# Revisiting the Saul Narrative in Chronicles: Interacting with the Persian Imperial Context?

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*ABSTRACT*

*It is well-known among biblical scholars and other Bible readers that the Chronicler's presentation of King Saul of Israel differs significantly from the version in 1 Samuel. Many studies have been conducted on this and commentators normally dedicate extensive space to the peculiarity. In line with Knoppers's suggestions of how to approach this peculiarity, this article will investigate whether it could benefit our discussion of the Chronicler's portrayal of King Saul if the perspective of identity formation forms our interpretative key.*

## A    INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that the Chronicler's presentation of King Saul of Israel differs significantly from the version in 1 Samuel. Many studies have been conducted on this issue and commentators normally dedicate extensive space to this peculiarity.[1] Although a critical synoptic comparison of the texts—not only of those

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[1]    The following studies, particularly focused on the peculiarities of the Chronicler's representation of Saul compared to that in 1 Samuel, have appeared since 2000: Yairah Amit, "The Saul Polemic in the Persian Period," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (eds. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 647–661; "The Delicate Balance in the Image of Saul and Its Place in the Deuteronomistic History," in *Saul in Story and Tradition* (eds. Carl S. Ehrlich and Marsha C. White; FAT 47; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2006), 71–79; Simcha S. Brooks, *Saul and the Monarchy: A New Look* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Georg Hentschel, *Saul. Schuld, Reue und Tragik eines "Gesalbten"* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003); Gary N. Knoppers, "Israel's First King and 'the Kingdom of YHWH in the hands of the sons of David.' The Place of the Saulide Monarchy in the Chronicler's Historiography," in *Saul in Story and Tradition* (eds. Carl S. Ehrlich and Marsha C. White, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2006), 187–213; Piotr Kuberski, "La Crémation dans la Bible? La Mort de Saül et de ses Fils (1 S 31; 1 Ch 10)," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 83/2 (2009): 185–200; David Wagner, *Geist und Tora. Studien zur göttlichen Legitimation und Delegitimation von Herrschaft im Alten Testament anhand der Erzählungen über König Saul* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005); Thomas Willi, "'Den HERRn aufsuchen …' Einsatz und Thema des narrativen Teils der Chronikbücher," in *L'Ecrit et l'Esprit: etudes d'histoire du texte et de théologie biblique en hommage à Adrian Schenker* (eds. Dieter Boehler, Innocent Himbaza and Philippe Hugo, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 432–444. See also the following exegetical commentaries that have appeared since 2000: Pieter B. Dirksen, *1 Chronicles* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 158–167; Ralph W. Klein, *1*

found in the Masoretic text (hereafter MT), but also of other versions such as the Septuagint (hereafter LXX)—remains interesting and a very important task of biblical scholars, the more fundamental question to ask is of course: why does the Chronicler's portrayal of Saul differ so much? Or: what different function did the Saul material have in Chronicles compared to the Deuteronomistic History?

I am of the opinion that the rhetorical thrust of this narrative, as part of the Chronicler's overall construction, has not been grasped sufficiently yet, because the international (Persian) context of the time of origin has not been taken into account adequately. The present study will contribute to the further clarification of this peculiarity in the biblical literature.

My discussion will start with some observations on the texts (section B). Thereafter (section C), a brief overview of the different hypotheses that have been offered in past scholarship on the function of the Chronicler's Saul narrative will be provided. This second part will conclude with a summary of Knoppers's synthesis. In Section D I will critically engage with this synthesis. Section E will then offer a further attempt to interpret the enigmatic Saul narrative in Chronicles against the background of the Persian imperial context.

## B    OBSERVATIONS ON THE TEXT(S)

Although our attention will be mainly focused on the Saul narrative in 1 Chronicles 10:1–14 (subsection 1), a short overview will also be given of the other reference to Saul in Chronicles, namely in the genealogies (subsection 2), as well as in isolated references in other royal narratives (subsection 3).

## 1    The Chronicler's Saul narrative (1 Chronicles 10:1–14)[2]

Knoppers[3] and Klein[4] provided excellent discussions of all the technicalities that emerge from a synoptic comparison between 1 Samuel 31 and 1 Chronicles 10 (in both MT and LXX), and the interested reader may access this information there.

In our observations on the Chronicler's Saul narrative, we will see that (i) the Chronicler made certain changes to the *Vorlage* in 1 Samuel 31, (ii) certain sections were omitted from the *Vorlage*, and (iii) other sections were

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*Chronicles: A commentary* (Hermeneia, Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2006), 282–291; Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 515–531; Steven L. McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles* (AOTC, Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2004), 114–120.

2    All English translations are, unless otherwise indicated, from the NRSV.

3    Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 515–531.

4    Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 282–291.

added in the Chronicles text.[5] We will mainly concentrate (for the sake of brevity) on a selection of textual features in the second and third categories, that is, those parts omitted from the *Vorlage* and those added.

There are three sections in this text: Verses 1–7 narrate the death of Saul and his house, verses 8–12 concentrate on the benevolent acts of the people of Jabesh-Gilead, and verses 13–14 provide a theological interpretation of Saul's death.[6]

### 1a     Verses 1–7

This section was taken over from Samuel by the Chronicler in a fairly un-changed way, with only a few stylistic differences occurring in the first few verses. In verse 6, however, the Chronicler has inserted a phrase after having omitted information from the equivalent text in 1 Samuel 31:6. In the *Vorlage* the text reads: "So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day." The Chronicler omits reference to the armor-

