1

Introduction

The threefold divine promise to Abraham (of blessing, progeny, and land) remained of vital importance to Israelite life (both at the national and individual levels) through the centuries.[1] Progeny is the evidence of Yahweh's blessings (cf. Gen 15:1–2). One way this blessedness manifests is in the care children provided for their aged parents. Besides, children also saw to the proper burial of their parents. A fitting burial meant ultimately "being gathered" to the ancestral tomb so that the family continued to be together even after death.[2] More importantly, children served as security for the family and ensured the continuing life of the family within the covenant community. John H. Walton and Victor H. Matthews, commenting on Gen 11:30, observe, "Failure to produce an heir was a major calamity for a family in the ancient world because it

1. Keil writes of four promises to Abraham, namely, numerous offspring, blessings (material and spiritual), a great name, and the status of a possessor and dispenser of divine blessing (K & D 1, 122). He understands the promise of land to be a part of the command to Abraham to leave the land of his birth. We note, however, that this divine promise is repeated several times to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A number of these repetitions mention the three aspects of the promise as blessing, progeny, and the land of Canaan, though not everyone of the repetition has all of the elements (cf. Gen 12:1–3; 13:14–16; 17:1–8; 18:18–19; 22:15–18; 26:3–4; 28:13–14).

2. Explaining the OT concept of family, Drinkard, Jr., expatiates, "Even in death the Hebrew ideal placed one with their family. One common Old Testament expression for death is 'to lie down with one's ancestors' (1 Kgs 1:21, 22, and frequently in Kings and Chronicles). Another common phrase is 'to be gathered to one's people' (Gen 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:29, 33; etc). Both these phrases and archaeological and biblical records indicate that family tombs were common. At Sarah's death, Abraham purchased a cave and field at Machpelah to use for a burial cave or family tomb. Later Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were also buried in the same family tomb" (Drinkard, "Family in the Old Testament," 485–501).

meant a disruption in the generational inheritance pattern and left no one to care for the couple in their old age."[3]

The land itself was reckoned as a fief that Yahweh had bequeathed to Israel (Lev 25:23; 2 Chr 7:20; Ps 85:1). Thus, each individual family land was viewed as Yahweh's inheritance (Hos 9:3; Joel 2:18; 3:2; Isa 8:8), for which Israel was just a steward. Therefore, land as Israel's inheritance, was not subject to a perpetual transfer outside of the family, clan, or tribal allotment (cf. Num 27:7–11; 36:1–12; 1 Kgs 21:1–3; Ezek 46:18). This accounted for the desire of everyone in Israel to have children, especially sons, who would ensure the perpetuity of Yahweh's inheritance (i.e., land holdings) within the family.[4] Of course, the children themselves were seen as Yahweh's inheritance, on loan, as it were, to their parents (Ps 127:3; Ruth 4:3–5; cf. Gen 4:1, 25; 30:1–2; 1 Sam 1:19–20; 2:20–21).

In this light, the extermination of any family line (or tribe) in Israel was not taken lightly (cf. Judg 21:2–3). The annihilation of a person's family in Israel was an extreme manifestation of divine retribution—the severest kind of punishment reserved for the most heinous forms of blasphemy or apostasy (Josh 7:1, 24–25; Num 16:27–33; 1 Kgs 14:7–11; 16:1–4; 21:18–24). It is surprising, then, that a systematic study of the fortunes of the progeny of Israel's first king (which was all but wiped out) has not generated interest in the scholarly community. Our interest in this study is heightened by the fact that aside from the central matter of succession to the throne of Israel, the motifs of burial (for Saul and his deceased sons in the ancestral tomb, a function one's progeny performed) and the inheritance of the land (left behind by Saul) are interlaced in David's complicated dealings with Saul's house. Additionally,

3. Walton and Matthews, *Genesis–Deuteronomy*, 35.

4. Wright captures the intricacies of the relationship between the people, the land, and Yahweh well, as he writes on the Hebrew term לחנ (both as a noun and as verb), "The most common literal meaning of both refers to the division of the land within the kinship structure of Israel and thus signifies the permanent family property allotted to the tribes, clans, and households of Israel. The sense of kinship and of specially significant property inherent in the words leads to a wide metaphorical use, of which the most theologically important is the use of both nom. and vb. to express the relationship between Israel and Yahweh. There is a flexible 'triangular' usage of both *nhl* and *nahalâ* to signify the land as Israel's inheritance, the land as Yahweh's inheritance, Israel as Yahweh's inheritance, and even Yahweh as Israel's (or at least the Levites' inheritance)" ("לחנ," *NIDOTTE*, III, 77–81). For more on the discussion of לחנ see Lewis, "The Ancestral Estate (~yhla tlxn)," 597–612.

the many tragedies that befell this family make one wonder whether it was the curse rather than the blessing that was operative within it.

