's clear command. He was told, "Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camel and donkeys" (1 Sm 15:3).

Saul failed to follow this clearly stated command. Ironically, Saul spared the king, Agag, not the weak or the women and children but the king. Saul's men also spared not the weak but the best of the sheep, cattle, fat calves and lambs (1 Sm 15:9). Achan and Saul committed the same sin when they took of the *cherem.* However, unlike Achan, Saul did not immediately confess when he was confronted. He gave four different versions of what happened (1 Sm 15:13, 15, 20-21, 24). This shows the seriousness of Saul's sin. "Samuel now realised that Saul was not a leader, but the tool and slave of the people" (Young 1962:285).

2.1.2 Conclusion of the Saul Cycle

Earlier in his reign Saul is humble and genuinely so. Yet when he becomes king he views himself much like the other ancient Near Eastern kings, as one

with ultimate authority. Indeed, he certainly proves to be a king similar to that of the nations surrounding Israel. The failure of the king to follow orders from the One higher than himself results in a departure from God's will. This rebellion presumes to control the course of events that follow. Failure to carry out God's will is wickedness in God's eyes. "This is a form of idolatry. God would now begin to terminate Saul's rule as Israel's king" (Constable 1967:59).

Although Saul was "little more than a rustic chieftain, he was a man of pride and self-will and as time progresses these characteristics assert themselves increasingly in his rule of the people" (Harrison 1970:184). "He had the potential to be a great leader one that Israel and heaven would be extremely proud of but instead he became a tragic figure who died a rejected man of his own hand, a victim of his own self-will" (Larue s.a:s.p).

" This is how the life of Israel's first king, the man after the Israelites own heart, ended. He was full of promises at his anointing having many natural qualities that could have contributed to a successful reign. He also possessed the Holy Spirit's enablement after his anointing" (Constable 1967:118). Unfortunately, instead of being a blessing to Israel he became a curse.

This literary unit provides a transition into the next major unit of the narrative and introduces the hidden motif of David as Israel's hero. "In Biblical depiction, Saul stands entirely in David's shadow. Saul is merely the negative background against which David's light can shine brightly. "The rejection of Saul provides the basis upon which the choosing of David is built" (Deist, Vosloo, Pretorius & du Plessis 1982:89). "In this short pericope (1 Sm 13:7-15) obedience was the stone on which Saul stumbled; here it is the rock that crushes him" (Constable 1967:56). Indeed, "Saul's loss of kingship and kingdom are irrevocable; the rest of 1 Samuel details how in fact he does lose it all" (Miscall 1986:98).

2.2 "Story of Saul and David" (1 Sm 16:1-31:13)

The importance of this textual unit is that it marks the beginning of the fourth and last major section of 1 Samuel.

2.2.1 Introduction to the Saul-David Cycle

Our story begins with the focus on Saul's decline and replacement. Then it shows David's movement and advancement to the throne. Undoubtedly, Saul's accelerated deterioration meant that his position as king was cast into doubt by Israel. The Hebrew history of Saul, while starts well, only emphasises his disobedience; and his repeated failure to carry out God's

instructions given through the Prophet Samuel. When he stopped carrying out God's commands, the Spirit of God leaves him and Saul becomes depressed and cruel.

When Saul is made king, Samuel said to all the people, "If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God – good! But if you do not obey the Lord and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your fathers" (1 Sm 12:14-15). The words of Samuel certainly rang true for Saul now. However, as Harrison (1970:184) points out, "theocratic ideal was still stronger than that of newly established monarchy and Samuel was ordered by God to anoint David, son of Jesse, as successor to Saul in a move to preserve the unity of the nation."

2.2.1.1 David's introduction to the royal family (1 Sm 16:1-23)

In 1 Samuel 16 the narrator identifies several people (Samuel, Jesse and David), their location and the actions that are about to take place. Douglas (1993:109) observes, "this particular marker also serves to locate the plot in a specified time, signalling an important shift of the action from one character to another namely leadership from Saul to David." This technique is used several times in this cycle as the narrator moves the focus of the narrative from Saul to David.

A major motif is revealed in this section of the narrative as another key character is introduced into the plot. Constable (1967:63) calls it, "the theme of the Lord's anointed." Heater (1991:117) points out, "the theological thread running through Samuel and Kings is God's choice of a leader to represent Him as He implements His covenant with Israel."

The pericopes that follow record this gradual transition and slow transformation of the nation. Slowly the Israelites would come to recognise David as the next king. "While the hero of the last half of 1 Samuel is David, Saul is also prominent. Saul declines as the old anointed as David rises as the new anointed" (Constable 1967:63). Brooks (2005:69) adds, "in this narrative, the main purpose is to show David's great popularity having first appeared in the text as a young servant of Saul; David is shown as becoming popular among the people through his military exploits and influential within the royal family itself." The narrator's presentation of David shows that he was certainly not, in Samuel's mind, the first choice for king, to replace Saul. This is confirmed in the narrative as David is not present when Samuel comes to anoint the future king (1 Sm 16:10). Later, David is anointed secretly by

Samuel and receives the Spirit of the God, who, we are told has departed from Saul.

(i) David's anointing (1 Sm 16:1-13)

This time God's choice was not a king for the people according to their desires but a king for Himself (1 Sm 16:1), one who would put Him first. Samuel judges Jesse's sons by their external qualities. This concurs with the way the Israelites chose Saul earlier in the narrative. The reader is reminded that in chapter 9 of 1 Samuel the narrator describes Saul as, "an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites - a head taller than any of the others" (1 Sm 9:2). In the case of David, "as he had done earlier in Scriptural history, God chose the son that was not the natural choice showing that He does not bind Himself to what is traditional" (Constable 1967:65). Commentators agree that the mention of David's position in his family is a continuation of the theme of God choosing the younger over the older. This is a theme found in several places in the Old Testament; one example is Jacob being chosen over Esau in Genesis 25:23.

The narrator once again emphasises that David's appointment was of God and not of man. The affirmation is that God sees not as man sees, with His eyes, but with His heart (1 Sm 16:7). Upon David's presentation to Samuel the reader is told "he is ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features" (1 Sm 16:12). The narrator contrasts David here with that of Saul's physical appearance when he was anointed (1 Sm 9).

However, God did not choose David for his physical appearance but rather because of God's sovereign choice and because of David's heart attitude. McDonald (s.a:s.p) agrees with this claiming "the suitability of David to be king of Israel does not rest in his stature or prowess, but in the will of God alone." So it can be said that the purpose in presenting David like this is to demonstrate how he was "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sm 13:14; Ac 13:22).

> What does it mean to be a man after God's own heart? Seems to me, it means that you are a person whose life is in harmony with the Lord's. What is important to him is important to you. What burdens him burdens you. When he says, 'Go to the right,' you go to the right. When he says, 'Stop that in your life,' you stop it. When he says, 'This is wrong and I want you to change,' you come to terms with it because you have a heart for God.

(Swindoll 1997:20)

In 1 Samuel 16:13 the narrator tells us of Samuel's departure for his home in Ramah. At this point in the narrative Samuel becomes a minor character and no longer plays an active role in the events that unfold. So it can be said "his anointing of David, therefore, was the climax and capstone of his career" (Constable 1967:65).

(ii) David at Saul's court (1 Sm 16:14-23)

The earliest tradition of David coming to Saul's court begins in 1 Samuel 16:14-23. Saul has a mental illness, diagnosed in Scripture as, "an evil spirit from the Lord, sent to torment him" (1 Sm 16:14). David is brought to play music to soothe him.

> In addition to being the middle chapter of 1 Samuel, chapter 16 is pivotal in another way as well. It is half way (1 Sm 16:1-13), ending with a statement concerning David's reception of the Spirit of God, describes David's anointing as ruler of Israel to replace Saul; its second half (1 Sm 16:14-23), beginning with a statement concerning Saul's loss of the Spirit and its replacement with an 'evil spirit' sent by God, describes David's arrival in the court of Saul. Thus this juxtaposition of (1 Sm 16:13) and (1 Sm 16:14) delineates not only the transfer of the divine blessing and empowerment from Saul to David but also the beginning of the effective displacement of Saul by David as king of Israel. The transition at (1 Sm 16:13-14) can thus be arguably defined as the literary, historical and theological crux of 1 Samuel as a whole.
>
> (Youngblood 1992:682)

In 1 Samuel 16:14 the narrator describes God's relationship to Saul following the Lord's rejection of him. God's contact with him is now non-existent and His empowering Spirit has left Saul without the divine enablement he once enjoyed. Howard (1989:481) asserts, "When Yahweh's Spirit came upon David his anointer (Samuel) left, leaving him in good hands. When Yahweh's Spirit left Saul an evil spirit came upon him leaving him in dire straits." The narrator mentions Saul's deteriorating mental state and his fits of terror in order to emphasise the world into which David is so far a silent participant.

The author of the book goes to great lengths to demonstrate how David's rise to power was due to God's sovereignty and that he was not liable for ending the Saulide dynasty (1 Sm 16:5-9). Interwoven through the narratives of David's ascension is the testimony from others that David would be king. This again emphasises that David is God's choice (1 Sm 23:17; 25:31; 28:17). Gordon (1986:160) points out an most important fact,

"the Lord was with David." Already God was using these circumstances to elevate David from the ranks of a shepherd of sheep to become the shepherd of His people and David's musical ability enables him to lead the Israelites in worship of God later.

The event which led to David's first meeting Saul makes two points. The first is that David did not engineer it. David was not ruthlessly ambitious, determined to rise up the social ladder anymore than Saul himself had been (1 Sm 9). The second point is that God overruled to bring David to the court. It is through sheer chance (as it seemed) that he is brought to Saul's attention. So it was God, not David, who was responsible for his first steps towards the throne. In the pericopes that follow the reader is now exposed to the ongoing heightened tension between David and Saul when the narrator shows the interception of their paths beginning in 1 Samuel 16:14-23.

2.2.1.2 David and Goliath (1 Sm 17:1-54)

The scene changes from the court of Saul to the battlefront between the Philistines and the Israelites. The narrator identifies a group of people, their location and the action they are about to take or in Israel's case, the action they are afraid to take. The narrator moves the focus of the narrative to David who is present in the "troubled and unresolved world of Saul" (Brueggemann 1990:135). This section of the narrative emphasises what God saw in David that led Him to make him king. It further emphasises what Israel began to see in David. "David fought the Lord's battle, as Samuel did (1 Sm 7). He also did so as Saul, God's previously anointed king, had done (1 Sm 10-11; 14-15)" (Constable 1967:67).

An important noteworthy pattern in this narrative is its distinctive parallel account to the battle in which Saul rescues Jabesh-Gilead. Saul's defeat of the Ammonites (1 Sm 11:1-11) followed the account of his anointing (1 Sm 10:1). Similarly, with David, his defeat of Goliath (1 Sm 17) follows the record of his anointing (1 Sm 16:13). Both these important accounts serve to emphasise God's blessing and hand on His newly appointed leaders respectively.

Throughout 1 Samuel the Philistines have been described as the main enemy of Israel and now they were beginning to encroach into Judah. In 1 Samuel 9:16 Saul is given the mandate to save God's people from their Philistine rivals, but proves to be unable to bring about their total defeat (1 Sm 14:52). In this pericope Saul is poised to make another attempt. McDonald (s.a:s.p) adds, "The reader should not be expecting much, given the context of Saul's regal deposition and personal disarray."

In the midst of intense drama with the Philistines, David is sent by his father to bring food to his brothers who are preparing for battle. On arrival he finds that no one is willing to fight the giant Goliath for fear of the inevitable–death. David then volunteers himself to fight for Israel, confident that his God will fight for him. In doing so, he takes on the responsibility, which is Saul's to bear as leader of the people.

"The narrator's detailed description of Goliath is intended to draw attention to his awesome size and the weight of his armour and weaponry. The narrator impresses Goliath's awesome power and invulnerability in order that the reader might appreciate David's great faith and courage. In doing so the narrator paints David in direct contrast to Saul" (Constable 1967:68). Goliath's arrogant boasting dominates this section as he defies and mocks the ranks of Israel. In Goliath's repeated derision throughout the narrative, the reader is invited to view this as a challenge to the honour of God.

" The Philistines proposed a battle in which two representative champions from Israel and Philistia will duel it out, not an uncommon method of limiting war in the ancient world (2 Sm 2)" (Hoffner 1968:6). The Israelites feel that they have no one who could compete with Goliath physically. However, if the appearance of Goliath directs us anywhere, it is to Saul who, "stood taller than all in Israel" (1 Sm 9:2) and is therefore a logical match for Goliath. As before (1 Sm 14:1-2), Saul remains in the background when he should have been leading God's people. In this situation where David outwardly appears physically weak to take on Goliath, Saul isn't.

Another point, which is often overlooked, is that Jonathan is absent throughout the narrative of 1 Samuel 17. Where is the brave prince from 1 Samuel 14?

> Are we really to imagine that he is cowering before the Philistine giant, like Saul and the rest of his men? Might it not be more true to life to suppose that Jonathan is simply standing back, so that the 'neighbour' may emerge? Allowing that Jonathan is an exceptional individual, a man of no less faith and character than David, nothing is impossible, or even implausible, in his willing abdication to David.
>
> (Provan et al 2003:240)

From God's perspective, if Saul's dynasty were not to endure then it would make no sense for Jonathan to emerge as the hero of the battle as he had done before. It seems possible that God wants His anointed David to enter the scene in this victory to show the difference between Israel's first king and the king that is handpicked by Him.

Further, Saul may have prevented Jonathan from taking any action as he was the crown prince and if Saul felt that Israel stood no chance against the giant he would have not wanted his heir apparent to be killed. However, with this said, Saul knew that his dynasty will not continue. His state of mind, though, may have allowed him to overlook this tiny important detail. Nevertheless, whatever the narrator's reasons for not mentioning Jonathan, we know that God is at work and it is His plan for David to enter the scene as he does.

Back on the battlefield, Ehrlich (2006:64) gives a very real picture of Saul when he says, "Saul's acquiescence is pitiful; a shepherd lad with no experience in warfare is Israel's champion, because its king is afraid. The largest warrior among the Israelites is afraid to face his Philistine equivalent." Again Saul's failure is confirmed. "The opposite of the fear of the Lord is the fear of man. No greater contrast of these opposing fears could be presented than when David confronted Goliath. Saul and his men feared Goliath the man but David by virtue of his fear of Yahweh did not" (Boogaart 1985:209).

The attention of the narrative now shifts from Saul and his army to the one young man who will represent God and His people. David has now become engaged in the conflict and the reader hears David speak for the first time in the narrative. McDonald (s.a:s.p) observes, "Alter identifies David's first words as being in Biblical narrative convention, a defining moment of characterization." David clearly considered himself capable of defeating Goliath when he heard of Goliath's insults to God. The fact that he refers to God as the 'living God' (1 Sm 17:26) shows David's belief that God was still the same Person who could defeat present enemies as He had done in the past. David has a simple faith.

"Most Israelites took Goliath's challenge as defying Israel (1 Sm 17:25), but David interpreted it as defying the living God, the only true God (1 Sm 17:26). Here we see David's heart for God begins to manifest itself" (Constable 1967:69). Saul sneers at David when he offers himself to fight Goliath. He clearly evaluated David's chances by his physical appearance, which was that of a young teenager (1 Sm 17:33).

"However, David's real confidence lay in the fact that Goliath had set himself against the living God (1 Sm 17:36). David viewed Goliath as just another predator that was threatening the safety of God's flock, Israel and the reputation of Israel's God" (Boogaart 1985:216). He gave credit to God for allowing him to kill the lion and the bear (1 Sm 17:37). "The same faith in Yahweh had inspired Jonathan's deed of valour (1 Sm 14:6). Saul again shows that he trusts more in material things for success by arming David as he did (1 Sm 17:38)" (Gordon 1986:157).

The narrative pace is slow as the conflict heightens. Ehrlich (2006:65) asserts that Saul's farewell to David is feeble, "Go and the Lord be with you" (1 Sm 17:37). If he truly believes in God's help, why does he not go himself? Or is he persuaded that Yahweh, who has abandoned him (Saul), is with David? His attempt to dress David in his armour (1 Sm 17:38-39) may reflect Saul's (and the author's) implicit recognition that David is his replacement." This is another place where the narrator takes the opportunity to highlight Saul's complete distrust of God.

In his final preparations, David, after being offered the royal armour, refuses it and goes out to face Goliath. Historically, it is believed that the sling David used was not a toy catapult or slingshot but rather it was "an ancient offensive weapon that shepherds also used to control their sheep. Shepherds usually made a sling out of a long, thin strip of leather and formed a pouch in its middle. Talented slingers could propel small objects hundreds of feet at very high speeds with great accuracy (Jdg 20:16)" (Constable 1967:70-71).

Smith (2000:41) comments, "Pictures of slings and stones from this time show stones typically being from two to three inches in diameter. Probably David's stone was the size of a modern baseball or even larger." So it can be said that "David beat Goliath, not with the weapons of a warrior, but with the tools of a shepherd" (Constable 1967:71). In 1 Samuel 17:45-47 the narrator reveals to the reader the clearest expression of David's faith in God, his view of God as the ruler of the Israelite army and his trust that God was the Deliverer of His people (1 Sm 17:46). Furthermore, David was jealous for the reputation of God (1 Sm 17:47), not his own glory, which so occupied Saul. His faith rested on God's promises concerning victory against the enemies of God's people (Gn 12:3; Dt 31:1-8; Js 1:1-9).

The battle was over almost before it had begun. The absence of details, which is a deliberate tool in narratives, emphasises the fact that the Philistine giant is not killed by the military methods of the Philistines or by Saul for that matter. The reader is repeatedly told that it is not the sword that killed Goliath. "This completes a contrast with the ways of Saul, who sought to conquer the Philistines on their own terms. The representative nature of this victory is established as the Philistines flee and their camp is plundered" (McDonald s.a:s.p). Once again Ehrlich (2006:64) points out, "The famous story of David and Goliath shows that the contrast between David and Saul is not only a matter of Yahweh's presence, but also, one of trust in Yahweh in times of need."

This chapter closes with Saul's question about David's family origins. "This is enigmatic, given Saul's previous awareness of David and his family in chapter 16. The redactor record's Saul's questioning[s] three times. Has Saul's mental

illness made him forgetful?" (McDonald s.a:s.p). Perhaps his mental state made him forget or perhaps he had never asked David these questions before. Constable (1967:72) points out, "another explanation of Saul's strange ignorance is that the events of chapter 17 may have been chronologically before those of chapter 16." While it is beyond the scope or purpose of this paper to resolve these chronological questions, commentators do agree that this can be explained in narrative terms as directing the reader back to chapter 16, to be reminded that David is God's choice of successor to the throne.

David emerges superior to both Saul and Goliath in this pericope. This motif parallels the events in 1 Samuel 4-6 where we see that God is superior to Dagon. Gordon (1986:153) concludes, "His victory that day in the valley of Elah made a national hero of him, as well as entitling him to the hand of the king's daughter in marriage; but it also evokes jealous feeling in Saul, thus indirectly setting in motion the events which fill the rest of 1 Samuel." Not only did David have the Spirit of God upon him but his victory over Goliath was a further affirmation that he is God's choice. From this day on David's life will never be the same. His victory over Goliath is a turning point in his young life.

2.2.1.3 Saul, Jonathan and David (1 Sm 17:55-18:5)

Earlier when Saul was introduced into the story we are told of his anointing, military success and the people's reaction to him (1 Sm 10-11). Now the narrator follows the same pattern by recording David's anointing, military success and the people's reaction to him. In 1 Samuel 18:1 David is present in Saul's world in all its attractiveness, ambiguity, danger and power. The narrative unfolds with rich drama and intrigue, with the dynamic friendship between David and Jonathan blossoming against this backdrop.

By this point David has already been secretly anointed (1 Sm 16:12-13), he is a welcomed healing musician to the king (1 Sm 16:22-23) and eccentrically recruited as a warrior (1 Sm 17:31). The events of 1 Samuel 17 result in David being summoned to the royal court.

(i) Jonathan's first covenant with David (1 Sm 18:1-5)

> After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as

> himself. Jonathan took of the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic and even his sword, his bow and his belt.
>
> (1 Samuel 18:1-4)

This pericope portrays how David becomes established as a "popular, beloved and therefore threatening member of Saul's court" (Brueggemann 1990:135). Saul's intentions in bringing David to the palace are unclear. However, David's success allows him to become Saul's assistant, Jonathan's friend and the hero of his country. David develops important relationships in this chapter. The most significant ones are with three of Saul's children, Jonathan (1 Sm 18:1-5); Merab (1 Sm 18:17-19) and Michal (1 Sm 18:20–29). In the cases of Jonathan and Michal they both love him. "The third case (Merab) is an unresolved oddity in the chapter that does not greatly illuminate the rise of David" (Brueggemann 1990:135).

