

DAVID'S RISE AND SAUL'S DEMISE: NARRATIVE  
ANALOGY IN 1 SAMUEL 24-26

By Robert P. Gordon

The narrative segment which is the subject of this paper belongs to the so-called 'Story of David's Rise', to use Leonhard Rost's title for the second of the three major compositional units which he detected in the books of Samuel./1/ In the event, the world of Old Testament scholarship was much more interested in Rost's arguments for the existence of an originally independent Narrative of Succession - 2 Samuel 9 - 1 Kings 2, according to the classic formulation. When, in the late 1950's, the unitary potential of David's *Vorgeschichte* began to be recognized - witness the monographs by Nübel (1959), Mildenerger (1962), Ward (1967) and Grønbaek (1971)/2/ -

1. L. Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids* (BWANT III, 6. Stuttgart, 1926) 1.33-5 (= *Das kleine Credo und andere Studien zum Alten Testament* (Heidelberg, 1965) 238-41). It is now of no more than antiquarian interest that Rost himself excluded 1 Sam. 24-26 from his hypothetical source, even though it comprised various pericopae and fragments from 1 Sam. 23 through to 2 Sam. 5.
2. H.-U. Nübel, *Davids Aufstieg in der Frühe israelitischer Geschichtsschreibung* (diss. Bonn, 1959); F. Mildenerger, *Die vordeuteronomistische Saul-Davidüberlieferung* (diss. Tübingen, 1962); R. L. Ward, *The Story of David's Rise: A Traditio-historical Study of I Samuel xvi 14 - II Samuel v* (diss. Vanderbilt, 1967; Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms); J. H. Grønbaek, *Die Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids (1 Sam. 15 - 2 Sam. 5)* (Copenhagen, 1971). Cf. also A. Weiser, 'Die Legitimation des Königs David. Zur Eigenart und Entstehung der sogen. Geschichte von Davids Aufstieg', *VT* 16 (1966) 325-54; R. Rendtorff, 'Beobachtungen zur altisraelitischen Geschichtsschreibung anhand der Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids', in *Probleme biblischer Theologie* (Fest. G. von Rad), ed. H. W. Wolff (München, 1971) 428-39; J. Conrad, 'Zum geschichtlichen Hintergrund der Darstellung von

Rost's starting-point was advanced to 16:14, or, with Grønbaek, to 15:1, and his fragmentary approach gave way to a more positive evaluation of the canonical material thus delimited./3/

Even so, 'David's Rise' does not represent the same homogeneous blending of sources as is the case with the Narrative of Succession./4/ As we read we are more conscious of the individual narrative blocks making up the whole, and of the tensions which their conjoining has imposed on the composite work./5/ But this is not the whole story. For whether or not we subscribe to the theory of a large narrative unit separable from the rest of 1 and 2 Samuel, we have to reckon with a high degree of interplay among the various sub-units contained in these chapters. J. T. Willis's study of 'comprehensive anticipatory redactional joints' in 1 Samuel 16-18 neatly illustrates the point: even 16:14-23, which has stoutly defied attempts at harmonization with 17:1 - 18:5, can be shown to function programmatically in

## 2. Contd.

- David's Aufstieg', *TLZ* 97 (1972) cols. 321-32; F. Schicklberger, 'Die Davididen und das Nordreich. Beobachtungen zur sog. Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids', *BZ* 18 (1974) 255-63; N. P. Lemche, 'David's Rise', *JSOT* 10 (1978) 2-25.
3. Weiser, *art. cit.* 344, claimed further territory for the *Aufstiegsgeschichte*, arguing that 2 Sam. 6 functions *ad majorem gloriam* David. He also regarded 2 Sam. 7 as the keystone of the whole narrative, noting in particular the interaction between 1 Sam. 25:28,30 and 2 Sam. 7 (*art. cit.* 348).
4. At the same time we note Conroy's conclusion that 'the current state of research no longer justifies an automatic and uncritical acceptance of 2 Sam 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2 as a fully rounded literary unity with a clearly defined theme': C. Conroy, *Absalom Absalom! Narrative and Language in 2 Sam 13-20* (Rome, 1978) 3.
5. Ward, *op. cit.* 197f, suggests that, to some extent, the state of the narrative reflects David's circumstances while on the run from Saul; there was 'no order or pattern in David's existence'.

relation to the larger context of the struggle between Saul and David./6/ Some of the principal elements in the story are passed in review before the account proper gets under way.

Since agreement about the existence of an independent, self-contained account of David's early career is not crucial for our study we shall use 'David's Rise' simply as a convenience-term. It is in any case indisputable that the second half of 1 Samuel is focused principally on David: 'the stories of Saul and David are really stories about David'./7/ Humphreys' portrayal of 1 Samuel 9-31 as a three-part story about Saul highlights a subsidiary theme, but makes a useful point at the risk of distorting the image which the section seems more naturally to project./8/ The motif to which all else in these chapters is subservient is that of David's progress towards the throne. And, in the way of biblical narrative, the question is not whether he will become king, but how he will become king./9/ He is from the outset God's nominee, and therefore the rightful claimant; Jonathan early acknowledges the fact and so, eventually, does Saul.

The 'how' of David's accession comes to the fore at that point where the initiative seems to be passing from Saul to his fugitive servant. From chapter 24 on the narrator

- 
6. J. T. Willis, 'The Function of Comprehensive Anticipatory Redactional Joints in 1 Samuel 16-18', *ZAW* 85 (1973) 294-314 (especially 295-302).
  7. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology I* (ET, London, 1962) 324. Cf. *idem*, 'Zwei Überlieferungen von König Saul', in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament II* (München, 1973) 202.
  8. W. L. Humphreys, 'The Tragedy of King Saul: A Study of the Structure of 1 Samuel 9-31', *JSOT* 6 (1978) 18-27.
  9. Cf. P. D. Miscall, 'The Jacob and Joseph Stories as Analogies', *JSOT* 6 (1978) 32. Miscall distinguishes in this connection between divine word and human; the latter does not necessarily achieve fulfilment.

