

KING DAVID: LITERARY ASPECTS OF CHARACTERIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is based on the premise that the Bible, in addition to being a work of historical and theological significance, is also a work of literary significance. As such, the aim of the dissertation is to study the biblical figure of David as a literary character. In particular, it focuses on various techniques of characterization used to present this character to the reader.

The primary texts examined in this dissertation are I Sam. 16 - I Kings 2:10, and Psalms 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63 and 142. In addition to these biblical texts, various biblical and literary critics are consulted, and their theories and arguments applied to this investigation of David as a literary character.

In investigating David as a literary character, certain aspects of characterization theory are considered: direct and indirect techniques of characterization, and primary and secondary levels of characterization.

Chapter One outlines these theoretical issues of characterization, which are discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Two deals with the use of contrast as a characterization technique.

Chapter Three examines character interaction.

Chapter Four considers the function of motif in characterization.

Chapter Five relates certain psalms and poems to the narrative texts, as they, too, perform a characterizing function.

Chapter Six is a chapter of conclusion.

It must be emphasized that the focus of this dissertation is primarily on the techniques and strategies used to present the character David, and less on the character himself. The emphasis is on the process, rather than on the product.

The dissertation is in English. All biblical quotes are given in English translation, with English transliteration of Hebrew words when necessary.

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PREFACE

Until about two centuries ago the Bible was approached primarily from a theological perspective, and, to a lesser extent, from a historical perspective. The demarcation between the secular and the non-secular was clear, and the Bible fell very definitely in the realm of the non-secular. As such, the Bible was deemed a work of theological and historical significance, while its literary significance was not considered.

In the 19th century, however, particularly with the advent of Romanticism, there was a movement away from theocentricism towards a more anthropocentric outlook. In the field of biblical study, theology and history were no longer of sole importance, and the Bible's literary value began to be considered. This trend of recognising the Bible as a work of great literary significance has continued until the present day, and in the last twenty years there has been a flood of research into the literary facet of the Bible.

King David is fascinating and controversial, both as a theological figure and as a historical figure. The spirit of the recent research has prompted me to investigate him as a figure of literature, that is, as a literary character.

I became interested in the techniques used to transform David from a real person into a character in a story; in the techniques used by the author to structure this character, and in how these techniques affect the reader's reconstruction of this character.

I wanted to examine how the flesh became word, and then how the word becomes flesh, since the techniques involved in this process play an integral part in making David a subject of controversy and endless fascination.

Thus the aim of the dissertation is to discuss the literary aspects of characterization in the biblical figure of David. As the title suggests, this is not intended to be an exhaustive study but rather a selective study of certain aspects of the characterization of David. The main emphasis is on the techniques used by the author to characterize David, and how these techniques structure the reader's perceptions of the character.

The dissertation is comprised of six chapters: an introductory chapter, four chapters dealing with four different aspects of the characterization of David, and, finally, a chapter of conclusion.

In Chapter One, the introductory chapter, two issues are discussed: the boundaries of the biblical text to be used, and literary theories of characterization. Firstly, I Sam. 16 - I Kings 2:10 is identified as the primary narrative text of the dissertation. This is followed by an explanation and justification of this textual selection. Secondly, the chapter explains the concept of David as a literary character. It continues by presenting two viewpoints on character; realist and semiotic, and indicates that this study is based on the realist perception of character.

The chapter concludes with a brief survey of realist theories of characterization, by both non-biblical and biblical theorists, in order to prepare the reader for the forthcoming discussion of characterization techniques.

In Chapter Two the use of contrast as a characterization technique is discussed. Yosef Ewen's three axes of character-classification are mentioned: the axis of simplicity-complexity, the axis of stasis-dynamism and the axis of the penetration into the character's "inner life".¹

Chapter Two concentrates on the two first-mentioned axes — simplicity-complexity and stasis-dynamism — and attempts to demonstrate that David is both a complex and a dynamic character. The technique of contrast is one of the ways in which this complexity and dynamism is achieved.

Chapter Three focuses on the contrasts which emerge from character interaction, unlike Chapter Two which deals with contrasts within the character himself. This chapter attempts to demonstrate how contrasts in character interaction shed valuable light on the character concerned. To this end, David's spousal, political, filial, fraternal and parental relationships are analyzed.

¹ Ewen, Yosef, HaDemut BaSiporet (Character in Narrative), Tel-Aviv: Sefirat HaPoalim, 1986, pp. 33 - 34.

Chapter Four is concerned with the use of motif as a characterization technique. First the function of motif as a characterization technique is explained, as well as the relevance and significance of an intertextual reading in connection with the use of motif. These concepts are then applied to the characterization of David, and thus the chapter illustrates how motif is used to enrich this characterization.

Chapter Five returns to Ewen's axes of character-classification. This chapter concentrates on the third axis, that of the penetration into the character's "inner life". This axis is discussed here because its significance can only be fully appreciated when taking into consideration observations made in previous chapters.

Since the narrative text of I Sam. 16 - I Kings 2:10 does not afford much penetration into David's "inner life", this chapter suggests using certain Davidic psalms and poems in order to achieve this penetration. As such, an intertextual reading is advocated, with the psalms and poetry being read in conjunction with the events described in the narrative text.

This chapter assumes Davidic authorship of the psalms and poems discussed for the sake of an intertextual reading which significantly enhances the characterization of David. In ascribing authorship to David this chapter is thus based on a hypothetical premise. No attempt is made to either prove or disprove this hypothesis; rather the emphasis is on the benefits derived from this assumed ascription to David.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

(i) BOUNDARIES OF THE TEXT: IDENTIFICATION AND JUSTIFICATION

This study is a text-immanent study. "Immanence" means "existing, operating, or remaining within" and so a text-immanent approach consists of dealing with what is contained in the text, and not with what is extraneous to the text.

This framework of text-immanence is, however, flexible. It allows for the introduction of other texts if these texts contribute to the discussion at hand. Thus, while this study is predominantly text-immanent, an intertextual perspective is also included.

The application of the concept of text-immanence to biblical criticism means studying the text in its extant form, studying what is in the text *now*, as opposed to studying the pre-history of the text, how the text came to exist in its present form. As such, text-immanence stands in direct contradiction to form-criticism. And, indeed, the boundaries of the text I shall be using appear to be a flagrant flouting of basic form-critical principles. Thus the identification of the textual boundaries of this study necessitates an accompanying explanation and justification.

The text I shall be dealing with is as follows: I Sam. 16 - I Kings 2:10. It is important to note that no chapters are omitted within this textual selection; it is a textual block that runs from I Sam. 16, through to I Sam. 31, including *all* of II Sam., I Kings 1, and terminating with I Kings 2:10. These chapters have been chosen as they constitute a comprehensive presentation of the information necessary for the reader's reconstruction of the character David.

This selection of chapters ignores the whole concept of the "Succession Narrative" established by Leonhard Rost², a leading critic in the form-critical debate about I and II Samuel. Rost proposed that the Books of Samuel and I Kings 1,2 are not a unity, but rather that they are composed of four separate narrative units: The Ark Narrative, The Story of the Ammonite War, Nathan's Prophecy and the Succession Narrative (I Sam. 9 - 20. I Kings 1,2). Each unit has its own particular theme and stylistic features. These units had been written at separate times, by different authors, and later combined to form a seemingly unified narrative sequence. While the first three units are self-explanatory, some attention must be given to the term "Succession Narrative".

According to Rost, everything in the fourth narrative unit relates to the question of who should succeed David as king after his death, and that consequently the whole unit was constructed around this central theme or issue. Rost sees I Kings 1,2 as the critical chapters, as it is here that the succession to the throne of David is finally determined when Solomon is anointed king, thereby negating Adonijah's claim to the throne. The preceding chapters — II Sam. 9-20 — were all written with this denouement in mind. Other chapters in the Books of Samuel dealing with King David, or with the young David before he became king, were omitted from this classification if they did not contain information specifically relating to this central theme of succession.

² Rost, Leonhard, The Succession to the Throne of David, Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982.

This theory, first proposed by Rost in 1926, has been widely accepted by biblical scholarship, albeit with some modifications in later years. In recent years it has become clear that although Rost's theory in its broad outline (i.e. the idea of separate narrative units) is still accepted, the outer boundaries of his "Succession Narrative" are much disputed. Much of the dissension has arisen as a result of the issue of theme. Rost based his theory on a retrospective thematic formulation i.e. by first identifying the theme contained in I Kings 1, 2 and then seeing what in the preceding chapters conformed with this theme. In addition, Rost utilized stylistic criteria to support his thematic conclusions. It follows that any disagreement with Rost's identification of theme could naturally lead the critic to identify different chapters as relating to his particular theme. And indeed, consensus on the thematic and stylistic issues has not been reached.

Despite this lack of unanimity among biblical scholars regarding the theme and stylistic features of the Succession Narrative, and consequently its delimitations, this remains essentially a form-critical debate. The scholars are working on the assumption that I and II Samuel and I Kings 1, 2 is *not* a unified text, and are thus engaged in investigating its composite parts: when they were written, by whom, and for what purpose. And since Rost *did* establish the boundaries of the Succession Narrative to a certain degree, a significant portion of the Books of I and II Samuel are neglected in the process.

This is the nature of form-criticism; it tends to be fragmentary rather than unifying³. Bailey emphasises this point when he says that

It has been a cornerstone to the theory that the composition of the Book of Samuel is best explained by a so-called 'fragmentary hypothesis'⁴.

What about the chapters that the form-critical Succession Narrative leaves out? A comparison of the chapters I have selected with Rost's Succession Narrative boundaries (I have chosen Rost's boundaries as he was the first to propose the theory of the Succession Narrative) will show that I Sam. 16 - 31, II Sam. 1 - 8, and II Sam. 21 - 24 have been excluded from the Succession Narrative, since they do not relate directly to the theme of succession. Not being succession-orientated they are relegated to the periphery, being classified as "The History of David's Rise": I Sam. 16 - II Sam. 8⁵ and "The Samuel Appendix": II Sam. 21 - 24⁶.

³ See Berlin, Adele, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983, Chapter V.

⁴ Bailey, Randall C., David in Love and War, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990, p. 12.

⁵ Gordon, R.P., 1 and 2 Samuel, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987, p. 61.

⁶ Gordon, R.P., op. cit., p. 96.

R.P. Gordon states it very clearly:

Thanks in no small way to Rost's 1926 study, it has become fashionable to divide the story of David into two main units which are thought to represent two originally independent narratives. The 'History of David's Rise', a kind of *Bildungsroman* (narrative tracing the development of a character), follows David's early career to the point where he has been acknowledged as king by all the tribes of Israel and has taken up residence in Jerusalem, his newly-acquired capital (2 Sam. 5). The reign of David in Jerusalem, and particularly the internal problems of the royal house in this period, is the subject of the 'Succession Narrative' which occupies most of the remainder of 2 Samuel and extends as far as I Kings 2⁷.

This division of the text into various separate narrative units is justified from a form-critical point of view, but from a literary point of view it can be problematic⁸. Gordon, unknowingly, calls attention to this problem when he calls The History of David's Rise a "*Bildungsroman*", explaining it as a "narrative tracing the development of a character". A "*Bildungsroman*" is not simply a narrative tracing the development of a character, but more specifically, a narrative concerned with a person's *formative* years and development.

⁷ Ibid, p. 91.

⁸ In this respect see Yehoshua Gitay's "Reflections on the poetics of the Samuel Narrative: The question of the Ark Narrative", The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 54, 1992, pp. 221 - 230. This article argues in favour of the unity of the Ark Narrative, despite its apparent disunity from a form-critical point of view.

I agree with Gordon that the History of David's Rise does indeed describe David's development during his earlier and formative years. However, from a literary point of view I do not believe that the character (i.e. David) is fully formed and stops developing at the point where he is acknowledged king and takes up residence in Jerusalem. On the contrary, I believe that the character David continues to develop all through the so-called Succession Narrative, through the Samuel Appendix, through I Kings 1, and that it stops at I Kings 2:10, at the point where David dies. In other words, although the Succession Narrative and the Samuel Appendix may be historically, thematically and stylistically separate from the History of David's Rise, from a literary point of view they are indispensable for the study of the *continued* development of the character. In light of this J.P. Fokkelman advises against

the pigeonhole mentality which at one point invokes and isolates a 'Thronfolge-Erzählung' and, at another, perceives an 'Aufstiegsgeschichte Davids' — approximately in I Sam. 16 to II 5 or 8 ...⁹

In the Books of Samuel and in I Kings 1, 2 almost the whole of David's life is presented to the reader: from the time he is a teenager until his death. If, in analysing the David character, the reader chooses to do so according to the form-critical divisions, he runs the risk of not seeing David comprehensively as a continually developing, yet integrated, character.

⁹ Fokkelman, J.P., Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel, vol. 2, Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1986, p. 3.

If he ignores the History of David's rise, then the character he analyses in II Sam. 9 - 20 and I Kings 1,2 emerges out of a vacuum, without a past. If he ignores the Samuel Appendix he ignores certain aspects of David's personality which could significantly affect his assessment. And, conversely, if the reader studies the History of David's Rise and ignores the other sections, he does himself a disservice by failing to pursue the account of the character's maturation, which is available to him.

It is clear that if one is to examine the character David from a literary point of view (that is, by focusing on the literary techniques used to construct the character), it is essential to consider the entire corpus of material pertaining to David in order to ensure a comprehensive and exhaustive assessment of the character. In other words, for literary purposes it is necessary to view the separate narrative units as integrated and connected.

From a literary perspective the material should be perceived as a single narrative unit, even though this may not be so from a form-critical standpoint. For while the form-critic approaches the present text with a view to dismantling it into its original components, the literary critic perceives it as a whole.

This perception is due to the synchronic approach in biblical studies. John Barton, in his book Reading the Old Testament. Method in Biblical Study¹⁰, discusses several different methods used in biblical study, namely Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism, the Canonical approach, New Criticism, and Structuralism. The first three — Source, Form and Redaction criticism — are all historical-critical and therefore diachronic methods: their aim is to investigate the historical development that resulted in the present form of the text. The latter three — the Canonical approach, New Criticism, and Structuralism — can be termed synchronic methods: their aim is to investigate the text *as it is in its extant form*, without reference to its origins or sources (These three approaches, especially New Criticism and Structuralism, were much influenced by the advent of text-immanent criticism in the realm of secular literary criticism)¹¹.

I mention these different approaches to biblical study in order to emphasise that my approach to the Books of Samuel, while not specifically Canonical, New Critical or Structuralist, is indeed similar to these approaches in that it is synchronic, and not diachronic. In accordance with the synchronic approach, David first appears to the reader in I Sam. 16 and remains present until I Kings 2:10, when he dies.

¹⁰ Barton, John, Reading the Old Testament. Method in Biblical Study, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 136, 137.

In order to get a full understanding of his character this whole textual block must be used, irrespective of historical divisions, because the character must be dealt with from his emergence to his disappearance. A comment by Jon D. Levenson¹² supports this point:

The difference between I Samuel 25 and its neighbours [i.e. I Sam. 24 and 26] is that in the latter, David seeks out Saul solely in order to demonstrate his good will, whereas in our tale, only the rhetorical genius of Abigail saves him from bloodying his hands. In short, the David of chaps. 24 and 26 is the character whom we have seen since his introduction in chap. 16 and whom we shall continue to see until 2 Samuel 11, the appealing young man of immaculate motivation and heroic courage. But the David of chap. 25 is a man who kills for a grudge. The episode of Nabal is the very first revelation of evil in David's character. He can kill. This time he stops short. But the cloud that chap. 25 raises continues to darken our perception of David's character ... The David whom we glimpsed ominously but momentarily in 1 Samuel 25 dominates the pivotal episode of Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11: 1 - 12:25).

When Levenson makes this observation he uses I Samuel 24, 25 and 26 — The History of David's Rise — and II Samuel 11 and 12 — The Succession Narrative. This shows that he has crossed the historical boundaries of the separate narrative units in order to reach his conclusions with regard to David's character.

¹² Levenson, Jon D. I Samuel 25 as Literature and as History. Catholic Biblical Quarterly 40, 1978, pp. 11 - 28, p. 23.

Levenson clearly needs information from both narrative units in order to facilitate a comprehensive and integrated character assessment: one unit activates the other. Levenson's is an inter-textual reading, or possibly intra-textual, and mine will be along precisely the same lines.

Adele Berlin's observation about the composite nature of the Joseph story is extremely apt, and could equally be applied to the Books of Samuel:

There may have been a redactor who drew on earlier sources, but he was much more creative than he has been given credit for. The text that he produced is a new work, a work worthy of serious consideration in its present form. *(Thus to base an analysis on the present text, as the synchronic approaches do, is more than just a matter of convenience or ignorance)*¹³.

I think Berlin sums up the whole issue very well when she says:

The whole thrust of source criticism is toward the fragmenting of the narrative into sources, while, at the same time it ignores the rhetorical and poetic features which bind the narrative together¹⁴.

It is for this very reason that the textual boundaries of my work will be I Sam. 16 - I Kings 2:10, thereby disregarding the traditional boundaries established by form-criticism.

¹³ Berlin, A., op. cit., p. 21, my emphasis - T.M.S.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 21.

(ii) DAVID AS A LITERARY CHARACTER

Historically David was King of Israel from 1010 - 970 BC; what remains of him now is a scriptural representation. As such, he is both an historical personality and a literary figure. Our knowledge and understanding of him as an historical figure is based almost solely on his literary depiction as it appears in I and II Samuel and I Kings 1, 2. The David who was once a real person now exists as a character in a narrative. And as a character in a narrative he is subject to the same narrative conventions and techniques as any other fictional character. Wallace Martin notes that "The conventions of narrative ... are not constraints on the historian and novelist; rather they create the possibility of narration"¹⁵.

Since our perception of David is dependent on the way he is portrayed in the text, it therefore becomes necessary to examine this manner of textual portrayal in order to understand its effect on the reader. The author uses various characterization techniques to construct the character. These techniques in turn guide and direct the reader as he reconstructs the character for himself during the reading process¹⁶. It is these characterization techniques that will be under scrutiny in the examination of the biblical figure of David.

¹⁵ Martin, Wallace, Recent Theories of Narrative, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986, p. 73.

¹⁶ See Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith, Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics, New York: Methuen, 1983, p. 36.

(iii) CHARACTER: THE REALIST VIEWPOINT AND THE SEMIOTIC VIEWPOINT

The concept of character is perceived in two fundamentally different ways¹⁷. According to the realist view, character is understood as a mimetic imitation of human beings; literary characters imitate the psychological composition of real people. As such, characters acquire a certain measure of independence from the text in which they appear. Consequently, it is possible to "extract" them from the text, and study them separately from the rest of this text.

The semiotic view stands in direct contradiction to the realist view, not considering character as a mimetic imitation of human psychology, but rather as a symbol or signifier of something that lies beyond the text. According to this viewpoint, the character has no existence outside of the text in which it appears. Thus the character cannot be studied independently of the text, instead, it must always be examined in relation to the other textual elements. Rimmon-Kenan sums up the difference between these two contrasting viewpoints:

Whereas in mimetic theories (i.e. theories which consider literature as, in some sense, an imitation of reality) characters are equated with people, in semiotic theories they dissolve into textuality¹⁸.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 29 - 34, especially p. 31.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

The approach adopted in this work accords with the realist perception of character, and the characterization techniques to be studied are those used when creating a character in the realist mode. In my opinion this is appropriate because David does indeed have an existence that is independent of the text; he is an historical figure just as much as he is a literary character. The real person is transformed into a literary character, and it is this transformation that is to be investigated. And, in this work, the transformation will be viewed as realistic and mimetic, as opposed to semiotic.

A word about the term "character", since it is an ambiguous term in the English language, as Ewen observes¹⁹. It can either indicate a personage²⁰ in narrative fiction, or it can signify a person's personality, the distinctive qualities and traits that distinguish each individual (and also each literary character, in the realist view). In this work the term will refer to the former i.e. a personage in narrative fiction. However, the character David's personality will be discussed, since personality constitutes a basic principle of the realist perception of character²¹.

¹⁹ Ewen, Y., op. cit., p. 23.

²⁰ I use the word "personage" in preference to "protagonist" (principle character) or "hero" (principal male character, or a character that possesses superior qualities) because of its neutral sense.

²¹ Ewen, Y., op. cit., p 24.

(iv) CHARACTERIZATION IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

The characterization techniques used to construct character in biblical narrative are essentially the same as those found in non-biblical texts. Although there may be a difference in the utilisation and manipulation of these techniques, the techniques themselves remain the same, allowing for the application of non-biblical narrative poetics to biblical narrative.

However, while it is possible to apply contemporary poetics to biblical texts, the biblical author's knowledge and awareness of these techniques cannot be assumed, and the contemporary reader cannot presume to know his intentions. The biblical literary outlook should not be equated with that of the contemporary author and reader. Thus, it is very important to be aware of the particularities and distinguishing features of biblical poetics in order to avoid analysing an ancient literature according to contemporary poetic criteria.

V. Philips Long cautions against this danger, saying that while "many of the insights and analytical procedures of modern literary and linguistic theory may profitably be applied to biblical narratives ...", one runs the risk of "reading the narratives according to conventional understandings completely foreign to them"²².

²² Long, V. Philips, The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence, Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989, pp. 16, 17.

It is for this reason that the following brief discussion of characterization techniques will be based on the views of both non-biblical and biblical theorists, namely Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan and Robert Alter, Shimon Bar-Efrat, and Adele Berlin, respectively.

(v) EXPLANATION OF CHARACTERIZATION TECHNIQUES USING THE THEORY OF RIMMON-KENAN, ALTER, BAR-EFRAT AND BERLIN

Rimmon-Kenan states that "character is a construct, put together by the reader from various indications dispersed throughout the text"²³ and then proceeds to explain these "various indications"²⁴. She identifies two basic kinds of indicators of character, namely direct definition and indirect presentation. Direct definition can be provided by the narrator, and, very rarely, by the character himself. Direct definition, however, only has absolute validity when supplied by an authoritative narrator. As the term suggests, direct definition consists of a direct, explicit statement informing the reader about some particular aspect of the character, and as such requires no interpretation, deduction or inference on the part of the reader.

In contrast to direct definition, indirect presentation requires considerable activity on the part of the reader, since the character traits must be inferred from the speech and actions of the characters.

²³ Rimmon-Kenan, S., op. cit., p. 36.

²⁴ Ibid, see Ch. 5 - "Text: Characterization".

In other words, the character's qualities and motivations are not stated explicitly, but rather demonstrated implicitly. Rimmon-Kenan discerns two types of speech which inform the reader about the character: the speech used in conversation (i.e. direct speech) and the speech of silent mental activity²⁵.

She explains that the character's action may be one-time or habitual and that there are three kinds of acts: acts of commission, acts of omission and contemplated (but not performed) acts²⁶.

It must be emphasised that these techniques — direct definition and indirect presentation — are the basic "building blocks" of character. They very seldom operate in isolation, since characterization is usually achieved by a combination and collocation of these foundational techniques. Also, these techniques could be termed "primary" characterization techniques as other "secondary" characterization can be activated once these primary techniques have successfully combined to form the construct that is character. These secondary techniques will be discussed below.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 63.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 61.

In the main, the biblical theorists, Alter, Bar-Efrat and Berlin, concur with Rimmon-Kenan's delineation of characterization techniques, though they may express their views in slightly different terms. These biblical theorists explain how these basic characterization techniques function in the biblical context, thus providing the specific biblical poetics so necessary in Long's opinion.

Robert Alter renders Rimmon-Kenan's two categories of direct definition and indirect presentation as "a scale of means, in ascending order of explicitness and certainty ..."²⁷.

Here the top end of the scale refers to direct definition — "the reliable narrator's explicit statement" — while the lower end refers to indirect presentation — "the realm of inference"²⁸. However, Alter points out that

Biblical narrative offers us ... nothing in the way of minute analysis of motive or detailed rendering of mental processes; whatever indications we may be vouchsafed of feeling, attitude or intention are rather minimal; and we are given only the barest hints about the physical appearance, the tics and gestures, the dress and implements of the characters, the material milieu in which they enact their destinies. In short, all the indicators of nuanced individuality to which

²⁷ Alter, Robert, The Art of Biblical Narrative, New York: Basic Books, 1981, p. 116.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 117.

the Western literary tradition has accustomed us — preeminently in the novel, but ultimately going back to the Greek epics and romances — would appear to be absent from the Bible"²⁹.

Bar-Efrat's understanding of characterization techniques corresponds to that of Rimmon-Kenan's, as he divides characterization into the direct and the indirect shaping of the characters³⁰.

Bar-Efrat provides a very detailed discussion of biblical characterization techniques in the second chapter of his book. Some of his observations should be mentioned. He claims that the indirect shaping of characters predominates in the Bible³¹. With respect to direct characterization, he notes that "Characterization voiced by God has absolute validity, like that pronounced by the narrator, or perhaps even more so"³². With respect to indirect characterization, achieved by the speech and actions of the character, he considers actions to be the primary means of characterization in biblical narrative³³.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 114.

