'Who Is David and Who Is – the Son of Jesse?'
The Interpretation of the Figure of King David
in the Development of Old Testament Theology

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Abstract: The article addresses the issue of the numerous inconsistencies and contradictions found in the David cycle in 1 Sam 14 – 1 Kings 2. Usually, exegetes tend to believe that the biography of the king, especially the section the 'History of David's rise to power', shows traces of two legends of different origins, regardless of whether the figure actually existed in Israel's history. However, after comparing the inconsistencies in the portrayal of the king, it can be concluded that the basis of the legends about David may have been a real historical figure of a certain warrior whose biography can be traced from 1 Sam 27 – a certain warrior from the Philistine city of Ziklag who conquered the heights of Hebron and may be considered the founder of the Judah statehood.

Keywords: King David, the 'History of David's rise', Philistines, Kingdom of Judah, the books of Samuel

King David is one of the most intriguing characters of the Old Testament also when it comes to the different ways he is perceived by the readers – from a saint in the Catholic Church and the 'great king' of the Gospels (Matt 5:35) to a cruel bandit leader, hungry for power at any cost, to which he clawed his way not sparing his relatives or closest friends. The image of David is so rich that it must be admitted that the way he is considered depends largely on the purpose of the study and the chosen interpretation strategy:

> The David the reader sees will depend on the decisions about what one is willing to look at and what questions one is willing to entertain. Are we interested in the David of Samuel or Chronicles or Psalms? Are we interested in the David of history or of the text? Are we interested in the text as it stands or the possibility of layers within the text? Do we trust the text or do we not? And while it seems certain that the text constrains our interpretation of David so that he may not mean just *anything*, it also seems clear that to many and various different readers he does in fact mean *many things*.[1]

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1   K. Bodner – B. Johnson, "David: Kaleidoscope of a King," *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel* (eds. K. Bodner – B. Johnson) (LHBOTS 669; London: Clark 2020) 122.

One of the basic motifs of the David cycle, which includes the whole of the books of Samuel and the first two chapters of 1 Kings, is the apologetic motif[2] introduced to convince the reader that: David was the true king of Israel by the will of God; Saul proved unworthy of his position and, having committed the sin of disobedience, the archetypal 'original sin',[3] was, himself and all his descendants, forever deprived of the right to the throne; David was innocent of most of the crimes committed in his presence and led to his rise to supreme power.

The apologetic mood is shared by many exegetes and commentators who try to create a 'holistic' image of David as a rich and very complex personality, full of contradictions, a picture of a 'real', 'living man' with his paradoxes and weaknesses.[4] The numerous contradictions and inconsistencies found in the David cycle are usually explained in the context of the other pericopes in the cycle, regardless of the fact that these pericopes might belong to various redactions of an apologetic nature, which seek to reinterpret once commonly known events in favour of the monarch or to attribute to him what was not the case.[5] Some authors even assume that behind the badly disguised apology or legends about disputed facts of history, there is a 'grimace' on the part of the writer, who conveys them with a certain degree of irony, somehow signalling to the reader that these beautiful stories are 'merely for public consumption'[6] and that the author approaches with caution the version of events to be conveyed.[7]

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2   On apology as a leitmotif of the David cycle see K. McCarter, "The Apology of David," *JBL* 99 (1980) 489–504.

3   A concept used as a theodicy argument to explain the drastic change in the fate of the person once chosen by God, and then – the victim. First described in the scene of Adam and Eve's punishment, it is repeated in Judg 2:1–5 in the scene of Israel's rejection (V. Komarnytskyy, *"Giuda per primo": Il ruolo della tribù di Giuda nell'epoca premonarchica secondo il libro dei Giudici* [Kraków: Wydawnictwo Paweł Trzopek 2024] 85–56) and in 1 Sam 15 – in the scene of Saul's rejection. In all the scenes referring to the 'original sin', the following elements are common: the apparent disproportion of the imposed punishment to the committed crime; the surprise at the severity of the punishment; the impossibility of obtaining forgiveness (at least in the near future).

4   Considering that clue, the figure of David is presented in the works of, e.g.: W. Brueggemann, *David's Truth in Israel's Imagination* & *Memory* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1985); K.L. Noll, *The Faces of David* (JSOTSup 242; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997); B. Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (The Bible in Its World; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2001); B. Green, *David's Capacity for Compassion: A Literary-Hermeneutical Study of 1–2 Samuel* (LHBOTS 641; London: Clark 2017).

5   Advocates of a synchronic approach, limiting their analysis to the canonical text as the only one attested by the ancient author, are often prone to over-interpretation when certain narrative contradictions occur and attributing causes and circumstances to deeds or events that are more the products of the commentators' imagination. By ignoring the motif of the apologetic (or propagandistic) nature of the cycle's texts, diachronicity is avoided but the classic 'David-legend' image appears: 'Synchronic or literary critics solve this Gordian knot by simply stating that discourse critics are not interested in the actual authors, but rather in the image of the teller that can be reconstructed from the text' (G. Andersson, *Untamable Texts: Literary Studies and Narrative Theory in the Books of Samuel* [JSOTSup 514; New York: Clark 2009] 200).

6   D.M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (JSOTSup 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1978) 96.

7   In particular, R. Polzin sees the critical attitude of the narrator in the story of the circumstances of Abner's death (*David and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History* [ISBL; Bloomington, IN: Indiana

The apologetic nature of the story about David is quite clear, although it should be noted that apologetic comments are only used in relation to the so-called 'David-warrior' whose deeds require an 'advocate'. By contrast, another image of David – the 'shepherd of the sheep', a somewhat naive young man – is flawless from the outset, leading many (if not most) scholars to believe that the 'shepherd' image is a later literary development of the image of the 'warrior'.[8]

The article is an attempt to present 'at least a *realistic* likeness of David'[9] (or 'Davids') using a critical analysis of his image as an alleged historical figure, acknowledging the intended apologetic nature of the texts of the cycle. That sceptical attitude separating a deed, even an alleged one, from its apologetic interpretation, will make it possible to draw a hypothetical map of the history of a person who aspires to be perceived as a historical figure in the Ir I – Ir IIA eras. Initially, it can be assumed that David, as a representative of his era, acted similarly to other rulers of that time, therefore it was a strong, cunning, charismatic and cruel leader who came to power rather than a pious young man from the provinces.

Sketching a 'coherent' picture of David always involves an attempt to overcome the contradictions in his biography. However, if one were to undertake quite the opposite approach and sketch an image of David as 'incoherent' as possible, highlight the contradictions, contrast the dividing lines of the image and adopt a critical stance, referring rather to the context of the time, one must allow for the possibility that different characters, sometimes very dissimilar to one another, would be looking out of the resulting sketch.

University Press 1993] 40–41), which K. Bodner regards as an example of the use of the literary technique of 'pseudo-objective motivation' (*David Observed: A King in the Eyes of His Court* [HBM 5; Sheffield: Phoenix Press 2005] 40–41). In a similar way, as a hidden polemic and exaggerated apology of the figures of David and Solomon, the biblical text was understood by, e.g., R. Mason (*Propaganda and Subversion in the Old Testament* [London: SPCK 1997]), Y. Amit (*Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* [Biblical Interpretation Series 25; Leiden: Brill 2000]), E. Seibert (*Subversive Scribes and the Solomonic Narrative: A Rereading of 1 Kings 1–11* [JSOTSup 436; London: Clark 2006]), B. Johnson ("An Unapologetic Apology: The David Story as a Complex Response to Monarchy," *The Book of Samuel and Its Response to Monarchy* [eds. S. Kipfer – J. Hutton] [BWANT 228; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2021] 225–242). It should be noted, however, that attributing a tinge of irony to an archaic text in its modern understanding is quite a speculative assumption and it must first be proven that such sophisticated writing techniques were used at that time, especially in religious texts.

8   Such an approach was assumed by a number of scholars, an overview of whose positions is given by J. van Seters (*The Biblical Saga of King David* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2009] 3–39). The predominant view of exegetes on the origin of the David cycle is the hypothesis of at least one redaction (Deuteronomistic or one of its variations) in relation to some source tradition containing historical memory of the events or any older legend. Van Seters distinguishes two traditions in the David cycle (combined as a result of several Deuteronomistic redactions, *ibidem*, 27, 34–39), one of which idealises the king while the other one describes him as a typical 'oriental despot' of the time, (*ibidem*, 1).

9   S. McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press 2000) 189. Apart from McKenzie, in recent years, J. Baden's attempt to reach the historical figure of David should also be (*The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero* [New York: HarperOne 2013]).

1. David vs. History

David, the son of Jesse, an Ephrathite from Bethlehem of Judah appears in 1–2 Sam and the first chapters of 1 Kings as a highly ambiguous figure: a handsome young man, full of God's fear and a merciless murderer; a faithful friend and a perfidious intriguer; a naive idealist and a cynical politician. On the one hand, the figure of King David in the books of Samuel is so dominant that one can only wonder why the books are not 'the books of David' but of 'Samuel', a character clearly secondary and possibly later than David editorially.[10] A probable reason for assigning the authorship of the books of 1-2 Sam to 'Samuel' was that the Deuteronomistic authors, 'reserved' towards the figure of David, a controversial but important personality, preferred to consider that historical period as the 'period of Samuel', the prophet, who, being the source of Israel's monarchy understood it as a deviation from the original idea of the God-king, and thus containing a certain defect that causes the monarchy, by its very nature, to strive to idolise a man, a monarch. God is replaced by a man, often a wicked one, who decides the fate of people, which sooner or later leads to disaster.

As to whether there was any semblance of statehood in Judah in the Ir I or late Ir I – Ir IIA eras, there is still considerable dispute today. The main argument in favour of David being a rather made-up character is a very widespread theory according to which there was no historical context that would serve as a setting for David as a 'king' as there was no 'Judah' in times when that historical/legendary figure is supposed to have lived. According to supporters of the so-called 'low chronology', the emergence of Judah as a political-economic unit is a derivative of the establishment of the Israeli state in the north, next to which Judah developed as 'a sort of client state',[11] existing until the time of Omri (first half of the 9th century) only within Jerusalem and its surroundings. During the period of Israel's fall, Judah became a vassal state of Assyria and only then, receiving numerous refugees from the north, it became the Judah known from the books of Samuel and Kings. It was the very Judah that, after the fall of Israel and absorbing the traditions of the North, began to create its own history and perceive itself as a great power, already at the times of David.[12]

The argument derived from the above assumption is that while the events of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites did not actually take place (at least not in

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10   K. McCarter believes that the tradition of Samuel, the Ark and the rejection of Saul was a later inclusion in the original pre-Deuteronomistic redaction, containing Saul and the cycle known as the 'History of David's rise' (HDR). According to McCarter, in the 'prophetic' redaction, the story was composed from a perspective suspicious of monarchy in any form, committed to the ideal of the prophetically mediated divine election of leaders, and therefore opposed to hereditary succession and supportive of the prophetic office as an institution ("The Apology of David," 491, 503).

11   I. Finkelstein, "The Rise of Jerusalem and Judah: The Missing Link," *Levant* 33/1 (2001) 105.

12   According to Finkelstein, it is only from the time of Omri and his dynasty that one can speak of the beginnings of the statehood of Judah, first within the city-state of Jerusalem (along the lines of Amarna within the walls of the Middle Bronze Age), which after some time, with the help of Israel and Phoenicia, extended its range to the Negev and Shephelah ("The Rise of Jerusalem and Judah," 105–115).

the 'biblical' dimensions), it is quite likely that the era of the great kings, David and Solomon, presented in the same pattern of the 'golden legend', should also be regarded as a later founding myth, rather than a real chronicle of history.

Opponents of 'low chronology', accusing their antagonists of engaging in proving the insufficiency of biblical texts when confronted with archaeological data, are thus trying to move 'from excessive scepticism to a modest optimism'[13] to demonstrate that historiographic data is in favour of the fact that already in 10th century Judah was organised as a state in a way very close to the oldest texts of the Deuteronomistic History (DH) – as a network of cities – fortresses with a separate material culture: Gezer, Beit-Shemesh, Tel Masos, Jerusalem, Tell en-Nasbeh, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Tell Beit Mirsim, Be'er-Sheva etc., 'therefore on the basis of all the "witnesses" we have in this case, the claim that the kingdom of David and Solomon in Judah in the 10th century BCE did exist is true "beyond a reasonable doubt".'[14]

Thus, the very possibility that David merged the kingdom of Israel with Judah into a single superpower is challenged mainly based on archaeological data. Unlike the impressive fortresses of the densely settled territory of Benjamin and southern Ephraim of the era of Ir I (Gibeon, Bethel, Tell en-Nasbeh [Mizpah], et-Tell [Ai], Khirbet Raddana, Tell el-Ful, Khirbet ed-Dawwara) Jerusalem was quite a modest settlement at that time, ruling over a sparsely populated territory.[15] From that perspective, the idea of a 'United Monarchy' could have been created under the influence of the memory of the kingdom of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:23–29), who for several decades ruled over a fairly extensive territory ('from the Entrance to Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah', 2 Kings 14:25), which, later on, Judah commentators accepted as the historical boundaries of David's kingdom. Perhaps that tendency contributed to the creation of David as the ruler of Judah; the universal figure, belonging first to the court of Israel, Ephrathite and heir to Saul.

The above theory about Jeroboam II as the prototype of David[16] does not explain why that narrative describes with such tragedy the fate of the descendants of King Saul, a dynasty allegedly destroyed by David. The archaeological data attesting to the wars in the highlands of Benjamin in the second half of the 10th century, which destroyed the Israelite agglomeration, fit rather well with the pacification expedition of Pharaoh Sheshonk I in the second half of the 10th century, confirmed by independent sources. In the absence of extrabiblical evidence of Davids's take over of Saul's power in the 11th–10th centuries, it would be logical to assume that Saul's dynasty ruled the northern kingdom alongside the dynasty

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13   W. Dever, "Solomon, Scripture, and Science: the Rise of the Judahite State in the 10th Century BCE," *JJAR* 1 (2021) 104.

14   Dever, "Solomon, Scripture, and Science," 119. For more, see Y. Garfinkel, "The 10th Century BCE in Judah: Archaeology and the Biblical Tradition," *JJAR* 1 (2021) 144–146.