is at pains to show that, despite the opportunities given, David did not take the law into his own hands. He emphatically was not implicated in Saul's death, nor in the deaths of Abner and Eshbaal. And it is not difficult to discover a likely reason for this emphasis. Sympathy for Saul and his house did not die easily in Israel, and certainly not during David's reign. The Gibeonite episode recounted in 2 Samuel 21 did not help matters, and there must have been many who agreed with Shimei's denunciation of David as a 'man of blood': 'Begone, begone, you man of blood, you worthless fellow! The Lord has avenged upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead you have reigned' (2 Sam. 16:7f). As late as 2 Samuel 20 we read of a revolt of the men of Israel under the leadership of the Benjaminite Sheba ben Bichri. That this was an attempted coup by the pro-Saul faction seems more than likely./10/ At a later stage Solomon's maladministration can only have given credibility to the Saulide cause. It is small wonder, then, that David's non-complicity in the deaths of Saul and his family has been given such coverage in these chapters,/11/ and still less wonder if 'David's Rise' was produced under royal auspices and 'represents the official interpretation of the Jerusalem palace'./12/ Nowhere is this question of David's avoidance of blood-guilt addressed more directly than in 1 Samuel 24-26.

#### THE NARRATIVE UNIT

I began by referring to 1 Samuel 24-26 as a 'narrative segment', though strictly speaking the 'wilderness cycle', as the 'segment' may fairly be called,/13/ begins at 23:14. It is a beginning which, to quote Klaus Koch, 'is not markedly typical of the start to a Hebrew story',/14/ but that need not detain us. The

- 
10. Sheba was perhaps even a kinsman of Saul; cf. J. Bright, *A History of Israel*<sup>2</sup> (London, 1972) 205.
  11. Cf. Conrad, *art. cit.* 325; Lemche, *art. cit.* 12f, 15.
  12. Ward, *op. cit.* 216. Ward thinks that 'David's Rise' was composed as early as Solomon's reign, when the hope of reconciliation between the Davidides and Saulides was still alive.
  13. So Ward, *op. cit.* 50.
  14. K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method* (ET, London, 1969) 137.

issue of blood-guilt is first raised at 24:1ff and it is from this point on that the narrator applies his skills to the development of his all-important theme. On almost any analysis of these chapters 26:25 marks the closing bracket; Saul, having blessed David, 'returned to his place'./15/ 27:1 reports David's decision to take refuge with the Philistines and we enter a new phase in his story. Further justification for treating 23:14 (effectively 24:1) - 26:25 as a narrative unit would therefore appear unnecessary.

Hitherto most treatments of 1 Samuel 24-26 have concentrated on the question of the relationship between chapters 24 and 26, usually to demonstrate that these are sibling accounts of a single incident. Literary criticism attributed the accounts to separate written sources./16/ Form criticism, on the other hand, envisages a period of separate development within the oral tradition./17/ But whereas Koch, who holds that we have 'two versions of the same story', appeals to oral tradition in order to account for the *differences* between them,/18/ Grønbaek maintains that we are dealing with two originally independent traditions whose *similarities* are best explained as having arisen during a period of parallel development within the oral tradition./19/ The similarities certainly call for some explanation, though, it need hardly be said, this is but one aspect of a more general problem of parallel accounts in 1 Samuel. In what follows we shall not be discussing the origin or life-setting of the individual units, but rather their function within the narrative composite of 'David's Rise'.

- 
15. Grønbaek, *op. cit.* 183, is an exception.
  16. Cf. K. Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel* (Tübingen/Leipzig, 1902) 157; H. P. Smith, *The Books of Samuel* (ICC. Edinburgh, 1912) 216.
  17. Cf. Koch, *op. cit.* 132-48.
  18. *Ibid.* 143.
  19. *Op. cit.* 169 (cf. 180f).

## NARRATIVE ANALOGY

At some point the traditions relating to David's early career were brought together to form a connected narrative corresponding *grosso modo* to what we have in the MT. In this connection we can hardly avoid talking of a 'narrator', however we envisage his rôle. By his shaping and deployment of the material available to him this narrator has infused his own spirit into the stories which he recounts. It is to him that we owe the overarching themes and dominant emphases which give the narrative its connectedness, and not just at the lowly level of topical or chronological arrangement. Current interest in 'the Bible as literature', with attention being paid to the larger narrative unit, the development of plot, characterization and the like, has ensured for the narrator a more honourable status than heretofore. And rightly so, even if we do not subscribe to the view that the Old Testament is 'a large chiasmus constructed one New Year's Day in the Exile'./20/

One of the outstanding features of biblical narrative, and perhaps the one which is most open to misinterpretation, is its tendency to laconicism, just at those points where the modern reader looks to the narrator to spell out his intention or, maybe, to moralize on the action of the story./21/ Where the reader's sensibilities are offended this taciturnity may be put down to moral indifference on the part of the narrator, or simply - and this has special relevance to 'David's Rise' - to undisguised hero-worship. But Hebrew narrative is much more subtle than that, using a wide range of narrative techniques to perform the functions of the explicit commentaries in the more transparent narrative types. Prominent among these techniques is that of narrative analogy. Narrative analogy is a device whereby the narrator can provide an internal commentary on the action which he is describing, usually by means of cross-reference to an earlier action or speech./22/

- 
20. If the author may be permitted to quote himself from somewhere in the oral tradition!
21. Cf. R. Alter, 'A Literary Approach to the Bible', *Commentary* 60 (1975) 73.
22. Cf. Alter, *loc. cit.*

Thus narratives are made to interact in ways which may not be immediately apparent; ironic parallelism abounds wherever this technique is applied.

Narrative analogy, we submit, provides an important clue to the relationship between 1 Samuel 25, which tells the story of Nabal, and the contiguous chapters, which treat of David's sparing of Saul. The point can be expressed in the simple equation: Nabal=Saul. Saul does not vanish from view in 1 Samuel 25;/23/ he is Nabal's alter ego.

### 1. Predisposing Factors

Why should Nabal serve as a narrative function of Saul? Several predisposing factors are suggested by a surface reading of 1 Samuel 24-26, but by far the most important is the shared motif of David's magnanimity towards his enemies: 'In each case, David perceives a powerful advantage in killing, but is restrained by a theological consideration.'/24/ Nabal, no less than Saul, poses the question, Will David incur blood-guilt on his way to the throne? Considerations such as that Nabal is not 'the Lord's anointed' and that to kill him would not be a violation of royal sacrosanctity are temporarily set aside. The point is made in Abigail's speech that blood-guilt for anyone - even for a Nabal - could cast a shadow over David's throne at a later stage (25:30f).

