“SOLOMON WHO IS GREATER THAN DAVID”

SOLOMON’S SUCCESSION IN 1 KINGS I-II IN THE LIGHT
OF THE INSCRIPTION OF KILAMUWA, KING OF Y’DY-SAM’AL

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In a previous study on the “Succession Narrative” (2 Sam. ii[?]–xx; 1 Kings i-ii), I have suggested that this literary complex as a whole was composed from a certain political standpoint, i.e., the defence of Solomon against the old regime of David. From this point of view, the “Succession Narrative” can be summarized in the following fashion: a) Solomon, one of the younger sons of David, gained his designation as David’s successor by a court intrigue; b) the legitimacy of Solomon’s accession is defended by a claim that the irregular procedure involved was unavoidable under abnormal circumstances; c) the regime which Solomon challenged was supported by the administration whose nominal ruler was the aging David and whose strong-man was the commander-in-chief Joab; d) the description of David’s shortcomings in the narrative reflects the political standpoint of Solomon’s historiographer; e) Solomon’s purge of his opponents is regarded by this historiographer as an initial achievement of his monarch in a matter left unfinished by David.

On the basis of these observations, I shall try to show in the present article that the concluding section of the “Succession Narrative”, i.e., 1 Kings i-ii, is an apologetic composition from the early days of Solomon, aiming at legitimatizing not only his irregular succession but also his execution of his brother, high officials of the old regime and a leader of the Saulides. I shall attempt to explain the substance of the Solomonic

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1 I am grateful to Professors J. C. Greenfield and H. Tadmor for having read the manuscript and for their valuable comments.
3 For a select bibliography of the “Succession Narrative” up to 1978 see ibid, p. 175, nn. 1-2. Among the literature which appeared since that date, the thesis that regards 1 Kings i-ii as the Solomonic legitimization from his time is held by S. Zalewski, Solomon’s Ascension to the Throne: Studies in the Books of Kings and Chronicles (Jerusalem, 1981) (Hebrew), and P. K. McCarter, “Plots, True or False: The Succession Narrative as
legitimation by analysing the pertinent biblical texts and by referring to relevant extra-biblical material. The latter may provide us with a much needed analogy for the narrative of Solomon’s succession and the events it relates.

I believe that the Solomonic legitimation consists of two conflicting elements: an apology for his legitimacy and a defence for his deeds. Both elements are skilfully blended in the congratulation offered to David by Benaiah (1 Kings i 37) and by similar words of David’s servants (i 47) on the occasion of Solomon’s accession: “May your God make the name of Solomon more famous than yours, and make his throne greater than your throne.” The implication of the words is twofold: on the one hand, an explicit congratulation to David on having a successor, on the other, an implicit wish that the reign of this successor may surpass that of David. This congratulation must have originated in the Solomonic scribal circle, since the canonical view in the biblical traditions regards Solomon as inferior to David in every respect.

We come now to the extra-biblical parallel to the Solomonic succession, which augments the biblical narrative by providing a point of departure for historiographical and historical analysis. The comparative

Court Apologetic”, Interpretation 35 (1981), pp. 355-67. While the former finds a unity of these chapters with 2 Sam. ix-xx, the latter proposes that materials in 2 Samuel, which had been composed originally for the Davidic apology, were attached to 1 Kings i-ii as a preface. An opposite view is suggested by J. Van Seters, “Histories and Historians of the Ancient Near East: The Israelites”, Orientalia, N.S. 50 (1981), pp. 156-67. According to his suggestion, the Court History (2 Sam. ix-xx; 1 Kings i-ii) was added to the stories of Saul and David as an anti-legitimation story in the post-exilic period (p. 166). A “relative” unity of 2 Sam. ix-xx and 1 Kings i-ii is confirmed by “stylistic and structural analyses” or “literary-structural analysis”; see J. P. Fokkelman, Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel I: King David (Assen, 1981); K. K. Sacon, “A Study of the Literary Structure of ‘The Succession Narrative’”, in Ishida (ed.), Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays (Tokyo, 1982), pp. 27-54. Both studies propose the title “(A Story of) King David” for the work (Fokkelman, p. 427; Sacon, p. 54) by assuming Solomon’s succession as one of the themes of the composition. A question is raised about the legitimacy of separating a “succession narrative” from the rest of Samuel-Kings by P. R. Ackroyd, “The Succession Narrative (so-called)”, Interpretation 35 (1981), pp. 383-96. A text reconstructed by a redaction-critical study is suggested by F. Langlair, “David, fils de Jessé. Une édition prééutéronomique de l’histoire de la succession”, RB 89 (1982), pp. 5-47.


5 For the second implication, compare the following text of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria: “šēnu Aššur ... eli šarrānī ... šarrūt ugarriḫa ušarba zikri šumiṣa. When Aššur made my royal power more famous and my fame greater than (that of all) kings”, R. Borger, Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien (AfO Beiheft 9, 1956), p. 98, line 32; cf. CAD Z, p. 116a.

6 For David’s loyalty to Yahweh in contrast to Solomon’s apostasy, see 1 Kings xi 4, 6, 12-13, 33-36.