

Rereading the *relecture*?

The Question of (Post)chronistic Influence in the
Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel

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Elaborated Literary Violence: Genre and Ideology of the Two Stories I Sam 22,6–23 and II Sam 21,1–14

Jürg Hutzli

The present article focuses on two stories dealing with acts of big blood shed. I Sam 22,6–23 relates the massacre of the priests of Nob; II Sam 21,1–14 is about the execution of seven descendents of Saul, as atonement for Saul's attempt to exterminate the Gibeonites. Most researchers consider both stories or at least certain parts of them old.¹ For both stories few verses are regarded as secondary.

In this paper I try to reassess the analysis of these stories and will point to indices favoring a late date of origin for both of them. They concern the language in use, intertextual connections and particular motifs. A further indication consists in the fact that the reported events of the stories lack significant resonance in the corpus of the Hebrew Bible. There are only two texts, I Sam 2,33 and Ps 52,2, which allude or refer to I Sam 22,6–23. With regard to the importance of the related events and acts this silence in the Biblical context is astonishing. Interestingly, also in the Book of Chronicles one does not find any allusions to these stories. This raises the question whether the latter were composed after the formation of the book of Chronicles.²

1. Literary character and setting of I Sam 22,6–23

1.1. Introduction: The place of the story I Sam 22,6–23 within I-II Sam

As for its contents, I Sam 22,6–23 is connected with a few other texts in I-II Samuel. First, it seems to be the natural continuation of the story of David's visit at the sanctuary of Nob (I Sam 21,1–10). Doeg, the chief of Saul's shepherds, who

¹ As for I Sam 22, cf. among others: Wellhausen, *Composition*, 251; Smith, *Commentary*, 205; Hertzberg, *Samuelbücher*, 147–148; Stoebe, *Das erste Buch*, 411–12; Dietrich, *Königszeit*, 151; cf. also McCarter, *I Samuel*, 365; Hentschel, *I Samuel*, 127–130, who paraphrases the events as having happened; for II Sam 21, cf. among others: Klostermann, *Bücher*, 168; Budde, *Bücher*, 244–245; de Vaux, *livres*, 231; Hertzberg, *Samuelbücher*, 310; VanderKam, *Complicity*, 537–540; Caquot/de Robert, *livres*, 453; Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch*, 458; Caquot/de Robert, *livres*, 586; McKenzie, *David*, 124–125, 136–137; Halpern, *Demons*, 84–87; Dietrich, *Königszeit*, 152.

² In two earlier articles I analyzed both texts (cf. Hutzli, *Saul*, and *id.* *l'exécution*). In the present contribution I will summarize and refine my reflections, supplement them with further arguments.

will slaughter all priests from Nob, is mentioned in the former story, we read that he was detained before Yhwh (21,8). In 22,6–23 he tells Saul about David’s visit in Nob; this report leads to the accusation of Ahimelek the chief priest of Nob and finally to his and the entire priesthood’s execution. However, there are slight discrepancies between the two stories; Doeg’s report towards King Saul is not concordant with certain elements of the plot of I Sam 21,2–10. We will take a closer look at the relationship between the two stories later.

Secondly, the pericope of I Sam 22 is also related to texts more remote in I-II Sam. The close connection of I Sam 22,6–23 to the oracle of the anonymous prophet in I Sam 2,27–36 on one hand and the short genealogical text 14,3a on the other becomes evident. In fact, the prophet of 2,27–36 announces the somber event of I Sam 22,6–23: I Sam 2,33 predicts that all members of Eli’s house will encounter a violent death (cf. the text versions of 4QSam^a and LXX); only one member of the priestly family will survive.

I Sam 2,33 (4QSam^a and LXX):

And I do not destroy a man from my altar
it shall be that his eyes may fail and his soul may perish;
but all the abundance (מַרְבִּית) of your house shall fall by the sword of
men.

It is quite certain that this prophecy points to the events related in I Sam 22,6–23: the massacre of the priesthood of Nob and the escape of the only survivor Abyatar. Sometimes v.33 is interpreted as referring to the events of I Sam 4 (defeat of the Israelites against the Philistines, death of the two sons of Eli, survival of Ikabod);³ but this interpretation causes the difficulty that the noun מַרְבִּית “plenty, abundance” hardly refers to only two men.⁴

The connectedness of the two texts 2,27–36 and 20,6–23 is supported by the genealogical text I Sam 14,3a; here the identification of the two priesthoods (the Elides, the priests of Nob) is made more explicit:

I Samuel 14,3a:

And Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod’s brother, the son of Phinehas,
the son of Eli, the priest of Yhwh at Shiloh, was wearing the “Ephod”.

This verse consists of a genealogical chain which indeed connects 2,27–36 and the story of 22,6–23: Ahiah, a priest in the days of King Saul, is said to be a great-grandson of priest Eli, and at the same time the son of Ahitub who is – according to I Sam 22,6–23 – the father of Ahimelek, the priest of Nob. This affiliation is highlighted in the story of I Sam 22.

Undoubtedly, these two texts and the story of the massacre of Nob (I Sam 22,6–23) are closely connected. How must their mutual relations be described

³ Cf. Stoebe, *Das erste Buch*, 119; Dietrich, *Samuel*, 145.

⁴ Cg. Hutzli, *Erzählung*, 174.

diachronically? What text is dependent from which? In scholarship the texts 2,27–36 and 14,3a, in their present form, are often considered secondary insertions in their context. Timo Veijola for instance believed that they were formulated by the Deuteronomist.⁵ Others believe that both, the oracle of 2,27–36 and verse 14,3a, contain old elements belonging to the tradition of I Sam 2 and I Sam 14 respective (Dietrich⁶). Concerning the story of the massacre of Nob (I Sam 22) however, almost all scholars consider it older and predating the two other texts (final version).

