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DAVID IN CULTURAL MEMORY

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KING DAVID TAKEN OVER BY JOSIAH, MOSES AND ABRAHAM – DEALING WITH THE DAVIDIC DYNASTY IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD

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INTRODUCTION: THE PARADOX OF KING DAVID IN THE SO-CALLED DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

In the books of Samuel and Kings, after the dtr redactions that these books underwent, King David plays a prominent, yet also ambiguous role. On the one hand, he is presented as YHWH's chosen one to whom the deity promises an eternal dynasty (2 Sam 7) and who is used as a yardstick to measure the other kings' religious behavior. On the other hand, the second book of Samuel contains numerous stories that do not fit this picture: in 2 Sam 12, the king has an adulterous liaison with Bathsheba, who later becomes his wife, but in order to marry her, David organizes the death of Bathsheba's husband. After that he has to face a series of revolts especially from his son Absalom, who is finally killed by David's general Joab. During this revolt David abandons his capital and his people and appears quite passive or even weak. And also in the story about his successor to the throne that opens the books of Kings, David is depicted as an old monarch with lacking any vigor and power of decision so that the prophet Nathan and his wife Bathsheba can easily convince him that he had uttered an oath through which he established Solomon as his successor.

How to explain the positive references to David in the book of Kings with these stories of the so-called "Court History"? The traditional answer by Martin Noth, the "father" of the Dtr History hypothesis was, that his Deuteronomist, whom he believed to be a single author, was an "honest broker", who faithfully transmitted the older traditions that he had at his disposal even in case they contradicted his own views¹. John Van Seters

¹ Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament (1943)* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft,

had suggested a very different solution. He claimed that the Court History is a post-dtr addition to the books of Samuel and Kings. The author or redactor who added that story at the beginning of the Persian period wanted to prevent any hopes about the restoration of the Davidic dynasty or any messianic expectations linked to the figure of David, as can be found in oracles contained in the book of Ezekiel that announce the coming of a "new David". The author of the Court History was opposed to such ideas and therefore emphasized the dark or weak sides of the founder of the Judean dynasty².

Whether one wants to resolve the problem in the traditional way or whether one wants to accept the late date of the Court History, and there are some good reasons to do so, the fact remains that the "cultural memory" of David became ambiguous in the Persian period. Inside and outside the Dtr History different strategies developed in order to cope with the figure of David and the Davidic dynasty.

In what follows I would like to present some of these strategies. I will start with (1) the use of David as a positive reference in the Dtr History. After that I will turn (2) to the question of the ending of the Dtr History in which David had disappeared. This brings us (3) to the question of whether David has been supplanted by King Josiah, who receives at the end an even better praise. After that we will deal with the question of Davidic or Dynastic memory in the Torah, examining (4) the law of the king in Deut 17 before (5) a final investigation about Abraham as a new king or David.

1. DAVID AS A POSITIVE REFERENCE IN THE DTR HISTORY

As it is well known all rulers are evaluated in the books of Kings according to their religious behavior, the ideal of which, according to the dtr theology, can be characterized by a double exclusivist ideology: the worship of YHWH alone and only in the Jerusalemite Temple. In this regard, all Northern kings fail, perpetuating the sins of Jeroboam, that

1967). English translation: *The Deuteronomistic History*, SOTSup 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

² John Van Seters, "The Court History and DtrH: Conflicting Perspectives on the House of David," in *Die sogenannte Thronfolgeschichte Davids. Neue Einsichten und Anfragen*, ed. Albert de Pury and Thomas Römer, OBO 176 (Freiburg (CH): Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 70-93; *idem*, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009).

is the worship of YHWH outside of Jerusalem and especially in the sanctuary of Bethel. As for the Southern, Judean kings some of them are compared in a positive or negative sense with their "father". This comparison appears for the first time with Solomon, who is held responsible by the Dtrs for the splitting up of the "United Monarchy". The dtr redactors use two different expressions "to walk in the way of his father" (*hlk bdrk 'byw*) and "to do what is right in the eyes of YHWH" (*'sh htwb b'yny yhwh*)³.

The comparison starts with the divine revelation to Solomon in 1 Kgs 3. Before the theophany the narrator states: "Now Solomon loved YHWH, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places." This notice is quite anachronistic since Solomon has not yet built the temple and Gabaon where YHWH's revelation takes place is described as *bamah*, a high place. The comment in 1 Kgs 3:3 reminds the reader (or listener) of 1 Kgs 2:2ff., where David, in strong contrast to 1 Kgs 1, appears like Moses and Joshua, who farsighted give their last instructions before their deaths: "I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of YHWH your God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn ...". In this passage, verses 3-4 are often considered to be a late dtr (DtrN or similar) addition⁴. The redactor's aim could have been to show that David did indeed walk in YHWH's commandments – something that is not stated earlier in the books of Samuel – and also that he admonished his son Solomon to do so.