In this book, I have investigated the fortunes of the surviving Saulides during the reign of David, the goal of this investigation being to establish whether the fate of individual Saulides recorded in Samuel was due to divine retribution, on account of their father, or pure happenstance. Attempts have also been made, on the basis of textual evidence, to determine the role of King David in their fates: whether the tragedies that befell the Saulides were orchestrated by a Davidic containment policy directed at the house of Saul or they were precipitated by other factors.

Consequently, I have examined the accounts in 2 Samuel (relevant passages from chapters 3 to 21) to see *if* and *how* the actions of King David were directly or indirectly determinative of the plight of Saul's heirs. Careful attention has been paid to providing explanations of and for the actions (and inactions) of David and other prominent characters in the Samuel narrative that impacted the Saulides negatively. Subsequently, I evaluated the tragedies of each of the Saulides in the light of Deuteronomic provisions for maintaining justice within the covenant community.

Finally, I embarked up a biblical theological integrative reading of the research findings. The aim of this integrative reading is to determine any relationship between this particular way of construing these data and the rest of the biblical text. In view of David's stature in the Bible, it is imperative to reconcile his prominent place in redemptive history with his flawed portrayal in Samuel.

The significance of this project lies in the conscious effort to carry out a systematic study of the story of the Saulides after the downfall of their progenitor. In other words, its goal is to add to the existing body of literature a systematic account of the fate of King Saul's progeny during the reign of David.

Moreover, that the book of Deuteronomy serves as a prologue to the entire Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) is one of the few issues that a great many practitioners in the biblical scholarly guild seem to be agreed upon. Yet little effort has been expended in consciously evaluating the DtrH texts on the basis of the teachings of Deuteronomy. In this book, I have evaluated the narratives of the Saulides in 2 Sam 3–21 solely on the basis of the Torah instructions in Deuteronomy. Closely related to the

preceding, I have endeavored to show how the theme of justice (arising from Deuteronomy) is highlighted in 2 Samuel for the *Golah* community as a means of pointing the way forward for them in the messiness of life in the exile.

Furthermore, there has been a growing scholarly recognition of the unity of the books of Samuel. This is often illustrated with the thanksgiving hymns of Hannah and David (at the beginning of 1 Samuel and the end of 2 Samuel respectively). This study will illustrate this unity with other salient motific concerns that interweave the two books.

Unlike many of the works that are reviewed in the second chapter of his book, my concern in this book is not to do an all-encompassing evaluation of the entire Succession Narrative (SN). Neither is it an adventure in historical reconstructionism. Rather, it is a venture in a literary understanding of the story of the Saulides who survived their progenitor, King Saul, after his demise during the Philistine conflict at Mt. Gilboa. Thus, my focus has been to read the relevant portions of the MT text of 2 Samuel as it narrates the story of Saul's progeny. My study therefore is focused primarily on those chapters of 2 Samuel that make specific reference to Saulides (especially chapters 2–4, 6, 9, 16:1–4, 19:25–31 [ET 24–30]; and 21:1–14). However, because David's dealings with Michal date to the History of David's Rise (HDR) era, I also considered 1 Sam 18:17–19:17; 25:39–44.

READING SAMUEL IN ITS LITERARY CONTEXTS

Samuel and the Torah

This study presupposes the organic nature of the development of the biblical canon. Therefore, in considering the justice theme as a yardstick for evaluating David's reign in Samuel, it is important to take a look at that theme's moorings in the Torah. Walter Brueggemann paradigmatically lays out the pattern of the development of tradition in Israel.[5] Explaining the pattern of the growth of Israel's tradition, he observes that Israel as a community of faith had precious memories (traditions) of God's dealings with her; which memories she considered normative. As a people, they were also constantly being buffeted by the pressures and tensions of historical existence. Therefore, Israel's sacred texts were the product of ongoing engagement of remembered traditions with historical pressures

5. Brueggemann "Introduction," 11–12.

that were shaping her life. "Sometimes Israel's situation invited strong affirmations, of enormous insight and power. At other times the cultural context sorely tried the tradition, evoking reactions merely defensive and parochial. But in each case, and therefore behind every text, there was a moment of meeting; and out of that came a new affirmation and a fresh statement of faith."[6] Accordingly, Israel's tradition was alive and growing in the ongoing experiences of the nation. Therefore, according to this paradigm, the principal question to ask of any text of the Hebrew Bible is: "What in this text can we discern of the meeting between memory and the historical pressure?"[7] Thus one question we seek to answer as we study the text of Samuel is to find the linkage between it and the past tradition as deposited in the Torah.