Time and place are also enabling factors in the rôle-identification of Nabal with Saul. While the Nabal story is in its proper setting inasmuch as it recounts an episode from the period of David's outlawry in the Judaeian wilderness,/25/ it is also significant that the

- 
23. Pace Humphreys, art. cit. 19. A rough parallel is provided by Jobling's suggestion of rôle identification between David and Jonathan earlier in 1 Samuel: D. Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative* (SJSOT 7. Sheffield, 1978) 4-25.
  24. J. D. Levenson, '1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History', *CBQ* 40 (1978) 23.
  25. W. Caspari, *Die Samuelbücher* (KAT VII. Leipzig, 1926) 311, thought that the Nabal story belonged with chapters 27-30 and David's stay at Ziklag, but there is little or nothing to commend this view.

two places mentioned in 25:2 in connection with Nabal have strong associations with Saul. Maon is named three times in 23:24f as the area where David hid and where Saul came within an ace of apprehending him. Carmel, where Nabal had his estate, was the place where Saul erected his stele in celebration of his victory over the Amalekites (15:12)./26/

Then there is Nabal's social status. He was a wealthy individual whose style of life could even have been the envy of Saul; he is therefore fit to stand as a narrative surrogate of Saul. Levenson, in declaring him 'no commoner', ventures the opinion that he was 'the *rō's bêt 'āb* or the *nāšī'* of the Calebite clan, a status to which David laid claim through his marriage to Nabal's lady'./27/ And were we to indulge Levenson a little further in his speculations we should discover that the correspondence between Saul and Nabal does not end there, for Levenson surmises that the Ahinoam mentioned in 25:43 is none other than Saul's wife, the only other bearer of the name in the Old Testament. But perhaps it is too much a flight of fancy to imagine that 'David swaggered into Hebron with the wife of a Calebite chieftain on one arm and that of the Israelite king on the other'!/28/

## 2. Depiction

Psychologically Saul and Nabal are geminate. They refuse to know, in particular to acknowledge David for what he is, and they are alienated from those about them. Jobling brings out well this epistemological aspect of Saul's 'rebellion' as it is depicted in earlier chapters of 1 Samuel/29/. Saul has it on the authority of no less than Samuel that he and his house have been rejected by God, but he will stop at nothing in order to frustrate the divine purpose. Jonathan, by way of contrast, 'receives no revelations, and yet he knows'./30/ As for alienation, it is not only Saul and Jonathan who are polarized in their attitudes to David (*cf.* 20:30-34).

---

26. *Cf.* Grønbaek, *op. cit.* 172.

27. *Art. cit.* 26f.

28. *Ibid.* 27.

29. *Op. cit.* 20f.

30. *Ibid.* 21.

Michal, Saul's daughter become David's wife, works against her father to prevent David's arrest; she would rather lie to Saul than see David fall into his hands (19:11-17).

At best, too, there is ambiguity about the attitude of Saul's servants to their master. On one occasion he complains because they withhold intelligence about David's movements: 'You have all conspired against me, and no one informs me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse, and none of you feels sorry for me or informs me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait, as at the present time' (22:8). Only by appealing to their self-interest - would David exercise his powers of patronage in favour of Benjaminites as Saul had done? - can he hope to obtain information. But even then it is the Edomite Doeg, described as 'standing with the servants of Saul', who steps forward. Later, when Saul orders his servants to put the priests of Nob to the sword, their refusal means that Doeg again has to oblige (22:17-19).

Nabal reads like a diminutive Saul when viewed in this light. In his eyes David is just a fugitive slave, and there are far too many of them about the countryside these days. However, his acid dismissal seems to be more than an expression of contempt for a local condottiere: 'Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse?' (25:10) sounds like an echo of Sheba's rebel-cry in 2 Samuel 20:1: 'We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.' Nabal even talks like a Saulide sympathizer./31/

In his relations with his wife and his servants Nabal again reads like a reflex of Saul. Abigail has no confidence in him: 'But she did not tell her husband Nabal' (25:19); 'she told him nothing at all until the

---

31. Levenson, *art. cit.* 24, links 1 Sam. 25:10 with Sheba's revolt: '1 Samuel plants an ominous seed, which sprouts in the doomed rebellion of Sheba, but matures in the days of David's grandson Rehoboam, when the Northern tribes raise the identical cry, with a momentous effect on David's "secure dynasty" (1 Kgs 12:16-17).'

morning light' (25:36). Nor is it just that she acts independently of her husband: she is unable to say anything positive about him. For her he is a paradigm of reprobation, and her desperate errand is, not to save his life, but to save David from catching a blot on his escutcheon. And nowhere is the difference between 'the lady and the fool' so marked as in their respective attitudes to David; Abigail is as perspicacious as Nabal is obstinately blind.

If Abigail cannot speak well of her husband it is not surprising that his servants think ill of him. There is no denying his cantankerousness, so that one of the servants can remind his mistress - apparently with impunity - that Nabal is 'so much a man of Belial that one cannot speak to him' (25:17).

David's hot-blooded response to Nabal's incivility was to mobilize his entire band of six hundred followers, deploying them exactly as he did later in the recovery operation against the Amalekites: four hundred go into attack and two hundred stay by the baggage (cf. 1 Sam. 30:9f, 21-25). On this occasion the scale of the operation certainly encourages us to see Nabal in larger-than-life terms. Perhaps, too, there is *double entendre* - a hint at the fate of the Saulide house? - in the servant's warning to Abigail in 25:17: 'evil is determined against our master and against all his house'. Be that as it may, when Abigail returned from entreating David she found her husband celebrating the wool-clip in right royal manner. His symposium is said to have been 'like the feast of a king' (25:36), which may be an unsubtle way of drawing attention to the rôle-identification with which the narrator has been operating.  
/32/

- 
32. The same expression occurs in 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, LXX at 2 Sam. 13:27, possibly 'suggested by a reminiscence of I 25, 36': S. R. Driver, *Notes on ... the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1913) 302. Driver also allows the possibility that the words may have been omitted from MT 2 Sam. 13:27 by homoioteleuton. Cf. E. C. Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus* (Missoula, 1978) 85.

