

THE LITERARY DESIGN OF 1 SAMUEL—1 KINGS 2

The Book of Samuel (in the Hebrew Bible, 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel are a single book) might be better entitled “The Book of David,” since its main character is David, not Samuel. The book tells the story of David’s life, with the purpose of demonstrating that David was a man after God’s heart and the LORD’s rightful choice for Israel’s throne. It is composed of a series of larger sections, each focusing on one era or theme in David’s life. The number of such sections is generally seen as a half dozen or so. Further structural analysis suggests, however, that the book (along with 1 Kings 1:1—2:46) comprises seven well-defined units, each with its own artful internal layout:

- I. Birth and Rule of Samuel (1 Sam. 1--7)
- II. Saul’s Reign, Failure, and Rejection by God (1 Sam. 8--15)
- III. David in Saul’s Court (1 Sam. 16--20)
- IV. David as a Political Fugitive (1 Sam. 21--31)
- V. David as King over Israel and His Kindness to Saul’s Family (2 Sam. 1--8)
- VI. David’s Failure and its Dreadful Consequences (2 Sam. 9--20)
- VII. David’s Final Years and Solomon’s Accession (2 Sam. 21--1 Kings 2)

OVERALL LITERARY STRUCTURE OF 1 SAMUEL 1:1—1 KINGS 2:46

The material in 1 Samuel 1:1—1 Kings 2:46 is primarily arranged in a chronologically linear order (see Figure 0). At the least, the following analysis of the overall structure helps account for the presence and position of a number of repetitions in the material, many of which serve important roles in symmetric designs (e.g., the matched stories of the wickedness of Eli’s sons, the two stories of the Ziphites’ betraying David, the paired stories of David’s sparing Saul’s life).

Particular themes are reinforced by structure. For example, the surprising number of matched stories about David’s kindness to Saul and his family serves to highlight this theme. Apparently one of the book’s purposes was to address the accusation (probably rife during the early years of Solomon’s reign) that David was a traitor and an enemy of Saul and his family. Likewise, the strategically placed stories illustrating how Saul’s own children loved David underscore David’s innocence in Saul’s court. The book serves, in part, as an apology, or defense, seeking to demonstrate that David was indeed a man after God’s heart and Israel’s rightful king.

Of particular interest are the parallel stories of David’s kindness to personal enemies, including Saul, members of Saul’s family and court, and Shimei. The number of such matched stories draws attention to this admirable quality in David’s life. Moreover, the central episode of the entire book is the story of how David was mercifully prevented from taking vengeance upon Nabal. The point is clear: the person after God’s heart does not seek vengeance against personal enemies but entrusts that responsibility to an all-knowing and just God (cf. 2 Sam. 16:12).

OVERALL STRUCTURE OF 1 SAMUEL 1:1—1 KINGS 2:46

- A Samuel succeeds elderly Eli and rules over all Israel (1 Sam. 1—7)
- Hannah's song: my horn, my rock, grave, death, thundered against them from heaven, exalt, armed with strength, darkness, feet, anointed one, He gives the king, humble, proud; God's uniqueness; etc.
 - theme: fall of Eli's priestly line
 - The LORD's plagues and human efforts that stopped them (4:1—6:21)
 - people offer up the two cows pulling the ark's cart, as burnt offerings (after plagues ceased), using wood of cart as fuel, setting ark on rock
- B Saul's failure (1 Sam. 8-15)
- war against King Nahash of Ammon triggered by Nahash's threatened humiliation of Israelites in Transjordan
 - Saul's sins and their uncovering and condemnation by prophet Samuel
 - Saul's response: he makes excuses
- C David's initial rise to popularity in Saul's kingdom (1 Sam. 16—20)
- Saul initially accepts David, then turns against him
 - David is anointed by Samuel; Michal's marriage to David
 - theme: members of Saul's family were kind to David
- X THE LORD REVERSES FORTUNES OF SAUL AND DAVID; SAUL SEEKS TO KILL DAVID BUT IS HIMSELF KILLED (1 Sam. 21—31)**
- C' David's initial rise to power over all Israel (2 Sam. 1—8)
- Saul's kingdom initially opposes David, then accepts him
 - David is anointed by Judah; Michal's remarriage to David
 - theme: David was kind to members of Saul's family
- B' David's failure (2 Sam. 9-20)
- war against King Nahash of Ammon triggered by Nahash's humiliation of David's ambassadors in Transjordan
 - David's sin and its uncovering and condemnation by prophet Nathan
 - David's response: he repents
- A' Solomon succeeds elderly David; David's final years (2 Sam. 21—1 Kings 2)
- David's song (obviously echoing Hannah's): my horn, my rock, grave, death, thundered against them from heaven. exalt, armed with strength, darkness, feet, anointed one, he gives the king, humble, proud; God's uniqueness; etc.
 - themes: fall of Eli's priestly line: Zadok replaces Abiathar, "fulfilling the word Of the LORD had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli" (1 Kings 2:27)
 - LORD's plagues and human efforts that stopped them (2 Sam. 21, 24)—one plague involves place where ark would rest
 - David offers the two oxen pulling the threshing sledge as burnt offerings (after plague ceased), using wood of sledge as fuel (ark will rest on this rock)

Figure 0.

Another important point is underscored by the repetition of matched units focusing on the disastrous sins of Saul and David. Both units recount the sin, God's exposure and condemnation of the sin, and the sin's terrible consequences (Saul lost his kingdom and his life, David's family was torn apart). This repetition emphasizes the importance of Israel's leaders (and people) obeying God and his laws. In addition, the contrasted responses of Saul and David carry the message that when a person sins, he or she should sincerely repent (as David did) and not just give excuses (as Saul did).

Other themes are developed and reinforced by repetition, including the importance of seeking direction from the LORD and the importance of obedience even in the midst of adversity (the matching narratives of David helping the Judean town in the midst of his own dangerous situation).

One of the most important themes in the book is that God will, in the end, right all wrongs, punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous. While the wicked may flourish for a season (Samuel's sons, Saul), God will surely punish them. Conversely, even though righteous people may suffer terribly, God will remain with them during their suffering, protecting and guiding them. This point is emphasized, for example, by the matched narrative about how God enabled David to escape from wicked king Saul. God will surely protect and help the person whose heart is right with him. The book is written to inspire the audience to follow God and obey His laws, for in the end God will reward those who obey and will punish those who turn from Him and flaunt His laws.

I. BIRTH AND RULE OF SAMUEL (1 SAMUEL 1—7)

The first major division of the book of Samuel (Figure 1) opens with the story of Samuel, the prophet who would play a key role in David's rise to power. This unit

BIRTH AND RULE OF SAMUEL (1 Samuel 1--7)

- A Introduction: Samuel's birth and lifelong dedication to the LORD (1:1--2:11)
 - born in Ramah
 - Samuel's family goes up from Ramah to Shiloh from year to year
 - Elkanah went home to Ramah
- B Eli's wicked sons show contempt for the LORD at the tabernacle (2:12-26)
 - Israel's priests disrespect the LORD's tabernacle and the LORD's offerings
- C Prophecy that Eli's sons will be killed on one day (2:27-3:1 a)
 - X SAMUEL'S CALL (3:1b--4:1a)**
- C' Prophecy about Eli's sons comes true: their deaths (4:1b-22)
- B' Travels of the ark; Philistines show respect for the LORD's ark (5:1—7:1)
 - Philistine priests respect the LORD's ark and honor him with offerings
- A' Conclusion: Samuel's victory and lifelong rule over Israel (7:2—17)
 - Samuel lives in Ramah
 - Samuel goes from year to year to various centers, then returns to Ramah
 - Samuel always went home to Ramah

Figure 1.

begins with the narrative of Samuel's birth and ends with the summary of his rule: "So Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life" (7:15-17). This unit is composed of seven chronologically arranged episodes or narrative units, designed to form a symmetry, with Samuel's call at the highlighted center.

