

Historical Inquiry in Sacred Texts: The Kings of Israel and the Question of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, King of the Jews, and Messiah

Larysa Karaliova†, Ilia Brondz*

Norwegian Drug Control and Drug Discovery Institute (NDCDDI) AS, Ski, Norway

The history of the kings of Israel is closely connected not only with the history of ancient Israel and the Jewish people but also with broader questions of religious memory, political legitimacy, and the transmission of sacred narratives. Larysa Karaliova devoted several chapters of her unpublished manuscript to the historical and theological interpretation of kingship, state formation, political legitimacy, and the historical memory of ancient Israel. These chapters formed part of a broader interdisciplinary work on American and European policy, industrial development, and historical progress. The work was inspired by a personal meeting with former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 2011, as described by Brondz (2025). This article is the third contribution in the series *Historical Inquiry in Sacred Texts*, following the articles “A Theological and Historical Inquiry Into the 1915-23 Extermination of Christians Under Ottoman Rule: Part I” and “Historical Inquiry in Sacred Texts: Prophecy and Political Conflicts”. It examines how the early kings of Israel are represented in religious and historical traditions and how these representations have shaped the memory of the Israelite monarchy in antiquity, throughout the Jewish Diaspora, in relation to the modern State of Israel, and in broader global discourse. The study draws on the Torah, the Bible, selected Qur’anic passages, historical and archaeological scholarship, and personal observations made during visits to Israel. Particular attention is given to the relationship between sacred narrative, political authority, collective memory, and later confessional interpretation.

Keywords: Saul, David, Solomon, Israelite monarchy, sacred texts, collective memory, political legitimacy, Philistines, tribes of Israel

Introduction

During her first visit to Israel, Larysa Karaliova attended Hebrew classes at an ulpan, an institution in which newcomers and foreign students study the Hebrew language, learn elements of Jewish and Israeli history, and become acquainted with Israeli society. In one lesson, the teacher discussed the first kings of Israel and identified David as the first king. When Larysa asked, “Was Saul not the first king?”, the teacher replied, “Yes, but we do not like him”.

† Larysa Karaliova, passed away in 2025. This article is based largely on one chapter of the unpublished manuscript by her and was developed in collaboration with the co-author.

* Ilia Brondz, corresponding author, Ph.D., Norwegian Drug Control and Drug Discovery Institute (NDCDDI) AS, Ski, Norway.

This apparently informal exchange raises a broader sociological, historical, and theological question: Why do certain rulers become central to collective memory, while others are diminished, neglected, or discredited as King Herod (Brondz, 2023)? The issue is not merely biographical. It concerns the formation of collective understanding, the relationship between sacred narrative and political legitimacy, and the ways in which later communities evaluate authority, memory, and historical testimony.

The present article therefore asks who ruled in early Israel, how these rulers were represented, and why later traditions remembered them unevenly. The aim is not to reject sacred texts, but to examine how historical memory operates within and around them and how later interpretation may alter the perception of earlier events. In a biblical metaphor, the study seeks to separate the “wheat from the chaff” by distinguishing textual testimony, later interpretation, political memory, and confessional reception in the formation of historical narratives.

The cases of Saul, David, and Solomon are especially important because they stand at the intersection of divine election, theocracy, monarchy, political authority, theological interpretation, and social perception. Comparable processes may be observed in the later reputation of King Herod, whose image was shaped by religious and historical traditions that invite renewed examination (Brondz, 2023). Similar mechanisms have operated in many societies during dynastic or confessional change, when a new ruling house or dominant tradition sought to reinforce its own legitimacy by discrediting earlier rulers. This phenomenon may be described as a dynastic or confessional “black legend”.

This tendency becomes especially visible during transitions from fragmented feudal structures to centralized monarchy, or during struggles between theocratic and monarchical models of authority. A relevant example is Ivan IV of Russia, known as Ivan the Terrible. His cruelty, the oprichnina, and political repression were not inventions. Nevertheless, later tradition strongly emphasized the image of a “bloody tyrant”, while placing in the background his centralization of the state, the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan, territorial expansion, and the creation of a stronger monarchical structure.

