

CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE “PROBLEMATIC” REPRESENTATIONS OF DAVID IN SAMUEL-CHRONICLES TRADITIONS

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Abstract

Though in Jewish tradition, starting with the Deuteronomistic Historian and the Psalter, David has long been lionized and magnified as the ideal king of Israel. However, modern critical scholarship and/or interpretive tradition has more often than not, questioned his real identity and character. This study sought to critically reconstruct and reevaluate the life of David in light of recent scholarship and then underscore some of his legacies that can be emulated by African/Nigerian leaders. Despite David's shortcomings and flaws, he still has some qualities that leaders can emulate. The methodology adopted for the study included narrative and descriptive criticisms, as applicable in historical-critical analysis. The findings revealed that David was an ambitious and shrewd person, loyal to his friends but ruthless to his enemies. The study also showed that the Chronicler was more interested in presenting the public life and not the private affairs of David. Hence, David is being glorified in Chronicles more than in any other historical book. Some of the legacies of David included his refusal to ascend the throne through regicide; establishment of an independent United Monarchy; securing the land of Israel from foreign aggressions, and setting the standard for proper worship. The study concludes by asserting that David's flaws should not be the focus of a good reader, but his enviable qualities and good legacies that should be emulated.

Keywords: Samuel-Chronicles traditions, David, Deuteronomist(ic) History

Introduction

Although in Jewish tradition, starting with the Deuteronomistic Historian and then the Psalter, David has long been lionized and magnified as the ideal king of Israel, modern critical scholarship and/or interpretive tradition have often questioned his real identity and character. Modern scholarship has depicted him as a controversial figure. Many critical scholars, like Welhausen, find it difficult to believe all that has been written about David. The latter is being depicted in two major ways: first, as a pious shepherd who rises to become the king of Israel by divine providence. In fact, the Deuteronomist historian gives a literary portrait of David as an example of covenant fidelity. Second, he is portrayed as an ambitious, crafty, or shrewd usurper who schemes, kills, deceives, and manipulates his way to a throne that he does not deserve (Payne 1979; Halpern 2001; Bosworth 2006; Gard 2006).

David has thus been classified into two contradictory figures: the “historical David” (who was ambitious and murderous) and the “literary David” (who was pious and innocent). More so, there are indications that the Davidic narratives found in Samuel-Chronicles serve apologetic and/or polemic purposes. These stories were probably propaganda created to minimize the flaws of the “historical David,” who was a tyrant and a “man of blood” (cf. 2Sam.

16:7-8). The “literary David” is believed to have been created as a photographic positive of the guilty “historical David.” Thus, for example, the “literary David” is exonerated from the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2Sam. 1:1ff), Abner (2Sam. 3:6-39), Ishbaal (2 Sam 4:1–12), even though he benefited from their deaths (McKenzie 2000; Halpern 2001). Bright, for example, recognizes that David was “ambitious” and “devious” (193–4).

This paper sought to critically evaluate the life of David in light of recent scholarship and then underscore some of his legacies that can be emulated by African/Nigerian leaders. Despite David’s shortcomings and flaws, the author believes that he still has some merits or qualities that leaders can emulate in order to succeed.

Since this study is essentially an investigative one, the researcher adopted narrative and descriptive criticisms, as applicable in the historical-critical method. The paper contends that the books of Samuel-Chronicles reveal a much more focused *Sitz im Leben* that betrays a push for David’s right to the throne once held by Saul and that in trying to achieve this polemic agenda, the author(s) or editors ended up giving contradictory pictures of David. Of course, as Brian has observed, the Deuteronomist(s) laid the foundation of this agenda in Judges, where efforts are made to elevate the tribe of Judah over the other tribes, especially that of Benjamin, where Saul came from. No consensus has been reached among scholars on the purpose behind the writing of the Chronicles. However, many believe that the book has an obviously didactic character (Neil 2016). Before going further in the study, it is important to trace the history of the isagogic (introductory) items or elements of authorship, genre, and dating in order to give the study a proper background. The historical review of each of these elements is to be treated independently, as each is subject to different influences.

