

# Some issues to consider when engaging “the David story” (1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 3)

## CHALLENGE: THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL SEEM TO CONTAIN THREE NARRATIVES THAT CAN BE READ/INTERPRETED SEPARATELY:

- a. The story of Saul’s reign (1 Samuel 1-15)
- b. The “History of David’s Rise” (“HDR”, 1 Samuel 16 [?] -2 Samuel 8 [?]): there is no consensus on when the HDR begins or ends
- c. The “Succession Narrative” (“SN”, 2 Samuel 9 [?] -1 Kings 3 [or 11?])

### 1. HOW DO WHAT MANY SCHOLARS CONSIDER TO BE THE THREE MAJOR SECTIONS RELATE TO EACH OTHER IN TERMS OF:

- a. **AUTHORSHIP**: many options considered, including
  - 1) a single author at the time of David/Solomon
  - 2) multiple authors at different times with conflicting perspectives (e.g., pro/anti-Saul/David; pro/anti-monarchy in general)
- b. **TIME OF COMPOSITION/EDITORIAL WORK**: options range from the time of the events narrated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, with no one guess holding scholarly sway
- c. **INTENDED AUDIENCE**: options include:
  - 1) The Jerusalem elite
  - 2) Foreign kings/peoples
  - 3) The population of Judah
- d. **PURPOSE OF COMPOSITION**: options include:
  - 1) Defense of David’s accession to the throne
  - 2) Defense of David’s reign over Israel (as opposed to Saul)
  - 3) portrayal of the mixed benefits/costs of monarchy
  - 4) “serious entertainment” like Shakespeare or other “historical” works from later periods

***There is no scholarly consensus on any of these questions.***

### 2. WHICH ACTUAL TEXT (E.G., ANCIENT HEBREW TEXTS, THE SEPTUAGINT GREEK, OR THE 12-13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MASORETIC HEBREW) REFLECTS THE “TRUE” STORY, I.E., THE ONE THE “AUTHOR(S)” INTENDED TO TELL?

An example from 1 Samuel 17, the “David and Goliath” story: the challenge is that the Septuagint (LXX) version is much shorter than the Masoretic version. Options:

- a. The Masoretic added parts to the LXX, so we should read the LXX
- b. The LXX deleted parts from the older (but unavailable) Hebrew original, which the Masoretic is assumed to follow, so we should read the Masoretic

### 3. HOW DOES THE HDR RELATE TO THE SN? SOME OPTIONS:

- a. They are part of a single, continuous narrative (from whatever time of composition each interpreter determines)
- b. The HDR is pro-David propaganda which is refuted by the SN from a later time/voice
- c. However and whenever each was composed, they were both edited by a “Deuteronomistic” pen in a later period
- d. Further, other edits/changes were made in the Persian era after the end of Babylonian Exile

### 4. HOW DOES THE HDR (OR THE SN) RELATE TO OTHER TEXTS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE? SOME OPTIONS:

- a. The HDR is older than any other continuous text in the Bible
- b. The HDR is part of a larger composition that includes Genesis and other texts
- c. The HDR is part of the larger composition known as the “Deuteronomistic History”, from Joshua to 2 Kings
- d. The HDR is older than some but newer than others written independently