THE LEADERSHIP OF SAUL

by

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PART TWO

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Abstract

In this thesis I shall consider the account of Saul's leadership of Israel as it is portrayed in the biblical text of 1 Samuel. Traditional accounts of Saul's leadership, both biblical and scholarly, have often made the paradoxical claim that Saul is at once both the first king and yet also a failed king.

I shall argue that by adopting an alternative framework it is possible to propose an interpretation of Saul that does not fall into this paradox, one that sheds new light on the nature of the biblical character. In particular, I shall argue that Saul should be conceived, not as a failed king, but rather as a successful chief. In order to do this I shall draw upon the political anthropology of Pierre Clastres. I shall also criticize previous attempts to characterize Saul as a chief by drawing attention to the inadequacy of the conceptions of chief employed.

In Part One I shall discuss the previous accounts of Saul, questions concerning the judgements inherent within the biblical text, and the perspectival nature of those judgements. I shall then consider previous attempts to present Saul as a chief and introduce the work of Pierre Clastres.

In Part Two I shall turn to consider the biblical account itself. I shall examine the accounts of the call for a 'king', the appointment of Saul as 'king', and Saul's 'reign' as 'king'. In each case I shall argue that although Saul is explicitly *proclaimed* a 'king', a careful reading of the biblical narrative shows that Saul *functioned* as a chief. I suggest that this functional analysis of Saul as chief enables one to shed light on a number of aspects of this biblical character that have until now remained unclear.

Abbreviations

References to books of the Bible follow the abbreviations listed in *Hart's Rules for Compositors and Readers at the University Press Oxford* (Oxford, 1983), p. 5. Note also the following general abbreviations:

4QSam[a]	The most important scroll for the Book of Samuel discovered at Qumran.
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955)
BDB	*A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* ... Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as Translated by Edward Robinson, Edited ... by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907)
DSSB	*The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, Translated with a Commentary by Martin Abegg Jr, Peter Fint, Eugene Ulrich (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999)
JB	*The Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966)
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series
Kautzsch	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, As Edited and Enlarged by the Late E. Kautzsch, Second English Edition Revised by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910; repr. 1990)
KSA	Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, 15 vols (Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag & De Gruyter, 1980)
LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon*, Compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A New Edition Revised and Augmented throughout by Henry Stuart Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940)
LXX	*Septuaginta*, ed. A. Rahlfs (Stuttgart, 1935; repr. 1965)

NRSV	*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989)
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Edited by P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982)
Vulg.	*Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. A. Colunga & L. Turrado, Quarta Editio (Matriti: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1965)

The following works – primarily commentaries – will be referred to in the notes by the surname of the author only (for other works by the same author the full title will be cited):

Ackroyd = P. R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971)

Alter = R. Alter, *The David Story: Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 1999)

Baldwin = J. G. Baldwin, *1 & 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988)

Birch = B. C. Birch, *The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy: The Growth and Development of 1 Samuel 7-15*, *SBL Dissertation Series* 27 (Montana: Scholars Press, 1976)

Driver = S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd edn 1913)

Edelman = D. V. Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*, JSOTSup 121 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991)

Eslinger = L. Eslinger, *The Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of I Samuel 1-12* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985)

Gordon (OTG) = R. P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984)

Gordon = R. P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1986)

Gunn = D. M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, JSOTSup 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1980)

Hertzberg = H. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, trans. J. S. Bowden, The Old Testament Library (London: SCM, 1964)

Jobling = D. Jobling, *1 Samuel*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998)

Klein = R. W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, World Biblical Commentary 10 (Waco: Word Books, 1983)

Long = V. P. Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence*, SBL Diss. Series, 118 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987)

Mauchline = J. Mauchline, *1 & 2 Samuel* (London: Oliphants, 1971)

McCarter = P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel*, Anchor Bible Volume 8 (New York: Doubleday, 1980)

McKane = W. McKane, *I & II Samuel*, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM, 1963)

Miscall = P. D. Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986)

Payne = D. F. Payne, *Samuel*, Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982)

Polzin = R. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History; Part Two – 1 Samuel* (San Francisco: Harper Row, 1989)

Smith = H. P. Smith, *The Books of Samuel*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1899)

Other works will be referred to by the author's name and title only, the full details being reserved for the Bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Topic

This study will focus upon the biblical portrait of the figure of Saul as he is presented to the reader in the final form of the first book of Samuel. In particular, the study will examine the way in which the standing and function of Saul within the wider context of the people of Israel is described.

The figure of Saul as he is presented in the biblical account is paradoxical for two reasons. On the one hand, Saul is described as the first king of Israel and yet is said to have failed as a king. Moreover, although the overriding presentation of Saul in the biblical account is of a failed king, a close reading of the text, as we shall see, implies that Saul does not function as a king at all and so cannot be said to have failed as king. Indeed the appellation of Saul as having failed in his role as king might be taken to suggest that even the biblical author(s)/redactor(s) considered that Saul did not actually function properly as a king. The concern of this study then, is the tension which is present in the text between the explicit naming of Saul as king of Israel and

the implicit definition suggested by the details in the biblical narrative of his actions. This study will question why, if the figure of Saul is said to have failed to meet the requirements of the position of king of Israel, he is nevertheless continually labelled as king.

The biblical account ascribes to Saul the prestigious position of being the first king of Israel. After a period of unsuccessful judge-deliverers, the people of Israel are said to have demanded a new form of leadership which is alien to their traditional mode of social and political organization. Thus the biblical account of the figure of Saul and his rise to prominence amongst the people is played out in the text against the backdrop of the adoption of foreign practices. Saul is described as having been chosen from amongst the people to fulfil the popular request for a 'king like all the nations', a request that is condemned from the very outset in the biblical account as representative of a turning away from tradition and faith. When viewed from the perspective of this very negative beginning the figure of Saul is, from his very first appearance in the text, operating as the personification of all that the biblical author(s)/ redactor(s) understand as undesirable from a people chosen by God. That is to say, as indicated above, the biblical narrative traces the people of Israel's turning away from God and traditional practice towards other foreign nations and practices.

A number of biblical scholars have acknowledged the paradoxical and negative presentation of Saul in the biblical account and have sought to overcome this by describing Saul variously as some sort of chief, judge, or

transitional judge-king.[1] The aim of this study is to contribute to this ongoing scholarly debate. In particular, this study shall explore the description in the biblical narrative of Saul's actions both before and after he is said to have become king of Israel in order to establish whether there is some other way of understanding his function as leader and, moreover, whether it is possible to interpret his character and function in the text in a more positive light. In other words, the study shall examine whether it is possible to characterize the leadership of the figure of Saul as a good example of some other form of leadership, in contrast to the traditional biblical label of failed king.

It is arguable that an ineffectual or failed king is not really a king at all. Therefore, to continue to describe an individual as a failed king is not really to say anything informative about them.[2] To accept the explicit definition of Saul and his leadership in the narrative is therefore not enough. This study will examine the implicit characterization the figure of Saul defined according to his described actions, relationships, and functions. These details within the biblical narrative itself offer, I shall argue, an alternative way in which to understand the leadership of the literary figure of Saul based upon how he is described as having operated or functioned, as opposed to how he is labelled within the biblical account. This study will argue that a more positive and productive way in which to understand the character of Saul and his leadership

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[1] See for example the works of Flanagan, Alt, and McNutt listed in the bibliography.

[2] Thus I understand a king as an individual who functions as a king. This is reminiscent of Plato's functional definition of objects (see *Republic* 352d-354b). For example, a knife is a tool which is sharp and capable of cutting. A knife which is not capable of fulfilling this function is a 'bad knife'. Such a knife may, in turn, be deemed to be not really a knife at all because it fails to fulfil the proper function of a knife. The fact that it may look like a knife and be called a knife is irrelevant if it does not perform as a knife.

is not to consider him simply as a failed king (his failure marked by his disobedience to God, mirroring the disobedience and rejection of God by the people in making a request for a king in the first place) but rather as a successful chief (whose actions are marked by an obedience to the people).

The Saul with which this study is concerned is the character in the biblical narrative contained in the first book of Samuel. The focus will be upon this literary image of a political and military leader who stands as a transitional figure in the transformation from local judge-deliverers to a national leadership in the form of kingship. The study will not specifically address those questions relating to the historical accuracy or otherwise of the biblical account nor whether or not an historical individual called Saul existed. The reason for this focus on the literary rather than possible historical aspects is that whilst the literary figure of Saul is clearly and systematically presented to the reader it is difficult to reconstruct the historical individual Saul and his functions within the society of Israel in a specific period in that society's social and political development. Any attempt to achieve the latter is likely to reveal so few 'historical facts' that there would be little to assert with any real confidence about the historical Saul's leadership. Furthermore, what evidence we have primarily derives from the biblical account and it is difficult – some might say impossible – to verify independently the 'facts' of the biblical account. As Philip Davies has argued,

> there is no way in which history automatically reveals itself in a biblical text [...]. An additional problem, in fact, is that there is no *non-literary* way of making this judgement either, since none of these characters has left a trace outside the biblical text![3]

In this study we shall therefore suspend judgement concerning whether there is any relationship between the literary portrait of the character Saul and an historical individual named Saul. Instead, we shall focus upon the figure of Saul as he is presented to us in the final form of the first book of Samuel. That is to say, his ascribed personal characteristics, relationships and actions during his 'reign' as Israel's first 'king'. Questions concerning the original sources, later editing, and theological intentions of the author(s) will not be addressed in any detail insofar as they are closely related to those questions concerning the status of the biblical narrative as an historical record.[4] However, although it might be difficult to treat the text as a historical document, it may at least be read as a source that sheds some light on the thoughts of its author(s) and the intellectual world of its original readers (or hearers). Although it may be difficult to date precisely these authors and readers, nevertheless the Saul narrative does offer some form of window onto the way in which political leadership was conceived in ancient Israel. This literary study, then, may offer at least some historical window onto the shared assumptions of the ancient authors and readers, if not one onto Saul himself.

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[3] Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, p. 12.
[4] For an overview of these issues please see chapter 1 of the study.

In order to offer a more positive framework within which to understand the described functions and actions of the figure of Saul this study shall draw upon a particular description of leader which is frequently employed by anthropologists in the study of socio-political organizations in historical societies, namely 'chief'. This literary study shall therefore borrow certain anthropological definitions of leadership insofar as these socio-historical definitions may shed light upon the biblical text. The utilization of these anthropological definitions should not be understood as being indicative of an attempt to reconstruct the history and socio-political development of ancient Israel. As acknowledged above, this is a task in which one is unlikely to be able to succeed. Rather, the anthropological definitions are employed in this study insofar as they might assist in offering an alternative and positive interpretation of the literary character of Saul. In particular, these definitions will be shown to offer a means of understanding the literary character Saul in terms of his actions and functions rather than simply in terms of his title and label as 'failed king'. In other words, just as a literary critic might employ psychoanalytic models as a means of analysing the relationships between fictional characters in a literary text, so one might draw upon anthropological definitions of leadership in order to analyse the nature of the socio-political relationships between groups of characters portrayed in texts, without making judgements concerning the historical or fictional status of the text or characters concerned.

These anthropological definitions will, it is hoped, make it possible to offer a fresh and more positive interpretation of the character of Saul and his

leadership. The work of the biblical scholar James Flanagan will be discussed in this connection insofar as he too has offered a systematic interpretation of Saul and his leadership which also draws upon anthropological resources. However, it will be argued that Flanagan's interpretation of Saul and his leadership retains the overriding negative aspects of the biblical account because it approaches the conception of chief only in terms of its relationship with monarchy. Flanagan's analysis of the biblical account does not look beyond the labelling of Saul as the first and yet failed of a new type of leadership.

At this preliminary stage it may be helpful to offer some definitions of terms which will employed throughout the study. By 'leader' I simply mean anyone who directs the activity of a group of individuals, without any further specification. I shall use this as a generic term when I do not want to imply any particular form of leadership. By 'king' I understand an individual who has the power to assert himself over and against a group of others if he so wishes (but not necessarily) in order to achieve his objectives. According to this functional definition of a 'king', a king is one who is able to control his subjects and a king without real political or military power is no king at all. By 'chief' I understand a leader who has the consent of those whom he leads and whose political power is based upon such consent. The relationship between the chief and those whom he leads is thus interdependent in a way in which the relationship between a king and his subjects is not. These definitions will of course be developed during the course of this study, especially in Chapter Two.

2. The Structure

The first Chapter will introduce the paradox of the traditional characterization of Saul as a failed king and the general scholarly consensus concerning Saul. It will also outline the background to the text, its origins and sources, in order to give some outline conception of the origins of the final form of the text of the first book of Samuel. Questions concerning the way in which this text may be read by scholars and the status of those readings will be discussed. In particular it will be argued that it is not possible to validate one particular reading of a text over and above all others. Rather it will be suggested that the most constructive way to develop a better understanding of a text is not to assume that subjective interests can be overcome but rather to supplement existing subjective interpretations with further subjective interpretations in order to view the text at hand from as many different perspectives as possible. The interpretation of Saul in the first book of Samuel that will be offered in this study will be done in this spirit as a further perspective that may be taken alongside others in order to gain the most rounded view of Saul possible. This more rounded view of Saul – of which the present study is but one component – is the nearest to an objective description of the literary account that is possible. It should of course be emphasized once more that here the focus is upon an understanding of the literary portrait of Saul rather than the historical figure that may or may not stand behind the biblical account.

The second chapter will examine accounts of Saul that have drawn upon anthropological models of political leadership and, in particular, the account by James Flanagan. I shall suggest that although Flanagan proposes that Saul should be conceived as a chief, his account does not advance significantly upon the traditional 'failed king' interpretation. In order to explore the theoretical presuppositions of this account I shall examine the anthropological material upon which Flanagan's analysis is based. In contrast to his use of the work of Elman Service, I shall draw upon the work of the French anthropologist Pierre Clastres and argue that his work offers a more constructive framework within which to approach Saul.

These two chapters constitute Part One of this study, mapping out the methodological framework for the remainder of the study. Part Two is devoted to an analysis of the relevant sections of the biblical account of Saul. They do not constitute an exhaustive commentary on the text but rather simply focus upon the material pertinent to gaining an understanding of the literary figure of Saul as a political leader.

Chapter Three is concerned with the call for a king by the people, the stimulus behind this, the manner of the request, and the requirements of such an individual. In particular it will discuss the character Samuel's account of kingship and the various interpretations to which this has been subjected. The specification of this king to be a king 'like other nations' will make a brief survey of models of ancient Near Eastern kingship necessary. However this use of historical material should again not be taken to imply that Saul is being assumed to be an historical figure. Judgement remains suspended. Rather it is

simply a helpful way of placing the biblical narrative within the context that the events it purports to describe appear to be set. Just as one studying a novel set in Roman antiquity might examine its contents alongside historical material of that period, so here the biblical narrative will be read alongside historical data generally taken to be broadly contemporary with its apparent setting.

Chapter Four is concerned with Saul's selection and appointment as leader. It focuses upon those three separate biblical accounts of the election of Saul to the position of leader in Israel. In particular, it will examine those characteristics of the figure of Saul that lead the people to single him out as a prospective leader and the role of the people in the narrative in the election of Saul.

Chapter Five examines the account of Saul's 'reign' and his 'failure' as a king as it appears in the biblical text, the focus being chapters 13-15 of 1 Samuel. I shall focus upon the specific events in the narrative in which Saul is presented as failing. Central here will be the role played by the people in these events and the nature of the power relationship between the people and Saul.

In the Conclusion I shall draw the discussion together and shall argue that by characterizing Saul as a successful chief rather than as a failed king it is possible to gain a greater insight into the literary portrait of his political leadership. Of course it will not be claimed that this more positive assessment can be definitive but it will be suggested that this assessment may serve as a useful supplement to the existing interpretations. In particular, I shall consider whether this new account of Saul as chief can or should be equated with the

figure of the 'Judge' presented in the biblical tradition. I shall suggest that although such a connection may appear possible, in fact it sheds little further light on Saul's leadership.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION

In this chapter I shall consider those problems surrounding the interpretation of biblical texts generally. In particular, I shall touch upon issues such as the production of biblical texts (including authorship and redaction), the textual description of the character of Saul and his activities, and, further, the way in which the character of Saul might be seen to function within the overriding objectives of the text. These issues will also be considered within the framework of problems of interpretation more generally.

In Section One a survey of both the biblical presentation and scholarly interpretations of the figure of Saul will be given. It will be shown that the image of Saul is predominantly negative, a fact which becomes all the more apparent when his character is considered in terms of the contrast in the biblical account between his actions and those of David, who one might designate the king *par excellence*.

In Section Two the production of the first book of Samuel will be considered within the wider context of the production of biblical texts

generally. Scholarly arguments relating to the underlying aims of the biblical author(s) and redactor(s) and the part that this might have played in determining the presentation of particular characters within texts will also be considered. It will be demonstrated that the manner in which the biblical text was produced makes it difficult, if not impossible, to establish any 'historical facts' about the figures or events which are presented to the reader. In sum, it will be argued that the biblical texts are written from necessarily conditioned and limited perspectives which cannot but colour the biblical narratives.

In Section Three I shall consider whether it is possible for a reader of a particular text to set aside their own limited assumptions and viewpoints and allow the text simply to speak for itself. A number of scholarly arguments surrounding this issue will also be considered. I shall conclude that it is not possible simply to 'read without prejudice'. Rather, it is the case that all readings and interpretations are necessarily conditioned and therefore limited. I shall also touch upon the apparently logical conclusion of perspectivism which claims that if all perspectives are limited and can have no claim to 'truth' then it follows that all perspectives are equally valid, which ultimately results in total relativism.

In Section Four I shall consider this issue of the alleged slide into relative nihilism which has frequently been attributed to the Nietzsche. I shall analyse Nietzschean perspectivism in some detail in order to assess whether it is possible to achieve any sort of objective understanding. In particular, Nietzsche's argument that there is only perspective and that the more

perspectives we have on a particular object (or in our instance, a particular text) the more complete our understanding will be.

In Section Five I shall outline how, by employing this Nietzschean model of 'panoptics' to a particular text, in this case the first book of Samuel, it is possible to approach the biblical presentation of the figure of Saul and his leadership in a different and more positive way. The approach to the problem of interpretations of the figure of Saul will be briefly set out in terms of the content of the subsequent chapters of this study.

1. Saul the Failed King

The biblical presentation of the figure of Saul is as an individual who occupies a pivotal place in the social and political development of the people of Israel. The biblical account describes how the people of Israel demand a king in place of their traditional but now dysfunctional and corrupted judge-deliverers. From the very outset the request for a king is deemed as in some way to represent the people's rejection of the one true king, their God. It is the figure of Saul who is assigned to this new and deprecated role as the first king of Israel.[1]

The figure of Saul presented to the reader is a somewhat paradoxical figure. On the one hand he is described as the first of a new type of political leader, a king. Whilst on the other hand Saul is characterized as having failed

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[1] For further information on this question see Orlinsky, 'The Tribal System of Israel and Related Groups in the Period of the Judges'.

to live up to that title. The overriding message of the biblical account is that the figure of Saul and his appointment as leader represents a break from the traditions and practices by the Israelite people and, as if to prove the point, Saul is condemned as having failed to fulfil the requirements of that role through a consistent disobedience to the command of God. The figure of Saul is therefore at once both the first king and yet also a failed king. This seems to be a rather unhelpful and inadequate way to characterize Saul's leadership. Firstly, it is of limited explanatory use to ascribe to the figure of Saul the label of king if he is also said to fail to conform to that mode of leadership. If he failed to function as a king then it seems strange to continue to label him as such.[2] Secondly, the overriding characterization of the figure of Saul in purely negative terms ignores those positive dimensions of his character and leadership which are also present in the details of the biblical account when one looks behind the façade of the 'failed king' theme of the text. The aim of this study is to examine the literary account of the leadership of Saul and to try to offer an image of his leadership that looks beyond the dominant presentation of Saul as a 'failed king'. This first chapter will examine the traditional image of Saul as a 'failed king' in both the biblical account where the claim clearly originates and in subsequent scholarly interpretation and will consider the status of such claims.

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[2] This paradox could be dismissed simply by saying that Saul was called king but that he failed to fulfil the role of king. That is to say that nominally he was king but functionally he was not. However this distinction is not explicitly made in the typical scholarly accounts of Saul's leadership. The precise details of the various ways in which the term king may or may not be applied to Saul will of course feature prominently in Part Two of this study.

In the biblical narrative, and in the opinion of some biblical scholars, the leadership of Saul is to be equated with the judge-deliverers who immediately preceded Saul's accession to the status of king in the biblical text. Alt, for example, describes how the judge-deliverers "did their warlike deeds to protect the Israelite territory against foreign encroachments [...] on the strength of a personal gift and power which was regarded in Israel simply as charisma".[3] He suggests that this personal and charismatic element should also be attributed to Saul.[4] Like the judge-deliverers, the figure of Saul is an heroic individual who rises to prominence as a result of his actions during a time of particular crisis. His positive response to the crisis facing the people of Jabesh-Gilead predominates in this conception of an affinity between Saul and the leaders that had gone before.[5] However, despite this affinity, Saul is also thought to represent a radical shift in the ideals of Israelite leadership. Whilst the judge-deliverers were simply inspired leaders of a number of affected tribes, the figure of Saul is deemed by contrast to effect a transformation of leadership to the national sphere. In his appointment as king the figure of Saul is portrayed as a new organism. The permanence and centralization of his 'kingly authority' are deemed to represent a radical break from the 'military

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[3] Alt, 'The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine', p. 178. For further discussion of the so-called 'Judges Period' see, for example, Martin, 'Israel as a Tribal Society'; McKenzie, *The World of the Judges*; Mayes, 'The Period of the Judges and the Rise of the Israelite Monarchy'.

[4] Alt, 'The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine', p. 190. For a similar scholarly evaluation see for example McKenzie, *The World of the Judges*, esp. p. 118; Orlinsky, 'The Tribal System of Israel and Related Groups in the Period of the Judges'; Dumbrell, 'In Those Days There Was No King in Israel; Every Man Did What Was Right in his Own Eyes: The Purpose of the Book of Judges Reconsidered', p. 76.

[5] Dumbrell, ibid., p. 76, affirms that the Jabesh-Gilead crisis described in 1 Sam. 11 is a clear affirmation of Saul's continuance of the office of Judge.

chieftain' or judge-deliverer leadership structure that had preceded him. [6] The attribution of the label of 'king' to the figure of Saul, according to Alt, "completed the process by which the nation-state came into being and finished forever all that had gone before".[7] It should be noted, however, that Alt was using the biblical text as a historical source, something that we shall not be doing here.

The biblical narrative begins by describing the figure of Saul in positive terms. We read for example of his goodly nature, and it is suggested that he was in some way superior to other Israelites. As a consequence of his special attributes the figure of Saul is described as having won the favour of the community and it would appear that this played some role in his ascension to the office of king.[8] That the figure of Saul is considered as having been held in high esteem is arguably demonstrated in his ability to rally the tribes of Israel successfully in an offensive against those enemies who were oppressing the people of Jabesh-Gilead. His success in this endeavour is described as having met with further popular acclamation and a (re-)affirmation of his position as king. The narrative states that Saul was also successful in other military campaigns: "When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side – against Moab, against the Ammonites, against

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[6] Orlinsky, 'The Tribal System of Israel and Related Groups in the Period of the Judges', p. 378, suggests this 'military chieftain' terminology.
[7] Alt, 'The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine', p. 194.
[8] See for example 1 Sam. 10: 24 where the prophet Samuel states: "'Do you see the one whom the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people. And the people shouted, 'Long live the King!'".

Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines; wherever he turned he routed them".[9]

However, despite his many successes, the overarching theme of the narrative is dominated by the presentation of the figure of Saul as a failure in his role of king. Perhaps most obviously, the biblical narrative describes two major military campaigns by Saul during his time as king. In each case the conclusion of the narrative account is the impotence and deficiency of Saul as king. Chapter 13 of the first book of Samuel describes a campaign in which the figure of Saul leads the people of Israel into battle against the Philistines. Faced with his abandonment by the people who had gathered to fight and the failure of the prophet Samuel to appear at the appointed time, Saul is described as having offered the apparently traditional 'offerings of well being' himself. The narrative account condemns this making of the offering by Saul as a major act of disobedience. Whether Saul's error is to be understood in terms of his actual act of sacrifice which was considered a usurpation of the authority of the priestly office, or whether it is simply a matter of his not having waited until the arrival of Samuel is not clear and continues to be a matter for scholarly debate.[10] What is clear is that the biblical account condemns Saul for his apparent failure to obey a direct commandment of God given through his

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[9] 1 Sam. 14: 47.

[10] See 1 Sam. 10: 8 where the prophet Samuel states that Saul shall go to Gilgal ahead of him "then I will come down to you to present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you [...]". 1 Sam. 13: 8 states clearly that Saul "waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal [...]". So perhaps it is simply that he was impatient and failed to wait for Samuel's appearance at the appointed time. For an overview of the scholarly debate surrounding this question see for example Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence*, pp. 85ff.

prophet and, in so doing, Saul is deemed to have forfeited both his own claim and that of his heirs to the throne of Israel. The text states, "The Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, but now your kingdom will not continue: the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart; and the Lord has appointed him to be ruler over his people because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you".[11]

In a similar vein, chapter 15 of the first book of Samuel describes how, in a military campaign against the Amalekites, the figure of Saul is described as having listened to the 'voice of the people' rather than to the command of God through his prophet in allowing the spoils of war to be salvaged rather than being 'utterly destroyed'. As a consequence, regret is expressed at his ever having been made king and his replacement by another more suitable candidate is announced. The text presents the prophet Samuel as declaring that, "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king. [...] The Lord has torn the Kingdom of Israel from you this very day and given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you".[12]

The biblical account plays out the remainder of the Saulide story against the backdrop of this more suitable candidate, David, who is described as coming to exert a position of prominence within Saul's own entourage,[13] and who is privately anointed king in Saul's place.[14] The relationship between these two figures is portrayed as one of an increasingly developing animosity as David's position is exalted over and above that of Saul. The biblical

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[11] 1 Sam. 13: 14.
[12] 1 Sam. 15: 23 and 28.

account describes how the achievements of David result in an a tremendous increase in his popularity so that he is characterized as superseding Saul. As a consequence, Saul's jealousy for his own position is inevitably aroused.[15] As if to further confirm Saul's utter rejection as king, the narrative describes how the 'spirit of God' leaves Saul and is replaced by 'an evil spirit from God'. In contrast to this, upon his anointing as king in Saul's place the 'spirit of God' is said to have entered into David.[16] The presence or absence of the 'spirit of God' thus functions within the text as a means of representing the approval and disapproval of a particular character. In other words the image is employed as a legitimising device in the biblical narrative.[17] The remainder of the biblical account is then concerned with the presentation of David's rise to power and authority among the population in stark contrast to, and as a product of, Saul's own rejection and abandonment by the people. What remains is essentially a presentation of contrasts: Saul *versus* David. The figure of David is ascribed the success which is deemed to have eluded Saul and all those who had gone before him. That is to say, David is said to have utterly defeated the Philistines. Moreover, David is characterized as displaying his military superiority over the enemies of the Israelite people which is shown to result in bringing him success greater than that previously accredited to

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[13] See 1 Sam. 16: 14-23.
[14] See 1 Sam. 16: 1-13.
[15] See for example 1 Sam. 18: 7-8: "And the women sang [...] 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands.' Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?'".
[16] See 1 Sam. 16: 13-14.
[17] See Coggins, *Introducing the Old Testament*, p. 24, and Brettler, 'Ideology in the Book Of Samuel', p. 101.

Saul. The biblical account of the figure of David as leader of armies and bandits, his defeat of the enemies of Israel and his eventual capture of Jerusalem and the establishment of the Ark there are achievements which stand in stark contrast to the melancholic and abandoned Saul who is cast in the role of the opposer to the glorious leader David.[18] As if to emphasize Saul's utter rejection and abandonment by his god, we read of the dead prophet Samuel (summoned up by Saul through a necromancer) pronouncing once more God's rejection of Saul as king over Israel and prophesy the death of Saul and his sons on the battlefield.[19] The labelling of Saul as failed king may therefore be considered in terms of an attempt by the biblical author(s)/redactor(s) to establish Saul as a literary foil to David. The figure of David is presented in the biblical account as the one true king of Israel through whose leadership Israel enjoys victory and regional dominance. Furthermore, David's period as king is described in the biblical account as representing some sort of return to faith and obedience to God, epitomized perhaps in his establishment of Jerusalem as the religious centre of the nation where the Ark of the Covenant is housed. However, it will be argued in this study that, just as is it possible to look to the details of the biblical account and see rather more negative aspects of the character of David including his adultery, marriage to foreign women, and murder of those who stand in his way, so also it is possible to analyse those details in the biblical account of Saul's actions in a

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[18] See 1 Sam. 17, 18: 7, 21: 22, 29: 5, 18: 16, 22: 2, 19: 8, 23: 5, 30: 16-20, 2 Sam. 5, 6.
[19] 1 Sam. 28: 17-19: "The Lord has done to you just as he spoke by me; for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbour, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore

more positive light. By looking beyond the label of Saul as first and failed king it will be argued that it is possible to interpret Saul's leadership in a different way.

For the most part biblical scholars have reiterated the label of Saul as failed king and have frequently not looked beyond the obviously coloured image which dominates the biblical account. Rather than considering the details of the biblical narrative from which it is possible to glean a contrasting perspective the majority of biblical scholars have been content simply to paraphrase the biblical narratives and their description of Saul and also merely to repeat their judgement of him as a failed king. The figure of Saul is thus invariably understood as an utterly inappropriate choice for the position of king of Israel which is inevitably proved in his conformity to the label of dysfunctional king. As Spina comments, Saul is 'a hapless monarch' who was wholly unsuitable as king and was rejected as a direct result of his failure to comply with the instructions of his god and replaced with a more appropriate individual.[20] Brettler continues this line of interpretation, arguing that Saul generally acted in an inappropriate manner, in "an unroyal fashion".[21] He suggests that Saul's demonstrations of emotions such as fear render him inadequate and undeserving of the role as king.

More generally, Saul's actions are invoked as evidence of his unsuitability and consequent failure in his post. A number of scholars have been content simply to adopt the label of failed king and to cite as evidence in support of

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the Lord has this thing to you this day. Moreover the Lord will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Phillistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me [...]".

their interpretation those biblical accounts of chapters 13 and 15 of the first book of Samuel where Saul stands condemned for his failure to heed the command of his God given through the prophet Samuel. For example, the figure of Saul is characterized as having demonstrated his desire to confirm his own power and authority over the people of Israel by sacrificing respect for the ancient law of God to his own authority in his refusal to do as commanded and 'utterly destroy' the Amalekites. Eichrodt argues that it is little wonder then, that "the zealot for Yahweh's cause, Samuel, would have nothing more to do with a monarchy which presumed on the power of its office instead of seeking its highest legitimation in selfless effort on behalf of Yahweh's purposes".[22] Cross expresses a similar view, positing that Saul is guilty "of a breach of old law, namely by attempts (in one way or another) to manipulate the fixed forms of holy war in his own interest".[23]

In contrast to this period of inadequate, undeserved, and ill-performed kingship, there is the figure of David. Just as the biblical account lays considerable emphasis upon the achievements and developments of the nation-state of Israel during the reign of king David, so too do the majority of biblical scholars. That is to say, as in the biblical account where the story is one of contrasts, so also biblical scholars perpetuate the contrast of Saul with David. Epstein, for example, argues that "Saul did not fulfil the high hopes placed in

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[20] Spina, 'Eli's Seat: The Transition from Priest to Prophet in 1 Sam 1-4', p. 104.
[21] Brettler, 'Ideology in the Book Of Samuel', p.104.
[22] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p. 445.
[23] Cross, 'The Ideologies of Kingship in the Era of the Empire: Conditional Covenant and Eternal Decree', in his *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, p. 221.

him [... however] with David, his successor, began Israel's golden era".[24] Noth offers a remarkably similar evaluation. He emphasizes his point by describing the biblical account of the period of the kingship of Saul as 'a mere episode' and goes on to contrast this episode with the radically different reign of David. After the death of Saul and the ascension of David to the throne, he argues that Israel entered "a completely new and decisive phase" of political power.[25] Bright is equally dismissive of the leadership of the figure Saul suggesting that his reign ended in "dismal failure, leaving Israel, if possible, worse off than before".[26] Bright goes on to affirm, in line with the biblical account, that David should be considered, in contrast to the 'tragic figure' of Saul, a much worthier king.[27] In opposition to the failure of Saul stands David who succeeds where Saul has floundered and is able to ally the religious with the political aspects of the Israelite monarchy. Even the personal characteristics of the two leaders of Israel stand juxtaposed in the works of various scholars as they do in the narrative of the book Samuel itself. In the work of Goldberg and Rayner, for example, the despair and melancholy of Saul is viewed against the backdrop of the ambition, genius and "golden promise of Davidic youth".[28] The general view of biblical scholars is perhaps epitomized in the conclusion of Eichrodt who argues that "the visible blessings which the Davidic kingdom brought to the whole nation overcame men's last doubts whether the monarchy as a permanent institution could be

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[24] Epstein, *Judaism*, p. 35.
[25] Noth, *The History of Israel*, p. 179. More generally, Noth's estimation of Saul's career is that it was 'a terrible failure' (see e.g. p. 199).
[26] Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 186.
[27] Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 196.

pleasing to God [...]".[29] Thus, as Gunn suggests, in the biblical narrative "Saul functions negatively, as a paradigm, as an example of the failure to respond properly to the demands of God, and positively as a pointer towards a model of obedient response, of a proper relationship with God".[30] That is to say, Saul's reign is marked by "exemplary failure and tragedy",[31] and this failure is utilised within the narrative to highlight by way of contrast to the obedience and success of David. The failure of the figure of Saul to measure up to certain standards, understood in terms of unquestioned obedience to the commands of God, stands in stark contrast to his successor David who is deemed in the biblical account to epitomise true kingship and obedience.

This brief survey of a number of scholarly interpretations of the character of Saul and his period as leader of Israel demonstrates how many biblical scholars are content simply to endorse the overriding biblical presentation of Saul as a failed king whose capacity to disobey the commandments of his god results in the appointment of a successor who is presented as marking a golden stage in the development of Israel.[32] Little time is set aside to consider whether there are in fact any positive elements within the biblical account.

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[28] Goldberg & Rayner, *The Jewish People: Their History and their Religion*, p. 27.
[29] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 447.
[30] Gunn, p. 26.
[31] Gunn, p. 28.
[32] Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, p. 24, suggests that 'Histories of Israel' have virtually rewritten the biblical story in a more rationalistic tone.

2. Textual Production

As outlined above, the biblical account of the figure of Saul and his period as leader of Israel is predominantly negative. Saul is at once both the first king of Israel and yet is described as having failed in fulfilling the requirements and obligation of the role. Although he is ascribed some limited success on the military front, his failure to obey the commandments of God in this connection are used in the text to mark his downfall. In contrast to this is the figure of David who is said to have been 'the man after God's own heart' and who is secretly anointed king in place of Saul. David's actions are set out and act as a means of contrast with the actions of Saul. For example, whilst Saul in his jealousy for his position seeks to destroy David, the latter is merciful and does not take advantage of opportunities to kill Saul. Perhaps most significantly for the author(s)/redactor(s) of the biblical narrative, Saul's disobedience to the will of God is sharply contrasted with the obedience of David.

The biblical account's presentation of Saul as the epitome of failure serves, then, a certain function within the narrative. Saul's failure serves as a means of developing a later contrast with the success of David. It is clearly the case that the biblical narrative was the product of an individual or individuals who sought to present a particular story to the reader of the text. It is inevitably the case that the biblical narrative was therefore written from a particular perspective, by individuals with a certain set of beliefs and intentions who were based within a certain historical context. In effect, one might say that the text was written with a particular agenda or purpose in mind. From what has

been discussed so far this agenda might be understood in terms of an attempt to chart the rise of the Israelite State and to establish David as *the* king of Israel. But in order to say more about the assumptions at work in the biblical account of Saul's rise to prominence and the period of his leadership it is first necessary to consider the conditions under which it was produced.

If we reflect for a moment on the nature of writing each of us would acknowledge that writing is (a) an expressive form and (b) as such it is an individual's means of expression. This is equally as applicable today as it was yesterday or even centuries ago. The simple fact of the matter is that, like all literature, the bible was written by, and therefore expresses the view of, a particular individual or a number of individuals. Such individual(s) in their commitment to writing, whether we understand their work as a literary fiction, as an attempt at historiography, or even as a combinatory work, would be limited in their writing. As individuals we do not have an unmediated access to a 'real world' which is marked by disinterest. Rather, our access to the 'world' is mediated and coloured by personal experiences and expectations. So it follows that just as human perceptions prove to be entirely subjective, perspectival, and therefore limited, so also the written expression of these perceptions shares in this fundamental limitation. In other words, the individual is necessarily incapable of neutral observation, interpretation, or description.

An interesting element in this discussion with regard to the biblical writer(s) or scribes, might be the suggestion by scholars that they were confined to a particular segment of society. That is to say that they belonged to

a professional class or school connected in some way to an institution like that of the temple or royal court.[33] It has been argued by scholars that it is extremely unlikely that the levels of literacy in an ancient society like Israel would have been such that the texts of the sort that we have in the biblical literature could have been produced by anyone other than those from the upper echelons of society. Davies points to the fact that such societies are likely to have extremely few people who would have been capable of writing. He suggests that the number be limited to around five percent of the general population. Even if this number did include lower members of the social order, Davies argues that it is extremely unlikely that these individuals would have had either the time, the inclination or the ability to write such a diverse body of literature as we have in the Bible. Davies states that "at issue is not simply the ability to write, but the capacity, motivation and opportunity to write [...] *literature*, not to write business transactions, or letters, or lists of names even, or to scratch abecedaries. The production of scrolls containing histories, cultic poems, wise sayings and oracles is not an individual hobby. Such work requires a professional class with time, resources and the motivation to write".[34] Edelman similarly argues for the likelihood of a professional class of

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[33] See for example Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, p. 18. Here he expresses his opposition to the suggestion that the literature of the Bible is the product of an entire society as opposed to a certain group within that society. Davies points to the evidence of a modern society where literacy is as high as ninety percent of the general populous but which nevertheless sees book writing limited to only around one percent of the population. See also Edelman's Introduction to her work, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*; Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel*, esp. pp. 31, 33, and 38. For a more detailed discussion of the debate surrounding scribal schools see Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach*.

[34] Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, p. 102. Thus, although archaeological finds of various artifacts such as ostracon in the region might suggest that there were other groups within society that were also literate does not mean that they might necessarily be responsible for a

committed writers. She suggests that the writer of the Saulide narrative and the larger 'Deuteronomistic History' was a member of the literate upper classes and was probably attached to the Jerusalemite court. She argues that "it seems logical to presume that he had formal training as a scribe, since his literary product reveals a high level of complex, artistic achievement that would have been beyond the abilities of one not schooled in literary endeavours".[35] Edelman goes on to highlight the fact that the 'Deuteronomistic History' is concerned with "promoting Jerusalem as the one place that Yahweh would choose to place his name to dwell in the monarchic period. It also reveals a strong pro-Judahite, anti-Israelite bias in its use of David in the book of Kings as the measuring rod for the ideally obedient king".[36]

This suggestion, that the writer of the biblical literature might be connected to a particular school or else a sponsor, raises a number of important issues. Obviously it highlights the point mentioned above about the significance of personal background and experience and how it affects one's perception and consequently one's literary description of the world. It also asks that we reflect on the various ways in which a particular patron, teacher, or dominant group might influence the literary activity they support or commission. To what extent might the perspective of the individual writer be further distorted by those of his or her patron(s)?

A number of scholars have drawn attention to the fact that ancient Near Eastern 'historiography' is generally centred upon self-justification and

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biblical text. For a further discussion on archaeological data and its impact on the literacy debate see also Edelman, pp. 21-24.

personal identity. The focus within these cultures seems to be predominantly connected to the person of the king and his dynasty, and there is generally assumed to be an attempt to legitimate rule, to glorify actions in various campaigns, and otherwise to describe the actions of the king.[37] Brettler argues that there is much evidence to suggest that in the ancient Near East, writing and historiography were used as a means to bolster the image of the king, and was thus to a certain extent an ideologically motivated pursuit. He states that "much of the writing and depiction of history in Mesopotamia was controlled by the court scribes who wrote ideological history that would satisfy the ruling king. Though the details of this process are not fully known, it is clear that such history is not typically interested in the actual past, but has been variously described as ideological, propagandist or apologetic".[38] In this way, it is suggested that it might be best to consider such works, because of their distortion of events, as 'the creation' of a royal scribe. In view of this evidence that ancient Near Eastern compositions relating to kings and their actions was to a degree influenced by royal (scribal) ideologies, Brettler suggests that it is extremely likely that the book of Samuel reflects a similar influence.[39]

Readers of the biblical literature should thus be wary if their reading is focused upon establishing the historical veracity of an event described in the Bible. The author of the text would inevitably be writing from a limited

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[35] Edelman, p.18.
[36] Ibid.
[37] See for example Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*, pp. 1-4, and Brettler, 'Ideology in the Book Of Samuel', pp. 94-96.
[38] Brettler, 'Ideology in the Book Of Samuel', p. 96.
[39] Brettler, 'Ideology in the Book Of Samuel', p. 94.

perspective and possibly had an interest in promoting the viewpoints or interests of a particular group, possibly the Jerusalemite court, although this is by no means certain.[40] Nevertheless, it should be clear that the perspective of the writer is certain to be limited and also to stem from a particular point of view which reflects the prejudices of his or her social class or those of a patron, about matters which are deemed to be of importance to their group.[41]

This issue of the partisan nature of writing is made all the more difficult by the complex development of the literature of the Bible. The vast majority of biblical scholars have long since acknowledged that the texts of the Bible are not completely unified bodies of work. Few scholars would today question that the books of the biblical corpus are but end products of a long period of literary growth.[42] The texts that purport to describe actual events are likely to have been the product not of a single hand but many hands and the literature that they produced is likely to have undergone various processes of redaction at later dates so that the views within the texts are probably an amalgamation

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[40] See also Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, pp. 102-03, 115-26.
[41] See Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes, Schools and Scholars*, p. 16, for a further discussion of this so-called 'filter effect' of the membership of individual authors in some elite literary group.
[42] The debate over how long this period of growth which resulted in the biblical literature might have been is of course a debatable point but one which need not be discussed fully here. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, p.84, suggests that the traditional scholarly view on the evolution of the biblical literature (an evolution in terms of a development from an oral tradition – what was written – redaction – present shape of text) which requires a long evolutionary period might be unnecessary. He posits that the literature might have begun as late the Persian period. Davies points to certain examples within the Dead Sea Scrolls as a means of demonstrating that literary developments can occur over an apparently short space of time. For a further discussion of this question on the late origin of biblical literature see also for example Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes, Schools and Scholars*, pp. 138-45 and Finkelstein, 'The Rise of Early Israel', pp. 7-10.

of a multiplicity of 'interested' viewpoints. The relationship between what is done and what is written is always a complicated one.[43]

The groundwork for understanding the development of the book of Samuel and its account of the rise and development of the institution of the monarchy is generally acknowledged to have been done by Wellhausen and his subsequent followers.[44] Wellhausen suggested that, on the basis of the various tensions evident in the text (which oscillates between a positive and negative attitude towards the institution of monarchy) it was possible to conclude that the book of Samuel was the product of a number of different sources stemming from different periods and therefore reflecting the views and ideals of those different periods. He further posited that there had been a revision of the book of Samuel, the product of a later period, which had impressed upon these earlier sources the distinctive ideals and views of its own age. In this way Wellhausen suggested that the general anti-monarchical stance that is found expressed alongside a more pro-monarchical view might be explained

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[43] The present study shall not be an attempt to offer an exhaustive and detailed discussion of the various scholarly attempts to understand the development of the biblical material, nor even the book of Samuel. There have been far too many such scholarly reconstructions so that any attempt to discuss them all would be necessarily brief and sketchy and do little justice to the detailed arguments involved. Rather the attempt here will be simply to outline the major currents and turning points in the debate that might be helpful in our connection.

[44] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*. This translation is based upon Wellhausen's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* of 1883, the second edition of his *Geschichte Israels* first published in 1878. Wellhausen built upon the work of others, notably de Wette, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die kanonischen und apokryphischen Bücher des Alten Testamentes* (esp. pp. 221-231 on source criticism of the books of Samuel). Variations upon Wellhausen's source hypothesis followed in the work of scholars such as Karl Budde, H. P. Smith, and Hugo Gressman. For a discussion of Wellhausen and those others who similarly posited various source hypotheses relating to the book of Samuel and a survey of the debate on the Deuteronomistic history generally see Birch; Brueggemann, 'The Book of 1-2 Samuel', in *ABD*; McKenzie, 'The Deuteronomistic History', in *ABD*, vol. 2, pp. 160-68; Clements, *A Century of Old Testament Study*; Mayes, *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile: A Redactional Study of the Deuteronomistic History*; the papers in McKenzie & Graham, eds, *The History of Israel's Traditions*.

as stemming from the exilic period and thus reflecting the views of that age. This later view, he suggested, shared something of an affinity with the book of Deuteronomy. In this way, the more anti-monarchical stance might be understood as reflecting a Deuteronomistic ideal wherein Israel is a theocracy with Samuel as her leader and representative before God. Within this context the request for a king was considered sinful.