This is confirmed in the divine speech at Gabaon: "If you walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days" (1 Kgs 3:14). As it has often been observed this divine speech in 1 Kgs 3 is taken up by a second speech of YHWH in 1 Kgs 9. Both dtr speeches frame the positive part of King Solomon's reign, whereas 1 Kgs 9 is introducing the bad sides of his reign which will lead to the end of the United Monarchy.⁵

³ See the listings in Thomas Römer, *Israels Väter. Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition*, OBO 99 (Freiburg (CH): Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 282-5.

⁴ See for instance Timo Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie. David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung*, AASFserB. 193 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975), 28-9.

⁵ See on this Thomas Römer, "Redaction Criticism: 1 Kings 8 and the Deuteronomists," in *Method Matters, Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David*

In 1 Kgs 9:4, the same condition and the same comparison with David is formulated, but now the negative outcome, in case that Solomon will not behave like his father, is emphasized: “*If you will walk before me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’ But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following me, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes . . . , then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight*”(1 Kgs 9:4-6).

Before the kingdom splits up, the destruction of the Temple and the exile are already announced. However, the fact, that after Solomon’s death, the kingdom of Judah subsisted next to Israel is explained in the following ways. First the narrator states that,

“Solomon did what was evil in the sight of YHWH, and he did not follow YHWH *fully (ml’)*, as David his father had done” (11,6). This statement apparently tries to say that Solomon was not entirely bad (probably because he has built the Temple) but cannot compare to David. Ahijah’s prophetic speech to Jeroboam telling him that he will be the new king over the tribes of Israel contains a similar explanation, which is formulated in the MT in a very strange mix of plural and singular: “because they have forsaken me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they *have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and (observing my statutes and my ordinances),⁶ as his father David did.*” This mix is difficult to explain: either the end in singular, which clearly alludes to Salomon, is a gloss from a copyist who wanted to emphasize Solomon’s responsibility, or the whole verse was first in singular (as it is the case in LXX, Syr and ms of the Vulgate) and was then transformed in order to show that all tribes of Israel were responsible for the end of the United Monarchy.

The fact that YHWH permitted Solomon’s son to continue the dynasty and to rule over one tribe, Judah, is also explained with a reference to David: “But to his son I will give one tribe, that my servant David may

have a *nîr* always before me in Jerusalem” (v. 36). We will come back to the question of a *nîr* for David. Interestingly in 1 Kgs 11:37-39 Jeroboam, receives the same conditional promise of an ongoing dynasty as Solomon (here David appears as YHWH’s servant), but because of his construction of the sanctuaries of Bethel and Dan he immediately annihilates the promise to benefit from YHWH’s protection as did David.

The next king who is compared to David is Asa: “*Asa did what was right in the sight of YHWH, like David his father*” (1 Kgs 15:11). Asa’s right-doing consists in religious reforms: he bans male prostitutes, destroys the symbol of Ashera and other statues. However he maintains the high places, which the dtc redactors of Kings abhor (1 Kgs 11:12-14).

The next king being directly compared to David is Amaziah: “*He did what was right in the sight of the YHWH, yet not like David his father; he did according to all that Joash his father had done*” (2 Kgs 14:3). His father Joash is indeed also praised for doing the right in YHWH’s eyes without mention of David. Joash did restore the temple, prefiguring Josiah’s temple restoration. Interestingly Amaziah, in contrast to Asa, did not the right like David his father, although both kings are “only” blamed for having maintained the *bamôt*.

King Ahaz is also compared to David, but in an entirely negative way: “he did not do what was right in the sight of YHWH his God, as his father David had done” (2 Kgs 16:3). Ahaz is blamed because he behaved as a vassal of the Assyrians and imitated the kings of Israel. His son Hezekiah stands in total contrast to his father Ahaz: “*He did what was right in the sight of YHWH, according to all that his father David had done*” (2 Kgs 18:3). Hezekiah is like Josiah a cultic reformer and, reading 2 Kgs 18:4 (“He trusted in YHWH, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him”) one gets the impression that he was the best of all, an impression that will be later contradicted by the comment on Josiah. Did Hezekiah surpass David in the eyes of the author of this verse? However, when YHWH defends Jerusalem against the assault of the Assyrians, the reason for the divine protection is again David: “For I will defend this city to save it for my own sake and for *my servant David’s sake*” (1 Kgs 19:34; see also 2 Kgs 20:6). Thanks to David’s behavior the Assyrians are driven back by YHWH, and when YHWH promises to heal Hezekiah from his illness, David is mentioned again in 2 Kgs 20:5: “Thus says YHWH, the *God of your father David*, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you.”

L. Petersen, ed. Joel M. LeMon, Kent Harold Richards, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 56 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 63-76.

⁶ Lacking in LXX* and perhaps a late addition.

David appears for the last time in the book of Kings, and in the Dtr History, in comparison with Josiah: "He *did what was right in the sight of YHWH and walked in all the way of his father David*, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left" (2 Kgs 22:2). Like Hezekiah, Josiah is said to behave exactly like David, his father. But, as we will see, finally he will surpass him.