Writing on the portrayal of the prophet Samuel in the book that bears his name, Robert D. Bergen rightly observes, "The writer's portrayal of this prophet/judge functions as a bridge between the text of 1, 2 Samuel and the Torah"; it has the goal of communicating "hope to a people who doubted the status of Israel's covenant promises, especially that of return to the Promised Land (cf. Deut 30:3–5)."[8] In conjoining Israel's contemporary existential situation with the memory of its tradition, in a deliberative mode in order to persuade Israel to choose the path of hope, the writer of Samuel employed different media to re-enact and enliven the Torah traditions. These include the use of narrative analogies, theological themes, and literary motifs. Bergen has so well documented these linkages of the books of Samuel to the Torah that one forbears reproducing them here.[9] Nevertheless, key points in these similarities are highlighted here for emphasis.

The lives of the two most important figures in the books of Samuel have been cast in the shape that captures the images of the most important figures of the Torah, using narrative analogy. The image of the prophet Samuel in the book that bears his name is cast in a mold that corresponds to that of the long-foreseen prophet who is like Moses (Deut 18:15–18). Bergen draws out this similarity as follows:

6. Brueggemann "Introduction," 11.
7. Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible*, xv.
8. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 35–36.
9. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel,* 35–53.

> Both Samuel and Moses were raised in environments outside their own homes. Both received their initial revelations from God in solitude, in the presence of a burning object, with their name being mentioned twice by God at the beginning of the encounter. During the first encounter with the Lord both were told of divine judgments that would come against the authority structures in which they were reared. Both were called prophets, and unlike any others in the Torah and Former Prophets, both were called "faithful." Both spoke words of judgment against leaders who had abused the Israelites. Both personally killed one oppressor of Israelites and then went into a season of self-imposed exile. Both wrote down regulations that were deposited before the Lord. Both performed some priestly duties, yet neither was ever termed a priest. Both acted as judges and were responsible for major transitions in Israelite history. Both had two named sons, none of whom played significant roles in later history. At the Lord's direction both anointed individuals who led Israel to fight against—and defeat—the inhabitants of Jerusalem, act in behalf of the Gibeonites, and conquer the Promised Land.[10]

In like manner, Bergen makes a case that the author of Samuel discreetly selected and arranged the events in the life of David so that it is a literary hologram of the history and destiny of Israel, beginning with the patriarchs, through the exodus, to the exile and the return therefrom:

> Like Abraham and Isaac, Israel's founding patriarchs, David was a shepherd (1 Sam 16:11); like Joseph he received a divine promise during his youth that he would be leader of his people (1 Sam 16:12); like Joseph also he faithfully served in a king's court (1 Sam 19–22); like Moses and Israel in Egypt, youthful David defeated a seemingly invincible opponent (1 Sam 17:32ff.); like Israel, David had an extended experience in the wilderness that involved moving from place to place (1 Sam 22:1ff.); like Israel he fought and defeated the Amalekites during his time in the wilderness (1 Sam 30:1ff.); like Israel, David received prophetic blessings from an opponent during his wilderness experience (1 Sam 26:25); like Israel, David re-entered the land but took control of it only gradually over a period of time (2 Sam 2:1ff.); like Israel, David conquered Jerusalem and established it as the nation's capital (2 Sam 5:6ff.); like Israel, David possessed the Promised Land and defeated enemies on every side (2 Sam 8:1ff.); like Israel, David committed grievous violations of the Torah that resulted in di-

10. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel,* 35.

