"And David Was Sitting in Jerusalem": The Accounts in Samuel and Chronicles

Yossi Leshem
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Much research has been directed to the variant readings of the Books of Samuel and Kings, on the one hand, and the Books of Chronicles on the other. One of the outstanding variants of this sort is the absence of the story of David and Bathsheba from Chronicles, which includes only a historical framework account.

In the present article, I attempt to show that the presence of the historical framework alone in Chronicles is based on a general tendency in this book to glorify King David. The reason for this tendency is the messianic idea as it developed during the Second Temple Period, the time of the writing of Chronicles, even in the framework account.

The figure of David portrayed in 1 Chronicles is quite different from that portrayed in the Book of Samuel, a point which has been noted by all the commentators who have dealt with Chronicles.[1] The Book of Chronicles, which was composed in the Second Temple Period (centuries later than the Book of Samuel, which was composed during the First Temple Period, close to the time of the events), presents a different historical picture of the Israelite nation, especially with regard to King David. One can discern three primary characteristics of King David in Chronicles which contrast with the image of him in Samuel and Kings: (A) glorification of the figure of David, (B) the complete absence of David's private life and family, and (C) an emphasis on

1 See, *inter alia*, J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. J.S. Black and A. Menzies (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1885), 172–82; G. von Rad, *Das Geschichtsbild des Chronistischen Werkes* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1930), 19–30; A.C. Welch, *The Work of the Chronicler* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 11 and *passim*; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Chronikbücher,* HAT (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1955), 190–95; M.Z. Segal, *ספרי שמואל* (Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sefer, 1956/7, 46; J.M. Grintz, "תיאור חיי דוד בספר שמואל ובספר דה"י", *Bet Mikra* 2 (1956/7): 69–75 (with changes and additions: *idem*, *מוצאי דורות: מחקרים בקדמוניות המקרא וראשית תולדות ישראל וספרותו* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1969), 344–53; J. Botterweck, "Zur Eigenart des chronistischen Davidgeschichte," *Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Viktor Christian* (Vienna: n.p., 1956), 12–31; S. Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*, trans. Anna Barber (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 467–91; Y. Zackovitch, *דוד - מרועה למשיח* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1995), 141–47; Y. Kaufmann, *תולדות האמונה הישראלית*, vol. 4 (Part 8) (Jerusalem/Tel Aviv: Mossad Bialik and Dvir, 1937–1946), 456–57.

David's connection to the founding of the Temple and the establishment of the sacrificial cult.[2]

The first of these characteristics has attracted a good deal of attention in the literature on Chronicles. The medieval commentators already took note of this point, and modern scholarship has continued to explore David's aggrandizement, even supplying a multitude of examples sufficient to prove the point.[3] All the stories that sully David's image, such as the story of his misdeed with Bathsheba, the story of Amnon and Tamar, Absalom's revolt, Sheba ben Bikhri's revolt, the description of David's old age, and others, have been entirely omitted from the Chronicler's description. At the beginning of his life, Samuel depicts David as a king pursued by Saul, and toward the end of his life as pursued by his sons, his wives, and his courtiers; these events too have been omitted from the account in Chronicles. The storyteller of the Book of Chronicles even deletes small details in order not to cast aspersions on David's character.[4]

The question arises, then: did the author of Chronicles depict an ideal character, a character so perfect as to be without a single flaw? Most scholars have responded to this question affirmatively, and there are those who see in this the central thrust of the book.[5] It is my view that one cannot see in all the parallel stories justification for such a claim.

Despite the intention of the author of Chronicles to glorify David, he deletes

---

2 On the time of the two books' composition, see, e.g., S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 535–40; Arno Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1909); E.Y. Kutscher, *הלשון והרקע הלשוני של מגילת ישעיהו השלמה* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1959), 54; A. Bendavid, *חכמים* 1 (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1971), 67–70; S. Japhet, "בפעל בטקסטים המקבילים בספר דברי הי[illegible]פי שרשי", *Leshonenu* 31 (1966/7): 165–79, 261–79, with brief English summaries; A. Hurvitz, *לתולדות: ללשון לשון בין שני בית בימי המקרא לשון* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1972), 15–26. Grintz states that the author of Samuel (and its general editor as well) lived close to the time of David and his grandeur, while Chronicles was composed some decades after Ezra, perhaps at the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes II, around 400 BCE (J.M. Grintz, *מוצאי דורות*, 347–48). See also below, n. 26. On the characteristics of David in Chronicles, see Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 468.