Summing up so far, we have seen how the dtr redactors construct the comparisons of Judean kings in order to evaluate their religious actions. In these comparisons David appears as at the one who did right in the eyes of YHWH, and as the one who kept the divine statues and commandments. It is not clear to which precise behavior this presentation of David refers. There is no account in which he appears a dtr cult reformer or even as following the divine law. Therefore we have to do here with a theoretical dtr construction, which seems to be based upon the idea that the founder of the chosen dynasty behaved according to the divine will.

A similar idea is linked to the idea that YHWH did not destroy immediately the kingdom of Judah because he wanted to preserve a *nîr* for David. This theme appears in the comments about the reigns of Solomon, Abiam and Jehoram (1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19). There has been a long debate about the meaning of *nîr* which often is translated with "lamp", but which may on comparison with the other biblical texts using this term better be understood as "royal estate" as suggested by Ehud Ben Zvi.⁷ Many scholars consider that the promise of a "*nîr l'dwd*" alludes to the promise of an eternal dynasty in 2 Sam 7. This may be possible although the term does not appear in this text. Another intriguing question is why the *nîr*-theme is restricted to the three kings Solomon, Abiam and Jehoram. According to Omer Sergi⁸ the theme appears when there is a danger of foreign women. If one accepts this idea, it is possible to argue that the dtr redactor who added the *nîr*-theme considered the foreign wives as a threat to the Davidic dynasty. In this case it could be an addition later than the other remarks on David's righteous behavior. It could also be understood as a reference to the promise of an eternal to David in 2 Samuel 7. The date and the formation of this text are also hotly debated. Most agree that the text must in its original form be pre-exilic since the promise does

⁷ Ehud Ben Zvi, "Once the Lamp has been Kindled – A Reconsideration of the Meaning of the MT *Nîr* in 1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19 and 2 Chr 21:7," *ABR* 39 (1991): 10-30.

⁸ Omer Sergi, "Foreign Women and the Early Kings of Judah: Shedding Light on the Historiographic Perception of the Author of Kings," *ZAW* 126 (2014): 193-207.

not fit the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Judean state⁹. For F.M. Cross the existence of 2 Sam 7 in the Dtr History was a strong case for his theory of a Josianic edition of the Dtr History. According to Cross and all his followers the Josianic edition of 2 Sam 7 had been used a royal propaganda, showing that Josiah is a David *redivivus* of a sort.¹⁰ However, despite many attempts it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct the extent of the older document behind the present text of 2 Samuel 7. For that reason Jan Rückl emphasized¹¹ has the fact that contrary to Mesopotamian building inscriptions 2 Sam 7 presents a polemic against David's plan to build a temple. According to him the dynastic promise to David was written after the destruction of the Jerusalemite temple¹² in order to counter the causal relationship between the building of a temple and the duration of a dynasty. This expresses the hope that the dynasty thanks to the promise to David would not follow the fate of the temple. This would fit well in a time without temple or even after the reconstruction of the temple when the Davidides lost the control over the Temple. This new reading is challenging but brings us to the question of why David is absent in the end of the Dtr History and how one has to understand its end.

2. NO DAVID AT THE END – HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE LAST VERSES OF 2 KINGS 25?

As already mentioned, David appears for the last time in the books of Kings introducing the reign of Josiah. When it comes to the last years of the kingdom David has disappeared. And contrary to 2 Kings 17 that offers a long explanation for the reasons of Israel's downfall, there is nothing similar in the last chapters that report the end of Judah and the destruction of the temple. For that reason it has often been suspected that the Dtr History did end somewhere else than in the present last verses of 2 Kings 25,

⁹ William M. Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David. The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1-17* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Omer Sergi, "The Composition of Nathan's Oracle to David (2 Samuel 7:1-17) as a Reflection of Royal Judahite Ideology," *JBL* 129 (2010): 261-279.

¹⁰ Frank M. Cross, "The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic. Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-289.

¹¹ Jan Rückl, *A Sure House. Studies on the Dynastic Promise to David in the Books of Samuel*, OBO 281 (Fribourg: Fribourg Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

¹² See also Wolfgang Oswald, *Nathan der Prophet: eine Untersuchung zu 2Samuel 7 und 12 und 1Könige 1*, *ATHANT* 94 (Zürich: TVZ Theologischer Verlag, 2008).

probably in 2 Kgs 25: 21 "and so Judah was led away from their land to the exile." This according to many scholars may be the closing remark of the exilic DtrH.¹³ The exile is presented as the conclusion of the whole history, creating at the same time the myth of an "empty land", suggesting that "all Israel" has been deported, which is in contradiction to the historical facts and other biblical accounts.¹⁴ If 2 Kgs 25:21 originally was the conclusion of DtrH, we must assume, that very soon it was enlarged with verses 22-26, which contain the information about the anarchic situation in the land (described in detail in Jer 40-42), and so to a certain extent correct 2 Kgs 25:21: "And all the people parted ... and went to Egypt...". Here the entire history of the people of YHWH, which started with the Exodus from Egypt, is practically annihilated. There is not a more negative way to express the end of a history and no clear hope for a future can be found in these verses. If these two verses were conclusions of the exilic edition of the DtrH it can hardly be maintained that the Dtrs kept up hope for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. Does the situation change with regard to the Davidic dynasty in 25:27-30, which represents the conclusion of the actual form of the books of Kings?

"Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, ... that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he became king, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison; and he spoke kindly to him and set his throne above the throne of the kings who were with him in Babylon. Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes and had his meals in the king's presence regularly *all the days of his life*; and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion for each day, *all the days of his life*".

According to Noth, the account on the improvement of Jehoiachin's situation, who receives a place of honour at the table of the Babylonian king, "was added, because this event – even though little interesting for the story as such – is still part of the description of the destiny of the Judean kings."¹⁵ In no way it should be read "in the sense of a new dawn of a better future."¹⁶ The slightly laconic attitude of Noth towards these

¹³ Walter Dietrich, "Niedergang und Neuanfang: Die Haltung der Schlussredaktion des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes zu den wichtigsten Fragen ihrer Zeit," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion. Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times*, ed. Bob Becking and Marjo C.A. Korpel (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1999), 45-70.

¹⁴ Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the 'Exilic' Period*, Symbolae Osloenses (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 87.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 108 (translations mine).

verses has soon been contradicted especially by G. von Rad who saw these verses as expressing a hope of the continuity of Davidic dynasty or even the hope of the coming of a messianic king¹⁷. According to von Rad, this passage contains a discreet hope that the history of the Davidides did not come to an end. E. Zenger was much more affirmative, stating that in these verses the promise to David in 2 Sam 7 had been fulfilled.¹⁸ But there are no references to 2 Sam 7, YHWH is not even mentioned, and the narrator is telling a very secular event without any commentary. If he had wanted to show to his audience a fulfilment it would have been easy to take up an expression like "for David's sake" or something similar. One may also observe that nothing is said about Jehoiachin's sons, who are mentioned in Chronicles but not here; there is no allusion to an eventual successor. The narrative ends with Jehoiachin staying in Babylon until the end of his days.

Apparently we must find another explanation. There seem to be literary and thematic parallels between the destiny of Jehoiachin and the Diaspora-novels in Gen 37-50 (Joseph),¹⁹ Dan 2-6 (Daniel) and Esther (Mordecai). In all these texts an exile is brought out of prison and gains an important role at the court of a foreign king, becoming "second after the king" (2 Kgs 25: 28; Gen 41: 40; Dan 2: 48; Est 10: 3); in all four cases the new position is marked by a changing of clothes (2 Kgs 25: 29; Gen 41: 42; Dan 5: 29; Est 6:10-11; 8:15). The aim of these Diaspora-narratives is to show, that the land of the exile can become a land, in which one can live well and even make an astonishing career. 2 Kgs 25: 27-30 could be interpreted similarly: the destiny of Jehoiachin symbolizes the transformation of the exile into a Diaspora.²⁰ More generally, the Deuteronomists of the early Persian period play the strategy of the "open end," which is quite comparable to the ending of the Pentateuch. But at that end David has vanished. A similar strategy can be observed in the final account of Josiah's reform.

¹⁷ Gerhard von Rad, "Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den Königsbüchern (1947)," in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, TB 8 (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1958), 189-204.

¹⁸ Erich Zenger, "Die deuteronomistische Interpretation der Rehabilitierung Jojachins," *BZ NF* 12 (1968): 16-30.

¹⁹ For the references to Joseph see Michael J. Chan, "Joseph and Jehoiachin: On the Edge of Exodus," *ZAW* 125 (2013): 566-577.

²⁰ Donald F. Murray, "Of All Years the Hope-or Fears? Jehoiachin in Babylon (2 Kings 25:27-30)," *JBL* 120 (2001): 245-265; Ronald E. Clements, "A Royal Privilege: Dining in the Presence of the Great King," in *Reflection and Refraction. Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim, W. Brian Aucker, VTSup 113 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), 49-66.

3. JOSIAH, BETTER THAN DAVID?

When opening the narrative about Josiah's reign, which mostly consists of a report about his reform, he is equaled with David: "He did right in the sight of YHWH and *walked in all the way of his father David*, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left."

However in the final account of his reform he will surpass his "father."

The story of Josiah's reform in 2 Kgs 22-23 is a complex text whose first edition (in a very short form) might stem from the Josianic period. In a recent article Nadav Na'aman has argued that the story of the discovered book, the so-called *Auffindungsbericht*, was part of the oldest form of the story, which was according to him an independent narrative, which was later integrated in the DtrH History.²¹ According to him the finding of the book was absolutely necessary for the original account, which needed a starting point for Josiah's reform. But according to the parallel account in 2 Chr 34 Josiah undertook his reform without any book, which was found only ten years later. In the Chronicler's account, the book is not needed for the reform but for Huldah's oracle. Also in 2 Kings 22:8 the mention of the discovered book interrupts the scene in v.7 and 9, a fact that also supports the idea of a later insertion. Therefore I tend to disagree with Na'aman on this point, but be it as it may, he also concludes that in the literary context of the DtrH "the 'book of the Law' became an element in the revolutionary concept of the 'book' as the word of God, symbolizing the transition of authority from the prophet and the temple to the divine written word".²²