15   I. Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: the Archaeology and History of Northern Israel* (Ancient Near East Monographs 5; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 2013) 40–43.

16   I. Finkelstein, "Northern Royal Traditions in the Bible and the Ideology of a 'United Monarchy' Ruled from Samaria," *Stones, Tablets, and Scrolls: Periods of the Formation of the Bible* (eds. P. Dubovský – F. Giuntoli) (Archaeology and Bible 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2020) 122–126.

of David in the south for some time, until the Sheshonk invasion, which put an end to Saul's dynasty.[17] After the fall of the house of Saul, the territories north of Jerusalem could come under the rule of Jerusalem for a short time.[18] The next centre of the kingdom in the north, the beginning of which 1 Kings 11 relates to Jeroboam I, a subject of Sheshonk (the biblical Shishak, 1 Kings 11:40), would have been the city of Tirsa, the seat of the new king who would begin his reign after the Egyptian invasion (cf. 1 Kings 14:25).[19] Such a hypothesis is acceptable, especially since Jeroboam I, like David, was also depicted as an Ephrathite, the son of Zeruiah (1 Kings 11:26),[20] the founder of a kingdom in Saul's territory. The fundamental doubt, however, is that descendants blamed David for the fall of Saul's kingdom and the destruction of his house. Such a long-lasting memory of the tragic fate of the king of Gibeah from the turn of the 11th to the 10th centuries, and his entire family, testifies to the unprecedented importance of that person for representatives of certain social groups, which required apologetic efforts on the part of the supporters of the house of David.

A fundamental difficulty in reconstructing the political map of ancient Israel may be the attempt to apply modern understandings of social relationships and the idea of power being about control of territory, until antiquity, where power was based more on symmetrical (allies) or asymmetrical (patron-subordinate) relations. In those times, political power was rather about a coalition of tribes, cities, and families, which had little (if at all) control over the territories of their residence. Coalition members or elders in tribes entered into alliances with other social groups, shrine priests and private individuals for mutual gain. A Bronze Age city was only as strong as it could rely on its own army or an alliance with someone stronger, therefore the size of a city did not play a decisive role in assessing its power, since a large city, e.g., a caravan station and a centre of trade or craft, could require external defence, while a small city, in turn, having military resources, could have a 'broad power base' and make fairly distant neighbours dependent on it.[21]

As can be seen in 2 Sam 2:4 and 5:1–3, the legitimation of David's power took place through the entry into a covenant between the conqueror of Hebron and the councils of the tribes that acknowledged his authority. From then on, neither the distance nor the size of the capital mattered, as David's 'power base' was grounded in the alliance of the tribes. Rehoboam lost his authority over the North in an analogous way – the covenant of the house of David with the tribes of Israel was dissolved (1 Kings 12:16). The legitimacy of power is not unconditional, and perhaps this is why the authors, supporters of the house of David, felt compelled to fashion an apology of David towards the dynasty of Gibeah after clashing

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17   Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 51.
18   I. Finkelstein, "Jerusalem in the Iron Age: Archaeology and Text; Reality and Myth," *Unearthing Jerusalem: 150 Years of Archaeological Research in the Holy City* (eds. K. Galor – G. Avni) (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2011) 191.
19   Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 80–81.
20   The name of Jeroboam's mother צְרוּעָה (1 Kings 11:26) is *hapax legomenon*, while the name (presumed) of the mother of the 'sons of Zeruiah' (allies and, possibly, relatives of David) is צְרוּיָה according to the BH.
21   K. Keimer, "Evaluating the 'United Monarchy' of Israel: Unity and Identity in Text and Archaeology," *JJAR* 1 (2021) 72–73.

with the historical memory of the refugees from the North. However, the best means of legitimising power is not apology but ideology,[22] therefore the writers' next task was not only to acquit David but to prove that the power of his descendants was legitimate, decent and also necessary. That attempt was so successful that it made the figure of David a symbol of national identity.

The problem with such a form of 'conquest' is that it leaves behind a rather small (if any) 'archaeological footprint',[23] especially as neither Saul nor David had ambitions to become great builders.

The argument for the non-existence of a 'historical David' may be dealt with in the following way: David is indeed presented as a legendary figure, similar to Gilgamesh, Heracles or King Arthur; at the same time, it is also obvious that this character is so contradictory internally that the question arises as to whether it is about the same epic hero or rather about different ways of perceiving the same person, who exercised effective control over the territories of the southern part of the so-called Central Highlands,[24] occupied Hebron and conquered Jerusalem.

Also, excavations in Hebron and other archaeological sites in the Hebron Highlands do not definitely deny the possibility of the conquest/occupation of Hebron (and probably the entire Bronze Age 'tri-city' of Hebron, Debir, Anab) during the Ir I – IIA period,[25] that is, within the boundaries determined by the text of 2 Sam 2:1–3, occupied by David and his army from the Philistine Ziklag.

As for the archaeological discoveries in the excavations in Jerusalem (carried out for more than 150 years and being the subject of endless debate), one can only say with some justification that the city began to grow and the population increased in the 10th–9th

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[22] Keimer, "Evaluating the 'United Monarchy' of Israel," 73–75.

[23] Keimer, "Evaluating the 'United Monarchy' of Israel," 91.

[24] I.e., the territory of the mountainous locality from the Hebron region in the south to the Jezreel Valley in the north.

[25] Archaeological data from the excavations in Tel Rumeida (Hebron), Khirbet-Rabud (presumably Debir) and the surrounding area indicate that the cities established near the source of the waters in the Hebron Highlands saw their rise and fall during the Middle and Late Bronze Age periods: Hebron, surrounded by the cyclopean wall of the MB II era experienced a decline in the Late Bronze Age (J. Chadwick, "Discovering Hebron: The City of the Patriarchs slowly yields Its Secrets," *BAR* 31 [2005] 24–33, 70–71; A. Ofer, "Hebron," *NEAEHL* II, 608–609); the walls of Debir were erected in the Late Bronze Age, before the disappearance of Hebron and Lachish (K. Galling, "Zur Lokalisierung von Debir," *ZDPV* 70 [1954] 135–140; M. Kochavi, "Khirbet Rabûd = Debir," *TA* 1 [1974] 26–32); Anab, presumably Khirbet ʿAnab eş Şeghirah, 6 km away from Khirbet Rabûd (cf. Josh. 11:21), was part of the trio of cities dominating the area in the MB II–LB II eras, the conquest of which meant gaining control of the Hebron Hills (Kochavi, "Khirbet Rabûd = Debir," 28–29). Possibly, in the memory of generations, those three cities remained in the symbolic form of the 'three sons of Anak', mythical giants who were able to fortify their cities with a cyclopean bridge (Komarnytskyy, *"Giuda per primo"*, 488–490). After a period of decline in the Ir I era (the end of that period is generally accepted as the time associated with David's actions), Hebron starts to become again an important point on the political map of Judah in Ir IIB (D. Ben-Shlomo, "New Evidence of Iron Age II Fortifications at Tel Hebron," *The Last Century in the History of Judah: The Seventh Century BCE in Archaeological, Historical, and Biblical Perspectives* [eds. F. Čapek – O. Lipschits] [AIL 37; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2019] 63–87).

centuries, also the development expanded to include administrative buildings.[26] Due to the lack of traces of the conquest of the city described in 2 Sam 5:6–10, it can be concluded that the annexation of Jerusalem to 'Judah' took place rather by means of unknown negotiations and agreements. However, there are indications that the Judah of the Ir IIA era was already an organised social structure of a state character and Jerusalem was part of that structure.[27]

Therefore, given the above conclusions, it can be stated that a certain statehood of Judah may have already existed in the 10th century and someone must have been its founder – someone remembered by the descendants as 'David'.

2. Different Presentations of David

The question of who (for the first time?) wrote the story of David is highly debatable. It is unlikely that the author of the original 1–2 Sam text was the witness to the described events – that person was rather a compiler and an interpreter of the 'legends about the great king'. Nevertheless, if the author's interpretations are not taken into account, contained primarily in numerous speeches and odes attributed to the king, based on the described events one can conclude that the character in question was a rather cruel, ruthless and faithless man.

The above is best seen in the tragedy of the house of Saul and the fate of the Benjaminites, whose destiny the authors of 1–2 Sam did not intend to conceal. 1 Sam 9–14 contains the story of the assumption of the throne of Israel by Saul, the son of Kish, from the Benjamite city of Gibeah. The narrative of the first anointed one is rather ambiguous, since already in the first chapters one senses an ironic motive relating to Saul. Nonetheless, the story of Saul is presented with maximum plausibility[28] and it is about a ruler capable of facing not only an opponent of equal military capability[29] but also a much stronger enemy.[30] *Sitz im Leben* of Saul's brilliant victories and that of his valiant son Jonathan, who is presented as the true heir to the throne in the stories (1 Sam 14), captures quite realistically the reality of the Ir I period in the Levant, when the semi-nomadic tribes gathered in the region of Ephraim, trying to survive under pressure from the Sea Peoples and other

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26 Y. Gadot – J. Uziel, "The Monumentality of Iron Age Jerusalem Prior to the 8th Century BCE," *TA* 44 (2017) 123–140; W. Dever, *Beyond the Texts: An Archaeological Portrait of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Atlanta, GA: SBL 2017) 276–283.

27 Cf. Dever, *Beyond the Texts*, 259–382.

28 This leads some scholars to believe that there are much older traditions behind the story of Saul, based on real historical memory, perhaps even from the 10th century; BCE, N. Na'aman, "Saul, Benjamin and the Emergence of 'Biblical Israel'," *ZAW* 121/2 (2009) 342–348.

29 Such as the Ammonites at Jabesh (1 Sam 11) or the Amalekites in the south, who were also mountain dwellers and, presumably, did not have the game-changing weapons of the time, such as chariots or iron weapons.

30 For more see: Josh 10–12; 1 Sam 13:5–7; 14:1 ff., where the tactic in question is used by the mountain tribes of that historical period (LB-Ir I) in the war against an opponent owing chariots and iron weapons, which was to avoid clashes in the open space (Y. Yadin, "Military and Archeological Aspects of the Conquest of Canaan in the Book of Joshua," *JBQ* 32/1 [2004] 7–15).

hostile semi-nomadic tribes. With the technological development of the proto-Israelite tribes lagging behind the newcomers, the mountain tribes could only counter with their consolidation (consolidated military forces)[31] and the launching of a series of small-scale military attacks on terrain that was familiar to them and difficult for the opponent. Similarly, the scene of preparation for the battle in the Valley of Elah is also realistic: Goliath, whose equipment is surprisingly precisely described and fully corresponds to the details of the equipment of a Greek hoplite of that historical period (1 Sam 17:6–7),[32] looks unbeatable to the warriors, mountain dwellers without access to metal production technology (1 Sam 13:19–22).

It should be noted, however, that David's appearance on the scene of history (1 Sam 17 ff.) is preceded by two chapters (1 Sam 15–16) that interrupt the positive narrative about Saul. Chapter 15 justifies why God rejects such a valiant leader. That chapter has quite noticeable features of a later text[33] as it is inconsistent with the previous narrative: the occurrence of the Exodus motif, the presence of Samuel as superior over Saul, the use of numerous tools inappropriate to the 'battle report' genre, and finally, Saul's very presence in the southern territories not controlled[34] by him are sufficient signs that chapter 15 is not an integral part of the legend of Saul[35] but rather a literary link to the next chapter, a justification (quite debatable one) of why such a brave king was rejected by God. The next chapter, 1 Sam 16, introduces a new protagonist who brings into the story of Saul many themes absent from the earlier narrative[36] and reverses the roles of the actors in the narrative: Saul goes from being a brave warrior king to a person suffering from bipolar disorder; also Jonathan, the charismatic leader in his father's army, becomes a supporting character dominated by the charismatic David.[37]

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31 A. Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion and Resistance* (Approaches to Anthropological Archaeology; London – New York: Routledge 2014) 227–234.

32 J. Zorn, "Reconsidering Goliath: An Iron Age I Philistine Chariot Warrior," *BASOR* 360 (2010) 1–18.

33 T. Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia/Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae: Sarja-Ser. B 193; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedakatemia 1975) 102, note 156.

34 J. van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1983) 258.

35 S. McKenzie, "Saul in the Deuteronomistic History," *Saul in Story and Tradition* (ed. C. Ehrlich) (FAT 47; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2006) 62–63.

36 The basic feature of the so-called 'battle report' is a certain pattern in conveying events of a military nature from the point of view of the victor, which lacks details of the battle, dialogue and dramatic tension between the characters (J. van Seters, "The Conquest of Sihon's Kingdom: A Literary Examination," *JBL* 91/2 [1972] 188). 1 Sam 17 seems to be the continuation of the narrative of 1 Sam 14, although the pericope 14:47–52 is rather a separate block-digression.

37 The positioning of two *personae* in relation to each other as protagonist and antagonist, the former being the exemplar of all virtues while the latter shown in an exclusively negative light, is typical of literary forms that are often considered to be the oldest models originating from oral traditions (A. Nahkola, *Double Narratives in the Old Testament: The Foundations of Method in Biblical Criticism* [BZAW 290; Berlin: De Gruyter 2001] 135). Starting with 1 Sam 16:14 ff., Saul is portrayed solely as an inadequate person, unworthy of his position, although in the narrative of 1 Sam 7:2–14:52 he is seen (mainly) as a hero.

But David, too, is by no means a coherent *persona*, for already in 1 Sam 17, one sees several figures in that character at the same time. The dominant image of David is that of a handsome, red-haired young man who is so small that he cannot put Saul's military armour on (1 Sam 17:38–39). According to one tradition, that young man was a musician in the king's court (1 Sam 16:18–22), according to another – he only appeared on the battlefield and Saul did not know him before (1 Sam 17:55).