### 3. Word-reprise

For specificity and directness Hebrew narrative, particularly in the aspect of narrative analogy, relies heavily on word-repetition. It is through 'the repetitive use of key verbal stems'/33/ that the narrator lays the hermeneutical markers which impart some measure of objectivity to our attempts to understand his viewpoint. The study of word-repetition therefore has an assured place in narrative analysis; for even our present fascination with multiple readings and open-ended analyses must leave us free to regard as our primary hermeneutic objective the elucidation of the meaning which the writer himself intended to convey./34/ The beauty of this device is that it enables the narrator to make his point with an absolute economy of words, whether it be to highlight parallelism, contrast, or development, across the contextual divide. There are instances of the phenomenon in 1 Samuel 24-26 which help to lay bare the narrator's intention in these chapters: chapter 25 contains verbal echoes of chapter 24 and is in turn echoed, briefly but distinctly, in chapter 26.

24//25

In 25:8 David instructs his young men to go to Nabal and ask him to 'give whatever you have available to your servants and to your son David'. David, in fact, makes a show of being deferential to Nabal, and it is important

- 
33. M. Fishbane, 'Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle', *JJS* 27 (1975) 21; cf. R. Alter, 'Biblical Narrative', *Commentary* 61 (1976) 63. For word-reprise as a poetic device see J. Muilenburg, 'A Study in Hebrew Rhetoric: Repetition and Style', *SVT* 1 (1953) 97-111.
34. 'It is what the author wants to get across to his readers or listeners that should be the concern of every teacher of the Old Testament': J. F. A. Sawyer, *From Moses to Patmos* (London, 1977) 9. For further discussion of authorial intention see H. W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative. A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven/London, 1974) 73-85, 250-66, 301f.

for the narrator, in view of the sequel, that there is no excuse for Nabal's rudeness. However, 'your son David' may also be seen as a deliberate echo of 24:16, where Saul addresses David as 'my son David'. The latter expression occurs three times in the parallel narrative in chapter 26 (vv. 17, 21, 25) and is peculiar to Saul in the books of Samuel./35/

The second instance of significant word-repetition involves the contrasting pair 'good' and 'evil' - and it is noteworthy that of the approximately eighty occurrences of the roots טו/טוב and רע in 1 Samuel fully one third are to be found in chapters 24-26. In 24:17 (18) Saul is in a repentant mood and confesses to David, 'You are more righteous than I; for *you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil.*' This point is developed in verses 18ff (19ff) with further occurrences of the root טו. When we pass on to the Nabal story and to David's meditation on the insult to his men the parallel with Saul is hard to miss: 'Surely in vain have I protected all that belongs to this fellow in the wilderness, with the result that nothing has been lost of all that belongs to him; *and he has returned me evil for good*' (25:21). And with this the servant's report to Abigail is in agreement: 'the men were very good to us and we suffered no harm' (25:15).

Thirdly, the figure of the רע makes its appearance in chapters 24 and 25. In his exchange with Saul outside the cave David expresses his confidence that God will interpose on his behalf: 'May the Lord be judge and give sentence between me and you, and *may he see and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand*' (24:15(16)). The metaphor is picked up again in 25:39 when David receives the news of Nabal's death: 'Blessed be the Lord *who has pleaded the cause of my reproach* at the hand of Nabal and has kept back his servant from evil.' These are the only occurrences of the root רע, in its forensic sense, in 1 Samuel./36/

- 
35. Cf. also David's use of 'father' in his address to Saul in 24:11.
36. The verb is used in 1 Sam. 2:10 ('those who oppose the Lord will be shattered'). רע in 1 Sam. 15:5 represents a defective spelling of the verb ארע.

25//26

The most striking case of word-repetition comes in 26:10 in David's rebuttal of Abishai's suggestion that he finish Saul off with one thrust of his spear. Said David, 'As the Lord lives, the Lord will smite him; either his day will come and he will die, or he will go down into battle and perish.' This seeming vagueness as to the manner in which Saul would die is deceptive, for two of these statements have a direct bearing on Saul's fate. At the purely historical level it is a fact that Saul went into battle against the Philistines and perished on Gilboa (1 Sam. 31:6). But, seen from the perspective of the wider narrative context, it is the first clause which carries the accent: 'the Lord will smite him'. The possibility of Saul's death at the hand of someone other than David does not arise in chapter 24, yet it forms the *point d'appui* of David's argument against Abishai in chapter 26. Whence, therefore, this conviction that Saul's death would come as an act of divine judgment? We need only look back to the Nabal story for the answer. When Nabal heard from Abigail about the fate which she had so narrowly averted the shock was too great for him, with the result that 'his heart died within him and he became like a stone' (25:37). About ten days after this 'the Lord smote Nabal and he died' (v. 38). 'Smote' here, as in 26:10, translates the verb  $\eta\lambda\lambda$ , the mere repetition of which is sufficient to point up the comparison between Saul and Nabal. The manner of Nabal's death provides the key to David's confident assertion in 26:10 and herein, as we shall presently suggest, lies also a pointer to the whole narrative thrust of 1 Samuel 24-26.

This adumbration of Saul's death in the judgment on Nabal may also be significant for the interpretation of 25:26, where Abigail expresses the hope that David's enemies will 'be as Nabal'. Since Nabal appears to have been fit and well when Abigail set out, her words can only amount to an imprecation of wrong-headedness on those who sought David's life - unless, that is, verse 26 anticipates Nabal's untimely demise./37/ The obvious difficulty with

37. Cf. W. McKane, *I and II Samuel* (TC. London, 1963) 151; J. Mauchline, *1 and 2 Samuel* (NCB. London, 1971) 170; H. J. Stoebe, *Das erste Buch Samuelis* (KAT VIII/I. Gütersloh, 1973) 449.

this interpretation is that it assumes prophetic powers for Abigail and does little for the verisimilitude of the story. This, however, has to be balanced by the consideration that the whole of Abigail's speech portrays her as a woman of uncommon, even prophetic, powers of discernment. Since on other grounds the connection between the deaths of Nabal and Saul has been established we may the more confidently interpret 25:26 as a wish that Saul - for who else seeks David's life? - may suffer the same fate as Nabal (*cf.* 2 Sam. 18:32).

