The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

Volume 5: Article 3 (2004)

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Uzzah's Rebellion

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1. Introduction

The books of Samuel reflect a time in Israel's history were many drastic changes were occurring. It was a period of transformation when Israel changed from an impotent tribal society, subject to a more powerful militant neighbour, to a temporarily independent and despotic monarchy. In transitional phases like this, struggles for power may be expected that result in murder, rebellions, and civil wars. Whereas the Bible explicitly describes three of these rebellions, the present author has been puzzled why there is no direct evidence of a mutiny by the influential priesthood against David's ambitious plans.

In this paper we would like to examine the passage from 2 Samuel 6:6-8 as an intimation of a coup against David's plans for Jerusalem. The narrator of 2 Sam 6 gives a detailed account of the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem by David, which process suffers a temporary setback due to the death of Uzzah, and this episode is related in verses 6-8.

During his reign David had to cope with at least three major revolts from within the ranks of his followers. Although the Bible treats these insurrections as if they were entirely the product of self-seeking leaders, the reports are an indication that there must have been significant grievances that led the people, and even close associates like Absalom with his two-hundred companions, to adopt a rebellion as a way of coping with their complaints.[1]

The three uprisings registered in the HB are:
1.) The coup led by Absalom, David's first-born (2 Sam 15-18);
2.) The revolt under the leadership of Sheba, son of Bichri, a Benjaminite (2 Sam 20), and

3.) Adonijah's bid for the throne, which was supported by Joab and Abiathar (1 Kings 1-2). All three rebellions exhibit the same focus: A struggle between the pre-monarchial elements in Israel-Judah and the bureaucracy created by David in Jerusalem, the capital of his new empire.[2]

2. The Three Rebellions

Absalom appeals to a basic sense of justice in the populace and easily captures their attention. When men try to gain access to the king's court, which is now set up in Jerusalem and does not come to them anymore as previously the circuit judges had done (1 Sam 7:16-17), Absalom is able to persuade them that they can more easily and immediately receive a hearing from him without having to grovel for it, as the new monarchial etiquette requires (2 Sam 15:2-6).

Although the Biblical account endorses David as the chosen and anointed of YHWH, it cannot hide the ease with which Absalom is able to summon the tribes to his cause, especially since this summons is issued from Hebron, the city of Patriarchal and early Davidic renown. David is put to flight with only the support of his mercenaries and bureaucrats (2 Sam 15:15-18).

Although the HB calls Sheba, the leader of the second revolt, a scoundrel, it does not deny the deep division and distrust that still existed between Israel and Judah, which David had not been able to eradicate (2 Sam 19:41-20). This second uprising was not only a secession of Israel from the union, but when David commands Amasa to come to his aid with the army, Amasa delays, exciting David's apprehension that this rebellion could be more serious then the one fomented by Absalom (2 Sam 20:6). If David were to lose this conflict, he would lose the army as well as the major part of his kingdom, Israel (2 Sam 19:43), and he would be reduced again to the status of a tribal leader. Therefore, this time, with the help of his commander Joab, he goes to great lengths to annihilate the insurgent (2 Sam 20:6-22).

It is the last rebellion under Adonijah that emphasizes this conflict between the old guard in the provinces and the new power consolidated in the city of David.[3] Adonijah, the crown prince according to primogeniture (1 Kings 1:6), has the support of the pre-monarchial priesthood in the person of Abiathar, as well as the backing of the army in the person of Joab.

Both of these men, with their followers, had been supporters of David in the beginning of his reign.[4] Through many of the changes or reforms, initiated by David from Jerusalem, these men had often been humiliated. Abiathar, the leader of the old Shilonite priesthood, had to share his power and prestige with a complete unknown, Zadok[5], once the Ark had been moved to the new capital (2 Sam 8:17; 1 Chr 16:39-40).[6]

Seemingly David wants to reform the service of the Levites. He gives orders to their leaders to make certain that only rightful members of the group minister in front of the Ark,[7] blaming the outcome of the incident at the גרן נכון[8] on the illegitimacy of the personnel[8] at the time of the transfer of the Ark (1 Chr 15:11-15), but then he appoints his own sons, non-Levites, as priests (2 Sam 8:18).[9] It had also been his decision to abandon the Ark in the house of Obed-Edom, again a non-Levite, a Gittite.[10]

Joab had been David's steadfast companion-in-arms fighting many a battle for him (2 Sam 10:7-14; 11:1; 12:26-27), including the conquest of Jerusalem (1 Chr 11:6). He also did a lot of the dirty work so that David did not have to sully his hands with, for example, many of the equivocal murders (Abner, 2 Sam 3:26-39; Uriah, 2 Sam 11:6-25; Absalom, 2 Sam 18:2-14), as well as conducting the fatal census (2 Sam 24:1-9). At the first opportune moment David seizes the chance to free himself of this friend and removes him from the position of commander of the army, which then he gives, of all people, to Amasa, the army commander of Absalom's choice in his revolt against his father (2 Sam 19:13).

