

## Judah Bookends

### *The Priority of Israel and Literary Revision in the David Narrative*

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#### Abstract

The story of David as king in 1-2 Samuel is defined by rule of Israel. In contrast, Judah's centrality in the David narrative is limited to two sections: David's anointing over Judah in 2 Sam 2:4a (part of a larger unit in vv. 1-4a) and the end of the Absalom lore in 19:9b $\beta$ -15, 16b-18a; and 19:41-20:5. These Judah additions or "bookends" interrupt the flow of the narrative, shifting and reorienting the reader's direction in favor of Judah. Considered as a whole, the secondary nature of Judah in the David narrative invites us to reconsider the political and social landscape of the early monarchy. For the majority of its textual growth, the David material is defined not by a United Monarchy, nor by a clear political division between Israel and Judah, but by one important entity: Israel.

#### Keywords

David – 1-2 Samuel – Israel – Judah

Scholars have long since recognized editorial work linking the books of Joshua through Kings.<sup>1</sup> Unique to the books of Samuel, however, is core material

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1 Martin Noth's monumental idea of a single writer-editor in the exilic period, his "Deuteronomist," has since generated a plethora of literary-historical arguments. See Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Darmstadt, 1943). For comprehensive overviews of the various literary-historical arguments on Samuel-Kings that have developed from Noth's theories, see P. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 8; New York,

seemingly less affected by editorial activity.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, in part, because of this view, it has been widely assumed that Judah is essential to the David story. In the past decade, literary historians have gone further, proposing that the oldest material in the David narrative in 1-2 Samuel is focused on David and Judah alone.<sup>3</sup> This early David lore would have no connection to Saul, or to David's rule over Israel. In other words, historically, David ruled Judah first, and Israel never. In this scheme, material focused on Israel would be added after the fall of the northern kingdom, at which point Judah would claim the identity of Israel. This post-720 BCE, Israel-centered David story would address communities in the north and reflect a Judahite desire for a united kingdom under the Davidic dynasty.<sup>4</sup>

Based on the very limited place of Judah in the David narrative, I propose here an alternative historical interpretation, which develops from the priority of David as ruler of Israel in the Samuel accounts. One difficulty with recent reconstructions stressing the primacy of Judah is that Judah appears remark-

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1980), pp. 27-30; Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London, 2007), pp. 14-43; and Jeremy M. Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest: The Overwritten Texts of Personal Exile and Transformation in the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW 396; Berlin, 2009).

- 2 For one example, Reinhard G. Kratz explains the distinction between 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Samuel as follows: "... whereas the framework scheme in 1-2 Kgs is original, with a few episodes which broaden out here and there, and the bulk of the narrative material is secondary, in 1-2 Samuel the narrative material is original and the Deuteronomistic framework is secondary" (Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* [trans. John Bowden; London, 2005], p. 171). See also P. Kyle McCarter, "The Books of Samuel", in Steven L. McKenzie and Matt Patrick Graham (eds.), *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth* (Sheffield, 1994), pp. 260-263.
- 3 Proponents of this view include Alexander A. Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zur Erzählung von König David in 11 Sam 1-5* (BZAW 335; Berlin, 2004); idem, "Flucht und Heimkehr Davids als integraler Rahmen der Absalommerzählung", in Rüdiger Lux (ed.), *Ideales Königtum: Studien zu David und Salomo (Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 16; Leipzig, 2005)*, pp. 42-69; Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*; and Jacob L. Wright, *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory* (New York, 2014). Fischer and Kratz are reviewed in Hutton's *The Transjordanian Palimpsest*, 142-146; and in Daniel E. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition* (New York, 2012), pp. 98-100. See also H.G.M. Williamson's strong rebuttal of this view in the prophetic material in "Judah as Israel in Eighth-Century Prophecy", in Jamie A. Grant et al. (eds.), *A God of Faithfulness: Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on His 60th Birthday* (New York; London, 2011), pp. 81-95.
- 4 Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, pp. 1-12, 49, 209-201 and 275; Wright, *David, King of Israel*, p. 47.

ably few times as an acting political group (or polity)<sup>5</sup> in 1-2 Samuel. Judah is generally attested as a population or a geographical area, particularly during David's escapades in the south while fleeing from Saul. Such a population is never envisioned as a unified polity, but rather as roaming or disconnected peoples who take their name from the southern geographical region.<sup>6</sup> Where Judah appears as a polity, it is within the framework of editorial statements regarding "Israel and Judah," or in the context of categorical information, such as numbers of troops.<sup>7</sup> In the books of Samuel, the centrality of Judah is limited to two key sections, both in 2 Samuel: David's anointing over Judah in 2 Sam 2:4a (part of a larger unit in vv. 1-4a), and Judah's dominance at the end

5 Names to define places or people in the ancient world can be used geographically, politically or socially. When names are used politically, they often define a body of people capable of action, though this can also be entangled in social definitions. I define the term polity as a unified political body capable of action. See Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel*, p. 240.

