The Function of King David in the Deuteronomistic History

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Abstract

This thesis examines the literary figure of King David in the narrative of Samuel-Kings. John Van Seters, in his book The Biblical Saga of King David, has identified two major blocks of tradition in the Samuel-Kings version of the narrative of David. Van Seters contends that the earlier Deuteronomistic narrative (DtrH) portrays David as the ideal king of a unified Israel, and that this narrative was overlaid by a later Persian period narrative (the David Saga,) which was written as a reaction to the Deuteronomistic narrative, and which sought to undercut its monarchical ideology. The aim of this thesis is to exact the socio-historical circumstances under which both of these narratives were composed. I will argue that DtrH reflects the hopes of the exiled elite of the Babylonian golah for the reestablishment of the Davidic line, and that the David Saga reflects the dissolution of these hopes under Persian imperial control.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine la figure littéraire du Roi David dans le récit de Samuel-Rois. John Van Seters, dans son livre « The Biblical Saga of King David », a identifié deux blocs principaux de tradition dans la version biblique de Samuel-Rois du récit de David. Van Seters affirme que le récit antérieur deutéronomiste (DtrH) dépeint David en tant que roi idéal de l'Israël unifiée, et que ce récit a été superposé par un récit postérieur de l'époque Perse (la saga de David,) qui a été écrit en réaction au récit deutéronomiste, et qui vise à nuire à son idéologie monarchique. Le but de cette thèse est d'établir les circonstances socio-historiques sous lesquelles ces deux récits on été composés. Je soutiendrai que DtrH reflète les espoirs d'élite exilée du Babylonien « golah » pour le rétablissement de la ligne de David, et que la saga de David reflète la dissolution de ces espoirs sous la commande impérial persane.

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Introduction

In the history of the monarchs of ancient Israel and Judah contained within the books of Samuel and Kings, the narrative of David is by far the longest and most complex. David himself is also quite a complex character, heralded as both the ideal ruler of the nation who upholds all of the ordinances and commandments of YHWH, and as a flawed ruler whose reign is marred by adultery, intrigue, rape, murder, and rebellion. This is not the case in the Chronicler's version of the David narrative, in which several stories portraying David in a negative light are absent. Bathsheba, for example, only appears once in the Chronicler's version in a minor genealogical note;[1] the stories of her affair with David and David's subsequent murder of her husband are not mentioned. The absence of the majority of these incriminating stories leaves the Chronicler's David as a shining example of kingship. The ideology of the Samuel-Kings narrative is not as straightforward, and a picture emerges of a David divided. It is of fundamental importance in the study of the Samuel-Kings narrative that these two faces of David are properly understood, and it is the primary task of this thesis.

As the first of the dynastic line which ruled Judah from the formation of the state until its eventual destruction at the hands of the Babylonians in 597/86 B.C.E., David serves as the paradigm for the monarchical ideology of the nation. However, this monarchical ideology is divided, based on two competing portrayals of the figure of David. John Van Seters in *The Biblical Saga of King David* defines two major blocks of tradition within the account, seeing the original, Deuteronomistic material as expressing a thoroughly positive portrayal of David overlaid by a later Persian period document

[1] I Chronicles 3:5.

aiming to undermine the portrayal of the Deuteronomistic account, and to call into question the legitimacy of the reign of David. I will argue in chapter four that the initial depiction of David in the Deuteronomistic account is reflective of the social situation of the exile, wherein the elite court functionaries associated with the recently defunct monarchical system would have had high hopes for the reestablishment of the kingdom. Further, I will argue in chapter five that the later additions to the David narrative were composed during the late Persian period when the Persian imperial government no longer appointed Israelites from prominent families to govern the province of Yehud, but rather loyal Persian officials. At this point, questions of the reestablishment of the monarchy of old would have been abandoned, and calling into question the legitimacy of Israel's monarchical system would have served as a justification for a kingless Yehud which was thriving and experiencing growth compared to its revolting and rebellious neighbours in the Levant, Cyprus, and Egypt.

The first three chapters of this thesis will serve to foreground this argument. The first chapter will be an examination of the fundamental question of how it is that history and historical texts should be approached, highlighting the historiographical theories of Louis Mink, Hayden White, and Paul Ricoeur. The second chapter will overview several theories surrounding the composition of the Deuteronomistic History, in which the narrative of David is contained, from the initial conception of a unified "Deuteronomistic History" by Martin Noth through to more recent theories concerning the Former Prophets and the Deuteronomistic author(s). Finally, the third chapter will examine the (lack of) archaeological data for David's proposed time period of the tenth century B.C.E. in order to show that the literary portrayal of David and his kingdom diverges from the physical

evidence from this period, and that the account in Samuel-Kings likely serves a purpose other than to show “exactly what happened” during the reign of David.

I

History, Theory, and the Biblical Text

In describing the Deuteronomistic History, Rainer Albertz remarks, "to the best of our knowledge, it is the oldest historical work in the world," the first "official" history of the Israelites, written [presumably] a century before Herodotus set pen to paper.[2] Approaching any history, however, ancient or modern, is problematic. The narratives of the period of the United Monarchy, due to the incredible lack of archaeological evidence from that time period, often draw scholars to ask the one question of the text which they cannot answer: namely, "what actually happened?" The vitriolic skepticism and staunch apologetic displayed in the so-called "minimalist-maximalist" debate have contributed very little in terms of advancing actual knowledge of the ancient world between the times of Saul and Solomon. In light of this fruitless question, it is necessary to first propose another, more fundamental question: "how do we approach history?" First and foremost, it is necessary to explore the ways in which history is written and the ways in which it is fictionalized.[3]

Louis Mink: Modes of Comprehension

It is nothing new to say that history and fiction have been bedfellows for quite some time in postmodern theories of history and historical knowledge. Contemporary theorists, such as Louis Mink, Hayden White, Paul Ricoeur, and many others, have made the connection between history and fiction, looking at how they feed into one another and

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[2] Rainer Albertz, Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E. trans. David Green, Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, p. 273.

[3] This should not imply that history is false or intentionally deceptive. Fiction explains in the realm of the imaginary, and, as a product of language, historical works do as well, in spite of the fact that they deal with "actual events."

augment each other. This connection runs deep in Western philosophy; Mink points to its roots in Descartes' musings on history's utilization of fiction, "fiction makes us imagine a number of events as possible which are really impossible, and even the most faithful histories, if they do not alter or embroider things to make them worth reading, almost always omit the meanest and least illustrious circumstances, so that the remainder is distorted."[4] In the development of philosophy since the seventeenth century, however, history has only enjoyed a peripheral position; historical theory and practice in centuries past has had to take its cues from developments in a philosophical tradition primarily concerned with the natural sciences.

In such a philosophical environment it is easy to understand the emergence of, for example, the Rankean ideal of objective history. The ideals championed by Leopold von Ranke in the mid-nineteenth century, namely philological methods of source criticism and the view that primary source documents act as an open window into the past, swept through the historical discipline. The presupposition that archive-delving would provide direct access to past *wie es eigentlich gewesen* led historians of the time to believe that they were dealing with an "unproblematic past."[5]

There has since been a revolution in philosophical priority. As Collingwood puts it, "the chief business of seventeenth-century philosophy was to reckon with seventeenth-century natural science…. the chief business of twentieth-century philosophy is to reckon with twentieth-century history."[6] This change in philosophical priority dovetailed with

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[4] Louis Mink, "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension," in Historical Understanding ed. Brian Fay, Eugene Golub, Richard Vann. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987, p. 42.
[5] Elizabeth Clark, History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 13.
[6] R. G. Collingwood, An Autobiography. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939, pp. 78-9.

the increasing awareness that natural science and history employ different organizational schemes, and that history organizes data into narrative.[7]

Louis Mink, in light of these developments, attempted to categorize the different organizational schema employed by different branches of thinking into three distinct *modes of comprehension: theoretical, categoreal,* and *configurational*. By comprehension, Mink means the act of *holding together* different pieces of data we experience in sequence and organizing these data into some kind of whole which can then be understood. He writes, "The steps of a proof, the actions of a narrative, the notes of a melody, and even the words of a sentence are experienced one after the other, but must be considered in a single mental act before they can even constitute data for significant discourse."[8]

Mink roughly describes his *theoretical* mode as being capable of comprehending the relationships between universals and particulars; it is the type of comprehension used to understand all of the instances of a particular generalization. The example he uses is that of a scientific law, such as Boyle's law. When the law is understood, it allows for the comprehension of every particular instance in which the law can be applied. He describes this mode as thin but powerful, since it allows for the comprehension of each particular, "experienced and unexperienced, actual and possible,"[9] but at the same time strips these particulars of their individuality. The *categoreal* mode, which Mink argues is the mode of comprehension used in philosophy, is that which allows for the comprehension of the relationships between universals and universals, organizing concepts into an

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[7] cf. Mink, "History and Fiction," p. 45.
[8] Louis Mink, "Modes of Comprehension and the Unity of Knowledge," in Historical Understanding ed. Brian Fay, Eugene Golub, Richard Vann. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987, p. 36.
[9] Ibid. p. 38.

interconnected web of categories. Finally, Mink describes his *configurational* mode as allowing for the comprehension of relationships between particulars and particulars. This is the mode of comprehension Mink attributes to historical understanding, capable of seeing a number of particulars together as "elements in a single complex of concrete relationships," such as the "combination of influences, motives, beliefs, and purposes which explain a concrete historical action."[10]

When observed through Mink's modes of comprehension, history becomes incredibly distinct from both natural science and philosophy insofar as it simply cannot be comprehended in the same manner, and sheds any remaining vestiges of the "scientific" notions of "objectivity" and "hard evidence" which it had acquired during the nineteenth century. History writing is not the process of wading through archives full of "facts," digesting them, and coming to definitive conclusions. History writing, rather, is the process of writing what is seen in hindsight. Mink, in a touch of exaggeration, compares the act of *configurational* comprehension to Boethius' "God's eye view" of events in time, such that "time is no longer the river which bears us along but the river in aerial view, upstream and downstream seen in a single survey."[11] The historian writes what he comprehends, and the authors of the archival documents do the same: writing memories of real events into narrative time. It is no shock that, once history had shed its scientific skin and taken up its place as narrative, historical theorists searched back to the roots of discourse on narrative, Aristotle's *Poetics*, for the foundations of their theories of history and historical knowledge.

Aristotle: Mimesis and the Historian-Writer

[10] Ibid. p. 38-9.
[11] Mink, "History and Fiction," pp. 53, 57.

Although Aristotle's work is the first major discourse on narrative and the art of *making things with words*, Aristotle himself draws a line between the poet (who, for Aristotle, should engage in either tragedy or comedy) and the historian-writer. The poet, for Aristotle, engages in the *mimetic* art. That is to say the poet constructs a compelling plot by rendering the *praxeis* of great "men-in-action" into language.[12] The most important out of all the constituent elements of a work of linguistic art is the proper arrangement of incidents: the plot or *muthos*. A *mimetic* work is not primarily concerned with the development of its characters, but with the development of action: the representation of a piece of life. All other constituent elements of a *mimetic* work, characters, speech, thought, "visuals," and song-making all come secondary to plot, since it is impossible to create, for example, a tragedy without *praxeis*, but it is possible to create one without characters.[13] A good plot is the mark of a good poet, and must contain a logical beginning, middle, and end to form a coherent whole which can be grasped simultaneously by the mind of the reader-viewer.[14] At this point it is possible to see the connections between Aristotle's description of *poetics* and Mink's *configurational* comprehension; the "holding together" of a plot in the mind is an essential part of narrative, both historical and non-historical. Aristotle, however, argues that historian-writer does not function in this way, and is not bound by the primacy of plot. This is a view that must be challenged in order for Aristotle's *poetics* to have any influence on how history is to be understood.

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[12] Aristotle, Aristotle's Poetics. trans. George Whalley, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997, 1450a4-5.
[13] Ibid., 1450a10-20.
[14] Ibid., 1450b25-30.

Aristotle's historian-writer is cut from an entirely different cloth than the poet – *amimetic* or *delotic* as opposed to *mimetic*. Δηλώσις (*delosis*) is the Greek Aristotle uses to describe the historian's process.[15] In its verbal form, the word essentially means "to point out" or "to make visible/clear" or "to explain". Whalley observes that the historian, for Aristotle, simply "observes and records, [whereas] the poet discerns and constructs".[16] The record of the historian is therefore bound *chronologically*, as opposed to the *logically* bound *muthos* of the poet.[17] The historian's record may very well have unity – a beginning, middle, and end – but this unity, for Aristotle, will be *chronological* in nature, and it will probably not reflect the *logical* unity of a *muthos* as Aristotle remarks that in history "each of these [events] bear[s] to the others an accidental [? random] relation."[18] There is a fundamental difference, in Aristotle's thinking, between the poet and the historian. This difference is not a difference in content – real vs. fictional – but rather a difference in method. A poet is still a poet whether he uses "actual events" to pad the walls of his *muthos* or uses *praxis*-based fiction to the same effect; using "actual events" does not necessarily make one an historian for Aristotle.[19]

Aristotle is firm in the idea that history writing as a practice is *amimetic*, that history writing is a slave to chronology, logically plotless, the recording of events in the (probably) illogical order in which they occur in time. This type of record, however, would hardly pass for history as it is currently understood. In fact, such a plotless account would have more in common with what Hayden White describes as the genre of the *annals* where the only semblance of unity and continuity is provided by the ceaseless list

[15] Ibid., 1459a20-25, cf. note 226.
[16] Ibid., 80, note 70.
[17] Ibid., 1459a20-30.
[18] Ibid., 1459a25-30.
[19] Ibid., 1451b27-33.

of dates, and where the events are simply observed and recorded without logical connection or unity.[20] But history writing, that is, any historical account which moves beyond raw event-data, is comprehensible, emplotted, and endowed with a sense of logical unity and meaning. Because history writing is followable narrative, and as such, emplotted, it is possible to apply what Aristotle writes about the poet and about the *mimetic* art to the historian-writer.

Hayden White: The Priority of the Conclusion

Simply classifying history writing as a *mimetic* process does not *ipso facto* turn all written history into fiction, nor does it relieve history of the need for characters, timelines, archival research, etc. Rather, it highlights similarities between history and poetry (in the Aristotelian sense) which can prove useful in the illumination of what history is and what history does. Aristotle writes of the poet and the historian, "the one [i.e. the historian] tells *what happened*, the other [i.e., the poet] [tells] the sort of things *that can happen*. That's why in fact poetry is a more speculative and more 'serious' business than history."[21] Aristotle goes on to claim that the reason for this is that poetry deals with universals and history with particulars. But this assertion alone, true as it may be, does not change that fact that history also tells the sorts of things that can happen, and that history is also a speculative and serious business. Much is invented or deduced in history writing: motives, influences, purposes. In the case of ancient historiography, even dialogue or entire series' of events may be imagined in order to satisfy plot requirements. Potentiality is just as important in history as it is in poetry, and perhaps even more so

[20] Hayden White, The Content of the Form. Baltimore: John Hopkins Univeristy Press, 1984, pp. 4-16.
[21] Aristotle, 1451b5-10.

considering the historian must represent and make coherent the chaotic events of times past.

But it is not enough to say that historiography can make use of narrativity; history *must* be narrativized. In *The Content of the Form* Hayden White, drawing on Roland Barthes, remarks that "between our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience in language, narrative 'ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted.' And it would follow that the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning itself."[22] This is quite the packed statement, and it suggests that the only *meaningful* way to translate knowing into telling is by means of narrative. To elucidate this claim, White draws upon three modes of historical representation – the annals, the chronicle, and the history proper. The first two genres fail to achieve true "historicality" by "their failure to attain to full narrativity of the events of which they treat."[23] The chronicle is a particularly interesting case of this, because it does aspire to some form of narrativity, and goes beyond the "dates and data" model of the annals genre. Where White sees the failure of the genre of the chronicle is in its "end point." He notes that the chronicle "starts out to tell a story but breaks off *in medias res*, in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved, or rather, it leaves them unresolved in a storylike way."[24] Therefore, to narrativize is not only to begin to tell a story; to narrativize is also to *conclude*.

