

REVIEW ARTICLE

# King David His Vitality, His Anointing and His Glory

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## Abstract

This work attempts to contribute to the debate on the history of King David, his rise to the throne, and his exploits. At the same time, it attempts to highlight how his historical figure gradually acquired grandiose and vital characteristics. It seeks to point out that David's covenant with Yahweh both foreshadowed and continued and strengthened Israel's covenant with the Deity. The confirmation of this covenant was further concretized by the persistence of a national memory that extolled those moments as those of its greatest glory and dignity, while projecting them into the future in messianic terms.

**Keywords:** King David, monarchy, Saul, vitality.

*Thus says Yahweh Yahweh: Behold, I will bring out the children of Israel from among the nations where they have settled. I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land. and I will make of them one nation... and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, and my servant David shall be king over them..... my servant David shall be their prince for ever.*

(Ezekiel 37:21-25).

## 1. Introduction: The Story of King David

The story of David appears in I Samuel 16 through I Samuel 31, where the story of Saul is taken up to tell us of his death and that of his sons at Gilboa (II Samuel 1:20). Thus, II Samuel tells the story of David from that death and his subsequent reign, with a supplement at the end (II Samuel 21, 24). Finally, the story of David ends in the first sections of I Kings, with the usurpation of Adonijah, the assumption of Solomon and David's last words to Solomon, until I Kings 2:10-11, where it is expressed:

*10 David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. 11 The days that David reigned over Israel were forty years. In Hebron he reigned seven years, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years<sup>1</sup>.*

Three independent sources are believed to have

<sup>1</sup>The translation used is that of Lods and Monnier (1947), supported by Cerni Bisbal (1992), Cipriano de Valera (1989), Reina and Valera updated (2003), Straubinger (1972), and the Vulgate (2023).

participated in the compilation of these three books: one Yahwist, one Elohist and a third ignored by the two previous ones, which Dhorme (1910), in a classic study dedicated to the subject, designates with the letter X. To a greater or lesser extent, these three sources attempt to establish accounts which, connected or frankly contradictory to each other, narrate the establishment of a formal monarchy beginning with Saul and continuing with David's rule after a period of civil war, give an account of David's early wanderings in Hebron, the conquest of Jerusalem, the transfer of the ark from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem, the account of David's sin, the intervention of the prophet Nathan, the taking of a census, the birth of Solomon, the rebellions of David's sons, and an oracle concerning the king's descendants (Herrmann, 1985).

Part of these narratives attempt to show how the promise of the Godhead made to the Patriarchs and Moses is fully realised through David's reign, for it is clear to the redactor that the covenant initiated reaches its fullness with David. Moreover, the realisation of

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this promise also confirms to the Hebrew people the power of their God over the other Canaanite divinities. Thus, the establishment of the ark in Jerusalem crowns a political process, but it is also the prologue to a new religious manifestation that will be organised around a Deity, Yahweh, increasingly legitimised and repeated by a people who will distinguish him as different and unique among the other divinities (Banks, 2006).

David managed to unify the warring Israelite tribes, extended his kingdom to limits not reached by his successors and succeeded in generating a dynasty that lasted for four centuries until the end of national independence. David appears victorious in all his campaigns, defeating the traditional enemies of the Hebrews. His successes, seen from a distance, probably seemed incomparable. The vitalism that comes from the account of his prodigious life (in short: a humble shepherd boy enthroned King) extended to a religious expansion, giving his people a sense of the extraordinary, with full confirmation that they had indeed been chosen by the Deity through a millennia-old promise. If this humble David had been a chosen one, an “anointed of Yahweh”, it was only proof that this humble people could also become a chosen one, an “anointed” of Yahweh..... (Kayser, 1998).

The memory that was forged of David could not but constitute the palpable proof of events that, as the centuries passed and the fate of the people declined irreversibly, testified to a prodigious destiny for a people who upheld laws and beliefs based on Yahweh. It is not surprising, then, that religious tradition embellished and magnified the deeds of the legendary monarch, and that legends were soon formed both about his origin and about the means he used to attain power, being considered, according to the etymology of his name, the “beloved good” of Yahweh. Many of these legends appear in the books already mentioned, but the book of Chronicles, written at least seven centuries after David’s life, is particularly exemplary in this respect (John, 2024).

The book of David records historical facts that could be considered true in any case: Ziklag’s time, his servitude with the king of the Philistines, the slaughter of the priests of Nob, his usurpation of the throne with the slaughter of Saul’s descendants, his marriage to Michal, the - decisive - conquest of Urusalim, the recovery of the ark at Kirjath-Jearim and the ecstatic dance at the entrance to Urusalim, the conquest and anathema on the Canaanite peoples, the rebellion of his sons, Adonijah and Absalom, and the episode of the last request he makes to Solomon on his deathbed (Faust and Farber, 2025).

At the same time, from the Deuteronomic code (7th century) and, above all, from Chronicles (3rd century) onwards, a profuse quantity of new accounts and new versions of old oral traditions are added to the above, presumably, whose central nucleus seems to be the imperative need to legitimise David’s accession to the throne. Historical memory probably retained the imprint that if there was an “anointed one” of Yahweh it was indeed Saul and not David, so it was necessary to modify this historical imprint as far as possible and to indicate in every possible way that while this was true, there were plenty of events to show that Saul was no longer in any way Yahweh’s anointed one. We have here the bundle of stories surrounding David the shepherd, David facing Goliath, the close friendship with Jonathan, the declarations of Jonathan and Saul that David must be the successor and true anointed of Yahweh, the break-up of Samuel and Saul, the abandonment of Saul by Yahweh, the madness of Saul, and the (secret) anointing of David by Samuel (Lods, 1956).

To the above should be added, but from a growing idealisation of the historical David, the David the author of the Psalter and the messianic David, thus closing a cycle that seems almost of growing divinisation, unheard of in the traditional Hebraic mentality.

## 2. How a king becomes king

### 2.1 Gilboa, Ishbaal and Abner

The beginning of David’s political history seems to be in the south of Israel, in the confines of the tribe of Judah and specifically around the region of Ziklag. From the defeat of Gilboa, in which David almost cooperated against the defenders of Israel, and in which Saul and three of his sons perished, the way was opened for David to realise his plan for political dominance over the Saulids, judging by the way his story develops from there (Kirsch, 2000). It is in this region of Ziklag, which originally belonged to the Philistines and later became part of the tribe of Judah, that David clearly began to emerge as a leading figure, acting as chief or protector of the peoples of the area, as well as organising raids to punish those who did not accept such protection (Cazelles, 1981).

Moreover, in this area he gradually gained the support of the chiefs of the tribe of Judah, to whom he sent gifts of the spoils of his predatory raids (I Samuel 30:26-31). The episode of his marriage to Nabal’s wealthy widow Abigail is by no means anecdotal: it won him the support of the clan of the Calebites. David therefore had many supporters in the southern

region, whose inhabitants may never have looked favourably on the preponderance of a Benjamite monarch (Kirsch, 2000).

