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Thus Far on the Way:
The Ark Narrative in 1 Sam 1–8 as Dialogic Diachrony

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By Timothy C. McNinch

A century of scholarship (since Leonhard Rost's seminal 1926 study) has wrestled with the probability that the author of 1–2 Samuel made use of an independent Ark Narrative source. This dissertation extends that scholarship by exploring the internal complexity of the Ark Narrative, discovering multiple scribal contributions—both before and after the pericope was joined with the Samuel narrative. Composition-critical analysis drives a close reading of the godnapping story in 1 Sam 4–6 as well as the Samuel and Eli narratives in the surrounding context of 1 Sam 1–8. Within this material, an early layer about the abduction and return of a divine image functioned as the foundational cult legend (*hieros logos*) for a solar shrine at Beth Shemesh. Later contributions expanded the scope of the tale, transforming it into a pan-Israelite narrative about YHWH's divine image. Only in one of the latest redactions was the ark itself (via the term ארון) introduced to the narrative. Furthermore, Samuel, Eli, and Eli's sons entered the narrative at different compositional stages, growing the text over time into the form we possess today. In addition to the work of hypothesizing a relative chronology for these pericopes, the dissertation puts multiple voices represented by different scribal layers into conversation, considering their "dialogic diachrony." Two concluding chapters explore threads of that dialogue as they played out across time, related to (1) the divine initiation of Israelite identity and (2) the appropriate priestly supervision of Israel's worship. A conclusion reflects on the potential of this dialogic hermeneutic for biblical theology that attends to, and grapples with, the polyphony inherent in the text.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library

AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BWA(N)T	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
Bib	*Biblica*
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BRP	*Biblical Research Perspectives in Biblical Literature*
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research (*formerly *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies)*
CurBS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible.* Edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1995. 2nd rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
ETR	*Études théologiques et religieuses*
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FAT II	Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HALOT	*Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Edited by Ludwig Köhler, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson. Translated by Johann Jakob Stamm. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2000 Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
HHBS	History of Biblical Studies
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*

JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JR	*Journal of Religion*
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology* (formerly *Biblical Archaeologist*)
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
Proof	*Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
R&T	*Religion and Theology*
RevistB	*Revista bíblica*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
Sem	*Semitica*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
ST	*Studia Theologica*
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SymS	Symposium Series
TA	*Tel Aviv*
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006.
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
UBL	Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WJK	Westminster John Knox Press
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.

- *James Weldon Johnson*[1]

> *The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it—it does not approach the object from the sidelines.*

- *Mikhail Bakhtin*[2]

THOU WHO HAS BROUGHT US THUS FAR ON THE WAY

I stopped singing. It was February 1—the first day of Black History Month—and I stood in the front row of the chapel at Christian Theological Seminary, where I serve on the faculty. We were rounding into the final verse of our chapel service's closing hymn, James Weldon Johnson's

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[1] "Lift Every Voice and Sing," *NAACP*, accessed: 2/2/2023, https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/lift-every-voice-and-sing.

[2] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (1981; repr., Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 276–77.

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" (also known as the "Black National Anthem"), when the third line caught in my throat and arrested me: *Thou who has brought us thus far on the way*. I was taken aback, noticing for the first time the intertextual resonance linking this line with Samuel's triumphant declaration as he erected a stone ebenezer near Mizpah, עד הנה עזרנו ה' "Thus far, YHWH has helped us" (1 Sam 7:12).[3] I do not know if Johnson drew consciously or subconsciously from Samuel's words (there are many biblical allusions in the song), but both lines identify a *chronotope*, to use Bakhtin's coinage (an intersection of time and place, a "thus far"), when/where God was recognized as the community's source of survival and hope for future endurance.[4]

Johnson composed "Lift Every Voice" at a precarious historical moment for Black Americans.[5] The power of the American political experiment, constructed upon an ideology of white supremacy, had failed African Americans. That puts it too mildly: the American state had oppressed, exploited, and overtly dehumanized them for centuries. Yet, Black Americans had survived as a people and continued to assert their fundamental humanity. Transforming the slaveholders' religion into a uniquely Black Christian spirituality, poets like Johnson reflected the conviction that while the state had opposed them, God had seen and was rescuing them. In a postbellum context of legal emancipation alongside entrenched systemic inequality, on the anniversary of President Lincoln's birthday in 1900, Johnson prayed that the God who had brought Black Americans "thus far on the way" would continue to support and defend them in the challenging years ahead. The poem, set to music by Johnson's brother, struck a nerve and earned an enduring legacy. In 1919, the NAACP dubbed the Johnson brothers' song the unofficial "Negro National Anthem."[6]

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[3] In this dissertation, I refrain from printing or vocalizing the tetragrammaton, abbreviating it in Hebrew as ה' and transliterating it as YHWH. The only exceptions to this policy are in the citations of scholarship that include the vocalized tetragrammaton in their titles. While this practice of circumlocution for the divine name in printed texts is not part of my own Christian tradition, I have adopted it as a personal choice and an expression of solidarity with my neighbors in many Jewish communities. In this practice, I have been highly influenced by one of my mentors, Johanna van-Wijk Bos, who writes about misguided quests to vocalize the divine name in "Writing on the Water: The Ineffable Name of God," in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ed. Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky, SymS 8 (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 45–59.

[4] Mikhail Bakhtin writes, "We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature…. In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope" ("Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist [1981; repr., Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008], 84).

[5] Burton W. Peretti, *Lift Every Voice: The History of African American Music*, The African American History Series (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 52–53.

The language of a "national anthem" for Black Americans, apart from any official recognition by the state and the song's perhaps intentionally ambiguous final line, "true to our native land," echo the timbre of the text in 1 Sam 7. Set in the years just before the advent of the Israelite monarchy, Samuel's declaration that "Thus far, YHWH has helped us" invites Israelites to claim a national identity that is prior to, and beyond the control of, the kingdom or "state." For Israelite/Judahite readers of Samuel in the years following the demise of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, Samuel's words expressed a hope that where the state had failed them, their deity would sustain them, and that their identity as a "nation" or a "people" could endure on a basis other than state support.[7]

By using Johnson's phrase, "Thus Far on the Way," as the title of this dissertation, it is not my intention to culturally appropriate the Black National Anthem for this white American scholar's project. Instead, I aim to acknowledge and celebrate the important way that resilient communities, to this day, grapple with Israel's historical texts as their own received Scripture and draw upon its language to help clarify their own sense of communal identity. Johnson's song, with its enduring power, models creative engagement with the legacy of Scripture. Of course, the authors and redactors of Samuel did not have future Black Americans in mind, but insofar as modern communities continue to enter into theological conversation with ancient Israel's sacred literature, they participate in an ongoing project of biblical meaning-making, expanding the horizons of the text.

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[6] Peretti, *Lift Every Voice,* 188. See also Johnson, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

[7] For extended discussion of the rise of Israelite "national" consciousness apart from the state, see Jacob L. Wright, "The Commemoration of Defeat and the Formation of a Nation in the Hebrew Bible," *Proof* 29.3 (2009): 433–72; and idem, "The *Raison d'Être* of the Biblical Covenant: Assessing Mendenhall's Emphasis on Kinship," in *Maarav: Law, Society, and Religion: Essays in Memory of George E. Mendenhall,* ed. Bernard M. Levinson (Rolling Hills Estates, CA: Western Academic Press, 2020), 45–62.

Such creative engagement with the received text is not, however, confined to "post-biblical" communities. The central premise of this dissertation is that the dialogue, formed by generations of creative engagement with the Scriptures, *extends back to the compositional stages of the texts themselves*. The early chapters of Samuel did not appear all at once, but grew up gradually, shaped by many generations of Israelites, Judahites, and Yehudim/Judeans/Jews who each had their own contexts, concerns, and literary purposes. The text was significantly edited several times, and new tradents supplemented the meaning-making conversation with new voices in each iteration. Fortunately, as I will demonstrate below, the redactors did not—as a rule—obliterate the work of those who preceded them. Instead, they adapted, repurposed, reframed, and sometimes contradicted them. Though it involves as much art as science, careful analysis of the text can hypothetically disambiguate the cacophony of voices in the conversation, allowing for a reconstruction of text's history of composition.

The aim of this dissertation is therefore, in a sense, to "lift every voice" and piece together the scribal dialogue through time that has resulted in the so-called "Ark Narrative" of 1 Sam 4–6 in its canonical setting within 1 Sam 1–8. Such analytical reconstructions are valuable to biblical historians and participate in a recursive feedback loop (potentially, but not necessarily, tautological) with other historical evidence to help us better understand the world of ancient

Israel. Even more significantly, in my view, the present exercise attempts to account for the literary reality of the text: that it is multiply authored and retains the reverberations of a plurality of voices and ideologies within it.

The Ark Narrative has been a pivotal text for many interpretive communities, including the communities that authored and reauthored it during the generations of its composition. The narrative sits in the middle of a block of text (1 Sam 1–8) that represents a tipping point in Israel's biblically reimagined history, just before the advent of the Israelite monarchy. Most of the Hebrew Bible was likely composed or compiled in anticipation of the loss, or in the wake of the loss, of that centralized state institution.[8] Therefore, this formative dusk of the era of the judges, just before the dawn of Israel's monarchy, became a prime *textual* chronotope for serial retrospection by successive generations, wrestling with the potential benefits and dangers of monarchy, the relationships between governance and worship (and between rulers and cultic personnel), and their sense of national identity before and beyond the Israelite and Judahite monarchies. They gravitated to this moment just before the birth of the monarchy to frame their understanding of Israel's subsequent history. Set in this context, the Ark Narrative participates in that generations-long *dialogue*—sometimes *debate*—about what it means to be a people, even a people of God, apart from (and in the rhetoric of retrospective, *before*) the monarchy.

I approach this redactional process sympathetically, not pejoratively. My sense is that in most cases, redactors were not attempting to twist or manipulate history as realpolitik; rather they believed they were (to use Jean-Louis Ska's term) "channels of transmission," whose task was "not only to transmit, but also to adapt, correct, adjust, and interpret the tradition for the present."[9] Redactors were less interested in inscribing their individual ideologies, and more interested in stewarding the communally owned tradition, so that it more clearly and meaningfully spoke into their own social context. Likewise, their interest in history was not (primarily) antiquarian.[10] As Martin Noth concluded (with respect to the author of the Deuteronomistic History), "Dtr did not write his history to provide entertainment in hours of leisure or to satisfy a curiosity about national history, but intended it to teach the true meaning of the history of Israel…."[11] History was not fixed; it was a malleable medium for identity formation and reformation, and could be shaped accordingly. It was not until much later, likely the common era, that the sacred histories passed down from earlier generations were considered immutable.

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[8] See Wright, "The Commemoration of Defeat."

Even today, communities debate whether history, once formulated in a nation's canonical literature, is immutable; or whether history may be revisited and revised in order to better explain the present. With such contemporary debates in mind, I hope that this present study contributes both new knowledge of the ancient text *and* a refreshing hermeneutic—a way of reading that attends to, and engages with, what we might call Scripture's "dialogic diachrony."[12] My hope is that this approach gives scholars, faith leaders, and lay readers "something to work with" (to borrow a phrase from Carol Newsom) in their task of meaning-making.[13]

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[9] Jean-Louis Ska, "A Plea on Behalf of the Biblical Redactors," *ST* 59.1 (2005): 7.

[10] *Pace* Baruch Halpern, who argues (probably rightly) that antiquarian interest was at least one of the motivations of biblical scribes in *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*, 2nd ed. (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1996).

[11] Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 134. See also comparison of Noth's thought with Nadav Na'aman's understanding of "historiography" in Yairah Amit, "Looking at History through Literary Glasses Too," in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman*, ed. Yaira Amit and Nadav Na'aman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 1–15.

[12] I am grateful to Jacob Wright for the suggestion of "dialogic diachrony" as an alliterative coinage describing the conversational hermeneutic that I engage with this project.

[13] Carol A. Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," *JR* 76.2 (1996): 290–306.

SIGNS OF COMPOSITIONAL COMPLEXITY IN 1 SAM 1–8

Though the first eight chapters of 1 Samuel can be, and have been, read as a unified narrative leading to the birth of the Israelite monarchy, scholars have long suspected that it is not the work of a single author. Among the many indications of complexity in 1 Samuel 1–8, four significant factors are raised here to introduce the problem and justify further diachronic exploration: (1) Samuel's absence in chapters 4–6; (2) the ark's absence outside of chapters 4–6; (3) overlapping entanglements of the Elide material with the Samuel and ark stories; and (4) the multiple evaluations of Eli's legacy. These literary signals gesture toward the rough outlines of the text's compositional history. At the same time, they also raise new questions about narrative threads that appear to extend across one or more of the major seams, challenging the simple source divisions that have dominated the history of scholarship on these texts.

Samuel's Unexcused Absence in 1 Sam 4–6

The ark material in 1 Sam 1–8 is recognizable by prominent horizontal seams. Samuel vanishes entirely after 4:1a, and only reappears in the narrative at 7:3, leaping into his prophetic leadership role, just as if he had never been away.[14] Robert Polzin's paradoxical evaluation that "the absent Samuel is everywhere present in chapter 4" overstates the conclusion that may be drawn by linking the military defeat in 1 Sam 4 to the victory that takes place via Samuel's mediation in 1 Sam 7.[15] In 1 Sam 4, the narrator does not draw attention to Samuel's absence as a semantic feature; he is simply *not there*. Neither can this turn of the spotlight away from Samuel in 1 Sam 4–6 be explained by the shift in geographic venue from Israel to Philistia, since much of 1 Sam 4 is set at Shiloh and prominently involves the other characters (Eli, Hophni, Phinehas) who are also based there. Moreover, the length of the Ark Narrative argues against the proposal that it is simply a digression to tie up the Elide saga (1 Sam 4) and Ark tale (1 Sam 5–6) before returning to the central figure of Samuel,[16] or to "satisfy the audience's curiosity" over how Samuel's prophecy in 3:11–14 might be fulfilled.[17] It is more likely that the lengthy portion in 1 Sam 4–6 that omits Samuel derives from one or more separate traditions and has been secondarily conflated with the Samuel story.

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[14] Another omission in 4–6 is any explicit reference to the guilt of Eli's sons, as noted by Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: WJK, 1964), 46–47. Beginning with Samuel's disappearance in chapters 4–6, Joseph Bourke concludes that the text contains two independent stories: a Samuel story, of Northern Israelite origin and an Ark Narrative, of Southern Judahite composition. See "Samuel and the Ark: A Study in Contrasts," *Dominican Studies* 7 (1954): 73–103.

The Ark's Absence Outside of 1 Sam 4–6

Conversely, 1 Sam 1:1—4:2; 7:3—8:22 reveals no foreshadowing of, or reflection upon, the ark's significant sojourn in Philistia—nor indeed knowledge of the ark's existence at all.[18] When the story picks up Samuel's thread in 7:3, it simultaneously drops the ark thread completely, despite the fact that the ark has held center stage for three chapters. The ark is mentioned only once (1 Sam 14:18, though the LXX has "ephod") in the next thirty chapters of Samuel-Kings, returning to the canonical narrative only in 2 Sam 6.

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[15] Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: 1 Samuel*, Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 58–60. See also Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 2nd ed., WBC 10 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), xxxvi.

[16] Contra Klaas A. D. Smelik, "The Ark Narrative Reconsidered," in *New Avenues in the Study of the Old Testament*, ed. A. S. van der Woude, OtSt 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 134; John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 349; John T. Willis, "Samuel Versus Eli: I Sam. 1–7," *TZ* 35.4 (1979): 212.

[17] Contra Yehoshua Gitay, "Reflections on the Poetics of the Samuel Narrative: The Question of the Ark Narrative," *CBQ* 54.2 (1992): 226.

[18] The sole exception is the parenthetical mention of the ark of Elohim at the temple in Shiloh in 3:3b, which I argue is a late insertion. Even read synchronically, the ark in 3:3b plays no significant narrative role in chapter 3, except perhaps that "Samuel's association with it while it was still in the Shiloh sanctuary is an additional enhancement of his credentials" (Klein, *1 Samuel*, 32). Such an enhancement could be the motive for the ark's redactional insertion here. When Samuel finally recognizes YHWH's presence in the temple, the divine presence is not in any way associated with the ark but is instead described as a direct physical theophany—YHWH enters and stands before Samuel (3:10, ויבא ה' ויתיצב). Did YHWH enter through the door, or somehow via the ark as a conduit? We are not told. The ark's presence in the temple is not reiterated, nor explicitly connected to this theophany. Samuel is nowhere else associated with the ark.

Furthermore, the theology of 1 Sam 4–6 (as it relates to the ark) is distinct from the theology of the Samuel thread. In 1 Sam 4–6, the god of Israel is not omnipresent; rather, the ark is the *sine qua non* of the deity's localized presence. In stark contrast, immediately after the ark is installed at Kiriath Jearim, the Samuel thread reports that rituals were performed at Mizpah "in the presence of YHWH" (לפני ה׳, 7:6; cf. 7:9–10, 17) without any explanation of how this could have been accomplished in the absence of the ark as the conduit of the divine presence. Do these rituals at Mizpah imply a suddenly omnipresent deity? Or do they imply some other tangible manifestation of YHWH before whom these rituals were performed? These tensions remain unaddressed by the text.

Antony Campbell notes the dissonance between the ark's centrality in 1 Sam 4–6 and relative absence elsewhere, admitting that "it comes as a surprise to realize how little hard information we have about this apparently most important religious symbol in ancient Israel."[19] Nevertheless, "for all this, it is assumed—and surely rightly—that the ark was a central and significant symbol of God's presence in early Israel."[20] However, this assumption is based entirely on the biblical tradition, most especially the pericope in 1 Sam 4–6 (and 2 Sam 6). In light of the ark's less prominent role most of the rest of the Bible, as well as its absence from the archaeological and iconographic records, these isolated pericopes may bear too much of the tradition's weight to warrant the conclusion that the ark was indeed "central" to historical Israel. Put differently, if the ark was *not* central to the cultic life of early Israel, how did it come to be so central in 1 Sam 4–6? Is the ark's presence in this pericope an essential feature, or could it have entered later in the text's composition history?

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[19] Antony F. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, FOTL 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 29.

[20] Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 30.

Overlapping Entanglements: Samuel, Eli, and the Ark

While the ark material's current delimitation in 1 Sam 1–8 is recognizable by the horizontal literary breaks in the narrative flow, the composition history of these chapters is complicated by material pertaining to the priest Eli and his sons, which is intertwined with both the Samuel and ark threads. In the final version of the text, Eli plays a significant role in Samuel's birth narrative, beginning with Eli's appearance at the temple of YHWH in 1:9.[21] The priestly blessing that he bestows upon Hannah in 1:17 is instrumental in the opening of her womb, leading to Samuel's subsequent birth, as Hannah herself reiterates when she presents him to Eli as a lifelong servant (perhaps a nazirite) at YHWH's temple in Shiloh (1:26–28). There, Eli is cast as the young Samuel's mentor, helping him discern the voice of YHWH (3:1–18).

Eli's centrality in the story continues, however, even after Samuel has exited the stage. In 1 Sam 4, Eli's own sons accompany the ark from Shiloh to the front lines of battle with the Philistines (4:3–4). Subsequently, Eli's deathly downfall (4:17–18, 21) and the deaths of his sons (4:11, 17, 21) are explicitly tied to the capture of the ark in battle at Ebenezer. If the blocks of Samuel and ark material are really so clearly separated, how did the Elide story come to be so tightly bound to both threads?

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[21] Eli appears in 1:9 without any introduction. Surprisingly, when his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are identified as priests at Shiloh in 1:3, Eli himself is not counted among them.

Multiple Evaluations of Eli's Legacy

Further complicating the picture, the Eli-related material in 1 Sam 1–4 itself contains multiple perspectives.[22] One Eli thread portrays him as the leading (only?) priest at Shiloh, interacting with Hannah as a supplicant, offering multiple effective blessings, and training the young Samuel to recognize the divine voice.[23] In 1 Sam 4, Eli is rightly (and righteously) concerned for the wellbeing of the ark, and the shock of its loss prompts his tragic fall, without any indication from the narrator that Eli's death is a divinely meted punishment. Indeed, the narrator's overall evaluation of Eli in this thread is positive.[24] In contrast, the other thread explicitly names Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, as the priests at Shiloh, enumerates their multiple (and highly specific) transgressions, narrates Eli's ineffective attempt to restrain them, and recites the doom against the Elide priestly dynasty via a message from a mysterious man of God.[25] This second portrait condemns Hophni and Phinehas and holds Eli himself culpable for their errant ways. The man of God's condemnation prepares the reader to interpret the Elides' deaths in 1 Sam 4 as divine judgment—and possibly the cause of a great slaughter of Israelite soldiers and (temporary) divine abandonment via the Philistine capture of the ark. These divergent perspectives provoke the question: could the condemnatory material about Eli and his sons be compositionally secondary to an earlier, more positive narrative that involved Eli alone? How might these diverse Elide traditions relate to the composition history of the Ark Narrative, with which they seem to be only partially enmeshed?

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[22] That is, 1:3b, 9b, 12–18, 25–28; 2:11–18a, 20, 22–36; 3:1, 2b, 4–9, 11b–14, 15b–18.

[23] Generally, the thread includes: 1:9b, 12–18a, 25b–28; 2:11b, 20; 3:4–6, 8–9; 4:12–17a, 18b; though, some nuances will be discussed below.

[24] Much has been made of Eli's misinterpretation of Hannah's muttering lips as drunkenness (1:12–14)—and perhaps this could be read as a foreshadowing of his loss of divine (in)sight in canonical context (Eli eventually becomes completely blind, 4:15). But in its immediate context, Eli's error is innocent. Hannah came directly from the feast where drinking was conventional, and her body language communicated drunkenness. The reader is only wiser than Eli because the narrator has ironically divulged the true cause of Hannah's state. When Hannah corrects him, Eli immediately believes her and takes her vow seriously, offering the blessing that opens her womb.

[25] Generally, the thread includes: 1:3b; 2:1–10, 12–17, 22–36; 3:11b–14, 15b–18; 4:4b, 11, 17b–18a, 19–22; though some nuances will be discussed below.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Together, these four signals of compositional complexity (and others to be discussed below) invite a nuanced study of the compositional history of the so-called "Ark Narrative" and its context in 1 Sam 1–8. While the bulk of research pertaining to the Ark Narrative has treated it as a unified literary source, this project pursues the primary question of the Ark Narrative's *internal* complexity and whether the stages of its composition may be discerned and ordered through a systematic diachronic analysis. On the front end of that analysis, I dispute the assumption (shared by all scholarship to date, both synchronic and diachronic) that whatever the origins of the Ark Narrative may be, the ark itself is the central feature holding the narrative together. Instead, I propose that the ark entered the narrative as one of the tendentious finishing touches of the present form of the text. After supporting that hypothesis, a fresh perspective on the pericope's underlying sources and supplements comes into clearer view. Further, the results of my analysis of the so-called "Ark Narrative" in 1 Sam 4–6 permit me to propose a new solution to the unsettled problem of the compositional relationship between the Elide material and the Samuel and ark threads in the wider literary context of 1 Sam 1–8.

HISTORY OF ARK NARRATIVE RESEARCH

A century ago, in 1926, Leonhard Rost brought together the two ark-centric episodes from 1 Sam 4–6 and 2 Sam 6, dubbing them *die Ladeerzählung* (the "Ark Narrative").[26] Rost identified these two pericopes as an independent, once-unified, early source for the larger scroll of Samuel. Due to its apparent narrative continuity, and to Rost's important study, this so-called "Ark Narrative" source behind 1–2 Samuel has been the focal point of most ark scholarship for a century. While Rost's proposal was a seminal contribution to ark scholarship, he was not the first to suggest that 1–2 Samuel was a composite document—others had suggested that documentary sources for the Pentateuch continued into the Former Prophets (and could explain, for example, the various divine epithets associated with the ark).[27] But Rost was the first to propose that a narrative block of ark material (comprising 1 Sam 4:1b—7:1; 2 Sam 6:1–23) existed independently and was drawn upon as a source for the books of Samuel. In a way, Rost's approach laid some of the groundwork for Martin Noth's later hypothesis of a Deuteronomistic History that comprised many such blocks of material, entirely separate from the source documents of the Pentateuch/Tetrateuch.[28] Rost based his own theory on his perception of the overlap of vocabulary, style, and theology in the two now-separated parts of the Ark Narrative. He also highlighted the structure of the narrative, claiming that the plot is left unresolved at 1 Sam 7:1 and only finds its appropriate conclusion in 2 Sam 6. All of this has been challenged in the century since Rost's publication, and many of the details of his analysis have been found wanting, even by those who agree with his general conclusion of an independent Ark Narrative document.[29] Rost dated the composition of the Ark Narrative to sometime late in David's reign or early in Solomon's reign, before the installation of the ark in the temple. He envisioned it as a *hieros logos*, the foundational cult legend told to pilgrims visiting the shrine in Jerusalem in order to explain the ark's miraculous past.

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[26] Leonhard Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, BWA(N)T 3 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1926).

[27] See, e.g., Fritz Seyring, "Der alttestamentliche Sprachgebrauch inbetreff des Namens der sogen 'Bundeslade,'" *ZAW* 11 (1891): 114–25; Karl Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel*, KHC 8 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1902), 32–47.

[28] Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1943). Noth's dependence on Rost is treated in Edward Ball's introduction to Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David*, trans. Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn, Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship 1 (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1982), xxxi–xxxii.

Rost's proposal held the field for quite some time. In the decades following his book's appearance, a handful of significant articles appeared engaging his theory.[30] The most adventuresome of these was probably Georg Fohrer's 1971 exploration of potential sources internal to Rost's Ark Narrative.[31] Fohrer begins by observing the variety of names for the ark and proposes that these signal multiple layers in the growth of the text (beginning with material associated with "the ark of the god of Israel," then "the ark of God," and finally "the ark of YHWH"). While I agree with Fohrer's instinct regarding the internal complexity of the Ark Narrative, and also attend to the variety of designations of the ark, I do not make this the starting point or determining criterion for source disambiguation. Therefore, many of my conclusions differ significantly from Fohrer's. Additionally, Fohrer dates almost all of the internal growth of the Ark Narrative to the era before and during the reigns of David and Solomon.[32] He accepts the general accuracy of the history presented in Samuel and uses this data to inform his absolute chronology, an assumption that has been problematized by subsequent historical research.

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[29] E.g., Patrick D. Miller and J. J. M. Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of 1 Samuel* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 27–36.

[30] See especially Naphtali H. Tur-Sinai, "Ark of God at Beit Shemesh (1 Samuel 6) and Peres 'Uzza (2 Samuel 6, 1 Chronicles 13)," *VT* 1.4 (1951): 275–86; Bourke, "Samuel and the Ark: A Study in Contrasts"; Jan Dus, "Die Erzählung über den Verlust der Lade 1 Sam. IV," *VT* 13.3 (1963): 333–37; Hermann Timm, "Die Ladeerzählung (1. Sam. 4–6; Sam. 6) und das Kerygma des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks," *EvT* 26.10 (1966): 509–26; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Kiriath-Jearim and the Ark," *JBL* 88.2 (1969): 143–56.

[31] Georg Fohrer, "Die alttestamentliche Ladeerzählung," *JNSL* 1 (1971): 23–31.

[32] A significant exception is the Elide material in 4:4b, 11b–22, which Fohrer assigns to some later era, on the basis of the way it ties individual characters' fates to the ark, in contrast to the communal nature of the earlier ark story ("Die alttestamentliche Ladeerzählung," 26, 31). I share his assessment of the lateness of the Elide material but draw my conclusion from different criteria.

In the 1970s, interest in the Ark Narrative surged with the publication, in quick succession, of three influential monographs by Franz Schicklberger,[33] Antony Campbell,[34] and Patrick Miller and J. J. M. Roberts.[35] These all agreed with Rost's hypothesis of an independent Ark Narrative, but they defined its extent differently from Rost and from each other. Among these, only Schicklberger proposes significant, discernable internal complexity within the pericope. Schicklberger's thesis is that the eldest core of ark material was in 1 Sam 4, a *Katastrophenerzählung* ("catastrophe narrative") depicting the terrible loss at Ebenezer/Shiloh, including the death of the Elides and loss of the ark. He situated the composition of this narrative in the region of Shiloh, shortly after the events described, with the purpose of keeping alive the memory of what had happened. Schicklberger hypothesized that the rest of the ark material in Samuel was added by Deuteronomistic authors after the fall of Samaria, when northern tales such as the Shiloh catastrophe narrative would have migrated to Judah. Schicklberger has been influential, even if his form critical category of a *Katastrophenerzählung* has been disputed.[36] His general approach, however, is very similar to Peter Porzig's more recent analysis, who proposes that all but the minimal story of the ark's catastrophic loss in 1 Sam 4 comes from the later literary imagination of Second Temple priests.[37]

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[33] Franz Schicklberger, *Die Ladeerzählungen des ersten Samuel-Buches*, FB 7 (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1973).

[34] Antony F. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4–6; 2 Sam 6): A Form-Critical and Traditio-Historical Study*, SBLDS 16 (Missoula, MT: SBL and Scholars Press, 1975). See also idem, "Yahweh and the Ark: A Case Study in Narrative," *JBL* 98.1 (1979): 31–43; idem, *1 Samuel*; Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

[35] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*.

[36] See, e.g., the critique in Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 2–9.

[37] Peter Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes im Alten Testament und in den Texten vom Toten Meer*, BZAW 397 (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 141, 155.

Antony Campbell is perhaps the staunchest supporter of Rost's theory among prominent ark scholars. His 1975 dissertation, *The Ark Narrative*, expanding Rost's brief study, quickly became a respected analysis in its own right. Campbell agrees with Rost that, although the Ark Narrative may have been built from preexisting traditional material, an author brought these traditions together as an independent and unified written document whose contours are roughly 1 Sam 4:1b–7:1; 2 Sam 6. "Whether we consider the beginning, the middle, or the end, or whether we look at the internal structure of the narrative, the simplest, most satisfactory and most convincing conclusion is that the Ark Narrative is fundamentally a literary unity, and should be interpreted as such."[38] The fundamental problem with Campbell's assertion, and other formulations of a "disappearing redactor," is that it offers a false either-or dichotomy.[39] Just because a narrative *can be read* as a literary unity does not mean that it was *composed* as a unity. A text may have *both* a complex history of composition *and* a comprehensible and well-structured final form—to the redactor's credit! Campbell's primary contention with Rost has to do with the purpose of the Ark Narrative. He rejects the priestly *Sitz* of Rost's *hieros logos* theory and proposes instead a royal setting for the narrative, whose pupose was to support the idea of monarchic rule over a united Israel under David and to give divine legitimation to his government. The Ark Narrative describes the divine prerogative to suspend the era of the judges and move, quite literally, into a royal institution.[40] Of course, this theory depends on the inclusion of 2 Sam 6 in the original Ark Narrative source. If the two parts were composed separately, as many have argued (see below), then there is no solid basis for Campbell's *Sitz im Leben* for the tale.

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[38] Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 178.

[39] For a concise discussion of the concept of the "disappearing redactor," see John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*, rev. and enlarged. (Louisville: WJK, 1996), 56–58.

[40] Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 252.

Patrick Miller and J. J. M. Roberts take another position altogether in their slim, yet dense monograph, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of 1 Samuel*. To the original, independent Ark Narrative, they add the material from 1 Sam 2 that describes the sin of Eli's sons and the prophecy of their impending judgment (2:12–17, 22–25, 27–36).[41] For Miller and Roberts, this material provides the essential answer to the question posed in 4:3, "Why has YHWH beaten us today before the Philistines?"[42] Without the preceding explanation in 1 Sam 2 as part of the original narrative, they argue that this question is left unanswered. Miller and Roberts are right to identify the problematic entanglement of the Elide thread with the Ark Narrative. The Elide saga is indeed truncated if the Ark Narrative begins only in 1 Sam 4:1b. However, their solution—expanding the original narrative to include much of 1 Sam 2—only muddies the waters.[43] A more complex composition history resolves this tension.

Regarding the conclusion of the Ark Narrative, Miller and Roberts reject the continuation of the story into 2 Sam 6. For them, the material in 1 Samuel is self-contained, and terminates appropriately enough with the return of the ark to Israelite territory in 6:13—7:1. I agree. The topical affinities of 1 Sam 4–6 with 2 Sam 6 are not strong enough, in our shared opinion, to support the thesis that they were written by the same author. Instead, Miller and Roberts suggest that the author of the latter wrote with a copy of the former in front of them (or at least with knowledge of it).[44] According to their reading, the purpose of this shorter Ark Narrative in 1 Sam 4–6 is to give a theological answer to the (supposed) historical loss of the ark to the Philistines: it was punishment for the sins of the Elides and *not* a matter of YHWH's weakness before the Philistine gods. In light of this theodicy, Miller and Roberts date the narrative to the early period of David's reign, before his more decisive defeat of the Philistines (after which, the theological question asked and answered by the Ark Narrative became moot).[45] However, this absolute chronology depends too heavily on the veracity of the biblical account of David's reign.

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[41] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 37–41.

[42] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 10, 27–32, 44; followed by A. Stirrup, "'Why Has Yahweh Defeated Us Today before the Philistines?' The Question of the Ark Narrative," *TynBul* 51.1 (2000): 81–100.

[43] Thomas Römer argues (rightly, I think) that including portions of 1 Sam 2 in the original Ark Narrative creates more problems than it solves, especially since 1 Sam 4 does not portray Eli or his sons in an explicitly negative light ("Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?" in *Eigensinn und Entstehung der Hebräischen Bibel: Erhard Blum zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Joachim J. Krause, Wolfgang Oswald, and Kristin Weingart, FAT 136 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020], 262). My hypothesis that the Elide thread in 1 Sam 4 is secondary provides a middle way between Miller/Roberts and Römer.

The other important contribution of Miller and Roberts to the history of research on this pericope is their extended presentation of comparative material from Mesopotamia related to the motif of the abduction of divine images (or "godnapping") in battle.[46] Miller and Roberts lean into this comparative material for three main purposes. First, the evidence contradicts those (e.g., Schicklberger) who doubt the unity of the Ark Narrative in 1 Samuel because they find it improbable that a stolen god would ever be returned to its home. Rather, some of the pilfered gods in these Mesopotamian tales did eventually find their way back to their home turf. Second, the presence of narrative material comparable to 2 Sam 6 challenges those (e.g., Mowinckel, Bentzen) who suppose 2 Sam 6 to be merely the fictional historicization of a temple ritual. And third, the comparative evidence demonstrates that other communities who experienced the theft or defacement of their gods also worked creatively to find a theological explanation for the loss.

Miller's and Roberts's comparative approach joined an already extensive history of scholarship exploring the question of the ark of the covenant in its historical context. Sigmund

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[44] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 34.

[45] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 93.

[46] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 12–24.

Mowinckel was an early advocate of applying comparative material to the interpretation of biblical texts. His reading of Mesopotamian literature depicting divine enthronement festivals led him to propose a similar *Sitz im Leben* behind many of the biblical psalms, including Psalm 132, which he believes rehearses the coming of the ark into Jerusalem. Mowinckel proposed that 2 Sam 6 was a narrative version of the liturgical "program" for this enthronement festival.[47] Aage Bentzen extended Mowinckel's analysis and incorporated 1 Sam 4–6 into the same *Sitz*, arguing that the confrontation between YHWH and Dagon (1 Sam 5:1–5) was a historicization of the classic *Chaoskampf* mythical motif. This became part of the program celebrated at the annual enthronement festival.[48] Much more recently, Daniel Fleming has nuanced this hypothesis by comparing the *zukru* custom from Emar in northwestern Syria (as well as the Assyrian *akitu* festival) with the Ark Narrative (especially the 2 Sam 6 block).[49] Fleming agrees that the comparative evidence suggests a connection between the Ark Narrative and an annual enthronement festival in Jerusalem during the Judahite monarchy. However, in contrast with Mowinckel and Bentzen, Fleming does not consider the narrative a reflex of the cultic liturgy; rather the opposite, he sees in the *zukru* custom an example of the ritualization of a historical moment. Consequently, he theorizes that the liturgy envisioned by Psalm 132 may be a serial cultic commemoration of the historical procession of YHWH into Jerusalem, remembered and reflected narratively in 2 Sam 6. While the present project does not engage 2 Sam 6 at length, these comparative discussions offer helpful context for the *other* cultic procession in the so-called “Ark Narrative,” that is, the Ashdodite procession of the god of Israel, depicted in 1 Sam 5:8–10.

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[47] Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalm Studies*, trans. Mark E. Biddle, HHBS (Atlanta: SBL, 2014), 268–305. Mowinckel's *Psalmenstudien* were originally published in six volumes, beginning in 1921.

[48] Aage Bentzen, "The Cultic Use of the Story of the Ark in Samuel," *JBL* 67.1 (1948): 37–53.

[49] Daniel E. Fleming, "David and the Ark: A Jerusalem Festival Reflected in Royal Narrative," in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, ed. David S. Vanderhooft and Avraham Winitzer (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2013), 75–95.

Herbert Niehr takes the comparative evidence further, suggesting that apart from the Bible’s programmatic aniconism, all other evidence suggests that there would have been an anthropomorphic image of YHWH housed in the Jerusalem temple (and in the Israelite cultic sites at Samaria, Dan, and Bethel).[50] Given the ubiquity of divine images in ancient Southwest Asian temples, the burden of proof is on those who maintain the historicity of the Bible’s aniconism. Niehr corroborates this thesis with clues from biblical material that suggest iconic representation of YHWH was the historical norm: the cultic rituals of the Jerusalem temple follow the pattern of “care and feeding” of divine images in ancient Southwest Asian contexts; prophetic and psalmic texts use the language of gazing at the face of YHWH, or seeing YHWH enthroned—this language presumes a physical iconic representation of the deity in Israel/Judah’s worship. Niehr concludes that the ark tradition amounts to an intentional replacement of divine image language by post-exilic editors who, in a new context, did not tolerate iconic representation of YHWH. Niehr does not follow this line of argumentation into an analysis of 1 Sam 4–6, but his comparative data and insights about the influence of aniconism more generally on the biblical vision of Israel’s religion have been catalytic for the compositional theory I argue in the following chapter, concerning the redactional presence of the “ark” in the so-called “Ark Narrative.”

The diachronic development of Judahite aniconism may be supported by the observation of Leong Seow, that within the Priestly tradition of the Hexateuch, the ark is *never* called by the epithet “Ark of [Divine Name]” (whether ארון ה׳, ארון אלהים, or ארון אלהי ישראל).[51] Instead, P always refers to the ark as the “Ark of the Covenant” (ארון העדת). Seow interprets this move as an intentional distancing of the ark from its association as a throne or footstool (or, I might add, iconic representation) of YHWH. The implied purpose of such a move is to preserve the divine presence among the people, even in the absence of the ark (a theological necessity after the fall of Jerusalem, when the P strand is typically dated). Thomas Römer concurs with the assessment that Israel and Judah venerated anthropomorphic images, in *The Invention of God*.[52] Nevertheless, he does not suspect the ark as a circumlocution for such an image (as he does for “glory of YHWH,” “lamp of YHWH,” or even “Jerusalem”).[53] Instead, he proposes that the ark described in the Ark Narrative may have originally functioned as a *container* for some sort of iconic representation of YHWH, before becoming understood as a *signification* of the invisible deity.[54]

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[50] Herbert Niehr, “In Search of YHWH’s Cult Statue in the First Temple,” in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Karel van der Toorn (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 73–95.

The aniconic impulse may be also discerned in the Deuteronomistic handling of texts that reference an “ephod” used for divination. This ephod tradition is tied to the ark tradition by the strange appearance of the ark in 1 Sam 14:18. The Septuagint version of this text has “ephod” in place of the Masoretic “ark,” but the gloss in verse 18b (“for the ark of Ha’elohim was at that time with the people of Israel”), which repeats the word “ark,” suggests a preference for the MT reading. Philip Davies (later supported by Van der Toorn and Houtman) builds a case that most or all of the occurrences of “ephod” in Samuel are a systematic replacement of “ark,” the erasure of a second ark tradition that was seen as incompatible with the canonical ark story.[55] This whole line of inquiry is a fascinating textual puzzle to try to solve, but for the purposes of this overview, I highlight only the possibility (identified but rejected perhaps too quickly by Van der Toorn and Houtman) that behind "ephod" could just as easily have been a circumlocution for "*tselem*," or "*pesel*," or even "YHWH."[56] Speculative as this is, further research on this point could shed light on the development of aniconism in the redactional history of the Former Prophets, parallel to the similar historical development identified by archaeological research.

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[51] Choon Leong Seow, “The Designation of the Ark in Priestly Theology,” *HAR* 8 (1984): 185–98.

[52] Thomas Römer, *The Invention of God*, trans. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 122–23; 141–59.

[53] Römer, The Invention of God, 159.

[54] Römer, *The Invention of God*, 90–92. See also idem, “L’arche de Yhwh: de la guerre à l’alliance,” *ETR* 94.1 (2019): 106.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a turn in research, consonant with the general turn in the guild away from the established historical-critical approaches toward new synchronic literary methodologies. Within Ark Narrative scholarship, some scholars challenged Rost's thesis at its foundation: perhaps there was never an independent Ark Narrative to begin with; the ark material was composed at the same time as the rest of Samuel as an *ad hoc* narrative thread within the book. An early voice for this approach was John Van Seters. In his magisterial *In Search of History*, Van Seters includes a discussion of the ark material in his general disapproval of redaction criticism.[57] In his view, ancient historians did not piece together bits of source documents; rather, they consulted their sources and then wrote completely in their own words. Instead of an ancient source document, Van Seters sees in the ark thread a creative prefiguration of the 6th-century exile. In Babylon, after the fall of Jerusalem, the key question was: Is Judah's god now subject to the gods of the captors? The author of the ark story answers: not in the least. Is YHWH still in control of human affairs? The ark story answers: absolutely.

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[55] Philip R. Davies, "Ark or Ephod in 1 Sam XIV.18?," *JTS* 26.1 (1975): 82–87; Karel van der Toorn and Cees Houtman, "David and the Ark," *JBL* 113.2 (1994): 213–19.

[56] van der Toorn and Houtman, "David and the Ark," 218.

[57] Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 277–91.

In “The Ark Narrative Reconsidered,” Klaas Smelik presents several arguments against an independent Ark Narrative.[58] His strongest case, perhaps, is that the ark material is theologically inseparable from its context in Samuel. Stripped of that theology, the Ark Narrative would be no more than the mere description of an event. Smelik finds it difficult to imagine a convincing *Sitz im Leben* for such a hypothetical source document. Rather, he sees the ark material contributing to the larger exilic themes of Samuel and the Deuteronomistic History, composed just before or after the fall of Jerusalem, as a theological challenge to the notion of Jerusalem’s inviolability.

Yehoshua Gitay adds his voice to those arguing for the unity of the ark material with its context in Samuel. His approach in “Reflections on the Poetics of the Samuel Narrative” is unique, in that he concedes many of the stylistic arguments for the independence of the Ark Narrative, noting that the prose style of the Ark Narrative is formally different from its context in Samuel.[59] However, he challenges the form critical conclusion that differences in style imply differences in authorship. Instead, Gitay reads the stylistic shifts in the ark material as an intentional rhetorical device, employed by a single author, meant to satirically lampoon the victors and their gods. Further, Gitay proposes that the ark material is actually the narrative core of the whole of Samuel (and maybe even the entire Deuteronomistic History).[60] As Gitay reads it, the whole plot of 1–2 Samuel centers around getting the ark to Jerusalem and enshrining it in the temple; thereafter the plot is about keeping the temple (which contains the ark) holy and functioning; and in exile, about the possibility of restoring the temple.

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[58] Smelik, “The Ark Narrative Reconsidered.”

[59] Gitay, “Poetics of the Samuel Narrative.”

[60] Gitay, “Poetics of the Samuel Narrative,” 224.

A more measured argument for the place of the Ark Narrative is put forward by Karel Van der Toorn and Cees Houtman in their coauthored article, "David and the Ark."[61] The second half of their article deals with the question of the independence of the Ark Narrative, to which they give a "both/and" answer. They see 1 Sam 4–6 and 2 Sam 6 forming a distinct and unified narrative thread about the movement of the ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem. However, they also consider this material to be inextricably embedded in the context of Samuel. Therefore, rather than calling this material an "independent source document," they refer to the ark material as a distinct "literary strand," likely composed as an *ad hoc* thread within the rest of Samuel. A decade later, Mark McCormick makes a similar argument, stating even more strongly (if perhaps too sweepingly) that the only version of the ark material accessible to us is the Deuteronomistic version; there is no way for us to uncover earlier sources or historical functions of the ark.[62]

McCormick's abandonment of diachronic analysis is somewhat typical of recent treatments of the ark material. In a 2006 survey, Keith Bodner reviewed the work of a dozen contributors, most of whom are simply less interested in the compositional history of the Ark Narrative.[63] Instead, they lean into close readings of the final form (e.g., Eslinger, Miscall, Polzin), dialogue with literary theory (e.g., Green), or with theological readings (e.g., Brueggemann). Such contributions are important and demonstrate the breadth of meaning available in these texts, which have been preserved through the ages precisely because of their theological utility in multiple settings among multiple readerships. However, I wish to argue that this reality does not eliminate the need for diachronic analysis, nor nullify its significance.

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[61] van der Toorn and Houtman, "David and the Ark."

[62] C. Mark McCormick, "From Box to Throne: The Development of the Ark in DtrH and P," in *Saul in Story and Tradition*, ed. Carl S. Ehrlich and Marsha C. White (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 175–86.

[63] Keith Bodner, "Ark-Eology: Shifting Emphases in 'Ark Narrative' Scholarship," *CurBR* 4.2 (2006): 169–97.

Instead, diachronic work helps us understand better how a text came to be so potent and long lived, while also giving voice to the meanings, ideologies, and art of earlier authors and redactors of the text.

Not all Ark Narrative scholars have given up on diachronic reading, however. Erik Eynikel reviews the arguments for and against the literary independence of the Ark Narrative, concluding in favor of independence.[64] He proposes that 1 Sam 1–3 was redactionally fronted to the tale to transform it from a story of "YHWH's victory" into one about "sin and punishment."[65] Another unique perspective is offered by Serge Frolov, in his monograph *The Turn of the Cycle*, whose thesis is that 1 Sam 1–8 was composed as an independent (but internally unified) narrative cycle, fronted to an earlier version of Samuel during the Babylonian exile by Jerusalem-based priests.[66] Frolov sees the purpose of the "cycle" (including the ark story) to be the redactional problematization of Zion ideology, the monarchy, and the Zadokite priesthood. In other words, this cycle represents an *anti*-Deuteronomistic polemic, which (through the quirks of scribal tradition) found its way into the preserved version of Samuel, resulting in the ideological complexity we encounter in the final text of the Former Prophets. Peter Porzig, on the other hand, dates most of the ark material even later than Frolov, attributing it to Second Temple priests as part of their imaginative idealization of the Solomonic temple and its Yahwistic accoutrement.[67] For Porzig, the only earlier kernel of material in the so-called "Ark Narrative" is the report of the loss of the ark in 1 Sam 4.[68] The myth of the ark's return in 1 Sam 5–6 was composed later to fill the narrative gap created by the surprising presence of the ark later on in the biblical history.[69] In a subsequent study, Porzig explores the possibility of a post-Chronistic redactional layer in Samuel-Kings that has influenced the extant version of the Ark Narrative, including especially the mention of Levites (e.g., 1 Sam 6:15).[70] Eynikel, Frolov, and Porzig each, however, consider the bulk of the Ark Narrative to be internally unified—a conclusion I dispute in my analysis.

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[64] 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 *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor and Harry F. van Rooy (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 88–106.

[65] Eynikel, "The Relation between the Eli Narratives," 106.

[66] Serge Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle: 1 Samuel 1–8 in Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives*, BZAW 342 (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2004).

[67] Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 296.

The last several years have witnessed a number of dissertations and articles dealing (at least in part) with the Ark Narrative, perhaps indicating a renewed interest in discovering new possibilities in this text.[71] Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger's recent essay, "Eli, Samuel und Saul in den nordisraelitischen Überlieferungen," approaches relationship between Eli and Samuel through the sociological rubric of "authority." Most relevant to the present study, latter half of the essay offers a nuanced diachronic study of 1 Sam 1–7 based on stylistic/syntactical analysis.[72] While our stylistic analyses are methodologically similar, Schäfer-Lichtenberger's results differ somewhat from mine below, largely because she accepts as a starting point the general unity of each “horizontal” narrative unit (1 Sam 2; 4; 5; 6), then examines syntactical differences between them;[73] whereas I discern layers that “vertically” span two or more narrative units. Nevertheless, Schäfer-Lichtenberger’s work demonstrates careful diachronic work on the level of authorial style and is therefore an excellent conversation partner for the present study.

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[68] Porzig's theory of a "catastrophe narrative" in 1 Sam 4 as the earliest kernel of the Ark Narrative (following Schicklberger) is followed even more recently by Benedikt Hensel, "The Ark Narrative(s) of 1 Sam *4:1b–7:1 / 2 Sam 6* between Philistia, Jerusalem, and Assyria: A New Approach for a Historical Contextualization and Literary-Historical Classification," in *Jerusalem and the Coastal Plain in the Iron Age and Persian Periods: New Studies on Jerusalem's Relations with the Southern Coastal Plain of Israel/Palestine (c. 1200–300 BCE)*, ed. Felix Hagemeyer (Göttingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 163–92.

[69] Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 150–51.

[70] Peter Porzig, "Postchronistic Traces in the Narratives about the Ark?," in *Rereading the Relecture? The Question of (Post)Chronistic Influence in the Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel*, ed. Uwe Becker and Hannes Bezzel, FAT II 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 93–105.

[71] Dissertations include Mark O. Enemali, "The Danger of Transgression Against the Divine Presence: The Case of the Ark Narrative" (Notre Dame, PhD diss., 2014); Maria J. Metzler, "The Ark of the Covenant and Divine Rage in the Hebrew Bible" (Harvard University, PhD diss., 2016); Daniel Shalom Fisher, "Memories of the Ark: Texts, Objects, and the Construction of the Biblical Past" (University of California, Berkeley, PhD diss., 2018); Jonathon E. Wylie, "He Shall Deliver My People from the Hand of the Philistines" (University of Wisconsin-Madison, PhD diss., 2018).

[72] Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger, "Eli, Samuel und Saul in den nordisraelitischen Überlieferungen," in *The Books of Samuel: Stories—History—Reception History*, ed. Walter Dietrich, BETL 284 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 181–206.

Jaime Myers’s article, “The Wicked ‘Sons of Eli’ and the Composition of 1 Samuel 1–4,” defends her proposal that Hophni and Phinehas represent a late redactional layer that extends from the Samuel story through the beginning of the Ark Narrative.[74] Her observation of the distinction in the extant text between “Eli’s sons” (unnamed/unnumbered) and “Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas” was very helpful for my own analysis of the composition of 1 Sam 1–4.

In the field of archaeology and its overlap with biblical studies, Israel Finkelstein and Thomas Römer have recently overseen excavations at the site of the ancient town of Kiriath Jearim. Their discovery of the remains of a platform complex that likely dates to the time of Jeroboam II of Israel (mid 8th century BCE) is highly suggestive of the site’s significance as a shrine at the border between Israel and Judah.[75] Finkelstein has used the results of these excavations to add detail to his ongoing reconstruction of 8th century Israelite history,[76] while Römer has explored the implications of the excavations for the interpretation of biblical texts, including the Ark Narrative.[77] Finkelstein and Römer have also collaborated on some publications that pertain specifically to the Ark Narrative.[78] Their stimulating work has been instrumental in my own reconstruction of a plausible absolute chronology for the redaction of 1 Sam 1–8. Finkelstein and Römer hypothesize that the Ark Narrative was composed in the 8th century as a *hieros logos* of the shrine at Kiriath Jearim, legitimating the transfer of the ark there after the destruction of Shiloh.[79] Römer further suggests that the ark likely remained at Kiriath Jearim until Josiah of Judah transferred it to Jerusalem in the late 7th century.[80] I retrace the probable historical context of the Ark story differently, based on multiple redactional layers internal to the narrative, and I diverge most significantly from Finkelstein and Römer in my proposal that Kiriath Jearim was likely never an ark shrine, but rather housed an image of YHWH. Despite these differences, Römer and Finkelstein (in their separate and collaborative publications) have been influential in my understanding of the historical context behind an important stage of the text's development.

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[73] Schäfer-Lichtenberger, “Eli, Samuel und Saul,” 189–90.

[74] Jaime A. Myers, “The Wicked ‘Sons of Eli’ and the Composition of 1 Samuel 1–4,” *VT* 72.2 (2021): 237–56.

[75] See Israel Finkelstein et al., “Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim near Jerusalem, 2017: Preliminary Report,” *Sem* 60 (2018): 31–83.

[76] Israel Finkelstein, “A Corpus of North Israelite Texts in the Days of Jeroboam II?,” *HBAI* 6.3 (2017): 262–89; idem, “First Israel, Core Israel, United (Northern) Israel,” *NEA* 82.1 (2019): 8–15; idem, “Jeroboam II’s Temples,” *ZAW* 132.2 (2020): 250–65.

[77] Thomas Römer, “How Jeroboam II Became Jeroboam I,” *HBAI* 6.3 (2017): 372–82; idem, “L’arche de Yhwh”; idem, “Jeremiah and the Ark,” in *Jeremiah in History and Tradition*, ed. Jim West and Niels Peter Lemche,

Cynthia Edenburg has made an important contribution to Ark Narrative research in her recent, wide-ranging article, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled: Reconsidering the Extent, Purpose and Historical Context of the Ark Narrative."[81] Edenburg sees significant internal complexity within the narrative and assigns most of the later redactions to exilic and post-exilic

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Copenhagen International Seminar (New York: Routledge, 2019), 60–70; idem, "Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?"

[78] Israel Finkelstein and Thomas Römer, "Kiriath-Jearim, Kiriath-Baal/Baalah, Gibeah: A Geographical-Historical Challenge," in *Writing, Rewriting, and Overwriting in the Books of Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets: Essays in Honor of Cynthia Edenburg*, ed. Ido Koch, Thomas Römer, and Omer Sergi (Peeters Publishers, 2019), 211–22; idem, "The Historical and Archaeological Background behind the Old Israelite Ark Narrative," *Bib* 2 (2020): 161–85.

[79] Römer, "L'arche de Yhwh," 101–2; idem, "Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?" 273–74; Finkelstein and Römer, "The Historical and Archaeological Background," 184.

[80] Römer, "L'arche de Yhwh," 102–3.

[81] Cynthia Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled: Reconsidering the Extent, Purpose and Historical Context of the Ark Narrative," in *Fortgeschriebenes Gotteswort: Studien zu Geschichte, Theologie und Auslegung des Alten Testaments: Festschrift für Christoph Levin zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Reinhard Müller, Urmas Nõmmik, and Juha Pakkala (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 153–74.

Judahite scribes, reflecting on the ark and its shrines as “sites of memory” to inspire hope for restored divine presence among a traumatized community.[82] I share many of Edenburg’s understandings about the diachronic development of the narrative (though I have drawn different conclusions with regard to some details), and I have found her attention to the linguistic features of the text to be especially helpful as a comparand to my own linguistic-stylistic analysis.

METHODOLOGY

In Defense of Diachrony

The final decades of the 20th century witnessed a pendulum swing in biblical studies from the traditions of historical criticism (methods seeking to uncover the world *behind* the text) to the proliferation of studies of biblical texts as literature in their final, or canonical, forms (attending to the poetics of the world *within* the text). These two major modes of inquiry were often juxtaposed as “diachronic” and “synchronic,” borrowing terms from Ferdinand de Saussure’s linguistic theory.[83] The former was more interested in the development of texts through time, while the latter typically evaluated the final form as a unified work of literature. As a result of this shift in scholarship, many began to consider the diachronic methods of compositional criticism to be passé, an attitude that persists to this day, especially in the North American context (diachronic/compositional approaches remain relatively strong in continental European scholarship). Challenges to traditional diachronic methods that seek to identify and reconstruct compositional sources and redactional layers behind biblical texts generally group around two prominent themes: the hypothetical (nonempirical) nature of reconstructed sources and insufficient attention to the final/canonical text.

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[82] Edenburg, “The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled,” 171.

[83] On Saussure’s approach to synchrony and diachrony, and its applicability to biblical studies, see James Barr, “The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical: A Triangular Relationship?,” in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes de Moor, OtSt 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–14; Koog P. Hong, “Synchrony and Diachrony in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation,” *CBQ* 75 (2013): 521–39. It should be noted that Saussure’s use of the terms “synchronic” and “diachronic” do not map exactly onto their common usage in biblical studies. As discussed in the essays cited above, for Saussure, the synchronic approach compares multiple exemplars of language situated in the same culture at the same time; the diachronic approach attends to the changes in the linguistic system of a culture over time.

The Hypothetical (Nonempirical) Nature of Reconstructed Sources

Few studies of biblical diachrony have access to significant empirical data. Most result in hypothetically reconstructed sources or redactional supplements derived solely from internal evidence discerned in the final text.[84] This absence of empirical verification for scholars' hypotheses leaves diachronic study open to the criticism that its imagined layers of sources and supplements are of little value, neither for the reconstruction of history, nor for literary appreciation of the text, nor for theological appropriation.[85] Klaas Smelik comments, with respect to the Ark Narrative specifically,

> [Diachronic scholars] agree on one point: the extant text of Samuel is the work of an editor who used older sources or traditions. They believe it is possible to reconstruct these sources and traditions by removing parts of the extant text. It is remarkable however that their literary-critical analyses produce dissimilar results. This raises the question as to whether it is useful to apply such an approach.[86]

Plainly, a couple hundred years of critical study has not yielded consensus on the historical evolution of the biblical text, but rather a proliferation of unverified hypotheses—perhaps as many theories as scholars proposing them! As I overheard one leading Hebrew Bible scholar say during a colleague's dissertation defense, "By now, diachronic studies amount to little more than rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic."

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[84] Sometimes empirical evidence is designated "textual," while internal evidence is labeled "literary"—hence the traditional term for the investigation of sources: *Literarkritik*, or "literary criticism." The traditional term has become confusing, however, because many beyond the guild (and some within) assume that "literary criticism" refers to synchronic interpretation of the stylistic features of the text as literature. Therefore, I usually refer to *Literarkritik* (and its companion methods) as "compositional criticism."

[85] See, e.g., Raymond F. Person Jr. and Robert Rezetko, eds., *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism*, AIL 25 (Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 1–35.

[86] Klaas A. D. Smelik, Converting the Past: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography, OtSt 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 37.

This criticism is not without some merit. Indeed, it speaks against an attitude of overconfidence and feigned scientific objectivity that has characterized some traditional diachronic studies. An important tenet of the scientific method is its replicability: apply the same methods, get the same repeatable results. This has obviously not been the case when applying diachronic methods to biblical texts. Rather than viewing our task as a scientific process, it is better to emphasize that diachronic study is always tentative and inherently interpretive.[87] It lives in the realm of plausibilities, not verifiable certainties. Cynthia Edenburg's concept of "economical" hypotheses is apt (even if her conclusion that they characterize a "scientific" method could be considered an overstatement): "The 'economical' explanation gives the *simplest* account for the *greater number* of observable phenomena than either a simple explanation that disregards problematic details, or than a multi-stage explanation that allocates each phenomenon to a separate layer."[88] In other words, sound diachronic analysis represents a scholar's best interpretation of the features present in the text before them. The scholar's attempt to account for as many of those features as possible results in a *plausible* reconstruction of the text's compositional history. Such a hypothesis may not be strictly verifiable/falsifiable, but its merits can be evaluated and debated, and it can contribute to a deeper understanding of the text—even when multiple scholars propose divergent reconstructions. Commenting on Benjamin Ziemer's challenge to growth models of biblical redaction (*Wachstumsmodells*), Juha Pakkala concurs,

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[87] *Pace* Cynthia Edenburg, "Falsifiable Hypotheses, Alternate Hypotheses and the Methodological Conundrum of Biblical Exegesis," *ZAW* 132.3 (2020): 383–401, whose thesis is "that scientific method is appropriate to the Humanities as a whole, *including* Biblical studies" (383–84). Edenburg recognizes the lack of replication in methodological outcomes of diachronic analyses, but concludes, "it is not the method that is faulty; instead, the presuppositions governing the analyses need to be examined and put to the test" (388). In other words, it is not the science that is at fault, but the scientists.

[88] Edenburg, "Falsifiable Hypotheses," 393 (emphasis original).

> Many additions undeniably go undetected by literary critics and there may be occasional omissions that could hardly be restored, but the reconstructed exact wording as such should not be the goal of literary and redaction criticism.… Redaction-critical reconstructions should be seen as abstractions of a very complicated development and as theories constantly open to discussion, criticism and improvement.[89]

In this sense, studies like the present dissertation are *always* approximations and will surely be wrong about several proposals, at least in their details. Humility is required. Nevertheless, the value of such a study is not limited to its empirically verifiable elements only but also extends to its elucidation of the historical and social developments in the communities behind the text, as suggested by the broad—and plausible—contours of its literary analysis.

It is also relevant to note that while individual diachronic studies often lack strictly empirical bases, the study of ancient Southwest Asian[90] textual composition *as a whole* has much empirical data from which to draw, yielding a reliable portrait of the typical methods of scribal transmission. Jeffrey Tigay's magisterial *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* catalogues perhaps the most relevant cadre of Mesopotamian analogues to the biblical texts to date.[91] Examining also biblical texts for which we do possess multiple extant versions (e.g., Exodus,

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[89] Juha Pakkala, "Review of *Kritik des Wachstumsmodells*, by Benjamin Ziemer," *Bib* 102.3 (2021): 468.

[90] Throughout this dissertation, I have opted to use the term "ancient Southwest Asia" (except in direct quotations of others) to designate the region often referred to as the "ancient Near East" in biblical scholarship. Neither term is ideal (e.g., the former implies, but technically omits, Northeast Africa). Despite its deficiencies, "ancient Southwest Asia" is less dependent on Eurocentric assumptions and privilege. On these matters, Steed Vernyl Davidson writes, "The deployment of western intellectual tools to construct knowledge of the geographical and cultural context of the Bible amounts to a form of Orientalism…. The dominant and uncritical use of the designator 'ancient Near East' for the socio-political and geographical location of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, more aptly designated as Southwest Asia, reflects this reality. The title for the area, among other things, tends to overlook colonialist histories and literatures about this area, obscures contemporary geo-political realities, and masks the racial underpinnings of the knowledge being produced about the area and its people" ("Writing/Reading the Bible in Postcolonial Perspective," *BRP* 2.3 [2017]: 29).

[91] Jeffrey H. Tigay, ed., *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

Deuteronomy, and the Samaritan Pentateuch; Samuel-Kings and Chronicles), Tigay shows that the redactional changes we see empirically are often detectable in the younger text through non-empirical diachronic methods of literary analysis—even if those insights would not have been verifiable without access to the earlier version for comparison.[92] Tigay's work has been followed recently with a slew of biblical examples in recent volumes by Müller, Pakkala, et al.[93] They conclude that "[t]he empirical or documented evidence indicates that editorial modification was the rule rather than the exception, and accordingly signs of editing can be found in all parts of the Hebrew Bible."[94] In this light, the assumption of unified authorship made by readers of a final pericope, based on the lack of empirical data for earlier forms, can only be heuristic. As Hans Jürgen Tertel challenges, "Attempting to avoid redaction criticism for dogmatic or pragmatic reasons means to merely ignore the problem but not to solve it."[95] Indeed, reading biblical books, or even pericopes, as if they were singularly authored like modern literary works is to pretend the Bible is something it is not. Conversely, diachronic approaches are premised upon the demonstrated historical *fact* of compositional complexity. Then they work to describe that process as plausibly as possible. Neither synchronic nor diachronic approaches give us access to an ultimately verifiable history of the text; both approaches yield heuristic approximations; both approaches create knowledge and provide insight into the text. Therefore, when a narrative block like 1 Sam 1–8 presents so many signs of compositional complexity, the lack of scholarly consensus on the reconstruction of its composition should not deter us from continuing to propose new diachronic solutions, weighing them against the evidence we have available.

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[92] See, for example, Tigay's analysis of the Jethro material in the Samaritan Pentateuch and its precursors in Exodus and Deuteronomy: "How much of this could have been recognized by source criticism if the Masoretic Exodus and Deuteronomy were not available to guide the analysis? Clearly, some omissions … would have eluded detection…. On the whole, however, the Samaritan pericope is full of signs of compositeness which would have led critics to unravel its components rather accurately" (*Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, 66–67).

[93] Reinhard Müller, Juha Pakkala, and Bas ter Haar Romeny, Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible, RBS 75 (Atlanta: SBL, 2014); Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala, Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East: What Does Documented Evidence Tell Us about the Transmission of Authoritative Texts?, CBET 84 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017); Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala, Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible: Toward a Refined Literary Criticism, RBS 97 (Atlanta: SBL, 2022).

[94] Müller, Pakkala, and Romeny, *Evidence of Editing*, 1. See the similar conclusion drawn by Reinhard G. Kratz, *Das Judentum im Zeitalter des Zweiten Tempels*, FAT 42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 144–56.

[95] Hans Jürgen Tertel, Text and Transmission: An Empirical Model for the Literary Development of Old Testament Narratives, BZAW 221 (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1994), 1.

Insufficient Attention to the Final/Canonical Text

It is sometimes charged that diachronic studies are inherently destructive. That is, their starting point is an assumption of an incoherent final text, and their goal is to dismantle that text into its constitutive elements, leaving the final text behind. Such projects are "completely preoccupied with intermediate levels of redaction prior to the final form of the text, leaving the received text largely unexplored as an editorial creation with its own distinctive contours and emphases."[96] Stated differently, "The [Hebrew Bible] as a whole is lesser than a sum of its parts—this is the starting point of source criticism and its bottom line."[97]

Again, the critique has both strength and weakness. Some compositional criticism *does* abandon the extant version of the text in favor of its hypothetical sources. But this need not be the case. The best diachronic studies stem from careful, close readings (one might even say "synchronic" readings) of the text in its final form, attending to shifts in perspective and style that may be artifacts of compositional processes. As David Clines notes, "diachronic studies in biblical criticism often seem to have taken their rise from observed deficiencies in texts as systems—so much so that a plausible case can be made for saying that synchronic study always

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[96] As characterized by Lawson G. Stone in his apology for redaction criticism, "Redaction Criticism: Whence, Whither, and Why? Or Going beyond Source and Form Criticism without Leaving Them Behind," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 27.4 (1992): 105.

[97] As characterized by Serge Frolov in his apology for diachronic approaches (*The Turn of the Cycle*, 11). See also Frolov's systematic counterarguments in favor of diachronic methods (27–36).

comes first, whether logically or in practice."[98] Clines sees "synchronic" and "diachronic" inquiries as segments on a spectrum rather than mutually exclusive pigeonholes.[99] I agree. The goal of diachronic analysis is to better understand the text we actually have before us, to appreciate the plurality of voices it contains—and not the hegemonic perspective of the latest redactor only, nor the hegemonic perspective of some earlier, more pristine, source. Even Brevard Childs, the champion of "canonical" interpretation, insists on the value of diachronic analysis for understanding the canonical text:

> It seems obvious that this final form can be much better understood, especially in its crucial theological role as witness, if one studies carefully those hundreds of decisions which shaped the whole. Thus it greatly sharpens one's vision of the final form … if one first distinguishes between earlier and later levels within the witness ... The crucial test is the extent to which the recognition of the parts aids rather than impairs the hearing of the whole.[100]

In a way, Childs is echoing Franz Rosensweig's famous insight that the siglum "R" (for "Redactor") ought to be read as "*Rabbenu*," that is, "our teacher."[101] The successive editors of the text are our teachers, drawing our attention to sites of comparison, tension, puzzlement, and wonder in the version of the text they received. Each redactor is also, therefore, a reader of the tradition, whose perspective matters for a thick, fulsome interpretation of the extant text.[102]

Nevertheless, synchronically minded scholars are right to insist that without a move toward reading the full, final form of the text (with its compositional stages in mind), diachronic scholars may leave us like Moses, perched on Mt. Pisgah, at the edge of the promised land of the final text, but not actually entering it.[103] This is why, after the work of analyzing the text of 1 Sam 1–8 and proposing an account of its compositional stages, the concluding chapters of this dissertation attempt to read those stages, including the final text, as a living conversation among the various voices preserved in the diachrony of the text.

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[98] David Clines, "Beyond Synchronic/Diachronic," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes de Moor, OtSt 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 61–62.

[99] Clines, "Beyond Synchronic/Diachronic," 52.

[100] Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 104–5; cited in Barr, "The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical: A Triangular Relationship?," 13.

[101] See Joel S. Baden, "Redactor or Rabbenu? Revisiting an Old Question of Identity," in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Brill, 2017), 96–112. See also Stone, "Redaction Criticism," 111–12.

[102] On the redactor as a reader, see Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 34.

Another formulation of this challenge to diachronic analysis suggests that if difficulties in the final text could be explained as an aesthetic literary choice by a single author, then there is no reason to propose complex authorship. Nevertheless, just because a text *can* be read as a unity does not mean that it *is* a unity.[104] It is unnecessary to assume that final coherence and compositional complexity participate in a zero-sum game, as the concept of the "disappearing redactor" charges. It is possible *both* to discern compositional layers *and* to read the product of such redactional work in a coherent manner. The redactors of the text, as "channels of transmission" (to use Ska's term), were generally conservative in their approach.[105] They made additions, omissions, glosses, interpretations, and creative conflations of source documents and traditions. But they did not, as a rule, thoroughly cover their tracks in the process. They produced a text that is generally comprehensible in its extant form—indeed, it is a work of literary genius—and yet, it is also a work whose seams remain exposed and whose difficulties are not entirely smoothed over.

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[103] This image comes from J. Gerald Janzen's remarks on the 10-year anniversary of Frank Moore Cross's *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), presented in 1983 at a plenary session of the Annual Joint Meetings of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature. Janzen concludes with a friendly critique: "Frank Moore Cross's *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* leads us in an Exodus from previous synthesis, and along several of the most important wilderness stations, on the way to the final form of the text. I intend to place Frank Cross in the most select company when I suggest that CMHE leaves us perched on Mount Pisgah" (used with permission, personal communication).

[104] Richard Preß makes essentially the same point in his early evaluation of Rost's thesis. "Der Prophet Samuel: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung," *ZAW* 56.3–4 (1938): 181. See also Tertel, *Text and Transmission*, 2.

[105] Ska, "A Plea on Behalf of the Biblical Redactors," 10.

One might think of redacted biblical texts as a quilted blanket. A quilt has been pieced together from a variety of source textiles—its seams are not difficult to perceive; yet it still functions as a unified blanket. The whole is useful, meaningful, even when its compositional elements are discernable. Many quilts are rightly recognized as works of art (some are even hung in art museums). The artistry of the quilt is appreciated in the selection of source pieces and in their arrangement to produce flows of shape and color—sometimes consonant, other times discordant. To press the analogy even closer to the biblical text, occasionally quilts are passed down through successive generations, and new tradents add to or replace sections of the quilt so that it continues to function for a new "audience" or expresses the new quilter's aesthetic. The Bible we read is such a quilt. Tradents treasured it by changing it, adapting it, so that it functioned in their generation—yet they left the seams showing.

An Overview of My Methodological Approach

The analytical techniques I have employed in the following study are not novel and do not require significant introduction here (they are explained, where relevant, in the body of the dissertation). I often refer to the battery of methods employed below as "compositional criticism," which serves as an umbrella term for text criticism, source criticism (*Literarkritik*), form criticism, and redaction criticism. Each of these tools is somewhat fluid in its use by different scholars, and none of them exists in a vacuum.[106] They bump against each other in the toolkit, and the scholar reaches for whichever promises to be most applicable to the problem at hand. While the techniques are not novel, applying them to the relatively small sample of 1 Sam 4–6, which has been presumed to be a unified composition by the majority of scholars for a century, has not been common. My initial findings in these three chapters of Samuel raised issues that pushed my attention outward to their context in 1 Sam 1–8. Like any prolonged study, at times, my work was very methodical; at other times, I followed hunches that led either to insights or to dead ends. But generally speaking, my work with the text under consideration in this dissertation followed the methodological workflow in Table 1.1.

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[106] See accessible summaries of each traditional technique in Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, eds., *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (Atlanta: SBL, 2009).

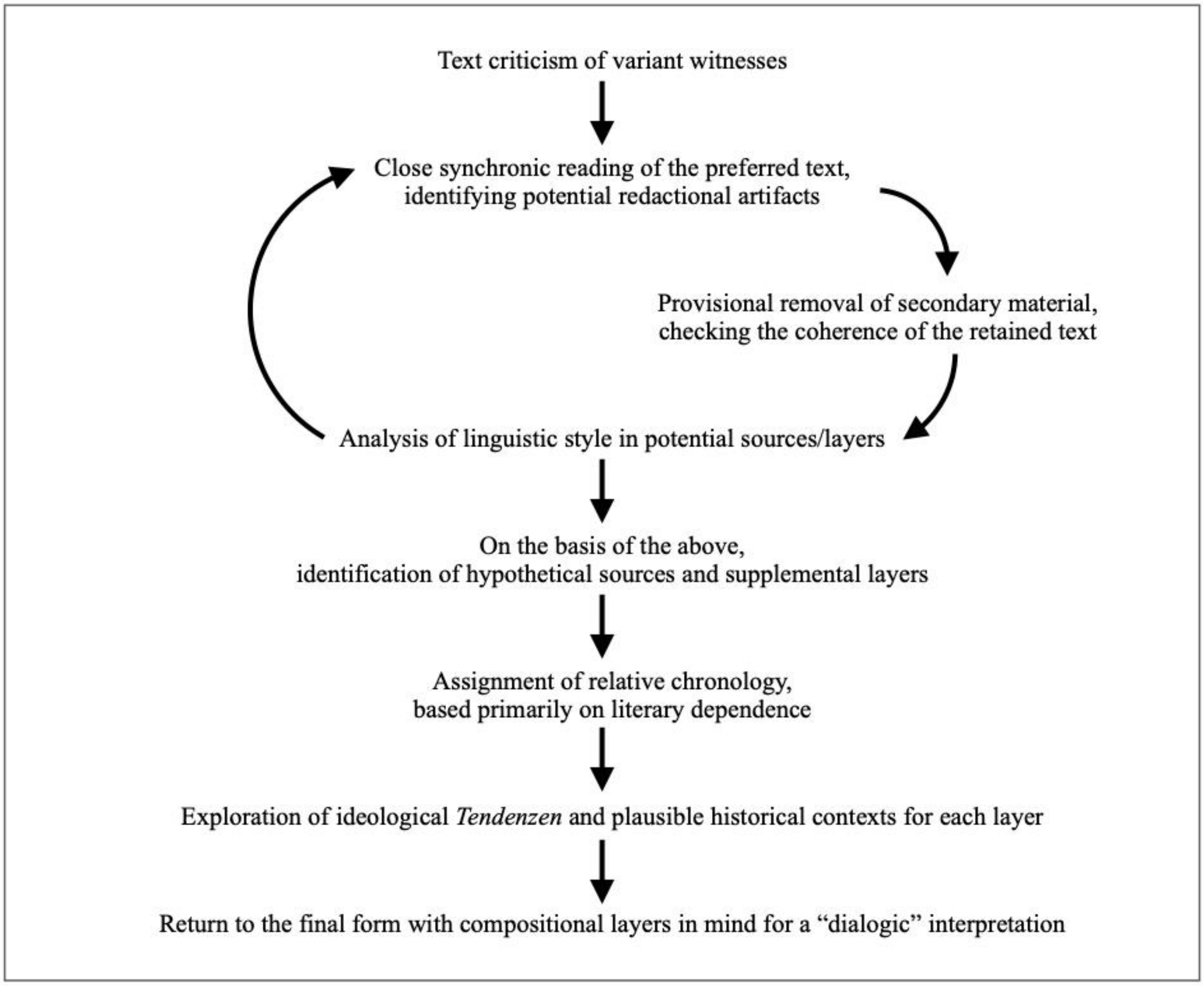
Text criticism of variant witnesses
Close synchronic reading of the preferred text, identifying potential redactional artifacts
Provisional removal of secondary material, checking the coherence of the retained text
Analysis of linguistic style in potential sources/layers
On the basis of the above, identification of hypothetical sources and supplemental layers
Assignment of relative chronology, based primarily on literary dependence
Exploration of ideological *Tendenzen* and plausible historical contexts for each layer
Return to the final form with compositional layers in mind for a “dialogic” interpretation

Table 1.1: Diachronic Workflow

1 Sam 1–8 as "Dialogic Diachrony"

I conclude this section with a note to explain the subtitle of this dissertation. My thinking about the biblical text in its final form has been significantly influenced by the literary theory of Mikhail Bakhtin—both by my reading of his studies of Rabelais and Dostoevsky, and by the spate of recent reflections on the usefulness of his thought for biblical studies.[107] Beginning in about 1980, interest in Bakhtin (1895–1975) began to percolate through the biblical studies guild, lagging about a decade behind the translation of his work into English, and his rediscovery in the field of literary studies.[108] Bakhtin's theories are broadly useful because they examine modern novelistic techniques through the lens of their origins in archetypal principles about the nature of human language and communication—even consciousness itself. At the core of Bakhtin's thinking is the insight that meaning is always socially determined—that truth, and the language that expresses it, is fundamentally *dialogic*.[109] Bakhtin writes,

> Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is, in someone else's consciousness expressed in discourse. At that point of contact between voice-consciousnesses the idea is born and lives.[110]

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[107] See Barbara Green, "Bakhtin and the Bible: A Select Bibliography," *PRSt* 32.3 (2005): 339–45. See also the essays in Roland Boer, ed., *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies*, SemeiaSt 63 (Atlanta: SBL, 2007). Cf. my own contribution, "'Who Knows?': A Bakhtinian Reading of Carnivalesque Motifs in Jonah," *VT* 72.4–5 (2022): 699–715.

[108] The turn toward Bakhtin within biblical studies was inaugurated by the publication of Robert Polzin's seminal, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges*, Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History 1 (New York: Seabury Press, 1980). For a concise summary of Bakhtin's life and influence on biblical studies, consult Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 11–65.

[109] Perhaps the fullest explanation of the social nature of human consciousness, speech, and literary meaning comes from Bakhtin's colleague, V. N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986). Indeed, there is an ongoing debate regarding the authorship of this book, with strong arguments that it comes from Bakhtin's own hand. Nonetheless, Bakhtin was content to credit the work to Volosinov, and I see no reason to press the matter. The ideas themselves most certainly emerged *dialogically* in the interactions among the Bakhtin circle of scholars. For an accessible overview of the Bakhtin Circle and their work, see the peer-reviewed web-article: Craig Brandist, "The Bakhtin Circle," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, n.d., http://www.iep.utm.edu/bakhtin, accessed 7/1/2023.

[110] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 88.