Now at first glance the difference between the chronicle and the history proper seems relatively small. Contrary to the style of the annals genre, both the chronicle and

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[22] White, Content of the Form, p. 1-2.
[23] Ibid., p. 4.
[24] Ibid., p.5.

the history proper make logical connections between the "real events" they portray. Both are continuous; both start, progress, and terminate. But *termination* and *conclusion* are not one and the same, and what is in this nuanced distinction is a wide gap between history proper and other kinds of historical representation. So what fills this gap between *termination* and *conclusion*, between the chronicle and the history proper? White concludes that there is a trend of "historical evolution" from the annals to the chronicle to the history proper which is carried onward by an "interest in law and legality". He writes,

> But once we have been alerted to the intimate relationship that Hegel suggests between law, historicality, and narrativity, we cannot but be struck by the frequency with which narrativity… presupposes the existence of a legal system against which or on behalf of which the typical agents of a narrative account militate…. The more historically self-conscious the writer of any form of historiography, the more the question of the social system and the law that sustains it, the authority of this law and its justification, and threats to the law occupy his attention…. Interest in the social system, which is nothing more than a system of human relationships governed by law, creates the possibility of conceiving the kinds of tensions, conflicts, struggles, and their various kinds of resolutions that we are accustomed to find in any representation of reality presenting itself to us as a history.[25]

It is therefore the *social system* which allows for the possibility of concluding. In this way, someone engaged in the *mimetic* art, when recounting in narrative form, is not only a maker of his plots, but also a judge over them. Not simply adjudicating between what events are recounted and which events are left out, s/he must also moralize the events to represent them in narrative form with a sufficient conclusion.

This concluding of events, however, contrasts the way in which direct experience meets our senses. It is impossible that "any sequence of real events actually comes to an end, that reality itself disappears, that events of the order of the real have ceased to happen."[26] White notes that "one could make a pretty good case for both the annals and chronicle forms as paradigms of ways that reality offers itself to our senses" since they

[25] Ibid., p. 13-4.
[26] Ibid., p. 23.

both represent a more straightforward presentation of incidents.[27] But the reality represented by the chronicle is repulsive, frightening, and unappealing, and that represented by the annals is even more so. It seems that in this moralizing trend, which leads from the annals through the chronicles to the history proper, humankind shies away from reality in favour of *truth*, giving up natural temporal order for meaning and control. There is in narrative a "demand for closure" which is a "demand for moral meaning."[28] Time does not "conclude," but "the configuration of the plot imposes the 'sense of an ending'… on the indefinite succession of incidents."[29] Thus configurational emplotment forcefully ruptures time with a moralizing ending, and encapsulates it in a "temporal unity," something controllable and appealing.

It is no surprise, then, that Augustine is least distraught in Book Eleven of his *Confessions* when he is talking about the example of a "psalm which he knows." The psalm *Deus Creator omnium* has a unity, continuity, and a discernable beginning, middle, and end (if only in terms of the order of its vocalic utterances.) The psalm is structured, which allows Augustine to gain control over time and express it in terms of the structure of the psalm, where "what occurs in the psalm as a whole occurs in its particular pieces and its individual syllables."[30] Because the psalm is memorized, and the conclusion is already known to the one who has memorized it, it has "followability" – i.e. the conclusion is ever present in the mind of the speaker as s/he speaks from the beginning of the psalm through to its conclusion.

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[27] Ibid., p. 25.
[28] Ibid., p. 21.
[29] Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 3 vols. trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, 1988, p. 67.
[30] Augustine, Saint Augustine's Confessions, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, 11:XXVIII (38).

Paul Ricoeur: The Fiction Effect

Ricoeur seeks to explain this "followability" of narrative encapsulation of time as he writes,

> To follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfillment in the "conclusion" of the story. This conclusion is not logically implied by some previous premises. It gives the story an "end point," which, in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole. To understand the story is to understand how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion, which, far from being foreseeable, must finally be acceptable, as congruent with the episodes brought together by the story. It is this "followability" of a story that constitutes the poetic solution to the paradox of distention and intention.[31]

Thus, the followability, understandability, and meaningfulness of a story are directly tied to its capacity for conclusion. Ricoeur adds that it is "in the act of retelling rather than in the telling" – much like the retelling of Augustine's memorized psalm – "that this structural function of closure can be discerned."[32] It is only when a story is *well known* that one can anticipate the end of the story at each point during the story – again, like in Augustine's psalm, the whole of the psalm is present at each moment in the psalm's retelling. Thus, "it is as though recollection invert[s] the so-called 'natural' order of time. In reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the ending, we also learn to read time itself backwards."[33] Ricoeur adds, "thanks to this reflective act, the entire plot can be translated into one 'thought,' which is no less than its 'point' or 'theme.'"[34] It is this "end point" – not the termination, but the *telos* of the narrative – which the plot highlights throughout, and which is necessary to achieve Mink's *configurational* comprehension. It is this capacity for conclusion which makes narrativity necessary for meaningful historical discourse.

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[31] Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, pp. 66-7.
[32] Ibid., p. 67.
[33] Ibid., pp. 67-8.
[34] Ibid., p. 67.

But as soon as conclusions are drawn, history experiences a *fiction effect*. The plot of a narrative provides the illusion that its conclusion is imminent, and yet multiple accounts are written of the same events which incorporate different plots and reach different conclusions. White argues, "in order to qualify as historical, an event must be susceptible to at least two narrations of its occurrence."[35] Narrative historical discourse must therefore be understood "primarily as interpretation, rather than as explanation or description."[36] White goes on to quote Ankersmit, the "effect [of the great books of history] is thus to estrange us from the past, instead of placing it upon a kind of pedestal in a historiographical museum so that we can inspect it from all possible perspectives."[37] This is because historical discourse stands as an "extended metaphor… 'dense and opaque' rather than thin and transparent."[38] The problem of history-reading occurs when the reader takes the "real-seeming" to be the "real-itself," reading interpretation as description. And this is surprisingly easy to do. Humans crave narrative. White remarks that "narrative is a cultural universal because language is a human universal."[39] But narrative as a "literary artifact," like language itself, has a tendency to distort, to mean "more than it literally says," to say "something other than what it seems to mean," and to reveal "something about the world only at the cost of concealing something else."[40]

Because history shares the narrative mode of telling with literary fiction, there is even greater opportunity for distortion: people are replaced by characters, places are replaced by locations, and time periods are replaced by settings. Ricoeur remarks,

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[35] White, Content of the Form, p. 20.
[36] Hayden White, Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999, p. 7.
[37] Ibid., p. 7.
[38] Ibid., p. 6.
[39] Ibid., p. 22.
[40] Ibid., p. 7.

> A history book can be read as a novel. In doing this, we enter into an implicit pact of reading and share in the complicity it establishes between the narrative voice and the implied reader. By virtue of this pact, the reader's guard is lowered. Mistrust is willingly suspended. Confidence reigns…. We have entered the realm of illusion that confuses, in the precise sense of the term, 'seeing-as' with 'believing we are seeing.'[41]

The interweaving of history and fiction therefore fictionalizes history inasmuch as it forces the reader to abandon his historically-minded skepticism. This lulls the reader into a false sense of security where s/he accepts uncritically the presuppositions and moralizing conclusions of the events which are laid out by the author. This interweaving is possible because "myth, literary fiction, and traditional historiography utilize the narrative mode of discourse…because they are all forms of language use."[42] To emplot by means of language is therefore to open what Ricoeur calls "the kingdom of the *as if*."[43] Thus, to narrativize is also to *fictionalize* history according to Ricoeur's dual definition of fiction as both a "synonym for narrative configurations" and an "antonym to historical narrative's claim to constitute a 'true' narrative."[44]

Historical discourse tends to spurn this fictionalization, since history belongs to the category of what White terms, "the discourse of the real."[45] Fictionalization of history, however, is quite inescapable because "insofar as historical stories can be completed, can be given narrative closure, can be shown to have had a plot all along, they give reality the odor of the ideal." White goes on to say that because of this the plot of a history becomes an embarrassment because the plot betrays itself as *constructed*, not *found*.[46]

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[41] Ricoeur, p. 186.
[42] White, Figural Realism, p. 22.
[43] Ricoeur, p. 64.
[44] Ibid., p. 64.
[45] White, Content of the Form, p. 20.
[46] Ibid., p. 21.

The embarrassment of the plot reveals history not to be unproblematic, but to be extremely problematic, because it is impossible to grasp "what actually happened" from reading a literary work. There is therefore no sense in looking for "truth" about the historical David from the Deuteronomistic History, because what is in the text is not David, but a construal of him. And because of the lack of archaeological evidence concerning David, and concerning his time period of the tenth century B.C.E., all that remains of David is information which is literarily construed. It is much more fruitful to look at *how* David is construed and to attempt to engage in the difficult task of exacting *why* he was construed in this way.

II

The Deuteronomistic History

Martin Noth: The Deuteronomistic History

It is impossible even to begin discussing the portrayal of the figure of David in the Deuteronomistic History without first establishing a context for the Deuteronomistic History. Ever since Martin Noth's proposal that Deuteronomy-II Kings represented a unified corpus, the Deuteronomistic History has been at the center of much scholarly debate. Since so much of the interpretation of the Deuteronomistic History depends on its date and setting, it is necessary to outline the scholarship on this subject from Noth to the present. This exercise will not "solve" the issues which surround the Deuteronomist(s), but it will hopefully provide a probable scenario for when, where, and by whom the Deuteronomistic corpus was written.

Noth set out to examine the so-called Deuteronomistic material, i.e. literary fragments within the Bible which bore resemblance to the language of the Book of Deuteronomy determined by literary and source critical standards. This Deuteronomistic material, Wellhausen's D "source," held a linguistic uniformity which Noth believed to be "undisputed."[47] Noth attempted to prove that the various D fragments throughout the Historical Books were intimately connected. Noth examined not only the literary connections, but also the thematic and theological connections between the various D

[47] Martin Noth, The Deuteronomistic History. trans. Max Niemeyer Verlag, Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1981, p. 5.

fragments, asking the question of whether the fragments represented a unity, and therefore the product of a single mind.[48]

Noth advanced his thesis that the Deuteronomistic History represented a unified work by two major arguments. The first argument was that the Deuteronomist inserted retrospective and anticipatory reflections by way of long or short speeches at the introduction of every major character within the corpus in order to frame the work. This phenomenon, which has "no parallels in the Old Testament outside Dtr,"[49] provides evidence of a single hand at work throughout the historical corpus who knew the conclusion of the whole history – the exile of the people of Judah into Babylon – and wanted to issue judgment upon the events that led up to this conclusion.

Noth's second major argument for the unity of the composition is the precise internal dating scheme which was worked out by the Deuteronomist, since the Deuteronomist was "extremely interested in chronological questions, that is in establishing exactly when, in relation to each other, the events of which he tells took place."[50] Noth quotes I Kings 6:1, "In the four hundred eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month…" The Deuteronomist, Noth argues, sticks precisely to this round number of 480 years. Noth gives a summary of the Deuteronomistic dating from the exodus from Egypt to the fourth year of Solomon's reign, noting that even though the number appears to come out as 481, Solomon was anointed while David was still alive (I Kings 1:11) and thus the last year of David's reign

[48] Ibid., p. 3.
[49] Ibid., p. 6.
[50] Ibid., p. 18.

and the first year of Solomon's reign were the same year, giving the precise round number of 480 years.[51]

Coming to the story of David, Noth assumes that the Deuteronomist is acting mainly as a compiler, editor, and re-shaper of much older narrative traditions, since he "obviously" "had access to all kinds of information on the monarchic period in official records."[52] The Court History of David, along with the Saul narrative and the History of David's Rise to Power, are also assumed by Noth to be early writings dating back close to the time of the events which they depict.[53] Noth also assumed that the historical viewpoint of the Deuteronomist was hopelessly negative, "with the final historical catastrophe in view, Dtr. consistently develops the idea of ever-intensifying decline throughout his work."[54]

As for the dating of the composition of the Deuteronomistic History, Noth is able to conclude with a very narrow range of dates, since he viewed the Deuteronomistic History as having a single author. Because of this assumption, he is led to the conclusion that this single author could only have composed the material after the final event described in his history, which is the Babylonian exile of Judah. Noth therefore assumes that the author wrote some time in the mid-sixth century B.C.E. "when the history of the Israelite period was at an end."[55]

Noth's dating of the Deuteronomistic History suffers from its dependence on his assumption of a single author, an assumption that has since been rejected, or at very least challenged. His dating scheme does, however, highlight the importance of the exile for

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[51] Ibid., pp. 18-24.
[52] Ibid., p. 56.
[53] Ibid., p. 54.
[54] Ibid., p. 79.
[55] Ibid., p. 79.

the Deuteronomistic History. The books of the Deuteronomistic History *conclude* with the exile and the deportation of Judah to Babylon in 587/6 B.C.E. The plot of the Deuteronomistic History is therefore ever concerned with the exile, and attempts to provide the answer to why the catastrophe occurred. This is not to say that portions of the Deuteronomistic History do not deal with pre-exilic or post-exilic concerns, but to say that exile was the question at the heart of the corpus. As Nicholson points out, "there is no mention at all in Kings of any release of the Jews from exile, no hint of a return to Jerusalem or of the rebuilding of the Temple."[56] This makes dating the composition of the Deuteronomistic History after the exile extremely difficult.

E.W. Nicholson: Deuteronomy and Tradition

Nicholson, however, takes a very different approach to the dating of the composition of the Deuteronomistic History. Nicholson accepts Noth's theory of a Deuteronomistic circle, but challenges the belief that the group or author responsible for the Deuteronomistic History was completely separate from the circle responsible for the Book of Deuteronomy. The common belief, championed by von Rad, was that the Deuteronomist was influenced by the Book of Deuteronomy and the Mosaic/Sinai traditions on the one hand, and by specifically Jerusalem traditions "concerning Yahweh's choice of Mount Zion as his dwelling-place and the house of David to be his anointed rulers over Israel" on the other, but that the Deuteronomist belonged to neither tradition specifically, "standing as it were mid-way between them deriving his theological standpoint from certain aspects of both of them."[57] Nicholson, however, tries to show that

[56] E.W. Nicholson, Deuteronomy and Tradition. Oxford: The Alden Press, 1967, p. 6.
[57] Ibid., p. 108.

the Deuteronomists directly inherit the tradition of those responsible for the Book of Deuteronomy.

Nicholson argues that the Deuteronomic circle originated as a northern Israelite prophetic circle who fled south after the northern deportation of 721 B.C.E., believing that the "future of the nation as a whole lay with Judah."[58] These "custodians of the old amphictyonic traditions underlying the book worked during the reign of Manasseh and drew up their plans for reviving and reforming the nation when the opportunity for doing so would arise."[59] During the Josianic reforms, which Nicholson argues were first spurred on by political motivations to gain independence in the face of the crumbling Assyrian empire,[60] *Ürdeuteronium* was somehow "discovered" in the Temple and was "accepted by the authorities in Jerusalem and became the basis for further reformation enactments which supplemented those already enforced by them."[61]

After creating this narrative for the Deuteronomic circle, Nicholson then tries to show that the linguistic and theological similarities between the Deuteronomic circle and the Deuteronomist were not the result of a later separate group picking up and using Deuteronomy and adopting its style and theology. Nicholson notes striking similarities even within the Book of Deuteronomy. Passages presumably from the pen of the Deuteronomist appear to be written in the same style as those presumed to be part of *Ürdeuteronium* with the only differences being "an occasional variation in vocabulary or short phrase and minor nuances in syntax."[62] From this he argues that the Deuteronomist was completely at home in the Deuteronomic style because it was "his own natural mode

[58] Ibid., p. 105.
[59] Ibid., p. 106.
[60] Ibid., pp. 8-16.
[61] Ibid., p. 102.
[62] Ibid., p. 109.

of expressing himself and not… a slavish or cumbersome copying of the style of a book which was originally quite foreign to him."[63]

Further, Nicholson points to the theological similarities between the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic circles, especially in terms of covenant tradition. Nicholson argues that the Deuteronomist, though influenced by the Jerusalem cult traditions, re-interprets them in the light of the Deuteronomic Sinai cult traditions. To illustrate this, Nicholson points to several points in the Deuteronomistic History where the Deuteronomist has imposed Deuteronomic concepts on cult traditions Nicholson believes to have been originally Jerusalem cult traditions. The first instance of this is in the charge the Deuteronomist places on the monarchy to uphold the "law of Moses."[64] The Deuteronomist has, in Nicholson's view, taken the "unconditional covenant" of the Oracle of Nathan in II Samuel 7:8-16[65] and imposed upon it Deuteronomic conditions in David's last charge to Solomon in I Kings 2:4, such that there shall always be a Davidic king on the throne as long as the ordinances and statutes are upheld. The second example of this Deuteronomic infusion Nicholson highlights is in the Mount Zion traditions. The Deuteronomist here "has imposed the peculiar name-theology upon the Mount Zion traditions…the primacy of Jerusalem is accepted but at the same time re-interpreted."[66] So because Yahweh's true dwelling is not on this earth, but in heaven, in the Deuteronomic view, the Deuteronomist insists that only Yahweh's *name* dwells in the city.[67]

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[63] Ibid., p. 109.
[64] Ibid., pp. 109-11. cf. I Kings 2:1ff.; I Kings 9:4f.
[65] It should be noted that the Oracle of Nathan in II Samuel 7 contains no language of covenant. It is specified as a promise to the House of David which is not termed a "covenant" until the Oracle of Nathan is reinterpreted in later texts. Cf. Psalm 89:3,28,34; Isaiah 55:3.
[66] Ibid., p. 112.
[67] I Kings 8:29; 14:21; II Kings 21:7; 23:27.

