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CORNERSTONE
BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

1-2 Samuel
J. Robert Vannoy

GENERAL EDITOR
Philip W. Comfort

New Living
Translation.

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featuring the text of the
NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

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VOLUME 4a : 1–2 Samuel

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* is based on the second edition of the New Living Translation (2007). Nearly 100 scholars from various church backgrounds and from several countries (United States, Canada, England, and Australia) participated in the creation of the NLT. Many of these same scholars are contributors to this commentary series. All the commentators, whether participants in the NLT or not, believe that the Bible is God's inspired word and have a desire to make God's word clear and accessible to his people.

This Bible commentary is the natural extension of our vision for the New Living Translation, which we believe is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful. The NLT attempts to communicate God's inspired word in a lucid English translation of the original languages so that English readers can understand and appreciate the thought of the original writers. In the same way, the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* aims at helping teachers, pastors, students, and laypeople understand every thought contained in the Bible. As such, the commentary focuses first on the words of Scripture, then on the theological truths of Scripture—inasmuch as the words express the truths.

The commentary itself has been structured in such a way as to help readers get at the meaning of Scripture, passage by passage, through the entire Bible. Each Bible book is prefaced by a substantial book introduction that gives general historical background important for understanding. Then the reader is taken through the Bible text, passage by passage, starting with the New Living Translation text printed in full. This is followed by a section called "Notes," wherein the commentator helps the reader understand the Hebrew or Greek behind the English of the NLT, interacts with other scholars on important interpretive issues, and points the reader to significant textual and contextual matters. The "Notes" are followed by the "Commentary," wherein each scholar presents a lucid interpretation of the passage, giving special attention to context and major theological themes.

The commentators represent a wide spectrum of theological positions within the evangelical community. We believe this is good because it reflects the rich variety in Christ's church. All the commentators uphold the authority of God's word and believe it is essential to heed the old adage: "Wholly apply yourself to the Scriptures and apply them wholly to you." May this commentary help you know the truths of Scripture, and may this knowledge help you "grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord" (2 Pet 1:2, NLT).

PHILIP W. COMFORT
GENERAL EDITOR

ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

b.	Babylonian Gemara	Heb.	Hebrew	NT	New Testament
bar.	baraita	ibid.	*ibidem,* in the same place	OL	Old Latin
c.	*circa,* around, approximately	i.e.	*id est,* the same	OS	Old Syriac
		in loc.	*in loco,* in the place cited	OT	Old Testament
cf.	*confer,* compare			p., pp.	page, pages
ch, chs	chapter, chapters	lit.	literally	pl.	plural
contra	in contrast to	LXX	Septuagint	Q	Quelle ("Sayings" as Gospel source)
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls	M	Majority Text		
ed.	edition, editor	*m.*	Mishnah	rev.	revision
e.g.	*exempli gratia,* for example	masc.	masculine	sg.	singular
		mg	margin	*t.*	Tosefta
et al.	*et alli,* and others	ms	manuscript	TR	Textus Receptus
fem.	feminine	mss	manuscripts	v., vv.	verse, verses
ff	following (verses, pages)	MT	Masoretic Text	vid.	*videtur,* it seems
		n.d.	no date	viz.	*videlicet,* namely
fl.	flourished	neut.	neuter	vol.	volume
Gr.	Greek	no.	number	*y.*	Jerusalem Gemara

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

ASV	American Standard Version	NCV	New Century Version	NKJV	New King James Version
CEV	Contemporary English Version	NEB	New English Bible	NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
		NET	The NET Bible		
ESV	English Standard Version	NIV	New International Version	NLT	New Living Translation
GW	God's Word	NIrV	New International Reader's Version	REB	Revised English Bible
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible	NJB	New Jerusalem Bible	RSV	Revised Standard Version
JB	Jerusalem Bible				
KJV	King James Version	NJPS	The New Jewish Publication Society Translation (*Tanakh*)	TEV	Today's English Version
NAB	New American Bible				
NASB	New American Standard Bible			TLB	The Living Bible

ABBREVIATIONS FOR DICTIONARIES, LEXICONS, COLLECTIONS OF TEXTS, ORIGINAL LANGUAGE EDITIONS

ABD *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols., Freedman) [1992]

ANEP *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Pritchard) [1965]

ANET *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Pritchard) [1969]

BAGD *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* 2nd ed. (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker) [1979]

BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* 3rd ed. (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich) [2000]

BDB *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Brown, Driver, Briggs) [1907]

BDF *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Blass, Debrunner, Funk) [1961]

BHS *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Elliger and Rudolph) [1983]

CAD *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* [1956]

COS *The Context of Scripture* (3 vols., Hallo and Younger) [1997–2002]

DBI *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman) [1998]

DBT *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (2nd ed., Leon-Dufour) [1972]

DCH *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (5 vols., D. Clines) [2000]

DLNTD *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (R. Martin, P. Davids) [1997]

DJD *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* [1955–]

DJG *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Green, McKnight, Marshall) [1992]

DOTP *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (T. Alexander, D.W. Baker) [2003]

DPL *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Hawthorne, Martin, Reid) [1993]

DTIB *Dictionary of Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Vanhoozer) [2005]

EDNT *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (3 vols., H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET) [1990–1993]

GKC *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Gesenius, Kautzsch, trans. Cowley) [1910]

HALOT *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. Stamm; trans. M. Richardson) [1994–1999]

IBD *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (3 vols., Douglas, Wiseman) [1980]

IDB *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols., Buttrick) [1962]

ISBE *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols., Bromiley) [1979–1988]

KBL *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (Koehler, Baumgartner) [1958]

LCL Loeb Classical Library

L&N *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (Louw and Nida) [1989]

LSJ *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed., Liddell, Scott, Jones) [1996]

MM *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Moulton and Milligan) [1930; 1997]

NA[26] *Novum Testamentum Graece* (26th ed., Nestle-Aland) [1979]

NA[27] *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed., Nestle-Aland) [1993]

NBD *New Bible Dictionary* (2nd ed., Douglas, Hillyer) [1982]

NIDB *New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Douglas, Tenney) [1987]

NIDBA *New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Blaiklock and Harrison) [1983]

NIDNTT *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (4 vols., C. Brown) [1975–1985]

NIDOTTE *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols., W. A. VanGemeren) [1997]

PGM *Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri.* (Preisendanz) [1928]

PG *Patrologia Graecae* (J. P. Migne) [1857–1886]

TBD *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Elwell, Comfort) [2001]

TDNT *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols., Kittel, Friedrich; trans. Bromiley) [1964–1976]

TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (8 vols., Botterweck, Ringgren; trans. Willis, Bromiley, Green) [1974–]

TLNT *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (3 vols., C. Spicq) [1994]

TLOT *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (3 vols., E. Jenni) [1997]

TWOT *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (2 vols., Harris, Archer) [1980]

UBS[3] *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (3rd ed., Metzger et al.) [1975]

UBS[4] *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (4th corrected ed., Metzger et al.) [1993]

WH *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Westcott and Hort) [1882]

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis	Deut	Deuteronomy	1 Sam	1 Samuel
Exod	Exodus	Josh	Joshua	2 Sam	2 Samuel
Lev	Leviticus	Judg	Judges	1 Kgs	1 Kings
Num	Numbers	Ruth	Ruth	2 Kgs	2 Kings

1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Song	Song of Songs	Obad	Obadiah
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Isa	Isaiah	Jonah	Jonah
Ezra	Ezra	Jer	Jeremiah	Mic	Micah
Neh	Nehemiah	Lam	Lamentations	Nah	Nahum
Esth	Esther	Ezek	Ezekiel	Hab	Habakkuk
Job	Job	Dan	Daniel	Zeph	Zephaniah
Ps, Pss	Psalm, Psalms	Hos	Hosea	Hag	Haggai
Prov	Proverbs	Joel	Joel	Zech	Zechariah
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Amos	Amos	Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Matt	Matthew	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Mark	Mark	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
Luke	Luke	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
John	John	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Acts	Acts	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 John	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 John	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 John	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal	Galatians	Phlm	Philemon	Rev	Revelation

Deuterocanonical

Bar	Baruch	1–2 Esdr	1–2 Esdras	Ps 151	Psalm 151
Add Dan	Additions to Daniel	Add Esth	Additions to Esther	Sir	Sirach
Pr Azar	Prayer of Azariah	Ep Jer	Epistle of Jeremiah	Tob	Tobit
Bel	Bel and the Dragon	Jdt	Judith	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
Sg Three	Song of the Three Children	1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees		
		3–4 Macc	3–4 Maccabees		
Sus	Susanna	Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh		

MANUSCRIPTS AND LITERATURE FROM QUMRAN

Initial numerals followed by "Q" indicate particular caves at Qumran. For example, the notation 4Q267 indicates text 267 from cave 4 at Qumran. Further, 1QS 4:9-10 indicates column 4, lines 9-10 of the *Rule of the Community*; and 4Q166 1 ii 2 indicates fragment 1, column ii, line 2 of text 166 from cave 4. More examples of common abbreviations are listed below.

CD	Cairo Geniza copy of the *Damascus Document*	1QIsa[b]	Isaiah copy [b]	4QLam[a]	Lamentations
		1QM	*War Scroll*	11QPs[a]	Psalms
		1QpHab	*Pesher Habakkuk*	11QTemple[a,b]	*Temple Scroll*
1QH	*Thanksgiving Hymns*	1QS	*Rule of the Community*	11QtgJob	*Targum of Job*
1QIsa[a]	Isaiah copy [a]				

IMPORTANT NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

(all dates given are AD; ordinal numbers refer to centuries)

Significant Papyri (𝔓 = Papyrus)

𝔓1 Matt 1; early 3rd	same codex) 1 Cor 7–8, Phil 3–4; late 3rd	𝔓30 1 Thess 4–5; 2 Thess 1; early 3rd
𝔓4+𝔓64+𝔓67 Matt 3, 5, 26; Luke 1–6; late 2nd	𝔓20 Jas 2–3; 3rd	𝔓32 Titus 1–2; late 2nd
𝔓5 John 1, 16, 20; early 3rd	𝔓22 John 15–16; mid 3rd	𝔓37 Matt 26; late 3rd
𝔓13 Heb 2–5, 10–12; early 3rd	𝔓23 Jas 1; c. 200	𝔓39 John 8; first half of 3rd
𝔓15+𝔓16 (probably part of	𝔓27 Rom 8–9; 3rd	𝔓40 Rom 1–4, 6, 9; 3rd