3 One medieval view is that of [illegible]-Rashi to 1 Chr 10:1: "When it relates the story of David, it tells nothing about his baseness but tells only about his might and grandeur, because the book belongs to him and to the kings of Judah."

4 E.g., the story of Michal (2 Sam 6:20–23), and the story of the famine (2 Sam 21:1–6), make mention of the fact that David was nearly beaten by a Philistine (2 Sam 21:15–17).

5 For the entirely positive view of the Chronicler's David, see von Rad, *Das Geschichtsbild des Chronistischen Werkes*, 129; A.M. Brunet, "Le Chroniste et ses sources," *RB* 60 (1953): 505, 508, *RB* 61 (1954): 374–75; G. Wilda, "Das Königsbild des Chronistischen Geschichtswerk." (PhD diss., Bonn. 1959), 45ff.; R. North, "Theology of the Chronicler," *JBL* 82 (1963): 376–81 (with particular reference here to pp. 376–81). North and Brunet make the argument that this is the book's central theme. Zackovitch (717, 142) argues that the removal of the personal dimension

from his sources several passages that display that same tendency. For example, the narrator eliminates the story of David's anointment as king (1 Sam 16:1–12), undoubtedly a very positive tale, as well as David's victory over Goliath (1 Sam 17). The narrator of Chronicles does indeed concentrate on enhancing David's reputation, and he does not deal with his private life or his family. This observation enables us to understand why he eliminates entire passages that could serve his goal of praising David. We can therefore perceive that aggrandizing David should not be regarded as Chronicles' basic and absolute goal.[6]

That goal does not hold absolute sway, but it appears nevertheless to play a large role, as evidenced by the fact that in almost every instance of parallel passages in Samuel and Chronicles, David is described much more positively in Chronicles than in Samuel. The reason for this, although not essential to the present study, will be presented below. At present, though, I will offer one clear example of this tendency and then suggest a more marginal example.

As mentioned above, the tendency of the author of Chronicles is to remove the personal dimension from the book in order to protect David's honor. As part of that painstaking effort, the author of Chronicles removes the tale of David and Bathsheba, told in 2 Samuel, along with its consequences. Yet, while the Bathsheba incident has disappeared, along with all the personal stories about David, a remnant of that tale remains – the frame story.

Most scholars agree that the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel is quite clearly built of two different parts: the frame story (2 Sam 11:1 and 12:26–31) and the tale itself (2 Sam 11:2–12:25).[7] Scholars are divided over the question of whether the two parts were written at the same time by a single author or if

---

in Chronicles serves, among other goals, the tendency toward stringent protection of David's honor.

6 Japhet (*The Ideology of the Book of Chroni* and n. 225), and Zackovitch (717, 142) reach the same conclusion.

7 E.g, Leonhard Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids.* Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament 3/6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926), 80. (Engl. ed., *The Succession to the Throne of David*, trans. Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn [Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982], 79–80); H.P. Smith, *The Books of Samuel.* ICC (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1961), 317; G.P. Ridout, "Prose Compositional Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam 7, 9–10; 1 Kings 1–2)," (PhD diss., Berkeley [Graduate Theological Union], 1971), 152–53; D.M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation.* JSOTSup 6 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), 70; T. Veijola, "Salomon – der Erstgeborene Bathsebas," *Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament,* ed. J.A. Emerton. VTSup 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 230–49 (= "Solomon: Bathsheba's Firstborn," trans. Peter T. Daniels, in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History.* Sources for Biblical and Theological Study Old Testament, ed. G.N. Knoppers and J.G. McConville [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000], 340–57); P.K. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel* (AB) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 285; Y. Kiel, *ספר שמואל*. Da'at Miqra, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1981) 428–30.

they were written at different times by different authors.[8] We will not enter the fray on that point, but will instead examine the text from a literary perspective, inquiring into the goals of the final narrators of Samuel and of Chronicles.