Finally, Nicholson attempts to link the Deuteronomistic pattern of prophecy-fulfillment to the Deuteronomic tradition. The Deuteronomistic History was "written in the shadow of the events of 721 B.C. and 586 B.C.,"[68] and sought to provide a theological explanation for why those events occurred. Nicholson argues that the Deuteronomist saw these events as the fulfillment of the "warning of the curse which would befall the nation in the event of disobedience"[69] which was issued alongside the law in Deuteronomy. The pattern of prophecy and fulfillment is incredibly marked in the Deuteronomistic History, one example being Ahijah's prophecy of the division of the Davidic kingdom in I Kings 11:30f., and its expressed fulfillment in I Kings 12:15f. More examples of this pattern are scattered throughout the Deuteronomistic History. From this Nicholson argues that the "Deuteronomist saw and wished his readers to see a direct relationship between the word of Yahweh as spoken by the prophets and the events of Israel's history."[70] In doing so, the Deuteronomist, like Deuteronomy, is associating prophecy and obedience to the Law of Moses (prophet *par excellence.*) Thus, Nicholson concludes that the Deuteronomistic material is a later expression of the same expatriated northern prophetic circle responsible for Deuteronomy itself.

F.M. Cross and Rudolf Smend: Deuteronomistic Redaction

While Nicholson sidesteps several glaring issues in Noth's theory, he does provide a 'life setting' for the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic circles, and creates a closer link between the two groups than had previously existed. Subsequent to Nicholson's work, several scholars took exception to Noth's hypothesis of a single author and a unified text within the Deuteronomistic History. Two of the most influential of the

[68] Ibid., pp. 114-5.
[69] Ibid., p. 115.
[70] Ibid., p. 117.

scholars who have pointed to tensions in Noth's theory are F.M. Cross and Rudolf Smend. Cross proposed a *double-redaction* model, which held that one edition of the Deuteronomistic History was written during or shortly after the time of Josiah, with a later edition composed during the exile.[71] T. Römer takes issue with this model because it is extremely difficult to delineate the bounds of the proposed "pre-exilic edition." He argues that "the allusions to the exile within deuteronomistic texts are so numerous that their elimination from the first edition looks rather like begging the question."[72] Smend's model, which was later expanded by his students, was one of *successive redactional layers*. This model postulates that after the initial edition of the corpus was written in the exile by the Deuteronomistic Historian (DtrH,) the History was subsequently subjected to several redactions by various groups including a Prophetic Deuteronomist (DtrP,) and a Nomistic Deuteronomist (DtrN.) N. Lohfink later expanded the model further to include a pre-exilic layer (DtrL,) and a final redactional layer in the post-exilic period (DtrÜ.)[73] Both of these models have held widespread acceptance and have been subjected to continuous and ongoing modification.

More recent scholars, such as Thomas Römer, John Van Seters, and others, have abandoned both models in favour of a more Nothian position in order to "take seriously the *coherence* (despite the great complexity) of the deuteronomistic ideology and style."[74] Such a neo-Nothian position allows for a certain unity within the texts while breaking away from Noth's vision of a solitary author writing with a single-minded ideology. The

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[71] Thomas Römer, "Deuteronomy in Search of Origins," in Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History. eds. G.N. Knoppers and J.G. McConville, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000, p. 116.
[72] Ibid., p. 116.
[73] Ibid., p. 116.
[74] Ibid., p. 117.

task of delineating the different redactional layers which was carried out by the disciples of Cross and Smend has proven to be an impossible literary task which will likely never yield absolute consensus as the "descriptions of certain 'layers' often appear quite arbitrary."[75]

Thomas Römer: Deuteronomy in Search of Origins

Römer's approach is to take the Book of Deuteronomy as a pivot-point in the Hebrew Bible, since it serves a double purpose as both the introduction to the Deuteronomistic History, and the conclusion to the Pentateuchal narratives. Römer stands with Martin Rose and John Van Seters in viewing Deuteronomy *first* as being the "cornerstone" of the Deuteronomistic History, and *second* as and expansion of the texts attributed to the "Yahwist."[76] This is a gigantic shift in the assumed chronology, since previous biblical scholarship presupposed that the Pentateuchal narratives predated the Deuteronomistic History. This shift allows Römer to delineate three distinct redactions of the Deuteronomy, the first being the exilic version of the corpus "edited by a 'school,' or better a 'coalition,' of scribes, former court functionaries, and 'liberal' priests," Dtr^1. The second edition represents several layers of later redaction which cannot be properly delineated based on linguistic style, but which stem from the same ideological milieu as Dtr^1; Römer lumps these redactional layers together as Dtr^2. The final set of redactions occurred when the editorial group responsible for the Pentateuch utilized Deuteronomy as its conclusion.[77]

Römer argues this model on the grounds that the Deuteronomistic Deuteronomy was above all a search for "origins." Römer believes the catastrophes of 597 and 587/6

[75] Ibid., p. 116.
[76] Ibid., p. 113.
[77] Ibid., pp. 113-7.

B.C.E. to have stripped Judah of "the pillars on which the identity of the people rested – king, Temple, land…. It was thus necessary to reinvent a new identity; and actually, a search for identity is always a search for 'origins' as well."[78] Römer posits that Deuteronomistic Deuteronomy transports its audience, the exiled people of Judah, into a situation of origins by means of a thinly veiled fiction which tropes the period of the exodus as a reflection of the current condition of exile in order to "wipe out entire centuries of history to signify that a new beginning was possible."[79]

Römer attempts to illustrate his point by highlighting the role of the *fathers* in Deuteronomistic Deuteronomy. Because of the pivotal position of Deuteronomy as both the introduction to the Deuteronomistic History and the conclusion to the Pentateuchal narratives, it expresses two distinct origin mythologies by the designation *fathers*. The Deuteronomistic usage of *fathers* refers to those in the period of the exodus, with whom the Deuteronomists wished their audience to identify. Römer argues that it was only later at the time of the post-deuteronomistic redaction that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were inserted into the text of Deuteronomy and conflated with the *fathers* who wandered through the desert.[80] In fact, Deuteronomistic Deuteronomy wants very little, if anything, to do with the patriarchs. The only mention of these ancestors outside the post-deuteronomistic "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" formulation occurs in Deuteronomy 26:5, "A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt." This anonymous *father*, sometimes associated with Jacob, is clearly marked as "not-Israel," since for the

[78] Ibid., p. 117.
[79] Ibid., pp. 117-8.
[80] Ibid., p. 130.

Deuteronomists "Egypt is the beginning of the history of *Israel*; the ancestor who descended there is still an *Aramean*."[81]

The beginning of Israel's history in Egypt and the exodus was meant not only to reflect the current situation of the exiles in the trope of the wandering *fathers*,[82] but also to show the addressees of Deuteronomy that Yahweh's promise of the land to the *fathers* of the past held true in the period of the conquest of the Cisjordan. Römer argues that the addressees of Deuteronomy are transformed into the *fathers* of the conquest, and that they were therefore meant to reappropriate this relative "golden-age" of the time of Moses-Joshua "when the promises made to the fathers in Egypt were realized."[83]

Römer's broad outline of the composition and intention of the Deuteronomistic History comes a great way from the earlier theories from Noth to the expansion of the models of Cross and Smend. The old trends of attempting to dissect and label verses and half-verses as belonging to particular layers of redaction are not only not practiced by Römer, but are also challenged. Römer throws into question de Tillesse's widespread theory that the "singular passages" in Deuteronomy reflected the style of *Ürdeuteronium*, and that the "plural passages" belonged to the Deuteronomistic redaction of the book.[84] Römer explains this phenomenon as *Numeruswechsel* [change of number,] an intentional literary style of the Deuteronomistic editors; the constant change between plural and singular second person address was meant "first of all to hold the attention of the addressee, but it also expresses the fact that the community can be spoken to as an

[81] Ibid., p. 131.
[82] Cf. ibid., p. 118.
[83] Ibid., pp. 134-5.
[84] Nicholson relies heavily on de Tillesse's theory throughout his work.

individual and that, consequently, each individual ("thou") represents the community ("you")."[85]

Rainer Albertz: Competing Deuteronomistic Parties

While Römer recognizes that there is a "great complexity" within the Deuteronomistic literature, he does not pay enough attention to the deep ideological tensions within the text. This task is taken up in two different approaches by Rainer Albertz and K.L. Noll. Albertz's approach is to suggest that the ideological tensions within Deuteronomistic texts represent an internal division within the so-called Deuteronomistic school. Albertz takes as a starting point Lohfink's suggestion that writers coming from different backgrounds and using different rhetorical styles can nonetheless be a part of the same movement if they support the same goals. He then proposes that the opposite is also true, that "groups which come from a common background and use the same or similar rhetorics can nevertheless constitute several movements because they fight for different goals."[86]

The focal point of Albertz's discussion of multiple "parties" within the Deuteronomistic school lies mainly in the tensions and contradictions between the Deuteronomists responsible for the Deuteronomistic History (DtrG) and those responsible for the Deuteronomistic portions of Jeremiah (J-D). Although he does not stress enough the tensions internal to DtrG, the thesis is nevertheless useful. Albertz argues that the birth of the Deuteronomistic school was during the time of the Josianic reforms, which were "supported by a broad coalition of different groups and persons… members of the royal family (Josiah, later Jehoahaz), influential sections of the

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[85] Ibid., pp. 118-9.
[86] Rainer Albertz, "In Search of the Deuteronomists," in The Future of the Deuteronomistic History. ed. Thomas Römer, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000, pp. 5-6.

priesthood of Jerusalem headed by the main-priest Hilkiah, important parts of the officials around the scribe Shaphan, the majority of the nobility around Judah (עם הארץ), and prophets like Huldah and the young Jeremiah."[87] This coalition then split up after the sudden death of Josiah, and members of the coalition were split between two competing parties which Albertz terms the "reform party" (led by the Shaphanides, the leading family of those who remained in the land during the exile, primarily responsible for J-D) and the "nationalistic party" (led by the Hilkiades, the leading family in Babylon during the exile, primarily responsible for DtrG.)[88]

K.L. Noll: Deuteronomic Debate

But even within DtrG there are tensions and contradictions which are so numerous that they throw into question any theories of a synchronic composition history. This is the argument which Noll presents in an attempt to overturn Noth's theory of a unified Deuteronomistic composition once and for all, and to replace it with his theory of a "Deuteronomic Debate" in which several authors and groups of authors composed the Former Prophets in conversation with Deuteronomy.

Noll identifies two stages in the redactional history of the Former Prophets. The first redactional stage occurred when the books each existed in the form of a single manuscript, the second when they began to be widely disseminated.[89] Each stage of redaction represents multiple layers of redaction that gradually accrued over the texts on

[87] Ibid., p. 11.
[88] Ibid., p. 12.
[89] K.L. Noll, "Deuteronomistic History or Deuteronomic Debate? (A Thought Experiment,)" *JSOT* 31.3 (2007): 318.

an *ad hoc* basis.[90] Noll dates the first set of redactions to the Persian period, and the second set to the Hellenistic period.[91]

Noll justifies this chronology using the external evidence of the lack of attention the Former Prophets received into the Persian period and beyond. He argues that "it seems likely that the Elephantine Jews did not possess knowledge of biblical books, which suggests that biblical scrolls might not yet have been in circulation in the late Persian era… Hecataeus of Abdera knew little or nothing of the traditions in the Former Prophets… Demetrius and Eupolemus demonstrate that when these documents were known, they were not treated as definitive accounts of past events, and another non-Jewish author, Pompeius Trogus, demonstrates little knowledge of the Former Prophets in early Roman times."[92] And even in the Hellenistic and Roman eras when the texts were circulated, they were not very well known nor were they frequently cited, being overshadowed by the Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms.[93]

Noll concludes that "unless one wants to argue that these books were first composed at a late date – and I do not suggest that – then one is compelled to conclude that the Former Prophets existed for centuries in a predeuteronomistic form."[94] Noll therefore proposes a very long and gradual redaction of the Former Prophets extending from 600-300 B.C.E.,[95] and for a long time constituted the breeding ground for a debate

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[90] Ibid., pp. 319-23.
[91] Ibid., p. 325
[92] Ibid., pp. 320-1.
[93] Ibid., pp. 131-2.
[94] Ibid., p. 333.
[95] Noll argues that only at the end of this long redactional process were the four books unconvincingly tied into a single narrative. Ibid., p. 344.

among "a narrow group of like-minded intellectuals whose writings were not intended for mass consumption."[96]

Noll's thesis is certainly compelling, and has great impact on the study of the Former Prophets. His model, if correct, undermines the possibility that the Former Prophets were written in order to present a coherent history to the exiles of Judah including a glorious past which could be reappropriated in their return to the Promised Land. Noll is certainly correct to imagine an incredibly long redactional process extending from c. 600 to 300 B.C.E., but his model has a few failings. First, his proposal that the Former Prophets were not intended for mass consumption is based on the fact that they were not well known books in the late Persian through Roman periods. This does not rule out the possibility that Deuteronomy and Former Prophets were indeed intended for mass consumption and instruction during the exilic era during which they would have been most pertinent. Unfortunately it is impossible to gauge how widely known these texts were during the exilic era. Second, his proposal that the books were not only written independently, but existed independently in predeuteronomistic form for centuries, seems unlikely, since it would entail four groups, possibly of different backgrounds, writing four non-overlapping, yet subsequent, histories of Israel, all of which would be quite senseless if they contained no references to the catastrophe of 587/6 B.C.E. Third, it does not seem plausible that any scribe writing in the late Persian period or afterward would feel the need, in their time, to construct a Deuteronomistic explanation for and solution to a problem which was no longer pertinent. Despite these considerations, Noll's model is invaluable because it questions any model that

[96] Ibid., p. 336.

presupposes Deuteronomistic involvement in the pre-Persian period or, for that matter, any model that reads these four books together in the pre-Hellenistic period.