European examples include Richard III of England, whose posthumous image was strongly shaped by Tudor historiography and later by Shakespeare, he was portrayed as a usurper, monster, and murderer; Mary I of England, remembered in Protestant tradition as “Bloody Mary” primarily because of the burning of Protestants, although modern scholarship has emphasized the greater complexity of her reign; James II, portrayed in Whig historiography as a Catholic despot whose overthrow required justification; Louis XI of France, remembered as the “universal spider” despite his role in the centralization of the French monarchy; and Philip II of Spain, whose reputation was influenced by the wider anti-Spanish “black legend”, especially in Protestant and anti-Spanish polemics. These cases are not identical to the biblical narratives, but they demonstrate how political and confessional memory can reshape the reputation of rulers after their death.

Saul’s struggle may be understood on two fronts. Externally, he confronted the Philistine confederation of five major city-states—Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath—commonly known as the Philistine Pentapolis. These cities were inhabited by the native Philistines and associated with the Philistines from approximately the late 12th century BCE until their conquest by the Babylonians around 604 BCE. Internally, he faced the problem of transforming a loose tribal coalition into a more centralized political and military structure. The emergence of monarchy may therefore be interpreted not only as a theological development, but also as a response to sustained external danger and the need for coordinated defence.

Canaan, Palestine, and the Terminology of the Land

A preliminary question concerns the land in which the Israelite tribes settled and the number of tribes that constituted ancient Israel. According to the Torah, biblical traditions, and selected Qur'anic passages (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010; The Torah, 2010; The Qur'an, 2017), the Israelites led by Moses out of Egypt eventually entered the land of Canaan. In these traditions, the land is presented as territory designated for the Children of Israel by divine command.

Qur'an 5:21, for example, presents Moses addressing the Children of Israel: "*O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has assigned to you and do not turn back [from fighting in Allah's cause] and [thus] become losers*" (The Qur'an, 2017, Qur'an 5:21). خَاسِرِينَ فَتَقَبَّلُوا أَدْبَارَكُمْ عَلَىٰ تَزَوُّوا وَلَا لَكُمْ اللَّهُ كُتِبَ إِلَيْكَ الْأَرْضِ الْمُقَدَّسَةِ ادْخُلُوا قَوْمِ يَا

Qur'an 2:136 likewise places Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Israelite tribes, Moses, Jesus, and the prophets within a shared sacred-historical framework.

The designation "Palestine" does not function in these sacred texts as the name of the Israelite settlement in Canaan. The term became prominent in later Greek and Roman geographical and administrative usage. The terminology of the land is therefore historically significant, and ancient names should not be transferred uncritically into later political contexts.

The biblical term associated with the Philistines refers to a distinct ancient population, commonly linked in modern scholarship with the Sea Peoples of the late second millennium around 1200 BC, and should not be uncritically equated with later Arabs, or modern Islamic political identities. The Hebrew form *Pəlišṭīm* (פלשתים) is conventionally rendered in English as "Plishteim". Some etymological interpretations relate the underlying Semitic root to ideas of intrusion or migration, but the term should not be treated as a simple, uncontested translation meaning "invaders". The population history of Gaza (ancient Canaan) is complex and includes multiple waves of settlement. The Philistines (*Pəlišṭīm*), associated with the Sea Peoples, appeared in the region in the late second millennium BCE. Israelite tribes emerged in the same broader region during this period, while Arab populations became known in Gaza (ancient Canaan) much later, in the first millennium CE. These Arab populations were historically distinct from both the earlier Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, and the early Israelite tribes.

Academic discussion must distinguish among the ancient *Pəlišṭīm* (פלשתים), later Roman geographical terminology, subsequent Arabic usage, and modern national or political identities of Palestines.

Larysa Karaliova, a linguist familiar with Slavic, Germanic, and Romance languages and possessing some knowledge of Hebrew and Arabic, also noted a linguistic feature with wider historical implications: the phoneme /p/ is not native to Classical or Modern Standard Arabic, and foreign words containing this sound are commonly adapted by means of /f/ or another available phoneme. This observation is relevant to the history of the toponym, because it illustrates how foreign geographical names are adapted when they enter a different language. It does not by itself resolve modern political questions, but it supports the need to distinguish linguistic borrowing from claims of uninterrupted ancient terminology.

The terminology used in sacred texts, later historical writings, imperial administration, and modern political discourse may differ substantially. The present inquiry therefore distinguishes among ancient textual designations, later geographical names, and modern political usage.

The 12 Tribes of Israel and the 10 Lost Tribes

Jacob had 12 sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin—and one daughter, Dinah (The Torah, 2010). It is often assumed that the tribes of Israel simply

bear the names of Jacob's sons, but the later tribal structure is more complex. Dinah does not appear as the ancestor of a tribe, while Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, are incorporated into the tribal system through Jacob's blessing.