³⁰ Bar-Efrat, Shimon, Narrative Art in the Bible, Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989, p. 48, and the rest of Chapter 2: The Characters.

³¹ Ibid, pp 53, 64.

³² Ibid, p. 54.

³³ Ibid, p. 77.

He says that much of the speech in biblical narrative serves to provide information³⁴, and that speech with the sole purpose of expressing emotion is rare³⁵. Thus as a result, the language of biblical narrative is "typified by a minimum of adjectives (illustrating aspects of personality) and a high percentage of verbs (relating to speech and deeds)"³⁶.

Berlin's understanding of characterization is very similar to that of the three above-mentioned theorists. She refers to direct definition as "telling" and to indirect presentation as "showing"³⁷. However, she makes some important points concerning the Bible's apparent dearth of description:

It has often been said that the Bible rarely describes its characters. This is due to several factors: the ratio of description in general to action and dialogue is relatively low, and character tends to be subordinate to plot. Thus when we are given some detail about a character's appearance or dress, it is usually because this information is needed for the plot³⁸.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 75.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 70.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 90.

³⁷ Berlin, A., op. cit., p. 38.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 34.

Berlin contends that description is not completely lacking in the Bible; there is indeed a certain measure of description, but that "what is lacking ... is the kind of detailed physical or physiological description of characters that creates a visual image for the reader"³⁹.

The above is a brief outline of characterization techniques in non-biblical texts, and then specifically in biblical texts. It is certainly not an exhaustive study of the subject but simply a presentation of certain basic elements of characterization that should be borne in mind when approaching the concept of characterization in the Bible. While the fundamental principles of characterization are intrinsic to both biblical and non-biblical texts, the Bible's laconic approach to characterization must be emphasised.

As already explained, the Bible is sparing when it comes to details of physical appearance, leaving the reader to visualize the character in any way he chooses.

Also, very little information is given concerning the character's personality and emotional states, requiring the reader to deduce this psychological aspect by himself from the few indications that are present in the text.

39

Ibid, p. 34.

Finally, the predominant characterization techniques are of the indirect type, once again requiring certain deductive activities on the part of the reader. Clearly, biblical characterization techniques demand much reader-participation in the reconstruction of character^{40 41}.

As previously stated, the above-mentioned characterization techniques are what I have termed "primary" techniques. The reader relies on these techniques in order to formulate his initial impression of the character. Once the reader has formed this initial view, it is subsequently modified (either intensified, altered or contradicted) by the secondary techniques of characterization. This concept of "secondary characterization techniques" is similar to a technique that Rimmon-Kenan refers to as a "reinforcement of characterization", whose "characterizing capacity depends on the prior establishment, by other means, of the traits on which it is based"⁴². These secondary techniques constitute the second stage in the reader's reconstruction of the character since they require the reader to process, and then re-integrate all the information already supplied to him. Although this is a two-stage process, the operations are not performed consecutively, but rather simultaneously.

⁴⁰ Ewen, Y., op. cit., p. 39.

⁴¹ See Auerbach, Eric, Mimesis, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953, Ch. 1.

⁴² Rimmon-Kenan, S., op. cit., p. 67.

This will become clear in the course of the discussion, as the main focus of this work is in fact on certain of these secondary techniques of characterization, namely, the technique of contrast, the technique of interaction with other characters, the use of motif as a technique of characterization, and the technique of intertextuality.

Note: The reader is advised that a short account of David's life is contained in the appendix. This biographical sketch may help the reader to familiarise himself with the events of the story before proceeding to the examination of the protagonist⁴³ David. The reader should also note that this biographical sketch is based entirely on I and II Samuel, and I Kings 2, and that no legendary or extra-biblical material has been included. I have tried to present this account in as unbiased a manner as possible, but of course there is no such thing as a completely unbiased historical account.

⁴³ Here I use the term "protagonist" specifically in the sense of "principle character".

CHAPTER 2
THE TECHNIQUE OF CONTRAST

But what a road, what a fate, lie between ... David the harp player, persecuted by his lord's jealousy, and the old king, surrounded by violent intrigues, whom Abishag the Shummamite warmed in his bed, and he knew her not! The old man, of whom we know how he has become what he is, is more of an individual than the young man; for it is only during the course of an eventful life that men are differentiated into full individuality ...⁴⁴

Literary characters differ in that some are complex (multi-faceted) while others are simple (single-faceted); some are dynamic (continually changing and developing) while others are static. Characters can be classified according to these criteria i.e. as either complex or simple, dynamic or static. Ewen suggests that characters be classified along certain scales or axes. This makes it possible to place the character at an intermediate point between the poles of simple-complex and static-dynamic, and thereby avoid a classification of extremes. Ewen proposes three scales: a scale of development (i.e. dynamism), a scale of complexity, and a scale of the penetration into the "inner life"⁴⁵. This last-mentioned scale, that of the penetration into the "inner life", will be discussed in Chapter Five.

⁴⁴ Auerbach, E., op. cit., pp. 17, 18.

⁴⁵ Ewen, Y., op. cit., pp. 33 - 34.

In this chapter the two first-mentioned scales will be discussed, namely that of complexity and that of development, and it will be shown that David is both a complex and a dynamic character.

Although a simple (single-trait) character does not change and is therefore always static⁴⁶, a complex character does not necessarily change — complexity does not automatically guarantee dynamism⁴⁷. Yet it will be shown that David is indeed a complex *and* a dynamic character. More significantly, the techniques used to achieve this complexity and dynamism will be demonstrated, since this is the main focus of the work ("the process, not the product" — see abstract).

One of the techniques used to construct David as a complex and dynamic character is that of contrast, or more specifically, the technique of the comparison which reveals a contrast. Contrast works in two ways: diachronically and synchronically. In the diachronic mode, the contrast between the state of the character at different stages in the narrative serves to illustrate the development and the changes that have occurred in the character i.e. its dynamism. In the synchronic mode, the character's dynamism (revealed diachronically by the technique of contrast) serves to illustrate the fact that the character possesses several different qualities, in other words, that it is complex.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 37.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 41.

Thus the technique of contrast has a dual function in that it reveals dynamism diachronically and complexity synchronically. Contrast can function in other ways, too: the contrast between the character concerned and the other characters in the narrative serves to provide additional insight into the nature of the character, as does the contrast between the character's behaviour and the expected norm⁴⁸.

Long writes that:

biblical narrators were masters in the use of comparisons and contrasts as means of characterization. This is true not only as regards a character's own words and actions, but also in terms of comparisons and contrasts between two different characters or between a character's actions and an expected norm. One of the more prominent techniques by which biblical narrators were able to provide implicit commentary was through the use of narrative analogy⁴⁹.

This chapter will deal with contrast as a technique for revealing David's dynamism and complexity. The other functions of the technique of contrast in constructing the character David will be discussed in Chapter Three.

⁴⁸ Berlin, A., op. cit., p. 40.

⁴⁹ Long, V.P., op. cit., p. 39.

Berlin explains how the technique of contrast functions:

The Bible's main characters, and also many secondary characters, are not static. Changes in their character are shown by changes in their reactions. Thus the later words and deeds of a character may contrast with his earlier words and deeds⁵⁰.

Here Berlin describes the combination of characterization techniques. The "words and deeds of a character" belong to the category of primary, indirect characterization: the reader infers from the speech and actions of the character concerned. The contrast of the "later words and deeds" with the "earlier words and deeds" constitutes the second stage of characterization. Here the reader re-assesses the information he has already collected in light of the new information supplied to him by the contrast that has now become apparent.

I shall now proceed to the practical application of Berlin's observation by investigating four instances of contrast in David's personality. These instances of contrast are composed of various episodes drawn from different stages in David's life. In each instance of contrast the situations are similar, but David's response to the situation is different each time. This contrast in reaction is what reveals David as a complex and a dynamic character.

⁵⁰ Berlin, A., op. cit., p. 40.

(i) DAVID AS BOLD AND ACTIVE (I SAM. 17: 1 - 50) vs DAVID AS RESTRAINED AND PASSIVE (I SAM. 16: 5 - 13)

The situations described in these two passages are very similar: taunts, insults and curses are hurled at David, deeply wounding his honour. Yet his reaction to this verbal abuse is different in both situations. In the former he is bold and active, rising to the bait; while in the latter he is restrained and passive, refusing to rise to the bait.

In I Sam. 17: 1 - 50 David accepts the challenge of the Philistine giant, Goliath. Goliath's taunts are deliberately provocative, striking fear into the hearts of the Israelites. They are so terrified that they cannot respond (see vss. 11, 24). But David is incited to fury by the audacity of the Philistine champion, asking "for who *is* this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (vs. 26). He volunteers to fight Goliath and is brought before Saul. Saul tries to discourage David, considering him to be no match for Goliath. David replies:

Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock ... Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God ... The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. (I Sam. 17.34, 36, 37)

David's words show him to be brave and confident. Moreover, they show that he is not prepared to simply submit to the insults of the enemy, who "hath defied the armies of the living God". Israel's honour, and therefore David's own honour, has been insulted, and David is determined to avenge this insult. He believes that God will help him, since he is fighting to defend His honour.

This brave and confident stance is evident again when David comes face-to-face with Goliath. When Goliath curses David and threatens to give his flesh to the birds and the beasts (vs. 44) David answers:

Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands. (I Sam. 17:45 - 47)

This aspect, heard not only by Goliath but by all the Israelite and Philistine soldiers present, resounds with fearlessness and heroism.

David answers Goliath on his own terms, threatening to throw *his* flesh to the birds and the beasts. But the real force of David's words comes from his belief that God will make him, and Israel, the victors; all David's confidence stems from this fundamental belief. Here we see David certain of his own power, because he is certain of the divine origin of that power.

David's fearless speech is complemented by his courageous actions:

And it comes to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang *it*, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him, but *there was* no sword in the hand of David.
(I Sam. 17: 48 - 50)

David's actions are just as heroic and valiant as his words. Boldly, and utterly undaunted, he goes forward to confront Goliath. He is relentless in his determination to avenge the honour of his people and of his God.

These two primary, indirect characterization techniques — the character's direct speech and the character's actions — reveal much about his personality. David, the puny youth, takes on the Philistine giant.

Goliath taunted and insulted his people and his god to such an extent that he was roused to a fury of action. There was no hesitation in David's behaviour, no self-restraint. His honour, and that of his people, insulted, he rose immediately to avenge the insult. Here David is bold, intrepid and, above all, responsive and active. Goliath throws down the gauntlet and David picks it up immediately.

Now consider the situation in II Sam. 16: 5 -13. The event described takes place at the time of Absalom's attempted coup. David is forced to flee Jerusalem in fear of his son. On his flight he is met by Shimei son of Gera, a Benjamite who stones him and his men. Shimei curses him viciously, calling him a bloodthirsty murderer, and suggests that Absalom's coup is God's vengeance for David's having usurped Saul's throne (vss. 7, 8). Abishai son of Zeruah, a high-ranking commander in David's army, is outraged at these words, and says to David, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head" (vs. 9). David replies:

What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said unto him, curse David. Who shall then say, wherefrom hast thou done so? ...

Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this* Benjamite *do it*? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him.

It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. (II Sam. 16:10 - 12)

Once again someone insults David's honour, just as Goliath did many years previously, but this time David's response is completely different. In fact, he does not even reply to the man who curses him, instead directing his words to Abishai and his servants.

This speech shows David to be in a resigned, submissive state of mind. He does not object to Shimei's accusation, or attempt to refute it, but rather accepts it as something sent by God. As such, it should not be resisted, but allowed to continue. He sees himself as, in some way, deserving of Shimei's curse. Finally, he puts himself in God's hands, believing that God will perhaps compensate him for this suffering.

David's actions correspond to his words, as he makes no attempt to evade Shimei or move out of his range:

And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.
(II Sam. 16: 13)

David's words and actions in this episode show him to be resigned, accepting and fatalistic. He does not stand up to Shimei, he submits to him. Instead of acting, he remains passive. The fiery resistance he displayed to Goliath is nowhere to be seen. Shimei throws down the gauntlet and David chooses to ignore it.

The contrast between David's behaviour in these two similar situations is very significant. In I Sam. 17: 1 - 50 the honour of the entire nation is insulted. David puts himself in a position of direct contact with the enemy, and even though there is an attempt to persuade him not to fight, he is determined to defend Israel's honour. Furthermore, he is fighting to defend the honour of God, and he believes that God will therefore support him in his action. He is challenged and responds boldly and actively, taking the offensive.

In II Sam. 16: 5 - 13 David's personal honour is insulted. There is an attempt to persuade him to take action, yet he refrains from confronting the enemy, and thereby defending his honour. Furthermore, he believes that the insult itself comes from God, and therefore he should not avenge it; God will defend *his* honour if He sees fit. He is challenged and responds submissively and passively, taking the defensive. The contrast between this response and that in I Sam. 17:1 - 50 reveals both his complexity and his dynamism.

Alternatively, this speech could be evidence of David's maturity, and the self-control that is acquired by age. In his youth he could not tolerate an insult, and responded aggressively. Now that he has matured he possesses the self-control to allow an insult to go unchallenged, if it is expedient to do so. Perhaps the fact that it is a personal insult, as opposed to Goliath's national insult, makes it easier to bear. Or perhaps David is simply exercising self-restraint now because it is politic to do so; saving his aggressive response for a more opportune moment.

Either way, since this response shows that David has acquired self-restraint through maturity, it is evidence of another aspect of his dynamism.

It could be argued that these changes in David's personality are the result of circumstantial changes in his life. When he fights Goliath he is at the threshold of his reign, strong, confident and positive, having suffered no defeat or hardship.

When he flees Absalom and Jerusalem he is middle-aged, plagued by domestic and political troubles, and thus very possibly disheartened and disillusioned. But it is precisely the fact that he is so affected by these changes of circumstance that is important, for it demonstrates that he has the capacity for change.

Alter writes about this "capacity for change exhibited by the biblical personages who are treated at any length" and about "the biblical understanding of individual character as something which develops in and is transformed by time - preeminently in the stories of Jacob and David ..."⁵¹.

These changes in David's personality, revealed by the contrast of these two similar episodes, are evidence of his dynamism. Also, the contrast of these episodes shows very different sides of David's personality, and is thus evidence of his complexity.

⁵¹ Alter, R., op. cit., p. 126.

(ii) DAVID AS SELFLESS, ALTRUISTIC AND HIGH-MINDED (I SAM. 24)
vs DAVID AS SELFISH, EGOISTICAL AND IMMORAL (II SAM. 11)

In this example the events in the passages selected are very different. But what is common to both of them is that David finds himself in a difficult situation from which he has to extricate himself. In the one situation he resolves the problem by refraining from murder whereas in the other he resolves the problem by deliberately organising the death of another man. This dramatic change in David's opinion of the sanctity of human life is to be investigated, for it is this change that is evidence once more of his dynamism and complexity.

In I Sam. 24 Saul has mounted a massive manhunt in order to kill David, whom he considers to be his rival for the throne. By sheer coincidence Saul wanders alone into the cave in which David and his men are hiding. This presents the perfect opportunity for David to kill his pursuer and thereby save his own life, as his men suggest in vs. 4. Yet David refuses to do so, explaining, "God forbid that I should harm my master, the Lord's anointed" (vs. 6). What he does do is cut off a corner of Saul's cloak, but even this symbolic gesture leaves him conscience-stricken (vss. 4, 5). Saul leaves the cave unharmed. David follows him and tells him what took place in the cave, emphasizing that this action on his part proves that he has no intention of treachery against Saul:

Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know that and see that

there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it ... mine hand shall not be upon thee. (I Sam. 24: 11, 13)

Saul fully comprehends David's magnanimity and expresses his respect for David's behaviour towards him:

Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: for as much as the Lord has delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. (I Sam. 24: 17 - 19)

Here three primary, indirect techniques of characterization — the character's speech, the character's actions and the speech of another character — combine to construct a certain aspect of David's personality. The David we see in this episode is selfless and high-minded. David could have killed Saul. He had already been anointed by the prophet Samuel and knew he was destined to be king. He could thus have construed this encounter as a God-given opportunity to dispose of his rival-pursuer and hasten the realization of his destiny, as well as save his own life. Yet he recoils from killing Saul. His refusal to kill the king may stem from a deep love of Saul, or it may stem from a disinclination to transgress God's laws and risk divine or human retribution, or from other reasons which we cannot guess.

But whatever his reason, David's refusal to kill Saul indicates a fundamental distaste for cold-blooded murder and a knowledge that human life must be treated with respect. He saves Saul's life, possibly at the expense of his own, and this may not be in his best interests at this stage. Saul is intent on killing him, and his murder of Saul could therefore be considered self-defence. Hence his refusal to do so reflects a selflessness and a high-minded altruism.

A very different side of David's personality is presented to the reader in II Sam. 11. In this chapter David returns to Jerusalem while the army is engaged in war against the Ammonites. While in Jerusalem David sleeps with a married woman whose husband, Uriah the Hittite, is away at war against the Ammonites. The woman, Bathsheba, falls pregnant. David, fearful of the consequences of claiming paternity of the child of an adulterous relationship, recalls Uriah to Jerusalem. He tries to make Uriah sleep with Bathsheba and thereby pass off the child as Uriah's, but this plan fails, as Uriah considers sex with one's wife an inappropriate self-indulgence during war-time. In desperation, David sends Uriah back to the front with a letter to Joab, the commander-in-chief of the army, in which he orders Joab to put Uriah in the forefront of the battle where he is certain to be killed. Uriah thus carries his own death-warrant to Joab. This time David's plan succeeds and Uriah is killed by the Ammonites.

These are David's actions; now let us consider his words. Many other soldiers were killed alongside Uriah because Joab had to send the men on a particularly dangerous manoeuvre in order to ensure that Uriah would be killed in battle. This is David's reaction to the messenger who tells him that many of his men have died in an apparently reckless military operation:

Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him. (II Sam. 11:25)⁵²

This is David's verbal response to the news that Uriah has been killed, possibly at the unnecessary cost of many lives. Perhaps David felt obliged to respond in this way in order not to arouse suspicion about Uriah's death, but an expression of regret and distress at the death of these men would not have been inappropriate, even in such a politically motivated speech. Indeed, it would not only be appropriate, but in fact correct, for the king to show sorrow at the loss of his men. His failure to do so makes his callousness all the more pointed, and could even hint at his guilt in the matter. By making this glib comment, and by not reprimanding Joab in any way, David shows his relief at the death of Uriah, since it solves a rather embarrassing problem for him.

⁵² See p. 118 for alternative translations of this verse.

David has caused the death of Uriah and of many other men, and he shows no remorse or regret in his words. These deaths are the end-result of David's lust for a woman forbidden to him, and his indulgence of this lust. This entire episode shows David only concerned with his own desires and needs: first his desire for Bathsheba and then his need to eliminate Uriah. He appears to be unconcerned by the ramifications of his actions, seeking only to satisfy himself. It shows him to be selfish and self-centred. It also shows him to have little regard for the sanctity of human life.

Contrast David's behaviour here with that in I Sam. 24. His conflict with Saul is politically motivated (the issue of who should be king). David is not the initiator of this conflict; it is Saul who hunts David, not the other way around. And David's life is in real danger, for Saul will almost certainly kill him if he catches him. In II Sam. 11 the problem arises out of a purely personal motivation, namely David's desire to possess Bathsheba (although this personally motivated problem could have political implications). David himself is completely responsible for this problematic situation, since he is the sole initiator and cause of it. And it is not clear that David is in any real danger: even if the affair became public knowledge (and there is no evidence that it is *not* public knowledge), the king is above reproach, and a man of Uriah's loyalty would take no action against the king. Yet in I Sam. 24 David shows himself to be incapable of cold-blooded murder, while in II Sam. 11 he blithely organises the death of someone who is simply inconvenient to him, and shows no regret when many others die in the process.

The David of I Sam. 24 is selfless, altruistic and high-minded. The David of II Sam. 11 is selfish, egoistical and immoral. Whether this change is the result of dynamic development, or whether it is the exposure of existing contrasting qualities, is not certain. As such, the fact that two such contrasting facets co-exist in one character indicates either the character's dynamism, or his complexity, or both simultaneously.

(iii) DAVID AS VOLATILE, IMPULSIVE AND QUICK TO ACT (I SAM. 25: 1 - 21; II SAM. 1: 1 - 16; II SAM. 4) vs DAVID AS HESITANT, PASSIVE AND DISINCLINED TO ACT (II SAM. 3: 23 - 39; II SAM. 13: 1 - 21)

The events described in these five episodes show two very different sides of David's personality. In all of these episodes David is either angered or grieved by the behaviour of another person (or people). Yet his response to this offensive or upsetting behaviour is not consistent: sometimes he reacts immediately and impulsively, whereas at other times he either fails to act, or acts in an apathetic manner when decisive action is clearly required. It is difficult to discern a pattern in David's mode of response, although certain conclusions can be drawn. That this behaviour of David's is erratic suggests that it is not a process of development from one state to another, but rather that it is a gradual exposure, through the course of the narrative, of contrasting personality traits. This gradual exposure of inherent qualities, while not necessarily an indication of dynamism, is certainly an indication of complexity.

I shall first deal with those episodes which characterize David as hot-headed, impulsive and quick to act. The first of these is David's encounter-by-proxy with Nabal the Carmelite (I Sam. 25: 1 - 21).

Nabal, a wealthy Carmelite, is shearing his sheep. David, hearing of this, sends ten men of his band of outlaws to Nabal to ask for payment for their protection of Nabal's shepherds and flocks while the sheep were in the pasture.

Nabal, despite his immense wealth, refuses to recompense David and his men. He insults David, implying that he is no better than a runaway slave. David is incensed by Nabal's insolent refusal to pay that which David considers to be his due.

And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. (I Sam. 25: 13)

David's indignation is apparent in his words, too:

Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fellow* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertained* unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.

So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. (I Sam. 25: 21, 22)

David's intentions can clearly be gauged from his actions and speech. He immediately calls his men to arms and states his express purpose of killing Nabal and his household in order to requite Nabal for his insolence. David sets off on this mission and is determined to carry out this threat. Only the diplomatic intervention of Nabal's wife, Abigail, prevents him from doing so.

Although David does not actually carry out his threat, the readiness with which he springs into action reveals his hot-headed impulsiveness. There is no hesitation in his reaction; he does not stop to consider whether perhaps Nabal is right, or whether there has been some kind of misunderstanding. And the punishment that he intends to mete out to Nabal seems extreme: death for non-payment of dues. In this passage David is volatile, impetuous, and above all, quick to act.

This same impulsive leap into action is seen in two instances of David "killing the messenger". The first is in II Sam. 1: 1 - 16 when an Amalekite bears the news of Saul and Jonathan's death in the battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. The Amalekite claims to have killed Saul, at Saul's own request, in order to save him further torture and humiliation at the hands of the Philistines. The Amalekite hopes that this deed will earn him David's gratitude (and possibly a reward), but it has the completely opposite effect, David is enraged that someone, especially a foreigner (see vs. 13), should have the audacity to kill the king of Israel, who is anointed by God.

And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?

And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, *and* fall upon him. And he smote him that he died.

And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed. (II Sam. 1:14 - 16)

A very similar situation occurs in II Sam. 4. At that time David was king in Hebron, while Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was king in the north, and therefore David's rival to the throne. Two of Ishbosheth's captains, Rechab and Baanah, anticipating a reward from David, sneak into Ishbosheth's house and murder him while he sleeps. But again this action has the opposite effect on David. He is scathing in his denunciation of them, referring to the incident of the Amalekite:

When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would give a reward for his tidings:

How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? Shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? (II Sam. 4: 10, 11)

David then matches his actions to his words, and Rechab and Baanah suffer the same fate as the Amalekite:

And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged *them* up over the pool in Hebron ... (II Sam. 4:12)

It has been said that these two incidents — the killing of the Amalekite and of Rechab and Baanah — were politically motivated: David wanted to discourage any future attempts at regicide⁵³. The fact that the measures taken by David may have been politically expedient does not exclude the possibility that David was indeed morally outraged by the two regicides, and it also does not detract from the impulsive and speedy nature of David's reaction.

These three episodes characterize David as hot-headed, volatile, impulsive, and very quick to act, should the situation require it. The following two episodes show a very different side of David's personality.

In II Sam. 3: 23 - 39 Joab murders Abner, Ishbosheth's former commander-in-chief who had recently defected to David. Joab murders Abner in cold-blood in revenge for his having killed his brother Asahel in a skirmish between the opposing forces (II Sam. 3: 27, 30; II Sam. 2: 19 - 23). David is quick to absolve himself of guilt concerning the murder of Abner, laying the blame very firmly on Joab (see II Sam. 3: 28, 29, 37). He does curse Joab, but takes no steps to punish him in any way. He mourns copiously for Abner's death (see II Sam. 3:31 - 35) but still takes no action against Joab.

