

**David's Political Mourning in the Hebrew Bible: An Analysis of  
How David Mourns in Instances of Political Significance**

A Thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
degree of Master of Theology (MTh)

by

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August 2021

## **Abstract**

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2021

With growing research indicating that mourning is culturally bound, criticisms of David's political mourning by scholars such as Pamela Reis and Malul Meier seem increasingly uninformed. Both sympathetic and critical readers of David can often make conclusions without considering that David lives in a culture distant from our own, and therefore his special responsibilities, among other things, may often inform his actions. That is not to say that David cannot gain personally from his actions, but scholarship must consider all factors that impact David's response, not only those which are to his benefit. The point of this thesis, therefore, is to distinguish mourning rites as appropriate and inappropriate politically, thereby discovering what may have been personally or politically advantageous and what may have been politically dignified. Rather than cast a negative judgement on David for his mourning, it is far more fruitful to investigate why David mourns, by laying out frameworks for various mourning rites, thereby indicating through cross-examination why David's mourning is political.

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to many for their assistance in starting, persisting and nearing completion of this thesis. Beginning with the academic, I would like to extend my thanks to my primary supervisor, Ekaterina Kozlova, whose subject-knowledge, creativity and devotion to her field have helped bring this thesis to completion. Her help has truly extended beyond that which her duty requires and for that I am grateful. Furthermore, her patience and sensitivity during some more difficult times that I have undergone has not gone unnoticed. Further thanks are extended to Jean-Marc Heimerdinger, my second supervisor, whose outside eye has further raised the standard of this final draft. Finally, I am extremely grateful for my proof-readers, Archie Catchpole, Philip Hutchinson and David Hutchinson, all of whom sacrificed their valuable time to assist me.

I would be remiss if I did not mention those who have provided emotional and financial support, who are too numerous to name. However, I would like to mention my parents (Helen and John), my sister (Katy), my girlfriend (Asha), my friends (Philip, Reuben, Annabelle, Nicole, Simon, Sam, as well as many others), and my church (St. Paul's Church South Harrow). Finally, many thanks to Keith Laing, the remarkable LST librarian for his purchases and delightful company!

Finally, I wish to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, Catherine (Kate) Whyte (31<sup>st</sup> May 1934 – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021), who had her Last Rites performed on the same day as my Viva and died a few of days later. Stubborn, hard-working, egalitarian, and left-wing. I will be forever grateful for her influence on my life. Rest in Peace.

## Abbreviations

<i>ANE</i>	Ancient Near East
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>HB</i>	Hebrew Bible
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>JFSR</i>	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>OT</i>	Old Testament
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

All abbreviations are taken from The SBL Handbook of Style.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand how King David should ideally mourn as a monarch, and to explore how both personal grief and political desire influences his mourning. This study will focus on four instances of David's political grief, providing an open exploration of the various rituals and emotions that occur in each passage, and allowing the scholar to holistically understand the significance of individual behaviours, which one can then apply in any examination of David's political mourning.

Analyses of David's emotional state in instances of political deaths often focus on his potential involvement in the murders, with scholars inserting their own biases by declaring his expression of grief 'real' or 'fake'.<sup>2</sup> Prior to reaching a verdict on the legitimacy of David's grief, this study believes it useful to first study how the expression of grief varies from culture to culture. Therefore, the first chapter of this study will utilise cross-cultural anthropology, to better understand how differing cultures will express grief. As mourning can be so varied in expression, not all behaviours can be examined; instead, this thesis will use the theme of 'crying' as a springboard for analysing mourning cross-culturally and will proceed to suggest how crying in instances of grief should be understood in the HB. Finally, to assist the remainder of the study, we will explore how soldiers and monarchs should typically express grief in the ANE. As the way an individual mourns leads to them being either honoured or shamed, the first chapter will also end with a brief note on the honour-shame paradigm.

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Brueggemann believes David's mourning to be legitimately painful. (Brueggemann, W., *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990, 212-213; 230; 283.) P. Kyle McCarter is more suspect of David, though not absolutely condemnatory, believing him to be innocent in some circumstances (McCarter, P.K., Jr., *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1984, 65.), but likely guilty in others (Ibid, 121, 129.), which influences whether his mourning is legitimate. Whereas Malul Meier believes David's excessive mourning for Saul and Abner are acts which must be fulfilled to ensure he is not viewed as a suspect as the cause of either of their deaths. (Malul, M., 'Was David Involved in the Death of Saul on the Gilboa Mountain?', *RB*, 103 (1996) 527, 532.)

The second chapter will contain an investigation of David's mourning for Saul and Jonathan. At the fore of this investigation will be the supposition that David's mourning for Jonathan and Saul was well-received, as it should be for any scholar analysing the text. This chapter will then examine the mourning rites which occur in vv.11-12, exploring what those four mourning rites indicate to the reader. Following on, this study will not provide an exegesis of David's lament, many of which have been completed already, but will instead highlight those points which indicate that his underlying thrust is political.

Chapter three will tackle David's mourning for Abner. Scholars studying 2 Samuel often reach similar conclusions, believing David to be feigning grief to ensure he is not found guilty of involvement in Abner's murder. Much like chapter two, this chapter will once more start with the presupposition that David's grief is well received, which is indicated in the text. The various mourning behaviours will then be analysed, followed by an examination of David's lament. Finishing, an investigation into the people's response to David's fast will be provided.

The fourth chapter will look at David's mourning for Nahash in 2 Samuel 10 and analyse international mourning in the ANE, to establish how political mourning should ideally occur, with further discussion on David's response to Nahash's rejection of David's envoy. Furthermore, we will see how David rectifies his politically undignified mourning in 2 Samuel 19 by reverting to a more honourable form of mourning.

The fifth chapter will examine David's mourning for his son Absalom. It may confuse the reader as to why this is necessary, as David's relationship with his son was more personal than political. However, it is precisely because David should not be mourning, as Absalom is an enemy of the state, that it is worth examining. The investigation will illustrate a rawer expression of grief, devoid of any political undertones. Equally, the negative reaction to such emotional expression will be clear.

The final chapter will conclude by bringing together the various facets of David's grief and highlight what is particularly personal and what is political in David's expression of grief. There will be no new research brought into this section, but parallels will be drawn based on the established research.

# Understanding Grief

## Introduction

In recent decades, the developing fields of psychology and anthropology have influenced our understanding of mourning in the HB. Concomitant with these strides, new and more critical evaluations of King David have emerged, that have questioned the traditional positive reputation ascribed to him. Though these fields may seem unrelated, they intersect when one studies David's political mourning. This chapter will frame the thesis by laying the foundations for the relevant debates. Accordingly, this chapter has three tasks. The first is to make the reader aware of the varying scholarly interpretations of David's emotions, highlighting how such views are most often influenced by personal biases. The second section will analyse mourning behaviours as performed in the worldview of ancient Israel. As mourning comprises a broad range of behaviours, it is helpful to refine the scope by which mourning is assessed; as tears are a near-universal means by which grief is communicated, tears shall be the baseline mourning behaviour by which grief will be understood in this section.<sup>3</sup> Finally, we will analyse how David should mourn through the lens of a monarch and a warrior. This will be supplemented with a brief note on the honour-shame culture in ancient Israel. These studies will lay the groundwork for understanding how David should, ideally, mourn for his political allies.

## What was King David Feeling?

Often biblical scholars' desires to understand David's emotions and validate their opinions of him can result in overarching judgements being made about his grief. For example,

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<sup>3</sup> In a study by Rosenblatt, et al., they analysed seventy-three cultures, with crying being at least partially present in grief in seventy-two, with the only culture deviating from the norm being the Balinese. (Rosenblatt, P.C., Walsh, R.P., Jackson, D.A., *Grief and Mourning in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, HRAF Press, 1976, 15.)

in his commentary Walter Brueggemann insists that David's outward behaviours are consistent with his emotional expression;<sup>4</sup> whereas Pamela Reis, in her article on David killing messengers in 2 Samuel, suggests that David's grief is most often to his own political advantage.<sup>5</sup> Others have noticed this disparity in scholarly reception, such as Hugh Pyper who uses 2 Samuel 12 as a catalyst for investigation. Where David does not outwardly grieve his infant child's death in 2 Samuel 12, Pyper highlights how scholars can view him as anything from extremely human to utterly heartless.<sup>6</sup> As David's emotions are never specified, only his actions, much is left undefined in the text, which gives way to varying interpretations. Or as Pyper writes, 'the narrator never claims to offer us a glimpse of David's inner reactions. David's emotions are not explained. Rather, his actions are described.'<sup>7</sup> Considering nothing is made explicit in the text, it is both inevitable and understandable that individual biases will taint interpretations of emotional expression.

Just because something is understandable, however, does not mean that it should continue, as the issues it can create are divisive. David Bosworth notes two divergent views of David in scholarship, one of which he labels as 'the pious David,' wherein 'it draws attention to [his] merits as described in the Bible and minimizes the seriousness of his faults.'<sup>8</sup> The opposite view is the 'critical appraisal of David,' in which 'scholars view the biblical narrative as a generally positive portrait of David, [but] they claim that the murderous and ambitious

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Brueggemann's commentary on David's response to Saul's and Jonathan's deaths, where he describes it as 'compelling and convincing because there is an astonishing congruity between David's personal inclination and political perceptiveness.' (Brueggemann, *Samuel*, 212.) In his discussing on David's mourning over Abner he writes that 'we need not doubt David's genuine respect for Abner, but the funeral is also a media event.' (Ibid, 230.)

<sup>5</sup> In 2 Sam 1 David kills the Amalekite messenger who takes credit for mercy-killing Saul, upon his request. David then kills the Amalekite for killing the anointed king, but Reis notes that this is advantageous to David as it warns those around him to not lay their hands on him, another who is anointed. ((Reis, P.T., 'Killing the Messenger: David's Policy or Politics?', *JSOT*, 31 (2006) 177.) She believes that David's grief over his son Absalom (who had led a revolt against him) however, is purely to consolidate the support of Absalom's defectors post-death. (Ibid, 188.)

<sup>6</sup> Pyper, H.S., 'Reading David's Mind: Inference, Emotion and the Limits of Language,' in A.G. Hunter and P.R. Davies (eds.), *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002, 74.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>8</sup> Bosworth, D.A., 'Evaluating King David: Old Problems and Recent Scholarship,' *CBQ*, 68 (2006) 192.

historical David was a remarkably different man from the pious literary figure.<sup>9</sup> There are a range of factors which influence how any scholar will view David (e.g., religious tradition, education, class, nationality, and so on), but it is undoubtedly also true that scholars' views will also be influenced by preconceived notions and opinions. With regards to mourning, therefore, this means that a scholar who is defending David is more inclined to view his grief as 'real,' with those on the other end of the debate ardently proclaiming his expression as 'fake'. To add new ground to the debates, the following section will analyse grief behaviours in context, which can then be applied to David.

## **Expressing Grief in Different Cultures**

### **Cross-Cultural Portrayals of Mourning**

As cultural biases can cloud perception, it is helpful to reshape Western notions of grief through the lens of cross-cultural anthropology, specifically through highlighting how different cultures treat tears. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Alfred Radcliffe-Brown undertook studies on the Andaman Islanders. Of relevance to this discussion is Radcliffe-Brown's note that the islanders were able to cry on command, which they demonstrated upon his request,<sup>10</sup> to which he wrote that they had seven specific occasions which merited ritual weeping.<sup>11</sup> In his commentary on weeping, he wrote that it was not 'a spontaneous expression of feeling,' though genuine feelings may be felt, but instead was considered a ceremonial duty.<sup>12</sup> Yet he proposed that in the Western conception, tears are most frequently connected with feelings of sorrow (though

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Radcliffe-Brown, A.R., *The Andaman Islanders*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1922, 117.

<sup>11</sup> '(1) When two friends or relatives meet after having been for some time parted, they embrace each other and weep together; (2) at the peace-making ceremony the two parties of former enemies weep together, embracing each other; (3) at the end of the period of mourning the friends of the mourners (who have not themselves been mourning) weep with the latter; (4) after a death the relatives and friends embrace the corpse and weep over it; (5) when the bones of a dead man or woman are recovered from the grave they are wept over; (6) on the occasion of a marriage the relatives of each weep over the bride and bridegroom; (7) at various stages of the initiation ceremonies the female relatives of a youth or girl weep over him or her.' (Ibid, 239.)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 239-240.

occasionally joy), meaning there is a desire to associate weeping exclusively with the expression of unhappiness;<sup>13</sup> Radcliffe-Brown instead attributes weeping to what he calls ‘the tender emotion,’ which acts as a catalyst for expressing feelings of distress or happiness attributed to personal attachments.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Radcliffe-Brown began a process in which western anthropology would move away from understanding weeping exclusively as a burst of unhappiness and would consider it as a social response.<sup>15</sup>

Different perspectives have arisen since Radcliffe-Brown visited the Andaman Islands. Others argue that ritual weeping should not be viewed as an act of duty, but a period wherein grief is expressed at a specifically predetermined allotment of time. Consider Richard Huntington and Peter Metcalf who, in their book, look at other instances of weeping in grief. For example, they note how the Bara people of Madagascar can only weep at two points when someone dies, ‘while the body is lying in the women’s hut before burial, and just before the secondary burial of the exhumed bones.’<sup>16</sup> Equally, they point to an article from 1939 by Godfrey Wilson where he discusses the burial rites of the East African Nyakysua people, wherein men will only weep once and then dance, yet women may weep consistently, even forfeiting sleep to tears.<sup>17</sup> Finally, though not specifically related to grief, in her article on ritual weeping, Pamela Klassen shares an experience from a Hindu wedding in Canada, when she was forewarned that ‘the time for crying’ was approaching, where the women were offered an

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 240.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 241.

<sup>15</sup> Émile Durkheim, a founding thinker of modern sociology, similarly wrote that ‘mourning is not the spontaneous expression of individual emotions. If the relations weep, lament, mutilate themselves, it is not because they feel themselves personally affected by the death of their kinsman. Of course, it may be that in certain particular cases, the chagrin expressed is really felt. But it is more generally the case that there is no connection between the sentiments felt and the gestures made by the actors in the rite.’ (Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (translated from the French by Joseph Ward Swain), London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971, 397.)

<sup>16</sup> Huntington, R., Metcalf, P., *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson, G., ‘Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial,’ *Bantu Studies*, 13 (1939) 7-17 in Huntington and Metcalf, *Celebrations*, 36-38.

opportunity to show ‘their grief over the loss of their sister/daughter/niece.’<sup>18</sup> Klassen writes how she wanted to view this timeframe for weeping as ‘inauthentic,’ but eventually adopted an approach where she recognised this as a ‘container to let out the grief.’<sup>19</sup> Weeping in grief then should not to be defined by the Western conception. In his book *House of Weeping*, Bosworth succinctly describes the Western notion of crying as ‘analogous to flowing fluids that, if blocked, build up potentially explosive pressure. Emotional expression, including weeping, provides a release or catharsis that relieves destructive and unhealthy pressure leading to improved mood and mental health.’<sup>20</sup> Bosworth challenges this notion by laying out two psychologically backed reasons as to why people weep: ‘helplessness and social sharing.’<sup>21</sup> Further Bosworth points to Ad Vingerhoets,<sup>22</sup> whose research on tears indicates that there is no such thing as inauthentic weeping, but that ‘all tears are real tears.’<sup>23</sup> Bosworth expands on this idea, and summarises through comparing it to ‘the tears of an actor on stage,’ who ‘like those of professional mourners, may not be motivated by the loss at hand, but they are not unmotivated.’<sup>24</sup> The conception of tears, therefore, should not be restricted to grief. Research has shown that (a) all crying is motivated, and (b) social stimulus helps to prompt tears.

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<sup>18</sup> Klassen, P., ‘Ritual,’ in J. Corrigan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 151.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>20</sup> Bosworth, D.A., *House of Weeping: The Motif of Tears in Akkadian and Hebrew Prayers*, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid; ‘In both positive and negative situations, people may feel helpless or sense that they are out of control and unable to cope adequately with the situation. As they lose control of their emotional regulatory processes, they feel powerful unbridled emotions. From this sense of helplessness, a short step leads to the social or interpersonal aspect of weeping. As one loses control and feels helpless, one requires help from others. Thus, we cry when we feel that we cannot cope with a situation and turn to trusted other for support. The connection between helplessness and social bonding as motives for weeping finds strong support from attachment theory. A person is apt to weep in situations in which it is important to elicit empathy or support, and/or to reduce aggression or anger.’ (Ibid, 21.)

<sup>22</sup> Vingerhoets, A., *Why Only Humans Weep: Unravelling the Mysteries of Tears*, 2013, 146-147, in Bosworth, *House*, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Vingerhoets, *Why*, 146-147. He points to the ‘commotion model’ which indicates that there are three stimuli prompting tears.

<sup>24</sup> Bosworth, *House*, 33.



## Grief in the Hebrew Bible

What was shown in the previous section evidenced that the portrayal of grief from culture to culture can differ radically, leaving the biblical scholar to wonder how those in ancient Israel grieved. In his book, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, Gary Anderson lays out a paradigm for understanding emotions in the HB based on anthropological studies. In his final chapter, Anderson elucidates the performative aspect of mourning in rabbinic literature. Summarising the view of emotional expression in ancient Israel as found in ancient and modern literature, Anderson writes that joy is experienced in the ‘observance of commandments,’ with ‘emotional disposition’ reflected in action not expression.<sup>25</sup> He points to numerous scholars,<sup>26</sup> but it is worth noting one example in which a rabbinic text asserts, in its commentary on Ex 14:6, that Pharaoh “‘gladly” harnessed his own chariot’, when Pharaoh’s actions ‘stem from feelings of fear, vengeance, and anger,’ highlighting how joy is not completely associated with ‘human feeling.’<sup>27</sup> As mourning is the ritual antitype to joy,<sup>28</sup> Anderson suggests that mourning should be viewed in the same fashion, in which certain behaviours are encouraged and others disbarred, creating prescription for how both grief and joy are expressed through a given behaviour.<sup>29</sup> In his first chapter, Anderson quotes Huntington’s and Metcalf’s summary of emotion in Andaman culture, which can helpfully be used in this instance to describe grief in ancient Israel, where they write that ‘the sentiment does not create the act, but wailing at the proper moment and in the prescribed manner creates within the wailer the proper sentiment.’<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Anderson, G.A., *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991, 101-102.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. scholars quoted in Anderson, *Time*, 102, n.4-9.

<sup>27</sup> Yishmael, *Mekilta of Rabbi Ishmael*, vol. 1 (translated from the Hebrew by J.Z. Lauterbach), Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1933, 199 in Anderson, *Time*, 103-104.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 49-53, 108-111.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 126-128. See, also, Emanuel Feldman who highlights the various prescriptions which occur at allotted time periods following death, as well as the injunctions against mourning on the Sabbaths and festivals. (Feldman, E., *Biblical and Post-Biblical Defilement and Mourning: Law as Theology*, New York: Yeshiva University Press Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1977, 82-88.)

<sup>30</sup> Huntington and Metcalf, *Celebrations*, 26 in Anderson, *Time*, 3.

How then should one understand tears in ancient Israel? Some, such as John Oswalt, believe weeping to be ‘the natural and spontaneous expression of strong emotion,’ although he proceeds to undermine that point by writing about ritual weeping and how professional mourners were called to weep at times of death.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, Eileen De Ward writes that ‘mourning in the ancient Near East was not a private activity,’ and notes how ‘the Israelites during the exodus, having no roofs to climb to, wept, to reinforce their prayer, each family at the door of its tent (Num. 11:10).’<sup>32</sup> Much like Radcliffe-Brown writes of the Andaman Islanders, and Bosworth writes of weeping in general, tears were a public phenomenon in the ANE. Zhixiong Niu quotes Arvid Kapelrud, writing that ‘death was followed by weeping and mourning whether they liked the deceased or not. It was a force in itself, and the right ceremonies had to be performed.’<sup>33</sup> Scholars demonstrate that weeping should be considered somewhat emotionally driven,<sup>34</sup> but in instances of national grief, weeping was a duty, and as will be shown throughout this thesis, in instances of political grief, too.

### Understanding David’s Grief

Mourning is not just cultural but is influenced, too, by class, gender, and other subsections of a society, and David was no exception to this rule. In order to understand those instances in which David was obliged to mourn and those in which he was disbarred from mourning, we will analyse martial and monarchical mourning, to understand how these factors can impact expectation in mourning.

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<sup>31</sup> Oswalt, J.N., ‘בָּכָה,’ in R.L. Harris, et al. (eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, Chicago: Moody Press, 1981, 107-108.