6 References to Judah as a geographical region or as disconnected populations include 1 Sam 17:1, 12; 22:5; 23:3, 23; 27:10; 30:14, 16; and 2 Sam 6:2. In 1 Sam 17:1 ("Socoh of Judah"), 1 Sam 17:12 ("Bethlehem in Judah"), and 2 Sam 2:6 ("Baalah of Judah"), Judah is presented as a component of geographical names for particular locations (see footnote 11 on 2 Sam 2:6). In 22:5, the "land of Judah" is a geographical destination for David and his men, shortened in 23:3 when David's men state that they are "afraid here in Judah." The same "land of Judah" is attested in 1 Sam 30:16 alongside the "land of the Philistines." Neither of these "lands" is associated with a single polity defeated by Amalek in the context of 1 Sam 30, but rather as a general geographical region for different populations of people. Similarly, the "Negeb of Judah" is identified as a geographical area for disconnected groups of people in 1 Sam 27:10 and in 30:14, alongside the "Negeb of the Jerahmeelites" and the "Negeb of the Kenites" (or Kenizzites, as attested in the Septuagint and in 4QSam<sup>a</sup>) in 27:10, and the "Negeb of the Cherethites" and the "Negeb of Caleb" in 30:14. The same description of disconnected groups is attested in 1 Sam 23:23, when Saul states that he will search out David "among all the clans (or thousands: *'elep*) of Judah."

7 These attestations include 1 Sam 11:8; 15:4; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam 11:11 and 12:8. Two exceptions are 1 Sam 27:6, a narrative interruption that explains why Ziklag belongs to the kings of Judah "to this day"; and 30:26, in which the "elders of Judah" receive David's spoil from his war with the Philistines. 1 Sam 30:26 frames a population list (vv. 27-31) that sets Judah parallel with the Jerahmeelites and Kenites (or Kenizzites), therefore complementing 1 Sam 27:10 (see footnote 6). Following the "elders of Judah" (30:26), other populations to which David sends his spoil are listed in the geographical south (vv. 27-31), including Bethel (likely Beth-zur from Josh 15:58; see McCarter, *1 Samuel*, pp. 434, 436), Eshtemoa and Jattir, as well as the "towns" of the Jerahmeelites and Kenites (Kenizzites). Judah is cast as one population within this larger set, and the list concludes with Hebron in v. 31, the ultimate focus of David's interest in 2 Sam 2:1-4a. Notably, Judah does not fight alongside David and "his men" in 1 Sam 30, but only receives a share of the spoil at the end of the chapter. Overall, this list anticipates a political bond between David and Judah present in 2 Sam 2:4a, yet anachronistic to 1 Samuel and otherwise absent in the Saul-David material.

of the lore concerning Absalom and the beginning of the Sheba story in 19:9b $\beta$ -15, 16b-18a; and 19:41-20:5. These are the sole sections in the Saul-David and David material that contain a concentrated focus on Judah as an acting political body. In both sections, Judah is identified specifically with David.

Setting aside these two segments for the moment, there are ten additional references to Judah scattered throughout 2 Samuel. The first is the introductory statement to the “Judahites” (*bēnē-yēhūdāh*) in 2 Sam 1:18, which leads into David’s elegy to Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam 1:19-27.<sup>8</sup> Three references follow Judah’s anointing of David in 2 Sam 2:4a (vv. 7, 10 and 11); v. 7 reiterates that Judah anointed David as king, while vv. 10-11 contain parenthetical information regarding a particular chronology for the length of David’s rule over Judah. This chronology should be seen on analogy with 2 Sam 5:4-5 and 1 Kgs 11:42: we are told that David reigns forty years in 2 Sam 5:4, equal to the reign of Solomon, who is said in 1 Kgs 11:42 to rule from Jerusalem over “all Israel” for forty years. Yet David’s forty-year period is split between Israel and Judah: seven years, six months over Judah in Hebron, and the remaining thirty-three years over Israel. The parallel framework between 2 Sam 2:10-11; 5:4-5; and Solomon’s forty-year reign over “all Israel” in 1 Kgs 11:42 suggests this chronology is secondary to the core David material, organized according to the regnal framework of 1-2 Kings.<sup>9</sup> The notion of a separate, seven-year rule for David over Judah subtracts out a number based on the parallel scheme in 1 Kgs in such a way that is secondary to the primary focus on Israel.