The seminal work of Noth opened up new avenues in the debate on the nature of the books of Samuel and marked a move away from the theory that the Pentateuchal sources continued into these books or that previously independent literary units had passed through a stage of Deuteronomistic redaction.[45] Noth's work is, in part, built upon Wellhausen's observations regarding the presence of Deuteronomistic elements within the books of Judges through to Kings. Noth argued that these books were not separate compositions but rather that they formed part of a larger literary unit comprising the book of Deuteronomy through to the end of Kings.[46] Noth advanced the theory that various traditions had been brought together to form part of a larger complex by the 'Deuteronomistic historian' in the mid-sixth century BCE. All of this material, he argued, had been woven together with the Deuteronomist's own insertions and comments which provided him with the means to impose his own theological perspective onto the material – a perspective which in Noth's view shared much in common with that of the book and tradition of Deuteronomy. Noth consequently designated this

material the 'Deuteronomistic History'. He writes that the Deuteronomist "was not merely an editor but the author of a history which brought together material from highly varied traditions and arranged it according to a carefully conceived plan. In general [... the Deuteronomist] simply reproduced the literary sources available to him and merely provided a connecting narrative for isolated passages. We can prove, however, that in places he made a deliberate selection from the material at his disposal".[47] Noth goes on to state that the Deuteronomist "expands and augments his material [...] in order to express his particular viewpoint".[48]

This Deuteronomistic viewpoint is, according to Noth, dominated by the view that Israel had slowly but surely brought upon itself its divine rejection and consequent downfall as a result of its repeated apostasy. This apostasy Noth argues, is seen by the Deuteronomist to be exemplified in the people's demand for a king. This is an act which, in the eyes of the Deuteronomist, implies a rejection of the nation's dependence upon her God to send a deliverer in times of emergency. A king, being responsible only to himself, would inevitably become a burden upon the people.[49] Noth suggests that, writing with hindsight, the Deuteronomist considers the monarchy to be a late and inappropriate innovation which itself significantly contributed to the

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[45] For further details in this regard see for example McKenzie, 'The Deuteronomistic History', p. 160. He discusses these two broad categories of approach to the so-called Former Prophets which he says predominated biblical studies before the work of Noth.
[46] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*.
[47] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, p. 26.
[48] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, p. 28.
[49] See for example Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, p. 80.

downfall of Israel through its own apostasies.[50] The monarchy was thus viewed as "categorically objectionable, and that it accomplished a positive good only under isolated, outstanding representatives".[51] Noth states that the Deuteronomist shared in a generally pervasive view of the whole Old Testament tradition which saw in the figure of David, in spite of his own weaknesses, a model against which to judge other kings.[52] In Noth's view then, the negative perspective of the Deuteronomist in respect of both the institution of the monarchy and the inevitable downfall of Israel pervades the whole of his history. As Lemche succinctly put it, "we see all of the events of the Israelite monarchy through the glasses of the Deuteronomists".[53]

Noth's Deuteronomistic thesis has been accepted by the vast majority of biblical scholars and continues to be influential so that even the most recent scholarship frequently remains heavily reliant upon it.[54] However, Noth's conception of the Deuteronomistic History, which as we have seen he conceives to be entirely negative, is that the downfall of Israel is due entirely to the apostasy of the people and her kings. A number of subsequent scholars have attempted to interject a positive Deuteronomistic aspect. A significant

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[50] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, p. 77 & p. 123, for example.
[51] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, p. 127.
[52] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, pp. 86-87.
[53] Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society*, p. 122.
[54] For the continued predominance of this view of the Deuteronomistic History see for example Grabbe, 'Are Historians of Ancient Palestine Fellow Creatures – or Different Animals?'; Ahlström, 'The Role of Archaeological and Literary Remains in Reconstructing Israel's History'; Edelman, p. 16; Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, pp. 84-89. Noth's suggestion of a single exilic composer has continued to be the subject of debate however (see e.g. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählender Bücher des Alten Testaments*, pp. 161-192, who suggests that the model of a Deuteronomistic history fails to take into account the constant supplementation of the biblical tradition). Since it is beyond the scope of this present study to offer a sufficient analysis of this debate, the reader is directed to those surveys indicated in n.

approach has been to argue that within the work there is to be found, alongside Noth's element of judgement and punishment, a positive factor. This positive factor consists in the divine promise to David and his dynasty that it should endure forever. Mayes and Clements for example, both warn against simply deeming the Deuteronomistic perspective as anti-monarchical and reflective of Israel's later discontentment with her kings.[55] This, they suggest, is far too simplistic. The Deuteronomistic criticism of, and warning against, the monarchy as an institution which causes injustice is not the end of matters. Rather, this theme is set alongside the equally Deuteronomistic view that the king is chosen and installed by God. In this connection, Clements suggests that there is a distinction between good and bad kings and that this is marked by the appointment of David as king and the divine promise to him and his dynasty.[56] However, this more positive aspect of the Deuteronomistic history has some negative implications. In this emphasis upon the promise to David, it might be argued that the work elevates him to a position of superiority so that he assumes the function of king *par excellence*. In this way, the perspective of the Deuteronomist clouds the presentation of 'events' so that it effects a purely subjective means to oppose all non-Davidic kings as unacceptable to God and to legitimate David, a Judahite king in his claims to a kingship that was

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44 above for a discussion of those theories which posit a multiple redaction of the Deuteronomistic history, or the existence of a Deuteronomistic School.

[55] Mayes, 'The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy', pp. 11-12, and also Clements, 'The Deuteronomistic Interpretation of the Founding of the Monarchy in I Sam. VIII', pp. 401-09.

[56] Clements, 'The Deuteronomistic Interpretation of the Founding of the Monarchy in I Sam. VIII', pp. 401-09. For a further discussion of this positive aspect see McKenzie, 'The Deuteronomistic History', pp. 161-62.

originally northern Benjamite.[57] In this way, the figure of Saul might be said to be viewed negatively within both aspects of the Deuteronomistic history.[58] Within one Deuteronomistic framework Saul is presented in negative terms because he is the first of a new kind – a king – which as an institution is viewed in generally negative terms. Saul might therefore be a figure who is used in the text as a means of representing all that is deemed to be perverse within the institution of monarchy generally. Within the other framework outlined above, the figure of Saul might be understood within the narrative as functioning as a negative paradigm in relation to the model of Davidic kingship. In this way, one might say that the figure of Saul is essentially portrayed as the anti-hero to David's hero. The literary description of the failure of Saul to fulfil the role of king might be understood as functioning within the text as the counter-theme to David's success.

Thus, as Brettler has suggested, "almost every chapter of the long unit can be seen as fitting into the ideological program of legitimating David at Saul's expense. This was accomplished by a set of narrators who compiled, shaped and wrote texts to foster their position. In this process, the narrators used for ideological purposes what some would call literary devices, such as contrasts or antitheses between Saul and David. These are used, however, for

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[57] Mayes, 'The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy', p. 12.

[58] Cross, 'The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History', in his *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp. 284-87, suggests that this two-fold theological stance of the Deuteronomist might be explained in terms of two distinct editions of the Deuteronomistic History. One stemming from the old Deuteronomistic covenant theology which viewed the destruction of the people and the monarchy as tied to their apostasy, and another drawn from the royal ideology in Judah with its emphasis upon the promise to David to establish his line forever. Cross suggests that these two editions of the Deuteronomistic stem from two different periods: one written in the era of Josiah and the other completed c. 550BCE.

ideological rather than literary-aesthetic purposes".[59] Similarly, Van Seters argues that "all the episodes bear the same thematic concern for legitimizing David's role as successor to Saul and for putting Saul in an unfavourable light".[60] That there is an observable bias in favour of the figure of David to the detriment of the figure of Saul in the biblical narrative is evident and is made all the more apparent when one considers Saul's character not in isolation but in relation to the early career of David. Saul's deterioration and failure-rejection stand in an overtly marked contrast to the youthful and divinely elect David.

From what we have discussed above we can see that scholars are generally agreed that the development of biblical texts is a complex issue. The text of the book of Samuel is not generally considered to be a literary unity. Rather, like the majority of the literary corpus that is the Bible, scholars acknowledge that the text is derived from an amalgamation of different traditions. Some of these traditions may be pro-monarchical in outlook whilst others adopt the opposite stance. Furthermore, certain of the traditions may be considered as reflective of an anti-Saulide viewpoint whilst others are not. The fact of the matter remains however that one must acknowledge the nature of the text as such a fusion and mixture of varying perspectives and attempt to dismantle the literary profile of Saul so that he might be seen not purely in terms of his part of some larger literary project. Those elements that run counter to this portrayal must also be analysed and deemed an equally worthy perspective.

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[59] Brettler, 'Ideology in the Book Of Samuel', pp. 108-09. See also Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*.

How else might Saul be functioning within the narrative aside from within this aspect as a failed king in contrast to the man after God's heart, David?

3. Perspectivism versus Objectivism

These questions regarding the production of the biblical account of Saul open up a number of more fundamental questions about the production of texts in general and lead to more philosophical discussions about the nature of truth. Such discussions often start with a distinction between perspectivism and objectivism. The suggestion that it is impossible for individuals to escape their own viewpoint and that their perceptions are thus necessarily limited and essentially perspectival stands opposed to the assumption that it is possible to establish an objective perception of the world. This objectivist position might be summarized in the following way. It suggests that it is possible to gain unmediated access to the world, and that the means to achieve this undistorted access is through the (assumed) ability of the individual to sublimate his own assumptions and point of view and 'let the text and/or facts speak for themselves'. Only in this way can anyone hope to establish the 'truth'.

Within the historical context, the historian's task is simply to listen to the sources, to read documents without prejudice and to use them to reconstruct the past in its own terms. [61] As Elton argues, "the present must be kept out of

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[60] Van Seters, *In Search of History*, p. 269.

[61] Thus the materials which remain from the past are treated by the objectivist as true and factual so that information might be derived from them to give specific data about specific

the past if the search for the truth of that past is to move towards such success as in the circumstances is possible".[62] The questions of the historian should thus stem from those presented by the evidence of the past itself rather than from within the context of present theorising about the past. It would appear then, that the principle seems essentially to focus upon a rigid separation between the observer and the object of his observation. The subject and the object are considered as completely differentiated.[63] Elton seems to be convinced that it is indeed possible for the individual to completely separate himself from the object of his study so that his own assumptions and presuppositions do not obscure his reconstructions of the past. The suggestion that the biases and perspectives of individuals stand in the way of objective knowledge is thus dismissed. Elton writes that this suggestion "that men cannot ever eliminate themselves from the search for truth is nonsense, and pernicious nonsense at that, because it once again favours the purely relativist conception of history, the opinion that it is simply in the historian's mind and becomes whatever he likes to make of it".[64] Despite recognizing that perspectives and "unconscious presuppositions have indeed done much to distort the hunt for the truth about the past", objectivists like Elton argue that "What needs to be understood is the fact that recognizing one's perceptions

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times, places and persons if the correct scholarly techniques are employed. On this point see LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, p. 18.

[62] Elton, *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study*, p. 65, also pp. 24, 52,73, and his *The Practice of History*, p. 65.

[63] Carr, *What is History?*, p. 119.

[64] Elton, *The Practice of History*, p. 57.

should enable one to eliminate them, not to surrender to them".[65] Thus Elton declares that the historian should become "the servant of his evidence".[66]

In a similar vein Edelman, writing in relation to the reader of the biblical material, discusses the importance of the interpreter's ability "to try to understand the world-view and literary conventions that were prevalent at the time the texts were written and not to superimpose our own structural and literary devices on these ancient texts".[67] Rather, she suggests that the interpreter should "try to read from the perspective of a member of the ancient intended audience".[68]

This suggestion that the interpreter might be able in some way to suppress his or her own bias and perspective which is a result of the inevitability of being influenced by present-day concerns, and in place of this adopt an entirely new and in reality, alien perspective, seems to be fraught with difficulties. As Whitelam has stated, "there is no ideologically sterile reader [nor is there any] ideologically sterile or politically neutral construction of the past [...]".[69] Therefore, the suggestion that the reader of biblical texts should cast off his or her own shoes and walk awhile in those of an ancient Judahite appears to be perhaps unachievable.[70] As Mayes has suggested, "the notion

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[65] Elton, *Return to Essentials*, p. 10.
[66] Elton, *The Practice of History*, p. 62.
[67] Edelman, 'Saul ben Kish in History and Tradition', p. 146.
[68] Edelman, 'Saul ben Kish in History and Tradition', p. 147. Elsewhere, in her *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*, p. 12, Edelman suggests that the interpreter should 'read like an ancient Judahite'.
[69] Whitelam, 'The Search for Early Israel: Historical Perspective', p. 45.
[70] Indeed, Edelman, p. 11, acknowledges the difficulty in her proposed methodology. She is apparently well aware, in spite of all that she has said with regard to the adoption of an entirely different perspective by the interpreter, that this is essentially an impossibility. She will retain as an individual interpreter her own limited perspective so that, "in reality, my

that the reader, the interpreter of a text, can by an imaginative act of empathy transpose himself or herself into the mind of the author [or audience ...] has been a view more or less consciously assumed in much historical study, but is now widely dismissed as simplistic. It takes no account of [...] the fact that interpreters generally do not just *find* meaning in the object of interpretation, but rather *put* meaning on that object".[71] Put simply, an individual reading any particular text cannot escape his or her own present and the inevitable influence it will have upon their interpretation. As Marc Bloch writes, "in the last analysis, whether consciously or no, it is always by borrowing from our daily experiences and by shading them, where necessary, with new tints that we derive the elements which help us to restore the past".[72] Similarly, E. H. Carr posits that "we can view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present. The historian [and reader] is of his own age, and is bound to it by the conditions of human existence".[73] The suggestion that anyone is able to 'bracket out' or suspend their own perceptions through some ascetic self-discipline seems nonsensical. Our judgements are never in themselves marked by neutrality. As Carr argues, "the facts [...] never come to us 'pure', since they do not exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder".[74] The notion that

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reading of the text and decisions about the author's methods and intentions will represent the opinions of an American female at the end of the twentieth century [...]".

[71] Mayes, 'On Describing the Purpose of Deuteronomy', p. 229. Mayes, however, goes on to suggest a turn to Habermas as an appropriate methodology. This is different to the line that will be taken in this present work and developed later on.

[72] Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, p. 44.

[73] Carr, *What is History?*, p. 24.

[74] Carr, *What is History?*, p. 22. This view stands in direct opposition to that of Elton discussed above. Indeed, in his work *The Practice of History*, pp. 13ff, Elton is explicitly critical of Carr.

objectivity is achieved through a reading or interpretation without prejudice is surely negated by the commonplace and common sense realization that we are necessarily finite individuals with limited perspectives. Indeed, Carr highlights the fact that the material read is itself bound up with the intentionality and viewpoint(s) of the author which must then undergo an analysis which is itself equally limited. "No document can tell us more than what the author of the document thought – what he thought happened, what he thought ought to happen or would happen, or perhaps only what he wanted others to think he thought, or even what he himself thought he thought [...]. The facts, whether found in documents or not, have still to be processed by the historian before he can make any use of them".[75] As Evans states, "if we abandon our self-consciousness and fail to develop the art of self-criticism to the extent that we imagine we are bringing none, then our prejudices and preconceptions will slip in unnoticed and skew our reading of the evidence".[76]

This emphasis upon the role of the individual and his perspective on his view of the 'facts' or 'the real world', if pressed, seems logically to lead to the view that objectivity is an impossibility. As Collingwood has argued in respect of historical analysis (which is applicable also to literary interpretations), "St Augustine looked at history from the point of view of the early Christian; Tillamont from that of a seventeenth-century Frenchman; Gibbon from that of

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[75] Carr, *What is History?*, p. 16. For a discussion of the perspectivism of biblical scholars, particularly those of Germany and America, and its influence on their interpretations of the biblical texts see Whitelam, 'The Search for Early Israel: Historical Perspective', pp 50-53. Whitelam argues that "the picture they painted of Ancient Israel was little more than mirror images of their own time rather than a reflection of anything that happened in the past" (p. 53).

[76] Evans, *In Defence of History*, pp. 230-31.

an eighteenth-century Englishman; Mommsen from that of a nineteenth-century German. There is no point in asking which was the right point of view. Each was the only one possible for the man who adopted it".[77] In other words, if it is argued that an individual's outlook and understanding are necessarily dominated by his own, very limited, perspective, then it seems to follow that there would appear to be no limit upon the number of possible perspectives. If one argues that all views are perspectival, it cannot follow that any one viewpoint or perspective can be said to be better than any other, for there is no further criterion against which the competing perspectives can be judged. The only apparent conclusion to perspectivism thus seems to be that there are in infinite number of possible perspectives all of which are equally legitimate and therefore equally valid.

With regard to the figure of Saul and how he is generally understood within biblical scholarship, the same would seem to apply. As Evans states, "documents can be read in a variety of ways, all of them, theoretically at least, equally valid. Moreover, it is obvious that our way of reading a source derives principally from our present-day concerns and from the questions that present-day theories and ideas lead us to formulate. Nor is there anything wrong in this".[78] Although one might argue that the biblical presentation of the figure of Saul is one which is evidently written from a particular partisan stance, and that biblical scholars seem also to have perpetuated this narrow perspective, it would appear that one must also acknowledge that any new interpretation will

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[77] Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. xxii.

be equally limited. That is to say, any new interpretation of the figure of Saul and his actions, as described to us in the biblical account, will reflect a peculiarly individual perspective which will be coloured by contemporary historically determined interests and concerns.[79] In the light of this, a new interpretation would be unable to claim a privileged position in relation to other interpretations; it would simply be yet another new point of view equally conditioned and limited. "Once the intellectual gateway to total relativism has been opened, it cannot be closed again in the interests of one privileged theory or another".[80]

4. Nietzsche on Perspectivism

This image of a variety of equally valid perspectives, which might be categorized as the beginning of a slide into nihilistic relativism, has often been attributed to Nietzsche. The questions surrounding this issue regularly appear in Nietzsche scholarship and Nietzsche is often cited in broader discussions that deal with the relativity of truth. Nietzsche's own theory of perspectivism, based upon an optical analogy, states that an individual's unique location in space and time at any moment will limit and condition the perspective he may have of any particular object. This perspective, based upon a unique yet

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[78] Evans, *In Defence of History*, p. 84. However, Evans is critical of the strong relativist claim that each perspective is true according to the perspective from which it is written (p. 220).
[79] As Foucault states: "historical descriptions are necessarily ordered by the present state of knowledge [...]" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 5).
[80] Evans, *In Defence of History*, p. 232.

always limited point of view, will itself be unique yet limited. Thus it seems that no perspective will be able to claim the status of an objective truth.[81]

As a consequence of this emphasis upon the perspectival nature of perception, Nietzsche has been criticised for what appears to be a rather nihilistic attitude. A number of authors have suggested that Nietzsche's perspectivism leads to the conclusion that since all truths are perspectival, there can no longer be any objective notion of truth.[82] Such an understanding of Nietzsche is not without some textual basis, as can be seen from passages such as the following from *The Will to Power*: "There are many kinds of eyes. Even the Sphinx has eyes – and consequently there are many kinds of 'truths', and consequently there is no truth".[83] However, this passage, deriving from one of Nietzsche's notebooks (known as the *Nachlass*), was included in the compilation known as *The Will to Power* only by later editors. Nietzsche himself chose not to include it and others like it in any of the works he prepared for publication himself. In this sense one might say that it is a thought that Nietzsche rejected. Consequently, it seems to be a mistake to rely

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[81] Nietzsche's perspectivism does not lead to epistemological scepticism and should not be approached in terms of Kant's 'appearance' / 'thing-in-itself' distinction (outlined in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, *passim*). Nietzsche explicitly rejects Kant's distinction in the section of *Twilight of the Idols* entitled 'How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth' (= *KSA* 6, pp. 80-81). As will become in clear in what follows, Nietzsche affirms that we do have knowledge of the real world, but that this knowledge is always governed by perspectival knowing. As stated by Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, p. 50: "Perspectivism [...] does not imply that we see or know an appearance of the world *instead of* that world itself. The perspective is not the object seen, a self-contained thing which is independent of and incomparable to every other. What is seen is simply the world itself [...] from that perspective".

[82] See for example Comte-Sponville, 'The Brute, the Sophist, and the Aesthete: "Art in the Service of Illusion"' and Outhwaite, 'Nietzsche and Critical Theory'. For a more detailed survey of those who interpret Nietzsche in this way, together with a critical discussion, see Leiter, 'Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Geneaology of Morals*'.

[83] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, § 540 (= *KSA* 11, 34[230], p. 498): "Es giebt vielerlei Augen. Auch die Sphinx hat Augen: und folglich giebt es vielerlei 'Wahrheiten', und folglich giebt es keine Wahrheit".

upon such passages when attempting to follow Nietzsche's ideas about perspectivism.[84] Instead it seems more prudent to focus upon Nietzsche's own published remarks concerning his perspectival theory of truth.

One of the key passages in his published works where Nietzsche outlines his notion of perspectivism is *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 3 § 12, and it is worth quoting at length:

> let us be on our guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject"; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as "pure reason", "absolute spirituality", "knowledge in itself": these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity', be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this – what would this mean but to *castrate* the intellect?[85]

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[84] Hollingdale, *Nietzsche*, p. 172, argues that the material in *The Will to Power*, along with other *Nachlass* (notebook) material is effectively abandoned material: "if Nietzsche did not use it, it was because he did not wish to use it; and this is the light in which one should read it".

[85] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 3 § 12 (= *KSA* 5, p. 365): "von nun an besser vor der gefährlichen alten Begriffs-Fabelei, welche ein 'reines, willenloses, schmerzloses, zeitloses Subjekt der Erkenntniss' angesetzt hat, hüten wir uns vor den Fangarmen solcher contradiktorischen Begriffe wie 'reine Vernunft', 'absolute Geistigkeit', 'Erkenntniss an sich': - hier wird ein Auge zu denken verlangt, das gar nicht gedacht bwerden kann, ein Auge, das durchaus keine Richtung haben soll, bei dem die atkiven und interpretirenden Kräfte unterbunden sein sollen, fehlen sollen, durch die doch Sehen erst ein Etwas-Sehen wird, hier wird also immer ein Widersinn und Unbegriff von Auge verlangt. Es giebt *nur* ein perspektivisches Sehen, *nur* ein perspektivisches 'Erkennen'; und *je mehr* Affekte wir über eine Sache zu Worte kommen lassen, *je mehr* Augen, verschiedne Augen wir uns für dieselbe Sache einzusetzen wissen, um so vollständiger wird unser 'Begriff' dieser Sache, unsre 'Objektivität' sein. Den Willen aber überhaupt eliminiren, die Affekte sammt und sonders aushängen, gesetzt, dass wir diesvermöchten: wie? hiesse das nicht den Intellekt *castiren*?

In this passage Nietzsche warns his readers to beware of the notion that it is possible for an individual to act merely as a spectator. That is to say, he dismisses as naïve and impossible the traditional goal and assumption that it is possible to achieve objective contemplation; the disinterested, disembodied and unpartisan understanding of the world, held on to by people such as Elton. Nietzsche argues that as individuals we are not (and will never be) able to demonstrate the ability to perceive independently of our own personal perspective. In contrast to the notion of disinterested and unaffected perception, designated above as a 'conceptual fiction', Nietzschean perspectivism presupposes the subject as situated in and therefore affected by the world. Any particular individual's views and perceptions of the world necessarily embody the conditions and circumstances of the world in which they are situated. Thus, "there is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'". Nietzsche responds to this by suggesting that there is great value to be found in a plurality of perspectives, which he expresses in his analogy between knowing and seeing: "the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity', be". Nietzsche advocates then a multiplicity of views of a particular thing, a multiplication of the number of perspectives, so that a more adequate conception of the thing might be possible. In order to understand

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...". I have used the translation by Walter Kaufmann in his *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (p. 555).

Nietzsche's perspectivism more fully it is thus necessary to discuss this optical analogy.[86]

In the case of seeing a particular object it seems obvious that (a) it is always seen from a particular perspective – whether that be from a particular angle, distance or in a certain light; (b) our understanding of the nature of the object would be better if we based that understanding on many different perspectives, for example the more angles we see the object from; (c) it is conceivable that the number of perspectives with which to see the object are infinite; and finally (d) there could be numerous factors capable of distorting our perspective of the object, for example our distance relative to it or perhaps varying light quality. If we were to apply these general – and one should think common sense – observations to a specific example of an object like a house we might suggest that corresponding to these four points we can state the following: (a) viewed from different positions we will see different aspects of same building; (b) someone who walks around the perimeter of the house and views it from a number of different positions will have a better conception of the house than someone who remains in one position; (c) there is theoretically no limit to the number of different perspectives one might have on the same building; and (d) two people standing in the same position would see the house differently in differing background conditions – a night-time view would inevitably give different results from a day-time perspective.[87]

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[86] The following discussion of the optical analogy draws upon that of Leiter, 'Perpectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*'.
[87] See also Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, p. 51 where he offers another interesting example for analysis.

In this optical example it seems to be clear that although all perspectives will contribute something to an understanding of the house, this by no means gives rise to the corollary that all perspectives are equal and therefore equivalent in terms of their access to, and subsequent understanding of, the nature of the object 'house'. On the contrary, what is made clear is the fact that the *more* perspectives we take on a subject the more we will be able to develop a more rounded, and therefore inevitably better understanding. Some perspectives will necessarily be better than others and the greater the number of perspectives the more rounded the understanding of the object.

If we take Nietzsche's point that seeing is analogous to knowing, that by 'eyes' are meant perspectives, then the claims of the optical case are applicable to questions concerning knowledge and interpretation. In this connection then, (a) we know objects from a particular perspective: from a particularly interested standpoint. Each of us views the same object in the light of our own sets of concerns, interests and assumptions; (b) considering an object in the light of a number of these differing perspectives will be more informative than just one; (c) there is no limit to the number of perspectives we can have on a particular object; and (d) certain interests or concerns might seriously cloud our ability to gain a helpful grasp of an object.

In the light of this account of Nietzsche's optical analogy, the final phrase of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 3 § 12, can now be understood. Here Nietzsche says that "the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing be". In this sense Nietzsche does not wholly abandon the concept of objective truth. Rather, he

posits a new and re-valued notion of truth or objectivity constructed within the context of his perspectivism. This new objectivity will involve a plurality of different eyes or perspectives, taken together to offer the best available image of a particular object. Just as the greatest understanding of a house will be the product of taking together many different visual perspectives, so the greatest understanding of any object (or text) will be the product of taking together many different perspectives or interpretations. Thus it is better to have an amalgamation of limited perspectives or interpretations of a thing rather than just one conditioned perspective.[88] Just as in the optical example it is impossible to escape the limitations of the eye but it is possible to supplement one perspective with others, so, in the epistemological example, it is impossible to escape perspectivism but it is at least possible to supplement any one perspective with many others. Thus Schrift writes, "accepting the inherent limitation of each individual 'optics', if the myth of objectivity is to be salvaged at all it will only be in the form of a heuristic ideal, as a call for a 'panoptics'".[89] Similarly, Schacht suggests that by collecting together a number of perspectives it will be possible to construct a "meta-level perspective" that will be superior to any single perspective taken alone.[90] In

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[88] Carr, *What is History?*, pp. 26-27, similarly discusses the notion of knowledge/objectivity in terms of the visual. He argues that, "It does not follow that because a mountain appears to take on a different shape from differing angles of vision, it has objectively either no shape at all or an infinity of shapes. It does not follow that, because interpretation plays a necessary part in the establishing of the facts of history, and because no existing interpretation is wholly objective, one interpretation is as good as another, and the facts of history are in principle not amenable to objective interpretation".

[89] Schrift, 'Between Perspectivism and Philology: Genealogy as Hermeneutics', p. 368. Schrift also affirms that Nietzsche's new and "transvalued concept of 'objectivity'" be understood "as the ability to remain in control of an ever increasing multiplicity of perspectives [...]" (p. 368).

[90] Schacht, *Nietzsche*, p. 10; see also Chapter Two, esp. pp. 103-05.

this Nietzsche may well have been inspired by his philosophical hero Heraclitus who posited a common *logos* that would take into account the fact that "The sea is the purest and the foulest water: for fish drinkable and life sustaining; for men undrinkable and deadly".[91]

This new conception of an objectivity of many eyes, a plurality of perspectives, or a panoptics, is developed by Nietzsche and personified by him in the Classical mythological figure of Argos the hundred-eyed monster. Argos, often called *Argos ho panoptēs* (Ἄργος ὁ πανοπτης), the many-eyed, is said to have guarded over Io the mistress of Zeus when she was turned into a cow. His many eyes, ranging from four to a hundred to ten thousand in the various Classical sources, enabled him to remain on guard day and night as only two of his eyes rested at any one time. According to Apollodorus he had eyes all over his body,[92] while Ovid suggests "a head set round with a hundred eyes".[93] Despite this, the story goes that he was killed by Hermes.[94] It is this image of "hundred-eyed Argos" that Nietzsche affirms for his new conception of objectivity.[95]

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[91] Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, fr. 70. This imagery was later taken up by the sceptic Sextus Empiricus who argued that if different animals experience objects differently there can be no objective account of objects in themselves. Thus he suggests that we must suspend our judgement about the nature of things. Yet what Heraclitus seems to draw from this is not that knowledge is impossible but rather that an objective account must include all opposing perspectives. See Kahn, pp. 186-87, and Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (Loeb edition), 1.59.

[92] Apollodorus, *The Library* (Loeb edition), 2.1.2.

[93] Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, 1.625.

[94] See Aeschylus, *The Suppliant Maidens*, 303-305 and *Prometheus Bound*, 568, 678 (both in the Loeb edition). For further references see the entry under Argos in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

[95] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* II, 'Assorted Opinions and Maxims', § 223 (= *KSA* 2, pp. 477-78). For the relationship between this passage and *Genealogy of Morals* Essay 3 § 12 (= *KSA* 5, pp. 363-65) see Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, p. 158.

In this way, Nietzschean perspectivism is able to avoid the problem of dogmatically asserting the truth of one particular interpretation whilst at the same time avoiding the problem of complete relativism which asserts that all interpretations are of equal worth. Nietzsche offers a new notion of objectivity that falls into neither naïve positivism nor absolute relativism. It is one that accepts the inevitability of perspectivism without destroying all notions of knowledge. It accepts the subjectivity of the author and the perspectival nature of knowledge but nevertheless asserts that it is still possible to develop a more objective conception of an object, although this will be a new model of objectivity defined as a hyper-subjectivity or a panoptics.

5. Perspectives on Saul

In the light of this panoptic conception of objectivity proposed by Nietzsche it becomes possible to re-examine the figure of Saul, not by dismissing the traditional interpretation of him as a 'failed king', but rather by acknowledging the perspectival nature of this scholarly judgement and by supplementing it with perspectives deriving from other points of view. Thus with this Nietzschean approach it is not necessary to reject the traditional account of the figure of Saul. Indeed, from certain of those points of view from which the text was written, namely that of charting the rise of the Israelite State which was deemed to have been reached and consolidated with the kingship of David, Saul is indeed a failure. In this sense the traditional interpretation is an accurate account, but only insofar as one explicitly acknowledges the point of

view from which it was written. However, to claim that this is the *only* possible account of Saul would be misguided and would constitute a failure to recognize the limited and perspectival nature of the judgement by the biblical author(s)/reactor(s). Whilst the image of Saul as the failed king may reflect a dominant viewpoint within the final form of the text of the first book of Samuel, beneath this surface are details which point to other, more positive, attitudes towards the figure of Saul and the period of his leadership of Israel.

To re-examine the image of Saul 'panoptically' will involve supplementing this dominant perspective with those other views and characterizations of the figure of Saul which are also present in the details of the biblical account even at those points in the text where Saul stands condemned and rejected as leader. In each case it will be necessary to make explicit the various beliefs and assumptions at work in the creation of these new perspectives, acknowledging their perspectival nature and avoiding any unjustifiable claims to absolute truth. By bringing these various perspectives together it will be possible to develop a more well-rounded understanding of the biblical character Saul. This panoptic image of Saul will include within it a multiplicity of images, often conflicting with one another, without claiming any necessary convergence between them. That is to say, this panoptic conception of objectivity is not about reconciling a number of different views into one overarching supra-perspective. Rather, to suggest a hundred-eyed perspective on Saul points to the taking on board of a variety of what might be frequently opposing points of view. Thus, as Alexander Nehamas states, "perspectivism [...] implies that our many points of view cannot be smoothly

combined into a unified synoptic picture of their common object".[96] He goes on to say that "these different eyes need not ever yield a single unified picture".[97] The fact of the matter is that, since all perspectives are necessarily dependent upon and demonstrate particular backgrounds and attitudes, the greater the number of these limited points of view on a particular object the better. A 'constellation' of viewpoints offers a good basis for a more well-rounded understanding of the object contemplated than simply one viewpoint. In this sense, this panoptic approach conforms to the suggestion of Davies that "We need *multiple* histories because there can be no neutral history".[98] Knauf similarly affirms that "history cannot exist in any other form than in a variety of competing histories".[99] Similarly with interpretations of texts, no one interpretation is neutral. Consequently, we need multiple interpretations in order to gain a better insight into a particular text and characters that appear within it.

This study will attempt the modest task of supplementing the traditional image of Saul with one other, derived from a different set of political assumptions and an alternative image of social organization to the one implicit in the traditional biblical account. However, just as one of Nietzsche's optical perspectives may be better than another, so this study will attempt to offer a supplementary perspective that manages to overcome the paradoxical nature

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[96] Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, p. 49.
[97] Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, p. 50.
[98] Davies, 'Whose History? Whose Israel? Whose Bible? Biblical Histories, Ancient and Modern', p. 113. Furthermore, "There is no *objective* history of Israel [...]. Modern historians need to write their own story (or stories), and define their own Ancient Israel" (p. 111). See also Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, p. 15, where he proposes a hyper-subjective (but not objective) amalgamation of differing portraits.

of the traditional account and its predominantly negative presentation of the figure of Saul. In order to achieve this, in Chapter Two I shall outline this other point of view, one that is based upon work in the field of political anthropology and, in particular, on the work of Pierre Clastres. Once these theoretical assumptions have been explicated it will then be possible (in Part Two) to return to the biblical account of the figure of Saul and to re-examine it from this new perspective. This new perspective will suggest that, from this other point of view, Saul may be characterized not simply as a failed king but rather as a highly successful chief. Thus the first step towards creating a multiplicity of perspectives on the figure of Saul and his leadership will be to affirm him as both a failed king from one perspective but also as a successful chief from another, equally valid, perspective. While neither of these perspectives can claim to be the 'truth' about the figure of Saul taken on its own, one might be 'optically better' than another, and when taken together they certainly form the basis for working towards a more rounded and objective account of Saul in the Nietzschean sense of a 'panoptic' objectivity.

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[99] Knauf, 'From History to Interpretation', p. 27.

CHAPTER TWO

SAUL AS CHIEF

In this chapter I shall consider an alternative interpretation of the figure of Saul and his period of leadership which does not limit itself to the label of 'failed king' that dominates the biblical account. I shall begin by discussing an important new interpretation of the biblical account offered by James Flanagan. I shall then go on to consider what I take to be certain limitations with Flanagan's account. In particular, I shall argue that Flanagan's implicit employment of a theory of cultural evolution results in his interpretation of Saul being reduced to simply an alternative means of characterizing Saul as a failed king. In the light of this discussion I shall introduce an alternative framework for understanding the biblical character of Saul, drawing upon the work of the French anthropologist Pierre Clastres, which will hopefully overcome those problems identified in Flanagan's model.

Flanagan's own account draws upon certain anthropological resources in order to understand the figure of Saul and, in particular, his form of leadership over Israel and these will be examined here. In my own development of an

alternative approach to the interpretation of the figure of Saul I shall also draw upon anthropological resources. However, it should be emphasized at the outset that, unlike Flanagan who attempts to analyze 'the historical Saul', my primary concern remains the literary presentation of Saul in the biblical account rather than any attempt to reconstruct the 'historical Saul' or to identify the period within the social development of the culture of Ancient Israel from which he might have stemmed.

1. Flanagan's New Interpretation of Saul

As discussed in the previous chapter, the traditional interpretation of the figure of Saul and his period of leadership is predominantly negative in both the biblical account and subsequent scholarly interpretation. Saul is described as the first in a new form of leadership, kingship, which is deemed to represent a break with tradition. However, Saul is also said to have failed in his new role. Is it possible to offer an alternative interpretation which allows the reader to see the figure of Saul in a more positive light? I shall argue that within the biblical account there are details which allow us to interpret Saul in a more positive light. I shall argue that by employing anthropological definitions of various forms of leadership it is possible to gain a better understanding of Saul's actions. In particular, I shall suggest that the details of the biblical account, when considered in the light of these anthropological definitions, offers an alternative and more positive way in which to characterize Saul other than the limiting label of failed king.

James Flanagan has similarly employed anthropological resources in order to offer an alternative interpretation to the traditional notion of Saul as failed king, although as I have noted his aim is to analyze 'the historical Saul'.[1] He is one of the few scholars to offer a systematic and new conceptual framework within which to analyse the leadership of Saul, and this has proved to be influential.[2] It is due to this influence that I shall focus upon his account here.[3] Flanagan argues that the leadership of Saul is more akin to pre-state socio-political systems – chiefdoms – as opposed to a sovereign of a State.[4] David and Saul, he suggests, are thus best interpreted as 'competing chiefs'.[5]

For the present study, Flanagan's specific comments on Saul and his function within ancient Israelite society are of particular importance. Flanagan's analysis is essentially one of contrasts between Saul and the more successful David, and his estimation of Saul, even according to this new paradigm of chief, appears to be markedly negative. He describes Saul as follows:

> A tall, handsome agriculturist who emerged as a leader because of his military prowess, Saul enjoyed some ability to evoke support of a militia, but he eventually failed and stood defenceless before his

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[1] See Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel'.
[2] See, for example, Bellefontaine, 'Customary Law and Chieftainship: Judicial Aspects of 2 Samuel 14.4-21', McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, Schäfer-Lichtenberger, 'Sociological and Biblical Views of the Early State'.
[3] Although some other scholars (e.g. Gottwald) have suggested that Saul be considered as a chief, Flanagan is the first to flesh out this idea in any detail.
[4] See Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel'. See also Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E* and Lemche, *Ancient Israel. A New History of Israelite Society*, who also refer to the chief occasionally in their work. Frick, *The Formation of the State in Ancient Israel. A Survey of Models and Theories*, pp. 69 & 203, discusses the evidence for a chiefdom hypothesis, concluding that Saul might be considered a 'paramount chief'.
[5] Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel', p. 152.

> enemies and slayers, the Philistines. He was a warrior and intensifier who apparently performed rituals, a duty he shared with the priests, and who took part in ecstatic religious movements, although he eventually was chastized for cultic violations. [...] His personal weaknesses [characterized as bouts of depression and jealousy] directly contributed to David's success, a situation which is typical of chiefs competing for the paramount power.[6]

Flanagan continues with a discussion of those elements which he considers to have played a significant role in the rise of chiefs – redistribution, organization, and military leadership. In connecting his discussion of these elements to Saul, he states that:

> Although we have no record of Saul's generosity, the narratives suggest that he was a solidifier who finally failed to knit firm alliances between the village populations and his central administration. This factor contributed to his decline [...] As a result, Saul was unable to establish a state of dependency through redistribution, which otherwise might have stabilized his leadership. [...] He was too weak to rout the Philistines, and they rather than he controlled many of the economic resources.[7]

A further element identified by Flanagan as characteristic of a chiefdom is the fact of its theocratic nature. Such an element is either present or it is not, so no value judgements are made as to the success or failure of Saul in this regard. Flanagan states that:

> As we would expect in a chiefdom, the religious functions mentioned in the biblical narratives also indicate that Saul's and David's reigns were theocracies. Both individuals were anointed by Samuel; both performed cultic rites; both used priests and prophets. In short, religion

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[6] Ibid., p. 151.
[7] Ibid., p. 160.

> was used by both to legitimate their authority and to help maintain social control.[8]

The terminology applied in the biblical literature to both Saul and David, *nagid* (נגיד) and *melek* (מלך), is also said to highlight the chiefly nature of their leadership roles. Flanagan argues that there is a pattern of usage evident in these terms which reflects a parallel in the stages of progressive cultural evolution from chiefdom to kingdom. The debate as to the meaning of these two terms and their relationship is explained, in Flanagan's opinion, by the gradual evolution in the role of *nagid* as chief(dom) gave way to king(dom). The term *nagid* is seen to epitomize the role of the chief, whilst *melek* is said to refer to the monarchical structure to which it gave way[9].

It may be instructive at this point to consider these two Hebrew terms in a little detail.[10] Following Flanagan, my discussion of these terms here is not intended as a comprehensive linguistic analysis of their use or meaning but rather as an examination of any conceptual distinction that may exist between different forms of leadership expressed by these terms. In the first book of Samuel Saul's election to leader is recounted in triplicate. He is appointed twice as *melek* (מלך) and once as *nagid* (נגיד).[11] The precise meanings of these two terms and their relationship as designations of the same leader has been much debated. Here I shall consider two instances of the use of each of

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[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., p. 162. These two terms and their significance, if any, for understanding Saul's leadership will be discussed further in Chapter Four.
[10] Further discussion focusing upon the way in which early translators understood these terms may be found in the Appendix.
[11] See 1 Sam. 10: 24, 11: 15, and 10: 1 respectively.

these terms and focus upon how they might be understood.[12] In particular, I shall offer an overview of some of those main scholarly understandings of the terms.

In two passages – 1 Sam. 10: 24 and 11: 15 – Saul's leadership is described using the word *melek* (מלך). The first of these passages describes how Saul was chosen from among the people to be leader by the casting of lots and was acclaimed by the people present as *melek* (מלך).[13] In the second passage, after his successful campaign against the Amalekites in defence of the people of Jabesh-Gilead, Saul is once again acclaimed by the people as *melek* (מלך) at Gilgal.[14]

The ways in which one might understand the root meaning of this term *melek* (מלך) are considered to be somewhat dubious.[15] A comparative analysis of the term with the Assyrian *malâku*, meaning 'counsel' or 'advice' has resulted in the conclusion that perhaps the term translated 'king' originally signified 'counsellor' or some other individual whose opinion was considered decisive.[16] However, the term *melek* (מלך) is usually rendered into English as 'king'.[17] Cognate words such as מלכות are often taken to refer to royal dominion and royal power generally.[18] The term is thus generally assumed by scholars to refer simply to the monarchical head of a centralized system of

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[12] These four passages are the three mentioned in the previous note together with 1 Sam. 9: 16.
[13] 1 Sam. 10: 24 states that: "And all the people shouted, and they said, 'Long live the King'" (וירעו כל־העם ויאמרו יחי המלך).
[14] 1 Sam. 11: 15 thus states: "And all the people went to Gilgal and there they made Saul King" (וילכו כל־העם הגלגל וימלכו שם את־שאול).
[15] See for example BDB, p. 572.
[16] Ibid.
[17] See for example BDB, pp. 572-73, NRSV, and JB.

authority or State whose characteristics are typified in the description of the 'ways of the king' in 1 Sam. 8: 10-18. There, the 'king' or *melek* (מלך) is described as exerting supreme and fundamental control over the lives of his subjects with the confiscation of both persons, property and produce. The authority of the king stands over and against his subjects whom he makes servants of rather than serving their interests.[19]

Whilst the term *melek* (מלך) is generally assumed to signify a king or typical monarchical authority, the meaning of the term *nagid* (נגיד) which is also used to designate Saul's leadership is not so clearly defined or understood nor is the possible relationship between the two terms.

In our second pair of passages – 1 Sam. 9: 16 and 10: 1 – Saul's leadership is described using the word *nagid* (נגיד). The biblical tradition describes how Samuel is advised by God of His intention to send a man from the tribe of Benjamin to be anointed by the prophet as the *nagid* (נגיד) of the people.[20] In a second passage this same term is then ascribed to Samuel who, after anointing Saul, explains that God has chosen him from amongst from the people to be *nagid* (נגיד).[21]

The precise meaning of this term and the way in which it should be translated has been much debated by biblical scholars and commentators.

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[18] See BDB, p. 574, where מלכות is rendered as 'royalty, royal power, reign, kingdom'.
[19] I have already quoted and discussed this text in full in Chapter Three.
[20] 1 Sam. 9: 16 states that God instructed Samuel that "You shall anoint him to be *nagid* over my people Israel" (ומשחתו לנגיד על־עמי ישראל).
[21] 1 Sam. 10: 1 states that Samuel said "Is it not because the Lord has anointed you to be *nagid* over his inheritance?" (ויאמר הלוא כי־משחך יהוה על־נחלתו לנגיד).

More often than not the preferred rendering is simply as 'leader'.[22] Generally it is understood that the term derives from the verb 'to be conspicuous' (נגד) and may consequently be understood as referring to that which is literally conspicuous or that which is in front.[23]

To understand this literally one might say that one who is conspicuous or 'in front' is a military commander literally leading the people from the front. In this way a *nagid* (נגיד) might be take to refer to the leader of a military force who leads the people of Israel into battle. Referring back to 1 Sam. 8 one might posit that the role of *nagid* (נגיד) is thus intended to satisfy the request of the people for a leader who would 'go out before us and fight our battles'.[24] This interpretation of the term as signifying some sort of military commander or leader appears to have a certain amount of extra-biblical support. In the Old Aramaic inscription known as the Sefire Treaty, *ngd* appears as a title in a list between 'royal princes' and 'officers'.[25] Thus it is considered likely that the *nagid* (נגיד) was an individual with less authority than a royal prince but nonetheless with others under his command. In this sense the term might be taken to suggest a sort of superior officer or a military commander. Peckham considers that the Hebrew term went through several stages of development. He suggests that originally the term signified a specially chosen and designated military leader which under the Davidic monarchy was then

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[22] See for example BDB, p. 617. In the two passages relevant here NRSV has 'ruler' and JB has 'prince'.
[23] See BDB, pp. 617-18.
[24] 1 Sam. 8: 20 "go out before us and fight our battles" (ויצא לפינו ונלחם את־מלחמתנו).
[25] See Fitzmyer, 'Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty from Sefire', pp. 112-13, with further discussion in Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, p. 220 n. 5, and Peckham, 'Nora Inscription', p. 465.

applied to the person of the king. Finally, he suggests, the term developed into a title denoting a functionary whether from the religious sphere or the civil and purely administrative sphere.[26] On the basis of the Hebrew and Aramaic evidence taken together, Peckham concludes that in the earlier period the term *nagid* (נגיד) designated a high-ranking officer or commander.[27]

To take the term less literally one might alternatively understand it to refer to an individual who is conspicuous or foremost among a group in terms of his status rather than literally leading a group from the front. In this sense the term might be taken to refer to a prominent member of a group, a leader in general. Driver suggests along these lines that the employment of *nagid* (נגיד) in the books of Samuel and Kings should be understood as a means of indicating the role of a leader in general – "the chief ruler of Israel".[28]

It has also been suggested that *nagid* (נגיד) may be understood as a passive participle derived from the root 'to proclaim' (נגד).[29] Rather than refer to one who stands 'in front' (active) the term may instead refer to one who is placed

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[26] See Peckham's discussion of the Hebrew term in relation to the appearance of *ngd* in the Canaantite Nora Inscription of the 9th century BC, 'Nora Inscription', p. 465. In support of his argument for the development of the meaning of the term *nagid* Peckham refers to biblical passages such as Ezek. 28: 2; Ps. 76: 13; 2 Chron. 11:22 and 11: 11. Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel', p. 161, and Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy*, esp. pp. 2-3, both note the study by Richter ('Die *nagid*-Formel', *Biblische Zeitschrift* 9 (1965), 71-84), who also argues for a similar development of the term. Flanagan states that Richter proposed that the term *nagid* initially signified a military commander but that it evolved for use as a designation for king (and was equated with *melek*) during the Davidic monarchy. Ultimately the term came to be applied, in the post-Davidic era, to functionaries. For examples of the application of *nagid* to functionaries see for example Jer. 20: 1; Neh. 11: 11; 1 Chron. 9: 11; 2 Chron. 31: 12 (in relation to priests); 1 Chron. 12: 27; 13: 1: 27:4 (in relation to military personnel); 1 Chron. 26: 24; 2 Chron. 28: 7 (other functionaries).

[27] See Peckham, 'Nora Inscription', p. 465; see also Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, p. 220.

[28] Driver, p. 73.