" Jonathan, the crown prince of Israel recognises a kindred spirit in David" (Gaebelein 1992:67) which subsequently leads them to strike up a strong and lasting friendship. At the same time, "Saul decides that he wants David's presence beside him and insists on him taking up home in the palace" (Lange 1971:90). So far there is no Scriptural evidence that Jonathan or Saul knew of David's anointing. Nevertheless, "he (Jonathan) was willing to forego his own destiny to allow one more capable to rule God's people. This is the climax of Jonathan's unselfish generosity" (Smith 2000:282).

> Jonathan plays a double role in God's plan to save His people from its enemies through David. As Saul's son and crown prince, Jonathan, is first an 'adversary,' as David's friend and through his own abdication, he becomes a 'helper' toward a divine objective. In this way, yet another theological problem is solved. The contradiction between God's original pledge to Saul and his ultimate rejection. Is God unreliable? Far from it, Yahweh's grace is utterly free; Yahweh's demand is utterly binding. Saul sins and must be rejected. But Yahweh made a promise, which must be kept. Therefore, the passing of Saul's kingship must express the radical discontinuity caused by sin but also the radical continuity guaranteed by grace. In the character of Jonathan it becomes possible that the kingship passes by legitimate means to one who has become his heir.
>
> (Jobling 1986:25-26)

The first covenant made between David and Saul's family is that between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 18. This covenant according to Lockyer (1958:78), is "not a covenant of business or politics, but of friendship/love", for which the Hebrew language employs *(ahbh/aheb)*, meaning *love*. "When

Jonathan took off his robes (a symbol of the Israelite kingdom; (1 Sm 15:27-28) and gave it to David (1 Sm 18:4), he was in effect transferring his own status as heir apparent to him" (Youngblood 1992:707).

> All of this was recognition of David's worth, for Jonathan was willing to give his all, even his right to the throne, 'for he loved him as himself' (1 Sm 18:3). In our political world, where power plays such an important role, what would be thought of a prince who voluntarily renounced his throne in favour of a friend whose character and godly faith he admired? It is an unusual theme, unique maybe. What did Jonathan's contemporaries think, and in particular his father?
>
> (Baldwin 1988:129)

Moreover, this relationship is described in very strong emotive language. Brettler (1998:106) asserts, "For David to reign, Saul, the king and Jonathan, the oldest son and thus the crown prince, needed to cede their kingship to him. This is done first, by Jonathan, who makes a pact with David, (1 Sm 23:17) and later Saul echoes the same sentiment (1 Sm 24:21)." Laney (1982:61) adds, "the covenant of friendship referred to in verse three was a unilateral (binding on one party) covenant in which Jonathan committed himself to David with complete disregard for self. The gift given by Jonathan served to ratify the covenant and honour David."

Constable (1967:74) states, "Jonathan's selfless action reflects his submission to Samuel's oracle that Saul would not have a continuing dynasty (1 Sm 13:13-14). Rather than trying to perpetuate Saul's dynasty, as Abner tries to do later (2 Sm 2:8-9), godly Jonathan turned over the symbols of the crown prince to David." David's refusal to take the royal armour in the David and Goliath scene "symbolizes David's refusal to usurp Saul's royal place" (Brettler 1998:107).

However, it is also important to mention that these verses have been interpreted in another way. Pro-homosexual advocates use the verses that describe David and Jonathan's relationship to propagate a theology of homosexuality. In 1 Samuel 18 Jonathan is described as being *knit to the soul* of David or as the NIV translates it, *one in spirit* with David. Both concepts have their roots in Scripture (*one spirit*, Phlp 1:27 and *one flesh*, Gn 2:24, Mt 19:5).

It is important to note that being *one in spirit* with someone and becoming *one flesh* with someone are two completely different things. In the passages dealing with *one flesh*, the context is always within the bounds of a God ordained man–woman marriage. The Bible employs the same word, that is, *one spirit* to describe the relationship between Jacob and his son Joseph (Gn 37:3), as it does to describe David and Jonathan's relationship. This passage carries no sexual connotation whatsoever.

Within this context there is a political subtext, because two of Saul's children, Michal and Jonathan, are depicted as loving David and thereby affirming his legitimacy for the throne at the expense of the Saulide lineage. The narrator does not apologise for nor condemn the emotional attachment expressed by the two men, nor does he present it as anything out of the ordinary. Further, Jonathan and David are never depicted as sexually intimate. Nowhere in Scripture does it mention that they *had sex*.

> It is considered in the east a special mark of respect to be presented by a prince with some of the garments he has for his own wearing. The gift of a girdle is a token of the greatest confidence and affection and is very highly prized. Joab expressed his intense desire for the death of Absalom by willingness to give a girdle to the man who would murder him (2 Sm 18:11). Further, there is a curious instance of the estimation placed on the possession of garments, which had once covered, and of weapons which had once adorned the person of royalty. When the treaty was made between Russia and Persia in 1814, the Persian plenipotentiary, who had been honoured by various gifts of weapons and clothing from his sovereign, designated himself in the preamble of the treaty as 'endowed with the special gifts of the monarch, lord of the dagger set in jewels, of the sword adorned with gems, and of the shawl-coat already worn.' It was in this way that the shepherd–warrior was honoured by Jonathan.
>
> (Freeman 1996:138)

2.2.1.4 David becomes Saul's enemy (1 Sm 18:6–30)

Ehrlich (2006:66) infers, "it is Saul's enmity toward David that forms the basis of chapters 18-20." The relationship between David and Saul did not begin as one of enmity. Initially, David is portrayed as a servant of Saul (1 Sm 16:14-23). Their relationship changes at Saul's initiative. David's bravery and praises from the women stir up Saul's envy and jealousy (1 Sm 18:5-9) and marks the change in their relationship. In the ensuing study we will see that not only did

Jonathan love David but also, all the people, including Saul's servants love him.

The reaction of the people to Saul when he became king was simple and most people follow him except a few troublemakers (1 Sm 11:12-15). With David the reaction of the people is more complex and significant (1 Sm 18:1–19:17). At this point there is no indication that Saul knew of David's anointing but his growing jealousy seems to have mounted over David's increasing ability, success and popularity, which were a result of God's grace. Jonathan on the other hand proves to be a faithful friend who not only accepted David's anointing from God but also protects him against his father who seeks to kill him at every opportune moment. Gordon (1986:150) points out, "There will be many twists in the story of David's progression to the throne and a few crisis points, yet all is told in the knowledge that God can put His men where He wants them to be, whether the route is direct, or even circuitous."

(i) David's popularity with the people (1 Sm 18:6-9)

David's obedience and faith in the chapters that follow result in his prosperity, a motif that is repeated throughout the narrative. David is reported as a popular figure in the public eye. The women celebrate him as a much-honoured military hero (1 Sm 18:6-16) and he is said to have great military success. "On both accounts of personal intimacy with Saul's family and in public appeal, David is indeed 'in the rise'" (Brueggemann 1990:137). These various reports are a vindication of the judgement that the "Lord was with him" (1 Sm 18:12, 14, 28, 16:18). He is loved by Israel (1 Sm 18:16, 28) and said to be loved by Saul's servants (1 Sm 18:22) as well as Jonathan and Michal (1 Sm 18-20).

The counterpart to David's success, popularity and affection is Saul's deep and growing hostility (1 Sm 18:11, 25). The enormous popularity of David intensifies the relation between David and Saul. Saul is further troubled by the growing relationship between his son Jonathan and David. This vexed relationship becomes the focus of the ongoing narrative. The Lord and many others were with David but Saul was firmly against him. Brooks (2005:73) adds, "now begins the long period (or stage) of suffering, during which Saul the king behaves like a man obsessed and suspicious of the people closest to him and bent on a futile pursuit of David (1 Sm 19-27)."

(ii) Saul's direct attempt to kill David (1 Sm 18:10-16)

Saul makes his first attempt on David's life the day after the battle with Goliath. As David was playing the harp Saul throws a spear at him. The narrator states the reason for Saul's violent act in 1 Samuel 18:12, which reads "Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul." "Saul's unbridled jealousy bred terror; he began to think that his

most loyal subject was his mortal enemy" (Constable 1967:75), this stands in direct contrast to Jonathan's implicit confidence in David. "The difference was Saul saw David as a threat to his security whereas Jonathan saw him a saviour to God's people" (Constable 1967:75).

Saul's attempts did not stop David from growing in popularity. By the time Saul sends David onto the battlefield, David is already the commander-in-chief. Saul placed him over a large unit of soldiers in the field, so as not to be a constant aggravation to him at court. However, Saul's decision only gave David more exposure to the people and increased his popularity with them. When Saul realised what was happening, his hatred toward David burned even more. "God was causing the wrath of Saul to praise him, to contribute towards the fulfilment of His plans. 1 Samuel 18:13-16 sets the growing approval of the people and the mounting disapproval of Saul in vivid contrast" (Constable 1967:75).

(iii) Saul's indirect attempts to kill David (1 Sm 18:17-30)

Due to his unsuccessful attempts at murdering David himself, Saul then tries other means to kill him. Michal, Saul's younger daughter who is to be given to David in marriage, is described as loving David. With this knowledge, Saul intends to use Michal's marriage to David as a trap. As son-in-law to the king, Saul knew that David will be in line to ascend the throne. It seems that Saul is still unaware of David's anointing.

In his thinking, David's marriage to Michal "made David an even more important target for the Philistines in battle" (Constable 1967:76). "In the East grooms normally paid their prospective father-in-law a price to compensate for the loss of their daughter" (Yamauchi 1978:244). In this case Saul was willing to take one hundred uncircumcised Philistine foreskins instead. A rather convenient plan wickedly devised by the king himself.

"He probably thought that David would respond to the challenge and perhaps die in the encounter with the Philistines. Saul used Michal as the bait to lure David into what he thought would be a fatal encounter with the Philistines. However, God protects David and he is able to provide the king with twice as many foreskins as Saul had specified" (Constable 1967:76). Earlier in the chapter Saul promises his oldest daughter Merab to David and then gives her to another man. This time, Saul keeps his word and gives David his daughter, Michal, as promised. There is some controversy that surrounds David's son-in-law status. The reader is reminded that the relationship between David and Jonathan has been interpreted as being sexual in nature by pro-homosexual advocates. In this instance, Saul refers to David becoming his son-in-law a second time (1 Sm 18:21). Pro-homosexual advocates interpret this as a very

strong possibility that David and Jonathan were joined in a covenant that Saul recognised as a marriage.

Townsley (s.a:s.p) argues that this line of reasoning, while persuasive to pro-homosexual advocates, is not conclusive because, "there is no record of Hebrew literature of that era that refers to gay marriages," which would lead one to question whether or not Saul would have seen their covenant as one of legal marriage." A conclusive possibility for Saul's language in 1 Samuel 18:21 is that he was referring to David's second son-in-law status as coming from the original promise by Saul to give Merab to him (1 Sm 18:17), even though Merab was later given in marriage to another man. A second possible criticism is that this argument is made from conjecture and that no specific reference is made to marriage or sexual activity.

> A study of the words referring to marriage in the Old Testament are typically in the context of being 'taken' or 'given' (yqch) as property (byvlh) or 'protector/provider' (ybm), since women had no rights in Hebrew culture and were considered property to be 'given/sold.' This aspect of marriage would not have been applicable to David and Jonathan's relationship. The other primary word translated as 'marry' is actually the exact same word as 'woman' (ishh), which obviously isn't applicable in this case. As for the lack of specific reference to sexual activity, which would definitely signify marriage, very few Old Testament relationships, which are clearly marriage relationships, have subsequent descriptions of sexual activity; therefore it is improbable that such a characterization would be applied here either.
>
> (Townsley s.a:s.p)

Looking back at Saul's actions, we see that he is determined to kill David; even after he is part of his family through marriage and the commander-in-chief of his army. In short, by making himself David's enemy, Saul is in effect making an enemy of God, the reason being that David is God's anointed. In contrast, David remains faithful to Saul until his death; his reason being that Saul is God's anointed. David's outstanding ability displayed in battle, which is guided and provided by God, results in him becoming increasingly successful and appreciated in Israel (1 Sm 18:30).

> Throughout this chapter the author balances statements that credit God for David's successes (1 Sm 18:12, 14, 28) with others that credit David for them (1 Sm 18:5, 14, 15, and 30). Both reasons were true. God's choice of David and David's choice of God worked together to make him successful. The opposite was also true of Saul. The Lord

had forsaken Saul, but Saul had also forsaken the Lord and the result was tragedy.

(Constable 1967:77)

2.2.1.5 Saul attempts to kill David again (1 Sm 19-20)

Saul now makes his intentions public and abandoning pretenses (1 Sm 18:22) he orders Jonathan to put David to death. He is driven by pure hatred and has determined in his mind that David must die.

(i) Jonathan attempts to protect David (1 Sm 19:1-7)

Saul's attitude towards David must have caused Jonathan great stress and caused a conflict of loyalties within him. Jonathan knows that he needs to honour his father, but he also loves David. In this pericope Jonathan chooses to tell David of Saul's intentions, but he also tries to honour his father by advising him not to kill David, which will result in him having innocent blood on his hands.

Jonathan reminds Saul that it is on account of David that they have victory over the Philistines. Moreover, he appeals for impartiality since David's death is unjustifiable (1 Sm 19:5). Constable (1967:77) adds, "Jonathan's words echo Saul's own statement when he had freed Jabesh-Gilead earlier in his reign (1 Sm 11:12-15). In that incident Saul generously refuses to punish his enemies. Possibly it was this memory that moves him to promise Jonathan that he will be merciful to David." Jonathan's request is successful, but only temporary and results in Saul vowing not to kill David (1 Sm 19:10). David then returns to the court and service of the king (1 Sm 19:7). Again pro-homosexual advocates use this verse to propagate their theology. 1 Samuel 19:1 (NKJV) reads "Jonathan delighted greatly in David." The Hebrew word used in this verse is *chaphets*. In Hebrew *chaphets* means *joy of heart* and is never used in the Old Testament to denote sexuality.

1 Samuel 19:8-10 records Saul's fourth attempt to kill David. This literary structure emphasises Saul's great desire to kill David. In this attempt the narrator mentions for the third time an evil spirit afflicting Saul. This spirit causes him to break his vow to God (1 Sm 19:6). Now David has to flee the palace. David is no longer safe in Saul's presence. David's days as an outlaw begin here and continue until the death of Saul (1 Sm 31-2 Sm 1). God's protection of David is a motif running through this section. We see this motif in 1 Samuel 19:1-7 and then again in 1 Samuel 19:11-17. In both cases it was one of Saul's own children who came to David's rescue. Jonathan protects David in the beginning of this section (1 Sm 19:1-7) and Michal does so at its end (1 Sm 19:11-17).

(ii) Michal's attempt to protect David (1 Sm 19:11-17)

Immediately after David's marriage to Michal, his death was vowed. Saul once again is on a mission to kill him. Just as Jonathan had done earlier, Michal tells David of her father's plan. Then she aids his escape, firstly by helping him escape and secondly by fashioning a dummy in his bed and concocting a story that he is sick. Youngblood (1992:716) observes, "Michal's ruse was probably effected by piling clothing, carpets, or the like on David's bed covering it with a garment, allowing only the goats hair at the head to show." "God's care for David resulted in the breaking of loyalties. In the ancient world a daughter's loyalty to her father normally remained strong after marriage. God overcame what was natural to protect His anointed and faithful servant" (Constable 1967:79).

(iii) God's deliverance at Ramah (1 Sm 19:18-24)

David escapes to Naioth in Ramah where he seeks refuge with Samuel. Saul follows David to Ramah and once again God rescues David, but this time it was not with human intervention but by the direct overpowering of the Spirit. After sending an entourage to Ramah, Saul finally goes there himself. On arrival at Ramah, Saul, like his messengers before him, is overpowered by the Spirit of God and ends up prophesying.

" Saul's disrobing (1 Sm 19:24) probably symbolised the loss of his regal dignity and status as well as his personal dignity" (Gordon 1986:39), emphasising that such a person was not fit to be king. This reference to Saul's prophesying (1 Sm 19:23-24), which happens near the place where he prophesies shortly after his anointing (1 Sm 10:12), becomes "an ironic comment on Saul's life story" (Baldwin 1988:134). "Saul had begun his reign with great potential and God's enabling Spirit, which resulted in his praising God. Yet now he was almost a raving madman" (Constable 1967:80). Saul drove himself to the point of insanity by refusing to submit to God, who still exercises sovereign control over him despite his attempts to do things his own way.

It is significant that this chapter closes with the repetition of the saying, "… [I]s Saul among the Prophets?" (1 Sm 19:24). Youngblood (1992:717) says, "To question the genuineness of Saul's prophetic behaviour was to question his legitimacy as king of Israel." This disparaging saying brackets the story of Saul's contacts with Samuel and with the Holy Spirit (1 Sm 10:11). It reminds the reader that Saul had the potential to be a great king because of the resources that were available to him.

As discussed in the section titled the Saul Cycle the two occurrences of this saying explain Saul's failures. "He lost the opportunity to establish a dynasty; he lost his own throne and his personal dignity. He refuses to put the honour,

glory and the will of God before his personal ambitions and pride. Saul lost the privilege of reigning and became a vessel unto dishonor, creating problems for others and eventually destroying himself" (Constable 1967:79). This chapter highlights, three times, the motif of God protecting David. However, this time he uses both natural and supernatural means by which to do it.

(iv) David's concern for his own safety (1 Sm 20:1-11)

Chapter twenty of first Samuel records Jonathan's last attempt to reconcile David and Saul. The reader's attention is drawn to Saul, whose inability to genuinely repent is very evident. David in this chapter is distressed at Saul's attempts on his life; however Jonathan assures him that he has done nothing wrong. It seems that Jonathan does not appreciate the intensity of Saul's hatred toward David as yet.

(v) Jonathan's second covenant with David (1 Sm 20:12-17)

There are several oaths and strong affirmations, which characterise this chapter (1 Sm 20:3, 12, 13, 16, 17, 23, 42). According to Jewish customs the festival being celebrated in this chapter introduces a new month, which the Israelites celebrate by having a sacrificial meal that is spread over a few days. Scripture points out that it is both a religious and civil holiday (Nm 10:10; 28:11-15).

David, being Saul's commander-in-chief would normally have been present at the king's table during this festival. Warriors, who dined with kings, did so as an expression of their loyalty to that king. In 1 Samuel 20:18-23 we read that David is absent from the feast. Saul notices David's absence and he may have even questioned David's commitment to him in his mind. However, David sensing that Saul may try to kill him again, hides in a field. Constable (1967:81) comments, "Hiding in the field seems to be an extreme measure. Why could David not have gone home to Bethlehem or stayed with friends who would have kept his presence secret from Saul? Perhaps David trusted no one but Jonathan."

This pericope introduces the *deceptive* aspect of David's character, which crops up from time to time throughout his flight from Saul. Here David lies about his whereabouts when he says he is at a family reunion. "At the beginning of his period of flight from Saul, David resorted to deceitful behaviour as well as trust in God. As this trial continues, he learns to trust God more completely. His trials purify his character.

David proposes his test in 1 Samuel 20:7 to convince Jonathan that Saul really intended to kill him" (Constable 1967:81). In his distress David asks Jonathan to take his life. His thinking being that if he must die, it should rather

be at the hand of his friend than at the hand of Saul, who is clearly an enemy. Constable (1967:82) affirms, "David had temporarily lost sight of God's promise that he would rule over Israel. Jonathan refuses to kill David but promises to tell him if Saul responds with hostility as David predicts he would (1 Sm 20:9)."

Jonathan then suggests a plan by which he could communicate with David without revealing David's location (1 Sm 20:10-11). 1 Samuel 20:12-17 indicates that Jonathan believes David will someday be the king (1 Sm 20:13-15). Jonathan came to appreciate God's loyal love (Heb: *hesed* 1 Sm 20:14-15) and now calls on David to deal similarly with his descendants when he becomes king. He secures a promise from David that when David reigns he will protect Jonathan's family. David keeps this promise as we read later in the story of Mephibosheth (2 Sm 9).

Constable (1967:81) infers, "it was common in the ancient Near East for kings who began a new dynasty to kill all the descendants of the former king to keep them from rising up and trying to reclaim the throne." This was the second covenant made between David and Jonathan.

(vi) David and Jonathan's plans (1 Sm 20:18-23)

Before their parting, Jonathan tells David that he will shoot three arrows so that David will know if he is safe to join the celebrations.

> Friendships are one of the most enriching of life's experiences. How poor is the man or woman who is friendless! Friends enrich life because they give, without counting the cost. Jonathan was a man who gave to David more than he received; and in doing so showed how different he was from the typical king described in 1 Sm 8:11-17, whose sole function was to take. Life has its givers and its takers; Jonathan was supremely a giver - and David, though destined to become a king, persistently declined to take anything away from Saul. He patiently waited for God to give him the crown of Israel.
>
> (Payne 1982:106)

(vii) Saul's anger over David's absence (1 Sm 20:24-34)

Initially, as recorded in 1 Samuel 20:26 Saul's conclusion is that David is ceremonially unclean. However, after a while Saul demands an explanation for David's absence and looks to Jonathan to provide him with one. Saul's hatred for David is so great that he is unable to utter his name (1 Sm 20:27 and 31). Youngblood (1992:723) comments, "the phrase 'the son of' in 1 Samuel 20:30 is a mild insult and by insulting Jonathan's mother Saul is intensifying his insult (1 Sm 20:30)." In Saul's mind, Jonathan has chosen David as his friend to his own dishonor (1 Sm 20:30), because he has made

him his friend rather than killing him as Saul wanted him to do. David will ultimately take Jonathan's place as king of Israel.