The hint of the 'battle report' giving way to another literary genre after the presentation of the figure of Goliath is the abundance of extraneous motifs and the very description of the event. On the one hand, duelling leaders or leading characters in front of armies was a fairly common way of resolving disputes in ancient times, indicating that David was the best candidate in the army of Israel to face the giant, apparently the leader of the Philistines. In this way, the author presents David as the best warrior, the 'Israelite Achilles', which is indirectly confirmed by the fact that David turned out to be quite widely known in this respect by the people (1 Sam 18:6–7). On the other hand, the fact that a boy with a club faces Goliath indicates that the case in question (or in the given editorial) is more about a duel of a religious nature – a fight between gods in the persons of their representatives, with David, who is intentionally depicted as a young boy, as a symbol of the power of the Lord of Hosts, being able to defeat a giant having the hands of a child.[38]

The duel between David and Goliath contains two non-obvious but very important details that point to hidden motives in 1 Sam 17, absent in the earlier narrative about Saul. Firstly, the name 'Goliath' is, presumably, a semiticised version of the ancient Lydian name Alyattes, meaning a 'leader of an army' or 'conqueror of trophies', or the Mycenaean name Lawagetas – a commander of an army in the Mycenaean culture; similarly, the name 'David' may be a version of the Philistine name $Δαι$-$ϝιδ$, which indicates a person 'proficient in warfare'.[39] Thus, quite possibly, the prototype of the story of David's clash with Goliath may have been some fight between two warriors of Philistine origin, equal in prowess, similar to the famous duel between Achilles and Hector from *The Iliad*, with one warrior (perhaps) killing the other one using a catapult.

The second detail is the portrayal of Goliath as one of the mythical giants-Anakites,[40] descendants of the *Nephilim* (Gen 6:4), a race of humans born from the cohabitation of 'sons of God' and human women, which led to the radical corruption of the human race and, as a result, to the worldwide flood (Gen 6:4–7). The *Nephilim*, according to the legends, survived the flood, so the fight against them is part of the eschatological struggle of the creation, wanted by God, against that which should not, according to God's design,

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38 The scene of David's clash with Goliath in 1 Sam 17 refers to the military practices of the time as well as to mythological motifs about the duels of gods (R. de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1971] 128–135).

39 T. Schneider, "The Philistine Language: New Etymologies and the Name 'David'," *UF* 43 (2011), 569–576.

40 1 Sam 17:4.7, cf. Num 13:33. For traces of the tradition about the possible presence of Anakites in Gath see Josh 11:22.

have existed.[41] The use of a stone to destroy such a power leads us to the metaphor of the stone in Dan 2:34–35 being an image of the authority of God, in whose power are all the powers of this world.[42] In this presumably eschatological duel between Good and Evil, David appears as the successor of Moses, Joshua and Caleb, who fought the descendants of the Anakites as ancient evil.[43]

The above two details are independent of each other, but they show how differently a scene where a new protagonist of history is introduced can be perceived: a skilled warrior with a Philistine name and a representative of the 'world of Moses' speaking out against the 'error of creation', which 'insults the army of the living God' (1 Sam 17:10, 25, 26, 36, 45).

The second presentation of David begins in 1 Sam 17:12. He is no longer the king's harpist and 'a man of war' (1 Sam 16:18) but a shepherd of the flock (1 Sam 17:34), whom neither Saul nor his commander Abner had seen (1 Sam 17:55).[44]

In 1 Sam 18:5, after the scene of Jonathan relinquishing his priority (1 Sam 18:1–4), there appears a slightly different David – a rather experienced courtier, able to play the lyre,[45] in the king's court and – at the same time – a brave warrior, who enjoys such high authority that he can become the leader of Saul's soldiers (1 Sam 18:13–14, 27, 30), professional warriors gathered from all the tribes of Israel (1 Sam 14:52). It is difficult to imagine a 'red-haired young man' in that role. Both David's leadership of the army, his courtly status and his position as the king's son-in-law fit the image of a courtier-warrior-musician rather than

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41 The motif of the giants who survived the Flood recurs in Jewish literature as an image of antediluvian sinfulness that survived God's punishment and appears as a reincarnation of the original evil – what should not be on Earth. Therefore, the fight of Joshua, Caleb and, more importantly, David (1 Sam 17; 2 Sam 21:18–22; 23:21; 1 Kings 20:4–8) against Anak and other giants takes on eschatological features (I. Fröhlich, "Origins of Evil in Genesis and the Apocalyptic Traditions," *Apocalyptic Thinking in Early Judaism* [eds. C. Wassen – S. White Crawford] [JSJSup 182; Leiden: Brill 2018] 141–159; L. Stuckenbruck, "The Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: the Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4 in the Second and Third Centuries B.C.E.," *The Fall of the Angels* [eds. C. Auffarth – L. Stuckenbruc] [TBN 6; Leiden: Brill 2004] 87–118).

42 A. Rofé, "The Battle of David and Goliath: Folklore, Theology, Eschatology," *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (eds. J. Neusner – B. Levine – E. Frerichs) (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1987) 138–139.

43 Deuteronomistic theology gives the event of the conquest of the Promised Land eschatological features: in Deut 9:1–3, the 'sons of Anak' are presented as a symbol of evil, and in Deut 9:5a–b one reads: 'It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations,' indicating that Israel's invasion is a kind of continuation of the 'flood' to annihilate sin, personified by the Anakites. Perhaps Joshua's use of חרם in reference to the Anakites (Josh 11:21) is part of the 'logic of the flood' that annihilates everything that came before (Komarnytskyy, *"Giuda per primo"*, 151–152).

44 Double accounts of the same event are common in Enneateuch texts, especially in the texts of Deut, Josh, Judg and Sam. In particular, 'double accounts' (or 'doublets') are often included in texts conveying the so-called 'battle report', which may suggest that these messages were of a certain form that later on, being written down, were combined with other oral traditions concerning the same event, resulting in the impression that a given story was told twice (D.M. Gunn, "Narrative Patterns and Oral Tradition in Judges and Samuel," *VT* 24/3 [1974] 286–288). 'It is characteristic of the legend, and oral tradition in general, that it exists in the form of variants. These variants show the adaptation of the legend "from place to place" and "age to age" according to the universal law of change' (Nahkola, *Double Narratives in the Old Testament*, 136).

45 How could a shepherd know how to play a string instrument, a tool of fortune-tellers and a hobby of the aristocracy? (McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, 56–57).

a shepherd-teenager. The common motif in the representations of David is his origin – both 'the shepherd' and 'the warrior' are presented as the sons of Jesse, the Bethlehemite.

David-'the shepherd' seems the same person as David-'the warrior' and, starting from 1 Sam 18, the reader follows the fate of only the latter. He is still the son of his father Jesse, and his brothers join his band (1 Sam 22:1), although previously they were Saul's soldiers and David was not (1 Sam 17:13–14). In the course of the narrative, the trace of the older brothers is lost and the 'sons of Zeruiah', who according to 1 Chron 2:16 are also his relatives, come to the fore. David finds a hiding place for his father and the rest of his family in Mizpeh of Moab, at the local king's house (1 Sam 22:3–4), which may be the same city as Mizpeh in Gilead, and together with his band (1 Sam 22:2) sets out on a journey that is to take him to the throne of Israel. Thus begins the story of 'David's rise' (commonly known as the 'History of David's rise', HDR) which clearly takes the form of a monomyth – David, fleeing from royal power returns as a king, which also proves that the legend of the king was created based on a literary form popular at that time.

In the DH, David's genealogy can be found in 1 Sam 17:12: 'David was the son of an Ephrathite, the one who came from Bethlehem of Judah, and his name was Jesse, and he had eight sons.'[46] In the Old Testament, Ephrathites are often understood as 'Ephraimites', especially due to the pericope in Judg 12:1–6[47] (the war between Ephraim and Gilead), in 1 Sam 1:1 and 1 Kings 11:26, although in the texts about Jesse and Elimelech (Rt 1:2), who are also called 'Ephrathitess' (and both come from Bethlehem), there is no mention of their Ephraimite origin.[48] The suggestion here is that those individuals rather came from Ephrat, which may be a certain toponym or territory in Judah near Bethlehem.[49]

David's association with Bethlehem of Judah (not to be confused with Bethlehem of Zebulun, Josh 19:15; Judg 12:8–10) is all but emphasised by showing that location as his hometown, from which he came and to which he returned to see the graves of his ancestors (2 Sam 2:32) and to participate in family worship (1 Sam 16:4–5; 20:6). It is puzzling that

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46 Of particular note is the fact that David is the 'eighth son' according to 1 Sam 16:6–10 and 17:12–15, and the seventh son according to 1 Chron 2:13–15. In the first reference, Jesse introduces 'his seven sons' (16,10) and then the 'younger' of the 'boys'. In the passage: הֲתַמּוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד שָׁאַר הַקָּטָן, '[...] are those all the boys? There is still one left, a little one [...]' (16,11), Jesse calls David not בֵּן (16,10), like the others, but נַעַר. Given the symbolic nature of the number 7, one would expect Jesse in 1 Sam to have seven sons, leading some exegetes to think that in this way the authors of 1 Sam wanted to emphasise David's low position even on the symbolic plane. Emphasising the importance of the 'seventh son' would be symbolic in that culture; to be the 'eighth' literally means to be a 'nobody' (McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, 53).

47 The tendency to translate the phrase: 'Are you an Ephraimite?' (Judg 12:5) into modern languages are evident attempts to harmonise the text with the context of the utterance, since the Hebrew text, Greek, Latin and Aramaic translations attest to the variant: 'Are you an Ephrathite?'.

48 In Rt 1:2, Elimelech and his family are called Ephrathites from Bethlehem of Judah (אֶפְרָתִים מִבֵּית לֶחֶם יְהוּדָה); Booz, the ancestor of David (according to Rt 2:3), also belongs to that family. In 1 Sam 1:1, Elkanah, a native of Mount Ephraim (הַר אֶפְרָיִם), father of the prophet Samuel, is introduced as אֶפְרָתִי. Finally, 1 Kings 11:26 depicts the first king of northern Israel, Jeroboam I, also as an Ephrathite: וְיָרָבְעָם בֶּן־נְבָט אֶפְרָתִי מִן־הַצְּרֵדָה, from the city of צְרֵדָה, of unknown location. Possibly the modern toponym ʿĒn Ṣerēda in the mountainous part of Samaria (*HALOT* III, 1053) is derived from that name.

49 A. Demsky, "The Clans of Ephrath: Their Territory and History," *TA* 13/1 (1986) 46–59.

David's father, Jesse, is introduced as Bethlehemite in the בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי form, used only four times in the BH – three times in the reference to David's father (1 Sam 16:1, 18; 17:58) and once to the father of Elchanan, who 'slew Goliath of Gath, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam' (2 Sam 21:19). From that, one may conclude that there is a tradition according to which a certain warrior – 'Bethlehemite' (בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי) defeated the giant Goliath of Gath.

Mentions of defeating Goliath or a similar mythical giant are also found in 2 Sam 21:19 and 21:20–21. In 2 Sam 21:19, Goliath of Gath is defeated by Elchanan, a Bethlehemite. Elchanan is mentioned twice in 2 Sam (21:18; 23:24) and twice in 1 Kings (11:26; 20:5). Perhaps the heroic deed of the Bethlehemite Elchanan was later attributed to David, or David was once known as 'Elchanan'[50] – before he started to use his Philistine nickname (*Δαι-ϝιδ*). Only in the case of the fathers of David (יִשַׁי) and Elchanan (יַעֲרֵי אֹרְגִים) the TM uses the spelling בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי (Bethlehemite). In 2 Sam 23:24 and 1 Chron 11:26, Elchanan is the son of דּוֹדוֹ מִבֵּית לֶחֶם || דֹּדוֹ בֵּית לֶחֶם, however, his father does not appear as an independent character but the similarity of the writing of the names דּוֹדוֹ (דֹּדוֹ) and דָּוִד is puzzling. Even more weird is the verse 1 Kings 20:5: וַיַּךְ אֶלְחָנָן בֶּן־יָעוּר אֶת־לַחְמִי אֲחִי גָלְיָת ('and Elchanan the son of Jair killed Lachmi the brother of Goliath'), in which Elchanan's father[51] is no longer called בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי (Bethlehemite), while Elchanan kills לַחְמִי, a brother of Goliath. The parallels between the scene of the fight in the Valley of Elah and the tradition about Elchanan are quite numerous: Elchanan/David – Goliath; the origin of both characters; בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי – לַחְמִי; mentions of Gath. Is it possible that the variant in 1 Kings 20:5 is the original version of the event, later corrected so that David (דָּוִד) becomes the protagonist instead of Elchanan (the son of דֹד), and the antagonist's name לַחְמִי is understood as the city of birth of the hero (בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי)?[52]

50   R. Klein, *1 Samuel* (WBC 10; Waco, TX: Word Books 1983) 173.

51   Bearing the name יָעוּר, which may be a variant of the name ישי through the ligature ש/עו (F. Polak, "Conceptions of the Past and Sociocultural Grounding in the Books of Samuel," *History, Memory, Hebrew Scriptures: A Festschrift for Ehud Ben Zvi* [eds. I.D. Wilson – D. Edelman] [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2015] 121, note 21).

52   The historiographical data concerning the city of Bethlehem of Judah, unlike other cities of Judah (mainly Hebron and the surrounding areas, see above), do not allow to conclude that the events described in the books of Samuel, taking place in Bethlehem, could have occurred in that city in the period referred to in Ir I – Ir IIA. Excavations of ancient cemeteries at Khalet al-Jam'a and Jebel Dhaher testify that the city experienced a decline during the LB- Ir I period, revived in Ir IIA–B (960–701) and began to develop in Ir IIC–III (701–586) (L. Nigro, "Le necropoli di Betlemme e la storia della città nel II e I millennio a.C.," *Holy Land. Archaeology on Either Side: Archaeological Essays in Honour of Eugenio Alliata, ofm* [eds. A. Coniglio – A. Ricco] [Collectio Maior 57; Milano: Edizioni Terra Santa 2020] 39–44). Such a chronology confirms the data in 2 Kings 11:6 about the expansion of Bethlehem by Rehoboam but does not confirm the existence of the city in the time of David. It is difficult to imagine that ancient Bêth-Leḥem, probably an important sanctuary of one of the Canaanite deities (Lehem?, Horon?, 'Anat?) dating back to the Bronze Age (T. Vuk, *Bibbia tra orientalistica e storiografia: una introduzione* [Analecta 91; Milano: Edizioni Terra Santa 2021] 69–76; N. Na'aman, "On Gods and Scribal Traditions in the Amarna Letters," *UF* 22 [1990] 252–254), known from the Amarna Letters as URUÉ-dNIN.URTA under the protection of the ruler of Jerusalem (9 km away from Bethlehem, Letter EA 290, W. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press 1992] 333–334), was under

Another tradition about the death of the alleged Goliath can be found in 2 Sam 21:20–21, where a certain 'man of great stature' from Gath, 'who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot,' a pre-historic giant-Rephaite, is killed by 'Jonathan, son of Shimei, brother of David' (2 Sam 21:20–21).