Even propositions that appear to be *monologic*—that is, the expression of an isolated individual—are unavoidably part of ongoing communal discourse. Every word ever uttered is a reply to some other idea and anticipates a reply to itself.[111] This is the concept expressed in the second epigraph to this Introduction. Bakhtin's professional fascination with Dostoevsky centered on the novelist's ability to work with that concept—that dialogic imagination—injecting it into his books' characters. Early on, Bakhtin credited Dostoevsky with the whole-cloth invention of the "polyphonic novel," in which characters possess their own self-consciousness, the author's perspective is relativized, and the "meaning" of the work is an open-ended question to be explored in the living, unmerged, dialogic interplay of ideas between the characters. Later, Bakhtin softened his praise for Dostoevsky, describing how his novels—while certainly innovative—utilized and extended a tradition of literary dialogism that actually traces back to the serio-comic works of antiquity.[112]

Bakhtin's thought has been especially helpful for readings of biblical texts undertaken by methodologically synchronic scholars. But I am convinced that there is a further insight to be gleaned from Bakhtin with respect to the diachronic study of biblical texts. The dialogic truth created between the characters of a Dostoevsky novel is the result of a literary technique employed by a single author, *simulating* polyphony in the text. The Bible, on the other hand, is *genuinely* polyphonic, for it has been multiply authored by generations of scribes. The compositional history behind our text makes it—in some real sense—a living dialogue, with many relevant voices preserved in the text, not the final redactor's voice only. This plurality of voice is an essential feature of the text. Reading it *only* synchronically is like listening to stereophonic music with just one ear. As I apply Bakhtin's concept of dialogism to diachronic analysis of a compositionally complex text, I aim to move beyond serial synchronic readings, the mere interpretation of monologic meaning at each stage of redaction. While much of this dissertation is devoted to the careful parsing of those stages, the goal is finally to bring them together in dialogue across time. Meaning is found (or made) in the interactions *between* the authorial/redactional voices in the text.[113] I participate in meaning-making as a diachronic reader and express my sense of the contours of the dialogue at many points in the dissertation, but especially Chapters VII, VIII, and the Conclusion.

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[111] See Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," 302–3.

[112] David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), 58–59.

SHAPE OF THE STUDY

The dissertation begins (Chapter II) with an exploration of the term ארון "ark" in the Ark Narrative and perhaps my most innovative proposal. I suggest that the perceived unity of this narrative around the sacred cultic object is a very late redactional overlay. The story had a long life as the adventurous tale of YHWH's anthropomorphic image; the ark only entered the narrative in its youngest revisions, as a scribal attempt to soften the implied iconism of a treasured tale. With the unifying feature of the word ארון omitted, other internal complexities in the text snap into sharper focus. Chapter III, therefore, presents a diachronic analysis of 1 Sam 4–6, with a focus on the godnapping tale in 1 Sam 5–6. Multiple potential revisions are proposed and evaluated for narrative continuity and stylistic coherence, leading to a relative history of the composition of these chapters.

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[113] And, of course, meaning is also made in the further interactions between the textual voices and our own perspectives as historically and communally situated readers.

Chapters IV and V zoom out to examine the context of the Ark Narrative in its canonical placement, wedged within the story of Samuel. Chapter IV looks at the birth and youth story of Samuel in 1 Sam 1–3 and considers its entanglement with the sad fate of the Elide priests. Diachronic analysis is guided by the recognition of the prominent use of resumptive repetitions (*Wiederaufnahmen*) in these chapters. Chapter V picks up the Samuel thread in 1 Sam 7–8, tracing the conversation about Samuel's ambiguous role in Israel's history (Priest? Judge? Prophet? Kingmaker?). Many of these narrative threads intersect in 1 Sam 4, which I call a "spaghetti junction" of tradition (Chapter VI). In this chapter, I pick apart the tangle to propose a relative composition history for 1 Sam 4 and the whole unit of 1 Sam 1–8.

The final two chapters of the dissertation consider probable historical contexts for a number of specific voices in the text's dialogic diachrony. Chapter VII identifies an early foundational cult legend (*hieros logos*) for the shrine at Beth Shemesh, which was adapted into a story to legitimate Israelite Kiriath Jearim in the mid 8th century, BCE. This was part of a hypothesized anthological project to create a national literature under the auspices of Jeroboam II. Chapter VIII turns to the diachronic tussle for priestly legitimacy by Levitical and Zadokite tradents. Following the Conclusion, an appendix considers the surprising presence of the Mesopotamian deity Dagan in the Ark Narrative.

CHAPTER II
AN IDEOLOGICAL "ARK" OVERLAY IN 1 SAM 4–6

Diachronic analyses and synchronic readings of the Ark Narrative in 1 Samuel have shared the basic assumption that the central, unifying feature of the narrative (however its sources may be identified and delimited) is the ark. The prominence of the ark in this story, as a result, influences scholars' understandings of Israelite history and the development of Israelite religion. For example, if sources for this Ark Narrative have roots in the early Iron Age, as proposed by Rost, Miller and Roberts, and others, then an actual ark (or multiple arks) must likewise have been central to the Israelite cult in the pre-monarchic or early monarchic era.[114] This line of reasoning may be extrapolated, leading to the conclusion that some form of aniconic theology was an early and perhaps strikingly unique element of ancient Israelite religion.[115] Furthermore, if parts of the story were composed in support of religious shrines (Kiriath Jearim) or in condemnation of them (Shiloh), then in all likelihood those shrines housed historical arks, and the Ark Narrative can be seen as a witness to this ark-centric feature of early Israelite religion.[116] On the other hand, if aniconic theology was introduced later to Israelite or Judahite religion (perhaps as an innovation of post-exilic priests), then—following the chain of logic back to the text—this sets a correspondingly late *terminus a quo* for the composition of the ark stories in 1 Samuel (and elsewhere).[117]

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[114] Rost, *Überlieferung*, 38; Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 91–94; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, ConBOT 18 (Uppsala, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1982), 19; Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: WJK, 2000), 87–88; Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 30; Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 101–8; Jill Anne Middlemas, *The Divine Image: Prophetic Aniconic Rhetoric and Its Contribution to the Aniconism Debate*, FAT II 74 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 80–88.

[115] See discussion of the state of the question on the uniqueness of early Judahite aniconism in Christoph Uehlinger, "Arad, Qiṭmīt—Judahite Aniconism vs. Edomite Iconic Cult? Questioning the Evidence," in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. Gary M. Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, BJS 346 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 80–112. See also Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 87–93.

[116] As proposed by Finkelstein et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim"; Finkelstein and Römer, "The Historical and Archaeological Background."

However, the assumed linkage between the so-called Ark Narrative and the ark itself need not be treated as a given. In this chapter, I explore the possibility that earlier versions of 1 Sam 4–6 and its sources implied a somewhat typical *iconic* representation of Israel's god in the form of an anthropomorphic divine image.[118] In the narrative, this *de facto* iconic theology was implied through the use of divine names to identify Israel's deity. My hypothesis is that for most of its compositional history, what would eventually become 1 Sam 4–6 was a collection of tales about the adventures of YHWH's divine image; that only in one of the latest stages of its composition was the single word ארון supplemented at each place where a physical image of Israel's god was implied (in at least 32 of the 37 occurrences of the term).[119] This ingenious redactional move transformed the various names for the deity into construct phrases: not "YHWH" (implying an image) but only "(the ark of) YHWH," thus softening the implied iconism of the narrative and renewing its relevance for a new generation with new priorities, values, and taboos.

THE CASE FOR AN "ARK" OVERLAY

The word ארון occurs 202 times in the Hebrew Bible (MT), including 37 occurrences in 1 Sam 4:1b—7:2. Of the occurrences outside this pericope, only 105 (64%) occur in construct state, and even fewer (82, or only 50%) are in construct with a divine name as the *nomen rectum* (“the ark of DN” or “the ark of the covenant of DN”). It is striking, then, that within 1 Sam 4:1b—7:2 nearly every occurrence of ארון is the *nomen regens* of a divine name (35 of 37 occurrences, or 95%).[120] Since the Hebrew genitive is determined by its position in a construct chain, and not by its form, a simple noun—or in this case, a divine name—may be made genitive by simply inserting another noun (such as ארון) before it, without needing to change anything in the morphology of the divine name itself.[121] This means that throughout the pericope, if ארון were omitted it would leave behind coherent and grammatical sentences (see example in Table 2.1). Other related elements of the sentences, whether verb forms, pronomial endings, or full pronouns, may refer syntactically to the ark (as the *nomen regens*) in the extant text. But if the word ארון were absent, they would interact just as grammatically with the deity itself. That is, “he/his” pronouns and 3ms verbs are the appropriate forms, whether their antecedent is the inanimate ark or the living deity.[122] The word ארון is not essential to the grammatical coherence of the narrative.

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[117] Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 155–56.

[118] Or possibly a theriomorphic image, though the body imagery employed in the Bible would suggest an anthropomorphic image was more likely (see below).

[119] There are 37 total occurrences of ארון in 1 Sam 4:1b—7:2. I propose that 32 belong to the "ark" overlay, and five may belong to later supplements, in which the term ארון is native to the supplement (4:22; 6:1, 13, 15; 7:2).

Table 2.1: Example: 1 Sam 5:10 with and without ארון

וישלחו את **ארון** האלהים עקרון ויהי כבוא **ארון** האלהים עקרון ויזעקו העקרנים	5:10 (MT)
וישלחו את האלהים עקרון ויהי כבוא האלהים עקרון ויזעקו העקרנים	5:10 (ארון omitted)

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[120] The two exceptions are 6:13 and 7:2, where הארון appears as an absolute noun. However, these may be assigned to later redactional layers on other grounds.

[121] Cynthia Edenburg notes (personal communication) that excising ארון from the text often leaves behind the divine name האלהים (with the definite article), which would require a morphological adjustment to get to the unarticulated אלהים. I suggest that in these cases, the article is not a morphological element required by ארון, but rather an integrated part of the divine epithet used in the earlier text. Compare the many occurrences of האלהים (with the article) throughout the Hebrew Bible. The only occurrences of אלהים without the article in 1 Sam 4–6 are 4:7, 11 (and only the latter is in a construct with ארון).

[122] The single exception is 4:18, where the verb (נלקחה) may be a 3fs form reflecting the ambiguous gender of the noun ארון. This is, however, inconsistent with the way the ark is gendered throughout the rest of the pericope. See Raanan Eichler, *The Ark and the Cherubim*, FAT 146 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 20.

Admittedly, these observations only demonstrate the grammatical possibility and relative ease with which ארון could have been systematically overlaid upon our pericope. They are not evidence that such a scribal intervention actually took place. But, when we consider the literary overlay of the word ארון as a hypothesis, it explains many of the difficulties and quirks of the present form of the text. These will be examined in turn below. Taken together, the evidence amounts to a cumulative case for the probability that an "ark" overlay was indeed performed late in the narrative's compositional history.

Lack of Physical Description of the Ark

One such quirk in the so-called "Ark Narrative" is the absence of any physical description of the ark, despite the ark's ubiquity in the pericope. There is no mention of poles, rings, gold, size, shape, contents, or decor. The only possible exception to this silence is 1 Sam 4:4, which mentions cherubim. Since the cover of the ark is described elsewhere as having cherub-styled artwork (Exod 25, *passim*), this could be a reference to the ark's physical features. However, in this verse, the cherubim are not described as a physical feature of the *ark*, but rather, they form a throne upon which the *deity* sits.[123] They are part of an extended divine epithet, not a description of the ark. The physical location of the cherubim included in the epithet could be a temple sanctuary, or even the heavens, for that matter.[124] In short, this datum, which invokes the common visual motif of seated anthropomorphic divine images, more likely reflects a memory of YHWH as a seated deity—not necessarily the decoration of an (aniconic) ark.[125] Aside from 4:4, the narrative presents the ark with absolutely no description apart from the bare word, ארון. No more than this would necessarily be expected in sparse Hebrew prose if the ark played a minor part in the narrative. But as the central focus of this lengthy story, one would expect to find at least some incidental description of it. While this is an argument from silence, this is what we may say affirmatively: If the word ארון were completely omitted from the text, it would leave behind no orphaned visual descriptions of the ark in the story.

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[123] Or, "between" them, or "among" them. See Raanan Eichler, "The Meaning of יֹשֵׁב הַֽכְּרֻבִים," *ZAW* 126.3 (2014): 358–71. Elsewhere, contrary to my own conclusion, Eichler reasons that this epithet *does* apply to the ark itself (*The Ark and the Cherubim*, 208–9). See also discussion in Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *God: An Anatomy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022), 56–57.

[124] The use of the epithet צבאות in 4:4 also seems to be associated with the deity enthroned in the temple (not out on the battlefield). See Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 24.

The Ark as a Euphemism for the Deity

The presence of an "ark" overlay also explains the euphemistic nature of the ark's role in the narrative. In the final text, the ark functions as a placeholder for the deity himself.[126] All of the actions performed by the ark (toppling Dagon, 5:2–4; unleashing a plague, 5:6–7; killing the Philistines, 5:10–12; driving the cows toward Beth Shemesh, 6:12–14; striking the Beth Shemeshites, 6:19–20) are not conceptually attributed to the ark itself, but to the deity behind the ark. As McCarter summarizes, "Where the ark was there was [YHWH] fighting on Israel's behalf."[127] Likewise, actions performed for or upon the ark (bringing him into the camp, 4:6–7;

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[125] See Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue," 87. See also Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 25; Diana Edelman, "God Rhetoric: Reconceptualizing YHWH Sebaot as YHWH Elohim in the Hebrew Bible," in *A Palimpsest: Rhetoric, Ideology, Stylistics, and Language Relating to Persian Israel*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi, Diana Edelman, and Frank Polak (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 85–86; Römer, *The Invention of God*, 121–22. In any case, I would argue that 4:4 likely belongs to a later redaction altogether.

[126] As emphasized by Bourke, "Samuel and the Ark: A Study in Contrasts," 89–90. See also Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled," 165; Eichler, *The Ark and the Cherubim*, 135–36. N.B., I am using the masculine pronoun for the deity, here and elsewhere in the dissertation, to reflect the way he is gendered in the biblical pericope; I am not affirming the gendering of God in modern confessional contexts, where I advocate for inclusive and expansive language for God.

[127] P. Kyle McCarter, *I Samuel: A New Translation*, AB 8 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 109.

installing him at the temple of Dagon, 5:2; processing him around, 5:8; paying tribute to him, 6:3) are implicitly performed for or upon the deity himself. In this story, the ark functions only as a physical marker of the localized presence of the associated deity. The absence of the word ארון would only make explicit what has become implicit in the present form of the narrative, its most "elemental" feature, according to Miller and Roberts: "The subject of the narrative is [*YHWH*], not the ark."[128]

Indeed, many have commented that the Philistines treat the ark *just as if* it were a divine image, some concluding that this should be attributed to their pagan religious context, which has led them to confuse the ark for a divine image.[129] But why would the Philistines make such an error? As far as we can tell, the ark (as described in Exodus) did not physically resemble a typical divine image.[130] Moreover, the Philistines are not characterized in our narrative as naïve pagans, unfamiliar with the religion of Israel, but as astute and capable theologians. They have the historical wisdom to connect the power of Israel's god with the events of the Exodus narrative (4:8; 6:6), and later, they discern the appropriate—and indeed technical—priestly offering (an אשם) to pay reparations to Israel's god and expiate their guilt.[131] In spite of their apparent familiarity with Israelite religion, the Philistines treat the ark as they would a divine image: placing it in a position of honor in their temple, processing it through their towns, accompanying it with valuable tribute.[132] Even when it comes time to send the ark back to Israelite territory, the Philistines use an intransitive verb (וישב למקמו, “Let him *return* to his place,” 5:11), implying that the ark has enough independent (divine) agency to direct its (his) own movements.[133] The Philistines’ religious reflexes toward Israel’s god make the most narrative sense if, in fact, the story originally depicted the capture of a divine image, not a mere cultic vessel.

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[128] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 79.

[129] E.g., M. Delcor, "Jahweh et Dagon: ou le Jahwisme face à la religion des Philistins, d'après 1 Sam 5," *VT* 14.2 (1964): 138; Schicklberger, *Die Ladeerzählungen*, 181–86; Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 12–26, 56–67; van der Toorn and Houtman, "David and the Ark," 216; Joel S. Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim*, SBLDS 183 (Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 74. See also Metzler, "The Ark of the Covenant and Divine Rage in the Hebrew Bible," 165–73.

[130] Though, perhaps we should not assume that the description of the ark in Exodus is presupposed here.

[131] Commenters regularly overlook the theological astuteness of the Philistines when assessing their characterization in 1 Sam 4. E.g., McCarter, *I Samuel*, 106; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 42.

The Philistines are not the only ones in the narrative to treat the ark *just as if* it were a divine image. Eli and his daughter-in-law are both undone by the news of the ark’s capture. Certainly, the loss of such a holy vessel would have been tragic and lamentable. But it does not follow that when YHWH’s “footstool” or “throne” is captured, YHWH is also necessarily taken into captivity.[134] According to the biblical ideology surrounding the ark in the Pentateuch, Israel’s god is not bound to the ark as other deities are bound to divine images. YHWH’s numinous presence may come and go from the physical location of the ark. It is a valuable and precious cultic accessory, but it is not an image; it is not a god.[135] Yet, both Eli and his daughter-in-law are so grieved upon receipt of the news of the ark's capture that they die (Eli from a fatal fall and his daughter-in-law from complications of grief-induced labor), and as the new mother expires, she exclaims not that a precious vessel has been taken, but that the very כבוד of YHWH (that is, the hypostasized presence of YHWH) has gone into exile.[136] As Campbell summarizes, for Eli and his daughter-in-law the loss of the ark means "[YHWH] has departed from his people and has abandoned them."[137]

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[132] While the abduction of a divine image was humiliating for the conquered people, the deity himself was often treated with honor. The placing of the ark at Dagon’s side (5:2 ,אצל דגון) rather than “before Dagon” (לפני דגון) may signal respect or even appropriation. On YHWH as a “vice regent” with Dagon, see Jonathon E. Wylie, “The Victory of YHWH in the Temple of Dagon (1 Samuel 5:1–5),” in *For Us, but Not to Us: Essays on Creation, Covenant, and Context in Honor of John H. Walton*, ed. John H. Walton et al. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020), 340. For a different conclusion, see Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 154, 187–88; Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*, BJSUCSD 11 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 137. I also read the procession of the ark among the Philistine cities to be not an act of humiliation, but an attempt to placate the deity by showing him great honor.

[133] A. Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: WJK, 2011), 59.

[134] Though he comes to a different conclusion regarding the redaction history of the text, Philip R. Davies also recognizes the *non sequitur* of the connection between the capture of the ark and Eli’s death: “Whilst the loss of the ark is no doubt to be conceived of as a shock, it is true that in the preceding chapters the relation between Eli and the ark is nowhere brought into prominence, as we should expect if the loss of the ark in ch. 4 is to be fully prepared for” (“The History of the Ark in the Books of Samuel,” *JNSL* 5 [1977]: 12).

[135] On the identification of a deity with its image, see Michael Brennan Dick, “The Mesopotamian Cult Statue: A Sacramental Encounter with Divinity,” in *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Neal H. Walls (Boston, MA: ASOR, 2005), 43–67. In Exodus (e.g., Exod 40:34–38), the ark is always listed among many sacred objects in the tabernacle, the whole of which the *kavod* would intermittently visit.

Later in the story, a large number of Beth Shemeshites are stricken dead for having looked upon the ark (כי ראו בארון ה׳, 6:19), implying that looking at the ark is somehow equivalent to looking upon the deity himself, with the same deadly consequence. The gravity of this transgression moves Thomas Römer to speculate that there must have been a stone or statuette depicting the god of Israel contained within the ark, which the men of Beth Shemesh viewed after opening the ark and peering inside.[138] But the text does not provide such details. The Beth Shemeshites are decimated for simply beholding the ark.[139] When they resolve to send the ark to Kiriath Jearim, they understand that they are sending YHWH away (6:20–21).[140] In each of these cases, despite the insistence on aniconic theology surrounding Israel's god elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the ark functions as a thinly veiled euphemism for the deity himself, with the solitary word ארון buffering the deity in a simple construct phrase. If the word ארון were removed, the ambiguity of the euphemism would be overcome, and the internal logic of the story would follow more naturally.

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[136] For discussion of כבוד as a direct representation of the deity, see Edelman, "God Rhetoric," 93.

[137] Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 185. See also Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 51–52. In two successive paragraphs, Hertzberg is forced to say both that "[YHWH] is not bound to the ark; he shapes history independently of the symbol of his constant presence" (51) *and* "Despite the observations made at the end of the last section, it does not now transpire that the Lord abandons the ark" (52). The final form of the text asks readers to have it both ways.

[138] Römer, "L'arche de Yhwh," 106, 107.

[139] While the preposition -ב is notoriously flexible and may imply that the people looked "at" or "inside" the ark, the latter is highly unlikely. Of the 64 occurrences of the preposition -ב following the verb ראה, only two (2 Kgs 20:15 and Isa 39:4—and these are a doublet of the same text) imply looking "inside" some object, in this case within Hezekiah's "house" (ויאמר מה ראו בביתך). The vast majority of the occurrences use the preposition in the sense of looking "at" or "upon" an object.

[140] As noted by Eichler, *The Ark and the Cherubim*, 136.

Divine Images Identified by Divine Names

By way of comparison, Dagon's depiction in the story is an immanent example of the typical literary portrayal of divinity from the world in which our text was authored. It is assumed that readers will understand that the god in the temple at Ashdod is a sculpted image of some sort (possessing at least a head and hands; therefore, most likely an anthropomorphic image).[141] Yet, in the narrative itself, the word "image" is not used. Dagon's image simply *is* Dagon.[142] When the image is found prostrate before the ark, "Dagon" is prostrate before the ark. When he is found toppled the second time, one might envision a scenario whereby the head and hands of the statue broke off during its fall and, carried by that momentum, came to rest at the threshold of the temple. But that is not how the narrative describes it. Dagon's head and hands were "cut/severed" (כרתות, 5:4); this is the language of bodily disarticulation after defeat in battle.[143] There is no hint from the narrator that the image of Dagon is merely wood or stone—he is a divine body. Readers would instinctually expect YHWH's representation to be a divine body, as well. Indeed, the narrator sets up YHWH and Dagon as competitors, side by side in Dagon's temple (5:2), framing the narrative so that readers anticipate a divine contest.[144] To use Ted Lewis's colorful metaphor, "It is a battle of divine images punching it out, so to speak: in one corner is 'the Ark of God,' in the other the image of Dagon."[145] The literary parity between Dagon and YHWH, god versus god, *mano-a-mano*, is somewhat weakened by the insertion of an aniconic ark into the story, leaving Dagon to battle against YHWH's furniture. To overcome this imbalance and read a coherent narrative, readers must conceptually suspend the aniconic nature of the ark and interpret the divine contest as if the ark *is* YHWH in the way that Dagon's image *is* Dagon.

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[141] See Eichler, The Ark and the Cherubim, 147.

[142] See Johanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos, *The Road to Kingship: 1–2 Samuel*, A People and a Land 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 60; Daniel O. McClellan, *YHWH's Divine Images: A Cognitive Approach*, ANEM 29 (Atlanta: SBL, 2022), 141, n. 14.

[143] For a survey of ancient Southwest Asian iconography of the disarticulation of enemy combatants and the occurrences of this imagery in the Hebrew Bible, see Joel M. LeMon, "Cutting the Enemy to Pieces: Ps 118,10–12 and the Iconography of Disarticulation," *ZAW* 126.1 (2014): 59–75.

Alternatively, in light of the disparity between the aniconic ark and the iconic Dagon, one might be tempted to characterize 5:2–6 as an idol parody, chiding the Philistines for their belief that a mere image could be alive with divinity (cf. Isa 44:9–20, *passim*).[146] But this would surely be a misinterpretation. The point of the scene in 5:2–6 is not that the image of Dagon is actually lifeless; it is that Dagon (who is quite real and quite present in the temple) is no match for YHWH, who kills and dismembers his rival. The victory of YHWH in this scene *depends* on the fact that the image of Dagon *is* Dagon. Further, if this were an idol parody, one would expect to find the word idol (פסל, צלם, or some other synonym) in the text. Likewise, if YHWH's aniconic representation was meant to be contrasted with Dagon's iconic representation, then one would expect the ark's *dissociation* from YHWH to be emphasized; but it is not. YHWH is just as present in/with the ark as Dagon is present in/with his image. This is not an idol parody. It is a divine contest—one whose narrative clarity is only complicated by the introduction of the word ארון.

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[144] Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 53; see also David Toshio Tsumura, "The narrator might be hinting that the real issue here is warfare between two deities. Note that 'before the ark of the Lord' is almost the same as 'before the Lord'" (*The First Book of Samuel*, NICOT [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007], 205).

[145] Theodore J. Lewis, The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion through the Lens of Divinity (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 141.

[146] E.g., Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 143. For an extended comparison of the Ark Narrative with biblical idol parodies, see Levtow, *Images of Others*, 132–43. Levtow characterizes the Ark Narrative as "similar to" the icon parodies. However, rather than denying the reality of Dagon, in 5:2–6, "the cult image of the Philistine deity is literally deprived of its sensory powers through removal of its head and its 'hands,' which in the Ark Narrative signify power" (140).

The “Ark” vs. “Hand” of YHWH

The unclarity continues after the fall of Dagon, for the text oscillates between the “hand of DN” (5:6, 7, 9) and the “ark of DN” (5:7, 8, 10, 11) in its description of the plague that befalls the Philistines. Antony Campbell interprets that in this section, “the protagonist they have to deal with is not the ark but the ‘hand of [YHWH].’”[147] But surely it is *both*; to deal with one is to deal with the other. In order to make sense of the narrative, the reader must, as Campbell does, continue to disregard the aniconism of the ark and treat it as a euphemism for the deity. This iconic/aniconic tension is easily explained if we imagine an earlier form of the text without the ark. In that text, the “hand of YHWH” is vocabulary that would have likely evoked readers’ iconographic awareness of the common image of anthropomorphic deities poised to strike with their weapon-wielding hand.[148] A later redactor, working to soften the implied iconism of the text by overlaying the word ארון, could have naturally passed over references to “the hand of DN,” since these may also be read aniconically, as a metaphor for divine power, without emendation (despite the idiom’s anthropomorphic roots). Furthermore, the insertion of ארון at these points would have added confusion, for “the ark of the hand of DN” or “the hand of the ark of DN" would be nonsensical. Therefore, the redactor allowed both the "ark" and the "hand" to stand in as alternating, mildly aniconic circumlocutions for the deity in the story.

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[147] Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 93. See also Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 79 (and, of course, the title of their book).

[148] See Joel M. LeMon, “YHWH’s Hand and the Iconography of the Blow in Psalm 81:14–16,” *JBL* 132.4 (2013): 865–82, especially pp. 880–81, where LeMon discusses the use of השב יד על in Amos 1:8, a pronouncement of doom against the Philistines and Ekron (cf. 1 Sam 5:11, “The hand of Ha’elohim weighed very heavily there [Ekron]”). See also Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 63–64; J. J. M. Roberts, “Hand of Yahweh,” *VT* 21.2 (1971): 244–51.

Thus, in the final form, Philistine and Israelite characters, as well as the story's narrator, treat the ark *just as if* it were a divine image, despite the contradictory insistence that the ark is most assuredly *not* a divine image. This inconcinnity only exists because the word ארון does not adequately overcome the iconic emphasis of the earlier forms of the narrative. When ארון is omitted, the inconcinnity disappears.

Misfit with Ancient Godnapping Narratives

The presence of the word ארון also complicates the generic participation of the so-called Ark Narrative with other ancient Southwest Asian godnapping (or "divine abandonment") narratives.[149] In these comparands, cultic accessories are never the primary concern.[150] Recognizing the variance from this pattern in the Ark Narrative, Campbell explains that the godnapping stories "speak of the departure and return of the gods themselves; the Ark Narrative, involving the mythical only indirectly, does not speak of the departure of [YHWH] but of the ark instead." Then he adds, "That the basic understanding is the same is not open to serious doubt."[151] Campbell's observation only reinforces the mental leap that must be made to read the ark story in this generic framework. Even more to the point, in these other tales, although the abduction of the god's physical image is implied, as a rule these narratives refer to the deity by name only, not as the "image of DN" or the "statue of DN"—certainly not the "footstool" or "throne" or "ark" or any other "[accessory] of DN." Now, it is possible that scribes familiar with Mesopotamian godnapping stories innovated in their composition of the Ark Narrative, bending the godnapping motif into a divine-accessory-napping tale—and the extant form of the Ark Narrative strays from the genre in exactly this respect. But it is more plausible that the earliest forms of 1 Sam 4:1b—7:2 followed the convention of dealing with the concerned god directly, by name, unproblematically implying a divine image at the heart of the narrative.

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[149] See discussion of comparative literature in Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 179–91; Schicklberger, *Die Ladeerzählungen*, 181–86; Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 12–26; Jacob L. Wright, "The Deportation of Jerusalem's Wealth and the Demise of Native Sovereignty in the Book of Kings," in *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright, AIL 10 (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 123, n. 48.

[150] Campbell argues that in some cases "emblems" or "vessels" of the deity were taken as booty (*The Ark Narrative*, 187–88). However, the evidence he gives does not support that such temple booty was considered equivalent to the image of the deity. Campbell himself oscillates in his discussion between distinguishing gods from their "emblems" and treating them as a unity.

[151] Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 185.

Cultic Discontinuity in the Biblical History

Finally, recognition of an "ark" overlay in 1 Sam 4–6 may help resolve one of the enduring puzzles of the biblical ark material: If the ark really was the central cultic object of Israel's ancient past, as it is portrayed in the final form of our pericope, how do we explain its surprising disappearance from the narrative in Kings after its installation in the temple, with no account of its ongoing significance or its tragic loss?[152] This biblical silent treatment has led to a proliferation of theories about the ark's present location.[153] From a different angle, a few scholars have suggested a literary solution to this puzzle, proposing that the bulk of the Ark Narrative and other biblical ark texts were not composed as early as the consensus has supposed. The ark material is instead very late, retrojected onto the early history of Israel by post-exilic scribes, thus exaggerating (or possibly inventing) the ark's importance in the pre-monarchic and early monarchic eras.[154] I think this solution is partly correct. However, moving the composition of the Ark Narrative wholly into the post-exilic era only brings the historical puzzle forward in time with it, for one of the central values of the post-exilic scribal authors was their claim to cultic continuity with pre-exilic Judahite religion.[155] For example, the author of Ezra provides a detailed inventory of the temple vessels that were taken in the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem (among which, the ark is notably omitted). These were then returned—each and every one—by Cyrus the Great (Ezra 1:7–11). In light of the high value placed on the continuity of important cultic vessels, why would post-exilic scribes invent a vessel that they did *not* possess, and invest it with *central* importance, supported with an elaborate story about its unique connection to YHWH, if they could not point to it as the locus of YHWH's presence in their own day or endeavor to explain its absence? Walter Dietrich writes, "it would be nothing short of heroic to tell a story of a sacred artifact only once it had been destroyed or robbed." He concludes, despite the ark's unexplained disappearance, "It seems much more likely that such stories were told (still) while the ark existed and was venerated: during the monarchy."[156] Just as the surprising omission of the ark in the post-Solomonic history is problematic for the narrative continuity of the Deuteronomistic History, the all-important ark's absence in the post-exilic era is problematic for ark-oriented texts that may have been composed at that time.[157]

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[152] After the ark's permanent installation in the temple under Solomon, it disappears from the biblical narrative, except for a curious mention in 2 Chron 35:3, when Josiah instructs the Levites to bring it to the renovated temple (there is no mention of it having been previously removed, nor is this moment preserved in 2 Kings). Jer 3:16 references the ark obliquely (noting its present or impending absence). For analysis of this enigmatic reference, see Thomas Römer, "Jeremiah and the Ark"; Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger, "'Sie wird nicht wieder hergestellt werden': Anmerkungen zum Verlust der Lade," in *Mincha: Festgabe für Rolf Rendtorff zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Erhard Blum (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), 229–41. Regarding the omission of the Ark Narrative in Chronicles, see discussion in McCarter, *I Samuel*, 29–30. Furthermore, as Porzig notes in passing, "Trotz der großen Bedeutung der Lade gibt es zu dieser Erzählung bekanntlich keine Parallele in den Chronikbüchern," translation: "Despite the great significance of the ark, this narrative has no parallels in the books of Chronicles" (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 144, n. 196). Perhaps when the Chronicler(s) were compiling their version of the national history, the all-important ark was not yet part of the 1 Samuel godnapping narrative. Did the Chronicler(s) deal with the implied iconism of the story by omitting it? One can only speculate.

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[153] For compilations of these theories, see Phyllis Lynette Enstrom and P. J. Van Dyk, "What Happened to the Ark?," *R&T* 4.1 (1997): 50–60; John Day, "Whatever Happened to the Ark of the Covenant?," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day, LHBOTS 422 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 250–70.

[154] Porzig retains a historical kernel in 1 Sam 4, but assigns the rest of the Ark Narrative to post-exilic priestly scribes (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 155–56). Cf. Edenburg, who assigns the whole pericope to post-exilic scribal authors ("The Radiance [of Yahweh] is Exiled," 163, 170–72). Römer, on the other hand, raises the possibility that the ark was brought from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem by Josiah only 50 years before the destruction of the temple (cf. 2 Chron 35:3), thus explaining its absence from the earlier monarchic era narrative ("L'arche de Yhwh," 103). While Römer's hypothesis plausibly explains the *absence* of the ark in the post-Solomonic narrative, it does not explain the ark's *prominence* in the David and Solomon stories.

[155] Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Temple Vessels: A Continuity Theme," in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel*, VTSup 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 166–81; idem, "Continuity and Discontinuity: Rehabilitation and Authentication," in *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament*, ed. Douglas A. Knight (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 215–34. See also Wright, "The Deportation of Jerusalem's Wealth."

The proposal of an overlay of the word ארון in 1 Sam 4–6 accounts for these challenges because it explains that the centrality of the ark in the Deuteronomistic History is largely a byproduct—an unintended consequence—of the attempt to soften the iconism of an already venerated story about the divine image. Before the ark's insertion into 1 Sam 4–6, its disappearance from the developing narrative in Kings was of little consequence. The ark was after all a temporary vessel, conceived as part of a portable shrine that allowed for the worship of YHWH during the wilderness era (as described by P).[158] In the Deuteronomistic framing of Israel/Judah's history, after a permanent home for YHWH was constructed, and permanent cultic vessels were crafted, the mobile shrine became narratively obsolete. Meanwhile, the tale about the Philistine sojourn of Israel's god could have circulated (even in the pre-exilic era) as an

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[156] Walter Dietrich, *The Early Monarchy in Israel: The Tenth Century B.C.E.*, trans. Joachim Vette (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 251.

[157] Serge Frolov posits a different solution, namely, that the ark story was composed (in part) as a polemic *against* the veneration of the ark: it did not help the Israelites in battle, it struck out at both Philistines and Israelites (Beth Shemesh), and the Philistines were defeated under Samuel's leadership despite the absence of the ark (*The Turn of the Cycle*, 36, 172–75). Frolov's hypothesis is intriguing, but in my estimation, it does not do justice to the centrality of the ark in the extant pericope—in any case, if the purpose of the Ark Narrative was to polemicize against the importance of the ark, the reception history of this pericope shows that the author was profoundly unsuccessful.

[158] The tradition history of the ark in the wilderness narrative of the Pentateuch is contested. Cynthia Edenburg notes that the ark is absent from the core of Deuteronomy, while it is frequently mentioned in the Priestly source texts (and in non-synoptic passages of Chronicles). She concludes that the ark was much more significant in the scribal imagination of post-exilic scribes ("The Radiance [of Yahweh] is Exiled," 170). See also the discussion of the ark–tent–wilderness associations as a late innovation in Robert Rezetko, *Source and Revision in the Narratives of David's Transfer of the Ark: Text, Language, and Story in 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13, 15–16* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 185–86.

iconic story, centered upon the anthropomorphic image of the deity.[159] It was only after aniconic ideology became more prominent in Judahite religious consciousness that it became necessary to either adapt or excise the story of YHWH's sojourn in Philistia.[160] Such an aniconic intervention would only have been necessary, however, *if an earlier, iconic, version of the story already existed*, and held some level of authority within the narrative tradition.[161] The ark was drawn upon as a creative tool to soften the iconism of 1 Sam 4–6 with relatively minimal intervention, by simply transforming the direct references to the deity (which implied a divine image) into construct phrases: ארון האלהים, ארון אלהי ישראל, ארון ה׳. In this way, the redactor obviated the offensive iconism while retaining the story of YHWH's unilateral victory over Israel's enemies. While this move solved the immediate theological/ideological problem of implicit iconic representation in the traditional story, it had unintended consequences: the dynamism of the ark in the revised godnapping tale elevated the ark's status as a physical representation—maybe even the *sine qua non*—of YHWH's presence. Two byproducts of this localized redactional fix in the Samuel narrative were the new problem of the sacred ark's omission in later historical accounts leading up to the fall of Jerusalem and the problem of the ark's absence in the list of cultic vessels restored after the exile. Why were these narrative problems left unresolved? I can only speculate. Perhaps the scribe(s) responsible for this intervention were unaware of the challenges their intervention created for other narratives; alternatively, perhaps they judged that the value of improving 1 Sam 4–6 was worth the unresolved narrative tension induced elsewhere.

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[159] I agree with those who have concluded from archaeological surveys, comparative religion, and clues within the biblical text that both Israel and Judah had anthropomorphic images of their deities housed in their temples, much as their neighbors did, for most of their history. See, e.g., Manfried Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, *"Jahwe und seine Aschera": anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel: das biblische Bilderverbot*, UBL 9 (Münster: UGARIT-Verlag, 1992); Brian B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, ed. Diana Edelman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 75–105; Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue"; Christoph Uehlinger, "Anthropomorphic Cult Statuary in Iron Age Palestine and the Search for Yahweh's Cult Images," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Karel van der Toorn (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 97–155; Bob Becking, "Assyrian Evidence for Iconic Polytheism in Ancient Israel," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Karel van der Toorn (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 157–71; Römer, *The Invention of God*, 122–23, 141–59. For a summary of the arguments for and against this historical evaluation, see Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God*, 290–97.

[160] The timing of the rise of Israelite/Judahite aniconism remains debated and has an extensive body of research devoted to it, without a clear consensus. Here, I only claim a relative transition from programmatic iconism to programmatic aniconism, without needing to lock in the absolute dates. Representative of the scholarly discussion are Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context*, ConBOT 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995); Christoph Uehlinger, "Israelite Aniconism in Context," *Bib* 77.4 (1996): 540–49; Karel van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, CBET 21 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997); Diana Edelman, "Introduction," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, ed. Diana Edelman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).

[161] A larger project of aniconic scribal revision is suggested by Römer: "After the prohibition of images was imposed, other substitutes were found for the statue of Yhwh, such as the "glory" of Yhwh or the lamp holder [or, I would add, the "ark," and eventually] … the most important substitution was the scroll of the Torah…" (*The Invention of God*, 159).

TEXT-CRITICAL EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF AN "ARK" OVERLAY

While I have made the case for the explanatory power of an "ark" overlay, the chief difficulty with the argument is that we have no direct empirical evidence to support it—that is, *all* of our textual witnesses to 1 Sam 4–6 already contain the word ארון. However, there is some relevant empirical evidence to support the hypothesis indirectly. Within our pericope, there are a number of variants between the MT and LXX. A few of these are significant (and will be discussed in detail in later chapters), but most are minor differences, a word choice here or there, suggesting some differences between the *Vorlagen* of the major witnesses. These minor variations often occur in the designations of the ark: different names for the associated deity, the addition or omission of ברית, or the omission of a divine name altogether.[162] The preferred reading in each case must be evaluated on its own merits, but the concentration of variants around the designations of the ark may represent scribal attempts to bring harmony to a text with too much variation around the name of this most sacred vessel. This suggests, subtly, that the presence of the word ארון, while grammatically correct, sits somewhat uncannily in the narrative.

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[162] Such textual variants surrounding the designation of the ark and/or divine name are present at 4:3, 4, 5, 7; 5:2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11; 6:1, 3, 5, 8, 11, 13, 20; 7:1.

The most striking empirical data point lies outside of 1 Sam 4–6. Laws found in Exod 23:17 and 34:23 require Israelite men to make pilgrimage three times per year to worship in the (future) temple, "looking upon the face" or "appearing before the face" (יראה ... את פני) of YHWH. Eventually this clear implication of an anthropomorphic divine image became intolerable. In both cases, the Samaritan Pentateuch inserts the word ארון before the divine name, relieving the text of the tension created by the implication of a divine image. Instead of viewing the face of YHWH, worshipers merely look upon, or appear before, the ark of YHWH.[163] This theological revision of the received text is *exactly* the scribal intervention I have hypothesized occurred throughout 1 Sam 4–6. While it is not a smoking gun in the case of the Ark Narrative, this example provides empirical evidence that at least one other ancient scribe used the simple insertion of ארון to avoid iconic implications in their received text.

A more widely cited text-critical problem, found in 1 Sam 14:18, is also relevant to our inquiry. There, Saul instructs a priest to bring him the ark for the purpose of divining the appropriate course of military action. At this point, the MT has ארון האלהים where the LXX has τὸ εφουδ. Some interpreters have preferred the LXX's *ephod* in this case, in order to harmonize the narrative with 1 Sam 7:2, which suggests that the ark would have been quarantined at Kiriath

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[163] This example is discussed at length by Juha Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted: Omissions in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 191–95. Pakkala considers each of the MT, SP, and LXX versions of these texts to be aniconically motivated theological revisions of an original text that implied looking upon the face of the divinity as a ritual act. SP stands out, though, for its use of ארון to accomplish this softening of the implied iconism. Pakkala goes on to discuss several other examples of small, aniconically motivated redactions attested in textual variants in extant witnesses (195–210, 222–23). He does not, however, speculate on the use of ארון for this purpose in texts for which we do not have empirical evidence, such as the so-called Ark Narrative.

Jearim at this time.[164] Nevertheless, “ark” appears to be an intentional variant, and not a simple scribal error, for its presence is reinforced in the second half of the verse (MT) with the explanation, “for the ark of Ha’elohim [ארון האלהים] was in those days with the Israelites.”[165] On this evidence, some propose that there were multiple arks in circulation.[166] A more elegant solution, however, is that this is another site where ideologically aniconic scribes attempted to correct the iconic representation of Israel’s god. Perhaps the insertion of ארון was a first attempt to soften the iconism, and a later scribe substituted “ephod” (likely האפוד in the LXX *Vorlage*) in a further effort to coordinate the story with the ark’s installation at Kiriath Jearim, creating a variant tradition now preserved in the LXX.[167] In any case, this verse is another empirical example of the fluidity of the words used to describe the hypostatization of the Israelite deity in the compositional history of 1 Samuel.

OVERLAY AS A REDACTIONAL TECHNIQUE

As part of the evaluation of the “ark” overlay hypothesis, it is worth considering whether such a systematic “overlay” of a single word upon a pericope for ideological reasons is a scribal technique for which we have evidence beyond the present case. A number of comparands commend themselves. The book of Jeremiah has been helpful for developing redaction-critical methodology because of the significant variance between the extant MT and LXX witnesses. J. Gerald Janzen’s seminal study catalogued the systematic expansion of proper names in MT Jeremiah, over against its *Vorlage* (as evidenced by parallel passages in the LXX).[168] Often, characters’ names have been secondarily overlaid with their official titles (e.g., “Jeremiah [the prophet] said to Hananiah [the prophet]…” 28:5 MT; 35:5 LXX). Even more striking, the tetragrammaton has been expanded, in the MT of Jeremiah, to ה׳ צבאות (72 times) and to ה׳ אלהי ישראל (35 times).[169] Similarly, the cliché נאם ה׳ has been inserted secondarily into MT Jeremiah 73 times, in order to follow the pattern set by 103 existing occurrences in the LXX *Vorlage*. Janzen concludes, “One might expect an occasional omission of a name by scribal error; but the divergence of [LXX] from [MT] is so wide that it cannot be accounted for by inadvertent omission.”[170] These changes represent a systematic “improvement” of the inherited text at some point in the Masoretic tradition. Unfortunately, it is difficult to discern whether the motivation for such systematic insertions was ideological or purely aesthetic. However, the curious redactional appellation of עבדי “my servant” to the name Nebuchadrezzar, three times in MT Jeremiah (25:9; 27:6; 43:10), certainly appears to be ideological. While these three occurrences are admittedly far fewer than ארון in the Ark Narrative, the case is helpful because the ideological emendation is accomplished by the overlay of a single word in multiple locations.[171]

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[164] Davies, “Ark or Ephod in 1 Sam XIV.18?” See also, Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 180, n. 88.

[165] On the priority of ארון in this case, see Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 158–61.

[166] van der Toorn and Houtman, “David and the Ark,” 229–31. Multiple arks were also hypothesized by rabbinical sources. For discussion, see Tzemah Yoreh, “The Two Arks: Military and Ritual,” *TheTorah*, n.d., https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-two-arks-military-and-ritual.

[167] William R. Arnold argues this point at length in *Ephod and Ark: A Study in the Records and Religion of the Ancient Hebrews* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), 10–23; Karl Budde even proposes that the original reading was אביר, i.e., a “bull image,” and that both ארון and אפוד are attempted circumlocutions (“Ephod und Lade,” *ZAW* 39 [1921]: 41).

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[168] J. Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, HSM 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 69–86.

[169] Emmanuel Tov further assigns these expansions of personal and divine names to a particular edition of MT Jeremiah, which he calls “Edition II” (“The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History,” in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, ed. Jeffrey H. Tigay [Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985], 227–29). For a contrasting view of the composition of Jeremiah, see Alexander Rofé, “The Double Text of Jeremiah Revisited,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah*, by Alexander Rofé, ed. Louis Stulman and Edward Silver (Oxford University Press, 2021), 113–28.

[170] Janzen, Studies in the Text of Jeremiah, 75.

[171] Hermann-Josef Stipp, “A Semi-Empirical Example for the Final Touches to a Biblical Book: The Masoretic *Sondergut* of the Book of Jeremiah,” in *Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East: What Does Documented Evidence Tell Us about the Transmission of Authoritative Texts?*, ed. Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala, CBET 84 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 305.

Another case that arises from comparison of the MT with LXX concerns Josh 24. The LXX preserves Josh 24:5–13 as Joshua's own speech, referring to YHWH in the third person. The MT, however, has transformed this into a direct, first-person divine speech, by systematically altering the verb forms and omitting third-person references to YHWH.[172] The grammatical change employed in this intervention differs from that used in the ark overlay. Nevertheless, it demonstrates how small changes, made systematically throughout a pericope, can be used by a redactor to give a text a new theological emphasis. In this case, putting this speech in the deity's mouth rather than Joshua's gives greater theological authority to the speech and clarifies that the ban in Josh 24:8 was a divine initiative, not the people's initiative.[173]

Synoptic comparison of Chronicles with Samuel-Kings also yields interesting empirical results. A long-recognized example is the systematic replacement of the theophoric element בעל (preserved in Chronicles) with the element בשת in parallel texts in Samuel-Kings (e.g., אשבעל > איש בשת; מריב בעל > מפיבשת; etc.).[174] These substitutions represent a tendentious denigration of Baʿal in the proto-MT *Vorlage* of Samuel-Kings. The model differs from the "ark" overlay in that it involves substitution rather than insertion, but it functions as a proof of concept for the systematic, ideological revision of single words through a body of inherited text.

Such tendentious revisions were also performed by the editors of the Samaritan Pentateuch, as noted above.[175] Another applicable comparand is the SP emphasis on Mt. Gerazim as the place authorized for worship. In Deuteronomy, the phrase “the place that YHWH *shall choose*” (יבחר, MT/LXX) has been replaced in the SP with “the place that YHWH *has chosen*” (בחר) in twenty-one instances. This shift represents an ideologically motivated, systematic, single-word (single-letter!) overlay across a body of text.

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[172] A notable lapse occurs at 24:7, where the third person is retained. See Ville Mäkipelto, *Uncovering Ancient Editing: Documented Evidence of Changes in Joshua 24 and Related Texts* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 261–62.

[173] Mäkipelto, Uncovering Ancient Editing, 262.

[174] Reinhard Müller, "Das theophore Element '-Baal' zwischen Samuel und Chronik," in *Rereading the Relecture? The Question of (Post)Chronistic Influence in the Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel*, FAT II 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 107–29.

[175] See Robert T. Anderson, *The Samaritan Pentateuch an Introduction to Its Origin, History, and Significance for Biblical Studies*, RBS 72 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 71–103. In addition to the בחר overlay, Anderson highlights the

Finally, the divine name in Gen 2–3 offers an interesting potential comparison. Here, the combination ה׳ אלהים occurs twenty times, while it is all but absent in the rest of the Pentateuch (only Exod 9:30, which is itself a textual variant). Source criticism of Genesis is (still!) in a state of flux, and certainly any analysis of the divine name in this text must proceed literarily rather than empirically (like ארון in 1 Samuel, all the extant witnesses of Gen 2–3 already have ה׳ אלהים). Even so, the confinement of the double name to Gen 2–3 and the grammatically awkward appositional construction favor the likelihood of scribal intervention.[176] A variety of redactional explanations for the presence of this divine name cluster have been offered.[177] Even if the precise motivations of the redactor may only be speculated, it remains plausible that אלהים has been overlaid upon this pericope in much the same way as ארון has been overlaid in 1 Sam 4–6. Taken together, these empirical and literary examples demonstrate that the systematic overlay of small,

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insertion of היום at Deut 4:2; 12:28; and 13:1, “deemphasizing any rendition of the law that might follow” (89). Anderson also notes the systematic way that the SP eliminates anthropomorphic references to the deity, e.g., replacing איש מלחמה with גיבור במלחמה in Exod 15:3 (94).

[176] Gerhard von Rad wonders aloud if this might be understood as a construct phrase (*Genesis: A Commentary*, Rev. ed., OTL [Philadelphia: WJK, 1972], 77).

[177] Naphtali H. Tur-Sinai proposes that the double-naming of the deity is an artifact of the pericope’s dependence on Mesopotamian creation myths that used divine determinatives to name the gods (e.g., *ilu shamash*, *ilu sin*, etc.) (“JHWH Elohim in der Paradies-Erzählung: Genesis 2:4b—3:24,” *VT* 11.1 [1961]: 94–99). Gerhard von Rad supposes that a redactor was concerned to clarify that YHWH was the same deity as the Elohim of Gen 1 (*Genesis*, 77). Richard Elliot Friedman considers it a way to ease the transition from the P creation narrative (which uses only אלהים) to the J stories (which use ה׳ exclusively) (*The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses* [San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2003], 35). Thomas L. Thompson considers it a way to explicitly connect YHWH with the realm of “divinity” (“The Intellectual Matrix of Early Biblical Narrative: Inclusive Monotheism in Persian Period Palestine,” in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, ed. Diana Edelman [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996], 121, n. 17).

consistent changes in a pericope was among the scribal techniques used by biblical redactors to overwrite inherited texts with nuances of new or clarified meaning.[178]

CONCLUSION: THE EXPLANATORY POWER OF AN "ARK" OVERLAY

In light of the cumulative case, a scribal overlay of the term ארון late in the composition of 1 Sam 4–6 is the most plausible explanation for many of the narrative difficulties present in the final form.[179] The "ark" overlay accords with the lack of physical description of the ark in the pericope. It accounts for the iconic-aniconic tension in the story, which forces the reader to both acknowledge the distinction between the ark and the deity while also, at times, suspending that conceptual distance for the sake of the narrative.[180] It explains the disparity in the characterization of YHWH and Dagon in the final form, and restores sense to the way the Philistines, Israelites, and narrator treat the god of Israel *just as if* he is represented by a divine image. Likewise, an early iconic version would align better with the generic expectations of ancient godnapping stories. The elevation of aniconic ideological priorities in priestly circles of Persian Yehud supplies the most likely motive for an "ark" overlay, and comparison with other biblical redactions demonstrates a model for such scribal intervention. Finally, the identification of a late “ark” overlay invites us to examine the text (at least heuristically) without the pervasive word ארון dominating the pericope. When the shadow cast by the ark is removed, unique stylistic and narrative features of the diachronic layers of the text come into the light, unobscured by the fragile unity overlaid upon the whole by the single word ארון.

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[178] Another potential example of systematic, ideological scribal intervention in a pericope is the probable MT deletion of "before YHWH" (as compared with the LXX tradition) in 1 Sam 1:9, 11, 14, 28; 2:15, 21. See Jürg Hutzli, "Theologische Textänderungen im Massoretischen Text und in der Septuaginta von 1–2 Sam," in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel*, ed. Philippe Hugo and Adrian Schenker (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 214. However, the priority of the LXX tradition in each of these instances remains debatable.

[179] Was such an overlay performed on other ark-related texts, e.g., 2 Sam 6 (Rost's hypothesized conclusion to the Ark Narrative)? The argument above may provide a "proof of concept" that such an intervention is possible, but analysis of the specific texts would be required to establish the probability—and this takes us beyond the scope of this dissertation. While he does not address this specific question, Robert Rezetko presents a reasoned case for significant post-Chronistic editing in 2 Sam 6 (*Source and Revision in the Narratives of David's Transfer of the Ark: Text, Language, and Story in 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13, 15–16*). See also Porzig, "Postchronistic Traces in the Narratives about the Ark?"

[180] On the function of the ark to maintain a cognitive distinction between the deity's self and the deity's agency, see McClellan, *YHWH's Divine Images*, 155, *passim*.

CHAPTER III
COMPOSITIONAL CRITICISM OF THE SO-CALLED "ARK NARRATIVE"

In the extant text, the tale of Samuel's rise and leadership of Israel in the era before the Israelite monarchy (which spans 1 Sam 1–8) is interrupted by the extended tale about the capture and return of the ark. This "godnapping" story splits what would otherwise have been a continuous military conflict between Israel and Philistia into two separate campaigns: a first campaign that results in a resounding Philistine victory (4:1b–11) and a subsequent Israelite victory several months later (7:5–13). The ark enters the text during the first campaign, following an initial setback (4:1b–2). Brought from Shiloh to the front lines of battle at Ebeneezer, the ark's presence renews the Israelite hope of victory. On the contrary, they are decimated, and the ark is captured. Compounding the trauma, the priests Hophni and Phinehas are killed in the battle. Upon hearing the news, their father Eli and Phinehas's wife die as well (4:3–22). The next nine-hundred words in the text (5:1—7:2) recount what happened to the ark in Philistine territory and its return to Israelite territory. Yet we may ask whether this ark-oriented intermission in Samuel's story belongs to an independent and unified "Ark Narrative" source, or whether it has a complex composition history of its own. In this chapter, I take a critical look at the entire excursus found in 1 Sam 4:1b—7:2 to consider its component narrative elements and probable (relative) compositional history. My analysis begins by highlighting the contrasts between 1 Sam 4 and 1 Sam 5–6. Then, I identify a number of doublets in the plot of 1 Sam 5–6 that suggest multiple traditions behind this part of the narrative (reserving analysis of 1 Sam 4 until Chapter VI). The suggestion of multiple traditions in 1 Sam 5–6 is strengthened by text-critical issues that surface in these chapters. With this data in hand, I evaluate the continuity, scribal style, and ideological scope of the hypothetically disambiguated sources, leading to a proposal for the section's relative compositional chronology.

IS THE ARK NARRATIVE IN 1 SAMUEL A UNIFIED COMPOSITION?

Since Leonhard Rost's seminal work, the "Ark Narrative" has typically been understood as a unified source comprising 1 Sam 4:1b—7:2. Rost hypothesized that this tale originally concluded with the material now found in 2 Sam 6:1–15. Apart from a handful of minor editorial accretions during its later transmission, this self-contained Ark Narrative was once the *hieros logos* of the Jerusalem shrine in the time of David and Solomon, a story told to pilgrims to celebrate the sanctity of the shrine and reinforce its supremacy over competitors (such as the shrine at Shiloh).[181] Scholarship is split, however, on whether Rost was correct about the continuation of the Ark Narrative into 2 Sam 6.[182] In addition, given the downfall of the Elides in 1 Sam 4, Patrick Miller and J. J. M. Roberts have proposed that parts of 1 Sam 2 describing the sins of Eli's sons must have been part of the original Ark Narrative, motivating their deaths and the loss of the ark as divine judgment.[183]

Contrary to Rost, et al, who view the Ark Narratives in 1–2 Samuel as a unified source, and also contrary to Miller and Roberts, who expand the material that is judged to have been part of the original unified Ark Narrative source, I believe that the earliest discernable source for an "Ark Narrative" comprised a much shorter tale than is found in the extant text.[184] This short, core godnapping tale grew over time to include most of 1 Sam 5–6, but its extended introduction in 1 Sam 4 was composed when the godnapping and Samuel narratives were conflated, as an editorial seam to hold the narrative pieces together. No one disputes that the godnapping tale takes a major turn at 1 Sam 5:1. But I am proposing that this turn is more than a change of setting in the middle of a unified narrative. Rather, the stark shift of style and emphasis from 1 Sam 4 to 1 Sam 5–6 are evidence of separate authorship.[185]

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[181] Rost, *Überlieferung*, 36.

[182] Some of the challenges to Rost's theory are enumerated in Finkelstein and Römer, "The Historical and Archaeological Background," 161–62. See also Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger, "Beobachtungen zur ladegeschkhte und zur Komposition der Samuelbücher," in *Freiheit und Recht: Festschrift für Frank Crüsemann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Frank Crüsemann et al. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003), 326–28; Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 12; Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 135; Römer, "Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?" 262; but cf. Walter Dietrich: "both [1 Sam 4–6 and 2 Sam 6] narrate how the ark goes on a journey, with Jerusalem as its final goal (even the itinerary in 1 Sam 5–6 seems to point to Jerusalem, not Kiriath-jearim [1 Sam 7:1] as its destiny)" (*The Early Monarchy in Israel*, 252).

[183] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 27–32.

Divine Epithets

1 Sam 4 begins by favoring the tetragrammaton for the divine name (4:3 [2x], 4, 5, 6), but shifts after verse 6 to *exclusive* use of האלהים (4:4, 7 [without article], 8 [2x], 11 [without article], 13, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22). The dominant use of האלהים in chapter 4 is highly distinct from the naming conventions of 1 Sam 5–6, where האלהים accounts for only six of its 27 divine epithets. Two of these six are found immediately in 5:1–2, whereafter the narrative shifts back to predominant use of the tetragrammaton.[186] Antony Campbell offers both synchronic and diachronic explanations for this noticeable shift: האלהים in 5:1–2 could be an original "factual tradition," with the tetragrammaton in 5:3–4 representing later redactional interpretation; or, perhaps the narrative context of confrontation with Dagon required a shift to the deity's "proper name" by a single

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[184] As I argued in the previous chapter, an earlier version of the tale likely omitted even the "ark" itself, being instead a tale about the capture and return of the divine image.

[185] In this assessment, I agree with Porzig: "Und wie anders ist der Charakter dieser folgenden Kapitel!" (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 143), though we come to different conclusions regarding the implications of these differences.

[186] The imbalance is even stronger when we consider 5:1 to function as the concluding sentence of the story told in 1 Sam 4 and part of that author's bridge to the inherited godnapping material. I also read האלהים in 5:2 (MT) is a scribal variant due to dittography (cf. LXX: [κιβωτὸν] κυρίου).

author.[187] Either solution is possible. However, the freely synonymous use of divine epithets throughout 1 Sam 5–6 makes it unlikely that the tetragrammaton was singled out as somehow necessary in the scene with Dagon.[188] Nor is there a reason to assume that 5:1–2 is earlier, or more factual, than what follows. Instead, I favor a third option: it is more likely that the story has been revised through introduction and that the use of האלהים in 5:1–2 is representative of the conventions of the redactor who also composed 1 Sam 4.[189] While varying divine epithets should not be taken as simple markers of source division, the striking switch to האלהים at 4:7, consistent use of that single epithet through the rest of chapter 4, and reversion to the tetragrammaton at 5:3 without strong internal narrative motivation, is suggestive of multiple authors at work.[190]

Related to the issue of divine epithets, within the Ark Narrative, only 1 Sam 4 uses the term ברית as part of the ark's nomenclature (4:3, 4 [2x], 5).[191] The ark is never the "ark of the covenant" in 1 Sam 5–6. Indeed, these are the only occurrences of ברית in all of 1 Sam 1–8, and the only occurrences of ארון ברית in the whole of 1–2 Samuel (except 2 Sam 15:24). This feature further isolates 1 Sam 4 from the style of its wider literary context.

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[187] Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 72.

[188] Marten Woudstra notes that while אלהי ישראל occurs almost exclusively in the direct speech of the Philistines in the ark narrative (although cf. 5:7), they also freely use the other divine epithets in their naming of the ark (*The Ark of the Covenant from Conquest to Kingship* [Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1965], 82).

[189] On revision through introduction, see Sara J. Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); Cynthia Edenburg, "Rewriting, Overwriting, and Overriding: Techniques of Editorial Revision in the Deuteronomistic History," in *Words, Ideas, Worlds: Biblical Essays in Honour of Yairah Amit*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Frank Polak (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2012), 60.

[190] As argued by Fohrer, "Die alttestamentliche Ladeerzählung." Fohrer's source divisions are suspect, especially since he ties them to historical developments gleaned maximally from the biblical narrative itself. But his intuition that the various designations of the ark reflect a complex compositional history was on the mark.

[191] That is, in the MT. The evidence is strangely reversed in the LXX. The term διαθήκη (=ברית) is omitted entirely in 1 Sam 4 but appears three times in 1 Sam 5–6 (5:4; 6:3, 18) and twice in 7:1. In any case, the references to the covenant here are often understood to be redactional glosses. See, e.g., Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 66.

Characterization

The narrative styles of 1 Sam 4 and 1 Sam 5–6 may also be distinguished by their approaches to characterization. 1 Sam 4 is a character-driven drama about Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas (along with his wife and child, Ichabod). But in 1 Sam 5–6, no human protagonist is identified—in fact, the narrative abandons individual human characters entirely, shifting to a story about groups of "Philistines," "rulers," "priests and diviners," and the inhabitants of several towns named as collectives: "Ashdodites," "Ekronites," "people of Beth Shemesh," "residents of Kiriath Jearim."[192] This focus on collectives rather than named individuals stands out as a departure from the pattern of the rest of the Samuel (including 1 Sam 4), which resembles a relay race from protagonist to protagonist, with the baton passed from Hannah to Eli, Eli to Samuel, Samuel to Saul, Saul to David.[193] And the Former Prophets continue passing the narrative baton to named kings and prophets in paratactic succession, each taking their turn on the track all the way to the Babylonian exile. As a rule, Samuel-Kings is a character-driven history of individual influencers; within this corpus, *only* 1 Sam 5–6 is not.

Furthermore, the characterization of the deity shifts in 1 Sam 5–6. In 1 Sam 4, Israel's god (via the ark/image) plays a passive, almost inert role.[194] Contrary to Israelite (and Philistine) expectations, bringing him to the frontlines of battle provides no advantage to Israel. By contrast, in 1 Sam 5–6 Israel's god wields unstoppable power, unilaterally dealing out death and disease to deity (5:2–5) and people (5:6–12) alike. In 1 Sam 4, the deity (via the ark/image) is in the background of a human drama. Israel's god is present in the narrative, but the spotlight remains on the human characters. In 1 Sam 5–6, the deity (via the ark/image) is foregrounded and vital. This shift can, of course, be read synchronically as an *intentional* withholding of divine energy in 1 Sam 4 (in judgment against the Elides, or the elders, or the people as a whole—the motivation is unclear), only to have that divine vitality reasserted in 1 Sam 5–6 in defiance of the Philistines (and Beth Shemeshites). But the ability to rationalize this shift synchronically does not remove the likelihood that the difference in divine characterization entered the text through editorial processes.

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[192] At the end of this section, we hear the name "Joshua" the Beth Shemeshite (6:14, 18; but only to identify a location—Joshua himself does not appear) and finally, Abinadab and Eleazar are named in Kiriath Jearim (7:1; but both are mentioned passively—neither is the subject of an active verb). Apart from these, there are no named individuals in 5:1–7:2. Cf. also Walter Dietrich, *Samuel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener-Verlag, 2003), 17*, who adds the observation that the narrative perspective of the Ark Narrative shifts often within these populations—perhaps a hint at complex composition within the pericope.

[193] Even antagonists are named; e.g., not just "the king of Amelek" but "*Agog*, king of Amelek" (1 Sam 15).

[194] In this section, I use the admittedly awkward construction, "the deity (via the ark/image)," to recall my argument that until late in the composition history of the pericope, the object at the center of the story was likely an image of Israel's god.

Capturing the Divine Image

Despite the dramatic shift, it could be argued that the ark material in 1 Sam 4 is essential to the original Ark Narrative because the description of the ark's capture is the necessary introduction to the story that unfolds in 1 Sam 5–6. But this is not the case.[195] Even Miller and Roberts (who nevertheless conclude that the Eli story and Ark Narrative are unified) note that in comparable ancient Mesopotamian godnapping narratives, the circumstances of the god's capture are not always narrated.[196] For example, in an inscription from the Kassite king Agum-kakrima, the extant narrative picks up only after the Babylonian deity Marduk had *already* fallen into enemy hands and is ready to begin his journey home.[197] In the biblical narrative, the simple statement in

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[195] As noted almost a century ago by Richard Preß, 1 Sam 5–6 has very different concerns from those narrated in 1 Sam 4 ("Der Prophet Samuel," 181–82).

[196] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 16.

[197] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 95–96.

5:2 that the Philistines "took" (לקח) the deity (via the ark/image) is introduction enough for the unfolding of a godnapping tale that coheres with its genre. Alternatively, hypothetically, an original introduction to the godnapping account could have been omitted when the tale was integrated to the material in 1 Sam 1–3, in favor of the new bridge composed to span the two.[198] In light of all of the above, in the analysis that follows, I will investigate 1 Sam 5–6 as a standalone godnapping tale, without the material in 1 Sam 4 as its introduction. I return to discussion of 1 Sam 4 in Chapter VI, where I explain its composition as an extended redactional seam and an intersection of multiple textual traditions.

TWO GODNAPPING THREADS

"The separation of sources within the Ark Narrative is not required by the text and is positively harmful to its literary structure and overall composition," asserts Antony Campbell.[199] Dealing specifically with the story of the ark in Philistine territory in 1 Sam 5, Miller and Roberts extend Campbell's assessment and echo a wide swath of scholarly opinion when they conclude that "Chapter 5 is composed of two sections (5:1–5 and 6–12) that clearly hold together, cannot be separated into different literary strata or tradition complexes, and flow directly out of 1 Sam 4."[200] Against Campbell, Miller, and Roberts, not only do I argue that 1 Sam 5–6 was composed *before* 1 Sam 4, but also that these chapters are internally complex! A close reading identifies two (or more) narrative traditions that have been secondarily conflated—two different godnapping threads, each with its own crisis, concerns, geography, and narrative style, which have been combined into a single divine adventure.

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[198] For examples of introductions omitted during scribal conflation of sources, see Moshe Anbar, "Genesis 15: A Conflation of Two Deuteronomic Narratives," *JBL* 101.1 (1982): 39–55; Tigay, *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, 77. More generally, on omissions in the redactional process, see Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*.

[199] Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 173.

[200] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 53.

Table 3.1: Two Godnapping Narratives[201]

PLOT	BETH DAGON GODNAPPING	ASHDOD GODNAPPING
Abduction	YHWH[202] taken to Beth Dagon (5:2)	Ha’elohim taken to Ashdod (5:1)
Crisis	Dagon falls (5:3a)	“Swellings” break out (5:6–7)
Consultation	-	Philistine *seranim* (5:8a)
Advice	-	Process him around (5:8b)
Action	Dagon set back in his place (5:3b)	Elohe-Yisrael processed around (5:8c)
Result	Dagon falls and is decapitated (5:4)	Plague intensifies (5:9–10)
2nd Consultation	Priests and diviners (6:2)	Philistine *seranim* (5:11a)
2nd Advice	Put on cart and send adrift (6:7–9)	Send him away! (5:11b–12)
2nd Action	YHWH sent adrift (6:10–12)	Message sent to Kiriath Jearim (6:21)
2nd Result	YHWH arrives at Beth Shemesh (6:14)	YHWH arrives at Kiriath Jearim (7:1–2)

Two Abductions

The presence of several doublets in an otherwise straightforward narrative may be an indication of redactional intervention. In 1 Sam 5–6, *every major plot point is doubled*, suggesting multiple scribal hands with differing priorities and concerns may be preserved in the text. The first plot element is the abduction and relocation of the deity. Instead of a simple account of the capture of Israel’s god, 1 Sam 5:1–2 presents a journey of the divine ark/image in staggered stages: The ark of Ha’elohim (ארון האלהים) is taken from the battlefield at Ebenezer to Ashdod, then to the temple of Dagon, and finally to the place beside Dagon. Closer reading reveals that the two sentences describing these stages are nearly verbally identical.[203] The only significant difference is the identification of the captured deity’s destination.

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[201] As will become clear below, this outline is merely heuristic. I will propose that the actual composition history of the text is more complex than these two clear threads suggest.

[202] Preferring the LXX variant in this case (proposing MT האלהים as dittography).

[203] As discussed in Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 58.

Table 3.2: Structural Comparison of 5:1, 2

5:1	ופלשתים לקחו	את ארון האלהים	ויבאהו	מאבן העזר	אשדודה	
5:2	ויקחו פלשתים	את ארון האלהים	ויביאו אתו		בית דגון	ויציגו אתו אצל דגון

The duplication in these sentences preserves two distinct “takings” (לקח) of the ark and two distinct “bringings” (בוא) of him to alternate destinations. This level of duplication is atypical in prose and suggests that one sentence is likely a secondary recapitulation of the other. Furthermore, the parallel positioning of Ashdod and Beth Dagon within the structure of these two sentences identifies them as distinct geographic locations.[204] This is a clue that in an earlier form of the narrative, Beth Dagon may not have denoted a shrine, “the house of Dagon,” which stood within the town of Ashdod. Rather, “Beth Dagon” may have referred to the town named for its patron deity, Dagon (cf. Josh 15:41; 19:27).[205] Such a naming custom for shrine centers was common in ancient Israel and the Levant more broadly (consider a few of the many biblical exemplars: Beth-El, Beth-Shemesh, Beth-Leḥem, Beth-Ḥoron, Beth-Anat, etc.). Understanding 5:2 this way helps clarify why the final clause (ויציגו אתו אצל דגון) was necessary. In the extant version, the deity has already been brought to the “temple of Dagon,” so the note that the ark/image was installed next to Dagon is somewhat redundant (or at least unusually precise). But if 5:2 is read without 5:1 preceding it, "Beth Dagon" becomes the name of the destination town, and the final clause becomes a meaningful elaboration, clarifying that the ark/image was not only brought to the town but also installed next to the town's divine image in their temple. Likely, then, 5:1 was composed secondarily to 5:2 and was prepended to it as a transition from the battle story at Ebenezer. The new introduction of 5:1 also reframed the geography of the tale, promoting Ashdod as the destination for the captive Israelite deity and demoting Beth Dagon from its status as a temple *town* to that of a mere temple *building*.[206]

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[204] On the parallel structure of 5:1–2 giving emphasis to the final clause in each line, but without the literary-critical conclusion, see David G. Firth, “*Parallelismus Memborum* in Prose Narrative: The Function of Repetition in 1 Samuel 5–6,” *OTE* 15.3 (2002): 652.

[205] Consider Aaron Burke’s exploration of Beth Dagon as one of the cultic towns forming a sacred landscape in Judah (“Toward the Reconstruction of a Sacred Landscape of the Judean Highlands,” *JANER* 21.1 [2021]: 13–14). Burke refrains from speculatively identifying the location of Beth Dagon, but the presence of a Beth Dagon in the vicinity of Joppa is remembered in Sennacherib’s record of Assyria’s 701 campaign (see James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement*, 3rd ed. [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969], 287–88). At the height of Ashdod’s hegemony in the 8th century, prior to its conquest by Assyria (under Sargon II) in 711, Beth Dagon was probably within the control of Ashdod—which may explain why the residents of Beth Dagon are called “Ashdodites” (5:3), if this is not a redactional gloss. The hegemony of Ashdod could also help explain why tales pertaining to Beth Dagon and Ashdod may have been conflated later in the compositional history of the pericope: to 8th century readers/hearers, Beth Dagon *was* part of Ashdod’s outskirts. On these political “borders” in the period leading up to the Assyrian conquest, see Shawn Zelig Aster, “Ashdod in the Assyrian Period: Territorial Extent and Political History,” *JNES* 80.2 (2021): 334–35.

Two Crises

There are actually two different sorts of problems for the Philistines in the godnapping narrative.[207] The first is a contest between YHWH, the god of the Israelites, and Dagon, the god of the Philistines (5:2–5). It is a contest that takes place, we might suppose, in the unseen divine realm. But evidence of the conflict becomes visible in the physical space of Dagon's temple, where on two consecutive days the image of Dagon is found early in the morning lying prostrate before the ark of YHWH.[208] The second time, Dagon's head and hands have been severed and placed upon the threshold of the temple.[209] This section concludes with an etiological aside, that Dagon's priests (and visitors to the temple) step over the threshold "to this day" because of what happened to Dagon during this contest.[210] What happens next at Dagon's temple is left unreported. Was Dagon's image repaired? Was it retired and a new image constructed? We are not told, for the scene shifts abruptly to the second Philistine problem, the outbreak of disease among the Ashdodites.

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[206] Cynthia Edenburg also notes the nearly identical structure of 1 Sam 5:1, 2, but she draws the opposite conclusion, proposing that 5:2–5 was "tacked on at a secondary stage" in order to clarify that YHWH was also victorious over the Philistines' god ("The Radiance [of Yahweh] is Exiled," 156); cf. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 84–85. I would argue, however, that there is a stronger motivation for 5:1 to be the younger verse, for its position at the beginning of the scene "overrides" the geography of 5:2, relocating the whole episode to Ashdod (rather than Beth Dagon). For discussion of this principle of redactional "overriding" via re-introduction, see Edenburg, "Rewriting, Overwriting, and Overriding," 60. For an extended discussion of this redactional technique, see Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe*, 1–41.

[207] As is often noted in the secondary literature, e.g., Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 73–74; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 48.

[208] Adrian Schenker discusses the difference in duration between the two crises, and between the MT and LXX witnesses, in "Textgeschichte von 1 Sam 5:1–6 im Vergleich zwischen dem hebräischen Text der Massoreten und der ältesten griechischen Bibel," in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel*, ed. Philippe Hugo and Adrian Schenker (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 241–46, 252.

In the MT, these two catastrophes are presented sequentially, as if they are two stages of a sustained divine attack against the Philistines (though in the LXX they are somewhat more interwoven). Their narrative juxtaposition obscures the vast differences in the nature of the two crises. The second catastrophe takes place not at "Beth Dagon" but in the town of Ashdod; it is inflicted not upon the deity, but upon the populace; it is not a contest of strength between two deities, but a unilaterally inflicted plague, against which the people are defenseless. The people break out in some sort of boils, tumors, or hemorrhoids (the term עפלים is difficult to decipher), which causes a deathly fear and a great cry of distress.[211] The plague of disease is accompanied by an infestation of mice—more on this complication below. These differences in the nature of the crises may be explained if the present story is a combination of two different legends into a single narrative.[212]

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[209] We may imagine the statue of Dagon broken into pieces as it toppled; however, the text itself uses the transitive language of cutting—implying an active agent of the violence, not an intransitive crumbling or breaking. For discussion of dismemberment, see Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 59–60; David G. Firth, "'Play It Again, Sam': The Poetics of Narrative Repetition in 1 Samuel 1–7," *TynBul* 56.2 [2005]: 13; Amnon Ben-Tor, "The Sad Fate of Statues and the Mutilated Statues of Hazor," in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever*, ed. Seymour Gitin, J. Edward Wright, and J. P. Dessel (Penn State University Press, 2006), 3–16; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 50; LeMon, "Cutting the Enemy to Pieces." On parallels in Mesopotamian literature depicting Marduk killing (and dismembering) competitors, see Hanspeter Schaudig, "Death of Statues and Rebirth of Gods," in *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient near East and Beyond*, ed. Natalie Naomi May (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2012), 130–34.

[210] On the underworld connotations of the "threshold," see McCarter, *I Samuel*, 122; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 50; Steve A. Wiggins, "Old Testament Dagan in the Light of Ugarit," *VT* 43.2 (1993): 272. On the etiology as a secondary supplement, see Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 61.

[211] On the meaning of עפלים, see McCarter, *I Samuel*, 123, 133; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 50; Aren M. Maeir, "A New Interpretation of the Term ('opalim עפלים) in the Light of Recent Archaeological Finds from Philistia," *JSOT* 32.1 (2007): 23–40.

Two Consultations and Advisements

The people respond to these crises by consulting the authorities. In light of the plague, the people of Ashdod summon the leaders of the Philistine alliance, the סרנים, whom they consult about what to do for Israel’s god. When the offered solution only turns the Ashdodite epidemic into a Philistine pandemic, the people venture a second consultation with the *seranim*, and finally a third consultation—this time with the “priests and diviners.”[213] In the extant form of the text, these consultations may be read synchronically as a development of the plot and an intensification of the distress. But from a literary-critical standpoint, the differences between the consultations invite closer inspection. The *seranim* represent a political institution, that is, the governance of the towns as expressed in the political alliance of a Philistine confederation. The priests and diviners, on the other hand, represent the cultic institution. This is not to say that there was a hard division between religion and politics—both were integrated into the public life of ancient communities, but they were different spheres, nonetheless, supervised by different personnel. The two groups of professional consultants offer the people differing advice, each consistent with the social location of the consultants: the *seranim* propose a political solution: parading the god of Israel like a kingly deity in festive procession, to curry favor. The cultic intermediaries, on the other hand, propose a divination test: set the ark on a cart and monitor its movement for divine intention. These proposed solutions indicate differences in interpretation of the nature of the catastrophe. The *seranim* recognize an angered deity who must be appeased and shown deference and devotion to entreat him to lift his hand of plague. This counsel seems to be best matched with the Ashdod plague narrative. The diviners, on the other hand, interpret the problem as a mystery to be solved: is YHWH the cause of the distress or not?[214] A divination test is better paired with the mysterious toppling of Dagon, to determine whether YHWH was responsible for Dagon's fall.

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[212] Walter Dietrich gestures in this direction: “This narrative was anything but fully coherent and was composed of various traditions. We must therefore assume a lengthy process of transmission and redaction and abandon the idea of an early date for the ark narrative as a whole…. This is especially the case for 1 Sam 5–6, where individual episodes were combined to create the picture of a journey that spread terror throughout the land of the Philistines” (*The Early Monarchy in Israel*, 276, 277).

[213] Campbell observes, “If these [priests and diviners] are Philistines … they show a remarkable capacity for distancing themselves from their clients; in v. 9 solidarity returns. There may be tradition-historical growth in this text” (*1 Samuel*, 79). John Harvey suggests that the invocation of priests and diviners is connected to the Exodus theme in the Ark Narrative (cf. Exod 7:11) (“Tendenz and Textual Criticism in 1 Samuel 2–10,” *JSOT* 26.2 [2001]: 75). However, the experts consulted by Pharaoh in Exod 7 are different personnel: “sages and magicians” (לחכמים ולמכשפים; cf. לכהנים ולקסמים in 1 Sam 6).