Judah is attested twice more in the section detailing David’s anointing over Judah and Israel in 2 Sam 2:1-5:3. The first, 3:8, is a Masoretic textual gloss to Abner’s rhetorical question, “Am I a dog’s head,” to which is added a phrase omitted in the Septuagint: “which belongs to Judah” (*’āšer līhūdāh*). The shorter Greek text offers the better reading, while the gloss in the Masoretic Text attempts to increase Judah’s presence in the narrative. The second, 3:10,

8 David’s lament is considered to be one of the oldest biblical poems, though its origin and date of inclusion in the David narrative are debated. The introductory statement in v. 18 also appears secondary to the core poetry, altering the framework of the lament. Note that throughout 1 Samuel, David has never been identified as leader over the “Judahites,” nor do they fight alongside him. On this opinion, see also Jacques Vermeylen, *La loi du plus fort: Histoire de la rédaction des récits davidiques de 1 Samuel 8 à 1 Rois 2* (BETL 154; Leuven, 2000), pp. 185-188; and Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, pp. 278 n. 15 and 333; contra McCarter, *1 Samuel*, pp. 78-79; and William L. Holladay, “Form and Word-Play in David’s Lament over Saul and Jonathan,” *VT* 20 (1970), pp. 153-189, esp. p. 154.

9 See also McCarter, *1 Samuel*, p. 88; and Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, p. 95, on the secondary nature of these verses. The notes regarding David’s reign in 2 Sam 5:4-5 are missing from the Samuel scroll at Qumran, as well as in the text of 1 Chr 11.

contains a noticeable shift in language: Abner swears he will move the kingship from the House of Saul to David, placing the throne of David upon Israel and Judah, from Dan to Beer-sheba (vv. 9-10). These verses assume knowledge of key sections throughout 1 Samuel in which Yahweh condemns Saul and promises to transfer his kingdom to David, whom he chooses as successor.<sup>10</sup> Verses 9-10 pack these ideas together into ideological language that exposes the interest of a later Judah by validating David's dynastic claim.

After Ishbaal (Ishbosheth) dies in 2 Sam 4 and Israel comes to Hebron to anoint David in 2 Sam 5:1-5, Judah disappears and is mentioned only a handful of times throughout David's struggle to maintain rule over Israel (5:5, 6:2, 11:11, 12:8). These references to Judah are all but negligible: 5:5 is an annalistic note providing a chronological link back to 2 Sam 2; 6:2 is a geographical reference to "Baalath of Judah,"<sup>11</sup> and in 11:11 and 12:8, Judah is attested within the framework of statements regarding "Israel and Judah," while otherwise excluded from the narrative.<sup>12</sup> Judah then enters as a key player in 19:9b $\beta$ -15, 16b-18a, and 41-44, and continues as part of the bridge into Sheba's rebellion in 20:1-13 (especially vv. 1-5).

If the Judah material were indeed primary to the David story, the story would collapse from lack of self-standing, independent lore. Very rarely does Judah play an active role as a unified body, and very few Judah references are integral to the narrative. Notably, in both cases in which Judah is central, the polity seems to materialize out of nowhere and evaporate just as quickly,

10 Condemnations of Saul in 1 Samuel include 1 Sam 13:13-14; 15:26-28; and 15:35-16:13.

11 See footnote 6. Baalath is referred to as part of the northern boundary of Judah in Josh 15:9-10, also identified as Kiriath-baal (Josh 15:60 and 18:14) and Kiriath-jearim (Josh 15:9). 1 Sam 6:21 and 7:1-2 similarly refer to this location as Kiriath-jearim; for a literature review and discussion of the relationship between 1 Sam 6-7, 2 Sam 6 and the broader David story, see Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest*, p. 279; also Erik Eynikel, "The Relation Between the Eli Narratives (1 Sam. 1-4) and the Ark Narrative (1 Sam. 1-6; 2 Sam. 6:1-19)", in Johannes C. De Moor and Harry F. Van Rooy (eds.), *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets (OtSt 44; Leiden, 2000)*, pp. 88-106. As discussed in Eynikel, some would interpret Baalath of Judah as Baale-Judah or "inhabitants/lords (*ba'âlê*) of Judah" (cf. Judg 9:2 and the "inhabitants of Shechem"). In 2 Sam 6, with the exception of the reference to "Baalath of Judah," the return of the ark is associated entirely with David and Israel; David retrieves the ark from "Baalath of Judah" with the "chosen" (*bâhûr*) of Israel (v. 1) and the "House of Israel" (vv. 5, 15), then celebrates the return of the ark with the "multitude" (*hâmôn*) of Israel (v. 19).