David's relations with the inhabitants of pre-monarchical Judah are also ambiguously shown. The Judeans are rather hostile towards David, who is a fugitive: hiding in the Cave of Adullam, David receives an oracle from the prophet Gad to go to Judah (1 Sam 22:5), where he saves the city of Keilah from an invasion by the Philistines, for which he is met with great ingratitude – the inhabitants of the city were ready to hand him over to Saul (1 Sam 23:1–13); the inhabitants of the Desert of Zif betray him and he is pursued by punitive expeditions (1 Sam 23:14–24; 26:1–25); he is tracked down and handed over to Saul by the inhabitants of Ein Gedi (1 Sam 24:2).

Likewise, David does not 'remain indebted' to those who refuse to recognise his royal ambitions: Nabal, the Calebite, who does not recognise David's right to his property ('Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?', 1 Sam 25:10) and firmly refuses his 'services' (which are similar to extortion), dies suddenly 'under unexplained circumstances' and David 'seizes' his wife, which may be an expression of taking over his property, since the seizure of the ruler's harem was a symbol of taking over the power of the one defeated by the conqueror.

The peak of that hostility can be found in chapter 1 Sam 27, where David is shown as a subject of the king of Gath, who leads punitive expeditions against the inhabitants of Judah:

> Whenever David attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel, and returned and came to Achish. Achish said: «Where were you today on the war expedition?» David said: «In the Negev of Judah. In the Negev of the Yerachmeelite. In the Negev of the Kenites». David left neither man nor woman alive to bring them to Gath. He stated: «Lest they should inform on us, saying: Thus David did. And thus was his behaviour all the time he dwelt in the country of the Philistines». (1 Sam 27:9–11)

The story in 1 Sam 27 does not seem connected to the tradition contained in 1 Sam 21:11–16, in which David also appeared before Achish (1 Sam 21:11–16) but, fearing for his life, had to pretend to be mad and was banished from the court. The pericope in 1 Sam 27 begins the narrative of David, a Philistine subject, ruler of the city of Ziklag, who becomes king of Judah and, in a few years, lord of the Central Highlands, the mountains of Judah and Samaria.

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the rule of the 'Judeans' or 'Ephrathites' at the time, as Jerusalem of the Jebusites bravely faced all the invaders in that period. Unless they were allies/subjects of the Jebusites at the time.

3. David vs. the House of Saul

1 Sam 27, which introduces the reader to David as a Philistine warrior, may be the oldest mention of David, additionally (if the David storyline with the omission of the later poetic additions in 1 Sam 27 – 2 Sam 5 is considered) it is the most literarily consistent one: a certain mercenary, presumably named *Δαι-ϝιδ*, a subject of King Achish of Gath, a ruler of the Philistine city of Ziklag (presumably ʽτεῖχη λευκά', ʽwhite walls'),[53] taking advantage of the fall of Saul's kingdom conquers the heights of Hebron and then, in a war with Saul's heirs, gathers Israel around him, winning the war against Abner, the former commander of the dead king's army, destroying all members of Saul's family. This is how David became unreachable to the Philistines, who had no military advantage in the mountainous area and were limited to only local fights in the western foothills.

A comparative analysis of the two pericopes of the ʽdoublet' about David's stay with the Philistines (1 Sam 21:11–15 ‖ 1 Sam 27) indicates that 21:11–15 is a clearly later text. The text of 1 Sam 27, although marked by features of the later redaction,[54] most closely corresponds to the realities of the 10th–9th centuries in terms of the position of the city of Gath in the political arena and the actions of David's band, similar to the bands of Habiru from the turn of the Late Bronze – Ir I eras.[55] Therefore, as Finkelstein points out, 1 Sam 27 may be one of the texts reaching back to the actual historical memory of a given period.[56]

Which ʽDavid' is described in the scene of humbling before Achish in 1 Sam 21:11–15, especially in relation to the ʽdoublet' in chapter 27? It is logical to assume that 1 Sam 21 belongs to the ʽshepherd' tradition, because of the humble attitude, and 1 Sam 27 fits perfectly with the image of the fugitive soldier playing the role of an ʽabrek'.[57] However, David's humble attitude towards Achish rather corresponds with the apologetic behaviour of an ʽabrek': (ʽWhom did the king of Israel go after? After whom are you pursuing? After a dead dog, after one flea?', 1 Sam 24:15). Being humble before Saul and Jonathan is associated with

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53   Schneider, "The Philistine Language," 569–576.

54   E.g. the name ʽAchish' may be a later borrowing of the name of the seventh-century ruler of Ekron (G. Hentschel, "David's Flight to the King of Gath," *David in the Desert: Tradition and Redaction in the "History of David's Rise"* [eds. H. Bezzel – R.G. Kratz] [BZAW 514; Berlin: De Gruyter 2021] 229–230).

55   I. Finkelstein, "Geographical and Historical Realities behind the Earliest Layer in the David Story," *SJOT* 27 (2013) 136.

56   ʽBeing part of the stories of David's life as an outlaw on the southern fringe of the highlands and his dealings with the king of Gath, the material about his sojourn in Ziklag (1 Sam 27,6; parts of 1 Sam 30) and the spoil of Amalek (1 Sam 30, 26–31) probably belongs to the early southern layer' (Finkelstein, "Geographical and Historical Realities behind the Earliest Layer in the David Story," 134). Finkelstein also excludes the occurrence of any religious or apologetic motifs in the oldest legends of David (dating from the 9th century at the latest), which he dates to the 9th– 8th century (*ibidem*, 134–137).

57   *Abrek* – a term derived from North Caucasian folklore to describe the figure of the noble bandit, a social phenomenon of a hero who opposes the official unjust authorities and therefore forced to hide in mountainous areas inaccessible to them. The abrek's social and religious values meet with the approval of the local population, who sympathise with him and support him, (cf. R. Gould, "Transgressive Sanctity: The Abrek in Chechen Culture," *Kritika* 8/2 [2007] 271–306). David, forced by an unjust king to flee, an honest and pious outlaw warrior, fits the character of ʽabrek' more than any other culturally occurring figure of the noble highwayman.

the apologetic motif, while the attitude of a 'shepherd' is beyond reproach. Only a man as artistic as Saul's harpist could have pretended to be mentally retarded before Achish, rather than an inexperienced shepherd, who, in 1 Sam 17 appears as a 'marble-stiff' ancient hero, as if sculpted by Michelangelo. It is difficult to imagine that the hero who with the name יהוה on his lips had miraculously defeated the warrior from Gath could humiliate himself in such a way before his king (with Goliath's sword in his hand on top of that, cf. 1 Sam 21:10). In the case of the 'abrek', in turn, the attempt at an apologetic explanation of those suspicious relations is very appropriate since David's close ties with the Philistines were apparently well known to his contemporaries and posterity. Given that 1 Sam 21:12 quotes 1 Sam 18:7, one can assume that the first pericope is the product of an editor, the apologist of the 'abrek'.

1 Sam 27, however, serves one purpose only – to include in the narrative the fact of David's active participation in the pacification expeditions on the side of the Philistines.[58] That fact could have been omitted – the narrative could have proceeded directly from David in the desert to Saul's death, at most with the mention in 1 Sam 21:11–15 of a certain disgraceful episode in his biography, testifying to the hero's cunning. But 1 Sam 27, even when well integrated into the narrative, remains 'alien' to the attitude of the 'abrek', previously the wrong fugitive harpist, whose deeds from 1 Sam 27 onwards take on a military character with signs of mass genocide.

David's role in Saul's death during the battle of Gilboa is also unclear. With great enthusiasm, David accepts the proposal of Achish to participate in the war against Israel on the side of the Philistines (1 Sam 28:1–2) and accepts the opposition of the other Philistines with indignation (1 Sam 29:8). It is unclear whether the scene of the opposition of the other Philistine commanders is not a later editorial addition intended to relieve David of his duty to shed the blood of the Israelites and to compromise the life of the Lord's anointed, since later the descendants of Saul held David responsible for the king's death ('Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty! The Lord has brought back upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have become king!', 2 Sam 16:7–8). Shimei, a Benjamite, Saul's relative and David's accuser, might have been aware of his real involvement in the death of the king of Israel thanks to his contacts with the Philistine court in Gath (1 Kings 2:39–40).[59]

A terrible fate awaited the members of Saul's family: Saul's son and successor Ishbaal was killed as a result of a conspiracy (2 Sam 4); Meribbaal, the son of Jonathan (1 Sam 9, according to 2 Sam 19:25 – Saul's son), remained with David as a hostage and was forced to humiliate himself (2 Sam 19:29), which, most likely, did not save his life – deprived of his property (2 Sam 16:4) he was murdered together with other members of Saul's family with

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58   2 Sam 21–24 and especially 23:8–39 is a sign that the writers wanted to preserve the older text as much as possible, even if it did not fit the newly arranged narrative and clearly contradicted what had been written earlier.

59   C. Ehrlich, "David and Achish: Remembrance of Things Past, Present, or Future?," *David in the Desert: Tradition and Redaction in the "History of David's Rise"* (eds. H. Bezzel – R.G. Kratz) (BZAW 514; Berlin: De Gruyter 2021) 240.

the consent (on order?) of David (2 Sam 21:8–9);[60] Shimei was also murdered by Solomon on the order of David, already on his deathbed (1 Kings 2:9). Finally, David seems to be attempting to destroy the very memory of Saul's family by taking the bones of Saul and Jonathan from Jabesh in Gilead (2 Sam 21:10–14), a city associated with the memory of Saul's glorious days (1 Sam 11), apparently allied to that dynasty, which became the resting place of his corpse (1 Sam 31:11–13) and the memorial (if not the cult) of the king of Israel.[61]

4. David vs. His Surrounding

'The king makes the court,' and David's court had little in common with the idealised image of Israel as an amphictyony of the twelve tribes of Jacob's descendants. This is particularly evident when the text departs from its usual apologetic stance and attempts to give the reader a chronicle of history and its characters.

Very telling is the scene at the bedside of the dying king, when David gives instructions to his successor: Solomon was to murder two men – Joab, the son of Zeruiah, and Shimei, a relative of Saul. Those two figures symbolise two dangers to the monarch – another dynasty that disputes the unquestionable right to the throne and an internal enemy who, although loyal, acts independently, undermining the sacredness of the king's authority.

Joab, the son of Zeruiah, David's most faithful servant, his military leader and commander of his bodyguard, according to 1 Kings 2:5, was blamed for the death of Abner and Amasa. Both characters are also quite significant for understanding the circumstances in which David came to power and ruled.

Abner, the commander of Saul's army and faithful to him even after his death, fighting in the interests of his son Ishbaal, refuses to recognise David's divine anointing, calling him the 'commander of the Calebites,'[62] i.e., of the Hebronites, since once Hebron

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60   2 Sam 21:7 and 2 Sam 21:8 mention 'Mephibosheth', although with different spellings (מְפִי־בֹשֶׁת and מְפִבֹשֶׁת, respectively), which according to widespread opinion is an alternative (pejorative?) name for Meribbaal, the son of Jonathan (M. Avioz, "The Names Mephibosheth and Ishbosheth Reconsidered," *JANES* 32/1 [2011] 11–20). Based on another theory, 'Mephibosheth' in 2 Sam 21:7–8 may be the same person as Ishbaal/Ishbosheth, Saul's son and heir, and the description of his death in 2 Sam 21:8 follows another tradition according to which Saul's heir was murdered not by vicious traitors (2 Sam 4) but by David himself (J. Bailey, "The Assassination of Mephibosheth: Royal and Redactional Intrigue in the Book of Samuel," *JSOT* 44/2 [2019] 279–289).

61   This city, faithful to Saul, was probably destroyed, traces of which can be found in Judg 21:8–14, where Jabesh in Gilead is demolished. A quite clear anti-Benjaminite motif in the second epilogue of the book of Judges (Judg 19–21), comparing Benjamin and its capital Gibeah – the capital of King Saul (1 Sam 10:26; 11:4; 15:34 passim) – with Sodom, mentions the destruction of Jabesh in Gilead for loyalty to Benjaminites, although the city was quite distant from the scene of the events and the reason for its demolition was made up. The abduction of the daughters of Jabesh of Gilead and handing them over to the surviving Benjaminites for them to become their wives may be evidence of the kinship of the inhabitants of Jabesh with Benjamin.

62   This is how the meaning of Abner's angry cry towards Ishbaal should be understood: הֲרֹאשׁ כֶּלֶב אָנֹכִי אֲשֶׁר לִיהוּדָה (2 Sam 3:8), which the Greek translates: μὴ κεφαλὴ κυνὸς ἐγώ εἰμι (the phrase אֲשֶׁר לִיהוּדָה in the LXX is omitted) and is usually (in Greek, Latin and modern translations) translated as: 'Am I a dog's head (belonging to

and the surrounding areas were given to Caleb and his family (Josh 14:6–15; 15:13–19; Judg 1:10–15, 20). Later on, Abner recognises David's authority, perhaps due to David's Ephrataean background. If the identity of the Ephrathites and Ephraimites is recognised, then Abner, a Benjaminite, and David, an Ephraimite, would both belong to the 'house of Joseph' (cf. 2 Sam 19:21). Perhaps this was the intention of presenting David as an Ephrathite in that historical situation. To both the Ephraimites (as an Ephrathite) and the people of Judah (as a Bethlehemite), he seemed to be the ideal compromise, someone able to unite both societies – the kingdom of Saul and the community of Judah emerging around Hebron:

> David belonged to one of the Ephraimite families who settled in the northern part of the Judean hills, which eventually amalgamated with the Judean population and affiliated themselves with the tribe of Judah. From a distant vantage point David could be identified as either or both, Judahite and Ephraimite. This understanding of David's origin may illuminate some aspects of his history and reign. It may explain the antagonistic attitude of some of the older and more established elements of the tribe of Judah such as Nabal the Calebite (1 Sam. 25:19) or the inhabitants of Ziph (1 Sam. 26:1), and it provides another context for his anointing by Samuel, the Ephraimite prophet. It may also explain David's appeal to the northern tribes, the relatively smooth transfer of loyalty from Saul's house to him (2 Sam. 5:1–4), and his success in establishing the united kingdom.[63]

But Abner was Saul's brother (cousin) (1 Sam 14:50), therefore he had to die.