Consequently, as soon as he heard of the disaster at Gilboa, David, having consulted Yahweh, left Ziklag, where he was a vassal of the Philistine king Achish, and went to settle with his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, and all his people, in Hebron, the ancient city of the Calebites, where: “the men of Judah came and anointed David king over the house of Judah” (II Samuel 2:1-4). As can be seen, the account is concrete and revealing: there is no background of David in Saul’s court, no prophetic anointing by Samuel. On the contrary, David is “anointed”, not by a religious act or by any religious personage (which centuries later I Samuel 16 would try to convey), but by a deliberately political act, in which once again the usual rivalry between the Israelite tribes, far removed from any idealised pre-monarchical amphictyony (Joshua 24), is manifested (Noth, 1985).

Next, David attempts to win over Saul’s faithful followers, the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, whom he congratulates on their pious action on behalf of Saul’s remains and asks them to acknowledge him as his successor (2:4b-7). We are not told what the response of the Jabbasites was; but at that time David’s glory and legitimacy must have been rather weak, for General Abner, taking Saul’s last legitimate son, took him to Transjordan, and there, in the city of Mahanaim, enthroned him as Saul’s successor and probably proclaimed him also “anointed of Yahweh”<sup>2</sup>.

There were, then, after Saul’s death and for a long period of time, two kings in Israel: one Ishbaal<sup>3</sup>, who resided with his court in Mahanaim; and another, David, who reigned over the tribe of Judah and had Hebron as his capital, although, as in Ziklag, he remained a vassal of the Philistines, which seems to be evident from some texts such as II Samuel 5:17. These two parallel kingdoms, which lived in perpetual war (2:12-31; 3:1), lasted the same length of time, i.e. seven and a half years (2:11; 5:5), since they began at the same time, on the occasion of Saul’s death (1:14,

16; 2:1-4, 8, 9), and ended with the murder of Ishbaal (4:8-12; 5:1-3), which led to David being recognised as sole king of all Israel (Ska, 2017).

For this reason, and for other that remains unclear, Abner withdraws his support for Ishbaal and decides to initiate a rapprochement with David. To this end, he travels to Hebron in order to make him part of the negotiations he had entered into with the elders of Israel to dethrone Ishbaal so that all would accept him as the sole king of the country. On this journey he also takes Michal, whom David betroths (according to the biblical text for the second time, although it is more likely that it was for the first time and as part of a plan by Abner and David to legitimise the latter’s accession to the throne) (Berlin, 1982).

On this occasion, David offers a banquet to Abner and his companions, in which his nephew Joab does not participate (II Samuel 3). But as soon as Abner leaves to return home, Joab arrives with a considerable booty and when he learns of the arrival of the enemy general, after reprimanding his uncle David for having received him with such pomp, he hurries after him, sending messengers to tell him to return, for he had to speak with him. And when Abner returns with confidence, Joab murders him with malice aforethought (3:22-27).

Beyond David’s possible direct involvement in such a murder, later piety sought not to incriminate him in such a grave incident, with which a Davidic account of innocence and protest at the deed was united with particular eloquence: “*When David heard of it, he said, ‘I and my kingdom are forever innocent before Yahweh from the blood of Ahner the son of Ner! And then he burst out in the following imprecation against the murderer: ‘May his blood be on the head of Joab and on all his father’s house! May there always be in Joab’s house men sick with gonorrhoea, or with leprosy, or men who handle the spindle (feminine?), or who have to walk with crutches (or: not even one who hangs on a staff! (cripples?))*” (3, 28-29) (Cerni Bisbal, 1992).

In any case, it cannot be forgotten that Joab was in no way punished for that murder, with which the writer tries to justify David by making him say: “*Though anointed king, I am weak, and those men, the sons of Zeruiah, are stronger than I. May Yahweh punish Yahweh for the murder, and may he punish them. May Yahweh punish the evildoer according to his wickedness*” (3:39). With Abner and Ishbaal dead, David became king of all the Israelites. Two accounts, with variants, narrated this event, and gave

<sup>2</sup>The new king, who ruled in central and northern Israel, was called Ishbaal or Ichbaal ‘man of Baal’, i.e. ‘worshipper of Baal’ (I Chron. 8:33), a name which the Yahwist scruples of the redactor transformed into Isboseth (II Samuel 2:8), thus turning it into the surprising expression ‘man of shame’.

<sup>3</sup>Ishbaal seems to have been a very young man, perhaps a teenager, otherwise he would have gone to war with his father and brothers. The very language of the text: ‘Abner took him, brought him over to Mahanaim, made him king’ (II Samuel 2:8-9) and the harsh way the general treats him when Ishbaal reproaches him for having taken up with Rizpah, Saul’s concubine, to such an extent that it is added: ‘And he could not answer Abner for fear of him’ (3:7-11), seem to corroborate this.



rise to the beginning of chapter 5, composing a series of juxtaposed paragraphs. Following the Yahwist narrative, we have that: “1 *All the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and spoke to him thus: ‘Behold, we are your bone and your flesh! 2 In the days of old, when Saul was our king, it was you who were at the head of Israel, and Yahweh said to you, ‘You shall feed my people Israel, and you shall be the leader of Israel. 3b King David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Yahweh’.* But according to the Elohist account it is all the elders of Israel, not all the tribes of Israel, who “*came to the king at Hebron and anointed David king over Israel*” (5:3a-3c)<sup>5</sup>.

Then, in vs. 17-25, two campaigns of the Philistines against David are indicated, in which the Philistines were completely defeated, implying that the war ended with their expulsion from Israelite territory, which, though inaccurate, was in any case a palpable and definite proof that David had acceded to the throne with the approval of Deity, that the affront of Gilboa had been settled, and that David was performing exploits which had been impossible for Saul (Wright, 2014).

## 2.2 David at the Service of the Philistines

But despite the Philistine expulsion, it had not been forgotten in the memory of the people (probably linked to oral cycles) that at one time David, before being proclaimed king, lived and lived with what were considered Israel’s greatest enemies. In this way, and in order to understand or justify such a decision, it began to be associated with a kind of “exile”, since Saul’s follies and irascibilities put David in permanent danger of death. So David, with his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, and his 600 men, each with their respective families, went into Philistine territory, where he entered the service of Achish, king of Gath (Berlin, 1982).

It is curious to note that such exile is associated with a ferocity, which centuries later was ‘softened’:<sup>9</sup> *David plundered that region, sparing neither man nor woman, and took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothes; then he returned and came to Achish. 10 And when he said to him, “Where have you raided today?” David*

*answered, “In the Negeb of Judah, or in the south of the Jerahelites, or in the south of the Kenites.” 11 So David did not leave alive a man or a woman of those whom he was to take to Gath, for he said to himself, “Lest they report us, and say, ‘Look what David has done.’” And such was his custom all the days that he dwelt in the land of the Philistines. 12 And Achish had great confidence in David, for he said to himself, He has made himself odious in Israel, his people, and so he shall be my servant for ever” (I Samuel 27:8-12).*

It seems, then, that David did not hesitate to attack both Hebrews and non-Hebrews, showing inflexibility and lack of compassion. With equal rudeness he will kill the Moabite prisoners: “*he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground, and he measured two lines to put them to death, and a whole line to give them life*” (II Samuel 8, 2), or he will mistreat the Ammonites: “*And David brought out the people that were in it, and put them under the saws, and on the iron knives, and on the iron axes, and made them work in the brick-kilns, and did the same to all the cities of the children of Ammon*” (II Samuel 12:31).