#### 4. *Word-play*

The rôle-identification of Nabal with Saul is, arguably, canonized in Saul's final exchanges with David in 26: 21-25, where we find Saul at his most conciliatory: 'I have done wrong; come back, my son David, for I will never again harm you, because my life was precious in your eyes this day; behold, I have played the fool (הִסְכַּלְתִּי) and have erred exceedingly' (v. 21). On any reckoning הִסְכַּלְתִּי is a loaded word.<sup>38/</sup> This is the verb with which Samuel launches into his denunciation of Saul at Gilgal: 'You have acted foolishly (וְנִסְכַּלְתָּ); you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which he commanded you' (1 Sam. 13:13); now in the presence of the successor to whom Samuel's speech makes allusion Saul pronounces judgment on himself.

But it is also worth considering whether הִסְכַּלְתִּי has special significance within the more immediate context. In other words, does the admission 'I have played the fool' point back to chapter 25 and the figure of Nabal? A definitive answer would require an excursion into the semantic field of 'folly' in Biblical Hebrew, and, in particular, a discussion of the merits of 'fool' as a translation of BH נָבֵל.<sup>39/</sup> S. R. Driver favoured the

- 
38. R. A. Carlson, *David the Chosen King* (Uppsala, 1964) 207f, regards the use of this verb as characteristic of the Deuteronomistic group.
39. See the studies by W. M. W. Roth, 'NBL', *VT* 10 (1960) 394-409, and T. Donald, 'The Semantic Field of "Folly" in Proverbs, Job, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes', *VT* 13 (1963) 285-92.

translation 'churl' in 25:25 and this is the way of NEB: "Churl" is his name, and churlish his behaviour'./40/ James Barr, on the other hand, opts mediatingly for 'churlish fool', though he does not regard this as the original meaning of the actual name 'Nabal'./41/ There is indeed strong versional support for locating BH נבל within the semantic field of 'folly', evidence which extends to the Hebrew-Greek equivalences in Ecclesiasticus./42/ If 'Nabal' has some connotation of 'folly' then, as Gemser has noted, there is a handy Akkadian analogue in the personal name Saklu ('foolish')./43/ It is also a matter of some relevance that the Hebrew root טבל denotes more than folly if by that we mean stupidity or imbecility. The folly in the moral realm which BDB associates with the root brings it within striking distance of BH נבל and נבלה./44/

Word-play on Nabal's name is in any case a feature of 1 Samuel 25. It comes explicitly in verse 25 already quoted: 'נבל is his name and נבלה is with him.' There would seem to be another instance of play on the name in verse 37 which, in talking about the wine 'going out of Nabal', seems momentarily to think of him as a נבל, a wine-skin. (The commentators' silence at this point could be attributable to myopia or to powers of restraint which this writer obviously lacks!) Finally, when the narrator describes Abigail as 'of good understanding' (טובה-שכל, v. 3) is he not saying that she was all that her husband, so aptly named, was not?

---

40. Driver, *op. cit.* 200.

41. 'The Symbolism of Names in the Old Testament', *BJRL* 52 (1969-70) 21-8.

42. *E.g.* Ecclus. 4:27; 21:22.

43. B. Gemser, *De Beteekenis der persoonsnamen voor onze kennis van het leven en denken der oude Babyloniërs en Assyriërs* (Wageningen, 1924) 192f. I owe the reference to Prof. Barr's article.

44. *BDB*, 614f.

## FUNCTION OF NABAL INTERLUDE

A more exact statement of the function, or, perhaps more correctly, of one of the functions, of 1 Samuel 25 can now be undertaken. It is unlikely that the Nabal incident has been included merely to show us how David and his men fared in the wilderness,<sup>45/</sup> or even to relate how David acquired Abigail as wife. Nor are the mines of authorial intention exhausted, if they are touched at all, by Miscall's proposal to read the chapter as an oblique commentary on chapter 14, in virtue of the fact that it is also concerned with a vow rashly uttered: '1 Sam. 25, the Abigail and David episode, stresses the rashness of Saul's vow and his obstinacy in needlessly trying to fulfill it.'<sup>46/</sup>

In fact most are agreed that the centre of gravity in the Nabal story lies in Abigail's speech and the main issue which it confronts, namely the necessity of David's avoiding blood-guilt. 1 Samuel 25 is therefore of a piece thematically with the adjacent chapters which tell of David's avoidance of blood-guilt for Saul. This is not journey's end, however, for we must look more closely at the way in which Nabal contributes to the exposition of the theme. And first we shall take issue with Levenson who, while agreeing that there is a thematic relationship between chapter 25 and the adjoining chapters, nevertheless sees its main function in another direction.

The difference between 1 Samuel 25 and its neighbors 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

- 
45. Cf. Mauchline, *op. cit.* 171, on chapter 25 as only incidentally a source of sociological information.  
46. *Art. cit.* 30 (narrative analogy 'is not limited to texts in close proximity').

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./47/

Levenson then sums it up in a sentence: '1 Samuel 25 is a proleptic glimpse, within David's ascent, of his fall from grace.' So, for Levenson, the shadow of Bathsheba and Uriah, and of all the ugly entail of that episode, falls over this chapter.

The attractions of Levenson's thesis notwithstanding, there are good grounds for thinking that the Nabal story functions nearer home. In the first place, Levenson's exposition betrays a doubtful interpretation of David's behaviour in the cave at En-gedi. This is a point to which we shall return; suffice it to say just now that it is very doubtful whether the narrator would have viewed chapter 25 as giving 'the very first revelation of evil in David's character'. It is even more to be doubted that it was the narrator's intention that this chapter should discord with his otherwise 'tendentious' - so Weiser/48/ and most - account of David's rise. According to another, and perhaps more satisfactory, reading, the account of David's honourable acquisition of Abigail stands self-consciously in contrast with the sordid matter of 2 Samuel 11-12. 'Honourable' is, of course, a relative term here, though not necessarily as relative as Lemche implies when he accuses David of 'frightening a man to death and stealing his wife'./49/

All this, however, is only to disregard the function of 1 Samuel 25 within its immediate narrative setting. For from 24:1 to 26:25 we have a three-part plot in which there is incremental repetition of the motif of blood-guilt and its avoidance./50/

---

47. Art. cit. 23.

48. Art. cit. 354.

49. Art. cit. 12.

50. For comment on ternary structure in biblical narrative see Humphreys, art. cit. 19; Miscall, art. cit. 31f.

*Scene One* (24:1-22(23)): David, incited to avenge himself on Saul, performs a symbolic act which is of sufficient gravity to cause him immediate remorse. He then berates his men and states the theological grounds for not striking Saul down.