<sup>32</sup> De Ward, E.E., ‘Mourning Customs in 1,2 Samuel,’ *JJS*, 23 (1972) 5.

<sup>33</sup> Kapelrud, A.S., *The Violent Goddess: Anat in the Ras Shamra Texts*, Folkestone: Universitetsforlaget, 1969, 81 in Niu, Z., *The King Lifted Up His Voice and Wept: David’s Mourning in the Second Book of Samuel*, Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2013, 40.

<sup>34</sup> Bosworth writes about how Joseph was unable to control his tears (Gen 45:1-3). (Bosworth, *House*, 32.)

## Martial Mourning

David was a keen soldier, having personally fought many battles and expansionist campaigns (1 Sam 17; 18:5, 6, 27, 30; 19:8; 23:1-5; 27:8-9; 28:1-3; 30:18; 2 Sam 8:1-14) which would have impacted his emotional expression. Soldiers often learn to function in a way which differs from everyday life. The intense pressures of war can mean that the expression of certain emotions differs drastically from that of civilians. How soldiers mourn their fallen comrades, therefore, is a task worth investigating. As no specific parameters are laid out in the HB, the task is left to cross-cultural comparison. To do this, first this study will analyse an article written by Nissan Rubin in the 1970s, in which he laid out three instances of mourning in the Israeli army. Following on, this study will then highlight an instance of martial grief from an ancient culture and show the similarities and differences.

In his article, Rubin highlights three instances of grief in the Israeli army. The first instance is of Misha, a platoon commander who died as a result of an infection arising from a hernia.<sup>35</sup> Following his death, the soldiers in his platoon sat out luxury activities, such as watching movies, and requested that they would not have to attend a platoon evening, with the evening instead being used as a memorial event for Misha.<sup>36</sup> The second instance described is of an unnamed cook who died in a car crash. This man's funeral was prepared quickly and without care, his death was considered 'undignified' as he was not killed in battle and his job did not offer him high status, and only those officials who had to attend his funeral attended.<sup>37</sup> The final instance is about Dan, a captain (posthumously promoted to Major) who died in the Yom Kippur war.<sup>38</sup> 'He was given a standard funeral ceremony which was prepared with great care. A large number of senior officers were present (more than is customary at the funeral of a major) and a number of eulogies were delivered... On the thirtieth day after burial (a special

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<sup>35</sup> Rubin, N., 'Unofficial Memorial Rites in an Army Unit,' *Social Forces*, 63 (1985) 802.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 803.

mourning date in Jewish law), a memorial evening was held in Dan's honor and he was given special mention at other events held in the unit.<sup>39</sup> This highlights how rank heavily impacts mourning in warrior culture, with those of higher rank receiving greater respect at the funerary services and in mourning. These fairly recent instances of mourning can deliver lessons which can be applied to ancient cultures. Primarily, that the grief process can be considered more lavish for a soldier of higher rank, evidenced in Alexander the Great's grief over Hephaestion, a general in his army and a close friend. Following Hephaestion's death, Alexander was near inconsolable, and the mourning behaviours described, though uncertain, further present him as devastated.<sup>40</sup> Alexander restrained himself from eating, the funeral was excessive, costing ten-thousand talents for the funeral pyre and involved public mourning.<sup>41</sup> Though personal friendship influenced the grandiose nature of his funeral, Hephaestion's status in the army likely made it a more attainable goal.

Having evidenced that mourning was dependent upon rank, it is now helpful to examine how crying is viewed in warrior culture. Vingerhoets notes an interview with General Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf,<sup>42</sup> in which General Schwarzkopf states that it was at times appropriate for a commander to cry, one of which for him was when he was away from home on one Christmas Eve – though he too noted that at other times crying would have been inappropriate.<sup>43</sup> Equally, Vingerhoets states that in Greco-Latin warrior literature crying was more prevalent, occurring far more frequently than in modern society.<sup>44</sup> However, once more there is a trope in which there is 'a certain degree of emotional self-control' in which soldiers, specifically the Trojans, could hold back their tears.<sup>45</sup> The commonality between ancient and

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 803-804.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander is described as, possibly, laying with the body and refusing to leave it, hanging the physician who cared for Hephaestion, and cutting off his hair. (Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander* (translated from the Greek by A. De Sélincourt), London: Penguin Books, 1971, 371.)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 372.

<sup>42</sup> Vingerhoets, *Why*, 123.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 240.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 241.

modern soldiers is clear; those who have experienced war are able to attain a resilient attitude that allows them to have remarkable control over how they express their emotion. As David appears a typical soldier, likely not suffering from PTSD,<sup>46</sup> it is safe to assume that, as a warrior, David had greater command over his own emotions than those who have not served in the military.

### **Monarchical Mourning**

Having discussed how a soldier would ideally mourn, our investigation will now move to how a monarch would ideally mourn, as throughout David's narrative he is viewed as both monarch-elect and monarch. In ancient and modern societies there are culturally dictated parameters by which political officials are permitted to mourn. As an example once more, Arrian notes that Alexander's excessive grief over Hephæstion forced his critics to say that 'such excesses were discreditable, and unfitting not only for a great potentate like Alexander, but for any king.'<sup>47</sup> For Alexander, the expectation was that grief would not be in excess. As international mourning will be analysed later in this essay, it is worth refining the boundaries of this section to a more immediately appropriate topic. Therefore, the following paragraph will analyse how politicians and administrators should mourn their children in the ancient Israelite culture.

In Exodus 12:29-30, Pharaoh is described as mourning for his son and wailing (צעקה), prior to letting the Israelites escape. Nothing is said of the connection between his grief and his political faux pas, though grief does predicate a bad political move, which Pharaoh did regret and attempted to reverse. Leviticus 10 describes the deaths of Aaron's sons, and a firm

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Grimell, J., 'Contemporary Insights from Biblical Combat Veterans through the Lenses of Moral Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,' *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counselling*, 72 (2018) 244.

<sup>47</sup> Arrian, *Campaigns*, 371.

ordinance not to mourn (10:6-7).<sup>48</sup> 1 Samuel 4 describes a messenger delivering news to Eli on the deaths of his sons as well as the Ark breaking, but seemingly he reacts more to the news of the Ark than he does to the well-being of his sons. 2 Samuel 12 describes David weeping for his infant son with Bathsheba, prior to the child's death, and then a return to his normal life post-death. In 2 Samuel 13 David weeps after the death of his son Amnon, but little more is said of David's grief. Finally, 1 Kings 14 describes the death of Jeroboam's child, but merely states that everyone in Israel mourned. Nothing is said of Jeroboam. It appears that the idealised father either does not grieve for his child, or if he does that grief is limited and not overly emotional. Any excessive display of emotion may lead to a political mistake, similar to that of Pharaoh. In her article, Cat Quine demonstrates that royal queens appropriate a masculine ideal in the Bible, that when a child dies, these queens either do not mourn, or if they do mourn, they do so appropriately. For example, Bathsheba 'mourns appropriately' for Uriah, is 'comforted' when her child dies, and does not mourn for David.<sup>49</sup> Jezebel does not mourn when receiving the news of her son Jehoram's death, but instead 'adorns herself, and challenges Jehu's authority.'<sup>50</sup> Athaliah, too, does not mourn for her dead son, but 'arises to destroy all the royal seed of Judah (2 Kgs 11:1).'<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the ideal in the biblical narrative is a masculine ideal, which is not achieved in Exodus 12:29-30, whereupon Pharaoh clearly recognises what would be considered a mistake due to excessive mourning, and seeks to rectify it in Exodus 14.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Diane Sharon, in an article comparing Leviticus 10 and 2 Samuel 12, highlights that although Aaron does not have any clear expressions of grief following the death of his sons, his performing a simpler offering fits with a trope of refusing 'cultic meals' (Hannah in 1 Sam 1:1-8; David in 1 Sam 20:5-7, 24-29; and Jonathan in 1 Sam 20:34), thereby expressing some grief. (Sharon, D.M., 'When Fathers Refuse to Eat: The Trope of Rejecting Food and Drink in Biblical Narrative,' *Semeia*, 86 (1999) 138.)

<sup>49</sup> Quine, C., 'Bereaved Mothers and Masculine Queens: The Political Use of Maternal Grief in 1-2 Kings,' *Open Theology*, 6 (2020) 414.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 416.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>52</sup> Adversely, maternal grief seems to be paradigmatic as a catalyst for social change. See Susan Sered, who notes that in various societies, 'over and over, we find women creating or leading religions that offer bereaved mothers means of maintaining contact with their dead children.' (Sered, S.S., 'Mother Love, Child Death and Religious Innovation: A Feminist Perspective,' *JFSR*, 12 (1996) 7.) Sered demonstrates that maternal grief, in almost all cultures, has kickstarted some sort of religious revival. It, too, is illuminating that she can track evidence of this from eighteenth century English Shaker leader, Ann Lee (*Ibid*, 14), to modern Africa, where women of different tribes, who assume spiritual responsibility upon the death of a child have in different instances innovated new

Furthermore, as will be shown in chapter five, there is a set pattern for how monarchs should grieve their political allies. As there was an ideal for how David should grieve a child, the following paragraph will present how David conforms to this ideal, alongside his expectations when grieving his children.

When David is informed that his infant child will die due to his adultery, David performs petitionary mourning to prevent the death of his child. Following the child's death, David's senior servant is hesitant to tell him that the child has died, to prevent him from mourning. Most notably, David Lambert looks to the response of the 'senior servant', who actively tries to entice David out of his state of mourning.<sup>53</sup> That his servant tries to keep the news of his child's death from David further adds to the confusion (v.18).<sup>54</sup> Lambert asks why the servant lacked any visible empathy for David's plight, which he answers through a study of various other texts.<sup>55</sup> He shows that when Hannah weeps out of her desire for a son, Elkanah 'feels slighted', and wishes her out of her 'afflicted' state, as she 'has effectively removed herself from participation in the feast and therefore from his society' (1 Sam 1:8).<sup>56</sup> Equally, Lambert points to Esther who is 'greatly agitated' when she discovers typical mourning behaviour from Mordecai, who had just discovered a plot of Haman to destroy the Jewish people (Est 4).<sup>57</sup> All of this Lambert affiliates to the natural human inclination to distance oneself from mourners, or to 'force them to clean themselves up,' often because their actions are 'grotesque'.<sup>58</sup> This highlights an aspect of mourning in politics that is not noted by many

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religious experiences to increase their involvement and modify their guilt (Ibid, 8). See also, Amy Kalmanofsky, who shows the initiative of two women 'with dying (or dead) children' to revive their child in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4 (Kalmanofsky, A., 'Women of God: Maternal Grief and Religious Response in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4,' *JSOT*, 36 (2011) 61). See also Kozlova, E.E., *Maternal Grief in the Hebrew Bible*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, who collects together both ancient (ANE and HB) and modern examples of maternal grief which serve to illustrate the power of grieving mothers.

<sup>53</sup> Lambert, D., 'Fasting as a Penitential Rite: A Biblical Phenomenon?,' *HTR*, 96 (2003) 486.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Saul Olyan notes that many of the typical mourning behaviours, 'reverse what biblical texts represent as normal, quotidian grooming behaviours such as anointing, washing, laundering clothes, or binding hair... [and]

biblical scholars: that people would fear the repercussions of a leader who was separated from society because of grief, as that person could not effectively govern. Therefore, there was a real urgency for the people, especially the closest delegates of a monarch, to lift them out of mourning behaviours, and to push the monarch back into a place of effective governance. Concomitantly, one can assume that the people are encouraging David to end his mourning due to a national anxiety that their monarch is not in the world of the living.

This does not mean that David does not grieve, however, for his children, as he later does for Amnon in 2 Samuel 13 and Absalom in 2 Samuel 18-19. Bosworth creates a framework for understanding David's mourning in 2 Samuel 12, noting that his fasting and weeping prior to his infant child's death was 'petition' and his attitude following the infant's death reflects resilience.<sup>59</sup> Scholars should recognise that David's grief is impacted by the cause of death, as Bosworth notes that 'not all deaths are the same, and one major variant [which impacts grief responses] is the manner of death,' how 'sudden deaths' cause greater grief in parents and can lead to 'complicated grief.'<sup>60</sup> In the instances where Amnon and Absalom died, David's grief was more excessive as neither was expected, and both suffered 'sudden and violent death[s].'<sup>61</sup> However, as will be shown, in the instance of Absalom's death there was great risk in David's mourning.

The politician or administrative official is not offered the opportunity to publicly express their grief, unless their grief was subtle and short-lived. This conclusion is supported by the abundance of evidence, showing that mistakes are made by excessive mourning (such

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some mourning behaviours such as weeping, wailing, groaning, and sighing are intended to display emotional pain.' (Olyan, S.M., *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 32.) All mourning conduct, from emotional to physiological, cause distress in various forms to the people surrounding the mourner.

<sup>59</sup> Bosworth, D.A., 'Faith and Resilience: King David's Reaction to the Death of Bathsheba's Firstborn,' *CBQ*, 73 (2011) 692. In a separate article, Bosworth lays out the 'four grief trajectories: resilience, recovery, prolonged grief, and delayed grief.' (Bosworth, D.A., 'Understanding Grief and Reading the Bible,' in F.S. Spencer (ed.), *Mixed Feelings and Vexed Passions: Exploring Emotions in Biblical Literature*, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017, 118.)

<sup>60</sup> Bosworth, 'Faith,' 700.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*



as Pharaoh, and as will be shown by David in 2 Sam 18-19); that a masculine ideal is adopted by queens; and that those men who are in administrative positions prioritise political responsibility (1 Sam 4). Instead, mourning for political leaders should be restricted to a limited timeframe and a level of control over emotions should be shown. In chapter five, a more highly political understanding of grief will be uncovered in international relations.

## Shame and Honour

The result of mourning within or without the established boundaries would be that the politician would instigate either a shame<sup>62</sup> or honour<sup>63</sup> response. In the worldview of the ANE and the modern Mediterranean, these ideas are a framework for everyday interactions. From a Western perspective it is fairly easy to frame them as somewhat irrelevant. However Saul Olyan unpacks the framework of shame well for a Western audience, highlighting certain crucial aspects of shame/honour paradigms for OT scholarship, writing that honour can ‘be gained through military victory... lost through defeat and exile, where it is replaced by shame... Honour is meant to be recognized and acknowledged; it is very much a public phenomenon.’<sup>64</sup> Olyan carefully distinguishes between different relationships conferring

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<sup>62</sup> For studies on shame, see Bechtel, L.M., ‘Shame as a Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political, and Social Shaming,’ *JSOT*, 49 (1991) 47-76 [50]; Stiebert, J., *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution*, London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002. Lyn Bechtel and Johanna Stiebert have both written progressive studies on shame, wherein psychological and anthropological perspectives on the matter are incorporated to define what shame is. To utilise Stiebert’s study, ‘Shame... is an emotion focused on the vulnerability and conspicuousness of one’s self-image (subjective, internalized) in terms of a perceived ideal (objective, external).’ (Stiebert, *Construction*, 3. For greater depth on the psychological aspect see pp.4-6.)

<sup>63</sup> Broadly speaking, honour can be conceived of as the opposite to shame. Pedersen understands honour, based on the book of Job, as being built on ‘rich blessing,’ evidenced by his sons, livestock and ability to help others. (Pedersen, J., ‘Honour and Shame,’ in Pederson, J., *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, Vol. 1, London: Oxford University Press, 1959, 214-215.) Furthermore, honour is inherently attached to the individual (See *ibid*, 215.), a view which James Jumper in his doctoral dissertation frames as an ‘ontological’ understanding (Jumper, J.N., *Honor and Shame in the Deuteronomistic Covenant and the Deuteronomistic Presentation of the Davidic Covenant*, Doctoral Dissertation, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013, 17.) Jumper, much like Stiebert, utilises a holistic understanding, understanding honour as being ‘conceptualized as a limited commodity,’ which must be regularly and consistently proved and can be challenged. (*Ibid*, 21. See notes 78-81) Honour can only be conceived of through transaction, meaning ‘one cannot gain honor unless another loses it through shame.’ (*Ibid*. 22.) Honour, therefore, is a commodity which can only be conceived of in relation to shame.

<sup>64</sup> Olyan, S.M., ‘Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,’ *JBL*, 115 (1996) 204.

honour and shame, and helpfully quantifies the types of relationships between two foreign leaders as ‘partners in parity’, and those between ‘unequals’ as ‘vassal-suzerain’ relationships.<sup>65</sup> In any covenant relationship, honour and shame are communicated through the ritual actions already mentioned, and intentionally and publicly ‘communicate relative position in a status hierarchy’.<sup>66</sup> In terms of mourning, Olyan briefly notes that mourning rites are one way honour is gained, and correctly mourning a political ally, or not mourning an enemy, is a way of gaining honour, and in the latter instance, conferring shame on the grieving family of the deceased.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 205. T.R. Hobbs challenges Olyan’s paradigm, believing that the vassal-suzerain paradigm is incorrect, instead arguing for a ‘patron-client’ system, writing that ‘the patron-client relationship involves access to goods in a society where such goods are experienced as limited.’ (Hobbs, T.R., ‘Reflections on Honor, Shame and Covenant Relations,’ *JBL*, 116 (1997) 502.) Hobbs’ suggestion contends that in societies where commodities are limited, due to lacking wealth, it is unlikely that the majority would have functioned on a covenantal paradigm but would instead focus on delivering honour and shame through the limited commodities they possess. In support of this argument, one can look to Ken Stone’s book, where he demonstrates how women’s sexuality is viewed as a commodity and an opportunity to impart shame on another family through ‘sexual conquest,’ in Mediterranean cultures. (Stone, K., *Sex, Honor, and Power in the Deuteronomistic History*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, 43.) However, as this study is focused on monarchical mourning, which was often covenantal, it is safe to assume that Olyan’s paradigm is apt.

<sup>66</sup> Olyan, ‘Honor,’ 204-205.

<sup>67</sup> Anderson also points out the ‘behavioral force’ of honour in the HB, as honour is expressed through behaviour, with Anderson pointing to ‘You shall honour your father and mother.’ (Anderson, *Time*, 12.)

## **2 Samuel 1**

### **Introduction**

2 Samuel 1 describes how an Amalekite messenger dressed in traditional mourning garb enters David's camp to inform him that Saul and Jonathan have died in battle. In response David performs a series of mourning rites, kills the messenger, and performs a lament. Scholars would be justified to be suspect of his elaborate sequence of grief, as this mourning is over Saul, the king who attempted to kill him, thereby forcing him into exile. Equally, though, David grieves Jonathan – Saul's son and heir – who helped David, swore a covenant with him, and developed a deep comradeship with him. Regardless of whether one may be suspect of David's grief, there is no indication in the text that his audience suspected David of being guilty of involvement in Saul and Jonathan's deaths, nor that the audience was displeased with how David mourned, unlike 2 Samuel 19 where David's actions are indicated to be inappropriate (2 Sam 19:2-3[3-4], 5-7[6-8]). Counterintuitively, one can assume that David acts in a kingly manner, and the purpose of this section is to (a) show how he did that, and (b) highlight the political and personal feelings that may arise from his display of grief. This section will, therefore, be split into two parts: first, there will be an analysis of the performed mourning rites which occur in vv.11-12. The second section will analyse some key facets of the lament, indicating what David is attempting to achieve through performing this lament and these facets will be shown to be predominantly political.

### **Performed Mourning Rites**

#### **Tearing Clothes (V.11)**

Having been told of Saul's and Jonathan's deaths, David's first performed act of mourning in v.11 is for him and his company to tear their clothes in grief. Tearing clothes was a typical expression of anguish in the ANE, being most frequently described through the verb

קרע, which broadly speaking is used ‘as an expression of fear, horror, consternation, or dismay over a calamity,’<sup>68</sup> but was usually paired with putting on sackcloth.<sup>69</sup> The purpose of tearing clothes is not known,<sup>70</sup> though Winfried Thiel suggests that it could ‘reflect an archaic identification of clothing with the person who wears it, so that tearing a garment represents the rending of the wearer’s inmost being.’<sup>71</sup> Recent research has shown that clothing should be considered an extrasomatic extension of the body, an idea Laura Quick explores in her article which views ‘dressing and undressing’ as a symbolic representation ‘to describe various psychological states such as shame, honour, majesty and glory’ in the book of Job.<sup>72</sup> Appealing to anthropological literature, she demonstrates how body ornaments are used to describe physical ailments in certain cultures, and argues that this worldview was operative in the ANE.<sup>73</sup> She justifies this through examples such as Elijah anointing Elisha his successor, through clothing (1 Kgs 19:19), or Aaron being ‘stripped of his clothing’ before he dies ‘in order for Aaron to vacate the office of the high priesthood’ (Num 20:28).<sup>74</sup> Quick describes this worldview as a ‘multi-material’ one, in which ‘items worn closely upon the body were understood to be constitutive parts of the person. Accordingly, clothing divestiture as well as the destruction of clothing has a weighty symbolic value’<sup>75</sup> – meaning that by stripping clothing

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<sup>68</sup> Thiel, W., ‘קרע,’ in G.J. Botterweck, et al. (eds.), *TDOT*, Vol. 13 (translated from the German by D.A. Green), Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, 175. The extent to which clothes were torn is uncertain. Morris Jastrow believes the mourner to have been completely nude. (Jastrow, M., Jr., ‘The Tearing of Garments as a Symbol of Mourning, with Especial Reference to the Customs of the Ancient Hebrews,’ *JAOS*, 21 (1900) 24.) Thiel argues from 2 Kings 6:30 that it was ‘down to the waist’. (Thiel, ‘קרע,’ 176.) Also see Alexander Rofé who argues that there is evidence from ancient Egyptian literature, Zechariah 12:12-14 and Hosea 10:5 that both women and men would have stripped at least their upper body in mourning. (Rofé, A., ‘Zechariah 12:12-14 and Hosea 10:5 in the Light of an Ancient Mourning Practice,’ in C. Cohen, et al. (eds.), *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, (Vol. 1), Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008, 300, 302-304.)