In the following, I will shortly address myself the question of the literary setting and the probable mutual relationships between the three texts. In a second step the relation between the adjacent texts I Sam 21,1–11 and 22,6–23 will be highlighted. Afterwards I will add further observations concerning some particularities of the story which will allow describing its literary character and setting. Finally I will consider extent and tendency of the redaction layer to which the story 22,6–23 probably belongs and the possible date of origin.

1.2. The literary historical relationship between the three texts 2,27–36, 14,3a, and 22,6–23

How does the story I Sam 22,6–23 relate diachronically to the two texts I Sam 2,27–36 and 14,3? In order to answer this question first the three texts will briefly be examined in their contexts.

An indication that the oracle of the anonymous prophet as a whole forms a later insertion in its context is verse 3,1 which immediately follows.⁷ This verse marks the beginning of the story of Yhwh's revelation to Samuel:

I Samuel 3,1:

ודבר-יהוה היה יקר בימים ההם אין חזון נפרץ

And the word of Yhwh was precious in those days; no vision “broke through”.

If the story of I Sam 3 was the immediate continuation of 2,27–36 its author probably would have formulated the opening differently.⁸ To this argument might be added an observation concerning the image of Eli the priest: while in the oracle of 2,27–36 the latter is absolutely negative, in I Sam 1–4 one finds important positive traits (for instance Eli's blessing and advice are effective [cf. 1,17 and 2,20]). A further indication for a late origin of the composition 2,27–36 is the identification of the Elides with the Levites.⁹ No other text in the adjacent chapters

⁵ Veijola, *Dynastie*, 38–42.

⁶ Cf. Dietrich, *Samuel*, 123–125.

⁷ For all questions concerning the formation of I Sam 2,27–36 and the relationship to its context, cf. already Hutzli, *Erzählung*, 167–181.

⁸ Cf. Veijola, *Dynastie*, 35.

⁹ Cf. also Mommer, *Samuel*, 9.

presupposes such an equation. In general one should note that Levites do not play any role in the plot of Samuel.¹⁰ As for the pericope 2,27–36, the fact that the “house of Eli” is identified with the Levites becomes obvious by a juxtaposition of 2,28 with Deut 18,5, the verse stating the election of the Levites in Deuteronomy:

I Sam 2,28:

ובחר אתו מכל-שבטי ישראל לי לכהן לעלות על-מזבחי להקטיר קטרת
לשאת אפוד לפני ואתנה לבית אביך את-כל-אשי בני ישראל:

And I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priests – to ascend my altar, to burn incense, and to carry an ephod before me – and I assigned to your father’s house all offerings by fire of the Israelites.

Deut 18,5:

כי בו בחר יהוה אלהיך מכל-שבטיך לעמד לשרת בשם-יהוה הוא ובניו
כל-הימים:

For Yhwh your God has chosen him out of all your tribes, to be in attendance for service in the name of Yhwh, he and his descendants, for all time.

We note also the motif of the “revelation to the house of Eli’s father” (2,27) which presupposes the Moses story of Ex 2 and 3 (Moses is designated as “man of the house of Levi” in Ex 2,1). Thus the father of the house of Eli seems to be Levi.

As positive counterpart of the Levites appears the Jerusalem priesthood; the expression “reliable priest” (כהן נאמן, 2,35) clearly alludes to Zadok, the eponym of the Zadokides. The latter are regarded as the elected priesthood by the author of the text. Zadok is opposed to Abiathar to whom the oracle alludes in 2,33.

By dealing with this theme (rejection of the Levites, election of the Zadokides) the oracle of I Sam 2,27–36 is thus quite unique within its context. Background of the prophecy is probably the conflict between Zadokides and Levites which was virulent probably in Babylonian and in Persian period and also later.¹¹

Also for I Sam 14,3a, some observations suggest that this text was secondarily inserted in its context: V. 3a interrupts the narrative flow: 3b seems to be the smooth continuation of 2 (cf. the key word עם “troops”). Furthermore the expression נשא אפוד only appears here and in the two texts 2,27–36 and 22,6–23. In chapter 14 an anonymous priest is mentioned three times, but in the context of these verses the idiom נשא אפוד never occurs.

With Veijola and others we can conclude that the “genealogical bridge” of 14,3a and the oracle of 2,27–36 secondarily link the priesthood of Nob with the house of Eli in Shiloh in order to identify the two priesthoods.¹²

¹⁰ Verses mentioning Levites (I Sam 6,15; II Sam 15,24) are generally considered secondary, cf. among others Campbell, I Samuel, 80; McCarter, I Samuel, 136; id., II Samuel, 370; Veijola, *Dynastie*, 44.

¹¹ Cf. below I.5.

¹² Veijola, *Dynastie*, 43.

As told above, most commentators consider I Sam 22,6–23 old and preserving historical reminiscences concerning the fate of the priesthood of Nob, they see the story on the same literary level as I Sam 21,1–10.¹³ If any only few verses are regarded as late insertions: Vejjola believed that the specification of Nob’s priests as “Ephod bearers” (cf. 22,18), which occurs elsewhere only in the two related texts (in 2,28 and 14,3a) was added by the Deuteronomist (“DtrG”).¹⁴ Budde¹⁵ reckoned with a literary connectedness of 22,7 with the described “practice of the king” in I Sam 8,11–14.

