

6 A Literary and Discourse Analysis of the Contexts of Genesis 14: 2 Samuel 7

As evidenced in the last chapter, the interpretation of Genesis 14 has been greatly enlightened by a co-reading of some of its contexts (Genesis 12-13, 15, 17, 22 and 49 and Numbers 22-24). The initial divine promise to the patriarchs was partially fulfilled (Genesis 49 and Numbers 22-24) but was greatly refined and streamlined into a theological thrust, namely, the promise of a kingly, messianic figure in the future. Surely the promise heightens expectations, but the question remains: did this figure already appear in the history of Israel? If so, might it be King David or King Solomon, for both figures are closely tied to the text of 2 Samuel 7? Nonetheless, what specifically links 2 Samuel 7 with Genesis 14 and Numbers 22-24 is the ֶלֶל-theme. Due to this thematic connection, it is a justifiable undertaking to attend to 2 Samuel 7.

6.1 A Study of 2 Samuel 7 and Its Relationship to Genesis 14 (and Its Contexts)

Scholars have closely studied the text of 2 Samuel 7. Several critical issues, though somewhat relevant, cannot be dealt with at length in this paper. Rather than addressing these four issues, we defer them for closer treatment to an impressive corpus of literature: first, the text's relationship to Deuteronomistic History (DtH);³⁴⁴ second,

³⁴⁴ Based on Martin Noth's influential thesis, Deuteronomy through Kings constitutes a single work under the work of a Deuteronomist. Noth's proposal can be found in his *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981). See Gary N. Knoppers, "Introduction," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 18, concerning the confusing publishing data for Noth's book (from one German book into three English books). Among all the surveys regarding DtH, the best (and most up-to-date) article is written by Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, "Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues," in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. T. Römer, A. de Pury and Jean-Daniel Macchi, JSOTSup 306 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 24-141. In this article, the authors provide: (1) a prehistory study of Joshua-Kings; (2) the discovery of the Deuteronomic Phenomenon; (3) the thesis of a Deuteronomistic Historiography (Noth's thesis reiterated); (4) reactions to Noth's thesis; (5) further developments based on Noth's thesis; (6) its application to other biblical corpora; and (7) its current debate. They have shown the growth of Noth's thesis and its complexity due to diverse evolutions. For 1-2 Samuel in DtH, see *ibid.*, 123-28. A simplified version of Noth's theory compared to others in diagrammatic summary can be found in Joyce Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, TOTC (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1988), 30. According to Baldwin (*1 and 2 Samuel*, 30-32), biblical scholarship has shifted its view of the compositional nature of Genesis-Kings from Wellhausen's Hexateuch-Collections, to Noth's Tetrateuch-Deuteronomistic History, to treating Genesis-Kings as a "standard" unit. Adherents of DtH like Dennis J. McCarthy have argued that 2 Samuel 7 is one of the key structural texts in DtH. See his "2 Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomic History," *JBL* 84 (65): 131-38.

its textual dependence and how it gives priority to Psalm 89 and 1 Chronicles 17,³⁴⁵ third, the matter of determining the conditionality or unconditionality of David's covenant in 2 Samuel 7;³⁴⁶ and fourth, its history, reconstructed based on the text.³⁴⁷

345 Specifically, we are not interested in dating these texts. Nonetheless the literary relationship between Samuel and Chronicles is a broad topic. Most scholars agree, however, that the Chronicler cites the materials from Samuel-Kings. See Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, WBC, vol. 14 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1986), xxiii; cf. Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, WBC, vol. 15 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), xviii and Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 16. For Chronicler's use of Samuel-Kings, see Kai Peltonen, "Function, Explanation and Literary Phenomena: Aspects of Source Criticism as Theory and Method in the History of Chronicles Research," in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, ed. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenize, JSOTSup 263 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 18-69 in which he discusses three theories regarding sources for Chroniclers, thus extending the focus beyond Samuel-Kings. Regarding these three texts (2 Samuel 7//1 Chronicle 17, Psalm 89), nearly all commentators agree that 1 Chronicles 17 is literally dependent on 2 Samuel 7. See Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 198. Furthermore, Psalm 89 complicates the picture of the literary dependence of these three texts. Sarna ("Psalm 89," 36-37) lists three possible literary relationships between these three texts: (1) The Poetic version appeared/was written later than the prose version; thus, Psalm 89 depends on 2 Samuel 7//1 Chronicles 17; (2) the opposite of the above; and (3) all three texts access a common source of the original oracle (each option being supported by bibliographical data there). A. A. Anderson gives a synthesis of the complicated picture in his *2 Samuel*, WBC, vol. 11 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 113. For a textual layout of all three passages and a study on them, see John L. McKenzie, "The Dynastic Oracle: II Samuel 7," *TS* 8 (47): 187-218.

346 Though the word "covenant" is absent in 2 Samuel 7, some scholars, like VanGemern, generally regard God's promise there as a covenant; see his, *Progress of Redemption*, 230-35. The nature of the Davidic Covenant (with others like Abrahamic and Mosaic) has been a subject of debate for biblical scholars, and Knoppers in particular provides an insightful analysis of the debate. Based on our three texts (plus Psalm 132), he probes some of the neglected areas in scholarly approaches to the Davidic covenant and argues against the position that the stark dichotomy of the nature (conditionality/unconditionality) of the Davidic covenant cannot be sustained. Knoppers, "David's Relation to Moses: The Contexts, Content and Conditions of the Davidic Promises," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, JSOTSup 270 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 91-118.

347 Some scholars have attempted to reconstruct the history behind 2 Samuel 7 and most would argue for a royal ideology or religio-political agenda behind this text. For the former, see for example, Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 229-73; see 246-63 particularly for 2 Samuel 7. Similarly, see Timothy Veijola, *Die Ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975), 68-79. See G. W. Ahlström, *Psalm 89: Eine Liturgie aus dem Ritual des leidenden Königs* (Lund: Gleerups, 1959), 182-85; cf. Veijola, "Der Prophet Nathan und der Tempelbau," *VT* 11 (1961): 113-27. Tomoo Ishida argues for 2 Samuel 7 as the origin of Judean royal ideology; idem, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel: A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-Dynastic Ideology*, BZAW 142 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 99-117. For a religio-political agenda (to legitimize the Davidic dynasty and Jerusalem's temple), see Gwilym H. Jones, *The Nathan Narratives*, JSOTSup 80 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 59, in which Jones argues that the present form of 2 Samuel 7 serves as an introduction to the Succession Narrative.