But we should not rule out that these accounts of cruelty are exaggerations after the fact, if we bear in mind that when he was in disgrace during the revolutionary period of Absalom, the Ammonites gave them proof of consistent friendship, for he probably limited himself to making them tributary only, without doing them harm (I Samuel 17:27-29). On the other hand, David, when he was king, continued to maintain good relations with the Philistines, with whom he formed his elite guard, commanded by Benhaya, with the Cherethites and the Pelethites, who, according to general belief, were all Philistines or Cretans (I Samuel 30:14-16; Amos 9:7), and they were always faithful to him, even in his greatest adversities (II Samuel 8:18). In I Kings 1:38-44, we also see the preponderant role that this body of Philistines played in the enthronement of Solomon (Baentsch, 1935).

It was probably to compensate for these stories that an alternative to his life in Siclag was established, whereby he is no longer a terror to the people, but is now a “shepherd” of them, for he took refuge in the cave of Adullam, where all his kindred gathered with him: “*All the oppressed also came to him, and all that were in debt, and all that were bitter in heart, and he became their leader, so that he had with him about 400 men*” (I Samuel 22:2), a number which shortly afterwards increased to 600 (23:13; 25:13). David is no longer a common highwayman, but a protector

<sup>4</sup>This covenant is celebrated ‘before’ Yahweh, says the text, so it could be assumed that there was in Hebron a sanctuary where there was also some ark, statue or sculpture of Yahweh, which perhaps proves that each Yahwist sanctuary had its own ark.

<sup>5</sup>The author of Chronicles, who centuries later copied almost verbatim this part of David’s story (5:1-10), added at the end of v. 3: ‘according to the word of Yahweh by Samuel’ (I Chron. 11:3), thus alluding to the anointing done by this prophet, a legendary event which is completely ignored by those present at the above-mentioned meeting.

and helper of all those who are victims of social evils. In this he follows the example of another hero of Yahweh, Jephthah, who in an identical case gathered to his side *“the idlers who went out with him in his wanderings”* (Judg 11:3).

### 2.3 The Slaughter of Saul’s Descendants

Despite the previous episodes of anointing or enthronement by the elders or tribes of Israel, everything seems to indicate that this was not enough to legitimise David’s accession to the throne. David, who realised that he could not count on the complete loyalty of the Ephraimites<sup>6</sup>, or who still felt that he did not have full legitimacy as king, tried to get rid of all Saul’s descendants who might lead a revolt against him or whom he considered a threat, and for this purpose he took the opportunity of a public calamity described in II Sam, 21.

Everything seems to indicate that at the beginning of his reign there was a famine for three years, politically related to the fact that Saul had tried to exterminate the Gibeonites, thus breaking the covenant Joshua had made with them (Josh 9:15). These Gibeonites seem to demand compensation from David, to cancel the evil effects of his curses when they were persecuted by Saul, and so they demand that seven men of Saul’s family be delivered to them, to be hanged on the mountain of Gibeon. David acceded to this request<sup>7</sup>, for which he was undoubtedly excused, and gave them the seven men requested, all of them male descendants of Saul, except Mephibaal, son of Jonathan, crippled and lame in both legs (II Samuel 4:4), and from whom he surely had nothing to fear. Everything seems to indicate that the atoning (and politically convenient for David) ritual took place before an altar of Yahweh, as before Yahweh, at Gilgal, Samuel quartered the Amalekite prisoner king Agag (I Samuel 15:33).

It should be noted, however, that at the time of the events it seems that few, if any, believed the ruse of the Gibeonite offence, for when David fled from Jerusalem at the time of his son Absalom’s revolution, Shimei, of Saul’s kin, met him, throwing stones at him and cursing him: *“Go, go, you bloodthirsty murderer! Yahweh has brought upon you all the blood of the*

*house of Saul, whose kingdom you have usurped, and Yahweh has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom; behold, you are in disgrace, for you are a bloody man”* (II Samuel 16:5-8) The episode appears to be true and is important because Simei’s remarks may have reflected what was thought of David at the time outside his inner circle (Ska, 2017).

### 3. How to Convince that David was not a Usurper

Let us now examine the cycles of legends that became legend over the centuries, by which it was sought busily to prove that David - in spite of what has hitherto been indicated - was never a usurper, that he never deliberately sought to dethrone Saul and destroy his offspring, and that in fact his friendship with Jonathan, his and Saul’s statements, and David’s marriage to Michal could not but clearly indicate David’s right to the throne. As if this were not enough, the story was also introduced that Samuel had in fact anointed him in secret, and that Saul’s sins and mental insanity had long since effectively disqualified him as king, having ceased to be Yahweh’s anointed (Austin, 1975).

If we accept the biblical account, we have that David, of humble origin, but a gentle, insinuating and courageous man, won the esteem of King Saul, either by defeating a Philistine named Goliath, or by his musical gifts (according to another version), who distinguished him by appointing him captain of a band of armed forces, and later gave him his youngest daughter, Michal, in marriage. The biblical account is intended to remove any suspicion of intrigue and evil intentions on David’s part. On the contrary, the impression is left that his accession to the throne of Israel is due to a series of circumstances that gradually and irreversibly elevate him to the throne (Baker, 2025).

Thus, alongside accounts which systematically devalue Saul, we have others, concatenated, which indicate that it was inevitable, beyond his death at Gilboa, that David should become king, both by right, for it was established that he had been secretly anointed by Samuel, and for Israel’s own convenience, for Saul had proved to be jealous, unstable and homicidal, and had lost all favour and support from the Deity. To make matters worse, it was established that two of Saul’s sons, Jonathan and Michal, protected David and recognised his inheritance rights. It was a propaganda campaign, all the more effective because the house of Isaï was killed by either David or Solomon, with no one left alive who dared to offer a dissenting opinion (Finkelstein and Silberman, 2007).

<sup>6</sup>The Ephraimites not only revolted against David during his reign, first by joining the cause of Absalom and then by following the revolutionary forces of the Benjaminite leader Sheba (II Samuel 16-20), but after Solomon’s death they separated themselves definitively from the Judahites and formed the kingdom of the North or Israel.

<sup>7</sup>With what is lacking in his oath to Saul: 21 “And now I know that you shall reign, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. 22 Swear to me therefore by Yahweh that you will not exterminate my posterity after me, and that you will not remove my name from my father’s house! 23 So David swore to Saul” (I Samuel 24).

### 3.1 The Beginning of David's Relations with Saul. David

On this point there are two totally incompatible accounts, whose differences are impossible to harmonise. According to one of these accounts, the Yahyaist, (J), David entered into relations with Saul, thanks to his musical talent (I Samuel, 16, 14) and according to the other, the Eloist, (16, 17), thanks to his courage in slaying a giant named Goliath (Mckenzie, 2000).