Two Results and Final Destinations

The two strategies have very different outcomes. In response to the plague, the people do indeed send Israel's god on a procession, but the result is an intensification of the plague, and a heightening of the fear among the people. This prompts a second gathering of the *seranim*, who this time advise the people to send Israel's god away.[215] The diviners' strategy, on the other hand, is immediately successful. The cows who are harnessed to a cart holding YHWH march directly to YHWH's own "place," Beth Shemesh (understood to be Israelite territory) thus confirming the hand of YHWH behind the catastrophe.[216] Interestingly, once the narrative focus in the extant text has shifted to the divination test, it does not shift back to the theme of plague in Philistia. In fact, we are not told what effect, if any, the departure of YHWH had on the plague among the Philistines. That part of the story is truncated once the scene shifts to Israelite territory.

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[214] Campbell notes that the earlier Philistine demand ("Send away the ark of the god of Israel," 5:11) expresses "confident certainty that the deaths are due to the god of Israel. In ch. 6, this certainty is replaced by uncertainty." In light of this shift, a theory of complex composition "is not totally unthinkable" (*1 Samuel*, 78). Indeed this is a strong point in opposition to the theory that 5:2–5 is secondary to 1 Sam 6 (e.g., Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 143). If 5:2–5 were excised from the text, *there would be no need for divination*. Edenburg agrees that at this point, a divination test seems superfluous, such that "separate notions regarding the course of action might have been conflated in the development of the narrative" ("The Radiance [of Yahweh] is Exiled," 157). See also Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "The Return of the Ark (1 Samuel 6) and Impetrated Ox Omens (STT 73: 100–140)," in *All the Wisdom of the East: Studies in Near Eastern Archaeology and History in Honor of Eliezer D. Oren*, ed. Mayer Gruber et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 177–85, for discussion of the divinatory logic at work in this scene.

[215] Klein reads 5:11 as an Ekronite instruction to the *seranim* (*1 Samuel*, 49). However, the Hebrew of 5:11 is ambiguous as to whether the command, "Send away the ark/god!" is issued to or by the *seranim*.

Likewise, Israel's god makes a two-stage journey at the end of the unit. While YHWH initially finds a resting place in Beth Shemesh, upon a prominent stone which is there "to this day" (6:18),[217] a fresh outbreak against the Beth Shemeshites prompts YHWH's transfer to Kiriath Jearim, where he finds a semi-permanent home under consecrated guardianship. Beth Shemesh is just a brief stopping point on the ark's itinerary toward Kiriath Jearim (and ultimately Jerusalem, when read with 2 Sam 6). But these multiple stages of homecoming make the ending of the story unusually complex and stilted, another potential indication of narrative supplementation or conflation.

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[216] McCarter observes the cultic significance of the term למקומו in 5:11 and 6:3, but he argues that the Philistines have no specific shrine in mind. Rather, "wherever [YHWH] is content for the ark to remain will be its 'place'" (*I Samuel*, 124). However, this reading does not wrestle sufficiently with the test offered by the Philistine priests: the test is whether or not Israel's god will direct the cart to Beth Shemesh (and *specifically* to Beth Shemesh), a cultic town identified by the priests as גבולו, "his own bounds." There is no mention of Shiloh, or Jerusalem, or any other proper home for this deity. Perhaps in the earliest form of this story (now overwritten), the deity was kidnapped from Beth Shemesh as well as returned to Beth Shemesh. On the unexpected omission of Shiloh at this point of the narrative, see Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 57; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 56–58; Römer, "Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?" 261, 269. On the significance of the term מקום "place" as a referent to holy shrines in ancient Southwestern Asian literature, see Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 210–11. With regard to the deity-driven cart in this scene, note that in connection with the *akitu* festival, Marduk/Bel is portrayed in a Babylonian legend as driving his divine chariot without the aid of a human charioteer, as a demonstration of his divine agency (see Hanspeter Schaudig, *Explaining Disaster: Tradition and Transformation of the "Catastrophe of Ibbi-Sîn" in Babylonian Literature*, dubsar: Publications on the Ancient Near East 13 (Münster: Zaphon, 2019), 172–73, esp. n. 818).

[217] Or is YHWH there "to this day"? The somewhat corrupt text at this point obscures the intent of this line. Jeffrey Geoghegan suggests that "to this day" (עד היום הזה) is especially correlated to threats to the sanctity of the ark ("'Until This Day' and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 122.2 [2003]: 220–21); but this is probably too specific an intention to assign to the common etiological formula.

Two Similarly Structured Godnapping Narratives

The doubling of each of the above plot points raises the possibility that two similarly structured narratives have been conflated by an editor (see Table 3.1, above). Each individual plot contains: godnapping, crisis, consultation, advice, action, and result. If we tentatively separate the two narratives according to these plot points, how do the two reconstructed blocks of text compare? Do extant textual variants reveal fractures between these narrative threads? Does either strand form a continuous, independent narrative? Are there noticeable differences in linguistic style among the threads which may support the conclusion that they originate from independent scribal hands?

TEXT CRITICAL ISSUES AS CLUES TO COMPOSITION HISTORY

The variation between extant text traditions about the nature and timing of the Philistine crisis provides another clue to the complex authorship of these narrative threads. In 1 Sam 5, the Masoretic and Septuagint traditions part ways significantly. Most LXX witnesses place the outbreak of swellings (1 Sam 5:6 [MT]) at the end of 5:3, that is, between the two topplings of Dagon.[218] Then, in 5:6 where the MT reports the initial outbreak of swellings, the LXX reports

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[218] The Antiochene LXX is a notable exception. It appears to have been corrected against the MT. See Schenker, "Textgeschichte von 1 Sam 5," 251.

A brief excursus on a text-critical curiosity: The phrase used to describe the "desolation" of the Ashdodites in 5:3 LXX is καὶ ἐβασάνισεν αὐτοὺς, "and he tortured them" (cf. the parallel in 5:6 MT, וישמם "and he desolated them"). However, the Greek cognate βασάνου, "torture," is used to translate אשם throughout 1 Sam 6 (6:3, 4, 8, 17)—despite the fact that in Leviticus (e.g., Lev 5:14—6:7) the אשם offering is consistently translated πλημμελείας. Why additional results of YHWH’s heavy hand against the Philistines (absent in the MT): the Philistine “ships” are struck, and mice swarm the land, resulting in a great deathly confusion.[219] The outbreak of mice is reiterated in 6:1b (LXX; again omitted in the MT). Finally, the mice are present in both textual traditions in the instructions for a reparation offering (אשם) to appease Israel’s god (6:4–5, 11, 18).[220]

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does the LXX translator of 1 Sam 6 read אשם as βασάνου, torture? My speculation is that the LXX translator did not recognize the word אשם as a technical term from Leviticus, but rather interpreted it as an echo of 5:3 (LXX), either because their *Vorlage* read ויאשמם (“and he made them pay”; cf. hif. of אשם, *HALOT* vol. 1, pp. 95–96), or because the translator misread (or misheard) וישמם. There is at least one other instance in the Hebrew Bible of אשם and שמם as variants in the witnesses (Joel 1:18).

[219] Cf. Schenker, “Textgeschichte von 1 Sam 5,” 248–50. The LXX of 5:6 reads, καὶ ἐβαρύνθη χεὶρ κυρίου ἐπὶ Ἄζωτον, καὶ ἐπήγαγεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐξέζεσεν αὐτοῖς εἰς τὰς ναῦς, καὶ μέσον τῆς χώρας αὐτῆς ἀνεφύησαν μύες, καὶ ἐγένετο σύγχυσις θανάτου μεγάλη ἐν τῇ πόλει. I propose the following reconstructed Hebrew *Vorlage*: ויענה להם ויפרץ להם באנים ובתוך ארצם עלו עכברים ותהי מהמת מות גדולה בעיר. The strange intransitive phrase, καὶ ἐπήγαγεν αὐτοῖς has puzzled commentors, and was evidently discomfiting in antiquity as well: the Antiochene LXX resolves the tension by adding an object, καὶ ἐπήγαγεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῦς μύας. Schenker reconstructs καὶ ἐπήγαγεν αὐτοῖς = ותביאם or ותבא להם, with unclear subject and object. בוא (hifʿil) is indeed a common cognate for ἐπάγω, although it is usually not employed intransitively. I have reasoned in a different direction and suspect that behind the LXX here is actually the Hebrew ויענה להם, “and he afflicted them,” on analogy with Psa 87:8b (LXX; 88:8bMT): καὶ πάντας τοὺς μετεωρισμούς σου ἐπ᾽ ἐμὲ ἐπήγαγες = וכל משבריך ענית (לי).

If עני was indeed the verbal root used by the *Vorlage* of 1 Sam 5:6 (LXX), it raises an intriguing possible solution to the unexpected appearance of “ships” (εἰς τὰς ναῦς = בָּאֳנִיָּם) in the verse. What is the nature of the affliction on the ships? Were the ships themselves damaged? Did sailors and port workers contract the “swellings”? Did mice swarm the ships? The text does not elaborate. In fact, this is the only mention of ships in a somewhat repetitive text that mentions the townspeople and their swellings, along with the land and its mice, multiple times. If ships were a target of divine attack, why did they not make it into the summaries of the crisis? Why were the Philistines not instructed to sculpt golden images of their ships? Schenker proposes that ships were mentioned here to clarify that all possible evacuation routes—including by sea—were cut off, such that there was no escape from the plague. Others have associated ships with the mice and the known transmission of bubonic plague by ship-borne rodents (e.g., McCarter, *I Samuel*, 119; Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 64–65; but cf. Firth, “Play It Again, Sam,” 13, n. 34, who argues that the link between plague and rats is a modern one). To these possibilities, I add my own speculation (a much more mundane solution): Perhaps the text once read ויענה להם ויפרץ להם בענים, “and he [YHWH] *afflicted* them; Then he burst out against them in their *affliction*”—drawing upon the root עני twice, as a verb and a noun (cf. the inflected ענים in Exod 4:31; cf. also בעני in 1 Sam 1:10—which I attribute to the same redactional layer as 1 Sam 5:6). Later, “ships” were introduced through a simple scribal error due to misspelling (א/ע) or mishearing (בֳּעָנְיָם and בָּאֳנִיָּם are homophones). Once ships entered the textual tradition, the error was plausible enough in association with the port town of Ashdod, that it was not subsequently recognized and corrected.

[220] A minor difference: the LXX omits the phrase in 6:4 “and five gold mice.” In the LXX, an undefined number of golden mice are to be crafted to represent the mouse plague (6:5).

These differences raise challenging text critical questions about priority. Is the MT witness to be preferred as the *lectio difficilior* because it instructs the Philistines to craft golden mice without having mentioned them previously?[221] On this theory, the LXX has supplemented the narrative about the outbreak of mice as an explanation for their presence as part of the reparation offering. On the other hand, the LXX could be *difficilior* because it leaves Dagon only partially defeated for an extended period (months?) while the plague manifests among the people. Only then is he toppled a second time and broken. Adrian Schenker makes a compelling case for the priority of the LXX.[222] The MT witness represents a more polished and theologically coherent narrative, dividing the divine attack against the Philistines into two clear stages: 1) a quick and decisive victory against the Philistine deity; 2) a prolonged campaign of plague against the Philistine people. By comparison, the LXX narrative is much less ordered: the narration of YHWH's hostilities against Dagon and the Philistine people are intertwined, making the timing unclear at best. An additional strike against the land itself via the plague of mice adds confusion about whether these crises are related or unrelated. The MT tidies up these difficulties by clarifying that all of these crises are symptoms of a single plague: the plague of swellings, shared by the Philistine Pentapolis as a whole, its authorities, its people, and its gods (6:4–5). Rather than five golden swellings to potentially abate the swellings, and an undefined number of golden mice to ameliorate the mouse plague (per LXX), the MT requires five of each, absorbing the mice into the single plague of swellings, perhaps understood as their physical cause.[223]

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[221] For a fascinating etymological ride from עכבר through μῦς to Latin *musculum* and a potential rendering of the term within its semantic range as "anal muscles" in this narrative context, see Auld, *I & II Samuel,* 78.

[222] Schenker, "Textgeschichte von 1 Sam 5."

[223] Schenker, "Textgeschichte von 1 Sam 5," 255.

I think Schenker's assessment is correct, that in this narrative the LXX is the *lectio difficilior* and should be given priority.[224] The MT sifts the story into a more "natural" and theologically potent structure. Schenker's text critical study does not, however, comment upon *why* (from a redaction critical perspective) the LXX witnesses to such a "difficult" narrative tradition. I suggest that the narrative difficulties preserved in the LXX's rendering are the byproduct of a redactional conflation of originally separate Beth Dagon and Ashdod threads. This redactor's editorial priority was to compile and unify their source material into a single story. Therefore, they interwove two discrete godnapping stories about the god of Israel's retaliatory aggression against the Philistines (one story that focused on Dagon and another on the Philistine people) such that they formed the one, albeit messy, godnapping narrative that we see preserved in the LXX textual witnesses. At a much later time, after the transmission streams of the LXX *Vorlage* and the proto-MT had diverged, an editor or editors in the MT stream "improved" their inherited text by disentangling the strikes against Dagon and the Philistines, making them into a clear two-stage campaign, while absorbing the mouse plague into the more compelling plague of swellings. While these "improvements" occurred late in the transmission history of the text, they bear witness to the narrative discomfort caused (to some tradents at least) by an earlier editor whose literary goals and priorities were different. It may be that the cleaned-up version of the MT "Ark Narrative" actually represents a partial (and perhaps accidental) *reversion* to the separate sources utilized by the early compiler of Israelite traditions.

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[224] There are other examples in 1 Samuel where the LXX appears to represent the earlier text. Chief among these is probably the large expansion of 1 Sam 17 by the MT. See Emanuel Tov, "The Composition of 1 Samuel 16–18 in the Light of the Septuagint Version," in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, ed. Jeffrey H. Tigay (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 97–130.

CONTINUITY OF HYPOTHETICAL SOURCES

When the doubled material in 1 Sam 5–6 is stripped away, the remaining material comprises 5:2–5; 6:2a, 7aβ–8a, 8bβ–9a, 10–11a, 12a, 13–14, 18b. It would read continuously as follows:[225]

Table 3.3: Hypothesized Beth Dagon thread

(5:2) ויקחו פלשתים את * ... [κυρίου] ויביאו אתו בית דגון ויציגו אתו אצל דגון (3) וישכמו ... ממחרת והנה דגון נפל לפניו ארצה לפני * ה׳ ויקחו את דגון וישבו אתו למקומו (4) וישכמו בבקר ממחרת והנה דגון נפל לפניו ארצה לפני * ה׳ וראש דגון ושתי כפות ידיו כרתות אל המפתן רק דגון נשאר עליו (5) על כן לא ידרכו כהני דגון וכל הבאים בית דגון על מפתן דגון ... עד היום הזה ... (6:2) ויקראו פלשתים לכהנים ולקסמים לאמר מה נעשה ל*ה׳ ... (7) [ויאמרו] קחו ועשו עגלה חדשה אחת ושתי פרות עלות אשר לא עלה עליהם על ואסרתם את הפרות בעגלה והשיבתם בניהם מאחריהם הביתה (8) ולקחתם את * ה׳ ונתתם אתו אל העגלה ... ושלחתם אתו	(5:2) And Philistia took * ... [YHWH].[226] They brought him to Beth Dagon and erected him beside Dagon. (3) They rose early …[227] on the next day, and look! Dagon was falling[228] face down before * YHWH. They took Dagon and returned him to his place. (4) They rose early in the morning on the next day, and look! Dagon was falling face down before * YHWH,[229] and the head of Dagon and the two palms of his hands were severed upon the threshold—only Dagon remained upon it. (5) Therefore, the priests of Dagon and all who enter Beth Dagon will not tread upon the threshold of Dagon … to this day.[230] … (6:2) So they called (Philistia) to the priests and to the diviners, as follows: "What shall we do for * YHWH? … (7) [They said,][231] "Take and make one new cart and two nursing cows, upon whom has not gone up a yoke. You shall bind the cows to the cart and return their calves home from behind them. (8) You shall take * YHWH and put him on the cart … You shall send him away and he will go. (9) You shall

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[225] In the translation that follows (and others like it below), ellipses [...] indicate material in the final form that has not yet entered the text at this stage. In accordance with my hypothesis of a late "ark" overlay, occurrences of the word ארון in the final version are marked in earlier layers with an asterisk [*].

[226] With LXX (with Dietrich, *Samuel*, 254). MT has האלהים. I judge the MT a dittography from the parallel in 5:1 (see discussion above). I have put "the ark of" in parentheses throughout based on my argument that the word ארון is a later redactional overlay upon the text (see previous chapter).

[227] MT identifies the subject as אשדודים. I consider this a potential explanatory gloss. Note that the Ashdodites are identified in the plague thread as האשדודים or אנשי אשדוד, whereas the nonarticulated gentilic used here is unique.

[228] Or "fallen." The participle is ambiguous, but I prefer to read (especially with the presentative הנה) that they caught Dagon in the act of falling. This note accentuates the timing of the fall: dawn, or just predawn. See discussion of the mythological implications in chapter seven of this dissertation, below.

[229] The repetition in 5:4a of 5:3a could potentially be a *Wiederaufnahme*, added by the scribe who inserted 5:3b (LXX). However, in this case I deem it more likely that the repetition is original. The double toppling of Dagon eliminates the possibility that he simply fell by accident and motivates the search for an explanation via divination.

[230] The whole of 5:5 is likely a late, etiological supplement. In any case, the interjection באשדוד (where I have ellipses) is syntactically awkward and may be an even later clarification.

[231] The verb ויאמרו found at the beginning of 6:3 may supply the implied original narrative cue here at 6:7. I assume it was deleted by the author of 6:2b–6 and overwritten with the transitional note, ועתה.

והלך (9) וראיתם אם דרך גבולו יעלה בית שמש הוא עשה לנו את הרעה הגדולה הזאת ואם לא וידענו כי לא ידו נגעה בנו מקרה הוא היה לנו (10) ויעשו האנשים כן ויקחו שתי פרות עלות ויאסרום בעגלה ואת בניהם כלו בבית (11) וישמו את * ה׳ אל העגלה ... (12) וישרנה הפרות בדרך על דרך בית שמש במסלה אחת הלכו הלך וגעו ולא סרו ימין ושמאול ... (13) ובית שמש קצרים קציר חטים בעמק וישאו את עיניהם ויראו את [κιβωτὸν κυρίου] וישמחו לראות (14) והעגלה באה אל שדה יהושע בית השמשי ותעמד שם ושם אבן גדולה ויבקעו את עצי העגלה ואת הפרות העלו עלה לה׳ ... (18) [ועל האבן] הגדולה ... הניחו עליה את * ה׳ עד היום הזה בשדה יהושע בית השמשי	see: if he goes up the road to his own borderland, that is, to Beth Shemesh, it is he who has done to us this great evil. But if not, then we will know that his hand has not harmed us. A chance is what happened to us. (10) The people did so, and they took two nursing cows and bound them to the cart, and their calves they shut up at home. (11) They put * YHWH in the cart … (12) And the cows went straight along the road to Beth Shemesh. On one course they walked—walking and wailing—and they did not turn right or left. … (13) Now, Beth Shemesh was harvesting the wheat harvest in the valley. They lifted their eyes and saw * [YHWH],[232] and they rejoiced at the sight. (14) And the cart entered the field of Joshua the Beth-Shemeshite. And it stood there. And there was a great stone. They split the wood of the cart, and the cows they sent up as a burnt offering to YHWH. … (18) [And upon the great stone][233] … they installed * YHWH to this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth-Shemeshite.

This Beth Dagon godnapping thread reads as a generally continuous and complete story. As I will show below, it contains a consistent vocabulary, grammatical style, and ideological outlook.

Turning to the Ashdod-based thread, with the above material removed, the remainder would comprise 5:1, 3b (LXX), 6–12; 6:1, 2b–6, 8bα, 11b, 12b, 15–18a, 19–21; 7:1–2, as follows:

Table 3.4: Hypothesized Ashdod supplement

(5:1) ופלשתים לקחו את * האלהים ויבאהו מאבן העזר אשדודה ... (3b) [καὶ ἐβαρύνθη χεὶρ κυρίου ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἀζωτίους καὶ ἐβασάνισεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐπάταξεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὰς ἕδρας αὐτῶν,	(5:1) Philistia took * Ha’elohim, and they brought him from Ebenezer to Ashdod ... (3b) [LXX: “Now, the hand of YHWH was heavy against the Ashdodites, and he tortured them. And he struck them on their seats, Ashdod and its borderlands. So it was, when ...”]

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[232] With LXX: καὶ εἶδον κιβωτὸν κυρίου. MT has ויראו את הארון. This is one of only two instances in 1 Sam 4:1–7:2 (MT) where הארון is an absolute noun (not in construct form; the other is 7:2).

[233] A wide array of textual witnesses preserves אבן/λίθου here. אבל is an error. Additionally, I propose that somewhere along the line, an eager scribe was caught up in the string of clauses beginning with ועד in 6:18 and wrote ועד האבן where they ought to have copied ועל האבן (cf. 6:14, 15; see also McCarter, *I Samuel*, 130). A later redactor smoothed out the syntax of this corrupt text by adding the relative particle אשר.

τὴν Ἄζωτον καὶ τὰ ὅρια αὐτῆς. (4) καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ...]	
(6) ותכבד יד ה' אל האשדודים [καὶ ἐπήγαγεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐξέζεσεν αὐτοῖς εἰς τὰς ναῦς, καὶ μέσον τῆς χώρας αὐτῆς ἀνεφύησαν μύες, καὶ ἐγένετο σύγχυσις θανάτου μεγάλη ἐν τῇ πόλει.]	(6) Now, the hand of YHWH was heavy against the Ashdodites, ... [LXX: “And he afflicted them and burst out against them on their ships. And in the midst of their land arose mice, such that there was a great panic of death in the town”].
(7) ויראו אנשי אשדוד כי כן ואמרו לא ישב * אלהי ישראל עמנו כי קשתה ידו עלינו ועל דגון אלהינו (8) וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים אליהם ויאמרו מה נעשה ל*אלהי ישראל ויאמרו גת יסב * אלהי ישראל ויסבו את * אלהי ישראל (9) ויהי אחרי הסבו אתו ותהי יד ה' בעיר מהומה גדולה מאד ויך את אנשי העיר מקטן ועד גדול וישתרו להם עפלים (10) וישלחו את * האלהים עקרון ויהי כבוא * האלהים עקרון ויזעקו העקרנים לאמר הסבו אלי את * אלהי ישראל להמיתני ואת עמי (11) וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים ויאמרו שלחו את * אלהי ישראל וישב למקמו ולא ימית אתי ואת עמי כי היתה מהומת מות בכל העיר כבדה מאד יד האלהים שם (12) והאנשים אשר לא מתו הכו בעפלים ותעל שועת העיר השמים (6:1) ויהי * ה' בשדה פלשתים שבעה חדשים ... (2b) הודענו במה נשלחנו למקומו (3) ויאמרו אם משלחים את * אלהי ישראל אל תשלחו אתו ריקם כי השב תשיבו לו אשם אז תרפאו ונודע לכם למה לא תסור ידו מכם (4) ויאמרו מה האשם אשר נשיב לו ויאמרו מספר סרני פלשתים חמשה עפלי זהב וחמשה עכברי זהב כי מגפה אחת לכלם ולסרניכם (5) ועשיתם צלמי עפליכם וצלמי עכבריכם המשחיתם את הארץ ונתתם לאלהי ישראל כבוד אולי יקל את ידו מעליכם ומעל אלהיכם ומעל ארצכם (6) ולמה תכבדו את לבבכם כאשר כבדו מצרים ופרעה את לבם הלוא כאשר התעלל בהם וישלחום וילכו ... (8b) ואת כלי הזהב אשר השבתם לו אשם תשימו בארגז מצדו ... (11b) ואת הארגז ואת עכברי הזהב ואת צלמי טחריהם ...	(7) The people of Ashdod saw that it was so, and said, “Do not let * the god of Israel dwell with us, for his hand is hard upon us and upon Dagon our god. (8) They reached out and gathered all the Philistine authorities to themselves, and said, “What shall we do for * the god of Israel?” And they said, “Gath! Let * the god of Israel process around.” So, they processed around * the god of Israel. (9) So it was, after they processed him around, that the hand of YHWH was against the town, a very great panic. And he struck the people of the town, from the least to the greatest, and swellings broke out on them. (10) Then, they sent away * Ha’elohim to Ekron. So it was, as * Ha’elohim entered Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, as follows: “They have processed * the god of Israel around to me to kill me and my people!” (11) They reached out and gathered all the Philistine authorities, and said, “Send away * the god of Israel, that he may return to his own place and not kill me and my people!” For there was a deathly panic in the whole town—the hand of Ha’elohim weighed very heavily there, (12) such that the people who did not die were stricken with swellings, and the town’s rescue-cry rose to the heavens. (6:1) Now, * YHWH was in the Philistine plain seven months ... (2b) Inform us: with what shall we send him away to his place?” (3) And they said, “If you are sending away * the god of Israel, do not send him away emptyhanded, for you must return (oh, return!) to him a reparation-offering. Then, you will be healed and it will be made known to you why his hand will not turn from you.” (4) They said, “What is the reparation-offering that we shall return to him?” They said, “The number of the Philistine authorities: five gold swellings and five gold mice, for one beating is on all of them and on your authorities. (5) You must make images of your swellings and images of your mice, the ones destroying the land. You shall give honor to the god of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from upon you and from upon your gods and from upon your land. (6) For why would you weigh down your heart just as Egypt and Pharaoh weighed down their heart? Was it not when he toyed them that they sent them away and they left? ... (8b) and the gold vessels, which you have returned to him as a reparation-

(12b) וסרני פלשתים הלכים אחריהם עד גבול בית שמש ... (15) והלוים הורידו את * ה׳ ואת הארגז אשר אתו אשר בו כלי זהב וישמו אל האבן הגדולה ואנשי בית שמש העלו עלות ויזבחו זבחים ביום ההוא לה׳ (16) וחמשה סרני פלשתים ראו וישבו עקרון ביום ההוא (17) ואלה טחרי הזהב אשר השיבו פלשתים אשם לה׳ לאשדוד אחד לעזה אחד לאשקלון אחד לגת אחד לעקרון אחד (18) ועכברי הזהב מספר כל ערי פלשתים לחמשת הסרנים מעיר מבצר ועד כפר הפרזי ... (19) ויך באנשי בית שמש כי ראו ב*ה׳ ויך בעם שבעים איש חמשים אלף איש ויתאבלו העם כי הכה ה׳ בעם מכה גדולה (20) ויאמרו אנשי בית שמש מי יוכל לעמד לפני ה׳ האלהים הקדוש הזה ואל מי יעלה מעלינו (21) וישלחו מלאכים אל יושבי קרית יערים לאמר השבו פלשתים את * ה׳ רדו העלו אתו אליכם (7:1) ויבאו אנשי קרית יערים ויעלו את * ה׳ ויבאו אתו אל בית אבינדב בגבעה ואת אלעזר בנו קדשו לשמר את * ה׳ (2) ויהי מיום שבת הארון בקרית יערים וירבו הימים ויהיו עשרים שנה וינהו כל בית ישראל אחרי ה׳	offering, put in the box at his side ... (11b) and the box and the gold mice and the images of their hemorrhoids ... (12b) And the Philistine authorities were walking behind them to the border of Beth Shemesh ... (15) But the Levites took down * YHWH and the box that was with him, which had in it gold vessels, and set them on the great stone. And the people of Beth Shemesh sent up burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to YHWH. (16) And the five Philistine authorities saw and returned to Ekron on that day. (17) And these are the gold hemorrhoids that Philistines returned as a reparation-offering to YHWH: for Ashdod, one; for Gaza, one; for Ashkelon, one; for Gath, one; for Ekron, one. (18) And the gold mice were the number of all the Philistine towns, for the five authorities: from fortified town to rural village ... (19) But he struck the people of Beth Shemesh because they had looked upon * YHWH. He struck of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men. And the people mourned because YHWH struck the people with a great strike. (20) Then the people of Beth Shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before YHWH, Ha’elohim, this holy one? And to whom shall he go up from upon us?” (21) They sent messengers to the residents of Kiriath Jearim, saying: “Philistia returned * YHWH. Come down. Bring him up to yourselves.” (7:1) The people of Kiriath Jearim came and took up * YHWH and brought him into the house of Abinadab, on the hill. El’azar, his son, they consecrated to guard * YHWH. (2) So it was, from the day of the seating of the ark in Kiriath Jearim, the days increased and became twenty years and the whole house of Israel lamented after YHWH.

A cursory glance shows that this is obviously not a continuous narrative. While the Ashdod-based material from 1 Sam 5 reads somewhat continuously (despite some messiness created by textual variants), the material in 1 Sam 6 is highly fragmented. Moreover, several lines in this material clearly depend upon the Beth Dagon thread: 5:1 is patterned after 5:2; the question asked of the *seranim* in 5:8 (“What shall we do to for * the god of Israel?”) is nearly identical to the question asked of the priests in 6:2; and the trio of asides in 6:8b, 11b, and 12b are deliberately appended to the priests’ instructions for the divination test involving the cow-driven cart. In light of these dependencies, perhaps there never was an independent Ashdod-based godnapping source—all of this material was a supplemental expansion of the Beth Dagon story, invented by a creative redactor. There exists an alternative option: an Ashdod-based godnapping tale with its own plot and emphases may be embedded in this material, comprising primarily material from 1 Sam 5. It was subsequently conflated with the Beth Dagon story by a redactor, who also expanded the Ashdod tale in order to interweave it more fully with the Beth Dagon story. While I am intrigued by this possibility, the reconstruction of an independent Ashdod-based narrative cannot be supported with strong internal evidence. It is better, for now, to consider the second godnapping story (5:1, 3b [LXX], 6–12; 6:1, 2b–6, 8bα, 11b, 12b, 15–18a, 19–21; 7:1–2) a potential supplemental layer added by one or more redactors to the Beth Dagon-based core, rather than an independent source. In the analysis that follows, I refer to this combined material as the "Ashdod supplement."

COMPARING THE STYLES OF THE NARRATIVE THREADS

Style is more than a patterned use of vocabulary; it includes an author's typical approaches to syntax, grammar, register, literary allusion, and discursive technique. Each of these can be evaluated and compared in blocks of text, to consider the level of similarity and dissimilarity. Lending too much weight to vocabulary alone can skew the results dramatically,[234] for different authors writing about the same topic will often draw from the same pool of vocabulary; conversely, a single author writing about different topics will often use unique vocabulary with reference to each. Therefore, vocabulary must be only part of the overall critical analysis of style.

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[234] See, e.g., the sustained critique of Rost's vocabulary analysis in Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 33; Schäfer-Lichtenberger, "Beobachtungen zur ladegeschkhte und zur Komposition der Samuelbücher," 328; Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled," 158–63.

We should expect some difference in style in sources that derive from different authorial hands. This must be evaluated with care, however, because the processes of conflation or redaction may influence the stylistic features preserved in the extant text. Redactors may mimic one source as they stitch in another, or they may misremember their source material as they supplement it to a base text from memory (these are known as memory variants).[235] In other words, even if multiple sources lie behind our present text, we may not have the actual words of each source in the textual witnesses we possess today.[236] We must proceed with caution. But if there *is* significant stylistic variance recognizable in the hypothetical sources and supplements, it can lend support to the compositional hypothesis. Stylistic analysis can also help hone compositional criticism. After general stylistic profiles are identified for particular sources or layers of redaction, they create something of a "circular argument" (to put it pejoratively) or a "productive feedback loop" (conceived more positively) by which stylistic criteria may help discern the appropriate source or layer for ambiguous material.

Significant/Characteristic Vocabulary

The word Israel (ישראל) occurs 54 times in 1 Sam 1–8. It is most prevalent in the Samuel and Eli material (a combined 46 occurrences in 1 Sam 1–4; 7–8) but is much rarer in 1 Sam 5–6 (only eight occurrences). While it appears eight times in the Ashdod supplement as I have identified it

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[235] See David M. Carr, "Torah on the Heart: Literary Jewish Textuality Within Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *Oral Tradition* 25.1 (2010): 17–40; idem, "Orality, Textuality, and Memory: The State of Biblical Studies," in *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writing: Ancient Literacy, Orality, and Literary Production*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 161–74. The potential for complex oral prehistory in the Ark Narrative is discussed by Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 112–13.

[236] The ambiguity inherent to such an investigation is evident in the plethora of variants in the Mss and ancient translations of the text. The bulk of these variants do not greatly impact the meaning of the narrative, but they do affect our perception of literary style.

(each time in the context of the divine epithet, אלהי ישראל, 5:7, 8 [3x], 10, 11; 6:3, 5), it *never* occurs in the Beth Dagon thread. The complete absence of "Israel" in the Beth Dagon thread prompts a closer look at how nationality/peoplehood *is* described by that thread. As it turns out, the story has a geographically localized scope. It mentions Beth Dagon (5:2), priests and diviners (6:2), and "the people" (האנשים, 6:10). Then it mentions Beth Shemesh (6:9, 11), and uses the gentilic "Beth-Shemeshite" (בית השמשי, 6:14, 18) for the owner of the field, Joshua, where the cart comes to rest. No other gentilics are used, excepting two references to the Philistines (5:2, 6:2), which may be redactional.[237] Though it is an admittedly small sample, the Beth Dagon thread involves only two cult centers (Beth Dagon and Beth Shemesh) and the people who live there. It does not seem to be concerned with larger ethnic or national identities, whether Israelite or (possibly) Philistine, nor is it concerned with larger territorial claims. YHWH's own bounded territory (גבולו, 6:9) in this story is identified as *Beth Shemesh*, not explicitly Israel, and the people who live there are *Beth Shemeshites*, not Israelites. This is in sharp contrast to the framing of the larger narrative in the extant form of the text, where the ark story is set within a broad conflict over the territories of Israel and Philistia, between Israelites and Philistines.

Related to the vocabulary of place is the term עיר, which occurs frequently (eleven times) in 1 Sam 1–8 (1:3; 4:13 [2x]; 5:9 [2x], 11, 12; 6:18 [2x]; 7:14; 8:22). All six of the occurrences in 1 Sam 5–6 denote Philistine towns in the Ashdod supplement: Gath (5:9 [2x]), Ekron (5:11, 12), collective towns (6:18 [2x]). By contrast, the term is absent in the Beth Dagon thread; neither Beth Dagon nor Beth Shemesh is described as an עיר.

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[237] This "pan-Philistine consciousness" may be a characteristic of the outlook of a later redactor. If so, then these two mentions—both positioned at narrative seams—could be redactional harmonizations. See the section, "Shifting Scope in the Ashdod Supplement," later in this chapter.

The vocabulary of violence also varies between the two blocks of material. Once again, the Beth Dagon thread stands out for its unique vocabulary. While the surrounding context prefers the root נכה (thirteen occurrences in 1 Sam 1–8) or the root נגף (six occurrences) to denote the "strike" of the Philistines against Israel or the "strike" of Israel's god against the Philistines, the Beth Dagon thread uses neither of these terms and speaks only of "this great evil" (הרעה הגדולה הזאת), and uses a different root, נגע (6:9), to denote the divine "strike" that YHWH's hand has dealt.[238]

When it comes time to seek outside help, the Ashdod supplement twice employs a rare idiom, וישלחו ויאספו "They sent and gathered" (5:6, 11).[239] But when the Philistines consult the priests and diviners of the Beth Dagon thread, the linguistic pattern is disrupted despite the identical narrative beat described. Instead of the expected "sending and gathering," these temple personnel are simply "called" (ויקראו, 6:2).[240]

The Ashdod supplement uses the verbal root סבב four times in the short span of 5:8–10 to describe the movement of the ark (or the divine image). This level of recurrence suggests that סבב may have been a *Leitwort* chosen by the author for rhetorical effect. Though the Beth Dagon thread also describes divine transportation, it does not use the *Leitwort* סבב, opting instead for

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[238] This type of variation in vocabulary around a shared topic could be a single author's attempt to avoid linguistic monotony. But in empirical examples, it is often a sign of the scribal conflation of source materials. See, e.g., Tigay, *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, 67–68.

[239] The idiom occurs seven times in the Hebrew Bible: 1 Sam 5:8, 11; 2 Sam 11:27; 2 Kgs 5:6, 7; 23:1; 2 Chron 34:29 (|| 2 Kgs 23:1).

[240] A synchronic explanation for this difference would be the need to gather the *seranim* from their scattered districts in the Philistine Pentapolis, whereas the priests and diviners were already local and needed only to be called. Nevertheless, the vocabulary difference is present in the text and contributes to a cumulative case for distinct sources. Moreover, the idea that the priests were "local" only highlights a gap in the extant text: no home temple is identified for the priests and diviners. Are they the "priests of Dagon" from Ashdod? The text does not say. Are they collected representatives from temples throughout Philistia? The text does not say. This gap disappears if we imagine the consultation with the priests to be a continuation of the narrative at the temple in Beth Dagon that breaks at 5:4 (or 5:5). In that case, there would be no need to wonder about the home of the priests.

הלך (6:8, 12), עלה (6:9), and ישר (6:12). In its description of the mode of divine transport, the Beth Dagon thread gives special emphasis to the cart (עגלה), which recurs seven times (6:7 [2x], 8, 10, 11, 14 [2x]). By contrast, the Ashdod supplement, though just as interested in divine movements, makes no mention of the mode of transport, cart or otherwise.

The Ashdod supplement repeats the root מות four times in 5:10–12 (three verbal occurrences, 5:10, 11, 12, one nominal, 5:10). Of note, it is also frequent in the Eli material of chapter 4, which describes the death of Eli, his sons, and his daughter-in-law. The absence of this term in the Beth Dagon thread is perhaps not statistically significant. Nevertheless, it is at least suggestive that while human death is the chief threat in the Ashdod supplement, it is not the primary concern in the Beth Dagon thread, which concentrates instead on a divine conflict occurring in the divine realm, revealed in the human realm through a process of divination.

Differences in vocabulary support the hypothesis that the Beth Dagon thread and Ashdod supplement derive from different scribal hands.

Table 3.5: Style: Significant Vocabulary

Lexeme	1 Sam 1–4; 7–8	Beth Dagon thread[241]	Ashdod supplement[242]	Total
ישראל	46	0	8	54
עיר	5	0	6	11
נכה	6	0	7	13
נגף	5	0	1	6
נגע	0	1	0	1
רע	3	1	0	4
סבב	1	0	4	5
עגלה	0	7	0	7
מות	9	0	4	13

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[241] Comprising 5:2–4; 6:2a, 7aβ–8a, 8bβ–9a, 10–11a, 12a, 13–14, 18b, as identified above.

[242] Comprising 1 Sam 5:1—7:2, minus the Beth Dagon thread. I have labeled this the “Ashdod” supplement for convenience, despite the fact that some of this material is unrelated to Ashdod in particular, and despite the probability that it is internally complex.

Divine Epithets (Again)

Analysis of divine epithets (a special subset of vocabulary) as evidence of compositional complexity has a fraught history in scholarship (especially in Pentateuchal criticism) and deserves a bit of elaboration here. In the past, alternation between the divine names YHWH (ה') and Elohim (אלהים or האלהים) was considered clear evidence of diverse sources. But this confidence has eroded over the years with studies that demonstrate a more complex picture. Often multiple divine names are used synonymously; sometimes multiple divine names are used in the same phrase (e.g., ה' אלהים in Gen 2). Many scholars consider divine epithets to be thoroughly unhelpful in compositional criticism.[243] While caution is well advised, I fear that such scholarship has thrown out the baby with the bathwater. ה', אלהים, האלהים, אל שדי, צבאות, and other epithets *are* used synonymously to denote the god of Israel and Judah in the canon of Scripture. But this does not mean that they are inherently, nor historically, synonymous. Their coexistence in the text is evidence of a religious-historical and theological merging of multiple ancient deities, over time, under the umbrella of—or into the personhood of—the Israelite national deity. In light of this historical phenomenon, it is probable that some, perhaps even many, of the occurrences of these divine epithets in the biblical text preserve traditions about distinctively named deities prior to their eventual merger. That is, the Bible preserves ancient traditions about אל, אלהים, ה', שדי, etc., *alongside* more recent traditions that used such epithets synonymously or interchangeably. The challenge, of course, is to discern whether varying divine epithets in a given pericope represent the former or the latter. Just as in Pentateuchal criticism, so throughout the Hebrew Bible, the evidence of variant divine epithets is inconclusive on its own. But it may be a powerful support to other lines of evidence: If the use of multiple epithets transcends hypothetically identified literary sources and supplements, then the evidence suggests that these divine names were employed synonymously by a single author. When, however, the use of distinct divine names aligns sharply with the hypothetical sources identified by other lines of evidence, it adds non-trivial weight to the argument that they represent multiple scribal hands.

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[243] See, e.g., M. H. Segal, "El, Elohim, and Yhwh in the Bible," *JQR* 46.2 (1955): 89–115; Frank Polak, "Divine Names," in *Words, Ideas, Worlds: Biblical Essays in Honour of Yairah Amit*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Frank Polak (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2012), 159–78. For further discussion on the value of divine epithets as clues to diachrony, see Thomas Römer, "The Elusive Yahwist: A Short History of Research," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, SymS 34 (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 9–27; James S. Anderson, "El, Yahweh, and Elohim: The Evolution of God in Israel and Its Theological Implications," *ExpTim* 128.6 (2017): 261–67; Yoel Elitsur, "The Names of God and the Dating of the Biblical Corpus," in *The Believer and the Modern Study of the Bible*, ed. Tova Ganzel, Yehudah Brandes, and Chayuta Deutsch (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2019), 428–42; Koog P. Hong, "Elohim, the Elohist, and the Theory of Progressive Revelation," *Bib* 98.3 (2017): 321–38.

In 1 Sam 1–8, three primary divine epithets are employed for Israel's god: YHWH (ה׳), Elohim (אלהים[ה]), and Elohe- (or "the god of") Israel (אלהי ישראל). The Samuel and Eli material (1 Sam 1–4; 7–8) strongly favors ה׳ (95x), though אלהים[ה] also has a significant showing (17x). Within the godnapping narratives (1 Sam 5–6), the Beth Dagon thread uses the tetragrammaton *exclusively* (9x).[244] The Ashdod supplement makes use of all three epithets, though the preference seems to shift from אלהי ישראל in 1 Sam 5 to ה׳ in 1 Sam 6. It has been noted that אלהי ישראל is only used in the mouths of the Philistines,[245] whereas ה׳ and אלהים[ה] are used by the narrator, suggesting that the Philistine characters may not know this god by name, or prefer to refer to him by his geographic home rather than by name.[246] Certainly, this could be a (partial) synchronic, stylistic rationale behind the use of אלהי ישראל in the extant version. But if this is considered conventional, why is Dagon not called by the Israelite narrator "the god of the

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[244] Reading the exception in 5:2 (האלהים) as a scribal variant (LXX preserves κύριος = ה׳); I also emend 6:13 (ויראו את־הארון) to ויראו את ארון־ה׳, following the LXX (καὶ εἶδον κιβωτὸν κυρίου).

[245] Finkelstein and Römer, "The Historical and Archaeological Background," 163; Eichler, *The Ark and the Cherubim*, 13; in any case, the Philistines also use the other divine names synonymously.

[246] For discussion of the term אלהים to associate a deity with a particular place or patronage, see Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim*, 65–66.

Philistia” (אלהי פלשת) or “the god of the Philistines” (אלהי פלשתים)? The occurrences of האלהים, on the other hand, are found conspicuously at the introductory seam of the Ashdod story (5:1) and where the story expands to include the city of Ekron (5:10–11).[247] In the end, the apparent clustering of divine epithets within the Ashdod supplement may be another indicator of compositional complexity internal to that material. For now, it is enough to observe that while the division of divine epithets is not entirely conclusive, it is noticeably different in the two primary godnapping threads (Beth Dagon and Ashdod), supporting the hypothesis that they represent different written traditions.[248] As Campbell also concludes, in light of “the alternation of the titles for the ark, ‘ark of God’ and ‘ark of YHWH’—their occurrence, despite difficulties, is a little too significant to be accidental.”[249]

Table 3.6: Style: Divine Epithets

Epithet	1 Sam 1–4; 7–8	Beth Dagon thread	Ashdod supplement	Total
ה׳ [צבאות]	95	9	10	113
[ה]אלהים[250]	17	0	5	22
אלהי ישראל	2	0	9	11

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[247] A final occurrence of האלהים in 6:20 involves an elaborate epithet: ה׳ האלהים הקדוש הזה, where it may not be a proper noun (and it is absent in the LXX). Furthermore, the phrase ארון האלהים in the final form is found only in Samuel and in parallel texts in Chronicles. Eichler concludes, “This indicates that these forms [ארון האלהים and ארון אלהי ישראל] are peculiar either to one or more of the sources used in Samuel, or to an editor of the book whose activity preceded the composition of Chronicles” (*The Ark and the Cherubim*, 13).

[248] Contra Miller and Roberts, who aver that “the diversity of terminology … shows no clear pattern permitting a separation of sources according to how ark terminology appears” (*The Hand of the Lord*, 54).

[249] Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 307. This appears to be a development from Campbell’s earlier thinking: “Attempts to distribute the titles for the ark source-critically or to resort to emendation are dubious” (*The Ark Narrative*, 59). In the more recent commentary, Campbell surmises that a “YHWH” tradition supplemented (and partially overwrote) an earlier “Elohim” ark story. I propose below a more complex composition history, in which I suggest that much of the YHWH-oriented material was composed earlier than the Elohim-oriented tradition.

[250] Four additional occurrences of אלהים (not included in this tally) refer to Dagon (5:7) and/or other Philistine deities (6:5), and foreign deities (7:3; 8:8).

Grammatical Tendencies

Direct Object Pronouns

The choice between using objective verbal suffixes versus the definite direct object marker (את) with objective suffixes could be an indicator of authorial style. Though it may not be a settled matter in the ongoing debate over linguistic dating, it is likely that the language trended toward increased use of verbs with objective suffixes over time.[251] Therefore, we may cautiously observe the patterns in our hypothetical sources and supplements to consider whether this syntactical feature differs among them, and to what degree. In 1 Sam 1–8 overall, when direct objects are expressed pronominally, the vast majority of objective pronouns are verbal suffixes (72.9%). This is even more concentrated in the Samuel-Eli material (1 Sam 1–4; 7–8), which uses verbal suffixes 84.6% of the time. The Ashdod supplement uses verbal suffixes far less often, but still 50% of the time. The Beth Dagon thread, however, stands out in its almost exclusive use of suffixed direct object markers (את).[252] Of the six direct object pronouns in this story, only one is a verbal suffix (ויאסרום in 6:10)—and this outlier is not straightforward: the 3mp suffix does not agree with the gender of its antecedent (פרות). Therefore, McCarter has proposed that it derives from an archaic dual form.[253] In any case, the Beth Dagon thread tends toward a style of direct object pronouns that is markedly different from both the Ashdod supplement and the literary context of 1 Sam 1–8. If the theories relating this stylistic feature to linguistic development are correct, then it also highlights the Beth Dagon thread as potentially the earliest block of text under our consideration.

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[251] Cynthia Edenburg, Dismembering the Whole: Composition and Purpose of Judges 19–21, AIL 24 (Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 120–21.

[252] In the Ashdod supplement and Beth Dagon thread, the sample size is admittedly small (12 and 6 occurrences, respectively). However, my aim is to uncover tendencies, not to establish statistically significant results (in the scientific sense).

[253] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 135.

Verbal Aspect

An author's individual stylistic aesthetic may predispose them to favor the use of greater or fewer infinitives, participles, or finite verbs in their prose, a tendency that is usually not attributable to the demands of the subject matter. In the case of infinitives, significant variation in the ratio of infinitives to total verbs in blocks of text may help highlight different authorial hands.[254] Overall, infinitives are common in 1 Sam 1–8, employed at a rate of about ten percent of total verbs. This frequency is not uniform, however. In 1 Sam 5–6, they occur at a rate of only 6.4% of total verbs (9/141), whereas in the surrounding context of 1 Sam 1–4; 7–8, infinitives are more frequent, accounting for 10.9% of verbs (66/608). This difference is even more pronounced when the common infinitive לאמר, as an idiomatic marker of direct speech, is removed from consideration. In that case, the ratio becomes 5.1% to 10.6%. In other words, 1 Sam 5–6 uses infinitives *only half as frequently* as its surrounding context. This stylistic feature could contribute to the argument that 1 Sam 5–6 is independent from its context in Samuel.[255] The seven infinitives (not לאמר) found in 1 Sam 5–6 are somewhat differently distributed between the Beth Dagon thread and the Ashdod supplement (7.8% and 3.4%, respectively). With such a small statistical sample, however, this feature may not necessarily be a mark of stylistic distinction between them.

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[254] This predisposition one way or the other could also be a marker of linguistic development over time, but such a study is beyond the scope of this research.

[255] 1 Sam 4 is often considered a unified part of the godnapping narrative continued in 1 Sam 5–6. By way of comparison, the infinitives/verbs ratio in 1 Sam 4 is 10.5% (or 9.6% without לאמר), still nearly twice as frequent as 1 Sam 5–6, reinforcing the stylistic independence of the latter.

Like infinitives, different authors tend to employ greater or fewer participles in their individual style. In this case, there is a striking difference between the Beth Dagon thread (which uses participles at a rate of 15.7% of verbs) and the Ashdod supplement (only 4.4% of verbs). The surrounding context of 1 Sam 1–4; 7–8 splits the difference with 10.0% of verbs being participles.[256] This stylistic feature supports both the distinction between the godnapping threads and their distinctiveness from the rest of 1 Sam 1–8.

Subordinate Clauses

Another element of authorial style is the relative complexity of sentences.[257] Longer sentences, with more frequent use of subordinate clauses, often indicate a higher literary register and literary sophistication of the author. More complex sentences may also support a relatively later date of composition, as the language itself adapted to purely literary texts (as opposed to transcriptions of oral texts, which tend toward fewer subordinate clauses).[258] To assess the relative complexity of sentences in our narrative threads in 1 Sam, I have compared the frequency of common subordinating particles (כי and אשר) with that of finite verbs (as an approximation of the number of total clauses in the text block).[259] The resulting ratio estimates the rate at which sentences are complicated by the use of subordination. In 1 Sam 1–8, the variation in the rate of subordination is striking. The Beth Dagon thread uses the technique sparingly (only one exemplar each of כי and אשר), amounting to 5.0% of clauses. By contrast, the Ashdod supplement employs subordination via כי or אשר in 20.3% of its clauses! (The context in 1 Sam 1–4; 7–8 measures 15.0%). These results suggest that the Beth Dagon thread uses a simpler, more succinct style in comparison with the elaborate style of the Ashdod supplement. The surprisingly high level of subordination in the Ashdod supplement raises other possibilities: it may be that it was composed significantly later than the earlier Beth Dagon thread; in addition, this feature may reveal that a significant amount of the material in the Ashdod "supplement" is indeed supplemental, built upon the Beth Dagon thread via the use of subordinated interpolations. It is also possible that the Ashdod material is itself redactionally complex—earlier simple sentences having been glossed, clarified, or generally expanded via grammatical subordination.

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[256] 1 Sam 4 clocks in at 7.6% participles (8/105 verbs), much closer to the Ashdod supplement than the Beth Dagon thread; yet still quite distinct.

[257] Cynthia Edenburg notes that the so-called Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4:1—7:2) contains both terse and complex style but evaluates the latter as the general stylistic profile of the narrative as a whole. She does not attempt to compare the relative complexity of hypothetical redactions within the Ark Narrative ("The Radiance [of Yahweh] is Exiled," 155).

[258] Frequent subordination is one of the criteria identifying what Frank Polak calls "complex-nominal" literature—a relatively later form of biblical literature, in contrast to the earlier "rhythmic-verbal" style. See Frank Polak, "Style Is More than the Person: Sociolinguistics, Literary Culture and the Distinction between Written and Oral Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*, ed. Ian Young, JSOTSup 369 (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 38–103. Subordination may also be a technique of redactional expansion. In that case, the complexity is a feature of the redactor's style, but not necessarily that of their source material. Therefore, this feature must be weighed in concert with a wider pallet of stylistic criteria.

Taken together, the above sampling of stylistic features including vocabulary, divine epithets, and several grammatical tendencies lends support to the hypothesis that the Beth Dagon thread and Ashdod supplement were authored by different hands.

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[259] Edenburg also uses כי and אשר to compare the relative complexity of blocks of text, though she applies this test to whole chapters, noting that "the causal particle [כי] is particularly frequent in 1 Sam 4, while the relative pronoun [אשר] is frequent in 1 Sam 6 and wholly absent from 1 Sam 4. Such stylistic variation could be difficult to attribute to one and the same author, and might be resolved in the course of redaction analysis that is based upon additional factors" ("The Radiance [of Yahweh] is Exiled," 156). Edenburg's observation bolsters my own conclusion that 1 Sam 5–6 was authored by a different hand from that of 1 Sam 4. Edenburg does not apply this experiment to hypothetical sources within 1 Sam 5–6.

Table 3.7: Style: Grammatical Tendencies

Feature	1 Sam 1–4; 7–8	Beth Dagon thread	Ashdod supplement	Total
direct object pronoun	8	5	6	19
direct object suffix	44	1	6	51
infinitives/verbs	66/608 (10.9%)	4/52 (7.7%)	5/89 (5.6%)	76/749 (10.1%)
infinitives (not לאמר)	64/606 (10.6%)	4/51 (7.8%)	3/87 (3.4%)	71/744 (9.5%)
participles/verbs	61/608 (10.0%)	8/51 (15.7%)	4/90 (4.4%)	73/749 (9.7%)
כי/אשר subordination	72/481 (15.0%)	2/40 (5.0%)	16/79 (20.3%)	90/600 (15.0%)

SHIFTING SCOPE WITHIN THE ASHDOD SUPPLEMENT

The Beth Dagon thread may be extracted from 1 Sam 5–6 as a continuous, complete, stylistically coherent, and stylistically distinct narrative. *A posteriori* analysis is not able to extract a similar independent narrative tied geographically to Ashdod—at least not without pieces missing from the plot.[260] Nevertheless, stylistic analysis of the larger "Ashdod supplement" (including all the material not identified as part of the Beth Dagon thread) has hinted that it is likely internally complex, the result of a series of redactions. These stylistic hints are especially pronounced in the clustering of divine epithets in different sections of the Ashdod supplement and in its frequent use of subordinate clauses. To this evidence, we may now add the presence of shifting geopolitical scope, unclarity over the nature of the crisis (one plague or two; swellings, mice, or both), and variation in the apparent knowledge of or dependence upon the "Beth Dagon thread" tradition.

Whether one reads synchronically or puts forward redactional hypotheses, the town of Ashdod is indisputably the geographic focus of the material I have dubbed the "Ashdod supplement." In the extant version, Ashdod and related gentilics appear six times in 1 Sam 5:1–7.

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[260] For a succinct explanation of "*a priori*" and "*a posteriori*" approaches to compositional analysis, see Jacob L. Wright, "The Evolution of the Gideon Narrative," in *Supplementation and the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Saul M. Olyan and Jacob L. Wright, BJS 361 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 106–7.

The plague of "swellings" (עפלים) that breaks out in 5:3b (LXX; 5:6 MT) is directed against Ashdod and its immediate vicinity only (את אשדוד ואת גבוליה), at least at first. The crisis is epidemic, not pandemic. Since the initial outbreak was localized in Ashdod and was immediately interpreted by the local Ashdodites as hostility from Israel's god against themselves, it would be natural to conclude that it was, in fact, a military contingent of *Ashdodites* who had been responsible for the capture of the deity. One could speculate that an earlier form of the narrative may have made this point explicit. However, in all extant versions, the culpability for abducting Israel's god is laid at the feet of the Philistines collectively (5:1–2).

There are reasons to suspect that this widening of scope, from a narrative about a localized Ashdodite crisis to a narrative of pan-Philistine significance, is due to redactional expansion of the tradition. In 5:7, the people of Ashdod resolve: "Don't let (the ark of) the god of Israel dwell[261] with us!" In this case, the "us" refers to Ashdod alone, not the greater Philistine community. The Ashdodites send for the Philistine *seranim* (סרני פלשתים) as *outside* consultants, giving advice for a local crisis. In light of the Ashdodites' urgency to be rid of the god of Israel, the authorities' recommendation to "bring him around" (NASB, NRSV, ESV) or "move him" (NJPS) to Gath is somewhat anticlimactic, instructing the Ashdodites to do what they had already purposed: get rid of Israel's god! A clue to the puzzle here is found in the choice of the verb, סבב (5:8 [2x], 9, 10), typically used to denote circuitous travel.[262] It is likely that an earlier version of this narrative used the verb סבב with the connotation that Israel's god ought to be "circulated" or "processed around" *within* Ashdod. The mention of Gath as a "destination," in addition to being an atypical use of סבב, occurs only once[263] and with awkward syntax: the town's name—without preposition or locative—is merely inserted at the beginning of the sentence: "Gath! Let (the ark of) the god of Israel process around…."[264] I take the word גת to be a later gloss. The rest of the paragraph is simply set in "the town" (before the insertion of Gath, there was no need to clarify between antecedent locations) and the "circulation" of Israel's god is described as a self-contained activity (5:8b, 9a; cf. 10b), not movement toward an external destination. Read this way, the advice to circulate Israel's god in a procession is not a tepid ratification of the Ashdodites' prior intention to send him away, but rather a bold strategy for *keeping* the deity, while also appeasing him. Perhaps the procession that was envisioned in this earlier version of the story was based on the model of ancient Mesopotamian festivals, in which a deity was periodically brought out and paraded around in honor, before being returned to his temple.[265] For the Ashdodites, the hope was that this show of deference would win the favor of the captured deity. Alas, no. Instead, the plague intensified, and the swellings afflicted "the people of the town, from the least to the greatest" (5:9). The alternative scheme having failed, the Ashdodites return to plan A: "Send away (the ark of) the god of Israel, that he may return to his own place and not kill me and my people!" (5:11b).[266] For, as the story continues, "there was a deathly panic in the whole town [i.e., Ashdod] … and the town’s [i.e., Ashdod’s] rescue-cry rose to the heavens” (5:11b, 12b).

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[261] The inflected verb יֵשֵׁב is intransitive, suggesting agency. This is yet another nod toward the theory that the inanimate ark (ארון) is a later addition to the text, which does not quite fit the tenor of the narrative.

[262] סבב may include multiple stops (cf. 1 Sam 7:16) but ends up back at the start of the loop. Consider the use of סבב in Josh 6, where it indicates a cultic procession around Jericho that results in divine action (not movement to a new location). Cf. Römer, "L'arche de Yhwh," 100.

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[263] גת occurs here once in the MT. A plus in the LXX remarks at the end of v. 9 that the "Gittites" made seats for [to hide? to comfort?] their bottoms: "καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς οἱ Γεθθαῖοι ἕδρας." A fragment of 4QSam^{a} appears to follow the LXX.

[264] The syntax is ambiguous: Is Gath the subject of the verb ויאמרו (cf. LXX), in which case the *seranim* do not speak at all? Or is Gath a locative destination for the verb יסב? I am not the only one to find this confusing. The unclarity is resolved in the LXX by means of several glosses: "καὶ λέγουσιν οἱ Γεθθαῖοι Μετελθέτω κιβωτὸς τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς ἡμᾶς· καὶ μετῆλθεν κιβωτὸς τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς Γεθθα (5:8, cf. 5:9b "καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς οἱ Γεθθαῖοι ἕδρας"). Fragments of 4QSam^{a} appear to follow LXX. English translations also follow the LXX to mitigate the awkwardness of the MT. See also Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled," 160.

[265] See discussion of the Mesopotamian *akītu* and *zukru* festival processions in Fleming, "David and the Ark."

[266] This urgent cry erupts quite naturally from the mouths of the Ashdodites, despite being reframed as Ekronite speech in the extant text (cf. 5:10–11a). Later generic references to "the town" (5:11, 12) could denote Ashdod just as easily as Ekron.

Table 3.8: Pan-Philistine Expansion

(5:7) ויראו אנשי אשדוד כי כן ואמרו לא ישב * אלהי ישראל עמנו כי קשתה ידו עלינו ... (8) וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים אליהם ויאמרו מה נעשה ל*אלהי ישראל ויאמרו	(5:7) The people of Ashdod saw that it was so, and said, “Do not let * the god of Israel dwell with us, for his hand is hard upon us ...” (8) They reached out and gathered all the Philistine authorities to themselves, and said, “What shall we do for * the god of Israel?” And they said,
גת	“Gath!
יסב * אלהי ישראל ויסבו את * אלהי ישראל (9) ויהי אחרי הסבו אתו ותהי ... בעיר מהומה גדולה מאד ויך את אנשי העיר מקטן ועד גדול וישתרו להם עפלים	“Let * the god of Israel process around.” So, they processed around * the god of Israel. (9) So it was, after they processed him around, that there was ... in the town a very great panic. For he struck the people of the town, from the least to the greatest, and swellings broke out on them.
(10) וישלחו את ארון האלהים עקרון ויהי כבוא ארון האלהים עקרון ויזעקו העקרנים לאמר הסבו אלי את ארון אלהי ישראל להמיתני ואת עמי	(10) Then, they sent away * Ha’elohim to Ekron. So it was, as * Ha’elohim entered Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, as follows: “They have processed * the god of Israel around to me to kill me and my people!”
(11) וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים ויאמרו שלחו את * אלהי ישראל וישב למקמו ולא ימית אתי ואת עמי כי היתה מהומת מות בכל העיר	(11) They reached out and gathered all the Philistine authorities, and said, “Send away * the god of Israel, that he may return to his own place and not kill me and my people!” For there was a deathly panic in the whole town—
כבדה מאד יד האלהים שם (12) והאנשים אשר לא מתו הכו בעפלים	The hand of Ha’elohim weighed very heavily there, (12) such that the people who did not die were stricken with swellings,
ותעל שועת העיר השמים	and the town’s rescue-cry rose to the heavens.

Expansion of this localized Ashdodite crisis into a pan-Philistine crisis was accomplished by the insertion of the single word גת “Gath!” awkwardly at the beginning of the direct speech in 5:8b, along with the insertion of 5:10–11a, in which the Gittites attempt to “send around” the god of Israel to Ekron (or Ashkelon, as the LXX renders it), again interpreting the verb סבב in an atypical way. Regarding the structure of the Ekronite-Ashkelonite episode (5:10–11a), the verbatim repetition of 5:8a at 5:11a, “They sent and gathered all the Philistine *seranim*” (וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים), may be a *Wiederaufnahme* marking this section as a later interpolation. The secondary nature of the Gath/Ekron-Ashkelon expansion is supported by some of the stylistic distinctives identified above. The initial outcry of the Ekronites in 5:10, “They have circulated (the ark of) the god of Israel to me to kill me and my people!” is restated nearly verbatim in the next sentence (5:11b).[267] However, the latter occurrence (which I am assigning to an Ashdodite voice prior to the redaction) employs the direct object marker for the pronominal object of the verb “to kill” (ולא ימית אתי ואת עמי), whereas the Ekronite exclamation just one sentence earlier uses a verbal suffix (להמיתני ואת עמי).[268] Furthermore, the interpolation departs from use of the divine epithet אלהי ישראל “the god of Israel” (5:7, 8 [3x], 11aβ), opting instead for האלהים “God” (5:10 [2x]).[269] I consider it unlikely that a single author would abruptly shift lexical and grammatical style in these ways in the absence of significant narrative motivation.

If a redactor expanded the scope of the Ashdod crisis to encompass a wider Philistine constituency that included Gath and Ekron, then it is also worth noting that the pan-Philistine scope is defined even more sharply by an even later redaction. During most of the story, the Philistine *seranim* are an unnumbered collective (כל סרני פלשתים). Among Philistine towns, Ashdod features prominently, with minor references to Gath and Ekron. But in 6:4b the Philistines are instructed to craft precisely *five* golden swellings and *five* golden mice to represent the [five] Philistine authorities and their towns. This note recurs in 6:16–17, where the

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[267] The characterization of the Ekronites’ exclamation as an “outcry” (ויזעקו העקרנים, 5:10) spelled with a *zayin* (זעק) rather than a *tsadi* (צעק) is considered by Robert Polzin to be a signal of Late Biblical Hebrew, under the influence of Aramaic (*Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose*, HSM 12 [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976], 137). Cf. 1 Sam 4:13; 7:8–9; 8:18.

[268] Use of the first-person singular pronoun is puzzling in both cases (cf. the plural in 5:7, and the LXX plural in 5:11). One solution is to suppose that the first-person pronoun clarifies the Ashdodites’ sense that the strike is against them alone, not against an ambiguous “us” that could be interpreted to include their addressees, the Philistine *seranim*.

[269] The Ekronites use the epithet אלהי ישראל once in 5:10b, but I take this to be mimicry of the parallel statement in the following verse (see similar discussion of editorial mimicry in 5:1–2 above). האלהים also appears at 5:11bβ, which leads me to suspect that the aside, “The hand of Ha’elohim weighed very heavily there,” is also part of this redaction.

(specifically) five Philistine *seranim* are matched with five named towns: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron—the so-called Philistine Pentapolis.[270] The specificity here is jarring compared to the pattern set by the earlier narrative, and these asides are generally considered to be editorial clarifications. I suspect that 6:1 also belongs to this layer of redaction, for it refers to the "Philistine Plain" (שדה פלשתים) as a unified political realm and shares this layer's concern with numbers—in this case specifying that (the ark of) YHWH was in Philistia for precisely seven months (cf. the "twenty years" of residency at Kiriath Jearim mentioned in 7:2, likely originating from the same scribal hand or community).[271]

Table 3.9: Five Philistine Constituents

(6:4) ויאמרו מה האשם אשר נשיב לו ויאמרו מספר סרני פלשתים חמשה עפלי זהב וחמשה עכברי זהב כי מגפה אחת לכלם ולסרניכם (5) ועשיתם צלמי עפליכם וצלמי עכבריכם המשחיתם את הארץ	(6:4) They said, "What is the reparation-offering that we shall return to him?" They said, "The number of the Philistine authorities: five gold swellings and five gold mice, for one beating is on all of them and on your authorities. (5) You must make images of your swellings and images of your mice, the ones destroying the land.
(6:15) והלוים הורידו את ארון ה׳ ואת הארגז אשר אתו אשר בו כלי זהב וישמו אל האבן הגדולה ואנשי בית שמש העלו עלות ויזבחו זבחים ביום ההוא לה׳ (16) וחמשה סרני פלשתים ראו וישבו עקרון ביום ההוא (17) ואלה טחרי הזהב אשר השיבו פלשתים אשם לה׳ לאשדוד אחד לעזה אחד לאשקלון אחד לגת אחד לעקרון אחד (18) ועכברי הזהב מספר כל ערי פלשתים לחמשת הסרנים מעיר מבצר ועד כפר הפרזי	(6:15) But the Levites took down the ark of YHWH and the box that was with him, which had in it gold vessels, and set them on the great stone. And the people of Beth Shemesh sent up burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices on that day to YHWH. (16) and the five Philistine authorities saw and returned to Ekron on that day. (17) And these are the gold hemorrhoids that Philistines returned as a reparation-offering to YHWH: for Ashdod, one; for Gaza, one; for Ashkelon, one; for Gath, one; for Ekron, one. (18) And the gold mice were the number of all the Philistine towns, for the five authorities: from fortified town to rural village.

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[270] In the Bible, the Philistines are associated with these five towns, but rarely as a collective pentapolis (only Josh 13:3; Judg 3:3; and here in 1 Sam 6:4, 16, 17). Gath is often missing from lists of Philistine towns, which usually include the other four (cf. Jer 25:20; Amos 1:6–8; Zeph 2:4; Zech 9:5–7). See Israel Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible: A Late-Monarchic Perspective," *JSOT* 27.2 (2002): 131–67.

[271] Also notice the shift in 6:1 to use of the tetragrammaton, characteristic of this redactional layer.

In sum, the shifting geopolitical scope of the “Ashdod supplement” affirms the intuition that it has a complex compositional history. There was likely an early version of the supplement that was set entirely in Ashdod. Subsequently, at a time when a pan-Philistine setting was more relevant to the editors of Israel/Judah’s Scriptures, the scope of the divine strike against the Philistines was widened to include Gath and Ekron, representing the whole of Philistia.[272] Still later, this story was tweaked in a few places in order to specifically evoke the Philistine Pentapolis as a more precisely defined political entity.

RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE GODNAPPING NARRATIVE

The presence of duplicated plot elements, clues from textual variants, stylistic patterns, and shifts in geopolitical scope have all pointed toward a complex narrative in 1 Sam 5–6, composed through multiple stages of authorship, compilation, and editing. These patterns of complexity put us in a position to hypothesize a relative chronology of the pericope’s composition, aided by the independence or dependence of various sections, sentences, and phrases in the text.

The Beth Dagon Thread

It can be noted, first of all, that nothing in what I have identified as the Beth Dagon thread (5:2–5; 6:2a, 7aβ–8a, 8bβ–9a, 10–11a, 12a, 13–14, 18b) is dependent upon the Ashdod supplement, or upon anything in 1 Sam 1–4. It succeeds as a hypothetically independent narrative source, beginning with the abduction of YHWH to Beth Dagon, continuing with the confrontation between YHWH and Dagon, resolving with the divination test that sends YHWH back to “his place” (i.e., Beth Shemesh), and concluding with his installation upon the “great stone” at Beth Shemesh (and an etiological summary “to this day,” no less). The only potential exceptions to that independence are the mention of “Ashdodites” in 5:3, and the etiology in 5:5, which emphasizes that the “threshold of Dagon” is in Ashdod. Both of these are readily hypothesized as redactional glosses, inserted later to help weave the Ashdod setting into the Beth Dagon narrative.[273] I am proposing, therefore, that the Beth Dagon thread is the earliest part of the extant narrative.[274]

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[272] Later, in 1 Sam 7:14, “from Ekron to Gath” is used as a merism for the Philistine towns that were “restored to Israel”—implying that the whole of Philistia comprised formerly Israelite towns that had been occupied by the Philistines.

Table 3.10: Beth Dagon thread

(5:2) ויקחו פלשתים את * ... [κυρίου] ויביאו אתו בית דגון ויציגו אתו אצל דגון (3) וישכמו ... ממחרת והנה דגון נפל לפניו ארצה לפני * ה׳ ויקחו את דגון וישבו אתו למקומו (4) וישכמו בבקר ממחרת והנה דגון נפל לפניו ארצה לפני * ה׳ וראש דגון ושתי כפות ידיו כרתות אל המפתן רק דגון נשאר עליו (5) על כן לא ידרכו כהני דגון וכל הבאים בית דגון על מפתן דגון ... עד היום הזה ... (6:2) ויקראו פלשתים לכהנים ולקסמים לאמר מה נעשה ל*ה׳ ... (7) [ויאמרו] קחו ועשו עגלה חדשה אחת ושתי פרות עלות אשר לא עלה עליהם על ואסרתם את הפרות בעגלה והשיבתם בניהם מאחריהם הביתה (8) ולקחתם את * ה׳ ונתתם אתו אל העגלה ... ושלחתם אתו והלך (9) וראיתם אם דרך גבולו יעלה בית	(5:2) And Philistia took * ... [YHWH]. They brought him to Beth Dagon and erected him beside Dagon. (3) They rose early … on the next day, and look! Dagon was falling face down before * YHWH. They took Dagon and returned him to his place. (4) They rose early in the morning on the next day, and look! Dagon was falling face down before * YHWH, and the head of Dagon and the two palms of his hands were severed upon the threshold—only Dagon remained upon it. (5) Therefore, the priests of Dagon and all who enter Beth Dagon will not tread upon the threshold of Dagon … to this day… (6:2) So they called (Philistia) to the priests and to the diviners, as follows: “What shall we do for * YHWH? … (7) [They said,] “Take and make one new cart and two nursing cows, upon whom has not gone up a yoke. You shall bind the cows to the cart and return their calves home from behind them. (8) You shall take * YHWH and put him on the cart … You shall send him away and he will go. (9) You shall see: if he

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[273] Regarding “Ashdodites” in 5:3, it is the only occurrence of this gentilic without the article in the pericope (cf. האשדודים 5:6; אנשי־אשדוד 5:7). In addition, the word disrupts the parallelism of the scenes in the pericope. On the structure of the scene and the odd fit of the word Ashdod, see Firth, “Parallelismus Memborum in Prose Narrative,” 652–53. Regarding “in Ashdod” in 5:5, it may be that the whole etiological statement about stepping over the threshold of Dagon is supplemental. Just as likely, in my opinion, the word באשדוד may be a singular gloss, for it is only necessary in the sentence if one feels there is some ambiguity about the town in question. It fits, therefore, very naturally as a gloss added by the conflator of the two godnapping stories.

[274] In the translation that follows (and others like it below), ellipses [...] indicate material in the final form that has not yet entered the text at this stage. In accordance with my hypothesis of a late “ark” overlay, occurrences of the word ארון in the extant version are marked in earlier layers with an asterisk [*].

שמש הוא עשה לנו את הרעה הגדולה הזאת ואם לא וידענו כי לא ידו נגעה בנו מקרה הוא היה לנו (10) ויעשו האנשים כן ויקחו שתי פרות עלות ויאסרום בעגלה ואת בניהם כלו בבית (11) וישמו את * ה’ אל העגלה … (12) וישרנה הפרות בדרך על דרך בית שמש במסלה אחת הלכו הלך וגעו ולא סרו ימין ושמאול … (13) ובית שמש קצרים קציר חטים בעמק וישאו את עיניהם ויראו את [κιβωτὸν κυρίου] וישמחו לראות (14) והעגלה באה אל שדה יהושע בית השמשי ותעמד שם ושם אבן גדולה ויבקעו את עצי העגלה ואת הפרות העלו עלה לה’ … (18) [ועל האבן] הגדולה … הניחו עליה את * ה’ עד היום הזה בשדה יהושע בית השמשי	goes up the road to his own borderland, that is, to Beth Shemesh, it is he who has done to us this great evil. But if not, then we will know that his hand has not harmed us. A chance is what happened to us. (10) The people did so, and they took two nursing cows and bound them to the cart, and their calves they shut up at home. (11) They put * YHWH in the cart … (12) And the cows went straight along the road to Beth Shemesh. On one course they walked—walking and wailing—and they did not turn right or left. … (13) Now, Beth Shemesh was harvesting the wheat harvest in the valley. They lifted their eyes and saw * [YHWH], and they rejoiced at the sight. (14) And the cart entered the field of Joshua the Beth-Shemeshite. And it stood there. And there was a great stone. They split the wood of the cart, and the cows they sent up as a burnt offering to YHWH. … (18) [And upon the great stone] … they installed * YHWH to this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth-Shemeshite.

A Better Destination: Kiriath Jearim

The Beth Dagon thread comes to a settled conclusion in 6:18b, “And upon the great stone … they rested (the ark of) YHWH to this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth Shemeshite.” This has all the makings of a “happily ever after” ending. It identifies a sacred stone table in Beth Shemesh as the appropriate resting place for YHWH’s image and offers the preceding tale as the foundational legend of Beth Shemesh’s selection by the deity. However, at some later date, this ending was disrupted and revised by an editor who believed that the deity’s proper “place” (מקום) was not Beth Shemesh, but Kiriath Jearim.[275] The new ending composed to accomplish this transition comprises 6:19—7:1.[276] In this revised ending, the Beth Shemeshites are treated as foreigners (just as the Beth Dagonites were), stricken by YHWH for having presumed to host the deity, to stand before and look upon his image in worship (6:19).[277] After a great number of their people were slaughtered, the Beth Shemeshites reach out to Kiriath Jearim.[278] This movement of the deity to Kiriath Jearim is presented as the obvious solution—as if both Beth Shemesh and Kiriath Jearim already know where the deity really belongs.[279] In their message to the people of Kiriath Jearim, the Beth Shemeshites style themselves as mere couriers, middlemen helping YHWH get from Philistia to his rightful home (6:21). There is no anticipation of danger for the people of Kiriath Jearim, for YHWH belongs among them.[280]

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[275] On Kiriath Jearim as the deity’s proper resting place, see Cynthia Edenburg: “The Ark story is thus emplotted along the lines of a quest narrative, which details the trials and tribulations of a hero as they set out from their point of origin until they arrive at their hoped-for destination, which is frequently their home” (“The Radiance [of Yahweh] is Exiled,” 164).

[276] That is, all of 6:19—7:1, except for the instances of the word ארון (a later overlay). 7:2, often included in demarcations of the Ark Narrative, is a later interpolation noting the twenty-year duration of the ark/deity’s residence in Kiriath Jearim (twenty years is a common DtrH chronological framework; it also anticipates the

Table 3.11: Kiriath Jearim supplement

(6:18) ... [ועל האבן] הגדולה ... הניחו עליה את * ה׳ עד היום הזה בשדה יהושע בית השמשי (19) ויך באנשי בית שמש כי ראו ב*ה׳ ויך בעם שבעים איש חמשים אלף איש ויתאבלו העם כי הכה ה׳ בעם מכה גדולה (20) ויאמרו אנשי בית שמש מי יוכל לעמד לפני ה׳ האלהים הקדוש הזה ואל מי יעלה מעלינו (21) וישלחו	(6:18) ... [And upon the great stone] … they installed * YHWH to this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth-Shemeshite. (19) But he struck the people of Beth Shemesh because they had looked upon * YHWH. He struck of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men. And the people mourned because YHWH struck the people with a great strike. (20) Then the people of Beth Shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before YHWH, Ha'elohim, this holy one? And to whom shall he go up from upon us?" (21) They sent

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movement of the ark in 2 Sam 6, which is otherwise not foreshadowed here at all). It is also important to note that 6:19 has a significant variant between the MT and LXX. I find Tur-Sinai's explanation for this variation (and for the strange numbers of casualties) highly plausible. He proposes that *both* the MT copyists *and* the LXX translators misread the Hebrew text before them. Tur-Sinai's hypothetical reconstruction reads: ולא נקו בנכן ה׳ באנשי בית שמש ויך בעם שב עם איש המשם אלף איש "There was no one unpunished in YHWH's smiting of the people of Beth Shemesh. He smote of the people old men and warrior, one thousand men" (Tur-Sinai, "Ark of God at Beit Shemesh"). For an alternative solution, see McCarter, *I Samuel*, 131.

[277] On the use of ראו ב- to indicate "looked upon" rather than "looked into" (as is often supposed), see Marti J. Steussy, *Samuel and His God* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 23.

[278] The omission of עפלים or טחרים in the description of the strike against the Beth Shemeshites may support the notion that the Ashdod plague story postdates the Beth Shemesh/Kiriath Jearim version of the narrative.