Amasa was the commander of Absalom's army, a man from the South, a relative of Joab (2 Sam 17:25), who joined David a bit later as commander of the army of Judah (2 Sam 19:14–16). The fate of Amasa is closely linked to the metamorphosis in David's self-determination: after the uprising of the whole of Israel and Judah against David, which was suppressed mainly by mercenary forces, David understood that the compromise figure of the 'Ephrathite' had a certain weakness consisting in not offering support in the tribal elites. A strong tribe that supports a dynasty, like the Benjaminites in relation to Saul, can be an important factor in the stability of a monarchy, which is why after Absalom's defeat, David proposed a deal to the Judeans – he declared himself a Judean for them to become the royal tribe (2 Sam 19:12–13) and support David against the tribes of the North. The gesture confirming David's decision was to be, i.e., the appointment of Amasa as commander instead of the faithful and cruel Joab, the son of Zeruiah.

Judah)?'. A more coherent and contextually logical translation would be: 'Am I the commander of the Calebites?' ('Caleb' as a collective person) because after Abner is accused by the heir to the throne of usurping power by taking over the harem of the late King Saul (2 Sam 3:6–10), the leader replies that he is not like David, also a former commander of Saul's army, and now 'ראשׁ כלב', who intends to take power away from the house of Saul, but the one who defends this dynasty (Komarnytskyy, *"Giuda per primo"*, 198).

63   S. Japhet, "Was David a Judahite or an Ephraimite? Light from the Genealogies," *Let Us Go Up to Zion: Essays in Honour of H. G. M. Williamson on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (eds. I. Provan – M. Boda) (VTSup 153; Leiden: Brill 2012) 305.

Prior to that, the Judeans had shown little favour towards King David, at least since his move to Jerusalem. Absalom, having undertaken a revolt against David, was immediately recognised as king in Hebron, the heart of Judah. And if in the time of Saul Hebron was not yet seen as a city of Judah,[64] during David's reign Hebron and the other cities of the Hebron Hills and the Negev, belonging to the Calebites, Kenites, Jerachmeelites and other tribes, began to form a certain cultural unity, a 'great Judah'.[65] It was this newly-formed power from the South that was chosen by David. The Judeans immediately came into conflict with the tribes of the North, i.e., with the tribes of 'Saul's Israel' (2 Sam 19:42–44), and it is to the Judeans that David turns to suppress the Israelite uprising led by the Benjaminites (2 Sam 20:4). However, Joab murders Amasa, and his army of mercenaries seemed quite self-sufficient to intimidate the Judeans (2 Sam 20:7–13) and claim victory over 'the whole Israel' (2 Sam 2:17–18; 18; 20:14–22).

Who were those mercenaries, the mysterious Kerethites and Pelethites, David's most loyal servants? The Kerethites are mentioned already in 1 Sam 30:14 as a population, inhabiting the 'Negev of the Kerethites', which together with the 'Negev of Judah' and the 'Negev of Caleb' was hostile to the Amalekites, but was not a target for David in the service of the Philistines,[66] which would prove that the Kerethites were at least allied with the Philistines. As per the prophets Ezekiel and Zephaniah, the Kerethites were people living by the sea, identified with the Philistines (Ezek 25:15–16; Zeph 2:5–7). In other passages of the historical books, the Keretites and the Pelethites appear together as a single force (2 Sam 8:18; 15:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kings 1:38, 44; 1 Kings 18:17), who, according to one of hypotheses, may have been mercenaries from the Sea Peoples (Cretans and Philistines, respectively).[67] It is those הַכְּרֵתִי וְהַפְּלֵתִי who went into exile with David (2 Sam 15:18) and

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64   In 2 Sam 2:4, the 'men of Judah' come to Hebron (possibly controlled by the Calebites), indicating that Hebron was not seen as a city belonging to the tribe of Judah (C. Balzaretti, *1–2 Sam.* [I libri Biblici: Primo Testamento 8; Milano: Paoline 2020] 355).

65   A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC 11; Dallas: Word Books 1989) 24. Judah/Judea, becoming a confederation of tribes, will later be seen as one of the 'tribes' of Israel, the tribe of Judah, the son of Jacob-Israel. The concept of the 12 tribes is maintained in later redactions of the Enneateuch but seems to be almost completely ignored both in the Sam-Kings narrative as well as in the earlier southern traditions, where instead of the tribes – 'sons' of Israel there are tribes inhabiting those areas (some of them later identified with 'Judah', others were listed as enemies). While representatives of the northern tribes can still be found among David's guards (2 Sam 23:8–39) or Solomon's officials (1 Kings 4), the presence of representatives of the southern tribes is not emphasised. It is possible that the people in the south considered themselves as Ephrathite, Kenites or Calebites, just as those in the north considered themselves as Ephraimites, Benjaminites or Zebulonites, i.e. they had a different identity paradigm than the tribes that made up Saul's kingdom: 'In the identification of David himself, we see the echoes of an earlier Judahite system, one that did not survive. The concept of the "twelve tribes of Israel" developed from an originally smaller northern tradition that did not include the south, could accommodate these narratives in their final form, but did not completely eradicate what they had been like before.' (A. Tobolowsky, "Othniel, David, Solomon: Additional Evidence of the Late Development of Normative Tribal Concepts in the South," *ZAW* 131/2 [2019] 208–209).

66   'Achish said: «Where were you today on the war expedition?» David said: «In the Negev of Judah. In the Negev of the Yerachmeelite. In the Negev of the Kenites»' (1 Sam 27:10).

67   D.T. Tsumura, *The Second Book of Samuel* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2019) 159–160. Equally probable seems to be the hypothesis that the formula וְהַכְּרֵתִי וְהַפְּלֵתִי was a popular slogan in those days to call

gained victory for him over the united army of Israel and Judah (2 Sam 17–18). It is them who humiliated the army of Judah and pacified the rebellion in Israel (2 Sam 20). Finally, it is them who ensured Solomon's ascension to the throne, against the will of the royal family, the court elite and the priesthood (1 Kings 1). The most frequently mentioned commander of the Davidic 'janissaries' is Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, mentioned in the appendix to 2 Sam as one of David's heroes who 'killed […] an Egyptian of enormous stature: the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but he went down to him with a club and snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear'[68] (2 Sam 23:21), and who, in 1 Kings 2, is depicted as an executioner in the service of Solomon, murdering the enemies of the new king one by one: Adonijah, Solomon's brother and rival, Joab the son of Zeruiah and Shimei, a relative of Saul.

Also Joab, the son of Zeruiah, the faithful commander of David's army, had his soldiers ('אַנְשֵׁי יוֹאָב', 2 Sam 20:7). While still in David's band, when he was hiding away from Saul in the desert (1 Sam 26:6), Joab became commander of David's select army, הַצָּבָא הַגִּבֹּרִים (2 Sam 10:7), which may have included some of characters from the list found in 2 Sam 23:8–39, who were not connected by kinship or any political ties.[69] Joab contributed to many victories of David, fulfilled the order to murder Uriah, the Hittite,[70] and remained faithful to David in all the civil wars. In 2 Sam 18:2, Joab – together with his brother Abishai and Ittai of Gath (a foreigner, cf. 2 Sam 15:19) – leads an army loyal to David and defeats the united army of Israel.[71] Saul chose the bravest sons from the tribes of Israel (1 Sam 14:52), but who were the 'trustees' of David's?

The Kerethites, the Pelethites, the mercenaries of unknown origin who had a decisive influence at King David's court – they were the ones who 'made' David the king. Therefore the question arises of how it was possible for 'David from the tribe of Judah' to come to power and maintain it 'on the bayonets' of foreigners.

Philistine mercenaries – due to its rhyming sound and perhaps due to its similarity to other words meaning something alien or some force of chaos, similar to תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ in Gen 1, 2.

68   The mention of the duel with the giant may refer to the legend of Goliath.

69   Only some of the listed soldiers were of Judean origin, the rest came from the North or from outside Israel.

70   Uriah the Hittite was certainly a foreigner, a guard of David, living next to the king's house with his wife. One may assume that the army of foreign mercenaries was willing to support Solomon, the son of Bathsheba (most likely also a foreign woman from the circle of those mercenaries), rather than Adonijah.

71   In 1 Kings 2, Joab made the wrong choice by opposing the demands of Solomon's supporters, of whom only Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, with his 'Kerethites-Peletites', was endowed with real power, therefore Joab had to die along with another pretender to the throne and a relative of Saul challenging God's choice of that bloody dynasty.

5. Δαι-ϝιδ

The mention of the 'Philistine period' in David's life in 1 Sam 21:11–15 and 1 Sam 27 may indicate that David – in the memory of the Israelites – was indeed somehow associated with Gath and its king, who was considered the main reason for the death of Saul and his family. It seems quite possible that this is an attempt to connect the figure of David, the king of Israel, with the fact of his earlier presence at the Philistine court – as a servant. From the point of view of the creator of the narrative, it would be better if that detail, i.e., David's controversial relationship with the Philistines that discredits the protagonist, was absent. The 'doublet' about David's stay in Gath, found in the cycle, is a double attempt to deal with that issue and to present it in a manner favourable to David. And while the first text (1 Sam 21:11–15) seeks to completely justify David, blaming the situation on Saul's madness, the parallel story, although accompanied by extensive apologetic commentary, provides some inconvenient but also key facts from David's biography. It is 1 Sam 27 that explains how David was able to take over the power in Israel.

Thus, the story of David's rise to power seems to contain two alternative beginnings. The first one is the 'way of the abrek' – a courtier who was lied to and who, condemned to endure the injustice of the world, reached the lowest point of his journey in the scene of humbling himself before the Philistine ruler from Gath (1 Sam 21:11–15). To the image of the 'abrek', in addition to the 'scene before Achish', belongs the pericope about the event at Nob, as well as the clashes with the local population in the desert, the run away from Saul – in a word, all the scenes in which David appears as a hero chased by external forces of evil.

However, if one takes as a starting point the scene in which David is a military leader in the Philistine city of Ziklag, the task of whom was the pacification of the border people (1 Sam 27:8–11b), it is possible to trace a somewhat different biography – of a hero who went from being a Philistine satrap to becoming the ruler of a mountainous locality with its capital in Hebron. In the final chapters of the HDR narrative, it is already impossible to distinguish which 'David' is the editor talking about: the Philistine of Ziklag or the 'abrek' of Bethlehem. Effectiveness, ruthlessness or calculating cruelty – those are not the features of the noble 'abrek' but of the 'Philistine'. A question might be posed of who was the prototype of David and why he was so important for posterity that the apologist writers chose to leave the rather unpleasant details of his biography in the text, limiting themselves only to their reinterpretation.

The hero of Ziklag does not humiliate himself in front of the Philistines, he does not run away from anyone, on the contrary: it is his army that can force all opponents to flee. While still in Ziklag, David sought to establish contacts with the people he was conquering, sending them signs of a desire to improve the relations (1 Sam 30:26–31), and in this way, he won over the tribes of the South, the territories uncontrolled by the greater powers. Taking advantage of Saul's death (irrespective of whether the protagonist participated in the event or not), David conquered (or occupied without a fight) the Hebron Highlands (the peaks of Judah or 'the mountain of Judah', cf. Josh 11:16, 21) and

gathered numerous semi-nomadic tribes around him to cut himself off from Gath and other Philistine cities.

The Philistines, unlike the mountain people, did not know how to fight in mountainous terrain, nor did they have much aspiration to conquer the Negev.[72] Taking advantage of the presence of proven 'soldiers of fortune' and Philistine mercenaries, David serves as an alternative to the declining dynasty of Saul in mountainous Judah. 'Saul's Israel' could not afford to wage war against two strong enemies at the same time – the Philistines from the west (who already partially occupied the Central Highlands, cf. 1 Sam 13–14; 2 Sam 5:18–25) and David from the south.

The most coherent literary line seems to be 1 Sam 27:5–12; 28:1–2; 29(?); 30–31; 2 Sam 2:2–4; 5:1–7 ff.., according to which a Philistine leader called David (or similar), the administrator of the city of Ziklag (or a place with a similar name), conquered the Hebron Highlands and was recognised by the local tribes as a commander. Such a hypothesis is supported, on the one hand, by an analysis of the proper names 'David', 'Ziklag' and 'Goliath' (see above) and, on the other hand, it is testified in its favour by archaeological data which indicate that the tri-city of Hebron fell into ruin and was later rebuilt during the Ir I – Ir IIA period.[73]

Starting from 1 Sam 27, David's personality changes: he is no longer a hunted fugitive who hides away in caves, being a relatively weak enemy, but becomes a leader who pacifies the surrounding peoples – the inhabitants of the Negev, the Amalekites and the Philistines. At the same time, he methodically 'removes' his opponents, both real and potential, wins several clashes with neighbouring nations (1 Kings 11:14–22) and suppresses rebellions using a professional army.

How did the 'abrek', who truly avoided confrontation with Saul's expedition, who wandered in foreign territory, become the leader of the Philistine mercenaries who were able to conquer the entire South, occupy the dominant strongholds of the Hebron Highlands, defeat the Philistines and conquer Gath (2 Sam 8)? The image of David, the lord of the southern mountains, entering into conflict with the Philistines in the west, with the Amalekites in the south, with the Ammonites in the east,[74] and waging wars with Abner over the years

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[72]   At the beginning of the 12th century, the Negev lost its importance as a commercial route within the Egyptian empire (N. Panitz-Cohen, "The Southern Levant (Cisjordan) during the Late Bronze Age," *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant* [eds. M. Steiner – A. Killebrew] [Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014] 652–653; A. Gilboa, "The Southern Levant (Cisjordan) during the Iron Age I Period," *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant* [eds. M. Steiner – A. Killebrew] [Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014] 629–631).