<sup>69</sup> Thiel, ‘קרע,’ 176.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Jastrow, Jastrow, ‘Tearing,’ 25; Thiel, ‘קרע,’ 177; De Ward, too, who believes it to be primitive but disconnected from the originally ‘more savage rite’ (De Ward, ‘Mourning,’ 9.)

<sup>71</sup> Thiel, ‘קרע,’ 177.

<sup>72</sup> Quick, L., “‘Like a Garment Eaten by Moths,’ (Job 13:28): Clothing, Nudity and Illness in the Book of Job.’ *Biblical Interpretation*, Advanced Articles (2020) 2-3.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 5-7.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 8-9.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 9. C. Zaccagnini, too, notes that ‘divestiture’ of clothing ‘represents the final stages of personal impoverishment’ in the ANE (Zaccagnini, C., ‘Legal and Socio-Economic Aspects of the Deprivation of Clothes in the

from the body, the mourner was expressing their inner state through a physical manifestation of grief.

Of David's six mourning narratives in 2 Samuel (1; 3:31-39; 10:1-5; 12; 13:30-39; 18:33-19:4), only three of them contain a reference to tearing clothes (chapters 1, 3 and 13), and only chapter 3 contains a mention of adorning sackcloth. Melanie Köhlmoos notes a pattern occurring in Genesis where Jacob tears his clothes only upon hearing of Joseph's 'unexpected' death (Gen 37:34), whereas at 'Rachel's death (Gen 35:18-20) or Isaac's death (Gen 35:28),' there is no tearing of clothes.<sup>76</sup> This leads Köhlmoos to the conclusion that tearing clothes 'is not required when death is not completely unexpected, [but] it is suitable to tear one's garment when experiencing an unexpected (or violent) death.'<sup>77</sup> She further substantiates her claim through demonstrating the pattern in David's life, arguing that the moments at which one would expect David to evoke a more holistic mourning ritual (when his children die in 2 Sam 12 and 19), David does not – likely because David was aware that those deaths could occur.<sup>78</sup> One could argue that there are other moments in the HB where torn garments do not reflect the given trope, however, Köhlmoos does state that as literature 'the characters act in accordance with the narrative design,' and if these were the idealised moments of tearing garments, then that is what the editor/writer would have portrayed.<sup>79</sup>

In tearing his clothes for Jonathan and Saul, David outwardly displays his internal distress, which required explicit performance; equally, it displayed shock at the present matters. Tearing clothes would have been a powerful symbol in the ancient world. Where clothing is

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Ancient Near East,' *ZABR*, 26 (2020) 38.), noting how king's divesting their clothes was a symbol of defeat in the HB (Gen 37:34; 1 Kgs 12:27; 2 Kings 6:24-41; 19:1; Est. 4:1; Isa. 37:1; Jonah 3:6). (Ibid, 52.)

<sup>76</sup> Köhlmoos, M., 'Tearing One's Clothes and Rites of Mourning,' in C. Berner, et al. (eds.), *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible*, London: T & T Clark, 2019, 306.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 308-309.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 309.

currently an excess to the Western reader, to an ancient audience clothing was sparser,<sup>80</sup> and to tear a garment was a greater sacrifice.

### **Mourning (V.12)**

Second in David's mourning behaviours is the verb טָפַד, which is typically translated in this instance as 'they mourned' (ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV). Mayer Gruber argues that although the verb can be translated as 'mourn', its primary and original meaning was 'beat the breast'.<sup>81</sup> He believes that when used as a 'transitive verb' it means 'mourn', citing 1 Samuel 25:1, 2 Samuel 11:26, alongside the Niphal 'be mourned,' as found in Jeremiah 16:4 and 25:33, as evidence for its secondary meaning.<sup>82</sup> He indicates that the verb and noun form (מִטְפֵּד) can be used to mean 'eulogy', and that this occurs when the verb is used as a '*verbum dicendi*' (meaning it introduces speech).<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, he highlights that in Amos 5:16, מִטְפֵּד means 'funeral oration'.<sup>84</sup> For the remainder of its usage, he claims it returns to its primary meaning of 'beat the breast', appealing to an earlier section of his book, where he writes that: 'in both verses the criterion that enables us to determine that בָּכָה means 'weeping' rather than 'mourning' is the juxtaposition of בָּכָה with other terms also referring to specific [gestures] or rites of mourning.'<sup>85</sup> He refers back to this logic when determining the meaning of טָפַד and argues that, in those ten instances wherein it does not sit in parallelism or juxtaposition with other terms indicating mourning, it means 'beat the breast'.<sup>86</sup> That David had already entered

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<sup>80</sup> As Zwickel writes, 'While the elite had prestigious garments, poor people owned only work clothes.' (Zwickel, W., 'Fabrication, Functions, and Uses of Textiles in the Hebrew Bible,' in C. Berner, et al. (eds.), *Clothing and Nudity in the Hebrew Bible*, London: T & T Clark, 2019, 188.)

<sup>81</sup> Gruber, M.I., *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980, 436-437.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 438.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 442.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 444.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 417.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 446-447.

mourning when he tore his clothes does indicate that he would have been undertaking a ritual action at this moment; whether that action was ‘beating the breast,’ is not entirely certain.<sup>87</sup>

The verb occurs elsewhere in the HB, as in Genesis 23:2, where Abraham mourns his deceased wife Sarah, or in Genesis 50:10 when Joseph and his brothers reach the land their father should be buried in, and 1 Samuel 25:1 when all Israel mourned the prophet Samuel (as well as 1 Sam 28:3, which recaps the action for Samuel). There is no fixed pattern to determine its usage, but that the four instances incur mourning for individuals with an elevated status may determine that it is an act reserved for those at the top of society. Equally, it is also the only verb used to describe Bathsheba’s mourning for Uriah, which as shown in the first chapter, was conducted as appropriately as possible (2 Sam 11:26).

What it meant for David cannot be known. The evidence does suggest that the meaning is fairly broad, but indicative of a ritual action.<sup>88</sup> Where it likely did indicate ‘beat the breast’ in early history, the meaning of the verb did change to a performative act which is not expressive of emotion but of a more political act. It is likely that in this instance, David’s performance over Saul and Jonathan does not express any internal grief but a proper action performed at the right moment for two men of a high status. One could speculate further, arguing that as the verb is used in two instances where David could be considered guilty (in Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths, and in Uriah’s death), that David engages the performance in instances where he is guilty of murder. However, as there is no way of proving whether David had any involvement in Saul’s and Jonathan’s death, this is resolved to hearsay.

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<sup>87</sup> Patterson believes the ‘basic meaning’ is ‘mourn, lament, wail’ (Patterson, ‘ספד,’ 630.); whereas Scharbert, noting the translation for the verb in Isaiah 32:12 in the Septuagint as ‘beat the breast,’ indicates that this is likely the original meaning. (Scharbert, J., ‘ספד,’ in G. J. Botterweck, et al. (eds.), *TDOT*, Vol. 10 (translated from the German by D.W. Stott), Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, 299.)

<sup>88</sup> Note how it can allude to ‘hired mourning women,’ ‘beat the breast,’ ‘to begin to sign the lament for the dead, mourn for someone.’ (Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., ‘ספד,’ in Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., *HALOT*, Vol. 2, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, 763.)

## Fasting (V.12)

Whatever the reason for fasting, it appears to have played a significant role in the ANE and later Judaism. Anderson notes how in rabbinic Judaism the restrictions are given that: ‘Our rabbis taught: All restrictions that apply to the mourner hold equally well for the 9<sup>th</sup> of Ab. Eating, drinking, bathing, anointing, the wearing of shoes, and marital relations are forbidden thereon.’<sup>89</sup> Fasting, therefore, was a means by which one could show a discernible sense of grief through a given ritual. Before one can discuss why David fasted for political purposes, one must discuss why one would have fasted more generally. Hendrik Brongers elucidates on the cultural trope of fasting and its origins.<sup>90</sup> He notes that fasting as a norm occurs alongside other actions such as ‘rending clothes,’ ‘making the bed on sackcloth and ashes,’ ‘beating the breasts and mutilating oneself,’ and so on.<sup>91</sup> Generally, the time for which fasting would occur was dependant on the relationship with the person, with a longer period for a family member, and a shorter period in instances of ‘homage’.<sup>92</sup> He further notices that in 2 Samuel there is a distinction in the mourning rituals taking place before and after the death of Bathsheba’s child where, following the infant’s death, David no longer fasts in grief.<sup>93</sup> However, if one considers the instances where David does fast (2 Sam 3:35-36; 12:16), it appears to be in instances of (a) political mourning for a close ally (or one who he wanted to show to be a close ally), or (b) as a petition.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Anderson, *Time*, 76.

<sup>90</sup> Brongers believes that fasting in grief began as all food and drink in the house were considered impure following a death, and he evidences this through the ‘bread handed over by the neighbours,’ where neighbours would bring food for a recently bereaving family to eat. (Brongers, H.A, ‘Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-Biblical Times,’ in H.A. Brongers, et al. (eds.) *Instruction and Interpretation: Studies in Hebrew Language, Palestinian Archaeology and Biblical Exegesis*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, 4.) These views bear resemblance to those of Edward Westermarck who in his cross-cultural study suggested that the corpse defiles everything in the house, including food and drink (Westermarck, E., ‘The Principles of Fasting,’ *Folklore*, 18 (1907) 403.) However, Westermarck differs from Brongers by suggesting that there must have been a ‘physiological motive’ for fasting. (Westermarck, ‘Principles,’ 409.)

<sup>91</sup> Brongers, ‘Fasting,’ 3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>94</sup> Recall Lambert’s article as described in chapter one, where David fasted only in petition, an act which shocked his servant. (Lambert, ‘Fasting,’ 478-479, 486.)



That David does not fast upon the deaths of any of his children, but does fast for political allies, should demonstrate that this is a public act. It was one which was culturally understood and allowed individuals to express their own grief,<sup>95</sup> but had no strong relevance to David's own personal expression of grief. Therefore, David in fasting over Saul and Jonathan was intending to indicate a public grief. Nothing personal was being displayed.

### **Weeping (V.12)**

Weeping has already been discussed in the first chapter, predominantly in relation to cross-cultural studies, but also in relation to biblical literature. To briefly recap what has already been written: weeping, regardless of what one weeps for, is legitimate weeping. Moreover, tears in the HB should be considered ritualistic. In 2 Samuel 1 David, for whatever reason, does cry over Saul and Jonathan, though the scholar is not told why. Quoting Bosworth once more, he writes, 'the tears of an actor on stage, like those of professional mourners, may not be motivated by the loss at hand, but they are not unmotivated.'<sup>96</sup> One does not know over what or whom David mourns, but one can recognise that he does express grief in this moment. All investigation into whom or what David is mourning is speculative, although one could argue it to be Jonathan, based on their comradeship. That this mourning does not occur for an extended period of time does not reflect an absence of grief; instead, it reflects an attitude necessary in the military where grief should be expressed briefly, to ensure one is always prepared for war.

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<sup>95</sup> In 2 Sam 12:21 his attendants expected him to fast to express his grief.

<sup>96</sup> Bosworth, *House*, 33.

## The Lament

Discussion will now centre around the lament itself and its political meaning. Many commentaries have devoted themselves to an exegetical analysis of the lament, so this will not be the method of this study. Instead, what will follow is a topical analysis of some key themes arising from the lament and their relevance to political mourning.

### Animals and Landscape

The invocation of the animals in the lament is crucial to understanding the overall thrust of David's lament as political. Three animals are named specifically: a gazelle, an eagle, and a lion. An analysis of each will be undertaken at present.

הַצִּבִּי (gazelle) is emphatically the first word of the lament (v.19). There are two issues in scholarship: does הַצִּבִּי mean gazelle, and to whom does it refer? On its meaning, there are two possibilities: a noun along the lines of 'glory,' 'beauty,' or 'splendour', or possibly 'gazelle'.<sup>97</sup> Scholars such as Anderson prefer the translation of 'The Beauty' or 'The Splendour', as 'kings were often depicted as incomparably handsome and abounding in various outstanding qualities', and that this is part of court language;<sup>98</sup> whereas there is a strong tradition for understanding 'gazelle' as a title for warriors and leaders in the ANE, including Asahel in 2 Samuel 2:18.<sup>99</sup> The uncertainty does seem to suggest that the ambiguity is intentional.<sup>100</sup> To whom the noun refers is a lesser issue for the purposes of this study. However,

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<sup>97</sup> Smith disagrees with both, though his method begins by laying out the definitions of gazelle and beauty, and deducing that the attributes of a gazelle, as defined by himself and not from the text, do not fit Jonathan or Saul; he also disregards 'beauty' as it does not match the attributes which are connoted to 'glory'. (Smith, H.P., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Books of Samuel*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961, 261.)

<sup>98</sup> Anderson, A.A., *2 Samuel*, Dallas: Word Books, 1989, 16.

<sup>99</sup> See Dahood et al., who note that gazelles in the ANE could refer to 'princes', as well as those assisting leaders being described as 'gazelles' and 'bulls'. (Dahood, et al., 'Value,' 161-162.)

<sup>100</sup> Freedman, D.N., 'The Refrain in David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan,' in C.J. Becker, et al. (eds.), *Ex Orde Religionum*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972, 120; Fokkelman, J.P., *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses: Volume II: The Crossing Fates (II Sam. 13-31 & II Sam. 1)*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986, 652; Anderson, too, concedes that this is a possibility (Anderson, *Samuel*, 16.), though he still favours 'The Beauty' or 'The Splendour'.

Mark Smith understands it as a reference to Saul as it is a term used to describe ‘leadership in [one] Ugaritic story’;<sup>101</sup> Robert Gordon notes that הצבי ‘stands in the corresponding position in the colon’ to the name Jonathan in v.25, but asserts that ‘it is unlikely that the lament begins by singling Jonathan out for mention’;<sup>102</sup> yet David Noel Freedman suggests that the parallelism between vv.19 and 25 indicate that הצבי is Jonathan, and ‘was a nickname or sobriquet... for the prince rather than the king.’<sup>103</sup> That all options are viable once more indicates that the likely object is both Saul and Jonathan. This ambiguity highlights the political nature of the lament from the first verse as David intentionally calls upon both the monarch and heir, blurring the lines of whom he mourns for, as David wants to show his respect for them, recognising both their political and martial prowess. David then introduces an eagle (נשר, v.23), further substantiating his reverence for Saul and Jonathan, as ‘the swiftness of this monarch of birds was proverbial’ (cf. Deut 28:49; Prov 23:5; Lam 4:19).<sup>104</sup> However, when David introduces the lion (ארי, v.23), ambiguity arises. Most often ארי designates enemies or ‘wicked rulers’,<sup>105</sup> and David says that Jonathan and Saul “were stronger than lions,” the irony being that they were killed by their enemies. David uses the first two instances of mentioning animals as an opportunity to recognise their warrior status, yet ארי beckons the listener to recall that both Saul and Jonathan (though Saul especially) were not as remarkable in their leadership as some may have thought.

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<sup>101</sup> Smith, M.S., *Poetic Heroes: Literary Commemorations of Warriors and Warrior Culture in the Early Biblical World*, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014, 270. See also, McCarter *Samuel*, 74; Anderson *Samuel*, 16.

<sup>102</sup> Gordon, R.P., *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary*, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1986, 211. See also, Polzin, R., *David and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History, Part Three, 2 Samuel*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, 13.

<sup>103</sup> Freedman, ‘Refrain,’ 120.

<sup>104</sup> Anderson, *Samuel*, 19.

<sup>105</sup> Davies, P.T., ‘Animal Imagery,’ in Longman, T. III, Enns, P. (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, Nottingham, Inter-Varsity Press, 2008, 15.

## Warfare

Weapons are a consistency throughout the lament, occurring in the prelude in v.18 (bow, קשת), as well as in vv.21 (shield, מגן), 22 (bow and sword, קשת and חרב), and 27 (weapons of war, כלי מלחמה). Smith's study of warrior culture is illuminating, and in relation to weaponry being used as a description of warriors, he points to ANE parallels. He notes Baal and Yamm being described through their weaponry in Ugaritic literature, Ninurta being described as Sharur in Sumerian literature, as well as Achilles in the Illiad.<sup>106</sup> Further, Smith suggests that weapons should be considered an extrasomatic extension of the soldier's body, hence why soldiers may have been represented by their weapons.<sup>107</sup> Through understanding weaponry as such, it is then important to note the meaning of the individual weapons in relation to their wielder.

Saul's shield is said to be no longer 'anointed with oil' (בלי משיה בשמן). In his article, William Shea suggests that the anointing of a shield served a logistical purpose, though he did not know what.<sup>108</sup> It was later discovered that this was a common practice in the ANE and it served a logistical advantage.<sup>109</sup> However, 'anointed' was also a term applied to kings in the books of Samuel (1 Sam 2:10, 35; 12:3, 5; 16:6; 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam 1:14, 16; 19:21; 22:51; 23:1). David is taking advantage of the dual meaning of 'anoint' wherein neither Saul's shield requires anointing anymore, nor is Saul anointed as king anymore. In his article, Francis Landy reflects on the irony within the text, commenting on David, who too is anointed and by proclaiming Saul as unanointed, claims the kingship for himself.<sup>110</sup> By referring to Saul

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<sup>106</sup> Smith, *Poetic*, 273.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Shea, W.H., 'David's Lament,' *BASOR*, 221 (1976) 142.

<sup>109</sup> Millard, A.R., 'Saul's Shield Not Anointed with Oil,' *Bulletin for the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 230 (1978) 70. Cf. Robert Alter who notes that the oil would have made 'their outer surface slippery and thus would have enhanced their effectiveness in deflecting weapons.' (Alter, R., *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel*, London: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1999, 199.)

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Landy, 'Irony,' 8.

through his shield, David can highlight himself as heir to the throne, but seemingly still pledge allegiance to the king through a given trope.

Following the shield, the bow and sword come into view. On the bow, Tod Linafelt believes it to be an ‘ironic reference’ linking back to 1 Samuel 18, where Jonathan handed over his coat, bow and sword to David.<sup>111</sup> 1 Samuel 18:4 is pivotal for understanding this verse, but Linafelt does not incorporate the full nuance. He argues that the bow represents Jonathan’s loyalty and the sword Saul’s disloyalty, but one could argue that the allusions stretch further. If one looks at Tryggve Mettinger’s book, *King and Messiah*, he describes the powerful symbolism of Jonathan handing his coat to David in 1 Samuel 18:4, as it represents him handing over his claim to the throne,<sup>112</sup> with Mettinger highlighting how the act of handing over coat, sword and bow in 1 Samuel 18:4 is too often overlooked, but fails to comment on the bow and sword himself.<sup>113</sup> Though the coat does represent the kingship itself, scholarship should note the use of the bow and sword to represent the imperial element of ancient kingship, which held expectation of military campaigns to expand the boundaries of a kingdom. If one looks to Genesis 48:22, where Jacob uses sword and bow to represent his taking land from the Amorites, alongside Joshua 24:12 where God declares that he sent hornets to clear out the citizens of Jericho, instead of soldiers fighting with ‘sword and bow,’ a pattern emerges where ‘sword and bow’ are a fixed pair representing expansionist campaigns. Therefore, by referring to Jonathan and Saul through ‘sword and bow’ David once more highlights that they are unable to undertake their duty of expanding their kingdom. Much like the references to animals, David

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<sup>111</sup> Linafelt, T., ‘Private poetry and Public Eloquence in 2 Samuel 1:17-27: Hearing and Overhearing David’s Lament for Jonathan and Saul,’ *JR*, 88 (2008) 521.