[29] See e.g. Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, pp. 161, 171, 182.

'in front' (passive).[30] Thus it is suggested that one who is *nagid* (נגיד) is one who has been 'proclaimed' or 'designated'.[31] On the basis of this many have preferred to translate the term as 'heir designate' or 'king-elect' as opposed to the more general term 'leader' whether understood in a militaristic or civil sense.[32] However, scholarly views have been divided as to whether the title *nagid* (נגיד) should be considered on a purely secular or on a religious level. Mettinger, for example, argues that it was the responsibility of the reigning king to designate the heir to his throne and therein lies the secular origin for the title *nagid* (נגיד) which was applied to the heir-designate.[33] However, it is clear that such a thesis is problematic in the case of Saul since it is clearly the case that the narrative presentation of Saul does not indicate that he was designated as heir.[34] Perhaps for this reason other scholars have preferred to understand the title *nagid* (נגיד) as referring to an individual who has been designated by God. For example, Birch suggests that this term is applied to Saul before he is officially made king in order to indicate that he has been

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[30] See the discussion in Ishida, *History*, p. 58 n. 9.

[31] See Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, pp. 161, 171, 182. However, Ishida, suggests that it is not possible to determine whether the form is active or passive (see *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 58 n. 9). See also Alt, 'Formation of the Israelite State', p. 254 n. 54, for a similar view as regards this ambiguity.

[32] See for example Edelman, p. 45 (also 'Saul's Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead', p. 197 n. 8); Birch, pp. 38-39 (also 'The Development of the Tradition on the Anointing of Saul', pp. 64-65); Alter, p. 49; Hertzberg, p. 82; Shaviv, 'Nabi and Nagid', p. 112; Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 50-51; Gordon, p. 114; McCarter, pp. 178-179; Mauchline, p. 96.

[33] See Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, p. 158-63. McCarter, p. 179, considers the view of Mettinger to be plausible and similarly concludes that the title *nagid* refers regularly in the biblical tradition to 'king designate'.

[34] Shaviv, 'Nabi and Nagid', p. 112, has also made this point. He points out in his own analysis of Mettinger's theory that the latter has no option but to conclude that the biblical tradition's presentation of Saul's election as *nagid* is a later reworking "since there was no mortal king before Saul who could designate him as heir". On this basis Shaviv concludes that Mettinger's thesis is untenable.

proclaimed as the future king by God.[35] In this way the title *nagid* (נגיד) is deemed to originate not in secular usage (designation by a ruling monarch) but rather in the theological one (announced/designated by God).[36] The difficulty with this view of the term is that there are certain kings who are designated *nagid* (נגיד) not by God but by a reigning king, as Mettinger points out.[37] Given this lack of consistency in the way in which the term is used in the biblical texts, it is tempting to return to the more general definition of the term as simply a leader designated but not yet in his post. However, even at this most basic of levels the theory is problematic if one bears in mind the case of Hezekiah who is described as *nagid* (נגיד) despite having been reigning for some time.[38] This would appear to suggest that the title *nagid* (נגיד) cannot be understood as signifying a king-elect whether appointed by a secular or a divine authority.

There are, then, three broad ways to understand the title *nagid* (נגיד); as literally 'one in front' such as a military commander, as more generally 'one in front' such as a prominent member of society, or as 'one who has been designated' such as a king-elect. In the light of the objections to the third of these, I propose at this preliminary stage to understand the title to refer to 'one in front' in a broad sense that may include either or both of the first two interpretations.

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[35] See Birch, 'The Development of the Tradition on the Anointing of Saul', pp. 64-65; also Hertzberg, p. 82; Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 50-51.
[36] See Shaviv, 'Nabi and Nagid', p. 112, for more on this point.
[37] See for example the designation of Solomon (1 Kgs. 1: 35) and Abijah (2 Chron. 11: 22) as *nagid* by the reigning monarch to single out his successor to the exclusion of others. For further discussion see Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, pp. 159-62.

The nature of the relationship between these two terms has been discussed by a number of scholars, some of whom have attempted to clarify the distinction between *melek* (מלך) understood as 'king' and *nagid* (נגיד) understood as 'king-elect'. The meaning and relationship between these two terms were considered in an influential work by Alt.[39] He established a distinction between the two terms on the grounds of a religious and political differentiation of roles which were present simultaneously in an individual's particular leadership. Thus *nagid* (נגיד) was assumed to relate to the religious calling to leadership whilst *melek* (מלך) was thought to designate the office conferred by public acclamation:

> The accounts of Saul's rise to power reveal very clearly in other expressions that they intend to differentiate between what Saul had become through the designation of Yahweh and the status he was given by the acclamation of the people; as the chosen of Yahweh he was merely called *nagid*, and it was the nation which conferred upon him the title of *melek*, 'king'. A clear distinction is made between his divine ordination and human rank.[40]

For Alt, then, these two terms are closely related to one another in the career of a leader and do not refer to radically opposed forms of leadership.

Flanagan understands the relationship between these terms somewhat differently. He proposes that Saul and David were chiefs who provided

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[38] See 2 Kgs. 20: 5 where God is described as instructing the prophet Isaiah to "Turn back, and say to Hezekiah *nagid* of my people [...]".
[39] Alt, 'Formation of the Israelite State'.
[40] Alt, 'Formation of the Israelite State', p. 254. Hertzberg, p. 82, similarly deems *nagid* to reflect theological recognition to which is added political honour by the acclamation of the people so that the *nagid* is then called *melek* or king. Whilst it might be possible to make this sort of association between the two terms in the case of Saul's appointment as leader, as has

leadership for a family based non-egalitarian society. In particular, he suggests a socio-political evolutionary analysis in which Saul's leadership is best understood as a chiefdom, David's as that of a transitional form of leadership from chiefdom to State, with the achievement of full Statehood during the reign of Solomon.[41] According to Flanagan, the terms *melek* (מלך) and *nagid* (נגיד) reflect this evolutionary development of Israelite political organization.[42] Thus he suggests that these terms refer to clearly distinguishable forms of political leadership from different periods of Israelite history rather than to closely related periods within the leadership of a particular individual. The fact that both terms are applied to Saul and David presumably reflects the fact that, on the view that history can be reconstructed from the narratives, these leaders were active during a transitional phase of Israelite political history in which the categories become blurred. On the basis of Flanagan's discussion, one might say that *nagid* (נגיד) refers to a chief while *melek* (מלך) refers to a king, each term referring to a clearly different form of political leadership.[43]

It could be argued, however, that the difference between these two terms should not be taken to refer to any such substantial difference. Instead, it might be suggested that the difference simply reflects two source documents

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been noted above, this sort of approach is not more widely applicable to those other 'kings' of whom the titles are also applied.

[41] See Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel'.

[42] See Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel', pp. 161-62.

[43] In one passage Flanagan appears to suggest some form of evolution of the meaning of *nagid* itself (p. 162). However he does not develop this idea which would appear to confuse his earlier definition of *nagid* as chief (p. 161). In the light of his overall project his claim that there was a "gradual evolution in the role of the *nagid* as chiefdom gave way to monarchy" (p.

used by the editor, deriving from different time periods in which different terms were used to refer to a king. Alternatively it might suggested that it simply reflects a desire for literary variety on the part of the author(s) and no substantial difference in meaning is implied. However, if one considers other instances of *nagid* (נגיד) in the biblical literature one can see that this term is often used to refer a variety of important individuals who are not kings – in particular priests, military leaders, and functionaries.[44] This suggests that throughout the biblical text *nagid* (נגיד) was conceived with a meaning in some sense broader than that assigned to *melek* (מלך) which is restricted to 'king'.[45]

For Flanagan, there is an evolutionary development from chiefdom to kingdom which is reflected in the use of these terms in the biblical account. He suggests that "studies of the cultural evolutionary and succession patterns of other societies have described similar transitional circumstances and have concluded that such times were periods when the society was led by chiefs".[46] Many of the elements deemed by such studies to be characteristic of chiefdoms and distinguishing them from both egalitarian and State socio-political systems are said to be documented in Israel.[47] Consequently Flanagan

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162) is somewhat confused and should presumably be read as a 'gradual evolution as chiefdom gave way to monarchy'.

[44] For examples of the application of *nagid* to functionaries see for example Jer. 20: 1; Neh. 11: 11; 1 Chron. 9: 11; 2 Chron. 31: 12 (in relation to priests); 1 Chron. 12: 27; 13: 1: 27:4 (in relation to military personnel); 1 Chron. 26: 24; 2 Chron. 28: 7 (other functionaries).

[45] See for example the passages cited in BDB, pp. 572-73. Of course *nagid* may also be used of kings, but if it is used of other individuals as well then its meaning appears to be broader than merely king.

[46] Ibid., p. 163.

[47] Ibid., p. 163. Flanagan draws specific attention to the work of Renfrew, who cites twenty characteristics of chiefdoms which are detailed on pp. 146-47 in Flanagan's work.

concludes that this suggests the presence of chiefs in Israel and accounts for the absence of "a strong centralized monopoly of force equipped with laws during the time of Saul".[48]

Flanagan's analysis of Saul is centred upon a conception of chiefdom that may be outlined as follows: (a) unlike egalitarian societies, chiefdoms exhibit certain rules and taboos that surround the chief; (b) a new hierarchical social system is established with the appearance of a chiefdom which contrasts it with the equality that marked the previous egalitarian social organization; (c) the chief is inevitably at the pinnacle of this new ranking system with others ranked according to their genealogical nearness to him; (d) emphasis is placed on the importance of the chief's role as redistributor and warrior-intensifier; (e) the fact that the chief and the priest are frequently the same person lends a theocratic character this socio-political organization that is absent from the previous social organization; (f) social stratification into occupational classes is absent in a chiefdom which does not have a highly organized bureaucratic network with a professional ruling class. Rather, the chief swallows up these functions in himself.

Flanagan's analysis, though obviously having drawn upon a variety of anthropological sources, is heavily dependent upon the work of Elman Service.[49] In order to understand fully Flanagan's own assumptions about chieftainship we will need to consider the work of Service in more detail. It

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., pp. 142-43: "Israel's evolution from tribal organization toward full kingship will be reviewed in the light of cultural evolutionary theory, such as that of Service".

shall become clear in what follows that the criteria ascribed by Flanagan to the chiefdom are evident also in Service.

2. Service's Conception of the Chief

Elman Service suggests that it is possible to delineate three phases in the evolution of the socio-political organization of a given social system.[50] Segmental or egalitarian social structure (in which bands and tribes are subsumed as one category) gives way to the growth and development of the chiefdom, which in turn precedes the foundation of the State. According to Service's analysis, a chiefdom is seen as a necessary and intermediate stage that lies between simple egalitarian society and the State.

Service characterizes egalitarian societies as those systems with a non-hierarchical social structure. The society is 'segmented' into various kinship groupings which are 'egalitarian' or equal in relation to one another.[51] That is to say, there is, more specifically, a marked absence of any "formal hierarchy of authority or power above the level of individual families".[52] Service suggests that one of the characteristics of this system of social organization is the lack of any permanent, centralized leadership structure. This is not to deny

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[50] Service, *The Origins of the State and Civilization. The Process of Cultural Evolution* . In his earlier work, *Primitive Social Organization. An Evolutionary Perspective*, Service suggests four rather than three evolutionary stages in human cultural development from simple to more complex forms. These are bands, tribes, chiefdoms and the state. Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society: An Essay in Political Anthropology*, also delineates a four stage evolution of socio-political organization: egalitarian, ranked, stratified and the state societies. These stages reflect the progressive emergence of centralized leadership and the existence of a legalized monopoly of power to back it up

[51] *The Origins of the State and Civilization*, pp. 3-4.

that there is some sort of leadership system in place, however primitive. Rather, it is simply to state that any leadership is of a transitory nature. A particular individual might lead the social group of band or tribe in his own field of competence, but this is on what might be described as an essentially *ad hoc* basis.[53] As and when the need arises, an individual renowned and held in high esteem for his courage and expertise in war, for example, might act as campaign leader in some military engagement. The leader under these circumstances retains the position only for so long as he is respected within the group. An individual's authority does not extend to the ability to command and have his word obeyed however. Rather, he is followed only voluntarily and has no means with which to ensure that the group does his bidding: "Since he is an authority without formal status, the position must be based entirely on personal qualities. This in turn would mean that different activities or different contexts would probably bring different persons to the fore".[54]

Service argues that there is a movement towards, in some egalitarian or segmentary societies, a more hierarchical system of social structure. In particular, he suggests that there is a movement towards a more permanent leadership structure. Service claims that a 'big-man' appears within the egalitarian social structure who acts as leader. This position is essentially won through an individual's standing within the community so that a man's personal qualities form the basis of his authority. Service suggests that this standing could be won and sustained through a show of superiority by a

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[52] Ibid., p. 71.
[53] Ibid.

number of means so that the big-man might gather around himself a group of followers. Demonstration of dancing ability, gift-giving, as well as prowess in warfare are named by Service as apparently important instituted occasions for such a show of superiority. Gift-giving, Service suggests, is particularly significant. The generosity of the big-man is capable of instituting a sense of obligation in the receiver so that the big-man is able to establish a following within the society.[55] Service stresses however, that the big-man mode of leadership is in no way a formalized leadership arrangement. That is to say, according to Service's hypothesis, the people might feel obligated to their leader, but this is by no means a legal obligation. In this way the big-man and the chief are understood by Service as stepping stones towards fully fledged State organization in which such an obligation would be regulated by institutions. Over time, Service argues, the big-man would also like to see his descendants hold a similar position of authority within society, and there follows the development of an expectation that their charismatic qualities and the respect felt towards them by the community will be inherited by their sons, especially the first born. Inevitably, Service argues, these sons feel a certain pressure to succeed and demonstrate particular strengths comparable to those of their father. Nevertheless, it remains the case that it is *only* through acts which have elevated the individual above the rest of the group that any person

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[54] *The Origins of the State and Civilization*, p. 50. See also pp. 55-70.

[55] Ibid., pp. 72-3. Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, suggests that the big-man makes himself leader by making others followers. This is achieved, according to Sahlins, by often "calculated disposition of his wealth which puts people under obligation to him and constrains their circumspection" (p. 22). As we shall see, a different interpretation is given by Pierre Clastres. He acknowledges the institution of a debtor-creditor relationship but with the respective positions reversed.

will attain, and indeed retain, the position as leader.[56] The hope for a hereditary leadership structure does not translate into an automatic assumption of office.[57] This 'big-man' social structure, Service suggests,

> may resemble an embryonic *chiefdom* [...] leadership is centralized, statuses are arranged hierarchically, and there is to some degree a hereditary aristocratic ethos. The big-man's group is much smaller [...] but a more important distinction is that since it rests on a purely personal form of power it is short-lived and unstable as a structure. Above all, [... the big-man] has no formal means to enforce his authority and his command elicits only a voluntary response from his followers.[58]

In Service's analysis, the significant distinction between this phase of 'big-man' social organization within egalitarian societies, and that of chiefdom rests on the development of a depersonalized and hereditary leadership. What has in egalitarian society been an achieved status is transformed, he argues, into an ascribed status. A permanent and institutionalized office of leader – the chief – replaces the previously fluid leadership position. The *expectation* that the successes and abilities of the 'big-man' will be inherited by his sons is eventually stabilized, becoming a custom and then a rule.[59] In Service's view, the qualities of the leader's hereditary successors are absent from this new

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[56] Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society*, shares this evaluation of the big-man leadership structure. He suggests that the power of the big-men "is as fragile as their last successful party" (p. 232).
[57] *The Origins of the State and Civilization*, pp. 73-74.
[58] Ibid., p. 74.
[59] Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, agrees with this view when he states that: "the chief does not make his pre-eminence, so much as come into it" (p. 21). He further demonstrates this point when he suggests that where the big-man is "forced to engage in every kind of maneuover to accumulate wealth and tactfully distribute it to engender personal loyalties, the chief has a matter of noble due a lien on the allegiance and goods of his people" (p. 26).

equation.[60] The position of leader develops, in the chiefdom, into an inherited office. That is to say, a person might carry out the functions of leader either successfully or inadequately, but regardless of this he will retain the position. "The position exists independently of the particular qualities of the person filling it".[61]

Service argues that a principle underlying cause of this movement towards a centralized and permanent office of leadership is the role of redistribution; "chiefdoms are *redistributional societies* with a permanent central agency of coordination".[62] Many chiefdoms arise, he suggests, in those regions where exchange is important and gives rise to various local specializations in production. Geographical and ecological circumstances promote the development of a redistributional economy which, for its effectiveness, incorporates a centrally coordinated redistributional network. Produce which is unavailable through its own natural resources to one group is brought in from another which in turn lacks certain products. A system of exchange develops, resulting eventually a local specialization and the production of a surplus for exchange. Within this system the chief functions as redistributor, acting as an intermediary between his own group and some other group, organizing and directing exchanges. The chief, according to Service, receives a surplus which he stores, exchanging at some point for some other product, and then eventually redistributing this amongst his own people when the need arises. As the redistributional system becomes a more significant component

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[60] On this point, Pierre Clastres will disagree, suggesting that instead the successors will be dropped if they fail to perform.

in the economical system of the society, the (re)distributor-chief becomes increasingly important. The more stable the leadership, the greater the possibility for extending the exchange system. Service suggests that dependence upon this system is then allied to dependence upon the person of the chief.[63] Effective redistribution requires the continued existence of the redistributor. The success of the leader results in considerable exaltation of his status in the minds of his many followers.[64] As Flanagan states, according to Service's thesis,

> A reciprocal and spiralling relationship is established in which a leader's traits inspire the group's dependence. The dependency in turn enhances the role of the leader so that his success guarantees even greater dependence, and so on, until the role becomes institutionalized into an office.[65]

This creation of an office of leader, the chief, does not simply result in the establishment of one exalted position within what remains an essentially egalitarian social system. Rather, according to Service, it instigates an overarching hierarchical system of control which marks a radical break with the previously egalitarian social system with a transition to a social organization dominated by a 'conical clan' or *ramage* system which institutes social inequality. According to Service's analysis, the organizing principle

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[61] *Primitive Social Organization*, p. 155.
[62] *Origins of the State and Civilization*, p. 75.
[63] See ibid., pp. 146 ff, and *Origins of the State*, pp. 75-80.
[64] *Origins of the State and Civilization*, p. 293: "the leader's position is strengthened by his doing the job well and fairly. In such early stages in the creation of a redistributional structure, the leader is very "accountable" to his followers [...] and the benefits that accrue to them, if he is a good leader, are highly visible and easily comprehended".
[65] 'Chiefs in Israel', p. 145.

becomes a hierarchy centred around the person of the chief so that the genealogical nearness of an individual to the person of the chief is paramount. Effectively, the high rank of the chief affects also the social ranking of every member of his family, elevating their social position. Implicit in this structure would be the priority that one would expect to be given to the first-born son who would thus rank higher than any other person in relation to the chief.[66]

Service asserts that,

> *ramages* [are] forms of kinship that involve the institution of inequality by heredity. But it may be well to point out that the ramage (conical clan) is typically characterized by political, or bureaucratic, differentiation accompanied by symbols of high-low status, but with no 'objectively differentiated degrees of access to the means of production' among them. That is, it is typical of chiefdoms that priests or chiefs (and their immediate families) do not produce foodstuffs, but accept or require 'gifts,' or taxes, or tribute for partial redistribution – (a part is withheld).[67]

Service's assertion suggests a high-low distinction within the structure of chiefdom society. From his statement cited above it would appear that within his conception of the chiefdom there is a class division based upon a relation to production. Society is apparently divided into two; those who engage in production and those who do not. Service's analysis suggests that those members of the society who rank lower within the social hierarchy labour not just for their own subsidence but also for those not engaged in production. Those persons ranked higher in the social hierarchy, the chief and his

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[66] See *Origins of the State and Civilization*, p. 79. See also, Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, pp. 24, 49, for a similar description of the conical clan system which is said to mark the chiefdom.
[67] Ibid., p. 212.

immediate family members, do not engage in production themselves but rather appropriate the production of others for their own subsistence. It is this social inequality which markedly distinguishes between a chiefdom and an egalitarian social structure. Unequal access to common property and office is characteristic of chiefdoms, and ramage descent groups mark the move away from segmental organization;[68] "a chiefdom differs radically from a tribe or band not only in economic and political organization but in the matter of social rank – bands and tribes are egalitarian, *chiefdoms are profoundly inegalitarian*".[69]

Service is able to delineate the chiefdom from the previous social organization of egalitarian society *primarily* on the basis of (a) an institutionalized and hereditary form of leadership, coupled with (b) a resultant hierarchically organized social system with the chief at its apex. How is such a conception of the chiefdom to be differentiated from what is, for Service, the subsequent phase of the State? In other words, what specific traits are found in the State but are absent from, or inconceivable in, chiefdoms?

Service states that the chief is invested with a certain authority within society. This authority or the power to influence the decisions of another is not marked by the use of force. Service suggests that a person or group might listen to the chief simply because he is the chief:

> because the other is *in* authority – as a priest obeys the bishop – or because he is *an* authority, respected for his knowledge. The power of

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[68] Cf. 'Chiefs in Israel', p. 149, for a more detailed discussion of this aspect of social structure.
[69] *Primitive Social Organization*, p. 150 (my emphasis).

> authority ideally rests solely on an hierarchical relationship between the persons or groups, so that obedience is not compelled by some kind of forceful bullying dominance but rather by custom, habit, ideas of propriety [...] that effectively reinforce and legitimize the power and make it acceptable.[70]

We can summarize Service's conception of the chiefdom outlined above as (1) marked by a hierarchical social structure not present in the previous egalitarian society, but (2) not having the institutionalized force that one would associate with the State.[71] Service suggests, for example, that the chiefly role as a legal authority sees disputes mediated by means of persuasion to establish compliance with a particular arbitration, but there is no suggestion that the chief is able at any time to force the litigants to accept a decision.[72] Service suggests that in his role as redistributor, the chief is afforded the opportunity to withhold or dispense goods as a means of influencing the decisions of a group. Those who support the chief in some particular endeavour might be rewarded whilst others less supportive might be pressured into supporting the chief.[73] Similarly the fact that the chief frequently subsumes the functioning of the priest offers a supernatural dimension to his authority. A chief might thus deal with acts against himself or his authority by a public reprimand, or else by threatening supernatural harm in his capacity as priest.[74] Service states in this connection that, "in a chiefdom [...] legal authority is likely to combine with

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[70] *Origins of the State and Civilization*, pp. 11-12.
[71] Ibid., p. 16: "Chiefdoms have centralized direction, hereditary hierarchical status arrangements with an aristocratic ethos, but no formal, legal apparatus of forceful repression. The organization seems universally to be theocratic, and the form of submission to authority that of a religious congregation to a priest-chief. If such non-violent organizations are granted the status of an evolutionary stage, then the origin of the state [...] is much simplified, turning on the question of the use of force as an institutional sanction".
[72] Ibid., p. 87.

this function still others of a political, military, economic, or priestly nature, and these are likely to give him various coercive powers".[75] In contrast to this, Service suggests that the State has a 'monopoly of force':

> a State, regardless of its developmental stage, is distinguishable from a chiefdom by the presence of that special form of control, the consistent threat of force by a body of persons legitimately constituted to use it [...] Personal force may be found at all levels, but in States it is the monopoly of only certain persons. Monopoly of force, as opposed to the power of a chief [...] who might necessarily hold an *advantage* of force, is important.[76]

Only those persons authorized by the State to enforce its decisions and put down opposition are endowed with the power to command force. Thus Service suggests that in contrast to the chiefdom, the State is marked by a far more structured control within society. Whereas in a chiefdom various bureaucratic functions are subsumed under the auspices of one leader, the State establishes an entire network of bureaucratic offices, the higher offices being occupied by those upper echelons of society.[77] Wherever a system of secular sanctions backed by force or its threat is established, carried out by a body of people enforced to use it, the State appears.[78]

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[73] Ibid., p. 293.
[74] Ibid., pp. 92, 296.
[75] *Origins of the State and Civilization*, p. 87. Here we can note an apparent tension in Service's account. If the chief does not yet have full political power then it seems paradoxical to talk of coercion. Perhaps influence or persuasion would be more appropriate.
[76] Service, *Primitive Social Organization*, p. 171.
[77] Ibid., p. 172.
[78] See Claessen & Skalnik, 'The Early State: Theories and Hypotheses', p. 16.

So, we can see that the distinction in Service's analysis between the chief and the State-leader is one of degree of power.[79] Once the chief has increased his authority to a total position within the group he effectively becomes a sovereign, institutionalizing his previously implicit power and authority. In this sense the chief is a proto-State leader. The difference is one of a development of organs of power from influence, through coercion, to total control.[80] It is due to this fact that Service is able to state that "both States *and* chiefdoms have the most necessary ingredient of law, a central authority that can create rules of behaviour, enforce them, and judge the breaches of them".[81]

3. Flanagan and Service Criticized

Many of those aspects generally agreed as characteristic of the State are, according to Service's model, also found in the chiefdom, although perhaps in an underdeveloped way. This is perhaps inevitable given his cultural evolutionary methodology.[82] Any system of analysis which is grounded in an understanding of human society as progressing through the stages of

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[79] Service is by no means alone in drawing this conclusion. See also Fried, p. 230, Claessen and Skalnik, p. 16 and pp. 630-31.

[80] A difference in kind would suggest that power/control rests not with the leader, whether of chiefdom or state, but with the people. Service suggests that an element of coercive power is available to the chief who has an *advantage of force* but not necessarily a *monopoly of force*. As Sahlins states, "If the state is a monopoly of force and the state of nature an equality of force, then the chiefdom is an intermediate condition, a majority of force, where the ruler usually has the commanding margin over any of his lesser fellows" (p. 92).

[81] Service, *Origins of the State and Civilization*, p. 90.

[82] For other discussions and criticisms of the evolutionary approach see Lewis, 'Warfare and the Origin of the State', and Haas, 'Cultural Evolution and Political Centralisation'.

primitivism at one end of the spectrum, to the pinnacle of the State and civilization at the other, will necessarily posit that elements of each successive state are to be found in that which precedes it. Service's conception of the chiefdom, by definition, contains within it the beginnings of the next phase in human cultural evolution; the State. Service states that the chiefdom is "a stage in social evolution occupying a position intermediate between tribal society and civil society". [83] The territoriality of the State – defined not strictly according to the institution and maintenance of physical/geographical boundaries, but also as the marking out of social boundaries, the dividing of society into various zones and the control of these zones of social organization – is found, if in a more embryonic form, in the chiefdom. This fact can be seen in a number of those aspects summarily outlined above under the auspices of Service's conception of chiefdom.

Service's model of chiefdom, which greatly influences Flanagan's own discussion of this system of socio-political organization, suggests in a number of ways that there is little to differentiate it from the State. The beginnings of a centralized and hierarchical system typified by the State are seen to be already within chiefdoms insofar as they are primarily redistributional societies. The fact that there is an established social centre denoted by the chief, towards and from which there is a flow of goods anticipates the centralizing tendency of the State with its vast bureaucratic network. Service also suggests that this chiefly redistibutional system is inherently unbalanced. The chief receives goods for redistribution but holds back a proportion for his own sustenance

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[83] Service, *Primitive Social Organization,* p. 159.

and also for that of his immediate family members. Access to the material resources of the society is thus unequal. In connection with this, Service also suggests that those members of the upper echelons of society – those who are genealogically closer to the person of the chief – generally receive as income tax and tribute from the lower social strata. This hierarchical social structure is similarly described as an attribute of the State. Claessen and Skalnik, echoing Service, assert that social inequality in the State is based primarily on birth with the relative distance from the ruler's lineage constituting the dividing principle.[84] Service thus establishes a division of chiefly society into two strata. This division might be said to be based principally upon the relationship to production. Economic support for the non-producing class occupied by the chief and his familial entourage is elicited from those engaged in production who toil not just for themselves but also for others. Claessen and Skalnik make a similar assertion with regard to the State. They suggest that the functioning of the State as an organization is possible only with the material support of the producers.[85] They state that:

> the early State is a centralized socio-political organization for the regulation of social relations in a complex stratified society divided into at least two basic strata, or emergent classes – viz. the rulers and the ruled –, whose relations are characterized by political dominance of the former and tributary obligations of the latter.[86]

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[84] Claessen & Skalnik, 'The Early State: Models and Reality', p. 638.
[85] 'The Early State as Process', in *The Early State*, p. 601.
[86] Claessen & Skalnik, 'Early State: Models and Reality', p. 640.

Thus the State as an organization is supported and preserved through the acquisition of the production of those members of the lower social strata. It has been suggested that this societal division represents the emergence of the State. Krader, for example, argues that "the non-divided, undifferentiated society is primitive society, the divided society is civilized society [...] it is the society with the State".[87]

The parallelism between State and chiefly society extends beyond the control over goods and production to control over the use of force within the society. Service suggests that the power of the chief over the remainder of the population extends only to the use of non-physical means to induce a voluntary channelling of behaviour. In contrast, he argues, the State is able to employ physical force instituted at the hands of a legally instituted body. All other non-instituted and thus uncontrolled force is prohibited by the State.[88] Although the notions of 'power' indicative of both these instances are very different, ranging from persuasion/threats at one end of a sliding scale, to the use of brute force at the other, both are means of exerting a principle of control over the actions and decisions of a person or group. In this way, the chiefdom, according to Service's conception, contains within itself the beginnings of an institutionalized agency instituted to maintain order and enforce the decisions of a central government.

Unlike the State, Service's chief has fewer agencies with which to institute these principles of control. The chief swallows up a number of otherwise

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[87] Krader, 'The Origin of the State among the Nomads of Asia', pp. 94-95.

disparate offices. The duality of the roles of chief and priest for example, have resulted in Service characterizing the chiefdom as a 'theocracy'. The attribution of some supernatural element to the person of the leader is also frequently applied to the sovereign of the State. For example, Cohen states that,

> certainly all early States have rulers ubiquitously believed to have supernatural powers, [...] to intercede between man and the gods for their people. Nevertheless, what should not be forgotten is the fact that such features are simply the elaboration of the religious functions performed by the local leaders in pre-State systems. Divine kingship is a particular form of such generally enhanced supernatural status.[89]

There is, in Service's analysis, a self-declared blurring of the boundaries between State and chiefdom: "States retain many of the characteristics of chiefdoms – each successive stage of evolution incorporates many aspects of the previous stage".[90] Flanagan seems to accept uncritically Service's conception of the chief and many of the other sources he uses (including Claessen and Skalnik) share similar a conception of chief, along with the same teleological conception of historical progress. As a consequence of drawing upon this conception of chief, Flanagan's description of Saul as a chief fails to advance significantly upon the traditional interpretation of Saul as a 'failed

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[88] Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society*, pp. 235, 238, and Cohen, 'State Origins: A Reappraisal', p. 36, also characterize the state as exerting control over the greatest amount of coercive force within society.

[89] Cohen, 'State Origins: A Reappraisal', p. 64. See also Claessen & Skalnik, 'The Early State as Process', p. 606.

[90] Service, *Primitive Social Organization*, p. 173. Claessen & Skalnik, 'Limits: Beginning and End of the State', p. 621, agree with Service on the point when they state that: "There is a marked continuity in the development of the early state. A complex social structure is already found in the chiefdom, where there are likewise already, aspects of legitimation enhancing the

king'. Consequently one might say that Flanagan's designation of Saul as a chief says not much more than describing him as a 'not-yet-fully-formed king'.[91] Certainly, as the description of Flanagan's reinterpretation of Saul at the outset of this chapter illustrates, Saul fails even as chief. Perhaps this failure is inevitable when Flanagan's conception of the chief is so close to the traditional conception of the king.

4. Clastres' Conception of Chief

In order to be able to explore the reign of Saul within a framework other than that of monarchy we need to find an account of leadership that does not define itself purely in relation to kingship. We can find such an account in the work of the French political anthropologist Pierre Clastres.[92]

The type of analysis represented by Service would be characterized by Clastres as presenting an essentially 'neo-theological' interpretation of primitive society. Service presents the chiefdom as an intermediate phase in a society which has yet to experience the apparently civilizing tendencies of the State. Such societies are defined as societies without a State and it is assumed that such societies are consequently at a purely embryonic stage within their evolution towards the State. Primitive society is described in terms of lack, the lack of a State.

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chief's position. Centralizing tendencies are found long before the emergence of the state, while earlier phases of development, too, are characterized by social inequality".

[91] See Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel', p. 145.

Clastres' research into systems of social and political organization might be characterized as, in short, stating that primitive societies, societies whose principal form of leadership is the chief, are *irrreducible* and *in opposition* to the State. Of fundamental importance to Clastres' hypothesis is the question of 'power'. The traditional ethnographical approach with its establishment of a scale of power – at the one end of the scale societies with power and at the other those societies where power is absent – is, he argues, flawed. This common approach betrays an underlying evolutionary postulate where the thought is that between societies with power and those without the transition is gradual and quantitative.[93] Clastres suggests that the model against which power is measured is, more often than not, that of Western civilization which conceives of power in terms of hierarchical and authoritarian relations of command and obedience. The bounds of power are thus set by coercion.

> For what is an embryonic power if not that which could and should *develop* into the adult State? And what is this adult State whose embryonic beginnings are discovered here and there? It is none other than the type of power to which the ethnologist is accustomed [...].[94]

In contrast to this, Clastres wants to suggest that power is present in all societies and within the confines of all social relations and that this power exists independently of violence and hierarchy.

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[92] Clastres' principal works include *La Société contre l'état* (1974), translated as *Society Against the State*, and *Recherches d'anthropologie politique* (1980), translated as *Archaeology of Violence*.
[93] See Clastres, *Society Against the State*, p. 10 (Fr. pp. 9-10).
[94] *Society Against the State*, p. 18 (Fr. p. 17): "Car qu'est-ce qu'un pouvoir embryonnaire, sinon ce qui pourrait et devrait *se développer* jusqu'à l'état adulte? Et quel est cet état adulte

Clastres argues that the State institutes a social division into those who command and those who obey, those who are masters and those who are subjects, those who do not work and those who work not just so that they might live but in addition so that others might live. Power is detached from society and held in the possession of a minority who might exercise it over and against the remainder of society. This minority knows and declares what is in everyone's best interest and puts itself in charge of imposing it. The State is thus thought to constitute a vertical and hierarchical ordering of social relations.

> What is a State? It is the total sign of division in society, in that it is a separate organ of political power: society is henceforth divided into those who exercise power and those who submit to it. Society is no longer an undivided we, a single totality, but a fragmented body, a heterogeneous social being. Social division and the emergence of the State are the death of primitive society.[95]

In contrast to the State, primitive society is characterized by the very absence of hierarchy, division and the subjugation of man. Rather, primitive societies are said to be marked by a purely horizontal plane of relations, so that "a distinct political sphere cannot be isolated from the social sphere".[96] In other words, Clastres' suggests that rather than power being separated from, and

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dont on découvre, ici et là, les prémices embryonnaires? C'est bien entendu, le pouvoir auquel l'ethnologue est accoutumé [...]".

[95] Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 165 (Fr. pp. 204-05): "Qu'est-ce que l'État? C'est le signe achevé de la division dans la société, en tant qu'il est l'organe séparé du pouvoir politique: la société est désormais divisée entre ceux qui exercent le pouvoir et ceux qui le subissent. La société n'est plus un Nous indivisé, une totalité une, mais un corps morcelé, un être social hétérogene. La division sociale, l'émergence de l'État, sont la mort de la société primitive".

[96] *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 88 (Fr. p. 104): "on ne peut y isoler une sphère politique distincte de la sphère du social".

exercised against, society as a whole by a minority, power resides within the social body itself so that it remains undivided. Furthermore, the holders within these societies of what would elsewhere be deemed 'power' are in fact 'powerless' insofar as they are not in a position to issue a command and have it obeyed, or to use force as a method of social control. Power, Clastres suggests, does not begin and end with subordination and violence. 'Powerless power' is non-coercive power – is the power of the chief. "Chieftainship is located outside the exercise of political power".[97] Power is therefore only an appearance of political power within the position of chief, since the chief has no power to wield over the community. "To hold power is to exercise it: power that is not exercised is not power, it is only appearance".[98] In other words, Clastres distinguishes between power in general (in the sense that Foucault has analysed power relations) and the specifically political power embodied in the Western State.[99]

If the chief's role is essentially an impotent one, then how does he function within the community? How are we to conceive of a leader who does not have the ability to prioritize his own will over the will of the majority? Clastres suggests that the chief is vested with a certain role within the community.

> He is responsible, essentially, for assuming society's will to appear as a *single totality*, that is, for the community's concerted, deliberate effort to affirm its specificity, its autonomy, its independence in relation to other communities. In other words, the primitive leader is

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[97] *Archaeology of Violence*, pp. 88-89 (Fr. p. 105): "la chefferie s'institue à l'extérieur de l'exercice du pouvoir politique". See also *Society Against the State*, p. 206 (Fr. pp. 175-76).
[98] *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 96 (Fr. p. 115): "Détenir le pouvoir, c'est l'exercer: un pouvoir qui ne s'exerce pas n'est pas un pouvoir, il n'est qu'une apparence".
[99] See Danaher, *et al.*, *Understanding Foucault*, pp. 47-49.

> primarily the man who speaks in the name of society when circumstances and events put it in contact with others.[100]

The chief instigates the (re)formation of alliances with those who are friends of the community and wages war with the enemies, together with maintaining peaceful internal relations. The character and skills of the chief are reflected in this role. The position of chief is attained and maintained, Clastres suggests, purely on the basis of personal qualities and 'technical competence' such as oratorial talent, hunting expertise, generosity, and the ability to co-ordinate martial expeditions, for example. The 'power' of the chief, if it exists at all then, is purely on a personal level, grounded in the prestige which comes from his abilities. If the chief were to be called upon to act as an arbiter of some internal dispute, he would, according to Clastres' analysis, have no means at his disposal to prevent a feud should his attempts at persuasion fail. If he fails to effect a reconciliation through his influence and oratorical talent the chief is not in a position to issue a command and so force compliance to his ruling. In Clastres' view, this "plainly reveals the disjunction between power and coercion".[101] The words of the chief by no means carry the force of law. His word will be listened to, but not obeyed, only in those situations where it complies with the desire of society as a whole. In other words, society does

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[100] *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 89 (Fr. p. 105): "Il est, pour l'essentiel, commis à prendre en charge et à assumer la volonté de la societé d'apparaître comme une *totalité une*, c'est-à-dire l'effort concerté, delibéré de la communauté en vue d'affirmer sa specificité, son autonomie, son indépendance par rapport aux autres communautés. En d'autres termes, le leader primitif est principalement l'homme qui parle au nom de la société lorsque circonstances et événements la mettent en relation avec les autres". Italics as in the French; omitted in the English edition.

[101] Clastres, *Society Against the State*, p. 30 (Fr. p. 28): "Et cela révèle bien la disjonction entre le pouvoir et la coercition".

not allow the chief to transcend his 'technical limit'. The individual as chief offers up his technical competence into the service of the group, and not the group in the service of the chief.

Throughout his work, Clastres repeatedly emphasizes this relationship between 'leader' and primitive society. He suggests that the chief is able to fulfil his role precisely because he has the support of the group, a support upon which his position is wholly dependent. The chief is not in a position to make a decision on his own authority which he then proceeds to impose on the community. Rather, it is he who responds to the will of the people. The chief's functions are controlled by public opinion. The intention to wage war, for example, is proclaimed only if society wants it. The prestige of the leader does not go so far as to allow his word to be transformed into a word of command. His words will be listened to only for as long as his point of view expresses society's point of view as a single totality. Under no circumstances can the chief issue a command and expect it to be obeyed. He is not able to know in advance that his word will predominate and be listened to.[102] The chief's power is marked by permanent fragility. At any moment he might be abandoned by the people in favour of some other individual. He is perpetually under surveillance by the group who are keen to ensure that his desire for prestige is not translated into a desire for power distinct from the power inherent within the social body.[103] Inevitably if the situation becomes such that the chief's desire for power is apparent for all to see, he is no longer tolerated

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[102] *Society Against the State*, p. 37 (Fr. p. 34).

and the people abandon him.[104] Primitive society is thus characterized by Clastres as the resistance of the establishment of a separate organ of power from within the social unity.

The interaction between the chief and the rest of society is marked by a spiralling debt-relationship. The prestige of an individual results in his being chosen by the people as their chief. The prominence and success of the chief contributes directly to his continued occupation of that position. An individual might be acknowledged as chief as a result of prestige won through war and his success in organizing and leading raids against the enemy of the society. It is then precisely these qualities which are fostered and harnessed by the group in the service of the group. The chief becomes "the effective instrument" (*l'instrument efficace*) of the group functioning in their service rather than the tribe in the service of the chief to achieve his own private ends.[105] The prestige acquired in warfare and so forth is, however, easily forgotten if it is not constantly renewed by fresh success. "The tribe, for whom the chief is nothing

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[103] Michel Foucault has suggested that panoptic procedures of surveillance are always concrete forms of the exercise of power. See *Discipline and Punish*, p. 249. In the light of this, we can say that in this case power still resides with the people.

[104] See Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 91 (Fr. p. 108). Sahlins includes this characteristic within his own conception of the big-man, so that one might suggest that Clastres' conception of the chief has less to do with that suggested by Service and shared by others, and more to do with their conception of the big-man. Sahlins suggests that the big-man is in danger of "overstepping the mark, and engendering a sense of dissatisfaction, defection or, as a last resort, destruction at the hands of his own people" (p. 90). However, Sahlins' own conception of big-man still falls back on the traditional conception of leadership insofar as it presupposes, albeit in an embryonic state, a flow of debt from the people to the leader. Thus Sahlins states that the big-man, by means of 'informal private assistance' to people, "develops about him a coterie of lesser men. Obligated to him, these people are responsive to his harangues and their production is put at his disposition. Culling goods from his faction he sponsors public feasts and giveaways. Thus the big-man becomes a man of renown, of influence if not exactly authority" (pp. 89-90). The fact that Sahlins conceives the big-man as creating a debt within the people suggests that the concept of big-man has not fully escaped the Statist model in the way Clastres model of chief does.

[105] See Clastres, *Society Against the State*, p. 209 (Fr. p. 178).

more than the appropriate tool for implementing its will, easily forgets the chief's past victories".[106] The chief's position is tenable only for so long as he continues to enhance and maintain his prestige within the group. In order to achieve this he principally uses generosity together with success in war.[107] Further success in wars desired by the group will serve to bolster his standing within the community. The chief desires a recognition that society alone can bestow or refuse. Thus the relationship of dependence is established at the outset. "The leader is in debt to society precisely because he is the leader. And he can never get rid of this debt, at least not as long as he wants to continue being the leader".[108] The people never relinquish their power.[109]

Clastres suggests that this debtor-creditor relationship is therefore significant in understanding social structures. He states that the very nature of society is changed according to the direction of the flow of debt between its members. "If debt goes from the chieftainship toward society, society remains undivided [... but if] debt goes from society toward the chieftainship, power has been separated from society and concentrated in the hands of the chief [...

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[106] *Society Against the State*, pp. 209-10 (Fr. p. 178): "La tribu, pour qui le chef n'est que l'instrument apte à réaliser sa volonté, oublie facilement les victoires passées du chef".

[107] Clastres' description of the characteristics of the chief shares some of those ascribed to the big-man by Sahlins. Thus both leaders are described as attaining their positions through their own efforts. Being unable to exploit others in order to create a surplus so that they might, through acts of generosity, gain the position of leader, the big-man and chief instead exploit their families and themselves in order to increase their standing and prestige within society. See Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, pp. 88-89, and Clastres' discussion of his conception of the big-man in *Archaeology of Violence* pp. 113-17 (Fr. pp. 137-43). In general one might say that Clastres appears to subsume the big-man and the chief into one category of leadership.

[108] Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 115 (Fr. p. 140): "Le leader est en situation de dette par rapport à la société en taut justement qu'il en est le leader. Et cette dette, il ne peut jamais s'en acquitter, le temps du moins qu'il veut continuer à être le leader".

[109] In this sense the spiralling relationship increases the debt of the chief to society. This opposes Flanagan's claim that there is an inverted spiralling debt that increases the dependency of the people on the chief, making the formation of a state inevitable. See Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel', p. 145.

and society becomes] divided into the dominating and dominated".[110] The State is thus recognized by a marked change in the flow of debt that is reversed from the chief indebted to society to society indebted to the chief. This is a crucial shift. Voluntary tribute becomes forced tribute, becomes tax. Clastres notes that "to hold power, to impose tribute, is one and the same, and the despot's first act is to proclaim the obligation of payment".[111] Clastres goes on to state that "where there are masters, where there are subjects who pay their tribute, where there is a debt, there is power, there is the State".[112]

The fundamental drive of primitive society, in Clastres' view, is therefore to ensure that a social division between those who command and those who obey is never established. In the words of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – whose political philosophy draws upon Clastres – it is "the mode of a social State that wards off and prevents the State".[113] To this end the chief is not there to command and no one is destined to obey. His word will be followed only insofar as it conforms to the will of the group. Clastres emphasizes

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[110] Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 116 (Fr. p. 141): "Si la relation de dette va de la chefferie vers la société, c'est que celle-ci reste indivisée, [...] la dette court de la société vers la chefferie, c'est que le pouvoir s'est séparé de la société pour se concentrer entre les mains du chef, [...] renferme la division en dominants et dominés".

[111] *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 116 (Fr. p. 141): "Détenir le pouvoir, imposer le tribut, c'est tout un, et le premier acte du despote consiste à proclamer l'obligation de la payer". For further discussion of the concept of tribute and its significance as a characteristic of the early State see Skalnik, 'Some Additional Thought on the Concept of the Early State'.

[112] *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 135 (Fr. p. 166): "Là où il y a des maîtres, là où il y a des sujets qui leur payent tribut, là où il y a de la dette, il y a du pouvoir, il y a de l'État". As we have already noted, in the tribal organization the triumphs of the chief are always soon forgotten, making his status precarious. In other words, he has no power because he has not created a memory in the population. So, for the chief to become a despot he must create a memory in the population so that his past victories form a permanent debt in the minds of the group. This relation between power, debt, and memory has been dealt with by Nietzsche in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 2 §§ 3-5 (= *KSA* 5, pp. 294-300). For Deleuze & Guattari's use of this see their *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 190 (Fr. pp. 224-25).

[113] Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 357 (Fr. p. 442): "le mode d'un état social qui conjure et empêche l'Etat".

throughout his work that it is society as a social unity which holds power and it holds power precisely as the means of maintaining that unity and preventing the emergence of a power separate from itself. In this respect, primitive society is not society where the State is absent, but rather, primitive society is a society *against* the State.