⁵³ See Gros Louis Kenneth. *The Difficulty of Ruling Well: King David of Israel*, *Semeia*, Vol. 8, 1977, pp. 15 - 33, p. 25.

At the end of the chapter David admits to his weakness and inadequacy in dealing with Joab (and Abishai) effectively, when he says to his servants,

know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

And I *am* this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruah be too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness. (II Sam. 3: 38, 39)

Here David's words and actions (or lack thereof) characterize him as tentative and ineffectual, unable to take decisive action. Instead he transfers this responsibility of taking decisive action to God (see vs. 39). Compare this passive David with the David of the next chapter (II Sam. 4), where David forcefully and decisively takes matters into his own hands, and does not defer to divine judgement.

David's passivity and failure to take effective action reaches drastic proportions in II Sam. 13: 1 - 21. In this chapter David's son Amnon rapes his (Amnon's) half-sister, Tamar. Incestuous rape is a heinous crime, yet David does not even rebuke Amnon for this deed, let alone punish him. Consider these three verses which describe what happens after Tamar is evicted from Amnon's house:

And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? But hold now thy peace, my sister: he *is* thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.

But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth.

And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

(II Sam. 13: 20 - 22)

In none of these verses is there mention of David taking any action against Amnon. Granted, it does state that David was very angry when he heard these things (vs. 21), but he does not convey this anger to Amnon in even a verbal reprimand. Amnon's crime goes completely unpunished, and consequently, Absalom feels obliged to take matters into his own hands in order to avenge the violation of his sister. The rest of the chapter is concerned with Absalom's vendetta against Amnon, whom he eventually kills two years later. Clearly, David has completely absented himself from the task of disciplining Amnon. In this episode, where decisive and effective action is required, David's lack of action characterizes him as weak, ineffectual and passive.

The first three episodes discussed in this section — David and Nabal the Carmelite, David and the Amalekite, David and Rechab and Baanah — all characterize David as volatile, impulsive and quick to act.

As stated, some of David's actions in these episodes could be interpreted as politically expedient, but this does not necessarily conflict with the sincerity of the action. The last two episodes discussed — Joab's murder of Abner, Amnon's rape of Tamar — characterize David as unable or slow to act, ineffectual and passive. It cannot conclusively be said that David moves from a state of vigorous, effective action to a state where he is passive and unable to act effectively. What could possibly be said is that in the political realm David is far more active and decisive than he is in the familial realm; for this viewpoint see also I Kings 1:6.

Since there is no discernable pattern of progression from action to inaction, but rather a random occurrence of these different facets of David's personality, David cannot be termed a dynamic character in this instance. However, the co-existence of such contrasting personality traits is definitely another indication of David's complexity.

(iv) DAVID AS SENSITIVE, EMOTIONAL AND COMPASSIONATE (II SAM. 1: 17 - 27; II SAM. 12: 15 - 17, 24; II SAM. 19: 1 - 5) vs DAVID AS COLD, IMPASSIVE AND RUTHLESS (II SAM. 11: 1 - 17, 25; I KINGS 2: 1- 10)

In this contrastive exercise two very different facets of David's personality are revealed. Sometimes David is sensitive, emotional and compassionate; while at other times he is cold, impassive and ruthless. Again, no particular pattern can be discerned in this antithetical behaviour; there is no movement from one extreme to another.

Though certain conclusions can be drawn with respect to this contrasting behaviour, these conclusions do not reflect a movement or a development in a particular direction. Nevertheless, the simultaneous co-existence of these antithetical qualities in David's personality serve to define him as a complex character. And, while no specific directional change occurs, David's behaviour is not uniform and consistent; his behaviour is different in each episode. This constant change and motion within his personality define him as a dynamic character.

David's sensitivity and compassion is clearly illustrated in his lament of the death of Saul and Jonathan in II Sam. 1: 17 - 27. In this chapter David is informed by a self-seeking Amalekite that Saul and Jonathan have died in battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. David, enraged at the audacity of the Amalekite who claims to have killed Saul at his own request, immediately orders him to be killed (II Sam. 1: 14 - 16). He mourns publicly, in the traditional manner, for the death of the Israelite leaders and the defeat of the Israelite army (vs. 11, 12), but the lament that follows resounds with a sincerity and a personal expression of loss that far exceeds that which is prescribed by the traditional mourning procedures. The lament is quoted here in its entirety:

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places:
 how the mighty are fallen!
 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of
 Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines
 rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised
 triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, *let there be* no dew,
neither *let there be* rain, upon you, nor fields of
offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is
vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, *as though he*
had not been anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the
mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the
sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely and pleasant in their
lives, and in their death they were not divided: they
were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than
lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you
in scarlet, with *other* delights, who put on
ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
O Jonathan, *thou wast* slain in thine high places.

I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan: very
pleasant has thou been unto me: thy love to me was
wonderful, passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war
perished! (II Sam. 1: 19 - 27)

This lament (i.e. the character's speech) clearly reveals David's grief and sense of loss. Space does not permit a detailed analysis of the lament, but even at first glance David's emotional pain is apparent. While it is logical that he should mourn for Jonathan, his friend, it is startling that he should mourn for Saul, his would-be murderer. His reverence for both Saul and Jonathan is conveyed, explaining his own acute sense of loss, and that of the nation. This expression of grief is not prompted by the dictates of the mourning conventions, but rather by David's own sensitive and emotional nature.

It is a spontaneous and heart-felt outpouring, an instinctive reaction. David is deeply affected by the death of Saul and Jonathan, and he makes no attempt to conceal his distress. His words clearly show him to be grieving, responding with a sensitivity that, while it is appropriate to the situation, is certainly not demanded by it.

Another example of David's emotional sensitivity far exceeding the bounds of duty is in II Sam. 12: 16, 17, 24. In this chapter the prophet Nathan tells David that the child of his adulterous union with Bathsheba will die — this is God's punishment for David's sin. David, while knowing the child's death to be pre-ordained, nevertheless prays to God to save the child. Consider David's actions when the child falls sick:

David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

And the elders of his house arose *and went* to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. (II Sam. 12: 16, 17)

David knows the child's death to be inevitable, yet his sensitivity and compassion compels him to try to rescue the child who is paying for his father's sins. Here it is apparent that David is deeply moved by the prospect of the child's death. His anguish must surely be intensified by the fact that the child's imminent death is in lieu of his own (see vs. 14).

After the child's death David transfers his concern and compassion to Bathsheba, the mother of the child. Having decided that there is nothing more he can do for the dead (see vss. 22, 23), he goes to comfort the living. His actions are described as follows:

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him.

(II Sam. 12:24)

David now moves from being a concerned parent to a compassionate husband. Instead of leaving Bathsheba to grieve alone (as could easily have happened in the patriarchal biblical society), he goes to comfort her. This gesture shows empathy and sensitivity; even in the midst of his own torment he is aware of the pain of others, pain that has been caused by his own actions. He comforts and consoles Bathsheba for the death of their child.

When Absalom, another of David's sons, is killed in battle, David is absolutely devastated. The fact that this battle was a battle for the throne of Israel, and that Absalom died trying to usurp his father's throne, has no bearing on David's grief. Also, the fact that it is inappropriate for the king to mourn the death of the enemy is initially of no concern to David: his sorrow knows no bounds. David's response to the death of Absalom is described in II Sam. 19 as follows:

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

And it was told Joab, Behold the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

And the victory that day was *turned* into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

But the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son! (II Sam. 19:1 - 5)⁵⁴

Here we see David completely overwhelmed by grief; his sense of loss blots out everything else. He is blind to the fact that this excessive display of grief is politically inappropriate and potentially damaging to his position as king. He is utterly immersed in his own wretchedness and sorrow. David is completely overcome by emotion, revealing his extreme sensitivity. Perhaps this emotional susceptibility and sensitivity is excessive, since it makes him dangerously self-absorbed. Nevertheless, one thing is clear: David is indeed capable of a very emotional response.

⁵⁴ Note the presentation of this response. First there is the narrator's explicit statement "the king was much moved," then there is a description of the king's actions, and, finally, a report of the king's speech.

This sensitive, emotional, compassionate side of David's personality disappears completely in I Kings 2. David is on his death-bed and, knowing he is about to die, he gives final instructions to Solomon, his successor. After exhorting Solomon to keep God's precepts and commandments so that he will be successful in all he does, and ensure God's continued support (vss. 3,4), he says:

Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruah did to me, *and* what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace ...

Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace. (I Kings 2: 5, 6)

David then continues:

"And, behold, *thou hast* with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went down to Mahanaim: but he came down to me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou *art* a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood. (I Kings 2: 8, 9)

These words reveal an inexorable, ruthless David. Gone is the sensitive, compassionate, highly-emotional David of previous episodes; in his place is a grim, hardened man, bent on revenge. Previously David had been compassionate to Shimei, showing him clemency (see II Sam. 19: 18 - 23). Now he negates this previously-granted clemency by calling on Solomon to avenge him.

Joab had crossed David many times. Here David mentions the murders of Abner (II Sam. 3) and Amasa (II Sam. 20); what he does not mention is Joab's responsibility for the death of Absalom (II Sam. 18), as well as his treachery in supporting Adonijah as successor to the throne, while David still lives (I Kings 1), although the text never states that David is aware of the part played by Joab in Absalom's death. David has never yet punished Joab; now he ensures that punishment will be meted out by Solomon. David's earlier clemency and mercifulness has disappeared and has been replaced by an implacable ruthlessness. He is no longer sensitive and compassionate; now he has hardened his heart.

Another example of David's ruthlessness can be found in his dealings with Uriah the Hittite in II Sam. 11. This episode has already been discussed in section (ii) of this chapter, so it will not be analysed in detail here again. Suffice it to say that David's disposal of Uriah shows the same ruthlessness as that which he displays in I Kings 2.

It appears that David coldly and calmly arranges the murder of Uriah, who had become inconvenient to him (see II Sam. 11: 14, 15) and shows no remorse at the news of his death (see II Sam. 11: 23, 25). Joab's coaching of the messenger leads one to think that David would usually have been very distressed by news of this kind, yet here he is not. In this episode David's compassion and emotionalism are nowhere to be seen; all that can be seen is an impassive, determined ruthlessness.

These five episodes show two very opposite sides of David's personality. From the first three — David's lament for Saul and Jonathan, his prayers for the sick child and comforting of Bathsheba, his mourning for Absalom — he emerges as sensitive and compassionate.

He is aware of, and sensitive to, the pain of others, and seeks to alleviate their suffering, both physical and emotional. He is capable of being greatly moved by the death of those close to him, and he responds with profound emotion. He makes no attempt to suppress his feelings; rather he gives them free rein.

By contrast, the other two episodes — David's death-bed instructions to Solomon and his disposal of Uriah the Hittite — reveal him to be cold, impassive and ruthless. In these episodes he is not merciful and compassionate, but harsh and inexorable. Whatever remorse he may feel is suppressed, and he appears to be implacable and merciless.

As previously stated, no particular pattern can be discerned in this inconsistent behaviour of David. Yet it could be said that, in general, when it comes to family matters and family members, David acts with sensitivity and compassion (besides in the case of Amnon's rape of Tamar), but when it comes to political issues he becomes impassive and ruthless. This behaviour can be considered appropriate: in personal matters David is permitted to show emotion but in the political arena it is required of him that he be the impeturbable, ruthless king.

What is remarkable is that David does indeed possess these two very different sides and that each is activated as the situation requires it. He is not a static, inflexible character; rather he is a character that is fluid and dynamic, responding differently as the circumstances change. The contrast of these five episodes once again confirms him as a complex and dynamic character⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Leo G. Perdue, in his article, "Is there anyone left of the house of Saul ...?" Ambiguity and the Characterization of David in the Succession Narrative. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 30 (1984) pp. 67 -84, discusses this issue of the contrast between David's ruthlessness and his compassion. He suggests two possible readings of the David character. In the first he sees David as a dynamic character who endeavours to rule with compassion and graciousness but in the end resorts to ruthlessness as the only effective means of rule. Thus Perdue has indeed discerned a directional movement in this seemingly inconsistent behaviour of David. In the second reading he sees David as a static character, "one that consistently binds together deceit, treachery and ruthlessness" (p. 74). Perdue explains that this approach "regards David as a static character who does not inwardly change and develop within the movement of the plot" (p. 74). Perdue contends that both readings are viable, since this ambiguous characterization is a typical feature of biblical narrative, and this ambiguity may even have been intentional on the part of the biblical author (p. 80). While Perdue's second reading contradicts my view of David as a dynamic character, it does not affect my view of David as a complex character.

(v) CONCLUSION

In this chapter it has been demonstrated that David is both a complex and a dynamic character. This complexity and dynamism is conveyed to the reader by means of the characterization technique of contrast.

The author constructs David as a complex and dynamic character by relating different episodes in his life which reveal significantly contrasting personality traits. It is the task of the reader to compare these different episodes, and, by doing so, to observe the contrasts in David's behaviour, and thereby perceive both his complexity and his dynamism.

This investigation of this aspect of the technique of contrast has illustrated that David is a very complex and a very dynamic character. He is composed of various antithetical personality traits.

During the course of the narrative these different qualities are revealed as his behaviour changes with each new situation. His personality is thus in a constant state of movement and flux, clearly indicating him to be a dynamic character as opposed to a static one. Using Ewen's axes of classification, on the axis of complexity he would be placed very close to the pole of complexity, and on the axis of development he would be placed very close to the pole of dynamism. Indeed, "what a road, what a fate, lie between ... David the harp player, persecuted by his lord's jealousy, and the old king, surrounded by violent intrigues, whom Abishag the Shunnamite warmed in his bed, and he knew her not!", as Auerbach noted.

CHAPTER 3

THE TECHNIQUE OF INTERACTION WITH OTHER CHARACTERS

By far the most important of contexts is the web of human relationships in which any single character must be emeshed. So much of what we are can only be defined in terms of our relations with other people ...⁵⁶

In this statement W.L. Harvey points to an important characterization technique, namely that of the interaction and the interrelation between the characters of a narrative. Here Harvey suggests that a character does not exist in isolation, but rather in relation to the other characters in the social context of the narrative; that a character is defined in terms of his/her relations with other characters. Thus, in order to understand the character, the reader should investigate the character's relationships, because these relationships shed light on the character himself.

Since the interaction and interrelation of a particular character with the other characters has an illuminating and revelatory function, it can be classed as a technique of characterization. This technique of characterization operates in various ways. Firstly, the character in question can interact in a different manner with each of the other characters, and these differences can be significant and informative.

⁵⁶ Harvey, W.L., Character and the Novel, London: Chatto and Windus, 1965. p. 52.

Secondly, sometimes the contrast, or the similarity, between two characters provides an important commentary on the character concerned. This is the technique of contrast between characters that was mentioned in Chapter Two, and, as stated, it will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter. Finally, the nature of the character's interrelation with the other characters is important. In this respect, attention should also be paid to the changes which occur in these relationships as the narrative progresses, and the character concerned moves from youth to maturity, and eventually to old age.

These three aspects of character interaction should be borne in mind when investigating David's interaction with the other characters in the narrative, as they all combine to constitute a valuable technique of characterization.

In this study it is not possible to investigate David's interaction with the other characters in its entirety; the large number of characters in the narrative prevents this kind of exhaustive study here. However, an attempt will be made to deal with as many characters as possible, with the emphasis on those characters who are most influential in David's life.

(i) DIFFERENCES IN INTERACTION AS A CHARACTERIZATION
TECHNIQUE: DAVID WITH HIS WIVES

Adele Berlin's article "Characterization in Biblical Narrative:

David's Wives"⁵⁷ relates to the first-mentioned aspect of this characterization technique of interaction with other characters. In this article she demonstrates how David relates differently to his various wives (and concubine, in the case of Abishag), and how this difference in spousal interaction serves to characterize him. Berlin first discusses David's relationships with Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba and Abishag individually, and then explains how

The result in all of these cases is an indirect presentation of David, in which various aspects of his character merge naturally, outside of the glare of direct scrutiny⁵⁸.

Berlin describes David's interaction with Michal as emotionally cold, lacking in warmth and tenderness. David uses Michal to political advantage in order to advance his own career at her father's court (see I Sam. 18:26; II Sam. 13 - 16). This relationship reveals a cold, calculating, exploitive side of David's personality⁵⁹. David's relationship with Abigail (see I Sam. 25) reveals a completely different side of his personality. According to Berlin, he is obviously attracted to her and very eager to marry her. Despite this instant attraction, he behaves courteously and properly towards her, showing himself to be capable of self-restraint.

⁵⁷ Berlin, Adele. Characterization in Biblical Narrative: David's Wives. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 23, 1982, pp. 69 -85.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 79.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 70, 71, 79.

His dealings with Abigail show that he does indeed have the potential for strong, passionate romantic feelings — feelings which appear to be totally absent in his relationship with Michal⁶⁰.

In David's relationship with Bathsheba these passionate feelings are intensified to the point where they become a lust that David cannot control (see II Sam. 11). This relationship reveals a lustful, grasping side of David's personality⁶¹. Whereas with Abigail he was able to practise self-restraint (he only marries her once her husband is dead, see I Sam. 25:39) and behave in a gentlemanly manner; with Bathsheba he loses control completely. He moves from being passionate yet self-restrained (with Abigail) to being lustful, licentious and acquisitive (with Bathsheba). David's interaction with Bathsheba and her husband Uriah the Hittite, is, among other things, a display in the exercise of absolute power. By contrast, David's relationship with Abishag (see I Kings 1) is evidence of weakness and impotence⁶².

This weakness and impotence could be physical, caused by old age. It could also be emotional, caused by the domestic and political turmoil in David's life.

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 76, 79.

⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 72, 73, 79.

⁶² Ibid, pp. 74, 79.

Finally, it could be symbolic: the king is about to die, the power is slipping from his hands into his son's. Whether it is just one of the above-mentioned possibilities, or a combination of them, the point is still clear: David's relationship with Abishag reveals the feeble, weak and impotent side of his personality.

This investigation of David's various spousal relationships has revealed several different aspects of his personality. His emotions run the gamut from cold opportunism, to restrained attraction and desire, to unbridled lust, and, finally, to feebleness and impotence.

All of these personality traits are evidenced by David's interaction with his wives and concubine, proving character interaction and relationships to be an effective characterization technique.

(ii) DIFFERENCES IN INTERACTION AS A CHARACTERIZATION TECHNIQUE: DAVID AND HIS POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS

In the above-mentioned article Berlin deals with relationships that are part of David's personal, private life, even though sometimes these relationships have political ramifications. Kenneth Gros Louis, in his article "The Difficulty of Ruling Well: King David of Israel"⁶³, discusses some of David's public relationships and explains how these relationships serve to characterize him.

⁶³ Gros Louis, K., op. cit.

Gros Louis identifies David's major public relationships as those with Samuel, the priest Ahimelech, Nabal the Carmelite, Achish, King of Gat, Abner and Joab, the prophets Nathan and Gad, David's sons Solomon and Adonijah, and Shimei the Benjamite⁶⁴. Gros Louis then continues:

What is David like with these people? How would we characterize him? The traits which emerge most clearly are these: he is shrewd and calculating, cautious, patient, vigorous in the defense of himself and his followers. Most importantly, he acts in the public welfare, even if it means at times suppressing his own desires, humbling himself, letting himself be criticized⁶⁵.

Once again David's relationships — this time his public relationships — help the reader to reconstruct the character, as certain personality traits emerge from these relationships.

(iii) CONTRAST WITH OTHER CHARACTERS AS A CHARACTERIZATION TECHNIQUE

This is the second dimension of interaction as a characterization technique, as well as a dimension of contrast as a characterization technique, as mentioned in Chapter Two. It must be emphasized that although contrast may exist between characters who have no contact with each other, here the implication is the contrast that occurs *during the process of character interaction*.

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 23, 24.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 24.

As the characters interact with each other a contrast may be evinced that sheds light on the characters' personalities and thereby serves as a characterizing device.

In II Sam. 11 David manipulates Uriah the Hittite in order to avoid having to admit paternity of the child of his adulterous union with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife.

Menakhem Perry and Meir Sternberg in their article "The King Through Ironic Eyes"⁶⁶, have analysed this chapter in detail, showing how David's machiavellian unscrupulousness is subtly contrasted with Uriah's loyalty and devotion. The main purpose of Perry and Sternberg's article is to demonstrate the system of lacunae operative in this chapter, and how it is incumbent upon the reader to construct hypotheses in order to fill in these gaps.

But in the process of identifying the lacunae in the text, Perry and Sternberg show how the apparently neutral narrator subtly passes judgement on David's behaviour. This criticism, which is implicit rather than explicit, is achieved by the juxtaposition of David's scheming machinations with Uriah's loyalty and faithfulness to a people and a cause that are not even his own (Uriah is a Hittite, not an Israelite)⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Perry, Menakhem and Meir Sternberg. The King Through Ironic Eyes: The Narrator's Devices in the Biblical story of David and Bathsheba and Two Excursuses on the Theory of the Narrative Text. HaSifrut 1:2 Summer 1968, pp. 263 - 292.

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 272 - 274.

Consider Uriah's reply to David when asked why he did not go down to his house and sleep with his wife, in accordance with David's instructions:

The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in the tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest and as thy soul livest, I will not do this thing. (II Sam. 11:11)

These words show Uriah's allegiance to the Israelite people and their cause. This level of loyalty and identification is unexpected in a foreigner, and this is precisely what makes the characterization so striking: a Hittite soldier is more devoted to the Israelites than the King of Israel himself. David's shortcoming is thus subtly, yet forcefully, emphasized.

Uriah fails to respond to David's urging to sleep with Bathsheba. By doing so he refuses that to which he is lawfully entitled. This contrasts with David's unlawful action, thereby emphasizing the unethical and immoral nature of David's behaviour.

David's subsequent actions are sharply contrasted with those of Uriah. David makes Uriah the bearer of his own death warrant. Whether Uriah knows, or even suspects, that he carries his own death warrant is not evident. Nevertheless, his unquestioning obedience to David is juxtaposed with David's unscrupulous exploitation thereof.

In this chapter David is characterized as machiavellian, unscrupulous and immoral. This characterization is so effectively achieved by showing the interaction between David and Uriah. The contrast that emerges from this interaction is that which serves to commend Uriah and thereby condemn David. This example shows how contrast within the context of interaction between characters is indeed a valuable characterization technique.

(iv) THE NATURE OF DAVID'S RELATIONSHIPS AS A CHARACTERIZATION TECHNIQUE: FILIAL, FRATERNAL AND PATERNAL BONDS

In real life a person's nature is shaped in part by his family environment: the influences of parents and siblings and the relationship of the person to these family members. Since the realist perception of character contends that literary characters should be constructed according to the same psychological principles as those inherent in real people, it is necessary to investigate David's familial relationships in order to ascertain their contribution to the formulation of his character.

David's father was Jesse, the Bethlehemite (II Sam. 16:1), the grandson of Ruth and Boaz (I Chron. 2:12 - 15; Ruth 4:21, 22). David's mother is unknown, as nothing is written about her. According to II Sam. 16:10 David had seven brothers. The three eldest of these brothers are named: Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah. According to I Chron. 2:13 - 16 David had six brothers, Eliab, Abinadab, Shimma, Nethaneel, Raddai, Ozem — and two sisters — Zeruah and Abigail.

This discrepancy is not important for our purposes. What is important to note is that in both cases David is indicated as the youngest son of a large family. Also, I Sam. 17:12 states that Jesse was an old man, so it should be borne in mind that David is the son of an aged father. His mother, although unnamed, is still alive when he is a teenager, since in I Sam. 22:3 it is written that David takes both his father and his mother to the king of Moab for protection.

Nothing is written of David's relationship with his mother. This does not mean that David did not have a relationship with his mother, since every child has some kind of relationship with his mother, even if it is a bad one. What it does mean is that the author did not consider it sufficiently relevant to be included in his text. This in itself significant.

Joel Rosenberg observes that

One curious feature of the Davidic history as a whole, beginning as far back as I Sam. 16, is the apparent disjunction between David's own father's house (the house of Jesse) and the one he himself forms. Indeed, the house of Jesse seems mysteriously to fade away quite some time before the house of David is fully constituted⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ Rosenberg, Joel, King and Kin, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 174.

Rosenberg's observation tends towards psychology, calling attention to the fractured nature of David's relationship with his family. This fracture occurs as a result of David's being separated from his family when he is still in his teens. At a time when the bonds established in childhood should be solidified and cemented, they are severed by command of the king. This does serious damage to David's relationship both with his father and with his brothers.