The origin of the book-finding motif probably needs to be situated in the deposit of foundation tablets in Mesopotamian sanctuaries, which are often "rediscovered" by later kings undertaking restoration works.²³ But interestingly, the foundation stone is in 2 Kgs 22 replaced by the book, which becomes the "real" foundation for the worship of YHWH. In the present account of 2 Kgs 23, Josiah eliminates all cultic symbols from the temple to make it the place where the book is to be read to the people. The replacement of the iconic and sacrificial cult by the reading of the book can be understood as a strategy to emphasize the importance of the written

²¹ Nadav Na'aman, "The 'Discovered Book' and the Legitimation of Josiah's Reform," *JBL* 130 (2011): 47-62.

²² Na'aman, "The 'Discovered Book'," 62.

²³ Thomas Römer, "Transformations in Deuteronomistic and Biblical Historiography. On 'Book-Finding' and Other Literary Strategies," *ZAW* 109 (1997): 1-11.

scroll. In doing so, the Persian time Deuteronomists prepare the rise of Judaism as a "religion of the book".²⁴

We have observed that 2 Sam 7 tries to dissociate the dynastic promise from the Temple. 2 Kgs 22-23 also tries, but in another way, to dissociate the Davidic dynasty from the Temple, in order to transform the temple into a place where the "book" is read.

In a Persian period setting, 2 Kgs 22-23 can be understood as a foundation myth of the synagogues. It is difficult to know when the first synagogues were built, but it seems quite logical that the Diaspora situation required buildings for gathering, for administrative and religious matters.

It has often been argued that the found book in 2 Kgs 22-23 should be identified with the first edition of the book of Deuteronomy, and this is certainly right in the sense that the *Ur-Deuteronomium* was written under Josiah. But in a Persian period context, the reading of the "book" in 2 Kgs 22-23 may already allude to the beginning of the promulgation of the Pentateuch. Some scenes in the reform account, often suspected to be additions, support that view: the eradication of the cult of Molech (2 Kgs 23:10) is not based on a law in Deuteronomy but on prohibitions in the book of Leviticus (18:21; 20:2-5). Equally, the *teraphim* (2 Kgs 23:24) are not mentioned in Deuteronomy but appear as "pagan idols" in Genesis (31:19, 34-5). The expression "book of the covenant"²⁵ appears in Exod 24:7 but not in Deuteronomy. The cultic initiatives of Josiah may therefore reflect the beginnings of the compilation of the Pentateuch. This new foundation replaces the traditional markers of religious identity: the temple, the prophet and the Davidic king.

At the end of the narrative, there is first a comment about Josiah that places him higher than David, by making him the only king who fulfills the loyalty prescription of Deut 6:4-5 literally: 2 Kgs 23:25 is the only exact parallel to Deut 6:5:

"Before him there was no king like him who turned to YHWH with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him".

²⁴ Jean-Pierre Sonnet, "Le livre 'trouvé.' 2 Rois 22 dans sa finalité narrative," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 116 (1994): 836-861.

²⁵ The MT has "this book of the covenant" and suggests an identification of the "book of the covenant" with the "book of the law." LXX and Vulg (and one Hebrew manuscript) read, however, "book of this covenant."

Deut 6:5	וְאֶהְבֶּתְךָ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֵדְךָ
2 Kgs 23:25	וְכִמְהוּ לֹא-הָיָה לְפָנָיו מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁב אֶל-יְהוָה בְּכָל-לִבָּבוֹ וּבְכָל-נַפְשׁוֹ וּבְכָל-מְאֵדוֹ כְּכָל תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה וְאֶתְרָיו לֹא-קָם כְּמֹהוּ:

Even if David did walk in the way of YHWH by behaving according to his statutes and commandments, he did not, contrary to Josiah, fulfill literally the “*shema’ Yisrael*”, because the adverb *me’ôd* is only used twice as a substantive (“might”) in the Bible: in Deut 6:4-5 and for Josiah in 2 Kgs 23:25.

But 2 Kgs 22-23 in its final form is also about the disappearing of the king in favor of the book. The strange oracle of Huldah that Josiah will die *beshalom*, which is contradicted by the account of Pharaoh killing him at Megiddo has surprised many an exegete. The audience may understand this oracle in the sense that the pious Josiah is spared from seeing the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 22:20b). One may also understand that, after the introduction of the book, kingship is no longer necessary and can vanish “peacefully.” After creating room in the temple for the reading of the book, the king, traditional mediator between God and man is dispensable. Josiah’s death is accompanied by a caesura that compares to the caesura after Moses’ death:

Deut 34:10	וְלֹא-קָם נְבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדְעוּ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנָיו:
2 Kgs 23:25	וְכִמְהוּ לֹא-הָיָה לְפָנָיו מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-שָׁב אֶל-יְהוָה בְּכָל-לִבָּבוֹ וּבְכָל-נַפְשׁוֹ וּבְכָל-מְאֵדוֹ כְּכָל תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה וְאֶתְרָיו לֹא-קָם כְּמֹהוּ:

With Josiah, kingship disappears and gives way to the Mosaic Torah that becomes the new authority to which any royal dynasty has to submit.²⁶ This is clearly stated in the Law of the king according to Deut 17:14-20.