*Scene Two* (25:2-42): David, outraged by Nabal's rudeness to his men, sets out with the intention of destroying him and every male belonging to him. His anger is assuaged by Abigail's intervention; Nabal comes under divine judgment.

*Scene Three* (26:1-25): David is again incited against Saul, this time by Abishai. Saul and his men are in a deep sleep, as helpless before David as was Nabal when 'his heart died within him and he became like a stone' (25:37). David unhesitatingly rejects Abishai's suggestion; Saul is 'the Lord's anointed' and God will deal with him (vv. 9f).

'Incremental repetition', in the sense in which I use it here, means the development or modification of a motif through repetition in separate narrative sequences. The changes and variations thus introduced 'can point to an intensification, climactic development, acceleration of the actions and attitudes initially represented, or, on the other hand, to some unexpected, perhaps unsettling, new revelation of character or plot'.<sup>51</sup> In the setting of 1 Samuel 24-26 we have to do with the maturation of an idea in David's mind, the progress being unfolded in three episodes each of which has its own point of resolution without prejudice to the coherence of the larger narrative unit.

Manifestly, the suggestion that there is incremental repetition in these chapters assumes that David's actions in relation to Saul in the first and third scenes are qualitatively different. Koch does not agree:

---

51. Alter, 'Biblical Narrative', 63.

In both narratives David takes a token with him. Yet in chapter xxiv he only removes the skirt of Saul's robe, whereas in chapter xxvi he also (*sic*) takes Saul's weapon. Here also B (i.e. ch. 26) must be the later version. The story is lent a more soldierly aspect if the adversary is robbed of his weapon and not merely of a piece of his apparel./52/

Koch, like most, regards chapters 24 and 26 as variant accounts of the same incident. But this monistic view need not lead automatically to the conclusion that David's actions are meant to be accorded the same status. (Of course, if the accounts answer to two separate occasions when David spared Saul there is even less reason to force the parallel.)

On a straightforward reading of 24:1-7(8) - and I am not among those who hold that the MT is in need of reordering in this section/53/ - David's excision of a piece of Saul's robe stands for more than the procuring of a token in proof of his good-will toward the king. The fact that attempts have been made to illuminate the act from this and that source is immaterial, for in each case it emerges with an impressive, if not altogether uniform, symbolism.

Symbolism there certainly is if 24:4f is meant to be read in the light of 15:27f, where the tearing of a robe - whether Samuel's or Saul's is disputed/54/ - signifies the forfeiture of his kingdom: 'And Samuel turned to go, and he seized the skirt of his robe and it tore. Samuel said to him, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and will give it to your neighbour who is better than you.' According to this interpretation, then, David, the 'neighbour' in question, staked his claim to the kingdom that day in the cave when he

- 
52. *Op. cit.* 143. R. C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia, 1976) 49-54, represents a similar evaluation of David's behaviour in the two accounts.
53. Reasons were given in a short paper ('1 Samuel 24:7 (8) and the Dichotomized Servant in Q') read at the joint meeting of the British and Dutch Old Testament Societies in Cambridge, July 1979 (not yet published).
54. Grønbaek, *op. cit.* 164, thinks that it is Samuel's cloak which is torn - in which case compare Ahijah's tearing of his own robe in 1 Ki. 11:30f. Cf. also

removed a piece from Saul's robe. The narrative complementarity of the two passages is also suggested by the occurrence in both of the expression כָּנַף מְעִיל (15:27; 24:5), since it is not found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible./55/

References to Akkadian texts from Alalakh and Mari illustrate the possibility that David's was a calculatedly symbolic act at En-gedi. Since grasping the hem of a superior's cloak was a common expression of submission it has been surmised that David's cutting of Saul's hem amounted to a declaration of revolt./56/ Actual cutting of a garment is mentioned in the Mari texts in connection with the immobilizing of a 'prophetess'. In one letter Baḥdi-Lim, administrator of the Mari palace, informs Zimri-Lim that 'Aḫum the priest has removed the hair and the hem of the cloak of the muḫḫutum'./57/ This evidently was thought to bring the muḫḫutum under the control of the king to whom the hair and hem were forwarded. The parallel with 1 Samuel 24:4f(5f) is sufficiently close for Noth to conclude that 'David, by cutting off the hem of the garment, does evil to Saul'. /58/

---

54. Contd.

- R. A. Brauner, "'To Grasp the Hem" and 1 Samuel 15: 27', *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 6 (1974) 35-8. According to Brauner, Saul took hold of Samuel's cloak - an act symbolic of supplication - but inadvertently tore it; Samuel thereupon attached the symbolism to the tearing of the robe. 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, LXX read '(and) Saul laid hold' for MT '(and) he laid hold'; cf. Ulrich, *op. cit.* 54.
55. Grønbaek, *op. cit.* 164f.
56. D. J. Wiseman in *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, ed. D. W. Thomas (Oxford, 1967) 128. For text, see *idem*, 'Abban and Alalah', *JCS* 12 (1958) 129; see also CAD 16, 223.
57. ARM VI, 45, 7ff; cf. VI, 26, r. 8f. Cf. E. Noort, *Untersuchungen zum Gottesbescheid in Mari: Die "Mariprophetie" in der alttestamentlichen Forschung* (AOAT 202. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1977) 84-6.
58. M. Noth, 'Remarks on the Sixth Volume of Mari Texts', *JSS* 1 (1956) 330.

Without committing ourselves to any of these explanations, we can still admit the probability that David's act was symbolic, and even grave in its implications. Some corroboration of this view comes in the statement in verse 5(6) that '*David's heart smote him* because he had cut off Saul's skirt'. This is a strong statement which is used on only one other occasion - that of the census in 2 Samuel 24 - to describe David's feelings of remorse (2 Sam. 24:10). Now one of the outstanding features of the census narrative is that David's action had deeper implications than were at first apparent. Such, it would seem, is the case in 1 Samuel 24:5(6).