Clastres repeatedly emphasizes that his work is an attempt to overcome the traditional evolutionist framework of anthropological/ethnological research. He is highly critical of the 'neo-theological' interpretation of primitive society which defines such societies as societies without a State and that reasons that such societies are consequently at a purely embryonic stage within their evolution towards the civilizing State.[114] In Clastres' view this negative estimation of primitive society is flawed.[115] The emphasis, in his view, should be on *why* such societies do not have a State. He suggests that the answer lies in their absolute refusal to be divided into the dominating and dominated as opposed to the claim that it is because they haven't yet reached an appropriate point in their evolutionary development. "The politics of the Savages is, in fact, to constantly hinder the appearance of a separate organ of power, [...] to ward off the appearance in its breast of the *inequality* between masters and

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[114] See Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 90 (Fr. p. 107).

[115] Lévi-Strauss also criticises such interpretations of societies without a state: "Nothing is more dangerous than for anthropology to build up two categories, the so-called primitive peoples and ourselves" ('A conversation with Claude Lévi-Strauss', cited in Morris, *Anthropological Studies of Religion*, p. 278). Morris goes on to suggest that Lévi-Strauss came to argue that in comparing these two cultures we find two types of scientific thought and that the "savage mind" evident in the former culture is in no sense inferior (see p. 278). Society without a state is in no way defective. Rather, such societies are functioning according to a different model. See also Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, esp. pp. 3-8, 101-03.

subjects, between chief and tribe".[116] It is not that primitive society is without a State, rather it is *against* the State. The chief is not chief of a State. "*The space of the chieftainship is not the locus of power*, and the 'profile' of the primitive chief in no way foreshadows that of a future despot".[117]

5. Clastres versus Flanagan and Service

It should be clear by this point that the fundamental difference between the analyses of chief made by Service and Clastres lies in their differing attitudes towards social and cultural evolution. Whilst for Service the chiefdom is a necessary stage in the evolution of human culture which sees its culmination in the appearance of the State, Clastres is actively opposed to, and sets out to destroy, any suggestion that the chiefdom is a preamble to the State. Clastres states categorically that,

> primitive societies are not overdue embryos of subsequent societies, social bodies whose "normal" development is arrested by some strange malady; they are not situated at the commencement of a historical logic leading straight to an end given ahead of time, but recognized only a posteriori as our own social system.[118]

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[116] Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 91 (Fr. pp. 107-08): "La politique des Sauvages, c'est bien en effet de faire sans cesse obstacle à l'apparition d'un organe séparé du pouvior [...] en vue de conjurer l'apparition en son sein de l'*inégalité* entre maîtres et sujets, entre le chef et la tribu". Italics as in the French; missing in the English edition.

[117] Clastres, *Society Against the State*, p. 206 (Fr. p. 175): "*L'espace de la chefferie n'est pas le lieu du pouvoir,* et la figure (bien mal nommée) du 'chef' sauvage ne préfigure en rien celle d'un futur despote".

[118] *Society Against the State*, p. 199 (Fr. p. 169): "les sociétés primitives ne sont pas les embryons retardataires des sociétés ultérieures, des corps sociaux au décollage 'normal' interrompu par quelque bizarre maladie, elles ne se trouvent pas au point de départ d'une

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that, despite his best efforts, Clastres does not manage to free himself completely from the evolutionist assumption. Clastres' position might be described as founded upon two theses. The first is that primitive society has not failed to reach a certain stage in its development towards the State. Rather it is a society that actively seeks to ward off the State. The second is that when the State arrives it is in the form of an irreducible break rather than as a consequence of some gradual progression. He writes, "the emergence of the State brought about the great typological division between Savage and Civilized man, it created the *unbridgeable gulf* whereby everything was changed, for, on the other side, Time became history".[119]

Throughout his work Clastres assumes the existence and independence of a counter-State system of social organization whose function is to ward off something that does not yet exist since the *gulf* which demarcates the two principles of social organization is yet to occur. Deleuze and Guattari respond to this by saying that Clastres,

> tended to make primitive societies hypostases, self-sufficient entities [...]. He made their formal exteriority into a real independence. Thus he remained an evolutionist, and posited a state of nature. Only this state of nature was, according to him, a fully social reality instead of a pure concept, and the evolution was a sudden mutation instead of a development. For on the one hand the State rises up in a single stroke, fully formed; on the other, the counter-State societies use very specific

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logique historique conduisant tout droit au terme inscrit d'avance, mais connu seulement a posteriori, notre propre système social".

[119] *Society Against the State*, p. 200 (Fr. p. 170): "L'apparition de l'Etat a opéré le grand partage typologique entre Sauvages et Civilisés, elle a inscrit l'ineffaçable coupure dans l'au-delà de laquelle tout est changé, car le Temps devient Histoire".

> mechanisms to ward it off [...]. We will never leave the evolution hypothesis behind by creating a break between the two terms.[120]

In other words, Clastres' maintenance of the independence and pre-existence of counter-State societies suggests that they ward off that which does not yet exist. Surely however, State and counter-State presuppose the existence of each other. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari for their own part suggest that the two actually co-exist and interact. Clastres succeeds in moving away from the evolutionary notion that one stage in the social order necessarily leads to another, as exemplified in Service's work. However, Clastres continues to postulate that one mode of social organization comes after another chronologically, but he avoids claiming that there is *necessary* movement from one stage to another. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the chief has no temporal priority over the king. In other words, chiefdom and State are mutually presupposing yet opposed modes of social organization without any temporal or historical relation, let alone any evolutionary connection.[121] In the present context this is important insofar as evolutionary accounts of chiefdoms-kingships often tend to present the chief, not as a genuinely alternative form of leadership, but simply as a 'proto-king' or 'not yet fully formed king'. Consequently they do not offer a radically different framework

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[120] Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 359 (Fr. pp. 444-45): "Il tendait à faire des sociétés primitives une hypostase, une entité auto-suffisante [...]. De l'extériorité formelle, il faisait une indépendance réelle. Par là il restait évolutionniste, et se donnait un état de nature. Seulement, cet état de nature était selon lui une réalité pleinement sociale, au lieu d'un pur concept, et cette évolution était de mutation brusque, au lieu de développement. Car, d'une part, l'Etat surgissait tout d'un coup, tout fait; d'autre part, les sociétés contre-Etat disposaient de mécanismes très précis pour le conjurer [...]. Or on ne rompra pas avec cette hypothèse d'évolution en creusant la coupure entre les deux termes [...]".

[121] See *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 393 (Fr. p. 489).

from which to approach the figure of Saul. In contrast, Clastres' chief offers a conception of political leadership that is truly independent from the monarchical model.

It will be this conception of the difference between chief and king, namely Clastres' conception – slightly modified in the light of Deleuze and Guattari's comments – that I shall use to reinterpret Saul. In other words, I shall work with the traditional conception of kingship and Clastres' conception of chiefdom as two equally plausible yet opposed conceptions of political leadership, both possible at any given time. In the present context such temporal issues are of less significance as I shall be using these two opposed conceptions simply to explore the presentation of political organization in a literary text. By using Clastres' definition of chief it is possible to escape the traditional monarchical and evolutionary frameworks and will enable us to engage in a new account of Saul's leadership, one that will hopefully avoid falling back into the 'failed-king' or 'not-yet-fully-formed king' accounts that previous commentators, including Flanagan, have continually repeated if only implicitly.

PART TWO

Introductory Note

So far I have considered the traditional presentation of Saul as a 'failed king', an alternative presentation of Saul as a chief by Flanagan, and have suggested that this alternative account does not manage to free itself fully from the traditional paradigm. In particular, I have argued that Flanagan's social evolutionary presuppositions make his 'chief' little more than a 'not-yet-fully-formed king'. In order to overcome this weakness in Flanagan's conception of 'chief' I have outlined an alternative conception of 'chief' made by Clastres that, I suggest, offers a framework within which to approach Saul that is truly independent from the traditional paradigm of 'failed king'. In order to develop this claim I now move forward in Part Two to consider the details of the biblical account of Saul.

In Chapter Three I shall examine the account of a call by the people of Israel for a 'king'. In particular I shall consider those key attributes which are requested in this new leader and whether one might consider them to conform to the traditional conception of kingship. As a means of comparison in this regard I shall consider the characteristics ascribed to kingship in the critique by the prophet Samuel and, insofar as a king 'like other nations' is requested, examine Near Eastern models of kingship.

In Chapter Four I shall examine the three episodes detailing Saul's appointment as leader. In particular, I shall focus upon the different

terminology employed in the various accounts and discuss scholarly opinions concerning the significance of this.

In Chapter Five I shall examine the principal events during Saul's 'reign' as described in the biblical narrative and consider whether these events are most helpfully characterized as the actions of a failed king. I shall draw together these discussions, and make explicit the role that Clastres' analysis of political leadership might play in interpreting them, in the Conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CALL FOR A KING

In this chapter I shall examine the account given in 1 Sam. 8 of the inauguration of the institution of monarchy. I shall begin in Section One by considering how and why the people demanded a king. In Section Two I shall discuss the polemical account given about kingship which is attributed to the prophet Samuel in the text. These considerations of the text will focus upon the final form as we have it before us. Given that the request by the people is for a king 'like the nations', in Section Three I shall offer an overview of how kingship was conceived in theory and practice in those ancient Near Eastern nations which surrounded Israel, the setting for the biblical narrative. Finally, in Section Four I shall consider what the Israelite people wanted and expected from the king that they requested.

1. The People Call for a King

In 1 Sam. 8 we find a narrative account outlining a confrontation between the prophet Samuel and the people of Israel concerning the future leadership of Israel:

> When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges (שפטים) over Israel. [...] But his sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice.
>
> Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "You are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; appoint for us (שימה־לנו),[1] then, a king (מלך) to lead (שפט) us, like all the nations (ככל־הגוים)".[2]

The emphasis in the text here is for a king to 'lead' the people, apparently following a failure by the prophet Samuel's sons to provide an adequate system of leadership. The narrative subsequently goes on to describe how the desire of the people of Israel was not simply for a leader but rather for someone who would 'go out before' the people. In other words, the attributes required of this new leader are both civil and militaristic.[3]

In order to consider exactly what it was that the people are said to have wanted and expected when they called for a king, it might be helpful to examine briefly the immediate pressures that are described in the biblical

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[1] It is worth noting that the imperative form of the verb 'appoint' is employed here. We shall discuss the significance of this later.

[2] 1 Sam. 8: 1-5. Hertzberg, p. 72, argues that the Hebrew term here for 'nations' (גוים) is used as a means to stress the non-Israelite and 'heathen' aspect of the request by the people. He suggests that the monarchy is here depicted as representing a departure on the part of Israel from their special position "to sink to the level of others".

[3] 1 Sam. 8: 11-20.

account as having led to this call. In what follows I shall consider those internal and external pressures and what they might be able to tell us about the actual functions the Israelites were expecting their king to fulfil. Only by understanding *why* the people called for what appears to be a new type of leader and what they expected him to do will it be possible to understand what they expected from Saul and by what standards they would evaluate his success or failure in meeting those objectives.

(a) Stimulus towards the Monarchy

The opening lines of this passage from 1 Sam. 8 (quoted above), where we have a description of the inauguration of the institution of monarchy in Israel, begin with a description of the traditional and pre-monarchical system of leadership – that of the judge. The prophet Samuel, who has been described in the previous chapter as having judged Israel all the days of his life, is said here to be old. Consequently, Samuel is described as having attempted to pass on his own function as judge to his sons. The biblical account does not appear to present the sons of Samuel as having been granted any specific militaristic or political leadership role. Rather, the role ascribed to them in the text is apparently limited to that of judge as mediator or diplomatic arbiter in disputes. This step towards the establishment of a hereditary form of leadership has been described as a "little dynastic experiment".[4]

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[4] Gordon, p. 109.

A number of scholars have noted the reference in the text to the hereditary form of leadership already ascribed to the prophet Samuel and have seen this as marking a step towards monarchy. From the moment Samuel sought to pass on his office to his sons (in a manner normally attributed to a monarchy) judgeship is deemed to have failed.[5]

Perhaps the reason for the rejection of this hereditary principle is found in the description of Samuel's sons. The biblical account cited above goes on to describe how the sons of Samuel have failed to act appropriately in their appointed roles. The narrative describes the corruption of Samuel's sons who are said to have taken bribes and perverted the course of justice.[6] Put simply, the biblical account concludes that they have exploited their positions. As Eslinger states, "the maintainers of justice have become the perverters of justice".[7] The maladministration of justice described in the text is the complete antithesis of the commandment with regard to the function of the judge found in Deuteronomy which states:

> You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.[8]

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[5] See Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel*, p. 58; Jobling, pp. 62-64; Hertzberg, pp. 71-72; Mauchline, p. 88; and McCarter, p. 160. Jobling, pp. 63-64, states that "the last and greatest judge tries, in a sense, to turn judgeship into kingship by making it hereditary. As a direct result he does turn judgeship into kingship".

[6] See 1 Sam. 8: 3, quoted above.

[7] Eslinger, p. 158.

[8] Deut. 16: 19. See also Deut. 24: 17 and Exod. 23: 2, 6. For a further discussion see Driver, p. 67.

It is arguable that the author(s)/redactor(s) of 1 Sam. 8 are seeking to make plain the inherent dangers of hereditary succession, namely, that those successors to the position of power invariably abuse it and are corrupt.[9] The prospect that Samuel's sons should follow their father as judge is said to have been deemed as unacceptable by the people of Israel. Thus one might conclude that the author(s)/redactor(s) of the text identify the hereditary positions of Samuel's sons and their failure act in the appropriate way with the abandonment of the old regime of judges in favour of a king.[10]

This conclusion is in contrast to the interpretation of Edelman. In her view, it is not that the people have seen in the failure of Samuel's sons a failing of hereditary leadership but rather that they wish to move towards the establishment of "an unbroken chain of *effective* leadership".[11] Thus the request for a king like the nations is an expression of the nation's desire to "move away from the disastrous cycle experienced under the non-continuous form of mediating leadership represented by judgement to a permanent, unbroken form of mediating representation offered by dynastic kingship. A prevalent and apparently effective form of political leadership in the surrounding world".[12]

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[9] McCarter, p. 160, and Hertzberg, pp. 71-72, both share the view that the failure of hereditary succession lies in its openness to abuse by those who so gain positions of power.
[10] See Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel*, p. 63. In support of this conclusion Garsiel points to the repetition of the age of Samuel and the fact that his sons do not walk in his ways in vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-5. He argues that repetition is here employed as a device to establish a cause and effect connection. Thus, in the view of Garsiel, the behaviour of the sons of Samuel directly leads, in the mind of the biblical author, to monarchy.
[11] Edelman, p. 38.
[12] Edelman, p. 39.

Edelman distinguishes between the system of judgeship which we are implicitly advised in the text has developed under Samuel to an hereditary office and the kingship leadership structure which is hereditary by nature. The hereditary nature of kingship, she argues, will offer continuity and an effective form of leadership. Rather than military campaigns being led by judges who appear on an *ad hoc* basis, the people of Israel are looking for a permanent militaristic leader. However, it is difficult to see why, if Samuel had already instituted an hereditary system with the appointment of his own sons to judgeship positions, the people would wish to abandon this system in favour of another hereditary dominated social organization – kingship.

The biblical tradition appears to suggest that at least part of the reason for the request for a new mode of leadership described in terms of a king was in order to replace the inherently self-serving system of judgeship that they had come to know with the appointment of Samuel's sons. Perhaps the request to this extent is not for some radically new form of leadership but rather for someone who would conform to the model of judge as impartial arbiter and civic leader which the sons of Samuel had failed to do. Whereas Samuel's sons are portrayed as having acted in a manner which would serve their own self-interests, presumably claiming their authority on the basis of birthright, the people are described as wanting a leader who will act their behalf and who will serve their interests. In this sense, in place of a leadership pattern which one might say has conformed to the model of a tyrannical king, the people desire a leader who will gain respect rather than authority on the basis of successfully functioning as an impartial arbiter and military leader.

(b) Manner of the Request for a King

When we turn to consider the actual way in which the request for the appointment of a king is made, we note that the text ascribes the desire for this 'innovative' means of leadership as coming explicitly from within the body of the community itself. Thus we are told how the 'elders of Israel' gathered together an approached the prophet Samuel.[13]

Whilst the Hebrew Bible does not specify exactly who the elders were or what qualifications for such a role were required, the majority of scholars understand the elders to have been male citizens of stature, entrusted with important decision-making, who operated at a local level within the clan/lineage or family.[14] The 'elders of Israel' within the context of our text is therefore understood to mean a separate group within Israel who exercised a certain amount of authority and who should be considered here to be representing the views of Israel at a more general level and to be acting at the gathering as intermediaries between the people and Samuel.[15]

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[13] 1 Sam. 8: 4, quoted above.

[14] For example see McCarter, pp. 105 and 203; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 8 and 69; McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, pp. 99-101, 174.

[15] As Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties*, p. 35, states, "in Ancient Israel, every local community was a self-governing body ruled by the council of elders. This was the people's representative organization, which exercised supreme authority in the community, especially in the pre-monarchical period". That the elders functioned within pre-monarchical Israel is evident from texts such as Num. 11: 16 which states: "Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them". See also Deut. 29: 10; Josh. 8: 10 and 24:1; Exod. 3: 16-18 and 12: 21. However, it should be noted that the Hebrew Bible presents the role as continuing also during the period of the monarchy. See for example 1 Sam. 30: 26; 1 Kgs. 21: 8-14; Jer. 26: 17; and Prov. 31: 23.

The text in question makes it plain then that the 'voice of the people' played the decisive role in the transition towards kingship.[16] The king who is here 'asked for' will be appointed by Samuel, who is instructed by God to obey the voice of the people. The appointee, who is introduced in the next chapter, is of course Saul. It is perhaps worth noting here that Saul's name is etymologically linked to the root of the verb 'to ask' (שאל). On the basis of this association Saul becomes literally 'the one asked for' or obtained by request.[17]

A further point worth noting in relation to the manner in which the request was made by the elders is that it is actually stated as an imperative: "appoint/make (שׂים) for us a king". What has been deemed to be a request is in fact more than simply that – it is literally a demand by the people.[18]

(c) Requirements of the King

Having considered how the people are presented to have demanded a king from Samuel, we shall now turn to consider why they did so. That is to say,

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[16] Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties*, p. 48, states that "there must have been, in the rejection of Samuel's regime of [judge], a declaration that the monarchy was established by the people". Eslinger, p. 255, is of the opinion that the request by the people of Israel constituted a formal petition "calling for an end to the theocratic system with its fallible mediators and holy god". (See also, pp. 263, 278-279). It should be borne in mind when considering the view of Eslinger that in the ancient Near East the king was closely associated with the divine realm acting as mediator between the gods and his subjects. This is discussed below. See also Edelman, p. 39, who shares the view that, on the basis of the ancient Near Eastern model of kingship, Eslinger is mistaken in his view that Israel's request for a king was in order to move towards a more secular government.

[17] See Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel*, pp. 70 and 73. He points out that the author of the text has employed the root on four separate occasions "in order to make clear that it is the people who ask the Lord for a king". He cites 1 Samuel 8: 10; 12: 13, 17, 19 (p. 73). See also Klein, p. 76.

what expectations did they have of the king requested and exactly what functions did they expect him to fulfil?

(i) King as Judge

Firstly, it should be noted that the desire of the people is for a king 'to judge' or 'to lead' (שפט) the people. The use of this term in fact echoes the title given to the 'judges' that have gone before, including Samuel himself. It is possible that this is a deliberate attempt by the author to illustrate how the king requested will take over those functions previously carried out by the judge.[19] However the context of this passage suggests that they are not merely asking for another judge but rather for something new to replace the judges. Yet somewhat paradoxically it is not made clear exactly how this new 'king who will judge' will be different from the previous 'judges'. Perhaps Hertzberg was correct when he suggested that this new 'one who will judge' will differ from the previous 'judges' insofar as he will not be corrupt.[20] Thus the function of this new 'king who will judge' does not appear to be radically different from the function of the previous 'judges' except that he will be more trustworthy and less corrupt.

There is, however, some difficulty when we come to consider what the actual duties and roles of a judge were and therefore how the verb 'to judge'

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[18] See Edelman, p. 38, and Miscall, p. 47.
[19] Eslinger, p. 256.
[20] Hertzberg, p. 72. Hertzberg concludes in this regard that the king "is to be a just, incorruptible judge, as the contrast with the sons of Samuel is meant to show".

(שפט) should be understood. The Hebrew Bible gives no specific information as to what the judges actually did when they 'judged' Israel. 1 Sam. 7 for example describes Samuel as a 'judge' (שפט) of Israel. We find that he is represented in this text as fulfilling apparently more than one role. Samuel is deemed to have 'judged' Israel through prayer and sacrifice; under Samuel's judgeship the enemies of the Israelites, the Philistines, are defeated and Israelite territory recovered; and he is further described as administering justice 'on a circuit'.[21] The verb 'to judge' (שפט) appears then to have included judging in the strictly judicial sense and yet also extended to refer to leadership or governance in general. The fact that 'to judge' Israel incorporated also some sort of judicial function is made particularly clear, as we have seen above, in connection with Samuel's sons.[22] They are described as taking bribes and consequently perverting the course of justice, turning a blind eye to wrong doings for a price. No general leadership duties are applied to them. In other words, the verb 'to judge' has more than one meaning,

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[21] See also 1 Sam. 12: 1-6, which refers to bribes and appears consequently to confirm a judicial aspect to Samuel's own position as 'judge'. Ishida, *History and Historical Writing*, p. 38, states that it is generally quite difficult to find examples of judges acting as judges in courts. With regard to this reference in 1 Sam. 12, he states that opinions are divided on this passage which, he concedes, might be indicative of judicial activities (see ibid. p. 38 n. 5).

[22] References to the king as final arbiter in cases of dispute are found scattered throughout the texts of the Hebrew Bible. David is described as saying that he will intercede on behalf of a woman who has approached him and 'give orders concerning your case' (2 Sam. 14: 1-20). Reference is made at 2 Sam. 12: 15 to Israelites coming to the king for 'justice'. 2 Kgs. 8: 1-6 recounts the story of a woman who went to the king to lodge a claim for her house and lands which have presumably been taken over by others during a period of absence. The woman is referred to a 'enuch' who is given the order to ensure that the property in question is restored and that the woman is compensated for any loss of revenue incurred whilst she has been away. 2 Chron. 19 refers to the attempts by King Jehosophat to institute formalised judicial system which saw the appointment of judges.

indicating as it does to lead or govern together with, to a certain extent at least, certain judicial functions.[23]

The demand by the people for a king 'to judge' (שׁפט) them is perhaps best understood as incorporating two main characteristics. On the one hand the people request a king who will act in some mediatory capacity as a judge or arbiter in disputes, yet they also request a king who will govern or lead them as a civic leader (perhaps in a more centralized manner than had previously been experienced).[24]

(ii) King as Military Leader

A second desire in the request for a king is that he should be someone who would go out before the people and fight their battles for them.[25] In other words, of fundamental importance in the biblical account of the king and his function was as a leader during times of conflict. Thus a significant role for the king would be to defend his people and their territory from aggression and encroachments into their territory by other peoples.[26] As presented in the text,

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[23] See BDB, p. 1047, where the verb is designated as meaning 'judge, govern'. A number of scholars have also understood the verb has having more then one meaning indicating at least these two separate elements; see for example Alter, p. 42; Ishida, *History and Historical Writing*, pp. 42-43; and Eslinger, p. 255.

[24] I shall return to these ideas concerning Saul as Judge in the Conclusion.

[25] 1 Sam. 8: 20, quoted above.

[26] As if to emphasize the importance of this feature of the monarchy the biblical tradition describes how David secured his kingdom with defeats against the Philistines (2 Sam. 5: 17-25), Moabites (2 Sam. 8: 2), Edomites (2 Sam. 10-12) and Ammonites (2 Sam. 8: 14). Solomon in turn apparently continues his father's enterprise with the establishment of fortifications as protection against enemy encroachments (1 Kgs. 9: 15ff) and by the development of the armed forces (1 Kgs. 9: 19 and 10: 26ff).

the people of Israel see a necessary connection between kingship and military advantage.[27]

A number of scholars have pointed to the external pressures confronting the Israelite people and, in particular, the continued threat of attack by peoples of surrounding nations. Of particular significance in this respect are deemed to be the Philistines.[28] It has been argued that the pre-monarchical social system consisted of a number of at least geographically disparate groups whose coming together proceeded from a common interest in the face of a threat of territorial encroachment and a loss of independence posed by their surrounding neighbours. In response to such crises a number of so-called 'charismatic' tribal heroes (the 'Judges') emerged as warrior-deliverers. It would seem to be unlikely that these individuals acted on the behalf of *all* Israel – *contra* the claims in the biblical account – since it was not necessarily the whole of Israel that was threatened at any one time. As a number of scholars have pointed out, this situation inevitably undertook a radical transformation when the neighbouring Philistine forces advanced and inflicted a devastating defeat on the Israelite forces, capturing the central symbol of Israelite faith – the ark – and destroying an important sanctuary at Shiloh. Gottwald states that, "owing [...] to a remarkable convergence of mutually reinforcing factors – unified military and political organization, flexible

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[27] As Mauchline, p. 90, states, the people were willing to put their trust "in military strength and that stable form of government which seemed to be offered by kingship".
[28] Jobling, p. 57, states that "Israel's experience of the Philistines necessitates some new way of theorizing about foreign rule. The judge theory is not adequate to the task". See also Hertzberg, p. 74, for a similar view. See McCarter, p. 60, and Gordon (OTG), pp. 41-42, where they consider this aspect of the kingship in relation to the victories over and against the

repertory of tactics and weaponry, a secure home base within easy striking distance [...] and a monopoly on iron – the Philistines were able to gain the upper hand over Israel in a seesaw struggle which precipitated the rapid emergence of the institution of monarchy in Israel as the only recourse if this unprecedented threat was to be met".[29] *All* Israel was now equally threatened. The realization that a successful defensive strategy by a unified fighting force was required gave rise to the demand for a more centralized leadership.

We have seen how the biblical tradition describes how the king demanded by the people of Israel was expected to fulfil more than one function. The king anticipated was expected not only 'to judge' (שׁפט) the people and act as a civic leader but was also to act on behalf of the people in battle as their military leader. In other words, the impetus towards a monarchy came partly as a result of external pressures. The threat of the loss of independence for the people of Israel, combined with the inadequacy of 'charismatic' judge-deliverer leadership patterns, coalesced in the desire for a leader acceptable to all and capable of leading a successful joint campaign.

Philistines described in 1 Samuel 7. The suggestion there seems to be that the people have survived thus far without a king in dealing with military emergencies.

[29] Gottwald, *Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 415. On the Philistines as an external impetus towards monarchy see also Alt, 'Formation of the State', pp. 238-239; Jobling, pp. 50 and 57; Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 131-134; Gordon (OTG), pp. 41-42; Birch, p. 11; Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 439; and McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*, p. 104.

2. Samuel's Account of Kingship

(a) The Text

In the biblical narrative Samuel is told by God to listen to the voice of the people in their request for a king. However, this is accompanied by the instruction that he should "solemnly warn them and show them the way of the king who shall reign over them".[30] The request of the people is granted by God and there follows the recital by Samuel of the characteristic practice of kingship:

> "This will be the way of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots;[31] and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields

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[30] 1 Sam. 8: 9 (העד תעיד בהם והגדת להם משפט המלך אשר ימלך עליהם). The term translated here as 'way' (משפט) could be understood also as custom, ordinance, or manner. It is also often understood as 'justice' or 'judgement'. Hertzberg, p. 73, posits that this term does not mean the 'rights of the king', that is to say the limits on the powers of the king. Rather, it should be taken as signifying the conduct of the king in the more general sense. McCarter, p. 157, and Klein, p. 76, both draw attention to the etymological resonance between משפט and שפט. As McCarter puts it, "The people have asked for a king to judge us and they are to be warned about the justice of the king". 'Solemnly warn them' (העד תעיד בהם) is properly understood as to bear witness in a court of law but more generally as to testify, protest or speak solemnly. The preposition ב used here is usually directed against a person in this sort of context - here literally, 'against them' (the people). See Driver, p. 67. McCarter, p. 157, similarly argues that this verse employs formal legal language.

[31] The reference to chariots is taken by Alter, p. 43, to be indicative of Samuel's desire to signal "the political shift he envisions, for chariots were the instruments of the monarchies with which Israel contended, whereas the Israelites in this early stage did not have this sort of military technology at their disposal [...]". It is certainly arguable that the possession of a large reserve of chariots to mass on the battlefield presupposes not only some sort of sizeable and centralized organizational power but further military strength. (see e.g. Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, p. 20, in the context of Archaic Greece).

and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers (עבדיו).[32] He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers (סרים)[33] and his courtiers (עבדיו). He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle (בחוריכם)[34] and donkeys, and put them to work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks; and you shall be his slaves (עבדים).[35] And in that day you will cry out because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day".[36]

As we can see, the biblical description of kingship here is entirely negative in tone. It is clear from this polemical account of kingship that the

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[32] The Hebrew term used is literally 'his servants' (עבדיו). However, most translations of the term as it is used here prefer officers, courtiers, or some other appropriate term in order to indicate that it it is intended to be understood as referring to someone of rank within the royal court. Alter, p. 44, shares the view that servants in this context refer to "functionaries of the royal bureaucracy, whose service to the king was in fact often rewarded by land grants". See also McCarter, p. 158, where he states that in his view the term is not to be understood as referring simply to some menial functionary but rather to a ranking member of the court. In support of this argument he refers the reader to surviving seal inscriptions from Israel and other northwestern Semitic cultures where the term appears following a proper name - this he concludes points to the servants in question being royal courtiers. One assumes that McCarter does not consider that every servant in the employ of the royal household for the benefit of the state would have need for a seal. On the significance of Near Eastern seals for understanding socio-political structures within a given society see M. S. Rothman, 'Sealings as a Control Mechanism in Prehistory'. In this paper Rothman focuses on the use of seals and sealings as administrative artifacts used to monitor the production, movement, storage and disbursement of items within a society under centralized control.

[33] The Hebrew term translated here as officers (סרים) is apparently derived from the Assyrian term meaning 'one at the head, officer'. Because this Assyrian term was frequently applied to those officials emasculated as a requirement of their position it acquired the meaning 'eunuch'. See McCarter, *I Samuel*, p. 159, for a discussion.

[34] The term 'cattle' (בקר) is an emendation of the Hebrew 'young men' (בחור). Cattle (τὰ βουκόλια) is used in the LXX and as suggested by Driver is more appropriate in the context given that the verse begins with reference to slaves and concludes with asses (see Driver, p. 68). The implication appears to be then that those things owned and used by the individual will be taken by the king for his own use. Driver adds that the 'young men' have been dealt with implicitly previously in this passage at verse 11 (בניכם, 'sons'). See also McCarter, p. 155. Weinfeld, *Social Justice*, p. 138 n. 31, adds that this interpretation is supported by certain Babylonian and Ugaritic documents which describe the exemption of certain persons from the conscription of oxen, donkeys and slaves for royal service. Incidentally these texts also refer to certain other aspects described in Samuel's speech including conscription into the army, appropriation by the king of produce and land as well as the imposition of taxation on his subjects. For a further discussion of these so-called *zakûtu* documents see ibid., pp. 133-39.

[35] The term translated here as 'slaves' (עבדים) could also be understood in the more general sense of servants. It is worth noting here that the passage has now moved from the expropriation of Israel's sons and daughters, land and produce, servants and animals to conclude with 'and you shall be his slaves' which clearly represents a marked change in

author(s)/redactor(s) of this biblical text consider the institution of monarchy to be oppressive. The portrait painted here presents the king as exerting supreme and fundamental control over the lives of his subjects. Confiscation of both persons, property and produce is described.[37] The repeated use of the verb 'to take' (לקח) and the fact that the affected object in each instance is placed in the Hebrew *before* the verb serves to stress the burden that kingship will bring.[38] One would think from the description of the king presented in the text that his sole drive is for self-preservation and enrichment. The fact that the institution is described as bringing with it some sort of militaristic administration appears here to be cast in a negative light. It may well be the case that this is in order to oppose what the people consider to be one of the key positive attributes of the king they request. It necessarily follows from their request for a king who will go out before them in battle that a prerequisite will be an army to lead. Perhaps the criticism here is not of the idea of an army with its system of commanders but rather that military service will be forced upon the people emphasized here with reference to the *taking* of

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emphasis. See Driver, p. 68, and Alter, p. 43. In Lev. 25: 39ff we find a prohibition against the slavery of Israelites by fellow Israelites.

[36] 1 Sam. 8: 10-18.

[37] There would appear to be here a connection to the rule of kingship described as having been written down Samuel and placed in the sanctuary and further the law of the king presented in the book of Deuteronomy. See 1 Sam. 10:25 and Deut. 17: 18-19 respectively. The passage in Deuteronomy states that when the people come into the land they shall request a king to be appointed 'in the manner of all the other nations around me'. This connection has been acknowledged by a number of scholars: See for example Blenkinsopp, 'The Quest', p. 78; Smith, p. 55; and McCarter, p. 156. For a discussion of Deut. 17 and its implications for the limits on the power of the king see McConville, 'King and Messiah'.

[38] See Driver, p. 68, on the placing of the object before the verb and also Alter, p. 43. Eslinger, p. 274, points also to the use of contrasting verbs and pronominal suffixes in order to emphasize the negative aspect of kingship. That is to say the text presents how the king 'will *take your* [...] and *give* it to *his* servants".

the sons of the people in order to create a military organization.[39] Perhaps Polzin is correct to suggest that Samuel's words are intended to demonstrate the tendency of the king to make servants of his people rather than to serve their interests.[40]

(b) Interpretations

When discussing this description of the qualities of kingship, the vast majority of scholars have tended to centre their studies around whether the description might best be considered as applicable to the models of kingship found in the ancient Near East, or whether it would be more appropriate to understand the description as a retrospective account of Israelite kingship. I shall now turn to consider these two understandings of the description of the ways of the king as exemplified by Mendelsohn and Clements, whose theories have influenced subsequent scholarship.[41]

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[39] It should be noted that texts recounting the organization of society prior to the foundation of the institution of the monarchy also refer to military organization and its divisions into units. According to tradition this is an organizational syatem Mosaic in origin. See for example Exod. 18: 21 and Deut. 1: 15. McCarter, p. 158, suggests that the military units referred to "represented the organization not of the professional standing army of the state but rather the forces conscripted from the people. The officers here referred to however, should probably be thought of as permanently recruited servants of the king".

[40] Polzin, p. 85.

[41] For a summary of some of those other distinct scholarly arguments relating to the ways of the king see Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties*, pp. 40-41.

(i) Near Eastern Interpretation

It has been suggested that the picture presented of kingship should be considered as reflecting not the aberrations of Israelite kings but rather, of the kings of surrounding nations. The Israelites "did not live in an amphictyonic isolation [...] they lived among other peoples and were inevitably subject to cultural influences. These were particularly attractive when they came from a prosperous people who had arrived at a more highly developed culture than they themselves had".[42] Mendelsohn, perhaps the most notable exponent of this view, posits that the denunciation of the institution of kingship is "an authentic description of the semi-feudal Canaanite society as it existed prior to and during the time of Samuel" and that the document is therefore contemporaneous with that period.[43] The references in the text to the appointment of Israel's sons to the king's chariots, to be commanders and so forth are compared by Mendelsohn to the system already operational within the Canaanite city-state which had at its disposal a small force of foot soldiers derived from the lower strata of social classes and also a group of professional warriors (the *maryannu*) derived from the upper echelons of society. In return for their services and the payment of taxes this group (together with high ranking officials and members of the king's own family) were granted crown lands which had been amassed by expropriation as a result of conquest,

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[42] Mauchline, p. 89.
[43] Mendelsohn, 'Samuel's Denunciation of the Kingship', p. 18. See also Hertzberg, p. 73, who also argues that there is a similarity between those actions of the king described in these verses and the conditions of the semi-feudal Canaanite society. Gordon (OTG), p. 43, points

confiscation, or purchase.[44] Mendelsohn points out in support of his thesis that just as the description by Samuel refers to the king's use of forced labour which is what he understands by people, cattle and asses being 'put to his [the king's] work' so too do texts from Ugarit describe how *corvée* labour (obligatory unpaid labour) was employed in order to establish and maintain monumental and public works such as temples, palaces, road systems, and so forth. Mendelsohn concludes that the biblical text represents an appeal to the people of Israel not to impose upon themselves a Canaanite institution which is alien to their own way of life.[45]

(ii) Retrospective Interpretation

However, others have argued that the list of the so-called 'ways of the king' cannot be used as evidence for the history of the early monarchy, contrary to Mendelsohn's view. Some scholars have preferred to view the material as a late reflection of Israel's experience with her own kings, particularly Solomon or his successors, here perhaps presented in a composite sketch.[46] Clements, for example, argues that 1 Sam. 8 represents the viewpoint of the Deuteronomists of the exilic age who were able to consider the Israelite

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out that F. Crüsemann also argues for the early origin, specifically the early monarchic period, of the 'king list'.

[44] Mendelsohn, 'Samuel's Denunciation of the kingship', pp. 18-20. For a list of the various tithes/taxes imposed by the Canaanite king on his subjects in order to maintain himself and the apparatus of government and its identification with the biblical reference to 'one tenth' of grain, flocks or vineyards see especially p. 20.

[45] Mendelsohn, 'Samuel's Denunciation of the kingship', p. 22.

[46] See Gordon (OTG), pp. 42-44; Birch, pp. 24ff; Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, p. 81; McCarter, pp. 161-162; and Clements, 'The Deuteronomistic Interpretation'.

institution of the monarchy retrospectively.[47] Whilst Clements acknowledges that the Israelites may have had some knowledge of the pattern of kingship in the surrounding kingdoms of the Near East at an early date, he does not consider that there was any evidence to prove that the list of the ways of the king stems from such an early date.[48] Clements argues that if it is accepted that the text of 1 Samuel is a Deuteronomistic composition and that its authors had made use of an already existing catalogue of royal oppressions placed here in the mouth of Samuel, then "it is most likely that this list is of Israelite origin, stemming from the memories of Solomon's reign".[49] In support of his thesis Clements highlights the fact that the biblical texts recount that Solomon exacted labour from his subjects in order to carry out extensive building projects including of course the temple.[50] The biblical texts also recount how the acquisition of chariots which was begun under David was stepped up by Solomon after his own succession to the throne.[51] Clements states that:

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[47] See Clements, 'The Deuteronomistic Interpretation', p. 399. He posits further that the Deuteronomists were not directly responsible for the list of the 'ways of the king'. Rather, the list was already current as a separate formulation which was incorporated by the Deuteronomists because it suited their purpose of denigaiting certain aspects of the monarchy as an institution. See also Hertzberg, p. 74, for a similar view of the pre-existence of the list of the ways of the king. The Deuteronomistic origins of the passage is acknowledged also by Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, p. 81. Clements offers a discussion of the scholarly literary analysis of the text at pp. 399-400. For a further discusssion of the various traditions of literary analysis and theories regarding the composition of 1 Samuel 8-12 see Mayes, 'The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy', pp. 11-17; Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 217-26; Eslinger, pp. 11-39; McCarthy, 'The Inauguration of the Monarchy'; Birch, esp. pp. 1-11; and Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties*, pp. 27-31. Birch states at p. 5 that "it can be agreed that I Samuel 7-15 shows ample evidence of a complex process of growth and development involving a wide variety of materials, but source analysis has not been successful in unravelling this process".

[48] Clements, 'The Deuteronomistic Interpretation', p. 401.

[49] Ibid., p. 409.

[50] For references to Solomon's use of slavery see for example 1 Kings 5: 13-16 and 9: 22.

[51] See 2 Sam. 8: 4 and 1 Kgs. 4: 26 and 10: 26-29 and Gordon, p. 110.

> "whilst it is not possible to assert complete conformity of the royal oppressions listed in I Samuel VIII 11-17 with the actual details of Solomon's political measures, there are adequate reasons for accepting that he was the ruler whose actions most closely complied with them [...]. He it was who endeavoured to establish the monarchy of Israel in the mould of a typical oriental despot".[52]

In Clements' view, then, the list presented in the text of the characteristics of the king reflects the excesses of Solomon's reign. Any reader of the text familiar with Israel's history would necessarily make this link.

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We have seen above that those practices enumerated in Samuel's denunciation of the institution of monarchy such as military conscription, *corvée*, appropriation of lands by the king, taxation of production, and so on could have been known to a writer who had observed the same in the Canaanite city-states or other states in the surrounding areas. We have also seen that these practices could also be understood as a reflection of the sort of rule endured by Israel during the reigns of her own kings, whether that king be identified as David, Solomon, or one of his successors. It should also be noted that scholars are unable with any certainty to date the text in question and inevitably will have no means of determining categorically the king whose rule is described. However, given the size and stature of the ancient Near Eastern cultures, it seems reasonable to assume that the biblical author(s)/redactor(s) – even if

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[52] Clements, 'The Deuteronomistic Interpretation', p. 403.

writing some time later – would have had a Near Eastern model of kingship in mind when they put into Samuel's mouth a denunciation of kingship.[53]

3. Near Eastern Kingship

As we have seen, according to the biblical account the Israelite request was for a king who was specifically a king 'like all the nations'. That is to say, the model of kingship to which the Israelites are said to have aspired is to that prevalent among the Near Eastern cultures of which Israel was a part.[54] In a recent study Day has argued that by the time of the Israelite adoption of the practice of kingship the highly developed kingdoms of the Hittites and the Egyptians had disappeared or become less predominant.[55] He therefore concludes that they could not have been particularly influential as regards the Israelite understanding and practice of kingship. Rather, he suggests that due to its geographical proximity to Israel, the institution of monarchy as found in Canaan, Syria, and Transjordan is naturally most likely to have been particularly influential on the Israelite institution.[56] Thus these would have formed the backdrop against which the biblical narrative is set. Day is correct

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[53] See Gordon (OTG), p. 44, and Polzin, p. 85-86.

[54] For Near Eastern texts I have, in general, relied upon the standard collection in English; Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (abbreviated to *ANET*). This contains references to publications containing the texts in their original languages. I have supplemented these with further texts collected and translated in Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, and Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*.

[55] Day, 'The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy', p. 72.

[56] Day, 'The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy', p. 72. Baines, 'Ancient Egyptian Kingship', p. 16, in a similar vein to Day has argued that ancient Egypt and the world of the Hebrew Bible are "far removed in scale and social institutions. It would therefore be difficult to offer a close comparison between the forms of kingship in the two societies".

to point out that empires such as those of the Egyptians and Hittites had declined to a great extent by the time of the inauguration of the Israelite monarchy.[57] Kuhrt has explained in her analysis of the Levant that between 1400 and 1200 BCE its small states formed part of the Hittite and Egyptian Empires. However, after 1200 BCE it would appear that there was some sort of crisis which resulted in the disappearance of the Hittite empire and the destruction of Levantine cities such as Ugarit. At this time Egypt's control of the southern Levant also came to an end and by the eleventh century it had withdrawn to its narrowest frontiers.[58] What is interesting to note is that for a time, these two empires exerted a considerable amount of control and presumably also influence over a great number of the small Levantine city-states.[59] Thus whilst it is arguable that they and other Near Eastern states cannot be understood as forming a direct line of influence at the time of the inauguration of the monarchy (the period in which the Saul narrative is set), their impact is likely to have been perpetuated long after their disappearance from the political scene.

It has to be borne in mind that the geographical location of Israel placed it at a very important point as regards major trade routes through the Near East.

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[57] The inauguration of the monarchy here is, for the sake of clarity, identified with the appointment of Saul. Whilst it is not possibly to give an exact date in this connection, we follow the proposed chronology of Kuhrt who suggests that Saul's 'reign' began around 1030/1020 BCE (Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 440).

[58] Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 385.

[59] Evidence for the existence of Canaanite city-states can be found in the so-called Armana Letters (see *ANET*, pp. 483-90). These texts dating from the fourteenth century BCE comprise almost three hundred letters addressed to the Egyptian king by various kings/princes of particular Canaanite city-states (including Jerusalem). The status of these small states as subjects of the Egyptian king are made clear in the frequently occurring formulaic words: "At the feet of the king, my lord, the Sun-god from heaven, seven times, seven times I fall, both

With Anatolia to the North, Egypt to the South and access to the Mediterranean, the Levant of which Israel might be understood as a commercial and cultural crossroads.[60] That Israel had direct contact with and undertook trade with other regions is suggested throughout the biblical texts. See, for example, the account of Solomon's building programme at 1 Kgs. 5 which recounts the exchange of goods with Tyre who, in return for wheat and oil is said to have provided timber comprised of cedar and cypress. Inevitably trade brought with it contact with many different peoples and it is likely that the culture of Israel was quite cosmopolitan in character. It is therefore quite possible that a great number of those cultures of the Near East played some part in the biblical author(s)/redactor(s) conception of 'a king like all the nations'.[61]

It is beyond the scope of this study to give a detailed and systematic exposition of the institution of the monarchy and its related apparatus in the ancient Near East.[62] What follows is an overview of the theory and practice of kingship in the ancient Near Eastern cultures, insofar as they form the cultural context in which the biblical narrative is set. The scope of this discussion will

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prone and suppine" (see for example *ANET*, p. 487). More often than not the purpose of the letter is to gain the assistance of the Egyptian King in a struggle against an enemy.

[60] On the importance and practice of trade and the incentives it offered for interactions between different regions of the ancient Near East see Rothman, 'Evolutionary Typologies', p. 7.

[61] Mendenhall, 'The Monarchy', p. 159, states that "We have [...] not only biblical evidence but also modern anthropological evidence that when a population emerges from a community to a political monopoly of force, it almost inevitably imitates models best known and accessible to it". He states further that the Israelite monarchy was an "imitation of [...] successful ancient empires" (p. 69).

[62] For a more detailed discussion and further references see the two volume study by Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*. A number of works have been devoted to Egyptian state and society in particular, for an introductory survey of the Egyptian king and the State and further references see especially volume one of Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*. See also Baines, 'Ancient

not be limited to simply those written sources of the areas immediately surrounding Israel, for the reasons outlined above. The various scribes and bureaucrats of the ancient Near East have left behind a copious amount of documentation recording various details of the society of which they were a part. In view of this, the description below will necessarily be cursory and generalized. We should be conscious of the fact that there will always be variations in socio-political organization and changes through time. We should also be aware that there are also those within any society who stand outside the frame of reference and whose own thoughts, ideals and practices are not documented. It does not necessarily follow that because something is not clearly documented that it is valid to deny its possibility. Many of the documents available to us are one-sided.[63] It should be noted that the texts reflect various political and religious viewpoints. A number of sources appear to have been instigated by rulers and therefore their content is coloured by the desire to praise their achievements and legitimate their position. Moreover, texts are inevitably not always contemporaneous with the events or persons they describe. So, for example, a text believed to stem from a period contemporary with the inauguration of the Israelite monarchy may have been influenced by events or social organizations and so forth from a much earlier or later period. Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that whilst many of the texts may be propagandist in nature they are still able to tell us something –

Egyptian Kingship'; Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship* and Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*.