The first verse in the Samuel account (the framework verse, 2 Sam 11:1) presents itself as a non-tendentious description of a standard military campaign, the war against the Ammonites. A more careful examination, however, reveals that this verse is loaded with direct criticism of King David (and according to Perry and Sternberg, suffused with irony).[9]

Those who assigned the cantillation marks (*teʿamim*) to the text divided the verse asymmetrically. The major disjunctive mark (*etnaḥta*) in this verse was placed before the last three words. Thus, the clause "and David was sitting in Jerusalem" is juxtaposed with the entire previous text of the verse: "And it happened at the turn of the year, at the time the kings sally forth, that David sent out Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah [...]." I agree entirely with Perry and Sternberg, and Polak after them, that the reader attempts to compensate for this lack of symmetry and tends to lengthen the duration of his or her reading of the second part of the verse in an attempt to make it equivalent to the duration of reading the longer first part.[10] In doing so, the authors of the cantillation

8 See the full list in n. 5 above. Isaac Bacon even argues that the frame story (the war) of the Book of Samuel is actually later than the war story of Chronicles, and that the author of Samuel found two stories that related to the same event and therefore grafted one story onto another, with the story from Chronicles serving him as the base. See Isaac Bacon, "תיאור חיי דוד בס' שמואל ובס' דבה"י", *Bet Mikra* 1 (1956): 59–80, esp. 78–79 and n. 16 there.

9 Menahem Perry and Meir Sternberg, "The King through Ironic Eyes: Biblical Narrative and the Literary Reading Process," *Poetics Today* 7 (1986): 275–322; on this point particularly 280–83. (Originally published in Hebrew in *Hasifrut* 1 [1968]: 263–93, on this point particularly 267–69.)

10 Frank Polak, *הסיפור במקרא: בחינות בעיצוב ובאמנות*, *Sifriyat Ha-Entsiklopedia Ha-mikra'it* 11 (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1994), 408–9. Polak writes: "In the Bathsheba incident, the narrator is in no hurry. He opens with a tranquil description containing nothing to arouse suspicion. [...] Now it becomes clear what great significance there is to the observation, 'and David was sitting in Jerusalem.'" This description stands in contrast to the observation regarding the king's dispatching activity: "'[he] sent out Joab ... and [they] besieged Rabbah.' While his men were sent to fight in the land of the Ammonites, David stayed behind in Jerusalem and wanted to play around with the wife of one of his officers. One can see from this that the naïve introduction was ironic."

In contrast, Garsiel sees no irony whatsoever in our verse. He writes: "There are some who find in the details of the description intentional irony directed against King David [...], but it appears that there is no ironic intent in this passage. Instead, it serves as a link between the description of the second battle, at Helam (10:15–18), in which David crushed the Aramean reinforcement troops, and the description of the third battle, in which David again sent his army under his command to punish the land of Ammon." (Moshe Garsiel, *שמואל ב'*, *Ensiklopedia Olam Ha-Tanakh* [Jerusalem: Revivim, 1988/9], 102–3). Garsiel lays out his opinion in great length in

marks actually emphasized the second, shorter part of the verse, and directed the reader's attention to it.

Similarly, in the first part of the verse the author emphasized David's active role: "David sent . . . ," as opposed to his passivity as described in the second part: "David was sitting [i.e., remained behind]. . . . "[11] While David is busy in the first part of the verse sending all the men off to war, in the second part he "rests from his intensive work." The short second part of the verse might seem to be unnecessary, since it is clear from the first part that if David sent everyone off to war, he must not be taking part himself. The descriptive detail, "and David was sitting in Jerusalem," could even have been reported as "and/but David did not go out." Thus we should regard the words "and David was sitting in Jerusalem" as a descriptive detail of great significance for the development of the plot, without which we would not fully comprehend the narrator's intention.