> vine judgment and escalating internal problems (2 Sam 11:1ff.); like Israel, David was forced to go into exile east of the Jordan river (2 Sam 15:13ff.) and resided, like a later Davidic king, in a capital city previously considered hostile (2 Sam 17:24); like Israel, David ultimately returned from exile to Jerusalem (2 Sam 19:11ff.); like Israel, David experienced opposition from people in the land following his return from exile (2 Sam 20:1ff.)[11]

The theological themes of the Torah that are picked up in the Samuel books include those of Covenant (2 Sam 7:8–17; cf. Gen 15:18–21; 17:4–14, 19, 21; Exod 2:24; 24:8; Num 25:12–13); Land (1 Sam 7:14; 27:8–10; 2 Sam 8:3–9; cf. also 1 Sam 4:10; 31:7; 2 Sam 15:14; 17:22); and the presence of God among or with his people (cf. Gen 39:2, 21; Exod 33:3, 15–17; Deut 4:7; 1 Sam 3:19; 16:13, 18; 18:12, 14, 28; 2 Sam 5:10; 7:3). The leitmotifs of the Torah that the author of Samuel incorporates in his works include those of the barren woman (cf. Gen 11:30; 25:2; 29:31; 1 Sam 1); the shepherd (cf. Gen 4:2; 12:6; 26:14; 30:29–31; 38:13; Exod 3:1)—in which case Saul is shown to be an incompetent shepherd (1 Sam 9:1–5, as a proleptic portrayal of his kingship) while David is portrayed as a faithful shepherd (1 Sam 17:34–37, and to a degree a reflection of his anticipated reign); the use of the shepherd's instrument for deliverance (Moses in Exod 4:17; 7:12, 20; 8:17; 9:23; 10:13; and David in 1 Sam 17:40, 50); taking refuge with and yet outwitting Philistine kings (cf. Gen 20:1–18; 26:1–11; 1 Sam 27:1ff.); the dramatic echoes of fratricide (cf. Gen 4:8; 2 Sam 13:20–29; 14:4–7); the younger sibling surpassing the elders (Gen 4:2–5; 17:18–21; 25:23; 37:3–8; 38:29; 48:14–20; Exod 6:20; 1 Sam 1:4–5, 20; 16:11–12; 2 Sam 12:24–25).[12]

Thus, the books of Samuel served as a witness to the Torah, and in this capacity they function to reiterate and clarify the message of the Torah. Consequently, as shown in the table 1 below, in a number of places, these books demonstrate that the prophecy/promise pronounced in the Torah has now been fulfilled.

11. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 36–37.

12. For a detail discussion of these themes and motifs see Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel,* 43–53.

Table 1: Examples of Prophecies/Promises in the Torah and their Fulfillment in Samuel

Prophecy/Promise	Place first made	Place where fulfillment is recorded
The rise of kingship	Gen 36:31; 17:6, 16	1 Sam 8:5
The rise of a Judahite dynasty	Gen 49:10	2 Sam 7:8–16
The rise of a destroyer of Moab & Edom	Num 24:17–19; Exod 14:14; cf. Num 24:20	1 Sam 14:47–48; 15:7–8 and 1 Sam 30:17; 2 Sam 8:2, 12–13
Lasting priesthood to Eleazarite family	Num 25:13	Eleazarites not Elides (1 Kgs 2:27); fulfillment (1 Kgs 2:35)

Samuel and Deuteronomy

In addition to the ways in which the books of Samuel are linked to the Torah, there are also a number of ways in which they are connected particularly to Deuteronomy. It has already been pointed out above that by narrative analogy, the author of these books showed that, in some respects, the prophet Samuel was the coming prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15–19).[13] Similarly, the prediction concerning Israel asking for a king "like all the nations" and the condition on which they were to appoint the person—the one whom "the Lord chooses" (Deut 17:14–15)—finds fulfillment in Samuel (1 Sam 8:5; 9:17; 10:1; 16:1–13).

In the same way, Deuteronomy's provision that Israel shall worship at a central sanctuary at the place of Yahweh's choosing (Deut 12:5–7, 14, 21, 26; 16:1–16) finds its fulfillment in Samuel (2 Sam 6). Indeed, the condition for arriving at the place of Yahweh's choosing was that Yahweh will give Israel rest from all their enemies round about them so that they dwell in safety (Deut 12:9–11). This condition was perfectly met in the reign of David, as recorded in Samuel. The Philistines were the unwavering troublers of Israel throughout the judges' era even up to the end of the reign of Saul. It was David that finally put to rest this trouble (2 Sam 5:18–25). This silencing of the Philistine made possible, as we shall see later, the recovery of Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath-jearim,

13. See my above reference (footnote 10 above) to Bergen's erudite discussion of this issue.

near which the Philistine had a garrison that restricted Israel's access to the Ark, thereby limiting Israel's worship of Yahweh as was anticipated in the wilderness (1 Sam 10:5; 13:3–4; cf. 14:18[14]). However, the resounding defeat of the Philistine in 2 Sam 5:18–25 made possible the removal the Ark from Gibeonite territory to a central place that was readily accessible to all Israel in 2 Sam 6. In fact, the *pax Davidide*[15] was what made the contemplation of the construction of a befitting temple at the central sanctuary conceivable (2 Sam 7:1–2). All this is a direct fulfillment of the expectation as annunciated in the wilderness (Deut 12:9–10).