Again the reader is exposed to Saul's utter disregard for the will of God. He still was in denial about his rejection. Saul still perceived David as a threat to his continuing dynasty. Jonathan, in his godliness only wanted God's will and he wanted it more than he desired being the king of Israel. Therefore he tried to reason with Saul again (1 Sm 20:32). Saul, exasperated by what he interpreted as Jonathan's selfless foolishness, tried to execute him, as he had previously done with David. This brush with death finally convinces Jonathan that David was right about Saul's intentions to kill him.

(viii) David's final departure from Gibeath (1 Sm 20:35-42)

In the next pericope Jonathan confirms David's fears about Saul's intentions. They decide not to see each other again for their mutual safety. This chapter reveals that both Saul and Jonathan realise that David is the Lord's anointed and that he will one day replace Saul. More important, though, is their individual responses to this knowledge. Saul is bent on seeing his own plans being fulfilled, but Jonathan wants God's will. Jonathan here chooses David over his father, as did Michal, earlier in the narrative. Jonathan is the main character in this pericope. The narrator contrasts both Jonathan and Saul's attitude to God's will. Rather than opposing God's will and His anointed, as Saul did, Jonathan humbles himself before God's will and supports David.

Constable (1967:83) concludes, "Jonathan faced a terrible tension since Saul's attitude divides Jonathan's loyalty. Jonathan solves this problem by putting God's will first. He submits to the domestic authority of his father and to the civil authority of his king by obeying Saul except when obedience to Saul conflicted with obedience to God."

We also see in this pericope (1 Sm 20:24-42), that pro-homosexual advocates have interpreted the kiss shared by David and Jonathan to be sexual in nature. 1 Samuel 20:41 reads "… [T]hey kissed one another and they wept together…." Whilst this may seem like unusual behaviour, in the Middle East, kissing is a common social custom. It was practiced in Biblical time and is still very much a part of modern Middle Eastern culture. It does not necessarily carry a sexual connotation, so there is no reason to assume that David and Jonathan's goodbye kiss is sexual in nature.

2.2.1.6 David escapes Saul (1 Sm 21:1–26:25)

In several parts of the narrative thus far the narrator has used the literary device of alternating the focus of each pericope from one character to another. Typically, from Saul to David, however, in the previous pericope the

focus is on Jonathan. The same technique is employed in chapters 1-3 with Samuel and Eli's sons. In that chapter Samuel's goodness is contrasted with the wickedness of Hophni and Phinehas. The narrator's purpose is the same in 1 Samuel 21-29 with David and Saul.

In the next series of chapters (1 Sm 21-30), the narrator emphasises David's rise with the growth of his supporters and sets it in contrast to Saul's army, which is growing weaker. These chapters also develop the motif of a right response to God's anointed. Youngblood (1992:727) comments, "The two chapters comprise of a literary unit of three sections arranged in chiastic order. Chapters 21:1-9 and 22:6-23 are concerned with the Priestly compound at Nob in Benjamin while the central section (1 Sm 21:10-22:5) summarises David's flight to Gath in Philistia, Adullam in Judah and Mizpah in Moab."

Upon his arrival at Nob, David lies to Ahimelech with regard to his reason for being there. After he accepts supplies from Ahimelech, he goes to Gath which also proves to be unsafe for him. David sensing his personal danger pretends to be insane to save his life. Payne (1982:113) points out, "insanity was often believed in the ancient world to be an affliction of the gods and it was customary to treat madmen as taboo if not as holy people who should not be harmed in any way."

In both Nob and Gath, David resorted to deception to protect himself and in each place his deception is followed by severe disaster. Now, David takes flight to the town of Adullam, where he and his family, who are also in danger, are safe and out of Saul's reach. It is here that David becomes a leader of a small group of people who have become discontent with Saul.

(i) Saul's slaughter of the Priests (1 Sm 22:6-23)

The narrator now focuses the reader's attention back to Saul who is now in Nob looking for David. In this pericope Ahimelech appeals to Saul on David's behalf much like Jonathan had done earlier. Only this time, Saul does not respond to reasonable persuasion. In his rage he commands his men to kill the Priests whom God has appointed to serve Him; this is done in total disregard for God and His will.

Saul's men are unable to follow his instructions. Firstly, because it is a harsh punishment and secondly because they have respect for the Priests and recognise them as God's anointed. This was a trait that is greatly lacking in Saul. Doeg, however, is a foreigner, an Edomite, who clearly had no regard for the Mosaic Laws (1 Sm 21:7). He not only obeys the king but goes even further than what was commanded by Saul and kills all the men, women, children and animals (1 Sm 22:19).

Nevertheless, Saul is still responsible for this devastation (1 Sm 22:21). "Earlier in his career Saul had disobeyed God's command to slay the

Amalekites and now he slaughters the Nobites without any divine instruction" (Constable 1967:85). However, God preserves one of Eli's descendants, who reports the murders to David. Upon hearing the news David is filled with remorse because it is his deception which results in Saul ordering the slaughter of the priests.

(ii) David rescues Keilah (1 Sm 23:1-14)

The literary spotlight now moves back from Saul to David who is in the town of Keilah. "We have just witnessed how Saul, in an outburst of rage, became responsible for the destruction of the priestly city of Nob. In chapter 23, David, even while on the run from Saul, is shown saving a city from Philistine attack" (Gordon 1986:175). The narrator informs us that in this passage David inquired of the Lord four times (1 Sm 23:2, 4, 10, and 11). David sought to defend his countrymen from their enemy, even though it is actually Saul's responsibility as king.

David is shown here as someone who willingly places himself under the authority of God. David moves on from Keilah to Ziph where Jonathan, who is introduced into the narrative again, risks his life to encourage David. David and Jonathan make their last covenant with each other here and this marks the last meeting between them recorded in Scripture.

(iii) David in Ziph (1 Sm 23:15-23)

Once again the narrator focuses the reader's attention on Saul who is still in pursuit of David. Out of fear for Saul the Ziphites tell him that David has been there. However, David escapes to Maon before Saul can find him.

(iv) David in Maon (1 Sm 23:24-29)

In the last pericope of this section David is in the wilderness of Maon. Some people sympathise with David and inform him of Saul's approach so David and his men seek refuge behind a huge rock. Just as Saul is about to close in on David he is informed that the Philistines have invaded a specified area of Israel. Saul has to break off his personal agenda and respond to the Philistine threat giving David a chance to increase the distance between Saul and himself by moving on to Engedi.

2.2.1.7 David, Nabal and Abigail (1 Sm 24–26)

Chapters 24-26 form a discrete literary unit within 1 Samuel. Chapters 24 and 26 are virtually mirror images of each other, beginning with Saul receiving a report about David's latest hiding place (1 Sm 24:1; 1 Sm 26:1), focusing on David's refusal to lift a hand against Saul, 'the Lord's anointed' (1 Sm 24:6, 10; 26:11), and concluding with the words of a

> remorseful Saul and his returning home from his pursuit of David (1 Sm 24:17-22; 26:21, 25). The two chapters form a frame around the central chapter 25, where the churlish Nabal functions as an alter ego of the rejected Saul. In addition, divine protection that keeps David from shedding innocent blood runs as a unifying thread through all three chapters.
>
> (Youngblood 1992:745)

Gordon (1986:270, cf also Ehrlich 2006:69) agree, "The close similarities of chapter 24 and 26 suggest that they are versions of the same story." Ehrlich (2006:70) further observes, "1 Samuel 24-26 form a literary unit whose portrait of David contrasts with that of Saul in the foregoing chapters." Gordon (1986:270) adds, "Chapter 24 contains a three part plot in which there is incremental repetition of the motif of blood guilt and its avoidance." Ehrlich (2006:72) asserts, "in 1 Samuel 24:10 it is stated and in chapter 26 implied that Yahweh turns Saul over to David. The table has now turned, where previously Saul sought to kill David, now David has several opportunities to kill Saul. Saul is vulnerable and at the mercy of David. David, however, refuses to lay a hand on God's anointed."

(i) David's first sparing of Saul's life (1 Sm 24)

In the previous section Saul sought on several occasions and through different means to kill David. In this section (1 Sm 23:29-24:22), David is given the opportunity to take Saul's life, but instead David spares him. "This incident is concerned with 'cutting off' (1 Sm 24:4, 5, 11, 21). David had the opportunity and received encouragement to 'cut off' Saul's life but chose instead to 'cut off' only his robe hem" (Constable 1967:92).

Baldwin (1988:146) explains, "The verb 'cut off' forms something of a recurring theme, a leitmotiv, in 1 Samuel 20-24". "The hem or edge of a person's garment in the ancient Near East made a statement about his or her social standing. A kings hem was especially ornate and identified him as the king" (Milgrom 1983:61). In the opinion of Smith (2000:128), "by cutting off this piece of Saul's robe, which Saul may have laid aside as he relieved himself (1 Sm 24:3), David was suggesting that he could have cut of Saul's reign just as easily." Had David taken the opportunity to kill Saul when he had the chance his actions would have been inappropriate. However, one of the themes running through this book is that God is the one who vindicates His people. We have seen this in several passages where God has rescued Israel from their enemies. Similarly, it is God's job to rid David, His anointed, of the one who persecuted him.

This incident provides another insight into David's character. David was acknowledging God's sovereignty by submitting to His authority in recognising

Saul as king. David refuses to take revenge for the trouble that Saul causes him. Heater (1991:54) comments, "No greater example of wisdom practice is found than in David's response to Saul." Perhaps it is this object lesson that David presents to Saul that allows him to respond to David as he does. In the final analysis, David proves that he is not trying to kill Saul because Saul is the Lord's anointed. In doing so, David is also showing that it is inappropriate for Saul to seek to kill him, because he too, is the Lord's anointed.

In his conversation with Saul, David refers to him as his lord (1 Sm 24:8), his king and his father (1 Sm 24:11); David expresses respect, submission and affection for Saul through these titles. David's words and actions convict Saul of his actions (1 Sm 24:17) and the king weeps because of this (1 Sm 24:16). He refers to David as his son (1 Sm 24:16), as David had earlier called Saul his 'father' (1 Sm 24:11). Saul confesses David's superior righteousness (1 Sm 24:17) and goodness (1 Sm 24:18).

Saul asks David not to cut off his descendants when he came to power (1 Sm 24:21). As noted earlier, it was customary in the ancient Near East for a new king to kill all the descendants of the ruler whom he replaced. David has already promised Jonathan that he will not kill his descendants (1 Sm 20:14-17) and he now makes the same promise to Saul (1 Sm 24:22). "To cut off someone's name meant to obliterate the memory of him" (Constable 1967:95). David even agrees to spare Saul's reputation in Israel (2 Sm 1:17-27). While Saul's remorse was genuine David knows it will probably only be temporary. We see David growing in this chapter. In his first encounter with Saul he is in a position to end the struggle between them, but he opts to leave the destiny of Saul and his dynasty in God's hand.

(ii) David spares Nabal's life (1 Sm 25)

"Chapter 25 is the central panel in the triptych that constitutes chapters 24-26. As such it not only anchors the literary unit but also facilitates the fact that chapters 24 and 26 mirror each other" (Youngblood 1992:752). This chapter opens and closes with a tragedy, the opening tragedy being the death of Samuel (1 Sm 25:1) and the closing tragedy being Saul giving Michal to another man (1 Sm 25:44). Commentators believe that the events of chapter 25 take place when David is at an emotionally low point in his life. Further proof of this is that David does not emerge as the hero in this pericope, Abigail does. Once again, (Jdg 4), God uses a woman to prevent a tragedy in Israel's history.

At this point in the narrative Samuel dies. It is significant that Samuel's death is recorded at this point in the narrative because Saul as just voiced his realisation that David would be Israel's next king (1 Sm 24:20). Constable (1967:96) suggests, "David would have probably continued Samuel's ministry

and become Israel's first king without the hiatus of Saul's tragic reign if Israel did not insist on having a king prematurely." Samuel's provision of transition from the Judges to the monarchy had therefore ended. Keil & Delitzsch (1960:238) observe, "Since the days of Moses and Joshua, no man had arisen to whom the covenant nation owed so much as to Samuel, who had been justly called the reformer and restorer of the theocracy."

"As the story unfolds, the narrator reveals many similarities between Saul and Nabal and the narrator may have dropped these clues to help the reader compare the two men. The narrator uses a literary device called narrative analogy in which ironic parallelism abound" (Gordon 1986:42). "The contrast between Nabal and Abigail could not be stronger. He was foolish; she was wise. He was evil; she was good. He was repulsive; she was attractive. He was arrogant; she was humble. He was ungodly; she was godly. He was an antagonist; she was a peacemaking" (Constable 1967:97).
Heater (1991:56) adds, "The story of the stupid sheepherder with a beautiful and intelligent wife is one of most delight in Samuel. Its purpose is to lay one more brick in the edifice of David's legitimacy." David's men have been patrolling the wilderness of Paran in Judah where Nabal's shepherds have been tending their flocks. They have made this area safe from the raiding Amalekites, Philistines, and occasional wild animals that may harass Nabal's shepherds. "It was common courtesy that wealthy Nabal would have expressed his appreciation to David by providing some food for his men. Sheep shearing was a happy time for shepherds and usually involved feasting" (Baldwin 1988:147).

> By referring to himself as Nabal's son (1 Sm 25:8) David was placing himself in a subordinate position to Nabal. David had earlier called Saul his 'father' (1 Sm 24:11, 16). This is another clue that suggests that the narrator wanted the reader to view Nabal as Saul's alter ego. Nabal in this situation viewed David as a rebel and failed to acknowledge David's help to him and that David was the Lord's anointed. However, David overreacted to Nabal's insulting rebuff (1 Sm 25:13) and he prepared to attack and kill Nabal's entire household (1 Sm 25:22, 34).
>
> (Constable 1967:97-98)

In 1 Samuel 25:14-17 we read that Nabal's servant appeals to Abigail to reverse Nabal's orders. He tells her how God has blessed Nabal's shepherds through David. Gunn (1991:96) asserts, "the Hebrew words for *good* and *evil* each occur seven times in chapter 25 (verses 3, 8, 15, 21, 30, 31, 36 and 3, 17, 21, 26, 34, 39 [twice]), which further emphasises the contrast between Nabal and Abigail. Youngblood (1992:753) adds, "together they underscore

one of the major themes of the story: Good brings its own reward, while evil recoils on the head of the wicked."

In her appeal to David, Abigail proceeds to help David view the situation from God's perspective. She refers to the Lord as the One who, in response to her words, was restraining him from shedding innocent blood (1 Sm 25:26). She presents her gift of food and asks David for forgiveness on her husband's behalf. Heater (1991:56) comments, "David was about to attack fellow Judeans and wipe out a whole family. This act would surely have brought reprobation on David and would have undone all his carefully crafted relationships with his fellow Israelites." Abigail concludes her appeal with a request that David remember her when he attains the throne. In all that she said, Abigail, revealed a godly perspective that is totally absent in her husband. David hears the Lord's voice behind Abigail's words. When Abigail eventually tells Nabal what occurred he dies. God strikes Nabal dead for his pride and opposition to His anointed.

As mentioned before, the beginning of the chapter opens with Samuel's death and ends with Saul giving his daughter Michal to another man in marriage. Saul considered David as good as dead or as Constable (1967:102) suggests, "he may have also done this to remove the possibility of David claiming the throne because he was Saul's son-in-law."

(iii) David's second sparing of Saul's life (1 Sm 26)

In chapter 26 the narrator moves the focus back to Saul. It has been established that there are similarities between this chapter and chapter 24, in which David spares Saul's life in the cave of Adullam. "Perhaps the most significant difference, is that, in chapter 24 David was on the defensive whereas in chapter 26 he was on the offensive" (Constable 1967:102).

The major theme in this pericope is David's learning to trust God to repay his enemies rather than taking revenge himself. He displays a greatness of character in his dealing with Abishai and Saul. David is hiding by the hill of Hachilah (1 Sm 23:19), when Saul comes down from Gibeath with 3000 men and they camp near the main road. In comparison to Saul's army David only had 600 men (1 Sm 23:19; 1 Sm 25:13). David sends out scouts and they confirm that Saul is definitely there. So David and Abishai, David's nephew, go down to the camp.

In this pericope the narrator contrasts David's godly viewpoint to Abishai's carnal viewpoint. Abishai concludes that because God has given David the upper hand David should kill Saul. David had used similar words when he promises to kill Goliath (1 Sm 17:46; 1 Sm 26:8) as does Saul when he describes how he will kill David with his spear (1 Sm 18:11). Abishai goes as far as to offer to kill Saul himself on David's behalf. David's response to his

offer to kill Saul begins (1 Sm 26:9) and ends (1 Sm 26:11) with the reason why David will not kill Saul himself and it is the same reason he will not permit Abishai to kill him. Saul is the Lord's anointed. David reminds him that God could deal with Saul without their help.

One would assume that Saul would have been secure surrounded by his men but 1 Samuel 26:12 reveals that he is actually very vulnerable. David takes the spear and water jug and lays the water jug near Saul's head and then leaves. Saul had used the spear three times (1 Sm 18:10; 1 Sm 19:9-10; 1 Sm 20:33) to try and kill David, therefore it can be considered an instrument of death and similar to a sceptre, it is also a symbol of Saul's rule. By taking Saul's spear David is teaching the king that he has the power of death but chose to spare Saul's life instead. This symbolic act communicates that the right to rule will be David's eventually. Water jugs were considered a life-giving vessel which had special significance for the Israelites when they were in the Judean wilderness. By taking Saul's water jug, David was teaching Saul that he had the power to take his life.

Saul again refers to David as son. However, this time David doesn't call him father. David may have still respected him as God's anointed; but he is no longer his father-in-law (1 Sm 25:44). Saul again confesses his sins as he had done in 1 Samuel 24:17, admitting that he had played the fool (similar to Nabal). However, he never follows through with genuine repentance. Scripture does not record another meeting between David and Saul.

2.2.1.8 David in Philistia (1 Sm 27:1-30:31)

In these final chapters the narrator contrasts Saul and David's rise to kingship. The reasons for them being chosen are the extent of their commitment to God. The narrator also continues to develop the theme of a proper response to God's anointed in this part of the book. David's respect for the Priests and his seeking God's will through them show a proper attitude. Saul on the other hand slaughters them, showing that he no longer cares about the worship of God. This point is highlighted later when he turns to the witch of Endor for guidance. Further, this section has the objective in demonstrating that David has nothing to do with Saul's death. David's commitment to God allows him to become God's instrument of blessing to the Israelites. This is true despite the fact that David fails to seek God's guidance before moving back into Philistine territory.

In these last chapters of 1 Samuel the narrator uses the same technique as before alternating between David and Saul's activities. This technique puts the fates of these two men in stark contrast. The book ends with the narrative contrast technique with which it opened; where the narrator contrasted Samuel and Eli's sons.

Harassed by the necessity of moving from place to place, David once more seeks refuge among the Philistines (1 Sm 27). He is welcomed by the king, who assigns him Ziklag as his residence. Here David lives among his followers for some time as an independent chief engaging in frequent war with the Amalekites and other tribes south of Judah. Achish and the rest of the Philistines rejoice in the rift that exists between David and Saul.

As Merrill (1986:219) asserts, "without David, Saul lacked military leadership sufficient to eliminate the Philistine threat; without Saul, David lacked the power base from which to operate." Payne (1982:140) adds, "Achish realized that as soon as David did attack his own people, he would lose forever the possibility of changing sides." Since David now enjoys Philistine protection Saul no longer pursues him. Saul knows that to get to David he would have to take on the Philistines. David uses this opportunity to clear the Promised Land of Israel's enemies. However, to Achish and the Philistines, it seems that David is ridding Philistia of its enemies. "David walked a thin line of deception but was able to convince Achish that his victories were for the welfare of the Philistines and detriment of Israel" (Constable 1967:106).

" In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army." David said, "Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do" (1 Sm 28:1-2). David's response to Achish in these verses is ambiguous. He does not promise to fight for the Philistines but gives the impression that he will. Achish clearly interprets David's words as a strong commitment to him and rewards him with the position of his lifelong bodyguard (1 Sm 28:2). "David continued to be a blessing for Israel in Ziklag without giving any real help to Israel's enemy, the Philistines. This plan of David's while yielding some positive benefits, involved him in deception and lying and leaving him vulnerable to Achish if the Philistine king had learned what was really going on" (Constable 1967:107).

(i) Saul and the witch of Endor (1 Sm 28:3-25)

Samuel's death and the earlier mention of Saul's commendable removal of cultic practices prepare for what follows (Lv 20:6; Dt 18:10-11). The Mosaic Law prescribed death for mediums and spiritists, God intends to use Prophets to communicate with His people (Dt 18). It is unwise and dangerous and therefore forbidden, for the people to seek guidance from other sources.

