



# **The Prophetic Structure of 1-2 Samuel**

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*thesis accepted for the degree of D.Phil.  
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## Short Abstract:

The book of *1-2 Samuel*, originally one scroll, is an episodic narrative recounting how the ancient Israelite monarchy was established around 1000 BC by the prophet Samuel and the kings Saul and David. For well over a century historical critics have sought to discern the process of its composition, proposing various conclusions with little consensus. Presently it is generally believed that several blocks of traditional material on common themes (e.g. the History of David’s Rise) were brought together in the later pre-exilic period as part of the so-called Deuteronomistic History.

This thesis chooses to begin with the present limits of *1-2 Samuel* (without including, for example, 1Kgs 1–2), and undertakes to apply rhetorical analysis to all fifty-five chapters, episode by episode, each in its final-form position. The particular structural technique that has been discerned throughout this book is inverted parallelism with an unparalleled centre, here termed ‘concentrism’. The unique contributions of this thesis are firstly a careful methodology for concentrism in Hebrew narrative, based on Hebrew poetic and oral composition and proposing specific criteria for identifying and verifying such structures. Secondly, the thesis attempts to account for the current position of every episode in the book, discerning how each contributes to the larger work as regards literary structure and rhetorical message. The resulting arrangement demonstrates an overall unity of technique and authorial perspective, focused on the themes of prophecy (hence the thesis title), deliverance from military attack, religious devotion and dynastic succession.

The centre of this thesis therefore provides a detailed description of the discovered structure, one chapter for each of the book’s two primary segments (1Sam 1 – 2Sam 6; 2Sam 7–24). A lengthy preceding chapter addresses various theoretical issues often raised relating to such concentric patterns (often inadequately labelled ‘chiasmus’/‘chiastic’). A summary chapter likewise follows the central chapters, revisiting themes of the methodology and drawing conclusions together. An initial chapter outlines past and present compositional theories, and a concluding chapter suggests further avenues of future research.

## Long Abstract:

The question this thesis has set out to address is whether rhetorical analysis is a suitable tool for both literary and historical-critical analysis of biblical books. The specific book analysed is 1-2 Samuel, which is considered in its final form according to the division of books in the Hebrew Bible tradition, and the specific rhetorical technique explored in relation to this book is the inverted parallel structure with an unparalleled central element, referred to herein as ‘concentrism’ rather than the less specific term ‘chiasmus’.

**Chapter One** of this thesis begins by setting the current study in its broader historical context, with a particular focus on biblical studies since the Enlightenment. Old Testament scholarship on 1-2 Samuel over the past hundred and fifty years has moved, broadly speaking, from first-wave literary criticism (*Literarkritik*) of sources, forms/traditions and redactional layers, into second-wave literary criticism which is less interested in the history of composition and transmission of the text and more focused on the final form of the text and its ideological messages. Form criticism, which sought to contextualise the earliest fragments or discrete units of traditional material identified within a ‘source’ document, gave rise to two different approaches. On the one hand, redaction criticism turned to investigate the editorial activity required to stitch together these discrete traditional units, whereas on the other hand, rhetorical analysis proposed expanding this interest in ‘form’ to apply to the larger final form as a coherent literary



composition. At that time, however, the rising influence of postmodern philosophical scepticism about authors and history led early proponents of rhetorical analysis to undertake synchronic reading for its own sake, without then trying to locate this (broadly) coherent text within its most plausible historical context – a two-stage process advocated in this thesis as ‘third-wave literary criticism’. Notable proponents of the two-stage approach include for example Amit on Judges or Polzin on 1-2 Samuel, and this current thesis represents another attempt to analyse the final form of 1-2 Samuel and then situate its composition in its most plausible historical setting.

Practitioners of rhetorical analysis recognise a number of different compositional techniques used in ancient texts, and among these is the structural technique defined above as ‘concentrism’. Partly due to a general failure to distinguish odd-numbered from even-numbered inverted parallelism, the generic term ‘chiasmus’ has become associated with a large number of highly subjective analyses of biblical passages or books, lacking suitable methodological grounding or criteria for verification. This thesis has identified an extensive structural arrangement underlying the entire book of 1-2 Samuel, which consistently uses concentrism as the primary technique of composition. In order to present such a proposal to the academic community, therefore, the technique itself must first be set on firm methodological foundations. That is the purpose of Chapter Two of this thesis.

**Chapter Two** therefore sets out to define, contextualise, and set parameters for the use of concentrism within biblical studies, and particularly within biblical Hebrew narrative. The first section on Genre notes how principles of Hebrew poetic parallelism would have made concentric structures readily comprehensible to an ancient Israelite audience, and if in poetic texts then also within prose narratives. The second section discusses various aspects of Composition, particularly relating to oral / aural cultures, and demonstrates how the technique of concentrism would have presented itself as a particularly appealing method for arranging episodic narratives in a time of relatively low levels of literacy. The third section explores different reasons why an author might have used concentrism, particularly as a way of clarifying his Purpose or intention in writing this text, although it is also acknowledged that large-scale concentric documents might not have been readily discernible by a general audience. The fourth and fifth sections move on from the theory behind concentrism to the practice of recognising and verifying its use in certain texts. The fourth section begins with Identification, whether that be a procedure for finding examples of concentrism, or methods for defining boundaries between the distinct rhetorical units of which a concentric structure is composed. Finally, the fifth section uses the work of Richard Hays on intertextuality to propose a strict method of Verification for examples of concentrism. The seven successive criteria identified here (Balance > Volume > Weight > Trademarks > Integrity > Agreement > Satisfaction) are justified on the basis of a wide survey of theoretical discussions about concentrism within scholarly literature.

The methodology behind the recognition, verification, and interpretation of concentrism is vital to all that follows in the thesis, and the themes of the five sections of Chapter Two are revisited in Chapter Five, when assessing the results of the intervening analysis of 1-2 Samuel. It is quite possible that other scholars will decide after close reflection that the rhetorical messages and implication of authorship identified in this thesis, which seem to situate the coherent composition of 1-2 Samuel at a certain point in Israel’s history, are not the best reading of the identified structure. In that case, they are welcome to propose alternative readings of the structure and implied audience of this book (or its constituent parts). Equally, it is possible that scholars will consider the specific evidence presented here for concentric structures in 1-2 Samuel, whether that be delineation of discrete rhetorical units or else the parallels identified between them, and decide that the proposed arrangement does not stand up to scrutiny. If so, Chapter Two of this thesis offers a straightforward method for verifying (or refuting) proposed parallels and whole structures, according to seven commonly agreed criteria. The latter process of verification is exemplified in §5.1 for the structure of 2Samuel 10–12. On the one hand, this is a test of the structure proposed for this biblical passage, but on the other hand, it is a test of whether the verification method itself is able to produce an acceptable degree of confidence (or otherwise) about a proposed example.

It is also the methodology (particularly §§2.4.1-3) which has called for a comprehensive survey of the entire text of 1-2 Samuel, rather than being limited to, say, 1Samuel 4 – 2 Samuel 6 (broadly what is identified by others as the History of David’s Rise) or 2Samuel 7–24. Since the earliest complete or largely-complete manuscripts of 1-2 Samuel evidently assume it to be a single coherent literary



composition, rhetorical analysis should attempt to account for the compositional arrangement of the whole rhetorical unit, as well as each of its constituent parts. Within the space constraints of a doctoral thesis, this demands a survey of every episode in the book, unavoidably superficial, leaving a properly in-depth analysis to other scholars (on the basis of the criteria in §2.5) or to a later expansion by the author of the thesis for publication. Even so, the discussion of each broader concentric structure, and of each pair of episodes within it, has attempted to set out the most important features that might be considered using criteria such as Balance, Volume, and Weight, and at a larger level Trademarks and Integrity. The extensive scholarly literature on 1-2 Samuel could produce numerous examples of Agreement with the observations made in this thesis, though the author is well aware that disagreements will not be hard to find as well, demanding comparison. The general survey contained in this thesis is presented in the hope that enough substantial points of valuable exegetical comment have been identified to earn a hearing for the overall structural proposal within the community of scholars of 1-2 Samuel.

The structural arrangement of 1-2 Samuel identified in this thesis falls into two primary concentricisms, the first covering 1Samuel 4 – 2Samuel 6 (with a subsidiary concentricism in 1Samuel 1–7), and the second covering 2Samuel 7–24 (22:1–23:7 only part of a subsidiary concentricism in 20:23–24:25). As a result, these two primary structures are each allotted one chapter in this thesis. For the sake of convenience, each broad structure in the whole book has been given a meaningful name in addition to its anachronistic numerical designation, and the justification for choosing these names is provided in the introduction to each structure, or ‘song’. A more detailed summary of the different stages of composition discerned for 1-2 Samuel is offered in §5.4, drawing together partial discussions in the introductions to different songs within Chapters Two and Three. Similarly, the **Appendix** at the end of the thesis gathers together into one place a selection of diagrams (‘maps’) of the most important concentricisms identified within the central chapters, notably the full twenty-one levels of the largest structure (1Sam 4 – 2Sam 6), presented only in successive parallel segments within the discussion in Chapter Three.

**Chapter Three** begins with detailed analysis of the first primary structure of 1-2 Samuel. It is observed to start with that an apparently pre-existing major concentricism in 1Samuel 4 – 2Samuel 6 has been augmented by an interlocking structure incorporating the first three chapters of 1Samuel. This initial structure in 1Samuel 1–7 (the Song of Eli) is therefore addressed first, and the re-use of chapters 4–7 for that secondary structure is discussed here, with further explanation later in §5.4. After the Song of Eli, the Song of the Ark (1Sam 4 – 2Sam 6) is discussed in successive stages, starting with the outermost segments and working inwards toward the central episode of 1Samuel 19:18-24. Map 2 at the start attempts a visual summary of the whole narrative sweep in a single simplified diagram, as it is very easy to lose track of the broader narrative when analysing pairs of episodes separated by a large amount of intervening material. In detail, then, the outermost episodes (section A/A’, Episodes **1–5/5’–1’**) feature the holy YHWH of Hosts enthroned on His ark, and battles for Israelite independence by Samuel and then David. The next level up (section B/B’, Episodes **6–7 / 7’–6’**) contains episodes with complex internal structures, signifying the major seasons of political turmoil transitioning from Samuel to Saul, and from Saul to David. These periods bracket the reign of Saul, whose outer series of parallel episodes is designated ‘The Song of Saul’s Kingdom’ (section C/C’, Episodes **8–13/13’–8’**), the focus being on Saul’s character in repeated encounters on the one hand with Samuel the prophet, and on the other with David. The innermost series of episodes designated ‘The Song of David’s Testing’ (sections D-E/D’-E’, **14–20/20’–14’**) presents David as king-in-waiting, concealed in the former segment but an open secret in the latter. Finally, the central episode (**21**) is the only scene in 1-2 Samuel where the three main characters – Samuel, Saul and David – are in the same place at the same time, yet despite this, the Spirit of God is unmistakably the main actor.

**Chapter Four** moves on to consider the second primary concentricism of 1-2 Samuel, which has also been augmented at the outer edge by a subsidiary concentricism through the insertion of additional episodes (2Sam 22:1–23:7). Without these inserted episodes, the Song of the Temple (2Sam 7–24) comprises two inverted sequences of episodes disconnected chronologically (2Sam 7–9 || 20:23–21:14 + 23:8–24:25) framing a central element. This time, however, the central element has two parts, so as to represent cause and effect – the Song of Uriah (2Sam 10–12) results in the Song of Absalom (2Sam 13:1–20:22). Each of these central narratives is itself structured concentrically, the second being a twin-peaked concentricism so as to represent the double punishment prophesied by Nathan against David in the centre of the first narrative. After the composition of this Song of the Temple, two poems were inserted into the later sequence of episodes that frame its central narratives, in order to create a secondary concentric structure in



2Samuel 20:23–24:25 (recognised as concentric by scholars of 1-2 Samuel, and typically designated an ‘appendix’). This final and perhaps most widely accepted concentricism is unique, though, in the fact that it appears to lack a central element, alone of all the concentricisms in 1-2 Samuel. It is this observation, based as it is on a detailed survey of every other concentric structure in Chapters Three and Four, that calls for some sort of appropriate structural and rhetorical explanation.

It is therefore the entire structural arrangement of 1-2 Samuel that leads the rhetorical analyst to focus on the apparently missing centre of the so-called ‘appendix’ (2Sam 20:23–24:25). §2.5.2 explains how the arrow in the centre of a concentric bow must rest on the bowstring, interpreted in light of the first and last episodes. When applying this interpretative principle to the missing centre, the author of this thesis identified 23:1a as possibly the intended central statement, perhaps even pointing to an implied author for both primary concentricisms in 1-2 Samuel. This was not even imagined prior to the structural analysis, and in view of its potential historical-critical implications has understandably led to considerable trouble for this thesis, both in research and in examination. Nevertheless, the principles of concentric composition demand some explanation for this unusual final concentricism.

The lengthy discussion about the proposed centre of the final concentricism (2Sam 23:1a – “Now these are the last words of David.”) has been rewritten several times in order to set out carefully the logical steps of the argument that has led the candidate to see it as an identification of the book’s implied author. Such an ascription would appear generally consistent with the rhetorical messages conveyed throughout the rest of the structures in 1-2 Samuel. Yet should this argument be accepted by other scholars, it still amounts only to a claim of authorship rather than proof of its validity. Historical-critical questions go beyond the strict limits of a literary thesis, but since its first examiners required a discussion of these matters, they have been explored in an Excursus in Chapter Six, entitled “Bible and archaeology – conflicting witnesses for David?”. Autobiography and pseudonymity in the ancient world are important topics for future research.

**Chapter Five** mirrors Chapter Two, assessing the proposed structure under five headings: Verification uses the seven proposed criteria to test the structure identified in 2Samuel 10–12. Identification recounts the author’s personal experience of recognising concentricism in 1-2 Samuel. Purpose accumulates evidence from internal rhetorical messages for a potential historical setting through consideration of the implied audience and intentions behind the structure. Composition sets out evidence for editorial additions, that implies two distinct editions of 1-2 Samuel. Finally, Genre discusses two metaphors for concentricism that were arguably in the mind of the author.

**Chapter Six**, in a similar fashion, returns to the successive eras of previous scholarship on 1-2 Samuel surveyed in Chapter One, as a guide for considering potential avenues for Further Research. Of course, the most important first step required before progressing any further is the detailed verification of the rest of 1-2 Samuel according to the seven criteria of §2.5. If the other concentric structures described here (in addition to 2Samuel 10–12) are considered a broadly accurate representation of the book’s rhetorical arrangement, the second stage of further research will have to analyse the rhetorical messages conveyed through the structure. In line with principles of ‘third-wave literary criticism’, these messages must be situated in their most likely historical setting, weighing up the likelihood or otherwise of the implied authorship identified in this thesis. If after this process, the literary and historical-critical conclusions of this thesis are upheld, the implications for further research are potentially significant. Areas for such research may include ‘third-wave literary criticism’ and final-form rhetorical analysis (e.g. ‘chiasmus’), the ancient literary context of 1-2 Samuel (as regards the Septuagint textual tradition, or the Documentary Hypothesis, or ancient knowledge of Pentateuchal texts and traditions), and even ultimately a reassessment of the value of spiritual interpretation of scriptural texts.

The successive stages of this thesis each offer potentially valuable contributions to scholarship: A methodology accounting for concentric Hebrew narratives, then underpins a detailed rhetorical analysis of every episode in 1-2 Samuel, itself establishing the consistent pattern which calls for some explanation of the missing centre within 2Samuel 20:23–24:25. The conclusions of this thesis, identifying a ‘least implausible’ solution to this literary anomaly, drag the thesis into a maelstrom of historical-critical controversy surrounding the figure of King David, and will thus doubtless provoke strong reactions from other scholars. Nevertheless, this thesis is presented in the hope that, whether in one part or in another, understanding of the endlessly intriguing text of 1-2 Samuel will have been furthered in some way.



## Preface

“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter,  
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.  
As the heavens for height and the earth for depth,  
So the heart of kings is unsearchable.”

Proverbs 25:2-3

Every book is the product of its environment, and can only be interpreted properly when its author and context are understood. Prefaces such as this one are therefore invaluable for their clues to the unique perspective and implicit motivations of the author. Be that as it may, both I myself and this particular work have been shaped by a wide variety of contributions, a limited selection of which are noted here with gratitude.

Intellectually, thanks are due to Professor John Barton for diligent supervision and wise counsel, to Professors Graeme Auld and Robert Gordon and Dr John Jarick for rigorous examination and judicious recommendations, to the Oxford graduate and senior Old Testament seminars, OTSEM [northern European Hebrew Bible network] and the Society for Old Testament Study for stimulating academic conversation and camaraderie, and to my students for humouring and honing my enthusiasm for these texts.

Financially, thanks are due to the Theology Graduate Studentships, Squire and Marriott Bursaries, Crewdson Trust, Erasmus Fund, Sam Coghlan, Dieks Anthony, other friends and donors who prefer to remain anonymous, and particularly to Eileen Alexander whose generosity opened and propped open the door for me into higher education.

Culturally, thanks are due to Rabbi Eli and Friedy Brackman and fellow regulars of the ChaBaD synagogue, who have provided welcome rest at the end of each busy week, as well as an inspiring halakhic and ethnic home community.

Personally, thanks are due to my parents Joe and Heather, who first introduced me to the book of Samuel, and who have faithfully exemplified how love and respect for the Scriptures translates into practice.

Spiritually, thanks are due to Emmanuel Church, and particularly David and Margaret Coak, for the adventure we have shared together over the last eleven years, the primary reason I happily relocated to this fine city from the ‘other place’.

Practically, thanks are due to the beautiful, accommodating venues of the Mansfield Theology Library, the Radcliffe Camera, G&D’s cafés, and the Howat family residence, and to Mezza Mehrabanpour, Ed and Josh Currer and my parents for generous gifts of laptops, without which this could not have been written.

Rationally, thanks are due to my close friends, to housemates, and to family, who have invested in me and in this project variously with their prayers, gifts, time, and food, reminding me reciprocally that investment in people (Ps 16:3) endures beyond even the making of many books, and keeping my body and soul together, my feet on the ground, my clothes from becoming too threadbare, and my priorities in the right place.

I regret not being able to make specific mention of so many other valued individuals, whose involvement is nevertheless much appreciated. I trust this thesis will go some way towards repaying the encouragement and interest of this audience, for whom it was written. Scholarship is of no consequence if it does not bring enduring benefit to those who hear.

Dedicated to

the author,  
the object,  
and the recipient of 1-2 Samuel,  
and of course, to David himself.

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## Chapter One – Past Scholarship

The last century and a half of Hebrew Bible studies has witnessed such extensive changes to its philosophy, practice, and impact, that it might be considered in some ways comparable to the tumultuous times of similar duration recorded in the book of 1-2 Samuel. Centuries-old traditions about the early prophetic composition of *Samuel* [italicised hereafter to distinguish the book from the prophet] were assailed, like the Israelite tribal confederacy, by ‘foreign’ invaders, in the form of powerful intellectual movements in European scholarship. The perceived vulnerability of faith-based biblical studies demanded more ‘scientific’ techniques of literary criticism for the biblical texts, and Wellhausen’s all-encompassing proposal, head and shoulders above its competitors, was welcomed gladly and reigned uncontested for decades. In time, though, its excesses came to be challenged by the younger holistic approach, which was clearly better equipped to engage with the new ‘foreign’ invasion of postmodernism. As the ‘newer literary criticism’ has in turn become the establishment, questions are now starting to be asked about its own excesses and inability to rein in its unruly children. Will it also go the way of its predecessor, or can an heir be found to inherit the kingdom, uniting the factions and leading the discipline into its most glorious period of influence?

This thesis could be seen as a voice raised in support of one particular contender for the throne – what is termed here ‘third wave literary criticism’ – which gives priority first to a careful rhetorical analysis of the final form (‘newer literary criticism’) but then also makes an effort to situate this completed composition within its original historical setting, the primary quest of older *Literarkritik*. The resulting conclusion with regard to *Samuel* is just as unexpected as was David’s choice of Solomon as king, but even so, the focus ought to be placed not on personal opinions about the conclusion’s inherent merit, but on the legality of the rhetorical analysis – the rigour of the methodology that underlies this particular assessment. For this reason, after a regrettably brief summary of past scholarship on *Samuel* to set the stage, a lengthy discussion of theoretical foundations precedes the elaboration of the book’s literary structure which relies on those

foundations. Likewise, the structural explanation is followed by a corresponding chapter assessing it in light of those methodological principles, before a conclusion briefly surveys the many possible directions for further research.

Providing a thorough and objective summary of past scholarship on *Samuel* is a worthy aim, though ultimately as unattainable as would be the composition of an impartial history about the origins of monarchy in ancient Israel. This chapter will naturally proceed on a broadly chronological trajectory, in order to cover a few of the key developments that have changed the direction of scholarship on *Samuel*. Attention moves from scriptural to critical to post-critical to third-wave scholarship, despite the extensive overlap between all four of the sections. Although the majority view has shifted noticeably in different periods of scholarship, it would probably be possible to find adherents or forerunners of each of these various approaches at any particular point in time.

### 1.1 *Scriptural [or 'pre-critical'] scholarship on the composition of Samuel*

Contemporary academic study of the Bible broke so decisively with its religious heritage in the European Enlightenment that it is now normal for surveys of interpretation of *Samuel* to begin with the advent of 'higher criticism', as if *ex nihilo*. Scholarship of the Bible prior to this time is typically referred to patronisingly as 'pre-critical', however a more careful consideration of the preceding seventeen centuries inevitably sheds light on the origins of modern debates and may even suggest ways through. It would seem more accurate to refer to this period broadly as 'scriptural' scholarship, seeing as it is the rejection within academic study of the Bible's spiritual authority, connoted by the term 'scripture', which best defines the last two centuries.<sup>1</sup> The following survey will be necessarily brief and generalised, in deference to the much-anticipated publication of David Gunn's new Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentary, *1 and 2 Samuel Through the Centuries* (2016).

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, that is not to say that biblical critics have necessarily abandoned their personal convictions about the importance of the Bible as God's communication to them; rather, they are careful to 'bracket out questions of truth' from their academic study. "[In pre-critical times] criticism was often neutralized, and its insights ignored or discouraged, because of a commitment to the religious authority of the biblical text." – Barton 2007a: 132, 171-72.

## Before Judaism and Christianity

If we were to start with the earliest interpreters of *Samuel*, most would agree we should explore parts of the biblical books of Kings, Psalms and Chronicles, perhaps along with various prophetic oracles referring to a covenant with David. Such ‘inner-biblical exegesis’ generally reveals a belief that *Samuel* was considered reliable historical source material about both the historical origins of the Israelite monarchy and associated theological developments of the time concerning temple, kingship and ‘Zion’.<sup>2</sup> The combination of literal historiography and spiritual significance is also found in conservative Second Temple discussions about *halakhah* (law), for example in Jesus’ appeal to the precedent of David eating consecrated bread on the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-8; cf. 1Sam 21 in light of Lev 24:5-9). In various of his *halakhic* judgements, Jesus seems to steer a course between the more literal, strict interpretations of Shammai, and Hillel’s midrashic exegesis with its seven hermeneutical rules.<sup>3</sup> Their Alexandrian contemporary Philo, on the other hand, established an allegorical approach to scripture consistent with Platonic interpretations of Homer that were common in Hellenistic philosophy of the time. Still others associated with Qumran produced *pesher* commentary on scripture, viewing all types of text as potentially predictive of their own distinctive Jewish sect, just as the first Jewish followers of Jesus did also in their New Testament writings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Chronicles may also preserve slender evidence for a different title to the book of Samuel in pre-exilic times. Its Hebrew title ‘*Samuel*’ is late, first attested in Origen’s commentary on the Psalms (= “1, 2 Kings” – Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 6.25.2) and the Talmud (*bab. Baba Bathra* 14b-15a; cf. Beckwith 1985: 246-47, 119-22) and then in Jerome’s *Prologus Galeatus*. This evidently represents the primary prophet assumed to have authored the book (cf. 1Chr 29:29; Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa* 25; Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.37-40; his *Antiquities* 6.66 paraphrases 1Sam 10:25 to imply that Samuel wrote the whole of 1-2Samuel by divine foreknowledge). The ascription to a known prophet probably arose first when Judas Maccabeus re-gathered the scriptures (2Macc 2:14; cf. 1Macc 1:56-57) and evidently established the standard division between the ‘Prophets’ and Writings of “others who followed them” (Sir 0:1). *Samuel*’s traditional place in the former collection thus called for a named prophetic author – Beckwith 1985: 152-53, 155, 163-64.

Yet some time before this, 1Chr 27:24 makes an intriguing reference to “the chronicles of King David”, whose census total is smaller than that of the Chronicler (cf. 1Chr 21:5-6 with 2Sam 24:9). This term ‘chronicles’ (דְּבָרֵי-הַיָּמִים) could mean David’s official court records (Neh 12:23; Est 2:23; cf. 2Sam 8:16b), but since these records must be the implied source for the final census total corrected in Chronicles (1Chr 21:6; 23:27), the source document with the deficient number is probably *Samuel* itself. In that case, 1Chr 27:24 may arguably preserve the original name of *Samuel*, and perhaps even of its ostensible author.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also Crossley 2004, especially chs. 4, 6, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Patrick 2010.

Biblical interpretation in the late Second Temple period is often seen to have diverged quite sharply into Christian and Jewish exegesis following the so-called 'parting of the ways', but the case has been made quite persuasively for recognising a continuum persisting throughout late antiquity.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the constructive mutual influence of these two diverse communities on each others' interpretative traditions can be traced much further, even to the present day. Despite the polemic frequently hurled at each other's interpretations, and the lamentable periods when theological differences were used to justify political oppression, times of respectful engagement with each other's scholarship has produced some of the most enduring advances in biblical interpretation, such as in the eras of Jerome and Rashi.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the next two millennia there are two trends in the interpretation of the Bible, expressed in greater or lesser degrees of clarity in different individuals and generations, which we may summarise simplistically as the 'spiritual' and the 'literal'. Each of these were dominant for approximately a millennium, though the other approach was never without adherents.

### Spiritual interpretations

The first trend, reflecting Hillel, prioritised the spiritual interpretation of scripture over the literal, or 'plain' sense, though it is worth noting that at least in the early period people like Origen understood 'literal' as closer in meaning to 'literalist', the failure to distinguish genres which led to misuse of the text either by heretics or by pagan critics. In response, the Alexandrine school of Clement and Origen defended the primacy of the text's traditional moral and spiritual significance and application to the Church, which could move the debate beyond the crudest level of the literal words, generally through the use of allegory and typology. One of the most ancient and widespread allegories for the more positive stories about David read them as illustrations of his 'greater son', Jesus, eclipsing study of these texts either as historical sources or as ancient Israelite compositions.

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<sup>5</sup> Boyarin 1999. Cf. Sandgren 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Isaac Kalimi (2002; 2006) is one of the chief advocates of a new rapprochement between Jewish and mainstream biblical scholarship.

At a similar time in Jewish communities, the rabbinic successors to Hillel likewise put primary emphasis on the *halakhic* or legal relevance of the text for daily life. In this case, legislation and resolution of disputes required biblical justification, and where the all-important Pentateuch was not clear, appeal could be made to texts in the Psalms or Prophets, which included *Samuel*, even if this was tangential to their acknowledged natural meaning. Over time, therefore, the priority of *halakhah* led to the 'Oral Torah' of traditional explanation superseding the inspired Prophets and Writings themselves at least in terms of importance for the Jewish community. In both communities the interpretation of scripture was done orally for the most part, and in the early third century as the sermons of Origen on *Samuel* and other texts were beginning to be written down, Judah haNasi authorised the preservation of rabbinic *halakhah* in writing as the Mishnah (and Tosefta). These early collections, and their accumulated layers of tradition in the Holy Land and Babylon which formed the two Talmuds, also recorded many examples of *aggadah* or *midrash*, imaginative sermonic elaborations of arresting details in the text. These were later collated from many sources according to biblical book, such as Midrash Samuel from the late ninth century, and some suggest that their speculative or metaphorical nature is designed to reward 'deep' reading and prevent abuse by detractors. The 'spiritual' interpretation of allegory in Christian interpretation or *halakhah* and *aggadah* in Jewish exegesis, each with their approved lists of rules, remained dominant in both communities right through into the Mediaeval Period.

#### Literal interpretations

The second trend, reflecting Shammai, was the conviction that the plain sense, the 'literal', is foundational to and generative of the spiritual sense. This usually arose as a way of reining in the excesses of spiritual interpretation, and was frequently combined with a particular interest in the scholarly languages and in the production of a version of the Bible faithful to the original and also widely accessible. An early expression of this tendency came in response to the perceived interpretative license of the Septuagint, translated into Greek in the Second Temple Period. Aquila

in the early second century was one of several who sought to improve upon the original Greek translation, producing a far more literal rendering of the Hebrew text, and he is often also associated with the 'Onkelos' who translated the Aramaic version, or Targum, of the Pentateuch.<sup>7</sup>

Origen raised the question of the 'true' text of the Old Testament with his six-columned *Hexapla*, including Aquila's version, and Jerome answered the question for Christians in the late fourth century when he gave priority to the Hebrew text accepted by the Jewish community in his revision of the Latin Bible, starting with the books of Samuel.<sup>8</sup> This 'Vulgate' eventually ousted all earlier Latin versions to become the standard text for the Western Church even beyond the Reformation, so his scholarly respect for the Jewish canon and interpretations (less so the *aggadic*) expressed in the prologues and elsewhere, came to have a disproportionate influence on subsequent Christian scholarship. The fourth- to fifth-century school of Antioch which influenced Jerome actively opposed the allegorical excesses of the earlier Alexandrine school by focusing on the literal meaning of Scripture, though they still distinguished between ordinary and figurative language and allowed for typological interpretation that could be justified from the literal sense.<sup>9</sup> Due to accusations of heresy against certain of its teachers, the school fell into disrepute, but the two famous representatives who survived relatively unscathed, Chrysostom and later Theodoret, both wrote on *Samuel*, topical sermons and assorted 'questions' respectively.

The commentaries on *Samuel* by Procopius of Gaza in the late sixth century, and the great British scholar Bede a little later, synthesised insights of earlier Greek and Latin fathers of the Church using the 'catena' technique. Bede's second-generation pupil Alcuin, invited by Charlemagne to oversee

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<sup>7</sup> The slightly later Targum Jonathan, of the Prophets, includes the book of Samuel, and incorporates some early *aggadic* interpretations of the Hebrew into the translation itself.

<sup>8</sup> As recorded in his *Prologus Galeatus*. Although Jerome was aware, like Origen, that *Samuel* was still a single scroll in the Jewish tradition, he followed the Septuagintal division and renamed 1 and 2 Samuel the first and second of four books of Kings.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia, for example, was interested in both the historical setting and historical reference of biblical books and of specific prophetic oracles, believing that prophets served their own generation through forth-telling as well as a later one through foretelling – Norris 1990: 30-31, citing (PG 66:556C D).

his Carolingian Renaissance in the late eighth century,<sup>10</sup> developed a tradition of incorporating such notes into the preface and margins or even between the lines of Vulgate manuscripts. This culminated about four centuries later in the comprehensive *Glossa Ordinaria* for both the biblical text and canon law, but this Christian tradition was paralleled and far surpassed by the work of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki) on the Talmud and the Hebrew Bible. Rashi's commentary quickly became the preeminent Jewish commentary, and his deft scholarly judgement about Talmudic traditions and persuasive insistence on the *peshat*, or 'plain sense', influenced not only all subsequent Jewish commentators even to the present, but also the Christian scholars at the nearby Abbey of St Victor.

Hugh of St Victor, for example, learned Hebrew from local Jewish experts, quite possibly including Rashi's grandson and successor Rashbam,<sup>11</sup> in order to comment on *Samuel* and other Old Testament books. His new emphasis on the original languages and the literal sense was followed by many subsequent Christian scholars, most notably Nicholas of Lyra in the early fourteenth century, who produced what later became the first printed Bible commentary, a continuous exegetical gloss on the whole Bible much valued by the later Reformers from John Wycliffe onwards.<sup>12</sup> Both Luther's pastor Bugenhagen and his opponent Cardinal Cajetan produced commentaries on *Samuel* according to the literal sense so forcefully advocated by Luther, followed later by Calvin and others, and Reformation exegetes were generally quite restrained when drawing parallels between David and his descendant Jesus. The assumed historicity of *Samuel* led the Reformers to use its pro- and anti-monarchical passages in their own debates over church and state, and James I of England argued that 1Samuel 8:11-18 outlined the acceptable demands of a king on his people, comparable to Charlemagne eight centuries earlier.

As little as a century after Calvin, Louis Cappel seemingly undermined his own Reformed orthodoxy by proving from the late origins of the Masoretic vowel pointing, as shown by the Jewish

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<sup>10</sup> The books of *Samuel* became more popular at this time due to Charlemagne's court nickname of 'David', after the biblical king.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Smalley 1964: 149-56.

<sup>12</sup> Arguments used against the literal sense advocated by Nicholas of Lyra were closely comparable to those used against Wycliffe's translation into the vernacular – Deanesly 1920: 167 n.2.

scholar Levita, that scripture had a literary history like any other book. Drawing from Ibn Ezra, David Kimhi, Abravanel and others who had followed Rashi's *peshat* method, the seventeenth-century Anglican and Jewish scholars Hobbes and Spinoza both denied Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, whereas the Catholic Richard Simon preferred just to identify corrections and interpolations in the text. Spinoza's insistence on the rationality of historical inquiry led to a general rejection of miraculous elements in the biblical text,<sup>13</sup> but this made relatively little impact on the interpretation of *Samuel*. Although modern biblical criticism did not arrive until the Enlightenment from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, many of the views expressed in it have their origins much earlier, and the priority of the literal over the spiritual sense popularised by Rashi has remained the dominant scholarly view even to the present.

### 1.2 Higher critical scholarship on the composition of Samuel

Deuteronomy has been described as the 'Ariadne's thread' to lead one through the labyrinthine history of historical-critical research on the OT,<sup>14</sup> having played a decisive role in numerous scholarly debates due to its unusual coherence as a literary document and its recognisable style, and due also to its apparent influence on King Josiah's religious reforms, shortly before the Babylonian exile.<sup>15</sup> This connection of a distinctive expression of theology and literature with a commonly agreed historical event has made it a relatively fixed point of reference in the development of Israel's religion, and thus also the development of its religious literature, since other texts may be situated before or after it according to their theological content and possible literary borrowing. Although Deuteronomy has undoubtedly been the dominant text of historical criticism for the last hundred and fifty years, the moon to its sun has been the story of Absalom in the book of Samuel, 2Sam 13–

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Grant, with Tracy 1984: 105-108.

<sup>14</sup> Westphal (1892: xxiv) uses this analogy in terms of pentateuchal studies, but twentieth-century proposals of a Deuteronomistic History and deuteronomistic redactions of the prophets justify an even broader application.

<sup>15</sup> The identification of Josiah's 'law book' as Deuteronomy was already made by Chrysostom, Jerome and Athanasius, and is rarely disputed. In 1805, De Wette suggested that it was actually *composed* in large part at that time, and whether one agrees with him or not, the reforms of Josiah function as a *terminus ante quem* for the completion of a written document containing at least the majority of Deuteronomy. Recent doubts expressed about the historical value of the relevant narratives in 2Kings are not responding to new material evidence, but tend to result from an overly arid scholarly imagination.

20. This likewise has been generally recognised as a coherent and carefully crafted literary unit, and its 'ring of truth' and impression of eye-witness testimony has drawn critics like moths to a flame.

A) Source criticism

Medieval Jewish commentators had already noted various parallel but contrasting stories in the historical books of Genesis and in *Samuel*, and awareness of source materials lying behind the final form of the text had been widespread from the earliest stage of reception of the biblical texts.<sup>16</sup> From the mid-eighteenth century, parallel stories in Genesis had therefore been assigned either to the 'Yahwist' ('J') or the 'Elohist' ('E') sources on the basis of divine names and many other linguistic and stylistic criteria. This early 'Documentary' hypothesis for Genesis initially fragmented when later books of the Pentateuch were brought into consideration, but some still promoted 'E' as a coherent document throughout on the basis of its chronological framework and legal material, supplemented by 'J' traditions. Closer study of the 'E' material then isolated 'P' as a foundational source onto which distinct 'E' and 'J' layers had been built, with 'D' at the end, but scholarly consensus about sources only re-emerged with the 'newer Documentary Hypothesis', when Wellhausen broadened his scope to include the book of *Samuel*.

Wellhausen's influential *prolegomena* to his projected History of Israel (1878) was based on his conviction as an historian that the stories of David and others showed no influence from Mosaic law such as is recorded in Exodus through Deuteronomy. Furthermore, biblical scholars had long recognised in 1Samuel 8–12 an alternating sequence of pro- and anti-monarchical passages which implied different sources. Wellhausen refined his assessment of the earliest stage of Israelite history and religion by separating these sources. He treated the optimistic Davidic history in *Samuel*, including the Absalom narrative, as of great historical value, but the pessimistic traditions were assigned to a later author writing at the time of Judah's deportation to Babylon, long after the actual

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<sup>16</sup> Sources are explicitly cited in several cases such as the 'Book of the Wars of YHWH' and 'Book of Yashar' (Num 21:14-18; Jos 10:12-13; 2Sam 1:17-27), or the prophetic and courtly records used by the authors of Kings and Chronicles (e.g. 1Kgs 11:41; 15:23, 31; 1Chr 29:29-30; 2Chr 12:15; 20:34).

events, who believed it was Judah's monarchy which had been to blame not just for the exile but from the beginning.

Wellhausen's breakthrough in re-ordering the sources combined radical suggestions by various older scholars about the law being later than the prophets with new proposals about Israel's steady religious evolution over time.<sup>17</sup> The development of Israelite religion from an early vibrant personal faith around the time of David and Solomon to a late ossified ritualism and legalism in the post-exilic period could therefore be tied securely to the history of Israel's literature at two points: The coherent and reliable early layer of stories in *Samuel* bore witness to the state of religion portrayed in his earliest pentateuchal source 'J', and the similarly coherent book of Deuteronomy down at the time of Josiah, codifying ethics and centralising spiritual authority, confirmed the trajectory of Israelite religious development that would culminate in 'P', the latest rather than earliest source.

The source-critical theories of Wellhausen were only the first high-water mark of the new scholarly discipline of 'higher criticism', and his successors did little to change the picture he had drawn, pursuing ever more detailed subdivisions of the four commonly agreed sources. Wellhausen himself had traced the four sources as far as Joshua, arguing for a 'Hexateuch', so other scholars then extended the search for the four source documents into the books of Judges and *Samuel* also. The hexateuchal sources were now seen to have been composed later than the events related in these historical books, so it would be no surprise if the panoramic histories of those sources had included stories also from these later times. Eissfeldt was one of the last major scholars to pursue source critical analysis of *Samuel*, and though he found evidence in it for his own distinctive theory of a third early source 'L' alongside 'J' and 'E', he was already having to defend his assumption of interwoven source documents from the new approach of independent 'blocks' of tradition advocated by Rost. In summary, although the later work of source critics is often rightly criticised as

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<sup>17</sup> The term 'evolution' is used advisedly with reference to the mere progression from simple to more complex forms of religious thought and praxis, ignoring value judgements about such a development. Wellhausen himself believed this evolutionary process in Israelite religion and literature to have been highly detrimental to 'true Yahwism', however the modern obsession with biological and social evolution has led many scholars since then to accept the principles behind his theory while reversing his assessment, at least with regard to beliefs such as monotheism, universalism and afterlife. For further details see Barton 2007b: 169-79.

'atomistic', it does not follow by *reductio ad absurdum* that their original intention was misguided; now that four major medium-sized sources had been confidently discerned within the text, the task still remained to explain how these documents had themselves been formed from smaller fragments of tradition.

B) Form / tradition criticism

A significant contribution towards this end was made by the new scholarly disciplines of form criticism and then tradition criticism, both championed by Hermann Gunkel at the start of the twentieth century. Form criticism shifted the attention from the intermediate documents right back to the earliest fragments of oral tradition out of which these documents had been constructed. Such original independent units of tradition had been identified long before source criticism, in examples such as Hannah's song (1Sam 2:1-10), or David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (2Sam 1:19-27), but now prose material as well was stripped back to its most basic story forms. Tradition criticism followed on from form criticism almost immediately, by necessity, proposing hypotheses about the corporate social contexts in which individual fragments of tradition began to coalesce, often presumed to have crystallised around particular historical figures or locations.

Budde and others argued around the turn of the century that Wellhausen's two sources in *Samuel* were contiguous with the hexateuchal documents 'J' and 'E', but those who felt the linguistic evidence too weak for this, such as Kittel, were able to recommend the new methods of tradition criticism as a preferable alternative to source criticism for this book. They did not object to the idea of two horizontal interwoven sources in *Samuel*, but recognised the importance of intrinsic inductive reasoning from analysis of smaller traditional clusters rather than deductive searching for sources on the basis of extrinsic pentateuchal criteria. Followers of Gunkel such as Gressmann and Alt were more forceful, rejecting the source-critical model in favour of discrete traditional units in *Samuel*.

Picking up on such suggestions, the young scholar Leonhard Rost chose to write his *Habilitation* thesis on one such discrete unit in *Samuel*, the so-called 'court history' (2Sam 9–20 with 1Kgs 1–2)

recognised by Wellhausen to have been a coherent literary unit. However, although he relied on the fresh perspectives of tradition criticism in order to attack source-critical approaches to *Samuel*, he preserved Wellhausen's assumptions about creative authorship of literary units rather than the impersonal oral 'schools' advocated by tradition critics. His 1926 book argued compellingly for a composition of *Samuel* from originally independent literary units, among which he defended an 'Ark Narrative' (1Sam 4–6; 2Sam 6), the 'Prophecy of Nathan' (2Sam 7), and the 'Account of the Ammonite War' (2Sam 10, 12:26-31), before focusing primarily on what he termed the 'Succession Narrative' (2Sam 9–20 and 1Kgs 1–2). Although he didn't develop the suggestion at all, he was apparently the first scholar to suggest a connected narrative work between roughly 1Sam 16 and 2Sam 5, commonly known as the 'History of David's Rise'.<sup>18</sup>

His prioritising of coherent thematic content over form led him to draw in earlier material that could be considered relevant, such as Nathan's dynastic prophecy in 2Samuel 7 or the account of Michal's childlessness at the end of chapter 6. Such recognition of narrative connections with earlier stories became a fundamental methodological problem with his theory of independent literary documents, something Eissfeldt noted in his review of Rost's book.<sup>19</sup> Eissfeldt was obviously defending his own now discredited theories about strands of (heptateuchal) sources extending throughout *Samuel*, but even so, his criticism of the presumed independence of the narratives, and his preference for the traditional source-critical tools of distinguishing between texts, have not been overturned.

Rost's theories about the composition of *Samuel*, and particularly about the Succession Narrative, quickly achieved widespread support, being adopted by Alt, von Rad and Hertzberg, and directly influencing both Noth's theory of the Deuteronomistic History and Weiser's parallel theory of the Prophetic History. It is possible, however, to see Rost's analysis as in some ways a high-water mark for tradition criticism, at least regarding *Samuel*. Although he assumed a creative written form

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<sup>18</sup> Ball 1982: xxiv. Of course, Wellhausen had somewhat anticipated this suggestion (for references see footnote 29 of Ball's introduction on p. xlv).

<sup>19</sup> Eissfeldt 1928; accessed via Ball 1982: xvi-xvii.

instead of Gunkel's speculation about collective oral composition, he shared the same focus on the segments of traditional material which had been compiled to form the larger literary document of *Samuel*. In terms of tradition history, scholars who adopted Rost's proposals such as von Rad concluded, as Wellhausen had, that these segments were evidently written down very close in time to the events they record, confirming their significant historical reliability.<sup>20</sup>

Rost's tradition-critical division of *Samuel* into several distinct narrative segments was then explored further by many others, focusing attention on passages Rost had discussed only briefly, such as the Ark Narrative, the History of David's Rise, or even the Rise of Saul in 1Samuel 7–15. Various scholars, however, called into question the precise limits of Rost's supposedly independent narratives, particularly the inclusion of 2Samuel 6 with the Ark Narrative (1Sam 4–7), or the beginning of the Succession Narrative in 2Samuel 10 or 9 or 7 or 6:16. Others wondered whether the History of David's Rise should begin at 1Samuel 23:1, with Rost, or earlier in 16:14, 16:1, or even 15:1, and whether it should end at 2Samuel 5:10, with Rost, or perhaps include also chapters 6 and 7.<sup>21</sup> In a similar vein, Carlson argued for a consideration of 2Samuel 2–7 and 9–24 as a coherent literary unit from a tradition-critical perspective, seeing the first section of 'David under the Blessing' mirrored by the second 'under the Curse', and Miller and Roberts advocated extending the Ark Narrative back to 1Samuel 2 about Eli's wicked sons, on clear tradition-critical grounds.<sup>22</sup> This awareness of broader narrative logic, as already recognised to slightly different ends by Eissfeldt in his review of Rost's book, would eventually grow into a fully-fledged narrative-critical methodology, but at this stage scholars continued to debate on the assumption that Rost's conception of originally independent segments was correct.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Ball 1982: xxx-xxxi.

<sup>21</sup> For a recent discussion of the limits of the History of David's Rise, see Yoon 2011: 5-67. Gordon's fine explanation (1984) of all of the proposed major segments of 1-2 Samuel was not apparently updated in subsequent reprintings (1987, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Carlson 1964. Miller & Roberts 1977; summarised in McCarter 1980b: 23-26.

<sup>23</sup> Frolov (2002) offers a trenchant critique of this, showing that each section of the 'DtrH' depends on the one preceding, but failing to consider whether later authors might have picked up where earlier ones had left off.

### C) Redaction criticism

Within a generation of the beginning of form and tradition criticism, though, interest was already turning from its preoccupation with the growth from small fragments of source material to the opposite end of the compositional process, the editorial or redactional activity at the various different stages of compilation. The authority of their source material, whether accumulated within oral tradition or composed in complete documents, would restrict final authors of the hexateuchal source documents (and books like *Samuel*) to serving simply as editors or 'redactors'.<sup>24</sup> Such was the view of Martin Noth, whose tradition-critical studies (i.e. *Überlieferungsgeschichte*) on the Deuteronomistic History (1943) and on the 'Tetrateuch' (1948) established a new high-water mark for redaction criticism. He was in fact more interested in the growth of traditions than in the modest contribution of the final Deuteronomistic redactor, who had done little more than compiling and arranging traditions, and inserting a handful of public speeches at key turning points in the history.

Nevertheless, Noth's concept of the 'Deuteronomist' [Dtr] with his remarkable breadth of historical vision and ability to produce such a large composition, caught the imagination of generations of scholars and gave impetus to the search for the redactor(s) in other biblical books also. Noth's brilliant idea was to detach the book of Deuteronomy, and thus also Joshua, from the reigning paradigm of the 'Hexateuch', in order to see it as the inspiration and introduction for the following collection of historical books comprising Joshua, Judges, *Samuel* and Kings. Of these, *Samuel* was thought to contain the least amount of editorial material, limited by Noth mainly to 1Samuel 7:2–8:22 and 12:1-25; these anti-monarchical passages were thereby rescued from source-critical attributions to 'E' and restored to the later exilic date advocated by Wellhausen.<sup>25</sup>

Noth's vision of a tentative Dtr redactor, entirely pessimistic about the possibility of Judah recovering from YHWH's judgement of exile, yet perfectly willing to preserve earlier more optimistic

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<sup>24</sup> Van Seters (2006) attacks contemporary conceptions of the 'editor' or 'redactor' in Old Testament studies primarily on the basis of etymology and comparative observations from the field of Classics; nevertheless, his preference for ascribing genuine creativity to secondary authors is to be commended.

<sup>25</sup> It was this anti-monarchical perspective of Noth's Dtr that persuaded him to make the majority of 2Samuel 7 pre-Dtr, though many of his successors have taken issue with him on this point. Scholarly predecessors for Noth's theory can be traced back through Ewald and de Wette to Spinoza – Römer & de Pury 2000: 30-39.

views within his traditional source material, did not sit comfortably with many who accepted his broad thesis. It was inevitable that just as subdivided sources after Wellhausen had multiplied, so subdivided redactors would also multiply. Two influential revisions of Noth's proposal were Cross' optimistic 'Josianic' Dtr and pessimistic exilic Dtr shortly thereafter, or the three Dtr redactions of the Göttingen school (Smend, Dietrich, Veijola), all exilic, with an optimistic basic history (Dtr<sup>G</sup>), a rescension introducing numerous prophetic stories (Dtr<sup>P</sup>), and a final more pessimistic legal redaction (Dtr<sup>N</sup>). The more layers of redaction to be introduced, of course, the greater the amount of material in the various constituent books that must be called upon as evidence of redaction, so more and more of *Samuel* came to be attributed to Dtr redactional activity rather than earlier traditions.<sup>26</sup>

The Göttingen emphasis on a layer of prophetic elements, however, was by no means a new insight. Soon after Noth's study of the Deuteronomistic History [DtrH], Artur Weiser broadly accepted his modest Dtr redaction, but explained the almost complete lack of revision in *Samuel* on tradition-critical grounds.<sup>27</sup> His particular contribution was the idea of a 'prophetic interpretation of the history and its traditions', incorporating other traditions of the court and people such as the Succession Narrative, but subsuming these under the greater authority of the prophets. This would therefore explain the anti-monarchic passages in 1Samuel 8–12 as a prophetic, rather than Deuteronomistic, perspective. Weiser, though, can hardly be credited with a groundbreaking suggestion; from the very earliest times, many students of *Samuel* have taken for granted that the book was compiled from the prophetic records of Samuel, Nathan and Gad about David's life which are mentioned in 1Chronicles 29:29-30.<sup>28</sup>

Although far more attention has generally been paid to Noth's Deuteronomistic History, Weiser's Prophetic History has gradually gained a following too (Fohrer, Kaiser, Birch, Flanagan,

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<sup>26</sup> With Noth's arguments that the Dtr had also been responsible for compiling JE traditions in the Pentateuch, and others subsequently recognising Dtr-type ideas in the prophets, Gordon (1984: 18) is not exaggerating when he speaks of "the imperialist tendencies of the phenomenon of Deuteronomism in current Old Testament study".

<sup>27</sup> Weiser 1961: 165-70.

<sup>28</sup> As noted also by Baldwin (1988: 28).

McCarter), though usually as a prior redaction to the Dtr rather than a prophetic oral 'tradition'. Most recently, Campbell and O'Brien have argued in detail for an extensive 'Prophetic Record' stretching from 1Samuel 1 through 2Kings 10:28, being one of several large source documents including the Ark Narrative that were compiled by the first of Cross' two Dtr redactors.<sup>29</sup> Those who advocate a prophetic composition behind *Samuel* usually pay lip service to Noth's subsequent Dtr redaction, however the smaller the role played by the Dtr, the more irrelevant the thesis of a DtrH becomes for the study of the composition and purpose of *Samuel* in particular.<sup>30</sup> Of course, that is not to say that redaction criticism is irrelevant, but rather that for *Samuel* perhaps one should be looking at it as a pre-exilic prophetic composition instead.<sup>31</sup>

#### [D] Textual criticism

As an appendix of sorts to this third upwelling of higher criticism, it would be appropriate to make mention of the impact of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, from 1947 onwards, on the study of *Samuel*. Textual criticism as a discipline began much earlier than 'higher criticism', so-called with reference to the 'lower' criticism of the manuscripts alone. Early text critics focused on collating variant Hebrew manuscripts of the Masoretic Text type [MT], but an alternative approach, back-translating the Septuagint [LXX] into Hebrew in order to propose a less problematic original text, was pursued at length by Thenius (1842), Wellhausen (1871) and S.R. Driver (1890). Kittel's first version of the *Biblia Hebraica* adopted many of their proposed emendations to the MT on the basis of LXX readings, but soon doubt was cast on the possibility of distinguishing a reconstructed original Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX from less worthy 'corrections' made to a proto-MT *Vorlage* by translators. By the time de Boer revised the apparatus for *Samuel* in the *BHS*, his own textual

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<sup>29</sup> Campbell & O'Brien 2000.

<sup>30</sup> See also the helpful essay of Knoppers 2000.

<sup>31</sup> McCarter (1994) has argued instead that the anti-monarchical (i.e. prophetic) material is itself a secondary redaction of the original edition of the DtrH, carried out at Mizpah of Benjamin under the governorship of Gedaliah in the very early exile, yet distinct from the Deuteronomistic school(s) of redactors (cf. McKenzie 2000a: 310-14). It seems to me that redaction-critical conceptions of composition have here failed to do justice to the inevitable diversity of 'prophetic' perspectives about monarchy at every point in Israel's history (cf., e.g. Jer 22).

studies of the book (1938, 1949) had made him rather less confident of the text-critical value of the LXX.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the middle of the twentieth century was to change all this, though, as four Hebrew manuscripts of *Samuel* were found dating back to the third to first centuries BC.<sup>32</sup> Cross concluded that the readings preserved in the larger fragments were generally closer to the LXX than to the MT, indicating that genuine Hebrew variants lay behind the Greek text of the LXX and causing a renewal of support for the LXX in recovering the 'original' text of *Samuel* (e.g. McCarter, Klein). However, further studies have shown that no biblical manuscript from Qumran is consistent enough in its agreement with the LXX to qualify as its likely Hebrew *Vorlage*, and on the other hand various deliberate translational changes made to a proto-MT version of the text by the LXX have been recognised.<sup>33</sup> One must also question whether variant readings even in the Hebrew manuscripts from Qumran were perhaps also introduced in a desire to improve upon a problematic earlier copy of the text.<sup>34</sup> Tsumura takes this approach in his recent commentary on 1Samuel, relying on comparative linguistics from Ugaritic and phonetic spellings to explain many presumed 'mistakes' in the MT, much to Klein's frustration. Gilmour also chooses to work with the MT for the majority of her engagement with the text, for the different reason that this synchronic final form is at least attested in an actual manuscript, and is thus preferable to the reconstruction of a text that may never have existed at all.<sup>35</sup>

These developments in textual criticism have also affected and been affected by redaction criticism of *Samuel*, often connected with assessments of the Chronicler's re-use of *Samuel* as source

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<sup>32</sup> 1QSam (first century BC; 1Sam 18:17-18 + fragments from 2Sam 20-23 [MT-type]), 4QSam<sup>b</sup> (c. 250BC; fragments from 1Sam 16, 19, 21, 23 [MT-type]), 4QSam<sup>c</sup> (100-75BC; only 1Sam 25:30-32 and 2Sam 14:7-15:15 [MT/LXX<sup>Luc</sup>]), 4QSam<sup>a</sup> (50-25BC; fragments from most chapters [LXX-type]). Tsumura (2007: 6) notes that "we really have only one manuscript ('scroll'), since only in the case of 4QSam<sup>a</sup> can we be reasonably sure that we have what could be called a biblical text. The other two texts are so fragmentary that we cannot rule out that they are some type of paraphrase, similar to other biblical paraphrases that have been found."

<sup>33</sup> Tov 1988: 29. Schniedewind 1994.

<sup>34</sup> Pisano's meticulous study indicated that "in the vast majority of cases a large plus or minus occurring in the LXX or 4QSam<sup>a</sup> vis-à-vis MT indicates a further literary activity by LXX [or its *Vorlage*] or 4QSam<sup>a</sup>", even if the latter texts are still helpful for restoring small corruptions in the MT text tradition (1984: 283-85). Aejmelaeus (2007 [1987]: 82-83) insists that the LXX readings be attributed to the *Vorlage* "as a possible original text".

<sup>35</sup> Tsumura 2007: 9-10; 1999. Klein 2008: xl. Gilmour 2011: 35-36.

material for his own work of history. Whereas text critics were traditionally practically unanimous in assuming an original final form of the text that subsequently underwent mostly unintentional corruption through scribal copying over many generations, redaction criticism has blurred the distinction between late redactors inserting occasional fragments of material and copyists who might do the same.<sup>36</sup> Some scholars have even abandoned concepts of a 'final form' of the text, preferring to see a continuum from composition into transmission, at least prior to the survival and hence triumph of the proto-Masoretic Text following the destruction of the Second Temple.<sup>37</sup>

My own Master's dissertation traced the transmission of the Hebrew text of the Bible from the present day back as far as the earliest attested manuscripts from Qumran, assessing the various transmission traditions in each era according to the criteria of provenance, quality, contamination and unresolved diversity. On this basis it became clear that, far from displaying a 'textual pluriformity', Second Temple Judaism contained various traditions with markedly different attitudes towards the text, including a highly conservative one consistently associated with texts of the 'proto-Masoretic' type.<sup>38</sup> When one takes into account also the fact that the Dead Sea Scrolls were apparently 'discovered' at least twice before 1947, each time finding their way into the hands of recognised scholars of the day,<sup>39</sup> the most reasonable assumption to make is that the meticulous Masoretes made use of the very best ancient manuscripts, unfortunately no longer extant. In that case, we are arguably justified in relying on the undisputed excellence (though not infallibility) of their text-critical scholarship and superior sources, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel on the basis of the versions and any remaining scraps discarded in the caves.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Tov 2001: 313-50.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Barton 2007c: 270-71. However, Pisano (2000) shows how difficult this is to demonstrate in practice.

<sup>38</sup> Patrick 2004b.

<sup>39</sup> First c. 200AD, used by Origen for his Hexapla (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.16.1-3; cf. Wright 1949; Cross 1949: 38), and second c. 790AD (cf. Kahle 1959: 16). The latter is very close to the time usually proposed for the earliest known named Masorete, Asher the Great Elder, and the scholars in Jerusalem at the time were apparently Karaites as were the Tiberian Masoretes – cf. Khan 1987: 32-33.

### 1.3 *Post-critical scholarship on the composition of Samuel*

Due in part to the multiplication *ad libitum* of conflicting theories about redactional layers, traditions, and sources, a fourth approach developed around a generation after the rise of redaction criticism, namely final-form criticism. Many different influences can be detected behind this fresh approach to biblical literature,<sup>40</sup> two of which are given below, but its common designation as ‘newer literary criticism’<sup>41</sup> highlights the fact that most of its advocates shared an unusually forthright rejection of earlier methods of ‘historical / biblical criticism’ rather than claiming continuity.

From a literary perspective, the foray into biblical studies by the literary critic Robert Alter inspired many with a new appreciation for the creative artistry of the text as a literary whole. His demonstration of how various smaller narratives of potentially disparate origin had been formed into well-crafted rhetorical structures and final forms illustrated the sort of approach urged upon biblical scholarship by James Muilenburg in a presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature over a decade earlier. That address had effectively provided an alternative to redaction criticism, in that while both were shifting attention away from the small units of form criticism, a focus on the overall design of the final form is quite different to an interest in isolating just the small editorial stitches finally connecting the accumulated narrative clusters of tradition criticism.<sup>42</sup> Rhetorical analysis was forsaking the basic gradualist assumptions of form and tradition criticism and returning

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<sup>40</sup> One example being the religious authority of these texts at and especially beyond “that passing moment when the final form was achieved”; Brevard Childs and James Sanders represent two influential approaches to ‘canonical criticism’ – cf. Sanders 2000: 24-25, 31; also Van Seters 2006: 362-76, esp. 373.

<sup>41</sup> In contradistinction to what is known in German as *Literarkritik* – ‘literary criticism’ in this case refers primarily to what we would call ‘source criticism’, but could be broadened to apply to all three dominant modes of biblical ‘higher’ criticism discussed above, against which ‘final form criticism’ typically sets itself. For general introductions see House (1992) and Exum & Clines (1993).

<sup>42</sup> Some have made the valuable observation that although Muilenburg can take the credit for making newer literary criticism acceptable to biblical scholarship, he was preceded by Auerbach’s book *Mimesis* in 1953. This Jewish scholar’s work influenced many subsequent final form scholars of the Old Testament, and he basically agreed with Rosenzweig’s well-known response to higher criticism about sources and Redactors, a standard view in Jewish Bible scholarship even to the present, that “For us, R is Rabbenu”.

to the older views of scholars such as Wellhausen, Rost and von Rad who had assumed creative individual authors to have been at work.<sup>43</sup>

Alter was only the most influential representative of the new narrative criticism, though. Starting with Muilenburg's pupil Ridout (1971), Bar-Efrat (1975 [Hebrew]),<sup>44</sup> Conroy (1978), Gunn (1978, 1980) and particularly Fokkelman (1981-1993) all produced significant narrative-critical works on *Samuel*. In his *Anchor Bible Dictionary* article on 1-2 Samuel, Flanagan makes the perceptive observation that Gunn's influence in this area may in some ways rival that of Alter, due in part to his foundation (with others) of a journal and two presses (1976, 1980) devoted to new non-traditional approaches to biblical study; "Plurality and simultaneity of hypotheses and interpretations became the hallmarks of scholarship on Samuel".<sup>45</sup> This simultaneity was justified through advances (or perhaps retreats?) in the field of literary theory, where postmodern proponents of 'New Criticism' rejected the authority of the author or 'original' purpose of a text, dismissing this as the 'intentional fallacy'.<sup>46</sup> Instead, younger scholars wanted to assert the equal validity of their own perspectives on literature, and narratives provided endless scope for isolating the specific themes or characters most interesting to the individual interpreter with their own personal agenda (reader-response criticism).

The interest in structural arrangement of narratives, advocated by Muilenburg and applied to *Samuel* with particular skill by Bar-Efrat and by Fokkelman, resulted in many specifically 'chiastic' proposals for individual passages within the book,<sup>47</sup> as well as a few suggestions about the shape of the whole of 1-2 Samuel. Of these, three in particular are worth mentioning.<sup>48</sup> In the late 1970s Yehuda Radday produced very rough chiastic diagrams for 1Samuel and 2Samuel as distinct books (a surprisingly anachronistic reliance on the LXX subdivision), offering the self-reflective excuse that

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<sup>43</sup> Alter (1981: 119 n.1) writes, "the evidence for a unified imaginative conception of the whole David story seems to be persuasive".

<sup>44</sup> See also Bar-Efrat 1980.

<sup>45</sup> Flanagan 1992: 961.

<sup>46</sup> Far from being a 'fallacy', the very presence of books written by the New Critics in order to persuade us of their ideas gives the lie to their disavowal of authorial intention.

<sup>47</sup> See Welch & McKinlay 1999 – in the entries for Bar-Efrat, Bourke, Bruegemann [sic], Bullinger, Ceresko, Fischer, Gottwald, Klaus, Kselman, Langlamet, Lete, Radday, Ridout, Shea, Sternberg, Weiss, Willis and Zapf.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. also Rosenberg 1987: 136-40, whose brief broad-brush observations are often astute.

perhaps the author “found his material in I Samuel impossible to press into a chiastic frame and therefore did as well as he could”. David Dorsey did little better two decades later, showing that his favourite seven-part chiastic form found in nearly every book of the Old Testament appears again in 1-2 Samuel (no surprise).<sup>49</sup> Peter Leithart made a significant improvement on all his predecessors, simply by recognising that the book of Samuel ought to be analysed distinct from 1Kings 1–2.<sup>50</sup> His personal assessment of his own fifteen-part structure speaks for itself: “Though a few of these correspondences appear stretched (even to me!), overall the scheme works well and was arrived at by applying the most rigorous and scientific methods known to man.”<sup>51</sup> I am not aware of any to date who have managed to identify a straightforward concentric arrangement of the whole book of *Samuel* episode by episode, such as is offered in this present thesis, although of course many have recognised clear concentric patterns in subsidiary literary units or sections.

*Excursus A: Historical analysis of Samuel*

An additional factor in the growth of interest in final-form or narrative criticism was the loss of confidence in the unique value of the biblical texts as sources for history.<sup>52</sup> This had been a primary objective of traditional historical criticism of the Bible since the early nineteenth century, inspired by the same philological developments in literary theory that led the great German historian Leopold von Ranke to found modern history on criticism of primary sources, seeking to show the past “how it essentially was” (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*).<sup>53</sup> Historians between the wars became disillusioned about previous certainties, and after the second World War they tried again to restore objectivity, turning to the new social sciences to make their discipline more ‘scientific’ and quantifiable. The

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<sup>49</sup> Radday 1981: 79-82. (When Radday tries to arrange individual episodes in 2Samuel chiastically the resulting pattern is quite unrecognisable, just as “sketchy” as the outline he rejects which had been suggested by Lund (1942: 88-92) for 2Samuel 15 – 1Kings 2.) Dorsey 1999: 135.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. similarly Flanagan 1972: 173-76; Conroy 1978: 2; Gordon 1994: 290-91; Keys 1996: 54-70; Firth 2001: 207. For a full discussion of the significance of 2Sam 21–24, see Klement 2000.

<sup>51</sup> Leithart 2003: 31-33.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Steussy (1999: 10-19) justifies her final-form approach, open to textual disunity and unorthodoxy, by simply reporting lack of historical-critical consensus over historical reconstructions from the text (Goliath, Ahinoam), United Monarchy archaeology, and diachronic development of texts (DtrH, Succession Narrative).

<sup>53</sup> Evans 2000: 16-19.

French *Annales* historians became very influential, emphasising the *longue durée* rather than a subjective history of specific people and events. They also influenced the development of the 'new archaeology' approach in the 1960s by American New World archaeologists.<sup>54</sup> To identify factors governing processes of cultural change, these 'processualists' downplayed historical records – largely lacking for pre-literate indigenous societies – in favour of interdisciplinary collaboration between anthropologists, sociologists, palaeo-ecologists and the physical science disciplines. These new methods reaching archaeologists of ancient Canaan by the 1970s justified for some of them also a reduced interest in the events-based approach to history as found in the Bible.<sup>55</sup>

Between the wars, biblical archaeologists led by W.F. Albright had made many confident historical assertions based on the biblical texts, such as a twelfth-century BC 'conquest' of Canaan by Joshua. Ever-increasing archaeological research, though, began to undermine some of these conclusions, and historians of ancient Israel turned to the social sciences and 'new archaeology' for alternative theories, particularly for the Israelite arrival in Canaan and the emergence of the first Israelite state(s).<sup>56</sup> Their apparent successes then reinforced the parallel conclusion that biblical texts were likely to be unreliable as sources for history unless backed up by more 'objective' evidence from scientific archaeological investigation.<sup>57</sup>

Within less than a decade, some of the same scholars who had pioneered social scientific methods for objective historical research into Israel's origins (e.g. Lemche 1984; Whitelam & Coote 1987; cf. Finkelstein 1988) were at the forefront of a new 'revisionist' school of biblical scholarship, effectively repudiating even their own earlier attempts to write a history of ancient 'Israel'. They continued to affirm the value of processualist archaeological methods, as a way of writing history

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<sup>54</sup> Evans 2000: 38-40.

<sup>55</sup> Dever 1981; cf. Moorey 1991: 140-48, xv-xvi.

<sup>56</sup> *Excursus B* (after §6.1) raises the possibility that it may be the standard chronology, rather than the biblical text, that is to blame for the incompatibility between for example the book of Joshua and the early Iron Age.

<sup>57</sup> Davies (1996: 15) and Liverani (2005: xv-xvi) note how the advancing scepticism in biblical history has successively overwhelmed the Primeval History, the Patriarchal Period, and the Exodus and Conquest, and is now assailing the United Monarchy.

without needing to appeal to written sources,<sup>58</sup> but in general they appear to have largely turned from ‘positivist’ contributions of socio-scientific historiography (being unqualified in archaeology apart from Finkelstein) to ‘nihilist’ attacks on the historicity of the biblical texts. It is not that actual archaeological material uncovered in the last twenty years has given rise to such a vicious assault on the reliability of biblical history;<sup>59</sup> on the contrary, many discoveries could perhaps reinforce its historical value.<sup>60</sup> It seems, therefore, that the primary cause for this scepticism was the same postmodern philosophy that had already been assailing the wider discipline of history (Dever 2001).

‘Postmodern’ recognition of the indeterminacy of language provoked an existential crisis in the discipline of history in the 1980s and 1990s, criticising the dominant discourses and idealistic objectivity of older historians.<sup>61</sup> Since then, secular and biblical historians as well as archaeologists have taken on board valid postmodern insights,<sup>62</sup> and yet defended the theoretical robustness of the historical endeavour in principle and in practice.<sup>63</sup> Even so, the degree to which ideology may have unduly influenced particular historical sources such as *Samuel*, and our modern use of them for historiography, remains widely disputed, and final-form criticism has often provided a convenient scholarly way of circumventing the whole question.

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#### 1.4 *Third wave literary-critical scholarship on the composition of Samuel*

The first wave of ‘literary criticism’, or *Literarkritik*, in the late-nineteenth and early- to mid-twentieth century, recognised that the biblical texts are not transparent windows onto historical or

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<sup>58</sup> Finkelstein does still appeal to biblical texts for the later Iron Age, but rejects their value for Israelite history before Omri and Ahab (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001). Lemche, Whitelam et al. reject biblical history *a priori*.

<sup>59</sup> Finkelstein’s cogent proposal of a new ‘low chronology’ for the early Iron Age is instead a re-interpretation of existing archaeological evidence, and is discussed in *Excursus B* below (after §6.1).

<sup>60</sup> Cf., e.g., the Tel Dan stele fragments (1993–1994), the ‘Large Stone structure’ [“David’s palace”?] in Jerusalem (2005), the Tel Zayit Abecedary (2005; cf. Tappy & McCarter 2008), the Khirbet Qeiyafa ostrakon (2008; cf. Galil 2009) and ‘Išba’al inscription (2012; cf. Garfinkel 2015), the Ophel Treasure (2013), the Lachish Jar Sherd (2014; cf. Sass 2015) and the Hezekiah bulla (2009; cf. Mazar 2015), among others.

<sup>61</sup> Evans 2000: 3-9; he offers an instructive example (233-38) of the postmodern literary theorist Paul de Man, whose historical deconstructionism was employed to excuse his youthful collaboration with Nazi propaganda.

<sup>62</sup> For example, that acknowledging one’s own ideological bias is the best way to limit its effects.

<sup>63</sup> E.g. Evans 2000; Dever 2001; Provan, Long & Longman 2003; Grabbe 2007: 28-30; Brettler 2010: 26-27.

theological reality, as they had typically been used for generations by confessing scholars,<sup>64</sup> but are worthy of analysis in their own right as literature. Understanding their original composition and transmission would enable the scholar better to distinguish the unique perspective(s) afforded by each particular ‘window’ on the external reality to which they bore witness. The methods pioneered by first wave literary criticism prioritised the detection of internally coherent sources, primary forms, agglomerative traditions, and redactional activity by compilers. As these methods each degenerated into unrestricted proliferation of hypotheses, postmodernist developments in literary theory and history inspired a second wave of ‘newer literary criticism’ in the second half of the twentieth century, focusing on the final form of the text as an artistic unity in which inconsistencies were valued precisely because of the polyvalence they generated. Final-form analyses typically chose to ignore diachronic questions of origin as either irrelevant or (sadly) unrecoverable,<sup>65</sup> but as with first wave literary criticism, before long the second wave surrendered to the law of diminishing returns by dissipating into widely divergent readings of the same texts, eschewing competition on principle.<sup>66</sup>

In a perhaps inevitable Hegelian dialectic, the internal problems of the first wave expressed in the contradictory second wave have in the last two or three decades begun to resolve themselves into a rising third wave of literary criticism, only just beginning to be felt.<sup>67</sup> In this third wave, synchronic analysis is appreciated as in fact an essential foundation for the ever-important diachronic questions, questions of how ancient authors deliberately crafted their texts as compositions for specific audiences.<sup>68</sup> When Muilenburg advocated final-form analysis four decades

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<sup>64</sup> Moberly distinguishes between ‘confessing’ and ‘confessional’, the latter implying allegiance to a specific Christian denominational ‘confession’ – see Barton 2007a: 173.

<sup>65</sup> Barton (1994: 8-10) criticises Alter along these lines, and attempts to mediate between first- and second-wave literary critics.

<sup>66</sup> For recent examples of the deregulated abandon in newer literary criticism of *Samuel*, see Linafelt, Camp & Beal 2010.

<sup>67</sup> E.g., to differing degrees, Polzin on Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges (1980), 1Samuel (1989), and 2Samuel (1993); Gooding on Daniel (1981) and Judges (1982); Webb on Judges (1987); Koorevaar on Joshua (1990), summarised in Klement (1996; ETr 1999); Amit on Judges (1999); and Lundbom on Jeremiah (1997, 1999, 2004a, 2004b) and Deuteronomy (2013: 20-21, 23-25).

<sup>68</sup> Klement (e.g. 1999: 459 = 1996: 101) makes a persuasive argument for the priority of synchronic analysis before diachronic, citing Polzin (1980: 3-7), who cites Bakhtin and others. Cf. also Edelman 1991: 21-24.

ago, he was simply arguing that the rhetorical analysis assumed by form criticism ought to be applied to the complete text rather than just to extracted selections. Unfortunately, since that time postmodern philosophical scepticism about both authors and history has deterred most final-form critics from attempting to pursue the synchronic 'plain sense' of the text back into its original diachronic context(s). Nevertheless, his call still stands, and more evidence is now available to determine the rhetorical intent of the final-form author by identifying comparable document-length literature from Near Eastern cultures surrounding ancient Israel. For example, Deuteronomy has been compared with vassal treaties and lawcodes, Joshua with conquest accounts, Samuel with royal accession propaganda, and Kings with court chronicles.<sup>69</sup>

The other method of discovering rhetorical intent in a final-form text, logically prior to the comparative approach, is the discernment of structural techniques used by the author across the whole document. That requires a definition of the limits of the document, and the natural place to start is at the most basic and tangible division between individual scrolls, attested in the Genizah manuscripts, medieval Hebrew scrolls, and as far back as the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves. We know that at some point prior to our earliest manuscript evidence, each book was physically distinguished from others by means of its own scroll, and would therefore have been recognised at that time as having had a distinct rhetorical purpose.<sup>70</sup> We are justified, therefore, in treating *Samuel* as a single work, following its attestation in the Dead Sea Scrolls rather than in the Septuagint, as a deliberate

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<sup>69</sup> E.g. [1] Wenham 1970; Kitchen & Lawrence 2012; [2] Younger 1990: 249-53; [3] McCarter 1980a (developing Hoffner 1975). Römer (2005: 104-106) uses this sort of comparative analysis to argue for a library of individual scrolls composed by Deuteronomists prior to the final redaction of the DtrH. Unfortunately his predetermined conclusion about the neo-Assyrian date for all these compositions prevents an impartial comparison with documents from other civilisations or time periods.

<sup>70</sup> Haran 1985: 1-3. Exceptions might be Genesis through Numbers, or the Book of the Twelve. Barton (2007c: 4) commends the "advantage in beginning from what is known and proceeding by stages to reconstruct what is unknown, rather than starting with hypothetical 'earliest stages' and coming late in the day to the text in its present form; for this more familiar route tends to mean that we have already made up our minds on many issues before ever we confront the text itself, and can no longer see it with any freshness of perception."

alternative to either isolating small portions of text for analysis or presuming an original narrative continuum from Judges through Kings.<sup>71</sup>

This present thesis is intended as an illustration of third wave literary criticism, analysing the entire book of Samuel by explaining every episode within its structural context (Chapters Three and Four) so as to demonstrate the message of the whole. The particular rhetorical technique used by the author to arrange episodes throughout the book, 'concentrism', must first be given a suitably thorough methodological justification (Chapter Two), including criteria that must be met to prove that concentrism is genuinely present in any particular text (§2.5). However, the literary analysis of *Samuel* would not be complete without assessing the proposed rhetorical structure, not only verifying it according to the criteria, but also considering questions of likely authorship, historical setting, and even the multiple editions uncovered through rhetorical analysis (Chapter Five). This study of *Samuel* will naturally provoke many questions for further research, some of which are spelled out in Chapter Six.

One of the most common questions, though, is why the structure I propose here has never been seen before. From the above survey of past research, I trust this will have become somewhat more clear: In the earliest period of its reception history, the book was treated simply as a source of historical facts about the origins of the Israelite monarchy, though from the Church Fathers and Tannaim onwards many became more interested in tracing spiritual patterns between either David and Jesus or the early monarchy and the laws of Moses, respectively. The recovery of the 'literal' sense as foundational to the 'spiritual' led to a new appreciation of the history for its own sake, reflected pragmatically in the reigns of Charlemagne and James I among many others. When Enlightenment thought started to interest biblical scholars in the literary history of *Samuel*, presuppositions about contradictions and multiple sources distracted them from reconsidering its

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. Firth 2013: 19-22. This is not to ignore the fact that we do find mention made of traditional associations of distinct scrolls, either in libraries or as a perceived theoretical group, in preceding centuries as early as the manuscript copies of the books themselves; evidence is presented by Beckwith (1986: *passim*, 221, 242-45).

hackneyed final form. Attention did return to the final form in the later twentieth century, just as postmodernism began persuading younger scholars to focus on reader-response studies and reject the importance of a (final) author. Only now, therefore, are we finding ourselves free once more to explore techniques by which an author might have given an objective arrangement to his material, conveying a specific message to his original audience. Whether it is possible to determine who this audience might have been is a question we must leave to Chapter Five.



## Chapter Two – Methodology

My introduction to ‘chiasmus’ was, as far as I can remember, through the writings of Kenneth Bailey on the parables of Jesus from a Middle Eastern perspective.<sup>72</sup> I learned of the principle of a series of units of text arranged in parallel pairs between a foundational pair of units at the beginning and end (*inclusio*) into two inverted symmetrical slopes with a climax at the summit, resembling a step pyramid. Once I was aware of this structural technique it was filed away in my memory along with various others I was learning. Four of my published articles since that time have involved structure in biblical books: the first recognises in 1Corinthians 12–14 the five standard parts of a Graeco-Roman rhetorical speech according to a particular handbook written by Cicero, the second explores the fourfold structure used in the book of Job throughout its narrative sections and speech headings, the third demonstrates how Matthew’s Gospel is divided into ten *peshet* units as known from Qumran scrolls in order to expound various passages from the book of Isaiah, and the fourth proposes in Proverbs 10:1–22:16 a ‘God-fearing’ religious calendrical arrangement, using a Yahwistic cluster in the centre to mark the start of the king’s civil calendar at the autumn festival.<sup>73</sup> None of these have involved chiasmus of any sort, so it was a surprise when I stumbled upon a very large chiastic structure in 1–2 Samuel soon after beginning research for my D.Phil. thesis.

I naturally thought it highly unusual to find a chiastic structure on so large a scale, but when I began to explore what others had written on chiasmus in the Old and New Testaments, I was unpleasantly surprised at both the number of proposals made for different passages or books, and the appalling subjectivity and implausibility of the vast majority of them. In the extensive secondary literature on the subject of chiasmus, there appear to be two types of publication, as noted by Porter and Reed:

those that posit various chiastic organizations of units of biblical material, and those that analyze the theoretical foundations for such studies. The first category has generated studies far too

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<sup>72</sup> Kenneth Bailey 1976; 1980. While I prefer to speak of ‘concentrism’, the more familiar term is ‘chiasmus’.

<sup>73</sup> Patrick 2004a; 2005; 2010; 2015.

numerous to discuss here, while the second category has generated only a small number of publications.<sup>74</sup>

Unfortunately, many scholars appear to presume that the number of chiasmic proposals of the first category produced in the last eighty years or so are cumulative proof for the presence of chiasmus on whatever scale.<sup>75</sup> From my own consideration of those compiled by Lund, Welch and his contributors, and Breck,<sup>76</sup> I am inclined to think that their 'metal-detector' searches in the field are indicating rather a lot more iron ore in the rocks than genuine treasure. There must be more reliable methodology and rigorous criteria for verifying the different chiasmic structures proposed, particularly on the scale of chapters or whole books, if we are to move beyond criticisms of the technique and start to appreciate its true value for biblical criticism.

I have tried to gather the majority of Porter and Reed's second category of studies which analyse the theoretical foundations for chiasmic studies, grouping their observations into five different methodological categories which this chapter will address in turn:

- (1) Genre – The first section shifts attention from the 'chiasmus' of Graeco-Roman rhetoric to the 'concentrism' of Hebrew rhetoric, founded on the parallelism principle characteristic of Hebrew poetry, and recognises its existence as a feature of high rhetorical style, potentially useful for both poetry and prose on both a small and large scale.
- (2) Composition – The second section explores features of oral composition, and whether it is possible to define concentrism as a characteristically Oriental rhetorical technique that could have been taught or used for planning compositions.
- (3) Purpose – The third section asks if it is necessary to prove that an author intended to use one particular structure to communicate his message, and if so, whether the audience needed to be able to perceive it or not.

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<sup>74</sup> Porter & Reed 1998: 214.

<sup>75</sup> E.g. Talbert 1970: 360-61; Welch 1981a: 9; Blomberg 1989: 5 (to give credit to Blomberg, he does go on to offer some helpful criteria for assessing validity of proposed chiasms); Breck 1994: 197.

<sup>76</sup> Lund 1942. Welch (ed.) 1981. Breck 1994.

- (4) Identification – The fourth section discusses the need for impeccable examples to establish a clear definition of a rhetorical structure, and also the need for reliable methods of identifying the textual boundaries of the rhetorical units within the examples.
- (5) Verification – The fifth section offers a clear definition for ‘concentrism’, and distils all the many proposed tests for authentic ‘chiasmus’ into seven criteria, all of which are important to prove the intentionality of each paralleled pair of units in a concentrism beyond reasonable doubt.

## 2.1 Genre

### 2.1.1 *History of the term ‘chiasmus’*

The ground-breaking work of Nils Lund in 1942 which established this technique within literary criticism was responsible for popularising the name ‘chiasmus’, or ‘chiasm’ in short form.<sup>77</sup> Since then, however, it has been generally accepted that the term ‘chiasmus’ was known from the time of Isocrates (fourth century BC), but only became an accepted technical term in classical rhetoric from Pseudo-Hermogenes (fourth century AD) onwards, and applied in its earliest technical use specifically to the inversion of four clauses in the form A-B-B’-A’.<sup>78</sup> Roman rhetoricians had formerly used the term ‘commutatio’ for this four-clause inversion,<sup>79</sup> although scholars have suggested a variety of other technical terms in classical rhetoric that may have been applied to ‘chiasmus’-like forms.<sup>80</sup>

Apparently Aristarchus of Alexandria, in the early second century BC, used the term ‘chiasmus’ to refer to an inversion of words, in distinction to the inversion of ideas expressed by the terms ‘hysteron proteron’ (“last – first”) or ‘deuteron proteron’ (“second – first”), a distinction rejected by his rival Crates of Pergamum.<sup>81</sup> There is evidence that Aristarchus, and others including the great Roman rhetorician Cicero, recognised ‘hysteron proteron’ as a feature of the ancient literature of

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<sup>77</sup> Lund 1942: 38. Other nearly synonymous terms include ‘regression’, ‘correspondence’, ‘envelope figure’, ‘pivot pattern’, etc. – Thomson 1995: 18; Welch 1981a: 10. In the field of English literature it is known as ‘sovereign midpoint’ – cf. Fowler 1970; Spearing 1982. In Quranic studies, ‘ring composition’ is becoming increasingly commonplace – Ernst 2011: 160-71 and Appendix B; thanks to Adam Gradel for the observation.

<sup>78</sup> E.g. 2Sam 22:21. Cf. Pseudo-Hermogenes, *On Invention* 4.3.2; acknowledged by Thomson 1995: 14-17.

<sup>79</sup> Brouwer 2000: 26-27; citing Kennedy 1984: 28.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Di Marco 1993: 480; Thomson 1995: 14-18.

<sup>81</sup> Thomson 1995: 15; citing Welch 1981c: 255.

Homer, referring specifically to the way he would often structure dialogue by responding to the last of a series of questions first,<sup>82</sup> with even up to eight pairs of questions and answers.<sup>83</sup> However, there is no evidence that ‘chiasmus’ or ‘hysteron proteron’ were ever applied as rhetorical terms in ancient times to structures beyond the length of a single dialogue.

Bengel (1742) seems to have been the first in ‘modern’ times to use the term ‘chiasmus’, although he used the term for both inverted parallelism (A-B-B’-A’) and direct or alternating parallelism (A-B-A’-B’).<sup>84</sup> It does not appear that his studies of the New Testament had any influence on Robert Lowth, whose famed lectures on the parallel nature of Hebrew poetry (1753) prepared the ground for his successors to discover ‘chiastic’ structures in Old Testament texts. Jebb (1820) further developed Lowth’s analysis, and he coined an alternative term ‘introverted parallelism’, derived from Hebrew poetic scholarship, for his discovery of two couplets set next to each other in which successive lines of the first are paralleled inversely with those of the second.

When Lund produced his own studies, he was particularly drawn to this ‘inverted parallelism’ form, as it has come to be known. Yet in order to extract this structuring principle from the context of poetry with its tight definitions, and apply it to both the most extensive and the briefest passages, in prose as much as in poetry, he chose to adopt Bengel’s term ‘chiasmus’ as “the earliest term used” and a “more flexible and inclusive” term “already in use in general literature”.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately

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<sup>82</sup> Bassett 1920. The majority of these ‘chiastic’ dialogues are composed of just four elements, hence the more common Aristarchan term ‘deuteron proteron’. The Homer scholar Whitman (1958: 252-56; cited by Thomson 1995: 15) points out that whereas ‘hysteron proteron’ balances by opposites (i.e. question and answer), ‘ring composition’ tends to balance by similarity or identity, and together they represent “The principle of circularity, including concentricity, or framing by balanced similarity and antithesis”.