If our interpretation of the incident in the cave is correct then the contrast with the similar-sounding episode in 26:1-12 is not to be missed. David, having once violated the sanctity of the king's person - to put it no higher - shows not the slightest sign of weakness on the second occasion. Standing between these two accounts is chapter 25, in which the whole issue of grievance, revenge and blood-guilt is played through to its conclusion. Thus David is given a preview of what will happen if he commits his case to God and leaves Saul unharmed. 1 Samuel 25 is therefore 'proleptic' - it has 'an inner significance which runs ahead of the external appearances'/59/ - not so much in relation to the more distant events of 2 Samuel/60/ as to its immediate context.

#### REDUNDANCY VS. DEVELOPMENT

This positive appraisal of 1 Samuel 24-26 as narrative is greatly at variance with Jobling's verdict on the same chapters.

- 
59. Thus Jobling, *op. cit.* 12, on the function of 1 Sam. 14:1-46 and 18:1-5 within the story of Saul. Cf. also Fishbane's remarks, *art. cit.* 22f, on proleptic elements in the Jacob cycle in Genesis.
60. *Pace* Levenson (*vid. supra*).

The attempt is made . . . to show Saul both as the rejected one and as willingly abdicating to David. In ch. 24, he begins by seeking David's life, and ends by confessing David's future kingship (vs. 20). Their next encounter, in ch. 26, is a "redundant" repetition of this cycle, though without the specific confession. . . . But in the very next verse (27:1) David complains of the continuing danger to his life from Saul. The attempt fails; the theological aim is here pursued at the cost of narrative coherence, and even of psychological conviction; at no level does the account make sufficient sense./61/

For Jobling the 'theological aim' of 1 Samuel 13-31 is to 'make theologically acceptable the transition from Saul's kingship to David's',/62/ an aim which he regards as capable of fulfilment only with Jonathan's mediation, and this pivotally in 18:1-5 where, according to Jobling, we have Jonathan's virtual abdication in favour of David.

If this be the yard-stick then 1 Samuel 24-26 must indeed be judged a failure in narrative terms. However, as we observed at the outset, the legitimacy of David's claim to the throne is not the issue in this section; it is, rather, a question of how David is to appropriate what is legitimately his by divine decree: blood-guilt for Saul or no? Jobling, more than most, should have recognized this in view of the fact that Jonathan, on whom he pins so much, makes his most explicit statement about David's future kingship in 23:17, i.e., just as the 'wilderness cycle' gets under way. Far from being a 'redundant' repetition of chapter 24, chapter 26 builds on the earlier account and, through its speeches, points forward to the next phase of David's life on the run. 27:1, instead of destroying the coherence of the narrative, as Jobling alleges, strikingly emphasizes David's determination not to lift his hand against Saul; his magnanimity puts him in danger, so that he has to take refuge with the Philistines. Jobling is looking for a narrative coherence which makes no concessions to historical reality, for Saul never did deliver his

---

61. *Op. cit.* 22.

62. *Ibid.* 21.

kingdom to David on a plate - of that much we may be certain. In short, Jobling has imposed his own stereotype on the narrative and castigated it for vacuity.

#### NARRATIVE AND SPEECH

The discussion so far has scarcely begun to do justice to the fact that each of the component narratives in chapters 24-26 climaxes in an exchange of speeches,<sup>63/</sup> and if we were attempting a final analysis of the section - as if there could be such a thing - this would undoubtedly be a serious defect. It could be argued, on the other hand, that our approach will help to correct a prevailing imbalance. Certainly, if the narrative is judged solely in terms of the ideology of the speeches, chapter 26 falls flat on its face. Such is the criterion usually applied, which explains why Koch is not the only one to have expressed puzzlement about the present function of the chapter.<sup>64/</sup> Saul's speeches in chapter 26 are anti-climactic when set alongside his affirmations at En-gedi. The most that he can manage is, 'Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will have success' (26:25). There may be hints of David's future regal status when he pronounces Abner and the rest worthy of death (v. 16), or when Saul confesses to him that he has 'sinned' (v. 21),<sup>65/</sup> but none of this matches the full-blooded affirmation of 24:20(21): 'I know that you will certainly be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand.' Indeed, it is hard to imagine how chapter 26 could have capped this, if that had been the intention.

But to judge the speeches of chapter 26 by the canons of chapter 24 is to fail to recognize that they are animated by other considerations, namely, the irreconcilability of David and Saul, and David's imminent withdrawal to Philistia. Chapter 26 recounts the last confrontation between the two, and the narrator makes the most of the

- 
63. Cf. von Rad, *Theology I*, 54 ('the dialogues between David and Saul are the highlights to which the external events lead up'); so also Koch, *op. cit.* 150.  
64. *Op. cit.* 147.  
65. Cf. Koch, *op. cit.* 141n., 142.

fact:/66/ 'Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of the hill at a distance, a great space being between them' (v. 13). The 'distance' and 'space' are surely not just physical here; in outlook and destiny the two are poles apart and already, even before the speeches, the gulf is fixed. Nothing that Saul can say will change the situation. To his invitation - or is it a plea? - to come back David merely replies, 'Here is the spear, O king!' (v. 22)./67/ David knew, and Saul knew, the significance of the spear in their relationship (cf. 18:10f; 19:19f).

In 26:13-25, then, the way is being paved for David's initiative announced in 27:1, the initiative which brought him into vassalage to the Philistines and saw him far from Gilboa when his people were deep in trouble. The subject is introduced by David in verses 19f ('they have driven me out this day so that I should have no part in the heritage of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods'), Saul's invitation to return (v. 21) - not paralleled in chapter 24 - has to be read in the light of it, and David's committal of his future into God's hands in verse 24 probably has it in view.

In its own way the altercation between David and Abner, who does not figure in chapter 24, also contributes to the forward thrust of chapter 26. There is just a hint of historical allegory about David's upbraiding of the man who was to survive Gilboa and become the mainspring of Saulide resistance to David's rule over a unified kingdom of Israel: 'Abner you cannot even guarantee the king's safety, and how are you going to ensure the survival of his house?' (cf. 26:15f).