The faction supporting Solomon is represented by Zadok, the priest who owes his appointment to David's favour, and Benaiah, who is in charge of David's mercenaries (2 Sam 20:23). These men, their adherents, as well as Nathan, the court prophet, Shimei, and Rei, are all personally dependent on David's approbation.[11] They are in full accord with Bathsheba, the wife from Jerusalem, that David acquired through adultery and murder, and they manipulate the dying king in giving his approval to Solomon, a man completely at ease in the halls of the capital but who has no connection to the people of the hinterland. This affair underlines the fact that, after about a forty-year rule in Jerusalem, David had not been able to overcome this breach between town and country.[12]

3. Saul and David

It is only surprising that all of the above uprisings occur after the establishment of Jerusalem as the political and religious centre of Israel. Was there no one among the leaders, in the very beginning of David's assumption of power, who had enough shrewdness to foresee that this personal union might be fraught with problems, especially, since these very leaders had, in former times, been so wary about letting Saul appropriate too much independent power?[13]

Israel had been welded into a monarchy because of a need to preserve its existence against a superior military force, the Philistines, and because the people wanted "a king ... like other nations" (1 Sam 8:5). The people and their leaders did want a king, but there were forces among them who were ambivalent about the very idea of a king in Israel. It was these forces who were unwilling to give Saul the powers needed to fulfill his monarchial duties properly, forcing him and his government to vacillate between that of a tribal chiefdom and that of an autonomous kingdom.[14] The account narrating the election of Saul seems to derive from at least two different sources, one being in favour of the monarchy, and the other being truculently anti-monarchial.[15]

This ambivalence is further illustrated by the choice the tribes made of the incumbent to the throne. Saul, although from a good family, comes from Benjamin (1 Sam 9:1-2; 10:20-21), the weakest tribe, which had been dependent on the good will of the rest of the league for its very existence in the not too distant past (Judges 20-21). This choice of Saul of Benjamin was endorsed by the two major entities, the House of Joseph in the North and Judah in the South, because Benjamin posed no threat to either of them.

As can be seen from the above outline of the three major revolts, David could always count on support from his private army which he had gathered around him during his days as a fugitive from Saul. Saul himself never built up his own army but continued in his reliance on the tribal militias (1 Sam 13:2-4). This peasant militia followed his inspired leadership enthusiastically, until their leaders felt that Saul's growing success and autonomy might undermine the established order, and they, in the person of Samuel, a representative of the Shilonite establishment, curtailed Saul's effectiveness (1 Sam 13:8-14). As a consequence, David took the opportunity to gradually establish himself as the person able to provide the needed leadership.

4. The Uzzah Affair

4.1 Introduction

Apparently, though, there were some people who had taken to heart the warnings against the monarchial form of government as voiced by Samuel (1 Sam 10:19; 12). The priests had experienced the wrath of a thwarted monarch to their sorrow before[16], when Saul massacred their lineage at Nob (1 Sam 22:9-19). Abiathar, who had escaped the slaughter, had found refuge with David, who at the time was himself a fugitive from Saul's anger (1 Sam 22:20-23). During Absalom's revolt Abiathar still seems to be loyal to David and together with Zadok is left behind in Jerusalem as guardian of the Ark and as spy to David, although the passage (2 Sam 15:24-27) recording this incident is rather ambiguous in its wording.[17]

David must have lived in Jerusalem for quite some time before he decided to transfer the Ark there. The chronology of the events detailed in the Book of Samuel cannot be taken at face value, but if we give any credence to 2 Sam 5:9-6:1 and 7:1-2, it can be deduced that David was well established in Jerusalem as a sovereign of some repute, before he decided he needed the Ark. It was probably due to this time lapse that people, including the priests, had the opportunity to observe David and his government and become alienated from him and his policies. This is especially true if these policies included the integration of the Yahwistic cult into the indigenous cult of Jerusalem. Since David retained and honoured the local priest(s) of Jerusalem in the person of Zadok, and since there is no evidence that David destroyed the sanctuary(ies) after his conquest of the city, he in all likelyhood intended to re-utilize the Jebusite sanctuary and eventually deposit the Ark there.[18]

4.2 The Literature

It is my contention therefore, that the incident recorded in 2 Sam 6:6-8 is an attempt at a revolt by the priests, before David had a chance to seize all the symbols of authority[19] and to manipulate them according to his own designs. The report of this uprising is more obscured in the telling than the accounts of the other rebellions because when it was written, it had to fit into the established literary schemae of the *hieros logos* of the Ark Narrative and the subsequent *Königsnovelle*.

The authors of the *hieros logos*[20] of the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4-6 and 2 Sam 6) were in all probability the priests of the sanctuary that housed the Ark in Jerusalem. This can be seen in the fact that besides the Ark, which naturally occupies the central role in this tale, and besides David, it is the guardians of the Ark who are the only persons identified by name: Hophni, Pinchas, Eli, Eleazar ben Abinadab, Uzza and his brother Ahio, and Obed-Edom.[21] The story was composed for the purpose of acquainting the visitor to the Jerusalem sanctuary with the marvellous history of how this North Israelite cult object came to be in Jerusalem.[22]

The subsequent chapter of 2 Samuel 7, dealing with David's wish to build a Temple to YHWH, has been labelled a *Könignovelle* by Siegfried Herrmann[23] basing his research into the content, as well as the form, on a prototype of Egyptian literature. This Egyptian paradigm exhibits a design of three points: 1.) the king discloses his plans to his courtiers; 2.) he obtains their approval; and 3.) the king is recognized as the legitimate son of god through divine choice, he accomplishes his intentions, and the entire undertaking closes with sacrifices and prayers.

These two stories, the *Ark Narrative* and the *Königsnovelle,* are so closely intertwined with each other, in that David exploits the occasion of the newly arrived Ark (*Ark Narrative*) as the justification for wanting to build a house to YHWH (*Königsnovelle*), that they have compressed any of the details[24] not absolutely necessary to the culmination of this tale, as for example, the facts surrounding the events at the גרן נכון.