In addition, we consign the detailed exegesis of the text to several outstanding scholars who have done a fine job analyzing the text.³⁴⁸

To reiterate, the concern is how the text rhetorically connects to Genesis 14 (12-15, 49) and Numbers 22-24. Adopting the same approach used in the Balaam episode, we will divide the text into two. After examining 2 Samuel 6 as a cotext for 2 Samuel, the rhetorical effect of the literary structure of 2 Samuel 7 will be investigated,³⁴⁹ and its literary and thematic correlation with Genesis 14 and Numbers 22-24 will be highlighted.

6.1.1 A Syntagmatic and Rhetorical Study of the Cotext of 2 Samuel 7, Particularly with 2 Samuel 6

Why 2 Samuel 6 is a cotexts for 2 Samuel 7 but 2 Samuel 8 is not a cotext needs an explanation. Recently, Eslinger, using rhetorical criticism, argues that 2 Samuel 6 is the rhetorical situation of the narrative context for 2 Samuel 7.³⁵⁰ From another angle, R. A. Carlson observes that there is a ring composition – that is, it begins and ends with the same word or phrase – based on David who “defeated Philistines” (אֶת-כָּל-שָׂרִים) (אֶת-כָּל-שָׂרִים)

³⁴⁸ J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, vol. 3, *Throne and City (II Sam. 2-8 and 21-24)* (Assen, the Netherlands: Van Gorcum, Assen, 1981); P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, AB, vol. 9 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1984); particularly with 2 Samuel 7, see Lyle Eslinger, *House of God*.

³⁴⁹ Due to the scope and other constrains of this project, our focus narrows to 2 Samuel 7; bringing in Psalm 89 and 1 Chronicles 17 will only complicate our analysis. Generally, most scholars consider 2 Samuel 7 the starting point for the study of the Davidic covenant (or the Nathan oracle). Thus, our analysis will examine 2 Samuel 7 in its present canonical shape within the Hebrew Bible. For an excellent study of Psalm 89, see David Volgger, *Notizen zur Textanalyse von Ps 89*, *Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament* 45 (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1994), cf. Mavine Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, WBC, vol. 20 (Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1990), 406-30. More recently, see Knut M. Heim, “The (God-) Forsaken King of Psalm 89: A Historical and Intertextual Enquiry,” in *King and Messiah in Israel*, 296-322. For 1 Chronicles 17, see Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 324-41. Compared to J. M. Myers, *1 Chronicles*, AB, vol. 12 (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 125-30, Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 174-84, this rates as a far better commentary of 1 Chronicles 17.

³⁵⁰ Eslinger, *House of God*, 14-15.

י) in 5:25 and 8:1, thus making 2 Samuel 6-7 a unit.³⁵¹ Furthermore, Carlson notes how 2 Samuel 6, as part of the Ark Narrative,³⁵² already hints at contention between temple and tent (בֵּית אֱלֹהִים respectively), thereby making 2 Samuel 6 part of the larger context for the interpretation of 2 Samuel 7.

Moving now to a syntagmatic study, the multiple occurrences of בָּרָךְ in 2 Samuel 6 and 7 has have become a theme.³⁵³ The blessing theme³⁵⁴ serves not only as a structural link between 2 Samuel 6 and 7 but also serves as the motive for David's actions in 2 Samuel 6 and what he subsequently proposed in 2 Samuel 7.

Both the structural link and motive in these two chapters are further reinforced by the narrator who adds another correlated element, namely בֵּית יְהוָה, to בָּרָךְ. David intended to bring the ark of God back to Judah, but because of the fatal incident with Uzzah, he was afraid and instead left the ark in the house of Obed-Edom (6:1-10). Observe how the following rhetorical effect of 6:11-12 builds on בָּרָךְ:³⁵⁵

(structural remark) וַיֵּשֶׁב אָרוֹן יְהוָה בֵּית עֶבֶד אָדָם הַגָּטִים שְׁלַשָּׁה חֲדָשִׁים
 וַיִּבְרֹךְ יְהוָה אֱתָה עֶבֶד אָדָם a
 וְאֶת-כָּל-בְּרִיתָה: b
 (structural remark) וַיַּגְדֵּל מֶלֶךְ קָדוֹר לְאָמֹר
 בָּרָךְ יְהוָה אֱתָה בְּיִת עֶבֶד אָדָם 'a'
 אֶת-כָּל-אַשְׁר-לֹא 'b'
 (structural remark) בְּעִבוּר אָרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים: b

351 R. A. Carlson, *David, The Chosen King: A Traditio-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1964), 99. It also explains why this phrase "the Lord gave David rest from all his enemies" is in 7:1. The Philistines are regarded as arch-enemies of Israel in the books of Samuel. Applying a broader stroke, David A. Dorsey has produced a chiastic structure for 2 Samuel 1-8 wherein David becomes king over Judah (2 Samuel 1-4) and over all Israel (2 Samuel 5-8). In the second section, Dorsey makes 2 Sam 7:1-17 the "climax: the promise of David's everlasting dynasty." Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 133.

352 For a preliminary understanding of the Ark Narrative, see Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David*, trans. Michael Rutter and David Gunn (Sheffield: Almond, 1982), 6-34; Antony F. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative: A Form-Critical and Traditio-Historical Study*, SBLDS 16 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1975), 6-54. More recently, Walter Dietrich and Thomas Naumann, *Die Samuelbücher*, ErFor 287 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 121-43. See a brief evaluation by Ronald F. Youngblood, "1, 2 Samuel," in *EBC*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), 593-94 and Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC, vol. 10 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 38-40.

353 It also serves as a semantic link back to our previous study of Genesis 14 (12-15) and Numbers 22-24.

354 Though not identical to ours, a similar idea is advocated by Carlson, *The Chosen King*, 97-99, cf. 55.

355 Cf. Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 191. He takes vv. 10-12 as a ABB'CCA' structure. Donald F. Murray has provided a different observation of vv. 10-12 but affirmed the rhetorical effect of the repeated elements in these verses. Murray, *Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension: Pragmatics, Poetics and Polemics in a Narrative Sequence about David* (2 Samuel 5.17-7.29), JSOTSup 264 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 131-33.

Note how this is almost verbatim in aa' and bb', and see how בֵּית is transposed in b and a'. Through this rhetorical and chiastic structure, the narrator's point is clear: in whomever's house (בֵּית) the ark of God dwells, the divine blessing (בָּרָךְ) is there.³⁵⁶ David was informed (יָגַד לְפָנָיו דָּיו) of this.³⁵⁷ Therefore the blessing theme – at least from the narrative's standpoint – becomes the main motive for David to complete the return of the ark to Judah (vv. 12b-15).³⁵⁸ The occurrences of בָּרָךְ connect to David who blessed the people (בָּשָׂר) after the ark was settled, made sacrifices (vv. 17-18), and then returned home to bless his own house (בֵּית, v. 20a).