12 See footnote 7. In 11:11, David is told that "the Ark and Israel and Judah remain in Succoth" (*sukkôt*; also translated "booths"), while 12:8 mentions the "House of Israel and Judah" in conjunction with Nathan's oracle.

leaving David's rule of Israel as the dominant storyline. In 2 Sam 2, the anointing of Judah is fronted to a section that is otherwise entirely focused on David's struggle to win over Israel. In 2 Sam 19-20, Judah appears at the end of the story, in the context of David's return to Jerusalem from Mahanaim. These two blocks of Judah material transform a broader storyline that otherwise does not distinguish between the constituents of the struggle as "Israel" and "Judah." As such, the Judah material interrupts the flow of the narrative, shifting and reorienting the direction of the story in favor of Judah. The fact that Judah is so rarely seen is notable, for if the Judah material is indeed primary to the David story, and if David is identified so particularly with Judah, then where is Judah?

In contrast to Judah and the House of David, the majority of the David material is focused on David's rule of Israel alone. From David's struggle to become king over Israel (2 Sam 2-5) to his struggle to maintain rule in the Absalom-Sheba rebellions (2 Sam 15-20), the preoccupation is David's affiliation with Israel.<sup>13</sup> If the Israel material were indeed added after the fall of the northern kingdom, then almost the entirety of the David narrative would be invented from scratch post-720 BCE. Building from the evidence, including Israel's dominance and Judah's relative absence as a body politic, with the exception of two isolated and dependent units, the logical conclusion is that Israel, not Judah, is primary to the David story.

Against the backdrop of Judah's reduced role, we must consider the two occasions when this people does take center stage in the David narrative: 2 Sam 2:1-4a and the end of chapter 19 (vv. 9b $\beta$ -15, 16b-18a, 41-44, bleeding into 20:1-5). I suggest that the "Judah bookends" in 2 Samuel are part of a secondary phase of literary revision to the story of David as king of Israel. With the incorporation of Judah on either end of the story, David's kingship is reframed and the reader's orientation subtly shifted toward Judah, and not Israel, as central to the story of David.

### David's Double Anointing

The story of David as king opens with David's double anointing in 2 Sam 2:1-5:3; first over Judah (2:4a), and then over Israel (5:3), after David successfully defeats Saul's son Ishbosheth (Ishbaal) in 2 Sam 4. The first anointing in 2:4a forms the base of our assumptions of Judah's primacy in the David story. Yet

13 2 Sam 6-13 are also entirely addressed to Israel. The two units I highlight in this paper (2 Sam 2:1-5:3 and 15-20) are crucial as the larger units into which the key Judah sections are embedded.

Judah's connection to the story of David's anointing in 2:1-5:3 is tenuous at best. After appearing briefly as a character in 2:4a, Judah disappears, and the story refocuses on David's struggle to become king over Israel, with no mention of Judah.

In 2 Sam 2:1, David asks Yahweh whether he should go up to any of the "cities of Judah." Yahweh then sends him to Hebron with two of his wives (2:2), "the men" with him, and each man's household (2:3). When David and his group arrive in Hebron, the "men of Judah" come to anoint David king "over the house of Judah" (2:4a). The literary cohesion of verses 1-4a is debated;<sup>14</sup> perhaps most notable is the categorical separation between David and "his men" in 2 Sam 2:3 and the "men of Judah" who come to anoint David in the subsequent line (2:4a). In light of the surrounding narrative in 1-2 Samuel, in which David's followers are defined simply as his "men" or his "servants," it is the statement regarding the "men of Judah" in 2:4a that appears most incongruent within vv. 1-4a, and within chapters 2-5 as a whole.