[279] Frolov reads Kiriath Jearim as a "non-Israelite" (Gibeonite) city, with reference to Josh 9:17 (*The Turn of the Cycle*, 138). In this way, the proper "home" of the ark is not at issue; rather, the story shows that the deity is not biased in favor of Israel (or Israelite territory). Frolov's argument only holds, however, if the non-Israelite status of Kiriath Jearim was maintained in the era when this story was written—if, e.g., it was composed under the aegis of Jeroboam II, then Kiriath Jearim would have been a model Israelite locale (see Chapter VII).

[280] On a stylistic level, note that this Kiriath Jearim supplement shares with the Beth Dagon thread a stylistic preference for detached object pronouns (העלו אתו, 6:21; ויבאו אתו, 7:1), in contrast to some later layers.

מלאכים אל יושבי קרית יערים לאמר השבו פלשתים את * ה' רדו העלו אתו אליכם (7:1) ויבאו אנשי קרית יערים ויעלו את * ה' ויבאו אתו אל בית אבינדב בגבעה ואת אלעזר בנו קדשו לשמר את * ה'	messengers to the residents of Kiriath Jearim, saying: "Philistia returned * YHWH. Come down. Bring him up to yourselves." (7:1) The people of Kiriath Jearim came and took up * YHWH and brought him into the house of Abinadab, on the hill. El'azar, his son, they consecrated to guard * YHWH.

Earliest Ashdod Material

While a complete Ashdod-based godnapping narrative cannot be satisfactorily extracted from the extant text, parts of what I have termed the "Ashdod supplement" may preserve an independent tradition about a crisis at Ashdod (having nothing to do with the divine contest at Beth Dagon). Whether this tale of a plague crisis at Ashdod had an independent written life or was composed *ad hoc* (as part of a redactional supplement to the Beth Dagon thread) is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, 5:6 (MT, cf. 5:3 LXX) introduces a crisis in Ashdod without any explicit reference to the business with Dagon. The story continues in 5:7 with the reaction of the people of Ashdod to this crisis: They *saw* what was going on, so they proposed to send the god of Israel away. The immediate impetus for the expulsion of Israel's god is the outbreak of swellings in and around Ashdod—this is what the people *saw* in 5:6, which led them to conclude that the hand of Israel's god was hard upon them.[281] The addition of the phrase "and upon Dagon our god" at 5:7bγ, tagged syntactically to the end of the sentence, is a redactional insertion to support the later interweaving of the two primary threads. The insertion is a minimal intervention, for Dagon is never mentioned again in the pericope, which from this point forward forgets him and focuses exclusively on the plague crisis (swellings in the MT; swellings, ships, and mice in the LXX).[282]

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[281] Close readers of the pericope will be surprised to encounter the adjective קשתה here for the hand of Israel's god, where we would expect to find כבדה. Indeed, the "heavy hand of the Lord" becomes a kind of *Leitwort* in the so-called Ark Narrative (cf. Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*). The use of "hardness" here, and the missed opportunity to sound the refrain of "heaviness"—*pace* Miller and Roberts, who call it "an unexceptional synonym" (*The Hand of the Lord*, 65)—makes me suspect that the refrain about the heavy hand of YHWH likely represents a redactionally imposed structure, while this line about the "hardness" of the hand of Israel's god likely predates the redaction. My proposal that the "hand of YHWH" is a later editorial framework is supported by the distribution of divine epithets: the early Ashdod thread uses אלהי ישראל exclusively. Only the phrase 'יד־ה' introduces the tetragrammaton (5:6, 9; cf. יד האלהים in 4:8; 5:11).

As the narrative shifts to a consultation with the Philistine *seranim* (5:8a), there is no look back to Dagon. However, the question posed to the *seranim* in 5:8b, "What shall we do for (the ark of) the god of Israel?" is remarkably similar to the question asked of the priests and diviners in the Beth Dagon thread, "What shall we do for (the ark of) YHWH?" (6:2), the shift of divine epithet notwithstanding. Moreover, the section that begins with the summoning of the Philistine *seranim* concludes with a second summons at 5:11a. This *inclusio*, and the literary dependence of 5:8b upon 6:2, lead me to conclude that 5:8–11a are supplemental. The earlier version of the Ashdod thread likely progressed directly from the stated problem in 5:7b(α–β), "Do not let * the god of Israel dwell with us, for his hand is hard upon us," to the stated solution in 5:11b, "[Rather,] send away * the god of Israel, that he may return to his own place…." This earlier version seems to be independent of the Beth Dagon material, and therefore may reflect an independent tradition set at Ashdod. Once again, the perceived threat in this early narrative has nothing to do with Dagon and everything to do with the deadly plague: "'Let him return to his own place and not kill me and my people!' For there was a deathly panic in the whole town" (5:11b). It may be that the last of the independent Ashdod material in the extant text is found in 5:12b, with the note that "the town's rescue-cry rose to the heavens."[283]

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[282] There is one other reference to Philistine gods in the pericope at the end of 6:5, "Perhaps he will lighten his hand from upon you *and from upon your gods* and from upon your land." It is odd for Philistine priests to refer to "*your* gods." Critically, Dagon is not singled out, despite the focus of 5:1–5. Instead, this line speaks of the gods, generically, assuming that they, *de facto*, share the fate of the people in their assault of swellings.

[283] This last note may prompt readers' sympathy for the Philistines, since in the Hebrew Bible it is often the Israelites whose cries rise to the heavens, and are answered by divine assistance (e.g., Exod 2:23; but cf. the Israelite deity's attentiveness to the cry of the Ninevites in Jonah). For an interpretation of the story that suggests that Israel's god hears and responds favorably to the Philistines' cry by recalling the ark to Israelite territory, see Peter R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 56; Gnana Robinson,

Table 3.12: Earliest Ashdod material

(5:6) ... ויך אתם בעפלים את אשדוד ואת גבוליה [καὶ ἐπήγαγεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐξέζεσεν αὐτοῖς εἰς τὰς ναῦς, καὶ μέσον τῆς χώρας αὐτῆς ἀνεφύησαν μύες, καὶ ἐγένετο σύγχυσις θανάτου μεγάλη ἐν τῇ πόλει] (7) ויראו אנשי אשדוד כי כן ואמרו לא ישב * אלהי ישראל עמנו כי קשתה ידו עלינו ... (11) ... שלחו את * אלהי ישראל וישב למקמו ולא ימית אתי ואת עמי כי היתה מהומת מות בכל העיר ... (12) ... ותעל שועת העיר השמים ...	(5:6) ... And he struck them with swellings, Ashdod and its borderlands. [LXX: “(6) and he afflicted them and burst out against them on their ships (or ‘in their affliction’). And in the midst of their land arose mice, such that there was a great panic of death in the town.”] (7) The people of Ashdod saw that it was so, and said, “Do not let * the god of Israel dwell with us, for his hand is hard upon us ...” (11) ... “Send away * the god of Israel, that he may return to his own place and not kill me and my people!” For there was a deathly panic in the whole town ... (12) ... and the town’s rescue-cry rose to the heavens ...

Conflating the Beth Dagon and Ashdod Threads

When the Beth Dagon godnapping tale was adapted into an Ashdod-based story (whether the plague narrative was preexistent or composed for this purpose), several changes needed to be made to the received text. This is likely when, for example, the gloss אשדודים was added to 5:3a to clarify that the worshipers at the “house” of Dagon were Ashdodites. Later in the story, a scene in which the Ashdodites are advised to process Israel’s god around (5:7bγ–11a)[284] was added to clarify that mitigation measures had already been attempted by the Philistine *seranim*—to no avail—before the priests and diviners (from the Beth Dagon thread) were consulted in 1 Sam 6. Indeed, each reference to the Philistine *seranim* in this narrative (when unnumbered) may be included in this redactional layer (5:8, 11a; 6:12b; cf. 7:7). The appeal to a political federation that includes both Ashdod and Beth Dagon (at least as a suburban outpost of greater Ashdod) and

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Let Us Be like the Nations: A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel, ITC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 36–37; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 52.

[284] However, I assign parts of this interlude to later redactions, including the word גת in 5:8, the phrase יד־ה׳ in 5:9, all of 5:10, and each instance of ארון. See below for further discussion of these redactions.

to political leaders of the federation, may reflect a social context that was more regionally or nationally oriented than the more parochial earlier source material evinces.[285]

Along with the "processional" interlude, a great deal of additional material helps weave the two primary threads together. This supportive material can be identified by its dependence upon both the core Ashdod-based material and the Beth Dagon thread, and the identification can be bolstered by stylistic considerations. The clearest examples are found in 6:3–5 and in the second halves of 6:8 and 6:11. Regarding 6:3–5, the instructions to build and return a reparation offering (אשם) to Israel's god presupposes that the instructions are being given by priestly consultants, who are present in the narrative as part of the Beth Dagon thread (cf. 6:2).[286] However, the purpose of a reparation offering is to pacify an angry deity. This purpose coheres with the Ashdod plague crisis, which explicitly names Israel's god as the offended party. But a reparation offering does not quite cohere with the crisis at Beth Dagon, for which culpability has not been established—hence the need for the divination test! The instructions for building a cart and seeing where it goes have nothing to do with appeasing the offended deity. Rather, their purpose was to discern if YHWH was really behind the crisis (the toppling of Dagon) or if the fall of their god was by chance. Therefore, the insertion of instructions for appeasing Israel's god via offerings actually dilutes the clear purpose of the divination test, asserted in 6:9.[287] The Ashdodites' gold images ride along on the divination cart, which now serves two not-quitereconcilable purposes. This amendment to the instructions from the priests and diviners regarding the building of golden swellings and mice is reinforced with interpolations in 6:8 and 6:11, reminding readers that the cart bore not only YHWH, but also the articles of the reparation offering. These interpolations turn originally concise descriptions into long, complex sentences with multiple subordinations—another indicator that the attached clauses are very likely secondary.[288]

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[285] Israel Finkelstein, for example, proposes the 7th century as the *terminus a quo* for references to the *seranim*, based on etymological connections to the Greek τύραννος ("The Philistines in the Bible," 136–37).

[286] Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 148. Cf., however, McCarter's proposal that אשם is "compensation paid as protection against further suffering" and that כבוד in 6:5 should be translated "tribute" (McCarter, *I Samuel*, 133).

[287] As noted by Peter R. Ackroyd: "There seems to be more than one element in the story: (1) the provision of an indemnity, and offering to remove the anger of Israel's God; (2) a scheme to discover whether the disaster is really to be attributed to him. The two are harmonized in the present narrative, but in reality they represent somewhat different approaches to the theme" (*The First Book of Samuel*, 58).

Finally, the *seranim* (who had disappeared from the narrative without explanation after 5:11) reappear briefly in 6:12b, trailing behind the cart as far as the border of Beth Shemesh. This sentence is marked as a parenthetical aside by use of a subject-verb syntactical order and a participle (הלכים). While their role here is not essential to the plot, the presence of the *seranim* near the end of the pericope functions as a kind of inclusio, completing the conflation of the Beth Dagon and Ashdod narrative threads.

Table 3.13: Conflation of the Beth Dagon thread and Ashdod supplement

(5:2) ויקחו פלשתים את * ... [κυρίου] ויביאו אתו בית דגון ויציגו אתו אצל דגון (3) וישכמו *אשדודים* ממחרת והנה דגון נפל לפניו ארצה לפני * ה׳ ויקחו את דגון וישבו אתו למקומו [καὶ ἐβασάνισεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐπάταξεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὰς ἕδρας αὐτῶν, τὴν Ἄζωτον καὶ τὰ ὅρια αὐτῆς. καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε] (4) וישכמו בבקר ממחרת והנה דגון נפל לפניו ארצה לפני * ה׳ וראש דגון ושתי כפות ידיו כרתות אל המפתן רק דגון נשאר עליו ... (6) ... ויך אתם בעפלים את אשדוד ואת גבוליה [καὶ ἐπήγαγεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐξέζεσεν αὐτοῖς εἰς τὰς ναῦς, καὶ μέσον τῆς χώρας αὐτῆς ἀνεφύησαν μύες, καὶ	(5:2) And Philistia took * ... [YHWH] and they brought him to Beth Dagon and erected him beside Dagon. (3) They rose early *(Ashdodites)* on the next day, and look! Dagon was falling face down before * YHWH. They took Dagon and returned him to his place. [LXX: "... And he tortured them and struck them on their seats, Ashdod and its borderlands. So it was, that"] (4) they rose early in the morning on the next day, and look! Dagon was falling face down before * YHWH, and the head of Dagon and the two palms of his hands were severed upon the threshold—only Dagon remained upon it. ... (6) ... And he struck them with swellings, Ashdod and its borderlands. [LXX: "(6) and he afflicted them and burst out against them on their ships (or 'in their affliction'). And in the midst of their land arose mice, such that there was a great panic of death in the town."]

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[288] I have also included 6:9b in this redaction, based primarily on the elaborate style produced by multiple subordinations. It remains possible, however, that 6:9b was part of the original Beth Dagon thread.

ἐγένετο σύγχυσις θανάτου μεγάλη ἐν τῇ πόλει] (7) ויראו אנשי אשדוד כי כן ואמרו לא ישב * אלהי ישראל עמנו כי קשתה ידו עלינו

*ועל דגון אלהינו (8) וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים אליהם ויאמרו מה נעשה ל*אלהי ישראל ויאמרו ... יסב * אלהי ישראל ויסבו את * אלהי ישראל (9) ויהי אחרי הסבו אתו ותהי ... בעיר מהומה גדולה מאד ויך את אנשי העיר מקטן ועד גדול וישתרו להם עפלים ... (11) וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים ויאמרו*

שלחו את * אלהי ישראל וישב למקמו ולא ימית אתי ואת עמי כי היתה מהומת מות בכל העיר ... (12) ... ותעל שועת העיר השמים ...

(6:2) ויקראו פלשתים לכהנים ולקסמים לאמר מה נעשה ל*ה׳ ... (3) ויאמרו

*אם משלחים את * אלהי ישראל אל תשלחו אתו ריקם כי השב תשיבו לו אשם אז תרפאו ונודע לכם למה לא תסור ידו מכם (4) ויאמרו מה האשם אשר נשיב לו ויאמרו ... (5) ועשיתם צלמי עפליכם וצלמי עכבריכם המשחיתם את הארץ ונתתם לאלהי ישראל כבוד אולי יקל את ידו מעליכם ומעל אלהיכם ומעל ארצכם (7) ועתה*

קחו ועשו עגלה חדשה אחת ושתי פרות עלות אשר לא עלה עליהם על ואסרתם את הפרות בעגלה והשיבתם בניהם מאחריהם הביתה (8) ולקחתם את * ה׳ ונתתם אתו אל העגלה

ואת כלי הזהב אשר השבתם לו אשם תשימו בארגז מצדו

ושלחתם אתו והלך (9) וראיתם אם דרך גבולו יעלה בית שמש הוא עשה לנו את הרעה הגדולה הזאת

ואם לא וידענו כי לא ידו נגעה בנו מקרה הוא היה לנו

(10) ויעשו האנשים כן ויקחו שתי פרות עלות ויאסרום בעגלה ואת בניהם כלו בבית (11) וישמו את * ה׳ אל העגלה

ואת הארגז ואת עכברי הזהב ואת צלמי טחריהם

(7) The people of Ashdod saw that it was so, and said, “Do not let * the god of Israel dwell with us, for his hand is hard upon us

*and upon Dagon our god. (8) They reached out and gathered all the Philistine authorities to themselves, and said, “What shall we do for * the god of Israel?” And they said ... “Let * the god of Israel process around.” So, they processed around * the god of Israel. (9) So it was, after they processed him around, that there was ... in the town a very great panic. For he struck the people of the town, from the least to the greatest, and swellings broke out on them.... (11) They reached out and gathered all the Philistine authorities, and said,*

“Send away * the god of Israel, that he may return to his own place and not kill me and my people!” For there was a deathly panic in the whole town ... (12) ... and the town’s rescue-cry rose to the heavens ...

(6:2) So they called (Philistia) to the priests and to the diviners, as follows: “What shall we do for * YHWH? ... (3) And they said,

*“If you are sending away * the god of Israel, do not send him away emptyhanded, for you must return (oh, return!) to him a reparation-offering. Then, you will be healed, and it will be made known to you why his hand will not turn from you.” (4) They said, “What is the reparation-offering that we shall return to him?” They said, ... (5) You must make images of your swellings and images of your mice, the ones destroying the land. You shall give honor to the god of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from upon you and from upon your gods and from upon your land.... (7) So now,*

Take and make one new cart and two nursing cows, upon whom has not gone up a yoke. You shall bind the cows to the cart and return their calves home from behind them. (8) You shall take * YHWH and put him on the cart,

and the gold vessels, which you have returned to him as a reparation-offering, put in the box at his side.

You shall send him away and he will go. (9) You shall see: If he goes up the road to his own borderland, that is, to Beth Shemesh, it is he who has done to us this great evil.

But if not, then we will know that his hand has not harmed us. A chance is what happened to us.

(10) The people did so, and they took two nursing cows and bound them to the cart, and their calves they shut up at home. (11) They put * YHWH in the cart,

(12) וישרנה הפרות בדרך על דרך בית שמש במסלה אחת הלכו הלך וגעו ולא סרו ימין ושמאול *וסרני פלשתים הלכים אחריהם עד גבול בית שמש* (13) ובית שמש קצרים קציר חטים בעמק וישאו את עיניהם ויראו את [κιβωτὸν κυρίου] וישמחו לראות (14) והעגלה באה אל שדה יהושע בית השמשי ותעמד שם ושם אבן גדולה ויבקעו את עצי העגלה ואת הפרות העלו עלה לה' ... (18) [ועל האבן] הגדולה ... הניחו עליה את * ה' עד היום הזה בשדה יהושע בית השמשי (19) ויך באנשי בית שמש כי ראו ב*ה' ויך בעם שבעים איש חמשים אלף איש ויתאבלו העם כי הכה ה' בעם מכה גדולה (20) ויאמרו אנשי בית שמש מי יוכל לעמד לפני ה' האלהים הקדוש הזה ואל מי יעלה מעלינו (21) וישלחו מלאכים אל יושבי קרית יערים לאמר השבו פלשתים את * ה' רדו העלו אתו אליכם (7:1) ויבאו אנשי קרית יערים ויעלו את * ה' ויבאו אתו אל בית אבינדב בגבעה ואת אלעזר בנו קדשו לשמר את * ה'	*and the box and the gold mice and the images of their hemorrhoids.* (12) And the cows went straight along the road to Beth Shemesh. On one course they walked—walking and wailing—and they did not turn right or left. *And the Philistine authorities were walking behind them to the border of Beth Shemesh.* (13) Now, Beth Shemesh was harvesting the wheat harvest in the valley. They lifted their eyes and saw * [LXX: "YHWH"] and they rejoiced at the sight. (14) And the cart entered the field of Joshua the Beth-Shemeshite. And it stood there. And there was a great stone. They split the wood of the cart, and the cows they sent up as a burnt offering to YHWH. And upon the great stone ... they installed * YHWH to this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth Shemeshite. (19) But he struck the people of Beth Shemesh because they had looked upon * YHWH. He struck of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men. And the people mourned because YHWH struck the people with a great strike. (20) Then the people of Beth Shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before YHWH, Ha'elohim, this holy one? And to whom shall he go up from upon us?" (21) They sent messengers to the residents of Kiriath Jearim, saying: "Philistia returned * YHWH. Come down. Bring him up to yourselves." (7:1) The people of Kiriath Jearim came and took up * YHWH and brought him into the house of Abinadab, on the hill. El'azar, his son, they consecrated to guard * YHWH.

Pan-Philistine Supplements

The conflated godnapping narratives appear to have been further expanded by a layer of redaction that is ideologically marked by its pan-Philistine outlook, and stylistically marked by the use of the divine epithet האלהים and a preference for verbally suffixed direct object pronouns. As I explore below in Chapter VI, this scribal hand may also be responsible for supplements found in 1 Sam 1–4; 7–8. In 1 Sam 5–6, this layer is evident in 5:1, which (as discussed above) duplicated and adapted 5:2 in order to reframe the whole godnapping narrative as an extended denouement to the failed battles at Ebenezer.[289] The lateness of 5:1 relative to 5:2 is supported by the presence of a verbally suffixed object (ויבאהו) in 5:1, whereas the parallel verb in 5:2 retains the separated object of an earlier style (ויביאו אתו). 5:1 also reorients the conflict with Dagon geographically in the town of Ashdod, effectively annexing Beth Dagon (literarily) as a mere temple house within the borders of greater Ashdod.[290]

The same hand is likely responsible for the expansion of the "procession interlude" (5:8–11a) into a pan-Philistine episode that includes Gath and Ekron (adding 5:8b "גת"; 5:10, 11bβ–12a).[291] In addition to expanding the geopolitical scope of the narrative, the epithet used for the Israelite deity in this expansion abruptly shifts to האלהים (5:10, 11).[292] The latter piece of the expansion (5:11bβ–12a) clarifies that the Ekronites' protestations against bringing Ha'elohim to their town were to no avail; the hand of Ha'elohim weighed heavily *there* (שם) as well, leading to many deaths and the ubiquitous swellings. The effect of this clarification is that "the town" whose rescue cry goes up to the heavens (5:12b) becomes reinterpreted as Ekron, rather than Ashdod (as it would have been in the earlier version).

Finally, in the second Philistine consultation (with the priests and diviners), the advisors digress to reflect theologically on the parallel between the Philistines' experience and the Egyptians' experience as found in the Israelite Exodus narrative (6:6). There are a number of allusions to the Book of Exodus in 1 Sam 1–8, transcending the redactional seams where the so-called Ark Narrative is stitched into the fabric of the Samuel narrative. As I will discuss more fully below (see Chapter VIII of this dissertation), when discernable, these allusions to the Exodus narrative share the present layer's pan-Philistine geopolitical outlook and prefer the epithet האלהים for Israel's god. Therefore, while 6:6 does not evince these features explicitly, it belongs by virtue of its strong Exodus allusion to that body of redactional material.[293]

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[289] Porzig also sees 5:1 as a "redaktionelles Verbindugsstück," but he reverses the relative compositional order from what I present here (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 143). For Porzig, 1 Sam 5 is later than 1 Sam 4.

[290] Possibly, this redactor could have also added the subject of 5:2 (פלשתים), overwriting a more parochial gentilic *בית הדגונים. This is, however, pure speculation. The residents of Beth Dagon may very well have been considered Philistines by the Beth Shemeshite author of the Beth Dagon thread.

[291] Gath is a surprising inclusion, given its fairly early historical decline. Finkelstein suggests that its presence here may preserve a 10th century memory of Gath's significance ("The Philistines in the Bible," 155–56); alternatively, it may reflect a historical moment when Gath was considered part of greater Ekron, perhaps shortly after it was transferred to Ekronite control by Sennacherib (ibid., 140).

[292] That is, except in 5:10b where אלהי ישראל is used in a line parroting the speech found in 5:11b after the *Wiederaufnahme*.

Table 3.14: Pan-Philistine supplements

(5:1) ופלשתים לקחו את * האלהים ויבאהו מאבן העזר אשדודה	(5:1) Philistia took * Ha'elohim, and they brought him from Ebenezer to Ashdod.
(2) ויקחו פלשתים את * ... [κυρίου] ויביאו אתו בית דגון ויציגו אתו אצל דגון	(2) And Philistia took * ... [YHWH] and they brought him to Beth Dagon, and erected him beside Dagon.
[... *no change in 5:3–7* ...]	[... *no change in 5:3–7* ...]
(8) וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים אליהם ויאמרו מה נעשה ל*אלהי ישראל ויאמרו	(8) They reached out and gathered all the Philistine authorities to themselves, and said, "What shall we do for * the god of Israel?" And they said,
גת	"Gath!
יסב * אלהי ישראל ויסבו את * אלהי ישראל (9) ויהי אחרי הסבו אתו ותהי ... בעיר מהומה גדולה מאד ויך את אנשי העיר מקטן ועד גדול וישתרו להם עפלים	"Let * the god of Israel process around." So, they processed around * the god of Israel. (9) So it was, after they processed him around, that there was ... in the town a very great panic. For he struck the people of the town, from the least to the greatest, and swellings broke out on them.
(10) וישלחו את * האלהים עקרון ויהי כבוא * האלהים עקרון ויזעקו העקרנים לאמר הסבו אלי את * אלהי ישראל להמיתני ואת עמי	(10) Then, they sent away * Ha'elohim to Ekron. So it was, as * Ha'elohim entered Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, as follows: "They have processed * the god of Israel around to me to kill me and my people!"
(11) וישלחו ויאספו את כל סרני פלשתים ויאמרו שלחו את * אלהי ישראל וישב למקמו ולא ימית אתי ואת עמי כי היתה מהומת מות בכל העיר	(11) They reached out and gathered all the Philistine authorities, and said, "Send away * the god of Israel, that he may return to his own place and not kill me and my people!" For there was a deathly panic in the whole town—
כבדה מאד יד האלהים שם (12) והאנשים אשר לא מתו הכו בעפלים	The hand of Ha'elohim weighed very heavily there, (12) such that the people who did not die were stricken with swellings,
ותעל שועת העיר השמים ... (6:2) ויקראו פלשתים לכהנים ולקסמים לאמר מה נעשה ל*ה' ... (3) ויאמרו אם משלחים את * אלהי ישראל אל תשלחו אתו ריקם	and the town's rescue-cry rose to the heavens ... (6:2) So they called (Philistia) to the priests and to the diviners, as follows: "What shall we do for * YHWH? ... (3) And they said, "If you are sending away * the god of Israel, do not send him away

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[293] Another clue to the probable lateness of 6:6 in this pericope is its use of a verbally suffixed object (וישלחום).

כי השב תשיבו לו אשם אז תרפאו ונודע לכם למה לא תסור ידו מכם (4) ויאמרו מה האשם אשר נשיב לו ויאמרו ... (5) ועשיתם צלמי עפליכם וצלמי עכבריכם המשחיתם את הארץ ונתתם לאלהי ישראל כבוד אולי יקל את ידו מעליכם ומעל אלהיכם ומעל ארצכם (6) ולמה תכבדו את לבבכם כאשר כבדו מצרים ופרעה את לבם הלוא כאשר התעלל בהם וישלחום וילכו (7) ועתה קחו ועשו עגלה חדשה אחת ושתי פרות עלות אשר לא עלה עליהם על ואסרתם את הפרות בעגלה והשיבתם בניהם מאחריהם הביתה ...	emptyhanded, for you must return (oh, return!) to him a reparation-offering. Then, you will be healed, and it will be made known to you why his hand will not turn from you.” (4) They said, “What is the reparation-offering that we shall return to him?” They said, ... (5) You must make images of your swellings and images of your mice, the ones destroying the land. You shall give honor to the god of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from upon you and from upon your gods and from upon your land. (6) For why would you weigh down your heart just as Egypt and Pharaoh weighed down their heart? Was it not when he toyed them that they sent them away and they left? (7) So now, take and make one new cart and two nursing cows, upon whom has not gone up a yoke. You shall bind the cows to the cart and return their calves home from behind them. ...

Latest Supplements

A handful of additional supplements appear to have made their way into the text lately. They may represent a unified redactional layer, or they may have been introduced singly, *ad hoc*. These supplements are stylistically and ideologically distinct from the layers already discussed, but they do not necessarily cohere together with each other.

5:6a (MT; 5:3a LXX); 5:9;* These verses introduce the “hand of YHWH” motif as a summary statement of the crises in Ashdod and Gath, respectively. The use of the tetragrammaton here distinguishes these lines from the rest of the Ashdod-oriented material, which uses אלהי ישראל and האלהים exclusively. Additional clues mark these lines as relatively late: 5:6a uses a verbally suffixed object (וישמם), whereas the earliest Ashdod thread uses detached object pronouns (for example, even in the very next clause: ויך אתם). Moreover, the insertion of יד ה' in 5:9 leads to awkward syntax in the resulting line: ויהי [...] בעיר מהומה גדולה מאד “There was in the town a very great panic,” becomes ויהי יד ה' בעיר מהומה גדולה מאד “The hand of

YHWH was against the town, a very great panic."[294] The meaning of the line is still intelligible in the resulting text, but its strained syntax may be the result of wrenching the "hand of YHWH" motif into the sentence.

6:1, 4b, 16–18a; 7:2; The use of a new/unique geographic term in 6:1 (שדה פלשתים), which is not elsewhere in the story recapitulated, and the concern here for precise duration markers ("seven months") suggest that this line is a late addition. This is likely the same editorial hand that clarified the number ("five") of the Philistine *seranim*, golden swellings, and golden mice in 6:4b, closed the narrative loop with the five *seranim* in 6:16,[295] and composed the tally of golden hemorrhoids (טחרים rather than עפלים in this instance) and mice in 6:17–18a.[296] I also suspect that the note about the deity's twenty-year residency in Kiriath Jearim (7:2) derives from the same editor.[297]

6:2b; The simple question posed to the priests and diviners, "What shall we do for YHWH?" (6:2a) is extended with the additional demand: "Inform us, with what shall we send him away to his place?" (6:2b). In addition to the use of a verbal suffix on the imperative (הודענו, cf. the detached object אתו in the following verse), the additional question steals the priests' thunder, proleptically anticipating their advice not to send Israel's god away emptyhanded. The line was probably added to fill the gap between the open-ended question "What shall we do for

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[294] Note the difficulty felt by NRSV translators, who introduced an extra verb to the received text here: "the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic."

[295] The final remark in 6:16, "on that day" (ביום ההוא), sounds a note of resolution to the plotline involving the *seranim*—despite the fact that the fate of the Philistines with respect to their plague is left unnarrated. Cf. ביום ההוא used to convey a sense of resolution several times in the Deuteronomistic History, including Josh 4:14; 9:27; 24:25; Judg 3:30; 4:23; 1 Sam 31:6; 1 Kgs 16:16.

[296] The style of following the name of each town with the tally note אחד "one" is strikingly reminiscent of the list of conquered kings that forms Joshua 12. Perhaps a similar literary motive inspired both, or perhaps they were even composed by the same hand. The use of the term, טחרים, which is the *qere* throughout the earlier part of the narrative, is another sign of the lateness of this summary.

[297] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 142; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 66.

YHWH?" and the assumption embedded in the response that they are already planning to expel the deity: "If you are sending away … the god of Israel…" (6:3).

6:15a; The appearance of the Levites as handlers of the ark stands out as a late insertion, since there is no other mention of them in the pericope.[298] Their intrusion here seems to depend on the tradition that the Levites were the only authorized handlers of the ark. Furthermore, I note that this insertion appears to be marked with a *Wiederaufnahme* in the repetition of העלו עלה (עלות) ... לה' in 6:14b, 15b.

Finally, the word ארון was overlaid throughout the pericope (as discussed in the previous chapter), a redaction that belongs somewhere within this latest round of supplements. Within these late supplements, the word "ark" appears four times: 6:1, 13b, 15; 7:2. Of these, only 6:15 and 7:2 are likely to have been added after the "ark" overlay.[299]

CONCLUSION: RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

A careful reading of the narrative doublets, continuity issues, authorial style, and geopolitical scope of 1 Sam 5–6 has led to a plausible relative chronology for the development of the core Ark Narrative in 1 Samuel. The most prominent features of the Beth Dagon thread and the Kiriath Jearim supplement seem contained to these chapters. However, later layers explored above share elements of style and plot that are characteristic of the larger narrative in 1 Sam 1–8. Therefore, to fill out the story of the Ark Narrative's complex composition, it is necessary to also attend to the composition of its wider context in 1 Samuel. The following chapters (IV and V) will consider the development of the Samuel thread in 1 Sam 1–3; 7–8. Then, Chapter VI will examine 1 Sam 4—traditionally understood as the introduction to the Ark Narrative—as the site where many of these disparate literary traditions collide.

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[298] Klein, *1 Samuel*, 55; Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled," 158. Porzig suggests that the presence of the Levites here may be a sign of post-Chronistic redaction of 1 Samuel ("Postchronistic Traces in the Narratives about the Ark?," 94–95).

[299] 6:15, due to the traditional association of the Levites as handlers of the ark; 7:2, because the ark is invoked without an associated divine epithet.

CHAPTER IV
SAMUEL: PRIESTLY PROTÉGÉ AND PROPHET (1 SAM 1–3)

The compositional complexity evident in the so-called Ark Narrative in 1 Sam 5–6 is inseparable from the dialogic diachrony underlying the whole of 1 Sam 1–8. To appreciate the layered dimensionality of the Ark Narrative, it is necessary to untangle the threads in 1 Sam 1–3; 4; and 7–8, and to consider which ones have been woven into the story about the adventures of the divine image. The present chapter follows the Samuel thread and its interaction with the Elide saga in 1 Sam 1–3. The following chapter picks up Samuel's story in 1 Sam 7–8. Then I will return to 1 Sam 4 to put the pieces together with the Ark Narrative.

SAMUEL AND THE ELIDES IN THE EXTANT TEXT

In 1 Sam 1–3, the figure of Samuel is regularly viewed in appositional contrast with Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons. Samuel is faithful, well-regarded by both YHWH and the people, and learns to become attentive to YHWH's word. Hophni and Phinehas, on the other hand, are unfaithful, ill-regarded by the people, targets of divine anger, and they prove inattentive to YHWH's word as expressed in cultic regulations and the counsel of their father. The contrast is accentuated by several sudden shifts of narrative scene, from glimpses into Samuel's development as an apprentice or assistant at the temple in Shiloh to scenes in which Eli's wayward sons profane their own service at the temple. Crucially, the contrast is starkest in 1 Sam 4, which describes an ill-fated military campaign against the Philistines that results in the death of Eli's sons (and then Eli himself, along with his daughter-in-law) as well as the Philistine capture of the ark. While Eli, Hophni, and Phineas are deeply enmeshed in this chapter, and meet their ends here, Samuel is conspicuously absent. This is remarkable since, at the end of 1 Sam 3, Samuel attains a position of notoriety throughout the land, not least in Shiloh where YHWH continues to appear to him (3:19–20). Therefore, Samuel's unexcused absence from Shiloh in 4:12–22 is highly suggestive that these threads were authored independently from one another.[300] When the dust has settled in 1 Sam 4, Hophni and Phinehas have met untimely deaths (and their father has met a timely, albeit sudden, death), while Samuel goes on to lead Israel to success against their enemies and later plays a central role as a divine agent in the rise of the Israelite monarchy.

On a narrative level, though Eli himself is highly involved in the young Samuel's story, Eli's sons and Samuel play no part in each other's stories, nor betray any knowledge of one another, despite their shared home.[301] They are nevertheless connected on the literary level by some shared vocabulary and thematic motifs. Both Samuel and Eli's sons are called נערים, "boys."[302] Both sets of characters are also addressed as בנים, though in the case of Eli's vocative address to Samuel as בני, "my son" (3:6, 16), the term is likely included as a form of polite address from an elder to a junior (cf. 4:16). Nevertheless, in the literary context of the contrast between Samuel and Eli's biological sons, this passing note of competition for Eli's legacy may have been intentionally sounded for rhetorical effect.

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[300] However, cf. Peter D. Miscall, who takes Samuel's absence to be a narrative qualification of his exalted position in 3:20. Miscall reads 4:1 and 4:3 as missed opportunities for Israel to appropriately consult the deity via Samuel the prophet (*1 Samuel: A Literary Reading*, ISBL [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986], 26). Such a reading offers an explanation for the problem in canonical context, but it does not argue against a compositional origin for the problem. See also David G. Firth, who argues that "Although Samuel will not be mentioned in the ark narrative itself, his authority hangs over it, and the outworking of his word concerning Eli and his family is thus an important component within it" ("Play It Again, Sam," 9). Firth, however, assumes the unity of 1 Sam 4 with 1 Sam 5–6, and his conclusion begs the question by reading Samuel's authority into part of the text that does not claim it.

[301] The exceptions to this rule are found in 1:3, where Hophni and Phinehas are identified as priests at Shiloh (though they play no role in Hannah's tale), and 3:13, where Samuel is told by YHWH that Eli's downfall is tied to the transgression of Eli's sons (though they are not named or numbered in this instance).

[302] The term, however, may have a more vocational than developmental connotation in this context, especially combined with the participle משרת, "serving" (cf. Joshua's adult role vis-à-vis Moses in Exod 33:11, *passim*). Therefore, Samuel's, Hophni's, and Phinehas's relative ages in the story remain ambiguous (Eli's sons are called נערים *and* אנשים in the same verse [2:17], although the latter is omitted in LXX and 4QSam^a). On נער as a *terminus technicus* for a subordinate temple servant, see Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, Analecta Biblica 35 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 74–75.

Indeed, the identification of Samuel's own paternity in the narrative could be a topic for discussion. Certainly, the extant form of the story is unambiguous: Elkanah is Samuel's biological father (1:19–20). And yet, the woman who was unable to conceive with her husband becomes suddenly pregnant after a private encounter with Eli the priest at the temple in Shiloh. Could something be read between the lines of the text? There are rumors among the people that Eli's sons fornicate with the women who worship at the entrance to the tent of meeting (2:22). Could the father be implicated as well? Likely not, for the narrative is explicit about Samuel's biological paternity. Still, the ambiguity in the encounter between Eli and Hannah could be interpreted as the suggestion of a metaphorical or spiritual surrogacy on Eli's part, in which the seed of his blessing performs for Hannah what Elkanah was unable to physically accomplish on his own. In the end, it is Eli who ends up raising Samuel, playing the paternal role during the boy's upbringing at the temple.[303] Therefore, Samuel is positioned within the narrative to be a competitor to Eli's sons for the role of the priest's protégé and successor to his legacy of Israelite leadership.[304]

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[303] Elkanah recedes into the background of the narrative, supplanted by Eli, although Hannah continues to play the maternal role in Samuel's life—at least in a periodic way. The text notes that she brings Samuel a garment, annually, when she comes to worship at Shiloh (2:19). In that verse, Hannah is identified as "his mother," while Elkanah is no longer identified by his relationship to Samuel. He is merely "her husband."

[304] Miller and Roberts argue that Samuel is secondary to the Eli material and note that different titles are given to them (Eli is a priest, while Samuel is a judge); therefore, it is unclear whether the redactor intends Samuel to be Eli's successor at all (*The Hand of the Lord*, 29–30). It should be noted, however, that Eli is also identified as a judge in 4:18. John T. Willis discusses the "contrast scheme" in this pericope, but uses it to compare Samuel and Eli himself (not Eli's sons), drawing a comparison to the way Saul and David are later contrasted in 1 Samuel ("Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition from a Prophetic Circle at the Ramah Sanctuary," *JBL* 90.3 [1971]: 290). However, the comparison to Saul and David is dubious because it is not clear that Samuel "succeeds" Eli as the priest of Shiloh (the text does not make this explicit—as we would expect if this were its emphasis).

COMPOSITIONAL COMPLEXITY AND RESUMPTIVE REPETITION IN 1 SAM 1–3

It could be argued that the back-and-forth between independent threads of Samuel and Hophni/Phinehas material is the rhetorical technique of a single author, drawing a contrast between the depravity of Eli's sons and the worthiness of Samuel.[305] While this competitive dynamic is powerfully present in the final form of the text, there are indications that the literary contrast between Samuel and the Elides may have been accomplished by creative supplementation of Elide material to an earlier version of the narrative, which concerned Samuel alone. The fact that Samuel and Eli's sons are never in the same place at the same time (despite their similar cultic roles and supposedly shared home) is one indicator in this direction. Additionally, when the scene flips from Samuel material to Elide material and back, it is often accompanied by a *Wiederaufnahme*, or "resumptive repetition," of the phrase or sentence immediately prior to the scene-change.[306]

Wiederaufnahmen often mark the boundaries of editorially inserted material, though this is not always the case. The same device may be used by a single author as a temporal marker, to give a sense of simultaneity, a "meanwhile, back at the ranch" effect.[307] Repetition may also function as a type of refrain, emphasizing a theme within a narrative. For example, the famous refrain, “In those days there was no king in Israel” (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), serves to give emphasis to the political chaos of the depicted era. Finally, there is also the possibility that a repetition merely depicts a recurring action in the plot, with no particular structural impact—sometimes repetition is just repetition. To discern which type of repetition one has encountered, it is necessary to examine the relationship of the material enclosed by the repetition with the context of the material that encloses it.[308] If the wider thread contains details that are dependent upon information or actions that take place within the enclosed parenthesis, then it is likely that the device of repetition is being used creatively by the single author of both threads. On the other hand, if the two threads are wholly independent, or if the parenthetical material is clearly dependent upon the enclosing thread, then it is more likely that the parenthetical material is secondary. The presence of other elements such as narrative contradictions, divergent styles, and multiple unrelated traditions may also nudge us toward concluding that repetition is a signal of supplementation.[309]

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[305] E.g., Willis, "Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition," 290.

[306] The term "resumptive repetition" was coined by Harold Marcus Wiener in *The Composition of Judges II 11 to I Kings II 46* (Leipzig: Heinrichs, 1929). The German word *Wiederaufnahme* was later popularized by Curt Kuhl in "Die 'Wiederaufnahme': ein literarkritisches Prinzip," *ZAW* 64.1 (1952): 1–11.

[307] On the various uses of *Wiederaufnahmen*, see Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Presentation of Synchroneity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narratives," in *Studies in Hebrew Narrative Art throughout the Ages*, ed. Joseph Heinemann and Shmuel Werses (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978), 9–26; Burke O. Long, "Framing Repetitions in Biblical Historiography," *JBL* 106.3 (1987): 385–99; Firth, "Play It Again, Sam"; Adele Berlin warns that "form critics have mistaken a poetic feature in the discourse [*Wiederaufnahme*] for evidence of the text's history" (*Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 128). In reference to the "contrasting refrains" in 1 Sam 1–3, Joseph Bourke considers them an authorial device to create symmetry between Samuel and Eli's sons ("Samuel and the Ark: A Study in Contrasts," 82).

In addition, a complexity that is sometimes missed in the effort to identify a simple editorial trajectory is that the literary function of a particular instance of repetition may have changed over time, as a text grew through redaction. What was once a simple *Wiederaufnahme*, marking a discrete insertion in an early version, may be overlooked by a later editor, or interpreted as a thematic refrain, picked up, and recycled again. Diachronic analysis must be alert to each of these possibilities. In what follows, I examine each of the four prominent repetitions in

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[308] See Marc Zvi Brettler, “The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2,” *JBL* 116.4 (1997): 604. Though I come to some different conclusions, my analysis of the resumptions in 1 Sam 1–3 owes a great debt to Brettler’s insightful study. Brettler concludes that there were three major supplementations: A, 2:11b–17b; B, 2:22–26; C, 2:27–36. The remainder he labels the “base text” of the narrative. Cf. the diachronic analysis of this section in Dietrich, *Samuel*, 125–27.

[309] As Cynthia Edenburg argues in “The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled,” 155. See also, idem, “Falsifiable Hypotheses,” 391–92.

1 Sam 1–3 with attention to these factors, drawing my own conclusions about the composition history of the pericope. To tip my hand, I believe that these repetitions are indeed key to understanding the composition of this section of 1 Samuel. However, their deployment is complex, rather than straightforward. Like an archaeological tel in which some layers are neatly stacked, while other layers have (confoundingly) repurposed earlier materials, the strata of 1 Sam 1–3 have become somewhat intermingled over time and require extra diligence to excavate. In light of this complexity, the conclusions drawn must necessarily remain tentative.

Repetition A

Initial Occurrence: 2:11b
והנער היה משרת את ה׳ את פני עלי הכהן
“And the boy was attending YHWH before Eli the priest”
Repetition: 2:18a
ושמואל משרת את פני ה׳
“And Samuel was attending the face of YHWH”

Table 4.1: Repetition A (1 Sam 2:18a)

The precise wording of this repetition is inexact: the initial occurrence at 2:11b names YHWH as the object of the boy’s service and includes Eli in a subordinate clause.[310] The repetition at 2:18a names Samuel explicitly (rather than “the boy”) and contracts the remaining elements, retaining the preposition and YHWH but omitting the supporting verb היה and the mention of Eli.[311] Repetition need not be exact to function as an editorial resumption or an indication of temporal simultaneity.[312] However, the differences are worth noting as additional potential clues to the compositional process.

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[310] See Römer, *The Invention of God*, 122–23, for his theory that משרת את־פני ה׳ originally connoted Samuel’s task of caring for the “face of YHWH” (an anthropomorphic image housed in the temple at Shiloh).

[311] However, LXX adds a preposition in 2:11b: “καὶ τὸ παιδάριον ἦν λειτουργῶν τῷ προσώπῳ κυρίου ἐνώπιον Ηλι τοῦ ἱερέως” (cf. “את פני ה׳” in 2:18a). The preferred variant is difficult to discern in this case, but I lean toward preferring the MT and explaining the variant as a scribal coordination with 2:18a.

The material enclosed by this initial potential *Wiederaufnahme* (2:12–17) is the first description of the sins committed by Eli's sons. In essence, their transgression is cultic: they took unauthorized portions of the meat sacrifices for themselves and demanded portions before the appointed time (over the objections of the worshippers bringing the sacrifices).[313] In this section, the sons of Eli are called—curiously in the singular—נער הכהן, "the priest's boy" (2:13, 15), i.e., the priest's servant or apprentice, and in 2:17 they are called—plural—הנערים, "the boys," and in the final clause of the verse, האנשים, "the men." In this section, Eli's sons are neither numbered nor individually named.[314]

Overall, this paragraph is literarily independent of its setting in the wider Samuel narrative. The enclosed material knows that Eli is a priest, and it presumes some sort of regular (and regulated) sacrificial cult that was profaned by Eli's sons' behavior. But it does not depend on any specific plot elements of the Samuel story narrated to this point.[315] The material in 2:12–17 is related to a later narrative thread about the sins of Eli's sons (cf. 2:27–30; 3:11–14) but is not dependent upon it. Apart from these three instances, no other text in 1 Sam 1–8 shows explicit awareness of the sinfulness of Eli's sons.[316] Neither is the surrounding Samuel material dependent on anything revealed in the enclosed paragraph. Although the Samuel story describes an annual sacrificial feast at Shiloh, the rituals described in 2:12–17 are not necessarily tied to that specific feast. Therefore, it is very likely that the enclosed paragraph is supplemental, and that 2:18a is indeed an editorial marker of resumption.

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[312] Indeed, Brettler marks this repetition as a *Wiederaufnahme* on the basis of the verb משרת alone, noting that slight variations are typical in the use of the device ("The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2," 604–5).

[313] The premature taking of food intended for the deity, with dire consequences, is a literary trope found in other ancient Southwest Asian comparands. Hanspeter Schaudig describes these examples and draws connections to the narrative in 1 Sam 2 (*Explaining Disaster*, 170–73).

[314] This is in stylistic contrast to the tendency within the Samuel material to name each character (even Peninnah), as observed by Preß, "Der Prophet Samuel," 185.

[315] Against this independence, Gary Rendsburg contends that there is alliterative wordplay (words beginning with על) that spans the division between Samuel and Elide threads. But this argument is unconvincing. The alliteration may be purely accidental, or it could be a dependence of the inserted material on a stylistic feature of its source ("Some False Leads in the Identification of Late Biblical Hebrew Texts: The Cases of Genesis 24 and 1 Samuel 2:27–36," *JBL* 121.1 [2002]: 36).

Repetition B

Initial Occurrence: 2:21b
ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה׳
"And the boy Samuel grew up with YHWH"
Repetition: 2:26
והנער שמואל הלך וגדל וטוב גם עם ה׳ וגם עם אנשים
"And the boy Samuel continued growing up and was approved both by YHWH and by people"

Table 4.2: Repetition B (1 Sam 2:26)

Once again, the repetition is not exact. The initial instance uses a finite verb (ויגדל) while the repetition switches to participial action (הלך וגדל), with the accompanying syntactical shift from verb-subject order to subject-participle order. The repetition also embeds the original indirect object (עם ה׳) within a more elaborate subordinate clause (וטוב גם עם ה׳ וגם עם אנשים). Nevertheless, the repetition remains recognizable. Enclosed by the repetition is another brief parenthesis into the Elide saga (2:22–25). It depicts the nature of the transgression of Eli's sons somewhat differently from 2:12–17, this time identifying a sexual act committed with (or against) the “women of *tseva’ot*.”[317] These women are mentioned elsewhere only in Exod 38:8, usually taken to be a Priestly-source text.[318] The expression, “Tent of Meeting” (אהל מועד, 2:22), is also out of place in the context of 1 Samuel, where the shrine at Shiloh is typically identified as a house (בית 1:7, 24; 3:15) or temple (היכל 1:9; 3:3) of YHWH.[319] In this section, Eli warns his sons of the gravity of their sin, but they are unrepentant. Again, the sons are neither numbered nor named.

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[316] It could be argued that the death of Hophni and Phinehas in chapter 4 is tied to their transgression, but such a connection can only be made interpretively—their guilt is not explicitly invoked in chapter 4, nor is it stated that their deaths are a punishment of any sort.

Regarding its literary dependencies, this parenthetical paragraph presumes that the reader already has knowledge of misdeeds committed by Eli’s sons against “all Israel” (2:22; cf. 2:14).[320] It also foreshadows that the sons will be killed by YHWH, which seems to depend, *ex eventu*, on the demise of Eli’s sons narrated in 1 Sam 4. Another feature that appears to be related to 2:22–25 are later descriptions of Eli’s failing eyesight (3:2; 4:15), presumably due to his advanced age, which is first mentioned in 2:22—though the direction of dependence is uncertain (knowledge of Eli’s old age could have been inferred from 3:2 or 4:15 and retrojected onto 2:22 by a redactor). The only loose connection between this parenthesis and the Samuel material is the divine message given to Samuel in 3:11–14 that resonates with Eli’s warning about the impossibility of forgiveness for sins committed against YHWH (cf. 2:25). However, if 3:11–14 is supplementary, as I argue below, then 2:22–25 remains entirely independent of the core Samuel story.[321] It is therefore most likely an editorial insertion, and the repetition at 2:26 appears to be a marker of resumption.[322]

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[317] However, the entire phrase (ואת אשר ישכבון את הנשים הצבאות פתח אהל מועד) is omitted in LXX and 4QSam^a. Miller and Roberts judge it a later addition to heighten the severity of Hophni’s and Phinehas’s sin (*The Hand of the Lord*, 39), as does Porzig (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 128).

[318] Brettler, “The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2,” 608. The connection to the author/era of P adds weight to the suggestion that this part of 1 Samuel (at least) is a relatively late composition.

[319] Harvey, “Tendenz and Textual Criticism in 1 Samuel 2–10,” 72; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 22. On the בית at Shiloh as an actual “stone-built temple,” see Israel Finkelstein et al., “Excavations at Shiloh 1981–1984: Preliminary Report,” *TA* 12.2 (1985): 169–70.

[320] This dependence is observed by Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 116.

Repetition C

Initial Occurrence: 2:11b
והנער היה משרת את ה׳ את פני עלי הכהן
“And the boy was attending YHWH before Eli the priest”
Repetition: 2:18a
ושמואל משרת את פני ה׳
“And Samuel was attending the face of YHWH”
Additional Repetition: 3:1a
והנער שמואל משרת את ה׳ לפני עלי
“And the boy Samuel was attending YHWH before Eli”

Table 4.3: Repetition C (1 Sam 3:1a)

In his treatment of the composition of 1 Sam 2, Marc Zvi Brettler considers the two repetitions discussed above (A and B) to be editorial *Wiederaufnahmen*. While he identifies the oracle of the “man of God” (2:27–36, his “Addition C”) as a third block of secondary material in 1 Sam 2, added by an exilic Deuteronomist, Brettler concludes that its insertion is not marked by resumptive repetition.[323] Nevertheless, the following verse (3:1a) echoes the language of Samuel’s service (משרת) found in 2:11b, 18a, following another block of Elide material.[324] Could this repetition be another instance of *Wiederaufnahme*?[325] Brettler answers in the negative, seeing 3:1 instead as the simple continuation of the base narrative interrupted at 2:21.[326] After all, the challenge with identifying 3:1 as an editorial *Wiederaufnahme* is that it does not repeat the language that occurs immediately before the parenthetical material—that is, just before 2:27. Rather, it harkens back to 2:18a (or perhaps all the way back to 2:11b, language the repetition matches almost exactly). Such a gap is not characteristic of resumptive repetition. On the other hand, if 1 Sam 1–3 underwent multiple stages of redaction over time (as Brettler also hypothesizes), it raises the possibility that material once enclosed by a clear resumptive repetition in an early redaction was later expanded by additional insertions, thereby dislocating the simple *Wiederaufnahme* and resulting in a form of the text that contains a more complex matrix of nested repetitions. Though it is an admittedly messy hypothesis, I believe such a solution best explains the situation in the text before us.

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[321] 3:11–14 is not formally dependent upon 2:22–25, in any case. Indeed, the dependence may well be in the other direction. Though YHWH tells Samuel that divine condemnation of Eli’s sons’ behavior has already been made known to Eli (3:12–13), the “unforgivable” nature of their sin is announced in 3:14 as if for the first time (“Therefore I [now] swear…”). Therefore, 2:25 may be picking up on the theme already established in 3:14.

[322] However, *pace* Brettler, et al, I argue below that 2:26 is *not*, after all, a *Wiederaufnahme*. Note, for example, that the Samuel narrative does not actually “resume” at this juncture. Therefore, this is a rhetorical repetition used to accentuate the contrast between Samuel and the Elides.

[323] Brettler, “The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2,” 605, 609–11.

[324] Also observed by Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 116.

First, however, it is necessary to establish that 2:27–36 is indeed secondary in nature. On the whole, the message from the man of God appears to be thematically resonant with and narratively dependent upon 2:12–17, for it shares that text's identification of the sin committed by Eli's sons as the greedy consumption of choice offerings (2:29). At the same time, it betrays no dependence on the additional material found in 2:22–25. Therefore, the trajectory of relative composition of this Elide material would appear to be: first 2:12–17 along with (or followed by) 2:27–36, and lately supplemented by the intervening 2:22–25. This is not the whole story, however. The man of God's message shows signs of its own internal development.[327] Curiously, while the sons remain unnumbered and unnamed in the first part of the message (2:27–33), they are explicitly numbered (two) and named (Hophni and Phinehas) in 2:34—the first appearance of this formula since 1:3b. The numbering/naming schema is a signal of additional complexity within 2:27–36, which must be considered when reconstructing the composition history.[328] What remains clear is that, like the other Elide sections, there is absolutely no connection to the Samuel narrative within the man of God's message. Therefore, it fits the pattern of secondary material, and keeps open the possibility that 3:1a was (at some earlier compositional stage) a simple resumptive repetition. Before we attempt to put the pieces of this puzzle together, a final significant repetition must be examined.

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[325] As argued by Myers, "The Wicked 'Sons of Eli,'" 246.

[326] Brettler, "The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2," 606.

[327] See, e.g., Walter Dietrich's comment: "the speech by the man of God reaches into a distant future. It foretells not only the catastrophes of 1 Sam 4 (the defeat of the Israelites by the Philistines, the loss of the ark, and the eradication of the house of Eli) but also the massacre of the priests of Nob by Saul (1 Sam 22) and even the cult centralization under Josiah that removes the cultic privileges of the rural priests (2 Kgs 23). We can hardly avoid the

Repetition D

Initial Occurrence: 2:21b
ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה׳
"And the boy Samuel grew up with YHWH"
Repetition: 3:19a
ויגדל שמואל וה׳ היה עמו
"And Samuel grew up, and YHWH was with him"

Table 4.4: Repetition D (1 Sam 3:19a)

The final potential *Wiederaufnahme* in 1 Sam 1–3 occurs at the end of the section in which Samuel encounters YHWH's voice and a divine message of condemnation against his mentor, Eli (3:1b–18). This repetition is usually not considered in discussions of *Wiederaufnahmen* because, like the previous example, the repetition does not replicate language found immediately

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conclusion that this prophecy is a *vaticinium ex eventu* and, at least in its final form, a Deuteronomistic creation" (*The Early Monarchy in Israel*, 254).

[328] Myers, "The Wicked 'Sons of Eli,'" 239.

prior to the potential insertion.[329] Instead, it borrows a phrase from 2:21b and 2:26, noting once again that Samuel "grew" (ויגדל). This multiple repetition, separated by more than one scene, suggests that this device may not be a resumption, but rather a refrain, resounding what was originally toned in 2:21b and 2:26.[330] This is certainly possible. However, Samuel's "growth" is a somewhat mild theme to emphasize as a refrain. Nor does it make much sense as a marker of narrative simultaneity (since, instead of simultaneity, it explicitly notes that time has passed). The strangeness of the repetition is even more striking when ויגדל is read in a grammatically perfect sense: Samuel "grew up," i.e., "reached maturity." Read from this vantage, Samuel "grew up" once in 2:21b, then "continued growing" in 2:26, only to "grow up" *again* in 3:19a! In light of these oddities, I consider it most plausible that in an earlier form of the narrative, 3:19a functioned as a resumptive repetition of 2:21b (which it very closely resembles). If all of the intervening material from 2:22—3:19 is lifted from the narrative, 2:21 fittingly concludes the Samuel birth narrative, stating summarily that Samuel "grew up" to maturity. If the base Samuel story continued from there, we would expect the next sentence to be set during Samuel's adulthood. Indeed, the sentence following the *Wiederaufnahme* at 3:19 turns to the battle with the Philistines at Ebenezer (4:1–2), which is the military context into which Samuel reappears as an adult (7:3). 1 Sam 3:19, then, may have been composed as a *Wiederaufnahme* to resume the narrative after the redactional insertion of Samuel's theophany (parts of 3:1–18). This simple resumption was later obscured by further supplements as the narrative grew, distancing the repetition from its original source in the flow of the narrative. Among those later additions was

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[329] For example, Porzig sees the whole of 1 Sam 3 framed by 3:1a and 3:19a, but since these notices do not use the same language, he does not consider this a *Wiederaufnahme*. Nevertheless, he recognizes the resonance of 3:19 with 2:21, 26 (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 112, 115).

[330] With Julio Trebolle, "Textual Criticism and the Composition History of Samuel: Connections between Pericopes in 1 Samuel 1–4," in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel*, ed. Philippe Hugo and Adrian Schenker (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 268.

2:22–26, supplying the final (and most syntactically variant) repetition of Samuel's growth. While this reconstruction is attractive *prima facie*, in order to bear the weight of plausibility it must fit within a holistic schema of the growth of the text.

PUTTING THE PUZZLE TOGETHER: RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF 1 SAM 1–3

Thus far, I have identified four potential insertions marked with *Wiederaufnahmen*: the greed of Eli's sons (2:12–17); the sexual sin of Eli's sons (2:22–25); the man of God's oracle (2:27–36); and Samuel's theophany (3:1b–18). A few other sections appear to be secondary, though they are not marked by *Wiederaufnahmen*: the clarification of Hophni's and Phinehas's presence at Shiloh (1:3b), which references Eli before his own introduction in 1:9;[331] Hannah's prayer (2:1–10), which, in addition to its formal shift to verse, refers anachronistically to the monarchy;[332] and the summary paragraph that follows Samuel's theophany (3:19b–20), which identifies Samuel with the technical term, "prophet" (נביא).[333]

Identifying the Base Samuel Narrative

If the insertions identified above (marked with *Wiederaufnahmen*) are excised, the remaining text of 1 Sam 1–3 comprises 1:1–3a, 4–28; 2:11, 18b–21. This narrative of Samuel's birth and youth, discerned through an *a posteriori* process of elimination, remains complete and coherent. Its content depends on none of the proposed supplementations. Curiously, however, this narrative contains *two* protagonists of Israel's early history: Samuel and Eli. This feature stands out because the rule within the Former Prophets is to present the narratives of individual protagonists in paratactic series. When this is not the case (e.g., the overlapping narratives of Saul and David), the consensus of scholarship is that multiple traditions have been conflated into a single narrative.[334] If the Samuel and Eli threads in 1 Sam 1–3 (and 4, where the Elide thread concludes) represent the conflation of traditions, it may be possible to discern which thread belongs to the base narrative and which is supplementary, and whether their combination was *literary*—that is, a piecing together of written sources—or *authorial*—that is, conceptually interwoven before being committed to writing by an author.[335] The primary criteria, once again, must be dependence and completeness: Is there a Samuel and/or Elide narrative embedded here that can stand on its own, complete and coherent, without dependence on the other?

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[331] Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 114.

[332] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 75; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 14.

[333] On the potential Ephraimite/Deuteronomistic origins of the term נביא, see Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 136–38.

By these criteria, the Elide material in 1 Sam 1–3 (and 4) cannot stand on its own. When extracted from the Samuel story, the Elide material does not form a complete or continuous narrative.[336] Eli's introduction in 1:9b depends on the setting at Shiloh established in the Samuel material and is not a fitting introduction to an independent narrative in any case.[337] The next block of Elide material, 1:10–18, is entirely dependent on the Hannah story, as are 1:25–28; 2:11b; and 2:20. Similarly, the Elide material in chapter 4 depends on the battle report in 4:1–2

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[334] See, e.g., Jacob L. Wright, *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[335] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 85.

[336] While Miller and Roberts acknowledge the fragmentary nature of the Elide material, they still assume its priority over the Samuel narrative, which they regard as a supplement (*The Hand of the Lord*, 30–31). However, their argument oversimplifies the compositional process. *Some* secondary Samuel material has indeed been interwoven into the Elide scenes (e.g., 2:26), but this does not relegate the coherent base Samuel narrative to secondary status.

[337] Klein is also unsettled by the abrupt introduction of Eli, though he does conclude supplementation based on this observation (*1 Samuel*, 8). McCarter wonders if the earliest Samuel story was set at Shiloh at all, or whether Shiloh was added to incorporate the Eli tradition (*I Samuel*, 66). Cf. Jan Dus, "Die Geburtslegende Samuels I. Sam. I. (Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu I. Sam. 1–3)," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 43.2 (1968): 163–94.

(which, I argue, belongs to the base Samuel narrative). Therefore, if an independent Eli tradition once existed, it has been thoroughly embedded into the Samuel story and is no longer identifiable as an independent source document.

The Samuel material, by contrast, is indeed able to stand on its own as a continuous and coherent narrative, when the material entangled with Eli is set aside as potentially secondary. This section of the Samuel narrative comprises 1:1–3a, 4–9a, 18b–25bα; 2:11a, 18b–19, 21. I propose that this is part of the earliest discernable layer of the Samuel story. It would have continued with 4:1–2, then directly into the Samuel material in 1 Sam 7 (discussed in the next chapter).

Table 4.5: Base Samuel Narrative

(1:1) ויהי איש אחד מן הרמתים צופים מהר אפרים ושמו אלקנה בן ירחם בן אליהוא בן תחו בן צוף אפרתי (2) ולו שתי נשים שם אחת חנה ושם השנית פננה ויהי לפננה ילדים ולחנה אין ילדים (3) ועלה האיש ההוא מעירו מימים ימימה להשתחות ולזבח לה׳ צבאות בשלה ... (4) ויהי היום ויזבח אלקנה ונתן לפננה אשתו ולכל בניה ובנותיה מנות (5) ולחנה יתן מנה אחת אפים כי את חנה אהב וה׳ סגר רחמה (6) וכעסתה צרתה גם כעס בעבור הרעמה כי סגר ה׳ בעד רחמה (7) וכן יעשה שנה בשנה מדי עלתה בבית ה׳ כן תכעסנה ותבכה ולא תאכל (8) ויאמר לה אלקנה אישה חנה למה תבכי ולמה לא תאכלי ולמה ירע לבבך הלוא אנכי טוב לך מעשרה בנים (9) ותקם חנה אחרי אכלה בשלה [καὶ κατέστη ἐνώπιον κυρίου] ... (18) ... ותלך האשה לדרכה ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד (19) וישכמו בבקר וישתחוו לפני ה׳ וישבו ויבאו אל ביתם הרמתה וידע אלקנה את חנה אשתו ויזכרה ה׳ (20) ויהי לתקפות הימים ותהר חנה ותלד בן ותקרא את שמו שמואל כי מה׳	(1:1) There was a certain man from Ramataim Tsofim from the hill of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, son of Yeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Tsuf, an Ephrathite. (2) He had two wives; the name of the first was Hannah, and the name of the second was Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. (3) That man would go up from his town from year after year to bow and to sacrifice to YHWH of hosts at Shiloh, ... (4) So it was, on the day that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give to Peninnah his wife—and to all of her sons and daughters—portions. (5) But to Hannah he would give a certain special portion, for Hannah he loved, but YHWH had closed her womb. (6) And her rival tormented her, and tormented again, on account of her trouble, for YHWH had closed up her womb. (7) This would happen, year upon year; as often as she went up to the house of YHWH, sure enough, she would torment her. And she would weep and would not eat. (8) Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart embittered? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" (9) Hannah arose, after eating at Shiloh, [MT: "and after drinking"; LXX: "and presented herself before YHWH"] ... (18) ... Then the woman went on her way. And she ate, and her face was no longer downcast. (19) They arose early in the morning, and they bowed before YHWH. Then they returned and entered their home at Ramah. Elkanah knew Hannah his wife and YHWH remembered her. (20) So it was, in the course of time, that Hannah became pregnant and bore a son. And she called his name Samuel, for "From

שאלתיו (21) ויעל האיש אלקנה וכל ביתו לזבח לה׳ את זבח הימים ואת נדרו (22) וחנה לא עלתה כי אמרה לאישה עד יגמל הנער והבאתיו ונראה את פני ה׳ וישב שם עד עולם (23) ויאמר לה אלקנה אישה עשי הטוב בעיניך שבי עד גמלך אתו אך יקם ה׳ את דברו ותשב האשה ותינק את בנה עד גמלה אתו (24) ותעלהו עמה כאשר גמלתו בפרים שלשה ואיפה אחת קמח ונבל יין ותבאהו בית ה׳ שלו והנער [μετ᾽ αὐτῶν] (25) וישחטו את הפר ויביאו את הנער ... (2:11) וילך אלקנה הרמתה על ביתו והנער היה משרת את ה׳ ... (18) ... נער חגור אפוד בד (19) ומעיל קטן תעשה לו אמו והעלתה לו מימים ימימה בעלותה את אישה לזבח את זבח הימים ... (21) כי פקד ה׳ את חנה ותהר ותלד שלשה בנים ושתי בנות ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה׳	YHWH I requested him." (21) The man Elkanah went up—and his whole household—to sacrifice to YHWH the annual sacrifice and his vow. (22) But Hannah did not go up for she said to her husband, "Once the boy is weaned, I will bring him, and he will be seen by the face of YHWH, and he will dwell there permanently. (23) Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what is right in your eyes. Stay until you have weaned him. But may YHWH stand by his word." So, the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him. (24) Then she brought him up with her when she had weaned him, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and she brought him to the house of YHWH at Shiloh; and the boy was [MT: "a boy"; LXX: "with them"]. (25) And they slaughtered the bull and brought the boy ... (2:11) And Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house, and the boy was attending YHWH ... (18) ... a boy girded in a linen ephod. (19) A little robe his mother would make for him, and would take it to him year after year, when she went up with her husband to sacrifice the annual sacrifice. ... (21) And YHWH visited Hannah; and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up with YHWH.

Samuel's Dream Theophany

The first supplement to the core Samuel story is the addition of Samuel's dream theophany, comprising 3:2a, 3a, 10*–11a, 15a, and marked with a *Wiederaufnahme* at 3:19–20. This early version of the theophany does not yet include Eli's mediation at all. Moreover, it may have (*must* have, if my hypothetical reconstruction is accurate) contained a different message from YHWH to Samuel, later overwritten by 3:11–14, as many scholars have speculated.[338] While the proposal of an overwritten earlier text is methodologically risky and must remain speculative, there are good reasons to consider the possibility in this case.[339] Robert Gnuse's form-critical study of Samuel's theophany is particularly instructive here. In each of the ancient comparands that Gnuse cites, the contents of messages imparted during a "dream theophany" are positive and reassuring—never messages of judgment.[340] Indeed, after the *Wiederaufnahme* at 3:19a ("and Samuel grew up"), the following phrase ratifies what was likely a message of assurance, for "YHWH was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground" (3:19b). Though the precise content of the earlier message is, of course, impossible to reconstruct, most of the generic elements of the dream theophany form outlined by Gnuse—apart from the message itself and the human response—are preserved in the extant text and may be considered elements of the original theophany supplement: the spatial setting (temple); sleeping recipient (Samuel); reference to time (lamp had not yet been quenched, i.e., pre-dawn);[341] visual apparition (YHWH stood there);

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[338] Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel*, 25–26; Timo Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975), 38–39; Robert Karl Gnuse, "A Reconsideration of the Form-Critical Structure in 1 Samuel 3: An Ancient Near Eastern Dream Theophany," *ZAW* 94.3 (1982): 88–89; André Caquot, *Les livres de Samuel* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1994), 67–68; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 31; Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 120–21; Walter Dietrich, "The Layer Model of the Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Samuel," in *Is Samuel among the Deuteronomists? Current Views on the Place of Samuel in a Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Cynthia Edenburg and Juha Pakkala (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 47.

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[339] Porzig advises against this theory, precisely because of its methodological slippery slope: "Sie erfordert die zusätzliche Hypothese eines durch keine Zeugen belegten Textes, dürfte folglich kaum beweisbar sein und kann—verfolgt man die Annahme weiter—letztlich jede literarische und logische Unebenheit erklären: der ältere, glatte Text wurde eben verdrängt. Doch sollte eine solche Annahme höchstens die ultima ratio des Exegeten sein, wenn der Text unter keinen Umständen mehr anders zu erklären ist," translation: "It requires the additional hypothesis of a text that has not been verified by any witnesses, which therefore can hardly be provable and can—if one pursues the assumption further—ultimately explain every literary and logical unevenness: the older, smooth text has simply been suppressed. But such an assumption should at best be the exegete's last resort, if the text can under no circumstances be explained otherwise" (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 120–21). I agree with Porzig's caution, in principle. However, in this case, formal, literary-critical, and stylistic factors combine to make the redactional overwriting of Samuel's theophany more likely than the theory that a single author composed the text as we read it today (though such a possibility cannot be ruled out).

[340] Gnuse, "A Reconsideration of the Form," 384–85. Cf. Gen 28:10–22; 46:1–4. In both of these nocturnal dream theophanies from the Jacob cycle, Jacob is offered words of assurance and divine presence in the face of dire circumstances. Furthermore, Gerald Janzen interprets 3:15 "Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of YHWH" as a kind of "re-birth" of Samuel from the womb of the temple with a new vocation (operating intertextually with the opening of Hannah's womb in chapter 1)—surely a positive experience, not an occasion for a message of doom ("'Samuel Opened the Doors of the House of Yahweh' [1 Samuel 3:15]," *JSOT* 8.26 [1983]: 94).

[341] 3:3b is the only mention of the ark in the pericope. It is also one of only two occurrences of the phrase ארון אלהים (without the article) in the Bible (the other is 4:11). Its purpose here is simply to connect the ark of Elohim to the temple at Shiloh and to the Samuel story, as narrative anticipation of its later retrieval from that location in 4:3–4 (cf. Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 127). The ark itself has no role in the theophany account, which speaks rather of "YHWH standing before Samuel" (3:10). The rareness of this construct title for the ark leads me to suspect that the original supplement may have contained only אשר־שם אלהים and that ארון was appended as part of the "ark" overlay (see above). The point about this interpolation setting up the later retrieval of the deity applies whether the referent is the ark or some other representation of Elohim in the Shiloh temple.

awakening (Samuel! Samuel!); formal termination (Samuel lay until morning, then he opened the doors).[342] The addition of Samuel’s theophany to the base Samuel narrative brings the appearing, speaking deity directly into the Samuel story as an active character—whereas in the earlier version, YHWH had been a (silent) cultic presence only. The inclusion of the theophany shifts the tone of the prose from the realm of historiography to the realm of myth; from “what happened to Samuel” to “what happened between Israel and YHWH.” In addition, it elevates Samuel’s authority, for he becomes more than a dynamic hero. He is one who speaks directly with YHWH,[343] and whose words are backed by YHWH’s own authority (3:20).

Table 4.6: Samuel’s Dream Theophany

(2:21) כי פקד ה' את חנה ותהר ותלד שלשה בנים ושתי בנות ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה' ... (3:2) ויהי ביום ההוא ... (3) ונר אלהים טרם יכבה ושמואל שכב בהיכל ה' ... (10) ויבא ה' ויתיצב ויקרא ... שמואל שמואל ויאמר שמואל דבר כי שמע עבדך (11) ויאמר ה' אל שמואל ... [*original message of assurance*] (15) וישכב שמואל עד הבקר ויפתח את דלתות בית ה' ... (19) ויגדל שמואל וה' היה עמו ולא הפיל מכל דבריו ארצה (20) וידע כל ישראל מדן ועד באר שבע כי נאמן שמואל לנביא לה'	(2:21) And YHWH visited Hannah; and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up with YHWH.... (3:2) So it was, on that day, ... (3) When the lamp of ‘Elohim had not yet been quenched, and Samuel was lying in the temple of YHWH, ... (10) Then YHWH came and stood there and called ... “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your slave is listening.” (11) YHWH said to Samuel, [*original message of assurance*] ... (15) Samuel lay until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of YHWH.... (19) And Samuel grew up, and YHWH was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. (20) And all Israel from Dan to Beersheva knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet for YHWH.

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[342] Gnuse, “A Reconsideration of the Form,” 381–85. Leuchter presents several strong arguments in favor of interpreting Samuel’s encounter as a dream theophany (*Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition*, Biblical Refigurations [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 35–40). Leuchter includes the observations of Gnuse’s study as well as several religio-historical connections between Shiloh, the deity El, Samuel’s and Elkanah’s theophoric names, and the tendency for El to manifest in dreams in biblical and Ugaritic literature. However, Leuchter concludes that the present case is *not* a dream theophany because the content of the encounter differs so dramatically from the generic expectations. I see Leuchter’s contribution as further evidence that 1 Sam 3 has a complex compositional history.

[343] Like Moses (see Leuchter, *Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition*, 31–40). Notice, also, the similarity between the phenomenology of Samuel’s theophany (ויבא ה' ויתיצב ויקרא... שמואל שמואל, 1 Sam 3:10) and that of Moses’s theophany (וירד ה' בענן ויתיצב עמו שם ויקרא בשם ה', Exod 34:5).

Eli, the Faithful Priest

The next supplement was not confined to a single block of inserted text. Traditions about the priest Eli were woven into various parts of Samuel's birth narrative and theophany narrative—notably in this layer, *without the use of Wiederaufnahmen*. This redactional layer adds 1:9b, 17–18a, 25bβ–28; 2:11b, 20; 3:4–6, 8–9, 10aβ (כפעם בפעם). In this version of the story, Eli is cast as a faithful divine agent, blessing Hannah (efficaciously) and acting as a paternal mentor who teaches the young Samuel to recognize the voice of YHWH (Eli's own sons are not yet mentioned). While an anthological impulse may have prompted the scribal inclusion of Eli material, any preexisting Eli traditions have been thoroughly reworked so that Eli is now an integrated character in Samuel's story. Still, when the "pre-Eli" and "post-Eli" versions of the Samuel story are compared, it is clear that Eli's inclusion performs a significant literary function, for he acts as a priestly buffer between "lay" characters and the deity. When Hannah seeks an audience with YHWH, Eli is like the bouncer at the gate: effective contact with the divine must go through him (1:9, 17–18).[344] Later, the toddler Samuel cannot be presented directly to YHWH (as in the earlier version) but is taken to Eli, under whose watchful eye Samuel attends YHWH at the temple (1:25–28).[345] Hannah, despite being blessed (by Eli) to birth Samuel, is given no further children to raise in her own household until Eli's powerful subsequent word of blessing releases five more births (2:20). In addition, when YHWH calls out to Samuel, the voice is indistinguishable from that of his mentor, the priestly mediator. The voice must be deciphered by

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[344] Despite Eli's priestly "buffer" in the final form of the text and a cultural hierarchy that elevated priests and males generally, Hannah's unusually prominent personal agency shines through. See Paba Nidhani De Andrado, "Hannah's Agency in Catalyzing Change in an Exclusive Hierarchy," *JBL* 140.2 (2021): 271–89. Likewise, some variation between the MT and LXX precisely at the moments when Hannah appears before YHWH suggests that different tradents had different levels of comfort with her access to the divine presence (see Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*, 200–10).

[345] Trebolle, "Textual Criticism and the Composition History of Samuel," 265.

Eli until Samuel has been trained to discern and respond to it on his own (3:4–9). Importantly, Eli’s role in this supplement is entirely positive.[346]

Table 4.7: Earliest Eli supplement

(1:9) ותקם חנה אחרי אכלה בשלה [καὶ κατέστη ἐνώπιον κυρίου]	(1:9) Hannah arose, after eating at Shiloh, [MT: “and after drinking”; LXX: “and presented herself before YHWH”]
ועלי הכהן ישב על הכסא על מזוזת היכל ה׳ ... (17) ויען עלי ויאמר לכי לשלום ואלהי ישראל יתן את שלתך אשר שאלת מעמו (18) ותאמר תמצא שפחתך חן בעיניך	and Eli the priest was sitting on the throne at the doorpost of the temple of YHWH ... (17) Then Eli answered, and said, “Go peacefully; and may the god of Israel grant the request you have requested from him.” (18) And she said, “May your slave find favor in your eyes.”
ותלך האשה לדרכה ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד (19) וישכמו בבקר וישתחוו לפני ה׳ וישבו ויבאו אל ביתם הרמתה וידע אלקנה את חנה אשתו ויזכרה ה׳	Then the woman went on her way. And she ate, and her face was no longer downcast. (19) They arose early in the morning, and they bowed before YHWH. Then they returned and entered their home at Ramah. Elkanah knew Hannah his wife and YHWH remembered her.
[... *no change in 1:20–24* ...]	[... *no change in 1:20–24* ...]
(25) וישחטו את הפר ויביאו את הנער	(25) And they slaughtered the bull and brought the boy
אל עלי (26) ותאמר בי אדני חי נפשך אדני אני האשה הנצבת עמכה בזה להתפלל אל ה׳ (27) אל הנער הזה התפללתי ויתן ה׳ לי את שאלתי אשר שאלתי מעמו (28) וגם אנכי השאלתהו לה׳ כל הימים אשר היה הוא שאול לה׳ וישתחו שם לה׳ ...	to Eli. (26) And she said, “Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing with you here to pray to YHWH. (27) For this boy I prayed; and YHWH gave to me my request that I requested from him. (28) Furthermore, I myself have lent him to YHWH; all the days of his life, he is lent to the YHWH.” And she bowed there to YHWH ...
(2:11) וילך אלקנה הרמתה על ביתו והנער היה משרת את ה׳	(2:11) And Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house, and the boy was attending YHWH
את פני עלי הכהן ...	before Eli the priest ...
(18) ... נער חגור אפוד בד (19) ומעיל קטן תעשה לו אמו והעלתה לו מימים ימימה בעלותה את אישה לזבח את זבח הימים	(18) ... a boy girded in a linen ephod. (19) A little robe his mother would make for him, and would take it to him year after year, when she went up with her husband to sacrifice the annual sacrifice.
(20) וברך עלי את אלקנה ואת אשתו ואמר ישם ה׳ לך זרע מן האשה הזאת תחת השאלה אשר שאל לה׳ והלכו למקמו	(20) Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May YHWH appoint for you seed from this woman, in place of the one lent, which she lent to YHWH.” Then they would go to his place.
(21) כי פקד ה׳ את חנה ותהר ותלד שלשה בנים ושתי בנות ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה׳ ... (3:2) ויהי ביום ההוא ... (3) ונר אלהים טרם יכבה ושמואל שכב בהיכל ה׳ ...	(21) And YHWH visited Hannah; and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up with YHWH. ... (3:2) So it was, on that day, ... (3) When the lamp of ‘Elohim had not yet been quenched, and Samuel was lying in the temple of YHWH, ...