This kind of textual hint, whether communicated later through the use of cantillation, or more directly during early redaction, occurs often in Scripture. In the story of Samson in Judges 15, for example, the narrator points out in the first verse that the events took place "in the days of the wheat harvest." This detail might seem to make no difference at all to the plot development, but later

---

his article "הסיפור על דוד ובת שבע בספר שמואל - אופיו ומגמתו", *Bet Mikra* 17:2, no. 49 (1971/2): 162–82. Here, Garsiel argues against Perry and Sternberg's contention that, if the author intended that verse to tell the story ironically with David as its target, he would have written explicitly, "and *King* David was sitting in Jerusalem." He would not have set the end of the verse, about David remaining in Jerusalem, at such a distance from its beginning, where he notes that it was the season when kings regularly went out to war. I do not concur at all with Garsiel's arguments. First, Joab's position as David's military commander is also absent from the story. Second, the title "king" would neither add to nor detract from the criticism leveled against David in this verse, and, of course, everyone knows he is the king. The fact that the narrator saw fit to point out that this was the season for military campaigns is not arbitrary; descriptive detail in a dramatic story is of great importance for understanding the story. Furthermore, the narrator presented the detail about David staying in Jerusalem as a balance to all that came before in the verse, which is the reason for the great distance in the narration between the kings' "sallying forth" to do battle and (King) David's choice to stay behind in Jerusalem. See also my argument below regarding the parallel verse in Chronicles.

11 While the verb here translated as "sit" is not a grammatical passive, it is an intransitive verb, unlike all the other verbs in the verse, which are transitive. McCarter renders this clause as "but David himself remained in Jerusalem" (P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel,* 277), and Kiel comments, "while at the same time David remained sitting in Jerusalem, since he apparently believed that the outcome of the war had already been determined, and mention of this fact implies some criticism of David, who departed this time from the practice of Israelite leaders, who would lead the people out to battle and lead them back from battle" (Yehudah Kiel, *ספר שמואל*, vol. 2 (II Samuel). Da'at Miqra [Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1981], 413). Both are already anticipated by Malbim (Meir Leibush Wisse, 1809–1879), who writes, "by the king's staying at home and not going to fight God's war, [the opportunity for] this incident came into his hands."

in the story we readers come to understand that this descriptive detail is very important to understanding the story. Samson's revenge against the Philistines is terribly harsh. Burning the Philistines' fields during the wheat harvest leaves them bereft of grain for an entire year. Zakovitch writes, "The narrator . . . adds a bit of chronological data about the timing of Samson's arrival at his wife's home: 'in the days of the wheat harvest.' This detail should draw our attention, because the biblical narrator is not in the habit of stuffing his readers with extraneous temporal descriptions. When he mentions the time something occurred, he can be assumed to be telling us something important to the plot of the story. . . . Mentioning the season will come to be understood in verse 4, when Samson sets a fire in the Philistines' standing grain and destroys all their harvest. As Rabbi Joseph Kara says, 'Therefore it was necessary to mention here the days of the wheat harvest – since in the same chapter he set torches on fire and sent fire into the Philistines' standing grain.'"[12]

Returning to our story in Kings, the first framework verse also begins with a marginal descriptive detail which seems to have no role in advancing the plot: "at the turn of the year, at the time the kings sally forth." Without entering into the debate over which part of the year is being described, we can say that the choice of words – the indication that this is the time of year when kings regularly go out to make war – demands our attention.[13] This is the time when kings are indeed accustomed to going out to battle, but King David remains "sitting" in Jerusalem, going nowhere. And not only that; King David has sent everyone else off to war. If the narrator did not have a clear intent, he could simply have written, for example, that "David sent out all the warriors," which would, of course, have included Uriah. It was important to the narrator to show how David "cleansed" Jerusalem of all adult male fighters – "Joab and his servants with him and all Israel" – thus emphasizing his total aloneness as

12 Yair Zakovitch, *חיי שמשון (שופטים טז-יג): ניתוח ספרותי - ביקרותי* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1982), 122–23.

13 Scholars are divided over how best to understand the phrase translated here "at the turn of the year." M.Z. Segal, for example, thinks this refers to the spring (Segal, *ספרי שמואל* , 298). Kiel, in contrast, understands the adverbial phrase to mean that a full year had passed since the end of the previous incident (Kiel, *ספר שמואל*, 413). Smith contends that it means "a year later" (Smith, *The Books of Samuel*, ad loc.). McCarter avers that the phrase usually refers to springtime, but that here – with the definite article applied to kings (*ha-melakhim*) indicating that the phrase refers to Aramean kings mentioned in the previous chapter – the adverbial phrase indicates that a year has passed since the previous incident (McCarter, *II Samuel*, ad loc.), and Garsiel agrees with him (Garsiel, *II Samuel*, ad loc.). The medieval commentators, too, were divided in their understanding of this phrase. While Rashi and Gersonides argued that it refers to a time when the land is replete with standing grain and horses are brought out to pasture, David Kimḥi and Joseph Kara wrote that the reference is to the end of the year, which is when, to quote Kimḥi, the sun "returns to that point" (apparently referring to the royal warfare season).

the only warrior remaining in Jerusalem. And what will the king do now in a city empty of all adult men? Be bored to death? David spends his time in total idleness, sleeping through the daylight hours ("And it happened at eventide that David rose from his bed," v. 2), getting up only as the night approached, walking here and there on the roof of the palace with nothing to do.

