

Preface

THE LITERARY RICHES OF biblical Hebrew narrative have consistently intrigued its readers through all ages. The story of David, in particular, has been a fascination of both the academy and popular culture in all of Western civilization and the spheres of its influence. In spite of the myriads of readings of this story, due to the depth of the narrative's riches, many of its facets remain unexplored. I set out, in this book, to explore only a small tributary of this literary Amazon: The relationship between David and Saul's heirs. A few things underpin my particular approach to this enterprise, namely, the desire to 1) be comprehensive and systematic in my study of all the heirs of King Saul in the Davidic era; 2) be consistent in my evaluation of these narratives on the basis of the Deuteronomistic Code, and not on grounds extraneous to the biblical text itself, since the study assumes the Deuteronomistic redaction of Samuel; 3) be consistent in my application of a narrative critical approach to all the passages studied; 4) carry out my study within the context of contemporary secondary literature on the topic through an in-depth discussion, analysis, and critique of such literature; and 5) carefully sketch out the outworking of the biblical theological and redemptive historical import of the themes and motifs that arise from this work.

In its comprehensive analysis of the fate of Saul's heirs, this study shows that David, like other ancient Near Eastern usurpers, perpetrated heinous injustices against the vanquished house of Saul. The study evaluates the relationships between David and Saul's heirs, with the underlying theme of justice, drawing upon the provisions for justice in the covenant community in the book of Deuteronomy. Because no separate narrative of Saul's descendants exists in the Bible, this study focuses on the story of David and its interconnection with the fate of the Saulides to determine the factors that lay behind the tragedies that befell them, specifically whether these tragedies were due to continuing divine retribution, pure happenstance, or Davidic orchestra-

tion. The passages studied for this purpose are 1 Sam 18:17–19:17; 25:39–44; 2 Sam 2–4, 6, 9, 16:1–4; 19:25–31 [ET 19:24–30]; 21:1–14. A close reading of these texts brings us to the conclusion that David was, for the most part, unjust and calculating in his dealings with the Saulides. Thematic and motific threads arising from this study (such as the impact of human conduct on the environment, the tension between election and the character of God’s servants, the dynamics of sacred space and sacred toponyms, the Judahite [Davidic] kingship, the monarchy, marriage, and Zion theology) are subsequently discussed within their contexts in Israel’s (and Jewish) traditions for their biblical theological and redemptive historical import.

Chapter 1 lays out the primary concern of this work, the investigation of the fates of Saul’s heirs in David’s reign. It also situates Samuel in its DtrH context, highlighting the thematic and motific connections between Samuel and the Torah, not the least of which is the theme of justice—the undergirding criterion for evaluating David’s dealings with the Saulides in the book. The chapter also necessarily demonstrates the literary unity of the books of Samuel, because my reading of the narrative as it relates to the Saulides disregards the consensus position regarding the boundaries of the Succession Narrative (SN). By this, I included in my study 2 Sam 21, which, along with the last three chapters of the book, is usually severed from the rest of the book’s narrative and branded as an appendix.

Chapter 2 is an overview of the history of the critical study of the books of Samuel, beginning from the early nineteenth century. It also highlights pivotal points in Samuel scholarship in the twentieth century, leading up to where we are early in the twenty-first century. The general overview is followed with a narrower focus on a review of selected literature that is centered either on David (2 Samuel) or on Saul (1 Samuel). Additionally, the review also considers the methodological approaches that have been employed, and their underlying presuppositions.

The third chapter considers the exegetical methodology approach of the book. In it, I survey the use of contemporary literary criticism in biblical studies (with particular emphasis on biblical narrative). The literature is studied with a view to underscoring the generative factors, development, and growth of contemporary literary criticism, with especial attention paid to narrative criticism. I, therefore, survey the different forms of this approach and the direction in which the studies that adopt

them take. Finally, I discuss the various elements essential in narrative criticism. It would be foolhardy to attempt to discuss every literary device that is used in narrative criticism, so I simply review some of the more salient elements or devices. These devices (along with those not specifically reviewed here but discussed in the course of data analysis) serve as heuristic tools in reading our texts.

Chapter 4 is where I begin to delve into the core of the study. The death of Saul and his three sons is recorded in 1 Sam 31–2 Sam 1. In 2 Sam 2 civil war breaks out as David is crowned king over the house of Judah at Hebron. We begin to encounter David's confrontation with the Saulides in 2 Sam 3 during the civil war years. Here we begin the literary analysis of the report of the initial civil war, Abner's negotiations with David, Abner's death, and the death of Ishbosheth.

