

1 Introduction



CANONICAL ROLE

The Book of Samuel is the third book in the Former Prophets (Hebrew *Nēbī'im Rī'shōnīm*) of the Tanak, the Jewish form of the Bible, following Joshua and Judges and preceding Kings. According to the Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 14b–15a, it is written by the prophet Samuel. The Former Prophets recount the history of Israel from the time of Joshua and the conquest of the land of Canaan in the Book of Joshua; the period of the Judges in the Book of Judges; the formation of the Israelite monarchy in Samuel; and the period of the Kings of Israel and Judah from the time of David through the Babylonian Exile in Kings, when King Jehoiachin of Judah was released from confinement by King Evil Merodach (Amel Marduk), the son of Nebuchadnezzar, of Babylon. The aim of the Former Prophets is to explain how YHWH granted the land of Canaan to Israel, but Israel was ultimately exiled from the land due to its alleged failure to observe the commandments of YHWH.¹ The Latter Prophets likewise envision a return to the land of Israel and the restoration of the Jerusalem Temple.

First–Second Samuel are the fourth and fifth books of the Historical Books of the Christian Old Testament, following Joshua, Judges, and Ruth,

¹ For discussion of the Former Prophets, often identified diachronically as the Deuteronomistic History in contemporary scholarship, see Marvin A. Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 3–177; see also Richard D. Nelson, *The Historical Books* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998); Antony F. Campbell, SJ, *The Historical Books: An Introduction* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000); and Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction* (London and New York: T and T Clark, 2007).

and preceding 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit (in Roman Catholic Bibles), Judith (in Roman Catholic Bibles), and Esther. First–Second Samuel again recounts the origins of the Israelite monarchy following the periods of the conquest of Canaan (Joshua) and the period of the Judges (Judges and Ruth), and prior to the subsequent history of Israel and Judah as recounted in 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, and Esther through the Persian period. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles read 1–2 Maccabees as part of the Historical Books, extending the history into the Hellenistic period immediately preceding the time of Jesus, but 1–2 Maccabees are generally read as prophetic books following the Additions to Daniel in the Protestant Apocrypha because they anticipate further prophets from G-d. Insofar as the Prophets are read as the fourth and concluding segment of the Old Testament, the Christian Bible is organized to emphasize that the New Testament completes and fulfills the Old Testament in Jesus Christ. Consequently, the formation of the monarchy in 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Chronicles points to the origins of the House of David, of which Jesus is considered to be a descendant.

TEXTUAL VERSIONS

Samuel appears in a variety of textual versions, including the Masoretic Hebrew Text, the various forms of the Septuagint Greek texts, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, the Aramaic Targum Jonathan, the Coptic versions, the Ethiopian (Ge'ez) Bible, and many others. The Scrolls from the Judean Wilderness, also known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, include three major textual witnesses, namely, 4QSamuel^a, 4QSamuel^b, and 4QSamuel^c, and the text quoted by Josephus appears to have major affinities with the Old Latin version that preceded the Vulgate.²

Only the Hebrew Masoretic Text functions as sacred scripture in Judaism, and the Targums function as important witnesses to the interpretation of the Bible together with the rest of the Rabbinic literature. Some versions, such as the Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and possibly the Peshitta, were originally written by Jews, but they are not considered as authoritative in Judaism.

All of the above-mentioned versions of the Bible in Christianity are considered as witnesses to sacred scripture, which resides with G-d.

² Eugene Charles Ulrich, Jr., *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus* (HSM 19; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978).

Consequently, interpreters frequently emend the biblical text, based on the versions, in an effort to reconstruct the presumed original text of the Bible. Such emendations inform Christian translations of the Bible, such as the New Revised Standard Version, which appears in the New Cambridge Bible Commentary.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the various textual versions, particularly the Greek Septuagint, indicate that there is a lengthy history of development of the biblical text. The earliest known manuscripts of the Masoretic Text appear in the Cairo Codex of the Prophets (896 CE or later), the Aleppo Codex of the Bible (920 CE), and the St. Petersburg or Leningrad Codex of the Bible (1008 or 1009 CE). No earlier manuscripts are available, apparently because worn-out manuscripts are buried in Judaism. Controversy between Rabbinic Jews and Karaite Jews, on the one hand, and polemics against Judaism by Muslim and Christian scholars, on the other hand, concerning the true reading of the Jewish Bible during the seventh and eighth centuries CE required the production of authoritative Masoretic manuscripts.

The Greek Septuagint version of the Bible originated in the third century BCE when Pharaoh Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (309–246 BCE) allegedly invited some seventy Jewish scholars to Alexandria to produce a Greek translation of the Torah for inclusion in the famed library at Alexandria. Although the account of this translation in the Letter of Aristeas may be legendary, the number of seventy Jewish or Rabbinic scholars remains in the term Septuagint, which identifies the Greek form of the Bible. The oldest extant manuscripts, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, are Christian manuscripts that date to the fourth century CE.