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[5]   Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, 52–66 is of course right when he emphasizes that differences between the Deuteronomistic *Vorlage* and Chronicles should not always be attributed to the theological intentions of the Chronicler. It might be that the Chronicler's *Vorlage* was a different version of the text than the one encountered in the MT of the Deuteronomistic history. A comparison with (particularly) the LXX of Samuel-Kings can assist as cross-check in this respect. With reference to 1 Chr 10 the LXX version of 1 Sam 31 shows that the Chronicler's *Vorlage* most probably did not differ significantly from the MT version of 1 Sam 31. Only in 1 Chr 10:7, 9, 12 small differences might be assumed. See Klein's discussion, *1 Chronicles*, 282–283 (specifically notes 12, 17, 21). Knoppers is of the opinion, however, that the minuses in Chronicles compared to Samuel indicates that the Chronicler probably used a shorter version than MT Samuel: "It should be noted … that when Chronicles and MT Samuel are compared, many of these differences amount to lacunae in Chronicles. Chronicles exhibits very few pluses. Even though Chronicles is a late text, it would be methodologically flawed to assume that such minuses necessarily result from the Chronicler's abridgment of Samuel. Quite the contrary, the version of Samuel used by the Chronicler was probably a shorter text than MT Samuel. … The most one can say, given the limited amount of textual evidence available, is that the Chronicler's source was slightly shorter than MT Samuel. The Chronicler's *Vorlage* represents a briefer, typologically more primitive text of Samuel than MT 1 Sam 31" (Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 516, 526). However, since LXX Samuel and LXX Chronicles show more or less the same differences than their MT counterparts, it seems that the amount of deviation between MT Samuel and the *Vorlage* of MT Chronicles is minute, as Klein has indicated. In any case, these observations convince me to agree with both Klein and Knoppers in their refutation of Ho's point of view in which he argued that 1 Sam 31 and 1 Chr 10 made use of a common source, with 1 Chr 10 closer to the original. See Craig Y.S. Ho, "Conjectures and refutations: Is 1 Samuel XXXI 1–13 really the source of 1 Chronicles X 1–12?" *VT* 45/1 (1995): 82–106.

[6]   I agree here with Klein's outline of this pericope. See Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 283.

bearer and all his men, as well as the temporal reference "that same day." He furthermore supplied another finite verb "they died" (מתו) at the end of the verse, and inserted the expression "and his whole house" (וכל־ביתו) as subject of this verb.

In verse 7 the Chronicler changed "the men of Israel" [my translation] of the *Vorlage* into "every person in Israel" [my translation], a change that correlates a similar modification in verse 1. In verse 7 the Chronicler has furthermore abbreviated the geographical indication of where the men of Israel were, localizing the indication to the situation of the battle.

1b     Verses 8–12

The next section opens with the temporal indication "The next day" (ויהי ממחרת) which was taken over from the *Vorlage*. The Chronicler took over 1 Samuel 31:8 unchanged, but eliminated the word "three," the number of Saul's sons according to the Samuel text—an omission that was probably necessitated by the fact the Chronicler mentions four sons of Saul in 1 Chronicles 8:33 and 9:39 (as we will see when we discuss the genealogies below). This omission seems strange, however, since the mentioning of three sons was no problem to the Chronicler in verse 6 where he kept the reference.

Verse 9 describes what happened to Saul after his death. Whereas 1 Samuel 31:9 reads "They cut off his head, stripped his armor, …" 1 Chronicles 10:9 mentions that the Philistines "stripped him and took his head and his armor," thus omitting the explicit reference to the cutting-off of Saul's head.

The Samuel version indicates then that the Philistines, after having spread the good news of Saul's death "in the temple of their idols (בית עצביהם) and among their people", took his armor to "the temple of the Ashtoreths" while his body (גויתו) was fastened to the wall of Beth-Shan. No indication is given there what happened to Saul's head. The Chronicler's version differs significantly here.

Apart from indicating that the news was spread "among their idols" (את עצביהם) and that the armor was taken to "the temple of their gods"[7] (בית אלהיהם) (in stead of to the בית עשתרות in 1 Sam 31:10), the Chronicler mentions that Saul's head/skull (גלגלתו) was "fastened … in the temple of Dagon" (in stead of "his body against the wall of Beth Shan" in 1 Sam 31:10). Although the Chronicler did not mention explicitly the cutting-off of Saul's head, this is implied here. With this change the Chronicler solved the mystery remaining in 1 Samuel 31 about what happened to Saul's head, since it does not play any further role in that narrative. However, this change in

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7     Frevel has indicated that references to female gods were systematically omitted by the Chronicler. See Christian Frevel, "Die Elimination der Göttin aus dem Weltbild des Chronisten," *ZAW* 103 (1991): 263–271.

Chronicles also emphasises the humiliation and mockery accompanying the death of Saul—a humiliation initiated and concluded by the Philistines.

After it was mentioned in verse 11 that "all Jabesh-Gilead" ("the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead" in 1 Sam 31:11) heard of what happened to Saul under the hands of the Philistines, verse 12 continues indicating that their "valiant warriors" took "the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons" to Jabesh. The indication in 1 Samuel 31:12 about the valiant men of Jabesh-Gilead journeying "through the night" was omitted, and obviously also the reference to "the wall of Beth-Shan" which is not part of the Chronicler's version. 1 Samuel 31:12 continues with an indication that the bodies of Saul and his sons were cremated there. This detail was left out by the Chronicler. In the second last sentence of verse 12 the Chronicler then merges the information provided in the first two sentences of 1 Samuel 31:13 into one sentence, changing the "tamarisk" of 1 Samuel for some unknown reason into an "oak."

1c    Verses 13–14

The last two verses are the Chronicler's own material, since it is not attested in 1 Samuel 31 (MT or LXX). It is clear that the Chronicler wanted to give a theological interpretation to Saul's death. According to verse 13 Saul died "because of his unfaithfulness in which he as acted unfaithfully against Yahweh" [my translation] (the noun and verb are from מעל).[8] This unfaithfulness is then defined in two statements: On the one hand it is indicated that "he did not keep the word of the Lord", while on the other hand Saul is accused of having "consulted a medium, seeking guidance," and that he "did not seek guidance from the Lord." The ironic wordplay between "Saul" (שָׁאוּל) and "to consult" (לִשְׁאוֹל), as well as the use of the verb "seek" (דרשׁ) which occurs prominently in the Chonicler's *Sondergut* elsewhere in the book, are strong indications of the writer's theological evaluation of Saul.

Verse 14 continues with the statement that "the Lord put him to death" (in Hebrew: "he put him to death"). There is general agreement among exegetes that the unidentified subject of the Hebrew verb is Yahweh.[9] This is quite significant for the Chronicler's understanding of Saul's death. The next sentence which has the same subject: "the Lord … turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse," shows that the Chronicler understood the transfer of the kingship from Saul to David as an act of Yahweh. It is noteworthy that Saul is never called "king" in this narrative, although this last verse suggests that he was in charge of the kingdom (המלוכה).

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[8]    The root מעל (both as verb or noun) occurs prominently in Chronicles, forming a theological line throughout the book. See the discussion of Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 289.

[9]    See, e.g., Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 291 and Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 524–5.