Each of the models presented above represents a valuable piece of the puzzle in terms of reconstructing the composition history of Deuteronomy – II Kings. It is fair to say that the Deuteronomistic History represents neither the "undisputed unity" of Noth's model, nor the "recalcitrant hodgepodge of narrative discontinuities" of Noll's.[97] Any model attempting to explain who the Deuteronomists were and when they were writing must strike a balance between the apparent coherence of the text and the glaring tensions, discontinuities, and contradictions within it. A reasonable compromise may appear as follows: the original Book of Deuteronomy, which is essentially irrecoverable, but probably contained most of chapters 6-12, was composed in Judah by a coalition of scribes including a northern prophetic circle which fled south after the catastrophe of 721 B.C.E., and was written some time during the reigns of Manasseh and Josiah. After Josiah's sudden death, different groups who supported the Josianic reforms split into separate "parties" who nevertheless remained in conversation with one another. The majority of these scribes were subsequently deported to Babylon to be used as skilled labour in Babylonian society. Living in close proximity to each other in the Babylonian Golah, this politically divided, Deuteronomistic group of scribes set out to write the history of Israel from Moses to the present utilizing whatever knowledge they had at hand, trying to come up with an explanation for their recent loss of power, and achieving only the most minimal consensus: that the monarchy was punished due to a failure to obey the laws set forth in Deuteronomy. These books were then re-edited after the release of Jehoiachin, an event which inspired hope among those Albertz terms the "nationalistic

[97] Ibid., p. 344.

party," but fierce skepticism from others within the Deuteronomistic school who blamed their current loss of power on he poor decisions of the monarchy, and did not wish to see it revisited in Judah. After the return from exile, the Deuteronomistic History became the arena for even more debate among Deuteronomistic (and even anti-Deuteronomistic) intellectuals, and was subjected to a long process of augmentation and glossing which lasted until the Hellenistic period. It is therefore necessary to approach texts within the corpus with extreme caution and limited presuppositions, since it is nearly impossible to separate out what was written when or by whom.

The question still remains of David's position in the Deuteronomistic History. Since, as will be demonstrated below, the archaeological evidence for the time period of the United Monarchy is extremely deficient, the importance of the portrayal of David in the Deuteronomistic History is substantially heightened because it is all that remains. And what remains is a figure that is shaped and reshaped to drive a subtle debate on the monarchical ideology of Israel between different parties responsible for writing portions of the Deuteronomistic History.

III

Archaeology and the "Age of David"

David's time period, the period of the United Monarchy of Israel and Judah, was once believed to hold a very secure position in terms of its historicity. In constructed histories of Israel, even scholars inclined to claim that the periods preceding the United Monarchy were mythical or fictitious could look to the period of the United Monarchy as an "historical watershed" in the Hebrew Bible.[98] The reasons for this were twofold. First, the vivid narratives concerning the kings of this time period – including the Court History (or Succession Narrative) of David, once heralded as the earliest piece of historiography in the Hebrew Bible[99] – were considered to be contemporaneous with the kings themselves. As first-hand accounts of the events, "one needed only to see them as plausible to accept them as history."[100] Second, though Saul and David were not credited with the undertaking of large building projects, Solomon was. The biblical accounts of Solomon's gates at Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, and Jerusalem in I Kings 9:15 at first appeared to be corroborated by the archaeological evidence from dig sites in those areas. Two apparently contemporaneous gates were discovered in the Northern cities of Hazor and Megiddo, built to similar specifications with huge stones cut by the same technique.[101] In 1967, the spring dig at Gezer uncovered a gate of similar specifications which was proclaimed to be a third "Solomonic" gate, "proving" true the great power and wealth of the United Monarchy and "confirming" the biblical texts.

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[98] Thomas L. Thompson, The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel. London: Basic Books, 1999, p. 201.
[99] John Van Seters, In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1997, p. 216.
[100] Thompson, p. 201.
[101] Ibid., p. 202.

The two great pillars buttressing the historicity of the period of the United Monarchy have, in recent years, been shown to lie on shaky grounds. The idea that some parts of the Deuteronomistic History represent first-hand accounts of the events described has all but disappeared. Most scholars now date the Deuteronomistic History to the exilic or very late pre-exilic period, while others have argued that parts of this history, if not all texts of Hebrew Bible, are products of the Persian or Hellenistic periods. This does not mean that the events of the United Monarchy are completely fictitious, but it does mean that naïve claims that the biblical accounts represent a precise history of the period can no longer be made. Further, newer archaeological surveys have raised chronological concerns about finds previously dated to the tenth century B.C.E. which have in turn led to new projections concerning state formation in Palestine during the Iron Age.

Combined, these developments have been cause for pause when examining the historicity of the United Monarchy. If the period of the United Monarchy is in fact not historical, several questions are raised as to the motives for writing such compelling and comprehensive historical narratives about that time period. If the narratives contained within Samuel and Kings are not the straightforward recording of events as they happened, or if the United Monarchy of Israel simply did not exist, it would follow that there is a deeper ideological motivation for the writing of these texts, the characters representing the ideas and concerns of the time in which they were created. An examination of the archaeological data is necessary to see whether or not such a claim is warranted.

The "Solomonic" Gates of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer

The most notable thing about the archaeological evidence of Palestine after the XXth Egyptian dynasty is that none exists, or at least not very much does. Finkelstein remarks that "this is an archaeological 'dark age' of over four centuries, one which covers most of the Iron I, the days of the United Monarchy, and the entire history of the northern Kingdom of Israel."[102] There are no chronological anchors, since none of the well-dated inscriptions such as the Mesha Stele from Dibon, the Shishak Stele from Megiddo, and the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan was found *in situ*. They were all found in "unsafe" stratigraphic contexts, and as result "they are of no direct value in establishing an absolute chronology of the key archaeological assemblages."[103]

Even the monumental finds of the six-chambered gatehouses from Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer previously thought to be beyond doubt "Solomonic" have been stratigraphically questioned because the methodology originally used to proclaim these gates "Solomonic" has been found unsound. It is likely not as blatant an error as Thompson portrays it, claiming that the Gezer archaeological team took huge boulders and rolled them down a hill, and deliberately discarded ceramic evidences to distort the dating of the stratigraphical layer in which the gate was found; Dever, a member of this dig alongside Thompson, fiercely denies this claim.[104] Methodological problems do, however, surround the dating of these gates, those of Gezer and Megiddo specifically.

Finkelstein notes that the gate at Gezer has been dated to the Solomonic period on the basis of ceramic evidence from the Gezer Field III city walls area. These arguments were based on the meticulous statistical data compiled by Holladay concerning the red

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[102] Israel Finkelstein, "State Formation in Israel and Judah: A Contrast in Context, A Contrast in Trajectory." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62.1 (1999): 36.
[103] Ibid., p. 36.
[104] William G. Dever, "Archaeology, Ideology, and the Quest for an 'Ancient' or 'Biblical' Israel," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 61.1 (1999): 44.

slip and burnished pottery surrounding the "Solomonic" gateway at Gezer.[105] Holladay's chronological anchor for the dating of the pottery, however, appears to be the biblical text, since he remarks that "the key stratum seems to be Gezer Field III Phase UG3A, which is both very short and historically exceptionally well positioned. It comes after the Solomonic building period, richly documented by biblical and historical data and secured by comparative regional archaeological and architectural criteria combined with comparative pottery criteria."[106] Finkelstein makes his frustrations known about the use of the biblical account to confirm the dating of pottery in a particular stratum, pottery dates which can then be used "independently" to date the gate within that stratum and "confirm" the biblical account.[107]

Similarly, although the gate at Megiddo was originally dated to the Solomonic period stratigraphically, Ussishkin observes that "later…all further evaluations were based on arguments of indirect or circumstantial nature, namely the interpretations of biblical descriptions, typological comparisons with other sites, and concepts concerning the development and function of fortifications. Eventually these general considerations were believed to carry more weight than the direct stratigraphical data."[108] Ussishkin's reversal of interpretive priority, examining the stratigraphical data first, and only secondarily the external considerations, coupled with his reevaluations of the gate structure itself, yields a different conclusion concerning the dating of the gate.

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[105] Israel Finkelstein, "[De]formation of the Israelite State: A Rejoinder on Methodology," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 68.4 (2005): 206.
[106] John S. Holladay Jr., "Red Slip, Burnish, and the Solomonic Gateway at Gezer," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 277/228 (1990): 62.
[107] Finkelstein, "[De]formation," pp. 206-7.
[108] David Ussishkin, "Was the 'Solomonic' City Gate at Megiddo Built by King Solomon?" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 239 (1980): 3.

Ussishkin accepts the tenth century dating for the ceramic evidence of the surrounding gate area, suggesting that the ashlar masonry in "Phoenician" style found in stratum VA-IVB "admirably fits the biblical descriptions" and is thus content to conclude that "the Stratum VA-IVB city can be easily identified as the city built by Solomon."[109] While this argument may not be completely sound considering the concerns raised about the dating of red-slipped and burnished pottery, along with the argument's dependence on the biblical texts to provide a date for stratum VA-IVB, Ussishkin main concern is with the gate structure itself. The Megiddo gate differs from the gates at Hazor and Gezer since "the four-entryway gates at Hazor and Gezer were connected to a casemate city wall, while the 'Solomonic' gate at Megiddo was connected to a solid city wall."[110] The solid wall and the gate were both originally dated to the period of Solomon, but after comparisons were made to the casemate walls connected to the gates in Hazor and Gezer, the Solomonic date of the solid wall, but not the gate itself, was revised, and a new hypothesis was proposed in order to harmonize the findings of the three gates. Y. Yadin, before breaking ground, had the hypothesis that there in fact was a Solomonic casemate wall once connected to the original Solomonic gate which had gone undetected by the excavators because it had been filled in to form the solid wall now visible. This hypothetical casemate wall would "solve" the stratigraphical problems, cementing both the casemate wall and the original gate in stratum IVB dated to the period of Solomon, and would also solve the problem of making sure all three "Solomonic" gates were "identical" architecturally. Yadin then proceeded to cut trenches to the east which

[109] Ibid., p. 7.
[110] Ibid., p. 2.

uncovered what he believed to be the Solomonic casemate walls which were previously attached to the original inner gate complex.[111]

The archaeological data, however, do not support this conclusion. In more recent surveys of the area, no sign of this casemate wall has been found. Further, the solid wall (Wall 325) is believed to be part of the original construction of the gate, as Ussishkin concludes, "A study of the available photographs reveals how well the wall is architecturally fitted to the gate towers…. The bottom of the wall is clearly laid at a level with the bottom of the gate structure…. A section through Wall 325… shows that no other wall is hidden beneath or inside the former in the vicinity of the gate."[112]

There are also two further difficulties which arise if the gate is dated to stratum VA-IVB. First, the fiery destruction layer which completely mars the entirety of stratum VA-IVB, probably due to the military campaigns of Egyptian Pharaoh Shoshenq I (= biblical Shishak?) in 926/5 B.C.E., miraculously misses only the Solomonic gate structure. Second, the destruction layer would have raised the floor of the gate, requiring the ceiling to also be raised, calling for a complete remodeling of the gate structure in the following period. There is a gap in logic here, as Ussishkin questions, "If indeed the gatehouse survived from Stratum VA-IVB – why then radically remodel it?"[113] Ussishkin concludes by dating the gate structure to stratum IVA, which most likely dates after the reign of Solomon.[114]

There are still further problems with attributing the building of all three six-chambered gates to Solomon. First, the measurements of the three "Solomonic" gates are

[111] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
[112] Ibid., p. 12.
[113] Ibid., pp. 15-6.
[114] Ibid., p. 17.

not identical, and they were certainly not "build from the same blue-prints." The gate at Gezer "is square in plan, and, according to the published schematized plan, is ca. 17.0 m. wide and ca. 17.0 m. long. The gates in Hazor and Megiddo are rectangular in plan, being ca. 17.5 - 18.0 m. wide and ca. 20.3 m. long."[115] Also, three similar gates have been excavated, two at Lachish and Tel Ira "found in late Iron II contexts," and one "outside the borders of the supposed Solomonic state (at Philistine Ashdod)."[116] These finds have shown that the building style of the three "Solomonic" gates was not unique to the kingdom of Israel, and was probably a popular style of defense throughout the Levant during the Iron Age. Despite the first glance similarities between the three "Solomonic" gates, the stratigraphical data show that these gates date quite differently. Though the striking similarities in stone cutting styles and specifications of the Megiddo and Hazor gates are interesting, even these gates have been found to be built at different time periods.[117]

Israel Finkelstein: Low Chronology

Beyond the debate over the dating of the "Solomonic" gates, deeper questions have been raised about the dating of eleventh-ninth century B.C.E. strata across the Levant. Finkelstein has proposed to shift the dating of all strata within Palestine one century lower, taking issue with the chronological anchors used to date those strata in the Alt-Albright paradigm. The prevailing paradigm is based on two major anchors: the dating of the three "Solomonic" gates in Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor to the tenth century B.C.E., and the dating of Philistine Monochrome pottery to the early twelfth century B.C.E.[118] The

[115] Ibid., p. 17.
[116] Finkelstein, "State Formation," p. 37.
[117] Ussishkin, p. 17.
[118] Finkelstein, "State Formation," pp. 35-7.

former has been shown, above, to be an unreliable anchor for fixing absolute chronology of the sites in question; Finkelstein deals with the latter in detail.

Philistine Monochrome ceramics, "unanimously accepted as indicators of the first phase of Philistine settlement in southern Canaan,"[119] were dated in the Alt-Albright paradigm to the early twelfth century B.C.E., the same time period as the XXth Egyptian Dynasty. In the historical reconstruction provided by this paradigm, Ramses III settled the Philistines in the southern coastal plain of Canaan immediately following his clash with the "Sea Peoples" in the eighth year of his reign in 1175 B.C.E. Multi-strata sites (Tel Qasile and Ashdod) observed multiple strata containing Monochrome wares lasting almost two centuries, and were dated, based on the historical reconstruction, between the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C.E. Strata also containing Bichrome wares were then subsequently dated to the tenth century B.C.E.[120] However, what is strange about this particular chronological model is that no Monochrome pottery has been found in any of the Egyptian stronghold sites which were inhabited until the days of Ramese III or possibly Ramses IV (1175-1135 B.C.E.) Further, Egyptianized pottery which characterizes XXth Dynasty strata has not been found in any strata containing Philistine Monochrome pottery.[121]

By the Alt-Albright model, this marked separation is the measure of "sharp social division between neighboring but apparently non-interacting communities (those with the Monochrome wares set against those with the Egyptianizing ceramics)."[122] Finkelstein takes issue with this reasoning, arguing that "such an important socio-political conclusion

[119] Ibid., p. 37.
[120] Ibid., p. 36.
[121] Ibid., p. 37.
[122] Ibid., p. 37.

about the relations between adjacent communities requires the interjection of some kind of ethnographic or ethnohistoric model to increase its plausibility. In the absence of such supportive arguments, any claim for the contemporaneity… of the two distributions must be considered weaker than an alternative based on chronological separation, particularly since it makes fewer assumptions about human behavior." In support of this argument, Finkelstein points to the two sites of Ashodod and Tel Miqne. In these sites, there appears to be a Philistine Monochrome-bearing stratum built atop a destroyed XXth Dynasty city. This would suggest that the Philistines were not settled immediately following the battles between Ramses III and the Sea People, but rather after the collapse of Egyptian control in southern Canaan.[123]

Since the prevailing chronology was used to date all subsequent Philistine and early Israelite strata, this new model of "Low Chronology" would create a "snow-ball effect," shifting the dating of strata throughout the Levant down by almost a century until a "Lower Anchor" could be established. Finkelstein finds this lower anchor in stratum VIA at Megiddo, in which Philistine Bichrome wares are absent, but yet is dated to the period preceding the United Monarchy because typical "Canaanite" motifs are still present in this strata. In the following strata of VB and VA-IVB, the material culture makes a takes a dramatic shift wherein all "Canaanite" motifs end and typical Iron II features are introduced, which would require a very large gap in time between strata VIA and VB. From this dramatic re-dating of Philistine ceramics, Finkelstein moves to push all strata dating from the eleventh-ninth centuries B.C.E. down almost an entire century,

[123] Ibid., pp. 36-7.

offering solutions to numerous dating quagmires which have plagued the archaeology of the Near East.[124]

Finkelstein's Low Chronology has an impact on the theory of state formation for both Israel and Judah. Finkelstein calculates that Israel did not reach "full-blown statehood"[125] until the early ninth century B.C.E. alongside Moab, Ammon and Aram Damascus, whereas Judah did not reach "full-blown statehood" until the mid-late eighth century B.C.E.,[126] likely due to their differing geographies, ecologies, and population compositions. Finkelstein does allow for a United Monarchy, but notes that, assuming it is not a fiction, "the unification of the central hill country in the 10th century B.C.E. was a short-lived exception in the history of the highlands, while the contrasting circumstances and political systems of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, better reflect the deeper, pervasive, and long-term structures of Levantine regional history."[127]

There have been objections to Finkelstein's Low Chronology, most notably by Dever.[128] Some have even taken to radiocarbon dating in order to weigh in on the issue, and "the radiocarbon results, both from Dor and Tel Rehov, indicate that the low chronology can no longer be brushed off. However, we are in no position yet to proclaim this one correct or any other chronology obsolete."[129] The radiocarbon dating of these archaeological assemblages, however, offers caution to those who would make broad-

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[124] Ibid., pp. 37-9.
[125] Finkelstein defines a "full-blown state" as a state that has a well stratified society led by a ruling stratum which extends beyond the immediate kinship of the ruler, and one with the capacity for writing systems, for the erection of monumental structures, and for large-scale centralized economic production and shipment. Cf. ibid., pp. 39-40.
[126] Ibid., p. 48.
[127] Ibid., p. 48.
[128] William G. Dever, "Archaeology and the 'Age of Solomon': A Case-Study in Archaeology and Historiography," in The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millenium. ed. Lowell K. Handy, Leiden: Brill, 1997, pp. 215-251.
[129] Ayelet Gilboa and Ilan Sharon, "An Archaeological Contribution to the Early Iron Age Chronological Debate: Alternative Chronologies for Phoenicia and Their Effects on the Levant, Cyprus, and Greece," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 332 (2003): 72.

stroke generalizations across vast territories; results from these reliable ^{14}C dating surveys must be retrieved locally from every archaeological site in the Levant, and it will likely be decades before the full picture of the chronological system is completed.