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[346] Caquot also traces the earliest Eli material to a positive remembrance of the priest: “on suggère, que c’est grâce à Silo et à Eli qu’il [Samuel] a pu jouer le rôle qui fut le sien,” translation: “It is implied that it was thanks to Shiloh and to Eli that he [Samuel] was able to play the role that was his” (*Les livres de Samuel*, 70).

(4) ויקרא ה׳ אל שמואל ויאמר הנני (5) וירץ אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויאמר לא קראתי שוב שכב וילך וישכב (6) ויסף ה׳ קרא עוד שמואל ויקם שמואל וילך אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויאמר לא קראתי בני שוב שכב ... (8) ויסף ה׳ קרא שמואל בשלשית ויקם וילך אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויבן עלי כי ה׳ קרא לנער (9) ויאמר עלי לשמואל לך שכב והיה אם יקרא אליך ואמרת דבר ה׳ כי שמע עבדך וילך שמואל וישכב במקומו	(4) Then YHWH called to Samuel, and he said, “Here I am!” (5) And he ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call. Return. Lie down.” So he returned and he lay down. (6) And YHWH continued to call again, “Samuel!” Samuel rose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son. Return. Lie down.” ... (8) And YHWH continued to call Samuel a third time. And he rose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli understood that YHWH was calling the boy. (9) Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he should call you, then you should say, ‘Speak, YHWH, for your slave is listening.’” Samuel went and lay in his place.
(10) ויבא ה׳ ויתיצב ויקרא כפעם בפעם שמואל שמואל ויאמר שמואל דבר כי שמע עבדך (11) ויאמר ה׳ אל שמואל [*message of assurance*] ... (15) וישכב שמואל עד הבקר ויפתח את דלתות בית ה׳ ... (19) ויגדל שמואל וה׳ היה עמו ולא הפיל מכל דבריו ארצה (20) וידע כל ישראל מדן ועד באר שבע כי נאמן שמואל לנביא לה׳	(10) Then YHWH came and stood there and called just as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your slave is listening.” (11) YHWH said to Samuel, [*message of assurance*] ... (15) Samuel lay until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of YHWH. ... (19) And Samuel grew up, and YHWH was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. (20) And all Israel from Dan to Beersheva knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet for YHWH.

A Corrupt Priestly Dynasty

Eli was initially joined to the Samuel narrative as a revered supporting character, facilitating appropriate contact with the deity. But at a later stage, the text was supplemented by scribes who did not wish Eli to be read as a protagonist in the narrative.[347] This new layer begins by disparaging Eli himself, adding 1:10–16, in which Eli rudely mistakes Hannah’s heartfelt prayers for the drunkenness of a “worthless woman” (בת בליעל, 1:16).[348] On the contrary, Hannah recognizes that she is one of the needy whom YHWH lifts from the ash heap to seat her in a place of honor (2:8). It is difficult to place Hannah's psalm-like prayer (2:1–10) in the composition history of this pericope, self-contained as it is.[349] Its provenance is impossible to determine, though the looseness of its thematic resonances with the story make it likely that it was not composed specifically for its eventual canonical home in 1 Samuel. Nevertheless, the strong theme of the "reversal of fortunes" makes this present redactional layer a likely moment for its inclusion here.[350] If so, then the prayer may be hinting that Eli represents the lofty who are brought low, while the lowly—such as Hannah—are exalted in YHWH's care.

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[347] The layer adds 1:10–16; 2:1–10, 12–17, 27–33, 35–36; 3:1a, 7a; along with further pluses in 1 Sam 4–7 (to be discussed below).

[348] I assign the whole of this section (1:10–14) to the present layer. In addition to the anti-Eli *Tendenz*, the paragraph uses doubled verbs (inf. abs. + inflected) in 1:10, 11, a stylistic feature shared with other interpolations in this layer (cf. 2:16, 27, 30; 6:3; 8:9). Furthermore, it intensifies the contrast between Hannah and Eli through the description of Hannah’s (vicarious) nazirite vow (1:11b), which likely has Samson’s vocation (Judg 13) already in view (see Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 108).

Continuing this theme, another new block of text (2:12–17) describes the cultic transgression of "worthless men" (בני בליעל, 2:12), the corrupt sons of Eli—treating them as an unnumbered, anonymous collective.[351] This description of their cultic corruption is followed immediately by a message of condemnation that arrives via an anonymous "man of God," who holds Eli culpable for the corruption of his household and predicts untimely deaths for the lot of them (2:27–33, 35–36).[352] On a stylistic level, the language of his prophecy is solemnified by the use of doubled verbs (inf. abs. + inflected verb, cf. 1:10, 11; 2:16; 6:3; 8:9).[353] On the level of the content, the prophecy assumes some background to the Elide heritage that puzzles modern interpreters: “your father’s house” (בית אביך) is invoked four times—though the identity of the father/ancestor is withheld. Leuchter, following Cross, identifies this Elide ancestor as Moses.[354] If this is the case, then the prophecy may be speaking into a much later conflict between priestly classes who traced their lineages to Moses and Aaron, respectively. Nevertheless, it is striking that the implied father/ancestor is not explicitly named in this prophetic oracle. Is this because the identity of this ancestor was obvious to the earliest audience; or is it an intentional obfuscation of the Elide heritage? Another curious feature is the prophecy’s inexact resonance with the Exodus narrative. It mentions that Eli’s ancestral house was chosen by YHWH when they were slaves to the house of Pharoah (בית פרעה), perhaps implying priestly service in Pharaoh’s court.[355] In the biblical Exodus narrative, on the other hand, Aaron’s line is consecrated for priestly service only after Israel was freed from Egypt (Exod 28). Neither do the priestly duties enumerated here exactly match any list of priestly duties outlined in the Pentateuch.[356] It appears that this prophecy is appealing to a priestly origin story other than the one preserved in the Pentateuch.

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[349] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 75; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 14.

[350] The prayer's positive evaluation of the monarchy in 2:10 also aligns with elements in 1 Sam 8, which may belong to the same layer of redaction (see below). See also John T. Willis, "Song of Hannah and Psalm 113," *CBQ* 35.2 (1973): 139–54, who dates the prayer much earlier. Willis proposes that 2:10 "originally had in mind a local 'king' of an Israelite city-state or tribe, and not a king of United Israel. If this is possible, then the Song of Victory in 1 Sam 2:1–10 comes from a pro-monarchical circle of the premonarchical period, who felt that [YHWH]'s kingship was not jeopardized by an earthly king" (149).

[351] The term בני־בליעל of course echoes Hannah's protestation in 1:16. It may also be a paronomastic play on this group's role as Eli's "sons," making Eli the "father of corruption." See also the occurrence of the term to describe the people of Gibeah in Judg 19:22; 20:13 (another hint that this layer has Judges already in mind). See discussion in Edenburg, *Dismembering the Whole*, 19.

[352] On Eli's culpability for his sons' misdeeds, see Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 41. Miller and Roberts also observe the palpable absence of Samuel in this prophecy. They suggest that if the author had intended Samuel as the replacement for the corrupt Elides, such would have been included in the man of God's prophecy. While their observation adds to the case that the Elide and Samuel material derive from different authors, it does not serve as evidence for the priority of 2:27–36.

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[353] This observation is one line of evidence for the argument that these portions of the text belong to the same redactional layer.

[354] Leuchter, *Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition*, 33; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 196. However, cf. Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 160–72, for his argument that the identity of the ancestor is intentionally withheld as a polemic against hereditary priesthood generally.

[355] Emending the text to read “slaves” with the LXX. The 3 occurrences of בית פרעה in the Joseph cycle clearly denote the royal court (45:2, 16; 50:4). The only other occurrences of the term are Gen 12:15; 1 Kgs 11:20 (2x); Jer 43:9—never in the biblical Exodus narrative! This terminological precision argues against a reading that would generalize the timeframe of the priestly election described here to include the wilderness appointment of Aaron and sons as priests.

[356] In a similar way, the priestly duties described in 2:12–17 use unique vocabulary. המזלג שלש השנים, for example, only occurs here. Moreover, each of the vessels listed in 2:14 (והכה בכיור או בדוד או בקלחת או בפרור) is rare in the Hebrew Bible, and no two of them appear together anywhere else.

In contrast to the previous round of Elide supplements, the scribe responsible for this insertion utilizes a *Wiederaufnahme* at 3:1a to resume the narrative.[357] The aside in 3:7a ("And Samuel did not yet know YHWH") may also belong to this layer, highlighting Eli's failure to nurture his protégé's prophetic discernment. Note that the same language is used to express a similar sentiment with regard to Eli's sons in 2:12b.[358]

Table 4.8: Anti-Elide supplements

(1:9) ותקם חנה אחרי אכלה בשלה [καὶ κατέστη ἐνώπιον κυρίου] ועלי הכהן ישב על הכסא על מזוזת היכל ה׳	(1:9) Hannah arose, after eating at Shiloh, [MT: "and after drinking"; LXX: "and presented herself before YHWH"] and Eli the priest was sitting on the throne at the doorpost of the temple of YHWH.
(10) והיא מרת נפש ותתפלל על ה׳ ובכה תבכה (11) ותדר נדר ותאמר ה׳ צבאות אם ראה תראה בעני אמתך וזכרתני ולא תשכח את אמתך ונתתה לאמתך זרע אנשים ונתתיו לה׳ כל ימי חייו ומורה לא יעלה על ראשו (12) והיה כי הרבתה להתפלל לפני ה׳ ועלי שמר את פיה (13) וחנה היא מדברת על לבה רק שפתיה נעות וקולה לא ישמע ויחשבה עלי לשכרה (14) ויאמר אליה עלי עד מתי תשתכרין הסירי את יינך מעליך (15) ותען חנה ותאמר לא אדני אשה קשת רוח אנכי ויין ושכר לא שתיתי ואשפך את נפשי לפני ה׳ (16) אל תתן את אמתך לפני בת בליעל כי מרב שיחי וכעסי דברתי עד הנה	(10) And she was bitter-tempered and prayed to YHWH, and wept (oh, wept). (11) And she vowed a vow, and said, "YHWH of hosts, if you will look (oh, look) upon the affliction of your slave, and remember me, and not forget your slave, but will give to your slave a seed of men, then I will give him to YHWH all the days of his life, and a razor will not go up upon his head." (12) So it was, as she multiplied her prayer before YHWH, that Eli was watching her mouth. (13) But as for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart; only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. And Eli considered her a drunkard. (14) Eli said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put aside your wine from upon you." (15) But Hannah answered, and said, "No, my lord, a hard-spirited woman am I; and wine and liquor I have not drunk; but I have poured out my life before YHWH. (16) Do not regard your slave as a worthless woman, for from my many complaints and my torment I have been speaking thus far."
(17) ויען עלי ויאמר לכי לשלום ואלהי ישראל יתן את שלתך אשר שאלת מעמו (18) ותאמר תמצא שפחתך חן בעיניך ותלך האשה לדרכה ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד (19) וישכמו בבקר וישתחוו	(17) Then Eli answered, and said, "Go peacefully; and may the god of Israel grant the request you have requested from him." (18) And she said, "May your slave find favor in your eyes." Then the woman went on her way. And she ate, and her face was no

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[357] The use of the *Wiederaufnahme* at 3:1a, mirroring the phrasing at 2:11b, leads me to conclude that at this stage, 2:18b–21 (Eli's blessing and the conclusion to Hannah's story) *followed* the contiguous inserted block comprising 2:12–17, 27–33, 35–36; 3:1a. Later in the composition history, this long block of text was divided in two, and the end of Hannah's story (2:18b–21) was transposed between the two parts (see below).

[358] This lack of knowledge of YHWH may be connected to a redactional layer in the Book of Judges that calls attention to the rise of a generation after the initial conquest of Canaan that "did not know YHWH" (Judg 2:10). See discussion in Jacob L. Wright, "Military Valor and Kingship: A Book-Oriented Approach to the Study of a Major War Theme," in *Writing and Reading War Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. Brad E. Kelle and Frank Ritchel Ames, SymS 42 (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 51.

לפני ה׳ וישבו ויבאו אל ביתם הרמתה וידע אלקנה את חנה אשתו ויזכרה ה׳

[*... no change in 1:20–24 ...*]

(25) וישחטו את הפר ויביאו את הנער אל עלי (26) ותאמר בי אדני חי נפשך אדני אני האשה הנצבת עמכה בזה להתפלל אל ה׳ (27) אל הנער הזה התפללתי ויתן ה׳ לי את שאלתי אשר שאלתי מעמו (28) וגם אנכי השאלתהו לה׳ כל הימים אשר היה הוא שאול לה׳ וישתחו שם לה׳

(2:1) ותתפלל חנה ותאמר עלץ לבי בה׳ רמה קרני בה׳ רחב פי על אויבי כי שמחתי בישועתך (2) אין קדוש כה׳ כי אין בלתך ואין צור כאלהינו (3) אל תרבו תדברו גבהה גבהה יצא עתק מפיכם כי אל דעות ה׳ ולא נתכנו עללות (4) קשת גברים חתים ונכשלים אזרו חיל (5) שבעים בלחם נשכרו ורעבים חדלו עד עקרה ילדה שבעה ורבת בנים אמללה (6) ה׳ ממית ומחיה מוריד שאול ויעל (7) ה׳ מוריש ומעשיר משפיל אף מרומם (8) מקים מעפר דל מאשפת ירים אביון להושיב עם נדיבים וכסא כבוד ינחלם כי לה׳ מצקי ארץ וישת עליהם תבל (9) רגלי חסידו ישמר ורשעים בחשך ידמו כי לא בכח יגבר איש (10) ה׳ יחתו מריבו עלו בשמים ירעם ה׳ ידין אפסי ארץ ויתן עז למלכו וירם קרן משיחו

(2:11) וילך אלקנה הרמתה על ביתו והנער היה משרת את ה׳ את פני עלי הכהן

(2:12) ובני עלי בני בליעל לא ידעו את ה׳ (13) ומשפט הכהנים את העם כל איש זבח זבח ובא נער הכהן כבשל הבשר והמזלג שלש השנים בידו (14) והכה בכיור או בדוד או בקלחת או בפרור כל אשר יעלה המזלג יקח הכהן בו ככה יעשו לכל ישראל הבאים שם בשלה (15) גם בטרם יקטרון את החלב ובא נער הכהן ואמר לאיש הזבח תנה בשר לצלות לכהן ולא יקח ממך בשר

longer downcast. (19) They arose early in the morning, and they bowed before YHWH. Then they returned and entered their home at Ramah. Elkanah knew Hannah his wife and YHWH remembered her.

[*... no change in 1:20–24 ...*]

(25) And they slaughtered the bull and brought the boy to Eli. (26) And she said, “Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing with you here to pray to YHWH. (27) For this boy I prayed; and YHWH gave to me my request that I requested from him. (28) Furthermore, I myself have lent him to YHWH; all the days of his life, he is lent to the YHWH.” And she bowed there to YHWH.

(2:1) Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in YHWH; my horn is raised in YHWH. My mouth widens over my enemies, for I rejoice in your salvation. (2) There is no Holy One like YHWH, for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our god. (3) Do not multiply your speech so high, arrogance coming from your mouth; for a god of knowledge is YHWH, and by him deeds are established. (4) The bows of the heroes are shattered, while the limping gird on valor. (5) The full have hired themselves out for food, while the hungry are plumped up. The infertile woman has borne seven, while she of many children is wretched. (6) YHWH deals out death and life; brings down to Sheol and raises up. (7) YHWH makes poor and makes rich; brings low, but also raises up; (8) He lifts up the lowly from the dust; from the ash pit exalts the needy to seat them with nobles, to bequeath them a throne of honor. For to YHWH belong the pillars of the earth, and on them he has set the world. (9) The feet of his faithful ones he shall guard—but the wicked in the darkness shall perish; not a single one will overpower him. (10) YHWH! His opponents shall be shattered; above him the sky shall thunder. YHWH will judge the ends of the earth; and will give strength to his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

(2:11) And Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house, and the boy was attending YHWH before Eli the priest.

(12) And the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know YHWH (13) nor the rights of the priests due from the people. Anyone sacrificing a sacrifice, the priest’s boy would come as the meat boiled, and the three-toothed fork would be in his hand. (14) And he would strike it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. They would do this to all Israel, to those who came there at Shiloh. (15) Furthermore, before they would smoke the fat, the priest’s boy would come and say to the one

מבשל כי אם חי (16) ויאמר אליו האיש קטר יקטירון כיום החלב וקח לך כאשר תאוה נפשך ואמר לו כי עתה תתן ואם לא לקחתי בחזקה (17) ותהי חטאת הנערים גדולה מאד את פני ה’ כי נאצו האנשים את מנחת ה’ ... (2:27) ויבא איש אלהים אל עלי ויאמר אליו כה אמר ה’ הנגלה נגליתי אל בית אביך בהיותם במצרים לבית פרעה (28) ובחר אתו מכל שבטי ישראל לי לכהן לעלות על מזבחי להקטיר קטרת לשאת אפוד לפני ואתנה לבית אביך את כל אשי בני ישראל (29) למה תבעטו בזבחי ובמנחתי אשר צויתי מעון ותכבד את בניך ממני להבריאכם מראשית כל מנחת ישראל לעמי (30) לכן נאם ה’ אלהי ישראל אמור אמרתי ביתך ובית אביך יתהלכו לפני עד עולם ועתה נאם ה’ חלילה לי כי מכבדי אכבד ובזי יקלו (31) הנה ימים באים וגדעתי את זרעך ואת זרע בית אביך מהיות זקן בביתך (32) והבטת צר מעון בכל אשר ייטיב את ישראל ולא יהיה זקן בביתך כל הימים (33) ואיש לא אכרית לך מעם מזבחי לכלות את עיניך ולאדיב את נפשך וכל מרבית ביתך ימותו אנשים ... (35) והקימתי לי כהן נאמן כאשר בלבבי ובנפשי יעשה ובניתי לו בית נאמן והתהלך לפני משיחי כל הימים (36) והיה כל הנותר בביתך יבוא להשתחות לו לאגורת כסף וככר לחם ואמר ספחני נא אל אחת הכהנות לאכל פת לחם (3:1) והנער שמואל משרת את ה’ לפני עלי

(18) ... נער חגור אפוד בד (19) ומעיל קטן תעשה לו אמו והעלתה לו מימים ימימה בעלותה את אישה לזבח את זבח הימים (20) וברך עלי את אלקנה ואת אשתו ואמר ישם ה’ לך זרע מן האשה הזאת תחת השאלה אשר שאל לה’ והלכו למקמו (21) כי פקד ה’ את חנה ותהר ותלד שלשה בנים ושתי בנות ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה’ ... (3:2) ויהי ביום

who was sacrificing, “Give meat to roast for the priest; for he will not take from you boiled meat, only raw.” (16) And the man would say to him, “Smoke (oh, smoke) the fat as usual, then take for yourself whatever your heart desires.” And he would say, “No, you will give immediately; if not, I will take it by force.” (17) And the sin of the boys was very great before YHWH; for the men disrespected the offering of YHWH ... (2:27) A man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus YHWH has said: Did I not reveal (oh, reveal!) myself to your father’s house when they were in Egypt, [LXX: + “slaves”] to the house of Pharaoh, (28) and choose him from all the tribes of Israel for myself as a priest, to ascend upon my altar, to smoke incense, to carry an ephod before me? And I gave to your father’s house all the fires of the children of Israel. (29) Why would you look upon my altar and upon my offering, which I commanded, with a greedy eye, and honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves from the best of every offering of Israel, of my people? (30) Therefore, declares YHWH the god of Israel, I had said (oh, said!) that your house and your father’s house would walk in and before me permanently. But now, declares YHWH, far be it from me. For those who honor me I shall honor; and those who despise me shall be cursed. (31) Look! Days are coming when I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father’s house, from having an elder in your house. (32) And you will look in distress with a greedy eye on all the good done to Israel. But there will be no elder in your house, ever. (33) But one man will I not cut off for you from my altar, to wear out his eyes and drain his life. And all the increase of your house will die as men. ... (35) And I will raise up for myself a confirmed priest—according to my mind and my desires he shall do. And I will build for him a confirmed house, that he may walk in and out before my anointed one forever. (36) And it shall be that anyone who is left in your house shall come to bow to him for a piece of silver and a cake of bread. And he shall say, ‘Assign me, please, to one of the priestly offices, to eat a bit of bread.’” (3:1) And the boy Samuel was attending YHWH before Eli.

(18) ... a boy girded in a linen ephod. (19) A little robe his mother would make for him, and would take it to him year after year, when she went up with her husband to sacrifice the annual sacrifice. (20) Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May YHWH appoint for you seed from this woman, in place of the one lent, which she lent to YHWH.” Then they would go to his place. (21) And YHWH visited Hannah; and she conceived

ההוא ... (3) ונר אלהים טרם יכבה ושמואל שכב בהיכל ה׳ ... (4) ויקרא ה׳ אל שמואל ויאמר הנני (5) וירץ אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויאמר לא קראתי שוב שכב וילך וישכב (6) ויסף ה׳ קרא עוד שמואל ויקם שמואל וילך אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויאמר לא קראתי בני שוב שכב	and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up with YHWH ... (3:2) So it was, on that day, ... (3) When the lamp of ʿElohim had not yet been quenched, and Samuel was lying in the temple of YHWH, ... (4) Then YHWH called to Samuel, and he said, "Here I am!" (5) And he ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call. Return. Lie down." So he returned and he lay down. (6) And YHWH continued to call again, "Samuel!" Samuel rose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son. Return. Lie down."
(7) ושמואל טרם ידע את ה׳ ...	(7) (And Samuel did not yet know YHWH) ...
(8) ויסף ה׳ קרא שמואל בשלשית ויקם וילך אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויבן עלי כי ה׳ קרא לנער	(8) And YHWH continued to call Samuel a third time. And he rose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli understood that YHWH was calling the boy.

Eli's (Partial) Rehabilitation

Another block of material critical of Eli's sons (2:22–25) depends on the earlier description of their transgressions, but it adds the additional note about their violation of "the women of hosts" (הנשים הצבאות).[359] In this way, the paragraph elevates the severity of the sons' sins by extending it from simple greed and corruption (2:12–17, 29) to actual engagement in temple prostitution or rape of vulnerable temple attendants. At the same time, the author of these lines reduces Eli's personal culpability by insisting that the sons continued to transgress in deliberate defiance of their father's counsel (2:25).[360] While the earlier version of the story had been unambiguous about Eli's "buck stops here" culpability as the head of his household (notice that the accusation in 2:29 is directed at Eli personally), this paragraph somewhat rehabilitates Eli as a tragic character. He certainly failed in his responsibility to leave a godly legacy of faithful priests, but it was not (this supplement argues) due to a lack of effort.

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[359] In this layer, the sons of Eli remain unnamed/unnumbered, following the model of 2:12–22, 27–33.

[360] Myers, "The Wicked 'Sons of Eli,'" 250–51. See also the summary of criticism against Eli catalogued in Marvin A. Sweeney, "Eli: A High Priest Thrown under the Wheels of the Ox Cart," in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*, ed. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson (New York: T&T Clark, 2020), 59–75.

I speculate that this new paragraph was originally intended to follow directly from the initial description of Elide transgression (2:12–17) and before the man of God's visitation (2:27—3:1). However, the insertion of 2:22–25 at this stage would have created a lengthy, continuous block of Elide material spanning 2:12–17, 22–25, 27–33, 35–36, sandwiched between 2:11b and its *Wiederaufnahme* at 3:1a.[361] The potential length of this block of text may have troubled the author of 2:22–25, who wished to maintain and emphasize the contrast between Samuel and the Elides that had already become part of the textual tradition. In order to increase the tempo of that alternation, and thereby improve the rhetorical power of the device, they broke the narrative block about Eli's sons into two sections, transposing between them the conclusion to Hannah's story (2:17b–21), which had originally followed 3:1.[362] Having made this move, 2:18a ("and Samuel was serving in the presence of YHWH") was required to transition from 2:17 to 2:18b. The clause serves as a kind of *Wiederaufnahme*, but the differences between 2:18a and 2:11 may be significant. More than a simple resumption, 2:18a reinforces the contrast that this author wished to emphasize, putting Samuel back into the direct presence of YHWH and omitting Eli's mediating role, which had been established in 2:11. The transposition of the conclusion to Hannah's story also had the effect of juxtaposing her "giving" (and resulting increase of fertility) with the Elides' "taking" (and loss of legacy).

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[361] See previous configuration proposed above (Table 4.8).

[362] See Table 4.9, below. The proposal of an editorial "transposition" of a section of text from one location to another is bold—it requires a more significant scribal intervention than merely adding in a line or two. Nevertheless, several empirically verifiable exemplars demonstrate that this was indeed a technique employed by biblical redactors. See Müller and Pakkala, *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible*, 465–528.

In addition, 2:26 was added to break up 2:22–25, 27–33, again raising the tempo of rhetorical alternation between Samuel and Eli's sons. Like 2:18a, 2:26 emphasizes Samuel's favor with YHWH and leaves Eli entirely out of the equation. Furthermore, 2:26 adds that Samuel enjoyed the favor of the people, in direct contrast to poor report circulating about Eli's sons in 2:22–24.

Complementing Eli's partial rehabilitation, other passages attempt to explain Eli's failures as the result of conditions beyond his control. First, "the word of YHWH was rare in those days; there was no widespread vision [חזון]" (3:1b), and second, "Eli was lying in his place, and his eyes had begun to dim; he could not see" (3:2aβ–b). These two failures of sight (one spiritual and one physical) are likely meant to restore Eli's sympathetic status in the reader's eyes.[363] Neither is Eli's failure to nurture his protégé's insight entirely his own fault, for the fact that "Samuel did not yet know YHWH" (3:7a) is explained as a matter of divine timing: "the word of YHWH was not yet revealed to him" (3:7b). With this new angle on Eli in view, his death may be read as a tragic accident—not a divine strike—and the final summary of his years as a judge may be read appreciatively. This is not to say that Eli is fully rehabilitated as a heroic protagonist in the story. Rather, like his priestly house in general, Eli himself has passed his prime and become ineffective in his leadership. It is time to pass the baton of leadership to a new, prophetically perceptive, figure. While reducing Eli's personal culpability, the author nevertheless emphasizes the contrast between Eli's decline and Samuel's ascent. This is accomplished, in part, by the new frame given to Samuel's theophany: prior to the encounter,

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[363] The theme of Eli's advanced age, which begins the layer at 2:22 and is implied in 3:2, is reprised in 4:15 (likely part of the same redaction).

“the word of YHWH was rare” (3:1b); but after the encounter, “YHWH once again appeared at Shiloh, for YHWH revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh with the word of YHWH” (3:21).[364]

Continuing this theme, I propose that at this stage, Samuel’s original theophanic word of assurance (now lost) was overwritten by 3:11–14, rehearsing the divine condemnation of the Elides. This paragraph depends both on the context of the prior message from the man of God (2:27–33, 35–36),[365] as well as the new information in 2:22–25 about Eli’s failed attempts to restrain his sons’ blasphemous behavior.[366] This duplication of the judgment against the Elides is unnecessary for the plot. Why, then, does it recur? Perhaps the best explanation is that the original message of assurance in Samuel’s theophany struck the wrong tone for this redactor. Originally, Samuel was assured that YHWH would be with him and would support his words—and, sure enough, despite a disastrous military setback, YHWH’s deliverance materialized when Samuel called out (7:9ff). But the present redactor preferred to write Samuel’s initial divine encounter such that it reinforced the decline of the Elides, instead of offering a message of hope and reassurance. Concurrently, an epilogue was appended to the theophany, in which Eli demands to hear a report of the message given to Samuel (3:15b–18). This paragraph participates in Eli’s partial, but not complete, rehabilitation. For despite the message of doom, Eli is piously resigned to accept the results of his ineffectiveness as YHWH’s own prerogative.[367]

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[364] See Leuchter, Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition, 50–51.

[365] Klein agrees that 3:11–14 depends on 2:27–36 but notes that it does not hint at a survivor (cf. 2:33), suggesting that there are parts of 2:27–36 that are later than Samuel’s theophany (*1 Samuel*, 31). In contrast, I have judged all of 2:27–36 to be earlier than 3:11–14. Samuel’s theophany is a clear judgment against the house of Eli, but it does not imply complete extermination—only unforgiveable iniquity.

[366] 3:13 notes that Eli’s sons were “cursing themselves,” though the text may be read “blaspheming Elohim” if מקללים להם is considered a later scribal emendation of מקללים אלהים. If accepted, this restoration further echoes Eli’s invocation of sin against אלהים in 2:25. See McCarter, *I Samuel*, 96.

[367] However, see discussion of Eli’s response in 3:18 as “culpable passivity” in Ryan Cook, “Pious Eli? The Characterization of Eli in 1 Samuel 3:18,” *HBT* 40.2 (2018): 166–82.

In overwriting Samuel's theophany, the author has reinterpreted the encounter as a prophetic call, rather than a dream theophany, despite the formal differences.[368] In this layer, the "word" of YHWH (a prophetic catchphrase) is emphasized at 3:17, 18 and reinforced with the addition of 3:1b, 7b, 21. Furthermore, the addition of 3:1b reframes the temporal context of the encounter, setting it in a time when prophetic revelation was desperately needed. The focus of "on *that day*" in 3:2, therefore, shifts from the day when Samuel had "grown up" (2:21b) to the day(s)[369] when the word of YHWH was rare (3:1b).

Table 4.9: Eli's (Partial) Rehabilitation

(2:11) וילך אלקנה הרמתה על ביתו והנער היה משרת את ה׳ את פני עלי הכהן (12) ובני עלי בני בליעל לא ידעו את ה׳ [*no change in 2:13–16*] (17) ותהי חטאת הנערים גדולה מאד את פני ה׳ כי נאצו האנשים את מנחת ה׳ (18) ושמואל משרת את פני ה׳ transposed from below: { *נער חגור אפוד בד (19) ומעיל קטן תעשה לו אמו והעלתה לו מימים ימימה בעלותה את אישה לזבח את זבח הימים (20) וברך עלי את אלקנה ואת אשתו ואמר ישם ה׳ לך זרע מן האשה הזאת תחת השאלה אשר שאל לה׳ והלכו למקמו (21) כי פקד ה׳ את חנה ותהר ותלד שלשה בנים ושתי בנות ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה׳* } (22) ועלי זקן מאד ושמע את כל אשר יעשון בניו לכל ישראל ואת אשר ישכבון את הנשים הצבאות פתח אהל מועד (23) ויאמר להם למה תעשון כדברים האלה אשר אנכי שמע את דבריכם רעים מאת כל העם אלה (24) אל בני כי לוא טובה השמעה אשר אנכי שמע מעברים עם ה׳	(2:11) And Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house, and the boy was attending YHWH before Eli the priest. (12) And the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know YHWH [*no change in 2:13–16*] (17) And the sin of the boys was very great before YHWH; for the men disrespected the offering of YHWH. (18) And Samuel was attending the face of YHWH, transposed from below: { *a boy girded in a linen ephod. (19) A little robe his mother would make for him, and would take it to him year after year, when she went up with her husband to sacrifice the annual sacrifice. (20) Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May YHWH appoint for you seed from this woman, in place of the one lent, which she lent to YHWH." Then they would go to his place. (21) And YHWH visited Hannah; and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up with YHWH.* } (22) And Eli was very old. He heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and that they lay with the "women of hosts" at the door to the tent of meeting. (23) He said to them, "Why do you do things like these, for I am hearing about your evil doings from this whole people? (24) No, my sons—for it is not good, the rumor I am hearing spread among the people of YHWH. (25) If someone sins man to man, he may pray to 'Elohim [LXX: YHWH]. But if against YHWH a man sins, who will pray for him?" But they would

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[368] Gnuse, "A Reconsideration of the Form," 386–88.

[369] The subtle contradiction between "days" in 3:1b and "day" in 3:2a is another signal that redactional activity has occurred at this juncture. Additionally, the nif'al of the root פרץ is a biblical *hapax*, but it is more common in postbiblical Hebrew. See McCarter, *I Samuel*, 97.

(25) אם יחטא איש לאיש ופללו אלהים ואם לה׳ יחטא איש מי יתפלל לו ולא ישמעו לקול אביהם כי חפץ ה׳ להמיתם (26) והנער שמואל הלך וגדל וטוב גם עם ה׳ וגם עם אנשים	not hear the voice of their father; for YHWH intended to kill them. (26) And the boy Samuel continued growing up and was approved both by YHWH and by people.
(27) ויבא איש אלהים אל עלי ויאמר אליו כה אמר ה׳ הנגלה נגליתי אל בית אביך בהיותם במצרים לבית פרעה	(27) A man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus YHWH has said: Did I not reveal (oh, reveal!) myself to your father’s house when they were in Egypt, [LXX: “slaves”] to the house of Pharaoh,
[*... no change in 2:28–35 ...*]	[*... no change in 2:28–35 ...*]
(36) והיה כל הנותר בביתך יבוא להשתחות לו לאגורת כסף וככר לחם ואמר ספחני נא אל אחת הכהנות לאכל פת לחם (3:1) והנער שמואל משרת את ה׳ לפני עלי	(36) And it shall be that anyone who is left in your house shall come to bow to him for a piece of silver and a cake of bread. And he shall say, ‘Assign me, please, to one of the priestly offices, to eat a bit of bread.’” (3:1) And the boy Samuel was attending YHWH before Eli.
ודבר ה׳ היה יקר בימים ההם אין חזון נפרץ	And the word of YHWH was rare in those days; there was no widespread vision.
(2) ויהי ביום ההוא	(2) So it was, on that day,
ועלי שכב במקמו ועינו החלו כהות לא יוכל לראות	When Eli was lying in his place, and his eyes had begun to dim; he could not see.
(3) ונר אלהים טרם יכבה ושמואל שכב בהיכל ה׳ ... (4) ויקרא ה׳ אל שמואל ויאמר הנני (5) וירץ אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויאמר לא קראתי שוב שכב וילך וישכב (6) ויסף ה׳ קרא עוד שמואל ויקם שמואל וילך אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויאמר לא קראתי בני שוב שכב (7) ושמואל טרם ידע את ה׳	(3) When the lamp of ‘Elohim had not yet been quenched, and Samuel was lying in the temple of YHWH, ... (4) Then YHWH called to Samuel, and he said, “Here I am!” (5) And he ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call. Return. Lie down.” So he returned and he lay down. (6) And YHWH continued to call again, “Samuel!” Samuel rose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son. Return. Lie down.” (7) (And Samuel did not yet know YHWH,
וטרם יגלה אליו דבר ה׳	and the word of YHWH was not yet revealed to him.)
(8) ויסף ה׳ קרא שמואל בשלשית ויקם וילך אל עלי ויאמר הנני כי קראת לי ויבן עלי כי ה׳ קרא לנער (9) ויאמר עלי לשמואל לך שכב והיה אם יקרא אליך ואמרת דבר ה׳ כי שמע עבדך וילך שמואל וישכב במקומו (10) ויבא ה׳ ויתיצב ויקרא כפעם בפעם שמואל שמואל ויאמר שמואל דבר כי שמע עבדך (11) ויאמר ה׳ אל שמואל [~~*message*~~]	(8) And YHWH continued to call Samuel a third time. And he rose and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli understood that YHWH was calling the boy. (9) Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he should call you, then you should say, ‘Speak, YHWH, for your slave is listening.’” Samuel went and lay in his place. (10) Then YHWH came and stood there and called, just as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your slave is listening.” (11) YHWH said to Samuel, [~~*message of assurance*~~]
הנה אנכי עשה דבר בישראל אשר כל שמעו תצלינה שתי אזניו (12) ביום ההוא אקים אל עלי את כל אשר דברתי אל ביתו החל וכלה (13) והגדתי לו כי שפט אני את ביתו עד עולם בעון אשר ידע כי מקללים להם בניו ולא כהה בם (14) ולכן	“Look! I am doing something in Israel, such that when anyone hears of it, their two ears will tingle. (12) On that day I will bring about against Eli all that I have spoken regarding his house, from beginning to end. (13) For I have told him that I am judging his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, that his sons were cursing themselves, and he did not rebuke them. (14) Therefore, I swear to the house of

נשבעתי לבית עלי אם יתכפר עון בית עלי בזבח ובמנחה עד עולם	Eli that the guilt of Eli's house shall not be covered by sacrifice or offering forever.”
(15) וישכב שמואל עד הבקר ויפתח את דלתות בית ה׳	(15) Samuel lay until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of YHWH.
ושמואל ירא מהגיד את המראה אל עלי (16) ויקרא עלי את שמואל ויאמר שמואל בני ויאמר הנני (17) ויאמר מה הדבר אשר דבר אליך אל נא תכחד ממני כה יעשה לך אלהים וכה יוסיף אם תכחד ממני דבר מכל הדבר אשר דבר אליך (18) ויגד לו שמואל את כל הדברים ולא כחד ממנו ויאמר ה׳ הוא הטוב בעינו יעשה	Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. (16) But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” He said, “Here I am.” (17) And he said, “What was the message that he spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. Such may ‘Elohim do to you and moreso, if you hide from me a word of the message that he spoke to you.” (18) So Samuel told him all the words and did not hide it from him. Then he said, “He is YHWH; what is good in his eyes, let him do.”
(19) ויגדל שמואל וה׳ היה עמו ולא הפיל מכל דבריו ארצה (20) וידע כל ישראל מדן ועד באר שבע כי נאמן שמואל לנביא לה׳	(19) And Samuel grew up, and YHWH was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. (20) And all Israel from Dan to Beersheva knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet for YHWH.
(21) ויסף ה׳ להראה בשלה כי נגלה ה׳ אל שמואל בשלו בדבר ה׳	(21) YHWH once again appeared at Shiloh, for YHWH revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh with the word of YHWH.

Eli’s Two Sons, Hophni and Phinehas

An addendum to the prophecy (2:34) identifies Eli’s previously unnamed and unnumbered errant sons as the two specific men, Hophni and Phinehas. The simultaneous death of these two sons (narrated at 4:11), is foretold to Eli as a sign that Israel’s god has indeed judged his household. Hophni and Phinehas are also included at 1:3b to place them at Shiloh and thereby frame the entire narrative that spans 1 Sam 1–4 as a story about their demise.[370] Yet their appearance there creates the inconsistency that the “two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas” are introduced before the reader has met or heard of Eli himself (who does not appear until 1:9). Neither do the brothers play any actual role in the birth story of Samuel. Indeed, both of the occurrences of the pair in 1 Sam 1–3 are entirely anticipatory in nature, looking ahead to their deaths in 1 Sam 4.[371]

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[370] The aside at 1:3bβ clarifies that Hophni and Phinehas are “priests to YHWH.” This is the only time they are explicitly identified as such, and the divine name YHWH is never elsewhere invoked within the redactional layer that contains Hophni and Phinehas (a layer that spans 1 Sam 1–8). Therefore, I deem this a later gloss. It remains possible, I admit, that this is an exception to the rule, in which case this clause would belong with the “Hophni and Phinehas” layer.

It is unclear whether the names Hophni and Phinehas are meant to invoke personages known to the redactor's community, or whether they are simply invented. In any case, both names seem to be of Egyptian linguistic origin.[372] Likewise, the name Phinehas is reminiscent of Aaron's grandson, who plays an important role in the Exodus and Conquest traditions (e.g., Exod 6:25; Num 25; 31:6; Josh 22).[373] The name Hophni, on the other hand, only occurs in 1 Sam 1–4, and exclusively in formulaic association with his brother. The Egypt/Exodus undertones in the naming of the Elide transgressors will become more significant as we examine related compositional activity in 1 Sam 4–8. In these earlier chapters, the literary purpose behind the clarification of the names and number of Eli's sons is difficult to discern with confidence. Jaime Myers proposes that this device personifies the sons so that they may function as characters who move through an extended narrative.[374] More likely, perhaps, is the impulse to conform the pericope to the literary trope of pairs of unworthy sons (e.g., "Simeon and Levi," Gen 34:25–31; 49:5–7; "Er and Onan," Gen 38:6–10; "Nadab and Abihu," Lev 10:1–2; "Joel and Abijah," 1

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[371] Myers, "The Wicked 'Sons of Eli,'" 239.

[372] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 59; Myers, "The Wicked 'Sons of Eli,'" 243. For my speculation that the names may reflect a polemic against priests serving in Jewish colonies in Egypt during the Persian period, see Chapter VIII, below.

[373] "Aaron" is also an Egyptian name (as is "Moses"). It has been theorized that the Phinehas in 1 Sam should, in fact, be identified with the Phinehas of the Exodus/Conquest tradition, and Eli (עלי) understood as a homophonic adaptation of "Eleazar" (אלעזר), the son of Aaron (see Willis, "Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition," 305, n. 63). Such a proposal would clarify the mysterious identity of Eli's "father," who was chosen as a priest in Egypt (1 Sam 2:27–28). However, the report of Eleazar's death and Phinehas's succession (Josh 24:33; Judg 20:28) complicates the narrative chronology of this line of reasoning. On the other hand, the redactors of these stories did not always make chronology a high priority. Cf. the unexpected and anachronistic appearance of Phinehas at Bethel in Josh 22:27b–28a (Edenburg, *Dismembering the Whole*, 34–37).

[374] Myers, "The Wicked 'Sons of Eli,'" 251.

Sam 8:1–3).[375] Of course, it remains possible that the names Hophni and Phinehas had special meaning for the scribe who included them here to denigrate their memory.

Table 4.10: Eli's Two Sons, Hophni and Phinehas

(1:1) ויהי איש אחד מן הרמתים צופים מהר אפרים ושמו אלקנה בן ירחם בן אליהוא בן תחו בן צוף אפרתי (2) ולו שתי נשים שם אחת חנה ושם השנית פננה ויהי לפננה ילדים ולחנה אין ילדים (3) ועלה האיש ההוא מעירו מימים ימימה להשתחות ולזבח לה' צבאות בשלה ושם שני בני עלי חפני ופנחס ... (4) ויהי היום ויזבח אלקנה ונתן לפננה אשתו ולכל בניה ובנותיה מנות	(1:1) There was a certain man from Ramataim Tsofim from the hill of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, son of Yeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Tsuf, an Ephrathite. (2) He had two wives; the name of the first was Hannah, and the name of the second was Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. (3) That man would go up from his town from year after year to bow and to sacrifice to YHWH of hosts at Shiloh, and there were the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas ... (4) So it was, on the day that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give to Peninnah his wife—and to all of her sons and daughters—portions.
(2:33) ואיש לא אכרית לך מעם מזבחי לכלות את עיניך ולאדיב את נפשך וכל מרבית ביתך ימותו אנשים (34) וזה לך האות אשר יבא אל שני בניך אל חפני ופינחס ביום אחד ימותו שניהם (35) והקימתי לי כהן נאמן כאשר בלבבי ובנפשי יעשה ובניתי לו בית נאמן והתהלך לפני משיחי כל הימים	(2:33) But one man will I not cut off for you from my altar, to wear out his eyes and drain his life. And all the increase of your house will die as men. (34) And this, for you, is the sign that shall come to your two sons, to Hophni and Phinehas: on one day the two of them will die. (35) And I will raise up for myself a confirmed priest—according to my mind and my desires he shall do. And I will build for him a confirmed house, that he may walk in and out before my anointed one forever.

CONCLUSION: COMPLICATED ANCESTOR, COMPLICATED DEITY

Analysis of 1 Sam 1–3 has revealed that many generations of scribes were responsible for shaping this story in their own contexts. As with any reconstruction of composition history that is hypothesized from literary evidence rather than empirical evidence, the above schema must remain tentative. Some aspects are significantly speculative (e.g., the overwritten earlier message in Samuel's theophany), while other aspects are quite probable, given the cumulative literary evidence (e.g., the secondary nature of material about Eli's sons). That said, each of these proposed layers is consistent in its own thematic tendencies, with plausible motivations for the scribal interventions. Furthermore, a particular strength of the schema I have presented in this chapter is its ability to account for the irregular incidence of *Wiederaufnahmen* in 1 Sam 1–3. Some scribes preferred to use them as a matter of literary convention, while others did not. In some cases, successive intrusions of new material separated once-clear resumptions from their original seams and obscured the text's earlier, simpler structure. Through a diachronic lens, we can watch the contrast between Samuel and the Elides grow along with the corpus, over many literary generations, with a unique intent on the part of each author. The repetitions added by some as a simple device to indicate resumption were picked up by later redactors as sites of ideological potential. In particular, the layer I have labeled "Eli's (Partial) Rehabilitation" even took steps to heighten the impact of the rhetorical contrast between Samuel and the Elides by moving blocks of text around to increase the back-and-forth tempo.

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[375] Of particular interest here are Nadab and Abihu, another pair of corrupt priests who die on the same day, via divine judgment. It may be that Nadab and Abihu are presented in Lev 10 as symbolic predecessors to the Levites who eventually served at Bethel during Jeroboam I's reign. See discussion in Risto Nurmela, *The Levites: Their Emergence as a Second-Class Priesthood*, SFSHJ 193 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 123–24.

This is part of the profit of diachronic analysis. The ideological contrast between Samuel and the Elides, which in synchronic perspective has limited (or perhaps "flattened") interpretive potential, can now be understood as a vibrant dialogue between multiple authors who have each left their mark on the text. Viewing 1 Sam 1–3 through this depth dimension, Eli's characterization, in particular, becomes a site of ongoing debate *within the text*: Is he a positive agent of priestly propriety and divine blessing? A corrupt head of household who cared more for fattening his sons than for right worship? Or is he a well-meaning but tragic leader whose ineffective parenting led to the defilement of his legacy? Each of these perspectives is present in the text if we attend to more than the final redactor's point-of-view. Other thematic shifts may be perceived diachronically, as well. The layers exhibit a general trajectory toward increasing consciousness of pan-Israelite identity and centralized institutions/offices of authority, from the family story of an “Ephrathite” in the earliest layer to “all Israel” in later redactions, eventually foreshadowing offices of “king” (2:10) and “prophet” (3:20).[376] The mediating role of priests becomes more important as the text grows, both in terms of priests’ potential for blessing (e.g., 2:20) as well as their potential for corruption (e.g., 2:12), with ramifications for the wellbeing of the whole people (3:11). There may even be a perceptible shift in the profile of Israel’s deity in later layers. In the base Samuel narrative, the deity is concerned with family matters, such as an individual woman’s fertility. Later layers turn the focus of divine attention toward cultic and national concerns.

Finally, my hypothesized relative chronology in 1 Sam 1–3 is not confined to these three chapters of the book. Some of these changes were part of wider projects of redaction that extended into 1 Sam 4 and, in some cases, beyond. Therefore, the framework I have proposed here may be held loosely as I compile additional evidence from the unfolding plot. I engage these next sections of the text out of their canonical order, however. In the next chapter, I will explore 1 Sam 7–8, where the base Samuel layer identified above continues, before returning to 1 Sam 4 to tie the strands of my diachronic analysis together.

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[376] Walter Dietrich remarks on the narrow horizon of the Samuel material (individuals, family, Shiloh, Ramah) compared to the wider horizon of Elide material (Israel, people, people of YHWH) in 1 Sam 1–3 (*Samuel*, 118–19).

CHAPTER V
SAMUEL: JUDGE AND KINGMAKER (1 SAM 7–8)

As soon as he grows up, Samuel disappears from the extant narrative—only to reappear without reintroduction in 7:3, as if he had been waiting in the wings the whole time. The present chapter picks up the Samuel thread at its resumption in 1 Sam 7 and follows it to its conclusion.

RESUMING THE SAMUEL STORY

Samuel's absence from 1 Sam 4–6 is one of the strongest indicators that some version of the Ark Narrative was secondarily inserted into its present location. If so, it should be possible to identify a continuous narrative flow from the point of the intnerruption to the point where the original narrative resumes.[377] Indeed, it would be tempting to read Samuel's reintroduction to the story at 7:3, ויאמר שמואל אל כל בית ישראל "And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel…," as an instance of *Wiederaufnahme*, reprising the phrase that abruptly cuts off in 4:1a (MT), ויהי דבר שמואל לכל ישראל "And the word of Samuel came to all Israel."[378] Another candidate for resumptive repetition of the Samuel thread is found a couple verses later, in 7:5, ויאמר שמואל "And Samuel said…."[379] The suggestion that Samuel's speech once continued without the interruption of the ark story is perhaps supported by the observation that the idiom at 4:1a (MT), ויהי דבר "A word came," is more typical of an *introduction* to an oracle than the *conclusion* to a pericope (as it now functions in the MT). On this basis, Frank Spina has argued that 4:1a was indeed originally composed to anticipate a prophetic oracle—perhaps the words of Samuel retained in chapter 7. He interprets Samuel's long silence following 4:1b in the present text as a "pregnant pause," a rhetorical strategy to highlight Israel's refusal to listen to the prophetic word.[380]

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[377] For a different approach, consider Aelred Cody's hypothesis that Samuel's birth and childhood narratives circulated independently from the stories of his adult judgeship, and were compiled at a later date (*A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 68–69).

[378] Eynikel, "The Relation between the Eli Narratives," 101; Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled," 153–54.

[379] Wylie, "He Shall Deliver My People from the Hand of the Philistines," 447.

There are challenges to these theories of resumption, however. If an earlier Samuel story continued directly from the oracular introduction in 4:1a to the beginning of Samuel's speech in 7:3 (perhaps beginning with the infinitive לאמר after the resumptive phrase), the speech introduces some narrative incoherence. For example, when Samuel begins to speak in 7:3b, he presumes that Israel has strayed from YHWH through idolatrous worship (7:3aβ–bα). However, no such idolatry has been described in the earlier narrative.[381] Likewise, Samuel presumes that Israel is under threat from the Philistines (7:3bβ). While this is arguably the case following 1 Sam 4–6, such a crisis was never adumbrated in 1 Sam 1–3. In the same way, when we get to 7:5 (the other potential site of literary resumption), Samuel proposes to intercede for Israel in prayer to YHWH at Mizpah, but the need for such intercession has not been established prior to 4:1a. Therefore, both 7:3 and 7:5 as potential resumptions of the narrative suspended at 4:1a present a Samuel who is offering a solution in search of a crisis.

Another proposal may better explain the development of the text. I propose that the original Samuel thread did not break at 4:1a but continued with 4:1b–2. The necessary motivation for Samuel's activity in 1 Sam 7 is the military conflict narrated in 4:1b–2.[382] After their initial loss, Israel retreats to Mizpah (7:6a), where they are able to fend off a second Philistine attack with YHWH's help (7:10aβ–13). While the latter battle occurs at Mizpah, the two battles are connected by their shared proximity to Ebenezer (4:1; 7:12).[383] The latter reference even provides an etiological anchor for the toponym. Therefore, I consider it necessary to include 4:1b–2 in the essential Samuel narrative, providing the transition from the story of Samuel's youth to his activity as an adult leader.[384]

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[380] Frank A Spina, "A Prophet's 'Pregnant Pause': Samuel's Silence in the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4:1-7:2)," *HBT* 13.1 (1991): 59–73.

[381] Cf. Willis, "Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition," who argues for the general unity of the Ark Narrative with its surrounding literary context, speculating that the idolatry mentioned in 7:3–4 was not the *cause* of the Philistine invasion, but its *result*: "It is quite possible that when they were defeated at Ebenezer and the ark was lost, the Israelites concluded that [YHWH] had failed them or was not as powerful as Dagon (who apparently defeated him) and other gods. So in desperation they turned to other gods" (303). However, such an inference is nowhere intimated by the text itself.

Including 4:1b–2 as part of the base Samuel thread has implications for delimiting the Ark Narrative, which takes the military conflict with the Philistines as its launching point in the extant text and is, therefore, often identified as 1 Sam 4:1b—7:2. In contrast to this common scholarly demarcation, I observe that the godnapping account does not formally begin until 4:3, when the strategy of bringing YHWH to the battle line is first proposed by the elders of Israel. What, then, is the literary function of 4:1a (MT), "And the word of Samuel came to all Israel"? I think the strongest possibility is that it belongs to the early supplemental layer that emphasizes Samuel's prophetic vocation at a national scale (which also includes 3:19–21a). If so, then the structural role of 4:1a is *not* that of an oracular introduction (as Spina suggests); rather, it forms an *inclusio* that brackets 3:20—4:1a by framing the national significance of Samuel's prophetic identity with the phrase, כל ישראל "all Israel."[385]

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[382] Notably, the LXX of 4:1a omits "And the word of Samuel came to all Israel," but preserves an alternate version: "In those days, Philistia mustered for battle against Israel, and Israel went out to meet them for battle." For the LXX, neither 7:3 nor 7:5 functions as a *Wiederaufnahme*, and resumption of the thread may be considered without appeal to the device of repetition. Conversely, 4:1a (LXX) is absent in the MT, making it appear in the MT that Israel initiated the conflict with the Philistines. This may be an ideological revision or, perhaps more likely, 4:1a (LXX) has dropped from the MT by homoioteleuton; see Klein, *1 Samuel*, 37. Alternatively, the omission of 4:1a (MT) may be attributed to the general corruption of the text at this juncture. The LXX repeats much of 3:20 a second time and adds a summary reflection about Eli and his sons: καὶ Ηλι πρεσβύτης σφόδρα, καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ πορευόμενοι ἐπορεύοντο καὶ πονηρὰ ἡ ὁδὸς αὐτῶν ἐνώπιον κυρίου. On the various solutions to this jumble, see Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 59, n. 15. In any case, the LXX and MT reconverge at 4:2 to depict the tragic Israelite loss on the field of battle.

[383] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 149; but cf. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 68, who proposes that the two "Ebenezers" refer to different geographic locations.

[384] While I connect the battle in 1 Sam 7 to the first battle in 4:1–2, others make similar connections between 1 Sam 7 and the *second* battle in chapter 4 (i.e., 4:3–11), e.g., Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 353; Firth, "Play It Again, Sam," 15. Firth, in particular, connects the voice of YHWH in 7:10 with the voice of the people in 4:5, concluding that the battle in chapter 7 (in which YHWH fights, and then Israel responds) is a literary reversal of the battle in chapter 4 (when Israel fought first, and then called upon YHWH). I concede that there is narrative resonance between these accounts. However, this does not demonstrate the dependence of 7:10 upon 4:5 (though it is certainly possible). Just as likely, however, the elaboration of the first battle in 4:3–11 was composed as an inversion of the battle in 1 Sam 7 and is dependent upon it.

By contrast, when we next encounter Samuel in the extant narrative (at 7:3), the text does not repeat the phrase "all Israel," but instead employs a somewhat different phrase, כל בית ישראל "the whole house of Israel," which it shares with the preceding verse (7:2). This phrase, "the whole house of Israel," is among a number of features in 7:2–4 that point to its probable late composition.[386] These verses draw upon conspicuously Deuteronomistic terminology ("all your heart"; "foreign gods"; "the Ba'als and the Asherahs"; etc.).[387] The condemnation of foreign worship embedded in these verses is at home in a Deuteronomistic context but is not pertinent to the earlier story told in 1 Sam 1:1—4:2.

In light of these factors, the most likely resumption point for the base Samuel narrative is 7:6, with the regrouping of battle-weary Israelite troops at Mizpah: "Israel was beaten before

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[385] Another possibility for 4:1a (MT) is that the base Samuel layer included *both* of the major variants witnessed by the MT and LXX: "In those days, Philistia mustered for battle against Israel (4:1a LXX). And the word of Samuel came to all Israel (4:1a MT), and [in response] Israel went out to meet Philistia for the battle…." In this case, 4:1a MT would specifically denote Samuel's muster of Israel. Such a widespread summons of Israelite troops is echoed, albeit more elaborately, in Saul's muster to confront Nahash of Ammon (1 Sam 11:1–11). Nevertheless, I discount this theory because the *Leitwörter* "all Israel" in 4:1a lead me to assign it to the redactional layer that emphasizes pan-Israelite ideology.

[386] The phrase, "the whole house of Israel," is most often found in texts that are generally accepted to be of late origin, e.g., Ezek (10x); 2 Sam 6 (2x); Jer (2x); see Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 91; but cf. Dalit Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts between the Exiles and the People Who Remained (6th-5th Centuries BCE)*, LHBOTS 543 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 193. See also Nurmela, *The Levites*, 87–90, for discussion of the phrase "house of Israel" belonging to an era after the defeat of the Northern Kingdom, when it was important to distinguish between Israelites with northern (i.e., "house of Israel") and southern (i.e., "house of Judah") identities within the surviving kingdom of Judah.

[387] Klein, *1 Samuel*, 64. See also the argument for late supplementation of 7:3–4 in Juha Pakkala, *Intolerant Monolatry in the Deuteronomistic History*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 76 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 1999), 148–49.

Philistia, and they struck down among the array on the plain about four thousand men … So, they mustered at Mizpah … and Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.” (4:2b; 7:6aα, 6b).[388]

SAMUEL THE JUDGE

The base Samuel narrative begun in 1 Sam 1–3 concludes with an episode that celebrates his leadership as Israel’s judge (comprising 4:1–2; 7:6aα, 6b, 10aβ–13, 15–17).[389] After a devastating loss near Ebenezer, Israel regroups at Mizpah, while Samuel intercedes for them with a sacrifice to YHWH and a cry for help.[390] Perhaps hoping to find Israel preoccupied with worship, Philistia attacks at the very moment that Samuel is offering his sacrifice, but YHWH strikes the attackers with a panic and Israel follows with a decisive rout of the enemy. The episode concludes with the erection of an ebenezer by Samuel to mark the occasion of YHWH’s victory.[391] Samuel's story concludes with a formulaic summary of his lifelong career as Israel's judge.[392]

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[388] It is possible that Samuel’s directive, “Then Samuel said, ‘Muster all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray on your behalf to YHWH” (7:5) is the resumption point. However, Samuel’s invocation of “all Israel” and his prophetic initiative (“I will pray on your behalf to YHWH”) would seem to indicate that this line belongs to a redaction with a pan-Israelite perspective. I lean toward assigning 7:5 to the redactor who integrated the Samuel and godnapping threads, adding 7:5 as a transition to the resumption of the Samuel thread in 7:6.

[389] See the formatted translation in Appendix II for a more legible, visual representation of this confusing string of partial verses. Secondary material in 1 Sam 7 likely includes: 7:6aβ (a cultic ceremony of repentance—despite no indication of transgression in the base narrative); 7:7–10aα (an aside to draw in the Philistine *seranim*—characters who belong to a later layer of redaction—and to describe Samuel’s priestly offering of a whole burnt offering [עולה כליל] to YHWH); 7:14 (a supplement with a decidedly national/territorial scope, mentioning specifically Ekron and Gath, cities that feature in a later layer of the godnapping narrative).

[390] Mizpah is described in Judges as a prominent cultic site; see Judg 20:1, 3; 21:1, 5, 8, as noted by Klein, *1 Samuel*, 66; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 145.

This episode is reminiscent of the pattern established by the hero stories told in the book of Judges (e.g., Judg 12:7–15, *passim*): a crisis (1 Sam 4:1–2); an outcry among the people (1 Sam 7:8–9); divine intervention mediated by a judge (1 Sam 7:10–11); a period of rest for the people and the land (1 Sam 7:12–13);[393] and a summary of the judge's career (1 Sam 7:15–17). While these final verses offer an epilogue to Samuel's successful leadership against the Philistine threat, they omit the usual statement regarding the death and burial of the judge (e.g., Judg 12:7, 10, 12, 15).[394] The notice of Samuel's death is withheld in the final text until 1 Sam 25:1 (cf. 1

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[391] Klein marks the etiology of Ebenezer in 7:12 as the likely conclusion of the earliest tale, adding that 7:15–17 is also probably earlier than the Deuteronomistic context into which it has been set (*1 Samuel*, 69–70). Jacob Wright highlights the significance of Samuel's ebenezer on the "narrative map of Israel's history," marking the turning point of the narrative: YHWH has been their help "thus far"—but after this, Israel attempts to help themselves, with predictably catastrophic results (Wright, "Military Valor and Kingship," 52–53).

[392] Leuchter connects this use of שפט with Samuel's invocation of the divine warrior in 7:8–9, in synchronicity with the warrior stories in the Book of Judges—not with the juridical role played in 7:6 (*Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition*, 66–69). These shifts in the range of meaning for the term *shofet* are further indication of compositional complexity in the unit.

[393] Affinities between 1 Sam 7 and Judges are noted by Bourke, "Samuel and the Ark: A Study in Contrasts," 73–74; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 145; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 66; Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 174–77, 219–25; Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 46–48. Campbell recognizes the resonance between Samuel's story and that of the judges, but emphasizes the Samuel narrative's variations from the pattern, concluding that one thread may have been modeled upon the other (*1 Samuel*, 92–93). See also Willis's distinctive argument that the whole of 1 Sam 1–7 is an extended judge story in which the Ark Narrative functions formally as the description of a crisis (Philistine supremacy) that is not overcome until chapter 7 ("Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition," 298). However, this is an oversimplification of the function (and narrative-theological import) of 1 Sam 4–6. Cf. also Firth, who considers 4:1b—7:1 and 7:2–17 to be formally distinct from the stories in Judges because, unlike Judges, they both involve unilateral action on the part of YHWH "without any form of human mediation" ("Play It Again, Sam," 12). While this is plainly true for the godnapping story in 1 Sam 5–6, disregard for Samuel's mediating role in 7:2–17 is an interpretive oversight. Furthermore, Firth uses the thematic similarity between these two stories to support his hypothesis that they were composed by the same author "as a diptych in which YHWH's free authority is stressed" (ibid.). However, the thematic resonances could just as easily have motivated an editor to juxtapose two narratives composed by different authors (i.e., by inserting 1 Sam 4–6 into the Samuel story).

[394] Jacob Wright notes that there is no explicit identification of Israelite sin in 1 Sam 4 to prompt the beginning of the cycle, as is often the case in Judges ("Military Valor and Kingship," 49). However, 1 Sam 7:3–6 reframes the Philistine conflict in terms of Israelite sin and repentance. Could this represent a redaction of the Samuel material in the pattern of the Judges anthology?

Sam 28:3), where it follows the standard formula (death, mourning, burial notice).[395] In addition to this variance from the Judges schema, 7:13 confidently announces that the Philistines never again entered Israelite territory during Samuel's lifetime. Yet in its present context, this statement is contradicted by the Philistine incursion that becomes the central crisis of Saul's kingship (cf. 1 Sam 13), which occurs during Samuel's lifetime.[396] Similarly, 7:15 claims that Samuel judged Israel "all the days of his life." Yet later the text, Samuel himself supervises the transition in Israel from rule by judges to rule by monarchs during his own lifetime.[397] The reasonable inference from these inconsistencies is that the author of the summary of Samuel's judgeship in 1 Sam 7:13, 15–17 is unaware of the "kingmaker" Samuel traditions found in 1 Sam 8–28.[398] Perhaps the latter appearances of Samuel were added when the Samuel narrative was joined to the story of the rise of Israel's monarchy, or perhaps existing characters in the latter material were reidentified as Samuel (e.g., the anonymous "man of God" in 9:6; cf. 2:27). If the Samuel thread was expanded secondarily into the narrative of the early monarchic period, it would help explain why his death notice was postponed to its present location where it interrupts the story of David's rise.[399]

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[395] Not every judge is given a death notice; cf. the omission of Deborah's death (Judg 5:31), as observed by Jacob L. Wright, *War, Memory, and National Identity in the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 173.

[396] On the finality of the defeat of the Philistines in 1 Sam 7, see Frolov, *The Turn of the Cycle*, 142, 152, 179.

[397] Preß, "Der Prophet Samuel," 192. This evidence is also central to Frolov's diachronic theory that 1 Sam 1–8 (as a unit) is secondary to the story of monarchy in 1 Samuel. For Frolov, Samuel "delivers Israel not as a (reluctant) kingmaker but as a model judge; his successes in making Israel repent and securing Yhwh's help against the Philistines (1 Samuel 7) are judgeship's last hurrah. In this sense, 1 Samuel 1–7 closes an era instead of opening one" (*The Turn of the Cycle*, 42).

[398] As Walter Dietrich proposes in *The Early Monarchy in Israel*, 273.

[399] Andrew Tobolowsky argues for the secondary nature of the character named Samuel in 1 Sam 8–28 with a case by case analysis of each subsequent appearance of Samuel in the narrative; "The 'Samuel the Judge' Narrative in 1 Sam 1–7," *ZAW* 129.3 (2017): 376–89.

Table 5.1: Samuel the Judge

(4:1) [Καὶ ἐγενήθη ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις καὶ συναθροίζονται ἀλλόφυλοι εἰς πόλεμον ἐπὶ Ισραηλ] ויצא ישראל לקראת פלשתים למלחמה ויחנו על האבן העזר ופלשתים חנו באפק (2) ויערכו פלשתים לקראת ישראל ותטש המלחמה וינגף ישראל לפני פלשתים ויכו במערכה בשדה כארבעת אלפים איש ... (7:6) ויקבצו המצפתה ... וישפט שמואל את בני ישראל במצפה ... (10aβ) ופלשתים נגשו למלחמה בישראל וירעם ה׳ בקול גדול ביום ההוא על פלשתים ויהמם וינגפו לפני ישראל (11) ויצאו אנשי ישראל מן המצפה וירדפו את פלשתים ויכום עד מתחת לבית כר (12) ויקח שמואל אבן אחת וישם בין המצפה ובין השן ויקרא את שמה אבן העזר ויאמר עד הנה עזרנו ה׳ (13) ויכנעו הפלשתים ולא יספו עוד לבוא בגבול ישראל ותהי יד ה׳ בפלשתים כל ימי שמואל ... (15) וישפט שמואל את ישראל כל ימי חייו (16) והלך מדי שנה בשנה וסבב בית אל והגלגל והמצפה ושפט את ישראל את כל המקומות האלה (17) ותשבתו הרמתה כי שם ביתו ושם שפט את ישראל ויבן שם מזבח לה׳	(4:1) [LXX: "In those days, Philistia mustered for battle against Israel"] and Israel went out to meet Philistia for the battle, and they camped at Ebenezer, and Philistia camped at 'Afeq. (2) Philistia arrayed to meet Israel, and the battle commenced. But Israel was beaten before Philistia, and they struck down among the array on the plain about four thousand men ... (7:6) So they mustered at Mizpah ... And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah ... (10aβ) Philistia approached for the battle against Israel. But YHWH thundered with a great voice on that day against Philistia and panicked them, and they were beaten before Israel. (11) And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued Philistia and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car. (12) Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and the Shen and named it Ebenezer ["the stone of help"]; for he said, "Thus far, YHWH has helped us." (13) And the Philistines were subdued and did not continue again to enter the borderland of Israel. The hand of YHWH was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel ... (15) Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. (16) He went as needed, year after year, and circulated to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel—all these places. (17) And his returning was to Ramah, for his home was there. And there he judged Israel, and he built there an altar to YHWH.

SAMUEL THE KINGMAKER

It comes as a major turn, then, when the idealized summary of Samuel's success as a judge is followed immediately in 1 Sam 8 with a dramatic shift toward monarchic governance. The story of the rise of the Israelite monarchy begins properly at 1 Sam 9:1, with the introduction of Saul the Benjaminite chief.[400] Therefore, 1 Sam 8 serves as a literary bridge to motivate the transition from rule by judges to the leadership of a centralized monarchy. As far as bridges go, however, the chapter is more like a rickety rope bridge than a solid highway overpass; it may be one of the most ideologically indecisive chapters in the Bible. The narrator describes a legitimate need for leadership transition (the corruption of Samuel's sons), but both Samuel and YHWH interpret the elders' call for transition as a damnable rejection of YHWH's rule. The elders and people are censured for their insolence, but in another surprising twist, YHWH grants their request and instructs Samuel to appoint a king to rule Israel. The reader leaves 1 Sam 8 unsure of whether monarchy is good or bad, a strategic advancement or a conceded evil. It is possible that a single author composed 1 Sam 8 with intentional ambiguity about the merits of monarchy,[401] but the inconsistency may very well preserve an editorial debate on the topic, a succession of scribes who stamped the historical origins of the Israelite monarchy with their own ideological foreshadowing.[402]

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[400] Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 88–89.

Pro-Monarchy

The first editorial bridge between Samuel's story and the beginning of the monarchy has a pro-monarchic ethos (comprising 8:1, 3–7a, 9b–10, 22b). The author views monarchy as a faithful development toward national cohesion and a gracious gift from YHWH. This perspective on monarchy necessitates a demotion of the idyllic picture of judgeship still ringing in our ears from 1 Sam 7. Therefore, the author undermines the prospect of ongoing dynastic judgeships by narrating the corruption of Samuel's sons.[403] If even Samuel could not ensure a legacy of godly leadership, who could? Samuel's sons are portrayed flatly in the narrative, as undeveloped as Eli's sons in 1 Sam 2–4. They are not *characters* so much as they are *placeholders* in a biblical trope of dynastic corruption.[404] Samuel's sons make no actual appearance in the story; they are discussed only in absentia, and interestingly, their fate is never disclosed. They do not perish like Eli's corrupt sons, nor are they exiled or even officially demoted from their office as judges. Instead, once they have fulfilled their literary function to prompt the request for a king, they simply vanish from the narrative.[405] Samuel's progeny is never again a topic for discussion in the biblical record. While Samuel is understandably displeased with the people's demand—it is, after all, his own dynasty they are rejecting—YHWH's initial response to Samuel is favorable toward the elders' request, validating their critique of the instability of judgeship. YHWH instructs Samuel to heed their voice and appoint a king (8:7a; cf. 8:22). In this way, the centralized and sustained authority of a monarchy is presented as the natural solution to the problem of corrupt regional judgeships, a solution stamped with divine approval.[406] The narrative is primed for a subsequent historical portrait of growing Israelite prosperity and military success under the aegis of a strong central monarchy (1 Sam 9ff).

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[401] As proposed by Ronald E. Clements, "Deuteronomistic Interpretation of the Founding of the Monarchy in 1 Sam 8," *VT* 24.4 (1974): 398–410. Cf. Jonathan H. Walton's synchronic reading that paints the anti-monarchic portions of 1 Sam 8 as anti-[a certain type of] monarchy, but pro-[another type of] monarchy ("A King like the Nations: 1 Samuel 8 in Its Cultural Context," *Bib* 96.2 [2015]: 179–200). Walter Dietrich discusses the ambivalence in both synchronic and diachronic terms (*Samuel*, 36*–37*).

[402] As Robert Wilson discusses, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, 172–74.

[403] The sons are introduced anonymously and unnumbered in 8:1, 3–4, much like Eli's sons function as an unspecified collective in early redactions of 1 Sam 1–3. The names, Joel and Abijah (8:2), are likely secondary and reflect coordination with the redaction that names Eli's two sons in the earlier narrative.

As part of the transition from judgeship to monarchy, Samuel's own vocation is transformed. Though he was characterized as a judge with a lifetime appointment in 7:15, in 1 Sam 8, his career pivots to kingmaker. Samuel is not asked to merely step aside as judge to make way for a king; rather, the elders petition Samuel himself to provide the king for the people (8:5).

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[404] Stefan Kammerer, "Die missratenen Söhne Samuels," *BN* 88 (1997): 85.

[405] I also propose that at this stage, Samuel's sons were an unnamed collective. Their identification as the pair, Joel and Abijah, was likely part of the same compositional layer that named and numbered Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

[406] See Lester L. Grabbe, Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 21.

Furthermore, Samuel is tasked by YHWH with instructing the people in the appropriate "rights of the king" (והגדת להם משפט המלך, 8:9). In this manner, the monarchy is introduced as an institution full of potential for national stability, yet still under the supervision of a prophetic mediator.

Table 5.2: Pro-Monarchy supplement

(7:15) וישפט שמואל את ישראל כל ימי חייו (16) והלך מדי שנה בשנה וסבב בית אל והגלגל והמצפה ושפט את ישראל את כל המקומות האלה (17) ותשבתו הרמתה כי שם ביתו ושם שפט את ישראל ויבן שם מזבח לה׳	(7:15) Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. (16) He went as needed, year after year, and circulated to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel—all these places. (17) And his returning was to Ramah, for his home was there. And there he judged Israel, and he built there an altar to YHWH.
(8:1) ויהי כאשר זקן שמואל וישם את בניו שפטים לישראל ... (3) ולא הלכו בניו בדרכו ויטו אחרי הבצע ויקחו שחד ויטו משפט (4) ויתקבצו כל זקני ישראל ויבאו אל שמואל הרמתה (5) ויאמרו אליו הנה אתה זקנת ובניך לא הלכו בדרכיך עתה שימה לנו מלך לשפטנו ככל הגוים (6) וירע הדבר בעיני שמואל כאשר אמרו תנה לנו מלך לשפטנו ויתפלל שמואל אל ה׳ (7) ויאמר ה׳ אל שמואל שמע בקול העם לכל אשר יאמרו אליך ... (9b) כי העד תעיד בהם והגדת להם משפט המלך אשר ימלך עליהם (10) ויאמר שמואל את כל דברי ה׳ אל העם השאלים מאתו מלך ... (22b) ויאמר שמואל אל אנשי ישראל לכו איש לעירו	(8:1) So it was, when Samuel became old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel ... (3) But his sons did not walk in his paths, and they stretched out toward illicit gain, and took bribes, and twisted justice. (4) So all the elders of Israel assembled and came to Samuel at Ramah, (5) and said to him, "Look, you have become old and your sons do not walk in your paths. Now, may you appoint for us a king to judge us, like all the nations." (6) But the thing seemed evil in Samuel's eyes, when they said, "Give us, please, a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to YHWH, (7) and YHWH said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people, to all that they say to you ... (9b) however, you shall warn (oh, warn!) them, and show them the rights of the king who will rule over them." (10) So Samuel said all the words of YHWH to the people who were requesting from him a king ... (22b) Then Samuel said to the people of Israel, "Go, each to his town."

Anti-Monarchy

The thread in support of Israelite monarchy appears to have been challenged by one or more revisions that reframe the request for a king (and the resultant prioritization of "statehood" over the "nationhood" established during the period of the judges) as a catastrophic misstep on

Israel's part (8:7b–22a).[407] A scribal intervention reframes the elders' complaint about Samuelide corruption as a smokescreen for their own abandonment of YHWH as their king (8:7b–8).[408] But YHWH is not deceived, recognizing the people's implicit rejection as part of an idolatrous pattern played out in each generation since their liberation from Egypt.[409] The interpolation is concluded with a surprising *Wiederaufnahme* in 8:9a, "And now, listen to their voice." While the words mirror 8:7a, the intervening material has completely upended their meaning. Instead of a divine solution to a pervasive social problem, monarchy has been reframed as an expression of communal infidelity. The deity's instruction to Samuel becomes a word of resignation and judgement against the people.[410]

The folly of Israel's request for a king is elaborated in a second block of new material (8:11–22a).[411] This litany of the "rights of the king" explains the exploitative excesses of monarchic leadership.[412] However, the people are resolute in their obstinance (8:19). This block also ends with a *Wiederaufnahme* (8:21–22a), as YHWH resigns the people to their chosen fate.

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[407] On the tension between "nation" and "state" in Judges and Samuel, see Wright, "The *Raison d'Être* of the Biblical Covenant," 54.

[408] Pakkala, following Veijola, assigns this interpolation to nomistic editors (*Intolerant Monolatry in the Deuteronomistic History*, 149).

[409] McCarter notes the highly Deuteronomistic flavor of this tie between idolatry and abandonment of YHWH (*I Samuel*, 157). Klein concurs, noting the language of "reject," "abandon," "worshiping other gods," "cry out," "you chose," "YHWH will not answer" (*1 Samuel*, 76–78).

[410] Frolov contrasts the judgmental tone of 1 Sam 8 with the conciliatory tone of Samuel's speech in 1 Sam 12: "The deity grants the request [in 1 Sam 12] not out of malice, as it probably does in 1 Samuel 8, but for the sake of Israel's deliverance" (*The Turn of the Cycle*, 176–77).

[411] This could be part of the same redactional layer as 8:7b–9a. However, the resumptive repetitions at 8:9a, 22a, and the exclusive use of the divine epithet YHWH, suggest that 8:9b–22a may represent a later redactional layer. I propose that 8:7b–9a belongs to the earlier layer marked by appeals to the Exodus narrative and the near exclusive use of the divine epithet, האלהים. On this basis, I also include the naming of Samuel's two sons, Joel and Abijah, in the layer that names and numbers Eli's sons.

[412] 1 Sam 8:11–17 is commonly thought to be the incorporation of a preexisting document by Deuteronomistic authors/editors. See, e.g., Klein, *1 Samuel*, 74; Clements, "Deuteronomistic Interpretation," 400–1.