Although this account of Saul's death is the only full narrative about him in Chronicles (in contrast to the elaborate presentation of Saul in Samuel), Saul is also present in the genealogies. The next subsection gives a brief overview of those genealogies.

## 2    Saul in the genealogies

A special section at the end of the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 8 (8:33–40) embeds Saul in the lineage of Benjamin. The brief section in 8:29–32 introduces some people who were probably from Benjaminite descent, but settled around Gibeon. The mentioning of "Gibeon" is important since this town was closely related to Saul (whose lineage is provided in the next subsection). Interestingly, "Gibeon" is also mentioned later in Chronicles as the place where the tabernacle rested before it was brought to Jerusalem (see 1 Chr 16:39; 21:29; 2 Chr 1:3). The subsection in 8:33–40[10] forms a continuation of the genealogy provided in 8:29–32, since it traces the lineage of Jeiel through Ner and Kish to Saul. This subsection closes in verse 40 with the remark, "All these were the descendants of Benjamin." With this remark an arc is drawn from 8:1 where the Benjaminite genealogy was opened.

With the remark, "So All Israel was enrolled by genealogies; and these are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel," the Chronicler concludes in 9:1a a great genealogical construction that opened in 1:1 with "Adam," but particularly in 2:1–2 with "the sons of Israel." Chapters 2–8 are presented in this way by the Chronicler as a very elaborate genealogical social identity map of "All Israel" who is pertinently mentioned in this closing stone to the construction.

Verse 9:1b continues with a description of the inhabitants of post-exilic Jerusalem, but the last few verses of this chapter jumps back to Saul again. Commentators are in agreement that the Chronicler (or those responsible for the final composition) probably included the genealogy of Saul here in order to lead over to the narrative part starting with the death of Saul in chapter 10. Apart from 8:39–40 the rest of the Benjaminite genealogy discussed above (in 8:29–40) is reproduced here in 9:35–44 (with only minor changes). The last two verses of chapter 8 were probably added for the purpose of concluding the Benjaminite context within which Saul features (as we have seen above). In the case of 9:35–44 the literary context is different, and the same addition was therefore not taken over here.

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[10]    See Anne E. Gardner, "1 Chronicles 8:28–32; 9:35–38. Complementary or Contrasting Genealogies?" *ABR* 55 (2007): 13–28 who regards this subsection to be earlier than the Saul genealogy in 9:35–38.

## 3      Further references to Saul

A few other passing remarks to Saul are included in Chronicles, namely in 11:2; 12:1, 2, 20(2x), 24, 30(2X); 13:3; 15:29; 17:13; 26:28.[11]

In 11:2 "All Israel" is addressing David at Hebron, indicating that they have regarded him as military leader for some time already, "even while Saul was king". This is the first time that Saul is called "king" in Chronicles. However, one should take note that this does not belong to the Chronicler's *Sondergut*, but was rather taken over from 1 Samuel 5:2. Christine Mitchell's observation should also be taken note of here. She indicates:

> [I]t is important to notice that only once Saul is described as king (מלך) in Chronicles, and it is in 11:2. Here it is the people who described Saul as having ruled (שאול מלך), using the verb rather than the noun to describe Saul. Because the verb is used to describe his action rather than the noun to describe his status, it could be implied that while he did act as a king, he may not have been one. Moreover, since it is the people and not the narrator who describes Saul as מלך, we might even wonder about whether they perceived his status correctly. In sum, it is as if Saul was never really a king at all, and the one mention in 11.2 with its attendant ambiguities is there simply to emphasise Saul's non-kingship.[12]

In 12:1–2 we find an introduction to "the men who came to David in Ziklag." The temporal indication situates this episode in the time "while he was banished from the presence of Saul son of Kish." This remark occurs in the Chronicler's *Sondergut*, but it shows that the Chronicler presupposed knowledge of the Deuteronomistic account of Saul's strained relationship with David. The Chronicler continues to identify those men who came to David as "kinsmen of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin," specifying that they could shoot arrows and sling stones with both hands. The fact that the Chronicler presupposed knowledge of the strained relationship between Saul and David also becomes apparent in verse 20 (19 in NRSV) where it is stated that some of the men of Manasseh defected to David as well when they fought together with the Philistines against Saul. A parenthetic remark added by the Chronicler specifies this remark, however, saying that David and his men in fact did not help the Philistines against Saul, because they decided after deliberation that that would be too dangerous, should David suddenly join Saul in battle.

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[11]   According to an SESB search, Klein omits 12:24 from this list, but adds 17:13 where Saul is not mentioned explicitly in the Hebrew text. He is indirectly called David's predecessor there. See Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 284 and 382.

[12]   Christine Mitchell, "The Dialogism of Chronicles," in *The Chronicler as Author. Studies in Text and Texture* (eds. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 321.

Verse 24 (23 in NRSV) in 1 Chronicles 12 then introduces the list of armed men who came to David at Hebron "to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, as the Lord had said." In verse 30 (29 in NRSV) some Benjaminites are also listed with the specification that they were brothers (i.e. kinsmen) of Saul. It is further indicated that these men "remained loyal to Saul's house until then." These references are again part of the Chronicler's *Sondergut*.

In 1 Chronicles 13:3 the Chronicler offers his account of the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. This section probably refers to 2 Samuel 15:24–29, although these texts cannot be considered parallel. In the Chronicler's version David addresses his men saying that they should bring the Ark to Jerusalem since "we have not turned to it in the days of Saul". The verb used here is דרשׁ ("seek")—a verb which occurs prominently in Chronicles and is typical of the Chronicler's theology. The ultimate goal of all Israel should be to "seek" Yahweh, because then they will experience rest and peace. It is therefore suggested here, with a clear relationship to the *Sondergut* in 10:13–14 (discussed above) that the era of Saul was not a time in which Yahweh was sought. The bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem in David's time gives expression to this attitude.

The reference to Saul in 15:29 is still situated in the Ark narrative, indicating that Michal, the daughter of Saul and wife of David, despised David in her heart when she saw him leaping and dancing in front of the ark as it was brought into Jerusalem.

Although Saul is not mentioned explicitly in 1 Chronicles 17:13 the reference there, namely "from him who was before you" (my translation), clearly refers to Saul. This reference which occurs in the context of the Chronicler's version of Nathan's oracle about the Davidic kingship, could be an amplification of the text (as the text-critical apparatus in BHS suggests) which was taken over from 2 Samuel 7:15 where Saul is mentioned by name in a similar phrase.