[73]   In the LB-Ir I era, the southern hills were sparsely settled, numbering at most 18 settlements, few of which survived the great population displacements of the Late Bronze Age collapse, which led to the disappearance of Hebron, Hormah, Arad *et al.* (Ben-Shlomo, "New Evidence of Iron Age II Fortifications at Tel Hebron," 63–87; K. van Bekkum, "Coexistence as Guilt: Iron I Memories in Judges 1," *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History* [eds. G. Galil – A. Gilboa] [AOAT 392; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 2012] 539–540).

[74]   It is not clear whether the fights with the Ammonites belong to the historical memory of the time of the founding of Judah, or whether it is rather a historical projection of later events, for example, the wars of Jeroboam II

is at odds with the image of the 'abrek' who was afraid of each of them. Was he supported by the tribes of future Judah? However, observing how willingly those people betrayed him to Saul, how gladly Hebron supported Absalom just a few years later, and how easy it was for David to capture their cities,[75] one can conclude that: (1) the local semi-nomadic people did not like David; (2) they were not a significant military force.

The authority of David the 'warlord' was so high that the Philistine troops remained loyal to him, supposedly a Judean, and turned their weapons against their compatriots. The reason could have been that David was their compatriot, only more broad-minded, like Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan, who were able to expand their territories by including local communities in their civilisation project, which in David's case was called the 'Great Judah'.

What reason is there to consider 1 Sam 27 as a separate narrative? This is indicated by the parallelism with the passage 21:11–15, which seems to be an organic part of the story of the 'abrek'. Chapter 27, on the contrary, is not part of it, because the noble 'abrek' would not serve the enemy as a murderer of his future subjects. 1 Sam 21:11–15, in turn, fits perfectly into the form of the monomyth[76] as a classic *nadir* – a humiliated David at the feet of the Philistine, who was also humiliated later on. Thus, if 27 belongs to another tradition, where is its origin? It might have been ignored and omitted by the editor or nothing was known about the origin of the David described in 1 Sam 27, or the later reader was simply spared the details of the origin of their great founder. Moreover, it is surprising that the most important person in the is deprived of the legend about his miraculous birth, and the very fact of anointing him king in 1 Sam 16 is a later, dramatically expanded editorial 'doublet' of the earlier mention in 2 Sam 2:4a–b.

When did the story of David begin to be written, and what was it based on? G. Galil believes that the first texts of the DH, such as 'The Book of Saviors', 'The Acts of Saul', 'The Acts of David' and 'The Book of the Upright' began to take shape in Jerusalem in the 10th century, during the reign of Solomon.[77] However, it seems more likely that 'The Book of Saviors', ending with the formula found in 1 Sam 7:13, contained only the sagas about the northern judges (from Ehud to Samuel; the 'most southern' judge of the cycle was

(N. Na'aman, "Memories of Monarchical Israel in the Narratives of David's Wars with Israel's Neighbours," *HBAI* 6 [2017] 308–328).

[75] In 2 Sam 2:2–3, David moves to Hebron with six hundred soldiers, while his entire army may have numbered ca. 2,000 warriors. Together with their families, this constituted a huge number of people (according to the criteria of the Ir IIA era), for which not one city, but several, had to be freed (Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 23). This observation would indirectly confirm that the conquest was not limited to Hebron but to a minimum of the entire 'tri-city' (cf. בְּעָרֵי חֶבְרוֹן, 'in the cities of Hebron', 2 Sm 2:3), which was certainly accompanied by the expulsion or slaughter of the inhabitants. Echoes of those actions can be found in Judg 1:10–15, 20. It is likely that the inhabitants of Hebron remembered well how David's conquest was carried out and therefore willingly joined Absalom's revolt at the first opportunity.

[76] The oldest ancient narratives, e.g. *The Epic of Gilgamesh, The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* etc., were built following the monomyth model (F. Greenspahn, "From Egypt to Canaan: Heroic Narrative," *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration* [ed. K. Harrison] [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 1988] 1–2).

[77] G. Galil, "The Formation of Judges and Samuel and the Deuteronomistic Composition," *VT* 71 (2021) 567.

Ehud, a Benjaminite) who operated in the territory controlled by Saul. Therefore, it is more likely that 'The Book of Saviors' and 'The Acts of Saul', the texts containing northern tradition (Ephraimite, Gilead, Danite, etc.),[78] were set in the north at the sanctuaries of Israel (for example, at Bethel).[79] In those legends, Saul was portrayed as a hero, as in 1 Sam 7–14. 'The Acts of David' is most likely a later imitation of 'The Acts of Saul', only the purpose of the narrative was to construct the legend of a royal dynasty reigning over Israel as a theological entity – God's saving work, acting through the institution of the monarchy. Saul was supposed to be God's first chosen one, but he did not meet the requirements of his calling. A more dignified person – David – was anointed instead. To theologically justify the editors' choice of David, Samuel was 'resurrected'[80] – first to reject Saul in 1 Sam 15, and then to choose David in 1 Sam 16.

David was created in the literature as a continuation of Saul, the heir to the anointing and all the rights of the king of Israel, once his servant, a powerful warrior who was accused of being a bandit, a mercenary of uncertain origin who – on his way to power – murdered everyone, including the king of Israel and his family. Thus arises the image of the slandered servant who requires apologia and is the image of the noble and God-fearing 'abrek'. But within that image, another character can be noticed, a more coherent one – the dark figure of the 'warlord', a valiant warrior who engages in robbery and mass murder, able to conquer strongholds, make complex political alliances and does not hesitate to use the military force of his mercenaries against all those who refuse to acknowledge him as being the first. He bears no resemblance to the inept courtier or, even in a small way, to a shepherd-teenager.

The Judeans (if, while referring to that period, one can call the inhabitants of the Hebron Highlands and the Negev as Judeans) recognised him as their ruler, but there is no evidence that he was related to them. Paradoxically, David is recognised as a relative by the representatives of Israel, who say: 'Behold, we are your bones and your flesh' (2 Sam 5:2), which, in this case, may suggest a rather rhetorical device – an expression of a desire to establish a covenant by symbolically recognising each other as relatives (cf. 1 Macc 12:5–23).

'David of Ziklag' was only recognised as a leader over Israel after the seizure of the fortress of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6–8), which blocked Saul's way to the south and his to the north. Hence such readiness of the northern tribes to acknowledge his supremacy over them. Being the king of both Judah and the territory once controlled by Saul, David relied for the rest of his life not on the local elite, nor even on members of his family (although, later

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78   Komarnytskyy, *"Giuda per primo"*, 204–230.

79   A. de Pury, "The Jacob Story and the Beginning of the Formation of the Pentateuch," *Farewell to the Yahwist?: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (eds. T. Dozeman – K. Schmid) (Symposium Series, 34; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2006) 55–62; E. Knauf, "Bethel: The Israelite Impact on Judean Language and Literature," *Judah and Judeans in the Persian Period* (eds. O. Lipschits – M. Oeming) (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2006) 291–349; K. Hong, "The Deceptive Pen of Scribes: Judean Reworking of the Bethel Tradition as a Program for Assuming Israelite Identity," *Bib* 92/3 (2011) 427–441.

80   The allusion to Samuel's death can be found in 1 Sam 7:13 and 1 Sam 12.

on, he and many of his companions will be counted by the Chronicler as part of the tribe of Judah), but on Joab's bodyguard and the Philistine mercenaries of Benaiah.

It is difficult to say who David was in his first, pre-apologetic, 'Philistine' appearance – a Philistine, or rather a charismatic mercenary with the nickname of '*Δαι-ϝιδ*'?[81] Apologetic strands aside, in the story of David in the desert, there is a band, similar to the Habiru – once famous in Bronze Age literature, that terrorised the lands of the Negev and the Hebron Highlands, left alone after the withdrawal of Egypt. Perhaps that band was a problem for Saul as much as for the Philistines, so the Philistine leader from Gath (let's call him Achish) found a compromise solution by recruiting them as his mercenaries, inciting David against Saul.[82] Having pacified everyone around him, most notably the Amalekites, who had some control over the Negev, and growing in power through plunder (Nabal), David slips out of Achish's control and is recognised as king by the people he conquered. This, presumably, was the beginning of the biography of the king of Judah.

In the stories of Saul's hunt for David, the basic motif is David's innocence, the impossibility of allowing David to raise his hand against God's anointed one. Four chapters are devoted to the above (1 Sam 22–24, 26). To leave no doubt to the reader, the author-apologist puts the words about David's innocence (and even his recognition as king, 1 Sam 24:21–22) 'in Saul's mouth' and makes him repeat them several times (1 Sam 26:25), to the point of exaggeration, which raises even more suspicion, since 'there is no smoke without fire.'

The intention of the later author might have been not only to emphasise – as much as possible – that David did not participate in Saul's defeat but also that David began the conquest only after Saul's death.[83] In the pre-apologetic version of the HDR, the figure of Saul did not occupy a central position (if it occupied any). It was not the death of Saul (who did not control the South anyway), but rather the attack of the Amalekites on Ziklag (1 Sam 30) that was the reason for the conquest of the Hebron Highlands and the Negev, the territory of Amalekites (Num 13:29; 14:45). Quite possibly the original tradition was that David reigned in Hebron for seven and a half years (2 Sam 5:5) while Saul was still alive, and only took advantage of the political vacuum created in the North to extend his power over Benjamin and the mountains of Ephraim.[84]

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81   The etymology of the name דוד is a problem for scholars. In a situation where almost all other characters (even where one would not expect it, such as Uriah, Hittite) have names with a clearly Hebrew etymology, often theophoric, it is surprising that the etymology of the name דוד is still highly debatable to this day, (cf. Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 266–269).

82   McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, 106–107.

83   J. Wright, *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2014) 35.

84   The alleged seven and a half years of David's stay in Hebron are covered in two chapters with one episode of the clash between Abner and Joab (2 Sam 2–3). After his father's death, Ishbaal 'ruled' only two years (2 Sam 2:10), and he was murdered immediately after Abner's death (2 Sam 4). N. Na'aman, analysing the verse in Num 13:22d: 'Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt' points to the possibility that the case in question refers to the transfer of the capital from Hebron in Jerusalem for seven years ('"Hebron Was Built Seven Years before Zoan in Egypt' (Numbers XIII 22)," *VT* 31/4 [1981] 488–492), which would confirm the chronology of 2 Sam 5:5 and that, most likely, the conquest of Hebron took place approximately five years

It is also possible that David contributed to Saul's death indirectly. Saul had not lost any wars and knew how to face the Philistines attacking him from the west. The battle of Gilboa shows a different tactic – the Philistines attacked Israel from the north, and if David had attacked from the south at the same time, Saul would have had to fight on two fronts. Such a prospect may have forced Saul to split his army, which ultimately led to Israel's defeat. Later on, Saul's descendants, the elite of the once prosperous Benjamin,[85] would accuse David and call him a 'bloody man' and 'wicked' (2 Sam 16:7) – for 'striking the back' of the fighting king, as a result of which all the inhabitants of the Central Highlands became hostages of David and his Philistine band.[86]

In relation to the royal house of Saul, one can see a fairly widespread practice whereby the king who assumes power eliminates all members of the previous dynasty so that no one can claim the throne in the future. All of Saul's sons are killed. Jonathan's son and all the sons of Saul's daughter Merab are killed, too. The younger daughter Michal dies childless in David's harem.[87]

David might have been anointed king of Judea long before Saul's death and this might have been part of the Philistine strategy. Over those seven and a half years, David formed an anti-Saul coalition (with the Philistines and the Ammonite king, Nachash, 2 Sam 10:1–2) that led to the defeat of the house of Saul.[88] The problem for the Philistines began when David slipped out of their control and instead of having a secured rear in the east, the Philistines received a much more dangerous enemy who, instead of protecting order on the Philistine borders, was able to unite the tribes and make them a new force.

Actual historiographic data on the first stages of the creation of a political entity called 'Judah' is still missing, but one might be tempted to hypothesise. It would be a story of a certain frontier warrior who, being an influential military figure, begins to

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before Saul's death, and that the war against Saul's shattered home after the defeat at Gilboa was initiated not by Abner (2 Sam 2:12a) but by David, who was finishing the conquest of his neighbour to the north after completely destroying the Edomites in the south (cf. 1 Kings 11:15–16).

85   Archaeological data indicate the massive development of nomadic settlements in the area of Benjamin between the 11th and the first half of the 10th century, followed by their rapid disappearance in the second half of the 10th century and their later revival in the form of fortresses. This leads to the conclusion that during this period there were clashes between Jerusalem (which by the 10th century had developed as one of the centres of the community occupying the lands north of the city) and Beniamin. Thus, the former concentration of settlements and economic activity in Benjamin became a battleground, as well as the border of two hostile states (O. Sergi, "The Emergence of Judah as a Political Entity between Jerusalem and Benjamin," *ZDPV* 133/1 [2017] 12–17).

86   McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, 108–110.

87   One may be tempted to hypothesise on the fate of the younger daughter of the king of Israel in the specific historical context: Abner gave Michal (already married at that time, 1 Sam 25:44) to David as a guarantee of peace (2 Sam 3:13–16), the marriage with whom would legitimise David as Saul's successor in the eyes of the Benjaminites. This was likely the first meeting of David and Michal, a dynastic marriage which was not consummated on David's part, perhaps intentionally, so as not to have a descendant with her – Saul's grandson, who could be the hope for Benjaminites in the future (McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, 138). Michal remained in David's harem as a prisoner. Thus, the claims of Saul's descendants to the throne were eliminated.

88   McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, 116.

consolidate the semi-nomadic tribes by entering into dynastic marriages. Equally impor-
tant was the adoption of their prevailing or gaining popularity religion[89] (Yahwism), which
was brought from northern Arabia, probably by the tribes of Kenites or Midianites,[90] and
spread thanks to nomads at caravan stations,[91] overshadowing other gods and becoming
more and more universal.[92] The idea of God יהוה may have become the consolidating con-
ception for that diverse population, and with the occupation of the dominant hill, Hebron,
it acquired its first Judean temple,[93] assimilating the cults of common ancestors (or a com-
mon ancestor) as the basis for loyalty to the tribes' covenants. The creator of such a com-
munity could have been that warrior with a predisposition for a genius.