The Septuagint version of 1–2 Samuel, known in the Septuagint as 1–2 Reigns or Kingdoms, is complicated.³ The Greek form of 1–2 Reigns differs

³ For discussion, see Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem: Simor, 1997); Julio Trebolla Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill/Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). For a critical edition of the Greek text of 1–2 Reigns (1–2 Samuel), see Alan E. Brooke, Norman McLean, and Henry St. John Thackeray, *The Old Testament in Greek, vol. II: The Later Historical Books. Part I: 1 and 2 Samuel* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1927); Natalio Fernández Marcos and José Ramon Busto Saiz, *El Texto Antioqueno de la Biblia Griega. I: 1–2 Samuel* (Madrid: Instituto de Filología, C.S.I.C., 1989). For an up-to-date English translation of the Greek text, see Bernard Taylor “1 Reigns” and Bernard Taylor and Paul D. McLean, “2 Reigns,” *A New English*

markedly from the Hebrew Masoretic form of Samuel, particularly in 1 Samuel 16–18, where the Greek text is much shorter, prompting scholars to argue that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Greek text must be an earlier version of these chapters than the Masoretic form. The Septuagint text fills in gaps that appear in the often difficult Hebrew text, which has suggested to some that scribal error might have affected the current text of Samuel or that the older and potentially northern dialect of the Hebrew in some parts of Samuel may have necessitated interpretative Greek renditions of the text to present an esthetically coherent text for an educated Greek reader.

A major problem in the Greek text of Samuel is the presence of two distinctive Greek versions of the text. The Greek of 1 Samuel 1–2 Samuel 9 (or 10) represents the so-called Old Greek, which many Septuagint scholars judge to be an earlier Greek form of the text that in many cases varies from the presumed proto-Masoretic text. The Old Greek is generally coherent and well styled, which suggests that there are actually two issues in this text. One is the question of the Hebrew *Vorlage*, which varies from the Masoretic text, and the other is the translation technique employed by the Greek translator to produce a coherent and esthetically pleasing Greek text.⁴ The other textual version is the so-called Kaige recension, derived from the Greek wording *kai gē*, “and also,” employed to render the Hebrew *waw*-consecutive narrative tense characteristic of Samuel and most biblical Hebrew narrative. Overall, the Kaige recension is very literal and stylistically deficient because it represents an effort by the translators to produce a literal Greek reading of the underlying Hebrew text that contrasts markedly with the style of the Old Greek. The Kaige text begins in 2 Samuel 10 or 11 and continues all the way through the rest of Samuel and 1 Kings (3 Reigns) 1–2. In 1–2 Kings, the Old Greek resumes in 1 Kings (3 Reigns) 3–2 Kings (4 Reigns) 21, and the Kaige resumes once again in 2 Kings (4 Reigns) 22–24. Although the Kaige is supposedly intended to correct the reading of the Old Greek in favor of the underlying Hebrew, the placement of the Old Greek prior to the Kaige in 1–4 Reigns (Samuel and Kings) suggests that the so-called Old Greek is an attempt to replace the Kaige with a more coherent and esthetically pleasing form of Greek.

Translation of the Septuagint, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 244–270, 271–296.

⁴ Anneli Aejmelaeus, “The Septuagint of 1 Samuel,” *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays* (BET 50; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 123–141.

The three major manuscripts of Samuel among the Dead Sea Scrolls show some correlation with the Septuagint manuscripts, although there is also considerable correlation with the presumed proto-Masoretic text. The first is 4QSamuel^a, a fragmentary manuscript that dates to 50–25 BCE and contains elements of 1 Samuel 1:9 through 24:16–22.⁵ The Hebrew text agrees closely with the presumed *Vorlage* of the Old Greek in 1 Samuel 1–2 Samuel 9, but the text in 2 Samuel 10–24 displays far less agreement with the Kaige recension in 2 Reigns 10–24. Instead, this section shows closer correspondence to the Old Latin text and readings from Josephus, which prompted Tov to argue that it represents a combination of proto-Lucianic and late-Lucianic elements. The second is 4QSamuel^b, another fragmentary manuscript that preserves readings from 1 Samuel 12:3–23:23 and dates to approximately 225 BCE.⁶ The manuscript displays extensive agreement with the Old Greek, but also substantive agreement with the proto-Masoretic text. The third is 4QSamuel^c, a very fragmentary manuscript that preserves 1 Samuel 25:30–32; 2 Samuel 14:7–21, 22–15:4; and 15:4–15.⁷ The manuscript dates to the first quarter of the first century BCE. It shows greater conformity with the proto-Masoretic text, but there is substantive influence from the Old Greek. Overall, the three major Qumran scrolls of Samuel indicate eclectic texts that show influence from the Old Greek, the proto-Masoretic text, and the Lucianic Greek text that apparently stands behind the Old Latin and the citations of Josephus.

The Syriac Peshitta text may have originated as a Jewish Targum that was employed in early Christianity. It shows close adherence to the proto-Masoretic text, although there is some influence from the Septuagint tradition.⁸ The Latin Vulgate was written in the fourth century CE by Jerome in consultation with Rabbinic authorities to bring the Bible closer to the presumed proto-Masoretic text of the day over against the variations found in the Greek translations.⁹ The Aramaic Targum Jonathan to the

⁵ For discussion, see Frank Moore Cross, Jr. et al., *Qumran Cave IV. XII. 1–2 Samuel* (DJD17; Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 1–216, esp. 1–28.

⁶ See Cross et al., *1–2 Samuel*, 219–246, esp. 219–224.

⁷ Cross et al., *1–2 Samuel*, 247–267, esp. 247–254.

⁸ For discussion, see M. P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For critical editions of the Syriac text, see P. A. H. De Boer, “Samuel,” *The Old Testament in Syriac. Part II/2: Judges–Samuel* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); George A. Kiraz and Donald M. Walter et al., *The Syriac Peshitta with English Translation. Samuel* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2015).

⁹ See Benjamin Kedar, “The Latin Translations,” *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed.

Former Prophets is attributed to Jonathan ben Uzziel, the first century CE Tanna and disciple of R. Hillel, but interpreters maintain that the authors are unknown and that the period of composition extends from the second through the seventh centuries CE.¹⁰ Targum Jonathan adheres closely to the proto-Masoretic text and offers a highly interpretative, midrashic reading of the text.