4. THE LAW OF THE KING AND THE DAVIDIC DYNASTY

Although David was the founder of a dynasty and recipient of a divine promise, he was not like other kings in the ancient Near East the mediator of the divine law. The Dtrs emphasize that he behaved according to YHWH’s law, but he did not receive it from his god, contrary to Hammurabi and other

ancient Near Eastern kings. According to the Hebrew Bible, the whole Law of YHWH is transmitted to Moses, and not to any king.²⁷ The fact that Moses is a substitute for the king is also made clear in the only ‘law’ dealing with a king, Deut 17:14-20. First, this law is according to the situation of discourse given by Moses, whose voice is so mingled with YHWH’s voice, that it is impossible to decide in many passages who the speaker is.

Deut 17:14-10 is often dated in the 7th century BCE and understood as an attempt by a Dtr author to limit the king’s power while increasing the power of the court officials. If dated to the Assyrian period, its intention could have been to create a balance between being loyal to YHWH and being loyal to Assyria: the king should limit his symbols of power and not appear as a threat to Assyria, and he should also show his loyalty to YHWH by reading the Torah.²⁸

It is however more plausible to locate this text in the sixth century BCE, at the end of the Babylonian or the beginning of the Persian period. It can be demonstrated that the author of this passage already knows the Deuteronomistic History in its exilic edition.²⁹ It was probably written in order to summarize the dtr discourse about kingship and more precisely about the David dynasty.

The opening in Deut 17:14 (“when you have entered the land and you say: ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me’”) foreshadows the first story about the installation of monarchy (1 Sam 8:5). The author of 1 Sam 8 was apparently unaware of Deut 17:14-20, since Samuel is presenting in 1 Sam 8:10-18 a quite different description of kingship. The divine election of the king in 17:15 (“you shall surely set a king over you whom YHWH your God chooses”) alludes to 1 Samuel 8–12 (see 1 Sam 10:24, but also YHWH’s election of David and Saul’s rejection in 1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 6). The prohibition of placing a foreign king on the throne (17:15: “you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman”) may allude to the “Phoenician” (influenced) kings of

²⁷ There is a half-exception in 1 Sam 30:25 where it is said that David made “a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day” with regard to the share of booty. Yet this is not a divine law but a custom linked with David.

²⁸ Patricia Dutcher-Walls “The Circumscription of the King: Deuteronomy 17:16-17 in Its Ancient Social Context,” *JBL* 121 (2002): 601-616.

²⁹ There is no need to distinguish different layers inside this passage, except, some smaller revisions; see for this (and a late date of the “law of the king”) Reinhard Achenbach, “Das sogenannte Königsgesetz in Deuteronomium 17:14-20,” *ZABR* 15 (2009): 216-233; Thomas Römer, “La loi du roi en Deutéronome 17 et ses fonctions” in *Loi et justice dans la Littérature du Proche-Orient ancien* ed. Olivier Artus, *BZAR* 20 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 99-111.

²⁶ Françoise Smyth, “When Josiah Has Done his Work or the King Is Properly Buried: A Synchronic Reading of 2 Kings 22:1-23:28,” in *Israel Constructs its History. Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, Jean-Daniel Macchi JSOT.S 306 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 343-358.

Israel or even to foreign wives who are considered in the books of Kings as a threat to the Davidic dynasty. Or is this a polemic against the discourse of Second Isaiah, who presented Cyrus as YHWH's messiah?³⁰ The combination of horses and Egypt (17:16: "Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses") refers to different attempts by Israelite and Judahite kings to ally with Egypt, alluding to the end of the history of the Israelite and Judahite monarchy. This warning may also be a reference to Solomon's horse trade in 1 Kgs 10:26, which transfers an Assyrian practice to the ruler of the "United Monarchy". Albertz has suggested that the prohibition to make the people return to Egypt, refers to Jehoiachin's attempt to send mercenaries to Egypt in order to make Pharaoh his ally.³¹ This does not, however, provide a "terminus ad quem" for this passage, since Judean mercenaries are attested in Egypt during the entire Persian period. The prohibition against "many wives" in Deut 17:16 ("He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself") is a clear allusion to Solomon's love of foreign women (1 Kgs 11:1-3) and his wealth. Again, the report of 1 Kgs 11 was probably written without knowledge of the "law of the king", since this law is not quoted, although Solomon is heavily criticized. All these prescriptions do not give any privilege to the king, they are all restrictions and contrast with the royal power as it is known in an ancient Near Eastern background.