The focus in chapter 5 is on the relationship between David and Michal. Because of the enduring nature of a marriage relationship, my investigation here goes back to the story of their marriage in the History of David's Rise (HDR). I read the return of Michal to David by Abner as still part of the HDR. I give close attention to the implications of the return of Michal to David after she had been Paltiel's wife. I explore this issue in its legal, ethical, and theological dimensions.

This is followed with an analysis of the estranged relationship between David and Michal (encapsulated in their conversation at the end of the ark procession). Some of the issues I tackle at this point, besides the literary analysis, include the cultic nature and significance of this episode and the literary genre of the woman at the window and its implications for Michal's story. I also carefully examine the enigmatic conclusion of the episode with the narrator's notice that Michal had no children at the time of her death. My proposition is that Michal was not barren, as the passage has been traditionally read, but was bereft of her sons in the Gibeonite sacrifice.

I concluded the chapter with the consideration of the murder of Michal's five sons and her two half-brothers. I necessarily had to deal with the textual difficulties of 2 Sam 21:1–14, and why I have elected to follow the Masoretic Text (MT) rather than the ancient translations, as most scholars and modern translations do. I discuss the genealogical mix-up with a comparative analysis of similar situations both in the books of Samuel and in the Chronicler's history. Ultimately, my primary concern is with the murder itself. I explore the nature of the reported

oracle, and the nature of the “sacrifice” of the Saulides. All these are studied in light of the Deuteronomic Code and the import it ought to have borne on that incident.

In chapter 6, I engage the complex dealings of David with Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan—David’s supposed best friend, who had even abdicated his right to his father’s throne for David. I begin the discussion with a look at the triumphant David and the presumed restoration of Mephibosheth. I glean through the narrative in order to discern possible motivations for David’s unusual kindness to a Sualide, the family line of which David had unremitting suspicion.

We follow the checkered fortunes of Mephibosheth as they mutate with the whims of David in the vagaries of the latter’s trouble-plagued political history. From the zenith of David’s triumph we journey with a Mephibosheth who is invested with his grandfather’s estate, even if he has no control over it, to the nadir of David’s disgrace, where the humbled Mephibosheth is dispossessed of what he never asked for in the first instance. When the dust of rebellion settles, we are found alongside Mephibosheth in the train of those who had come to grace the return of the king. We watch with the hapless Mephibosheth as a David, who, with a compromised integrity and a conscience sullied by the bribes of Ziba, is unable to look the two contenders for the estate of Saul in the eye and give a just judgment, but rather resorts to a face-saving compromise verdict, which Mephibosheth rejects off-handedly. What pulled David to such abysmal moral depths? These matters squarely engage our attention.

Chapter 7 consists of an integrative reading of the research findings. It has two main parts. The first part is concerned with an evaluation of the dealings of David and/or his retainers with the Saulides, studied in the light of Torah instruction, especially as spelled out in the Deuteronomic Code. We assume an exilic final redaction of the Deuteronomistic History, hence the need to evaluate the accounts with the ideological/theological presuppositions that underpin the entire history in the context of the exile.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the biblical theological implications of the study. This draws out the significance the book may have held for the Golah community as they sought a new direction for their future. Seeing astride the biblical terrain the colossus that David is, I attempt to make sense of Yahweh’s choice of him: I seek to find reasons

for the fascination of the biblical writers with David. I also correlate the way I have read these biblical narratives to other biblical data with similar concerns.

The concluding chapter, chapter 8, lays out a summary of the project, highlighting the significant findings of the research. It also includes the inferences and conclusions drawn from the study. Finally, it evaluates the success of the project, thereby indicating the contribution this project has made to the body of knowledge in the study of biblical narrative.

The highlights of the significant contributions of this book include its introduction of new concepts and terminology in literary critical theory, especially but not exclusively, with respect to the Bible. Such new concepts/terms include intra-textual consciousness, stitch-word(s), historicity (and its adjectival form, *historical*), *disability*, and *plotlet*. Important likewise is my understanding of the dual authorship of biblical narratives. Accenting to the divine authorship of the Bible, I concluded that the divine author identifies with, but is not subsumed by, the narrator's voice. On this note, I proffered intra-textual consciousness (undergird by the fact of the divine author's position of super-agency and super-perception) as the basis for understanding all elements of biblical narratives including the narrator's point of view.