Table 5.3: Anti-Monarchy supplements

(7:15) וישפט שמואל את ישראל כל ימי חייו (16) והלך מדי שנה בשנה וסבב בית אל והגלגל והמצפה ושפט את ישראל את כל המקומות האלה (17) ותשבתו הרמתה כי שם ביתו ושם שפט את ישראל ויבן שם מזבח לה' (8:1) ויהי כאשר זקן שמואל וישם את בניו שפטים לישראל	(7:15) Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. (16) He went as needed, year after year, and circulated to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel—all these places. (17) And his returning was to Ramah, for his home was there. And there he judged Israel, and he built there an altar to YHWH. (8:1) So it was, when Samuel became old, he appointed his sons as judges for Israel
(2) ויהי שם בנו הבכור יואל ושם משנהו אביה שפטים בבאר שבע	(2) The name of his son, the firstborn, was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah—judges in Beersheva.
(3) ולא הלכו בניו בדרכו ויטו אחרי הבצע ויקחו שחד ויטו משפט (4) ויתקבצו כל זקני ישראל ויבאו אל שמואל הרמתה (5) ויאמרו אליו הנה אתה זקנת ובניך לא הלכו בדרכיך עתה שימה לנו מלך לשפטנו ככל הגוים (6) וירע הדבר בעיני שמואל כאשר אמרו תנה לנו מלך לשפטנו ויתפלל שמואל אל ה' (7) ויאמר ה' אל שמואל שמע בקול העם לכל אשר יאמרו אליך	(3) But his sons did not walk in his paths, and they stretched out toward illicit gain, and took bribes, and twisted justice. (4) So all the elders of Israel assembled and came to Samuel at Ramah, (5) and said to him, "Look, you have become old and your sons do not walk in your paths. Now, may you appoint for us a king to judge us, like all the nations." (6) But the thing seemed evil in Samuel's eyes, when they said, "Give us, please, a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to YHWH, (7) and YHWH said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people, to all that they say to you
כי לא אתך מאסו כי אתי מאסו ממלך עליהם (8) ככל המעשים אשר עשו מיום העלתי אתם ממצרים ועד היום הזה ויעזבני ויעבדו אלהים אחרים כן המה עשים גם לך (9) ועתה שמע בקולם	For it is not you they have rejected, but me they have rejected from ruling over them, (8) according to all the deeds they have done, from the day I brought them up from Egypt to this day, they have abandoned me and have served other gods. Thus they are also doing to you. (9) And now, listen to their voice.
(9b) אך כי העד תעיד בהם והגדת להם משפט המלך אשר ימלך עליהם (10) ויאמר שמואל את כל דברי ה' אל העם השאלים מאתו מלך	(9b) however, you shall warn (oh, warn!) them, and show them the rights of the king who will rule over them." (10) So Samuel said all the words of YHWH to the people who were requesting from him a king
(11) ויאמר זה יהיה משפט המלך אשר ימלך עליכם את בניכם יקח ושם לו במרכבתו ובפרשיו ורצו לפני מרכבתו (12) ולשום לו שרי אלפים ושרי חמשים ולחרש חרישו ולקצר קצירו ולעשות כלי מלחמתו וכלי רכבו (13) ואת בנותיכם יקח לרקחות ולטבחות ולאפות (14) ואת שדותיכם ואת כרמיכם וזיתיכם הטובים יקח ונתן לעבדיו (15) וזרעיכם וכרמיכם יעשר ונתן לסריסיו ולעבדיו (16) ואת עבדיכם ואת שפחותיכם ואת בחוריכם הטובים ואת חמוריכם יקח ועשה למלאכתו (17) צאנכם יעשר ואתם	*(11) He said, "These will be the rights of the king who will reign over you: your sons he will take and appoint them for himself in his chariotry and among his horsemen, and they will run before his chariotry; (12) and to appoint for himself leaders of thousands and leaders of fifties, and to plow his plowland and to harvest his harvest, and to make vessels of his battle and vessels of his chariotry. (13) And your daughters he will take as perfumers and cooks and bakers. (14) And your fields and your vineyards and your best olive groves he will take and give them to his slaves. (15) And your seed and your vineyards he will tithe and give to his eunuchs and slaves. (16) And your slaves, male and female, and your best workers, and your donkeys will take and put them to his work. (17) Your flocks he will tithe, and you*

תהיו לו לעבדים (18) וזעקתם ביום ההוא מלפני מלככם אשר בחרתם לכם ולא יענה ה' אתכם ביום ההוא (19) וימאנו העם לשמע בקול שמואל ויאמרו לא כי אם מלך יהיה עלינו (20) והיינו גם אנחנו ככל הגוים ושפטנו מלכנו ויצא לפנינו ונלחם את מלחמתנו (21) וישמע שמואל את כל דברי העם וידברם באזני ה' (22) ויאמר ה' אל שמואל שמע בקולם והמלכת להם מלך	*yourselves will become his slaves. (18) And you will cry out in that day because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves. But YHWH will not answer you on that day." (19) But the people refused to hear Samuel's voice. And they said, "No! We insist: a king shall over us, (20) so that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." (21) And Samuel had heard all the words of the people, and spoke them in the ears of YHWH. (22) YHWH said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and crown a king for them."*
(22b) ויאמר שמואל אל אנשי ישראל לכו איש לעירו	(22b) Then Samuel said to the people of Israel, "Go, each to his town."

CONCLUSION: MULTIPLE SAMUELS, MULTIPLE THEOLOGIES IN DIALOGUE

While a synchronic reading of 1 Sam 7–8 paints an ambivalent portrait of Samuel and of the coming monarchy, a diachronic perspective reveals a chorus of voices in dialogue, each making the case for their version of Israel's history. The opening salvo is offered by a storyteller who remembers Samuel as a priestly judge, to whom YHWH responded in a moment of military crisis and near annihilation. Samuel himself underlines the point: "Thus far, YHWH has helped us" (7:12). Another voice wants to temper the valorization of Samuel by introducing the corruption of his sons, who were not equipped to follow in their father's footsteps. Righteous elders confront Samuel with the need for a centralizing monarch, who will give their people a noble, stable, and defensible place on the regional political stage (8:1, 3–7a). Another voice speaks with a contrary prophetic perspective: these elders were *not* righteous in their request. Presuming to speak from YHWH's own perspective, this voice identifies the demand for a king as a rejection of YHWH and an expression of idolatry in pursuit of the ways (and the gods) of the nations (8:7b–8). Supporting this critique, a voice of experience and hindsight lays out the excesses of monarchic power that will inevitably result from handing power to a human autocrat (8:11–20).

Furthermore, the portrait of Israel's deity shifts as different voices from different social-religious contexts contributed to the narrative. Notably, the multiple divine epithets for Israel's god employed in 1 Sam 4–6 are reduced to YHWH alone in 1 Sam 7–8.[413] 1 Sam 7 also severs the tether of proximity between YHWH and the ark, which was so central in the final form of 1 Sam 4–6. Though the ark is installed at Kiriath Jearim, the Samuel thread seems unaware of YHWH's quarantine there. Cultic ceremonies are performed at Mizpah before some (other?) representation of YHWH's presence, and those rituals are effective in their appeal for divine aid. In Samuel the judge's story, YHWH is a powerful, immanent presence, fighting a military battle on Israel's behalf (cf. the expectations voiced in 1 Sam 4:3–9). In 1 Sam 8, however, YHWH is at once more distant *and* more vocal. YHWH is no longer expected to lead Israel's military exploits—a role now expected of a king (8:20). Instead of a deity whose aid is summoned through sacrificial ritual performed by a priest (7:9), YHWH is now engaged via the conversational prayers of a prophet (8:6–9, cf. 3:10–14). Remarkably, instead of silencing past voices, scribes engaged their received traditions, supplementing and reframing the stories. Their edits changed the tone of the text, surely, but they also preserved the debate embedded within the text.

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[413] The sole exception is ה' אלהנו in 7:8.

CHAPTER VI

A SPAGHETTI JUNCTION OF TRADITIONS (1 SAM 4)

Thus far, I have treated the Samuel, Eli, and godnapping threads in 1 Sam 1–8 as distinct units. However, they are intertwined within the larger literary framework of the biblical books of Samuel. An investigation into how these threads were combined draws us to 1 Sam 4, the fault line where these traditions collide. After a discussion of the problem of overlapping entanglements and a review of popular solutions, the present chapter presents my own reconstruction of the composition of 1 Sam 4 and its implications for the rest of 1 Sam 1–8.

OVERLAPPING ENTANGLEMENTS

The ignorance in the godnapping story of the Samuel thread, and the ignorance in the Samuel stories of the godnapping thread has led the majority of scholars to conclude that they represent independent literary traditions. However, these traditions have been conflated in a way that has produced a complex relationship of each to the story of Eli and his sons, with which the Samuel thread is entangled in 1 Sam 1–3 and the godnapping narrative is entangled in 1 Sam 4. Rost, Campbell, and most others approach this problem of overlapping entanglements by splitting the Eli thread into two parts.[414] According to this theory, the Elide material in 1 Sam 4 represents the original introduction to an early, unified, standalone Ark Narrative that traced the movement of the ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem. The Elide material in chapters 1–3 is, therefore, secondary. This material was likely authored by the Deuteronomist to supply a backstory for Eli and a theological reason for his family's loss of status as Israel's priests.[415] Another solution, proposed by Schicklberger (and followed by Porzig), makes an even more dramatic critical evaluation: the loss of the ark and implied destruction of Shiloh are the *only* bits of narrative that comprise the earliest text of 1 Sam 4. Everything else (from the rest of the Ark Narrative, to the Elide saga, to the Samuel story) is supplemental growth built atop that core historical *Katastrophenerzählung*.[416] Miller and Roberts move in the opposite direction. Like Rost and Campbell, they conclude that the Eli thread is original to the Ark Narrative. But rather than dividing up the Eli thread, they insist that most of the material about Eli and his sons from 1 Sam 2 formed the original introduction to the Ark Narrative and is literarily inseparable from it.[417] Each of these perspectives is attractive and offers a reading consistent with the associated scholars' interpretations of the Ark Narrative's literary purpose.[418] For Rost, who sees 2 Sam 6 as the original conclusion to 1 Sam 4–6, the point of the Ark Narrative is to legitimize the Jerusalem shrine in the time of David and Solomon, by recalling how the ark abandoned Shiloh and made its way by stages to its rightful home in Jerusalem. Such a *hieros logos* of the Jerusalem ark shrine would naturally begin with the ark's departure from Shiloh. Not willing to commit to such an early date of composition, Campbell opines that the purpose of the Ark Narrative is to signal the end of the era of the judges and prepare the way (via literary retrospect) for the advent of the monarchy. That historical shift in Israel's divinely authorized mode of governance is symbolized in the text by the movement of the ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem.[419] Schicklberger, on the other hand, considers the original purpose of the core ark story to be the literary commemoration of a local disaster at Shiloh, later expanded to develop a theology of divine presence that does not depend on Jerusalem/Zion.[420] Miller and Roberts, alternatively, read the Ark Narrative as the theological answer to the elders' question in 4:3, "Why did YHWH beat us today before the Philistines?" This pressing question goes unanswered without the description in 1 Sam 2 of the corruption of the Elide priesthood and the prediction by the man of God that their corruption would be punished by death.[421]

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[414] Rost, *Überlieferung*, 36; Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 249–50.

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[415] Against this view, it may be argued that even with the backstory of 1 Sam 2, the Elides are insufficiently introduced in the narrative. They appear abruptly, and at the end of Eli's (unnarrated) career. Were there additional Eli traditions familiar to readers but not included in the Deuteronomist's version of 1 Samuel? Cf. Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 349, who nevertheless maintains that the canonical introduction of the Elides is narratively sufficient.

[416] Schicklberger, *Die Ladeerzählungen*, 41–42, 70–73; Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 141–42. Note, however, that 1 Sam 4 says nothing about Shiloh's destruction!

[417] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 27–32. See also Davies, "The History of the Ark in the Books of Samuel," 11; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 24–26.

[418] Campbell also notes that a scholar's interpretation of the significance of the Ark Narrative depends a great deal on their estimation of its textual extent. "Yahweh and the Ark: A Case Study in Narrative," *JBL* 98.1 (1979): 32–33.

Such disagreement by careful literary critics has prompted some scholars to abandon the pursuit of an independent Ark Narrative altogether.[422] They suggest that if an early Ark Narrative was used by the Deuteronomists, it has been so thoroughly embedded that we are unable to distinguish it.[423] Others have decided that the best way forward is to consider Rost's theory falsified and to advance under the presumption of a unified Samuel text composed by a single author.[424] These scholars offer meaningful synchronic interpretations of the extant text. Certainly, the idea that the text is unintelligible without source disambiguation has been thoroughly disproven by these thoughtful readings (not to mention more than two millennia of pre-critical reception and interpretation). However, just because a text can be *read* as a unity does not mean that it was *composed* as a unity.[425] As I have demonstrated above, 1 Sam 1–8 retains evidence of multiple layers of composition—diverse voices in a dialogue through time—interwoven most tightly in 1 Sam 4.

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[419] Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 152–53, 198–200; idem, "Yahweh and the Ark," 32. Campbell insists on the inclusion of 2 Sam 6 in the original Ark Narrative because of the implausibility of "ending a narrative with the ark shipped off to out-of-the-way Kiriath-jearim.... as a final resting place, Kiriath-jearim can be no more than a repository for outworn sacral objects" (*1 Samuel*, 301–2). But it has become clear, following recent excavations of the site, that Kiriath Jearim was far from "out of the way." It was likely a prominent cultic center, at least in the second half of the 8th century. I would also argue that Kiriath Jearim need not be the final historical resting place of the ark for its installation there to be a fitting conclusion to the pericope. Even in canonical context, the Ark Narrative does not purport to be an exhaustive history of the ark, but only one prominent episode in its history—an episode that finds its conclusion at Kiriath Jearim.

[420] Schicklberger, *Die Ladeerzählungen*, 211–34.

[421] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 27–32. McCarter follows Miller and Roberts in adding parts of 1 Sam 2 to the original Ark Narrative, proposing that the denigration of the Elides gives emphasis to the prophet Samuel's great achievement in 1 Sam 7 (*I Samuel*, 25–26).

[422] E.g., Smelik, "The Ark Narrative Reconsidered," 131–32.

[423] E.g., Willis, "Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition"; Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 353; Gitay, "Poetics of the Samuel Narrative"; David G. Firth, *1 and 2 Samuel: A Kingdom Comes*, Phoenix Guides to the Old Testament 9 (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2013), 43.

The three major diachronic models for the early chapters of Samuel, typified by the scholars cited above, hinge on the literary function of 1 Sam 4 and its relationship to the Samuel, Elide, and godnapping narrative threads.[426] Does this chapter contain the original, independent, historical kernel (Schicklberger/Porzig)? Is it the introduction to an independent Ark Narrative (Rost/Campbell)? Or is it the beginning of the end of the Elide saga that started in 1 Sam 2 and finds its ultimate conclusion in 1 Sam 7:1, with the ark in a new home (Miller and Roberts)? The schematic below presents a relative chronology of composition for 1 Sam 4 that offers a both/and solution to the impasse between the proposals of Campbell, Schicklberger, and Miller/Roberts. The Elide material of 1 Sam 2 and 4 belongs together *and* the so-called "Ark Narrative" is an independent source (comprising, however, only 1 Sam 5–6 and pertaining to an image of the deity, not yet the ark itself). The "ark" (or godnapping) material of 1 Sam 4 is secondary, composed *ad hoc* by scribes who wished to integrate an independent godnapping story into the existing Samuel narrative. Finally, the Elide saga was layered atop this conflation, accounting for its entanglement in both earlier threads.

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[424] McCormick, "From Box to Throne," 180–82.

[425] Richard Preß makes essentially the same point in his early evaluation of Rost's thesis. "Der Prophet Samuel," 181.

[426] Cf. Philip R. Davies, who also wrestles with this puzzling entanglement: "The presence of Hophni and Phinehas on the battlefield implies the presence of the ark, and vice-versa, if it was the function of the Shilonite priests to carry the ark. Thus it is difficult to deny that both the ark and the sons of Eli belong to the original narrative. But if ch. 4 is to be included within the ark-saga, chs. 1–3 must also be added. If the ark-saga included the fulfilment of a threat, it must also have included the threat itself. However, whilst the ark-saga is concerned with David and his claims, the story of the family of Eli can only with difficulty be comprised within this scheme" ("The History of the Ark in the Books of Samuel," 11).

MULTIPLE VOICES IN 1 SAM 4

The Base Samuel Layer

In Chapter IV, I identified a base literary layer of traditions about the character Samuel in 1 Sam 1–3, which describe his birth, youth, and maturity into the role of an Israelite judge. That layer extends into 1 Sam 4 by only a couple verses. 1 Sam 4:1–2 depicts a Philistine attack against the forces of Israel in the days of Samuel, resulting in an initial Israelite loss. I proposed that this loss at Ebenezer was the motivation behind the original continuation of the narrative at 7:6. There, in response to this initial setback, Israel retreats to Mizpah and seeks YHWH's help, via Samuel's intercession (7:8). While Samuel is performing his worship, the Philistines mount a second wave of attack. But this time, YHWH thunders against them and hands victory to the Israelites (7:10–13). This original Samuel narrative concludes with a formulaic summary of the judge's career (7:15–17), with the exception that the notice of his death and burial has been displaced, via subsequent redaction, to later in the book (1 Sam 25:1). As a judge narrative, the Samuel story probably arose alongside the tales of the other Israelite (i.e., Northern) judges, and may have been composed and preserved at Ramah, Samuel's purported hometown (cf. 1:1, 19; 2:11; 7:17; 25:1).[427]

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[427] Willis, "Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition," 307–8.

Table 6.1: Complete Base Samuel layer

(1:1) ויהי איש אחד מן הרמתים צופים מהר אפרים ושמו אלקנה בן ירחם בן אליהוא בן תחו בן צוף אפרתי (2) ולו שתי נשים שם אחת חנה ושם השנית פננה ויהי לפננה ילדים ולחנה אין ילדים (3) ועלה האיש ההוא מעירו מימים ימימה להשתחות ולזבח לה׳ צבאות בשלה ... (4) ויהי היום ויזבח אלקנה ונתן לפננה אשתו ולכל בניה ובנותיה מנות (5) ולחנה יתן מנה אחת אפים כי את חנה אהב וה׳ סגר רחמה (6) וכעסתה צרתה גם כעס בעבור הרעמה כי סגר ה׳ בעד רחמה (7) וכן יעשה שנה בשנה מדי עלתה בבית ה׳ כן תכעסנה ותבכה ולא תאכל (8) ויאמר לה אלקנה אישה חנה למה תבכי ולמה לא תאכלי ולמה ירע לבבך הלוא אנכי טוב לך מעשרה בנים (9) ותקם חנה אחרי אכלה בשלה [καὶ κατέστη ἐνώπιον κυρίου] ... (18) ... ותלך האשה לדרכה ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד (19) וישכמו בבקר וישתחוו לפני ה׳ וישבו ויבאו אל ביתם הרמתה וידע אלקנה את חנה אשתו ויזכרה ה׳ (20) ויהי לתקפות הימים ותהר חנה ותלד בן ותקרא את שמו שמואל כי מה׳ שאלתיו (21) ויעל האיש אלקנה וכל ביתו לזבח לה׳ את זבח הימים ואת נדרו (22) וחנה לא עלתה כי אמרה לאישה עד יגמל הנער והבאתיו ונראה את פני ה׳ וישב שם עד עולם (23) ויאמר לה אלקנה אישה עשי הטוב בעיניך שבי עד גמלך אתו אך יקם ה׳ את דברו ותשב האשה ותינק את בנה עד גמלה אתו (24) ותעלהו עמה כאשר גמלתו בפרים שלשה ואיפה אחת קמח ונבל יין ותבאהו בית ה׳ שלו והנער [μετ᾽ αὐτῶν] (25) וישחטו את הפר ויביאו את הנער ... (2:11) וילך אלקנה הרמתה על ביתו והנער היה משרת את ה׳ ... (18) ... נער חגור אפוד בד (19) ומעיל קטן תעשה לו אמו והעלתה לו מימים ימימה בעלותה את אישה לזבח את זבח הימים ... (21) כי פקד ה׳ את חנה ותהר ותלד שלשה בנים ושתי בנות ויגדל הנער שמואל עם ה׳ ... (4:1) [Καὶ ἐγενήθη ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις	(1:1) There was a certain man from Ramataim Tsofim from the hill of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, son of Yeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Tsuf, an Ephrathite. (2) He had two wives; the name of the first was Hannah, and the name of the second was Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. (3) That man would go up from his town from year after year to bow and to sacrifice to YHWH of hosts at Shiloh, ... (4) So it was, on the day that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give to Peninnah his wife—and to all of her sons and daughters—portions. (5) But to Hannah he would give a certain special portion, for Hannah he loved, but YHWH had closed her womb. (6) And her rival tormented her, and tormented again, on account of her trouble, for YHWH had closed up her womb. (7) This would happen, year upon year; as often as she went up to the house of YHWH, sure enough, she would torment her. And she would weep and would not eat. (8) Elkanah her husband said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart embittered? Am I not better to you than ten sons?” (9) Hannah arose, after eating at Shiloh, [MT: “and after drinking”; LXX: “and presented herself before YHWH”] ... (18) ... Then the woman went on her way. And she ate, and her face was no longer downcast. (19) They arose early in the morning, and they bowed before YHWH. Then they returned and entered their home at Ramah. Elkanah knew Hannah his wife and YHWH remembered her. (20) So it was, in the course of time, that Hannah became pregnant and bore a son. And she called his name Samuel, for “From YHWH I requested him.” (21) The man Elkanah went up—and his whole household—to sacrifice to YHWH the annual sacrifice and his vow. (22) But Hannah did not go up for she said to her husband, “Once the boy is weaned, I will bring him, and he will be seen by the face of YHWH, and he will dwell there permanently. (23) Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what is right in your eyes. Stay until you have weaned him. But may YHWH stand by his word.” So, the woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him. (24) Then she brought him up with her when she had weaned him, with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and she brought him to the house of YHWH at Shiloh; and the boy was [MT: “a boy”; LXX: “with them”]. (25) And they slaughtered the bull and brought the boy ... (2:11) And Elkanah went to Ramah, to his house, and the boy was attending YHWH ... (18) ... a boy girded in a linen ephod. (19) A little robe his mother would make for him, and would take it to him year after year, when she went up with her husband to sacrifice the annual

ἐκείναις καὶ συναθροίζονται ἀλλόφυλοι εἰς πόλεμον ἐπὶ Ισραηλ] ויצא ישראל לקראת פלשתים למלחמה ויחנו על האבן העזר ופלשתים חנו באפק (2) ויערכו פלשתים לקראת ישראל ותטש המלחמה וינגף ישראל לפני פלשתים ויכו במערכה בשדה כארבעת אלפים איש ... (7:6) ויקבצו המצפתה ... וישפט שמואל את בני ישראל במצפה ... (10aβ) ופלשתים נגשו למלחמה בישראל וירעם ה׳ בקול גדול ביום ההוא על פלשתים ויהמם וינגפו לפני ישראל (11) ויצאו אנשי ישראל מן המצפה וירדפו את פלשתים ויכום עד מתחת לבית כר (12) ויקח שמואל אבן אחת וישם בין המצפה ובין השן ויקרא את שמה אבן העזר ויאמר עד הנה עזרנו ה׳ (13) ויכנעו הפלשתים ולא יספו עוד לבוא בגבול ישראל ותהי יד ה׳ בפלשתים כל ימי שמואל ... (15) וישפט שמואל את ישראל כל ימי חייו (16) והלך מדי שנה בשנה וסבב בית אל והגלגל והמצפה ושפט את ישראל את כל המקומות האלה (17) ותשבתו הרמתה כי שם ביתו ושם שפט את ישראל ויבן שם מזבח לה׳ ... (25:1*) וימת שמואל ... ויקברהו בביתו ברמה	sacrifice. ... (21) And YHWH visited Hannah; and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up with YHWH ... (4:1) [LXX: “In those days, Philistia mustered for battle against Israel”] and Israel went out to meet Philistia for the battle, and they camped at Ebenezer, and Philistia camped at ‘Afeq. (2) Philistia arrayed to meet Israel, and the battle commenced. But Israel was beaten before Philistia, and they struck down among the array on the plain about four thousand men ... (7:6) So they mustered at Mizpah ... And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah ... (10aβ) Philistia approached for the battle against Israel. But YHWH thundered with a great voice on that day against Philistia and panicked them, and they were beaten before Israel. (11) And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued Philistia and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car. (12) Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and the Shen and named it Ebenezer [“the stone of help”]; for he said, “Thus far, YHWH has helped us.” (13) And the Philistines were subdued and did not continue again to enter the borderland of Israel. The hand of YHWH was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel ... (15) Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. (16) He went as needed, year after year, and circulated to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel—all these places. (17) And his returning was to Ramah, for his home was there. And there he judged Israel, and he built there an altar to YHWH ... (25:1*) Then Samuel died, and they buried him at his home in Ramah.

Integrating the Samuel and Godnapping Narratives

In a later generation, scribes integrated the godnapping narrative (1 Sam 5–6, already including the Beth Dagon thread and the Kiriath Jearim postscript) with the Samuel layer. They bridged the gap from the setback at Ebenezer (4:2) to the beginning of the godnapping narrative (5:2) by composing an entirely new, intermediate, battle narrative (4:3–4a, 5–7, 9aα, 10). In this *ad hoc* scene, following their initial loss, the elders of Israel attribute their misfortune to Israel’s failure to have their deity in the vanguard of battle.[428] Therefore, they instruct “the people” to retrieve YHWH from Shiloh and bring him to the front lines (4:3–4a).[429] The arrival of the deity is a morale booster, and Israel’s army shouts a great battle cry (תרועה), which sends dread into the Philistine camp (4:5–7).[430] The Philistines, however, regain their courage and fight for their lives, ultimately routing Israel and killing thirty-thousand Israelite soldiers (4:9aα, 10). In the battle, they abduct YHWH and transport him to Beth Dagon (5:2).

This newly composed battle narrative differs stylistically from the earlier battle report in 4:1–2. While the earlier account reports only the essential “scoreboard” of the battle, the supplemented scene is awash with narrative detail and includes multiple instances of direct speech.[431] The earlier battle mentions the “array” of Philistine forces (ויערכו פלשתים) and locates the battle “on the array on the plain” (במערכה בשדה).[432] However, in the new scene, despite its length, the noun מערכה and the verb ערך are absent—the location of the battle is unspecified. In the first battle, the fight is “abandoned” (ותטש המלחמה) as Israel was beaten, whereas in the new battle scene, Israel “flees” (וינסו איש לאהליו).[433] In the first battle, casualties are numbered in stricken men (ויכו ... איש), while in the latter they are tallied as fallen foot-soldiers (ויפל ... רגלי).[434] While an author is not required to use repeated vocabulary, even in a highly standardized genre like battle reports, the many differences between these similar accounts reinforce the likelihood that they derive from different authorial hands.[435]

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[428] See Edenburg, “The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled,” 165.

[429] Notice that “the people” retrieve YHWH from Shiloh and *they* transport him to the battle. In the final form, Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas are tacked onto this statement as an afterthought to set up their demise in the battle, but their presence is not necessary to the primary plotline that pertains to the abduction of YHWH. Willis argues that 4:3 depends on the prior notice that the deity was housed at Shiloh (3:3) (“Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition,” 302). However, this is not strictly necessary. The base Samuel narrative, as I have identified it, makes clear that there was a shrine to YHWH at Shiloh. Therefore, the author of 1 Sam 4 (even in its earliest iteration) would have assumed that an image of YHWH was present in Shiloh, even without the explicit notice at 3:3. On the contrary, the parenthetical note at 3:3 may be a later gloss to add just such explicitness.

[430] On the תרועה as a battle cry, see Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 145–60.

[431] Campbell highlights a marked change from “report” to “interpretation” with the question posed in 4:3 (“Yahweh and the Ark,” 36; idem, *The Ark Narrative*, 68–71). In a similar way, Davies identifies the godnapping theme as an “elaboration” of the typical battle report pattern, suggesting redaction (“The History of the Ark in the Books of Samuel,” 13). Noting the contrasting styles between 4:1–2 and 3ff, Römer remarks, “Dass ein und derselbe Erzähler bzw. dieselbe mündliche Tradition stilistisch so unterschiedlich berichten sollte, leuchtet nicht ein,” translation: “That one and the same narrator or the same oral tradition should report with such stylistic variation, does not make sense” (“Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?” 265).

[432] This language is reprised in the messenger’s report at Shiloh (4:12, 16), belonging to the next layer of redaction.

The chief accomplishment of this supplemental interlude—and certainly its primary motivation—is to put YHWH on the field of battle, leading naturally to his abduction in the fray.[436] This is made explicit in the opening line of the godnapping narrative: “And the Philistines took YHWH and brought him to Beth Dagon…” (5:2).[437] On the other side of the godnapping narrative, after YHWH has been successfully installed at Kiriath Jearim, the author transitions back to the Samuel thread by introducing 7:5, Samuel’s call for Israel to regroup at Mizpah. This transition remains somewhat abrupt, but it is important because it positions Samuel as the initiative taker in the resurgence against the Philistines, and it remotivates the geographic shift to Mizpah. The effect of the long godnapping excursus is that the (now third) battle near

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[433] This use of the root נטש is unusual and difficult to translate. See commentary by McCarter, *I Samuel*, 103; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 37. The idiom איש לאהליו “each to his tent” occurs nine times (all within DtrH: Judg 7:8; 20:8; 1 Sam 4:10; 13:2; 2 Sam 18:17; 19:9; 20:1, 22; 2 Kgs 14:12; plus two occurrences in parallel texts in 2 Chron 10:16; 25:22).

[434] The term רגלי only occurs in tallies of soldiers (Exod 12:37; Num 11:21; Judg 20:2; 1 Sam 4:10; 15:4; 2 Sam 8:4; 10:6; 1 Kgs 20:29; 2 Kgs 13:7; Jer 12:5; 1 Chron 18:4; 19:18).

[435] David M. Gunn, “Narrative Patterns and Oral Tradition in Judges and Samuel,” *VT* 24.3 (1974): 286–317.

[436] Campbell notes that “the loss of the ark and the interpretation of that event are the primary concerns of chap. 4. The deaths of Hophni and Phinehas, and even of Eli, are of secondary concern to the narrator” (“Yahweh and the Ark,” 37). Campbell acknowledges such complexities in the composition of the Ark Narrative (and helpfully discusses them at length), but he considers the compilation of diverse sources, along with interpretive discussion, to be the work of the single narrator responsible for most of the extant Ark Narrative—work completed before the Ark Narrative was incorporated into 1 Samuel. See, e.g., Campbell’s reflection on 4:3–9, “If one may speak of the intention of the narrator in the composition of the narrative, it cannot be overlooked that it is precisely in such an interpretive intermezzo with its speeches that the work of the narrator is discernible” (*The Ark Narrative*, 149).

[437] I hypothesize that the subject of 5:2 (פלשתים) was added at this point, perhaps even overwriting בית דגונים, though this speculation is neither provable, nor essential to the redaction-critical reconstruction.

Ebenezer (cf. 7:12) is distanced from the earlier campaign by some significant span of time, during which YHWH has fought unilaterally against the Philistines behind enemy lines. But despite the chronological gap, the battle in 7:5–13 still functions narratively as the conclusion to the hostilities introduced in 4:1.[438]

Notably, the author is not interested in portraying the capture of Israel's deity as a punishment against Israel, nor against the Elides (who have not yet entered the narrative tradition).[439] As Cynthia Edenburg summarizes,

> The narrative, on its own, provides no justification for the Israelite defeat. In contrast to the NeoAssyrian text which blames Babylonian corruption for Marduk's decision to abandon his land and temple, there is no hint of Israelite guilt in the Ark Narrative, nor is it implied that their defeat represents divine retribution. So too, no explanation is provided for the divine outbreak at Beth-Shemesh. Quite the opposite—the people of Beth-Shemesh had rejoiced at the ark's return and immediately sacrificed an offer in thanks."[440]

Even the substantial military losses portrayed in these battles are characterized as only a temporary setback, set right by YHWH in 1 Sam 7. Likewise, the abduction of YHWH is only a temporary plot twist—not a case of punitive divine abandonment.[441] Culpability for YHWH's capture is placed squarely on the shoulders of his captors, who experience direct retaliation from the deity in 1 Sam 5. The net outcome of the pericope that extends from 1 Sam 4:1—7:13, even in its earliest form, is a decisive victory for YHWH and for Israel, and the subdual of the Philistines.[442]

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[438] Instead of the conclusion to a single pericope begun with the battles in 1 Sam 4, Porzig suggests that 1 Sam 7 was composed as a later counternarrative (*Gegengeschichte*) to the *Katastrophenerzählung* of 1 Sam 4, to explain what happened after the loss of the ark—i.e., YHWH was still victorious (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 153).

[439] The connection between the abduction of Israel's god and the transgressions of the Elides will be made in subsequent redactional layers. The lingering discrepancy, even in the final form, is noted by Firth: "Although the capture of the ark had not featured in either of the prophetic messages that preceded this narrative, it becomes the narrative vehicle through which both the messages of the man of god and Samuel are, at least partially, resolved" ("Play It Again, Sam," 13). Firth does not, however, follow this insight to its diachronic implications.

[440] Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled," 169.

[441] Wrongdoing on the part of the community is rarely a cause for divine abandonment in Mesopotamian godnapping tales. For several examples of communal innocence in the context of divine absence or godnapping, see Sa-Moon Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient near East* (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 1989), 19–23.

The scribe who combined the godnapping narrative with the Samuel narrative is probably also the same hand that added the original theophany scene in 1 Sam 3 (including the now lost message of assurance to Samuel). Not only is Samuel recharacterized in both supplements as one who speaks directly with YHWH (3:10; cf. 7:5), but the *Leitwörter* כל ישראל "all Israel" also appear at key moments in both supplements (3:20; 4:1, 5; 7:5).[443] Weaving the Samuel legends together with the *hieros logos* of the Kiriath Jearim shrine appears to be part of the project of compiling a unified history of "all Israel" out of valued literary traditions deriving from various parts of the kingdom. Indeed, in this layer, Israel is explicitly represented as a unified polity stretching from Dan to Beersheva (3:20).[444] As a tale of conflict with—and eventual victory over—Israel's Philistine enemy, the godnapping tale that brought the deity to Kiriath Jearim fit well as an excursus within Samuel's campaign against the Philistines.

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[442] Hermann Timm attributes this compilation work to the (exilic) Deuteronomist, suggesting that the Ark Narrative's placement here, before the monarchy, is Dtr's kerygmatic demonstration of the Israelite deity's ability to rule unilaterally, even outside of the land and without a king ("Die Ladeerzählung [1. Sam. 4–6; Sam. 6] und das Kerygma des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks").

[443] Cf. 1 Sam 25:1, which may have belonged to this pericope as its conclusion. If so, then the clause "all Israel gathered and lamented him" (ויקבצו כל ישראל ויספדו לו) could have been part of this supplemental layer.

[444] Cf. the pan-Israelite idiom "from Dan to Beersheva" in Judg 20:1 (the assembly at Mizpah); 2 Sam 3:10 (transfer of the unified kingdom to David); 2 Sam 17:11 (Absolom's attempted coup); 24:2, 15 (David's census); 1 Kgs 5:5 [4:25 English] (idealized Solomonic kingdom).

Table 6.2: Integrating the Samuel and Godnapping narratives

(4:1) [Καὶ ἐγενήθη ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις καὶ συναθροίζονται ἀλλόφυλοι εἰς πόλεμον ἐπὶ Ισραηλ] ויצא ישראל לקראת פלשתים למלחמה ויחנו על האבן העזר ופלשתים חנו באפק (2) ויערכו פלשתים לקראת ישראל ותטש המלחמה וינגף ישראל לפני פלשתים ויכו במערכה בשדה כארבעת אלפים איש	(4:1) [LXX: “In those days, Philistia mustered for battle against Israel”] and Israel went out to meet Philistia for the battle, and they camped at Ebenezer, and Philistia camped at ‘Afeq. (2) Philistia arrayed to meet Israel, and the battle commenced. But Israel was beaten before Philistia, and they struck down among the array on the plain about four thousand men.
*(3) ויבא העם אל המחנה ויאמרו זקני ישראל למה נגפנו ה' היום לפני פלשתים נקחה אלינו משלה את * ... ה' ויבא בקרבנו וישענו מכף איבינו (4) וישלח העם שלה וישאו משם את * ... ה' צבאות ישב הכרבים ... (5) ויהי כבוא * ... ה' אל המחנה וירעו כל ישראל תרועה גדולה ותהם הארץ (6) וישמעו פלשתים את קול התרועה ויאמרו מה קול התרועה הגדולה הזאת במחנה העברים וידעו כי ארון ה' בא אל המחנה (7) ויראו הפלשתים כי אמרו בא אלהים אל המחנה ויאמרו אוי לנו כי לא היתה כזאת אתמול שלשם ... (9) התחזקו והיו לאנשים פלשתים ... (10) וילחמו פלשתים וינגף ישראל וינסו איש לאהליו ותהי המכה גדולה מאד ויפל מישראל שלשים אלף רגלי ...*	*(3) The people entered the camp, and the elders of Israel said, “Why did YHWH beat us today before Philistia? Let us take for ourselves from Shiloh * ... YHWH, that he may enter into our midst and rescue us from the hand of our enemies.” (4) So the people reached Shiloh and they carried from there * ... YHWH of hosts, seated on the cherubim ... (5) So it was, when * ... YHWH entered the camp, all Israel shouted a great shout, and it shook the land. (6) Philistia heard the sound of the shout, and said, “What is the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?” And they knew that (the ark of) YHWH had entered the camp. (7) Then the Philistines feared, for they said, “Gods have entered the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us, for such as this has not occurred in recent days ... (9) Get ahold of yourselves, and become men, Philistia!” ... (10) Philistia battled and Israel was beaten and they fled, each to his tent. The strike was very great: from Israel fell thirty-thousand soldiers ...*
(5:2) ויקחו פלשתים את * ... [κυρίου] ויביאו אתו בית דגון ויציגו אתו אצל דגון	(5:2) And Philistia took * [LXX: “YHWH”]. They brought him to Beth Dagon and erected him beside Dagon.
[... *godnapping narrative* ...]	[... *godnapping narrative* ...]
(7:1) ויבאו אנשי קרית יערים ויעלו את * ה' ויבאו אתו אל בית אבינדב בגבעה ואת אלעזר בנו קדשו לשמר את * ה' ...	(7:1) The people of Kiriath Jearim came and took up * YHWH and brought him into the house of Abinadab, on the hill. El’azar, his son, they consecrated to guard * YHWH ...
(5) ויאמר שמואל קבצו את כל ישראל המצפתה ואתפלל בעדכם אל ה'	*(5) Then Samuel said, “Muster all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray on your behalf to YHWH.”*
(6) ויקבצו המצפתה ... וישפט שמואל את בני ישראל במצפה	(6) So they mustered at Mizpah ... And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.

Eli’s End

At some stage after the addition of the godnapping narrative, Eli the priest was introduced as the mediator of Samuel’s emergence into Israelite leadership. Eli mediates the opening of Hannah’s womb, raises the boy Samuel as a servant at the temple in Shiloh, and trains Samuel to attend to the voice of YHWH. This narrative thread of Eli's positive role as a priestly mediator and mentor continues into 1 Sam 4, with the addition of 4:12–13aα, 13bβ–14, 16aβ–17a, 18b (originally a continuous block of text). Here, Eli's life comes to a tragic end in the aftermath of the first two battles at Ebenezer. However, on a narrative level, Eli's demise still contributes to Samuel's rise by functioning as a *de facto* passing of the baton of leadership from Eli to his young protégé, who rises to the occasion in 1 Sam 7:5. In this way, the whole Eli-focused supplement is enfolded into the Samuel narrative as a subplot of the dominant thread.

The Eli block in 1 Sam 4 is positioned between the report of the losses at Ebenezer and the change of scene to Beth Dagon. A runner from the field of battle brings news of the Israelite loss to Shiloh (4:12). His arrival is noted with the first word of 4:13, ויבוא "He entered," but is interrupted in the extant text by an explanatory gloss. The thread resumes in 4:13b (following the *Wiederaufnahme*, והאיש בא) with the messenger's report in the town, their resultant outcry, and Eli's summons to the messenger (4:13b–14). Eli's question, "What is the sound of this commotion?" is reminiscent of (and likely dependent upon) the Philistines' identical query in 4:6.[445] Verses 15–16aα are also secondary, resuming with the *Wiederaufnahme*, ויאמר האיש אל עלי "The man said to Eli" (4:16aα; cf. 4:14, ויגד לעלי "He told to Eli"). The messenger's report to Eli comprises 4:16aβ–17a, using characteristic vocabulary drawn from both the base Samuel thread (מערכה 4:16; cf. 4:2, 12) as well as the next layer (נוס 4:16, 17; cf. 4:10). In response to the devastating loss, Eli falls from his perch, breaks his neck, and perishes (4:18aβ–b). Though the shock of the Israelite defeat prompts Eli's fall, nothing is added (at this stage) to suggest that his death should be associated with the loss of the deity. Philip Davies reflects, "Whilst the loss of the ark is no doubt to be conceived of as a shock, it is true that in the preceding chapters the relation between Eli and the ark is nowhere brought into prominence, as we should expect if the loss of the ark in ch. 4 is to be fully prepared for."[446] Neither does the text imply that his demise is a divine punishment. Indeed, throughout this supplement, Eli is presented as a helpful and successful priestly mediator. As McCarter comments, "Old Eli's death is tragic. In life, as we have seen ... he was not depraved or even inattentive to his duties as chief priest…."[447] Indeed, Eli's career is summarized as a full and complete (forty-year) term as Israel's judge (4:18b), providing a formulaic conclusion, whereafter the plot changes scene and emphasis to the godnapping account (5:2).[448] When the narrative returns to Israelite territory, Samuel appears at center stage, leading Israel's resurgence against the Philistines (7:5). The baton of leadership has been passed.[449]

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[445] See Römer, "Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?" 267.

The motivation for this Eli-focused supplement and its date of composition are difficult to propose with confidence. Potentially, the character of Eli was invented to create a priestly buffer between Hannah and YHWH, and a mediating channel of introduction for the young Samuel, for a new audience who felt that direct "lay" contact with YHWH was taboo. Alternatively, there may have been an existing body of tradition about an Eli who served as the presiding priest of the temple at Shiloh. The motivation for conflating these traditions may have been anthological. If both Samuel and Eli had connections to Shiloh in their traditions, it may have seemed natural to interweave their stories for an anthological project.

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[446] Davies, "The History of the Ark in the Books of Samuel," 12.

[447] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 116.

[448] 4:18b is sometimes understood as a later insertion. See, e.g., Campbell, *The Ark Narrative*, 166.

[449] Firth discusses the "unresolved narrative tension" introduced by Samuel's succession to Eli's judgeship in a wider narrative about the rise of the Israelite monarchy ("Play It Again, Sam," 11).

Table 6.3: Eli’s End in 1 Sam 4

(4:10) וילחמו פלשתים וינגף ישראל וינסו איש לאהליו ותהי המכה גדולה מאד ויפל מישראל שלשים אלף רגלי ...	(4:10) Philistia battled and Israel was beaten and they fled, each to his tent. The strike was very great: from Israel fell thirty-thousand soldiers ...
(12) וירץ איש בנימן מהמערכה ויבא שלה ביום ההוא ומדיו קרעים ואדמה על ראשו (13) ויבוא ... להגיד בעיר ותזעק כל העיר (14) וישמע עלי את קול הצעקה ויאמר מה קול ההמון הזה והאיש מהר ויבא ויגד לעלי ... (16) ויאמר האיש אל עלי אנכי הבא מן המערכה ואני מן המערכה נסתי היום ויאמר מה היה הדבר בני (17) ויען המבשר ויאמר נס ישראל לפני פלשתים וגם מגפה גדולה היתה בעם ... (18b) ויפל מעל הכסא אחרנית בעד יד השער ותשבר מפרקתו וימת כי זקן האיש וכבד והוא שפט את ישראל ארבעים שנה ...	(12) A man of Benjamin ran from the array and came to Shiloh that day, and his clothing was torn and the dust was upon his head. (13) He entered ... and told the town, and the whole town cried out. (14) Eli heard the sound of the cry and said, “What is the sound of this commotion?” So the man hurried and entered and told Eli ... (16) The man said to Eli,“I am the one who entered from the array, and I from the array fled today.” And he said, “How went the matter, my son?” (17) And the reporter responded and said, “Israel fled before Philistia, and also a great beating occurred among the people ... (18b) And he fell from upon the throne backward, behind the hand of the gate, and he broke his neck and died—for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years ...
(5:2) ויקחו פלשתים את * ... [κυρίου] ויביאו אתו בית דגון ויציגו אתו אצל דגון	(2) And Philistia took * [LXX: “YHWH”]. They brought him to Beth Dagon, and erected him beside Dagon.

Anti-Elide Supplementation in 1 Sam 1–8

Another author flips the positive evaluation of Eli on its head. As noted above, this layer disparages Eli in his interactions with Hannah (1:10–16; 2:1–10) and introduces Eli’s sons—unnumbered and unnamed—as a corrupt priestly dynasty (2:12–17, 27–33, 35–36).[450] The man of God’s denunciation of Eli’s dynasty is, however, general in nature and does not specifically anticipate the losses depicted in 1 Sam 4. Instead, it intimates that future generations of the Elides will not serve at YHWH’s altar and will die before reaching an elderly age. This author did not supplement the narrative in 1 Sam 4. Nevertheless, their condemnation of the Elide priestly line in 2:27–33 changes the tone of the larger narrative and makes it possible to read Eli’s own tragic death in 1 Sam 4 as a (partial) fulfilment of the man of God’s prophecy.

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[450] See Table 4.8, above.

However, it should be noted that such a connection is not made explicitly, nor is there any mention (at this stage) of the specific fate of his sons. Therefore, the reader is left to wonder whether Eli's death is related to the man of God's message, or whether the doom forecast in 1 Sam 2 is meant to be connected to a future tragedy for the Elide priests.[451] In either case, these considerations did not induce further supplementation at this time to the narrative within 1 Sam 4.

There are reasons to suspect, however, that this hand is responsible for supplements in the godnapping narrative. Just as this author is concerned for priestly propriety in 1 Sam 1–2, they may have continued to write with concern for pious handling of Israel's god in Philistia.[452] This priestly *Tendenz* of cultic concern may be perceived in the instructions to process the divine image around Ashdod in the manner of ancient religious festivals (5:8) and in the instructions to return Israel's god with a reparation offering (6:3) in the form of apotropaic votives. These supplements share a stylistic tendency with those in 1 Sam 1–2 of the frequent use of infinitive absolutes (1:10, 11; 2:16, 27, 28, 30; 6:3, 8:9). Additionally, the divine epithet אלהי ישראל "the god of Israel," dominant in this layer of the godnapping narrative (5:8 [3x]; 6:3, 5), is also present in the man of God's prophetic speech (2:30, "YHWH, the god of Israel").

Mirroring the failure of Eli's sons, the same hand likely composed the condemnation of Samuel's sons (at this stage, like Eli's sons, unnumbered and unnamed; 8:1, 3–7a, 9b10, 22b).[453]

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[451] The most common suggestion is the massacre of the priests at Nob in 1 Sam 22:11–23). The "one man" spared in the Elide household (2:33) is nearly universally recognized as a proleptic reference to the priest Abiathar, who survives the episode at Nob. In addition, the "faithful priest" (2:35) is surely Zadok, whose priestly dynasty is elevated when Abiathar is demoted (1 Kgs 2:26–27), and whose "faithful house" becomes the lasting priestly dynasty in the days of the Judahite monarchy and beyond. See Willis, "Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition," 307; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 91–93; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 27; but cf. Lyle M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1–12*, BLS 10 (Decatur, GA: Almond Press, 1985), 135–37.

[452] See Table 3.13, above.

[453] See Table 5.2, above.

In this way, the layer as a whole participates in an apology for centralized monarchic rule over Israel. Samuel's prophetic office is championed only in anticipation of his role as the divinely appointed kingmaker for Israel. To that end, I consider it likely that the psalm styled as Hannah's prayer—which also anticipates a strong monarchy (2:10)—was added at this stage. The partnership between priest and monarch is also sounded in this layer by the anonymous man of God, who prophesies (against Eli and his dynasty) that YHWH will raise up a faithful priest whose descendants will "walk in and out before my anointed [i.e., king] forever" (2:35). This is a development from 2:30, which states that in the past, YHWH had intended that the Elides "would walk in and out of my [i.e., YHWH's] presence forever"). For this scribe, a centralized monarchy supported by a faithful priesthood was the appropriate and natural solution to the corruption of regional judicial/priestly dynasties—an innovation in governance affirmed, according to this redactor, by YHWH (cf. 8:7a).[454]

"Hophni and Phinehas" and Related Redactions in 1 Sam 1–8

Still later, scribes made the generalized condemnation of the Elide priesthood much more explicit. A new layer is easily recognized by its prominent features: the naming and numbering of Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas; a strong preference for the divine epithet, האלהים; and a framing of the Philistine conflict as a recapitulation of the Israelite captivity and exodus from Egypt. An indication of the layer's lateness is its presence throughout 1 Sam 1–8, integrated with all of the earlier (Samuel, Eli, and godnapping) threads.

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[454] Leuchter helpfully interprets 2:27–36 as divine authorization of a new priestly dynasty unrelated to ancestral lineage: "the rhetoric of the oracle deflates the efficacy of the Elide strategy: laying claim to the traditions of their ancestor Moses is futile, for a non-Elide will be characterized by those Mosaic traits irrespective of biological descent according to YHWH's will" (*Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition*, 33).

This is the redaction that identifies Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, in 1:3b and foretells their synchronized deaths in 2:34.[455] The sole emphasis on Hophni and Phinehas is curious. As Campbell explains, "The death of Eli is not foretold, the loss of the ark is not foretold, the fate of wives or children is not mentioned. What is foretold, and fulfilled in chap. 4, are the deaths of Hophni and Phinehas, *as sign*."[456] In 1 Sam 4, the redactor follows through on that prophetic sign with material that sets up the demise of Hophni and Phinehas and reframes the aftermath of the Israelite defeat at Ebenezer through the lens of divine judgment against the Elide house. In 4:4b, the two men are placed on the field of battle with "Ha'elohim" (האלהים), having accompanied him from Shiloh. Indeed, their injection at this point changes the emphasis of the narrative. As Miller and Roberts highlight, "What often goes unobserved here is that Hophni and Phinehas are as important as the ark. They are responsible, by their proximity to the ark, for its defeat and capture. *They* are the issue here, not the ark."[457] In an addendum to the battle losses enumerated in 4:10, the redactor makes explicit that "Ha'elohim was taken, and the two sons of Eli died, Hophni and Phinehas" (4:11). By highlighting these two outcomes of the battle and listing them paratactically, a new, explicit association is forged. Though the capture of Israel's deity was not part of the prophecies uttered against the Elides, in *this* supplement, the departure of Ha'elohim from Israel is part and parcel of the judgment against the house of Eli.[458] Contrary to Miller's and Roberts's assertion that "No literary-critical moves or redactional analysis can fully eliminate this [punitive] dimension of chapter 4 without simply destroying the integrity and intelligibility of the narrative,"[459] I see this dimension as an astounding diachronic innovation. What was originally composed to explain the abduction of the deity, which had later been made the occasion for the good priest Eli's death, was in this latest version transformed into an explicit sign of judgment against the Elide priestly house. By adding 4:11, the author introduces the theme of divine abandonment as judgment against the Elides for the first time, though it will be elaborated as the saga unfolds.[460] This innovation also forces a reinterpretation of the great Israelite losses, transforming them into (surely disproportionate) collateral damage suffered in the execution of divine judgement against the sins of two specific men.[461]

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[455] McCarter, *I Samuel*, 112; See also Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie*, 102.

[456] Campbell, "Yahweh and the Ark," 35 (emphasis original).

[457] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 44.

[458] Auld notes that the five occurrences of the nif'al form of the verb לקח (4:11, 17, 19, 21, 22) make up half of the total in the entire Hebrew Bible (*I & II Samuel*, 67).

As the scene shifts from the battlefield back to Shiloh, the association between the capture of Israel's deity and the downfall of the Elides remains a priority. A parenthetical aside is added (4:13aβ–bα) to call the reader's attention to Eli, sitting at the gate of the town, waiting for news, for "his heart was trembling over … Ha'elohim." In the earlier version of this part of the narrative, Eli's death was prompted by his shock at the devastating (general) Israelite casualties suffered. But in this layer, the messenger explicitly adds that in addition to the terrible losses suffered by the people as a whole, "also your two sons died, Hophni and Phinehas, and … Ha'elohim was taken" (4:17b). Moreover, the redactor also clarifies that it was the mention of Ha'elohim that prompted Eli's fall (4:18aα), thus tightly binding the deaths of Hophni, Phinehas, and Eli together with Ha'elohim's abandonment of Israel.

In addition to these brief but significant clarifications, a new epilogue has been attached to the Elide saga. Following the prior formulaic conclusion (4:18b), a new scene (4:19–21) turns to Phinehas's wife, about to give birth. The sad news is repeated to her, the shock of which induces (as it turns out, fatal) labor pains.[462] In her dying moments, from the liminal space between life and death, she breathes the authoritative interpretation of these tragic events, naming them in the naming of her son: “No Glory” or “Where is Glory?” (אי כבוד).[463] For, “glory has gone into exile from Israel” (4:21a). One final time, this scribe clarifies the inseparable link between the death of the Elides and the abduction of Israel’s deity, identifying that the dying woman’s words were “regarding the taking of … Ha’elohim and regarding her father-in-law and her husband” (4:21b). Ichabod carries the judgement against the Elide priestly line in his very name. Notably, his birth also foreshadows that, despite the deaths of Eli’s (only?) two sons, the Elide line continued. The same-day deaths of Hophni and Phinehas were never meant as the complete fulfilment of the man of God’s prophecy, but rather a *sign* to Eli that the foretold doom against the entire family line would surely be fulfilled in due time (2:34).

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[459] Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 89.

[460] See Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled," 167.

[461] Campbell, "Yahweh and the Ark," 35.

Finally, the author transitions to the godnapping narrative by adding geographic details: “Philistia took … Ha’elohim and brought him from Ebenezer to Ashdod” (5:1). As I noted in Chapter III, this sentence mirrors the syntax of 5:2, reframing its geographic scope: Ha’elohim now travels to Ashdod, while “Beth Dagon” is reinterpreted as “the temple of Dagon” (presumably in Ashdod).

The material participating in this layer is comparatively simple to recognize. Its lines are often added parenthetically. For example, Hophni and Phinehas are twice superimposed onto scenes that do not require them, with the phrase ושם שני בני עלי "and there [were] Eli's two sons…" (1:3; 4:4). The announcement of their death (4:11) is appended to the battle losses as an addendum, with subject-verb syntactical order. Later, when Eli is told of their death and of the abduction of Ha'elohim, it is attached to the report as an afterthought (also using subject-verb order), וגם שני בניך מתו "and also, your two sons died…" (4:17).[464]

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[462] The episode appears to share an intertextual relationship with the birth narrative of Benjamin, during which Rachel dies (despite reassurance from her midwife), naming her son בן אוני, “son of my mourning” (Gen 35:16–21).

[463] On the various etymological possibilities for אי כבוד, see Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 140, n. 173; Tryggve Mettinger gives special attention to the term כבוד and its associated theology. Usually, he interprets it as belonging to the milieu of Ezekiel, where it occurs often. But with respect to 1 Sam 4, Mettinger considers the appearance of *kavod* language to be part of an understanding of the ark that “can be traced directly back to the milieu in which the Ark first appears as a historical quantity … the period of the Judges” (*The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 121). Of course, Mettinger is assuming the Ark Narrative is unified and early. My literary critical reconstruction puts the *kavod* element here in 1 Sam 4 much closer to Ezekiel’s frame of reference.

With the telltale sign of the epithet האלהים as a clue, this layer can be perceived in the godnapping narrative, as well. This is the hand that expanded the plague story, turning the procession of Israel's god at Ashdod into a circulation of Ha'elohim to Gath and then Ekron (5:10, 11bβ–12a). These two towns are also named in 7:14, an addendum to Israel's ultimate victory against the Philistines. Gath and Ekron were likely added as part of this layer to invoke a geographic and political reality that was more expansive than the earlier, more confined geographic and cultic vision of 7:16–17. The note about peace with the "Amorites" in 7:14 also arrives without context, and the term is not used elsewhere in 1 Samuel.[465] Its inclusion at this point in the narrative underscores the totality of Samuel's success as a leader with YHWH as Israel's "rock of help," and bolsters the idyllic characterization of the era before monarchic leadership.[466] As Klein helpfully summarizes,

> "Samuel presided over a united Israel as a judge who prayed for the people, led their confession, performed priestly functions for them, including the building of an altar at his hometown of Ramah and the carrying out of sacrifices, and who was the prophetic agent of Holy War against the Philistines. … Things functioned regularly and properly under Samuel; even the Philistines were kept in check; kings were not needed."[467]

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[464] Porzig observes that the multiple addenda in this verse attached by the particle וגם make the sentence conspicuously *überfüllt* (*Die Lade Jahwes*, 139).

[465] Amorite, in this case, is probably a summary term for the indigenous residents of Canaan (perhaps including the Philistines), as it is often used by the Deuteronomistic editor; see McCarter, *I Samuel*, 147.

[466] See Wright, "The *Raison d'Être* of the Biblical Covenant," 54.

[467] Klein, *1 Samuel*, 69.

The other prominent feature of this redactional layer are the frequent allusions to Egypt and the Exodus tradition.[468] Phinehas's name is shared with an important figure from the Exodus and Conquest narratives (Aaron's grandson and high priest). Hophni is not mentioned outside of this pericope, however the name appears to be of Egyptian derivation.[469] Additional brief asides also invoke or evoke Egyptian and Exodus themes (often in the vicinity of Hophni/Phinehas material or material bearing the divine epithet האלהים). In 1 Sam 4, after Hophni and Phinehas are identified with Ha'elohim in the Israelite camp at Ebenezer, the Philistines' panicked response is extended into a brief soliloquy, identifying Ha'elohim as the god who struck down Egypt (4:8).[470] In the following verse, the existing rally call "Get ahold of yourselves and become men, Philistia!" is extended with the dependent clause, "lest you slave for the Hebrews as they slaved for you" (4:9aβ)—evoking the Israelites' slavery in Egypt and using the gentilic "Hebrews," so commonly found in the Exodus narrative.[471] Later, Philistine priests warn their people not to harden their hearts as Pharaoh did before being afflicted by Israel's god with a series of plagues until he sent the Israelites away (6:6).[472] The Exodus tradition appears again in the 8:7b–8, where the positive response to the elders' request for a king is reinterpreted as rejection of their god, “just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day.” Finally, also in 1 Sam 8, the trope of Samuel’s corrupt sons is adapted to mirror the specificity given to Eli’s sons; they too are named and numbered (Joel and Abijah, 8:2).[473]

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[468] See the catalog of allusions to Pentateuchal non-P and P Exodus and plague stories found in this pericope, in Edenburg, "The Radiance (of Yahweh) is Exiled," 161–62, esp. 162 n. 59. Cf. a similar discussion in McCarter, *I Samuel*, 132–134; see also extended discussion of this theme in Harvey, "Tendenz and Textual Criticism in 1 Samuel 2–10."

[469] According to Klein, "Hophni" is Egyptian for "tadpole," while Phinehas means "the Negro" (*1 Samuel*, 7). See further discussion of these etymologies in Chapter VIII, below.

[470] On 4:8 as a redactional insertion, see Römer, "Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?" 266. Many commentators have also suggested that the final words of 4:8 should be "and with pestilence" (reading במדבר not as *bammidbar* with MT, but as *bemo-dever*, "with pestilence"), reinforcing the Egyptian plague theme (see Miller and Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord*, 46, n. 23; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 104).

[471] Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 66.

[472] On the "divine weaponization of plague," see McCarter, *I Samuel*, 126. On 6:6 as a redactional allusion to the Exodus, see Römer, "L'arche de Yhwh," 105. On the unusual verb התעלל in 6:6, see Klein, *1 Samuel*, 57; Edenburg, *Dismembering the Whole*, 19. Edenburg identifies several key words shared by 1 Sam 6:6 and Judg 19:25 (the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine). Is there some intertextual literary dependence here, or perhaps a culturally patterned way to speak of humiliating abuse?

Table 6.4: Hophni, Phinehas, and Ha’elohim in 1 Sam 4

(4:4) וישלח העם שלה וישאו משם את ארון ברית ה׳ צבאות ישב הכרבים	(4:4) So the people reached Shiloh and they carried from there * ... YHWH of hosts, seated on the cherubim
ושם שני בני עלי עם ארון ברית האלהים חפני ופינחס	(and there were the two sons of Eli with * ... Ha’elohim, Hophni and Phinehas).
(5) ויהי כבוא * ... ה׳ אל המחנה וירעו כל ישראל תרועה גדולה ותהם הארץ (6) וישמעו פלשתים את קול התרועה ויאמרו מה קול התרועה הגדולה הזאת במחנה העברים וידעו כי * ה׳ בא אל המחנה (7) ויראו הפלשתים כי אמרו בא אלהים אל המחנה ויאמרו אוי לנו כי לא היתה כזאת אתמול שלשם	(5) So it was, when * ... YHWH entered the camp, all Israel shouted a great shout, and it shook the land. (6) Philistia heard the sound of the shout, and said, “What is the sound of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?” And they knew that * YHWH had entered the camp. (7) Then the Philistines feared, for they said, “Gods have entered the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us, for such as this has not occurred in recent days.
(8) אוי לנו מי יצילנו מיד האלהים האדירים האלה אלה הם האלהים המכים את מצרים בכל מכה במדבר	(8) Woe to us! Who will save us from the hand of this noble Ha’elohim? This is Ha’elohim who struck down Egypt with every strike in the desert (or, “and with pestilence”).
(9) התחזקו והיו לאנשים פלשתים	(9) Get ahold of yourselves, and become men, Philistia,
פן תעבדו לעברים כאשר עבדו לכם והייתם לאנשים ונלחמתם	Lest you slave for the Hebrews just as they slaved for you. Become men, and battle!”
(10) וילחמו פלשתים וינגף ישראל וינסו איש לאהליו ותהי המכה גדולה מאד ויפל מישראל שלשים אלף רגלי	(10) Philistia battled and Israel was beaten and they fled, each to his tent. The strike was very great: from Israel fell thirty-thousand soldiers.
(11) ו*אלהים נלקח ושני בני עלי מתו חפני ופינחס	(11) And * Elohim was taken, and the two sons of Eli died, Hophni and Phinehas.
(12) וירץ איש בנימן מהמערכה ויבא שלה ביום ההוא ומדיו קרעים ואדמה על ראשו (13) ויבוא	(12) A man of Benjamin ran from the array and came to Shiloh that day, and his clothing was torn and the dust was upon his head. (13) He entered,
והנה עלי ישב על הכסא יך דרך מצפה כי היה לבו חרד על * האלהים והאיש בא	and look! Eli was sitting on the throne beside the road, watching, for his heart was trembling over * Ha’elohim. The man entered
להגיד בעיר ותזעק כל העיר (14) וישמע עלי את קול הצעקה ויאמר מה קול ההמון הזה והאיש מהר ויבא ויגד לעלי ... (16) ויאמר האיש אל עלי אנכי הבא מן המערכה ואני מן המערכה נסתי היום ויאמר מה היה הדבר בני (17) ויען המבשר	and told the town, and the whole town cried out. (14) Eli heard the sound of the cry and said, “What is the sound of this commotion?” So the man hurried and entered and told Eli ... (16) The man said to Eli,“I am the one who entered from the array, and I from the array fled today.” And he said, “How went the matter, my son?” (17) And the reporter responded and said,

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[473] These pairs of corrupt sons may also be a subtle nod to the tale of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s sons who were struck down for cultic impropriety (Lev 10).

ויאמר נס ישראל לפני פלשתים וגם מגפה גדולה היתה בעם	“Israel fled before Philistia, and also a great beating occurred among the people,
וגם שני בניך מתו חפני ופינחס ו*האלהים נלקחה (18) ויהי כהזכירו את * האלהים	and also your two sons died, Hophni and Phinehas, and * Ha’elohim was taken. (18) So it was, when he brought to mind * Ha’elohim,
ויפל מעל הכסא אחרנית בעד יד השער ותשבר מפרקתו וימת כי זקן האיש וכבד והוא שפט את ישראל ארבעים שנה	that he fell from upon the throne backward, behind the hand of the gate, and he broke his neck and died—for the man was old and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.
(19) וכלתו אשת פינחס הרה ללת ותשמע את השמעה אל הלקח ארון האלהים ומת חמיה ואישה ותכרע ותלד כי נהפכו עליה צריה (20) וכעת מותה ותדברנה הנצבות עליה אל תיראי כי בן ילדת ולא ענתה ולא שתה לבה (21) ותקרא לנער אי כבוד לאמר גלה כבוד מישראל אל הלקח ארון האלהים ואל חמיה ואישה ... (5:1) ופלשתים לקחו את * האלהים ויבאהו מאבן העזר אשדודה	(19) And his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was about to give birth, and she heard the rumor about the taking of * Ha’elohim, and the death of her father-in-law and her husband. And she collapsed and gave birth, for her pains overtook her. (20) And at the moment of her death, her attendants spoke, “Don’t fear, for you have borne a son.” But she did not respond and paid no attention. (21) And she called the boy “Where-is-Glory?” Saying, “Glory has gone into exile from Israel,” regarding the taking of * Ha’elohim, and regarding her father-in-law and her husband ... (5:1) Philistia took * Ha’elohim. They brought him from Ebenezer to Ashdod.
(5:2) ויקחו פלשתים את * ... [κυρίου] ויביאו אתו בית דגון ויציגו אתו אצל דגון	(2) And Philistia took * ... [LXX: “YHWH”]. They brought him to Beth Dagon and erected him beside Dagon.

Latest Supplements

A couple explanatory glosses appear in 1 Sam 4. The first is a parenthetical comment to indicate that Eli was ninety-eight years old and blind (3:15). This may have been added by the same scribe who noted Eli’s advanced age in 2:22 and his waning sight in 3:2. Other asides that utilize the theme of vision/sight could well have been part of this redactor’s work, including 3:1b (חזון “visions”), 3:7b (יגלה “revealed”), 3:15b–18 (המראה “the appearance”; אל נא תכחד “do not hide”; הטוב בעינו “the good in his eyes”),[474] 3:21 (להראה “to appear”; נגלה “was revealed”). I have assigned these glosses to the work of a scribe seeking to rehabilitate Eli in the eyes of the reader.[475] An unrelated gloss in found in the narrator's remark that Phinehas's wife's dying utterance, "Glory has gone into exile," referred specifically to the taking of Ha'elohim (4:22)—that is, it was *not* prompted by the deaths of her father-in-law and husband, despite the claim of 4:21b.[476] Finally, as I have argued, each mention of the ark (ארון) in 1 Sam 4 was inserted as part of a late ideological overlay spanning 1 Sam 4–6.[477]

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[474] In addition to subtle themes of sight, the phrase “both ears will tingle” (3:11) is in a particularly late register, being found in only two other passages, both with clear Deuteronomistic influence, 2 Kgs 21:12 and Jer 19:3; see McCarter, *I Samuel*, 98–100. But cf. Brettler’s assertion that 3:1–19 shows altogether no sign of Dtr editing (“The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2,” 607).

CONCLUSION: THE MEANING OF DEFEAT

A synchronic reading of the final form of 1 Sam 4 could leave the reader with the sense that this chapter's focus is divine judgment against the Elide priestly dynasty. While that theme is certainly present, it represents only one voice in the text. Attention to the chapter's diachronic development identifies 1 Sam 4 as the epicenter of an intense dialogue about the meaning of the military loss suffered by Israel in 4:1–2. An initial voice intends this episode as part of the "Samuel the Judge" story. The storyteller tells of the early loss in battle with only brief description because in their story, that loss is only a minor setback, an initiating crisis that is soundly answered by YHWH through Samuel's leadership in 1 Sam 7. Their story participates in the genre of tales that tell of the wars of YHWH against Israel's enemies.

Another voice enters the dialogue, however, urging us to slow down and reflect theologically on this upsetting loss. This voice speaks through mouths of the elders, asking "Why did YHWH beat us today before Philistia?" (4:3). No explicit answer is given. Instead, the redactor follows this question with a traditional tale of YHWH's abduction, display of power in Philistia, and then return to Kiriath Jearim (portions of 4:3—7:5)—only then resuming the story of Israel's victory with YHWH as their "stone of help." This long digression invites reflection. What if the elders' question is not, in the first place, about assigning fault or blame (i.e., "What have we done wrong that YHWH has beaten us via the Philistines?") but rather about discerning the divine purpose: "To what end has YHWH permitted the Philistines to defeat us?" If the godnapping narrative is the answer to *that* question, then it may demonstrate through story that YHWH allowed a localized military setback in order to facilitate the larger, more decisive defeat of Israel's enemy.[478] The toppling of Dagon and the outbreak of plague among the Philistines builds upon the brief description of YHWH's "thunder" against them (7:10), giving emphasis to YHWH's intent to fight unilaterally and decisively against (a unified) Israel's opponents—despite initial setbacks—whether those opponents are gods (5:1–5), Philistines (5:6–12), or even Judahite residents of Beth Shemesh (6:19). This author's reformulation of the historical moment must surely have spoken into their own situation—likely a time of great threat and/or in view of recent military setbacks.

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[475] See Chapter IV and Table 4.9, above.

[476] Campbell remarks on "a shift of emphasis in relation to the battle report in v.10–11. There it would seem that the emphasis is upon the defeat and calamitous increase in casualties. The loss of the ark and the death of its attendants are mentioned in what is almost no more than an appendix (v.11). But by the time the narrative has reached the end of the second anecdote [i.e., 4:22], this emphasis has been moved to the loss of the ark. The defeat is almost forgotten; in the forefront is the capture of the ark" (*The Ark Narrative*, 152).

[477] See Chapter II, above. The explanatory aside in 1 Sam 3:3b may also have been added at this time, the only mention of the ark in the Samuel thread.

Another voice of dialogic diachrony quibbles at the previous emphasis on YHWH's unilateral, unaided battling. Israel's deity chooses, most often, to work in partnership with human representatives. Eli the priest was such a representative, and Samuel the prophet even more! The divine purpose behind the losses suffered at Ebenezer may have been to move the history of

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[478] Reframing military loss and the capture of a cult statue as an intentional strategy of the deity to wield destruction against his enemies is not unique to the Ark Narrative. A handful of Mesopotamian legends attribute just such a disaster to the cunning strategy of their gods. One particularly poignant example derives from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon, depicting Marduk's return from Elam: "(Although Marduk) had been brought (by force) to the land of Elam, he overturned [it (and)] inflicted a complete defeat upon i[t]." This and other examples are discussed in Schaudig, *Explaining Disaster*, 54–55.

Israel's *leadership* forward—passing the baton from the priests to the prophets. This voice pauses the action for a scene at Shiloh depicting Eli's tragic death (portions of 4:12–18). Such prophetic partners with the will of YHWH are still needed, claims this voice.

Another group shakes their heads. No, the Elide priesthood was a corrupt house (and the celebrated prophet Samuel's legacy was not much better, cf. 8:1–5). These tragic military defeats, along with the deaths of Eli and his sons, are the consequences of turning away from Israel's god, and from the true priestly order (משפט). These dynasties lost their divine privilege, and perhaps the central point of this story is to pave the way for a better institution of leadership under the rule of YHWH's anointed king.

Each of these voices still echoes in the text of 1 Sam 4 that we read today. The dialogue is not resolved; there is no monologic interpretation of Israel's history here. Instead, the text as an unresolved conversation invites readers to wrestle with the meaning of tragedy, loss, and disaster—especially in the context of the divine presence.

CHAPTER VII

EARLY CHAPTERS OF SAMUEL AS DIALOGIC DIACHRONY: *HIEROS LOGOS* AND ISRAELITE IDENTITY

The preceding study has disentangled several layers of compositional activity preserved in 1 Sam 1–8. Stylistic/thematic affinities and relative dependencies have identified a plausible relative chronology, leading to the present text. The final two chapters of this dissertation address some of the implications of that work for approximating an absolute chronology—like giving faces to the voices in the conversation. Several layers are examined for their resonances with generally accepted features of Levantine history, as well as some recent archaeological research, in order to identify a probable historical moment and rationale for sequential editorial contributions. Three of these prominent dialogic threads are highlighted in these chapters: (1) the creation and adaptation of a *hieros logos* for Beth Shemesh and Kiriath Jearim; (2) the development of an anthology of Israelite ideological histories (this chapter); and (3) a jostling in the text for priestly legitimacy over many generations (next chapter).

Such historical questions are fascinating in their own right; however, the purpose of this exercise is not simply to match text with history. Indeed, such assignments can be, at best, tentative—the authors did not sign and date their contributions. Just because a particular text applies well in a particular historical context does not justify a "pseudo-historicism" that would consider this proof of the text's provenance. Nor does it eliminate the possibility that the source or supplement might apply equally well to other compositional contexts, two "perils" that

Benjamin Sommer has poignantly raised.[479] Nevertheless, the exploration of these historical probabilities remains valuable as a scholarly reconstruction (i.e., approximation) of the development of the extant text and the unfolding of the ideas it contains, as those ideas pass through multiple historical, interpretive contexts. In this way, the following compositional history continues to treat the text as "dialogic diachrony," a conversation unfolding across time. In these final chapters, we pause in the liminal space between history and heuristic, to recreate and eavesdrop upon the dialogue preserved in the forum of the text. What are the central ideologies voiced in each layer, and how do they interplay with what came before and what would come later? What circumstances of the social and political history of the region may have prompted their composition and adaptation? This redaction-critical approach results in a thick, multifaceted interpretation; a living conversation—one that refuses to be flattened out by attending to the final redactor's agenda only.

THE BETH SHEMESH *HIEROS LOGOS*

Among the earliest layers of 1 Sam 1–8 is the brief tale I identified above as the "Beth Dagon thread" (5:2–4; 6:2a, 7aβ–8a, 8bβ–9a, 10–11a, 12a, 13–14, 18b). This tale narrates the crisis of Dagon's apparent death in the shrine at Beth Dagon, and the process by which Dagon's caretakers divined the party responsible for their deity's inauspicious toppling. YHWH responded to their divination test by driving their cart from Beth Dagon to his own "place" at Beth Shemesh, where he was greeted with joy, worship, and the establishment of an enduring site of veneration ("to this day," 6:18). The conclusion to the story in the identification of a cultic site and the beginning of sacrificial worship suggests that the tale may have originated as a *hieros logos* for the shrine at Beth Shemesh.

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[479] Benjamin D. Sommer, "Dating Pentateuchal Texts and the Perils of Pseudo-Historicism," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 85–108.

hieros logos as a Genre

When Leonhard Rost brought together 1 Sam 4–6 and 2 Sam 6 as a hypothetically continuous source narrative behind the books of Samuel, he proposed that this "Ark Narrative" was originally composed as the *hieros logos* (that is, the foundational cult legend) for the Jerusalem shrine in the days of David or Solomon. He imagines, "Die Erzählung diente dem Zweck, den Besuchern des Heiligtums, besonders wohl den Festpilgern, die Bedeutung der Lade darzulegen, was am besten geschehen konnte durch die Erzählung ihrer wunderbaren Schicksale."[480] Criticism of Rost's proposal, including the literary analysis I have presented, challenges the feasibility of the tale as Jerusalem's *hieros logos*. At the very least, there is no indication in 1 Sam 4–6, even in the extant version, that Jerusalem is intended as the ultimate destination of the ark. However, Rost's association of the deity's arrival at a new cultic site with the genre of *hieros logos* was not so far off the mark.[481]

The Hebrew Bible preserves a great number of *hieroi logoi* in its narrative books, despite the programmatic centralization imposed by the Deuteronomists and their scribal heirs. Many of these stories describe the building of altars for worship at particular sites and mark the moment with a legend about divine legitimization of the site. Some are quite brief (one or two sentences), while others are more verbose. Moreover, some sites (e.g., Bethel, Shechem, and Jerusalem) are assigned multiple foundation narratives within the anthology of the Hebrew Bible. These tales are varied in their content, but often include several of the following features: (1) the identification of a particular site; (2) the name of the property's (otherwise unknown) owner, along with their gentilic;[482] (3) association with an ancestral hero; (4) a notable geographic feature, often one with cultic significance (a sacred tree, stone, threshing floor, mountain, etc.); (5) a note about the time of day (dawn, night, etc.);[483] (6) appearance of the deity or an angelic representative; (7) some paranormal event (a miracle, perhaps); (8) the construction of an altar; (9) commencement of sacrifices or other ritual (such as libation); (10) explicit invocation of the divine name; (11) naming of the site; (12) etiological formula (often עד היום הזה "to this day").[484] Table 7.1, below, maps the distribution of these features among 22 potential *hieroi logoi* narratives in the Hebrew Bible.[485]

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[480] Rost, *Überlieferung*, 36; translation: "The narrative served the purpose, for visitors to the shrine, especially the festival pilgrims, of explaining the meaning of the ark, which could best be done through the narrative of its miraculous fate."

[481] George W. Coats defines *hieros logos* as "sacred words used for showing the origin of a holy place; cultic legend intended as an account of the foundation of a sanctuary by a depiction of the event of the construction that marked the place as holy" (*Genesis, with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*, FOTL 1 [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983], 318). Other synonymous terms used in the FOTL series include "Sanctuary Legend" and the German "Heiligtumslegende."

The Beth Dagon thread includes many of these common motifs. In the early part of the narrative, it notes that "early in the morning" Dagon was discovered toppling over (5:3, 4; time

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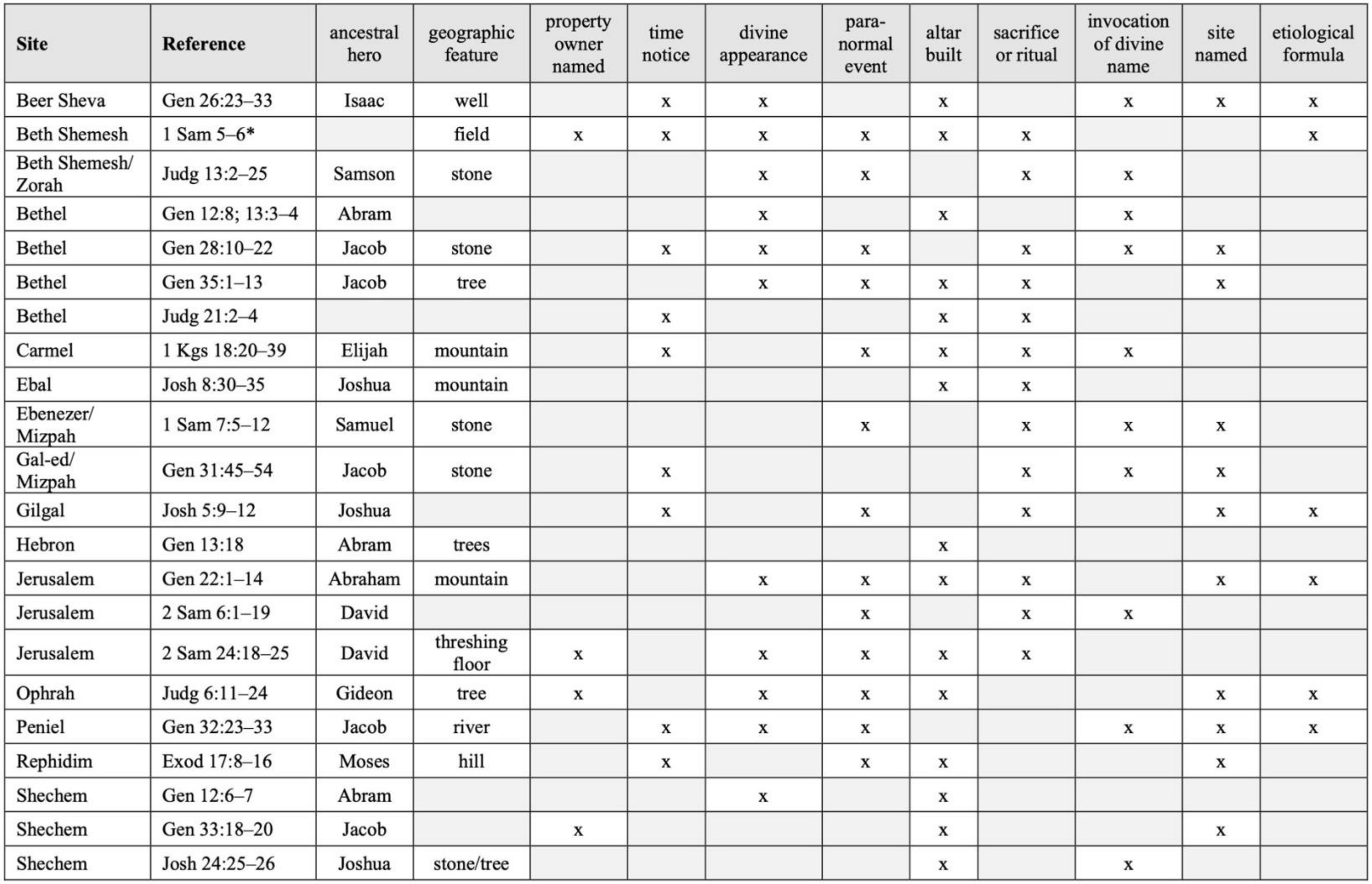
[482] E.g., Joshua the Beth Shemeshite (1 Sam 6:14), Joash the Abiezrite (Judg 6:11), Obed-edom the Gittite (2 Sam 6:9), Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam 24:18). The ethnic identification of the property owner may serve to highlight the functional transfer of the land in question from mundane use to sacred use by Israel's god.