It is possible to argue that the divine blessing is also the main motive for him to build a temple for God in 2 Sam 7:1-3,³⁵⁹ though his original intention (building a temple for God) is gradually transformed, via Nathan's oracle, into a prayer. Our argument is based on the syntagmatic combination of בֵּית and בָּרָךְ repeated in David's prayer in v. 29, וָבָרָךְ אֲתָּה בָּיִת עַבְדָּךְ . . . וּמִבְרָכָה יְבָנֶךָ בֵּית יְהָבָדָךְ.³⁶⁰ Therefore, the key theme for

356 Note that it did not happen in 1 Samuel 5, however, for the Philistines were devastated and afflicted when they housed the ark. It is unknown, however, what kind of blessing Obed-Edom experienced. Cf. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 105.

357 The description of blessing to the house of Obed-Edom is only known to the readers, not to David until the phrase יָגַד לְפָנָיו דָּיו. Murray remarks that this is the turning point of the story in 2 Samuel 6 (*Divine Prerogative*, 131).

358 Murray's perception that this part of the story has portrayed David's motive as "covert" and "self-interest" is unwarranted. See his *Divine Prerogative*, 131-32. In our judgment, Murray is misguided by his overall thesis of "divine prerogative and royal pretension," which is how he interprets 2 Samuel 6-7.

359 Cf. Eslinger, *House of God*, 23-24, who, like others, speculates about (and summarizes many of scholars' opinions on) the motive of David's plan of temple-building, asking pointedly if it resulted out of a heart of gratitude or out of the scheming mind of a politician. In contrast, our argument arises from reading what is hinted at in the text.

360 The root בָּרַךְ occurs in 2 Samuel in the following verses: 2:5, 6:11, 12, 18, 20, 7:29, 8:10, 13:25, 14:22, 18:28, 19:40, 21:3, 22:47. The usage of בָּרַךְ, except for 2 Samuel 6-7, can be divided according to these five designations: (1) the Lord blessed his people, 2:5; (2) a greeting is given, 8:10; (3) man's approval sought, 13:25; (4) a human blessing conferred upon another human, 14:22, 19:40, 21:3; and (5) accorded as praise to God 18:28, 22:47. Thus, with 2:5, the usage of בָּרַךְ in 2 Samuel 6-7 is unique in the sense that it is Yahweh who blessed his people, the exception being 6:18, 20. In these last two references, David could be regarded as God's agent, at least from a certain point of view (cf. 19:40). Here we should note a parallel role David plays in comparison with Melchizedek's. Melchizedek is the first king who blessed Abraham while David is the first Israelite king who blessed his people, Abraham's descendants (6:18).

2 Samuel 6-7 is rooted in these two words מִבְּנָה³⁶¹ and מִבְּנָה through our rhetorical and syntagmatic study.

6.1.2 A Rhetorical and Syntagmatic Study of 2 Samuel 7

This rhetorical study should begin with crediting Eslinger, who has successfully delimited 2 Samuel 7 as a rhetorical unit.³⁶² Nonetheless, it is indisputable that 2 Samuel 7³⁶³ is divided into two sections: vv. 1-17 and vv. 18-29.³⁶⁴ The skillfully constructed text attains the utmost in its rhetorical and discourse effects. It would be challenging to improve Fokkelman's lucid summary of the two sections:

The mortal [David] who thought of the initiative as his, and adopted the stance of a sender (*destinat^{eur}*) by giving God a temple (*bayit*), becomes the beneficiary (*destinataire*), and gains a certain immortality through the receipt of a lasting dynasty (*bayit*) from God. . . . All the mortal David can do is thank and praise.³⁶⁵

361 Murray has noted that the word serves as a thematic element in 2 Samuel 7. Idem, *Divine Prerogative*, 160-230. Abraham Malamat observes there is a word play on מִבְּנָה, similarly found in the Mari texts. See Abraham Malamat, "A Mari Prophecy and Nathan's Dynastic Oracle," in *Prophecy: Essays presented to Georg Fohrer on His Sixty-fifth Birthday 6 September, 1980*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 82. In critical scholarship, temple and dynasty have been the chief tenets or concerns by the DtH. See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 217-24. An unresolved issue is why a Deuteronomistic writer or redactor – presumed by advocates of DtH as the final editor of this text – allows vv. 5-7, the divine refusal to building a temple, into this text? Of course, the proponents of the DtH give various explanations yet still do not satisfy the inconsistency of their basic tenets. See an up-to-date evaluation and defense by a DtH proponent, Steven L. McKenzie, "Why Didn't David Build the Temple? The History of a Biblical Tradition," in *Worship and the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 284, ed. McKenzie, M. Patrick Graham and Rich R. Marrs (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 204-24. There is, however, a more satisfactory explanation we will explore in the following section. McCarter (*II Samuel*, 222) suggests that v. 13a is the "linchpin" binding together the two incongruous notions – the refusal of the temple and promise of a dynasty – and so it is highly editorial. Yet this supposed editorial lynchpin has ignored the story's rhetorical and discourse perspective.

362 Eslinger, *House of God*, 10-12.

363 See Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 207: the text of 2 Samuel 7 is a "photographic negative" of the previous chapter; the latter is composed of narrative, and it is only when we approach the end that we discover dialogue, while in 2 Samuel 7 the dialogues and David's prayer (speech) occupy the entire chapter except for a few clauses in narrative that serve as transitions.

364 For a subdivision of these two sections, see various commentaries.

365 Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 208.

As observed earlier, one should examine the rhetorical arrangement of 2 Samuel 7 through this key word **בֵּית** ("bayit").³⁶⁶ Therefore in the following subsections, we will first treat the oracle (vv. 1-17) followed by the prayer of David (vv. 18-29).

6.1.3 A Study of the Oracle of Nathan

The rhetorical question **הַאֲתָּה תַּבְנֵה לִי בֵּית לְשָׁבֵת**³⁶⁷ (in v. 5) is a good place to start in our analysis of the oracle's rhetorical effect. This question appears following two introductory formulae that closely resemble each other: (1) **הַהְוָא נָאָתָּה דְּבָרֵינוּ אֲלֵינוּ לְאֹמֶר** in v. 4 and (2) **כִּי יְהִי בְּלִילָה**, comprising this chapter's very first occurrence of this prophetic and solemn phrase (cf. v. 8). Cast in a prophetic setting, this rhetorical question serves as a response to the dialogue between David and Nathan concerning temple-building in vv. 1-3. Furthermore, the rhetorical question is tied to the following explanation (vv. 6-7), which clearly ends with another rhetorical question, **לִפְנֵי לְאָבִינְתָּם לְיִצְחָק אָזְרוּם**. Note that this rhetorical question changes the one in v. 5b from singular (**הַאֲתָּה**) to plural (**לִפְנֵי לְאָבִינְתָּם!**)³⁶⁸ The plural subject is **אֶת-עַמִּי אֲתִישָׁרָאֵל**, "my people,