Garsiel sees no criticism of David in this verse, because, as he sees it, the language of the text does not enable us to determine whether it was standard practice for David to take a mid-day rest or whether this was a one-time occurrence due to the oppressive summer heat. It seems to me that Garsiel expects the narrator to come out clearly here with a statement that David sinned, but that is not the way the biblical narrator tells a dramatic tale. Many times in the Bible, a narrator does not prejudge and express his opinion about a character's actions or feelings, but instead presents things in an apparently neutral fashion; we the readers are expected to draw the conclusion ourselves.

As an example, consider the story at the beginning of the Book of Ruth (1:1–5). Here we read about the history of a family over the course of a decade, a family that, during those years, absorbs more than a few shocks. The family moves from the land of Israel to Moab due to famine, the father dies there, the sons are married to two Moabite women, and those sons, too, die. During all this upheaval, the narrator refrains from sharing with the reader any of the feelings experienced by Naomi, who remains alone in a strange land. If we compare two verses, though – verses 3 and 5 – we will gain an accurate understanding of Naomi's inner life: in verse 3 we read, "and she was left with her two sons," while in verse 5 we find, "the woman was left without her two children and without her husband." There are five differences between these two apparently very similar clauses: (1) at their death, the "sons" become "children," although they are already married; (2) in verse 3 the woman is left *with* her two sons, while in verse 5 she is left *without* her two children; (3) in verse 3 Naomi is called "she," whereas in verse 5 she becomes "the woman" – and with neither husband nor children this woman is left with no hope, because her primary tasks as a woman have been erased; (4) the order in which the dead are listed in verse 5 is not chronological (the children are listed before the husband) because the author wanted to make us aware of Naomi's plight; (5) the use of a higher-order disjunctive cantillation mark in verse 5 (*zaqef qaton* instead of *tippeḥa* as in verse 3) points out Naomi's separation from all her loved ones. The author's intent in these verses is unquestionably to show us Naomi's psychological distress. While in verse 3 hope still remained, by verse 5 distress has overcome Naomi and she remains completely alone. Instead of stating explicitly that Nomi was crying in despair in verse 5, the narrator takes a path like that in 2 Samuel 1, allowing the reader to discern the author's intent to communicate Naomi's psychological state by comparison. Similarly in our story, the reader is expected

to understand the narrator's critical opinion of David from the frame story. In Garsiel's opinion, on the other hand, it is only with Uriah's words (verse 11) that the narrator begins his criticism of David. I also take issue with scholarly opinion that David arose after an afternoon sleep as opposed to after a night's sleep, since the text can also be understood as David "taking advantage" of all hours for sleep, since he has nothing better to do.[14]

Of course, there is irony here, and the distance from here to explicit criticism of the king is short. The same harsh criticism of the king expressed in Nathan the prophet's words, "You are that man!" (2 Sam 12:7), is already to be found in Uriah's words in the previous chapter. In the entire scope of chapter 11, the narrator places only one sentence in Uriah's mouth. After David asks him (11:7) "how Joab fared and how the troops fared and how the fighting fared," Uriah doesn't bother to answer and doesn't go down to his own home as the king had commanded. But he does respond to the king's question (11:1), "Why haven't you gone down to your house?," with these words: "The Ark and Israel and Judah are located at Succoth [while you, O king, remain "sitting" here in Jerusalem] and my master Joab [– he is my master, not you –] and Your Majesty's men are camped [literally, "sitting"] in the open [but you sit in your huge palace]; how can I [who am one of those warriors] go home . . . and sleep with my wife? [Maybe you can do such things, but I cannot.]" Uriah's use of the verb "sit" to describe the situation of the warriors remaining encamped at Succoth stands in pointed contrast to David's own situation, far from danger in his comfortable abode. It should be noted that all David asked Uriah was why he had not gone down to his house. He does not mention Uriah's wife, but Uriah does (and in a sexual context, at that), as though he wanted to say to David, "I know what went on here in my absence."