[483] This is particularly significant for sites that are associated with solar worship or motifs.

[484] On the use of "to this day" in cult legends, see Isac Leo Seeligmann, "Ätiologische Elemente in der biblischen Geschichtsschreibung," in *Gesammelte Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel*, ed. Erhard Blum (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 94–96, 106.

[485] Other biblical stories may qualify as *hieroi logoi*. I selected these 22 because each involves either the building of an altar or the commencement of sacrifices at a particular location (with the exception of the Peniel story in Gen 32, which contains so many of the other elements). A handful of these stories are collected and analyzed by Rami Arav, "The Binding of Isaac, a Sacred Legend for the Jerusalem Temple," *TheTorah*, 2020, https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-binding-of-isaac-a-sacred-legend-for-the-jerusalem-temple. Interestingly, only five of these 22 are identified in the FOTL series as a "*hieros logos*" (Gen 28:10–22; Gen 35:1–15; Gen 22:1–14; Gen 33:18–20; 1 Kgs 18:20–39; see Coats, *Genesis*, 8–9). Genre identifications for the others include "etiology," "account," "itinerary," "legend," "novella," and more. This only illustrates that form criticism is not an exact science. However, the disbursement of common elements in the pericopes I have cited shows a similar literary purpose behind them: to confirm the divine selection and legitimization of a cultic site.

Table 7.1: Biblical *hieroi logoi*



Site	**Reference**	ancestral hero	geographic feature	property owner named	time notice	divine appearance	para-normal event	altar built	sacrifice or ritual	invocation of divine name	site named	etiological formula
Beer Sheva	Gen 26:23–33	Isaac	well		x	x		x		x	x	x
Beth Shemesh	1 Sam 5–6*		field	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
Beth Shemesh/ Zorah	Judg 13:2–25	Samson	stone			x	x		x	x		
Bethel	Gen 12:8; 13:3–4	Abram				x		x		x		
Bethel	Gen 28:10–22	Jacob	stone		x	x	x		x	x	x	
Bethel	Gen 35:1–13	Jacob	tree			x	x	x	x		x	
Bethel	Judg 21:2–4				x			x	x			
Carmel	1 Kgs 18:20–39	Elijah	mountain		x		x	x	x	x		
Ebal	Josh 8:30–35	Joshua	mountain					x	x			
Ebenezer/ Mizpah	1 Sam 7:5–12	Samuel	stone				x		x	x	x	
Gal-ed/ Mizpah	Gen 31:45–54	Jacob	stone		x				x	x	x	
Gilgal	Josh 5:9–12	Joshua			x		x		x		x	x
Hebron	Gen 13:18	Abram	trees					x				
Jerusalem	Gen 22:1–14	Abraham	mountain			x	x	x	x		x	x
Jerusalem	2 Sam 6:1–19	David					x		x	x		
Jerusalem	2 Sam 24:18–25	David	threshing floor	x		x	x	x	x			
Ophrah	Judg 6:11–24	Gideon	tree	x		x	x	x			x	x
Peniel	Gen 32:23–33	Jacob	river		x	x	x			x	x	x
Rephidim	Exod 17:8–16	Moses	hill		x		x	x			x	
Shechem	Gen 12:6–7	Abram				x		x				
Shechem	Gen 33:18–20	Jacob		x				x			x	
Shechem	Josh 24:25–26	Joshua	stone/tree					x		x		

of day; paranormal event). After YHWH was released, the deity drove the cattle cart directly toward his own place (6:12; paranormal event), where the story highlights an appearance of the deity ("They lifted their eyes and saw … YHWH," 6:13; divine appearance). The deity came to rest in a field at Beth Shemesh (6:14; geographic feature, identification of the site), owned by Joshua the Beth-Shemeshite (6:14; owner, with gentilic), wherein lay a great stone (6:14; geographic feature). The joyous Beth-Shemeshites commence sacrifices (6:14; on the great stone? An altar is not explicitly mentioned but could be implied). Finally, the narrator notes that YHWH has rested (נוח, cf. Isa 66:1) on the great stone at Beth Shemesh "to this day" (6:18; etiological formula). The narrative does not contain every common element of the genre. For example, there is no association with an ancestral hero, no explicit invocation of the divine name (though the narrator is clear that the sacrifices are offered to YHWH; 6:14), and no legend of the naming of the site. Nevertheless, the preponderance of formal features is enough to propose that the story functioned as a foundational cult legend (*hieros logos*) for a shrine at Beth Shemesh.

A Shrine at Beth Shemesh

A century's worth of modern archaeological excavation projects at Tel Beth-Shemesh have given historians a significant window into the history of the site. Though the date of its earliest settlement is unknown, Beth Shemesh seems to have been nearly continuously occupied from the Early Bronze Age (before 1500 BCE) through at least the Iron Age IIB (700 BCE), despite a number of intermediate destruction events.[486] In the Iron Age I (1150–950 BCE, the period in which the biblical Ark Narrative is set), Beth Shemesh was a Canaanite peasant community in the Sorek Valley. Its Bronze Age fortifications had been demolished and were not rebuilt in this era. As is perhaps reflected in 1 Sam 6, the town had a thriving grain industry.[487] Already in this era, the residents of Beth Shemesh seem to have been culturally distinct from the Philistine communities who occupied sites only a few kilometers away (e.g., Tel Batash-Timnah), but also somewhat distinct from the proto-Israelite communities in the highlands.[488]

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[486] Much of this historical reconstruction at Beth Shemesh comes from the report of the latest major excavations, led by Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman. For notes on the continuous occupation of the site, see "A Peasant Community on the Philistine Border: Levels 6–4: Iron I ca. 1150–950 BCE," in *Tel Beth-Shemesh: A Border Community in Judah*, ed. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 212.

Beth Shemesh experienced a major transformation in the Iron Age IIA. The excavation directors write, "The sudden appearance of large public enterprises related to defense, water management and storage indicates that a purposeful decision by a central government changed the Iron I village of Beth-Shemesh into an administrative center on the Israelite-Philistine border."[489] In the mid 10th century, new town fortifications were built, probably representing the activity of an early Israelite or Judahite kingdom, expanding into the Sorek Valley as the Philistines withdrew somewhat from the region.[490] The 10th through 9th centuries were the heyday for Beth Shemesh as the leading Israelite town in the Sorek Valley.[491] But its hegemony came to an abrupt halt, marked by a catastrophic destruction layer dated to the early 8th century. Bunimovitz and Lederman reason that this destruction is most probably the result of Jehoash of Israel's campaign against Amaziah of Judah, ca. 790 BCE (cf. 2 Kgs 14:8–14; 2 Chron 25:17–24; more on this significant moment below).[492]

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[487] Bunimovitz and Lederman, "A Peasant Community on the Philistine Border," 227.

[488] Resistance to Philistine cultural influence is evident in the paucity of Philistine pottery forms at this level, as well as the nearly complete absence of pig (and dog) bones at the site, compared to their abundance at the synchronous layer at Tel Batash and other nearby Philistine sites. Bunimovitz and Lederman hypothesize that the pressure to maintain cultural distinctiveness was higher at border towns like Beth Shemesh, and the restriction on eating pork may have spread from the borderlands inward to the central highlands (rather than the other way around, as is often supposed) ("A Peasant Community on the Philistine Border," 226, 228, 233). On the historical "seesaw" of prominence between Beth Shemesh and their neighbor Timnah, see idem, "The Early Israelite Monarchy in the Sorek Valley: Tel Beth-Shemesh and Tel Batash (Timnah) in the 10th and 9th Centuries BCE," in *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times": Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Aren M. Maeir, Pierre De Miroschedji, and Amihay Mazar (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 407–27.

[489] Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Royal Intervention: From Village to Administrative Center Level 3: Iron IIA ca. 950–790 BCE," in *Tel Beth-Shemesh: A Border Community in Judah*, ed. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 370–71.

[490] Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Royal Intervention," 376, 379.

[491] Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Royal Intervention," 381.

Beth Shemesh was rebuilt after this major demolition, but it was a shadow of its former glory. Judahite dominance in the region shifted to Lachish, and in the vacuum left by Beth Shemesh in the Sorek Valley, Philistine Ekron and Timnah saw dramatic recoveries. As Bunimovitz and Lederman summarize, "It is hard to believe that the phenomenal comeback of both Ekron and Timnah, which parallels the destruction and decline of Beth-Shemesh, was a matter of chance."[493] In the Iron Age IIB, Beth Shemesh developed a "cottage industry" of olive oil production based in domestic sites—not major production centers like some other towns.[494] Hezekiah's westward expansion probably bypassed Beth Shemesh and set up a new frontier at Timnah.[495] Finally, the town was overrun and demolished by Sennacherib's Assyrian army in the campaign of 701 BCE, an event from which Beth Shemesh never recovered.[496]

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[492] Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Royal Intervention," 369, 382.

[493] Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Royal Intervention," 382.

[494] Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "'Your Country Is Desolate, Your Cities Are Burned with Fire:' The Death of a Judahite Border Town: Level 2: Iron IIB ca. 790–701 BCE," in *Tel Beth-Shemesh: A Border Community in Judah*, ed. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 465.

[495] Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Your Country Is Desolate," 466.

[496] Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Your Country Is Desolate," 467. This assessment has been called into question by a flurry of archaeological activity at the site beginning in 2019, in response to plans for a major highway development that would have destroyed much of the tel. A massive salvage excavation was undertaken (directed by Boaz Gross), which uncovered an expansive 7th century settlement on the edge of the tel with well-developed oil and wine production facilities. This suggests that the site remained significant even after Sennacherib's invasion. It appears that the town's survivors picked up what they could and rebuilt their livelihoods just a few meters east of the rubble. Though it is too soon for these data to be published in peer-reviewed sources, see Boaz Gross, "The Other Side of Beth Shemesh," *Biblical Archaeology Society*, 28 May 2021, https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/the-other-side-of-beth-shemesh.

Though a great deal has been learned about Beth Shemesh in the course of the tel's archaeological dismantling, very few finds have related to the religious life of the community. One of the most significant finds is a (probably) late 8th century inscribed bowl clearly displaying the word קדש, indicating that it was dedicated to cultic activity.[497] Found in a domestic residence, this inscribed bowl raises the possibility that the structure was the home of a priest (though this hypothesis has not been confirmed by other evidence at the site). Regardless of the status of the structure in which the קדש bowl was discovered, the find, when compared with similar vessels from other contemporaneous sites, "implies that priests were among the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh, whether a shrine existed there or not."[498]

While the published excavation reports have not uncovered a clear temple or shrine at Beth Shemesh, recent unpublished finds by the Tel Aviv University excavation team appear to indicate the presence of a Late Bronze or Early Iron Age temple structure. A 12th century building was uncovered, separated from the residential district, facing eastward, and opening onto a platform that may have been used for cultic ceremonies. Libation vessels, decorated cups, and animal bones were also found on the site. "There is a lot of evidence that this was indeed a temple," concludes Bunimovitz. "When you look at the structure and its content, it's very clear that this not a standard domestic space but something special."[499] Even more intriguingly, a large stone slab resting on two small stone legs (reminiscent of the אבן גדולה in 1 Sam 6:14) was situated prominently in the room, identified by Zvi Lederman as a shrine table.[500]

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[497] This significance of *qdš* vessels is determined by comparison with similar finds at other cultic sites. Dale W. Manor concludes, "Num 18:8– 20 narrates in some detail elements of the offerings of the people that would belong to the priests and their families. It notes that portions of the oil, wine, grain and produce, as well as the first issue of humans and animals would be given to the priests. Considering this variety of offerings, the array of vessels that have yielded *qdš* inscriptions—kraters, bowls, plates, jugs/jars—it is not surprising and is quite suitable for offering of some of these goods. The vessels we have noted were likely inscribed to preserve their appropriate use, probably dedicated to priests for personal use" ("A Priest's House at Beth-Shemesh? An Incised *qdš* Bowl," in *Tel Beth-Shemesh: A Border Community in Judah: Renewed Excavations 1990–2000: The Iron Age*, ed. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016], 476).

[498] Manor, "A Priest's House at Beth Shemesh?," 478.

In addition to the archaeological evidence, biblical texts also remember Beth Shemesh as a priestly town. The Beth Shemesh listed in Josh 15:10 (in the allotment of Judah) is identified in Josh 21:16 as one of the Levitical cities apportioned to the Kohathite priestly clan (paralleled in 1 Chron 6:44). The historicity of these lists is dubious, but they may preserve a memory of certain towns as cultic centers and/or may reflect a Judahite program of intentional reassignment of sites from their Canaanite cultic origins to new Yahwistic service.[501]

Beth Shemesh as a Solar Cultic Site

Of course, one of the most straightforward indicators that Beth Shemesh was associated with cultic practice is its name. Many Canaanite cult centers in the southern Levant were named for their patron deity, often with the toponym "house/temple of DN." Presumably, these toponymic traditions stem from pre-Israelite (likely Amorite, during the Middle Bronze Age) foundations of towns such as Beth Shemesh, Beth El, Beth Ḥoron, Beth Anoth, Beth Leḥem, and Beth Dagon.[502] Aaron Burke draws attention to the surprising persistence of these toponyms even after Israelite/Judahite (Yahwistic) hegemony was exerted over the region:

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[499] Shlomo Bunimovitz, quoted in Ariel David, "Bible-Era Temple Found Near Jerusalem May Be Linked to Ark of the Covenant," *Haaretz*, 19 December 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-bible-jerusalem-ark-of-the-covenant-archaeology-christianity-jesus-1.8284948.

[500] David, "Bible-Era Temple Found Near Jerusalem May Be Linked to Ark of the Covenant."

[501] Burke, "Reconstruction of a Sacred Landscape," 30.

[502] See Burke, "Reconstruction of a Sacred Landscape," 8–15. Other cultic sites in the Judean Highlands with divine name toponyms (without the prefix "Beth") include the Rephaim Valley, Kiriath Baʻal (i.e., Baʻalah/Kiriath Jearim), Ataroth, Anathoth, Jericho, and Jerusalem.

> The preservation of these toponyms suggests, first and foremost, that the cultic associations, and presumably ritual activities, of these sites—many of them prominent, such as Jerusalem—played a significant role in the cultic orientations of their early inhabitants, well before Israelite and Judean hegemony. A perforce limited review of biblical traditions exposes that these same sites persist in an important capacity within Judean cultural memory. While it may be surprising that they continued to do so during the Iron Age, recurring cultic themes connected with these Judean towns in biblical tradition suggest a process of cooption and supersession that were part and parcel of cult traditions in the ancient Near East.[503]

Burke goes on to hypothesize that this network of highland cultic sites formed a kind of "sacred landscape," whose significance persisted into the Iron Age in the cultural memory of Judah.[504] Within that sacred landscape, Beth Shemesh was an important gateway from the Shephelah to the highlands, guarding—as a divine outpost—one of the most significant routes from the coast to Jerusalem.

The biblical *hieros logos* for Beth Shemesh clearly identifies the celebrated deity in the tale as YHWH. Nevertheless, the naming of the cult center after the Semitic deity Shamash/Shemesh (the sun god) raises the possibility that the legend preserved in the Bible has been adapted from a tale about Shemesh.[505] To explore this potential, a brief profile of Shemesh in Mesopotamia and the Levant is in order. In some Babylonian sources, Shemesh is identified as the "creator of heaven and earth" (cf. Egyptian attribution of creation to Re, the sun god).[506] Perhaps echoes of the sun god as creator can be heard in the first creation account of Genesis, in which the first act of Elohim's creative work is the production of light and the establishment of day/night cycles (Gen 1:3–5).

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[503] Burke, "Reconstruction of a Sacred Landscape," 34.

[504] Burke, "Reconstruction of a Sacred Landscape," 16–26.

[505] Hereafter, "Shemesh." Shamash and Shemesh denote the same deity; the difference is one of pronunciation only. Residents of the southern Levant pronounced segolate nouns differently than their Mesopotamian neighbors.

[506] Nahum Sarna, "Psalm XIX and the Near Eastern Sun-God Literature," in *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1967), 171.

Much more prominent than the creator motif, however, is Shemesh's widely recognized role as the world's ultimate judge. Nahum Sarna explains, "Šamaš represented the principle of cosmic justice. He was the 'judge of heaven and earth' (*dayyān šarnē u irṣitim*); 'the judge of gods and men' (*šaipí-iṭ ili u a-wi-lu-tim*) supervising the moral order, and he therefore sired 'equity and truth' (*mešaru* and *kettu*). As the inspiration of legislation his name was invoked in the law codes."[507] Consider, for example, the text and iconography preserved on the Hammurabi stele (housed in the Louvre Museum, Paris). The bas relief at the top of the stele depicts King Hammurabi receiving his legal from none other than Shemesh, the god of justice.[508] A Babylonian prayer, dubbed "The Shamash Hymn," also celebrates the sun's illuminating power to bring hidden transgressions to light (e.g., "Your beams are ever mastering secrets; At the brightness of your light, humankind's footprints become vis[ible]").[509] The place and time of Shemesh's judgements are significant. Dawn is the moment when Shemesh executes judgment. For example, "Šamaš you opened the bolts of the doors of heaven, you ascended the stairs of pure lapis lazuli. Accordingly, you carry the scepter of lapis lazuli in your arms in order to judge cases."[510] Citing this and several other exemplars, Janice Polonsky concludes that "a principal function of the sun god at daybreak is to act as supreme judge of all beings."[511] In light of Shemesh's judicial responsibility, it became customary to orient Mesopotamian temples toward the east, so that "the very first glimmer of brightening dawn" (a frequent timestamp for cult activity in the Epic of Gilgamesh) would illuminate the temple's entrance, where legal proceedings took place.[512] Temple entrances, city gates, and domestic thresholds were often the sites of judicial pronouncements, perhaps because of their symbolism of the liminality between the inner and outer worlds, the Anthropocene and divine realms.[513] Shemesh's "place" is the eastern horizon, the threshold to the underworld.[514] Therefore, dawn at the threshold of the temple was the ideal chronotope (to use Mikhail Bakhtin's coinage) for divine judgment under the stewardship of Shemesh.

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[507] Sarna, "Psalm XIX and the Near Eastern Sun-God Literature," 173.

[508] James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2010), 155, *59*.

[509] William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds., *Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1.117, lines 9–10.

[510] Janice Polonsky, "The Rise of the Sun God and the Determination of Destiny in Ancient Mesopotamia" (University of Pennsylvania, PhD diss., 2002), 235.

[511] Polonsky, "The Rise of the Sun God," 236.

The expectation of vindication via the sun god's judgements leads to expressions of joy when the sun is sighted by worshippers. Nahum Sarna draws upon Egyptian texts that emphasize the joy that comes with the dawn of Re: "when thou risest in the horizon of heaven, a cry of joy goeth forth to thee from all people," and "In every place every heart swelleth with joy at thy rising."[515] Sarna observes a similar association preserved in biblical texts that pair אור (light) and שמח (joy), such as, "Light [אור] dawns on the righteous; and upon the upright of heart, joy [שמח]" (Psa 97:11), and "The precepts of YHWH are upright, rejoicing [שמח] the heart; the commands of YHWH are pure, enlightening [אור] the eyes" (Psa 19:9).[516] Even more to the point, I would add, are biblical texts that bring together joy, light/dawn, and divine justice; for example, "Satisfy us at dawn [בקר] with your faithfulness [חסד] that we may sing for joy [שמח] all our days" (Psa 90:14), or "YHWH, at dawn [בקר] hear my voice; at dawn I shall make my case to you [אערך לך], and wait … Let all who take refuge in you rejoice [שמח]" (Psa 5:4, 12). Each of these rays of divinity, justice, dawn, and joy emanate historically from their association with the solar deity.

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[512] Mary Shepperson, "The Rays of Šamaš: Light in Mesopotamian Architecture and Legal Practice / شعاع شماش: ضوء في عمارة بلاد ما بين النهرين والممارسات القانونية," *Iraq* 74 (2012): 55–58.

[513] See, e.g., Victor Matthews's summary, "The gate was the tie that bound the average citizen to the operations of his government and of the temple. And it was the symbol of the continuity of law and social stability. This could explain the discovery of a group of Assyrian legal tablets in a room associated with the 'gate of Shamash' (god of justice), which may have been used as a law library by the judges. Their physical presence may have also served to represent the fact that justice was dispensed here" ("Entrance Ways and Threshing Floors: Legally Significant Sites in the Ancient Near East," *Fides et Historia* 19.3 [1987]: 26). Cf. Polonsky: "The threshold of the [Mesopotamian] temple gate is liminal territory, enabling a recreation of the entrance way of the rising sun god. With the opening of the eastern gate of the temple, the worshipper gains access to a position before the rising sun god, the herald of the new day, and the congregation of the divine assembly is allowed entrance into the arena of fate determination enclosed within the temple" ("The Rise of the Sun God," 759–60).

[514] Christopher E. Woods, "At the Edge of the World: Cosmological Conceptions of the Eastern Horizon in Mesopotamia," *JANER* 9.2 (2009): 185–86.

[515] Sarna, "Psalm XIX and the Near Eastern Sun-God Literature," 174.

Returning to Shemesh proper, it is also important to note that he is often depicted as one who drives a chariot across the sky.[517] This iconographic trope may perhaps be traced to an understanding of the disk of the sun as a wheel that turns through the heavens.[518] Moreover, Shemesh in his chariot never deviates from his straight path through the sky. A Babylonian sunset prayer to Shemesh/Utu implores, "Utu, make straight your way, go the true road to your 'level place.' Utu, you are the judge of the land … the one who straightens out its decisions."[519] The wordplay in the prayer is repeated in many extant texts imploring Shemesh to lead humanity on a "straight" (Akkadian *ešēru*; cf. Hebrew ישר), i.e., morally "upright" path of life.[520] One of the common Akkadian epithets for Shemesh was *muštešir*, i.e., "the one who directs aright."[521] Thus, Shemesh's straight path in the heavens was a daily phenomenological reminder of his ability to judge with "straightness" and justice.

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[516] Sarna, "Psalm XIX and the Near Eastern Sun-God Literature," 174. Sarna also references Psa 107:42, 119:74; Prov 13:9.

[517] See, e.g., Glen Taylor, Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel, JSOTSup 111 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 33, 36.

[518] Edouard Lepiński, "Shemesh *שׁמשׁ*," in *DDD*, 765.

[519] Wolfgang Heimpel, "The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts," *JCS* 38.2 (1986): 129.

[520] See Polonsky, "The Rise of the Sun God," 80, 85, 497–98.

[521] Sarna, "Psalm XIX and the Near Eastern Sun-God Literature," 173.

Solar Features of the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos*

We are now in a place to reexamine the biblical *hieros logos* of Beth Shemesh through the lens of solar imagery. First, the scene in 5:2–4 draws upon the themes of divine judgment against Dagon, in the pattern of Shemesh veneration. The two occasions of Dagon's toppling are set at dawn (i.e., וישכמו ... ממחרת, 5:3; וישכמו בבקר ממחרת, 5:4), and the spectators witness their god falling at that very moment (notice the use of the presentative, והנה, and the participial action, (נֹפֵל, כְּרֻתוֹת).[522] This dawn execution takes place at the threshold of the temple, where Shemesh judges (המפתן, 5:4). It is not a stretch, therefore, to read the imagery of the scene as a depiction of Dagon receiving his judgment as the "first glimmer of brightening dawn" struck the threshold of the temple. Dagon's severed head and hands are an image of defeat, but also of executed legal judgment. As Victor Matthews puts it, "the fact that the 'palms of his hands lay cut off upon the threshold' (v.4) signifies that the circumstances of judgment had been legally certified in [YHWH]'s favor."[523] Each of the scene's elements is evocative of Shemesh's judicial profile.

Next, the divination test set up by the priests and diviners is shaped to discern the activity of a specifically solar deity. For example, their precise instructions about the vehicle are not incidental. The construction of a new cart (עגלה חדשה, 6:7) carries solar cultic significance. Even before the innovation of chariots as military vehicles, early sledges and wheeled carts were used for the transportation of divine images and as vehicles of the gods in Mesopotamian mythology.[524] Moreover, the “newness” of the cart carries ritual or magical connotations. For other biblical examples of these undertones, consider the “new ropes” that had the potential to bind Samson (Judg 15:13); “firstfruits” grain offerings (Lev 23:16; Num 28:26) and “firstborn” animal offerings (Exod 13:11–13) to secure agricultural fertility; Ahijah’s “new robe,” signaling divine apportionment of ten tribes to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11:29–31); and Elisha’s “new dish” for magically purifying Jericho’s water supply (2 Kgs 2:20).[525] This magical newness is likely behind the cultic appropriateness of sacrificial cattle that “have never borne a yoke” (1 Sam 6:7; cf. Num 19:2; Deut 21:3).[526] Beyond the generally numinous quality of the use of a “new cart,” the deity’s transportation in such a vehicle calls to mind the imagery of Shemesh’s solar chariot.[527] Indeed, the diviners in 1 Sam 6 release this divine vehicle in order to observe whether it—like Shemesh’s chariot through the underworld—would eventually “rise” at the deity’s own territory, i.e., Beth Shemesh (אם דרך גבולו יעלה בית שמש הוא, 6:9).[528] The tale also gives the curious detail that the new cart bearing YHWH went “straight” to Beth Shemesh and did not veer to the right or the left, that is, to the south or the north (וישרנה ... ולא סרו ימין ושמאול, 6:12).[529] This language evokes the solar journey along the east-west axis, even using the verb “to travel straight” (ישר), so often associated with Shemesh. Finally, just as the appearance of the sun god on the horizon provokes joy among worshipers, the tale in 1 Sam 6 notes that the Beth Shemeshites rejoiced (שמח) when they beheld the approaching deity (6:13). In their joy, they commenced sacrifices (using the cart as wood and the cows as sacrificial offerings), launching a tradition that continued at least through the time of the story’s author (“to this day,” 6:18).[530] It appears that the contours of the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos*, now embedded in 1 Samuel, told the story of a solar deity who executed judgment over a competitor and set a straight course toward his venerable home, the “house of Shemesh” or “Sun Temple.”

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[522] Contra McCarter, who characterizes the dramatic moments of the scene as having taken place "off stage … in the darkened temple" (*I Samuel*, 125). Of course, the participles leave room for flexibility of interpretation about the moment of Dagon's fall. In combination with the presentative, I read them as indicating present action. However, in either case, the big reveal is coordinated with dawn.

[523] Matthews, "Entrance Ways and Threshing Floors," 34.

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[524] William J. Hamblin, *Warfare in the Ancient Near East to 1600 BC: Holy Warriors at the Dawn of History* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 130, 471. Cf. the apportionment of oxcarts to priests for their work in Num 7:3–8 (see D. Kellermann, “עֲגָלָה *ʿᵃgālâ*,” in *TDOT* vol. 10, 453).

[525] On the magical/divine associations of the word חדש, see R. North, “חָדָשׁ *chādhāsh*,” in *TDOT* vol. 4, 243. An alternative theory that deserves attention is the possibility that the adjective “new” may retain cultic associations from the Akkadian cognate term, *eššu*, despite North’s assertion that the homonyms *eššu* = “new” and *eššu* = “temple” “exhibit no semantic link” (“Chadash,” 226). On the contrary, a will from LBA Emar notes the inheritance of two “new carts” (*ereqqu eššu* > עגלה חדשה) by a son whose responsibility is for the upkeep of the home’s shrine and caretaking of its gods (Timothy L. Undheim, “Late Bronze Age Middle Euphrates Wills in the Context of Their Ancient Mesopotamian Analogues: A Window on Emar Society” [Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, PhD diss., 2001], 139). In that context, *ereqqu eššu* could just as easily translate to “shrine carts.” Could an echo of this technical term and the flexibility of the adjective *eššu* be retained in the specific requirement of an עגלה חדשה in 1 Sam 6 (cf. 2 Sam 6:3, another “new cart” for transporting Israel’s deity)?

[526] The resonance between the scenario in 1 Sam 6 and the regulation in Deut 21 is especially intriguing. Deuteronomy calls for the sacrifice of a cow that has never worn a yoke in the event of the discovery of a slain individual whose assailant is unidentified. 1 Samuel calls upon the same animal (eventually sacrificed) in a scenario in which Dagon’s assailant is uncertain. Perhaps these two biblical texts draw upon a common cultural principle.

[527] See Lepiński, “Shemesh,” 765.

[528] Glen Taylor also notes an “almost magnetic attraction” of the divine cart to Beth Shemesh and raises the possibility that solar significance is behind this feature of the story. Nevertheless, he concludes that this attraction “probably has more to do with location of Beth-shemesh just within ‘Israelite’ territory than with it being a ‘solar’ site” (*Yahweh and the Sun*, 131, n. 3). I suspect that Taylor probably downgrades his initial instinct because he is

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reading the story in its final form, which has a pan-Israelite scope. The earliest tradition would probably not have understood “Israelite territory” as a concept.

[529] For ימין ושמאל as cardinal directions, see D. Kellermann, “שְׂמֹאל *‘śᵉmō’l*,” in *TDOT* vol. 14, 139. If Beth Dagon is identified with the modern site of the same name near Jaffa (cf. Sennacherib’s conquest report; however, this site has not been positively identified by archaeological investigation), then a path to Beth Shemesh would have followed a major ancient roadway (still followed today along a significant portion of Hwy 1 in Israel); see David A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel*, The ASOR Library of Biblical and Near Eastern Archaeology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 181–89. Though the road runs NW/SE, rather than along the cardinal east-west axis, a journey along this artery would have followed a straight, generally eastward trajectory, and the note about avoiding north-south deviation would have been relevant.

[530] The tale also notes that the deity appeared precisely when the Beth Shemeshites were harvesting wheat in the valley (6:13). This detail may imply that the *hieros logos* had special significance for the cultic traditions at Beth Shemesh surrounding the wheat harvest. Possibilities abound, including that this story may have been part of an annual harvest festival at Beth Shemesh. Could it be that harvest imagery is behind the mythological symbolism of their patron deity Shemesh cutting off the head of Dagon (whose name may be etymologically associated with the word “grain” דגן) at Beth Dagon? This inference is impossible to confirm and piles speculation atop speculation. Nevertheless, the symbolic resonance is intriguing. Alternatively, the note about the timing of YHWH’s arrival may simply be the contribution of a later redactor who wished to associate this moment with the Israelite firstfruits celebration (as proposed by Bourke, “Samuel and the Ark: A Study in Contrasts,” 95).

From Shemesh to YHWH

Despite the solar framing of the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos*, its protagonist in the extant version is identified as YHWH, *not* Shemesh. It may be inferred, then, that either an original tradition about Shemesh has been redacted into a story about YHWH, or that the story was intentionally composed to feature YHWH as deity with a solar profile. Either way, this tale speaks in 1 Samuel as one voice within a larger dialogue about the nature of Israel's god. It bears witness to a stream of devotion that celebrated the Shemesh-like attributes of YHWH, the world's creator, judge, and ethical guide.

Evidence of solar worship in the Iron Age kingdoms of Israel and Judah is widespread in the archaeological record, from solar iconography on cult stands, to winged sun-disk iconography on document seals and *lmlk* inscribed jar handles, to the solar alignment of shrines and temples (including the Jerusalem temple).[531] Many personal names found in epigraphic sources (even names with Yahwistic theophoric elements) contain solar-thematic elements, such as אור, נר, זרח, etc.[532]

There are even a few explicit references to state sponsored Shemesh worship retained in the biblical history. 2 Kings 23:5 reports that the kings of Judah had appointed offerings for Shemesh and other celestial deities at the shrines near Jerusalem (policies reversed by Josiah). Even within the Jerusalem temple itself—conspicuously at the (presumably east-facing) entrance—horses and chariots of Shemesh had been stationed (2 Kgs 23:11 reports Josiah's removal and destruction of these).[533] Whether through personal witness, memory, or plausible imagination, Ezekiel also reports a vision of Shemesh worship at the east-facing doorway of the temple, men bowing to the rising sun (Ezek 8:16). Each of these reports is condemned by the text's authors.

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[531] On solar iconography present on the Taanach cult stand, see Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 24–37. On solar bullae and *lmlk* stamps, see Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 42–55; Römer, *The Invention of God*, 121–22; Joel M. LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts*, OBO 242 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 101–2. On the alignment of temples, see Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 66–86; Römer, *The Invention of God*, 99–100.

[532] Taylor, Yahweh and the Sun, 88–91; Römer, The Invention of God, 128–30.

Despite the programmatic prohibition of solar worship as idolatry, a great deal of divine solar imagery is nevertheless retained and celebrated in the extant biblical texts. Beth Shemesh may be somewhat unique in its explicitly solar toponym.[534] However, legends involving other sites retain solar undertones that possibly preserve the memory of sun veneration at these places. For example, YHWH's judgment against Sodom takes place "at the break of dawn" (Gen 19:15) and when "the sun [השמש] came out upon the land" (Gen 19:23). Note also that the mysterious divine being who wrestles with Jacob at the Jabboq was constrained by the breaking dawn (Gen 32:27) and the etiology of Peniel/Penuel is explicitly tied to the shining of the sun [השמש] upon Jacob/Israel (Gen 32:32).[535] During Joshua's battle with the Amorites, he addresses YHWH by the names "Shemesh" and "Yareaḥ" (Josh 10:12).[536] The chariot of the sun-deity also makes appearances in the biblical text (2 Kgs 2, Ezek 1),[537] as does language that evokes iconography of the winged sun disk. For example, "The sun [שמש] of justice shall rise upon you who fear my name, and healing shall be in its wings" (Mal 3:20).[538] Similarly, the "glory" of YHWH is often described with solar imagery (e.g., Deut 33:2; Hab 3:3–4; Isa 59:19; 60:19; etc.).[539]

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[533] See discussion of the horses and chariots of Shemesh in Christoph Uehlinger, "Was There a Cult Reform under King Josiah? The Case for a Well-Grounded Minimum," in *Good Kings and Bad Kings*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 393 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 301–3.

[534] However, consider also עין שמש (Josh 15:7; 18:17), הר־חרס (Judg 1:35), תמנת־חרס (Judg 2:9), מעלה החרס (Judg 8:13). See Hans-Peter Stähli, *Solare Elemente im Jahweglauben des Alten Testaments*, OBO 66 (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1985), 12–13; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 95–98.

[535] See Bernd Janowski, "JHWH und der Sonnengott: Aspekte der Solarisierung JHWHs in vorexilischer Zeit," in *Pluralismus und Identität*, ed. Joachim Melhausen (Gütersloh, Germany, 1995), 239; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 262.

[536] See discussion in Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 114–16.

[537] See Lepiński, "Shemesh," 765.

Given the preserved witness to solar veneration in Israel/Judah and the veneration of YHWH in solar profile at multiple sites, it may be impossible to determine whether the *hieros logos* at Beth Shemesh was originally composed as a Shemesh tale or as a YHWH (with solar attributes) tale. A historical factor that may tip the balance of probability somewhat is Hazael of Damascus's 9th century campaign, which destroyed Philistine Gath and earned Hazael control of the Philistine coast (ca. 830–800 BCE). Relieved of pressure from Philistia, Judah expanded into the Shephelah and likely took control of Beth Shemesh at this time.[540] Very possibly, the historical veneration of Shemesh at the site was replaced or merged at that time with veneration of Judah's patron deity, YHWH. Such a scenario would reasonably explain the hypothetical transformation of the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos* into a tale featuring YHWH (in solar profile). Alternatively, the shift in the deity's identification could have been part of a centralizing and anthologizing project undertaken by Jeroboam II in the mid 8th century (see below).[541] In any case, the retention of solar features in the tale, despite the altered protagonist, would not have been unusual. As Uehlinger summarizes, "In the history of Near Eastern religions, we can observe time and again that the functions and roles of deities had a stronger local inertia than even their names, which could be combined, exchanged, grouped genealogically, and brought into line with political and economic shifts."[542] Nevertheless, it also remains possible that this tale featured YHWH from its earliest composition. If so, then the story spins a distinctly solar adventure for YHWH, as legitimization for YHWH worship at the site named *beth shemesh*, "Sun Temple."

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[538] See also discussion of solar imagery within Psa 19 in Sarna, "Psalm XIX and the Near Eastern Sun-God Literature"; and winged sun disk iconography in Psa 17, 36, 57, 61, 63, and 91 in LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms*.

[539] Lepiński, "Shemesh," 766.

[540] Israel Finkelstein, The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel, ANEM 5 (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 126.

[541] Finkelstein proposes that the "El" of the Jacob cycle was transformed into YHWH as part of Jeroboam II's literary project ("A Corpus of North Israelite Texts," 271).

Dating the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos*

The question of the "original" protagonist of the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos* depends somewhat on its date of composition. However, a confident determination of that date remains unclear. Very possibly, the tale originated with the naming of the site. However, we cannot be certain about the date at which the site was dubbed "Beth Shemesh," which could have been as early as the Middle Bronze Age (per Burke) or as late as the Iron Age (per Niemann).[543] The function of the town as a religious site may be indicated by the recently uncovered temple structure at the tel; however, this data may not yield explicit evidence regarding the identity of the deity/deities venerated at the site. The other complicating factor in determining a compositional date for the *hieros logos* is the availability of writing as a technology for preserving the tale. Certainly, such a tale could have been composed orally and preserved in that form for a long time before being inscribed as written text.[544] Regarding the written text, there is limited evidence for some practice of writing at Beth Shemesh as early as the 11th century BCE.[545] Seth Sanders describes the advent of short inscriptional writing like that found at Beth Shemesh as a kind of "small-scale luxury craft" limited to independent elites.[546] But more widespread literacy and the composition of longer literary texts in Israel did not arise until the 8th century.[547] The best indicator of a temporal terminus for the composition of the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos*, in oral or written form, is the addition of the appendix that describes a divine outbreak against Beth Shemesh and the transfer of the deity to Kiriath Jearim. If this appendix was added in the wake of the destruction of Beth Shemesh by Jehoash of Israel in the early 8th century (ca. 790), then some version of the original tale must have been established at Beth Shemesh before that date.

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[542] Uehlinger, "Was There a Cult Reform under King Josiah?," 302. See also discussion of the durability of divine toponyms in Burke, "Toward the Reconstruction of a Sacred Landscape of the Judean Highlands."

[543] Burke, "Reconstruction of a Sacred Landscape," 8–9; Hermann Michael Niemann, "Zorah, Eshtaol, Beth-Shemesh and Dan's Migration to the South: A Region and Its Traditions in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages," *JSOT* 24.86 (1999): 43.

[544] Possible indications of oral composition in the pericope include the prevalence of short clauses with minimal subordination; use of repetition (esp. 5:3,4; 6:6,10); use of formulaic expressions (e.g., "They lifted their eyes and saw" 6:13). See Frank Polak, "The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative," *JANES* 26 (1998): 59–105. Of course, the practice of oral composition did not disappear with the advent of writing technologies. Therefore, the likelihood that this pericope was orally composed only broadens the possible range of its composition date; it does not create a *terminus ad quem*.

The Purpose of the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos*

The original function of the *hieros logos* can only be speculated. Most likely, it served as a tradition of legitimization for the worship of Shemesh or YHWH at the site. Like many legends, it might contain a kernel of historical memory embedded within it. Did Beth Shemesh get its name because of the mysterious arrival of a solar deity on their doorstep once upon a time? Or was the story of the arrival of the deity composed *ex eventu* to explain the site's already traditional name? It is impossible to say with certainty. Nevertheless, in either case, the legend emphasizes the theological point that it was the deity who chose the site (and its people as priests and worshipers) and not *vice versa*. In this way, the story forms a local community with a bond and sense of identity that likely extended beyond mere kinship or economic ties. The story imparts a sense of divine purpose to the Beth Shemeshite community, and it aligns them with the social-theological principle of justice that is associated with the solar deity (whether Shemesh or YHWH). In the next stage of textual development, however, the bond between deity and place at Beth Shemesh was severed, as a new voice entered the conversation.

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[545] A game board, incised with the name חנן has been variously dated. McCarter concludes, based on careful analysis of the script, that, "it seems reasonable to propose that the inscription on the *ḥnn* gaming board was applied in the late 11th century BCE, thus associating the object with the early part of the last Iron I phase of Tel Beth-Shemesh (Level 4, 1050–950 BCE)" (P. Kyle McCarter, "Section B: Comment on the *Ḥnn* Gaming Board Inscription," in *Tel Beth-Shemesh: A Border Community in Judah*, ed. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016], 648). However, cf. the later date proposed by Michael Sebbane, "*ḥnn* Gaming Board Section A: Two-Sided Gaming Board Fragment Bearing an Ownership Inscription," in *Tel Beth-Shemesh: A Border Community in Judah*, ed. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 646.

[546] Seth L. Sanders, "Writing and Early Iron Age Israel: Before National Scripts, Beyond Nations and States," in *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context*, ed. Ron E. Tappy and P. Kyle McCarter (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 106.

[547] See discussion in André Lemaire, "Levantine Literacy, ca. 1000–750 BCE," in *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writing*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 11–46; Brian B. Schmidt, "Memorializing Conflict: Toward an Iron Age 'Shadow History' of Israel's Earliest Literature," in *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writing*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 103–32; Jessica Whisenant, "Let the Stones Speak! Document Production by Iron Age West Semitic Scribal Institutions and the Question of Biblical Sources," in *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writing*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 133–60.

FROM BETH SHEMESH TO KIRIATH JEARIM

The next voice present in the dialogic diachrony belongs to scribes associated with Kiriath Jearim. The addition of four verses, 1 Sam 6:19—7:1, forms an appendix to the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos* and effectively coopts the tale for use as the foundational cult legend at Kiriath Jearim. Earlier attempts to correlate this narrative with "the actual course of events" related to the movements of the ark of the covenant in the 10th century BCE were misguided by the presumption of literary unity within the biblical Ark Narrative.[548] However, when the appendix to the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos* is allowed to stand as an independent redactional intervention, a probable historical occasion for the redaction is readily accessible. To help discern the date and purpose of this redaction, we may consult the convergence of recent archaeological finds at both Beth Shemesh and Kiriath Jearim, as well as the chronistic report preserved in 2 Kgs 14 (paralleled in 2 Chron 25).

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[548] See, e.g., Blenkinsopp, "Kiriath-Jearim and the Ark." Blenkinsopp explores the potential role of the Gibeonites as custodians of the ark at Kiriath Jearim in the 10th century. However, in the absence of helpful archaeological data in 1969, he is forced to conclude that it is "hazardous to speculate" (156) too much about "the actual course of events" (145). Now that we have more data on the history of Beth Shemesh and Kiriath Jearim, we may postulate a historical reconstruction with more confidence (though it undermines some of Blenkinsopp's reading).

In addition to the strike against Beth Shemesh narrated in 1 Sam 6, the biblical account preserves another episode of devastation at Beth Shemesh, set in the early 8th century. The scene opens with the portrayal of a series of military success for Amaziah of Judah against the Edomites in the first decade of the 8th century (2 Kgs 14:7). Bolstered by these victories, Amaziah challenged the stronger forces of Jehoash of Israel, but was roundly defeated in battle at Beth Shemesh (14:8–14). Though the biblical account presents the conflict as a provocation by the Judahite king Amaziah (which may be a Deuteronomistic polemic against him), it also notes that it was Jehoash of Israel who took the offensive action (14:11). Therefore, the decisive confrontation took place after Israel’s incursion into Judahite territory, at the Judahite border town of Beth Shemesh. As the gateway to Jerusalem, the fall of Beth Shemesh left Judah’s capital vulnerable, and the narrative depicts a significant Israelite raid upon Jerusalem, breach of its northern wall, and plundering of its cultic and royal treasuries (14:13–14). Despite this aggressive action, the Judahite territories were not (apparently) fully annexed by Israel After his capture at Beth Shemesh, Amaziah was presumably released (though this is not described in the narrative), and the plunder of Jerusalem implies that Judah must have endured some sort of vassal status *vis-à-vis* Israel (though this, too, remains implicit in the Judahite account).[549] Notably, when Amaziah later fled an internal coup attempt, he went to Lachish—not Beth Shemesh (1 Kgs 14:19)—which may be an indication of the enduring desolation of Beth

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[549] On the vassal status of Judah to Israel in the 8th century, see Finkelstein, “Jeroboam II’s Temples,” 250. For a reading that sees clues in the text as indicating the release of Amaziah by Jeroboam II, see Nadav Na’aman, “Azariah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel,” *VT* 43.2 (1993): 227–34.

Shemesh in the Shephelah during the reign of Jehoash's successor, Jeroboam II.[550] As noted above, the destruction of Beth Shemesh ca. 790 BCE is supported by the discovery of a significant destruction layer dating to the early 8th century at the site.[551]

Kiriath Jearim is not mentioned in the account in 2 Kgs 14. However, recent excavations led by Israel Finkelstein and Thomas Römer have uncovered a significant building project at Kiriath Jearim, dated to the first half of the 8th century BCE. Though Kiriath Jearim had been continuously occupied since the Early Bronze Age, its peak was during the Iron IIB–C (8th to early 6th centuries BCE).[552] At the beginning of that phase, a large manmade platform was constructed at the summit of the hill, 150m by 110m and oriented to the cardinal directions, supported by massive retaining walls.[553] Such platforms are unknown in Judah at the time, and the possibility of Assyrian construction does not quite fit the dating of the walls.[554] This leaves Israel as the most likely candidate for this building up of Kiriath Jearim in the mid 8th century.

> Elevated platforms such as the one featured at Kiriath-jearim—consisting of support walls, which together with fills laid behind them create an artificial hill—are well-known in the Northern Kingdom, in the capital Samaria and elsewhere. Some were built in the Iron IIA by the Omride Dynasty, others (e.g., Penuel and certain elements at Samaria) could have been constructed in the Early Iron IIB…. Accordingly, the days of Jeroboam II (788–747 BCE), in the middle of the 8th century, well-fit both the OSL and the ceramic data.[555]

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[550] See Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Royal Intervention," 382.

[551] Bunimovitz and Lederman, "Royal Intervention," 369, 382.

[552] Finkelstein et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim," 41. The historical name of the site appears to have fluctuated, and the name "Kiriath Jearim" may have been an Iron Age innovation (see Burke, "Reconstruction of a Sacred Landscape," 9, 18). For a survey of the names associated with the site in biblical memory, see Finkelstein and Römer, "Kiriath-Jearim, Kiriath-Baal/Baalah, Gibeah: A Geographical-Historical Challenge."

[553] Finkelstein et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim," 52–53.

[554] Finkelstein et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim," 58. Dates for the building of the platform and its retaining walls were obtained via Optical Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) of several samples, which measures the time elapsed since quartz grains ceased to be exposed to sunlight (see ibid., 55–57).

[555] Finkelstein et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim," 58, 59.

Like Beth Shemesh, Kiriath Jearim overlooks the major route to Jerusalem via the Shephelah. Therefore, while the former may have functioned as a Judahite protective outpost until its destruction by Jehoash, the latter was probably established by Jeroboam II as a monumental administrative-military center on the southern edge of Israel's territory, to monitor and control the same passage to Jerusalem during Israelite suzerainty.[556] In this context, the destruction of Beth Shemesh ca. 790 BCE and the subsequent renovation and expansion of its neighbor Kiriath Jearim in the years following must surely have been a strategic political move by Israel.

But it was not political only. The humiliation of Amaziah's Beth Shemesh by Jehoash and its replacement by a fortified Kiriath Jearim under Jeroboam II's direction would have been accompanied by a transfer of cultic hegemony from the former site to the latter. Although no explicitly cultic artifacts or temple remains have yet been uncovered in the early excavations at Kiriath Jearim, it is likely that the site played more than a merely administrative role at Israel's southern border with Judah. The elevated platform's axial alignment is consistent with other Israelite cultic sites.[557] In addition, the city is remembered in several biblical texts as a cultic center.[558] Israel's dominance over Judah at the edge of the Sorek Valley was, therefore, established both politically and religiously (of course, these elements are never far apart) by the expansion of Kiriath Jearim during Jeroboam II's reign. It is no great stretch to suppose that, in addition to the shift of *intangible* influence and political dominance from Beth Shemesh to Kiriath Jearim, *tangible* cultic paraphernalia—including the divine image—were also plundered in the sack of Beth Shemesh and eventually reinstalled in a shrine at Kiriath Jearim.[559]

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[556] Finkelstein and Römer, "The Historical and Archaeological Background," 169, 183.

[557] Finkelstein and Römer, "The Historical and Archaeological Background," 170; Finkelstein et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim," 43; Römer, "L'arche de Yhwh," 102.

[558] In addition to 1 Sam 6:19–7:1, Mark Leuchter highlights Josh 9:17; Judg 18:12; Psa 132:6; 2 Sam 6:2; Micah 3:12; Jer 26:18, 20 as references to Kiriath Jearim that have subtly cultic resonances ("The Cult at Kiriath Yearim: Implications from the Biblical Record," *VT* 58.4–5 (2008): 531–41). See also 1 Chron 13:5; 2 Chron 1:4; As Finkelstein puts it, "For the Chronicler, Kiriath-jearim is still an important location, because he mentions it three times in relation to the Ark" ("Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim," 38).

These 8th-century historical events appear to be mirrored in the legend found in 1 Sam 6:19—7:1, a tale of Beth Shemesh's misfortune and Kiriath Jearim's ascendancy, along with the physical transfer of the deity. These lines do not form their own story but serve as a new conclusion to the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos* that formerly had ended satisfactorily at 6:18.[560] The fact that the reframed legend remains set in the premonarchic era should not distract readers from recognizing and attributing its inspiration to events that occurred during Jehoash's and Jeroboam II's reigns. Retrojection of current events onto narratives set in the historical past may have been a common technique used by Jeroboam II's scribes. Thomas Römer has made the case that, like Kiriath Jearim, the sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel were established as Israelite shrines during Jeroboam II's reign—actions that were literarily assigned to Jeroboam I in retrospect by the scribes who compiled 1–2 Kings.[561] Indeed, Jeroboam II's scribes may have made a practice of adapting the extant *hieros logos* of a site to accommodate Israelite cultic interests. For example, in a 1951 essay, Victor Maag proposes that the *hieros logos* of Bethel found in Gen

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[559] Finkelstein and Römer propose that the ark was the cultic object installed at Kiriath Jearim ("The Historical and Archaeological Background," 184; cf. Finkelstein et al., "Excavations at Kiriath-Jearim," 60; Römer, "Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?" 273–74). However, I have argued that the ark's presence in this story is a much later intrusion—added for ideological (aniconic) reasons, while the historical referent is a divine image (either of Shemesh or YHWH—or possibly a merger of the two).

[560] Campbell acknowledges as much: "Verse 18 would make a good ending if the beginning of v. 19 were not so difficult and uncertain. As it is in the text, or as it is reconstructed, v. 19 can hardly begin anything. The present text is best followed through to 7:1.… The story of the ark's return could end with 6:18. But the text does not end there" (*1 Samuel*, 78, 79). Nevertheless, Campbell does not consider the extended story to be a *hieros logos* for Kiriath Jearim because in his view the pericope is incomplete without the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6): "The sanctuary that is to replace Shiloh is not yet to hand. Kiriath-jearim functions in the narrative as either a geniza (for outworn religious objects) or as a waiting-room or antechamber. It would be a highly unsatisfactory ending to a story celebrating the ark" ("Yahweh and the Ark," 39).

[561] Römer, "How Jeroboam II Became Jeroboam I".

28:10–22 may have been adapted by Israelite scribes from an extant legend about a stone *matsevah* at the site, which had been erected by a being with superhuman strength.[562] By adapting an existing legend, scribes could access the earlier tale's authority while filling it with new meaning.

In that mode, the reworking of Beth Shemesh's *hieros logos* served two purposes. First, it delegitimized the sanctity of Beth Shemesh and transferred that legitimacy to Kiriath Jearim. In the scribal appendix, rather than a glorious homecoming, the movement of the divine image from Beth Dagon to Beth Shemesh was reinterpreted as a malicious attempt to *perpetuate* the deity's foreign captivity (from Israelite perspective, Judahite Beth Shemesh was foreign territory)—and it was met with a divine slaughter. Therefore, the Beth Shemeshites' exasperated questions, "Who can stand before this YHWH… and where can we send him?" (6:20), are answered immediately and definitively: Israelite priests… Kiriath Jearim.[563] Thus, in the tale, the suffering Beth Shemeshites are made to admit that Kiriath Jearim is the appropriate home of the displaced deity.

The second purpose of the cooption and transformation of the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos* was to frame the movement of the deity to Kiriath Jearim as the deity's own choice, not a merely human political/military achievement. The natural bond between the solar-profiled YHWH and the "Sun Temple" town was nullified, for YHWH had chosen Kiriath Jearim as the divine home, and the people of Kiriath Jearim (that is, the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom and their priests) as YHWH's preferred constituents. Such a *hieros logos* may have promoted a sense of national religious cohesion for Jeroboam II's Israel, and it may have bolstered their sense of superiority over their Judahite neighbors, including the residents of Beth Shemesh and Jerusalem.

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[562] Victor Maag, "Zum hieros logos von Beth-El," *Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft* 5 (1951): 126.

[563] With Miscall, *1 Samuel*, 34–35; contra A. Stirrup, "Who is able to stand? … The unspoken answer is 'No one'" ("'Why Has Yahweh Defeated Us Today before the Philistines?,'" 99–100). See also Enemali, "The Danger of Transgression Against the Divine Presence: The Case of the Ark Narrative," 185. Robert Polzin suggests that the answer to the rhetorical question may be: David and Solomon, in Jerusalem (*Samuel and the Deuteronomist: 1 Samuel*, 70–71).

JEROBOAM II'S ALL ISRAEL ANTHOLOGY

The *hieros logos* at Kiriath Jearim was not the only literary product likely developed during Jeroboam II's reign. Israel Finkelstein has proposed that an entire corpus of Israelite literature was committed to writing, collected, and disseminated by Jeroboam's scribes, as part of a project to consolidate national identity.[564] These scribes collected and adapted oral traditions about heroic individuals, legends of eponymous ancestors, dynastic origin stories, and perhaps Exodus and Conquest traditions, and compiled them into an anthology of Northern "Israelite" literature.[565] Such a project may have been prompted by the convergence of two important social factors: the need to define Israelite identity as Jeroboam's territorial holdings expanded, and the spread of writing as a technology in the 8th century Levant.

However, the stability of state institutions does not automatically lead to the production of national literature. In an article on the relationship between national identity and the generation of biblical texts, Jacob Wright observes that the majority of our extant biblical literature was more likely produced in the context of *defeat* (anticipation of defeat and reflection upon defeat) than victory, for it is written from the vantage point of the vanquished rather than from the perch of monarchic power.[566] Often, for the extant biblical literature, it may have been the *loss* of the stability provided by state structures that prompted new formulations of national identity—a sense of "peoplehood" in which monarchy was "historically important yet not essential to the existence of the nation."[567] Wright has in mind primarily the Assyrian defeat of Israel and the Babylonian defeat of Judah as engines for such innovative reflection on identity, but his argument is applicable to earlier downturns in the monarchic era as well. In the wake of Syrian and Moabite campaigns in the southern Levant in the latter half of the 9th century and the loss of Israelite control over more than half of its territory, Israel would have needed a basis for cohesion beyond territorial sovereignty, if the nation was to hold together. In the aftermath of precisely those losses, Israel Finkelstein imagines, "There was probably a need to answer questions like 'Who are we and who belongs to our nation?,' questions that must have been amplified by the sudden renewed territorial expansion in the first half of the 8th century, following the decline of Damascus as a result of Assyrian pressure."[568] In other words, if contraction of territory in the context of 9th century defeat prompted reflection on Israelite identity as a people *beyond* kingdom, then the rebounding expansion and reacquisition of territory under Jeroboam II in the 8th century would have reasserted those questions—but in the new context of a peoplehood *within* kingdom.

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[564] Finkelstein, "A Corpus of North Israelite Texts." Finkelstein cautions: "With no way to present a striking proof for what I am suggesting, I urge the reader to take this essay as an intellectual experiment, being a probability more than a certainty" (264). I do not offer proof either; however, the themes present in this layer of redaction in 1 Sam 1–8 cohere with Finkelstein's thesis. See, however, the dissent offered by Nadav Na'aman, "Was the Reign of Jeroboam II a Period of Literary Flourishing?," *HBAI* 9.3 (2020): 348–65.

[565] Finkelstein, "A Corpus of North Israelite Texts," 267.

The all-too-brief account of Jeroboam II's reign in 2 Kings 14:23–29 belies his stunningly successful and lengthy reign as king of Israel (ca. 789–748 BCE). Even the Judahite redactor of this material, whose summary evaluation of Jeroboam II is unequivocal ("He did evil in the eyes of YHWH," 14:24), is forced to acknowledge that the borders of Israel were greatly expanded under Jeroboam's leadership, benefiting both Israel and Judah—though this is explained as an act of divine mercy (14:25b–27). Jeroboam continued his father Jehoash's control over the Southern Kingdom of Judah, gained in Jehoash's victory at Beth Shemesh, ca. 790 BCE.[569] Judah's vassalage to Israel created (possibly for the first time) a united Israel that encompassed both northern and southern kingdoms. The similarity of the 8th century altar design at Israelite Dan and Judahite Beersheva is probably a signal that they were indeed the northern and southern border towns of Jeroboam II's united kingdom. The two towns are mentioned together in Amos 8:14 (another 8th century text) and in the common biblical expression "from Dan to Beersheva," which likely derives from this historical setting.[570] With control of the desert trade routes, archaeological evidence suggests that Israel's influence under Jeroboam II stretched all the way to the Gulf of Aqaba.[571]

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[566] Wright, "The Commemoration of Defeat."

[567] Wright, "The Commemoration of Defeat," 444.

[568] Finkelstein, "A Corpus of North Israelite Texts," 266.

Within the northern territories, the dating of remains at cultic sites such as Dan, Bethel, Penuel, Shechem, Shiloh, and Kiriath Jearim point to a significant reorganization of worship during Jeroboam II's reign.[572] The fact that most of these sites are depicted in biblical texts as having been established much earlier (during the reign of Jeroboam I in the 10th century) is probably due to intentional temporal displacement by Judahite redactors, in order to vilify the Northern Kingdom's founding monarch, Jeroboam I, while also disguising the successes of his more recent successor Jeroboam II.[573]

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[569] See J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Louisville: WJK, 2006), 351–56.

[570] Finkelstein, "Jeroboam II's Temples," 261.

[571] Finkelstein, "A Corpus of North Israelite Texts," 267. For relevant archaeology from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, see, idem, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 139.

[572] Finkelstein, "Jeroboam II's Temples," 253–56. For the tie between this reorganization and the compilation of sacred texts, see, idem, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 139.

[573] Finkelstein, "Jeroboam II's Temples." See also Römer, "How Jeroboam II Became Jeroboam I."

A corpus of texts promoting an ideology of national unity would certainly have supported Jeroboam II's assertion of sovereignty over the core of Israel, Judah, and the territories he reacquired in the north and Transjordan. If the king's scribes collected local legends from the disparate communities of Jeroboam's Israel and spun them together into a single, shared history, it would have helped him legitimize his authority in all the far flung reaches of his realm. For example, Finkelstein hypothesizes that an early collection of hero tales gathered in the 8th century (now forming he core of the Book of Judges) was supplemented at that time by an invented list of minor judges to "complete the map" of Israel and show that each of these territories (including the Nimshides' own homeland) was part of Israel's earliest origins.[574] Similarly, by framing "all Israel from Dan to Beersheva" as a national reality in their literature before the rise of the monarchy, the Israelite king could support his claim to jurisdiction over all of these regions on the basis of ancient bonds (fictive or real). In sum, an ideology of peoplehood *before* kingdom (forged in the wake of defeat) set the stage for an understanding—in Jeroboam II's era—of a unified peoplehood *within* kingdom. In later historical circumstances, following the Assyrian and Babylonian devastations of Israelite and Judahite independent monarchies, the ideology of peoplehood would become reframed *beyond* kingdom.

If Jeroboam II did indeed support his royal influence with the production of a national literature to reinforce the fictive kinship ties of his people, the timing was certainly ripe for the utilization of growing literacy in Israel during the 8th century. Almost no lengthy inscriptions or texts have been recovered from the heartland of Israel and Judah dating before 800 BCE.[575] But just at that moment, coinciding with the economic boom under Jehoash and Jeroboam II, we begin to see significant administrative writing in the region's archaeology along with the appearance of lengthy "Bible-like" texts (such as the Deir Alla Balaam text and an Exodus-like plaster inscription at Kuntillet 'Ajrud).[576] Evidence of extensive writing on perishable media (papyrus fibers retained on bullae) at Samaria in the 8th century leads Jessica Whisenant to conclude, "The extant epigraphic record from Samaria tellingly hints at what was doubtless the very active role played by Israel's scribal specialists in the administering of the state. Moreover, by engaging in a series of writing practices that were predicated on the existence of Israel as a totality, Israel's scribes in turn helped generate state hegemony."[577] Whisenant's evaluation coheres with Seth Sanders's emphasis on the power of vernacular texts to call a "public" into being:

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[574] Finkelstein, "A Corpus of North Israelite Texts," 275, 283.

[575] Catalogs and dates of epigraphic artifacts are found in Benjamin Sass and Israel Finkelstein, "The West Semitic Alphabetic Inscriptions, Late Bronze II to Iron IIA: Archeological Context, Distribution and Chronology," *HBAI* 2.2 (2013): 149–220; Lemaire, "Levantine Literacy, ca. 1000–750 BCE." For an alternative hypothesis that literary texts could have circulated in Israel and Judah long before the 8th century, see Matthieu Richelle, "Elusive Scrolls: Could Any Hebrew Literature Have Been Written Prior to the Eighth Century BCE?," *VT* 66.4 (2016): 556–94.

> Writing was recruited by an Israelite state to establish itself, in order to argue publicly that it existed…. Texts that address people in a vernacular—a written version of their own spoken language—can help call this people into existence as a self-conscious group…. Instead of the capitalist idea of books and newspapers circulating as commodities that everybody might want to buy, there existed then the idea of written texts circulating through the process of *QR'* [קרא] 'summoning/reading/proclaiming', represented repeatedly in the Bible and West-Semitic inscriptions as an inherently public and political act.[578]

Though the general population would not have been privately "reading" an anthology of Israelite texts produced and disseminated by Jeroboam II's scribes, its existence would have carried numinous authority and its public recitation would have functioned as a summons to hearers to identify as a people, a nation, united by their historical bonds.[579]

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[576] Israel Finkelstein, "History of Ancient Israel: Archaeology and the Biblical Record - the View from 2015," *RevistB* 63 (2015): 380. Documentation of the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscription and interpretation is found in Nadav Na'aman, "The Inscriptions of Kuntillet 'Ajrud through the Lens of Historical Research," *UF* 43 (2011): 299–324, esp. 310–12. On the correlation between a relief in external military pressure, economic prosperity, and a rise in literary scribal activity, see Schmidt, "Memorializing Conflict."

[577] Whisenant, "Let the Stones Speak!," 142.

[578] Sanders, "Writing and Early Iron Age Israel," 107–8.

Above, I identified a specific layer in the early chapters of 1 Samuel that gathered and conflated the *hieros logos* from Kiriath Jearim with the tale of Samuel, the Ephraimite judge.[580] Therefore, this layer fits the anthologizing impulse of Jeroboam II's project. Furthermore, new material composed to stitch the pieces together at their seam skews toward an ideology of "all Israel," in support of the broader literary aims of the project. The most significant of these seams, as I have reconstructed them, follow 4:2 and precede 7:5. At the first seam, the redactor has introduced 4:3–4a, 5–7, 9a, 10. These additions describe the bringing of YHWH from Shiloh to the Israelite camp and narrate a new battle with significantly greater Israelite losses. This transitions to the beginning of the Kiriath Jearim *hieros logos* at 5:2, with the abduction of YHWH from the battlefield and transfer to Beth Dagon.

In addition to neatly bridging from the battle scene in the Samuel story (4:1–2) to the godnapping narrative that begins the *hieros logos* of Kiriath Jearim, the additional lines emphasize the ideological *Tendenz* of Jeroboam II's project. In this interlude, Israel is presented as a unified military force, directed by a univocal group of "elders" (זקני ישראל, 4:3). The hyperbolic number of casualties in the second round of fighting (30,000) implies that a large, national Israelite army is involved in the conflict, and not just a smaller troop representing a particular tribe or clan.[581] The words used to describe Israel are notably collective in nature: ישראל ("Israel," of course); העם ("*the* people"); העברים ("*the* Hebrews," as identified by Philistia). They are one people, with one deity, united against a shared enemy (איבינו, "*our* enemies," 4:3). Finally, the catch phrase of the project, כל ישראל ("all Israel"), appears in 4:5. The catch phrase appears again in the brief stitch connecting the end of the Kiriath Jearim *hieros logos* to the resumption of the Samuel thread (7:5), thus framing the excursus with the ideological *Leitwörter*. By sandwiching the Kiriath Jearim *hieros logos* within the Samuel story, the loss and recovery of the deity was incorporated into a larger narrative of temporary military setbacks followed by eventual victory, with YHWH's help, over the Philistine enemy. Such a developed, complex tale could have bolstered Jeroboam's own expansionist military ambitions and conscription of soldiers from diverse locales into a unified army.

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[579] See discussion of the numinous quality of writing in William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 24–34.

[580] In Finkelstein's discussion of the "map" of Israel encompassed by Jeroboam's anthology of hero stories, a hero for the hill country of Ephraim is missing. Finkelstein fills this gap with a theory about the judge Abdon (Judg 12:13–15), involving metathesis of עפר > פרע to place Abdon in the town of Ophrah—not Pirathon—in Ephraim ("Major Saviors, Minor Judges: The Historical Background of the Northern Accounts in the Book of Judges," *JSOT* 41.4 [2017]: 440–41). However, such acrobatics may be unnecessary. The original Samuel story, stripped of the many layers of accumulated redactions, could very well have been the missing Ephraimite hero story, perhaps anchored geographically at Ramah, the hometown of his infancy and elder years (despite his sojourn in Shiloh). For emphasis on the Ramah-orientation of the Samuel story (though with quite different redaction-critical conclusions), see Willis, "Anti-Elide Narrative Tradition."

Earlier in the narrative, this layer adds material between Samuel's "growing up" (2:21) and the commencement of war with Philistia "in those days" (4:1).[582] This interpolation introduces Samuel's dream theophany at Shiloh and the authorization of his words as one who speaks for YHWH. The contours of this theophany have been discussed above. Here, it is only necessary to call attention to the presence of the dominant "all Israel" ideology within the interpolation, especially in the summary statements at its conclusion. The catch phrase "all Israel" occurs twice (3:20; 4:1a), and the first occurrence is accompanied by the geographic tag, "from Dan to Beersheva," highlighting the claimed span of the kingdom during the days of

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[581] For discussion of hyperbolic casualty numbers in reports such as the one found in 1 Sam 4:10, see Denise Flanders, "A Thousand Times, No: אלף Does Not Mean 'Contingent' in the Deuteronomistic History," *Bib* 99.4 (2018): 484–506.

[582] The inserted material comprises 3:2a, 3a, 10*–11a, [now missing message of assurance], 15a, 19–20; 4:1a.

Jeroboam II. By means of this material, Samuel was promoted from his status as a local hero to that of a "confirmed" national spokesperson for YHWH (נאמן שמואל לנביא לה', 3:20), whose prophetic words were recognized by "all Israel" (4:1a). Together, these features reframe the conflict described in 4:1–2 as a *national* conflict, rather than a localized skirmish. If we imagine the composition of 1 Sam 1–8 as dialogic diachrony, we may hear this author's insistence that these diverse sources are actually united by a shared national identity and the beneficent support of YHWH, Israel's sole patron deity.

Conclusion: Divine Initiative toward a Communal Identity

In this chapter, I have proposed historical contexts for the development of the *hieros logos* at Beth Shemesh, its adaptation for use at Israelite Kiriath Jearim, and the compilation of a corpus of independent stories into a sequential narrative that celebrates "all Israel." A common theme in these stages of the text's development is the *divine initiative* creating and sustaining the communities involved. The patron deity of Beth Shemesh judges and executes a competitor (Dagon), then personally drives cows separated from their calves straight to Beth Shemesh—thus initiating the community of veneration established at that site. In a later generation, the storyteller subverts the old legend by detailing the divine rejection of Beth Shemesh and approval of Kiriath Jearim as the deity's rightful home. This narrative move lends divine legitimacy to the establishment of Kiriath Jearim as a border shrine with authority over its environs, including Beth Shemesh. Still later, the compilation of the Kiriath Jearim *hieros logos* with the Samuel story, including the victory at Mizpah and establishment of a monument near Ebenezer, emphasizes YHWH's initiative to create a national community of Israelites and to support their struggles against their national enemies: "Thus far, YHWH has helped us" (7:12).

While the tradents representing voices in this segment of the dialogue apply the theme of divine initiative differently, they share the drive to frame their social identity in theological terms, rather than simply looking to local kinship or class ties. This theological shaping of the community leads us to the dialogic thread that concerns the human stewardship of the relationship between the people and their god, the theme taken up in my final chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

EARLY CHAPTERS OF SAMUEL AS DIALOGIC DIACHRONY: PRIESTLY LEGITIMACY

The history of the Israelite/Judahite priesthood remains somewhat opaque. A post-exilic distillation of the priesthood into a hierarchy of Zadokite priests and Levite temple assistants seems relatively probable, but the story of lineages and conflicts in the pre-exilic and exilic frames that led to that configuration is, at best, uncertain, and many divergent and plausible reconstructions have been proposed.[583] The precise historical allegiances of competing priestly parties in a set timeline may not be essential for my reconstruction here. What is most important to recognize is that the priesthood was a contested role, and (as with the office of prophet) its level of alignment with national and imperial monarchies vacillated through time. Furthermore, many of the texts that now comprise the Hebrew Bible were probably composed by priests, and most of them were certainly edited and transmitted by priests. Therefore, it is no surprise that the issue of priestly legitimacy enters the dialogic diachrony at many levels. In what follows, the precise identification of the parties in conflict is sometimes speculative and, therefore, must remain tentative. But this reconstruction allows us to consider the layers of our focus text as a kind of back-and-forth debate through time, growing into the polyphonic text we possess today.

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[583] E.g., Cody, A History of Old Testament Priesthood, 146–74; Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 195–215; John W. Miller, The Origins of the Bible: Rethinking Canon History (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), 31–66; Miller, The Religion of Ancient Israel, 171–74; Serge Frolov, “Man of God and the Deuteronomist: Anti-Deuteronomistic Polemics in 1 Sam 2,27–36,” SJOT 20.1 (2006): 58–76; Thomas Römer, “The Relationship between Moses and Aaron and the Question of the Composition of the Pentateuch,” in The Social Groups behind the Pentateuch, ed. Jaeyoung Jeon, AIL 44 (Atlanta: SBL, 2021), 55–72.

ELI AND JEROBOAM II'S REGIONAL PRIESTLY TRADENTS

The Zadokite priests eventually won the day as the tradents of the extant biblical corpus, but all compositional layers in 1 Sam 1–8 do not evenly champion the Zadokite line. Indeed, at times the debate over priestly authority and legitimacy became quite heated, and vestiges of challenges to Zadokite hegemony have been preserved. Nevertheless, some non-Zadokite contributions predate or bypass that debate, playing a nonpolemical role in the text. The earliest layer of Elide material may inhabit just such a nonpolemical space. An early version of 1 Sam 1–4, postdating the compilation of the Samuel and godnapping narratives into a single story, introduced Eli the Shilonite as Hannah's beneficent intercessor and the young prophet Samuel's mentor.[584] The layer presents Eli in a largely positive light in 1 Sam 1–3; nevertheless, it also quickly moves toward his tragic death in chapter 4, making way for Samuel's own rise to national leadership. This brief, yet clear arc for Eli may reflect the social context of the tradents who composed this material.

It is common in the scholarly literature to tie the narrative of Eli's fall to the historical memory of Shiloh's 10th century destruction.[585] I am not convinced by that association. The story in 1 Samuel, after all, never identifies Shiloh as a site of Philistine aggression. While the townspeople at Shiloh lament the report of Israelite losses at Ebenezer (4:13), there is no hint in the extant text that Shiloh itself fell during the conflict or was even a target for attack.[586] If the primary motivation for the narrative was to memorialize or reflect theologically on the destruction of Shiloh, the text's silence on that very matter is highly problematic. The narrative spotlight simply shifts away from Shiloh, following the abducted deity to Beth Dagon, then to Beth Shemesh and, finally, Kiriath Jearim. Afterward, the narrative picks up with the regrouping of Israelite forces under Samuel's leadership at Mizpah. The fate of Shiloh is simply not a narrative priority for the author of this story.[587] The portion of the tale that narrates Eli's death is not presented as a communitywide Shilonite catastrophe narrative (*contra* Schicklberger and Porzig); rather, the gravitas of the report of Eli's death at Shiloh is located in the interconnected personal narratives of the tale's protagonists, Eli and Samuel.

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[584] See Tables 4.7 and 6.4.

[585] E.g., "There seems no reason to doubt … that the site was destroyed by the Philistines following the defeat of the Israelites in the battle of Eben-ezer" (Finkelstein et al., "Excavations at Shiloh," 173). But cf. Finkelstein's more recent evaluation that horned altars recently uncovered at Shiloh "should be viewed as game-changers" indicating an extended life for the site (Finkelstein and Römer, "The Historical and Archaeological Background," 178).

[586] The presumption of Shiloh's destruction in the subtext of the story can only be supported by appeal to Jer 7:12–14; 26:6 (cf. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 47). Aelred Cody notes the lack of textual and archaeological evidence (at least to date in 1969) for a Philistine destruction of Shiloh in the 10th century (*A History of Old*

At this stage of composition, Eli's priestly heritage is a non-issue. He appears without explicit ancestry, posted at the Shiloh temple, and does very little in the way of technical cultic "work."[588] Eli is presented as the quintessential regional priest, whose central responsibility is to facilitate the devotion of visiting worshippers and mediate divine blessing. Eli is unconcerned with the minutia of priestly regulations that characterize later, centralized priestly responsibility in biblical texts. The perspective of the present narrative layer is that Eli's worthy role at Shiloh was fulfilled faithfully. Yet, the story communicates, the baton of his leadership and mediation of divine favor toward Israel passed to the prophetic office (represented by Samuel).

Testament Priesthood, 110, n. 5). Recent excavations have revived the possibility that Shiloh continued as an important cultic site through and beyond the 10th century; see Finkelstein, "Jeroboam II's Temples," 255.

[587] As noted by Ann-Kathrin Knittel, *Das erinnerte Heiligtum: Tradition und Geschichte der Kultstätte in Schilo* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 95. See also Römer, "Katastrophengeschichte oder Kultgründungslegende?" 269.

[588] Note that Elkanah performs his own sacrifices, not Eli (1:4, 25). See Susan Ackerman, "Who Is Sacrificing at Shiloh? The Priesthoods of Ancient Israel's Regional Sanctuaries," in *Levites and Priests in Biblical History and Tradition*, ed. Mark Leuchter and Jeremy Hutton (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 25–43; Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 13.

This relationship between a country priest and a peripheral prophet may help us set this redactional layer in its most plausible historical context. In his reconstruction of Israel's prophetic history, Robert Wilson hypothesizes a community of marginalized Levitical priests who became the supportive base for prophets who spoke from the periphery of the Israelite monarchy after the expulsion of Abiathar (as told in 1 Kgs 22:26–27).[589] This political intrigue reflects competition between the royal court priests and the marginalized Levites. Some of that ideological battle likely became textualized in the waning years of the Israelite monarchy in the second half of the 8th century. I speculate that with the ouster of the Nimshide royal dynasty by Shallum (briefly, ca. 753 BCE) and its replacement by the House of Gadi for a dozen years (Menahem and Pekahiah, ca. 752–740 BCE; 2 Kgs 15:8–23), the network of priests who had supported Jeroboam II's regime at Samaria and surrounding regional cultic outposts were likely excluded or marginalized by the new regnant dynasty.[590] This push to the margins gave rise to a critical posture toward the monarchy, which was viewed as contradicting the time-tested traditions of Israel (an ideology that would evolve into Deuteronomism). Prophets like Hosea and Amos expressed this ideology via the medium of prophecy, delivered from the margins of Israelite power.[591]

The community of marginalized priests who sponsored state-critical prophets were also the tradents of the sacred history composed and compiled during their years of influence under the Nimshides. In a late 8th century context, in addition to collecting and anthologizing the new oracles of their sponsored prophets, they continued reproducing their treasured version of Israel's history, adding in relevant layers—including perhaps the Eli material found in 1 Sam 1–4. If something like this reconstructed history is behind the Eli layer, then it is significant that Eli is brought into the spotlight as a powerful mediator of divine blessing to Israelites—embodying the central priestly vocation claimed by the tradents who composed the layer. At the same time, Eli is portrayed (reflecting the historical situation in the late 8th century) as an elderly priest helping birth and support the new authority of the prophetic office. In the story, then, Eli and Samuel are not presented as rivals, but as collaborating representatives of two divinely initiated offices, priest and prophet, with the latter supported by the former. Eli's death is portrayed tragically—just as the regional Israelite priests would have viewed their own marginalization as a tragic historical circumstance. And yet the word of YHWH did not fail but found its voice in the mouth of the prophets, a phenomenon that may have inspired hope for the priestly tradents of the texts in the late 8th century. By portraying the twin offices of priest and prophet as functioning successfully with YHWH's help even before the advent of the monarchy, the redactor legitimized the 8th century prophetic critique of Israel's kings as well as their critique of the new slate of centralized court priests and prophets (e.g., Amos 7:10–17; Hos 6:5).

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[589] Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, 301–5. Wilson proposes that Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah ben Imlah may have been among these institutionally peripheral prophets (304).

[590] Following Wilson's reasoning (though Wilson dates the primary marginalization of Levites to the early post-Solomonic era).

[591] See, e.g., discussion of the similarity between Hosea and 1 Sam in Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 123–24. Wilson's discussion of social support networks (often minoritized or marginalized communities) for peripheral prophetic intermediaries may be found in *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, 30–32, 46–48, 69–73.

ANTI-ELIDE VOICES

Another dialogic perspective veers sharply from the celebration of the Northern regional priests. At this stage, the story was supplemented with polemical material aimed directly at Eli and his priestly lineage.[592] In the narrative, the symbolic presence of Eli expands to include a group of

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[592] See Tables 3.13, 4.8, and 5.2.