The conclusion in Deut 17:18-20 stipulates that the king "shall write a copy of this torah in presence of the Levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear YHWH his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes".

In Deuteronomy 17, the king is a scribe of a sort,³² but not the mediator of the Law; Moses is. The king continues copying the Mosaic Law, as Joshua had already done after conquering the land (Josh 8:32, where he

³⁰ According to Ernest W. Nicholson "'Do Not Dare to Set a Foreigner Over You.' The King in Deuteronomy and 'The Great King,'" ZAW 118 (2006): 46-61, the prohibition should be understood as a critique of those who accepted the Assyrian king as their suzerain. This interpretation presupposes, however a 7th century dating of this passage.

³¹ Rainer Albertz, "A Possible *terminus ad quem* for the Deuteronomic Legislation? A fresh Look at Deut. 17:16," in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershon Galil, VTSup 130 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 271-296.

³² "He shall scribe" does however not necessarily mean that the king has to do it himself; he may delegate this task to professional scribes. The same holds true for the king, who "builds" the temple.

inscribes on stones a copy of Moses' Law). The king also has to obey to the Law as did David according the Dtr comments in the book of Kings. Deut 17:20 states that "he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel." Deut 17:14-20, concedes the possibility that Israel might be ruled by a king, although in quite a restrictive way. In his way there way be a possibility for a Davidic dynasty, so that the Law of the king could have been introduced in the Persian period into the Torah as a concession to those dreaming of restoring the Davidic dynasty.

In a way Deut 17:14-20 draws the conclusion from the Dtr presentation of David by subordinating the Davidic dynasty to Moses and the Law. However, in the Torah Moses is preceded by Abraham, who also shows some parallels with David.

5. ABRAHAM AND DAVID

In the context of the traditional Documentary theory some parallels between Abraham and David had been used in order to date the Yahwist in the time of the "United Monarchy". The fact that Abraham is located in Hebron as was David before he took over Jerusalem was considered as providing an early date for the Abraham narratives. And Gerhard von Rad who located the Yahwist at the court of Solomon understood the promises in Gen 12:1-4 as fulfilled in the establishment of the Davidic dynasty.

There are indeed other Davidic features in the Abraham narrative, but these do not stem from the time of David or Solomon but from the Persian period when there were no more Davidides ruling over Judah.

One may observe in several texts of the Abraham narrative a transfer of royal ideology to the figure of Abraham that starts already in Gen 12:1-4.

Here YHWH promises to Abraham a transfer that he will become a great nation and a blessing for all the families of the earth: "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make *your name great*; And so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed (or: *bless themselves*)."

These blessings have their closest parallels in the royal ideology in the ancient Near East as well as in the Hebrew Bible.³³ Abraham is blessed as

³³ For these parallels see, Matthias Köckert, *Vätergott und Väterverheißungen. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Albrecht Alt und seinen Erben*, FRLANT 142 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 276-294.

David is blessed in 2 Sam 7:29: "Now therefore, may it please you to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord YHWH, have spoken; and with your blessing may the house of your servant be blessed forever" (see also Ps 45:3).

In the royal Psalm 72 the idea that the others will be blessed by the name of the king parallels Gen 12:2-3:

"May his *name* endure forever; May his name *increase* as long as the sun shines; And *let men bless themselves by him*; Let all nations call him blessed" (Ps 72:17).

The "great name" that YHWH promises to Abraham in Gen 12:2 has a literal parallel in the promise to David in 2 Sam 7:9: "and I will make you a great name."

The same transfer of royal ideology can also be observed in the priestly version of YHWH's covenant with Abraham in Gen 17. The change of name from Abram to Abraham reminds one of the change of the king's name when he was enthroned. This is particularly attested in Egypt and in Assyria, but also in several cases for Judean kings and for maybe also for Solomon, whose other name was Jedidiah.

The promise in Gen 17:6: "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you." Here it is Abraham, who becomes the founder of the royal dynasty and not anymore David. Since David is from the tribe of Judah, and Abraham the ancestor of Jacob, father of the twelve tribes, it is Abraham who is claimed to be at the origin of the monarchy, but not only of the Judean one, but also of other royalties in the Levant, underlining Abraham's character as an "ecumenical ancestor".

The most important text for the transfer of royal ideology to Abraham is however Gen 15.³⁴ There is some consensus again in recent European research that Gen 15 is a "late" text, but opinions differ in regard to the question of whether it is basically the work of one author or the result of a complex history of redactions and whether it pre-or postdates the priestly account of YHWH's covenant with Abraham in Gen 17. I cannot take up here this discussion, which is less important for our topic. However it seems quite clear to me (and others) that Gen 15 presupposes Gen 17,³⁵ and that

³⁴ Thomas Römer, "Abraham and the Law and the Prophets" in *The Reception and Remembrance of Abraham*, ed. Pernille Carstens and Niels Peter Lemche, Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts 13 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2011), 103-118.