When Saul's servants suggest that he engage a musician in order to ease his melancholy, he sends a message to Jesse:

"Send me David thy son, which *is* with the sheep" (I Sam. 16:19). Saul does not order David himself to come; instead he addresses his command to Jesse. Clearly David is still considered a minor, subject to his father's authority. Jesse cannot refuse a royal command, so he

took an ass *laden* with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul. (I Sam. 16:20)

Jesse ensures that David goes to Saul bearing gifts; the irony of this verse is that the greatest gift Jesse has given to Saul is not the bread, the wine, or the kid, but the bearer of the gifts, his son. Jesse's loss is emphasized by the use of the words "his son" which are superfluous in this verse⁶⁹. That Jesse has indeed lost his son is evident in these verses:

⁶⁹ cf. Gen. 22:2.

And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. (I Sam. 16:21, 22)

And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. (I Sam. 18:2)

Saul's first message to Jesse was an order: "Send me ...". This message is a request: "Let ... I pray thee ...". Even Saul knows that he cannot command another man to give up his son. But Jesse, being a loyal subject, accedes to the king's request, and in so doing, surrenders his son. What did Jesse reply to Saul? We do not know because Jesse's reply is unrecorded. This omission is significant because it points to the difficulty Jesse must have had in providing an adequate answer to Saul's request. It is possible that he was actually incapable of a verbal reply.

David is thus removed from his father and sent to live at the royal court. Initially Saul is very taken with David, and David enjoys the benefits of being one of the king's favourites (I Sam. 18:5). Saul advances his military career and it is clear that he is in a privileged position, having the support and protection of the king. David has become Saul's protégé, and in this sense Saul becomes a kind of foster father to him. It appears that David has no more contact with Jesse, except when he takes his parents to the king of Moab for protection in I Sam. 22:3, 4. Saul now fills the role that had been Jesse's.

Proof of this transference of parental-filial allegiance can be found in the two incidents where David has the opportunity to kill Saul but chooses not to do so (I Sam. 24, 26). Both encounters are concluded with an emotional conversation between Saul and David. In I Sam. 24 David addresses Saul as "my father" (vs. 11) and Saul addresses David as "my son" (vs. 16). In I Sam. 26 Saul once more addresses David as "my son" (vss. 14, 21, 25). It should be noted, too, that Rosenberg refers to Saul as David's "political 'father'"⁷⁰ and as his "adoptive patron"⁷¹.

Shortly after David's arrival at court, when he is still establishing himself and becoming accustomed to his new environment, Saul, his "foster father", turns on him. This is a complete about-turn; instead of protecting him, Saul is now determined to kill him (see I Sam. 18:8 - 12 for the turning point of Saul's changed attitude to David).

Evidence of Saul's changed attitude to David is to be found in the fact that Saul does not refer to him as "my son" as in I Sam. 24, 26, or even as "David", but refers to him as "the son of Jesse" (I Sam. 20:27, 30, 31; I Sam. 22:7, 8). Saul is now disowning David, refusing to assume a foster paternity; instead he symbolically re-instates Jesse as David's father.

⁷⁰ Rosenberg, J., op. cit., p 174.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 175.

This must have been a traumatic series of events for David: the man who took him from his father and his family, made him his protégé, became a kind of foster father to him, now seeks his life. In light of this confusing and disturbing set of circumstances it is to David's credit that he twice refrains from killing Saul, and then later mourns his death with the lament of II Sam. 1:19 - 27. Nevertheless, the two relationships — with Jesse and with Saul — play a vital role in the shaping of David's personality, as will be seen below.

David's relationship with his brothers is just as problematic as that with his father. There is hardly any recorded interaction between David and his brothers, yet two observations can still be made with respect to David's fraternal relationships.

The first observation concerns the similarity between David's relationship with his brothers, and that of Joseph with his brothers. Joseph is a younger son of a large family, and David is the youngest son of a large family. Both have an aged father (see Gen. 37:3 and I Sam. 17:12). Being the younger sons of large families, it is unlikely that either Joseph or David will attain much in the way of inheritance or social status. Yet both Joseph and David rise up over their brothers, far surpassing them in both wealth and status — Joseph becomes second only to Pharaoh in Egypt and David becomes king of Israel.

As Walter Brueggemann notes, "In the rise-of-David narrative we are indeed watching while a "last one" becomes a "first one"⁷². Ultimogeniture prevails over primogeniture.

Both Joseph and David learn early on that they are destined for greatness. Joseph has symbolic dreams predicting that he will be far more important than his brothers (Gen. 37:5 - 11). David is anointed king while still a youth by the prophet Samuel (I Sam. 16:1 - 13). In the story of Joseph it is clearly stated that Joseph's prediction of his own greatness makes his brothers envious of him, and causes them to hate him (Gen. 37:5, 8, 11). In the story of David nothing is written of his brothers' reaction to his being anointed king, but it is possible to imagine that this caused feelings of resentment and envy amongst his brothers. All seven brothers are paraded before Samuel and deemed unsuitable; the choice of the youngest son over older, more likely candidates is liable to arouse jealousy. A possible hint of this jealousy and resentment is seen when Eliab, David's eldest brother, overhears David asking what the reward is for killing Goliath:

And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom has thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. (I Sam. 17:28)

⁷² Brueggemann, Walter, First and Second Samuel, Louisville: John Knox, 1990, p. 157.

This speech resounds with the annoyance of an older brother who has been goaded by the grandiosity of his youngest brother. Here Eliab perceives David's self-assurance as vainglory and arrogance, which could be the result of David's having been anointed king. Eliab must consider David's volunteering to fight Goliath as yet another occasion for David to "steal his thunder" and usurp Eliab's status as the eldest, and therefore the most important, brother. It is interesting to note that David, like Joseph, makes no attempt at humility or self-effacement in order to reassure his brother(s). Instead he retaliates with a scathing retort: "What have I now done? *Is there not a cause?*" (I Sam. 17:29). His next action is equally deprecating: "And he turned away from him toward another, and spake after the same manner ..." (I Sam. 17:30). Surely Eliab must be incensed by this dismissive behaviour.

Abinadab and Shammah, two other of David's brothers, were also at the battlefield (I Sam. 17:13) yet no mention is made of them in this incident. There are several possible reasons for this: they could have been elsewhere when this incident occurred, or they could have been present but chosen not to voice an opinion, or they could have been present and allowed Eliab to speak on their behalf, thus expressing a common consensus of opinion. In any event, if Eliab can be considered representative of David's other brothers, it can be concluded that David's fraternal relations were strained and tense, to say the least.

Another parallel can be drawn between David and Joseph. The turning point in Joseph's career occurs when he is sent by his father to inquire after his elder brothers who are away from home, tending the flocks. The stay-at-home child is sent to inquire after the elder brothers who do the proper work in the family. The same occurs in the case of David: Jesse sends David to inquire after his elder brothers who are away from home. This time the brothers are fighting a war rather than tending the sheep, but the similarity is nevertheless evident. The stay-at-home child is sent to inquire after the elder brothers who do the man's job of waging war. David's defeat of Goliath is definitely the turning point in his career, too, echoing that of Joseph (The difference is that Joseph is passive in the facilitation of his turning point, whereas David is active).

The next mention of David's brothers is in I Sam. 22:1, when they go to the cave of Adullam to join David, who has become an outlaw fleeing from Saul. The reference is collective, "his brethren"; after I Sam. 17:28 there is no further individualized reference to any of David's brothers until II Sam. 13:3 when reference is made to "Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother". II Sam. 13:32 contains the final reference to Shimeah, and with this the subject of David's brothers is closed.

These are the only three references indicating contact between David and his brothers. Granted, they do go to support him when he becomes an outlaw, but even then there is no specified mention of their activity — in I Sam. 26:6 - 9 it is Abishai, Joab's brother, who is at David's side, not any of his own brothers. The fairly minimal interaction between David and his brothers suggests a certain estrangement between them. This estrangement could be the result of the brothers' resentment of David's having been anointed king over them. It could also be the result of David's having been separated from them when he goes to live at Saul's court. This creates an enforced separation, as well as another reason for resentment, since while they are left tending the sheep, David is becoming a nationally acclaimed hero. All these reasons could contribute to the apparent estrangement between David and his brothers.

David's minimal fraternal interaction suggests that these were deficient, inadequate relationships. Denied this fraternal support, David forms other relationships as substitutes. Two of these stand out: his relationship with Jonathan and his relationship with Joab. Rosenberg recognises that David is forced to seek his fraternal connections outside of his immediate family, when he refers to these relationships as "adoptive fraternal bonds"⁷³. Furthermore, he terms David's relationship with Jonathan a "quasi-fraternal attachment"⁷⁴, thus confirming that a kind of fraternal substitution has occurred.

⁷³ Rosenberg, J., op. cit., p. 176.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 176.

The fraternal nature of David's relationship with Jonathan is emphasized by the fact that Jonathan provides unconditional love and support for his friend, at great personal risk. This kind of devotion is usually only found between family members, or between a man and a woman, and this is possibly David's meaning when he says to Jonathan:

very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. (II Sam. 1:26)

Whether David exploited this unconditional love is debatable. Jonathan is clearly the initiator of the relationship (see I Sam. 18:1, 3, 4). Throughout the text there are affirmations of Jonathan's feelings towards David (see I Sam. 19:2; 20:3, 17). Jonathan expresses his willingness to help David with anything that he needs, "whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee" (I Sam. 20:4). He risks his father's anger several times in order to save David (see I Sam. 19, 20, 23:16 - 18). By contrast, there is only one reference to David's feelings for Jonathan, when David cries more than Jonathan at their parting (I Sam. 20:41). This is not a definitive affirmation; the reader must infer from David's copious weeping that he is grieved by having to part from Jonathan.

The fact that explicit declarations of affection are thus only expressed by Jonathan leaves the reader uncertain as to David's feelings for Jonathan. Yet David's lament seems to suggest that he felt a deep affection for Jonathan.

In this lament David seems to be genuinely grieved at the death of Jonathan (and Saul). Perhaps David, not having had the experience of close familial bonds, did not know how to express affection towards Jonathan while he was alive. However, Jonathan's death shocked him into giving expression to these previously suppressed feelings. But whatever the nature of this controversial friendship, Jonathan clearly assumes a fraternal role in David's life, filling the gap created by the deficient relationship he has with his own brothers. If Saul is David's foster father, then Jonathan is his foster brother.

David's relationship with Joab is similar to his relationship with Jonathan in that it, too, although to a lesser extent, is of a fraternal nature. Joab is supposedly David's nephew, the son of his sister Zeruah, although this is only revealed in I Chron. 2:13 - 16. But this is unknown to the reader of I and II Samuel and I Kings 1, 2, and so for this reader there is no familial connection between David and Joab.

Joab is David's military commander-in-chief, and also seems to function as David's second-in-command or right-hand-man in a more general sense. David relies on him heavily for the success of his military operations, and for the smooth running of the country in general. Theirs does not appear to be a relationship based on affection, but rather on the twin poles of mutual respect and mutual loyalty. Yet despite this apparent lack of affection there seems to be a close, strong bond between David and Joab.

Joab has an instinctive understanding of David's thoughts and feelings, as is evidenced by his disposal of Uriah the Hittite at David's request (II Sam. 11)⁷⁵ and by his effecting a reconciliation between David and his son Absalom (II Sam. 14), since David is unable to do this by himself. Joab's primary concerns are king and country, yet sometimes he sees fit to override the king's authority for the good of the country, in order to better serve his king. Examples of this well-intentioned insubordination are his killing of Absalom (II Sam. 18) and his killing of Amasa (II Sam. 20).

At times the motives of Joab's actions are questionable — it is possible that he is motivated more by self-interest than by concern for David and the people. Examples of these ambiguous actions are Joab's murder of Abner (II Sam. 3:22 - 39) and his murder of Amasa (II Sam. 20). These actions are ambiguous because Joab could be performing them in order to secure his own position, or else he could be performing them in order to spare David the bother of two unpleasant, albeit necessary tasks. (Joab's support of Adonijah as David's successor in I Kings 1 could also be understood that Joab considered Adonijah to be David's rightful heir and thus his action was not intended as a breach of loyalty).

Yet, even if these actions are motivated by self-interest, they are in no way damaging to David's cause, and consequently Joab could not be accused of treachery or disloyalty.

⁷⁵ Perry, M., and M. Sternberg, op. cit., pp. 279, 280.

Sometimes David is overwhelmed by the brutality of Joab's actions. He says of Joab, and of Joab's brother Abishai:

And I *am* this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruah *be* too hard for me ... (II Sam. 3:39)

What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruah? ... (II Sam. 16:10)

These words of David are significant. David is saying that he finds the harshness and severity of Joab's (and Abishai's) actions shocking. But at the same time he is also admitting that in his actions Joab (and Abishai) is capable of a brutality and a ruthlessness of which he himself is incapable. David's incapacity for brutality and ruthlessness is debatable, in light of II Sam. 1:13 - 16, II Sam. 4: 9 - 12, II Sam. 11 and I Kings 2:5 - 9. The motivations for David's words are unclear, yet both possibilities shed light on his personality.

It may be that he is expressing a genuine distaste for brutality. Or it may be that his words are political rhetoric; for form's sake it is expedient that he condemns their actions. The first possibility reflects the admirable quality of abhorrence of brutality; the second possibility reflects clever statesmanship.

In respect of the second possibility, David's reliance upon the sons of Zeruah emerges: they perform actions which are necessary, yet it would be impolitic for him to perform these actions himself. David thus depends on their support. David's brothers are conspicuously absent in the rendering of support to David. Joab (and Abishai), by being constantly and visibly supportive of David, assume a semi-fraternal role in their relationship to David. Thus a kind of fraternal substitution occurs, although to a much lesser extent than in the case of Jonathan.

Despite the high level of Joab's devotion and loyalty to David, David asks Solomon to arrange for Joab's execution after his death. This remarkable volte-face will be dealt with at the end of this chapter, in the section dealing with David's view of loyalty and betrayal.

Having examined David's filial and fraternal interaction, it is now time to examine his paternal interaction i.e. his relationships with his children. David has many wives and hence many children (see I Sam. 25: 42, 43; II Sam. 3:2 - 5; II Sam. 12:24 and II Sam. 13:1). But the text only concentrates on five of these children, viz. Amnon, Tamar, Absalom, Adonijah and, to a lesser extent, Solomon. The information about David's relationship with Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom is contained in a textual block that runs from II Sam. 13 to II Sam. 19:5. David's relationship with Adonijah and Solomon is contained in I Kings 1 - 2:9.

David's relationship with his children is tempestuous, troubled, and ultimately tragic. It is never actually stated that David loves his children, yet the text gives us clues that he cares about them very much. For example, it is common knowledge that he visits his children when they are ill, as is evidenced by Jonadab's plan to enable Amnon to sleep with Tamar. Jonadab says to Amnon:

Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him ...
(II Sam. 13:5)

Jonadab does not say "and *if* thy father cometh to see thee ...", he says "and *when* thy father cometh to see thee ...". It is a foregone conclusion that David will visit his sick child. And, indeed, David does come to see him (see II Sam. 13:6).

When the child of David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba is mortally ill, David prays for the child's recovery (II Sam. 12:15 - 17). His desire that the child should not suffer, and should not die, suggests his love for this child.

Another example of David's deep feelings towards his children is found further on in II Sam. 13. David hears false news that Absalom has killed all David's sons. David is instantly devastated, as vs. 31 shows:

Then the king arose, and tore his garments, and lay on the earth; all his servants stood by with their clothes rent. (II Sam. 13:31)

Jonadab hastens to reassure him that it is only Amnon, and not all of his sons who have been killed. David's distress must have been sufficient to affect even the wily Jonadab, and cause him to take pity on David.

The most convincing proof of David's love for his children is found in his reaction to the news that Absalom has been killed in battle. As explained in Chapter Two⁷⁶ David is shattered by this news and his grief knows no bounds. II Sam. 19:1 describes this grief:

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (II Sam. 19:1)

These indirect characterization techniques are used to depict David's feelings for his children. David's habitual action (visiting his sick children, II Sam. 13:5), his three one-time actions (praying for the recovery of his sick child in II Sam. 12:15 - 17, mourning the death of his children, II Sam. 13:31 and II Sam. 19:1), and his speech (mourning Absalom's death, II Sam. 19:1) lead the reader to believe that David did indeed love his children very deeply.

⁷⁶ See pp. 50, 51.

Yet, despite this deep love that David feels for his children, he does not interact successfully with them, and his relationships with them are fraught with discord and strife . This strife is caused both by David's failure to impose discipline on his children when it is needed, and by his failure to communicate effectively with them. These failures set in motion a tragic series of events that culminate in the death of Absalom. Amnon, David's eldest son rapes Tamar, his own half-sister (II Sam. 13). Incestuous rape is a heinous crime and clearly calls for some form of punishment, but as explained in Chapter Two⁷⁷, David does nothing (II Sam. 13:1 - 22). Absalom, Tamar's full brother, cannot accept that David has allowed Amnon to go unpunished, and so he takes it upon himself to have Amnon killed (II Sam. 13:22 - 29). There is no indication that David would now discipline Absalom for this crime, but Absalom, nevertheless, fears David's anger and so flees to neighbouring Geshur⁷⁸ for three years (II Sam. 13:37, 38). As time goes by David forgives Absalom and longs for his return:

And *the soul* of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead. (II Sam. 13:39)

Now Joab the son of Zeruah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom. (II Sam. 14:1)

⁷⁷ See pp. 44, 45.

⁷⁸ Absalom's mother was a princess from Geshur (II Sam. 3:3) and thus he sought political asylum from her family.

But David is incapable of effecting a reconciliation between himself and Absalom, and it is Joab who arranges this reconciliation (II Sam. 14). This is a protracted reconciliation, as David only agrees to see Absalom two years after his return to Jerusalem (II Sam. 14:28). Even then it is not clear whether this is a genuine reconciliation, or whether it is simply for form's sake, on the part of either one or both of the parties. The verse describing the moment of reconciliation is terse and unforthcoming; when David

had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom. (II Sam. 14:33)

Did Absalom kiss David, or was this a one-sided gesture? From this verse, and from the subsequent chapter (II Sam. 15) it can be assumed that Absalom was not genuinely reconciled to his father, as his next move is to stage a coup d'état in an attempt to usurp his father.

Of course, this coup may be coincidental and Absalom simply power-hungry, but this spirit of rebellion is at variance with Absalom's sense of family loyalty and duty, as evidenced by his avenging the rape of his sister, Tamar. The coup is unsuccessful, and in the decisive battle between David's and Absalom's respective supporters, Absalom is killed, leaving David utterly devastated.

The blame for the deterioration in David and Absalom's relationship can be placed very squarely on David's shoulders. Disciplining Amnon would have obviated his murder by Absalom and possibly improved his relationship with his daughter Tamar, which must have been extremely strained by now, although the text is silent on this issue. Failing this, effective communication with Absalom after the murder would have obviated his fleeing to Geshur. David then compounds the problem by failing to initiate the reconciliation himself. Then, when the reconciliation has been arranged, David is so tentative that he causes further pain to Absalom. Possibly, if David had acted decisively and communicated effectively with his children, the whole tragedy could have been avoided. The onus for decisive action and effective communication lay on David as the ultimate authority, being both father and king. His failure to take this necessary action results in an estrangement which does irrevocable damage.

This failure to impose discipline and to communicate effectively can also be seen in David's relationship with Adonijah and Solomon in I Kings 1. In this chapter, when David is old and about to die, Adonijah, next in line to the throne after the now dead Amnon and Absalom, proclaims himself David's successor (I Kings 1:5). Granted, this is a presumptuous action since (a) the king is not yet dead and (b) the king himself should name the successor to the throne. But it is also a logical and comprehensible action: the king is about to die and Adonijah is indeed the next in line to the throne. As such, Adonijah cannot be utterly condemned for his action.

David intended Solomon to be king. Whether he had indeed promised this to Bathsheba earlier is not certain (see I Kings 1:11 -31). But it is possible that if he had made a public proclamation to this effect, the subsequent confusion that ensued over who would succeed him could have been avoided. Adonijah would not have endangered his own reputation and he would not have had to fear Solomon's retribution. Solomon's reaction to Adonijah is both gracious and fair:

If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die. (I Kings 1:52)

But the damage is already done because fear, suspicion and tension are already present in Solomon and Adonijah's relationship. This strained relationship ends in tragedy; in I Kings 2:13 - 25 Solomon has Adonijah killed. Effective communication between David and his sons would probably have obviated this whole situation, too.

It is significant that David does not reprimand or rebuke Adonijah in any way for his attempted usurpation of Solomon's throne, and thereby of David's own authority. This failure to enforce discipline may be due to his failing health and advanced years, yet it seems to be consonant with an already established pattern of behaviour, as I Kings 1:6 shows:

And his (i.e. Absalom's) father had not displeased him at any time in saying, why hast thou done so?...

This verse is further evidence that David was a lenient parent, allowing wrongdoings to go unpunished, and even unrebuked. In this respect it is noteworthy that Adonijah, after his attempted usurpation, does not fear David, but Solomon. David, though old and feeble, is still the king and could punish him, yet there is no evidence that Adonijah considers this likely. David's history as an indulgent parent is clearly revealed by this verse.

David's interaction with Solomon is not detailed, besides for the instructions he gives to him on his deathbed (I Kings 2:1 - 9). The reader cannot ascertain the nature of David's relationship with Solomon from this deathbed speech, and, in fact, there is insufficient information on the interaction of these two characters to facilitate an assessment of their relationship.

However, there is sufficient information on David's interaction with his other children to facilitate an assessment of this paternal interaction and of his role as a parent. David's interaction with his children is problematic. He clearly loves his children very much, but his inability to show correct parental guidance and authority causes serious problems. He is an indulgent and lenient parent who refrains from disciplining his children. His failure to temper his deep love for his children with firm discipline and effective guidance results in unsuccessful, and, ultimately, destructive relationships.

(v) CONCLUSION

Having examined the nature of David's filial, fraternal and paternal relationships, their function as a characterization technique can now be demonstrated. In the realist perception, as stated, a character's family members are crucial to the construction of the character's personality. The biblical David is no exception to this rule, as familial bonds play an important part in the formation of his character.

I believe that David's filial, fraternal and paternal relationships are all interconnected, and hence they combine to perform the function of characterizing David. His filial and fraternal relationships provide the key to the understanding of his paternal relationships, and shed much light on his personality as a whole. Rosenberg recognizes this, calling David's relationship with his father's house "perhaps the most formative factor in his private personality and public self alike ..."⁷⁹.

David's enforced separation from his father and brothers has serious consequences. Denied a relationship with Jesse, his real father, he turns to Saul, his "adoptive" or "foster" father. This relationship succeeds for a certain time, and then is ended by Saul's rejection of David. David does not re-establish his relationship with Jesse.

⁷⁹ Rosenberg, J., op. cit., p. 175.

Denied a relationship with his brothers, David seeks this fraternal support elsewhere, namely in Jonathan and, to a lesser extent, in Joab. These quasi-fraternal relationships are temporarily satisfying, but Jonathan dies young, and Joab ultimately betrays David. This filial and fraternal substitution is emphasized by the fact that David laments the death of Saul and Jonathan (II Sam. 1:17 - 27), but not that of his own father and brothers.

Although this substitution does take place, and is indeed a temporary solution to David's problem of lack of familial bonds, in the end it is unsuccessful. David is successively rejected, abandoned, and betrayed. Having suffered rejection, abandonment, and betrayal, David then turns to his children for the establishment of strong, rewarding familial bonds. But even in this endeavour he is doomed. Firstly, the rejection and abandonment he has experienced makes him terrified of alienating, and thereby losing, his children. Consequently, he is an overindulgent, overly lenient parent who refrains from disciplining his children. Secondly, he himself has had limited experience of successful parental guidance, and so he does not know how to guide his children, communicate with them, and be an effective parent.

Gros Louis highlights the connection between David's filial and paternal relationships, by explaining how David's relationship with Saul, his "foster" father, affects his relationship with Absalom:

Because of his relation with Saul, David surely understands the complexity of his ambivalence towards Absalom. What could be more poignant than a conflict between king/father and his apparent successor/son?⁸⁰

As a result of David's inadequacies as a parent, he is once again rejected, and betrayed, this time by his children.

What kind of character emerges from such troubled, fractured relationships; how do these relationships serve to characterize David? David is a character who strives for strong familial bonds, desperately wanting the love and support of those close to him. But because this familial love and support constantly eludes him, he becomes obsessed with the concept of loyalty. Those whom he loves, reject and betray him, so he comes to value loyalty and consistent devotion above all else. Loyalty becomes the governing principle in David's life, the principle around which his whole life, public and private, is structured.

He is understandably hesitant to trust others, but once loyalty has been proved his gratitude and appreciation know no bounds. However, if disloyalty or betrayal is detected, David's wrath has no limits, either. As he grows old, the issue of loyalty versus betrayal becomes of paramount importance to him.

⁸⁰ Gros Louis, K., op. cit., p. 30.