The last reference to Saul occurs in 1 Chronicles 26:28. There it is indicated that the "dedicated gifts"[13] from "Samuel the seer" and "Saul, the son of

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[13]    The term ההקדישׁ used here probably referred to the booty that was taken in war, as well as other gifts for the maintenance of the sanctuary. Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 495 finds this reference in the text strange: "In addition to David's contemporaries, the Chronicler (or the source from which he draws) claims that earlier Israelite leaders had contributed or dedicated (ההקדישׁע) booty from their wars for the maintenance of a temple that in fact they never saw nor presumably ever contemplated. In his enthusiasm the Chronicler (or his source) links people who were rivals to one another and to David in their lifetimes and who even, in the case of Saul, otherwise served in a completely negative capacity in Chronicles. The booty of Samuel would be from his war against the Philistines (1 Sam 7:7–14), while Saul's booty presumably was accumulated in his battles against the Ammonites (chap. 11), the Philistines (chaps. 13–

Kish," together with those of Abner and Joab, were placed in the care of David's treasurers. This section belongs to the Chronicler's *Sondergut*. Apart from the genealogies, this is probably the only reference in Chronicles that portrays a positive image of Saul, indicating that he contributed to the "dedicated gifts." However, it is suggested still that those were put in the care of David's officials—certainly an indication of the transfer of power.

## 4    Stating the problem

From these textual observations it becomes clear that the Chronicler indeed offers a very peculiar image of Saul. We have mentioned above that the Chronicler in more than one instance certainly presupposed the fuller account of Saul's life in Samuel.[14] But why does Saul receive so little attention in Chronicles compared to the Deuteronomistic history? As Knoppers puts it:

> If the author calls so much attention to the achievements of David and Solomon, why does he pay relatively little attention to their predecessor Saul? Only one full chapter is devoted to the reign of Israel's first monarch. That material comprises an account of the last event in Saul's life, his death in battle …, the author's negative evaluation …, and the author's momentous declaration that YHWH "turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse."[15]

However, the question can also be put in another way: Why did the Chronicler pay attention to Saul at all? Knoppers continues:

> Given that virtually all of the Chronicler's coverage of the monarchy is devoted to the Davidic monarchy centered in Jerusalem …, why does he devote any attention to Saul at all? Moreover, why does he provide a lengthy lineage for Saul's ancestral house as a preface to his account of Saul's rule … and allude to Saul in other contexts? If, in the Chronicler's view, "the kingdom of YHWH" was "in the hands of the sons of David," … why not just begin with the rise of David? As a Judean living in the late Persian or Hellenistic period, why does the Chronicler preface his narratives about David and Solomon with a short tale about Benjaminite Saul?[16]

I have the intention of revisiting these intriguing questions relating to the Chronicler's presentation of Saul. But, before venturing into another proposal, it is time to review past scholarship on this issue.

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14), and even the Amalekites (chap. 15) …" Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 877 is of the opinion that the term "seems to designate the holy offerings or donations."

[14] See Mitchell, "Dialogism," 311–326 for a discussion of what it delivers to read these narratives without taking cognisance of the *Vorlage* in comparison with a reading that does stand in dialogue with the *Vorlage*.

[15]   Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 188–189.

[16]   Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 189.

## C     OVERVIEW OF THE DIFFERENT HYPOTHESES CONCERNING THE FUNCTION OF THE CHRONICLER'S SAUL NARRATIVE

Knoppers remarks that "(t)he chapter dealing with Saul's final battle has itself become the scene of considerable scholarly conflict."[17] Although this is just a short narrative in the larger construction of Chronicles, it has generated a whole range of different scholarly positions. Knoppers has categorised this spectrum of views into four groups.[18] The first position emphasises that the Chronicler wanted to contrast Saul and David. A second group of scholars calls attention to the unique contribution of the Saul narrative in the Chronicler's theology, emphasising that the Chronicler's version also operates independently from the *Vorlage*. A third position is represented by scholars who downplay the contrast between Saul and David, as well as the unique theological contribution of the Saul narrative in Chronicles by emphasising the continuity between Saul's and David's reigns. The fourth group of scholars emphasise (like in the first position, although arguing from a different angle) the contrast that is constituted between Saul and David in the Chronicler's version.

It becomes clear here that the interpretation of the Chronicler's Saul narrative vacillates between an extreme position where scholars see no continuity between Saul and David, and an opposite extreme where the David narrative is merely seen as a continuation of the narrative that starts with Saul. In this respect Knoppers's remark points in the right direction:

> The interpretative issue may not be a question of either continuity or discontinuity, but of both continuity and discontinuity. The Chronicler's narrative draws a sharp line between the careers of Saul and David, but also avers that these monarchs are consecutive rulers of the same kingdom.[19]

At this point it is appropriate to consider the synthesis and new avenues that Knoppers offers. He brings together different aspects of the four positions discussed above.[20] He is careful not to fall into the trap of overemphasising either continuity or discontinuity in the Chronicler's account, acknowledging those elements of all four approaches that could be integrated into a synthetic inter-

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[17]     Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 526.

[18]     Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 526–531; Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 189–193.

[19]     Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29,* 528.

[20]     Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29,* 528–531 and more elaborately in Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 193–210. In the latter publication he attends more adequately to the second important consideration, namely the Chronicler's circumstances in Persian-period Judah. This aspect is also discussed in his treatment of the Benjaminite genealogy in 1 Chr 8. See his commentary in Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, 490–491. See also the discussion below.

pretation. He indicates two important considerations that should be taken into account when pursuing an understanding of the role and function of the Saul narrative in Chronicles:

> In my judgment, this question is best addressed by pursuing two considerations. The first has to do with the Chronicler's historiography, while the second has to do with the Chronicler's circumstances in Persian period Judah.[21]

In dealing with the first consideration, namely the unique style of the Chronicler's historiography and his focus upon the monarchy, Knoppers emphasises that there is one significant difference between Samuel's and the Chronicler's presentation of the monarchy:

> In Samuel the beginnings of the monarchy are steeped in controversy. … Compared to the profound suspicions about kingship in 1 Samuel, the Chronicler's condensed version of the Saul story is extraordinary. For the Chronicler, the institution of monarchy is not the issue. When Saul fails, a change of polity is not entertained … (W)hen Saul's rule ends in ignominy and three of his male heirs perish, the kingdom endures. … (T)he deaths of Saul and his three sons do not result in a change of polity. After Saul's failure, God turns the kingdom over to David …[22]