The Tel Dan Inscription and the "House of David"

In spite of the doubt cast upon the Albright chronological system and the historical reconstruction upon which it is based, one recent archaeological find in particular, the Tel Dan Inscription, is thought to contain actual reference to the United Monarchy. In 1993, during the summer session of digging at the archaeological site at Tel Dan, a basalt slab approximately 22cm x 32cm[130] was unearthed upon which was an inscription with thirteen lines of text.[131] A year later, two smaller fragments were found in the same site, believed to be part of the same inscription.[132] The text is fragmentary and incomplete, if incredibly legible in its paleo-Aramaic script. Beyond its resemblance to certain Hebrew Bible passages, the most striking characteristic of the Stele is a configuration of six letters near the end of the text at the beginning of the ninth line which reads ביתדוד. At the time of its discovery, this was the first and only extra-biblical mention of the name David in the ancient world. Lemaire has since proposed that a similar reading exists in the Moabite Mesha Stele.[133] Over sixty articles were written on the Tel Dan Inscription in the three years that followed the initial publication of the find

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[130] See George Athas, The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation, London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003, pp. 30-5. He provides a conjectural estimate of the dimensions of the full Stele, approximating the Stele to be a minimum of 115cm high by 35cm wide.
[131] A. Biran and J. Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 43 (1993): 81-98.
[132] A. Biran and J. Naveh, "The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment," *IEJ* 45 (1995): 1-18.
[133] André Lemaire, "'House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscrition: A new restoration of a famous inscription reveals another mention of the 'House of David' in the ninth century B.C.E.," *BAR* 20.3 (1994): 30-37. Although a reading of "House of David" in the Mesha Stele is possible, the fragment it is reconstructed from is so damaged, and the context so vague, that Lemaire's understanding of "House of David" is likely never to be more than a possibility.

by A. Brian and J. Naveh.[134] Over half of these articles deal solely with the interpretation of the six letters aforementioned.

Shortly after its discovery, a number of questions were raised concerning the authenticity of the Tel Dan Stele. The first among those to raise concerns was Giovanni Garbini, drawing attention to what seemed to be paleographic anomalies. Further, Garbini noted that the "exceptional preservation and legibility of the inscriptions and the quantity and richness of information preserved regarding Israel (in an Aramaic inscription)" pointed to the unlikelihood of its authenticity.[135] The fragments have since been vetted closely enough to give some semblance of scholarly consensus regarding their authenticity.[136]

The initial assessment of the date of the Stele was far from conclusive. Biran was unsure about the dating of the construction of the walls in which the fragments were initially found, and attempts to paint the dating of the walls into one of two possible frameworks provided by the Hebrew Bible, viewing the walls as either erected by Jeroboam or Ahab. The range of his dating scheme, taking into account the earliest date

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[134] Andre Lemaire, "The Tel Dan Stele as a Piece of Royal Historiography," *JSOT* 81 (1998): 3.
[135] Russell Gmirkin, "Tools, Slippage, and the Tel Dan Inscription," *SJOT* 16.2 (2002): 293-4.
[136] See especially Frederick H. Cryer, "On the Recently Discovered 'House of David' Inscription," *SJOT* 8.1 (1994): 3-19 and "A 'Betdawd' Miscellany: Dwd, Dwd' or Dwdh?" *SJOT* 9.1 (1995): 52-58. See also Gmirkin, "Tools, Slippage," pp. 293-302. Gmirkin leaves the question of the authenticity of the inscription open, citing several curious examples of tool scoring upon already broken parts of the Stele, disking, overhangs and flaking potentially caused by scoring a previously broken and thin section of stone, and letters that suspiciously (and intentionally?) stop short before a break in the basalt. His conjectures, however, prompted by a conference paper by Cryer, are based on photographic evidence only, and could well be optical illusions (as he himself points out in the article.) There now exists a general scholarly consensus that the Stele is not a complete forgery, though F.H. Cryer, "Of Epistemology, Northwest-Semitic Epigraphy and Irony: The 'btwdwd/House of David' Inscription Revisited," *JSOT* 69 (1996): 3-17, laments the fact that, in the elation that followed the discovery of the fragment, more scholars did not even bring up the question of the Stele's authenticity. See also Athas, Tel Dan Inscription, pp. 70-2. Athas provides a detailed rebuttal to Cryer's claim that there were chisel marks on the broken surfaces of the tablet, and also points to a noticeable and long-sustained patch of weathering on the right side of the fragment that could only have been caused by years of resting in the find site in antiquity prior to its discovery in 1993.

for the construction of the walls and the latest possible date for their destruction according to the sources of the Hebrew Bible, places the Stele between 932 B.C.E. and 814 B.C.E.[137] This is a considerably large range for dating the Stele, and is almost useless as far as providing any sort of relevant context for interpretation. The main method of recent scholarship which has been used in dating the inscription of the Stele is that of paleographical analysis. Two important examples at hand are the relatively old investigations by Tropper, translated, revisited, and reinterpreted by Cryer, (1993/1996) and the more recent (not to mention more thorough) investigations of Athas (2003.) Paleographical analysis is not an exact science, and it is impossible to say with any certainty that if any two texts are orthographically equivalent that they were written within the same year or even the same decade, let alone whether the dates of the inscriptions to which they are compared are correctly gauged. But paleographical analysis is able, at very least, to narrow the range of dates.

The results of this painstaking, letter by letter examination of the text prove to push the date of the text later than the original assumptions of the excavators from the tenth/ninth century into the eighth century B.C.E. for both investigators. Cryer finds the majority of the orthographical parallels within the inscriptions of Sefire, Zakir, Hadad, Panamuwa, and Bar Rakab, placing the Tel Dan Stele on a chronological trajectory running from 800-730 B.C.E. Of the various sources, Cryer has the most faith in the parallels between the Tel Dan Stele and the Sefire inscriptions, and chooses to date the Stele accordingly c. 750 B.C.E.[138] Athas, however, upon close examination of the data, believes the text of fragment A to have Syrian influences (being written with a slight left

[137] Cryer, "Epistemology," p. 4.
[138] Ibid., pp. 8-14.

leaning slant,) and to have most in common with the texts of the Amman Citadel Inscription and the Kilamuwa Stele. Athas therefore ascribes to the text of Fragment A an earlier date c. 800 B.C.E. (with a range of 2 decades on either side.)[139] This dating scheme supports both the original Biran-Naveh arrangement of the fragments[140] and the new arrangement proposed by Athas himself.[141] Both arrangements of the texts have their respective merits and downfalls, but neither seriously affects the interpretation of the lexeme בית דוד.

The original interpretation of the lexeme בית דוד as a reference to the Davidic dynasty has its roots in the biblical text. In II Samuel 7, David and YHWH exchange a set of promises: YHWH, speaking through Nathan, requests a בית ארזים from David,[142] and in return promises to build David a בית – the text is clear that YHWH means a line of descendants, a dynasty – that will be sure and established forever.[143] Both promises are subsequently fulfilled in the character of Solomon who both builds YHWH his requested בית ארזים and begins the line of the descendants of David. This promise is a pivotal moment in the Deuteronomistic History, and the promise made to David of a "sure house" is expanded into a covenant in later texts.[144] It is therefore no surprise that numerous scholars believed that the בית דוד in the Tel Dan Stele was one and the same

[139] Athas, Tel Dan Inscription, pp. 135-6.
[140] This arrangement, which places the two sets of fragments side by side to read as a continuous text, suggests that the author of the inscription was Hazael, reigning from 842 B.C.E. to 805 B.C.E. The inscription in this case would probably have been written between the middle and end of his reign.
[141] The new arrangement, which sets fragments B1-2 much lower in the text than fragment A, would place the authorship of the inscription in the hands of Bar-Hadad son of Hazael, who reigned from 796 B.C.E. to 792 B.C.E. He has often been referred to as Bar-Hadad III, but there is reason to believe, as Athas argues, that he should in fact be enumerated Bar-Hadad II. Cf. Athas, Tel Dan Inscription, p. 263ff.
[142] II Samuel 7:4-7.
[143] II Samuel 7:11-7.
[144] Cf. Psalm 89, Isaiah 55.

with this Davidic dynasty. After all, the context of the inscription provides us with the names of kings who were descendants of David. Even Biran and Naveh, the first people to publish on the Tel Dan Stele, claimed that בית דוד was a reference to the "dynastic name of the kingdom of Judah."[145]

The implication of finding reference to the Davidic dynasty is great: it would show that the concept of the Davidic dynasty was present at a very early time in the monarchy of ancient Israel. It would therefore make it harder for so-called "biblical minimalists" to deny the existence of David based on absence of evidence. The reaction from this camp of biblical scholars to the news of the discovery of the Tel Dan Stele was unsurprisingly negative, but surprisingly embarrassing. Dever jests that "Davies and other revisionists have turned into contortionists trying to turn this stupendous ninth-century inscription into anything but what it is: a historical datum fixing the 'house of David' and Israel into the bedrock of the Iron Age."[146] While Dever is not correct about the certainty that this Stele offers, nor is he correct about the probable date of the inscription, he is quite correct that the alternate interpretations of the lexeme often appear stretched and unlikely. One example of these alternative interpretations is found in the work of German scholars Lehemann and Reichel, which claims the lexeme to be a reference to a heretofore unattested deity *Dod* in the guise of *BaytDod*, a possible cultic object of some kind. Connecting the lexeme which follows בית דוד – ואשם – with the deity *Ashim*, and reconstructing the text which precedes בית דוד to be ואסך "and I made libation," they come to the following translation: "…And I made libation to *BaytDod* and *Ashim*…" This reconstruction, however, is fraught with grammatical issues, and has since been

[145] Biran and Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment," pp. 93-6.
[146] Dever, "Archaeology, Ideology," p. 42.

rejected on those grounds, not to mention its problematic proposed referent, the deity *Dod*.[147]

The lexeme בית דוד understood as a reference to the Davidic dynasty, however, is also fraught with difficulties. First, there is no word divider in the text of the Tel Dan Inscription between the words בית and דוד, which means that the two words are to be understood as a singular concept; a word divider would be expected if this lexeme were considered a dynastic label. Second, the text preceding the lexeme likely reads [מל]ך, giving the translation "king of בית דוד." As Athas argues in a later article, "If we scan all the occurrences outside the Tel Dan Inscription in which state entities are called by a dynastic label, we will find no instance in which someone is referred to as the 'king of' a dynastic label…. This is not surprising, though, because a king does not rule a dynasty – he rules a kingdom, a specific area of land."[148]

Athas has forwarded what seems to be the only convincing theory concerning the lexeme: that it is a *toponym*. It would certainly make sense if בית דוד was read as a toponym, since, if credence is given to the original arrangement of the texts, it is essentially parallel to the toponym Israel in the text of Fragment A, and the kings of these toponyms are referred to in the subsequent lines of text in Fragment B. But even in Athas' new arrangement, if the preceding word really is [מל]ך, there is no choice but to regard בית דוד as a toponym. Athas ultimately identifies בית דוד with Jerusalem, which he proposes exercised scant control of the surrounding region, a "poor,

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[147] Athas, Tel Dan Inscription, pp. 219-21.
[148] George Athas, "Setting the Record Straight: What Are We Making of the Tel Dan Inscription?" *Journal of Semitic Studies* 51.2 (2006): 247-8.

insignificant and fractured region" before its economic boom after 800 B.C.E.[149] Athas finally claims that this toponym is equivalent to the biblical עיר דוד, or "city of David." Athas contends that the noun which means city in biblical Hebrew, עיר, is unattested in Old Aramaic, and that the Aramaic author used the word בית in order to represent the Hebrew idea expressed by עיר.[150] This exchange of elements is not unheard of, as the Hebrew Bible refers once to the town of Beth Shemesh as עיר שמש.[151] Athas thus argues that the Aramaic toponymical ביתדוד of the Tel Dan Inscription must be thoroughly distinguished from the Hebrew socio-political term בית דוד located in the narratives of the Hebrew Bible.[152]

David himself is simply not in the scope of the text of the Stele. What is there appears to be in all likelihood the name of a city-state. It is impossible to tell whether this city-state received its name from King David or from elsewhere, since "the naming event is outside the inscription's scope."[153] It may be that there was simply a city named "beloved city" or "city of blessing," and that the biblical authors of the exilic period presupposed that there was an ancient king of the name David as a way to explain the naming of the city or a way to claim a mythic heritage connected to the city. It is equally possible that an ancient chieftain – who would have little resembled the biblical figure at any rate – named David could have lent his name to the fortress in Jerusalem. There are certainly several examples in the Near East of cities named after great rulers a kingdom: the north Syrian kingdom of Arpad is named *Bit-Agusi* named after Gusi/Agusi, the

[149] Athas, Tel Dan Inscription, pp. 271-9.
[150] Ibid. p. 180.
[151] Ibid. p. 180. See also: Joshua 19:41.
[152] Ibid., p. 300.
[153] Ibid., pp. 308-9.

kingdom of Damascus is called *Bit-Hazaili* after king Hazael, and the kingdom of Israel is called *Bit-Humri* after Omri.[154]

With the data at hand, there is no reason to deny the existence of the United Monarchy. The physical evidence, however, also provides us with absolutely nothing which ties the figure of David as portrayed in the biblical text to any "real" person of history, as if such a thing could ever exist. The narrative accounts of David and his exploits are no doubt historical, but to be certain they are fictionalized histories as any history is fictionalized. The extent to which they are fiction is not important. What is important is that they have something to say not only about Israel's past, but more importantly about the Israel which produced these texts. They present David as both an ideal ruler and a flawed ruler, and while it may be possible to see this as a picture of a man who is deeply human with both his great moments and his shortcomings, this is not the way that propaganda works. Furthermore, there is evidence in the text of Samuel-Kings that David was not originally intended to be a character displaying both human strength and human weakness. In I Kings 11, Solomon does not meet the high expectations set by his father David, "For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of YHWH, and did not completely follow YHWH, as his father David had done."[155] According to the author of I Kings 11, David is completely righteous, never having done what is evil in the sight of YHWH. However, after the Bathsheba affair in II Samuel 12, Nathan uses the same language to criticize David's actions, "Why have you

[154] Nadav Na'aman, "Cow Town of Royal Capital?: Evidence for Iron Age Jerusalem," *BAR* 23.4 (1997): 47.
[155] I Kings 11:5-6.

despised the word of YHWH, to do what is evil in his sight."[156] The author of I Kings 11 does not seem to be at all aware of the criticism of Nathan. The author of I Kings 11 has either chosen to ignore this text or failed to notice its existence (the case for which would be difficult to make,) or was working with an entirely different and wholly positive account of David's reign.