Criticism of David grows progressively stronger in the story of David and Bathsheba in Samuel. If in the first verse that criticism is still under the surface – although nonetheless perceptible through the descriptive details – by the time we read Uriah's words the criticism is no longer hidden, and in Nathan's speech it is explicit. The narrator's opinion about David's relations with Bathsheba are completely clear, and he makes no effort to hide his opinion from the reader. In order to present his unequivocal stance toward David, he forges a perfect link between the frame story and the incident itself. I cannot rule out the possibility that the narrator had the story of David and Bathsheba at hand and composed an appropriate frame story for it about the war with the Ammonites, matching the critical tone of the story in the frame story that he added. Alternatively, even if the narrator did not write the frame story himself but received it alongside

14 Garsiel, "הסיפור על דוד ובת שבע בספר שמואל - אופיו ומגמתו," 170–71.

the tale of David and Bathsheba, he wisely presented it in a form that displays the same measure of criticism found in the body of the tale.

The story of David and Bethsheba is absent from Chronicles. The frame story, however, is alive and well there – although it appears in Chronicles with changes that seem at first to be minor. Here too (1 Chr 20:1), the major disjunctive cantillation mark (*etnaḥta*) in the verse appears near its end, leaving the latter part of the verse with just this short clause of four Hebrew words: "Yoav besieged Rabbah and destroyed it." The earlier part of the verse (the first of two sections after its major bifurcation marked by the *etnaḥta*) is very long, but the asymmetrical division here has no apparent goal; the criticism of David has entirely vanished.[15] Here, too, the verse opens with an exposition of the time of the war, but Joab is the single figure in the verse. While David was active in this part of the verse in Samuel, Joab gets the credit in Chronicles: "Joab led out the army force and ravaged the land of Ammon, and then besieged Rabbah. . . ."[16] All the characters sent by David in the Book of Samuel disappear and are reduced in Chronicles to Joab alone, who is here doing as he himself sees fit, without having been dispatched by David. The words "and David was sitting in Jerusalem" in Chronicles are left without a critical context, because they come before the *etnaḥta* (together with Joab's actions) and not after it.

The continuation of the story in Chronicles (verses 2–4) is a nearly exact copy of the verses in 2 Samuel (12:30–31), and thus of the story of David and Bathsheba; there remains only the frame story from the Book of Samuel. The frame story appears in Chronicles with changes at the beginning (20:1) since there was no need for the criticism of David, but at the end (20:2–4) it is cited word for word.

The example at hand amply demonstrates one of the primary tendencies of Chronicles. While many positive stories from Samuel, such at David's victory over Goliath (1 Sam 17), his anointment as king at his father's home by Samuel (1 Sam 16), and others, are nowhere to be found in Chronicles, the author of Chronicles has no interest in personal stories about David.[17] If, however, the author of Chronicles does not want to simply skip over a story in Samuel that contains a negative tone regarding David, the author does everything in his power to erase that negative tone. Thus the stories dear to the author of Chronicles remain in the book, displaying a positive attitude toward King David.[18]

---

15 In fact, one cannot find in all of Chronicles a single story critical of David.

16 "David sent out . . ." In 1 Sam 20:1 David is the subject of the verse, while Joab is its object. David is mentioned in the parallel verse in Chronicles only in the context of his sitting in Jerusalem, and all other actions are Joab's.

17 Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 467–69.

18 This is also how Japhet sees it. She did not distinguish between stories that are completely absent, such as the incident of Amnon and Tamar, Absalom's rebellion, the description of David's old

To demonstrate this tendency, and to show that the author of Chronicles takes the same approach in other places as well, let us examine another example: in 2 Samuel 5:17–25 we find a description of wars between the Israelites (led by King David) and the Philistines.[19] As is typical for the author of Chronicles, his account of these wars follows the account of the author of Samuel almost word for word (1 Chr 14:8–16).