𝔓45 Gospels and Acts; early 3rd

𝔓46 Paul's Major Epistles (less Pastorals); late 2nd

𝔓47 Rev 9–17; 3rd

𝔓49+𝔓65 Eph 4–5; 1 Thess 1–2; 3rd

𝔓52 John 18; c. 125

𝔓53 Matt 26, Acts 9–10; middle 3rd

𝔓66 John; late 2nd

𝔓70 Matt 2–3, 11–12, 24; 3rd

𝔓72 1–2 Peter, Jude; c. 300

𝔓74 Acts, General Epistles; 7th

𝔓75 Luke and John; c. 200

𝔓77+𝔓103 (probably part of same codex) Matt 13–14, 23; late 2nd

𝔓87 Philemon; late 2nd

𝔓90 John 18–19; late 2nd

𝔓91 Acts 2–3; 3rd

𝔓92 Eph 1, 2 Thess 1; c. 300

𝔓98 Rev 1:13-20; late 2nd

𝔓100 Jas 3–5; c. 300

𝔓101 Matt 3–4; 3rd

𝔓104 Matt 21; 2nd

𝔓106 John 1; 3rd

𝔓115 Rev 2–3, 5–6, 8–15; 3rd

Significant Uncials

א (Sinaiticus) most of NT; 4th

A (Alexandrinus) most of NT; 5th

B (Vaticanus) most of NT; 4th

C (Ephraemi Rescriptus) most of NT with many lacunae; 5th

D (Bezae) Gospels, Acts; 5th

D (Claromontanus), Paul's Epistles; 6th (different MS than Bezae)

E (Laudianus 35) Acts; 6th

F (Augensis) Paul's Epistles; 9th

G (Boernerianus) Paul's Epistles; 9th

H (Coislinianus) Paul's Epistles; 6th

I (Freerianus or Washington) Paul's Epistles; 5th

L (Regius) Gospels; 8th

P (Porphyrianus) Acts—Revelation; 9th

Q (Guelferbytanus B) Luke, John; 5th

T (Borgianus) Luke, John; 5th

W (Washingtonianus or the Freer Gospels) Gospels; 5th

Z (Dublinensis) Matthew; 6th

037 (Δ; Sangallensis) Gospels; 9th

038 (Θ; Koridethi) Gospels; 9th

040 (Ξ; Zacynthius) Luke; 6th

043 (Φ; Beratinus) Matthew, Mark; 6th

044 (Ψ; Athous Laurae) Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles; 9th

048 Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles; 5th

0171 Matt 10, Luke 22; c. 300

0189 Acts 5; c. 200

Significant Minuscules

1 Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles; 12th

33 All NT except Revelation; 9th

81 Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles; 1044

565 Gospels; 9th

700 Gospels; 11th

1424 (or Family 1424—a group of 29 manuscripts sharing nearly the same text) most of NT; 9th-10th

1739 Acts, Paul's Epistles; 10th

2053 Rev; 13th

2344 Rev; 11th

f[1] (a family of manuscripts including 1, 118, 131, 209) Gospels; 12th-14th

f[13] (a family of manuscripts including 13, 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, 1709—known as the Ferrar group) Gospels; 11th-15th

Significant Ancient Versions

SYRIAC (SYR)

syr[c] (Syriac Curetonian) Gospels; 5th

syr[s] (Syriac Sinaiticus) Gospels; 4th

syr[h] (Syriac Harklensis) Entire NT; 616

OLD LATIN (IT)

it[a] (Vercellenis) Gospels; 4th

it[b] (Veronensis) Gospels; 5th

it[d] (Cantabrigiensis—the Latin text of Bezae) Gospels, Acts, 3 John; 5th

it[e] (Palantinus) Gospels; 5th

it[k] (Bobiensis) Matthew, Mark; c. 400

COPTIC (COP)

cop[bo] (Boharic—north Egypt)

cop[fay] (Fayyumic—central Egypt)

cop[sa] (Sahidic—southern Egypt)

OTHER VERSIONS

arm (Armenian)

eth (Ethiopic)

geo (Georgian)

TRANSLITERATION AND NUMBERING SYSTEM

Note: For words and roots from nonbiblical languages (e.g., Arabic, Ugaritic), only approximate transliterations are given.

HEBREW/ARAMAIC

Consonants

א	*aleph*	= '	מ, ם	*mem*	= *m*
ב, בּ	*beth*	= *b*	נ, ן	*nun*	= *n*
ג, גּ	*gimel*	= *g*	ס	*samekh*	= *s*
ד, דּ	*daleth*	= *d*	ע	*ayin*	= '
ה	*he*	= *h*	פ, פּ, ף	*pe*	= *p*
ו	*waw*	= *w*	צ, ץ	*tsadhe*	= *ts*
ז	*zayin*	= *z*	ק	*qoph*	= *q*
ח	*heth*	= *kh*	ר	*resh*	= *r*
ט	*teth*	= *t*	שׁ	*shin*	= *sh*
י	*yodh*	= *y*	שׂ	*sin*	= *s*
כ, כּ, ך	*kaph*	= *k*	ת, תּ	*taw*	= *t, th* (spirant)
ל	*lamedh*	= *l*			

Vowels

	patakh	= *a*		*qamets khatuf*	= *o*
ח	*furtive patakh*	= *a*		*holem*	= *o*
	qamets	= *a*	ו	*full holem*	= *o*
ה	*final qamets he*	= *ah*		*short qibbuts*	= *u*
	segol	= *e*		*long qibbuts*	= *u*
	tsere	= *e*	ו	*shureq*	= *u*
	tsere yod	= *e*		*khatef patakh*	= *a*
	short hireq	= *i*		*khatef qamets*	= *o*
	long hireq	= *i*		*vocalic shewa*	= *e*
	hireq yod	= *i*		*patakh yodh*	= *a*

GREEK

α	*alpha*	= *a*	ι	*iota*	= *i*
β	*beta*	= *b*	κ	*kappa*	= *k*
γ	*gamma*	= *g, n (before* γ, κ, ξ, χ)	λ	*lamda*	= *l*
δ	*delta*	= *d*	μ	*mu*	= *m*
ε	*epsilon*	= *e*	ν	*nu*	= *n*
ζ	*zeta*	= *z*	ξ	*ksi*	= *x*
η	*eta*	= *ē*	ο	*omicron*	= *o*
θ	*theta*	= *th*	π	*pi*	= *p*
			ρ	*rho*	= *r* (ῥ = *rh*)

σ, ς	*sigma*	*= s*	ψ	*psi*	*= ps*
τ	*tau*	*= t*	ω	*omega*	*= ō*
υ	*upsilon*	*= u*	ʽ	*rough*	*= h (with*
φ	*phi*	*= ph*		*breathing*	*vowel or*
χ	*chi*	*= ch*		*mark*	*diphthong)*

THE TYNDALE–STRONG'S NUMBERING SYSTEM

The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series uses a word-study numbering system to give both newer and more advanced Bible students alike quicker, more convenient access to helpful original-language tools (e.g., concordances, lexicons, and theological dictionaries). Those who are unfamiliar with the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek alphabets can quickly find information on a given word by looking up the appropriate index number. Advanced students will find the system helpful because it allows them to quickly find the lexical form of obscure conjugations and inflections.

There are two main numbering systems used for biblical words today. The one familiar to most people is the Strong's numbering system (made popular by the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible*). Although the original Strong's system is still quite useful, the most up-to-date research has shed new light on the biblical languages and allows for more precision than is found in the original Strong's system. The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series, therefore, features a newly revised version of the Strong's system, the Tyndale-Strong's numbering system. The Tyndale-Strong's system brings together the familiarity of the Strong's system and the best of modern scholarship. In most cases, the original Strong's numbers are preserved. In places where new research dictates, new or related numbers have been added.[1]

The second major numbering system today is the Goodrick-Kohlenberger system used in a number of study tools published by Zondervan. In order to give students broad access to a number of helpful tools, the Commentary provides index numbers for the Zondervan system as well.

The different index systems are designated as follows:

TG   Tyndale-Strong's Greek number   ZH   Zondervan Hebrew number
ZG   Zondervan Greek number   TA/ZA   Tyndale/Zondervan Aramaic number
TH   Tyndale-Strong's Hebrew number   S   Strong's Aramaic number

So in the example, "love" *agapē* [^{TG}26, ^{ZG}27], the first number is the one to use with Greek tools keyed to the Tyndale-Strong's system, and the second applies to tools that use the Zondervan system.

The indexing of Aramaic terms differs slightly from that of Greek and Hebrew. Strong's original system mixed the Aramaic terms in with the Hebrew, but the Tyndale-Strong's system indexes Aramaic with a new set of numbers starting at 10,000. Since Tyndale's system for Aramaic diverges completely from original Strong's, the original Strong's number is listed separately so that those using tools keyed to Strong's can locate the information. This number is designated with an S, as in the example, "son" *bar* [$^{TA/ZA}$10120, ^{S}1247].

1. Generally, one may simply use the original four-digit Strong's number to identify words in tools using Strong's system. If a Tyndale-Strong's number is followed by a capital letter (e.g., ^{TG}1692A), it generally indicates an added subdivision of meaning for the given term. Whenever a Tyndale-Strong's number has a number following a decimal point (e.g., ^{TG}2013.1), it reflects an instance where new research has yielded a separate, new classification of use for a biblical word. Forthcoming tools from Tyndale House Publishers will include these entries, which were not part of the original Strong's system.

1–2 Samuel

J. Robert Vannoy

INTRODUCTION TO
1–2 Samuel

FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL bear the name of the prophet whom God used to establish kingship in Israel. It was Samuel who guided Israel through the important transition from the period of the judges to that of the monarchy. In a nutshell, this reorganization of the theocracy is the most important thing that happens in 1 and 2 Samuel. The account of the events surrounding this transition is interlaced with themes emphasizing divine sovereignty over all of human history and the reversal of human fortunes. As we follow the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David, we see that God is indeed the King of kings and that it is his prerogative to exalt the humble and bring down the proud.

AUTHOR

Although this book—for 1 and 2 Samuel are in fact one literary work—bears Samuel's name because of his prominent role in bringing about the transition to a monarchy, he was not its author. We know this because Samuel's death occurred during the lifetime of Saul and is reported in 1 Samuel 25:1. Many of the narratives of the book, and particularly those concerning the time of David's reign, describe events that clearly took place subsequent to Samuel's death. This, however, is not necessarily to say that the book contains no material from Samuel's hand. We know, for example, that Samuel, along with other prophets of his time, wrote about the events of his day (1 Chr 29:29 speaks of *The Record of Samuel the Seer*, *The Record of Nathan the Prophet*, and *The Record of Gad the Seer*). Certainly the anonymous author of 1–2 Samuel either incorporated or consulted sources from earlier times in order to narrate events from the more-than-130-year period in Israel's history that the book portrays. One such source is explicitly mentioned (2 Sam 1:18, *The Book of Jashar*) and others (1 Chr 27:24 refers to "King David's official records") were certainly used. But because the book of Samuel is anonymous and because there is not adequate information either from within the book itself or from external sources concerning the circumstances surrounding the time of its composition, it is not possible to speak with certainty about who its author may have been. Moreover, the authorship of 1–2 Samuel is something that cannot be considered in isolation. The reason for this is that one's conclusion about the date of authorship is inseparably tied to a host of other complex questions concerning the literary character of the book as well as the purpose of its composition.

DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING

The date for the composition of 1–2 Samuel is a matter on which there is little agreement among biblical scholars. Until recent times, most evangelical scholars opted for a date sometime shortly after the death of Solomon "perhaps about 920 or 900 BC" (Harrison 1969:709; cf. Young 1964:178). Among nonevangelical scholars there have been two broad categories of approach to the questions of date and authorship: In the first half of the twentieth century many attempted to apply the sort of documentary source analysis characteristic of Pentateuch studies to the books of Samuel. (In short, the idea was that four sometimes-parallel accounts, or literary sources, commonly cited as J, E, P, and D, were merged together into one larger work to form the Pentateuch.) The conclusion of many of these scholars was that the J and E documents of the Pentateuch could be traced on into Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (Budde 1890; Wellhausen 1899; Eissfeldt 1965). During the second half of the twentieth century, the majority of nonevangelical scholars shifted their viewpoint to some version of the Deuteronomistic History theory developed by Martin Noth in 1943. It was Noth's hypothesis that the entire corpus of Deuteronomy—2 Kings was for the most part the work of a single author (the "Deuteronomistic Historian") who wrote during the exilic period. Noth denied that the Pentateuchal sources of J, E, D, and P continued beyond the end of Deuteronomy. He argued that Deuteronomy itself consisted of old traditions recovered in 621 BC (the "law book" found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah; 2 Kgs 22) and originally consisted of only Deuteronomy 5–28. It was his view that the Deuteronomistic Historian of the exilic period added Deuteronomy 1–4 as an introduction to his entire history and then compiled Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings as his complete theological presentation of Israel's history—one governed by the ideals of the older materials of Deuteronomy. Noth built on the work of a number of scholars who had questioned the validity of the documentary theory of the composition of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and preferred to speak of self-contained tradition units rather than two or three parallel and continuous literary documents. Among the most important of these tradition units were the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4:1–7:1; 2 Sam 6–7),[1] the Narrative of Saul's Rise and End (1 Sam 9:1–10:16; chs 11; 13–14; 31); the Narrative of the Rise of David (1 Sam 16:14—2 Sam 5); and the Succession Narrative (sometimes also termed the Court History of David; 2 Sam 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2).

Of particular significance for the question of the time of 1–2 Samuel's composition is the so-called Succession Narrative, which spans the books of Samuel and Kings and terminates with David's death and the succession of Solomon to the throne. It was Rost (1926) who first argued that 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2 are two parts of an originally independent literary unit that was the product of a single author living in the time of Solomon and, most importantly, that its climax and conclusion are found in the report of Solomon's accession to the throne in 1 Kings 2.[2] If, as Rost's theory requires, there is no clear-cut division between the books of Samuel and Kings, because the "Succession Narrative" flows across the divide between the two books, then it would seem to suggest that the author or compiler of Kings was the author or compiler of Samuel as well. As Longman and Dillard

(2006:155) note, "The materials in 2 Samuel 21–24 are widely viewed as an intrusion to the Succession Narrative, separating the accession of Solomon (1 Kings 1–2) from the earlier narratives leading to that event." The Succession Narrative theory, then, fits nicely with Noth's Deuteronomistic History theory, which maintains that none of the historical books from Joshua to 2 Kings were written (at least in their present form) until the time of the Exile.

When one looks more closely at both the documentary source theory and the Deuteronomistic History theory as explanations of the origin and the nature of the composition of 1–2 Samuel, things quickly become much more complex. Within the documentary source theory, scholars are divided over whether the books of Samuel were the product of continuous sources or independent fragments. But whatever differences have surfaced in delineating the documents (and there are many), there is general agreement that in its final form the book reflects either a Deuteronomistic redaction, or else one of its later sources exhibits strong Deuteronomic influence. This in itself, however, brings along with it the inevitable conclusion that the book is to be dated comparatively late, that is, either during or after the Exile. The reason for this is the nearly axiomatic belief among mainstream biblical scholars that Deuteronomy is linked with the reform of Josiah and is to be dated to about 622 BC.[3] This dating for Deuteronomy was integral to Wellhausen's documentary source theory for the origin of the Pentateuch, and also to his reconstruction of the history of Israel's religious development.[4] It has remained a fundamental assumption of biblical scholars ever since. Moving the date of Deuteronomy away from the Mosaic era and placing it at the end of the kingdom period in the Old Testament inevitably has far-reaching implications for the literature of the Old Testament because theological ideas and linguistic expressions similar to those of Deuteronomy can be found in all of the historical books from Joshua to 2 Kings, as well as in many of the prophetic books. So the late dating of Deuteronomy has led to the conclusion that many other Old Testament books including 1–2 Samuel should be dated late as well.

It is of particular interest to me that some cracks are beginning to appear in the two most important theories that have influenced mainstream biblical scholars to adopt an exilic date for the final form of 1–2 Samuel. First of all, questions are increasingly being raised about Noth's Deuteronomistic History theory. Even though von Rad accepted Noth's literary thesis of a Deuteronomistic Historian and a Deuteronomistic History work, he disagreed from the very beginning with Noth's view of the aim or purpose of the work. Von Rad had misgivings concerning Noth's negative idea that the basic purpose of the Deuteronomistic History was to provide a theological explanation for the Exile as a necessary act of Yahweh's justice. Von Rad suggested that the Deuteronomistic Historian worked with a wide variety of traditional material that often did not readily accommodate itself to his basic theological attitude. For example, von Rad claimed that the material pertaining to the Davidic covenant is wholly un-Deuteronomic, and yet the Deuteronomistic Historian did not exclude it. Von Rad saw a basic conflict between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants, each reflecting different traditions and different interests. He said, "In taking up this strongly established tradition [David as the prototype of

a theocratic monarch, and a model of obedience] the Deuteronomist has moved right away from his native climate of the book of *Deuteronomy*, whence his theological viewpoint originates. The wide extent to which the Deuteronomist employs this tradition in his work shows that the Deuteronomic tradition in its purest form could not hold its ground here. The obviously very powerful messianic conception has broken in upon it and demanded a hearing" (von Rad 1947:218). Certainly von Rad was correct in seeing a significant emphasis on the Davidic covenant in both Samuel and Kings, as well as the implications that this carries for an eschatological or messianic dimension for Israel's future history (cf. Provan 1995b; Satterthwaite 1995). This sharply contrasts with Noth's idea of a finished history with no vision for the future.

This tension, reflected in the themes of curse and blessing, and more broadly in the concepts of law and grace, has continued to fuel discussion around the character and purpose of the Deuteronomistic History. The general trend among nonevangelical scholars has been to attempt to resolve the tension by means of diachronic literary analysis and by the suggestion that the present form of the Deuteronomistic History is the result of multiple redactions or layers. According to F. M. Cross, the Deuteronomistic History was composed in two phases (1973:274-289). In its first phase, which Cross links with Josiah's reform, it expressed a positive or favorable outlook on the house of David and the kings of Judah. But according to Cross, this version of the national history was revised subsequent to the Exile, and material fundamentally opposed to the monarchy, as well as sections anticipating the Exile, were inserted. This twofold redaction theory to explain the origin of what are viewed as conflicting trajectories in the Deuteronomistic History presently receives broad support, particularly among American nonevangelical scholars.[5]

The present state of Deuteronomistic History studies, however, reflects widening differences on many issues, including the date of its origin, its limits, its purpose and manner of construction, as well as the identity of the Deuteronomist(s) (Klement 2000:44-51). Coggins (1999:26) comments that "there is no external evidence of any kind [for this] wide-ranging and influential" movement and "the whole history of tradition has to be worked out by inference. Deuteronomistic influence may be traced, but there is still no agreement as to who the Deuteronomists were." Westermann (1994) has questioned the existence of a unified Deuteronomistic History and argues that each of the books from Joshua to Kings had its own development and was separately edited after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Römer (2003:240) expresses frustration related to "the so-called Deuteronomistic History, which I believed to be one of the most reliable constructs in Old Testament research but which is now more and more disputed." He goes on to suggest (2003:251) that some of the books of Deuteronomy—2 Kings are more likely a collection of diverse texts that "were already available *before* the creation of an encompassing historical work covering the time from Moses to the fall of Judah." McConville (1993) has pointed out that even though one may speak of the "deuteronomic" character of the books from Joshua to 2 Kings, there are also significant differences of perspective and theological concern in each of these books that also need to be recognized and accounted for. These differences argue against a single final author, and close

examination of the theology and content of each book shows adaptation to the concerns and needs of the people of God during a time much closer to the occurrence of the events described than to that of the exilic period. Auld (1999:116) has said, "Not only do I become less and less sure that I know *what* the Deuteronomists did in respect of the composition of the Former Prophets, I also wonder more and more with my British colleague Richard Coggins *whether* whoever-did-what should be called 'Deuteronomists.'" His inclination (1999:123) is to see the flow of influence as running backwards from Kings through Samuel to Deuteronomy, rather than the reverse. He says (1999:125), for example, that the "transition from Moses to Joshua is adapted from the transition from David to Solomon; as David did not built [sic] the holy 'place,' so Moses did not enter the land. The troubled period of Israel under the Judges follows on the Moses-Joshua story as the troubled story of Northern Israel follows on David-Solomon. An earlier story was built by redeveloping the classic story of Jerusalem's kings." Preuss (1993:394-395) suggests, in the conclusion to his summary of studies on the Deuteronomistic History from 1984–1991, that because of the different schools and models it seems that "every Old Testament scholar has fashioned not only his own theory of the composition of the Pentateuch, but also his own view of the Deuteronomistic History" (my translation).[6] R. R. Wilson (1999) goes so far as to say that recent research "may in fact have demonstrated, unwittingly, that the concept of Deuteronomism has become so amorphous that it no longer has any analytical precision and so ought to be abandoned. . . . Current trends in Deuteronomistic research may thus force scholars to take seriously the possibility that if everybody is the Deuteronomist, then there may be no Deuteronomist at all." Because of this unsettled nature of the contemporary scene in Deuteronomistic History studies, it is my view that one should be very cautious about drawing conclusions concerning the late date of the writing of 1–2 Samuel on the basis of its "Deuteronomistic" character.

Although in mainstream Old Testament studies, the late dating of Deuteronomy requires a late date for the historical books that carry a Deuteronomic imprint, a more nuanced approach is taken by some evangelical scholars who maintain that Deuteronomy is fundamentally a Mosaic book but nevertheless remain open to the idea that Samuel—Kings was edited during the exilic period by redactors who were looking at Israel's history from a Deuteronomic perspective. Longman and Dillard (2006:153) say that since "Samuel is part of the Deuteronomic History, most scholars view the final stages of its composition as the work of editors/authors during the period of the Exile; however, it is all but impossible to recover the compositional history of the book, and it may well have been produced in essentially its present form at a much earlier date." Because of the considerable uncertainties involved in the reconstruction of the compositional history of the book, as noted by Longman and Dillard, it is my view that it is preferable to regard the Deuteronomic character of the book as part and parcel of its original composition rather than as a secondary augmentation.[7] While the Deuteronomistic History hypothesis is not likely to disappear any time soon from the horizon of Old Testament studies, it is my view that evangelical scholars should be cautious about embracing it as a framework for their own studies.[8]

A second theory that has exerted considerable influence on moving biblical scholars to posit an exilic date for 1–2 Samuel is the Rostian Succession Narrative hypothesis, which has worked hand in glove with the Deuteronomistic History theory.[9] As noted above, Rost argued that 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2 were originally a single narrative unit and that "succession to the throne" was its central theme. In Rost's view, the original unity of this narrative is presently obscured by the "appendices in 2 Sam 21–24 which belong to various different sources" (1982:80). Recent studies have disputed this conclusion from a number of directions. Most importantly, Keys (1996) has thoroughly and convincingly challenged the idea that 2 Samuel 10–20 should be linked with 1 Kings 1–2. In her view, 2 Samuel 10–20 is not so much concerned with the succession of Solomon but rather with a theological evaluation of David.[10] The opening chapters of Kings are not the conclusion to the David account, but rather the introduction to the reign of Solomon.[11] At the same time, Klement (2000) has convincingly demonstrated that 2 Samuel 21–24 are not simply extraneous miscellaneous appendages to 1–2 Samuel, but rather are an appropriate conclusion for the entire book, as well as a key for discerning its structural framework (see "Literary Style," below). Rosenberg (1987:123-124) suggests that the "two widely accepted results of source-criticism—Leonhard Rost's notion of a tenth-century BCE 'Succession History' (2 Sam 11—1 Kings 2) and Martin Noth's notion of a sixth- or fifth-century 'Deuteronomic History' (Deut—2 Kings) have tended to obscure the literary character of the Samuel books by depriving them both of their autonomy as books and of the commonality of texture and perspective that unites them with most other books of the Hebrew Bible."