[63] For further discussion see Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 220, and Stein, "Who was King? Who was not King?' Social Group Composition and Competition in Early Mesopotamian State Societies'.

the climate of opinion contemporary with the period in which the biblical narrative is set.[64]

The documentation available to us is derived largely from urban sites from cultures where literacy was not widespread and they may therefore provide information relating to the Temple and palace administrations of the ancient Near East, but it must be borne in mind that they provide only a partial and generalized picture. They are not a complete and fully representative account of the institutions, groups, and activities in a society.[65]

In this section I shall focus upon the nature of kingship in the ancient Near East and, in particular, the authority of the Near Eastern King and the functions he fulfilled.

(a) The Authority of the Near Eastern King

Interestingly, kingship as an institution appears to have been considered by ancient Near Eastern authors to have been ultimately divine in its origins.[66] Kingship is described has having been divinely instigated and, moreover, as having stemmed from the very origins of the universe. We find reference to this conception in documents such as the Sumerian Kinglist which states that

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[64] Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 260. See also Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, p. 46.
[65] See Stein, 'The Organizational Dynamics of Complexity', pp. 11-12.
[66] It is beyond the scope of this study to enter into any sort of detailed discussion of the relationship between king and divinity and the ideology of power. For an analysis of this subject matter see Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*; Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*; Needham, 'Dual Sovereignty' in his *Reconnaissances*; Abélès, ''Sacred Kingship' and Formation of the State'.

"Kingship was lowered from heaven" and that after the great flood, "Kingship was lowered (again) from heaven".[67]

This link between divinity and kingship was also applied to specific kings whose appointments were stated to have been at the instigation of the gods themselves who selected them from amongst other men. For example:

> When Ningursu, warrior of Enlil, granted the Kingship of Lagaš to UrukAgina, taking him by the hand from among the 36,000 people [...].[68]

The gods, then, are described as choosing or taking the hand of a king and, further, are sometimes described has having some involvement in the birth or upbringing of the king in question. Postgate points to the example of Eanatum of whom the Stele of the Vultures states that "Ningursu implanted the semen for Eanatum in the womb [...] Ninhursag offered him her beneficial breast".[69]

We may suspect that perhaps the purpose behind such affirmations was the desire by a king to legitimate his position. One might suggest that such instances would be more common in periods where there had been a break in the predominant dynastic order of succession – father to son. In cases such as these, where there was no apparent secular criterion for one man to assume a position of supreme authority over others, divine sanction was a necessity and

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[67] 'The Sumerian King List', trans. in *ANET*, p. 265. For the use of similar phraseology see also the Sumerian 'Myth of the Deluge' (see *ANET*, pp. 42-44).
[68] 'The Reforms of UruKAgina', text 14.7 in Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 268.
[69] 'The Stele of the Vultures', text. 14.8 in Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 269.

so legitimation through links with divinity was stressed with particular intensity.[70]

The application of divinity to kingship was not simply limited to the institution of kingship as such, but seems on occasion to have been extended to the actual person of the king. That is to say, rulers made claims to their own divinity. Most people are familiar with the Egyptian conception of the Pharaoh as being of divine nature, specifically 'Son of Ra' and the fact that temples were established for the worship of his immortal element – the royal Ka.[71] However, it would appear that this conception of the person of the king as being in some way divine was not limited solely to the Egyptian understanding. Day has recently posited that a similar understanding of kingship was to be found also amongst Israel's nearest neighbours, the

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[70] For similar analyses see for example Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 268-69, and Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, p. 63. It should be noted that divine selection was apparently not the only method available. That a king could be chosen by the general populace is discussed by Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 269-70. Perhaps one of the most influential scholars with regard to kingly selection by representatives of the people, the so-called 'Assemby' is T. Jacobsen. Jacobsen, in his entry 'Mesopotamia' in the collected work *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* describes how early Mesopotamian kings were selected for the position, at certain times of crisis, from amongst the population by a representative group the Assembly. He posits that this 'primitive democracy' grounded in custom and authority without the backing of force later developed into the organization of a real state in which the ruler commands authority and force to ensure concerted action by the population. In other words, the powers of the population were eroded and substituted by an absolute ruler. (see p. 173) For a discussion of Jacobsen's views see for example Marc van de Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City*. Mieroop argues for the contrary position reversing the traditional perspective exemplified by Jacobsen and positing instead that with increased territory political influence and independence of the cities and their representatives was increased. (see especially pp. 133-39, where Mieroop's theory is outlined). For a discussion of the composition and powers of the Assembly see also Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 89 and pp. 249ff. Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, p. 63, states that "kings seldom enjoyed the absolute power which scholars often readily ascribe [...] In the early period there were often councils of elders who had to be consulted on important decisions. Later, priests and above all, the military, brought a strong degree of influence to bear on the throne". Lambert, 'Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia', p. 67, concurs with this view of the important role of the military and posits, specifically in relation to Assyria, that should the king fail to provide what was expected the result may be that he would be removed from office.

Canaanites. He draws particular attention to certain Ugaritic Texts which, it is claimed, provide evidence of the king being understood as both 'god' and 'son of god'.[72] Day refers, for example, to the Ugaritic Kinglist where the names of deceased kings are preceded by the term '*il*' or 'god'. Day also points to the Ugaritic Keret text where king Keret is described as the 'son of *el*' or son of god.[73] It would appear that the first ruler to make a claim to divinity was Naram-Sin whose claim is expressed in his depiction in a victory stele with horns and further by his self-designation as the 'god of his city' (Akkad).[74]

The relationship between the king and the divine sphere was apparently further enhanced by his various religious duties. The king's responsibilities for his people/subjects were apparently considered to have been intimately bound up with his special relations with the god(s). Thus various offerings were made by the king to the god(s) on behalf of his people of whom he was the representative in order to retain the god(s) favour which would result in prosperity (particularly in the form of good harvests) and social order.[75] A number of scholars have also highlighted in this connection the role of the

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[71] For a discussion of the divinity of the Egyptian kings see Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, pp. 4-15 (also considers Sumero-Akkadian, Hittite and Western Semitic kingship in a similar vein), and Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*.

[72] Day, 'The Canaanite Inheritance of the Hebrew Monarchy'. That a ruler's claim to divinity might be expressed by his own name being preceded by the divine determinative is also confirmed by Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 266. He suggests two further methods: the king's headress might be represented by horns which were the mark of a god in the iconography, and in a variety of ways evidence may be seen that he was worshipped by the population in a cult of his own. One should note that Postgate refers to the claim by rulers of divinity as an 'anomaly' (ibid).

[73] See Day, 'Canaanite Inheritance', p. 82. Translations of the Ugaritic Keret text can be found in *ANET*, pp. 142-49, and also in Matthews & Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, pp. 76-81. On Ugarit rulers and their identification with the gods see also Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, pp. 80-91.

[74] See Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 267. For further discussion see also Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, p. 67.

[75] For further discussion of offerings see Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 262-63.

king in various ritual re-enactments such as the so-called 'sacred marriage festival' which is said to have resulted in the renewal of the fertility of the land.[76] A corollary of this was that the king could credit any subsequent success to himself. There are frequent references in the texts available to us which point to the king as the bringer of prosperity.[77]

Another connection with the divine and addition to the authority of the ancient Near Eastern king was in the construction of various temples to the gods. An illustration of this task and its significance can be found in the descriptions of Gudea of Lagaš who describes how he built a principle shrine to Ningirsu in order to please the god and rescue Lagaš from a water shortage. The text describes how completion of the temple shall bring reward:

> [...] abundance from on high,
> so that in your time the people shall spread their hands on plenty.
> Prosperity shall accompany the laying of the foundations of my house.[78]

The authority of the ancient Near Eastern king was, to a certain extant, derived from his association with the gods. Kingship as an institution was deemed to

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[76] A description of the ceremony has survived – see Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, text 14.4, p. 265. See also Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, pp. 69-70, and Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, p. 68. For a discussion of the religious-ideological structure of kingship and the association of the king with ritual more generally see Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship* and Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*. For a discussion including an analysis of parallels in Israel see the papers collected in Hooke, ed., *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship* and Day, 'The Canaanite Inheritance', pp. 82ff.

[77] See for example the prologue to the Code of Hammurabi in which the king describes himself as "the one who makes affluence and plenty abound; who provides in abundance all sorts of things for Nippur-Duranki" (*ANET*, p. 164; Hammurabi's reign has been dated to 1728-1686 BCE).

[78] 'Gudea Cylinder A, col. xi', text 14.3 in Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 264. For a description of the building programme itself see *ANET*, pp. 268-69. For a discussion of the text as a whole as illustrative of the task of the king to execute the commands of the god(s) see

have been derived from the gods and more often than not individual ancient Near Eastern kings designated themselves to be of divine origin or else chosen from amongst the population by the gods to act as king. This link between the king and the gods was further enhanced by his acting as intercessor between his subjects and the gods in order to ensure prosperity and social justice within the land. It has been concluded that "rulers ruled by the express authority of the gods and were expected to create a prosperous, well-governed land".[79] It is clearly the case that there was a tradition in the ancient Near East of the king legitimating his own position over his subjects by claiming divine authority for his political power.

(b) The Functions of the Near Eastern King

(i) Judge and Civic Leader

Having discussed the authority of the king within the ancient Near East I shall now turn to consider those functions which are ascribed to the king in ancient Near Eastern texts.

It would appear that, from its earliest inception and throughout the states of the ancient Near East, the institution of kingship was fundamentally bound up with the notion of justice.[80] A principle duty of the king was thus to ensure the protection of the weaker members of the population through the

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Jacobsen, 'Mesopotamia', in Frankfort *et al.*, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, pp. 189-91.

administration of justice.[81] As we shall see below, and as Halpern has stated, "ultimately, the king presented himself as the personification and defender of what was just, the supreme judicial authority".[82]

The significance of justice and its attachment to the person of the king is arguably *the* basis for the appointment of a king in the first place. The prologue to the Law Code of Hammurabi states that:

> at that time Anum and Enlil named me
> to promote the welfare of the people,
> me, Hammurabi, the devout, god-fearing prince,
> to cause justice to prevail in the land,
> to destroy the wicked and evil,
> that the strong might not oppress the weak [...].[83]

The text goes on to state that it is by the means of his decrees that Hammurabi, who by his own designation was the 'king of justice', was able to promote the welfare of his people, instigating law and justice in the land,

> in order that the strong might not oppress the weak,
> that justice might be dealt the orphan (and) the widow
> [...].
> I wrote my precious words on my stela,
> and in the presence of the statue of me, the king of justice,
> I set (it) up in order to administer the law of the land,
> to prescribe the ordinances of the land,

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[79] Lambert, 'Kingship in Mesopotamia', p. 55.
[80] For further discussion see Whitelam, *The Just King*.
[81] Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, p. 65, suggests that this emphasis on the responsibility of the ruler for the welfare of all his subjects, but in particular the socially weak emerged as a counterweight to the the possibility that central power would be abused.
[82] Halpern, 'Kingship and Monarchy', p. 414.
[83] 'The Code of Hammurabi', in *ANET*, p. 164. The full text is cited at pp. 164-80. The emphasis here on the appointment of a king in order to establish justice in the land can also be found elsewhere. For example, the so-called 'Lipit-Ishtar Lawcode' similarly states in the prologue that the king was called to "the princeship of the land in order to establish justice in the land, to banish complaints, to turn back enmity and rebellion [...]" (*ANET*, p. 159).

to give justice to the oppressed.[84]

On a practical and day to day level the king is also described as having functioned as an arbiter in disputes. For example, the Middle Assyrian Laws of the twelfth century BCE refer specifically to the king being able to adjudicate in a number of particular matters in order to determine what he considers to be a fit punishment to inflict on the guilty party.[85] One might therefore understand that the king was deemed to be the final arbiter in any matter. Thus the Hittite king appears to have made the final decision in the protracted divorce of an Ugarit subject-ruler.[86]

The following 'petition to a king' suggests that the king was thought to be, in theory at least, the fount of justice and the final arbiter:

> The lord, hero of Inanna, say
> "Thou (*in*) thy judgement thou art the son of Anu,
> Thy commands, like the word of a god, cannot be *turned back*,
> Thy words are like *rain* pouring down from heaven, are without number,
> Thus says Urshagga, thy servant:
> 'My king has cared for me, who am a "son" of Ur.
> If now my king is (truly) of Anu,
> Let not my father's house be carried off,
> Let not the *foundations* of my father's house be torn away.
> Let my king know'".[87]

That justice was considered to be an essential and idealized attribute for successful kingship is highlighted by Ugaritic Legend of King Keret.[88] Here

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[84] 'The Code of Hammurabi', in *ANET*, p. 178. For an analysis of the nature of the Code of Hammurabi and its intent, see Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 289-91.
[85] See *ANET*, p. 187.
[86] See Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, pp. 310-311.
[87] 'Petition to a King', in *ANET*, p. 382. Emphasis is that of the translator, S. N. Kramer.

King Keret is admonished by his son, Yassib who considers that his father's position has become untenable because:

> Thou hast let thy hand fall into mischief.
> Thou judgest not the cause of the widow, nor adjudicat'st the case of the wretched; driv'st not out them that prey on the poor;
> Feed'st not the fatherless before thee, the widow behind thy back. [...]
> Descend from the kingship – I'll reign [...].[89]

We can see that a significant function of the ancient Near Eastern king was his role as the dispenser of justice. It is clear that the king acted on a judicial level as the ultimate administrator of justice, fulfilling the role of final arbiter of any dispute amongst his people. On a more general level, the leadership of the ancient Near Eastern king is said to establish justice in the land, ensuring that the poor and weak and not taken advantage of by others.

(ii) Military Leader

Another significant role of the king described in ancient Near Eastern texts was as defender of the independence of his lands and protector of his people from foreign encroachments. The king's strength in military exploits was considered important also perhaps because the fruits of war could be used to improve life so that the king could be described as provider of plenty and

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[88] The complete text is cited in *ANET*, pp. 142-49.
[89] 'The Legend of King Keret' (KRT C, vi), in *ANET*, p. 149.

stability. The pre-eminent status of the ancient Near Eastern king was thus intimately bound up with his prominent military role.[90]

That military ability was considered to be an important attribute of the king in the ancient Near East is shown in a vase inscription in which the Mesopotamian king, Lugal-zagesi, tells of how as a result of his military prowess he achieved domination over Sumer and the gift of kingship of the land by the god Enlil:

> When to Lugal-zagesi – king of Uruk [...] – Enlil, king of countries had given the Kingship of the Land, made the Land obedient to him, thrown all countries at his feet, and subjected them to him from sunrise to sunset, – at that time he made his way from the Lower Sea, via the Tigris and Euphrates, to the Upper Sea, and Enlil had allowed none to oppose him from sunrise to sunset. Under him all countries lay (contented) in their meadow, and the Land rejoiced. The shrines of Sumer, the Governors of all countries and the region of Uruk *decreed* the role of ruler for him [...].[91]

It would appear that warrior-like attributes and abilities were also considered important in Egypt as a basis for the selection of a successor to the king. In the text which follows, the ability to handle a horse and chariot (principle features of ancient Near Eastern military makeup) together with certain prerequisite physical attributes were considered of paramount importance:

> Now, further, his majesty appeared as king as a goodly youth. When he had matured [...] there was no one like him on the field of battle. He was one who knew the horses: there was not his like in this numerous

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[90] See Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 36.

[91] 'Vase inscription of Lugal-zagesi', text 2.3 in Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 35, his emphasis. Postgate describes this inscription as an embodiment of the 'formal ideology of Sumerian politics' (p. 34).

army. There was not therein one who could draw his bow. He could not be approached in running.

Strong of arms, one who did not weary when he took the oar, he rowed at the stern of his falcon-boat as the *stroke* for two hundred men [...].

[...] It was really a deed which had never before been done nor heard of by report: shooting at a target of copper an arrow which came out of it and dropped to the ground – except for the king [...].

[...] When (it) was heard in the palace by his father, the Horus: Mighty Bull, Appearing in Thebes, the heart of his majesty was glad when he heard it, rejoicing at what was said about his eldest son, while he said in his heart: "He it is who will act as Lord for the entire land, without being attacked, while the heart *moves* in valor, rejoicing in strength, though he is (only) a goodly, beloved youth" [...].[92]

It is clear that in the ancient Near East kings frequently sought to expand the lands available to their subjects and, of course, to the palace. Various inscriptions record in pictures and text the vanquishing of the enemy and the subsequent expansion of territorial frontiers. The Law Code of Hammurabi, for example, describes in its prologue how the 'warrior' king "extended the cultivated land belonging to Dilbat", who is "the subduer of settlements along the Euphrates" and who is "the one who seizes the foe". Perhaps as a means of illustrating the point further, the king is described not as the ruler of a particular city but rather this territorial designation is extended to "the four quarters of the world" which he has made subservient.[93] It is clear that, in this instance at least, the warrior prowess of the king is described in what one might characterize as overtly propagandist terms.[94] Those conquests which

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[92] From a stela near the Sphinx at Gizeh, recounting the deeds of Amen-hotep II (1447-21 BCE), trans. in *ANET*, pp. 244-45; also in Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, pp. 212-13.

[93] *ANET*, p. 165.

[94] As Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 241, has stated in his discussion of early Mesopotamian society, the obsessive bureaucrats did not 'up sticks and go on campaign' -- when it comes to accounts of warfare "we are the prisoners of what the Mesopotamian rulers wanted us to know: both their royal inscriptions and the public art are essentially propaganda".

came with military strength resulted in land which could be used to augment the king's own estates and those of his household. Land and those other things recovered could also be used to reward those who the king favoured which in turn resulted in a debt of gratitude.

This role of the ancient Near Eastern king as military leader, defender of his people and territory, mirrors the request by the people of Israel for a king who would go out before them and fight their battles. Clearly, in a region where there were continuing expansionist moves afoot, a capable military leader was deemed to be of particular importance as a means of ensuring survival and prosperity.

(iii) State Bureaucrat and Manager

However, the role of the ancient Near Eastern king was not strictly delimited to those two elements discussed above. He is also described as having had a part to play in the more mundane affairs of state – the evidence available to us shows that there were craft industries, agricultural estates, and commercial ventures inside and outside the palace, all of which needed to be adequately administered to ensure the prosperity of the king's own household and those households of his subjects. A great deal has been written about the fact that the state exercised a redistribution system.[95] Put simply, various craft or

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[95] For a discussion of economic specialization and control by the state exemplified in the Mesopotamian Ur III Dynasty see Zeder, 'Of Kings and Shepherds. However, a number of scholars have pointed out that it is important to note that just as today no state can lay claim to a totality of economic control so also was the case in the ancient Near East. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 104, for example points out that while the king/palace took an active

agricultural produce is gathered from the populace, more often than not by way of tax, and this is then collected by the state for redistribution. Redistribution was apparently a method by which the king could reward those who had done some kind of service on his behalf and served also as a means of ensuring loyalty from those closest to him. However, it is clear that it was not possible for the king to assume personal control of each stage in such a process if only for the simple fact that he could not be in all places at all times. It therefore follows that, in order for the system of control to be effective, some other means of conveying the authority of the king has to be initiated. The result is the development of a bureaucratic framework composed of various level officials who undertook to take charge of administering various aspects of the system.[96] There are a great number of administrative titles which have come down to us through the texts but all too often the specific roles assigned to each are ill-defined:[97]

> The vizier, (the) magistrates, (the) courtiers, (the) councils of hearers, (the) viceroy of Kush, (the) commandants, (the) superintendents of

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role in trade and its control there existed also flourishing extensive private networks. See also Stein, 'the Organizational Dynamics of Complexity', pp. 14-15, where he states that whilst the state may have attempted to control production and circulation of goods there were also private entrepreneurs who were engaged in exchange independently of the state. See also Edens, 'On the Complexity of Complex Societies', p. 212.

[96] The extent of a centralized administrative machinery is shown in the increasing level of the standardization of scripts, weights and measures, calendrical systems. See Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 53; Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 41 and 296-207; and Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, p. 71, for further discussion.

[97] As Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 153, points out, "although it is clear that the concepts of authority and responsibility were strictly formalized, both the terminology and the hierarchy of civilian administration remain to be worked out". See also, Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, p. 70, for a similar conclusion.

> gold, (the) mayors (of towns and) controllers of camps/tribes of Upper and Lower Egypt, (the) charioteers, (the) stable-chiefs [...].[98]

The same is also true of the various strata of militaristic officials and administrators required for the levying and training of men to form a large and experienced military reserve which could be mobilised quickly. It has to be acknowledged that with the various campaigns which are said to have been undertaken by the kings of the ancient Near East that a standing army was an essential feature – they could be on standby in case of foreign encroachment. It is apparent that the common foot soldier stood at the bottom rung of a vast and complex network of officers. For example, we have an Egyptian text which states:

> Come,<let me tell> you the woes of the soldier, and how many are his superiors: the general, the troop-commander, the officer who leads, the standard bearer, the lieutenant, the scribes, the commander of fifty, and the garrison-leader.[99]

It would appear that there was an obligation upon the population to serve in the royal army, the reward for which was the right to hold land. The distribution of land to soldiers in return for military service is a practice recurring in many different times and places and the duty to serve apparently

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[98] From a decree inscribed at Nauri in Nubia by Sety I, trans. in Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 217. This text gives a picture of the officials of the Egyptian New Kingdom. It takes the form of an instruction by Sety I to his various personnel to ensure the protection of the lands donated to his funerary temple. For an insight into the political institutions and the social structure tied to the Hittite king see the Edict of Telepinu cited in Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, pp. 244-48.

[99] 'Papyrus Lansing', trans. in Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 219.

passed on to whoever inherited the land.[100] When there were no campaigns which the soldiers were required to participate in they appear also to have served certain other roles including acting as couriers, cowherds, and supplying labour for public building projects.[101]

Whilst we have seen that a primary function of the ancient Near Eastern king was the administration of justice, it should be borne in mind that the judicial tasks which included the settling disputes between parties and determining appropriate punishments for criminals could not be achieved by one person. Thus many of the cases to be considered would be referred to those judicial functionaries appointed by the king. The judicial tasks were carried out by a pyramid of various authorities – the local councils, the judges, and the king. However, we do not have any formulation in writing of the specific function of each. We find no definition of the judicial process either. If we consider the Code of Hammurabi we can see that, for example, a 'ward' existed who formally warned a man with a dangerous oxen, and the code states also that village and its mayor (assumed to be an appointee of the king and a link between village and central administration) would be held responsible for the actions of a man within its territory and directly involved in the administration of justice. The code also makes specific references to the referral of cases to judges.[102]

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[100] See Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, pp. 110-11.
[101] See Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, p. 242, text 13.1. For further discussion of the system of conscription and the existence of a standing army see Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, pp. 83-84, and Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, p. 110.
[102] See Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, pp. 275-277, for a more detailed discussion of those persons involved in the judicial process. See pp. 279ff. for a discussion of those judicial procedures exemplified in the Mesopotamian Law Codes such as that of Hammurabi.

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We can see, then, that another function of the ancient Near Eastern king, in addition to his roles as judge and civic leader and his militaristic tasks, is that of organizer and maintainer of an administrative or bureaucratic system within society. Whilst those other functions appear to form a part of the biblical conception of the role of a king, this last function of the ancient Near Eastern king as state bureaucrat and manager is not explicitly asked for by Israel in the biblical account, although it is said to have been envisaged by the prophet Samuel.

4. Summary

So far we have seen a number of different features relating to the call for a king as it is presented in 1 Sam. 8. In particular we have seen three distinct components of this call. The first two of these are *explicit* calls for a king 'to judge' the people and to lead them in military campaigns. The third is the less clear call for a king 'like other nations'. In order to explore this third call, I have examined Near Eastern accounts of kingship insofar as these form the cultural context within which the biblical narrative is set. As we have seen, this may, in turn, be seen to involve an *implicit* call by the people of Israel for three distinct functions in their new leader: judge, military leader, and state bureaucrat. It is tempting to assume that by calling for a king 'like other

nations', the people of Israel in the narrative wanted *not only* the judge and leader *explicitly* demanded but *also* a bureaucratic leader who would create a highly organized State apparatus, just like the other nations. Yet there are a number of reasons for being wary of this assumption.

Firstly, we must note the difference between the divine authority often assumed by Near Eastern kings and the manner of Saul's appointment in the text. Saul did not impose his leadership upon the people but rather was demanded by the people. He is, as his name suggests, the leader obtained by request.

Secondly, as we shall see later, the biblical account's description of Saul's leadership does not suggest that it displayed the bureaucratic features of certain other ancient Near Eastern leadership structures (as epitomized in the 'ways of the king' which appears in the text).[103] As has been recognized by scholars, when we turn to consider the account of the 'reign' of Saul we shall find that the list of oppressions ascribed to the king in these verses were not applicable.[104] Rather than construe this as a failure on his part to meet the demands of the people, it may be equally plausible to suggest that this was never a demand of the people. Given Saul's distance from the Near Eastern model of the king who claims divine authority, one might suggest that one should be wary of placing too much emphasis upon the call for a king 'like

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[103] 1 Sam. 8: 10-18.

[104] As Clements, 'The Deuteronomistic Interpretation', p. 405 states, "Saul had only a very modest court and did not attempt to introduce into Israel either an expensive army or a complex state administration". Klein, *1 Samuel*, p. 74 also considers that the critique of kingship contained in 1 Sam. 8: 10-18 "would not have been relevant to the modest dimensions of Saul's kingship".

other nations'.[105] Instead it may be preferable to focus upon the explicit qualities demanded by the people, namely judge and military leader.

If we recall for a moment Clastres' analysis of the functions of the chief within society we shall see a parallel. The chief should exemplify a warlike disposition to ensure a successful offence/defence coupled with the ability to use his prestige and diplomatic skills to settle various internal and external disputes. As we can see, the leader called for by the Israelite people must also fulfil both a militaristic and diplomatic function. Moreover, in Clastres' analysis, the defining characteristics of a chief are an authority based upon the demands of the people rather than political power imposed upon them, together with a primarily charismatic form of leadership often based upon military campaigns. It is these qualities which are desired of the new leader so that they might be employed by the people in the service of the people.

Although the tasks for the leader (whether chief or king) are the same, the way in which each type functions – and in particular their relationship with the people – is quite different. Thus Clastres' model offers a very different way to think about what the people of Israel are said to have called for, in contrast to the Near Eastern model of a divinely appointed bureaucratic despot. This latter model is, of course, exactly what Samuel warns against, as we have seen. Yet we should not draw any conclusions concerning what the people actually wanted upon the basis of that indirect evidence. On the basis of the text itself, the type of leader called for by the people in the narrative appears to share

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[105] According to McCarthy, 'The Inauguration of the Monarchy', p. 412, the Saul cycle showed him as hero-deliverer and so he could be presented as a king not like the other nations.

more in common with Clastres' chief than with a despotic Near Eastern king. It is essential to bear in mind precisely what the people called for when trying to assess the success or failure of Saul's leadership. In the light of these comments, along with Clastres' distinction between chief and king, I shall now proceed to consider the details surrounding Saul's appointment as leader and the events that took place during his leadership. These will be the subjects of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

SAUL'S APPOINTMENT AS LEADER

In this chapter I shall consider the biblical account of Saul's selection and appointment to the position of leader. In the first three sections I shall examine each of the biblical accounts of Saul's election in turn.[1] In particular, I shall consider the characteristics attributed to Saul in the text, and the relationship between these and the attributes demanded by the people. In Section Four, I shall consider how, in the light of these passages, the position of Saul might be best characterized.

1. Saul's First Election

The first account of Saul's selection and appointment to the position of leader in Israel is presented to the reader in the description of a series of seemingly trivial events where Saul is brought face to face with the prophet Samuel. The

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[1] By 'election' I simply mean the process by which Saul is 'elected' or chosen to be leader in an indeterminate sense without necessarily implying whether it be by God, Samuel, the people, or Saul himself.

biblical describes how Saul's concern to locate and return his father's lost asses leads ultimately to his searching out the figure of Samuel in order to use his powers as a seer and prophet to establish the location of the asses. [2]

(a) The Text

The biblical account opens with an introductory notice about a man called Kish from Benjamin who is described as being a man of means (גבור חיל).[3] Kish is described as having had a son, Saul,[4] of whom it is said that he was:

> A handsome (טוב) young man.[5] There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than him; from his shoulders and upwards he was taller (גבה)[6] than all the people (1 Sam. 9: 2).

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[2] 1 Sam. 9: 1 - 10: 16.

[3] There has been a considerable amount of debate surrounding the exact meaning of the Hebrew expression (גבור חיל) used to describe the status of Kish here. Broadly speaking scholarly views can be divided between those who understand the Hebrew as indicative of wealth (e.g. Humphreys, 'Tragedy of King Saul', p. 20, and Driver, p. 69) and those who understand it as signifying that Kish was a warrior (e.g. Klein, p. 86; Mauchline, p. 92; and BDB, p. 150). McCarter, pp. 164-73 prefers to understand the Hebrew as 'powerful man' in order to retain neutrality with regard to wealth or military strength and thus maintains an ambivalent meaning.

[4] Scholars have noted that there is a marked absence in this introductory notice of a birth story for Saul. See for example Miscall, p. 52; McCarter, p. 172. McCarter suggests that where the chapter in its present form has Kish as its central focus, originally the narrative may have gone on to describes the birth of Saul.

[5] The Hebrew טוב is often simply rendered 'good'. However BDB, p. 373, suggests that the term as used here is intended to signify that Saul was pleasant or agreeable to the sight. Gordon, p. 112, prefers 'impressive' or 'fine'. Most scholars are generally agreed that the description of Saul is intended to signify that he was physically impressive and about to enter into adulthood. (See McCarter, p. 173; BDB, p. 104).

[6] Most translations prefer to read here that Saul was 'head and shoulders taller than any of them' (e.g. NRSV). The BDB, p. 147, points out that the term translated here as 'taller' can also be understood as being 'exalted' above others. Perhaps the *NIV Triglot* is correct in its suggestion that the passage should be read as signifying that Saul was 'without equal among Israel' which is in fact said of Saul by Samuel in 1 Sam. 10: 24.

There then follows in the narrative a description of Saul's quest to fulfil the request made of him by his father to find and return his missing asses.[7] Saul and his travelling companion eventually arrive at the land of Zuph[8] where the prophet Samuel, described in the context of this passage as a man of God and seer,[9] is found and is considered able to offer some sort of guidance in the location of the asses. The text describes how prior to Saul's arrival God had revealed (גלה את־אזן) [10] to his prophet that:

> "I will send to you a young man from the land of Benjamin and you shall appoint him to be leader (נגיד)[11] over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines for I have seen the distress of my people and their crying has come to me". When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you. He it is who shall govern (עצר) over my people" (1 Sam. 9: 16-17).[12]

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[7] For a discussion of the significance of asses within ancient cultures and their association in the biblical tradition with royalty/nobility, see Edelman, p. 43; Klein, p. 86; Gordon, p. 127. For biblical references to asses see for example, Judg. 5: 10; 10: 4; 12: 14; 2 Sam. 16: 1-2; 1 Kgs. 1: 33-35, 38-40; Zech. 9: 9.

[8] Driver, pp. 1 & 71, identifies the land of Zuph with the home of Samuel in Ephraim. See also Alter, p. 46, and McCarter, p. 175, who share this view.

[9] McCarter, p. 175, posits that 'man of God' signifies a professional holy man thought to have special skills and powers to invoke the aid of supernatural forces. The subsequent textual explanation of the origins of 'prophet' in the older usage 'seer' at v. 9 is not considered by McCarter to be part of the original narrative. He suggests the verse acts as a means of harmonising the present tale in which Samuel is called seer, or 'man of God' with the preceding material in which he is called 'prophet' (ibid. p. 177).

[10] McCarter, p. 178, points out that the Hebrew is literally that God 'had uncovered Samuel's ear'. He states that the idiom implies something previously unknown or kept secret from the hearer (as in 1 Sam. 20: 2, 12, 13; 22: 8, 17) and may be used as a revelation to a man of God (e.g. 2 Sam. 7: 27).

[11] A number of scholars have identified the presence of a wordplay in 1 Sam. 9: 1 - 10: 16 on the Hebrew root נגד. This is said to centre around the use in 1 Sam. 9: 6, 8, 18, 19, and 1 Sam. 10: 15, 16, of the Hebrew word *higgid* (הגיד), usually translated as 'to declare' or 'to speak'. See Edelman, p. 44-45; Klein, p. 87; McCarter, p. 176; Shaviv, 'Nabi and Nagid', p. 111 (who identifies occurrence of different forms of the verb *higgid* as a seven-fold hint at the bestowal of the title *nagid* on Saul); Eslinger, p. 293 & 335; Miscall, p. 62; Polzin, p. 98. McCarter, p. 176, concludes that "the frequent use of *higgid* [...] is one of the techniques employed to heighten the fundamental irony of a young man's unknowing quest for a kingdom: Saul in his innocence asks the man of God to inform (*higgid*) him about the lost asses, but what he is informed is that he is to be prince (*nagid*) over Israel".

[12] Birch, 'The Development of the Tradition on the Anointing of Saul', p. 61 (see also Birch, pp. 30-31), argues that 1 Sam. 9: 15ff constitutes a modified version of the call formula

The reader is advised that, when he is approached by Saul, the prophet Samuel assures him that the asses he had been searching for have been located. After having identified Saul as the person designated by God to be the leader of the people, Samuel is said to have declared:

> "And on whom is all Israel's desire fixed if not on you and your fathers' house (בית אביך)?".[13] Saul answered, "I am only a Benjamite, from the smallest of the tribes (שבט) of Israel, and my clan (משפחה)[14] is the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin" (1 Sam. 9: 20).[15]

Saul is then described as joining the prophet and invited guests for a meal. On the following day, Saul and Samuel are said to have met privately when Saul is anointed. The biblical account states that:

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associated with Gideon, Moses, and several prophets. He identifies the following components of the call narrative: divine confrontation (9: 15); introductory word (9: 16-17); commission (10: 1); objection in 9: 21; reassurance (10: 7b); and sign (10: 1b, 5-7a). For an analysis of the standard call formula which influenced Birch see Habel, 'Form and Significance of the Call Narrative'. For a discussion of the 'call form' as the underlying structure of these accounts see Klein, p. 84-86.

[13] The reference to 'your father's house' (בית אביך) has been translated as 'ancestral house' by the NRSV. See BDB, p. 110, for a discussion of the usage of this terminology and the possibilities for understanding it as signifying a division of the tribal unit in the sense of family or clan.

[14] See BDB for a discussion of the Hebrew terms rendered above as 'tribe' (שבט) and 'clan' (משפחה) at pp. 987 & 1046 respectively. For a discussion of the social structure of Israelite hierarchy along the lines of clan and tribe see McCarter, p. 180; Gordon, p. 115; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 4-8; Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 245-341. It is generally accepted that the family constituted the immediate relations of the head of a household. A group of families within a particular area constituted a clan whereby certain political and religious functions were shared. The tribe in turn comprised a group of several clans.

[15] See also See also Judg. 6: 15 where similar phraseology is attributed to Gideon: "[...] how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family" (following NRSV).

Samuel took a vial (פך)[16] of oil and poured it on his head; then he kissed him, and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you to be leader (לנגיד) over his inheritance? (על־נחלתו)" (1 Sam. 10: 1).[17]

(b) Saul's Characteristics

It is interesting to note that the description of Saul in this account of his election to the position of leader is positive in outlook. As we have seen above, the account opens with a description of Saul's family background. This opening genealogical description serves perhaps as a means of emphasizing the greatness and high status of the father of Saul and, by implication, of Saul

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[16] A number of scholars have drawn attention to the employment of a vial of oil in the anointing of Saul; see for example, Edelman, pp. 51-52; Polzin, p. 35; Klein, p. 90; Miscall, p.59. More specifically, scholars have noted that this use of different equipment in the anointing of Saul marks a contrast between him and David. In contrast to the small vial or flask used here, a horn (קרן) is used in the anointing of David which said to have been a typical symbol of strength. (See BDB, pp. 901-02, for a discussion of the employment of the Hebrew term to symbolize personal strength). Edelman, pp. 51-52, for example, suggests that knowing that a king was ordinarily anointed with a horn as opposed to a vial, the audience would raise questions of the validity of the appointment of Saul. This doubt would have been further reinforced, she suggests, by the subsequent use of a question by Samuel rather than a statement in providing an explanation of the meaning of the anointing. A further negative aspect in relation to the use of a vial might also be that it is also employed in command to anoint Jehu (2 Kgs. 9: 1-3) who is described as not turning from the sins of Jeroboam and not walking in the ways of God. (2 Kgs. 10: 31). For a further discussion of the significance of the act of anointing more generally see McCarter, p. 178.

[17] The preposition translated as 'over' (על) is significant here. Kautzsch, p. 383, explains that the two original meanings are 'upon' and 'over'. However it may also be understood as 'on behalf of' (BDB, p. 754) and thus this passage may be read as 'rule on behalf of my inheritance' rather than 'over my inheritance'. The verb does not appear to determine how to read the preposition here; for it is equally plausible 'to lead over' or 'to lead on behalf of'. The word translated as property (נחלה) may also be understood as 'people' or 'inheritance' (BDB, p. 635). McCarter, pp. 180-81, prefers 'estate' and points out that the Hebrew noun employed here can refer to landed property held by an individual whether acquired by inheritance, military victory, or some other means. He considers that in this context the noun refers specifically to the estate of Yahweh, mythically conceived, which should be understood as signifying "the land won in conquest, hence Israel". In LXX this passage is somewhat longer than it is in the Hebrew (and Driver, p. 78, believes that this "has every appearance of being original"); that which Saul is to lead over is described as both 'people' (λαὸν) and 'property' (κληρονομίαν). In both instances these appear in the accusative so the preposition ἐπὶ (corresponding to על) should be understood as 'over' rather than 'on behalf of' which would require the genitive (see LSJ, pp. 621-23).

himself, who is set apart in the text as the individual destined for greatness.[18] This account also ascribes specifically to the figure of Saul three personal attributes which are worthy of note here.

The first of these characteristics relates to the description of the physical appearance of Saul. It is clear that in the biblical account Saul's appearance is considered as something which serves to distinguish him from amongst the general population. In particular, Saul is said to have been goodly and is described as standing "head and shoulders above everyone else".[19] This description of Saul's outstanding physical appearance is perhaps reminiscent of the picture presented of others who, elsewhere in the Bible, are cast in the mould of hero or otherwise designated to be separated out for a special career.[20] It is clear, then, that the person or persons responsible for the text consider a remarkable outward appearance to be of some sort of significance in marking out an individual for a prominent and special role. Saul's physical qualities were apparently considered paramount in his selection and appointment as leader.[21] Thus Alter states that Saul's "looming size, together

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[18] See Edelman, p. 43, and Hertzberg, p. 80.

[19] 1 Sam. 9: 2.

[20] The reference to Saul's physical appearance is deemed by a number of scholars to be a typical tool employed within the biblical tradition which ascribes this aspect to many heroes or to those destined for a special career. See for example Edelman, p. 43; McCarter, p. 173; Birch, pp. 31-32; Birch, 'The Development of the Tradition on the Anointing of Saul', p.57 (see also biblical texts such as Gen 39: 6; 1 Sam. 16: 12; Esth. 2: 7). However, Humphreys, 'Tragedy of King Saul', p. 20, points out that while this introductory notice is similar to those regarding David and Joseph (1 Sam. 16: 18 and Gen. 39) it corresponds more closely to words about another doomed potential king, Absalom (2 Sam. 14: 25-6). He highlights the fact that attention is called to the physical appearance of both Saul and Absalom but, unlike David and Joseph, no reference is made to their other abilities and it is said of neither at this point that God was with them. "Thus in this introductory notice Saul appears as a figure of heroic potential, but a subtone of uncertainty as to the direction this potential will take resonates in the background" (Humphreys, 'Tragedy of King Saul', p. 20).

[21] It is this emphasis in the biblical tradition upon the exceptional physical characteristics of Saul which has lead a number of scholars to conclude that what we have here is folklore.

with his good looks seems to be an outward token of his capacity for leadership".[22]

Another of the positive personal characteristics which are ascribed to the figure of Saul in the text is that of obedience. In contrast to the image presented of the sons of the prophet Samuel in 1 Sam. 8, Saul is depicted in 1 Sam. 9 as obeying his father's command to search for his missing asses immediately and without question.[23] It would appear that by including this aspect when describing Saul's personal traits the narrator perhaps sought to identify him as fulfilling the demands previously made by the people in respect of their new leader. Furthermore, it is also possible that this also serves as a means of developing the theme of Saul's destiny to greatness.[24]

The final characteristic attributed to Saul in the text is his modesty. As indicated above, the biblical account describes how Saul had doubts about his own capabilities and qualifications to hold such a prestigious and prominent position as that of leader of Israel. Saul is described as saying that "I am only a Benjamite, from the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my clan is the least

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Birch, p. 32, for example, states that "this focus on the ideal picture of Saul, and the distinctly dramatic style of introduction, seem to indicate that 9: 1-2 is of a piece with the folklorist account of Saul's search for the asses which follows". See also Gordon (OTG), p. 44; Pffeifer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 345; Mayes, 'Rise of the Israelite Monarchy', p. 2; Klein, p. 84. In contrast to this general scholarly consensus Smith, p. 59, deems this account to be the earliest and most reliable of those sources which relates the origin of the monarchy in Israel.

[22] Alter, p. 46. However, Alter further notes that with the appearance of David on the scene these very same characteristics which are deemed praiseworthy here "are associated with a basic human misperception of what constitutes fitness to command" (ibid.).

[23] Edelman, p. 44. The characteristics of Samuel's sons and the influence this is deemed by the biblical tradition to have had upon the people and their request for a king is discussed in the previous chapter of this study.

[24] See Edelman, p. 44.

of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin".[25] However, despite his self-deprecation, Saul is assured that he has been separated out and chosen to be the leader or *nagid* of the people.[26]

(c) Function of Saul as Prospective Leader

In this account of Saul's election to the position of leader Saul is given the title *nagid* (נגיד) and not *melek* (מלך). As we have seen in Chapter Two, the figure of the *nagid* (נגיד) or leader within Israel is intimately bound up with a militaristic function. Thus it is expressly stated that he shall serve as a means of saving Israel 'from the hand of the Philistines'.[27] That is to say, the previously reported ascendancy over the Philistines seems to have vanished, and military effectiveness is endorsed as the rationale for the new leadership.[28] This is extended at a later point in the biblical tradition to apply not simply to this one group, the Philistines, but also to 'the hand of their enemies all around'.[29]

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[25] 1 Sam. 9: 21.

[26] A number of scholars have drawn attention to the fact that Saul's protestations about his humble origins and his unworthiness for the role of leader should not be taken literally. Rather, Saul's words fit with "the customary response of individuals called into divine service in the Bible" (McCarter, p. 179). See also Miscall, p. 58; Edelman, pp. 34-35; and Gordon, p. 115. The specific reference to Saul's being from the smallest of the tribes and so forth might be a reference to 1 Sam. 2: 8 where it is stated that god will select the weak. McCarter suggests that it serves "as a means to emphasize the miraculous nature of his rise to the throne" (p. 180).

[27] 1 Sam. 9: 16.

[28] The task of saving the people from the Philistines stands in opposition to 1 Sam. 7: 11ff. This view is shared also by Alter, p. 50.

[29] 1 Sam. 9: 16b & 10: 1b respectively. See the previous chapter of this study where this militaristic aspect of the function of the leader requested by the people in 1 Sam. 8 is discussed.

A further important aspect of the functions of the new leader is that it will be his duty 'to govern' or 'to rule' (עצר) the people. A number of scholars have highlighted the fact that the Hebrew verb employed here appears to be out of place, and its employment has been the subject of much scholarly debate.[30] Scholars have pointed to the fact that the verb "is not employed elsewhere to refer to reigning or ruling. The root *malak*, to be king and to rule, is studiously avoided".[31] In other words, if the biblical narrator wished to indicate that a function of the *nagid* (נגיד) was to rule over the people it is strange that he has chosen to use *asar* (עצר) as opposed to the more straightforward *malak* (מלך) to signify this function. It is arguable that by the employment here of *asar* (עצר) the intention was to suggest some other aspect to the role of *nagid* other than to rule.

Edelman, amongst others, has pointed to the fact that the Hebrew verb *asar* (עצר) has the meaning 'restrain'.[32] Thus, in addition to those militaristic aspects required of the *nagid*, she suggests that the new leader to be appointed at the request of the people is also meant to 'restrain' the people's tendency to become like other nations and to adopt foreign practices. In Edelman's view,

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[30] See for example, Edelman, p. 48; Smith, p. 64; Gordon (OTG), pp. 45-46; and McCarter, p. 179, who have all noted the peculiar use of the Hebrew verb here and debated its meaning.

[31] Miscall, p. 57. Smith, p. 64, has also argued that the verb nowhere else has the meaning 'to rule'. He points to his employment in the following senses: 'to shut up (the heavens), Deut 11: 17; 'to restrain (an animal), 2 Kgs. 4:24; to check (one's words), Job 4: 2. In view of this, Smith suggests that the text should be suspected because to rule seems inappropriate here. Gordon (OTG), pp. 45-46, has also highlighted the absence here of the obvious verb *malak*, 'to rule' or 'to reign'. These views stand in contrast to that of Driver, p. 74, who understands this term "only in the sense of *coercere imperio*". In other words, in Driver's view the term signifies imperial rule or control. BDB, p. 783, thus suggests that the verb עצר is intended here to signify to 'rule over'.

just as the judges had some sort of judicial authority and responsibility in addition to a more general leadership role which included militaristic elements, so too the 'king' is meant to spend his lifetime actively holding the people to the covenant.[33] In contrast to this view, McCarter considers the understanding of *asar* (עצר) as 'restrain' to be inappropriate. He prefers to render it as 'muster'.[34] Thus it is perhaps possible to understand that what is intended here is not some sort of coercive means of restraining the people but rather that of to 'retain' in the sense of 'gather, assemble, muster'. In this way one might consider Saul's function as *nagid* (נגיד) as the person who will gather Israel into a strong army to defend themselves against attack from their neighbours.[35] In the light of the earlier discussion of the title *nagid* (נגיד), together with the emphasis upon the role of the *nagid* (נגיד) to defeat Israel's enemies, this interpretation of *asar* (עצר) as 'muster' certainly seems to be appropriate in the context. The authority of Saul as *nagid* (נגיד) appears, then, to be circumscribed. It would appear that his function as leader of Israel is specifically linked to the need to establish a strong militaristic defence within Israel.[36]

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[32] Edelman, pp. 48-49. Hertzberg, p. 83, along similar lines deems the verb to be literally, 'to keep in check' and Klein, p. 89, suggests to 'keep within bounds'. McCarter, p. 179, has also noted that the Hebrew verb commonly means to restrain, hinder or even to retain or shut in.
[33] Edelman, pp. 48-49.
[34] McCarter, p. 179.
[35] See ibid.
[36] Gordon (OTG), pp. 45-46. There he states that "the indications are in this text that Samuel is anointing Saul to a circumscribed exercise of kingship that does not usurp his own unique authority". Gordon, p. 115, asks whether the choice of *nagid* here deliberately puts a limit on the role of Saul in the new constitution.