The tribal names associated with Israel therefore include Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. It is not "The Twelve Tribes" but are 13 tribes. This produces 13 names when Levi is counted. In the territorial distribution, however, Levi did not receive an ordinary tribal territory, while Joseph's inheritance was represented through Ephraim and Manasseh. This explains why lists of the tribes vary according to context—genealogical, territorial, liturgical, or political.

In Genesis 49, Jacob's final words to his sons are not uniform blessings in the simple sense. Some are blessings, others are prophetic characterizations, and the words addressed to Reuben, Simeon, and Levi contain severe rebuke. Judah receives the royal promise, while Joseph receives the blessing of fruitfulness and divine protection. Ephraim and Manasseh are blessed separately in Genesis 48, where Jacob deliberately gives precedence to the younger Ephraim over the elder Manasseh (The Torah, 2010).

Moses had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, but they did not become separate tribal patriarchs. They remained within the Levitical line. In the territorial settlement, Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh received their inheritance east of the Jordan River. Their fighting men crossed the Jordan to assist the other tribes in the conquest, but their permanent tribal territories lay east of the river.

After the division of the united monarchy into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah, the political and tribal structure changed further (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2002). Judah and Benjamin, together with Levites and (members of other tribes who migrated southward after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom), remained associated with the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria, and part of its population was deported. Other inhabitants remained in the land or moved south. The later tradition of the "Ten Lost Tribes" developed from this political disruption and from the subsequent disappearance of distinct northern tribal identities.

The later population history of Samaria (part of the Northern Kingdom) and Judea is complex. It includes Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Christian, and Islamic phases and settlers. Claims about direct biological or cultural continuity between ancient tribal populations and modern communities should therefore be made cautiously and supported by appropriate historical, archaeological, and, where relevant, genetic evidence.

The Period Before Saul's Reign

The settlement of the Israelite tribes in Canaan, as represented in biblical tradition and reconstructed in modern archaeology, was a gradual and contested process rather than a single, uniform event (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2002). The Merneptah Stele provides the earliest widely accepted extra-biblical reference to a people called Israel in Canaan during the late 13th century BCE (Hasel, 1994; Maeir, 2013).

The biblical narratives describe repeated conflicts with neighbouring peoples, including Philistines (the Sea Peoples), Ammonites, Moabites, Amalekites, and various nomadic groups. These pressures contributed to the demand for a centralized authority capable of organizing taxation, military service, and collective defence. At the same time, the establishment of monarchy created tension with the older charismatic and religious forms of leadership represented by judges, priests, and prophets.

The books of Samuel preserve this tension in theological form. In 1 Samuel 8, the people demand a king “like all the nations”, while Samuel warns that monarchy may lead to conscription, taxation, and the concentration of power. Saul is nevertheless selected and anointed as king. The narrative presents his relationship with Samuel as increasingly conflictual, particularly over military obedience, sacrificial authority, and the treatment of captured enemies.

According to 1 Samuel 15, Samuel executed Agag, king of the Amalekites, after Saul had spared him contrary to Samuel’s understanding of the divine command. The episode may be interpreted in several ways: as a conflict over obedience to prophetic authority, as a struggle over the limits of royal discretion, or as a theological narrative designed to explain Saul’s rejection.

Samuel’s later anointing of David while Saul was still alive (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 16) is central to the political and theological structure of the narrative. Samuel appears to have been concerned less with strengthening the theocratic system than with preserving the influence of the priesthood at Shiloh and maintaining his own authority over political affairs.

He constantly plotted against the legitimate ruler. From a modern political perspective, the act of anointing David could be described as delegitimizing the reigning monarch and preparing an alternative succession, that could be regarded as treason, an attempt at rebellion and a coup d’ état. Within the biblical account, however, it is presented as the execution of divine judgment following Saul’s disobedience. An academic analysis should acknowledge both the internal theological logic of the text and the political implications of the act.

The surviving notes also compare the conflict between prophetic, priestly, and monarchical authority with contemporary Israeli political disputes. Such comparisons may be suggestive, but they risk introducing anachronism and partisan controversy into a study of ancient monarchy. For this reason, the present version does not use current political figures as direct analogues. The broader analytical point may nevertheless be retained: Throughout Jewish history, disputes over military service, religious authority, civil government, and the relationship between sacred law and state power have repeatedly shaped political life.