<sup>83</sup> The longest example, cited most often, is Homer’s *Odyssey*, 11.170-203, where Odysseus’s series of questions [often mistakenly calculated as just seven] to the shade of his dead mother Anticleia are answered in a precisely inverted order, summarised as follows: Odysseus: “How did you die? / By long disease? / Or by the gentle arrows of Artemis? / What of my father? / And my son? / Does another man possess my property? / How is my wife’s state of mind? / Has she married again?” // Anticleia: “She remains in your house. / But she weeps night and day. / None other possesses your property. / Telemachus is unharassed and popular, as a magistrate. / Your father stays in the countryside, sleeping roughly indoors in winter and in the vineyard in summer, and grieves as he ages. / Artemis did not slay me with her arrows. / Nor did I waste away from disease. / But I was robbed of sweet life by my longing for you.”

<sup>84</sup> Cited by Lund 1942: 35.

<sup>85</sup> Lund 1942: 38-39. Although Boys (1825: 50) used Jebb’s term ‘introverted parallelism’, he suggested ‘correspondence’ might be more appropriate, for similar reasons to Lund – he believed the phenomenon could be applied not only to lines of poetry but to paragraphs and whole books also.

it seems his optimism about the greater flexibility of the Greek rhetorical term was premature. Those who have done further research into the use of this term in classical literature have come to general agreement that it can rightly be applied only to what is now termed ‘micro-chiasm’,<sup>86</sup> and specifically the inversion of four clauses. Historically, therefore, the term ‘chiasmus’ is entirely inappropriate both for patterns larger than a single dialogue and for patterns featuring an unparalleled central element.

### 2.1.2 *Concentrism as a deduction from Hebrew poetic parallelism*

If Classical rhetoric is unsuitable as a methodological foundation for concentric structures, I propose we turn instead to the realm of Hebrew poetry. Unfortunately, ancient rhetorical handbooks are not extant for the literature of ancient Hebrew,<sup>87</sup> nor to my knowledge for the cultures of Egypt, Ugarit or Mesopotamia. Here we rely instead on the recognition, universal within Old Testament scholarship since Lowth’s lectures, that parallelism is the single defining feature of Hebrew poetic literature. As Kugel has pointed out,

chiasmus in Hebrew... ought rightly not to be separated from the context of parallelism itself. That is, where it appears in Greek or Latin more or less ‘out of the blue,’ in Hebrew it is truly a concomitant of the binary structure of parallelistic sentences, and it represents a decision *not to parallel* the word order of A.<sup>88</sup>

Robert Lowth’s identification of parallelism as the most basic characteristic of Hebrew poetry had often been noted in preceding years and centuries,<sup>89</sup> but it was his expert presentation and reputation as Oxford Professor of Poetry that gave him the title of ‘father of Hebrew poetical criticism’.<sup>90</sup> His collected volume of lectures was quickly translated into German by J. D. Michaelis from 1758, and from then on two avenues of scholarship developed, one continental and the other

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<sup>86</sup> Dahood (1976) appears to be the first to distinguish ‘micro-chiasm’ (simple chiasms of four members) from ‘macro-chiasm’ (of up to several chapters); Porter and Reed 1998: 213 n.2.

<sup>87</sup> DeSilva 2008: 345 n.3 – “Arguments from inductive proof” are “all that one can offer”.

<sup>88</sup> Kugel 1981: 19.

<sup>89</sup> Noteworthy precursors include the Jewish rabbis Rashi (1040-1105), his grandson Rashbam, David Kimchi (1160-1235), and also Christian Schöttgen (*Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*, 1733) – Meynet 1998: 53-59, 59 n.20. Kugel (1981: 204-73, esp. 266-73) has produced a remarkable compilation of the history of Jewish and Christian thought concerning Hebrew poetry, and has shown Lowth’s true achievement in synthesising previous thought into an acceptable definition.

<sup>90</sup> For the context of his lectures, see the seven essays in Part A of Jarick (ed.) 2007.

British, and both evidently ignorant of the other even into the 1950's.<sup>91</sup> In 1820, John Jebb observed that parallelism was not merely (or accurately) synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic, as Lowth had classified it, but it could also be direct or introverted in arrangement, at either the level of the couplet (Ab/bA) or the level of the stanza (A/B/C//C'/B'/A').<sup>92</sup> Four years later Thomas Boys (1824) took Jebb's observations and applied the principles to long passages – chapters and whole epistles.

On the continent, Friedrich Köster published an extensive article in 1831,<sup>93</sup> which similarly took Lowth's theory of parallelism between members in a verse and applied it to verses in a stanza also, initiating what became known as 'stanza theory'.<sup>94</sup> This continental approach thus began with large texts, and utilised parallelism or repetition to indicate transition between stanzas, in the process noting such ideas as *responsio* (paralleled stanzas), *concatenatio* (keywords shared between the end of one stanza and the beginning of the next), and *inclusio* (repeated words framing a stanza). It lacked the precision of the British approach, however, which gave priority to cataloguing parallelisms found within individual poetic verses and then extended these patterns to larger units.<sup>95</sup> Eventually both lines of scholarship arrived at a recognition of direct and inverted parallelism between more extended passages of poetry and prose.<sup>96</sup> However, Meynet argues that the 'rhetorical method' he represents and attempts to organise comes through the British rather than continental avenue, in part because the continental 'school' came to a "dead-end" in its pursuit of Greek poetic models and Graeco-Roman rhetorical categories for their findings in Hebrew poetry.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> For example, Galbiati (1956) refers only to three French and thirteen German predecessors (see Meynet 1998: 163-64). In English similarly, there is practically no mention of continental scholarship on this subject until Parunak (1983: 525-48).

<sup>92</sup> Jebb 1820: 53-55, 60 (see Meynet 1998: 68-70, 72-73).

<sup>93</sup> Köster 1831. An earlier well-known advocate of Lowth's ideas of parallelism who did much to popularise them on the continent was Johann Herder (*Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, 1782-83), on whom see Kugel (1981: 283-84) and Bultmann (1999: 75-85).

<sup>94</sup> Müller (1896) established key principles of this theory, developed by others including Albert Condamin, Umberto Cassuto and Enrico Galbiati (see Meynet 1998: 128-29, 136-38, 163-64; and Parunak 1983: 525-26).

<sup>95</sup> Parunak 1983: 525-26. In my view, a combination of these two approaches will be most useful to the analysis of larger units within narrative texts, for which see below.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, the expression of parallelism principles for poetry by Condamin (1933: 26), and Galbiati's expansion of these in application to narrative texts (Meynet 1998: 136-38, 163-64). A defence of the principle of extrapolation from shorter to longer texts will be provided below.

<sup>97</sup> Meynet 1998: 127-28, 351-55.

Lowth's threefold classification of parallelism lasted effectively unchallenged for over two hundred years,<sup>98</sup> until James Kugel pointed out that the two lines of a couplet need not be seen as *static*, coexisting simultaneously, but rather, the second line is part of the meaning of the whole, serving as the "built-in afterthought". There is a *dynamic* of thought that moves from the first to the second, which Kugel decided was more fundamental to the nature of Hebrew poetry, subsuming 'synonymous' and 'antithetical' comparison within it. He then defined this dynamic concept with reference to its most common type of movement – emphasis shifting from the first half to the second ("A, and what's more, B"). In his review article of Kugel's book, Watson defended the value of Lowth's 'synthetic' and 'antithetical' categories, and also noted that Kugel's choice to treat the second line as climactic fails to acknowledge its parenthetical function in some cases.<sup>99</sup> However, Kugel had himself admitted that his phrase 'what's more' was "an inexact version of the concept of subjunction", chosen because it "ultimately leads to a proper orientation toward *all* lines" rather than treating B as a perfunctory repetition of A to make it poetic.<sup>100</sup> Ultimately, in Hebrew poetic parallelism *the two lines together express a single distinct thought*.<sup>101</sup>

In this case, the technique of 'inverted parallelism' is at its most basic level a structural or syntactical subdivision of each half of the standard two-line couplet, inverted in order to strengthen the closure of the conceptual unit by the second line.<sup>102</sup> By subdividing two parallel lines (A || B) into Aa+Ab and Ba+Bb, two further levels of parallelism can be introduced: secondary parallelism between the outermost elements (Aa || Bb) and between the innermost elements (Ab || Ba), and tertiary parallelism between the paired outermost elements and paired innermost elements (Aa+Bb || Ab+Ba). The result is a poetic unit of two subdivided lines tied far more closely together than a

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<sup>98</sup> Interestingly, John Jebb noted less than seventy years after Lowth's work that 'synonymous' was an inadequate term, for the second line sometimes served to bring the sense to a climax, or an anti-climax, or a generalisation, or particularisation. He suggested the alternative term 'cognate parallelism', which is effectively what Kugel means by "A, and what's more, B" (see Meynet 1998: 66-67).

<sup>99</sup> Watson 1984: 91-92.

<sup>100</sup> Kugel 1981: 57.

<sup>101</sup> The essential connection of merismus to parallelism was observed by Schöttgen in his seventh rule (see Meynet 1998: 57; and Kugel 1981: 271), but interest in this has revived only recently, e.g. Honeyman 1952.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Kugel 1981: 20.

standard couplet of monocola can be tied. Of course, the same principle applies when couplets are substituted for lines to form a four-line strophe, or 'quatrain' in poetic terminology.<sup>103</sup> With inverted parallel quatrains, such as Job 27:10-11 or Proverbs 28:13-14, their four lines are usually represented as (A+B || B'+A') in order to highlight their secondary parallelism more clearly.<sup>104</sup>

More subdivisions or inserted cola can be added to the inverted parallel form, but whether one parallels tricola or heptacola,<sup>105</sup> the tertiary parallelism between the outermost and innermost pairs usually carries very little exegetical significance. It has been noted, though, that some emphasis does fall naturally on the central pair,<sup>106</sup> and the couplet about 'darkness' at the centre of Isaiah 60:1-3 is a nice example. In this particular case, however, the six paired units either side of the central pair combine to develop the theme of 'light' and therefore form an unmistakable tertiary parallelism between the outer sections (A-F; F'-A') and the inner section (G+G'). The poetic modulation from light to darkness and back to light, A-B-A' in its most simple designation, actually represents a distinct technique of poetic parallelism, different from straightforward inversion. Its characteristic emphasis on the centre and tertiary parallelism justify the name 'concentrism'.<sup>107</sup>

Watson has noted in his masterful inventory of 'chiastic' patterns in biblical poetry, that certain tricola (three-lined poetic units) can be described also as "two parallel cola separated by an isolated line, and forming a close-knit unit".<sup>108</sup> A clear example is 1Samuel 2:2 ("There is no one holy like

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<sup>103</sup> Reviewers of Kugel (1981) often offer the criticism that "he entirely ignores larger units" beyond the couplet (Landy 1984: 74); "although a high proportion of Hebrew poetry is in couplets (and this applies in differing degrees to other ancient Semitic poetry) there is also extensive use of the monocolon, not to mention tricola, quatrains and longer sequences." – Watson 1984: 92.

<sup>104</sup> B' (B-prime) and A' are so designated to indicate their parallelism with B and A in the first couplet. Thomas Boys was the first to use the letters 'a' || 'a' and 'b' || 'b', although the italics are now replaced with apostrophes (Meynet 1998: 89 n.12).

<sup>105</sup> E.g. Isaiah 6:10, and the impressive Isaiah 60:1-3: "Arise, / shine, / for your light has come, / and the glory / of YHWH / has risen upon you. / For behold, darkness will cover the earth, // and deep darkness the peoples. / But upon you will rise / YHWH, / and his glory upon you will appear, / and nations will come to your light, / and kings to the brightness / of your rising." (variation of vocabulary discussed by Butterworth 1992: 23-24)

<sup>106</sup> Bassett (1920: 47) notes that Aristarchus of Alexandria dismissed his opponent's criticism of Homer (cited above) for leaving Odysseus' questions about his wife and son to the end, by arguing that they were answered first and thus were central to the dialogue. Cf. Brouwer 2000: 25-26. For a notable recent example, see the carefully structured 'Prologue' introducing Dylan Thomas's collected poems (1952); cf. Whitman 1958: 256.

<sup>107</sup> Bar-Efrat (1989: 99 n.2) argues for a distinction between ring/envelope structures (A ... A), concentric structures (A,B,x,B,A) and chiastic structures (A,B,B,A).

<sup>108</sup> Watson 1981: 126.

YHWH // indeed, there is no one besides You // nor is there any rock like our God.”), where the third-person descriptions of God’s character as ‘holy’ and ‘rock-like’ are separated by a direct address to the psalmist’s deity. Considering the predominance of the simple couplet in Hebrew poetry, when the thought returns to a parallel of the first line sooner than expected, the hearer’s attention is drawn to why there is no parallel for the second line. The emphasis that lingers at the centre despite the return to the closing parallelism could perhaps be thought of as a mid-way point between Kugel’s (A<B) emphasis and Watson’s (A>B) alternative, expressed as (A<B>A’).

As with inverted parallelism, this simplest form of concentric parallelism can be expanded easily by inserting more pairs of lines between the outermost pair and the central line.<sup>109</sup> However, the technique can also be applied with creativity and variation to poetic units of five (or more) cola, five couplets, five strophes, or even five stanzas, just as the acrostic principle seen in Psalm 34 could be reproduced on a much expanded scale in Psalm 119 or the book of Lamentations.<sup>110</sup> A fine example of this is Psalm 67, which we will set out here following the commonly accepted practice of indentation:<sup>111</sup>

God be gracious to us and *bless us*,  
Cause His face to shine upon us. [Selah]  
    That Your way may be known on the *earth*,  
    Your salvation among all nations.  
        *Let the peoples praise You, O God;*  
        *Let all the peoples praise You.*  
            Let the *nations* be glad and sing for joy  
            For You will judge the peoples with uprightness  
            And guide the *nations* on the earth. [Selah]  
        *Let the peoples praise You, O God;*  
        *Let all the peoples praise You.*  
The *earth* has yielded its produce;  
    God, our God, *blesses us*.  
    God *blesses us*,  
That all the ends of the *earth* may fear Him.

<sup>109</sup> Examples might be the concentric pentacolon in Jeremiah 2:27c-28 focused on idolatry linked to disaster, or the oft-mentioned concentric heptacolon in Amos 5:4b-6a clarifying that ‘seeking YHWH’ does not mean journeying south to Beersheba [but rather to Jerusalem].

<sup>110</sup> Middlemas (2004: 91-93) suggests that acrostic structuring in Lamentations is but one rhetorical method used by the author to construct the whole work, and that the book may show evidence of a broader central authorial focus on the ‘calm eye of the storm’.

<sup>111</sup> Used as far back as Jebb (Meynet 1998: 89 n.12).

The concentricism here is built using keywords that are repeated in each paralleled couplet, but it is quite evident that the poet has used a variety of parallelism techniques to give character to an otherwise too perfect concentric structure. For example, the first two couplets obviously parallel the last two, but the poet has deliberately mixed the last two couplets to rework them into their own inverted parallel quatrain, thereby introducing an interesting theological point that relates to the central tricolon (blessing on Israel brings God's joyous rule in the nations). That tricolon also is not only of the A-B-A' form regarding its nouns, with 'nations' alternating with 'peoples', but it is also an A-a'-B-B' form regarding its verbs, with 'be glad' and 'sing' in the first line, but 'you judge' and 'you guide' paralleled in the second and third lines. This example not only reveals the poet's clear awareness of concentric parallelism, the dominant or architectonic poetic form of the psalm, but also freedom from excessive constraint to this single technique in the process of composition.

### 2.1.3 *Poetic techniques applicable to prose narrative*

When we read modern translations of the Old Testament, or even turn to the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, we are struck by the obvious typographical difference between prose and poetry. The common use of extra blank space separating lines is, however, only a very recent introduction, and it is quite possible to find a variety of examples of 'unmetrical poetry' or 'parallelistic prose' which blur the apparently hard and fast boundaries upon which modern critical scholarship often relies.<sup>112</sup> In fact, when viewed in light of ancient Near Eastern literature, the typically prose medium for ancient Israelite narrative appears quite unusual. For example, one might consider the 'narrative verse' of Ugaritic epics,<sup>113</sup> parallelistic rhetoric in the El-Amarna letters,<sup>114</sup> and the clear vertical marks or caesurae which mark division of poetic lines on both the Mesha stela and the record of the

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<sup>112</sup> See Gray 1915: 46; Kugel 1981: 76-81.

<sup>113</sup> Watson 1983; Alter (1985: 27-28) argues that the purpose and content of Old Testament and Ugaritic narratives are quite different, but even so in light of their similarities he still wonders why Hebrew poetry and narrative appear so distinct.

<sup>114</sup> Gervitz 1973a; 1973b.

Ararat campaign of Shalmaneser.<sup>115</sup> Should we discover that Hebrew narrative might be somewhat more 'poetic' than we first thought, this would be no surprise considering its cultural context.

Two developments in Hebrew poetic theory, following Kugel, will help to lay the theoretical foundation for applying patterns of Hebrew poetry to narrative:<sup>116</sup> first, Robert Alter's definition of the nature of poetic parallelism as tending towards narrative, and second, Adele Berlin's clarification of the importance of structure for conveying meaning in genuinely poetic texts. Alter's 1985 book noted Kugel's implicit distinction between static and dynamic parallelism, confirming the predominance of the latter category, and used concepts from the linguist Roman Jakobson to suggest that the dynamic is a natural development from the static as the hearer's attention moves from one line to the next.<sup>117</sup> This narrative momentum, "from line to story", might influence an equivalent development from epic poems, narrative poetry, into a more exclusively contiguous literary form of poetic narrative.<sup>118</sup> In the same year as Alter, Berlin also used Jakobson's theoretical logic in order to clarify how poetry and 'non-poetry' might be differentiated, reaffirming Kugel's proposal that parallelism is the mark of elevated rhetorical speech throughout Hebrew prose as well as poetry.<sup>119</sup> 'Terseness' is one characteristic of biblical poetry,<sup>120</sup> and unlike 'non-poetry', its message is conveyed primarily through the relationships which parallelism creates, such that a poem's unity cannot be understood until its structure and paralleled elements have been identified. In theory, therefore, one might be justified in defining a narrative text which structures its message primarily through a systematic use of parallelism as a 'poetic narrative', as opposed to a 'prose narrative'.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> de Moor 1988; Lambert 1961. For these and other examples, see Koopmans 1990: 176.

<sup>116</sup> A third possible theoretical foundation for such a transition might be found in the identification of a common oral background to both types of literature. This will be discussed in §2.2, below.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. e.g. Jakobson 1960; 1968.

<sup>118</sup> Alter 1985: 28-33, 62-63; 37-38.

<sup>119</sup> Berlin 1985: 139-40; cf. Kugel 1981: 85-87, 94-95, 301-302.

<sup>120</sup> Berlin 1985: 5-7; One mark of 'terseness' is the general absence of connectives between the lines of poetry – simply by being placed alongside each other they are intended to be seen as conveying a meaning through their structural connectedness, hence the value of parallelism techniques such as inversion.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Christensen's distinction between 'narrative poetry' and 'lyric poetry' (1987: 30).

While the theoretical justification for applying poetic techniques to prose passages has only been formulated in the last three decades, its practice goes back well into the nineteenth century. In the British line of succession from Lowth, Boys had already applied poetic techniques in his study of lengthy prose passages as early as 1824. On the continent, only in the last forty years has the so-called Kampen school started applying poetical techniques of Müller's 'stanza theory' such as 'responion', 'inclusion', and 'concatenation' to narrative also. Koopmans summarises the approach of the Kampen school (de Moor, Korpel, et al.) as the systematic analysis of poetic narrative from the smallest elements building up to the larger, forming successively cola, verses, strophes, canticles and cantos. He notes that parallelism can be both internal, forming rhetorical units, and external (or 'distant'), linking units; external parallelism is "a characteristic of this genre" of narrative poetry.<sup>122</sup>

At this stage it would be possible to offer examples of concentric parallelism in prose passages, from the smallest scale (e.g. the seven-unit arrangement of 1Samuel 3:17) to the very largest (1Samuel 4 – 2Samuel 6).<sup>123</sup> However, to maintain the focus on theory here, this has been left to the Appendix, where a selection of those structures discussed in Chapters Three and Four are collected for convenience. One scholar who has thoroughly illustrated and analysed concentric (or 'pivot') patterns in Hebrew narrative is Nathan Klaus, but he restricts himself to verbal rather than conceptual parallelism, and to brief structures of between one and five verses in which clear verbal parallels are more easily demonstrated.<sup>124</sup> Ian Thomson had taken the same approach with regard to the Pauline epistles,<sup>125</sup> but neither provide evidence for why larger structures are in principle less likely to exist. On the contrary, when the principle of concentric emphasis has been grasped by an author, it can quickly be brought to bear at every level of the composition of a text. If increasing numbers of modern literary critics and chiasm enthusiasts can make the extrapolation from small to large, one cannot deny the same conceptual leap to an ancient author, as long as his awareness of

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<sup>122</sup> Koopmans 1990: 177-80, 266-67; 172-73.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. also Schulz 1991: 146-47; Bar-Efrat 1989: 98-111.

<sup>124</sup> Klaus 1999: 36, 24 n.25 – He cites Watson and Polak who assert for poetry and prose respectively that both the creation and discernment of a concentric structure on a larger scale is considerably more difficult.

<sup>125</sup> Thomson 1995: 23-24, 30-31, 215, 231.

the literary technique is clearly demonstrable on the small scale.<sup>126</sup> Of course, the larger the literary unit that one tries to construct according to concentric parallelism, the harder the task becomes, and the more skilled the author must be to pull it off.<sup>127</sup> The issue is therefore not plausibility, but provability.

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<sup>126</sup> "An important characteristic of architectural patterns in literature is that they are recursive; that is, the units they form can be joined together by the same patterns into larger units, to which the patterns may yet again apply to form even larger units." – Parunak 1983: 541.

<sup>127</sup> "The degree of certainty about the presence of chiasmus in a text usually varies in inverse proportion to the total length of the text. In other words, the more spread out the proposed chiasm, the less certain the fact of its chiasticity becomes, except in remarkable circumstances." – Welch 1999: 160-61.

## 2.2 Composition

In the first section it has been demonstrated how an ancient Israelite would have been able to recognise the theory and rhetorical significance of concentric narrative, because of its development from basic principles of poetic parallelism, and because of the applicability of rhetorical techniques to composition in both poetry and prose. To move from possibility to probability, though, it is necessary to consider compositional techniques for narrative epic in ancient Israel. Classical scholars who recognise concentricism within ancient Greek literature often propose Oriental origins for it, and the popularity of parallelism in the ancient Near East could be considered supporting evidence for this. However, at such a time in Israel's history most literature would have been composed orally, or at least for an aural audience if writing was involved in the process. Studies of narratives composed in order to be heard rather than read have revealed certain methods which are typically utilised to aid comprehension, and several of these turn out to be integral to the technique of concentricism. Even so, the use of writing in the planning of lengthy compositions is found in other comparable ancient cultures, and would be plausible even in the earliest period of the Israelite state.

### 2.2.1 *The origins of Classical concentricism*

As noted above, the literary technique of 'chiasmus' was not acknowledged in any of the numerous Graeco-Roman rhetorical handbooks until the fourth century AD, so those who claim to find 'chiasmus' in New Testament writings from the early Roman period are forced to argue that it was a known technique but considered too rudimentary or uncouth to mention in the handbooks, or else so natural a way of thinking that it was too obvious to mention.<sup>128</sup> Thomson, for example, further develops ideas drawn from Stock to the effect that Classical education in the first century of the Roman empire would train children to think symmetrically and both forward and backward, lending itself to chiastic awareness.<sup>129</sup> Porter and Reed have shown these arguments to be at best

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<sup>128</sup> Kennedy 1984: 28-29; Standaert 1986: 86; Thomson 1995: 14-17.

<sup>129</sup> Thomson 1995: 20-21; Stock 1984; Stock depends on Marrou 1956.

inconclusive, and insist that ancient Greek and Latin authors would have had no more than a vague idea of inverted parallelism, and no clear formulation of this technique.<sup>130</sup>

Others have appealed to Classical scholars themselves who detect concentric structures in the writings of ancient Greeks and Romans.<sup>131</sup> I have no expertise to assess these proposals, but it appears that the theoretical justification for Classical concentricism tends to follow at least three routes: visual art, imitation of Semitic literature, or oral culture. Whitman, for example, defends the large-scale concentric structure he identifies in Homer's *Iliad* by appeal to the distinctive psychology of the Geometric Age manifested in symmetrical designs of pottery and monumental architecture.<sup>132</sup> Talbert similarly proposes an influence from "visual art" and "pedimental structure" that would give "man in antiquity" a heightened sense of form and therefore of concentricism.<sup>133</sup> One cannot deny the possibility of such a conceptual leap between visual and oral art,<sup>134</sup> but it does at least require more evidence, as for example one might conceivably find in literature inscribed on walls in ancient Egypt.

Breck suggests instead an alternative influence from ancient Semitic literature, an idea going back at least as far as Lund;<sup>135</sup> he hypothesises that the small-scale inverted parallelism technique of *hysteron proteron* originated with Homer, "who possibly adapted it from a more ancient concentric parallelism inherited from early Semites".<sup>136</sup> In this he evidently relies on the examples 'found' in Sumero-Akkadian and Ugaritic literary texts by Smith and Welch,<sup>137</sup> which he believes are sufficient

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<sup>130</sup> Porter & Reed 1998: 216-17, n.20.

<sup>131</sup> Talbert (1970: 360) cites over a dozen books and articles about Greek and Roman literature between 1928 and 1963 that reportedly find 'chiastic' patterns in literature of the Greeks (Homer [*Iliad* and *Odyssey*], Aeschylus, Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Pindar, Plutarch) and Romans (Catullus, Horace, Virgil, Propertius). Miesner (1974) is also often cited for his discussion of Classical Greek and Latin use of 'chiasmus'.

<sup>132</sup> Whitman 1958: 284.

<sup>133</sup> Talbert 1970: 364. Similar arguments have been proposed independently for concentric techniques in English Renaissance poetry, by Fowler (1970).

<sup>134</sup> Douglas (1999: 218-40) suggests that the tabernacle's design is imitated in the structure of Leviticus.

<sup>135</sup> "a cultural heritage from the Semites, the gift of the East to the West" – Lund 1942: xxiv, 130-36.

<sup>136</sup> Breck 1994: 30.

<sup>137</sup> Breck 1994: 21. Smith 1981: 17-35. Welch 1981b. Of the two, the first at least does seem to show some evidence of concentricism at the level of a few lines (e.g. 'Wooing of Inanna' lines 12-19 [p. 23]) and inverted parallelism in Ishtar's entrance and exit of the seven gates of the Netherworld ('Descent of Ishtar', obv. lines 42-62 and rev. lines 39-45 [pp. 25-26]), but the majority of examples can be explained simply as the natural

to demonstrate the presence of ‘chiasmus’ in the third millennium BC, long before Homer. The mere accumulation of scholarly proposals is not evidence for conscious ancient use of the technique as such, as will be discussed below in §2.4, and borrowing of one culture’s literary techniques by another culture must be demonstrated rather than assumed. Nevertheless, Mesopotamian scholars themselves, like Classical scholars, have apparently started to detect the use of this technique to some extent in their ancient texts,<sup>138</sup> and the Classicist Martin West (1997) has also decisively demonstrated the extensive influence of ancient Near Eastern culture and literature on early Greek poetry and myth.<sup>139</sup> Thus an Oriental origin of the concentric technique in Classical literature may be plausible in theory, even if reasonable proof is still lacking.

If large-scale concentricism was indeed Oriental in origin, which would be consistent with the dominance of poetic parallelism throughout the ancient Near East from Mesopotamia to Egypt,<sup>140</sup> it would be difficult to argue for direct literary borrowing before the time of Plato.<sup>141</sup> On the other hand, the influence of a common Near Eastern cultural heritage and in particular its oral rhetoric traditions would be better able to explain the appearance of concentric patterning in ancient Greek, pre-exilic Hebrew and late Second Temple Koiné compositions alike.<sup>142</sup>

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rise and fall structure of a story plot, rather than as deliberate use of a rhetorical structuring technique (but cf. footnote 349).

<sup>138</sup> See e.g. Westenholz 1992: 141, cf. 132-37; Black 1992: 76-80; and Vanstiphout 1992: 261, among other articles in Vogelzang & Vanstiphout 1992.

<sup>139</sup> Lord (2000: 156-57) hypothesised that Homer’s inspiration for his epic compositions came from observation of Hebrew epics such as ‘J’ and ‘E’ in the ninth to eighth centuries and Assyrian epics such as Enuma Elish and Gilgamesh in Sargon II’s library in Nineveh of the late eighth century BC.

<sup>140</sup> Akkadian poetry, whether in narrative or lyrical texts, typically uses parallelism of couplets, or ‘distichs’ – Groneberg 1996: 71. As for Egyptian poetry, Foster (1995: 10) explains that “The poems – in all genres [i.e. narrative, didactic, lyric] – are written in couplets, pairs of verse lines that together make up a complete sentence or a portion of a longer compound sentence... This is the ‘parallelism’ familiar to students of biblical poetry; in Egypt it is a thousand years older... The result is what can be called the ancient Egyptian ‘thought couplet.’” Cf. Foster 1980; Lichtheim 1973: 11-12.

<sup>141</sup> Lord (2000) and Whitman (1958) both recognise the dominance of oral culture in the time of Homer.

<sup>142</sup> Bailey’s extensive first-hand experience of traditional Middle Eastern rhetoric from Sudan as far as Iran has been shown to be of great relevance for New Testament interpretation – Kenneth Bailey 1976: 29-37, 49; esp. 34-35; cf. also 1980; 2008.

### 2.2.2 *Ancient Israel as an 'oral' culture*

Whereas Mesopotamia and Egypt had displayed a relatively high level of literacy from the third millennium BC, ancient Israel is often presumed to have become literate only around the eighth century, with the majority of its historical writings reaching completion a couple of centuries later. Does this preclude an oral origin for the technique of concentricism in Hebrew narratives? For a thorough and balanced discussion of the current state of research generally on *Oral Tradition in Ancient Israel*, see Miller (2011). A few specific points are worth making here.

#### (i) Literacy in ancient Israel

To start with, orality and literacy have always been symbiotic, fluctuating across time, geography and social position within both mainly oral and mainly literate cultures.<sup>143</sup> Pure orality tends to be confined to only the most independent and isolated cultures lacking trade as a motivation for acquiring literacy.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, literacy ranges from the mere ability to write only one's name all the way to the modern phenomenon of using reading and writing in the most mundane of daily activities.<sup>145</sup> In mainly oral societies literacy is a specialist skill belonging to professional 'scribes' and the elite, and it is only with the establishment of an educational system, sponsored by cultural institutions such as the state or religious centres, that literacy becomes more widespread in a society.<sup>146</sup> Even then, orality is not made obsolete by literacy, but rather adopts new roles in relation to writing. Reading was an oral activity until relatively recent times,<sup>147</sup> as indicated for example in the Hebrew word for 'read' (*qārā'*) being the same as the word for 'call'. Because of the expense of reproducing texts prior to the printing press, literary compositions were also 'published'

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<sup>143</sup> Finnegan (1988: 42, cf. 41-43) mentions factors including "political control, class interests, economic pressures, geographical access, educational background, and so on".

<sup>144</sup> Ong 1982: 85-86. But compare Finnegan 1988: 149, 82-83; cf. also 141-42.

<sup>145</sup> For a full analysis of the development of literacy, see Ong 1982: 78-138.

<sup>146</sup> Finnegan 1988: 28, 40.

<sup>147</sup> Silent reading was one of the things that most impressed Augustine about Ambrose, Bishop of Milan in the late fourth century AD – Augustine, *Confessions* 6.3.

through oral performance, well illustrated by Jeremiah 36 and 51:59-64. In this way 'literature' could be widely known and communicated even in a mainly oral environment.<sup>148</sup>

As for ancient Israel in particular, the position of its territory between the empires of Egypt and Anatolia or Mesopotamia resulted in a succession of imperial administrators governing with a heavy or lighter hand for centuries. Occupants of that land even in the earliest period of Israel's history would therefore have been unavoidably aware of writing in the form of official reports, legal documents or political stelae, whether or not the general populace were functionally illiterate.<sup>149</sup> Even so, evidence would suggest that literacy was probably more widespread from the rise of monarchy onwards than has often been assumed. The large numbers of unattached clay bullae unearthed, even those without onomastic inscriptions, demonstrate the Israelite preference for writing on Egyptian papyrus despite its vulnerability to the wet climate or to fire, perhaps due to its convenience for spatial transmission as compared with clay tablets or stone stelae.<sup>150</sup> Israel's minor epigraphic remains, including fragments of literature, are actually comparable in amount and distribution to those of neighbouring cultures for whom longer literary works have survived on durable materials. As with those cultures, therefore, we may assume that Israel had a literary tradition preserved by both state institutions and literate individuals for their own personal use.<sup>151</sup>

This widespread distribution of literacy, even if relatively sparse, would be consistent with the many and varied biblical references to the dispersal of Levites and priests throughout the land (e.g. Num 35:1-8; Jos 21; Jdg 17-19; 2 Kgs 23:4-9; Neh 10:34-39; Hos 6:9). Ancient Near Eastern cultures typically assigned the task of education to cultic functionaries (cf. Deut 31:9-13; Mal 2:4-9),<sup>152</sup> and the Levites' musical skills (e.g. 1 Chr 25:1-8; Deut 31:19-22; Ps 44:1-3 + title) indicates oral transmission of tradition as much as written. Carr adds that the number and variety of biblical texts resemble the long-duration corpuses for higher level education in neighbouring cultures, beyond

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<sup>148</sup> Finnegan 1988: 78. See further Niditch 2008: 17; 1996: 39-59.

<sup>149</sup> Goody 1968: 4-5. Antti Laato noted perceptively (OTSEM 2011, Copenhagen) that Israel's subjugation and government of Moab prior to the Mesha Stele might be taken as evidence of their equal or superior literacy.

<sup>150</sup> Finnegan 1988: 25.

<sup>151</sup> Millard 2008; cf. 1985. Cf. also Knoppers 1999: 220-21.

<sup>152</sup> Niditch 1996: 122-25; Carr 2005: 152.

mere alphabetic education necessary for basic literacy, so their diversity of origin, whether social, geographical, or chronological, supports the conclusion that education and literacy were relatively widespread.<sup>153</sup>

(ii) Loss and recovery of literacy in a predominantly oral culture

It is also necessary to counter the popular conception of a ‘primitive’ (or else ‘authentic’) oral stage of tradition,<sup>154</sup> and a straightforward transition from orality to literacy – that is, a linear development of literacy in ancient Israel. A society’s actual relationship with literacy is far more complex and dynamic, because the development of literacy and literature within a culture tends to coincide with urbanisation and local political stability. The balance of literacy and orality in a particular territory, therefore, will naturally become cyclical when viewed over a long duration of time, because of the rise and fall of states, empires or civilisations.<sup>155</sup> The Hittite and Neo-Hittite empires in Anatolia, or the Mycenaean civilisation and Archaic city states of the Greek peninsula, are just two examples among many, and the *prima facie* evidence from attributions of authorship in biblical texts is also consistent with a cyclical view of literacy. For example, after centuries of decentralised tribalism, the united monarchy is credited with the production of significant works of history, psalmody, wisdom and philosophy (e.g. 1Kgs 11:41; Ps 72:20; Prov 1:1; 10:1; Eccl. 1:1),<sup>156</sup> but the political and economic collapse after Solomon corresponds to a dearth of literary productivity. This is only reversed again to a degree in the eighth century, the lengthy prosperous reigns of Jereboam II and Uzziah apparently allowing a new literary tradition of ‘writing prophets’ to emerge (Amos 1:1; Hos 1:1; Isa 1:1). Hezekiah’s newfound political autonomy from Assyrian rule then coincides with new works of history, psalmody and wisdom (2Kgs 17; Isa 36–39; Prov 25:1), and so on. Of course, scholars disagree about many details of this picture, but in any case it would be even

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<sup>153</sup> Carr 2005: 126-55, 162.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Lord 2000: 7.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Finnegan 1988: 84-85, 148, 153, esp. 160.

<sup>156</sup> Goody (1968: 2) notes that in non-literate societies, “magico-religious activity is singularly eclectic in that shrines and cults move easily from place to place”, unlike ‘religions of the book’ which tend to have a “fixed point of reference”, such as, perhaps, David’s central sanctuary.

more unrealistic to propose in its place a smooth evolutionary development from orality to literacy and literature across such a length of time.<sup>157</sup>

Collapse of political stability in a territory invariably results in a loss of literacy and literature among the general populace, although rarely a complete loss. In such times, literature is often preserved for posterity within religious institutions that not only carry a responsibility for education, but also are better suited to weathering political turmoil.<sup>158</sup> In parallel with literary preservation, popular works of literature are usually preserved orally to some degree, having been incorporated within oral compositions already prior to the demise of general cultural literacy.<sup>159</sup> Yet when the literature is recovered again, it exerts its greater perceived authority as a conforming influence on the usually more flexible oral versions,<sup>160</sup> particularly if it also claims religious authority. Even so, verbal flexibility in religious and ritualistic traditions has been found to be less than in most other types of oral transmission.<sup>161</sup>

Extended periods of general illiteracy allow enough time for oral cultures to develop mature traditions of oral composition in various different genres;<sup>162</sup> “When a tradition ... goes from oral to written, [it] goes from an adult, mature style of one kind to a faltering and embryonic style of another sort.”<sup>163</sup> Although restored political stability or national independence necessitates

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<sup>157</sup> Niditch 2008: 18. See, for example, the presentation of Carr 2005: 162-73.

<sup>158</sup> E.g. Christian monasteries in early mediaeval Europe preserving classical literature – Cahill 1995. Biblical examples might include Samuel, whose career spanned the crucial time between Shiloh’s destruction and David’s patronage of Gibeon, or the priestly teachers Ezekiel and Ezra during and after the Babylonian exile (cf. Eze 2:8–3:4; 7:26–8:1; 20:1-44; 33:30-33; Ezra 7; Neh 8).

<sup>159</sup> Lord 2000: 23, 136; Niditch 1996: 123-24. Carr (2005: 159-60) argues for a dual transmission of long-duration Israelite texts, comparable to those of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece. Finnegan (1988: 113-15) describes in detail the way a single written tale of Fijian origins spread widely in oral tradition without any direct knowledge of its original literary composition.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Josiah’s rediscovery of the Book of the Law. Illiterate poets in a society increasing in literacy will often assume that writing gives the literate person a speed and accuracy of transmission greater than their own oral skills, even if the reality is not so straightforward (Lord 2000: 28).

<sup>161</sup> Ong 1982: 62-66; Finnegan 1988: 158, 172-73. Other factors that ensure verbal accuracy include claims of divine inspiration (Finnegan 1988: 96, 99-101), duties of professional message delivery (Finnegan 1988: 166), or musical setting (Ong 1982: 63; Finnegan 1988: 96-98).

<sup>162</sup> Finnegan (1988: 71-72) cites examples of such oral compositional traditions from cultures including the Homeric, Anglo-Saxon, Yoruba, Zulu, Efik, Yugoslavian, Somali and South Pacific Gilbertese.

<sup>163</sup> Lord 2000: 134.

administration and therefore renewal of literacy,<sup>164</sup> literature composed in the early stages of its development will still tend to reflect various stylistic features typical of the traditions of oral composition.<sup>165</sup> Such early literature is often motivated by the desire of the elite to reinforce their society's distinct cultural identity,<sup>166</sup> assembling for example rediscovered and modernised classical texts (e.g. Job's ancient poems with a later prose setting),<sup>167</sup> or traditional oral records of history (e.g. Judges), or accounts of the state's glorious foundation (e.g. *Samuel*).<sup>168</sup> Literary compositions in turn start to influence the continuing tradition of oral composition, though less so with the expensive epic texts than with the widely circulated 'songbooks' (e.g. Num 21:14-30; 2Sam 1:17-27; 2Sam 22; Psalms books 1–2).<sup>169</sup> In as little as one generation, though,<sup>170</sup> the society's forms of literary education can come to be influenced by and even modelled after those of more dominant literate cultures nearby, eschewing traditional oral techniques.<sup>171</sup>

In summary, it is quite unrealistic to suggest that literacy and literature appeared in ancient Israel for the first time in the eighth century BC, seeing as it had been present in varying degrees for many centuries, not only in neighbouring Egypt and Mesopotamia but also within Canaan itself.

Even so, it is periods of lower literacy which often give rise to highly sophisticated techniques of oral

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<sup>164</sup> Finnegan 1988: 19; cf. Heaton 1974: 101-126.

<sup>165</sup> Ong 1982: 26.

<sup>166</sup> Literate Maori chiefs were extensively involved in preserving their own oral heritage in writing in the mid-nineteenth century (Finnegan 1988: 115-17). An even clearer example is that of Elias Lönnrot and the compilation/creation of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*, which directly influenced Finnish national identity – for a description of the epic's creation see Honko 1990: 181-230. Another example might be Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), whose stories of King Arthur and others were arguably a significant contributing factor to Britain's national identity. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* published under King Alfred the Great had served a similar function for the English two centuries earlier.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Patrick 2005.

<sup>168</sup> Carr 2005: 163-64. The small size of a new literate bureaucracy would not preclude the creation of longer works (163 n. 191); and in fact, such works would come to exert disproportionate influence on the culture.

<sup>169</sup> Lord 2000: 23, 136-37. Finnegan (1988: 113) mentions the importance of written books of proverbs for modern Samoan or Maori orators composing speeches. Cf. Deuteronomy's pragmatic justification for appending a song to the lawbook – 31:9-13, 19-22, 24-30.

<sup>170</sup> Lord 2000: 109, 129-32, 137-38. The speed of the shift from selective memory to comprehensive social memory in the present generation, due to the so-called 'information revolution', illustrates the effect of technological development on social consciousness (*pace* Finnegan 1988: 8-14).

<sup>171</sup> Finnegan 1988: 105-106, 113-17. These techniques might be preserved instead in other primarily oral environments, such as perhaps the prophetic movement in ancient Israel which evidently had its own schools (1Sam 19:18-20; 2Kgs 2:3-7; 4:38-41; 6:1-7) and agonistic expertise typical of oral rhetoric (cf. Ong 1982: 110-111). Finnegan (1988: 68) mentions comparable oral 'schools' among the Maori, Ruanda, Uzbek, Gaulish and Irish, and also gives various examples of oral media used to challenge the status quo – 1988: 164-65. Cf. Niditch 1996: 118-20.

composition.<sup>172</sup> In the early stages of renewed political stability or autonomy, these oral techniques then exert their influence on the new literature being composed. Literature that displays typically oral features is therefore more likely to have originated in a time when the majority of the general populace were still functionally illiterate, though they could still access it perfectly easily through oral performance.

### 2.2.3 *Compositional techniques distinctive for oral cultures*

Beginning with the Classicists Parry and Lord back in the early twentieth century, scholars of ancient literature have long recognised the value of modern investigations into oral cultures for shedding light on ancient compositional practices. Conclusions from modern comparative material, however, can only ever be suggestive of possibilities rather than evidence of ancient practices.<sup>173</sup> The same is true, though, of comparisons made with the neighbouring cultures of ancient empires, which can be just as distant from ancient Israel, albeit in different respects – socio-politically rather than geographically or chronologically. Unlike modern oral cultures, ancient ones provide no sure access to genuine practices of oral composition as might be gained with microphones or video cameras. Texts are synchronic rather than diachronic records, but they do have the inherent capacity of becoming oral again through performance to an audience. It is through that subjective experience of a composition, therefore, that we might draw provisional conclusions about the capabilities of its original intended audience, so it has been suggested that we should seek to identify marks of ‘aural’ rather than ‘oral’ composition.<sup>174</sup> A composition might assume oral performance and aural reception regardless of whether writing had been involved at any point in its

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<sup>172</sup> Individuals who use them need not be illiterate however – cf. Finnegan 1988: 144-45. The technically advanced modern oral compositional technique of freestyle rapping is often performed by people with a relatively extensive education in literacy (at least compared to many traditional societies).

<sup>173</sup> Cooper 1992: 121; *pace* the largely unqualified extrapolation by Albert Lord of oral compositional practice in the South Slavic region to oral composition in all other traditional societies both ancient and modern – Lord 2000: chapter 6 (“Writing and Oral Tradition”).

<sup>174</sup> E.g. Russo 1992: 13-17; Black 1992: 71-72, 86-91; Parkinson 2009: 15, 64-65, 267-70.

creation (using rough drafts) or performance (from notes or script) or subsequent conservation for future performance (perhaps in an anthology).<sup>175</sup>

(i) Pragmatic factors in aural communication

To introduce the subjective difference between aurality and literacy, any student will be able to testify, with feeling, to the difference between a lecture composed for a literate readership and a lecture designed to be heard and experienced by an aural audience.<sup>176</sup> Audible reading of a written Hebrew text can reveal similarly pragmatic distinguishing features. For example, even the distinction between “oral” and “aural” in spoken English is meaningless for a hearing audience unless pronunciation is unnaturally modified to make it clear. Acrostic poems are usually more discernible in writing than when heard, unlike rhyming poems, due to the brevity with which the consonant at the beginning of a word is sounded. On the other hand, alternation between conventional spellings and dialectal language written phonetically, such as the language of Boaz and Naomi in the book of Ruth,<sup>177</sup> requires the literate reader to pronounce the words to understand them, confirming its design as aural composition.

On a larger scale, the performance of a composition to an aural audience is strictly linear in time, so hearers who lose concentration do not have the luxury of ‘backlooping’ to hear what they missed. Redundancy and repetition of the key points thus become very important techniques for helping an audience stay ‘tuned in’ during an extended performance, as well as conveniently giving the speaker time to think about what must be said next. Literate audiences *can* backloop, though, and since writing by hand takes typically ten times longer than speaking, literate authors will naturally want to eliminate redundancy wherever possible.<sup>178</sup> Aural audiences will also be less able to cope with

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<sup>175</sup> See the proposals of Goody and Zumthor in Cooper 1992: 105. For illustrations of the latter two situations, see for example Parkinson 2009: 13, 35-36, 38; and also Jeremiah 30:1-2; 36:6-21, 32.

<sup>176</sup> “But oral learners find it difficult to follow literate-styled presentations, even if they are made orally. It is not enough to take materials created for literates and simply read them onto a recorded format. Making something audible does not necessarily make it an ‘oral’ style of communication.” Lovejoy 2005: 5.

<sup>177</sup> Campbell 1975: 24-26; cf. his reflections (pp.18-23) on ‘the Hebrew singer of tales’ inspired by Lord (2000).

<sup>178</sup> Ong 1982: 39-41.

extended digressions to develop characters or sub-plots, so the author must generally keep his primary focus on one main character or theme at a time.<sup>179</sup>

(ii) Episodes and longer narratives

The difficulty we have as speakers in oral settings with identifying the earliest logical or chronological point of a story, leads to the creation of episodes by plunging into the middle of the action,<sup>180</sup> and digressing to explain background material.<sup>181</sup> For oral composers, therefore, “episodic structure was the only way and the totally natural way of imagining and handling lengthy narrative”.<sup>182</sup> Episodes will often be recounted according to one or another of a wide repertoire of traditional ‘themes’,<sup>183</sup> familiar motifs or tropes which can be expanded or abbreviated according to the needs of the occasion and interests of the audience.<sup>184</sup> Episodes are also crafted as distinct units of narrative with balanced patterns and a “formulaic tendency”, often repeating elements at the beginning and end of the episode,<sup>185</sup> and inverting the order of internal elements to give greater cohesion and distinction from neighbouring episodes.<sup>186</sup>

The construction of lengthy narratives involves the author selecting and ordering his thematic episodes as constituent parts of the broader ‘song’,<sup>187</sup> episodes which may also be of different genres due to the unique utility of narrative as a ‘repository’ for remembering assorted traditional information.<sup>188</sup> Drawing many episodes together to form a single coherent work usually reflects literary interests, since smaller collections of episodes are better suited to single performances.

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<sup>179</sup> Ong 1982: 151-52. The contrast between the storyline of Saul and David in *Samuel* and that of the divided monarchy in Kings nicely illustrates different expectations regarding backlooping.

<sup>180</sup> This technique, called ‘*in medias res*’, was recognised in the epic poets by scholars as early as Horace in his *Ars Poetica* (lines 148-49).

<sup>181</sup> Occasional parenthetical asides to the audience will typically be marked out by means of what Parunak (1981: 162) calls ‘external inclusio’ (i.e. *Wiederaufnahme*); e.g. 1Sam 19:10, 18.

<sup>182</sup> Ong 1982: 144; see further 141-44, 148.

<sup>183</sup> E.g. gathering of an army, receiving counsel in a royal court, dispatching of messengers, a hero’s ‘helper’, a banquet, etc. – Lord 2000: 68, 71, 94, 95; Ong 1982: 60.

<sup>184</sup> Lord 2000: 78-79, 81, 117, 119, 123.

<sup>185</sup> Ong 1982: 27, 34. Black (1992: 90) suggests that the use of framing is “*more* important in giving structure to orally performed, aurally perceived poetry” than in equivalent written compositions (emphasis his).

<sup>186</sup> Lord 2000: 92-93, 119. Parunak 1981: 158.

<sup>187</sup> Lord 2000: 95.

<sup>188</sup> Ong 1982: 140-41, 146. Parkinson (2009: 42-50) imaginatively recreates a performance of the Twelfth Dynasty Egyptian *Tale of Sinuhe* with all its various different episodes and genres.

Even so, usually in the storyteller's mind the episodes had already formed a rough matrix or meta-narrative focused on the primary character or storyline,<sup>189</sup> similar to our own experience of the difference between telling 'the story of how I met so-and-so' and telling 'the story of my life'. Ordering of episodes need not necessarily be strictly chronological,<sup>190</sup> but will instead suit the author's intention to convey certain messages to an audience, perhaps highlighting certain moral values, or key turning points that changed the main characters in significant ways. Unlike literary texts, however, oral compositions cannot rely on title pages, headings, paragraph breaks, or italics to summarise stories, distinguish episodes from each other, or clarify which are the most important to the author.<sup>191</sup> For this purpose he might therefore emphasise particular elements of the story by interrupting patterns based on repetition, so as to draw attention to the anomaly.<sup>192</sup>

Evidently, the technique of concentricity suits composition in an aural context in a number of ways, the first being its reliance on repetition and parallelism, the second being its ability to define clearly the boundaries of either an episode or a larger narrative, the third being its flexibility for use in both lyric poetry and episodic narrative, two of the most common forms of composition in oral or traditional cultures, and the fourth and most important being its inherent emphasis on its anomalous central element. We can conclude, therefore, that an ancient author familiar with the principles of poetic parallelism and composing for an aural audience would in fact be likely to make use of the technique of concentricity, whether in poems or in narrative.

Some have suggested that concentricity and other techniques well-suited to aural composition may actually be merely ways of thinking rather than defined literary categories.<sup>193</sup> This is in fact a

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<sup>189</sup> See for example the Zairean epic of the Nyanga hero Mwindo, which took the bard Candi Rureke twelve days to recount for scribes, having never been asked to narrate all the stories before (Ong 1982: 146). Tigay (1982) has analysed in detail the composition of the Gilgamesh epic over time, but his reconstruction of a complex process of splicing together different literary sources seems too dependent on the modern literate mentality. Perhaps a more realistic conception for the ancient world would be a mutual influence between oral and literary encapsulations of the same large meta-narrative about this ancient Mesopotamian hero, with different performers or writers choosing to focus on different episodes from the larger shared matrix. Cf. Dalley 2000: 39, 45, 49.

<sup>190</sup> Ong 1982: 141-44, 147.

<sup>191</sup> Ong 1982: 125-26; Parunak 1981: 153-54.

<sup>192</sup> Parunak 1981: 165-68.

<sup>193</sup> Scholer & Snodgrass 1992: xix.

false dichotomy, since ‘natural’ compositional techniques may nevertheless be brought to bear very deliberately on a particular project, as for example the iambic pentameter ubiquitous in poetry. It also implicitly presumes a graphical conception of rhetorical composition, the proof required for defined categories typically being attestation in written handbooks.<sup>194</sup> Rarely are modern pupils educated in oral compositional techniques, as was common in the time of the Greek and Roman rhetoricians, but ancient wordsmiths must have been given some sort of formal education in aural composition even if simply imitation of skilled practitioners.<sup>195</sup> Known techniques must have existed even if we cannot be fully certain about them,<sup>196</sup> but I believe there is in fact clear evidence to suggest that the author of *Samuel* was using concentricism as a conscious literary technique, evidence that will be provided in §5.5.

#### 2.2.4 *Plans used to construct aural compositions*

If concentric structure can theoretically have been used for oral performances of narratives perhaps extending over several hours, how might we expect a performer to remember the narrative? Would it have to be read out with feeling from a written text,<sup>197</sup> or would there be more natural oral ways of recalling the order in which the different episodes are to be found? If so, might it be possible that even in initial composition an author had arranged the order of episodes in the longer narrative by using simplified plans, either mental or written?

##### (i) Mental plans

Oral poets recall complete ‘songs’ with a beginning, middle, and end, by means of themes which “lead naturally from one to another to form a song”.<sup>198</sup> When a traditional bard hears a story performed he will usually need a day or two to think through the progression of episodes within the

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<sup>194</sup> See as an alternative the discussion of oral education in ancient Mesopotamia and elsewhere, involving father-and-son instruction and oral instruction in schools, in Alster 1992: 32-34.

<sup>195</sup> “An oral culture likewise has nothing corresponding to how-to-do-it manuals for the trades... Trades were learned by apprenticeship” – Ong 1982: 43. Cf. Gerhardtsson 1961.

<sup>196</sup> Watson (1994: 388-89) offers evidence for intentional Israelite instruction in parallelism techniques and small-scale ‘chiasmus’. Cf. also Carr 2005: 153-55; as well as Psalm 60 (title), 2Sam 1:18, etc.

<sup>197</sup> See hypotheses in Parkinson 2009: 13, 35-38.

<sup>198</sup> Lord 2000: 94-95; *pace* Ong (1982: 147-48), who implies that oral composers do not tend to think of their work as a “self-contained, discrete unit, defined by closure”.

larger narrative before he can reproduce the whole story himself in his own particular style.<sup>199</sup> The South Slavic bard Šećo Kolić describes his own process of learning the art of oral composition:

“When I was a shepherd boy, they used to come for an evening to my house, or sometimes we would go to someone else’s for the evening, somewhere in the village. Then a singer would pick up the *gusle* [one-stringed bowed instrument], and I would listen to the song. The next day when I was with the flock, I would put the song together, word for word, without the *gusle*, but I would sing it from memory, word for word, just as the singer had sung it ... Then I learned gradually to finger the instrument, and to fit the fingering to the words, and my fingers obeyed better and better ... I didn’t sing among the men until I had perfected the song, but only among the young fellows in my circle [*družina*] not in front of my elders and betters.”<sup>200</sup>

Black discusses the use of mental frames for memorisation and performance with reference to ancient Sumerian narrative poetry, and cites as of interest the advice of two of the greatest early Roman rhetoricians, Cicero and Quintilian.<sup>201</sup> The former author, for example, explains that, “Technical memory relies on locations and images. By locations I mean anything which can be briefly, neatly and strikingly isolated either naturally or deliberately in such a way as to facilitate our retrieving it by our natural memory: a building, a colonnade, a corner, a vault.” Quintilian also notes that not only buildings but long journeys, city ramparts, or pictures, might serve the mnemonic purpose.<sup>202</sup> Although of course the Roman rhetoricians postdate Israelite oral societies by many centuries, such mnemonic techniques are not culture-specific, and for ancient Israel we might hypothesise that natural geographical features could serve as ‘locations’.

(ii) Written plans

‘Cicero’ explains oral mnemonic techniques for his own literate culture by drawing parallels: “the backgrounds [i.e. locations] are very much like wax tablets or papyrus, the images like letters, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the script, and the delivery is like the reading”.<sup>203</sup> Papyrus and wax tablets would also have been the most common writing materials back in the Iron

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<sup>199</sup> Experienced bards may be able to recount it accurately after a single hearing – Lord 2000: 26-27, 68-79.

<sup>200</sup> Lord 2000: 21. By ‘word for word’ he means not ‘identical’ but rather ‘unchanged in essence’ so as not to falsify the “historic truth of what is being sung” (p. 28). As Lord notes, to the oral mind, ‘word’ simply means ‘utterance’, a sound group that may range “from what we call a word to an entire line of poetry, or even an entire song” (p. 25), a similar range of meanings as is encompassed by the Hebrew word *dābār*.

<sup>201</sup> Black 1992: 91; cf. also Carruthers 2008: 89-93. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is no longer generally attributed to Cicero, but was written in his lifetime and came to be associated with him due to its remarkable popularity.

<sup>202</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.29 (as found in Black 1992). Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 11.2.17-22

<sup>203</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.30

Age Levant, papyrus or leather rolls being up to 4m long and between 10 and 47cm high, and wax-covered wooden writing-boards, usually hinged, being as small as 9.5 by 6.2cm, or as large as 33.8 by 15.6cm.<sup>204</sup> Plausibly, therefore, one might imagine oral composers in a society with developing literacy being introduced to the art of writing by the inverse parallel: familiar mental arrangements of episodes could also be expressed in this new graphic or pictorial form on papyrus or wax writing-boards, whether for composition or for performance.

‘Cicero’ considered it “obligatory to have these backgrounds in a series, so that we never by confusion in their order be prevented from following the images”. Confusion in arrangement might be considered inherently less problematic when dealing with narratives, though episodes are not necessarily always strictly chronological, and Quintilian recognised that “just as it is easier to learn verse than prose, so it is easier to learn prose when it is artistically constructed than when it has no such organisation”.<sup>205</sup> About three centuries before Cicero, Aristotle taught that when constructing the plot of a story, “whether the poet takes it ready-made or constructs it for himself, he should first sketch its general outline, and then fill in the episodes and amplify in detail.”<sup>206</sup> Talbert suggests that this guidance was apparently followed by Virgil, Cicero’s contemporary, who is described as having “worked from a preliminary sketch, a prose outline, which he subsequently turned into verse”.<sup>207</sup>

Whether mental or graphical, therefore, plans must have been used by ancient authors to construct extended narratives. With the technique of concentricism, for example, one might imagine an author associating successive episodes of a narrative with places on the ascent and descent of a familiar mountain in the hill-country of Judah, the summit naturally connected with the most important episode or turning point of the whole story (cf. §5.5; 2Sam 15:17–16:14). Alternatively, or perhaps concurrently, he might have inscribed a number of ostraca with symbols or summaries of

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<sup>204</sup> Payton 1991; Millard 2008; cf. also Millard 1995.

<sup>205</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.30; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 11.2.39

<sup>206</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 17.5. Ong (1982: 79-81, 167-68) notes that Aristotle’s teacher Plato lived in that transition period between orality and literacy in ancient Greece.

<sup>207</sup> Donatus / Suetonius, *Life of Virgil* 23 (early second century AD) – Talbert 1970: 363.

individual episodes and then tessellated them so as to visualise the arrangement of episodes in the narrative, identify ‘gaps’, and ensure balance between paralleled episodes.

(iii) Headings representing episodes

In order to represent them graphically on wax writing-boards or ostraca, episodes could not be written out in full, so one would need to hypothesise a practice of epitomising or summarising associated with the construction of plans. One feature of ancient literature that might lend itself to the selection of important details or summaries is the common appearance of what are known as ‘rubrics’, or lines written in red ink within otherwise black ink texts. Egyptian literature used rubrics throughout the second and first millennium BC, typically for introductory headings of sections with a change of genre (e.g. “Copy of the Decree Brought to this Humble Servant / about his Being Brought Back to Egypt” – *Tale of Sinuhe* l. 178), or the first phrase of a new episode or speech, or the first line of a stanza.<sup>208</sup>

Closer to the Israelite context, similar rubrics were used in the Deir ‘Alla plaster texts, dating from probably around 800BC and apparently reproducing the columns of a scroll.<sup>209</sup> Although the majority of the text was written in black ink, red ink was used occasionally for the most important lines of the text. As with the Egyptian rubrics, the first half of the first line that served as a title for the following text was written with red: “[These are the visions of Balaam the son of Beo]r the man who was seer of the gods.” (l.1a).<sup>210</sup> No other titles are extant in this fairly brief text, but we do also find rubrics used in one other context, namely, certain divine statements that appear to be of particular significance for this prophetic genre.<sup>211</sup> Thus not only headings but also key statements within the story are highlighted graphically – in this case the divine oracles, as is appropriate for a

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<sup>208</sup> Parkinson 2009: 93-95, 106, 161-62, 184.

<sup>209</sup> Millard 1995: 215-16.

<sup>210</sup> Hoftijzer & van der Kooij 1976: 184. Translations of the texts can be found on pp. 179-82.

<sup>211</sup> The statement of the goddess Shgr is written in red (Combination I; Hoftijzer & van der Kooij 1976: 186, 188-89), unlike the prophet’s own words, and also in II.16-17 the rubric most likely highlights an oracle of the ‘Shadday gods’ against Balaam (cf. I.8-9) announcing ‘we will punish you...’ (*nšpṯ*; *pace* Hoftijzer & van der Kooij 1976: 246, 280-81; cf. 245), preventing him from cursing any more (comparable to Num 22:12, 34-35).

‘prophetic’ text. A similar phenomenon might therefore be expected of texts in neighbouring Israel written on papyrus scrolls at least as early as the ninth century BC.

One other place where it seems compositions were summarised with an apposite phrase is in the Psalms. Thirtle’s superb intuition applied the evidence of the colophon of Habakkuk’s psalm (Hab 3:19) to the Psalter, showing for example that “Dove of the Distant Terebinths” in the title of Psalm 56 was in fact originally part of the colophon of Psalm 55, and thus conveniently summarises the preceding psalm (cf. 55:6-8) for the benefit of the ‘choir director’.<sup>212</sup> Other examples are “Death of the Champion” [i.e. Goliath, the one who stood forth ‘between’ the armies] for Psalm 8, “Hind of the Morning” [referring to the king himself, and echoing many themes from Psalm 18, e.g. 18:33] for Psalm 21,<sup>213</sup> and arguably also “A Psalm, a Song at the Dedication of the House” applying to Psalm 29 rather than Psalm 30, to which belongs therefore just the simple title “Of David” (cf. Pss 25–28).<sup>214</sup>

It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that ancient Israelite authors would easily have identified headings, important sentences, or perhaps even key characters or actions, depending on the nature of the episode in question, to use as summary statements when arranging episodes graphically or mentally into plans for a lengthy narrative. We saw above how the concentric structural technique displays a number of features that lend themselves to aural composition, indicating the likelihood that it is an example of a mature compositional technique developed in a predominantly oral society. However, as literacy began to be valued for administrative purposes in a newly stable or autonomous society, it would not take long before oral or aural composers recognised how writing might enable them to compose narratives far longer than previously possible (cf. §5.5). Their traditional techniques such as concentricism would soon begin to undergo changes that enabled more complex plot lines or character development, creating new techniques of narrative composition for emerging literate audiences.

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<sup>212</sup> Thirtle 1905: 15-16, 90-94.

<sup>213</sup> Thirtle 1905: 70-75, 86-89,

<sup>214</sup> Thirtle (1905: 14 n.2, 16 n.1) notes that title material can occasionally be repeated in the colophon (cf. Pss 45; 87). Psalms 29 and 87 might both have been associated with the ark’s arrival in Jerusalem – 1905: 82-85.

## 2.3 Purpose

§2.1 demonstrated how the principles of poetic parallelism would have made it possible for an ancient Israelite to perceive the significance of the technique of concentricism, whether in poetry or prose. §2.2 found it not just possible but likely that an aural composer would have used concentricism for a lengthy narrative, in a time when literacy was beginning to spread in ancient Israel, because its pragmatic suitability for aural hearers would make it a good candidate for having been a mature technique of Israelite oral composition. Concentricism may be understandable in principle and inherently well-suited to an aural setting, but to show that it is not just likely to have been used but in fact of great importance for its author, questions of purpose must be addressed. The present section will explore these from three perspectives: first the scholar's responsibility for pursuing the author's intention when proposing a concentric arrangement, second the author's various possible reasons for using concentricism, and third the audience's ability to perceive concentric patterns.

### 2.3.1 *The significance of authorial intention in concentricism*

It has often been suggested by chiasmus enthusiasts that this technique is so 'natural' a mode of expression that it may even have been unconsciously applied to a composition by an ancient author.<sup>215</sup> With regard to even-numbered 'chiasmus', or inverted parallelism, which is very common in oral communication,<sup>216</sup> at a small scale this might well be happening unconsciously for aesthetic effect or convenience. However, as I have argued above (§2.1.2), concentric parallelism contains an inherent emphasis by setting apart one particular element at the centre of the structure. Also, the more extended a concentric pattern, the less possible it is to argue that its author was unaware of the precise arrangement of paralleled episodes around the climax or turning point.

Bassett's observation from the field of classics nearly a century ago could have been written for Old Testament studies in the twenty-first century:

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<sup>215</sup> Scholer & Snodgrass 1992: 128.

<sup>216</sup> A1: "Are you coming to the party?" B2: "Can I bring a friend?" A3: "Boy or girl?" B4: "What difference does it make?" A4: "It is a matter of balance." B3: "Girl." A2: "O.K." B1: "I'll be there." – Kenneth Bailey 1976: 50. Cf. also *hysteron proteron* in §2.1.1 above.

In modern editions we often find the remark, 'Note the chiasmic order,' but rarely any reason for doing this. Yet if chiasmus is merely a rhetorical trick of style, discovered and named by the ancient grammarians, it may be queried whether the student is sufficiently repaid for assuming this added burden of scholastic baggage... If chiasmus is to be more than a scholastic legacy of doubtful value, its function and significance should be explained.<sup>217</sup>

I would similarly argue that exegesis should be the primary goal of any type of rhetorical criticism used in biblical studies, hence my preference for the sort of 'rhetorical analysis' exemplified by Roland Meynet (1998). Despite recent attempts to deny the superiority of authorial intention (see §1.3),<sup>218</sup> those who ignore it do so at their own cost, consigning their own subjective analyses to the pile of unfalsifiable and thus unprovable speculations. It is only when an author's primary message has been recognised that secondary questions may be asked of his work without risk of misrepresenting the author. Ancient authors also deserve a fair hearing, and if we are not careful we run the risk of imitating the tabloid media, skilled in selecting the most controversial yet most insignificant details of a public speech.

Some who advocate concentric structures try to avoid the need for falsification by explicitly affirming the validity of others' contradictory analyses of the same texts, apparently believing that 'chiasmus' is a 'deep structure' of human thought, unconscious and therefore inherently flexible.<sup>219</sup> While this has the appearance of profundity, Breck might object to someone applying this argument to his own article, finding the middle line of the middle page, and concluding that by speaking there [in the context of 2Corinthians 8–9] of "a sign of unity between the mother church and communities of the diaspora", Breck's main intent in his article, albeit unconscious, is to promote Roman Catholic financial support for Rome.<sup>220</sup> It is hard to deny that for a structure to have any exegetical value with regard to the text itself, it must be shown to have been deliberate on the part of the author.

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<sup>217</sup> Bassett 1920: 59.

<sup>218</sup> An 'author' may be one who either compiles pre-existing materials into a new creation, or crafts entirely fresh oral or literary works.

<sup>219</sup> E.g. Breck 1999: 265; 1994: 197-98 – citing concentric analyses of John's Gospel by both Talbert and Ellis, or by both Borgen and Gerhard.

<sup>220</sup> Breck 1999: 258, line 18.

Unsurprisingly, many scholars, both proponents and critics of ‘chiasmus’, view alternative concentric analyses as a strong falsifiability test for a particular proposal of concentricism.<sup>221</sup> Different concentric analyses of the same text, particularly where the centres of the concentricism are at different points, are not evidence of a clever author, but rather evidence that the rhetorical critics have more work to do in order to come to an agreement about the correct analysis, if indeed concentricism is present at all.

Even though multiple concentric analyses are problematic, an author may of course have intended to communicate several complementary messages,<sup>222</sup> and would have been able to use different rhetorical techniques for each.<sup>223</sup> For example, distinct theological themes might be featured in several carefully selected passages to convey meaning by their arrangement, and yet undermine neither the primary concentric emphasis of the whole nor the broadly chronological sequence in the case of narratives. The metaphor of a text’s ‘skeleton’ is perhaps a helpful way of comparing concentricism with other complementary large-scale structures;<sup>224</sup> in the same way, the equally important circulatory, nervous or digestive systems of the body are still secondary, only effectual when positioned and supported by the skeleton. If a concentricism is proposed for an entire text, therefore, it should initially be assumed to be the only overarching structural pattern. If another rhetorical structure has been identified that governs the whole document, the likelihood is that they cannot both be present.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Blomberg 1989: 14 – “No more appropriate center for 2 Cor 1–7 could be found.”; deSilva 2008: 367 – “He also exhibits a high degree of tolerance for significantly differing chiasmic outlines without regarding their very multiplicity as, in some sense, vitiating the project as a whole.”; Porter & Reed 1998: 223.

<sup>222</sup> Porter & Reed (1998: 226) note that there may be “several (and even conflicting) motivations for creating a discourse”. My approach would generally be to give the author the benefit of the doubt and assume that perceived ‘conflict’ or disjunction in a text’s messages are probably due to my own incomplete understanding rather than to a schizophrenic author or incompetent editor.

<sup>223</sup> Talbert (1970: 363) gives examples of “double and even triple structure in the writings of antiquity”, something even my own amateur poetry has occasionally managed.

<sup>224</sup> Suggested by Thomson 1995: 38 n.119. The ‘architecture’ metaphor is employed, alongside ‘pattern’, by Talbert (1970: 1 n.5), following usage in Classical and New Testament scholarship.

<sup>225</sup> My own research has for this reason effectively disqualified concentricism as the primary pattern for 1Corinthians 12–14 and for Matthew’s Gospel – Patrick 2004a; 2010.

### 2.3.2 *Complementary functions of concentricism*

Watson has suggested two functions of concentricism, whereas Thomson and Talbert have both classified three, and all are careful to affirm that a single concentricism will usually serve more than one function.<sup>226</sup> Although the categories overlap, I would suggest approaching function in terms of its value for different stages in the communication of the author's message: The first and fourth of the six functions listed here are pragmatic for both the author and the performer,<sup>227</sup> the second and third apply to the author's message, and the fifth and sixth apply to the audience's perception.

- (1) The *structural* value of concentricism provides the author with a familiar pattern into which initially disparate material may be selected and moulded.
- (2) The *emphatic* significance of the first, last, and central episodes then attract the most important messages or events. This function is the most distinctive of concentric patterns, as opposed to, for example, inverted parallelism.
- (3) The *poetic* significance of paralleled episodes gives greater depth to each episode, whose purpose can be understood fully only in its interrelation with its counterpart. This poetic parallelism usually gains added meaning when viewed in light of the central turning point.
- (4) The *mnemonic* value when performing before an audience enables recitation from memory, each episode recalled in its proper place according to the extended pattern.
- (5) The *aesthetic* effect of the parallelism adds balance, poetic variation and aural beauty to the otherwise linear narrative being told.
- (6) The *completive* action of potentially every episode after the centre brings smaller story arcs to their natural conclusion, and ultimately completes the whole story in the final episode by clearly echoing its opening in the first.

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<sup>226</sup> Talbert 1970: 365-66; Watson 1981: 145; Thomson 1995: 34-38.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Black 1992: 90-91.

I would suggest that most if not all of these functions of concentricism will work together for any particular composition, providing good reason for an author's preference for this particular rhetorical technique when setting out to construct a lengthy narrative.

Of these six functions, four prioritise the form of concentricism, compared with two for content, but these two are those relating to the all-important message of the author. As Butterworth notes, "most scholars interested in structure operate on the assumption that one simply needs to demonstrate a structure by pointing out correspondences that the reader can see. Very little attention is given to what the author might have intended".<sup>228</sup> Although recognising the form of a text is worthwhile, it has been properly understood only when the content is thereby clarified,<sup>229</sup> just as proof that one has found the proper pair of spectacles is in the ability to enjoy an otherwise blurry three-dimensional film created to be viewed through those spectacles.<sup>230</sup> Concentricism likewise can bring a text into focus as the author intended, showing us how to read it and where we ought to be paying special attention; which points are foregrounded and which are mere scenery. Exegesis is thus the aim of rhetorical analysis, and application of a rhetorical technique to a text is ultimately vindicated by the contribution it makes to exegesis of the whole passage and its constituent parts.

Thomson has drawn attention to the symbiotic relationship between form and content by observing the circularity between exegetical benefits which confirm the presence of concentricism, and presupposition of concentricism which produces new insights into the text. Though he terms this "a self-correcting procedure",<sup>231</sup> the danger of veering into pure reader-response calls for some methodological 'guard rails', such as my fourth and fifth criteria for verification in §2.5.3 below.<sup>232</sup> I have also suggested in §2.4.3 certain guidelines for identifying the presence of concentricism, to save the rhetorical critic unnecessary waste of time and effort in what Thomson calls 'experimenting'. He

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<sup>228</sup> Butterworth 1992: 25. Cf. Gordon (1995: 108) regarding rhetorical studies of the prophetic books.

<sup>229</sup> Thomson 1995: 38-39.

<sup>230</sup> DeSilva (2008: 344 and n. 1) warns that sometimes what is offered is instead "a structural lens that threatens to blur others' ability to read the text accurately". Thomson (1995: 32) recognises the value of exegesis for deciding between different concentric analyses of the same passage.

<sup>231</sup> Thomson 1995: 33-34, 215-216, 223-24.

<sup>232</sup> For an example of reader-response, cf. the 'grafting' of Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act 1 Scene 2, onto 2 Kings 5:13-14 by Barton 1996: 228-31. Automotive metaphor drawn from deSilva 2008: 344.

does speak of a 'point' at which one moves from concentricism-verifying exegesis to concentricism-assisted exegesis, but it is probably more realistic to speak of diverging trajectories. Although both start at the same place, postulating the presence of this technique in a text, on the first track it will become increasingly difficult to account for exceptions to the architectural pattern, and at a certain 'point' the venture must be deemed unsuccessful. On the second route, however, with every new application of the structure to a portion of the text, vistas of interpretation will begin to open up, and no such 'point' will be perceived.

### 2.3.3 Perception of large-scale concentricism

Beyond the author's purpose for a structure, it is important to consider its effect on an audience. In this regard, Thomson acknowledges both the difficulties faced by modern Western-educated scholars in recognising concentric patterns and the superiority of oral learners in feats of memory, but still finds it hard to imagine how listeners might detect anything beyond a short inverted pattern.<sup>233</sup> Talbert had already addressed this, though, outlining four possibilities for perception of large scale architectural patterns by an audience, and preferring the second option here for his own arrangement of John 1–5:<sup>234</sup>

- (a) The pattern was generally recognised consciously when first heard.
- (b) The pattern was immediately felt by most, but reflection was necessary for recognition.<sup>235</sup>
- (c) The pattern was only recognised by a few after considerable reflection.
- (d) The pattern was the secret of the author.

Talbert's second and third categories seem to be practically indistinguishable, and in any case, starting with reader-response too quickly leads the scholar to rely on subjective experience. Instead, I propose to approach the question from the perspective of authorial intention as it relates to audience:

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<sup>233</sup> Thomson 1995: 36. Cf. Butterworth 1992: 59.

<sup>234</sup> Talbert 1970: 363-65. Talbert lists the categories in the reverse order.

<sup>235</sup> Black (1992: 90-91) compares the structure of a symphony, "only... perceptible on repeated performance". Whitman (1958: 258) refers in this regard to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Lohengrin*.

- (1) The author intended his audience to recognise the pattern immediately.
- (2) The author intended the pattern to be used by the performer as an aide-memoire, whether or not the audience perceived it.
- (3) The author used the pattern simply for convenience when composing, and did not mind whether the audience understood how his material had been structured.
- (4) The author deliberately intended that the audience fail to perceive the pattern.

Any of these options might apply to a text arranged concentrically, and it is possible that an author's intentions may vary for different parts of the same text. For example, the first is probable in the case of small-scale structures either within episodes or across collections of episodes up to three or four chapters, but the second and third are more realistic with regard to macro-structures of large epics. On the basis of smaller examples an audience may suspect the same principle to apply to the whole, but would lack either the time to study or a codex with which to compare far distant passages. Even so, the likelihood that ancient literature was designed for repeated performances, or 'rereadings',<sup>236</sup> would allow an educated audience whether literate or aural to "ponder, search out" and ultimately "master" the writings of wise men (Eccl. 12:9-12; Prov 25:1-2). From the other direction, an author would be well able to ensure his audience perceived the most important passages, by applying other available rhetorical techniques including aphorisms, simile and metaphor, repetition, and narratorial comments.<sup>237</sup>

Whereas the second and third possible intentions about perception are primarily related to form, in terms of content, the pragmatic difficulty of comprehending a very large structure will effectively force the author to choose between the first and fourth options. Unless he resorts to unsubtle application of more than a few techniques to draw attention to his central point, he will be concealing it to all intents and purposes. Admittedly, authors might be happy to "perform feats of

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<sup>236</sup> An idea championed by Ben Zvi, e.g. 1996: 132-33; 2000: 5-6.

<sup>237</sup> A fine example of this is the rhetorically powerful "You are the man!" speech of Nathan at the structural centre of 2Samuel 10–12, for which see below in §5.1.

virtuosity for their own sakes”, which is “one of the minor joys of artistic creation”,<sup>238</sup> but to hide the most important message amid so many other minor ones that are readily discernible is likely to have a more deliberate reason behind it. Three such reasons might apply here, without being mutually exclusive.

First, an author may be reticent to publish, or at least to explain, compositions of a highly personal significance. An example of this is Spenser’s *Epithalamion*, one of his most complex and accomplished poems, whose structure was probably concealed because it had been composed to commemorate his own midsummers day wedding.<sup>239</sup> Dylan Thomas may have also illustrated this reason in the perfectly constructed 102-line inverted parallelism he composed as a prologue to a volume of collected essays; he instructed his publisher that it was ‘important’ to remove any mention of the rhyming scheme in the poem’s introduction.<sup>240</sup>

Second, an author may be carefully controlling the way his message is received, displaying a highly advanced theoretical understanding of the effect of literature on an audience. A prime example of this is the seven-volume *Chronicles of Narnia*, whose numerical significance C.S. Lewis deliberately concealed to allow his audience to get a ‘feel’ for each planetary influence of the Divine without their minds getting in the way, particularly in light of potential controversy over his ‘astrological’ interests.<sup>241</sup> In the case of the book of Samuel, I will show that the author’s points of emphasis consistently highlight divine oracles or actions of various prophets, and main characters succeed or fail entirely on the basis of their attitude and response to prophetic authority. Thus the author may well have concealed the overall structure so as to effectively make the book itself function as a prophetic message, understood only by those with ‘ears to hear’ (cf. 2Sam 23:1-7).

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<sup>238</sup> Whitman 1958: 255-56.

<sup>239</sup> See Hieatt (1960: 8-15), for the factors leading to a solution of this 365-year-old literary mystery.

<sup>240</sup> Thomas 1952: 173-74 – cf. the Textual Preface. The example is cited by Whitman (1958: 255-56), in addition to “*Finnegans Wake* and the ciphers and acrostics in late Medieval and Renaissance poetry”.

<sup>241</sup> Ward 2008: 15-22, 27-35, 239-49. Whitman (1958: 255-56) speaks of an audience feeling and responding “with emotions necessarily and appropriately vague.”

Third, it is not uncommon for written texts in newly-literate or mainly oral societies to be treated as 'magical' and memorial.<sup>242</sup> Goody, for example, writes, "Many of the ceremonial texts of Egypt and Mesopotamia 'were not intended to be read by human eyes', for they were essentially communications between man and god, not man and man".<sup>243</sup> The same principle is evidently at work both in the so-called 'Isaiah memoir' (e.g. Isa. 8:16-18),<sup>244</sup> and in Job's anguished plea, "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! That with an iron stylus and lead they were engraved in the rock for ever!" (Job 19:23-24; cf. 31:35-36). This third reason also applies to *Samuel*, as will be explained below in §4.5; the author, like Hannah in the first major scene of the book, is effectively crying out for a son and heir, and though his human audience can sense the fervency of his prayer, only the divine audience need perceive its content.

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<sup>242</sup> Niditch 1996: 78-88; Ong 1982: 93-94.

<sup>243</sup> Goody 1968: 11. Goody cites Oppenheim (1964: 234-35) for "ceremonial uses of writing". See also Lipton (2008: 70) for other references, suggestions received from Robert Gordon by both her and myself, with thanks.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Clements 2000.

## 2.4 Identification

§2.1 showed that Hebrew poetic parallelism would have given ancient Israelites a theoretical understanding of the emphatic arrangement inherent in concentric poetry or prose. §2.2 explored features of aural composition such as would have been relevant for ancient Israelite audiences, demonstrating the likelihood that concentricism would have been chosen as a technique appropriate to the planning of an extended narrative. §2.3 identified various purposes for which an author might deliberately use concentricism, explaining why authorial intention is important, yet also considering possible reasons for concealing the message of a large-scale structure. Having covered the theoretical principles underlying the use of concentricism in ancient Israel, the next two sections address the practical issues of detecting and verifying examples of such structures in ancient texts. These are probably the most important contributions of this thesis to literary study of the Old Testament, in view of the unregulated and inconclusive nature of most so-called ‘chiastic’ analyses of biblical passages or books. This particular section will first explore the interdependence of general definitions and specific examples, and then discuss the quality expected of examples, before offering a procedure for discovering such structures and a brief summary of methods by which literary units may be distinguished from each other.

### 2.4.1 *Inductive and deductive identification*

In his influential 1968 address to the Society of Biblical Literature, Muilenburg urged biblical scholars to move beyond the valuable but limited form-critical approach established by Gunkel. His first constructive criticism concerned the “proclivity among scholars in recent years to lay such stress upon the typical and representative that the individual, personal, and unique features of the particular pericope are all but lost to view”.<sup>245</sup> His aim was not to reject the generalities of definitions, but rather to balance them with the particularities of examples, for which he proposed the enterprise of ‘rhetorical criticism’. Form criticism had established its *Gattungen* from the outset

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<sup>245</sup> Muilenburg 1969: 5.

on rigorous methodology and categorisation, enabling the deductive recognition of particular texts which conformed more or less closely to those patterns. Rhetorical criticism developed inductively instead on the basis of actual texts, and as common techniques began to be recognised in many texts across different genres, the techniques became a focus in themselves.<sup>246</sup> All too often, this emphasis on techniques has led rhetorical critics themselves to ignore the specificity of the examples they adduce, and Muilenburg's criticism gains new relevance.<sup>247</sup>

In fact, whether one starts with the deductive or the inductive method, the two approaches are complementary and interdependent. Patterns observed in several different passages should lead to clearly defined proposals about ancient Israelite rhetoric. That enables one to complete the circle by deductive reasoning, proposing falsifiable hypotheses about rhetorical techniques in order to test the theories using specific examples. Without this, proponents of rhetorical criticism are effectively denying fellow scholars the opportunity of testing their cases in point or refining their proposed definitions.<sup>248</sup> In this thesis the specific technique of concentricism, which previous scholars had discerned inductively by accumulating examples, has been defined and analysed on a theoretical level for extended narratives in terms of its distinctive features, purpose, and rhetorical effect. The technique remains in the realm of theory, however, until the hypothetical definition has been established deductively by means of particular examples.

Some insist that examples must be sought only in genres that already attest other examples. For instance, one of Porter and Reed's main objections to proposals of concentricism in the epistle to the Philippians is that there are no other generally accepted examples of concentricism in letters of the first century AD. In fact, they argue that the focus on concentric structure has "obscured

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<sup>246</sup> Cf. footnote 75. Argument from examples was used even as early as Boys 1825: 167; quoted in Meynet 1998: 126.

<sup>247</sup> Kenneth Bailey (1980: xix) noted how E.W. Bullinger's undisciplined proliferation of 'examples' in his 1913 book *The Companion Bible* "virtually discredited the discipline for a full generation".

<sup>248</sup> Dawson (1994: 15) summarises helpfully the process of research from data to theory to methodology back to data. Compare the refinements of Lowth's theories about Hebrew poetry by Kugel, Watson, Berlin and others, discussed above in §2.1.

recognizable epistolary elements”.<sup>249</sup> Form criticism has demonstrated the vital importance of distinguishing genres, but sometimes this can be taken too far. Rhetorical techniques are not necessarily limited to particular genres,<sup>250</sup> and what is more, even in the epistolary genre there is in fact no shortage of concentric proposals, as for most if not all biblical genres. Admittedly only very few have been generally accepted, but this is mainly due to a lack of suitably rigorous criteria with which to test them, the burden of proof falling squarely on those proposing concentricisms. Even when an example has been generally accepted, though, this must not be treated as an open door to finding the technique throughout the genre. To do so would be to ignore the specificity of each example and the way form always mirrors content, certain techniques being chosen to communicate certain messages. Bailey proposes that “each piece of evidence must be examined on its own merits and neither rejected nor accepted *a priori*”, while Thomson recommends “erring, if any way, on the side of caution in order to exclude doubtful structures”.<sup>251</sup>

#### 2.4.2 *Quality of identified examples*

In establishing theoretical foundations for the technique of concentricism above in §§2.1–3, I have argued that one might expect whole narrative books in ancient Israel to have been structured using principles of concentricism. To confirm this hypothesis ‘beyond reasonable doubt’, one must define what level of perfection is required in a proposed example, such as the book of Samuel discussed below. Scholer and Snodgrass have noted that most proponents of ‘chiasmus’ do not try to argue

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<sup>249</sup> Porter & Reed 1998: 218, 219, 222, 223–24, quote from 226. It is my published conviction that Paul was thoroughly familiar with Classical rhetorical norms, and I believe he did use principles of deliberative rhetoric within sections of his letters, which is not surprising considering their unusual length as compared with other ancient letters (Patrick 2004a). Debate continues over the genre of Paul’s letter bodies, but it is at least clear that relating them to the three classical species of rhetoric is helpful for recognising their important features (cf. Martin 2010: 194, 199). While I therefore can understand those who grant Graeco-Roman rhetorical and epistolary theory the exclusive rights to New Testament rhetorical analysis, it would be hard to argue that Paul had no influence from non-Classical rhetoric as well, as discussed above in §2.2.1. Of course, the methodological foundations I have offered above for concentric narrative in ancient Israel would need to be developed further for New Testament studies, but it is in principle possible that there was a fusion of ancient and modern rhetorical techniques in Christian literature of the first century.