Authorship and dating of Samuel-Chronicles

Originally, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel were one text (Daniel 1993). Dellard and Tremper corroborate that the author of Samuel is unknown. Although the text bears his name, Samuel, it does not specifically mention him as the author. This has, of course, necessitated diverse speculations from different scholars. However, Jewish traditions maintain that the prophet Samuel wrote the books bearing his name. The Talmud affirms that “Samuel wrote the book that bears his name and the Book of Judges and Ruth” (*Baba Bathra* 14b). Some other scholars argue that Samuel may not have been the composer of the entire text since 1Sam. 25:1; 28:3 records his death. Some conclude that based on the clause “Ziklag [which] pertains to the kings of Judah until this day,” the book must have been composed sometime after the division of the kingdom or after the exile (Young 177). Patterson believes that the history of the monarchy contained in Samuel was compiled during the reign of King Josiah of Judah, long after the death of Samuel (43).

Some rationalist scholars who argue for Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis have maintained that “the books of Samuel were preserved in two more or less parallel but independent sources, which are similar to J and E” traditions (Payne 1979; Halpern 2001). These authors are more concerned with the ‘final literary forms’ (the final product) of the book and not the ‘process’ or original forms. Thus, since the majority of studies on historical books and/or narrative criticism in the Hebrew Bible have followed the observation that the book was compiled later, probably after the division of the United Kingdom, there is no need to disagree with this claim (McKenzie 1985).

Concerning the name and authorship of Chronicles, Young points out that in the Hebrew Bible, the two books, 1 and 2Chronicles are a single text with the title, “*Divere hayyamim*: the words of the days.” It is the Septuagint (LXX) that divided the book into two, as we now have them in the Christian “Old Testament” Scriptures, and referred to them as *Paraleipomena*: “Things omitted

or passed over” (389). According to the Talmud and other Jewish traditions, Ezra wrote the genealogy found in the Chronicles (Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 15a), and thus, he is generally accepted to have composed this text. Commenting on the authorship of Chronicles, Edwer and Madsen hold that Ezra is generally accepted as the author of the book (n.p.). Young argues, “It must be remarked that in the light of passages such as 1Chronicles 3:19-21 and 2Chronicles 36:22, 23, the books cannot have been composed before Ezra’s time” (389). Other scholars like Albright William, Newsome James, and Payne David also believe that Chronicles was composed by Ezra.

Although the precise dating is still under discussion, scholars usually date the books to the fifth century B.C.E., the period of the resettlement (Throntveit 1987). However, Arnold and Beyer note that recently, many modern scholars have argued that Ezra was not the author of this book but another person. They base their arguments on the fact that the book is located after Ezra-Nehemiah in the Jewish canon (252). Even though other scholars opine that different authors may have composed the book, the common text, that is, the genealogy recorded in 2Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-3, poses a great challenge to such a view of multiple authors. These texts (2Chron. 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-3) have led scholars to conclude that Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah were written together during the post-exilic period (Osborn 1). While others like Hugh G.M. Williamson, Simon J. De Vries, Brian E. Kelly, and others argue for the fourth century (Hugh 16-7; Simon 17; Brian 26-8). If one should go by the genealogies provided in Chronicles and Ezra, it may be easy to assume that the book of Chronicles was written during the post-Exilic period, and I would rather subscribe to this view. This is because, as Young has noted, the concluding part of Chronicles and the opening part of Ezra are very similar. Based on these similarities, it is most likely that the opening verses of Ezra were gotten from Chronicles (not vice versa) (Young 389-90). Yet Jelbert maintains that though these similarities, referred to as “*Stichzeile*” or catchline by Hugh G.M. Williamson, are there, they are not necessarily a sign of common authorship (3). Besides, many believe that the language of Chronicles shows that the book probably comes from the general period of Ezra,” and if so, then it should be dated to the period between 450 and 425 B.C. (Young 390; Richard 1981). Throntveit supports the view that Chronicles was written after the Exile. According to him, the Chronicler “used the David story to address the needs of his (postexilic) community, which questioned the value of God’s old promises to David in this new time of Persian domination, without a king, worshipping in a temple that was the mere shadow of Solomon’s glorious edifice” (374).