This commentary is based on the Hebrew Masoretic Text of 1–2 Samuel, with appropriate attention to variant readings in the text.

SYNCHRONIC LITERARY FORM

The synchronic literary form of literature refers to its literary structure, plot development, and characterization without regard to diachronic or historical considerations of authorship, historical setting, or compositional history.¹¹ Consideration of the synchronic literary form of a biblical book entails reading it strictly as literature.

Despite its narrative complexity, the Book of Samuel displays a very simple synchronic literary structure: it recounts the successive reigns of the ruling houses of Israel that emerged in the aftermath of the increasingly chaotic rule of the Judges. The account begins in 1 Samuel 1–7 with the rule of the priestly House of Eli, with which the priest and prophet Samuel is affiliated, and it proceeds to recount the displacement of the priestly house.

First Samuel 8–31 recounts the reign of the first King of Israel, King Saul son of Kish, who failed in securing Israel from its enemies. The account begins in 1 Samuel 8–15, which depict Saul's reign as an absolute failure due to his inability to lead the nation and to observe YHWH's expectations. It continues in 1 Samuel 16–31 with the rise of David son of Jesse,

M. J. Mulder; Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 299–338, esp. 313–334; for a critical edition of the Latin text, see Robertus Weber, *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatum Versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983).

¹⁰ Daniel J. Harrington and Anthony J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets* (Aramaic Bible 10; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1987), 1–15, 101–208. For a critical Aramaic edition of the text, see Alexander Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic. II: The Former Prophets According to Targum Jonathan* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 94–211.

¹¹ For discussion of the critical methodology employed in this commentary, see Marvin A. Sweeney, "Form Criticism," *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, ed. S. L. McKenzie and S. R. Haynes (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 58–89.

depicted as an ideal leader for Israel who enjoyed the favor of YHWH and thereby united the country against the Philistines. Saul ultimately committed suicide in a failed battle against the Philistines that resulted in Israel's subjugation to Philistia.

Second Samuel 1–24 recounts the reign of David son of Jesse. The narrative begins with 2 Samuel 1–9, which narrates David's rise to kingship in Judah, his victory over King Ish-Bosheth (Esh-Baal) son of Saul of Israel at Gibeon, and his selection as King of Israel. It continues with his victories over the Philistines, his selection of Jerusalem as his capital, his return of the Ark of G-d to Jerusalem, the account of YHWH's promise to grant David eternal kingship, his rule over Israel and Judah and the surrounding nations, and his care for Mephibosheth son of Jonathan.

Second Samuel 10–24 narrates David's failures as king, beginning with his adulterous affair with Bath Sheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite. Although David repented of his sins, subsequent chapters demonstrate how Nathan's condemnation of David and David's failures as a father functioned to destroy his Hebron-based family and ultimately brought Solomon to the throne.

Samuel's accounts of the reigns of the House of Eli, the House of Saul, and the House of David constitute a study in leadership, including depictions of how a proper leader should exercise power, especially as exemplified by Samuel and David during his rise to power, and how a leader may fail, especially as exemplified by Eli, Saul, and David, whose failure to discipline his own sons produced catastrophic results.¹²

The Former Prophets do not depict the ultimate failure and exile of Israel and Judah as ends in themselves. Rather, the Former Prophets impress upon its readers the necessity to observe the commandments of YHWH that constitute the basis for YHWH's grant of the land of Israel to the people of Israel and Judah. Insofar as Samuel focuses on the leadership of the nation, it is especially incumbent upon the Kings of Israel and Judah and other leaders to exercise their power appropriately in accordance with the principles laid down in YHWH's commandments.¹³ Samuel functions much like later works focused on leadership, such as Sun Tzu's *Art of War*

¹² See my study, "Rethinking Samuel," *Visions of the Holy* (SBL ResBibS, 2 vols.; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature Press, in press).

¹³ Sweeney, "Rethinking Samuel"; Moshe Halbertal and Stephen Holmes, *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017).

or Machiavelli's *The Prince*.¹⁴ The Former Prophets anticipate a return of the exiles to Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel and a restoration of Jewish life in the land of Israel. Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, written in China during the fifth century BCE, advises the reader on strategic thinking for attaining goals in military campaigns and leadership in general. Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, written in 1513 by a senior Florentine Republic official but published posthumously in 1532, is a highly influential political manual that advises the reader on political strategic thinking and leadership in general. The Book of Samuel differs in genre but nevertheless illustrates principles of political and military leadership in its portrayals of Samuel, Saul, David, and the other major figures presented in the book.

DIACHRONIC CONSIDERATIONS

As an important component of the Former Prophets, Samuel functions as part of the so-called Deuteronomistic History. The Deuteronomistic History is a scholarly construct that is based on the final form of the Former Prophets read in diachronic perspective. The model for the Deuteronomistic History was first proposed by Martin Noth in 1943 to assess the literary form, theological outlook, and compositional history of the Former Prophets when read together as a whole.¹⁵ Noth argued that the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) was a historical work formed through a process of tradition history that attempted to assess the history of Israel from the perspective of the Babylonian Exile. Older tradition-historical textual units, such as major elements of the Book of Samuel and the Elijah–Elisha narratives in 1 Kings 17–2 Kings 13, were incorporated into the largely DtrH narrative framework. Noth argued that the Babylonian Exile marked the end of Israel's history, and the DtrH attempted to explain that end by charging that it presented a history of divine judgment against Israel for violating the covenant in Deuteronomy.