In the following, I will question this contention and argue instead that the entire story is a late composition and probably stems from the same author as I Sam 2,27–36. In fact, close examination reveals further elements of I Sam 22,6–23 (besides the motif of the Ephod bearers) referring to the oracle of 2,27–36 or the genealogical link of 14,3a. I will discuss them shortly:

1. The expression “house of your father” (“his father”) occurs three times in relation with the mention of Ahimelech, the priest: כָּל-בֵּית אֲבִיו (I Sam 22,11.16); בֵּית אֲבִיךָ (22,22). The same term is used four times in the oracle of 2,27–36 (בֵּית אֲבִיךָ “house of your father”; cf. I Sam 2,27.28.30.31). We may conclude that in I Sam 22,6–23 the “father” (ancestor) of the house is the same as in the oracle: Levi (s. above).
2. In the story I Sam 22 Ahimelech’s name is followed four times by the patronymic “son of Ahituph” (cf. וְאֶהֱיָמֶלֶךְ בֶּן-אֲחִיטוּב, I Sam 14,3; 22,9.11.12.20). Interestingly enough, this patronymic does not appear in the story I Sam 21,1–11 (David’s visit to the Nob sanctuary); here Ahimelech is designated only by his first name (three occurrences).
3. As for the expression נֶאֱמַן (2,35bis; 22,14), it occurs only five times in I-II Sam: two attestations are found in I Sam 2,27–36 and one in the story of I Sam 22. Considering these points in total they are strong indexes that I Sam 22,6–23 is composed with regards to the oracle of the anonymous prophet 2,27–36 and 14,3a.¹⁶

Thus we should ask the question whether the story of the Nob’s massacre is on the same literary level as these two texts. With regard to the communalities of vocabulary and the mutuality of references this conclusion seems possible to

¹³ See above, n. 1.

¹⁴ Vejjola, *Dynastie*, 40–41.

¹⁵ See Budde, *Bücher*, 153: “Der Wortlaut erinnert sehr an 8 14 12 (...); doch ist bei so nächstliegenden Dingen schwer zu entscheiden, ob ein literarischer Zusammenhang vorliegt.”

¹⁶ One might respond that all these diverse elements were secondarily inserted (cf. Vejjola’s suggestion concerning the term “bearers of the Ephod”). However, this seems unlikely: if there was a redactor with the intention to insert these elements, certainly he would have inserted them also in I Sam 21,1–10. Yet, they are lacking there, the motif of the Ephod (cf. 21,10) excepted. Concerning this latter, one should recognize that it differs from the occurrence in I Sam 22,18 insofar the specific expression “bearer of the Ephod” is lacking. In the Septuagint version of 21,10 the term “Ephod” is absent, too.

me. Alike these texts thus the composition I Sam 22,6–23 belongs as well to a comprehensive redactional layer covering the Books of Samuel. Probably other texts are to be ascribed to this layer, too.¹⁷

As the next two paragraphs will show, there are further indications for a relatively late origin of the story and its insertion in its context.

1.3. The relationship between I Sam 21,2–10 and 22,6–23

Careful investigation of the two related stories I Sam 21 and 22 reveal some significant differences between them: They concern all Doeg's testimony report about David's stay in Nob (cf. I Sam 22,9–10) which deviates from the story I Sam 21,1–10 in three points:

⁹ Doeg the Edomite, who was standing among the courtiers of Saul, spoke up: "I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelech son of Ahitub at Nob.

¹⁰ He inquired of Yhwh on his behalf and gave him provisions; he also gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

Communalities with the presentation of I Sam 21,2–10 are as follows: (1) David is provided with food; (2) he receives the sword of Goliath. However, there are slight but important differences:

1. What David receives is not holy bread but ordinary, profane food (cf. צִידָה "provisions" [v. 10] and לֶחֶם "bread, food" [v. 13]).
2. Doeg states that Ahimelech inquired of Yhwh on David's behalf (I Sam 22,10). Interestingly enough, this inquiry is not mentioned in I Sam 21. In I Sam 22 however this motif is highlighted: It occurs three times (in the testimony of Doeg, in the accusation of Ahimelech by Saul (22,13) and finally in the defense speech of Ahimelech (22,15)).
3. In the story of I Sam 21 David lies and pretends to visit the sanctuary by order of King Saul. In the account of I Sam 22 this motif is lacking. Yet, one expects the priest would mention this aspect in his defense speech; because it would discharge him.

For what reason does the presentation in I Sam 22 deviate from the preceding story in these three points? I see the following explanation: The author of I Samuel 22,6–23 intends to put David in more positive light and slightly correct the picture drawn by I Sam 21: (1) In his eyes David should not order holy bread, this is not worthy of a future King's behavior. According to Lev 24,9 sacred bread may only be eaten by the priests. (2) The main motive for David's visit should be religious: The inquiry of Yhwh should be prioritized. The author has thus not only

¹⁷ See below I.5.

a particular interest to emphasize David's religious integrity (cf. first point), but also to refer to his piety. (3) Furthermore, the non-mention of the false testimony of David is also in line with this tendency to gloss-over David.

All observations together indicate that both stories are composed by different authors. It seems that I Sam 22,6–23 stems from a later time than I Sam 21,1–11; its author had the intention to “adjust” the image of David and thus to put it in contrast with the darkened image of king Saul.

1.4. The literary character of I Sam 22,6–23

But the author of the text is not only acquainted with the preceding story I Sam 21 but with large parts of the Book of Samuel; throughout his text he picks up motifs and idioms found in other stories of I-II Sam:

- The motif of the spear in the hand of Saul at the beginning of the story (cf. I Sam 22,6b) appears also in I Sam 18,10 and 19,9.
- The author of I Sam 22,6–23 opens his story by depicting Saul as leader sitting under a tree (a tamarisk). A very similar beginning is found in I Sam 14,2. There is a difference between the two formulations which might reveal a special intention of the author: While according to I Sam 14,2 Saul is sitting under “the pomegranate tree at Migron” the beginning of the story of I Sam 22,6 reports that Saul was sitting “under the tamarisk tree on the height”. Since the tamarisk (לשן) was considered as a sacred tree¹⁸ and Saul's place presumably originally is called *bāmâ*, “high place” (cf. LXX¹⁹) the author probably alludes to a sacred place.²⁰ With regard to the obviously dark image of Saul apparent in the story this “ouverture” may be intentional: already at beginning Saul holds the “wrong” religious position; *bāmôt* (“high places”) and sacred tree are disqualified in many Dtr texts²¹; before the background of these texts Saul appears as an apostate.