The final scenes of I King 1 - 2 are replete with contrasts between loyalty, at least self-professed, and treachery, between faithfulness and deception. The plot by Nathan and Bathsheba to place Solomon, not Adonijah, on David's throne succeeds because of the prophet's strong emphasis on his and Bathsheba's loyalty, coupled with that of Benaiah and Solomon. By contrast Nathan points to the treachery of Adonijah and his party who are plotting to take the throne. Thus David, consumed with his own passion for loyalty from his subjects, selects Solomon as his successor⁸¹.

This obsession with loyalty reaches its zenith in I Kings 2:5 - 9. Here David is on his deathbed, giving final instructions to Solomon. From his words it is evident that his last thoughts are of loyalty and betrayal, not of God, nor of the nation. David dies requesting of Solomon to reward those who have shown loyalty to him, and punish those who have betrayed him:

Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruah did to me⁸², and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.

⁸¹ Perdue, L., op. cit., p. 79.

⁸² This could be an implicit reference to Joab's responsibility for the death of Absalom. The text never reveals whether David is in fact aware of the part played by Joab in Absalom's death. These verses, (5, 6) nonetheless, reflect that David ultimately considers Joab to have been disloyal to him, irrespective of his involvement in Absalom's death. Alternatively, the instances of betrayal cited here may be a front for the more serious instance, namely Joab's authorization of Absalom's death (II Sam. 18:10 - 15).

Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his
 hear head go down to the grave in peace.

But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the
 Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy
 table: for so they came to me at Jordan when I fled
 because of Absalom thy brother.

And, behold, *thou hast* with thee Shimei the son of
 Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a
 grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim:
 but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to
 him by the Lord, saying I will not put thee to death
 with the sword.

Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a
 wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto
 him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave
 with blood.

(I Kings 2:5 - 9)

These words, spoken at such a crucial time in David's life,
 reveal that these polar concepts of loyalty versus
 betrayal/rejection are determinative principles in David's
 interaction and relationships with other characters. Joab, his
 loyal subject, must therefore die for his betrayal.

This chapter has shown how the character's interaction and
 relationships with other characters serve as a technique of
 characterization. David's interaction with his wives, with
 Uriah the Hittite, and with the various members of his family
 (both real and adoptive) sheds light on his personality and
 thereby contributes to the construction of his character.

Harvey is thus correct in saying that

The human context, then, is primarily a web of relationships; the characters do not develop along single and linear roads of destiny but are, so to speak, human cross-roads⁸³.

⁸³ Harvey, W.L., op. cit., p. 69.

CHAPTER 4

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE MOTIF: THE SWORD

(i) MOTIF AS A TECHNIQUE OF CHARACTERIZATION

A motif is "any repetition that helps unify a work by potently recalling its earlier occurrence and all that surrounded it"⁸⁴. It can be the repetition of any element within a literary text (or texts): a word, a phrase, a situation, an object, an idea, a set description, an image or a complex of images. The repetition of any one of these elements constitutes a motif. The significance lies in the recurrence of the element, and not in the nature of the element itself.

A motif which only occurs within a single literary text can be called a *leitmotif*, a "guiding" or "leading" motif. The presence of a *leitmotif* in a text may serve as a technique of characterization if it is specifically associated with a particular character. Each time the motif recurs the reader is reminded of the character with which it is associated. In this way the portrayal of the character is enriched, gaining additional resonance. Sometimes the motif recurs in a slightly altered form, and these changes subtly signify a change in some aspect of the character himself.

⁸⁴ Barnet S., et al., A Dictionary of Literary Terms, Boston: Little, Brown, 1960, p. 57.

(ii) MOTIF AS A TECHNIQUE OF CHARACTERIZATION IN A
NON-BIBLICAL TEXT: SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

Consider the character Ophelia in Shakespeare's Hamlet. She is associated with the motif of flowers. In Act IV:v she is shown as losing her sanity. In her demented ramblings flowers feature constantly: lines 38 - 40, 173 - 175 and 178 - 183 all contain significant references to flowers. Later in Act IV:vii it is a garland of flowers that causes her to fall into the river and drown (lines 167 - 174). The flowers that were illustrative of her insanity recur as the instrument of her death. In this way the motif functions as a characterizing device. First, it characterizes her as losing her sanity, and also serves to powerfully presage her death, both to the other characters and to the audience, or reader. Then, when she dies the recurrence of the image of flowers indicates the severity of her derangement: she has become completely insane. This confirms her earlier apparent loss of sanity as permanent and fatal, as opposed to transient. Thus the motif of flowers accentuates Ophelia's descent into madness and subsequent death.

(iii) MOTIF AS A TECHNIQUE OF CHARACTERIZATION IN BIBLICAL
TEXTS

The biblical author is no different to Shakespeare in his use of motif as a characterizing device. Alter, although not speaking specifically about motifs, emphasises the importance of repetition in the Bible, since it is by nature an extremely laconic text⁸⁵.

⁸⁵ Alter, R., op. cit., pp. 179, 180.

With regard to the repetition of single words he identifies a device called the *leitwort*, the thematic key-word⁸⁶. This concept of a *leitwort* corresponds to Martin Buber's concept of the "guiding word"⁸⁷. The *leitwort* operates in much the same way as the *leitmotif*, and that which "befalls the protagonist of the biblical tale is emphatically punctuated by significance, and the *Leitwort* is a principle means of punctuation"⁸⁸.

The use of the *leitmotif* as a characterizing device can clearly be seen in the story of Joseph⁸⁹. Joseph is associated with the motif of clothing, and it is this motif which charts his rise to power and importance. Initially it is special clothing — the coat of many colours — that is evidence of Jacob's preferential love for him (Gen. 37:3). Then this coat, combined with his brothers' resentment at Joseph's boastfulness, becomes instrumental in sending him to Egypt as a slave (Gen. 37). Here clothing reflects the tension between Joseph and his brothers, as a result of Joseph's being destined for greatness. In Egypt clothing is once again a catalyst in Joseph's career. When he rejects the advances of Potiphar's wife she uses a scrap of clothing to accuse him of attempted rape (Gen. 39).

⁸⁶ Ibid p. 180.

⁸⁷ Buber, M., Darko shel Mikra, Jerusalem: Bialik, 1964, pp. 284 - 307 (Hebrew text).

⁸⁸ Alter, R. op. cit., pp. 179, 180.

⁸⁹ See Reisenberger, Azila Talit, "The "Clothes" Motif and the Dynamics of Interpretation." Unpublished paper. South African Judaica Conference. University of Cape Town, 1989.

Consequently Joseph is thrown into prison where he meets Pharoah's butler who arranges Joseph's determinative audience with Pharoah (Gen. 40, 41). The incident with Potiphar's wife, evidenced by the scrap of Joseph's clothing, shows his maturity and moral uprightness, indicating that psychologically, too, Joseph is closer to achieving his predestined greatness. Joseph's release from jail is punctuated by the clothing motif; he "changed his raiment" (Gen. 41:14). This change of clothes signifies a turning point in Joseph's life, it is an indication that he is in the ascendancy. And when Joseph does finally achieve his predestined greatness it, too, is paralleled in the clothing motif:

And Pharoah said unto Joseph, See I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharoah took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

(Gen. 41:41, 42)

The *leitmotif* of clothing is thus an effective device in the characterization of Joseph, as it links up the different stages of his development, both as a private person and as an important public figure.

The story of Joseph is a good example of the use of a motif as a characterizing technique. Here the motif of clothing is actually a *leitmotif*, as it is operative within a single narrative text only (I am treating the story of Joseph as a textual block, based on content, and ignoring chapter divisions).

But, in actual fact, this *leitmotif* has broader implications as it reappears again in another biblical text, the story of Amnon and Tamar in II Sam. 13.

The reappearance of the clothing motif is activated by the use of a *leitwort*, or, in Buber's case, the "guiding word", namely the coat of many colours, the *ketonet pasim*. These words first appear in Gen. 37:3, 23, 32 and then reappear in II Sam. 13:18, 19. They do not appear anywhere else in the Bible, and thus they can be considered very uncommon words. As a result, the appearance of *ketonet pasim* in II Sam. 13:18, 19 immediately evokes Gen. 37, and indeed the entire story of Joseph. The motif of clothing clearly connects the two stories, and this connection should be examined.

In Gen. 37 Joseph's coat of many colours, given to him by Jacob, arouses his brothers' jealousy, and is thus partly responsible for their capture of him and their sending him to Egypt as a slave. In II Sam. 13 Tamar is raped by her half-brother Amnon. In her distress after the event she tears her coat of many colours, which was the dress worn by the royal daughters.

Alter explains the significance of the use of the term *ketonet pasim* and its allusion to the story of Joseph:

"The links with Joseph are then made explicit in an odd detail of royal sartorial custom which the writer appends to the rape narrative.

After Amnon has his servants thrust Tamar out ... we are told that 'she had on a coat of many colours [*ketonet pasim*] for such were the robes that the virgin daughters of the king would wear' (v. 18). Joseph, of course, conspicuously associated with a coat of many colours, is, in fact, the only other figure in the Hebrew Bible said to wear such a garment.

The confluence of allusions to the Joseph story gives thematic depth to the tale of incestuous rape. The episode begins with an echo of Joseph's reconciliation scene and moves back in reverse narrative direction to the ornamental tunic, which in the Joseph story marks the initial crime of brothers against brother, when they attacked him and fabricated out of the blood-soaked garment the evidence of his death. Tamar, at the end a victim of fraternal hatred like Joseph at the beginning, tears her tunic as a sign of mourning, and her fine garment, like his, may well be blood-stained, if one considers that she has just lost her virginity by rape⁹⁰.

Here we see how the portrayal of both characters — Joseph and Tamar — is enriched by the use of a motif. This enrichment is reciprocal, as both texts benefit from the unifying presence of the motif. This reciprocity is significant in its own right, too, since it reveals another literary device, namely that of intertextuality. Intertextuality is the activation of one text by another; the allusion of elements in one text to elements in another.

⁹⁰ Alter, R. Putting Together Biblical Narrative. The Albert T. Bilgray Lecture. University of Arizona. March 1988, pp. 6, 7.

The clothing motif is an example of intertextuality in that its sphere of operation is not restricted to a single text, but instead reaches into another text, thereby initiating a dialogue between these two apparently separate texts. Alter says of this phenomenon that

the Bible offers rich and varied evidence of the most purposeful literary allusions — not the recurrence of fixed formula or conventional stereotype but a pointed activation of one text by another, conveying a connection in difference or a difference in connection through some conspicuous similarity in phrasing, in motif, or in narrative situation⁹¹.

This "pointed activation of one text by another" could be considered in some way consonant with B.S. Childs' canonical approach to biblical criticism, since he writes that

Within the fixed parameters of a canonical corpus the method seeks to determine how the meaning of a given passage, even if damaged, was influenced by its relation to other canonical passages⁹².

This shows an element of similarity between Childs' canonical approach and the concept of the Bible as literature: both deal with the text as it exists today and both recognise connections between the individual texts within the greater biblical context.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 2.

⁹² Childs, Brevard S., Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, London: SCM, 1979, p. 105.

The purpose of this brief discussion of intertextuality in the Bible is to emphasize that a motif is not necessarily operative only within the confines of a single text. It may allude to another biblical text, and this allusion can intensify the effect of the motif. And now, having explained how motif functions as a technique of characterization, first in a non-biblical and then in a biblical context, it is possible to proceed to the use of motif in the characterizing of David.

(iv) MOTIF AS A TECHNIQUE IN THE CHARACTERIZATION OF DAVID

The character David is associated with the motif of the sword, or in Hebrew, *hereb*. Unlike *ketonet pasim*, the word *hereb* is very common in the Bible. Yet, despite this frequency of usage, it will be demonstrated that when it appears in relation to David in I and II Samuel and I Kings 1, 2, it performs the function of a characterizing motif.

The sword has a recognised symbolic value in both biblical and non-biblical literature.

the sword, in its symbolism, wavers between ... extremes: it is destructive when it becomes the means of making force prevail over law, of instituting an arbitrary power, but it also has a positive side when it combats injustice and evil, when it is the realisation of a chivalrous ideal. In this last case it comes close to its constructive function, defending and guaranteeing peace, maintaining justice⁹³.

⁹³ Aziza, Claude, et al., Dictionnaire des Symboles et des Thèmes Littéraires, Paris: Fernand Nathan, 1978, p. 88, my translation - T.M.S.

In biblical usage the sword also has both negative and positive connotations. On the one hand it "is commonly used ... as a symbol for violence and oppression"⁹⁴. It

is associated with curses, war-famine-plague (Jeremiah 21:7, Ezechiel 5:12); it symbolises the invasion of foreign armies. It is also the instrument of divine vengeance, it arms the Angel of Death (Exodus)⁹⁵.

On the other hand

It signifies equally the goodness and the power of God, just as it is associated with the scales, symbolising justice: the sword cuts between the good and the bad, striking the guilty⁹⁶.

Evidently the symbolic value of the sword is not predetermined, but rather it depends on the context in which it appears. Although this ambivalence is present to a certain extent when used in connection with David, the sword constantly functions as a symbol of David's power. It signifies David as the ruler of the land, David in control of the kingdom. Sometimes David utilizes this power to positive ends, and sometimes he exploits and abuses it. However, when associated with David, the sword tends to have a negative connotation, signifying violence, or oppression, or tyrannical, absolute power.

⁹⁴ Wevers, J.W., The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 1962, vol. 4.

⁹⁵ Aziza, C. et al., op. cit., p. 88, my translation - T.M.S.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 88.

Nonetheless, each time the word *hereb* is mentioned in connection with David it reflects a difference in his status, or in his use of that status. It is thus possible to gauge the development of David's personality through the recurrence of this motif.

The first time David encounters a sword he is uncomfortable with it. This occurs in I Sam. 17 when he is about to fight Goliath. Saul, fearing to send an unarmed youth to do battle with the Philistine giant, lends him his own suit of armour, including a sword (vs. 38). This gesture has symbolic value, indicating that from the very first moment David is destined to possess the king's sword, in other words, to be king.

David puts on the armour, but then, unused to such heavy armour and feeling encumbered by it, he takes it off, saying to Saul, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them*" (vs. 39). Fighting Goliath is David's first step towards becoming an acclaimed hero in Israel and thus his first step on the path to becoming king. In this context his reply to Saul is symbolically significant; when he says he is unfamiliar with the sword he is also indicating his unfamiliarity and uncertainty with the concept of power. He is willing to fight Goliath, but he cannot do it Saul's way. The trappings of monarchy do not yet sit easily on his shoulders. He is destined to be king, but he is not quite ready to fulfil this destiny. In this incident David's refusal of the sword signifies his unpreparedness to assume power at this early stage.

David declines the offer of the sword and instead sets out to duel with Goliath armed with only his staff, a slingshot and five smooth stones (vs. 40). This refusal of the traditional weaponry indicates a contrast between Saul and David: Saul, the seasoned warrior, is reliant on military power, while David, the young shepherd, relies on ingenuity and, above all, in faith of God. Here Saul is cautious and fearful (to confront the Philistines), and possibly a little disillusioned by war. By contrast, David is brave and confident, and idealistic. Saul fights with a sword, but David fights with faith. David's speech to Goliath resounds with this faith:

Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle *is* the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

(vss. 45 - 47)

In the duel with Goliath David is the victor, as vs. 50 relates:

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was* no sword in the hand of David.

In this chapter the sword motif characterizes David in two ways. Firstly, it depicts him as willing to assume power, but at the same time acknowledging his unpreparedness for this power, and hence his inability to assume it at this point. Secondly, it depicts him as confident and idealistic, filled with faith in God. The sword motif also highlights the contrast between David and Saul, and, in David's unconventional choice of weapons in preference to the sword, there is a hint that David may be a different kind of king to Saul. Here, unlike in all later stages of his life and career, it is David's distancing himself from the sword that serves to characterize him.

Immediately after killing Goliath there is a change in David. Whereas previously he had shunned the sword, he now approaches it. This time it is not Saul's sword that he picks up, but Goliath's. He beheads Goliath with Goliath's own sword (vs. 51). Having killed Goliath, David has instantly become a hero. This is his first success, his first achievement on the way to becoming king, and it makes him more experienced, and thus more assertive; it brings him closer to being able to assume power. David's reaching out to grasp the sword symbolises his reaching out to grasp the power in the land. And the fact that it is Goliath's sword and not Saul's is significant, because it hints that the line of succession will not go through Saul's family; instead the successor will be an outsider. But David does not keep this sword with him. Vs. 54 tells us that "David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent".

The first part of this verse is obviously an anachronism; David could not have taken Goliath's head to Jerusalem because Jerusalem was still a Jebusite city. It is only in II Sam. 5 that David conquers the Jebusites and takes Jerusalem.

Nonetheless, the general import of the verse is still relevant: David does not keep the sword on his person but leaves it elsewhere, and in I Sam. 21:9 he reclaims it from Ahimelech, priest of Nob (This will be discussed below).

David has reached out for the sword, grasped it, and used it. Now he distances himself from it again. Here the sword motif reveals him as reluctant or disinclined to assume power at this point. He has had a taste of it, and is now prepared to wait. Just as the sword lies waiting for him to reclaim it, so the throne waits for him to sit on it.

In I Sam. 18 the sword motif shows David moving closer to assuming power. In this chapter Jonathan, who, as Saul's eldest son should succeed his father as king, symbolically transfers this right of succession to David. Jonathan developed a deep affection for David, and, in order to demonstrate this affection he

stripped himself to the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. (I Sam. 18:4)

This gesture of Jonathan's is highly symbolic. In giving David his sword, Jonathan is actually abdicating his right to the throne and transferring it to David. The sword is given willingly, and in the spirit of friendship as vss. 1 and 3 emphasize:

the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David,
and Jonathan loved him as his own soul ...

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he⁹⁷
loved him as his own soul.

(I Sam. 18:1, 3)

Jonathan's symbolic gesture of abdication in favour of David is later verbally affirmed in I Sam. 23:17, when Jonathan says to David:

Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not
find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I
shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father
knoweth.

This voluntary surrendering of his claim to the throne on the part of Jonathan could be considered a legitimation of David's later seizure of power. But even if this is not the case, the sword motif clearly depicts David as moving closer to assuming sovereignty.

⁹⁷ This pronoun "he" is equally ambiguous in the Hebrew text, although the similarity of wording with vs. 1, "Jonathan loved him as his own soul", seems to suggest that here the pronoun refers to Jonathan.

The reappearance of Goliath's sword in I Sam. 21 confirms that David's ascent to power has indeed begun. In this chapter David is fleeing from Saul, Jonathan having ascertained that Saul is indeed determined to kill him (see I Sam. 20).

Ahimelech does not simply lend David any arbitrary weapon. Instead he suggests that David reclaim Goliath's sword to use in his own defence. By making this suggestion Ahimelech harks back to another determinative incident in David's career. When David killed Goliath he became a national hero, and thereafter continued to eclipse Saul in popularity. At that time David had not been ready to assume power (Saul's sword, I Sam. 17:38, 39). He had tentatively reached out for power (Goliath's sword, I Sam. 17:51), but then later distanced himself from it (leaving Goliath's sword in his tent, I Sam. 17:54). Now David is no longer tentative; he makes a strong, definite movement to take the sword, the power: "give it me". And perhaps David is aware of the significance of this sword, for he says: "*There is none like that ...*"

In this episode the functioning of the sword motif can clearly be seen. It links up the previous appearances of swords, making this new mention of the sword highly significant. Here the sword motif shows David as having matured, become more experienced, and he is now ready to reach out decisively for the sword, to reach out decisively for the power.

Now the pace accelerates in David's ascent to power. In the next chapter (I Sam. 22) the mere mention of Goliath's sword arouses Saul's wrath and provokes his extreme aggression. When Doeg the Edomite, who had been present at David's meeting with Ahimelech, tells Saul what transpired (I Sam. 21: 9, 10), Saul is so furious that he has Ahimelech, the priests of Nob, and the entire city killed (I Sam. 21: 11- 19). This aggression, while not directed at David himself, is an indication of an escalation of Saul's aggression, in his desperation to eliminate his rival. It seems that the sword of Goliath has become a provocative symbol of David's power. This increase of aggression on Saul's part is matched by an increase of aggression on David's part. David, who had previously been very hesitant in his contact with the sword, now appears to be completely at ease with it. In I Sam. 25 when Nabal the Carmelite insults David, and refuses to pay his dues for David's men's protection of his flocks, David is incensed. His first reaction is to resort to the sword:

And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword; and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. (I Sam. 25:13)

In I Sam. 17 David had set out to do battle armed with a slingshot and faith in God. Now he sets out to do battle armed with a sword, and possibly with the conviction that his reign is imminent. Whereas previously he avenged God's honour, he now sets out to avenge his own honour.

This aggression is not directed towards Saul, nor is it a gesture of self-defence. It is a very clear assertion and demonstration of his newly-acquired power. Gone is the David who said of Saul's armour, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them*" (I Sam. 17:39). In his place is the new David: sword-wielding and power-hungry.

The appearance of the sword motif in I Sam. 25 thus characterizes David as totally comfortable in the possession of power, and moreover, enthralled both in the assertion and the exercise thereof. Later the sword motif will show that this initial enthrallment gives way to blatant abuses of power, and how David does himself irreparable harm by his inability to deal effectively with the absolute power of a king.

Saul pursues David to no avail. David moves closer and closer to the throne. Saul is powerless to stop David, as his position strengthens and he exerts his superiority over Saul. Saul continues to lose ground to David until finally he is utterly defeated, at which point David takes over. This loss, and eventual transference, of power is evidenced by the sword motif.

Just as David is associated with the sword, so Saul is associated with the *hanith*, the javelin or spear.

The javelin is Saul's weapon against David, his means of asserting himself against the threat constituted by David. When Saul first turns on David it is with the javelin, as I Sam. 18 describes:

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand.

And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice. (I Sam. 18:10, 11)

In I Sam. 19 Saul again tries to kill David with the javelin:

And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand.

And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night. (I Sam. 19:9, 10)

In I Sam. 20 it is the javelin that convinces Jonathan that Saul is indeed determined to kill David:

And Saul cast a javelin at him (Jonathan) to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. (I Sam. 20:33)

These recurrent references to the javelin in connection with Saul lead it to emerge as the motif associated with this character.

God causes a deep sleep to fall upon Saul's men, making them unaware of David and Abishai's presence in the camp (vs. 12). Abishai want to kill Saul with his own spear (vs. 8), but David restrains him, making another suggestion:

The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that *is* at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awakened: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them. (I Sam. 26:11, 12)

David and Abishai take Saul's spear and water flask, leave Saul's camp and go to an adjacent hilltop, from where they address Saul and his men. First David rebukes Abner, Saul's commander-in-chief, for not having adequately protected his king. He tells Abner that the fact that he, David, was able to get close enough to Saul to steal his spear and water flask is evidence of Abner's negligence:

This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster. (I Sam. 26:16)

The spear and the cruse of water are the evidence that David had the opportunity to kill Saul, but did not do so. When Saul realises this he regrets his pursuit of David and becomes deeply repentant (vs. 21). This is David's reply to Saul's contrition:

Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

(I Sam. 26:22)

The cruse of water is not mentioned; it is the spear that is at issue. Now that Saul has expressed remorse for his persecution of David, David is prepared to return his spear. The spear, the emblem of Saul's power, "the king's spear", which was used by Saul to strike at David, has been taken by David, and then returned at his command. This is highly symbolic: David has seized Saul's spear, the symbol of his power and authority.

He has held it in his hand and then returned it at a moment which he considered opportune. While David held Saul's spear he held sway over Saul; Saul was entirely at his mercy. After Saul admits that he has sinned (vs. 21) David consents to the return of the spear, and this must surely constitute Saul's ultimate humiliation in this incident: Saul's power is dependent on David's clemency.

In this incident the sword/spear motif shows Saul's subjugation to David. The spear is captured by the sword; Saul's power is in David's hands. For a few moments Saul is at David's mercy, and it is only David's grace that restores Saul's power to him.

But this is in fact only a token restoration of Saul's power. David is gracious enough to permit Saul to retain at least the emblem of his power, although not the actual power itself. Henceforth Saul is a figurehead, and David is the real power in the land. This initial transference of power prefigures the more incontrovertible transference of power that is still to come.

The incontrovertible transference of power takes place in I Sam. 31, where Saul is killed. In this chapter the Israelites are fighting against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines prove to be much stronger than the Israelites. The Israelites flee the battlefield in defeat, and Saul and three of his sons are killed. Vss. 3, 4 describe Saul's death:

And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

(I Sam. 31: 3, 4)

Saul's death is a suicide, brought about by his fatal injuries, and, knowing death and defeat to be imminent, he chooses to spare himself unnecessary suffering and humiliation. To this end, he throws himself on a sword.

It is significant that the instrument of Saul's death is the sword. Saul does not kill himself with a javelin, or spear, the symbol of his authority, but with a sword, the symbol of David's power and hence the harbinger of his own death. It is as if Saul is finally disarmed of his protection against David and, as such, he is killed by a sword that is symbolic of David's power.

