DAVID AND HIS CIRCLE IN GENESIS XXXVIII

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Various scholars have correctly noted that much of Genesis mirrors the events of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon. This is borne out by similar story lines, allusions, and shared language. Among the paradigm passages which may be cited is Gen. xv 18 where the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham, minnehar miṣrayim ‘ad-hannāhār haggādōl n’hār ṭɔrāt, correlate with those of the Davidic-Solomonic empire. 1 Benjamin Mazar has used this example and many others to demonstrate that "Genesis was given its original written form during the time when the Davidic empire was being established, and that the additions and supplements of later authors were only intended to help bridge the time gap for contemporary readers, and had no decisive effect on its contents or its overall character." 2

Most scholars who have worked along these lines have concentrated on the material usually ascribed to J. The author of this strand, after all, is presumed to have lived during the United Monarchy. Important contributions are those of Joseph Blenkinsopp, Walter Brueggemann, Ronald E. Clements, Lothar Ruppert, and Peter F. Ellis. All these, to be sure, come in the wake of Gerhard von Rad’s work which sought to demonstrate that the early monarchy produced two masterpieces of historiographic writing: the Succession Narrative and the Yahwist source. 3

Stylistic comparisons were the focus of Blenkinsopp’s article, 4 as

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he noted several motifs common to both the Succession Narrative of 2 Sam. ix-1 Kings ii and the mythological material of Gen. ii 4-iv 16. Among the most convincing of these is the fratricidal theme, viz., Cain’s slaying of Abel and Absalom’s slaying of Amnon, in both of which occurs baṣṣādeh (Gen. iv 8; 2 Sam. xiv 6).

Brueggeman saw in those portions of Gen. ii-xi attributed to J four stories (Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, and the Tower of Babel) closely paralleling four episodes from the Succession Narrative (David and Bathsheba, Amnon and Absalom, Absalom and David, and Solomon and David). He concluded: "While the theology of Gn 2-11 (J) is the special kerygmatic formulation of the Yahwist, perhaps it is the history of his time, the David story right before his eyes, that gives him the ‘stuff’ out of which he formulates his kerygma... The Genesis stories may be for the Yahwist another way of writing about the dynasty... Thus Genesis becomes quite clearly a theology for the monarchy.”

Clements stressed the covenant connection between Abraham and David, respectively, Gen. xv and 2 Sam. vii. I quote him at length: "We must recognize consequently that the account in Genesis 15 of the Abrahamic covenant has been influenced in its formulation by features drawn from the Davidic covenant of Jerusalem... our main contention [is] that there was a close connection, both in historical significance and religious interpretation, between the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants... the Yahwist was very conscious of the existence of Israel as a monarchic state... This author intentionally related the patriarchal age to that of the Davidic-Solomonic empire under the scheme of promise and fulfillment in order to show the religious significance and sacred authority of the Davidic state... It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Yahwist himself saw an important connection between Abraham and David.”

Ruppert has noted a relationship between several pericopes in Genesis ascribed to J and several episodes from David’s life. In one instance, the corresponding passages are seen as similar, namely, Jacob’s prayer in Gen. xxxii 10-13 and David’s prayer in 2 Sam. vi: 18-29. In the other case, the related stories are seen as reverse

5 "David and his Theologian", CBQ 30 (1968), pp. 156-81, particularly pp. 175-6. He is apparently unaware of Blenkinsopp’s work, though they touch on the same subject matter.