

reflected in the Samuel narrative is anachronistic and that tenth century Judah was not conducive to sophisticated literary composition. Khirbet Qeiyafa and other locations, such as Khirbet en-Naḥas, have yielded data that challenges minimalist assumptions regarding the socio-political developments of the southern Levant during early Iron IIA.¹¹ On the other hand, Fowler's continuum of development further undermines the potency of Van Seters' already uncertain literary criticisms. The difference in person that Van Seters observes hardly seems to be the "radical transformation" that precludes an apologetic classification (2009: 59). Furthermore, the notion that the third person narration of the biblical text does not properly parallel the "apologetic" intentions of other Ancient Near Eastern texts fosters more questions than answers. Consequently, the criticisms of Van Seters upon the apologetic classification are less than convincing.

McCarter does offer an important statement on the form of an apology and where his Davidic apology would have fallen on a developmental continuum.

Hoffner's reluctance to define this 'tradition of royal apologies' too strictly is, I think, prudent. Surely there is nothing distinctively Hittite or even ancient Near Eastern about the literary category of political self-justification with accompanying claims for the legitimacy of the usurper, his ability to rule, his moral rectitude, and his divine election to office. *Efforts to find more than 'a certain loose literary form' shared by the several examples of the category would probably fail. On the other hand the apology of Hattushilish demonstrates the potential for an elaborate development of this genre in the general cultural milieu in which the history of David's rise was composed, and the striking similarity of themes in the two compositions is a clue to the original character of the Israelite document.* (1980: 489, emphasis mine)

McCarter rightly acknowledges the probable existence of an ancient apologetic genre with a corresponding literary form while acknowledging its elastic tendencies. Indeed, the Hittite/Israelite comparison does not permit a systematic reconstruction of the genre's form, but it is enough to postulate the existence of such genre with an identifiable form. The differences between the Israelite and Hittite accounts suggest that the apologetic genre, at least by the time of the Israelite writer, had begun to evolve. Consequently, McCarter's classification of the "History of David's Rise" as an apology is still a worthy classification. By implication, the apologetic character should be extended to the remainder of the pro-Davidic material of Samuel. Thus, Van Seters' "Account A" apologizes David's legitimate and divinely sanctioned rule.

The insertion of the so-called “Account B” appears to represent the moding of the apologetic material by importing skeptical, uncertain, perhaps even satirical, attitudes. Second Samuel 5-8 brings all of David’s efforts to a climatic conclusion. Politically, David unites the northern and southern tribes under his rule and effectively eliminates the Philistine threat. He also conquers Jerusalem, which offers a capital devoid of any history that would exasperate the tensions between the northern and southern tribes. Religiously, David secures the Ark and transports it to Jerusalem, establishing a new cultic center. Most importantly, the Lord, through the prophet Nathan, presents David with a dynastic promise that includes a “charter” (Halpern 2001: 134). Therefore, upon the conclusion of 2 Sam 8, the questions that plagued the community early in the Samuel narrative are answered decisively. The community enjoys, and will continue to enjoy, stable political leadership in the form of a dynastic family, and that family is able to deal decisively with socio-political issues of the day. Furthermore, the founder of the dynasty embodies the community’s religious ethos, ruling with justice and equity, so declares 2 Sam 8:15. In other words, 2 Sam 5-8 also establishes the pillars of the dynastic ideal: stable leadership with an anticipation of peaceful succession, an identifiable territory, and an ethos to govern society.

As the David Saga—Van Seters’ “Account B”—begins in earnest with the start of chapter nine,¹² the positive atmosphere quickly falls away (2009: 262–63). David subtly moves to control the remnants of Saul’s household under the pretext of loyalty. In chapter ten, the Ammonites and Aramean conflicts are recounted, which contextualizes the David and Bathsheba episode. According to 2 Sam 11:1, “In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him. They ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem” (NRSV). Van Seters is correct when he suggests that this statement compares David to a typical ancient Near Eastern ruler with imperialistic ambitions (2009: 290), but such a comment transcends a simple comparison. That David is enjoying the comforts of Jerusalem while men are exerting so much effort in the Ammonite conflict is ironic. The reader expects David to be on the battlefield, particularly since David’s military prowess was a focal point in the previous chapters. Such irony anticipates trouble.