According to the first account, that of David's musical abilities, David was loved by Saul, he was his squire, and Saul sends him to tell David's father that he will keep him by his side, «because he has found favour in his eyes», and because he calms him from an evil spirit sent by Yahweh<sup>8</sup>. Moving on to the second story, the context is now clearly different and moves from the palace to the field of war against the Philistines<sup>9</sup>, where Saul despairs of finding a hero to meet the challenges of a giant named Goliath. This giant has helmet, greaves and coat of mail, armour all of bronze, armed also with spear, spear and sword, who challenged the Israelites, saying: *“Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose us a man to come down against me. If he can fight against me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I am victorious and kill him, then you will be our servants and serve us. 10 The Philistine added, “I challenge the troops (or squadrons) of Israel today! Send me a man to come out and fight me hand to hand. 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and filled with great terror”* (I Samuel 17:9)

<sup>8</sup>Although the text is not explicit, it could be thought that J wants to express that this 'evil spirit' appears after Samuel secretly anoints David in Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16), in an episode immediately prior to this one where Saul's need to appease himself with harp or zither music (kinnor) is narrated (Roper Berzoza, 2014), with which Saul, without knowing it, had ceased to be the anointed of the Deity.

<sup>9</sup>In this war it is indicated that David's brothers, the sons of Isai, were already involved. According to this passage the sons of Jesse were eight, as is expressed in a parenthesis of 17, but in 17, 1-3, 14, the author understands them to be four; and in I Chron. 2:13,16, it is stated that there were nine: seven males and two females, David being the seventh of the males (v.15) and not the eighth as in Samuel 16:10,11. The imprecation of his elder brother Eliab on seeing him is striking: “Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said to him, ‘Why have you come here, and with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and the wickedness of thy heart: thou art come to see the battle’” (17:28). It seems that Isai was not very impressed with David either, for fearing that what he commands for his sons and their captain might be stolen or eaten, he asks him to bring him some record of this delivery: ‘And thou shalt bring me a pledge from him’ (vs. 17, 18). These stories must be independent of the heroic account of the battle, for they are totally out of keeping with any idealisation of David, and it cannot be ruled out that they belong to some lost cycle of Saulic, rather than Davidic, stories.

Of course, this great “terror” of Israel is immediately contrasted with the fearless courage of the young David, who, without any armour, has to face and defeat the giant. In this way, the legendary story wants to underline that David is a young shepherd boy, not old enough to go to war, who, for this reason, Saul, at first, does not want to allow him to expose himself to such a disproportionate single combat (v. 33), but David, in any case, is a young shepherd boy, not old enough to go to war, but David accepts the challenge anyway, defeats the giant and slays him, but not before making it clear that it is Yahweh himself who wins, for it is the Deity who gives him his courage and strength: *“47 And all this congregation shall know that Yahweh has no need of sword or spear to win, for the battle is up to Yahweh, and he will deliver you into our hands”*<sup>10</sup>.

What is considered the beginning of David's public life is thus glorified in a most admirable way<sup>11</sup>, and already at that moment he shows signs of greatness and of Yahweh's preference. He is not only a Hebrew hero, but also, and his exploit makes this clear, the true anointed of Yahweh (Kucová, 2007).

### 3.2 Saul's Jealousy and Madness

Following the events of David's glory, we are informed that: *“18:6 When David returned after he had slain the Philistine, the women went out to meet David with dancing choirs and tambourines, and the dancers went out from all the cities of Israel singing to meet King Saul, with festive songs and triangular harps. 7 The women and the dancers sang and said, “Saul struck his thousand, but David struck his ten thousand. 8 This displeased Saul and made him very angry, for he said to himself, “They have given David his ten thousand, and me his thousand; he has nothing to give but the kingdom!” 9 And from that day on Saul did not cease to look on David with evil eyes, nor to look on him with evil eyes. 10 And it came to pass the*

<sup>10</sup>Note the error of the chronicler who indicates in v. 54: ‘And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but his weapons he put in his tent’, which is in contradiction with v. 57, which states that David presented himself with the giant's head to Saul. It is also impossible that David took the head of the Philistine to Jerusalem, since that city was only conquered many years later.

<sup>11</sup>In reality the legendary cycle of David appropriated the exploits of other Hebrew heroes, for according to II Samuel 21, the vanquisher of Goliath was not David, but a hero named Elhanan: ‘And there was another battle in Gob against the Philistines, and Elhanan the son of Laari the Bethlehemite slew Goliath of Gath, and the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam’ (v. 19). I Chron. 20, 5, to overcome this difficulty, put in the Hebrew manuscript: ‘Eth Lachmi achi Goliath’, which means ‘he slew Lachmi the brother of Goliath’, so that it would thus follow that Elhanan would have killed not Goliath, but one of his brothers, Lachmi, there being therefore no opposition that David was the victor over Goliath.



next day that the evil spirit of God came upon Saul, and he prophesied (or spoke frantically or angrily) in the midst of his house<sup>12</sup>. And David sounded the call, as he did every day; and Saul had his spear in his hand. 11 And Saul threw the spear, saying, "I will nail David to the wall"; but David dodged the blow twice. 12 From that time Saul was afraid of David, because Yahweh was with him; but he had turned away from Saul. 13 So Saul removed him from his office and made him chief over a thousand men (chiliarch). And David went out and went in before the people, 14 and was successful in all his undertakings, and Yahweh was with him. 15 When Saul saw that he was successful in his undertakings, he was afraid of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went in and out before them"

The story shows how David's glory was joined by Saul's jealousy and resentment when he realised that David was the favourite of the people and not him. Saul began to show signs of instability that made him dangerous and uncontrollable. Thus there is no longer any of the glory of the Godhead in him, and the writer indicates that the "anointed one" is increasingly losing that ability (Baker, 2025).

### 3.3 David, Saul's Son-in-Law

But, in order to explain the fact that a simple shepherd like David attained the throne, other traditions were also imposed concerning the fact that, in reality, David had already entered into a family alliance with Saul. Thus, it was established that Saul first offered him, according to this account, his eldest daughter Merab as his wife, whom he did not forget, however, had actually been the wife of one Adriel of Meholah (vs 17-19). The same is true of Michal. Saul comes to know that his youngest daughter, Michal, loved David, news that pleased him greatly, so he formulates this thought: "I will give her to him to be a snare to him, and to be against him the hand of the Philistines". Then Saul said to David a second time, "Today you shall be my son-in-law" (v. 21). But then we are told that Saul uses his servants to suggest to David the idea that he could be his son-in-law, which is in contradiction to what was said earlier, and he no longer speaks directly to David about such an important matter, but they are the mediators of this marriage (vs 22-27), David insisting all the time on his condition of poverty and humility (Van Seters, 2009).

<sup>12</sup>To further delegitimise Saul, he is made to engage in possessive behaviour (frantic talking) which at the time of the redactor was strongly disapproved of. It seems that from the 8th century onwards such possessive practices begin to be attacked (Micah 3:5-8, 11; Zechariah 18:2-6). Interestingly Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians praises these ecstatic and glossolalia experiences (1 Cor. 14, 1-5).