More importantly, Judah disappears as soon as David is anointed, and the story reverts to David's struggle to gain rule of Israel. At the heart of the narrative lies a core, independent account that begins in 2:12, what I refer to as the Abner-Joab material.<sup>15</sup> The story depicts a strange contest at the pool of Gibeon between the followers of Saul's son Ishbosheth, led by Abner, and the

14 For example, Römer views 2:4a as secondary "deuteronomistic" expansion based on its regnal formula (*The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, p. 95). Contrary to Römer, Walter Dietrich suggests that 2:4a the most reliable witness (possibly dated to the tenth century) within verses 1-4a (Dietrich, *The Early Monarchy in Israel: The Tenth Century BCE* Leiden; Boston, 2007), pp. 158-160. Kratz views vv. 3-4a as core material, and vv. 1-2 as late, post-Deuteronomistic expansions (*The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*, p. 184).

15 I agree with Fischer, who argues that 2:12-16 represents the source material for 2 Sam 2. Fischer views the remainder of the material as consisting of pre-deuteronomistic and deuteronomistic redactions. Fischer dates the pre-deuteronomistic material, what he refers to as his "David-Redaction," to seventh-century Jerusalem, following the fall of the northern kingdom (*Von Hebron nach Jerusalem*, pp. 46-98 and 269-291). Unlike Fischer, I would date the majority of the narrative (Fischer's "David-Redaction") much earlier, to a primary phase in the development of the David narrative. While Fischer considers all of 2:1-10a to be part of his (post-720) David redaction, I would place only 2:4a, the reference to Judah, within a post-Israel world. See the "Conclusion" below. Johannes Klein suggests two core sections of the narrative, 2 Sam 2:12-16 (the skirmish at the pool of Gibeon), and 2:18-32 (the chase scene between Abner and the sons of Zeruiah). Around these core narratives, Klein identifies specific pre-deuteronomistic additions or "summary texts" that transform and resituate the core material into the broader narrative (Klein, *David versus Saul: Ein Beitrag zum Erzählsystem der Samuelbücher* [Stuttgart, 2002], pp.146-147).

followers of David, led by Joab. The story is not about Israel as a whole, but about local problems and local people, defined primarily by Benjamin. The landscape is specific to Saul and isolated from any other known centers of Israel and Judah. The lines between the participants in the skirmish are vague, and it is not clear over what these two groups are fighting. This core narrative is depicted as simple entertainment for the army commanders Joab and Abner, in which twenty-four “young men” (*ně'ārîm*), twelve from Benjamin and twelve of David’s “servants,” come forward at the pool of Gibeon and swordplay to the death (2:14-16).

This core narrative is incorporated into the broader storyline in 2 Sam 2:1-5:3 and transformed into the event that precipitates open battle between the followers of David and of Ishbosheth (really Abner). Throughout the struggle for power, the opposing parties are noticeably referred to as the Benjaminites and the men of David, and once as Israel and the servants of David. The only attested reference to Judah is in 2:10-11, the secondary chronological scheme discussed earlier in this article. Focused on Benjamin and the men of David, a particular image is formed throughout 2 Sam 2-4, one of tribal feuds rather than organized battle between larger entities. The story continues with Abner transferring his loyalty to David in 2 Sam 3, and closes with the death of Ishbosheth in Mahanaim (2 Sam 4) before the elders of Israel anoint David king in 2 Sam 5:3.

While Judah is viewed as primary to the David narrative, I suggest that the anointing over Judah in 2:4a is secondary to the story of David’s dual anointing. Isolated from the surrounding narrative and dependent on what precedes and follows, Judah is superfluous. Removing Judah from 2:4a, the story builds smoothly from 1 Samuel to the climax of Israel’s anointing in 2 Sam 5:3. Placed strategically in the beginning of 2 Samuel, the Judah addition then subtly shifts the reader’s perspective to view Judah as primary to the story. The anointing of Judah in 2 Sam 2:4a therefore becomes the first of two Judah “bookends” to the story of David as king, the second of which appears at the close of Absalom’s revolt in 2 Sam 15-19.