Some of the smaller units in 1 Samuel 1--7 exhibit this same structure. For example, the narrative of Samuel's birth is so arranged (Figure 1.1). This narrative's layout underscores the theme of the reversal of fortunes, a theme that dominates the Book of Samuel. Notice that the turning point, Samuel's birth, is placed at the center.

SAMUEL'S BIRTH (1 Samuel 1:1—2:11)

- A Elkanah and his family go yearly from Ramah to Shiloh (1:1-8)
- B Hannah's sad prayer (1:9-11)
 - C Sad conversation between Hannah and Eli (1:1 2-18)
 - X BIRTH OF SAMUEL (1:19-23)**
 - C' Happy conversation between Hannah and Eli (1:24-28)
- B' Hannah's happy prayer (2:1-10)
- A' Elkanah goes home to Ramah, but Samuel remains in Shiloh (2:11)

Figure 1.1.

The next unit, about Eli's wicked sons, has a layout that utilizes the matches to highlight the contrast between Samuel and the wicked sons of Eli (Figure 1.2).

ELI'S WICKED SONS (1 Samuel 2:12-26)

- A Introduction: Eli's sons do not know the LORD (2:12)
- B Wickedness of Eli's sons (2:13-17)
 - C Samuel ministers before the LORD (2:18)
 - X HANNAH HAS MORE CHILDREN (2:19-21b)**
 - C' Samuel grows up before the LORD (2:21c)
- B' Wickedness of Eli's sons (2:22-25)
- A' Conclusion: Samuel grows in favor with the LORD (2:26)

Figure 1.2.

Sometimes, we can detect larger enveloping structures that include and overlap smaller units as those immediately preceding. Typically in the Book of Samuel, the shape of larger narratives conform to two conventional structures. It may be compared to the architecture of a building, one is foundational, the other structural. Consider the literary artistry of 1 Samuel 2:1-36, 1 Samuel 3:1—4:1a, and 1 Samuel 4:1b-18 below.

LITERARY UNITY OF 1 SAMUEL 2:1-36

- A Hannah's oracle, concluding with reference to the LORD's anointed (2:1-10)
- B Samuel ministers before the LORD (2:11)
 - C The sins of Eli's sons (2:12-17)
 - D Samuel ministers before the LORD (2:18-19)
 - X ELI BLESSES SAMUEL'S PARENTS (2:20-21a)**
 - D' Samuel grows in the LORD's presence (2:21b)
 - C' The sins of Eli's sons (2:22-25)
 - B' Samuel grows in the LORD's presence (2:26)
- A' The Man of God's oracle, concluding with reference to the LORD's anointed (2:27-36)

Figure 1.3.

LITERARY UNITY OF 1 SAMUEL 3:1—4:1a

- A Samuel [as a servant] served the LORD before Eli (1a)
- B Absence of divine oracles (1b-c)
- C Eli's fading abilities (2)
 - D The LORD calls Samuel three times in vain (3-9)
 - a Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD (3)
 - b The LORD's first call to Samuel (4-5)
 - c The LORD's second call to Samuel (6)
 - x Samuel had not known the LORD (7)**
 - c' The LORD's third call to Samuel (8)
 - b' Eli's instructions for the LORD's call (9a)
 - a' Samuel lied down in his place (9b)
 - X THE LORD REVEALS HIMSELF TO SAMUEL (10-15)**
 - D' Eli calls Samuel (16-18)
 - a Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision (vv. 15c-16)
 - b What is the word He has said to you? (17a)
 - c Please do not hide [it] from me! (17b)
 - x May God do so to you, and continue so (17c)**
 - c' if you hide from me a single word (17d)
 - b' of all the words that He said to you! (17e)
 - a' Samuel told Eli the vision (v. 18)
 - C' Samuel's growing stature (19a)
 - B' Return of divine oracles (19b-21)
- A' Samuel's word [as prophet] came to all Israel (4:1a)

Figure 1.4.

Beginning with 1 Samuel 4:1b—6:19, the ark of the covenant is the symbol of the presence of God in Israel, and the scenes that follow are a crushing parody of the vitality of that presence in the lives of its people.

THE ARK OF THE LORD PRESENCE (1 SAMUEL 4:1—6:19)

- A Death of some Israelites (4:1b-2)
 - B A military defeat: loss of the ark; sons of Eli die (4:5-11)
 - C Consequences of the ark's loss: Eli dies with a broken neck (4:12-22)
 - C' Consequences of the ark's capture: Dagon "dies" with a broken neck (5:1-12)
 - B' A religious victory: the ark is returned (6:1-18)
- A Death of many Israelites (6:19)

Figure 1.5.

LITERARY UNITY OF 1 SAMUEL 4:1b-18

Introduction: Israel defeated in battle: 4000 killed on the battlefield (1b-2)

- A The people came to the camp, "Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the LORD" (3)
 - B From Shiloh the ark of the LORD who sits on the cherubs, was brought; the sons of Eli were present, mentioned by name (4)
 - C When the ark came into the camp, a great jubilation of all Israel (5)
 - D When the Philistines heard the sound of the jubilation, they said, "What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? (6a)
 - E The Philistines gather that (the ark of) God has come in the camp; fear (6b)
 - F Long speech of the Philistines on their chances on the battlefield (7-9)
 - G Narrator closes with the report on all which had been lost; specifically mentions Hophni, Phinehas and the ark (10-11)
 - A' A man of Benjamin ran out of the battle line and came on that day to Shiloh (12)
 - B' At the roadside in Shiloh, on his seat, sits Eli himself, he is afraid for the ark (13a)
 - C' The man came to report in the city, the whole city shouted (13b)
 - D' Eli heard the noise of the shouting and said, "What does the noise of this commotion mean?" (14a)
 - E' The man hurriedly told Eli (14b)
 - F' Eli's age and blindness (15)
 - G' The messenger gives a full report, repeats verbatim v. 11ab = loss of Hophni, Phinehas and the ark (16-17)

Conclusion: The narrator closes with a report on Eli's dread, death and office (18)

Figure 1.5.1.

II. SAUL'S REIGN, HIS FAILURE, AND HIS REJECTION BY GOD (1 SAMUEL 8--15)

The second major unit in Samuel is the story of the establishment of Saul's kingship and his failure and rejection by God (Figure 2). The story begins with the LORD's choosing Saul to be Israel's king (A), and it closes with the LORD rejecting

Saul as Israel's king (A'). The unit is organized in a positive-to-negative fashion, beginning with the good stories about Saul (culminating in Saul's great victory over the Ammonites), followed by stories about Saul's failures and rejection by God. The symmetric arrangement scheme is designed to highlight the reversal of Saul's fortunes, with the central episode being Samuel's farewell address.