<sup>250</sup> §2.1.3 demonstrated the permeability of boundaries between Hebrew poetry and prose. Bassett (1920: 59–62) likewise emphasised that Homer’s narrative technique of ‘hysteron proteron’ originated in poetry, and also argued for the influence of this particular technique on Plato’s writings, despite Plato’s explicit aversion to such things.

<sup>251</sup> Kenneth Bailey 1976: 47 – following H.J. Cadbury’s review of Lund 1942; Thomson 1995: 29.

that perfection is required, but nevertheless they ask “how much imperfection is allowed for something still to be considered chiasmic in structure”.<sup>252</sup> Imperfection may be explained in one of four ways: emphasis on the asymmetrical element, falsification of the proposed concentric structure, lack of authorial expertise, or corruption of the text subsequent to its composition.<sup>253</sup>

The first of my seven criteria for verifying concentricity, below in §2.5.3, calls for ‘Balance’ in terms of number, position and approximate length of episodes. I argue that we must start with an expectation of perfection, because only by sharing the same expectation that the author would have had, can we properly appreciate his deliberate deviation. Such dislocation should feel frustrating to the interpreter, motivating one to explore exegetically why the author might have deviated from his pattern in order to give this particular passage greater emphasis. If no satisfactory solution can be found on the basis of exegesis and meaning, one is forced to question the author’s use of the technique in the first place. Thomson recognises that if one allows even a slight disjunction of order, “the problem becomes that of deciding at what point a perturbation becomes so severe that the pattern fails as a chiasmus”.<sup>254</sup> Of course, it may be possible that the author simply lacked the expertise to follow the pattern consistently, or else had done so but subsequent transmission of the text then corrupted its arrangement. In either case the text would be a bad example of concentricity, unable to provide the necessary confirmation of the hypothesised rhetorical technique.

It might seem self-defeating to disqualify examples that appear to have been corrupted during transmission, particularly as there are few if any texts in the Hebrew Bible that have not had multiple redactional layers identified in them by scholars, all the more so at the level of whole documents such as *Samuel*. I am not against attempts to distinguish stages in a text’s composition, and have in fact myself discerned a very clear earlier edition within the final form of *Samuel*, for which see below in §5.4. Nevertheless, there is a real difference between offering a better

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<sup>252</sup> Scholer & Snodgrass 1992: xix-xx.

<sup>253</sup> Thomson (1995: 40) suggests three further possibilities, accidental imbalance (expressing lack of expertise in my view), deviation for parenthetical reasons (a subset of asymmetrical emphasis I would suggest), or simple “cultural aversion to perfect symmetry” (which I cannot imagine being a reason on its own without having exegetical significance also); Thomson here draws on Talbert 1970: 361-62.

<sup>254</sup> Thomson 1995: 29.

explanation for the presence of particular details than can be given by synchronic composition, and altering elements that do not fit one's hypothesised reconstruction of the text.

Thomson's first requirement for accepting a concentric pattern is that it "will be present in the text as it stands, and will not require unsupported textual emendation in order to 'recover' it".<sup>255</sup> Of course, manuscript evidence for non-Masoretic readings should be given due weight, Hebrew more so than the versions perhaps. Watson rightly notes that to choose to ignore some parts of a stretch of text in order to establish the pattern is to beg the question.<sup>256</sup> There are at least four distinct reasons why textual emendation should be avoided when looking to prove the presence of a rhetorical technique in a particular text: (1) perhaps the editor did not notice the pattern in his source material; (2) perhaps the editor did notice the pattern; (3) perhaps the source material was not as we assume; (4) perhaps my structure is wrong.

Firstly, then, the earliest scribal scholars working with or copying the biblical texts were far closer to their original time of composition than we are now. If the reasonably intelligent 'editor', who is supposed to have inserted the glosses or removed segments of our proposed structure, failed to recognise the original concentric pattern, we should be realistic about the unlikelihood of noticing it ourselves.

Second, if an editor had in fact observed concentricism in his putative source material but disrupted this in its secondary use, we should logically conclude that he did not see sufficient value in the original structure to preserve it. One must therefore offer adequate reasons for prioritising hypothetical reconstructions of the source texts over interpreting them as the final author had intended them to be understood within the context of the whole.<sup>257</sup> This would also apply to finding complete structures within small sections of a larger text.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Thomson 1995: 28.

<sup>256</sup> Watson 1994: 355; cf. 1981: 137.

<sup>257</sup> A case in point would be the arguable use of Genesis, Joshua, *Samuel* and Kings by the author of Chronicles; did he expect his audience to be familiar with the context of passages quoted from older authoritative texts, as New Testament authors evidently did (cf. Patrick 2010)?

<sup>258</sup> Porter & Reed (1998: 224) implicitly criticise the analysis of a portion of text in isolation from the "entire discourse" within which it features.

Third, despite the probability that many biblical books drew on pre-existent source material of some sort, it is sometimes surprising to encounter the unusual levels of confidence some scholars have in their own ability to reconstruct these ancient sources. The more hypothetical a document is, the less certain the conclusions will be that can be drawn about it, hence the value of using extant texts despite possible blemishes or corruptions. Since unusual idiomatic expressions often fall out of use over time, it is wise to maintain a degree of respect for the transmission of the ancient texts we have the privilege to study.

Finally, textual emendation allows the scholar effectively to rewrite the text in whatever way is required to 'prove' the presupposed concentric structure; falsifiability is practically impossible. One must assume the inviolability of the text in order to have any moderately objective debate. If my proposed structure doesn't neatly fit the text, I must assume that it is me, rather than the text, that is wrong.

#### 2.4.3 *Procedure for identifying examples of concentricism*

So far we have seen how rhetorical techniques must be established both in theory and practice, both deductively from definitions and inductively from examples. Examples should be 'good' ones, evidently concentric without any unsupported textual emendation or unexplained breaks in the structure. However, it is one thing to disqualify proposed examples of concentricism using rigorous criteria, and quite another to look for concentricism in a passage which has not been analysed in this way before. It is at this point that one is in great danger of doing what Welch calls 'imposing' the structure upon the text "by Procrustean design or artifice of the reader".<sup>259</sup>

As with any other type of tool, it is possible to force a key into a lock which it was not meant to open, with questionable success. With truly concentric texts, the identification of the various elements of the structure will fall into place with relatively little effort on the part of the interpreter (cf. §5.2), and to get a feel for how easily the key should turn, experience of identifying rhetorical structures of diverse types is invaluable. Kugel is rightly suspicious of "today's zealous chiasmatics,

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<sup>259</sup> Welch 1981a: 13.

nay, chiasmaniacs”,<sup>260</sup> who seem to view ‘chiasmus’ as the one-size-fits-all solution to potentially every passage in the Bible.

Between 1992 and 1995, Tanner, Butterworth, Breck and Thomson all proposed ‘steps for finding chiasm’, apparently without knowledge of each other’s suggestions. These ranged from Thomson’s two steps to Breck’s twelve,<sup>261</sup> and the following sequence represents a considered integration of the most sensible features drawn from all four:

- 1) Consider the text form and overall structural features of the whole book or major compositional unit.<sup>262</sup>
- 2) Identify the episode boundaries throughout the larger literary work using unit delimitation, discourse analysis, transitional techniques of textual patterning, or a combination of these.<sup>263</sup>
- 3) Look for a variety of different textual patterns that might explain the arrangement of the episodes identified through the whole literary unit, that is, at the macrolevel.<sup>264</sup>
  - 3a) If looking for concentricity, begin with the outermost episodes forming an *inclusio*, and work your way inwards with successive paired episodes towards a climactic central unparalleled episode (not *vice versa*).<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Kugel 1982: 330.

<sup>261</sup> Thomson’s two steps display the least theoretical refinement, comprising basically ‘identification’ using parallelism and ‘verification’ using exegesis – 1995: 33-34. Conversely, most of Breck’s twelve steps are pragmatic, such as marking brackets in pencil in a study Bible, re-reading the passage aloud, and visualising the form of the passage.

<sup>262</sup> Butterworth 1992: 60; Tanner 1992: 149.

<sup>263</sup> This second step of Tanner (1992: 148) corresponds to establishing the ‘divisions’ of the text form in Butterworth’s first step. The three approaches are discussed below (§2.4.4), the third being Tanner’s personal contribution (cf. 1990). Breck urges his presumed amateur biblical student to ignore late divisions in the printed text such as paragraphs or verse and chapter numbers. Although it is of course correct that such printed divisions are not necessarily consistent with the ancient manuscripts (cf. van Banning 2007), an *a priori* rejection of them is unwise as it carries the danger of deliberately construing an unnatural reading.

<sup>264</sup> Butterworth and Tanner both recognise that concentricity is only one common rhetorical pattern among many, recommending analysis initially “independently of structural considerations”. Breck, however, unwisely enthuses about “detecting chiasmic structures throughout the Bible” – Breck 1994: 355 – “Appendix I: A Guide to Detecting Chiasmic Patterns” = 355-57.

<sup>265</sup> Thomson (1995: 26 n.78) criticises Lund’s fifth ‘law’ about important conceptual terms gravitating to the centre of a structure, suspecting that he “places a quotation at the ‘centre’ of a supposed chiasmus, and then ‘creates’ a chiasmic pattern around it.” Yet later Thomson admits (p. 215) that for two of his own patterns he

- 4) When a macrolevel concentricism has been identified, look for a variety of different textual patterns that might govern the individual episodes within the larger structure, that is, the microlevel.<sup>266</sup> Unless one is dealing with an obvious source text, it is likely that the textual pattern at the microlevel will usually correspond in type to the macrolevel pattern.
- 5) Carefully explore the exegetical significance of the textual patterning discovered, first at the macrolevel and then at the microlevel of the various episodes, to identify a coherent message communicated throughout the whole compositional structure.<sup>267</sup> If the structure identified does not encompass the whole document, this message should make sense within its larger textual context.
  - 5a) At both the macro- and microlevel, concentricism can be expected to reveal meaning by comparing the second of two parallel episodes with the first in light of the central episode, without doing violence to the 'natural' forward flow of the narrative or poem.
- 6) Compare the 'discovered' exegetical significance of the book or distinct passage with the conclusions of other rhetorical critics as well as those of scholars in other branches of Old Testament research.<sup>268</sup>

The process by which I myself identified the structure of *Samuel* did in fact correspond to this sequence, though at that time I was ignorant of the scholarship on identification cited here. A

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too first identified a "strong central panel" and then worked outwards in parallel sections "until the situation was reached when the chiasmic patterning broke down". Breck wisely suggests working inwards towards the centre from the outermost elements or boundaries of an episode. For clear confirmation of this principle from *Samuel*, cf. below in §4.2, 3/3' – footnote 447.

<sup>266</sup> Tanner's third and fourth steps prioritise textual patterning "within an individual episode (the microlevel)" before that found "between episodes" – 1990: 130-31. While I agree that proper macrolevel analysis depends on correct interpretation of each episode, microlevel verbal patterning will not necessarily reveal the often conceptual emphases being paralleled by the author at the macrolevel, particularly if the author is re-using source material with existing textual patterns for certain episodes. Of course, microlevel analysis can certainly help to reinforce the importance within an episode of certain elements evidently paralleled at a macrolevel. Cf. the "self-correcting procedure" noted by Thomson 1995: 33.

<sup>267</sup> Butterworth's fifth and sixth steps, considering authorial intention behind the structure and its relationship with other sections in its context, both seem to be essential to the exegetical endeavour he implies as having been done prior to his fourth step, which mentions "conclusions concerning the overall meaning and emphasis of the unit". Tanner makes this an explicit fifth and final step after macrolevel textual patterning.

<sup>268</sup> Butterworth's fourth step; unsurprisingly, when applying his own analytical procedure in both his third and fourth chapters, he combines his last three steps into a single discussion.

survey of the scholarly literature informed me about the overall structural features, and my perception of episode boundaries in the text was a natural consequence of detailed familiarity with the book developed through repeated re-readings. For further details see below, §5.2.

Butterworth's second and third steps of identification both discuss proper methods of detecting repetitions and parallels between episodes or elements, but as this is equally important as part of the process of verifying parallels, detailed discussion will be postponed until §2.5.3 below. In terms of identifying concentricism, though, these methods would apply in both stages three and four, because there may be potential parallelism between elements of a text at both the macro- and microlevel. The next few sections of this thesis proceed logically according to the above sequence, introducing methods for identifying episode boundaries in §2.4.4, discussing in §2.5 the types of parallelism out of which the specific textual pattern of concentricism is constituted, taking all of Chapters Three and Four to analyse in detail the exegetical significance of structures throughout *Samuel*, first at the macrolevel and then at the microlevel, and then in §5.1 working through one representative section of the structure in light of assessments by various other scholars. The last three steps of identification actually correspond also to stages in the verification of concentric structures, as one might expect, but these two sequences have been distinguished according to their separate purposes.

#### 2.4.4 *Methods for identifying episode boundaries*

Muilenburg's presidential address, usually credited with establishing rhetorical criticism as a distinct methodology, specified the two major concerns of a rhetorical critic. The second of these was "to recognize the structure of a composition and to discern the configuration of its component parts... the techniques of narrative and poetic composition" rather than just "the formal and traditional modes of speech of the literary genres or types".<sup>269</sup> One of these is of course the concentric technique for which my criteria in §2.5 have been specifically developed. However, the first priority of the rhetorical critic, which "goes without saying" according to Muilenburg, is "to

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<sup>269</sup> Muilenburg 1969: 10.

define the limits or scope of the literary unit, to recognize precisely where and how it begins and where and how it ends".<sup>270</sup> He perceives that although there is great disagreement in commentaries over this matter, usually no attempt is made to defend why a passage has been delimited in a certain way. He argues that delimitation of a passage is in fact essential for understanding the author's purpose, because "The literary unit is in any event an indissoluble whole, an artistic and creative unity, a unique formulation." It is for this reason that episode delimitation has been treated separately and logically prior to the criteria meant to verify parallels between identified episodes.

In response to those who dismiss rhetorical criticism and compositional techniques as too subjective, Muilenburg pointed to generally accepted rhetorical devices like *inclusio* as well as to comparative ancient Near Eastern material, but ultimately remarked that "in matters of this sort there is no substitute for literary sensitivity". In an attempt to balance this subjectivity, we will consider fairly superficially three different methods for distinguishing episodes from each other which have become established in scholarship over the last four decades, namely delimitation criticism, discourse analysis, and textual patterning. All three emphasise different objective features of the text, functioning in a complementary way, but in the final analysis Muilenburg's remark holds true; knowledge of these methods can contribute little more than sharpening one's subjective literary sensitivity.

(i) *Delimitation criticism*

The origins of delimitation criticism as a scholarly discipline apparently go back to the 1978 study of *Petucha und Setuma* by Oesch, who proposed a new discipline called 'Gliederungskritik'.<sup>271</sup> The so-called Kampen school in the Netherlands was engaging in structural analysis of ancient Northwest Semitic poetry from around the same time and onwards,<sup>272</sup> influenced by the continental 'stanza

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<sup>270</sup> Muilenburg 1969: 8-9. Although one must initially assume distinct episode boundaries, Parunak (1983) has helpfully clarified a variety of transitional techniques available to ancient authors. Thomson (1995: 214) suggests that unit boundaries "will not break the flow of syntax".

<sup>271</sup> Oesch 1979: 366.

<sup>272</sup> Korpel 2000: 13, n. 44.

theory' heirs of Lowth,<sup>273</sup> and recognising the potential for a more objective approach to structural poetic analysis, they expanded the discipline's scope to include all delimitation markers found in actual manuscripts and renamed it 'delimitation criticism'. As with its older sibling textual criticism, delimitation criticism can be a tool either for isolating the most original reading or else for better understanding the history of reception of the text by interpreters in different generations.<sup>274</sup>

In ancient literature, the most consistent graphical division was between literary works themselves, among which could be classed most books in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>275</sup> The next most important divisions separated the multiple clay tablets of a single work, or extensive 'chapters' of a papyrus or parchment scroll, a rare example of titled chapters being the ten books of 'the generations of ...' in Genesis (e.g. Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; etc.).<sup>276</sup> These major sense divisions were usually expressed by means of extra spaces inserted, up to even a whole blank line, such gaps used in all biblical texts at Qumran including those in paleo-Hebrew script.<sup>277</sup> These texts also use smaller gaps to distinguish sub-divisions, possibly introduced for liturgical reading, and originally indicated by marginal signs (*paragraphoi*).<sup>278</sup> Because of difficulties distinguishing between larger and smaller gaps,<sup>279</sup> paragraph markers were introduced known as *petuhot* and *setumot* respectively.<sup>280</sup> Yet since both mistakes and deliberate interpretative alterations have often interchanged one for the other,<sup>281</sup> Korpel wisely advises the scholar to pay careful attention to the presence of both types of division without according too much weight to the distinction.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Cf. Korpel 2000: 45-46; §§2.1.2,3 above.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Korpel 2000: 12, citing Olley 1998: 125.

<sup>275</sup> Korpel 2000: 46. Cf. Kuonen's 1861 observation that both Judges and *Samuel* conclude with appendices, establishing their autonomy as literary works (cited by Römer & de Pury 2000: 38), *pace* Levin 2011: 129-37.

<sup>276</sup> Korpel (2000: 46-47) notes that the Peshitta marks only 'chapters', perhaps bearing witness to "to an early family of Hebrew manuscripts in which only the largest units had been marked".

<sup>277</sup> Tov 2000: 316-17; Tov does note that occasionally a gap might indicate nothing more than a poor writing surface on the scroll, so access to the original manuscripts or *editio princeps* is worthwhile.

<sup>278</sup> Korpel 2000: 9, 22. It is possible that such marks go back into pre-exilic times; the common term '*selah*' in the Psalms is probably a comparable marginal notation indicating unit delimitation relating to performance, though as with other ancient delimitation notation its precise meaning is now irretrievable.

<sup>279</sup> Korpel 2000: 47.

<sup>280</sup> Korpel 2000: 19; Tov 2000: 337; cf. Watson 2006: 169.

<sup>281</sup> Watson 2006: 168.

<sup>282</sup> Korpel 2000: 12.

The actual antiquity of any particular graphical division, therefore, is not easy to ascertain, even though the fact that sense divisions are marked from the Elephantine papyri as far back as the Hammurabi Code makes it likely that the original autographs of the Hebrew Bible had likewise been divided into larger sections according to meaning.<sup>283</sup> The transmission of sense divisions in Second Temple, medieval, and versional manuscripts has been relatively stable, suggesting the antiquity of pericope division,<sup>284</sup> despite some significant differences across the manuscripts which will require careful and extensive comparison to explain. Many have observed how Qumran scrolls show a greater liberality with sense divisions than later medieval Masoretic manuscripts, not only having a greater proportion of disjunctive (*petuhot*) divisions, but having more divisions overall.<sup>285</sup> Korpel suggests reasons for the ‘less trustworthy’ Masoretic tradition losing sense divisions,<sup>286</sup> but it seems far more likely to me that the fewer Masoretic divisions and smaller gaps between sections reflects greater appreciation for the conceptual connections throughout the text, correcting the tendency in earlier times to treat it in a piecemeal fashion as a source of ‘proof-texts’.<sup>287</sup>

The existence of different traditions of sense division within a particular text therefore requires that they be weighed by comparison with “structural analyses of the same text with the help of traditional exegetical and linguistic methods”.<sup>288</sup> Structures such as the one proposed in this thesis can actually serve to calibrate delimitation criticism, in much the same way as the evidence below will demonstrate for textual criticism also. Yet delimitation critics also appeal to correlation between graphical divisions and textual patterning in the form of introductory expressions.<sup>289</sup> For example, Olley (1993) has analysed 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> in this regard, listing all 238 divisions of both *petuhot* and

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<sup>283</sup> Tov 2000: 334-35; cf. Korpel 2000: 5.

<sup>284</sup> Korpel 2000: 16, 22; Tov 2000: 324, 330. A more sceptical view of scribal faithfulness is represented (as expected) by Ulrich 2003: 301.

<sup>285</sup> Tov 2000: 323.

<sup>286</sup> Korpel 2000: 23, 49.

<sup>287</sup> A modern illustration of the inverse tendency is given by Tov (2000: 340), who demonstrates that *BHS* records the sense divisions of the Leningrad Codex using the letters *samekh* and *pe*, yet also divides the text further with additional spaces according to its editors’ own interpretations. Even so, some Qumran scrolls did have less divisions than Masoretic manuscripts: “1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and 4QSam<sup>a</sup> reflect only 80% of the sense divisions of the medieval manuscripts of [מט]”, even more noticeable in 4QSam<sup>c</sup> – Tov 2000: 325-26, 328.

<sup>288</sup> Korpel 2000: 23-24, citing Oesch 1979: 366-67. Korpel understandably recommends techniques of patterning known from stanza theory (pp. 45-46).

<sup>289</sup> Tov 2000: 341.

*setumot*, and collating them all into just five groups of words or phrases, with only five percent of divisions failing to correspond to one of these groups.<sup>290</sup> Though some have objected that the expressions are “typical of all Ancient Near Eastern poetry” and also appear elsewhere without sense divisions marked,<sup>291</sup> Olley’s point is that graphical delimitation was not haphazard but corresponded to rhetorical divisions inherent within the original text. Langlamet’s comparable studies in the Pentateuch and *Samuel* are discussed below.<sup>292</sup> In summary, delimitation criticism instructs rhetorical critics to pay attention to *petuḥot* and *setumot* equally when determining episode boundaries, treating these ancient divisions with due respect, particularly where reinforced by evidence of textual patterning and rhetorical structure.

(ii) *Discourse analysis*

Delimitation criticism concerns itself with the visible orthographic demarcation of paragraphs, but there might be various reasons why spaces are inserted or removed from a text without a primary concern for meaning, such as blemishes in the parchment, aesthetic layout of text, or expense of additional sheets.<sup>293</sup> Genuine structural units will typically be indicated in any language by inherent linguistic features, and Longacre was one of the first linguists to overturn the traditional restricted focus on the sentence and consider the dynamics of paragraphs and discourses also.<sup>294</sup> Since then the discipline of discourse analysis has been developed extensively, particularly by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, working in numerous indigenous language groups worldwide.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> 1. The speech of YHWH (designated by words like *'mr*, *dbr*, *ch 'mr*, *qwl*, *qr'* and *n'm*). 2. Summons to hear (imperatives with *šm'*, *qšb* or *'zn*). 3. Designation of time (*bywm hhw'*). 4. Exclamations (*hwy*). 5. Oracles against the nations (*mś'*).

<sup>291</sup> Korpel 2000: 7, 9, quote from 12.

<sup>292</sup> Langlamet 1984; cf. also Tov 2000: 341.

<sup>293</sup> Longacre 1979a: 115-16.

<sup>294</sup> Longacre 1979a: 116-17. The definition given by Brown & Yule (1983: 6) to the term ‘text’ (or ‘discourse’) is “the verbal record of a communicative act”.

<sup>295</sup> Dawson 1994: 57-59; cf. Pattemore 2003: 7-10 and nn.13-14. Initially attempts were also being made in psycholinguistics to describe macrostructural patterns of narratives, from the ‘top down’ instead, but they foundered when confronted with complex narratives – see Crystal 2010: 123, citing Thorndyke 1977.

Because of confusion with the German term *'Diskurs-analyse'*, a sociological method of exploring conversations and power interplay 'behind' the text,<sup>296</sup> European scholarship often refers to discourse analysis as 'textlinguistics' instead.<sup>297</sup> Though some scholars prefer to avoid "unwanted connotations" of the term 'discourse',<sup>298</sup> its ambiguity and breadth of meaning, comparable to the term 'text',<sup>299</sup> commends its use in our present study, especially as it relates to spoken and thus aural communication.<sup>300</sup> However, there are some scholars who dismiss this new discipline altogether, for "restating the obvious", "forbidding terminology", "vague ideas" and complete lack of "probative value".<sup>301</sup> Such objections are becoming less pertinent as its empirical theory is increasingly refined,<sup>302</sup> and with Dawson's construction of a 'bridge' into linguistics for scholars of biblical Hebrew, we need not be wary of "the intellectual 'investment and returns' involved".<sup>303</sup>

Even so, discourse analysis has become very broad and detailed, to say nothing of the wider field of linguistics, and in fact, it would not be a surprise to find linguists treating the sort of concentric analysis proposed in this thesis as a subset of discourse analysis!<sup>304</sup> Our specific focus on delimiting episodes justifies the cursory treatment here, which summarises three linguistic insights about narrative structure. The first two are highlighted by Longacre's visualisation of the "double helix of discourse", twin strands of verbs and nouns, to put it simplistically.<sup>305</sup>

On the one hand, narratives can use the variation of dynamic and static verbal tenses to demarcate both storyline ('foreground' or 'mainline') and setting ('background' or 'offline').

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<sup>296</sup> Thanks to Sonja Ammann for explaining this distinction in conversation at OTSEM in Skálholt, Sept 2010.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Crystal 1997: 119: "there is considerable overlap [between the terms]... and any attempt at a principled distinction would be premature".

<sup>298</sup> Dawson 1994: 21-22.

<sup>299</sup> Pattemore 2003: 4-5. Cf. "text(-ual(ity), -ure, -linguistics)" in Crystal 1997: 386-87.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Chung 2008: 131-33.

<sup>301</sup> Silva 1995: 103; quoted by Pattemore 2003: 10.

<sup>302</sup> Pattemore 2003: 12-15.

<sup>303</sup> Dawson 1994: 24, cf. 11-12.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. Longacre 1999: 144 and n.15; 1989: 17. Longacre (1979b: 90) surveys the scope of the discipline. For an excellent summary of "Linguistics" in biblical studies, see Miller 2005.

<sup>305</sup> Dawson (1994: 65) interprets Longacre's second strand as "participant reference and speech interaction". Admittedly Longacre (1989: 139) does say that "participants not only figure in actions and events, but in a very important subset of actions that have come to be termed speech acts... [which as much as any action] accomplish certain ends". However, I interpret this as further definition of the realms in which 'participants' may be 'acting'.

Longacre has expressed this ‘verb rank in narrative discourse’ diagrammatically, comparing different verbal tenses in their ability to advance a story:<sup>306</sup>

Band 1: Storyline	1. Preterite: primary <sup>a</sup>
Band 2: Backgrounded Actions	2.1. Perfect 2.2. Noun + perfect (with noun in focus)
Band 3: Backgrounded Activities	3.1. <i>hinnēh</i> + participle 3.2. Participle 3.3. Noun + participle
Band 4: Setting	4.1. Preterite of <i>hāyâ</i> , ‘be’ 4.2. Perfect of <i>hāyâ</i> , ‘be’ 4.3. Nominal clause (verbless) 4.4. Existential clause with <i>yēš</i>
Band 5:	5. Negation of verb clause: irrealis (any band) <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 1. demotes to 2.2. by preposing a noun. 1. demotes to 5. by preposing *lô*, ‘not’ [Preterite > Perfect].

<sup>b</sup> “Momentous negation” promotes 5. to 2.1. / 2.2.

By ‘preterite’ in Band 1 he means the *wayyiqtol* or *waw*-consecutive form, just as 4.1 refers to *wayhî*.<sup>307</sup>

On the other hand, variation in use of nouns can be equally significant, because narratives distinguish between participants in the story according to their importance. The following scheme of Longacre is a generally accepted hierarchy among linguists for ranking participants in a narrative,<sup>308</sup> whether it comprises action or dialogue.<sup>309</sup> Berlin describes them instead as ‘full characters’, ‘flat characters’ (or secondary characters) and ‘functionaries’ (individuals who serve a single role in the narrative).<sup>310</sup>

α. **major participants** (the slate of participants for the whole story):

1. central (protagonist)
2. other(s)
  - a. antagonist
  - b. helpers / bystanders

β. **minor participants** (participants whose role is restricted only to particular episodes in the story)

<sup>306</sup> Longacre 1989: 81.

<sup>307</sup> Regarding forms of *hyh* (Longacre’s 4.1 and 4.2), Dawson comments, “[*hyh*] is inherently stative and “thus can never be a foregrounded narrative verb”, and “[*wyhy*] seems almost without exception to function as a paragraph-break marker, and as such is often a marker of *discontinuity*” – Dawson 1994: 34, 35.

<sup>308</sup> Longacre 1989: 142-43.

<sup>309</sup> Dawson 1994: 67; summarising chapter 8 of Longacre 1989.

<sup>310</sup> Berlin (1994: 24, 27, 32) actually renames the three categories “full-fledged character”, “type” and “agent”, to avoid confusion.

γ. **props**

1. human
2. animate
3. inanimate
4. natural forces

The third group of relevant features, in addition to foreground-background and participant reference, conveys the narrative's conceptual focus, expressed by coherence of topic, time or key words.<sup>311</sup> In each of these three techniques of narrative structure – verbs, nouns, and concepts – when the story's focus shifts noticeably this will typically indicate the start of a new 'paragraph' in the discourse. In summary, episode boundaries will tend to be most clearly signalled by verbal tenses and then confirmed on the basis of the other narrative elements,<sup>312</sup> though these objective discourse-analytical details cannot substitute for intuition and literary sensibilities.<sup>313</sup>

(iii) *Textual patterning*

This third method of distinguishing episode boundaries is less sophisticated theoretically than delimitation criticism and discourse analysis, with correspondingly fewer practitioners. The two scholars selected each decided to focus on the specific expressions and techniques used to introduce new episodes, interested in content more than delimitation critics, and in boundaries and transition more than discourse analysts. Yet the combined results of their studies effectively mediated between the other two methods, offering relatively independent corroboration of their basic objectivity.

Tanner's doctoral research in rhetorical criticism was specifically "concerned with the formal surface structure" for which he coined the term "textual patterning".<sup>314</sup> He collated techniques of episode transition from various sources both theoretical and exegetical,<sup>315</sup> arriving at his conclusions deductively in contrast to Langlamet's inductive approach. Langlamet began with what was then

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<sup>311</sup> Dawson (1994: 104) provides examples of questions pertaining to these self-evident categories.

<sup>312</sup> Dawson 1994: 104, 107.

<sup>313</sup> Longacre 1999: 143.

<sup>314</sup> Tanner 1990: 60.

<sup>315</sup> E.g., respectively, Andersen (1974) and Ross (1981).

known as *Gliederungskritik*,<sup>316</sup> analysing the *petuhot* and *setumot* paragraph divisions within the book of Samuel in the related Masoretic codices of Cairo, Aleppo and Leningrad, and then took this a step further by assembling tables of information about the initial words of all the divisions regardless of type.<sup>317</sup> Both arrived at lists of approximately ten techniques typically used for delimiting episodes in Hebrew narrative,<sup>318</sup> with many points of contact including characteristically discourse-analytical observations such as the disjunctive effect of ‘offline’ sentences in a narrative or the ability of speech-acts to function as distinct episodes despite lacking ‘events’ as such. From their lists, I have assembled seven general techniques for introducing narrative units, the first three being by far the most common, and the last somewhat separate in that it is not necessarily an initial marker:

1. Standard action introduction (ויהי and/or temporal indicators, can use ויסף instead)<sup>319</sup>
2. Standard speech introduction (וַיֹּאמֶר with accompanying words, not always initial)<sup>320</sup>
3. Circumstantial / ‘offline’ clauses (including X-qatal [forefronting of subject], noun clauses [with participle of verb], and הנה clauses)<sup>321</sup>
4. Verbs of motion<sup>322</sup>
5. Verbs of apprehension<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Langlamet 1984: 504, 518.

<sup>317</sup> Langlamet 1984: 495.

<sup>318</sup> Tanner 1990: 91, 127.

<sup>319</sup> Tanner 1990: 93-94; Langlamet 1984: 497. ויהי can appear in the plural or feminine singular in a stative sense, or as a simple copula, followed by the subject. Temporal indicators may include אחרי, אחרי-יכן, אחרי, ועתה or אז, כי, הדברים, כאשר, a character’s age, or words with a temporal sense e.g. ועתה or אז, כי. Langlamet appears to observe that ויסף followed by a participle or infinitive effectively combines ויהי with temporal reference.

<sup>320</sup> For distinct ‘dialogue heavy’ episodes, see Tanner 1990: 67, 92, 129 (his tenth category). Langlamet (1984: 504-505) observes that 185 out of 350 paragraphs in *Samuel* introduce speeches or speakers, sometimes as narrative setting for a dialogue. Of these, 120 begin with וַיֹּאמֶר, and all but two of the remainder feature the verb אמר somewhere in the first few words, common examples including wy[qt!] ... wy’mr (35x), wy[qt!] ... l’mr (13x), and kh-’mr yhwh (5x). In his separate category of sending messengers or messages, the latter could perhaps be seen as a non-standard introduction to a speech episode.

<sup>321</sup> Tanner’s convenient general summary (1990: 96) of the numerous variations corresponds broadly to Longacre’s ‘cline’ of verbal tenses, noting also that “Circumstantial clauses may function as secondary clauses, dependent to another main clause”. Langlamet lists X-qatal and noun clauses separately, as Tanner does with הנה clauses used to introduce a statement of information rather than as part of a discourse or dream report. Waw-consecutive verbs (e.g. וַיֹּאמֶר) preceding הנה form an idiomatic expansion of the circumstantial clause. הנה clauses can also close a narrative unit, as a summary, counterpoint or transition – Tanner 1990: 66, 102.

<sup>322</sup> The most common are ירד, הלך, יצא, or קום, בוא, עלה, ירד, and Langlamet mentions here a verb of non-movement also, ישב. I would incorporate Langlamet’s separate categories for verbs of gathering (e.g. קבץ) and for the verb שלח pertaining to dispatching messengers. Of course, verbs of motion need not indicate changes of scene, but do often function transitionally – Tanner 1990: 114, 128-29; Langlamet 1984: 498.

6. Explicit subject reference<sup>324</sup>

7. Scene or topic change (whether primary character, setting, key word or motif)<sup>325</sup>

Both Tanner and Langlamet also assessed actual episodes demarcated by these techniques to discern the original rhetorical message of the overall discourse,<sup>326</sup> which is the goal of determining episode boundaries. Clearly all three methods discussed here in §2.4.4 are complementary, and familiarity with these objective features of a text can sharpen, though not replace, one's "literary sensitivity" to the transition between episodes, as noted by Muilenburg.

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<sup>323</sup> Langlamet includes ראה, שמע, and ידע within "verbes de connaissance", but his sub-category 'Information' within שילח verbs also essentially communicates that something has been apprehended; his examples both use the verb נגד (Hiph'il and Pu'al). Tanner notes that a character then "begins to act upon that realization".

<sup>324</sup> Tanner (1990: 115-16; citing Andersen 1974: 64-65) recognises that direct reference to a primary character without pronouns can mark a new paragraph without interrupting the string of waw-consecutive clauses. Langlamet doesn't mention this technique, but his *Tableau V* of discourse divisions indicates that the vast majority of speech episodes in *Samuel* explicitly name the character speaking – 1984: 502-503. He does not record how often the name is then substituted with pronouns, as Tanner notes for narrative episodes.

<sup>325</sup> Two categories of Tanner are grouped together here. The first, "Scene shifts and special transition verbs", allows for recognisably new scenes despite a lack of the above syntactical features. Verbs of motion and of apprehension were initially included but later given their own categories. One might suggest here that just as changes to the rank of participants in a story may mark a new episode, so also might changes of (the ranking of) location, *mutatis mutandis*. The second category of "Repetition and word motif" can effect cohesion within an episode but may also mark successive new episodes (e.g. תולדות in Genesis) – 1990: 106-113, 128.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. Langlamet 1984: 506-507, 518-19; pp. 508-517 are an extended discussion of the "theo-logy" of the divisions of *Samuel* according to the Aleppo Codex. He attributes the "backbone" ("charpente") of the system of paragraph divisions to the latest 'original text' – p. 497. See also Tanner 1992.

## 2.5 Verification

In this section we come to the second practical question of methodology with regard to detecting concentricity in ancient texts, having discussed in §2.4 the reasons and procedure for identifying examples of concentricity. §§2.1–2.3 demonstrated that the composition of lengthy narrative in ancient Israel would have been likely to utilise concentricity, a parallelism-based technique well-suited to aural contexts and useful for highlighting important details. Be that as it may, though, the presence of concentricity in particular documents cannot simply be posited, but must be able to be confirmed by careful and objective analysis. Despite some excellent theoretical contributions to the field of rhetorical analysis over the last thirty years,<sup>327</sup> recent scholars have continued to insist on “a convincing set of criteria for how to identify chiasm” before this technique is “used as part of any interpretative framework”.<sup>328</sup> Establishing criteria with which to verify concentricity is therefore the aim of the present section of my methodology.

### 2.5.1 *Intratextuality*

From a theoretical perspective, the problems most critics have with proposed concentric structures relate to the connections identified between passages which are not contiguous. In New Testament scholarship, though, this sort of intertextuality has long been recognised, primarily in regard to first-century AD authors citing or alluding to texts from the Hebrew Bible. Similar dependence on earlier material is being explored for various texts in the Old Testament,<sup>329</sup> although controversy over relative dating of its books can make this more of a challenge. Yet if one text can be shown to refer to another written centuries earlier, it is theoretically possible to identify intertextuality also between two passages within the same literary work, separated not temporally but syntactically. The term for this would thus be INTRAtextuality rather than INTERtextuality.<sup>330</sup> At the level of clauses or lines, this mutuality and shared meaning is generally termed ‘parallelism’ (see

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<sup>327</sup> Of particular note are Parunak (1981; 1982), Meynet (1998) and Walsh (2001).

<sup>328</sup> Porter & Reed 1998: 218-21. Cf. deSilva 2008: 345 n.3.

<sup>329</sup> E.g. Strazicich 2007; Tooman 2011.

<sup>330</sup> Frolov 2016: 26.

§2.1), for which scholarship of Hebrew poetry offers highly refined theory and methods of analysis. At the level of paragraphs, scenes, or episodes, though, the association of parallelism with scholarship about ‘intertextuality’ might enable the discipline to be set on a firmer footing.

It must be noted that intratextuality between episodes is a feature of several different rhetorical patterns, and the criteria given below could be applied effectively to them all. As a result, scholars who offer criteria for testing concentricism often confuse matters by including elements pertaining to the definition also. In what follows, definition is clearly distinguished from criteria, because if a proposed example fails even to meet the definition, criteria relating to its constituent parts become irrelevant.

### 2.5.2 *Definition of concentricism*

As explained in §2.1, concentricism is distinguished from other parallelism-based patterns by its central unparalleled element which carries the author’s primary emphasis, the keystone that holds the arch in place. For the sake of clarity, therefore, we would use the terms ‘direct parallelism’ for the (A-B-C--A’-B’-C’) form, ‘inverted parallelism’ for the even-numbered (A-B-C--C’-B’-A’) form, and ‘concentricism’ for the odd-numbered (A-B-C-D-C’-B’-A’) form,<sup>331</sup> properly composed of at least five episodes.<sup>332</sup>

The three essential elements of concentricism are therefore (1) a base pair, (2) symmetrical inverted slopes, and (3) a central unparalleled episode.<sup>333</sup> The two outermost episodes taken as a

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<sup>331</sup> Meynet’s glossary of rhetorical terms (1998: 376; cf. 199) distinguishes between ‘chiasm’ (even-numbered inverted parallelism) and ‘concentricism’ (odd-numbered inverted parallelism), despite apparently confusing the two types in the main body of his text (e.g. pp. 233, 236, 240-41), and his use of these terms is followed by Walsh (2001: 13) among others. Thomson’s broader definition of ‘chiasmus’ (1995: 25-26) as essentially “bilateral symmetry of four or more elements about a central axis” deliberately allows for both odd- and even-numbered structures, in order to reflect “the consensus of current opinion”. He concluded (1995: 26 n.73), perhaps somewhat prematurely, that Breck’s insistence (1987: 71; 1994: 18-19) on the importance of the unique central element “does not appear to have found support”.

<sup>332</sup> Five episodes would allow for inverted symmetry in addition to the base pair and central episode. An A-B-A’ form might signify nothing more than an *inclusio* demarcating a single passage, though if the author can be shown to have used full concentricism elsewhere, its exegetical principles may be relevant here also. The term ‘episode’ pertains to concentric narratives, but as a general rhetorical technique, ‘concentricism’ may equally be constructed from other units such as clauses, poetic lines or sentences.

<sup>333</sup> Welch dutifully reports suggestions of fellow members of the Hebrew Poetry Group of the Society of Biblical Literature in the 1980’s that “the extremes may be as important as, if not more significant, than the

pair serve as either (i) the primary context within which the central message is understood, or (ii) the ‘before and after’ situations changed by the central turning point.<sup>334</sup> The central episode must be of sufficient theological, ethical, or narratory weight and explanatory power to serve as the key for the whole concentricism,<sup>335</sup> interpreted primarily in conjunction with the *inclusio* of paired extremities that demarcate the boundaries of the concentricism.<sup>336</sup>

Once the outermost *inclusio* has been identified, the concentricism is established by the observation of symmetrical inverted slopes made up of a series of distinct episodes leading from the first towards the central episode and then back again towards the final episode. Every episode is paired with its parallel episode on the opposite slope, ascent paralleling descent,<sup>337</sup> and the central episode frequently adds further significance to each of the responding episodes on the descending slope when compared with their opposite episodes on the ascent. This is in line with Kugel’s observation of the way the ‘second’ element in Hebrew parallelism completes the thought expressed through the pair (“A, and what is more, B”).<sup>338</sup>

### 2.5.3 *Criteria*

Once a passage has been shown to qualify as a concentricism by definition, intratextuality must be verified for each pair of episodes within it, including the base pair.<sup>339</sup> In a highly influential book on

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center of a chiasm”. However, Welch himself rightly sides with Lund instead, who “ranked the extremes second only to the center in importance” – Welch 1999: 174.

<sup>334</sup> Welch’s tenth criterion ‘Centrality’ notes that “Inverting is the essence of chiasmus, so the clearer the reversal at the center point, the stronger the chiasticity of the passage” – 1999: 165. The only scholar I have found who questions the ‘Presupposition that Centre is Important’ [sic] is Boda (1996: 58), who cites Clines in support (1984: 193 – not 192, *pace* Boda). Yet Clines was simply acknowledging the limits of our present knowledge about Hebrew poetry, and did in fact allow that “This [presupposition] may be correct”.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Blomberg 1989: 7.

<sup>336</sup> Walsh (2001: 14) notes that “Sometimes, in a concentric pattern, there is an explicit or implicit link between these outermost subunits and the central one.”

<sup>337</sup> Man (1984: 151-52) cites Miesner, Di Marco and Talbert to make the point that the true meaning of individual episodes cannot be discerned without recognising the pairedness of the pairs.

<sup>338</sup> Kugel 1981: 58. This further significance of the episodes in the descending slope was already recognised by Bailey (1976: 50), who speaks of a “crucial new element that resolves or completes the first half”. Walsh (2001: 11, 14) notes that the entire ‘panel’ or ‘sequence’ of episodes before the centre can also be recognised as a process that is being paralleled and perhaps inverted in its opposite sequence.

<sup>339</sup> Breck (1994: 3) claimed that the burden of proof ought to lie with those who reject a proposed chiastic structure, but Welch (1999: 159) more reasonably insists the opposite, along with the vast majority of scholars. Even so, my proposed criteria may be useful when disproving concentric proposals for particular passages.

citations and allusions to the Old Testament in New Testament texts, Richard Hays proposed seven criteria for assessing intertextuality.<sup>340</sup> My own criteria have been remodelled directly from his.<sup>341</sup>

(1) **Balance.** Hays' first criterion *Availability* [to a later author] becomes irrelevant for intratextuality within a single synchronic document, yet we might still apply the underlying principle (the plausibility of intertextuality, independent of its interpretation) to the matter of *Balance*. One may reasonably presume that an author who chooses concentricism to structure his composition would take pains to maintain balance throughout the whole work.<sup>342</sup> Balance must be demonstrated in number and position of episodes (every episode paired with a single corresponding episode at the equivalent place on the opposite slope), and approximate length of paired episodes.<sup>343</sup> Imbalance of any type must either be acknowledged as an inconsistency undermining the proposal, or justified by plausible appeal to authorial intent, for which Volume of parallel elements may be decisive.<sup>344</sup>

(2) **Volume.** The amount and variety of links between two texts are very important both for Hays' brief 'echoes' or quotations of earlier texts, and also for intratextual 'reverberations' between parallel segments in a single document. Smaller episodes may have not much more than verbal

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<sup>340</sup> Hays 1989: 29-32.

<sup>341</sup> Many others have proposed assorted criteria for assessing 'chiastic' structures, a few of whom are worth noting: Welch (1999: 161-67) offered fifteen criteria that are helpful individually but lack careful logical arrangement. Boda (1996: 56-58) carefully classified thirteen "errors in the rhetorical analysis of chiasmus", showing that it is easier to recognise negative "pitfalls" than to propose positive validating criteria for true structures. Thomson (1995: 27, 28-33) discussed six characteristics (rephrasing some of Lund's seven "laws") and then seven "requirements and constraints" (three and four respectively) for identifying chiasmus, although with self-confessed "hesitation", and "deliberately vague". The most helpful list of detailed criteria, however, was the collection of nine proposed earlier by Blomberg (1989: 5-7), which has been adopted without adjustment by more recent scholars such as Brouwer (2001: 38-44), Siew (2005: 209-212), and Heil (2007: 13-14), discounting the limited criticisms from Porter and Reed (1998: 219-20). Even so, proposals to date have tended to confuse the technique's theoretical principles, definitive features, and assessment criteria, each carefully distinguished in this thesis. The selected comments cited below are an attempt to exemplify the numerous observations or criticisms of 'chiasmus' made over the last hundred years or so.

<sup>342</sup> Welch 1999: 165-66 ("Balance").

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Thomson 1995: 27; Boda 1996: 56-57. Even so, Blomberg's seventh criterion (1989: 7) requires that the outline should divide the text at natural breaks, implicitly recognising that literary composition is not mathematics; authors are somewhat constrained by their own story to include necessary details within an episode even if precise Balance of Length between paralleled episodes is thereby affected.

<sup>344</sup> "The looser the equivalence in length, the stronger must be other connective elements to support the correspondence" – Walsh 2001: 11. As regards deliberate asymmetry beyond that of the central climax, structural imbalance can be a technique for emphasising particular passages – Parunak 1981: 166-68; Tanner 1992: 148; Thomson 1995: 39-40. Walsh (2001: 8) wisely observes, "The clearer the fundamental symmetry and the more obtrusive the disturbance, the more the asymmetrical element draws a reader's attention."

parallelism, its techniques including word play and word pairs,<sup>345</sup> or comparable semantic constructions,<sup>346</sup> and scholarship about Hebrew poetic parallelism provides further varieties.<sup>347</sup> Larger episodes usually also contain simple verbal parallels, but they are likely to include more complex conceptual parallels involving typical narrative features of genre, characters and activities,<sup>348</sup> quite possibly corresponding to ‘natural’ developments in the narrative plot.<sup>349</sup> It is important, therefore, that both verbal and conceptual parallels be identified,<sup>350</sup> and the more there are, the more likely the intentionality behind them.<sup>351</sup> When identifying paralleled elements, one must be aware that ‘*non-conformists*’, examples of these elements that appear elsewhere in the concentricism outside the selected pair of episodes, have the potential to disqualify that particular parallel and thus undermine the concentricism.<sup>352</sup> Furthermore, interpreters can often select quite insignificant or common elements within units of text in order to demonstrate intratextuality, hence my third criterion.

(3) **Weight.** Hays’ criterion of *Recurrence* relies on the author’s allusions elsewhere in his writing to the same source text, but if we are assuming a concentric structure, each episode will usually

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<sup>345</sup> Cf. Klaus 1999: 261-72; Watson 1986: 128-44.

<sup>346</sup> Berlin (1985: 27-29) further classifies “linguistic” (i.e. verbal) parallelism into grammatical (morphological/syntactical), lexical/semantic and phonological aspects. Walsh (2001: 8-10) also has an excellent discussion of verbal parallelism, in which he discusses phonemic repetition, aurally or orthographically similar words or forms, word order, and even length and complexity of sentences. Watson (1981: 137) and others prioritise verbal parallels as a safeguard against subjective “headings” (cf. footnote 354 below, and also my fifth criterion ‘Integrity’).

<sup>347</sup> Cf. Watson 1986: 46-55, 114-59; Gillingham 1994: 23-28, 78-82; Nel 1992: 138.

<sup>348</sup> Walsh (2001: 10) explains that while repeated elements can theoretically be of any size, “the smaller the repeated element, the more limited the unit it can organize... It is on larger levels of organization, therefore, that thematic or conceptual repetition becomes more decisive.” Cf. Butterworth 1992: 59; Thomson 1995: 41-42. Berlin recognises how her “semantic” aspect of parallelism allows for equivalence of concepts beyond mere verbal links, noting the relevance of textlinguistics (i.e. discourse analysis) in this regard – 1985: 91-96.

<sup>349</sup> “Often the paralleling elements can be ascertained only by abstracting the plot development” – Tanner 1992: 148. Walsh (2001: 8) further explains that “structural units are often thematic units (like paragraphs in English prose) or dramatic ones (like scenes). To the degree that symmetrical patterning enables us to discern the extent and limits of a literary unit it can provide clues to the thematic structure of the passage.” In principle, then, an author’s concentric arrangement of both structure and plot may well be coextensive and mutually reinforcing (*pace* Boda (1996: 57 and n. 2 – “Methodological Isolation”) et al.).

<sup>350</sup> Cf. Blomberg 1989: 6; Walsh 2001: 10; Frolov 2016: 26.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. Thomson 1995: 33; Welch 1999: 163-64 (“Density”); Blomberg 1989: 6-7.

<sup>352</sup> Cf. Blomberg 1989: 7; Thomson 1995: 41; Boda 1996: 57; Welch 1999: 164 (“Mavericks”); Frolov 2016: 26. Klaus (1999: 260-61) self-critically analyses the varieties of Non-conformists found in his chosen concentricisms (“pivot patterns”), but the vast majority of these clearly lack inherent Weight, making their use elsewhere in the structure unremarkable; weighty Non-conformists are more likely to falsify a concentricism.

have only one other episode that was particularly intended to resonate with it. An alternative criterion, drawing out what Hays mentions about those passages the author considered to have been of particular importance, could be termed *Weight*. As regards intratextuality, then, the more important the elements being paralleled are within either or both of the units, the more likely the intentionality behind the parallel.<sup>353</sup> This criterion goes some way towards avoiding the commonly criticised problem with many proposed chiasmic structures of arbitrary summary statements or ‘headings’ assigned to episodes,<sup>354</sup> selecting rather minor features of each episode to compare, rather than their primary meaning. A related objection often raised about concentrisms may be illustrated with the idiomatic scenario of unmentioned ‘*elephants* in the room’, that is, elements of one episode that are clearly very prominent and yet lack any parallel in the supposedly equivalent episode.<sup>355</sup> The interpreter must deal faithfully with the whole episode and justify any such ‘missing’ parallels, lest the pairing of the episodes lose credibility. Even so, when a genuine concentricism indicates the equivalent position of two seemingly unrelated episodes, closer inspection may well reveal parallels that signify the true authorial intention behind the inclusion of these units, putting the ‘elephants’ into proper perspective.<sup>356</sup>

(4) **Trademarks.** Parallels deemed too ‘light’ according to our third criterion might therefore be reinforced in view of their context within the larger concentricism, making it important to identify precisely the various techniques used to connect episode pairs. This process should begin to reveal some frequent techniques of parallelism, whether that be word play, character

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<sup>353</sup> Blomberg 1989: 6 (fourth criterion); Welch 1999: 164 (“Dominance”). Butterworth (1992: 60) specifies “Whole phrases ... Rare words, words used in characteristic ways, clusters of related words”.

<sup>354</sup> Thomson (1995: 30-31) discourages “chiasmus by headings”, noting that “The problem associated with headings is that, by definition, they must be both theologically and interpretatively selective. The key question is how well the chosen heading reflects the *author’s* focus of interest rather than the *commentator’s*.” [emphasis his] His solution is to work only with passages small enough that the words themselves may be laid out graphically to represent the structure. Yet in his conclusion (p. 215) he admits that “in practice it might be argued that, when the basis of comparison of two elements relies on *content* rather than on *form*, the ensuing description of the relevant content of the element results in an implicit assignation of a ‘heading’ to that element. This having been said, however, the need for careful exegesis of the individual elements is not reduced.” See also Boda 1996: 57 – “Arbitrary Labelling”.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. Butterworth 1992: 59; Boda 1996: 57; Welch 1981a: 13.

<sup>356</sup> “The material [ancient writers] considered central does not always match modern preconceptions of what is important.” – Blomberg 1989: 6.

comparison, theological emphasis, or narrative equivalence.<sup>357</sup> In this way one might be able to build up a 'profile' of the author, so to speak, in terms of his particular interests as shown in consistent compositional activity. A very important reinforcement that can be noted at this stage is what I call '*miniatures*', that is, the presence of small-scale rhetorical structures, and particularly concentrisms, within an individual episode of the overarching concentristism.<sup>358</sup> Not only are these usually easier to identify through self-evident verbal parallels, and when identified can themselves indicate the primary focus of that episode, but they are evidence that the author did use concentristism as a compositional technique.<sup>359</sup> Obviously, the more pairs of episodes there are in a structure, the easier it becomes to 'recognise' compositional trademarks, and therefore we might argue that the *accumulation* of paired episodes in a concentristism has the potential indirectly to strengthen the argument for its existence.<sup>360</sup>

Compositional techniques are perhaps more objectively quantifiable, but discerning the accumulated significance of these parallels moves us into the more subjective realm of interpretation, which characterises the remaining three criteria. As Hays notes, "This test begins to move beyond simple identification of echoes to the problem of how to interpret them." He calls his fourth criterion *Thematic Coherence*, referring to how well an allusion fits into the overall line of argument the author is developing. We might say, then, that if the significance of the parallels between two episodes is compatible with the meaning of other parallels elsewhere in the concentristism, and gains added significance from the central episode, this may be adequate reason for the author's selection of these particular features to connect

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<sup>357</sup> Butterworth (1992: 60) argues that "Techniques discovered in several different passages may be regarded as more secure than those found only once or twice."

<sup>358</sup> Cf. Welch 1981a: 13. These individual episodes may be of different genres, for example poetry, since narratives in predominantly aural cultures are used as repositories for various other genres [cf. §2.2.3(ii)].

<sup>359</sup> Cf. Boda 1996: 57; Welch 1999: 166-67.

<sup>360</sup> Of course, a number of weakly paralleled episodes will hardly add to the credibility of the structure, and the larger the structure is, the harder it is to construct in the first place (Frolov 2016: 42-43). Accumulation is more an indication of the relative expertise of the author, provided the parallels meet our second and third criteria adequately. Cf. Blomberg 1989: 6-7; Welch 1999: 163.

otherwise seemingly unrelated episodes.<sup>361</sup> *Trademarks*, therefore, refers to ‘trademark’ compositional techniques of parallelism and also to ‘trademark’ messages expressed through those parallels, the latter being an important aspect of the fifth criterion, Integrity.

(5) **Integrity.** The original criterion of *Historical Plausibility* in Hays’ list was intended to guard against readings that reflect modern sensibilities rather than what would have plausibly been intended by the author and understood by his original audience. The messages discovered through intertextuality should fit within the historical period in which the text was composed.<sup>362</sup> In a concentricism, the intratextual messages must similarly be plausible within the historical period of composition evident from the text.

Dating an epistle of Paul, however, is generally far easier than dating an Old Testament book, for which dates can often be proposed that are several hundred years apart. Historical plausibility is therefore not merely a matter of avoiding modern sensibilities, but also depends on accurate assessment of the date of composition.<sup>363</sup> Two relatively objective methods of dating Old Testament texts involve surface-level features of the text. The first is identification of the latest time period spoken of within the document as the likely period of composition,<sup>364</sup> or at least its *terminus post quem*.<sup>365</sup> It is therefore essential that the complete extent of the original document be established through literary analysis before one tries to identify the latest historical reference.<sup>366</sup> The second dating method is analysis of any comments by the narrator

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<sup>361</sup> Welch (1981a: 13) notes that “Key words, echoes, and balancing should be distinct and should serve defined purposes within the structure.”

<sup>362</sup> By way of example, he warns against “readings that turn Paul into (say) a Lutheran” (1989: 30).

<sup>363</sup> Hays makes the further observation (1989: 30) that even when we are confident of the approximate date of composition, this test “necessarily requires hypothetical constructs of what might have been intended and grasped by particular first-century figures”. He also acknowledges that an author “might have written things that were not readily intelligible to his actual hearers”.

<sup>364</sup> For example, Jehoiachin’s release from prison mentioned at the end of Kings and Jeremiah.

<sup>365</sup> For example, Psalm 78 culminates in the destruction of Shiloh in Ephraim and God’s choice of Jerusalem and David’s tribe, Judah, so the psalm could not have been composed prior to David’s conquest of Jerusalem. Determination of the *terminus ante quem* is less straightforward, but Jerusalem’s contrast with Shiloh rather than Shechem or Samaria might support a composition not long after the *terminus post quem*, that is, within a century of the latest historical feature referred to in the text.

<sup>366</sup> For example, if the book of Judges is understood as part of the same composition as Kings (i.e. the ‘Deuteronomistic History’), its latest historical reference will not be Samson but Jehoiachin (cf. also 18:30+31). The frequent scholarly appeal to source material or editorial glosses, however, moves the discussion away

that indicate the *terminus ante quem*, that is, a message that can only have been valid within a certain temporary historical situation.<sup>367</sup> Debates over dating are complicated by the perceived relevance of ancient stories and texts to later audiences, self-evident in the canonical process itself. Subsequent re-use of a document, however, does not lessen the fundamental importance of determining its original context for proper exegesis. Modern speculation about the metaphorical significance of ancient stories in later generations, when used as a method for dating their composition, can sometimes bear a certain similarity to the excesses of the allegorical method of Philo and Origen (e.g. Polzin 1989: 219-21; 1993: 128-30).

A third reliable method of dating the text can be provided by suitably verified concentric structures in a text, due to their unusual exegetical value for conveying the message of the author. Just as explicit comments by the narrator can be distinguished from the events being narrated and then situated within specific temporary historical situations, so also can the messages expressed by concentric emphasis and parallelism. These sub-surface or structural features, however, are not self-evidently present to the same extent as are comments by the narrator. They must therefore be shown to be in conformity with the evidence of the surface-level features as regards both dating and message, before they can be accepted as genuine evidence of authorial intent. For this reason, I have focused this criterion on the ‘integrity’ between surface meaning and structural meaning.<sup>368</sup> In identifying meanings within paralleled episodes, one should be able to recognise these same important authorial messages not only in other structural emphases within the text,<sup>369</sup> but also on the surface of the text, particularly in

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from the limitations of extant manuscripts into the realm of unfalsifiable hypotheses. See Meynet (1998: 177-80) for further elaboration of this point.

<sup>367</sup> A well-known example is the phrase *‘ad hayyōm hazzeh* (‘until this day’), appearing about sixty times in the narrative books of Genesis through Chronicles; see e.g. Geoghegan 2006; Patrick 2011a: 9-15; 2011b.

<sup>368</sup> “We need to keep the *text*, and not the *pattern*, foremost before our eyes.” – deSilva 2008: 369.

<sup>369</sup> The final step proposed by Butterworth 1992: 61.

narratorial comments,<sup>370</sup> or at least to show the plausibility of these messages as belonging to the latest time period to which the document makes reference.<sup>371</sup>

(6) **Agreement.** This term simply restates Hays' criterion '*History of Interpretation*', requiring that other interpreters of the text, both critical and pre-critical, should have recognised many if not most of the parallels identified. Originality, particularly regarding popular books or passages, ought to arouse suspicion,<sup>372</sup> although a complete concentric synthesis of numerous individual parallels already noted by generations of scholars may well be an original contribution.<sup>373</sup> Alternatively, it may be the messages communicated through the parallels that find agreement in wider scholarship, even if the parallels themselves had not been noted previously – agreement of exegesis as distinct from intratextuality.<sup>374</sup> It is worth making the same observation Hays does that while the reinforcing of a parallel with reference to other scholars can serve as a possible restraint against arbitrariness, this criterion “should rarely be used as a negative test to exclude proposed [parallels] that commend themselves on other grounds”.<sup>375</sup> Once identified, a concentricism can be used to uncover many more parallels previously unnoticed, though this cannot excuse the scholar from seeking out Agreement.<sup>376</sup> The more uncorroborated parallels are identified, the more likely it is that the creativity lies not with the author but with the interpreter.

(7) **Satisfaction.** Similarly, this final criterion from Hays can be appropriated directly into our criteria for intratextuality. As Hays notes, one must avoid the affective fallacy and interpretative

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<sup>370</sup> Klaus (1999: 273) raises the question of whether an editor might structure source material that had been narrated by others, thus distinguishing between the 'narrator' and the 'editor'. However, it seems self-evident that a later compiler (i.e. secondary author) will be in agreement with an earlier narrator's perspective if he includes it unchanged, unless it is made suitably clear to the audience that the earlier author is not being quoted with approval (see Patrick 2010: 50-51).

<sup>371</sup> It is surprising how few rhetorical analysts and scholars of 'chiasmus' have given any thought to this criterion, perhaps due to an insufficient interest in exegesis, and especially exegesis of the larger literary document within which the rhetorical structure plays a part, as Klaus (1999: 277) acknowledges.

<sup>372</sup> Cf. Blomberg 1989: 5-6; Thomson 1995: 222.

<sup>373</sup> Blomberg 1989: 19-20.

<sup>374</sup> Butterworth (1992: 60) recommends comparison with exegetical conclusions of scholars “who have not been primarily concerned with structure”.

<sup>375</sup> Thomson (1995: 222-23) also warns against overplaying the criterion of Agreement.

<sup>376</sup> See the warnings against subjective 'reader-response' analysis in §2.3.2 above.

circularity in expressing this criterion. However, it is indeed “the most important test”, though least quantifiable, because it is in effect an appeal to “the experience of a contemporary community of competent readers”.<sup>377</sup> Not only should the parallels between each pair of episodes be satisfying to other readers both lay and scholarly,<sup>378</sup> but the effect that the central message has on the entire structure and each individual parallel should commend itself to the discernment of others.<sup>379</sup> Hays asks whether, “when [the interpreter] beckons us to listen, we do hear faint music reverberating around us”. C.S. Lewis describes similarly the way in which, when an interpretative key is found for a particular text, the whole work begins to reveal valuable and previously unrecognised meanings.<sup>380</sup> The proposed concentricism should show superior explanatory power when compared with all other compositional **alternatives**,<sup>381</sup> not only the standard scholarly outlines of the text, but especially other concentric analyses.<sup>382</sup>

Although those who offer criteria often make the qualification that a proposal need not meet every one to be valid,<sup>383</sup> I would argue that every one of these seven criteria must be met for a genuine deliberate parallel to exist between any two paired episodes, and thus for the concentricism as a

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<sup>377</sup> Cf. Welch’s fifteenth criterion, “Aesthetics” (1999: 167): “Finally, there is room for subjective appreciation. Computers alone cannot identify chiasmus... human readers must judge an author’s artistic success”.

<sup>378</sup> If “other reasons for repetition” are regularly suggesting themselves to the thoughtful reader (cf. Butterworth 1992: 59), the satisfaction with the overall presentation will be greatly reduced.

<sup>379</sup> Welch (1999: 167) mentions further aesthetic factors to consider: “the author’s fluency with the form; consistency in sustaining the structure, balance, and harmony; pliability at the turning point (which yet does not draw undue attention to itself); and meaningful applications of the form that do not resort to subtleties so obscure as to be esoteric or awkward.”

<sup>380</sup> “There then comes to you a person, saying, ‘Here is a new bit of the manuscript that I found; it is the central passage of that symphony, or the central chapter of that novel. The text is incomplete without it. I have got the missing passage which is really the centre of the whole work.’ The only thing you could do would be to put this new piece of the manuscript in that central position, and then see how it reacted on the whole of the rest of the work. If it constantly brought out new meanings for the whole of the rest of the work, if it made you notice things in the rest of the work which you had not noticed before, then I think you would decide that it was authentic.” – Lewis 1979: 58; cited by Ward 2008: ix.

<sup>381</sup> Cf. Butterworth 1992: 59; Welch 1999: 163; DeSilva 2008: 345 n.3. Blomberg (1989: 5), however, makes this his first criterion: “There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve... If a more straightforward structure can adequately account for the textual data, recourse to less obvious arrangements of the material would seem, at the very least, to risk obscuring what was already clear.” While this is undoubtedly wise advice to those setting out to find concentricism, satisfaction with current outlines is no less subjective for having widespread support (see Grabbe 2011); advances in scholarship depend upon individuals who have seen something they believe everyone else ought to see too.

<sup>382</sup> Pace Breck (1994: 196-98) and others. For further discussion see §2.3.1 above.

<sup>383</sup> E.g. Blomberg 1989: 7.

whole to be verified.<sup>384</sup> One may not necessarily address each criterion in detail or in order, but all must be demonstrable in one way or another, or their absence easily explicable:<sup>385</sup>

- (1) *Balance*: The two episodes being considered should be paralleled with each other alone, at an equivalent position on each slope, and be of a similar length.
- (2) *Volume*: There should be multiple parallels between the two episodes, both verbal and conceptual, with paralleled elements that do not feature regularly at other points in the concentricism.
- (3) *Weight*: The parallels should be between weighty elements in each episode rather than inconsequential details, preferably between elements that are themselves emphasised rhetorically within the episode, and the interpreter must not avoid other significant features of the text that may indicate a different explanation for the arrangement.
- (4) *Trademarks*: The type of parallels at work should be specified, in order to build up a 'profile' of trademark techniques of the author, and also trademark messages communicated through the parallels; miniature examples of concentricism should be noted in support of the use of this technique at an architectonic level, and the larger the structure the more expert the author.
- (5) *Integrity*: Messages communicated through parallelism between episodes should be consistent with that of the whole structure, which should complement those in other structures elsewhere in the document in question. They should also be recognised on the surface of the text, particularly in narratorial comments, or at least it should be possible to show the plausibility of these messages as belonging to the latest time period to which the document makes reference.

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<sup>384</sup> Scholer and Snodgrass (1992: xxi) observe that "Even those persons who discuss criteria for identifying chiasmus often make unjustified identifications of chiasmus", citing Clark (1975) and Welch (1981) as examples. I trust that my analyses below will not fall foul of my own criteria, but even if this turns out to be the case, it is more important that rigorous criteria be established in the field of 'chiastic' studies and rhetorical analysis.

<sup>385</sup> "The validity of a chiasmus depends on the *cumulative impact* of a number of criteria." – Thomson 1995: 32, emphasis his.

- (6) *Agreement*: The vast majority of parallels being proposed for the concentricism, or at least the messages communicated by these parallels, should be able to be reinforced with reference to other critical and scriptural (i.e. 'pre-critical') scholars.
- (7) *Satisfaction*: The parallels between each pair of episodes should be satisfying to other readers both lay and scholarly, and the effect that the central message has on the entire structure and each individual parallel should commend itself to the discernment of others; if alternative structures or compositional explanations have been proposed, this particular concentric pattern will need to be seen to have superior explanatory power.

With any work of literature, it would be naïve to assume that a single interpreter could fully account for the complexity and artistry involved in its composition. Nevertheless, the case for a fundamentally concentric structure governing the proposed passage or book must be able to be established 'beyond reasonable doubt' using these criteria, for the proposal to stand.

#### 2.5.4 *Stages of assessment using the criteria*

It is suggested that these criteria naturally progress through four stages in the process of assessment, as befits their cumulative force:

- (i) The necessary start to such a process is to set out the structure being proposed, identifying the distinct rhetorical units being arranged, so that it is possible to recognise both the overall concentric character of the proposal and to note the presence or absence of Balance. Imbalances should be noted at this stage, even if their justification does not appear until the second or third stage.
- (ii) The second stage involves the careful demonstration of the Volume and Weight of the intratextuality in each pair of episodes in turn, starting with the outermost pair that forms the beginning and end of the overall rhetorical unit,<sup>386</sup> and working inwards to the unparalleled centre. Non-conformists and Elephants ought to be acknowledged and explained, although explanation might rely on evidence from the next stage.

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<sup>386</sup> Cf. footnote 265 above.

- (iii) The third stage has the interpreter assemble the author's Trademark techniques of intratextuality and also begin therefore to explain their exegetical significance. The messages of each pair of episodes ought to reinforce the centrality of the middle episode in the context of the beginning and end, and the Integrity between this overall message and the explicit 'surface' comments of the author should be clear. As Agreement can apply to either the intratextual parallels or the exegesis of their meaning, or preferably both, appeal to other scholars should be made throughout the second and third stages respectively.
- (iv) Finally in the fourth stage, the proposal as a whole must engender a greater Satisfaction on the part of informed readers than alternative structures or presentations of the text's purpose. One may find it easier to outline these (inadequate) Alternatives before embarking on one's own proposal, but the conclusion should not shy away from standing the new proposal up in the midst of the others to show it to be head and shoulders above the rest. A critique of such a proposal, on the other hand, should be able to point at the end of the assessment to more convincing and satisfying alternative arrangements, not necessarily concentric.

The reader may wish at this stage to move directly to §5.1 to observe the application of these criteria to one sample section of *Samuel*, namely 2Sam 10–12, before returning to Chapters Three and Four for a complete rhetorical exposition of the entire book.



### Chapter Three – Rhetorical Commentary on 1Samuel 1 – 2Samuel 6

The survey of past scholarship in Chapter One illustrated the way in which scholars had for two millennia approached *Samuel* as if it were a deep well from which one might draw pure theology and history. Over the last century and a half, European intellectual movements then persuaded biblical scholarship to devise more ‘objective’ methods of literary criticism. Initially, these focused on the process of this well’s construction, and more recently, on the final form of the well in terms of its aesthetics and its various historic and potential uses. In the ‘third wave literary criticism’ I am advocating, though, it is necessary to start with a thorough analysis of the final form’s structure and substance, and on that basis also draw conclusions about its construction, so as to determine its original and proper intended function.

My own structural analysis of *Samuel* could not be simply presented, however, without first addressing important methodological questions about concentricism itself. In Chapter Two, therefore, §§2.1 and 2.2 situated the technique within its ancient setting, respectively theoretical in terms of Hebrew poetic parallelism and pragmatic in terms of aural and literacy in ancient Israel. §2.3 emphasised how concentric arrangement is inherently deliberate and meaningful, and then §§2.4 and 2.5 made clear practical suggestions for both identifying examples of concentric narratives, and testing them according to rigorous criteria. With a suitable methodological framework in place, the structure may now be set out in detail in Chapters Three and Four for general inspection, before proceeding in Chapter Five to the important analysis of the book’s construction and intended function.

The provision within the limits of this thesis of a commentary on the rhetorical features and resulting message of every episode in the fifty-five chapters of 1-2 Samuel will depend on the goodwill of its audience on several counts. Having suggested three methods for determining episode boundaries in §2.4.4, and seven criteria for verifying proposed concentricisms in §2.5.3, such detailed justification for the proposals I make in these next two chapters would far exceed my

allotted space, and must therefore be left largely to the discretion of the informed reader. I am in no way avoiding this vital authentication process, though, and have chosen one important section to verify in detail in §5.1 as a representative sample. Reference to secondary literature, whether in support or defence of my numerous observed parallels, is one particularly grievous loss from the following exposition, but as this is the sixth of my seven criteria, 'Agreement', it too must be postponed to §5.1.

In order to make a complete survey of *Samuel* it seemed preferable to preserve coherence in the exposition of the text, allowing a heuristic analysis of individual episodes and smaller structures to confirm the conclusions later demonstrated at the level of the whole work, the most important being the unity of authorial intent throughout the book of *Samuel*. If unitary authorship is assumed, for the sake of argument, it follows also that the authorial perspective and purpose are likely to be coherent throughout. Furthermore, it follows that the technical execution of structural parallelism, with which the author constructs his message, ought to be both precise and thorough at every level; a master-builder will ensure quality and structural integrity throughout a construction, with less concern for external decoration. It is of course possible that the author made mistakes, and even more likely that I will have misunderstood his intentions in places. However, the literary technique of concentricism, much like a suspension bridge, relies on the soundness of every structural unit if it is to fulfil its purpose. In the following exposition, therefore, it may seem that an 'all or nothing' proposal is being made. Fellow scholars are welcome to take issue with any part, but if readers are to cross the bridge to find the author's desired outcome, they must first grasp the basic principles of construction and be convinced of the essential integrity of every load-bearing part of the structure.

Another conclusion demonstrated later (§5.4) but assumed here for the sake of argument, is that the final form of the book falls into two major sections, though not corresponding to the later division of the scroll at the death of Saul to form 'First Samuel' and 'Second Samuel'. Instead, the final composition appears to have made use of an earlier document which comprised the vast majority of what is now 1Samuel 4 – 2Samuel 6, incorporating new episodes at its beginning to

create an introduction in 1Samuel 1–7, and then composing a second ‘volume’ in 2Samuel 7–24, half the length of the first. Each volume of *Samuel* has one concentric macrostructure, though both are in fact compound structures insofar as both have been augmented with additional episodes to form subsidiary structures which introduce and conclude the book, and each also contains episodes which themselves are internally concentric.<sup>387</sup> The two volumes of *Samuel* are expounded here in Chapters Three and Four respectively.

For convenience, I have given titles to each concentricism based on its content, rather than simply using the numerical references derived from the late division into two books. My decision to refer to each narrative concentricism as a ‘song’, avoiding the dull or inaccurate terms ‘structure’ or ‘epic’ or ‘story cycle’, is not meant to imply a pervasive use of lyric poetry, although such connotations do nevertheless reflect the most likely medium of its original aural performance (cf. §2.2). Stanza Theory uses similar musically-derived terms such as ‘canticle’ or ‘canto’ (§2.1.3), but the English word ‘song’ is flexible enough to be able to apply to rhetorical units of various different lengths and genres. Each song is represented diagrammatically to summarise its arrangement, yet the headings used are always provisional, and readers are encouraged to consult the passages for themselves. Texts, not headings, are the units being paralleled.

One final observation to make before beginning our exposition is that the book of Samuel is presented as an historical narrative, and as such assumes a coherent conceptual world of the author within which his stories and their messages are to be understood. The following exposition cannot concern itself with the important questions of how closely this conceptual world reflects other possible ancient perspectives on ‘what actually happened’, a reality whose web of causes and effects is infinitely complex and impossible to comprehend. It is the author’s own perspective that we are attempting to uncover, and the techniques he used to communicate this.

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<sup>387</sup> For convenient summary diagrams of both volumes, and of the whole book, see the Appendix, (8)–(10).

### 3.1 Introduction to the Song of Salvation

The two major sections of *Samuel* appear to have been summarised by the final author with the terms 'salvation' and 'desire' (2Sam 23:5; see §4.5, 4'), evidently highlighting God's deliverance of David from Saul, and David's royal longing for a temple and an heir. The first of these sections, concluding with 2Sam 6, would therefore be the Song of Salvation, and its primary concentric structure does climax appropriately with a story epitomising David's salvation. This concentricism is plausibly an originally independent document, subsequently expanded with an introduction when it became the basis for a larger book (cf. §5.4), so I have given separate names to the original 'Song of the Ark' (1Sam 4–2Sam 6) and the introductory 'Song of Eli' (1Sam 1–7).

The Song of the Ark begins in 1Sam 4 with the ark of the covenant being exiled from Israel, and ends with its restoration to a place of honour in Jerusalem in 2Sam 6. Within these outer bounds are successive pairs of stories about judgement on those who dishonour the ark, its temporary home in the house of Abinadab on the hill, defeats of Philistine invasions by both Samuel and David, their respective home towns and children, and so on towards the centre of the song. Other notable pairs of episodes on the way include stories about the city of Jabesh-Gilead just before and just after Saul's reign; Saul tearing Samuel's robe after sparing his enemy Agag, which parallels David sparing his 'enemy' Saul and cutting his robe; Saul using the shepherd David to kill the giant of Gath, and the shepherd Doeg to kill the priests of Nob; the women's song about David having killed more than Saul, and its repetition by the Philistines to king Achish; and Jonathan's two attempts to intercede with Saul on David's behalf, reported to David both times when he is concealed in the same field.

This entire span of thirty-four chapters is therefore arranged precisely into a single concentric structure without deviation, and culminates in the only scene in the entire book of Samuel where its three main characters appear in the same place at the same time. 1Sam 19:18-24 recounts David's flight to Samuel in Ramah, followed eventually by Saul who is overcome by the Spirit of God in Samuel's presence. The message of the whole Song of the Ark is therefore that God Himself saved

David from Saul, in order that His presence which had been removed from Shiloh might be brought into Jerusalem – a message reinforced at every level of the song.

As for the subsequent literary development of this portion of *Samuel*, one might suggest the following possible reconstruction: When considering an expansion to the Song of the Ark, it was felt that theological explanation needed to be given for Shiloh's destruction, the epochal event of Israel's early history at which the original story had begun, as well as for how Samuel came to be Israel's judge and prophet in Ramah, where he appears at the centre of the song. Rather than simply composing an introductory concentricism, the author wanted to preserve the primary focus of the whole first volume, so the introduction needed to be incorporated into existing material somehow. The solution was to interlock the two structures, so that 1Sam 4–7 played a role in both concentricisms. Slight adjustments then had to be made to these episodes to make them more suitable for their role in the introductory Song of Eli also, and the added material thus explains the imbalance of length in these episodes (cf. §5.4). A further purpose of the introduction was to prefigure themes that would become central in the second volume, such as leaders losing their authority by failing to discipline their sons, and the importance of paying attention to prophetic rebukes.

### 3.2 The Song of Eli

The author has managed, despite limitations of existing material, to compose an accomplished concentricism comprising introduction, three pairs of episodes around a vital centre, and conclusion.

#### *Map 1 – The Song of Eli (1Sam 1:1–8:3)*

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- 1 Elkanah in Ramah, mention of Eli's sons Hophni and Pinhas (1:1-3)
  - 2 Prayer of Hannah and YHWH's response, named Samuel (1:3-20)
  - 3 (Dis)honouring of YHWH with offerings, Hannah prophesies in song (1:21–2:21a)
  - 4 Eli's sons do not listen to his warning when their sins are reported (2:21b-26)
  - 5 YHWH's judgement on Eli and his house through the man of God (2:27-36)
  - 4' Samuel listens to [Eli's?] YHWH's warning and reports it to Eli (3:1–4:1a)
  - 3' Prophesied reactions, Philistines give offerings, Israelites dishonour the ark (4:1b–7:1)
  - 2' Prayer of Samuel and YHWH's response, named Ebenezer (7:2-16)
  - 1' Samuel in Ramah, mention of Samuel's unfaithful sons (7:15–8:3)
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In the hypothetical original form of the Song of the Ark, Israel's demand of a king instead of Samuel was probably presented as entirely wicked (see 1Sam 8:7-8; 10:19; 12:12, 17-20). Now the Song of Eli introduces a secondary, understandable reason in its outermost elements (**1/1'**), namely Samuel's corrupt sons who parallel the sons of Eli (1Sam 1:3; 8:3). If Eli had lost his seat of honour for not disciplining his sons, as Samuel himself was told directly (1Sam 3:12-13), Samuel could hardly object when his own authority was later rejected for the same reason. Nevertheless, that is only a secondary message of the Song of Eli found only once; the focus everywhere else in this song is on the *contrast* between Samuel's family and Eli's family. It is worth noting that just as the introduction (**1**) is interlocked with the following episode by means of the reference to Eli's sons in 1:3 after the start of **2** (compare the equivalent episode introductions in 1:3 and 1:21), so the conclusion (**1'**) is interlocked with the episode that precedes it by means of the annual travels and "circuit" in 7:16 (cf. the parallels with **2** in 1:7 and 20) mentioned between repeated references to judging Israel in 7:15, 17 and 8:1-2.<sup>388</sup>

In the Song of the Ark, the episode about Samuel's deliverance of Israel from the Philistines after twenty years of oppression serves as an example of the complete victory that an anointed judge of Israel can win for the nation, something not imitated again until David's victories. However, here in the Song of Eli the focus of this episode is on Samuel's successful prayer to YHWH in great affliction, and his grateful commemoration of YHWH's kindness (**2'**). His mother Hannah is shown to have had an equivalent godliness and effectiveness in prayer in the parallel episode, commemorated in Samuel's own name, 'God heard' (**2**). The key verse of the whole song is 1Sam 2:30 (for which, see below), and true to His character YHWH has honoured those who honour him, maintaining faithfulness to Hannah's son because he shared her fervent faith.

This godliness of Hannah is further reinforced in the second episode about her (**3**), contrasted this time with the ungodliness of Eli's sons. They were truly "sons of Beliya'al", unlike her (1Sam

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<sup>388</sup> Given the theoretical observation (footnote 336) that outermost and central units of a concentricism often display explicit or implicit links, Ramah's prominence at both edges of the Song of Eli and at the centre of the Song of the Ark reinforces the interconnection between the two songs (cf. §5.2(3a); cf. also 2Sam 2:27 – §5.5).

2:12; cf. 1:16), and whereas she voluntarily fulfilled her vow to lend Samuel to YHWH and also brought extravagant sacrifices, Eli's sons took what they wanted by force from the people offering their sacrifices. Thus a contrast is set up between Hannah in 1:21-28 and Hophni and Pinhas in 2:12-17, and contrasting halves of the episode tied together with a transition verse in 2:11 and conclusion in 2:18-21a (*inclusio* with 2:11 and also 1:20-21). The contrast deliberately parallels the contrast in the opposite episode (**3'**) between the men of Beth-shemesh (cf. 6:9-20) who consciously dishonoured the ark, and the Philistines who mistreated it out of ignorance and repented with offerings and cows for sacrifice when they discovered their guilt (5:1–6:18; cf. 1:24-25). Since Beth-shemesh was one of the priestly cities of Judah (Jos 21:16), its inhabitants might have been expected to know how to act before their own god, as also might the sons of the high priest Eli. YHWH's double judgement on Israel (4:2-3, 10-11) proved retrospectively the presumption of Israel's elders in appropriating the ark for their own purposes (cf. 2Sam 6, primary parallel in the Song of the Ark), thus linking 4:1b-11 with 6:19-20 as jointly paralleling Eli's sons' behaviour in 2:12-17 (cf. 4:4, 11).<sup>389</sup>

The account of the ark's capture seems to have been a lengthy and complete pre-existing episode, and the author would have been limited in the conceptual parallels he could make with it in its new partnered episode. So in addition to composing the contrasting pair of scenes in **3** depicting cultic (im)propriety, he also evidently inserted an extra section into both episodes between the two contrasted parties – Hannah's reaction to God's blessing between the stories of her righteousness and the priests' sin, and the reactions to God's judgement by Eli and Pinhas' wife between the primary stories of Israelite presumption and Philistine contrition. If one removes 1Sam 4:12-22 from the episode to restore its hypothetical form in the original Song of the Ark, 1Sam 5:1 would follow on quite smoothly from 4:11 and maintain unbroken attention on the progress of the ark throughout the episode.

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<sup>389</sup> Other apparent connections between **3** and **3'** are Hannah's self-sacrificial separation from her newly-weaned son Samuel and the nursing heifers separated from their calves (1:22-24; 6:7, 10), and the pervading background story of the Exodus: Hannah's mothering of Samuel only until being weaned seems to echo Jochebed's nursing of her son Moses (Exod 2:7-10), whose actions against the Egyptians are recounted more than once by the Philistines in this section before their eventual defeat by Samuel (4:8; 6:6; cf. also 2:27-28).

Hannah’s whole prayer is meant to be prophetic, whether at its top and bottom concerning the coming king (‘horn’) of Israel, or in the climactic contrast between her own newfound fruitfulness and the languishing of a mother with children (1Sam 2:5b).<sup>390</sup> Ichabod was evidently not the first son of Pinhas’ wife (1Sam 14:3), so her sad demise in childbirth (4:19-22) is evidently a fulfilment of Hannah’s prophecy as part of the judgement on Pinhas. Likewise, at the start of the prayer’s core, dealing with the theme of reversal (2:3-8d), the deeds of the arrogant are said to be judged by YHWH, and then its concluding point about reversal refers to the seat of honour that is inherited by the poor whom YHWH exalts. The description of Eli falling off his seat of honour at the entrance of Shiloh (4:12-18) is a theologically fitting reaction to the death of his arrogant sons, completing the prophecies against his house (2:5, 8, 25, 31-34; 3:11-14) and clearing the way for Samuel’s exaltation to the seat of the judge.