Subsequent studies grounded in continental scholarship, such as the work of Walter Dietrich, Rudolf Smend, and Timo Veijola, argue for an exilic-period model for the formation of the DtrH from its basic edition (DtrG), through a prophetic edition (DtrP), and a nomistic or legal edition

¹⁴ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. and ed. Ralph D. Sawyer (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, with an introduction by Christian Gauss (New York and Scarborough, Ontario; Mentor, 1952).

¹⁵ Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981).

(DtrN).¹⁶ American scholars, such as Frank Moore Cross, Jr., Richard D. Nelson, and Gary N. Knoppers, argue that an earlier edition of the DtrH, written during the reign of King Josiah of Judah (r. 640–609 BCE), points to Josiah as the righteous Davidic King who would restore the ideal of a united Davidic empire until his unexpected death at the hands of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt.¹⁷ The exilic expansion of the DtrH points especially to the sins of King Manasseh of Judah (r. 687/6–642 BCE) to explain the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile.

Discussion of the DtrH has largely settled in support of the American model of a late-seventh-century BCE Josianic edition that was revised after Josiah's death to present a sixth-century exilic version of the work. But issues remain. Halpern and Vanderhooft posit a late-eighth-century BCE Hezekian edition of the work.¹⁸ Campbell and O'Brien posit a late-ninth-century Prophetic Record that originated in northern Israel to point to the emergence of the Jehu dynasty.¹⁹ McCarter posits a Solomonic Apology that culminates in the reign of Solomon and his building of the Jerusalem Temple.²⁰ Römer generally accepts the American model but raises

¹⁶ Walter Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); Walter Dietrich, *David, Saul und die Propheten* (BWANT 122; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1989); Rudolf Smend, "Die Gesetz und die Völker. Eine Beitrag zum deuteronomischen Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie*, ed. H. W. Wolff (Fs. G. von Rad; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 494–509; Timo Veijola, *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1977); Timo Veijola, *Die ewigen Dynastie. David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975).

¹⁷ Frank Moore Cross, Jr., "The Themes of the Books of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274–289; Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981); Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations under G-d: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies* (HSM 52–53; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993–94).

¹⁸ Baruch Halpern and David Vanderhooft, "The Editions of Kings in the 7th–6th Centuries," *HUCA* 62 (1991): 179–244; cf. Iain W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW 172; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988).

¹⁹ Antony F. Campbell, SJ, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late-Ninth Century Document* (CBQMS 17; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association, 1986); Mark A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

²⁰ P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *2 Samuel* (AB 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 11–16.

questions about the Deuteronomistic character of the whole.²¹ And some contemporary scholars reject Noth's model altogether.²² The present commentary posits a model of the composition of the DtrH that builds upon the scholarship outlined here and the author's work on the role of King Josiah's influence in the composition of the DtrH and the prophetic literature, as well as a detailed commentary on Kings.²³ The model largely accepts the hypotheses of an Exilic DtrH, a Josianic DtrH, and a Hezekian DtrH with minor modifications and explanations. It modifies the hypothesis of a ninth-century Prophetic Record offered by Campbell and O'Brien to point instead to an eighth-century Jehu Dynastic History that culminates in the reign of King Jeroboam ben Jehoash of Israel, who ruled a kingdom that extended from Lebo-Hamath in Aram to the Sea of the Arabah (the Red Sea), much like the kingdom of Solomon (to 2 Kgs 14:23–29).²⁴ The present commentary accepts much of McCarter's hypothesis of a Solomonic Apology, although it modifies the hypothesis with a great deal of further elaboration concerning its contents and theological outlook and relabels it as the Solomonic History.

The Book of Samuel shows little evidence of DtrH composition. Interpreters point to 1 Samuel 8, which presents Samuel's warnings concerning the nature of kingship that show some affinities with the Torah of the King in Deuteronomy 17:14–20, and 1 Samuel 12, in which Samuel's farewell speech calls upon the people to observe YHWH's commandments, as examples of DtrH composition.²⁵ First Samuel 8's warnings concerning

²¹ Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History* (New York and London: T and T Clark, 2007); see also the essays in Cynthia Edenburg and Juha Pakkala, eds., *Is Samuel among the Deuteronomists? Current Views on the Place of Samuel in a Deuteronomistic History* (AIL 16; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013).

²² See the essays in Edenburg and Pakkala, eds., *Is Samuel among the Deuteronomists?* for a full discussion of contemporary issues.

²³ Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*; Marvin A. Sweeney, *1–2 Kings: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

²⁴ Although Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 93–109 earlier posited that the so-called Succession Narrative in 2 Samuel 9:11–24 originated with the Josianic DtrH due to its critique of David in comparison to Josiah, study of this material in the present commentary prompted a change of view that includes the Succession Narrative as part of the Jehu Dynastic History to account for its anti-Davidic and pro-northern viewpoints. Even as part of an earlier Jehu Dynastic History, the Succession Narrative continues to lend itself easily to the Josianic DtrH's efforts to portray Josiah as a righteous Davidic King who corrected the problems of earlier kings of Israel and Judah.

²⁵ For example, Hans Jochen Boecker, *Die Beurteilung der Anfänge des Königtums in den deuteronomistischen Abschnitten des 1. Samuelbuches* (WMANT 31; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 10–34.

kingship do not match entirely the concerns expressed in Deuteronomy 17:14–20, but they anticipate Solomon’s rule of northern Israel, especially imposition of the *mas*, “tax,” or “corvée” upon the northern tribes in 1 Kings 4–5. Concern with observance of YHWH’s commandments in 1 Samuel 12 gives cogent expression to the concerns of the DtrH.²⁶ Some argue that Nathan’s prophecy of eternal kingship for the House of David in 2 Samuel 7 is a DtrH composition,²⁷ but the references to the dynastic oracle in 1 Kings 2:1–4; 8:14–26; and 9:1–9 all characterize the Davidic promise as conditional, insofar as the sons of David are adjured to observe YHWH’s commandments in order to retain the throne. Such an understanding explains why the House of David no longer rules Israel in Jerusalem at the end of Kings.