David – the 'abrek', the creation of the original Deuteronomistic redaction, already
seems to be a more 'multidimensional' character. His rural origin from Bethlehem prob-
ably meant that he belonged to the landed aristocracy rather than to the proletariat
(2 Sam 7:8; 18:23). Such a social status guaranteed the descendant of a noble Bethlehem
family a position in the court in Gibeah.[94] The high social status of David's ancestors is
confirmed by the book of Ruth – Booz was wealthy and influential in his city. His abil-
ity to play string instruments means that he was an aristocrat and/or a person associat-
ed with religious worship.[95] From the beginning, that David was recommended to Saul
as a 'man of war'[96] and soon became his armour-bearer, the closest person to his master
(1 Sam 16:21). That courtier charms the royal court – the charismatic figure makes eve-
ryone around him fall in love with him, including Saul's children, which is why he falls

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89   Perhaps David's reason for adopting the religion of the conquered people was an attempt to gain the favour
of the gods in whose territory he was beginning to live. A political motive seems more likely: the ambitious
leader saw the potential of the rapidly spreading southern religion and wanted to benefit from its consolidating
power.

90   On the 'Kenite' or 'Midianite' hypothesis concerning the origin of Yahwism in northern Arabia, see T. Römer,
The Invention of God (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2015); F. Pfitzmann, *Un YHWH venant du Sud?:
De la réception vétérotestamentaire des traditions méridionales et du lien entre Madian, le Néguev et l'exode (Ex-
Nb; Jg 5; Ps 68; Ha 3; Dt 33)* (ORA 39; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2020); R. Miller, *Yahweh: Origin of a Desert
God* (FRLANT 284; Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2021).

91   Some scholars consider the Midian culture of the 13th–11th century as the source of the worship of YHWH,
which spread in Ir I–II over vast areas of southern Canaan via trade routes and first took root in the caravanse-
rai (including Kuntillet ʿAjrud) and then, as a result of the popularisation of copper metallurgy, made its way
to the Central Highlands (J.M. Tebes, "The Southern Home of Yahweh and Pre-Priestly Patriarchal/Exodus
Traditions from a Southern Perspective," *Bib* 99/2 [2018] 171–175).

92   Among the supporters of the hypothesis of the 'southern' origin of Yahwism, the most noteworthy is the as-
sumption that in the Late Bronze Age Yahwism was a kind of religion of opposition of the southern people to
the culture and religion of Egypt, which may have been the source of the later 'Exodus' motif (N. Amzallag,
"Who Was the Deity Worshipped at the Tent-Sanctuary of Timna?," *Mining for Ancient Copper: Essays in
Memory of Beno Rothenberg* [ed. E. Ben-Yosef] [Monograph Series 37; Tel Aviv: Eisenbrauns 2018] 127–134).

93   A.C. Graham, "Hebronite Tradition behind P in Genesis," *JTS* 41/162 (1940) 149–152.

94   McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, 57–59.

95   Klein, *1 Samuel*, 165–166.

96   יֹדֵעַ נַגֵּן וְגִבּוֹר חַיִל וְאִישׁ מִלְחָמָה (1 Sm 16:18) – literally 'skilled in the play (strings), of heroic strength, man of
war' – the author of 1 Sam 16:18 might have known what '*Δαι-ϝιθ*' meant in Philistine, since גִּבּוֹר חַיִל וְאִישׁ
מִלְחָמָה has a fairly close meaning.

victim to the king's jealousy, who wants to remain the only person who arouses universal admiration in his court. Faithful David becomes a fugitive and has to save his life by putting himself in the hands of God…

The whole story might have been created only to combine the figure of 'David of Ziklag' with Saul of Gibeah into one continuous monarchical tradition – David the 'abrek' becomes the 'warlord' of Ziklag and becomes David known to the reader from 2 Sam 5 ff. That hypothesis is supported by the fact that David's victorious deed in the Valley of Elah (and perhaps David's origin) was modelled on one of the subjects of 'David of Ziklag'. Indirect proof of the above is the description of the locality where the fugitive 'abrek' is hiding – southeast of Benjamin towards the Jordan Valley. The territory is nominally controlled by Saul-independent Jerusalem,[97] where both heroes are strangers. The 'abrek', hiding in caves from the punitive expedition that was tracking him, would have undergone quite a long internal evolution from frightened squire to strong Machiavellian-type politician.

6. Portrait of the Saint

Reading the canonical text beginning with 1 Sam 16:1 ff., one gets to know yet another David. He is a red-haired young man with 'beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance' (16:12), somewhat naive (17:26), too short to stand in line with warriors (17:28), unskilled with weapons (17:39) and unambitious (17:58). The characteristic motive for his behaviour is religious (17:45–47), he obeys his sense of justice and duty even when he does not understand God's will (1 Sam 20:8). He talks to God before any move, and God leads him by the hand, annihilating his enemies.

The author of such a picture of David wants to justify his hero as much as possible, without departing from the earlier legend about him. David is not to blame for the death of Saul and his heir to the throne. Jonathan gave David precedence over himself (1 Sam 20:13–15), and David, for the sake of the memory of Jonathan, took care of his son (2 Sam 9). It was not David who slaughtered the entire house of Saul, but the criminals who were punished, or the Gibeonites who fulfilled the will of God (2 Sam 21:8–9). David did not destroy the memory of Saul by taking his corpse from Jabesh but wanted to honour it (2 Sam 21:12–14). David is not to blame for the death of Abner, to whom he dedicates a posthumous ode (2 Sam 3:33–34), nor for the death of Amasa (which may be true, given the character of Joab). The death of Joab and Shimei is a demand for justice that is lacking for Absalom, the perpetrator of the rebellion, the cause of death of many, but whom the king mourned as the only one.

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97   H. Niemann, "Expansion Policy of the Davidic Dynasty Judah from the Late 10th to the Early 6th Centuries BCE," *Jerusalem and the Coastal Plain in the Iron Age and Persian Periods* (ed. F. Hagemeyer) (ORA 46; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2022) 63.

The religious theme develops in several directions. First, a theology of 'God's anointed' is created, whose life is holy and who is rather an instrument in God's hands. Second, the idea of a symphony of kingdom and religion is designed, where the House of God stands next to the royal palace and the priests and prophets are the most important people in the kingdom. The king is no longer a cynical ruler forcing every knee to bow in front of him, but a former shepherd dancing in front of the Ark (2 Sam 6:14) and who became who he was only by God's will (2 Sam 7:8), an intemperate and weak man who falls and rises conscious of his weakness (2 Sam 12:13). The king-'shepherd' is no longer a calculating, cynical politician, but a man full of faith and fear of the Lord.

That three visions of David in one narrative evoke an internally contradictory image of the king because David's actions, which are very natural for the rulers of that time, had to be explained by later editors to their contemporaries in a new religious context. Therefore, the creators of the Work of Chronicles carefully worked through the story of David to present the reader with a 'new David'.

David from the Work of Chronicles, which rather is a literary genre of hagiography, was mentioned by J. Wellhausen in a famous quotation:

> See what Chronicles has made out of David! The founder of the kingdom has become the founder of the temple and the public worship, the king and hero at the head of his companions in arms has become the singer and master of ceremonies at the head of a swarm of priests and Levites; his clear cut figure has become a feeble holy picture, seen through a cloud of incense.[98]

Above all, the Chronicler wants to avoid conflict in the biography of David related to his 'uncertain' origin: from the beginning, David is presented as a direct descendant of Judah, the son of Israel (Judah – Perez – Hezron – Ram – Amminadab – Nahshon – Salmon – Boaz – Obed – Jesse – David, 1 Chron 2:1–15, cf. Ruth 4:18–22).[99] Also important to the Chronicler is the rationale for David's election as king. In 1 Chron 28:4, David, in the presence of all Israel, says openly: 'Yet, the Lord, the God of Israel, chose me from all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever; for He chose Judah as leader, and from the house of Judah, my father's household, and from my father's sons, He was pleased to make me king over all Israel.' Those words were spoken rather as a justification for the king's will to build a new temple in Jerusalem, for which there were no reasons: neither historical nor related to any religious tradition. The only purpose must have been the will of God, communicated to his anointed, according to which his son Solomon was to build a new national sanctuary dedicated to the Mosaic covenant (of which the Ark was the symbol).[100]

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98   J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of IIsrael: With a Reprint of the Article 'Israel' from the "Encyclopaedia Britannica"* (Edinburgh: Black 1885) 182.

99   It was also important for the Chronicler to justify the presence of certain figures in the king's entourage: thus Joab and his brothers, the sons of Zeruiah, are mentioned as David's nephews (1 Chron 2:16).

100   M. Boda, "Gazing through the Cloud of Incense: Davidic Dynasty and Temple Community in the Chronicler's Perspective," *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography* (eds. P. Evans – T. Williams) (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2013) 219.

For the Chronicler, the Davidic Dynasty is a form of direct theocracy. The kingdom of Judah is the kingdom of God, in which the king rules as prince or vice-king, and the dynasty of Jerusalem is the embodiment of the covenant, and its continuation – a sign of blessing (1 Chron 17:16–27). The Chronicler perceives David on two complementary levels: on a personal level, as a figure of a repentant sinner,[101] and on a political level – as a model for all subsequent rulers.[102] Likewise, for the Chronicler and the readers, the age of David is a distant age of splendour, a 'golden age' of Israel that influenced 'all the kingdoms of the world' (1 Chron 29:30), which can only be repeated in an eschatological perspective.[103]

7. Problems of Reinterpretation

Such different images of David testify to the fact that each major era created its own 'David' or, in other words, interpreted him in different ways. David I, 'the Philistine', may have been the protagonist of the legends of the pre-Deuteronomistic era; David II, 'the Abrek-Ephrathite', probably represents the Deuteronomistic era; David III, 'the Shepherd', is the product of the following (post-Deuteronomistic) editorial stage; David IV, 'the Saint', was created by the Chronicler of the post-exilic period. Each of these 'Davids' was a response to the challenges of the era that produced the interpretation.

Any attempt to reconstruct the redaction history of a text subject to numerous influences over the centuries is highly speculative. When examining any alleged redactional 'iteration', it is essential to remember that only a more or less well-founded hypothesis can be challenged by focusing on other aspects of the studied text. Discerning interpolations or changes to the text from a narrative perspective leads to the question of why posterity reinterprets the figure of David. Usually, researchers use the historical contexts to which a text, tradition or motif might belong as a key to interpretation.

It is reasonable enough to say that the figure of King David has been reinterpreted throughout history: from the earliest, literary underdeveloped and somewhat morally ambivalent figure of the warrior, commander of the army at Ziklag of the eleventh to tenth centuries,[104] conqueror of Hebron and founder of the first lasting monarchy of the Central Highlands of the Levant, to the figure of the Ephrathite from Bethlehem of Judah at the court of Saul, who became king after him. This presumably earliest legend of 'David of

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101   Bodner – Johnson, "David: Kaleidoscope of a King," 130.
102   R.K. Duke, *The Persuasive Appeal of the Chronicler: A Rhetorical Analysis* (Bible and Literature Series 25; Sheffield : Almond Press 1990) 54.
103   Boda, "Gazing through the Cloud of Incense," 242–245.
104   The traditions associated with the memory of Ziklag refer to the ninth century BCE, at the latest, when it was a significant regional power in southern Canaan. In the late ninth century, the town was destroyed and never regained its importance (A. Maier, "The Tell eṣ-Ṣafi/Gath Archaeological Project 1996–2010: Introduction, Overview and Synopsis of Results" *Tell eṣ-Ṣafi/Gath*. I. *The 1996–2005 Seasons* [ed. A. Maeir] [ÄAT 69; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2012] 26–49).

Ziklag' appears devoid of any apologetic motive. This 'David' needs no justification for his power, which he won by force, reasserted by force and secured with mercenary bodyguards.

As noted earlier, when combining narratives from different traditions about the same events involving the same protagonist[105] into a single synoptic narrative, the newly created text tends to have numerous inconsistencies: 'speeches' of characters from one tradition do not match up with the events as a whole; characters' traits appropriate for one era become unacceptable for another due to changes in the moral values and priorities of the following generations in their specific political-cultural situation; details and relationships whose original meanings have been forgotten are added based on other data or literary invention; stories about a single protagonist featuring different characters are combined into a single narrative when previously non-existent narrative connections between supporting characters are added; older legends containing religious motifs are reinterpreted in the light of the subsequent radactor's theology, but may 'sneak in' some of the details specific to the religiousness of older traditions.[106]

The difference in the perception of 'David of Ziklag' and 'David of Bethlehem, the Ephrathite' involves showing and justifying David's reign over Israel and Judah not just due to conquest but also his birthright.[107] 'David the Ephrathite' is a hero in exile, a leader in the process of establishing a monarchy (as monarchies are established not by 'shepherds' but by 'heroes'). This explains his possessive behaviour in the desert towards others – he has a right to everything because he is destined to reign.

Furthermore, there may be some original oral tradition underlying the 'Ephrathite' tradition, including a collection of inconsistent historical anecdotes about the young king. These would be marked by simple morality, portraying David as merciful towards allies, lenient towards family members and ruthless towards those who did not recognise the future monarch in the fugitive from the desert. The priest Ahimelech of Nob and Abigail, Nabal's wife, recognise David's authority, while Nabal, the people of the Negev and the House of Saul do not and are severely punished for it.

The figure of 'the Ephrathite' standing in for the king of Israel and Judah was perhaps created as a reworking of the ideological and literary traditions about Saul that reached

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[105] Only after a combination of factors, such as a similar event involving the same protagonist, can certain narratives be regarded with a high degree of probability as 'parallel' accounts of the same event. In the case of a description of a similar event involving different characters, the hypothesis that it is the same event is less likely to be valid unless, of course, it is an event as spectacular as, for example, the worldwide deluge; cf. U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Magnes 1961) 55–68; R. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study* (JSOTSup 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1987) 61; Nahkola, *Double Narratives in the Old Testament*, 168–171.