When we move on from **3** and **3’** to **4** and **4’**, we have finally come to episodes that were most likely purpose-built for use in this particular song. The compositional techniques become much more apparent, therefore, and better reflect the expertise found everywhere else in *Samuel*. To start with, the sins for which Hophni and Pinhas are condemned to death by the man of God are explicitly those involving their unlawful consumption of the fat of sacrificial animals and their general despising of the offering of YHWH (1Sam 2:28-29; cf. 2:15-17). Yet the sons of Eli are

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<sup>390</sup> Although each of the following structural units of Hannah’s prayer has been composed with its own independent poetic quality, the deliberate arrangement of the various elements is quite clear:

- a my horn (1b-c)
- b my enemies (1d-e)
- c YHWH our rock (2)
- d arrogant humbled (3)
- e power reversal (4)
- f hunger reversal (5a-b)
- g childlessness reversal (5c-d)
- f’ death reversal (6)
- e’ wealth reversal (7)
- d’ poor exalted (8a-d)
- c’ YHWH gives stability (8e-9a)
- b’ YHWH’s enemies (9b–10b)
- a’ his horn (10c-e)

condemned for further sins in this separate episode in 2:22-25, sins not referred to again in the rest of the Song of Eli but significant in light of the parallel episode.<sup>391</sup>

The two descriptions of Samuel 'growing' before YHWH in 2:21b and 2:26 are a deliberate *inclusio*, marking off an independent episode (4). The equivalent episode (4') has a similar *inclusio* focusing on the "word of YHWH" in 3:1 and 3:19–4:1a (the word of YHWH has become the word of Samuel).<sup>392</sup> Both episodes emphasise Eli's advanced age (2:22; 3:2 – both details combined in the final story of Eli in 4:15), both emphasise YHWH's desire to execute Hophni and Pinhas (2:25; 3:13-14), and both involve Eli receiving reports about his sons (2:22-24; 3:17-18). The primary contrast between the two episodes, though, is between Eli's sons and Samuel, whom Eli calls "son" twice (3:6, 16), expressed in two key ways. The first is the behaviour of Eli's 'sons' towards the place of YHWH's dwelling, termed variously the "tent of meeting", "temple of YHWH" and "house of YHWH" (2:22; 3:3, 15); while Eli's sons sleep at the doorway of YHWH's dwelling in fornication, Samuel sleeps near the ark itself simply so that he can get up early to open the doors to worshippers.<sup>393</sup> The second contrast is the behaviour of Eli's sons towards their own father; they "would not listen to the voice of their father" (2:25), whereas Samuel is so attentive to Eli's voice that he mistakes God's own voice for that of Eli. Perhaps there is a hint here also that obedience to one's earthly father is preparation for hearing the voice of God (cf. 2Sam 16:23).

Finally we come to the central episode of the song, 5 (2:27-36). The description of Samuel in the service of YHWH before Eli in 3:1 not only again attributes the imminent judgement of Eli's sons to their cultic transgression, by echoing the bookends of 2:11-18, but also serves as a clear end marker for the central episode, as if it were forming an *inclusio* with 2:26, the conclusion of episode 4. The focus of this Song of Eli is on the prophetic word of an unnamed 'man of God', and it will become

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<sup>391</sup> Pace Pisano 1984: 70-75; literary structure must be taken into account in the text-critical crux of 2:22b.

<sup>392</sup> The 'ministry' of Samuel in 3:1a deliberately ties this episode back to 2:11 and 18, whereas the 'growth' of Samuel in 3:19 ties it also to 2:21b and 26.

<sup>393</sup> The concluding clause "at the doorway..." (2:22) can be connected either with the feminine participle "serving" or with the masculine verb "slept". It is possible that the reference to the lamp of God in 3:3 is meant to imply that it was also Samuel's duty to keep the lamp lit (cf. Exod 27:20-21; 30:7-8), fulfilled symbolically by the restoration of prophecy through him.

apparent throughout *Samuel* that prophets and prophecy are of absolutely central importance for the author, hence the title of this thesis. The episode as a whole is the unparalleled central element of the song, but one can also detect a simple concentric structure to the episode itself. 2:27-29 gives the first segment of the oracle, beginning the account of Eli's past with the introduction "Thus says YHWH". The pivot in 2:30 concerning the reversal now happening in Eli's present is emphasised with a double reference to the "oracle of YHWH", and this is followed by a prediction of Eli's future with a simple introductory "Behold" (2:31-36). The theme of Moses, the Exodus, and the wilderness wanderings is central in the first segment, reinforced by a double reference to the *Ha'azinu* song of Moses with the word "kick" and the idea of fattening (1Sam 2:29; Deut 32:15).

The prediction of Eli's successor as priest (2:35) is clearly meant to parallel David, both in terms of acting according to what is in God's heart and soul (1Sam 13:14) and of an enduring house (2Sam 7:16). However, when this climactic promise is viewed in the context of the beginning and end of the Song of Eli, it takes on a disturbingly ambiguous undertone. Samuel is undoubtedly the faithful priest who is in view in 2:35-36, wearing a linen ephod in 2:18 (cf. 1Sam 22:18), calling Israel to put away its sinful behaviour in 7:3 (cf. 1:14), and serving as judge in place of Eli in 7:15-17 (cf. 4:18). However, his own wayward sons appear to have undermined his promise of an "enduring house" when the people demand a king; at least, that is the implication of the parallel between **1** and **1'**, 1:3 and 8:1-5. The implicit conclusion must therefore be a question raised about the durability of the promise of an enduring house for David too; a man whose apparent failure to rebuke his sons (2Sam 13:20-22, 37-39) resulted in the loss of his heir (2Sam 18:33 [MT 19:1]). More will be said on this matter in §5.4.2 below.

In summary, then, the Song of Eli introduces the person of Samuel whom we find functioning as judge and prophet in Ramah in the Song of the Ark that follows. His effective intercession and honour for the cultic holiness of YHWH's dwelling are a reflection of his mother Hannah's, and are also the reason he was exalted to inherit Eli's seat of honour instead of Eli's arrogant, disobedient sons. Both Hannah's prophetic prayer and the judgement of the man of God anticipate Samuel's

king-making role, and yet the central message of the whole song is a justification for YHWH's willingness to reverse His gracious promise if its beneficiary fails to honour Him rightly.

### 3.3 The Song of the Ark

The Song of the Ark is a remarkable accomplishment, spanning thirty-four chapters and at least twenty distinct levels of paralleled episodes arranged in precise inverted order. What is more, the episodes are tightly woven together as a coherent narrative that follows a chronological sequence fairly closely. Nevertheless, the primary intent of the song is not simply to recount the events as they happened, but to draw particular meanings from each one in light of the overall story. Occasionally, therefore, the chronology had to be treated more flexibly to allow the placement of parallel episodes opposite each other, giving the effect of a digression from the sequence of events for those who knew their proper order. [Detailed discussion of this has had to be omitted regrettably, though for one example see episodes **17/17'** in §3.5 below.]

Since the Song of the Ark appears to have been composed as an independent work, prior to the rest of *Samuel*, it is not surprising that there are several clear examples of passages that were plausibly added to the original song when it was incorporated into the larger work, though always for good reason and balanced with additions on the opposite slope. We have already seen examples of this in 1Sam 4:12-22 and 8:1-3, 5a, and others will be discussed at the appropriate points below and synthesised later in §5.4. The parallels in this song exude a youthful confidence and black-and-white juxtaposition of good and bad, big and small, blessing and cursing, success and failure. The Song of Desire in the final edition of *Samuel*, in contrast, is a more mature and complex arrangement, communicating several nuanced ideas with more precision and greater force.

Map 2 – The Song of the Ark (1Sam 4:1 – 2Sam 6:23)

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- A** Ark exiled and dishonoured, Samuel defeats Philistines and judges in Ramah (1S 4–7)
- | **B** Samuel rejected, Saul acknowledged by Samuel, Saul’s kingdom established (8–12)
- | | **C** First week of Saul’s reign, curse of Jonathan, family, sparing of Agag (13–15)
- | | | **D** David anointed, saves with a harp, kills Goliath for Saul, who becomes mad (16–18:12)
- | | | | **E** David’s abstinence leads to a Philistine trap, defended by Jonathan (18:13–19:17)
- | | | | | **F** Spirit of God humiliates Saul before Samuel to protect David (19:18–24)
- | | | | | | **E’** David defended by Jonathan, escapes trap by his abstinence (20–21:9 [MT 21:10])
- | | | | | | | **D’** David acts mad, priests killed for Saul, David saved by ephod, affirmed (21:10–23:18)
- | | | | | | | | **C’** David’s sparing of Saul, family, blessing by Saul, last week of Saul’s reign (23:19–31:7)
- | | | | | | | | | **B’** Saul’s kingdom commemorated, David acknowledged by Abner, David accepted (31:8–2S 5:3)
- A’** David rules in Jerusalem and defeats Philistines, ark dishonoured and yet brought in (5:4–6:23)
- 

In the map of the Song of the Ark above, I have attempted to abbreviate its twenty levels of paralleled episodes into just five, the underlining making it easier to take in at a glance. One of the most distinctive features of *Samuel* is the way that the concentric structure matches the narrative flow so closely (cf. footnote 349). The author’s intention is not only to contrast Saul and David, but to compare David with Samuel, the last successful military ‘judge’ and religious leader of Israel. The whole narrative falls into a handful of distinct segments, and there are two clear smaller songs that fit neatly inside the Song of the Ark, as if one were to name the same mountain by three different names when calculating its height either from the base or from two successive points up its slope. I have named these two additional songs the Song of Saul’s Kingdom (**C – F – C’**) and the Song of David’s Testing (**D – F – D’**).

The Song of the Ark encompasses all other messages within the primary story of YHWH of Hosts abandoning His sanctuary at Shiloh because of Israel’s idolatry, but eventually permitting His anointed king David to make Jerusalem the new dwelling place for His name, having rescued David from all his enemies for this very purpose. The author presents David as the true replacement for Samuel, a righteous deliverer of Israel from the Philistines (**A/A’**), but Samuel is also compared with Abner, since they each humbly used their supreme influence over Israel to endorse God’s newly appointed leaders, Saul and David respectively (**B/B’**). The episodes at this second level are skilfully

constructed, their unusual complexity perhaps reflecting the complex politics of both of these transitional periods in the nation's history.

Great emphasis is then placed on the start and end of Saul's reign, his first week paralleling his last, and repeated rebellion against Samuel's authority at the beginning comparable to repeated pursuits of his rival David towards the end (**C/C'**). His death is recounted precisely opposite his official notice of accession, suggesting that the author has intended a distinct Song of Saul's Kingdom between these bounds, reflecting on his authority as the anointed king despite his character flaws.

However within this song, between David's first appearance at his boyhood anointing by Samuel, and the first report that Saul and Jonathan both accept David's claim to the throne, the episodes all seem to share a focus on David's worthiness to become king (**D/D'**).<sup>394</sup> This Song of David's Testing also includes two secret tests by Saul in the form of suicide missions against the Philistines, counter-balanced by two occasions when Jonathan hides David in a field and intercedes with Saul on his behalf (**E/E'**).

Finally, in the central episode shared by all three of these songs (**F**), the Spirit of God is the main protagonist, striking enemies to the ground not for dishonouring the ark of the covenant but for threatening His prophet Samuel and anointed servant David. Saul prophesies again as he had done just after his anointing, but this time it is to humiliate him rather than validate him as king.<sup>395</sup> And David chooses to shelter from his enemies under the protection of God Himself. This is a turning point for Saul, who has earned YHWH's personal enmity from now on (cf. 1Sam 24:4, 18-21 [MT 5, 19-22]; 26:10; 28:16-19), and also for David, who from this point on has learned to rely not on

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<sup>394</sup> It is worth noting that when viewed all together, aspects of David's tests correspond surprisingly closely to the order of signs given by Samuel to Saul at his own anointing, signs that would confirm God's choice of him (1Sam 10:1-8). After their fathers start to show them personal attention (10:2, 9; 16:11-12, 19), there are descriptions of goats, bread and wine which must have some significance (10:3; 16:20; cf. 17:17-18). Then they encounter groups of prophets prophesying, and the Spirit comes upon YHWH's anointed, the same proverb being used for both occasions (10:5-6, 10; 19:20, 24). After 'doing what their hand finds' at Jabesh-Gilead and Qe'ilah respectively (10:7; 11:1-11; 23:1-5), the final confirmation is the seventh day crisis at which Saul loses courage and with it the kingdom, whereas David finds strength (10:8; 13:2-14; 29:1-30:8).

<sup>395</sup> Since rejecting Saul, YHWH had opposed Saul using messengers (three distinct dispatches of evil spirits are mentioned in 1Sam 16:14-23, 18:10 and 19:9, corresponding to Saul's three embassies against David in 19:20-21), but now He Himself comes to oppose Saul, just as Saul himself had come to arrest David.

military skill or diplomacy but on divine revelation (17:46-47; 18:11, 26-27; 19:6; cf. 20:12-17, 22; 21:6 [MT 7]; 23:2-4, 9-12, 14).

In what follows, these larger segments will serve as convenient divisions within which to explore the twenty levels of parallelism about the central episode **21** (i.e. **F**). This explains why each of the following diagrams appears to have a large hiatus in the centre; the complete structure is set out in the Appendix, section (9), but this chapter discusses it in discrete conceptually unified sections.

*Map 3 – The Song of the Ark, section A–A’ (1Sam 4:1–7:17; 2Sam 5:6–6:23)*

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- 1** Ark of the covenant of YHWH brought out of Shiloh with shouting, Pinhas’s contrary wife (4:1-22)
  - 2** Judgement on cities who dishonour the ark, travels on a cart, “until this day” (5:1–6:18)
  - 3** Ark brought into the house of Abinadab on the hill, son of his to keep it (6:19-7:1)
  - 4** Philistines hear, gather for war, Samuel defeats them by a voice from YHWH (7:2-13)
  - 5** Cities restored to Israel, Samuel judges from house in Ramah, two sons (7:14–8:3)
  - 5’** Jerusalem captured, David reigns from house in Jerusalem, eleven sons (5:6-16)
  - 4’** Philistines hear, gather for war, David defeats them by a voice from YHWH (5:17-25)
  - 3’** Ark brought from the house of Abinadab on the hill, sons of his to guide it (6:1-4)
  - 2’** Judgement on Uzzah who dishonours the ark as it travels on a cart, “until this day” (6:3-11)
  - 1’** Ark of God, YHWH, brought into the city of David with shouting, David’s contrary wife (6:12-23)
- 

As noted above, episodes **1** through **5** are in fact identical to episodes **3’** through **1’** of the Song of Eli, though with slightly different delimitation of units because of their dual purpose, having to parallel two different collections of episodes at the same time. In its role within the Song of Eli, 1Sam 4:1–7:1 was treated as a single episode (**3’**) made up of smaller interrelated elements. The same is true of its function within the Song of the Ark; episodes **1–3** function in some ways as a single episode, or better ‘cluster’, as do **3’–1’**. The reason for the grouping of these episodes into a cluster here in **1–3** and **3’–1’** is due to their common focus on the ark, and in each case the first episode of the cluster introduces the ark with a lengthy honorific description (1Sam 4:4; 2Sam 6:2). What is more, thirty thousand warriors of Israel die when the ark is captured, so the same number are mustered to bring it up (1Sam 4:10; 2Sam 6:1), but whereas both sons of Eli were killed in the ark’s exile, only one of Abinadab’s two sons is killed in the ark’s return (1Sam 4:11; 2Sam 6:7), an important pattern that is further reinforced as seen below.

Episodes 1 and 1' (1Sam 4:1-22; 2Sam 6:12-23)

Episode 1 would have been the very beginning of the suggested original form of the Song of the Ark, and like any good modern action film, it dives straight into the middle of the action (*in medias res*) with a certain battle between Israel and the Philistines (its decisive significance recognised in hindsight). After the report of YHWH's defeat of their army, the elders decide to bring down the ark from Shiloh, and at its arrival in the camp they "shouted with a great shout". Likewise in episode 1', after the report of YHWH's blessing of Obed-Edom, David decides to bring up the ark to the city of David, and as it arrived there was "shouting and the sound of the trumpet". The original Song of the Ark would have then had its fitting conclusion in 2Sam 6:17-19, an expression of David's religious obedience and authority to pronounce blessing, and also his magnanimity as king "to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women".

In the Song of Eli it was noted that 1Sam 4:12-22 digresses from the journey of the ark to record the fulfilment of Hannah's prophecies about the vacated seat of honour and a languishing mother. Neither story progresses the ark narrative, effectively pausing its journey to view reactions to its loss (cf. 6:13; 7:2), and they appear to have been introduced to the Song of the Ark when the Song of Eli was formed. In order to create balance, therefore, the ill-fitting 2Sam 6:16 and 20-23 was introduced, souring the celebration of the ark's entrance to Jerusalem, but corresponding neatly to the addition about Pinhas' wife in its opposite episode. The death of her father-in-law Eli is probably reflected in David's reference to the displacement of Michal's father Saul and all his house, but the pair of insertions evidently focus mainly on the women of the story, as also does Hannah's prayer in 1Sam 2:1-10. Both Michal and Pinhas' wife are daughters(-in-law) of rejected rulers of Israel,<sup>396</sup> both seem to ignore the joy of the present occasion to lament the past, even if this highlights their sharply contrasting reactions to the ark, and both are portrayed in the end as dying without having further

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<sup>396</sup> Interestingly, as Eli was judged with premature deaths for his male offspring, apart from one (1Sam 2:31-33, 36; 22:20-23), so Saul would experience the same judgement, apart from one (1Sam 31:2; 4:8; 2Sam 21:7-9).

children.<sup>397</sup> However, additions made to the foundational outer episodes of a concentricism will unavoidably shift the meaning of the whole, which explains why the author then also apparently felt it necessary to add a closely related third episode just before the climax of the Song of the Ark. The story about Michal in 1Sam 19:11-17 has no parallel after the central episode, even though the two stories about Jonathan interceding with Saul are unmistakably paralleled (19:1-10; 20:1-42). Rather than adding an irrelevant reference to a woman within the central episode, therefore, the story of Michal was placed just before it, next to her brother Jonathan's actions for David (cf. 2Sam 1:26). Consistent with the additions to episodes **1** and **1'**, David's wife is presented negatively, slandering her husband rather than escaping with him, and preferring her ancestral inheritance (represented by household idols) in place of her husband. For more discussion see under episode **20** and in §5.4.

#### Episodes **2** and **2'** (1Sam 5:1–6:20; 2Sam 6:3-11)

In episodes **2** and **2'**, the desperate and ignorant Philistines sent the ark of Israel's god up to Beth-Shemesh on a new cart (1Sam 6:7-8), but when David brought the ark up from Baale-Judah, he had less excuse for his ignorant choice of another new cart as its means of transport (2Sam 6:3). It is no surprise, then, that the irreverence of Uzzah was punished with death (6:7), as the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh had been (1Sam 6:19). Both incidents are also commemorated with places named after those events "until this day" (1Sam 6:18-19; 2Sam 6:8),<sup>398</sup> as also the custom of avoiding the threshold of Dagon's temple originated with the judgement of YHWH and continues "until this day" (1Sam 5:5).<sup>399</sup> David's fear of welcoming the ark into his own city (2Sam 6:9-10) is for exactly the same reasons as the people of Ashdod, Gath, Ekron and Beth-Shemesh sent it to other cities (1Sam 5:7-8, 10-11; 6:20), but in this case the ark only stays in its temporary Philistine lodgings for three

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<sup>397</sup> The accusation Michal makes also gains added significance in light of Pinhas' wife, in that Pinhas had 'uncovered himself' with the 'maidservants' to his wife's disgrace (1Sam 2:22), and Michal is accusing David of the same motivations as Pinhas, even though his intention to honour God could not be more opposite to that of Pinhas. For the neat concentric structure governing 2Sam 6:20-23, see the Appendix, section (2).

<sup>398</sup> 1Sam 6:18 refers to "the great platform [טַע in *Ugaritic*] Abel", linking to the 'mourning' (אבל) in 6:19. See Tsumura 2007: 225-26.

<sup>399</sup> Uzzah's death at the threshold of Jerusalem, so to speak, may have led David to a similar commemoration of avoidance, a breach in the city wall at that site – cf. 2Sam 6:8 with 1Kgs 11:27. Is this a *terminus ante quem*?

months (2Sam 6:11 – “the Gittite”), half of the time it had spent in the land of the Philistines (1Sam 6:1). This is not incidental, but parallels the judgement wrought against just one of Abinadab’s two sons as opposed to both of Eli’s two sons. YHWH is indicating to David that this outbreak of His anger is only partial, and that He will not bring full judgement for this disrespect as He had years earlier.<sup>400</sup> The length of these episodes is unbalanced, but the Volume and Weight of parallels make up for this.

#### Episodes 3 and 3’ (1Sam 6:21–7:1; 2Sam 6:1-4)

Both episodes 3 and 3’ are quite brief, and one might argue that each cluster of three episodes about the ark would require an end point or start point (respectively) for the journey of the ark. Also, if the ark has been kept at Kiriath-Yearim ever since it returned from its Philistine exile, where else could David go to collect it and bring it up to Jerusalem? However, for two reasons I believe this to be a distinct pair of episodes. The first is the length to which the author goes in 2Sam 6:3-4 to repeat twice verbatim the full description of the ark’s old home – “the house of Abinadab which was on the hill” (cf. 1Sam 7:1), with named sons of Abinadab responsible for caring for the ark in both episodes. The redundant repetitions of 2Sam 6:3 in 6:4 force an interruption to an otherwise smooth narrative sequence, thus separating episodes 3’ and 2’. The second reason is the use of the alternative name for Abinadab’s home town, Baale-Judah as opposed to Kiriath-Yearim (cf. Joshua 15:9); this variation is unlikely to have been merely stylistic, particularly given the distinctive double mention of “the name” in the same verse.<sup>401</sup> “Baalim”, in the sense of foreign gods rather than ‘lords’, do make a prominent appearance in both episodes 4 and 4’ despite their rarity elsewhere in *Samuel*, as we shall see below. This seemingly incidental description of the ark’s temporary resting place is arguably theologically significant for the author, just as was the mention of Obed-Edom’s ethnicity in 2Sam 6:10. It might imply that this move is symbolic of Israel choosing to leave behind

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<sup>400</sup> The same use of the numbers three and seven for partial and full judgement can be found in the parallel passages about the faults of kings – 2Sam 21:1 || 24:13. Likewise the three years of Elijah’s famine (1Kgs 18:1; “three years and six months” according to Luke 4:25 and James 5:17) and seven years of Elisha’s (2Kgs 8:1).

<sup>401</sup> This principle can be applied to the entirety of *Samuel* – the more one sees the arrangement as deliberate and meaningful, the more significant even the smallest details in the narratives appear. Obviously, at such a distance from the original context of composition, our ability to detect all these nuances is quite limited, and there is undoubtedly a danger of pressing the parallels too far without justification from Trademarks.

its foreign religious practices, and returning from its Baalim to the new dwelling place of YHWH, just as the ark had been brought up out of the ignorant impiety of Beth-Shemesh to Kiriath-Yearim. This alone is what will give them permanent victory against their enemies, as Samuel had promised (1Sam 7:3).

#### Episodes 4 and 4' (1Sam 7:2-13; 2Sam 5:17-25)

The reference to “Baalim” in the sense of foreign gods is only one of several close parallels between these episodes. In both cases the Philistines hear, after a period of Philistine dominance (cf. 1Sam 7:14; 31:7) that the Israelites are showing signs of renewed national identity, and ‘go up’ to deal with this little threat. In both cases the national leader, Samuel or David, seeks YHWH for help and receives an answer, and the two responses in 4 are reflected in the two distinct battles recorded in 4’: The great “sound” with which YHWH thundered against the Philistines (1Sam 7:10) is paralleled in the “sound of marching in the tops of the *baka* trees” in the second battle (2Sam 5:24), after which the Israelites pursue their enemies and strike them down for some distance (2Sam 5:25; cf. 1Sam 7:11). The response of Samuel to the victory, naming the place “Ebenezer” (1Sam 7:12), is paralleled by David’s response to his first victory, naming the place “Baal-Perazim” (2Sam 5:20), and even the record of two battles with the Philistines in the same “valley of Rephaim” (2Sam 5:18, 22) is a deliberate parallel of Samuel’s battle, the second to be located at Ebenezer (1Sam 4:1; 7:12). The theological parallel between the episodes which is picked up in the following episode 3’ (2Sam 6:2) is developed through a deliberate focus on idols. In 1Sam 7:3-4 Samuel attributes the Israelite defeat and exile of the ark to their idolatry, worshipping the “Baalim” that are defined as “foreign gods” through the parallel construction paired with Ashtaroth in both verses (cf. 1Sam 12:10). Then in 2Sam 5:20-21 we find an equivalent parallel, between “destroyed my enemies” (i.e. Baal-Perazim) and David’s capture of the idols of the Philistines, a complete inversion of the original battle at Ebenezer when the Israelite ‘gods’ were carried off by the Philistines (1Sam 4:8; 5:1). The name “Baal” in 2Sam 5:20 is perhaps therefore not to be translated ‘master’ as a reference to YHWH, but

rather as a generic reference to those against whom God had ‘burst forth’ - the “foreign gods” of the Philistines (cf. 2Sam 6:8; Num 25:2-3), hence the decision of “the whole house of Israel” (2Sam 6:5, 15; cf. 1Sam 7:2-3) to exalt YHWH from His former position among the ‘Baalim’ of Judah (2Sam 6:2).

Episodes 5 and 5’ (1Sam 7:14–8:3; 2Sam 5:6-16)

The final pair of episodes in this segment of the Song of the Ark, **5** and **5’**, constitute the calm before (and after) the storm – the peace and security that Israel had experienced under the judgeship of Samuel and then not again until David was made king over all Israel. Yet in both episodes we have fairly clear evidence for secondary additions to the original Song of the Ark, which will be discussed more comprehensively in §5.4 below. The original episode **5** probably comprised 1Sam 7:14-17, referring to the recapture of cities that belonged to Israel, peace between Israel and the Amorites, Samuel’s judgeship, and his house in Ramah. All of these elements are also found in episode **5’**, where we read of David’s capture of Jerusalem (2Sam 5:6-9), peace between Israel and the Phoenicians in the context of David’s house in Jerusalem (5:11), and David’s reign (5:10, 12).

As suggested above, the attribution of blame to Samuel himself for Israel’s desire for a king was probably not original to the Song of the Ark. The reasons given later in the song for this request are simple rebellion (like the sin of idolatry – 1Sam 8:7-8; cf. 15:23) and the increasing threat from Nahash king of the Ammonites (1Sam 12:12), with no further hint of blame on Samuel or his sons (1Sam 12:2-5). Thus the demand of the elders of Israel in 1Sam 8:5 probably lacked any justification in the original version of the song, so that the people’s true motives might be progressively revealed in the following stories. This is precisely the technique that had already been used in explaining YHWH’s reason for abandoning His ark in 1Sam 4:3, 10-11 (cf. 7:3-4). Then in the second stage of composition, 1Sam 8:1-3 and the first statement of the elders in 8:5 would have been introduced to the Song of the Ark. Corresponding to these additions, in episode **5’** the verses that have probably been added secondarily are 2Sam 5:13-16. The parenthetical enumeration of David’s sons in 5:13-16 is paralleled with 1Sam 8:1-3 but not 1Sam 7:14-17, and Bathsheba is also implied in 2Sam

5:14 (cf. 12:24 and 1Chr 3:5), suggesting that this reference was introduced when her story was being written.<sup>402</sup>

Thus the first level of the Song of the Ark begins and ends with a three-part cluster of episodes tracing the journeys of the ark from Shiloh to Kiriath-Yearim, and thence to Jerusalem, each journey interrupted by a brief period being hosted by Philistines. Both sections also describe a second battle with the Philistines in a particular location, which is won when YHWH answers his appointed leader, Samuel or David respectively. He comes to the aid of His people who have rejected foreign idols, and establishes a period of peaceful independence for Israel.

*Map 4 – The Song of the Ark, section B–B’ (1Sam 8:4–12:25; 1Sam 31:8–2Sam 5:5)*

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- 6** *Samuel and then all Israel acknowledge that YHWH has chosen Saul as king (8:4–10:25)*
- a** Israel rejects Samuel as judge, despite being told the practices of a king (8:4-22)
  - b** Saul pays to see Samuel, who welcomes him, with final words at the city edge (9:1–10:16)
  - a\*** Kingship of Saul the Benjamite is demonstrated conclusively by drawing lots (10:17-25)
    - 7** *Samuel speaks to Israel after Saul’s vindication at Jabesh-Gilead (10:26–12:25)*
      - i** Saul’s honour is restored by delivering Jabesh-Gilead (10:26–11:15)
      - ii** Israel testifies that Samuel is blameless before YHWH and His anointed (12:1-5)
      - iii** Samuel reminds the people of the deeds of YHWH (and Samuel) for them (12:6-15)
      - iv** YHWH responds to Samuel to confirm Samuel’s authority (12:16-19)
      - v** Samuel assures the people of his ongoing goodwill towards them (12:20-25)
    - 7’** *David speaks to Israel after Saul’s vindication by Jabesh-Gilead (1S 31:8 – 2S 2:7)*
      - i’** Saul’s honour is restored by the men of Jabesh-Gilead (31:8-13)
      - ii’** Amalekite testifies he is to blame (not David) for killing YHWH’s anointed (1:1-16)
      - iii’** David reminds Judah of the deeds of Saul and Jonathan for them (1:17-27)
      - iv’** YHWH responds to David to confirm David’s authority (2:1-4)
      - v’** David assures Jabesh Gilead of his ongoing goodwill towards them (2:5-7)
- 6’** *Abner and then all Israel acknowledge that YHWH has chosen David as king (2:8–5:5)*
- a’** Israel rejects David as king, despite evidence of the strength of David’s house (2:8–3:6)
  - b’** Abner pays to see David, who welcomes him, with a final message at the gate (3:7-39)
  - a\*’** Benjamites demonstrate the kingship of David conclusively by killing his only rival (4:1–5:5)
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This next segment of the Song of the Ark prepares for the Song of Saul’s Kingdom and then mops up its last remnants after Saul’s death; it recounts the period of Israel’s discontent with Samuel

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<sup>402</sup> Its reference to “more concubines and wives” might also have undertones of criticism, in light of negative references to concubines later in 2Sam 15:16, 16:22 and 20:3, in 21:11 (not mentioned in 1Sam 14:50, though cf. 2Sam 3:7), and elsewhere in Gen 35:22, Deut 17:17, Jdg 8:31; 19:25-27, etc.

leading to the start of Saul's reign and then the period of Israel's discontent with David following the end of Saul's reign. Both the ascending and descending slopes at this elevation in the song have been constructed using just two clusters of episodes, and each cluster has its own internal structure which parallels that of its opposite number, though not inverted in order, but directly (as tends to be the case for secondary parallels). The outer cluster explains the important role played by a recognised authority over Israel in the public recognition of the kingship of both Saul and David. The inner cluster then uses a story about Jabesh-Gilead in both cases alongside a lengthy public speech by an offended leader (Samuel or David) which demonstrates their innocence, approval by God, and magnanimity despite being dishonoured. Thus the whole segment is a study in ancient Israelite psychology of honour and shame in leadership, illustrated by paralleling Samuel with Abner and then with David, and Saul and his family are consistently presented as a second-best option, despite the support of Jabesh-Gilead.

Episodes 6 and 6' (1Sam 8:4–10:25; 2Sam 2:8–5:5)

To start with episode 6, then, we find within this cluster a clear concentric arrangement of three smaller episodes, beginning and ending with scenes (in Ramah and then Mizpah) in which rejection of Samuel is equated with a disregard for YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (1Sam 8:8; 10:18). 10:25 also explicitly refers back to the "*mišpat* of the king(dom)" explained to Israel by Samuel in 8:11-18. Each of these outer scenes in episode 6 also has its own concentric arrangement, the first pairing 8:4-9 and 8:19-22 around 8:10-18, and the second pairing 10:17-19b and 10:25 (each with one key theme from 8:4-18) around 10:19c-24. The command of YHWH to "listen to their voice" (8:7, 9, 22) is then fulfilled in his public appointment of a king for Israel by lot in 10:19c-24.

In the centre of the cluster in episode 6 we have the focus of this episode, the acknowledgement of YHWH's chosen king in private by the current leader of the nation (a Trademark theme – cf. 1Sam 16:13; 23:17). The composition of this central episode follows a deliberate sequence of events: 9:1-4 gives the background situation that led to the encounter between Saul and Samuel, 9:5-10

focuses on the need to pay a fee in order for the meeting to take place, 9:11-24 describes the feast at which Samuel welcomed Saul with all the best expressions of hospitality in preparation for delivering his message, 9:25–10:9 recounts the final important words spoken privately to Saul at the edge of the city,<sup>403</sup> and 10:10-16 covers the fulfilment of the message communicated at that meeting. The final scene of this episode (10:14-16), as Saul arrives back at home, is meant to form an *inclusio* with the introduction to Saul's family in 9:1, however the unexpected twist is that it is Saul's uncle, rather than his father, who meets him and questions him. This is quite deliberately intended to prepare for the later introduction of Abner, Saul's uncle (1Sam 14:50-51) who is the central character of the opposite episode.

Likewise in episode **6'**, the concentric cluster of smaller episodes introduces Ishbosheth's reign in a scene focused on the pool of Gibeon (2Sam 2:8–3:6) and concludes it at the pool in Hebron (4:1–5:5). Once again, both also display internal centrism or *inclusio*, the first pairing 2:8-11 and 3:1-6 around 2:12-32, and the second pairing 4:1 and 5:1-5 around 4:2-12.<sup>404</sup> The two central 'pool narratives' have been beautifully crafted to mirror each other: Both involve two leaders of bands (Abner and Joab, or Baanah and Rechab), bloodshed at a pool (in Gibeon or Hebron), an important character dying by being struck in the belly deceptively in the middle of the day (Asahel or Ishbosheth), followed by a journey through the Arabah all night (Abner and his men, or Rechab and Baanah), and finally a burial in a family tomb (Asahel or Ishbosheth's head), and the scene concluding in Hebron.

In between the two pool narratives, the centre of the cluster in episode **6'** has been composed with great care to pattern it as closely as possible after the story of the first meeting between

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<sup>403</sup> 1Sam 9:18 shows that Ramah had a gate, beyond which was a well (9:11; cf. 2Sam 3:26; 23:15). Samuel's first meeting with Saul in the gate, "as soon as you enter the city" (9:13), balances his final conversation with Saul at the "edge of the city" (9:26-27) – a term found nowhere else in Scripture (but cf. 1Sam 14:2 with 22:6). At dawn the gate would be suitably deserted for this official act to take place privately (cf. similar themes in Ruth 3:14–4:12).

<sup>404</sup> In §5.4 below, it will be observed that originally the introductions and conclusions here were all very brief in the first edition of the Song of the Ark, originally being simply 2:8-9 and 3:1 (3:6 being a recapitulation of 3:1 after the insertion of 3:2-5; cf. footnote 181 – 'external *inclusio*'), and then 4:1 and 5:1-3. When incorporated into the larger work, carefully balanced additions were made: 2:10-11, 3:2-5, 4:2c-4 and 5:4-5.

Samuel and Saul. Thus we find it follows the same deliberate sequence of events: 3:7-11 gives the background situation that led to the encounter between Abner and David, 3:12-16 focuses on the need to pay a 'fee' in order for the meeting to take place, and 3:17-21 describes the feast at which David welcomed Abner to Hebron with generous hospitality. In the story of Samuel and Saul, however, the feast was merely a preparation for the most important part of the encounter, which would involve a private conferral of authority later in the gate, a "covenant" between them (cf. 3:12). Since Abner had been general to both Saul and Ishbosheth, the audience expects David to confer on Abner the honour of becoming his general too (as he later promises in an equivalent situation to Amasa in 2Sam 19:13 [MT 14]). However, in a tragic twist to the standard pattern, 3:22-27 records the arrival of David's military leader Joab (cf. 2:13) who summons Abner back to the gate in Hebron, as if with a private message of royal honours from David, only to strike him deceptively in the belly as he had done to Joab's brother in battle (2:23; cf. 4:6). The clear implication is that Joab is not merely taking revenge for his dead brother, but also eliminating competitors for the coveted position of David's general (2:12-13; cf. 1Chr 11:6). Finally, 3:28-39 covers the reaction of David to the 'message' communicated by Joab in the gate, lamenting over Abner and cursing Joab and Abishai. To strengthen this interpretation, we recall the story about Saul's uncle quizzing him over his meeting with Samuel (10:14-16). If Abner was in fact that uncle, Saul had originally hidden from him the honour coming to his family in "the matter of the kingdom", just as later Joab ensured that the comparable honours for Abner from David remained for ever hidden from him.

Samuel's prophetic knowledge of Saul's future as king and deliverer from the Philistines (1Sam 9:15-17, 23) clearly parallels the prophetic words reported by Abner to Ishbosheth and to the elders of Israel concerning YHWH's similar choice of David (2Sam 3:9-10, 18). Abner reflects Samuel not only as a prophet, but also as a recognised authority not just over Benjamin (3:8, 13-16, 19) but over all Israel (2:9; 3:9-10, 12, 17, 21; cf. 2Sam 19:20). Saul had no real chance of becoming king without Samuel endorsing YHWH's choice of him (1Sam 10:24; 11:14; 12:13-14; 15:30), and David likewise

could not have been accepted by all Israel without the power behind Saul's throne, Abner, publicly advocating him as YHWH's anointed (2Sam 3:9-10, 21). When Abner died, it was all David could do to hold together the fragile covenant between Israel and Judah that Abner had been brokering (3:37-39), and thanks to Abner's arguments and authority it did eventually have its desired conclusion (5:1-3; cf. 3:17; 1Sam 18:13-16). It was only appropriate that Abner be given an episode all to himself in this story of David's accession (cf. the *inclusio* of 2:8 and 4:12).

#### Episodes 7 and 7' (1Sam 10:26–12:25; 1Sam 31:8 – 2Sam 2:7)

As in the apparently traditional five-part sequence for private bestowal of authority followed in both 1Sam 9:1–10:16 and 2Sam 3:7-27, episodes 7 and 7' follow a traditional sequence of responses by which a rejected ruler can maintain face when his rival is publicly honoured. The first scene of both episodes introduces the responses that follow, by recording that public honour given to the rival. Episode 7 begins with the "valiant" men supporting Saul's kingship being contrasted with "sons of Beliya'al" who shamed him by refusing to bring him gifts. Although he honourably refrained from returning their insults, both before and after the deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead (1Sam 10:27c; 11:13), Samuel felt it necessary to reaffirm Saul's honour and kingship before "all the men of Israel" in order to establish his reign securely (11:12, 14-15; paralleled with 10:26). This first scene, where Saul defends the honour of Jabesh-Gilead (11:2) and has his own honour reinstated, is directly paralleled after Saul's death by the scene in which the shame brought on Saul and his sons by the Philistines is covered by the "valiant men" of Jabesh-Gilead who recover their bodies and bury them honourably (31:8-13). This act may also be seen as reinstating the honour of Jabesh-Gilead (2Sam 2:4-5) in light of the formerly shameful reputation of this city (an account is given in Judges 21:5-15).

Each Jabesh-Gilead scene is then followed by a series of four distinct responses, on the one hand concerning Samuel (replaced by Saul) and on the other concerning David (replaced by Saul's heir). In 1Sam 12:1-5, Samuel calls on Israel to testify before YHWH and His anointed king Saul that Samuel did not deserve the shame of their rejection in any respect. Their testimony concerning Samuel's

innocence is explicit, and is interpreted as a testimony “against” the people themselves for their rebellion against him. Paralleling this in 2Sam 1:1-16 is a second scene focused on the personal testimony of the Amalekite that he himself had taken the life of Saul and stolen his crown and bracelet (1:10). After David’s instinctive reaction of mourning for Saul and for the nation (1:11-12), the attention turns again to the Amalekite’s testimony, and like that of the Israelites before Samuel, his words are interpreted as testifying “against” him and earning his just execution for treason (1:16).<sup>405</sup> The clear implication is that David, like Samuel, is innocent of any wrongdoing that would justify the rebellion of Israel against his authority; it was presumably partly the accusation that David had participated in the death of Saul that had caused Israel to turn instead to Ishbosheth (cf. 3:17).

The third in the sequence of episodes is a rhetorically powerful recitation of the history of Israel leading up to this particular point in time, and both speakers refer to themselves within their recitation, associating themselves with the glorious past that has now been irretrievably lost. In the first account, Samuel sets up a standard three-part pattern of the cycle of oppression, appeal to YHWH, and deliverance by His appointed leaders, the second cycle mentioning himself by name, and the third implying that in rejecting YHWH as their King, they were also rejecting Samuel as their appointed and proven deliverer-judge. Previously, God had faithfully delivered His repentant people, but now the pattern had been broken. In the second account, David composes a concentric lament for Saul and Jonathan, with a personal extension on the end to express his own unique response to the loss of Jonathan in particular. This addendum would not be sung by the sons of Judah, but it is appropriate in the mouth of David himself, and its concluding couplet combines the outermost and central themes of the main lament to tie it closely to the whole preceding

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<sup>405</sup> It is worth noting that the author seems not to believe the account of the Amalekite, as the narrated version of Saul’s death in 1Sam 31:3-5 differs from it markedly, but even if the Amalekite lied, judgement will be meted out on the basis of his own testimony; this simply serves to increase the episode’s focus on the importance of testimony.

structure.<sup>406</sup> The parallel with Samuel’s traditional recitation of Israel’s history indicates that this lament for Saul and Jonathan is intended to become an official memory of their lives, reinforced by the reference to its prompt inscription in the Book of Yashar (1:18), apparently a national collection of poems of importance for Israel (cf. Jos 10:12-13; §5.5). David’s poem not only laments the loss of Israel’s greatest weapons of war, Saul and Jonathan, but identifies David with that previous era of victory, implicitly proposing himself as the solution to Israel’s defeat (cf. 3:18).

The fourth part within both **7** and **7'** demonstrates YHWH’s own ongoing affirmation of the rejected ruler’s authority. Samuel marks the beginning of his third speech to the people by repeating from the start of his second the command, “[And] now, take your stand and...” (1Sam 12:16; cf. 12:7). Having reminded the people in his introduction (12:6) that it was YHWH who had appointed Moses and Aaron, both of whom are known traditionally for their wondrous ‘signs’ (cf. Deut 34:10-12; 1Sam 4:8), he now proves that he himself has also been appointed by YHWH. At his request YHWH sends thunders and rain from a clear sky to interrupt the wheat harvest, provoking renewed fear of YHWH and His prophet, and agreement that asking for a king was indeed an “evil thing” (12:19; cf. 12:17). At the equivalent point in **7'**, the author needed to describe a clear sign from YHWH of His approval of David’s authority over Israel, and the only suitable event seemed to be YHWH’s two clear answers to David’s inquiries, directing him to return to the land of Judah and settle in Hebron (2Sam 2:1; cf. Gen 23:17-20; Jos 14:6-15). When he did so, the men of Judah apparently recognised his divine authorisation to rule and anointed him king of Judah (2:4a).

Finally, rancourless magnanimity is the message of the fifth part of the sequence, reflecting in both episodes **7** and **7'** the attitude of YHWH Himself towards His rebellious people. Samuel expands

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<sup>406</sup> A simplified layout of the lament (2Sam 1:19-27) is as follows:

- a *'gazelle'* slain on high places + *mighty fallen* (19)
- b daughters of Philistines rejoice (20)
- c Mount Gilboa, shield not enough (21)
- d *weapons of Jonathan* and Saul [note priority of Jonathan] (22)
- c' death in same place, speed and strength not enough (23)
- b' daughters of Israel weep (24)
- a' *mighty fallen* + *Jonathan* slain on high places (25)
- e Jonathan’s love for David (26)
- a/a'+d *mighty fallen, weapons* perished (27)

upon the request of the people for his intercession, and as well as warning the people from turning aside “after futile things which cannot profit nor deliver” (1Sam 12:21; cf. 7:3), he reassures them that like YHWH he himself bears no animosity towards them. In the parallel passage, David responds to the report of Jabesh-Gilead honouring Saul (forming an *inclusio* with 1Sam 31:8-13), and as well as reassuring Saul’s supporters that like YHWH he himself bears no animosity towards them, he urges them to be “sons of valour” and confirm his authority over all of Israel; after all, they had been “men of valour” by honouring Saul’s body (1Sam 31:12) and Saul’s own kingship had likewise been acknowledged first by those “valiant” whose hearts God had touched (1Sam 10:26). The implication may also be drawn from this parallel between the words of Samuel and David, that by turning to Ishbosheth immediately after David’s message (2:8-9) the people of Israel were also turning to a ‘futile’ man who could neither profit nor deliver them as his father had (1:24).

Thus we have in this second segment of the Song of the Ark a sophisticated reflection on the theme of honour and shame in leadership, with the problematic fact of David’s rejection by Israel after Saul’s death very deliberately compared with the shame brought on Samuel himself by Israel in the period leading up to Saul’s reign. Two primary episodes are selected for attention in each case: The earlier one contains Samuel’s first private meeting with Saul in Ramah and also Samuel’s public response to the restoration of Saul’s honour at Jabesh-Gilead. The later one contains David’s public response to Saul’s death and restored honour at Jabesh-Gilead and also David’s first private meeting with Abner in Hebron. The complexity of the concentric patterns conveys the political turmoil of these times, yet also reinforces the great skill of the author with this technique.

### 3.4 The Song of Saul's Kingdom

*Map 5 – The Song of the Ark, section C–C' (1Sam 13:1–15:35; 23:19–31:7)*

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- 8** Summary at the start of Saul's reign (13:1)
    - 9** Saul's seventh day, Hebrews leave, Saul's foolish sacrifices + Samuel's judgement (13:2-15)
    - 10** Jonathan and armour bearer take a risk, smite enemies in three groups (13:16–14:23)
      - 11** Saul curses his son Jonathan, unwilling to make atonement for his sin (14:24-46)
        - 12** Saul's family, in the context of delivering Israel from its plunderers (14:47-52)
          - 13** Saul preserves enemy's life, tears Samuel's robe, [Samuel's death] (15:1-35)
    - 13'** David preserves enemy's life, cuts Saul's robe, Samuel's death (23:19–25:1)
    - 12'** David's family grows through delivering Nabal from plunderers (25:2-44)
    - 11'** Saul blesses his 'son' David, having not tried to atone for any sin by David (26:1-25)
    - 10'** David and men risk going to Achish, smite enemies in three groups (27:1-12)
    - 9'** Saul's necromancy + Samuel's judgement, Hebrews leave, David's seventh day (28:1–30:31)
  - 8'** Report of the death of Saul and his sons (31:1-7)
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With this present segment of the Song of the Ark the episodes generally start to become more compact, though sometimes following on from each other fairly closely (for example in episodes **10–11**). While David naturally plays a more prominent part in the descending series of episodes, it is primarily Saul's authority that is in view throughout both panels, shown for example in the way that David is usually paralleled with Jonathan to emphasise also their comparable relationship with Saul. Whereas Saul's curse on his son Jonathan (episode **11**) prevents him from achieving complete victory over the enemies he had smitten in **10**, Saul's blessing on David (**11'**) can be interpreted as the reason why David is able to achieve complete victory over his enemies, even under the nose of the Philistines (**10'**). Even the account of David winning his wise wife Abigail through his defence of Nabal's flocks, is meant to imply that Saul's family was likewise a reward from God for his labour in defence of God's flock Israel. This focus on Saul also explains why his two primary failures are not contrasted with the two times David humbly spares Saul's life. So even when David's preservation of his enemy Saul (**13'**) is paralleled with Saul's preservation of his enemy Agag (**13**), the author's primary reason is in fact Saul's own self-condemnation in his admission to David that sparing one's enemy betrays one's underlying motives (1Sam 24:19 [MT 20]; cf. 15:20, 24, 32).

The Song of Saul's Kingdom, though demarcated by the official start and end of Saul's reign, also features Samuel at the beginning and end of each half (as well as in its centre, 1Sam 19:18-24), and the point is made explicitly in 15:35 that Samuel did not 'see' Saul (i.e. have an audience with him [cf. 2Sam 3:13]) until the day of his death. Between episode **13** and **13'**, the only time that Saul encounters Samuel is in animosity and disgrace, and it was not at Samuel's initiative. Samuel had declared twice to Saul, both after he failed the seventh day trial (**9**) and after he spared his enemy Agag (**13**), that his kingdom would not endure but instead be given to another. The need to repeat the judgement might itself have made Saul question its permanence, though, so while Samuel was still alive Saul may have held out hope that YHWH could yet change his mind and speak to him again through his prophet (cf. 15:25, 30; 28:6). However, once Samuel had died (**13'**), his judgement was irrevocable, and it was only a matter of time before it was enacted against Saul. Thus, when Saul summoned Samuel up from the dead in episode **9'**, Samuel said nothing to him beyond what he had said at their last encounter – Saul's kingdom was about to be taken from him.<sup>407</sup>

The author's intention, therefore, is evidently not to tear down Saul in order to build up David; on the contrary, David is not the standard by whom Saul is measured. The faults of Saul are primarily his disregard for YHWH's commands through Samuel, and his mistreatment of 'sons' who would succeed him, despite their exemplary faith (**10–11** and **11'–10'**). It is true that David passes his test on the seventh day while Saul at the same point is consulting a necromancer (for which see below). However, if David is to succeed Saul, it is appropriate that he endures his seven day trial during the final week of his predecessor. Furthermore, Saul was not failing any test by seeking out Samuel; he had long since failed the test, and in this pathetic appeal to Samuel we finally see him turning for help to Samuel, only he is far too late. Saul is not presented as a foil to David, but as a tragedy in his own right, a truly great man who lost it all by failing to submit to YHWH's prophet (19:22-24).

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<sup>407</sup> Although see Kent (2011: ch. 6) for a well-argued alternative explanation.

### Episodes 8 and 8' (1Sam 13:1; 31:1-7)

1Sam 13:1 is a notorious verse in textual criticism, often considered proof that the Masoretic Text is corrupt, and invariably altered in the versions by the insertion of additional numbers in both Saul's age at accession and his length of reign. The Septuagint removes the entire verse, and many modern translations leave blanks for the numbers (DBY, JPS [1917/1985], CJB, NAB, NJB, RSV/NRSV, ESV).<sup>408</sup> However, when taken on its own merits there is nothing grammatically problematic about the Hebrew of the verse.<sup>409</sup> It can be read quite straightforwardly as, "Saul was one year old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel for two years." It is only problematic given the reader's inability to equate these numbers logically with the apparent age of Saul before his accession (1Sam 9:2), or with the number of events attributed to his reign in 1Sam 13–31, including six separate clashes with the Philistines (13:3–14:46; 17:1-52; 19:8; 23:1-5; 23:27–24:1 [MT 24:2]; 28:1–31:7) among other conflicts (14:47-48; 15:1-9).

However, the careful positioning of this accessional notice opposite 31:1-7 offers a clue to the correct interpretation of these numbers. If Saul's death concluded his reign, and he reigned for two years, is there anything two years earlier that might explain 13:1? When the final battle between the Philistines and Saul took place (28:1 onwards), David and his men had been living in the territory of Gath for "a year and four months" (27:7). The incident that apparently persuaded David to leave Israel for Philistia was his final brief encounter with Saul in 26:1-25, and before this is the account of David's protection of Nabal's flocks during the weeks of sheepshearing and the ten days following (25:7, 15-16, 38). Prior to this is the brief notice of Samuel's death and burial in his house in Ramah (25:1), echoed just before Saul himself dies (28:3). It would not seem unreasonable to assume that the events of chapters 25 and 26 could fit within a period of approximately eight months. Why then does 13:1 limit Saul's reign over Israel to only those final two years after Samuel's death?<sup>410</sup> The last time Samuel's house in Ramah was mentioned explicitly (not counting 9:18, where Ramah is not

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<sup>408</sup> "not based on comparative textual evidence but on content analysis" – Tov 2001: 10-11 (emphasis his).

<sup>409</sup> Driver (1913: 97) rejects "two years" as a unique grammatical form "not said in Heb[rew]", but others dismiss his argument as "rather weak" (Althann 1981: 242 [citing Noth]; cf. Barthélemy 1982: 175-76).

<sup>410</sup> Josephus (*Ant.* 6.14.9, old Latin version) similarly records that Saul reigned two years after Samuel's death.

specified) was in 7:17, and in the same description of Samuel's leadership of Israel it says "Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." (7:15) The point that the author is making with this notice of Saul's length of reign in 13:1 is unmistakably theological, as well as chronological – while Samuel was alive, YHWH never considered Saul's authority over Israel valid (cf. 13:13-14). One is reminded of David's frequent acknowledgement that despite having been anointed king by Samuel, he had a duty to honour and obey while there was still another 'YHWH's Anointed' on the throne (24:6, 10 [MT 7, 11]; 26:9-11, 16, 23; cf. 31:4 with 2Sam 1:14).

If the length of Saul's reign is technically correct, then, what are we to say of his age at accession – one year old? To begin with, in the final episode of the first half (**13**), Samuel explicitly describes what Saul had been like at the start of his reign – "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were the head of the tribes of Israel? And YHWH anointed you king over Israel" (15:17). This reminder unmistakably contrasts with Saul's present attitude towards kingship, being greedy for the plunder despite claiming an intention to sacrifice (15:9, 15, 19). Saul's merely pragmatic view of sacrifices (15:15, 21; 13:9-10) is contrasted with Samuel's own highly significant sacrifice of a suckling lamb as a whole burnt offering in 7:9. On the one hand, therefore, it is possible that the ascription "one year old", used elsewhere in scripture only for sacrificial animals and usually with the additional description "without blemish" (Exod 12:5; cf. Lev 12:6; 23:12; Num 6:14; 7:15; Eze 46:13), refers metaphorically to Saul's innocence and humble self-perception at his accession (cf. 1Sam 9:21).

On the other hand, a second observation may be drawn from Samuel's reminder in 15:17, in which he referred to YHWH's 'anointing' as king. For Saul as for David, Samuel's anointing oil simply prefigured the greater divine anointing, as he prophesied in 10:6 – "Then the Spirit of YHWH will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man." Textual references to changing seasons between this first anointing by Samuel in the dry season (9:25-26), deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead during ploughing (11:5), and the renewal of Saul's kingship at Gilgal during the wheat harvest (12:17), support the suggestion that the period between Saul's

anointing and renewal of kingship was approximately one year. Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel argued that Saul must have calculated his age afresh from this moment when the Spirit of God first gripped him,<sup>411</sup> which would have made him presumably approximately a year old, spiritually speaking, when he was confirmed king at Gilgal. Whether Saul would have done so or not, it seems clear that the author treats the activity of the Spirit of God as of supreme importance (cf. 19:20-23), and it would not be surprising to find him putting such weight on that single prophecy of Samuel about the Spirit. Having ‘become king’ during the wheat harvest at Gilgal a year after his anointing, Saul’s first act was to provoke the Philistines to war, in order to fulfil the final instruction of Samuel that would consecrate his kingship (13:3, 8; cf. 9:16; 10:8). Yet from fear of losing the remnants of his army entirely, Saul offered the sacrifices without Samuel on the seventh day, and promptly failed the trial. Succeeding would have resulted in his kingdom being “established” (13:13-14), but right from Saul’s first week as king, YHWH withdrew His approval of Saul and had sought out and appointed another ruler, a “man after His own heart”.

It appears that the author composed 13:1 to be deliberately jarring for the reader, in part to indicate the start of a new section or song within the larger Song of the Ark, in part to point unmistakably to the untimely death of Saul in the parallel passage 31:1-7, and in part to communicate to his audience several vital theological messages about Saul’s reign in summary form at its beginning, without compromising the literal value of this regnal notice. The brief record of Saul’s demise in 31:1-7 is thus a fitting parallel to 13:1, marking the abrupt conclusion to his sole reign over Israel. The fact that he fell on his own sword rather than being killed by anyone else is also significant, communicating that no-one but Saul was to blame for the loss of his kingdom. Samuel had recovered stolen Israelite cities from the Philistines at the beginning of his lifelong judgeship over Israel (7:14), but in his two-year reign and death, Saul managed to lose even the gains won for Israel by his predecessor (31:7), and when David came to the throne the nation was back in the state in which Samuel had found it after the ark’s exile from Shiloh.

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<sup>411</sup> Ben Israel 2000: 44-45. This is evidently a Jewish tradition, free of any influence from Christian concepts.

Episodes 9 and 9' (1Sam 13:2-15; 28:1–30:31)

To explain the evident imbalance of length between these episodes, we must first understand the chronology of episode 9', since the final days of Saul's reign are a very carefully calculated period of seven days corresponding to the week in episode 9. 28:1-2 sets the scene for the following four chapters by recording David's apparent willingness to join the Philistines in the upcoming battle against Israel, but then the scene immediately shifts to Saul's visit to the necromancer on the night before his death (28:19). Then chapter 29 carefully rewinds exactly half of the Philistine army's journey, from Shunem back to Aphek (29:1; cf. 28:4) to explain the reason why David was nowhere near Mount Gilboa when Saul died, despite having accompanied the Philistines on their march north. Having been forbidden from entering the battle by the Philistine commanders, David and his men had to leave at first light to return to Ziklag. They arrived home "on the third day" (cf. 30:12, 13), meaning that it must also have taken three days to march as far as Aphek (29:10–30:1), and the Philistines would have taken the same amount of time to complete their journey to Shunem by the sixth day. The Egyptian servant later found by David on the pursuit of the Amalekites had been abandoned by his master three days earlier after the destruction of Ziklag (30:13-14), in an ironic parallel with the Hebrew servant David (28:2) abandoned by his Philistine master on the same day far away from his burning home. On the sixth day when David arrived in Ziklag, his men were not only ready to abandon him (cf. 13:8), but threatened to stone him (30:6). Even so, unlike Saul, David "strengthened himself in YHWH his God" on the eve of the seventh day, and because he passed this trial of faith, the seventh day was for him a day of virtually complete victory over his enemies (30:17-19). David returned to Ziklag presumably the following day (30:21-26), but the author explains in 2Sam 1:1 that David arrived home "after the death of Saul" – both battles had therefore happened on the same day at opposite ends of the country, and the actions of Saul and David on the eve of battle could not have been more different when facing death (1Sam 28:4-25; 30:1-8). When David had been in Ziklag for two further days, sending plunder to friends in Judah (30:26-31), the Amalekite messenger arrived from the battle in the north, having made the six day journey in just

three days, as one might expect from a runner (2Sam 1:2). Saul's reign therefore started and finished with a week of impending doom from a superior Philistine army, and in the end neither Samuel nor David was on hand to help.

The three chapters of episode 9' are considerably longer than the fourteen verses of episode 9, but since the two periods of time recounted are identical, the author presumably felt it unnecessary to belabour considerably the report about the first week or severely telescope that of the second, more recent and momentous week.<sup>412</sup> Even so, the author has interestingly made an effort to arrange their constituent elements in a roughly inverted order to fit with the wider Song of Saul's Kingdom. So whereas the departure of the Hebrews from Saul's army (13:6-7) corresponds to the departure of the Hebrews from the Philistine army (29:1-11), both of these technically happened before Saul lost his nerve on the final day, whether with an ungodly offering or with necromancy respectively. Yet the author has deliberately recounted the story of Saul's final appeal to Samuel out of chronological order, placing it before David's departure from the Philistine camp rather than afterwards, so as to suit the broader inverted pattern.

The arrangement of episode 9 (13:2-15) is bracketed by the *inclusio* of Gibeah of Benjamin in verses 2 and 15, and comprises two primary sections, the Hebrews in Saul's army (13:2-7), and Saul's reaction to the threat (13:8-10) to which Samuel responds (13:11-14). Likewise, the arrangement of 9' (28:1-30:31) is bracketed by the *inclusio* of passages dealing with David's true allegiance, 28:1-2 and 30:26-31. David's response to Achish in 28:2 is highly ambiguous, as it is clear that Achish in fact has no idea what David has really been doing, and therefore what he will do in battle (cf. 27:11-12). David's words to the elders of Judah in 30:26, on the other hand, are quite straightforward about whose side David is on. What is more, when read in light of David's ruling immediately beforehand (30:24), one may reasonably interpret David's actions to be communicating the belief that these friends in Judah are sharing in the spoil of David's victories, and that he is therefore fighting on their behalf even if they themselves must 'stay with the baggage'. Within this *inclusio*, the same two

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<sup>412</sup> For further discussion of the expertise with which episode 9' was constructed, see Firth 2013: 74-76.

primary sections appear inverted from their order in **9**, Saul's reaction to the threat (28:3-14) to which Samuel responds from the dead (28:15-19),<sup>413</sup> and the Hebrews in the Philistines' army (29:1-11). In this episode, however, the story of these Hebrews continues into chapter 30 for the very good reason that whereas Saul failed the trial in 13:9-10 and so forfeited the establishment of his kingdom by YHWH, David passed the trial in 30:1-8 and was then able with just six hundred men, exactly the same number of men Saul had had (30:9; 13:15) to win the spoil needed to establish his kingdom (30:23).

The author has effectively composed a double parallel of episode **9** in **9'**, such that both Saul's failure in chapter 28 and David's success in chapter 30 parallel Saul's initial failure in chapter 13, and at the same time create their own concentric cluster of episodes within **9'**. In between Saul's failure and David's success is the description of the Hebrews leaving the Philistine army, the centre of this cluster, and this episode itself has a concentric arrangement. David and his men on the approach to Jezreel form the outermost elements (29:1-2, 11), followed by Achish's testimony about David's faultless service and instructions to return home (29:3, 8-10), followed by the displeasure of the Philistine commanders (29:4, 6-7), and in the centre the well-known song comparing Saul and David. An alternative arrangement would simply see two panels, 29:3-5 and 6-10, the first a three-part conversation between the commanders and Achish, and the second a three-part conversation between Achish and David. Regardless of the arrangement, though, the song at the centre which echoes the paralleled 18:7 and 21:11 [MT 12] has been recalled quite deliberately to give a further clue to the author's otherwise somewhat concealed intentions in this extended episode cluster.

#### Episodes **10** and **10'** (1Sam 13:16–14:23; 27:1-12)

From this point on, the parallels between episodes become much more straightforward. As mentioned above, episodes **10** and **11** are closely connected, which arguably suggests an intended connection also between episodes **11'** and **10'**, reinforced by David's anticipatory comments in

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<sup>413</sup> The conclusion to the scene (28:20-25) carefully parallels its introduction (28:7-14) so as to make Samuel's words the highlight of the pericope, and 28:3-6 are an extended background to the following story.

26:19-20. It does appear that the story of Jonathan and his armour bearer, followed by that of Saul's curse, are the conclusion to the invasion of the Philistines provoked by Jonathan back in 13:3 to fulfil Samuel's instructions to Saul in 10:8 (cf. 9:16). Even so, the unnecessarily extended background information inserted before Jonathan's valiant uphill attack (13:16-23; even with its own *inclusio* of "Michmash" in 13:16 and 23), deliberately separates off episode **9** from **10** and **11**, at least from a structural perspective. Likewise, therefore, chapter 27 should be connected more with chapter 26 than with chapters 28–30, at least in terms of drawing out the author's intended meanings from the structure.

As for that extensive scene-setting in 13:16-23, both halves clearly give important introductory material for the following story of Jonathan and his armour bearer. The geographical description of military movements in 13:16-18 and 23 can be taken together with other details in 13:2-15 and chapter 14 to give the following sequence of events: After Jonathan captured the Philistine garrison in Geba, his father gathered the Israelite army to Gilgal for sacrifices before returning to Geba (13:16). The Philistines, meanwhile, had captured Michmash from Israel to use as a base of operations (13:16-18; cf. 13:2), and when they advanced to the pass opposite Geba, Saul chose to retreat back to Gibeah, perhaps with the excuse of following Samuel (13:23; 14:2, 16; cf. 13:15). Jonathan decided instead to take the battle to the Philistines, and went in secret to confront the garrison overlooking the pass. The information about Jonathan having one of only two swords in all Israel (13:19-22) emphasises that Jonathan was risking Israel's most important military resources, but also explains why the Philistines were not expecting him to attack; a sword is far easier to hide than a ploughshare!

The other reason for these two introductions can be found in the parallels with episode **10'**; each one makes David's apparent defection to Philistia appear in a new light. David's three-fold attack against Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites, able to be read as speaking of three attacks on a single day (27:8-10; cf. "today") may well be intended to parallel the three-pronged invasion of the

Philistines into Israel (13:17-18),<sup>414</sup> implying that David's relocation to Philistia could in fact be seen as part of a covert Israelite 'invasion' of the territory between Shur and Egypt (27:8b). Likewise, the description of all Israel going down to the Philistines to sharpen their agricultural implements (13:20-21), necessarily used as weapons by Israelites in their warfare (cf. Joel 3:10), suggests a covert reason behind David's later migration to Philistia on the pretence of entirely mundane family-related needs (27:3). If David and his men were believed to be fighting on behalf of the Philistines, they would have been exempt from the Philistine prohibition on sharpening swords and spears – a sword each for his six hundred men is a great improvement on the two for Saul's whole army. The author thus found another way of justifying David's decision to choose Philistia as a place of refuge from Saul, rather than, say, Moab (cf. 22:3-4).

Yet obviously the main parallel between episodes **10** and **10'** is between the risky forays of both Jonathan and David into Philistine territory (indicated by the verb 'cross over' in 14:1 and 27:2), in both cases knowing that Saul would not have dared to do so even having the ark of God (14:16-19; 27:4; cf. 26:20). Saul has six hundred men, just as David does (14:2; 27:2), and just as Jonathan's armour bearer is willing to follow him anywhere, so David's men show a similar devotion to him despite the great risk to them and their families (13:7; 27:3). There may also be a deliberate parallel between the response of the Philistines to Jonathan that is a sign of YHWH's victory granted to him, and the response of Achish to David's question, "until this day", which is portrayed as proof of YHWH's promise to David that he would be king (14:8-12; 27:5-6). Thus David's relocation to Philistia is represented not as mere flight from Saul, but rather as a great risk on his part, trusting that "perhaps YHWH will work for us, for YHWH is not restrained to save by many or by few". It is seen as an opportunity for him to invade Judah's enemies on her southern borders, as well as increasing the military capabilities of his army. It was a conscious decision on David's part to leave the presence of YHWH, as Jonathan had, because there was "nothing better" for him than to risk living among his enemies for a time ("enemies" in 30:26; cf. 30:16).

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<sup>414</sup> Note the pointed addition of 'three-pronged fork' in the list of implements in 13:21 (cf. 13:20). This detail may be a Trademark interest of the author, just as 'three-toothed fork' (2:13) paralleled 'three bulls' (1:24 MT).

### Episodes 11 and 11' (1Sam 14:24-46; 26:1-25)

However, Saul is still king, and the primary focus of episodes **11** and **11'** is the effectiveness of the blessings (or otherwise) of the anointed leader upon his people (cf. 1Sam 1:17; 2:20-21; 2Sam 6:18-19). Episode **11** begins with a brief flashback to Saul's instruction to his army before they went out to engage the Philistines in battle (1Sam 14:24; cf. 14:20), thus introducing a new episode focused on his curse (14:24-46), and ends with the departure of his enemies (14:46). Episode **11'** is clearly separated from what precedes it, and the brief mention of the mutual departure of Saul and David in 26:25 is sufficient to conclude the episode. These two episodes tell very different stories, and Saul is the only character appearing in both, yet both stories involve Saul trying to kill his 'son', curses and death sentences being pronounced, and a discussion of blood being shed away from the presence of YHWH. In the first, Jonathan rebukes his father, saying, "My father has troubled the land" (14:29-30); in the second, Saul himself admits, "I have sinned... Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error" (26:21). In the first, Saul refers to Jonathan with three-fold emphasis as "Jonathan my son" (14:39, 40, 42); in the second, Saul refers to David likewise with three-fold emphasis as "my son David" (26:17, 21, 25; cf. 24:16 [MT 17]). Much more significantly, in both episodes the possibility is raised of Jonathan or David being considered at fault by YHWH Himself; in the first story YHWH selects Jonathan as the guilty person who has prevented Him from granting complete victory over the Philistines (14:41-42), and in the second David mentions the idea that "YHWH has stirred you up against me" (26:19). This turns out to be a key to understanding the message behind these paralleled passages.

The primary question in these two episodes is why the king Saul, who is able to make atonement on behalf of the people before YHWH, chooses not to do so in the case of his own 'sons' Jonathan and then David. In the first story, Saul had prevented the people from eating anything until evening (14:24), and even when Jonathan ate honey in the forest it appears the people still refrained out of fear (14:28). So by the time they got as far as Aijalon that evening (14:31; a journey from Michmash would have taken the whole day), their weariness and hunger made them so ravenous that they

would not wait to cook the meat they slaughtered, eating it with its blood (14:32). Nevertheless, though it was Saul's fault, it was the people who had sinned, and so Saul built an altar out of a large stone where the people could kill and eat the animals properly (14:33-35). It seems that Saul's quick action succeeded in atoning for the people's sin, despite its severity (cf. Lev 17:1-14), in that YHWH did not accuse them of sin when the lots were cast (14:41). On the other hand, when it came to Jonathan, who had sinned entirely unintentionally having not even heard his father's oath (14:27), for some reason Saul was not willing to make a simple sacrifice and atone for his son's sin (cf. Lev 5:4-6), but insisted on his death (14:43-44). David argues that Saul is doing exactly the same to him, in that if David has indeed committed some unintentional sin, there must be some sacrifice that could be made for him (26:19). But instead, Saul himself is intending to shed David's blood illegally rather than convicting and if necessary executing him justly before the presence of YHWH (26:20). The association of murder with the eating of meat with its blood is made elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Gen 4:4, 8-11; 9:4-6; Lev 17:4; Eze 33:25; 39:17-19; etc.). David is thus appealing to Saul's concern for adhering to YHWH's commands, and if it turns out that he has sinned somehow, asking that Saul use his influence before YHWH to atone for his sin with sacrifice, just as should have happened with Jonathan. In fact, one might argue that Saul's curse on Jonathan his son was ironically the reason why he and Jonathan did not achieve complete victory over their enemies (14:24, 30, 46), whereas his blessing on David for 'accomplishing much and prevailing' bore fruit in David's complete annihilation of his enemies when in Philistia (26:25; 27:9, 11). A king has great authority before YHWH for blessing or cursing, hence the conclusion of the entire Song of the Ark with 2Sam 6:18-19.

The other message in these parallel passages emerges from a comparison between the curses and death penalties pronounced by both Saul and David. Saul's curse was a foolish one according to his son (14:29-30), both counter-productive and leading to the people sinning out of desperation, whereas David's curse was justified according to the law of YHWH. David pronounced a curse on any people who stirred up Saul against him in order to exile him from the land (26:19), and as this would effectively prevent David from being able to worship YHWH at His sanctuary, leading potentially to

the worship of other gods, they deserved to be opposed by YHWH Himself (cf. Deut 13:1-18). It is also noteworthy that Jonathan was ransomed from Saul's judgement by the people, whereas David implies that the people may be complicit in his own persecution (14:45; 26:19). Secondly, Saul's death sentence against Jonathan was worse than foolish; victory had been won already, yet out of an entirely personal greed for more plunder and revenge (14:36; contrast 15:19, 21, 24) Saul insisted on removing every obstacle to the divine approval for his further pursuit of the Philistines, even if it might be his own son (14:39). What is more, pronouncing a death sentence on the one who broke his command and came under his curse was quite unnecessary, especially after such a great deliverance (14:45), and was therefore quite uncharacteristic of Saul himself (cf. 11:13). David, on the other hand, declared that Abner and the rest of Saul's guard should receive the death penalty for not protecting their king (26:14-16). Although the true cause had been "a sound sleep from YHWH" (26:12), this judgement of David was appropriate, as the soldiers of a king ought to guard him with their own lives; Abishai himself did this for David (2Sam 21:15-17), as also did David's three mighty men (2Sam 23:9-10, 13-17; cf. Est 2:21-23).

So we see that both episode **11** and episode **11'** have been crafted to draw out the primary meanings of the opposite story, so that Saul's character as a king can better be seen. Though he had begun in magnanimity (11:13), he soon allowed his greed for plunder and glory to turn him against even his own 'sons'. His curses and death sentences were foolish, as was his pursuit of David, though as king he had been able to atone effectively for the sins of his people. Had he recognised this, he might have been willing to offer sacrifices for his sons' failings (whether real or imagined), and by blessing Jonathan he might have enabled him to win victories as complete as those of David later in Philistia. Once again, contrasts drawn with the curses and death penalties pronounced by David are only there to highlight the inadequacies of Saul, a tragic figure of a leader from first to last.

Episodes 12 and 12' (1Sam 14:47-52; 25:2-44)

Episodes 12 and 12' are not quite as disproportionate as episodes 9 and 9', but the parallels are unmistakable, and the positive message nicely balances out the negative one of 11 and 11'. The arrangement of episode 12 is a simple concentric structure, with Saul's successful battles against his enemies (14:47-48) paralleling the gathering of mighty and valiant men into his army (14:52), and Saul's children (14:49) paralleling his elders (14:50b-51).<sup>415</sup> The centre of this episode is therefore the description of Saul's wife Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz (14:50a), in the context of delivering Israel from its plunderers and gathering mighty valiant men to himself. It is presumably no accident, then, that in the following episode there is a passing reference to Saul setting up a monument for himself in Carmel (15:12), following his victory over the Amalekites, the plunderers mentioned in 14:48. The only other reference to Carmel in Judah (apart from Joshua 15:5) is found in episode 12', where a certain man from Maon named Nabal kept sheep and goats in Carmel. Samuel's description of the activity of a king in 1Sam 8:11-18 allows him to give prime land and taxes of harvests and flocks "to his officers and to his servants". It is not implausible, therefore, that Nabal may in fact have earned his prosperity from faithful service as a 'mighty man' in Saul's battles (14:52), perhaps even receiving property in Carmel as a reward for involvement in the battle with the Amalekites (15:12). Whether or not Nabal owed his prosperity to Saul, Nabal's response when David asks for reimbursement is perhaps not quite so foolish as it would initially appear: "There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master" (25:10). It would be quite natural for him to be somewhat hesitant to aid David and risk being blamed for harbouring a traitorous servant of Saul (deliberately echoing 22:7-10); whatever David's wrath might be, the wrath of Saul would almost certainly be greater.

In episode 12', therefore, we have a beautifully told story about David and his men delivering Nabal's shepherds from their plunderers (25:7-8, 15-16, 21), and requesting in vain some small share

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<sup>415</sup> It is possible to read 14:50b as "Abner the son of Saul's uncle Ner", but it appears that the author has deliberately paralleled 1Sam 10:14-16 with the episode that begins at 2Sam 3:6 in order to equate Abner with Saul's uncle. This is clearly how it is interpreted also in 1Chr 8:33 and 9:39.

in his sheep-shearing festivities in return. Although he and his men receive nothing from Nabal, the man's wife Abigail appeases their anger with some provisions brought in secret, and then when her husband dies of shock on hearing what she has done, she becomes the wife of David instead. She is his second wife alongside Ahinoam of Jezreel, replacing his wife Michal who had been given to another husband. The parallels with episode **12** are emphasised through Abigail's own summary in 25:28 – "YHWH will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of YHWH, and evil will not be found in you all your days". Immediately before this, David had sworn to Saul to allow his house to endure (24:21-22 [MT 22-23]), yet Saul denied the same blessing to David by confiscating his wife Michal (25:44). While fighting YHWH's battles against plunderers, David was dissuaded at the last minute from the 'evil' of avenging himself on Nabal (25:26, 31, 33), and so YHWH's own revenge made for David an enduring house (cf. 2Sam 3:3). Just as Saul had delivered Israel from its plunderers (e.g. the Amalekites) with the help of his mighty men (e.g. Nabal perhaps), and was consequently blessed with a fruitful wife and noble children, so David too delivered Nabal from his plunderers with the help of his band of men and thereby ended up inheriting his own beautiful wife. Had the story been about David's other wife Ahinoam instead, the parallel with Saul would have been perfect, but the author was understandably limited by the stories available to him. The mention of Michal's remarriage here in 25:44 may have been introduced to the Song of Salvation at the same time as the other stories about Michal (1Sam 19:11-17; 2Sam 6:16, 20-23). However, it is more likely that this was part of the original song, because it is neatly balanced with the natural reference to her in 1Sam 14:49, and is necessary background material to David's demand for payment from Abner before their meeting (2Sam 3:13-16), which is part of the traditional sequence of events told in both paralleled stories at that point (see above in **6/6'**).

The description of Saul's military and family successes in **12** lacks almost any hint of critique, apart from perhaps a slight note of desperation in his accumulation of "any" mighty and valiant men for his army (14:52). Equally, the story of David's gain of an intelligent and beautiful wife in **12'** is nearly entirely lacking in any sort of critique of Saul, with perhaps only the mildest jibe at Saul for

choosing to reward a fool with such wealth, only for his astute wife to undermine his authority and then on her husband's death promptly hand over all of that wealth to his enemy David, while she herself became David's wife in place of Saul's own confiscated daughter. The praise of Saul does appear to be genuine, and is one of the only glimpses we have of the glories of his reign (cf. 2Sam 1:24). In view of David's lament over Saul and Jonathan in 2Sam 1:19-27, it would not be out of place to see this episode's mostly straightforward comparison of Saul's wife Ahinoam and David's wife Abigail as a real expression of respect for Jonathan's mother, about whom we know nothing else. She is portrayed as a worthy gift to Saul in return for his valiant deliverance of Israel from its plunderers.

#### Episodes **13** and **13'** (1Sam 15:1-35; 23:19–25:1)

The final pair of episodes in this segment, **13** and **13'**, contains some of the clearest parallels in the whole Song of the Ark. Both episodes begin with background events establishing why Saul and Agag, or David and Saul, should be considered 'enemies' (15:1-9; 23:19–24:3 [MT 24:4]), in preparation for extended dialogues between Saul and Samuel, and between David and Saul (15:10-34; 24:4-22 [MT 5-23]). Both background sections also feature Saul being urged against his enemy and expressing gratitude for the kindness shown to him by his allies (15:6; 23:21; note that the Ziphites are praised for 'sparing' Saul, as he later 'spares' Agag – cf. 15:9, 15). This delimitation of episodes is reinforced by the conclusions of episodes **14'** and **13'** (23:17-18; 24:20-22 [MT 21-23]) which both mention Saul's knowledge that YHWH had chosen David and describe the main character's return to his house.

In 14:48 we were told that Saul smote the Amalekites, delivering Israel from the hand of their plunderers, but Saul's failure to complete his mission against the Amalekites (**13**) is not necessarily a different event (cf. 15:7). The story is resonant with echoes of the Israelites' journey through the wilderness and conquest of the land,<sup>416</sup> both explicit (15:2, 6) and implicit: The ambush in the valley ominously echoes Joshua's conquest of Ai following the judgement on Israel for failing to destroy

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<sup>416</sup> A Trademark theme in the Song of the Ark, e.g. 1Sam 2:27-28; 4:8; 6:6; 8:8; 10:18; 12:6-11.

everything in Jericho (15:5; cf. Jos 7–8), Samuel’s description of YHWH as one who does not change His mind like mankind echoes the prophecy of Balaam, one who prophesied about Agag (15:29; cf. Num 23:19; 24:7; echoed again in §4.5, 5), and Samuel’s words to Agag echo the words of Adoni-Bezek, another king who got a taste of his own medicine (15:33; cf. Jdg 1:7). However, the whole account of Samuel in this chapter primarily echoes Moses and the sin of the golden calf (Exod 32): YHWH tells his prophet of sin that has made Him reject His people, the prophet intercedes fervently before going to confront the people, he arrives to see a monument set up glorifying the people rather than YHWH, and sounds confirm to the prophet that sin has been committed; the leader tries to excuse himself by blaming the people, and the prophet himself takes the symbol of the people’s sin and vigorously destroys it. The equation that “insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry [*teraphim*]” (15:23; cf. Jdg 17:5; 18:14-20) makes the evocation of idolatry explicit, and justifies Samuel’s judgement that Saul’s actions have earned his rejection and replacement (cf. Exod 32:10, 14). Yet the parallel with Moses and Aaron may be intended to justify Samuel’s ongoing intercession for Saul, hoping that like Aaron he might be forgiven (15:35–16:1; cf. Exod 32:30-33; 40:12-13).

If Saul’s conquest of the Amalekites parallels Joshua’s defeat of Ai and capture of its king, and his failure to destroy everything parallels the sin of Achan just beforehand at Jericho, David’s opportunity to kill the king who had hidden himself in a cave may well be meant to parallel Joshua’s third conquest, of the five kings at Makkedah (Jos 10:1-28). David’s prophetic promise of his enemies being given into his hand (1Sam 24:4 [MT 5]) corresponds to the same promise to Joshua (Jos 10:8, 19), and yet unlike Joshua, who put to death the enemy kings (Jos 8:29; 10:26-27), David chose to treat Saul as a father rather than as an enemy (1Sam 24:11, 19 [MT 12, 20]). However, Saul explicitly recognised that David could not be his enemy, because enemies are not spared when the opportunity to kill them is found (24:19 [MT 20]). In saying this, he was condemning himself, as he had captured Agag and yet chosen to spare him from death (15:8-9, 20, 32-33); Saul had demonstrated that he did not consider Agag his enemy, and thereby deserved to be treated as YHWH’s enemy himself (cf. 1Kgs 20:34-42).

The two episodes are therefore parallel in that both focus on the sparing of an ‘enemy’ king, thereby undermining the depiction of each king as a true enemy. The sparing of Agag is defined as “rebellion” and “insubordination” by Saul against his own king, YHWH (15:19, 23, 26), whereas David’s sparing of Saul is precisely the opposite (24:10-14 [MT 11-15]). This is because the *herem* ban placed by YHWH upon the Amalekites (15:3, 8-9, 15, 18, 20) is considered equivalent to His anointing placed upon Saul (24:6, 10 [MT 7, 11]); both belong to Him alone, and therefore cannot be taken by any other for their benefit. Saul has taken what belonged to YHWH under pressure from his men (15:24) but David resisted the pressure from his men (24:4, 7, 10 [MT 5, 8, 11]), in order to honour what belonged to YHWH. Saul’s kingdom is therefore taken from him to be given to his neighbour “who is better than you”, and in the parallel episode Saul then recognises that David, being “more righteous than I”, will surely be king in his place (15:28; 24:17, 20 [MT 18, 21]).

The clearest parallel of them all, however, is the removal of a piece from the edge of a superior’s robe, a visible action signifying disrespect for the authority of the position represented by that robe (cf. 1Sam 2:18-19; 18:4; 28:14; 2Sam 13:18). Saul dishonours the position of the prophet represented by Samuel, to which Samuel responds by declaring that in effect YHWH will tear Saul’s own robe of kingship over Israel to give it to his neighbour (15:27-28; cf. 15:30). David then dishonours the position of king represented by Saul, cutting his robe, but he regrets this action and makes up for his error by an action of deepest respect (24:4, 5, 8 [MT 5, 6, 9]). Even so, Saul recognises that this ‘neighbour’ of his has indeed acted more righteously than he, and will in due time himself receive from the hand of YHWH the very robe of kingship that he had cut, as Samuel had promised to Saul.

Just as Saul had been granted his request that Samuel condescend to preserve his honour before the rest of the people despite his admission of guilt (15:30), so Saul again asks and is granted his request that David condescend to preserve his “name” after his death (24:21-22 [MT 22-23]). Finally, 15:35 concludes episode **15** both by echoing the start of its primary scene, when Samuel responded to YHWH’s regret (15:10-11), and by indicating that Samuel would never again ‘see’ Saul, that is, seek

an audience with him, as he had in 15:1 and 15:13 (hence 19:24 does not contradict this). The way this is expressed, “Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death”, is paralleled precisely at the end of episode **15'**, where it is recorded that once Saul acknowledged the certainty of Samuel’s prophecies that he would be replaced by David, “Then Samuel died; and all Israel ... buried him” (25:1).

### 3.5 The Song of David’s Testing

As Samuel’s attention turns away from Saul towards David, so does that of the audience of *Samuel*. The Song of Saul’s Kingdom maintained a focus throughout on Saul himself – his attitudes, character, spiritual authority, and family – whereas in the Song of David’s Testing, Saul appears more as a mirror to reflect on David than vice versa. The central episode is left out of the following map to signify its broader function as the shared climax of the Song of David’s Testing, the Song of Saul’s Kingdom, and the Song of Ark as a whole [see Appendix, (9)].

*Map 6 – The Song of the Ark, sections D-E and E'-D' (1Sam 16:1–19:17; 20:1–23:18)*

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- 14** Samuel anoints David king in secret (16:1-13)
    - 15** David delivers Saul from a terrorising spirit using a harp (16:14-23)
    - 16** Saul uses the shepherd David to kill the giant Goliath (17:1-54)
    - 17** David’s parents and military career prosper (17:55–18:5)
    - 18** David more kingly than Saul according to the women (18:6-9)
      - 19** David’s abstinence leads to a Philistine trap from Saul (18:10-30)
      - 20** Jonathan defends David, hiding him in the field [+ Michal] (19:1-17)
    - 20'** Jonathan defends David, hiding him in the field (20:1-42)
    - 19'** David escapes a trap from Saul by his abstinence (21:1-9 [MT 2-10])
    - 18'** David more kingly than Saul according to Philistines (21:10-15 [MT 11-16])
    - 17'** David’s new ‘military’ career, and parents exiled (22:1-5)
    - 16'** Saul uses the shepherd Doeg to kill the priest Ahimelech (22:6-19)
    - 15'** Abiathar delivers David from a terrorising king using an ephod (22:20–23:13)
  - 14'** Jonathan acknowledges David’s succession in secret (23:14-18)
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Just as the importance of Samuel for Saul’s kingdom was reflected structurally in his appearance at the beginning and end of each panel **C** and **C'**, so in this song Samuel’s importance to David is communicated by his presence at the start and in the centre. However, opposite Samuel’s anointing

of David is not another Samuel pericope, but rather the visit of Jonathan to David in the wilderness, and Jonathan also has pride of place in the uppermost pair of episodes flanking the central scene about Samuel. Evidently, the author intended to convey Jonathan's supreme spiritual influence on David (e.g. 20:12-16, 42; 23:16-18; cf. parallels between **10** and **10'**), second only to that of Samuel himself.