366 Heinz Kruse, "David's Covenant," *VT* 35 (1985): 149-50. Kruse notes word play in the usage of "house."

367 The rhetorical question anticipated a negative answer – that God indirectly refused David's proposal. Literature abounds on this divine refusal of a royal plan to build the temple. For some up-to-date works, see Victor Hurowitz who compares this account with extra-biblical sources, and argues for the possibility of the deity rejecting some kings' plans for temple-building. Furthermore, he points to the uniqueness of 2 Samuel 7. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic writings*, JSOTSup 115, JSOT/ASOR Monograph Series 5 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 164-65. More recently, see Raymond Kuntzmann, "David, constructeur du Temple?" in *Figures de David À Travers la Bible*, ed. L. Desrousseaux and J. Vermeylen (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 139-56. Besides surveying the contemporary literature on this subject, Kuntzmann also looks at three biblical texts regarding the divine reasons why David was not allowed to build the temple. Cf. McKenzie, "Why Didn't David." On the surface, it may be true that God rejected David's plan; yet, through rhetorical and discourse analysis, the temple-building proposal may not be the "real" focus of 2 Samuel 7. Rather, it may serve as a narrative (plot-carrying) device. This will be examined in our study.

368 Cf. Gen 15:1.

369 Fokkelman also notes this singular to plural "you." Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 217. See Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 175. He misses the point when arguing that "the plural verbal (בְּנִים) tilts further as David's royal pretension."

Israel”³⁷⁰ (v. 7), thus introducing another “person” in the same topic besides David, and that is none other than the people of Israel.

The double designation “my people, Israel” serves a four-fold rhetorical function: (1) it echoes back to the term, **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, found twice in vv. 6-7a; (2) it connects them to David (v. 8) in that Yahweh placed David as “ruler” (**מֶלֶךְ**)³⁷¹ over Israel (**עַל-עֲמֵי עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל**)³⁷² (נִגְדָּר), with victory over his enemies (v. 9); (3) more clearly (note: **לְעַמִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל** **בְּנֵי**), “for my people, for Israel”), “my people, Israel” reiterates the divine promise that Israel will be planted in place securely (v. 10); and (4) since the period when Judges ruled over Israel (**עַל-עֲמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**), Yahweh now promises rest and peace to David (v. 11a).³⁷² The rhetoric function ends with a declaration reversing the rhetorical question in v. 5b and 7b: (v. 11b) “Yahweh will make³⁷³ a house for David.” An introduction to another “person” category in v. 12 immediately follows v. 11b to explicate what kind of **בֵּית** Yahweh will make for David.

Verses 12-13 are the crux of Nathan’s oracle because whatever appears after these two verses is merely a repetition of the essence contained there. After a description of David’s passing (**כִּי וּמְלֹא וּמִירָא שְׁבַבַּת אֶת-אַבְתָּחָר**, v. 12a), it logically follows that someone will take his place, **וְתַקְרִמֵּת אֶת-רוּעָךְ אֶת-רַיֵּךְ**. Thus it is essential for us to explore the term **רוּעָךְ** from both a rhetorical and discourse perspective.

370 The question seems to be directed to **שָׁבֵן** **אֶת-אֶחָר** **שְׁבַבַּת**. See the debate of **שְׁבַבַּת** in Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 381. He glosses it “as a metonym for ‘tribal leaders’.” Cf. Eslinger, *House of God*, 31-32. Based on Eslinger’s explanation, the inter-changeability of leaders and people whom God placed under them is possible in God’s covenantal claim. We prefer “people” to “leaders” because the word “people” occurs more frequently while words denoting “leaders” appears only here and in v. 11.

371 See Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings*, ConBOT 8 (Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 151-74. He has made an insightful study of this term **מֶלֶךְ**. After applying a syntagmatic and paradigmatic study, he points to its syntagmatic association with **עַם**, and argues for the term signifying whomever Yahweh chose was “conceived of as being Yahweh’s royal family.” In his paradigmatic study, he remarks that this term corresponds to **בָּן** (see *ibid.*, 172-72). We will explore the syntagmatic relationships of **בָּן**, **בָּת** and **בָּתָם** in our paper later. Cf. Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, chapter 8.

372 See the debate of perfectum copulativum in vv. 9-11 in Oswald Loretz, “The Perfectum Copulativum in 2 SM 7, 9-11” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 294-96. Recently, and contra Loretz’s conclusion, see Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 223-35, 381-82.

373 Fokkelman (*Throne and City*, 229) has commented with insight: “By using [this word] God stands outside the much discussed plane of ‘I build, you build’ and the material object which goes with it; he had already mockingly turned round on such building in the envelope of the oracle of refusal. . . . What is about to give us not a tangible material object. . . . The choice of ‘making’ also ensures that God, as builder, is not in line with 5:11c where Phoenicians ‘build a *bayit* = palace of David.’” Some suggest emending this word (**בָּשָׁם**) to **בָּנָה** due to various textual supports. See Murray who maintains the same reading (**בָּשָׁם**) as *lectio difficilior* in *Divine Prerogative*, 70.

The only appearance of **רֹעֵה** in 2 Samuel 7³⁷⁴ is cast syntagmatically in the multiple occurrences of **עֵם**, **ישָׁרָאֵל**, and **בְּנֵי יִשְׁרָאֵל**.³⁷⁵ Note how both **עֵם** and **ישָׁרָאֵל** disappear in the oracle section after v. 11 and only resurface in 7:23-24, 26-27 (in David's prayer). Furthermore, the narrator confines the identity of this "seed" in this phrase: **יֵצֵא מִמְשִׁיךְ** **רְשָׁעָךְ** **אֲשֶׁר** **רְשָׁעָךְ** **אֲשֶׁר** **רְשָׁעָךְ** **רְשָׁעָךְ**. This phrase appears verbatim in Gen 15:4 (אֲשֶׁר **יֵצֵא מִמְשִׁיךְ**) and 17:7-8 (vv. 7-8) in 2 Sam 7:12, we suggest that the narrator is influenced by both Genesis 15 and 17 as he develops his discourse on the promise to David's seed. This possibility is further strengthened by the verbal parallels evidenced in both 2 Samuel 7 and Genesis 15, 17 as we compare the notion of peaceful death and the raising up of someone in place of the person who will die peacefully:

Gen 15:15 **וְאַתָּה תִּבְאַל אֶל-אֶבְחָר בְּשָׁלֹם חַקְבָּר בְּשִׁיבָּה טוֹבָה**