<sup>112</sup> Mettinger, T.N.D., *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings*, CWK Gleerup: Lund, 1976, 34. He, too, notes that ‘if the tearing robe in 15:27 refers to Saul’s robe’ then it points to Saul losing his throne. (Ibid.) David Stacey highlights the symbolism of offering a coat as a symbolic and prophetic act in the story of Elijah. (Stacey, D., *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament*, London: Epworth Press, 1990, 85-86.)

<sup>113</sup> Mettinger, *King*, 39.

both honours Saul and Jonathan, but equally points to their inability to serve as leaders any longer.

### **Gath (V.20)**

There are multiple other aspects of the lament which could be considered, but space does not permit a more in-depth evaluation. However, a final note is due to David's phrase "tell it not in Gath," in view of the place of Gath in David's life. Twice David requested protection from the king of Gath, and the second time that request was granted (1 Sam 27). Furthermore, it is thanks to the protection of the king of Gath, that David was not killed by Saul (1 Sam 27:4). Furthermore, the king gave Ziklag to David (1 Sam 27:6), the land where he resided until 2 Samuel 1. This was a land that offered protection to David that Israel and Judah could not. Yet, David casually attempts to disregard any allegiance that he may have had through this verse. This is for good reason, too. First, David was willing to fight for their army in 1 Samuel 31. Though he did not, Malul believes that the implication was that he would have if he could.<sup>114</sup> Second, as Olyan notes, mourning allows for a period of re-establishing connections.<sup>115</sup> David in this passage takes advantage of the mourning period to realign himself with Israel and Judah and sever previous allegiance to Gath, thereby disowning the land and ruler from whom he received protection. This is an important message for David to present to secure his future kingship.

### **Daughters (Vv.20, 24)**

In v.24, David makes reference to the daughters of Israel being clothed by Saul in scarlet. For Francis Landy, this draws allusions to the daughters' 'praise of David in 1 Sam

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<sup>114</sup> Malul, 'David,' 530.

<sup>115</sup> Olyan, *Mourning*, 51.

18,' where David is praised in song for his military success, which in turn kindles Saul's anger and jealousy.<sup>116</sup> However, though there are underlying allusions to David's success, David is also fulfilling a political duty by calling upon the services of the women. Though David leads the lament, he appeals to the daughters of Israel to themselves lead the nation in lamenting (v.24). The task of writing and performing laments in the HB was predominantly a female one,<sup>117</sup> as in the ANE and ancient Greece.<sup>118</sup> However, the specific laments of ancient women are, mostly, a lost genre.<sup>119</sup> In her article, Angela Standhartinger notes some general features of the lament genre, one of which is the 'call on other mourning women or nature to act as witnesses and to join their lament.'<sup>120</sup> The invocation of the daughters of Israel to lead the nation in mourning, or nature itself, is, as suggested by Standhartinger, a normality of the lament genre, and should be considered a necessary formality (though these features do not appear in David's lament for Abner). As a political leader, there is likely a personal prerogative in David handing mourning over to the daughters of Israel. As heir to the throne, and as one prepared to engage in a difficult war, David can neither spare the time, nor does he want to be viewed as one who mourns excessively. Therefore, to hand the reigns of mourning to others indicates a tactical political move, wherein he can appeal to a given cultural phenomenon of keening women leading national mourning. Equally, he seeks to hand over mourning to others as he intends to engage in battle.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Landy, F., 'Irony and Catharsis in Biblical Poetry: David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1.19-27),' *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, 15 (1981) 4.

<sup>117</sup> Van Dijk-Hemmes writes that specific texts (2 Sam 1:24; Jer. 9:6-21; Ezekiel 32:16) allude to this being a female led trade, in which a select group of women would 'draw on a reservoir of suitable texts.... [and] possess the ability to suit these to the circumstances. Thus they gave the public the opportunity to express their emotions.' (Van Dijk-Hemmes, F., 'Traces of Women's Texts in the Hebrew Bible,' in A. Brenner & F. van Dijk-Hemmes (eds.), *On Gendering Texts: Female & Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*, London: E.J. Brill, 1996, 83-84.)

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Smith, *Poetic*, 271, and the footnotes therein; see, too Bar-Ilan, M., *Some Jewish Women in Antiquity*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2020, 55; see *Ibid.* 70, for value of keening women in rabbinic literature.

<sup>119</sup> Standhartinger, A., "'What Women Were Accustomed to Do for the Dead Beloved by Them'" (Gospel of Peter 12.50). Traces of Laments and Mourning Rituals in Early Easter, Passion, and Lord's Supper Traditions,' *JBL*, 129 (2010) 561.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, including n.10.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. *Martial Mourning*, in which it was shown that soldiers can control their grief more than ordinary citizens. It is fitting, therefore, that in an instance in which David is mourning soldiers who have died in battle, as well as

Finally, scholars should again note that David is once more attempting to distance himself from the Philistines. David is subtly appealing to the fact that the Philistines will be rejoicing, whereas David, as an ally of the state and of Saul and Jonathan, is instead mourning. David is once more trying to publicly sever all ties with the Philistines and align himself with Israel.

### **David, Jonathan and Saul**

In recent years, scholars have increasingly debated the relationship between David and Jonathan as possibly being homoerotic. However, prior to investigating David's and Jonathan's relationship, it is worth first noting David's and Saul's relationship as expressed in this lament. Structurally speaking, Smith notes that there are two voices in this poem, one which he labels the 'public voice in vv.19-25.... [and the] private voice in vv.26-27,'<sup>122</sup> with vv.19-25 not directly addressing anyone and vv.26-27 addressing Jonathan. In fact, David never directly addresses Saul in the entirety of the lament, nor does he designate him with a royal title,<sup>123</sup> which Niu designates 'a measured violation of the mourning custom.'<sup>124</sup> Finally, David never truly highlights Saul's successes, instead he indirectly points to his own throughout the lament.

David describes Jonathan's love, however, as "being better than that of women." For some, this designates Jonathan and David's relationship as homoerotic,<sup>125</sup> while others have

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at a point where he is preparing for further war, he limits his grief and hands over leading the national mourning to the keening women.

<sup>122</sup> Smith, *Poetic*, 277.

<sup>123</sup> Smith notes that David does refer to Saul as anointed, a royal title but this is only in reference to Saul losing his kingship. (Smith, *Poetic*, 273.)

<sup>124</sup> Niu, *King*, 78.

<sup>125</sup> Horner is a foundational scholar, who laid out an argument centred upon their homosexual encounters, justifying it through David's influence of living under Philistine rule (Horner, T., *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978, 27-29.), though he does not consider that David's and Jonathan's love would have started prior to David living under Philistine rule. Ackerman compares the relationship to that of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, and writes that the adjective 'brother' in David's lament, 'may be similar to the possible use of brother in the 'Epic of Gilgamesh... as the objects of each other's erotic or sexual desire' (Ackerman, S., *When Heroes Love: The Ambiguity of Eros in the Stories of Gilgamesh and David*, Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2005, 190.), though Ackerman does note that if it were a homosexual love, the narrator would have condemned it. (Ibid, 194.) Olyan further instigates this view and argues that Ackerman's critique does not work as there is no evidence that homosexuality would have been condemned



tried to propose that this is an entirely political relationship.<sup>126</sup> The evidence in this debate is scarce and unclear, often motivated by religious traditional, personal sexuality and other experiences. As this is a thesis which is preoccupied with a political understanding of David's mourning, we will proceed that *if* it is political in nature, that this may be a moment of sentimentality, with underlying political nuance, expressed through the word 'love.' This is David carefully trying to balance a personal desire to grieve, but as both a soldier and monarch, to grieve appropriately, not showing an excessive range of emotions.

### Summary

This section has sought to present David's mourning over Saul and Jonathan as clearly as possible, without the desire to present his actions as either indefensible or beyond repute. Through this study, it has become evident that David's performed mourning activities, and their acceptance by the writer and audience as being proper, indicates a balance between emotion and performance in monarchical mourning narratives. David's weeping is the clearest expression of personal grief, though it is confined to a short time; and his actions of fasting and mourning clearly indicate a performed grief. There is no sign, however, that either the writer

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in 1000 B.C. (Olyan, S.M., "'Surpassing The Love of Women": Another Look at 2 Samuel 1:26 and the Relationship of David and Jonathan,' in M.D. Jordan, et al. (eds.), *Authorizing Marriage?: Canon, Tradition, and Critique in the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions*, Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2006, 19-20.)

<sup>126</sup> Key proponents of this view often link back to facets such as love being used from 'Amarna Period... in international relations' (Moran, W.L., 'The Ancient Near Eastern Background to the Love of God in Deuteronomy,' *CBQ*, 25 (1963) 79-80.); Thompson believes that the use of oaths throughout their lives designate this relationship as likely political (Thompson, J.A., 'The Significance of the Verb Love in the David-Jonathan Narratives in 1 Samuel,' *VT*, 24 (1974) 335-336.), a view which more and more scholars have adopted; cf. Edelman, D.V., *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991, 311; Keren, O., 'David and Jonathan: A Case of Unconditional Love?,' *JSOT*, 37 (2012) 10-11; Fleming, E.E., 'Political Favoritism in Saul's Court: אהבה, אהבה, and the Relationship between David and Jonathan,' *JBL*, 135 (2016) 20-33. Heacock does note, however, this view is normally adopted by forgetting that this is a lament devoted solely to Jonathan in vv.26-27. (Heacock, A., *Jonathan Loved David: Manly Love in the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Sex*, Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011, 30.) In personal correspondence with myself, Aren Maier a retired soldier and current professor, notes that what may be perceived as homoerotic to civilians is to those in the military a strong relationship, built in the confines of war. He wrote, 'From my personal experience, soldiers who serve together, particularly in small units, in military settings, and more so if they have undergone combat experiences, develop a close family like camaraderie, quite unparalleled with relationships developed in other contexts.' However, as this evidence is from a modern scholar/soldier, and is purely anecdotal, it is difficult to apply to an ancient situation, but does shed further light on a supporting perspective.

or the audience believe this to be wrong. The expectation is clearly placed on performing emotion, but not excessively. Therefore, any condemnation on David for his expressions of grief would be unjustified, as his culture dictated that it was right that this should occur. In his lament, however, David's own political intentions become apparent. He takes the opportunity to devalue Saul (which bolsters his own claim to the throne) and sever ties with his previous allies. Two Davids appear in this passage. There is the David, who undermines Saul, so as to ensure his own rise to the throne occurs as smoothly as possible, alongside the David who properly undertakes his civic duty.

## 2 Samuel 3

### Introduction

Scholarship on David's response to Abner's death is most usually preoccupied with determining David's responsibility in the matter. For this thesis, however, the concern is not as much why David mourned, but how David mourned and what that means. The narrative is densely packed and can be divided into three main sections: 3:6-21 tells of Abner handing the throne over to David; vv.22-27 tells of how Abner was murdered; vv.28-39 is David's mourning. The story begins with Abner, the commander-in-chief of Ishbosheth's army, being accused of trying to sleep with one of Saul's concubines to strengthen his own claim to power. Angered by the claim, Abner decides to hand over the power of the Northern Kingdom to David and makes a deal with him in which Abner will return Michal, David's wife and Saul's daughter, to David – thus strengthening David's claim to the throne. What Abner gains from this deal is never stated. The events then transpire negatively, wherein Joab, the commander-in-chief of David's army, discovers that this deal has been made and states that Abner is trying to deceive David, so kills him.<sup>127</sup> David's elongated mourning narrative then occurs, which involves declaring his own innocence (v.28); cursing Joab and his house (v.29); tearing his clothes and adorning sackcloth (v.31); joining in the funeral procession (v.31); burying Abner's body in Hebron and weeping (v.32); singing a lament (vv.33-34); fasting and swearing an oath against eating food until the end of the day (v.35); and finally proclaiming Abner as great (v.38)

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<sup>127</sup> The text states that Joab killed Abner as revenge for Abner killing Asahel, Joab's brother (v.30). However, some scholars argue that v.30 is a gloss (Anderson, *Samuel*, 62; McCarter, *Samuel*, 118-119.) Others have suggested the actual reason Joab killed Abner is because Abner was a threat to Joab's job. (Halbertal, M., Holmes, S., *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel*, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017, 53.) Niu notes how it is almost certain that David will attempt to give Joab's job to Abner, as he does so later when he tries to replace Joab (2 Sam 19:12) (Niu, *King*, 91.), though Niu forgets that David later does that as Joab kills David's son, Absalom. James VanderKam suggests that David was aware of what Joab's response would have been, and so sets up the murder to push responsibility for himself and to alleviate a political opponent. (VanderKam, J.C., 'Davidic Complicity in the Deaths of Abner and Eshbaal: A Historical and Redactional Study,' *JBL*, 99 (1980) 532.)

and himself as weak (v.39). The forthcoming analysis will focus on determining the significance of the various actions but will counterintuitively begin with a note on vv. 36-37.

### Vv. 36-37

The writer of the passage indicates that the people were ‘pleased’ with David’s response to the murder and that they believed him to be innocent of any involvement in the matter. Scholarship is often more focused on v.37 which proclaims David’s innocence – as they believe the verse inadvertently indicts him and seems an unnuanced ploy to detract responsibility for the fact that David might be responsible for the murder – however, this study will focus on the fact the people were pleased with David’s response; the question of whether they believed David to be innocent is a secondary matter.

Scholars are often focused on why the writer included the sentiment of David’s innocence, and to highlight one scholar, Robert Polzin believes the narrator is attempting to portray the people as ‘foolish in their wholesale acceptance of the king,’ as their views lack any real basis.<sup>128</sup> This sentiment, however, does not accord with the performative aspect of mourning that has been highlighted in the section labelled *Expressing Grief in Different Cultures*. Instead, one should take an approach like that of Yisca Zimran, who believes this statement to be ‘an integral part of the plot,’ meaning that the given statement on David’s innocence should be believed.<sup>129</sup> Though it is likely that there was speculation regarding David’s involvement in Abner’s death at the time the account occurred alongside the time it was written,<sup>130</sup> for the purpose of this thesis the focus should be that David’s actions in the

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<sup>128</sup> Polzin, *David*, 40-41.

<sup>129</sup> Zimran, Y., ‘Look, the King is Weeping and Mourning!’: Expressions of Mourning in the David Narratives and their Interpretive Contribution,’ *JSOT*, 41 (2018) 498.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Anderson who suggests that ‘certain doubts concerning David’s motives had existed in the minds of both Judeans and Israelites.’ (Anderson, *Samuel*, 63.)

narrative aligned with him being believed and absolved of murder, indicating the value and power of performed mourning.

## Vv. 31-32

### Adorning Sackcloth (V.31)

David's first act in mourning is to tear his clothes, an analysis of which has been provided in the previous chapter. However, to briefly recall what was discovered, tearing clothes is both a rite of mourning which is socially mandated, and also a reflection on the inner state of the person tearing their clothes. Adorning sackcloth, though, is far less understood. Thiel writes that sackcloth was 'a rough, coarse material or cloth woven from goat hair (later also camel hair) and thus black.'<sup>131</sup> It was possibly 'a loincloth (2 Kings 20:31; Isaiah 20:2)';<sup>132</sup> McCarter writes that it was an 'ordinary kind of household bag used, for example, for carrying grain (cf. Gen 42:45; etc.), and it is probable that it was material from such bags that was worn in mourning.'<sup>133</sup> The reason for adorning this material in mourning was, according to Thiel, 'self-abasement'.<sup>134</sup> In Genesis 37 and 2 Samuel 3, it is paired with tearing clothes, but there is no prescriptive pattern in how the mourning rites work. As Niu notes, if there is a pattern being followed it is ritualistic and is 'not [a] spontaneous act that reveal one's inner feelings and emotions.'<sup>135</sup> Therefore, the act of tearing clothes and adorning sackcloth are typical mourning rituals, but these rituals are not connected to any particular emotions except the public expression of grief.<sup>136</sup> If one favours Köhlmoos' argument that there is a prescriptive

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<sup>131</sup> Thiel, W., 'קִשׁוּ,' G.J. Botterweck, et al., *TDOT*, Vol. 14 (translated from the German by D.W. Stott), Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, 185.

<sup>132</sup> Anderson, *Samuel*, 52.

<sup>133</sup> McCarter, *Samuel*, 119.

<sup>134</sup> Thiel, 'קִשׁוּ,' 186.

<sup>135</sup> Niu, *King*, 102.

<sup>136</sup> In his book, De Vaux writes as if there is a typical prescriptive journey for one undertaking mourning rituals. He writes, 'At the news of the death, the first action was to tear one's garments (Gn 37:34; 2 Sam 1:11; 3:31; 13:31; Job 1:20). Then 'sackcloth' was put on (Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 3:31); it was a coarse material, usually worn next to the skin, around the waist and below the breast (cf. 2 Kings 6:30; 2 Maccabees 3:19)... The mourner took

pattern for tearing clothes,<sup>137</sup> then one must consider why sackcloth is not included in all instances.

As for why David opted to engage this particular rite in this narrative can only be speculated at. However, this study will suggest that as Abner's death contained the most speculation of David's interference, an extended sequence of mourning rites may have been required, and an act which displayed such powerful discomfort may have bolstered his case of innocence. Concomitantly, it should be noted that this act likely added to the fact that the audience believed David to be innocent and absolved him of any guilt. Therefore, whatever the purpose of this act, it was clearly a performed rite more powerful than many others and one which David felt necessary to utilise.

### **The Burial (V.31)**

Upon his death, Abner receives an immediate burial in the city of Hebron. In his article on burial, Olyan notes that the idealised burial would have been 'in the family tomb,' but that 'honorable internment in a substitute for the family tomb' would be a close second.<sup>138</sup> However, Olyan does write that some biblical texts would consider it a punishment 'not to be buried in the family tomb'.<sup>139</sup> Why then did David bury a man of such high status with a secondary burial type, which could be considered a punishment? The question is answered if one considers the burial location, Hebron, an important land for David's kingship. It is the city where David will establish his capital and is anointed king over Judah (2 Sam 2:1-4), and where

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off their shoes (2 Sam 15:30; Ez 24:17, 23; Micah 1:8) and headdress (Ez. 24:17, 23). Yet, on the other hand, a man covered his beard (Ez. 24:17, 23) or veiled his face (2 Sam 19:5; cf. 15:30). It is probable that to put one's hand on one's head was a regular sign of mourning: the Bible speaks of this gesture as an expression of sorrow or shame (2 Sam 13:19; Jer. 2:37), and it is the pose of weeping women in certain Egyptian bas-reliefs and on the sarcophagus of Ahriam, king of Byblos.' (De Vaux, R., *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (translated from the French by J. McHugh), London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980, 59.)

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Köhlmoos, 'Tearing,' 306.

<sup>138</sup> Olyan, S.M., 'Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology,' *JBL*, 124 (2005) 604.

<sup>139</sup> Olyan, 'Neglected,' 604.

he is anointed king over all Israel (2 Sam 5:1-3). Abner, however, has no special allegiance to Hebron, but handing over the Kingdom to David in Hebron earlier in the chapter.

Herbert Brichto believes that a grandiose burial in one's own land assumes a 'connection between proper sepulchre and the condition of happiness of the deceased in his afterlife.'<sup>140</sup> The intertwined claim to both 'the land to which they hold' and 'a single ancestral line', is central in understanding burial.<sup>141</sup> This is why Abraham was keen to be buried in his own land, with his wife, as the dual composition of land and family form the epitomised burial.<sup>142</sup> Even David desired his own body to be buried in his own land, if he were to die in war (1 Sam 26:20) as did Jacob and Joseph.<sup>143</sup> So why did David desecrate the ideal of internment among ancestors? It is worth noting that Abraham and David both create a new funerary site wherein notable individuals are to be buried. For Abraham, it is his family, and for David, it is Abner and Ishbosheth. One could suggest that David was attempting to mimic Abraham's initiative and reflect the patriarch by burying Abner in a new land.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, by burying Abner and Ishbosheth (both of whom are from the Northern Kingdom) in the land of Hebron in the Southern Kingdom, it foreshadows David's premiership over the entire land, both North and South. David's burial of Abner was a political move which should have elicited judgement. Instead of burying Abner in his own land, David attempts to highlight the inevitable unification of Israel and Judah and his own hopeful premiership.

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<sup>140</sup> Brichto, H.C., 'Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife – A Biblical Complex,' *HUCA*, 44 (1973) 8.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10.