SAUL'S REIGN AND REJECTION BY GOD (1 Samuel 8—15)

- A God chooses Saul when Israel demands a king at Ramah (8:1—10:16)
- Israel comes to Samuel in Ramah
 - God chooses Saul and Samuel declares this choice to Saul
 - Saul protests that he is insignificant and therefore not the right choice (9:21)
 - "as Saul turned to go, God changed his heart" (10:9)
 - Samuel will offer sacrifices at Gilgal (10:8)
 - Saul went no his home in Gibeah (10:9—16)
- B Saul chosen by casting of lots at Mizpah (10:17-27)
- lots work well for Samuel identifying Saul as rightful king
- C Story of war preparations and victory over Ammonites (11:1-13)
- Saul is able to gather a huge army (330,000 soldiers)
 - Saul succeeds in gathering many troops by slaughtering two oxen
 - seven-day wait results in victory
- X SAMUEL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS (11:14—13:1)**
- C' Story of war preparations against Philistines (13:2-15)
- Saul gathers a pathetically small army (only 600 soldiers)
 - Saul fails to keep troops with him by sacrificing (oxen?)
 - seven-day wait results in God's condemnation
- B' Saul's tainted victory at Michmash with the casting of lots (13:16—14:52)
- lots do not work well for Saul, identifying Jonathan as the culprit to be killed when Jonathan is actually the hero
- A' God rejects Saul; Saul's sin in Amalekite war (15:1-35)
- Samuel returns to Ramah never to see Saul again
 - God rejects Saul and Samuel declares this choice to Saul
 - Saul's insignificance in his own eyes (15:17)
 - "as Samuel turned to go, Saul caught hold of..." (15:27)
 - Saul intended to disobey God by offering sacrifices at Gilgal (15:21)
 - Saul went to his home in Gibeah

Figure 2.

In the first half, the eight speeches in chapter 8 constitute a remarkable chiasmus in which the second element in each pair reverses the roles of speaker and addressee:

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- A The people to Samuel (v.5)
 - B Samuel to the Lord (v.6)
 - C The Lord to Samuel (vv.7-9)
 - D Samuel to the people (vv.10-18)
 - D' The people to Samuel (vv.19-20)
 - C' Samuel to the Lord (v.21)
 - B' The Lord to Samuel (v.22a)
 - A' Samuel to the people (v.22b)

Figure 2.1.

At the center of this inversion we see that the opposition between two groups is really between Samuel and the people—not between the people and the LORD as would be expected. The structural opposition supports and confirms a fact that appears during the course of the unfolding dialogue: the LORD, though not liking the request, does not deny it; instead, He simply subverts it.

Chapter twelve divides into four parts, with v. 13 serving as the hinge:

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- A Samuel vindicates his covenant faithfulness before the people as witnessed by the Lord and his newly anointed king (vv.1-5).
 - B Samuel summarizes the righteous acts of the Lord during the periods of the Exodus and the judges to demonstrate divine reign through human leaders (vv.6-12).
 - X SAMUEL OBSERVES THAT THE LORD HAS GRANTED THE PEOPLE'S SELFISH AND APOSTATE DESIRE FOR A KING (V.13).**
 - B' Samuel summarizes the prospect of blessing for covenant obedience and of curse for covenant disobedience, confirming the ominous side of that prospect by a divinely sent miracle (vv.14-19).
 - A' Samuel calls the people, the king, and himself to continued covenant faithfulness (vv.20-25).

Figure 2.2.

Although the story of Saul's decline begins in chapter 13 and is highlighted in chapters 13—15, it continues sporadically to the end of 1 Samuel and is inextricably intertwined with the story of David's rise (16:1—28:2). These chapters (13—15), which constitute a separate unit apart from the preceding and following chapters, focus our attention on Saul's reign after the problem of kingship is resolved in chapters 8—12. Chapter 13 begins with the typical formula for introducing the reign of a southern Israelite king, chapter 15 ends with a final breach between Samuel and Saul, and chapter 16 begins with God's command to Samuel to anoint a son of Jesse of Bethlehem to replace Saul as king. The narrative in 1 Samuel 13—15 thus performs the important function of being a bridge between 1 Samuel 8—12 and 1 Samuel 16ff.

The literary structure of chapters 13—15 is chiasmic:

- A The rebuke of Saul (13:1-15)
- B The struggle against the Philistines (13:16—14:23)
- X THE CURSING OF JONATHAN (14:24-46)**
- B' Further wars of Saul (14:47-52)
- A' The rejection of Saul (15:1-35)

Figure 2.3.

Samuel's initial rebuke of Saul (A) parallels God's final rejection of Saul (A'); and Saul's victory against the Philistines (B) parallels his victories against various enemies, including the Philistines (B'). The hinge of the section is Saul's determination, however reluctant, to execute his firstborn son, Jonathan, heir to the throne (X).

The reversal in the fate of the groups involved is made visible by two series of sentences (13:5-7 and 14:15-23) which have a concentric structure and between which Saul and Jonathan are specially illuminated by their contrast in attitude and behavior.

- A The Philistines to the east of Beth-aven (13:5)
 - B Israel in sore straits (13:6a)
 - C Israel hides in caves and holes (13:6c)
 - D Hebrews flee across the Jordan (13:7a)
 - E Saul's army trembles (13:7c)
- F Climax of the descending line: Saul's little faith, clash with Samuel
 - F' Catalysis of the ascending line: Jonathan, courageous through faith, liquidates the post
- E' The Philistines tremble (14:15; 19-20)
 - D' Other Hebrews run over to Saul (14:21)
 - C' Israel, having hidden, reappears and takes part in the battle (14:22)
 - B' The LORD liberates Israel (14:23a)
 - A' The battle passes Beth-aven (westwards!) (14:23b)

Figure 2.4.

The first paragraph of 14:24b-35 is concentrically arranged:

- A Saul made the people swear an oath using a curse formula (14:24b)
- B "so none of the troops ate any bread" (14:24c)
- X THE TEST: THERE WAS HONEY IN THE FOREST (14:25)**
- B' "but no one put his hand to his mouth (14:26c)
- A' for the people feared the oath (14:26d)

Figure 2.5.

The context of 1 Samuel 14:23b-35 is also concentrically structured:

-
- A Saul sets a taboo (14:24)
 - B army: obedient (14:25-26)
 - C Jonathan, disobedient (unconsciously) (14:27)
 - X SAUL'S OATH (14:28)**
 - C' Jonathan: disobedient (consciously) (14:29-30)
 - B' army: transgression (14:32-33d)
 - A' Saul sets a ritual (14:33e-35)

Figure 2.6.

III. DAVID IN SAUL'S COURT (1 SAMUEL 16—20)

The third unit in Samuel is the story of young David's rise to fame and his life in Saul's court (Figure 3). Like the previous unit, this one is also arranged in a positive-to-negative order. It opens with the positive episodes of David's anointing by Samuel, his victory over Goliath, his popularity in Saul's court, and his friendship with Jonathan. Following the centrally positioned high point, David's fortunes turn, with three stories (that chiasmatically match the first three, to heighten the change in fortune) recounting Saul's murderous jealousy of David and his attempts to kill the young hero. The layout of this unit is similar to the others.

DAVID IN SAUL'S COURT (1 Samuel 16-20)

- A Samuel leaves Ramah to anoint David in Bethlehem. fearing that Saul will kill him (16:1-13)
- B Happy story of David's playing harp for Saul when evil spirits trouble him (16:14-23)
 - outcome: Saul loves David
- C David's victory over Goliath (17:1-58)
 - Goliath's spear intended to be used against David
 - David slays the Philistine giant and keeps his head as a trophy
 - Goliath intends to kill David; his plan fails
 - X DAVID'S SUCCESSES IN SAUL'S COURT (18:1-6)**
 - Jonathan loves David; people are pleased with him
- C' Saul's jealousy over song about David's victory over Goliath (18:7-30)
 - Saul takes his spear and nearly kills David
 - David slays two hundred Philistines and keeps their foreskins as bride-price for Michal
 - Saul intends to kill David through the Philistines; his plan fails
- B' Sad story of David's playing harp for Saul when evil spirits trouble him (19:1-17)
 - outcome: Saul is jealous and sends assassins to kill David; Michal saves him
- A' David flees to Samuel at Ramah, fearing that Saul will kill him; Samuel and Jonathan save David; David leaves Saul's court forever, becoming a fugitive (19:18—20:42)

Figure 3.