Knoppers continues to indicate a unique feature of the Chronicler's treatment of Saul, namely that the Chronicler shifted the focus from the institution of kingship to the conduct of the individual kings. The emphasis in Chronicles on Saul's death ignores this king's positive achievements, and thereby casts Saul's royal legacy in a negative light. However, with this strategy the Chronicler does not implicate the tribe of Benjamin, but rather the individual king. This strategy results into the reader realising that David comes to the kingdom not by "lineage, marriage, inheritance, or political machination," but "because of divine choice and human acclamation."[23]

When Knoppers comes to the second consideration, namely viewing the Chronicler's presentation of Saul against the background of the Chronicler's circumstances in Persian period Judah, he concentrates on the prominence of the tribe of Benjamin in this era. In his argumentation he relies heavily on archaeological evidence from particularly the northern areas of post-exilic Judah. He starts off by indicating that archaeological evidence shows that "(l)arge areas of Benjamin and some areas of the northern Judahite hill country seem to have been largely unaffected by the Babylonian invasions. … With the reestablishment of Jerusalem in the early Persian period as the capital of the province of Yehud and as the site of the Second Temple, the population of certain

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[21]  Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 528.
[22]  Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 528–9.
[23]  Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 530–1.

Benjaminite areas north of Jerusalem may have decreased slightly. Whatever the case, the area of Benjamin remained a major component of the province as a whole."[24] Knoppers rightly indicates that Benjamin's importance is attested in biblical texts stemming from this period (i.e. the Persian era). One prominent example is the inclusion of a very long genealogy of Benjamin in 1 Chronicles 8 (of which the Saul genealogy also forms part). Knoppers interprets this as follows: "In an era in which kinship relations and the question of ancestry were of great consequence for determining status and self-identity, the prominence of Benjamin is striking."[25] Knoppers also emphasises the sustained role that Benjaminites played in the monarchy: "During this period it is a consistent practice of Chronicles, over against the irregular manner of Kings … to mention Benjamin's involvement with Judah … In this manner, the author implicitly underscores a continuity between the tribal constitution of the Judahite monarchy (Judah, Benjamin, Levi) and the constitution of Yehud in his own day."[26] This description brings Knoppers to the crux of his interpretation of Saul in Chronicles:

> One can surmise, given Benjamin's position in Yehud, that the figure of Saul posed special challenges to the Chronicler as he composed his work. … The author deals with the challenges before him by taking aim at Saul himself, all the while dissociating Israel's first king from his personal relations to David and from the support of his own tribe. He characterizes Saul's rule as degenerate and rejected by YHWH. … Yet, not the tribe of Benjamin, but the actions of one member of one Benjaminite line are at issue. … The Chronicler urges his readers, including his Benjaminite readers, to consider David as a man for all Israel. … When seen against the negative paradigm of Saul's rule, the national consensus that characterises the rise and reign of David establishes a positive paradigm for later kings to emulate.[27]

Who these "later kings" are for the Chronicler's time is a matter not discussed further by Knoppers. This point will be taken up in our further discussion below.

## D    ENGAGEMENT WITH THE KNOPPERS SYNTHESIS

The attempt by Knoppers to synthesise the different interpretative positions on Saul in Chronicles is certainly laudable. He has enriched the discussion by bringing in the two important considerations. However, on certain points his synthesis can be criticized and even be taken further.

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[24]    Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 206–7.
[25]    Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 207.
[26]    Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 208–9.
[27]    Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 209–10.

In terms of his first consideration, namely the continuity and discontinuity between Saul and David in terms of monarchy and kingship, the following critical questions should be raised: According to Knoppers, the Chronicler "begins his narrative with the first king (1 Chr 10), and he ends it with Judah's last (2 Chr 36)."[28] However, the narrative construction of Chronicles does not end with Judah's last king; it rather ends with Cyrus, the king of Persia (2 Chr 36:22–23), who is indicated to be speaking in fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy.[29] This feature of Chronicles is, of course, quite significant within the late post-exilic circumstances within which the Chronicler writes. Also Knoppers's remark that "the rise and reign of David establishes a positive paradigm for later kings to emulate"[30] acquires a different nuance when read with this ending of the book in mind.

One could also ask whether the focus on the theme of monarchy should not be appended to, and integrated with, other related thematic observations. Whereas Knoppers rightly indicates that the continuation of the monarchy in David and his descendants is presented by the Chronicler as an initiative of Yahweh (particularly with reference to the *Sondergut* in 1 Chr 10:13–14), Dirksen indicates that there is a "purple thread" running through Chronicles to the effect that "the building of the temple is entirely God's business and historical contingency played no role in it."[31] These two views are, of course, not opposites or mutually exclusive. They emphasise different themes, but they also correlate in their observation that there is a tendency in Chronicles to emphasise that historical contingency does not have the last word. An emphasis on Yahweh's active initiative in both kingship and temple building seems to be a prominent feature of the Chronicler's narrative. These two themes merge remarkably in the last speech in the book: "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth Yahweh, the God of heaven, gave to me. And He ap-

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[28]  Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29*, 528.

[29]  McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles*, 22 discusses the ending of Chronicles with reference to its authorship. He mentions some of the arguments that are normally used in debates to support the point of view that the last two verses of 2 Chr 36 were added by another hand than the original author(s). He also refers to the fact that the doublet with Ezra 1:1–3a has prompted different theories about common authorship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah—a view that has been refuted in recent scholarship. One clue given by McKenzie should be highlighted, however: "(I)t is just as likely that the doublet was added secondarily to one of the works in order to connect it with the other one, particularly since the canonical order does not match the sequence of events that they relate" (22). My opinion is that the Chronicler deliberately ended his work with these words in order to present his (later in origin) historiographical work as the prelude (earlier in events) of the history of restoration described in Ezra-Nehemiah.

[30]  Knoppers, "Israel's first king," 210.

[31]  Dirksen, *1 Chronicles*, 163.

pointed me to build for him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah" (2 Chr 36:23 — my translation).