Some scholars support the above view that Chronicles was written after the exile. Such scholars believe that Chronicles was composed during the Babylonian and Persian imperial powers and that the major purpose of the Chronicler was to legitimize the very religious institutions and rituals that he or she saw as indispensable to the Israelite’s community’s cultural identity and/or distinctiveness (Simon 1988; Ackroyd 1991; Salman 1991; Brueggeman 2002; Samantha 2012). Corroborating the above view, Samantha affirms that Chronicles was written during or after the exile as the Jews turned to memories of the golden days in Palestine (236). After spending many decades in exile and coming back, many of the returnees, especially those born in exile, had to rely on their parents’ stories and/or memories of Judah. Moreover, these memories were different from the actual reality in Judah because the natives of the land rejected and discriminated against these returnees. As a consequence, they became foreigners in their ancestral land. Probably, the Chronicler composed the text to encourage the returned Jewish migrants, who could not have identified themselves with the ancestral but primarily with the ritual past.

Representations of David in Samuel-Chronicles

This paper has earlier noted that David is a central figure in both the Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. However, going through the traditions as found in Samuel-Chronicles, one discovers that he is represented by the narrators, or better still, the redactors, in different lights: as an obedient child, a skilled instrumentalist, a bold youth, a liar or shrewd fellow, and as a warrior-king that conquered and subjugated all the nearby nations that surrounded the nation, Israel (cf. 1Sam. 16:22-17:12ff; 18). Thus, according to the traditions found in Samuel and the Chronicles, David was a brave king who gave his people freedom and independence because, under him, Israel became a powerful, sovereign, and prosperous nation. He conquered the Jebusites' city, Jerusalem, made it Israel's capital (2Sam. 5:6) and brought back the Ark of Covenant to Jerusalem (2Sam. 6:1ff). The above legendary events—conquering Israel's major enemies, giving Israel a centralized capital city, and then bringing the Ark of Covenant back to Israel—made David gain wide acceptance and favor among his people. And there can be no doubt that, to date, he remains the most important and ideal king of the Hebrews. The Hebrew often looks back to David's days and legacies to draw strength and inspiration. But in spite of these achievements, a close and critical examination of the stories of David as recorded in Samuel and the Chronicles shows that even though he is generally portrayed as an epic and memorable king of Israel, there are so many questions concerning his real personality and/or qualities. Of course, Samuel-Chronicles traditions, to a great extent, draw much attention to him, yet they seem to give complex and even conflicting portraits of his personality.

In Chronicles, David is portrayed as a divinely ordained and favored king. Hence, the Chronicler does not emphasize his character (Gary 100–101), while in Samuel-Kings, David is depicted as a flawed person who, despite his well-known character flaws and blunders, was dedicated to Yahweh (Samantha 237). It is on this account that Yahweh chose, ordained, loved, and favored him over his master, Saul. A close examination of Solomon's prayer at Gibeon corroborates the above assertion (cf. 1 Kings 3:6). The key word in the above prayer is the Hebrew word *ka'ašer*, often translated as "because" or "according as." Hence, "because" David walked uprightly and was faithful to Yahweh, he was favored by Yahweh. This implies that if David had done otherwise, he would not have been favored. The narrator thus projects David as one to whom Yahweh reciprocates his faithfulness and devotion with the throne and with favor and blessings. Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 3:6 is presented differently by the Chronicler (cf. 2Chron. 1:8-9) (Japhet 483).

In the above text, it is obvious that the Chronicler expunges Solomon's claim, as found in 1 Kings 3:6. He does not mention David's character: his faithfulness, devotion, and uprightness; hence, David did nothing to deserve the dynasty and favor he enjoyed. Yahweh just loved David and solemnly promised him a kingdom. Based on the above contrasts, one can deduce that the Chronicler emphasizes Yahweh's *faithfulness*, *loving kindness* and/or grace towards David rather than his merits. Thus, David's character is not a factor considered by God (Hugh 1978; Samantha 2012).