So then, the speeches in chapter 26 are oriented to the future, and herein lies their justification. The narrator who used the action of chapters 24-26 to put across a theological point now uses speech to fuel the development of the next stage in his story.

---

66. Cf. Humphreys, *art. cit.* 24.

67. So the *k<sup>e</sup>tîb*; the *q<sup>e</sup>rê* is, 'Behold the king's spear'.

## CHARACTERIZATION

Small slice of narrative though it is, 1 Samuel 24-26 does permit us to speak of character development in connection with David. As the action unwinds we can see the evidence of an inward change. But, according to Scholes and Kellogg, 'characters in primitive stories are invariably "flat", "static", and quite "opaque"'./68/ This applies as much to the Old Testament as to the rest of ancient literature: 'The inward life is assumed but not presented in primitive narrative literature, whether Hebraic or Hellenic.'/69/ And for good measure the story of David and Bathsheba is cited for its opacity: situations are described in a detached, impersonal way, and without reference to the mental processes of those involved.

The 'wilderness cycle' in 1 Samuel certainly does not fit so comfortably into this pre-Christian mould of Scholes and Kellogg. At a crucial point early in the story we have a very clear indication of David's state of mind: 'And afterwards David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt' (24:5(6)). Thereafter the inward change is expressed in plot rather than in overt character formulation. Plot formulation, if I may now quote approvingly from Scholes and Kellogg, 'involves seeing the character at long range, with limited detail, so that his change against a particular background may be readily apparent.'/70/ This could have been written with the 'wilderness cycle' in mind. It is precisely because the stage-settings in chapters 24 and 26 are so similar that we are able to perceive the difference in the actor.

## NARRATION - HISTORY

Theology, narration - but how fares 'David's Rise' as history? Some 'concluding historical postscript' seems called for.

---

68. R. Scholes and R. Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York, 1966) 164.

69. *Ibid.* 166.

70. *Ibid.* 168.

For most of the modern period, and especially since Rost's work in the 1920's, the Succession Narrative has enjoyed recognition as the earliest, and also the foremost, example of Hebrew historiography. The lot of 'David's Rise' was to endure regular comparison, inevitably unfavourable, with its prestigious rival. The Succession Narrative was 'history' in the strict sense, 'David's Rise' was not. It was its transparent theological-propagandist slant even more than the thorny problem of the duplicates - though the two may not be unconnected - which decided the fate of 'David's Rise'.

Koch's use of 'saga' in connection with 1 Samuel 24 and 26 would also seem to reflect a negative view of the Davidic *Vorgeschichte*: 'Sagas are reality poeticised.' /71/ But Koch's position is just a little more complicated than this. He regards chapter 24 ('account A') as deriving from a written source which described David's rise to kingship. 'The complex literary type to which A belongs is therefore *historical writing*, for only a writer of history has as his theme the rise of a monarch's power over a particular nation and its persistence in face of external and internal danger.' /72/ He does not see the presence of heroic sagas in this earlier account as diminishing its status as history-writing, inasmuch as the historian has to make the best of the sources available to him. The compiler of 'A' was no less a historian than Herodotus or Thucydides who make frequent use of saga.

A question of more direct relevance to the bulk of this paper is whether literary artistry and narrative technique are compatible with the interests of history-writing. In his highlighting of themes and causal relationships is the narrator not taking us ever further away from the original events and circumstances - assuming that such there generally are - and should we not be going in that other direction in any case? The short

---

71. *Op. cit.* 156.

72. *Ibid.* 145. For further discussion and interaction with Koch see H. J. Stoebe, 'Gedanken zur Heldensage in den Samuelbüchern', in *Das Ferne und Nahe Wort* (BZAW 105; Fest. L. Rost; ed. F. Maass. Berlin, 1967) 208-18.

answer to the first part of the question is that it is doubtful whether any self-respecting historian could operate without adopting a view-point or without introducing theme(s), with all that this implies for the selection and arrangement of material. Obviously the extent of our sympathy with the view-point may be influential in our evaluation of the work as 'history', 'story', or something else.

As for the second part of the question: I cannot see that we have any choice but to be interested in the historical dimension of Scripture, however great the strains such an interest may impose at times. Of course we must appreciate the significance and value of 'the tradition', with proper regard for the metamorphosis of history in tradition, and of tradition as history. Nevertheless, it is hopelessly and unnecessarily reductionist to conclude that our study of the Old Testament can only produce a history of ideas.<sup>73/</sup> Even to produce a 'history of ideas' requires that we know when the ideas came into vogue and when they were superseded. And what is that but to treat the Old Testament as a document which bears witness to history?

It may be that at some point we shall take refuge in analogy; if so, we must select with care. Is it to be Shakespeare, with R. J. Coggins?

We should laugh out of court anyone who approached *Hamlet*, primarily with a view to improving his knowledge of Danish history, or *Henry V* as a source of knowledge of fifteenth-century England; yet a very similar approach to many an Old Testament book is regarded as entirely natural and proper.<sup>74/</sup>

There are indeed better sources for an understanding of Danish history and of fifteenth-century England, but the analogy could easily mislead. *Hamlet* and *Henry V* are

- 
73. As is suggested by N. Wyatt, 'The Old Testament Historiography of the Exilic Period', *STh* 33 (1979) 66n.
74. R. J. Coggins, 'History and Story in Old Testament Study', *JSOT* 11 (1979) 43; in similar vein D. Robertson, *The Old Testament and the Literary Critic* (Philadelphia, 1977) 5.

not even history-like in the sense in which Coggins himself would apply the term to Old Testament narrative. To many the analogy of Herodotus and Thucydides may be no more satisfactory, though I am bound to say that I think it somewhat nearer the truth. To be sure, there is a danger that immersion in the quest for 'historicity' may actually cut us off from the thought-world of the Old Testament, but the danger is in the excess. The peril of the opposite extreme is the unwarranted assumption that Israel's self-understanding was a self-misunderstanding. And that is a conclusion fraught with consequences for us all./75/

- 
75. Cf. M. H. Woudstra, 'Event and Interpretation in the Old Testament', in *Interpreting God's Word Today*, ed. S. Kistemaker (Grand Rapids, 1970) 58f.