Another way in which the connection between Deuteronomy and Samuel can be seen is in the ambiguous stance both books have toward the monarchy (whether they are critical or supportive of it).[16] Deuteronomy's prediction of Israel asking for a king is couched in language that may be reckoned as being negative: They asked that a king be appointed over them "like all the nations round about us" (ytbybs rva ~ywGh-lkK) (Deut 17:14). This demand in some ways undercut Israel's call, as Deuteronomy shows, to be distinct from other nations (a theme to which we shall also return later in the book). Yet, the positive element is that Yahweh will choose for them who would be their king at that moment. This ambiguity toward kingship resurfaces in Samuel (1 Sam 8—12). The negative element relates to Israelite demand for a king over them like the nations, using the exact Deuteronomic language (1 Sam 8:5, 19–20), and Samuel's unrelenting reprimand of them (1 Sam 8:6, 10–18; 12:7–25), while the positive element again comes from Yahweh not only acquiescing to their demand (1 Sam 8:7), but also being the one choosing for them their first two kings (1 Sam 9:15–17; 10:1, 20–25; 16:1–13).

14. For a fuller discussion of this particular passage see chapter 5 of this book.

15. My own term for the peace brought about by David's pacification and subjugation of all the nations that surrounded and often plundered Israel (2 Sam 5:18–25; 8:1–14).

16. This ambiguity in Deuteronomy and Samuel toward kingship has often been understand to mean the deuteronomists' attitude toward the monarchy, on which scholarly opinions range from those who take it be pro-monarchic, anti-monarchic, and/or a combination of both voices. For further discussion of this see Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David*; Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*; McKenzie and Graham, *The History of Israel's Traditions*; Klein, *1 Samuel,* xxviii; Keys, *The Wages of Sin*, 22; Gordon. *I & II Samuel*, 27; Frolov, "Succession Narrative," 97–98; Brueggemann, "Appendix," 395–97; Laato, "Psalm 132," 56–60; Clements, "The Deuteronomic Interpretation," 398–410; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 161–62.

Other ways in which the special bond between Deuteronomy and Samuel can be seen include, first, the destruction of Amalek. The injunction to Israel to destroy the Amalekites given in Deuteronomy (25:17–19) was never fulfilled in any other book of the Former Prophets but in Samuel (cf. 1 Sam 14:48; 15:1–11, 28; 27:8; 28:18; 30:1–18; 2 Sam 1:1-15; 8:9–12). Indeed, most of the references to the Amalekites in the only other book of the Former Prophets that mentions them deals more with their oppression of Israel than their destruction by Israel (Jdg 3:13; 6:3, 33; 7:12; 10:12; 12:15). Second, the unique position of Israel as Yahweh's treasured people is spoken about more often in Deuteronomy than any other book in the Torah (cf. Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; 27:9; 28:9). It is no accident that it is also in Samuel that this motif comes up in one of the most important passages of the Former Prophets, if not the entire Hebrew Scriptures (2 Sam 7:23–24). Third, in its prescription of the right cult, Deuteronomy also required the right manner of slaughtering and eating of meat: It must not be eaten with its blood (Deut 12:15–12, 23); and in all the annals of Israel, it is only in Samuel that the concern for the observance of this ordinance comes to expression (1 Sam 14:32–35).

Furthermore, it is to be noted that it is no coincidence that both institutions of monarchy and the prophetic office predicted in Deuteronomy (Deut 17:14–20; 18:15–19) should arise and become established in Samuel. It is similarly significant that the prophetic tradition of standing up to kings when they overreached themselves and threatened the religion of Yahweh would begin in Samuel.[17] One can even say that Samuel is the linking bridge between the Torah and the latter part of the Former Prophets cum the Latter Prophets, where prophetic denunciation of the overreaching actions (violations of the Torah) of monarchs is very pronounced.