The compositional model for the Book of Samuel in modern scholarship is heavily indebted to the work of Leonhard Rost, who in 1926 proposed the model of the Succession Narrative to explain the composition of the Book of Samuel.²⁸ Second Samuel 10–20 and 1 Kings 1–2 constitute a narrative written by an author who attempts to show that David’s adultery with Bath Sheba and his role in the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite, prompt conflict within the House of David that ultimately results in the deaths of David’s Hebron-born sons, Amnon, Abshalom, and Adonijah, and leads to the ascent of David’s younger son, Solomon, to the throne of Israel. The Succession Narrative thereby provides a means to work earlier narratives concerning the House of Eli in 1 Samuel 1–3, 7; the Ark in 1 Samuel 4–6, 2 Samuel 6; the reign of Saul in 1 Samuel 8–15; the rise of David in 1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 8 or 9; and the appendices concerning David in 2 Samuel 21–24 into the present form of the Book of Samuel. Later interpreters retitled it as the Court History, but the foundations for their analyses continue to rest on the work of Rost.²⁹

There are two fundamental problems with the work of Rost: first, the separation of 1 Kings 1–2 from the rest of the proposed Succession Narrative/Court History by the so-called Appendices in 2 Samuel 21–24, and second, the indications of northern dissatisfaction with the House of

²⁶ Boecker, *Die Beurteilung*, 61–88.

²⁷ Dennis J. McCarthy, “II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History,” *JBL* 84 (1965): 131–138.

²⁸ Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David* (Sheffield, UK: Almond, 1982, German original, 1926).

²⁹ For example, John Van Seters, *In Search of History* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 77–91.

David in the accounts of the revolts by Abshalom and Sheba against David in 2 Samuel 15–20 and the Appendices in 2 Samuel 21–24. Both call for reconsideration of Rost's hypothesis and the modifications made to it by later scholars.

Rost's argument that 1 Kings 1–2, in which Solomon supplants David's Hebron-born son, Adonijah, has been separated from the rest of the Succession Narrative by the introduction of the Appendices in 2 Samuel 21–24 raises questions. It is true that 1 Kings 1–2 is concerned with the issue of Davidic succession, but it presents an inherent critique of Solomon, who is born as a result of David's sins in committing adultery with Solomon's mother, Bath Sheba, and his role in murdering her husband, Uriah the Hittite, in a failed attempt to cover up his crime. Although David repented of his sins in 2 Samuel 10–12 prior to Solomon's birth, the narrative hardly represents an account of a royal birth that would have been propagated by the House of David. Furthermore, Solomon's execution of his brother Adonijah, based on the account of Adonijah's request to Bath Sheba for David's concubine, Abishag; his expulsion of the high priest, Abiathar; and his compliance with David's advice to eliminate Joab and Shimei indicate a purge of the House of David that eliminated David's Hebron-based family and supporters in favor of a Jerusalem-based faction that did not participate in David's rise to power. The narrative appears to recount a coup within the House of David that raises suspicions about the character of Solomon's reign. Solomon's reign is presented in adulatory terms in 1 Kings 3–10, but the accounts of Solomon's ascent to the throne in 1 Kings 1–2, his apostasy on behalf of his foreign wives in 1 Kings 11, and the subsequent references to his harsh rule over the north in the account of the failure of his son, Rehoboam, to be named king of northern Israel in 1 Kings 12, present a critique of Solomon that undermines the adulation in 1 Kings 3–10.³⁰

Furthermore, the so-called Appendices in 2 Samuel 21–24 likewise indicate critique of David, which suggests that they have something in common with the critique of David evident in 2 Samuel 10–20. The account of David's handing over the sons of Saul to the Gibeonites for execution in 2 Samuel 21 critiques David for enabling the deaths of the royal House of Saul into which he married. The demand of the Gibeonites presupposes a relationship with David that would have been concluded

³⁰ See Sweeney, *1–2 Kings*, 1–71, 152–161.

following his victory over northern Israel in 2 Samuel 2 and a prior relationship with the House of Saul.³¹ Unfortunately, the Samuel narratives provide no account of Saul's relationship with the Gibeonites, although there are hints of such a relationship when the Ark of G-d appears with the army of Saul in 1 Samuel 14:18 at his victory over the Philistines. Prior to this battle, the Ark had been kept at Kiriath Jearim, apparently an ally of Gibeon. Otherwise, the only hint of a relationship between the House of Saul and Gibeon appears in Joshua 9–10, which recounts the Gibeonites' alliance with Israel in the time of Joshua, although the narrative may have once had the alliance with the House of Saul in mind. Likewise, the account of the exploits of David's warriors in 2 Samuel 21:15–22 includes mention of Elhanan son of Jaar-Oregim, who killed Goliath, which suggests that David may have taken credit for the exploits of one of his warriors.³²

Second Samuel 22, David's psalm of thanksgiving to YHWH, and 23:1–7, David's last words, offer no critique of David, but the latter refers to YHWH's *b'ērīt 'ōlām*, "eternal covenant," with David, which has affinities with 2 Samuel 7 but not with 1 Kings 2:1–4; 8:14–26; and 9:1–9. This suggests that 2 Samuel 22 and 23:1–7 once concluded an adulatory account of David's rise to power that did not include 2 Samuel 10–20 or 1 Kings 1–2. Second Samuel 23:8–39 presents David's warriors, which also upholds David's reputation for leadership.