In view of the strong defense that has been made by a number of evangelical scholars for continuing to regard the book of Deuteronomy as belonging to the Mosaic era, or at least very close to it,[12] and in view of the host of questions being raised concerning the validity of both the Deuteronomistic History and the Succession Narrative theories, it is somewhat puzzling that a number of evangelical scholars have moved toward acceptance of an exilic date for 1–2 Samuel.[13] There seems to be good reason to retain the earlier consensus that the composition of 1–2 Samuel is best placed either during or shortly after the time of Solomon. This not only avoids enmeshment in many of the questionable assumptions concerning the date of Deuteronomy and the validity of the Deuteronomistic History and the Succession Narrative theories, but it also provides a better foundation for recognition of the uniqueness not only of 1–2 Samuel, but of each of the historical books from Joshua to Kings. As McConville (1993:77) has suggested, we should be careful not to prejudge "whether the different books that compose DtH [the Deuteronomistic History] might have distinctive theological concerns of their own, distinguishing them from each other."[14] Walters (2002:66) has called attention to several linguistic peculiarities[15] in 1–2 Samuel that suggest "that Samuel as a book had circulation and use independently of the books around it." Webb (1987:211) comes to a similar conclusion in connection with his study of the book of Judges, which he views as a distinct literary unit. In his opinion differences between the various historical books are "perhaps better accounted for in terms of an edited series of books than in terms of a series of more-or-less arbitrary units concealing an originally unified work."

On this basis Webb calls for a reopening of the question of how the Deuteronomic History came into existence.

Moving the origin of the present form of 1–2 Samuel away from the exilic period and placing it closer to the historical period about which it speaks does not, however, eliminate its anonymity. The book itself gives no indication of the author's identity. The realism of the description of David's reign in 2 Samuel 10–20 has led some scholars to suggest that the author was a contemporary, or near contemporary, to the events described, and that he wrote during the reign of Solomon. References, however, to "Israel and Judah" (1 Sam 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam 5:5; 24:1-9), as well as the expression "kings of Judah" in 1 Samuel 27:6 suggest that the author must have lived after Solomon's death and the division of the kingdom in 931 BC. Keys (1996:88) argues that 2 Samuel 10–20 "never had an independent existence, but was transmitted with the rest of the book from its initial composition." This conclusion, which seems to merit serious consideration, suggests that the author of 2 Samuel 10–20 was the author or compiler of the entire book. Although we do not know who this person was, and there is no need to give the writer a name as some have attempted to do,[16] it is certainly reasonable to conclude that the author was someone who stood in the prophetic tradition, and who lived in the early days of the divided kingdom period that began in 931 BC.[17]

AUDIENCE

The uncertainties associated with the compositional history of 1–2 Samuel complicate precise specification of the original audience for the book. The references to "Israel and Judah" and the "kings of Judah" mentioned in the previous paragraph do suggest that the book was written after the division of the kingdom in 931 BC. When an early date for Deuteronomy (Mosaic era, or close to it) is accepted, then the Deuteronomic language and concepts embedded in the narratives of 1–2 Samuel need not require a date subsequent to the reformation of Josiah (c. 622 BC) as is often assumed. While the realism of the narrative material, particularly in the description of David's reign, is a possible indicator of temporal proximity to David's reign, this quality is certainly not decisive in dating the book.

Perhaps the most important general indicator for suggesting an original audience early in the divided kingdom period is the book's focus on the themes of kingship and covenant. Israel's request for a king was a denial of the covenant and a rejection of the Lord, who was Israel's king. The Lord nevertheless told Samuel to give Israel a king, but in so doing, to define the role of the human king in terms consistent with Israel's covenant with the Lord. Israel's first king, Saul, failed to live up to this covenantal ideal and was therefore rejected. His successor, David, is presented as a true, although imperfect, representative of the ideal of covenantal kingship. In the books of 1 and 2 Kings, David is regularly presented as the standard by which subsequent kings are appraised, and the theme of kingship and covenant, introduced in 1–2 Samuel, is carried through until the time of the Exile. Throughout the entire kingdom period, the interface of the concepts of kingship and covenant was fundamental for Israel's self-understanding as a people who were simultaneously ruled by their divine sovereign, while being organized under the political structure of the

"unconditional" covenants because of their promissory nature, and then contrasted with the Sinai covenant, which is viewed as a "law covenant" and considered "conditional" in nature. The terms "promissory" and "unconditional" as applied to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants and the terms "law" and "conditional" as applied to the Sinai covenant certainly have some validity as indicators of the primary emphasis found in each of these covenants. Yet it must be noticed that the Sinai or "law" covenant is not completely without a promissory element (cf. Judg 2:1; 1 Sam 12:22), and the promissory nature of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants does not mean that they entail no law or obligation (cf. Gen 12:1; 17:1; 2 Sam 7:14-15; 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 9:4, 5; Ps 89:30-33). From these texts it is clear that both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants brought obligations on those to whom the promise was given. In the Davidic covenant it seems clear that the conditionality referred to in the above texts pertains to individual participation in the promised blessings, but not to the certainty of the fulfillment of the promise itself. Here it becomes clear that the Davidic covenant is not only an extension of the Abrahamic promise, but it is also entwined with the Sinai covenant in connection with individual participation in its benefits. Failure to live up to these obligations would invalidate the benefits of the covenant to the person involved (cf. Jer 22:30), but it would not jeopardize the ultimate fulfillment of the promise through the line of Abraham and David.

A survey of Israel's subsequent history reveals that David's descendants (not to mention the line of kings in the northern kingdom) failed more miserably than David had in living up to the ideal of the covenantal king. As it became increasingly apparent that the Davidic kings were unworthy of the high office to which they were called, the prophets and psalmists of Israel began to speak of a future king who would come in the line of David—one who would be a worthy occupant of his throne. The surprising thing about this future king is that he is not only spoken of as a descendant of David, but he is also spoken of in terms of deity (see, e.g., Pss 2; 45; 72; 110; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; Jer 23:5, 6; 33:15, 16; Mic 5:2). Unblemished covenantal kingship would only be completely realized when God himself entered human history in the person of Jesus, to sit on the throne of his father David (humanly speaking) and to rule in righteousness and justice forever (Matt 1; Luke 1:32-33, 67-80; Rev 22:16).

OUTLINE

   I. The Historical Setting for the Establishment of Kingship in Israel
     (1 Sam 1:1–7:17)
     A. Samuel's Birth; Judgment Pronounced on the Elides;
       Samuel Becomes a Prophet (1 Sam 1:1–4:1a)
       1. Samuel's birth (1 Sam 1:1-28)
         a. Elkanah's family (1 Sam 1:1-3)
         b. Hannah's sorrow (1 Sam 1:4-8)
         c. Hannah's vow (1 Sam 1:9-11)
         d. Hannah and Eli (1 Sam 1:12-18)
         e. Samuel's birth (1 Sam 1:19-23)
         f. Hannah presents Samuel to the Lord at Shiloh (1 Sam 1:24-28)

ENDNOTES

1. For more discussion about the existence of an independent Ark Narrative, see endnote 1 in the commentary on 1 Sam 4. In short, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the so-called Ark Narratives ever existed as an independent tradition; see the arguments in Smelik 1989.

2. Prior to Rost this material was generally designated the Family History of David (Thenius 1864:192), the Court History of David (Smith 1912:xxvi) or some other similar title. The unit was normally limited to material within 2 Samuel (although Wellhausen [1899:259] had very early on linked 1 Kgs 1–2 with 2 Sam 9–20 as part of the same source document). It was usually viewed as beginning with either 2 Sam 10 or 11 and running through ch 20. Rost's "discovery" of the idea of succession to the throne within this material quickly gained widespread acceptance. This led to the displacement of the earlier designations for this block of material among most mainstream biblical scholars, and it brought about the nearly unanimous consensus that it crossed the boundary between the books of Samuel and Kings. See further Keys (1996:14-15).

3. Wenham (1985:15) notes that "in the whirlpool of conflicting modern theories, one point in the critical consensus has escaped serious challenge: namely, the date of Deuteronomy. It is well-nigh universally assumed by mainstream scholarship that Deuteronomy was written in the late seventh century and should be associated with Josiah's reform c. 622 BC." Weinfeld (1996:38) comments, "King Josiah of Judah instituted a religious reform in 622 BCE that scholars refer to simply as Josiah's Reform. It might well be called the Deuteronomic Reform. Israelite religion would never be the same."

4. G. W. Anderson (1951:283), in discussing the approach to the religion of Israel referred to as Wellhausenism, says, "At no point has the conflict been keener than in connection with the date and nature of Deuteronomy, the *keystone* in the Wellhausen system of chronology. If there is serious uncertainty here, the entire structure of the theory is weakened and may collapse" (my italics). Eissfeldt (1965:71) speaks of the dating of Deuteronomy as a "point of Archimedes" by means of which Pentateuchal criticism can deliver itself from the bonds of church and synagogue tradition and provide an alternate dating for the Pentateuch and its various parts. Other similar expressions have been used to highlight the crucial significance of the late date of Deuteronomy for the critical analysis of the OT and its literature for nonevangelical scholars. Dahl (1928:360) calls the date of Deuteronomy the "keystone of the arch of OT research." Other designations include "a fixed point," and a "sort of Meridian of Greenwich" (ibid). For a thorough discussion of this entire issue see M. J. Paul (1988).

5. As McConville (1997:4) notes, "The advantage of Cross's work is that it accommodates the positive material on the monarchy rather better than Noth's theory could do. Against it is the sudden change of direction that has to be assumed when Dtr2 revises Dtr1."

COMMENTARY ON

1–2 Samuel

◆ **I. The Historical Setting for the Establishment of Kingship in Israel (1 Sam 1:1–7:17)**

A. Samuel's Birth; Judgment Pronounced on the Elides; Samuel Becomes a Prophet (1 Sam 1:1–4:1a)

1. Samuel's birth (1 Sam 1:1–28)

a. Elkanah's family (1 Sam 1:1-3)

There was a man named Elkanah who lived in Ramah in the region of Zuph* in the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, of Ephraim. ²Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah did not. ³Each year Elkanah would travel to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lᴏʀᴅ of Heaven's Armies at the Tabernacle. The priests of the Lᴏʀᴅ at that time were the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas.