The narrative of David and Goliath is one of the most well known and best loved stories of biblical narrative—at least that found in 1 Samuel. Just as Samuel’s anointing of Saul (1 Sam. 10:1) was followed by Saul’s defeat of Nahash and the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:1-11), so also Samuel’s anointing of David (1 Sam. 16:13) was followed by David’s defeat of Goliath and the Philistines (1 Sam. 17). Although lacking time frames, the impression in both instances is that the Israelite victory occurred fairly soon after the anointing and thus demonstrated the courage, determination, and military expertise of the newly anointed leader.

The Philistines and the Israelites are encamped on opposite sides of a valley. The scene may easily be visualized. On each side one man steps to the fore and presents himself as the champion of his army. On the Philistine side this man is Goliath (v. 4), on the Israelite side it is David (v. 40b). Their equipment is described in great detail. The contrast is obvious: vv. 5-7 and 38-40a. Goliath defies Israel (vv. 8-10) and causes terror in Israel’s camp (v. 11). David brings calm and quietness taking away the terror (vv. 31-35) and answers Goliath’s taunt (vv. 36-37).

DAVID AND GOLIATH (1 SAMUEL 17:1-40b)

Introduction: (1-3)

- A Goliath steps forward (4)
 - B Goliath's equipment (5-7)
 - C Goliath's two-part speech (8-10)
 - D Fear in Israel (11)
 - X DAVID FILLS IN THE BREACH (12-31)**
 - D' "Do not be afraid!", thus David (32)
 - C' David's two-part speech (33-37)
 - B' David's equipment (38-40a)
 - A' David steps forward (40b)

Figure 3.1.

The literary center focuses on David’s filling in the breach (vv. 12-31) that interrupt this sequence. It is interesting to point out the strong contrast between the soldiers’ words of resignation (v. 25) and David’s words of indignation (v. 26); the men of Israel call Goliath “this man”, David calls him “this uncircumcised Philistine”; they say that Goliath has come out to “defy Israel”, David says that he has come out to “defy the armies of the living God”; they refer to Goliath’s potential victor as “the man who kills him”, David refers to him as “the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel”.

The focus of 1 Samuel 18:12-30 is upon the lie conjured by King Saul in verse 22, by which he attempts to destroy David. One should note the inversion with heightening that occurs from verses 18 and 26 (David's protest / Saul's invitation that he become his son-in-law) to verses 21 and 23-24. The movement from the extremities toward the center is one of intensification.

SAUL'S TREACHERY (1 SAMUEL 18:12-30)

- A Saul's fear of David because of his success (12-16)
 - The LORD was with David
 - All Israel and Judah loved David
- B Saul's promise of Merab's marriage to David (17ab)
- C Saul's vicarious plan contemplated – let the Philistines kill David (17c)
 - D David's reluctance to be the king's son-in-law (18-19)
 - E Michal's love for David; Saul's approval (20)
 - F Saul's 2nd plan contemplated – let the Philistines kill David (21)
 - X SAUL'S HYPOCRITICAL WORDS TO DAVID (22)**
 - F' Saul's 2nd plan reiterated—let the Philistines kill David (23-24)
 - E' The marriage dowry necessary for David's marriage to Michal (25a)
 - D' David's enthusiasm to be the king's son-in-law (25b-26a)
 - C' Saul's vicarious plan foiled – David and his men strike down 200 Philistines (26b-27b)
- B' Saul gives Michal to David in marriage (27c)
- A' Saul's fear of David because of his success (28-30)
 - Saul knows that the LORD was with David
 - Michal loved David

Figure 3.2.

The literary structure of 1 Samuel 18:20-26a is chiasmic, wherein C/C' continue the tug-of-war concerning whether David will become Saul's son-in-law, with Saul playing the role of the suitor and David the role of the one being courted.

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- a Michael's love for David pleases Saul (v.20)
 - b Saul wants David to fall at the Philistines' hands (v. 21)
 - c Saul sends a message to David (vv. 22-23a)
 - c' David sends a message to Saul (vv. 23b-24)
 - b' Saul wants David to fall at the Philistines' hands (v. 25)
 - a' Becoming the king's son-in-law pleases David (v. 26a)

Figure 3.2.1.

Every time either Merab or Michal appears in this chapter, she is referred to as the "daughter" of Saul (vv. 17, 19-20, 27-28). David's marriage to one or both could not escape the political implications of their being the daughters of the reigning king. If Saul (and Jonathan) should die, David's claim on the throne of Israel would be all the

stronger if he were married to one of its princesses.

Furthermore, Michael's "love" for David (vv. 20, 28) parallels that of Jonathan (vv. 1, 3) and, while doubtless genuine, perhaps carries the same covenantal nuances. What is certain is that these two siblings show more love and loyalty to their father's competitor than to their father. The biblical author further invites the comparison by juxtaposing their narratives in 1 Samuel 18—20.

Saul and David were both "pleased" (vv. 20, 26) at the prospect of Michael's marriage to David, but for different reasons. As Moses had been a "snare" to the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ex. 10:7) in the sense of tripping him up at every turn and keeping him off guard, so also Saul intended that Michal would be a "snare" to David (v. 21) in the sense that Saul's demanded bride-price of a hundred Philistine foreskins would prove to be his undoing (v. 25). David, on the other hand, brought back "two" hundred foreskins (v. 27) and thus—ironically—capitalized on the "second opportunity" (v. 21) that Saul gave him.

Saul, to confirm to David his desires concerning Michael, sent further word through his "attendants" (v. 22). They were to approach David "privately" to make it appear as though they were speaking to him on their own rather than at Saul's command. They stressed their own loyalty to him that matched that of the people as a whole (v. 16).

David's response to them (v. 23), however, once more emphasizes his humble origins (v. 18). He again demonstrates that he "speaks well" (cf. 16:18), this time by using a Hebrew wordplay. In addition David refers to himself as a "poor man", a description that will come back to haunt him in Nathan's parable (2 Sam. 12:1-4).

Saul, however, would not allow David to plead poverty as an excuse to get out of marrying Michal. A mere "hundred Philistine foreskins" would suffice as compensation for her (v. 25). The Hebrew term *mohar* ("bride-price"; elsewhere only in Gen. 34:12; Ex. 22:15[15 MT]) refers to payment made by the groom to the bride's father.

In asking David to kill one hundred Philistines, Saul of course was hoping that David himself would be killed. Saul gave another reason, however, for his demand: that he might "take revenge" on his enemies (v. 25) by decimating them (cf. 14:24; Judg. 15:7; and 16:28 for other examples of avenging oneself on the Philistine enemy). Ironically, David himself has become one of Saul's "enemies" (v. 29; cf. also 19:17; 20:13; 24:4, 19; 25:26, 29).

IV. DAVID AS A POLITICAL FUGITIVE (1 SAMUEL 21—31)

The fourth major unit in Samuel tells the story of David's life as a political fugitive (Figure 4). The unit is ranged in a well-crafted seven-part symmetry. The author has deliberately selected stories that address questions about David's and that demonstrate that David was a man after God's heart, whom God repeatedly protected from Saul's misdirected jealousy. The unit represents the turning point of the book, beginning as it does with King Saul's seeking to kill David and concluding with Saul's death, which opens the way for David to become the new king.