Beyond the obvious contradictions, all the accounts converge in the fact that once again David rejects honours and distinctions: if he has come to marry a daughter of Saul it is not because he has desired it, but because Saul (usually out of petty interests) has insisted indefatigably on it. It is very likely that the union with Michal did not take place during Saul's lifetime, but after his death, when David was proclaimed king and took possession, as Saul's inheritance, of the sovereignty of the North Country (II Samuel 3, 13) (Baentsch, 1935), for, as in the case of Merab, it cannot be forgotten that Michal had been a daughter of Saul's daughter, it cannot be forgotten that Michal had had a husband before David, Paltiel son of Laish (II Samuel 3:15)<sup>13</sup> and that in fact, after Saul's death, David claimed Michal for the new king, Ishbaal, Saul's son and successor, apparently as a form of non-aggression pact (Baentsch, 1935).

### 3.4 Michal's Fidelity

The marriage to Michal was probably a marriage of convenience and pain<sup>14</sup>, which, however, was transformed by the chroniclers centuries later into an edifying proof of Michal's love and fidelity to her husband and not to her father Saul. Thus, there is no doubt that Michal is faithful to David beyond her father's position, recreating the legendary episode of Rahab and Joshua's spies (Josh 2:15), which describes how Michal makes her husband escape from Saul's wrath through a window on the other side of the building: "13 Michal took the teraphim, laid him on the bed, wrapped his head in a hairy goatskin, and covered him with the mantle<sup>15</sup>. 14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, 'He is sick. 15 But Saul sent messengers again to see David, saying, 'Bring him here to me on the bed, that I may kill him. 16 When the messengers came in, they found the teraphim on the bed, with the goatskin around his head. 17 Then Saul said to Michal, "Why have you thus deceived me and let my enemy escape, that he may be saved?" Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go, or I will kill you. 18 So David fled and escaped."

<sup>13</sup> Paltiel accompanies her much of the way weeping, in what is one of the few heart-rending testimonies of love that the Bible conveys (II Samuel 3, 14-16).

<sup>14</sup>With this in mind, is it just a coincidence that it is stated that David never had offspring with Michal (II Samuel 6, 23)?

<sup>15</sup>There are also echoes here of Genesis 31 (19:30-35), where it is narrated how Rachel steals her father Laban's teraphim. Although it is possible to suppose that Rachel's story is based on that of Michal, as both episodes refer to rituals in relation to priestesses and sacred idols, by that time already forgotten in the ancient religion of Israel (Lods and Monnier, 1947).

As we shall see, the episode recounted in II Samuel 6 indicates another possible, certainly contrasting, version of this relationship, in terms of discord and conflict (Leonard and Fleckman, 2016).

### 3.5 Saul's Murderous Purposes: the Tragedy of Nob

Within the cycle of this Davidic "exile" from Saul's court, we are told that David, alone and unarmed, goes to the city of Nob, in whose official sanctuary an ephod-oracle was preserved, a sanctuary served by a large priestly body, which according to the Hebrew text was composed of 85 priests (I Samuel 22:18). The head of this priestly corps was Ahimelech, probably the priest who led the ephod in Saul's early campaigns against the Philistines (I Samuel 14:3, 18). *"1 Then David came to Nob, where Ahimelech the priest was, who received David with a start and said to him, 'Why are you alone and no one is coming with you?' '2 David replied to Ahimelech the priest, 'The king has given me a charge and said to me, 'Let no one know the matter for which I have sent you and the order I have given you. I have told my people to wait for me in such a place. 3 Now if you have five loaves of bread at hand, give them to me, or give me what you have. 4 And the priest said unto David, I have not any loaves of bread at hand, but holy bread, provided thy people have abstained from women'<sup>16</sup>. 5 And David said to him, surely it is three days since we have had no women. As always when I go on a journey, the men's parts are in a state of purity, even though it is a profane journey."*

When Saul heard that the priesthood of Nob had given David food and weapons, he interpreted it as an act of rebellion, which the biblical text denounces as a grave error, denouncing the ruthless way in which Saul then acted: *"19 And Saul smote the priestly city of Nob with the edge of the sword: men, women, boys, sucking children, oxen, asses, and sheep were all slain"* (I Samuel 21:1-6). Only one of Ahimelech's sons, Abiathar, was spared the slaughter. He managed to flee with the ephod and was reunited with David, who promised to defend him and later appointed him chief of his priests.

The story is thus revealing and alarmingly indicative of the degree of insanity to which Saul had become blinded by his paranoia and jealousy of David.

<sup>16</sup>This episode seems to indicate the antiquity of the rite of showbread, which was later included in the Priestly Code (Leviticus 24, 5-9). In Hebrew they are called: 'bread of the rows' (Leviticus 24, 6; Exodus 40, 23), or the bread of the face of Yahweh (Exodus 25, 30) (Lods and Monnier, 1947).

The gravity of his behaviour is completed if we take into account that he slaughtered priests, children, babies (the text wants to make this clear), so it was clear that Saul could not remain Yahweh's "anointed" in these circumstances. Note that this episode of Saul's alleged cruelty is in open contradiction with his refusal to apply the anathema to Amalek, which Samuel reproaches him for and which will later be pointed out as the cause of the deity's loss of confidence in him (1 Samuel 15:18-19), preamble also to a supposed "deserved" death at the battle of Gilboa, which is announced to him by Samuel himself through the pythoness of EnDor (1 Samuel 28) (Halpern, 2001).

### 3.6 Jonathan's Friendship with David

Before this journey to Nod, we are informed that David goes to Jonathan, probably in the city of Gibeah, Saul's residence, and with words very similar to those addressed by Jacob to Laban (Genesis 31, 36), asks him why his father wanted to kill him (1 Samuel 20, 1)<sup>17</sup>. Jonathan, who has always presented himself as David's help and support, tells him that this will not happen, because Saul, who hides nothing from him, has not made such intentions known to him. But David insists that he is in grave danger: "there is but a step... between me and death". Jonathan promises to do for him, and so David says: *"5. Tomorrow is the new moon, and I must not sit at table with the king. So let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the third day. 6 If your father notices my absence, you shall say to him, 'David has asked my permission to flee to Bethlehem, his hometown, because all his family will be there for the annual sacrifice'"<sup>18</sup>.*

<sup>17</sup>Document X (Dhorme, 1910) depicts David as taking refuge in Ramoth with Samuel (1 Samuel 19:18-24), but the episode belies the fact that according to 1 Samuel 15:35, Saul had not seen Samuel again. On the other hand, it is not sensible that David, instead of fleeing to the South, where his family was, went to the North.

<sup>18</sup>It is interesting to note the mention, in this ch. 20, of two religious festivals: one celebrated annually at Bethlehem by the clan of David, which seems to have been the family sacrifice par excellence (1:3, 7, 21), to which only the kith and kin of the family were admitted; and the other, the feast of the neomenia or new moon, celebrated in the house of Saul with a feast preceded also by a sacrifice. The latter seems to indicate that the ancient Israelites honoured a lunar deity or perhaps the moon itself. As a non-Yahwistic feast, it does not appear in the earliest religious codes such as the Book of the Covenant, Deuteronomy and the Exodus Decalogues; and it was opposed by the eighth century prophets, Amos (8:5), Hosea (2:11, 13) and Isaiah (1:13, 11). On the other hand, curiously enough, Ezekiel, in establishing the feasts and sacrifices that should be celebrated in his ideal temple, indicates that burnt offerings and libations should be made on the novilunia and on the Sabbaths, days on which the door of the inner court on the east side should be opened, other days it should remain closed (Ezekiel 45, 17; 46, 1, 6). And the Priestly Code also provides for the celebration of burnt offerings and yegetal offerings 'in every new moon in its month, throughout all the months of the year' (Numbers 10, 10; 28, 11-15), thus sanctioning ancient religious rites that were not eradicated (Graves and Patay, 2012).