Saul's allotted time is up. Israel has lost and must submit to the Philistines; so, too, has Saul lost and must die, submitting to David. From a physical point of view Saul dies as a result of the battle against the Philistines, but from an ideological point of view he dies because he is doomed, and David is destined to be king. Saul must die so that David can be king in his place. Thus it is appropriate that it is a sword on which Saul falls: the sword is the cause of his death just as David is the reason for his demise. The sword motif illustrates that while physically Saul is killed by an upturned sword, symbolically he is killed by the ascendancy of David. Saul — the javelin — must die, so that David — the sword — can fulfil his destiny.

Up until now the sword motif has functioned to show David's gradual assumption of power. It showed David as moving from the point where he was not ready to assume power, through various stages of moving closer to the power and becoming more familiar with it, until finally Saul's death grants him this power for which he has been destined. In this sense the sword has simply had the neutral connotation of power.

As previously stated, in literature the sword has both positive and negative symbolic values. Here the sword motif does not suggest either the positive value of the combatting of injustice and wrongdoing, nor the negative value of the prevalence of force over law. However, the appearance of the sword motif in I Sam. 25, in the incident concerning Nabal the Carmelite, hints at the potential for the abuse of power on the part of David. His extremely aggressive reaction to Nabal's ingratitude shows that he is not above making force prevail over law. But, since David is restrained from violent reprisal by Abigail, this theme is not developed further. Nevertheless, it is clear from this incident that there does exist in David the potential both for the abuse of power, and for the use of excessive violence to which absolute power lends itself.

I Sam. 31 is the last time that the sword motif is used to indicate power in a neutral sense. From here onwards the sword motif, while still an indication of power, illustrates the negative aspect of power — its abusive and destructive aspect.

Now that David has assumed power and is no longer in the process of taking it from Saul, he tends to abuse it. In his hands the sword becomes a violent expression of absolute power.

Henceforth, the sword characterizes David as enthralled by his power, and, as a result, sometimes abusive and destructive.

Before Saul's death David is proclaimed king of Judah, not of the whole of Israel. Saul's son Ishbosheth rules over the northern tribes, and David must defeat him if he is to be king over all Israel. In other words, David must affirm and expand his power. To do so necessitates warfare between his men, under the command of Joab, and Ishbosheth's men, under the command of Abner. In II Sam. 2 a skirmish ensues between the two rival groups, as a result of which Abner kills Joab's brother Asahel. Abner, sickened by the bloodshed and strife, calls out to Joab:

Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

(II Sam. 2:26)

Abner is railing against the violence caused by David's need to establish his power in the land. He names the sword as the instrument of this violence, and it is David, in his desire to be king over all Israel, who wields this sword. David's reign has begun with violence, and Abner wants to know if this violence is going to continue throughout his reign, "Shall the sword devour for ever?"

His words prove to be remarkably prophetic, for there is indeed much "bitterness in the latter end" of David's rule. Although he is not addressing David, David indirectly answers this question in II Sam. 11, echoing Abner's words in a way that emphasises the sword motif as representative of David, and of his power.

In II Sam. 11 David sleeps with a married woman, Bathsheba, while her husband Uriah the Hittite is away at war. When Bathsheba discovers that she is pregnant from this adulterous union, David is frantic to conceal the fact of the adultery. He summons Uriah from the battlefield and tries to persuade him to sleep with Bathsheba; all to no avail, since Uriah refuses to do so. David, in his desperation, sends Uriah back to the front carrying his own death warrant in a letter to Joab. Joab is to place him in the most dangerous part of the battle so that he is sure to be killed. This constitutes David's grossest abuse of power: murder to protect the reputation of the king and conceal his adulterous affair, in itself also a gross abuse of his royal power.

Joab complies with David's instructions, and Uriah is killed in the fiercest part of the battle. Since Joab had to employ a dangerous strategy in order to ensure that Uriah would be killed, many other men died at the same time. Joab fears David's anger at this news, and coaches his messenger to tell the news in a way least likely to arouse David's anger. Yet David's reaction in vs. 25 is completely unexpected:

Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth this way and that way¹⁰⁰:

100 The King James Version translates this phrase, *kazoh wakazeh*, as "for the sword devoureth one as well as another:" I feel that a more literal, and hence a more faithful translation is achieved by rendering this phrase as "for the sword devoureth this way and that way:", or else as "for the sword devoureth like this and like that:". Accordingly, I have substituted my own translation for that of the King James.

make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

(II Sam. 11:25)

These words of David's, "Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth this way and that way:", echo Abner's question in II Sam. 2:26, "Shall the sword devour for ever?" Here the words "sword" and "devour" function as *leitworts* linking the two texts together.

David's reply to Joab's messenger is also, indirectly, a reply to Abner's question, the connection between the question and the answer being provided by the *leitworts*. David's reply to Joab's messenger is unfeeling and fatalistic. He is in effect saying that death is the inevitable result of war. Joab should not be distressed by the death of these soldiers, for death is simply part of war. While it cannot be denied that death is indeed an integral part of war, David expresses no regret for the loss of these men, he evinces no sign of mourning or distress.

Instead he orders the fighting to continue and become fiercer, "make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it ...", and orders the messenger to encourage Joab who is disturbed by these unnecessary deaths, "and encourage thou him". He appears unmoved by these deaths, dismissing them as fated by the very nature of war. Rosenberg supports this view when he observes that David:

offers no statement — as he had, lavishly, for his beloved comrade Jonathan — about the meaning of their lives, or the pain of their loss. He only chalks it up to blind chance on this cruellest of arenas ... David, by his own self-editing, ceases to be the deeply sentient respondent to the woes of war he had shown himself to be at the beginning of II Samuel. He now prefers to be the strategist, the manager from afar, a kind of Faustian technician of war busily tinkering with the channels of power he otherwise so freely wields¹⁰¹.

With this insensitive reaction David condones the fatality of war and displays an apparent indifference to the value of human life. This attitude sets the stage for a reign characterized by violence, strife and death, and indirectly answers Abner's question in the affirmative: yes, the sword shall devour for ever. But the sword that David now boldly points outward to Uriah will soon turn inward to his own family, where it will wound David himself very deeply.

In this incident the sword motif serves to characterize David as callous and unfeeling in his attitude to death, lacking basic respect for the value of human life. It is precisely because of this attitude that he is doomed: various tragic events will now take place within his own family which will force him to acknowledge the value of human life.

¹⁰¹ Rosenberg, J., op. cit., p. 173.

David's misapprehension of the might of the sword (and obviously of the implications of his own power) is about to have disastrous repercussions, as II Sam. 12 reveals.

In II Sam. 12 Nathan the prophet comes to David to make him see the error of his ways, and admit that he has sinned. After having used the device of the parable to help David understand the gravity of his sin, Nathan says:

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Amnon.

Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house ...

(II Sam. 12:9 - 11)

Nathan's prophecy shows how the punishment has been made to fit the crime. David has done evil, therefore God will raise up evil against David; David has killed with the sword, therefore God will ensure that the sword does not depart from David's own house. The sword motif reaches a peak here: David has brought doom (the sword) upon himself by his abuse of power (the sword).

The description of the sword here as never departing from David's house (vs. 10) is reminiscent of the sword that God places at the entrance to the Garden of Eden. Gen. 3:24 reads:

So he (God) drove out man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

The sword motif in I and II Samuel has now crossed the textual boundaries of chapters and books, and become intertextual. In Gen. 3 man sins by yielding to temptation and eating the forbidden fruit. God punishes him by casting him out of paradise, and sending him into the world of toil and suffering. God places a sword at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, barring Adam and Eve from returning to their previous idyllic existence. In II Sam. 11 David sins by yielding to temptation and entering into a forbidden relationship. In II Sam. 12 God punishes him by ending his harmonious, untroubled existence and bringing him pain and suffering instead. God places a sword at David's house, a sword that shall never depart from his house, thereby eliminating the possibility of David's ever returning to his previous peaceful, untroubled existence.

The flaming sword of Gen. 3:24, which "turned every which way" is the sword of II Sam. 11:25, which "devoureth this way and that way", and it is also the sword of II Sam. 12:10, which shall never depart from David's house. The sword of II Sam. 12:10 may not be flaming, but the intertextual connection to the sword of Gen. 3:24 cannot, and indeed, should not be ignored.

Michael Fishbane supports this view when he observes that the imagery of Eden

wends its way through the times and places of Israelite history, and can best be viewed in a series of texts which share common characteristics but which represent no coherent or integrated arrangement. The persistence of this imagery suggests its significance for the ancient Israelites, even as its recurrence lends the Bible a measure of coherence.¹⁰²

Fishbane observes further that

the primordial imagery of Eden surfaces to express man's deepest longings for harmony. Its recurrence traces a trajectory from prehistory to its earthy transfigurations; from the primal world center to its several relocations along the fractured face of history.¹⁰³

Nathan's prophecy is fulfilled, the sword does not depart from David's house. First the unnamed child of his adulterous union with Bathsheba dies. Then his daughter Tamar is raped by her half-brother Amnon. This in turn leads to David's family being torn apart by strife, with three of David's sons — Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah — being killed as a result of this strife.

¹⁰² Fishbane, Michael, Text and Texture, Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts, New York: Schocken, 1979, p. 111.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 120.

Yet despite these family tragedies David's hunger for power does not abate. In II Sam. 24 his desire to know the extent of his power prompts him to take a census. In vs. 3 Joab warns David against taking this census. According to Jewish belief census-taking should always be approached with caution, since it is an act which dehumanises and devalues human life. For this reason Ex. 30:11 - 16 advocates an alternative method of census-taking: counting a token monetary contribution from each person instead of counting the people themselves. David must have been aware of the implications of taking a census, and of the prohibitions connected to it. His insistence on taking the census, combined with his disregard for the prescribed manner of counting, resounds with precisely that insensitivity and disrespect for human life which Ex. 30:11 - 16 seeks to avoid.

David is resolute. He is determined to know just how powerful he is. It becomes evident that this is not a general population census, but a census of the able-bodied fighting men, as vs. 9 reveals:

And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

(II Sam. 24:9)

Brueggemann concurs by saying that "The purpose is to count potential soldiers, "valiant men" (v. 9). The purpose is to mobilize military power."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Brueggemann, W., op. cit., p. 352.

In this verse the sword motif reappears in the words, "eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword ...". These words indicate that it is the extent of his military power which David wishes to ascertain. This predilection for power costs David the lives of seventy thousand people, because as a punishment for the sin of his having taken a census,

the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

(II Sam. 24:15)

This punishment of a plague is consonant with Ex. 30:12, "that there be no plague among them, when *thou* numberest them."

In this incident the sword motif characterizes David as being so greedy for power that he actually abuses it. By taking the census of the military men he is exploiting his royal power, since he knows census-taking to be forbidden. His passion for power leads to the death of seventy thousand innocent people, making the census an abuse of his sovereignty.

The sword motif culminates at the end of David's reign. I Kings 1 shows that indeed the sword has not departed from David's house, with Adonijah and Solomon as rival contenders for David's throne. David has Solomon anointed as king, thereby invalidating Adonijah's self-proclamation as king. Although the issue of the succession to the throne is now resolved, the strife and dissent still remain in the family. Adonijah now fears Solomon, as vs. 51 shows:

And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to day that he will not slay his servant with the sword.

(I Kings 1:51)

The sword motif recurs again, here indicating that the violence and strife presaged against David's house in II Sam. 12 have come to pass. The prophecy has been realised. In this incident the sword is no longer David's, but Solomon's. Solomon, as David's successor has inherited from his father a tendency to exploit his royal power. In his hands, too, the sword acquires a negative connotation.

Had David named his successor earlier, this whole situation could have been avoided, and brother need not have feared brother. David's failure to timeously name a successor leads one son to fear the sword of his brother. Thus here the sword motif emphasises David's shortcomings as a father by showing how his lack of control over his children resulted in sibling rivalry with tragic consequences: rape and murder. At the same time it is testimony to David's initial abuse of power — the adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah — which has brought about this situation. This is the "bitterness at the latter end ..." (II Sam. 2:26), for the sword still "devoureth this way and that way" (II Sam. 11:25).

David leaves Solomon a legacy of violence. In his death-bed speech to Solomon he requests of Solomon that he find a way to have both Joab and Shimei killed, as revenge for their disloyalty. David says that he cannot kill Shimei himself because earlier he had shown him clemency. He is unable to revoke this clemency, having said to Shimei, "I will not put thee to death with the sword" (I Kings 2:8). Accordingly, he empowers Solomon to carry out these acts of retribution, in other words, to use the sword that he himself may not use. David's power is ebbing away; he now places it firmly in Solomon's hands.

This final appearance of the sword motif shows David transferring the power to Solomon, by giving him the responsibility of wielding the sword. The fact that David already names the sword's first victims means that the violence and bloodshed of David's reign is spilling over into Solomon's. And, indeed, Solomon will prove to be even more abusive of his absolute power than his father before him.

Here the sword motif, through David's insistence on retribution, characterizes David as fanatical in the assertion of his power. Joab's disloyalty and Shimei's insults challenge the supremacy of his power, and such a challenge cannot be left unanswered. It is essential that David avenge himself so that his power is not impugned. Thus his last words are not of peace, nor of God, but of the sword, and hence of the assertion of power through might.

(v) CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates how the motif of the sword functions as a technique in the characterization of David. It is a literary device which charts his accession, possession and loss of power, and the corresponding changes in David's personality. This device serves to illuminate the transference of power first from Saul to David, and then from David to Solomon. From the time David acquires the power to the time he relinquishes it, he undergoes many changes in his attitude to power, once again proving him to be a dynamic character. He changes from an inexperienced, idealistic youth to a hardened warrior who relies on force to solve his problems. He becomes abusive of his absolute power, with tragic consequences. This process of development is constantly accentuated and enriched by the recurrence of the sword motif. Furthermore, the sword motif is seen to function intertextually, giving greater resonance to both texts in which it appears. Thus the sword motif is instrumental in the characterization of David, particularly so in showing how David deals with the power of sovereignty.

CHAPTER 5

PENETRATION INTO THE "INNER LIFE" - PSALMS AND POETRY AS A TECHNIQUE OF CHARACTERIZATION

(i) THE FUNCTION OF THE PSALMS AND THE POEMS IN PROVIDING A PENETRATION INTO DAVID'S INNER LIFE

Texts echo, interact and interpenetrate. In the world of the text, rigid spatial and temporal distinctions collapse.¹⁰⁵

In Chapter Two¹⁰⁶ it was mentioned that Ewen suggests a classification of characters according to their location on three axes: the axis of simplicity-complexity, the axis of stasis-dynamism, and the axis of the penetration into the "inner life" of the character¹⁰⁷. The two first-mentioned axes were discussed in Chapter Two; it now remains to discuss the last-mentioned axis, that of the penetration into the character's "inner life".

Ewen, in fact, does not use the terminology of "penetration into the character's 'inner life'"; this is Rimmon-Kenan's own summation of various concepts outlined by Ewen in his section on types of the literary character. Ewen himself states that

two principles can be distinguished in the curiosity about man's soul. Perhaps both of them affirm the existence of the unknown and the unplumbed in the secret places of the soul.

¹⁰⁵ Handelman, Susan A., The Slayers of Moses, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982, p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ See p. 23.

¹⁰⁷ Ewen, Y., op. cit., pp. 33 - 44.

Yet, whereas the first principle supplies the reader with all the possible information and allows him to reconstruct a sufficiently unified and full character; the second principle, in the actual embodiment of the character, expresses the doubt in this possibility, allowing the secret and the concealed to remain in its original state, which does not yield to investigation¹⁰⁸.

Rimmon-Kenan, based on Ewen's delineation of the possibilities for the penetration into the "inner life" of the character, describes this axis as ranging from

characters such as Woolf's Mrs Dalloway or Joyce's Molly Bloom, whose consciousness is presented from within, to the likes of Hemingway's killers (in the story bearing this name, 1928), seen only from the outside, their minds remaining opaque¹⁰⁹.

Where would David be placed on this axis of penetration into the "inner life"? Is his consciousness presented from within, or is it only seen from the outside, his mind remaining opaque? This is the issue to be discussed in this chapter: to what extent is David's consciousness revealed, to what extent is there penetration into his "inner life"?

In my opinion, the David of I and II Samuel is fairly opaque. He is seen mainly from the outside. Usually the reader is obliged to deduce his state of mind from indirect techniques of characterization.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 39, my translation - T.M.S.

¹⁰⁹ Rimmon-Kenan, S., op. cit., p. 42.

Occasionally information is supplied in a direct manner by the narrator, giving the reader authoritative glimpses into David's consciousness. Here are some examples of these direct statements:

And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved ... (I Sam. 30: 6)

"And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach on Uzzah ...

And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and say, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? (II Sam. 6: 8, 9)

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man ... (II Sam. 12: 5)

But when King David heard of all these things, he was very wroth. (II Sam. 13: 21)

And *the soul* of King David longed to go forth unto Absalom : for he was comforted concerning Absalom, seeing he was dead. (II Sam. 13: 39)

And the king was much moved ...

for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son. (II Sam. 19: 1b, 3)

And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people ... (II Sam. 24: 10)

Sometimes it is not the narrator but rather another character who observes something about the character's "inner life", and relates it to the reader. An example of this occurs in II Sam. 14:

Now Joab the son of Zeruah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom. (II Sam. 14: 1)

Here the narrator shares Joab's insight into David's consciousness with the reader.

The deductions that the reader makes about David's "inner life" from the indirect characterization techniques are actually conjecture; very seldom is the reader given proof that his inferences are indeed correct.

The narrator's direct statements are more authoritative and therefore relatively more reliable. The most reliable penetration into the character's "inner life" is naturally provided by the character himself.

Yet these kind of insights, those provided by David himself, are rare in I and II Samuel and I Kings 1,2. The result of this scarcity is that sometimes David's consciousness is inscrutable, his "inner life" impenetrable. This imperspicuity leads to ambiguity, and the reader is uncertain of David's motives for certain actions or reactions.

This ambiguity forms the basis for Perdue's argument about the characterization of David in the Succession Narrative¹¹⁰. The David of I and II Samuel and I Kings 1, 2 is something of an enigma, as there is insufficient penetration into his "inner life". The reader who is dissatisfied with this enigmatic characterization is forced to look elsewhere for a revelation of David's consciousness.

This revelation can be found in the Book of Psalms, for it is here that the reader is afforded greater penetration into David's "inner life". The fact that the reader has available texts other than those of I and II Samuel and I Kings introduces an intertextual perspective, consonant with that described in the previous chapter¹¹¹. In this sense Handelman's comment which heads this chapter becomes deeply relevant.

The Book of Psalms contains 150 psalms. Seventy-three of these psalms are classified as "Davidic", as they begin with the phrase "a psalm of David". This does not necessarily mean that David is the author of these psalms; the most that can safely be concluded is that David is in some way *associated* with these psalms.

¹¹⁰ Perdue, L., op. cit., pp. 67 - 84.

¹¹¹ See Ch. 4, pp. 97 - 100.

Roger Tomes explains this problem, which arises out of the ambiguity of the Hebrew preposition "Le" (of/for):

The Hebrew preposition used, however, does not necessarily mean 'by': more often elsewhere it means 'for' or 'belonging to'. Hence the title 'a psalm of David' need not mean 'a psalm composed by David' but could mean 'a psalm composed for David (or the Davidic king)' or 'a psalm from the Davidic collection'¹¹².

Nahum M. Sarna, in the Encyclopedia Judaica, notes that

Other possibilities include a dedication to David, a tune or style supposedly Davidic in origin, or a composition taken from the repertoire of a Davidic guild of singers¹¹³.

Tomes and Sarna reflect the general scholarly view that the authorship of the Davidic psalms cannot conclusively be ascribed to David himself. In the nineteenth century it was believed that the psalms were written no earlier than the Maccabean period, thus making it impossible for David to have written them. In the twentieth century this view has largely been refuted and a pre-exilic date of composition advocated instead.

This in itself is no further proof of the Davidic authorship of the Psalms, since there is a scholarly consensus that the titles and superscriptions are secondary additions. In light of this Childs makes a comment which is crucial in the context of this chapter.

¹¹² Bigger, Stephen. (ed.), Creating the Old Testament, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p. 255.

¹¹³ Sarna, Nahum M., Encyclopedia Judaica, 1971, vol. 13.

Psalms which once functioned within a cultic context were historicized by placing them within the history of David. Moreover, the incidents chosen as evoking the psalms were not royal occasions or representative of the kingly office. Rather, David is depicted simply as a man, indeed chosen by God for the sake of Israel, but who displays all the strengths and weaknesses of all human beings. He emerges as a person who experiences the full range of human emotions, from fear and despair to courage and love, from complaint and plea to praise and thanksgiving. Moreover, by attaching a psalm to a historical event the emphasis is made to fall on the inner life of the psalmist. An access if now provided into his emotional life.¹¹⁴

Clearly the issue of whether the Davidic psalms can indeed be ascribed to David is a controversial one. It is not within the scope of this work to debate this issue, and consequently there will be no attempt to do so. For the purpose of this work it will be sufficient to concentrate on those psalms which have a clearly stated connection with some event in David's life, Psalms 3, 7, 18, 34, 52, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63 and 142.

In the case of these psalms, the biographical connections, together with the actual content of the psalms, makes it *reasonable* to assume Davidic authorship. Reason is not an adequate substitute for concrete proof, yet for the sake of a significantly enhanced intertextual reading it is expedient to consider the possibility that David was indeed the author of these psalms.

¹¹⁴ Childs, B.S., op cit., p. 521.

In accordance with Childs' view the intention here is to show how these psalms, together with other poetry contained in II Samuel, could be used as a device to reveal David's consciousness, as a means to facilitate the penetration into his "inner life". As already demonstrated, the prose sections of I and II Samuel, I Kings 1,2 provide relatively little insight into David's consciousness. The use of the poetry of II Samuel, and the intertextual use of the psalms, affords the reader an opportunity to gain additional insight into David's consciousness.

In Chapter One it was mentioned that in the process of indirect presentation one of the ways in which the reader is informed about the character is through the character's speech¹¹⁵. The psalms are poetry, and, as such, they can be considered a lyric form of the character's speech. They are simply another instance of the character's self-expression, albeit in lyric form.

Whereas most of David's speech in I and II Samuel, I Kings 1,2 occurs in the context of conversation, of dialogue; the psalms and the poetry can be seen as monologue, since they were neither composed nor voiced in a dialogic context. The David of I and II Samuel, I Kings 1,2 is presented through the medium of third-person narration; the David of the Psalms presents himself in the first person, unmediated by the presence of a narrator.

¹¹⁵ See ch. 1, pp. 15, 16.

These differences — the fact that the psalms and poetry are monologic, that the psalms are unencumbered by third-person narration — may make them a more immediate penetration into David's "inner life", a possibility which should be borne in mind.

The psalms and poetry have biographical allusions to events in David's life that are recounted in I and II Samuel, I Kings 1,2. Accordingly, they should be read in conjunction with the prose narrative. In this way they serve to provide an intertextual corollary to the prose account of David's life.

Psalms 3 and 7 are connected to David's relationship with Absalom. Psalms 34, 52, 56, 57, 59, 63 and 142 are all connected to the period in I Samuel when David was a fugitive from Saul. These psalms are related to different aspects and events of this outlaw period in David's life. Psalm 51 is connected to David's adultery with Bathsheba. Psalm 60 relates to some of David's military conquests. Psalm 18, which corresponds to II Sam. 22, is connected generally to David's victories over his enemies, and specifically to his deliverance from Saul. II Sam. 1: 17 - 27 reflects David's grief at the death of Saul and Jonathan. II Sam. 23: 1 - 7 relates to God's covenant with David and his house.

This outline shows that the psalms and poetry do not reflect all events and aspects of David's life. Also, some of the biographical allusions contained in the psalms are unclear, making it difficult to connect them to specific incidents in his life.

Nevertheless, these psalms and poetry do reflect certain significant phases of his life. In the process they deal with issues that have already emerged as crucial elements in David's psychological composition, namely the issue of his faith in God, the importance he attaches to loyalty and to betrayal, the issue of military power and his relationships with Absalom and Jonathan. These issues are developed further in the psalms and the poetry, thereby confirming them as key issues in David's personality. New issues are introduced, too: David's sense of guilt when he sins, and the divine legitimation of his sovereignty. By confirming and developing issues that are already known, and by introducing unknown ones, the psalms and the poetry have much to contribute to the characterization of David.

The analysis of the psalms' and the poetry's contribution to the characterization of David will be done chronologically. That is, the psalms and the poetry will be examined as they relate chronologically to David's biographical development, in so much as this is possible. Accordingly, the psalms relating to David's fugitive period will be discussed first, then Psalm 18/II Sam. 22, which relates to David's deliverance from Saul will be discussed. His deliverance from Saul is the result of the death of Saul and Jonathan, so II Sam. 1: 17 - 27 will be the next poem discussed. Once David is in power he is successful in several military conquests, so it is appropriate to discuss Psalm 60. Psalm 51, concerning David's guilt about his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, and the implications of this relationship, is next. One of the consequences of this relationship is David's tragic relationship with his son Absalom.