In 2 Samuel 5:21 we read, "They abandoned their idols (עֲצַבֵּיהֶם) there, and David and his men bore them off," which ends this account of war with the Philistines. In the parallel verse in Chronicles (1 Chr 14:12) we find, "They abandoned their gods (אֱלֹהֵיהֶם) there, and David ordered these to be burned in a fire."[20] The verses are very similar, but a difference in one detail reverses the meaning that the two narrators seek to emphasize. While in Samuel, David and his men carry off the Philistines' idols (עֲצַבִּים) in the victory march, in Chronicles the idols are burned and do not play a role in that march.[21] Not only that, but the burning of the idols is done in Chronicles on David's orders ("And David said…"), while in Samuel David does not speak but only acts. The narrator of Chronicles could not imagine that David took the Philistine idols for his own use, so he emends the verse, writing that David gave an order to burn the idols in a fire.[22]

The figure of David in the Book of Samuel is far from perfect. Here, David is

---

age, and so on (Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 469), and the story of David and Bathsheba, of which a remnant is left in Chronicles – the frame story. She does, however, comment on the fact that the author of Chronicles emphasizes matters of state, including the war stories, and she cites the story of the war against the Ammonites as a classic example of that (Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 469, especially n. 66). On flashbacks to David's past in Chronicles, see Zackovitch, זוז, 142–43.

19 On this example see Zackovitch, זוז, 145–46. See also Bacon, who argues that the Chronicles version is the original one, and that the clause at the end of 2 Sam 5:21, "וַיִּשָּׂאֵם דָּוִד וְאַנְשָׁיו" (usually understood as "and David and his men bore them off"), is of quite doubtful meaning (Bacon, "תיאור חיי דוד בס' שמואל ובס' דבה"י", 66–68). Thus, in Bacon's opinion, the version in Samuel should be regarded as a corruption of the version that appears in Chronicles.

20 On the particular liberalism found in Chronicles that prevents the author from calling the gods of the other peoples by such derogatory names as בשת ("shame"), אליל ("false god"), or עצבים ("idols"), see Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 48–49, especially n. 125.

21 On David's place in the establishment of the Temple and the inauguration of the sacrificial cult in Chronicles, see Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 471. And if David is a proper Israelite, it is inconceivable that David would have decided to take the Philistine idols with him.

22 There are two possibilities for explaining the taking of the Philistine idols after the war: either, as Segal argues, this is in keeping with the Assyrian and Roman practice of including them in a post-battle victory parade (Segal, *ספרי שמואל*, 267; at the end of this explanation he also cites the reason for the difference in Chronicles: to disabuse the reader of the notion that David enjoyed idolatry), or, indeed to worship those idols. In any case, whatever the reason, in the Book of Samuel David is not presented in a positive light, to say the least.

an Israelite king who regards the Philistine idols as legitimate gods which one might make use of. In Chronicles, on the other hand, David burns the idols (it is he who undertakes their immolation: "…and David ordered these to be burned"), which turns him into a positive figure. According to Deut 7:5, the people of Israel (and their king all the more so) are required to destroy the non-Israelites' idols and burn them.[23] I have no doubt that the difference between the figure of David in the Book of Samuel and his figure in Chronicles stems from and is related to the time of these two books' composition.[24] The author of the Samuel account, composing his work relatively soon after the lives of the protagonists, was unaffected by the later idealization of David reflected in the account in Chronicles. And although I wrote above that the reason for the difference between the images of David in Samuel and Chronicles was is not central to the present study, we cannot pass over it in silence.

The new idea that flourished in the time of the Second Temple was the idea of the Messiah – an idea which is directly connected to the Davidic dynasty. It is difficult to imagine a Second Temple author who would write the story of David and Bathsheba, for example, as it is told in the Book of Samuel. The perspective of the Book of Samuel, which was written close to the time of the events it portrays, had not yet passed through the filter of the messianic idea. It

23 Deut 7:5: "…their altars you shall smash and their cultic pillars you shall shatter and their sacred trees you shall chop down and their images you shall burn in fire."