Critical Appraisal of David's Righteous Representations in Samuel-Chronicles

As stated above, though Jewish traditions represent David as an ideal king of Israel, modern critical scholarship has long recognized the differing or contradicting representation of David, especially in the books of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles (Marti 1992; Brueggeman 1985). Moreover, some critical scholars have come to believe that the oldest and most reliable story about David is found in 1 Samuel 16:1-31:13, which continues through the whole of 2 Samuel and concludes in 1Kings 1:1-2 11 (Smith 1933; Wellhausen 1957).

For many critical scholars, the books of Samuel-Chronicles give conflicting pictures of David. For some, the true personality and/or character of David are contradictory and difficult to determine (Kyle 489–504; Marti 1999). Smith observes, “The character of David as presented in the Old Testament is rather hard to determine.” According to him, “He [David] has been so greatly magnified by the Chronicler and by the Psalter that it is difficult to believe all that they say about David. If it were all true, we should have to deal with a most complex and contradictory personality” (1). Over the years, many interpreters have followed the traditional view of David and depicted him in glowing terms, thereby minimizing his sins, while others have portrayed him otherwise. The depiction of David in the Samuel-Chronicles traditions invariably follows the apologetic tone of Biblical narratives. Based on these traditions, David is depicted as a pious lad, shrewd military strategist, and motivator with leadership and military skills; he is a “poet, musician, and religious reformer. His devoutness is manifested, among other ways, by “his ready repentance when confronted with his sin” (cf. 2Sam. 12:13) (Bosworth 192). Starting from 1 Samuel 16 through 2 Samuel to 1Kings 1:1-2:11, one observes that the narrators of the books depict David in many lights. First, as a rugged shepherd boy; then, as the chosen or anointed one (1Sam. 16:1-13); a royal court musician; and then a warrior... and so forth. Throntveit notes that many scholars have often dismissed the Chronicler’s portrait of David as a “non-historical and colorless idealization that intentionally omits objectionable material such as his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband” (374). Though recently, such ideas have been discarded because scholars now consider this narrative to be a later expansion (Nelson 1981; McKenzie 1991). Commenting on the Chronicler’s representation of David, Wellhausen states that,

See what Chronicles has made out of David! The founder of the kingdom has become the founder of the temple and the public worship, the king and hero at the head of his companions in arms has become the singer and master of ceremonies at the head of a swarm of priests and Levites; his clearly cut figure has become a feeble holy picture, seen through a cloud of incense (182).

Smith acknowledges the above fact, but opines that “this marked tendency to glorify David in all the records is not based upon historical fact.” For Smith, David was not a perfect character; he was a liar and a deceiver. “Lying was one of David’s foremost devices in getting himself out of difficulties” (2). Bright also acknowledges that David is “ambitious” and also “devious” (193–4). Smith’s view that some of the Davidic traditions are not based on historical facts is somehow implausible. Though some of these representations may seem to have been legendary, there is no need to doubt their trueness. From the onset, the narrators already projected David as a bright and/or brilliant folk who was a friend of Yahweh (1Sam. 13:14). And in most of the Davidic narratives, he is continually projected as being the chosen, brilliant, strong, and clever one.

Discovering the Historical David

Recently, many modern scholars, like Halpern, have tried to deconstruct and reconstruct Davidic narratives in order to discover his real identity. For Halpern, the Davidic narratives found in the Samuel Kings and Chronicles are mere fabrications. According to Halpern, David was a Canaanite, not an Israelite. He was a hired Philistine mercenary or officer who worked for Achish, king of Gath. And because he carried out a lot of successful military campaigns for the Philistines against Israel, he was rewarded with a vassal kingdom in the south after the death of Saul. Halpern went on to say that David was to be held responsible for the assassinations of Abner, Saul’s army commander, Amasa, and Ishbosheth, Saul’s firstborn child, who should have inherited the throne. Therefore, for Halpern, David was a deceiver and guilty of so many

bloodsheds. Furthermore, Halpern believes that Solomon was the son of Uriah or Nathan the prophet, or better yet, an anonymous fellow, not David's son, and that it was the so-called prophet Nathan that passed off his own paternity of Solomon onto David through trick because he did not want to bear the responsibility of being the father. As a consequence, Halpern sees the Samuel-Kings and Chronicles as apologetic propaganda probably written by Solomon's court secretaries. It is because Halpern does not believe in the veracity of the biblical texts that he came to the above conclusions.