(d) Role of the People

It is interesting to note that whilst we have already seen that the initial demand for a 'king' was made by the people, their role here in the description of the accession of Saul to the position of leader is diminished. This absence of the people playing any significant role in the rise to prominence of Saul has been acknowledged by a number of scholars.[37] It has been suggested that the people could be said to contribute scarcely anything to Saul's rise to prominence. Here Saul is said to have been anointed privately by Samuel at the express command of Yahweh. Samuel, as the representative of Yahweh, plays the lead role in the establishment of Saul as leader.[38] The biblical tradition describes how the anointing of Saul by Samuel on the instructions of God takes place secretly. As if to emphasize the secrecy of the event, it is specifically stated that Samuel instructs Saul to send his companion on ahead to make the return

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[37] See for example, Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 43-44, and McCarter, p. 187. Eslinger, p. 303, has pointed to the fact that the manner of the anointing by Samuel might be understood as signifying that he is in the position of authority. He states that "The true nature of Israel's new monarch and his subordination to Samuel is hidden from all; only after the people have accepted Saul does Samuel reveal the secret of the anointing" (ibid. p. 317).

[38] 1 Sam. 10: 1. The prominent role attributed to the prophet Samuel in the anointing of Saul has been considered by some scholars to be the product of a colouring of the tradition. This view is based upon the assumption that it was not until considerably later, possibly during the period of the northern Kingdom, that the emphasis of the role of the prophet in this sort of context comes into its own. See e.g. Mayes, 'The Period of the Judges', p. 324, who emphasizes the role of the 'prophetic circle', a group of redactors thought to be responsible for the colouring of certain areas of tradition in assigning a prominent role to the prophet Samuel. Humphreys, 'Rise and Fall of King Saul', p. 75, has similarly identified the hand of a later northern prophetic circle tracing its roots to Samuel in 1 Sam. 9. He posits that there was also a Southern and Davidic circle which wanted to establish the Davidic claim to the throne. For a discussion of the various scholarly literary analyses and theories regarding the composition and structure of 1 Samuel 9-10: 16 see for example Birch, 'The Development of the Tradition on the Anoiting of Saul', p. 55-57, and Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 42-43.

journey home leaving only himself and Saul present.[39] The secrecy of Saul's appointment is emphasized once again when it is reported how upon his return home he did not report his anointing by Samuel to his uncle.[40]

However, despite the focus here upon the role of the prophet Samuel and ultimately, Yahweh, it is perhaps overstating the case to claim that the role of the people is negligible. A closer look at the text shows that the role of the people is still by no means insignificant in this account of Saul's elevation to the leadership. The biblical tradition specifically relates how the decision to appoint the new leader, Saul, from amongst the people is initiated by the people's cry. It is stated that God described to his prophet Samuel how he had "seen the distress of my people and their crying has come to me".[41] This is not too different in kind to the role of the people recounted in 1 Sam. 8 where, in their desire for a king, they cry out to Samuel to anoint such a leader for them. That is to say, Yahweh's decision has been preceded by the people's own cries and initiative in finding a way out of their difficulties.

Furthermore, it is arguable that it is specifically Saul upon which the people have focused their attentions in seeking a new leader. Thus the biblical account states "and on whom is all Israel's desire fixed (ולמי כל־חמדת ישראל) if

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[39] 1 Sam. 9: 27. However, Edelman, p. 53, has suggested that it is possible that some of those thirty guests who are described as having attended a meal with Saul and Samuel previously may have had some sort of indication of Saul's favoured status but not necessarily his anointing. Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, p. 114, suggests that they may have been representatives of the people whose presence was necessary for the investiture.
[40] 1 Sam. 10: 14-16. Ap-Thomas, 'Saul's "Uncle"', esp. p. 245, posits that the text is not referring to an uncle of Saul here but rather to a Philistine governor with authority over the territory of Benjamin. See also Edelman, p. 55, who shares this view.
[41] 1 Sam. 9: 16.

not on you [...]".[42] However, it must be borne in mind that a number of scholars have suggested that the meaning of this Hebrew phrase is ambiguous.[43] In particular, Driver has suggested that, following the Septuagint and Vulgate, an alternative translation might be "and for whom is all that is desirable in Israel".[44] Thus Driver translates *hemdat* (חמדת) as 'the desirable things',[45] following the Septuagint which has *ta horaia* (τά ὡραῖα), literally 'the fruits'.[46] As one can see, it is thus possible to translate the verse in two ways: 'on whom is the desire of all Israel (centred)?', or alternatively, 'for whom is all that is desirable in Israel?'. It is clear that the former translation suggests that the desire of the Israelite people is here described as being centred around the person of Saul. Thus Klein has suggested that the biblical narrator perhaps wishes to indicate in advance the popular acclamation of Saul which will be made so explicit in the subsequent passages of 1 Sam. 10: 24 and 11: 15.[47] However, the latter translation seems to be "a deliberately oblique reference to kingship".[48] That is to say, the Hebrew might be understood as specifically referring to those elements typically attributed to the king as described in 1 Sam. 8 which describes how the king will take the

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[42] 1 Sam. 9: 20b (following NRSV). This is in contrast to Klein, p. 94, who posits that this account is unrelated to 1 Sam. 8 and the people's demand there for a king. He states that: "This pericope gives Yahweh's own legitimacy to Saul, a legitimacy mediated by no none less than the prophet Samuel, formulated according to the widely known call pattern, and unrelated to Saul's military successes (ch. 11) or the request of the people (ch. 8)".

[43] See Mauchline, p. 96; Gordon, p. 115; Edelman, p. 49; Smith, pp. 63-64; Klein, p. 89.

[44] See Driver, p. 74, and also BDB, p. 326.

[45] Note that Driver (p. 74) suggests that the text might better be read here as *hemudot*.

[46] Both Driver and BDB prefer this translation despite acknowledging elsewhere that the interrogative pronoun מי 'who?' employed here is generally used where persons are understood or implied and very rarely used of things where the form מה is preferred (see Driver, p. 87; BDB, p. 566). For a detailed discussion of the interrogative pronoun מי and its usage see Kautzsch, pp. 113 & 443-44.

[47] Klein, p. 89.

possessions of the people and use them to serve his own ends and, further, places the emphasis upon the wealth and taxes that would flow to Saul as leader. However, Edelman has pointed out that here there is perhaps an allusion intended in the employment of 'desire' to the 'desire' of the people for a king in 1 Sam. 8 which resulted in the request for a new type of leadership.[49] In the light of this discussion, perhaps an appropriate way in which to interpret the text is to understand it as signifying that the people have singled out Saul as the fulfilment of their desire for a new leader. As indicated above, the reasons for this may have been based upon his physical appearance and the fact that he was from a highly respected family – both aspects which arguably made him stand out from amongst the general populace.

(e) Summary

In this first account of Saul's election we have seen that his personal characteristics are considered to have played a significant role in his election to the role of leader within Israel. It is interesting to note at this point that Saul is depicted as not pushing himself forward for the position of leader but is rather selected from amongst the people, perhaps in part on the basis of his physical prominence which sets him apart from others. The position to which

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[48] Alter, p. 50.

[49] Edelman, p. 49 n. 1. Edelman is arguing here against the view of McCarter who, following LXX, suggests 'And to whom do the riches of Israel belong if not to you and to your father's house?' (see pp. 165, 170). At p. 179 he points out that Saul is to be king of Israel and therefore the owner, in a sense, of all her wealth. However, Edelman points out that McCarter's preferred rendering of the Hebrew term חמדת as 'riches' obscures this allusion to the desire of Israel expressed in the previous chapter.

he is elected is apparently grounded in the will of the people whose cries are said to have been heard by God and provided the stimulus for his selection and appointment as *nagid* (נגיד). This position as *nagid* (נגיד) is apparently intimately bound up with the desire for a military leader who will act on behalf of Israel. These characteristics suggest a leader who may be called *nagid* (נגיד) rather than *melek* (מלך). Saul's designation as *nagid* (נגיד) here accords with the accompanying description of both him and the process by which he becomes leader. Thus one might understand the figure of Saul as being the most prominent of the group and that it is this prominence rather than any coercion which results in his appointment as leader.

2. Saul's Second Election

In the second account of Saul's election we are presented with a description of his appointment to the position of *melek* (מלך) as opposed to his previous selection as *nagid* (נגיד). The text describes how Saul is in this instance chosen from amongst the people to be *melek* (מלך), 'king', by means of sacred lot at a public assembly in Mizpah.[50] The account begins with objections against the institution of kingship which are attributed to Samuel in a way which apparently continues his rhetorical account of the institution in 1 Sam. 8.[51] An interesting point to note here is that, as before, the request for a king

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[50] For a wider discussion of divinatory methods and their use in the selection and appointment of leaders see Goody's Introduction in *Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology*, pp. 21-23.
[51] 1 Sam. 8 is discussed at length in Chapter Three. For a discussion of the possible link, or otherwise, between this account of the election of Saul and 1 Sam. 8: 22 see Hertzberg, p. 87;

by the people is implicitly grounded in the desire to have a leader who will rescue them from their foreign oppressors and other distresses. In this way God, who is described as also fulfilling such desires, is considered to have been rejected. Despite the somewhat critical view of the institution of the monarchy, in its present form the narrative emphasizes once more the role played by Yahweh, and consequently Samuel his prophet and intermediary, in the choice of Saul as king. The decision made by Yahweh is revealed to the people. In the face of the people's demand of Samuel to appoint a king over them the prophet summons them before God:

> Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot (לכד).[52] He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the family of the Matrites was taken by lot. Finally he brought the family of the Matrites near an by man, and Saul the son of Kish was taken [by lot] (1 Sam. 10: 20-21).

However, it would appear that following Saul's selection he could not be found by those people assembled.[53] After a consultation it is revealed that:

Smith, p. 72; McCarter, pp. 191-92; Gordon (OTG), p. 46; Humphreys, 'Tragedy of King Saul', p. 21; Klein, p. 96.

[52] The Hebrew word גורל or 'lot', whose primary sense is 'stone, pebble', is not employed here. (For a discussion of lot-objects see Lindblom, 'Lot-Casting', pp. 166-67). However, McCarter, *I Samuel*, p. 192, has acknowledged that the technical terminology of the process is present. The Hebrew term לכד 'take' is employed here for the drawing of lots. See BDB, p. 540, for a discussion of לכד which is said to mean literally to capture, seize or take (by lot). See also 1 Sam. 14: 14; Josh. 7: 16-18 where the verb is also employed. Lindblom, 'Lot-Casting', p. 167, suggests that the original sense of this expression was "the magical power, active in the procedure of lot-casting, that 'caught' an offender or another person for whom lots were thrown".

[53] Scholars have drawn attention to the difficulty which Saul's absence from the proceedings would have caused. It has been noted that since the lot-casting procedure involved the bringing forward of a group, the selection of a sub-group, and finally an individual from that sub-group, the absence of Saul should be considered problematic. See Klein, p. 98; Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, p. 45; and Gordon (OTG), p. 46. Gordon (ibid.), has pointed out that some scholars, most notably Eichrodt, have proposed this anomaly has arisen

"See, he has hidden himself among the baggage".[54] Then they ran and brought him from there. When he took his stand amongst the people he was from his shoulders upwards taller than any of them.[55] Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see (הראיתם) the one whom the Lord has chosen?[56] There is no one like him among all the people". And all the people shouted, "May the king (מלך) live'!" (1 Sam. 10: 22-27).[57]

Saul and those who had been at the gathering for the selection of the king demanded by the people are then dispersed.[58] Saul is said to have returned to his home of Gibeah,[59] accompanied by mighty men (החיל).[60] However, it

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as a result of an inexact suturing of two different traditions of Saul's election - one on the basis of his physical stature and the other associated with the casting of lots.

[54] Driver, p. 84, points out that the people ask, 'Is there still (i.e. besides ourselves) any one come hither?'. However, in Driver's view the LXX, 'Is *the* man come hither?' (εἰ ἔρχεται ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐνταῦθα;) is preferable because it agrees better with the response given '*he* is hidden'. (Driver's emphasis and translations). See also Smith, p. 75, and Klein, p. 95. McCarter, p. 193, points out that the Hebrew term rendered here as 'baggage' (כלי) can be used of almost any kind of equipment. It is possible that he was concealed in a weapons stockpile or cultic utensils.

[55] This emphasis upon the physical stature of Saul is also used in 1 Sam. 9: 2 which I have discussed above.

[56] Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, pp. 112-13, notes that 'to see' (ראה) may also be understood as 'to choose' or 'to appoint'. Thus he suggests that the people may well have played an active part in the proceedings.

[57] McCarter, p. 193, argues that the phrase 'may the king live' was used to express popular acclamation of the king (1 Kgs. 1: 25, 34, 39; 2 Kgs. 11:12). See also Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, pp. 133-36, on the meaning of this phrase.

[58] Klein, p. 97, considers the reference to the sending of the people home to be a redactional tie to 1 Sam. 11 which allows the people in that chapter to be described as having been called out in defence of Jabesh-Gilead.

[59] Gibeah has been identified by some archaeologists, most notably Albright, with Tell el-Ful. Albright in his *Archaeology of Palestine*, p. 120, concluded that the remains of a tower discovered during his excavation of the site was "the citadel of Saul". Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, p. 237, similarly suggests that the site is "very probably to be identified with the Gibeah which was the home of Saul". She goes further, suggesting that the fortress which was discovered at the site may have been built by the father of Saul. The simple finds were interpreted as evidence of the "humble social status from which the leaders of Israel were drawn" (ibid., p. 238). It should be noted however that the dating of the finds at Tell el-Ful to the time of Saul is considered inappropriate by scholars such as Fritz, *The City in Ancient Israel*, p. 121 n. 3, and Gottwald, *The Politics of Ancient Israel*, p. 176. For more recent discussions of the association of Tell el-Ful and its identification with Gibeah of Saul see for example Mazar, 'Jerusalem and its Vicinity in Iron Age I', pp. 76-78, and Singer, 'Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines in the Period of the Emergence of Israel', pp. 323-25. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel*, p. 164, is surely correct to be critical of the methodology employed by scholars such as Albright where they "interpret supposedly objective.

would appear that not all those who had been present were convinced that Saul was the appropriate the choice for the new leader of the people:

> But some worthless fellows said, "How can this man save us?" They despised him and brought him no present (מנחה).[61] But he [Saul] held his peace (1 Sam. 10: 27).

(a) Lot-Casting

A number of scholars have considered that the description of Saul's selection as leader by means of the casting of lots has certain negative connotations when considered in the light of other similar instances of choosing by lot.[62]

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extrabiblical data on the basis of assumptions drawn from the biblical text". In other words, such a methodology is necessarily flawed insofar as interpretative assumptions about the biblical text feed those interpretative assumptions about the extrabiblical data. The biblical text's references to 'Gibeah of Saul' or to the 'hometown of Saul' are perhaps best understood as a straightforward indication of Saul's origins and locale. Thus the description of Saul as returning to Gibeah is, according to Eslinger, p. 363, not intended to give the impression that Saul now owns his own town but rather it is mentioned in order to remind the reader that Saul had returned to his home after his acclamation. This view is in contrast to those who, whilst acknowledging that there is no reference in the biblical traditions to Saul having built a palatial residence as one would expect of a king, nonetheless consider that Gibeah was the seat of Saul's headquarters and estate. See for example Gottwald, *The Politics of Ancient Israel*, pp. 46, 92, & 176, who views Gibeah in exactly this manner and concludes (on the basis of what evidence it is not clear) that the resources of this estate and headquarters were such that they were sufficient to support Saul's modest entourage.

[60] Driver, p. 85, points out that LXX has 'men of valour' (υἱοὶ δυνάμεων) or בני החיל with the בני having fallen out. Driver says that what is meant here is not simply a 'band of men' but "a military host - a sense that is not here appropriate". He continues by stating that we should understand the Hebrew as denoting not only men of valour but also "men morally brave, loyal and honest". Further, he suggests that the use of בני החיל here is intended as a contrast to the בני בליעל (sons of Belial) in the following verse which has been translated here as 'worthless fellows' with the NRSV. It is possible that this group of followers constituted a private force or mercenary group such as are mentioned in connection with Abimelech (Judg.9: 4) and David (1 Sam. 22: 2). However, it is interesting to note that the text does not suggest that Saul had any means of paying such a force in order to ensure its loyalty to him only. Moreover, as we saw in 1 Sam. 10: 27, Saul is not described as using force against those who questioned his position as leader.

[61] Driver, p. 85, understands this Hebrew word to signify "presents offered to a superior".

[62] See, Klein, p. 96; Birch, pp. 48-54; McCarter, pp. 191-92; Miscall, p. 64; Polzin, p. 104; Gordon (OTG), p. 47; Gordon, p. 120; and Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel*, p. 83.

Those other two accounts of selection by sacred lot in the Hebrew Bible identified are those found at Josh. 7: 16-26 and 1 Sam. 14: 38-44. It has been argued that in both instances not particularly good stories are recounted and it is therefore concluded that these two instances of selection by lot in some way "contaminate the selection of Saul".[63] That is to say, in an account which is otherwise generally favourable to Saul and his selection as leader, the association between the manner of his selection by lots and the discovery of a culprit elsewhere casts a particularly negative light upon both Saul and kingship more generally. Thus the casting of lots is "intended, above all else, to emphasize the guilt and sin inherent in the royal office for which he is taken. Saul, as Israel's first king, is singled out as a personification of kingship's sinfulness".[64]

However, in contrast to this negative interpretation of the lot-casting process, it has been argued that lots were simply a neutral means by which to determine the divine will. The need for such a determination of the divine will, it is argued, need not have necessarily involved guilt.[65] Whilst it should be acknowledged that the lot-casting process involved issues other than the discovery of a criminal, certain scholars have maintained that the combination of features present in 1 Sam. 10: 17-27 (an oracle of judgement followed by an injunction to cast the lots) implies that he is in some sense an offending party.[66]

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[63] Miscall, p. 64.
[64] Polzin, p. 104. See also Alter, p. 58, who also notes the association of the casting of lots with the discovery of a culprit.
[65] See Edelman, p. 56.
[66] See McCarter, p. 196.

(b) Characteristics of Saul

Several other points in this passage also deserve further examination. Firstly, Saul's personal qualities are described in such a way as to imply that they made his choice as leader inevitable. The fact that Saul is said to be goodly and in some manner superior to other men in Israel suggests that it was his prestigious standing within the community which had won their favour, and him the favourable position of leader. I have used the term 'favour' in this context to highlight the fact that the narrative's drive towards the establishment of Saul as the new leader within Israel rests firmly upon the desire of the people. That is to say, physical stature and appearance are employed here in order to emphasize that Saul is an appropriate choice as leader. Further, as Edelman has highlighted, it also appears to confirm the implied destiny of Saul for greatness outlined in the first account of Saul's election (1 Sam. 9: 1-2) where his family background and physical appearance are first mentioned.[67] Essentially Saul is depicted as having an obviously elevated status within the community. In a sense one might say that Saul's great height made him a conspicuous member of the community. It would

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[67] Edelman, p. 56. Klein, p. 101, also sees Saul's outstanding physique as confirmation of his select status. However as briefly mentioned above, whilst physical stature may have been considered by the biblical tradition to be sufficient reason for the selection of Saul as leader, elsewhere this is repudiated. Thus both Gordon (OTG), p. 46, and Klein, p. 99, have pointed to the warning given to Samuel by God at the time of David's selection and anointing (1 Sam. 16: 7), that a candidate's external appearance should not be considered. The text states that "God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearances but God looks at the heart". Klein, p. 99, suggests that1 Sam. 16 may have been intended as "a subtle criticism of arguments favouring Saul and his house".

appear that Saul's personal qualities, his prestige, were paramount in his selection.

(c) Will of the People

Secondly, concerning Saul himself, it is interesting to note that he is described as hiding among the baggage. This is without doubt not the sort of action one would expect of the leader of Israel, particularly in the light of the 'ways of the king' described in 1 Sam. 8. Thus the events "do not present Saul as a bold and eager aspirant to the new office".[68] Ishida suggests that the episode of Saul's hiding "shows that the narrative tries to create the impression that Saul did not covet the kingship but that the people compelled him to be king".[69] The biblical tradition draws attention to the fact that it is the will of the people which predominates. Despite his protestations and attempt to evade selection, Saul is acclaimed as *melek* (מלך). This emphasis upon the will of the people highlights the possible limitations that are likely to be inherent in the leadership system instigated here. Clastres' evaluation of the relationship between the chief and the rest of society and his view that power lies not with the chief but in the hands of the people is obviously relevant here. The chief is chief because the people have chosen him. The details of this account suggest a leader that does not appear to fit the image of a 'king' (*melek*) despite the

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[68] McCarter, p. 196.

[69] Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, p. 46. In contrast to this understanding, the reference to Saul's hiding among the gear or baggage is considered by Edelman, p. 57 as reflecting "the requisite humility of the royal candidate and not Saul's reluctance to assume office".

fact that he is called this in this election. Thus the details of the account appear to suggest a leader who might reasonably be characterized as *nagid* (נגיד), despite the fact that in this account of his election Saul is in fact proclaimed *melek* (מלך).

(d) Supporters and Sceptics

The account of Saul's appointment as 'king' raises another issue which throws some light on the nature of his leadership. Whilst the people play a role in his appointment as leader, his selection did not apparently meet with wholehearted support. Some people express their doubts in Saul's abilities to save, his military leadership capabilities verbally, 'How can this man save us?',[70] and through their refusal to bring the new leader a gift which was perhaps meant to signify their acceptance and support of the new leader.[71] These sceptics are designated by the biblical tradition to be 'worthless men' (בני בליעל). As Ishida states, "undoubtedly, Saul's elevation was recognized

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[70] Blenkinsopp, 'The Quest of the Historical Saul', p. 86, suggests that the implication of the question, 'How can this man save us?' is that Yahweh alone is capable of Israel's salvation and that consequently only he should be or could be legitimately considered as king of Israel. Saul's reply at v. 13 is saying in effect, according to Blenkinsopp, that Saul's acceptance of kinship does not imply the rejection of this theocratic ideal.

[71] 'Gifts' are considered by Edelman, p. 58, to be 'tokens of support' from the people. Hertzberg, p. 90, identifies them as 'gifts of homage', a view which is shared by Klein, p. 100. McCarter, p. 194, understands 'gifts' as the tribute paid to the king by the people under his sway (Judg. 3: 15) He suggests that although we have no other evidence of gifts of homage being presented to a newly elected king, this is certainly what is intended here. He concludes that "To fail to bring a gift is to refuse fealty" (p. 194). A different understanding of the reference to 'gifts' is offered by Polzin, p. 102. He identifies a parallel between the refusal to offer a gift here and the gift referred to in 1 Sam. 9: 7 where a gift is described as being a necessary offering to the seer or man of God. The refusal to bring a gift to Saul signifies, in Polzin's view, the feeling that Saul is not a prophet and that it would therefore be inappropriate.

as a legitimate action by all the people. Accordingly, dissenters were called 'worthless fellows'".[72] McCarter suggests that what we have here is a deliberate contrastive technique between on the one hand, worthless men and on the other, goodly men. He suggests that the goodly men were those who could be depended upon for loyal service and the worthless fellows are those traitorous or disloyal individuals.[73]

Interestingly, this notion of the goodly men as those who could be depended on has been taken by some scholars to represent part of a standing army which Saul had gathered about him.[74] However, it is not clear from the narrative that this is in fact the case. In the account as we have it before us Saul has only just been appointed leader making it unlikely that he would have had opportunity to engage in the selection or training of such an army. Furthermore, it is not clear how such a standing army would have been maintained given that no reference has been made to the taxation of people and produce on a national scale which would provide a sufficient surplus for the provision of payment and food for a group of men who were presumably solely dependent upon Saul having given up their day to day occupations to follow him. Perhaps Klein has in mind in this connection the 'gifts' or tribute mentioned in the passage which makes it plain that not all those present at Saul's appointment provided such tribute. But one could hardly suppose that

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[72] Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 73.
[73] McCarter, p. 194. He cites biblical texts such as 2 Sam. 20: 1; Gen. 25: 34; 2 Sam. 6: 16; 12: 9, 19 in his discussion.
[74] See Klein, p. 100. See also Gordon, p. 122, who prefers to interpret Saul's followers here as a 'group of henchmen'.

on the basis of *ad hoc* tribute payments a full standing army loyal to the person of Saul could be sustained.

It is also worth noting here that whilst some of those people present do offer a 'gift' (מנחה) to Saul, those who are said to have refused to make such an offering are apparently not compelled to pay tribute to the new leader.[75] Saul does not force the issue, rather one might say that the tribute paid to Saul came out of respect and not fear. This is reminiscent of Clastres' comments on the flow of debt within society as a means for identifying the nature of that society's social structure. Thus "to hold power, to impose tribute, is one and the same, and the despot's first act is to proclaim the obligation of payment".[76] Clastres goes on to state that "where there are masters, where there are subjects who pay their tribute, where there is a debt, there is power, there is the State".[77] That is to say, voluntary tribute which becomes forced tribute ultimately becomes tax. The obligation of the payment of tribute might easily be identified as an action which would be undertaken by the despotic ruler described in the biblical tradition in 1 Sam. 8.[78] Saul does not act in this way

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[75] However, Edelman, p. 58, suggests that this part of the narrative may be reconciled with a portrait of Saul as a typical king and refers to the ancient Near Eastern *Akitu* (New Year) festival during which she suggests that similar behaviour was shown towards the king who underwent a ritual humiliation. It might be worth while noting in this connection that the *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East*, p. 170, points to the ritual human humiliation of the king (or his stand-in) would be more physical. It describes how the kings face would be slapped and his ears pulled.

[76] Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 116 (Fr. p. 141): "Détenir le pouvoir, imposer le tribut, c'est tout un, et le premier acte du despote consiste à proclamer l'obligation de la payer".

[77] *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 135 (Fr. p. 166): "Là où il y a des maîtres, là où il y a des sujets qui leur payent tribut, là où il y a de la dette, il y a du pouvoir, il y a de l'État".

[78] This relationship between debt and social structure has been discussed previously in Chapter Two.

and thus, despite being given the title *melek* (מלך) in this account of his election, he does not act like a king.

(e) Ideology of Divine Election

It is interesting to note that the account of Saul's elevation to the position of leader recounted in 1 Sam. 10 emphasizes the role of God in his selection from amongst the people.[79] It has been argued that this emphasis upon divine intervention in the choice of Saul represents an example of the ideology of the divine election of the monarch which was employed so often by kings in the ancient Near East to legitimate their regimes.[80] That is to say, the biblical accounts function here to give the king "divine sanction completely independent of the popular assembly" and, further, that they "confirmed the validity of religious authority over the monarchy".[81] Whilst it is true to say that, like kings of the ancient Near East, Saul's appointment as leader in 1 Sam. 9 and 1 Sam. 10 is said to have been at the instigation of God who selected him from the people, it is perhaps going too far to suggest that this represents the ideological foundation of his monarchy. The fact of the matter is that the biblical texts are written from a particularly theological perspective. An overriding concern is to emphasize the role of God in the history of the

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[79] This is arguably also the case with 1 Sam. 9 which as we have seen relates how Saul was selected by God and anointed privately as leader.
[80] See e.g. Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, p. 49; Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, pp. 64, 94, 97-98, 181-82, 294.
[81] Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, p. 49. I have discussed this notion of the ideological foundations of kingship in the ancient Near East in Chapter Three.

Israelite people.[82] Thus God is described throughout the biblical tradition as selecting and appointing representatives or leaders from amongst the people and this is evident from the biblical traditions relating to the period before the rise of the monarchy and even in those accounts which purport to record Israelite history prior to the occupation of the land.[83] It is difficult to see in the light of this how one can conclude that, when this pattern of divine intervention in the choice of a leader is identified in the accounts relating to Saul's appointment, we have evidence of some ideological foundation of the monarchy, when elsewhere it signifies nothing but a literary bias of an author or narrator. It is difficult to see on what basis one would differentiate the divine sanction given to leaders of the pre-monarchical period and those after of whom it is said the divine selection represents some ideological foundation for their authority.

(f) Summary

In this second election, then, Saul is proclaimed 'king', *melek* (מלך). However, as we have seen, there are certain aspects in the details of this account which do not conform to the traditional image of the sort of behaviour

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[82] See Chapter One where I have already discussed the nature of the biblical traditions.
[83] See for example Exod. 3 where the actions of Moses in opposing Pharaoh are said to have been grounded in the personal instructions of God. Josh. 1: 1-2 similarly relates the story of how Joshua is commissioned to lead the Israelites into the land by God himself. The book of Judges describes how the leaders and deliverers of Israel during this period were 'raised up' by God. The actions of individuals such as those outlined here may thus be deemed to have been literally sanctioned by God who has selected them from amongst the people to carry out His will. Actions and authority to act are thus repeatedly given divine sanction and legitimation.

that one might expect from a king. Thus, when Saul is confronted by a group of people who fail to offer him a gift as others have done, he does not punish them for disloyalty or coerce them but rather takes no action against them. Other details worth noting are those aspects of the account which do not conform to the typical model of the manner in which one would expect kingship to be instigated. As in the previous account of Saul's election, we do not find evidence to suggest that Saul imposed himself as 'king' over the people. Rather, Saul is in fact described as attempting to evade selection. Further, it would appear that the fact that Saul's physical stature makes him stand out from the crowd is presented as significant for his acclamation by the people. One might say that Saul is compelled by the people to be 'king'. These points suggest that despite the fact that Saul is acclaimed as king, *melek* (מלך), in fact his selection and his own actions suggest that he functions as the principal member of the group, in a manner similar to how one might understand *nagid* (נגיד).

3. Saul's Third Election

In the third account of Saul's election he is also described as assuming the position of 'king', *melek* (מלך), by the people.[84]

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[84] 1 Sam. 10: 27b-11: 1-15.

(a) The Text

The biblical tradition recounts how the Israelite territory of Jabesh-Gilead was besieged by an external force, that of the Ammonites, and how the messengers of the people of Jabesh-Gilead reach Saul's hometown of Gibeah.[85] In this account of Saul's rise to prominence, culminating in his recognition as 'king', *melek* (מלך), of Israel, we have him presented as the person who came forward in response to this particular emergency.

In the narrative the elders (זקנים)[86] of Jabesh-Gilead, having been able to negotiate a period of respite from the Ammonites,[87] send messengers throughout the territory of Israel:

> When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the hearing of the people; and all the people wept aloud.
>
> Now Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen; and Saul said, "What is the matter with the people, that they are weeping?" So they told him the message from the inhabitants of Jabesh. And the spirit of God came upon Saul in power when he heard these words, and he was very angry. He took a yoke of oxen, and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then [...] they came out as one man (1 Sam. 11: 4-7).

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[85] A number of scholars have pointed to the possibility that there existed a special bond between Saul and his tribe of Benjamin and the people of Jabesh-Gilead. Scholars have highlighted in this connection that Judges 21: 8 describes how the Jabesh-Gileadites were the only people who did not participate in the war of extermination against Benjamin. Looking forward to chapter 31 of 1 Samuel we can see that it was the people of Jabesh-Gilead who rescued the remains of the deceased Saul. Miscall, p. 66 suggests that this latter association between Saul and the people of Jabesh-Gilead results in "Saul's greatest moment [being] marred by anticipation of his death when the people of Jabesh-Gilead will retrieve his body". For further discussion see Blenkinsopp, 'The Quest of the Historical Saul', p. 85; Hertzberg, p.92; Alter, p. 60; McCarter, p. 202; Miscall, p. 52.

[86] I have discussed the meaning of this term in Chapter Three.

Following Saul's successful campaign against the Ammonites there follows a description of how he was proclaimed king:

> The people said to Samuel, "Who is it that said, 'shall Saul reign over us?'.[88] Give them to us so that we may put them to death". But Saul said, "No one shall be put to death this day for today the Lord has brought deliverance to Israel".
>
> Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew (חדש)[89] the kingship". So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king (מלך) (1 Sam. 11: 12-15).

This account has been considered by a number of scholars to be, of all those narrative accounts of the election, the one which expresses or represents most closely those events which resulted in Saul's elevation to 'king'.[90] This view is

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[87] Driver, pp. 86-87, points out that the form of the Hebrew for 'Ammonites' (עמון) employed here is rarely used.

[88] The best way to translate this verse has been debated. A number of translators have taken it be a question as has been done here (e.g. NRSV; see also Alter, p. 63). Others have suggested that a negative participle be added on the basis of the LXX so that it reads 'Saul shall not be king over us?' (see e.g. Smith, p. 80). Another view is that of Polzin, p. 114, who tries to retain the declarative sense by suggesting that after Saul's action which paralleled that of the judges, the people sought to retract their insistence on monarchy and 'renew' the institution of judgeship. For further discussion of the verse and the debate see Miscall, p. 68; McCarter, p. 199; Alter, p. 63.

[89] Miscall, p. 69, has drawn attention to the fact that the Hebrew word (חדש) generally refers to rebuilding, restoring, and recreating after serious damage or total destruction. However, he notes that it is not clear here how the kingship could be deemed to have been damaged or destroyed. Consequently, he suggests that perhaps the word should be understood here as reaffirming or renewing at a later date; it is not a matter of damage but of time - 'let us again say that we will have a king'. Renewal is generally accepted by scholars as the appropriate rendering of the Hebrew word. However, it has been suggested by some scholars that the reference here to the 'renewal of the kingship' reflects an editorial attempt to harmonize the traditions of Saul's appointment. As McCarter, p. 205, points out, Saul has already been proclaimed 'king' (1 Sam. 10: 17-27a) and consequently it would not be necessary for his office to be granted again so it is simply renewed here (see also Klein, pp. 97 & 104).

[90] See for example Mayes, 'Rise of the Monarchy', p. 18; Mayes, 'Period of the Judges', p. 325; McCarter, p. 207. Mettinger, *King & Messiah*, pp. 83, 91, 96, consider this account to contain considerable historical information. Mauchline, p. 106, considers this account to be an independent one preserved at Gilgal. For a discussion of some of those literary theories regarding 1 Sam 11 (its structure and relation to those narratives around it) see Edelman, 'Saul's Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead', p 196, esp. n. 3-7. Edelman herself posits that 1 Sam. 11 is one stage in a three-step coronation ceremony (pp. 59 & 64; also 'Saul's Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead', pp. 198-99). Having been nominated for the monarchy the candidate is tested through some military deed and, following the successful completion of the test the coronation of the

perhaps best epitomised by Gordon when he states that the text in question is "a straightforward narrative of deliverance, in which the crisis produced a hero".[91] After successfully rallying the people of Israel in order to fend off the attack and the resultant victory, Saul is proclaimed 'king'.

(b) Reception of the Messengers

When we turn to consider the passage in detail, we note that, when faced with an aggressive encroachment upon their territory, the people of Jabesh-Gilead resort to the dispersal of messengers throughout Israel in an attempt to gather support. We are given a sole account of the encounter between these messengers and those Israelites they visited – that of Gibeah. Edelman has argued that Saul had already been established as king in the central country when he was approached by this group to become voluntary vassals. This decision, she suggests, was based on the Jabesh-Gilead recognition that Saul was in control of an army strong enough to overcome Nahash.[92]

However, in contrast to Edelman's view, it is perhaps interesting to note here that when the messengers reach Saul's hometown of Gibeah they are not described as searching for any one person in particular. Rather, they are said to

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king takes place. See Edelman, p. 30, for a fuller description of the 'three step ritualistic process'.

[91] Gordon (OTG), p. 47.

[92] Edelman, 'Saul's Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead', pp. 202-05. Edelman bases her interpretation on the tradition in 2 Sam 2: 4b-7 which in her view shows that the people of Jabesh-Gilead were not a corporate, constituent member of Israel in the time of Saul. Rather, they were a foreign element which was brought into Israelite state by a vassal treaty with Saul as their 'Lord' (אדניכם). Thus she concludes that Saul's rescue of Jabesh-Gilead could not have functioned historically as the catalyst to the foundation of the monarchy.

have approached the *people* and presumably describe the predicament of their people to them and request their assistance. Even when Saul, upon the hearing the resultant cries of the people, approaches the group he is not addressed directly. It is only when he makes his own enquiry for the reason of the cries of the people that he is given any information at all.[93] Furthermore, there is no indication here that Saul had supreme military capabilities in the usual form of a standing army. Indeed, if, as Edelman suggests, Saul was thought to have an established standing army under his control, the description which follows in the biblical account of his hewing an oxen in order to rally the people in a defence of Jabesh-Gilead would seem to be superfluous. Clearly such an act would have been completely unnecessary had there been an army awaiting his instruction. Also, as noted above, it is not apparent by what means Saul would have been able to support an army which was considered strong enough to overcome the Ammonites.

(c) The Action of Saul

Of particular interest is Saul's response to the message which is brought to the people of his hometown. The account sheds some light upon the characteristics of Saul and his leadership. It describes how Saul left his herd upon hearing the commotion that greeted the news that Jabesh-Gilead was

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[93] A number of scholars have noted the fact that the messengers of Jabesh-Gilead do not approach Saul directly or ask for him by name. See e.g. Gordon (OTG), p. 48; Mauchline, p. 104; Smith, p. 76-78; Alter, p. 60. However, note that while the Hebrew text suggests that the messengers went to Gibeah of Saul, the LXX suggests that they went to Gibeah 'to Saul'

being besieged by the Ammonites.[94] This appears to suggest that Saul was not living a separate and essentially parasitic existence at the expense of the rest of society who toiled to maintain a king and his court. Rather, he appears to be obliged to labour like everybody else.[95]

As we have seen in the text, Saul is described as proceeding to rally the people of Israel in defence of their fellow Israelites from Jabesh-Gilead. The rallying method employed by Saul perhaps gives an indication of both his self-perceived function and also the nature of that function.[96] The majority of scholars have considered the manner of the rallying through the dismemberment of oxen and the distribution of their parts throughout Israel as a threatening action on the part of Saul.[97] The implication is deemed to be that those who do not follow Saul and assemble to fight will be treated in the same way as the oxen. In other words, "the depicted bonding between king-elect and the people is based on coercion rather than mutual enterprise: whoever does

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(πρὸς Σαουλ), but Mettinger argues convincingly against the reliability of this reading (see *King and Messiah*, pp. 83-84).

[94] 1 Sam. 11: 5.

[95] Alter, p. 61, for his part, sees Saul's coming out of the field behind oxen as reminiscent of pattern of judges in which an agriculturalist is transformed by the spirit of god into a warrior. In contrast to this Miller, 'Saul's Rise', p. 168, states that that the description of Saul's coming out of the field behind the oxen does not give any information pertaining to Saul's own lifestyle. Rather, it is essentially an introductory tool for the oxen which Saul proceeds to slay and distribute.

[96] Scholars have suggested that the cutting up of the oxen is reminiscent of the crime of the Benjamites against the concubine of the man who was a guest at Gibeah described in Judg. 19. There the narrative describes how the concubine was cut into twelve pieces and sent throughout the land in order to gather the people together at Mizpah. Alter, p. 62, suggests that Saul's action may be intended to be an act of restitution, setting right the civil war which resulted in the atrocity at Gibeah or, that perhaps it inaugurates Saul's actions under the shadow of this earlier act of turpitude. Garsiel, p. 84 prefers the latter understanding, seeing in the association between the two accounts of the summoning of the people to present themselves for war the impairment of Saul's military achievement in the rescue of the people of Jabesh-Gilead. This identification of Saul's actions with the Judg. 19 story has also been made by, for example, Edelman, p. 59, and Hertzberg, p. 93.

[97] See e.g. Smith, p. 78; Alter, p. 62; Miller, 'Saul's Rise', p. 167; Gordon, p. 124; McCarter, p. 203; Klein, p. 103.

not assemble will have his oxen dismembered".[98] Alter concurs with this view of Saul acting in a manner typical of the tyrannical king in a model which conforms to the expectation of kingship described in 1 Sam. 8 which describes the 'ways of the king'. He states that "kings, like mafia capos, operate through coercion: Saul, in sending the hacked up oxen parts to his fellow Israelites with the threat 'whoever does not come out [...] thus will be done to his oxen', is presenting them with an offer they cannot refuse".[99] Certain other scholars have gone a step further and interpreted Saul's actions as not simply a threat against the oxen of the people. It has been suggested that the threat may have been more direct, referring to people themselves and not simply to their oxen. The action of Saul "evokes the world of execration and treaty curse where the threat was directed not so much at the individual's property as at the individual himself".[100]

However, it is possible to understand the actions of Saul in the dismemberment and distribution of the oxen in another way. The chapter begins with a description of how the leader of the Ammonites, Nahash, had made a threat of dismemberment against the people of Jabesh-Gilead saying "I will put out all your right eyes" (1 Sam. 11: 2b).[101] Given this context, one might understand Saul not as threatening the people of Israel himself but

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[98] Edelman, p. 63.
[99] Alter, p. 62.
[100] Gordon, p. 124. See also McCarter, p. 203.
[101] According to Josephus *Antiquitates Judaicae* 6.68-70 the Ammonites had been systematically reducing the Israelite population of Transjordan to slavery. He explains that the gouging out of right eye would have impaired ability to fight because the left eye was largely covered by the shield in battle. Josephus's extended account of the story touched upon in the Hebrew text is also found in the Scroll 4QSam[a] which adds a whole paragraph to the transmitted Hebrew text (see *DSSB*, p. 225).

rather as pointing out to the people the threat posed by the Ammonites. Thus his actions may be seen as a reminder of the presence of this external threat and the urgent need to unite against it. Saul's warning to the people might be understood as centring on his realization that with the fall of Jabesh the Ammonites would continue a path through the rest of Israel. Saul then succeeds in his unifying task and the people "come out as one" (1 Sam. 11: 7). In the face of the prospect of enemy encroachment, Saul sees his own role as that of a warrior-chieftain who must organize and lead a successful offensive, and as a diplomat. Through his skills of diplomacy, and presumably also relying upon his own prestige amongst the people, Saul seeks to unite the people who were otherwise disparate into a fighting force for the good of the group.

(d) The Battle and Reaffirmation

Having assembled and organized the thousands that had come into three companies, Saul leads this fighting force into what is his first battle. He meets with a major campaign success which confirms his position as 'king', *melek* (מלך). The popular reaction to this military and unifying leadership success is to reaffirm his position (1 Sam. 11: 14). It would seem from this that Saul's position as leader is at least partly bound up with his exceptional military prowess. In effect his position may be seen to be dependent to some extent on his prestige – prestige won in this instance by his primarily military capabilities. It is this very quality that the people had looked for in their leader

so that it might be harnessed and used in the service of the group. The people have seen in Saul an individual capable of successfully implementing their will to evade conquest. Indeed, the primary function of Saul as leader seems to pertain to war. As we shall see in the next chapter, the literary account of his 'reign' is principally marked by the large number of military campaigns that he leads against the enemies of the people. He succeeds in various offensive measures against the Philistines together with other neighbouring peoples; the Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, and so on. It would appear that Saul's position, borne out of the desire of the people to prevent their own destruction by their neighbours and to present a unified front, necessitated this military enterprise on his part. A position based upon and maintained through military victory necessarily requires the continuation of military success. With subsequent victories Saul's popularity and his position as leader are assured. His selection was made on the basis of his past actions which the group deems to be serviceable on their own behalf.[102] We have here, then, an account which once again attributes the impetus towards the appointment of a new leader to the initiative of the people of Israel. As Gordon states, "both biblical account and theoretical reconstruction are agreed that the monarchy came to Israel by

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[102] It is perhaps interesting to note that 1 Sam. 12: 12 specifically relates the Ammonite attack to the request by the people for a king which is deemed to result in the rejection of Yahweh from being king over the people. (this desire was first voiced in 1 Sam. 8). However, here the request by the people for a king is accepted, provided both he and the people obey the voice of God. Gordon, p. 126, believes 12:12 is an independent tradition regarding the origins of the monarchy which may be reflected here. Blenkinsopp, 'The Quest of the Historical Saul', p. 84, also suggests that this chapter stems from a later independent source. McCarter, p. 215, suggests that either the Deuteronomist knew an independent tradition with a different view of the relationship between ch. 12 and ch. 8 or he made free interpretation of the existing materials.

the will of the people".[103] It would appear that as a direct result of Saul's military prowess in leading the people to a victory over those enemies who have encroached upon their territory there follows a spontaneous popular reaction.

4. Summary

By considering these three accounts of the promotion of Saul to leader it is possible to discern a number of important characteristics of Saul and the nature of his leadership as they are presented in the biblical tradition(s).

Firstly, one can note that in each election the people play a significant role to the extent that one might say that he his willed for by the people. In any event it is clear that Saul does not impose himself upon the people as one might expect a typical king to do.[104] Moreover he does not offer himself as a prospective leader and even deprecates his ability to fulfil the role. Instead he is selected by the people on the basis of his personal and physical characteristics.

Secondly, Saul is not presented as one intent on coercing or punishing those who question his election. He does not act against those who do not offer him tribute, nor does he appear to demand tribute. Thus his behaviour does not conform to the account of kingship in 1 Sam. 8 where the king (מלך) is described as one who will take (לקח) from the people for his own ends.

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[103] Gordon (OTG), p. 48.

Thirdly, his election as leader is primarily as a military leader, coming as it does as a direct response to perceived military threats from the Philistines and the Ammonites. Moreover, his status as leader is reconfirmed on the basis of his military success at Jabesh-Gilead.

In the light of these characteristics, Saul's leadership may be seen to share much with the notion of a *nagid* (נגיד) and rather less with the notion of a *melek* (מלך). He has a military function and is chosen by the people from among the people for this function. Unlike a king he does not impose himself on the people. Yet as we have seen, in two of the three accounts Saul is called *melek* (מלך) rather than *nagid* (נגיד). What is one to make of this? As we have seen, in the accounts in which these proclamations are made, Saul is clearly described as leader who displays characteristics that share much in common with the concept of a *nagid* (נגיד). It appears, then, that although Saul is *called* a 'king' (מלך) he is nevertheless *described* as what we might call a 'principal' (נגיד). Thus although Saul is *nominally* called *melek* (מלך), as a leader he *functions* as a *nagid* (נגיד). This is reminiscent of the way in which Joesphus describes Saul in the *Jewish Antiquities*.[105] There, Josephus called Saul a 'king' (βασιλεύς) but proceeded to describe his function as a 'principal' (ἄρχων). Similarly with the Hebrew accounts, one might say that although Saul is *called* a 'king' (מלך) the accompanying account characterizes the way in which he *functioned* as something much closer to a *nagid* (נגיד). Thus one

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[104] Thus with Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy*, p. 240, "There is no indication that Saul tried to enforce the will of the central government on an unwilling population".
[105] See the Appendix for discussion of this text.

might say that Saul's proclamation as *melek* (מלך) is merely nominal; the details of the election accounts make clear that as a leader he functioned as a *nagid* (נגיד).