1:1 As in Greek version; Hebrew reads *in Ramathaim-zophim;* compare 1:19.

NOTES

1:1 *Ramah in the region of Zuph.* The KJV and NASB translate the Hebrew *haramathayim tsopim* as "Ramathaim-zophim," which is a geographical designation. The NIV and NEB translate the phrase as "Ramathaim, a Zuphite" which takes *haramathayim* [ᵀᴴ7436A, ᶻᴴ8259] as the name of the place of Elkanah's residence, and *tsopim* [ᵀᴴ6690.3, ᶻᴴ7435] as a designation of the clan to which Elkanah belonged. This is supported by the statement in 1:1b that Elkanah was a descendant of Zuph, and by the reference to the land of Zuph in 9:5. In 1:19 and 2:11 Elkanah is said to reside in Ramah (*haramah*). It seems likely that *haramathayim* is an alternate form, used only here, for the name Ramah. The *-ayim* sufformative is probably locative rather than dual (compare Gath/Gittaim; see note on 2 Sam 21:9; B. Mazar 1954:230). This is likely the same Ramah where Samuel later established his headquarters (7:15-17) after the destruction of Shiloh.

1:2 *Elkanah had two wives.* Although the creation narrative (Gen 2:24), as well as certain sections of the Wisdom Literature (cf. Prov 5:15-20; 18:22; 31:10-31), clearly imply monogamous marriage as God's standard for the marital relationship, bigamy and polygamy came to be tolerated in ancient Israel as socially acceptable (e.g., Esau, Jacob, Gideon, Saul, David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Ahab, Jehoram). The words Jesus spoke about regulations for divorce in the Mosaic law ("Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended," Matt 19:8) apply equally well to polygamy. Just as with divorce, polygamy is not explicitly prohibited in the Mosaic law but instead regulated in order to ameliorate its destructive effects (Deut 21:15-17). As Wright (1983:177) observes, "The story of Elkanah and his rival wives (ch 1) was hardly

written for the primary purpose of criticizing bigamy, but it is a vivid illustration of the potential agonies it can produce." See further ISBE 3.901-902; Kaiser 1983:182-190.

1:3 *the Lord of Heaven's Armies.* Lit., "the Lord of Hosts" (*yhwh tseba'oth* [TH3068/6635, ZH3378/7372]). This is the first occurrence in the OT of what becomes a common title for the God of Israel (there are 260 occurrences of it in the OT, mostly in Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). It appears to be a shortened form of "the Lord God of Hosts" (*yhwh 'elohe tseba'oth;* cf. 2 Sam 5:10; Hos 12:5 [6]; Amos 3:13; 4:13). The precise significance of *tseba'oth* in the title has long been discussed with no consensus achieved. By itself it is used to designate the armies of Israel (17:45; cf. Deut 20:4), celestial bodies (Deut 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3-5; 23:4-5; Isa 40:26), or heavenly creatures such as angels (1 Kgs 22:19; Pss 103:21; 148:2). Vos (1975:243) comments, "Jehovah of Hosts is His royal name. It designates Him as the almighty King both in nature and history [Ps 103:19-22; Isa 6:5; 24:23; Jer 46:18; 48:15; 51:57]." Whatever its specific meaning in the title, which may in fact vary in different contexts, it clearly seems to be intended to depict Israel's God as supreme over all powers in heaven and earth. The LXX either transliterates the term (*sabaōth* [TG4519, ZG4877]), or renders it by *kurios pantokratōr* [TG2962/3841, ZG3261/4120] (Lord Almighty) or *kurios tōn dunameōn* [TG1411, ZG1539] (Lord of the Powers). Because Rom 9:29 and Jas 5:4 also transliterate the term, as was sometimes done in the LXX, "Sabaoth" is often transliterated in modern languages, producing phrases such as "the Lord Sabaoth" and "the Lord of Sabaoth."

C O M M E N T A R Y

The narratives of 1 Samuel 1–7 do three important things: (1) They present Samuel as a faithful leader who serves in the multiple roles of prophet, priest, and judge; (2) they depict the disastrous situation into which Israel had fallen by turning away from covenant faithfulness during the period of the judges; and (3) they clearly show that Israel had no legitimate reason for desiring to have a king like the nations around them. All of these things are important for understanding the conditions attending the establishment of the monarchy under Samuel's direction in 1 Samuel 8–12.

First and Second Samuel depict Israel's momentous transition from the period of the judges to that of the monarchy. These books do not provide us with a detailed political history of this time, but are rather, for the most part, a collection of biographical stories pertaining to the leading personas in this period of Israel's history, namely, Samuel (chs 1–12), Saul (chs 13–31), and David (2 Sam 1–24). The narrative reaches its climax with the kingship of David, and particularly with God's promise to him that his dynasty would endure forever (2 Sam 7).

Even though the central focus of the narratives of 1–2 Samuel is the rise and reign of David, the story begins with the birth of Samuel rather than with the birth of David. When David appears on the scene in later chapters, there is still no description of his birth but only the story of his being chosen and anointed by Samuel when he was a young man. By this rhetorical means, the narrator, from the very beginning of his account, subordinates David's position as king to the word and work of the prophet Samuel.

Samuel was born during a dark period of Israel's history. The religious and moral deterioration characteristic of this time is clearly portrayed in the two stories appended to the book of Judges: A private sanctuary is robbed of its idols and priest

(Judg 17–18); and a civil war is fought against Benjamin because of the rape and murder of a woman traveler (Judg 19–21). Yet contrary to outward appearances, God was still at work among his people. The book of Ruth shows us that in the private sphere of family life the Lord was even then preparing the line from which David would be born (Ruth 4:18-22).

First Samuel 1 reveals that the Lord was also at work in another family, even though this family also had a dark side: In the household of Elkanah there was internal strife. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah was barren but Peninnah was not. Peninnah used her own fecundity to torment Hannah. In this situation, the Lord intervened on the side of Hannah. As de Jong (1978:51) suggests, Samuel was born not by might nor by power, not by the will of man nor by the will of the flesh, but according to the Lord's will. In fact, it is the Lord who is at the center of the entire narrative.[1] It was the Lord who had closed Hannah's womb (1:5-6); and the Lord who remembered her (1:19); and Hannah confesses at the end of the chapter that it was the Lord who had granted her request (1:27). It is clear that the Lord is faithful to his people when they are ready and willing to submit to him in faith, obedience, and worship. It is Hannah who personifies these qualities.

As a prelude of things to come, this chapter also introduces the reader to the high priest, Eli, and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. Eli is presented as a priest who is deficient in spiritual discernment but dutiful in his priestly tasks. No hint is given about the personal qualities of Hophni and Phinehas.

The first chapter begins with an introductory formula ("There was a man," 1:1) that is also found at the beginning of the Samson narratives (Judg 13:2). The formula suggests that what follows is to be read as the beginning of a new sequence of narratives in the context of the preceding stories of the judges. The man about whom the narrative speaks is Elkanah, who lived in the hill country of Ephraim. Hannah, one of Elkanah's two wives, remained barren. The familiar biblical theme of the barren wife (e.g., Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Samson's mother) raises the prospect, if not the expectation, of divine intervention on Hannah's behalf. This potentiality is heightened when the reader learns in 1:5 that "the Lord had given her no children."

Every year Elkanah and his family went to Shiloh to worship at the Tabernacle. Elkanah was evidently a godly man and consistent in his performance of ritual observances. Whether the yearly trip to Shiloh was occasioned by one of the three annual festivals (Passover, Festival of Harvest, Festival of Shelters; see Exod 23:14-19; 34:23; Deut 16:16-17) or was a special family observance is not made explicit in the text.[2] Perhaps it was the Festival of Shelters, the most exuberant of Israel's feasts and the one at which the participants celebrated God's care for his people during the wilderness wandering (Lev 23:43), as well as his blessing in the recent harvest (Deut 16:13-15).[3] In any case, at Shiloh Elkanah brought his sacrifices and worshiped "the Lord of Heaven's Armies" (see note on 1:3). It is particularly significant that this designation for Yahweh appears for the first time in the Old Testament in these narratives, which prepare the way for the establishment of kingship in Israel. At this time in history, Israel was extraordinarily in need of a reminder of the power and sovereignty of Yahweh, its Great King.

ENDNOTES

1. Brueggemann (1990b:47) notes that while the focus of 1 Samuel is on David, behind David is Saul and behind Saul is Samuel. But then we are still required to ask, "Whence comes Samuel?" Brueggemann responds, "The answer of course is that behind Samuel stands Hannah, frail, distressed, weeping, not eating. It is Hannah who finally dares to pray and to vow, to receive, to yield, and to worship. Israel's monarchy, we are told, begins in this voiceless voice of hopeless hope. . . . And behind Hannah? There is only Yahweh who closes wombs, who remembers, who answers prayers, and gives sons. There is only Yahweh and Yahweh has initiated the sequence of Hannah, Samuel, Saul and David *ex nihilo*, out of nothing but hurt brought to voice, hope dared, uttered fidelity, petitions risked, and vows kept."

2. Haran (1969:22) has argued that this is a "unique family custom not mentioned in any of the Pentateuchal law-codes which was observed once a year, independent of any definite date."

3. Judges 21:19 refers to an "annual festival of the LORD held in Shiloh." Since this festival is spoken of in connection with "vineyards" (Judg 21:20) and may have been held at the time of the grape harvest, it is often taken as a reference to the Festival of Shelters (Wolf 1992:505). Perhaps the same festival is in view here.

◆   **b. Hannah's sorrow (1 Sam 1:4–8)**

⁴On the days Elkanah presented his sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to Peninnah and each of her children. ⁵And though he loved Hannah, he would give her only one choice portion* because the LORD had given her no children. ⁶So Peninnah would taunt Hannah and make fun of her because the LORD had kept her from having children. ⁷Year after year it was the same—Peninnah would taunt Hannah as they went to the Tabernacle.* Each time, Hannah would be reduced to tears and would not even eat.

⁸"Why are you crying, Hannah?" Elkanah would ask. "Why aren't you eating? Why be downhearted just because you have no children? You have me—isn't that better than having ten sons?"

1:5 Or *And because he loved Hannah, he would give her a choice portion.* The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.   **1:7** Hebrew *the house of the LORD;* also in 1:24.

NOTES

1:4 *he would give portions of the meat.* From Lev 3; 7:11-21, 28-34, we learn that the ritual for the fellowship offering (sometimes called the peace offering) included a sacrificial meal. Both the priest and those who offered the sacrifice ate a part of the sacrificed animal. The fat was burned, and the blood was sprinkled on the altar.