#### Episodes **14** and **14'** (1Sam 16:1-13; 22:14-18)

The Song of David's Testing begins with God's irrevocable rejection of Saul, in favour of a new king for whom Samuel's only clues so far have been "a man after His own heart" (13:14; cf. 16:7) and "better than" Saul (15:28). The process of kingmaking, however, was quite similar. Both initial meetings with prospective candidates happened on the pretext of attending a community sacrifice presided over by the prophet (9:12-13, 19, 22-24; 16:2-5, 11), in both cases the Spirit of YHWH came mightily upon the chosen individual on the day of his anointing (10:6; 16:13), and both individuals had to be summoned out of hiddenness (10:22-23; 16:11-12). Yet one notable difference is the vessel used by Samuel to carry the anointing oil; unlike a "flask" in 10:1, the "horn" of Samuel expressly commanded in 16:1 undoubtedly echoes the beginning and end of the prophetic song by his mother Hannah (2:1, 10). David, not Saul, fulfils Samuel's destiny to anoint the king of Israel (2:10, 35). Interestingly, YHWH specifies Saul's role to Samuel as 'prince' or 'restrainer' (9:16-17; 10:1), whereas it is the people who appoint him "king" (10:24; 11:15; 12:13); David, on the other hand, is the one of whom YHWH says, "I have selected a king for myself" (16:1; but cf. 2Sam 7:8).

Episode **14'** is the first point at which either Jonathan or Saul explicitly acknowledge that David will be the next king (implied in 18:8; 20:13-15, 31, 42), clearly paralleling Samuel's presumed affirmation that 'YHWH has chosen this one' (16:12-13; cf. 16:8-10). Though short, the account of

Jonathan's visit to David at Horesh is constructed of two connected concentric patterns;<sup>417</sup> the first summarises the whole period of Saul's pursuit of David in the Judaeen wilderness (23:19–27:1), so that the visit of Jonathan in the second is understood to have been of great significance to David throughout this entire period. The parallels between episodes **14** and **14'**, therefore, are not only in the risks taken by Samuel and Jonathan in affirming the future kingship of David, but also in the significance to David of the encouragement of these two men during his time of persecution in the wilderness.

Episodes **15** and **15'** (1Sam 16:14-23; 22:20–23:13)

In episode **15** the audience is given a first glimpse of David, beyond descriptions of his parentage (16:1), handsome appearance (16:12) and anointing by the Spirit of YHWH (16:13). In 16:18 a servant of Saul adds four further descriptions of David: "skilful in music, and a valiant warrior and a man of war, and discerning in word". The episode begins and ends with a search for a decent harpist and wordsmith who can deliver Saul from the evil spirit terrorising him (16:14-17, 23), but in the middle, between two messages from Saul to Jesse (16:19-20, 22), is a surprising emphasis on David's role as Saul's armour bearer (16:21), corresponding to the second and third descriptions of him in the above list. At this point in the narrative we have not seen anything of David's military expertise, and neither has Saul, so it is possible that this is a summary description of what was in fact a process of introduction to Saul's court that took some time (cf. 17:15); 16:22 may be identical to 18:2, and

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<sup>417</sup> The first line here acts as an introduction to the period of time that concluded with Samuel's death (cf. 1Sam 22:4-5; 23:29; 24:22 [MT 24:1, 23]):

- X** And David dwelt in the wilderness in the strongholds (23:14a)
  - a** and he dwelt in the hill-country in the wilderness of Ziph (14b)
    - b** and Saul sought him every day (14c)
      - c** but **God** did not deliver him into his hands (14d)
    - b'** and David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life (15a)
  - a'** and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in *Horesh*. (15b)
- A** And Jonathan son of Saul arose and went to David in *Horesh* (16a)
  - B** And he strengthened his hand in **God**. (16b)
    - C** And he said to him, 'Do not be afraid, for the hand of my father Saul will not find you (17a)
      - D** and **you** yourself **will reign** over Israel and I myself will be second to you (17b)
      - C'** and also my father Saul knows this.' (17c)
    - B'** And the two of them made a covenant before **YHWH**. (18a)
  - A'** And David dwelt in *Horesh* and Jonathan went to his house. (18b)

16:21 to 18:5. Regardless of the precise chronology of events, it is clear that although the main narrative problem being resolved in episode **15** is the search for a skilful musician, the author intends rather to emphasise David's martial capabilities.

This makes the parallel with episode **15'** more understandable, as 22:20–23:13 features David's successful deliverance of Qe'ilah from the Philistines, and then his escape from Saul's plot to trap him inside the city. The military challenge of driving away a superior Philistine army from a fortified city within Philistine occupied territory is emphasised (23:1, 3, 7), as if to demonstrate the courage and skill David typically displayed in warfare, courage Saul would have recognised when appointing him armour bearer (16:21; cf. **2Sam** 23:20-23, 37). However, the other parallel is with the description of David leaving his youthful chores for his father (16:11, 19), who is only too glad to oblige, so as to enter formal employment with Saul using the harp carried in his hand (16:16, 19-20, 22-23). In 22:20-23 we have the story of Abiathar fleeing from service in his father's household once his father Ahimelech the priest lost his life in Saul's massacre, and taking up formal employment as a priest to David using the ephod carried in his hand (22:23; 23:6, 9-12).<sup>418</sup>

Both the syntax of 23:6 and the narrative structure of the whole episode emphasise the ephod used by Abiathar. The description of David's deliverance of Qe'ilah (23:1-5) is actually a flash-back, since Abiathar's flight to David (22:20-23) happened when David was already in Qe'ilah (23:6). The deliverance of Qe'ilah also focuses more on David's double inquiry of YHWH (see Episode **19'** below) than it does on the actual battle strategy, so as to parallel the double inquiry of YHWH through Abiathar's ephod in 23:7-13. The reason for David's use of the harp was that by playing it with his hand he was able to cause the evil spirit to depart from Saul and cease terrorising him (16:16, 23). It is not hard to recognise a parallel with Abiathar, who had acquired sufficient skill with the ephod to be able to inquire of YHWH for David so that he could do what was necessary to prevent Saul from terrorising him (23:8-9, 13). This might appear speculative until we notice that the word 'terrorise' is

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<sup>418</sup> In biblical Hebrew, holding tools or weapons "in the hand" frequently denotes a formal skill or profession (cf. Gen 40:11; Exod 4:20; Num 31:6; 1Sam 17:40; Hos 12:8); thus the idiom "fill the hand of" means "ordain".

used to describe Saul's behaviour towards David in 2Sam 22:5 (cf. 22:1, 4).<sup>419</sup> In both episodes, David and Abiathar represent those who unlike Saul have the skills needed to welcome the peace and freedom of YHWH into an otherwise terrifying situation.

#### Episodes 16 and 16' (17:1-54; 22:6-19)

The account of David and Goliath in episode 16 is one of the most well-known in all of *Samuel*, but is also one of the passages displaying most dissimilarity between the Masoretic Text [MT] and Septuagint [LXX].<sup>420</sup> As will become clear below, 17:55–18:5 (episode 17) was meant to parallel the similar collection of assorted information in 22:1-5, a passage present and accounted for in the LXX. Yet 17:55–18:5 is absent from the LXX, suggesting that the book's structure was overlooked at this point, allowing editors to remove these parenthetical verses and segue more smoothly from 17:54 into 18:6. Such an explanation is equally plausible for at least the majority of the other minuses in the LXX (for example, since 17:12-31 is lacking in the Greek, 18:17-19 which depends on 17:25 was felt to be extraneous).<sup>421</sup>

Structure also provides a key positive argument in support of the MT form of 1Sam 17. The structure of episode 16 falls unsurprisingly into a natural concentric arrangement, thereby revealing an unexpected authorial emphasis in the story which neatly parallels that in episode 16'. The first three verses (17:1-3) are background to the following narrative, explaining the location of the Philistine and Israelite camps relative to each other, and parallel the concluding verses (17:51-54) in which the Israelites rout the Philistines and plunder their camp. Then we are presented with the two champions in contrast to each other, within a neat *inclusio* describing Goliath 'coming forth' (17:4, 16). This obviously stands opposite the actual confrontation between the two champions in 17:40-50, beginning with their mutual approach towards each other, and emphasising David's lack of

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<sup>419</sup> This pair of episodes is perhaps one of the weaker parallels, relying on the strength of 14/14' and 16/16', but it also enables the author to incorporate the rest of the story hinted at in 1Sam 21:1-9 [MT 2-10] (19').

<sup>420</sup> Hence the voluminous secondary literature on this chapter – cf. Barthélemy et al. 1986; Auld & Ho 1992.

<sup>421</sup> Gordon (1986: 65) notes that the shorter LXX version has introduced its own logical inconsistencies with the lack of prior notice of David's shepherd gear in 17:40, and covenant with Jonathan in 20:8.

conventional weapons in an *inclusio* (cf. 17:5-7).<sup>422</sup> Between these, there are two narratives involving a father figure sending David out to a dangerous place with suitable provisions. First, Jesse sends David to gather information, but also gives him food with which to deflect potential resistance from his brothers and their commander (cf. 17:28); we also learn that the Israelites hearing Goliath's challenge "were greatly afraid" (17:17-24). Second, David urges Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him", and Saul (his potential father-in-law) tries to send David with his own armour to the front line (17:31-39).<sup>423</sup> Therefore in the middle we are left with the focus of this whole narrative: Three times the men of Israel explain what will be done for the man who kills Goliath (17:25, 27, 30; the first of these seems out of sequence until the pattern is recognised), separated from each other by two speeches of contempt, one for each champion (David against Goliath in 17:26; Eliab against David in 17:28-29). The author's interest in this episode, therefore, is not so much on the defeat of Goliath, but on the reward that Saul had promised to the one who defeated him, emphasised by three-fold repetition.<sup>424</sup>

The contrast with episode **16'** is clear. In episode **16'** we find recurrent references to the promise Saul made before Goliath's defeat – "And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's household free in Israel" (17:25). Saul's first speech in 22:7-8 glorifies his ability to grant fields and vineyards and military honours to his servants, hinting at his retraction of the great riches promised to David. In Saul's second speech, or dialogue (22:12-16), the first description of David given by Ahimelech is "even the king's son-in-law", focusing on the soon-to-be withdrawn reward of Saul's daughter Michal (cf. 25:44). Thirdly, in the speeches, David is referred to unusually as "the son of Jesse" four times (22:7, 8, 9, 13), and only twice by his own name (22:14, 17), highlighting Saul's betrayal of his promise about David's "father's household" (cf. 22:1-4). And finally, in between Saul's two

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<sup>422</sup> Goliath's beheading parallels that of Dagon (5:4), completing the contrast with the defeat at Ebenezer when Philistines envisaged mutual slavery (4:9) and confiscated Israel's holy 'weapon' (5:2; cf. 17:54; 21:9 [MT 10]; 31:9-10).

<sup>423</sup> Bestowing one's own clothes on another often signifies inheritance (e.g. 18:4; 1Kgs 19:19; Isa 22:19-22).

<sup>424</sup> Trademark three-fold repetition is also used for the climactic scene in 1Sam 19:20-21. Perhaps emphasis on reward was seen by the LXX as unworthy of one such as David, hence the omission of 17:25-31 (with 17:12-24).

speeches, Doeg the Edomite reports to Saul that David had been given “the sword of Goliath the Philistine” (22:9-10), which the audience knows full well was actually won by David himself in his great victory over Goliath, recounted in the parallel episode. The other aspect of parallelism here between episodes **16** and **16'** is shown in the remainder of episode **16'**. The accusation of Ahimelech in 22:9-11 is the centre of the episode, paralleled at the beginning by Saul sitting “on the height with his spear in his hand” in 22:6 (cf. 18:10; 19:9; and perhaps 17:3), and at the end by the massacre of the priests in 22:17-19. In effect, Saul is once again promising to his servants that the one who rids him of the threats to his authority will be rewarded with riches, and the only one willing to respond to his offer is another shepherd, Doeg. The dreadful contrasts between these two offers by Saul, however, is that the first threat was a foreigner defying YHWH Himself, whereas the second ‘threat’ is YHWH’s own priesthood. In this case Saul’s willingness even to use a foreigner to do his dirty work makes this king who stood ‘head and shoulders taller’ than all around him (10:23) take the place of the foreign giant Goliath who with spear in hand had set himself foolishly against YHWH; the reader is in no doubt about the eventual outcome of this uneven contest also.

Episodes **17** and **17'** (1Sam 17:55–18:5; 22:1-5)

The next two episodes, **17** and **17'**, are both collections of assorted information that have been inserted between two more substantial episodes. 22:1-5 might in some respects have fit better after the episode about Qe'ilah, at the start of David's period in the wilderness on the run from Saul. However, its parallel material in 17:55–18:5 simply could not have been expressed in such a way that it would fit before the episode in which David enters Saul's court as a musician. Episodes **16'** and **15'** needed to be kept together, linked as they were by the flight of Abiathar from Nob down to David in Qe'ilah (22:20-23), so episode **17** could not be introduced before the Goliath story. And although there might have been ways of swapping the order of episodes **18'** and **17'**, it was better that Saul's positive responses to David following his defeat of Goliath be recounted before the jealousy set in, hence the position of episode **17** at this particular place in the song. The above explanation is worth

setting out simply because the LXX evidently considered episode **17** an unnecessary interruption to the flow of the narrative (cf. 16:21); the author, however, appears to have had good structural reasons [for further discussion see §6.3(A)].

Both of these two episodes are in fact arranged in simple concentric structures. The first, 17:55–18:5, begins with Saul ascertaining the particular ‘father’s household’ that would benefit from his promised tax exemption (17:55-58; cf. 17:25), and Abner, “the commander of the army”, is brought into the scene probably to parallel the way that Saul set David “over the men of war” in 18:5. Then there are two balanced descriptions of Jonathan’s love for David (18:1, 3-4), and in the centre is the statement that Saul would not let David go back to his father again from that time on (18:2), which connects the beginning and end of the mini-episode. The second episode, 22:1-5, begins and ends with David departing and escaping to a new refuge (22:1a, 5), it then has two descriptions of David’s interaction with his ‘father’s household’ (22:1b, 3-4), and the centre is David being appointed captain over four hundred distressed, discontented debtors (22:2). Thus the parallels between the two episodes are fairly clear: in the first, David is forced to leave his family, now tax-free, in order to command Saul’s army, and is supported by Jonathan; in the second, David’s family are forced to come to him for security, now persecuted by Saul, as he has become a commander of a motley ‘army’ on the run, and is supported by Gad.<sup>425</sup>

#### Episodes **18** and **18’** (1Sam 18:6-9; 21:10-15 [MT 11-16])<sup>426</sup>

Having been given a sneak preview of David’s new career in Saul’s army, we now return in episode **18** to David’s return from the battle with Goliath. The author has cleverly positioned his first proper description of Saul’s raving [lit. “prophesying”] under the influence of the evil spirit (18:10-12, echoing 16:13-16; cf. 10:10) immediately after the victory song (18:6-9) so that there is a clear parallel between Saul’s genuine madness and David’s feigned madness at Achish’s court (21:13-15 [MT 14-16]). Perhaps the implication is that David drew his inspiration for this method

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<sup>425</sup> Note that Jonathan is again paralleled with a prophet, as in **14/14’**.

<sup>426</sup> ‘Hebrew’ and ‘English’ chapter divisions are evidently contemporary mediaeval variants – Davies 2013.

acting from his own close observation of Saul's insanity. However, we shall see in the discussion of episode **19** below that 18:10-11 functions technically as an *inclusio* with 19:9-10, both also being deliberately paralleled with details in the corresponding episodes **20'** and **19'**.

As for the primary parallels between episodes **18** and **18'**, then, it is quite clear that Saul the king of Israel interprets the song of the women, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands", in precisely the same way as do the servants of Achish the king of Gath. Both feel threatened by the presence of this king-in-the-making, David, and in both cases David appears to have been naïve about the implications of this popular song and put himself in harm's way. Saul predicts that such popularity may eventually win for David the kingdom of Israel (18:8), and the servants of Achish ironically refer to David as "the king of the land" (21:11 [MT 12]). The song of the dancing women is repeated verbatim in these two episodes (apart from one spelling variant), making the parallel between these two episodes one of the strongest in the whole song. It is of course true that the song is also repeated once more later in episode **9'** (29:5), but as was explained above, the song at that point is used as a succinct way of highlighting the unusual double parallel by both David and Saul with the seventh day of episode **9**, which effectively justified the establishment of David's kingdom in place of Saul's. Yet the kingliness connotations of the song in 29:5 are purely implicit and structural, relying on the explicit statements in both **18** and **18'**, so the third quotation of the song does not invalidate the close parallel between these two episodes.

#### Episodes **19** and **19'** (1Sam 18:10-30; 21:1-9 [MT 2-10])

As already mentioned, episodes **19** and **20** have been carefully tied together by an *inclusio* of 18:10-11 and 19:9-10, indicated explicitly by the note in 18:11 that David escaped "twice". Within this *inclusio* there is a further *inclusio* of descriptions about David's military leadership of Israel against the Philistines (18:12-16; 19:8) which also connects with a two-part note about Saul's fear of David and David's military success (18:29-30; omitted in LXX). This note is placed between the main parts of episodes **19** and **20** (18:17-28; 19:1-7) less as a climax than as a transition between the two

episodes, because the fear of Saul and skill of David link back to 18:12-15, whereas battle with the Philistines links forward to 19:8. Clearly the two episodes are designed to be understood together, and this is probably due to their shared message that the children of Saul were enthusiastic supporters of David, despite their father's antagonism and fear. Nevertheless, as regards their structural value, episodes **19** and **20** are treated quite distinctly as pairs for episodes **20'** and **19'**. The author therefore needed to find parallels in the latter for Saul's two attempts on David's life which bookend **19–20**. The second spear-throwing incident (19:9-10) from episode **20** is quite explicitly paralleled in episode **20'**, when Jonathan receives the same treatment (20:33). The first spear story (18:10-11) from episode **19** is acknowledged in a less overt way in episode **19'**, when David is seeking weapons from Ahimelech. The author's focus is obviously the sword of Goliath, and yet David's request deliberately specifies, in emphatic first position among "my weapons I did not bring in my hand", a "spear" in addition to a sword (21:8 [MT 9]; cf. 17:47, 50), to contrast with "the spear in Saul's hand" (18:10). David is never portrayed as being prepared to use a spear except here and in 2Sam 23:6-7 (which also alludes to Saul – see §4.5 episode **4'**; cf. 1Sam 26:11-22). In this way the author has tied together two episodes featuring Saul's children, while at the same time paralleling each separately as elements of his concentric structure.

After the spear story, therefore, episode **19** begins and ends with references to Saul's fear and David's skill (18:12-16, 29-30). Within these there are then two accounts of Saul offering a daughter of his to David for a wife. It appears that Merab was meant to be the reward promised to David (17:25), but David's self-abasement was interpreted as reticence and she was instead married to Adriel. Saul realised, though, that David would not fall in battle with the Philistines quite as easily as he had hoped, so he hatched a plot in which David's ambition would certainly result in his death. The second time Saul offered his daughter to David, she came with a specific and quite unrealistic bride-price. David's natural self-abasement was countered with deception from Saul's servants, to make him unable to resist the temptation, and yet when David decided to take Saul up on the offer this time, he doubled the asking price and Saul could not retract his offer. The main features of this

episode that the author intends to highlight are the euphemistic references to male genitalia (18:25-27), sexual humour that was quite common in the context of betrothal and marriage (cf. Jdg 14:3, 14, 18), and Saul's hidden intentions to bring about David's death by setting him an impossible task.

Episode **19'** appears at first glance to be entirely unconnected to episode **19**, but on a closer reading the parallels are quite evident. It seems that 1Sam 21:1-9 [MT 2-10] actually recounts the background story to the later deliverance of Qe'ilah by David and his men (23:1-5), even though the motivation for that endeavour has been deliberately depersonalised by the introduction, "And they told David..." (23:1; cf. 18:22-23, 25-26). Perhaps this was for the sake of better correspondence with Saul's own self-initiated deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead before the establishment of his kingdom (11:5-7; cf. 10:7). Whatever the reason, 23:6 records that Abiathar fled to David in Qe'ilah, putting the preceding deliverance of Qe'ilah (23:1-5) at the same chronological time as Doeg's report to Saul and the massacre of the priests of Nob (22:6-19). It would be logical, therefore, that the two inquiries David made of YHWH before delivering Qe'ilah (23:2, 4) are the same as referred to by Doeg in his report that Ahimelech the priest had inquired of YHWH for David in addition to giving him food and weapons (22:10, 13).<sup>427</sup> Inquiries of YHWH could only be made by priests with the necessary skills, so the most logical conclusion is that when David was inquiring of YHWH at Nob, this was with regard to his upcoming deliverance of Qe'ilah. In that case, when David tells Ahimelech, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no-one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you...'" (21:2 [MT 3]), David is not in any way trying to deceive Ahimelech to secure his assistance. On the contrary, he knows (particularly since the remarkable experience in Naioth) that YHWH is willing and able to help him against his enemies, so he has gone to the priests of YHWH for both the provisions he lacks and the guidance of YHWH. Presumably Saul's encounter with the Spirit of God at Naioth had brought him a brief period of sanity during which

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<sup>427</sup> In theory, it is possible that Doeg waited to bring his bad report against Ahimelech for a fair length of time, corresponding to the period David was delaying his mission to Qe'ilah by visiting Gath, the cave of Adullam, Moab, and the forest of Hereth (21:10 [MT 11]–22:5). It is more likely, though, that these episodes **18'** and **17'** have been moved here from a strictly accurate position after **15'** for structural reasons (cf. above, for **17** / **17'**).

David was again welcome at his court (cf. 20:5). But Saul's thoughts soon turned against David again, and he plotted to send David to his death once more, with an "urgent" and secret mission to deliver Qe'ilah almost single-handedly and without any provisions from the army's regular supplies (21:2, 8 [MT 3, 9]). It seems that David would not have been so foolhardy as to simply obey his insane king without the express approval of YHWH (23:2), and Saul also seems somewhat surprised to hear that David has done what he was commanded and yet for some providential reason is still an easy target (23:7-8).

In both episodes **19'** and **19**, therefore, David is sent on a suicide mission by Saul but is successful because YHWH is with him (18:12, 14, 28; 21:6 [MT 7]). The second parallel between the two is found in the discussion between Ahimelech and David regarding the sexual purity of him and his men. The euphemistic references to the "vessels of the young men" being holy (21:5 [MT 6]) contrast with the mentions of "Philistine foreskins" in 18:25-27, which are incontrovertible evidence of the unholy uncircumcision of "the king's enemies" (18:25; cf. 17:26). Furthermore, to eat consecrated bread David's men had to have abstained from marital intercourse (21:4 [MT 5]), which would cause ritual impurity (cf. Lev 22:1-7); David reassures Ahimelech that his soldiers refrain from such activities even on ordinary military exercises, let alone important ones like this one (21:5 [MT 6]; cf. 2Sam 11:9, 11, 13; Jos 3:5; 7:13; Deut 21:10-13). As in episode **19**, therefore, David had to complete his military duties before he could consummate his marriage with his betrothed wife Michal (18:26b-27). David's words to Ahimelech that "women have been kept from us as previously" (21:5 [MT 6]) applies nicely and most clearly to the parallel episode about Merab and Michal.

#### Episodes **20** and **20'** (1Sam 19:1-17; 20:1-42)

As explained above, 1Sam 19:8-10 forms a clear conclusion to a pair of episodes about Saul's children, but before considering parallels between 19:1-10 and 20:1-42, the place of 19:11-17 in the overall Song of the Ark must first be explained. In episodes **1** and **1'** above, it was argued that the

story of Michal's response to David's dancing (2Sam 6:16, 20-23) may be a secondary addition to an original form of the Song of the Ark, corresponding to additions to 1Sam 4 about Pinhas' wife.

Changing the first and last episodes of a concentricism will naturally shift its overall message, hence the author's apparent decision to acknowledge these changes also at the centre of the Song of the Ark. Since the original song probably mentioned Michal's confiscation from David and remarriage (25:44; cf. 2Sam 3:13-16), paralleling her introduction in 14:49, the author may have felt it would be appropriate to include in between these an episode explaining why the divorce had happened; the occasion when she had helped David not only out of her window but out of her life.

There was theoretically no reason why Michal could not have fled from Saul with her husband (cf. 27:3), so her choice to stay may have reflected a loss of her original love for her hero (18:20, 28), thereby forming an *inclusio* of sorts around the episode about Jonathan in 19:1-10.<sup>428</sup> Helping her husband to escape was the least she could do without appearing to be a disloyal wife, but the means she used to do so are probably meant to convey a further message. *Teraphim*, such as the one used by Michal to substitute for her husband's body in the bed, were household idols ('gods' in Gen 31:30; cf. 35:1-4), and thus represented Michal's disloyalty to David's god YHWH (cf. 1Sam 15:23), as implied also in 2Sam 6:16, 20-23.<sup>429</sup> Furthermore, *teraphim* represented ancestral inheritance (cf. Gen 31:14-16, 19; Jdg 17:1-5), suggesting that Michal was choosing her status as Saul's daughter above that of being David's wife (unlike Rachel, who fled with her husband – Gen 31:14-31). Finally, her lie about being threatened with death by David (19:17) was probably treated as sufficient cause for legal divorce by Saul, justifying her remarriage to Palti. This inserted story of disloyalty to both David and YHWH because of personal connection to Saul (cf. 2Sam 6:21) thus serves as a central

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<sup>428</sup> Perhaps David had this loss of love in mind when he declared Jonathan's love for him to have been "more wonderful than the love of women" (2Sam 1:26), as regards its constancy if nothing else (cf. 1Sam 23:16-18). Even so, conceptual echoes of Hannah's childlessness (1Sam 1:5) may yet hint at ongoing love on David's part.

<sup>429</sup> Though it was "David's house", wives in polygamous societies tend to have full responsibility over their own affairs (cf. 1Sam 1:6-8; Gen 16:6; 21:10-12; 30:14-16), which could include the *teraphim* (Gen 31:33-35).

warning to any others in Israel who might still resist YHWH's choice of David for similar reasons (1Sam 19:18-24).<sup>430</sup>

Returning to the part of episode **20** that most likely belongs to the original Song of the Ark (19:1-10), this first description of Jonathan's mediation with Saul (19:1-7), with its addendum tying it back to episode **19** (19:8-10), might almost appear to have been included solely for the sake of structural balance with other passages (i.e. 18:10-16, 30; 20:1-42). Such apparently unnecessary repetition may explain why the LXX lacks 18:10-11 and 18:30. Even so, 19:1-7 does help to catalogue Saul's descent into paranoia. Almost every detail of this brief account is deliberately paralleled within episode **20'**, even down to Jonathan 'taking his life in his hand', so to speak, by facing the rage and spear of Saul (20:33) as David had done with Goliath (19:5; cf. 17:7). In fact, the event described in the first episode is referred to explicitly as "that eventful day", and Jonathan instructs David to hide in exactly the same location in the same field (20:19). It would be hard to construct closer parallels than the ones between these two episodes.

Episode **20'** is quite lengthy, but necessarily so because of its significance for the story of David's deliverance from Saul. The story is told in three distinct sections, the last paralleling and fulfilling the first, in order to put emphasis on the central episode detailing the covenant between Jonathan and David. In the first section, 20:1-11, David asks Jonathan to discover Saul's plans against him, and the core of his request to Jonathan (20:3-8a) is framed by parallel expressions about David's iniquity, Jonathan's 'Heaven forbid!', and the hiding of Saul's intentions (20:1-2, 8b-9). A clear transition (20:10-11) then separates off the following continuation of their conversation. In the parallel section 20:24-42, Jonathan fulfils that initial request to sound out Saul and inform David. The climactic centre, therefore, is set apart by an *inclusio* about YHWH as witness (20:12a, 23b; cf. 20:42), and between Jonathan's oath to "uncover your ear and send you away" (20:12-13) and explanation of how this will happen (20:18-22), he makes David swear to him in return (20:14-17). The message of

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<sup>430</sup> In a sense, having contrasting stories about Michal and Jonathan either side of the climax in the final version presents David's subsequent relations with Saul's house as even-handed, appropriate to their dealings with him and with YHWH – David is not capricious, vindictive or malevolent.

the episode, therefore, is that Jonathan maintained his side of their covenant by warning David and assisting his escape; as a result, David is also under obligation to maintain his faithfulness to Jonathan's descendants, despite Saul's offences.

The role of Jonathan in David's salvation from Saul was clearly crucial, second only to the role of the Spirit of God Himself through Samuel in the preceding episode, and the author has represented this structurally not only by framing the climax with a pair of episodes about Jonathan, but also by means of the imbalance between **20'** and **20**. Jonathan's sign that David must flee was that he would shoot an arrow beyond where his servant was standing rather than before him (20:21-22; 36-37). It will be shown below in §5.5 how the author conceives of concentricism as a 'longbow', top and bottom tied together to give impetus to the arrow placed at the centre (Jonathan's "bow" serves as both title and climax of David's lament, 2Sam 1:17-27). If, then, the 'arrow' at the centre of the Song of the Ark is episode **21**, the unnaturally lengthy episode **20'** effectively represents a second arrow, shot just beyond the first to commemorate Jonathan's loyal salvation of David from Saul. Given the author's evidently deliberate use of the bow and arrow analogy for the primary structural technique governing the whole composition, as well as Jonathan's own association with this weapon in the textbook example poem, it is hardly coincidental that the story immediately following the climactic episode of the huge Song of the Ark features Jonathan shooting arrows "beyond" the expected target as a sign conveying hidden meaning, and telling his lad to "Go, find the arrows" (20:21, 36).

#### Episode 21 (1Sam 19:18-24)

Finally, in the centre of the Song of the Ark, and consequently the centre of the Song of Saul's Kingdom and the Song of David's Testing, we come to the focus of the whole Song of Salvation, the arrow at the centre of the bow, so to speak. 19:18-24 is the only scene in the whole book of *Samuel* in which its three main characters appear in the same place at the same time – David and Saul both travelling to meet Samuel at Naioth in Ramah. The entire episode sparkles with prophecy, reflecting

the author's trademark emphasis on prophecy in every song throughout *Samuel*, and the Spirit of God is more active in this episode than perhaps any other in the Old Testament, causing every character in it to prophesy (apart from David who is being hidden).<sup>431</sup> The presence of the Spirit is so strong that Saul's three groups of messengers prophesy, and Saul himself is overcome and publicly humiliated before Samuel for a whole twenty-four hours. In effect, YHWH Himself takes centre stage at the climax of the song, eclipsing even the charismatic character of His servant David.

The message of the Song of the Ark is deduced from the central episode in light of the first and last: The Spirit of God saved David from Saul (19:18-24) so that His presence which had been exiled from Shiloh (4:1-11) might be brought into Jerusalem (2Sam 6:12-19). The message of the Song of Saul's Kingdom is slightly different, having different start and end points: Although Saul began to reign as one effectively reborn by the Spirit (1Sam 13:1; cf. 10:6), his rebellion against YHWH's prophet Samuel from the very beginning of his reign, compounded by hatred of his anointed successor David (19:18-24), earned him the direct enmity of the Spirit of God and culminated in losing his kingdom after just two years of sole reign (31:1-7).<sup>432</sup> Thirdly, the Song of David's Testing communicates yet another message: YHWH's choice of David as king, recognised in secret by both Samuel (16:1-13) and Saul's heir Jonathan (23:14-18), was confirmed publicly (in prophecies?) by the Spirit of God Himself, who saved David from Saul without weapons of defence,<sup>433</sup> simply because he

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<sup>431</sup> The claim is often made, usually relying on this very passage, that the Hithpa'el of *nb'* simply describes 'ecstatic activity' (cf. corrupt "prophesying" in 18:10), as opposed to 'oracular activity' using the Niph'al. Yet in 1Sam 19:20 the messengers are said to be prophesying [Hithp] "also", that is, as are Samuel's company [Niph]; Niph'al and Hithpa'el are equivalent elsewhere also (e.g. 1Sam 10:10, 11; 1Kgs 22:8, 12; Jer 26:20). Samuel himself is hardly acting ecstatically (19:20), and "prophesying" behaviour is also connected to the presence of an oracular prophet in Numbers 11:25-29. The only precise parallel of "the Spirit of God came [hyh] upon him" (19:23) in the Pentateuch and Former Prophets is in Numbers 24:2, an account probably known to the author of *Samuel* as argued later in §4.5 (Episode 5). In that prophecy by Balaam (v 4), "falling down" (cf. 1Sam 19:24) is explicitly connected with visions and hearing "sayings of God". No clear prophetic oracle need have been spoken in 1Sam 19:18-24, but perhaps a revelation received then may be hinted at in 23:17, paralleling 16:1.

<sup>432</sup> As noted above (Episode 13), the comment that "Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death" (15:35) seems to refer to seeking an audience with the king (cf. Gen 44:23; Exod 10:28-29; 2Sam 2:13; 14:24). Since YHWH no longer recognised Saul's kingship (15:26), neither would Samuel. Saul's return visit to Samuel in Ramah, only to be stripped of his royal robes (cf. Num 20:28; Ezek 26:16; 1Sam 28:8), simply presents him as being forcibly reduced to his humble pre-royal state before the judge he had rejected (9:21; cf. Gen 19:9-11).

<sup>433</sup> Defenceless situations are a Trademark interest of the author: cf. 1Sam 12:12; 13:19-22; 14:13; 17:38-40, 45, 50; 18:10-11; 19:8-9; 2Sam 3:33-34; 4:7, 11; cf. also 1Sam 2:4, 9; 7:10; 2Sam 13:28-29; 18:14; 20:10.

had sought refuge in YHWH and His prophet (19:18-24). Taken together, the various parts of the song all find their coherence and purpose through the central episode.

As mentioned in the introduction to the Song of the Ark, above, this is a key turning point for both Saul and David as regards the nature of their relationship with YHWH, and hence their authority in Israel, but this is evidently a direct consequence of the contrasting attitudes to Samuel's authority they exhibit here. Back when Saul was first anointed by the Spirit of YHWH according to Samuel's word, those who had previously known him did not conclude simply that his prophesying qualified him for membership of the group of prophets. Rather, the proverb they created – "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (10:11-12) – was also expressed as, "And who is their father?" Of course, from 19:20 it is clear that Samuel has remained 'their father', so to speak, "standing, presiding over" the company of the prophets. Yet people must initially have been wondering whether Saul had now succeeded Samuel as leader of the prophets, perhaps like Moses who had led the nation by presiding over a group of prophets (Num 11:24-30; see also Deut 18:15-19; 33:4-5; 34:9-12; 1Kgs 19:8; 2Kgs 2:15). The reappearance of the well-known proverb in this central episode (19:24) is deeply ironic, in that Saul's 'prophesying' now resembles the influence of the evil spirit (18:10). If, then, David has replaced Saul in the anointing of the Spirit (16:13-14), perhaps he too has been inspired to lead the prophets. This seems to be the significance of 2Sam 23:1-4; is David also among the prophets (cf. Rev 3:7)?

## Chapter Four – Rhetorical Commentary on 2Samuel 7–24

This chapter continues the focused commentary on 1-2 Samuel, detailing the rhetorical features and resulting messages in the remaining episodes of the book. In Chapter Three, the first ‘volume’ of *Samuel* (1Sam 1–2Sam 6) was presented as comprising one primary concentric structure, what I have called the Song of the Ark (1Sam 4 – 2Sam 6), which appears to have been originally an independent composition. For the final work, a shorter introductory concentricism was interlocked with the song’s first few episodes to form the Song of Eli (1Sam 1:1–8:3). The Song of the Ark also contains two further concentric songs nestled within (†) it, the Song of Saul’s Kingdom (1Sam 13:1–31:7) and the Song of David’s Testing (1Sam 16:1–23:18), such that all three songs share the same central episode 1Sam 19:18-24, the only scene in *Samuel* where all three main characters appear together. The central messages of all four songs have an obvious interest in prophecy, whether that be the words of the man of God to Eli in 1Sam 2:27-36, or the prophesying of Samuel, Saul, and their companions in 1Sam 19:18-24. The other primary focus of the first ‘volume’ is the ark of the covenant, whose journey from Shiloh to Jerusalem forms the base of the Song of the Ark.

The author of the final work evidently then balanced the song about David’s ‘salvation’ for the sake of the ark, with a song about David’s ‘desire’ both for a house for the ark and for an heir to his own house who could build it, according to God’s promise.<sup>434</sup> Once again, prophecy features at the key points of concentric emphasis in this volume, both at the beginning and end of the Song of the Temple in prophecies by Nathan and Gad about temple and altar (2Sam 7:5-16; 24:18; cf. 24:12-13), in the centres of the Songs of Uriah and of Absalom (12:7-12; 16:23), and as near as possible to the centre of the Song of David’s Prayer (23:2-3); 1-2 Samuel has an unmistakably prophetic structure.

### 4.1 Introduction to the Song of Desire

To parallel the Song of Salvation structurally, the Song of Desire likewise comprises one primary concentricism (the Song of the Temple – chs. 7–24) containing two smaller concentricisms within it (the

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<sup>434</sup> These two terms are combined in 2Sam 23:5 as a parallel for the “everlasting covenant” made with David.

Songs of Uriah and Absalom – chs. 10–12; 13–20), as well as an additional concentricism constructed secondarily at one extremity (the Song of David’s Prayer – chs. 21–24), formed by re-using existing episodes and adding further episodes to form a new interlocking structure. This concluding structure parallels the introductory Song of Eli, both having relevance for the whole book of *Samuel*. After finishing the entire composition, the most plausible scenario is that the author then took one particular episode (2Sam 20:23-26) and deliberately displaced it from its initial position after 21:14, so as to communicate a strong message about Joab’s unworthiness to be general. Its original position is doubly confirmed by structural parallels, since it is one of the interlocking episodes that perform a dual function in both the Song of the Temple and Song of David’s Prayer.<sup>435</sup> Further explanation will follow at the appropriate points below (e.g. §4.5).

The main superstructure of the Song of Desire is coterminous with the Song of the Temple, though the latter does not include the two poems (22:1-51; 23:1-7) which were inserted secondarily to form the Song of David’s Prayer. The Song of the Temple begins and ends with oracles to David about the temple and its altar, enclosing three more successive pairs of episodes about military successes, David’s chief ministers, and covenant faithfulness shown to Mephibosheth. The two-part centre of the Song of the Temple is unusual for a concentricism, and consists of two songs recounted distinctly but co-dependently as cause and effect. The first of these is the Song of Uriah, set within an account of the war with the Ammonites, and neatly concentric to emphasise Nathan’s climactic oracle against David. The second is the Song of Absalom, starting and ending with stories of revenge taken by Absalom and Joab respectively, and culminating in two mini-concentricisms that recount the two acts of revenge God took on David for killing Uriah and taking his wife, precisely as Nathan had prophesied. The final song inserted into the end of the Song of Desire is the Song of David’s Prayer, and comprises the four pairs of episodes in 2Sam 20:23–24:25, three of these (the so-called ‘Appendix’) being widely recognised as a ‘chiasmus’ in commentaries on *Samuel*.

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<sup>435</sup> As Walsh (2001: 8) recognises, “The clearer the fundamental symmetry and the more obtrusive the disturbance, the more the asymmetrical element draws a reader’s attention.”

## 4.2 The Song of the Temple

Unlike the Song of the Ark, the Song of the Temple has been constructed using independent episodes with little if any chronological or narrative connection to each other. The Song of Uriah and Song of Absalom do function as coherent and successive stories, but the Song of the Temple was not meant to be a comprehensive account of the reign of David. More poetic than prosaic in its arrangement, its sequence is determined by the structural message of the pairs of episodes rather than by chronology,<sup>436</sup> though the second episode in a pair is usually later in time than the first, as will be explained below. This disjointed chronological sequence is commonly recognised for the so-called 'Appendix', chapters 21–24, but few notice that the same applies to chapters 7–9.<sup>437</sup> 2Sam 7 explicitly begins with David having rest from his enemies on every border, but chapter 8 then describes the numerous wars that led to this Pax Davidica, and chapters 10 through 12 focus in on one particular war with the Ammonites, aided by the Arameans, evidently also prior to the situation in chapter 7. The conquests of Gittite giants in 21:15-22 have an apparent internal chronology, but the vignettes about David's mighty men (23:8-23), the discovery of Mephibosheth, and the stories of the three-year famine and three-day plague (9:1-13; 21:1-14; 24:1-25) cannot be connected straightforwardly with any particular point in David's reign.

*Map 7 – The Song of the Temple (2Sam 7:1–24:25 [except 22:1–23:7])*

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- 1** Nathan's temple prophecy in response to David's unauthorised building initiative (7:1-29)
  - 2** David smites the Philistines and others with the help of YHWH (8:1-14)
  - 3** David's chief ministers (8:15-18)
  - 4** Mephibosheth honoured for the sake of Jonathan (9:1-13)
    - 5a** The Song of Uriah (10:1–12:31)
    - 5b** The Song of Absalom (13:1–20:22)
  - 3'** David's chief ministers (20:23-26)
  - 4'** Mephibosheth spared death because of the oath with Jonathan (21:1-14)
  - 2'** David smites the Philistines and others with the help of his mighty men (21:15-22; 23:8-39)
  - 1'** Gad's altar prophecy in response to David's unauthorised census initiative (24:1-25)
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<sup>436</sup> One other apparent reason for the sequence of episodes **1** (temple), **2** (war), **3** (chief ministers), and **4** (Mephibosheth), is the way they mirror the last few episodes of the Song of the Ark, respectively **1'**–**3'** (ark cluster), **4'** (Philistine wars), **5'** (David's kingship & sons), and **6'** (Ishbosheth) – cf. Firth 2001: 211-12.

<sup>437</sup> Firth (2013: 22-23; but cf. 44) includes chs 5–6, but associates ch 9 with 10–20 (contra Keys 1996: 74-81).

As mentioned above, I believe that the present position of episode **3'**, the only episode seemingly out of place in the entire fifty-five chapters, was a final, jarring disturbance of the completed Song of Desire by the author himself, so as to communicate a strong message about Joab, the first minister mentioned in that episode. This will be justified fully below, but I would beg the reader's indulgence at this stage, assuming for the sake of argument that the original arrangement of both the Song of the Temple and the secondary Song of David's Prayer (20:23–24:25) had episode **3'** in its proper position *after* episode **4'**. The concentric structure of the Song of the Temple was therefore perfectly balanced as originally composed, and at a secondary stage episode **2'** was subdivided in order to make room for the two poems now found in 22:1-51 and 23:1-7. This allowed for episodes **4'–1'** to form their own internal concentric structure with the poems at the centre, as a sort of colophon for the whole book of *Samuel*, corresponding to the Song of Hannah in 1Sam 2:1-10.<sup>438</sup>

#### Episodes **1** and **1'** (2Sam 7:1-29; 24:1-25)

The foundational episodes of the Song of the Temple correspond to those of the Song of the Ark, and emphasise David's first great 'desire' to build a house for the ark of God's name, the martial "YHWH of Hosts" who can now, like David, find rest in a permanent palace having defeated all His enemies. The connection has long been made between the altar, constructed in 24:25 according to the oracle of Gad the prophet, and the temple about which David asks Nathan the prophet for an oracle in 7:2. 1Chronicles 22:1 has David state explicitly, "This is the house of the divine YHWH, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel."<sup>439</sup> In the understanding of the author, the oracle of Gad was evidently seen as a clear re-affirmation of YHWH's desire for a temple to be built in Jerusalem, despite David's sinfulness shown in his census and the matter of Uriah. In the second episode, though, David realises that this altar and temple are not only to bring honour to YHWH, but also

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<sup>438</sup> A parallel suggested by various scholars, e.g. Childs 1979: 272-75, 278; Randall Bailey 1995.

<sup>439</sup> At this stage it is worth noting that I consider 1-2 Chronicles to be one of the earliest interpreters of *Samuel*, and as such, of great value to scholars attempting to discern the original significance of details in *Samuel*. That is not to assert that the Chronicler's conclusions are never anachronistic or incorrect, but we would be unwise simply to assume that our own conclusions are superior, being so much more distant in time and culture.

necessary to make atonement for the sins of the nation and their king.<sup>440</sup> In both cases David audaciously took the initiative in a religious matter, doing something that hadn't been done in Israel since the time the nation was brought up from Egypt (7:6-7; 24:1-3). His motivation at both times seems to have been simply enthusiasm for YHWH's glory, but whereas in the first instance YHWH condescended to reward this desire despite refusing David's request, in the second David was severely rebuked for acting presumptuously, something he himself acknowledged.

On closer reflection, there is actually a direct connection between the oracle of Nathan and the census of David, which assumes knowledge of the stories of Israel's wilderness journey implied in 7:6, 23-24, and recounted in the books of Exodus and Numbers. Throughout the period of the judges YHWH was "moving about in a tent" as a dwelling place (7:6, 11), refraining from commanding any one tribe and its judge to build a permanent dwelling apparently because He had not yet found a king through whom He could finally deliver Israel from all her enemies (7:7-11). These enemies were in fact YHWH's method of punishment (7:14; 24:13-14; cf. 1Sam 12:9-10), so the implication is that once the temple is built, Israel will no longer need punishing; their king would reign over Israel permanently in unending peace as the son of God (7:10, 13-14a). David was told that he himself was not the expected king who would build the temple (1Sam 2:10; cf. Exod 15:17-18); yet even so his piety was rewarded with an unprecedented declaration that this future king and temple builder would be the scion of an already established dynasty (7:19), of which David himself would be the founder (7:11-12, 16).

Both David and YHWH understand a temple to be a replacement for YHWH's original tent dwelling (7:2, 6-7), justifying a comparison with the traditional story of the tabernacle's construction. At Sinai the first census of the nation had been authorised in order to secure universal contribution towards Israel's new tabernacle through the silver half-shekel tax (Exod 30:11-16; cf. 38:25-28; Num 1), but forty years later a second census of the tribes was authorised just before Joshua brought Israel into

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<sup>440</sup> Theologically speaking, these two episodes are mutually reinforcing: in the first, God promises an eternal dynasty for David to ensure the permanence of the temple to be built; in the second, God rejects David's request to punish him and his family for his royal sin, instead ordaining the construction of an altar (and thus its associated temple) as a means of atoning for the sins of David's dynasty, thereby ensuring its preservation.

the land, this time to ensure that land allotted to tribes would be proportionate to their current population (Num 26:1-56; cf. 1:1-46). Since then, though, no census of Israel had been taken, just as no new dwelling place for YHWH had been built. It seems David concluded from Nathan's prophecy that he had now been given rest from all his enemies (7:9, 11), that Israel would now be 'planted' in their permanent territorial lands (7:10), and that the temple would be built by his immediate successor, "from your inward parts" (7:12; cf. Gen 15:4; 25:23). Thus he thought he was justified theologically in taking a census, both to prepare materials for the new temple, even if he himself was not actually going to build it, and to determine the relative proportions of different tribes for redrawing tribal boundaries, even if he himself was not going to apportion territory. This would explain his confidence in ordering the census despite the pious reservations of Joab and the other commanders of the army (24:3-4).<sup>441</sup>

The length of time taken to gather the census is given very specifically as nine months and twenty days, which I believe is significant when explaining the actual chronological sequence of the events described in this song.<sup>442</sup> Regardless, it is clear that by the time the census was completed, David had had a change of heart, probably upon further reflection about the wording of Nathan's prophecy. Nathan had spoken of David's son being disciplined by means of "the sons of men" (7:14), which in the context of 24:13-14 could be interpreted as military defeat; in that case, though, David's heirs would still suffer affliction from the wicked (7:10), and Israel's permanent settlement in the land under the promised (righteous) seed would not in fact happen for some time. David's census had therefore been premature as regards ascertaining the relative sizes of the tribes for apportioning territory, and ultimately a presumptuous misapplication of the oracle in terms of timing, whether or not it had been on reasoned theological grounds.

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<sup>441</sup> Joab's initial response to David is expressed interestingly in terms very similar to Moses' equally ambiguous blessing in Deut 1:10-11, which itself was presumably intended to be understood in light of the recently completed second census (Num 26-27).

<sup>442</sup> Had Solomon been conceived around the time of Nathan's temple oracle, a possibly original prophecy of a regnal name 'Peaceful' (cf. David – 1Chr 22:9; 28:6) would have been applied by David to Bathsheba's newborn (2Sam 12:24; cf. 1Kgs 1:17, 30; 5:3-5 [MT 17-19]). Yet Nathan's prompt arrival to give the boy a different name (12:25) may have led David to reconsider whether he had misapplied the original oracle in other respects also.

From 7:10 and 14, David understood that a king's punishment for sin would afflict his people, hence his pleas to the angel of YHWH in 24:14 and 17. David's concern for the nation is clearly in focus in both episodes (7:23-24; 24:17, 25), along with an interesting focus on secondary divine beings. The angel of YHWH appears visibly in 24:16-17 in the context of bringing judgement, and a being referred to as "God" is an historical actor in 7:23, at the centre of David's response to the oracle: "God" is said to have mirrored YHWH's actions in redeeming a people and making a name for Himself, but this God also did a great thing "for You [pl., presumably YHWH]... before Your [sg.] people". Although this verse is clearly difficult to interpret, as the versions attest, the reference to this being's "name" seems neatly compatible with the divine name of YHWH's angel in Exod 23:20-23 (cf. Exod 13:21; 14:19, 24). These are the only times in *Samuel* that such a secondary divine being, distinct from but functioning as or for YHWH, is referred to directly as an actor, though the role of "the angel of God" as a proverbially wise judge is also mentioned in 2Sam 14:17 and 20, and 19:27 [MT 28], discussed below.<sup>443</sup> When 24:25 describes YHWH being "moved by prayer for the land", the atoning activity of the angel of YHWH in the story (made more explicit by the Chronicler in 1Chr 21:16, 18, 30) may well be a deliberate parallel with the other God's "awesome deeds for Your land" in 7:23.

Thus the two episodes have been paralleled both with straightforward surface-level equivalence in terms of prophets delivering oracles about David's unauthorised religious initiatives, and with detailed theological parallels regarding the purposes of the census and the role of the angel of YHWH, supporting the apparent chronological association of the two episodes. These foundational episodes also give the context for the author's focus at the centre of the Song of the Temple on God's revenge against Absalom, the heir-apparent to David's house. He was meant to have been the son of 'peace' who would build the temple (7:12-13; explained further below), and though David fully accepted the justice of that punishment (24:17), YHWH Himself had reaffirmed the temple's construction through His prophet Gad (24:19), and must therefore appoint another royal heir to build it.

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<sup>443</sup> An anarthrous "angel of God" is mentioned as one who is proverbially "pleasing" by Achish in 1Sam 29:9; other supernatural agents of YHWH in *Samuel* are simply designated "a spirit" (1Sam 16:14-23; 18:10; 19:9).

## Episodes 2 and 2' (2Sam 8:1-14; 21:15-22 + 23:8-39)

After giving pole position to David's desire to build YHWH's temple, the next pair of episodes in the song illustrates YHWH's grace in enabling David to fulfil completely his primary duty as Israel's leader to defeat the Philistines specifically (3:18; cf. 7:8-9, 11; also 1Sam 9:16; 13:1-4).<sup>444</sup> The priority is clearly with the Philistines in both episodes, listed first in 8:1 despite appearing further down the summary list of 8:12, and given similar precedence in the corresponding episode (21:15-22; 23:8-39). Assuming that the two sections about David's mighty men were originally part of a single episode, it is notable that the first four incidents describe conquests of Philistine heroes, and then the ethnic identity of those killed by the first of "the Three" mighty men is deliberately omitted in order to emphasise defeat of Philistines by the second and third, and also by the Three together (23:8-17).

In the context of the wider song, contrasts between 2 and 2' are also significant. In the first, David himself is credited with all the victories, his name being used often where a personal pronoun would have been perfectly adequate, and the participation of his generals and other warriors is not mentioned (cf. 8:13 with 1Chr 18:12 and Ps 60 title). In 2', the very first appearance of David in battle is as a warrior no longer able to manage a whole battle and having to be rescued by his general, subsequently discharged from active service at the insistence of his own soldiers (21:15-17). Although he was actually involved in the defeat of one of the four Gittite giants, the true heroes are given due credit for their conquests (21:22).<sup>445</sup> Likewise, David's performance in battle alongside his

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<sup>444</sup> "After this" (8:1) may be just a standard idiomatic introduction to a new episode, but minor conflicts with the Philistines subsequent to the events of chapter 7 (cf. 7:1) may be implied by 7:11 and 21:15-17.

<sup>445</sup> The fact that the limited extent of David's own involvement in the first victory is admitted so candidly in 21:15-17 makes it entirely implausible to treat 21:19 as a hint that David was not the true conqueror of Goliath in the incident described in 1Sam 17. A much more logical explanation is found in 21:22, where all four giants are described as having been "born to the giant [singular] in Gath". The infamous "giant of Gath" would be none other than Goliath, whom David killed as a young man. It is no coincidence that David is said to have picked up five stones from the brook of Elah (1Sam 17:40); one stone was all it took to bring down Goliath, and the other four were intended, when the opportunity would arise, for Goliath's four sons (observation made also by Isbell (2006), though he inexplicably weakens this to "relatives"). Anticipating future necessary battles may also explain why David took Goliath's head "to Jerusalem" (17:54) – a prophetic gauntlet promising full completion of YHWH's conquest of Canaan (cf. Deut 9:1-3; Jos 11:21-22; 14:12-15; 15:63; 2Sam 7:9-10). By the time David was a mature warrior, Goliath's sons were now taking their father's place opposing Israel, and David had to rely on his men to finish the job he had started. It is not in the least surprising that the eldest son

“Three” mighty men is entirely outshone by that of Eleazar, who overcame despite extreme weariness (23:10). The victories of David’s men are attributed to the work of YHWH as David’s own had been (23:10, 12; cf. 8:14) but their achievements contrast with David’s weakness as an older man, made all the more prominent by the Uriah and Absalom stories in the centre of the song. Again, it is no coincidence that the list of thirty-one mighty men (23:24-39)<sup>446</sup> finishes on the reverberating final note of “Uriah the Hittite”; when David was at home in Jerusalem, too unfit to go into battle himself (11:1; cf. 21:15-17), he destroyed the life of his own elite warrior and defender Uriah who was fighting the Ammonites in his place.

Episodes 3 and 3’ (2Sam 8:15-18; 20:23-26)

The list of David’s chief ministers in 8:15-18 displays a neat concentric structure, its successive pairs starting at the top and bottom with David ruling as king and his sons being priests, then Joab over the army and Benaiah over the bodyguard, then Jehoshaphat as recorder and Seraiah as scribe, and in the centre a joint focus on Zadok and Ahimelech serving as “priests”. The parallel list features Ahimelech’s father Abiathar alongside Zadok (20:25), but this need not represent an earlier state of affairs, since Abiathar’s son Ahimelech (named after his murdered grandfather) is elsewhere also said to have represented his priestly clan during David’s lifetime (1Chr 24:3, 6, 31). However, as Abiathar was not deposed from his high priestly office until Solomon’s reign (1Kgs 2:26-27), it appears that Ahimelech was made a priest while his father was still ministering (cf. 15:24-29), an observation at the centre which reinforces the author’s point about David’s own sons at the extremities. David himself is portrayed as a priest-king in *Samuel*, wearing the linen ephod (6:14; cf. 1Sam 22:18), offering sacrifices, and blessing the people (6:17-18; 24:25; cf. 1Sam 13:8-14), and the

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would be named Goliath after his father and have his fearsome spear compared with that of his father (2Sam 21:19; cf. 1Sam 17:7), or that a younger brother might have a personal vendetta against David (2Sam 21:16).

<sup>446</sup> The reference to Asahel at the start of the list in 23:24 suggests that “the Thirty” was a fixed number of senior positions in David’s army, with replacements made for those like Asahel who died in combat (cf. 2Sam 2:23) or else retired (like David); this would explain the much longer list in 1Chr 11:26-47 as a later update. The calculation of “thirty-seven” (23:39) appears to include the thirty-one listed in 23:24-39, the Three (23:8-17), Abishai and Benaiah (23:18-23), and Sibbecai the Hushathite, the only one of the giant-killers from 21:15-22 not named again in 23:18-39 (Abishai – 23:18; Elhanan – 23:24; Jonathan – 23:32). This calculation therefore reinforces the conceptual unity of the two passages, despite their secondary subdivision.

Davidic Psalm 110 speaks of an “order of Melchizedeq” (Ps 110:4) who was similarly a priest-king in Jerusalem (Gen 14:18). David’s priestly activities were probably justified with reference to the unique priestly order of Melchizedeq, but if it was a priestly “order”, his sons would be expected to function alongside him as priests, just as Ahimelech functioned alongside his father Abiathar in their priestly clan.

On this basis, the contrast with 20:23-26 becomes much clearer. Here the concentric order is carefully dismantled so that the paired roles are listed together rather than opposite one another, but the sequence of the roles remains the same.<sup>447</sup> David as king is deliberately left out of the episode, so the sequence starts with Joab and Benaiah the soldiers, followed by the recorder Jehoshaphat and the new scribe who had succeeded Seraiah, and finally the priests Zadok and Abiathar. The differences to the list are quite significant and both reflect a later time in David’s reign. Firstly, David’s armed forces commanders are now joined by Adoram, whose equivalent role supervising the (foreign) forced labourers probably reflects David’s preparations now underway for the new temple (cf. 1Kgs 4:6; 9:21; 11:28; 12:18; 1Chr 22:1-5). Secondly and most importantly, though, there is no longer any mention of David’s sons being priests; on the contrary, David himself has now appointed a priest to minister to him, a personal chaplain (20:26). The implication is clearly that David had been presumptuous earlier in his reign, assuming that he and his sons could function as priests purely by virtue of ruling in Jerusalem. After the incident with Uriah and Absalom recounted in the centre of this song, David’s awareness of his own failures and those of his sons had taught him that only a truly righteous “son” of YHWH could qualify to reign for ever as king and priest over Israel (7:10-13; cf. 1Kgs 2:3-4; Ps 2; 45; 72; 110). David was unworthy to represent God to the people; he needed a priest himself.

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<sup>447</sup> This helpfully confirms our assumption above in §2.4.3 that a concentric structure ought to be read from the extremities inwards towards the centre.

Episodes 4 and 4' (2Sam 9:1-13; 21:1-14)

This fourth level of paralleled episodes, closest to the centre of the song, expresses the most important message of the author's overall argument. Having emphasised David's desire that YHWH's temple might be built (1/1'), noted how David's primary commission as Israel's military deliverer had been fulfilled with YHWH's help (2/2'), and illustrated David's contrition after his sin with Uriah through the changes made to his inner circle (3/3'), the author now demonstrates unmistakably how David himself took pains to maintain his own covenant with Jonathan. If David has upheld his covenant, surely YHWH will do the same for David.

Both episodes 4 and 4' speak of the "house of Saul", though the focus is clearly on his grandson Mephibosheth, in both cases presented as the only remaining Saulide (9:3; 21:7). David's favour shown to him is explicitly "for the sake of your father Jonathan" (9:7; cf. 21:7), referring to the covenant which was given special priority as the 'second arrow' at the centre of the Song of the Ark (1Sam 20). These two verses mentioning the covenant (9:7; 21:7) both appear as single verses at the centre of their respective episodes,<sup>448</sup> and are connected to the top (re: covenant) and bottom (re: outworking) of the episode: In episode 4, "kindness for Jonathan's sake" is reflected in 9:1, whereas eating at the king's table regularly is echoed in 9:13 (9:10 must also mention it to prevent a contradiction). Likewise, in episode 4', "the oath [šb'] of YHWH" between David and Jonathan (21:7) parallels the sworn agreement [šbw'h] between Israel and the Gibeonites in 21:2, whereas Jonathan reappears when his bones are reburied alongside those of his relatives in 21:12, 13, 14. Even the specific method of divine punishment for Saul's bloodshed carries a faint echo of David's lament over Mephibosheth's father and grandfather, when David had in effect cursed the mountains of Gilboa with drought for having received the blood of Israel's heroes (1:21; cf. Gen 4:10-12).

However, a more important message conveyed through this episode pair appears in light of the central 'story' of the Song of the Temple. After Absalom's rebellion, David is portrayed as uncertain about Mephibosheth's loyalty, and yet is not said to have deprived him of his honoured position at

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<sup>448</sup> For the structure of 2Sam 21:1-14, see discussion of Episode 1 in §4.5, below.

the royal table (16:3-4; 19:24-30 [מט 25-31]), despite deconsecrating other sons (cf. 8:18; 9:11). Questions over Mephibosheth's loyalty are therefore a background to episode **4'**, and since execution of seven Saulides was legally justified in order to make atonement (cf. Num 35:33), David was showing not only kindness (9:7) but mercy when he spared Mephibosheth. Likewise, David is appealing to YHWH's mercy in maintaining the covenant with David and his offspring. The partial excuse for Saul breaking Joshua's ancient covenant with Gibeon (21:2; cf. 21:12-14) and the atonement being made by executing sons (21:3-4) may also echo David's own acknowledgement of the justice of Absalom's death for his own sin against Uriah, where – as with Saul and the Gibeonites – the motive for murder was likewise not hate but jealousy.

#### Episodes **5a** and **5b** (2Sam 10:1–12:31; 13:1–20:22)

The decision to designate these two episodes as **5a** and **5b** rather than **5** and **5'** is important, because the Song of Uriah and the Song of Absalom are clearly not meant to be parallel, whether in content, length or arrangement. Rather, the Song of Uriah is a distinct composition introducing the Song of Absalom, each important but neither independent of the other. **5a** has at its centre YHWH's two-fold judgement decreed upon David for the murder and adultery committed against Uriah (12:10-12). **5b**, which follows immediately, begins and ends with accounts of revenge and appeasement (13:32 + 14:13; 20:10 + 20:22) to indicate that this whole story represents the revenge taken on David by YHWH to appease His hostility. At its centre, between David's flight from and return to Jerusalem, there are two balanced concentrics highlighting the two prophesied judgements. Thus, the centre of the Song of the Temple, **5a** with **5b**, conveys the message that David did truly sin but YHWH has taken full and terrible revenge on him for it, and now no punishment remains outstanding (cf. Keys 1996: 123-55; Firth 2013: 47).

However, the death of Absalom did not just put an end to mutiny; it deprived the nation of its only divinely appointed crown prince. At least five lines of reasoning lead to this unusual conclusion. First and most importantly, for the legal precedent established by the wise woman of Tekoa to apply

to Absalom, one must conclude that Absalom is the only possible heir ('coal') of David, and for this reason alone must not be executed for killing Amnon when there was no deliverer between them (14:6-7, 13-14).<sup>449</sup> Second, Absalom's rebellion is specifically stated as having happened "at the end of forty years" (15:7). David himself is said to have reigned forty years in Hebron and Jerusalem (5:4-5), so if Absalom's birth in Hebron confirmed the newly established diplomatic relations between Judah and Geshur (3:2-3), this number could not signify Absalom's age. Rather, it most naturally represents the fortieth regnal year of David,<sup>450</sup> at which point he considered his own sole reign to have ended (in a telling echo of Eli's demise – 1Sam 4:18; cf. 1Sam 3:18 with 2Sam 15:26) and Absalom's to have begun. Third, David's willingness to leave both his capital city and the ark for his treacherous son (15:25-26, 34), and insistence that Absalom be spared (18:5, 12, 33), are consistent with the hope against hope that he may yet be reconciled with his father (cf. 13:39; 16:11-12) and succeed him as planned upon his death. Fourth, Hushai says that Absalom is he "whom YHWH [and this people] has chosen" (16:18). This need not be rhetorical exaggeration of what David had suggested he say (15:34; 16:19) or else just more blatant lying by Hushai, because just hours earlier, Shimei had made a similar claim (16:8, cf. 7-12) which David accepted as possibly correct. David may well have already interpreted Nathan's oracle about his successor as pointing to Absalom's divine right, in which case it would be the unexpected timing of the hand-over that was caused by David's sin as Shimei claimed.<sup>451</sup> As mentioned above (footnote 442), had the oracle of Nathan originally included the point that David's heir would be named 'Peaceful' (cf. 1Chr 22:9; 28:6), giving the name 'Solomon' to Bathsheba's next child (cf. 7:12; 1Kgs 8:19) would serve a dual purpose, not only signifying that David's fourfold payment to Uriah was now 'paid' (*šālēm*; cf. 12:6;

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<sup>449</sup> There is no evidence that Absalom's older brother Chileab (5:3; cf. 1Chr 3:1) had died by this point.

<sup>450</sup> So Abrahanel and Isaiah di Trani [the Younger] (cf. Barthélemy 1982: 271). Various attempts have been made to explain the "forty years" in 15:7 [MT, LXX]; Josephus and some ancient versions (incl. LXX<sup>l</sup>) 'correct' the number to "four", but in the context the *lectio difficilior* is clearly "forty" (Althann 1992). Reconstruction of 4QSam<sup>a/c</sup> by Cross *et al.* (2005: 154-55, 264-65) is uncertain (cf. Fincke 2001:226), based purely on exegesis. The precise calculation of David's forty-year reign (2Sam 5:5 – no mention of Mahanaim, 17:24–19:15; cf. 2:8) undermines the idea that the number is merely a cliché (*pace* Barthélemy 1982: 272), even though forty years could well carry the sense of the end of one generation and start of another (Num 14:33; Jos 4:6; Jdg 3:11).

<sup>451</sup> In this context, "man of blood" might even be directly quoting Nathan's original oracle (cf. 1Chr 22:8; 28:3).

1Chr 3:5), but also confirming to Bathsheba that this son would also be his successor (cf. 1Kgs 1:13, 17, 30). Yet Nathan's arrival to give the boy a different name (12:24-25) would have caused David to reconsider which son the oracle might have referred to, identifying Abi-shalom without too much difficulty as the true chosen one (cf. 14:25), hence Hushai's statement. The name 'Solomon' would thereafter be remembered simply for its relevance to reimbursing Uriah, and in due time Nathan's support would be necessary to convince David that his original interpretation of the oracle had in fact been correct (1Kgs 1; 1Chr 29:1). Fifth, the author records at the second climax of the Song of Absalom (18:18) that Absalom had set up a memorial pillar for himself in the King's Valley, not having any sons to give him this royal honour (cf. Ps 45:16-17; 1Sam 15:12). On the one hand, the brief time of his reign would probably not have been sufficient to construct it (cf. 17:11, 16), suggesting it had already been made during David's reign, but regardless, David must have insisted it remain standing after his return, honouring Israel's murdered king "until this day". Furthermore, one could add to these reasons from *Samuel* the observation from 1Kgs 1:1-27 that after Absalom's death there was no automatic assumption at court that primogeniture should determine the new crown prince (cf. 1Sam 20:31; 23:17); as long as David was unwilling (or unable?) to identify his divinely chosen heir, the title would have to remain vacant.

David was still a king during the civil war, along with Absalom (2Sam 17:2; 18:12; cf. 16:16), as he had been with Ishbosheth (3:10, 21), but whether he still had God's blessing was unclear (15:25-26; 16:10-12; cf. 1Sam 16:1). He did again become sole ruler over Israel (19:10 [MT 11]; cf. 15:25), but the death of his divinely appointed heir would likely have implied to him that the covenant itself had been withdrawn, as had happened to Eli (1Sam 2:30-33) and Saul (1Sam 28:17-19; 31:2). It is no wonder he genuinely wished he had died instead of Absalom (2Sam 18:33 [MT 19:1]). As regards the cause of this tragedy, Shimei had concluded it was divine punishment for executing Saul's seven descendants (16:5-8; cf. 21:1-14), and though David was originally open to the idea (16:10-11), perhaps still when he returned to Jerusalem (19:19-23 [MT 20-24]), the structural link in this book between **5a** and **5b** clearly argues instead that Absalom's death was direct revenge for David's sins

against Uriah, not against Saul (cf. also 21:10-14; 1Sam 24:21-22 [מט 22-23]).<sup>452</sup> The death of Absalom, and the sin of David which caused it, are thus the pivotal events around which all the paired episodes in the Song of the Temple have been arranged.

### 4.3 The Song of Uriah

2Sam 10 explicitly echoes chapter 9 (9:1; 10:2), reiterating David’s willingness to preserve covenants with the descendants of his treaty partners, and countering suggestions that his war with the Ammonites had been purely one of aggression (10:3b). The Song of Uriah itself functions partly as a more detailed explanation of conquests mentioned in chapter 8, in particular the spectacular victory over Hadadezer (8:7-8, 12). The song starts and ends with the Ammonites in their royal city of Rabbah, the place where David killed Uriah “with the sword of the sons of Ammon” (12:9), signifying that David’s greatest military success was the context for his worst personal failure. How the mighty have fallen (cf. 1Sam 15:12-13).

The Song of Uriah can be simplified to paired clusters about Ammonites and Bathsheba around a central Nathan cluster, but more detailed differentiation places stronger emphasis specifically onto Nathan’s “You are the man!” speech.<sup>453</sup> Episodes will be addressed below within their clusters.

#### *Map 8 – The Song of Uriah (2Sam 10:1–12:31)*

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- 1 Introduction to Ammonite war, including Joab’s defeat of the Arameans (10:1-19)
  - 2 Bathsheba the wife of Uriah conceives a child with David (11:1-5)
  - 3 Messengers report about the war and bring bad news about Uriah’s death (11:6-25)
  - 4 Bathsheba mourns for her dead husband (11:26-27)
  - 5 Nathan arrives and speaks a parable to David (12:1-4)
  - 6 David responds with anger to Nathan’s words (12:5-6)
  - 7 Nathan pronounces YHWH’s twofold judgement on David (12:7-12)
  - 6’ David responds with contrition to Nathan’s words (12:13a)
  - 5’ Nathan speaks of immediate consequences and departs (12:13b-15a)
  - 4’ David fasts for his dying son (12:15b-17)
  - 3’ Servants hesitate to bring bad news about David’s son’s death (12:18-23)
  - 2’ Bathsheba the wife of David bears a son to David (12:24-25)
  - 1’ Conclusion to Ammonite war (12:26-31)
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<sup>452</sup> Such a realisation, that Shimei’s curses had actually lacked any divine stimulus, would explain David’s apparent change of heart in 1Kgs 2:8-9.

<sup>453</sup> This particular song will receive thorough verification according to my seven criteria, by way of example, later in §5.1. The imbalanced lengths of pairs of episodes here is discussed in detail in §5.1.1(i) and (ii).

### Episodes 1 and 1' (2Sam 10:1-19; 12:26-31)

These episodes were evidently composed together as an independent concentricism before being separated to bookend the story of David and Bathsheba, and this has been deliberately highlighted by the drastic imbalance of the inserted victories over Aram (10:6-19), despite their irrelevance to the author's focus on David's sins.

Two distinct concentric structures rise from the same foundational pair of episodes (10:1-5; 12:26-31), which detail David's official relations with the Ammonite king Hanun in Rabbah (cf. 17:27). Within the smaller concentricism, further pairs about Aramean alliances and battle array (10:6-8; 10:15-19), and about Joab's direction of Israelite troops (10:9-10; 10:13-14) place the central emphasis on Joab's godly leadership in a time of war (10:11-12). His expression of teamwork, courage and submission to YHWH's will contrasts most sharply with the behaviour of David in the following chapters – David set one warrior against another (11:15-16), concealed his sin rather than showing courage (12:12), and acted directly against YHWH's will (11:27; 12:9). The final episode reinforces this message by questioning whether in fact Joab rather than David should be given credit for the victory over Rabbah (12:27-28). Joab is only presented in a favourable light by the author of *Samuel* when he is trying to show David in a bad light, even worse than Joab (2Sam 10:12; 14:19-22; 24:3-4; cf. 2:26-27; 3:28-29, 39; 18:11-14; 20:9-10), hence the juxtaposition of David's larger structure with a much smaller structure about Joab (11:1–12:25; 10:6-19).

### Episodes 2–4 and 4'–2' (2Sam 11:1-27; 12:15b-25)

In episodes 2 and 2' the contrast between David's two acts of intercourse with Bathsheba and the fruit of those unions is made stronger by designating Bathsheba in 11:3 as "the wife of Uriah the Hittite" (11:3), but finally in 12:24 as "his [i.e. David's] wife". Bathsheba remains "Uriah's wife" in 11:26 and 12:15, either side of Nathan's confrontation scene, and in the very centre she is again given the full title (12:10). The audience is told that Bathsheba was bathing before being brought to David (11:2), presumably as a reference to ritual cleansing after menstrual impurity (cf. Lev

15:19-30), so that it is clear the child borne by her was truly David's rather than Uriah's. Just as the boy's early death is an expression of YHWH's displeasure not with the boy himself but with the illicit union of David and Uriah's wife (see **5'** below), so the love shown by YHWH to the new son in episode **2'** signifies His approval of their now legitimate union. There is no attempt by the author to connect this 'love' with the divine father-son relationship of Nathan's earlier oracle (7:14-15; cf. Prov 3:12).

David's own name for the child, as explained above, has been preserved in this episode not because of its connection with the dynastic oracle of Nathan – this detail was probably deliberately omitted from the account in chapter 7 (cf. 1Chr 22:9; 28:6) – but purely for its relevance to the story of Uriah. David's authoritative judgement in response to Nathan's parable, based on the law in Exodus 22:1 about restitution for stolen sheep, established a legal precedent that then rebounded onto David himself when Nathan declared in his climactic speech, "You are the man!" David could not reimburse Uriah with wives, but four sons would be fitting according to levirate principles (cf. Ruth 4:5, 17). It is not surprising to find, therefore, that 1Chronicles 3:5 identifies the mother of Solomon and three older brothers as "Bath-shua daughter of Ammiel" (cf. 2Sam 11:3; 5:14; 1Chr 2:3).<sup>454</sup> Being the fourth son (not counting the offspring of adultery who died before being named on the eighth day – 2Sam 12:18), "Solomon" uniquely represented David's completion of 'payment' (*šālēm*) to the Hittite, though he would have been known throughout childhood by the name "Yedidyah".

Episode **3** describes the consequences of the act in episode **2**, requiring various messages to be sent back and forth to the battlefield by David in an attempt to conceal his adultery (11:6-25). Uriah is first summoned to David on the pretext of reporting on the war (11:7), just as Joab's message that Uriah had been killed successfully was also communicated within a war report (11:18). In both exchanges the messenger takes a message in both directions, but the message Uriah returned to

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<sup>454</sup> This may well be drawn from another of the Chronicler's sources, just as 1Chr 3:1-9 gives an alternative name for Abigail's son, and mentions both Bathsheba and Tamar without needing to copy out their stories after 20:3. "Bath-shua" may also be alluding to levirate marriage by comparison with Judah's wife (1Chr 2:3), but shows no knowledge of the LXX reading 'sevenfold' in 2Sam 12:6 (influenced by Prov 6:31 or 'Bath-sheba'?; cf. Coxon 1981: 249-50). See also footnote 439 with regard to the value of the Chronicler's interpretations.

Joab was concealed in written form by David (11:14-15); literacy was evidently uncommon at this time in Israel. The second messenger from Joab (11:19-24) is warned that David might be furious at Joab's foolish military tactics, so he conflates the two-stage message, and David's response is unnaturally calm about the death of one of his thirty mighty men. In episode **3'**, therefore, the two messages are paralleled in reverse order. David's behaviour towards Uriah from concealed motives (11:6-15) is contrasted with David revealing the motive behind his behaviour towards his son's illness (12:22-23; cf. 11:15; 1Sam 1:11-15), and then the unexpected response of David to news of Uriah's death (11:16-25) is mirrored by his almost cheerful reaction to apprehensive servants reporting his son's death (12:18-21).

Finally, episode **4** briefly describes Bathsheba's appropriate period of mourning for her dead husband, during which she remained apart from David as would be expected of a grieving wife. Her fasting from relations with David can be interpreted as evidence of genuine sorrow and lack of complicity, as was David's fasting from food when mourning Abner (3:35-37; contrast 1Sam 28:23-25). In the case of David's son in 12:15b-17, David has 'heard' not that his son had died, but rather that his son would surely die (12:14), explaining the extreme behaviour normally associated with mourning. Like Bathsheba, he too separated himself from those around him, refusing to eat food with or speak to the elders of his household during that seven-day period (12:17, 18). His servants assumed that David's grief would increase once the boy had actually died, but they didn't realise that in effect David had already completed his week of mourning (12:23; cf. 1Sam 31:13; Gen 50:10).

#### Episodes **5** to **5'** (2Sam 12:1-15a)

This scene when Nathan confronts David is marked off clearly using the *inclusio* of Nathan coming to David and then returning to his home, and the five separate speeches, three by Nathan and two by David, are arranged so as to put the central emphasis on 12:7-12. Episodes **5** and **5'** are both spoken by Nathan (12:1-4; 12:13b-15a), just as episodes **6** and **6'** are spoken by David (12:5-6; 12:13a), and David's responses display the opposite emotions of anger and contrition, the change

effected by Nathan's two-fold oracle in between. Although the surface parallelism between these episodes is clear, the conjunction of culprit and judge in episodes 5 and 6 also parallels the same in 6' and 5'. Nathan's parable was interpreted by David as if it were a genuine case requiring the king's legal judgement (cf. 14:4-11; 15:2-6), so although his initial response was a gut reaction – "the man who has done this deserves to die" – the penalty decreed was strictly that required by law (12:5-6). Similarly, when presented with a contrite defendant (12:13a), the supreme king and judge YHWH (cf. 14:17, 20; 19:27 [MT 28]) relents from venting His anger – "you shall not die" – and decrees only what was considered strictly necessary, the death of the offspring of adultery. If YHWH had punished David with only longer-term consequences (12:10-12), unbelievers might have started to ridicule YHWH blasphemously as a God who appeared not to care that His servants misbehaved. David's son was not being 'punished' as such for David's sin, however; had he survived, David would have interpreted this as grace towards himself (12:22), so his death was likewise seen as direct punishment of David.

Finally, in the centre we find appropriately one of the most powerful pieces of rhetoric in the whole of *Samuel*, matched only by David's lament for Absalom in 18:33 [MT 19:1]. The devastating words of this divine judgement in episode 7 (12:7-12) have been crafted to draw even greater attention to this structural climax of the song, and resonate ominously with earlier passages. As with the man of God's prophecy against Eli (1Sam 2:27-36), YHWH's past dealings with David (12:7-8) and future punishments (12:10-12) frame a central statement of his present sins (12:9). The reminder of David's deliverance from the hand of Saul to take his place (12:7-8) is also dreadfully meaningful. Back in the Song of Salvation (from Saul), one of the pairs of paralleled episodes nearest its centre, within the Song of David's Testing, compared two times David had escaped from a trap laid for him by Saul (19/19' = 1Sam 18:10-30; 21:1-9 [MT 2-10]). In both cases, there was a theme of sexual abstinence, and although Saul intended to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines in the attempts to collect the bride-price for Michal and to deliver Qe'ilah, David survived because of

YHWH's help. Here in the Song of Desire, however, David has not only been sexually immoral,<sup>455</sup> but then to conceal his sin he tries to make Uriah sleep with his wife before returning to the battle, which would pollute the purity and thus compromise the success of the whole Israelite army in war (2Sam 11:11; cf. 1Sam 21:5 [MT 6]; for such 'holy war' principles see Jos 7:10-13, cf. Jos 3:5; Exod 19:10-11, 14-15). What is more, when this is unsuccessful he then lays a trap for his favoured warrior Uriah that he might fall by the hand of the Ammonites (12:9), as he himself had once been trapped; yet while he himself had escaped from the malice of his own king Saul, Uriah was not so fortunate when David decided to kill him. David had truly "despised" YHWH by imitating the very actions from which he himself had been saved.

The two prophetic judgements pronounced against David correspond to the two sins he committed against Uriah, hence the title 'Song of Uriah' rather than 'Song of Bathsheba'; as Uriah's wife was taken by force so would David's be, and as Uriah's 'house' had been taken from him by the sword, so David's own house would be struck down by the sword. Yet the sins committed in secret would have public retribution. The two judgements can be distinguished clearly, each introduced by "Thus says YHWH" (12:7, 11) however in the way they are expressed they cannot be separated from each other – "the sword shall never depart from your house" is accompanied by a reference to taking Uriah's wife (12:10), and likewise "he will lie with your wives" is accompanied by a reference to evil raised up against David from his own household (12:11). In the same way, the account of the fulfilment of these prophecies, the Song of Absalom, will be constructed such that the two judgements are distinct and yet not separated one from the other. The immediate punishment on David in 12:14 is delivered separately from the two long-term judgements, because adultery with

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<sup>455</sup> David's murder and adultery are said to have despised the "word of YHWH" (12:9), but there is no obvious prophetic command matching this description elsewhere in *Samuel* (cf. 1Sam 15:11, 19); "a man after His own heart" is hardly specific enough (1Sam 13:14). It is far more likely that 2Sam 12:9 refers to transgression of divine laws relating to murder and adultery, such as are found in Exod 20:13-14 and Deut 5:17-18 (while also echoing the judgement on Saul in 1Sam 15:23). The Vorlage of the Old Greek evidently did not have "word of" (Barthélemy 1982: 262), but 4QSam<sup>a</sup> introduces this into 12:14 instead of "enemies", presumably carried over from 12:9 as more logical in the context; it is thus likely that the Old Greek Vorlage omitted it, partly due to its absence in 12:10, and partly due to the narrative question I raise above (*pace* McCarthy 1981: 204-6).

Bathsheba would have been a sin deserving punishment whether or not she were married to Uriah at the time; David's sins against Uriah himself are the author's primary focus in this song.

#### **4.4 The Song of Absalom**

Unlike the broader Song of the Temple, the Song of Absalom was composed with careful chronological coherence (cf. 13:23, 38; 14:28), and the resulting narrative is widely recognised to be one of the earliest and best written novellas of ancient Israel, replete with detailed characterisation, vivid description and deep emotion. The focus throughout is unmistakably on the character of Absalom, who is mentioned awkwardly in the very first verse (13:1) despite not appearing as an actual character until 13:20, and who fulfils both of Nathan's prophecies to David, about "your companion" and one "from your own household" (12:11). Yet the Song of Uriah establishes that like the unfortunate firstborn of Bathsheba, Absalom too is essentially a victim of his father's failures; his wicked enmity against David and death in battle are both direct punishments on David by YHWH.

The author's acknowledged narrative expertise displayed in this song is only made more outstanding by his remarkable skill in structuring every detail of it using the concentric technique. Parallels he has selected for this purpose include the two beautiful women named Tamar, the two wise women who assist Joab, the two acts of revenge taken by Absalom both after a delay of two years, two times that a trumpet is blown to proclaim mutiny against David, two pieces of advice given by Ahithophel, two times when David is at the gate of Mahanaim proclaiming his love for Absalom while his army marches past, and two messengers who carry news about Absalom's misfortune despite receiving no reward for their efforts, as well as David's actions towards his concubines before and after Absalom's rebellion, and David's lengthy flight up over the Mount of Olives matched by his lengthy return down through the Jordan River. Some of these are used to establish the double-peaked superstructure of the song, while others contribute to the smaller concentric patterns shaping individual episodes and clusters of episodes.

Map 9 – The Song of Absalom (2Sam 13:1–20:22) – [simplified arrangement]

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- R** Absalom's revenge, Joab assisted by a wise woman (13:1–14:33)
    - (S)** Absalom's mutiny against David (15:1-12)
      - (W)** David leaves his concubines (15:13-16)
        - T** David's flight over the Mount of Olives (15:17–16:14)
          - W** Absalom sleeps with David's concubines (16:15–17:14, 23)
          - t** messengers run from Absalom to David (17:15-22, 25, 27-29)
            - S** Joab kills David's son Absalom (17:24, 26; 18:1–19:10 [MT 19:11])
            - T'** David's return across the Jordan (19:11-43)
      - (S)'** Sheba's mutiny against David (20:1-2)
      - (W)'** David isolates his concubines (20:3)
    - R'** Joab's revenge, Joab assisted by a wise woman (20:4-22)
- 

In the above map I have simplified the arrangement of the Song of Absalom into its primary themes, namely **Revenge**, the **Sword**, the **Wives** (i.e. concubines), and **t/T**ransition.<sup>456</sup> A much fuller map is provided below, with the sections about Revenge and Transition highlighted for easier comparison. However, its various episodes will be discussed under these four primary themes so as to make the song's structural messages as clear as possible.

Unlike the juxtaposed concentricisms within the Song of Uriaah, the two climaxes of the Song of Absalom are equally important fulfilments of prophecy, and the author has gone to some trouble to ensure this is reflected in the structure.<sup>457</sup> Both the defilement of David's Wives by his successor (cf. 12:8) and the devouring of his "house" by the Sword in Absalom's death (cf. 2:26; 11:25; 18:8) have been given their own concentric arrangements with equivalent numbers of episodes, though the second is unsurprisingly related at greater length than the first. Cleverly connected by a refreshing little transition (cf. 16:14; 17:29), these twin foci are framed by David's Transitions away from and then back to Jerusalem, holding the centres firmly in tension like an embroidery hoop. Both centres have fringes extending beyond the Transition frame, being anticipated by events before David's flight and then recalled after his return (15:1-16; 20:1-3). Yet if the fringes had been arranged in inverted order to reinforce the overall concentricism, one central theme would have appeared more

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<sup>456</sup> Interestingly, Conroy (1978: 89) has produced a very similar outline, though much less detailed.