Samuel as a Literary Unity

Though the present study is concerned primarily with selected texts from 2 Samuel, it is important to remember that the immediate context of 2 Samuel is the two books of Samuel. These books entered the Hebrew canon as one book. Several evidences can be adduced to substantiate this claim. The number of books in the Hebrew canon in Second Temple literature is a good case in point. The deutero-canonical book of *2 Esdras*

17. McConville, *Grace in the End*, 26.

(14:45) indicates that the Hebrew Bible published by Ezra consisted of twenty-four books. Josephus (*Against Apion* 1.37–40), on the other hand, indicates that there were twenty-two books. There are different ways in which the disparity between the two accounts is accounted for. While the translator of Josephus's works into the English language, William Whiston, proposes that Canticles and Ezra were not included,[18] Roger T. Beckwith in his analysis suggests that Ecclesiastes and Canticles are the books missing from Josephus's list.[19] By whichever of the reckonings, the implication is that our present books of Samuel, just like the books of Kings, were counted as one book.

The MT of Samuel also leaves us clues that point to the unity of the books of Samuel. The Masoretes had the practice of indicating the halfway point of each book of the Hebrew Bible and noting the total number of words in a book at the end of each book. In the case of Samuel, the halfway point is found in 1 Samuel 28:24 and the notes containing the total number of words is found at the end of 2 Samuel.[20]

Additionally, the author/redactor of Samuel employs numerous literary features in ways that show the unity of these books, not the least of which is the thanksgiving song of Hannah (1 Sam 2) and David's psalm (2 Sam 22). On the literary function of the two songs, Ronald F. Youngblood writes, "These two remarkably similar hymns of praise thus constitute a kind of *inclusio*, framing the main contents of the books and reminding us that the two books were originally one."[21] Several other factors serve to substantiate the above view. One has to do with the position of the songs: Hannah's coming toward the beginning of the narrative and David's toward its end. Besides, it is generally accepted that the Song of Hannah had a different setting than its present one. Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg lists a number of reasons for accepting that the hymn was inserted where it is now from a different setting. The natural flow of 1 Sam 1:28 with 2:11 (without a lacuna) is one such reason; also, the content of the song is only peripherally connected with Hannah.[22]

18. *The Complete Works of Josephus*, 776, fn. g.

19. Beckwith, "Formation of the Hebrew Bible," 49–51.

20. Cartledge says that such a practice would be incorrect except the Masoretes had considered Samuel to be one book (Cartledge, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 349).

21. Youngblood, "1, 2 Samuel," 579.

22. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 29. For a contrary opinion see John T. Willis, "The Song of Hannah and Psalm 113," 139–54; esp. 140–52.

The probable reason for the insertion of Hannah's song in its present contexts is the fact that it highlights a number of motifs that are constitutive of the ethos of the Samuel books. Similarly, the Song of David, at the end, re-echoes the same motifs to recap what has been presented in the books. A few of these motifs common to the two framing Songs are shown in Table 2.[23]

Table 2: A Sample Survey of Common Motifs/Themes in the Song of Hannah and The Song of David in Second Book of Samuel

S/N	Common Term/Concept	Ref. In 1 Samuel	Ref. In 2 Samuel
1	"horn" (!rq) as a symbol of strength	2:1, 10	22:3
2	"enemies" (bywa)	2:1	22:1, 4, 38, 41, 49
3	Yahweh as the "rock" (rwc) who brings salvation (h[vy)	2:1, 2	22:3, 32, 47
4	Reversal of fates in favor of the humble (or oppressed)	2:3–5, 7–9	22:28
5	Yahweh thunders (~[ry) against his enemies (the enemies of his oppressed ones)	2:10	22:14
6	Yahweh descends/acts from heaven (~ymv) for the sake of the oppressed	2:10	22:10
7	Reference to "the anointed" (wxyvm) of Yahweh (the king) receiving a gift from him (strength or steadfast love)	2:10	22:51
8	Yahweh brings one person down to Sheol (lwav) and another out of it	2:6	22:5–8, 17

Both songs contain the image of a suffering righteous one receiving deliverance from Yahweh. Simultaneously, Yahweh's wrath is thunderously visited on the proud/oppressor. Yahweh's role as an impartial, just judge is anchored in his ability to weigh the deeds of men (1 Sam 2:3),

23. For a similar comparison of Hannah's Song with David's Psalm, see Dillard and Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 141. Hertzberg has also made a similar comparison of Hannah's Song with other ancient songs (Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 146–48).

a clear innuendo to his ability to look beyond outward appearances but penetrate to the realms of the heart and motives (cf. 1 Sam 16:7; cf. Prov 16:2; 21:2; 24:12). This alerts the reader to the fact that in spite of human schemes to perpetrate injustice with grand concealment devices (such as the schemes of Saul and David; cf. 1 Sam 18:17–25; 2 Sam 11:15, 27b), Yahweh, the great judge, sees and holds them accountable. Similarly, Klein observes that the reversals of social conditions as contained in the songs are portrayed in the books of Samuel as the regular behavior of Yahweh, and Yahweh takes positive actions for the weak, while the sated and self-reliant (often oppressors) experience his reversing judgment.[24] By this indirect means, the author of Samuel advocates for justice in the behalf of the oppressed.