<sup>143</sup> Buitenhuis, M., 'Blood Revenge and Burial Rites in Ancient Israel,' *Journal for the American Oriental Society*, 39 (1919) 316.

<sup>144</sup> McDonough suggests that this connection can be seen in Abraham's purchase of the land for Sarah's burial, which is convoluted and elongated, and its similarity in 'David's action in purchasing the temple site.' (McDonough, S.M., "'And David Was Old, Advanced in Years': 2 Samuel XXIV 18-25, 1 Kings I 1, and Genesis XXIII-XXIV,' *VT*, 49 (1999) 128-129.) McDonough's argument is convincing but falls short, in that he suggests that the parallels sit in those two stories. Rudman, however, in response to McDonough, argues that the similarities go far further, for example, 'the curious connections between the stories of the two Tamars in Genesis xxxviii and II Samuel xiii, have been common knowledge for nearly forty years.' (Rudman, D., 'The Patriarchal Narratives in the Books of Samuel,' *VT*, 54 (2004) 239-240.) He proceeds to state, that the connections between Genesis and Samuel are underdeveloped, a point on which he cannot be faulted. (Cf. *Ibid*.) He continues to elaborate that both Abraham and David are 'progenitors of their nation'. (*Ibid*, 240.)

### The Funeral (Vv.31-32)

Both funerals and funeral processions receive little commentary in the HB, and although vv.31-32 indicates that they occurred, what they looked like is unknown. Niu takes the opportunity in his study to rebuild what he can. He begins by writing that ‘the closest parallel we can find is perhaps Jacob’s burial found in Gen 50:7-13. But even there, nothing regarding the detailed arrangement is described.’<sup>145</sup> He does suggest, however, that Joseph leading the funeral procession in Genesis 50 indicates that this was the job of a son, meaning that David is attempting to show himself as an ‘heir to Abner’.<sup>146</sup> He further substantiates this claim by arguing that through requesting Michal, his wife and Saul’s daughter, be returned to him in v.13, there is a pattern of David showing himself as an heir to the Northern Kingdom.<sup>147</sup> With regards to the funeral, Jan Fokkelman writes that the inclusion of the military may indicate that this is a ‘state funeral,’<sup>148</sup> meaning that David provided a level of care for Abner which he did not even provide for Saul and Jonathan, for whom he has not even provided a proper burial. Whether David is trying to show himself as an heir to Abner through the funeral can only be guessed at, but Niu’s argument is persuasive.

That this is the only documented funeral in the HB is itself significant, as it shows that there is an underlying benefit to documenting that David organised and participated in the funeral. It was likely that David, out of fear of being blamed for Abner’s death, attempted to show himself innocent by arranging an extravagant funeral. Furthermore, one could speculate that the audience at the time saw this as another necessary ritual action.

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<sup>145</sup> Niu, *King*, 104.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 105-106.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

<sup>148</sup> Fokkelman, J.P., *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses: Volume III: Throne and City*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990, 109.



### David's Lament (Vv.33-34)

Dominic Rudman writes that the elegy has 'presented commentators with something of a puzzle, not so much from any evident corruption of the text, as from its obscurity of meaning.'<sup>149</sup> The lament is peculiar. When compared with the lament in 2 Samuel 1, one can see there are certain aspects missing. For example, 2 Samuel 1 invites nature (e.g., v.21 proclaims that the Mountains of Gilboa should not rain) and women (v.24) to join in lamenting the fallen ones' deaths, a linguistic strategy which Standhartinger designates typical of the lament format.<sup>150</sup> Yet, this lament contains no such plea to nature or women. Furthermore, in David's present lament, there is no praise of Abner like that which he offered to 'his royal kinsmen' in 2 Samuel 1.<sup>151</sup>

David's claim to innocence is emphasised at the beginning of the poem with a rhetorical question aimed at the audience, asking them whether they believe Abner's death to be justified. As a rhetorical question, David invites his listener to conclude the answer is a firm 'no'.<sup>152</sup> The use of alliteration plays with the common consonants in נבל and אבנר, as well as David stressing the common components in הכמות and ימות.<sup>153</sup> The structure of the line echoes the sentiment which he will express throughout the entire lament: that he is not guilty of involvement in Abner's murder but is in agreement at the injustice of such a murder. Regardless of whether

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<sup>149</sup> Rudman, D.C., 'David's Lament for Abner (2 Samuel 3:33-34),' *IBS*, 22 (2000) 91. Contra Rudman's suggestion that there are no corruptions in the text, multiple attempts reconstruct the text have been provided by scholarship. Cf., Cross, et al., *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert: Qumran Cave 4: 1-2 Samuel*, Vol. 17, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, 112; Freedman, D.N., 'On the Death of Abner,' in J.H. Marks and R.M. Good (eds.), *Love & Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope*, Guildford: Four Quarters Publishing Company, 1987, 125-127; Qimron, E., 'The Lament of David over Abner,' in C. Cohen, et al. (eds.), *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, (Vol. 1), Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008, 144-145; Parry, D.W., 'The Aftermath of Abner's Murder,' *Textus*, 20 (2000) 94-95; Ulrich, C.E., Jr., *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978, 131-135; Dahood, et al., 'Instrumental Lamedh in II Samuel 3,34,' *Biblica*, 61 (1980) 261.

<sup>150</sup> Standhartinger, 'Women,' 561. One could incorporate Peter Ackroyd's emendation, where v.38 is included into the lament, (Ackroyd, P.R., *The Second Book of Samuel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 48.) but this still does not solve the issue of the invocation of women or nature not being included.)

<sup>151</sup> Auld, A.G., *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012, 383.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Fokkelman, *Throne*, 111.

<sup>153</sup> Fokkelman, *Throne*, 111.

David emphasises Abner's death as unjust, one cannot help but wonder why David refers to him as a fool (נבל).

Wolfgang Roth, in his article on the meaning of נבל, notes that the word is not widespread in the ANE, though it is found in Akkadian (wherein it means 'to tear out').<sup>154</sup> It is often used in conjunction with the verb מות to refer to corpses, and in its verbal form frequently 'refers to the withering of plants.'<sup>155</sup> Roth concludes that its meaning is related to 'being separated from life.'<sup>156</sup> Additionally, he studies the verb in its adjectival form (as it occurs in v.34), concluding that the context of Abner's unjust murder indicates that the meaning of נבל is indicative of Abner dying 'suddenly and without warning... shamefully and secretly.'<sup>157</sup> Finally he appeals to Job 30:8, where the description of a נבל refers to an 'outcast... and [those who] do no more participate in family and tribe and their life and blessing.... Outcasts could and were killed in secret and shame, suddenly and without warning.'<sup>158</sup> Roth's study accentuates that נבל should not be considered David trying to proclaim Abner a fool, but that he is highlighting Abner as dying like an outcast.

Anthony Philips further adds to the debate, through demonstrating the various uses of נבל throughout the HB.<sup>159</sup> With all the available evidence, Philips concludes that its meaning is 'reserved for extreme acts of disorder or unruliness which themselves result in a dangerous breakdown in order, and the end of an existing relationship'.<sup>160</sup> Though Philips and Roth come to similar conclusions, they have both been mentioned as they highlight slightly different contexts by which one can understand David's purpose for mourning. Roth suggests that David is trying to communicate that he also believes Abner's murder to be unjustified. Philip's

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<sup>154</sup> Roth, W.M.W., 'NBL,' *VT*, 10 (1960) 394-397, esp. 397.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, 400.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, 402.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>159</sup> Philips, A., 'Nebalah: A Term for Serious Disorderly and Unruly Conduct,' *VT*, 25 (1975) 237-241.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, 238.

argument, however, provides a further nuance, in which Abner's death could prove a pivotal moment where, if his audience believes his claim of innocence (which they do), then David can safely unite his kingdom, and if not there will be further trouble and disorder.. However, if his audience does not believe his claim, David risks a 'breakdown in order, and the end of an existing relationship,'<sup>161</sup> with that new relationship being the newly established allegiance of the Northern tribes.

In his next line, David proclaims that Abner's hands were not bound (from the root אָסַר) and, if one accepts the text of 4QSam<sup>a</sup>,<sup>162</sup> that his feet were not fettered (בִּזְקִיָּם). As Niu notes, the pair is more often used 'not in the context of confinement, but rather in the contexts of being transported, mostly in exile', which he argues refers to Abner's 'voluntary meeting with David', as 'he had not been brought to Hebron against his will, not like a captive in bondage; rather, he has come voluntarily on good terms.'<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, the reflexive meaning of the verse, as noted by Fokkerman, 'is as if the poet himself feels chained by the hard facts.'<sup>164</sup> David is attempting to demonstrate that he has a history of loyalty with Abner (however brief it may have been), that Abner willingly submitted to David's kingship and that David feels personally impacted by his death.

In his final line, David says "As one falls before the son of the wicked, you fell." It is interesting to note that this is a counterpart to the first line, 'inasmuch as all its consonants can be found in the semantic counterpart thereof, בְּנֵי עוֹלָה', where alliteration with Abner's name occurs.<sup>165</sup> In his study, Niu illuminates that בְּנֵי עוֹלָה occurs only four times more in the HB (2 Sam 7:10; 1 Chronicles 17:9; Psalm 58:3; Hosea 9:10), the first three of which 'clearly refer to

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Parry, 'Aftermath,' 95.

<sup>163</sup> Niu, *King*, 119.

<sup>164</sup> Fokkerman, *Throne*, 112.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 110.

Israel's antagonists, foreign enemies.'<sup>166</sup> Niu's understanding leads him to the conclusion that David is making a bold claim regarding Joab, claiming that he is one of the בני עולה, or a 'wicked antagonist of all the Israelites.'<sup>167</sup> This is a clear attempt by David to separate himself from the act committed by Joab.

### Summary

Each line of this elegy pointedly distances David from any involvement in the murder as well as any respect he may have for Joab. Concomitantly, the lack of any typical lament features indicates that David's purpose is to prevent further indictment. Moreover, Fokkelman writes that it is important 'to be aware of everything which is missing.'<sup>168</sup> Nothing is said of the murder (2 Sam 1:19, 25), no praise is given of Abner's personality or actions (2 Sam 1:23).<sup>169</sup> Instead 'the scale of values of the song is chiefly moral and legal.'<sup>170</sup> This may have been down to the fact that David felt less obligation to praise and mourn Abner as it was a mere formality, and David had already won over the Northern Kingdom (3:17-21). Unlike David's lament for Jonathan and David, however, David never puts inflammatory claims against Abner, likely because he has less to prove against this man.

### David's Fast (V.35)

The rite of fasting has already been covered in the previous chapter, but to briefly summarise it is a ritualistic attempt to express grief and also to petition God, but for David it was never used for the expression of personal grief. The present passage, though, contains some

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<sup>166</sup> Niu, *King*, 120; Niu provides discussion on how Hosea 9:10 is ambiguous of whether the enemy referred to is internal or foreign, but settles for foreign, pp.120-121.

<sup>167</sup> Niu, *King*, 121.

<sup>168</sup> Fokkelman, *Throne*, 112.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

peculiarities regarding David's fast which require exploration. First, the people urge David to end his fast, and second, that David took an oath in response.

### **The Response of the People (V.35)**

One becomes privy to David's fast through all the people (כל־העם), who are encouraging him to eat. Considering his fast was less than a day in length, it is peculiar that David is under such pressure. In his commentary, Anderson writes that it 'may be understood as a test of David's sincerity, and his refusal may have helped to convince the people that the king was not implicated in Abner's death.'<sup>171</sup> Though Anderson's suggestion makes sense, investigation shows the issue to be far deeper.

Niu suggests that the people should be considered David's 'comforters', as they 'attempt to bring about the cessation of David's mourning by breaking his mourning fast.'<sup>172</sup> The role of the comforter was an important one in the ANE, and it is a topic discussed by Anderson in his study on grief and joy. He delineates two types of comfort: 'processual', in which one assumes a 'state of mourning alongside the mourner,' or 'resultative', in which the comforter attempts to '[bring] about the cessation of mourning.'<sup>173</sup> Anderson concludes that 'kinsmen or close friends were obligated to show ritual and emotional identification with the one who had suffered a tragic loss. The same type of obligation was perceived among kings whose relationship was patterned on a kinship model.'<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, he illustrates how the point of mourning was to identify oneself with the dead and associate oneself with the world the deceased now inhabit.<sup>175</sup> As extended mourning meant extended detachment from the

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<sup>171</sup> Anderson, *Samuel*, 63.

<sup>172</sup> Niu, *King*, 110.

<sup>173</sup> Anderson, *Time*, 84.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. Xuan Pham notes that of the different types of comforters, those who join in mourning are usually the preference, as instructed in Ben Sirach 7:34. (Pham, X.H.T., *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, 28.)

<sup>175</sup> See the various ANE examples of mourners attempting to access the world of the dead or incorporating similar actions into their mourning. (Anderson, *Time*, 60-72.)

world of the living, mourning was often condemned if it exceeded a standard length.<sup>176</sup> However, David's mourning does not exceed a standard length. Though the text does not indicate when David initiated his fast, one can easily assume that, as this has all occurred in a single day, David's fast had yet to exceed a few hours. One must consider the necessity for the comforters as (a) they only seek to end David's very brief fast; and (b) they fail to associate themselves with David in his mourning.

In the section titled *Monarchical Mourning*, Lambert's article was brought to attention, which demonstrates that there was an inherent desire to bring a monarch out of mourning.<sup>177</sup> Additionally, if monarchs were to mourn, they were expected to mourn appropriately, for fear of political repercussions. One can conclude that there was (likely) an urgency for the people to ensure David's mourning for Abner was succinct and that he would only briefly be away from government. The people, therefore, are encouraging David to end his mourning due to a national anxiety that their monarch will be unable to effectively govern.

### **The Oath (V.35)**

After the people urge David to eat, David denies their request, instead proclaiming an oath saying, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets." The meaning of the oath is ambiguous, as David only predicates it with 'כה יעשה לי אלהים' and no implication is given of what the punishment may be, though severity is implied through the Hiphil of יסר. However, this is a vague and open oath, and much is left to the reader to make assumptions.

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<sup>176</sup> Anderson notes that Jacob refuses to be comforted, though his children want him to 'reincorporate himself among the living.' (Ibid, 86.) Furthermore, Gilgamesh's excessive mourning is viewed contentiously having superseded the ordinary week of mourning. (Ibid, 78.)

<sup>177</sup> Lambert, 'Fasting,' 486.

Paul Sanders lays out some important aspects that should be considered in this oath. That the use of  $\eta\kappa$  could have been originally joined with ‘some gesture or symbolic act’ which would have evidenced the proposed punishment.<sup>178</sup> An intended punishment is crucial to add meaning to this phrase, yet Sanders does concede that whatever physical actions may have accompanied this punishment are not present in this text.<sup>179</sup> The only condition laid out by David are those predicated by  $\alpha\alpha$ , in which he gives the circumstances in which the oath will be broken and under which he may be punished by God.<sup>180</sup> There are other self-imprecations in the HB, some of which are not upheld which could seemingly undermine the value of David’s oath. However, Sanders presents the various instances in which the self-imprecation is not upheld, concluding that those instances without follow-through portray that individual negatively and is intended to ridicule their ‘overconfidence,’ whereas in the instance that David does not follow through in 1 Samuel 25:22, it is due to changed circumstances.<sup>181</sup> Yael Ziegler provides a different perspective on the matter, with a more human and holistic nuance. She lists all the uses of the self-imprecatory phrases used in the HB,<sup>182</sup> demonstrating that five of the twelve self-imprecatory oaths in the HB are violated, yet the various writers do not ‘ever explicitly condemn’ a single violator.<sup>183</sup> She proceeds to analyse the instances in which the self-imprecatory phrase is uttered and notes that ‘intense emotions... precipitate the eruption of the self-imprecation,’ suggesting that these phrases are sudden emotional responses to negative circumstances, in which the oath-taker often has a ‘genuine desire to carry out the pledge,’ but it will often be ‘a hot-headed promise instead of a well-planned, implementable

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<sup>178</sup> Sanders, P., ‘So May God Do To Me!’, *Biblica*, 85 (2004) 92. Sanders draws on ANE parallels in which gestures were included in oath taking procedures. He cites a Mesopotamian source in which an oath was accompanied by ‘the touching of the throat’, insinuating that if the curse was broken, then the individual ‘was deserving of being killed’. (Ibid, 92.)

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 96.

<sup>182</sup> 1 Sam 3:17; 14:44; 20:13; 25:22; 2 Sam 3:9; 3:35; 19:14; 1 Kgs 2:23; 19:2; 20:10; 2 Kgs 6:31; Ruth 1:17. (Ziegler, Y., ‘“So Shall God Do...”: Variations of an Oath Formula and Its Literary Meaning,’ *JBL*, 126 (2007) 59-61.) Furthermore, the oath is not kept in 1 Sam 14:44; 25:22; 1 Kgs 19:2; 20:10; 2 Kgs 6:31. (Ibid, 64.)

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 65.

idea.<sup>184</sup> If she is right, there must have been great respect but equally great scepticism of the oath that David took in his (supposed) grief. What is more, that David took an oath with no tangible ramifications should not be undermined; he merely chose to continue a fast until the end of the day. But, once more, the evidence provided by Lambert indicates that David must prove that he was able to mourn for his ally, while not causing his newly gained advisors to worry about his excessive amount of mourning.<sup>185</sup> Though a self-imprecation lasting only till sunset and without real consequence, this was as much as David could offer as monarch.

### Summary

This section has sought to lay out the various aspects to David's mourning in 2 Samuel 3, and to do so holistically, not neglecting any key aspect. The resulting conclusion of each section is that David intends to demonstrate an exaggerated amount of mourning to ensure his immediate audience and those who would have heard about the mourning would view him as an ally of Abner. Considering David had no strong attachment to Abner and their relationship had always been somewhat rocky, this is not surprising. There is a tension to be held in this narrative. On one side of the debate, that David is attempting to make himself appear emotional does make him appear suspect. Equally, when one appeals to the work of scholars such as Gary Anderson, whose work shows that emotion in the ANE and HB was expressed through performance, David can be viewed as acting appropriately.

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 64-65.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. *Monarchical Mourning*.



## 2 Samuel 10

### Introduction

The narrative of 2 Samuel 10:1-5 is brief. It contains the description of the death of king Nahash of Ammon, whose son, Hanun, accedes to the throne (v.1). Out of diplomatic respect, David then sends an envoy to express his condolences to the new king (v.2), who in turn responds by shaving the beards of the envoy and cutting their garments to expose their genitalia (v.4). David responds by entering into war with the Ammonites (10:6-11:1). As will be shown, David's actions can be considered as appropriate mourning behaviours in international relations in the ANE, with Hanun's reception being somewhat atypical. Unlike most mourning passages, in which scholars will attempt to find evidence of David's inner life, 2 Samuel 10 is largely neglected in these studies. However, as will be shown, this is a passage which, when considered in conjunction with 2 Samuel 19 and comments made by Peter McCarter, illuminates how David strategically tried to redeem himself following the death of his son. As the passage is not predominantly concerned with mourning rituals but is instead part of the larger context of chapters 10-12,<sup>186</sup> all information about the mourning rituals will have to be extrapolated through different means. Therefore, this section will contain less direct material as compared to the sections on Saul and Jonathan, Abner and Absalom. Instead, to understand the mourning behaviours, it will be necessary to look at ancient Near Eastern norms for political mourning and consider the issue of shame and honour in mourning as well as the reception of the messengers and David's response. As will be shown in the following section,

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<sup>186</sup> As the purpose of this research is not to discuss structure and function of the larger narrative, there is no place for discussion of this issue here. However, Antony F. Campbell's view is that this text 'functions as an anticipatory appendix, providing background for the following story in chs. 11-12' (Campbell, A.F., *2 Samuel*, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005, 96); Anderson sees the function differently, in that chs.10-12 contain 'a more or less unitary account of three consecutive events', which frame chapters 10-12 and focuses on the defeat and capture of Ammon, which are interrupted by the events of the Bathsheba affair (Anderson, *Samuel*, 146); for different perspective, see McCarter, *Samuel*, 275-276.

diplomatic relations also involved the necessity to mourn, but more at stake was the recognition of the legitimate accession of the next monarch.