<sup>457</sup> Using the author's metaphor of a longbow for concentricism (§5.5), this structure would correspond well with the composite bow – harder to handle but more powerful than a regular bow, and known from the Late Bronze Age onwards in Canaan (Negev & Gibson 2001: 533; Gonen 1992: 246).

foundational than the other by virtue of having its introduction and conclusion at a lower level.

Instead, the fringes are interlocked to accord their respective centres equal significance.<sup>458</sup> Beyond these, the concentricism is completed by a further frame of paired episode clusters, establishing the theme of Revenge which controls the interpretation of the whole song. Both clusters also include the gentle words of a wise woman, though, who proposes a solution to the conflict being described. This may well echo David's own wise wife Abigail who counselled him against taking revenge (1Sam 25:3, 26-33), functioning subtly as authorised commentary on the themes of the song.

*Map 10 – The Song of Absalom (2Sam 13:1–20:22) – [detailed arrangement]*

- 0** Absalom's beautiful sister Tamar violated by Amnon (13:1-22)
    - 1** Absalom takes revenge on Amnon after two full years, and flees from David (13:23-36)
    - 2** Joab aided by a wise woman of Tekoa after Absalom is gone three years (13:37–14:24)
  - 0\*** Absalom's beauty, three sons, and daughter Tamar (14:25-27)
    - 1\*** Absalom takes revenge on Joab after two full years, and returns to David (14:28-33)
      - 4** Absalom steals the hearts of Israel, trumpet proclaims Absalom as king (15:1-12)
  - 3** David abandons Jerusalem, leaving only his concubines (15:13-16)
  - 5** David's flight from Jerusalem, interacting with many on the way (15:17–16:14)
    - 6** Absalom and Ahithophel enter Jerusalem (16:15)
      - 7** Hushai greets Absalom (16:16-19)
      - 8** Ahithophel advises Absalom (16:20-21)
      - 9** Absalom sleeps with his father's concubines (16:22-23)
    - 8'** Ahithophel advises Absalom (17:1-4)
    - 7'** Hushai advises Absalom (17:5-14)
  - 6'** [Jonathan, Ahimaaz,] Absalom (not Ahithophel) crosses Jordan (17:15-24)
  - 6** [Amasa, Barzillai,] David and Israel encamped across the Jordan (17:24-29)
    - 7** David sends out army, speaking of Absalom in the gate (18:1-5)
    - 8** Unpaid man tells Joab about Absalom alive in the forest (18:6-14)
    - 9** Absalom's death and burial, trumpet, Israel flees (18:15-18)
    - 8'** Unpaid man tells David about victory over Absalom (18:19-32)
    - 7'** David mourns Absalom over the gate, welcomes army (18:33–19:8c )
  - 6'** Israel dispersed, while David is still in Mahanaim (19:8d) [MT 19:1-9c]
- 5'** David's return across the Jordan, interacting with many on the way (19:9-43)
  - 4'** Sheba draws Israel after himself, trumpet rejects David as king (20:1-2)
- 0'** **3'** David returns to Jerusalem and isolates his concubines (20:3)
- 2'\*** David's generals go out with the army to pursue Sheba (20:4-7)
- 1'** Joab takes revenge on Amasa (20:8-13)
- 2'** Joab defeats Sheba, aided by a wise woman of Abel, returns to David (20:14-22)

Since the whole song is focused on Absalom, it is no surprise that the initial cluster of episodes introducing Absalom is narrated at much greater length than the final one after his death. Yet

<sup>458</sup> This is also the reason why the two prophecies are delivered in inverted order to their fulfilment (12:10-11).

structurally they have been finely and ingeniously balanced so that only a single episode is left without its opposite number, and quite deliberately so. In the first cluster, two episodes about revenge (**1/1\***) frame a central episode about a wise woman defusing hostility between David and Absalom (**2**). Conversely, in the last cluster, a pair of episodes relates the way hostility between David and the northern tribes was defused by another wise woman (**2'/2'\***), framing a central episode about revenge (**1'**). In this way, revenge is given equal weight to the conclusion of hostility, and this is precisely the message of the Song of Absalom – the revenge taken on David by YHWH has been completed, and thereby also the hostility between them. “God... plans devices so that the banished one will not be cast out from him.” (14:14)

The first story of Absalom’s revenge against Amnon required a description of the event of Tamar’s rape which justified her brother’s vengeance,<sup>459</sup> yet rape could not become the theme of the author’s outermost pair of episodes without reshaping the message of the cluster or even the whole structure. Instead, it became an introductory episode (hence its designation as **0**, prior to **1**), and a parallel episode **0\*** was inserted before **1\***, the former ‘beauty’ of Tamar reflected in that of her brother Absalom and namesake niece. Being distinct episodes, though, both **0** and **0\*** ought to be paralleled also at the equivalent points in the final cluster of episodes. The author ingeniously recognised that the brief episode immediately before this cluster (**3'**) could serve a secondary function as a parallel for episode **0** (hence **0'**), since like Tamar, David’s ten concubines remained unmarried in desolate seclusion through no fault of their own. However, what could possibly parallel the matchless beauty of David’s beloved son Absalom, now slain? Episode **0\*** is therefore left without any parallel [**0\*'**], episode **2'** following on directly from **1'**. Even so, those conscious of this deliberate structural imbalance will not fail to recognise the deeper significance of Amasa’s

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<sup>459</sup> Deuteronomy 22:28-29 legislates that a man who violates an unmarried and unbetrothed virgin must marry her permanently so that she is not left without a husband (cf. 22:13-21), however in the case of half-siblings such a marriage is forbidden by Leviticus 18:9, despite its common occurrence in Egypt for example (Lev 18:3; 2Sam 13:12). As a result, a man who violates his own half-sister has effectively taken a woman who can never be his wife, making the act equivalent to violating a woman engaged to another man, and so earning the death penalty (Deut 22:25). Such an argument might have justified Absalom’s claim to innocence in the matter of killing Amnon (2Sam 14:32).

writhing blood-soaked body at the end of episode **1'** (20:12), callously discarded in the field after Joab's treacherous greeting, by one of his young men. The garment thrown over him was hardly a mark of respect; instead it simply prevented others pausing to pay their respects. The parallels with Absalom's body dumped in a pit somewhere in the forest by Joab and his men (18:17) can hardly be clearer. Like his sister, Absalom had become a tragic victim of his own beauty, trapped by his hair in the branches of the oak (18:9; cf. 14:26) as surely as Tamar had been trapped in her brother's bedchamber.

#### Episodes of Revenge – **0** to **1\*** and **0'** to **2'** (2Sam 13:1–14:33; 20:3-22)

Episode **0** is itself arranged in a careful concentric structure, as might be expected,<sup>460</sup> but its central focus on Tamar's rape has its closest parallel not within the cluster (hence **0\***) but on the far side of the song (**0'**), with the desolation of David's concubines (ironically raped by the very one who had been so offended by his own sister's rape). Like Tamar, their 'husband' is still alive, but they have been permanently denied the privileges of marriage (20:3; cf. Deut 24:1-4). Within the cluster, the parallel episode **0\*** picks up on Tamar's beauty instead, which defined her at the start (13:1) but was torn by the end like her multicoloured garment (13:18-19). Though the author admits, through the imbalance of length (cf. §3.5, **20/20'**), that this is a poor substitute for Tamar's loss, her beauty is paralleled by the paired comments about the surpassing beauty of Absalom and his own daughter Tamar at either end of episode **0\*** (14:25-27). Within these are two further comments which both anticipate the loss experienced by Absalom. His beautiful head of hair would eventually cause his death (14:26; 18:9), and his daughter's three brothers would die prematurely before their father (14:27a; 18:18). Whereas Tamar's beauty and her violation were paralleled to some extent by her niece's beauty and the concubines' desolation, the beauty of Absalom himself could never be paralleled, reflected in the deliberate structural deficiency before episode **2'**. The "multicoloured garment" here signifying Tamar's beauty is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in Genesis 37,

<sup>460</sup> See Appendix, (6). The structure of 2Sam 13:1-22 parallels verses 1-7//20-22, 8-9//19, 10//17-18, and 11-13//15b-16 around 14-15b, putting the focus naturally on the key event and turning point of the narrative. For a differing arrangement with the same centre, see Ridout 1974: 80-83.

where Jacob's favoured and beautiful heir Joseph was lost and his multicoloured garment spoiled (cf. 39:6b). An echo of this story here would be deeply significant, reinforcing the parallel beauty of David's own precious heir Absalom (**0\***) who had been slain; like Jacob, he too would refuse to be comforted, going down to Sheol in mourning for his son (Gen 37:31-35).

In episodes **1** and **1\*** (13:23-36; 14:28-33), both stories of Absalom's revenge are described as responses to a situation that had happened two full years earlier (13:23; 14:28; cf. 13:38), in both cases Absalom instructs his servants to do the actual deed (13:28-29; 14:30), both appear to be a way of Absalom conveying a message to his father, whether through Jonadab or through Joab (13:32-33; 14:32),<sup>461</sup> and both conclude with David desiring Absalom's return (13:37, 39a; 14:33), because both times Absalom is considered to be innocent of wrongdoing (13:39b; 14:32b). 14:24 is technically a transition between episodes **2** and **1\***, even though it appears before episode **0\***, because it describes the cause leading to events two years later. The parallel episode **1'** at the end of the Song of Absalom (20:8-13) is quite clearly a parallel to the act of revenge taken by Absalom against Amnon, in that both are deceitful and kill the victim when he is happy and entirely unsuspecting (13:28; 20:9). Both are the murder of a "brother" (13:26; 20:9; cf. 17:25), and both are in fact the murder of a rival to a senior position of authority despite the murderer having apparent justification for the act – Amnon is the heir-apparent to the throne but has raped his half-sister (3:2-3; 13:30; cf. 13:32), and Amasa is the newly appointed general of David's armies in place of Joab but has been tardy in mustering the army of Judah in a time of civil war (19:13 [MT 14]; cf. 20:4-6). Beyond that, the murder of Amasa by Joab is described in a way that deliberately echoes his earlier murder of Abner in the gate of Hebron (3:26-39; cf. 20:10 with 3:27). This comparison is made all the more similar by the fact that both Abner and Amasa were rival generals, and by their similar role in turning the hearts of the nation back to David in order to acknowledge him as king after a time of civil war (3:9-10, 17-19; 19:14, 22b [MT 15, 23b]; cf. 1Sam 11:12-13). The difference, though, is that

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<sup>461</sup> Absalom's cousin Jonadab did not attend the sheepshearing celebration with the rest of the family (13:23-27), recognising Absalom's vengeful intent and presumably choosing to be elsewhere (cf. 13:3-5). Absalom's revenge on Joab for ignoring familial obligations (14:29-31) parallels Samson's revenge (Jdg 15:1-7).

whereas in 2Sam 3, Abner was killed on the pretext of his killing of Joab's brother, in 2Sam 20 the only thing that would count as an action worthy of personal revenge would be Amasa's appointment to Joab's position over the army, a motivation of pure ambition.

As for episodes **2** and **2'**, the role of the wise woman is prominent in both, although the one who persuades David to welcome Absalom back from exile is naturally given more space than the one who prevents Joab from destroying a northern border city in Israel. As explained above, the author deliberately made the first cluster's central theme the focus of the first and last episodes of the second cluster, and vice versa. To do this, episode **2'** (20:14-22) has been given a parallel episode **2'\*** (20:4-7) which picks up on the city fortifications at either end of **2'** (20:6; cf. 20:14-15, 21b-22). Given Joab's foolish approach right up to the besieged city to speak with the woman (cf. 11:20-21), one might almost imagine the author hinting at his regret that she had thrown over the wall a head rather than a millstone (cf. 11:21)! Joab is a central character in both episodes **2** and **2'**, seeking to fulfil David's own desires (14:1; 20:6), but in both cases having to rely on a woman for help (14:2-3, 19-22; 20:21-22; cf. Jdg 4:8-9). What is more, in both cases the women have (supposedly) been asked to hand over to the avengers one who has sought to destroy the life of the appointed heir, in the first case the son who murdered his brother (14:7, 11), and in the second the traitor who threatened the throne and thus the life of David (20:6a – "more harm than Absalom"; 20:21). This comparison between the two emphasises the crucial point in episode **2**, that although vengeance is rightfully brought on one who has lifted his hand against his brother (e.g. Sheba against David), when the one on whom vengeance is to be brought is himself the last remaining heir, preserving the heir takes precedence over exact retribution (14:7; cf. 20:19b). Since the tragic loss of David's heir Absalom is in view throughout this song, it is impossible to miss the message here, that Joab had put this argument in the mouth of the woman of Tekoa and yet acted in direct contradiction to this principle when he killed David's only remaining heir (at least in David's understanding).

The wise woman's words in episode **2** were intended "to change the appearance of things" (14:20), and will therefore repay closer attention as a subtle exegetical device of the author. At the

centre of her speech (14:13), the wise woman of Tekoa argues powerfully that David himself is the true subject of her parable (cf. 12:7). When the king gave in to the woman's insistent pleading for her son and swore to her that he would surely not die (14:11b), he had effectively passed judgement on himself, in that he had been unwilling to protect his own son Absalom from those who sought vengeance. As a result, Joab manipulated David into establishing the legal precedent whereby he might be able to acquit Absalom of guilt and bring him back to Jerusalem (14:21-23). David's legal justification is based firstly on the recognition that the murder of one son by the other happened because "there was no deliverer between them" (14:6), making it essentially a case of manslaughter rather than murder (cf. Num 35:9-34). Secondly, it is based on the legal principle of preserving a remnant who might inherit from the widow's husband (14:7b, 16).<sup>462</sup>

In accepting that his ruling for the woman's threatened son was applicable to his own fugitive son Absalom, David was also acknowledging some subsidiary points. First, he was taking responsibility for not having stood between his sons Absalom and Amnon as a 'deliverer', and so prevented Amnon's death (14:6; cf. 13:21-22). Second, he was admitting that it had been fear of his family and of the nation that had kept him from defending Absalom's actions as manslaughter (14:7a, 15a). Third, he was acknowledging that both he and the "people of God" already viewed Absalom as the heir to the king's throne (cf. 14:25; 1Sam 10:24), the "coal" in danger of being extinguished (14:7b, 9b, 13; cf. 21:17b), some years before he started plotting against his father's life (15:1-6; 16:11).

However, the 'change of appearance' effected by this story applies not simply to Absalom in exile, but also to God Himself, as noted memorably at the centre of the dialogue (14:14). Just as the woman and her son are a picture of David and Absalom, king David in his judicial role also becomes a

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<sup>462</sup> David's other unintentional self-ruling also forced him to preserve a remnant for the dead Uriah (§4.3, 2'). Precedent for making a special ruling to exonerate a manslayer who was also a sole heir may have been based either on the Mosaic ruling about the daughters of Zelophehad marrying within their father's tribe (Num 36:1-9) which comes immediately after provision for protecting manslaughterers (35:9-34), or on the story of YHWH sparing Cain from avengers (4:13-15) presumably because he had again become Adam's legal heir (cf. 4:9, 25).

picture of YHWH Himself, the supreme King and Judge of Israel (cf. 1Sam 8:7; 12:12).<sup>463</sup> The comparison is made explicitly by the woman on two occasions, when she equates David's wisdom and discernment with that of "the angel of God" (14:17, 20). Details are rarely incidental for the author of *Samuel*, and these references clearly call to mind the descriptions of the angel of YHWH in (7:23 and) 24:16, discussed above. Other echoes of those passages here include (1) the woman's recognition of iniquity on her and her father's house, the King being blameless in judgement (14:9; cf. 24:17c); (2) references to the destroyer who takes vengeance (14:11, 16; cf. 24:16-17); (3) the land as the "inheritance of God" Himself (14:16; cf. 7:23; 1Sam 26:19); and (4) the "devices" God plans to make atonement for sinners, such as the altar (14:14; cf. 24:18-19, 25). It is not implausible, in fact, that just as the angel of YHWH had provided a way for Abraham to receive his heir Isaac back from the dead, so to speak, on the very same mountain according to tradition (Gen 22:11-14; cf. 2Chr 3:1), and just as Jacob eventually received his heir Joseph (of the multicoloured garment) 'back from the dead' by the agency of the "angel" of God (Gen 42:32, 36; 46:30; 48:11, 15-16), so the wise woman's contrast between our apparently irreversible death like spilled water and God's actions to prevent death and restore the "banished one" (14:14) hint at the possible resurrection of David's dead heir Absalom. Surely the angel of YHWH must have planned some device by which David's fallen dynasty might be brought back to life again – a son to build the temple for His glory as prophesied.

Episodes of Transition – 5, 5' and 6'/6 (2Sam 15:17–16:14; 17:15-22, 25, 27-29; 19:11-43 [MT 12-44])

The episodes 5 and 5' are both quite extensive, comprising several encounters along the routes taken by David either away from Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives or towards Jerusalem across the Jordan River. Furthermore, each has an internal concentric composition, as might be expected.

In episode 5, David's flight begins at the outermost edge of Jerusalem, the "last house" (15:17), and concludes with the king and his retinue arriving and being refreshed "there" (16:14), presumably the "wilderness fords" of the river Jordan where he had said he would wait for news (15:28; 17:16,

<sup>463</sup> This amply confirms suggestions to this effect for other texts by Diana Lipton (2008: 54-57 *et passim*).

21-22), and where the parallel Transition is set (19:15-18, 31-39 [MT 16-19, 32-40]). This episode's scenes are arranged carefully along David's ascent and descent of the Mount of Olives, between its extremities at the brook Kidron and fords of the Jordan, so that the most important encounter takes place on the very summit (15:32). At the edge of Jerusalem beside the brook Kidron, David's first encounter was with Ittai from Gath who was leading out his six hundred soldiers (15:18-23). Though David urged him not to accompany him on his wanderings, Ittai insisted on staying, in language reminiscent of another foreign proselyte Ruth (15:21; cf. Ruth 1:16-17). This is paralleled at a comparable elevation on the opposite slope by David's conversation with Abishai, one of Ittai's fellow generals (18:2; Joab is also referred to within the plural "sons of Zeruiah", 16:10), in which David expressly permitted Saul's relative Shimei to walk along beside him on his journey despite his cursing and throwing of stones and dust (16:9-13). Both episodes involve unexpected participants in David's flight, but a contrast is drawn between loyal foreigners and rebellious kinsmen (16:11 associates Absalom "my son" with Shimei "this son of my right hand" / "this Benjamite" [cf. 16:6]). At the next stage on David's ascent he met and spoke with Zadok, who had brought the ark of the covenant of God with Abiathar from Jerusalem. Raising the possibility that YHWH might be communicating to David, "I have no delight in you" (15:26), David commanded him to return the ark to its place (15:24-29). The possibility of divine punishment is raised similarly on the other side of the mountain outside the village of Bahurim, within Shimei's harsh accusations against David (16:5-8), and Shimei's cursing parallels the absence of the ark from David's retinue, both being signs of YHWH's disfavour. At the penultimate level, as David "went up the ascent of the Olives", he was told that his counsellor Ahithophel had joined Absalom's conspiracy, and prayed against Ahithophel's counsel (15:30-31; cf. 16:23). Likewise, "when David had passed a little beyond the summit", a parallel encounter (with Ziba) informed him of his adopted son Mephibosheth's treasonous behaviour, and again taking immediate action, he confiscated his property (16:1-4). Finally, "as David was coming to the summit, where God was worshipped", he met the most important individual of the whole journey, his friend Hushai (15:32-37). Being one of the only men

in David's court whose knowledge of David might be considered of equivalent weight to that of Ahithophel, Hushai could be sent back to Jerusalem to infiltrate Absalom's rebellion at the highest level. Sure enough, it was Hushai's advice that preserved David's life in the following scene (17:1-14, 22-23), justifying his climactic position in the account of David's flight. It must be noted here that, in combination with the reference to the "bow" in David's lament (1:18, 22), this beautiful narrative illustration of concentricity is perhaps one of the clearest proofs of an author's conscious knowledge and use of a specific rhetorical technique in all of ancient Israelite literature (cf. §5.5).

Before discussing episode **5'**, we must first consider the transitional episode(s) **6'** and **6**, or episode **t** in the simplified Map 9, which stretches from 17:15 as far as 17:29. This transition between the Wives section and the Sword section (16:15–17:24; 17:24–19:8 [MT 19:9]) is a perfect example of interlocking transitional techniques in Hebrew narrative, as discussed, for example, by Parunak (1983). At the end of the climactic encounter in episode **5**, the statement, "and Absalom came into Jerusalem" (15:37b), was introduced to anticipate the beginning of the following episode (16:15), skilfully tying together different scenes. Absalom and Ahithophel enter Jerusalem together in 16:15, but their departures are not recorded within the main account of Absalom in Jerusalem (16:15–17:14), coming later in 17:23 and 24b only after the adventure of Jonathan and Ahimaaz (17:15-22). The theme of crossing the Jordan ties disparate elements of 17:15-24 into one episode, but at the end Ahithophel is no longer with Absalom and "the men of Israel" (cf. 16:15). Likewise, David's arrival in Mahanaim (17:24a) and Absalom's encampment with his army in Gilead (17:26) both belong with the main account of David in Mahanaim (18:1–19:8 [MT 19:9]). They have been separated off at the beginning by introductions to Amasa (17:25) and to Barzillai and his fellow benefactors (17:27-29), since transitions between narrative sections are convenient places for such background information. This arrangement might therefore be represented as [ **W — t-W-S-t — S** ], although in fact the concluding verses of the Wives story (17:23, 24b) are themselves interlocked with the introductory verses of the Sword story (17:24a, 26), just to tie the two fulfilment stories even closer together.

The transitional episode **t**, therefore, effectively breaks into two halves, the first looking back beyond the Wives section to Transitional episode **5**, and the second forward beyond the Sword section to Transitional episode **5'**. In the first half, Jonathan and Ahimaaz follow David's suggestion made in **5** (15:27-28, 36) to carry military intelligence about Absalom's plans from Jerusalem to the fords of the Jordan (17:15-22), briefly hiding down a well at the centre of their journey (17:18b-21a). In the second half, Amasa and Barzillai are introduced, but then get no mention at all in the Sword section until both feature in **5'** (19:13-14, 31-39 [MT 14-15, 32-40]). The extra genealogical material about Amasa in 17:25 serves in part to prepare for Joab's shameful act of revenge in episode **1'**, and the detail about provisions in Barzillai's introduction (17:2-29) echoes similar provisions from Ziba described in Transitional episode **5** (16:1-2) but with considerably more quantity and variety so as to justify David's more generous reward for Barzillai on his eventual return journey home (Transitional episode **5'** – e.g. 19:33 vs. 19:29 [cf. 16:4]).

Like David's concentric mountain journey in **5**, his return in **5'** is also concentric, but this time in a valley shape, from Mahanaim back across the ford of the Jordan to Gilgal on the western bank.<sup>464</sup> The majority of the action takes place at the ford, and the central story of Mephibosheth has been inserted into the episode as if it were happening in the very middle of the Jordan River, the corresponding position to the summit of the Mount of Olives. In reality, the lame Mephibosheth can hardly have made the effort to cross the Jordan himself in order to greet the king on its eastern bank, which is where David is at this point according to the story (19:18, 39 [MT 19, 40]). In the story of Mephibosheth (19:24-30 [MT 25-31]) it clarifies that "It was when he came from Jerusalem to meet the king that the king said..." (19:25 [MT 26]), and in 19:24 [MT 25] Mephibosheth's journey is described simply as he "came down to meet the king". It seems this meeting actually happened as the king arrived in Jerusalem itself, because Mephibosheth had no more donkeys on which he might travel down to David at the Jordan (19:26 [MT 27]; cf. 16:1-2), and because Mephibosheth says that "the king has come safely to his own house" (19:30 [MT 31]), implied also at the end of 19:24 [MT 25].

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<sup>464</sup> Note how this type of inversion is identical to the parallel between episodes **1-2-1\*** and **2'\*-1'-2'**.

Thus this story has evidently been placed out of its natural chronological order at the most important point in the structure, to emphasise its importance for the author.

The concentricism in episode 5' begins after the conclusion of the civil war with deliberations by both Israel and Judah about reinstating David as their king (19:9-15 [MT 10-16]). David's provocation of Judah through Zadok and Abiathar (19:11-12 [MT 12-13]) and bestowal of honours on Amasa (19:13 [MT 14]) results in Judah assembling at Gilgal, opposite David and his household on the eastern bank of the Jordan. The parallel final scene (19:40-43 [MT 41-44]) begins with David arriving in Gilgal (19:40 [MT 41]), after which Israel and Judah begin disputing with each other about bringing the king back, Israel even making direct reference to the first scene when they took the initiative to reinstate David (19:43 [MT 44]; cf. 19:11 [MT 12]). Whereas episode 5 featured a distinct individual in each scene, episode 5' allows for several. For example, Zadok, Abiathar and Amasa are all addressed by David in the first scene, and the second involves Shimei, Ziba and Abishai despite the primary focus on Shimei (19:16, 18-20, 23 [MT 17, 19-21, 24]). The outer pair of episodes describes the political struggle to reinstate David as king, but the theme of the inner pair (19:16-23; 19:31-39 [MT 17-24; 32-40]) is David's kingly magnanimity, towards Shimei in the first (19:23 [MT 24]; echoing 1Sam 11:13-14) and towards Barzillai in the second (19:33, 38 [MT 34, 39]). Shimei's fellow Benjamite, Ziba (19:17 [MT 18]), also parallels Barzillai in the opposite scene, as both had earlier supplied David with provisions out of their (own?) resources (16:1-2; 17:27-29). Furthermore, David's "household" crossing the Jordan in 19:18 [MT 19] parallels David himself and "all the people" crossing the Jordan in 19:39 [MT 40].

Finally, the central scene of the concentricism about Mephibosheth (19:24-30 [MT 25-31]) also settles easily into a further concentric structure of its own. Verses 24 and 30 [MT 25, 31] both describe David returning safely to Jerusalem, David's question to Mephibosheth in verse 25 [MT 26] corresponds to his decision about Mephibosheth in verse 29 [MT 30], and the beginning of Mephibosheth's defence in verse 26 [MT 27], emphasising his lameness (cf. 9:3 [MT 4]), parallels its conclusion in verse 28 [MT 29], emphasising David's favour to him for his father's sake (cf. 9:7 [MT 8]).

In the centre, therefore, is the point at which Mephibosheth addresses the slanderous accusation of treason made against him by his servant Ziba (19:27 [MT 28]). Within this verse, Ziba's accusation as plaintiff is set opposite David's discretion as judge, and once again the focus here is on the king being like the "angel of God". The same comparison was made by the wise woman of Tekoa in episode **2**, where David discovered, as he had earlier with Nathan's parable, that his own authoritative decree became in effect a divine judgement on himself. Here, therefore, David's merciful judgement concerning the possible traitor Mephibosheth, presumably again based on covenant faithfulness, will hopefully provide a model for God's own judgement about David (cf. 2Sam 22:21, 25-27). David himself has sinned against his own king, YHWH (represented by the "angel of God"), but would not He also be faithful to His covenant made with David, and show mercy?

Episodes concerning the Wives – **3, 6 – 6', 3'** (15:13-16; 16:15–17:24; 20:3)

As explained above, this first peak of the Song of Absalom fulfils Nathan's oracle about David's wives taken by his companion, and its 'fringes' (**3, 3'**) either side of the Transitional frame episodes both refer to David's concubines (15:16; 20:3). 15:13-15 narrates the point that David hears of Absalom's rebellion and decides to flee, which would technically be an introduction to episode **5** about his flight. However, 20:3a evidently functions in a parallel manner to conclude episode **5'**, since it reports David's arrival at his house in Jerusalem. These links with the Transition episodes are each situated between the overlapping fringes for the two central sections (i.e. between **4** and **3**, and between **4'** and **3'**), directly opposite each other, in order to tie together the introduction and conclusion of the Transition frame and those of both judgement stories (Wives and Sword). Even so, 15:13-15 does anticipate Absalom's mistreatment of David's concubines, in that David himself predicts that any who remain will not escape from injury thrust forth by Absalom (15:14); these verses do therefore belong with 15:16, just as 20:3a belongs with the rest of the verse.

Focusing in on the central section about Wives (**6 – 6'**), apart from its introduction in 16:15 and detached conclusion in 17:23 and 24a, the main body of the story of Absalom in Jerusalem fits into a

neat concentric structure. Hushai's initial interchange with Absalom in 16:16-19 parallels his longer advice given to Absalom in 17:5-14, the latter having been composed using two equivalent concentric pieces of rhetoric in order first to dismiss Ahithophel's counsel (17:8-10) and second to propose his own (17:11-13).<sup>465</sup> In the same way, Ahithophel's first piece of advice to Absalom about the concubines (16:20-21) parallels his second about pursuing David immediately (17:1-4). The centre is therefore 16:22-23, where Absalom sleeps with his father's concubines "on the roof" and "in the sight of all Israel", fulfilling the prophecy that David's companion would lie with his wives "before all Israel" and "in the sight of this sun" (12:11-12).

Absalom's climactic act of adultery is accompanied by a comment from the narrator that Absalom was here treating Ahithophel's advice as if it were a divine instruction, just as David had done also (16:23). Once again the author's Trademark interest in prophecy shines through. Absalom's failure to inquire of God through His prophets or priests (cf. 1Sam 28:6), in favour of trusting his advisor's counsel, was a crucial mistake, and possibly one reason his short reign was brought to an end by YHWH (17:14b; cf. 12:8). Interestingly, David is included also in this rebuke for having trusted Ahithophel's advice rather than God's word, which may be a hint that David's own reign had likewise suffered divine judgement on account of Ahithophel. No such counsel from Ahithophel to David is recorded explicitly in *Samuel*, but the event that brought the downfall of David's kingdom was of course seen to be his sins of adultery and murder against Uriah. On closer inspection, these acts take on a very different hue when one notes that "Eliam" is the name given for both Bathsheba's father and Ahithophel's son, who was one of David's mighty men (11:3; 23:34b). If David's counsellor Ahithophel was in fact also Bathsheba's grandfather, had David come to him for advice after his infidelity, it would have been to his advantage to manoeuvre his granddaughter into the harem of the king of Israel by disposing of her husband Uriah, merely a foreign soldier. As it stands, the Song of Uriah carefully avoids apportioning blame to anyone but David himself, so this reconstruction must remain speculative. If true, though, Ahithophel's decision

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<sup>465</sup> My Appendix, section (2), fine-tunes the insightful arrangement of this speech by Klaus 1999: 194-210.

to join the conspiracy of Absalom several years later could have been a similar calculated attempt to ingratiate himself with the one who would certainly become the next king of Israel, thereby securing the best future for his four great-grandsons. He did not live to discover that the youngest was actually himself destined to be David's successor.

Episodes concerning the Sword – 4, 6 – 6', 4' (2Sam 15:1-12; 17:24–19:8 [MT 19:9]; 20:1-2)

The second centre of the Song of Absalom is also anticipated and recalled in 'fringes' beyond the Transition episodes that frame the centre, in both cases before the fringe episodes of the first centre. This second centre is consistently about twice as large as its twin, not only in the length of its main centrism but also in the relative lengths of the fringes, yet structurally the two centres are identical and deliberately juxtaposed to be equivalent. The greater length of the second may reflect the author's greater concern about the death of Absalom than about the treatment of David's concubines, but on the other hand, there is also considerably more information to include when recounting two political coups and a civil war.

The anticipatory fringe, episode 4 (15:1-12), is arranged in two halves, the first describing the way in which Absalom "stole away the hearts of the men of Israel" (15:1-6),<sup>466</sup> and the second describing the actual proclamation of his mutiny in Hebron (15:7-12). Precisely in the centre, therefore, is the very significant chronological note, "Now it came about at the end of forty years that Absalom said..." (15:7a). As explained above, this need not be a mistake for "four" years, nor a reference to Absalom's age, but fits best as a reminder of the accession notice for David back in 5:4 which credited him with a forty-year reign over first Judah and then all Israel. In effect, the author is making the claim that David's own reign came to an end when his son Absalom proclaimed himself king (cf. 19:10 [MT 11]). Although a couple of events are reported from the period after Absalom's death, including the attempted reinstatement of David as king by both Israel and Judah at Gilgal (19:22c [MT 23c], in light of 1Sam 11:12-15; cf. 2Sam 20:1-2; 1Sam 27:6), this is presented as the

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<sup>466</sup> Cf. equivalent depictions of crown prince Yasib in the Ugaritic epic of King Keret (KTU 1.16 VI: 41-54); titles of Niqmaddu's son Niqmepa' (KTU 7.63) attest crown prince duties as temple builder (Stieglitz 2015: 231-33).

mere appearance of a reign (cf. 18:33 [MT 19:1]), just as 1Sam 13:1 had made Saul's reign during the lifetime of Samuel nothing but a co-regency, an unauthorised kingship whether or not Saul was known as "the king". Once David's heir had died, and with no further prophetic word from YHWH about His choice of a successor for David, the kingdom was in limbo and David was at best a caretaker king, as 1Kgs 1:1-14 depicts so evocatively.

Episode 4' parallels Absalom's conspiracy with Sheba's rebellion against David following the civil war (20:1-2), and the two halves of episode 4 are represented respectively by the "men of Israel" turning from David to follow another leader (15:2, 6; 20:2), and a trumpet being blown to announce the start of the new 'reign' (15:10; 20:1). Significantly, both of these elements are also found in the very centre of the story of the Sword (18:15-18), where Joab blows the trumpet (18:16) and all Israel flees, "each to his tent" (18:17b; cf. 20:1b). The "men of Israel" and their tents are also found at the (detached) beginning and end of the story of the Sword itself, with "all the men of Israel" who had crossed the Jordan with Absalom camping in the land of Gilead in 17:26, and then a brief notice in 19:8d [MT 9d] that "Israel had fled, each to his tent".

The main body of the Sword section (episodes 6-6') is arranged like the Wives section into a five-part concentricism. The first scene, 18:1-5 (episode 7), is also internally concentric, paralleling commanders (1, 5b), David's three generals (2a, 5a), and David's words to the people (2b, 4), to emphasise at the centre the words of the people that David is worth ten thousand of his men. In this scene David stands in the gate of Mahanaim as the whole army marches out, and charges his generals to be gentle with Absalom "for my sake". This is a direct parallel with the opposite scene (18:33-19:8c [MT 19:1-9c]), in which David weeps for Absalom in the chamber above the gate of Mahanaim as his army returns quietly through the gate beneath him, and his general then speaks to him with strong words. This scene is arranged simply into two corresponding halves: In 18:33-19:3 [MT 19:1-4], David mourns above the gate for Absalom, Joab is told that David is weeping, the people hear of David's mourning, and the people enter the city quietly. In 19:4-8c [MT 5-9c], David again mourns for Absalom in his house, Joab tells David to go out to his people, the people hear that David

is sitting in the gate, and all the people come before the king. Significantly, being two directly paralleled halves (a-b-c-d//a'-b'-c'-d') there can be no centre to this episode, but when one looks at the centre of the opposite episode 7 the reason for this becomes clear. David was told there by the people that no-one would care about their deaths, even if half of the army were lost, as long as David himself were spared. David evidently feels the same way about the king Absalom as the people felt about him, making this the heart of his lament in 18:33 [MT 19:1]: “My son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you!” The absence of this central message, both between the two halves of episode 7 and in the otherwise verbatim repetition of David’s lament (19:4 [MT 5]), signifies how Joab had silenced David’s heartfelt grief for his son, ‘outstanding among ten thousand’ (cf. Song of Songs 5:10); in 7 the message is that there is no longer any message possible.

The second scene, 18:6-14, sets the final battle in the forest of Ephraim, and the note that “the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured” (18:8) is an ominous preview of Absalom’s fate, trapped by the forest to suffer the prophesied ‘sword’ judgement.<sup>467</sup> The primary parallel between episodes 8 and 8 is in the role of messengers bringing news about Absalom’s misfortune. In episode 8, the man who informed Joab about Absalom in the oak had ignored Joab’s bounty on Absalom’s head, having witnessed David’s charge to Joab to deal gently with Absalom for David’s sake, and not trusting Joab’s character (18:13). This is paralleled in 8 by Ahimaaz choosing to forgo reward from Joab to take the bad news to David, apparently in order to break the news of Absalom gently for David’s sake. David was eagerly awaiting news of the battle by the gate, like Eli (1Sam 4:13), and there was apparently a custom in Israel that bad news should be brought by two people rather than one (18:25, 26; cf. 12:19; 17:21; Jer 51:31).<sup>468</sup> Joab knew that the news he was sending to David would in fact be interpreted as bad news by him, despite their victory over rebel forces, and yet he chose to send only one messenger. David recognised that there were actually two runners coming, and though he tried to convince himself that it was still good news (18:26, 27),

<sup>467</sup> The loss of his mule, a royal mount (18:9; cf. 13:29; 1Kgs 1:38) augured his lost kingdom – Conroy 1978: 60.

<sup>468</sup> Thus the single messenger who brought news of the ark’s capture (1Sam 4:14-18) was tragically unable on his own to restrain Eli’s grief; on the other hand, the outwardly grieving messenger who reported Saul’s death (2Sam 1:2-12) showed by arriving on his own that in fact he expected his message to be good news for David.

Ahimaaz's decision to run as well evidently had its desired effect of preparing David. Ahimaaz was aware that Absalom was dead (18:20), but chose not to break the news himself when he arrived first. That way David would have two messengers with him, including one he knew and loved (18:27; cf. 17:21), when he learned of his son's death. In both episodes, therefore, Joab is portrayed as disloyal and malicious, contrasting with lowly messengers who even forgo reward for David's sake. Episode **8** concludes with the three spears/darts Joab thrust into Absalom's heart "while he was yet alive in the heart of the oak" (18:14). Perhaps this gruesome and physically awkward act has further metaphorical significance (cf. Ps 34:18 [MT 19]; 55:21 [MT 22]; 109:22): Joab wounded David's own heart with three 'spears' when he struck Absalom, then sent only one messenger to David with the news, and finally forced David to stop mourning for his murdered son.

Finally, the central episode recounting the death of Absalom draws to a climax the Sword concentricism, and thus also the Song of Absalom, and the whole Song of Desire. Episode **8** finished with Absalom "yet alive" (cf. 20:12), allowing for episode **9** to describe Joab's men surrounding, killing and burying Absalom. The trumpet blown by Joab to signal the end of the civil war parallels the trumpets blown to proclaim mutiny against David (15:10; 20:1), and therefore portrays Joab's act of killing Absalom as in some sense itself a mutiny against David, who had expressly forbidden this. As with the centre of the story of the Wives, here too a comment by the narrator immediately follows the event that punished David. In 18:18 the audience is removed temporally and spatially to the time when a bereaved Absalom set up a pillar in the King's Valley outside Jerusalem, a memorial to himself in place of his three dead sons (14:27). As Absalom was then buried under a great heap of stones in the middle of the forest of Ephraim, this would indeed be the only memorial to him in Jerusalem (apart from the Song of Absalom itself). The implication is again clear. Absalom himself was the third son born to David (3:2-3), and the third of David's sons whose death is recounted (cf. 12:18; 13:28-29). David considers himself now to be in Absalom's predicament, without an heir to preserve his name, since the son God chose to succeed him is dead and he dare not make the same mistake as Saul, whose choice of his own successor constituted rebellion against God's judgement

(1Sam 20:31; 28:19). As a result, the only royal legacy by which to remember David will be the empty monument he is building in Jerusalem, that is, the temple that forms the base of the entire Song of Desire in 2Sam 7 and 24 – which was meant to have been built by Absalom. Yet even in this little comment there is just the slightest ray of hope. The “King’s Valley” mentioned here in 18:18 is found elsewhere only in Genesis 14:17, as the place where Melchizedeq blessed the childless Abram by the “Possessor of Heaven and Earth” (Gen 14:18-20). Abram refused to reward himself from the plunder of his military victory (Gen 14:21-24), looking instead to YHWH for inheritance (15:1) and for an heir who could inherit his promises instead of simply “a son of my house” (Gen 15:2-3). Receiving from YHWH the promise that his seed would be as numerous as the stars, Abram “trusted in YHWH, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:4-6). The parallels with this story are quite straightforward: David too has chosen to dedicate all the plunder from his great victories to YHWH (2Sam 8:10-12), presumably for the construction of the new temple (20:24a; cf. 1Chr 29:2). His only desire is that he might have a son to succeed him and inherit his promises, not simply a ‘son of his house’ but a son of YHWH’s own choice. The promise he has received from YHWH of an eternal dynasty (2Sam 7:13, 16) is just as breathtaking as the one given to Abram, and so he is responding in the same faith, trusting that although his body is as good as dead, YHWH will somehow restore to him the son of promise from the dead. The fulfilment of YHWH’s promise in the reign of Solomon, not even hinted at anywhere in the book of *Samuel* (cf. §4.3, Episode 2’), truly vindicated the righteous faith of this bereft king.

#### 4.5 The Song of David’s Prayer

Even commentators who do not generally recognise rhetorical structures elsewhere in *Samuel* acknowledge that the last four chapters of 2Sam, the so-called ‘Appendix’, appear to be arranged in three inverted pairs of episodes. If the central pair, the two poems (22:1-51; 23:1-7), are removed as a possible secondary addition paralleling 1Sam 2:1-10, the episodes about David’s warriors on either side lock together as a single episode corresponding to 2Sam 8 (confirmed by the number

“thirty-seven” in 23:39 – see footnote 446). Thus the ‘Appendix’ reveals itself to be the necessary completion of the Song of the Temple, the direct parallel of 2Sam 7–9. Even so, the insertion of the poems was not a later editorial corruption of the book, but a skilful creation of a concentric conclusion for the entire book of Samuel, by means of the same interlocking technique used to construct its introduction in 1Sam 1–7. This is shown in the way episodes **4’** and **1’** of the Song of the Temple were clearly written to parallel each other as well as their opposite numbers, and episode **2’** had a list of individuals appended to it so as to become a secondary parallel for episode **3’**. The message of this concluding concentricism can be perceived primarily within the context of its first and last episodes, which both explain how YHWH atoned for royal iniquity and ceased punishment in direct response to David’s prayer for the land.

*Map 11 – The Song of David’s Prayer (2Sam 20:23–24:25)*

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- 2** List of David’s chief ministers (20:23-26)
  - 1** Atonement made through David’s prayer after three year famine punishing Saul’s sin (21:1-14)
    - 3** Exploits by David and four mighty men [=5] against the four sons of Goliath (21:15-22)
    - 4** David’s song after salvation from the hand of his enemies and of Saul (22:1-51)
    - 5** [?] “Now these are the last words of David.” (23:1a)
    - 4’** David’s word by the Spirit of YHWH about righteous and wicked rule (23:1b-7)
    - 3’** Exploits by five leaders of David’s mighty men – the Three, Abishai, Benaiah (23:8-23)
    - 2’** List of David’s thirty mighty men, plus Asahel (23:24-39)
  - 1’** Atonement made through David’s prayer after three day plague punishing David’s sin (24:1-25)
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It is worth noting that most of those who treat 2Sam 21–24 as a ‘chiastic’ Appendix do not include 20:23-26, as this does not parallel any similar episode at the end of chapter 24. However, apart from the passing reference to Joab at its start, 20:23-26 is just as disconnected chronologically from the preceding Song of Absalom as from any of the episodes that follow it. The solution given above at the start of §4.2 was that this episode has in fact been deliberately displaced from its original position after 21:14. In that lower position it would have corresponded neatly not only to the list of David’s thirty mighty men in the Song of David’s Prayer (23:24-39), but also to the list of chief ministers in the Song of the Temple (8:15-18), which likewise separated an episode about Mephibosheth from one about military achievements.

As it stands, though, 20:23-26 is jarringly out of place as regards both songs, and like other structural imbalances in *Samuel*, can be explained as asymmetry for the sake of emphasis (see footnote 344). In its hypothetically original position before episode **3**, it would have functioned as a natural introduction to the stories of elite warriors, since Joab and Benaiah who head up the list of chief ministers are both military leaders. The same connection can be recognised also between the corresponding episodes 8:1-14 and 8:15-18 in the Song of the Temple. Yet whereas Benaiah features later within the stories of elite warriors (23:20-23), Joab is noticeably absent. His feats of bravery recorded elsewhere (e.g. 1Chr 11:4-6) might have fit very well within episode **3'**, however the only references to Joab are as the brother of Abishai and Asahel, and master of two valiant armour bearers (23:18-19, 24a, 37). The only reason he had remained among David's chief ministers after Absalom's rebellion (20:23) was because he had murdered his appointed replacement Amasa (19:13 [MT 14]; 20:4-5). Thus his official position as general had to be distinguished sharply and unmistakably from the section it had originally introduced, which commemorated valiant warriors for their honourable defence of David and of Israel (21:15-22; 23:8-39); Joab most certainly did not belong there.

#### Episodes **1** and **1'** (2Sam 21:1-14; 24:1-25)

Both of these episodes were originally written as part of the Song of the Temple, and therefore parallel other episodes in 2Sam 9 and 7 respectively. It was suggested in §3.2 that original episodes from the Song of the Ark were re-used within the Song of Eli by inserting additional material that still remains clearly visible. Here in the second 'volume' of *Samuel*, though, these dual-purpose episodes do not show signs of two layers of composition. On the contrary, the mention of Mephibosheth being spared, at the centre of episode **1**, might by its brevity and marginal relevance to the actual story suggest rather that this episode was originally composed for the Song of David's Prayer and was then incorporated into the Song of the Temple. Yet without that note the episode would not

have a central element, so it is fairly clear that the whole episode was composed with its role in both songs in the mind of the author from the start. The same would apply also to episode 1'.

Episode 1 has its own concentric arrangement. At the start is a three-year drought during which David "sought the presence of YHWH" and discovered its cause (21:1-2). It ends with an entire summer during which no rain falls (as usual), during which David realised what further action would bring God's favour again, and prayed more for the land (21:10-14). Clearly this was prompted by the report that Rizpah was still out on the mountain guarding her sons' hanging corpses. In such matters involving ritual purity for the land, the most likely cause for David's response would not be 'basic human decency', but rather recollection of the ancient law stating that an executed man must not be left hanging on a tree more than one day, or else the land will be defiled (Deut 21:22-23; cf. also Gen 4:10-12; Num 35:33). Without properly burying the bodies (and those of their relatives), the drought would be certain to continue despite atoning for Saul's sin against the Gibeonites. Then, the central reference to David sparing Mephibosheth (21:7), is framed by a pair of scenes about David interacting with the Gibeonites over their required compensation (21:3-6, 8-9; cf. also the discussion at §4.2, 4').

Episode 1' is likewise arranged in a concentric pattern [see Appendix, (6)], starting with the anger of YHWH burning against Israel,<sup>469</sup> inciting David to take a census (24:1) and finishing with YHWH bringing an end to the plague (24:25), being "moved by prayer for the land" in words almost identical to the conclusion of episode 1. The census conceived in 24:1 is then explained in more detail in 24:2-9, just as the offerings made to YHWH in 24:25 are given their background story in 24:20-24. Both episodes feature an interaction between David and a leader whose consent must be given for David's intentions to be realised (Joab/Araunah), and in both cases the leader objects to David's suggestion (24:3; 24:22-23), only to be overruled by David (24:4; 24:24). Within these two sections are another pair of passages (24:10-14; 24:17-19) in which David acknowledges his sin before YHWH (24:10; 24:17), the prophet Gad comes to David with a message for him (24:11-13;

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<sup>469</sup> This "anger" was evidently a reaction to the king's sins against Uriah the foreigner (cf. 21:2; 12:5) during the Ammonite war, i.e. prior to Nathan's temple oracle in peacetime (7:1) and David's response with the census.

24:18), and David responds with humility (24:14; 24:19). The centre of the episode, therefore, is found in 24:15-16, which itself has a concentric arrangement. YHWH's judgement on Israel (24:15; cf. 24:13, 6-7) parallels the angel of YHWH by Araunah's threshing floor (24:16d; cf. 24:18, 21), enclosing references to the destroying angel's hand in both 24:16a and 24:16c.<sup>470</sup> Thus in the very middle is the statement that "YHWH relented from the calamity" (24:16b), which is undoubtedly the focus of the entire episode, and also naturally parallels David's unwillingness to bring calamity on Mephibosheth at the centre of episode **1** (cf. also the discussion at §4.2, **1'**).

#### Episodes **2** and **2'** (20:23-26; 23:24-39)

Much has already been said about these two episodes above (§4.2, **3'**, **2'**), so it will suffice to point out here how the most important points in both lists concern the final person mentioned, with a measure of importance also attached to the first individual of the list. In 23:39, Uriah the Hittite is the last mighty man to be named, and his death reminds the audience of David's abominable iniquity against this faithful and valiant servant, recounted at the centre of the Song of Desire. Likewise, the final member of the privy council is the priest Ira the Yairite (20:26), who serves David in a personal capacity alongside the leaders of priestly clans (20:25b). His significance is seen by contrast with David's sons who had been priests in the first list of chief ministers (8:18b): As explained above within the Song of the Temple, it was evidently the same iniquity against Uriah which had proven to David how unworthy he and his sons were to mediate on behalf of God; rather, David himself needed a chaplain. The first individuals of the two lists in episodes **2** and **2'** also communicate similar messages, this time about Joab's unworthiness to be general. It was Joab's leading position among David's chief ministers (20:23) which caused this whole episode **2** to be displaced from its position introducing David's honoured warriors (21:15-22). Likewise in episode **2'**, the decision to attach Joab's brother Asahel to the start of David's thirty mighty men (23:24a)

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<sup>470</sup> This clear distinction between the angel of YHWH, who represents YHWH Himself, and the destroying angel who inflicts YHWH's judgements, seems to be understood also in the story of the wise woman of Tekoa. There the king to whom the woman is appealing is equated with the "angel of God" (to whom David is appealing), and she is asking the king for protection from "the destroyer" who is seeking the life of her only heir. Likewise in 24:16 it is necessary for the "king", (the angel of) YHWH, to intervene and make the destroying angel stop.

though he had died decades earlier with hardly any battles to his name (2:18-32) conveys just how dishonourable Joab's actions must have been in the eyes of the author to disqualify him from a place in this list.

Episodes 3 and 3' (2Sam 21:15-22; 23:8-23)

Since the list of the Thirty (23:24-39) is a close parallel in terms of genre to the list of chief ministers (20:23-26), it functions effectively as a separate episode, making the remaining episodes about mighty men more comparable in length and genre. It appears that membership of the Thirty was a particular honour reserved for only certain elite warriors who had distinguished themselves in battle (cf. footnote 446). To illustrate their valour, the author used episode 3' to record the exploits of the 'elite of the elite', the Three whose outstanding victories and devotion to David set them apart (23:8-17), as well as Abishai and Benaiah who had not attained to the Three and yet became generals, elevating them beyond the company of the Thirty (23:18-23; cf. 20:23). The Three had evidently been serving David years before he became king (23:13-14; cf. 1Sam 22:1, 4), which explains why two of those mentioned, Adino and Eleazar (23:8-10; cf. 23:11-12 and 33a), had apparently retired from serving with the Thirty (or perhaps died) and given their places to younger warriors such as Uriah.

To parallel these five 'elite' members of the Thirty, the author identified another group of four warriors who along with David had completed his defeat of Goliath's offspring (an explanation defended above, in footnote 445). Of these four warriors, Abishai was now commander over the Thirty (23:19), with Jonathan son of Shimei among their number (21:20-21; 23:33b – family background too obvious to repeat), but the second and third giant killers had apparently also now retired from among the Thirty – Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite and Sibbecai the Hushathite (21:18-19; not identical to 23:24b, 27b; cf. 1Chr 11:29). Thus the "thirty-seven" mighty men (23:39b) includes the serving Thirty (23:24b-39a), Asahel (23:24a), Abishai and Benaiah (23:18-23), two retired members of the Three (23:8-10), and two retired giant-slayers (21:18-19).

David himself might be considered the fifth giant slayer (21:22), paralleling the five elite warriors of episode **3'**.

Episodes **3** and **3'** are also parallel in their arrangement, each having two halves separated by a key central element. In episode **3**, the defeat of Ishbi-benob (21:15-17a) is distinguished from those of his three brothers (21:18-22), not only by David's personal involvement, but also by the extra-long introduction to the second half: "And it came about after this..." (21:18; cf. 21:15, 19, 20). Between the two halves is a central element in 21:17b, where David's men refuse to allow him into battle again, lest the "lamp of Israel" be extinguished. Likewise, in episode **3'**, the first half about victories of the Three (23:8-12) and the second about Abishai and Benaiah (23:18-23) frame a central scene, connected to the first half, which describes personal concern for David's well-being (23:13-17). Both of these central scenes relate to the author's primary interests about Absalom and Uriah from the overall Song of the Desire. The first may be compared with the equivalent insistence by David's army during the civil war with Absalom (18:3). However, whereas David was prevented from leading his men into battle, Absalom had been sent to his death at the head of his men by the advice of Hushai (17:11), thereby 'extinguishing David's coal which was left', to use the wise woman of Tekoa's metaphor for Absalom (14:7). The central scene of episode **3'** relates instead to David's sin against Uriah, in that the way he once poured out before YHWH the self-sacrificial 'blood' of his men in his younger days (23:16-17; cf. 14:14) contrasts sharply with his disregard in later life for Uriah's dutiful service (cf. 23:39), as if this time he drank of Uriah's life-blood and greatly displeased YHWH. This episode as a whole commemorates many of David's "men who went with their lives" (23:17), pouring out their stories selflessly before YHWH this time rather than claiming their exploits for David himself as in 2Sam 8:1-14 (cf. §4.2, Episodes **2/2'**; Ps 42:4 [MT 5]; Deut 32:2). As such, there appears to be an echo here of when the nation under Samuel poured out water before YHWH as a symbol of repentance (1Sam 7:6; Lam 2:19; 1Kgs 18:34), which was itself a parallel for Hannah who "poured out my soul before YHWH" (1Sam 1:15; cf. Ps 62:8 [MT 9]; 142:2 [MT 3]). Interestingly, these three episodes all appear at an equivalent 'altitude' in the structure of the entire book of *Samuel*, an

interlocking sequence of parallels across the Song of Eli, the Song of the Ark, and the Song of the Temple (cf. footnote 436; Map 1, Episodes 2/2'; §5.4). If this is in fact a deliberate connection, the recollection of the warriors' exploits in this pair of episodes may be another way of expressing remorse before YHWH for David's sins against Uriah, contributing another level to the Song of David's Prayer, in the hope that like Hannah his prayer for a son might be granted (cf. Episode 5 below).

#### Episodes 4 and 4' (2Sam 22:1-51; 23:1b-7)

Just as the outer episodes of the Song of David's Prayer feature prayers for the land (21:14; 24:25), so the inner episodes, the two inserted poems, essentially summarise the prayers of David during the two main periods of his life represented in the book of Samuel. The first poem (22:1-51), though it does refer to David's royal victories over foreign nations (22:44-46, 48, 50; cf. 8:1-14), specifically mentions Saul in its title,<sup>471</sup> and is probably meant to evoke the prayers David had prayed when fleeing from Saul (22:3-7, 18-28). As such, it corresponds to the first 'volume' of *Samuel*, 1Sam 1–2Sam 6, just as the second poem (23:1b-7) represents the content of the second volume, 2Sam 7–24.<sup>472</sup> A lengthy poetic title (23:1b-3b) introduces David's prophetic oracle about righteous kingship (23:3c-4) and its opposite (23:6-7), in the middle of which he has inserted a prayer that God might cause his "everlasting covenant" to grow (23:5). This particular prayer is the source for the terms "salvation" and "desire" which I have used to represent the two volumes of *Samuel*. Thus the two poems introduced to create the Song of David's Prayer apparently represent the two halves of the book of *Samuel*, the Song of Salvation and the Song of Desire, by summarising David's prayers for salvation from his enemies and for his greatest desire as king – an heir who could build the temple for YHWH.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> The title uses the common rhetorical device of 'the general and the specific' (e.g. 1Sam 25:26; 2Sam 1:4; 11:17, 24; 18:19, 28-32), where the specific example is what is really in focus when speaking in general ways.

<sup>472</sup> Cf. Rosenberg 1987: 140; Firth 2009: 525, 516-17.

<sup>473</sup> Samuel spoke of YHWH's 'desire' for sacrifices (1Sam 15:22), and David's longing to see the ark's habitation again would rely on YHWH's 'desire' in him (2Sam 15:25-26). Later, Solomon's 'desire' for building materials corresponds to his intention to build the temple and fulfil the prophecy to David (1Kgs 5:5-6, 8; cf. Isa 44:28).

The poem in episode 4 mentions the theme of salvation not only in its title (22:1) but also in its concluding verse (22:51), a verse which with its reference to covenant faithfulness and David's 'seed' is fairly clearly separate from the rest of the song.<sup>474</sup> This first poem is a fairly straightforward concentricism, as expected, although each of its constituent strophes could also be analysed individually for their poetic compositional techniques. Due to the length of the poem I have set it out in a map of its own, and again, the headings must be treated as provisional, subject to verification from the text.<sup>475</sup>

*Map 12 –David's Song of Salvation (2Sam 22:1–51)*

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**Intro** David spoke these words to YHWH when he was delivered from all enemies and from Saul (1)

- a** Praise to YHWH my rock (2-4)
  - b** God hears me in my distress (5-7)
    - c** YHWH as a victorious warrior (8-16)
      - d** YHWH puts me in a broad place (17-20)
        - e** My ways have been blameless (21-27)
          - f** YHWH is my lamp (28-30)
            - e'** God's way is blameless – a rock (31-33)
              - d'** God enlarges my steps (34-37)
                - c'** David as a victorious warrior (38-43)
                  - b'** Trembling foreigners hear me and obey (44-46)
                    - a'** Praise to YHWH my rock (47-50)

**Concl** A 'tower of salvation' of his king, and One who acts faithfully to David and his seed (51)

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Within the outer limits of the song (21:1, 51) two pairs of episodes display straightforward synonymous parallelism, strophes **a** and **a'** using standard hymnic expressions of praise, and strophes **d** and **d'** describing YHWH's salvation of David pictorially as being brought into a place of unhindered movement. Strophic pairs **b/b'** and **c/c'** both portray David as being granted dominion over his enemies which reflects that of his own king YHWH, the former pair comparing David's humble cries to YHWH with the humility of foreigners before David, and the latter picturing David as

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<sup>474</sup> 22:51 is probably deliberately ambiguous, the *Kethib* describing God "making great" the king's salvation and the *Qere* depicting God Himself as "a tower of salvation" (cf. Prov 18:10) reflecting the psalm's twin ideas of YHWH as a physical refuge (22:2-3) who also elevates David (22:34, 44, 49). It is tempting to wonder whether the 'tower' in this concluding verse might be hinting at the ziggurat-like structure of this poem about salvation, 'whose top is into heaven' (cf. Gen 11:4; here too, YHWH 'comes down' from 'heaven' to 'scatter' the haughty – 2Sam 22:10, 14, 15, 28). In a similar way, the central verse of the second poem seems to reflect consciously on the process of concentric composition ("ordered in all things, and secured"; 23:5c).

<sup>475</sup> Psalm 18 apparently adjusts and adds explanatory details to 2Sam 22, without compromising its structure.

having taken on the warrior nature of his God YHWH. This description of YHWH as a warrior probably relates to the angel of YHWH, who is viewed in very similar ways in the Davidic psalm 35 (cf. 35:1-6, 22-24), and whose great and awesome deeds at the Exodus are praised in 2Sam 7:23. Such a link is reinforced by this poem's other clear allusions to two ancient Exodus songs: Exodus 15, which apparently praises the angel of YHWH who had defeated the Egyptians (Exod 14:19-31), and Deuteronomy 32, which portrays YHWH as both a Rock and a warrior (Deut 32:4, 15-18, 23, 30-31, 35-43; cf. Exod 17:6; 23:20-26; Isa 30:27-32:2). In the uppermost pair of strophes (**e/e'**), David compares his own blamelessness with that of YHWH, a surprisingly confident assertion that fits best with David's early career before the Uriah incident. The focus of the whole song in strophe **f** is therefore YHWH's own ability to bring victory to David in his humility, and to light David's lamp, a metaphor for raising up an heir for David (cf. 22:51; 21:17; 14:7).<sup>476</sup>

Episode **4'** is significantly shorter than episode **4**, which is consistent with the shorter length of the Song of Desire (2Sam 7-24) as compared to the Song of Salvation (1Sam 1-2Sam 6). More will be said below about 23:1a, the apparent title to this poem, but after an unprecedented eight lines of poetic introduction in 23:1b-3a, the body of the poem comprises a two-part metaphor revealed to or through David by the "Rock of Israel". The first image of grass appearing in morning sunlight after a rainstorm is contrasted with the second image of prickly thorns, thrust away with a spear to be burned where they sit. If the first image represents ruling in the fear of God, the second would naturally represent ungodly rulership, and the reference in the intervening verse 5 to David's house 'sprouting' effectively asks whether it will sprout with righteous or wicked rulers (cf. 2Sam 7:14-15). The question then arises why the thorns of the second image are handled using "iron and the shaft of a spear" rather than, say, a mattock or fork or hoe (cf. 1Sam 13:21). Keeping a dangerous sprout of a leader at arm's length using a spear, naturally calls to mind Saul's treatment of both David and Jonathan, in contrast to David's lenient treatment of his own son Absalom who was a genuine threat; it effectively urges godly rulers to be strict, but not afraid. The suggestion might also be

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<sup>476</sup> 22:28 looks back to strophes **b-d**, 22:30 looks ahead to strophes **d'-b'**, and 22:29 summarises **e-e'**.

being made that David has now deserved the two attacks of YHWH described in the Song of Absalom, having become as much a son of Beliya'al as Saul had been (cf. 22:5)<sup>477</sup> in setting traps for an honoured warrior.

Thus the oracle very effectively epitomises the moral ambiguities of David's reign, and in the midst of these two perspectives David poses his own question to YHWH. Picking up the image of grass flourishing in the light of the sun after rain has passed (23:4), verse 5 asks, "Is not my house so with God, because of the eternal covenant he granted me?" (5a-b). The same question is posed in inverted order at the end of the verse (5d-e): "For all my salvation and all [my] desire, will He not make it sprout?" 'Salvation' and 'Desire' are natural references to the two parts of David's life,<sup>478</sup> and the two 'volumes' of *Samuel*, hence my designations for these sections in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis. In the centre of this concentric verse is a description of this 'eternal covenant', the 'salvation and desire' of David: "everything set out in order and secured" (5c). There is probably no better description of the way in which the technique of concentricism has been executed in *Samuel*. So if the entire story of David has been laid out so perfectly in concentric patterns, the question being asked here is whether there will be a third half, so to speak; will there be another 'salvation' volume to parallel the first, sunshine again after the rain, and the sprouting of a shoot of promise for David?

#### Episode 5 (2Sam 23:1a)

Finally, then, one comes to the centre of the Song of David's Prayer, only to find that there appears to be nothing there. Since the even-numbered inverted parallelism in 2Sam 21–24 is the structure in *Samuel* most commonly recognised within scholarship (famine, warriors, poem || poem, warriors, plague), the lack of a central element here would be a decisive falsification of the priority in

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<sup>477</sup> §3.5, episodes **15/15'**, proposed parallel deliverances from a terrorising spirit and a terrorising king, citing 2Sam 22:5 (Miscall [1991: 251] detects allusions to Saul and his snares for David in 2Sam 22:5-6). The same discussion in §3.5 also recognised tools 'in the hand' as conveying formal employment, hence 'armed' (*ml'*) in 2Sam 23:7 (cf. Ps 48:10 [MT 11]?). Saul's body was unusually burned in 'his place' before burial (1Sam 31:12).

<sup>478</sup> Cf. "the desire of all Israel" as a reference to kingship in 1Sam 9:20 (חמד and חפץ have a similar semantic range – e.g. Song 2:3, 7; Isa 64:10-11 with 65:11-12).

this thesis given to concentric structures and their climactic central messages. To use David's metaphor of the "bow" from 2Sam 1:17-27, what is the point of a beautifully constructed bow if no arrow is then placed in the middle?

It seems that there are four logical alternatives that might explain the apparent lack of a central element in 2Sam 20:23–24:25.

(i) *Different author/editor*

Perhaps this reworking of the existing Song of the Temple was a secondary structure created by a different author who did not care about the rhetorical distinction between even-numbered and odd-numbered structures. However, it has been shown clearly in multiple ways how the author of this final section was fully aware of the principle of the importance of the centre, and also of existing structural arrangements for the rest of the book. The two inserted poems (**4** and **4'**) both resolve into satisfying concentric arrangements with suitable central elements, as do the first and last episodes of the Song of David's Prayer (**1** and **1'**). The second inserted poem even speaks of David's covenant as "ordered in all things and secured" at the precise midpoint of the oracle (see layout in Appendix (5)), which is hardly likely to be coincidental.

(ii) *Deliberate lack of a centre*

Perhaps the author wanted to leave the centre empty, to communicate something about loss or speechlessness or the like.<sup>479</sup> In a sense this is correct. Various scholars have observed how the two poems at the end of the book balance Hannah's poem at the beginning. A deeper rhetorical equivalence between the start and end of the book would not therefore be surprising. It seems to me that this apparently voiceless (in fact, concealed) centre between the two poems parallels Hannah's voiceless prayer in the first scene of the entire book – the structure is itself a prayer for a son, but one that only God needs to hear. More on this below.

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<sup>479</sup> This would be approximately equivalent to episode **7'** in the Song of Absalom, though observe that, in contrast to **7**, the author avoided centrism entirely so as to prevent mistaken identification of a centre.

(iii) *Double centre*

Perhaps the author meant the two poems to be taken together as a dual centre of the structure, even though this would relativise the clear distinction between even-numbered and odd-numbered inverted parallelism everywhere else in the book. In any case, for there to be a double centre, the two elements must represent a unitary idea in some way. This can be seen, for example, in the twin centres of the Absalom story (2Sam 13–20), fulfilling precisely the two-fold judgement prophesied by Nathan in the centre of 2Samuel 10–12 (cf. below §5.1.1(iii)). Equally, the joint centrality of the Songs of Uriah and Absalom (2Sam 10–12; 13–20) within the broader Song of the Temple, functions as a closely-tied narrative of cause and effect, conveying a clear unitary message of “sin punished” at the centre of 2Samuel 7–24. In this Song of David’s Prayer, then, one could argue that both inserted poems share a degree of interest at their central points in David’s desire for an heir to replace Absalom. Even so, a single inserted poem could have made this point even more effectively and powerfully from a structural point of view, and furthermore would have been a better balance for Hannah’s song in 1Samuel 2:1-10, so a double centre here still fails to convince.

(iv) *2Samuel 23:1a as the centre*

The apparent title of 2Sam 23:1-7, “Now these are the last words of David”, seems designed to raise questions in the mind of the reader. If one tries to read the episodes in 2Samuel 21–24 as a chronologically sequential narrative, in line with most of the rest of the book, finding a poem of David’s “last words” at this point becomes problematic. David evidently has much more to say in the episodes that follow this poem.<sup>480</sup> There must therefore be another purpose for the placement of David’s “last words” here, and this is one factor that has led many scholars to recognise a structural thematic arrangement rather than a chronological one for the episodes in 2Samuel 21–24.

Most scholars are content simply to “note the chiasmic arrangement” for this so-called “Appendix”. However, this thesis has paid careful attention to structural arrangement everywhere else in 1-2 Samuel, and demonstrated the author’s exclusive use of the concentric technique, odd-

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<sup>480</sup> Morrison (2013) counter-intuitively treats everything from 2Sam 23:1 to 1Kgs 2:9 as David’s “last words”!

numbered rather than even-numbered inverted parallelism. This requires us to look again for an unparalleled central unit of sufficient importance to justify its climactic position in this sequence of episodes.

Only one thing stands alone at the structural midpoint of 2Sam 20:23–24:25 – a single sentence reading, “Now these are the last words of David.” Yet if 23:1b-7 was a poem that otherwise lacked a title, 23:1a must serve as its title because it would be necessary to divide the following poetry from the preceding poem. In that case, 23:1a could not be separated off as a structural centre for 2Sam 20:23–24:25; principles of unit delimitation (§2.4.4) would prohibit this conclusion. For the parallel poem (22:1-51), 22:1 is clearly a prose title that serves to identify the author and motivating situation for the poem’s composition, as is conventional for psalm titles. If 23:1a were just a prose title, it might naturally be read as information that what follows was written by David, and written just before his death (i.e. “last”). But 23:1b-3b then offers a poetic prelude before the actual oracle, effectively serving as an alternative title. With eight poetic lines in two pairs of parallel couplets, this prelude expresses in four different ways first that the following poem was composed by David, and then that the motivating situation was a divine revelation to him. As titles, these are not technically contradictory, but they are divergent.

To my knowledge, the only other poems in the Hebrew Bible which use multiple lines of poetry at the start to record authorship and occasion are two pertinent oracles of Balaam the prophet (Num 24:3-9; 24:15-19),<sup>481</sup> yet both of those lack additional prose titles. The identical prose introduction for each oracle (Num 24:3a, 15a) is clearly not a title; rather, it is a standard phrase used in ancient literature to tie a poem into a continuous prose narrative (cf. Job 27:1; 29:1). Yet we have already established that linking into chronological narrative is clearly not the purpose of 2Sam 23:1a in its broader context. If 23:1a were a title for what follows, therefore, this poem would be unique in extant Hebrew poetry for having two distinct titles. That is not to deny that it could be read as a title; on the contrary, the fact that it appears to be one is what effects the meaningful

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<sup>481</sup> Cf. also 1Sam 15:29 with Num 23:19. For the close parallels between 2Sam 23:1-7 and Balaam’s oracles, see Starbuck 1999: 186-89.

concealment of the structure's rhetorical message. However, the additional poetic title does make 23:1a unnecessary for the purpose of dividing the two poems, and thus allows it to function instead as a structural centre for the larger composition of 2Samuel 21–24.

Having established that 23:1a is unnecessary as a title for 23:1b-7, and is therefore able to function differently as the missing centre of 20:23–24:25, the rhetorical critic has reason to look more closely at 23:1a, to discern its apparent meaning if interpreted in this all-important climactic position. Perhaps it is not a pointless title, but rather the arrow at the centre of the bow?

On the one hand, a superficial reading of 23:1a as a title for the following poem would mean that its pronominal adjective “these” applies just to 23:1b-7 and designates this small composition as David’s “last words”. If, on the other hand, this sentence is interpreted as a stand-alone statement according to principles of concentric arrangement, the word “these” would naturally apply not just to what follows it, but to what comes below it in the structure, that is, either side of the central statement. It would refer both forwards and backwards, as if the sentence were pretending to be both a colophon and a title,<sup>482</sup> indicating that these poems could be understood together as David’s “last words”.

It was demonstrated earlier (§4.5) that the two poems 22:1-51 and 23:1-7 have been inserted secondarily into the original structure of the Song of the Temple (2Sam 7–24) to form an additional concluding concentricism. If these two poems were composed or at least incorporated subsequently into the existing composition, they do represent the final stage of composition of the whole book, and could therefore be designated appropriately as “the last words” from the author’s perspective. On the face of it, though, it is not the author who is speaking “last words” in 23:1a, but David. It is unlikely that 2Samuel 22 is being presented alongside 23:1b-7 as David’s final poetic compositions, in view of David’s complete confidence in his own righteousness (e.g. 22:21-27), surely an impossible

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<sup>482</sup> Thirtle (1905) recognised how many of the psalm ‘titles’ in the Psalter are in fact a conjunction of the colophon for the preceding psalm and the title for the following. Were this phenomenon observed in written poetic anthologies such as the Book of Yashar (2Sam 1:18), it may have suggested the idea to the author.

claim after the Bathsheba incident. Perhaps, then, it is the editorial placement of these two poems, rather than their actual composition, that is meant to be understood as David's "last words".

Would it be plausible to view this as an attribution of the "last" stage of editorial composition in 1-2 Samuel to David himself, as the 'implied editor'?<sup>483</sup> Purely from a narrative perspective, the "last" situation recorded for David is 2Samuel 20:22e, where the chronological narrative ends. At that point David has just put down a second nation-wide rebellion against his authority, his new general appointed to appease rebels of his own tribe has been murdered by Joab, and he has also recently lost his son Absalom, viewed by the whole nation as his rightful successor (19:10), thus leaving his kingdom in continuing turmoil and uncertainty. In this narrative context, the messages of the two poems seem particularly apposite – salvation from enemies (2Sam 22) and desire for growth of David's house (2Sam 23:1-7). In such a time in his life, David's "last words" might well be about salvation and an enduring dynasty. The final further distortion to this structure, wrenching 20:23-26 out of its original position between 21:14 and 21:15, would also be most understandable as a reflection of David's own extreme displeasure with Joab, as expressed elsewhere in 1Kgs 2:5-6 (cf. 2Sam 3:29, 39; also §4.5).

Additional support for seeing 23:1a as an identification of David as the implied editor of 2Sam 20:23–24:25 might come from applying the principles of concentric interpretation established in the methodology of Chapter Two of this thesis (§2.5.2). The central message of a concentric structure will be properly understood in light of the first and last episodes. For the Song of David's Prayer, both first and last episodes (21:1-14; 24:1-25) emphasise David's royal prayers for a land suffering divine judgement for the sins of its king. "These" words of David referred to in the centre would thus presumably correspond in some way to those repeated situations. The structure and positioning of 2Sam 13–20 immediately after 2Sam 10–12 is a clear argument by the author that, in

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<sup>483</sup> As Yairah Amit uses the term (1999: 14-19), this would distinguish, at least in principle, between an 'implied author' who might be inferred from a distinct textual unit, and an 'implied editor' reconstructed by the reader from the editorial arrangement of multiple units into a larger work. Episodic narrative such as in the book of Judges lends itself to the discernment of 'implied editors', as do poetic collections such as the Psalter, hence P.J. Botha's 2005 study of 'implied authors' for each of Psalms 1 and 2, and 'implied editor' for their current juxtaposition. The potential correlation with actual authors or editors could be a matter for later investigation.

his view, the direct cause of the turmoil at the end of the narrative of *Samuel* was David's earlier sins against Uriah. This would therefore constitute a third royal transgression that has brought divine judgement on Israel, this time not a famine nor a plague but rather the loss of its divinely designated king. It would then follow, from the pattern established by both outer episodes, that David as king is uniquely authorised to intercede for mercy on behalf of his nation. The "last words of David" referred to in the centre at 23:1a would quite plausibly be words of prayer.

It would seem reasonable, therefore, to interpret 23:1a as pointing to David himself as the implied editor, compiling 20:23–24:25 as his "last words" of intercession for the land. But is that all? It was argued above (§4.5, episodes **1** & **1'**) that the editor of this concluding concentricism had written both first and last episodes to be simultaneously suitable for their parallel episodes within both the Song of the Temple and the Song of David's Prayer. Likewise, it is argued below (§5.4; cf. footnote 436) that the author of the Song of the Temple was intimately familiar with the composition of the earlier Song of the Ark, suggesting a common author/editor for both works. Is there any further evidence that might support seeing David as the implied editor for the whole of 1-2 Samuel, not just for 20:23–24:25?

It has been observed independently by other scholars (cf. footnote 472) that the two poems do correspond well in terms of subject matter, and also uneven length, to the two primary sections of *Samuel* – the Song of Salvation (1Sam 1–2Sam 6) and the Song of Desire (2Sam 7–24). Note how well 2Sam 22:1b summarises the climactic central message of 1Sam 4–2Sam 6 at 1Sam 19:18-24,<sup>484</sup> and how appropriate the sentiments expressed within the poem (e.g. 2Sam 22:21-27) are for David's life strictly prior to the Bathsheba incident. Not only that, but David's oracle which follows also speaks in its central verse about "all my salvation and all [my/Your?] desire" (23:5d), a most elegant summary of the primary themes in the two parts of the book of *Samuel* (cf. §3.1), which have been "ordered in all things and secured" according to God's gracious covenant purposes for David.

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<sup>484</sup> 2Sam 22:21-28 similarly reflects the theme found in the centre of the introductory Song of Eli (1Sam 2:30).

It seems, then, that the two poems were deliberately selected and inserted to represent the two major parts of *Samuel*, the author using poems in a similar way to the woman of Tekoa's theatrical court case representing the nation's plea for Absalom's return, or to the prophet Nathan's parable representing David's sins against Uriah. If that is so, the statement in 2Sam 23:1a takes on a far greater significance, suitably climactic as a central statement. The whole Song of David's Prayer, constructed secondarily at the end of the Song of the Temple, would seem to equate structurally to a colophon for the whole expanded book. If its two inserted poems collectively represent the two parts of the larger work, the all-important central statement standing between them – "Now these are the last words of David" – would function effectively as a signature by the scribe, a statement about implied authorship for the whole of the book of *Samuel*.<sup>485</sup> Consequently, the rhetorical messages within each part of the book are meant to be understood as personal messages by David, and with the completion of this final editorial activity, the "last words" of David are finished and he has nothing more to say (hence 1Kgs 1:20; Ps 38:13-15 [MT 14-16]; 39:7-12 [MT 8-13]).

One might naturally wonder, then, why this statement appears on a superficial reading to be merely an extra title to the following poem, as if concealing its true significance. The same question would apply to messages throughout *Samuel* that rely on detecting parallels across wide sections of narrative, making them unavoidably opaque for any audience, whether aural or literate (cf. §2.3.3). The function of the whole composition as in essence a royal prayer for an heir provides a natural answer, corresponding to Hannah's prayer for a son in the first scene of the whole book (1Sam 1:9-16). Hannah "was speaking in her heart", pouring out her soul before YHWH in an unusual silent prayer, misinterpreted by even the godly priest watching because he was not her primary intended audience. Likewise, the author would most likely assume that even sympathetic observers of the book, unless taught how to 'hear' the authorial voice within the rhetorical structure, would be prone

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<sup>485</sup> It is worth reiterating here that at this stage we are simply considering the apparent implications of the literary structure; assessing the historical-critical validity of these implications must be addressed elsewhere.

to misinterpret his purpose at 2Sam 23:1 and therefore fail to appreciate the full breadth and message of his 'final' composition.

Just as Hannah was not trying to deceive Eli, the placement of 2Sam 23:1a is not deceptive, but the import of its connection with the two volumes of *Samuel* is deliberately withheld from those who are not the author's primary audience. Stories full of emotion tumble over one another, but their coherent message, or voice, is expressed only below the surface within extensive and precisely ordered concentric structures heard by YHWH alone, who looks at the heart. And what is the primary message of this prayer by the author? From David's perspective (cf. 2Sam 7:13; 12:23; 14:14; 14:25; 15:25; 18:18; 18:33 [MT 19:1]; 22:6), he might well have summarised his hopelessly unrealistic plea, as a grieving father, that Israel's appointed king, his prophesied son of peace, might be raised from the pit to build YHWH's temple and reign for ever.

## Chapter Five – Assessment

As an example of third-wave literary analysis, this thesis has established a clear theoretical foundation for the rhetorical technique of concentricism in ancient Israelite narrative (Chapter Two), before analysing the final form of the book of Samuel in detail to demonstrate how its concentric structures convey the (final) author's intended message (Chapters Three and Four). The task is not complete, however, until the final form has been given a plausible historical setting, and though this chapter will address this question in a preliminary way (§§5.3, 6.B), a full discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, the primary contribution of this particular investigation is the rhetorical structure of *Samuel*, the empirical evidence which must then be accounted for in one way or another. As such, then, the conclusions of the thesis have already been presented, and what follows is simply further reflection on those conclusions. The present chapter will therefore use this analysis of *Samuel* in various ways, to test the methodology established in Chapter Two for verifying and initially identifying concentric proposals (§§5.1–2), to draw preliminary conclusions about the purpose and setting of the final form (§5.3), and to explore its potential for refining source- and redaction-criticism and also rhetorical criticism (§§5.4–5).

### 5.1 Verification

In §2.5 above, I began by offering a clear definition of concentricism, an odd-numbered inverted parallel structure of at least five elements, which are typically episodes in the case of concentric narratives. A concentricism is composed of three essential features: (1) a base pair, (2) symmetrical inverted slopes, and (3) a central unparalleled episode. Interpretation of a concentricism treats the outermost pair of episodes as either (i) the primary context within which the central message is understood, or (ii) the 'before and after' situations changed by the central turning point. The central episode must therefore be of sufficient theological or narrative weight to serve as the key for the whole concentricism.

The book of Samuel is made up of two ‘volumes’ which mirror each other structurally, both comprising one major concentric structure that incorporates two smaller concentricisms, and a secondary interlocking concentricism at its outer extremity which serves either to introduce or conclude the whole book (1Sam 1:1–8:3; 2Sam 20:23–24:25; for the interface cf. footnote 436). Ideally every structure in *Samuel* ought to be verified using my seven criteria from §2.5, but for the sake of space, I have chosen just one representative structure to verify in detail – the first smaller concentricism within the second volume (2Sam 10:1–12:31; cf. §4.3 above). This particular composition is of moderate length and yet sufficiently detailed to allow for the application of all seven criteria, and its one point of significant imbalance well-illustrates the explanatory power of the criteria when applied as suggested.

With any passage excerpted from a larger final-form composition, it is essential that this broader setting be taken into account when seeking either to interpret or verify its arrangement, because its plot and message were designed to be understood within that context. In Chapter Four above, I have situated 2Sam 10–12 within both the Song of Desire (2Sam 7–24) and the book of Samuel as a whole. Other scholars have also proposed concentric analyses of the whole book, including Fokkelman (1981), Radday (1981: 77-84), Long (1993), Wilson (1997), Dorsey (1999: 129-36), Leithart (2003: 31-33), and Harvey (2006: 238-47), with varying degrees of detail.<sup>486</sup> For the purposes of this particular section, though, I will be making reference to a selection of the more focused studies of 2Sam 10–12, using secondary literature where it is relevant to my own analysis rather than attempting a comprehensive discussion of how scholars have interpreted these chapters.

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<sup>486</sup> See also the critiques of shorter concentric/chiastic proposals made by Ridout, Lund, Radday and Flanagan, in Conroy 1978: 143-45. For example, Flanagan (1972: 177-81) recognises 2Sam 8:16-18 and 20:23-26 as parallel, but by making these the extremities of a single uniform concentricism centred on 16:23, his hypothesis does not allow the “intrinsic narrative dynamism of the story as a whole” to express itself (Conroy, p. 145).

Map 8 – *The Song of Uriah* (2Sam 10:1–12:31)

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- 1 Introduction to Ammonite war, including Joab’s defeat of the Arameans (10:1-19)
  - 2 Bathsheba the wife of Uriah conceives a child with David (11:1-5)
  - 3 Messengers report about the war and bring bad news about Uriah’s death (11:6-25)
  - 4 Bathsheba mourns for her dead husband (11:26-27)
  - 5 Nathan arrives and speaks a parable to David (12:1-4)
  - 6 David responds with anger to Nathan’s words (12:5-6)
  - 7 Nathan pronounces YHWH’s twofold judgement on David (12:7-12)
  - 6’ David responds with contrition to Nathan’s words (12:13a)
  - 5’ Nathan speaks of immediate consequences and departs (12:13b-15a)
  - 4’ David fasts for his dying son (12:15b-17)
  - 3’ Servants hesitate to bring bad news about David’s son’s death (12:18-23)
  - 2’ Bathsheba the wife of David bears a son to David (12:24-25)
  - 1’ Conclusion to Ammonite war (12:26-31)
- 

5.1.1 (i) Assessment of Balance

The structure is evidently concentric according to the definition, and its central episode provides both the turning point of the story, changing David the sinner into David the penitent, and the primary (prophetic) message of the concentricism, the divine judgements which will then drive the following Song of Absalom (2Sam 13:1–20:22). The introduction and conclusion (1/1’) together form a complete story about the Ammonite war which was not only the historical setting for these private events in David’s life but also the instrument he used to conceal his adultery, only to have it exposed publicly at the centre. Every episode corresponds to its pair at the expected point on the opposite slope, creating a precise balance of number and position of episodes. Furthermore, episodes 2–4 and 4’–2’ form larger parallel clusters with David as the main protagonist, whereas he is eclipsed by Nathan the prophet in the central cluster (5–5’).

As regards balance of length, the second half of the structure is noticeably shorter than the first, though in most cases this is required by the story. For example, the initial liaison between David and Bathsheba (11:1-5) is necessarily more complicated than the second recorded liaison between the now married couple (12:24-25). David’s royal judgement in response to Nathan’s legal test case (12:5-6) is naturally more detailed than his response to the exposure of his sin (12:13a), where his contrition is fittingly shorn of any elaboration of excuses whatsoever. The same is true of Nathan’s

parable (12:1-4) which must be long enough to include all the important features of the case brought before the court, whereas Nathan's final delivery of YHWH's ruling (12:13b-15a) in response to the guilty plea by David is shorter yet of an equivalent length to David's own legal ruling (12:5-6). The bad news episodes are of unequal length primarily because of the space needed to record the various events, but even so, the two exchanges of messengers between David and Joab (11:6-15, 16-25) correspond structurally to David's two exchanges with his household servants (12:18-19, 20-23).