The advocacy for social justice commonly associated with the classical prophets of the seventh and eighth centuries often involved the critique, by the prophets, of the nature of the interaction between the king, the priest (and the cult), and the people. All these three institutions (the monarchy, the priesthood [and the cult, esp. at the central sanctuary], and the prophetic office) find their common confluence in the man Samuel.[25] Of these three, the priesthood was the most ancient. Yet by Samuel's time it had become decadent. Samuel, therefore, appeared on the scene as a reformer. It is reasonable to surmise that cult centralization, which became more established with the erection of the Jerusalem temple, began to blossom during this reform era of Samuel. His was not a spatial centralization; altars were still maintained at several high places (examples include Mizpah, Bethlehem, Gilgal, and Ramah). The centralizing factor was the priest (Samuel himself). It can be safely inferred that at all these altars only Samuel could offer acceptable sacrifices to Yahweh on the people's behalf. It was on this point that King Saul first fumbled, resulting in Samuel's pronouncement of the doom of the king's nascent dynasty (1 Sam 13:8–14).

24. Klein, *1 Samuel,* 16–17.

25. Ackroyd observes, "Kingship, holy place, priesthood—three themes which were eventually to be of fundamental importance in Old Testament thought. They are shown here linked together in the figure of Samuel with whom the book opens; and with him is linked too that other great line of religious influence which so dominates the period of the monarchy and beyond—the prophetic movement" (Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, 1971, 7–8). In his sequel to the volume quoted above Ackroyd notes, "The other great line of religious influence which is linked with Samuel is the prophetic movement; this too is developed in 2 Samuel" (Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 8).

There are other motific and thematic features that unite the books. An example is how the personal fortunes of Israel's leaders in the "all-Israel" era are intricately connected with how Israel fared militarily on their watch in Israel's ongoing struggles against the Philistines. There are four major leaders in 1–2 Samuel, namely, Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David. During the reign of each of these leaders, Israel had a military confrontation with the Philistines. There is almost an alternating pattern: Israel suffered defeat at the hands of the Philistines at the end of Eli's judgeship, enjoyed victory at the beginning of Samuel's, endured defeat at the end of Saul's reign, and experienced victory at the beginning of David's. This pattern is illustrated in table 3 below:

Table 3: The Evaluation of Israel's Leaders vis-à-vis Israel's Fortunes in its Conflict with the Philistines

Outcome of Israel–Philistine war in leader's reign		**Evaluation of leaders in Samuel**	
Ending Defeat	**Beginning Victory**		
Eli (1 Sam 4:1–18)		Negative	
	Samuel (1 Sam 7:1–14)		Positive
Saul (1 Sam 31:1–10; 2 Sam 1:1–4)		Negative	
David (near ending defeat 2 Sam 21:15–22)	David (2 Sam 5:18–25; 8:1)	Ambiguity (Somewhat positive/negative)	

Of these four leaders, those defeated by the Philistines at the end of their reigns are depicted in a bad light, while those with victory at the beginning of their reigns are portrayed more positively. Thus, Eli and Saul are roundly condemned. Samuel receives the greatest approval (cf. 1 Sam 12), even though his children had a problem similar to that of Eli's children (1 Sam 8:1–2; cf. 1 Sam 2:22). Yet the damnation of Eli as a person (1 Sam 2:27–30) contrasts sharply with the high integrity of Samuel (1 Sam 12:3–5).

There is some ambiguity in the presentation of David in the present shape of the books. There are two major accounts of conflict with the Philistines in which he is involved, both at the beginning and the end of his reign. In the conflicts at the beginning of his reign, he is victorious over the Philistines (2 Sam 5, 8), and this is the time in which David is still viewed very positively. On the other hand, in the conflicts toward the end of David's life, when he is not being portrayed in the best light, the Philistines had prevailed over David but for the help of his lieutenants (2 Sam 21:15–22). This latter episode in David's life is reminiscent of 1 Sam 17–18, where Saul is saved from the Philistines temporarily only by the help of his servant David.