### **The Ancient Near Eastern Background to the King's Death and Accession**

2 Samuel 10:1-5 presents an unorthodox approach to the reception of an envoy. The passage is written against a background of diplomacy, in which political deaths and the accession of a new monarch provided an opportunity to 're-establish existing relationships.'<sup>187</sup> Death itself is a period of social restructuring both individually and corporately. In the life of an individual, socially speaking, death can prompt a period of liminality, when the grieving person draws away from typical society into a period of mourning. The world of politics in the ANE was similar in this regard, as the newly acceded monarch would find themselves having to re-establish who could be considered their international allies, meaning that the death of a monarch could be an opportunity for allies to present a 'reaffirmation of loyalty.'<sup>188</sup> Most typically, this would be in the form of an envoy, who would be sent as representatives of their predecessor's political ally.<sup>189</sup> However, at its worst, a monarch's death was a gateway to political and individual turmoil.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Olyan, *Mourning*, 51.

<sup>188</sup> Meier, S.A., *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988, 32.

<sup>189</sup> The case of Ramesses II's letter to Hattusili III demonstrates the importance of sending an envoy upon accession. Though the letter is missing information, one can piece together certain aspects. Predominantly Ramesses makes reference to the fact that he had sent envoys across, with 'a certain physician,' 'rich presents' and 'all the good herbs.' (Goetze, A., 'A New Letter from Ramesses to Hattušiliš,' *JCS*, 1 (1947) 245.) For Goetze, the likelihood is that Hattusili 'had complained, probably with some justification, that the Pharaoh had not treated him as an equal. After all, Hattusili had won his throne by a coup d'état... Ramesses now acknowledges the achievements of the new Hittite king who had proved able to establish himself as the undisputed master of his empire.' (Goetze, 'New,' 251) Therefore, not sending an envoy was cause for great offense. For information on the case of Hattusili's rise to the throne, see, Knapp, A., *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015, 119-159.

<sup>190</sup> See the case of the Egyptian Queen who contacted Suppiluliuma I, writing: 'my husband died. A son I have not. But to thee, they say, the sons are many. If thou wouldst give me one son of thine, he would become my husband. Never shall I pick out a servant of mine and make him my husband!... I am afraid!' (Güterbock, H.G., 'The Deeds of Suppiluliuma as Told by His Son, Mursili II (Continued),' *JCS*, 10 (1956) 94.) Death in the political sphere meant remarriage, and for this queen, reliance upon a foreign power to save her from a marriage that she did not want.

It is important to look at ancient Near Eastern parallels to understand what the ideal mourning relationship would have looked like. Paul Kalluveettil, in his book *Declaration and Covenant*, makes reference to two texts from El Amarna, EA 29 and EA 41.<sup>191</sup> EA 29 contains a letter already highlighted in the section titled, *Hate and Love*. To briefly summarise, however, it indicates that the Mittani King Tushratta was devastated at the death of his ally, Amenhotep III (probably), and foregoes food and water, wishing his own soldiers were dead.<sup>192</sup> Tushratta felt it important to dramatically overstate the personal loss that he had felt upon the death of this ally, and how he would rather ten thousand of his own men die than this ally. In EA 41, Suppiluliumas took a different approach where, unlike Tushratta who stated his personal grief, Suppiluliumas took the opportunity to prompt a reminder of the political allegiance that previously existed between himself and Amenhotep III. He wrote:

‘Neither my messengers, whom I sent to your father, nor the request that your father made, saying, “Let us establish only the most friendly relations between us,” did I indeed re[fus]e.

Whatsoever your father said to me, I indeed did absolutely eve[ry]thing. And my own request, indeed, that I made to your father, he never refused; he gave me absolutely everything. Why, my brother, have you held back the presents that your father made to me when he was al[iv]e?’<sup>193</sup>

For Suppiluliumas, death was an opportunity to present a foreign ruler with an unfulfilled obligation, and thereby re-establish a relationship based on the fulfilment of this promise.

Pinhas Artzi discusses Hattusilli III, a Hittite monarch, who mourned for Kadasman-Turgu, a Babylonian monarch, which is most illuminating. Hattusilli, many years after the

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<sup>191</sup> See Kalluveettil, P., *Declaration and Covenant*, Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982, 49.

<sup>192</sup> *The Amarna Letters* (translated and edited by W.L. Moran), London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992, 94.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

death of Kadasman-Turgu, writes a letter to Kadasman-Enlil, the new monarch of Babylon and Kadasman-Turgu's son, to defend words stated at an earlier point wherein he wrote that he would protect Kadasman-Enlil at all costs, including against Itti-Marduk-Balatu. As Kadasman-Enlil acceded to the throne at a young age, Itti, his vizier, undertook the responsibilities of governance, leading Hattusilli to reaffirm his loyalty to the king, and insisting that any harm that may come from Itti would be met with retaliation.<sup>194</sup> For Artzi, the proof Hattusilli will deliver his promise rests on Hattusilli's reminiscence of his mourning act,<sup>195</sup> which Artzi describes as 'the humane evidence that the acts of the Hittite king are honest in both the legal and kinship sense.'<sup>196</sup>

In his article on the political dimension to 'love' in the ANE and HB, Moran notes a more orthodox approach to death and accession as highlighted in 1 Kings 5. Hiram, King of Tyre, sends an envoy to Solomon upon the death of David, which is well received, with a trade deal ensuing, which likely resulted in financial benefit to at least one kingdom.<sup>197</sup> Finally Xuan Pham, who in her book on mourning in the ANE and HB, further adds to Artzi's article through the inclusion of another example, of a 5<sup>th</sup> century Babylonian king mourning his own mother, who had rulers from other nations join him in mourning for his mother (as the queen mother was in a significant political position).<sup>198</sup> This final instance of political mourning does not contain any instance of accession, but describes political allies choosing to join in mourning.

Thus far, this section has shown that mourning was a valuable point at which a monarch could alter political relationships. It provided monarchs with an opportunity to show grief, to

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<sup>194</sup> For the letter see Oppenheim, A.L., *Letters from Mesopotamia: Official, Business, and Private Letters on Clay Tablets from Two Millennia*, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967, 139-146 [139-140].

<sup>195</sup> About his mourning, Hattusilli wrote: 'While the gods have kept me alive and preserved my rule, your father passed away and I mourned him as befits our brotherly relationship.' (Oppenheim, *Letters*, 140.)

<sup>196</sup> Artzi, P., 'Mourning in International Relations,' in B. Alster (ed.), *Death in Mesopotamia*, Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1980, 163.

<sup>197</sup> Moran, 'Ancient,' 80.

<sup>198</sup> Pham, *Mourning*, 23. Pham quotes A. Leo Oppenheim's translation of various ancient Near Eastern Texts (cf. 'Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts' (Translated by A.L. Oppenheim) in J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *ANET*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, 560-561.)

benefit financially, to show loyalty to a successor, and to have comforters while they were in grief. Politically, this was vital and not engaging in mourning was cause for significant offence.

### **Why Did David Feel the Need to Mourn for the Deceased King?**

If the political expectations of mourning and accession was a sensitive topic in the ANE then it is clear why David felt the need to mourn: out of political responsibility and diplomacy. As also noted, there may be another more personal aspect. These two converge in many ways and there is no distinct separation between what is considered political and what is considered personal in this chapter.<sup>199</sup> David does give an explanation of his own reasons for sending an envoy to the newly crowned king. Firstly, there is a prior relationship; the reader is not entirely certain of the relationship between David and Nahash, though indications in the text do provide some clarity. In 1 Samuel 11 Nahash leads a campaign against Israel which he loses, meaning it is possible that David allied himself with Nahash for protection whilst he and his soldiers were in an exodus, fleeing Saul, though what exactly that allyship looked like is mere speculation.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, we learn in the text that David's mourning occurs because of an act of  $\text{סָדַח}$  that Nahash did for David. Once more, this act of  $\text{סָדַח}$  is a matter of speculation. It is possible to view it in a political climate, similar to the one already mentioned involving kings in the ancient Near East, who out of loyalty and diplomatic respect mourned.<sup>201</sup> This is an acceptable understanding, as it fits against a larger backdrop of mourning rituals in the ancient

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<sup>199</sup> Much like David's mourning for Jonathan and Saul which was far more exaggerated and intertwined personal and political elements. Consider, too, Abner, for whom David felt no strong emotions but mourned, an entirely political act which looked personal. And consider, finally, Absalom, for whom David was unable was unable to merge his personal and political response, allowing his personal emotions to take over.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Alter who proposes that Nahash could have offered David 'refuge or logistical support' out of 'enmity toward Saul' (Alter, *David*, 244); see also, Esler, P.F., *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading Old Testament Narrative with its Ancient Audience*, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012, 308-309; McCarter, *Samuel*, 274.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Kalluveettil, *Declaration*, 49; Fokkelman, J.P., *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses: Volume I: King David (II Sam. 9-20 & I Kings 1-2)*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981, 43; Smith, R.G., *The Fate of Justice and Righteousness During David's Reign: Narrative Ethics and Rereading the Court History According to 2 Samuel 8:15-20:26*, London: T & T Clark, 2019, 73.

Near East. As Brueggemann notes, ‘the action is parallel to the action of a government in sending a high official to the funeral of a leader of an allied state in order to meet the new leader and affirm solidarity.’<sup>202</sup> Therefore, there is a possibility that the  $\text{דָּסָה}$  David is offering is a mere political courtesy. Yet, McCarter suggests that  $\text{דָּסָה}$  may be in reference to Nahash’s assistance to David in 2 Sam 17:27, which would then restructure the order of the chapters in the book of Samuel. In 2 Sam 17:27, reference is made to Shobi, son of Nahash, who allied himself with David’s army to fight Absalom. As it is unlikely that Shobi would have made an alliance with David following an Ammonite defeat, the more likely understanding is that Shobi was allied to fight with David under Nahash’s orders as king, therefore meaning that Absalom’s revolt actually preceded 2 Sam 10.<sup>203</sup> If so, then it is likely that the  $\text{דָּסָה}$  referred to by David, is the support referred to in 2 Sam 17,<sup>204</sup> meaning that David’s obligation to mourn came from the support he received in his own war against Absalom, and David now must repay that respect.

### **The Reception to the Messengers**

Why did a nation which had strong political and personal allegiances to David reject David’s customary mourning rituals? And how is this relevant to mourning practices? By considering the first question of why the Ammonites rejected David’s mourning, one leads well into the second question, about its relevance.

In politics, both ancient and modern, the death of a political figure can be used strategically by different political parties for their own benefit, and 2 Samuel 10 is a case in point.<sup>205</sup> To send a messenger was, as has already been shown, customary behaviour in the

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<sup>202</sup> Brueggemann, *Samuel*, 269-270.

<sup>203</sup> McCarter, *Samuel*, 270.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> Most famously, it was the death of Franz Ferdinand that kickstarted World War 1. Consider, also, Ernst vom Rath, a German diplomat in Paris who was murdered by Herschel Grynszpan, a Jewish man, and whose murder instigated pogroms in Germany.

ANE, and the messengers were to act as ‘comforters to mourn along with the family of the deceased.’<sup>206</sup> This means, to reject the messenger was an act of shame on the family of the deceased, and one with far-reaching ramifications. Why Hanun rejected the comforters was, at a basic level, to sever political alliances with the Israelite state.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, as Meier notes in his study on the messenger in the ANE, ‘creative insults’ could often be used to reject a messenger.<sup>208</sup> Ultimately, messengers could be rejected by the state for any reason, though, it may have been, as stated in the text, that this mourning envoy was actually there to spy out the city (v.3). He, consequently, imposed what Bechtel describes as a ‘shaming sanction.’<sup>209</sup> With reasonable suspicion that David is using his mourning envoy for a dual purpose,<sup>210</sup> Hanun inflicted upon those envoys delivering deceit, an apt punishment and suitably shamed them.

In his article on ritual inversion, Olyan notes the strategic purpose in how Hanun dealt with the envoys (shaving their beards and stripping their clothes). In the ancient Near East shaving constitutes a typical mourning rite for men, where,

‘Shaving the head or beard, plucking out hair, shaving a bald spot on the head, or letting the hair hang loose, among other forms of hair manipulation, are all examples of typical

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<sup>206</sup> Lemos, T.M., ‘Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible,’ *JBL*, 125 (2006) 232.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Hilary Lipka who views this as Hanun’s way of expressing ‘disinterest in maintain[ing] a covenant relationship in the most insulting way possible.’ (Lipka, H., ‘Shaved Beards and Bared Buttocks: Shame and the Undermining of Masculine Performance in Biblical Texts,’ in I. Zsolnay (ed.), *Being a Man: Negotiating Ancient Constructs of Masculinity*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2019, 185.)

<sup>208</sup> Meier, *Messenger*, 139.

<sup>209</sup> Bechtel, ‘Shame,’ 67.

<sup>210</sup> As Auld writes, ‘most of their neighbors to the east of the rift Valley (the Arabah), both south and north, have already been attacked by David, forced to pay tribute, and some of them occupied; and now David is sending them an ‘embassy’ when their king is new and potentially vulnerable.’ (Auld, *Samuel*, 443-444.) Or take the succinct phrase that Firth uses in his commentary to describe David’s imperial behaviour as ‘David’s expansionist policy towards the Philistines.’ (Firth, D.G., *1 & 2 Samuel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 8, Nottingham: Apollos, 2009, 409.) Because David had spent much of his time expanding his personal empire, it is only reasonable to assume that the Ammonite would be sceptical.

mourning rites as witnessed in texts such as Lev 10:6; 21:10; Jer 41:5; Mic 1:16; Job 1:20; Isa 15:2; and Ezra 9:3.<sup>211</sup>

However, as Olyan also points out, these rituals are also undertaken by ‘the person afflicted with skin disease’ in Leviticus 13:45-46, and are imposed on ‘a prisoner of war, a rival, or a wrongdoer by a hostile agent.’<sup>212</sup> Hence, there is a dual purpose to these rituals, either presenting an individual as a mourner or one who has been shamed. Equally, by tearing the garments, a typical morning ritual is also corrupted and used in shaming circumstances. As Köhlmoos points out, normally ‘the torn garments of the messengers seem to be part of the message itself (1 Sam 4:12; 2 Sam 1:2; 15:32; 2 Kgs 18:37; Isa 36:22; Jer 41:5).’<sup>213</sup> Although there is no indication that the messengers met Hanun with torn garments (though it is entirely possible), the envoy was still employed to comfort and mourn. If the envoy did arrive in torn garments, one could consider that Hanun emphasises what he considers their feigned idea of mourning. If they did not, then Hanun, in grief-spawned rage, inflicts onto them a corrupted version of a typical mourning ritual which they were lacking.

Olyan also mentions that shaving, and most likely stripping, were practices used by Assyrians against prisoners of war.<sup>214</sup> In Isaiah 7:20, the ‘unnamed victims’ of a war are humiliated by the Assyrians by shaving their pubic hair.<sup>215</sup> Olyan’s notation that this ritual inversion is engaged in 2 Samuel 10 provides a deeper understanding of how creatively one could reject a mourning ritual and turn honour into shame.

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<sup>211</sup> Olyan, S.M., ‘Ritual Inversion in Biblical Representations of Punitive Rites,’ in J.J. Collins, et al. (eds.), *Worship, Women, and War: Essays in Honor of Susan Niditch*, Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2015, 138-139.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

<sup>213</sup> Köhlmoos, ‘Tearing,’ 305.

<sup>214</sup> Olyan cites Cynthia Chapman (Olyan, ‘Inversion,’ 140, n.21.), who in her book notes that in Assyrian reliefs, the enemy were often portrayed as naked. (Chapman, C.R., *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004, 27.)

<sup>215</sup> Olyan, ‘Inversion,’ 140.



## David's Response

Mariecke van den Berg, who provides a queer reading of the text, argues that the stronger and more appropriate response would have been for David to shave his beard as an act of solidarity with the shamed men.<sup>216</sup> Suggesting that David's actions consolidate the idea that he has been shamed, she believes he could invoke 'a collective "turning of the other cheek",' which would have 'reversed the "politics of shame"'.<sup>217</sup> Van den Berg illuminates a valued asset of reader-response techniques, which challenges aspects of toxic masculinity which plague modern societies alongside ancient ones. However, she does not take into account the cultural importance of 'reciprocal honour' as Olyan describes it in his article on honour and shame.<sup>218</sup>

Unlike modern Western culture, the culture of the ANE was a shame/honour society, and one must invoke this framework to quantify how social relations were established.<sup>219</sup> Olyan notes that honour is established through 'military victory (Exod 14:4, 17-18; 2 Kgs 14:10) and lost through defeat and exile, where it is replaced by shame (Isa 23:9; Nah 3:10; Lam 1:8)'.<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, honour is something that should be repaid, and 'to return humiliation is the goal of one who is diminished or despised by a treaty partner'.<sup>221</sup> Therefore, the acts that are reported in 2 Samuel 10 are as follows: David acts honourably to Hanun, who repays the act by shaming David's men through shaving and stripping them. For David to restore honour 'in the universe of reciprocal honour' as Olyan describes it, he had no choice but to go to war, and to win the war.<sup>222</sup> All of this leads to the crux of the argument, that mourning was evidently a time to display acts of honour, or, for Hanun, shame. As mourning was a period of reorganisation and

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<sup>216</sup> Van den Berg, M., "'I Hid Not My Face": An Essay on Women, Their Beards, and the Promise of Isaiah 50:6,' *Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research*, 26 (2018) 77.

<sup>217</sup> Van den Berg, 'Hid,' 77.

<sup>218</sup> Olyan, 'Honor,' 213.

<sup>219</sup> For a more detailed understanding of shame, see the first chapter.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, 204.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, 205-206.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, 213.

reintegration into society, it worked to either consolidate or sever political or personal affiliation to another individual.

### Summary

Mourning in international relations was a risky business in the ANE. It involved possible disintegration of relationships and, if so, a period of turbulence for one or both nations. David's political mourning throughout 2 Samuel 10:1-5, however, has been exemplary. He mourned appropriately, responded carefully, and ensured that he was not the one imparting shame on a foreign leader. All of this was to rectify a [possible] mistake wherein his leadership in 2 Samuel 18-19 had been flawed and his mourning inappropriate. As mentioned in the section labelled *Shame and Honour*, both shame and honour can be lost and gained, and though David may have lost honour by his mourning in 2 Samuel 19, all of his actions in 2 Samuel 10 help to re-establish his mantle.

## 2 Samuel 19

### Introduction

The narrative of 2 Samuel 19 is a continuation of the narrative in 2 Samuel 12, where Nathan prophesies over David that someone will rise from his house and conspire against him (v.11), following his affair with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11. Invariably, the prophecy comes to fruition, and Absalom, David's son and heir to the throne, becomes disillusioned with David's leadership when David fails to punish Amnon (Absalom's half-brother and David's son) for raping Tamar (Absalom's sister and David's daughter) in chapter 13, leading to a coup by Absalom. David is forced into exile in chapter 15, Absalom sleeps with his father's concubines in chapter 16, and eventually a war results in Absalom's death in chapter 18. Regardless of the terror caused by Absalom in David's life, chapter 19 contains the most excessive and gut-wrenching of all the mourning narratives in David's narrative.

2 Samuel 18:33[19:1]-19:4[5] is a very long mourning narrative,<sup>223</sup> which does not present David in a good light. However, this long sequence allows the reader to see the true emotional state of David. To analyse David's political mourning in this passage is no easy feat as to mourn politically would have meant not to mourn at all. In regard to political responsibility, one can assume that everything that David does in this passage is inappropriate.

To analyse the various aspects of David's grief from a political lens this section shall be divided as follows. First, there will be a discussion on the entry of the messenger which occurs in 2 Samuel 18, as it highlights the sharp contrast between political responsibility (as expected by the messenger) and personal emotion (as evidenced by David). Second, there will be an in-depth analysis of the various aspects of David's grief, including his location, the verb

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<sup>223</sup> 'Whereas most of the mourning accounts have a relatively brief report scene (cf. Gen 37,32; Jonah 3,4; Ezra 9,1-2; Neh 1,3), our passage has a much more developed one, including a lengthy prelude (vv.18-22), two reporters, two reporting scenes and verbatim dialogues.' (Niu, *King*, 218.)

used to describe it, David's speech, and the reported actions. Finally, there will be a section on Joab's and the people's reactions.