4.3 The Priesthood

A second consideration to keep in mind is that any endorsement of public affairs by the Shilonite priesthood up until the establishment of the monarchy carried much weight with the leaders of the tribal confederation, as can be construed from their collaboration in the selection, as well as the rejection of Saul by Samuel. Therefore, it would have had more serious consequences for the reputation of the House of David, if it had ever been recorded more openly that the priesthood had had misgivings about the choice of David as aspirant in the role of sovereign than the mere disclosure that the crown princes or court officials had planned a coup d'état, especially if the story had been edited during the reign of either David or Solomon.[25]

> 6. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out his hand to the Ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. 7. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there because he reached out his hand to the Ark; and he died there beside the Ark of God. 8. David was angry because the Lord had burst forth with an outburst upon Uzzah; so that place is called Perez-uzzah, to this day. (2 Sam 6:6-8)

Over the centuries many people have looked at this passage and have noted a variety of problems with it. The watershed for the exegesis of this text came with Leonhart Rost[26] in 1926. It was Rost who posited the idea that 1 Sam 4:1b-7:1 and 2 Sam 6:1-23 form one unit, the *Ark Narrative*, which tries to explain how the former cult symbol from Shiloh was established in Jerusalem, after a detour through Philistia[27] and a delay created by the death of Uzzah.

Uzzah and his brother Ahio were the sons of Abinadab in whose house the Ark had rested for twenty years after its return to Kiriath-jearim (Baale-judah[28]) from the country of the Philistines. In most Bible translations *Ahio* is used as a proper name of a person. In Hebrew it has the meaning of "his brother."[29] The LXX uses the plural αδελφοι - *his brothers*. Some of the commentators have opted for the singular and some for the plural form in their translations.[30]

Eleazar, another son of Abinadab and thus a brother of Uzzah, had been consecrated by the men of Kiriath-jearim to attend to the Ark (1 Sam 7:1). McCarter even posits the idea that Uzzah and Eleazar are one and the same person.[31] Either way, Eleazar was either *the* brother or *one* of the brothers of Uzzah or Uzzah himself, who now is in charge of driving the new cart, made especially for the occasion, to transfer the Ark of God to Jerusalem. David had planned this occasion with great deliberation as a display of pomp and strength. He

> ".... again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the Ark of God" (2 Sam 6:1-2).

> David consulted with the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, with every leader. David said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you, and if it is the will of the Lord our God, let us send abroad to our kindred who remain in all the land of Israel, including the priests and Levites in the cities that have pasture lands, that they may come together to us. Then let us bring again the Ark of our God to us" (1 Chr 13:1-3)[32]

So Uzzah, in the company of David, surrounded by a military escort of thirty thousand men, drove the Ark on the new wagon to Jerusalem. The question bears repeating: was there

no-one who saw that David, who had his own army, his own capital, independent of any of the tribes and their leaders, needed the Ark in order to give his own ambitions approval? No-one to question what would happen to this North Israelite cult symbol in Jerusalem, the Jebusite town?[33]

At this point in his career David had already achieved a great deal by becoming king of Judah and Israel. It was due to his influence that Judah had become an entity by uniting within itself various clans and smaller tribes, such as Caleb and Simeon. But David also wanted the permanent allegiance of the North, and without the Ark in Jerusalem, his city would have remained a city state without an empire,[34] just as Jerusalem had always been throughout its long history. David and his Jerusalem, which had never had any association with the Yahwist tradition[35], certainly needed this symbol to legitimate his rule over the Yahwist population of Israel and Judah.[36]

4.4 At the גרן נכון

It was not until they had arrived at a threshing floor that Uzzah acted. A גרן, a threshing floor, is replete with variety of connotations and some of them are that it is a place which could be used (a) for politic and cultic activities[37] (Genesis 50:10-11; 1 Kings 22:10;[38] 2 Chr 18:9; Hosea 9:1), (b) by a divinity to manifest himself (Judges 6:37; 2 Sam 24:16; 1Chr 21:15, 28; Hosea 9:2), and (c) was a proper site to build an altar / a house there to worship God (2 Sam 24:18, 21, 24; 1 Chr 21:18, 22, 28; 2 Chr 3:1).[39]

The word kept its meaning as a place for an assembly to settle matters of community interest for a long time. Already in the Ugaritic literature the term גרן is found indicating a place of judgement: Aqhat 17,V,7; 19,I,23.[40] The rabbis continued using this term, in Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:3 A[41] and Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus, sect. 11[42] and Exodus, sect. 5[43], to denote a place where the Sanhedrin meets for the purpose of judgement and as a place of instruction.[44]

According to 2 Sam 6:6 this particular גרן was called נכון and although here the label is used as a proper name, it can be translated as the "prepared"[45] threshing floor as נכון can also mean: "vorbereitet, geordnet, hergerichtet."[46] as even in modern Hebrew it still means: "firm, fixed, stable; right, proper; ready."[47] What relation this name has to the name of כידן given to the גרן in the parallel story as related in 1 Chr 13:9 has not been clarified as yet.[48] But somehow the name given in the main record, Samuel, seems to indicate that it is the "right place." The right place for what? The right place to install the Ark again on Israelite soil, in a new sanctuary perhaps, after years of neglect, before David had a chance to take it to Jerusalem, its proposed unalterable residence! וישלח עזא אל־ארון האלהים ויאחז בו - *and Uzzah stretched out[49] his hand[50] to[51] the Ark of God and took hold of it.[52]* The reason given for Uzzah stretching out his hand and laying hold of the Ark in 2 Sam 6:6 and 1 Chr 13:9 is "for the oxen shook it" (NOAB)[53], or "for the oxen had stumbled" (JPS).[54]