Gordon (1986:192) asserts, "The wording of this introduction (1 Sm 28:4) is notable, for it is strongly reminiscent of two other fateful confrontations between Saul and the Philistines. The first at Michmash/Gilgal (1 Sm 13:5)

and the second at Socoh/Elah (1 Sm 17:11)." "On the eve of the battle of Gilboa, Saul is frightened and is anxious to call upon Yahweh for guidance, though the oracle is silent" (Brooks 2005:80).

Saul then turns to the witch of Endor in desperation. Brooks (2005:143) comments, "this episode describing Saul as being abandoned by Yahweh, desperate for guidance is in complete contrast to his introduction in I Samuel 9 as the one chosen by God and has the aim of showing that Saul's decline has reached its lowest ebb." As Saul reaches the depth of his fate, David attains the height of his popularity.

Larue (1997:s.p) adds, "the end of Saul's leadership in the Hebrew kingdom was tragic and movingly portrays his desperate search for supernatural guidance (1 Sm 28:3-25)." Scarcely has Samuel died, when the Philistines begin to menace the Israelites. No one felt Samuel's death more keenly than Saul. Left alone and isolated, he takes extreme measures to enter into communication with the departed prophet; he turns to a necromancer, one who consorts with the dead.

> In necromancy the peculiar rule holds that, unless it is summoned by a king, a spirit raised from the dead appears head downward and feet in the air. Accordingly, when the figure of Samuel stood upright before them, the witch knew that the king was with her. Though the witch saw Samuel, she could not hear what he said, while Saul heard his words, but could not see his person. This is another peculiar phenomenon in necromancy: the conjuror sees the spirit and he for whom the spirit had been raised only hears it. Any other person present neither sees nor hears it.
>
> (Viklund 2007:s.p)

Brueggemann (1990:193) notes, "The author wants to show that, in fact, Saul is not king; that he is frantic with no resources." Further, Saul chooses to go to Endor disguised and even more so he requests a *spirit*, an act that he himself prohibited earlier in his reign. Brooks (2005:600) points out, "the act of Saul removing his royal gown in itself gives a symbolic message; it hints at Saul's end as a king." Only fragments of the conversation between Samuel and Saul have been preserved in Scripture. However, we know that Israel's defeat and Saul's death are foretold. "From being obedient to God he became a man who was self willed and this got the better of him in his final days" (Larue s.a:s.p).

> We see the author has organized the stories in a descriptive sequence that confirms to the elements of tragedy. He provides the reader with materials that enable them to understand Saul and identify with him, to empathize with his pain and suffering, to feel

> compassion for him and finally to be amazed by his ability to reconcile himself to his fate as he sets out for his final battle.
>
> (Brooks 2005:73)

(ii) David and the Philistine leaders (1 Sm 29)

Chapter 29 focuses back on David in Philistia. The Philistine leaders are afraid to let David join them in the battle against Israel. They, unlike Achish, are not convinced about David's change of heart and feel that he will turn against them and so refuse for him to fight in the battle of Gilboa. Even though Achish defends him, it is not to be and David is exempt from going into battle. This is further evidence that David did not have a hand in destroying the Saulide lineage. It is also evidence of him being prevented from helping and rescuing Israel.

Again, the narrator emphasises the motif of God vindicating David and opening the way for him to the throne without any human help. God, on His own would vindicate David and rid him of his worst enemies. God protects His anointed, even in a foreign land. He convinces Achish of David's loyalty, which yields a measure of protection for David. He also convinces the other Philistine lords of David's threat, which results in their sending him far from the battlefront. In doing so, David is saved from fighting against Israel. Brueggemann (1990:199) adds, "the very same Philistines who will finally dispose of Saul (1 Sm 31) are the ones who unwittingly rescue David." In short, God providentially causes the reactions of people, as different as those reactions are, to protect David.

> David's sixteen months at Ziklag probably marked a low point in his spiritual walk with God. He displayed a lack of faith in going there, as though God could not protect him in his own land; he was not honest with Achish after he arrived there; and it was only because of God's intervening grace that he was spared from having to fight his own people. Significantly, too, it was during this time that his men nearly mutinied against him, not being sure that he was leading them aright. He had been doing so well until this time, but here he definitely slipped.
>
> (Wood 1986:211)

(iii) David destroys the Amalekites (1 Sm 30)

Nevertheless, in contrast, chapter 30 reveals many qualities that mark David as an outstanding leader. As Saul continues to decline, God perfects the characteristics of leadership in David that prepare him for the throne. In David's absence the Amalekites take advantage and invade Ziklag. David returns to Ziklag to find it empty of its inhabitants and burnt down. David's supporters turn on him and almost stone him. In his distress David turns to God to strengthen him.

Baldwin (1988:169) claims, “David’s genius was his spiritual resilience.” “Both David and Saul are portrayed as persons in deep crisis of leadership and both deeply at risk. What interests us is the difference of response. Saul seeks refuge in a medium (1 Sm 28), [but David inquired of the Lord] (1 Sm 30:8)” (Brueggemann 1990:201).

The rest of the chapter describes the distribution of plunder from the battle. The amount of space the narrator devotes to this revelation emphasises that he intends to stress it, showing David’s amazing ability to lead his men and obey God’s commands. Again this stresses his worthiness for succession to the throne. When the Amalekites capture Ziklag, it at first looks as if tragedy has struck, but later it proves to be a great blessing. In this respect, this event resembles David’s whole career. As a result of this victory, the people of Judah come to regard David as the obvious successor to Saul’s throne.

2.1.1.9 The death of Saul and Jonathan (1 Sm 31:1-13)

1 Samuel 31 presents David as one with many qualities that mark a strong, effective leader. Constable (1967:115) lists them as follows, “empathy (1 Sm 30:4), faith (1 Sm 30:6, 8, 23, 26), decisiveness (1 Sm 30:10), kindness (1 Sm 30:12), persistence (1 Sm 30:17), integrity (1 Sm 30:23), fairness (1 Sm 30:24) and generosity (1 Sm 30:21-31).” David’s effectiveness contrasts with Saul’s ineffectiveness as a leader. “Saul, disobeyed God’s prophet, defeated the Amalekites but lost his kingdom (1 Sm 15); David, seeking God’s will, defeats the Amalekites and embarks on his reign (1 Sm 30)” (Youngblood 1992:791).

Now for the last time the narrator moves the focus back to Saul. Constable (1967:116) infers, “Saul’s battle with the Philistines in this chapter may have been simultaneous with David’s battle against the Amalekites in the previous one.”

> Chapters 30 and 31 gain poignancy and power if we regard their events as simultaneous. In the far south, David is anxious about his own and about spoil, while in the far north Saul and the Israelite army perish. While David smites (hikkah) [‘fought,’ 1 Sm 30:17] the Amalekites, and they flee (nus) [1 Sm 30:17], the Philistines smite (hikkah) [‘killed,’ 1 Sm 31:2] Saul and his sons and Israel flees (nus) [1 Sm 31: 1, 7].
>
> (Miscall 1986:181-182)

The account of Saul’s death here differs from the one that the Amalekite messenger gives David later in 2 Samuel 1. Gordon (1986:202) claims that the latter account “is quite clearly the factual one (1 Chr 10).” The battle of Mount Gilboa is briefly reported in 1 Samuel 31. Saul’s sons are killed. Saul, who is severely wounded, asks his amour-bearer to kill him. When the amour-

bearer refuses, possibly out of fear of killing the king, Saul, wanting to avoid capture and torture, falls on his sword taking his own life.

> The decapitated bodies of him and his sons are nailed to the wall of the city Beth Shan as a final token of Philistine derision and defilement. Saul's head was sent throughout the Philistine kingdom as a proof of the monarch's death. The people of Jabesh-Gilead, remembering perhaps their earlier deliverance by Saul, rescued the bodies and provided a proper burial for the members of the royal family.
>
> (Larue 1997:s.p)

2.2.2 Conclusion to the Saul-David Cycle

In this cycle Saul's character is depicted as one of deep contrasts. On the one hand he is someone whom Israel could be proud of (1 Sm 9:2) and yet on the other hand he acts in a way that brings disgrace to himself and his people. His humility was proven by his mercy on those who rejected him (1 Sm 10:11; 22, 11:13, 15:17), but he was also proud and self-centered. Even though Saul is a courageous man he finds himself in positions where his weaknesses were evident and instead of trusting God, he gives in under pressure and yields to human impulses.

There are times in Scripture when it does not appear that Saul considered his actions before he acts upon them, nor does he contemplate beforehand the consequences of his disobedience. It is this impetuosity that is a part of his downfall and the very thing for which he is remembered today. He is seen as a man who could not be trusted with power and authority.

Saul's repeated disobedience to God results in the deterioration of his relationship with Samuel and ultimately, his relationship with God. This part of his character is evident in incidents like almost having his own son put to death because of an impulsive ban on food that he himself has made; his decision to intrude into the priestly office and offer sacrifices to God and lastly the murder of the Priests at Nob.

On the other hand the Biblical depiction of his son Jonathan contrasts markedly with that of his father. Firstly, as Constable (1967:73) comments, "Jonathan found a soul brother in David, a man who committed himself to trusting and obeying God as he did. This common purpose on the deepest level of life is what accounts for the love Jonathan and David shared for one another." Secondly, it seems that Jonathan realises David's abilities and God's hand on his life (1 Sm 23:17), a fact that Saul chose to ignore. Gordon (1986:159) asserts, "This is a virtual abdication by Jonathan, the crown prince."

Thirdly, Constable (1967:74) adds, “Jonathan’s humility is all the more remarkable since chronological references in Samuel seem to indicate that Jonathan was about thirty years older than David.” It is through Jonathan’s heart attitude that God is able to use him to spiritually transfer kingship to David. His contribution to David’s life began here and he becomes one of the most trustworthy friends David would ever have.

Throughout our study it is established that David too stands in direct contrast to Saul. At the beginning of David’s story he recognises God’s sovereignty. David knows it is God who will remove Saul (1 Sm 26:10). When one looks at David in contrast to Saul one sees that God is always with David (1 Sm 16:18; 17:37; 18:12; 14:28), whereas Saul is left with an evil spirit that torments him, and later, he is denied a divine oracle (1 Sm 28:6, 15). David, at the beginning of the narrative, is often described as innocent (1 Sm 19:4; 20:1; 24:10) whereas Saul repeatedly tries to kill him, believing him to be a threat to his kingship (1 Sm 18:18; 19:1-2, 5).

In contrast David shows mercy and kindness to Saul in sparing his life several times (1 Sm 24:18; 1 Sm 26:9-11). David is described as being successful in everything he did (1 Sm 18:14) whereas Saul’s failures become increasingly obvious, especially in the Goliath episode (1 Sm 17:11). David also repents when confronted with his sin, but Saul, while confessing his sin, attempts to justify his actions (2 Sm 12:13; 1 Sm 15:13-25). These examples show David’s faith and trust in God. In 1 Samuel 16 through to 2 Samuel 11 we see in David a model of faith for all who will follow God.

2.3 “Story of David” (2 Sm 1-24)

2.3.1 Introduction to the David Cycle

Unfortunately, the debacle at Gilboa leaves Israel at the mercy of the Philistines. “They took advantage of their position and occupied at least as much of the land as they held before Saul came into the picture” (Bright 2000:195). We read in 1 Samuel 23:14 that Philistine garrisons are once more established in the mountain range. Israel’s hopes have dwindled with their king on Mount Gilboa. However, there is a glimmer of hope as Bright (2000:195) comments, “yet Israel rose and within a few years had become the foremost nation of Palestine and Syria.” Israel’s hope is restored. This restoration is realised in David. 2 Samuel sets before us how Israel rose after the humiliation of Gilboa.

2.3.1.1 David’s victory over the house of Saul (2 Sm 1-4)

The book of 2 Samuel opens with a second account of Saul’s death. The narrator gives us a report of Saul’s final moments on Mount Gilboa in 1 Samuel 31, but in the context of the story, David does not yet know of Saul’s fate. His response to the news is spontaneous grief, which heightens with the

news that Jonathan has suffered the same fate as his father. David composes a very moving eulogy in their honour (2 Sm 1).

1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 1 records the transition that takes place in Israel's monarchy. Wood (1979:168) claims, "there is no reason why both accounts of Saul's death could be true. He therefore, considers the account in 1 Samuel 31 to be factual." Gordon (1986:208-209) argues that the Amalekites account "was not accurate and that he must have had some hand in killing Saul in view of 1 Samuel 31:1-6 and 1 Chronicles 10." This would explain how he was able to attain the king's crown and band, which he brought to David (2 Sm 1:6-10). It is his hope that David will be proud of his accomplishments. These are a few of the unresolved oddities within the text that is beyond the scope of this study.

Constable (1967:4) points out, "Mount Gilboa stood some 80 miles north of Ziklag, so it probably took the Amalekite three or four days to make the trip." Anderson (1989:10) explains, "It seems that the Amalekites story has its primary function to counter any possible rumors or accusations leveled against David." David's reaction must have surprised the Amalekite. Instead of feeling joy over his actions David is saddened by the news and orders the execution of the Amalekite.

> The author of Samuel established a deliberate connection between the two stories [i.e. this one and the Benjamite fugitive's report in 1 Sm 4:12-17] in order to set up an analogy between the fates of Saul's house and that of Eli's. The comparison indicates that there is a clear rule of law which connects a leader's conduct with his fate and the fate of his house. A degenerate leader, whether it is himself who has sinned or his sons, will ultimately be deposed of, or come to a tragic end, just as Eli and his sons die on the same day, Saul and his sons suffer the same fate on the same day.
>
> (Garsiel 1985:106)

2.3.1.2 David mourns for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sm 1:1-27)

"How the mighty have fallen," is the key refrain in the song (2 Sm 1:19, 25, 27). David's lament extols these fallen heroes, mourns their deaths and praises their bravery. In his song David also mentions Saul's virtue (2 Sm 1:19-24), this again gives the reader a glimpse of David's inner character. Even at the news of Saul's death David acts appropriately even though Saul has treated him with contempt. It shows his respect for God and His sovereignty. It gives further details about David and Jonathan's relationship (2 Sm 1:25-26) and concludes with a sigh of grief (2 Sm 1:27).

In 1 Samuel 20 Saul and Jonathan argue over David and Jonathan storms away in anger. This is the last encounter recorded in Scripture between Saul and his son. However, Jonathan, found a way to balance his love and loyalty to David and remained faithful to his father and king. As recorded in Scripture we know that Jonathan also dies on Mount Gilboa.

"The Hebrew words translated 'beloved' or 'loved' and 'pleasant' or 'gracious' (2 Sm 1:23) refers to physical attractiveness and fundamental devotion respectively. Taken together these two words articulate a peculiar and precious bonding with David" (Brueggemann 1990:216-217). The word *love* to which David refers to here is the same word *love* used in Psalm 109:4-5 and refers to *friendship*. Here too, pro-homosexual advocates state that the statement of *love*, which for David, "surpassed the love of woman," (2 Sm 1:26) is indicative of a homosexual relationship.

> There is nothing in the language of the verse to suggest this or rule it out. Horner (1978:s.p), in his book 'Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times,' asserts 'their relationship was most definitely homosexual.' But the verb (ahab/aheb) 'love' is not used elsewhere to express homosexual love, desire or activity for which the Old Testament employs (yada) 'know,' in the sense of 'have sex with' (Gn 19:5; Jdg 19:22). The latter verb is never used of David and Jonathan's relationship. Rather, 'love' as political overtones in the diplomatic and commercial context.
>
> (Gaebelein 1992:707)

Brueggemann (1990:145) attempts to explain the verb *ahab*, "The NRSV confusingly translated *(na'em)* as *beloved*, which makes it seem as if the verb *to love (ahab)* appears three times in verse 26 and points to the wrong corresponding verb in verse 23. The NIV translates it more felicitously, "you were very dear to me" (1 Sm 1:26), showing David calling to memory Jonathan's love (1 Sm 18:1, 3; 20:17)."

Further, the two verbs used are the same used in 2 Samuel 1:23 to speak of Saul and Jonathan, "in life they were loved and gracious," but the application here is more personal. It is at this point that there are various interpretations of the *love* shared between David and Jonathan, many are confused as to what David meant when he said that Jonathan's love for him, "was more wonderful than that of women" (2 Sm 1:26).

In Genesis 22:2 God tells Abraham to offer his son Isaac, whom he *loved (ahab)*, as a sacrifice. Isaac was old and blind when he asked his son, Esau, to shoot a deer and "make me a savoury meat, such as I *love (ahab)*" (Gn 27:1-4). Joseph was his father's favourite and when his brothers saw their father's *love (ahab)* for Joseph was more than he showed for them, they hated him (Gn 37:3-4).

The most important consideration of the word *love* is in the Ten Commandments. God said,

> You shall not make for yourself anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing *love* to a thousand generations of those who *love* me and keep my commandments .
>
> (Ex 20:4-6; Dt 5:8-10)

> Thompson has investigated the use of the verb *abah (love)* in the David and Jonathan narratives and beyond that, throughout 1 Samuel. He used examples like 1 Sm 16:21–Saul; 18:1, 3; 20:17; 2 Sm 1:26-Jonathan; 1 Sm 18:20–Michal; 18:16, 22, 28–Saul's surroundings/ Israel. The contexts (that is, the results) exhibit the concept not as an expression of personal inclination but as a political term that reaches into the realm of treaty language.
>
> (Knoppers & McConville 2000:288)

Another main concept that is important in this context is the word *hesed*. "In 1 Samuel 20:8, David requests *hesed* of Jonathan, meaning, in context, protection for his endangered life; (1 Sm 20:14-15) and then in 2 Samuel 9 we find the roles reversed. In each case the word means an *act* or better an *action of loyalty*. Its occasional association with *berit* makes it entirely clear that it has political rather personal overtones" (Knoppers & McConville 2000:288).

David's many liaisons with women are well known and notorious in some cases (2 Sm 11). We should be alert to the possibility that this phrase says less about David's sexual orientation than it says about the status of women

in ancient Israel. In an era of arranged marriages, love was not considered the basis of most relationships between men and women. Liaisons with women existed either in the context of marriage, where the purpose generally was child-bearing, or in elicit contexts, where the purpose was to satisfy lust. “Love of women in such a context might indeed pale in comparison to the deep and personal commitment represented by the love of David and Jonathan for each other” (Hastings 1914:60).

2.3.1.3 War between David and Ishbosheth (2 Sm 2:1-4:12)

Brooks (2005:69) comments, “The material that follows in 2 Samuel describes the struggle between David and the house of Saul. In 2 Samuel 2-8 the narrative centres on David and the civil war which ended in the deaths of Abner and Ishbosheth.”

> Without a doubt this portion [of 2 Samuel 2-8] forms the crux of the book. Here the fertility motif reaches its peak. The thesis of the author–that Israel is blessed with fertility when the nation (and the epitome of the nation, the king) is following the covenant is demonstrated in these chapters. The king, the Ark (representing the presence of God and the Word of God, the covenant) and fertility are all intertwined in a beautifully artistic way.
>
> (Constable 1967:7)

In contrast to the time David spent in Philistia, he now seeks God’s direction as to where he should relocate. Judah is David’s tribal homeland and it is here that God sends him. 2 Samuel 2:1 points out that David’s victories are a result of his dependence on God. Conversely, 2 Samuel 2:2 points this out as his tragedy, that is, his relationships with women. For the second time David is anointed as king and the people of Judah acknowledge him as God’s anointed. However, the people of Jabesh-Gilead remained faithful to Saul throughout his lifetime and their loyalty to him continues even after his death.

David went to great lengths to show these people that the enmity that existed between Saul and himself was one sided. “We see in these verses how David sought peace and unity with those who had been loyal to Saul in Israel. First, he took the initiative in contacting them (2 Sm 5). Second, he paid them a sincere compliment (2 Sm 5). Third, he obliquely reminded them that he was now the Lord’s anointed (2 Sm 2:6). Finally, he offered a ‘treaty of friendship’” (Hillers 1964:46-47). Treaties were not automatically continued when a new

king came into power, therefore David has to actively try and reconcile with them. At this point David's main support comes from Judah. Abner, Saul's cousin, seeks to make Ishbosheth, Saul's youngest son the new king, in an attempt to secure Saul's dynasty. This attempt to crown Ishbosheth ignited conflict between the house of Saul and the house of David.

In this pericope the contrast between David and Abner is highlighted. Whereas David is seeking reconciliation, Abner is seeking power. Further, the narrator points to a conflict in priorities. Abner is concerned with succession to the throne and David is concerned with giving Saul a proper burial (2 Sm 2:5-6). Unfortunately, Abner's act fuels the tension that already existed between the north and south. Kallai (1978:257) observes, "The distinctive concepts of 'Judah and Israel' evolved during David's kingdom in Hebron and after a period of reunification these entities were allowed to live on in the United Monarchy, though without an official division."

2 Samuel 3:1 is a summary of 2 Samuel 1-18. The remaining verses emphasise David's rise in power. During this time David also acquires more wives. Commentators agree that David did so to strengthen his military and political alliances. Malamat (1963:17) confirms, "This was common in the ancient Near East." However, we will see later how this decision to have more than one wife contributes to the destruction of David's household.