The story concludes with Saul's final anger at the way his son excuses David: *"Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan and he said to him, 'Ah, son of a prostitute woman!'"*<sup>19</sup> ... 33 *Then Saul threw his spear at him to thrust him through with it, and Jonathan understood that his father was determined to kill David"* (1 Samuel 20:30).

The episode, besides leaving no doubt about Saul's madness, who could have committed murder in a fit of rage, ends by sealing the friendship between Jonathan and David: *"41 When the boy was gone, David went out from behind the rock, bowed on his face to the ground, and prostrated himself three times. Then they kissed and wept for each other, but David wept more. 42 Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, for we have sworn to each other in the name of Yahweh, saying, 'May Yahweh be between us and our descendants forever'"* (Gunn, 1978).

But as if this were not enough, and lest there should be any doubt about the bond of friendship between the two, we have another version of this covenant of friendship, given in chapter 18, which seems to be independent of the others already given: *"18:1 When David had made an end of speaking with Saul, the soul of Jonathan was joined to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2 And Saul kept him from that day forward and would not let him return to his father's house. 3 And Jonathan made a league with David, because he loved him as his own soul: and Jonathan took off the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his armour, and his sword, and his bow, and his girdle, and his shield. And David was successful in all the expeditions to which Saul sent him, and Saul made him chief of the warriors, and he was well regarded by all the people, and even by Saul's servants."*

Baentsch (1935) rightly points out that the fact that Jonathan gave David his weapons is hardly reconcilable with the image we are given of a shepherd boy incapable even of carrying a sword. Likewise, the giving of the mantle by Jonathan has a special symbolic significance, for it is the emblem of royal dignity and the symbol of kingship that is given to David. The giving of this mantle must therefore illustrate the narrator's conviction that Jonathan abdicates his right of succession and appoints David as his heir.

And finally, lest there should be any doubt that Jonathan in his lifetime had already renounced his succession and made David king, we have an account

from him which reads: *"23:15 And David was afraid, because Saul had purposed to take his life. When David was in the wilderness of Ziph in Hororah, 16 Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in Hororah, strengthened his hand in God 17 and said to him, 'Do not be afraid, for the hand of Saul my father will not overtake you. You shall reign over Israel, and I will be your second, and even my father Saul knows that this is so.'" 18 So the two of them made a covenant before Yahweh. And David stayed in Horeshah, and Jonathan went to his home. But in any case and redundantly, in 20:11-17, a further account is added, according to which Jonathan and David would have entered into the same covenant for the fourth time: "And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David. And Yahweh took vengeance on David's enemies"; thus indicating that Jonathan not only legitimises David by his renunciation of the succession, but all his descendants, persigning any claim to the throne on his part or on the part of his own descendants".*

### 3.7 David Spares the Life of Yahweh's Anointed

A sharp contrast thus emerges: despite Saul's obsessive pursuit to kill him, David gave time and again displays of piety, religiosity and spirituality, for not only did he refrain from acting vengefully, but he multiplied again and again episodes of love and companionship, as we have seen, with Saul's family (Pardede, 2024).

This mixture of religious fervour and complete innocence of any desire for overthrow is admirably expressed in the desert episode of Ziph, where Saul arrives with 3,000 men to seize David. David, through his spies, learns of the arrival of his pursuer, arrives by night, when all are asleep, and refuses to let Abishai kill him: *"9 But David said to Abishai, 'Do not kill him, for who will stretch out his hand against Yahweh's anointed and be innocent? 10 As Yahweh lives, Yahweh alone will strike him, whether his day comes and he dies, or whether he goes down to battle and perishes. 11 May Yahweh never let me stretch out my hand against Yahweh's anointed,'" he takes away Saul's spear and water pitcher and from afar rebukes him for being persecuted and for being forced to live in a strange land where he must worship foreign gods"* (1 Samuel 26).

The episode<sup>20</sup> is thus particularly impressive, as it seeks to illustrate and glorify David's perennial

<sup>19</sup>This passage is piously translated as: 'Son of the perverse and rebellious', in the version of Cipriano de Valera (1989).

<sup>20</sup>The story seems to relate to the story of Gideon, when, before attacking the Midianites, he descends by night with a companion into their camp to observe what was going on there (Judges 7:9).

fidelity to the king, which (paradoxically) puts him in an excellent position to be, in any case, the rightful heir to the throne. The story as a whole suggests that David will in no way be a usurper devoid of any legitimate right to appropriate Saul's kingdom; on the contrary, he will be called to succeed Saul by divine dispensation<sup>21</sup>, which is acknowledged and ultimately accepted by Saul himself.

The legend thus favours David, but by extension the whole Davidic dynasty, leaving no doubt as to the magnanimity of its founder, who only reproaches the king for his unjust persecution, without taking revenge (Mckenzie, 2000).

### 3.8 Finally: In Fact, Saul had Already been Deposed and David Anointed

Curiously, if the earlier redactors could have known that a narrative closer in time would finally establish the consensus that in fact Saul had already lost the favour of the Divine, David having been anointed already in his time as a teenage shepherd, they could have been spared all the arguments of piety, oaths and humility we went through above and which in the face of this last point of argumentation are actually superfluous and misplaced. Indeed, as a final point in the process of legitimising the Davidic usurpation and delegitimising Saul, various events were established which indicated the loss of divine favour towards Saul: the episode of Samuel's failure to wait for the sacrifice at Gilgal (1 Sam 13: 8-14), the failure to apply the anathema against the Amalekites and to spare the life of king Agag (1 Samuel 15), a rupture expressed almost crudely in which an anguished Saul grabs Samuel by the skirt of his robe, whereupon it is torn (v. 27-28) (Wright, 2014).

And once again, third stories are introduced in succession, to confirm what has already been said so that there can be no doubt about it. We refer to the famous story of the pythoness of Endor, whereby it is now a dead Samuel, transformed into an *elohim*, who announces to Saul that he and all his descendants will perish without remedy (I Samuel 28). This lack of divine favour towards Saul correlates in turn with the fact that it was eventually ascertained that in reality Samuel, secretly and fearing Saul's reaction (although the accounts show him haughty, arrogant

and contemptuous towards Saul) had already anointed as the new chosen one of the deity the young David (*"of rosy complexion, fair eyes and good looks"*, v.12), the youngest of Isai's sons (1 Samuel 16), a clear gloss on Jacob's preference for his youngest son Benjamin.

The more historical accounts indicate, by contrast, that David never mentioned the high honour that Samuel had conferred on him, but proceeded as if he was completely unaware of the event. There was therefore a pious tendency to establish that this gesture of David's was probably due to his humility and respect for Saul. To this effect, one could cite as an example the episode in which Saul, pursuing David, enters a cave where the latter was hiding with his people, and David does not want to kill him, nor does he allow his people to do so, because *"I will never, he says, stretch out my hand against Yahweh's anointed"* (I Samuel 24:4-7, 10-12) (John, 2024).