2 Sam 7:12a **כִּי יָמַלְאָוּ מִירְאָךְ וְשַׁכְּבָתְךָ אַתָּה-אֶבְחָר**

Gen 17:7a **וְהַקְמָתִי אֶת-**

2 Sam 7:12b **תְּקִימָתִי אֶת-**

Most words in 2 Sam 7:12 either suggest the notion of peaceful death or contain literal citations directly from Genesis 15 and 17³⁷⁶ except for the last clause in 2 Sam 7:12b (**אַתָּה-מִמְלָכָתוֹ וְהַכִּינָה**). David's understanding of this promise in v. 12 further supports our contention. Note for example how, as he prayed in vv. 18-29, he repeated **אָדָם וָיְהָה** seven times: vv. 18, 19 (twice), 20, 22, 28 and 29. This divine name is unique because it is the same combination of God's names the writer of Genesis used when Yahweh promised Abraham a "seed" in Genesis 15:2, 8.³⁷⁷

Syntagmatically, the narrator takes pains to *differentiate* the "seed" as a person (third person masculine) from Israel as a people (**עֵם**, **ישָׁרָאֵל**, and **בְּנֵי יִשְׁרָאֵל**) by signifying **רְשָׁעָךְ** with **רְשָׁעָךְ** in v. 13 and **בָּנָךְ** in v. 14. Based on vv. 13-14, two explanations are offered.

³⁷⁴ The rare occurrence of **רֹעֵה** in 1-2 Samuel needs to be noted: 1 Sam 1:11, 2:20, 8:15, 20:42, 24:22[21], 2 Sam 4:8, 7:12 and 22:51. The syntagmatic use of **רֹעֵה** in the beginning (1 Sam 1:11, 2:20) and at the end (2 Sam 22:51) of the books of Samuel is significant. It first occurs in Hannah's prayer in 1 Sam 1:11. See J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, vol. 4, *Vow and Desire* (Assen, the Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1993), 37. There he prefers to interpret the phrase **רֹעֵה אֲנָשִׁים** "seed of men" as "one son." The last occurrence of **רֹעֵה** is in 2 Sam 22:51; it refers to David and his "seed" in David's song (**לְמַשְׁחָה-סִכְרָר**) in the context with this theologically loaded word **מִשְׁמָךְ**. In both references and here (7:12), this word has both theological and literary significance.

³⁷⁵ See vv. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11.

³⁷⁶ Note that the correlated word "king" (**מֶלֶךְ**) also appears in Gen 17:6, 16. Also, 2 Sam 7:12b alludes to Num 24:7 although the exact words are not used: cf. 2 Sam 7:12b to Num 24:7, **תְּמִימָה מִלְכָתוֹ**.

³⁷⁷ Kaiser, *The Messiah*, 80. Kaiser's comment is indebted to a related observation made by Carlson in *the Chosen King*, 127.

First, the phrase **הוּא וּבָנָה-בָּיִת לְשָׁמֵי**,³⁷⁸ which begins in v. 13, should be read in echo to v. 5b, **בָּנָה-בָּיִת לְשָׁמֵי**. Both phrases end with similar Hebrew consonants: **שׁ** and **ל**.³⁷⁹ Nonetheless, there is a fundamental difference in these two words. While the latter qualifies the **בָּיִת** unequivocally as a building, namely a temple, the former hints at something far more than a physical building (temple).³⁸⁰ By using the word **לְשָׁמֵי**, we believe the narrator tries to correct David's focus as well as the reader's, clarifying that this passage is *not* about a physical temple but about a dynasty or a kingdom, **מַמְלָכָה** as stated in vv. 12, 13, and 16. In these expressions, note the similarities regarding **מַמְלָכָה** in the following three verses:

וְהַסְנִיתִי אֶת-מַמְלָכָתוֹ 12
 וְכַנְתִּי אֶת-כְּסָא מַמְלָכָתוֹ עַד-עוֹלָם 13
 וְנַאֲמַן בַּתְּךָ וּמַמְלָכָךָ עַד-עוֹלָם 16

This notion – that is, that the purpose of this text concerns far more than a physical temple – is further fortified by the correlation of **בָּיִת** and **מַמְלָכָה** in v. 16: **בָּיִתְךָ וּמַמְלָכָךָ עַד-עוֹלָם וּנְאָמֵן**.³⁸¹ From a syntagmatic angle, moreover, **מַמְלָכָה** is twice described by this phrase **עַד-עוֹלָם**³⁸² once it is introduced in v. 12. Some scholars refuse to understand this phrase **עַד-עוֹלָם** as "for ever"³⁸³ but through our syntagmatic study, God's name is involved twice when this phrase occurs. To underscore this point, see **לְשָׁמֵי** in v. 13a and especially **שָׁמֵךְ** in v. 26a. It would not make any sense to gloss v. 26a as David prayed: "your (God's) name will be manifested for a while"; therefore, this phrase highlights an enduring aspect of this **מַמְלָכָה** that is impossible to find in the history of any human kingdoms.

Second, the narrator attempts to lessen some of the ambiguity in the word "seed" by qualifying it with **לְבָנָן** (v. 14) in addition to the word **הָוּא** (v. 13). The word **בָּנָן** is used three times in a construct state (as idiomatic, vv. 6, 7, 10). Nonetheless, like **עַד**, it is unique here (v. 14). The formula in which **בָּנָן** is found, **וְהָוּא יְהִי-לִי לְבָנָן אַנְיָ אַהֲרֹן**,³⁸⁴ on

378 Scholars have long noted that "he" (אָنָן) in v. 13 is there to contrast with the "you" (תְּמָנָן) in the question in v. 5. As early as 1926, W. Caspari has pointed this out. See *idem*, *Die Samuelbücher*, KAT, vol. 7 (Leipzig: A. Deichter, 1926), 482; quoted in Carlson, *The Chosen King*, 109.

379 Cf. Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 216.

380 Fokkelman (*Throne and City*, 216) offered a slightly different explanation of these two words, saying: "In this pair 'my Name' follows 'my dwelling' rhyming with it but at the same time being a subtle correction of it. The real resident of the temple is not to be God in person, but the Name."

381 Anderson has pointed out **בָּיִתְךָ וּמַמְלָכָךָ** as a possible case of hendiadys ("your royal house"). See *idem*, *2 Samuel*, 123. Syntagmatically, the word **בָּיִת** and **מַמְלָכָה** only occur in 2 Samuel in 3:10, 7:13 and 7:16. In 3:10, through Abner's mouth, the kingdom of the house of Saul will now be transferred to David and his throne will be established.

382 Cf. the phrase also in vv. 24-26, cf. v 29.

383 See Eslinger, *House of God*, 46-48 for his assessment on how we should gloss this phrase: "for ever or for a while." Cf. Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 194 (footnote 72).