DAVID'S LIFE AS A POLITICAL FUGITIVE (1 Samuel 21—31)

- A David flees; Saul has the LORD's priest Ahimelech and family killed (21:1—22:23)
- David seeks help and inquires of the LORD from the LORD's high priest (cf. 22:15)
 - The LORD's Priest gives hungry David bread from the LORD's own table
 - David is given Goliath's sword which he had used to decapitate the Philistine
 - Israelites begin to gather and join David
 - David is dismissed from the presence of King Achish of Gath
- B David saves the Judean town of Keilah from Philistines (23:1-18)
- C Ziphites betray David; David spares Saul's life (23:19-24:22 [23:19-24:23])
- begins: 'the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Is not David hiding. . . on the hill of Hachilah south of Jeshimon?'
 - David refrains from killing unsuspecting Saul takes a token
 - "Saul recognized David's voice and said, 'Is that your voice, David my son?'" (24:16|24:171); Saul admits guilt and goes home
 - ends: Saul returned home, and David went to the stronghold
- X DEATH OF SAMUEL; DAVID AND ABIGAIL (25:1-44)**
- Abigail's speech about David's future kingship
- C' Ziphites betray David; David spares Saul's life again (26:1-25)
- begins: 'the Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah opposite Jeshimon?'
 - David refrains from killing unsuspecting Saul takes tokens
 - "Saul recognized David's voice and said, 'Is that your voice, David my son?'" (26:17); Saul admits guilt and goes home
 - ends: David went on his way, and Saul returned home
- B' David protects Judean towns, while 'protecting" Philistines (27:1-12)
- A' The LORD has Saul and his sons killed at battle of Gilboa (28:1—31:13)
- Saul unsuccessfully inquires of the LORD (he had killed the LORD's priests); then he inquires of a witch (something the LORD had forbidden); meanwhile, David successfully inquires of the LORD from Abiathar, sole priestly survivor of Saul's slaughter of the priests of Nob (30:7-8)
 - witch gives hungry Saul a feast
 - Saul is decapitated by Philistine swords
 - Israelites of Saul's army scatter; Israelites in Transjordan flee
 - David is dismissed from the presence of King Achish of Gath and Philistines

Figure 4.

This central unit of the Book of Samuel opens with a symmetrically arranged account David's initial escape from Saul framed by episodes involving the priests at Nob, and closes with a surprisingly long, symmetrically arranged account of Saul's death at the battle of Gilboa.

It is curious that the story of Nabal and Abigail falls at the center of this section of Samuel. The story seems an unlikely center, since it does not seem to represent a high point, turning point, or climax of any sort. There are, however, at least two points that support its centrality and importance: (1) it opens with the death of Samuel (25:1), which certainly marks a significant turning point in the book, and (2) some of the most important themes in the entire Book of Samuel are verbalized here in Abigail's remarkable speech: (a) David's refraining from avenging himself with his own hands (25:26, 31), (b) David's innocence of wrongdoing (and the wish that it will continue his whole life; 25:28), (c) God's protection and blessing of David (25:29), and (d) God's intention to make David Israel's king and to make David's dynasty Israel's permanent ruling dynasty (25:28, 31).

1 Samuel 25 is the central panel, and as such, it not only anchors the literary unit but also facilitates the fact that chapters 24 and 26 mirror each other. Beginning with the death of David's friend Samuel, it ends with Saul's giving David's wife Michael to another man and thus considering David as good as dead. It is therefore possible to interpret chapter 25 as marking the low point to David's fortunes. At the same time, however, in the chapter David acquires a wise wife (Abigail) who had successfully persuaded him not to harm a quintessential find (Nabal). Saul, who figures largely in chapters 24 and 26, appears only in the last verse of chapter 25. But it is hard to escape the implication that in chapter 25, Saul, though physically absent, is nonetheless figuratively present in Nabal, his alter ego.

LITERARY STRUCTURE OF 1 SAMUEL 25:1-44

- A Samuel dies (1a)
- B David the fugitive is in the vicinity of the wealthy Nabal and his beautiful wife Abigail (1b-3)
- C Hearing of Nabal's situation and later rebuffed by him, David prepares to avenge the insult (4-13)
- D Abigail prepares food to take to David (14-19)
- X DAVID MEETS ABIGAIL (20-35)**
- D' Abigail returns home to find Nabal gorging himself on food (36-38)
- C' Hearing of Nabal's death, David praises the LORD for having upheld his cause against Nabal (39a)
- B' David the fugitive has taken the beautiful Abigail as his second wife (39b-43)
- A' Saul treats David as though he were dead (44)

Figure 4.1.

EARLY PERIOD OF DAVID'S FUGITIVE LIFE (1 Samuel 21—22)

- A Ahimelech, priest at Nob, helps David, and Doeg the Edomite sees it (21:1-9 [21:2-10])
- B David flees Judah and is spared at Gath (21:10--15 [21:11-16])
 - C David hides near Adullam; family joins him for their safety (22:1)
 - X FOUR HUNDRED FIGHTING MEN JOIN HIM (22:2)**
 - C David takes his family to Moab for safety (22:3-4)
 - B' David returns to Judah; Forest of Hereth (22:5)
- A' Ahimelech, priest at Nob, and all the priestly families at Nob, are betrayed by Doeg the Edomite; Saul has Doeg kill them all (Abiathar escapes) (22:6-23)

Figure 4.2.

1 Samuel 22:6-23 (A') serve the dual function of (1) describing the penultimate fulfillment of the LORD's promised judgment against the priestly house of Eli (see 1 Kgs. 2:26-27) and (2) demonstrating the complete contrast between the rejected king Saul's contempt for a priesthood that he considered to be treacherous and the elected king David's respect for and gratitude toward a priesthood that he considered to be an important mediator of God's will to His anointed.

- a Saul berates his officials (6-8)
 - b Doeg informs on Ahimelech (9-10)
 - x Saul condemns Ahimelech and his fellow priests (11-17)**
 - b' Doeg kills Ahimelech and his fellow priests (18-19)
 - a' David protects Ahimelech's son (20-23)

Figure 4.2.1.

SAUL'S DEATH (1 Samuel 28-31)

- A Introduction: setting for battle (background information) (28:1-4)
- B Prediction of witch of Endor: Saul and sons will die next day (28:5-25)
 - C David returns to Ziklag; families have been captured (29:1—30:6)
 - X DAVID'S VICTORY OVER AMALEKITES (THE LORD PROMISES DAVID VICTORY) (30:7-25)**
 - C' David returns to Ziklag with rescued families (30:26-31)
 - B' Prediction of witch of Endor comes true: Saul and sons are killed (31:1-7)
- A' Conclusion: aftermath of battle: recovery of bodies of Saul and sons (31:8-13)

Figure 4.3.

V. DAVID BECOMES KING OVER ISRAEL AND HIS KINDNESS TO SAUL'S FAMILY (2 SAMUEL 1—8)

The book's fifth major section tells the story of how David became king over all Israel after Saul's death (Figure 5). One of the main themes of this section is the mercy and kindness David showed to members of Saul's family. The section falls into two parts, each organized in a standard seven-part symmetry. The first part recounts David's rule over Judah and his expressions of grief over the deaths of members of Saul's family and court; while the second part tells the story of how David became king over all Israel and surveys the successes of his reign.