### 4. Three Psychological Sketches of a Vital King

David has a son by Bathsheba, whom, according to the account (II Samuel 11), Yahweh puts to death. During the child's agony, David fasts and spends the nights lying on the ground. The child dies and, to everyone's (i.e. the reader's) surprise, David gets up, bathes, changes his clothes, feeds and perfumes himself. When questioned about it, he says: *"22 When the child was alive, I fasted and wept, for I said to myself, 'Who knows, perhaps Yahweh will have mercy on me and bring him back to life! 23 But now that he is dead, why should I fast, and will I be able to bring him back to life? I will go to him, but he will not come back to me"* (II Samuel 12) (Hasson, Mudrik and Tennenbaum, 2025).

This account is (apparently) presented as a successor to an earlier one in which David is rebuked by the prophet Nathan for having ordered the death of Uriah the Hittite, the first husband of Bathsheba, whose mistress David had become (II Samuel 11:12). The two accounts are joined by the writer: *"But this deed committed by David displeased Yahweh"*, by which it was understood that the death of the child was a consequence of the guilt Nathan reproached him with for having ordered Uriah killed, and that this was the point of the account: to show the punishment for guilt in the face of shameful sins (BOSWORTH, 2006, 2011).

But we suggest that this is not the case. By the time we are concerned, David's stature had acquired such stature that this account of his pragmatism in the

<sup>21</sup>Note also that David complains bitterly that if he cannot be fully pious it is because he has been driven out of Yahweh's inheritance to worship foreign gods, which clearly indicates that the divinities of the various peoples were then regarded as particular gods, whose influence and power did not extend beyond the limits of the national territory. This comment was probably also introduced because David's worship of foreign, probably Philistine, divinities was still remembered at the time, which caused shock or confusion to religious piety.

face of the inevitability of the boy's death actually conceals traits of admiration and obeisance rather than censure. In this sense, we suggest that the two concatenated stories were originally independent. One is intended to explain the origin of Solomon (II Samuel, 11), but the other (II Samuel, 12), obeys the purpose of highlighting traits of semi-divine vitality of a character who over the centuries was transformed into someone increasingly vital and full of energy, someone who even despises death (Halpern, 2001).

This, we believe, is the ultimate meaning of the story of II Samuel 12: to underline that David was an extraordinary figure devoted to life and for life. He was by no means a sinner, nor was he subject to any guilt. On the contrary, he embodied the great spirit of his personal life, the spirit of the survival of his people and the spirit that emanates from the greatness of Yahweh<sup>22</sup>.

David's energetic attitude in eating, washing and perfuming himself after the death of the child seems to have a psychological motive, that is, it has to do with the intentionality of suggesting identity and emotional traits to a semi-historical figure, David, at a time when he is also admired, idealised and venerated. It is on the basis of this "figure" (legendary, but at the same time embodying a psychological subject), that a vitalist David, full of energy and determination, is installed in the story. Probably, following Bloom and Rosenberg (1995), it could be thought that this is perhaps one of the first biblical psychological descriptions of a figure turned almost into a literary character, based on the traits of vitality, full existence and the desire for blessing and life (Smith, 1933).

It is by no means accidental that the writer indicates that on the same night that the child dies, David goes to bed with Bathsheba, and it is by no means accidental that Bathsheba immediately becomes pregnant: David's vitality is as powerful and magical as Yahweh's, for he bears witness to it and reflects it. Here David founds the history of Israel, revealing the progenitorial gift of his offspring and the transmission of his heroic vitality (Klein, 2022).

<sup>22</sup>On the other hand, the historical core of the story of David and Bathsheba and the dead son could follow the same logic as that of David and Michal, implying that this 'death' reflected disagreements between the king and his spouse, just as Michal's complaints, shame and sterility with David also implied disagreements that were tried to be concealed or 'erased' over the centuries. Of course, Bathsheba was the mother of Yedidia or Solomon, but it must be pointed out that if Solomon acceded to the throne, it was by a stroke of command and manipulation, not by David's loving design (1 Kings 1:9-27). Nathan's participation was decisive in this regard. A proof of the closeness that Bathsheba had with Nathan is the fact that she named one of the other three sons she had with David, Nathan (1 Chron. 3, 3).

The episode in which David dances in ecstasy and naked when the ark enters Jerusalem, which Michal reproaches him with harshness and bitterness in II Samuel 6, must be understood with the same logic. No doubt these are features of communal religiosity that have become incomprehensible, but the meaning of the text is probably close to what we suggest: the vitality of the ark is transmitted to David, who in turn transmits this vitality to his people, who are sanctified by this ritual of leaping, dancing, shouting, singing and rejoicing. Being Yahweh's anointed is the full expansion of an élan that gives full meaning to Israel's historical and religious destiny. David is indebted to all the people, whom he protects and blesses, and disdains an aristocratic woman like Michal: "21 *Then David said to Michal, 'I have done this before Yahweh, who chose me over your father and over all his house, to be ruler over his people Israel: it is before Yahweh that I have danced. 22 And I shall become even more contemptible and viler in your sight; but before the handmaids of whom you speak, I shall be worthy of honour'*" (II Samuel 6:21-22) (André, 1982).

Finally, we believe we find the same logic in his words to Solomon on his deathbed: "8 *You also have with you Shemaiah the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, who cursed me with fierce curses on the day I came to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by Yahweh: 'I will not kill you with the sword. 9 And now do not let him go unpunished; you are a wise man, and you will know how you must deal with him, to bring down his bloody grey hairs to Sheol'*" (1 Kings 2:5-9)

Imbued with a logic associated with mechanical sociability (Durkheim, 1993), David understands that the word uttered by Shimei implies a real threat to his life and beyond: to the guaranteed survival of his offspring (Halpern, 2001). The image recreated is thus remarkable: in the minute of his death, David instructs his son to guarantee the endless vitality of his offspring, nullifying the curse that hangs over the future and guaranteeing conditions of eternity and survival at any cost (Finkelstein and Silberman, 2003).

## 5. Conclusions: Glory as David's Destiny

According to the writer of ch. 5 of II Samuel, David's three main initiatives, after being recognised as king of all the Israelites, were: to conquer Urusalim, a Canaanite fortress considered impregnable, then held by the Jebusites (vs. 6-9); to build himself a palace with the collaboration of Hiram, Phoenician king of Tyre, in the conquered square, which he made the



capital of his kingdom (vs. 11, 12); and to increase his harem (v.13) (Lods, 1956).

But beyond these concrete facts, the history that grew up around David exalted him as the great monarch of a unified Israel<sup>23</sup>. This unification was simultaneous with a progressive eradication, annihilation or assimilation of the ancient Canaanite peoples. Thus, the key to David's glory also lies in the beginning of Israelite supremacy over the Canaanites and their land, which in turn definitively legitimised the ancient patriarchal and Mosaic promises (Gunn, 1978).