4.5 Uzzah's Death

> And thus he died for:
> The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there
> because he reached out his hand to the Ark; (2 Sam 6:7)
>
> The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; he struck him down because he
> put his hand to the Ark; (1 Chr 13:10)[55]

Both of these passages assign God's anger to the fact that Uzzah put his hand on the Ark. The JPS translation for 2 Sam 6:7 says that he was killed "for his indiscretion",[56] and: "because he laid a hand on the Ark" (1 Chr 13:10). In other words, Uzzah who had lived in the presence of the Ark for about twenty years[57], who had been assigned to drive the Ark to Jerusalem on the cart constructed exclusively for this occasion[58], who, as the Bible says, in both the Samuel and the Chronicles passages, wanted to protect the Ark from harm, which after all was his job as driver of the Ark, gets killed by God for doing his job.

Scholars have always stressed the inherent sacredness of the Ark and that it did not need puny man's attention to survive.[59] True, but obviously, for the past how many generations the Ark, the symbol of YHWH's presence among his people, had depended on just this human assistance. There seems to be more to the story than this inherent taboo, which borders on magic.[60] After all, it was the Israelites who had believed in this magical quality when they brought the Ark out off the sanctuary at Shiloh in order to support their war effort against the Philistines and were sorely disappointed by YHWH's failure to cater to their expectations. So, perhaps there is more to Uzzah stretching out his hand towards the Ark than the manifest solicitude for its safety. Uzzah might have stretched out his hand in order to retain the Ark at the גרן נכון and the consequent melee, as David's military entourage clashed with the hostile priests trying to defend their domain, resulted in a number of deaths recorded variously in the HB.

If Tur-Sinai's[61] conclusion is correct, namely that the three stories (1 Sam 6:14-20; 2 Sam 6:6-11; 1 Chr 13:9-13), basically relate the same event, is correct, it gives an indication that as the Ark was being relocated something happened which entailed a confrontation between those in charge of the Ark and a war-like group, resulting in a number of deaths. To the authors of Samuel this story was of decisive importance, so that it has preserved its place in the Bible, and subsequent events and editors have not been able to eliminate it, but the details of its telling have become mangled.

4.6 David's Anger

The next action in this story is that of David who "was angry because the Lord had burst forth with an outburst upon Uzzah." Why did David react so dramatically towards this event and even call off the rest of the procession leaving the Ark in the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite (v. 10)?

Various Bible translations render the phrase ויחר לדוד with diverse nuances: "David was distressed" (*JPS*);[62] "David was displeased that" *(Jerusalem)*;[63] "Da ward Dauid betrübt" (*Martin Luther* ;[64] "David wurde tief betrübt darüber" *(Heilige Schrift)*;[65] "David was angry because" (*NOAB*);[66] "και ηθυμησεν Δαυιδ" *(Septuaginta)*.[67]

The grammatical constructions talking about YHWH's anger in verse 7 and then David's anger in verse 8 seem to be rather awkward. According to Gesenius[68] this is how they have been formed - "חרה (1) to burn, to be kindled .... Always spoken of anger, concerning which these expressions are used (a) חרה אפו, ... followed by ב against any one,..." . This would be the expression used in v. 7 where it is said of YHWH: ויחר־אף יהוה בעזה - *YHWH's anger was kindled against Uzzah,*" .... less often followed by על ...; אל ... - (b) without חרה לו אף '(anger) was kindled to him;' he was angry." This would be the combination used for v. 8: ויחר לדוד על אשר.

The awkwardness of these two sentences lies in that the construction can be interpreted as though the idea of YHWH being angry at Uzzah is being continued in v. 8, YHWH is angry at David. But then there is this switch, where David is angry because YHWH made this breach on Uzzah, as though the editor could not bring himself to say that YHWH was angry at David and thus switched the object of his anger in mid-sentence.

But then again: "These expressions sometimes rather denote sorrow than anger; and hence they are rendered in the LXX by the verb λυπεομαι. .... Hiphil - ההרה fut. ויחר - (a) to make to burn, to kindle anger, ...; followed by על." This could explain the divergent translations in the different Bible editions, except the LXX in 2 Sam 6:7 and 8 and 1 Chr 13:10 and 11 does not use λυπεομαι but uses the verb ηθυμησεν from ἀθῦμεω meaning "to be disheartened, despond, ...". For God's anger in v.7 the LXX uses the verb ἐθυμώθη from

θῦμόω - "make angry, provoke ...".[69] So, according to the Septuagint translator, God was angry but David was despondent.

If the actors of this ancient drama truly believed that sacred objects possessed an intrinsic quality which rendered them dangerous even to the humans responsible for them, why would David be so despondent, or even angry, and at whom or at what? After all the Divinity, by killing Uzzah, had manifested his integrity and might, and that really had been the reason why David had wanted the Ark in Jerusalem. He would not have wanted to be associated with an impotent god. And anyway, according to the existing texts, David *knew* that Uzzah had acted irresponsibly, that is why he later on tried to reform the cult personnel (1 Chr 15:11-14). But, he was angry/despondent, dropped off the Ark at the nearest place he knew[70] (could trust, or that was available) and terminated any further action re this North Israelite cult object.