¹⁸ Cf. Gen 21,33 and I Sam 31,13. – An indication that the tamarisk more than other trees had the status of a sacred tree becomes apparent from the special rendering of its name in the Septuagint: In all three texts (Gen 21,33; I Sam 22,6; 31,13) the translator renders the Hebrew term by ἄρουρα “cornland, field”. We follow the interpretation of “La Bible d’Alexandrie” (Grillet/Lestienne, Livre, 37), which diagnoses a theological motivated rendering: the translator was keen to avoid the impression that the tamarisk had the function of a holy tree in ancient Israel. Josephus avoids an appropriate translation of the expression לשן אשל as well (cf. Ant. 1,212; 6,251.377 and Begg, Antiquities, 198).

¹⁹ Theologically, the reading of the Septuagint is more difficult; the textual evolution במה (LXX G^{BL}) -> רמה (MT) seems more probable than the opposite development. *rāmâ* (MT) functions as a toponym.

²⁰ Cf. Driver, Notes, 180: “Saul held his court under a sacred tree (...), and in a sacred place”, cf. also Budde, Bücher, 152.

²¹ Critical towards sacred trees: Deut 12,2; I Reg 14,23; II Reg 16,4; II Reg 17,10; critical towards the “heights”: I Reg 3,3; 12,31; 12,44; II Reg 12,4 and *passim*.

- In 22,7 Saul refers to the “the practice of the king” which is described in I Sam 8. We recognize important similarities concerning the used vocabulary:²²

I Sam 22,7: “Saul said to the courtiers standing about him, ‘Listen, men of Benjamin! Will the son of Jesse give *fields and vineyards* (שדות וכרמים) to every one of you? And will he make (ישים) all of you *captains of thousands or captains of hundreds* (שרי אלפים ושרי מאות)?”

I Sam 8,11–14: ¹¹ “This will be the practice of the king (...)”: He will take your sons (...) ¹² and appoint (ולשים) them as *his chiefs of thousands and of fifties* (G: of hundreds) (שרי אלפים וחמשים) [G: מאות]; ... ¹⁴ He will seize your choice fields (שדותיכם), vineyards (כרמיכם), and olive groves, and give (ותתן) them to his courtiers.

- The formulation of the extermination of the priesthood in Nob corresponds to the ban order in I Sam 15,3 (word for word).

I Sam 22,19: And he *struck* (הכה) Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, *both men and women, children and infants; also oxen, donkeys, and sheep* (ועד אשה מעולל ועד מאיש ועד אשה מעולל ועד יונק ושור וחמור ושה ויונק ושור וחמור ושה), *he struck* with the edge of the sword. I Sam 15,3: Now go and *strike* (והכיתה) Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death *both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey* (מאיש ועד אשה מעולל ועד יונק משור ועד שה מגמל ועד חמור ועד חמור).

This reference to I Sam 15 shows again, that the author does not simply copy from another text but interacts with it subtly and sarcastically in order to polemize against Saul: The consistency which Saul lacks in his fulfillment of the divine banning order against the Amalekites he is ready to apply when punishing the Yhwh-priests of Nob.²³

Together these observations lead to the conclusion that I Sam 22,6–23 was composed as a literary “patchwork” which borrows elements from several texts of I-II Samuel. The examination of the manifold references reveals the author’s keenness to darken the image of Saul.

Furthermore, the analysis corroborates our estimation that the story already presupposes the formation of the Book of Samuel (s. above 1.2.).

²² The correspondence between the two texts is seen in Budde, Bücher, 153.

²³ The correspondence of these two texts is noted only by few commentators (cf. Stolz, Samuel, 147; Stoebe, Das erste Buch, 410).

1.5. Extent and tendency of the redaction layer, possible date of origin

What are the ideological interests behind the story? We detected two tendencies: On the one hand, the story depicts a very dark image of King Saul, which contrasts the positive one of David and, on the other hand, I Sam 22,6–23 is centered on the massacre of a priesthood and its loss of power. The mutual references to I Sam 2,27–36 and 14,3a, which deal with the priesthood of the Elides (Levites), suggest that it is rather the second topic which is the main theme. The three texts are part of a comprehensive redactional layer which is interested to bring the ruling priesthoods and priests of the time Saul and David in a genealogical relationship. Other texts concerning the priest Abiathar in the following chapters may be attributed to this layer as well: At the end of the story I Sam 22,6–23 (cf. v.20) we are told that a priest of Ahimelech's clan, Abiathar, survived the massacre. Abiathar escaped to David and the latter appointed him as a "bearer of the Ephod". In the subsequent chapters Abiathar is mentioned twice in the context of an inquiry of Yhwh; in both episodes Abiathar hands out the Ephod to David (cf. 23,9–10; 30,7–8). Concerning the passage in 23,9–10, the reader is surprised of Abiathar's being mentioned since in the preceding passage (23,1–5), which deals with a divination as well, the priest and his Ephod are not brought up.²⁴ Striking are the occurrences of the patronymic "son of Ahimelech" in I Sam 23,6 and 30,7, which bind these texts back to the massacre story. In II Samuel Abiathar is also mentioned, but here he never appears in the context of an inquiry of the deity. It is interesting to see that in these chapters there is no allusion to Abiathar's provenance from Nob nor to his forefathers (the patronymic Ahimelech never occurs). It seems that the author(s) of the episodes of the "court history" were not acquainted with I Sam 23,6–23 and the Abiathar-texts in I Samuel. The question arises whether Abiathar originally was only mentioned in the context of the court history; and whether the texts in I Samuel mentioning him (22,6–23; 23,6–9 and 30,7) were all inserted secondarily. Finally there is a short notice I Reg 2,27b which at first sight one might ascribe to the comprehensive redaction layer. It interprets Abiathar's dismissal by Solomon from his office (I Reg 2,26–27a) as a fulfillment of the oracle of the anonymous man of God (I Sam 2,27–36). However, this reference (I Reg 2,27b) might stem from an even later hand.²⁵