### **Entry of the Messenger (18:24-32)**

Prior to David's grief, there is a long scene describing the arrival of the messenger. The narrative tells of the death of Absalom, followed by Ahimaaz, a soldier in David's army, wishing to deliver the news of the Israelite victory to David. However, Joab recognises that though it is a national victory, David will instead take it as a personal loss. So, instead he opts to send a Cushite messenger. Ahimaaz continues to pester Joab to let him run and Joab eventually concedes. Ahimaaz runs to David, overtaking the Cushite, and while travelling is noticed by David's watchman. David, in seeing Ahimaaz run, tries to convince himself that it must be good news (v.25, 26, 27). In his study on the messenger in the ANE, Samuel Meier shows how messengers carried trepidation and fear wherever they went. In Ugaritic literature, when Anat sees a messenger travelling towards her, she assumes the messenger to be carrying bad news.<sup>224</sup> Similarly, Baal and Anat bring gifts to Asherah, who mourns upon seeing the 'messengers' arrival (though neither Baal nor Anat are messengers by profession).<sup>225</sup> At the news of Aqhat's death, there too is trepidation at the presence of a messenger.<sup>226</sup> Of course, messengers did not always signal bad news in the ANE, however, the expectation of bad news does appear to be a firmly established trope. David, though, inverts the pattern found in Ugaritic literature, when he tries to prevent his own grief by convincing himself that he will receive positive news from the messenger.

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<sup>224</sup> Meier, *The Messenger*, 131-132.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*.

Ahimaaz then arrives and is interrogated by David regarding Absalom's fate, but Ahimaaz does not directly answer David's question.<sup>227</sup> He does not say that Absalom had been killed, which would have connoted military victory, nor does he state, 'the Lord has avenged (שפט) the king from his enemies,' which 'connotes condemnation and punishment.'<sup>228</sup> Instead he says that Absalom and his army had been 'delivered' (סגר) which 'carries connotation of imprisonment.'<sup>229</sup> This implies that Ahimaaz was aware that the message of national victory was also one of personal distress. David, in questioning Ahimaaz, attempts to show 'psychological tact and political restraint', by referring to Absalom as נער.<sup>230</sup> However, upon learning of the fate of his son, נער transforms to the more personal בני, and David's grief ensues.<sup>231</sup> Concomitantly, David's focus on his son is further evidenced in the 'three-fold mention of בשׂר' (good news).<sup>232</sup> That both David and the messenger use בשׂר demonstrates that what both constitute as 'good news' differs dramatically from the other.<sup>233</sup>

In his study Niu comments that David's initial dialogue with the watchman (vv. 25, 26, 27) is actually a monologue. When the watchman is on top of the gate, he shouts news to David (קרא), whereas David is speaking (אמר).<sup>234</sup> With the considerable distance between the two of them, one must conclude that this is David speaking to himself in 'a desperate attempt to counter the fear that he must be harbouring in his heart.'<sup>235</sup> This type of behaviour is briefly discussed in an article by Bosworth on attachment behaviours in grief, where he writes that this is typical 'numbing' behaviour, in which one attempts to soften the emotional intensity of

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<sup>227</sup> Meier, in his study on the messenger in the ANE, notes that messengers lying or 'obscuring the truth' is an issue occurring across the ANE, and even led Assyrian leaders to consult Shamash for clarity about whether the messenger would lie. (Meier, *Messenger*, 169-170.)

<sup>228</sup> Reis, 'Killing,' 183.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Polzin, *David*, 188.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Niu, *King*, 230.

<sup>233</sup> Schilling, A., 'בשׂר,' in G.J. Botterweck, et al. (eds.), *TDOT*, Vol. 2, (translated from the German by J.T. Willis), Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975, 314.

<sup>234</sup> Niu, *King*, 230.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, 231.

grief.<sup>236</sup> When David does finally enter into conversation, he moves from self-soothing to repetitive interrogation, twice asking of Absalom's (or הנער) welfare (vv.29, 32).<sup>237</sup> The narrative of the messenger's entry highlights the emotional intensity that David underwent in awaiting this news, the typical grief behaviours experienced by a father, but more importantly, the stark contrast between the political expectations of the messenger and David's desires.

### **David Mourning for Absalom (18:33[19:1]-19:4[5])**

Reis' article will be used as a springboard for discussing David's grief in this chapter, as she goes against the typical opinion of scholarship. She believes that throughout chapters 18-19, David is acting and not legitimately mourning. She argues that David's urging of Joab to 'deal gently' is not explicit enough, and that 'if David had wanted to prohibit the killing of Absalom... he could have made the precise statement.'<sup>238</sup> Furthermore, that David does not fight in the war (which would have meant that he may have had to kill Absalom), and by publicly giving the order to 'deal gently' with Absalom, underlines the fact that he is acting defensively, by trying to protect his reputation from Absalom's supporters.<sup>239</sup> Reis also appeals to David's use of the word נער ('young man') to speak of Absalom, until his death, when it becomes בני ('my son'), as to Reis it indicates a new allegiance to Absalom following his death.<sup>240</sup> Finally, that David goes above the gate to weep, to the 'highest point of the city' is to 'broadcast his propaganda.'<sup>241</sup> All of these issues which have been brought out, plus the inclusion of a study on רגז, will be tackled in this section, to analyse what David's grief does express about his emotional state.

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<sup>236</sup> Bosworth, 'Understanding,' 127.

<sup>237</sup> Niu, *King*, 231.

<sup>238</sup> Reis, 'Killing,' 186.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

## רָגַז

In 18:33 [19:1], the reader is told that ‘the king was shaken’. The verb used, רָגַז, is picked up on by scholars for its poetic meaning; it is used elsewhere in the HB to describe earthquakes in both ‘earth and the heavens (1 Sam 14:15; 2 Sam 22:8; Isa 5:25; Joel 2:10)’, as well as an intense physical reaction to fear (Isa 32:11; 64:2; Joel 2:1).<sup>242</sup> It also appears in Amos 8:8, where the land will tremble (רָגַז) and the people mourn.<sup>243</sup> David Tsumura affirms the definition as ‘trembling with emotion’.<sup>244</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner further expand on the meaning of the verb noting that ‘trembling with emotion’ can be from ‘terror’ (Ex. 15:4), ‘anxiety’ (2 Sam 7:10), ‘joy’ (Jer 33:9), or ‘sadness’ (2 Sam 18:33[19:1]).<sup>245</sup> Whatever its meaning, the author wishes to portray an extreme expression of emotion, equated with instances of earthquakes or personal trepidation. Ekaterina Kozlova highlights the usage of רָגַז in the covenantal curse of Deut. 28:65, where the people will be cursed with a trembling heart (רָגַז לֵב) in the instance of their disobedience;<sup>246</sup> she observes how, in 2 Sam 7:10, God tells Nathan that the people of Israel will no longer be disturbed (רָגַז), and that the enemies of the nation will be removed.<sup>247</sup> Having acted inappropriately since his affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11), David is now described with this verb which is used to curse enemies of the Israelite state, a tragic irony. Here, there is likely a dichotomy in its usage. The writer is trying to portray a strong emotional display, but equally stressing that David’s grief is a result of his own failures as king.

<sup>242</sup> Morrison, C.E., *2 Samuel*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013, 4.8.4.3c.

<sup>243</sup> Niu, *King*, 235, n.62.

<sup>244</sup> Tsumura, D.T., *The Second Book of Samuel*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019, 268.

<sup>245</sup> Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., ‘רָגַז,’ in Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., *HALOT*, Vol. 3, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996, 1183.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Kozlova, E.E., ‘Acedia, ‘Bourgeois Ennui’, and Kingship in the Hebrew Bible and the Epic of Gilgamesh,’ *JTS* (forthcoming) 5-8.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, 7, n.42.

## Above the Gate

When David's mourning begins, he is said to move above the gate (18:33[19:1]) where he weeps. Why David chose to move above the gate is a minor point of contention among scholars with three possible solutions: (1) To publicise his grief, (2) for cultic purposes, or (3) to hide while he grieves. Reis is an advocate of the first opinion, believing that David's location was a foothold for proclaiming his grief loudly and publicly, in the presence of a crowd before whom he feels the need to defend himself and in order to rally Absalom's followers to his own side.<sup>248</sup> However, considering David's mourning will alienate him from Joab and his own army (vv.3[4], 5-7[6-8]) and that he has secured a military victory over the coup, it is unlikely pledging allegiance to Absalom could provide him any long-term benefit. De Ward stresses the possible cultic connection to performing mourning on roofs, appealing to the 'wailing heard from housetops' in Isaiah 15:3, with the women who mourned for Adonis on roofs, and also to Judith, who 'in her widowhood camped on the roof of her house (Jdt 8:5).'<sup>249</sup> She concludes that 'mourning in the ancient Near East was not a private activity; it has to be seen in order to achieve its effect.'<sup>250</sup> However, the cultic allusions appear somewhat flawed in this narrative, predominantly because, as Tsumura notes in his commentary, it does not occur alongside any other cultic behaviour, as for example, in a Ugaritic text in which 'King Keret went up to the roof to make sacrifice to the god El.'<sup>251</sup> By contrast, Zimran suggests that David goes above the gate for privacy, which seems the most likely possibility.<sup>252</sup> As already noted in the first and second chapter, weeping was a public display in instances of political grief, so in an instance where David will be shamed for mourning, privacy is of the utmost importance.

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<sup>248</sup> Reis, 'Killing,' 188.

<sup>249</sup> De Ward, 'Mourning,' 4-5.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>251</sup> Tsumura, *Samuel*, 268.

<sup>252</sup> Zimran, 'Look,' 507.



## David's Lament

His lament, though not a lament in the traditional sense,<sup>253</sup> is short and contains one coherent sentence. His preoccupation within the lament becomes apparent through the eightfold repetition of בני ('my son') and the fivefold repetition of אבשלום ('Absalom'). It goes as follows:

בני אבשלום בני בני אבשלום מי יתן מותי אני תחתיך אבשלום בני בני (18:33[19:1])

David then repeats himself in 2 Samuel 19:4 with:

בני אבשלום אבשלום בני בני (19:4[5])

Scholarship's reception to the lament has been mixed. Consider Andrew Davies who writes, 'Could the biblical author not just have written 'my son Absalom' once and been done with it?'<sup>254</sup> For Davies, style is more important than expression and this prompts him to question why David opted for an elongated and repetitive lament. Conversely, Steven Weitzman's approach views David as a father who grieves, describing his repetition as 'a resonant staccato stutter.'<sup>255</sup> For Weitzman, David's expression achieves what it aims to achieve: it expresses grief through stuttering. Both Davies and Weitzman are equally valuable in analysing David's lament for his son, where one must wrestle with questions of style and grammar, while also empathising with a grieving father. Methodologically, Robert Gordon's commentary inspires the most thought-provoking analysis for judging David's lament, when he writes: 'It is possible to condemn David for his preoccupation with his personal loss when the stability of the kingdom was at stake, yet even in times of crisis and high drama a king may be a father.'<sup>256</sup>

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Standhartinger, 'Women,' 561-562.

<sup>254</sup> Davies, A., 'Tears in Jerusalem: David's Response to the Death of Absalom in 2 Samuel and Tomkin's "When David Heard",' in D.J.A. Clines and E. van Wolde (eds.), *A Critical Engagement: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of J. Cheryl Exum*, Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011, 132-144, 133.

<sup>255</sup> Weitzman, S., 'David's Lament and the Poetics of Grief in 2 Samuel,' *JQR*, 85 (1995) 346.

<sup>256</sup> Gordon, *Samuel*, 287.

### ‘O My Son Absalom’

Scholarly analysis of the lament is most often framed by grammatical considerations. Charles Conroy writes that the lament is ‘balanced by three parts of the king’s outcry: vocative exclamations / wish / vocative exclamations: the pattern being A-B-A,’ with a ‘chiastic inversion’ of ‘my son, my son Absalom,’ and ‘Absalom, my son, my son.’<sup>257</sup> As Shimon Bar-Efrat writes, there is a ‘stylistic connection’ between אב (father), and the אב in אבשלום (Absalom), which ‘[highlights] the bond between father and son as well as the preceding conflict between the two.’<sup>258</sup> That Absalom’s name means ‘father of peace’ does heighten any sense of irony in the narrative, considering the distress brought to the kingdom, as well as the personal distress brought to David in this narrative. Finally, Tsumura describes the utterance as a piece of ‘highly elevated poetry’, as the formal structure and the ‘parallelism’ all show that consideration has been put into the sentiment expressed.<sup>259</sup> These grammatical readings overplay what is happening in the text, giving way to eloquence, a virtue of a king. What occurs in this text, however, is a stripping away of all things meritorious of a king, speech included.

In her critical evaluation of the Wise Woman of Tekoa, Patricia Willey writes of the broken and ineloquent speech of the woman as she stands before David’s throne, trying to deceive him.<sup>260</sup> Willey indicates that scholars often attempt to read order into the passage, restructuring and amending the text to rid it of ambiguity.<sup>261</sup> However, she believes the Wise Woman is feigning fear through her speech, and that the broken speech is reflective of a broken person.<sup>262</sup> Furthermore, Willey notes that Tamar’s speech in 2 Samuel 13:16, following her

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<sup>257</sup> Conroy, C., *Absalom Absalom! Narrative and Language in 2 Sam 13-20*, Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978, 75.

<sup>258</sup> Bar-Efrat, S., *Narrative Art in the Bible*, London: T & T Clark, 2008, 69-70.

<sup>259</sup> Tsumura, *Samuel*, 268.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Willey, P., ‘The Importunate Woman of Tekoa and How She Got Her Way,’ in D. Fewell (ed.), *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992, 119-121.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid*, 119-120.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 121.

rape, becomes ‘urgent, marginally grammatical, [and] condensed,’ highlighting that distress destroys speech.<sup>263</sup> Kozlova extends upon Willey’s research in reference to the Wise Woman of Tekoa as well as Tamar, arguing ‘that crippled grammar occasioned by grief... is part of the authorial intent.’<sup>264</sup> Extending this trope to 2 Samuel 19, it is unlikely that the author was writing poetry, but was instead appealing to a widely understood phenomenon in which broken speech represents the distressed person.<sup>265</sup> Grief is further expressed through the change in vocabulary: David has now made the switch from בני נער to נער, as already discussed in the section titled *Entry of the Messenger (18:24-32)*.

David’s cry is repeated once more in 19:4[5], and Bar-Efrat notes that in 18:33[19:1] it is preceded by וכה אמר בלכתו, suggesting an initial level of composure, whereas in v.4 David is said to ‘cry out’ (ויזעק), with no pretence of restraint.<sup>266</sup> Events have changed for the army too, where they have moved from rejoicing to mourning. Even in the knowledge that his actions are having negative repercussions, David does not decrease his mourning, but intensifies it.

That David is expressing grief in his lament is clear. However, one must consider: should the reader support David in his mourning? For Fokkelman, among many other scholars, the answer is no. Fokkelman writes that David’s cries are ‘moving, nay heart-rending, but... [the situation] does not merit a sentimental approach offering an ode to paternal love.’<sup>267</sup> He

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Kozlova, *Maternal*, 124-125, cf. footnote 13 for ANE examples of ‘intentionally broken syntax.’

<sup>265</sup> Conroy writes that ‘the eight-times repeated *i* sound conveys on the sound-level the keenness of David’s anguish.’ (Conroy, *Absalom*, 75.) Bar-Efrat writes, ‘the numerous repetitions of the elements ‘son’ and ‘ab’ echo continually in our minds, thus highlighting the bond between father and son as well as the preceding conflict between the two.’ (Bar-Efrat, *Narrative*, 70. Tsumura notes that ‘The formal structure emphasizes the degree of David’s anguish.’ (Tsumura, *Samuel*, 268.) Finally, Niu believes it demonstrates that ‘David is under the grip of strong emotion.’ (Niu, *King*, 234.)

<sup>266</sup> Bar-Efrat, *Narrative*, 42-43.

<sup>267</sup> Fokkelman, *David*, 263. Cf. Davies who describes David’s repetition as ‘inane, undignified babbling, and plain unnecessary’ (Davies, ‘Tears,’ 133.); Olyan, who in his article on shame and honour, writes that ‘David’s intentions – innocent to be sure – were irrelevant.’ (Olyan, ‘Honor,’ 210.) However, there are some who view David more with more empathetically, such as Polzin who writes of David’s lament, ‘Who has ever read these lines and not been moved to pity David?’ (Polzin, *David*, 187.). Or consider Steven McKenzie, who in his book writes that David could be considered an example of ‘his tender nature’ (McKenzie, S.L., *King David: A Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 165), though he does go on to write that David’s grief did present ‘a serious threat to David’s sovereignty and the unity of the kingdom.’ (McKenzie, *King*, 169.)

believes that David had a responsibility as monarch to lead the people, and his grief is unwarranted as this conflict is the fault of David. Furthermore, he notes that this behaviour is unbecoming of the man who had a more legitimate time to mourn for his infant child, but instead said, ‘Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him and he will not come to me’ (2 Sam 12:23). David should be stating a similar sentiment now for politically motivated reasons.<sup>268</sup> One cannot help but notice the lapse in the character of the king, but yet one still feels empathy for David. Reis and Fokkelman both come to a similar conclusion in that both believe that David is not justified in mourning, but they each approach the matter from different perspectives.

David’s lament is an outcry and expression of his emotions. They are devastating to read and demonstrate that David is distraught and expressing a real and very painful grief. The various scholars cited have shown that there is a poetic element to David’s lament, but that his broken speech represents a politician caught in his own failures and suffering the consequences. Yet, his political duty does not allow for the expression of grief in this instance.

### **‘Would that I had died instead of you!’**

As has already been uncovered, grief is a powerful emotion in OT texts. It was a driving force for mothers to set into action political and personal ambition. For David, however, it leads him to wish his own death upon him in the place of his son, declaring the shocking and dreadful phrase, ‘would that I had died instead of you’ (18:33[19:1]). As a phrase, it has a ‘staccato rhythm,’ and emphatically engages the pronoun אֲנִי, which Conroy describes as ‘an unforgettable expression of lacerated fatherly love and grief.’<sup>269</sup> The sentence ‘is an unreal optative sentence’, meaning that David expresses a desire that will never come to fruition.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Fokkelman, *David*, 253-264; Cf. Conroy, *Absalom*, 74, n.134.

<sup>269</sup> Conroy, *Absalom*, 75.

<sup>270</sup> Fokkelman, *David*, 264.

Furthermore it is ‘the only ordinary sentence between two lines consisting solely of exclamations/vocatives.’<sup>271</sup> Finally, with *מִי יִתֵּן מוֹתֵי אֲנִי* ending on ‘final *i*-sounds’, David’s pain is further accentuated through assonance.<sup>272</sup> The phrase itself is ‘the universal prayer of parents who have lost a child.’<sup>273</sup> It once more integrates poetry with pain, expressing David’s desire to swap places with his deceased child.

There is no indication in the text to what, or where, David is directing his grief. The reader has been told that he is above a gate, but he is absent from anyone who can state whether there was an object to which he directed his grief, whether he was pacing or possibly in a foetal position. His grief was directed verbally to his deceased son, as is evidenced from the suffix on *תַּחֲתֶיךָ*. One suggestion is given by Galit Hasan-Rokem, who suggests that David here could be ‘producing the acousmatic voice’, where the ‘originating cause’ of the sound is not seen, much like the mourning Yemeni Jewish women studied by Veder Madar.<sup>274</sup> Hasan-Rokem’s suggestion highlights a parallel between the father who should not be mourning for his son, and the women of Yemen who are not allowed to mourn in formal places of worship.

The wish to die in the place of his son finds no comparison with any other lament, though Niu does suggest an allusion to 2 Samuel 1:26, as in both David ‘expresses a very close personal relationship with the deceased.’<sup>275</sup> However, in 2 Samuel 1 David’s composure and eloquence of speech suggest that his grief is remarkably dissimilar from his grief over his son. Instead, his grief as expressed in his wish to die instead of his son represents a painful emotion, which as Hasan-Rokem notes, is hidden from the world, only to be heard.

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Morrison, *Samuel*, 4.8.4.3c.

<sup>274</sup> Hasan-Rokem, G., ‘Bodies Performing in Ruins: The Lamenting mother in Ancient Hebrew Texts,’ in I. Feber and P. Schwebel (eds.), *Lament in Jewish Thought: Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Perspectives*, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014, 49. Madar describes how Jewish Yemeni women do not engage in the funeral service, but instead, in groups, carry out laments at a home. ‘With veiled faces’ and self-laceration, the voices of the women have no discernible cause. (Madar, V., ‘Women’s Oral Laments: Corpus and Text – The Body in the Text,’ in I. Feber and P. Schwebel, *Lament in Jewish Thought: Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Perspectives*, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014, 69-70.)

<sup>275</sup> Niu, *King*, 234-235.