384 Note the repeated use of **אָנָן** here, connecting it back to v. 13.

the one hand, signifies a divine sonship motif³⁸⁵ and on the other hand, recalls the canonical transformation of the notion of **עֵד** into **בָּן** in some of our observations of the antecedent Scriptures (in Genesis).³⁸⁶ The narrator carefully constructs vv. 13-14a with equilibrium³⁸⁷ so that the “son” (**בָּן**) is the “he” (**אֵלֶּה**) who will build a kingdom³⁸⁸ in God’s name.

What kind of **רִבְוי** did Yahweh promise to David? Our answer is a summary of what this study has thus far indicated. While at the beginning of 2 Samuel 7, the subject matter is temple-building, the narrator skillfully shifts subjects to the thematic matter of Yahweh’s **רִבְוי**. By carefully structuring his composition and choice of words, our narrator anchors this **רִבְוי**, qualified by **מֶלֶךְ**, on David’s **עֵד**, qualified by **בָּן**. The **רִבְוי** is further characterized by **לְשָׁמֶן** and **עַד-שִׁלְמָה**. Therefore, the **רִבְוי** is confined to Yahweh’s kingdom through a Davidic son in Yahweh’s name. In other words, it is quite possible to conclude that 2 Samuel 7 is not concerned about the temple or about David’s own dynasty.

If our interpretation – an eternal kingdom, not a temple – is correct, all the scholarly suggestions to explain divine refusal of temple-building and all the speculations related to David’s motive to build becomes secondary if not irrelevant.³⁸⁹ Exegetes confuse the subject matter (temple building at the onset of the narrative) with the theme (divine kingdom or dynasty through David’s seed) primarily due to the ambivalence of **רִבְוי**. Nonetheless the narrator has attempted to safeguard his main theme through a prudent choice of words. It is through a discourse and rhetorical

385 Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 259-65. There Mettinger examines the divine sonship and divine kingship in 2 Samuel 7, Psalms 2, 89, and 110.

386 This transformation from **עֵד** to **בָּן** may be picked up in the Psalter (especially Psalm 2), see chapters seven to nine.

387 We are indebted to Fokkelman’s observation in vv. 13-14. He comments: “In verse 13 we see an equilibrium arise which takes place via he-mine – I-his and is grouped around the objects of temple and throne. In v. 14 the reciprocity gains perfect balance via the I-him plus he-me series. For the concatenation of the four lines we are alert to the alternation of the subjects:

13a he is the one who shall build a house for my name

13b and I shall establish his royal throne for ever

14a I shall be a father to him

14b and he shall be a son to me

The balance in 14 is so great that not only the number of syllables, but even the number of true consonants are exactly the same in both lines.” Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 232.

388 As delineated earlier, it is not about the temple but about a kingdom; therefore our conclusion differs from Fokkelman’s. Our conclusion is also contra Murray’s. He takes the **עֵד** as plural. See *idem*, *Divine Prerogative*, 188-90, 191-92. Again, his reading is misguided by his overall thesis.

389 Fokkelman arrives at a similar conclusion through a comparison of v. 12b and v. 13b. He remarks: “Only in 13a does *bayit* mean temple for a moment, and nowhere else for the rest of this long chapter. Solomon’s building a temple is an element of secondary importance compared with the promise of dynasty.” *Idem*, *Throne and City*, 231.

analysis that one can detect the narrator's rhetoric and meaning. With this, our study continues with an examination of David's prayer³⁹⁰ (vv. 18-29).

6.1.4 A Study of the Prayer of David

The prayer, serving as the only introductory prose after verse 18, consists of two nearly equal parts: the first half concerns the past, whereas the second half concerns the future.³⁹¹ Admittedly, this prayer may look repetitive.³⁹² If we follow the narrator's alleged thematic word, *בַּיִת*, however, then we would come up with a rhetorical-thematical structure.

This structure is not without connection to Nathan's oracle proper (vv. 5-16). Yahweh's oracle is signified in the introductory verse in v. 4: in the prophetic formula (אָלָה יְהוָה, paired with כִּי אָמַר יְהוָה in v. 5). The *דבר*,³⁹³ as we have argued earlier, concerns Yahweh's promise to David of the divine kingdom (בִּין). If that is the thematic notion of the passage, then we should be able to detect several elements continued in David's prayer: *דָבָר* and *נָבָד*, *בַּיִת*, and *דָוִד*. The last item, *דָוִד*³⁹⁴ replaces David because now he himself is praying. All three elements (in italics) are present in our findings:

וַתַּדְבֵּר גַּם אֶל־בַּיִת־עַבְדָּךְ לְמִרְחָוֹק
 וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הַדְבֵּר אֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָת עַל־עַבְדֶּךְ וְעַל־בְּנֵלֶם
 וְעַשֵּׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבְרָת
 לְאָמַר (. . . וּבַית עַבְדָּךְ דָוִד וְהַבָּנָן לְפִיְךְ³⁹⁵
 לְפִינִיךְ כִּי־אַתָּה אָדָן יְהוָה דִּבְרָת
 וּמְרַלְתָּךְ יְבָנֶךְ בִּית־עַבְדָּךְ לְשָׁלוֹם

Some syntagmatic notations for each verse are necessary. First, verse 19 shows David's understanding of what his house should be. In v. 19, David apparently humbled himself before God in v. 18, *מַニּ אַנְכִי*.³⁹⁶ Then David prayed in v. 19b, that Yahweh has made a

³⁹⁰ Rost makes the analysis of David's prayer his starting point (*Throne of David*, 35-41).

³⁹¹ Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 236.

³⁹² Murray, *Divine Prerogative*, 199-200. Nevertheless, he divides the prayer into three subunits. See *ibid.*, 162.

³⁹³ The *דבר* in v. 17 sets the stage: . . . *בְּדָבָר* See also Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 237-38. This word "concerns the history-making utterances of God or his promise" (*ibid.*, 237).

³⁹⁴ It appears as *עַבְדָךְ* in 2 Sam 7:19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27[2x], 28, 29[2x].

³⁹⁵ Though *דבר* does not appear here, note *הַצִּיּוֹן אָמַר* occurs three times in v. 4 where the prophetic formula is found. We deem unnecessary the scholarly suggestion to delete *לְאָמַר*. See Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 125, 127.

³⁹⁶ The question "who am I" echoes back to "you" in v. 5 and "he" in v. 13, that the divine plan is not like David's but that Yahweh has given David a role in his divine agenda concerning the *בַּיִת*. Fokkelman draws out the contrast here: that God is great and the human being is small; thus we have v. 19a (*וְהַקְרֵן עֹד זֶה בַּעֲזִיז*). See his *Throne and City*, 240.

promise concerning his **בֵּית** but added the word **לָמֶרְחָה**.³⁹⁷ The normal understanding of this word, confined by the context, should apply: “a remote period,” “the future,” “far into the future.”³⁹⁸ What David probably understood is that Yahweh’s promise of his **בֵּית** is not of the present but speaks of the future.