### Absalom’s Rebellion (2 Sam 15-19)

The story of Absalom is framed within the broader narrative of David’s struggle to rule Israel. It begins and ends with Absalom’s death and “all the people of Judah” and “half the people of Israel” accompanying David back to Jerusalem (2 Sam 19:41-44). The closing section, 2 Sam 15-19, echoes 2 Sam 2:1-5:3, this time with David’s son Absalom struggling to usurp his father by returning to

Hebron, the original seat of David's power in 2 Sam 2. Meanwhile, David and his "house" flee to Mahanaim, the place of asylum for Ishbosheth in 2 Sam 2-4. The nontraditional geography of the far south (Hebron) and the Transjordan (Mahanaim) link these two sections together, as does the sudden entry of Judah in 2 Sam 2:4a and 19:9bβ. The end of the Absalom-David conflict in 2 Sam 19 then continues into the first half of Sheba's rebellion (20:1-13) as a bridge text that connects the Absalom-David material into the otherwise independent story of Sheba that follows (20:14-22).<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the story of Absalom and directly following his death (2 Sam 13:1-19:9bα), Judah is absent. This is particularly notable throughout Absalom's rebellion against David in 2 Sam 15-18, a struggle that might be assumed to be between Israel and Judah. On Absalom's side, the players are defined as Israel or as a particular "tribe" (*šebet*) of Israel (15:1-2), as well as the "men of Israel" (15:6, 13) and simply "the people" or "troops" (*'am*) (15:12). The careful description of Israel as a coalition of tribes offers a collective vision for Israel's political shape similar to that of 2 Sam 5:1, a vision lacking in 1-2 Kings and perhaps rooted in Israelite narrative.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, on David's side, his constituents are defined not as Judah, but as his "house" (15:16), "people" or "troops" (15:17), "servants" (16:6), "soldiers" (*gibbōrîm*) (16:6), and "men" or "men of Jerusalem" (15:11; 16:13).

The rebellion begins as Absalom wins the support of Israel away from his father in 2 Sam 15. He stands before the gate to the city and greets those who have arrived from the various tribes in Israel (15:1-2). By portraying David as inaccessible and himself as sympathetic to each man's case, Absalom "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (15:6), drawing the loyalty of the people away from the king. Absalom then mimics his father's campaign in 2 Sam 2-5 by returning to Hebron, David's southern base, to consolidate his power. According to the text, he travels with 200 men "of Jerusalem" who know nothing of his plans to usurp the throne (15:11), in addition to David's trusted counselor Ahitophel (15:12). Absalom then sends messengers to all the tribes in Israel, telling them to announce Absalom's kingship in Hebron as soon as they hear the sound of

16 See Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel*, pp. 106-107, for a discussion on 2 Sam 20:1-13 as a bridge text from the Absalom material into the older, self-standing narrative of Sheba's rebellion.

17 On the connection between specifically Israelite narrative and Israel as a coalition of tribes, see Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel*, pp. 102-109. The phrase "tribes of Israel" appears only four times in 1-2 Kings (1 Kgs 8:16; 11:32; 14:21; and 2 Kgs 21:7). In all of these examples, the phrase is connected with David or Jerusalem as chosen by God: e.g. "the city which I chose out of all the tribes of Israel" (1 Kgs 8:16), and "Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel" (1 Kgs 14:21).

the *shofar* (15:10). Oddly, though Absalom gathers the support of Israel from the geographical south, there is no mention of Judah. Stranger still, when David hears the news, he departs Jerusalem with his whole “house” (*bayit*) (15:16a). This suggests that David’s body politic or “house” is mobile, able to quit Jerusalem as its base.

What follows is a long, detailed account of David’s journey to Mahanaim (15:17-17:27). The tale draws heavily on other narrative strands in the David material, particularly 2 Sam 2:1-5:3. Mahanaim (which appears only in 2 Sam 2-4 and 17) is David’s final destination; along the way in 16:1-14, David encounters various characters affiliated with the House of Saul in 2 Sam 2-4. In addition to the incorporation of this cast of characters, the Mahanaim journey depicts Jerusalem as a real court center with competing advisors. This depiction evokes the type of court politics that is lacking in Absalom’s rebellion in 15:1-16, and in the battle in the forest of Ephraim that takes place in chapter 18. The result is a carefully constructed journey that reads as a performance or procession, in which David leaves Jerusalem, passes through Bahurim (16:5-13), crosses the Jordan (17:22), and pauses in Gilead (17:26) before arriving in Mahanaim (17:27).<sup>18</sup> Chapter 18 then opens with the battle in the forest of Ephraim, again categorized by David’s “people” or “servants” on one side of the conflict, and “Israel” on the other (18:6-7). Finally, Absalom is killed (18:9-18), drawing the story of Absalom’s rebellion to a close.