During the war with Saul's descendants, Abner kills Ashel, Joab's brother. This causes bitter rivalry between Abner and Joab. David manages to reconcile with Abner (2 Sm 3:9-10, 21) but Joab does not know this and he takes revenge by murdering Abner (2 Sm 3:27). Gordon (1986:216-217) points out, "rarely in the Old Testament has a narrator gone to such lengths, as the writer of this passage, to preserve the good name of one of his characters. He assures us that neither David's heart nor his hand was set against Abner: Joab acted on his own account."

David's speech in the narrative declaring his innocence and cursing Joab and his family for his actions (2 Sm 3:28-29) is further evidence of him having nothing to do with the destruction of the Saulide dynasty. Deffinbaugh (s.a:s.p) notes "David's response to Joab's vengeance plays a crucial role in the healing of the nation. David publicly mourns Abner's death and strongly reprimands Joab for his actions. The Israelites recognised that none of this intrigue is of David's doing and that he does not approve of it (2 Sm 3:36)."

Shortly after these events, two of Ishbosheth's servants kill him and bring his head to David in Hebron. They seriously miscalculate David's response to their actions as David orders their execution for killing a member of the royal family. "He, who would not become king by taking Saul's life, would not reward those who took the life of his son. Finally, after seven and a half years of conflict, David becomes king of all Israel" (Deffinbaugh s.a:s.p).

Again the narrator draws attention to David's grief over another member of Saul's family (2 Sm 3:31–35). Such actions distance David from the demise of the Saulide dynasty and once again demonstrate that David's rise to power was that of God's doing. 2 Samuel 3:36–37 reads, "All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them. So on that day all the people and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner."

> The story of how David became king of all Israel follows, in most essentials, the same outline already established in the account of his accession to kingship of Judah (2 Sm 1:1–3:5). Both begin with a warrior trying to curry David's favor (an unnamed Amalekite (2 Sm 1:1-13); Saul's army commander Abner (2 Sm 3:6-21) and continue with the execution or murder of the warrior (2 Sm 1:14-16; 3:22-32), which is followed by a lament uttered by David (over Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sm 1:17-27; over Abner, 2 Sm 3:33-34). Near the centre of each literary unit is a brief report of the anointing of David as king (over Judah, (2 Sm 2:1-7); over Israel, 2 Sm 5:1-5). David and his men are then successful in defeating their enemies (2 Sm 2:8-3:1; 2 Sm 5:6-12) and each unit concludes with a list of the sons/children born to David (in Hebron, 2 Sm 3:2-5; in Jerusalem, 2 Sm 5:13-16). The similarities between the two sections point to the careful craftsmanship of a single author, who now sets about to tell his readers that just as the house of David had replaced Saul and his house in southern Canaan (2 Sm 1:1-3:5), so also David's house is about to replace that of Saul's in the rest of the land as well (2 Sm 3:6-5:16).
>
> (Youngblood 1992:832-833)

The narrator introduces the information in 2 Samuel 4:4 parenthetically to prepare the reader for what he says about Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9. Scripture records that Mephibosheth was only five years old when the news of Jonathan and Saul's death came (2 Sm 4:4). So he was clearly too young to rule as king and he was crippled, so he would not have been able to provide appropriate military leadership. Finally, however, David is established as the king and he displays loyalty, faith, justice, kindness and power as the one who is chosen by God.

2.3.1.4 David's reign (2 Sm 5-7)

> He (David) was the first man since Moses to unite the various Israelite tribes, spiritually as well as politically. He led them to victory over their enemies, but, what was more important; was that he renewed their faith in their covenant with God and taught them an all-important lesson; never to embark on any enterprise without first consulting God. His sense of devotion led him to take particular care of everything to do with the worship of God.
>
> (Viklund 2007:s.p)

David's management of his kingdom after ascending the throne is set against God's covenant with him. This covenant contains the promise of an everlasting throne and a son who will succeed him and build the temple (2 Sm 7:12, 13 and 16).

2.3.1.5 David unites the kingdom (2 Sm 5:1-25)

" After centuries of losing conflict, the Israelites finally defeat the Philistines unambiguously under the brilliant military leadership of David. His military campaign transformed the new Israelite kingdom into the Hebrew empire. David unites the tribes of Israel under an absolute monarchy" (Larue s.a:s.p).

As mentioned earlier David's ascension to the throne in Judah paralleled his ascension in Israel. In the same way the account of his powerful reign (2 Sm 5:16-8:18) parallels his court history (2 Sm 9-20). God blesses David through victory many times in battle. Keil & Delitzsch (1960:323, cf also Merrill 1986:237-238) agree, "the battle described in 2 Samuel 5:17-21 appears to be the one retold in 2 Samuel 23:13-17. It could have taken place between David's anointing as king over all Israel and his capture of Jerusalem or as Laney (1982:95) observes, "shortly after he had conquered Jerusalem."

Again, the presentation of David's successes is an attempt by the narrator to show that David's ascension to the throne is not at the expense of Saul's life, character or his kingship, it is a divine appointment in which God promises to preserve David's line. David's rise to national power shocks the Philistines into action. They are well aware of the history of his military exploits against their invasions of Israel and they are ready to annihilate David before he can expand his kingdom.

However, God honours David's request for a sovereign strategy (2 Sm 5:19) and victory follows for Israel. An important point to emphasise is how David acknowledges God's sovereign control over Israel, which stands in direct contrast to Saul's attitude towards God. David also sought God's direction for both these battles with the Philistines (1 Sm 5:19, 23). Through this victory,

David was able to clear the Philistines from the hills of Judah and Benjamin as well as establish Jerusalem as his capital.

> In the present context 2 Sm 5:17-25 depicts two encounters between David and the Philistines, which apparently brought to an end the Philistine domination of Palestine (see also 2 Samuel 8:1). In view of the book as a whole, it seems that the war with the Philistines was more prolonged, but the editor had chosen only these two select illustrations to sketch the main course of events. Perhaps, just as Israel had been defeated twice by the Philistines (1 Sm 4 and 31) so also the Philistines were twice routed by David (1 Sm 5:18, 22).
>
> (McCarter 1984:276)

2.3.1.6 David brings the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sm 6:1-23)

Chapter 6 not only records David's capture of Jerusalem but also reveals David's viewpoint on God. Historical records show that Jerusalem was a fortified Canaanite city in the middle of the territory occupied by Israel. Although Jerusalem had been conquered previously, Israel had failed to eradicate the inhabitants or sufficiently populate it themselves (Js 15:8; Jdg 1:8; 19:11) thereby allowing it to become a Canaanite stronghold (2 Sm 5:6).

" The capture of Jerusalem provided an ideal place for David to rule both northern and southern tribes as opposed to Hebron in the south. The bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem was also advantageous in preserving the old traditions and helped to ensure tribal loyalties" (Gordon 1986:230). Historically, the Ark had been involved with Israel in the wilderness and finding places to *rest* (Nm 10:33; Dt 1:32-33). "Therefore, the movement of the Ark into Jerusalem would have seemed to indicate a new stage of *rest* for Israel (2 Sm 6:12-15)" (Viklund 2007:s.p).

It was a momentous moment for Israel when the Ark is finally brought back to Jerusalem (2 Sm 6). The Ark was a symbol of the presence of God. There are specifications according to the Mosaic Law that deal with issues of the Ark. David's first attempt at brining the Ark to Jerusalem fails because he does not observe these customary practices. The Law specifies that the Priests are to carry the Ark on poles, not in a cart (Ex 25:14; Nm 4:1-15).

Furthermore, no one is meant to touch it (Nm 4:19-20). Baldwin (1988:232) asserts, "he who had experienced wonderful protection over the years from the Lord his God and had known unusual intimacy with him, had come to terms with the fact that he had overstepped the mark and presumed upon the relationship by failing to observe the regulations laid down to safeguard respect for God's holiness." This disobedience led to the death of Uzzah (2 Sm 6:7).

In his second attempt David wears a Priestly garment as he praised the Lord. Questions have been raised as to why David is not punished for this act because this garment is reserved for Priests. In a sense, it's the same nature of sin that Saul committed when he made the sacrifice on behalf of Samuel. "The white ephod was, strictly speaking, a Priestly costume, although in the Law it is not prescribed as the dress to be worn by them when performing their official duties, but rather as the dress which denoted the Priestly character of the wearer; and for this reason it was worn by David in connection with these festivities in honor of the Lord, as the head of the Priestly nation of Israel" Keil & Delitzsch (1960:336).

" The bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem was an event of major theological significance. David wanted to make the Jebusite city not only the center of his rule but also the center of worship of the Lord. By bringing the Ark to his new Jebusite capital, David was attempting to bind the tribes and the central government more firmly" (Heater 1991:126). The people responded enthusiastically, but Michal, interpreted David's actions as inappropriate. Perhaps she felt he should behave in a more dignified manner, but for David the honour of God was far more important than his own dignity. Due to her attitude, Michal suffered barrenness and this is a further example of how God destroys the Saulide lineage. Even his daughter is unable to conceive and provide an heir to David's throne.

Carlson (1964:93) comments, "It may be that God shut Michal's womb as a judgment on her for her attitude." However, Young (1962:296) believes that it was "in view of the record of antagonism that precedes verse 23, 'David had no more intimate relations with her.'" This is probable as we know that David had many wives by this time as well as concubines. He didn't need Michal to satisfy his sexual needs. If this interpretation of David's character is correct, then, this points to David's failure with regard to his household.

2.3.1.7 God's covenant with the house of David (2 Sm 7:1-29)

Following the return of the Ark is the messianic promise given in 2 Samuel 7:12 that an eternal throne will be given to one of David's lineage. In response to David's obedience and heart to honour God (2 Sm 6), God makes a covenant with him promising that his lineage will continue to rule Israel (2 Sm 7). David's reign will be forever established.

Constable (1967:26) points out, "This chapter along with 1 Samuel 7 and 12 is one of the most important in 1 and 2 Samuel theologically." Gordon (1986:253) adds, "2 Samuel 7 is rightly regarded as an 'ideological summit,' not only in the 'Deuteronomic History,' but also in the Old Testament as a

whole." The Davidic Covenant receives more attention than any other covenant except the Mosaic Covenant" (Levenson 1979:205-206).

Baldwin (1988:236) concludes, "This chapter was to become the source of the messianic hope as it developed in the message of the Prophets and Psalmists." The Israelites had anticipated entering into the Promised Land since their wandering in the wilderness (Dt 12:9) and they had enjoyed a measure of rest with Joshua (Js 21:44; 22:4; 23:1), however, David's victories over their enemies had brought a greater measure of rest than they had experienced throughout their history so far. In essence as Roth (1976:8) explains, "David completed what Joshua had begun, that is, taking possession of Canaan. It is the completion of Joshua's work which is reflected in 2 Samuel 7:1-11. Now David plans to build a temple as the sequel of the LORD having granted him rest from his enemies." Merrill (1986:274) cf also Oppenheim 1964:95) agree "In the ancient Near East the people did not consider a king's sovereignty fully established until he had built himself an appropriate palace."

de Vaux (1997:282-283) comments, "David thought it inappropriate for him as second in command to live in such a magnificent palace while His commander-in-chief's dwelling was only a temporary, much less impressive structure." While David's desire was to honour God, he is not permitted to build the temple. God's desire for David is to be a king not a temple builder. Youngblood (1992:887) points out the irony in verse six, "although God condescends to accompany His people on their journey with a tent as His dwelling (2 Sm 7:6), a tent carried by them (Israel), while all along they have, in fact, been carried by Him (2 Sm 7:6)."

> The promise of a 'great name' is reminiscent of God's covenant with Abraham (Gn 12:2) and suggests (though the word 'covenant' nowhere appears in these verses), that the Davidic kingship is being incorporated into the Abrahamic Covenant. This is reinforced by the reference to God's people Israel dwelling in their own place, undisturbed by enemies (2 Sm 7:10), a reference to Genesis 15:18-21 and Deuteronomy 11:24. Moreover, the covenant word 'hesed', God's 'steadfast love' (2 Sm 7:15), ensures the fulfilment of the promises, which are here, unconditional, though the need for chastisement is foreseen.
>
> (Baldwin 1988:36)

It was God's desire that David will have an heir from whom the kingdom will be established. This son will build the temple David wants to construct (2 Sm 7:13). "His right to rule, symbolized by the throne, would remain forever" (Constable 1967:29). "The Davidic Covenant is the centrepiece of Samuel and Kings. David, as a type of the ideal king (both in position and in practice), appears 'between the lines,' in 1 Sm 1-15, and dominates the lines in 1 Sm 16-31. Seeing the centrality of the Davidic Covenant enables the reader to pick up the argument of 1 Samuel and to see how it moves inexorably toward 2 Samuel 7" (Heater 1991:114-115).

In response to this, David offers a heartfelt prayer to God. He reveals a humble attitude towards God and his dealings with Him. Ten times in his prayer, David refers to himself as, 'Yahweh's servant.' Eight times he calls God his Master (Hebrew: *Adonia*). "David saw his own role in the larger context of God's purpose for Israel" (Constable 1967:34). The narrator emphasises through this that David stands in contrast once again to Saul.

> Thus it came about that David gave up his intentions of building the Temple. Though he was king of Israel, he accepted that he had to defer to a higher authority, that of the God of Israel, to whom he owed his calling through the Prophet Samuel, his preservation in mortal danger at the hand of Saul and his ascension to the throne by common consent of the people. Recognition on the part of the king that he owed the throne of his kingdom to the Sovereign Lord God involved humble acceptance of the role of servant. David was far from perfect, as the subsequent narrative is to demonstrate, but he had grasped this all-important truth about himself and it was because he valued so highly his call to serve the Lord God that he was sensitive to rebuke and repented when he stepped out of line. For this reason, he knew forgiveness and restoration of fellowship, both of which had eluded Saul because he could never bring himself to take his hands off the reins of government, or readily admit to being in the wrong. Saul by clinging tenaciously to what he regarded as his kingly prerogative, lost the kingdom; David more concerned about honouring the Lord than guarding his own reputation, had his kingdom made sure forever.
>
> (Baldwin 1988:218-219)

2.3.1.8 David's victory over the enemies of God (2 Sm 8-10)

(i) David defeats Moab, Philistia, Zobah and Syria (2 Sm 8:1-18)

"From the religious heights of chapter 7 we descend again to the everyday world of battles and bloodshed in chapter 8. The military action picks up where the story left off at the end of chapter 5" (Payne 1982:193). This section leaves no doubt about the invincibility of David's army.

> Recapitulating David's military victories during his years as king over Israel and Judah in Jerusalem, 2 Sm 1-14 parallel the account of the defeat of the Philistines (2 Sm 5:17-25) in the overall structure of the narrative of David's reign (2 Sm 5:17-8:18). The summary may not be intended as all–inclusive, since other wars and skirmishes are mentioned later in the book (Chapters 10; 21:15-22; 23:8-23). 2 Samuel 8:15-18 constitutes a summary of David's administration and concludes this section of Samuel that records the major important features of David's reign. God had established His kingdom through the consolidation of the tribes. He made Jerusalem David's new capital and he subdued the enemies of Israel, returned the Ark and made His covenant with David. The author of the book may have recorded David's military successes in chapter 8 because; the formal record of a king's accomplishments normally ended this way in the official records of the ancient Near Eastern monarchs.
>
> (Constable 1967:36)

(ii) David and Mephibosheth (2 Sm 9:1-13)

Constable (1967:39) infers, "David's kindness to Mephibosheth (chapter 9) helps to explain David's subsequent acceptance by the Benjamites. It also enables us to see that the writer returns here to events in David's earlier reign." Swindoll (1997:169) exclaims, "It is the greatest illustration of grace in all the Old Testament." In these verses David's kindness to Jonathan (Hebrew: *hesed*, *loyal love*, verses 1, 3, 7), is expressed in the kindness he shows to Jonathan's son.

It reveals to the reader that at the beginning of David's reign he is a covenant keeping king (1 Sm 20:14-17, 42). It is clearly one of David's strengths. His goodness to Mephibosheth is pure and merciful. It is a further expression of his love for Jonathan and his respect for Saul. Even now, having the power to avenge himself for being forced to be a fugitive by Saul, David, decides to show grace, which is a quality very befitting of a king.

(iii) David defeats the Ammonite-Syrian alliance (2 Sm 10:1-19)

The material in 2 Samuel 10-20 as a whole contrasts with that of 2 Samuel 2-8, in that the latter section of the narrative focuses the reader's attention on

the negative aspects of David's reign whereas in the first section the focus lay in the positive aspects. 2 Samuel 10-20 show the effects of being disobedient before God. Scholars often refer to 2 Samuel 10-20 as the 'Succession Narratives,' the reason behind the title is that these chapters record the history of Israel and its most famous king, leading up to the heir that would replace him. Other scholars like Vanderkam (1980:522) prefer to call it 'Court History,' since they believe it to deal with issues broader than just Solomon's succession. Merrill (1986:357), with regard to 2 Samuel 10-20, adds, "Virtually all scholars agree that this is one of the finest examples of history writing from the ancient Near East world. It is at the same time a masterpiece of biography and storytelling what with its ingenious interweaving of plots and subplots, its brilliant character sketches and its attention to artistic touches such as climax and denouement."

" 2 Samuel 10-12 form a sub-section within the Court History portion of 2 Samuel" (Youngblood 1992:920). "The phrase, 'Now it happened' or 'Now it was' (2 Sm 10:1; 13:1), always opens a new section" (Roth 1977:4). The descriptions of Israel's victories over the Ammonites (2 Sm 10:1-11:1; 12:26-31) frame the story of David and Bathsheba. Further, this section prepares us for David's sin with Bathsheba, by providing the historical context in which this sin takes place. Constable (1967:40) asserts, "it also shows that its David's growing power that leads to his sinning."

In chapter 10 we read Nahash, the Ammonite king has died and David sends his soldiers to convey his condolences. However, the Ammonites do not respond as David expects them to react. "When David's men came to the land of the Ammonites, the Ammonite nobles said to Hanun their lord, do you think David is honouring your father by sending men to express sympathy? Hasn't David sent them to explore the city and spy it out and overthrow it? So Hanun seized David's men, shaved off half of each of their beards, cut off their garment in the middle at their buttocks and sent them away" (2 Sm 10:2-6).

These actions begin a battle between the Ammonites and Israel. "There is no record that David had consulted God for directions with regard to this battle. Anderson (1989:149) comments, "one may note that there is at least no explicit consultation with Yahweh, such as described in 2 Sm 2:1 and 2 Sm 5:19, 23." However, in this section Joab's spirituality stands in contrast to David's. It reminds the reader of Jonathan's actions in 1 Samuel 14. Joab expresses the same kind of faith that the crown prince had expressed earlier in the narrative.

A further contrast to 1 Samuel 14 is that David is not the one leading the army, Joab is, in the same way that Jonathan went out instead of Saul. However, in this case, David, later does go out and leads his men in battle (2 Sm 10:17).

The narrator may have included this detail, to point to the events which will follow in 2 Samuel 11, where David is said to be in Jerusalem while his men are at war. Nevertheless, the Ammonites request help from the Arameans who gather together to help them. David's army route them out and from this time the Ammonites are subdued by Israel and the Arameans are afraid to help the Ammonites again.

2.3.1.9 David and Bathsheba: An interlude as a note of intrigue (2 Sm 11-12)

(i) David commits adultery and murder (2 Sm 11:1–12:23)

Heater (1991:144) believes, "the Bathsheba interlude occurs in 2 Samuel 11-12 primarily to indicate the birth and choice of Solomon, but much is learned about God's covenant dealing with His king." Another important aspect of this textual unit (2 Sm 11) is that it marks the beginning of David's decline.

> The crumbling of the empire in these chapters is far from anticlimactic. It is an outworking of the fertility principle which the author has been presenting throughout the entire book. Even David, the successful king, is not above this principle. When he disobeyed the covenant he was judged and since he was the king the whole nation was judged with him. Sexual sin (related to the fertility motif) was the cause of David's downfall and his sin was followed by sexual sins in his family.
>
> (Martin 1984:39)

The account of David and Bathsheba marks a low point in David's moral life. The narrator informs the reader that the time is spring. During this time it is customary for kings to go to war, although this time David remains in Jerusalem (2 Sm 11:1). The narrator may have mentioned this to imply that by remaining in Jerusalem, David is acting irresponsibly. "Leading his troops into battle was expected to be the major external activity for an ancient Near Eastern ruler" (Youngblood 1992:928).