DAVID BECOMES KING OVER ISRAEL (2 Samuel 1—8)

Part 1: David becomes king over Judah (2 Sam. 1—4)

- A David kills the man who claims to have killed Saul, Israel's king (1:1-16)
- B David's lament over Saul and Jonathan (1:17-27)
- C David made king of Judah and expresses gratitude to people who properly buried bodies of Saul and Jonathan (2:1-7)
- X RIVALRY BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH; DAVID'S KINGDOM PREVAILS; CLOSED BY LIST OF DAVID'S SONS (2:8—3:5)**
- C' Abner comes to make David Israel's king; he is assassinated without David's approval or knowledge (3:6-27)
- B' David's lament over Abner (3:28-39)
- A' David kills people who killed Saul's son Ish-bosheth, Israel's king (4:1-12)

Part 2: David establishes his rule over all Israel (2 Sam. 5—8)

- A David becomes king over Israel; summary of reign; conquest of Jerusalem (5:1-16)
- B Military victories over Philistines (5:17-25)
- C David "danced before the LORD" in joy as he brings the ark up to Jerusalem (6:1-23)
- X PROMISE OF DAVID'S EVERLASTING DYNASTY (7:1-17)**
- C' David "sat before the LORD" in joy when he prays before the ark, thanking God for the promise (7:18-29)
- B' Military victories over Philistines and others (8:1-14)
- A' Summary of David's reign (8:15-18)

Figure 5.

Second Samuel begins as 1 Samuel ends—with an account of the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan, the heir apparent. But while 1 Samuel 31 describes the events as they actually occurred, 2 Samuel 1:1-16 consists of a report of the events filtered through the not disinterested words of an Amalekite alien. The opening

narrative exhibit the following chiasmic arrangement.

THE LITERARY DESIGN OF 2 SAMUEL 1:1-16

- A David strikes down the Amalekites (1)
- B David questions an Amalekite (2-5)
 - C The Amalekite tells David his story (6-10)
 - C' David and his men react to the Amalekite's story (11-12)
- B' David questions the Amalekite again (13-14)
- A' David strikes down the Amalekite (15-16)

Figure 5.1.

Chapter 3 exhibits an interesting structure. The chapter concludes with a detailed account of the events preceding, including and following the death of Abner. It centers on verse 30, a parenthetical statement that explains why Joab found it necessary to kill his northern counterpart. Various elements in the two halves of the section parallel one another, producing a symmetrical outline.

-
- A Joab kills Abner (22-27)
 - B David protests his innocence of Abner's death (28)
 - C David curses Joab (29)
 - X THE NARRATOR'S PARENTHETICAL STATEMENT (30)**
 - A' David mourns Abner's death (31-35)
 - B' Everyone acknowledges David's innocence (36-37)
 - C' David praises Abner and curses Joab (38-39)

Figure 5.2.

VI. DAVID'S SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (2 SAMUEL 9—20)

The book's sixth major unit (the lengthy account of the court history of David) tells the story of David's sin with Bathsheba and its terrible consequences (Figure 6). The story is introduced by a brief episode about Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9), which provides background information without which the audience will not understand some of the events of the story. The story proper comprises two long sections, each laid out in the standard sevenfold symmetry: the first recounts David's sin, the second traces its consequences. The first is told in the context of David's war against the Ammonites, while the second involves David's war against his own son in Transjordan.

DAVID'S SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (2 Samuel 9—20)

Part 1: David's sin (2 Sam. 9:1—12:31)

Background information: Mephibosheth and Ziba (9:1-13)

- a David intends to favor the survivors in Saul's family (1)
- b David speaks to Saul's servant, Ziba (2-5)
 - x David expresses favor to Mephibosheth (6-8)
- b' David speaks to Saul's servant, Ziba (9-11a)
- a' David implements favor to survivors in Saul's family (11b-13)

- A War with the Ammonites (10:1-19)
 - B David's sin with Bathsheba; she conceives a child (11:1-5)
 - C David covers up his guilt (11:6-27)
 - X GOD UNCOVERS DAVID'S SIN (12:1-12)
 - C' David admits his guilt (12:13-15a)
 - B' Bathsheba's child dies; her next, Solomon, lives (12:15b-25)
- A' Victory over the Ammonites (12:26-31)

Part 2: Consequences of David's sin (2 Sam. 13:1—20:22)

- A Absalom's revolt (13:1—15:16)
 - Joab and wise woman cooperate to help the traitor Absalom
 - B David's flight from Jerusalem (15:17—17:29)
 - Shimei curses David; Abishai urges David to let him kill Shimei; David strongly rebukes Abishai
 - Mephibosheth ignores David's plight; Ziba and Barzillai offer help
 - C David remains at gate of Mahanaim to await news of battle (18:1-5)
 - X ABSALOM IS DEFEATED AND KILLED (18:6-18)
 - C' David at gate of Mahanaim hears news of battle and Absalom's death; he mourns bitterly over Absalom's death (18:19—19:8c [18:19—19:9c])
 - B' David's return to Jerusalem (19:8d-43 [19:9d-44])
 - Shimei begs for mercy; Abishai urges David to let him kill Shimei; David strongly rebukes Abishai
 - Mephibosheth is rebuked; David shows gratitude to Ziba and Barzillai
- A' Sheba's revolt (20:1-22)
 - Joab and wise woman cooperate to help the traitor Absalom
 - end marker: list of members of David's cabinet (20:23-26)
 - a Sheba deserts David (1-2)
 - b David takes steps to foil Sheba (3-7)
 - x Joab kills his rival Amasa (8-13)
 - b' The wise woman of Abel defeats Sheba (14-22a)
 - a' Joab returns to David (22b)

Figure 6.

The echoes between the two parts serve to highlight David's tragedy. For example, both wars take place in Transjordan; but the second is a tragic civil war. In both wars, David stays home, waiting for word from the front lines (which in both stories would be terrible news). In both wars, Joab leads David's troops in victory; the second war unfortunately involves the death of David's own son. In both wars, David waits with anxiety to hear if Joab has carried out his orders regarding a specific warrior: Uriah in the first, Absalom in the second. In the first war David instructs Joab to kill Uriah, the innocent husband of Bathsheba (Joab obeys, to David's satisfaction); in the second war David instructs Joab not to kill Absalom, a person who is truly a traitor (this time Joab disobeys and David is deeply distraught). In both stories David grieves over the loss of his sons (Amnon, Bathsheba's first son, Absalom). In both parts, Israel's leader commits adultery: in the first part, David has intercourse with Uriah's wife; in the second, Absalom sleeps with David's concubines.

Although chapter 11 is a discrete unit in a larger complex consisting of chapters 10—12, references to David, Joab, the Ammonites, Rabbah, and Jerusalem in 11:1 and in 12:26-31 make it like that chapters 11—12 constitute an integral section within that complex.

THE LORD'S DISPLEASURE WITH DAVID (2 SAMUEL 11:1—12:31)

- A David sends Joab to besiege Rabbah (11:1)
- B David sleeps with Bathsheba, who becomes pregnant (11:2-5)
- C David has Uriah killed (11:6-17)
 - D Joab sends David a message (11:18-27a)
 - X THE LORD IS DISPLEASED WITH DAVID (11:27b)**
 - D' The LORD sends David a messenger (12:1-14)
 - C' The LORD strikes David's infant son, who dies (12:15-23)
 - B' David sleeps with Bathsheba, who becomes pregnant (12:24-25)
- A' Joab sends for David to besiege and capture Rabbah (12:26-31)

Figure 6.1.

2 Samuel 13 shows how a narrative that begins with love (vv. 1-2) and ends with hatred (vv. 21-22), centers on an act of violence that turns love into hatred (vv. 14b-15a). That verses 1-22 constitute a pericope with literary integrity is clear. The three personal names, Absalom, Tamar, and Amnon, form an inclusio between verses 1 and 22b. The beginning and end are linked by way of a reversal: Amnon loves at v. 1, he is hated at v. 22.