From all indications, it is possible that Halpern relies heavily on the documentary hypothesis and source criticism and thus believes that originally, the Davidic narratives came from two different traditions (479). Though Halpern's work is novel, from all indications, it seems to be a mere personal conjecture that cannot be substantiated anywhere in the biblical texts. For this present author, Halpern's deconstructive caricature or "mis-representation" of David is simply weighed down by unnecessary imaginations, biases, and fictional embroidery. Based on the biblical accounts, especially the Deuteronomistic representations, the historical David was a man of many colors; he had virtues as well as flaws, like any normal human being. The Enlightenment philosopher Pierre Bayle's article on David in *Dictionnaire historique et critique* concentrates on David's moral failures and challenges the traditional interpretation of David as a hero. On many occasions, the narrators note that David lied in order to get himself out of trouble (1Sam. 10:13; 20:29; 21: 1-6; 27: 8ff). For example, the lies he told Ahimelech the priest put him, the Levites, and all the villagers into trouble as they all lost their lives. All of them died because of one man's deception.

In Samuel, David is also represented as a polygamist. Apart from Saul's daughter, Michal, he married Abigail, Nabal's widow (1Sam. 25:1-44). He also married Ahinoam of Jezreel. That means that he had three wives, and in 2Samuel 3:2-5, he had other wives: Maacha, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur, Haggith, Shephatiah, and Eglah. The above depiction of David is, of course, against the law of Yahweh, for a king was not to take many wives and amass wealth (cf. Deut. 17:15-18). And obviously, later, this caused a lot of problems for David. For instance, Amnon, the half-brother to Tamar, raped her, and the whole saga ended with Absalom killing Amnon in revenge for what he did to his sister. Smith, commenting on the above incidence, avers, "It is not surprising that with such a father there arose troubles in David's family (2Sam. 13:1-14:43). The rape of Tamar by her own half-brother Amnon was the beginning of trouble in the house of David. Moreover, the "righteous" king, David, did not even reprove Amnon, "for he loved him, because he was his firstborn" (8). Whatever may have been the reason why David kept silent over the issue, the narrator does not say that the king loved Amnon because he was his firstborn. The question then is: Which father would keep silent over such a grievous act perpetuated under his roof? Does David's attitude depict him as a good father and righteous king? Ordinarily, he was expected to have openly and sternly rebuked Amnon. And because he did not, that may have been the reason Absalom took the laws into his hands and killed Amnon, his half-brother.

The Amnon-Tamar saga is similar to what happened in Genesis 34, where Jacob's children, Simon and Levi, took laws into their own hands and murdered all the males in Shechem because their prince violated their sister, Dinah. However, unlike David, Jacob did not keep mute but openly rebuked the duo, Simeon and Levi, for their actions (cf. 34:30). Commenting on the above rape-murder saga and David's passive stance, Elwell remarks,

David [though] deeply upset over what has happened, but, strangely, he does nothing to punish Amnon. At the very least he should have announced that Amnon's deed had disqualified him as a contender for the throne. Just as Jacob's oldest son Reuben lost the birthright by sleeping with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22; 49:4), so Amnon had forfeited any right he had to the throne.

Perhaps David is reluctant to take any action against Amnon because he himself had been guilty of adultery. David's failure to discipline Joab, Amnon, and Absalom constitutes a major character flaw and has serious repercussions (*Commentary on 2Sam. 13:15*).

Based on the above observations, one can easily conclude that either David loved Amnon to a fault or that it dawned on him that he had no moral ground to condemn his actions since he, David, had also committed such an act with another man's wife. Though David may not have raped Bathsheba, he violated her and later killed her husband, Uriah (cf. 2Sam. 11). After he violated Bathsheba and killed the husband, he was followed by one trouble after another. Henry and Scott corroborate the above views of Walter. According to them, David was probably too lenient with his children because he was also culpable of immorality (adultery) and murder. He might have traced the sins of his children to his own misconduct and thus lacked the moral pluck or fortitude to take any punitive measure against them. Whatever may have been the case, David should have defended the defenseless as a righteous king and good father. But from all indications, he did not take any proactive step to look out for Absalom and bring him back to the palace; rather, he left the young man in exile not until Joab intervened (2Sam. 14:1-3). Even though David "longed" to see Absalom, he made no proactive move to bring him back to the palace (Matthew Henry's Concise *Commentary on 2 Sam. 13:1*).