³⁵ In a way one can argue that Gen 15 is also a theological correction of Gen 17. In Gen 17 Abraham is laughing when YHWH informs him that he will have a son, whereas in Gen 15 he reacts to the promise of a son adequately with "faith."

this chapter is perhaps the last important text added to the Abraham narrative in order to reevaluate Abraham against Moses. Abraham is presented as a prophet. The story opens indeed by a prophetic formula:

הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם

"YHWH's word came to Abram." This *Wortereignisformel* parallels Abraham with the prophets, especially Ezekiel and Jeremiah, who are often dressed with this formula. The prophetic context is underlined by the fact that the divine word is accompanied by a vision (see for instance Jer 1). And before Moses, Abraham is informed about the "true" name of the God of Israel. "I am YHWH, who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans" (v. 7). Abraham here comes to know before Moses the real identity of Israel's god. In a way he even surpasses Moses through his faith in YHWH.

But Abraham also appears as a substitute for David since Gen 15 opens by presenting Abraham as a royal figure. YHWH promises him an important booty, a promise that presupposes Abraham's war in Gen 14, and presents himself as Abram's shield. The root *m-g-n* can be found in the whole Pentateuch only here, in Gen 14:20 and in Deut 33:29, a verse that contains Moses' last words before his death. YHWH's promise to Abram is at the end of the Pentateuch fulfilled in the divine intervention for a "royal" Israel: "Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by YHWH, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall submit themselves to you; and you shall tread upon their high places." This oracle reflects a theocratic idea of a direct divine intervention without the mediation of a king. Interestingly, the depiction of YHWH as a shield (*mgn*) also appears in the psalm 2 Sam 22 attributed to David: "the word of YHWH is tested; he is a shield to all who take refuge in him" (v. 31). The royal image of Abraham in Gen 15, to which belongs also the divine exhortation: "do not be afraid", that in its turn parallels Assyrian and Babylonian *Heilsorakel* given to the king, is triggered or prepared by Gen 14, where Abraham acts like a king in waging war against other kings. The rescue of Lot by Abraham in Gen 14, where he raises his personal army (318 men) and pursues the capturers, may parallel David's rescuing of the captured wives and children (among them two of his own wives) from Ziklag in 1 Sam 30 by pursuing the Amalekites with 400 men and saving his captured wives and the others.

At the end of Gen 14, Abraham comes to Shalem, a clear hint to Jerusalem. There he meets Melchizedek, king and priest of El Elyon, to whom Abraham gives the tenth of all. The "royal" Abraham submits himself to

a priest with royal power who is not a predecessor of David, so that we may find in this very late addition an alternative view on religious and political power, not related to the Davidic dynasty.

As to Gen 15, it has often been observed that Abraham is presented as an anti-Ahaz. The emphasis on his faith (v. 6) is the opposite of king Ahaz, whom the prophet Isaiah accuses to lack faith (Isa 7:9).

But he is also the “first David.”³⁶ YHWH’s unconditional promise to Abraham anticipates his conditional promise to David in 2 Sam 7:

Gen 15,4	The one who shall come forth of your entrails shall be your heir (כִּי־אַם אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ הוּא יִירָשְׁךָ)
2Sam7,12	I will set up your seed after you, that shall come forth out of your entrails (וְהִקְיַמְתִּי אַחֲרָיִךָ אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ)

Besides 2 Sam 6:11, Gen 15 and 2 Sam 7 are the only biblical texts that speak about a son coming out of his father’s entrails. The transfer of Davidic themes and ideology to Abraham probably reflects a democratization of a sort of royal ideology. The redactors of the Torah apparently agreed in the idea that Israel does not need a king since it has Moses, but also Abraham.

BRIEF SUMMARY

Although David will play an important role in Jewish and also Christian discourses about the Messiah, there exists in the HB a movement that is less enthusiastic about the necessity for a “new David.” In the exilic and early post-exilic layers of the Dtr History, David is for sure constructed as a model of faithfulness to YHWH, so that YHWH postpones the judgment on Judah but he is a model with regard to “Torah piety,” a dtr construction that does not fit well to the older traditions about David. There is no expectation of a continuity of the Davidic dynasty at the end of the book of Kings. Although 2 Sam 7 may be understood with Rückl as an attempt to dissociate the Davidides from the Temple, 2 Kgs 25 ends with the exile of Jehoiachin without any statement about the continuity of the dynasty. In 2 Kgs 22-23 David is surpassed by king Josiah who, in his reform empties the temple, in order to give space to the reading of the “book.” His death may symbolize the death of the Davidic royalty which is replaced by the Pentateuch and Moses. Not the king, but Moses is the lawgiver in the

³⁶ Bernard Gosse, “Abraham and David,” *JSOT* 34 (2009): 25-31.

Hebrew Bible, and in the only law dealing with the king, the latter is subordinated to the Torah. Deut 17 may be a concession to a Davidic faction: there may be a Davidic king, but if so, he will not have much power. This is also shown by the transposition of Davidic themes to Abraham, especially in Gen 15. Therefore in the Pentateuch, Abraham and Moses have taken over David’s place and function.

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