This anticipation is realized quickly. The text quickly discloses David and Bathsheba’s night of indiscretion and her subsequent pregnancy (vv. 2-5). The episode then turns to its primary purpose, juxtaposing a pious foreigner with a devious and immoral Israelite king, which flies in the face of 2 Sam 8:15 (Van Seters 2009: 297–99). Again, this episode is deeply ironic and shocking. Chapter 11 concludes with the terse statement, “The deed which David did was evil in the eyes

of the Lord” (2 Sam 11:27). Such a statement is particularly damning, for it not only accentuates the deviousness of David’s deeds but it also echoes the condemnation of the evil kings of Judah and Israel. At this moment, David is amongst the worst Israel has to offer.

Things worsen for David. In chapter twelve, the prophet Nathan condemns the king publicly. This public censure includes a curse that, according to the narrative, spurs a sequence of events that plunges the royal family into a cycle of immorality, vengeance, and dynastic instability. By implication, the community is also destabilized. Recall that socio-political stabilization is a critical point communicated in the dynastic oracle and 2 Sam 5-8. Consequently, I echo Van Seters’ idea that the David and Bathsheba episode criticizes certain elements of the royal ideology and its dynastic ideal, ideology that informs so much of the pro-Davidic material in Samuel (2009: 287–301).

Dynastic destabilization bubbles below the surface and intensifies as the David saga progresses. Like his father, Ammon’s libido consumes him. He ignores all discretion and violates Absalom’s sister. This of course incurs Absalom’s wrath, which is satisfied only when he kills Ammon. Absalom is then exiled for three years in Geshur and another two in his Jerusalem residence. Only when Joab intervenes does Absalom enjoy the presence of his father again. Yet Absalom was cunning and ambitious. The David saga informs the reader that he had his sights set on the throne. He orchestrates a coup, and if it were not for his desire for publicity and sexual gratification, his coup could very well have succeeded. Ultimately, Absalom is killed in battle, against the explicit commands of David.

Other revolts sprung up during David’s reign, but more telling is the David saga’s portrayal of the king throughout. David is characterized very differently in these episodes than in those of the apologetic material. He is neither the valiant warrior nor charismatic leader. Rather, he is often subject to his carnal desires, passive, and unable to control or influence those around him. The picture painted is by no means flattering, and it suggests that the Davidic dynasty is just like any other powerful family—subject to jealousy, violence, and political maneuvering.

The David saga concludes with 1 Kgs 1-2, and again the prophet Nathan is at the center of the events that unfold. Again, a critique of the dynastic ideal is one of the principles being communicated. According to 2 Sam 7, David is promised an heir *after* his death. “When your days are filled and you sleep with your fathers, I will establish your seed after you.” However, as Van Seters notes, Solomon’s succession is secured neither after David’s death nor through peaceful means (2009: 331–40). Rather, an ambitious faction within the royal court secures Solomon’s succession. Worse is the characterization of David. His physical needs are dependent on those

around him, and he is incapable of detecting the deception of those within his court. Yet most provocative are David's last words to Solomon. In 1 Kgs 2:1-4, David encourages Solomon to live in accord with Moses' law so to secure the dynasty after him. However, in vv. 5-9, David's advice quickly turns dark, exhorting his son to enact the repercussions against Joab and Shimei that he was incapable of enacting. In Joab's case, David calls for his execution. Unexpectedly, at the moment of his death David is able to channel the ambition and charisma of his early years, an intriguing way of concluding the David saga.

In summary, when the David saga begins in earnest in 2 Sam 9, the charismatic and righteous David essentially gives way to an immoral and passive David. Furthermore, the David saga communicates that one moment of indiscretion resulted in judgment that fostered a series of violent and vindictive events that consumed the Davidic house for the remainder of patriarch's life. In fact, sexual deviance is a motif that recurs throughout the presentation, functioning as the vice that repeatedly consumes prominent members of the royal family. Culminating these unfortunate events was the manner by which Solomon secured the throne, a bloody battle engineered by an ambitious faction within the royal court. This is hardly the peaceful transition to which the dynastic oracle of 2 Sam 7 alludes.

It is clear then that the author of the David saga did not have an overwhelmingly positive view of the Davidic dynasty. In his eyes, the Davidic dynasty was not above humanity's vices. Carnal desires, vengeance, ambition, and other negative qualities were present amongst members of the royal family. More importantly, the implications threatened the socio-political stability that the dynasty offered. However, and somewhat paradoxically, the author of the David saga never explicitly questions the legitimacy of the Davidic line. Therefore, perhaps the author of the David saga was more concerned with whether the dynasty is even capable of exhibiting the stability about which it boasts. Because the political power that accompanies a monarchy coupled with the depravity of humanity combine to provide a formidable obstacle for righteous and stable rule, the author hints at a deeper question. Can the community's ethos be kept faithfully amongst kings?