Finally, 2 Samuel 24 includes an account of David's purchase of the threshing floor of Araunah as the site for the future Temple in Jerusalem. Although such an account might appear adulatory, the fact that the purchase was motivated by YHWH's punishment against David for taking a census of the people suggests critique of David, particularly since a census would provide the basis for imposing a tax on the people, as exemplified by Solomon's tax or *corvée* upon the people of northern Israel, mentioned in 1 Kings 4–5.

Consequently, the so-called Appendix in 2 Samuel 21–24 appears to have a central core in 2 Samuel 22–23, which honors David and upholds

³¹ See also Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Gibeon and Israel: The Role of Gibeon and the Gibeonites in the Political and Religious History of Early Israel* (SOTSMS 2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), esp. 28–40; cf. Israel Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel* (ANEM 5; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), esp. 1–61, although he dates the Gibeonite/Gibeah polity to the mid-tenth century based largely on the account of Pharaoh Sheshonq's invasion of Israel in the late tenth century BCE.

³² See Fritz Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel* (ZBK/AT 9; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981), 283; cf. McCarter, *2 Samuel*, 450.

his reputation, whereas the framework in 2 Samuel 21 and 24 presents critique of David and suggests that he is an inadequate monarch.

The second problem with Rost's work is the role that northern critique plays in the account of David's reign in 2 Samuel 10–20. Here, David appears as a king who is willing to betray one of his own loyal warriors, Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 23:39), by having an affair with his wife, Bath Sheba, and arranging his murder with Joab in an effort to cover up the affair. The later marriage between David and Bath Sheba produces Solomon, which would indicate that Solomon would not be highly regarded by those who would read the account of his origins, particularly northern Israelites, who would bear the burden of supporting his royal house, according to 1 Kings 4–5, from which his home tribe of Judah was excused. The consequent chaos in the House of David would lead ultimately to the revolt of Abshalom, the son of David's wife Maacah daughter of Telpai, King of Geshur. Geshur was an Aramean kingdom situated along the northern and eastern shores of the Kinnereth, Sea of Galilee, and would have been part of the orbit of northern Israel. Apparently, David's marriage to Maacah sealed a treaty with Geshur that would have enabled David to keep northern Israel in check. Abshalom's revolt built on dissatisfaction with David's rule in both northern Israel and southern Judah, but when the revolt concluded, the men of Judah quickly resumed their allegiance with David, whereas the men of Israel did not, according to 2 Samuel 19, especially verses 42–44. Immediately following these verses, 2 Samuel 20 recounts the failed revolt against David led by Sheba son of Bichri of the tribe of Benjamin. Although his revolt failed, his call to revolt in 2 Samuel 20:1 presages the northern revolt against Rehoboam ben Solomon in 1 Kings 12:16. Such a correlation indicates a relationship between the revolts recounted in 2 Samuel 15–20 and the later revolt by the northern tribes of Israel against the House of David in 1 Kings 12.

The revolts of Abshalom son of David and Shebna son of Bichri were precursors to the later revolt of the northern tribes against Rehoboam. Such a scenario indicates that the critical account of David's reign in 2 Samuel 10–24 once formed a part of the Jehu Dynastic History.³³ The Jehu Dynastic History relates dissatisfaction with the House of David (and Saul) by the northern tribes of Israel that ultimately culminated in the rule of the House of Jehu, whose fourth king, Jeroboam son of Joash, ruled a

³³ See Sweeney, *1–2 Kings*, 26–30.

kingdom like that of Solomon, which extended from Lebo-Hamath in northern Aram to the Sea of the Arabah (Red Sea) to the south of Judah.

The remaining narrative in 1 Samuel 1–2 Samuel 9 presents an adulatory account of the rise of the House of David that would not only honor David as the founder of a new dynastic house in Judah and Israel but also culminate in the adulatory account of the reign of David's son, Solomon, in 1 Kings 3–10. Although the present form of the account of Solomon's ascent to the throne and rule in 1 Kings 1–11 is framed with critical accounts in 1 Kings 1–2 and 11 (12), 1 Kings 3–10 presents Solomon as a wise, wealthy, and powerful king who kept Israel and Judah united, built the Jerusalem Temple, engaged in international trade that made his kingdom wealthy, and kept the peace by maintaining extensive and friendly relations with the surrounding nations, including Egypt, as indicated by his many marriages to foreign women. McCarter has already demonstrated the foundations for such a hypothesis in his arguments for naming the account "the Solomonic Apology."³⁴

McCarter built upon Grønbæk's analysis of the so-called history of the rise of David in 1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 5 as well as earlier work on the origins of the so-called Saul Cycle in 1 Samuel 1–15 by Hylander and the Ark Narrative in 1 Samuel 4–6; 2 Samuel 6 by Campbell.³⁵ Hylander demonstrated how the present form of the Eli narratives in 1 Samuel 1–3 originally formed an introduction to the rise of Saul by pointing to the inadequacies of the rule of the House of Eli as well as the hints in the narrative concerning the coming appearance of Saul (Hebrew *šā'ûl*, which means literally "requested, asked"), as indicated by the verbal hints of the son "requested" by Hannah, namely, the prophet (and priest) Samuel, who would play the key role in bringing Saul to power at the end of his lifetime (see 1 Sam 1:20, 28; 2:20; 8:10; 12:13, 17, 19). Campbell pointed to the role played by the Ark Narrative in providing an account of the Philistine capture of the Ark in 1 Samuel 4–6 and the role played by 2 Samuel 6 in redactionally joining the account of Saul's rise to power to the accounts of David's rise. The account of Saul's reign has clearly been edited to serve the purposes of the Solomonic History by framing adulatory accounts of Saul's

³⁴ McCarter, 2 Samuel, 9–16.