> This is a variation on David's activities during war. Previously, David had to 'talk his way,' into a battle (1 Sm 17:32-37). The text also gives the impression that he was present on the battlefield during his rise to power, the taking of Jerusalem and expansion of his empire (1 Sm 27:8; 30; 2 Sm 5:17-25; 8:1-14). Later in David's reign, the text makes it explicit that David was present on the battlefield only to have his men refuse to have his company on future campaigns (2 Sm 21:15, 17). On this occasion, David had been fighting against the Ammonites with Joab as his proxy, while he remained in Jerusalem (2 Sm 10:7). Only when the situation deteriorated for Israel did David join the battle (2 Sm 10:17).
>
> (Deffinbaugh s.a:s.p)

David's actions concerning Bathsheba follow a pattern seen in Scripture, he sees, he desires and he takes (Gn 3:6; Jm 1:14-15). David not only sees but he continues to see and so his lust grows. Perhaps Bathsheba is not entirely innocent in this incident. However, David takes Bathsheba and abuses his royal power in doing so. Gordon (1986:252) discerns, "a degree of complicity on Bathsheba's part, on the surface, the text presents Bathsheba as entirely passive as others act upon her. In the entire story she does not speak – she has no voice throughout." 2 Samuel 11:5 records her message to David of her pregnancy possibly through a servant.

Firth (2006:43) goes on to say, "the text does not say that her bathing was immodest, nor does it suggest whether she had a choice in the matters related. On the contrary, it is David, (not Bathsheba,) who is presented as the taker in chapters 11-12. Indeed, the narrator goes out of his way to make the contrast." The reader is given no indication of Bathsheba's compliance or lack thereof in the adulterous act. "The narrator purposefully allows Bathsheba's role to remain ambiguous, providing a striking contrast to the unambiguous behaviour of David" (Firth 2006:43).

Hence Gordon (1986:253) concludes that the author's point is that of "David's abuse of power when he sleeps with Bathsheba." Clearly, she is not pregnant at the time since she is bathing to become ritualistically clean (2 Sm 11:4) and Uriah, her husband, is at war. So it is as a result of sleeping with David that Bathsheba falls pregnant (2 Sm 11:5). "David compounds his sin by trying to cover it up rather than confessing it. He tries three times to cover it up: a 'clean' one (2 Sm 11:6-11), a 'dirty' one (2 Sm 11:12-13) and a 'criminal' one (2 Sm 11:14-17)" (Vogels 1975:246). The narrator, in the characters of David and Uriah, shows a strong contrast. David, who has realised his wrongdoing, seeks to cover up the scandal by encouraging Uriah to sleep with his wife (2 Sm 11:6-8). Uriah's character in the narrative is interesting as he seems to personify what David's conscience should have been.

David clearly underestimated Uriah's commitment to him, even though he is a Hittite; his actions show him as a dedicated warrior and a godly man. Unfortunately, for Uriah, David's initial cover up fails since Uriah refuses to sleep with Bathsheba. He explains, "The Ark, Israel and Judah are staying in tents and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields" (2 Sm 11:11). The narrator points out that the noble concerns that David had previously maintained and acted upon (2 Sm 7:2; 8) have now been abandoned for lust, while Uriah, (2 Sm 11:3, 6, 17, and 24) maintains these noble concerns.

> Astonishingly, this Hittite mentions the covenant symbol before everything else that has influenced his behaviour. He is aware also of

> his solidarity with the fighting men at the front, over whom he will not steal an advantage. Both of these considerations applied even more forcibly to the king, who had final responsibility for the war and laid much stress on covenant loyalty himself, but now a foreigner is showing him to be despicably lax.
>
> (Baldwin 1988: 233)

David's next plan was to get Uriah drunk in hope that he would sleep with Bathsheba and in doing so he will cover his sin. Again, David underestimates him. Gordon (1986:253-254) comments, "the despicableness of the king's behaviour contrasts with the noble figure of the wronged Uriah, several times referred to as a Hittite (2 Sm 11:3, 6, 17, 24), as if to emphasize that whereas the king of Israel was so obviously lacking in principle, the same could not be said of this foreigner."

David's brazen rebellion against God is revealed when he plots to have Uriah killed in battle. He sends a letter with Uriah, the contents of which is an order to have Uriah killed. David's cunning intention in the death of Uriah is to make it look like he died in battle, while David in his alleged pity marries Uriah's wife who is carrying his child to avoid the appearance of an adulterous relationship. "It is ironic that David, the protector of justice, would so pervert justice in the Uriah-Bathsheba incident" (Heater 1991:120).

Commentators harshly note that there is no expression of remorse on David's part as recorded in relation to other deaths, nor any attempt by the narrator to distance David from the events or justify his actions. This is another attempt by the narrator to display aspects of David's complex character. "It is these adulterous and murderous tendencies that David passed on to his sons who would later threaten his kingdom (2 Sm 13). In short, "David's kingdom did not prevail on account of his morality" (Deffinbaugh s.a:s.p), but rather because of God's faithfulness.

The account of David and Bathsheba is immediately followed up by the Prophet Nathan (2 Sm 12). Nathan's parable appeals to David's compassion as a shepherd. David's punishment for his sin should have been death (Lv 20:10). He hypocritically orders that the man in Nathan's story make right with God by appealing to the Mosaic Law (Ex 22:1), which he himself has just disregarded. Nathan's revelation in the words, "you are the man" (2 Sm 12:7) is one of the most dramatic sentences in the Bible. Nathan is exercising authority over David, which is the case with the monarchy in Israel, as seen with Samuel and Saul. David abuses the greatest blessing given to him. He shows an utter disregard for God in his actions.

> David's punishment would be twofold: (1) his own fertility (children) would be a source of his discipline and (2) God would remove the

> sources of his fertility (children) from him (2 Sm 12:11). The executions of these sentences follow in the text (2 Sm 13:11-14, 38-39; 16:22; 18:15). For this reason verses 9 and 10 of the twelfth chapter have been called the literary, historical and theological crux and centre of 2 Samuel as a whole.
>
> (Youngblood 1992:944)

David's bitter harvest starts with Bathsheba's newborn child. The innocent baby dies for the sins of its parents and a threefold prophecy unfolds as the Prophet Nathan reveals God's judgment. David despises God's commands by murdering and committing adultery and as a result he is told, "The sword shall never depart from your house because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own" (2 Samuel 12:10). "This is what the Lord says, out of my own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight before all Israel"' (2 Sm 12:11-13). David will pay the price in the unfolding of his inability as a father to lovingly guide a polygamous household.

However, David's confession that follows is genuine. God's response to David is that his sin is forgiven, but he has to live with the consequences of his lust. "This was a turning point in the life of David and the clearest indication that he was different from Saul in the most essential relationship of all, that of submission to the Lord God. For that reason he found forgiveness, whereas Saul never accepted his guilt or the rejection that followed it" (Baldwin 1988:239).

(ii) The birth of Solomon (2 Sm 12:24-25)

" Chapters 10-12 contain important revelations that help us understand the complexity of God's righteousness" (Constable 1967:51). While David's sin is not completely wiped away, God still blesses him. David and Bathsheba go on to have four sons. Solomon, while not the oldest is chosen to be the next king to follow David. Solomon, whose name means *peace* symbolises God's blessing on David. It is David's heart attitude that allows him to be the constant receiver of God's blessing. Again, in this way he is different from Saul.

2.3.1.10 David's decline (2 Sm 12-19)

The broader literary context demarcated by Ackroyd (1977:383) covers 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2. The 'Succession Narratives' or 'Court History,' contains information about the struggle for power in David's court. 2 Samuel 9-24 describes the gradual deterioration and decline of David's rule. After David's rise to power (1 Sm 16:14-2; 2 Sm 5:10), MaCarter (1984:356, cf also Deist 1982:84) agree, "The narrative cycle describes some of the events that

mark the political turmoil that erupted in David's lifetime." This is the longest literary unit in the Court History of David. It begins with a record of David's decline and ends with David defeating his enemies and returning to the throne.

While David enjoyed success on the military and social front, his personal life and relationships leave little to be desired. There must have been times as a father that David rejoiced in a newborn son or daughter. "As a father who had at least eight wives plus more and some twenty children plus other sons, he could not, as one man, emotionally supply what they all independently needed" (Marshall 2008:s.p).

(i) Rape of Tamar and death of Amnon (2 Sm 13:1-39)

Sadly, culture plays its hand with David who, following Saul's precedent, took on the tragic chain of events leading to the breakup of his family. In almost every other circumstance, except those that dealt with his children, David is portrayed as "cunning and ruthless" (Bosman & Loader 1987:141).

Unfortunately, each generation seems bent on having to learn for themselves. "The royal harem, with its palace intrigues, could only produce an unequal love from a father" (Marshall 2008:s.p). Busy with expanding the kingdom, David may have had little time for children and regrettably, David's inner character did not rub off on them. Bosman & Loader (1987:143) observe that David is "described as unable to act decisively in curbing the excesses of his children, who threaten his rule more effectively than any external enemy." Events come to a head when his eldest son Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar (2 Sm 13).

> The dialogue in the story of Amnon and Tamar looks like a conscious allusion to the technique used in the episode of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. Amnon addresses his half sister with exactly the same words with which Potiphar's wife accosts Joseph "Come to bed with me!" Gn 39:7, adding to them only one word, the thematically loaded 'sister' (2 Sm 13:11). She responds with an elaborate protestation, like Joseph before her.
>
> (Alter 1981:73)

Amnon's attraction quite clearly is lustful. After he rapes Tamar he wants nothing to do with her. Her brother, Absalom, is outraged and his hatred toward Amnon turns into a burning desire for revenge on behalf of his sister. If at this point David had punished Amnon, the royal family might not have split so disastrously. Sadly, David, though *very angry* with Amnon (2 Sm 13:21) did nothing. David's reasons for taking no action is unknown, perhaps he was reluctant to do so as Amnon was his eldest son and therefore the crown

prince. David may have also felt a certain amount of guilt punishing his son when he himself was guilty of a similar sin.

> The results of David's sin with Bathsheba became evident in his relations with his sons, for how can a father discipline his children when he knows that he has done worse than they? When David's son Amnon rapes Tamar, David is very angry (2 Sm 13:21) and yet he takes no action, for he, too, has committed his own sexual offense. The upshot is that Tamar's brother, Absalom, murders Amnon (2 Sm 13:29), but David again does nothing, for he too, has a murder on his head.
>
> (Achtemeier & Achtemeier 1979:94)

After he has Amnon murdered, Absalom flees to his grandfather, the King of Geshur and remains in exile. In killing Amnon the throne will now be his for the taking as the second eldest. However, in becoming a fugitive, Baldwin (1988:105) points out, "he forfeits his succession to the throne."

(ii) Rebellion of Absalom (2 Sm 14:1–19:43)

This section records Absalom's rebellion against his father, which results in David fleeing Jerusalem, once again being driven from his home. This rebellion reveals the decay that exists in David's household. Similar to that which existed in Eli's household in 1 Samuel. "The impression is left that David lacked the ability to handle his children. Two palace revolts mark his rule, as Absalom and Adonijah vied to replace their aging father" (Bosman & Loader 1987:141).

Joab, David's commander–in–chief plots to get Absalom back to Jerusalem and his sin pardoned. His reasons may have been political in nature. By custom, even though he commits murder, Absalom is David's successor to the throne. David has a large amount of love for Absalom, perhaps he saw the same raw and rugged man that he himself is in Absalom.

It is also possible that Joab recognises Absalom's right of succession and realises he needs to be located in Jerusalem rather than left in exile. Absalom, however, has murdered and David may not have considered him an appropriate successor for his throne (2 Sm 14:24). Though, Solomon is the one sworn to succeed David (1 Ki 1:13), there is no account of such a promise in 1 or 2 Samuel. Only the general promise that God will rise up David's offspring to succeed him (2 Sm 7:12).

In the end, Joab's plan succeeds and Absalom returns to Jerusalem. While he is allowed to return to the palace, he does not enjoy fellowship with his father as he did before (2 Sm 14:24). Upon Absalom's return to Jerusalem, the narrator informs the reader that Absalom is highly praised for his handsome features which brought him attention and popularity (2 Sm 14:25). 2 Samuel 14:25-27 helps the reader understand why he is so popular with the people.

Keil & Delitzsch (1960:411) point out, “a strong growth of hair is a sign of great manly power.” Further, Youngblood (1992:985) adds, “what Absalom considers his finest attribute will prove to be the vehicle of his ultimate downfall (2 Sm 18:9-15).

The narrator’s presentation of Absalom contrasts with that of Saul’s appearance in 1 Samuel 9. The only other person to be distinguished from all of Israel because of their appearance in their presentation is Saul (1 Sm 10:23). This contrast in description serves to point out the narrator’s anticipation of the upcoming actions of Absalom. Like Saul, while he may have been physically attractive he lacked the spiritual attractiveness that was crucial.

After a few years of dwelling in Jerusalem, outside the royal court, he forces his way back into the court by providing David with an ultimatum via Joab (2 Sm 14:32). It seems that David’s decision not to restore him to the royal court plagues Absalom and he eventually presses David for a personal reconciliation. Finally, David concedes and while there is no recorded conversation between David and Absalom, it is apparent that David restores him fully with a kiss (2 Sm 14:33). “David’s actions in this chapter placed Absalom in a position where he was able to openly pursue his kingly aspirations. This is indicated by his acquisitions of a chariot, horses and men (2 Sm 15:1). He then sets about a propaganda campaign exploiting David’s poor administration of justice, whether alleged or actual, for the next four years (2 Sm 15:2-6)” McDonald (s.a:s.p).

David appears unaware or unable to prevent his son’s ambition that leads to a successful palace coup against him. Here a much-loved son would not return that love to his father. We see here, “two sub-sections which both begin with a reference to time (2 Sm 15:1, 7) and form a literary ‘diptych’ (i.e., two complementary panels)” Fokkelman (1981:165). The first six verses explain how Absalom undermines his father’s authority and this lasts for four years. The final six verses relate to his preparation and execution of the revolt against David.

> Whatever the reason, he exhibited the same patient scheming and relentless determination which he had already shown when he set out to avenge the rape of his sister (chapter 13); the leopard had not changed his spots. His hatred for Amnon at least had some excuse, but now it had become clear that he had no affection for his father either. Apart from his love for his sister Tamar, he appeared to have been a cold, ruthless and above all ambitious man.
>
> (Payne 1982:227)

With the support of some people, Absalom was able to claim kingship in Hebron including support from key personalities in David's court (2 Sm 15:10-12). McDonald (s.a:s.p) asserts, "Such a political move forced David to flee Jerusalem for the sake of his court. Such a disaster needs to be seen as a result of poor management and unwillingness to administer justice on David's part."

However, David's complete submission to God in this section is admirable (2 Sm 15:22). "The phrase 'the fords of the wilderness' (2 Sm 15:28), probably refers to the place people forded the Jordan River near the wilderness of Judah" (Constable 1967:59). During the climb up the Mount of Olives, David stops for a time of mourning (2 Sm 15:30), weeping as he prays (2 Sm 15:31).Youngblood (1992:997) adds, "walking barefoot (2 Sm 15:30) symbolized 'the shameful exile on which he is now embarking.'"

Earlier David won the hearts of the people because of his heart for God, which found expression in his kindness to people (with the exception of Uriah). This made people love David. This theme of loyalty is what dominates chapter fifteen. His servants demonstrate loyalty in doing whatever David asks them to do (2 Sm 15:15-18).

Zadok and Abiathar become the king's informants (2 Sm 15:24-29). Hushai is willing to risk his own life to defend David. "Meanwhile David shows a commendable attitude very much in contrast to Absalom's arrogance. He is completely willing to submit to God's will (2 Sm 15:25), whatever that might prove to be. Such willingness to surrender leadership at the right time is another hallmark of good leadership" (Payne 1982:232).

In chapter 16 David encounters Ziba (2 Sm 16:1-4), this is the first of two men David meets that link him to the house of Saul, the other man is Shimei (2 Sm 16:5-14). "Although Ziba tries to ingratiate himself, Shimei curses him but David treats each of them with courtesy. The brief account of the king's kindness to Ziba (2 Sm 16:1-4) has obvious connections with the narrative of his kindness to Mephibosheth (2 Sm 9)" (Youngblood 1992:998-999). Ziba's report of Mephibosheth's reaction to the news that Absalom has rebelled seems to have been untrue and Shimei's attitude toward David is insulting and defiant.

The focus of this pericope is Abishai's desire for Shimei's execution. This parallels 1 Samuel 26; where the differences in David and Abishai's attitudes are seen. David shows some growth in this pericope when he acts in a way that pleases God. Unlike with Nabal, David controlled his temper and responds in kindness.

2 Samuel 16:15-17:29 is the central unit of 2 Samuel 5-20. The focus of this pericope is the advice given to the king by Hushai and Ahithophel. Hushai is

loyal to David. As Baldwin (1988:264) points out, “Hushai has kept his integrity, Absalom has been blinded by his own egoism and the reader is permitted to see one example of the outworking of God’s providence.”

Though David has lost power, Malick (1979:20) asserts that there are two elements in these narratives that work together to restore David to the throne. Firstly, the actions of Hushai serve to give David more time to make preparations for war (2 Sm 17:7-13). Hushai is effectively planted by David as a spy in Absalom’s court to frustrate the plans of Ahithophel (2 Sm 15:33).

Secondly, David had the support of key people who are able to ensure his success. An unnamed owner of a well is prepared to conceal David’s two informers after they have been discovered by a young man who in turn informs Absalom (2 Sm 17:17-19) of their presence there.

“In the ancient Near East people regarded the public appropriation of king’s concubines as an act that signaled the transfer of power to his successor” (de Vaux 1961:116). In this section Absalom breaks the Mosaic Law again (Lv 18:7-8) to gain power. By following Ahithophel’s advice, Absalom brought about one of the judgments God predicted would come on David’s house for his sin (2 Sm 12:11-12).

In 2 Samuel 17:9 Hushai warns that if only a small group of Absalom’s men pursue David and if David were to defeat them, then news of David’s victory will spread and the people will then side with David.

> In the overall structure of 2 Samuel 15:1-20:22, the story of Absalom’s death (2 Sm 18:1-18) provides a counterpoise to that of Shimei’s curse (2 Sm 16:5-14) and just as in the earlier narrative an adversary of David (Shimei) curses him (2 Sm 16:5, 7-8, 13), so also here an adversary of David (Absalom) opposes him in battle (2 Sm 6-8); just as in the earlier account David demands that Shimei be spared (2 Sm 16:11), so also here David demands that Absalom be spared (2 Sm 16:5,12); and just as in the earlier episode a son of Zeruiah (Abishai) is ready to kill Shimei (2 Sm 16:9), so here also a son of Zeruiah (Joab verse 2) is ready to kill Absalom–and indeed wounds him, perhaps mortally.
>
> (Youngblood 1992:1017)

“When David gives orders before engaging Absalom’s rebel army he says, ‘Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom’ (2 Sm 18:5)” (Marshall 2008:s.p). However, David’s commanders know a rebellion cannot be successfully crushed if its leader isn’t executed. “Loyalty to the nation meant killing the enemy” (Dickson 2006:67).

> The truth was that David acted as a father but not as a king–as if he and Absalom had had some minor domestic quarrel which could be put

> right by an apology and a handshake. He failed to see Absalom as a traitor and a rebel, whose actions had caused a great deal of harm to the stability and welfare of the kingdom, to say nothing of the great loss of life in civil war (verse 7). Yet every parent will feel a good deal of sympathy with David's viewpoint.
>
> (Payne 1982:245)

2 Samuel 18:9-18 records the death of Absalom. The text says that Absalom's head gets caught in an overhanging oak branch (2 Sm 18:9). In 2 Samuel 14:26 the soldier who found Absalom obeys David's request to spare his life. However, Joab arrives and mortally wounds Absalom. Just as David did not take the removal of Saul into his own hands (1 Sm 26:10), David now refuses to end his son's life (2 Sm 18:5, 12), though probably more out of fatherly compassion than reverence. Absalom is removed from power not by the direct intervention of David, rather by a freak accident of getting his hair caught in a tree while riding his mule and Joab and his men disregard David's earlier command and end Absalom's life (2 Sm 18:9-10).

Again, the author distances David from the death of his rivals and demonstrates that David's enthronement is due to divine election and not human initiative. Absalom's attempt at dethroning David, God's anointed, proves again that disobedience to God's covenant results in lack of blessing in Israel. Absalom fails to receive any blessing. He lives as Hophni, Phinehas and Saul had and his end came like theirs did too.

David enters the scene once again and on learning of the death of Absalom, he utters a heartbroken cry of grief, perhaps mixed with self-reproach for his tragic inability to influence Absalom as a father. He is fully human in his anguished cry for his son. "O my son Absalom - if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!" (2 Sm 18:33). This symbolic action of David is important as it points to his questionable priorities in this scene. His concern is with his dead son rather than with the nation. Dickson (2006:70) observes, "David's preoccupation with his mourning showed a total disregard for his people and their needs. He treated his soldiers and the people in the words of Joab "as nothing to you" (2 Sm 19:6). In contrast to the indecisive, sentimental David, there is Joab, who acts and acts decisively."

2.3.1.11 David returns to throne (2 Sm 20–21)

" In the overall structure of chapters 15-20 (more precisely 15:1-20:22), the literary unit describing the return of 'King David' (2 Sm 19:11) to Jerusalem (2 Sm 19:9-43) parallels that depicting his flight (2 Sm 15:13-37) caused by Absalom's rebellion" (Anderson 1989:228). Dickson (2006:71) explains, "we encounter in these verses the rehabilitation and restoration of a leader; the anti-leader becomes leader again, which becomes a moment of grace." In a

sense David is forced to put aside his feelings for his lost son and take up his proper role as commander and leader of the people.