On the basis of the present analysis of texts we presume that the redactional layer is limited on the Books of Samuel. First, it identifies the priesthood of Shilo with the Levites, and secondly, it links this family to the priesthood of Nob. The latter is almost totally annihilated. The aim of the author is to show that the Elides-Levites Priesthood, because of severe transgressions of the sons of Eli, was rejected by Yhwh and was, from a certain time on, forced to accomplish

²⁴ Cf. McCarter, I Samuel, 371–372.

²⁵ A "difficult" point of this reference is that according to I Sam 2,33 the "spared" Elide continues to ascend the altar of Yhwh, whereas, according to I Reg 2,27, Abiathar is banned from it. This probably shows that the two verses stem from two distinct authors.

subordinate priestly tasks. Strikingly enough, the newly elected priestly line of Zadok, has no Levitical origin. *This discontinuity between Levites and Zadokides is a particularity of the ideology of this redaction layer.*

As background of the comprehensive redaction layer we assume the conflict between Zadokides and Levites which was virulent in Persian time and later. A juxtaposition of the conceptions of priesthood in Deuteronomy, Ez, P and Chronicles shows strong heterogeneity and dissent in post-exilic Judahite literature concerning position, rights and duties of priests and Levites and their relationship. In Deuteronomy priests are designated as Levites; an increasing number of scholars, however, consider this identification secondary.²⁶ That there is a conflict between the two parties is clearly expressed in the so-called “Zadokides-layer” of the Book of Ezekiel (Ez 44,6–31).²⁷ According to this text, the Levites, who are accused of “disloyalty” are forced to accomplish lower temple services (Ez 44,9–14). Only the descendants of Zadok, who are considered a distinct group of Levites are allowed to execute the sacred services (fat and blood offerings) (cf. 44,15–16). We notice that the Zadokides here nevertheless are seen as Levites. For this reason the global rejection of the Levites found in the oracle I Sam 2,27–36 and the analyzed related texts is a much more extreme position than that of Ez 44.

2. The story about the revenge of the Gibeonites (II Sam 21,1–14)

2.1. The place of II Sam 21,1–14 in its context

In modern scholarship the estimation is widespread that the story II Sam 21,1–14 stems from an early tradition and preserves reminiscences of real events from the time of Saul and David.²⁸ Certain scholars believe that the place of the story within the book of Samuel has changed in the course of the literary history of the story.²⁹ Originally it would have preceded the pericope dealing with David putting Mippibaal under his supervision (II Sam 9). This story begins with David’s question: “Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” (9,1) According to the mentioned scholars this question originally alluded to the events reported in the story II Sam 21,1–14. But before assuming a “move” of the narrative during literary history or I-II Sam at the end of book, it is worth asking if its current place cannot be explained satisfactorily. For instance, it is possible that the pericope has been placed in the “appendix” of I-II Sam (II Sam 21–24), because it stems from a different tradition

²⁶ Cf. Dahmen, *Leviten*, 263–320 (316–320), Otto, *Levitisierung*; Achenbach, 285–309; *Levitisches Priester*, 285–309; Rudnig, *Heilig*, 280–318.

²⁷ Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, 1139; Rudnig, *Heilig*, 204–212, 280–304; Konkel, *Architektonik*, 305–322.

²⁸ Cf. n.1.

²⁹ Cf. among others: Klostermann, 168; Budde, *Bücher*, 244–245; de Vaux, *livres*, 231; J.C. VanderKam, *Complicity*, 537–539; Caquot / de Robert, *livres*, 453; McKenzie, *David*, 136–137.

than the other stories dealing with the descendants of Saul, or because it was created very late, after the formation of the Book of Samuel, as suggested by researchers for other texts in ch. 21–24. In fact, there are indications favoring the second possibility. Through the examination of language and motifs we will come to the conclusion that the story II Sam 21,1–14 is a late composition, presupposing already the formation of the books of Samuel. As for the question of the narrative II Sam 9 (“Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul...?”), in my opinion, it does not necessarily allude to the story of the execution of the Gibeonites. The question of 9,1 is easily understood in the context of the stories reporting the death of Saul and three of his sons in the battle of Gilboa (I Sam 31) on the one hand, and the death of Eshbaal, another son of Saul (II Sam 4,1–12), on the other.