In terms of the second consideration, namely the late Persian circumstances in which the Chronicler writes, Knoppers has also deepened the scholarly discussion on the function of the Chronicler's Saul narrative. However, two aspects of the historical context could have been highlighted more in Knoppers's working out of the second consideration. Firstly, the fact that Jerusalem and the Second Temple were geographically situated in the border region between Judahite and Benjaminite territory,[32] while David and Solomon, the temple builders, were from Judahite origin, most probably forms the backdrop for the rather complex portrayal of the relationship between Judah and Benjamin in Chronicles. The Benjaminite background emphasised by Knoppers in his synthesis therefore also provides the context within which the thematic relationship between kingship and temple building (referred to above) can be understood more adequately.

Secondly, Knoppers's consideration of the historical context unfortunately only focuses on the local inner-Yehudite dynamics. In other discussions[33] Knoppers has rightly emphasised that the international context of the late post-exilic era should be taken into account in our interpretations of Chronicles. His second consideration can therefore be enriched by also considering the international context of the Chronicler's time. I will try to show below that a consideration of the Persian royal ideological discourses may potentially further deepen our understanding of the Chronicler's Saul narrative.

In the next section I will attempt a further development of Knopper's synthesis, taking into account the desiderata indicated above.

## E     A FURTHER ATTEMPT

Knoppers's synthesis can in my view be broadened on three levels. Firstly, the Benjaminite link of Jerusalem and the Second Temple can be integrated into his discussion of the prominence of the tribe of Benjamin. Secondly, the rela-

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[32]  1 Chr 9:3 and Neh 11:4 witness to a Benjaminite presence in Jerusalem in the Second Temple period. See also the discussion of Phillip R. Davies, "The Trouble with Benjamin," in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (eds. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim and W. Brian Aucker, Leiden: Brill, 2007), 93–111.

[33]  E.g. Gary N. Knoppers, "Greek historiography and the Chronicler's history: A reexamination," *JBL* 122/4 (2003): 627–650. See also how I have taken a cue from his emphasis on the international context in the following publications: Louis C. Jonker, "The Cushites in the Chronicler's version of Asa's Reign: A Secondary Audience in Chronicles?" *OTE* 19/3 (2006): 863–881; "The Chronicler's Portrayal of Solomon as the King of Peace within the Context of the International Peace Discourses of the Persian Era," *OTE* 21/3 (2008): 653–669.

tionship between the themes of monarchy and temple can be further developed, but should also be brought into relation to the theme of rest/peace which is so prominent in Chronicles. And thirdly, the international backdrop of Persian royal ideology should also be taken into account in the interpretation of the first two aspects mentioned here. I will therefore start my discussion with the third point so that it may inform our discussion of the first two points.

## 1    Royal imperial ideology at the end of the Persian (Achaemenid) era

Knoppers's emphasis of the inner-Yehudite context of rivalry between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin as backdrop for our interpretation of the Chronicler's Saul narrative should be broadened to include the wider imperial context. In my presentation of this wider historical context I rely heavily on the work of the ancient history scholar, Josef Wiesehöfer.[34]

Two themes of Persian history will be highlighted here, namely (i) the administrative system of the Achaemenid Empire, and (ii) the ideological traits of Persian kingship (with special reference to the notion of *Pax Achaemenidica*).

In one of his most recent publications[35] Wiesehöfer comments as follows about the *administrative system* of the Achaemenid Empire:

> (I)t is quite clear that full uniformity of the administrative structures on a provincial level and of the relations between the official authorities and the subjects never existed. Depending on tradition, members of royal houses, Persian aristocrats, local dynasts, or city kings acted differently at or below the satrapy level, united only in their common responsibility to the Great King or the satrap.[36]

Wiesehöfer indicates, however, that the lack of administrative uniformity in the Persian Empire did not imply that there was not a sense of political unity. He continues:

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[34]    I hereby acknowledge not only the many sound publications of Wiesehöfer, but also the personal conversation I was able to have with him during June 2009 in Kiel. This conversation gave me the opportunity to clarify some of the aspects of his work, but also to test my hypotheses with him; for this I want to express my gratitude. Another elaborate work on the Persian era by a specialist in the field which could be used with great benefit is: Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander. A History of the Persian Empire* (Translated by Peter T. Daniels, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

[35]    Josef Wiesehöfer, "The Achaemenid Empire," in *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires* (eds. Ian Morris and Walter Scheidel, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 66–98.

[36]    Wiesehöfer, "The Achaemenid Empire," 85.

> Although basically "composite" in character, the Achaemenid Empire was not simply an ensemble of countries and peoples or a 'confederation' of political entities with only loose ties among them; institutional variety does not exclude political unity. On the contrary, … the Achaemenids were able to make cultural diversity serve the needs of imperial unity. … To their subjects they applied a clear and simple standard: loyalty … was rewarded, disloyalty severely punished. … In general, the Persians fostered good relations with organizations and elites in subjugated territories as a means of pacification and of lowering the costs of running the empire. Respect for the cults of subjugated peoples, the use of local elites as administrators of subjugated territories, and the fostering of an imperial ideology that encouraged a view of mutual benefit all created favorable preconditions for enhanced economic and political performance.[37]

A second aspect that should be considered here are *the ideological traits of Persian kingship*. Wiesehöfer mentions the following: "(A)s his kingship is owed to the favor of Auramazda,[38] the king is obliged to protect the god's good creation. … Order, not chaos, peace, not tension, and good conduct of the subjects and royal generosity, not disloyalty and kingly misbehavior, dominate the inscriptions and the imagery of the royal residences."[39] This royal ideology is closely linked to what Wiesehöfer calls a "Persian national identity." He describes it as follows:

> (A)lthough something akin to a "Persian national identity" can be noticed in the royal inscriptions, imperial ideology at the same time aimed at integrating the elites of the provinces within an empire-wide ruling class culture, even at integrating subjugated peoples into a kind of imperial "symbolic universe." No inhabitant of the empire was forced to choose between an "imperial" and a "local" identity. … However, (they were) not granted the possibility of rejecting this second identity by rebelling against Persian rule.[40]

The imperial ideology described here by Wiesehöfer is often referred to in the literature as the so-called *Pax Achaemenidica*.[41] It was an ideology that stressed the reciprocity of royal care and loyalty of the subjects. However, Wiesehöfer warns that one should not over-exaggerate the tolerant character of this ideology. There are two sides to this ideology:

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[37]  Wiesehöfer, "The Achaemenid Empire," 86.