"sons" who serve as priests at Shiloh. Along with the new cast members, the primary priestly responsibilities shift from the traditions of regional country priests (assisting worshipers with their own sacrifices and mediating divine blessing) to a job description that resembles more closely that of centralized, court-sponsored priests: performing meticulously circumscribed sacrificial liturgies on behalf of worshiping pilgrims and the royal court.[593] Indeed, the narrator summarizes the corruption of Eli's sons by charging that "they did not know YHWH or the rights of the priests (משפט הכהנים) due from the people" (2:12–13).[594] The following scene depicts the sons of Eli breaking the "rules" by mishandling sacrificed meat and taking priestly portions out of prescribed order. They are characterized as self-serving and sloppy sacrificial technicians—a caricature that may have functioned as a foil for the authors' own highly regulated priestly community.

Further, this supplement dismantles the cozy partnership between the regional country priests and their prophetic spokespeople, turning the prophetic voice against them. Eli is visited by a holy man (איש אלהים) who utters an oracle of doom over the priestly legacy of Eli's house. Though Eli had been introduced earlier without ancestry, his ancestral house (the Levites are likely implied here) is emphasized repeatedly in the man of God's oracle (2:27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36).[595] As a punishment for mishandling their priestly responsibilities (care of the "fires of the children of Israel," 2:28; cf. Deut 18:1; Josh 13:14), the priestly line to which Eli belongs was to be stripped of its honor and would suffer violence. All but one descendant would be cut off from serving at the altar, and the one left would be filled with grief. In place of the Levitical Elides, a new priestly dynasty was envisioned, which would have the enduring favor of the royal dynasty ("will walk in and out before my anointed forever," 2:35).[596] Surviving Elide descendants are pictured begging the new priestly regime for menial temple labor in order to survive (2:36; cf. 2 Kgs 23:9). As Richard Nelson summarizes, "Although this pro-Zadokite oracle admits that the Eli family is of ancient and authentic descent (1 Sam. 2:27), its misdeeds have earned it a marginalized and precarious status on the fringes of the priesthood."[597] The anti-Elide (interpreted as anti-Levite) polemic disrupts the earlier version's natural transition of leadership from Eli to Samuel, for it does not identify Samuel himself as the inheritor of Eli's forfeited blessing—as the established plot would lead readers to expect. Instead, a new, as yet unnamed dynasty led by a "faithful priest" is envisioned as the inheritor of the priestly mantle.[598]

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[593] See summary of shifting priestly roles in Richard D. Nelson, *Raising up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville: WJK, 1993), 11–14. See also Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 119–20; Nurmela, *The Levites*, 162; Ackerman, "Who Is Sacrificing at Shiloh?"

[594] Cf. the only other biblical occurrence of the phrase משפט הכהנים, also pertaining to priestly rights, in Deut 18:3. The concern for משפט recurs in the present layer at 8:3, 9.

[595] Curiously, Eli's father/ancestor is unnamed in the oracle. This raises several possible interpretations: (1) the author intended to obscure the ancestor's identity via omission (with Frolov, who sees the pericope as anti-Deuteronomist polemic against hereditary priesthood of any sort ["Man of God and the Deuteronomist"]); (2) the author intended to denigrate the ancestor via omission, assuming that everyone knew who it was (with Cross, who identifies the ancestor as Moses, the ancestor of the Mushites/Levites [*Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 195–206]; followed by Caquot [*Les livres de Samuel*, 54] and Leuchter ["The Fightin' Mushites," *VT* 62.4 (2012): 483–86]); or (3) the author did not know who the ancestor was. I lean toward agreement with Cross, et al, that the author implies

Vehement insistence on appropriate and orderly care of cultic objects and priestly liturgies continues with further supplements in 1 Sam 5–7. The author introduces the Philistine *seranim* to the story (political leaders of the Philistine cities) and lampoons them for processing Israel's god around in an attempt to appease him (5:8–9).[599] After that initial strategy proves disastrous, the Philistines wisely turn to their priests and diviners (6:2). The sagely priests lay out

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a connection with Levi and/or Moses and their descendants the Levites, especially in light of the probable allusions to, or intertextuality with, Deut 18:1; Josh 13:14 (אשי ה').

[596] The man of God's proleptically favorable perspective toward the anticipated monarchy may also hint at a courtly origin for the interpolation.

[597] Nelson, Raising up a Faithful Priest, 6.

[598] Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg notes this incongruency in *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 37.

[599] On the connection between *seranim* and the 7th century Greek τύραννος, see Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible," 136–37.

an orderly strategy for returning the deity to Israel, including the prescription of a precise reparation offering (אשם, 6:3ff).[600] The biblical reparation offering regulations belong not to the (northern) Deuteronomic tradition, but to the (southern) Priestly-Holiness tradition, another clue to the origin of this redactional layer.[601] When Philistine hostilities resume after the divine image has been returned (via Beth Shemesh) to Kiriath Jearim, a new paragraph clarifies that YHWH's help does not arrive unprompted, but only in response to Samuel's careful sacrifice of a suckling lamb as a whole burnt offering (עולה, 7:7–10aα).

Finally, the author turns their critique against Samuel's legacy in 1 Sam 8. Invoking the priority of משפט (8:3), Samuel's sons (just like Eli's sons) are indicted for their perversion of justice, prompting the request for a king to rule the people. Sounding the theme of divine approval of, and preference for, the monarchy (cf. 2:10, 35), this revision concludes with YHWH's order to Samuel to listen to the voice of the people, anoint a king to rule them, and instruct the people regarding the divine rights (again, משפט) of the king (8:7, 9).

A number of historical contexts could fit the shape of this polemic. A collision of competing priestly classes could have occurred with the influx of refugees to Jerusalem and its periphery in the wake of the Assyrian conquest of Israel (722 BCE).[602] In this moment, significant numbers of Levites, marginalized by the Israelite regime, may have felt vindicated in their critique of the Israelite kings, expressed through the prophets and fulfilled by the Assyrians on the geopolitical stage (cf. 2 Kgs 17:13–14, 21–23).[603] Emboldened by the fulfillment of their warnings in Israel, they sought to exert their influence on the central power structures of Jerusalem—bringing a Deuteronomic ideology of reform with them to the new *de facto* epicenter of Israelite worship. Their reform movement met with a level of success under Hezekiah. However, the established Zadokite priests managing worship at the Jerusalem temple would not have been hospitable to the incursion of Levitical priests from the North.[604] To their mind, these intruders did not understand the proper *mishpat* for handling holiness in an important central shrine. It is plausible to imagine an intense conflict over priestly legitimacy arising in this context—a conflict whose stakes involved theology, identity, and economic survival for the competing priestly orders.

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[600] On the אשם offering, see Jacob Milgrom, *Cult and Conscience: The* Asham *and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance*, SJLA 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), especially 13–83; Roland de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), 98; Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, 117–18.

[601] See especially Lev 5:1–19.

[602] On this theory, Lester Grabbe comments, "Whether this explanation is anywhere near the truth is difficult to prove because of the problem of the growth of the tradition; however, the basic twofold division between clergy allowed at the altar and inferior clergy is well-documented for the Second Temple period" (*Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages*, 58). Walter Dietrich assigns the bulk of the Ark Narrative to the Assyrian period, post 722 (*Samuel*, 56*), though he bases this primarily on the resonances between the Ark Narrative and Exodus (a theme I trace to a later redaction; see below).

The conflict seems to have intensified about a century later, during Josiah's reforms. If the report in 2 Kings 23 is based on a historical memory, Josiah further centralized Judahite worship so that it was performed exclusively at the Jerusalem temple, deposing the priests who served at shrines throughout the territory of Judah, many of whom were likely Levites with roots in the defunct Northern Kingdom.[605] This move would have given the Zadokite priests (who were already based in Jerusalem) an upper hand in their jostling for prominence over their

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[603] See Wilson, Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel, 304.

[604] The origin of the Zadokites in Jerusalem is similarly difficult to determine historically. Even their genealogical descent from Aaron is unclear (cf. 2 Sam 8:17; 1 Chron 6:4–8; 24:3). See Nelson, *Raising up a Faithful Priest*, 7.

[605] Richard Nelson proposes that 2 Kgs 23 should be interpreted to mean that Josiah deposed only those regional priests who had actually performed sacrifices at the local shrines; those who performed only instructional and judicial tasks were permitted to serve similar functions in Jerusalem, thereby creating the two-tiered system that was revived again after the exile (*Raising up a Faithful Priest*, 8–9). In any case, the broad effect of Josiah's reform was that it "dealt the *coup de grâce* to the country shrines" (Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 127–28, 134–41). Scholarship is not unanimous in affirming the historicity of Josiah's reform: cf. Niels Peter Lemche, "Did a Reform like Josiah's Happen?," in *The Historian and the Bible: Essays in Honour of Lester L. Grabbe*, ed. Philip R. Davies and Diana Edelman (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 11–19; Uehlinger, "Was There a Cult Reform under King Josiah?"; Juha Pakkala, "Why the Cult Reforms in Judah Probably Did Not Happen," in *One God—One Cult—One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen: De Gruyter, 2010), 201–35.

Levitical counterparts. Josiah's reforms were cultically restrictive, but at the same time territorially expansive.[606] In the effort to forge a reunified Israel and a new national identity, Josiah's scribes would have been motivated to anthologize and harmonize the cherished histories of the Northern and Southern kingdoms. It has been long hypothesized that Josiah's reforms were supported by the composition of ideological literary texts, including a version of the Former Prophets and perhaps even Deuteronomy itself. However—especially if the royal scribes were Zadokite priests—they would have edited those texts to clarify the priestly hierarchy and ensure their own hegemony over the office. In my view, this is most plausibly when the polemic against Eli (understood as a prominent Levite ancestor) and his "sons" entered 1 Samuel, asserting that they were characteristically inept as priests.[607] Moreover, the additions included a prophetic prediction of an emergent priestly line that would supersede the Levites and perform faithful service to YHWH (inferring the authors' own line, the Zadokites).[608] In this way, the growing biblical text became a site of ongoing priestly debate, with earlier celebrations of Levitical service overwritten by late 7th century Zadokite priorities. Interestingly, the Zadokite (or Zadokite-friendly) redactors do not challenge the Levites' ancestral right to priesthood or the legitimacy of their ancestry. Rather, they characterize the Levites' priestly privileges as having been divinely appointed *and* divinely taken away.[609] In the unfolding dialogue of the text, this move invests the Zadokite claims with divine initiative and authority.

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[606] Risto Nurmela emphasizes Josiah's annexation of Bethel and hypothesizes that demoted Levitical priests stationed there were incorporated into the Jerusalem cult as second-class priests (*The Levites*, 57–81).

[607] Aelred Cody notes that 2:27–30 appear to be directed at the Levites as a priestly class (rather than the Elides exclusively), and dates the oracle to the Josianic moment (*A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 67–68, 113–14).

[608] Beyond our focal text, later figureheads of the two priestly communities (Abiathar and Zadok) were introduced into the romanticized unity kingdom of David—but Abiathar was later exiled by Solomon (1 Kgs 2:27, the rest of his elders having been massacred by Saul; cf. 1 Sam 22).

[609] Cody, A History of Old Testament Priesthood, 114.

(PARTIALLY) REHABILITATING ELI

The polemic against Eli appears to have softened in another layer that re-presents the character of Eli in a more sympathetic light.[610] Eli's partial rehabilitation was accomplished by adding a scene in which he warns his sons of the danger of divine judgment, albeit unsuccessfully (2:22–25). Jaime Myers comments—a bit too forcefully, perhaps—that this late scribal addition "clears Eli of blame altogether and portrays him in a sage-like capacity."[611] This move was accompanied by a major change to 1 Sam 3, replacing the divine message of assurance to Samuel with a divine recapitulation and confirmation of the man of God's condemnation against Eli's priestly line (3:11b–14). The direct divine speech to Samuel differs, however, from the man of God's pronouncement in that it creates some distance between the culpable actions of Eli's sons and Eli himself.[612] Eli knew what his sons were up to, yet his attempts at intervention did not effectively restrain them (3:13). The author adds, as well, Samuel's report of his theophany to Eli and Eli's acceptance of the divine pronouncement (3:15b–18). As Gerald Janzen interprets it, "It is as though even the severity of God's judgment may be accepted as good … even for Eli the closure of judgment is not the last word."[613] In each of these brief scenes, Eli is characterized as someone attempting to do the right thing, submissive to and affirming of divine judgments, and yet ultimately powerless to control his sons' behavior. I believe this sympathetic, yet tragic characterization is reinforced by a few asides that highlight the circumstantial difficulties Eli faced: in those days, YHWH’s word was rare (3:1b, 7b); and Eli himself was by this point elderly and suffered failing vision (3:2b; 4:15).[614]

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[610] See Table 4.9.

[611] Myers, "The Wicked 'Sons of Eli,'" 251.

[612] Myers, "The Wicked 'Sons of Eli,'" 250.

[613] Janzen, "Samuel Opened the Doors," 95. For a different interpretation, in which Eli's resignation to the divine will is understood as "culpable passivity," see Cook, "Pious Eli?"

Two possibilities present themselves as potential motivations for this layer’s *Tendenz*. First, it may represent the desire to recover Eli as a worthy mentor for the budding prophet, Samuel.[615] While this scribal motivation is plausible, it is not tied to any specific historical circumstance that would help us date the redaction. Another attractive option is that this partial rehabilitation of Eli may represent a cooling of the competition for legitimacy between Zadokites and Levites, the reaching of a compromise in which Levites were permitted to function as temple workers, whereas the supervision of the altar itself was reserved for the Zadokite priests alone. Such a compromise appears to have been reached in the early Persian Period, as exemplified in the two-tiered system prescribed in Ezek 40–48 and in the description of cultic personnel and responsibilities in Ezra-Nehemiah.[616] The ineptitude of Eli’s sons warranted their exclusion from the central priestly office; yet their line (with Eli as representative ancestor) was not inherently corrupting of the temple’s holiness. Eli’s partial rehabilitation in the traditional text would have struck a balance that served the legitimation of circumscribed Levitical participation in the worship of the Second Temple Period.

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[614] The notes about Eli’s age and failing vision may represent a literary trope of natural transition from one generation to the next, after a full life, with accompanying blessings. There is no sense of condemnation in Eli’s blindness. Hertzberg remarks on the similarity between the depiction of Eli and Isaac in Gen 27:1 (*I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 41); see also the depiction of Jacob in Gen 48:10, and cf. Moses as an exception to the rule in Deut 34:7.

[615] Myers, “The Wicked ‘Sons of Eli,’” 251.

[616] See Grabbe, Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages, 50, 52; Cody, A History of Old Testament Priesthood, 166–74; Steven Shawn Tuell, The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48, HSM 49 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 121–52. See also Miller, The Origins of the Bible, 23–27, for discussion of links between the historical priestly compromise and the intertextuality of the books of Ezra and Malachi.

TAKING NAMES: HOPHNI, PHINEHAS, AND EGYPT

Though Eli himself was partially rehabilitated in the post-exilic era, the polemic against his sons in the narrative of 1 Sam 1–4 was actually sharpened as they became typological figureheads for the potential of priestly corruption. Another revision of the early chapters of 1 Samuel concentrated the polemic against Eli's anonymous "sons" around two named individuals: Hophni and Phinehas.[617] Clues about the historical setting for this material and reasons for naming Eli's sons may be found in the preponderance of the divine epithet האלהים in the layer, the expansion of the Philistine story to include Gath and Ekron, the introduction of the theme of exile as divine punishment, and the recurring motif of Egypt and the Exodus.

As has been discussed above, this layer stands out for its frequent (exclusive, if I have discerned accurately) use of the divine epithet האלהים. This prominence of האלהים is unusual in the Former Prophets—in fact, forms of *'elohim* occur most frequently in the latest biblical books (e.g., Qohelet, Daniel's court tales), while books with larger portions of earlier material tend to skew toward use of the tetragrammaton.[618] In 1–2 Samuel (together), forms of *'elohim* account for only twenty percent of divine epithets. Therefore, the consistent exclusive use of האלהים in this layer (indicating an avoidance of YHWH) is a loud stylistic feature. A number of scholars have dated the scribal preference for *'elohim* to the Persian period, as a function of growing "inclusive monotheism," in which the gods of Persia and Yehud could be understood as manifestations of a single God of heaven, *(ha)'elohim*.[619] The material added as part of this layer shares this precise nomenclature and, therefore, could also date to the Persian period.

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[617] The additions comprise 1:3b; 2:34; 4:4b, 8, 9b, 11, 13aβ–bα, 17b–18aα, 19–21; 5:1, 8 "Gath", 10, 11bβ–12a; 6:6; 7:14; 8:2, 7b–9a.

[618] Books that most frequently use of forms of *'elohim* vs. YHWH are: Qohelet (100%), Nehemiah (62%), Genesis (53%), Daniel (38%), Ezra (37%), Job (35%), Jonah (30%), Psalms (26%), Chronicles (25%). Among these, Qohelet stands out with 82% of its total epithets being האלהים (with the article), followed by Nehemiah (51%) and Daniel (38%). It remains unclear whether the use of the article with (ה)אלהים is a diachronic feature or a synchronic scribal preference. However, the author of the redactional layer under present discussion shows a clear preference for the article.

Another clue to this layer's date is the expansion of the Ashdod plague story in 1 Sam 5–6 to include Gath and Ekron. Hazael of Damascus destroyed Gath during his 9th century Levantine campaign, and Ekron's influence dwindled significantly during the Assyrian period. Therefore, the presence of these towns in the Ark Narrative is usually taken to suggest that it was either composed before the 9th century, during the Davidic/Solomonic era when these towns were in their heyday, or else represents a genuine historical memory of that era in the 8th or 7th centuries.[620] Both of these instincts are problematic, however. If the story had been composed when Gath was part of a historical Philistine confederation, one would expect Gaza and Ashkelon (the other two cities of the so-called pentapolis) to also feature as sites to which Israel's god was circulated.[621] On the contrary, Gaza and Ashkelon only appear once in the extant narrative, in a late redactional summary list of the five Philistine towns in 6:17—and they disappear just as quickly: the summary of the outcome of the Israelite victory over Philistia (7:14) reverts to naming only Ekron and Gath. On the other hand, if the story had been composed in the 8th or 7th centuries, with only a distant memory of the pentapolis in mind, there would have been no "current" associations with Gath and Ekron to pressure the innovation to include them in the narrative. At that time, Gath was abandoned and Ekron was only a minor player. Indeed, other biblical references to the Philistine alliance omit Gath entirely (e.g., Jer 25:20; Amos 1:6–8; Zeph 2:4; Zech 9:5–6).[622] The answer to this puzzle may be found not in the 8th or 7th centuries, but significantly later, in the 6th–4th centuries. Though Gath had remained mostly abandoned for centuries, it experienced an intensified resettlement under the auspices of the Achaemenid Empire, as a revivified city in the Persian province of Ashdod, only to wane again dramatically during the Hellenistic period.[623] Cultural pressure from the cities of Achaemenid Ashdod caused anxiety among those in Yehud who were attempting to preserve Jewish identity (cf. Neh 13:23–27). Therefore, a Persian-period window for the present layer would help explain the impulse to add Gath to the inherited story.[624]

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[619] See especially Edelman, "Introduction," 22–23. See also Albert de Pury, "Gottesname, Gottesbezeichnung und Gottesbegriff: 'Elohim als Indiz zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Pentateuch," in *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion*, ed. Jan Christian Gertz, BZAW 315 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 37–41; Hong, "Elohim, the Elohist, and the Theory of Progressive Revelation," 332–38; Anderson, "El, Yahweh, and Elohim," 264–66; Tuell, *The Law of the Temple*, 98–101.

[620] See, e.g., Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible," 154–55; Finkelstein and Römer, "The Historical and Archaeological Background," 165–66.

[621] Moreover, the historical existence of a Philistine pentapolis is debated (see Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible," 137–42). More commonly, in biblical texts, only four Philistine towns are named—probably reflecting a compositional era when Gath was largely uninhabited.

The proposal of Persian-period authorship is supported by the presence of a new interpretation for the divine departure. Whereas in the earlier versions the loss of the deity was merely a temporary military setback, the Hophni/Phinehas layer associates the abduction of Israel's god explicitly with the execution of divine punishment against the Elide priestly dynasty. The Elide story (indeed, the whole scroll of Samuel) was reframed by introducing Hophni and Phinehas as priests at Shiloh in the opening paragraph (1:3b), implying that the transgressing "sons" of Eli in 1 Sam 2 were this specific pair. In the man of God's condemnation of Eli and his lineage, an explicit sign was added: the deaths of Hophni and Phinehas on a single day (2:34).

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[622] Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible," 137–38.

[623] See Rona S. Avissar, Joe Uziel, and Aren M. Maeir, "Tell Eṣ-Ṣâfi/Gath during the Persian Period," in *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbours in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods*, ed. Yigal Levin, LSTS 65 (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 78–81.

[624] The same cannot be said for Ekron, which experienced no such resurgence in the Persian period: it remained basically empty after its destruction by the Babylonians in 604 BCE. See Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Vol. II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 407–12; Aren M. Maeir, "The Tell Eṣ-Ṣâfi / Gath Archaeological Project," *NEA* 80.4 (2017): 227–29. This somewhat weakens the argument presented above; nevertheless, as a near neighbor to Gath within the orbit of greater Ashdod, and as a town with a more recent memory of regional dominance, the impulse to include Ekron along with Gath in the narrative may potentially be attributed to Gath's resurgence during the Persian period.

Therefore, when the pair die in the second battle at Ebenezer (4:11), the tragic Israelite losses in the campaign—and the abduction of the deity (recounted in the same breath, 4:11)—are reinterpreted in this new context as the fulfillment of the man of God's prophetic sign. Scribes underlined this association with the addition of the relatively lengthy excursus about Phinehas's wife and child (4:19–21).[625] For Phinehas's wife, the sum of three tragedies: the abduction of the deity, the death of her husband (and brother-in-law, not mentioned here), and the death of her father-in-law, amounts to an "exile" (גלה) of the divine glory (כבוד) from Israel. This is the language of divine abandonment, similar to the themes sounded in the early chapters of Ezekiel, in which the prophet recounts a vision of YHWH's glory departing the holy city in judgement (Ezek 11:22–23).[626] This section of 1 Samuel shares Ezekiel's anxiety over the prospect of divine abandonment. In sum, an early Second Temple Period setting for this layer fits the theological ethos of a priestly community concerned to maintain the presence of YHWH's *kavod* in their renewed Jerusalemite temple. Threats to that security are personified in Eli's wayward sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

Among the most striking features of this layer is its collection of references to the story of the Israelite Exodus from Egypt.[627] In 1 Sam 4, the Philistines react to the arrival of Israel's deity in the camp (now accompanied by Hophni and Phinehas) by recalling, "This is Ha'elohim, who struck down Egypt with every strike in the desert" (4:8).[628] The next verse elaborates the fear: "lest you slave for the Hebrews as they slaved for you" (4:9b), which seems to collapse the narrative of Israel's enslavement to Egypt with the Philistine crisis (nowhere in the biblical narrative do we read of Israel being enslaved to Philistia). Later, when the plague-stricken Philistines consult with their wise priests, just as Pharaoh had (cf. Exod 7:11),[629] they are advised to avoid the Egyptian fate: "Why would you weigh down your heart just as Egypt and Pharaoh weighed down their heart? Was it not when he humiliated them that they sent them away and they left?" (6:6).[630] Finally, the theme surfaces in 1Sam 8, as the elders' request for a king is reinterpreted as a turn toward idolatry. Rather than being a reasonable request, met with divine approval (as in the earlier version), now the deity asserts, "they have rejected me from being king over them, just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods…" (8:7b–8).

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[625] This scene of maternal mortality probably has intertextual connections with Rachel's story in Gen 35:16–20.

[626] Cf. the study of divine abandonment and associated legal language (e.g., עזב) in Joel B. Kemp, "Renounced and Abandoned: The Legal Meaning of עזב in Ezekiel 8:12 and 9:9," *CBQ* 79.4 (2017): 593–614. See also discussion of גלה and Ezekiel in Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 140–41.

[627] See discussion of the Exodus motif in relation to the epithet אלהים in Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim*, 92–96; Burnett, however, assumes that the ark narrative is unified and composed in the early monarchic or premonarchic era.

It may be that ties to the Exodus story in this layer are simply intertextual associations prompted by the thematic resonance between the Philistine and Egyptian experiences of plague at the hand of Israel's god. However, these references wield a sharper polemical edge than that. After all, it is not only Philistines who are associated with Egypt in this layer. The newly introduced (Israelite) villains, Hophni and Phinehas, also bear Egyptian names.[631] This polemic suggests a historical moment when Judahite/Jewish anxiety over Egyptian corruption of priestly purity was at a high ebb. Just such a tension may be perceived in the Persian era Jerusalemite (Golah community) anxieties over the influence of עם הארץ "the people of the land," including syncretistic Jewish colonies in Egypt.[632] The most prominent of these Egyptian colonies were Tahpanhes (in the north) and Elephantine (in the south, at the gateway to Nubia). I would entertain the possibility that the anti-Egyptian polemic of this redactional layer may be aimed at these potentially corrupting Jewish colonies in Egypt.[633] While there is no way to verify my speculation, I wonder if the names Hophni and Phinehas were chosen to personify, and vilify, these two Jewish colonies (חפני < תחפניס, cf. the spelling in 1Kgs 11:19–20; פנחס < *nḥś* = Nubia; alternatively, the combination of both names may be meant to evoke Tahpanhes, חפני ופנחס < תחפנחס, cf. the spelling in Jer 43:7–9; 44:1; 46:14; Ezek 30:18).[634] The use of literary brothers to personify whole populations is a common feature of biblical narrative (e.g., Jacob and Esau represent the conflict between Israel and Edom; Judah and Ephraim as eponymous ancestors of the great Israelite kingdoms; the kingdoms of Moab and Ammon as the descendants of Lot's alleged incestuous union with his daughters). Hophni and Phinehas are introduced to the narrative as corrupt priests whose mishandling of Israel's sacrifices led to divine abandonment, the exile of the *kavod*. If this layer was composed by Jerusalemite priests in the Persian era, then it may represent a reinterpretation of the early chapters of 1 Samuel as a cautionary tale about the dangers of mixing Israel's worship with Egyptian-influenced elements and personnel.[635] According to the author's lore, Israel's identity was forged in their *escape* from Egypt. Therefore, Jewish resettlement in Egypt and the mixing of the worship of Ha'elohim with that of Egyptian deities represented an existential threat to Jewish communal identity and the perpetuation of the divine presence among them. To ensure the survival of pure worship, Hophni and Phinehas (read: the priests at Tahpanhes and Elephantine) were to be disavowed in favor of the Zadokite priesthood in Jerusalem.[636] By portraying the loss of the deity as the direct result of priestly impropriety, this revision has spun the godnapping narrative as an apology for Zadokite control of Jewish worship.[637]

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[628] Or "and with pestilence" (reading במדבר not as *bammidbar* with MT, but as *bemo-dever*, "with pestilence"; see McCarter, *I Samuel*, 104).

[629] As noted by Harvey, "Tendenz and Textual Criticism in 1 Samuel 2–10," 75.

[630] The use of the idiom תכבדו את לבבכם ("weigh down your heart") and the relatively rare verb התעלל ("humiliated") indicate literary dependence on Exod 10:1–2.

[631] חפני = *ḥfnr* = "tadpole" (Hermann Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen* [Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1935], 239); פנחס = *pꜣ-nḥśj* = "the nubian/southerner" (Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen*, 113, 209). Though it lies beyond my linguistic expertise, I wonder if חפני may instead be interpreted as *ḥp-nj*, i.e., "my Apis bull," the deity historically associated with Memphis (and associated with Memphis, Migdol, and Tahpanhes as אביר in Jer 46:13–15). An etymological relationship between Hophni and Apis is hinted by Walter Dietrich (*Samuel*, 38).

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[632] This tension may have been most acutely experienced in the mid- to late-5th century, in the aftermath of a dramatic Egyptian revolt (assisted by the Greeks) against Persian rule. This revolt, successfully put down by the Persians, led to a tightening of Persian control over all of their territories, including Yehud. For a monograph-length discussion of this historical context, see Kenneth G. Hoglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah*, SBLDS 125 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). In addition, according to Herodotus's *The Histories* (3.20), Persia maintained significant military garrisons at Elephantine and Daphne (Tahpanhes); see Herodotus, *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*, ed. Robert B. Strassler, trans. Andrea L. Purvis (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 130.

[633] On the apparent disregard of priests at Elephantine for the scruples of their brethren in Jerusalem, see Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 182.

[634] While some commentors have noted that the names חפני and פנחס share three letters and may therefore be some sort of paronomasia (e.g., Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 27), I have not encountered within the secondary literature the proposal that they may be meant to evoke Tahpanhes (and possibly Elephantine).

CONCLUSION: THEOLOGICAL ANXIETIES IN DIALOGUE

This chapter has imagined an ongoing dialogue between many generations of priests, concerning the rights, duties, and legitimate ancestry of those who supervise the worship of Israel's god. This debate—which undoubtedly unfolded in real communities beyond the text—left its mark in the texts of the Bible as they were developed and edited. The pericopes that became 1 Sam 1–8, especially the story of the fall of the Elides and its aftermath in the abduction and return of the deity, became one of many textual sites where the debate found its voice. Reading the compositional history of the text as dialogic diachrony prompts us to attend to the multiplicity of perspectives retained in the extant text, refusing to collapse these into the perspective of the final redactor only.

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[635] Hophni and Phinehas may not be the only Israelite (and indeed Levitical) names with Egyptian origins, including Moses himself, though these etymologies are endlessly debated. See, e.g., discussion in Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*, 39–41, 70–71.

[636] For historical discussion of the tensions between Persian-authorized Judahite cultic centers and unstable, possibly rogue, cultic elements in Egypt during the Persian period, see Herbert R. Marbury, "Reading Persian Dominion in Nehemiah: Multivalent Language, Co-Option, Resistance, and Cultural Survival," in *Focusing Biblical Studies: The Crucial Nature of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods; Essays in Honor of Douglas A. Knight*, ed. Jon L. Berquist (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 158–76.

[637] As Dietrich and Naumann reflect, "Von solchen Gestalten wird die Lade in Schilo versorgt—wie könnte sie für den Sieg Israels bei Eben-ha-eser sorgen! Die militärische Niederlage ist also die Folge eines kultischen (und übrigens auch ethischen) Niedergangs," translation: "If the ark in Shiloh is tended by such figures—how could it tend to the victory of Israel at Eben-ha-eser! The military defeat is therefore the result of the cultic (and surely also ethical) decline" (Walter Dietrich and Thomas Naumann, *Die Samuelbücher*, EdF 287 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995], 126).

As it pertains to the jostling and jockeying for priestly legitimacy, it is worth considering the various voices in the debate from a sympathetic perspective. Their "rewriting, overwriting, and overriding" (to borrow Cynthia Edenburg's terms) do not necessarily reduce to simple maneuvering for one's own, or one's own party's, political gain.[638] The competition we witness in the text was likely fueled by genuine theological anxieties, especially between country and court priests. Each perceived the other as a threat to divine protection and support. Courtly Zadokites pushed for centralized control of the cult under the supervision of the monarch, to protect against sloppy worship that would offend the deity and destabilize the divine presence; country Levites feared that a political autocrat would pervert the people's cherished traditions and lead the people away from exclusive devotion to a jealous YHWH. Levitical tradents likely introduced, or at least emphasized, the role of charismatic prophets protesting from the peripheries beyond the court to act as a control on the impunity of monarchs, while Zadokites emphasized prophetic voices that elevated Jerusalem and its temple at the center of the deity's will for the people.

In the Persian period, some kind of compromise was reached—albeit one that favored the Zadokites. Nevertheless, the Levites were not obliterated or erased. Instead, their role in Judah's worship was permitted a highly circumscribed legitimacy. Not that all threats had been eradicated. Jerusalem-based priests in the Persian period had to contend with the presence of other Jewish sites of worship, perhaps especially in Egyptian colonies. In an environment of Persian authorization of Jewish worship in Yehud and Egyptian revolts against Persian authority, some of the latest voices entering the dialogue in 1 Sam 1–8 warned against the perverting tendencies of Egyptian-associated priests.[639]

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[638] Edenburg, "Rewriting, Overwriting, and Overriding."

Each of these voices can be perceived in the extant text when attention is paid to its probable diachronic development. Such a reading raises more questions than answers—complicating and expanding the potential of the text. Viewed through this depth dimension, the many voices in the text can become cacophonous. Historical critics, literary critics, and faith communities that treat the text as sacred all tend to prefer a text that is perspicuous, manageable, and explainable. Therefore, if we are to accept and deal with the reality of a polyphonic text, some sort of dialogic hermeneutic becomes necessary.

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[639] On the Persian influence over Jewish religion, see, e.g., James W. Watts, *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: SBL, 2001).

CONCLUSION
A DIALOGIC HERMENEUTIC

I recently drove past a local church with a large sign on their lawn advertising a multi-session community workshop for learning "Biblical Family Values." I chuckled to myself when the first response that passed through my mind was: *Have they ever read the stories of biblical families?* I wouldn't want to model my own "family values" on David's, Jacob's, or Eli's families, for example (not to mention the parenting style of someone like, say, Jephthah). Even the least relationally dysfunctional biblical families assumed a cultural context with social norms (patriarchy, heteronormativity, polygamy, ethnocentrism, slavery, etc.) that most of us would prefer to leave in the ancient past. Of course, I understand that the "Biblical Family Values" church did not have these features of biblical families in mind, but rather intended to teach families to develop healthy relationships, seek mutual flourishing, and find stability in moral standards aligned with their interpretation of universal ethics derived from Scripture. Fair enough. What drew my attention, however, and caused me to reflect further was their implicit assumption that *the Bible (rightly interpreted) contains a single, consistent, and authoritative system of values* ("family values," in this case). Their understanding of the Bible was—to return to Bakhtin's rubric—classically *monologic*.

By contrast, in this dissertation, I have approached the Hebrew Bible by attending to its *dialogic* features, which result from the text's multiple authorship by successive generations of tradents. I began by focusing that attention on the so-called "Ark Narrative" in 1 Sam 4–6, expanding outward to its literary context in 1 Sam 1–8 as the dialogue drew in representative voices from that textual space. Diachronic analysis of the extant text, considering narrative continuity, doublets, dependence, formal discrepancies, and stylistic factors, revealed a significantly complex compositional development in these chapters.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ARK NARRATIVE RESEARCH

One of the most interesting results of that analysis is my conclusion that late in the pericope's composition history, a redactor overlaid the word ארון, "ark," on the godnapping story told in 1 Sam 4–6, in order to soften the iconic implications of YHWH's representation in the tale (see Chapter II). I also brought forward the insight that the Ark Narrative likely began its textual life as a solar-themed *hieros logos* of an ancient shrine at Beth Shemesh. The shape of the earliest discernable layer in the narrative emphasizes the solar profile of its protagonist deity, who wills his way to Beth Shemesh after judging and executing a rival. While other scholars have noted solar resonances in the Ark Narrative—most especially the movement toward Beth "Shemesh"—I have followed that thread much farther and in much more detail. In my analysis, I did not appeal to solar themes as a criterion for source disambiguation. Rather, the results of *a posteriori* compositional criticism uncovered an early layer whose distinctly solar character rose to the surface after later supplements were removed (see Chapter VII). As a third important contribution to scholarship on the Ark Narrative's composition, I have concluded that the overlapping entanglements of the Eli-related material with both the Samuel story and the Ark Narrative is explainable by diachronic development. That is, before Eli entered the story, an earlier redactor joined a version of the Samuel thread (sans Eli) to an early version of the godnapping tale (at that stage, already tied to Kiriath Jearim, as its *hieros logos*). The compiler of these stories composed the core of 1 Sam 4:3–11 to tie them together. Eli and sons joined the existing narrative in 1 Sam 1–4 only *after* that conflation had been performed, accounting for their presence woven into both earlier threads (see especially Chapter VI).

In addition to diachronic analysis that identified layers of the text's composition, I have sought within each chapter to frame the layers as interacting voices in polyphonic dialogue, rather than a mere series of monologic iterations of the text. Guided by Bakhtin's insight that no utterance exists in isolation, but "cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads," I have imagined the compositional depth dimension of this pivotal text as a kind of living conversation.[640] Indeed, this hermeneutic is more than a heuristic. Scribal tradents had the option to simply destroy what came before and to rewrite their sacred histories *ex nihilo*. Instead, they opted (generation after generation) to engage dialogically with their traditions—sometimes appreciatively, other times critically—*yet without erasing all traces of what came before*. The persistent echoes of earlier voices in the text are what permit us to propose plausible composition histories behind the extant version, as I have done above. The "meaning" of the text is found not only in the intent of the final redactor, nor only in the isolated perspectives of earlier tradents, but also in the ways these voices have interacted with each other—their interconnectedness remaining bound up in the final form. I drew conclusions about the contours of this interactive meaning-making in 1 Sam 1–8 as it relates to divine initiative in communal identity formation (Chapter VII) and priestly legitimacy (Chapter VIII).

Future study along these lines could explore other threads of the dialogic diachrony in 1 Sam 1–8 that have only been briefly intimated in this project. Among these outstanding threads might be, for example, the oft-discussed ambiguity with regard to the benefits and liabilities of monarchic governance; the shifting characterizations of the Philistines as political, ethnic, and/or religious “others”; and the trajectory of intensity around aniconic prohibitions against visual representations of Israel’s deity. I have also, for the sake of focus, mostly omitted discussion of 2 Sam 6, the purported sequel to 1 Samuel’s Ark Narrative. I do not believe that 2 Sam 6 was originally part of an independent Ark Narrative source, as Leonhard Rost hypothesized a century ago. Nevertheless, it would be valuable to apply the same battery of critical methods to 2 Sam 6 to discern whether some elements or layers of that pericope could be stylistically/thematically tied to the same (or associated) tradents as those who edited the various versions of 1 Sam 4–6. In particular, I would like to explore in future study whether the proposal of an “ark” overlay could apply to 2 Sam 6, as I have concluded it applies to 1 Sam 4–6. Was the deity transported into Jerusalem originally an anthropomorphic image? Or, did that narrative episode arise after the ark had been established in the tradition as the mildly aniconic representation of YHWH’s physical presence?

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[640] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," 276; see this dissertation's epigraph at the beginning of the Chapter I.

In addition to the narrow texts I have examined, it would be instructive to consider the implications of my diachronic analysis of 1 Sam 1–8 for theories of the overall composition of the Former Prophets / Deuteronomistic History. My intent for this dissertation was to analyze the extant text from square one, rather than to begin with the premise of any particular theory of composition for the Former Prophets. In hindsight, having completed that work, my results have tilted more toward the conclusions of the Göttingen school (Rudolf Smend, Timo Veijola, Walter Dietrich, et al, who treat the Deuteronomistic History like a “rolling corpus”)[641] than to the simpler “double redaction” theory proposed by Frank Moore Cross, et al.[642] But could my specific results be supported by comparison to, say, Dietrich's layer model in Samuel?[643] Or might my results challenge even that framework?

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[641] To borrow William McKane’s coinage from his study of the composition of Jeremiah (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], l–liii).

[642] See the summary presented in Thomas Römer, “The Current Discussion on the So-Called Deuteronomistic History: Literary Criticism and Theological Consequences,” *Humanities: Christianity and Culture* 46 (2015): 43–66.

THE VALUE OF A DIALOGIC HERMENEUTIC FOR BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Finally, future study could expand my "dialogic hermeneutic," the rudiments of which I have introduced here, drawing in other test cases from the Hebrew Bible (and, perhaps, the New Testament as well, where applicable). This ongoing work could develop into a model for biblical theology that has not yet been fully explored. To be sure, many others have recognized the plurality of ideological perspectives within the Hebrew Bible and their fruitfulness for biblical theology, perhaps most notably Walter Brueggemann.[644] Brueggemann's rubric of "core, counter-, and unsolicited testimony" has become paradigmatic for many students of Biblical Theology, and it champions a kind of "dialogic" approach to Scripture. Yet, Brueggemann is hesitant to credit the ideological diversity of Scripture to diachronic processes of the text's composition or the shifting historical contexts of its authors. He sees the diversity of perspective in Scripture as a *synchronic* feature, reading the whole through the single historical snapshot of the Babylonian exile. "By their intention, these materials are not to be understood in their final form diachronically—that is, in terms of their historical development—but more as an intentional and coherent response to a particular circumstance of crisis."[645] With the crisis of exile in mind, Brueggemann's theological method puts diverse voices from the *breadth* of the biblical witness into conversation—a valuable exercise!

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[643] See Dietrich, "The Layer Model of the Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Samuel."

[644] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

[645] Brueggemann, Theology of the Old Testament, 74.

But I am proposing something different. The "dialogic hermeneutic" I am exploring seeks to wrestle with the diversity contained in the text's *depth* dimension, i.e., its diachrony. Brueggemann warns against such diachronically-inspired biblical theology because of the twin dangers of historicism (deriving meaning in the world "behind the text" while dismissing the witness of the text itself) and a kind of Wellhausian supersessionist developmentalism (seeing early sources as "primitive" and theologically overruled by later, more enlightened voices).[646] In the end, Brueggemann considers the historical world behind the witness of Scripture, including its compositional history, to be irrecoverable, and therefore largely irrelevant. Even if we had access to the world behind the text, he writes, "it would not be in any direct way generative for theological interpretation."[647] I could not disagree more. While the importance of the Babylonian exile for understanding the Hebrew Bible is beyond dispute, it bears repeating that exilic and early post-exilic biblical scribes did not *write* the Bible in that context. They preserved and reframed their traditional literature, blurring the lines between composition and commentary; in other words, they pursued their literary task by engaging in an intentional dialogue with their tradition. Therefore, the text comes to us irrevocably bound to the multiple generations of tradents who composed and edited it, and its layers are saturated in their diverse historical contexts through time. Attending to only one cross-section of that context truncates the theological potential of the text. *Pace* Brueggemann, there is *significant* meaning to be made by eavesdropping on the dialogic diachrony embedded in the text—as I have demonstrated in this dissertation.

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[646] See Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 11–15, 48–49. Brueggemann's vigorous challenge to anti-Judaic supersessionism is commendable. Nevertheless, his prioritization of the post-exilic "moment" as the most relevant historical lens through which to engage theologically participates in a *de facto* supersession of earlier compositional voices and perspectives in the text.

[647] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 57. Later, Brueggemann softens his critique of historical criticism, stating, "It is not my purpose or interest here to dismiss historical criticism out of hand, but only to state its problematic character to which students must be attentive.... I believe it is urgent to attend in imaginative ways precisely to the odd, hidden, dense, and inscrutable dimensions in the text that historical criticism, in principle, is disinclined to credit" (105).

It matters—for exegesis *and* biblical theology—if the physical representation of the deity 1 Sam 4–6 was originally an anthropomorphic image, only lately muted by the scribal overlay of the ark. This is not to argue that the earlier version is better, more theologically valuable, or more "inspired" than the redaction, or vice versa. It only means that there are more relevant voices in the conversation than the latest redactor's only. Something is missed when theological commenters like Stephen Chapman brush away the earlier voices with a sweep of the hand: "Whatever the origin of the ark material might have been, in its present form and location it provides an extended illustration of misplaced faith."[648] Chapman interprets the story as a theological lesson about the perils of religious pragmatism, highlighting Israel's "misplaced faith" in the power of the ark, utilized for the purposes of state. In this, the Israelites were no better than the Philistines, for "both use the ark inappropriately and both confuse the ark with the deity that the ark represents."[649] This is a valid synchronic reading. However, an earlier tradent would want to interject that in their version of this tale, there was no such confusion: the protagonist of the story *was* the deity—not the ark! In that context, an alternative theological reading of the tale might highlight the independent prerogative of the deity *despite* the reverence shown by both Israelites and Philistines. In dialogue, these two sample readings (and there are surely more) invite the theological interpreter to reflect on their own community's attempts to control the divine—whether through idolatrous manipulation of the accoutrement of worship or through presumption that God will always take their side. Furthermore, the theological conversation in this text invites communities to wrestle with the appropriateness or inappropriateness of representing the deity in visual media—though the biblical conversation does not offer a monologic prescription.

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[648] Stephen B. Chapman, *1 Samuel as Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2016), 93.

[649] Chapman, 1 Samuel as Christian Scripture, 92.

To offer another example, it matters—for exegesis *and* biblical theology—if the Ark Narrative began as the *hieros logos* of a solar shrine. It means that the attributes classically assigned to Shemesh (creator of heaven and earth; just judge who brings hidden deeds to light; moral guide along straight/righteous paths; beacon of joy for the oppressed) are indelible features of the divine profile in the narrative—worthy of theological reflection, even if we transfer them to YHWH. One morning, while I was in the midst of drafting Chapter VII, I happened to encounter a particularly vibrant sunrise (a phenomenon I rarely experience). As I squinted into the intimidating power of the rising sun, giving light, energy, warmth to the whole creation—as well as dangerous, scorching radiation—I felt a distinct kinship with the many peoples (ancient and modern) who venerate the sun as a deity. Though within my tradition I do not worship the sun, attentiveness to the diachronic voices of my community's sacred text created a theological opening for me to experience this part of creation as a kind of icon, drawing me into deeper contemplation of the divine nature. Examples of such entrées to biblical theology inspired by the dialogic diachrony in the text could be multiplied many times over.

In my vocation as a biblical scholar and theological educator, I am eager to read and write works of biblical theology that recognize a diversity of compositional voices in the process of biblical meaning-making.[650] The enduring textualized presence of these many voices invites readers to enter the conversation themselves. Just as the authors and redactors of the text were meaningfully situated in their contexts, so are readers always situated. Interpretation is, therefore, a co-creative process, a living conversation at the intersection of the text and the reading community. As co-creators of meaning, those who participate in the reception of these texts as "Scripture" must wrestle with the variety of possible readings and take responsibility for their own interpretive conclusions in light of their communities' contextual needs. This requires more than simply picking out the most appealing monologic perspective in the text or deferring to the final editor's point of view. Instead, a dialogic hermeneutic asks reading communities to discern meaning in a text that is inherently, irreducibly polyphonic. Our own interpretations must, therefore, be held tentatively and with respect for other possibilities inherent in the text. Such a hermeneutic demands humility.

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[650] A recent, encouraging example in this direction is Cameron B. R. Howard, *The Old Testament for a Complex World: How the Bible's Dynamic Testimony Points to New Life for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021).

THUS FAR ON THE WAY

Then Samuel took a stone
and set it up between Mizpah and the Shen,
and named it Ebenezer; for he said
"Thus far, YHWH has helped us"
(1 Sam 7:12).

The earliest authors of the Hebrew Bible could not have imagined the afterlives that their compositions would embody. They likely did not know they were launching the opening salvo of a centuries-long (millennia-long, now) dialogue. During the long span between original composition and fixed form, the text's "composition history" and "reception history" were one and the same, as "readers" also did the work of copying, editing, compiling, supplementing, redacting, and publishing/performing the traditional texts in new contexts for new generations.

I suspect that the first author of 1 Sam 7:12 had modest, circumscribed intentions for this brief denouement, following Israel's precarious campaign against the Philistines. Perhaps this anonymous tradent committed the Samuel traditions to writing as part of the communal lore at Ramah, where Samuel was remembered as a judge. In recalling Samuel's standing stone monument that marked YHWH's beneficent intervention, this author punctuated their military tale with a distinctly theological interpretation: those within Samuel's orbit of governance had a deity who would reliably defend them from the incursions of their enemies—if only the people would call for help and trust the leadership of YHWH's appointed judge. For this early author, the "thus far" of YHWH's help was bound up with their community's hope for stability in their life at Ramah and its neighboring Israelite towns.

By the mid 8th century BCE, this pericope took on new life as part of an anthology of pan-Israelite histories supporting the idea that Israel was a united people with a shared heritage and an attentive, powerful patron deity. In this iteration of the text, "Thus far, YHWH has helped us" was not just the summary of a local military skirmish against the Philistines. It was now the exclamation point at the end of an extended godnapping narrative (the old Samuel story having been sandwiched around 1 Sam 4–6, the *hieros logos* of Kiriath Jearim). For the tradents who compiled and elaborated Jeroboam II's anthology, the "thus far" of this story took on new significance. Despite recent setbacks from the north (Syria) and threats from the south (Judah), Israel had survived as a people and, under Jehoash and Jeroboam II's leadership, were expanding their territory and influence in the Levant. Their patron deity, YHWH, had an agenda of greatness for this people, this kingdom—and was prepared to defend it, even if it meant traveling behind enemy lines to unilaterally deal out death and destruction to Israel's enemies and their gods. YHWH's "thus far" help, remembered in the old Samuel tale, was being brought forward and celebrated in a united Israelite people's own generation of prosperity. Thus far, YHWH had helped *them*, too.

A couple hundred years later, however, the same pericope was read through the lens of an entirely different historical circumstance. The Israelite monarchy—so strong in Jeroboam II's day—was gone. Neither had its heir, the Judahite kingdom, survived the onslaught of indomitable empire. As the Persian iteration of global empire spread its influence and permitted a limited autonomy in its vassal provinces, a new generation of Israelite-Judahite tradents reframed their understanding of "Thus far, YHWH has helped us." In that anxiety-filled post-exilic context, a fragile status quo was supervised by priestly tradents who believed that the strategy for protecting Jewish identity was to keep peace with the empire, remain distinctive in their cultural and ethnic makeup, and diligently safeguard the worship of YHWH the god of heaven. Could such a status quo survive in an environment where Yehud had no king of their own to defend them? In such a context, the story culminating in 1 Sam 7 recalled a time *before* the Israelite monarchy when their god's help was entirely sufficient. They read their tradition as an affirmation that their deity needed no king to act as the agent of divine help and stability. YHWH—*Ha'elohim*—was fully capable of acting unilaterally as long as the people and their priests safeguarded the purity of their worship. This arrangement gave priestly tradents a sense of agency, something they could do to promote the stability of their community's life even in the absence of political power. In a context without a king, they drew hope from their traditional texts that they, too, would be able to declare, "Thus far, YHWH has helped *us*." The dialogic diachrony around the promise of divine help drew in many voices, in many generations, each considering what "thus far" meant for their own community's journey on the way with their god. In that sense, the phrase "thus far on the way" epitomizes the central concept of this dissertation. Each time a community receives and reads these chapters in Samuel—both in the ancient world and today—a new "thus far" is invoked, and so the dialogue rolls on.

APPENDIX
WHAT IS DAGON DOING IN THE ARK NARRATIVE?[651]

Dagon makes a cameo appearance in the so-called "Ark Narrative" of 1 Samuel. "Cameo" is an appropriate term because Dagon's centrality in five crucial verses of the narrative (1 Sam 5:1–5) is inconsistent with his absence in the rest of the story and rare presence in the rest of the Bible (only Judg 16:23; 1 Chron 10:10). Moreover, Dagon is entirely absent from the archaeological record at Tel Ashdod and other known Philistine sites (see below). How should interpreters understand Dagon's prominent role in 1 Sam 5 in light of his relative silence beyond that narrative? Given the absence of historical evidence for Dagon in Philistia, perhaps his place in the Ark Narrative is an entirely literary invention. If so, it raises a new question: why would biblical authors impute Dagon to the Philistines if there was no living tradition or cultural memory of such a Philistine cult? As Itamar Singer puts it, "there is no reason to assume that *any* author in *any* period would deliberately misquote the name of the Philistines' main deity."[652] Despite Singer's hesitation, perhaps a reason for deliberate misrepresentation of Philistine religion can be hypothesized. As I have argued in this dissertation, Dagon may have entered the Ark narrative as part of a source tradition that was set at the town of Beth Dagon (not Ashdod), where Dagon was understood to be the patron deity. Though the site of Beth Dagon has not been confirmed, it is likely the town of the same name, near Jaffa, mentioned in Sennacherib's annals, where the Palestinian town Beit Dajan preserves the Arabic name to this day. It is about 20 miles north of Ashdod. I have argued that the earliest version of the godnapping narrative was set at this Beth Dagon and was the *hieros logos* for a temple at Beth Shemesh, where the source narrative concludes. When the tale was redacted much later, probably in the late 8th or early 7th century in Judah, Ashdod had become the most prominent Philistine city-state (with a sovereignty that encompassed towns as far away as Beth Dagon) and was a competitor with Judah for territories in the Shephelah. Therefore, it made sense to revise the story to make Ashdod the antagonist of this tale and the target of YHWH's vengeance, while in the story Beth Dagon was reinterpreted as a mere "temple" (בית) within Philistine Ashdod. This diachronic literary process would account for the lack of evidence for a Dagon cult or temple at Ashdod. Nevertheless, Dagon's *persistence* in the 1 Samuel narrative—even after the geographic scope was redactionally shifted—remains to be explained. The following survey pursues a rhetorical motivation for Dagon's enduring presence in the Ark Narrative.

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[651] The following essay began as an excursus about Dagon's presence in 1 Sam 5:1–5, intended for Chapter III. But it grew into a full-length essay on a tangential question that did not fit into the primary structure of the dissertation. I am submitting it as a stand-alone journal article, but I include it here as an appendix to the present research. I am grateful to Joel LeMon for reading an earlier draft of this work and giving extensive constructive feedback, which significantly improved my argument. I also appreciate the generative feedback offered by fellow panelists and audience members at the 2022 SBL Annual Meeting Ugaritic Studies and Northwest Semitic Epigraphy program unit, where I presented a version of this research.

[652] Itamar Singer, "Towards the Image of Dagon, the God of the Philistines," *Syria* 69.3 (1992): 436, *emphasis original*.

Dagon—known outside of the southern Levant as Dagan—was a prominent Mesopotamian deity. He was also known at Bronze Age Ugarit, but his status there is a matter of continuing debate.[653] Ironically, it is precisely the *ambiguity* of Dagan's place in the cultic life of Ugaritic society that may offer the best clue for understanding his literary place in 1 Sam 5. Dagan's profile as an important (but still foreign and non-assimilated) deity at Late Bronze Ugarit may be a model for his venerated profile in the southern Levant. Just as the Philistines became Israel's idealized other in biblical perspective, biblical authors may have retained Dagon in the Ashdod story because his status as a foreign deity made it possible to characterize him as an intruder—not an indigenous deity—making him an excellent foil for Israel's god, who claimed sovereignty over the Philistine coastlands (e.g., Num 34:6; Josh 13:1–7). Read synchronically, 1 Sam 5:1–5 asserts that despite Dagon's claim to Ashdod in his temple stationed there, the land itself (and therefore the divine jurisdiction) belonged to Israel's god. YHWH's rightful possession of the land (and by extension, Israel's right to the land) was demonstrated in the narrative by YHWH's decisive victory over the "foreign" deity, Dagon.[654]

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[653] The Canaanite vowel shift from long, accented ā > ō accounts for the difference in spelling/pronunciation. See Na'ama Pat-El and Aren Wilson-Wright, "The Features of Canaanite: A Reevaluation," *ZDMG* 166.1 (2016): 42; Singer, "Towards the Image of Dagon, the God of the Philistines," 436.

DAGAN'S HOMELAND

Before exploring Dagan's uncertain place at Ugarit and in Philistia, let us note his clearly prominent status farther inland in Syria, in the Middle Euphrates region. The earliest known documents that include the name Dagan are onomastic references in the Ebla archive, dated to the middle of the third millennium. These are names like *Ada-Dagan* ("Dagan is the father"), *Enna-Dagan* ("Dagan is merciful"), *Idi-Dagan* ("Dagan gave"), and *Il-Dagan* (The god is Dagan").[655] The same collection also mentions (without a proper name) the divine "Lord of Tuttul," which is almost surely a titular reference to Dagan, whose cult at Tuttul is well documented in later records.[656] During the reign of Sargon I (ca. 2300 BCE), a pair of inscriptions describe the king's campaign into Syria and northern Mesopotamia. In these inscriptions, Sargon prostrates himself before "Dagan of Tuttul," seeking the god's permission to invade Ebla and Mari. Deference to Dagan as the chief deity of the region was again documented when Naram-Sin (ca. 2260 BCE) attempted a similar military incursion.[657] Further, the 18th-century *Code of Hammurabi* attributes the king's success along the Euphrates to "Dagan his creator; the one who spared the people of Mera [i.e., Mari] and Tuttul."[658] Not only does this inscription demonstrate Dagan's stature, it also shows his geographic bond to particular cult centers (in this case, Mari and Tuttul) whose inhabitants were spared by the conqueror out of respect for, or fear of, a powerful local deity.[659] Indeed, the abundance of material from the Mari archives, Tuttul, and Tirqa that depict Dagan as the protagonist in cultic rituals and as the patron of kings helps solidify our understanding of Dagan as the chief deity of the Middle Euphrates region, whose cult was centered in Tuttul, well into the second millennium.[660] Dagan continued to be known as a regional high god in Mesopotamia through the first millennium BCE. He is mentioned in several important literary texts from the time of Sennacherib and even had a chapel dedicated to him in the temple at Aššur.[661]

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[654] Multiple epithets are used for Israel's god in the extant text. However, in the earliest version that includes Dagon (what I have dubbed the "Beth Dagon thread" or the "Beth Shemesh *hieros logos*"), the tetragrammaton is used exclusively.

[655] Lluís Feliu, *The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 26–27.

[656] Some scholars theorize that most of the occurrences of ^{d}BE ("lord") in Ebla tablets indicate Dagan, but this examined at length and rejected by Feliu (*The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria*, 7–41).

DAGAN'S STATUS AT UGARIT

The texts recovered from Ugarit paint a more enigmatic portrait of Dagan. On the one hand, he is certainly recognized and venerated in Ugarit, and appears to be quite significant. Dagan is present at the top of the canonical pantheon lists, typically sandwiched between El and Baʻal.[662] He is also frequently mentioned as the recipient of offerings in ritual texts.[663] Of the two prominent temples excavated on the acropolis, one was possibly dedicated to the worship of Dagan (the other belongs to Baʻal). Two stelae (KTU^2 6.13 and 6.14) were found within the temple's precincts commemorating offerings to Dagan. They identify the sponsors of the offerings (including an Ugaritic queen and an Ugaritic governor),[664] name Dagan as the recipient, and identify the type of offering given: the *pgr*-sacrifice, a funerary offering that was connected with the Dagan cult at Mari, where Dagan was given the title *bel pagre*, i.e., "lord of the *pgr*-sacrifice."[665] This evidence would lead one to conclude that Dagan was one of the most significant gods at Ugarit. On the other hand, we would expect a deity this prominent in the cultic life of the city to also be a regular protagonist in the literary texts of the community. Surprisingly, Dagan is almost entirely absent from the extant mythologies found at Ugarit. His name appears only as an epithet of Baʻal, who is called the "son of Dagan" (*bn dgn*) twelve times and "scion of Dagan" (*ḥtk dgn*) once.[666] Dagan himself does not appear as a character.

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[657] Bradley L Crowell, "The Development of Dagan: A Sketch," *JANER* 1.1 (2001): 34–35.

[658] *Code of Hammurabi*, IV:23–31, cited in Ulf Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Ba'al in Canaanite Religion*, Dissertationes Ad Historiam Religionum Pertinentes (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 50. While Dagan is celebrated in the code (along with other deities), Shemesh/Shamash is the god depicted as the bestower of legal authority to Hammurabi on the bas relief at the top of the stele.

[659] Oldenburg, The Conflict between El and Ba'al, 39.

[660] Feliu, *The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria*, 211–13; F. Healey, "Dagon דגון," in *DDD*, 216; Crowell, "The Development of Dagan," 55; Jeffrey P. Emanuel, "'Dagon Our God': Iron Age I Philistine Cult in Text and Archaeology," *JANER* 16.1 (2016): 32.

[661] Crowell, "The Development of Dagan," 45–47.

This striking absence has prompted several explanations. Joseph Fontenrose proposes that Dagan is present in the mythological texts, identified there as El.[667] After all, such fusing of the high gods in ancient Southwest Asia was not uncommon.[668] Fontenrose's suggestion would also solve the puzzle of Ba'al's double paternity, for he is also called "son of Dagan" *and* "son of El" in the mythological texts.[669] Alternatively, Nick Wyatt proposes that Dagan should be identified with Ba'al himself in the myths. Based on a potential Arabic cognate *dajanu*, meaning "cloudy,"[670] Wyatt proposes that Dagan was a storm god and that Ba'al's epithet *bn dgn* should not be read "son of Dagan," but "the Rainy One."[671] Taking an approach reminiscent of the Nicene Creed, Wyatt concludes that at Ugarit, "Ba'al and Dagan are ultimately two hypostases of one divine reality," meaning that the "one divine reality" is manifested in the literary texts (in which the storm god is "Ba'al, the Stormy One"), while the "two hypostases" found their way separately into the cultic texts (where Dagan and Ba'al are named side by side as distinct deities).[672] Nevertheless, these hypotheses of divine convergences in the mythological texts fail to adequately explain why Dagan is not similarly merged with El or Ba'al in the cultic texts.

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[662] Gregorio del Olmo Lete, "The Offering Lists and the God Lists," in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. Wilfred G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt (Boston: Brill, 1999), 309.

[663] del Olmo Lete, "The Offering Lists and the God Lists," 320–21; Feliu, *The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria*, 266–72.

[664] KTU^2 6.13 names the sponsor *ṯryl*, i.e., Queen Tharyelli, wife of Ibiranu, and KTU^2 6.14 names ˁUzzinu, possibly an Ugaritic governor whose name occurs in several Akkadian letters. See Feliu, *The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria*, 272–73.

[665] Feliu, The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria, 272.

[666] Frank J. Montalbano, "Canaanite Dagon: Origin, Nature," *CBQ* 13.4 (1951): 390.

[667] Joseph Fontenrose, "Dagon and El," *Oriens* 10.2 (1957): 277–79.

Still other scholars (e.g., Ulf Oldenburg) take Dagan's absence in the myths as cause for reevaluating his supposed importance at Ugarit in the first place. Perhaps the acropolis temple is not Dagan's, after all. Oldenburg proposes that the temple uncovered there actually belongs to El, since such a temple is described in the Aqhat epic. He explains that the dedicatory stelae are evidence only that Dagan was occasionally a guest deity at El's temple.[673] Oldenburg concludes that Dagan was simply not very important at Ugarit.[674] However, Dagan's prominent place in the Ugaritic cultic texts, once again, resists Oldenburg's conclusion about Dagan's relative unimportance, as does the elite status of his devotees attested on the recovered temple stelae.

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[668] Cf. a similar "convergence" of El and YHWH in Israelite history, discussed in Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 7–8.

[669] For a discussion of the possible origin of the name Ba'al at Ugarit, see Daniel E. Fleming, "Baal and Dagan in Ancient Syria," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 83.1 (1993): 88–98.

[670] After J. J. M. Roberts, The Earliest Semitic Pantheon: A Study of the Semitic Deities Attested in Mesopotamia before Ur III (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 18.

[671] However, this fails the standard of historical propinquity. Healey comments, "The appeal to such a remote Semitic cognate for etymology smacks of desperation" ("Dagon," 218).

[672] Nick Wyatt, "The Relationship of the Deities Dagan and Hadad," *UF* 12 (1980): 377.

With regard to the puzzle of Dagan's ambiguous status at Ugarit, I propose an alternative solution that emphasizes his widely recognized geographic roots in the Middle Euphrates region. El and Baʿal, along with a host of western Semitic deities were considered indigenous to the Levant; perhaps this is why they naturally found their way into the mythological texts of the Ugaritic community. Dagan, on the other hand, was a "foreign" god, whose indigenous home was farther inland. Indeed, even at Ugarit, Dagan is named in two texts as *dgn ttl*, "Dagan of Tuttul" (KTU^2 1.24:14; 1.100:15). In other words, as a cosmopolitan city, Ugarit accepted worship of Dagan (and a prominent temple was likely dedicated to his veneration). Yet, because he was not indigenous to their region, Dagan was not incorporated into the homespun mythological literature of the kingdom.

Though there is much about Dagan at Ugarit that is unresolved in the scholarship, his status there as a non-indigenous god has found a rare scholarly consensus. For example, Feliu states, "Dagan … was always perceived as a god foreign to Ugarit."[675] Oldenburg agrees, "El's family was the original Canaanite pantheon, whereas Dagân's family were the most important gods in the pantheon of the Middle Euphrates."[676] Wyatt concludes, "Ugaritic tradition is clear that Dagan is a foreign god, the patronal deity of Tuttul."[677] Crowell concurs, "Most likely Dagan was considered a foreign deity at Ugarit…."[678] Wiggins summarizes, "In many of the cultures of the ancient Near East, Dagan appears as an 'outsider', a deity whose original home seems to have been the Upper Euphrates region."[679] Therefore, rather than suggesting that Dagan was unimportant at Ugarit or that the Ugaritians knew him by other names, the proposal that holds the most data together is that at Ugarit, Dagan was venerated as an important foreign deity, but was not fully assimilated as an indigenous deity.

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[673] Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Baʿal,* 54–55, n.6; but cf. Wyatt, "The Relationship of the Deities Dagan and Hadad," 376; Paulo Merlo and Paulo Xella, "The Rituals," in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. Wilfred G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt (Boston: Brill, 1999), 303.

[674] Oldenburg, The Conflict between El and Baʿal, 55.

[675] Feliu, The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria, 302.

[676] Oldenburg, The Conflict between El and Baʿal, 150–51.

DAGAN IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

If the above scenario accurately captures Dagan's ambiguous profile at Late Bronze Ugarit, it is natural to ask whether a similar divine profile accompanied him into the southern Canaanite/Philistine coast, where it may have impacted the traditions preserved in the Hebrew Bible. While it is tempting to infer Dagan's prominence in the southern Levant from the biblical data in Judg 16 and 1 Sam 5, the evidence of his presence beyond these texts is scant—though not trivial. The earliest potential evidence for Dagan in the southern Levant is a third-millennium, decorated stele uncovered at Tel Arad near the Dead Sea. The iconography of the stele depicts a figure whose head appears to be an ear of grain.[680] Vladimir Orel takes this figure to be Dagan, but in the absence of other iconography with which to compare, the identification remains speculative, based on an uncertain etymology.[681] Later, the 14th-century Amarna letters attest a southern Canaanite prince named Da-ga-an-ta-ka-la, “Trust in Dagan,” which may imply a cult of Dagan in the city-state where he ruled.[682] In the Bible, two sites are named “Beth Dagon” (Josh 15:41; 19:47). One of these toponyms may be denoted by the Assyrian text that depicts Sennacherib’s campaign in 701 BCE and identifies “Beth Dagon” in the region of Jaffa.[683] Likewise, a 5th-century inscription on the sarcophagus of the Phoenician king Eshmunazar II reads, “The lord of kings has given to us Dor and Jaffa and the mighty lands of Dagân, which are on the plains of Sharon.”[684] These toponymical references imply that at some point these towns were home to the worship of Dagon, and perhaps the ones called “Beth Dagon” even housed temples dedicated to him (cf. other cultic toponyms: Beth El, Beth Shemesh, Beth Leḥem, etc.).[685] I have concluded that an earlier literary version of the story of conflict between YHWH and Dagon in 1 Sam 5 may have been set at one of these towns called Beth Dagon.

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[677] Nick Wyatt, "Baal, Dagan, and Fred: A Rejoinder," *UF* 24 (1992): 429.

[678] Crowell, "The Development of Dagan," 44.

[679] Wiggins, "Old Testament Dagan in the Light of Ugarit," 268.

[680] An image of the stele is reproduced in Vladimir E. Orel, "The Great Fall of Dagon," *ZAW* 110.3 (1998): 431.

[681] The possible etymological association of Dagan with the Semitic word for "grain" (cf. Hebrew דָּגָן) is often assumed but is far from certain. In fact, the preservation of the Hebrew דָּגָן *and* the vowel-shifted דָּגוֹן in Biblical

Later literary evidence for a Philistine cult of Dagon must also be evaluated. The Chronicler’s version of the Philistines’ mutilation of Saul’s body claims that his head was staked in Dagon’s temple (1 Chr 10:10), though the Deuteronomistic version places his remains “on the wall of Beth Shan” (1 Sam 31:10). In all likelihood, the Chronicler’s version is a coordination of

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Hebrew may be evidence that the two words are not etymologically related. For discussion of this problem, see Ola Wikander, *Unburning Fame: Horses, Dragons, Beings of Smoke, and Other Indo-European Motifs in Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 101.

[682] Oldenburg, The Conflict between El and Baʻal, 56.

[683] Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 270. This is the Beth Dagon that I propose was the referent in the Beth Shemesh *hieros logos*.

[684] Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Baʻal*, 56. The plain of Sharon was the cultivated lowlands that extended from Lydda and Jaffa as far as Carmel.

[685] The argument that Beth Dagon simply means “house of grain” without cultic resonance, on comparison with Bethlehem as “house of bread” (see, e.g., Crowell, “The Development of Dagan,” 50), presumes that the latter is a secular name and ignores the probability that Bethlehem was itself originally a temple town named in veneration of the god Leḥem. See Montalbano, “Canaanite Dagon,” 391; Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Baʻal*, 56.

the account with the tradition (based on 1 Sam 5) that Dagon was the chief god of the Philistines, who are credited with Saul's death at Mt. Gilboa.[686] Similarly, 1 Macc 10:83–84 describes the high priest Jonathan burning down a temple of Dagon in Ashdod in 147 BCE—though, again, whether the identification of the divine patron of the temple this scene is based on historical memory or is literarily inspired by knowledge of 1 Sam 5 is difficult to ascertain.[687] Nonetheless, some have taken it as evidence of a Dagon cult in Ashdod as late as the Hasmonean era.[688] Finally, in the Roman era, Philo of Byblos mentions Dagon (Greek *siton*, "corn") as the brother of El in the ancient Phoenician pantheon, though the accuracy of Philo's history is dubious.[689]

The most prominent literary evidence for Dagon's presence in Iron Age Philistia comes from the narratives in Judg 16 and 1 Sam 5, which describe temples at Gaza and Ashdod, respectively.[690] In addition to the long tradition of deference to the Bible as a historical source, the vividness of each of these stories has influenced numerous historical reconstructions of Philistine religion. A closer reading of each text, however, reveals that the textual evidence for a Philistine cult of Dagon is slim *even in these famous narratives*. Judg 16:23–31 tells of Samson's final act, a murder-suicide, bringing down the "house" in Gaza upon himself and the gathered Philistine authorities. But while the Philistines themselves are ubiquitous in the Samson narrative cycle (Judg 13–16), Dagon himself is explicitly named *only once* (16:23) and is the antecedent for the phrases "their god" and "our god" only within the space of two sentences (16:23–24).

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[686] 1 Chron 10:10 also revises the location of Saul's armor from "the temple of Astarte" (1 Sam 31:10) to "the temple of their gods," further otherizing the portrait of Philistine religion.

[687] In his comments on 1 Sam 5, McCarter relies on 1 Macc 10 for his conclusion that the temple of Dagon "was long a center of his worship" (McCarter, *I Samuel*, 121).

[688] E.g., Singer, "Towards the Image of Dagon, the God of the Philistines," 434.

[689] Emanuel, "Dagon Our God," 46; Healey, "Dagon," 217.

[690] That is, if we interpret the term בית to denote a temple.

Later, when Samson pushes apart the load-bearing pillars, Dagon is not mentioned, but only הבית, the house or temple without a specific divine attribution. Therefore, since Dagon himself receives only a passing mention in the whole of the Samson cycle, this narrative witness to a Philistine cult of Dagon should not be overstated.

Similar caution is merited with respect to Dagon's presence in 1 Sam 5. Again, the Philistines are present throughout the narrative, but Dagon himself is only featured within the confines of 1 Sam 5:1–5. He is mentioned one other time, in passing (5:7),[691] but this is likely a redactional gloss. Elsewhere in the story, the Philistine "gods" are anonymous (e.g., 6:5). As the narrative unfolds beyond the focal point of 1 Sam 5:1–5, both the Philistines and the narrator generally ignore the fate of Dagon and focus their attention on the Israelite god's attack against the human populations of the Philistine towns. Therefore, the historical witness of this brief pericope, which has inspired so much speculation about the nature of Dagon and of Philistine religion, should not be overestimated.

A more diminutive portrait of Dagon's presence in the southern Levant coheres better with the archaeological record. No Iron Age structure has yet been excavated that is clearly a Philistine temple to any god.[692] The most common cultic finds from Philistine sites, and the only representations of deities discovered to date, are terra cotta female figurines (nicknamed "Ashdoda," since nearly forty were found at Ashdod), which integrate a female body into a chair-like structure.[693] While the argument has been made that these figurines represent a feminized form of Dagon, as a syncretic fusion with an Aegean mother goddess,[694] there is no material or literary evidence to support this iconographic speculation. If Dagon were truly the patron deity of the Philistines, more persuasive material evidence of this reality ought to have surfaced by now.[695] While this could be framed as an argument from silence, it is based on a comparison to the abundance of positive evidence that has, in fact, been uncovered from Philistine sites, including Ashdod and Gaza. In sum, the literary and material evidence warrants caution against overstating Dagan/Dagon's presence in the southern Levant. While the towns named for Dagon in Joshua and in Sennacherib's annals bear witness to some sites that venerated the deity, there is almost nothing to suggest that he was historically the central patron deity of the Philistines.

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[691] I have argued above that the phrase ועל דגון אלהינו (5:7) is a secondary coordination with 5:1–5.

[692] David Ben-Shlomo, "Philistine Cult and Religion According to Archaeological Evidence," *Religions* 10.2 (2019): 20; but cf. Amihai Mazar, "The Temples and Cult of the Philistines," in *The Sea Peoples and Their World: A Reassessment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 213–32.

[693] Emanuel, "Dagon Our God," 34–36.

WHY IS DAGON IN THE ARK NARRATIVE?

I have presented three historical snapshots of Dagan/Dagon, capturing moments from the evolution of his veneration in an itinerary that moves counterclockwise on the map from MBA Mesopotamia to LBA Ugarit, and finally to IA Canaan/Philistia. On this itinerary, Ugarit functions as a midpoint between Dagan's centrality as a high god in his homeland and his presence as a relatively minor deity in the southern Levant. I am proposing that Dagan's ambiguous profile at Ugarit, as an important yet unassimilated foreign deity, may have influenced his veneration as it propagated into the southern Levant. Moreover, the farther Dagan traveled from his homeland, the more his significance waned.

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[694] Singer, "Towards the Image of Dagon, the God of the Philistines," 445

[695] As Emanual argues, "Dagon Our God," 33.

Now I return to my initial question. In light of the data I have presented, what rhetorical rationale may have prompted the retention of Dagon in the Ark narrative, even after it was redactionally associated with Ashdod, where there was likely no historical memory of Dagon veneration? There is no need to assume that Judahite scribes knew much of anything about actual Philistine religious practice or the makeup of their pantheon. Even if they did, their editorial goals were primarily ideological rather than antiquarian.[696] The Philistines are mentioned 294 times in the Hebrew Bible and are portrayed as the arch-nemeses of early Israel, the "ultimate other."[697] As the scribes considered whether they should retain Dagon in 1 Sam 5:1–5 as a patron deity for this idealized other (mirroring the centrality of YHWH for themselves in Judah),[698] Dagon's profile as a deity foreign to the Levant would have made him an excellent literary foil, aiding their polemic against the Philistines, whom they also viewed as intruders—whether or not the tradition of Philistine veneration for Dagon was rooted in actual history. In the estimation of the Judahite scribes, the patron god of the Philistines ought to be as foreign to Israel as they considered the Philistines themselves to be.[699]

My suggestion that Dagon's foreign profile was rhetorically front of mind for the Deuteronomistic redactors of Joshua–Kings has significant explanatory power. It may explain the paucity of literary evidence and absence of material evidence for Dagon that has been discovered to date in excavations of Iron Age Philistia: it was probably never there to be discovered (at least not at Ashdod or Gaza). This reading may also explain why there is no suggestion in the biblical literature that the Israelites were attracted to worship of Dagon, despite the tendency (at least as reported by the Deuteronomists and prophets) for Israel and Judah to be drawn to worship of non-Yahwistic Canaanite deities.[700] Perhaps deities who were considered indigenous to the Levant (El, Baʻal, Asherah, Shemesh, etc.) held greater potential sway over the residents of the land than a deity like Dagon, whose true home was known to be far away.

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[696] Pace Halpern, The First Historians.

[697] Emanuel, "Dagon Our God," 30.

[698] For an extended discussion of the association between ancient Southwest Asian polities and their patron deities, see Daniel I. Block, *The Gods of the Nations: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

[699] Cf. Mazar's comment: "In the Bible, then, the Philistine gods are presented as different from the gods of Canaan. Thus, in the Samson stories, the principal deity of Gaza and Ashdod is identified as Dagon, whereas the god of Ekron (9th century B.C.E.) is Baal-Zebub ('Baal of the Flies'), most probably a deliberate distortion of 'Baal Zebul,' a well-known Canaanite title" ("The Temples and Cult of the Philistines," 214).

Finally, this framework for Dagon's presence in the Ark Narrative suggests another potential layer of meaning in a synchronic reading of 1 Sam 5:1–5. The confrontation between YHWH and Dagon is often depicted as a powerful victory for YHWH on Dagon's own sovereign territory—Dagon's "turf," so to speak. But perhaps, despite the "temple of Dagon," readers should not assume that Ashdod is Dagon's sovereign turf. Indeed, sovereignty over the coastal plains may be the very issue at stake in the narrative for its latest editors. In that case, the contest between YHWH and Dagon is less about which deity possesses the greatest raw power, but rather about who has rightful jurisdiction over the territory. Local, indigenous patron deities have decisive power in their own territory, even in the face of superior military force.[701]

While the Judahites and Philistines claimed some of the same territory, at least in their overlapping borderlands, the key theological question in the final form of 1 Sam 5:1–5 is whether YHWH or Dagon is sovereign in Ashdod. Who has divine jurisdiction over the Philistine-controlled lands? The outcome of the contest at the temple in Ashdod, not to mention the subsequent destructive tour of Israel's god through Gath and Ekron, demonstrates YHWH's rightful jurisdiction as the indigenous sovereign over the entire land, while Dagon and his

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[700] As Singer observes, "Towards the Image of Dagon, the God of the Philistines," 435.

[701] Remember, for example, Sargon's necessary deference before Dagan at Tuttul.

Philistine servants are revealed as outsiders, foreign encroachers. This theme is reprised in the conclusion to the longer unit to which the Ark Narrative belongs, found in 1 Sam 7:14, “The towns that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered their territory from the hand of the Philistines.” This territorial dynamic in the narrative would not have carried the same force in the Ashdod story if, say, Baʿal were depicted as the patron deity of the Philistines. A Canaanite deity would have had some claim of jurisdiction over the disputed territory, and interpretation of the divine contest would have been negotiated along other axes.[702] But by assigning Dagon—the quintessential “foreign” deity—to the Philistines, the biblical scribes were able to reinforce their polemical case that Israel and their god were the rightful inheritors of the land.

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[702] Compare, e.g., the contest between YHWH and Baʿal in 1 Kgs 18, which is framed in terms of divine responsiveness to worship and prayer (and may even be a monotheistic apologetic for YHWH’s uniqueness).

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