4.7 Israel's Rite of Passage

In footnotes throughout the paper I have referred to an article by J.W. Flanagan.[71] This author uses the sociological model of the *rite of passage* advanced by van Gennep[72] to explain the incident recorded in 2 Sam 6. There are three phases to this paradigm: 1.) separation, 2.) liminality, and
3.) reaggregation. The first phase is manifested in the event when David claims the Ark in order to move it to Jerusalem, a non-Yahwist town, legitimating the temporal, spatial and social transformation occurring at that time within the Israelite people, especially the shift in power from the house of Saul to the person of David. The third stage is evidenced when David's interests are licenced by the prophetic oracle uttered by Nathan, which confirms his house on the throne of Israel forever. It is the second interval, *liminality*, which according to Flanagan is defined as:[73]

> In the midst of such changes is a period when people feel insecure and adrift,
> as if betwixt and between, on a threshold where they are at one and the same
> time "no longer" and "not yet" (liminality). Their uncertainty is often
> manifested in beliefs that doorways, midpoints, pilgrimages, processions, and
> the like are charged with extraordinary power and are spatially and
> conceptually sacred zones....

David's organization of the national procession to accompany the Ark on its way to Jerusalem may be taken as an example of this conviction.

> .... It is the second phase however which is often the most complex and confusing because that is where the actual threshold of change is crossed....

And it is in this framework that the puzzle of Uzzah's death and of David's anger (or "*betrübt sein*") acquires meaning. Whatever happened to bring about the death of Uzzah, a member of the established Yahwistic priesthood, it probably provokes both anger and sadness in David. He had laid his plans well. He had subdued the outside enemies. He had acquired much new territory including a new capital city. He had united the two parts of the kingdom through his charisma, and now he wanted to underline, symbolically, what had been achieved, but he meets serious opposition and he is uncertain of how to cope with it. He withdraws.

> ... Still, the air of uncertainty and opportunism that pervaded the atmosphere did not assure David's triumph. He could expect potential heirs and successors to vie relentlessly, even after his own accession. They could be expected to raise any claim they might have for paramountcy. Continuity in office is always a problem, especially in societies evolving toward a permanent, centralized monopoly of force because of the intense competition for high office. ... Conspiracy, rivalry, and violence, the hallmarks of transitional periods, are intensified by indeterminate succession patterns, ... In such circumstances, preventing cleavages and maintaining solidarity requires a shrewd leader who plays his cards well.... To miscalculate or to withdraw from competition even temporarily - unless the withdrawal is timed and calculated for its long-term advantages - is to surrender opportunities and to risk failure.

Whether David withdrew in anticipation of an eventual, more commanding return, or whether he felt defeated, cannot be ascertained from the text. His action does set a pattern for dealing with the three subsequent revolts. It is only during the second rebellion, led by Sheba, that David fights to keep his throne. During Absalom's rebellion he leaves the field, and during Adonijah's revolt he eventually dies but not before he had acquiesced in the choice of a king made by his favourite wife and by his courtiers.

On receiving affirmation that the Ark in Obed-edom's house had not been a rallying point for discontented Yahwists, but that the family of Obed-edom has been favoured since the Ark was deposited there, David again sees an opportunity to seize the advantage, and he claims its

benediction for his kingdom by resuming the procession to bring it to Jerusalem, with much rejoicing, dancing and music (2 Sam 6:12-15).

> It is in it, in a rite of passage, that role reversals, ritual dance, exceptional garb (or nudity), and ecstatic behavior are often employed as ways of manifesting the anti-structure and dialectical quality of the transition that are taking place personally, socially, and religiously.[74]

5. Summary and Conclusion

My conclusion would therefore be that after David had freed Israelite soil from the Philistine menace, he was able to move the Ark to a more appropriate place from Abinadab's dwelling. He wanted it in Jerusalem, his new capital, where he needed a focal point for the Yahwistic portion of his subjects in order to counterbalance the Jebusite symbols of the city. Some of the priests who had been associated with the Ark throughout the generations had misgivings. Not that the Ark had to go back to Shiloh, but neither did they want it sequestered in Jerusalem and become part of the local cult there. So during David's triumphal progress, when they came to a place that was acceptable according to Israelite theology of the time, the guardians of the Ark tried to retain it there. It is not certain what happened next, because each sentence of the various passages is obscure in its structure and wording, but the chief of the priestly contingent dies. Eventually this occurrence gets to be interpreted as divine intervention in favour of David's scheme. Initially though, the incident does upset David enough for him to abandon his plans. He deposits the sacred object in the first house that he comes to, and it is only after he receives assurances from the remainder of the population, that he resumes his first ambition and he brings the Ark into Jerusalem. The name of the place though, Perez-uzzah, remains a constant reminder to David that a break had been made in his strength, his, David's, power. David was never able to overcome this breach, and neither was his son Solomon.

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Notes

[1]. G.W. Ahlström, "Der Prophet Nathan und der Tempelbau," *VT* 11 (1961) 119-120, 124; James W. Flanagan, "Social Transformation and Ritual in 2 Samuel 6," in *The Word of the Lord shall go Forth. Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. by Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 364.

[2]. Flanagan, "Social Transformation," 362-363.

[3]. Ahlström, "Der Prophet Nathan," 123-5; Leonhard Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, (BWANT, III/6) (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1926) 88.

[4]. Martin A. Cohen, "The Rebellions during the Reign of David. An Inquiry into Social Dynamics in Ancient Israel," in Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History, and Literature in Honor of I.E. Kiev, ed. by C. Berlin (New York: Ktav, 1971) 96-7.

[5]. 1 Chronicles 12:28 states that Zadok came to David while the latter was still in Hebron, but this passage describes him as an officer; s.a. H.H. Rowley, "Zadok and Nehushtan." *JBL* 58 (1939) 118.

[6]. Rowley, "Zadok and Nehushtan,.," 113-141, esp. p.113.