The one imbalance of length that is actually significant for meaning is the marked disparity between the introduction to the Ammonite war (10:1-19) and its conclusion (12:26-31). Had the introduction been limited to the war with the Ammonites alone, as is the case in the conclusion and also elsewhere in the structure (11:1; 12:9), the introduction would have been of precisely equivalent length to the conclusion. Thus the imbalance here appears to be deliberate, and on closer inspection reveals a secondary concentricism with significance for the interpretation of the whole structure:

*Map 8a – The Song of the Ammonite War (2Sam 10:1-19; 12:26-31)*

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- a** David's diplomatic insult by the king of Ammon (10:1-5)
    - b** Arameans form a military alliance with the Ammonites, and David's response (10:6-8)
      - c** Joab's assessment of the battlefield and deployment of troops (10:9-10)
        - d** Joab's instructions and pious encouragement for fellow general Abishai (10:11-12)
          - c'** Joab's successful battle against his enemies and return from the battlefield (10:13-14)
            - b'** David's defeat of the Arameans, and their unwillingness to help Ammon again (10:15-19)
- 
- a'** David's official subjugation of the king of Ammon (12:26-31)
- 

Episode **a'** (= **1'**) was evidently detached from the rest of this structure deliberately,<sup>487</sup> and placed at the end of the story about David and Bathsheba in order to give the same base pair of episodes (**a/a'**) to two different concentric structures (10:6-19; 11:1–12:25) and thereby to make them reflect upon each other. The centre of the Song of the Ammonite War puts focus on Joab's expression of teamwork, courage, and submission to the will of YHWH, contrasting as clearly as

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<sup>487</sup> The Chronicler (1Chr 19:1–20:3) recognised the coherence of this rhetorical unit despite its disjunction.

possible with the activity of David in the Song of Uriaah – David set one warrior against another, concealed his sin rather than showing moral courage, and acted directly against YHWH’s will. The much greater size of David’s story, compared to that of Joab, shows it to be the author’s primary focus.

#### 5.1.2 (i) Assessment of Balance

This therefore presents us with a second concentricism requiring verification, which we will deal with first (§5.1.2) before returning to the primary concentricism (§5.1.1). The balance of number and position of episodes here is likewise entirely regular, and even the balance of length is much closer, with only the episodes about the Arameans (**b/b’**) moderately unequal in length. This slight imbalance, though, turns out to be inconsequential when the two episodes are broken down into their three parallel segments of Aramean military alliance (10:6; 10:15-16), David’s response (10:7; 10:17), and the resulting situation on the battlefield (10:8; 10:18-19). Some scholars also include 11:1 with the preceding chapter rather than with 11:2-5, but as Fokkerman recognises, this verse is “in a transitional position”, connecting the following narrative of the siege of Rabbah and its contemporaneous events in Jerusalem with the preceding events (10:1-5) that had provoked it.<sup>488</sup>

#### 5.1.2 (ii) Assessment of intratextuality (Volume and Weight)

In the **a/a’** pair, both episodes focus on the interaction between David and Hanun king of Ammon, a figure who does not appear elsewhere in Samuel (his brother Shobi is mentioned in 2Sam 17:27). Both describe the defeat of Hanun’s capital city Rabbah using common synonyms for decisive conquest of a city in warfare (הפך – 10:3; לכד – 12:29), as well as the transfer of royal authority from one king to another (Nahash to Hanun; Hanun to David), and the deliberate humiliation of a king’s citizens, whether by cutting garments and beards in half or by setting [to work?] under saws and iron tools and through brickkilns. Furthermore, the author may have included the unnecessary detail about Jericho in 10:5, known elsewhere as the “city of palms” (Deut

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<sup>488</sup> Fokkerman 1981: 50-51.

34:3; Jdg 1:16; 3:13), to parallel the “city of waters” in 12:27 (cf. 2Kgs 2:18-22), both being places of temporary waiting in **a** and **a’**. Hanun’s disrespect for David’s authority is contrasted with Joab’s respect. The only Non-conformist I can see, and not a particularly weighty one, is the reference to David returning to Jerusalem after his victory in 12:31, perhaps paralleling Joab’s return in 10:14, although this appears to be nothing more than a standard conclusion for an account of a military campaign (cf. 1Sam 14:46; 2Sam 2:29, 32; 20:22).

Episode **b** is cleverly delimited by inverting the orders of both Rehob/Zobah and Maacah/Tob from 10:6 in 10:8. To parallel episodes **b** and **b’**, both have been composed in three stages with several repeated words or constructions and word pairs. In both, when the Ammonites/Arameans “saw” that they were facing problems, they “sent for” and hired/brought allies from neighbouring territories, both specifying a leader involved (the king of Maacah or the general Shobach).<sup>489</sup> David heard/was informed, and deployed his own troops, causing his enemies to “go forth and array themselves (at Rabbah)” or “array themselves (at Helam) and fight”. The first episode then describes the position of the various allied forces on the battlefield, whereas the second episode describes the casualties of the various divisions of enemy forces, specification of troop numbers in 10:18 reflecting 10:6,<sup>490</sup> along with the response of the forces allied with Aram. Nothing of any weight is lacking a parallel, even if the second episode has to be slightly longer than the first in order to record the outcome of the battle. The use of לקראת with the verb ערך in 10:17 is also found in 10:9 and 10:10, making these potential Non-conformists. However, the verbs themselves in verses 9 and 10 are singular and transitive rather than plural and effectively intransitive in 10:8 and 10:17, and 10:8 does use the synonymous term מלחמה for לקראת.

The **c/c’** pair of episodes both feature Joab, with Abishai as a supporting character, both describe Joab personally directing the troops, and both describe the Arameans first followed by the Ammonites. The first episode describes the observation by Joab of the two battle fronts that gave rise to his specific strategy (10:9a), which parallels Joab’s decision in the second episode to leave the

<sup>489</sup> Fokkelman (1981: 48) notes the “word for word” parallel between verses 6a and 15a.

<sup>490</sup> Further helpful observations about the effect of the number parallels are made by Fokkelman 1981: 49.

battlefield temporarily after his strategy had succeeded (10:14b). The episodes could hardly be more closely paralleled.

### 5.1.2 (iii) Assessment of exegesis (Trademarks and Integrity)

The three pairs of paralleled episodes reveal a number of common points of comparison, and it is interesting that in this concentricism there are few if any contrasts being made. The effect is to give more coherence to the story by meeting the expectations of the audience rather than provoking them to ask why things had changed. Comparisons are most often made between the actions of the same individual or character-type in similar situations (e.g. kings' humiliation of enemy citizens in response to perceived diplomatic insults; threatened armies appealing to allies for help; David's reaction to news of enemy alliances; Joab's sensible reaction to enemy movements; Abishai's obedient supporting role for his brother), often using close repetition of words, phrases, syntax or scene progression as well as common word pairs. Yet the author also seems to have an interest in including minor details as clues towards further parallels, which may largely be lost on later audiences (e.g. Jericho as a place of temporary pause for the sake of courtiers saving face, and the "city of waters" as a place of temporary pause for the sake of David saving face; naming Helam as an important Aramean equivalent to the Ammonite city Rabbah; the king of Maacah made parallel with the general Shobach).

The overall message of this concentricism is appropriately Joab's statement to his brother Abishai at the centre of the whole structure, the only other speeches coming in episodes **a** and **a'** (10:2, 3, 5; 12:27-28). Joab's statement has sufficient theological and ethical weight to qualify as the climactic message,<sup>491</sup> expressing loyalty, piety, and honourable motives, and as such it acts as the hinge on which the whole story turns. The implication is that Joab's righteous leadership of the army earned YHWH's favour and the successful outcome of the war, ensuring that his strategy (**c**) was successful (**c'**), that the Arameans hired against Israel (**b**) were defeated (**b'**), and that the humiliation of David's men (**a**) was returned upon Hanun and his people (**a'**). This message is also the reason that this

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<sup>491</sup> The only mention of God in chapter 10 is here in Joab's speech – Fokkelman 1981: 48; cf. Lawlor 1982: 195.

concentric appendage was built into the start of the Song of Uriah. As king, David took credit for the Ammonite-Aramean defeat (2Sam 8:3-8, 11-12), yet his personal immorality during the course of the war showed that it must have been Joab's righteousness that achieved victory for David.<sup>492</sup>

This message is not just communicated by the structure, however, but as required by the criterion of Integrity can also be found on the surface of the text. In 12:27-28, Joab expressly warns David that Rabbah is about to capitulate to Joab, and if David doesn't come quickly the credit for victory will go to Joab instead. Not only that, but in 11:1 a seeming spelling mistake actually conceals a much more significant message. The story of David's adultery is said to have happened "at the turn of the year, the time when messengers go out [to battle]", though the *Qere* substitutes the more logical "kings" for the word "messengers" written in the consonantal text. By this clever word play, the author is hinting that when 'king' David ought to have gone out to battle, he stayed at home in Jerusalem and sent Joab as his 'messenger', who therefore deserved the credit for the victory (cf. 2Kgs 18:17; 19:8-10).<sup>493</sup>

#### 5.1.2 (iv) Assessment of Agreement and Satisfaction

Another scholar who has studied the story of the Ammonite War in detail is Randall Bailey,<sup>494</sup> but he completely misses the literary artistry due to an unfortunate over-interest in redaction criticism. Youngblood acknowledges that chapters 10 through 12 "constitute a distinct literary unit" within the larger Court History, but because he parallels 12:26-31 with 11:1 and thus believes the concentric pattern in chapters 11–12 to be complete, he separates off chapter ten and then has to admit that "the rather straightforward narrative of chapter 10 itself [does not] yield readily to literary analysis".<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Rost (1982: 61) notes insightfully that "Joab appears here almost as the great war-hero who wins the decisive battles, leaving only the final taste of success to his master. Perhaps one might even go further and say that the narrator's sympathies lie more with Joab than with David."

<sup>493</sup> Cf. Leithart 2003: 238. In *Samuel*, מְלָאכִים ('messengers') often carry martial as well as diplomatic authority (1Sam 19:11-16, 20-21; 25:14; 2Sam 2:5; 3:12-14, 26), making the title suitable for even the greatest of generals (2Sam 24:16; cf. Exod 23:20-23; Num 20:16; Jos 6:13-15).

<sup>494</sup> Randall Bailey 1990: 53-54, 61-62, 67-68.

<sup>495</sup> Youngblood 1992: 921.

An alternative proposal for the structure of this passage has been made by Fokkelman, who treats the battle with the Ammonites (10:6-14) as a complete rhetorical unit instead of 10:6-19. Even so, he notes that twice in verses 6-8 the Ammonites are the first mentioned of the two enemies, but this changes from verse 9 through 14. He also recognises that Joab who had been “constantly the subject” of verses 9 through 13 (or arguably 14) “no longer appears in the text” in the final battle with Aram. Rather, David is the primary actor in verses 15-19, which was also in fact the case in verses 6-8 though Fokkelman did not notice this because of the mention of Joab in 10:7 in a supporting role.<sup>496</sup> He does note that the situation created in 10:1-5 is not resolved by the end of chapter 10, and sees a parallel between 12:26-31 and 10:1-5 specifically, in that “their king” mentioned in 12:30 has been left unnamed deliberately unlike the four times ‘Hanun’ appears in 10:1-4, because of the author’s association of naming with honour in both 12:25 and 12:28.<sup>497</sup>

According to my criteria, therefore, the episodes of 10:1-19 with the detached conclusion of 12:26-31 are suitably balanced in terms of number, position and length, with verbal, conceptual and storyline parallels reinforcing the resonance between paired episodes. These parallels show a certain trademark consistency in terms of the author’s interests, and the message identified through parallels as well as at the centre is reinforced by explicit statements on the surface of the text (e.g. 12:28b). Although I have not yet found a scholar who has proposed the same arrangement of this particular passage, Fokkelman’s detailed study of the literary features of the text does in fact reinforce the outline presented here. Proof for this proposal needs only to be ‘beyond reasonable doubt’, though Satisfaction will ultimately rest on how well the message of this concentricism complements that of the wider rhetorical unit of 2Samuel 10–12.

Having justified the imbalance between episodes **1** and **1’** of the Song of Uriah by identifying a secondary concentricism within the combination of these passages (§5.1.2), attention can turn from the assessment of Balance to the subsequent stages of verification for the larger Song.

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<sup>496</sup> Fokkelman 1981: 47, 46, 48-49.

<sup>497</sup> Fokkelman 1981: 50, 96.

### 5.1.1 (ii) Assessment of intratextuality (Volume and Weight)

Intratextuality within the **1/1'** pair of episodes has been considered above,<sup>498</sup> so we move on to the **2/2'** pair. The central message of both episodes in this pair is Bathsheba's conception of a son by David, and all other details are simply setting the stage. In episode **2**, therefore, 11:1 explains why David was in Jerusalem at the time, verse 2 brings Bathsheba across David's path, verse 3 introduces her status as a married woman, and then verses 4 and 5 describe her intercourse with David and resulting pregnancy. The birth of the son is not recorded until 11:27, after Bathsheba has become David's wife, but as the liaison was illicit to start with, the actual birth though technically legitimate was not considered important to recount within episode **2**. In 12:24 David's relations with his wife are said to be with the intention of consoling her after the death of her first son, that is, in her best interests this time rather than his own earlier in 11:2. However, this time the emphasis is on the legitimacy of their relationship in the eyes of YHWH in contrast to the illegitimacy implied in 11:3, hence the message brought through Nathan the prophet to express YHWH's favour towards this son (12:25). That also explains why YHWH's interest in Solomon in episode **2'** does not qualify as an 'Elephant' even though it lacks a parallel in episode **2**; the child himself is not as important to the author as the legality of the union between his parents, as shown by the titles given to Bathsheba in the two episodes and confirmed by her titles elsewhere in the story.<sup>499</sup> As regards verbal parallels, therefore, "wife of" Uriah the Hittite (11:3) contrasts with "his wife" (12:24), "and she went to him" (11:4) corresponds to "and he went to her" (12:24), "he lay with her" comes in both 11:4 and 12:24, and both David and YHWH 'send' messengers who report the true identity of an individual (11:3 – not just a beautiful woman; 12:25 – not just a 'payment' for David's offence against Uriah, cf. 12:6). YHWH's 'love' for Solomon in 12:24 might seem to contrast with David's "evil" actions in His eyes in 11:27 and His confiscation of the resulting offspring in 12:14, but the parallel between love for an individual and displeasure in actions is not close enough to make this a true Non-conformist.

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<sup>498</sup> See also Fokkerman's helpful explanation (1981: 94-95) of three advantages to the author of narrating 12:26-31 after the conclusion of the story about Bathsheba despite the resulting chronological dislocation.

<sup>499</sup> Petter (2004: 403-407) has shown convincingly how Bathsheba's titles have been deliberately crafted.

The main conceptual focus of the **3/3'** pair is hinted at in the word play of 11:1 which refers to “messengers”. The cluster of episodes **2–4** begins with David’s adultery, but after his initial act of sin the rest of the narrative is propelled by means of messengers while David holds himself aloof (cf. 18:13). Likewise, episodes **4'–2'** start with YHWH striking Bathsheba’s child, after which the fate of the child decreed earlier by YHWH through His messenger Nathan is reported to David by his servants. The central episode of each cluster is therefore a sequence of two exchanges with messengers, both of which focus on the planned death of an innocent, and both of which describe an unexpected reaction from David to the sad news of the completed execution.<sup>500</sup> There are verbal parallels also between the activities David encourages Uriah to do when visiting Jerusalem and those he himself does after the death of his son, involving ‘going to his house’, ‘washing’, and ‘eating’. Both Uriah and David express their piety by paying attention to the places where YHWH has set His name (11:11 – “the Ark”, cf. 6:2; 12:20 – “the house of YHWH”, cf. 15:25), and David expresses an unusually emotionless and fatalistic view of death using proverbial sayings in both 11:25 and 12:23. It could be argued that an ‘Elephant’ in episode **2** involves Uriah refusing to “go down” to his house and instead sleeping at the door of the king’s house (11:9), apparently paralleling David lying all night on the ground and being unwilling to be “raised up” (12:16-17). Yet Uriah does not sleep on the ground but on a “couch” (11:13; cf. 11:2), and the word pair for “go down” (יָרַד) is not ‘rise up’ (קָוַם), which matches ‘lie down’ (שָׁכַב; something both Uriah and David do), but rather ‘go up’ (עָלָה; cf. Gen 24:16). Conceptual parallels are clearly more significant in these more lengthy episodes than verbal ones.

Episodes **4** and **4'** both focus unmistakably on mourning over the dead innocents who are the subjects of **3/3'**, though the surprising part of the parallel is the fact that David’s mourning in episode **4'** is before the child has actually died. Episode **4** communicates the natural grief of a wife for her husband by emphasising “the wife of Uriah”, “Uriah her husband”, “her husband” (11:26).

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<sup>500</sup> Bar-Efrat (1980: 159-60, 173) observes that the author has even used the time-velocity of the narrative to arrange 11:2-27 in a concentric pattern around 11:16-17, which comes in between the two exchanges of messengers. See also the discussion of these episodes above in §4.3.

Although David ‘sends’ once again, it is not to ‘take’ Bathsheba but to ‘gather’ her more gently into his own household (11:27; cf. 11:4), at which point she becomes David’s wife rather than Uriah’s. This expression of genuine mourning is clearly paralleled by David’s own actions on behalf of his dying son in 12:16-17; David “fasted” (cf. 2Sam 1:12), “lay on the ground” (some LXX and Qumran manuscripts of 2Sam 12:16 add “in sackcloth”; cf. 1Kgs 21:27), and was “unwilling” to be raised up (cf. Gen 37:35) or to eat food (cf. 2Sam 3:35). “Seven days” is also the length of time for which the men of Jabesh-Gilead had mourned over the death of Saul with fasting (1Sam 31:13). The birth of a son to one who had become David’s wife and YHWH’s displeasure with David are both also closely paralleled in YHWH striking “the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David”, and David inquiring of God for him (12:15b-16a). These are weighty parallels also, because titles are carefully chosen for Bathsheba at the various points throughout the story, and the personal intervention of YHWH is only found at the transitions to and from the cluster of episodes 5–5’ (11:27b–12:1a; 12:15b) and at the very end of the concentricism about David (12:24b-25).

In the 5/5’ pair, the common word pair ‘come’ (בוא) and ‘go’ (הלך) expresses Nathan’s journeys to and from David which frame the scene containing YHWH’s judgement on David, the episode cluster 5–5’. Otherwise, the only verbal parallel between episodes 5 and 5’ is the judgement on the ‘child’ born to David (12:14) and the description of the poor man’s ewe lamb as “like a daughter to him” (12:3), an unusual choice of words for a character that is actually meant to represent the wife of the ‘poor man’.<sup>501</sup> Conceptual parallels are stronger here, though, when the whole scene is understood at a deeper level as the defendant David before YHWH’s supreme court. David’s own judgement about Nathan’s test case illustrates the distinction between a judge’s initial emotional reaction expressing the culprit’s standing before YHWH (12:5), and the strict legal penalty for the specific transgression (12:6; cf. Exod 22:1). This explains the separation of YHWH’s judgements against David into two speeches (12:7-12; 12:13b-14), given in the opposite order to David’s own judgement: First, YHWH decrees the strict penalties for David’s sins against Uriah, on the principle of

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<sup>501</sup> Bath-sheba’s name (= ‘daughter of seven/oath’) may have suggested the idea to Nathan (Coxon 1981: 250).

*lex talionis* (12:9-12; cf. Exod 21:23-25), and second, David's state of guilt before his King is addressed. Episode 5 is therefore Nathan's way of conveying to David the emotional significance of his sin for YHWH, which is the significance of episode 5' also. On a more aesthetic or pragmatic note, the neat arrangement of three speeches by Nathan separated by two reactions from David presents an intuitive and neatly balanced concentric structure.

In the 6/6' pair, apart from the fact that David is the speaker of both episodes and refers to YHWH as the one to whom a sinner is ultimately answerable, the parallels between the episodes are conceptual and contrasting. David's anger at injustice and confident pronouncement of judgement in the first episode are countered in the second by his appropriately humble confession of guilt before his own judge, YHWH, having felt the full force of His anger. Both speeches by David have been expressed as briefly as strictly necessary to convey their content, so that the focus of the cluster of episodes is firmly on the lengthy, rhetorically loaded speech of Nathan in the centre.

#### 5.1.1 (iii) Assessment of exegesis (Trademarks and Integrity)

The varieties of parallelism in the primary concentricism of 11:1–12:25 differ somewhat from those found in the subsidiary concentricism in 10:6-19. In episodes 1/1', the king of Ammon's insult to David is repaid by David's confiscation of his crown. David's selfish and illicit impregnation of another man's wife in episode 2 is balanced by his caring conception of a second child with the same woman who is now his wife in the eyes of YHWH in episode 2'. Messengers bring David the bad news of Uriah's death in episode 3, and his surprisingly calm philosophical response is echoed, though for very different reasons, in his reaction to the bad news of his son's death in episode 3'. Episodes 4 and 4' describe similar states of heartfelt mourning by Bathsheba and by David, though the latter is unusual in that David's son has not yet died. Episode 5 starts with Nathan coming to David and presenting what appears to be a straightforward story of injustice for David to render judgement, whereas episode 5' has Nathan's final speech of judgement against David and his departure. In both

episodes **6** and **6'**, David reacts to the words of Nathan, though his righteous indignation in the first is contrasted strongly with his guilty contrition in the second.

Apart from the first pair of episodes, then, it is quite clear that the primary style of parallel in the concentricism focused on David (11:1–12:25) is contrastive, as opposed to the consistently comparative style of the concentricism focused on Joab (10:6-19). Characters in the larger concentricism frequently behave in unexpected ways when compared with their earlier actions, or else behave in seemingly very similar ways but for entirely different reasons. The overall effect of setting the stage with expected character-types – the villainy of the Ammonite king Hanun, the piety of the general Joab, and the satisfyingly predictable victories – is to emphasise further the inner conflict in David which expresses itself in extremes of pitiless calculating murder and disturbingly emotional repentant petition on behalf of the innocent.

Precise verbal parallels are used where appropriate in descriptions of similar actions, but conceptual parallels are far more important to the author, as well as the neat balancing of two exchanges with messengers in episodes **3** and **3'** or two responses of David breaking up the three parts of Nathan's prophetic message to him in episodes **5** through **5'**. The episodes themselves, though, are full of concise evocative descriptions using syntactical or verbal parallelism only where it will most benefit the storytelling of each episode. The structure with its natural points of emphasis serves the narrative and ethical purpose of the author rather than vice versa.

The centre of the structure, the second of Nathan's three speeches in the judgement hall of David, is unmistakably the most weighty episode in terms of rhetorical impact, theological conviction and narrative transition. "You are the man!" has become one of the best known exclamations in the whole story of David, and becomes all the more powerful for following David's own outburst of anger against what he had not realised was a parable of his own sin. This is the point at which David realises that his attempt to conceal his wrongdoing was entirely futile, and the rest of the narrative hinges on this revelation. David goes from anger to contrition, from judge to judged, from comforting his mourning lover to refusing to be comforted, from eagerly anticipating bad news to



David's Prayer (2Sam 22:1-51; 23:1-7) and given one-word summaries as "salvation" and "desire" in 2Sam 23:5 (see Chapter Four above). These two periods of David's life are clearly significant for the author of *Samuel*, hence their climactic mention here.

#### 5.1.1 (iv) Assessment of Agreement and Satisfaction

Other scholars who have proposed concentric structures for 2Samuel 10:1–12:31 include Roth (1977) and Lawlor (1982).<sup>502</sup> Youngblood says that "Attempts to discern a comprehensive literary structure (often chiasmic) for chapters 10–12 fail to convince", though this is probably because he himself proposes a concentric analysis for chapters 11–12 instead, as do various others.<sup>503</sup> If the episodes constituting the Song of the Ammonite War (10:1-19; 12:26-31) are removed from analyses of chapters 11–12 because of the failure to notice this additional structure, and 11:1 is also allowed to function simply as transitional background material for the following story of David, these analyses may still be useful for comparison with our own of 11:1–12:25.

One notable alternative concentric proposal for this particular segment has been made by Leithart,<sup>504</sup> who is in agreement with Youngblood about the parallel between 11:2-5 and 12:24-25 but improves upon his proposals for 11:6–12:23. Youngblood views the death of David's son in 12:15-23 as an equivalent of the death of Uriah in 11:6-17, and then equates the 'message' from Joab about Uriah's death (11:18-27a) with YHWH's message to David through Nathan in 12:1-14, so that the centre of the concentricism is 11:27b, YHWH's displeasure with David. Against Youngblood's proposal one might point out the Non-conformist that Uriah himself was also a messenger from Joab to David (11:6-7), that 12:18b-23 is an Elephant within his episode 12:15-23 in that it narrates events subsequent to the actual death just like 11:18-25, and the further Elephant within the message from

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<sup>502</sup> Lawlor (1982: 205) treats 11:27b as the centre, resulting in problematic parallels between 11:1-5 // 12:15b-25, 11:6-13 // 12:7-15a, and 11:14-27a // 12:1-6. Roth (1977: 5) gives an excellent broad-brush summary of the concentricism around "the Nathan-David encounter" (strangely identifying 12:1-4 as "the apex"), but otherwise is more concerned with complicated Proppian structural analysis of the narrative. Kalimi (2016) has also defended the unity of 2Sam 10–12, particularly against redactional proposals, but his proposed structure (pp. 37-39) uses a concept of 'concentric circles' quite different from that proposed in this thesis.

<sup>503</sup> Youngblood 1992: 921, structure on 927. Youngblood cites the similar outline of Meier (1978) and also "a comparable though slightly divergent analysis" by Sacon 1982: 42-44.

<sup>504</sup> Leithart 2003: 237.

YHWH through Nathan (12:1-14) of the sin of taking Uriah's wife, unparalleled in the message from Joab to David.

Leithart instead recognises the mourning parallels in 11:26-27 and 12:15b-17, and the conspiracy to kill Uriah in 11:6-25 paralleling the death of David's son in 12:18-23, and he treats the entire Nathan story of 12:1-15a as a single episode in the centre of the concentricism. He explains that "Nathan's delivery of Yahweh's word was the hinge on which the story turned; Nathan's message, and David's penitent reaction, saved the kingdom." I am in general agreement with Leithart's episode divisions for 11:2 [I would say 11:1] through 12:25, though I would put more emphasis on the literary device of messengers that unites 11:6-25 with 12:18-23, and would further subdivide his central episode of 12:1-15a into a five-part concentricism focused on 12:7-12. I would also question whether David's penitence did actually 'save the kingdom'; it saved his own life (12:13), but the author's focus is not so much on how David himself reacts when discovered, but on the two-fold judgement for his sin that would work itself out in the kingdom over the coming years (2Sam 13–20).

Scholarly agreement with most of the parallels identified above is not difficult to find in the commentaries, and there are even those who propose almost identical episode divisions and structural arrangements to the one I have suggested, at least for 11:1–12:25. However, this proposal is not just one more to add to the collection of concentric literary analyses of this passage. My criteria are intended to make every proposal of concentricism falsifiable by subjecting them to rigorous scrutiny, so that the explanatory power of each theory can be compared with alternatives across a number of different factors. Ultimately, though, satisfaction with my own proposed structure will only be achieved if the messages communicated through its paired episodes and its central focus are seen to be consistent with the message of the wider rhetorical units within which it has been situated, in this case first 2Samuel 10–20, then 2Samuel 7–24, and finally the whole book of Samuel.

In summary, then, this exercise in verification applying my seven criteria to the proposed structure of 2Samuel 10–12 has demonstrated the value of addressing each criterion in the proper order. The criterion of balance must have priority, because it was only when pondering the significance of the imbalance between episodes **1** and **1'** (10:1-19 and 12:26-31) that I recognised the presence of a subsidiary concentricism. As a result, the assessment of the primary concentric structure (§5.1.1) was paused at that point, so as to apply the criteria to the smaller concentricism (§5.1.2) and confirm its presence and significance for the whole composition, before returning to the three remaining stages of assessment for the larger structure. Verbal, conceptual, and aesthetic structural parallels were all found to have been used to good effect, and inverted episodes were also grouped into parallel clusters to help the story cohere and flow more smoothly. Many such features of the author's skill with concentricism here can be recognised as Trademarks of his distinctive style of composition throughout *Samuel*, as is also the case for his characteristic messages about piety, justice, contrition and prophecy. Interaction with the concentric assessments of other scholars demonstrated Agreement on many points of detail and even overall arrangement. Ultimately, since Satisfaction can be either deductive or inductive, persuasive because of the explanatory power of the proposal as a whole or because of careful cumulative verification of each constituent part, neither approach should be omitted from a proper rhetorical analysis.

## 5.2 Identification

Just as §5.1 illustrated the value of my seven criteria for verifying a proposed concentricism, using 2Sam 10–12 as a convenient example, so this present section will describe briefly my own process of identifying the concentric patterns in *Samuel* in order to demonstrate how the procedure described in §2.4.3 can work in practice.

(1) In line with my first proposed step of considering the text form and overall structural features of the entire document, I had been studying in detail all the texts associated with the United Monarchy for several years before starting my doctoral studies, familiarising myself with *Samuel's* narrative content and themes, and relationships to similar or neighbouring documents.

(2) In my first term of study, I then surveyed the present state of scholarship about the book's composition to help me recognise the more obvious boundaries between major segments of text. Though I had not yet researched existing techniques for detecting natural episode boundaries on a smaller scale, my thorough knowledge of *Samuel* allowed me to look beyond mere unit delimitation markers such as verse, paragraph, or chapter divisions, and recognise the stock phrases and temporal indicators which introduce episodes (textual patterning), and the shifts of scene effected by mainline/offline sentences and full/flat characters (discourse analysis).

(3) When it came to choosing which structural pattern to apply first to *Samuel*, I was by no means restricting myself to just one technique. In published articles I had already made use of Graeco-Roman rhetoric for the epistles of Paul, and a fourfold rather than threefold structure for the book of Job, and the following year I would publish another article on the ten-part arrangement of Matthew's Gospel according to the *peshet* technique known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. My reason for selecting concentricism with *Samuel* was that I had already recognised its presence in a closely related document of the same genre, namely 1Kings 1–12,<sup>505</sup> and what is more, many commentators had noted the use of 'chiasmus' in the last four chapters of 2Samuel itself.

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<sup>505</sup> This also gave me further reason to exclude 1Kgs 1–2 from my rhetorical analysis of *Samuel*.

(3a) Having chosen to apply the concentric technique to 2Sam 13–20 as a coherent unit widely-recognised in scholarship, I began by identifying a pair of clearly paralleled episodes which might potentially be the boundaries of a subsidiary rhetorical unit (David’s flight and return), and progressed inwards towards the centre(s) to allow the structure itself to identify the author’s most important point. To check whether this pair was actually the outer limit, I then moved outwards until the lack of a parallel for 20:23–21:14 before chapter 13 revealed another concentricism in chapters 10–12. Beyond these two structures, successive pairs continued outwards as far as 2Sam 7 and 24,<sup>506</sup> but 2Sam 6 did not correspond to 1Kgs 1, so the following day I started with the assumption that this was instead the end of an earlier structure. Identifying its parallel without too much difficulty as the ark’s departure (1Sam 4), I progressed inwards once again, finding pair after pair of episodes, until the true centre revealed itself quite unexpectedly as 19:18-24. 1Sam 1–3 stubbornly resisted analysis until I found the key back in the centre of the large structure – Samuel in Ramah – and thereby identified in 1Sam 1:1 and 7:17 the boundaries of an interlocking introductory concentricism. All fifty-five chapters fell neatly into place in just two days of study, and the ease of the discovery reassured me that I had not been forcing the evidence to fit the technique.

(4) After finding the overall arrangement of 1-2 Samuel at the macrolevel, I was delayed for about two years in pursuing the microlevel patterns within individual episodes because I felt keenly the need for firm methodological foundations and verification procedures to rehabilitate the technique of concentricism within mainstream scholarship. That completed, I could return to the text and reconsider those episodes whose parallels had seemed rather more tenuous than they ought to have been. In §2.4.3 above, I suggest that microlevel patterns will often correspond to that of the macrolevel, and I did indeed find this to be the case in many episodes. More importantly, though, I also realised that I had overly subdivided some passages which the author had designed as parallel

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<sup>506</sup> I hypothesised that the two poems, 22:1–23:7, might have been inserted secondarily to form the well-known concentric ‘Appendix’.

clusters of episodes, each with their own internal arrangement (usually concentric).<sup>507</sup> Had I given up too soon and resorted to textual emendation to ‘tidy up’ imbalance in the structure, the true pattern would still be hidden.

(5) Even from the first two days of discovery I started to recognise the exegetical significance of the macrolevel patterns discovered, and how the messages of individual structures or pairs within the overall pattern contributed to its meaning. For example, the centre of 2Sam 10–12, Nathan’s judgement oracle against David, pronounced the same two judgements given climactic position in the following story of Absalom. The joint situation of the Song of Uriah and Song of Absalom at the centre of 2Sam 7–24 then signifies a perfect balance of cause and effect, the author communicating how judgement had been meted out in full for David’s sins. Furthermore, while the climactic death of David’s heir Absalom had been entirely deserved, its juxtaposition with the outermost episodes conveys the author’s primary question: YHWH had made an unconditional covenant with David to give him an heir who would build the temple (2Sam 7), confirming His intentions by authorising construction of its altar (2Sam 24). In that case, will He not be faithful to His covenant, despite David’s offences, and authorise another heir to build the temple in place of the beloved Absalom?

(5a) A further level of exegetical meaning was then revealed in the way the second episode in a paralleled pair gains significance from the central episode. In the case of 2Sam 7–24, David’s sin and punishment in the centre explains why David’s sons ceased to serve as priests among his chief ministers (20:23-26; cf. 8:15-18), why David spared Mephibosheth from death when avenging the Gibeonites despite the apparent disregard for David’s previous kindness Mephibosheth showed during Absalom’s rebellion (21:1-14; cf. 9:1-13 and 12:7-8), why David’s mighty men are given full credit for military victories after his personal betrayal of both Uriah and the whole army (21:15-22; 23:8-39; cf. 8:1-14), and why the prophetic oracle about temple construction was no longer an act of grace alone but of mercy also (24:1-25; cf. 7:1-29).

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<sup>507</sup> E.g. episodes **6/6’** and **7/7’** in the Song of the Ark, and the cluster in episode **9’** (cf. §3.3 and §3.4 above, and section (9) of the Appendix below).

(6) The final step in identification is to compare one's conclusions about the book with those of other scholars in various branches of Old Testament research. Although §5.1 was only a preliminary exploration of such Agreement, I believe the majority of the messages I have seen (cf. §5.3 below) to be fully compatible with the standard interpretations of the book; this proposal is therefore not so much a new reading of *Samuel* as a new framework within which to synthesise and weigh the readings of its many other interpreters.

I did not set out at the start to prove 1-2Samuel concentric, nor did I write §2.4.3 as a conscious reflection of my own experience, and yet my own intuitive process of discovery turned out to be just the sort of approach that might be expected to produce reliable examples of concentricism. I trust this example may inspire more attempts to listen carefully to ancient texts without presupposing the answer.

### 5.3 Purpose

On the one hand, this section about the messages of the author and their most likely historical setting is of ultimate importance in an historical-critical analysis of the book of Samuel, which is the goal of third-wave literary analysis. On the other hand, though, for the purpose of this thesis, such conclusions are secondary to the elaboration of the structure itself, and represent a further stage of analysis beyond the present literary study. I have naturally spent a great deal of time working through these questions, and written extensively about the various possible historical periods in which the messages of *Samuel* might be most comprehensible, but most of this has been omitted from this thesis for the sake of space. In this section I present simply a distilled summary of my conclusions, and beg the reader's patience for a full elaboration in future publications.

Arguments have been made above (§4.5, 5) for interpreting 2Sam 23:1a, "Now these are the last words of David", as a climax to the Song of David's Prayer; as such, a structural reading of its location identifies it as pointing to the same implied author for both 'volumes' of *Samuel*, represented by the two inserted poems on either side (22:1-51; 23:1b-7). Allowing this climactic statement to be overlooked as a mere title to a poem expresses self-effacement and enables private prayer for God's ears only (cf. §2.3.3). I am open to other suggestions for the significance of this weighty structural emphasis, but the hermeneutical framework of the prayers of David at the outer limits of the song (21:14; 24:25), the parallel between a concealed royal prayer for a son and the voiceless prayer of Hannah in the first scene of the book (1Sam 1:9-18), and the surprising lack of any reference to David's death in the book, make this at very least a reasonable interpretation of the structure's intention.

For any literary composition, one would expect to find within its implicit rhetorical messages clear indications of the author's own time period, making the work relevant to his own

contemporary audience.<sup>508</sup> To identify the real historical setting, therefore, the numerous messages conveyed through the concentric structures and their constituent episode pairs ought to be ideal, since a message at this ‘subconscious’ level would resonate with the real intended audience without disturbing the illusion for them. This section will therefore collect and analyse these messages as evidence for the intended audience of *Samuel*.<sup>509</sup> I will also assume the conclusions of the following §5.4 as regards the two distinct editions of the book, since the internal psychological development clearly reflected therein might theoretically represent an even deeper dimension of the intricate illusion. Ultimately, this whole following discussion is a necessary test of the overall concentric patterning proposed for *Samuel* as regards Integrity, the fifth of my seven verification criteria (see §2.5.3(5)).

(i) Authorial intention in the first edition of *Samuel*

Beginning with the first edition, at the broadest level the Song of the Ark makes the argument that the Spirit of God Himself saved David from Saul through Samuel’s prophecy (1Sam 19), for the specific purpose that the ark of His presence which had been exiled from Shiloh (1Sam 4) might be brought into Jerusalem (2Sam 6). The author’s ubiquitous interest in and reverence for the ark as YHWH’s primary abode would be most natural in early pre-exilic times (cf. Jer 3:16).

Subsidiary messages include the author’s attempt to strengthen David’s claim to both political and religious authority over Israel, necessary for relocating the ark, by patterning his leadership closely on that of Samuel, Israel’s last and greatest judge and successor of Moses (1Sam 31:8–2Sam 5:25; cf. 1Sam 7:3–12:25). In terms of the structure, Samuel’s roles as prophet and religious intermediary are clearly less important than his political and military leadership, contrary to later tradition (e.g. 1Chr 11:3; 2Chr 35:18; Ps 99:6-9; Jer 15:1). It is difficult to explain, therefore, why a

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<sup>508</sup> Knauf (2010: 137) describes the “basic expectation” in Old Testament criticism that “a literary text should reflect the time of its [real] authors more faithfully than the [historical period] the authors write about”.

<sup>509</sup> Polzin (1989, 1993) presupposes the historical-critical hypothesis of a Deuteronomistic History, and then reads back into *Samuel* any aspects of exilic or post-exilic Israelite experience with which allegorical readings of particular stories might resonate. Detailed interaction with each point might reveal various alternative periods in which such messages might also have resonated, but our task is to find a coherent explanation for them all.

later author would think comparison with Samuel as judge might increase David's already considerable reputation, particularly when Samuel does not even feature in the book of Judges.

The author is clearly concerned to present Saul in as positive a light as possible, avoiding the temptation to attribute Saul's demise to his mistreatment of David (e.g. §3.4), excusing that behaviour as a natural consequence of the Spirit's departure from him (1Sam 10:6; 15:17; 16:13-14), and praising Saul's wife as a worthy reward for his mighty exploits (§3.4; **12/12'**). These authorial concerns in the structure are entirely consistent with David's lament (2Sam 1:17-27) in which he took upon himself the responsibility for preserving the public memory of Saul's greatness within the tribe of Judah for posterity. As in that lament, Saul's son Jonathan is given even greater honour than his father in the structure of the first edition. His encouragement of David is placed opposite Samuel's anointing at the extremities of the Song of David's Testing, and his deliverance of David is arguably positioned as a 'second arrow' just beyond the central episode about Samuel in Ramah. The author evidently saw Jonathan in some ways as a military and spiritual role model for David, second only to Samuel in importance for him. The Chronicler preserved records from the southern kingdom about the heirs of Saul and Jonathan, but no significant descendants are mentioned later than approximately the time of Hezekiah's census (1Chr 8:33-40; cf. 7:6-12; 8:1-32; 9:35-44). Respect for Saul and Jonathan might therefore have been relevant for certain later audiences, but its most obvious motive would be the personal familiarity David had with both; the author's interests are fully consistent with David's own stated perspective.

Two surprising messages of the Song of the Ark concern Abner and the Goliath episode. According to the author, Abner had the third greatest influence on David's career after Samuel and Jonathan, and in the structure he takes on a far greater significance than the surface of the text would suggest. By parallels with Samuel himself (§3.3; **6/6'**), the author communicates his belief that it was Abner's personal authority among the northern tribes of 'Israel' that persuaded them to accept David as their king. Throughout *Samuel*, Benjamin is presented as "first of all the house of Joseph" (2Sam 19:20). However, from the division of the kingdoms onwards, even into the post-

exilic period, Benjamin was associated with Judah in the south rather than with the northern tribes (1Kgs 12:20-24; 2Chr 17:12-19; 34:9; Ezra 1:5; 10:9). Portraying a Benjamite as foundational to Davidic authority in the north (as delineated in 2Sam 2:9) would thus appear highly implausible any later than Solomon's reign; Barzillai might have been a more logical candidate to choose if one were to invent the story in a later period.<sup>510</sup> As for the episode about Goliath's defeat (1Sam 17:1-54; cf. Appendix, (6)), its concentric structure [in the MT alone] places unexpected emphasis on Saul's promises of his daughter's hand and tax exemption as rewards for the champion, paralleling the focus of 22:6-19. Not only would these specific rewards be an uninteresting and even unworthy central message for anybody except David himself to draw from this story [hence perhaps the LXX omissions], but both concerns also became completely irrelevant once David himself was established as king over Israel (cf. 2Sam 3:12-16; 1Chr 27:18). The author's structure therefore conveys something of David's own ongoing personal pain and sense of injustice at the memory of this event, rather than, say, a more strictly pious message of his fearless passion for YHWH's reputation.

(ii) Authorial intention in the second edition of *Samuel*

As for the second edition, far from defending David's political and spiritual authority, the author now seems to go out of his way to undermine it, by exposing David's private acts of adultery and murder, and by exonerating Absalom completely for his rebellion by implicating David instead at every point (e.g. 2Sam 14:6, 32; 15:3, 34; 16:23; 17:11).<sup>511</sup> Not only that, but editorial changes made to the Song of the Ark tarnish Samuel's pristine reputation as well by recording his failure to raise his sons properly, paralleling the personal blame laid squarely at the door of Eli, distinguished high priest of Shiloh, for the 'distress of YHWH's dwelling'. Saul's daughter Michal is no longer a loving

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<sup>510</sup> "the book shows no knowledge of the division of the monarchy" (Barton 2004: 99; citing Dietrich 2000). David's emphasised innocence in the death of Abner also fits an oft-noted pattern of *apologia* in the first edition of *Samuel*, defending David against various accusations of complicity in the deaths of his opponents. Chapter Three confirms the function of these chapters as persuasive counter-propaganda, but whichever side one takes, the need to offer a defence at all does imply a near-contemporary audience – cf. §6.B.1(i).

<sup>511</sup> Even the narrator's statement that YHWH intended to bring calamity on Absalom (17:14) need not be seen as personal enmity; David's sin killed Bathsheba's son (12:14-15), and David is also responsible here (cf. 12:10).

wife but an unfaithful, idolatrous liar, assisting David's escape for purely selfish reasons,<sup>512</sup> and the famous general Joab, somewhat politically insensitive in the first edition, is pointedly stripped of honour in the second edition by deliberately marring the structural balance of the completed composition (2Sam 20:23-26).

Each of these changes to the author's message is straightforwardly explicable when viewed as a consequence of events in David's life after the events recorded in the first edition,<sup>513</sup> whereas the attempts to discredit Joab and defend Absalom would be pointless in any later generation (cf. 1Kgs 15:10-13). Even in David's time, this perspective would appear patently naïve to almost everyone in Israel except David himself,<sup>514</sup> perhaps being another reason for concealing such controversial views within the structure (cf. 2Sam 19:5-7). His sincere repentance, though, is found both on the surface of the text (12:13; 24:17; cf. Ps 51) and within the author's structure, whether in the meticulous refusal to spread the blame for David's sins, or in the significant changes represented by each paired episode following the calamitous central stories about Uriah and Absalom (cf. §4.2). One of these, regarding Mephibosheth (21:1-14), communicates the distinctive message that YHWH's faithfulness to the Davidic dynasty will reflect its own faithfulness to the descendants of Jonathan (cf. 21:2). Rather than trying to speculate about unrecorded conflicts between the dynastic houses of Judah and Benjamin in later generations,<sup>515</sup> the most natural context for such a message would be David's own reign (cf. 16:5-8; 19:16-23).

Most important, however, are the author's primary messages in the Song of the Temple and Song of David's Prayer. In the former, a key part of his argument is that the altar oracle (2Sam 24) proved YHWH's ongoing desire that a temple be built (cf. 2Sam 7), hence the need for a Davidic heir

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<sup>512</sup> For evidence behind this harsh critique, see above, §3.5 episode **20**, and below, §5.4.1, footnote 518.

<sup>513</sup> "Indeed one of the most striking aspects of the entire David story is that until his career reaches its critical breaking point with his murder-by-proxy of Uriah after his adultery with Bathsheba, almost all of his speeches are in public situations and can be read as politically motivated. It is only after the death of the child born of his union with Bathsheba that the personal voice of a shaken David begins to emerge." – Alter 1981: 119.

<sup>514</sup> "But the events in which Absalom plays a part are described in such a way as to show that the author not only understands but also joins in the king's lament for this his son. What a tragedy to happen to this fine young man! We can almost hear the man who wrote these chapters say this..." – Hertzberg 1964: 377.

<sup>515</sup> E.g. the Persian period, *pace* Edelman 2001; 1Chronicles omits the Saul-David conflict and adds 12:1-7, 16-18; cf. also Esther 2:5-7 and Nehemiah 11:1-9, which give no indication of inter-tribal conflict in those times.

to build it. This reasoning might make sense prior to the construction of either the first or second temple (e.g. Zerubbabel), but the author's parallel interest in the ark at the extremities of his first volume would clearly favour the earlier option.<sup>516</sup> As for the final centrism of the book, the author evidently believed the prayers of a king, even a sinful one, to be uniquely effective before YHWH as a means of atoning for royal sin that had brought judgement upon Israel (21:1-14; 24:16-25; cf. also §3.4, 11/11'). Thus the apparent presentation of David as the implied author of this entire book, placed at the centre of this structure, would represent the intention that the book itself might stand like a royal stele (cf. Job 19:23-24), an authorised prayer of confession and supplication for the purpose of blessing Israel with a new Davidic heir and temple builder. The implied (divine) audience would only be expected to respond favourably to the rhetorical messages of the structure if the implied author is genuine and appropriately heartfelt in his petition (2Sam 24:24; cf. 1Sam 1:15-17).

It would seem, therefore, that the least implausible or speculative explanation of the literary evidence, when assessed independently of historical or archaeological factors (for which see below, chapter 6, *Excursus B*), is one which does find Integrity between the surface and structural messages of the book of *Samuel*.<sup>517</sup> The rhetorical messages of the structure display significant coherence and consistency with the implied historical setting(s) when taken at face value.

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<sup>516</sup> "if they [the Davidic narratives] do not reflect the interests of a period close to the one they purport to describe, it is not so easy, either, to treat them as expressions of the needs and interests of Judah in later stages of her history." – Gordon 1994: 297.

<sup>517</sup> As regards surface messages, it is possible that copyists within the proto-Masoretic tradition detected or at least allowed for a slip of the third-person façade in 2Sam 9:11 [MT] – "Mephibosheth ate at **my** table as one of the king's sons".

## 5.4 Composition

The first step in historical critical analysis of a final-form document is to determine as far as possible the likely authorship and intended audience for the book, which sets its message in context. In §5.3 the case was made for seeing the structure's rhetorical messages as coherent enough in terms of implied audience to point to a very early historical period of composition, perhaps even within the reign of David, and designed as a private prayer for a royal successor concealed within a public account of the origins of monarchy in Israel. The next step, therefore, is to explore the process by which the book was constructed, and when. Though the existence of two editions of the Song of the Ark was assumed in Chapter Three for the sake of argument, the various details mentioned there are here brought together, identifying added verses which were evidently used to incorporate an originally independent Song of the Ark into the present much expanded book of Samuel. Regrettably, limitations of space prevent me from including my historical reconstruction of David's reign as it appears to have been conceptualised by the author of *Samuel*, and arguments for the two specific periods within this reign most likely to have been the intended setting for the completion and public performance of each edition.

I do not propose to present in this section a personal philosophy of redaction criticism nor to engage with the numerous scholarly attempts to define start- and end-points for major blocks of material within the traditional theories about the Ark Narrative, the History of David's Rise, and so forth. Nevertheless, I do aim to explain every detail of the text as belonging to either the first or second edition of the Song of the Ark. It seems to me logical to attempt to account for all the details of a text in as few stages of composition as possible [Ockham's razor], and also to assume that an author would generally avoid making changes to a complete earlier edition except where absolutely necessary, such as to maintain structural balance in the case of the author of *Samuel*. In §2.4.2 above, I argued against using textual emendation as an excuse for imbalance to a concentric structure. Imbalance ought to be noted, and if possible a plausible explanation offered as to why

this may be a deliberate point of emphasis by the author. In what follows, apparent imbalances to the concentric structure of the first edition are justified by appeal to the need for balance at the even broader level of the final version.

The additions made to the Song of the Ark appear to have been limited to only two ‘altitudes’ in the structure, both of which represent rhetorical seams in the composition. The first is at the outermost (lowest) level of the first and last episodes (**1/1’**), which have both had to be linked to some extent with adjoining compositions, understandably. Changes at the beginning and end will cause a shift in meaning for the whole concentricism, hence a further third insertion just before the centre (**20**). The second ‘altitude’ is at the end of the group of episodes in the Song of the Ark which had been re-used to form a new introductory Song of Eli. The Song of Eli now ended at the division between episodes **5** and **6** of the original Song of the Ark, and small insertions made to the seam of both episodes were then paralleled with insertions to episodes **6’** and **5’**, all amply justifiable on the grounds of narrative coherence and authorial message.

#### 5.4.1 *Outer level of editorial additions to the Song of the Ark*

I argued above in Chapter Three that the original Song of the Ark began *in medias res*, appropriately for an oral epic, with the gathering of Israelite and Philistine armies to the famous First Battle of Ebenezer, the devastating military defeat which resulted in the capture of the ark and destruction of Shiloh. The resettlement of the ark was of course the primary interest of the author in his whole narrative, probably originally composed to garner national support for David’s proposed temple (cf. 2Sam 5:11-12). The first line of the original song would have been 1Samuel 4:1b, “Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle...”, because 4:1a concludes a small balanced rhetorical unit that began in 3:20. Originally the ark’s removal from Shiloh (4:1b-11) would have continued without interruption into the episode about its dishonouring in Philistia and in Beth-Shemesh (5:1–6:20). The two intervening scenes about grief over the defeat and further deaths in Shiloh distract from the audience’s focus on the ark, and though they conclude subplots about Eli

and his priestly line within the secondary Song of Eli, neither are necessary background to the following story. Likewise, at the other end of the Song of the Ark, the final joyful arrival of the ark in Jerusalem is a natural conclusion to the whole epic, but the reaction of Michal to David's dancing is a distraction from the focus on the ark, and parallels the contrary reaction of Pinhas' wife in 4:20 to the joyous birth of a son, albeit contrasting Michal unfavourably with Pinhas' wife who valued the ark above her own son. Thus the final episode of the ark's arrival was probably originally 2Samuel 6:12-15 and 17-19, concluding with unmitigated celebration and royal magnanimity by David.

Turning to the centre of the Song of the Ark, the climactic episode (1Sam 19:18-24) is framed by a closely paralleled pair of episodes about Jonathan's actions on David's behalf (19:1-10; 20:1-42). Initially, I had associated 19:11-17 with the preceding episode about Jonathan, treating both together as the deliverance of David by Saul's 'children', but this only obscured the parallel about Jonathan. In fact, the episode conclusion in 19:10, "And David fled and escaped", reappears almost verbatim as the beginning of the following episode in 19:18, suggesting that this phrase in the original had been chosen as a suitable point to insert an extra episode about David escaping from Saul (cf. footnote 181). To integrate the new episode slightly better, "that night" was added to the end of 19:10, the verb for 'fled' in 19:18 was deliberately varied to echo the phraseology of 19:12 [ברח rather than בנס], and the episode was narrated with "messengers" (19:11, 14-16; cf. "servants" in 18:22-26) to anticipate 19:20-21. The author's skilful narration of the story of Michal therefore ensured that its structural interference would not appear too noticeable, seeing as this insertion was in fact necessary in light of the scenes about wives which had been added to the first and last episodes of the Song of the Ark. Changes to the base pair of episodes in a concentricism will alter the meaning of the whole concentricism, so for the sake of balance the author has introduced a further episode as close to the centre as possible. It would be possible to discuss the significance of these changes at length, but suffice it to say, the author viewed Absalom's rebellion as punishment for David's sins against Uriah, not against Saul's house as Shimei had claimed (2Sam 16:8; cf. §4.2 [5a/5b]). In that case, his harsh treatment of Michal in 2Sam 21:8-9 required further justification at

an earlier stage in the story; she was rather more unpleasant a character than the little daughter, doting wife and political pawn the original song had portrayed (1Sam 14:49; 18:7, 21; 25:44; 2Sam 3:13).<sup>518</sup>

#### 5.4.2 *Inner level of editorial additions to the Song of the Ark*

The first and greatest problem in the original Song of the Ark was the loss of the ark of the covenant (**1/1'**), but second only to this was Israel's rejection of YHWH in their demand for a king (**6/6'**), and in the original version the people of Israel were entirely to blame. Samuel's legal and military judgeship had been faultless (7:3-15; 12:3-5), yet when faced with the growing threat of Nahash king of the Ammonites on their eastern border (12:10-12), they rejected Samuel's divinely empowered leadership, signifying a deeper rejection of YHWH Himself (8:7-8, 19-22; 12:12-25). In the mind of the author this paralleled the northern tribes rejecting their proven military leader David in favour of Ishbosheth, despite David's blamelessness, which amounted to a rejection of the prophetic word of YHWH Himself (2Sam 3:9-10, 18). In the second version of the Song of the Ark, though, this clear message is significantly undermined when Israel's demand for a king is justified by appeal to the unrighteous leadership by Samuel's wayward sons (1Sam 8:1-5). It seems, therefore, that the few verses about Samuel's sons were added to the Song of the Ark in its second edition to form a parallel with the wayward sons of Eli, who had likewise brought about the end of their father's judgeship. The original Song of the Ark would therefore have lacked 8:1-3, and the elders' demand to Samuel in 8:5 would have read simply, "and they said to him, 'Appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.'" As a bald demand this would have been far more effective in provoking in the audience a sense of the offence felt by Samuel who had judged Israel so

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<sup>518</sup> Most ancient manuscripts and translations correct 'Michal' in the Masoretic Text to 'Merab', in light of 1Sam 18:19, but it is impossible to explain text-critically how any ancient copyist might have made such an obvious mistake. In fact, the *lectio difficilior* is explicable if Michal's children are here being exposed as the offspring of adultery with her sister's husband (cf. 2Sam 12:14), consistent with her lack of love for David and idolatrous disregard for YHWH – the message of both episodes about her inserted into the Song of the Ark. What is more, she and David (2Sam 6) are paralleled with Pinhas and his godly wife (1Sam 4), both devotees of the ark married to shameless adulterers (cf. 2:22-25). Rabbinic traditions praising Michal may have obscured this accusation of adultery; only Miscall (1991: 255), in a whole volume of essays on Michal, gives even a hint!

successfully up to that point (cf. 7:3-17). The underlying reasons for this demand would then be uncovered gradually through the next few episodes (cf. 10:7, 18-19, 26-27; 11:1-13; 12:12) – the mark of a master storyteller.

For the sake of structural balance, therefore, the mention of Samuel's sons at the end of episode 5 would therefore need a parallel in 5' (2Sam 5:6-16), and this is precisely what we find in the list of David's eleven sons born in Jerusalem (5:13-16). This brief note does not advance the plot at all, nor does it fit naturally as another illustration of the greatness of David's kingdom as such (5:9-12); rather, the emphasis placed on David's concubines calls into question his wisdom, since concubines and multiple wives were a known cause of family and dynastic tension (cf. Peninnah in 1Sam 1:2, 6; Rizpah in 2Sam 3:7-8; Gen 35:22; Deut 17:17; Jdg 8:31; 19:25-27; etc.). What is more, this anticipates the unfortunate events of Absalom's coup (15:16; 16:21-22), just as the reference to Solomon anticipates the story of David's adultery (2Sam 11–12). Like the note about Samuel's sons, the note about David's sons acts as a veiled criticism of a main character from the Song of the Ark who elsewhere in that song is entirely without fault. Both would seem to reflect more naturally the perspective of the second edition of the book.<sup>519</sup>

The slight adjustment to the speech of the elders in episode 6 also required a parallel in 6' (2Sam 2:8–5:5), but as this episode was a cluster of three smaller episodes, the central episode (3:7-39) being framed by 2:8–3:6 and 4:1–5:5, the question was where to introduce the extra material. Being aware that the new Song of the Temple required several pieces of background information to be mentioned earlier in the Song of the Ark, the author apparently recognised that putting the insertion in one of the framing episodes would actually allow him to make three additional insertions here without upsetting the overall balance.

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<sup>519</sup> Like Samuel, David had appointed his own sons to share his own priestly leadership of Israel (2Sam 8:18), but their undisciplined behaviour undermined his own authority (2Sam 15:3-6, 10) and brought great suffering on the whole nation (2Sam 18:6-8). The prophecy to Eli by the man of God at the centre of the Song of Eli (1Sam 2:27-36) therefore becomes in effect a rebuke of not just Samuel but David himself, who had similarly 'despised' YHWH (2Sam 12:9-10; cf. 1Sam 2:30), and whose soul was made to grieve over the increase of his house dying in the prime of life (2Sam 12:10; 18:33–19:4 [MT 19:1-5]; 23:5).

The list of David's sons born in Jerusalem naturally demanded a description of the sons born earlier in Hebron, not only because they were more directly in line to the throne, but also because two of them are characters that appear in the Song of Absalom later. On the other hand, the enumeration of David's children by name and in birth order is not an obvious description of the "house of David" which was engaged in "war" with the house of Saul (3:1, 6). These outer verses are actually another example of 'external inclusio' that points to interruption and resumption of an existing narrative (cf. footnote 181). The primary parallel in the original verse(s) was apparently between David who "grew steadily stronger" and Abner who "was making himself strong" (3:1, 6); if the latter was (accused of?) doing so through relations with a previous king's concubine (3:7-8), the author may have thought it a convenient place to introduce a similar reference to David's one clearly political marriage (to Absalom's mother), at which point he could then include the other children and their mothers also. 3:2-5 seems, therefore, to be a later addition to the existing episode.

An addition to the end of the first frame episode requires an addition to the beginning of the second frame episode, though, and sure enough we find a clearly parenthetical remark made in 4:4, out of chronological order, about how Jonathan's son Mephibosheth came to be crippled. Mephibosheth is irrelevant to the Song of the Ark, but he and his crippled state become important later in the Song of the Temple, hence their inclusion here. It appears that the extra parenthesis about the Beerothites at this same point (4:2c-3) was meant to anticipate the story of Saul's Gibeonite ethnic cleansing mentioned in the Song of the Temple (21:1-2). Beeroth was one of four Gibeonite cities (Jos 9:17), which would therefore explain why its non-Benjamite inhabitants had been forced to flee to Gittaim prior to the reign of Saul's son Ishbosheth. The narrative of Ishbosheth's assassination did not require anything more than a note that his assassins were fellow Benjamites, but the fact that they came from Beeroth gave the author an ideal opportunity to prepare the audience for a later story, and as he had already gone off on a brief tangent, he might as well introduce Mephibosheth at this point too.

With additions made to the inner boundaries of the two frame episodes, balance demanded further additions to their outer boundaries also. In the original Song of the Ark, the main point of episode 6' was simply that the increasing proof of David's kingly martial qualities eventually resulted in Ishbosheth's own family and tribe turning against him and making David instead king over all Israel. Recording how long the civil war between them had lasted would have been entirely unnecessary, or even counter-productive. Yet by the time of the second edition, the approximate parallels with Absalom's age and tragically brief reign led the author to include the note (2Sam 2:10) that Ishbosheth had been forty years old at accession (cf. 3:2-3; 15:7) and yet had only reigned two years before a violent death, just like his father Saul (1Sam 13:1); the reward for Ishbosheth's murderers thus served as a foreboding pattern for Absalom's killer (2Sam 4:9-12; cf. 18:11-14, 20).

By recording that Ishbosheth's reign lasted two years, though, the audience might have got the wrong impression that Israel's rejection of David had likewise only been two years long. On the contrary, there had apparently been several years before he was officially crowned king, when Saul's general Abner was convincing one tribe after another to unite once again under Saul's remaining heir (2Sam 2:9), rather than dispersing to their own territories to hide from their Philistine oppressors (cf. 1Sam 10:24–11:15; 13:4-7; 31:7). Altogether David's rightful kingship had been despised for a total of seven years, as well as probably a few months of deliberations following Ishbosheth's death, during which they finally agreed to transfer their allegiance to David rather than one of the remaining Saulides. Thus, it is likely that 2:10-11 is in its entirety a secondary addition to the original Song of the Ark; without it the narrative flows smoothly from 2:9 to 2:12, both describing Abner's journey from Mahanaim as far as Gibeon in Benjamin, where his attempts to expand Ishbosheth's kingdom were finally halted by means of a public contest, and began to be reversed (2:14, 17; 3:1).

For the sake of balance, then, the end of the second frame episode of this particular cluster was also thought to require an addition of a similar nature to 2Sam 2:10-11. David's own age at accession could be given, and a repeated mention made of his brief rule over Judah alone in Hebron,

however there is no explicit description of the death of David anywhere in the book of *Samuel*, this being recorded only later in 1Kings 2:10 (2:11 deferring to the authority of 2Sam 5:4-5). If on the face of it this second edition thus allows for David still to be alive and ruling in Jerusalem as king, there could be no suitable parallel to the full length of Ishbosheth's reign, unless... At this point, the author realised that a complete period of time could be given for David's reign, in the same way that he had recorded the length of Saul's reign. Until Samuel's death Saul was effectively only a co-regent; he took over the military and political duties from Samuel, but Samuel nevertheless remained the judge of Israel all the days of his life, at least in the eyes of God (1Sam 7:15; 16:1; 25:1). Thus it was perfectly correct to have recorded in 1Sam 13:1 only the days of Saul's sole rule over Israel. If the same was done for David, counting from the start of his reign over the tribe of Judah, he himself ruled without the assistance of co-regents for a total of forty years – that is, until Absalom had himself crowned king in Hebron in David's fortieth regnal year (2Sam 15:7). At that time when David heard, he would have assumed that YHWH was indicating it was time to hand over to Absalom, regardless of Absalom's malicious intent (16:11); he was after all David's chosen, divinely appointed successor and crown prince. When Absalom died not many months later, from the author's perspective Israel had now lost its divinely elected king, but without him having left any successor (18:18). David's complete reign was therefore just forty years, which had the added significance of paralleling perfectly the abrupt end of Eli's judgeship at the point that his own sons had died, after forty years of rule (1Sam 4:18). As with the notice about Saul's reign, the decision to record no more than forty years of reign for David would be technically correct and also communicate a powerful message to YHWH about Israel's present and ongoing lack of a legitimate king to sit on Absalom's throne.<sup>520</sup> Therefore in the original Song of the Ark, episode 6' would have ended at 2Samuel 5:3, leading directly into David's first act as king of all Israel in 5:6.

Thus these additions were linked through parallels from Eli's sons to Samuel's sons, to David's sons born in Jerusalem, to the sons born in Hebron, to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth (with the

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<sup>520</sup> How long David might have functioned as king after the close of *Samuel*, if 'function' is an accurate term for it, need not be more than a few years, but such historical questions are tangential to the focus of this thesis.

comment about the Beerothites fleeing), and finally, for the sake of internal concentric balance as well as narrative completeness, to regnal summaries for both Ishbosheth and David.<sup>521</sup>

In conclusion, apart from perhaps the occasional word added here or there (e.g. “Ichabod’s brother” in 1Sam 14:3), and possibly the occasional sentence removed (e.g. Joab’s valiant conquest of Jerusalem in 2Sam 5:8; cf. 1Chr 11:6), I believe the original Song of the Ark has remained almost entirely as originally composed, with the exception of the following additions:

- 1Sam 4:12-18            death of Eli in Shiloh
- 4:19-22                reaction of Pinhas’ wife to the ark’s departure
- 8:1-3                    Samuel’s sons judging in Beersheba
- 8:5a                    elders’ reference to Samuel’s sons
- 19:11-17               Michal’s assistance with David’s escape
- 2Sam 2:10-11           regnal summaries for Ishbosheth and David
- 3:2-5                    David’s sons born in Hebron
- 4:2c-3                  flight of the Beerothites
- 4:4                      Mephibosheth’s accident
- 5:4-5                    regnal summary for David
- 5:13-16                 David’s sons born in Jerusalem
- 6:16, 20-23            Michal’s reaction to the ark’s arrival

In each case the addition was felt to be required in order to wrap up loose ends from the Song of Eli or provide important background information for stories to come in the Song of the Temple, and every addition was made with concern for preserving the balanced concentric structure of the Song of the Ark. The author of the second edition was clearly intimately familiar with the structure of the original composition of the Song of the Ark, reinforcing the apparent implication in the Song of David’s Prayer (§4.5) that both editions were the work of the same author. The first edition was expanded by composing six new episodes (1Sam 1–3) to introduce Eli and Samuel, and also making

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<sup>521</sup> It is worth noting that additions to both episodes **6’a’** and **6’a\*\*** (2Sam 2:8–3:6; 4:1–5:5) should have led the author to introduce a further addition in **6a\*** (1Sam 10:17-25) to balance his inserted reference to Samuel’s sons in **6a** (1Sam 8:4-22). I believe the primary reason for this omission is that the proper subject for an insertion at this point would be the sons of Saul himself (cf. 13:1-3); however Saul’s sons were already listed in the original song (14:49), and what is more, any parallel with Samuel’s sons would imply criticism. The failure to mention Saul’s sons here can therefore be read as implicit honour for David’s beloved mentor Jonathan.

two distinct sets of insertions to the pre-existing work, one involving lengthy scenes,<sup>522</sup> and the other mostly short lists or small pieces of background information. Only the bare minimum of changes were made, being introduced at the edges or seams of larger sections of text in such a way that the textual join became smoother rather than more pronounced. Despite their brevity, though, the insertions were remarkably effective at casting the early narratives in a wholly new light, anticipating stories and themes that would dominate the newly composed Song of the Temple, and reflecting a perceptible shift in purpose and audience for the whole work. The expert editorial work is therefore seen to be as essential to the author's activity as is the composition of entirely new concentric narratives, and the same rhetorical technique used throughout is the key to this source-critical and redaction-critical endeavour.

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<sup>522</sup> The two poems inserted secondarily into the Song of the Temple (2Sam 22:1-51; 23:1b-7) clearly parallel Hannah's song in 1Sam 2:1-10, and therefore correspond to the same stage of composition as the insertions at the equivalent 'altitude' in 1Sam 4:12-22 and 2Sam 6:16, 20-23 (see §3.2), and thus also 1Sam 19:11-17.

## 5.5 Genre

In §§5.1-2, examples from *Samuel* were used to illustrate the value of the seven verification criteria and six-stage identification process recommended earlier in §§2.4-5 for proposed examples of concentricism. §5.3 summarised the messages of *Samuel* which reveal the author's reasons for composing the book. Then §5.4 drew together the evidence from Chapters Three and Four for two distinct stages of composition by the same author. This section will reinforce the key conclusion of this thesis, that the use of the technique of concentricism in *Samuel* was entirely deliberate, by assembling evidence for the author's sophisticated theoretical reasoning about the technique. In fact, *Samuel* functions in some ways like an ancient Israelite rhetorical handbook for concentricism.

In §2.1.1, the familiar term 'chiasmus' was shown to apply properly only to simple inversion of two pairs of clauses within a single sentence, as implied by the Greek letter *chi* (X). As such, then, it is entirely ill-suited to the technique used throughout *Samuel*, which always has an unparalleled central element, and can be used on a small or large scale and for various genres as a feature of elevated speech. Other terms proposed for this technique include 'ring composition', 'pivot pattern', or 'sovereign midpoint',<sup>523</sup> but each of these has its drawbacks. A 'ring' emphasises the function of bringing closure to the rhetorical unit, but fails to mention the central climax, and though 'sovereign midpoint' and 'pivot pattern' do emphasise the centre, they communicate little if anything about the inverted sequence of paired episodes or outer limits, respectively. My preferred term in this thesis, 'concentricism', conveys the effect of the paired episodes arranged as if in concentric circles around the all-important centre, but even this term fails to do justice to the outermost pair of episodes, second only to the centre in exegetical significance.

In §4.4, David's flight from Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives (Song of the Temple, episode 5; cf. Appendix, (7)) was shown to be arranged exquisitely around David's climactic encounter with his friend Hushai on "the summit, where God was worshipped" (2Sam 15:32; cf. 15:30; 16:1). As a

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<sup>523</sup> E.g. (respectively) Douglas 2007; Klaus 1999; Spearing 1982.

narrative incarnation of the rhetorical technique, this episode suggests that an ancient Israelite author might have conceived of concentricism as a rounded hill (ubiquitous in Judah's hill-country),<sup>524</sup> and hence used the term "summit" (ראש, e.g. 1Sam 16:13; 2Sam 2:25 / רמה, e.g. 1Sam 22:6) for the unparalleled central unit of a concentricism. Samuel's hometown was called Ramah ("summit" / "height"; cf. 1Sam 1:1; 2:11; 15:34; 16:13; etc.), and is featured at key structural positions in the Song of Eli (1Sam 1:1; 7:17) and the Song of the Ark (19:18-24). This only serves to highlight its unique dual form "Ramathaim" in the first verse of the whole book, 1Sam 1:1. In light of the double focus on "salvation" and "desire" at the other end of the book, in the very last structural insertion of two poems (2Sam 22:1-23:7), it is perhaps not entirely unjustified to wonder whether this dual form may be another conscious hint at the 'twin-peaked' structure of *Samuel*. Like a topographical "summit", concentricism enables the audience to climb to the highest rhetorical point, the place from which the symmetry of both slopes can be seen at the same time, and a traditionally sacred place where activities that take place are of the highest spiritual significance.

Yet even this image does not fully represent the dynamics of concentricism, giving no recognition to the outermost pair of units. The author therefore chose to use an alternative metaphor when teaching rhetorical composition, and records this explicitly in *Samuel*. The discussion of David's lament over Saul and Jonathan above in §3.3 (Song of the Ark, episode 7'; cf. Appendix (5), (10)) represents graphically the concentric structure of 2Sam 1:19-25, with an emotional first-person addendum in 1:26-27. The lament's introduction contains the unusual notice that David "intended to teach the sons of Judah a bow; behold it is written upon the scroll of Yashar" (1:18). Most translations assume that 'bow' is an ellipsis for a title such as "The Song of the Bow", and though Jonathan's skill with the longbow was legendary (cf. 1Sam 20:20-22; 1Chr 12:1-2), this would still be an unusual title to choose for a lamentation. The poem's inclusion in a poetic anthology for the purpose of teaching suggests that David designed it to be studied, and thereby remembered, since it

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<sup>524</sup> Cf. 'Cicero' and Quintillian using locations and journeys as mental frames for performance – §2.2.4(i).

would lose any practical significance, particularly for the “sons of Judah”, after the re-interment described in 2Sam 21:12-14.

Consideration of the lament’s concentric structure reveals a sophisticated awareness of the technique, with Jonathan, Israel’s “gazelle” (cf. 2:18; 1Chr 12:8 [MT 9]), emphasised at both ends and in the centre (vv. 19/25, 22), and his ‘bow’ appearing at the very centre of verse 22.<sup>525</sup> The second verse of the personal addendum, verse 27, deliberately quotes the outermost units of the concentricism and then summarises its centre, thereby effectively superimposing David’s heart-broken solo voice (verse 26) over the chorus of Israel’s corporate lament for their king (1:19-25). As an educational composition, then, the “longbow” (קֶשֶׁת) in 1Sam 1:18 is best seen as a technical Hebrew term for concentricism, in that both longbows and concentricisms are perfectly balanced arcs whose ends are tied together in order to give force to the pointed message placed at the very centre. The larger, stronger, more balanced, and more steeply-bent the *qeshet* is, the greater the impact of the central arrow will be (cf. footnote 457), and conversely, without an arrow the longbow is useless.

Therefore, although ‘concentricism’ is perhaps the best English term for the technique used by the author of *Samuel*, the term he himself considered most suitable in a rhetorical education setting (hence 2Sam 1:18) is *qeshet*, or ‘longbow’, as David himself illustrated so expertly with his lament over Saul and Jonathan, and presumably in other compositions also.

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<sup>525</sup> Gazelle (צבוי) and deer (איל) are closely associated in biblical texts (e.g. Deut 12:15, 22; 15:22; Song 2:7; 3:5), particularly for their ability to climb on high places (Song 2:8-9, 17; 8:14). Jonathan’s most famous exploit was defeating the Philistine garrison at Michmash by scaling the Bozez crag (1Sam 14:4-14), justifying the nickname ‘gazelle’. It is perhaps not coincidental that Jonathan’s famed martial skills recalled in 2Sam 1:17-27 are linked also in David’s self-description as ‘hinds’ feet ... on high places’ and bending ‘a bow of bronze’ (2Sam 22:34-35).



## Chapter Six – Further Research

In this thesis, then, 1-2Samuel has been analysed as an empirical example of a book structured primarily according to the ancient Israelite rhetorical technique of concentricism / *qeshet*. In the process of investigating the final form, the underlying structure was found to be communicating a number of coherent messages to its original audience, and even making what appears to be a direct claim about the identity of its author and therefore date of composition. The last of the seven criteria established above [§2.5] in order to test proposed examples of the concentric technique, is the criterion of Satisfaction; ultimately the ‘proof’ for a literary assessment is whether “when [the interpreter] beckons us to listen, we do hear faint music reverberating around us”.<sup>526</sup> What I have offered above is a detailed methodology for narrative concentricism, a thorough rhetorical exposition of all the episodes in *Samuel* according to its proposed structural arrangement, and a frank assessment of this structure in terms of its discovery and verification, intended purpose, two stages of composition, and self-conscious use of the concentric technique. Limitations of space have repeatedly disallowed more detailed assessment, and therefore inevitably what remains could have been expanded upon considerably at almost every point.

As regards further research, then, the most important first step required before progressing any further is of course the detailed verification of the rest of 1-2 Samuel according to the seven criteria of §2.5.<sup>527</sup> If the other concentric structures described here (in addition to 2Samuel 10–12) are considered a broadly accurate representation of the book’s rhetorical arrangement, the second stage of further research will have to analyse in depth the rhetorical messages conveyed through the structure. In line with principles of ‘third-wave literary criticism’, these messages must be situated in their most likely historical setting, giving due consideration to the likelihood or otherwise of the apparent historical implications of the final structure in 2Sam 20:23–24:25.

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<sup>526</sup> Hays 1989: 32.

<sup>527</sup> Cf., e.g., Frolov (2016) for a detailed critique of proposed structures of Numbers by Douglas (2007: 43-71) and of Judges by Way (2014), even on the basis of the one criterion of Volume; nevertheless, I commend all seven as valuable.

If after this process, the literary and historical-critical conclusions of this thesis are upheld, the implications for further research on the basis of its findings could be potentially significant. The first concerns the historical (and archaeological) context within which the book of Samuel was evidently intended to be understood by its author. The second requires use of the suitably rigorous methods proposed in Chapter Two, above, for identifying, delimiting, and assessing further examples of concentrically structured texts in the Hebrew (or even Greek) Bible. The third involves the ways in which the rhetorical-critical understanding of *Samuel* presented here might be seen to affect scholarship in other related disciplines within biblical scholarship, including textual criticism, canonical criticism and early *Wirkungsgeschichte* of biblical books, study of smaller literary units within biblical books, and possible literary or conceptual dependence of *Samuel* upon earlier Israelite literature. Finally, the fourth area is the oft-neglected 'spiritual sense', the moral and theological interpretation to which the plain or 'literal' sense can be shown to be pointing.

### 6.1 *Third wave literary criticism*

In the history of research on *Samuel* summarised in Chapter One, the case was made for combining the literary insights of final-form criticism with the rhetorical interests of historical criticism and embarking in earnest on third wave literary criticism. By starting with the final form of a text, which is to say, the earliest form for which we possess actual manuscript evidence,<sup>528</sup> the careful analysis of this document's internal arrangement, and genre according to comparative literature, will give scholars empirical evidence with which to determine its most likely historical setting. Only in this way is it possible to hear the text in its true contextualised plain sense, the first step towards either peering behind the text's individual perspective to the objective reality it attempts to describe, or else applying the message(s) of the text to one's own contemporary situation.

On the one hand, then, this calls for much more comparative form criticism of document-length genres both within and beyond ancient Israelite literature. Regarding *Samuel*, one external genre

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<sup>528</sup> For *Samuel*, 4QSam<sup>a</sup> from Qumran attests the same length and order found in Masoretic scrolls (§1.2 [D]).

often proposed is the royal ‘apology’, or literary defence of the accession of a new king, an example of which comes from the Hittite king Hattušili III.<sup>529</sup> Various sorts of comparative evidence might be accumulated for ancient genres of royal autobiography, including pseudonymous and concealed.

On the other hand, having allowed the final form of the book of Samuel to disclose its own implied author and audience, one must consider the possibility of pseudonymous authorship and later intended audience (if indeed it is possible to distinguish this from an implied audience), and then make every effort to situate the book within its true original historical setting. While every historical narrative, whether first-hand or third-hand, will represent simply one perspective on ‘what actually happened’, it must be viewed against its proper geographical and archaeological background if its message is to be understood correctly.

For *Samuel*, there is a small but increasing trend to read the book as reflecting almost exclusively a historical backdrop of the seventh to fifth centuries BC, assuming Deuteronomistic composition (e.g. Polzin 1989, 1993; Liverani 2005; Finkelstein & Silberman 2006). The literary structure, though, seems to imply a tenth-century origin for the book in its present form. Historical questions properly constitute a secondary discussion, essentially separate from the strictly literary analysis in this thesis, and should not be allowed to interfere with its conclusions. Even so, it is likely that widely held assumptions about the archaeological evidence for (i.e. against) a United Monarchy will prejudice the reception of any thesis which even raises the possibility of an early historical composition for *Samuel*,<sup>530</sup> hence the need for the following excursus.

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<sup>529</sup> Knapp (2013, 2015) reaffirms this parallel in terms of modal, not formal, literary genre, *contra* Short 2010.

<sup>530</sup> This line of reasoning, though, is disqualified by over a century of historical-critical scholarship (see Moorey 1991: 40-47, 101-106). Early opponents of Wellhausen appealed to archaeology to disprove his literary conclusions (cf. Long 1991: 591), especially about the Pentateuch. In response, Francis Brown’s presidential address to SBL in 1896 chided the Assyriologist A.H. Sayce: “one of the crudest mistakes in using Archaeology as a conservative ally is made when it is employed to win a battle in literary criticism. It is not equipped for that kind of fighting.” Likewise, Noth (1960: 48) resisted Albright’s archaeological ‘verification’ approach to the Bible: “archaeological illumination of the general situation in any particular period does not in any way enable us to dispense with the study of the nature of the traditions enshrined in the records which have been handed down”. Neither can one employ archaeology as a revisionist ally in today’s literary-critical debates. Fifteen years ago, Dever predicted just such a situation (2001: 247 n. 5): “I regard revisionism as in danger of becoming the new orthodoxy [allowing no diversity nor open-minded liberalism]”.

*Excursus B:*     Bible and archaeology – conflicting witnesses for David?

In the last forty years – the span of a single scholarly career – confidence in the historical value of traditions about David in the book of Samuel has changed to the point of being unrecognisable. There used to be a consensus in classical historical-critical scholarship that the author of *Samuel* (at least of 2Samuel 9–20) was most likely an eyewitness, contemporary with the events described and physically close to the royal court.<sup>531</sup> Gradually scholars have been forced to concede that biblical depictions of Solomon’s glorious empire, conquered by David, could not be substantiated, and thus to express uncertainty also about the historicity of many of the narrative details. They now address the possibility that “Saul and David never existed as historical figures” (Brettler 2010: 48; cf. Grabbe 2010a: 115), belonging to “a golden age, not a historical period” (Auld 1996: 167-68). It was only the discovery in 1993 and 1994 of fragments of a ninth-century stele in Tel Dan, referring to the Judahite dynasty as the ‘house of David’, that repelled the onslaught at the gate, so to speak.<sup>532</sup> Since then, even the most extreme sceptics no longer deny the probability that an actual chieftain named David founded a dynasty around the tenth century in the southern central highlands of Canaan, though they insist that this is hardly proof for the “fictional” biblical profile of ‘King David’ (Davies 2010: 60).

The growth of historical revisionism draws on a combination of historical/archaeological and literary arguments which are themselves interdependent and difficult to extricate from each other.<sup>533</sup> Often the impression given is that the linchpin of current scepticism is archaeological – the ‘Low Chronology’ of the early Iron Age promoted by Israel Finkelstein is “stripping the United Monarchy of monumental buildings” and thus of historical plausibility (Finkelstein 1996: 185). However, Moore and Kelle (2011: 233; cf. 17-25, 148, 407) have demonstrated that it was in fact literary reassessments of material about David which gave the primary impetus to a growing historical scepticism since the 1980s, this being the consistent direction of influence throughout biblical history research. If that is so, a fresh literary reassessment could potentially have a major

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<sup>531</sup> As Lemche summarises (2008: 143).

<sup>532</sup> [Isa 28:6] Hence the use of this image on the cover of Moore & Kelle (2011; cf. pp. 217-18, 277-78). Lemaire (1994) quickly identified the same phrase as a likely reading on the Mesha Stele from the same era.

<sup>533</sup> Though they ought to be – Thompson 1974: 3-4; Miller 1977: 88; 1991: 93-94; Dever 2001: 79, 90, 106.

impact on discussions about the historical existence of David and the nature of his reign.<sup>534</sup> This necessitates a proper dialogue between this thesis and current literary readings of *Samuel*, as well as a resolution of widely divergent views among modern archaeologists about the time of David.<sup>535</sup> Either of these could easily fill another thesis, precluding anything more than a brief survey here; priority in the present thesis must be given to the methodology (Chapter Two) and basic exposition of my literary proposal (Chapters Three and Four), both of which are essential prerequisites for further debates.

As literary analysis takes precedence over archaeological assessments, both in principle and in practice, the following discussion will address them in the same order.

#### 6.B.1 *Literary analysis of the book of Samuel*

##### (i) Literary arguments in favour of historical value

It is important to start by acknowledging the vast majority of historical-critical scholars, right up to the 1980s and beyond, whose trained critical faculties led them to the considered conclusion that the books of Samuel constitute broadly reliable historical accounts, perhaps sometimes even contemporary with the events they describe. Like their pre-critical predecessors, they were not ignorant of the difference between plausible history and popular folktale, and we would be ill-advised to brush aside the preponderance of scholarly opinion, even to this day, too hastily.

Secondly, there are literary critics today who still defend the value of the book of Samuel for historical reconstructions, viewing *Samuel* in the pattern of ancient royal apologetic literature.<sup>536</sup> Among these, Stephen McKenzie (2000b), Baruch Halpern (2001), and Joel Baden (2013) have each written ‘lives’ of David that make extensive use of the biblical book, albeit as a thoroughly polemical

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<sup>534</sup> “If the results of archaeology seem to be opposed to the conclusions of text criticism, the reason may perhaps be that not enough archaeological facts are known or that they have not been firmly established; the reason also may be that the text has been wrongly interpreted.” – de Vaux 1970: 78; cf. Wright 1971. Another archaeologist, Nadav Na’aman, has repeatedly emphasised the first two options – “Does Archaeology Really Deserve the Status of a ‘High Court’ in Biblical Historical Research?” (2011; likewise 1996a, 2009, 2010).

<sup>535</sup> For the latter, see the convenient and thorough introduction by Kletter 2004.

<sup>536</sup> Hoffner 1975; McCarter 1980a, 1980b; Tadmor 1983: 56; Sparks 2005: 820; Mayes 2006; Short 2010; Knapp 2013, 2015; cf. Van Seters 1983: 114-21. Cf. also footnote 510 above.

work that must be comprehensively deconstructed in order to arrive at the true historical picture of events in the time of David.<sup>537</sup> Others are inclined to be less cynical about David's protestations of innocence.<sup>538</sup> Halpern has continued to defend the value of the biblical text for historical study, and draws upon numerous other lines of internal evidence from (1-)2 Samuel to argue for a pre-exilic, even tenth-century composition (e.g. Halpern 2005).

Thirdly, this present thesis undertakes a more narrowly technical rhetorical analysis of *Samuel* which points not only to the remarkable coherence of both its literary structure and its 'ideological' messages, but also to an apparent historical time of composition in which these messages would be meaningful. If the authorial perspective and the implied audience of the book are explored in detail (cf. §5.3), one might reasonably conclude that the least implausible solution is to accept the rhetorical setting of the book at face value. If so, the book of *Samuel* may well have been composed at a much earlier time than the date commonly ascribed to the so-called Deuteronomistic Historian.<sup>539</sup> I must make it very clear, however, that it is certainly not my intention to try to argue that the biblical book is entirely accurate.<sup>540</sup> Like any other historical work, it is an unashamedly biased presentation of one particular narrative about events in those ancient times, and however strongly one might disagree with the author's ideology, it remains a valuable source of historical information for a wide variety of questions relating to that time period.

