The story we are dealing with (2 Sam. xiv 1-24) is part of the Thronnachfolgegeschichte 1). The general tendency is clear. Prince Absalom is in exile, because he has murdered his brother. Joab perceives 2) that the king longs for his exiled son and finds a way to make Absalom's return possible. To this end he uses a wise Tekoite woman, who fully instructed by him 3), obtains an audience from the king. The result of this audience is, that the prince is permitted to come home, be it that he is not allowed to see his father.

Also the general trend of that part of the story that describes the audience is clear. The woman following the instructions given to her pretends to be a widow who faces a terrible problem. She only had two sons left, now one of them has killed the other 4). Should the


2) For the interpretation of the wyd in v. 1 as "and he perceived, he was (became) aware", cf. e.g. Gen. iii 7, ix 24, xix 33, 35, 1 Sam. xviii 28, Jer. xxxii 8. See also S. R. Driver, Notes on the hebrew text and the topography of the Books of Samuel, Oxford, 1913 ad 2 Sam. xiv 1 and Fr. Brown, A Hebrew and English lexicon of the Old Testament... (with the cooperation of S. R. Driver and Ch. A. Briggs), Oxford, 1907, sub yd (ad Qal 1b).

3) See in the first place the wym ywb 'r-hdorym bbyb (v. 3). This expression is also found in Ex. iv 15, Numb. xxii 38 and Ezr. viii 17. In these cases a superior instructs a subordinate (the superiors are Moses, God and Ezra, the subordinates Aaron, the prophet Bileam and Judean high officials who serve with Ezra). This subordinate has to carry out his instructions (see especially Numb. xxii 38). Cf. S. R. Driver, o.c., ad 2 Sam. xiv 3 and P. (=E.) Diorme, Les Livres de Samuel, Paris, 1910, a.l. See furthermore David's words hyd ywb 'tk bkl-ç't (v. 19), words that presuppose that the woman acts completely on Joab's instructions (see also the woman's affirmative answer in the same verse).

4) There is no reason to emend the wym b'hdy 'r-b'hdy (v. 6) as most commentators propose. Against e.g. J. Wellhausen, Der Text der Bücher Samuelis untersucht..., Göttingen, 1871, p. 191, A. Klostermann, Die Bücher Samuels und der Könige ausgelegt, Nördlingen, 1887, a.l., O. Thenius, Die Bücher Samuels erklärt, (edited by M. Löhr), Leipzig, 1898, a.l., W. Nowack, Richter Ruth u. Bücher
fratricide be executed as he deserves, then her husband's posterity is exterminated and she herself will be left alone. She wrests from the king an irrevocable decision that the murderer in question will not be punished at all 1. Thereupon she applies this ruling of the king to his own situation and seems to have convinced him (especially this part of the story is very hard to understand) 2. David realises that Joab is behind all this, and sends for him. He then tells the grateful commander of the army that Absalom may return.

As U. Simon recently pointed out there is a clear parallelism between the story of the woman's audience and 2 Sam. xii 1-15 and 1 Reg. xx 35-43 (respectively the prophet Nathan reproaching David for his behaviour towards Bathsheba and Uriah and an unknown prophet reproaching king Ahab that he let his prisoner of war, Benhadad, go) 3.

But although the general trend and pattern of our story is clear, the details offer many difficulties. This is especially the case with vv. 13-17. It is the purpose of this article to tackle some of these problems in the hope that also some contributions will be made to the general understanding of the story.

It must be clear that the story told by the woman about her personal difficulties was untrue, as the stories as such told by Nathan to David and the unknown prophet to Ahab, were untrue 4. In both these cases

Samuelis übersetzt und erklärt, Göttingen, 1902, a.l., K. Budde, Die Bücher Samuel, Tübingen/Leipzig, 1902, a.l., Dhorme, o.c., a.l., W. Caspari, Die Samuelbücher mit Sachverklärungen versehen, Leipzig, 1926, a.l., etc. (cf. also S. R. Driver, o.c., a.l.). The object may be anticipated by a pronominal suffix, cf. Ex. ii 6, xxxv 5, Lev. xiii 57b, etc.; the subject may stand between the verbal form with the suffix and the object, cf. 1 Reg. xxi 13, 2 Reg. xvi 15, etc. Also, the form wykw instead of the more normal wykhw is grammatically possible, cf. Ex. xxi 29, Josh. ii 4, 1 Sam. xviii 1 (K), xxi 14 (example of tertiae yod verb), Jer. xxiii 6, Hos. viii 3, Ps. xxxv 8, Koh. iv 12, cf. also H. Bauer-P. Leander, Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache, Halle, 1922, par. 48 n. For these arguments see also C. F. Keil, Die Bücher Samuels, Leipzig, 1864, a.l.

1) V. 11, see also pp. 442, 448 f.
2) Vv. 13-17 (see also pp. 429 ff.). That she has attained her aim, is clear from the result, that the king tells Joab that Absalom may return.
3) U. Simon, "The poor man's ewe lamb. An example of a juridical parable", Bibl. xlvi (1967), pp. 207-242, especially p. 208. The two other parallels given by him (Is. v 1-7, Jer. iii 1-5) I have left out, because I do not consider them to be clear and convincing ones.
4) That the tale of the woman is untrue is already suggested by the fact that Joab has told her in great detail how to behave like a widow; in the tale her widowed state is a central point, cf. vv. 2, 5-7. See furthermore the fact that she is completely instructed by him on everything she says (cf. p. 419 n. 3). It is also suggested by the parallelism with the above mentioned tales about Nathan and the unknown