[7]. Exodus 25:14 and Numbers 4:15; 7:6-9.

[8]. Karl A. Leimbach, *Die Bücher Samuel*, (*Die Heilige Schrift des alten Testaments*, Bd. 3, Abt. 1) (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1936) 151 - here the author cites Kugler, *Von Moses bis Paulus*, 260 ff. where Kugler contends that the Levites refused to accompany the Ark to Jerusalem, although the reason he gives is that they with Zadok were the guardians of the sacred tent at Gibeon.

[9]. Rowley "Zadok and Nehushtan," 116 n.13.

[10]. J.-M. de Tarragon, "David et l'arche: II Samuel, VI." *RB* 86 (1979) 516. 1 Chronicles 15:18 ranks him among the Levites, the gatekeepers.

[11]. Flanagan "Social Transformation and Ritual," 363.

[12]. Martin. A. Cohen, "The Role of the Shilonite Priesthood in the United Monarchy of Ancient Israel," *HUCA* 36 (1965) 59-98.

[13]. Cohen, "The Role of the Shilonite Priesthood," 59-98.

[14]. Emily A. Schultz and Robert H. Lavenda, *Cultural anthropology: A Perspective on the Human condition*, 2d. ed. (New York: West Publishing Co., 1990) 244-253.

[15]. John Bright, A History of Israel, 3d. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981) 187-8.

[16]. At the time of our narrative the priesthood had settled in various locations according to family associations. The towns with their sacerdotal families of importance to this plot are Shiloh, Kiriath-jearim, Nob, and Jerusalem. The

whole Ark Narrative is precipitated by the Ark which rests at Shiloh in the care of the priest Eli and his sons Hophni and Pinehas of the house of Ithamar. During a battle with the Philistines the Ark is lost, Eli's two sons are killed, and Eli himself dies on hearing the bad news
(1 Sam 4:10-11, 18).   Although this event is always described as a destruction of the Shilonite priesthood, the Bible infers that the priests of Shiloh (the house of Ithamar) settled at Nob (1 Sam 14:3; 22:11).
After the defeat of the Israelites the Ark was captured and brought to Ashdod. Since the Ark caused chaos in the temple at Ashdod, the Philistines got rid of it by returning it to Israelite territory with gifts for the Israelite Deity (1 Sam 5-6:12). Eventually it was deposited in Kiriath-jearim where Eleazar the son of the priestly family of Abinadab took care of the Ark (1 Sam 7:1-2). When David transports the Ark to Jerusalem we hear nothing of Abinadab nor of Eleazar, it is Uzzah and Ahio, other sons of Abinadab, who accompany the Ark (2 Sam 6:3-4). Uzzah dies during the procession. Ahio is not mentioned again.

Nob is a priestly city just north of Jerusalem. A branch of the Shilonite priests has settled here. The Ark is never stationed at Nob and the priests are in charge of other sacred objects such as the showbread and Goliath's sword (1 Samuel 4-6, 9). This priestly contingent, the remnant from Shiloh, gets massacred at Saul's order and only Abiathar son of Ahimelech son of Ahitub escapes and seeks refuge with David (1 Sam 22:20).

After David had brought the Ark to Jerusalem he appointed Abiathar (Ahimelech), from the house of Ithamar, and Zadok, from the house of Eleazar, priests to minister to the Ark (2 Samuel 8:17; 20:25). A person Zadok is mentioned in the company of David at Hebron (1 Chr 12:28). Chronciles also provides Zadok with a genealogy (1 Chr 6:3-10).

Although both Eleazar and Ithamar were the sons of Aaron through whom the priesthood descended within Israel, according to the HB the house of Ithamar was the house of preeminence since the desert wanderings and the time of the Judges. It was the members of this house who had had responsibility for the Ark all along but now this office is shared with the rival house of Eleazar. When Abiathar sides with Adonijah (1 Kings 1:7) he loses his place and the Zadok family assumes the priestly leadership. They assert this authority until the exile about 400 years later. The question is never answered, why did Abiathar join Adonijah in his revolt(?).

This summary illustrates the incessant troubles the priesthood experienced with the inception of the monarchy and that a second priest after the Uzzah affair, Abiathar, showed his dissatisfaction with David.

[17]. Cohen, "The Rebellions during the Reign of David," 96-7 - the author discusses the possibility that Abiathar might have supported Absalom in the first revolt, which in turn provoked David to have him removed from office.

[18]. Konrad Rupprecht. *Der Tempel von Jerusalem. Gründung Salomos oder jebusitisches Erbe?* (BZAW, 144) (New York: de Gruyter, 1977); Konrad Rupprecht, "Die Zuverlässigkeit der Überlieferung von Salomos Tempelgründung," *ZAW* 89/2 (1977) 205-214; Rowley "Zadok and Nehushtan," 126-128, 138.

[19]. Tarragon, "David et l'arche," 522.

[20]. Anthony F. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4-6; 2 Sam 6): A Form-critical and Traditio-historical Study*, (*Dissertation Series*, 16) (Missoula, MO: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholar's Press, 1975) 39-40; Karl Gutbrod, *Das Buch vom Reich. Das zweite Buch Samuel.* (*Die Botschaft des Alten Testaments*, 11/2) (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1958) 84; Artur Weiser, "Die Tempelbaukrise unter David," *ZAW* 77 (1965) 154.

[21]. The priestly editor mentions him as an interloper (2 Sam 6:10-12; 1 Chr 13:13-14, 15:25) although eventually he does get canonized (1 Chr 26:4-8,15).