2.2. Indications for a late date of origin of the original story

Many indices, concerning both language and contents, favor a late, post-exilic date of the story’s formation:³⁰

- The expression “Israelites and Judeans”, in v.2, is in tension with the political situation which is presupposed by the stories of Saul; the differentiation between these two entities in I-II Samuel is rare.³¹
- In the story of 21,1–14 Gibeon is designated as belonging to “the rest of the Amorites”. By this the text alludes to the motif of the partial extermination of the autochthonous population in the Deuteronomistic literature.³² It is interesting to see that in I-II Samuel – where Gibeon occurs several times³³ – this town is never called an Amorite or Canaanite town but rather seems to be Israelite. – In consideration of the fact that these two first observations refer to v.2, one might wonder if the latter was inserted secondarily into the composition (see the proposal of T. Veijola).³⁴ Yet the argument of A. Malamat³⁵ and P. McCarter³⁶ against this contention seems more compelling: if v.2 was removed it would remain unclear in what the fault and the charge of Saul consists; Saul has killed many people of different nations. The severe reaction of the deity (famine) is easier to understand if the fault concerns a violation of a divine law (concerning the treaty with the Gibeonites, cf. Josh 9), as stated in v.2.

³⁰ Cf. also C. Edenburg’s contribution in the present volume.

³¹ The term *בני יהודה* appears only once more in II Sam 1,17. II Sam 11,11 distinguishes between Israel and Judah as two distinct army units. The merism *בני־ישראל ויהודה* “Israelites and Judeans”, however, is nowhere else found in I-II Sam.

³² Ex 23,23; 33,2; 34,11; Dtn 7,1; 20,17; Jos 3,10; I Reg 9,20–21; II Chr 8,7–8; Esr 9,1.

³³ II Sam 2,12.13.16.24; 3,30; 20,8.

³⁴ David und Meribaal, RB 85 (1978), 338–358 (351–352), cf. also Edenburg, Chicken, 124–125 and already Klostermann, Bücher, 234; Smith, Commentary, 374.

³⁵ Malamat, Doctrines, 9.

³⁶ McCarter, II Samuel, 441.

- The formulation לָּ שׁ / לָּ אִי followed by an infinitive (see v.4), is attested predominantly in late texts, as it is shown by Samuel Rolles Driver.³⁷
- It is striking that neither the three-year famine (cf. v.1) nor Saul’s killing of the Gibeonites (cf. v.1–2, 5) is mentioned anywhere else in Samuel and in the entire Hebrew Bible. With regard to the importance of these events, the lack of resonance seems odd. Concerning this observation, one may ask whether the authors and first redactors of the Books of Samuel really were acquainted with the story of the execution of the seven members of Saul’s family.
- The estimation of a late date of origin is also justified by the fact that the narrative has traits of an artificial composition: we note the symbolic value of numbers (the famine lasts three years, seven of Saul’s descendants die), and the lack of realism (Rizpah alone watches over the bodies of the executed Saulides during several months). These characteristics of legends are untypical for most of the stories of Samuel.³⁸

2.3. The possible intention of the story

Considering the consequences of all events reported in the story, one recognizes on the one hand the reestablishment of balance in the relationship between the deity, Israel and the Gibeonites, and on the other hand the severe loss in the family of Saul. It is this second aspect that means a change in the “state of affairs” if comparing with the foregoing chapters. With regard to this serious disruption in the history of the house of Saul we should ask whether the author wants to make his readers believe that at the end of David’s reign all descendants of Saul had disappeared. Against this could be argued that there is no explicit statement that the seven condemned formed the entire lineage of Saul. In fact, besides these seven descendants there is mention of Mippibaal, the son of Jonathan, which is spared by David. But Mippibaal is lame. His infirmity probably hinders him from being a valid candidate for the throne: the first kings of Israel were, like priests, “anointed” sacred characters, and as for the latter, the physical integrity was essential for the exercise of the office. Besides Mippibaal, there is no reference to other family members of Saul in the preceding chapters.³⁹ For this reason a symbolic interpretation of the number seven seems justified: The choice of this figure might be explained by the fact that it means – in Israel and the Ancient East in general – a complete entity.⁴⁰ By the use of the number seven and by

³⁷ Driver, *Treatise*, §202,1.

³⁸ They are recognizable in the story of II Sam 24 – remarkably a story also found in the appendix of I-II Sam.

³⁹ According to II Sam 9,12 Mippibaal had a son whose name was Mica. Apparently the author of II Sam 21,1–14 had overlooked him.

⁴⁰ Examples: the seven days of the week, the seven lamps of the menorah, and the seven councilors of the king of Persia.

the assertion that only the mutilated son Jonathan survived, the story expresses metaphorically, but no less clearly, the completion of the dynasty of Saul during the David's reign. In addition, the reader learns that this end is the consequence of a severe transgression of Israel's first king and that it corresponds to the will of Yhwh.

Among all names occurring in the story, Saul's name is the most mentioned.⁴¹ This is an indication that he is the central figure in the story's background.⁴² Furthermore, it is striking that members of his family are always designated by a term of relation to the *pater familias* ("son of Saul", "Saul's daughter", "the son of the son of Saul", "Saul's concubine").⁴³

Obviously, the story draws a very dark image of Saul. Saul is responsible for the unjustified killing of the Gibeonites and for its drastic consequence, the three years lasting famine, as well. The marked anti-saulide orientation of the text is accompanied by a pro-Davidic tendency. In fact, the author does not depict David as a Machiavellian ruler⁴⁴, but as a responsible king who, by seeking Yhwh, makes a first good step to resolve the crisis of the severe famine, and, furthermore, by fulfilling the desire of the Gibeonites, respects the will of God. Also David's final act, the order of a decent burial for the descendants of Saul, contributes to the positive image of David.

Thus the investigation of the language and motifs leads to the contention that the story seems to be both late and ideologically motivated. The place in the appendix of the books of Samuel (II Sam 21–24) may now be explained as follows: With regard to the end of the saga of David with its major theme of the king's succession, a redactor is keen to add information about the status of the house of Saul and its possible candidates for the throne. The story culminates in the statement of the loss of Saul's offspring: no Saulide will make claim for the throne over Israel.