The change of name from Urusalim to Jerusalem marks the success of a war of conquest and a religious symbol that gives legitimacy to Israel's supremacy over the ancient Canaanite peoples and also extends Yahweh's power over the Canaanite divinities. The conquest of Jerusalem was understood to mark not only the first glorious deed of Israel's new king, but also the confirmation of the power of an equally glorious Deity. Jerusalem thus became the religious centre of the land, and the ark of Yahweh was established there<sup>24</sup>.

By his triumphs David increased the prestige and power of his god Yahweh, in whose name and under whose protection he had fought all those happy wars. David's god had thus proved to be stronger than the gods of the neighbouring peoples, and David's success is but a tangible proof of Yahweh's power (Dussaud, 1914).

These unusual events for Israel developed national pride, while cementing the people's confidence in their mighty god Yahweh and, at the same time, redefining their history in the sense of promises fulfilled and longings satisfied. This process became more acute over time, and David's triumphs undoubtedly paralleled Yahweh's triumphs: David acted in the name of Yahweh, and ultimately his feats of conquest could not but signify that Yahweh was now more powerful than other gods or that he towered over them. It came to be understood that David's faithfulness was such that he was nicknamed "*the man after Yahweh's own heart*" (1 Samuel 13:14).

It can thus be seen that as early as the Deuteronomic code (7th century) and especially from Chronicles (3rd century) a number of new accounts and new versions

<sup>23</sup>This 'glory' has not yet been verified in archaeological finds that can be called magnificent (Liverani, 2005; Finkelstein-Silberman, 2003; Silberman-Finkelstein, 2007).

<sup>24</sup>The ark that David brought to Jerusalem was that of Kirjath-Jearim, a Canaanite city of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9, 27). This ark was originally supposed to have been in the sanctuary of Shiloh and was taken by the Philistines in the battle of Aphee (Lods and Monnier, 1947).

of old oral traditions were being added to the Davidic cycle. Historical memory probably retained the trace that if there was an 'anointed one' of Yahweh it was indeed Saul and not David, so it was necessary to modify this historical trace as much as possible and to indicate in every possible way that although this was true, it was no less true that many events took place which showed that Saul was in no way the anointed one of Yahweh. We have here the bundle of stories surrounding David the shepherd, David confronting Goliath, the close friendship with Jonathan, the declarations of Jonathan and Saul that David must be the successor and true anointed of Yahweh, the rupture of Samuel and Saul, Yahweh's abandonment of Saul, Saul's madness, and Samuel's (secret) anointing of David (Botterweck and Ringgren, 2002).

On the other hand, the establishment of the ark at Urusalim signified the progressive idea that the tribal god was now a National God, and that therefore the place of worship could no longer be tribal but National. David's supposed ferocity was not at all a cause for reproach; on the contrary, it demonstrated the ferocity of God himself. If Saul had been anointed by Samuel, it was hardly necessary to establish that David had been anointed by God Himself. Thus, while all kings were scourged and degraded in exilic and post-exilic times, only David (and Solomon) retained their glory and legitimacy (Cohen, 1991).

This rise of David's strength and greatness over the centuries is shown in the account of the census in Israel that he orders, which generates Yahweh's wrath, but surprisingly it is indicated that through the prophet or seer Gad, David is offered a choice of three possible things that Yahweh can do: seven years of famine, flight from enemies, or three days of pestilence (II Samuel 24). In between, Yahweh repents of his actions, stops the angel and David assumes his guilt and builds an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, which he buys (Van Seters, 2009).

The story is surprising. On the one hand, it establishes David's hierarchy: the Deity gives him a choice as to what he sees fit to execute. There is no other account that grants such pre-eminence to an Israelite over Yahweh. On the other hand, it is a touchstone for the figure of the Shepherd: David cares for his flock and, clothed in religious and humanist piety, understands that the plague is unjust to his people, thus assuming his personal responsibility. Finally, the story retrospectively legitimises Israel's dominion over Canaanite territory, which is considered just insofar as it has been done by purchase and not only

by conquest. It should not be ruled out that the model of Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 23) comes from this account and not the other way round. David is thus the model of Abraham and legitimises also the prototype of a "friendly" conquest of the original peoples of Israel, when a conquest by "jerem" "קֶרֶחַ" or anathema (Chavez, 1992), was not possible or advisable.

Thus, David's covenant with Yahweh, announces, as much as it continues and strengthens Israel's covenant with the Deity. The proof of that covenant was not only in David's triumphs, but in the continuity of his dynasty, and in the persistence of a national memory that extolled those moments as those of his greatest glory and dignity. The end of this Davidic glory was unthinkable, as it was conceived as eternal<sup>25</sup> (Von Rad, 1993).

In the course of time, David thus became the prototype of the godly king, the king after Yahweh's own heart, the symbol of Israel, and when misfortunes and calamities once again befell this people, messianic dreams arose that were inextricably linked to the name of David. The Messiah could only be a perfect and blameless descendant of this king, who would definitively subdue all the enemies of Yahweh's chosen people and transform Jerusalem into the centre of the world, to which all the other nations would return. Thus testifies the author of Psalm 89: "3 *I have made a covenant with my chosen ones, I have sworn this oath to David, my servant:* 4 *"I will establish his posterity for ever and establish his throne for ever...36 His posterity shall endure for ever, and his throne shall be established before me as the sun; 37 it shall be established for ever as the moon, the faithful witness which is in the heavens"*.

David thus becomes Yahweh's "anointed" for all eternity, a mythical time that is now understood as a religious and historical time of redemption. The people of Israel will be "the house of David" (Isaiah 7:13); and in the messianic age<sup>26</sup> Yahweh would restore his servant David over his people regenerated by affliction: "*After this the children of Israel shall turn and seek Yahweh their god, and David their king; and they shall come trembling to Yahweh and to his mercy in the latter days*" (Hosea 3:5). "*8 And it shall come to pass in that day. I will break the yoke*

*that is upon his neck, says Yahweh of hosts. And I will break their yoke. And foreigners will no longer be their masters. 9 And the children of Israel shall serve Yahweh their god; And they shall serve David their king, whom I will raise up for them. (Jeremiah, 30). "Thus says Yahweh Yahweh: Behold, I will bring out the children of Israel from among the nations where they have settled. I will gather them from all parts, I will bring them into their own land and make them one nation... and they shall be my people, and I will be their god, and my servant David shall be king over them... my servant David shall be their prince for ever"* (Ezekiel 37:21-25). Thus, was completed a cycle of idealisation, strength and survival unparalleled by any other biblical character (Leonard and Fleckman, 2016).

Whatever his true origin, as shepherd or band leader, David ended up being the perfect symbol of the best alliance between Yahweh and his People: the emotions of joy aroused by his memory in the past were gloriously projected into a future that would end up redeeming messianically the never-lost hopes of glory, power, dignity and strength. From that moment on, the destiny of the People was also the Glory of David.-

## 6. References

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<sup>25</sup>Jeremiah says that just as the stars of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sands of the sea, so Yahweh would multiply the seed of his servant David (Jeremiah 33:20-22).

<sup>26</sup>When the genealogies of Jesus are established (Matt. 1, 1-17; Luke 3, 23-38), care is taken to include David among his ancestors, since it was a generally accepted idea that the Messiah must be a descendant of David. Jesus is often called the Son of David (Wilson, 1972).

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