For all the distinct character of David’s journey to Mahanaim in 2 Sam 15-17, which appears to link what precedes and follows in chapters 15 and 18 as a secondary construction, Judah is still missing. The entrance of the polity Judah in chapter 19 is therefore startling. The scene shifts from David mourning Absalom’s death “at the gate,” surrounded by his troops (*am*) (v. 9b $\alpha$ ), to Israel’s preparations to accompany the king back to Jerusalem (v. 10). David then sends a message to the “elders of Judah” (v. 12), inquiring as to why they will “be the last” to return David to his house, behind Israel. He calls them “my brothers . . . my bone and my flesh” (v. 13), language mirrored in 2 Sam 5:1, with the implication of blood kinship as a basic for political loyalty. Thus, the “hearts of the men of Judah” are swayed towards the king “as one man” (v. 15), whom they precede to accompany across the Jordan (v. 16a).

18 For a discussion on the “Transjordanian Motif,” in which characters cross into the Transjordan with the intention of improving their political situation, see Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest*, pp. 1-50. Hutton examines, in particular, the ritual act of David’s journey to and from Mahanaim in 15:14-17:29 and 19:12-44, which involve rites that first separate David from the western land, and then reincorporate him into the west, through the various meetings of people along the way.

Judah then melts into the background, and the elaborate journey described in 2 Sam 15-17 is reversed in 19:18b-40. As David travels back to Jerusalem, he encounters the same cast of characters from 16:1-15 along the way.<sup>19</sup> Judah then reappears in vv. 41-44, claiming the king is “closer” to them than to Israel, while Israel claims they have more shares (based on number of tribes) in both the king and in David (19:44). This counting of tribes is generally attributed to later writers<sup>20</sup> and placed within a Judah-centric vision of Israel. As this story ends and the Sheba rebellion begins, the Judah addition bleeds into the first half of 2 Sam 20, connecting the Absalom-David material into the rebellion that follows. The material in this Judah addition, vv. 1-13, contrasts greatly with the core tale that follows in vv. 14-22. While Sheba is referred to as Benjaminite (*ʾiš yēmînî*) in v. 1, he is later described as a man of the hill country of Ephraim (v. 21). Though “all the men of Israel” follow Sheba in v. 2, he is entirely alone in the latter portion of the narrative. Where the addition ends in v. 13, Judah again disappears from the narrative, bringing the story back to a local tale that has nothing to do with a threatening rebellion of “all Israel” against David.

### Conclusion

To undertake a full literary-historical analysis of 2 Sam 2-5 and 15-20 would take us beyond the specific discussion of Judah’s presence and absence in these chapters.<sup>21</sup> Recent (mainly continental) scholarship has suggested that an old Absalom story, represented by the battle in the forest of Ephraim in 2 Sam 18, and perhaps the beginning of Absalom’s revolt in 2 Sam 15:1-6 (and 13?), lies at the heart of Absalom’s rebellion. The majority of the surrounding material, including Absalom’s move to Hebron (15:7-12) and David’s flight and

19 Hutton analyzes the strange sequence of meetings as David heads from east to west in *The Transjordanian Palimpsest*, p. 8.

20 Cf. Josh 3-4 and 1 Kings 11:35-36. Martin Noth considered Josh 2-8 to represent the earliest core of a narrative focused on Benjamin, which he dated to the ninth century (*Das Buch Josua* [Tübingen, 1971], p. 12). More recently, this collection has been dated either to the time of Josiah’s expansion or to a post-exilic community (Albert de Pury and Thomas Römer, “Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues,” in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, [eds. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 24-141, esp. 113-114. See also Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel*, 134-135).

21 The literary-historical analysis of 2 Samuel is undertaken in much greater detail in my dissertation and forthcoming book on the House of David.

return to Mahanaim (15:14-17:29; 19:9b $\beta$ -44) reflects later deuteronomistic editing and additions.<sup>22</sup> I agree that the battle in the forest of Ephraim (ch. 18) and Absalom's revolt (ch. 15) are independent, self-contained narratives, though I am less convinced by the clear demarcation of 15:1-6 and 13 (or thereabouts) as original material. I question the narrative evidence that leads to excising the entirety of the material surrounding these particular verses, and I am more inclined to see Hebron as primary. I also agree with the secondary nature of the long, elaborate descriptions of David's journey to Mahanaim and his return in chapters 15-17 and 19, which link the revolt to earlier material in the David narrative and connect Absalom's revolt in chapter 15 with the battle in the forest of Ephraim in chapter 18.