³⁵ Ivar Hylander, *Der literarische Samuel–Saul–Komplex (1 Sam. 1–15). Traditionsgeschichtlich Untersucht* (Uppsala: Alquist & Wiksell/Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1932); Antony F. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative* (SBLDS 16; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975); Jakob H. Grønbæk, *Die Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids (1. Sam. 15–2. Sam. 5). Tradition und Komposition* (Copenhagen: Prostant Apud Munksgaard, 1971).

rise to kingship in 1 Samuel 9:1–10:16 and his rescue of the city of Jabesh Gilead in 1 Samuel 11 with critical accounts in 1 Samuel 8; 10:10–17; 12; 13–14; and 15. The Book of Judges, which portrays a steady decline of Israel during the period of the Judges from Othniel of Judah in Judges 3 to the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19–20, constitutes a critique of Saul, his capital at Gibeah, and his home tribe of Benjamin.³⁶

Although the current form of the Saul Cycle serves the interests of the Solomonic History, it is clear that there was once an underlying narrative that provided an adulatory account of the rise of Saul to kingship and his heroism in delivering the city of Jabesh Gilead in 1 Samuel 1–7; 9:1–10:9; and 11. Portions of the narrative may be lost to us, but the interest in honoring Saul as the first King of Israel is clear.

THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Book of Samuel is first and foremost a work of literature, which means that the reader will play a decisive role in its interpretation.³⁷ Samuel is written to depict the changes of leadership in Israel during its early history, specifically the transition from tribal-based leadership in the period of the Judges to monarchies as the tribes undergo a process of unification.

The Book of Samuel portrays YHWH's interrelationship with the various agents of leadership during this period: the House of Eli, the House of Saul, and the House of David.³⁸ Apart from Samuel and other biblical sources, there is virtually no ancient literature that depicts Israel and Judah during this time. Insofar as Samuel provides the fullest depiction of Israel and Judah during this period, it is crucial for readers to understand its rhetorical aims, its plot development, and its characterization – or caricaturization – of the major players in the narrative. As Whybray demonstrates, Samuel is heavily

³⁶ Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 110–124.

³⁷ For foundational methodological perspective in reading Samuel as literature, see Sweeney, "Form Criticism"; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987); and Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994); see also W. Lee Humphreys, *The Character of G-d in the Book of Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Mignon R. Jacobs, *Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007); Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, eds., *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel* (LHBOTS 669; London: T and T Clark, 2020).

³⁸ Sweeney, "Rethinking Samuel."

influenced by wisdom motifs, and one must understand both the character of YHWH and the character of the book's human protagonists to comprehend its lessons concerning YHWH and Israel's human leadership.³⁹

YHWH is a key character in Samuel, insofar as YHWH both plays a major role in bringing the various ruling houses to power to provide leadership for the people, and YHWH also plays a major role in passing judgment upon them.⁴⁰ YHWH is obviously dissatisfied with the House of Eli in 1 Samuel 1–7, and YHWH's dissatisfaction is justified by the characterization of Eli and his sons: Eli is portrayed as an incompetent priest who does not recognize a woman, Hannah, at prayer; does not train his sons, Hophni and Phineas, in proper conduct; and does not recognize YHWH when the deity speaks with young Samuel before the Ark. The result is a catastrophe when Israel goes to battle against the Philistines at Aphek and loses everything, including the Ark of G-d and their freedom from Philistine domination. YHWH nevertheless appears triumphant when the idol of the Philistine god, Dagon, falls before the Ark when it is placed in the temple before Dagon and must be sent to Kiriath Jearim for safekeeping because the Philistines are unable to endure the power of the presence of YHWH.

The accounts of the rise of the House of Saul in 1 Samuel 8–15 are heavily polemical, in that they are designed to portray Saul as an incompetent leader who will ultimately be overshadowed and replaced by David. The narrative warns Israel – and the reader – about the cost of kingship. Although 1 Samuel 9:1–10:16 and 11:1–15 portray Saul as a handsome young man of destiny and a hero who saves Jabesh Gilead, 1 Samuel 8; 10:17–27; 12:1–25; 13:1–14:52; and 15:1–35 work together to undermine the positive portrayal of Saul. The people's desire for a king represents their rejection of YHWH (1 Sam 8); Saul is unable to function publicly as a leader who inspires confidence in the people (1 Sam 10:17–27); Saul and the people must obey YHWH's commandments (1 Sam 12); Saul is a tragic figure who oversteps his bounds by acting as a priest and by inadvertently cursing his own son (1 Sam 13–14); and Saul is a dangerous figure who refuses to obey YHWH's commandments and threatens Samuel (1 Sam 15).

³⁹ R. Norman Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Sam. 9–20 and 1 Kings 1 and 2* (SBT II/9; Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1968).

⁴⁰ Stephen B. Chapman, "Worthy to Be Praised: G-d as Character in the Book of Samuel," *Characters and Characterization*, ed. Bodner and Johnson, 25–41.

The depiction of the rise of David during the reign of Saul continues to denigrate Saul as it builds up the character of David, who can do no wrong and who enjoys the favor of YHWH in 1 Samuel 16–31. YHWH selects David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, as the favored future King of Israel. David soothes Saul with his music; he kills the Philistine giant, Goliath, when Saul and the rest of the men of Israel are too afraid to challenge him; Saul's son and heir, Jonathan, and his daughter, Michal, love David, despite the fact that he represents a threat to their own interests as children of the House of Saul; David constantly shows loyalty to Saul when he has the opportunity to kill him; Nabal conveniently drops dead, enabling David to marry his widow, Abigail, thereby marrying into the power structure of the tribe of Judah; David eventually becomes a Philistine vassal when Saul, unable to defeat the Philistines, spends his time unsuccessfully trying to subdue David; and David is absent when Saul commits suicide as the Philistines overwhelm him at Mt. Gilboa.