The figure of David was not written as a complex and human character, but rather develops into one as he is shaped to fit the shifting monarchical ideology of Israel, becoming *the key figure* in a debate which continues through the span of the composition history of the Deuteronomistic History, and far beyond it.

[156] II Samuel 12:9.

IV

David and the Monarchical Origins of Israel

With the current archaeological data tying nothing of the biblical account of David to his own historical time period of the tenth century B.C.E., the era of David scholarship which attempts to use the biblical account of David to retrieve some historical "kernel" from the period of the United Monarchy is over. Instead, there is a required historical-critical shift to the focus on the socio-historical contexts in which these texts were composed. As demonstrated above, there is still lingering the idea that the composition history of the Deuteronomistic History began in the period of the late monarchy. It is difficult, however, to argue that the impetus for the writing of this corpus was anything other than Judah's exile into Babylon in 587/6 B.C.E. All arguments for an earlier composition of certain portions of the text therefore must rely on the presupposition that the Deuteronomistic authors of the exilic period had at their disposal numerous textual documents from which to draw.

Though there are explicit references in the Deuteronomistic History to such documents as "The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel" and "The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah," these references are suspect. The similarity between these two referenced sources, both in title and in content, suggests that these two nations had very similar court scribal systems and keeping very similar records of their kings' activities. Everything in the physical evidence of these two nations, however, suggests that these two nations had quite independent development processes and the likelihood that these two nations did not consult each other on how to keep royal records is rather high. It is possible that these "Books of the Annals of the Kings" serve a rhetorical

function, in order to provide the text with the illusion of volume in the same way that a mirror would provide a room with the illusion of space. An indication of this is found in each example in which the "Books of the Annals of the Kings" are referenced, wherein these sources claim to provide the "rest of the acts" of certain kings.[157] In each case, these further acts are either not described or described in very minimal detail. Even though the Deuteronomists may have known nothing more about each king of Israel or Judah than is explicitly provided in the text, a quick reference to the "Books of the Annals of the Kings" gives the illusion that the Deuteronomistic historians knew much more about these kings, and that they were working with a vast corpus of historical records to write a truly rich history.

There is also the belief that numerous older poems, sagas, legends, and other tales for which the sources are not cited were also incorporated by the Deuteronomists into their work. This belief, for example, held true for quite some time in scholarly discussion of the Court History of David, the various lists in the David account,[158] and the tales of David's wars in II Samuel 5 and 8.[159] While it is possible that certain documents were used to shape some parts of the Deuteronomistic History, time and space does not allow for a full exploration of these "sources" within the entire corpus. However, thanks in no small part to the research of Van Seters, it is becoming more apparent that few, if any, such sources were used in the composition of the Davidic material. It is therefore likely

[157] I Kings 14:19, 29; 15:7, 23, 31; 16:5, 14, 20; 22:39, 45; II Kings 1:18; 8:23; 10:34; 12:19; 13:8, 12; 14:18, 28; 15:6, 11, 15, 21, 26, 31, 36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17, 25; 23:28; 24:5.
[158] The lists of David's officials, II Samuel 8:16-8 and 20:23-6; the lists of David's wives and sons, II Samuel 3:2-5 and 5:13-6; the list of David's military heroes, II Samuel 23:8-39.
[159] Cf. John Van Seters, The Biblical Saga of King David. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2009, pp. 90-7.

that the entirety of the DtrH David narrative[160] was composed in the exilic period. This is not to say that the entirety of the Davidic material within the Books of Samuel and Kings was written in the exilic period. Ever since Julius Wellhausen, scholars have noticed divisions within the David narrative. The major division expressed in Wellhausen's *Prolegomena* is twofold, dividing the narrative into two blocks of texts commonly known as the History of David's Rise to Power, comprising the material within I Samuel 16-II Samuel 8, and the Court History of David, extending from II Samuel 9-20 including I Kings 1-2.[161] This division continues to dominate the discussion of the Davidic material up to the present with only minor modifications to the contours of these major blocks of tradition. Each major block, however, has since been subjected to parsing by several imagined redactors and glossers.[162] While this major division still serves some purpose, a new paradigm has been envisioned by Van Seters which divides the Davidic material into two accounts which he refers to as DtrH, which is the original story of David composed by Deuteronomists, and the *David Saga*,[163] which is a late Persian period addition to the text that augments the original DtrH and adds the entirety of the Court History of David.[164] The present chapter will deal with the function of David in DtrH and the implications of this narrative for the exile and return; the following chapter will deal with the function of David in the *David Saga*.

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[160] By David narrative here I am referring to the Deuteronomistic material contained within the Books of Samuel and Kings, which should be distinguished from the late Persian period materials which include both additions to the History of David's Rise to Power and the entirety of the Court History of David which have been identified by John Van Seters. Ibid., pp. 121-344, 361-3.
[161] Julius Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1973, pp. 262-9.
[162] Cf. Van Seters, Saga of King David, pp. 16-34.
[163] The term *David Saga* should be understood as referring only to the late Persian period document *as identified by Van Seters* in The Biblical Saga of King David. Throughout this work, Van Seters italicizes the term, and that practice will be continued in this thesis.
[164] Ibid., pp. 34-9.

John Van Seters: DtrH and the *David Saga*

Van Seters contends that the original Deuteronomistic composition of the story of David was short and quite basic. He outlines the DtrH David narrative as containing David's introduction,[165] David's successful military missions,[166] the offer of Saul's daughters as wives for David,[167] the threats on David's life,[168] David's brief flight to Gath and his subsequent flight to Adullum in Judah,[169] David's final encounter with Saul where he spares Saul's life in Engedi,[170] Jonathan's death and Saul's subsequent suicide in the midst of battle with the Philistines,[171] David's lament for the deaths of Saul and Jonathan,[172] David's anointing over all Israel at Hebron,[173] David's capture and defense of Jerusalem,[174] David's foreign wars,[175] the return of the ark to Jerusalem,[176] and the Oracle of Nathan.[177] To this should be added a brief account of David's death.[178] Van Seters labels this early Deuteronomistic account of the story of David as *account A* of the History of David's Rise to Power, and contends that this narrative expresses an ideology quite different from the ideology expressed in the additions to the History of David's Rise to Power, which Van Seters labels *account B*, and the Court History of David, which he argues, quite convincingly, is by the same hand as the author of the *account B*.

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[165] I Samuel 16:14-23, but not his introduction and secret anointing by Samuel in I Samuel 16:1-13, nor his introduction in I Samuel 17 in the Story of David and Goliath.
[166] I Samuel 18:5-16.
[167] I Samuel 18:17-30.
[168] I Samuel 19:1-17.
[169] I Samuel 21:11-6; 22:1-5, 15-18, 24b-8.
[170] I Samuel 24:1-23.
[171] I Samuel 28:1a, 4; 31:1-13.
[172] II Samuel 1:1-4, 11-12, 17-27.
[173] II Samuel 2:1-2aα, 3; 5:1-3b, 4
[174] II Samuel 5:6-12, 17-25; 8:1.
[175] II Samuel 8:2-14; 10:15-9.
[176] II Samuel 6:23a, 5, 15, 17-9.
[177] II Samuel 7:1-29.
[178] II Samuel 8:15, I Kings 2:1-4, 10-2.

Van Seters characterizes the ideological position of Dtr's *account A* as very straightforward, in which, "David is guileless, transparently honest, loyal to Saul, and upright in all his actions."[179] David's career is one of ultimate success in establishing both the kingdom and cult of Israel. He is divinely elected, and is legitimately anointed king of all Israel[180] (not just the House of Judah as *account B* adds)[181] immediately following Saul's death. He then goes on to capture Jerusalem,[182] engages in a series of wars with the Philistines which ultimately liberate Israel from the great military power of the day,[183] and engages in further wars to extend the borders of his kingdom.[184] In the story of the Ark's return to Jerusalem, and in the Oracle of Nathan (with its charge of building the Temple,) David is also established as the "heir to the sacred traditions of Israel from Moses to Saul as reflected in DtrH and symbolized in the ark of the covenant."[185] While Van Seters has clearly identified the ideology of the DtrH David narrative as one that is on the whole positive towards David, he has not identified why this is so.[186]

David as a Model for Future Kings

The David of the Deuteronomistic account possesses a very similar function to the function of the addressees of the Mosaic discourse in Deuteronomy as expressed by T. Römer. As explained above, Römer conceived the book of Deuteronomy, or at least Deuteronomistic Deuteronomy, as a search for "origins," arguing that the exile of Judah

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[179] Ibid., p. 196.
[180] II Samuel 2:1-3, 5:1-5.
[181] II Samuel 2:4ff.
[182] II Samuel 5:6-12
[183] II Samuel 17-25; 8:1
[184] II Samuel 8:2-14; 10:15-9.
[185] Ibid., p. 269.
[186] This is likely due to his unwillingness to date the composition of the Deuteronomistic History. Cf. ibid., p. 368.

into Babylon stripped the people of the three pillars upon which their identity rested – king, Temple, and land – and it was therefore necessary to go back to the origins of the people of Israel in Moses to show that a new beginning was possible.[187] This argument becomes even more poignant for the narrative in which all three of these "pillars" are firmly established: the origins of the Davidic dynasty which ruled until the exile, along with the origins of the building of the Temple, are established in the Oracle of Nathan in II Samuel 7, and David's capture of Jerusalem and his subsequent wars secured the land of Israel and extended the borders of Israel from the Euphrates to Egypt. The DtrH David narrative is also a search for both origins and identity, but of a different sort than the search for origins in the Book of Deuteronomy.

As Römer argues, Deuteronomistic Deuteronomy "transports the exiled community, for whom in my opinion it was intended, into a situation of origins. By directly addressing their audience, the Deuteronomists in a way made them contemporaries of Moses, and this transparent fiction corresponds well with the actual situation of the exiled community: as at the time of Moses, they are again/anew outside the land, and they await (re)entry."[188] Römer suggests that the Deuteronomists accomplished this goal by use of the rhetorical device of *Numeruswechsel* (change of number,) and by references to the "fathers" of the exodus period. By *Numeruswechsel*, the continuous shifting back and forth between singular and plural address, "the responsibility of each individual to the instructions given by an intermediary of Moses with respect to the land-taking is stressed."[189] By references to the "fathers,"[190] more

[187] Römer, "Deuteronomy in Search of Origins," p. 117-8.
[188] Ibid., pp.117-8.
[189] Ibid., p. 119.

specifically references to the "land sworn to the fathers," the author of Deuteronomistic Deuteronomy makes the prospect of (re)taking the land a necessity for the present. The covenant in which Yahweh swears the land to the "fathers" is never expressed as one that is fulfilled; its fulfillment is granted to the addressees of the Mosaic discourse of Deuteronomy, "Not with our fathers did Yahweh make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today."[191] This same covenant, Römer argues, "must become again the foundation of the relationship with YHWH" in the exilic period.[192]

The Deuteronomistic David story reflects this same search for origins and identity, but instead of the origins of the *people of Israel*, the DtrH David narrative is a search for the origins of the *kingdom of Israel*. This is seen most remarkably in the Oracle of Nathan in II Samuel 7 which details Yahweh's promise of an eternal throne to the line of David. Yahweh's declaration to David through Nathan that, "your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever,"[193] grants all those with a stake in the current (or, rather, recently defunct) royal court of Judah a sure tie to the past glories of the David's own kingship, and allows this idealized past to be reclaimed for present. With the examples set by Hezekiah and Josiah, proof is given that even in the largely negative history of the kings of Judah there have been those who were able to walk in the ways of David.[194]

A great deal of this interpretation of the story of David in DtrH depends on how the composition of II Samuel 7 is understood, since it is not always considered a

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[190] These should be distinguished in Deuteronomy from references to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which belong to the Pentateuchal revision of Deuteronomy.
[191] Deuteronomy 5:3.
[192] Ibid., p. 126.
[193] II Samuel 7:16.
[194] II Kings 18:3; II Kings 22:2

Deuteronomistic creation. Albertz believes the Oracle of Nathan to represent a remnant of old Jerusalemite theology which was dealt a "severe blow" when the walls of Jerusalem were finally breached by the Babylonians, as he argues that "the guarantee that the Davidic monarchy would endure forever (2 Sam 7) and the central tenet of Zion theology, that the presence of Yahweh on Mount Zion made the city impregnable to external enemies (Pss 46:2-6[1-7]; 48:4-8[3-7]; 76:4-6[3-5]; 2 Kgs 18-20; Mic 3:11), had been refuted by history."[195] Albertz also contends that this "full-scale nationalistic position" of "pre-exilic times which had centered on Zion and kingship theology besides its common dtn. foundation"[196] was altered after the exile. After "the disaster of nationalistic politics in 587/6 B.C. the survivors of the nationalists had to learn their lesson: the eternal promises concerning Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty were made conditional on obedience to the dtn. law (1 Sam 12; 1 Kings 9)."[197] The text of II Samuel 7 is also traditionally regarded as a pre-exilic text by those scholars who adhere to F.M. Cross' double-redaction theory of the composition of the Deuteronomistic History.[198]

The suggestion that II Samuel 7 represents a pre-exilic kingship theology does have its logical merits. Indeed, who, knowing that the line of David would come to its end in the exile, would write about the perpetuity of this line? Furthermore, convincing arguments have been forwarded by Antti Laato that the death of Josiah was the impetus for the writing of the theodicy in II Kings 22-23 and Psalm 89 (which is directly

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[195] Albertz, Israel in Exile, p. 133.
[196] Albertz, "In Search of the Deuteronomists," p. 14.
[197] Ibid., p. 14.
[198] i.e. the theory that the Deuteronomistic History underwent an initial redaction under or immediately following the reign of Josiah, and a subsequent redaction during the exilic period. Cf. F.M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973, pp. 241-90 and Kenneth E. Pomykala, The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995, pp. 12-5.

dependant on the Oracle of Nathan.)[199] However, this entire line of thought is dependent on the presupposition that there was a pre-exilic version of the Deuteronomistic History, or that the Oracle of Nathan was a pre-Deuteronomistic creation.

First, the suggestion that the Deuteronomists wrote a pre-exilic version of their history is unlikely. The theme of exile so thoroughly permeates the work of the Deuteronomistic History that it is hard to imagine what the shape of this pre-exilic version would be, much less the reason for writing it in the first place. Second, it is quite likely that the era of David in general, and the Oracle of Nathan in particular, are extremely important to the overarching framework of the Deuteronomistic History. Such is the argument forwarded by D.J. McCarthy (and later utilized by Van Seters,) that the Oracle of Nathan is indispensable to the overall structure of the Deuteronomistic History, and represents the climax of the work.

McCarthy argues that the Oracle of Nathan should be included among the passages identified by Martin Noth in his *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* which the Deuteronomist used to tie his corpus together, which often "take the form of speeches attributed to leading actors in the history," and which "stand at the turning points of Israel's history: the beginning and the end of the conquest, of the era of the judges, and of the monarchy."[200] Van Seters notes that the essential Deuteronomistic "scheme of dividing Israelite history into three periods – the exodus and conquest, the age of the judges, and the rise of the monarchy (1 Sam. 8:8; 10:18-19; 12:6ff.) – is basic to 2 Sam.

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[199] Antti Laato, Josiah and David Redivivus: The Historical Josiah and the Messianic Expectations of Exilic and Postexilic Times. Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992, pp. 37-68.
[200] Dennis J. McCarthy, "II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomic History." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84.2 (1965): 131.