David now back on the throne of Israel, pardons the Judeans, who were supporting Absalom and he forgives the Benjamites who felt that his downfall would have been punishment for taking Saul's place on the throne (2 Sm 19:16-30). In this section we also made brief mention of Shimei who "actively opposed David, Ziba had misled him and Mephibosheth had not supported him. By forging all these Benjamites, David again secured the support of this difficult tribe" (Constable 1967:67).

(i) Rebellion and death of Sheba (2 Sm 20:1-14)

"The account of Sheba's rebellion against David serves as a counterpoise to the story of Absalom's conspiracy (2 Sm 15:1-12) in chapters 15-20, which constitute the major part of the narrative that comprises chapters 13-20 (more precisely, 2 Sm 13:1-20:22)" (Youngblood 1992:1042). Sheba is a Benjamite who still refuses to follow David and who seeks to split the kingdom. He sounds his rebel call in Gilgal and starts to gather supporters.

The story of Sheba is interrupted with the account of David's dealing with his concubines. On arrival back in Jerusalem David takes his ten concubines and places them in a house under guard and has no sexual relations with them again. They remain widows until their deaths. David behaves in harmony with the Mosaic Law in his actions. The Law forbade woman who had sexual relations with another man to return to their first husband (Dt 24:1-4) and they were henceforth treated as widows.

The narrator then moves on to tell the reader about Amasa, whom David has chosen to be the commander of his army, replacing Joab, possibly because Joab had killed Absalom. Unfortunately, Amasa acts too slowly and David then makes Abishai his commander-in-chief. The focus of the narrative is brought back to Sheba in verse six, "David said to Abishai, 'Now Sheba son of Bicri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your masters men and pursue him or he will find fortified cities and escape from us'" (2 Samuel 20:6). Again there is an interlude and the narrator tells the reader of Amasa's fate (2 Sm 20:8-13. Verse fourteen introduces Sheba again; this time, Joab and his men besiege Sheba. A woman in the town requests to speak with Joab and accuses him of wanting to destroy their city, so Joab tells her that if they hand Sheba over he will withdraw his troops.

" Abel is characterised in the proverb as a city with a long reputation for wisdom and faithfulness to the traditions of Israel. It is therefore, a mother in the same way that Deborah was, a creator and hence a symbol of the unity that bound Israel together under one God. And it is the wise woman's implicit

appeal to this unity that stops Joab in his tracks" (Camp 1981:28). Her actions result in the people killing Sheba and giving his head to Joab and once again David's rule is secure.

2.3.1.12 Appendix (2 Sm 21-24)

The last major section of the book (2 Sm 21-24), is often called the Appendix or Epilogue and consists of six separate pericopes that together constitute the end of the entire book. Gordon (1986:289, cf also Childs 1979:275) agree, "The final four chapters, far from being a clumsy appendix, offer a highly reflective and theological interpretation of David's whole career adumbrating the messianic hope."

(i) The Gibeonites avenged (2 Sm 21:1-14)

The narrator begins by informing the reader that all of Israel is experiencing a famine which lasts three consecutive years. Characteristically, David seeks the Lord with regard to this. God reveals to David that the famine is on account of Saul breaking a treaty with the Gibeonites and putting them to death during his reign. So David gathers the Gibeonites and asks them how he can avenge them for Saul's sin.

The Gibeonites ask David to hand over seven of Saul's descendants so they can kill and humiliate them as Saul had done to them. This practice was "in keeping with the Near Eastern and Mosaic Law (the lex talionis or law of revenge, Nm 35:31)" (Fensham 1964:96). The Hebrew word translated *hang* (2 Sm 21:6) means to execute in a way that the body suffers public humiliation (Nm 25:4).

However, David spares Mephibosheth in keeping with his covenant with Jonathan. These actions show him to be a true covenant keeper. He further pays honour to Saul and Jonathan by bringing their bones and burying it with Saul's ancestors and descendants. While the author of the book does not mention how much time elapsed between the execution and the coming of the rain, there is evidence that David's actions end the famine. When David follows the Mosaic Law, God brings blessing to Israel and restoration to the land. "God reduces Saul's line from one of the most powerful looking men in Israel in the person of Saul to one of the weakest looking in the person of Mephibosheth" (Constable 1967:75).

(ii) Defeat of the Philistines (2 Sm 21:15–22)

This pericope presents several chronological problems. It may be describing David's battle with the Philistines earlier in his reign (2 Sm 5:18-25), however commentators agree that it is hard to tell how incidents recorded here relate to others mentioned in the book. The reference to *giants* may point to the Rephaim who were mighty warriors who lived in Canaan, possibly the ones the spies sent by Moses saw at Kadesh Barnea (Nm 13:33).

2 Samuel 21:17 speaks of the *lamp of Israel*, which "refers to David, the source of Israel's human guidance, prosperity and well being – its leading light. As God was the light of His people, so the king was a source of life as His vice-regent" (Constable 1967:75). "When a man dies, his lamp is extinguished (Job 18:6; Pr 13:9); David's death would be tantamount to the extinction of life of the community (Lm 4:20). The figure of the lamp, which came to symbolize the Davidic Dynasty as maintained by Yahweh (1 Ki 15:4; Ps 132:17), possibly derives from the world of the sanctuary, in which a lamp was kept burning 'continually' (1 Sm 3:3)" (Gordon 1986:303).

In verse 19 the narrator makes reference to Elhanan killing Goliath which contradicts the report in 1 Samuel 17. However, 1 Chronicles 20:5 says "Elhanan killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath." Scholars seem to accept this as a correct reading. The point of this brief and obscure section is that it emphasises how God blesses David and his military campaigns. "Yahweh brought blessing through him to Israel's military as well as to their agriculture. The first incident in the Appendix (2 Sm 21:1-14) illustrates that breaking covenants reduces fertility, but this one (2 Sm 22:15-22) shows that God's favor results in supernatural victories" (Constable 1967:76).

(iii) David's Psalm of Praise (2 Sm 22:1-23:7)

Youngblood (1992:1064) asserts, "it has been recognized that 2 Samuel 22 is not only one of the oldest major poems in the Old Testament but also because Psalm 18 parallels it almost verbatim, it is a key passage for the theory and practice of Old Testament textual criticism."

This pericope is a Psalm of declarative praise for what God has done for David. It reflects the richness of David's spiritual life. It also shares several themes with that of Hannah's song (1 Sm 2:1-10). They both refer to divine deliverance (1 Sm 2:1-2; 2 Sm 22:1) and end with God's anointed (1 Sm 2:10; 2 Sm 22:51). "These two songs form a kind of inclusio around the books of Samuel and give them unity" (Constable 1967:76).

Further, it shows that "God responds to his people according to their conduct (2 Sm 22:26-27). He is astute to the perverted (2 Sm 22:27) in the sense that he turns them into fools. The similes in 2 Samuel 22:43 picture David's enemies as objects of humiliation and contempt" (Youngblood 1992:1075). Constable (1967:77) concludes, "it is both serendipitous and satisfying that the Song of David, a Psalm of impressive scope and exquisite beauty, should begin with, "The LORD (2 Sm 22:2), the Eternal One and end with 'forever' (2 Sm 22:51)."

(iv) David's men (2 Sm 23:8-39)

The combination of David's final song (2 Sm 22) followed by his last tribute (2 Sm 23:1-7) recalls the similar combination of Moses' final song and his last tribute (Dt 32 and 33). This was David's final literary legacy to Israel. The same great spiritual themes come through here as in the previous chapter and in the whole historical account recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel. The ancients regarded the last words of any person as especially significant.

The last words of Israel's great leaders were even more important (Gn 49; Dt 33; Ac 20:17-38). They often expressed lessons those who had walked with God for many years had learned. The narrator describes David as a simple shepherd boy, the son of Jesse, a common Israelite. In doing this, he portrays David as someone God raises up. There is no doubt that he was the Lord's anointed. David is pictured as one with political administration, rich in military forces and spiritual influences.

> David claimed that his words were the words God had wanted him to speak. Many ancient as well as modern interpreters of this book have understood David's description of Israel's ruler in verses 3 and 4 as a reference to the Messiah. The figure of the dawning sun pictures the righteous ruler as a source of promise, joy and blessing to His people (2 Sm 23:4). The figure of the sprouting grass describes him as a source of prosperity, new life and fertility (2 Sm 23:4). David viewed his dynasty as such because God had made an everlasting covenant (the Davidic Covenant) with him (2 Sm 23:5). This resulted in order, security, deliverance, fulfillment and desire (2 Sm 23:5). David believed that the covenant would result in increased blessing for his house (2 Sm 23:5).
>
> (Richardson 1971:257)

(v) David numbers the people (2 Sm 24:1-25)

The last section of the book records another occasion when God withdraws His blessing from Israel. When David stops trusting in God for protection and places his confidence in his military personnel, God sends a serious disease that kills 70,000 men. There are conflicting opinions as to why David orders the census. Merrill (1987:272) comments, "After the revolution of both Absalom and Sheba it would have been reasonable for David to reassess his military situation against the possibility of similar uprisings or other emergencies." The writer of Chronicles says, "An adversary caused David to take this action" (1 Chr 21:1), while 2 Samuel 24:1 reads, "Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.'"

Nevertheless, David clearly took the census to determine his military strength and in doing so expresses a lack of faith in God. Taking the census in itself

was not a sin (Ex 30:11-12; Nm 1:1-2); David's sin is placing confidence in numbers and not in God. Dillard (1985:105) adds, "for the Chronicler in particular [1 Chr 27:23-24], the arena of David's transgression appears to be that taking a census impugns the faithfulness of God in the keeping of His promises–a kind of a walking by sight instead of by faith." Even after being warned by Joab that his actions are not appropriate David proceeds with his plans.

However, his guilt overwhelms him and he is once more before the Lord confessing his sins (2 Sm 24:10). This response shows David at his best, as "the man after God's own heart" (Ac 13:22). Even though David shows a repentant attitude, this does not prevent consequences from occurring for him and the Israelites. God's punishment results in many dying. In response to this, David cries to God to have mercy on the people as it was on account of his sin that they are now being punished. David realising that he needs to make right with God again, offers sacrifices (2 Sm 24:18). David buys the threshing floor from Araunah a native Jebusite whose land had not yet been set apart to God. Then David commits himself to God again (2 Sm 24:25).

> The writer probably recorded this incident not only because it accounts for the origin of the site of Solomon's temple, but because it illustrates a basic theological truth taught throughout the book. Whenever someone whom God has chosen for special blessing sins he or she becomes the target of God's discipline and he or she also becomes a channel of judgment to others. Only repentance will turn the situation around. When David agreed to obey God's will revealed through Gad, he began at once to become a source of blessing again. Much blessing came to Israel from the land David purchased from Araunah. Early Jewish readers of 1 and 2 Samuel would have viewed the purchase of the site of Solomon's Temple as the climax of the book. The building of this Temple is the focus of the beginning of 1 Kings. Solomon's Temple became the centerpiece of Israel for hundreds of years. It was the place where God met with His people and they worshipped Him corporately, the center of their spiritual and national life. Therefore the mention of the purchase of Araunah's threshing floor was the first step in the building of the Temple, the source of incalculable blessing to come.
>
> (Constable 1967:83)

(vi) David's death (2 Sm 24:1-25)

The account of David's death does not illustrate a loving devoted family hovering around his bedside. Instead, cold-hearted political forces were at work. Adonijah, David's son, is more concerned about being the next king

than about his dying father and he initiates a crowning of himself. However, God still is in control and Adonijah does not succeed, as recorded in Scripture (1 Ki 1:28-53), Solomon, becomes the next king of Israel. Noll (1997:63) comments, “David‘s death bed scene brings together for the last time the two driving elements of David’s personality: (1) genuine piety (1 Ki 2:2-4) and (2) self-serving political shrewdness (1 Ki 2:5-9). No doubt it is this complexity of characterization which has made David one of the most famous and loved characters of Hebrew Biblical literature.”

2.3.2 Conclusion to the David Cycle

“ Chapter 24 provides a fitting conclusion to the story of David by calling attention once more and finally not only to his ambition and pride, but also to his humility and remorse” (Youngblood 1992:80). At the climax of David’s story we see the change in him, which is brought upon by his sin with Bathsheba. Noll (1997:63) observes that David is “fully monster in his written order of execution sent by the hand of Uriah.” He is seen as unwise in his dealings with his children. Unable to discipline them and provide the spiritual leadership they needed. In the scenes with Absalom and his revolt, David is unhinged in his inability to lead his people and he is fully human in his anguished cry over the news of Absalom’s death. “In short, David is good and evil, hot and cold, lovable and worthy of admiration, frightening in his disregard for the welfare of others” (Noll 1997:64). David is described as a well-rounded character, who is remembered as one of the most humble and devout personalities in the Old Testament.

3 A CONCLUSION TO THE THREE CYCLES

This brings to an end our discussion on the Three Cycles. Having observed in each how the narrator uses the unfolding events to develop his characters. Each cycle focuses on both major and minor characters and the impact that they have on the nation of Israel. More importantly we have seen how God sovereignly dealt with the tragic figure of Saul, how His hand is upon David from the very beginning, manoeuvring and shaping him into the king he wants him to be. One can see the lasting effects of David’s friendship with Jonathan and the contribution this relationship makes to David’s ascension to the throne. Finally, readers witness God’s grace in the forgiveness shown to David after he commits adultery and murder. In the final analysis, the pages of 1 and 2 Samuel reveal real people, with real issues and a very real God who loves unconditionally.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will give some brief conclusions to the previous chapters and focus our attention on specific parts of our study bringing together the important aspects that work together to depict David, despite all his flaws, as the greatest king in the history of Israel.

2 CHAPTER 2

The methodology employed in this study is that of Narrative Criticism with the emphasis on characterisation. Chapter 2 focuses on the various techniques employed in Narrative Criticism that help us better understand the way the narrator portrays his message through his characters.

3 CHAPTER 3

Attention is given to the history of Israel, the formation of the books of Samuel and the aspects that ultimately contribute to the books becoming part of the Hebrew canon.

4 CHAPTER 4

This is our longest and most detailed chapter. It focuses on the three narrative cycles in 1 and 2 Samuel that are of concern for our study.

4.1 Israel's history (1 Sm 1-8)

Recapping this chapter we are reminded that throughout the period of Israel's history they are plagued by hostile neighbours. From time to time they threaten, invade and occupy sections of Israelite territory. The books of Judges and 1 Samuel give us details of these events.

> The book of Judges bears witness to an amorphous and unstable tribal mode of life that was easily opened to religious idolatry, syncretism and political and military barbarism. By contrast 1 Kings attests to a centralised political power that pursed an economic monopoly and claimed theological legitimacy for the new institution of monarchy. It

> can be said that the books of Samuel occupy the transition point between this social and political system. Thus, they endeavour to narrate how these deep shifts affected ancient Israel at that time in history"
>
> (Brueggemann 1990:6)

1 Samuel opens with a dark and depraved Israel in which the attitude that prevails in the book of Judges continues. We read in 1 Samuel 3:1, "in those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions." Harrison (1970:183-184) comments, "the 300 years of Israelite history under the Judges were marked by political, moral and spiritual depravation. The situation was so bad that even Eli's sons, who were the High Priests at the end of the 12th century, had completely apostatized and used their Priestly office for their own gain."

God intervenes and provides a solution for Israel through the boy Samuel who was "the link between Judgeship and kingship" (Tsumura 2007:33). As discussed in the previous chapter under the heading the "Story of Samuel" – with the embedded story of the Ark, Samuel's rises as a Prophet in the shadows of Eli's wicked sons. God elevates him over Hophni and Phinehas because of his obedience to Him.

Samuel's contribution to the life of Israel matched only that of Moses who came before him. He was the king-maker and his whole life is wrapped around leading and directing Israel in the ways of the Lord. Later in Israelite history we are told that Israel became discontent with Samuel's sons who are appointed Judges when he grows old. So Israel demands a king and Samuel, though reluctant, anoints Saul as the first king of Israel. The climax of his career is his anointing of David to follow Saul as the next king of Israel.

4.2 Saul (1 Sm 9-10)

Ultimately, our primary concern is with the characterisation of David. However, in order to study his life we have to study the depicted world in which we meet him. This is a world in which Israel's first king Saul plays a vital role and in many ways contributes to the way in which the narrator develops David's character. In this way Saul becomes an integral component to David's life and thus an in depth study of the Saul cycle is necessary. With the exception of a few victories early in his reign, Saul's history is wrought with tragedy. Saul fails

on a number of occasions and in all of them the qualities of uncertainty, failure to stick to a task, and lack of poise, are seen as essential components that explain these failures.

An example of this discussed in the previous chapter is when he gives into pressure from the people and offers sacrifices without waiting for Samuel (1 Sm 13). Next, he does not control the people with respect to eating meat with blood (1 Sm 14). The nail in the coffin for Saul is keeping livestock and the Amalekite king alive. These actions are in direct disregard to the command of the Lord (1 Sm 15), these incidents characterise Saul.

4.3 Saul and Jonathan (1 Sm 11-15)

In these chapters Saul is contrasted with his son Jonathan, who “was a decorated warrior in his own right. Just before the account of David and Goliath there is a wild tale starring Jonathan that rivals even David’s famous exploits” (DeGarmo 2009:s.p). As discussed in the section titled, “Saul and the Philistines,” in the previous chapter, the Philistines have control of the southern part of Bethel. The Israelites are both outgunned and outmanned with their army quickly dwindling. Saul’s inability to direct and lead in this situation opens the way for Jonathan to step up. He goes on a rampage against the Philistine garrisons and the Lord, through Jonathan, brings victory for Israel.

The life of Jonathan, as far as we are told about him, falls naturally into three periods. Firstly, he is abruptly introduced in 1 Samuel 13 “as the right hand lieutenant of his father” (Bromiley 1982:1117). Secondly, Jonathan’s life is depicted in his relationship with David. Thirdly, Jonathan’s life is depicted against the backdrop of the exile of David. In short, Jonathan’s life is wrapped up in the lives of Saul and David. From their very first meeting Jonathan bonds with David. Saul, however, feels threatened by him and his hostility grows, whereas Jonathan clearly recognises God’s hand on David and protects him against Saul’s violence towards him.

4.4 Saul and David (1 Sm 16-1 Sm 31)

Throughout the sections of the previous chapter that deal with Saul we see the complexity of his personality. Humility is essential for a king, but humility that stems from a lack of self-confidence and indecisiveness is not a quality befitting a king. All of these encounters add to the intrigue of the narrative plot

and emphasise the roundness of Saul's character. Out of these insecurities grows Saul's utter hatred for David which subsequently leads him on a mission to kill David through various means. All of which fails because the Lord has been protecting His chosen king.

It is in this troubled time during Israel's history that the relationship between David and Jonathan blossoms. Saul is now contrasted with David who is God's chosen king and who has the Spirit of God over him as a protection from Saul who is plagued by an evil spirit. The contrast between Saul and David is seen throughout the study of the section titled the Saul - David Cycle in the previous chapter.

4.5 David and Jonathan (1 Sm 17-2 Sm 1)

Attention will now be given to David and Jonathan's relationship. It is arguably the most important relationship David will ever have in his lifetime. Further, this friendship is one of the most profound friendships described in the Bible. From the study conducted in our previous chapter we can see that Biblical relationships are filled with intrigue and complications. David and Jonathan's relationship is no different.

The ancient world to which they belong is a world of war. In this world women rarely featured, but when they did, they made huge impacts, albeit briefly so. In this warrior world bonds are made that lasted a lifetime. We can look at David and Jonathan's relationship against this backdrop. Friendship is one of the most precious gifts of God. History abounds in illustrations of this. Life proves again and again this glorious truth; "there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother" (Pr 18:34). We have seen many a war movie that demonstrates that the experience of war heightens the conviction that men can do anything, including dying for each other without a thought for self. This is the essence of friendship - selflessness. We see this in Jonathan's selfless actions towards David throughout the previous chapter.

From our study so far we know that David is firmly established in Saul's court (1 Sm 18). Jonathan makes this establishment secure. Jonathan's whole role in the Bible seems to find its purpose in illuminating David as God's chosen one to follow Saul as Israel's king. Historical references are not specific as to how much time elapses between Jonathan's rampage in 1 Samuel 14 and the events of 1 Samuel 17; however, many believe it to be only a few days. Nevertheless, Jonathan's absence in chapter 17 of 1 Samuel is unexplained

and the crown prince is only mentioned again when he comes face to face with David after the battle with Goliath in 1 Samuel 18.

> The King James Bible captures it well when it says, in that moment, 'Jonathan's soul was knit to the soul of David' (1 Sm 18:1). Suddenly, the two men were interlocked. They experienced, as the New Living translation puts it, 'an immediate bond of love between them and they became the best of friends.' Certainly it is one of the greatest friendships in all of the Bible and perhaps in all of literature.
>
> (DeGarmo 2009:s.p)

" Often in ancient times, people or groups of people entered into covenant relationships. Sometimes these relationships were between two warring factions. Other times, the lives of two people just seemed to be knitted together. The latter was the experience of David and Jonathan" (Tippit 2006:s.p). There were several characteristics of this covenant relationship in 1 Samuel 18 which can be a model for strong healthy friendships today.