24 The words "and David was sitting in Jerusalem" also afford us a glimpse of the distance between the two books regarding the time of their composition. The word "David" in the Book of Samuel is spelled "דָּוִד," while in Chronicles it appears in the *plene* spelling, with an additional *mater lectionis*: "דָּוִיד." It is widely acknowledged that such *plene* spellings became more common over the course of biblical literature, based mainly on Hebrew inscriptions from the First Temple era found in the land of Israel. One illustrative example: the word אִישׁ occurs in the Hebrew Bible over 1,000 times, and in every instance it appears in *scriptio plena*, including the "י." In contrast to that, in the Hebrew inscriptions from the First Temple Period, the word appears in *scriptio defectiva*, without "י." Thus, for example, in the Siloam inscription from the 7th century BCE, in lines 2–3 the word appears twice in *scriptio defectiva*: "אש אל רעו" ("one to another") and "אש קרא את רעו" (one calling to the other). In the Mesha stone as well, written in the eighth century BCE, in line 10 we read "ואש גד ישב בארץ עטרת" ("And the men of Gad had dwelt in the land of Ataroth"). In the Lachish letters, however, written at the time of the destruction of Judah in the 6th century BCE, in letter 3, lines 9–10, we find "איש לקרא לי" ("a person to read to me") with the noun in *scriptio plena*. On the expansion of Hebrew orthography there is a vast literature. See, *inter alia*, F.M. Cross and D.N. Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1952); D.N. Freedman, "The Orthography of the Arad Ostraca," *IEJ* 19 (1969): 52–56; G.B.A. Sarfati, "הכתובות העבריות מימי בית הראשון - סקירה והערות לשוניות" in *מחקרים ביהדות: ספר היובל לדוד קוטלר*, ed. Alfredo Mordechai Rabello (Tel Aviv: Am HaSefer, 1975), 104–22; Z. Zevit, *Matres Lectionis in Ancient Hebrew Epigraphs* (Cambridge, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1980). On the orthography of David's name, see Hurvitz, *בין לשון ללשון*, 18, n. 13.

is only natural that the author of Samuel would relate events in chronological order, and also write about events that were not complimentary to David. It is entirely evident that the goal of the author(s) of Samuel was not to present the reader with an ideal king, but rather with a flesh-and-blood king with both his finer characteristics and his faults.

Sara Japhet has already shown that the concept of the Messiah is hardly mentioned at all in Chronicles.[25] Yet, even if we accept Japhet's main points regarding eschatology and its connection with Chronicles – and I do tend toward accepting them – no one doubts that the messianic idea took root in the time of the Second Temple. Even if the author of Chronicles did not intend to present the messianic idea at the center of his book, he nonetheless wrote during a period when the messianic idea was the common currency of the people, and it would be therefore highly unlikely that he would portray David, from whose house the Messiah was to emerge, as he was portrayed in the less idealizing Book of Samuel. It seems more likely that when the narrator of Chronicles chose to tell stories from Samuel which he found critical of David, he excised the criticism from the story in order to allow David to appear as a positive figure This understanding resolves the difficulty that stems from the choice of stories by the author of Chronicles. The personal figure of David is not a topic that the author of Chronicles chose to address, which is why many positive stories about David's personal life in the Book of Samuel did not make their way into Chronicles. And the stories that relate to the Israelite community that did make their way into Chronicles are told without any negative references to David. Thus we can understand why the story of David and Bathsheba, which concerns David's personal life, is absent from Chronicles and why the

25 Japhet devotes an entire chapter of her book to eschatology, in which she lays out in comprehensive fashion the range of opinions about eschatology's connection to Chronicles. (Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 493–504.) At one end, Japhet cites an impressive list of scholars who argue that the advent of David and the messianic kingdom at the end of days is the focal point toward which the Book of Chronicles is aimed. These include Hänel, von Rad, Brunet, Kaufmann, and others. At the other, she cites a wide range of scholars who argue that Chronicles is devoid of any eschatological character, not only quantitatively but with regard to the book's character and aims. Among these are Eichrodt, Rudolph, Caquot, Liver, and others. Japhet agrees unequivocally with the latter group. Even if we accept the latter group's position, one cannot ignore the fact that during the Second Temple era the idea of the Messiah existed, and undoubtedly one could not tell such an awful story about David, from whose house the Messiah would come. Even if we accept that the frame story is the original story in Chronicles, it is self-evident that it bears no criticism of David.

frame account introducing that tale – which is a national story – remains in Chronicles, but without any critical dimension whatsoever.

Many thanks are due to two anonymous readers for several insightful suggestions incorporated in this study.