The author of the David saga communicated his reservations masterfully. By recounting certain events of David's lifetime with irony and subtle tones of skepticism in the immediate context of the literature that nurtured the ideas he was trying to critique,¹³ the author effectively tempers an overwhelmingly positive view of the Davidic dynasty with its dynastic ideal. Despite the positive implications that the Davidic monarchy offers Israel, the author emphasizes that it is an institution comprised of humans who are susceptible to temptation. Furthermore, the author emphasizes that there are repercussions to succumbing to those temptations,

repercussions that have implications for the dynasty and society at large. Clearly, the author of the David saga was skeptical, and such a perspective was probably fostered by experiencing the final days of Judah wherein incompetence and dynastic instability was at its highest degree.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I return to the construction and insertion of the so-called “Appendix.” I have suggested that the complex metaphor associated with the recurrence of η communicates the Lord is the ultimate source of the community’s vitality. Thus, the inclusion of the “Appendix” may represent a final layer to the literary development of the Samuel narratives. Moreover, it may represent a perceptual pendulum swing back toward the middle. Where the first layer was unashamedly pro-Davidic and convinced of the dynasty’s magnificence, “Account B,” or the David saga, seriously questioned—to the point of doubting—the dynasty’s abilities. The insertion of the “Appendix,” in a mediating fashion, allows the narrative as a whole to advocate a perception of the monarch that is neither hagiographic nor overly cynical. The Davidic dynasty is what the community needs, so long as it keeps the proper perspective. Literarily speaking, this layering demonstrates the erosion and virtual death of the apologetic form and ideal.

End Notes

¹ The following section contains a synthesis of discussions published elsewhere (Schreiner 2012a; 2014; 2016). They are reiterated here because they are foundational for this paper’s argument.

² An *inclusio* “establishes the main thought of the book (or passage), pointing to the essential concern of the book (or passage)” (Bauer and Traina 2011: 117). As precedent for the flexibility of where an *inclusio* may appear, see Bauer and Train’s discussion of Matthew’s *inclusio* (2011: 118). Brevard Childs and Walter Brueggemann have also argued that the Canonical form of 1 and 2 Samuel manifests an *inclusio* (Brueggemann 1988; Childs 1979: 271-80).

³ Frolov’s term “frame of reference” refers to the textually determined posture that the reader is to adopt initially (Frolov 2004: 29–32). For example, in the case of 1 and 2 Sam and 1 and 2 Kgs, the frame of reference the reader is to adopt initially is synchronic, for the text exists as a prose-narrative. In the case of the prophetic corpus, the frame of reference is often diachronic, for the superscriptions allude to the schematic organization of numerous oracles delivered throughout the prophet’s career.

⁴ While not the original proponent, see P. Kyle McCarter (1980-84: 2:16-19). The consensus appeals to the artistry and the intrusive nature of the chapters.

⁵ Saga is to be understood in Icelandic sense, not the German *Sagen* (Van Seters 2009: 42-49).

⁶ The specifics of Van Seters' redactional analysis are open to criticism. However, this essay is not the context for the technical discussion that is necessary. See my review for some examples (Schreiner 2012a). The value of Van Seters' work stems not from his specific conclusions but rather his general scheme.

⁷ Much of what follows depends upon the general conclusions of Van Seters. However, this essay proposes that the perspectives toward David and the dynastic idea expressed throughout 1 Sam-2 Sam 20 is not as radical and incompatible as what Van Seters suggests.

⁸ Invoking Fowler for issues of the Bible's literary development is not without precedent. See Donna Lee Petter's *The Book of Ezekiel and Mesopotamian City Laments* (2011).

⁹ For a more developed system, see Fowler's *Kinds of Literature* (1985).

¹⁰ Those charges included: 1) the accusation that David maneuvered himself politically at Saul's expense, 2) the accusation that David was a military deserter, an outlaw, and a mercenary, and 3) the accusation that David was implicit in the murders of Saul, Abner, and Ishbaal.

¹¹ Any discussion on these sites, particularly Khirbet Qeiyafa, is a glaring lacuna in Van Seters' work. For a discussion of Khirbet Qeiyafa and its effect on biblical studies, see David B. Schreiner (2012b).

¹² Van Seters argues that the author of the David saga certain episodes before 2 Sam 9.

¹³ In this sense, Van Seters' idea that the David saga used the earlier account as a "framework" for his presentation is helpful.

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