Firstly, they become *one in spirit*. It's not often that God just knits two hearts together. David and Jonathan were knit together and *one in spirit*. "This speaks of the fact that God was doing a supernatural work in their lives. The word *knit* is also important because it denotes a process by which God slowly joins two people together in friendship and camaraderie" (Laffoon 2005:s.p). This is significant because we have seen through our study in the previous chapter that Saul is determined not only to kill David but to prevent Jonathan from developing a healthy relationship with him.

Secondly, when people in the ancient world enter into a covenant, they often exchange pieces of clothing and armour. These are characteristics of the covenant shared between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 18 where we read, "Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic and even his sword, his bow and his belt" (1 Sm 18:4). "The clothing represented the material possessions that they had. Jonathan was saying to David, all of my possessions are now available to you. The sword represented the exchange of power. Jonathan was saying that all of the power available to him as Saul's son was now available to David" (Tippit 2006:s.p). His action of stripping himself of his royal insignia; to give them to David is an expression of the love and respect Jonathan had for him. Further, Jonathan's

love for David found expression in the surrender of his claim to the throne (1 Sm 18:4); it is a wonder that he could give up so much for the love of a friend.

Jobling (1986:14) observes, “Jonathan was no less than the personified solution of a difficult dual task that the Biblical narrators believed had been set before them to justify the legitimacy of a dynastic rule in Israel and to prove the dependability of God. The transition from Saul to David, otherwise theologically implausible, is by Jonathan made theologically plausible.” The narrator’s techniques show that Jonathan initially is identified with Saul but later distances himself from his father and identifies himself with David. “Basically, it is already clear in 1 Samuel 18:1-5 that the kingship has passed from Saul to David, by the mediation of Jonathan” (Jobling 1986:20).

Lastly, when two ancient people make a covenant, this covenant is to last until death. The only way that they can get out of the covenant is through death. In 2 Samuel 9 we read of how David’s loyalty is expressed to Jonathan even after Jonathan is dead. David has not only reared a monumental friendship with Jonathan, but also bore testimony to that highest ideal of friendship, which he realised in Jonathan.

In the Old Testament this is possible only on the basis of a common covenant of heart with the living God. In other words the relationship shared between David and Jonathan is based on their relationship with God. It is only by God’s grace that Jonathan can see that David is God’s chosen one to follow Saul as the king of Israel. It is only through God that David is able to befriend Jonathan despite the opposition from Saul. Intimacy is certainly an important part of friendship, but for a friendship to last it must also have loyalty. This is clearly a characteristic of their relationship.
In 1 Samuel 19, we read of how Jonathan seeks to protect David, firstly by telling him of Saul’s intentions to kill him and then by reasoning with Saul on behalf of David. The drama continues in 1 Samuel 20 where we read that Saul goes into a rage and his anger focuses on Jonathan. Saul blames Jonathan for all that was happening and calls him by an offensive name and insults his mother. From Saul’s perspective Jonathan is throwing away his kingship by pledging his love and allegiance to David.
Saul’s reasons are ungodly. He avoids the fact that God indicates through Samuel that his kingdom will be taken away from him (1 Sm 13:13-14; 1 Sm 15:22-23). He sets aside the fact that Samuel has anointed David as Israel’s next king (1 Sm 16:13). To kill David would be to kill God’s anointed. While David would not do this to Saul, Saul most certainly intends to kill David.

Jonathan encourages his father to think in terms of Biblical justice. If David is to die, what is the reason for his execution?

Saul in his rage hurls a spear at Jonathan, but misses him and there is no longer any doubt in Jonathan's mind that Saul's intention is to kill David. Jonathan is deeply grieved not because his father tried to kill him but because of the way his father has dishonored David (1 Sm 20:34). Spence (1906:29) asserts, "Human love is, in proportion to its purity and strength, a gift of divine love. It also illustrates the love from which it proceeds, by reflecting its image as in a mirror. It is of two fold nature, that is, of benevolence or charity to all, even the unworthy; and complacency towards those in whom it perceives the signs of excellence, or resemblance to itself."

We can see that this chapter is a significant turning point in terms of David's relationship with Saul and Jonathan. Previously, David has fled from Saul's presence temporarily, now he does so permanently. David will never again sit at Saul's table or play his harp to ease the king's troubled spirit and will never again fight for Saul in the Israelite army. David becomes a fugitive who is constantly on the run from Saul. As a result, the fellowship David had been able to enjoy with Jonathan will never be the same either.

This chapter is summed up with the word *covenant*. David flees to Jonathan at a very desperate moment in his life, because they have a covenant relationship which assures David of Jonathan's love and support. This covenant is actually clarified and extended in the text. What was originally a covenant between two men has now become a covenant between two families (1 Sm 20:15). What was once a general, albeit a significant covenant made at a time when there is no animosity on Saul's part toward David, now is clarified to deal with Saul's hostility and his intent to do violence to David. The covenant that bound these two men and their families incited Saul's wrath toward David and his son Jonathan. Saul could not oppose one without also opposing the other.

In 1 Samuel 23 Jonathan got wind of David's plight and at risk to his own life goes to meet with David. It has been some time now that Saul has been making attempts at killing David. As discussed in the previous chapter, Saul uses both direct and indirect methods to rid himself of David but so far he has not succeeded. In their last meeting recorded in 1 Samuel 23, David and Jonathan make another covenant with each other. In Scripture we read, 'Jonathan strengthened David's hand in God' (1 Sm 23:16). Jonathan's protection of David includes a shield around David's spirit. This covenant between David and Jonathan is the basis and guiding principle of the relationship between them. It gives both a sense of security and expresses both their submission and service to each other.

In 2 Samuel 1:26 we see the deep personal loss Jonathan's death creates for David. It is no longer the *splendour* and *glory* of Israel that "lies slain on the heights" (2 Sm 1:25). It is tragically Jonathan who lies slain there. He bemoans what he has lost in him, a dearly loved friend. We are reminded of 1 Samuel 18:1- 4 and 1 Samuel 20:17 where we read of the souls of David and Jonathan "being knit together in love and loyalty." This helps us sympathise with David when he says, "I grieve for you," (2 Sm 1:26), for it indicates that David's heart is deeply moved and utterly given up to distress.
Keck et al (2003:1208) affirms, "the poetry of grief in 2 Samuel 1:26 reflects the deep personal relationship of David and Jonathan and the covenant bonds between them, as portrayed in 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:1-42; 23:15–28." David goes on to speak of Jonathan as his *brother*, expressing the brotherly love that united them (2 Sm 1:26).

> Indeed, David had never experienced such love as Jonathan had shown him. He did not need to spell it out, for everyone knew that Jonathan, the heir to the throne, had not clung to his rights, but had voluntarily renounced them in favour of David, whom he had protected and encouraged through the years. And this renunciation had been no impulsive act, but an ongoing generous attitude of heart and mind: Jonathan allowed his own interests to be disregarded, in order that David could prosper. True that kind of love David may have not found in the women in his life, but even their love was not to be compared with the love which had motivated Jonathan.
>
> Baldwin (1988:181)

David and Jonathan's love for each other is something magnificent, when we consider the selfishness that can prevail among men and the hindrances that can stand in the way of expressing mutual love. It is borne and maintained by divine grace. It possesses commendable qualities that distinguish it from anything that could be shared with a woman. This love was characteristic of the appreciation of their worth (1 Sm 18:1-4). It encompasses deep respect for the other person and sets value upon them in relation not merely to what they actually are, but to what they may become. It can be assumed that in all his marriages David never experienced the same kind of joy of true partnership, deep communication, soul bearing and warm companionship that is usually experienced between a husband and his wife; however, these were treasured characteristics of his relationship with Jonathan.

The relationship between David and Jonathan is a Biblical example of a good and godly relationship. It is the kind of relationship that God wants us to have with Himself and with others. The source of our relationships with others is the relationship with the Triune God. Indeed their relationship is an inspired example of a friendship of souls. “God stood as a witness between the two (1 Sm 20:42). Most significant was the spirituality of the friendship. Jonathan sought to give David strength in the Lord, not in their relationship (1 Sm 23:16-18)" (Stevens 1997:s.p).

Their closeness in relationship shows that same gender attachments are not something new in human history. Indeed, judging from the expressions of feelings quoted throughout our study, one might think that emotional bonds between friends of the same gender are closer than between spouses and indeed bears testimony to David’s words, “your love for me was more wonderful than that of women” (2 Sm 1:26). He is speaking of the great pleasure and graciousness he found in Jonathan. Unreservedly, he gives expression to the love on which his friendship with Jonathan is based. Commentators concur, “This term of familial relationship and closeness may refer both to David’s relationship to Jonathan as the husband of his sister Michal and to their commitment in a covenant based on *hesed* which is the Hebrew word for *loyal love*, *steadfast love* or *faithfulness*.

> There is no disparity between king’s son and shepherd boy. Such a gift as each gave is not to be bought or sold. It was the fruit of the innate nobility of both. It softened and tempered a very trying time for both. Jonathan withstood his father’s anger to shield his friend. David was patient with Saul for his son’s sake. They agreed to be true to each other in their difficult situation. Close and tender must have been the bond which had such fruit in princely generosity and mutual loyalty of souls.
>
> (Hastings 1914:134)

Saul, in trying to drive a wedge between them only intensifies their relationship. Every telling blow that David experiences is counteracted by encouragement and support from Jonathan. Such a relationship is the priceless possession of all who can have it. Baldwin (1988:130) concludes, “Genuine love, person to person, sealed by a covenant, such as there was by David and Jonathan, provides a most telling model of an unbreakable

relationship. Unfortunately, David was never again to experience this kind of relationship with another person. David and Jonathan's relationship was based on their covenant love, respect and honour of God."

4.6 David's rise and reign as the king of Israel (2 Sm 2–10)

In contrast to 1 Samuel, which portrays the introduction to the monarchy, 2 Samuel highlights the establishment of that monarchy. A couple of years pass in which David struggles to attain full control of the throne. However, after a few battles and the deaths of significant characters like Ishbosheth and Abner, David is able to ascend the throne of both Israel and Judah.

There are three significant highlights of David's reign that occur at the beginning of the book. First, there is the return of the Ark, which is captured by the Philistines in 1 Samuel. Second, David's establishment of his capital in Jerusalem is significant as it establishes the centre for worship in Israel; and third, God's covenant with the house of David. Tsumura (2007:71) adds, "God uses king David's earnest plea to build a house for the Lord God to dwell in (2 Sm 7:5) as an occasion to further His eternal plan of salvation by choosing David's line to be that of the Messiah King who would sit on the throne of David forever." In 2 Samuel 7:16 God says to David, "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever."

4.7 David and Bathsheba (2 Sm 11-12)

David's ascension to the throne serves to establish faith in God and in His purpose by recounting the establishment of David's kingdom, which is cursed as a consequence of his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sm 11-12). David has committed a very serious sin before God and an atrocious transgression against Bathsheba who is under his protection as the king. David, before this transgression, has proven himself to be one of high moral and intellectual capabilities, so much so that God speaks of him as a man after His own heart (1 Sm 13:14).

God highly prospers David as king, giving him victory over his enemies and blessing the land with abundance. Prosperity, however, does not work to David's personal advantage. After years of phenomenal success under God's blessing, his kingdom is mighty and his name honourable. Therefore the necessity for his personal participation in wars has passed and his heart had begun to gravitate towards earthly pleasures and David falls into sin, which appears worse when contrasted with the high moral character shown by him in his earlier life.

The story of how he becomes captivated by Bathsheba and commits adultery with her, and subsequently, to safeguard himself, causes her husband Uriah to be placed in the forefront of the battle so that he might be killed by the enemy, is told in Scriptures in a most clear-cut manner, without the slightest effort to condone David's wrong-doing. No excuses are offered in connection with the account; the full weight of these dreadful crimes is laid directly on David's head.

He who had on several occasions respected Saul's life, because he was God's anointed, may have to some extent fallen into the misconception that his own anointing by God gave him the liberty to act upon others as he saw fit. The Biblical account states, "The thing that David had done displeased Yahweh" (2 Sm 11:27).

This section shows that even the man after God's own heart was not exempt from falling into sin and becoming involved in immorality. After some attempts at covering it all up, God exposes David in public to bring him to repentance and to a place where he could once again become a recipient of God's blessing. However, divine forgiveness does not imply remittance from that sin. David's family and in particular, his children, pay part of the price associated with those consequences.

> The penalty for David's sin was death, however in view of David's repentance God pardons his sin and inflicted only such punishment as was necessary for the full correction of the offender and the warning and instruction of the nation, showing that He is no respecter of persons and that king and people were on a common level before the divine law. It should be noted that the penalties inflicted were to a large extent the outgrowth of former sins. The severest troubles came from his polygamous household and the sons who gave him the most trouble were the children of heathen wives; and the child of Bathsheba died.
>
> (Day 2008:93)

Even in his failure and obvious grief over the loss of his son, David is very repentant. This is the underlying difference between him and Saul and the reason that even though David's sin should have ended in his execution, God was gracious to him and continues to bless and prosper him.

4.8 Amnon, Tamar and Absalom (2 Sm 13-19)

Pinto (1989:18) writes, "Yahweh both judges evil within the nation and delivers His chosen people (chastening David and removing unworthy candidates to the throne, while granting Israel not only respite from foreign oppression, but dominion over former enemies) so that Israel can experience the full covenant blessing."

The tragedies in David's household continue when David's oldest son Amnon rapes his half sister Tamar, resulting in Absalom her brother becoming infuriated with him for his actions. David, though not happy with Amnon, doesn't do anything to punish him and Absalom decides that he will avenge his sister by killing Amnon. Absalom then goes into hiding. After some years pass, Absalom, with the help of Joab, is allowed back into Jerusalem and plots to get rid of David and ascend the throne himself. However, his plan fails and he is killed in a horrific accident. David then regains control of the throne and remains king until his death.

This whole incident points to David's inability to love and control a polygamous household. Throughout his life we have seen David being admired for his bravery (1 Sm 17), his military strength (1 Sm 18), his ability to honour God and his respect for Saul's position as king (1 Sm 23 & 27). David displays shrewdness in convincing the Philistine king that his presence in Philistia will benefit the Philistines and we have seen throughout our study his ethical ability in being able to administer justice (2 Sm 8:15).

Further, David has a sense of responsibility in playing an instrument to help soothe Saul's troubles; he displays his giftedness in his ability to write Psalms and in making Jerusalem the centre of worship. These things work together to ground David ethically and show his reverence and fear of God. Even Ahimelech's attitude towards David in 1 Samuel 21 shows his high regard for him. Ahimelech died because of his protection of David. David's grief at the news of the death of the Priests too shows the refinement in his character.

However, the man we see in relation to his family is so different to the one described above. The first issue is that of polygamy within Israel, while it is permitted, it brings with it great trouble for the Israelites. As discussed in the previous chapter, we see the effects of this kind of relationship in the lives of Jacob, Leah and Rachel. Again we see the negative effects it has on David's family. It is the sons that he had with foreign wives that plague him the most. Many wives caused more trouble than is necessary. Perhaps it is for this reason that God makes the specification in Deuteronomy 17 that a king should not have more than one wife.

The second issue is that of David's sin. As mentioned in the previous chapter David may have been reluctant to discipline Amnon as he too has his own sexual sin on his head. Similarly, when Absalom kills Amnon, David may have been reluctant to hand down discipline as he too has murdered. While God is very clear about the punishment that will befall David's household as a consequence of his sins, nowhere is it indicated that David should not discipline his children for their wrong doing. He is spiritually and ethically frozen in this chapter. Perhaps this militarily strong king is ethically weak with regard to his family and while able to administer justice for the people of Israel, is unable to do so with those closest to him.

We see the affects of his weakness in his inability to lead God's people when Absalom threatens his kingdom. When he welcomes Absalom back he is blinded by his fatherly duty and puts this before the kingdom and in doing so endangers the people. David having such a notorious military background probably knew that in order for him to secure his kingdom, the enemy must die. In this case it was his own flesh and blood and David responds as a father and not a king. His grief at the news of Absalom's death shows a man who is unable to balance the responsibilities and role of being a king and being a father.

When one looks at David's character ethically, his sins seems to be far worse than that of Saul's and yet Saul lost it all and David is still revered as the greatest king in Israel. This can be explained by the fact that God has purposed David's life for His work, nothing David did could separate him from God and while God still accomplishes His work through David, the consequences of his sins are still felt, showing God to be loving and gracious. David is always a man after God's own heart, where Saul isn't. While he is not perfect, he is the epitome of God forgiving and having mercy on a sinful man whom he refines through all the events in his life. In this way, David becomes a picture of what God has done through Christ for all mankind.

4.9 David's final days (2 Sm 20-24)

David in his last days does a couple of things that bring to an end his glorious, yet, tumultuous reign. First, he avenges the Gibeonites whom Saul has humiliated during his reign. Second, he numbers his fighting men which results in punishment from God as it seems to indicate that David isn't completely trusting in God but that he has put his trust in the strength of his army. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, he buys a threshing floor, which would in the future become the very place where the Temple of Solomon wills be built.

As David approaches the end of his life, he becomes physically weak and is bedridden. While in this state, his son Adonijah tries to crown himself as the

next king of Israel. David had earlier promised Bathsheba that their son Solomon would succeed him, so both Nathan and Bathsheba go to David with the problem and David responds with the immediate coronation of Solomon (1 Ki 1-2). As David came to the end of his life, he charges Solomon to be faithful to God and his commandments, pointing out that this was the key to a successful kingdom. He warns him of individuals who will potentially pose a threat to his security and the kingdom. He also advises Solomon about those people who should be rewarded and honoured because they had treated David with respect.

> The author's emphasis on God's covenant loyalty also accounts for the way the book ends. Rather than picturing David in his last days, unable to cope with the fratricidal struggle for the throne, Samuel ends with David much as he was, a man capable of great sin, but unequalled in his repentance and desire to please God, providing the place where God's glorious manifestation to Israel would be housed in the near future by the man of God's own choosing, his son Solomon.
>
> Pinto (1989:20)

5 SUMMARY

It has been established that David is depicted as a round character throughout the unfolding of the narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel. The narrator portrays David firstly as a shepherd boy and ends with a picture of a wise Hebrew monarch who brings the tribes of Israel together as a united nation. By the end of David's long reign, Israel is depicted as a united nation behind a king who represented the will of God through his faithfulness to Him. "David's most important contribution was probably uniting the political and religious life of Israel. He symbolized this by setting up both the political capital and a centre for worship in Israel" (Constable 1967: 85). Further, Israel is depicted as being militarily, politically and geographically strong, this concurs with the evidence from ancient texts which present David as "a powerful warrior, cunning diplomat and talented musician" (Petersen & Niles 2007:s.p). Noll (1997:63) adds, "David's raw ambition is exemplified in nearly every scene".

" However, with all these tremendous accolades, the foundation of David's fame and faith can be traced to a period of severe trial and doubting in his life" (Petersen & Niles 2007:s.p). It is in this time, while on the run through enemy territory that David opens up and honestly shares his thoughts, struggles and fears, as expressed in the Psalms. "David was frustrated with God's plan for his life and he wrote about it in his Psalms. Although Saul stopped at nothing to kill David, David never followed through on his opportunities to kill Saul.

David's years alone with God forged his exemplary character and unwavering faith. Through loneliness and struggle, David learned to be fully dependant on God" (Petersen & Niles 2007:s.p).

> When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. "Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."
>
> (Psalm 32:3-7)

The Biblical portrait of David, with regard to his family is not of a perfect leader or a perfect father. In all of the scenes that deal with his children, the Bible presents David has one with little wisdom. Noll (1997:63) states plainly, "the narrator makes no attempt to soften the ugliness, though he does not abet it; instead he resorts to reporting dialogue without confirming or denying the accuracy to what is said by the various characters."
However, it is through these experiences that God humbles him and develops in him the essence of a renowned king and forges a legacy that endures to this day and while David is not devoid of sin, he at his core still remains, "a man after God's own heart" (Ac 13:22)."Even before he enters the story world, the narrator has been preparing for his arrival, setting the very ambiguous stage in which David's phenomenal successes will seem nearly miraculous" (Noll 1997:54).

6 CONCLUSION

This brings to an end our study on, "The Characterisation of David in the Samuel Narratives." David may well be remembered for his many failing throughout his lifetime but the New Testament shows that he not only made it into the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 but that he is described as, "a man who served his own generation by the will of God" (Ac 13:36).

> David fulfils the author's purposes by providing an ideal model for kingship. While David himself is far from being pure and sinless, the most important aspect of David's reign was that he was Yahweh's sovereign choice. It is this aspect that makes the office of kingship compatible with the identity of Israel as Yahweh's covenant people and

provides a theology of messiahship in anticipation of the fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant, which came in Christ.

(Deffinbaugh s.a:s.p)

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