7."[201] Furthermore, McCarthy notes a significant linguistic pair in the Deuteronomistic History with the parallel phrases עבדי דוד[202] and משׁה עבדי;[203] David and Moses alone share this precise attribution of Yahweh, "My servant N."[204] McCarthy notes that not even Joshua merits this title, which highlights the importance of David and the new thing which he brings: the founding of the Davidic line of kings.[205] By this comparison, the Deuteronomists signify "these two figures as the dual founders of the nation."[206] Finally, David is presented in contrast to the era of the judges in II Samuel 7:7, 10-11. As McCarthy argues, "the concept of the judges as official leaders of all Israel and the picture of the era as a time of regularly recurring troubles is, according to Noth, specifically deuteronomic. These ideas form the background for the reference in II Samuel 7, and David and his line are presented as the true successors of the judges who will bring on the last rest from Israel's enemies which the earlier leaders were unable to achieve."[207] The interpolation in II Samuel 7:10-11aα, identified by Van Seters,[208] which connects the establishment of the house of David and the building of the Temple with rest for *all Israel* suggests that the theme of rest for Israel from all her enemies was an acute goal for the people of Judah living in exile, and one that was previously realized (and would be realized again) when the requirements of king and Temple were (re)established.

The major correspondence which II Samuel 7 shares with both the style and important themes which run through the Deuteronomistic History reflects the highly

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[201] Van Seters, In Search of History, p. 276.
[202] II Samuel 7:8
[203] Joshua 1:2, 7.
[204] McCarthy, p. 132.
[205] Ibid., p. 132.
[206] Van Seters, In Search of History, p. 276.
[207] McCarthy, p. 133.
[208] Van Seters, Saga of King David, pp. 259-261.

Deuteronomistic nature of the Oracle of Nathan, and it was likely addressed to the disenfranchised elite living in the Babylonian golah during the exile. As such, II Samuel 7 serves a very interesting function in setting David up as a proto-messianic figure, as writing about the perpetuity of his line after its collapse certainly suggests that its return is nigh.

This is not to say that David himself was set up as a Messiah who would have been expected to return. Unlike other Messianic figures in the Hebrew Bible, namely Elijah,[209] it is explicit in the text that David dies.[210] Rather, David becomes a model for a future (Davidic) ruler, claiming that the (re)capture of Jerusalem and the (re)building of the Temple would finally grant Israel rest from her enemies. If the figure of David was composed as a model for future kings to follow, it may also shed some light on other tricky components of the DtrH David narrative. For example, Van Seters has trouble explaining the selection of Hebron for David's anointing, and suggests in a passing comment that "it seems likely that some old tradition linked the house of David with Hebron as well as Jerusalem."[211] If the Deuteronomists wrote David as a model for future (Davidic) kings to follow, it would be necessary for David to be anointed king *outside* Jerusalem in order for him to (re)capture the city as Yahweh's anointed.

This Deuteronomistic model may have been followed by the (possibly) Davidide Zerubbabel,[212] who leads the exiles from Babylon back to Judah, and who was

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[209] II Kings 2:9-12.
[210] I Kings 2:10.
[211] Ibid., p. 269.
[212] That Zerubbabel's Davidic lineage rests on shaky grounds has been demonstrated by Kenneth E. Pomykala. Pomykala points out that the only text which expresses Zerubabbel's Davidic lineage is I Chronicles 3:19, which refers to him as the grandson of Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) through his son Pediah, which is contradictory to the texts of Haggai, Ezra, and Nehemiah which refer to him as the son of Shealtiel, and furthermore, Chronicles was composed quite a long time after these texts. Pomykala, p. 45-60.

responsible, in part, for the rebuilding of the Temple according to Ezra. Certain post-exilic texts grant Zerubbabel a Messianic air.[213] In Haggai 2:23 Yahweh calls Zerubbabel "my servant Zerubbabel," a possible usage of the same Deuteronomistic language used in II Samuel 7:8 and Joshua 1:2, 7, placing Zerubbabel among the founders of Israel, Moses and David. Furthermore, he is referred to as a signet, חותם, a royal designation used of Davidic[214] and non-Davidic[215] kings. In Zechariah, reference is made to a royal figure who is called Branch, צמח, a possible Davidic referent,[216] and who is envisioned as one who will rebuild the Temple and rule alongside the priestly Joshua son of Jehozadak.[217] This strikes a chord with the leadership framework set up by Ezra which casts Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jehozadak as the two leaders who began work on the Temple upon returning from exile.[218] However, all of the references to II Samuel 7 or to the Davidic lineage of Zerubbabel are quite oblique, and while the anticipation of the return of a Davidic line may be present in these texts, one would expect a more explicit connection to the Oracle of Nathan or other parts of the DtrH David narrative if this were the main concern of these texts. Rather, the focus appears to be more on the rebuilding of the Temple than on the reestablishment of the Davidic line of kings. It is very likely that the expectation of II Samuel 7 was taken up, reworked in a number of different ways, transformed by some,[219] and outright rejected by others,[220] possibly before the exile even came to an end. What comes out of this reworking process is a mixed bag of expectations

[213] Haggai 2:20-23; Zechariah 1-8.
[214] Jeremiah 22:24.
[215] Ezekiel 28:12.
[216] Cf. ibid., pp. 53-60.
[217] Zechariah 6:9-15.
[218] Ezra 3:8-11.
[219] Psalm 89, Is 55:1-5, Jeremiah 30:8-9.
[220] Jeremiah 22:24-30; 40-1.

for the future of the nation. If the post-exilic texts concerning the return of the exiles from Babylon are any indication, the expectation for an actual reestablishment of the Davidic line of kings is decidedly lackluster if not muted. What remains, however, is the exuberance for the rebuilding of the Temple, which is certainly (at least partially) due to the model set up by the Deuteronomists in the DtrH David narrative for how to achieve lasting rest from all enemies.[221]

The examination of the remaining Davidic material, the *David Saga* and other Persian period texts, is therefore a difficult one. Van Seters has claimed the writing of the Court History (*David Saga*) to be a "product of an antimessianic tendency in certain Jewish circles" in the late Persian period,[222] and, more recently, to be a document which is "not so much anti-Saul or anti-David or anti-Solomon as it is *antimonarchy*."[223] It is curious, in lieu of the lack of practical applications of the DtrH David narrative to legitimize the revival of the Davidic line of kings in the early post-exilic period, that authors in the late Persian period would need to go to the lengths of writing an entire anti-legitimation narrative of the reign of David for the ends described by Van Seters. It is certainly clear, however, that the monarchical ideology of the late Persian period differs greatly from that of the exile, and the examination of the later literature will require an entirely different set of questions addressed to a very different socio-historical situation.

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[221] Cf. Ezra 3:10-3.
[222] Van Seters, In Search of History, p. 290.
[223] Van Seters, Saga of King David, p. 197.

V

A King Transformed: David in the Persian Period

The *David Saga*, built directly onto the DtrH David narrative, represents a wholesale alteration of the royal ideology of the original account. Instead of the search for monarchical origins expressed by the DtrH version, the *David Saga* represents a critique of monarchical origins in an attempt to undermine the entire institution of kingship in Israel. Van Seters has outlined the various ways in which the *David Saga* has intentionally subverted the royal ideology of the DtrH, and this outline serves as an appropriate point of departure for the discussion of the main question left unaddressed by Van Seters, namely, why the author of the *David Saga* felt the need to write a very large and complex narrative for the purpose of undermining Israel's royal ideology. When was the document composed, and what social factors gave rise to the document? Was the *David Saga* the continuation of a possible Saulide-Davidic rivalry, or are the concerns of a different sort altogether? Was the primary focus of the attack the Oracle of Nathan, so prominent in the royal ideology of DtrH, in order to undermine various messianic expectations which emerged from it?

Negative Monarchical Ideology in the *David Saga*

For Van Seters, the *David Saga* seeks to paint David in a negative light at every turn, and a number of passages in the *David Saga*, especially passages contained within the so-called Court History, serve to highlight this argument. First among these passages is II Samuel 6:1,3b-4,6-14,16,20-23, where David's dancing in the procession of the Ark is criticized by Michal:

> As the ark of YHWH came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before YHWH; and she despised him in her heart…. David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How the king of Israel honoured himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself!" David said to Michal, "It was before YHWH, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of YHWH, that I have danced before YHWH. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in my own eyes; but by the maids of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honour." And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.[224]

David's justification for his provocative dancing is that YHWH has chosen him over Saul and his house as prince, נגיד, over Israel, and "this gives him license to behave in any fashion he chooses."[225] The same language is used in this episode as is used in the Oracle of Nathan when Nathan proclaims that YHWH has chosen David to be נגיד over Israel,[226] and that he has rejected Saul.[227] In connection with the Oracle of Nathan, this passage is deeply ironic, suggesting that YHWH elected David to this lofty office only for David to act however he pleases, making the humility with which David accepts the office in the following chapter seem incredibly insincere.

The second passage, and probably the one which best highlights the intentions of the author of the *David Saga* as attempting to undermine the legitimacy of David's reign is the story of David and Bathsheba in II Samuel 11:1-12:25. In this well known story, David, remaining in Jerusalem while Joab and his army engage in a campaign against the Ammonites, sees a beautiful woman bathing from his rooftop.[228] He is informed that she is Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, but nevertheless has her summoned for a sexual

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[224] II Samuel 6:16,20-3.
[225] Van Seters, Saga of King David, p. 297.
[226] II Samuel 7:8.
[227] II Samuel 7:15.
[228] II Samuel 11:1-2.

encounter.[229] Bathsheba then sends word to David that she is pregnant, and so David attempts to cover up his actions by persuading Uriah to lie with his wife quickly, allowing him to take credit for the pregnancy. David fails in this attempt, at which point David decides to have Uriah killed by intentionally placing him in hard fighting during the Ammonite war, allowing him to take Bathsheba as his wife.[230] The narrator then comments that "the thing that David had done displeased YHWH" and so YHWH sends Nathan to confront David with his crime.[231] Nathan ultimately curses the house of David,

> Why have you despised the word of YHWH, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says YHWH: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun.[232]

YHWH therefore offers a punishment which fits the crime committed. David, however, confesses his sin and so punishment is delayed, but not annulled, now falling to David's offspring.

A few scholars, including Van Seters, have acknowledged the striking parallels between the story of David and Bathsheba and the story of Ahab and Naboth's vineyard in I Kings 21.[233] For Van Seters, the patterns of these two stories of the abuse of royal

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[229] II Samuel 11:3-4.
[230] II Samuel 11:5-27.
[231] II Samuel 12:1-8.
[232] II Samuel 12:9-11.
[233] Daniel Friedmann also compares these two narrative accounts. Like Van Seters, Friedmann acknowledges the apparent similarities between the two stories in terms of their respective forms and morals (namely, that they both deal with cases in which royalty infringes upon the law, murdering in order to obtain something belonging to one of their subjects.) Friedmann, however, choses to read the story of David and Bathsheba as having a much better outcome than the story of Ahab and Naboth, since the story of David leaves room for hope as Bathsheba's son Solomon survives and succeeds David as King over all Israel. Friedmann's interpretation, however, is deeply influenced by the Deuteronomistic notion that David is the ideal king of Israel, beloved by God, and therefore ultimately forgiven of this atrocity by YHWH. Cf. Daniel Friedmann, To Kill and Take Possession: Law, Morality, and Society in Biblical Stories. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002, pp. 75-92. Dividing the narrative of David as Van Seters does, however, changes the tenor of the story. Recognizing that the *David Saga* is a later narrative

power are quite similar: the king desires property that is not his, and which is forbidden to him by law. The king (or queen in the case of I Kings 21) has the rightful owner murdered so that he may take possession of the property. YHWH is angered, and sends a prophet to condemn the king, and to offer a punishment to fit the crime. The king repents, so judgment is delayed and placed upon the offspring of the king. Even the language used in these two stories is similar; both David and Ahab are accused by their respective prophets of having done "evil in the sight of YHWH."[234] Indeed, there is enough overlap between the themes and the language of these two stories to suggest that one is a direct imitation of the other, likely the author of the *David Saga* again making use of Dtr's own rhetoric to put a negative spin on the story of David.[235]

In addition to the passages discussed above, Van Seters notes several other sections of the David story which cast David in particular, and the monarchy in general, in a negative light. David is presented as displaying a lack of empathy towards Jonathan's son Mephibosheth.[236] Intermarriage, a taboo of the late Persian period, was practiced in David's kingdom as evidenced by the marriage of Uriah the Hittite to Bathsheba.[237] David's sons "prove to be no better than the father"[238] as David's first-born and heir, Amnon, rapes his half-sister Tamar, who is then murdered by David's third son Absalom,

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than DtrH, the narrative is no longer one which represents hope for the future through Bathsheba's child Solomon. Instead, the narrative condemns the future through David, Bathsheba, and Solomon, and paints with irony all Deuteronomistic notions of David as the ideal king of Israel.

[234] II Samuel 12:9; I Kings 21:20

[235] Cf. ibid., pp. 287-301.

[236] Ibid., pp. 280-7.

[237] Van Seters argues that "the designation *Hittite* has nothing to do with the historic Hittites of the second millennium B.C.E., as is so often suggested. At the time of writing this term was the standard way of referring to a member of the non-Israelite primitive population, much like the terms *Canaanite* and *Amorite*, the population that should have been exterminated or at the very least expelled from the whole land of Israel." Ibid., p. 297.

[238] Ibid., p. 301.

and in all of this David displays extreme negligence and is incapable of obtaining any sort of justice for these crimes.[239]

Finally, David, or more specifically David's professional mercenary fighting force under Joab, is portrayed as a dangerous force in the lives of the people. David is made to fit the regular pattern for kingship in the ancient Near East, going on campaign yearly in order to "pillage enemy territory, to conquer cities, and to collect booty…. He behaves just as any other Near Eastern despot."[240] His mercenary forces are portrayed as particularly ruthless in the way they conduct their raids, especially in I Samuel 30. Here, David returns to Ziklag to find that it has been raided by the Amalekites, and all the people of the city had been captured, but "they killed none of them."[241] David then pursues the raiding party, and "attacked them from twilight until the evening the next day. Not one of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled. David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken."[242] David takes no prisoners, and spares no one, just as he had done earlier in his raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites.[243] The Amalekites, one of Israel's most notorious enemies, appear quite humane by contrast in I Samuel 30. Furthermore, David's generals are often times portrayed as bloodthirsty, unruly, and uncontrollable. David, several times, rebukes Abishai because of his suggestion to kill various members of Saul's house.[244] David also has problems with the conduct of Joab as he murders Abner, lamenting, "Today I am powerless, even though anointed king; these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too violent for

[239] Ibid., pp. 301-4.
[240] Ibid., p. 290. Cf. II Samuel 11:1.
[241] I Samuel 30:2.
[242] I Samuel 30:17-8.
[243] I Samuel 27:8-9.
[244] I Samuel 26:8-11; II Samuel 16:9-12; 19:21-3.

me. YHWH pay back the one who does wickedly in accordance to his wickedness!"[245] The infighting between David and his generals continues when David laments over the loss of his son Absalom, after which Joab approaches David, essentially threatening a coup,

> Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your officers who have saved your life today…. You have made it clear today that commanders and officers are nothing to you; for I perceive that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. So go out at once and speak kindly to your servants; for I swear by YHWH, if you do not go, not a man will stay with you this night; and this will be worse for you than any disaster that has come upon you from your youth until now.[246]

Joab here is suggesting that the loyalty of the troops belongs to him and to the generals rather than David. The fact that David has nothing to say to Joab, and simply obeys him by going out to speak to the troops, suggests that David acknowledges that Joab is correct, and in fact he himself is powerless, at the mercy of his own generals. The bad blood and constant infighting between David and his generals paints the picture of David as a military leader who is just barely hanging on to power, and who is often times unable to control his own forces.