Thus Psalms 3 and 7, which supposedly refer to David's relationship with Absalom, will follow. The discussion will conclude with II Sam. 23: 1- 7, since this poem serves as David's review of his reign, as well as dealing with God's covenant with the Davidic dynasty.

Most of the psalms and poems will be discussed individually, although their reflection of key issues in David's "inner life", or consciousness, will be simultaneously emphasized.

(ii) DAVID'S FUGITIVE PERIOD: PSALMS 59, 52, 34, 57, 142, 56, 63

David's years as a fugitive are described in I Sam. 19 - I Sam. 30. These chapters depict David as a bold and resourceful outlaw, living by his wits. He appears intrepid, confident of his prowess as a warrior and hence of his ability to elude Saul. This is what is revealed by David's actions and his speech: he feigns madness in order to escape from Achish, the Philistine king of Gat (I Sam. 21); he gathers a band of outlaws around him for support and protection (I Sam. 22); he manages to save Keilah without falling into Saul's hands (I Sam. 23); he makes the bold symbolic gesture of cutting Saul's cloak, and then makes a speech which humbles Saul (I Sam. 24); he takes an aggressive stand against Nabal the Carmelite (I Sam. 25); he sneaks into Saul's camp with only Abishai for protection (I Sam. 26); he becomes a mercenary in the service of Achish, the Philistine king (I Sam. 27); his "willingness" to fight for the Philistines against Israel is rewarded by the Philistine lords' refusal to allow him to accompany them, thereby extricating him from a potentially difficult situation (I Sam. 29); his success as a military leader is demonstrated in the revenge attack against the Amalekites (I Sam. 30).

These chapters are filled with David's adventurous deeds and audacious speeches, yet it tells nothing of how David *feels*, there is no penetration into his "inner life" of this period. Is he always fearless and intrepid, or are there moments when his morale falters and he lacks confidence? Is he hurt by Saul's persecution of him, is he distressed by the fact that he is so often betrayed? Is he self-reliant or does he need the support of others? And what of his faith in God, that was so strong in I Sam. 17? Does he consider himself to be in some way responsible for the state of affairs, or is it inevitable, being divinely ordained? The answers to these questions are not to be found in I Sam. 19 - 30, but they may be contained in the psalms and the poetry.

Psalm 59 deals with the very beginning of David's life as a fugitive, "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." (Ps. 59:1) In I Sam. 19, where this incident is described, David does not say anything to his wife Michal, who warns him of the ambush and helps him to escape, giving the reader no clue as to his thoughts and emotions at this time. Yet Psalm 59 reveals his indignation or pain at being unjustly accused.

For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O Lord.

They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault
... (Ps. 59: 4, 5)

In I Sam. 19 David is reliant upon Michal's help. By contrast, in Psalm 59 he does not rely on human support, and instead calls for divine aid:

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me.

Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men (Ps. 59: 2, 3)

awake to help me, and behold (Ps. 59: 5b)

Then David becomes more confident, he appears convinced that God will indeed help him:

for God is my defence.

The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. (Ps. 59: 10b, 11)

At the end of the psalm he is completely convinced that God will help him:

But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence *and* the God of my mercy. (Ps. 59: 17: 18)

The faith in God which he displayed when fighting Goliath (I Sam. 17) has not left him, although here it is expressed in a more personal communication between him and God. He may not voice this faith as publicly as he did in I Sam. 17: 45 - 47, but he still believes that he will be divinely assisted in his battle, possibly because his success is pre-ordained. He expresses this idea of God's will prevailing over the world in words that echo I Sam. 17: 46. In I Sam. 17: 46 David taunts Goliath with "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

In Psalm 59 he says: "and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah." (Ps 59: 14b) In both incidents David calls on God to help him, since David's victory will constitute proof of God's dominion in the world.

David is rankled by the lies spoken by his enemies:

Behold, they belch out with their mouth, swords are in their lips: for who, say *they*, doth hear?
(Ps. 59: 8)

For the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying *which* they speak.
(Ps. 59: 13)

Lies are a form of betrayal, and David's hatred of betrayal and disloyalty is a recurrent theme in his poetry.

Three main issues thus emerge from Psalm 59. Firstly, David's innocence of the crimes of which he is accused; secondly, his faith in God, which prompts him to call for divine aid (and he seems fairly convinced that this aid will be forthcoming); and, thirdly, his condemnation of those who betray him by their speech.

After David has been warned by Michal that Saul is out to kill him, he flees to Samuel in Ramah (I Sam. 19: 18). Saul pursues him to Ramah but is still unable to catch him (I Sam. 19: 19 - 24). Saul first sends messengers to Ramah.

These messengers fall into some kind of ecstatic, "prophetic" trance and are thus prevented from apprehending David. After this happens twice, Saul, in desperation comes to Ramah himself. He, too, falls into this "prophetic" trance and is thus unable to catch David.

In Psalm 59 David entrusted his safety to God, possibly believing his survival to be pre-ordained. Maybe this incident in Ramah is proof both that David was correct in assuming God's protection, and that God's plan is at work in the world. Brueggemann validates this view when he observes that

The biblical narrative characteristically dares to assert, however, that there is purpose in the midst of power. It is this purpose in the midst of power to which David is willing to entrust himself ...¹¹⁶

Furthermore, with respect to I Sam. 19: 18 - 24 Brueggemann notes that "The spirit of God is at work on David's behalf."¹¹⁷

In I Sam. 20: 1 David leaves Ramah and meets with Jonathan. In this chapter David and Jonathan devise and execute a plan to ascertain whether Saul is determined to kill David. When it emerges that this is indeed so, David flees to Ahimelech, a priest of Nob (I Sam. 21: 1).

¹¹⁶ Brueggemann, W., op. cit., p. 141.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 144.

David pretends to Ahimelech that he is on a secret, urgent mission for Saul. Ahimelech gives him the provisions for which he asks, and suggests that David use Goliath's sword (I Sam. 21: 1 - 9).

Doeg the Edomite, an agent of Saul is present during this meeting, and overhears the entire proceedings. It later transpires that David was aware of Doeg's presence (II Sam. 22: 22). Yet the awareness of Doeg's presence did not cause David to be more discreet; perhaps his fear, or the urgency of the situation drove him to act recklessly. In I Sam. 22 Doeg the Edomite reports this incident to Saul. Saul is so incensed by what he considers to be Ahimelech's betrayal and disloyalty in supporting David that he orders the destruction of the entire city of Nob (I Sam. 22: 9 - 19).

Only Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, manages to escape. He flees to David and tells him what happened (I Sam. 22: 20, 21). When David hears of this senseless slaughter he holds himself responsible, saying to Abiathar;

I knew *it* that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned *the death* of all the persons of thy father's house. (I Sam. 22: 22)

David then suggests that Abiathar remain with him, and in that way his safety will be ensured (I Sam. 22: 23).

Nothing more is said about the slaughter of Ahimelech and the city of Nob, but Psalm 52 reveals that David is deeply affected by this murder, far more than he shows in I Sam. 22. In I Sam. 22 he admits responsibility for Saul's retribution on Nob; in Psalm 52 he rails against the treachery of Doeg which caused it.

Psalm 52 makes clear reference to Doeg's part in the proceedings as it begins:

To the chief Musician, Maschil, A Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech. (Ps. 52: 1, 2)

David then launches into a scathing condemnation of Doeg's actions. He asks why Doeg sought to advance himself, seeing that it is futile in view of the fact that God's goodness prevails:

Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?
the goodness of God endureth continually. (Ps. 52: 3)

The implication is that Doeg's schemes are powerless against God's will.

David is angry with Doeg for two reasons. Firstly, he is angry that Doeg stirred up so much trouble by his report to Saul. In this instance silence would have been preferable to damaging speech, which in David's opinion is malicious agitation, motivated by evil intentions.

Doeg's report cannot, strictly speaking, be construed as treachery since Doeg was loyal to the reigning king, Saul. Yet as an Edomite, i.e a non-Israelite, Doeg is not obliged to show loyalty to any particular Israelite king, and thus his action can be considered as one motivated purely by self-interest, and not by patriotic duty.

The second reason for David's anger at Doeg is Doeg's deceit. Doeg blatantly lied to Saul, saying that Ahimelech "enquired of the Lord ..." for David (I Sam. 22: 10)¹¹⁸. Ahimelech denies this accusation (I Sam. 22: 15), but the damage is already done in that its initial mention incites Saul's fury, making him incapable of listening to reason. David is very critical of Doeg's deceit, which is motivated by evil:

Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor,
working deceitfully.

Thou lovest evil more than good; *and* lying rather
than to speak righteousness. Selah.

Thou lovest all devouring words, O *thou* deceitful
tongue. (Ps. 52: 4 - 6)

David is certain that God will punish Doeg for his lies and his evil spirit - divine retribution will prevail:

¹¹⁸ Brueggemann, W., op. cit., p. 159.

God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of *thy* land of the living.
Selah.

The righteousness shall also see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

Lo, *this* is the man *that* made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, *and* strengthened himself in his wickedness. (Ps. 52: 7 - 9)

David sees himself as standing in direct opposition to Doeg. Whereas Doeg strengthens himself in wickedness, David strengthens himself in God:

But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
(Ps. 52: 10)

Finally David affirms his faith in God, and his conviction that it is right to trust in God:

I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it*; and I will wait on thy name; for *it is* good before thy saints. (Ps. 52: 11)

This psalm affords the reader a wider glimpse into David's state of mind as regards Doeg's report and the subsequent slaughter at Nob than that provided by I Sam. 22. In I Sam. 22 he admits responsibility for the slaughter; in Psalm 52 he reveals his contempt for Doeg's deceit and evil motives.

He continues by saying that deceit and evil, like that of Doeg, will not succeed in disrupting God's rule of righteousness, of which David is an integral part.

In this psalm David does not deal with the issue of responsibility for the incident, as admitted in I Sam. 22: 22. Rather, he focuses on Doeg's guilt and his comparative innocence, "But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God ..." (Ps. 52: 10). This may be an attempt to deflect the blame. It may also be David's personal reaction to the news of the slaughter at Nob, as opposed to the public reaction expressed in I Sam. 22. Surrounded by his men in I Sam. 22, it is politic for David to take the blame for the events that occurred. The psalm, on the other hand, is a reflection of personal conscience, and in this context David does not feel obliged to accept responsibility for the incident.

Whatever David's motivation for this psalm, it is connected to Psalm 59 in that it develops the themes introduced there: David's relative innocence in the proceedings, his faith in God, and the crime of deceitful speech.

In I Sam. 21, after David was given provisions and Goliath's sword by Ahimelech, the priest of Nob, he fled to Achish the Philistine king of Gat (I Sam. 21: 10 - 15 describes David's time in Gat). David had planned to seek asylum from Achish but when he reached Gat he realised that his reputation as a great Israelite warrior had preceded him, and thus he was now in danger from Achish, as well as from Saul.

In order to prevent Achish from recognising him, he feigned madness. This ploy is successful; Achish dismisses him, saying that he has no need of mad men (I Sam. 21: 15). Thus David saves himself by his own ingenuity.

Psalm 34 begins,

A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away and he departed.
(Ps. 34: 1)

This biographical reference is not completely clear. The psalm seems to refer to the incident in Gat, as described in I Sam. 21: 10 - 15, yet two possible incongruities can be detected. Firstly, in I Sam. 21:10 - 15 it does not state specifically that Achish drove David away, and I Sam. 22:1 simply begins by saying that David departed. This is not necessarily a contradiction, though, since it is possible to infer from I Sam. 21:15 and I Sam. 22:1 that Achish did indeed drive David away. Secondly, the name "Achish" should be used instead of "Abimelech". Mitchell Dahood attempts to resolve this problem when he says that

The psalm heading alludes to an episode of David with Achish, the king of Gath ... Instead of Achish the psalm heading reads Abimelech, which many commentators consider an historical inaccuracy on the part of the psalmist or psalm editor, but it is quite possible that Abimelech was the Semitic name of the king of Gath. The author of Gen. xxvi 1 mentions an Abimelech "king of the Philistines" in Gerar."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Dahood, Mitchell, The Anchor Bible Psalms 1 1 - 50, New York: Doubleday, 1966, p. 205.

Thus it is possible that this psalm heading does indeed refer to David's "mad" period in Gath (I Sam. 21: 10 - 15), although the psalm itself makes no direct reference to the people or to the events of this period. Instead, it is a psalm of thanksgiving "composed by an individual whose prayer for deliverance from tribulations was heard by Yahweh."¹²⁰ As such the psalm can be connected to David's escape from Achish.

Whereas in I Sam. 21: 10 - 15 David saves himself by his own quick thinking, in this psalm he attributes his rescue to God. In this psalm David expresses his gratitude to God for saving him. He calls others to join him in praise of God, and wants to teach others how to be God-fearing. This faith in God is consonant with that expressed in Psalms 59 and 52: God saves the righteous, and David is thus correct to entrust his safety to God.

In vss. 2 - 4 David declares his intention to praise God and invites others to join him. Then he gives the reason that this praise is due:

I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me
from all my fears. (Ps. 34: 5)

David then continues by expressing the belief that those who trust in God will be saved:

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 205.

The angel of the Lord encampeth around them that fear him, and delivereth them.

O taste and see that the Lord *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.

O fear the Lord, ye his saints for *there is* no want to them that fear him. (Ps. 34: 8 - 10)

The psalm ends with a final affirmation of this belief:

The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate. (Ps. 34: 23)

In vs. 12 David voices his intention to teach others to be God-fearing, presumably so that they too may enjoy God's protection, just as he does. Included in his advice is the exhortation to "Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile." (Ps. 34: 14) David here shows himself to be constantly concerned with the sin of evil speech. In his opinion it is essential that those who strive to be God-fearing refrain from this sin.

Psalm 34 is thus similar to Psalms 59 and 52 in that it attributes David's deliverance to God. In the narrative texts David's deliverance is the result of human resources and human aid. There is no mention of David's faith in God, nor of God being instrumental in saving David, such as that which is found in I Sam. 17: 45 - 47.

But these psalms, by revealing David's feelings and thoughts about the incidents, by providing the necessary penetration into David's consciousness, show that the contrary is true. David's faith is indeed omnipresent, and he is deeply aware of God's involvement in these events. This penetration into David's "inner life" shows that David considers his deliverances to be divinely engineered, and that he is grateful for this divine aid. This perspective is absent from the texts of I Samuel.¹²¹

After David flees from Achish in Gat he goes to the cave of Adullam where he gathers other social outcasts around him, thus forming a band of outlaws (I Sam. 22: 1, 2). Both Psalm 57 and Psalm 142 allude to David being in a cave.

Logically these psalms could also refer to I Sam. 24 which tells how David cut off the edge of Saul's cloak in a cave. There is, in fact, no way of knowing to which of these events Psalms 57 and 142 refer. What can safely be said is that both of these psalms belong to some stage of David's fugitive period, and can be discussed in this light.

¹²¹ Psalm 56, which possibly also relates to the events of I Sam. 21:10 - 15, is discussed on p. 155. This psalm, if connected to I Sam. 21:10 - 15, offers yet another perspective on this Philistine period of David's life.

Space does not permit an analysis of both psalms and, since these psalms are similar in content and context, only Psalm 57 will be discussed. This psalm has been chosen in preference to Psalm 142 because its heading is more specific; it alludes to the time when David "fled from Saul in the cave." (Ps. 57:1) The heading of Psalm 142 is less specific; "when he was in the cave." (Ps. 142:1), and thus may even refer to a cave in a metaphoric sense. In view of this, Psalm 57 is more relevant to the discussion at hand, as its heading connects it unmistakably to David's fugitive period.

Psalm 57 reveals David as feeling vulnerable. He feels surrounded, trapped by his enemies:

My soul is among lions: *and I lie even among*
 them that are set on fire, *even the sons of men,*
 whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue
 a sharp sword. (Ps. 57: 5)

They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is
 bowed down: they have digged a pit before me ...
 (Ps. 57: 7)

In view of this situation, and in contrast to his usual confidence, David appeals to God's mercy. Perhaps the extreme danger in which he finds himself overwhelms him, shaking his confidence. His need for God's mercy, and his perception of God as a safe haven in troubled times emerges from vs. 2:

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. (Ps. 57: 2)

In vss. 2 and 3 David appears to be more self-assured and more confident of God's support. Verses 8 - 12 show David determined to praise God and extol his mercy; the self-same mercy that he sought in vs. 2:

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. (Ps. 57: 11)

It appears as if David has reverted to his former confident self and has regained his conviction that God will protect him from his enemies. The momentary lapse in confidence and expression of vulnerability evinced by vs. 2 seems to have been superseded. Yet its presence cannot be ignored. Ps. 57: 2 is evidence that there are moments when David is overwhelmed by the enormity of the situation and the apparent odds against him.

The prose narrative does not depict David's shaken confidence and his sense of vulnerability, possibly because these emotions would not conform to the narrative's image of David as confident and self-assured. It is only in the psalms that this emotional frailty is allowed to be revealed; only in this penetration into David's consciousness does his insecurity and vulnerability emerge.

It is possible that Psalm 56 also alludes to I Sam. 21: 10 - 15. The psalm heading is "when the Philistines took him in Gath." (Ps. 56: 1). As such, the allusion is either to the events of I Sam. 21: 10 - 15, or to those of I Sam. 27¹²². According to the chronological framework outlined on p. 138 this psalm should either be discussed in conjunction with Psalm 34, which relates to I Sam. 21:10 - 15, or in another section relating to the events of I Sam. 27. However, since Psalm 56 is also concerned with the notion of David's vulnerability and, in fact, develops it further to include the aspect of fear, it is useful to discuss it here. In this sense, its relevancy to the present discussion motivates its inclusion here, even though it is possibly out of context from a chronological point of view.

Psalm 56, like Psalm 57, reveals David as feeling vulnerable; surrounded by his enemies (see Ps. 56: 7), he is doubtful of his ability to triumph over them. Yet Psalm 56 goes further than Psalm 57 in expressing this vulnerability, since in Psalm 56 David actually mentions being afraid. This notion of fear is absent from Psalm 57. Psalm 56 begins with exactly the same words as Psalm 57, "Be merciful unto me, O God:", but then exposes David's fear as it continues:

¹²² Cf. Anderson, A.A, The New Century Bible Commentary Psalms (1 - 72), Grand Rapids, U.S.A.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981, p. 420, and Dahood, op. cit., p. 42.

Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. (Ps. 56:2)

What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. (Ps. 56: 4, 5)

In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do to me. (Ps. 56: 12)

Granted, David does not actually state that he *is* afraid, he only mentions the possibility of his being afraid in the future. But the fact that he admits the possibility of fear is sufficiently significant, for it confirms the depiction of David as revealed by Psalm 57. Psalm 56 constitutes further evidence that there are indeed moments when David feels vulnerable, defenceless, and even afraid. Psalm 56 thus shows that Psalm 57 does not reveal an isolated incident of vulnerability and fear in David's "inner life", but instead shows that these emotions are present on more than one occasion.

These psalms thus depict David as prone to feelings of vulnerability and defencelessness. It also reveals him as experiencing moments of doubt as to his ability to elude his enemies, and as to the certainty of God's support. Living as a fugitive has taken its toll on David; he does not constantly see himself as invincible — feelings of fear and vulnerability have become part of his consciousness.

Two Psalms deal with the time David spent in the wilderness of Judah, alternatively called the wilderness of Ziph (see I Sam. 22: 5, I Sam. 23: 14, 19 and I Sam. 26: 1 - 3). I Sam. 22, 23 and 26 relate incidents of Saul's pursuit of David into the wilderness, and three dramatic encounters between the two. Both Psalm 63 and Psalm 54 allude to this period. The heading of Psalm 54 refers specifically to the incident(s) when the Ziphites revealed to Saul that David was hiding in the wilderness (Ps. 54: 1), which corresponds to I Sam. 23: 19 and I Sam. 26: 1 - 3. This short psalm reiterates sentiments already expressed in Psalms 59, 52 and 34: David's appeal for God's deliverance from his enemies, and his conviction that God is "mine helper" (Ps. 54: 6).

The heading of Psalm 63 refers more generally to this wilderness period in David's life, alluding to the time "when he was in the wilderness of Judah." (Ps. 63: 1) This psalm, even more so than Psalms 59, 52, 34 and 54, is a revelation of David's faith in God. Here David's faith is revealed, not so much as a request for deliverance, but more simply as a powerful yearning for the Divine. David uses language that is clearly influenced by the desert context to express this longing:

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee:
 my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee
 in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."
 (Ps. 63:2)

David then expresses the spiritual fulfilment he derives from God:

My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips:

When I remember upon my bed, *and* mediate on thee in the *night* watches.

Because though hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. (Ps. 63: 6 - 8)

Verses 10 and 11 deal with David's enemies. In these verses, in contrast to the previously discussed psalms, David does not appeal to God to bring about the downfall of his enemies. Here he expresses the belief (or the wish, depending on how these verses are interpreted) that they will meet their death. Possibly his yearning for God transcends his need to make specific requests of God.

The psalm concludes with the juxtaposition of those who are god-fearing, and therefore rejoice in God, as opposed to those who are evil (exemplified by those who lie), and therefore fail:

But the king shall rejoice in God: every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped. (Ps. 63: 12)

This verse reflects David's joy in God, and consequently it serves to sum up the entire psalm: David needs God for his happiness and fulfilment. In addition, this verse mentions the lying, evil speech which David so detests, thus connecting it with this issue as it appears in other psalms.

This psalm, in contrast to Psalms 59, 52, 34 and 54, focuses more on David's desire and yearning for God than on the wrongs inflicted on him by his enemies and his need to escape them. Psalm 63, lacking the usual preoccupation with the danger of enemies, is a powerful exposition of David's innate piety and deep faith. Brueggemann, commenting on I Sam. 23: 10 in a passage specifically devoted to I Sam. 23 - 26, supports this view when he says that:

In the midst of extreme danger, David is not portrayed as a man of action. Rather, in his extreme danger he prays (vs. 10). David understands that his proper posture before Yahweh is one of need and that Yahweh is his source of life and hope.¹²³

(iii) DAVID'S DELIVERANCE FROM SAUL: PSALM 18/II SAM. 22, II SAM. 1:17 - 27

Throughout his fugitive period David has turned to God, asking for God to deliver him from his enemies. He is usually confident that God will indeed help him, and this confidence in itself constitutes an affirmation of his faith. Psalm 18, which is a parallel version of II Sam. 22, albeit with certain textual variations, confirms that David was correct to entrust himself to God, and that his faith in God was justified, since he has emerged victorious over his enemies. Psalm 18 is thus David's song of triumph, but throughout this psalm he ascribes his triumph to God. He continually acknowledges God as the source of his victory.

¹²³ Brueggemann, W., op. cit., p. 163.

Psalm 18 is a relatively long, lyrical song of victory and thanksgiving — David praises and thanks God for his support and protection. The length of the psalm prevents a detailed analysis, but a few salient points will be discussed. The psalm can be divided into several sections. In vss. 1 - 7 David relates that in times of trouble he called on God to deliver him and God heard his cry:

In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

(Ps. 18: 7)

Vss. 8 - 17 contain a dramatic description of God's rescue of David. Much symbolic language is used in this description, in which God's power is realised by his subjugation and control of nature and the elements. This rescue takes on cosmic, almost mythic proportions¹²⁴. In vs. 18 David reiterates that God has rescued him from his enemies:

He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

(Ps. 18: 18)

In verses 21 - 28 David asserts that God has saved him because he is righteous and blameless:

Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight. (Ps. 18: 25)

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 340.

The position of this psalm in II Sam. 22, i.e. almost at the end of the account of David's reign, makes a verse like this appear incongruous: David's dealings with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite in II Sam. 11 render him neither righteous nor blameless. In this sense this section must be considered an instance of self-promotion, or propaganda, on the part of David. Although, if the psalm had been written immediately after David's effective rescue from Saul at the hands of the Philistines in I Sam. 31, David could still possibly be considered righteous and blameless. But since it is impossible to determine the exact date of the composition of this psalm, the relevance of this section cannot be ascertained.

In vss. 29 - 46 David attributes his strength, his military superiority, and also his victories to God; God is the source of all his success:

For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle:
 thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against
 me. (Ps. 18: 40)

David concludes the psalm with a summation of the reason for his thanksgiving to God:

It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people
 under me.

He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, that liftest
 me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast
 delivered me from the violent man.

Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord ...
 (Ps. 18: 48 - 50)

This psalm, in that it celebrates David's victories over Saul and his other enemies, constitutes, in David's opinion, confirmation that God has indeed heard his appeals and responded to them. David here acknowledges his indebtedness to God in triumphing over his enemies, he recognises that his success is due to divine intervention. Brueggemann concurs with this view when he observes that,

Insofar as the psalm is the voice of David, it readily acknowledges his power, gifts and achievements. In the midst of this celebration of the king, however, the psalm holds with great discipline to a more elemental conviction. It is God who gives victory ... It is God (*not David*) who has wrought the great victories.¹²⁵

In this penetration into his "inner life" David is revealed as fully cognizant of the role God plays in his life, and thus refrains from taking credit for his achievements.

The death of Saul in the war against the Philistines (I Sam. 31) means that the struggle between Saul and David is now over and David's fugitive period has come to an end. Psalm 18/II Sam. 22 is one reaction to this deliverance from persecution; II Sam. 1: 17 - 27 is another.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 344, my emphasis - T.M.S.

These poems are not mutually exclusive. Psalm 18/II Sam. 22 focuses on David's recognition of God as the source of his deliverance and his consequent triumph over Saul and his other enemies. Yet nowhere in this poem does David gloat over Saul's defeat, nor rejoice at his death. He simply gives thanks that he has emerged the victor, and has not been defeated by his enemies.

II Sam. 1: 17 - 27 shows David reacting differently to Saul's death. This poem is actually an elegy or lament for the death of Saul and Jonathan. It is quoted in its entirety and discussed in Chapter Two¹²⁶; consequently it will not be discussed in great detail here, save to indicate its function in providing a penetration into David's "inner life".

Although David benefits politically (his rival is eliminated) and practically (his life is no longer in danger) from the death of Saul, II Sam. 1: 17 - 27 reveals that on a personal level David does not welcome this death. His lament contains many references to Saul, showing that he is much grieved and saddened by Saul's death. In this poem David does not gloat over Saul's demise. Instead, he accords him a final token of respect by praising him (see vss. 22 - 24). These words can be considered evidence of the warmth and admiration David felt towards Saul, sentiments which Saul, the paranoid, failed to recognise.

¹²⁶ See ch. 2, pp. 47 - 49.

Whereas Psalm 18/II Sam. 22 reveals David's sense of triumph at having eluded Saul (and his other enemies), this elegy reveals David as deeply affected and saddened by the death that has occasioned this triumph. David's reaction towards Saul's death is thus complex: on one level he reacts to it as a political triumph, on another he reacts to it as a personal loss and cause of grief. Such is the revelation of David's consciousness provided by these two poems.

(iv) DAVID IN POWER - HIS MILITARY CONQUESTS: PSALM 60

Despite David's apparent grief at Saul's death, he moves quickly to assume power. He then becomes a successful military leader, conquering Jerusalem from the Jebusites (II Sam. 5: 6 - 9), eliminating the Philistine threat (II Sam. 5: 17 - 25), and then greatly expanding Israel's empire by various conquests in the surrounding areas (II Sam. 8: 1 - 14). II Sam. 8: 13 notes that David had become famous as a result of these military successes.

Psalm 60, in its superscription, alludes to a conquest mentioned in II Sam. 8: 13. This psalm is a request for God to assist Israel in conquering Edom, since it appears that God has temporarily withdrawn his support from Israel. Vss. 3 - 7 contain a general appeal to God to resume his support of Israel, and vss. 11 - 14 contain a specific appeal to God to help conquer Edom. These verses thus reflect David's perception that Israel's military strength is due to divine favour.

Vss. 8 - 10 are interesting in that they reveal another aspect of David's consciousness. In these verses David states:

I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my lawgiver;

Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. (Ps. 60: 8b - 10)

These words reveal David as glorying in his own power. In vs. 9 he rejoices that he has managed to subjugate Ephraim and Manasseh, two tribes who previously quarrelled continuously with Judah, his own tribe. In vs. 10 he rejoices that he has succeeded in subjugating the neighbouring states of Moab, Edom and Philistia. David celebrates Israel's military strength, the tangible proof of his own supremacy. He reigns supreme both at home and abroad, and Psalm 60 shows that this idea is very pleasing to him.

David is depicted as exhilarated by the enormity of the power he possesses. His awareness of the might of the Israelite army is most gratifying to him. This penetration into David's consciousness, provided by Psalm 60, shows him to be intoxicated with the notion of his own power within Israel, and with the power that is embodied in Israel's army and military triumphs.

This idea is borne out by the census in II Sam 24: David's obsession with Israelite military strength causes him to knowingly disobey Israelite law; the thrill of power overcomes reason¹²⁷.

(v) DAVID AND BATHSHEBA AND URIAH THE HITTITE: PSALM 51

II Sam. 11 is another instance where David knowingly disobeys Israelite law. In this case it is David's attraction to, and lust for, a woman, namely Bathsheba, that overcomes his reason and his judgement. David knew that Bathsheba was married (see II Sam. 11: 3), yet he was unable to restrain himself from seducing her, and thereby committing adultery. This adulterous union had tragic consequences, finally resulting in David engineering the death of Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband.

In II Sam. 24 David realises that he has sinned by taking the census and he is filled with remorse, as vss. 10 and 17 relate:

And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. (II Sam. 24:10)

And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house. (II Sam. 24:17)

¹²⁷ See ch. 4, pp. 124, 125.

In II Sam. 11 David is not so quick to perceive the fact of his sins, necessitating Nathan's intervention in order to make him realise the gravity of his sins. After Nathan has illustrated the serious nature of David's sins by the use of a parable, David understands what he has done, saying "I have sinned against the Lord." (II Sam. 11: 13) This constitutes recognition of the sins, it does not constitute regret, remorse or atonement. David's prayers for the life of the child born to him and Bathsheba can be considered an expression of his remorse at his actions, and a wish that others should not suffer from his sins, but these observations remain in the realm of inference.

A far more direct and authoritative expression of David's regret and remorse for his sins, as well as his intention of atonement, is found in Psalm 51. The psalm heading refers very clearly to this incident, "when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba." (Ps. 51: 2)

The psalm itself is a powerful outpouring of David's guilt, thereby connecting it very strongly to the events of II Sam. 11 and 12. Psalm 51 thus provides an insight into David's consciousness, and conscience, that is almost completely absent in II Sam. 11 and 12.

This insight into David's consciousness reveals that David's conscience is indeed sorely troubled. In this situation his first instinct is to appeal to God's mercy when considering his transgression, since his sins necessitate God's compassion:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. (Ps. 51: 3)

He then proceeds to directly admit that he has sinned. He does not specify the nature of his sins, however. He admits to sinning against God only, and, as such, any judgement that God should make would be justified (vss. 5, 6). In this confession he makes no reference to either the adultery with Bathsheba, nor the murder of Uriah the Hittite, possibly because he considers the essence of his sins to lie in the fact that he has violated God's laws.

David perceives his sins metaphorically as a stain on his conscience, rendering it unclean or impure. As such, he asks of God to cleanse or purify him, to create in him a "clean heart" (vs. 12) The following verses all reflect this perception of sin, the perception of the impure spirit that needs to be purified:

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (Ps. 51: 4)

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Ps. 51: 9)

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Ps. 51: 12)

David then expresses his intention to teach other transgressors the way of God (vs. 15), as well as his intention to praise God and His righteousness (vss. 15 - 17). Possibly this is an attempt to win God's favour, or an illustration of the sincerity of his atonement.

Finally David recognises that God does not want sacrifices as a gesture of atonement. Rather, God prefers a spiritual offering, "a broken and a contrite heart." (vs. 19) Verses 18 and 19 reflect this belief:

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give
it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a
broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not
despise.

This offering of contrition is in fact the essence of the psalm. This psalm, unlike II Sam. 11 and 12, reveals David as contrite and penitent, remorseful and regretful of his sins. This penetration into his "inner life" shows that indeed he does have a conscience, and this conscience is consumed with guilt. He is desperate to be absolved of his sins and thereby to remove the unbearable taint of transgression from his spirit.

This psalm depicts David as deeply contrite and penitent, aspects of his consciousness that are seldom revealed to the reader in the prose narrative of I and II Samuel, and I Kings 1,2.

(vi) DAVID AND ABSALOM: PSALMS 3, 7

David's adultery with Bathsheba, and his disposal of Uriah the Hittite, is a crucial turning point in both his personal life and his political career. His punishment for these sins is that the sword shall never depart from his house (II Sam. 12: 10) and that God will raise up evil against him out of his own house (II Sam. 12: 11). This presage of evil within David's family is fulfilled in the strife between his children, and the death of four of his sons: the unnamed child from his adulterous union with Bathsheba, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah (Adonijah's death is described in I Kings 2: 13 - 25).

The psalm headings of Psalm 3 and Psalm 7 appear to be connected to David's relationship with Absalom. Psalm 3 begins, "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son" (Ps. 3: 1), seeming to refer to the events of II Sam. 15 - 18. Psalm 7 begins, "Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite." (Ps. 7: 1) This superscription is slightly more obscure, but it could possibly be connected to the events described in II Sam. 18: 19 - 19: 4, when Ahimaaz and Cushy bring the news of Absalom's death to David. The fact that the "Cushi" of II Sam. 18 is called "Cush the Benjamite" in Ps. 7: 1 makes the exact biographical illusion uncertain.

However, the content of these psalms is even more problematic than the heading of Psalm 7. Neither psalm seems to relate in any way to David's relationship with Absalom.

Psalm 3 is a request for God to save him from his enemies, without any reference to Absalom, implicit or explicit. Psalm 7 is the appeal of an accused man: that God should judge him and punish his persecutors. Once again there is no reference to Absalom. The fact that neither of these psalms makes reference to Absalom is insufficient to determine that they do not relate to David's feelings for Absalom, since a strong connection of content would compensate for these supposed omissions. But in both cases the content of the psalms appears to be removed from the David-Absalom context.

It is possible that these psalms are indeed connected to the David-Absalom context, even though the sentiments which they express make it difficult to make this connection, and to understand them in this light. The fact that this connection is obscure does not exclude the possibility that it exists.

The purpose of these observations is not to ascertain the authenticity or relevance of these biographical allusions, since this is not the focus of this work. Rather, the purpose of these observations is to demonstrate that these psalms do not provide an obvious penetration into David's consciousness as regards Absalom. The psalm headings belie the psalms' usefulness in helping the reader understand David's feelings towards Absalom. As such, these psalms will not be discussed further; such a discussion being inexpedient in this case.

A far more insightful revelation of David's feelings towards Absalom occurs in II Sam. 19: 1 - 5, which reflects David's love for Absalom, and his grief and sense of loss at his death.

(vii) DAVID AT THE END OF HIS REIGN: II SAM. 23:1 - 7

"Now these *be* the last words of David." So begins a poem contained in II Sam. 23, namely vss. 1 - 7. Whether this poem is indeed David's last words is impossible to know, but it is in fact appropriate, since this poem is the last of David's creative works to be discussed in this chapter. The content of the poem, as well as its position almost at the end of the Books of Samuel, supports this view, as it serves as David's final reflection on his reign.

Before David speaks, the narrator introduces him as the anointed of God, thereby emphasizing the divine source of his sovereignty and his legitimacy as king. He also calls him "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. 23: 1), referring to his creative and lyric ability. David acknowledges the divine inspiration that he has received: "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." (II Sam. 23: 2).

David then continues and says that God told him how a king should ideally behave and govern:

He that ruleth over men *must* be just, ruling in the fear of God.

And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; as the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain. (II Sam. 23: 3b, 4)

The next verse is the most crucial verse of the poem. In this verse David frankly admits that his reign has not been ideal, that he has not lived up to the monarchical ideal explained to him by God.

When David says, "Although my house *be* not so with God" (II Sam. 23: 5), he is admitting that he has not been the ideal ruler of men, that he has not always been just, that he has not always ruled in fear of God.

David's acknowledgement of the less than ideal nature of his reign could refer to many things: his adultery with Bathsheba, his responsibility for Uriah the Hittite's death, the census, his troubles with his children, etc. David's admission is non-specific, rather it is a blanket admission that he has been neither a perfect nor an ideal king. This sentiment stands in direct contradiction to those expressed in Psalm 18/II Sam. 22. In this poem David describes himself as sinless and righteous, thereby glossing over the wrongs and sins of his reign. II Sam. 23: 1 - 7 is thus a far more honest and candid assessment of David's reign.

This contradiction may be the result of David's writing these poems at different stages in his life, if Psalm 18/II Sam. 22 is accepted as referring to David's effective rescue from Saul when he dies in battle on Mount Gilboa (I Sam. 31, II Sam. 1). In this case Psalm 18/II Sam. 22 reflects the youthful arrogance of a king just beginning his reign, a reign as yet untainted by sin. On the other hand, II Sam. 23:1 - 7 reflects the opposite: the wisdom of an old king, at the end of his reign, candidly assessing his life retrospectively.

However, if Psalm 18/II Sam. 22 is not referring specifically to David's deliverance from Saul, and hence does not relate to the beginning of his reign, this reasoning is invalidated.

The significance of vs. 5 does not end here, because David's candid admission is qualified by another statement:

yet he [God] hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure; for *this* is all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow. (II Sam. 23: 5b)

In this verse David refers to the covenant that God established with him in II Sam. 7: 14 - 16. According to this covenant God would support David and his house *irrespective of his deeds*. God might punish David or his descendants if they sinned, but He would never withdraw His support from David's house. In other words, God established a Davidic dynasty, and *unconditionally guaranteed* its perpetuity.

Here David is recalling this promise, recognising God's constancy, even in the face of his sins. David knows that he has not been a perfect king, but he also knows that God will not abandon him because of this, for God has made with him "an everlasting covenant". Even though he has sinned, David is nonetheless ("yet") assured of God's support.

The poem concludes with an admonition against evil, "Belial". (II Sam. 23: 6) David does not want his reign to be tainted with evil, he wants to distance himself from them. Those who concern themselves with evil "shall be utterly burned with fire ..." (II Sam. 23: 7b) David has acknowledged his own imperfection as king; he does not want his reign to be associated with evil any more than it need be.

This poem shows David candidly reviewing his reign. He acknowledges God as the source of his inspiration, and at the same time he admits that he has not fulfilled the ideal of monarchy as envisaged by God. But he knows that God is bound to his house in an everlasting covenant, despite his inadequacies as king. Whether this knowledge comforts him or shames him is not clear; this is for the reader to decide. Nonetheless, this poem in its frankness and honesty, provides the reader with an insight into David's usually well-concealed conscience. This insight is made more significant in that it occurs at the latter end of David's reign, thus constituting an effective, albeit brief, review of the essence of his reign.

(viii) CONCLUSION

This poem fittingly brings to a close the examination of the psalms and poems which are connected to certain events in David's life. These psalms and poems afford the reader much insight into David's "inner life" or consciousness, revealing a multitude of thoughts and emotions that are not always evident in the prose narration of his life.

David is seen to possess a deep faith in God. In times of trouble or danger he calls for divine aid. Usually he is convinced that God will come to his rescue. He sees his success as pre-ordained by God's selection of him as king — God's will will prevail and those who oppose God's purpose will suffer divine retribution. Thus he combines his deep faith in God with the conviction that he is on a divine mission, and consequently God will help him. It is even possible that David feels that since God has chosen him to be king, He owes him protection; God is bound by the nature of the enterprise to protect the man whom He has chosen to be king.

In contrast to this usual confidence, David sometimes doubts his ability to elude his enemies, and in these situations he feels defenceless, vulnerable and afraid. However, when David realises that he has escaped his enemies and emerged victorious, he ascribes this victory to God. In attributing his triumph to God, he expresses gratitude to God for having rescued him.

He views his victory both as proof that he was correct to entrust his safety to God, and as divine legitimation of his own sovereignty. In addition to his need of God in a practical way, David also has powerful yearnings for God, deriving his spiritual fulfilment from God's proximity.

David abhors evil speech: lying, deceit, slander and malicious gossip. He condemns those who have betrayed him by their evil speech. In fact, the act of betrayal wounds him deeply, and he feels utter contempt for those who are disloyal. This may explain his denunciation of Joab, and the order that he gives to Solomon to put him to death (I Kings 2:5, 6). It can thus be deduced that David values loyalty very highly.

Sometimes David juxtaposes himself as totally righteous with his enemies who are totally wicked. Yet on other occasions he admits that he is not righteous at all, that he has in fact sinned gravely. On these occasions he is penitent, remorseful and contrite. He expresses the desire to repent, and to teach others to be God-fearing as part of this process. And, yet, at other times, he protests his innocence and voices his indignation at being unjustly accused.

David is intoxicated by power: by his own power and control over all the tribes of Israel, and by Israel's military strength and power over other nations. This same intensity of emotion is evident when he mourns for Saul and Jonathan, despite the fact that their deaths facilitate his assumption of power in Israel. This grief reflects the deep affection, or respect, or both, which he felt for them.

Whether these psalms and poems were indeed written by David himself is debatable. It must be emphasized once again that this chapter does not seek either to prove or disprove this theory. The aim of the chapter is to examine David's consciousness in order to determine his position on Ewen's axis of penetration into the character's "inner life".

The principal vehicle which provides the reader with this access into the character's "inner life" is the psalms and the poetry. This means that the penetration into the character's consciousness is achieved intertextually: the narrative text (I and II Samuel, I Kings, 1, 2) provides insufficient penetration into the "inner life", and consequently this information must be drawn from other texts.

The psalms and poems facilitate sufficient insight into David's consciousness for the character to be placed at least mid-way on Ewen's axis of classification.

The psalms and the poetry, when read in conjunction with the narrative text, constitute a valuable insight into David's "inner life", confirming that indeed texts do echo, interact and interpenetrate, as Handelman claims¹²⁸.

¹²⁸ Handelman, S.A., op. cit., p. 47.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

These are the only two descriptions of David in the text. The first is a description of physical appearance, reported by the narrator:

Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful
countenance, and goodly to look to.

(I Sam. 16: 12a)

The second is a description of physical appearance, and of personality, reported by one of Saul's servants:

a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, *that is* cunning
in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war,
and a comely person, and the Lord *is* with him.

(I Sam. 16: 18b)

The fact that this description is reported by another character makes it more subjective, and therefore less authoritative, than the description in I Sam. 16:12a.

These are the only two direct indications of character; this is all the reader is *told*. Everything else is *shown*, through indirect characterization. The manner in which it is shown is such that the reader is obliged to read actively and participate in the characterization process.

The reader must compare and contrast David's behaviour at different stages in his life, as Chapter Two demonstrates. He must examine David's interaction with the other characters, as Chapter Three demonstrates. He is affected by literary devices, like motif, which enrich the characterization, as Chapter Four demonstrates. Finally, he has the option of reading intertextually, of incorporating information contained in other texts into his assessment, as Chapter Five demonstrates.

David's theological and historical significance is testimony to the biblical author's skillful characterization. He presents David in all his flawed humanity to the reader, but simultaneously manages to convey David's greatness and the glory of his reign.

The characterization is open-ended and ambiguous to a certain extent; there is no definitive David. Yet, despite this enigmatic portrayal, David still emerges theologically and historically triumphant. The author's subtle art of persuasion assures David's glory, while at the same time preserving his humanity. In transforming David from a real, historical person into a scriptural representation, he has created a literary masterpiece. This literary achievement demands recognition, for it is this artistry that has shaped David as a theological figure and as a historical figure.

The characterization of David is only a small part of the Bible's literary greatness. Much research remains to be done into the literary aspect of the Bible, so that its significance as a literary work can be fully recognised and appreciated.

APPENDIX: A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF DAVID'S LIFEI Samuel 16 - 31

David is anointed king by the prophet Samuel while still a young shepherd boy. He is not publicly proclaimed king, however, as Saul is still the reigning monarch. A short while after this David is summoned to the royal court where he plays on his lyre, soothing Saul who suffers from bouts of depression and melancholy. Saul becomes very fond of David, as does his son Jonathan, who makes a covenant of friendship with David. But when David becomes a renowned warrior, killing Goliath and many other Philistines, Saul feels threatened by his military success and popular acclaim. His fondness for David turns into deep mistrust, and indeed, a fear of usurpation. Saul is now determined to kill David, but although he tries several times, even mounting massive manhunts, David continually eludes him. Also, Saul had previously given David the honour of marrying his daughter Michal, but he now takes Michal away from David and marries her to another man. David subsequently marries two other women, Ahinoam and Abigail. Jonathan, despite his father's persecution of David, remains loyal to his friend. David becomes an outlaw, and gathers a band of supporters around him. Saul continues to pursue David, and by coincidence two incidents occur where Saul is at the mercy of David. However, in both cases David does not kill Saul.

David and his band of outlaws then become mercenaries, serving Achish, the Philistine king of Gat for three years. At this point there is a decisive battle between the Israelites and the Philistines where Saul and three of his sons are killed.

II Samuel 1 - 24

David laments the death of Saul and Jonathan. After consulting God he goes to the city of Hebron where he takes four more wives and several children are born to him. In Hebron he is proclaimed king of his own tribe, Judah. Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, is proclaimed king of the northern tribes. A war between the two rival kings begins. David's position is considerably strengthened when Ishbosheth's commander-in-chief, Abner, defects to David. Abner then proceeds to unite the tribes of Israel under David. At this point Ishbosheth is murdered by two men of his own tribe, Benjamin, who hoped to win David's favour by eliminating his rival. As a result David is now proclaimed king over all Israel, seven and a half years after becoming king over Judah. David's next move is to conquer Jerusalem from the Jebusites, making it his capital city. He brings the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, thereby centralising religious worship in this city. David expresses his desire to build a temple for God, but God tells him that He does not wish David to do so. David then engages on a series of successful military conquests against the neighbouring nations. The time has now come for David to honour the covenant that he made with his late friend Jonathan, and he does so by granting asylum in Jerusalem to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth.

A diplomatic misunderstanding leads to a protracted war with the Ammonites. During this war David has an adulterous relationship with a married woman called Bathsheba. When Bathsheba falls pregnant David recalls her husband, Uriah the Hittite, from the front in order to make it appear as if he is the father of the child. When this plan fails, David organises for Uriah to be killed in battle. God is displeased by David's behaviour, and punishes him by causing the death of the child of this extra-marital union, and by warning David that He will bring evil on his house.

Soon after the death of their first child, another son, Solomon, is born to David and Bathsheba. It is clearly stated that God loves this child Solomon. But now the evil already presaged comes to pass. Amnon, David's eldest son, rapes his half-sister Tamar. When David fails to punish or reprimand Amnon, Absalom, Tamar's full brother, takes the matter into his own hands by killing Amnon. Absalom, fearing his father's anger, flees to his maternal grandfather in Geshur, and it is evident that a serious rift has developed in the relationship between David and Absalom. Five years later, the two are eventually reconciled, with the help of David's commander-in-chief, Joab. It is not clear, however, whether this is a sincere reconciliation or whether it is just for form's sake.

Despite this apparent reconciliation, Absalom begins to undermine his father's popularity in an attempt to usurp his throne. He manages to win much support and stages a coup d'état, causing David to flee to Jerusalem with those who have remained loyal to him.

Absalom then enters Jerusalem and sleeps with David's concubines. In biblical times sleeping with a monarch's concubine(s) signified the replacement of the monarch by the man concerned. A battle ensues between the followers of Absalom and the followers of David. Although David expressly instructs his troops not to harm Absalom, Joab does indeed kill him, thereby quashing the coup and restoring David to power. David, utterly heartbroken at the death of his son, returns to Jerusalem.

Shortly afterwards there is another attempted coup, namely that of Sheba, the son of Bichri, and his Benjamite followers. This second coup is unsuccessful.

There is a famine in the land for three years and God tells David that it is in requital for Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites. David subsequently appeases the Gibeonites by giving them seven of Saul's sons whom they hang. Then the Philistines war against Israel again, and once again the Israelites defeat them. David then decides to take a census of the people, even though this is forbidden by Jewish law¹²⁹. Joab cautions him not to take the census, reminding him of the prohibition, but nonetheless David insists, and the census is taken. Since David has sinned by taking the census, God punishes him by bringing a plague on Israel for three days.

¹²⁹ See Ex. 30:11 - 16.

The plague stops at the threshing-floor of a certain Jebusite named Araunah. David buys the threshing-floor from Araunah and builds an altar to God there to show his gratitude for the cessation of the plague. This threshing-floor subsequently becomes the site of the Temple.

I Kings 1 - 2: 10

When David is old and frail there is yet another fight for the throne. Adonijah, next-in-line after Absalom (now dead) proclaims himself king, even though David is still alive. Nathan, the prophet, hearing of this, sends Bathsheba to David to remind him of his promise that Solomon would inherit the throne. David, thus reminded (or instructed; there is no textual proof of such a promise ever being made), has Solomon anointed king, thereby invalidating Adonijah's proclamation of himself as king.

Finally David is on his death-bed. He calls Solomon to him and gives him his blessing, along with some instructions to be carried out after his death. After having given these instructions, David dies and is buried in Jerusalem.

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