Second, in v. 25, what David asked Yahweh is what Yahweh had promised in Nathan’s oracle. A repeated phrase, **בֵּית־עֲבָדָךְ** is now separated in v. 25:³⁹⁹ and with a triple repetition of **דָּבָר**.⁴⁰⁰ We offer three comments are regarding these phrases. First, the separation of **עֲבָדָךְ** and **בֵּית**, together with the unexpected third person masculine suffix attached to **בֵּית** serves as a reminder to v. 13, **הִוָּא יְבָנָה־בֵּית לְשָׁמֵי** (italics ours) that “the house of your servant David” (בֵּית עֲבָדָךְ **הִוָּא**, see **דָּרְךָ** **הִוָּא**) is to be established by the “he” (**הִוָּא**) who is qualified by both “seed” (**יִצְחָק**) of David and “son” (**בָּן**) of divine adoption in Nathan’s oracle (vv. 12, 14). Second, the triple use of **דָּבָר** stresses the promissory nature of Nathan’s oracle, for which David prayed by employing the word **קָרְבָּן**⁴⁰¹ (from **קָרְבָּן**, cf. its synonym **בָּנָוֹן** in v. 26; both words appear earlier in Nathan’s oracle in v. 12, cf. v. 13)⁴⁰² as a petition for God to keep what he has promised regarding David’s **בֵּית** in vv. 25, 26. Third, the petition is further reinforced by the last clause in v. 25: **וַיַּשְׁחַת כַּאֲשֶׁר דָּבָרָת**.⁴⁰³ The significance of this last clause is the choice of **שְׁחַת**. Though commonly used in the Hebrew Bible, it forms a parallel structure between the oracle and the prayer by its correlation with some key words in this chapter. Note our observations in the following layout (key words are in italics):⁴⁰⁴

v. 3 **וְלֹבֶךְ** **עֲשִׂيقָה** **לְךָ** **שְׁחַת** // v. 21 **כָּל** **אֲשֶׁר** **בְּלֹבֶךְ** **לְךָ** **שְׁחַת**
 v. 9 **וְלֹשָׁם** **לוּ** **שֶׁם** **וְלֹשֶׁנָּות** **לְכָם** **הַדְּרוֹלָה** **וּנְרוֹאֹת** // v. 23 **וַיַּשְׁחַת** **לְךָ** **שֶׁם** **בְּרוֹלָה**
 v. 11 **וְעַל־בְּיוֹ** **הַקְמָה** **עֲדָשָׁלָם** **וְעַשָּׂה** **כַּאֲשֶׁר** **דָּבָרָת** // v. 25 **פִּרְבִּית** **וַיַּשְׁחַת** **לְךָ** **שְׁחַת**

To summarize the main point, what David petitioned from Yahweh (**שְׁחַת**) was what Yahweh promised he would do in Nathan’s oracle, **כַּאֲשֶׁר דָּבָרָת** (**שְׁחַת** **וַיַּשְׁחַת** **לְךָ** **שְׁחַת**) (v. 11).

³⁹⁷ Fokkelman makes this word a counter-part to **עֲדָלָם** in v. 18; in English, “far off” vs. “thus far.” Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 239-40. See our later syntagmatic note 4 for v. 29.

³⁹⁸ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, reprint; 1980), 350; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 126; Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 217. Cf. Eslinger, *House of God*, 70 (note 2). There he argues that the term usually means in the distant past, not the future.

³⁹⁹ We have yet to find any commentators remarking on this separation.

⁴⁰⁰ Fokkelman has noted the triple appearances of **דָּבָר** (*Throne and City*, 249).

⁴⁰¹ See the textual variant in *BHS* and a brief discussion in McCarter, *II Samuel*, 235.

⁴⁰² See comments on these two synonymous words in Fokkelman, *Throne and City*, 231.

⁴⁰³ Fokkelman has noted there are only two pairs of imperatives in this section: the first pair is **קָרְבָּן** and **שְׁחַת** (v. 25), and the next pair is in v. 29a: **הַזָּאֵל** **וְלֹבֶךְ**; idem, *Throne and City*, 249.

⁴⁰⁴ All the occurrences of **שְׁחַת** in 2 Samuel 7 are exhausted in the layout.

Third, in v. 26, we have already noted that David is added to the construct phrase **בֵּית עֶבֶד** and the synonymous words of **בָּנִים** and **הַקְרָבָה**.

Fourth, concerning v. 29, which is the thematic verse of this prayer, note the double appearances of **בֵּית עֶבֶד** and the triple occurrences of **בָּרָךְ**. Furthermore, the double-appearance of **לְשִׁזְׁלָפָה** recaptures the tempo aspect of this **בָּרָךְ בֵּית עֶבֶד**. The multiple occurrences of **בָּרָךְ** allude to several antecedent Scriptural passages (Genesis 12, 14 and 22 with Numbers 22-24).

We have finished a rhetorical and syntagmatic study on the two sections – the oracle and the prayer – in 2 Samuel 7. Since the prayer, through our analysis, is a reiteration of the oracle, we can recap the message in the oracle in one statement: Yahweh, through David's seed, will build an everlasting kingdom. This statement is not built strictly on the result of our analysis of 2 Samuel 7, because on several occasions we have alluded to the texts of Genesis 12-22 and Numbers 22-24. Therefore, the oracle in 2 Samuel 7 should also be viewed in the larger context of the OT, especially the passages we have just studied. That requires a summary of Genesis 14 (and its cotexts in Genesis) and Numbers 22-24, which is the topic of treatment in the next section.

6.2 A Summary: An Examination of the Literary Relationships of Genesis 14, Numbers 22-24 and 2 Samuel 7

The literary and thematic connection between 2 Samuel 7 and Genesis 14 seems to boil down to the **בָּרָךְ**-motif. The blessing by Melchizedek to Abraham is now transformed into David's prayer, which focuses on God fulfilling his promise to build an eternal **מֶלֶךְ**. Furthermore, the victory over the enemy that God granted to Abraham (Gen 14:20) is reiterated in 2 Sam 7:10-11. Nonetheless, we have observed (above) that there are more thematic-semantic links between the *cotexts* of Genesis 14 and 2 Samuel 7. Now we turn to and highlight these additional links between Genesis 12-15 and 2 Samuel 7.