2.4. Anti-Saulide texts in the Former Prophets

We have to ask for the author's motivation to compose such a story; for what reason does he aim to show to his readers the accomplishment of Saul's house? Is

⁴¹ Saul's name appears 13 times, more than that of David (11 times).

⁴² Cf. Exum, *Tragedy*, 114.

⁴³ Cf. "Mippibaal, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul" (v. 7); "... two sons that Rizpah daughter of Aiah bore to Saul" (v. 8); "Michal the daughter of Saul" (v. 8); "Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul" (v. 11); "Jonathan his son (i.e. Saul's)" (v. 12–14).

⁴⁴ According to some commentators, the author draws a rather dark image of David. The story would suggest that the latter wanted to get rid of the remaining descendants of Saul. Caquot / de Robert, *livres*, 586, for instance recognize "un machiavélisme de David profitant d'une famine pour se débarrasser de prétendants saülides", cf. also McKenzie, *David*, 124–125. 136–137 and Halpern, *Demons*, 84–87. – However, the story does not reveal any traces suggesting such an intention of the author. According to the text, David's decision to hand the seven descendants of Saul over for execution is solely due to the desire or need of the Gibeonites for atonement. Furthermore, this desire is justified by Yhwh's word and acting: The famine is caused by the lack of atonement, it is stopped only after the execution and respectful burial of Saul's descendants.

there a real politic interest behind this statement? The pericope can be associated with other stories which seem to be motivated by an anti-saulide tendency. Yairah Amit rightly points to the “hidden” polemic orientation of the narrative of Judges 19–21 which in fact polemizes against the tribe of Benjamin and King Saul. Amit opposes hidden polemical to openly polemical texts.⁴⁵ In Judges 19–21 the figure of Saul of course does not occur. But by connotating very negatively Saul’s home town Gibeah and by contrasting it to the “positive” Judean Bethlehem the story reveals its polemical hidden agenda.⁴⁶ As for the story II Sam 21 the unfavorable image of Saul is shown openly. A hidden agenda, however, is detectable here as well: Without saying it explicitly the author alludes to the completion of Saul’s dynasty.

As shown above an anti-saulide trend is also recognizable in the story of the massacre at Nob (I Sam 22,6–23), though this is not the primary motivation of the author (see above). In addition, it is worth mentioning the negative perception of Saul in the books of Chronicles.

It has been suggested that the background of these texts (and others) were tensions between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian period.⁴⁷ In the Neo-Babylonian era Benjaminite Mizpah became, instead of Jerusalem, the administrative center of Judah and it is possible that Mizpah played an important role in Judah for a long time, even after the beginning of the Persian period.⁴⁸ Additionally, the hopes of David’s descendants and their supporters about a revival of the Davidic dynasty were not confirmed. So it was a real theological crisis. In such circumstances, one can imagine that members of the “intelligentsia” of Benjamin had political ambitions, perhaps by making recourse to the ancient traditions of the kingdom of Israel, to renew the kingdom of Saul. The text about the execution of seven descendants of King Saul may well allude to such ambitions: by suggesting that the family of King Saul came to an end already in the era of David, the story pretends that Benjamin’s entire hope about the renewal of Saul’s kingship is groundless.

2.5. Date of origin

In contrast to the above discussed story I Sam 22,6–23, the story about the revenge of the Gibeonites shares only few typical vocabulary and stylistic features of the Books of Samuel. Several central expressions are unique within the context of I-II Samuel (cf. בקש Pi. + את פני יהוה “to inquiry of Yhwh” [v.1]; כפר Pi. “to make atonement” [v.3]; דמה Pi. “plan to destroy” [v.5]; שמד Ni. + מן “to be destroyed from remaining” [v.5]; יקע Hi. “to impale(?)” [v.6.9]; בחיר “chosen” [v.6]; נתך Ni.; “gush forth, be poured out, break forth” [v.10]; עתר Ni. “to entreat,

⁴⁵ Cf. Amit, Hidden Polemics.

⁴⁶ Cf. already the analysis of Wellhausen, Composition, 229–233.

⁴⁷ Cf. Amit, Saul Polemic, 647–661; Edelman, Rivalry, 69–91.

⁴⁸ Cf. Lipschits, Fall and Rise, 118–122.154–181.

to response” [v.14, also in II Sam 24,25]).⁴⁹ On the other side, as C. Edenburgh in her contribution in the present volume points out, II Sam 21,1–14 shares several expressions with the story Judg 19–21. Most striking is the use of the two verbs *דמה* Pi. (Judg 20,5) *שמד* Ni. (21,16), let us mention also *יציב* Hitp. (20,2) and *כל גבול ישראל* (19,29).

The fact that the composition interacts with a story in the Book of Joshua (Josh 9) and is connected to a text which is also found in an “appendix” of book – that of the Book of Judges – makes it probable that the composition presupposes already late redactional stages of the Book of Judges and the Book of Samuel and probably their chaining as well.

3. Date of origin of the stories I Sam 22,6–23 and II Sam 21,1–14

3.1. Communalities and differences between the two stories I Sam 22,6–23 and II Sam 21,1–14

An important *Leitwort* in both stories is “house” in the sense of dynasty. In I Sam 22 however the term refers to the dynasty of priests, i.e. the line of the Levites; and in II Sam 21 it is related to the ruler dynasty of the Saulides. In both stories the “patronymic” occurs strikingly often. The protagonists are seen in their relation to their “house”.