Closely related to the above is the existence of three factors that had destabilizing potential for Israel's leadership, namely, Yahwistic religion, the perennial Philistine threat, and successor-in-waiting (David, the son of Jesse, in the case of Saul).[26] These destabilizing forces created uncertainty for Saul, his reign, and his dynasty. Indeed, in 1 Samuel, we see all these three forces play out against Saul, once set in motion, until they brought his life to ruin. Second Samuel unveils how David dealt with these factors that had these threatening potential. For David, these forces were the ever-present Philistine threat, Yahwistic religion (how David dealt with this is considered in our discussion of 2 Sam 6 in chapter 4 of this book), and the house of Saul (as the successors-in-waiting). How David would navigate this potential minefield would determine his survival and the perpetuity of his dynasty. His retainers compromised Saul's house effectively enough to ensure his ascendancy (2 Sam 1–4); and he had routed the Philistines at the beginning of his reign. What remained was how to secure Yahweh's favor and to pacify the house of Saul so that it would pose no further threat. Ultimately, the struggle for the succession to the throne of Israel, between the houses of David and Saul, is evident in David's confrontation with Michal bat Saul in ch. 6.

Another major uniting theme operative in the books of Samuel is this: the tone for understanding the narratives about David in 2 Samuel is set in 1 Samuel (cf. 12:3–4). Samuel—who, as we have seen, has been cast as the prophet like Moses—is shown in this passage to be the embodi-

26. These forces were present for all of the four leaders in the "all-Israel" era in Samuel. For Eli, his sons' misconduct at the Yahwistic shrine (1 Sam 1:2:12–17, 22–25), the Philistine threat (1 Sam 4), and the presence of a successor-in-waiting, Samuel (1 Sam 2:11, 26; 3:1–9) all made possible the swift unleashing of divine retribution.

ment of the ideal Deuteronomic leader. The question that hangs over the work is, with the transition to the new type of leadership, will there be a king who will fit this Deuteronomic ideal of leadership? In other words, will there be another Moses? As we shall see, both kings mentioned in Samuel failed the test. Indeed, most of the kings in the books of Kings did even more pitifully, with the singular exception of Josiah (who alone of all Israel's kings is, like Samuel, cast in the mold of Moses).[27] The characterization of Samuel in this passage, as one who embodies the essence of Torah obedience, coming at the twilight of charismatic leadership of the judges and the dawn of monarchical leadership, then, is to form the template against which the kings were to be viewed.

27. Friedman shows that Josiah was a king like no other in Israel by pointing out that the DtrH is composed with Moses and Josiah constitution an *inclusio* that frames the entire document. The Josiah pericope in 1 Kgs 22–23 echoes matters (both thematic and phraseological) that are associated with Moses in Deuteronomy in ways that are not found in any other figure throughout the DtrH (Friedman, "From Egypt to Egypt," 171–73). Examples of this include:

1. The phrase "none arose like him" or the like, used of Moses in Deut 34:10 is not used of anyone unreservedly except Josiah (2 Kgs 23:5). Similar phrases are used of David (1 Kgs 15:5) and Hezekiah (18:5), but there are qualifications with them both: for David it was the Bathsheba affair and for Hezekiah it was his nonchalant and non-repentant attitude toward God's reproof (2 Kgs 20:16–19).

2. No other king competes with Josiah in fulfilling the law's requirement of wholehearted commitment to Yahweh (Deut 6:5; cf. 2 Kgs 23:25).

3. Josiah, in obedience to the law, inquires of the Lord (2 Kgs 22:13, 18; cf. Deut 17:8–12).

4. No king, except Josiah, fulfills the law's requirement (of both Israel in general, and kings in particular) to obey the Lord without "turning to the right or left" (Deut 17:11, 20; 28:14; cf. 2 Kgs 22:13, 18).

5. Josiah alone, of all the kings, carries out Moses' command that the Law be read in the "ears" of the people (Deut 31:11; cf. 2 Kgs 23:2).

6. Moses' action of smashing, burning, and grinding the golden calf (Deut 9:21) finds its only other counterpart in Josiah's actions (2 Kgs 23:6, 14).

7. The Law's requirement that the person Israel appoint as king be the one Yahweh chooses finds unsurpassed fulfillment in Josiah as his reign was predicted hundreds of years before his time (Deut 17:15; 1 Kgs 13:2).