The narrative's structure is a chiasmus (Figure 6.2). As heir to the throne, Amnon has access to virtually every pleasure and distraction, yet like the couple in the Garden, he craves the beauty that is denied him—his stepsister. His despair is gossamer thin, however, for no sooner is desire satisfied than expectation sours in contempt. Tamar,

by contrast, is left with a lasting desolation, the victim of the prince with the unbridled passion, her life wrecked, her prospects—even as a king’s daughter—hopeless. Two balanced scenes speak of the desolated being hideously counseled: Jonadab feeding on Amnon’s weakness—and no doubt on his own ambition, while Absalom trivializes his sister’s rape even while harboring revenge.

AMNON’S RAPE OF TAMAR (2 SAMUEL 13:1-22)

- A Amnon in love with Tamar (1-2)
- B Intervention of Jonadab (3-5)
- C Tamar’s arrival (6-9a)
 - D Amnon’s servants ordered to leave (9b)
 - E Amnon’s command to Tamar to come to bed with him; her unavailing plea (10-14a)
 - X AMNON’S RAPE OF TAMAR; THE TURNING OF LOVE TO HATRED (14b-15a)**
 - E’ Amnon’s command to Tamar to depart; her unavailing plea (15b-16)
 - D’ Amnon’s servant recalled (17)
 - C’ Tamar’s departure (18-19)
- B’ Intervention of Absalom (20)
- A’ Absalom’s hatred for Amnon (21-22)

Figure 6.2.

The center of the above chiasmus (vv. 14b-15a), focuses on Amnon’s unspeakable violence against his half sister. He had “grabbed” her earlier (v. 11), and he has apparently not released her throughout the entire dreary episode.

Verse 15a includes a micro chiasmus that, when translated literally, underscores the intensity of Amnon’s newly found hatred for Tamar.

- a Then Amnon hated her
- b with a hatred
- c great
- x exceedingly indeed,**
- c’ great
- b’ was the hatred
- a’ with which he hated her.

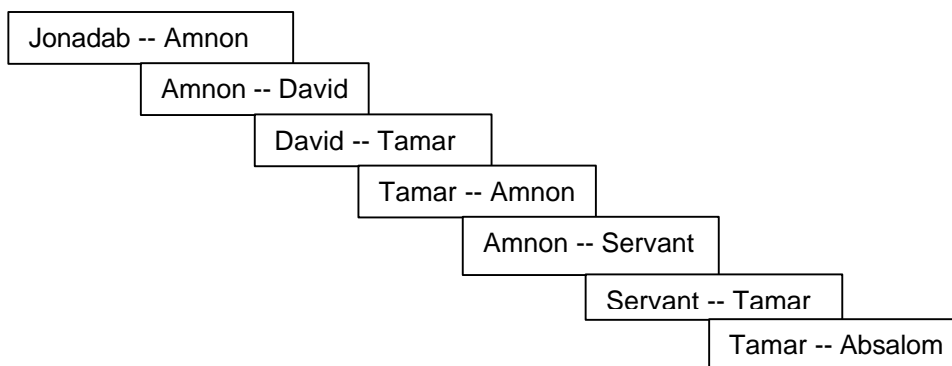
Furthermore, Absalom’s advice to Tamar (v. 20) parallels Jonadab’s counsel to Amnon (vv. 3-5), strengthening the suggestion that Jonadab and Absalom are working in concert. In terms of literary structure, verse 20 is exquisitely ordered:

- a “her brother” (Absalom)
- b “your brother” (Amnon)
- x “my sister” (Tamar)
- b’ “your brother” (Amnon)
- a’ “her brother” (Absalom)

Not only are the substantives concentrically arranged, but also in their possessive suffixes, indicating the 3rd, 2nd, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person respectively. Tamar stands in the center and is, in the first place, surrounded and enclosed by her evil brother, but he is, in turn, surrounded and enclosed by the good brother whose loving “my sister” originates in the center.

Typical of the narrator’s literary art, the shape of the entire story conforms to two conventional structures. Like the architecture of a building, one is foundational, the other structural.

Building with Stepped Scenes, 2 Samuel 13:1-22



The “desire/fulfillment of desire” motif exhibited in chapter 13 continues to chapter 14, which itself contains additional literary clues that lead to the isolation of chapters 13—14 as a separate unit within the Court History of David (chs. 9—20). As a whole, chapter 14 is concerned with Joab’s successful attempt to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem from his self-imposed exile in Geshur. Apart from the incidental reference to Absalom’s daughter, Tamar, in verse 27, Joab and Absalom are the only two people named in the episode. The other two players are “the king” (obviously David, though never referred to by name) and the wise woman from Tekoa.

As a whole, the episode is framed by an *inclusio* formed by the appearance of the name “Absalom” at the end of verses 1 and 33. The only other verse in the episode ending with “Absalom” is verse 21, which thus begins a subsection that mirrors the structure of the entire episode. As for the section constituted by verses 1-20, the verb that begins its first verse and concludes its last verse is “know”, reflecting the fact that Joab understands David’s intentions (v. 1) and David understands Joab’s.

THE SUCCESSFUL PLEA OF THE WIDOW (2 SAMUEL 14:1-20)

- A Joab “knew” (1)
- B Joab instructs the wise woman (2-3)
- C The woman makes a request of the king (4-5a)
- D The woman makes her first appeal (5b-10)
- X THE WOMAN EFFECTIVELY PLEADS FOR HER SON'S LIFE (11)**
- D' The woman makes her second appeal (12-17)
- C' The king makes a request of the woman (18-19a)
- B' The woman admits that Joab has instructed her (19b)
- A' The king “knows” (20)

Figure 6.3.

The center of the chiasmus focuses on the successful plea of the widow for the life of her son, which emboldens her to launch into her second pleas (vv. 12-17). It also contains the first of the woman’s seven references to God (vv. 11, 13, 14, 15, 17 [*bis*], 20).

As noted above, the entire episode of chapter 14 is framed by an *inclusio* formed by the occurrence of “Absalom” at the end of verses 1 and 33, and the subsection consisting of verses 21—33 is bracketed by an *inclusio* formed in the same way (Figure 6.4). But although the name “Absalom” appears prominently in the section (it is absent only from verses 22 and 26), the key player is clearly Joab, who mediates between the king and his son and is eventually the catalyst that brings about their reconciliation. Joab is the central figure in the two exchanges of direct discourse at the beginning and end of the pericope: (1) The king speaks (v. 21), Joab speaks (v. 22), the king speaks (v. 24); (2) Absalom speaks (v. 30), Joab speaks (v. 31), Absalom speaks (v. 32).

LITERARY DESIGN OF 2 SAMUEL 14:21-33

- A The king tells Joab to bring Absalom back (21)
- B The king refuses to grant Absalom a royal audience (22-24)
- C Absalom is described as being handsome (25)
- X ABSALOM PERIODICALLY CUTS HIS HAIR (26)**
- C' Absalom’s daughter is described as being beautiful (27)
- B' Absalom insists on a royal audience (28-32)
- A' The king summons Absalom into his presence (33)

Figure 6.4.

Chapters 15—20 constitute the major part of the longest definable literary section (chs. 13—20; more precisely, 13:1—20:22) of the Court History of David. Unlike chapters 13—14, which exhibit for the most part a “desire/fulfillment of desire” motif, chapters 15—20 prefer a “departure/return” pattern. As such the section lends itself readily to chiasmic analysis (Figure 6.5).

AHITHOPHEL’S ADVICE TO ABSALOM (2 SAMUEL 15—20)

- A Absalom rebels against David (15:1-12)
- B David flees from Jerusalem (15:13-37)
- C David expresses kindness to Ziba (16:1-4)
- D Shimei curses David (16:5-14)
- X AHITHOPHEL OFFERS ADVICE TO ABSALOM (16:15—17:29)**
- D’ Joab’s men kill Absalom (18:1-18)
- C’ David mourns for Absalom (18:19—19:8)
- B’ David returns to Jerusalem (19:9-43)
- A’ Sheba rebels against David (20:1-22)

Figure 6.5.