[22]. Rost, Die Überlieferung, 33.

[23]. Siegfried Herrmann. *Die Königsnovelle in Ägypten und Israel.* (*Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig, Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, 3) Jahrgang, 1954/55, 33ff. as

discussed by Artur Weiser "Tempelbaukrise," *ZAW* 77 (1965) 154-8 esp. n.5.

[24]. Flanagan, "Social Transformation and Ritual," 361-363.

[25]. Rost, *Die Überlieferung*, 38.

[26]. Rost, *Die Überlieferung*..

[27]. Rost, *Die Überlieferung*, 33.

[28]. P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: A new Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*. (*The Anchor Bible*) (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984) 162-3 n.2.

[29]. Scholars such as Sellin propose Zadok to have been the brother of Uzzah - Sellin, *Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Volkes*. I, 1924, 167, 169f.; also Budde, *ZAW* 52 (1934) 48f. - as cited by Rowley "Zadok and Nehushtan," 120-121, notes 23 and 24.

[30]. McCarter *II Samuel*, 163 n.3, 169 n.3; N.H. Tur-Sinai, "The Ark of God at Beit Shemesh (1 Sam. VI) and Peres 'Uzza (2 Sam. 6; 1 Chr. XIII)," *VT* 1 (1951) 284.

[31]. McCarter *II Samuel*, 169 n.3; but: Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *Die Samuelbücher*. (*Das Alte Testament Deutsch Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk*, 10) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) 228, argues that semantically this idea would be quite acceptable, chronologically though it would present problems, in that it would make Uzzah=Eleazar, at this time, to be very old. He proposes that "sons of Abinadab" be translated as "grandsons."

[32]. It is interesting to see how the two books introduce the story so differently. In Samuel David comes with his army of thirty-thousand men (or 150 to 420 men - McCarter, *II Samuel,* 168 n.1). In Chronicles David consults with his commanders and leaders, he also invites all the assembly of Israel, all the priests and Levites to accompany him in this God-willed enterprise. Chronicles has its own agenda in wanting to integrate and organize the priests and Levites after the return from Babylon and therefore both classes are dealt with extensively. Keeping that in mind the text nevertheless seems to give the impression of deferring unduly to the priesthood as though the author was well aware of the treatment given to the priesthood by the king(s) and the response that this treatment had aroused.

[33]. McCarter *II Samuel*, 168-9 n.2, also 179; Otto Eißfeldt, "Lade und Stierbild," *ZAW* 58 (1940/41) 190-215, esp. 199; Otto Eißfeldt, "Silo und Jerusalem," *SVT* 4 (1957) 138-147, esp. 142-145.

[34]. McCarter *II Samuel*, 175-6.

[35]. Flanagan "Social Transformation and Ritual," 363-364.

[36]. Ahlström "Der Prophet Nathan," 113.

[37]. Ahlström "Der Prophet Nathan," 115-9; John Gray, "Tell El-Far'a by Nablus: a 'Mother' in Ancient Israel," *PEQ* 84 (1952) 111-112.

[38]. Sidney Smith, "On the Meaning of the *Goren*," *PEQ* 85 (1953) 42-45.

[39]. Ahlström "Der Prophet Nathan," 115-7; G. Münderlein, "גרן *goren*," *TDOT* III (1978) 62-65; Rupprecht *Der Tempel von Jerusalem*, 5-17.

[40]. J.C.L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1977) 107, 114; John Gray "The *Goren* at the City Gate," *PEQ* 85 (1953) 118-123; Smith "On the Meaning of the *Goren*," 43-45.

[41]. Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah. A New Translation*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 590.

[42]. *Der Midrasch Wajikra Rabba. Das ist die haggadische Auslegung des dritten Buches Mose, Mit Noten und Verbesserungen von J. Fürst, (Bibliotheca Rabbinica. Eine Sammlung alter Midraschim zum ersten Male ins Deutsche übertragen von August Wünsche)* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967) reprographischer Nachdruck der Ausgabe Leipzig 1880-1885, 12v. bound in 5, XI, 78. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Scripture. The Evidence of Leviticus Rabbah.* (*Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism*) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 275.

[43]. *Der Midrasch Schemot Rabba. Das ist die allegorische Auslegung des zweiten Buches Mose. Mit Noten und Verbesserungen von J. Fürst und O. Straschun. (Bibliotheca Rabbinica. Eine Sammlung alter Midraschim zum ersten Male ins Deutsche übertragen von August Wünsche)* Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967, reprographischer Nachdruck der Ausgabe Leipzig 1880-1885, 12 v. bound in 5, VI, 59.

[44]. Gray "The *Goren* at the City Gate," 121-122.

[45]. *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures.* Translated with Additions and Corrections from the Author's Thesaurus and Other Works by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949) 550.

[46]. Ahlström "Der Prophet Nathan," 116-7, n.3.

[47]. E. Ben-Yehuda, English-Hebrew, Hebrew-English Dictionary, (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1964) 204.

[48]. McCarter *II Samuel*, 164 n.6; Otto Thenius. *Die Bücher Samuels*, 3. vollständig ... Auflage besorgt von Max Löhr. (*Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum alten Testament*) Leipzig: Hinzel, 1898, 111; here Tur-Sinai's theory is of interest in that he argues that נכון and כידרון are related, both meaning "the threshing floor of pestilence and affliction," - Tur-Sinai "The Ark of God at Beit Shemesh," 282-285. The LXX calls the threshing floor: Νωδαβ.