Saulide-Davidic Rivalry in the Persian Period

It is safe to say, from the examples given above, that the *David Saga* represents a critique of the Davidic monarchy, but it is still unclear what social situation would have given rise to such a critique. One possibility is that this narrative belongs to the same Saulide-Davidic rivalry that was resurgent in the early Persian period. Several scholars have suggested the possibility that portions of the Deuteronomistic History were written to justify either a Saulide or Davidic descendant as the rightful ruler of the Persian province of Yehud after the return from exile. Diana Edelman attempts to set the context

[245] II Samuel 3:39.
[246] II Samuel 19:5-7

for the Davidic-Saulide rivalry in one of two possible historical frameworks, (1) during the tenth century B.C.E. during the actual reigns of David and Saul or (2) during the last third of the sixth century B.C.E. "soon after the appearance of either Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel and Yeshua to claim leadership of the Persian province of Yehud."[247] As discussed above, a tenth century date for these texts is extremely unlikely, a point which Edelman herself notes.[248] Edelman suggests that during the early post-exilic period, two rival camps would have emerged in Yehud: those who remained in the land in the territory of Benjamin (who would have favoured a Saulide/Benjaminite appointment for governor,) and the *golah* community which was returning from exile (who would have favoured the appointment of a descendant of the royal house of David.)[249] Edelman suggests that both parties petitioned the Persian authorities, making their claim for who was to rule the province of Yehud, and from which capital city (Gibeon or Jerusalem).[250] For Edelman, this is one scenario which may have been the impetus for writing several sections of the Deuteronomistic History, including the Oracle of Nathan, which "reinforces the message that the Saulides have been divinely rejected in favor of the Davidides but goes beyond it to emphasize that the replacement period is eternal."[251] Further, Edelman argues that the "anti-Gibeonite bias in the Deuteronomistic History, the composition of Joshua 9-10, and the filling in of the great pool in Gibeon as well as the destruction [of?] its town walls all are explainable if Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and

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[247] Diana Edelman, "Did Saulide-Davidic Rivalry Resurface in Early Persian Yehud?" in The Land that I Will Show You: Essays on the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honour of J. Maxwell Miller. eds. J. Andrew Dearman and M. Patrick Graham, Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, p. 72.
[248] Ibid., pp. 72-3.
[249] Ibid., p. 73.
[250] Ibid., pp. 72-83.
[251] Ibid., p. 71.

Kiriath-jearim were the center of Benjaminite resistance to the *golah* party."[252] Edelman finally suggests that these debates between the two parties were resolved some time after the rebuilding of the temple in 515 B.C.E., at which point the "a single community in Yehud for dealing with its Persian overlords had been created."[253] It was at this point that priestly or levitical writers formulated the theme (most prevalent in I Samuel) of the kingship of YHWH over human kings in order to increase their own power and prestige within a community where the question of human kingship had essentially been abandoned.[254]

J. Blenkinsopp centers the same Benjaminite-Judean debate on different texts. First, he points to the tradition surrounding the location of Rachel's tomb which in I Samuel 10:2 and Jeremiah 31:15 is located in Benjaminite territory. However, Blenkinsopp argues, Rachel's grave tradition was appropriated "as a means of enhancing Judah's prestige and furthering its political ascendancy" by way of a scribal gloss in Gen 48:7 which places the grave site in the Judean Bethlehem (Ephrathah.)[255] Blenkinsopp also locates a focal point for the Benjaminite-Judean debate in the text of Judges 19-21 which, due to the evidence of borrowing from several texts,[256] Blenkinsopp assigns a relatively late date and suggests that it may have reflected actual hostilities between the Judeans and the Benjaminites in the early Persian period.[257] Yairah Amit also locates a source of Judean-Benjaminite polemic in Judges 19-21, but also notes the continuation of this polemic well beyond the early Persian period in the texts of Chronicles and Esther.

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[252] Ibid., p. 91.
[253] Ibid., p. 91.
[254] Ibid., pp. 83-5, 90-1. Cf. I Samuel 8, 12.
[255] J. Blenkinsopp, "Benjaminite Traditions Read in the Early Persian Period." in Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period. eds. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006, pp. 630-3.
[256] Genesis 19:1-11; I Samuel 11:1-11; Numbers 31; Joshua 8:10-29; Judges 3:15.
[257] Ibid., pp. 638-45.

Amit suggests that "at such a time of upheaval, and against a background of various changes of power and government and a decline in the prestige of the House of David, a polemic could well arise on the issue of leadership. It is possible that in these circumstances the population of Benjaminite origin hoped to assume the local leadership, a hope that reflected their relative strength in the recovering province of Yehud, as well as their disappointment in the House of David."[258] By reference to the biting anti-Saul polemic of the Chronicler's narrative and to the subtle pro-Benjaminite polemic of the Book of Esther, Amit argues that the "need to justify support for the Davidic dynasty, which had disappeared after Zerubbabel, and the need to find alternatives to the House of David, continued to preoccupy biblical literature during the Persian Period."[259]

The *David Saga* as a Justification for a Kingless Yehud

It is not clear, however, that this Benjaminite-Judean rivalry was the impetus for the writing of the *David Saga*. The critique of the monarchy in the *David Saga* is thoroughgoing, and in no place is David, Saul, or any other pretender to the throne portrayed as having legitimate claim to the throne. The *David Saga* does not serve the same function as the texts put forward by Edelman, Blenkinsopp, and Amit, and it is not part of this supposed Davidic-Saulide rivalry of the early Persian period. If anything, the *David Saga* has more in common with the line of reasoning Edelman points to as the impetus for the writing of I Samuel 8 and 12, and the rejection of a human king in favour of the election of YHWH as king over Israel, written at a time when "the Persian administration decided to appoint loyal Persians to serve as governors in various provinces in place of puppet kings descended from former royal houses," and when the

[258] Yairah Amit, "The Saul Polemic in the Persian Period." in Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period. eds. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006, p. 657.
[259] Ibid., p. 658.

question of the election of an Israelite leader for Yehud had been abandoned.[260] But the *David Saga* does not support the kingship of YHWH over a human king in the same way that Edelman argues that the texts in I Samuel do, nor is its intention the furthering of the prestige of the levitical or priestly stratum of Israelite society. Nor, contra Van Seters (in his earlier work), does the *David Saga* attack the Oracle of Nathan for the purpose of refuting later "messianisms" which emerged from it.[261] As seen above, especially in Kenneth E. Pomykala's *Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism*, little is made of the Oracle of Nathan and the hope for a "New David" until much later in the tradition, and even less is made of the Oracle of Nathan in terms of its use in justifying the reestablishment of the Davidic line of kings in the Persian period. The ideology of the Oracle of Nathan, very shortly after the exile, was already either heavily transformed[262] or outright rejected,[263] and so there seems little reason for writing the *David Saga* for the sole purpose of debunking a messianism that does not appear to have been extremely prevalent. The *David Saga* also does not directly attack the Oracle of Nathan, nor does it remove it from the text. The *David Saga*, as Van Seters suggests, may have downplayed the significance of the oracle by removing it from its proper place – at the end of David's career[264] – and may have parodied its language in the account of David's vulgar dancing before the procession of the Ark.[265] However, if defaming the Oracle of Nathan for purposes of debunking later messianisms was the

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[260] Edelman, "Saulide-Davidic Rivalry," p. 84.
[261] Cf. Van Seters, In Search of History, pp. 271-291.
[262] Psalm 89, Isaiah 55:1-5, Ezekiel 40-48, Jeremiah 30:8-9.
[263] Jeremiah 22:24-30; 40-1.
[264] Van Seters, Saga of King David, pp. 256-67. See especially p. 266, "It is the radical rearrangement that places 2 Sam 8:1-14 + 10:15-19a after chaps. 6-7 and then the major addition of the *David Saga* of 2 Sam 9-20 and 1 Kgs 1, between 1[sic] Sam 7 and its proper ending that trivializes the real significance of the prayer in the overall structure of Dtr's work."
[265] Cf. ibid., pp. 277-80.

principle goal of the author of the *David Saga*, a more explicit attack would be expected. In other words, if the principle aim of the *David Saga* was to nullify the Oracle of Nathan, it is a failed attempt.

In order to better understand the *David Saga*, a context for its composition is required. Van Seters attempts to date the composition of the *David Saga* by its "anachronistic" usage of mercenaries as the means by which David fights his wars, as he writes,

> This totally fictitious account of David's monarchy presents a vivid picture of the militaristic regimes of the Persian period, with an elite professional core and heavy dependence on mercenary armies, with specialized tactical skills such as those of the Cretans and the peltasts, under the control of their own leaders. The old citizen armies were no longer any match for these professional killing machines. These wealthy regimes, such as Persia, could invest fortunes in buying protection. The Davidic monarchy is viewed as a state with these resources, and the author sets out to recreate what life would be like in a state of this sort. His knowledge and understanding of the life of a mercenary and regimes that make use of them is quite remarkable and realistic when judged against the background of the social milieu of the 4th century B.C.E. There is no other period that provides such an appropriate context for this portrayal of a Near Eastern monarchy than this particular period.[266]

A date during the 4th century Persian period makes a great deal of sense as a date for the composition of the *David Saga*, since the prevalence of mercenary activity in the *David Saga* likely reflects the persistence of Persian military presence in Yehud during the time of its composition. J. Betlyon notes that "in the course of two centuries, Persia would fight the Egyptians eight times… The results of the wars and rebellions were not always the same. But one thing was for sure: Palestine was a staging area from which Persian power was repeatedly projected into the Nile River valley."[267]

But there is more to be said of the Persian period Levant than of its familiarity with Persian military activities; most of the revolts during this period occurred in

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[266] Ibid., p. 118.
[267] John W. Betlyon, "A People Transformed: Palestine in the Persian Period," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 68.1 (2005): 7.

Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Egypt, but "most of the fourth century [before the conquest of Alexander the Great c. 332/1 B.C.E.] appears to have been a time of prosperity in the Levant," wherein "Palestine generally experienced a season of steady, slow growth."[268] On the whole, it seems as though the economic policies of the Persian government directly benefited the Levant, some cities more than others, affording the region both peace and prosperity during this time period. Charles Carter, in a recent survey of the archaeological data from the period, has fleshed out in greater detail the economic situation in Yehud during the Persian period. In his reconstruction, Yehud was a much smaller province than originally assumed, as he writes, "Weinberg, for example, has suggested that the population of the province was about 200,000 before the advent of the *first* return in 539, a figure that is nearly 10 times greater than my projections for the *second half* of the Persian period,"[269] for which Carter estimates a population of about 20,650 (for the period c. 450-322 B.C.E.)[270] However, Carter argues that a small Yehud is not equivalent to an insignificant Yehud. The province of Yehud does appear to have been initially quite poor, as the biblical text characterizes the people as "suffering from the effects of heavy (imperial?) taxation and (internal Yehudite?) administrative abuses (Neh. 5.1-19). The long-term effect of the latter was the increase of debt slavery, the breakdown of the family structure, and general economic malaise. These kinds of problems, even though exaggerated for rhetorical or other purposes, reflect the kind of conditions one would expect in a relatively small and poor province."[271] However, the "archaeological witness and textual data seem to agree that as the Persian period

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[268] Ibid., p. 8.
[269] Charles E. Carter, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p. 285.
[270] Ibid., p. 202.
[271] Ibid., p. 289.

progressed, the size and status of the province increased."[272] This is due in large part to the external threats which Persia faced from Greece and Egypt. The economic stability of the province of Yehud, used as a staging area for Persian troops, would have been "in the best interests of the empire; even a small Yehud would have been guaranteed resources from other provinces, including the Shephelah (when in Persian hands) and coastal plain sites."[273] And although the constant military presence in Yehud may not have been appreciated, the province itself seems to have benefited from its relatively advantageous geographical location in terms of receiving support from the centralized Persian bureaucracy in order to aid the war efforts during the Persian period II. Against this backdrop, it may be possible to locate the historiographical strategy of the *David Saga* as seeking to justify the current situation in Israel by defaming the past. It employed this negative history, critiquing the origins of the monarchy, to show that this was a situation to which it was undesirable to return. If a king were to arise again in Israel, he would act no differently than David or the Persian kings of their own time, waging constant warfare, and causing persistent political unrest. Instead, the community at the time was satisfied with its situation of relative economic growth and lack of direct involvement in the wars being fought just outside its bounds.

Though the portrayal of David in the *David Saga* radically differs from his depiction in DtrH, it does not follow that the *David Saga* actively sought to nullify the monarchical ideology expressed in DtrH. Were this the case, the various passages of DtrH which portray David as an ideal and righteous ruler, the chosen of YHWH (such as II Samuel 7,) would have either been expunged from the text or more seriously

[272] Ibid., p. 294.
[273] Ibid., p. 293.

challenged by the author of the *David Saga*. Rather, the *David Saga* represents a revisiting of the monarchical origins of Israel under the strong influence of (i) the heavy (mercenary) military presence of the Persian Empire as Yehud was used for its location as a staging area for Persia to impose its control over its rebellious territories (especially Egypt,) and (ii) the general pessimism of the period towards the institution of the monarchy after the hope of its reestablishment dissolved under the tight grasp of Persian imperial control. Like all historical documents, the *David Saga* is a product of its social milieu, not seeking to radically alter the ideology of the past, but rather to cement the ideology of the present.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the function of the literary figure of King David in the Deuteronomistic History, both for the so-called original DtrH account and the *David Saga* as identified by John Van Seters. The Davidic narrative must be considered first and foremost as an historical document. As the examination of historical theory in the first chapter shows, history can no longer be considered as presenting past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Historical texts are not "an open window to the past," but rather must be viewed as a description of past events through the lens of the present social milieu in which they were composed, and therefore extremely problematic in terms of conveying historically reliable information.[274] The histories contained within the biblical books of Samuel-Kings are even more problematic, since it is still not clear exactly when they were composed, and still more problematic due to the shaky archaeological grounds of the United Monarchy.

The dating of the Deuteronomistic History is still rigorously debated in current scholarship, with proposed dates ranging from the tenth century B.C.E. to the extremely late projections of some scholars who place its composition far into the Hellenistic period. In the second chapter, I analysed several theories concerning the composition of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History, with the result that I have found not a single model for the composition of the Deuteronomistic History which satisfactorily explains the document. Certain models for the composition of the Deuteronomistic History, such as F.M. Cross' double-redaction model and K.L. Noll's model of Deuteronomic Debate, are certainly substantial. Ultimately, however, I remain

[274] Cf. Clark, History, Theory, Text, p. 13.

unconvinced by these models. I am resolved to view the Deuteronomistic History as a relatively unified exilic document, written through the lens of a very late pre-exilic Deuteronomic core, and revisited, augmented, and redacted for centuries by later authors. It should be clear, however, that none of this is certain. This model is nothing more than a working presupposition.

Working from the presupposition that the core of the Deuteronomistic History (including the original DtrH David narrative identified by Van Seters) was an exilic composition, I argued that the literary figure of King David was composed as a model for future kings to follow if/when the monarchy of Judah was reestablished. And though the Deuteronomistic History is highly critical of certain kings, the David narrative (as well as those of Hezekiah and Josiah) gives the impression that the Deuteronomistic circle did not view the institution of the monarchy as wholly negative, but in fact an institution to which it was possible and even desirable to return. This interpretation of the David narrative has major implications for the understanding of Davidic kingship theology, namely that the theology of the perpetual dynasty of David, previously understood as a pre-exilic notion,[275] should be understood, ironically, in the context of the exile when the line of Davidic kings was at an end. The promise of an enduring dynasty in II Samuel 7 should therefore be understood as a reflection of the hope, however brief, that the Davidic line of kings would be reestablished and indeed reign forever, rather than as the arrogant musings of a dynasty in power. The rebuilding effort, however, completely eclipses the desire for the reestablishment of the monarchy, evidenced by the reinterpretations of II

[275] Cf. Albertz, Israel in Exile, p. 133.

Samuel 7 by other post-exilic texts.[276] The hope for the reestablishment of the Davidic dynasty reflected in DtrH was therefore probably very short-lived.

Finally, I have argued that the *David Saga*, although it expresses a monarchical ideology counter to that of DtrH, was not composed as an argument against the ideology expressed in DtrH. It is not the case that the *David Saga* was reacting to DtrH, but rather that both DtrH and the *David Saga* were examining the monarchical origins of Israel through the lens of their socio-historical circumstances, reflecting the ideologies of their respective periods. The *David Saga*, composed during the late Persian period, expresses a general pessimism towards the institution of the monarchy brought about by a confluence of factors in the Persian province of Yehud. The downplaying or parodying of the "messianic" themes (if they can be so termed) as in the case of II Samuel 7, the portrayal of David's mercenaries as uncontrollable thugs, and the political and personal intrigue within the royal family can all be seen as quite at home in the political setting of fourth century B.C.E. Persia. The *David Saga* is very much a product of its time: a time when there was neither the need nor the desire for a king in Israel.

[276] Cf. Haggai 1-2, Zechariah 6:9-15.

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