Of course it may, in theory, be possible for a leader to be both *nagid* (נגיד) and *melek* (מלך) at the same time. That is to say, it is possible for someone to hold substantial monarchical power and yet at the same time hold the position of a military commander on the basis of personal prowess and status within the community. A king may be affirmed as military and civic leader by popular acclaim or he may be despised as an oppressor. Thus Saul could, in theory, have functioned as both *nagid* (נגיד) and *melek* (מלך) at once, in which case one might describe him as a popular monarch. Yet as we have seen, in the accounts of his election Saul does not display any characteristics that one would associate with a king. Thus at this preliminary stage it appears that Saul functioned as a *nagid* (נגיד) only. It will, of course, be necessary to assess how Saul functioned throughout his leadership before making any final judgement and it is to this that we shall turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SAUL'S FAILED 'REIGN'

In this chapter I shall examine the accounts of the 'reign' of Saul in the first book of Samuel. In particular, I shall focus upon three episodes deriving from chapters 13, 14, and 15.[1] The first two episodes included in chapters 13 (vv. 4-15) and 14 (vv. 24-45) are placed within the context of an extended narrative account of Saul's conflict with the Philistines.[2] The third episode, in chapter 15, details how the figure of Saul's defeated the Amalekites. Beyond chapter 15 the text shifts its focus and turns to the rise of David. In the first three sections I shall deal with each of these episodes in turn. In Section One I shall consider the account given of the initial stages of Saul's battle against the Philistines and shall discuss three ways in which one might understand his later rejection by Samuel. In Section Two I shall consider the remainder of the account of the battle with the Philistines, together with the summary

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[1] See Long, p. 70, who suggests that 1 Sam. 13-15 constitute a single unit describing the military achievements of Saul. However, the treatment of this 'unit' here should not be thought to imply anything in terms of their literary history, nor whether the two rejection accounts in chapters 13 and 15 were originally based on the same incident.

[2] Chapters 13 and 14 are often said to form a single coherent narrative; see e.g. Edelman, p. 76; Klein, p. 133.

description of Saul's other military campaigns. In particular, I shall examine the conflict between Saul and the people over the fate of Jonathan. In Section Three I shall consider the instructions given to Saul concerning his campaign against the Amalekites and analyse the reasons for his second rejection by Samuel. In Section Four I shall consider briefly the later chapters of the book and, in particular, Saul's relationship with David. In each case I shall attempt to consider what the biblical accounts tell us about the way in which Saul may be said to have failed as 'king'. Further, I shall consider what light this may shed on the status of Saul's leadership.

1. Saul's First Failure as 'King'

(a) The Text

In 1 Sam. 13 we find an account outlining the initial stages of the confrontation between the people of Israel, led by Saul, and the Philistines.[3] On the basis of the preamble given in verses 1-7 it would appear that Saul's home territory is the location of a Philistine outpost presumably charged with securing control of the area.[4] The actions of Saul's son Jonathan appear to initiate a period of war between Israel and the Philistines which will remain ongoing throughout Saul's time as leader. Thus in 1 Sam. it is stated that:

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[3] Klein, pp. 123-24, argues that there are three originally independent traditions in this chapter: An account of Saul's rejection; an account of his attack on the Philistines; and an account of Jonathan's attack on the Philistines.

[2] Saul chose three thousand men from Israel;[5] there were two thousand with Saul at Michmash and in the highlands of Bethel, and a thousand with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin;[6] the rest of the people Saul sent home, each man to his own tent.

[3] And Jonathan smashed (ויך) the garrison (נציב)[7] of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it.[8] And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land saying, 'Let the Hebrews hear'.[9] [4] And all Israel heard: Saul has smashed the Philistine

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[4] This is in contrast to the account given in 1 Sam. 7: 13-14 of Samuel's defeat of the Philistines.

[5] A number of scholars have argued that what is evidenced here is the beginnings of a standing army in place of the traditional national levy system. (See for example, Hertzberg, p. 104; Gordon, p. 132 Klein, p. 125; McCarter, p. 241). However, it is perhaps worth noting here (with Klein, p. 124) that the selected men, the 'standing army' if you like are apparently joined by a general muster which is called in the later verses (3-4). The plausibility of the view that Saul established a standing army is discussed in the previous chapter. McCarter, p. 225, suggests that 'thousand' is not meant to be taken literally here but rather as indicating a military unit of unspecified size.

[6] Driver, p. 98, points out that Gibeah is often confused with the similarly named Geba both by scholars and in the Hebrew Bible itself (see for example 1 Kgs. 15: 22). He highlights Isa. 10: 29 which refers to both place names suggesting that they were indeed distinct places. He locates Gibeah three miles North of Jerusalem and Geba three miles North East of Gibeah.

[7] Driver, p. 80, suggests the Hebrew נציב can have the sense of pillar (Gen. 19: 26), prefect or deputy (2 Sam. 8: 6, 14; 1 Kgs. 4: 19), post or garrison (1 Sam. 13: 23). With regard to the earlier appearance of the term in 1 Sam. 10: 5, Driver prefers the sense of officer or prefect. In contrast to this view Klein, p. 124, prefers garrison at 1 Sam. 10: 5 whilst noting the term could refer also to a prefect. Miscall, p. 82, and Alter, p. 70, suggest that Jonathan has killed a Philistine prefect whilst Long, p. 79, believes Jonathan has killed a governor. Smith, p. 93, has pointed out that the verb employed for the smiting of the Philistines here (ויך) implies that it was a person and not an object which was attacked. The verb used is, he suggests, nearly always used of smiting living beings, once of striking rocks (Exod. 17: 6). On this basis he concludes that the term נציב here is therefore a reference to an officer or a garrison. Clearly there is some scholarly debate. However, as Hauer, 'The Shape of Saulide Strategy', p. 154 n. 6, points out, whether what is meant is garrison, prefect or pillar, "The point is, Jonathan eliminated a symbol of Philistine presence and power. If it was a garrison, someone was in charge. If it was an official, he doubtless had subordinates. If it was an object (by all odds the least likely meaning) someone must have been about to report its desecration to the Philistine authorities elsewhere".

[8] It is interesting to note the fact that despite his commission as *nagid* to destroy the Philistines (1 Sam. 9: 16) Saul is not depicted here as the one striking the first blow against this enemy of his people (see also Long, p. 83).

[9] Driver, p. 98, believes 'the Hebrews' (העברים) is strange coming from Saul here. He points to LXX which reads, 'saying, the Hebrews have revolted' which would amend the Hebrew text to the following: לאמר פשעו העברים. This LXX reading has been preferred by a number of scholars (see for example Hertzberg, p. 104; Gordon, p. 133; Smith, p. 92). If correct, Driver suggests this emended phrase would be better placed at verse 3 after 'and the Philistines heard of it'. He also points out that Saul's blowing of the trumpet would then connect well with verse 4: 'So all the Israelites heard the news [...]'. Hauer, 'The Shape of Saulide Strategy', p. 157 n. 15, does not consider it appropriate to follow LXX reading here, preferring 'the Hebrews' which in his view gives adequate sense at this point.

> garrison, and Israel has incurred the enmity (נבאש)[10] of the Philistines. So all the people rallied behind Saul at Gilgal. [5] The Philistines mustered to do battle with Israel, thirty thousand chariots[11] and six thousand horsemen.[12]

It would appear that in the face of such vast Philistine forces, that many of those Israelites who had gathered for battle began to flee. And it is this, as we shall see, which forms the important background for the actions of Saul which are said to have resulted in his divine rejection as leader and his split with the prophet Samuel. The biblical text states that:

> [6] When the men of Israel saw that their situation was desperate, since they were hard pressed, they hid in caves and in thickets (חורחים),[13] among rocks, in vaults and in wells.[14] [7] Some Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the territory of Gad and Gilead.[15]
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> Saul was still at Gilgal and all the people who followed him were trembling. [8] He waited for seven days, the time that Samuel had

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The term 'Hebrews' (עברים) employed here is also found in 1 Sam 13: 19-20; 1 Sam. 14: 11-12, 21-23a. It has been pointed out (McCarter, pp. 106, 240; Klein, p. 125; Gottwald, *Tribes*, p. 421) that the term 'Hebrews' is an ethnic term which is used as a designation for the Israelites by foreigners and in the speeches of Israelites to foreigners (Exod. 1:15; 2: 11,13; 3.18). However, Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 419-424 (esp. pp. 419-420, see also *Klein* p. 137), suggests that the 'Hebrews' may also be identified with the *apiru*. Thus, he suggests, 'Hebrews' is used in two distinct senses: By the Philistines for the Israelites and by the Israelites for a group not equatable with Israel which fought with the Philistines but who are invited to come over to the Israelite side. However, McCarter, pp. 106 and 240, doubts the usefulness of the evidence of the *apiru*. He suggests, p. 241, that it is better to assume that where the term is not used in its general sense, it is still being used of ethnic Hebrews - those who had defected to the Philistine side but who returned as the fortunes of war changed (see also Gordon, p. 138).

[10] Driver, p. 98, renders the Hebrew נבאש as literally 'made itself malodorous against (= was in bad odour with)'.

[11] LXX has three thousand chariots.

[12] A number of scholars consider that the numbers of troops assigned to the Philistines here is exaggerated; see e.g. Driver, p. 98.

[13] Driver, p. 99; Klein, p. 125; Hertzberg, p. 101, suggest and that caves may more appropriate here as opposed to thistles or thickets (cf. 1 Sam. 14: 11).

[14] This hiding from the enemy by the people is paralleled in Judg. 6: 2.

[15] Hertzberg, p. 101 n. 'k', prefers to read 'great crowds' (עם רב) in place of 'Hebrews' (עברים) here which he notes is not confirmed by LXX (which simply has 'oi', they). Alter, p. 71, suggests that the employment of 'Hebrews' (עברים) here may be intended as a pun with 'crossed' (עברו). For further discussion see Driver, pp. 99-100.

appointed, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal and the people were scattered from him. [9] So Saul said, 'Bring me the burnt offering and peace offerings'. And he offered the burnt offering.[16] [10] And it came to pass that as soon as he offered the burnt offering, behold Samuel came [...].[17] [11] And Samuel said, 'What have you done?'. And Saul said, 'I saw that the people had scattered from me, and you[18] had not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had gathered themselves together at Michmash. [12] So I thought now the Philistines are going to fall upon me at Gilgal and I have not implored the favour of Yahweh. So I forced myself (ואתאפק) and offered the burnt offering'.[19] [13] And Samuel said to Saul, 'You have done foolishly, you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which he commanded you, for he would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.[20] [14] But now your kingdom shall not continue;[21] Yahweh has searched out a man after his own heart (כלבבו איש)[22] and designated him to be leader of his people, because you have not kept that which Yahweh commanded you'.[23]

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[16] On the offering of sacrifice before battle see for example, Judg. 20: 27; 1 Sam 7: 9.

[17] Edelman, p. 78, suggests that the 'behold' (הנה) here should "most plausibly be construed as a report of Saul's sudden perception of Samuel's arrival, as opposed to Samuel's sudden appearance out of nowhere". An interesting question would then follow: Has Samuel simply stood by and watched Saul make the offerings and does he then proceed to condemn this action which he could have prevented?

[18] The use of the pronoun here is emphatic.

[19] Smith, p. 97, reads 'constrained myself' instead of 'forced myself' here for the Hebrew verb אפק. He states that this is elsewhere used of restraining ones emotions (Gen. 43: 31; 45: 1; Isa. 42: 14). He suggests that the intimation is that Saul would have waited longer but circumstances forced his hand (see also Alter, p. 72). BDB, p. 67, confirm that the verb can have both meanings, but suggest 'compel oneself' is more appropriate in our context.

[20] Smith, p. 99, and Alter, p. 73, believe that we should not read here, with the text, the declarative 'you have *not* kept the commandment' (לא) but rather '*if* you had kept the commandment' (לוא). See Driver, p. 101, for discussion of the merits of this suggested emendation. McCarter, p.226-27, translates, 'the instruction of Yahweh, your god, that he instructed you'. However, he notes that LXX reads 'my instruction which Yahweh instructed you', and he suggests that this is not demonstrably inferior.

[21] It is generally acknowledged that what we have here is a reference to the possibility of a dynastic system of leadership which is to be denied Saul. It is not clear if it is Saul who stands rejected here or his prospective dynasty that allows for Saul to continue as leader until death. Klein, p. 127, and Hertzberg, p. 106, argue that it is only in 1 Sam. 15: 28 that we hear of the rejection of Saul's kingship itself. See McCarter, p. 229; Polzin, p. 127; Jobling, p. 80; Edelman, pp. 76-77, for further discussion.

[22] 'A man after his own heart' (איש כלבבו) is used of the ideal future rulers (e.g. Jer. 3: 15).

[23] Birch, *Rise*, p. 85, finds in verses 7b-15a the prophetic judgement formula against an individual (introduction, vv. 8-10; accusation, vv. 11-13a; announcement of punishment, vv. 13b-14). Like Humphreys, 'The Rise and Fall of King Saul', p. 75, Birch assigns these verses to a prophetic circle which he dates to the eighth century. However, Klein, p. 124, doubts the success of Birch in assigning the unit to such a period. Gordon, p. 133, and McCarter, p. 228,

The chapter continues by stating that the prophet departed from Saul and goes on to provide further background information about the state of the Israelites in comparison to the stronger Philistine force.[24]

This account of Saul's first major campaign – arguably his first act as leader of Israel[25] – already presents him as a failure. As we can see, even at this early stage Samuel renounces Saul's leadership. However it is far from clear precisely what Saul has done wrong to suffer such a rejection. In what follows I shall suggest that there are broadly speaking three main ways in which one might understand Samuel's rejection of Saul.[26]

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have also identified evidence here of a prophetic perspective on kingship with its emphasis upon the need for the king to be obedient.

[24] In particular, the text refers to the impact of Philistine dominance over the region which resulted in restrictions of access to iron smiths which impacted upon the Israelite ability to use particular weapons and agricultural implements (see 1 Sam. 13: 19-22). It would appear that the Philistines were also able to turn this restriction from a simple military advantage to a financial one also – they charged the Israelites for the sharpening of their metal equipment. For an analysis of the prices charged for the sharpening of Israelite equipment see Bewer, 'Note on 1 Sam 13 $_2$', esp. pp. 45-46. He suggests two thirds of a shekel or a פִּים for certain items and a third of a shekel for others.

[25] If one assumes that Saul's campaign against the Amalekites in 1 Sam. 11 was the impetus towards his rise to the position as leader as opposed to an account of an act carried out after he had already been appointed as king.

[26] A fourth interpretation has been proposed by Miscall who, p. 87, argues that Saul's failure is primarily due to the fact that he is sitting around burning sheep rather than getting on with the task in hand, namely killing Philistines. He writes, "Samuel simply cannot believe that Saul is still at Gilgal preparing burnt offerings rather than engaging in full battle with the Philistines. Saul has blundered and has revealed himself as unfit, because he does not act on his own as king". Although Miscall is correct to note that elsewhere in 1 Sam. 10: 7 Saul is told to do whatever he thinks is fit, it is clear that this is immediately conditioned by the command in 10: 8 to wait at Gilal for seven days. Indeed, this is how the majority of commentators understand the text. Consequently I shall not discuss this interpretation in any detail.

(b) Three Possible Interpretations of Saul's First Failure

(i) Disobedience to Samuel

The passage above describes the situation which is said to have been facing Saul and the people prior to their engagement with the Philistines after Jonathan's initial strike against them. Samuel is apparently expected, but absent. Saul is said to have "waited for seven days, the time that Samuel had appointed, but Samuel did not come". In the face of a rapidly diminishing force Saul resolves to offer the burnt offering at which time Samuel appears.

This reference to waiting for an appointed seven days is reminiscent of the instruction given to Saul by Samuel at 1 Sam. 10: 8:[27]

> 'And you shall go down to Gilgal ahead of me; then I will come down to you to present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. Seven days you shall wait until I come to you and show you what you shall do'.[28]

It has been suggested that there is a deliberate connection being made here between Saul's appointment as leader and his appointment to meet with

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[27] Although it would appear that, by the time of the events in 1 Sam. 13, a number of years have now passed. Thus Saul is described as having a son.

[28] Jobling, pp. 85-86, has questioned whether the commandment given at 10: 7-8 is divine in origin. He points to the fact that although these verses are the conclusion of a speech announced as the 'word of God' (9: 7), the divine 'I' is missing. Thus he concludes that it is possible to understand that "Samuel is ordering Saul about on his own authority" (p. 86). Polzin, p. 130, suggests that all along Samuel had been "secretly conspiring to maintain kingship in such a way that it would be as much as possible under his control". Edelman, p. 80, also raises the question of whether the condemnation of Saul in 1 Sam. 13: 13-14 represents a legitimate prophetic pronouncement reflecting the will of God or if instead it should be considered Samuel's own warning to Saul about his possible future divine rejection. Edelman concludes that that the statement can be read either way.

Samuel.[29] Thus there is a play on the Hebrew verb *siwwah* (צוה), whose semantic range includes 'command' and 'appoint' and the related noun *miswah* (מצוה). The verb can be used at once of God's appointing of the new leader and the command to Saul at Gilgal. Since Saul did not observe the appointment with Samuel he did not carefully execute his appointment as king. The result therefore is that God no longer chooses to observe the appointment of Saul as leader and so the appointment of a replacement will follow.[30]

However, it is not at all clear from the biblical account that Saul did fail to keep the appointment with Samuel. It is specifically stated that Saul did wait the prescribed seven days and only resorted to offering the sacrifice himself when Samuel had failed to arrive at the appointed time. Perhaps one is to assume that Saul had failed to wait until sundown on the seventh day. More probable perhaps is that it is the secondary clause of the instruction given to Saul which is significant here. It states, 'until I come to you and show you what to do'. Thus Saul is perhaps guilty not of failing to wait seven days but rather, more generally, of acting independently without Samuel's presence.[31] It would appear from this analysis that the instructions given to Saul by Samuel were in any event confusing and somewhat ambiguous in nature.[32] Thus it has

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[29] See McCarter, p. 228, and Polzin, p. 127.
[30] Ibid.
[31] See for example Long, p. 89; Hertzberg, p. 106; Smith, p. 93, who suggest that although we can assume Saul waited seven days, he failed to wait until Samuel arrived and so did not obey to the letter his instruction by Samuel.
[32] See Gunn, p. 40, on the ambiguity of the instruction.

been suggested that Samuel could equally be held responsible for failing to be precise in his instructions to Saul or, perhaps even in not appearing.[33]

Ultimately, Samuel's speech directs attention towards a central theme of obedience. More specifically, it refers to obedience to the word of God expressed through his prophet. Whilst Saul as leader had authority in military affairs insofar as he went out before the people into battle, his execution of those military affairs were circumscribed; they were only to be conducted as directed by the prophet whose role it was to communicate the divine initiative. This has already been highlighted as being a fundamentally important aspect of the new leadership called for by the people, a leadership accepted only in accordance with certain limitations.[34]

(ii) Infringement of Sacrificial Law

It has been suggested that the immediate cause of Saul's failing lies not simply in his failure to wait until the arrival of the prophet Samuel to give him further instruction, but in his offering of sacrifices to God. In so doing, Saul has failed to comply with some general commandment of the deity regarding sacrifice

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[33] Polzin, p. 131, suggests that 1 Sam. 13: 1-15 are as much about Samuel's own failings as those of Saul. He points to Samuel's failure to arrive in a timely fashion and also to his failure as a prophet when, having predicted that Saul would wait, he did not. Edelman offers a discussion of Polzin's view at p. 79 n. 1. She argues convincingly that Polzin has failed to take into account the fundamental purpose of the narrative which is the rejection of Saul and not that of Samuel.

[34] 1 Sam. 12: 14: "if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well". Thus McCarter, p. 230, states that the new leadership will be tolerated but "only as subject to the controlling authority of the prophet" (see also Long, p. 90). See Gerbrandt, *Kingship According to the Deuteronomistic History*, pp. 140ff, on the position and function of 1 Sam. 12 in the larger Deuteronomistic history and its attempt to integrate kingship as an institution theologically into the history of Israel.

and has thus overstepped his own authority. It is argued that whilst the sacrifice of a burnt offering was previously the prerogative of the judges, in the 'transitional era' which is considered as being represented by Samuel this was Samuel's privilege and one which he did not relinquish with Saul's appointment as leader. In this way Saul's act is said to have been regarded by Samuel "as an affront, and as an encroachment upon the traditional authority of the prophets".[35] In other words, in offering sacrifice the figure of Saul has usurped the authority of Samuel who was the correct sacrificer.

Such an explanation of Saul's offence may not be appropriate. It is interesting to note the entire absence here of any express criticism of sacrifice being offered by Saul which one might arguably expect to see. Furthermore, as has been acknowledged by a number of commentators, cultic infringement by a leader of Israel seems unlikely to be the substance of the charge against Saul given the number of references to the offering of sacrifice by other Israelite leaders which do not receive condemnation. For example, David is described as sacrificing burnt offerings and offerings of well-being,[36] as is Solomon.[37] Moreover, 1 Sam. 14: 33-35, which we shall discuss in due course, recounts Saul's establishment of an altar in order to sacrifice to the deity. If the biblical narrator considered that Saul's failing lay in his offering of sacrifice, one

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[35] Zeitlin, *Ancient Judaism*, p. 158; also Alter, p. 73; Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets*, pp. 96-97; Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 303; Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 187. For sacrificing the burnt offering as a privilege of Samuel, see 1 Sam. 7: 9-10. For further discussion of the ritual of sacrifice see Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 415-23.
[36] See 2 Sam. 6: 17; 24: 24.
[37] See 1 Kgs. 3: 4; 8: 62-64.

would logically suppose that this action would also stand condemned. However, this act is not criticised.[38]

(iii) Obedience to the People

On the basis of Samuel's criticism of Saul for having failed either to comply with a commandment of the deity voiced through his prophet or a divine sacrificial law, one might conclude that Saul has failed to comprehend the subordinate nature of his leadership.[39] In other words, he has failed to acknowledge the authority of Samuel. Thus one might assume that, by not acknowledging Samuel's position, Saul is in effect claiming total civic and religious authority for himself. In other words, one might assume that Saul's indifference to Samuel's command simply highlights his attempt to assert himself as 'king'. Thus, one might understand Samuel's rejection of Saul's leadership as the rejection of an over ambitious king.

However, one must take into account the role played by the people in this episode. As we have seen, while Saul waited for Samuel's arrival, his premature sacrifice was precipitated by the departure of the people (1 Sam. 13: 8). When Samuel confronted Saul, Saul emphasized this by stating at the very outset that the people had begun to leave (1 Sam. 13: 11). Moreover Saul also

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[38] See Klein, p. 127, who states: "The offence does not seem to be that the king merely usurped priestly sacrificial rights since his altar building and sacrifices are favourably noted in the next chapter (14: 31-35)".
[39] See Long, p. 90.

makes it clear that he considers that he has been forced by circumstances to act against Samuel's command (1 Sam. 13: 12).[40]

As we can see, then, Saul may be seen to fail to coerce those people who had gathered to enter into battle against the Philistines into staying with him.[41] His failure, then, is primarily due to his lack of coercive control over the population. In this sense one might say that he has failed to act as a 'king' who, according to 1 Sam. 8: 10-18, would exert considerable power over and against the people.[42] This is clearly very different from the claim that he was acting as an over ambitious king attempting to usurp Samuel's religious authority.

(c) Summary

I have suggested and outlined three broad ways in which one might understand Samuel's first rejection of Saul's leadership. The first would suggest that this rejection was a consequence of Saul's disobedience to Samuel's command to wait for his arrival at Gilgal. The second would suggest that it was a consequence of his infringement of some more general sacrificial law, although other biblical examples would call such an interpretation into question. The third would suggest that it was due to his failure to control the population, a failure that led to him to break Samuel's command.

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[40] See Smith, p. 97; Alter, p. 72, discussed above.
[41] Thus Edelman, p. 80, asks if perhaps the command broken is in fact to be understood as Saul's failure to constrain (עצר) the people during the wait so that they dispersed. (See the discussion of this verb as a function of the *nagid* in the previous chapter).
[42] See Jobling, p. 85.

As we have seen, the details of the text suggest that central to Saul's failure to comply with Samuel's command is his relationship with the people. One might say that his rejection as 'king' was due to his inability to control the population, an ability that one would naturally expect from any royal leader. His failure, then, is a failure to exercise royal authority over the population rather than a dispute with Samuel. Saul is, in this episode, not so much disobedient to Samuel but rather obedient to the people. To this extent he does indeed fail as a king.

2. Saul and Jonathan

(a) The Roles played by Saul and Jonathan

In 1 Sam. 14 the account of the campaign against the Philistines continues.[43] Once again, a primary role is assigned to the son of Saul, Jonathan.[44] Here he is described as undertaking a secret attack against an outpost of the 'uncircumcised' Philistines,[45] accompanied only by his armour-bearer.[46]

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[43] Jobling, 'Saul's Fall and Jonathan's Rise', p. 370, considers 1 Sam 14: 1-46 to originally have been a pro-Saulide tradition which has been recast to tell anti-Saulide story and draw a portrait of a rejected king.

[44] 'Jonathan son of Saul'. Long, p. 105, suggests that the purpose of this reference to Jonathan's filial relationship to Saul is to establish the rivalry and progressive alienation between them. A different interpretation is offered by Edelman which will be discussed below.

[45] See also Judg. 14: 3; 15: 18; 1 Sam. 18: 24-27; 31: 4; 2 Sam. 1: 20. This description of the Philistines as uncircumcised may have been intended in a derogatory sense or perhaps simply as a means of emphasizing that they were not part of the Israelite community. (See Edelman, p. 84, and Klein, p. 136, for further discussion. The latter highlights the archaeological data of carvings which apparently suggest that the Philistines did in fact practice circumcision).

[46] For a discussion of 'armour-bearer see for example Smith, p. 105. Further biblical references to this attendant include Judg. 9: 54; 7: 10; Num. 32: 19; Josh. 22: 7.

Meanwhile Saul is described as "staying in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree at Migron" (v. 2),[47] accompanied by around six hundred men and the priest Ahijah.[48] The text describes how the Philistines fell before Jonathan and continues by describing the resultant panic within the Philistine encampment. Upon noticing the scattering of the Philistines Saul establishes that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing.

> [20] Then Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves and they came to the battle [...]. [21] The Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines [...] turned and joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.[49] [22] All the men of Israel who had hidden themselves [...] when they heard that the Philistines fled, they chased after them and joined in the fight. [23] So the Lord saved Israel that day [...].[50]

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[47] Hauer, 'The Shape of Saulide Strategy', p. 157 n. 15, points out that Saul is thus not described as lounging in some citadel but rather at some sort of surveillance point amongst his troops as any good field commander ought to be.

[48] A number of scholars have pointed to the negative light which is cast upon Saul by his described association with Ahijah. The identification of Ahijah with the rejected house of Eli is taken to emphasize the rejection of the house of Saul. (See for example Alter, p. 76; Jobling, p. 95; Jobling, 'Saul's Fall and Jonathan's Rise', pp. 368-69; Hertzberg, p. 112; Miscall, p. 90; Edelman, pp. 86-87).

[49] See Driver, pp.110-11, for a discussion of this passage and how best to understand its tense.

[50] A number of scholars have identified evidence in 1 Sam. 14 of a holy war theme. The reference to the oath laid upon the people and the attempt to bring the Ark onto the scene have been highlighted by Humphreys, 'The Tragedy of King Saul', p. 22, as reflecting Saul's desire to place this struggle within the divine sphere of holy war. The reference to earthquake and fear of God have been discussed by Klein, p. 136-37. See Blenkinsopp, 'Jonathan's Sacrilege', pp. 426-29, for a more detailed discussion of the evidence in 1 Sam. 14 of Holy War. He points to elements such as the references to localities which would have been well known to audience e.g. a certain tree (v. 2); rocks (vv. 4-5); a field (v. 14); the physical realities described such as single combat, an insulting challenge flung at the enemy, the use of a three pronged attack, interest in numbers; on the theological level he highlights the seeking for a sign of divine approval, religious practices associated with Holy War (a fast); terminology is also considered as pointing to a Holy War, specifically the saving act of God in the face of supernatural fear by the enemy; he also notes the reference to the priest Ahijah who was

(i) The Status Assigned to Jonathan

As is clear from the passage cited above, 1 Sam. 14 continues the account of the battle against the Philistines which has been interrupted in the biblical narrative by the description of the confrontation between Samuel and Saul. It begins by describing a surprise attack by Jonathan against the Philistine position which apparently develops into a full-scale battle resulting in the defeat of the Philistine forces present. It has been acknowledged by some scholars that the purpose and focus of the narrative then, is the figure of Jonathan.[51]

As will be recalled, in the previous chapter of the biblical account Saul stands condemned and his kingdom rejected after his failure to keep the commandment of God. Reference is made there to the appointment of another man after God's own heart. With this in mind, it is perhaps natural to assume, as does Edelman, that the biblical narrative progresses in 1 Sam. 14 to identify this individual. Thus Edelman suggests that from the very outset, with the explicit mention of Jonathan's filial association with Saul, the focus of the narrative is upon the testing of Jonathan as a suitable candidate for kingship. She states that "the forthcoming battle is to focus on his [Jonathan's] status as heir-elect to the Saulide throne".[52]

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linked to the Shilonite priesthood which was intimately bound up with Holy War (see 1 Sam. 2: 28; 4: 11).

[51] See for example, Blenkinsopp, 'Jonathan's Sacrilege', p. 243; Edelman, p. 85; Jobling, 'Saul's Fall', pp. 367, 371 & 376.

[52] Edelman, p. 83.

Underlying Edelman's argument is her view that the request for 'a king like the nations' expressed the desire of the people to establish "a permanent, unbroken form of mediating representation offered by dynastic kingship".[53] Furthermore, in order to maintain the possibility of this interpretation, Edelman argues for the ambiguity of the rejection scene in 1 Sam. 13. She suggests that the "lack of precise temporal limits for the establishment of Saul's kingdom [generally understood as his dynasty] allows for the possible reign of many Saulides before it was removed".[54] It is not clear exactly what Edelman means when she says that 1 Sam. 13: 14 lacks 'precise temporal limits'. The text in question makes it clear that Saul's kingdom "*will not* continue, the Lord *has* sought out a man after his own heart and the Lord *has* appointed him to be *nagid* over his people [...]".[55] It is clear from this that Saul's 'dynasty' or kingdom has already been rejected with the appointment of another having already been made. There would thus appear to be no room for any notion of a probationary or testing period on the basis of the text as we have it before us today.[56]

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[53] Edelman, p. 39 (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of this interpretation).

[54] Edelman, pp. 80-81.

[55] (ממלכתך לא־תקום בקש יהוה לו איש כלבבו ויצוהו יהוה לנגיד על־עמו) It should be noted that although the verb 'appoint' (צוה) appears here in the imperfect form, the context – prefixed with a *waw* (ויצוהו) and following on immediately from the verb 'sought out' (בקש) – suggests that it should be read as a perfect. See Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, pp. 90-91, where he explains that where two sentences referring to the past are in one continuous narration only the first verb is in the perfect while the following one is in the imperfect with a prefixed *waw*.

[56] See also Jobling, 'Saul's Fall and Jonathan's Rise', pp. 367, 371 and esp. 376, who considers that Edelman's view would contradict the contents of 1 Sam. 13: 13-14. He suggests that any emphasis in 1 Sam. 14 on Jonathan is not intended to show that he is the intended successor. Rather, his significance lies in the mediatory role that he will play in the transition of power to David.

(ii) Saul's Inactivity

Leaving aside questions of Jonathan and the possibilities of a Saulide dynasty for a moment, another interesting point worth noting which arises from the introductory verses of 1 Sam. 14 is the manner in which Saul is characterized. While his son is described as undertaking a secret assault against the Philistine post accompanied by his armour-bearer, Saul is said to be "staying under the pomegranate tree that is at Migron".

A number of commentators have identified in this reference a parallel with other royal descriptions. Thus it is pointed out that the image of a ruler sitting on the threshing floor at the gate of a city is common in antiquity.[57] A Late Bronze age Ugaritic poem describes Daniel who "sits erect before the gate, under the mighty tree which is on the threshing floor" where he judges the case of the widow and the orphan.[58] However, it is perhaps worth noting that in the Israelite context this sort of activity is apparently not the sort of behaviour limited strictly to kings. Thus we read how Deborah, who is said to have 'judged Israel', "used to sit under the palm of Deborah [...] and the Israelites came up to her for judgement".[59] Thus, although there is no explicit reference here to some sort of judicial-administrative significance of the

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[57] See for example Klein, p. 135; McCarter, p. 239-240; Gordon, p. 136.
[58] Cited here from McCarter, p. 239. This same example is also cited by Klein, p. 135. Both refer also to 1 Kgs. 22: 10. However, BDB, p. 175 suggest that the text here is dubious. It is perhaps worth noting that the Hebrew word for 'threshing floor'(גרן) does not appear in our passage (see BDB, p. 550). That Migron is a proper name of a place is supported by the reference to it elsewhere (e.g. Isa. 10: 28). However, Smith, p. 105 suggests that in this instance the fact that the details of location have already been given renders this proper name superfluous and thus 'threshing floor' is considered more appropriate in this context.
[59] Judg. 3: 5.

pomegranate tree of Saul, it may perhaps be conceived as suggesting that Saul undertook the role of judge which was one of the tasks which the people requested that their new leader fulfil.[60]

In contrast to this view, Edelman considers this description of Saul's sitting under a tree to be illustrative of his inactivity. She states that "his inaction introduces an element of irony into the narrative when viewed against his earlier possible rejection from the office of king for his decision to take action".[61] In other words, Saul's inactivity here serves to counter his condemnation and rejection for premature action earlier in 1 Sam. 13 when he failed to wait until the arrival onto the scene of Samuel.

(b) The Conflict between Saul and Jonathan

Despite the apparent victory of the people of Israel the text goes on to describe how the Israelites were distressed (נגש) that day.[62] The reason for this distress is attributed to Saul:

> [24] For Saul had bound the people under an oath saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats any food until evening, that I may be avenged on my enemies'.[63] So none of the people tasted any food.

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[60] See 1 Sam. 8 and my discussion in Chapter 3.
[61] Edelman, p. 86.
[62] Driver, p. 112, and Alter, p. 80, offer a discussion of the Hebrew word used to express the 'distress' (נגש) of the people and point out that it means to be hard pressed by the enemy or at some military disadvantage (as in 1 Sam. 13: 6). However, in this instance the people appear to have the upper hand. Another possibility is that men are simply weak from hunger as the result of Saul's oath. LXX reads here, 'Saul committed a great blunder on that day', (McCarter, p. 245, follows LXX), a reading which is rejected as unnecessary by Edelman, p. 88.

There follows a description of the breaking of this oath by none other than Saul's son, Jonathan, who is described as not having heard his father's instruction to the people. After partaking of honey,[64] which he found upon the ground, Jonathan is advised by the people of the oath that they should not eat which had apparently resulted in the widespread feeling of faintness amongst the people. Jonathan retorts that his father 'has troubled the land'[65] and points out that by eating he has been refreshed.[66] He suggests that the victory won by the people that day would have been even greater had they not been denied the opportunity to eat freely of the spoil of the enemies. Ultimately, the people are said to have succumbed to their hunger and "flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves and slew them on the ground: and the people ate them with the blood".[67] Saul, upon hearing the news of the people's actions seeks to remedy an infringement of the laws not to eat the blood by establishing an altar upon which to sacrifice the remaining animals.

There then follows a description of how Saul proposes to renew the attack but, on the advice of a priest, consults with God first. No response is

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[63] Hertzberg, p. 114, and Smith, p. 115, believe that 'my enemies' should not be understood as a reference to personal vengeance. Rather, the Philistines were Saul's enemies because they were the enemies of Israel.

[64] It is generally acknowledged that 1 Sam. 14: 25 is corrupt. See for example Smith, p. 118; McCarter, p. 245, for discussion and possible reconstructions.

[65] Alter, p. 81, reads here 'my father has stirred up trouble'. He states that the verb 'troubled' (עכר) here means to muddy, as in stirring up muck in a pond and thus it is an antithesis to the lighting up of his eyes Jonathan just experienced as a result of eating of honey. Jobling, 'Saul's Fall and Jonathan's Rise', p. 367, considers that עכר specifically means to bring into cultic jeopardy, citing in support of his view Josh. 6: 18; 7: 25; Judg. 11: 35; 1 Kgs. 18: 18. Thus in his view, Jonathan is here accuses his father of having committed some sort of cultic error in the oath he has placed upon the people.

[66] His eyes have been lightened: see also Ps. 13: 3 and Ezra 9: 8.

forthcoming and Saul determines to seek out the person guilty of sin which has so offended God that he refuses to offer guidance.[68] Saul addresses the leaders (פנות)[69] of the people:

> [38] Saul said, 'Come [...] and let us find out what sin has been committed today. [39] As surely as the Lord who rescues Israel lives, even if it lies with my son Jonathan, he must die'. But no-one answered him. [...]
>
> [41] Then Saul prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Give me the right answer'.[70] And Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot and the men were cleared. [42] Saul said, 'Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan'.[71] And Jonathan was taken.

After admitting that he had eaten in spite of his father's oath, Saul declares that Jonathan must die:

> [45] And the people said to Saul, 'Must Jonathan die after winning this great victory for Israel? Never! As the Lord lives not one hair of his

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[67] 1 Sam. 14: 32. A practice forbidden in the 'Law of Holiness', Lev. 19:26. (See also Ezek. 33:25).

[68] As Edelman, p. 93, points out, there are two possible sins in this context: The eating of blood or the failure to wait until sundown to eat, thus breaking Saul's divinely backed ban.

[69] פנות translated here as 'leaders' means lit. 'corners'. However, in this context the intended meaning is taken to refer to the cornerstones or supports of the community. See BDB, p. 819; McCarter, p. 249; Edelman, p. 93; Klein, p. 140 for discussion. Additional biblical instances of the verb employed of leaders include Judg. 20: 2; Isa. 19:13; Zech. 10: 4; Ps. 118: 22. McCarter, p. 247, points out that LXX(L) has 'all the clans of the people' here.

[70] LXX reads, 'Why have you not answered your servant today? If the fault is in me or in my son Jonathan, respond with Urim, but if the men of Israel are at fault, respond with Thummim'. Toeg, 'A Textual note on 1 Sam XIV 41', esp. pp. 497-498, views LXX as authentic here as opposed to a secondary expansion and suggests that it sheds some light on techniques of divination in ancient Israel. For a discussion of what the Urim and Thummim consisted of and their possible role in the divinatory process see e.g. Lindblom, 'Lot-Casting', pp. 173-78; Klein, p. 140; Robertson, 'The Urim and Tummim'.

[71] Here there is an additional passage in the LXX which adds, "Whom Yahweh takes shall die. And the people (ὁ λαός) said to Saul ' it shall not be so'. But Saul prevailed over the people they cast the lot between him and Jonathan his son" (trans. Smith, p. 122; see also Klein, p. 131). Both Smith and Klein take this to be original. Of particular relevance here is the emphasis placed upon the role of people.

head shall fall to the ground [...]'. So the people ransomed (וירפדו)[72] Jonathan and he did not die.

(i) The Prohibition

After describing how Jonathan's attack upon the Philistines results in panic amongst the troops of the enemy, the biblical account describes how Saul and the people entered into battle, their numbers apparently swelled by those Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines. During the pursuit of the enemy as the battle spread, Saul apparently imposed a sacred fast on the people who were made to swear not to eat until the end of battle.[73] It is possible that this imposition of a ban on the eating of food was intended by Saul as a practical measure intended to inhibit looting, preserve discipline, and keep the army at the main business of slaughtering the Philistines.[74] It may have also been intended to please God and gain His favour and support in the campaign by ensuring that through his prohibition, the spoil of war could be

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[72] Edelman, p. 95, points out that the Hebrew verb פדה used to describe ransoming by God refers to a legal redemption for an assessed price (see also Driver, p. 119). However, it is not clear here whether the redemption or ransoming of Jonathan was achieved by the payment of some sort of monetary fine (Exod. 21: 30; Lev. 27: 1ff); the provision of some sort of animal substitute (Exod. 13: 13; 34: 20) or some other means. (For a discussion of the idea of substitution generally in the ancient Near East see Hooke, 'The Theory and Practice of Substitution'). Driver, p. 119, suggests that had the sense of redemption by substitution of another been intended here then it would have been made more explicit and not left for the reader to infer. Hertzberg, pp. 117-18, also believes it to be improbable that a special procedure lies behind the brief description of the redemption of Jonathan on the basis that expiation would have been made and the action against the Philistines could have gone on.

[73] Other instances of oaths can be found. For example sexual abstinence (1 Sam. 21: 6); refraining from sleep (Ps. 132: 3-4); vows to sacrifice (Judg. 11: 30-31).

[74] See Hauer, 'The Shape of Saulide Strategy', p. 158 n. 16.

divided and Yahweh given his portion before people indulged themselves, and perhaps failed to give an accurate accounting of the booty.[75]

However, Saul's ban on the consumption of food was inadvertently broken by his son who had not been present when the instruction was given to the people.[76] When advised by the people of his father's oath Jonathan notes his renewed vigour after eating and comments that the victory would have been greater had the people been able to eat.[77] When Jonathan's fault was discovered, it was only the direct intervention of the people which saved him. Meanwhile, the people who were hungry and faint after the battle, and presumably also the long fast, swooped upon the spoil, slaughtering the animals on the ground and eating them with the blood which was expressly forbidden.[78] "Ironically, the imposition of the ban, which was intended to win divine favour, results in the people's infraction of blood laws, a sin against Yahweh that can only bring divine displeasure".[79] That is to say, Saul's oath upon the people might be considered to have been counterproductive. As a means of combating this action on the part of the people Saul is described as

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[75] See Edelman, p. 91; McCarter, p. 249; Gordon, p. 139, for this interpretation. Gordon points to what he considers to be a parallel to the oath of Jepthah in Judg. 11: 31.

[76] Long, pp. 124-25, has argued that Saul deliberately invoked the ban in the absence of his son in order to trap him into a wrongdoing so that he could have a means of eliminating him as a rival or replacement. However, Edelman, p. 90, points out that given the previous rejection of Saul's kingdom this interpretation is unlikely. She suggests instead that Saul had assumed that Jonathan would be told of the ban.

[77] Edelman, p. 89, sees in Saul's ban a parallel to Josh. 7 but with a reversal in the relationship between troubling and booty. Thus Achan brings trouble by stealing booty; Jonathan claims that Saul has brought trouble by preventing the legitimate taking of booty.

[78] On the prohibition against the consumption of meat with the blood see Gen. 9: 4; Lev. 17: 11; 19: 16, 26; Deut. 12: 16, 23; Ezek. 33: 25.

[79] Edelman, p. 92.

having arranged for the erection of an altar so that the animals could be sacrificed to God.[80]

(ii) Saul's Conflict with the People

In describing the imposition of an oath of abstinence by Saul upon the people and the description of their eating of meat with the blood we note that the text ascribes a considerable amount of power to the people.

Saul's request that the people should abstain from food until the enemy could be destroyed was tolerated presumably because his opinion in such matters of military strategy would have been respected due to his proven past successes. However, when Saul declares that his own son must die because he did not abstain from food as directed, there seems to be a breakdown in relations. What had previously been understood as a strategic game plan is apparently turned by Saul into a word of command. Those who had failed to obey this command, even if they were his own blood relations, are sentenced to death. The will of the leader has been exerted over and against that of the group. However, with regard to his son, Saul is forced to comply with the will of the majority who declare that "not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground". Furthermore, is interesting to note that after the defeat of the

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[80] It was on the altar that blood belonged according to Lev. 17: 6, 11. Deut. 12: 15-24 allows for secular slaughter provided the blood is poured on the ground. Jobling, 'Saul's Fall and Jonathan's Rise', p. 373, points to the context of the passage, amongst chapters 13 and 15 in which sacrificial irregularity is the cause of Saul's rejection, and suggests that it is therefore arguable that the redactor evaluates Saul's actions in erecting an altar as needless and sinful. However, if this is the case, it is interesting to note that no express criticism of Saul's actions are found in 1 Sam. 14.

Philistines and the cessation of battle Saul appears not to have any control over the people's actions who are described as swooping upon the spoils of war. Although he might have disapproved of the people's rash act in consuming the slaughtered animals together with their blood, Saul is not described as taking any action specifically against the people. Thus he does not command that the people cease their actions. Rather, he resorts simply to an attempt at rectifying the situation by erecting an altar. Thus, one might conclude that "the warrior leader is at no moment of the expedition [...] in a position [...] to impose his will. [...] In other words, war does not, any more than peace, allow the chief to act the chief".[81] Saul's position is not one of power or authority, only its appearance.

(c) Saul's Military Prowess (1 Sam. 14: 47-48)

There then follows a summary list of Saul's victories won on behalf of Israel during his time as leader:[82]

> [47] So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side. Against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned he inflicted punishment on

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[81] Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, p. 170 (Fr. p. 210): "le leader guerrier, à aucun moment de l'expédition [...] n'est en mesure [...] d'imposer sa volonté, [...]. En d'autres termes, la guerre, pas plus que la paix, ne permet au chef de faire le chef".

[82] Miscall, p. 98, points out that these verses are unusual insofar as this sort of summary generally appears at the death of a leader and he therefore sees here a 'hint that [Saul's] reign is already over'. See also Edelman, p. 96, who shares this view. For discussion of the possible deuteromistic origin of these verses see Klein, p. 134. Gordon (OTG), p. 52, on the other hand suggests that this 'concluding summary' of Saul's reign has been placed here because the defeat of the Philistines was considered the high point in story of the house of Saul.

them.[83] [48] And he acted valiantly[84] and destroyed the Amalekites,[85] and delivered Israel out of the hands of their plunderers.

The remainder of 1 Sam. 14 offers a summary description of Saul's reign and it would seem from this that Saul's position as leader was at least partly bound up with his exceptional military prowess.[86] In effect his position is dependent to some extent on his prestige, prestige won in this instance by his primarily military capabilities. It is this very quality that the people had looked for in their leader so that it might be harnessed and used in the service of the group. The people have seen in Saul an individual capable of successfully implementing their will to evade conquest, one who 'will go out before us and fight our battles'.[87] Indeed, the primary function of Saul as leader seems to pertain to war. The literary account of his 'reign' is principally marked by the large number of military campaigns that he leads against the enemies of the people. He succeeds in various offensive measures against the Philistines together with other neighbouring peoples; the Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, and so on.[88] It would appear that Saul's position, borne out of the desire of the people to prevent their own destruction by their neighbours and

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[83] LXX has 'he was victorious' instead of 'inflicted punishment on them'. Driver, p. 120, considers LXX here to be fitting given the context.

[84] McCarter, p. 255, suggests that it is possible here not simply to understand that Saul 'did valiantly' but also that he had acquired power and wealth as a result of his conquests. He refers to Deut. 8: 17-18 and Ezek. 28: 4. He writes, "the point here is that Saul, in consequence of his campaigns against neighbouring states, extended his domain beyond the borders of Israel in several directions".