Furthermore, as earlier noted, David is represented as a liar and deceiver in 1Sam. 27:8ff. While with Achish, King of Gath, he often would raid some philistine allies and/or regions, kill everyone, and come back to inform Achish that he raided his own people, the Negev (of Judah, the Jerahmeelites, or the Kenites). Of course, these claims were complete lies, told by David to deceive the King of Gath and to make him think that he was making himself repugnant to his own people, the Israelites, and could be depended upon to fight for the Philistines.

For many, the true character of David is clearly reflected in his last words, recorded in 1Kings 2:2:4-9. According to this passage, David, on his death bed, gave orders to his son, Solomon, which included getting rid of some people: Joab and Shimei, the son of Gera. Joab's sin was that he killed Abner in a peaceful time, and Shimei's sin was that he cursed and abused David when he was fleeing from Absalom. Though the king had promised not to retaliate or kill Shimei, he counsels Solomon to make sure he, Shimei, has a bloody death. According to Smith, "This record certainly does not make David a saint. It rather makes him at times a brute" (10). However, some commentators see this advice as necessary if Solomon were to have a peaceful reign. Jamieson et al hold that:

It must not be supposed that in these dying instructions David was evincing a fierce, vindictive spirit. He is rather to be considered as acting in the character of a king and magistrate, in noticing crimes which he had not been in a condition to punish, and pointing out persons of whom Solomon would be under a necessity to rid himself as dangerous to the state (Jamieson et al *Commentary*, on 2 Sam. 13:15, n.p).

Fleming also acknowledges the importance of David's advice to Solomon. He notes that David gave those advices to ensure stability in Solomon's reign and government. If Solomon was to succeed and have a stable dynasty, notable rebels must be removed from the kingdom (120). One would think that it is part of life's reality, even if there is a possibility of injustice entangled with it. Despite the above opinions, however, some believe that David's last words and instructions to Solomon do not depict him as a good and righteous king. The scenario rather depicts him as one who keeps malice, who does not easily forgive but takes vengeance on his enemies. For instance, Joab had served him faithfully, defended his interests and life, and fought many wars with or for him. Even though he killed Abner, why did David not kill him by himself all this while? David had known for many years that Joab should have been punished for the murders he had committed (cf. 2Sam 3:30; 20:10). Why did he not deal with Joab himself? Probably, near the

end of his life, he now saw an opportunity to deal with Joab because he knew that Solomon would not hesitate to put to death one who had lately supported his rival, Adonijah (Fleming *Commentary* on 1Kgs. 2:5, n.p.).

Based on the above evidence, it is obvious that David was not a perfect man. Though he was a brave king, he was also an aggressive and cruel person who was loyal to his friends but ruthless to his enemies. And as earlier noted, he was a liar, deceiver, and traitor. Smith observes that it was later tradition that glorified the king, neglecting his crimes and faults and focusing on his virtues (11).

In Samuel-Kings, David is portrayed as one embattled by adultery and court intrigues, but in Chronicles, he is depicted as an unchallenged paragon of piety who is devoted to the establishment of the cult of Yahweh (Gerhard 1962; Wright 1998). From all indications, it is thus obvious that the Chronicler was more interested in presenting the public life than the personal affairs of King David; hence, David is glorified in Chronicles more than in any other historical book (Klein 1999; Gard 2006).