[106] Nahkola, *Double Narratives in the Old Testament*, 134–137.

[107] The very fact that these states, as depicted in 1–2 Sam, ever functioned as a single kingdom seems legendary. The 'United Monarchy' motif may suggest that the tale of a single founder of both states may be equally legendary (I. Finkelstein, "A Great United Monarchy? Archaeological and Historical Perspectives," *One God – One Cult – One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives* [eds. R.G. Kratz – H. Spieckermann] [BZAW 405; Berlin: De Gruyter 2010] 3–28.)

Judah after the fall of Israel in 722 BCE, in the context of earlier HDR traditions.[108] This resulted in the image of a young David, a charismatic courtier and warrior, Saul's successor. His journey fits the monomyth pattern: flight (separation), 'abrek' life (initiation), humbling himself before his enemy/betrayal (*nadir*),[109] recognition by Judah (return), and anointing as king after Saul (*climax*). David the 'Ephrathite' is a well-developed literary character. His story is not the chronicle of a historical actor but a legend, similar to that of Odysseus, the mythological hero.

This David, aristocrat and warrior, depicted in the older redaction of the book of Samuel, in what may have been the original 'Acts of David', is not at all the founder of Judah; according to this redaction, it was already part of Saul's kingdom, albeit separate and ten times smaller than Israel.[110] Such a David becomes king rather 'by the grace' of the tribes, first of Judah and then of Israel, being considered 'their own' (as an Ephrathite from Judah) by both communities, a gifted strategist, a representative of 'Saul's world' and a favourite of the royal court in Gibeah.[111] He creates nothing; he is just a figure of Israelite history, which originates from legends dating back to the decline of the Late Bronze Age, the disappearance of the Canaanite cities, and the legends of the patriarch Jacob–Israel, which most likely played the role of founding myth and consolidating the covenant of the northern proto-Israelite tribes. David's rule was embedded in a historical conglomeration incorporating elements of the northern narrative, and the Judah he created was introduced as 'the tribe of Judah', the descendants of Jacob's fourth son by Leah, whose four older sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah) were associated with the southern tribes.

In the following redaction, the image of David, court musician and warrior, is completely obscured by the image of 'David the shepherd'. The shift from 'David the Ephrathite' to 'David the shepherd' may be based on a change in perceptions of the nature of royal power in the era of the decline of the monarchy or its complete abolition. Just as in the Mesopotamian kingdoms, perceptions of royal power changed from framing the king

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108   O. Sergi, "Saul, David, and the Formation of the Israelite Monarchy: Revisiting the Historical and Literary Context of 1 Samuel 9–2 Samuel 5," *Saul, Benjamin, and the Emergence of Monarchy in Israel: Biblical and Archaeological Perspectives* (eds. J. Krause – O. Sergi – K. Weingart) (AIL 40; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2020) 57–58.

109   The *nadir* of the monomyth is usually associated with the most challenging trial that transforms a person. In David's monomyth, the most fitting for such a trial is 1 Sam 27 – being a traitor and murderer in the service of the enemy. However, the softened version of these events in 1 Sam 21:11–15 indicates the existence of another 'parallel' *nadir* of this monomyth, as the earlier one (27) may have been deemed too drastic by the writers. However, 21:11–15 as the *nadir* occurs in the wrong place, and David continues his 'downward journey' after 21:11–15.

110   According to 1 Sam 11:8, the ratio of soldiers from Israel and Judah is ten to one, corresponding to the ten tribes separated from the House of David under Jeroboam I against the one remaining with Rehoboam (1 Kings 11:30–32). In 1 Sam 15:4, this ratio is given as twenty to one, although this verse may be contaminated.

111   One should expect that the main task of the Deuteronomistic HDR cycle is to justify the transfer of power from Saul to David rather than to give some independent tradition about David (R.G. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments: Grundwissen der Bibelkritik* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2000] 182–186).

as a hero, idolised in one way or another, to the role of 'curate' to the living god living next door in the temple, so the king of Israel becomes a 'shepherd of the people'.[112] While 'David the Ephrathite' was depicted as a king-judge in the manner of the pre-monarchical judges (saviours) of Israel, 'David the shepherd' is no longer a king-saviour but a weapon that administers God's justice. He sometimes errs, sins and repents and is judged for his actions. He has similar responsibilities towards God as a shepherd has towards the owner of the sheep ('It is I; I am he that have sinned, I have done wickedly: these that are the sheep, what have they done?', 2 Sam 24:17). 'David the shepherd' is clearly depicted as weak, often helpless in the face of the evil forming in his own house. He is completely dependent on God's support and chosen by Him not for his own merits but for his 'purity of heart' (which is hardly consistent with 'David of Ziklag'). He is merely a 'red-headed boy', dancing before the Ark and weeping over the death of his friends and enemies. In this interpretation, David is no longer a strong and ruthless warrior who 'has the right' to take whatever he pleases (like 'David the Ephrathite'), but a shepherd boy whom God leads by the hand to a throne that he has not earned: 'Thus says the Lord of Hosts: I took you from the pastures, from following the sheep, so that you would be the leader over my people Israel' (2 Sam 7:8). His entire success as a leader is merely the result of God's choice, expressed in Samuel's anointing.

David, the shepherd boy chosen by God, who 'beholds the heart' (1 Sam 16:7), is a wholly religious character. He is the one whom Samuel, the last judge in Israel, anoints as his successor – the shepherd of Israel. The scene of God's rejection of Saul as divine judgement, with Samuel present, opens the prospect for the election of another king. Henceforth, the office of the 'judge of Israel' becomes dynastic and institutionalised, like the office of the priest. The duel scene between David and Goliath in 1 Sam 17 becomes iconic, whereby a defenceless young man (David), with God's help, defeats a giant (Saul),[113] the epitome of secular power complacent in its strength. The underlined innocence of David indicates the absurdity of the accusations of regicide levelled against him, especially since institutionalised leadership in Israel is based on the notion of the sacrality of the Lord's anointed, the covenant upon which God's relationship with His people is underpinned (2 Sam 7:12–16).

This is most clearly seen in the scene of the execution of the Amalekite messenger (2 Sam 1), who brought David to Ziklag the news of the death of Saul and his successor. This narrative, too, is a double of an earlier one contained in 1 Sam 31:1–6, except that in 2 Sam 1 King Saul is assassinated by an 'Amalekite', whom the narrator portrays as David's *alter ego*[114]: the 'Amalekite', like David before him, was 'a man who came out of Saul's camp' (2 Sam 1:2); as a result of the actions of the 'Amalekite', David is given the regalia;[115] upon

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112 Balzaretti, *1–2 Samuele*, 23.

113 M. Michael, "Is Saul the Second Goliath of 1 Samuel? The Rhetoric & Polemics of the David/Goliath Story in 1 Samuel," *SJOT* 34/2 (2020) 221–244.

114 Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist*, 6–10.

115 A possible allusion to David's war against the Amalekites, which propelled him to the throne of Judah, cf. 1 Sam 30.

noticing the Amalekite approaching, Saul asks him: 'Who are you?' This question is posed only three times in the books of the DH: מִי אַתָּה (1 Sam 17:58; 26:14; 2 Sam 1:8) and, with the exception of the last use, is addressed to David. As he did after the duel with Goliath, Saul does not recognise his soldier during the battle of Gilboa. Although this question may be more general: מִי אַתָּה was the fundamental question that the David cycle sought to answer – מִי אַתָּה, David is asked by all three of Saul, Abner and Nabal.

Nabal, performing the archetypal role of the trickster,[116] asks the central question of the narrative: מִי דָוִד, which has always troubled a society in which the memory of the 'Israel of Saul' that perished at the hands of the Philistines was still alive, a memory cultivated in the northern shrines of the patriarchs, among the elite of Samaria until its fall in 722 and the descendants of the migrants from the north fleeing the mountains of Ephraim and cherishing the memory of 'the forgotten kingdom'.[117] Later authors also have David ask the question: מִי אָנֹכִי, addressed first to the king (1 Sam 18:18) and then to God (2 Sam 7:18).

In 1 Sam 1, the author first of all wants to prove that David is not responsible for Saul's death. For how can one speak of the sacredness of the Lord's anointed when the founder of the dynasty himself made his path to the throne by shedding the blood of the Lord's anointed? If David had really played a part in the death of the king, the scene of the punishment of the messenger would have become a metaphorical scene of the punishment of himself in the guise of an Amalekite, Israel's enemy *par excellence*, which would have had a profound symbolism. If one accepts the point of view of some scholars that anti-David suggestions were consciously included by the writers (see above), that scene could be understood as a suggestion that the mercenary from the south (whoever he was, both Amalekite and David may be considered here), who murdered Saul, deserves only death.

Saul's death, like all other deaths, so favourable to David, as well as each of David's subsequent steps towards power are God's will and happen with His participation. David's enemies perish not because they are a threat to him, but because they stand in the way of God's plans. Each of them has sinned and contributed to the social corruption for which David is the remedy. David is portrayed as a rather extremely merciful character, humble towards the reigning Saul (being anointed king himself), willing to forgive his enemies (Shimei and other descendants of Saul, 2 Sam 9:1; 19:17–31), appreciate the nobility of his opponents' deeds (Jabesh, 2 Sam 2:4c–7; Abner, 2 Sam 3:33–34) and administer justice even to himself (2 Sam 12:13; 24:17). That 'David' retains his identity as a Bethlehemite. The emphasis is on the righteousness of the king that makes him the successor to Moses and Joshua, which is also felt in the later redactions of the book of Judges, where the tribe of Judah is presented

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116 In mythology and folklore, the trickster is an archetype (often a jester) who violates the will of the gods or the laws of society, leading to a game-changing moment, transforming a life situation, or undermining a commonly accepted truth. In 1 Sam 25, David's antagonist Nabal (נָבָל – 'fool') ironically asks the key question of the narrative regarding David's identity. The David cycle, in all its complexity, is the sum total of the redactors' efforts to answer this question.

117 Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 47–49, 159–164.

as their rightful continuation,[118] ruling out the possibility that the successor was a non-Israelite, non-Judean and, certainly, a Philistine.

The main idea of the redaction transforming a calculating commander into a naive shepherd is the idea of the all-embracing will of God, which guides the characters like pawns on a chessboard: Saul recognises David as righteous and himself as guilty, acknowledges his right to the throne and steps down from the scene of history. David, in turn, although anointed king, being a fugitive in the wilderness shows no royal ambition but allows God to lead him. It is God who saves David from shedding Nabal's blood by putting him to death himself. David's enemies perish before him if not by the hand of God, then by the hand of robbers against the generous will of David, who calmly treads over the bodies of his enemies towards his destiny according to the words of the psalm:

> The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
> until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet".

It is the Lord of Hosts who is the true king of Israel. David-the conqueror recedes into the shadows in favour of God-the conqueror. It is Him, the God-creator, who defeats Goliath, the symbol of antediluvian chaos, and David is merely the tool God uses to finally give His people possession of the Promised Land. David's wars take on a 'cosmic' dimension – wars of the 'Sons of Light' against the 'Sons of Darkness',[119] of the psalmist and prophet against the forces of chaos.

If one can speak of a tendency to 'divinise' the person of David, as a result of which he becomes the key religious figure of a certain tradition, which some propose to call 'Davidism',[120] in the figure of David – 'the shepherd' one can already notice the first steps in that direction, and in the work of the Chronicler such 'Davidism' crystallises in full.

In the last interpretation, contained in the books of Chronicles, the time of David is portrayed as the 'golden age' of Israel, and his figure becomes a legend of a powerful king whom no one could resist, the founder of Jerusalem worship and a psalmist, a shining example of a leader and saint.

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Although many scholars note the fundamental difference between David's deeds and his image of the 'God-fearing flock boy', most tend to view the narrative beginning with 1 Sam 16:14 as referring to one image – a courtier, a robber, a mercenary, a ruler of Judah, etc. In my view, however, those are quite different images that arise from the multi-layered apologia of a man who first comes to be seen as the founder of the kingdom of Judah and

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118 Komarnytskyy, *"Giuda per primo"*, 364–370.

119 P. Porzig, "David in the Judean Desert: Beobachtungen an ausgewählten Qumrantexten," *David in the Desert: Tradition and Redaction in the "History of David's Rise"* (eds. H. Bezzel – R.G. Kratz) (BZAW 514; Berlin: De Gruyter 2021) 28–29.

120 J. Kisch, *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel* (New York: Ballantine Books 2000) 5.

the lasting Jerusalem dynasty, and in the following centuries – as one of the key religious figures, the founder of the dynasty, City and Temple that over the centuries begin to be recognised as beings of an eschatological nature. It is in that final interpretation of the image that the figure of the first king of Jerusalem appears before us.

There are, however, several indications that make it possible to reach the 'original' identity of David. First, in the pre-monarchic period, Judah was not so much a nation as a territory. Second, the name David is probably of Philistine origin. Third, the series of deaths of his rivals rather supports the hypothesis that the perpetrator of their destruction was the one who benefited from it. Fourth, the hatred of the Bethlehemites towards David testifies indirectly that, at least by certain circles associated with the previous dynasty, David was considered a usurper. Fifth, the ethnic nature of David's surroundings, which included too few Judeans and too many foreigners. Finally, a number of apologetic attempts can be observed to portray David in a more positive light. 'In reality', however, David was a man of unknown origin, perhaps a Philistine, who conquered a fairly extensive area of the southern Levant from Phoenicia to northern Arabia and established a lasting dynasty in Jerusalem. It is his descendants who are responsible for creating other, more easily acceptable images of David, ignoring his flaws or excusing his ambiguous deeds.

One can trace at least three apologetic 'iterations' in the biblical text. The first one is the integration of the image of the 'warlord' into the Israelite context by endowing him with the biography of Bethlehemite-Ephrathite, a courtier and subject of Saul. The next one makes him a holy, innocent young man, guided by God towards his destiny. Finally, in the Chronicler's work, the image of the king is rewritten – as a hagiography of a great ruler, devoid of the literary 'tensions' of the DH.

'Historical David' left little material for historiographical research – the phenomenon of that person lies in the colossal impact he has had on the culture of humanity over the past three millennia. This is why, despite his various alleged morally questionable deeds, David has always remained a fascinating religious phenomenon.

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