Each of the above panels may be further analyzed as forming their own chiasmic pattern. For example, D (Shimei curses David, 16:5-14) may be further developed as follows:

- a David approaches Bahurim (5a)
- b Shimei pelts David with stones (5b-6)
- c Shimei curses David (7-8)
- x Abishai desires to cut off Shimei’s head (9)**
- c’ David accepts Shimei’s curses (10-12)
- b’ Shimei pelts David with stones (13)
- a’ David arrives at his destination (14)

Figure 6.5.1.

The account of Sheba’s rebellion against David in 2 Samuel 20:1-22 serves as a counterpoint to the narrative of Absalom’s conspiracy in 2 Samuel 15:1-12. David’s statement to Abishai in verse 6 highlights the comparison between the two episodes and underscores the seriousness of Sheba’s revolt: “Now Sheba son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom did”.

Since verses 1 and 22b both contain the phrases “he sounded the trumpet” and “every man to his tent”, the two verses form an *inclusio* that brackets the literary unit, which may be outlined chiasmically:

- A Sheba deserts David (1-2)
- B David takes steps to foil Sheba (3-7)
- X Joab kills his rival Amasa (8-13)
- B' The wise woman of Abel defeats Sheba (14-22a)
- A' Joab returns to David (22b)

Figure 6.6

VII. DAVID'S FINAL YEARS AND SOLOMON'S ACCESSION (2 SAMUEL 21—1 KINGS 2)

The concluding unit of the Book of Samuel presents the final details of David's reign and the story of Solomon's succession (Figure 7). That this unit includes the first two chapters of 1 Kings is indicated by at least two considerations. First, a grand biography of King David would not likely have ended with the incident of the plague in 2 Samuel 24, since that would have left the audience hanging. The storyteller would certainly have recounted the end of the story, David's death (which we have in 1 Kings 1—2). Second, the final outcome of the stories of a number of where it served to introduce the reign of the first characters introduced in the Book of Samuel (Mephibosheth, Joab, Shimei, Abiathar, Zadok, Benaiah) is not recounted until 1 Kings 1—2. It is only in 1 Kings 1—2 that all the plot lines are resolved. Perhaps, a later scribal or editorial decision moved the story of David's death and Solomon's succession from the end of the Book of Samuel to the beginning of the Book of Kings, where it served to introduce the reign of the first king of that book, Solomon.

DAVID'S FINAL YEARS AND SOLOMON'S ACCESSION (2 Samuel 21—1 Kings 2)

- A Famine caused by Saul's war against Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:1-14)
 - then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land (21:14)
 - B David's heroes (21:15-22)
 - how they defeated great Philistine warriors
 - C David's song of praise to the LORD (22:1-51)
 - C' The LORD's oracle to David (23:1-7)
 - B' David's heroes (23:8-39)
 - including how they defeated Philistines in battle
 - A' Plague caused by David's census (preparing for wrongful war?) (24:1-25)
 - then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land (24:25)
- Conclusion: David's death and Solomon's succession (1 Kings 1:1—2:46)
- the kingdom was firmly established in Solomon's hands (2:46)

Figure 7.

The organization of 2 Samuel 21—1 Kings 2 is unusual. It has seven units (which supports the inclusion of 1 Kings 1—2 in this analysis of the Book of Samuel); but these seven units are not arranged with the typical symmetric scheme. Instead, the first six units form a symmetry, while the seventh unit (1 Kings 1-2) stands alone (and is thus highlighted), exhibiting its own modified chiasmic pattern.

If 1 Samuel 1—7 of 1 Samuel describe the prelude to the beginnings of Israel's monarch, chapters 8—15 its advent, chapters 16—31 its establishment, and chapters 1—20 of 2 Samuel its consolidation under David, then the last four chapters of 2 Samuel—which for all intents and purposes conclude the magisterial history of the judgeship of Samuel, the reign of Saul, and the reign of David—function as an epilogue to the books of Samuel as a whole.

It would be a serious mistake to assume that the epilogue is disinterested in theological reflection or that it is otherwise inferior to the celebrated Court History (chs. 9—20) that immediately precedes it. The narrator's masterful use of prose and poetry alike provide a fitting conclusion to the career of Israel's greatest king. In sum, the final four chapters, far from being a clumsy appendix, offer a highly reflective, theological interpretation of David's whole career adumbrating the messianic hope.

THE LITERARY UNITY OF 2 SAMUEL 21—24

- A The LORD's wrath against Israel (21:1-14)
- B David's heroes (21:15-22)
- C David's song of praise to the LORD (22:1-51)
- C' The LORD's oracle to David (23:1-7)
- B' David's mighty men (23:8-39)
- A' The LORD's wrath against Israel (24:1-25)

Figure 7.1.

It may be claimed that an outline of this sort is more clever than credible. I would simply call attention to the double *inclusio* that links together the first and last sections—an *inclusio* that is all the more impressive since it interlocks the first verse of chapter 21 with the last verse of chapter 24: “a famine for three successive years” (21:1), “three years of famine” (24:13); “God/the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land” (21:14; 24:25).

The LORD's oracle to David (C'; 2 Samuel 23:1-7) is another example where a panel may be further analyzed as having its own chiasmic structure. By nestling the divine description of the ideal king in the middle of the poem, David's “last words” give the LORD the central—and therefore the final—word.

- a David speaks in the third person about himself (231b-e)
- b David speaks in the first person (2-3b)
- x **The LORD speaks (3c-4)**
- b' David speaks in the first person (5)
- a' David speaks in the third person about evil men (6-7)

Figure 7.1.1.

SOLOMON'S ACCESSION (2 Kings 1—2)

- A Adonijah plots to become king (1:1-11)
- B Adonijah's plot foiled; Solomon spares Adonijah (1:12-53)
- C David's charge to Solomon, including instruction to kill Joab and Shimei (2:1-9)
- X **DAVID'S DEATH (2:10-12)**
- A' Adonijah plots again to become king (2:13-22)
- B' Adonijah's plot fails; Solomon puts Adonijah to death (2:23-25)
- C' Solomon puts Joab and Shimei to death and banishes Abiathar (2:26-46)

Figure 7.2.

Previously, the depiction of Israel's leadership was neatly arranged in overlapping administrations of priest, prophet and king (Eli, Samuel, Saul, David). Now the succession is very much in doubt and the shape of the narrative indicates this.

Who shall follow King David? The cost of that discovery will be exorbitant. Four of David's sons will die in the midst of a conflict that touches everything until 2 Kings 2. They are, Amnon, the unnamed son of Bathsheba, Absalom, and Adonijah, each death the direct or indirect result of a single action and its consequences.

Our narrator planted a bombshell earlier in 2 Samuel 7: not only is David the king of God's choice, but David's house will establish a line of kings in perpetuity, a royal household (2 Sam. 7:1-17). Before that, between David's assumption of the two thrones, a list of sons is given (2 Sam. 3:2-5). But there are only six names. To the number conscious audience it is an incomplete list. Who shall be the seventh? For by tradition the seventh name in a list will be a significant figure in the story line. So Boaz, for example, was the seventh in the given line since Perez (Ruth 4:18-21). Yet when a further list of David's sons is given (2 Sam. 5:13-15), its names do not exactly hum with significance; names, in fact, of more concubines and wives (cf. 2 Sam. 5:13). Solomon's name is blandly dropped within the list, fourth among the stream of David's household. Is this near concealment of the heir a sign of the long road ahead for this newly unified nation, of troubles yet to arise within this royal house? An audience steeped in literary awareness would not easily miss such things.