[85] See 1 Sam. 15 which recounts the battle itself.

[86] Alter, p. 85 describes how Saul, through his military enterprise, manages to catch or secure (לכד) the position of leader. Edelman, p. 97, also suggests that the reference to Saul having captured the kingship is perhaps intended to indicate that his ability to secure Israel from her enemies through an astute military strategy (examples of which are given in 1 Sam. 11 and 13-14) led to his popularity and willing acceptance by the people.

[87] 1 Sam. 8: 20 which describes the qualities asked for by the people from their new leader.

to present a unified front, necessitated this military enterprise on his part. A position based upon and maintained through military victory necessarily requires the perpetuation of that element. With subsequent victories Saul's popularity and his position as leader are assured.

Interestingly, it would appear that Saul's military campaigns, apparently aimed at strengthening the position of Israelite territory against enemy encroachments, led to his establishment of the position of army commander which was occupied by a relative – Abner. Furthermore, such extensive military campaigns apparently also led to the establishment of a system of conscription.[89] Should this be taken as an indication of the institutionalization and centralization of Saul's authority, the beginnings of the sort of burdensome kingship Samuel had previously warned about in 1 Sam. 8? As Klein points out, "only one state official is mentioned for Saul, a simplicity that stands in sharp contrast with the burgeoning number of officials under David and especially Solomon".[90] Thus it would certainly seem that, if this is to be considered representative of a burgeoning state bureaucracy, then it is certainly extremely limited in scale.[91]

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[88] See Gordon, p. 142; McCarter, p. 255; and Hauer, 'The Shape of Saulide Strategy', on the strategic aim of Saul.
[89] See 1 Sam. 14: 50-52.
[90] Klein, p. 142.
[91] This has been acknowledged by a number of scholars. See for example Jobling, p. 88, who says that a king would want more official staff than this.

(d) Summary

In chapter 14, then, we can note a number of interesting points regarding Saul's leadership generally, in particular, his functions as military leader, and possibly also certain judicial functions. However, a central theme is the conflict between Saul and the people concerning the fate of Jonathan. As we have seen, Saul is unable to force his own will upon the people and is himself forced to accept their will.

3. Saul's Second Failure as 'King'

(a) The Text

We find in 1 Sam. 15 an account of the Israelite campaign against the Amalekites which is said to have been directly commanded by God. The rules for the manner in which the battle is to be fought are also said to have been stipulated by God. In no uncertain terms, the Amalekites are to be 'utterly destroyed' under the rules of warfare described by the 'ban' (חרם). That is to say, the battle is conceived as a Holy War.[92]

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[92] The Hebrew word for this destruction is חרם. Driver, p. 131, explains that it is derived from a root which in Arabic means 'to shut off', 'separate', prohibit' whilst in Israel it was used of separation or consecration to a deity. Frequently the term occurs as being used against those outside Israel (see Deut. 7:2, 25f; 20: 16-18).

[1] Samuel said to Saul, 'The Lord sent me[93] to anoint you [...] so now listen to the voice of the words of the Lord.[94] [2] Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'I will punish (פקדתי)[95] the Amalekites for what they did to Israel, how they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. [3] Now go and attack Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and donkey'.

[4] So Saul summoned the people [...]. [7] Saul defeated the Amalekites [...].[96] [8] He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, but utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. [9] But Saul and the people spared Agag, the best of the sheep and the cattle, the fatlings and lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. But everything that was despised and worthless they utterly destroyed.

[10] The word of the Lord came to Samuel, 'I regret (נחמתי)[97] that I made Saul king (מלך), for he has turned away (שוב)[98] from me and has not carried out my commands'.[99]

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[93] Samuel's speech begins with the pronoun prefixed to the verb rendering it emphatic, lit. 'me God sent' (אתי שלח יהוה). An extensive list of other occurrences of the pronoun in the emphatic position is offered by Driver, p. 121. Klein, p. 148, and Alter, p.87, suggest that the prominent position given to the first person pronoun is intended to emphasize the importance of Samuel in the narrative. Thus as McCarter, p. 265, states, emphasis is placed upon the prophet as the divinely appointed kingmaker and the fact that therefore his instructions must be obeyed by the king.

[94] LXX reads simply 'obey the voice of god'.

[95] Driver, p. 121, concurs with the translation 'punish' but points out that the Hebrew word signifies 'I will visit'.

[96] Klein, p. 147, suggests that the account employs hyperbole with regard to the number of troops involved, the geographic extent of the victory and the claim of total destruction (see 1 Sam. 30). He suggests that the high numbers of troops should be understood perhaps as denoting a military unit rather than a number. Thus two hundred military units from Israel and ten from Judah took part in the battle (p. 149).

[97] Gordon, p. 144, notes that the Hebrew word 'regret' (נחם) used of God usually functions to indicate the withholding or mitigating judgement (2 Sam. 24: 16) whereas here it refers to the reversing of what was intended for good. Gordon points to a parallel in Gen. 6: 6-7. Edelman, p. 103, adds that God's repentance here is a negative as opposed to positive force which is caused by the turning of Saul rather than the usual crying out of the people (Judg. 2: 11-23).

[98] On the 'turning away of Saul' (שוב) see Klein, p. 151, with further examples in Num. 14: 43; 32: 15; Josh. 22: 16, 18; 1 Sam. 12: 20; Jer. 3: 19.

[99] Birch, p. 107, considers the narrative account of the rejection of Saul here (as in chapter 13) to have been influenced by the prophetic judgement speech formula. He concludes that the rejection is consistent with the interests of prophetic circles (see also Humphreys, 'The Rise and Fall of King Saul', p. 75) which he dates to the eighth century who were probably also responsible for 1 Sam. 13: 7b-15a. Smith, p. 120, has also noted common features between chapters 13 and 15 such as location of events at Gilgal, the receipt of a command and failure to obey, the taking away of the kingdom and the giving of it to another. He suggests that they are derived from a common tradition, or one is dependent on other. Hertzberg, p. 106, suggests that the dispute between Saul and Samuel at Gilgal has been transmitted twice with one tradition connecting it with the Philistine war and the other with the Amalekite war. However, Birch is perhaps correct to point out that the accounts are not straightforward duplicates insofar as they serve apparently distinct purposes: the rejection of Saul as king here

There follows an account of the subsequent confrontation between Saul and Samuel which ultimately concludes with the announcement of the rejection of Saul as king:

> [16] Then Samuel said to Saul [...] [18] 'The Lord sent you on a mission and said to you, "Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed". [19] Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you pounce upon the spoil and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?' [20] Saul said to Samuel, 'I have obeyed the voice of the Lord.[100] I went on the mission which the Lord sent me, I brought back Agag the king of the Amalekites; I utterly destroyed the Amalekites. [21] From the spoil the people took sheep and cattle [...] to sacrifice them to the Lord your God in Gilgal'.[101] [22] But Samuel replied [...] [23] 'Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king'.
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> [24] Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice'.
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> [...] [27] As Samuel turned to go away, Saul caught at the hem of his robe and it tore. [28] Samuel said to him, 'Today the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you and given it to a neighbour of yours who is better than you'.[102]

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and the rejection of his dynasty in chapter 13. See Klein, pp. 147-48, for a review of the various literary analyses of 1 Sam 15. At p. 147 he also points to the prophetic origins of chapters 13 and 15.

[100] LXX reads, 'the voice of the people' (τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ λαοῦ) rather than 'the voice of God'. This may be seen to emphasize Saul's subservience to the will of the people.

[101] Edelman, p. 104; Klein, p. 151; Long, p. 144, have noted that in declaring his innocence, Saul employs same vocabulary used by God to announce his guilt to Sam in v. 11. At v. 13 (not quoted in passage cited above) Samuel is, according to LXX said to come to Saul 'who was in the process of offering a sacrifice to the Lord of the best of the plunder which he had brought from Amalek'. However, Edelman, p. 104, sees no reason to adopt this expanded LXX reading.

[102] 'Better than you' here is reminiscent of 1 Sam. 9: 2 where it is said that there was no one better than Saul. McCarter, p. 268 (see also Klein, p. 153), states that to 'grasp the hem' in old Aramaic and Akkadian equivalents of the Hebrew suggest a reference here to a gesture of supplication/submission.

It is left ultimately to Samuel to fulfil the requirements of the ban and the biblical account describes how he hewed Agag to death himself. Nothing however is said of the animals.

As if anything further were required to emphasize the utter rejection of Saul by God and his prophetic representative, the chapter concludes by stating that Saul and Samuel did not see each other again.

(b) The 'Ban'

The text of Chapter 15 begins by stating that because of those past actions of the Amalekites who had obstructed the Israelites in their entry into the land of Canaan they are to be utterly destroyed so that every living thing is wiped out and nothing remains. "If Israel is to have a king, then the king must assume responsibility for prosecuting Israel's ancient grievances. It is in this spirit that Yahweh assigns to King Saul the task of punishing Amalek [...]".[103] Thus Saul is instructed that he is to 'attack Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' As indicated briefly above, this stipulated method of warfare is deemed the 'ban' or *herem* (חרם).[104] According to the regulations governing the ban in the book of Deuteronomy, this was the practice of dedicating the enemy or his gods to the deity by killing the people and burning the animals and property:

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[103] McCarter, p. 269.

> [...] you shall put the inhabitants of that town to the sword, utterly destroying it and everything in it – even putting its livestock to the sword. All of its spoil you shall gather into its public square; then burn the town and all its spoil with fire, as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God. [...] Do not let anything devoted to destruction stick to your hand [...] (Deut. 13: 15-17).[105]

Another Deuteronomistic passage states that:

> [...] you shall put its males to the sword. You may, however, take as your booty the women, the children, livestock, and everything else in the town, all its spoil. You may enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the Lord your God has given you. Thus you shall treat all the towns that are very far from you, which are not towns of the nations here. But as for the towns of these peoples that your Lord your God is giving you as inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive (Deut. 20: 13-16).

In this instance, then, those cities outside the Israelite territory were only to have their men utterly destroyed or put under the ban. The remainder were to be allowed to be saved. Thus a total ban was restricted only to those cities in the land of Israel. Interestingly in this instance recorded in 1 Sam. 15, a total ban is prescribed for Amalek.[106] This is presumably on account of the intense hatred felt for this people.[107]

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[104] For a survey of the various instances where this term appears see Dietrich, 'The 'Ban' in the Age of the Early Kings'.

[105] See also Josh. 6: 17 where reference is made to the sparing from destruction of metals and objects made from them which are intended for the sanctuary. Klein, p. 149, points out that this practice is also evidenced in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. He points to the extra-biblical example of Mesha king of Moab who took men, women and children and devoted to them to Ashtar Chemosh (see *ANET*, p. 320).

[106] A number of commentators have noted this apparent exception to the rule for Amalek, see for example Klein, p. 149; McCarter, p. 266.

[107] For background to the hostilities between Israel and Amalek see Exod. 17: 8-16; Num. 14: 43-45; (see also Judg. 3: 13; 6: 3-5, 33; 7: 12; 1 Sam. 30). The specific phrasing of the

(c) Saul's Failure to fulfil the 'Ban'

As we have seen, chapter 15 centres upon Saul's apparent failure to fulfil this 'ban', a failure that leads to his second rejection by Samuel. According to Samuel, Saul has failed to obey the will of God. However, there are a number of ways in which one might interpret Saul's failure. In what follows I shall outline three broad ways in which one might approach this question. To be more precise, there are three distinct parties to whom Saul may have been obedient or disobedient.

(i) The Voice of God

The text ascribes to Saul a great military achievement in his defeat, at the head of the Israelite forces, of the Amalekites. Thus it is stated that Saul defeated them 'from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt' (v. 7). However, this praise for Saul and his military prowess is qualified to a certain degree by the additional information that he elected not to destroy everything of the Amalekites but rather to spare certain things. In particular he is said to have spared those things that were deemed to be good, including the best of the sheep and the cattle, the fatlings and lambs the best of the spoil together with

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instructions to Saul parallels the description of the Amalekite actions against the Israelites described in Deut. 25: 17-19.

their king, Agag.[108] As a result of this decision, God described as having regretted ever having appointed Saul as leader since he "has not carried out my commands" (v. 11). In other words, the figure of Saul is said to have failed in fulfilling the divinely stated objective to 'utterly destroy' or put Amalek to the ban. The narrative account continues with a description of a subsequent encounter between the prophet-priest Samuel and Saul. Upon approaching Saul, Samuel is confronted by the evidence of the animals which were spared during the battle and he questions Saul's actions and motives. He asks Saul "Why did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do what was evil in the sight of the Lord?" (v. 19).

It is apparent from Saul's response to this line of questioning that he considers that he has fulfilled the divine instructions and obeyed the voice of God insofar as he went on the mission he was given and utterly destroyed the Amalekites. However, we gain from this response an insight into the two potential acts of disobedience implicit in Samuel's criticism and the divine regret. On the one hand, Saul says that he chose to spare Agag the king of the Amalekites. Although he apparently devoted all the people to the ban as was the divine command, Saul did not kill the king. No motive is actually given for this decision. However, as has been noted, the divine command did not specifically stipulate the fate of the enemy king over and against that of the people.[109] It is thus perhaps possible to consider that Saul's sparing of the king

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[108] On the taking of the king alive see also Josh. 8: 23-29. Agag is mentioned only here and Num. 24: 7; 23: 24. However, Hertzberg, p. 125, has highlighted Esther 3: 1 as evidence of the development of the idea of Agag as the personification of the enemy of the Israelites and their God.

[109] See Edelman, p. 101.

was due to his desire to follow the divine command to the letter. Alternatively, perhaps Saul was simply using his own prerogative in sparing Agag.[110] Secondly, the people had taken the best of the spoil, more specifically, the best of the animals. Edelman suggests that the people, like Saul, have been too literal in their understanding of the command concerning the *herem* in sparing the best of the animals.[111] In their defence it is stated that the people's motives in so doing were not selfish but rather it was intended that the animals be offered as a sacrifice to God.[112] In support of this claim that the intention was to offer sacrifices from the spoil is the fact that the events are taking place at Gilgal.[113] They may also be seen to be supported by Samuel's condemnation of sacrifice (which is deemed theologically unacceptable) which would seem to indicate that it was possible that animals could have been exempted from the ban for cultic sacrifice.[114]

It is clearly considered to be the case that the instructions Saul had been given were unequivocal. He was to be unsparing in the campaign against

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[110] See Josh. 6: 17 for a further instance.

[111] Edelman, p. 102. It is assumed here that in Edelman's view the people have elected to follow the traditional prescriptions of the ban as outlined in the section above where the Deuteronomistic texts are quoted. Thus she states that the people have "deliberately adhered to a literal interpretation of the law" (ibid).

[112] However, as has been noted by McCarter, p. 267, this attribution of blame on the people by Saul is explicitly contradicted by the information given in v. 9 where it states that 'Saul *and* the people' spared both king and the best of the spoil.

[113] See also Gordon, p. 144, for this view. On Gilgal as the place where sacrifices were offered see BDB, p. 166; Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 302-03.

[114] Thus 1 Sam. 15: 22 states that 'obedience is better than sacrifice'. See also further, Isa. 1: 10-11, 13; Jer. 7: 21-26; Hos. 6: 6; Amos 5: 21-24; Mic. 6: 6-8, for the prophetic critique of sacrificial worship. I am indebted to Edelman, p. 107, for this interpretation of the implication of Samuel's condemnation of sacrifice.

Amalek. There was apparently no room for misunderstanding.[115] Thus the central issue may be seen to be one of failing to obey the voice of God.

(ii) The Voice of the Prophet

In the view of the biblical narrator(s), then, Saul is clearly guilty of wilful disobedience to God.[116] On a more practical level, Saul has disobeyed the voice of the prophet Samuel upon whom he is dependant for the receipt of the divine command.[117]

Jobling has highlighted the dependency of Saul as leader upon the prophet Samuel, suggesting that his failing in 1 Sam. 15 is linked to his attempts to act upon his own authority.[118] Thus he suggests that Saul's "fault is to *interpret* the law of the ban [...] instead of just obeying it".[119] That is to say, Saul begins here to exert his own authority and act in a more kingly manner, plundering as he sees fit, interpreting the law of the ban to his own advantage. However, when he is ultimately confronted by the prophet, "Saul repents, admits he can do nothing without Samuel and craves his continued support".[120] Thus the biblical account describes how Saul attempts to seek Samuel's continued support urging him to 'honour me before the elders of my

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[115] Thus as Gunn, pp. 41 & 53, concludes, Saul has simply not fulfilled the specific instruction regarding the spoil. He is either ignorant of some technical implications of the ban or sacrifice or else he has wrongly evaluated them.

[116] That obedience is the key issue in this chapter is made plain by the frequent occurrences of the verb throughout, esp. vv. 19-24.

[117] See 1 Sam. 12: 23, which describes the role of prophet in the mediation of the divine will.

[118] See Jobling, pp. 86-87. Long, p. 166, has also pointed to the controlled and subordinate nature of Saul's leadership.

[119] Jobling, p. 86.

[120] Jobling, p. 87.

people and before Israel' by returning with him to worship God.[121] Thus, although Samuel was previously described as trying to prevent kingship, which he failed to achieve, it could be argued that he does manage to achieve the next best thing, namely to establish a 'king' that he could control, a 'king' who is less than a king.[122]

(iii) The Voice of the People

As we have already seen above, in chapters 13 and 14 a particularly significant role is given to the people of Israel. When we turn to consider Saul's response to the questioning, and ultimately the condemnation, of his actions by the prophet Samuel, we see that the people appear once more as a driving force behind their leader's actions.[123] Thus Saul declares that:

> "I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice".[124]

Obedience to the command of God, expressed through his prophet, is a key feature of the text of 1 Sam. 15. Here Saul admits to his failure to obey the instructions of the deity but assigns blame for his actions to the people. It would appear that because of his concern to ensure the continued support of the people Saul obeyed their will instead in allowing the spoils of war to be

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[121] See 1 Sam. 15: 25, 30.
[122] See Jobling, p. 87.
[123] See McCarter, p. 270; Miscall, p. 110; Alter, p. 90; Edelman, p. 109, who have also noted the importance of the 'voice of the people' in this chapter.
[124] 1 Sam. 15: 24., already quoted above.

salvaged and not 'utterly destroyed'.[125] This characteristic trait of impotence in the face of the decisive will of the people is something that we have seen appear repeatedly in the biblical accounts we have considered in this study. Thus it is arguable that the biblical account of Saul has now come full circle. Asked for by the people, Saul's election to the position of leader results from Samuel's own capitulation to the 'voice of the people'.[126] Here we can see that because of his obedience to the 'voice of the people' and respect for their views Saul stands condemned and rejected as a failure. The image we are presented with here of Saul's mode of leadership can hardly be seen to comply with the image of the king depicted by Samuel's earlier characterization of an individual who would oppress the people rather than listen to their voice.[127] Just the opposite in fact.

(d) Summary

In chapter 15, then, we find another account of Saul's apparent failure to act as he should in his position as 'king'. Once more, Samuel – in the name of God – dismisses Saul from this position. For a second time, Saul is rejected as 'king'. Yet as we have seen, there are a number of ways in which one might understand this. On the one hand, Saul may be seen to break a direct

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[125] Klein, p. 152, and Edelman, p. 108, conclude that Saul thus stands condemned in 1 Sam. 15 not simply for having spared king Agag, but also for having failed to 'constrain' (עצר) the people. I have already discussed עצר (and its various meanings) which appears as one of those functions of the leader of Israel in 1 Sam. 9: 17 in Chapter Four. There I suggest that the term can be interpreted not just as meaning 'to constrain' but also as 'to muster'. However, it should be noted that this term does not actually appear in 1 Sam. 15.

[126] See 8: 9, 22 & 12: 1.

commandment of God or a direction from Samuel. On the other hand, Saul may be seen to fail on this account *because* he submitted to the wishes of the people. On this second account, his failure is primarily his failure to control the people, to impose his will upon the people. In the first case, one might see this failure as a theological failure, that is, a failure in his relationship with God. In the second, his failure is primarily political, that is, a failure to exert the sort of political authority that one would expect from a king. Again, in a sense, Saul does indeed fail as a king.

4. The Rise of David

As indicated at the outset of this chapter, chapters 13-15 form what might be considered as a summary account of those main features and achievements of Saul's 'reign'. In these chapters then, Saul is a main figure. However, from chapter 16 onwards the focus of the biblical narrative shifts to the 'man after God's own heart' who has been alluded to previously in the accounts of Saul's rejection as the one better than Saul who is to be appointed in his place.[128] From now on it is the figure of David, the divinely favoured, who is predominant. The remainder of Saul's 'kingship' is then played out in terms of his relationship with David, who is privately anointed king in Saul's place,[129] and who comes to exert a position of prominence within Saul's own

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[127] See 1 Sam. 8: 10-18, the so-called 'ways of the king'.
[128] It is interesting to note here that at the stage of Saul's rejection Samuel has apparently not been advised of any such divine decision and yet is still able to make such a pronouncement.

entourage.[130] Hereafter, for the most part Saul's actions are portrayed as merely a foil to David's.[131]

Although the biblical account portrays the relationship between David and Saul as having been a favourable one, at least initially, it is later described as having deteriorated as David's position became exalted to the extent that his achievements are compared to those of Saul and looked upon more favourably. In fact, David's achievements in matters of war apparently superseded those of Saul in the minds of many amongst the people: "and the women sang [...] Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten thousands".[132] Even Saul's eldest son Jonathan is described as transferring his personal allegiance to David whom he is said to have loved.[133] Saul's jealousy for his position as leader is inevitably aroused. It is certainly made clear that Saul considers David's increasing popularity to be threatening: "they have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?".[134] That is to say, the remainder of the chapters of 1 Samuel focus primarily on the continued disintegration of Saul as he tries, without success, to wipe out his rival for the affections of the people and ultimately for the position as leader. Thus Saul's increasing

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[129] In both rejection accounts (1 Sam. 13 and 15) Samuel made reference to Saul's successor who was already chosen but whose identity remains unknown. In 1 Sam. 16: 1-13 the text moves to the identifying and anointing of this individual.

[130] 1 Sam. 16: 14ff.

[131] See Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative*, p. 20: "David's rise matches Saul's decline, with David's good fortune underscoring Saul's failure"; also Humphreys, 'The Rise and Fall of King Saul', p. 76.

[132] 1 Sam. 18: 7.

[133] For example see also 1 Sam. 18: 1-4, 19, 20.

[134] 1 Sam. 18: 8.

madness and his alienation from his family are described as he pursues David at every turn.

However, it is perhaps worth noting that the biblical text, despite its more favourable slant towards David, nevertheless describes how Saul's popularity had been retained to a certain degree. Thus, for example, David is described as having been unable to stay in Keilah because the people will surrender him; when in the wilderness of Zuph, the Ziphites advise Saul of his whereabouts, and upon his arrival at En-gedi Saul is informed of David's whereabouts.[135] In this way, with the apparent ambiguity among the Israelites regarding who they wanted to lead and serve their interests, Saul and David are forced to vie against each other for chiefly authority. Both apparently attempt to consolidate their positions and popularity. Thus David, for example, is described as gathering support from among the disenfranchised.[136] Saul attempts to consolidate his own position and that of Israel, and to fulfil his appointed task of defeating the Philistines,[137] in a last ditched battle which results in the ultimate failure; the death of his sons and himself.

5. Summary

We have seen in 1 Sam. 13-15 three episodes each of which may be seen to centre around Saul's relationship to the people. In the first, Saul is charged

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[135] See 1 Sam. 23: 6-13, 19-24; 24: 1; 26: 1. Good, *Irony*, p. 76, notes in this regard that "in the light of Saul's suspicion of the people, we must note the irony of thef act that wherever David goes, someone informs Saul".
[136] 1 Sam. 22: 2.

with failing to keep the commandment of God as a result of an action designed to retain the continued support of the people who have begin to disperse. In the second, Saul is forced to abandon an oath he placed over the people in the face of pressure from the people. Thus his son Jonathan is rescued by the people who refuse to allow Saul to execute his judgement. In the third, Saul is charged with disobedience to God which, as we have seen, is primarily due to his failure to control the people. In each case Saul clearly does not conform to the model of tyrannical kingship portrayed by Samuel in 1 Sam. 8. Indeed, it is Saul's concern for the people and his standing amongst them that forms the basis for his 'failure' as a king.[138]

In one sense, then, Saul clearly is a 'failed' king, for he fails to exert the despotic control over the population that one would expect from a king. However, I suggest that, in the light of Clastres' analysis of political leadership, it is possible to approach Saul's leadership in a more positive light. Saul's repeated subordination to the will of people instead of the commands of Samuel presents him as a typical chief, a leader who does not impose himself upon the people but rather is chosen from among the people, by the people, to lead the people according to their own wishes. His relationship with the people was marked by a degree of dependency which Clastres identifies as the debt-relationship between chief and society. Saul's failure continually to demonstrate his remarkable prowess on the battlefield and thus assure his position as leader resulted in his achievements being eclipsed by those of

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[137] See 1 Sam. 9: 16.
[138] See Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, pp. 71-72.

another. An ineffectual tool is no longer of any use in serving the desires of the group. The numerous victories that Saul had previously won on the battlefield were for the most part forgotten now that another individual's military achievements had become more prominent in the mind of the people. Having lost prestige Saul's abandonment by the people begins.[139]

For a chief, then, there can be no conflict with the will of the people for such a conflict would immediately destroy his position. A chief is only a chief for so long as he has popular support. As these episodes make clear, it would be a mistake to characterize Saul as a 'king' – failed or otherwise – for he never wielded real political power. That power remains throughout the biblical narrative with the people. Saul may be criticised by Samuel for failing to function as a king and control the people. However one could only legitimately characterize that as a failure if it was Saul's intention in the first place.

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[139] Flanagan considers that the remainder of the biblical account relates the chiefly rivalry that existed from the time of David's appearance between Saul and David for the role of chief. "The literary records of the reigns of Saul and David reports a period of trauma and uncertainty when individuals competed forcefully for the paramount role" ('Chiefs in Israel', p. 163). On the basis of Clastres' model of chieftaincy, it is arguable that with the loss of such popular acclaim by Saul that he should have concede to the popular will which had transferred allegiance for the most part to David and saw in his mighty deeds a leader whose abilities could be employed for the benefit of the people.

CONCLUSION

1. In Summary

In the Introduction I drew attention to the paradoxical nature of the traditional characterization of Saul as a 'failed king'. He is said to be the first of a new type and yet fails to live up to that type. In Chapter One I examined the traditional accounts of Saul and suggested that the assessment given is but one that is possible among many. In Chapter Two I considered recent attempts to approach the figure of Saul from an alternative perspective and argued that they fail to escape fully those problems associated with the traditional account. I then outlined an alternative model from one which one might approach Saul.

Having dealt with these methodological issues in Part One, in Part Two of the study I turned to the biblical narrative itself. In Chapter Three I focused upon the account in the biblical text of the call for a king by the people and in particular the demand that this king be like the kings of other nations. In order to explore the significance of this I turned to Near Eastern accounts of kingship insofar as these form the historical context against which the biblical narrative is set. I argued that, although the people asked for such a king, the

attributes that they explicitly requested share little in common with the attributes commonly attributed to Near Eastern kings. In Chapter Four I examined the biblical accounts of Saul's appointment as leader, focusing upon the three election accounts. Again, I argued that although Saul is proclaimed as a 'king', the attributes that he actually displays share little with traditional models of kingship. In Chapter Five I considered the central episodes in the biblical account of Saul's time as leader. Again, I argued that the attributes and behaviour credited to Saul in the biblical narrative are not those that one would associate with a king.

In these three chapters in Part Two a central theme emerges. Throughout the biblical account Saul is explicitly called a king. However he fails to display the characteristics or the behaviour that one would expect from a king. Consequently in the biblical account he is presented as a failed king.

My argument in each of these chapters is that if one focuses upon how the character Saul *acts* and *functions*, rather than what he is *called* and *designated*, then – in the light of Clastres' conception of chief – it makes more sense to call Saul a chief than it does to call him a king. Moreover, I have suggested that to call Saul a 'failed king' is not only paradoxical but also un-illuminating. To call Saul a failed king is simply to say that he is not really a king at all. It implies that Saul *wanted* to be king but in some way failed to achieve this goal. Yet as we have seen, an analysis of the way in which Saul is said to have *acted* in those biblical accounts of his election and appointment to the position of leader portray Saul as not actually wanting to become leader at

all. Consequently to call Saul a failed king – as does the biblical account itself – conflicts with the details of the biblical characterization of Saul the leader.

I suggest that when considering the political leadership of the biblical character Saul one should focus upon not what he is *named* but rather how he *functions*. If one does this, I suggest that one would not seriously claim that he either functioned as a king or wanted to be a king. Only the labelling of Saul as such makes this characterization of his leadership tempting. I suggest that Clastres' conception of chief offers an attractive and plausible framework within which to approach the biblical character of Saul. Using this framework, Saul can be seen to exhibit the central characteristics of a chief and to stand in direct opposition to the sorts of attributes and behaviour usually credited to a king.

2. Saul as Chief

So, I argue that if one focuses upon the way in which Saul *functions* as a leader in the biblical narrative then it makes more sense to call him a chief than it does to call him a king. Moreover, Saul may be seen as a very successful chief – exhibiting the qualities that Clastres takes to be central for a chief – rather than a failure as a king.

As I have already indicated, to call Saul a 'failed king' sheds little light on the nature of his political leadership. By characterizing him as a successful chief it becomes possible to understand better a number of his central characteristics. In particular, three things become possible.

Firstly, one is able to offer a non-theological assessment of Saul's leadership. The biblical account is marked by a certain theological preoccupation and it is from this perspective that, in the narrative itself. Saul is said to be a failure.[1] Thus the text emphasizes the failure of Saul to obey the divine commands and contrasts his condemned leadership with the divinely favoured Davidic leadership. Although this theological judgement is indeed a characteristic of the biblical account, it conflicts with certain details of the account of Saul's leadership and thus it sits uneasily alongside the bulk of the Saulide narrative. As we have seen, Saul neither desires to be king nor displays the characteristics that one would expect from a king. Moreover, I have argued that the 'failure' of Saul is, in the biblical narrative, primarily a product of his obedience of the people rather than solely his infringement of a divine command. By approaching the narrative from an alternative non-theological perspective this conflict within the text can be analysed and understood.

Secondly, one is able to understand better the relationship between Saul and the people of Israel as it is presented in the biblical account. According to the biblical and traditional interpretation Saul wields real political power over the people as their king and yet fails to control them and gives in to their pressure at certain key moments.[2] The traditional interpretation is unable to explain this apparent confusion adequately. By characterizing Saul as a chief, however, one is able to understand the nature of the power relations at work in

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[1] See Chapter One, §§ 1-2.
[2] See Chapter Five, *passim*.

his leadership and the inter-dependency between his position and the will of the people. As we have seen, the chief's position is dependent upon the continual support of the community who have designated him as their leader. The chief is merely a useful tool who operates in the service of the group as a whole and who holds his position of 'power' only for as long as it is beneficial for the group.

Thirdly, and building upon the last point, one is able to offer a more positive characterization of Saul's leadership. Acting as a military leader, Saul functions as a successful chief working in the interests of the people of Israel. He does not fail to live up to the title of 'king' but rather successfully meets the demands of the people for a charismatic leader to rescue them in a time of need. At the moment at which he is called, Saul is precisely the type of leader needed and wanted by the people.

Beyond these three points, this alternative characterization of Saul sheds new light on the intellectual world of the authors and readers of the original text. Their shared assumptions implicit in the text may be viewed in a number of ways One might argue, for instance, that this apparent mismatch between the way in which Saul functions in the text and the way in which he is designated betrays a failure to understand forms of political leadership on their part. Alternatively one might read it as an attempt to offer a hidden meaning in the text, in which the incongruity between description and designation is held to be so obvious that it is clear to all that Saul's title of 'king' is merely an empty one. But it would be necessary to examine other parts of the biblical

text before one could begin to make any such general judgements about this intellectual world.

3. Saul as Judge?

An objection to this line of interpretation might be to claim that characterizing Saul as a chief differs little from the claim – already made in the scholarly literature – that Saul is little more than a judge. Some scholars (primarily concerned with uncovering 'the historical Saul') have argued that Saul may be characterized as essentially the same as one of the biblical text's earlier judges, the primary difference being that Saul is said to have exercised authority over a larger territory and perhaps for slightly longer.[3] Perhaps the most common basis for this characterization of Saul is in the biblical account of his rescue of the people of Jabesh-Gilead from the Ammonite threat. The classic work of Alt is typical of this interpretation.[4] He describes how Saul's "charismatic leadership, the military service of the tribes, the overwhelming success" is reminiscent of a story from the Book of Judges, "except perhaps that the circle of people who were borne along by the enthusiasm of the leader is wider here than elsewhere [and ...] the victorious tribes bring Saul to their sanctuary and by their act of homage make him what no charismatic leader

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[3] See for example Alt, 'Formation of the State', p. 253; Alter, p. 61; Blenkinsopp, 'The Quest of the Historical Saul', pp. 85-86; Edelman, p. 60; Miscall, p. 66; Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, p. 51; Gordon, p. 122; Dumbrell, 'In those days there was no king in Israel', p. 76; Jobling, p. 66; Polzin, p. 114; McCarter, p. 206.

[4] Note that Alt's work assumes that the text may be used as a historical source.

ever was before: the king of Israel".[5] In this sense, it is claimed, Saul may be seen as a 'super-judge', a transitional figure in the biblical account between the earlier judges and the later kings.

As we saw in the case of certain anthropological accounts of chiefdoms, this appears to presuppose some form of evolutionary framework in which the judge – as the chief – is conceived as a stepping stone in a development from a primitive tribal organization to a civilized State organization.

Egalitarian society	→	Chiefs	→	States
Tribal society	→	Judges	→	Kings

In the light of this, one might be tempted to assume that the political leadership of the chief may be broadly equated with that of the biblical figure of the judge. However, two objections may be raised.

Firstly, this sort of developmental analysis presupposes an evolutionary model which, as we have seen in Chapter Two, is based upon a number of unwarranted presuppositions.[6] It assumes some form of necessary evolution from primitive tribal society to a State organized society which reduces any non-State political organization to an under-developed or embryonic form of the State itself. This implies that the State is the only legitimate model for a sophisticated political system. As we have seen, for Clastres, the State and the Chiefdom are two equally valid yet opposed political systems that do not have

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[5] Alt, 'Formation of the State', p. 253, with specific reference to 1 Sam, 11: 1-11, 15.
[6] See Chapter Two, § 3.

any developmental relationship.[7] However, even Clastres can be seen to assume that chiefs in some sense come *before* States, as if the there were some form of necessary temporal order to these two modes of political organization. As Deleuze and Guattari note in their discussion of Clastres, this may be seen as an implicit evolutionism in his thinking which is also unwarranted.[8] The suggestion that the judge – like the chief – is some form of stepping-stone between primitive society and monarchy reduces such leadership to the status of merely a developmental stage and embryonic form in the necessary progress towards kingship. Consequently it does not offer a truly alternative framework within which to assess the leadership of Saul.[9] Like Flanagan's chief, the judge is in this context often conceived a little more than a 'not yet fully formed king'.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the biblical account gives little specific information as to what the judges actually did when they 'judged' Israel, as we have already seen in Chapter Three.[10] The biblical account of the 'period of the judges' is not particularly systematic in ascribing particular functions to the judges. Thus, although there is an implicit reference to some sort of judicial role for the judge, those other functions that marked this type of leadership are not specified. Generally speaking, the major attribute and function that is identified is militaristic. However, beyond this little is made clear. Consequently, presenting Saul as a judge does not shed any significant

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[7] See Chapter Two, § 4.
[8] See Chapter Two, § 5.
[9] See the similar criticisms directed towards Flanagan's conception of chiefdom in Chapter Two, §§ 1-3.
[10] See Chapter Three, § 1 (c).

light upon the nature of his leadership beyond emphasizing his military role which is already beyond dispute. Thus the attempt to call Saul a judge is of little explanatory value. For instance, it sheds little light on the nature of the complex relationship between Saul and the people of Israel.

Given these two objections, there appears to be little benefit in attempting to characterize Saul as a judge. If we are unable to say precisely how the judges functioned as political leaders then calling Saul a judge will not tell us anything further about the nature of his own leadership as it is presented in the biblical account. The present suggestion that Saul should be thought of as a chief is hopefully more enlightening insofar as the specific function of a chief as it is understood here has been clearly defined.

4. Final Remarks

As we can see, by conceiving the biblical character Saul as a chief – rather than a king or a judge – enables one to gain a better understanding of this interesting and important figure. Those scholars who present Saul as either a 'failed king' or a 'judge' are unable to flesh out these characterizations fully, as they are unable to define precisely what they mean by either of these designations. Moreover, a careful analysis of the biblical narrative calls into question the accuracy of either of these claims. In contrast, Clastres' carefully articulated functional definition of a chief not only accords more closely with the attributes and behaviour of Saul as he is portrayed in the narrative, but also enables us to understand better the nature of his leadership.

It should be stressed, however, that unlike those of many previous scholars who have examined the figure of Saul, that the present conclusions relate to the literary presentation of Saul rather than to any presumed historical figure. The present study has not be concerned with 'the historical Saul', although it may shed some light on the understanding of political leadership in the intellectual world of the narrative's authors, editors, and original audience.

APPENDIX

EARLY READINGS OF *NAGID* AND *MELEK*

In order to expand upon the discussion of the meanings of *nagid* and *melek* in Chapter Two, it may be helpful to consider briefly the way in which these two terms are translated in the ancient Greek and Latin versions of the biblical text. These translations will obviously introduce new pairs of terms rather than simply reflect the Hebrew terms, but nevertheless these may shed some light on how these Hebrew terms were understood by some of the text's earliest readers and commentators. It may be instructive to consider these early glosses, not has a confirmation of the meaning of the Hebrew terms, but as an illustration of the way in which some of the text's earliest readers conceived these two terms and any conceptual distinction that they may express.

First, the Septuagint translation into Greek.[1] To recap, there are four passages worth noting 1 Sam. 10: 24 and 11: 15 where Saul is appointed as

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[1] The Septuagint was translated by a number of hands during the third to first centuries BC. See Driver, pp. xxxix-xl. According to legend, it was produced by seventy two Jewish elders in Alexandria over seventy two days.

melek (מלך), and 1 Sam. 9: 16 and 10: 1 where he is appointed as *nagid* (נגיד).

In the first two of these passages the Septuagint translates *melek* (מלך) as *basileus* (βασιλεύς).[2] The Greek refers to a king, chief, or judge, but in particular to an hereditary king, to royalty, and more generally a lord or master.[3] In general one might characterize such a leader as one who imposes himself upon the people.

In the second pair of passages *nagid* (נגיד) is translated as *archon* (ἄρχων).[4] This term can refer to a ruler, commander, chief, magistrate, or governor.[5] However, in the light of our understanding of *nagid* (נגיד) as 'the one in front', of particular interest here are the cognate words *archo* (ἄρχω) – to begin, to rule – and *arche* (ἀρχή) which refers to the beginning, origin, or first of a thing.[6] In the light of this one might understand an ἄρχων as the first among a group, a leader or commander. Its use to refer to administrative officers and military commanders reflects this and these types of leader are clearly distinguishable from that signified by βασιλεύς, that is a hereditary king. The leader characterized as an ἄρχων is the first amongst the group that

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[2] LXX 1 Sam. 10: 24: καὶ ἔγνωσαν πᾶς ὁ λαὸς καὶ εἶπαν Ζήτω ὁ βασιλεύς; LXX 1 Sam. 11: 15: καὶ ἔχρισεν Σαμουηλ ἐκεῖ τὸν Σαουλ εἰς βασιλέα ἐνώπιον κυρίου ἐν Γαλγαλοις.
[3] See LSJ, pp. 309-10. Note that although LSJ also records as one possible meaning "first or most distinguished of any class", it only appears to have been used in this sense in relatively late authors such as Lucian and Philostratus (2nd-3rd cent. AD) and appears to be a deviation from it original and primary meaning as hereditary royal king or ruler.
[4] LXX 1 Sam. 9: 16: καὶ χρίσεις αὐτὸν εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐπὶ τὸν λαόν μου Ισραηλ; LXX 1 Sam. 10: 1 οὐχὶ κέχρικέν σε κύριος εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐπὶ τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ, ἐπὶ Ισραηλ;
Note that ἄρχων is also used at the end of the LXX version of 1 Sam. 10: 1 in an additional clause that is not found in the transmitted Hebrew text.
[5] See LSJ, p. 254.
[6] See LSJ, pp. 252 & 254.

he leads; the leader characterized as a βασιλεύς is of a different class to those whom he rules for he is a member of an hereditary monarchy.

If we turn to the translation into Latin in the Vulgate we can find a similar terminological distinction.[7] In the first pair of passages – 1 Sam. 10: 24 and 11: 15 – *melek* (מלך) is translated as *rex*.[8] This term refers to a sovereign ruler, a king, or to one of royal blood.[9] In the second pair of passages – 1 Sam. 9: 16 and 10: 1 – sadly Jerome is not consistent in his translation, rendering *nagid* (נגיד) as *dux* in the first instance and as *princeps* in the second.[10] This is clearly some form of inconsistency on the part of Jerome for as we have seen in both the Hebrew and the Greek the same term is used in these two passages. *Dux* may be understood as a leader or guide in general and sometimes is used to refer to a military leader or commander.[11] However of particular interest here is Jerome's use of *princeps*.[12] This term can refer to a founder or initiator, a leading member or chief of a group, or one who is in charge.[13] In a manner similar to that which we have seen in the case of ἄρχων, *princeps* is cognate with a number of terms that refer to the basic, primary, original, fundamental,

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[7] The Vulgate was translated by Jerome directly from the Hebrew but supplemented with consultation of the Septuagint. The translation of 1 Sam. was completed *c.* 393 AD. See Driver, pp. liii-liv.

[8] Vulg. 1 Sam. 10: 24: *et clamvit omnis populus, et ait: Vivat Rex*; Vulg. 1 Sam. 11: 15: *et fecerunt ibi regem Saul coram Domino in Galgala.*

[9] See *OLD*, pp. 1650-51.

[10] Vulg. 1 Sam. 9: 16: *et unges eum ducem super populum meum Israel*; Vulg. 1 Sam. 10: 1: *Ecce, unxit te Dominus super haereditatem suam in principem.*

[11] See *OLD*, p. 582.

[12] In what follows I shall focus upon Jerome's use of *princeps* rather than *dux* insofar as it echoes the terminology used in the Septuagint. The use of the relatively general term *dux* does not contradict the interpretation I want to offer here and my decision to focus on *princeps* is in order to emphasize its etymological resonance with ἄρχων.

[13] See *OLD*, p. 1458.

or first (e.g. *principalis*).[14] Just as we have seen in the Greek, the difference between *rex* and *princeps* is the difference between one who is an hereditary king and one who is the first within a group.

The evidence from the Septuagint and the Vulgate suggests that some of the early readers of the text conceived a clear distinction between two types of leadership based upon two sets of terminology. The first pair of terms – βασιλεύς and *rex*, both used to translate *melek* (מלך) – refer to a royal king who is distinct from the people over whom he rules and who imposes his rule upon the people. The second pair of terms – ἄρχων and *princeps*, used to translate *nagid* (נגיד) – refer to a leader who is more likely to be an administrative or military leader rather than a royal leader. Indeed, as we have already seen, these meanings are also connected with *nagid* (נגיד) itself.[15] However, the key feature of these terms are their etymological foundations which in both cases depends upon the notion of one who is the first or primary, or an original member of a group. In the context of political leadership this appears to suggest a leader who is considered to be the first among a group, a leader who is part of a group and is perhaps selected by that group as the best person to lead in whatever the particular context may be.

As we can see, then, *melek* (מלך) and its translations into Greek and Latin as βασιλεύς and *rex* all imply some form of royal leader, namely a king, and the various cognate words in all three cases primarily refer to things that may be characterized as royal or monarchical. In clear contrast to this, *nagid* (נגיד)

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[14] See *OLD*, p. 1458.

and its translations into Greek and Latin as ἄρχων and *princeps* all imply a more general form of leadership which does not appear to have any specifically royal connotations and in all three cases appears to have often been used to refer to administrative and military leaders. However, of particular importance here is the fact that in all three cases this model of leadership has an etymological foundation which suggests that this type of leader should be conceived as the first or principal member of a group rather than as one distinct from a group who imposes himself upon that group.

By way of summary, the relationship between these terms may best be presented in a table:

Hebrew:	*Melek* (מלך)	*Nagid* (נגיד)
Greek:	*Basileus* (βασιλεύς)	*Archon* (ἄρχων)
Latin:	*Rex*	*Princeps*
English:	King	First, Principal

We have, then, a clear distinction between two types of leadership illustrated in these two sets of terminology.

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In the light of this distinction, and in particular in the light of the terms used in the Septuagint, it is also interesting to note the terms used by Josephus in his

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[15] See BDB, p. 618.

account of Saul's leadership.[16] In particular there are two passages in which both βασιλεύς and ἄρχων (or forms related to them) are used in close proximity.

In the first of these passages Josephus repeats the story that the people implored Samuel to appoint for them a king (βασιλεύς), "who will lead the people (ἄρξει τοῦ ἔθνους) and wreak vengeance on the Philistines".[17] In the second passage Samuel is reported to have said to the people "This is he whom God has given you for a king (βασιλέα); see how he both excels all and is worthy of leadership (καὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἄξιος)".[18]

What is interesting to note here is that in both passages Saul is *called* a king (βασιλεύς) but in the accompanying description of what this will consist the word ἄρχων (or a form related to it) is used. From this it is tempting to conclude that in his account of Saul, Josephus uses the term βασιλεύς merely nominally but uses ἄρχων to describe the way in which Saul will *function* as a leader. In other words, Josephus implies with his use of terminology that Saul will function as a leader who is the first among his group rather than as a monarchical king, despite his nominal designation of him as a 'king' (βασιλεύς). In Josephus' account, Saul is worthy of being the first among the people and will be the 'one in front' when leading them against the Philistines. These functional descriptions of Saul's leadership using ἄρχων capture Josephus's characterization of Saul's leadership which appears to conflict with reading his use of βασιλεύς as anything more than a merely nominal title.

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[16] See Josephus *Antiquitates Judaicae*, book 6. I have used the Loeb Classical Library edition.
[17] Josephus *Antiquitates Judaicae* 6.36.

What this suggests is that when Josephus uses βασιλεύς he does so in a very general sense without necessarily implying a specifically monarchical conception of leadership (i.e. a king) and when he comes to flesh out precisely what he takes to be the *functional* nature of Saul's leadership his use of ἄρχων suggests that he conceives Saul's leadership as something much closer to *nagid* (נגיד) than to *melek* (מלך).

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[18] Josephus *Antiquitates Judaicae* 6.66.

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