[49]. *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon,* 826 (3) .... (c) שלח יד אל to lay hands upon anyone, ... - Sometimes יד is omitted. .... *to stretch* (the hand) *from on high*, followed by אל Samuel 6:6," - from on high because Uzzah was seated in a higher position than the Ark on the wagon or because he had higher intentions for himself?; McCarter *II Samuel*, 164 n.6; *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.* Editio funditus renovata, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1967/77) 513 n. 6c: "Ms cit + א־ידו cf QGST-MsV."

[50]. Ludwig Koehler und Walter Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, 4 Bände, (Leiden: Brill, 1967-1983) IV, 1400: "qal - c) יד .... die Hand ausstrecken: α) .... um etwas in guter od. böser Absicht zu berühren, "was ja dem Ergreifen recht nahe kommt" .... von der Bundeslade אל שלח (ידו) 2S 6:6, c. על 1C 13;10." *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 825-7 esp. 826 (3) (a) - "*to send out, to stretch out*, as a finger .... especially the hand .... (a) followed by על to any thing, 1 Kings 13:4 (in a hostile sense). 1 Chr. 13:10." Why would Uzzah be hostile to the Ark? The very story line (or justification used by the author) negates that since Uzzah wants to protect the Ark from falling off the wagon - or was the intention hostile to David's plans?

[51]. *Biblia Hebraica*, 513 n. 6d - "mlt Mss־א."

[52]. *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon,* 30 - אחז - (1) to take hold of, to seize, especially with the hand.... Const. with an acc. of pers. or thing, ... also very often followed by בּ, (3) *to hold* something taken, followed by an acc. 1 Chronicles 13:9...; and בּ. The underlying meaning of this root אחז even in modern Hebrew seems to denote the taking of possession of something: A.S. Halkin, *201 Hebrew Verbs fully conjugated in all forms.* (Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1970) 8-9.

[53]. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books. Edited by Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, New Revised Standard Version.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 392.

[54]. *HB, the Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1988) 478 n.f and 1550 n.a `had stumbled' - Meaning of Heb. uncertain; *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 136-7, esp. 137 (2)(b) with pl. verbs and adjectives, 2 Sa. 6:6, כי שמטו הבקר "for the oxen were restive"; *also*: p.834 שמט- (1) - .... Hence - (a) 2 Sa. 6:6, כי שמטו הבקר "for the oxen kicked," were restive (die Rinder schlugen, schmißen aus).

[55]. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 392 n.*a* "Meaning of Hebrew uncertain."

[56]. *HB*, 478 n.g-g - `for his indiscretion' So Targum;   McCarter *II Samuel*, 164-5 n. 7, the question of whether God struck Uzzah down, or the name of God struck Uzzah, is discussed here by the author, or could it be that Uzzah was struck down in the name of God?

[57]. Rowley "Zadok and Nehushtan," 121-122 - "The Ark was taken to Kirjath-jearim on its return from the land of the Philistines (1 Sam 7:1), some years before the elevation of Saul to the throne. It remained there throughout Saul's reign, and was brought to Jerusalem during the reign of David."

[58]. The traditional interpretation of this passage is that because the Israelites drove the Ark on an oxcart, in the manner of the Philistines when they returned the Ark to Beit-shemesh, instead of carrying it as instructed by God - Uzzah was slain by the Divinity.

[59]. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible,* 392, n.6:7. Hugo Gressmann, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israel. Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*. II/1, 2d. ed. (SAT II/1) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921) 134; McCarter *II Samuel,* 169-70 n. 6-7; Hertzberg *Die Samuelbücher*, 228.

[60]. Since this has been the accepted way of looking at these texts, it might be to our advantage to examine the story from a different angle, otherwise scholars will find themselves trapped in regarding the Ark as an object from an Erich von Daniken type examination: D. Medina. *God's Weapon: the Deadly Ark of the Covenant.*

[61]. Tur-Sinai "The Ark of God at Beit-Shemesh," 283-286.

[62]. *HB*, 478.

[63]. *The Jerusalem Bible*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966) 390.

[64]. Martin Luther, *Die gantze Heilige Schrifft Deudsch*, (Wittenberg 1545) Letzte zu Luthers Lebzeiten erschienene Ausgabe. Herausgegeben von Hans Volz unter Mitarbeit von Heinz Blanke. Textredaktion Friedrich Kur. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972) I, 579.

[65]. *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testamentes* nach den Grundtexten übersetzt und herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. Vinzenz Hamp et al. (Aschaffenburg: Paul Pattloch Verlag, 1957) 336.

[66]. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible,* 392.

[67]. *Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, edidit Alfred Rahlfs, (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935) I, 576.

[68]. The quotations cited in the following discussion have been taken from *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 303. See also: Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräische Grammatik*. Völlig umgearbeitet von E. Kautzsch. (Gesenius-Kautzsch-Bergsträsser) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985) 152, 53 e - hitzig werden; B. Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*. (London: Bagster [n.d.]) cclxxiv - fut. ... to burn, be kindled; to become hot, angry, wroth; ... his anger was kindled against; Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*. 2. Auflage (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1981) 530 - cites 6:8 under Kal.

[69]. Henry-George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, A Greek-English Lexicon: with a Supplement, (Oxford: At the Clarendon, 1968) 810.

[70]. Obed-edom, the Gittite, might have been known to David from his days among the Philistines in the city of Gath. 1 Chr 15:18 counts him among the Levites, the gatekeepers.

[71]. Flanagan "Social Transformation and Ritual," 367-370.

[72]. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

[73]. The three following passages are one continuous paragraph taken from Flanagan, "Social Transformation and Ritual," 364-365.

[74]. Flanagan "Social Transformation and Ritual," 367-8.