[38]  Wiesehöfer, "The Achaemenid Empire," 94 indicates that "(t)he Persian kings … did not try to create and enforce a divine hierarchy: local gods were never seen as subordinate to Auramazda. "

[39]  Wiesehöfer, "The Achaemenid Empire," 88–89.

[40]  Wiesehöfer, "The Achaemenid Empire," 89–90.

[41]  See also Wiesehöfer, "From Achaemenid Imperial Order to Sasanian Diplomacy: War, Peace, and Reconciliation in Pre-Islamic Iran," in *War and Peace in the Ancient World* (ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub, London: Blackwell, 2007), 124–127.

> On the one hand, the writings of the Achaemenid kings presuppose that subject loyalty is the norm, and they consider it a divine command and royal responsibility to provide justice, "truth," and well-being for all the inhabitants of the Empire. In turn, the well-being of the inhabitants is also desired by the gods, and Ahura Mazda qualifies the king specifically for these tasks. However, the inscriptions are very clear about the threat of sanctions that must be borne in mind by those who do not wish to follow divine and royal command. … A stick-and-carrot guarantee of well-being and graveyard silence after the suppression of rebellions were the two sides of the pax Achaemenidica at all times.[42]

Elsewhere[43] Wiesehöfer indicates that this might also be an explanation for the fact that very peaceful scenes were depicted on the outer walls of the royal palace in Persepolis, but the inner walls show battle scenes and scenes of subjugation.

These two points of background—the Persian administrative system and royal ideology—may help us to a more sophisticated understanding of the Chronicler's Saul narrative. We may assume that the Chronicler, being part of the literate elite in Jerusalem,[44] was fully exposed to this administrative system and royal imperial ideology. When this is realised, the other two levels of Knoppers's synthesis can also be deepened. I therefore turn to the relationship between Judah and Benjamin, as well as the theme of monarchy, in the next two subsections.

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[42]  Joseph Wiesehöfer, "The Achaemenid Empire in the Fourth Century B.C.E.: A Period of Decline?" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century* B.C.E. (eds. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Rainer Albertz, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 26.

[43]  Wiesehöfer, "From Achaemenid Imperial Order," 126.

[44]  The accepted position in Chronicles scholarship is that the author(s) of Chronicles should be sought among the literate elite in Jerusalem. (See the short but excellent summary in Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 16–17.) The Chronicler was particularly interested in the Davidic dynasty, the temple in Jerusalem, its clergy and its cult. Chronicles leaves the impression that he had inside knowledge about those institutions and could therefore probably have been a member of the temple staff, or at least part of the literate cultic leadership in Jerusalem. Scholars indicate that the portrayal of the Levites in Chronicles is very special, which would provide an argument for regarding the Chronicler as one of the Levitical priesthood. See Gary N. Knoppers, "Hierodules, Priests, or Janitors? The Levites in Chronicles and the History of the Israelite Priesthood," *JBL* 118/1 (1999), 49–72. The issues reflected in the book convince scholars that the Chronicler must have been an inhabitant of the post-exilic Persian province of Yehud.

## 2     Judah and Benjamin

While Knoppers is certainly right to emphasise the rivalry between Judah and Benjamin (or, in other words, between supporters of the former House of David and the House of Saul respectively) that continued into the Persian era, one should not overstate the opposition between them. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the Chronicler's construction and ordering of the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1–9 correlate Judah and Benjamin. The emphasis in the genealogies is unambiguously on Judah, Levi and Benjamin. However, many scholars (including Knoppers)[45] have identified a ring structure in the ordering of the genealogical material in which Judah and Benjamin are put on a par. Secondly, the Chronicler emphasises in the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 8:29–32 that the Benjaminites settled around Gibeon. In the later narratives of the Chronicler, he indicates that the tabernacle remained in Gibeon for a while. All these references (1 Chr 16:39; 21:29; 2 Chr 1:3) are in the Chronicler's *Sondergut*. It seems that the Chronicler wanted to emphasise the close Benjaminite link with the sanctuary. Thirdly, it should not be forgotten that the centre of Davidic power, Jerusalem, was founded after Jebus that lay on the border between Judahite and Benjaminite territory, was conquered. The temple in Jerusalem was built on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Although the Jebusites themselves are not in any way related to Judah, the location of power of the Davidic house was surrounded by Benjaminite territory with a great probability of a Benjaminite presence in Jerusalem in the Second Temple period.[46]

These three points emphasise that the Chronicler certainly saw continuity between Judah and Benjamin (or David and Saul), as Knoppers has aptly indicated, but simultaneously the Chronicler also wanted to stress discontinuity between the two.

I would like to relate this peculiarity of the Chronicler's portrayal of the relationship between Judah and Benjamin to the issue of identity negotiation

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[45]     See Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, 260–5.

[46]     Where the border between the tribal areas of Benjamin and Judah was, cannot be established with certainty. There is a consensus among scholars that it must have been very near to Jerusalem. See e.g. Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), as well as his essay, "Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century B.C.E.," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (eds. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 19–52. There are some biblical indications (in Josh 18:28 and Judg 1:21) that would suggest that Jerusalem was even considered by some, or at some stage, to be part of the Benjaminite territory. This cannot be established with certainty, since archaeological evidence does not allow those detailed conclusions. However, the proximity of this tribal border to Jerusalem and the fact that borders shifted over time, most certainly created awareness in Jerusalem of the juxtaposition of Benjamin and Judah.

and hybridity.[47] Social identity theory teaches us that identity negotiation always takes place on different levels, but also in continuity *and* discontinuity with certain other social groups. Furthermore, identity negotiation of one group amidst other social groups may take place without excluding the possibility of categorisation within the group. The Saul narrative (with the related genealogies and other references to Saul in Chronicles) forms part of an *intra*-group categorization. The Chronicler, a staunch supporter of the Davidic house and the cultic centre in Jerusalem, was simply confronted by the fact that the surrounding Benjaminites had, in the more administratively relaxed Achaemenid dispensation, the opportunity to resuscitate their claims on the centre of political and cultic influence. And these claims had to be settled by indicating that the only Benjaminite king they had, Saul, was actually killed by Yahweh himself in order for the kingship to go over to a Judahite, David, and his house. But the Chronicler was equally confronted with the fact that the Judahite centre of political and cultic influence was situated near Benjaminite territory.