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<sup>537</sup> Cf. also Heym 1973; McCarter 1980a; 1980b. Isser (2003: 108-9) argues implausibly that this 'true picture' could instead represent just the negative legends about David circulating at the time of the Deuteronomists.

<sup>538</sup> Gordon 1984: 65-66; Provan, Long & Longman 2003: 217-21; Johnson 2012. It seems to me that the many Davidic individual lament psalms mentioning unjust accusations and political intrigue, particularly in Book 1 of the Psalter, may provide independent evidence relevant to the narrative *apologia* for David in 1-2 Samuel.

<sup>539</sup> Regarding important questions of textual transmission, see below §6.3(A).

<sup>540</sup> One might choose to believe that the book is accurate in every detail, and thus align oneself fully with the ideological perspective of the author/narrator, but this would be a theological position rather than a critical one. Such a conclusion could not be derived from careful analysis of the text itself, even if we were to unearth a tenth-century autograph *in situ* complete with an attached photograph of the author. The text is simply one person's perspective on reality, and while a critic may judge him to be broadly trustworthy, to conclude that his text is without error could only be based on prior extra-textual convictions about the trustworthiness of the author(s), of the community of faith who preserved it, and ultimately of the god who has reportedly attached His reputation to such ancient texts.

(ii) Literary arguments against historical value

Reassessments of the biblical literature have arisen primarily from four lines of argument: redactional, technological, logical and philosophical.

First, the theory of a 'Deuteronomistic History' (Noth 1943; cf. §1.2(C)) remains powerfully influential to the present day, despite various slight adjustments or criticisms. If this theory is accepted, it follows that the book of Samuel must ultimately belong to the exilic composition, whatever its earlier sources may have been, and as such was completed in its current form around four hundred years after the events it purports to describe.<sup>541</sup> It is not hard to see how this might call into question the accuracy of its historical details.<sup>542</sup>

Second, there is clear evidence from both archaeology (e.g. names on seals) and biblical literature (e.g. the eighth-century prophets) for a significant expansion of popular literacy in ancient Israel in the eighth to seventh centuries BC (Grabbe 2007: 116-18). Epigraphic finds from preceding centuries are much scarcer, and it has therefore been proposed (Jamieson-Drake 1991) that major works of biblical historiography or literature would be unlikely to have been composed earlier than this period.<sup>543</sup> If literature only appeared at that time, even written sources incorporated within the DtrH cannot have been earlier than a couple of hundred years after events they report, their factual details being drawn from less dependable oral transmission and thus unreliable as history.<sup>544</sup>

Third, and related to the first two, many claim to recognise clear examples of internal inconsistency within the book of Samuel. The underlying implication is that if the inconsistent

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<sup>541</sup> Finkelstein and Silberman (2006) present a remarkably confident sequence of 'stages in development of biblical material' throughout their book, the three oral tradition stages and then four written stages of editing each associated with specific features of the text as it now appears.

<sup>542</sup> Polzin (1989, 1993) takes this to the extreme of denying any validity to the search for earlier traditions or sources within *Samuel*; he insists (rightly) that the document be interpreted first as a literary unity, and then within its historical context, but by presupposing an exilic setting he is forced to rely purely on allegory to find the author's messages for his audience (1989: 1-17). It is understandable, therefore, how the DtrH theory drew attention to the role of ideology in the writing of historical texts (Brettler 1995: 4).

<sup>543</sup> Cf. Garsiel 2010: 7-8. Halpern (2005: 426) is surprised at the "extraordinary extent" to which not only the revisionists' theories but also Finkelstein's 'low chronology' depend upon the lack of earlier historical sources.

<sup>544</sup> Liverani rejects an early 'Succession Narrative' not for historical anachronism but for the implausibility of authorised confession and of accurate scribal transmission (2005: 315-16, cf. 95-96). Isser (2003: 44) goes further, arguing on the basis of "folkloric elements, narrative breaks, and story variations" in *Samuel* that the Deuteronomist(s) historicised, baptised, and nationalised an earlier "popular fixed secular legend of David", a largely oral canon of heroic tales rather than genuinely early historiography (2003: 52-53).

elements were assigned to different time periods (e.g. eighth century, exilic DtrH), it would be possible to recognise greater overall coherence at a diachronic as opposed to a synchronic level.<sup>545</sup> It then supposedly follows (once again) that the further away such editorial layers are from the events described, the less reliable they will be as history.<sup>546</sup> Examples commonly appealed to include ‘doublets’ such as David sparing Saul twice (1Sam 24 paralleling 1Sam 26; Brettler 2010), ‘contradictions’ such as Goliath being defeated by David (1Sam 17) and by Elhanan (2Sam 21; Bar-Efrat 2010: 48), narrator comments presumed to indicate a lengthy passage of time (e.g. 1Sam 27:6; 2Sam 18:18; Bar-Efrat 2010: 48-49),<sup>547</sup> or specific themes or background details characteristic of later historical periods – whether Omride depictions of courtly life (Finkelstein & Silberman 2006: 106-110, 117), Persian historical events (Isser 2003: 87-99) and ideas about monarchy (Liverani 2005: 308-23), or Greek use of mercenaries (Van Seters 2010), single combat between champions (Rofé 1987),<sup>548</sup> and dramatic narrative themes (Adam 2010). Rarely is there any attempt made to synthesise these isolated details, themes, or passages into a coherent explanation that accounts for even a complete portion of the text. Perhaps the convoluted and impenetrable processes of ancient redaction are thought to add enough uncertainty as to make such attempts ultimately fruitless.<sup>549</sup>

Fourth, a major shift in the *Zeitgeist* of Western philosophy, associated with the ‘linguistic turn’ and ‘postmodernism’, has exerted a strong influence on historiography (cf. §1.A). Already back in the 1960s, David Levin (1967: 3) drew on expertise in both history and literature to contest the widespread “assumption that a natural law decrees hostility between good literature and serious history, between literary effects and factual accuracy”.<sup>550</sup> Nevertheless, the more biblical texts came

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<sup>545</sup> Cf. Barton 2007a: 41-44.

<sup>546</sup> Knoppers (1999: 211) cautions, though, that chronological distance need not entail less historical accuracy.

<sup>547</sup> It is rarely argued why these necessarily indicate that; indeed, Halpern (2001: 68, 225-26) actually treats 1Sam 27:6 as evidence of composition in the ninth century at the latest.

<sup>548</sup> Although cf. de Vaux 1972. Millard (2012) also warns against bald assertions of anachronism in ancient documents, and demolishes two such accusations that have been made against *Samuel* (coins, battering rams).

<sup>549</sup> Credit must be given here to Finkelstein and Silberman (2006) for attempting to create at least a broad framework within which to explain the successive stages of the text’s redaction. Even so, the impression given is of plucking from the texts any details which could plausibly be associated with the various historical periods of Israel’s history, at least as reconstructed by the authors; this is far from a thorough, or even coherent, treatment of the literary work that is the book of Samuel (let alone any one of its hypothesised earlier forms).

<sup>550</sup> Cf. Long 1994: 58-86; Evans 2000: 70-71; Provan, Long & Longman 2003: 79-93; Eynikel 2010: 1-7.

to be appreciated for their literary artistry and ideological rhetoric,<sup>551</sup> the more their historical value was doubted, distrusted until verified by extra-biblical sources (Davies 1992: 29; Thompson 1992: 132). Biblical historians of this persuasion give the impression that they are positivists, defending objective (i.e. non-theological) historiography of Iron Age Canaan against the pollution of base ideology (cf. Provan 1995; Dever 2001: 258). Not only does this misrepresent archaeology as objective and impartial,<sup>552</sup> but it unjustly denigrates biblical literature; some revisionists have consequently tried to claim that “the Bible is not history, and only very recently has anyone ever wanted it to be”.<sup>553</sup> Although the revisionist biblical historians often deny having postmodern presuppositions (Lemche 2010: 160), their views conform closely to this philosophical approach to history,<sup>554</sup> which Grabbe (2007: 27) conveniently summarises:

“There is no essential difference between history and literature, between a historical narrative and a narrative of fiction... the denial that historical writing refers to an actual historical past... The text can be interpreted in multiple ways. Authorial intent is an illusion... The ‘grand narrative’ is at an end, to be replaced by fragmentation, with many different even competing histories”

To assert that a text such as *Samuel* may contain certain reliable narratives about history is rejected as effectively reinforcing a dominant ideology which seeks to suppress competing or marginalised narratives.<sup>555</sup> ‘Authorial perspective’ or purpose, even if it were to be admitted as discernible, would be considered entirely self-referential, and would exist only to be deconstructed.<sup>556</sup>

### (iii) The contribution of this thesis to the literary debate

My thesis can be seen to provide different solutions to each of the above problems raised with the historical reliability of the book of Samuel from a literary perspective.

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<sup>551</sup> For a summary of scholarship on the ‘ideological’ nature of the stories of David, see Brettler 1995: 91-111.

<sup>552</sup> As with historical texts in the Bible, when we use published excavation reports by archaeologists of previous generations, we must make an informed decision about how far to trust their texts for the data we wish to incorporate into our own imaginative reconstructions of the past.

<sup>553</sup> Lemche & Thompson 1994: 18; dismissed as patently absurd by Dever 2001: 10. Moore and Kelle (2011: 4) demonstrate “the prominence of history and information about the past in the Bible”, and argue that narratives in Genesis through 2 Kings can reasonably be labelled ‘history’, even if their accuracy is disputed.

<sup>554</sup> Dever (2001:23-52) demonstrates compellingly their nihilist postmodern agenda.

<sup>555</sup> Hence the title of Whitelam’s 1996 book *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*.

<sup>556</sup> E.g. Clines 1990a, 1990b, 1993, 1995. Cf. Longman 1999: 107-15.

First, whereas the DtrH theory is a broad-brush attempt to account for all of the various perspectives and rhetorical features of the books of Deuteronomy through Kings, my own analysis focuses the attention down to the level of every single episode of *Samuel*, and in many cases every single verse of an episode. At this level of investigation, I have tried to demonstrate that the entire fifty-five chapters of the book, according to its accepted limits in the Masoretic Tradition (i.e. 1Sam 1 – 2Sam 24), forms a stand-alone literary unity. This rhetorical unit can be explained without any need for positing literary connections with other texts either in Judges or in Kings, suggesting that the DtrH theory is ultimately inadequate at the level of episodes, whether or not it appears to manage with broader narratives and themes.<sup>557</sup> If this is the case, then the book of Samuel ought to be assessed on its own merits for the most likely date of composition, and must not be presupposed to have reached its final form only at the time of the Babylonian exile.<sup>558</sup>

Second, my investigation into patterns of orality and literacy in ancient Israel (§2.2.2) establishes that there is no reason why major works of literature could not in theory have been written in times of limited popular literacy.<sup>559</sup> Lemaire likewise rejects the arguments of Jamieson-Drake against the possibility of literary composition earlier than the eighth century, which seem “somewhat ridiculous to anyone with experience in archaeology and epigraphy”.<sup>560</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the book of Samuel shows clear evidence of using a compositional technique particularly well-suited to oral performance and reception (cf. §2.2.3) indicates that it is in fact likely to have been composed in a

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<sup>557</sup> Polzin’s impressionistic narrative reconstructions of the exilic message of 1Samuel and 2Samuel (anachronistically divided, but cf. 1993:1) show how the book could have been re-interpreted in that era, but fail to do justice to the original message of *Samuel* as conveyed through its detailed literary arrangement.

<sup>558</sup> Garsiel (2010: 18-23, 41) accepts the idea of a Deuteronomistic History, and yet demonstrates the prominent “lack of Deuteronomistic editorial intervention” in the book of Samuel. Cf. also McConville 1996.

<sup>559</sup> Isser (2003) grudgingly acknowledges that archaeology could corroborate various details in *Samuel*, and maybe even tenth-century historiographical literature (2003: 20-21, 53, 60-71). As for the ‘heroic’ features he sees, ‘folkloric’ stories might equally be interpreted as ‘traditional’ or ‘popularist’, rhetorical structure accounts for the ‘narrative breaks’, and ‘story variations’ usually have perfectly plausible explanations (cf. footnote 445).

<sup>560</sup> Lemaire 2010: 58; cf. also 59. Around 190 well-stratified seals, impressions and bullae from tenth- to ninth-century levels in Tel Rehov and the City of David prove the existence of documents written on papyrus (Sanders 2008: 103-104), which probably included works of literature for scribal education (Na’aman 1996b: 180-82; Carr 2008: 116-17). The shift from iconographic earlier seals to onomastic later ones is not ‘proof’ of newly-developed literacy, but probably reflects aniconic religious reforms instead (Dever 2001: 235-37; *pace* Sanders). Na’aman (1996b: 172) discusses the evidence of hieratic numerals. Cf. Garsiel 2010: 27-33.

period when orality was more predominant than literacy in ancient Israelite society. This would be consistent with the very early date implied by the book's rhetorical messages.

Third, my thesis has offered a complete and coherent analysis of the entire book of Samuel (Chapters Three and Four) rather than simply isolated portions or themes, even though the depth and detail is unavoidably limited. My explanation also goes so far as to include a hypothesis about two distinct editions of the book, both by the same author (cf. §5.4). Yet in this case redaction has been used not as an excuse, to exclude passages problematic to my overall proposal, but rather as a solution, suggesting two editions which may each be fully reconstructed as internally coherent with their own detailed rhetorical arrangements. The challenge, therefore, for those who wish to dispute my analysis of the book is not to identify a handful of points at which they take issue with my interpretations, but to produce an analysis of their own (*not* necessarily concentric – §2.4.3, step 3) which explains in a more satisfying way all of the various features of the text as part of one or more coherent literary compositions.<sup>561</sup>

Fourth, as mentioned in the first excursus (Chapter One), most scholars have accepted postmodernism's recognition that subjectivity and ideology are unavoidable in all historical reconstruction,<sup>562</sup> but they also point out its limitations with regard to observing, recording and linking historical facts in as objective a manner as possible.<sup>563</sup> At the risk of betraying my philosophical naïveté, I continue to affirm the primary importance of determining authorial intent in any work of literature. I would not want to deny the presence of various inconsequential or even unintended messages, but if the fundamental purpose of the composition is ignored, the work as a whole is likely to be distorted and mishandled. The major methodological contribution of this thesis

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<sup>561</sup> Dever (2001: 108) poses the equivalent challenge from an archaeological perspective, to those who wish to take issue with his reconstruction of early Israelite history: "to overturn that [balance of probability] would require a more *likely* scenario, replete with new and superior independent witnesses. In the absence of that, scepticism is not warranted, and indeed is suspect." – Dever 2001: 108.

<sup>562</sup> Revisionist historians freely admit this, in which case one wonders whether their dismissal of the Bible as little more than literary "fiction, a fabrication" (Whitelam 1996: 23, cf. 33, 222) is simply a rejection of ideology incompatible with their own (Provan, Long & Longman 2003: 8). Would that we all heeded the plea of Long (1999: 586-87) for more candid self-reflection on our "core commitments" rather than caricaturing opponents.

<sup>563</sup> In view of its limitations, more recent trends have been observed in literary criticism ('neo-pragmatism'), in history ('critical-historical' approaches), and in archaeology ('post-processualism') – Dever 2001: 17, 272-73.

to literary analysis of ancient Hebrew narrative is its recognition of an essential purposefulness inherent in the concentric rhetorical technique (§2.3). Concentrism has an unparalleled ability to lay bare the deliberate rhetorical and theological messages of its author, communicated through parallelism at the smallest or largest scale (see Appendix). My application of these theoretical principles to the book of *Samuel* is of course open to critique by other rhetorical analysts, but if it can be demonstrated that the author did have a clear interest in drawing rational historical conclusions from events being described, it would be reasonable to treat his work as a reliable source for writing modern histories of ancient Canaan. What is more, if the implied author of an historiographical text is identified as a named individual known from history, and if further investigation suggests that this individual might be the actual author, the named historian would presumably have discernible ideological and social biases of his/her own, in effect acting as filters which are likely to shape any presentation of historical details.<sup>564</sup> In principle, these may therefore be peeled away to give more direct access to actual events, without forgetting one's own personal biases which are inevitably harder to offset.

### 6.B.2 *Archaeological analysis of the Late Bronze – Iron Age transition*

As I argued in my survey of past analyses of the book of Samuel throughout history (Chapter One), literary analysis of a biblical book must be undertaken first, before historical-critical analysis can identify the most likely historical context for the implied audience using archaeological and other extra-biblical data (i.e. 'third wave literary criticism'). Hence we turn to consider the evidence from archaeology for the Late Bronze – Iron Age transition and early Iron Age in ancient Canaan,<sup>565</sup> the period generally thought to correspond to what the biblical literature describes as the United Monarchy.

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<sup>564</sup> In any case, "historical persons are never 'historical' but always constructions and portraits, partly done for us and to us, and partly done by ourselves. In the same way, we are always busily constructing ourselves for the sake of appearance and for the sake of self-understanding. Those constructions are characteristically strange combinations of fidelity and deception." – Brueggemann 2002: 5; cf. 2.

<sup>565</sup> Despite Amihai Mazar's defence of the geographical term 'Palestine' (1990: 33 n. 1), Dever (2001: 62) suggests a more proper term would be ancient "Greater Canaan" – a less anachronistic and more politically neutral label. Cf. Hess 1998; Younger 1999: 187-88; Patrick 2011a: 4-5.

Before it is even possible to assess the conflicting views, though, one is immediately confronted by the problem of cross-contamination between archaeology and historical criticism of the Bible. Most discussions of this topic are littered with unqualified absolute dates and biblical designations for archaeological eras such as ‘Canaanite’, ‘proto-Israelite’, or ‘Solomonic’, and the non-specialist might easily get the impression of much greater confidence than the evidence actually warrants. Investigations in both fields ought to be conducted as independently as possible, assessing each type of data on its own terms. For archaeology, this means drawing conclusions about pottery sequences and correlations between strata of different sites according to their best fit in a ‘floating’ relative chronology. Only then can this be anchored with potentially historical ancient texts, which are the only possible source both for absolute dates of strata and equally for calibrated radiocarbon dates.<sup>566</sup> Archaeological data should ideally be discussed at first in purely typological terms such as ‘Late Bronze’, ‘Iron Age I’, ‘Iron Age II’, and so on,<sup>567</sup> because the archaeological debates that rage over the United Monarchy ultimately boil down to disputes over the absolute dates that ought to be assigned to different archaeological eras or destruction layers.

It seems, then, that there are three major options available to scholars for assigning dates to the strata relevant to *Samuel*:<sup>568</sup>

(i) Modified Conventional Chronology

The first is to leave the chronology broadly where it has been since Yadin famously identified the six-chambered gates in Hazor X, Megiddo V,<sup>569</sup> and Gezer VIII as clear evidence of Solomonic imperial

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<sup>566</sup> “Regarding ceramic typology, for example, archaeologists can work out a relative chronology from the potsherds alone, but when they assign dates they rely directly or indirectly on other kinds of evidence ... for Palestinian Iron Age pottery, the Hebrew Bible plays a major role in the process.” – Miller 1991: 101; cf. Yadin 1967: 259; Grabbe 2007: 24. For radiocarbon dating, see Levy & Higham (eds.) 2005; Grabbe 2010a: 67, 79, and references therein to Grabbe (ed.) 2008.

<sup>567</sup> That said, Grabbe (2010a: 63-64) identifies eight or nine different terminological proposals about how to divide up the period generally known as ‘Iron Age II’ (conventionally 1000–586 BC), often due to disagreements over correlations with textual data. Peter James (2008) also illustrates just how much potential leeway there is in the relative association of specific strata in different archaeological sites, let alone in the absolute historical dates assigned to each of these ‘horizons’ of associated strata.

<sup>568</sup> For a helpful introduction to the first two options, with extensive bibliography, see Bodine 2010.

<sup>569</sup> Franklin (2005: 314) explains why Stratum IVb is an “imaginary stratum”, incorrectly distinguished in the final report, and thus why the former ‘Stratum Va-IVb’ should become simply ‘V’, and ‘Stratum IVa’ simply ‘IV’.

architecture (cf. 1Kgs 9:15). The subsequent excavators of Hazor and of Gezer have confidently reaffirmed Yadin's chronology,<sup>570</sup> whereas two of the co-directors of the current Megiddo Expedition, Ussishkin and Finkelstein, have tried to undermine Yadin's conclusion, each in different ways. Ussishkin detaches Megiddo's all-important six-chambered gate from the supposedly tenth-century (Solomonic) Stratum V and attributes it instead to the later Stratum IV. However, Halpern, third co-director at Megiddo, has provided a careful and, in my inexpert view, convincing rebuttal of Ussishkin's archaeological case.<sup>571</sup> Finkelstein, on the other hand, takes the battle beyond just Megiddo, down-dating the entire Stratum V at Megiddo from the tenth to the ninth century, and therefore forcing associated strata in other sites to follow suit. By attributing all of this building work to Omri and Ahab, he leaves Solomon entirely without monumental architecture, effectively disproving the idea of a Solomonic empire at all. As expected, this has provoked fierce reactions from many others.

Halpern, like most other archaeologists, has acknowledged the strength of the observation that both Samaria and Jezreel, which appear from biblical texts to have been established as prominent cities first by Omri and Ahab in the ninth century, do indeed have similar types of pottery to the supposedly 'Solomonic' Stratum V at Megiddo (Halpern 2001: 464).<sup>572</sup> However, he and others try to dismiss the argument by down-playing the accuracy of dating according to pottery typology; a seventy-five year difference is apparently too small to distinguish, and the complex stratigraphies of Jezreel and Samaria add further ambiguity (Halpern 2001: 452-53). Amihai Mazar has consequently proposed a 'Modified Conventional Chronology', 'modified' to take into account Finkelstein's arguments by stretching out the Iron Age IIA period (formerly 1000–925BC) from 980 down as far as 840/830BC.<sup>573</sup> Effectively, it then becomes impossible to say for certain whether the six-chambered

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<sup>570</sup> Respectively, Amnon Ben-Tor (with Doron Ben-Ami 1998: 11-13) and William Dever (2001: 124-57, 267-69).

<sup>571</sup> Halpern 2001: 439-50. Cf. also Mazar (2007a: 156-57).

<sup>572</sup> A point made already by Fisher (1929), Crowfoot (1940) and Kenyon (1964). A further important argument (Franklin 2005, 2008) recognises identical masons' marks in the palaces of Samaria Building Period I and of Megiddo Stratum V. Halpern does point out, though, that biblical texts report Jezreel's existence as a village before its establishment as an important Omride city – 2001: 453.

<sup>573</sup> Mazar 2005: 21-22; 2007b: 121-23.

gates were built by either Solomon or Omri. Even so, this diluting of the already unimpressive monumental remains from the Iron IIA strata reinforces the conclusion of most historians that the biblical depiction of Solomon's glorious empire is at best a huge exaggeration. Halpern retorts that such 'spin' was a rhetorical convention in all ancient Near Eastern kingdoms – something he calls the 'Tiglath-Pileser principle' – and that exaggeration is something quite different from pure fiction; the minimum solid claims of a text must be skilfully extracted, but these then serve as valuable historical data (Halpern 2001: 107-41). It may not be much, but this first, widely-accepted option at least allows for the possibility that Solomon built something.<sup>574</sup>

(ii) Low Chronology

The second option as regards archaeological evidence for David and Solomon, therefore, is the 'Low Chronology' model championed by Israel Finkelstein. Although he rejects the biblical claims for a Solomonic empire, his chronological revision is also based unavoidably on other claims recorded in the same book of 1Kings for the foundation of Samaria.<sup>575</sup> Minimalist critics like Thompson (2006: 286) have not surprisingly taken him to task for this, insisting that the biblical texts are to be ignored as wholly unreliable for all pre-exilic Israelite history. However, engaging with ancient texts, in addition to archaeological and epigraphic data, is unavoidable for any reasonable ancient historian.<sup>576</sup> Finkelstein has presented clear archaeological reasons for down-dating the supposedly 'Solomonic' period of Iron IIA to the ninth century, and although his critics suspect ideological anti-United Monarchy motives (e.g. Mazar 2005: 25), they themselves may well have equal and opposite

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<sup>574</sup> Mazar (2007a: 152-54; 2007b: 125-29) presents the not insubstantial evidence concerning Jerusalem in the Iron IIA as compatible with a "modest yet vivid" United Monarchy; quote from Mazar 2005: 26.

<sup>575</sup> Defended in Finkelstein 2005: 38.

<sup>576</sup> Halpern 2005: 425. A disappointing example, though, is Liverani's recent imaginative 'history' of Israel (2005), which interweaves an indiscriminate selection of highly speculative and sceptical biblical scholarship with his own archaeological extrapolations into an impenetrable thicket of baldly asserted hypotheses. Na'aman (2006: 7-11) criticises the "authoritative manner", lack of methodological criteria for dealing with texts, fixation with ideology as an allegorical "code" for Israelite literati, and inaccessibility to students.

*a priori* reasons for resisting his conclusions, however well-grounded their counter-arguments may be archaeologically.<sup>577</sup>

Regarding the lower end of the Iron IIA, Finkelstein's opponents point out that while it may seem reasonable to compress Megiddo's unusually long-lasting Strata V and IV into about 150 years by lowering the first Iron IIA stratum to the time of Omri, doing this for the more densely stratified city of Hazor would "allow for each of the six Iron Age strata of Hazor [X–V], with several sub-phases in each, a duration of only approximately 25 years" (Ben-Tor & Ben-Ami 1998: 32). The stratigraphic congestion caused by this Low Chronology makes it entirely unrealistic, and one is therefore justified in holding on to Solomon after all. However, it was partly to resolve the opposite problem of overly sparse stratigraphy in some sites that Finkelstein originally proposed his revision (1996: 181-84), aiming to close the strange gap between supposedly tenth-century monumental architecture and late ninth- to eighth-century evidence of public administration in many Philistine sites and elsewhere. Closing gaps is a valid method for resolving very thin stratigraphy, but in this case it ended up as little more than 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' (cf. Kletter 2004: 37-38).

By lowering the Iron IIA period, an even larger gap opens up for the preceding Iron I period, which now stretches across an "unfeasible" three centuries from the end of the Late Bronze Age, conventionally dated up around 1200BC, down to the early ninth century.<sup>578</sup> In order to 'spread the butter more thinly', Finkelstein turned to the anomaly identified by Ussishkin (2007: 136) in the distribution of so-called 'Philistine' monochrome pottery (Mycenaean IIIC:1b). Monochrome is never attested in sites which have finds clearly associated with the final 20th Dynasty of New Kingdom Egypt (e.g. Lachish), despite being traditionally dated to the same time period. This gives him an excuse to delay the start of the 'Philistine' monochrome period until after the 20th Dynasty presence in Canaan ends, around 1140/1130BC. Naturally, this pushes the subsequent bichrome phase later still, and the various pottery phases are thereby distributed nice and evenly throughout

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<sup>577</sup> Moore & Kelle 2011: 251. Cf. Halpern 1996: 53; 2001: 75; Garsiel 2010: 34-37; Ben-Tor & Ben-Ami 1998: 34-36.

<sup>578</sup> Mazar 2005: 25.

the long dark age of the Iron Age I. Other historians counter that this brief anomaly might simply reflect a last-ditch Egyptian boycott of the pesky ‘Sea People’ Philistines and their monochrome ware, resisting their migration down the coast of Canaan. The historical arguments can be read both ways, but Finkelstein’s case is strengthened by Aegean archaeologists who consider the Low Chronology a better fit with the broader Mediterranean pottery context.<sup>579</sup>

Grabbe observes (2010b: 224) that he has “had more than one scholar approach me privately to assure me that the [Low Chronology] is dead – that no archaeologist believes it. Yet I keep coming across archaeologists who find supporting evidence for it or parts of it!” The idea began long before Finkelstein, and clearly the debate is far from over.<sup>580</sup> In fact, it seems bound to rumble on indefinitely in view of the fact that it is tied up, quite deliberately by both sides of the debate, with the emotive spiritual and political issues surrounding the existence of the kingdom of David and Solomon.<sup>581</sup>

### (iii) Centuries of Darkness

It is for this reason that the third option for assigning dates to strata is so appealing. Back in 1991, before Finkelstein introduced his Low Chronology hypothesis, a group of young archaeologists in London led by Peter James, each with expertise in a different field (ranging from prehistoric Britain to Mycenaean Greece to Pharaonic Nubia), published a *tour de force* called *Centuries of Darkness: A challenge to the conventional chronology of Old World archaeology*, for which Professor Colin Renfrew provided a Foreword. Far from trying to grind any ideological axe as regards biblical authority, they pooled their expertise in order to attempt a resolution of a long-standing problem of chronology around the Late Bronze – Iron Age transition. This problem has afflicted Old World archaeologists for a hundred years, whether they be digging in Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, Italy, Greece,

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<sup>579</sup> Grabbe 2010a: 65-66; but cf. Kletter 2004: 38-39.

<sup>580</sup> Cf. Dever 1997: 232-39. Grabbe (2010a: 66) remarks, concerning the relevant ‘Pottery assemblages and the dating of various strata’, on the “surprising difference of interpretation between professional archaeologists whom one would expect to agree about the facts in the ground”.

<sup>581</sup> Witness on the one hand Finkelstein’s appeal to the popular literati with his 2006 paperback *David and Solomon* (with Neil Asher Silberman), and on the other Eilat Mazar’s regular press releases for tourists and donors about ‘David’s Palace’ and other discoveries in the City of David excavations at Jerusalem.

Troy, Anatolia and northern Syria, Cyprus, Sudan, or even as far as Bahrain and Iran. Each of these areas struggles with ‘centuries of darkness’ following the end of the Late Bronze Age, until civilisation picks up again almost where it left off, two to three centuries later in the Iron Age. As Ad Thijs puts it (2010: 172), these five scholars “have accumulated an astonishing mass of evidence to show that the existing Egyptian timetable is too long and leads to chronological problems in all civilisations of which the timetables are ultimately derived from connections with Egypt”. They demonstrate that the chronological interconnectivity goes back to William Flinders Petrie in the late 1880s, who first assigned (surprisingly high) absolute dates to certain types of Mycenaean pottery based on datable Egyptian strata in which examples were found. Petrie was unaware that mistaken assumptions had already been introduced to the absolute dating of Egyptian eras, through unreliable astronomical Sothic dating and (unsurprisingly) the biblical archaeology synchronism equating Shishaq with Shoshenq I, based solely on similarity of name.<sup>582</sup> From this indisputable material connection of Mycenae and Ramesside Egypt, though, the conventional chronology spread far and wide, and in its wake also an invariable dark age following the Late Bronze – everywhere apart from Egypt. Even so, the chronological illusion became virtually impossible to detect from the vantage point of any one geographical region on its own.

*Centuries of Darkness* begins its survey in the Western Mediterranean, finding corresponding anomalies in the archaeological literature for each successive geographical area, and thus arriving in due course at ancient Canaan (chapter 8). Seeking out chronological discrepancies in the relevant scholarly publications, James found in the work of Kathleen Kenyon at Samaria evidence to suggest that the start of Iron II should be lowered – presumably the same source Finkelstein used for his proposals a few years later. However, with the benefit of a far broader perspective, James could see that on the one hand it is possible, or even necessary, to redistribute stratigraphic dates lower in the later Iron Age (732BC, 586BC, etc.) in order to close an artificial chronological gap in early Persian period Canaan, and so ease the unnecessary stratigraphic congestion earlier in the strata at sites like

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<sup>582</sup> For a useful introduction to the complexities and uncertainties of Egyptian chronology, see Shortland 2013.

Hazor (cf. James 1991: 170-92; 2008). On the other hand, in line with chronological revisions everywhere else in the ancient Mediterranean, it is also advisable to lower the end of the Late Bronze to within perhaps a generation or two of the start of the Iron IIA in the early ninth century.<sup>583</sup>

A happy side-effect of this chronological revision would be that David and Solomon, dated by free-standing biblical chronology to the eleventh/tenth century, come to be associated not with the poor material culture of either Iron IIA or Iron I, but instead with the prosperous final years of the Late Bronze Age, when trade flourished between the Egyptians and the Hittites, among many others, and when Canaan boasted local rulers who competed over the profitable trade routes and evidently imitated the fading glory of Egyptian imperial culture. It is no surprise that descriptions of Solomon's temple and its furnishings match excavated Late Bronze examples almost identically, nor that the "Millo", the only recorded monumental structure built by David apart from his palace (2Sam 5:9; cf. 1Kgs 9:15; also footnote 399), seems to correspond to the huge 'Stepped Stone Structure' in Jerusalem, evidently constructed at the time of the Late Bronze/Iron Age transition,<sup>584</sup> presumably by powerful local rulers. In this reconstruction, the Late Bronze – Iron Age transition would therefore represent not the arrival of the Israelites into Canaan (as Albright conjectured), but rather the political and economic collapse of the United Monarchy, the Late Bronze 'golden age'. The authors of *Centuries of Darkness* are promoting neither a 'maximalist' nor a 'minimalist' approach to the Bible, neither the traditional archaeological identification of 'Solomonic' strata nor the 'Low Chronology' reconstruction. They are genuinely trying to solve one of the most intractable and widespread archaeological problems of ancient history, and coming up with some surprisingly plausible results when it comes to matters of biblical archaeology. In the absence of sufficient space

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<sup>583</sup> Careful investigation of Egyptian chronology justifies significant overlaps of the Egyptian 21st Dynasty, which lacks Apis bull burials, statuary, genealogies and objects outside of Egypt, and also a considerable collapsing of the 22nd; "for every doubtful year of Egyptian history granted to the Third Intermediate Period, another year is added to the Dark Ages of the Eastern and Central Mediterranean, the Near East and Africa" (James et al. 1991: 232 [emphasis theirs]). Dodson (2013) also questions conventional Egyptian synchronisms with the Assyrian King List, and allows that challenges to the Shoshenq/Shishaq 'fixed' point may be justified.

<sup>584</sup> Cahill 1998, 2004, and especially 2003; cf. Steiner 1998.

to do their proposals justice, I simply commend their magnificent (if controversial) book to the attention of the reader.<sup>585</sup>

As regards the findings of my thesis, then, it is clear that the current state of archaeological research in no way undermines literary conclusions about unitary authorship of the book of Samuel, nor even the idea that it might in fact have been composed in a very early historical period. Whether one chooses to maintain the conventional ascription of Iron IIA strata to David and Solomon, or whether one prefers the 'Low Chronology' of Finkelstein as expressed more fully and reasonably in the *Centuries of Darkness* model, the literary presentation of David and other characters in the book of Samuel is perfectly adequately supported by the evidence of archaeology, insofar as it is able to provide independent corroboration. Archaeology can therefore retreat into its traditional supporting role to await the outcome of the necessary literary investigation into the proposals made in this thesis.

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## 6.2 *Final-form rhetorical analysis*

A second arena for further research is within the field of newer literary criticism, and in particular the analysis of rhetorical structure in biblical books and smaller passages. One of my primary intentions in this thesis has been to bring a greater measure of objectivity to the exploration of so-called 'chiastic' structures in the Bible. In line with the suggestions of some other scholars, I have proposed retiring the imprecise and anachronistic term 'chiasmus' in favour of a clear distinction between odd-numbered 'concentrism' and even-numbered 'inverted parallelism', whether on a small or a large scale. To aid the process of regulating rhetorical analysis, I suggested a clear six-step procedure for identifying examples of concentrism, as well as seven cumulative criteria which all need to be met for a proposed concentric structure to prove credible. §5.1 above offers a model for applying the criteria to an existing concentric proposal, in hope that on the same basis

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<sup>585</sup> Further details can be found on their website: <[www.centuries.co.uk](http://www.centuries.co.uk)>. Cf. also James & van der Veen 2015.

other scholarly proposals about biblical books or passages might now be able to be verified suitably, or else acknowledged to be inexpertly composed or (more probably) simply in the eye of the beholder.

Conversely, I trust this study will inspire newer literary critics of the 'second wave' to search out historical contexts for their final-form appraisals, allowing diachronic investigation its proper (i.e. secondary) place in literary analysis. Equally, by prioritising actual texts for which we have manuscript evidence, 'first wave' historical critics can pursue their traditional interests with less need for speculative hypotheses. The above study of *Samuel* illustrated how source-critical interests can be indulged by analysing boundaries of rhetorical units (cf. §2.4.6) and even identifying on rhetorical-critical grounds an existing documentary source incorporated within the second edition of a book (§5.4; the book of Kings might also repay such analysis). Form-critical interests can be applied to the search for comparative genres of book length rather than just the smallest literary forms, and tradition-critical concern for possible social or geographical contexts in which composition took place can be applied to the whole document first, followed by earlier stages of the book if any have been discerned. Redaction-critical alertness to large-scale editorial messages also enables one to trace the final author's primary message through each portion of his composition, and to note the expert editorial/authorial transitions between episodes, the 'seams' where small changes may have been introduced in a second edition.

### 6.3 *The book of Samuel in its ancient literary context*

#### A) Textual criticism

To begin with the latest stages of the book of *Samuel*, much study still remains to be done comparing the various extant Hebrew manuscripts and versions in light of the evident literary structure of the book. The concentric patterns in *Samuel* are constructed primarily from whole episodes, but as noted in Chapters Three and Four above, many of these episodes have their own internal arrangement which dictates the interpretation of the episode, and thus contributes to the

macro-structure. Additions or subtractions made to the text by later copyists or translators, whether small or large, will therefore have a detrimental effect on the comprehension of the structure as a whole.

By way of example from the Septuagint tradition, at the level of a single verse, the exposition of 1Sam 13:1 above in §3.4 demonstrated its function as a distinct episode with regard to the rhetorical structure, paralleled with the end of Saul's reign (1Sam 31:1-7) to frame the Song of Saul's Kingdom. Its thought-provoking numbers for Saul's accessional age and reign length were each selected to make historical and theological comment on his reign, and have been preserved accurately in the Masoretic Text. The Septuagint, however, omits the verse entirely in an attempt to clarify the text, and in so doing removes a key structural element of the whole book. At the level of whole episodes, §3.5 showed how the story of David and Goliath (1Sam 17:1-54) relies on an internal concentric structure to emphasise the reward David would receive for his victory, which then closely parallels its opposite episode 22:6-19. The Septuagint version, however, lacks 17:12-31, presumably deleted in order to remove redundancy (e.g. 17:16, 23) and resolve apparent contradiction (17:12-23; cf. 16:21-22).<sup>586</sup> This has consequently destroyed the episode's neat concentric structure and discarded the author's admittedly counter-intuitive central point about rewards, which then upsets the primary message this pair of episodes was designed to contribute to the whole book.

These two examples and several others confirm the observations of others (e.g. Pisano 1984: 283-85) that the Septuagint translator or (more probably) his Hebrew *Vorlage* frequently shortened or lengthened his source text "to produce a smoother or more unified narrative", evidently failing to recognise the author's original purpose and arrangement.<sup>587</sup> Although this must not be used to justify disregarding the Septuagint as a potential witness to the original readings of words or verses,

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<sup>586</sup> For extended discussion of the textual situation, see Barthélemy *et al.* 1986; *pace* the views of Tov and Lust. Inevitably, the arguments come down to hypotheses about likely compositional intentions of an author/editor, for which the evidence of sophisticated literary structure might well turn out to be decisive.

<sup>587</sup> Of course, this refers to the Old Greek LXX, which is attested only for 1Sam 1–2Sam 10. Thereafter, 2Sam 11:2 – 1Kgs 2:11 reflects the Καίτε Recension, reproducing a Hebrew *Vorlage* of a proto-Masoretic type, and for this section the Antiochian/Lucianic LXX text-tradition often attests the Old Greek [for which see Fernández Marcos & Busto Saiz 1989; cf. Aejmelaeus 2007 [1992]: 125-26]. Where 4QSam<sup>a</sup> reflects the Old Greek LXX text-type, it is in fact mixed/independent, including for example 1Sam 17:41 and 18:4-5, unlike the LXX.

it does reinforce the importance of the less creative Masoretic tradition for determining the overall shape of the final form, even with books (like *Samuel*) said to be in a ‘poor state of preservation’.<sup>588</sup> Much work remains to be done comparing the Dead Sea Scrolls and versions with the text of *Samuel* at particular points, and the intricate arrangement of the book, sometimes even down to individual verses, provides a basic ‘original’ form to refine using textual criticism. Delimitation criticism would likewise benefit from comparison with the structures found here (cf. §2.4.4 (i)).

From an earlier stage than the versions, it would be important to consider the parallels between *Samuel* and other texts within the Hebrew Bible, for example Psalm 18 or 1Chronicles. So much has been written on the intertextuality between *Samuel* and 1Chronicles that it would be inappropriate to try to summarise it here. The findings of this thesis, though, clearly demonstrate that the author of *Samuel* was composing his material largely *de novo*, with no evidence of a prior source also known to the Chronicler.<sup>589</sup> Even so, the Chronicler’s history often proves useful for clarifying background details in *Samuel*, implying that he had access to other reliable early sources in addition to *Samuel*. Where he did copy material from *Samuel*, he was evidently not particularly aware of, or at least not interested in preserving, the structural arrangement and internal messages of his source (though see footnote 487).

#### B) *Samuel* among the Former Prophets

Moving further back in time to the canonical placement of *Samuel* before Kings, it is self-evident that the first two chapters of 1Kings are written either in the same socio-historical environment or with literary dependence upon the book of Samuel. For example, the audience is expected to know the identity of Adonijah, Joab, and Benaiah without being told, the claim of Bathsheba coheres well with *Samuel*,<sup>590</sup> and David’s commands to Solomon about Joab and Shimei are surprisingly consistent

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<sup>588</sup> For discussions of variant readings in *Samuel*, see McCarter 1980b, 1984; Barthélemy 1982: 137-328, Pisano 1984; Fincke 2001; Cross *et al.* 2005; Parry 2007; Ulrich 1978, 2007; and Hugo & Schenker (eds.) 2010.

<sup>589</sup> Pace Auld 1994: 34-36 (§2.6). Even so, it is possible that 1Chr 11:6 restores a verse from the original Song of the Ark which the second edition had deleted due to the author’s increasing antipathy towards Joab. Carr (2011) explores new directions for study of earlier forms of both; literary structure would inform this dialogue.

<sup>590</sup> Cf. footnote 442, and discussion in §4.2 episodes **5a** and **5b**.

with the messages conveyed about them in the structure of *Samuel* (cf. §4.5 introduction; footnote 452). Not only that, but the overall composition of the book of Kings, in its basic or earliest form, puts clear emphasis throughout on the piety and dynastic covenant of David, consistent with the presentation of David in *Samuel*.

In almost all recent scholarship on *Samuel*, the ‘Deuteronomistic History’ hypothesis is taken for granted, assuming the final form of *Samuel* to have been completed, along with Joshua and Judges, only at the same time as the book of Kings, which must itself be dated to the time of the Babylonian exile in light of 2Kings 25. Regardless of whether one accepts the historical-critical conclusions about composition that are suggested through analysis of the book’s rhetorical messages in §5.3, the unmistakable unity of the book and rhetorical independence from surrounding books demands that the compositional history of the Former Prophets be thoroughly reassessed. Rather than attributing these books in their final form to one or more exilic redactors, the logical alternative is that each book was a unique composition, either picking up the history of Israel from where an earlier book had left off (e.g. Kings), or else filling in the story of a period not yet covered by existing books (perhaps Judges?). It would be premature to hypothesise about the relative dating of the other books in the Former Prophets before careful rhetorical analysis has clarified the likely historical context for each composition (cf. for Judges, Amit 1999).

Furthermore, if each book is to be assessed first in its final form, one must also refrain from drawing premature conclusions about verses or passages often thought to show dependence on Deuteronomy. The inception of the ‘Deuteronomistic’ theological school in the seventh century BC is often taken to be an ‘assured result’ of modern scholarship. However, it is equally possible that there were many distinct theological traditions, perhaps with their own literature, coexisting in different geographical or socio-cultural environments at any particular time in Israel’s history,<sup>591</sup> such as ‘priestly’ traditions in the temple or among Levites, ‘wisdom’ traditions in the royal courts and the clans, perhaps a ‘Deuteronomy-style’ tradition in the cities of refuge or among juridical

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<sup>591</sup> Cf. Firth 2013: 52.

functionaries (cf. Deut 1:9-18), 'prophetic' traditions in 'companies of prophets' associated with high places perhaps (1Sam 10:5; 19:20), and probably many more. Assertions cannot be made about the existence or non-existence of an actual book of Deuteronomy at the time Joshua or Judges or *Samuel* was written, until Deuteronomy's final form has been subjected to careful rhetorical analysis and situated in its own proper historical setting (cf. Lundbom 2013). Even then, without clear evidence of citation, an author may simply have been familiar with ideas from Deuteronomy through oral transmission rather than having access to a written copy (cf. Deut 31:9-13, 19-22).

### C) Subdividing *Samuel*

Narrowing the focus from *Samuel's* literary unity to its constituent rhetorical units, much scholarship of *Samuel* assumes the presence of independent literary compositions, in line with Rost's theories. Even if both editions of the book can plausibly be attributed to a single author, the fact that the history contained in the book covers approximately 130 years, from Samuel's birth to David's old age, means that any author must have used sources for the events he did not witness himself. One cannot therefore rule out the possibility of oral sources as well as some written sources, such as the apparently contemporary Book of Yashar into which David's lament over Jonathan was written (2Sam 1:18). Hypotheses about the independence of earlier written sources must demonstrate that these units are fully comprehensible on their own, and are unlikely to have shared the same author and purpose as the rest of the book. Conversely, even if one is simply interested in individual episodes for focused character studies or sociological investigation of family or political dynamics, unless one recognises the author's primary reason for including these particular narratives, it is easy to draw entirely unwarranted conclusions. Purpose and context always shape expression, so contextualisation is not optional.

Further research might also be beneficial with regard to refining the literary patterns discerned in this thesis, considering the limitations of space for exegesis and verification. Scholars of classical, Shakespearean or modern literature know very well that the study of a literary work of art is never

definitive. That said, past history of biblical scholarship would caution us that refinement typically tends towards excess and distortion, multiplying sources or forms or redactional layers *ad libitum*.

D) Samuel and the Pentateuch

Beyond the more concrete question of literary units and distinct historical sources, an important area for further research is the conceptual influence on *Samuel* from authoritative earlier traditions, whether oral or written. A synthesis of the book's frequent explicit references to earlier times and events produces the following summary of Israel's early history: The former idolatrous days of being governed and delivered by judges from various tribes (2Sam 7:7, 10-11), culminating with Samuel (1Sam 7:15; 12:9-11), had begun once the Israelites had been brought up from Egypt by Moses and Aaron to be resettled in the land of the Amorites (1Sam 7:14; 8:8; 12:6, 8; 2Sam 7:6). That journey had involved interaction with both Amalekites and Kenites (1Sam 15:2, 6), and the establishment of a priestly clan officiating in a religious system centred around a tent (1Sam 2:27-30; 2Sam 7:6) and an ark which was associated with a covenant made by Israel's god who had the significant name YHWH (1Sam 4:3-6; 2Sam 6:2-3). The journey had followed a legendary time of terrifying divine punishment of Egypt and her gods, partly 'in the wilderness', in response to the Pharaoh's enslavement of Israelites (1Sam 2:27; 4:8; 6:6; 10:18; 2Sam 7:23). Before the Israelites had cried out for deliverance, though, a man called Jacob had gone into Egypt (1Sam 12:8; cf. "Rachel's tomb", 10:2), a man who had a personal connection with YHWH and whose name can be paralleled with 'Israel' in poetry (2Sam 23:1; cf. 1Sam 7:2-3; 2Sam 6:5; 16:3). Other ancestors of a significant number of Israelites were Judah (2Sam 2:4), Benjamin (2Sam 3:19), and also Joseph who was shared by more than one tribe (2Sam 19:20 [MT 21]). The covenant Joshua had made with the Gibeonites is also considered legally binding, though Joshua is not named (2Sam 21:2).

Alongside these explicit references, the exposition in Chapters Three and Four above frequently found it appropriate to reference traditions recorded in the Pentateuch and Joshua, not merely as incidental hints, but as important keys for interpreting the author's message. At the relevant points

above we noted possible or probable allusions to or assumed knowledge of narratives, poems and laws from the primeval history, Abraham, Joseph, Moses' childhood, the plagues, Red Sea and Song of Moses, Amalekite war, Ten Commandments, Book of the Covenant, tabernacle instructions, golden calf, laws of purity in Leviticus, censuses, seventy prophets, Balaam, laws of inheritance in Numbers, laws of murder and adultery in Deuteronomy, *Ha'azinu* (Deut 32), ambush of Ai, and Gibeonite covenant, among others. The whole presentation of the prophet Samuel seems to have been modelled deliberately on traditions about Moses, as a Levite whose mother gave him up, who delivered and interceded for Israel, led the prophets, and appointed a Spirit-filled successor. Even more significantly, the author of *Samuel* apparently knew complete accounts from the Pentateuch rather than just isolated traditions, illustrated most clearly in the episode about Saul sparing Agag (1Sam 15:1-35). The primary inspiration for this narrative is the story of the golden calf in Exodus 32, and Samuel's prophetic dealings with Saul follow practically the same sequence as those of Moses with Aaron (cf. §3.3 (13/13')). Considering the number of explicit references to Moses and Aaron elsewhere in *Samuel*, it would be hard to defend the view that Exodus 32 was composed to evoke 1Samuel 15; the opposite has far greater theological impact.

Clearly much more work remains to be done exploring the extent to which the Hexateuch forms a conceptual backdrop for both the author of *Samuel* and his intended audience. Of course, we must be aware of the possibility that they knew this wide variety of traditions without having personal access to texts recording them.<sup>592</sup> If our historical-critical conclusions about the date of composition of *Samuel* are accepted as plausible, this will have implications for the relative antiquity of these Hexateuchal traditions, whether written or oral, and would apply potentially to every major section and genre of the Pentateuch. Not only that, but the history of Israel that can be reconstructed from explicit statements in *Samuel* connects people and events from the patriarch(s) up to the monarchy in precisely the order found in the final form of the Torah and Former

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<sup>592</sup> Some do argue that the Pentateuchal legislation may itself be based to some extent on narrative topoi such as are found in *Samuel*, but passages such as 2Sam 12:6 and 9 assume existing judicial decrees.

Prophets.<sup>593</sup> Any excising of these various historical references from *Samuel* must be prompted by impartial rhetorical analysis of its final form rather than by *a priori* scholarly presuppositions about the late origins of certain traditions.

#### 6.4 *Rehabilitating the 'spiritual sense' of scripture*

A philosophical division between 'faith' and 'reason', established by Spinoza in the mid-seventeenth century, remains a fundamental feature of biblical criticism to the present. For example, John Barton's three-fold definition includes, alongside establishing the 'plain sense' of the biblical text from philology (microsemantics) and genre (macrosemantics), the need to be 'noncommittal' by 'bracketing out questions of truth'. To read a text appropriately one cannot be "constrained by prior convictions about the text's meaning, drawn from an interpretative tradition".<sup>594</sup> Such an approach commends itself not just to the independent western scholar standing in the liberating tradition of the Reformers, but equally to the traditional believer of Jewish or Christian background for whom these texts are authoritative 'scripture'. As Barton points out, "truth is open to all comers, not the preserve of those 'in the know'",<sup>595</sup> a common biblical affirmation (e.g. Ps 86:8-11; Isa 45:18-25, John 18:33-38, Acts 17:22-31, 1Pet 3:15). That said, 'interpretative traditions' are not limited to religious communities; the way academics read the text is shaped by how their teachers taught its basic semantic features. The challenge for every reader is to develop their personal acquaintance with the text independently, resisting stereotypes created by first impressions, and allowing it constantly to surprise its inquirer.

This text has outlived generation after generation of interpreters, none of whom were less 'rational' than modern biblical critics. Whereas the modern interpretative tradition relegates theological interpretation to the secondary stage of 'evaluation' rather than the primary task of

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<sup>593</sup> The only slight discrepancy might be 1Sam 12:8 about Moses and Aaron settling Israel "in this place"; this is clearly a highly condensed summary, but even so, it might well be referring to Num 32, 34–36 (i.e. Moses).

<sup>594</sup> Barton 2007a: 124.

<sup>595</sup> Barton 2007a: 175.

‘perception’,<sup>596</sup> the previous interpretative tradition I have called ‘scriptural’ frequently understood an author’s theological intentions to be an inherent part of the ‘plain sense’ of the text that must be ‘perceived’. The external reference of a metaphor can be said to be its true ‘literal’ meaning, as has been argued recently with regard to an original allegorical intent behind the Song of Songs,<sup>597</sup> and even ancient critics such as Didymus the Blind were concerned to establish rational logical approaches to the ‘spiritual sense’ of the text.<sup>598</sup> If one takes a truly diachronic approach with the literature of the Hebrew Bible, the intended theological/rhetorical significance of a particular narrative in one book can make features of that narrative become images or symbols taken up and developed by subsequent authors. An example might be the seven days of creation in Genesis 1:1–2:3 applied in a complex theological network of legal philosophy to both days and years of rest in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, but also developing in association with Exodus 16:4-30 a theological connection between Exodus and new creation that is expanded upon in diverse ways by many other authors in the Hebrew Bible.

Third wave literary analysis of final form rhetorical purpose will hopefully begin to set the relative dating of biblical books on a more empirical foundation in conversation with archaeology, but if and when it is possible to establish likely literary or conceptual dependence of one book upon another (Hays’ first criterion of Availability), one can then begin to undertake a more complete analysis of the book’s ‘plain sense’. Based on a plausible relative chronology, it should be possible to develop a careful, systematic approach to tracing patterns of images and symbolism from one book to another, comprehending the spiritual or theological dimension of an author’s intention in light of writings that appear to have influenced him.<sup>599</sup> Theological relations between historically situated compositions, determined inductively as far as possible, may gradually reveal a coherent interconnected network of spiritual meaning among some or all of these religious texts. This was

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<sup>596</sup> Barton 2007a: 158-67

<sup>597</sup> Kingsmill 2009. Cf. Barton 2007a: 96-99.

<sup>598</sup> Cf. Young 1990: 11.

<sup>599</sup> See, for example, Pusey (1860), as described by Seitz 2007: 100-102. Seitz’s own approach to the prophets is a valuable contribution to the discussion, though from an exclusively Christian position.

evidently assumed by various Jewish communities in the late Second Temple Period, not only among followers of Jesus (e.g. Luke 24:27, 44-47) but also in the *peshet* commentaries of Qumran sectarians,<sup>600</sup> and even in mainstream messianic interpretations of the scriptures (cf. John 7:25-52). It would be short-sighted to dismiss these rational interpretations of the plain spiritual sense as all equally misguided about the true nature of the biblical texts. Rather, we must find ways of subjecting their competing assessments to careful critical analysis, choosing not to impose on the texts our own theological traditions which will each be unavoidably anachronistic to some degree, shaped as they are by centuries of internal sectarian competition as well as assimilation to external philosophies.

A return to treating the biblical texts as ‘scripture’ does not mean a step backwards into pre-critical theological bickering and the oppressive authority of the magisterium. Rather it is an advance in biblical interpretation, taking full account of modern literary-critical insights and yet acknowledging that past scholars of scripture may have made genuine contributions to a fuller comprehension of the plain sense, the spiritual as literal. The book of Samuel is an outstanding example of how the author’s intention, expressed through his rhetorical structuring of ‘literal’ stories, can communicate a further layer of significance beyond the surface of the text – moral, emotional, philosophical or theological. This concept of communication and interpretation is epitomised by the author’s first proper scene in the whole book: Hannah is forming words with her mouth, but without the added variation and articulation of her voice, her well-meaning audience is prone to entirely wrong interpretations. Only by perceiving the spiritual dimension of the author’s intention can we hope to interpret him correctly,<sup>601</sup> and how we then choose to respond is a matter for every individual’s conscience.

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<sup>600</sup> For which see Patrick 2010: 60-62.

<sup>601</sup> Cf. Long 1999: 587-89; acknowledging “truth claims” is logically prior to assessing their “truth value”.

## Appendix – Rhetorical Maps

This appendix is a visual re-presentation of information already contained within the text of the thesis above, especially chapters three and four. Graphical guides to find one's way around rhetorical structures (hence the term 'maps') often make it easier to take in the patterns of parallelism at a single glance.

The maps included below are a representative selection of the concentricisms in *Samuel*, and have been arranged in size order from smallest to largest, regardless of genre. Beyond the level of a paragraph or small episode it usually becomes unmanageable to set out the actual words graphically on a page, and rhetorical units must be summarised by means of headings. Even so, it must be reiterated that all headings are provisional, and are simply signposts for the passages indicated in parentheses; texts, not headings, are the units being paralleled.

### (1) Short sentences

*1Samuel 2:2*

- a There is no holy one like YHWH
- b indeed, there is no-one besides You
- a' and there is no rock like our God.

*2Samuel 24:17*

- a Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong
- b but these sheep, what have they done?
- a' Please let Your hand be against me, and against my father's house.

*1Samuel 3:17*<sup>602</sup>

- a What is the word He spoke to you?
- b Please do not hide it from me.
  - c So may He do to you
  - d God
  - c' and so may He continue
- b' if you hide from me anything
- a' of all the word that He spoke to you.

### (2) Small verbal episodes or speeches

*2Samuel 6:20-23*<sup>603</sup>

- a And Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said,
  - b "How honourable today was the king of Israel
    - c who exposed himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants
    - d like the shameless uncovering (הגלות נגלות) of one of the base fellows."
    - e And David said to Michal, "It was before YHWH
      - f who chose me above your father and above all his house
      - g to appoint me ruler
      - f' over the people of YHWH, over Israel
      - e' so I will dance before YHWH
      - d' and I will be more lightly esteemed (נקלתי) than this
      - c' and I will be humble in my eyes, but (not) with the handmaids of whom you spoke,
      - b' with them I will be honoured."
- a' And Michal daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

<sup>602</sup> Elaborated somewhat further than Klaus (1999) 75-78.

<sup>603</sup> Adjusted slightly from Klaus (1999) 152-68.

2Samuel 17:8-13<sup>604</sup>

- z And Hushai said to Absalom, “Not good is the counsel that Ahithophel has counselled this time.”
- a And Hushai said, “You yourself know your father and his men that they are warriors and they are bitter of soul like a bear bereaved in the countryside
- b and your father is a man of war and will not spend the night with the people; behold, now he is hid in one of the pits or in *one of the places*
- c and he will be like one who falls upon them in the first attack
- b’ and the hearer will hear and say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.’
- a’ And he, even a valiant one whose heart is like the heart of a lion, he will utterly melt. For all Israel knows that your father is a warrior, and valiant ones are those with him.
- z\* Therefore I counsel,
- A let all Israel be surely gathered (רָאִי רָאִה) to you from Dan to Beersheba like the sand that is by the sea in abundance
- B and let your face go into battle and we will come to him in *one of the places* where he can be found
- C and we ourselves will fall upon him like the dew falls upon the ground
- B’ and there shall not remain of him or of all the men with him even one.
- A’ And if to a city he withdraws (רָאִי) then all Israel shall bring to that city ropes and we shall drag it into the ravine, until there will not be found there even one pebble.”
- z’ And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “Good is the counsel of Hushai the Arkite, more than the counsel of Ahithophel.”

### (3) Small narrative episodes

1Samuel 23:14-18

- [ z And David dwelt in the wilderness in the strongholds ] (*intro to 23:14–25:1; cf. 22:4-5*)<sup>605</sup>
- a and he dwelt in the hill-country in the wilderness of Ziph
- b and Saul sought him every day
- c but God did not deliver him into his hands
- b’ and David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life
- a’ and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in Horesh.
- A And Jonathan son of Saul arose and went to David in Horesh
- B And he strengthened his hand in God.
- C And he said to him, “Do not be afraid, for the hand of my father Saul will not find you
- D and you yourself will reign over Israel and I myself will be second to you
- C’ and also my father Saul knows this.”
- B’ And the two of them made a covenant before YHWH.
- A’ And David dwelt in Horesh and Jonathan went to his house.

### (4) Lists

2Samuel 8:15-18

And David reigned over all Israel.

- a And David was a worker of justice and righteousness for all his people
- b and Joab son of Zeruiah [was] over the army
- c and Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud [was] recorder
- d and Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar [were] priests
- c’ and Seraiah [was] scribe
- b’ and Benaiah son of Jehoiada [was with] the Kerethites and the Pelethites
- a’ and the sons of David were priests.

<sup>604</sup> Cf., differing slightly, Klaus (1999) 194-210; Bar-Efrat (1980) 170-72. For נָפַל בַּיָּד (line c), cf. Isa 9:8 [מַט 7].

<sup>605</sup> The double structure shows how Jonathan’s encouragement affected David’s whole time in the wilderness.

**(5) Poems (songs / laments / oracles)**

*1Samuel 2:1-10*<sup>606</sup>

- a** My heart exults in YHWH; my horn is exalted in YHWH.
- b** My mouth is enlarged against my enemies, for I rejoice in Your salvation.
- c** There is no holy one like YHWH; indeed, there is no-one besides You; and there is no rock like our God.
- d** Stop talking talkatively with preening pride, arrogance going out from your mouth; for YHWH is a God of knowledge, and deeds are not esteemed.
- e** The bows of the warriors are broken; but the feeble gird on strength. the sated, for bread hire themselves out; but the hungry don't any more.
- f** Even the barren gives birth to seven; but she of many sons languishes.
- e'** YHWH deadens and enlivens; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. YHWH impoverishes and enriches; He abases, even exalts.
- d'** He lifts from the dust the poor, from the rubbish-dump He raises the needy, to cause them to sit with nobles, and inherit a throne of glory.
- c'** For to YHWH belong the pillars of the earth; and He set upon them the world; the feet of His pious one(s) He protects.
- b'** But the wicked in darkness will be silenced, for not by strength shall man prevail; YHWH, His adversaries will be shattered, against them in the heavens He will thunder.
- a'** YHWH will judge the ends of the earth; and He will give power to His king; and He will raise the horn of His anointed one.

*2Samuel 1:19-27*

- a** The gazelle, O Israel, upon your high places is slain; how the mighty have fallen.
- b** Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.
- c** O mountains of Gilboa, let not dew nor rain be upon you, nor fields of offerings, for there the shield of mighty ones was rejected, the shield of Saul not anointed with oil.
- d** From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the **bow** of Jonathan did not turn its back, and the sword of Saul did not return empty.
- c'** Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life, and in their death not parted. They were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions.
- b'** Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet with luxury, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.
- a'** How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle. Jonathan upon your high places is slain.

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**e** I grieve over you, my brother Jonathan; you were so delightful to me.  
Your love to me was wonderful, more than the love of women.

- a/d** How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished.

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<sup>606</sup> The summary given below in section 10 expands the inversion by separating **e/e'** into two couplets each.

2Samuel 23:1b-7

- x** The oracle of David son of Jesse,  
the oracle of the man raised on high,  
the anointed of the God of Jacob  
and the sweet psalmist of Israel:
- y** The Spirit of YHWH spoke by me,  
and His word was on my tongue;  
the God of Israel said,  
the Rock of Israel spoke concerning me:
- a** He who rules over men justly, who rules in the fear of God,  
and is as the light of the morning at sunrise, a morning without clouds,  
through sunshine and through rain, vegetation from the earth.
- b** Is not my house thus with God?
- c** For an eternal covenant he has granted me,  
**d** arrayed in every detail and secured,  
**c'** for all my salvation and all [my/His?] desire.
- b'** Will He not cause it to flourish?
- a'** But the worthless like thorns shall be all chased away, for one will not take them in the hand,  
and a man who would touch them will be equipped with the iron and shaft of a spear,  
and with fire they will be completely burned on the spot.
- } [poetic title]<sup>607</sup>
- } [David's response]

**(6) Larger narrative episodes**

1Samuel 17:1-54

- a** location of Philistine and Israelite camps relative to each other (1-3)
- b** introducing both champions, Goliath (4b-11) and David (12-15), as contest begins (4-16)
- c** father Jesse sends David with provisions to the battle, Israelite fear (17-24)
- d** reward for victory spoken three times,<sup>608</sup> contempt for each champion (25-30)
- c'** fearlessness, (father-in-law?) Saul sends David with armour to the front line (31-39)
- b'** two champions meet, declare intent, and do battle to the death (40-50)
- a'** Israelites rout Philistines and plunder their camp (51-54)

2Samuel 13:1-22

- a** Absalom's sister Tamar is beautiful, Jonadab counsels Amnon, David concerned for Amnon (1-7)
- b** Tamar arrives, cooks and dishes out cakes in Absalom's sight (8-9)
- c** Amnon asks Tamar to come to him in the inner room (10)
- d** Amnon tells Tamar to lie with him, but Tamar protests (11-13)
- e** Amnon rapes Tamar, and his love for her turns to hate (14-15a)
- d'** Amnon tells Tamar to leave, but Tamar protests (15b-16)
- c'** Amnon sends Tamar away from him, locking the door behind her (17-18)<sup>609</sup>
- b'** Tamar puts ashes on her head, tears her garment, and departs weeping (19)
- a'** Absalom counsels Tamar, Absalom's sister Tamar is desolate, David angry with Amnon (20-22)

<sup>607</sup> Probably deliberately modelled on Balaam's prophetic oracles about Israel's permanent settlement and victorious king in Numbers 24:2-9 and 24:15-19 respectively (cf. 2Sam 7:10-13; 23:5d).

<sup>608</sup> In the exposition above (§3.5) we see how this parallels the emphasis on reward in 1Sam 22:6-19.

<sup>609</sup> It became necessary to draw attention to Tamar's garment of virginity only after that status had been stolen from her, but this detail would distract from the events of the story if it were mentioned before Tamar's own attention had turned to her appearance when she realised she would have to leave Amnon's house. Thus the parenthesis is not out of place, though the tearing of the garment happens subsequently in verse 19.

*2Samuel 24:1-25*

- a YHWH's anger burns against Israel, inciting David to take a census (1)
- b detailed account of the administration of the census by Joab despite his objection (2-9)
- c David acknowledges his sin and responds humbly to a message through Gad (10-14)
  - d YHWH's three-day pestilence on all the people of Israel (15; cf. c [13] & b [6-7])
  - e destroying angel stretches out his hand towards Jerusalem (16a)
  - f "YHWH relented from the calamity." (16b)
  - e' destroying angel told, "It is enough! Now relax your hand!" (16c)
  - d' angel of YHWH by Araunah's threshing floor (16d; cf. c' [18] & b' [21])
- c' David acknowledges his sin and responds humbly to a message through Gad (17-19)
- b' detailed account of the purchase of the altar from Araunah despite his objection (20-24)
- a' YHWH is moved by prayer for Israel, accepting David's offerings on the altar (25)

**(7) Clusters of narrative episodes**

*2Samuel 15:17-16:14*

- a David's flight begins at the outermost edge of Jerusalem, the 'last house' (15:17)
- b David meets general Ittai whom he urges not to accompany him, to no avail (15:18-23)
- c David asks Zadok to return the ark to Jerusalem with Abiathar, aware that perhaps YHWH has no delight in him (15:24-29)
  - d "as David went up the ascent of Olives" he hears of Ahithophel's treason and prays immediately against his counsel (15:30-31; cf. 16:23)
  - e "as David was coming to the summit, where God was worshipped", David meets his friend Hushai, whom he sends back to foil Ahithophel's counsel (15:32-37)
  - d' "when David had passed a little beyond the summit" he meets Ziba and hears of Mephibosheth's treason, immediately confiscating his property (16:1-4)
- c' David accepts curses and stones from Shimei at Bahurim, as possible punishment from YHWH (16:5-8)
- b' David commands general Abishai to permit Shimei to accompany him (16:9-13)
- a' the king and his retinue arrive and are refreshed 'there' [the fords of the Jordan] (16:14)

*2Samuel 19:9-43 [MT 10-44]*

- a Israel (9-10) and then Judah (11-14) decide to reinstate David as king; David returns from Mahanaim as far as the eastern bank of the Jordan, with Judah opposite at Gilgal (9-15)
- b Shimei brings David's household across the Jordan accompanied by Ziba (who had provided for David), and David refuses to punish Shimei despite Abishai's urging (16-23)
- c Mephibosheth meets David as he returns in peace [to Jerusalem] (24)
  - d David questions Mephibosheth about his absence (25)
  - e Mephibosheth appeals to his lameness (26)
    - f Mephibosheth dismisses Ziba's accusation as slander (27a)
    - g Mephibosheth equates David with the (wise) angel of God (27b) <sup>610</sup>
    - f' Mephibosheth submits himself to David's judgement (27c)
  - e' Mephibosheth appeals to David's favour purely for his father's sake (28)
  - d' David declares his decision about Mephibosheth's property (29)
- c' Mephibosheth is content that David has returned in peace to his house (30)
- b' Barzillai refuses to be rewarded in Jerusalem despite David's urging, and Chimham (whose father had provided for David) crosses the Jordan with David and all the people (31-39)
- a' David arrives at Gilgal, where Israel and Judah dispute with each other about reinstating the king, Israel reminding Judah that they made their decision first (40-43)

<sup>610</sup> Thus the focus is on how David himself responds to being reinstated as king; his mercy for Mephibosheth despite suspected treason is meant to serve as a plea that the angel of God show him similar mercy (cf. 24:14).

## (8) Complete narratives contained within book-length structures

### The Song of Uriah (2Samuel 10:1–12:31)

- 1 Introduction to Ammonite war, including Joab's defeat of the Arameans (10:1-19)
- 2 Bathsheba the wife of Uriah conceives a child with David (11:1-5)
- 3 Messengers report about the war and bring bad news about Uriah's death (11:6-25)
- 4 Bathsheba mourns for her dead husband (11:26-27)
- 5 Nathan arrives and speaks a parable to David (12:1-4)
- 6 David responds with anger to Nathan's words (12:5-6)
- 7 Nathan prophesies YHWH's twofold **Revenge** on David: **Sword and Wives** (12:7-12)
- 6' David responds with contrition to Nathan's words (12:13a)
- 5' Nathan speaks of immediate consequences and departs (12:13b-15a)
- 4' David fasts for his dying son (12:15b-17)
- 3' Servants hesitate to bring bad news about David's son's death (12:18-23)
- 2' Bathsheba the wife of David bears a son to David (12:24-25)
- 1' Conclusion to Ammonite war (12:26-31)

### The Song of the Ammonite War (2Samuel 10:1-19; 12:26-31)

- a David's diplomatic humiliation by Hanun, king of Ammon (10:1-5)
- b Arameans form a military alliance with the Ammonites, David's response (10:6-8)
- c Joab's assessment of the battlefield and deployment of troops (10:9-10)
- d Joab's instructions and pious encouragement of Abishai (10:11-12)
- c' Joab's successful battle and return from the battlefield (10:13-14)
- b' David defeats Aramean allies, their unwillingness to help Ammon again (10:15-19)
- a' David's official subjugation and humiliation of the king of Ammon (12:26-31)

### The Song of Absalom (2Samuel 13:1–20:22)

- 0 Absalom's beautiful sister Tamar violated by Amnon (13:1-22)
  - 1 Absalom takes revenge on Amnon after two full years, and flees from David (13:23-36)
  - 2 Joab aided by a wise woman of Tekoa after Absalom is gone three years (13:37–14:24)
- 0\* Absalom's beauty, three sons, and daughter Tamar (14:25-27)
  - 1\* Absalom takes revenge on Joab after two full years, and returns to David (14:28-33)
- 4 Absalom steals the hearts of Israel, trumpet proclaims Absalom as king (15:1-12)
- 3 David abandons Jerusalem, leaving only his concubines (15:13-16)
- 5 David's flight from Jerusalem, interacting with many on the way (15:17–16:14)
  - 6 Absalom and Ahithophel enter Jerusalem (16:15)
  - 7 Hushai greets Absalom (16:16-19)
  - 8 Ahithophel advises Absalom (16:20-21)
  - [3] 9 Absalom takes David's wives, Ahithophel's 'prophecy' (16:22-23)
  - 8' Ahithophel advises Absalom (17:1-4)
  - 7' Hushai advises Absalom (17:5-14)
  - 6' [Jonathan, Ahimaaz,] Absalom (not Ahithophel) crosses the Jordan (17:15-24)
  - 6 [Amasa, Barzillai,] David and Israel encamped across the Jordan (17:24-29)
    - 7 David sends out army, speaking of Absalom in the gate (18:1-5)
    - 8 Unpaid man tells Joab about Absalom alive in the forest (18:6-14)
    - [4] 9 Absalom's death and burial, trumpet, Israel flees (18:15-18)
    - 8' Unpaid man tells David about victory over Absalom (18:19-32)
    - 7' David mourns Absalom over the gate, welcomes army (18:33–19:8c .)
    - 6' Israel dispersed, while David is still in Mahanaim (19:8d) [MT 19:1-9c]
  - 5' David's return across the Jordan, interacting with many on the way (19:9-43)
  - 4' Sheba draws Israel after himself, trumpet rejects David as king (20:1-2)
  - 0' 3' David returns to Jerusalem and isolates his concubines (20:3)
  - 2'\* David's generals go out with the army to pursue Sheba (20:4-7)
  - 1' Joab takes revenge on Amasa (20:8-13)
  - 2' Joab defeats Sheba, aided by a wise woman of Abel, returns to David (20:14-22)

### The Song of Absalom (simplified)

- R Absalom's revenge, Joab assisted by a wise woman (13:1–14:33)
  - (S) Absalom's mutiny against David (15:1-12)
  - (W) David leaves his concubines (15:13-16)
    - T David's (*concentric*) flight over the Mount of Olives (15:17–16:14)
    - W Absalom sleeps with David's concubines (16:15–17:14, 23)
    - t messengers run from Absalom to David (17:15-22, 25, 27-29)
    - S Joab kills David's son Absalom (17:24, 26; 18:1–19:10 [MT 19:11])
    - T' David's (*concentric*) return across the ford of Jordan (19:11-43)
  - (S') Sheba's mutiny against David (20:1-2)
  - (W') David isolates his concubines (20:3)
- R' Joab's revenge, Joab assisted by a wise woman (20:4-22)

[T/t = transition]

## (9) Book-length structures

### *The Song of the Ark* (1Samuel 4:1 – 2Samuel 6:23)

- 1 Ark of the covenant of YHWH brought out of Shiloh with shouting, [Pinhas's contrary wife] (4:1-22)
- 2 Judgement on cities who dishonour the ark, its travels on a cart, 'until this day' (5:1-6:18)
- 3 Ark brought into the house of Abinadab on the hill, son of his to keep it (6:19-7:1)
- 4 Philistines hear, gather for war, Samuel defeats them by a voice from YHWH (7:2-13)
- 5 Cities restored to Israel, Samuel judges from house in Ramah, [two sons] (7:14-8:3)
- 6 Samuel and then all Israel acknowledge that YHWH has chosen Saul as king (8:4-10:25)
- 7 Samuel speaks to Israel after Saul's vindication at Jabesh-Gilead (10:26-12:25)

- a Israel rejects Samuel as judge, despite being told the practices of a king (8:4-22)
- b Saul pays to see Samuel, who welcomes him, with final words at the city edge (9:1-10:16)
- a\* Kingship of Saul the Benjamite is demonstrated conclusively by drawing lots (10:17-25)

- i Saul's honour is restored by delivering Jabesh-Gilead (10:26-11:15)
- ii Israel testifies that Samuel is blameless before YHWH and His anointed (12:1-5)
- iii Samuel reminds the people of the deeds of their king YHWH for them (12:6-15)
- iv YHWH responds to Samuel to confirm Samuel's authority (12:16-19)
- v Samuel assures the people of his ongoing goodwill towards them (12:20-25)

### 8 Summary at the start of Saul's reign (13:1)

- 9 Saul's seventh day, Hebrews leave, Saul's foolish sacrifices + Samuel's judgement (13:2-15)
- 10 Jonathan and armour bearer take a risk, smite enemies in three groups (13:16-14:23)
- 11 Saul curses his son Jonathan, unwilling to make atonement for his sin (14:24-46)
- 12 Saul's family, in the context of delivering Israel from its plunderers (14:47-52)
- 13 Saul preserves enemy's life, tears Samuel's robe, Samuel's death mentioned (15:1-35)

### 14 Samuel anoints David king in secret (16:1-13)

- 15 David delivers Saul from a terrorising spirit using a harp (16:14-23)
- 16 Saul uses the shepherd David to kill the giant Goliath (17:1-54)
- 17 David's parents and military career prosper (17:55-18:5)
- 18 David more kingly than Saul according to the women (18:6-9)
- 19 David's abstinence leads to a Philistine death mission from Saul (18:10-30)

- 20 Jonathan defends David, hiding him in the field, [Michal's slander] (19:1-17)

### 21 Spirit of God saves David from Saul through Samuel's prophesying (19:18-24)

- 20' Jonathan defends David, hiding him in the field (20:1-42)

### 19' David survives a death mission from Saul (to Qe'ilah) by his abstinence (21:1-9 [מט 2-10])

- 18' David more kingly than Saul according to Philistines (21:10-15 [מט 11-16])

### 17' David's new 'military' career, and parents exiled (22:1-5)

- 16' Saul uses the shepherd Doeg to kill the priest Ahimelech (22:6-19)

### 15' Abiathar delivers David from a terrorising king using an ephod (22:20-23:13)

- 14' Jonathan acknowledges David's succession in secret (23:14-18)

### 13' David preserves enemy's life, cuts Saul's robe, Samuel's death (23:19-25:1)

- 12' David's family grows through delivering Nabal from plunderers (25:2-44)

### 11' Saul blesses his 'son' David, having not tried to atone for any sin by David (26:1-25)

- 10' David and men risk going to Achish, smite enemies in three groups (27:1-12)

### 9' Saul's necromancy + Samuel's judgement, Hebrews leave, David's 7th day (28:1-30:31)

- 8' Report of the death of Saul and his sons (31:1-7)

### 7' David speaks to Israel after Saul's vindication by Jabesh-Gilead (1S 31:8 – 2S 2:7)

- 6' Abner and then all Israel acknowledge that YHWH has chosen David as king (2:8-5:5)

### 5' Jerusalem captured, David reigns from house in Jerusalem, [eleven sons] (5:6-16)

- 4' Philistines hear, gather for war, David defeats them by a voice from YHWH (5:17-25)

### 3' Ark brought from the house of Abinadab on the hill, sons of his to guide it (6:1-4)

- 2' Judgement on Uzzah who dishonours the ark as it travels on a cart, 'until this day' (6:3-11)

### 1' Ark of God, YHWH, brought into the city of David with shouting, [David's contrary wife] (6:12-23)

- i' Saul's honour is restored by the men of Jabesh-Gilead (31:8-13)
- ii' Amalekite testifies he is to blame (not David) for killing YHWH's anointed (1:1-16)
- iii' David reminds Judah of the deeds of Saul and Jonathan for them (1:17-27)
- iv' YHWH responds to David to confirm David's authority (2:1-4)
- v' David assures Jabesh Gilead of his ongoing goodwill towards them (2:5-7)

- a' Israel rejects David as king, despite evidence of the strength of David's house (2:8-3:6)
- b' Abner pays to see David, who welcomes him, with a final message at the gate (3:7-39)
- a\* Benjamites demonstrate the kingship of David conclusively by killing his only rival (4:1-5:5)

### *The Song of Saul's Kingdom*

### *The Song of David's Testing*

## (10) Overall arrangement of 1-2 Samuel (simplified)

### *The Song of Eli* (1Samuel 1:1 – 8:3; introduction to Samuel)

- 1 Elkanah in Ramah, mention of Hophni and Pinhas (1:1-3)
- 2 Prayer of Hannah and YHWH's response, named Samuel (1:3-20)
- 3 (Dis)honouring of YHWH with offerings, **Hannah's Song** reacting to lending Samuel (1:21–2:21a) →
- 4 Eli's sons do not listen to his warning when their sins are reported (2:21b-26)
- 5 YHWH's judgement on Eli and his house through the man of God (2:27-36)
- 4' Samuel listens to [Eli's?] YHWH's warning and reports it to Eli (3:1–4:1a)
- 3' Prophesied reactions, Philistines give offerings, Israelites dishonour the ark (4:1b–7:1) [1–3 in Song of Ark]
- 2' Prayer of Samuel and YHWH's response, named Ebenezer (7:2-16) [4 (approx) in Song of Ark]
- 1' Samuel in Ramah, mention of Samuel's unfaithful sons (7:15–8:3) [5 (approx) in Song of Ark]

### *Hannah's Song* (1Samuel 2:1-10)

- a my horn (1b-c)
- b my enemies (1d-e)
- c YHWH our rock (2)
- d arrogant humbled (3)
- e power reversal (4)
- f hunger reversal (5a-b)
- g childlessness reversal (5c-d)
- f' death reversal (6)
- e' wealth reversal (7)
- d' poor exalted (8a-d)
- c' YHWH gives stability (8e-9a)
- b' YHWH's enemies (9b–10b)
- a' his horn (10c-e)

### *The Song of the Ark* (1Samuel 4:1 – 2Samuel 6:23) [simplified]

- A Ark exiled and dishonoured, Samuel defeats Philistines and judges in Ramah (1Sam 4–7) [episodes 1–5]
- B Samuel rejected, Saul acknowledged by Samuel, Saul's kingdom established (8–12) [6–7]
- C First week of Saul's reign, curse of Jonathan, family, sparing of Agag (13–15) [8–13]
- D David anointed, saves with a harp, kills Goliath for Saul, who is maddened by song (16–18:12) [14–18]
- E David's purity tested with a Philistine trap, defended by Jonathan (18:10–19:17) [19–20]
- F Spirit of God humiliates Saul before Samuel to protect David (19:18-24) [21]
- E' David defended by Jonathan, escapes trap by his purity (20–21:9 [מט 21:10]) [20'–19']
- D' David acts mad, priests killed for Saul, David saved by ephod, affirmed (21:10–23:18) [18'–14']
- C' David's sparing of Saul, family, blessing by Saul, last week of Saul's reign (23:19–31:7) [13'–8']
- B' Saul's kingdom **commemorated**, David acknowledged by Abner, David accepted (31:8–2Sam 5:3) [7'–6']
- A' David rules in Jerusalem and defeats Philistines, ark dishonoured and yet brought in (5:4–6:23) [5'–1']

### *"A Bow" [David's lament over Saul & Jonathan]* (2Samuel 1:19-27)

- a 'gazelle' slain on high places + *mighty fallen* (19)
- b daughters of Philistines rejoice (20)
- c Mount Gilboa, shield not enough (21)
- d **weapons (bow & sword)** of Jonathan and Saul (22)
- c' death in same place, speed & strength not enough (23)
- b' daughters of Israel weep (24)
- a' *mighty fallen* + Jonathan slain on high places (25)
- e Jonathan's love for David (26)
- a\*/d\* *mighty fallen, weapons* perished (27)

### *The Song of the Temple* (2Samuel 7:1 – 24:25) [simplified]

- 1 Nathan's temple prophecy in response to David's unauthorised building initiative (7:1-29)
- 2 David himself smites the Philistines and others with the help of YHWH (8:1-14)
- 3 David's chief ministers (8:15-18)
- 4 Mephibosheth honoured for the sake of Jonathan (9:1-13)
- 5a **The Song of Uriah** = David's unmitigated sins (10:1–12:31)
- 5b **The Song of Absalom** = YHWH's unmitigated revenge (13:1–20:22)
- 3' David's chief ministers (20:23-26) [DELIBERATELY DISPLACED FROM AFTER 21:14]
- 4' Mephibosheth spared death for Jonathan's sake (21:1-14)
- 2' David smites the Philistines and others with the help of his mighty men (21:15-22 [+ insertions] 23:8-39)
- 1' Gad's altar prophecy in response to David's unauthorised census initiative (24:1-25)

### *The Song of David's Prayer* (2Samuel 20:23–24:25; conclusion to Samuel)

- 2 List of David's chief ministers (20:23-26) [DELIBERATELY DISPLACED FROM AFTER 21:14] [3' in Song of Temple]
- 1 Atonement made through David's prayer after three-year famine punishing Saul's sin (21:1-14) [4' in Song of Temple]
- 3 Exploits by David and four mighty men [=5] against the four sons of Goliath (21:15-22) [2'a in Song of Temple]
- 4 **David's Song** after salvation from the hand of his enemies and of Saul (22:1-51) →
- 5 [?] "Now these are the last words of David." (23:1a)
- 4' David's word by the Spirit of YHWH about righteous and wicked rule (23:1b-7)
- 3' Exploits by five leaders of David's mighty men – the Three, Abishai, Benaiah (23:8-23) [2'b in Song of Temple]
- 2' List of David's thirty mighty men, plus Asahel (23:24-39) [2'c in Song of Temple]
- 1' Atonement made through David's prayer after three-day plague punishing David's sin (24:1-25) [1' in Song of Temple]

### *David's Song* (2Samuel 22:1–51)

- Intro:* David's words to YHWH after deliverance from enemies and from Saul (1)
- a Praise to YHWH my rock (2-4)
  - b God hears me in my distress (5-7)
  - c YHWH as a victorious warrior (8-16)
  - d YHWH puts me in a broad place (17-20)
  - e My ways have been blameless (21-27)
  - f YHWH is my lamp (28-30)
  - e' God's way is blameless – a rock (31-33)
  - d' God enlarges my steps (34-37)
  - c' David as a victorious warrior (38-43)
  - b' Trembling foreigners hear me and obey (44-46)
  - a' Praise to YHWH my rock (47-50)
- Concl:* A 'tower of salvation' of his king, who will be faithful to David & seed (51)

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