1:5 *only one choice portion because the LORD had given her no children.* Or, "And because he loved Hannah, he would give her a choice portion because the LORD had given her no children." The Hebrew of this phrase is difficult. The difficulty centers in the word *'appayim* (NLT, "choice") which normally means "both nostrils," "anger," or "face." The NIV and NASB, following Keil and others, understand the expression *manah* [TH4490, ZH4950] *'akhath 'appayim* to mean "one portion for two persons (i.e., faces)" or a "double portion." The KJV (much like NLT), following the Targum, renders the expression "a worthy portion" (i.e., "a portion of the face" in the sense of a portion of honor). Both of these suggestions, however, seem somewhat contrived in their attempt to produce an acceptable meaning. It has been widely recognized that the LXX (Vaticanus) provides a sensible and, given the

alternatives, probably the preferable reading (*plēn hoti* [TG4133/3754, ZG4440/4022], "except that") that presupposes a minor modification of the MT to *'epes ki* [TH657A/3588, ZH700/3954] (nevertheless), in place of *'appayim ki* [TH639/3588, ZH678/3954] (cf. Num 13:28; Deut 15:4; Judg 4:9). The idea of the statement, then, is that even though Hannah received only one portion, this was not because Elkanah did not love her, but simply because she was barren. In addition, he recognized that her condition was not simply misfortune, but was due to an intervention of the Lord.

1:6 *Peninnah would taunt Hannah.* Lit., "Her rival, however, provoked her intensely to aggravate her." Peninnah is designated *tsarathah* [TH6869A, ZH7651] (her rival), which is a technical term for a rival wife in Syriac and Arabic (S. R. Driver 1913:9) but is used only here in the Hebrew OT. The term suggests that Peninnah had become a second wife to Elkanah subsequent to his marriage to Hannah, perhaps even because of Hannah's barrenness. The verbal form of the same root occurs in this sense in Lev 18:18. McCarter (1980b:60) notes that the "Hebrew *tsarah* became virtually a technical, legal designation for a man's second wife in the Talmudic period, when bigamy was permitted (though not encouraged) until its general prohibition in the tenth century CE."

C O M M E N T A R Y

When the time came for distribution of portions of the sacrificial meal to the family members, Hannah received only one portion. This was not because Elkanah did not love her, but simply because Hannah had no children. Hannah's barrenness is rhetorically emphasized by a repetition (1:5) of the statement that the Lord had closed her womb (1:2). Her sterility, however, provides the occasion for Peninnah (her rival, see note on 1:6) to taunt her and cause her great emotional distress. This unjust treatment of Hannah by Peninnah highlights the contrast between the two women, one of whom is cruel and arrogant and the other afflicted and crushed. Similar contrasts are drawn between other individuals throughout 1–2 Samuel (e.g., Eli's sons and Samuel; Saul and David; Saul and Jonathan; Michal and Abigail). So here, even before his birth, Samuel is aligned with the side of honor and godliness through his oppressed but pious mother (cf. Eslinger 1985:73).

◆   **c. Hannah's vow (1 Sam 1:9–11)**

⁹Once after a sacrificial meal at Shiloh, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli the priest was sitting at his customary place beside the entrance of the Tabernacle.* ¹⁰Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the LORD. ¹¹And she made this vow: "O LORD of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the LORD, his hair will never be cut.*"

1:9 Hebrew *the Temple of the LORD.*   **1:11** Some manuscripts add *He will drink neither wine nor intoxicants.*

N O T E S

1:9 *Eli the priest.* Previously Eli's two sons were introduced as priests at Shiloh (1:3). It is to be understood that Eli was the high priest (see 2:28), although no specific term is used. Prior to this point in Scripture, the term for "high priest" (*hakkohen haggadol* [TH3548/1419,

◆ **VI. David Becomes King over Judah (2 Sam 1:1–3:1)**
   **A. The Deaths of Saul and Jonathan Reported to David
      (2 Sam 1:1–16)**

After the death of Saul, David returned from his victory over the Amalekites and spent two days in Ziklag. ²On the third day a man arrived from Saul's army camp. He had torn his clothes and put dirt on his head to show that he was in mourning. He fell to the ground before David in deep respect.

³"Where have you come from?" David asked.

"I escaped from the Israelite camp," the man replied.

⁴"What happened?" David demanded. "Tell me how the battle went."

The man replied, "Our entire army fled from the battle. Many of the men are dead, and Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead."

⁵"How do you know Saul and Jonathan are dead?" David demanded of the young man.

⁶The man answered, "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and there was Saul leaning on his spear with the enemy chariots and charioteers closing in on him. ⁷When he turned and saw me, he cried out for me to come to him. 'How can I help?' I asked him.

⁸"He responded, 'Who are you?'

"'I am an Amalekite,' I told him.

⁹"Then he begged me, 'Come over here and put me out of my misery, for I am in terrible pain and want to die.'

¹⁰"So I killed him," the Amalekite told David, "for I knew he couldn't live. Then I took his crown and his armband, and I have brought them here to you, my lord."

¹¹David and his men tore their clothes in sorrow when they heard the news. ¹²They mourned and wept and fasted all day for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the LORD's army and the nation of Israel, because they had died by the sword that day.

¹³Then David said to the young man who had brought the news, "Where are you from?"

And he replied, "I am a foreigner, an Amalekite, who lives in your land."

¹⁴"Why were you not afraid to kill the LORD's anointed one?" David asked.

¹⁵Then David said to one of his men, "Kill him!" So the man thrust his sword into the Amalekite and killed him. ¹⁶"You have condemned yourself," David said, "for you yourself confessed that you killed the LORD's anointed one."

N O T E S

1:1 *Amalekites.* This follows the gentilic *ha'amaleqi* [ᵀᴴ1886.1/6003, ᶻᴴ2021/6668] found in several Hebrew mss and the Syriac. As Smith (1912) and others have pointed out, normal Hebrew usage would require either *'amaleq* or *ha'amaleqi* rather than MT's *ha'amaleq* [ᵀᴴ1886.1/6002, ᶻᴴ2021/6667].

1:4 *Many.* The word *harbeh* [ᵀᴴ7235D, ᶻᴴ2221] (to make numerous) functions as the subject of the verb, although it is a Hiphil infinitive absolute in form (cf. BDB 915).

1:6 *I happened to be.* The word *niqreti,* preceded by the infinitive absolute *niqro'* [ᵀᴴ7122, ᶻᴴ7925], appears to be the Lamedh-He/Yodh verb *qarah* [ᵀᴴ7136, ᶻᴴ7936] but with the vowels appropriate for the Lamedh-Aleph verb *qara'* [ᵀᴴ7122, ᶻᴴ7925]. See Joüon and Muraoka §79l and GKC §75rr. The construction of the infinitive absolute followed by the finite verb gives emphasis to the verbal idea, thus as A. Anderson (1989:4) suggests, it could mean "it was entirely by chance that I happened to be. . . ." If the verbs are read as coming from *qara',* the translation would be "I was called to. . . ."

charioteers. The expression *uba'ale happarashim* [TH1167/6571, ZH1251/7304] (lit., "owners of horses" or "owners of horsemen") is found only here in the OT. The LXX renders it as *hoi hipparchai* [TG2460, ZG2689] (the commanders of cavalry).

1:9 *terrible pain.* The word *hashabats* [TH7661, ZH8688] is a hapax legomenon. Its meaning is uncertain. NEB and NIV render it "the throes of death." A. Anderson (1989:4) suggests "the hand of death." McCarter (1984:59-60) suggests "dizziness."

and want to die. Lit., "But my life is still wholly within me."

1:12 *the LORD's army.* The LXX has "Judah's army," reading *yehudah* [TH3063, ZH3373] for *yhwh* [TH3068, ZH3378], a difference of only one letter in unpointed Hebrew text.

1:13 *a foreigner . . . who lives in your land.* The term *ger* [TH1616, ZH1731] designates a resident alien (BDB 158, "dwellers in Israel with certain conceded, not inherited rights") in distinction from a common foreigner. NIDOTTE 1.836-837 says, "The sojourner is distinguished from the foreigner in that he has settled in the land for some time and is recognized as having a special status. As individuals or a group they have abandoned their homeland for political or economic reasons and sought refuge in another community, as Abraham in Hebron (Gen 23:4), Moses in Midian (Exod 2:22), Elimelech and his family in Moab (Ruth 1:1), or the Israelites in Egypt (Exod 22:20 [22:21 in ET])." It stands to reason that a resident alien is subject to the laws of the land where he resides. Fokkelman (1986:644) views this resident alien status of the Amalekite as "the juridical basis of David's attitude and decision. David is clearly of the opinion that as a member of the Israelite community the man should be familiar with and respect such an important prohibition as the taboo concerning the king."

1:15 *one of his men.* That is, one of his attendants.

Kill him! Lit., "Come here and strike him!" See Joüon and Muraoka §177e for asyndetic connection between two imperatives.

COMMENTARY

The opening narrative of 2 Samuel sets the stage for the transition from Saul's reign to David's. The closing narrative of 1 Samuel has already reported the deaths of Saul's three sons, including Jonathan, in Israel's battle with the Philistines at Mount Gilboa (1 Sam 31:2). It has also described how a seriously wounded Saul took his own life by falling upon his sword after his armor bearer refused to put him out of his misery (1 Sam 31:3-4). In this ensuing narrative a messenger comes to David in Ziklag (cf. 1 Sam 30:26-31) and announces what the reader already knows—both Saul and Jonathan are dead. But the messenger's report about the manner of Saul's death differs in significant ways from the account of the same event in 1 Samuel 31. The messenger, who is twice identified as an Amalekite (2 Sam 1:8, 13), bowed in homage before David (1:2) and told him that he was the one who had killed Saul at Saul's own request.[1] He then presented David with Saul's crown and armband as evidence that what he said was true (1:10). So in consecutive narratives the reader is confronted with two obviously conflicting reports of how Saul died. Either the Amalekite messenger lied to David or the report of 1 Samuel 31 is erroneous in its description of how Saul died. Both of these conclusions have been drawn by interpreters of these chapters,[2] but it would seem that the narrator intends the reader to understand that his own report (1 Sam 31) is the authentic version (see Fokkelman's [1984] detailed argumentation for this conclusion based

on literary analysis).[3] This means that the Amalekite's spurious story was based on his mistaken assumption that David desired to wrest the throne from Saul and that David would reward him handsomely for taking the life of his political rival.[4]

This brings the reader to the central question raised by this narrative unit. How would David respond to the Amalekite's message? Would he be taken in by his strategy and rejoice in the death of Saul and his most likely successor, Jonathan? Would he reward the Amalekite as a bearer of good tidings and the facilitator of his own ascent to royal status in Israel? Or would he rise above the enticement of personal ambition and demonstrate the same high regard for the inviolability of the royal office in Israel that he had displayed on previous occasions (cf. 1 Sam 24:6, 10; 26:16, 23)? David's response was not at all what the messenger expected. Immediately upon hearing the news, David and his associates reacted by exhibiting profound sorrow for the nation's great loss (1:11-12). David then posed further questions to the messenger and when he learned that he was a resident alien (see note on 1:13), he asked him why he had not been afraid to kill "the Lord's anointed one" (1:14).[5] As a resident alien, the Amalekite should have known and understood the inviolable nature of the royal office in Israel. Then, without waiting for a reply to the question about the killing of Saul, David commanded one of his men to put this self-condemned Amalekite to death for his offense. In this act David vindicated himself from any complicity in the death of Saul and opened the way for his own lawful and orderly accession to the throne.