Furthermore, the Persian imperial ideology of the time would have made the Chronicler well aware of the fact that the Persian kings wanted order and peace in their subjugated provinces. There is therefore no desire on the Chronicler's part to estrange the Benjaminites. They are still a prominent, even a founding, part of the "All Israel" concept that the Chronicler is trying to foster in these days. When trying to establish oneself from a provincial point of view within the empire, one can simply not afford to emphasise the differences with the *in*-group too much. *Intra*-group identity negotiation takes place, but not at the expense of the concomitant processes of *inter*-group identity negotiation.

This description fits what is called hybrid identities in postcolonial theory.[48] We see here the overlapping identities of a Judahite who on one level distances him from Benjaminite power claims. But we also see in the Chronicler somebody who understands himself as an "All Israelite," that is as an inhabitant of All Israel situated as a province within the Persian Empire.

This leads us to the next point, which deals with the process of *inter*-group identity negotiation which is also witnessed in Chronicles.

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[47]   I have explained how I use insights from particularly social identity theory in my interpretation of Chronicles in various publications. See e.g. Louis C. Jonker, "Reforming history: The hermeneutical significance of the books of Chronicles," *VT* 57/1 (2007), 21–44; "Textual identities in the Books of Chronicles: The case of Jehoram's history," in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives* (eds. Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth Ristau, Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 197–217.

[48]   See e.g. Mark G. Brett, *Genesis. Procreation and the politics of identity* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000). His methodological presuppositions are described in the introduction, which bears the subtitle "The contest of methods."

## 3    Monarchy, Temple and Rest/Peace

Knoppers has emphasised in his synthesis that the focus in Chronicles is on the monarchy. He has rightly indicated that the monarchy as institution is not questioned in the Saul narrative, but the Chronicler emphasises right conduct on the side of the kings, using the very prominent oppositional verbs "to seek Yahweh" (דרשׁ) or "to violate/transgress" (מעל).

One should, however, also take the broader context of Chronicles into account here. The terms used here become paradigmatic in the Chronicler's description of further Judahite kings, often relating their success to the fact that they "sought" Yahweh, or their downfall, sickness or death to their "not seeking" or "transgressing against" Yahweh. It becomes clear from the royal narratives in 2 Chronicles 10–36 that "not seeking" and "transgressing" lead to chaos, destruction in battles, sickness and death. On the other hand, "seeking" Yahweh leads to peace, rest and quietness. The paradigm of this type of kingship is Solomon.[49] The Chronicler (like no other writer in the Hebrew Bible) makes him "a man of rest," also etymologising his name to link him with the theme of peace (1 Chr 22:9).

This view on what the Chronicler considered to be the ideal kingship is also closely related to the temple. In the Chronicler's version of David's speech in which Solomon is ordered to build the temple, David indicates that he had planned to build a "house of rest" for the ark of the covenant of the Lord (1 Chr 28:2). Since he has too much blood on his hands, this task goes to Solomon. It is therefore suggested that the temple built by Solomon will be the ultimate place of rest, order and peace—the theme which is also closely associated with the kingship as shown above. Interestingly enough, 1 Chronicles 28:2 indicates the temple as a place of rest for the Ark of the Covenant, which we know was in Benjaminite Gibeon at the time.

We are again witnessing how the Chronicler is (consciously or subconsciously) interacting with the Persian imperial context of his own time. When negotiating an *inter*-group social identity (i.e. bringing the provincial and imperial contexts into interaction with one another) in the late Persian era, the Chronicler finds the notion of peace and order—so prevalent in the Persian empire—quite useful to describe the monarchical past of All Israel. However, he redefines the basis for peace and order in terms of his own local religious framework, namely "to seek Yahweh." On one level, the Chronicler thinks and writes as a citizen of the empire. On another level, the Chronicler claims validity for the All Israelite religion by making Yahweh the final source of peace and order. Again, we see hybridity in action here—not the one or the other, but rather both identities.

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[49]    See my discussion of the Chronicler's Solomon in Jonker, "Chronicler's Portrayal of Solomon," 653–669.

When interpreted in this way, the theme of monarchy which is so prominent in Chronicles, is not used out of merely historiographical interest, or for the sake of advocating the resurrection of the Davidic monarchy. The Chronicler's development of this theme, taking his conceptual resources from their Judahite past, rather functions as an instrument for negotiating social identity within a context in which the Persian royal imperial ideology had widespread influence.

Within this context it is therefore important to see where the Chronicler's monarchical construction leads to. As indicated above, this construction does not end with the last king of Judah, but rather with the first king of Persia. Cyrus is indicated to be the king to whom all the kingdoms of the earth were given *by Yahweh*—the same attribute associated with David at the end of the Saul narrative. And Cyrus is the one receiving the command *from Yahweh* to rebuild the temple—the "house of rest" of Solomon—in Jerusalem. Is the suggestion here perhaps that the Persian monarchy should be accepted as the continuation of the House of David, provided that Yahweh is "sought" by them?

We witness here the process of negotiating social identity operating on the level of *inter*-group categorisation. All Israel, the identity concept that the Chronicler attempts to develop, is indicated to be entirely part of the Persian Empire, subjugated to the Persian monarchy. However, simultaneously and not in contradiction, the Chronicler emphasises that Yahweh, the God of their pre-exilic Judahite kings, should be sought by this monarchy. That will lead to peace and order.

## F    CONCLUSION

We are well aware that the Chronicler's voice was not the only one during the late Persian period in Yehud negotiating its way through the socio-political and socio-religious contours of the day. And we also know that the Saul narrative had an "afterlife" in literature of later eras (e.g. in Josephus, in Rabbinic literature and among the early Christian fathers).[50]

But our knowledge of divergent voices on Saul and the ongoing *Nachwirkung* of this narrative convinces us all the more that this literature, including the Chronicler's Saul narrative, reflects the very complex processes of coming to terms with the contemporary circumstances of the interpreters.

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[50]    For a compact overview of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Saul in later literature, see Hentschel, *Saul*, 206–232. See also Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus' View of Saul," in *Saul in Story and Tradition* (eds. Carl S. Ehrlich and Marsha C. White, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2006), 214–244; Hanna Liss, "The Innocent King. Saul in Rabbinic Exegesis," in *Saul in Story and Tradition* (eds. Carl S. Ehrlich and Marsha C. White, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2006), 245–260.

May we perhaps see the Chronicler as a master of "speaking-in-the-im-perium?" Perhaps we may interpret the Chronicler's voice as a remarkable attempt to come to terms with Yehud's provincial existence in the late Persian Empire.

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