Besides the blessing (**בָּרָךְ**) notion, we identify the following connections between the cotexts of Genesis 14 and 2 Samuel 7: first, the verbal resemblance in the following phrase in Gen 15:1 and 2 Sam 7:4: (night/vision) **בָּ** (someone), casting both texts into a prophetic mode; second, just as the Lord promised Abraham to make his name great, thus did he promise to David (Gen 12:2, **וְאַנְתָּךְ שְׁמְךָ** and 2 Sam 7:9, **לְךָ שְׁמֵךְ**);⁴⁰⁵ and third, while Yahweh promised Abraham **שָׁמֶן** and later incorporated the kingly notion, the **שָׁמֶן**-promise given to David was also elaborated upon, suffused

405 Cf. 2 Sam 7:13. Allan K. Jenkins argues that the great name promised to Abraham is "a pointer" to the same promise to David. Jenkins, "A Great Name: Genesis 12:2 and the Editing of the Pentateuch," *JSOT* 10 (1978): 46. Cf Hans W. Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Yahwist," *Int* 20 (1966): 141-42. The great name of David (or even Abraham's) is ultimately replaced by God's name.

with a similar, enduring royal and kingdom notion (Genesis 15, 17, 2 Sam 7:12-17). The שׁרֵךְ is further characterized as אָשָׁר צִא מִנְשִׁיךְ in both Gen 15:4 and 2 Sam 7:12, making both Abraham and David the progenitors of this royal figure.

The next link is the literary relationship between Numbers 22-24 and 2 Samuel 7, in addition to the multiple-ברך. In this regard, we have three remarks. First, the messianic, royal figure coming from Jacob's seed encapsulated in the Balaam oracles (especially the fourth oracle, Num 24:17, 19) is crystallized as David's offspring in the oracle of Nathan. Moreover, Yahweh will establish the kingdom of this Davidic offspring (2 Sam 7:12b-13); the vague notion of kingdom in Num 24:7b is now explicated in 2 Sam 7:12-13, 16.

Second, in Num 23:19, God will certainly keep (סָמֵךְ) his promise (רְבָנָה), that is, to bless (בָּרַךְ), or do (הַשְּׁמֵךְ) what he says (הַמֹּאמֵן). This notion in Num 23:19 is recast by the author of 2 Samuel 7 by applying it to David's prayer that God will now bless (ברך) David and will fulfill (סָמֵךְ) what he promised (רְבָנָה) to him concerning his בֵּן (2 Sam 7:25, 28-29).⁴⁰⁶

Third, worthy of mention are two other links that exist between Numbers 22-24 and 2 Samuel 7: (1) the "out of Egypt" theme can be found in Num 23:22, 24:8 and 2 Sam 7:6, 23; and (2) the motif of Israel as God's unique people once scattered but now gathered as one nation or collected in one place is detected in Num 23:9 and 2 Sam 7:10 (note the word שָׁכֵן in both references).

Based on the above delineation, Genesis 14 with its cotexts and Numbers 22-24 seem to exert certain literary influence upon 2 Samuel 7. Or to a certain extent, the author of 2 Samuel 7 seems to be aware of these texts and perhaps interprets them in light of the dialogue of David and Nathan regarding the building of בֵּן.

406 The key words in the above remark can be viewed as follows (italics ours):

Num 23:19a לא איש אל ויכוב ובו-ארכם ויתנתקם

v. 19b הַהְאָ אָמַר לֹא נִשְׁתַּחַת

ברך ולא קומת

v. 20 הַנֶּה בָּרַךְ לְקֹחֶת וּבָרַךְ וְלֹא אֲשִׁיבֶנּה

Compare to 2 Sam 7:25b

על-בִּתוֹ הַקְמָה עַד-שָׁיֵלָה

ונשָׁה פָּאַשְׁר דָּבָרָה

A syntactical search with these two words, קם in Hiph. and בָּרַךְ in pi., is insightful. It occurs 16 times and these references are used to describe how God will fulfill what he promises: Num 23:19, 1 Sam 3:12, 2 Sam 23:1, 1 Kgs 2:4, 6:12, 8:20, 9:5, 2 Chr 6:10, 1 Kgs 12:15//2 Chr 10:15, Jer 33:14, Dan 9:12. Statistics based on BibleWorks for Windows.

6.3 Conclusion: Our Study of Genesis 14 with Its Cotexts (Genesis 12-22, Numbers 22-24 and 2 Samuel 7)

The blessing motif found in Gen 14:18-20 was pronounced to Abraham by the first priestly king. The object of Melchizedek's blessing, Abraham, was then chosen to carry on the divine promise, which basically contains three aspects – the presence of God, the land, and the seed – with the **עֵד**-aspect becoming the focus of our study in this project. This **עֵד**-aspect of divine promise became imbued with a kingly essence (Genesis 17, 49), later reiterated in the blessing by Balaam (Numbers 22-24), who like Melchizedek, was outside of the Abrahamic line.

Based on this study, one can argue that this **עֵד**-aspect developed into two strands: singular and collective. Collectively, it seems that **עֵד** is delineated into two dimensions in Genesis: the first dimension is that the seed of Abraham will form "a great nation" (Gen 12:2, 18:18); the other dimension is that Jacob's seed will become not simply a nation (Gen 46:3) but also "a community of nations" (Gen 35:11; cf. 48:19). This collective aspect of **עֵד**-promise seems to be fulfilled in light of these texts, which refer to the sons of Jacob (Genesis 49) or Israel (as in Numbers 22-24, 2 Sam 7: 6, etc.).

The other strand of **עֵד**, that is singular, refers to the messianic, that is, the royal figure, meaning that the author of 2 Samuel 7 has tried to differentiate from the collective one. In Nathan's oracle, an expansion of this **עֵד** strand is portrayed with a grand word, **בָּבֶן**.⁴⁰⁷ This key word, **בָּבֶן** encompasses some thematic notions framed in promissory oracles. First, the seed **עֵד** promised to Abraham (Genesis 15) has become **בָּבֶן** in 2 Samuel 7. The royal notion embedded in **עֵד** is further expanded in 2 Samuel 7, namely, that what is pictured is not merely a royal figure, a king, but also a kingdom (**מְמָלֵךְ**) through David's **עֵד**. Second, the royal figure and his kingdom appear not to be realized in David's time but concern the future, and the future notion is reinforced by Num 24:17 and 2 Sam 7:19. Third, in line with the king and his kingdom, Yahweh also repeatedly promised victory over the enemy through the royal seed (Genesis 22, Numbers 24, 2 Sam 7:1, 9). Fourth, the temporal aspect of the kingdom reigned by the **עֵד** is affirmed to be eternal in 2 Sam 7:13, 15.

In the next three chapters, as we look at Psalm 110, with its cotexts (Psalms 2, 132, etc.), might we detect similar lexical-thematic notions? This is the challenge awaiting us.

407 Rosenberg has processed **בָּבֶן** according to the following: "House as physical shelter of the Ark; house as ruling family; house as patrimony, posterity, and dynasty; house as temple and sanctuary; house as seat of Yahweh's reign." Idem, *King and Kin*, 121.