### The King Covered His Face

Predicating David's exclamations in 19:4[5] is the indication that he covered his face in grief. Alter writes that 'the gesture makes perfect psychological sense,' though he does not write how.<sup>276</sup> It is more helpful to start from a different direction and assume that the rite does not make sense and see where an analysis of the rite takes the reader. As already noted, Madar commented on the continued usage of women covering their head in grief among Yemeni Jewish women. Moreover, Samuel Krauss discusses covering the head in ancient and modern Judaism, with a wide variety of uses which extend beyond the realm of mourning, ranging from punishment to priestly duty.<sup>277</sup> However, he also notes that in 2 Samuel 15, David flees from Absalom, 'with covered head and bare feet'.<sup>278</sup> That David covers his head in instances of personal distress represents a regressive element in his own personality, in which he seeks coverage in times of trauma and fear. It is worth noting the allusion to 2 Samuel 13:9 in this instance too, where Tamar, following her rape which was left unavenged by David, covered her head with both ashes and her hands.<sup>279</sup> Had David avenged Tamar following her rape, Absalom would have never revolted, and David would not be mourning. Instead, David now mimics the actions of the traumatised woman, and he too covers his own head, again highlighting his political failure.

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<sup>276</sup> Alter, *David*, 312.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Krauss, S., 'The Jewish Rite of Covering the Head,' *HUCA*, 19 (1945-1946) 127-130.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, 131.

<sup>279</sup> The rite can be extended to various facets: putting dust on the head (cf. Gruber, *Aspects*, 456-460.); 'covering the moustache, face or head' (Olyan, *Biblical*, 33.); consider, too, Gilgamesh covering the face of the deceased Enkidu (Pham, *Mourning*, 17.)

## The People and Joab

### David's Responsibility

Having analysed the various features of David's mourning, discussion on Joab's disapproval of David's mourning will be examined. Tsumura sums up the attitude that scholars take to David's actions: 'David lets his own grief overcome his kingly responsibilities, and even his gratitude to God for his salvation.'<sup>280</sup> His responsibility was to prioritise rejoicing for winning a war, whereas he prioritised mourning, the ritual antitype.<sup>281</sup> Olyan notes that this is intertwined with 'the notion of reciprocal honor', in which honour is considered transactionally.<sup>282</sup> Where the army returns victorious on behalf of the king, the correct response should have been to confer honour on that army. However, rather than fulfil his duty, he mourns, resulting in the army being shamed. David's response should have consisted of 'the prescribed pattern of ritual behaviour', which would have involved 'sacrifice, feasting, and other public demonstrations confirming victory and the honor of king and people.'<sup>283</sup> As monarch, 'corporate victory' should have 'displaced personal loss,' thus instigating an honourable response. It is because of this 'covenant violation' that Joab is justified to argue in terms of love and hate, as 'David did not act appropriately toward his loyal servants, the legitimate covenant expectations of a victorious army were not met.'<sup>284</sup> Olyan's article is quoted by most scholars looking at this passage, as it takes into account the crucial honour-shame paradigm. Anderson notes that Rabbinic literature dictates that on feast days or national days of joy, mourners were commanded to act as if they were not in mourning.<sup>285</sup> Furthermore, he notes how Judith, while mourning, set aside those mourning behaviours on 'the day before

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<sup>280</sup> Tsumura, *Samuel*, 268.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Anderson, *Time*, 49-53. Esp. behavioural contrasts between joy and mourning, wherein they are the 'inverse' (p.49).

<sup>282</sup> Olyan, 'Honor,' 208.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid*, 209-210.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

<sup>285</sup> Anderson, *Time*, 50.

the new moon and the day of the new moon, and the feasts and days of rejoicing of the house of Israel' (Jdt 8:6) because 'joy... [is] demonstrated by behaviour, not by her emotional state.'<sup>286</sup> Therefore, the trope of biblical literature, both early and late, as evidenced by Olyan and Anderson, was for David to set aside an emotional response and prioritise ritual rejoicing at the winning of a war.

David's actions, as already shown, were a threat to national interests. His duty was to the people who fought in his army. Yet, the people still mourned with him (v.2[3]). This adds another element to the political-personal struggle taking place in this narrative: by noticing that their king was mourning, they show him empathy, but yet Absalom was still an enemy to them.<sup>287</sup> The people had strong expectations on their return, as evidenced in the eagerness of Ahimaaz to deliver the news, but, instead, David dishonoured the people.<sup>288</sup> Stansell notes the contrast with 2 Samuel 10, where David took an active role in ensuring the honour of his vassals is upheld, whereas, at a moment of personal grief, David is unable to carry out this task.<sup>289</sup>

David's reaction is evidence of poor leadership, because he is unable to set aside his emotions although (a) it is ritually right to do so; (b) it is expected of him by Ahimaaz, and the entirety of his army; and (c) he would not have been the only one to lose a child in this war.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Niu who argues that this is a more 'complex' conundrum, as the people show allegiance to their king, but their treatment of Absalom's corpse also showed their contempt for the rebel. (Niu, *King*, 240.) Regarding Absalom's corpse, it was disposed of by throwing it into a pit in the ground and throwing a גדול גל-אבנים ('a great heap of stones') over his body (18:17). Much ink has been spilled on understanding this passage. In his graded list of the five burial types, Olyan lists this burial as fourth, only superior to non-burial. (Olyan, 'Neglected,' 606.) However, the allusions to defeated leaders are clear (Cf. Joshua 8:29; 10:27). Furthermore, Francesca Starvakopoulou utilises Elizabeth Bloch-Smith's work (Bloch-Smith, E., *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, 103.), and suggests that this type of burial was to prevent anyone accessing Absalom's ghost, therefore the dishonour is even greater. (Stavrakopoulou, F., *Land of Our Fathers: The roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims*, London: Bloomsbury, 2012, 14, n.49.)

<sup>288</sup> Cf. 'The depth of their dishonor is emphasized in the passage by the two-fold reference to their shame.' (Stansell, G., 'Honor and Shame in the David Narratives,' *Semeia*, 68 (1994) 70.)

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. Mauchline, J., *1 and 2 Samuel*, New Century Bible, London: Oliphants, 1971, 290.



### On Joab's Reaction (19:5-7[6-8])

Joab reacts to David's grief with scathing statements, one of which insinuates that the army will abandon their posts if David does not rejoice rather than mourn. Hans Hertzberg writes, 'Joab makes himself the spokesman of the *vox populi*' by stating the intentions of the people.<sup>291</sup> Hertzberg's assessment appears unbalanced as there is no indication of revolution among the people, but instead a unity with David.<sup>292</sup> However, it is likely that, as David broke the covenantal agreement, they would eventually rebel.

Everything Joab states about David's mourning can be summarised in Bar-Efrat's quote, that 'David's reaction is diametrically opposed to what he should be feeling.'<sup>293</sup> It is for this reason that Joab felt it necessary to interject and ensure that David upheld his political responsibilities. In this sense, Joab can be said to be a 'parody of a comforter', as Niu describes him.<sup>294</sup> Typically, the role of a comforter was to 'participate in the rites of mourning with the mourner... [joining] the mourner for the mourning period, sharing the mourner's appearance, locus, and ritual activity.'<sup>295</sup> But, there were also other jobs for the comforter including '[imposing] an end to the mourner's mourning' (Gen 37:35; 1 Chr. 7:22-23; Isa 61:2-3; Jer 31:13).<sup>296</sup> Equally there is an important act of 'consolation', which is missing from the present text.<sup>297</sup> Niu recognises that there are no consolatory actions in this text,<sup>298</sup> but Joab does attempt to end David's mourning. There is a clear allusion in the text to 2 Samuel 13:32-35, in which Jonadab attempts to lift David out of mourning, but purely through reason and through no acts of empathy.<sup>299</sup> Niu indicates the irony of the situation: 'Whereas David is mourning but without

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<sup>291</sup> Hertzberg, H.W., *I & II Samuel* (translated from the German by J.S. Bowen), London: SCM Press Ltd., 1964, 361.

<sup>292</sup> As Alter astutely points out, the people have been loyal to David, showing their allegiance to their 'beloved leader,' by mourning alongside him. (Alter, *David*, 311.)

<sup>293</sup> Bar-Efrat, *Narrative*, 60.

<sup>294</sup> Niu, *King*, 242.

<sup>295</sup> Olyan, *Biblical*, 46-47.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Olyan, *Biblical*, 48.

<sup>298</sup> Niu, *King*, 242.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*, 243.

performing it publicly and the people are said to be in mourning but without actually participating in it, now, likewise, the comforter is comforting but without giving any words or showing any signs of comforting.<sup>300</sup> Joab's intentions were not hidden. He was attempting to lift the king out of mourning for noble intentions. Joab had taken upon himself the true and right goals of a commander: he killed Absalom, the rebel and threat to the state. He also prevented further dissatisfaction with David through delivering a speech to prompt him to set aside his mourning. The irony is clear though as 'the general is threatening his own lord and giving command to his own king, whereas the king follows silently the command of his general.'<sup>301</sup>

### **Hate and Love**

Joab berates David for loving those who hate him and hating those who love him, as well as stating that David would be happy were Absalom alive and his army dead (v.6[7]). It is worth considering the two points separately, as both highlight different standards in the ANE and HB. That Joab equated David's grief with David hating his army seems an exaggeration considering David is expressing parental grief, but it does highlight the political and covenantal undertones of love in the HB. Moran notes various aspects that require inclusion in any discussion of Joab's scathing comments. First, love is not emotional, but is very nuanced and is used to describe political relationships: often used between kings.<sup>302</sup> There are also duties for monarchs to love their vassals.<sup>303</sup> Furthermore, a 'subject must love their king,' which is evidenced by being 'opposed to the treacherous and rebellious.'<sup>304</sup> The allusions to moral and political conduct being evidence of love are clear – by obeying religious and capital laws one

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid, 243-244.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> As will be shown in *The Ancient Near Eastern Background to the King's Death and Accession*.

<sup>303</sup> Moran quotes EA 121:61 and 158:6 as evidence of this duty. (Moran, 'Ancient,' 79, n.17.)

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, 80.

evidences love and by respecting delegates and vassals one shows love. It frames ANE society as being one where monarchs should be revered, but only when both parties upheld the morals and laws of the relationship. Anderson describes Joab's hate-love dichotomy as an unjustified exaggeration, indicating that Anderson interprets love through the lens of emotion, not covenantal obligation.<sup>305</sup> Bar-Efrat, too, is guilty of this emotional reading of Joab's use of the hate-love dichotomy.<sup>306</sup> According to him, Joab's intention is to 'elevate David's paternal attachment to Absalom into a generalized, perverse political principle.'<sup>307</sup> Joab would have been aware there is nothing typically immoral about grief, but on this occasion, joy should have superseded grief. Once more it is worth noting the allusions to 2 Samuel 13: Amnon is described as being in love with Tamar (vv.1 and 4), which eventually translates into a hatred more intense than his love (v.15), another reflection on the allusions between David's political failure of the past and his grief now.

Regarding Joab's statement that David would be happy were others dead, consider the parallels with the Mittani document EA 29. It contains a letter from the Mittani king Tushratta to Amenhotep IV (later, Akhenaten), upon the death of Nummureya (presumably, Amenhotep IV's father, Amenhotep III), which states that when Tushratta heard of the death, he 'wept', taking 'neither food nor water'.<sup>308</sup> He goes on to write, 'let 10,000 be dead in my country, and in my [brother]'s [country] 10,000 as well, [but] let [my brother, whom I lov]e and who loves me, be alive as long as heaven and ear[th]'.<sup>309</sup> Presumably, if it were a political ally and equal,

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<sup>305</sup> 'It seems that Joab has arbitrarily extended David's love for Absalom to all the rebels, and that he has interpreted the king's grief as hate for his own men and officers.' (Anderson, *Samuel*, 227.)

<sup>306</sup> 'The generalization that David loves those who hate him and hates those who love him is undoubtedly unjust. Joab's contention that David's grief for his son is tantamount to declaring that his commanders and servant are of no importance to him is not accurate either. And Joab's 'perception' that 'if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased' (which is what he deduced from David's behaviour), is only partly correct. It is true that David would be happy were Absalom alive, but it is false to state that he would be happy were all his commanders and servants dead.' (Bar-Efrat, *Narrative*, 60.)

<sup>307</sup> Alter, *David*, 312.

<sup>308</sup> *Amarna*, 94.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

the idea of wishing death on his own subjects would have been acceptable to David. Therefore, this could be another example of ritual inversion.

## **2 Samuel 10 and 2 Samuel 19**

Stansell contrasts David's mourning in both chapters 19 and 10, believing that David took an active role in ensuring the honour of his vassals is upheld in 2 Samuel 10, whereas, at a moment of personal grief in 2 Samuel 19, David is unable to sufficiently carry out this task.<sup>310</sup> This section will suggest that 2 Samuel 10, which follows on from 2 Samuel 19, is David's attempt to rectify the mistakes he made in his response to the death of Absalom. This section will therefore briefly highlight the differences in David's response to his son's death and the events in chapter 10, to show how this acts to redeem David.

First, Stansell notes how in 2 Samuel 10:5, once the envoys have been shamed, he hides them to ensure they can regain 'their manly honour'.<sup>311</sup> However, David shames the entire army in 2 Samuel 19 by not conferring honour on them in their victory. Therefore, this is a first instance of David proactively attempting to redeem himself. Secondly, David sticks to the common practice for mourning in the ANE. He does not divert from the ritual norms as he does in 2 Samuel 19. Where David in 2 Samuel 19 struggles to rejoice with the men who fought against his son as his emotions take over, in 2 Samuel 10 he shows no emotion but instead seeks out the welfare of his envoys (v.5). David is proactively rectifying the mistakes and severing any allegiance that he may have to Absalom by repaying that  $\text{הסד}$ .

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<sup>310</sup> Stansell, 'Honor, 70.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

## Summary

As stated, numerous times throughout this chapter, David's grief over Absalom described how a monarch should not mourn, with the evidence clearly legitimising this view. A monarch should be able to set aside their grief in line with corporate obligation and political duty.<sup>312</sup> Instead, David engaged in a sequence of mourning rites, the combined series of which has not been seen in David's life before. Unlike Reis, this thesis will conclude that the evidence points in favour of David legitimately mourning for his deceased son. However, the flaw is that David, as a member and leader of a community, should have ensured that political duty superseded personal emotion. As has been shown so far, Joab's speech was a heavily exaggerated one intended to highlight to David the injustice of his mourning and the risk it carried. This section highlights the worst of David's political grief, because mourning was not the correct political thing to do, which resulted in Joab's accusation that David hates those who love him. His wrong behaviour does result, however, in him being rebuked by Joab, and eventually taking up his rightful position (upon the advice of Joab) to return to the gate.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Cf. Feldman, *Biblical*, 82-88.

<sup>313</sup> 'Kings and elders are often described as sitting at the gate (1 Kgs. 22:10; Jer. 39:3; Deut 25:7; Ruth 4:11).' (Tsumura, *Samuel*, 269.). Concomitantly, the war in which Uriah fights in 2 Samuel 11 ends up taking place in the city gate, the same place Uriah dies. In 2 Sam 15:2-6, Absalom's coup began at the gate. (Anderson, *Samuel*, 228.) The gate is a significant trope in the ANE, representing power and judgement, and in David's own life, death.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand David's political mourning. More specifically, we have focused on understanding how David should ideally mourn as monarch – and also to identify how both personal and political desire influences his mourning. This task was set against a background of showing how scholars try to identify David's grief as 'real' or 'fake,' but should judge it against the standards which fit David as both a warrior and a king.

The first chapter explores how grief is received in various cultures and argues that all tears are legitimate tears. Alongside this, there was a brief study on the reception to David's emotions in the HB. Building on this, the study has analysed David's emotional expression in four instances, highlighting that even when scholarship may be critical of David, culturally he was upheld as being reputable in his actions. Furthermore, where the wave of scholarship wants to view David's grief in 2 Samuel 3 as being political, and in 2 Samuel 19 as being legitimate,<sup>314</sup> the audiences and the writers clearly did not view the matters in the same way. Furthermore, though David mourned in all the passages given, his expression of mourning differed from the more overtly political instances to the personal instance in 2 Samuel 19. Consider the following: (1) In 2 Samuel 1 and 3, David tore his own clothes in grief, whereas in 2 Samuel 19 David covers his head; (2) in 2 Samuel 1 and 3, David is very eloquent, whereas in 2 Samuel 19 his speech is broken; (3) 2 Samuel 19 contains a verb expressing significant distress in David's life, whereas 2 Samuel 1, 3 and 10 contain no indication of distress; and, finally (4) 2 Samuel 19 indicates that David tried to hide himself above the gate while he mourned, whereas in 2 Samuel 1, 3 and 10 all actions were fairly public. The reader can, therefore, summarise that political mourning should not be considered expressive but performative, which to Western eyes may appear disingenuous.

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<sup>314</sup> Except Reis and Baruch Halpern who are both very critical, viewing Absalom's revolt as a strategic attempt by David to consolidate his power. Cf. Reis, 'Killing,' 188; Halpern, B., *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King*, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 90.

One can conclude that the ancient audience, much like modern scholarship, would have been fully aware that David's personal expression of grief differed greatly from any political expression of grief. However, where the ancient audience differed is that they received the political (and more performative expressions of grief) well, whereas the personal expression of grief was not received well.

In conclusion, scholarship should note the various facets which should impact David's expression of grief. Biases of personal,<sup>315</sup> academic,<sup>316</sup> and many other natures can influence interpretations of David's grief negatively. This study does not have sufficient space to cover all the aspects which should impact the interpretation of David's expressions but does cover one of the most crucial, which is to give greater weight to the expectations of those surrounding David. For example, in 2 Samuel 3:36-37, 'all the people' are said to believe that David is innocent of any involvement in Abner's murder, and in the section of this study titled *Vv.36-37*, some varying scholarly interpretations of this verse are provided. The conclusion from this study is that the author was indicating that David's performative mourning was expressive of a legitimate grief according to the cultural paradigm of their time. More indirectly, there are key examples where David's performative mourning fulfils his political duty. In 2 Samuel 10 when the ambassadors have been shamed as a result of their mourning, David immediately sends his ambassadors to Jericho to hide away until their beards return, and they can regain their honour. David's consideration of the ambassadors shows that Hanun has become 'odious,'<sup>317</sup> or 'a stink,'<sup>318</sup> to David, and he begins making preparations for war (v.6). In 2

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<sup>315</sup> In the debate on interpreting David's grief over Jonathan, scholar's interpretations of 2 Sam 1:26 can too often be based on personal and religious views on sexuality. Where evangelical scholars have a desire to protect the reputation of those in the Bible, non-religious scholars, especially those within the LGBTQ+ community, have an equally strong desire to highlight homosexuality within religious texts.

<sup>316</sup> For example, those scholars who study David's grief in 2 Sam 3 can often become preoccupied with the 'History of David's Rise,' or the 'Story of David's Rise,' meaning that their interpretation of David's expression of grief is first filtered through a highly critical lens. Cf. Malul, 'David,' 525, 527; VanderKam, 'Davidic,' 533; Lemche, N.P., 'David's Rise,' *JSOT*, 10 (1978) 16.

<sup>317</sup> Esler, *Sex*, 310.

<sup>318</sup> Stone, *Sex*, 120.

Samuel 19, however, Joab criticises David for not caring enough for his own people and considers it reasonable grounds for revolt. Political mourning, therefore, was not an act to allow David to express his grief, but more an opportunity to show that he was able to set aside personal emotion and fulfil his own political duty. Times of grief are an opportunity for David to show that his priority is political duty, not to exhibit personal expression. Scholarship must recognise that. Although the behaviours seem disingenuous to a modern reader, to the ancient audience they were signs of a good monarch who was stable in his leadership.

Those scholars who have been most critical of David should re-evaluate their conclusions regarding David's expression of grief, respecting that his performed feelings in 2 Samuel 1, 3 and 10 are in line with our cultural understandings of the OT whereby performance expresses emotion. Reis' highly critical view that David's grief was used for his political benefit<sup>319</sup> fits into Bosworth's description of a 'critical appraisal of David.'<sup>320</sup> Yet Reis must consider that, as a politician, David did have public relations to uphold, but his political strategy in 2 Samuel 1, 3 and 10 also ensures that his people can trust in him. David's political mourning, therefore, should not be evaluated only in its benefit to David but its benefit to those around him too. To paraphrase Huntington and Metcalf, for King David 'the sentiment [in mourning] does not create the act, but [the performance] at the proper moment and in the prescribed manner creates within [David] the proper sentiment.'<sup>321</sup> Expression outside the established parameters for mourning would have only been damaging. Those scholars who are most praising of David should also re-assess their view. Though David does fulfil his duty in mourning, this does not mean that his motives are known. For example, in the instances where David is appeasing the people, it should be noted that it is still to his political benefit, and his motives may still verge from altruism.

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<sup>319</sup> See *What was King David Feeling?*.

<sup>320</sup> Bosworth, 'Evaluating,' 192.

<sup>321</sup> Huntington and Metcalf, *Celebrations*, 26.



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