When considering the stories I Sam 22,6–23 (together with I Sam 2,27–36) and II Sam 21,1–14 under the aspect of the *result* of the respective plot we recognize a similar structure:

1. The result of the plot of I Sam 22 is the annihilation of the priesthood of Nob which is identified with the Elides who are for their part identified with the Levites (I Sam 2,27–36).
2. The violent death of the priesthood corresponds to the will of the deity (cf. oracle of I Sam 2,27–36).
3. There is *one* surviving member of this family. His descendants will play a subordinate role in the central sanctuary of Jerusalem. The Levites have definitively lost their status as a divinely chosen priesthood.
4. A second result is as follows: Saul is responsible for an act of big bloodshed. By this, Saul’s image is darkened.

Turning to II Sam 21 we are aware

1. that also here the plot leads to the annihilation of a dynasty – that of the “house of Saul”.
2. The execution of the “last” Saulides corresponds with the will of the deity (cf. the deity’s oracle after David’s inquiry; 21,1).

⁴⁹ Cf. Cynthia Edenburgh’s analysis of these terms in the present volume.

3. There is *one* surviving member of the family: Mippibaal. He is spared by David. Here a difference appears. In contrast to Abiathar Mippibaal is not a figure of hope for the Saulides. His only characteristic we learn about is his lameness.
4. Also here Saul is responsible for a big bloodshed (the annihilation of the Gibeonites): Saul's image is darkened again.

Both stories can be considered as an etiology of the fate of the respective dynasty: decline to a subordinate position (Levites) on the one hand and disappearance on the other (Saulides).

A comparison of the two stories shows also significant differences concerning the language. I Sam 22,6–23 borrows from several texts found in the first book of Samuel. As for the text II Sam 21,1–14 however it displays distinct language features which are not found elsewhere in the books of Samuel. Some expressions are shared with Judges 19–21.

I Sam 22,6–23 is centered on the massacre of a priesthood and its loss of power. In II Sam 21,1–14 priests do not play any role. According to the story I Sam 22,6–23 (cf. v.10), Ahimelech the priest inquired the deity on behalf of David; after the massacre of Nob the only survivor is appointed by David as a “bearer of the Ephod”. In contrast to this, II Sam 21,1–14 shows us David fulfilling a priestly function (he inquires the deity), in the entire story the king acts without any priestly assistance.

3.2. Postchronistic additions?

Coming to a conclusion from these analyses we suppose that the stories do not stem from the same author. An indication that the story I Sam 22,6–23 is composed before II Sam 21,1–14 is as follows: as shown above it refers to several texts found in I Samuel but not beyond; thus it seems to presuppose the formation of the Books of Samuel but not necessarily that of other books. The story about the revenge of the Gibeonites, however, is tightly connected to a story in the appendix of the book of Judges but much less with other stories of I-II Samuel; this suggests that this story presupposes already the formation of larger complex, i.e. a combination of books. The similarity of structure might be due to the influence of the earlier story I Sam 22,6–23 over the later composition II Sam 21,1–14.

It is striking to see that the justification for Saul's rejection in the story of the medium of En Dor (I Sam 28,17–18) refers only to the events of the story I Samuel 15, but not to the more serious transgressions by Saul related in I Sam 22,6–23 and II Sam 21,1–14. This raises the question whether the author of I Sam 28,3ff was not acquainted with the latter texts.

Also the book of Chronicles lacks any reference to the massacre at Nob or to the events reported in II Sam 21,1–14.⁵⁰ The Chronicler evaluates Saul's reign in

⁵⁰ Cf. also Shalom Brooks, Saul, 66.

I Chronicles 10,13–14. The defeat of Israel and the death of Saul in Gilboa are explained as follows:

- ¹³ So Saul died for his unfaithfulness (במעלו אשל מעל) which he committed against Yhwh, because of the word of Yhwh which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry of it,
¹⁴ and did not inquire of Yhwh, who therefore caused his death and transferred the monarchy to David son of Jesse.

Might the motif of Saul's "unfaithfulness" (מעל) to Yhwh be an allusion to the incidents in Nob or Gibeon? However, the following specification after מעל,⁵¹ the non-observance of a commandment of Yhwh, probably refers to I Sam 15,3 or 10,8, two verses which indeed allude to a word or command of Yhwh which Saul did not observe.⁵² The second specification refers to Saul's consultation of the medium at En Dor (I Sam 28,3–25). Thus this passage lacks any reference to the massacre at Nob and to the events reported in II Sam 21,1–14. In other texts in I-II Chronicles, one does not find any allusion to the events in Nob or Gibeon either. Have the two stories been composed after the formation the Books of Chronicles? Such a conclusion seems premature; we know that the Chronicler does not regard all texts from his *Vorlage* but selects among them in a deliberate manner. Nevertheless, we should ask for what reason he should ignore these stories which paint a dark picture of Saul and thus match his animosity against Saul nicely. For this, it can not be ruled out that the two stories were composed after the formation of I-II Chronicles.

It is interesting to see that the main ideological feature of the texts I Sam 2,27–36, 14,3a and 22,6–23 contrasts the high appreciation of the Levites we find in Chronicles (and some "Chronicle-like-additions" in I-II Samuel and other books as well). For this reason we further should raise the question whether the texts I Sam 2,27–36; 14,3a and I Sam 22 are composed as a response to the distinct pro-levitical position of the Chronicler. This question like others – i.e. the more precise indication of date of origin – however cannot be answered in the framework of this article.

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⁵¹ מעל in I-II Chr is often a general term ("to be unfaithful", "to transgress") which is accompanied by specifying, concrete expression, cf. I Chr 5,25; II Chr 12,1–2; 26,16; 28,22–23.

⁵² Cf. also S. Japhet, *Chronicles*, 229, interpretation of I Chr 10,13–14: "The death of Saul was a punishment for his sins, 'for his unfaithfulness', which took two forms: he did not keep the command of the Lord and he consulted a medium and not the Lord."

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