David continues to enjoy the favor of YHWH in 2 Samuel 1–9 as he continues his rise to kingship following the death of Saul, but he is also helped by the competence and loyalty of his general, Joab. David constantly asserts his innocence in the death of Saul by condemning those who raise their hand against YHWH's anointed, despite the fact that David has so much to gain from Saul's death. David becomes King of Judah – thanks in part to his marriage to Abigail – and goes to war against Ish-Bosheth (i.e., Esh-Baal), the son of Saul, who succeeds his father as King of Israel. David defeats Israel at Gibeon and deftly handles – with the assistance of Joab – the effort by Abner, Ish-Bosheth's general, who betrays his master in a failed attempt to ally with David. Following the assassinations of both Abner and Ish-Bosheth/Esh-Baal, David becomes King of Israel as well as King of Judah, and he deftly defeats the Philistines – again, with the help of Joab – and conquers Jerusalem – with the help of Joab again – to serve as his capital over both Judah and Israel. David makes Jerusalem the holy center of Israel by moving the Ark from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem, and he also manages to ensure that Michal, who had given David everything over against her own father, was left childless, ensuring that David could found his own dynasty rather than serve as a monarch of the House of Saul. Through all of this, David receives the eternal covenant of kingship from YHWH, becomes the ruler of a vast empire, and even manages to look after Mephibosheth (Merib-Baal), the son of David's close friend, Jonathan, the son of Saul, who should have been king after his father.

But the favor of YHWH slips away as David acts in a despicable manner in his adulterous affair with Bath Sheba and his role in the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite, in 2 Samuel 10–24. Although David eventually repents of his sins, the damage is done as Solomon, the future king, is born, and David's older sons born in Hebron indulge themselves in sins reminiscent of those of their father. Amnon, David's presumed heir, rapes his half-sister, Tamar, and in retaliation, her brother, Abshalom, murders him when David fails to do anything about it. Abshalom flees Jerusalem but returns at the insistence of Joab, only to lead a revolt against his father that tears the kingdom apart. The revolt only ends when Joab kills Abshalom, something David should have done in the first place, although David never realizes just how Joab had saved his kingdom. David suffers another revolt by Shebna son of Bichri, which portends the later revolt of the northern tribes of Israel against David's grandson, Rehoboam son of Solomon. Otherwise, David turns the sons of Saul over to the Gibeonites for execution; continues to praise YHWH in 2 Samuel 22 and 23:1–7; sees his heroes named, including Elhanan, the man who really killed Goliath, and Uriah the Hittite, the man whom David betrayed, in 2 Samuel 23:8–39; and draws YHWH's ire by engaging in a census of Israel, thereby necessitating the purchase of the threshing floor of Araunah to serve as the site of the future Temple to assuage YHWH's anger.

These narratives illustrate three key lessons. One is that YHWH appears to make mistakes, in that the House of Eli, the House of Saul, and in many respects, David, constitute questionable choices to serve as the leaders of Israel.⁴¹ Whatever their initial merits might have been, they prove to be inadequate in the cases of Eli and Saul and of questionable character in the case of David. But this leads to the other key lesson, that YHWH works through questionable human beings to achieve divine purposes. In Samuel, human characters have free will – and they exercise it vociferously. But this points to a third lesson, that Samuel is a study in leadership that teaches its readers the qualities and responsibilities necessary for just and effective leadership and the mistakes that leaders may make, thereby leading them to consequences that readers would do well to avoid.⁴²

Given the theological and narrative interests in the Book of Samuel, one may wonder about its historical veracity, specifically, were Eli and Saul

⁴¹ Cf. Marvin A. Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Shoah: Engaging Holocaust Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008).

⁴² Sweeney, "Rethinking Samuel."

incompetent leaders? Was David a brilliant leader who could also engage in despicable behavior? Lacking supporting records from the ancient Near East that would confirm or contradict what readers find in Samuel, there is no way to know. Contemporary scholarship raises questions about the history of the narratives in Samuel, due largely to the lack of inscriptional, literary, and archeological evidence concerning Israel, Eli, Saul, and David in this period,⁴³ but the general picture of Israel and Judah nevertheless appears at least plausible. Israel evolved from a semi-nomadic, tribal society that migrated into Canaan and merged with the local Canaanite population in the hill country at the same time as the Sea Peoples entered the coastal plain and merged with the Canaanite population there to become the Philistines of the Bible. In the following struggle for dominance, Israel and Judah eventually triumphed over the Philistines, even though they later succumbed to the Arameans, Assyrians, and Babylonians. David was not a builder, and so it is difficult to point to major building projects as he appears to have taken over a Canaanite culture that had already built its cities, towns, and edifices. Interpreters may note, nevertheless, that there is some evidence of standardization in the building of smaller cities that suggests the presence and influence of a minor monarchy that acted to unite the land.⁴⁴ David may well have been politically astute, but the empire claimed in 2 Samuel 8 may actually represent a web of alliances that would have secured David's position as a minor monarch in the region.

⁴³ See, for example, Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, esp. 1–61; see also the essays in Joachim J. Krause et al., eds., *Saul, Benjamin, and the Emergence of Monarchy in Israel: Biblical and Archeological Perspectives* (AIL 40; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2020).

⁴⁴ Yosef Garfinkel et al., *In the Footsteps of King David: Revelations from an Ancient Biblical City* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2018).