In this quick and decisive action David displayed in advance something of the qualities that would subsequently surface in the exercise of his royal office. The writer of Samuel later characterizes David as doing "what was just and right for all his people" (8:15). In Psalm 101, David himself described the aspirations that he brought to his royal office: He pledged to reign in a righteous manner, to defend the cause of the faithful, and to remove the wicked from the land (van den Berg 1997:13). The vision for a just society that David describes in this remarkable psalm is one in which the godly are given generous opportunity to flourish, while the arrogant and deceitful are held accountable for their sins. Although this vision was never fully realized during David's reign, the writer of 1–2 Kings uses David's reign as a standard by which later kings are measured (cf. 1 Kgs 3:14; 6:12; 8:25; 9:4; 11:4, 6, 12-13, 33, 38; 14:8; 15:3, 5, 11; 2 Kgs 14:3; 16:2; 18:3; 22:2). In much of modern western society, David's vision has become so inverted that it is common for the deceitful and arrogant to be honored, while the godly and upright are marginalized and oppressed. As human history has run its course, it has become increasingly clear that the fullness of David's vision will be realized only when David's greater son, who is described by the apostle John as "the source of David and the heir to his throne" (Rev 22:16), assumes the throne of his father. At that time, when "the world has . . . become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev 11:15), those who are "cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars" (Rev 21:8) will be excluded from the community of the new Jerusalem. Thus in David's first act as the remaining "anointed one" there is an indication of what his reign will look like. And even though David's kingdom never reached the heights that his vision for it encompassed, it did point forward in significant ways to an ultimate and complete realization of its standards in the new heavens and new earth.

ENDNOTES

1. There is irony in the fact that it is an Amalekite who announced the death of Saul to David and gave him the symbols of royal authority taken from Saul's dead body. It was Saul's disobedience to God's command to utterly destroy the Amalekites that had led to the Lord's rejection of him as king (1 Sam 15).

2. Alter (1999:197) comments, "This whole story obviously contradicts the account of Saul's death by his own hand in 1 Samuel 31. Predictably, this has led many critics to imagine two conflicting 'sources.' It is reassuring that more recent scholarly consensus has come to the sensible conclusion that the Amalekite lad is lying." Keil (1956:286) argues that the Amalekite's statement has an "air of improbability, or rather of untruth in it, particularly in the assertion that Saul was leaning upon his spear when the chariots and horsemen of the enemy came upon him, without having either an armour-bearer or any other Israelitish soldier by his side, so that he had to turn to an Amalekite who accidentally came by, and to ask him to inflict the fatal wound." For similar views see Fokkelman (1984); Goslinga (1962:12-13); Hertzberg (1964:236-238). On the other hand, Budde (1902:193-196); Smith (1912:254-255); and others have argued that the discrepancies between the two accounts are best understood as reflections of two differing and independent traditions of the manner of Saul's death. As Kennedy (1904:192) says, "On the whole, therefore, it is better with almost all recent critics to regard verses 6-10, 13-16, at least, as representing a variant tradition regarding the last moments of the unfortunate king."

3. Fokkelman (1986:639) comments, "A character cannot possibly succeed against his creator in any dispute in credibility, and the narrator has taken care to give us his own version beforehand, the authoritative one of 1 Sam 31."

4. That David understood what the Amalekite was up to is made clear by David's later comment: "Someone once told me, 'Saul is dead,' thinking he was bringing me good news. But I seized him and killed him at Ziklag. That's the reward I gave him for his news!" (4:10).

5. When Saul requested his armor bearer to take his life (1 Sam 31:4), we are informed that the armor bearer "was afraid" (*yare' me'od* [TH3372/3966, ZH3707/4394], lit., "he feared exceedingly") and would not do it.

◆   B. David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:17-27)

¹⁷Then David composed a funeral song for Saul and Jonathan, ¹⁸and he commanded that it be taught to the people of Judah. It is known as the Song of the Bow, and it is recorded in *The Book of Jashar.**

¹⁹ Your pride and joy, O Israel, lies dead
        on the hills!
    Oh, how the mighty heroes have
        fallen!
²⁰ Don't announce the news in Gath,
        don't proclaim it in the streets of
            Ashkelon,
    or the daughters of the Philistines
        will rejoice

and the pagans will laugh in
    triumph.

²¹ O mountains of Gilboa,
    let there be no dew or rain upon
        you,
    nor fruitful fields producing
        offerings of grain.*
For there the shield of the mighty
    heroes was defiled;
    the shield of Saul will no longer
        be anointed with oil.
²² The bow of Jonathan was powerful,
    and the sword of Saul did its
        mighty work.

They shed the blood of their enemies
 and pierced the bodies of mighty
 heroes.

²³ How beloved and gracious were Saul
 and Jonathan!
 They were together in life and in
 death.
 They were swifter than eagles,
 stronger than lions.
²⁴ O women of Israel, weep for Saul,
 for he dressed you in luxurious scarlet
 clothing,
 in garments decorated with gold.

²⁵ Oh, how the mighty heroes have
 fallen in battle!
 Jonathan lies dead on the hills.
²⁶ How I weep for you, my brother
 Jonathan!
 Oh, how much I loved you!
And your love for me was deep,
 deeper than the love of
 women!

²⁷ Oh, how the mighty heroes have
 fallen!
 Stripped of their weapons, they
 lie dead.

1:18 Or *The Book of the Upright.*   **1:21** The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

N O T E S

1:17 *funeral song.* The word *qinah* [ᵀᴴ7015, ᶻᴴ7806] refers to lamentation for the dead, elegy, or dirge.

1:18 *the Song of the Bow.* Lit., "bow." Most modern interpreters have understood *qesheth* [ᵀᴴ7198, ᶻᴴ8008] (bow) as the title of the lament. Others (including McCarter 1984:67-68) consider it intrusive and eliminate it, following LXX Vaticanus.

1:19 *Your pride and joy.* The word *hatsebi* [ᵀᴴ6643/6643A, ᶻᴴ7382/7383] is a homonym meaning either "beauty, honor" or "gazelle" (cf. BDB 840). Some (see Freedman 1972) have argued for the meaning "gazelle" in this verse as imagery for a military leader. Freedman applies the term to Jonathan. Zaph (1984:107) regards the word as deliberately ambiguous in both reference and meaning. He understands it as a reference to both Saul and Jonathan with a certain preference given to Jonathan. Zaph (1984:117) translates the phrase, "The gazelle/glory, Israel, upon your heights is slain." Although this is rather cumbersome English, it captures more of the ambiguity of the poetic language in Hebrew than does the more straightforward rendering, "your glory," or as NLT renders it, "your pride and joy." McCarter (1984:66, 68, 74) has proposed unnecessary textual emendations suggesting that the first line of the lament should be translated, "Alas, prince of Israel, slain standing erect!"

Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen! Fokkelman (1986:653) points out that the "rule of *parallelismus membrorum,* the general effect of which (according to Kugel) is 'A, what's more B,' is turned upside-down here, because the specific clause has displaced the standard expression . . . the listener expects the order of a painful exclamation plus an explanation/ development, but first he receives an alienating, specific and yet obscure, nominalizing statement, and only then a familiar, if not a worn-out, expression."

1:21 *let there be.* The verb is supplied on the basis of context (cf. GKC §147c).

nor fruitful fields. The meaning of this phrase (*usede therumoth* [ᵀᴴ8641, ᶻᴴ9556], "offering") is uncertain. Although there are adequate lexical explanations for the phrase, some have needlessly attempted to address the translation problem by textual emendation (see Gevirtz 1973:85-87; Holladay 1970:170-171). The NIV renders the phrase, "nor fields that yield offerings of grain." In a similar vein, the NJPS (and NRSV) render it "Or (nor) bountiful (bounteous) fields." Others, including A. Anderson (1989:11-12) and Young-blood (1992:817), have argued that the phrase is a semantic equivalent of *merome sadeh* [ᵀᴴ4791/7704, ᶻᴴ5294/8441] in Judg 5:18, and should be translated "mountain slopes" or

"high fields" on the basis that *therumoth*, like *merome*, is derived from the root *rum* [ᵀᴴ7311, ᶻᴴ8123] (be high, exalted). The rationale for this position is not only linguistic, however, but also stylistic. Fokkelman (1979:290-293) argues that this understanding fits better with the overall chiastic structure of 1:21. Fokkelman's suggested structure is:

> O mountains of Gilboa,
>> no dew
>> and no rain on you,
> O high fields!
> For there was defiled
>> the shield of the mighty,
>> the shield of Saul—
> no longer rubbed with oil.

While this is plausible, it is not the only possible structure, and it may at least be questioned whether chiastic structure should be determinative when there is no other example for this particular linguistic use of *therumoth*.

anointed. This follows many Hebrew mss that read *mashuakh* [ᵀᴴ4886, ᶻᴴ5417] instead of *mashiakh* [ᵀᴴ4899, ᶻᴴ5431] (normally used to refer to the "anointed leader" of God's people). Alter (1999:199) suggests that there is a symbolic message in the line "the shield of Saul will no longer be anointed with oil." Although it was common to rub leather shields with oil prior to battle to make their surface slippery, Saul's shield would now be "'unanointed' or 'messiah-less,' a haunting intimation that the LORD's anointed is no more. Clearly, the image of the royal shield lying befouled in the dust is a powerful metonymy for Saul himself."

1:26 was deep. Lit., "was wonderful." For the unusual morphology of *niple'athah* [ᵀᴴ6381, ᶻᴴ7098], see GKC §75. It is unnecessary to emend the text to two words as suggested by F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman (1975:26) and followed by O'Connor (1980:233) on the assumption of the loss of an Aleph by haplography. Such emendation yields the reading: *nipla' 'attah* [ᵀᴴ6381/859, ᶻᴴ7098/911] (you are wonderful). This would then form a couplet with the following phrase, *'ahabatheka li* [ᵀᴴ160/3807.1/2967.1, ᶻᴴ173/4200/3276] (your love was mine).

C O M M E N T A R Y

David's lament for Saul and Jonathan has long been recognized as one of the finest examples of Hebrew poetry in the Old Testament. Hertzberg (1964:238) characterizes it as "the most beautiful heroic lament of all time" and acknowledges with many others[1] that there is "no reason for doubting David's authorship." Fokkelman (1986:649) speaks of it as a "pearl of Hebrew poetry," which as "a rich and complex work of art . . . demands patience, artistic insight, and subtlety" for its proper interpretation. While there are ongoing discussions and even disagreements on many technical matters dealing with the poem's structural arrangement,[2] verse divisions, and metrical analysis, as well as with textual and lexical questions that cannot be discussed here, the fundamental purpose and theme of the poem is quite clear.

The grief that David and his men exhibited immediately upon hearing the news of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1:11-12) is given fuller expression by the author's inclusion of this song of lament, composed by David with the intent that it should be taught to all the people of Judah (1:18). The song was considered of such importance that it was preserved in the extrabiblical *Book of Jashar* (1:18), which appears to have been an anthology of Israelite poems (cf. Josh 10:13) that circulated in Israel during the Old Testament period.