Like 2 Sam 15-19, 2 Sam 2-5 also appears to contain core independent material, represented by the skirmish at the pool of Gibeon in 2:12-16 (see footnote 15). David's struggle to become king of Israel is built up around this story, through the creation of a more serious battle between the constituents of David and Saul. Mahanaim appears to be secondary to this text, similar to the Absalom material. Yet if the majority of 2 Sam 2:1-5:3 and 15-19 represents the attempt to create a cohesive David narrative, then the Judah additions in 2:4a and 19:9b $\beta$ -15, 16b-18a; and 19:41-20:5 are later still. In these sections, references to Judah are not seamless parts of the narrative, but rather disruptive

22 While scholars disagree on the exact parameters of the source texts in chapters 15 and 18, proponents of this general view include Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*, p. 176; Erik Aurelius, "David's Unschuld: Die Hofgeschichte und Palm 7", in Markus Witte (ed.), *Gott und Mensch im Dialog: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (BZAW 345; 2 vols.; Berlin, 2004), pp. 391-412, esp. pp. 396-400; Fischer, "Flucht und Heimkehr", pp. 43-69; Klaus-Peter Adam, "Motivik, Figuren und Konzeption der Erzählung vom Absalomaufrühr", in Markus Witte, et al., (eds.), *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur "Deuteronomismus"—Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (BZAW 365; Berlin; New York, 2006), pp. 194-195; Thilo Alexander Rudnig, *David's Thron: Redaktionskritische Studien zur Geschichte von der Thronnachfolge Davids* (BZAW 358; Berlin, 2006), pp. 234-279 and 330-331 (in contrast to Kratz, Fischer, Aurelius and Adam, Rudnig argues that David's flight to Mahanaim, specifically 17:22, is part of the original source material); Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, pp. 177-178. Hutton follows the analysis of Kratz, Fischer and Aurelius in positing an "early, concise battle report" that would include 15:1-6, 13; 18:1-2a, 4b, 6-9, and 15b-18b $\alpha$  (Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest*, p. 222). However, for Hutton the addition of a "Transjordanian Exile" encompassing 15:1-37 and 16:15-19:16 is pre-deuteronomistic and relatively early in the construction of the David narrative (pp. 221-222). In this, Hutton follows Jacques Vermeylen in discerning several layers of composition that can be located in the tenth-ninth centuries; see Vermeylen, *La loi du plus fort*, pp. 349-351.

interludes that do not fit the otherwise careful cataloguing of allegiances in David's struggle to rule.

In my dissertation and forthcoming book, I propose two primary phases of literary development in the David narrative. The first phase is concerned with the story of David as king of Israel and spans the majority of the David story. The second phase incorporates Judah into the narrative and alters the narrative framework to David as king of Israel and Judah. Against recent literary-historical arguments noted in this paper, I argue that the primary phase, David as king of Israel, likely begins prior to the fall of the kingdom of Israel, written from the perspective of Judah. In addition to the cautions noted at the beginning of this paper, the political landscape presented in the majority of the David narrative does not reflect a post-720 setting, but rather one rooted in the central highlands, prior to the expansion under Omri and Ahab.<sup>23</sup> I suggest that these stories about David's Israel were therefore written from a Judahite perspective that began to take shape before the fall of the northern kingdom. Judah need not have waited until the demise of Israel to have understood itself as part of this larger political entity; based on other texts, it seems entirely possible that Judah understood itself to be bound up with Israel during the existence of two monarchies.<sup>24</sup>

Then, the second phase of "Judah additions" must have occurred by the time of the combination of Samuel-Kings, perhaps as part of the effort to harmonize the David story with the narrative of two kingdoms. This would have taken place some time after the fall of the northern kingdom, potentially as early as the late pre-exilic period. The preoccupation of this second phase would have been to highlight Judah's prior claim on David. As books such as Kings demonstrate, the creation of a strong Judean identity by the time of the exilic period becomes a primary concern, permeating the task of those involved with the continued construction of the biblical tradition.

Considered as a whole, the secondary nature of Judah in the David narrative invites us to reconsider the political and social landscape of the early monarchy. The modest geographical interest of David suggests narrative roots in the time before the ninth-century expansions of the Omrides. For the majority of its textual growth, the David material is defined not by a United Monarchy, nor by a clear political division between Israel and Judah, but by one important entity: Israel.

23 The central-highlands focus reflects what Daniel Fleming and Lauren Monroe refer to as "Little Israel" in their ongoing project on Benjamin.

24 For more on this argument, see the prophetic material in Williamson, "Judah as Israel in Eighth-Century Prophecy", pp. 81-95.