David's Enduring Legacies: Lessons for Nigerian Leaders

Despite the fact that David had several character flaws, he left lasting legacies, and there are many good lessons that people, especially leaders, can learn from his life. First, although many have criticized David for some of his actions, one thing he should be applauded for is, first and foremost, his refusal to ascend the throne through regicide. Even as Noth sees David as a “shrewd man” who sought the kingship “deliberately and consistently from the very beginning” (179), from all indications, he refused to achieve his ambition via political murder. Of course, political murder was common in ancient times, and from all indications, David had easy opportunities to kill King Saul, but he did not. In fact, in the ancient world, it was common practice for a new dynasty to annihilate its predecessor's members (cf. Judg. 9:1–5; 1Kgs. 15:25–29; 16:8–11; and 2Kgs. 10:1–1) (Tushima 2011). But David, however, refused to do so, probably because he wanted his throne to be established in righteousness. For David, since Saul was Yahweh's anointed, he was untouchable. It is rightly said that fear of God is the height of wisdom. Indeed, David acknowledged Saul as God's anointed more than once (1Sam. 24; 26:9–10; 2Sam. 1:14), and he avoided killing Saul on two separate opportune occasions (1Sam. 24; 26).

The above incident is (or should be) a big lesson for politicians in Nigeria and Africa. One must not kill another to seize or ascend leadership positions. Politicians must thus realize that whoever is appointed or elected to lead is ordained by God and thus sacrosanct. It makes more sense that after the death of Saul, David and Ishbosheth, Saul's son, fought for the throne (2Sam. 3:1ff). At that point, David saw himself as the rightful heir to the throne, and God supported him. Jonathan, Saul's firstborn child and the rightful heir to the throne, had abdicated the throne for David (cf. 1Sam 23:17; 20:12–17). Saul himself had also earlier acknowledged that David would be king (cf. 1Sam. 24:20), even though he (Saul) was eager to preserve a dynasty of his own through Jonathan (cf. 1Sam 20:31).

Second, from the Chronicler's perspective, David was the one who established the independent United Monarchy, secured the land of Israel, and protected it from foreign aggressions. He organized the army, built formidable armed forces, and practically led them to battles like other kings. He sacrificed a lot to make sure his subjects had peace and prosperity. This is a great lesson for African and Nigerian leaders. It is unfortunate that many in Africa see leadership as an opportunity for self-aggrandizement. Hence, whenever people are privileged to be in any leadership position, they preoccupy themselves with self-aggrandizement. David was not that type of leader. He served the people with all his heart and fought numerous wars to make sure

they were secure politically and economically. He combined the southern part of the country (Judah) and the northern part (Israel) under his influence and made a great nation out of them in such a way that the neighboring nations became tributaries to Israel. African leaders, like King David, should strive to embody and exemplify the very cultural markers that give identity to their communities and nations. They should epitomize humane virtues that edify a society or community. Nigeria, for example, needs a unifying leader like David. Experience has shown that the nation is divided along ethnic and religious landscapes, especially since 2015, when President Muhammad Buhari won the election and became the leader of this country.

Finally, David gave Israel a centralized government. Under his leadership, Israel had a central government and a standing army that were well organized and formidable. He discovered that the position of Jerusalem was strategic and went for it, subduing the Jebusites that lived there. He fortified Jerusalem and also united the whole of Israel. Initially, many people, especially the northern tribes, opposed his kingship and were loyal to the house of Saul. However, when David ascended the throne, he made sure he united the people and ran an inclusive government. This attitude is noteworthy and also a lesson for politicians globally.

In some regions of the world, such as Nigeria, some ethnic groups have been agitating and clamoring for self-determination. But instead of the present federal government led by Muhammad Buhari looking for ways to broker peace, he seems to be careless about the disaffection. Good leadership, of course, includes brokering peace and building an inclusive environment for all, irrespective of tribe or religious affiliation.

Conclusion

From the onset, this paper established that David is a central figure in both Samuel-Chronicles. Some of his flaws as well as his good qualities were outlined and discussed in the study. Experience has shown that people, especially leaders, may not always do the right things, but the stories of David caution everyone, especially leaders, to always set good precedents and not bad or dangerous ones. Moreover, whether David is seen as a hero or villain, the Deuteronomistic narratives found in Samuel and then in the Chronicles suggest that God has purposes independent of ethics. God chooses people to fulfill His purposes on earth not because they are perfect beings but because of His sheer grace and loving kindness. For this reason, David's flaws should not be the status quo for the modern reader. More values should rather be placed on his merits and virtues than his blemishes. Out of all the monarchs (more than forty) who rule the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, only three (Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah) are said to be like David; hence, he is seen as "the paradigm of the good king" (Alison 20).

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