Verse 19 functions as a heading for the composition and captures its central theme in the expression "Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen!" This refrain is repeated three times in the course of the poem, at its beginning, middle, and end (1:19b, 25a, 27a). It is clear from the opening lines that David regarded Saul and Jonathan as national heroes and their deaths as a calamitous loss to the nation (see notes on 1:19). In 1:20 David voices his concern that the Israelite defeat at Gilboa would be the cause for celebration in the heathen cities of the Philistines, including the city of Gath where he had sought refuge during the time of his flight from Saul (1 Sam 27). Lest there be any misunderstanding among the people of Israel because of his ill-considered alliance with Achish, David expressed repugnance at the thought of Philistine women rejoicing in Israel's defeat and the pagan inhabitants of Philistia reveling in triumph over the people of Yahweh.[3] In 1:21 David gives further expression to his distress by placing a symbolic curse on the mountains of Gilboa; it was on these mountains that the disastrous defeat had occurred and the life of Saul, Israel's divinely anointed king, had been snuffed out (see notes on 1:21). From the opening three verses of the lament, we see that David was able to rise above the personal grievances of the ruptured relationship that existed between Saul and himself and give heartfelt expression of his great sorrow over the loss that the nation had sustained by her military defeat and the death of her leaders in battle.

Saul and Jonathan are eulogized in 1:22-23. Their victories in battle are celebrated and their loyalty to each other in life, as well as their companionship in death, are attested.[4] Then, after speaking of Saul and Jonathan collectively, David devoted a separate pronouncement to each of them individually (1:24, Saul; 1:25-26, Jonathan). He called upon the women of Israel to weep for Saul in recognition of the benefits he brought to the nation during his reign (cf. 1 Sam 14:47-52). (Note that the weeping women of Israel are set in sharp contrast to the joyful women of Philistia; 1:20.) Then, after a repetition of the central theme of the lament, "Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen in battle!" (1:25a), David paid a special tribute to Jonathan (1:25b-26). The singular place that Jonathan held in David's heart is highlighted not only by the very warm and personal statement of their love for each other, but also by the noticeable change in personal pronouns from the third person, in reference to Saul (1:24), to the first and second person in connection with the relationship between himself and Jonathan (1:26). In the last verse (1:27) the central theme is again reiterated: "Oh, how the mighty heroes have fallen!"

This lament provides an unusual insight into the deepest feelings and thoughts of David at a crucial turning point in his life. Even though Saul had waged a long-standing vendetta against him, and in spite of the fact that Saul had even sought to take his life, David showed no vindictiveness toward him when he learned of his death. Instead of spiteful recriminations for the abuse he had suffered at Saul's hands, and instead of any expression of elation at his demise, David showed only respect and honor for the person whom he continued to recognize as the Lord's anointed, notwithstanding his abuse of the office with which he was entrusted. In all of this David showed himself to be a person worthy of the royal office to which he, too, had already been anointed. And in the larger context of the flow of redemptive history, David's conduct on this occasion points forward to the coming Messiah

who would pray for those who crucified him (Luke 23:34), who would reconcile his chosen ones to the Father even when they were his enemies (Rom 5:8), and who would exhort his followers to love their enemies and pray for those who persecuted them (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27-36; cf. van den Berg 1997:14-15).

E N D N O T E S
1. See Gevirtz 1973:72; Holladay 1970:154; Smith 1912:258.
2. See Freedman 1972; Gevirtz 1973; Holladay 1970; O'Connor 1980.
3. Fokkelman (1986:661) notes that this is the reverse of the situation described in 1 Sam 18:6, when David along with Saul and Jonathan were acclaimed by the women of Israel after their victory over the Philistines.
4. Brueggemann (1990a:216) comments, "The poetry of grief looks past the rancors of father and son, the deception of the son and the rage of the father. Those gossip-driven tensions are now unimportant. Death has a way of permitting us to focus on the larger realities, to transcend the details of hurt and affront."

◆   C. David Becomes King over Judah (2 Sam 2:1–7)

After this, David asked the LORD, "Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?"

"Yes," the LORD replied.

Then David asked, "Which town should I go to?"

"To Hebron," the LORD answered.

²David's two wives were Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel. So David and his wives ³and his men and their families all moved to Judah, and they settled in the villages near Hebron. ⁴Then the men of Judah came to David and anointed him king over the people of Judah.

When David heard that the men of Jabesh-gilead had buried Saul, ⁵he sent them this message: "May the LORD bless you for being so loyal to your master Saul and giving him a decent burial. ⁶May the LORD be loyal to you in return and reward you with his unfailing love! And I, too, will reward you for what you have done. ⁷Now that Saul is dead, I ask you to be my strong and loyal subjects like the people of Judah, who have anointed me as their new king."

N O T E S
2:2 widow of. The literal translation of 'esheth [TH802, ZH851] is "the wife of."

2:4 anointed. Heb., wayyimshekhu [TH4886, ZH5417].

David heard. Lit., "And they declared to David." The verb wayyaggidu [TH5046, ZH5583] (and they declared) is active and assumes "the men of Judah" of the previous sentence as its subject.

2:6 May the LORD be loyal to you in return and reward you with his unfailing love! Lit., "May the LORD do [show] lovingkindness and truth to you." There is good reason for translating khesed we'emeth [TH2617/571, ZH2876/622] (faithfulness and truth) as a single concept (hendiadys, see Williams 1976:§72) yielding the translation, "May the LORD show you true faithfulness."

C O M M E N T A R Y
There is no question that the death of Saul marked a major turning point in David's life and launched a new phase in the long process of his rise to the throne. Although

Saul's death meant an end to David's fugitive existence, it at the same time raised a host of questions concerning how David should proceed in dealing with the difficult political issues connected with the transition of power from one regime to another in a nation that had only recently established a monarchy and had no precedents to aid in easing such a momentous change.

Although it must have been clear to David that he and his men could no longer remain in Ziklag, the city given to them by Achish (1 Sam 27:6) and recently destroyed by the Amalekites (1 Sam 30:1), it was not so clear where they should go or what they should do next. This is the setting for David's first recorded action subsequent to learning of Saul's death. David did not want to repeat the mistake he had made when he went to Gath without first seeking the Lord's guidance (cf. 1 Sam 27:1-3), so the very first thing he did was to request the Lord's guidance.[1] When David inquired whether he should return to Judah, the Lord told him that he should; and when David asked to what town he should go, he was told to go to Hebron. This meant that David's decision to move from Ziklag to Hebron was not in the first instance a pragmatic political calculation but rather an act of obedience to an instruction he had received from the Lord (Brueggemann 1990a:219). This does not mean, however, that there were no political overtones to his course of action. Hebron was an important city in Judah. It was located about 19 miles south-southwest of Jerusalem in the Judean hill country, and at 3,000 feet above sea level, was the highest town in Palestine (A. Anderson 1989:22). There were a number of factors that made the city an ideal choice for David's initial resettlement in Israel. The city had strong ties with Israel's founding fathers;[2] it was one of the recipients of the gifts that David had recently sent to a number of cities in Judah after plundering the Amalekites (cf. 1 Sam 30:26-31); and it was a city that belonged to David's own tribe.

Therefore David and his entire entourage,[3] including the two wives with him (Ahinoam of Jezreel[4] and Abigail the widow of Nabal from Carmel) moved from Ziklag to Hebron and its surrounding area, with the result that he was there anointed king (see note on 2:4) over the people of Judah. The reader is merely told that "the men of Judah came to David and anointed him king over the people of Judah" but is given no further information about the circumstances surrounding this significant political event.[5] Perhaps the reason that this second "anointing" of David does not receive as much emphasis as one might expect is that it was more or less a recognition of David's earlier anointing by Samuel (that was accompanied by the gift of God's Spirit; 1 Sam 16:13) and not something entirely new (van den Berg 1997:17). It was the initial anointing by Samuel that was fundamental and that represented God's choice of David as the chosen ruler for his people.[6]

Subsequent to this validation of David as king by the leaders of the tribe of Judah, David again showed respect for his predecessor, Saul, by sending a commendation to the men of Jabesh-gilead for providing Saul with a proper (though headless) burial (2:4-7; cf. 1 Sam 31:11-13). Just as Saul's first act after being chosen as king was to liberate Jabesh-gilead from their Ammonite oppressors (1 Sam 11:1-13), so David's first official royal act was to pay tribute to these same people for their loyalty to Saul. Along with this compliment, David also invited the Jabesh-gileadites

to join with the tribe of Judah in their recognition of his succession to Saul as the legitimate ruler over Israel (2:7). By this invitation it is clear that from the very beginning David had his sights set on consolidating his position as ruler over the entirety of God's people.

ENDNOTES

1. Although the means by which David sought guidance from the Lord is not indicated, it was most likely done through the use of the ephod that had been brought to David by Abiathar (1 Sam 23:6). David had used the ephod for seeking God's guidance on other occasions (1 Sam 23:1-4, 9-12; 30:7).

2. As Davis (1999:28) notes, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were all buried there (Gen 23:17-19; 25:9-10; 49:29-32; 50:13).

3. First Chronicles 12 suggests that the size of David's forces had grown considerably during the time he spent in the strongholds of Judah (1 Chr 12:8-18) and Ziklag (1 Chr 12:1-7, 19-22) and included representatives from the entire nation. At the heart of that chapter is a prophecy of success for David and those who joined with him because "God is the one who helps" him (1 Chr 12:18).

4. This is not the well-known northern Jezreel near the site of the Philistine victory over Israel (cf. 1 Sam 31:7), but rather a town located in the hill country of Judea (cf. Josh 15:55-56), near Carmel, the former home of Nabal and Abigail (1 Sam 25:2-3).

5. Fokkelman (1990:29) comments, "What stands out is that it is mentioned almost in passing, as something which is so self-evident . . . that it takes up little room."

6. As A. Anderson comments (1989:26), "In the light of the Saul narratives, it seems that one became the Lord's anointed once for all." Calvin (1992:55-56) recognized this as well. He notes that "a question might be raised here: How could the men of Judah dare anoint David, given that this would efface the original anointing, or declare it insufficient? And how could David allow it?" Calvin's answer to these questions is that when the men of Judah anointed David, "They were not implying that what Samuel did was ineffective, or that it was not powerful enough to accomplish anything. Rather, it is as though they were replying 'Amen', and ratifying what had been done. We should understand, therefore, that David is not elected king here by the desire of men, but that he received approbation because God authorised it, and thus men agree with it."

◆   **D. War between the House of Saul and the House of David (2 Sam 2:8–3:1)**

8But Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had already gone to Mahanaim with Saul's son Ishbosheth.* 9There he proclaimed Ishbosheth king over Gilead, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, the land of the Ashurites, and all the rest of Israel.

10Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he became king, and he ruled from Mahanaim for two years. Meanwhile, the people of Judah remained loyal to David. 11David made Hebron his capital, **and he ruled as king of Judah for seven and a half years.**

12One day Abner led Ishbosheth's troops from Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13About the same time, Joab son of Zeruiah led David's troops out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. The two groups sat down there, facing each other from opposite sides of the pool.

14Then Abner suggested to Joab, "Let's have a few of our warriors fight hand to hand here in front of us."