Historical examples also show that religious leadership and military action were not always opposed. The Maccabean revolt was initiated by Mattathias the priest and continued by his sons against Seleucid rule and enforced Hellenization. Likewise, the post-exilic restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple involved cooperation among religious, administrative, and imperial authorities. These cases demonstrate that priestly or religious leadership could participate directly in political organization and armed resistance, rather than representing a purely pacifist or non-state model.

David and Goliath: Heroic Tradition, Dynastic Legitimacy, and the Memory of Saul

The biblical narrative identifies the young David who defeated Goliath. David is the later king of Israel. This identification became central to the religious, literary, and political memory of the Davidic dynasty. Nevertheless, the narrative deserves careful examination, because the story of David and Goliath functions not only as a heroic tale, but also as a theological and political explanation of the rise of David and the decline of Saul.

The conflict between Saul and Samuel may be understood as a conflict between monarchy and prophetic-theocratic authority. Saul represented the first attempt to create a centralized Israelite monarchy under conditions of external military danger, especially from the Philistines. Samuel, by contrast, is presented as the prophetic-theocratic authority who first anointed Saul and later rejected him. The transition from the house of Saul to the

house of David therefore required more than a change of ruler. It required a narrative environment in which the superiority of the new dynasty could be justified religiously, morally, and politically. The tension between Saul and Samuel becomes especially visible in the Amalekite episode. King Saul defeats people of Amalek and preserves King Agag and part of the livestock, while Samuel interprets this as disobedience to the divine command transmitted through him. Samuel then executes King Agag himself, thereby demonstrating that prophetic authority claims power not only to judge the king, but also to override royal military and political discretion. This episode reveals two competing centres of authority: the monarchy represented by King Saul and the prophetic-theocratic authority represented by Samuel.

The story of Goliath serves this purpose with great force. Saul's army stands in fear before the Philistine champion, while David appears as the young defender of Israel who trusts not in armour, royal authority, or military rank, but in the God of Israel. Goliath represents brute force, while David represents faith, courage, and divine favour. In this way, the narrative transfers symbolic legitimacy from Saul's established monarchy to David, who is not yet king but is presented as the true bearer of divine support. This heroic portrayal may reflect later Davidic or Solomonic dynastic memory, in which the founder of the dynasty was presented as a divinely favoured warrior whose courage and faith surpassed the authority of Saul's established monarchy. Such a literary arrangement may reflect later dynastic shaping of the tradition, possibly in circles loyal to the Davidic or Solomonic monarchy, where accounts of David's rise were preserved and arranged to present him as the legitimate successor to Saul.

The relationship between 1 Samuel 16 and 1 Samuel 17 is especially important. In 1 Samuel 16, Samuel is sent to Bethlehem and to the household of Jesse. Divine guidance is presented as precise enough to identify the family, but the chosen son is not named in advance. Samuel first assumes that Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, may be the chosen one, but this assumption is rejected. After Jesse's sons have passed before Samuel and none is selected, Samuel asks: "Are all your sons here?" Only then is David, the youngest son, who is keeping the sheep, brought before him and anointed.

This delayed identification creates a strong literary effect. It contrasts human judgment, based on visible appearance and social expectation, with divine election based on a hidden criterion. At the same time, it also raises a historical and literary question: If Samuel had already anointed David in 1 Samuel 16, how should the reader understand the later presentation of David in 1 Samuel 17, where he appears again in connection with Saul's court, the army, and his brothers?

The episode also contains tensions that invite critical analysis. If Samuel was the decisive prophetic figure in the rejection of Saul and the selection of David, it is notable that Samuel is absent from the battlefield narrative in 1 Samuel 17. The duel between David and Goliath is presented as a decisive event for Israel's morale and for David's public emergence. Yet Samuel, who had already anointed David, does not appear as a witness to this public manifestation of divine favour. This absence may indicate that the anointing narrative and the Goliath narrative originated from different traditions that were later brought together within a larger account of David's rise. Possibly it is the work of King Solomon to present his predecessor.

This possibility is strengthened by the existence of another biblical tradition concerning the death of Goliath. In 2 Samuel 21:19, the killing of Goliath is associated with Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim of Bethlehem, whereas 1 Chronicles 20:5 later states that Elhanan killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath. This difference suggests that the tradition concerning Goliath was not transmitted in only one simple form. The Chronicler's version appears to

harmonize the difficulty by preserving David's role as the slayer of Goliath while assigning to Elhanan the killing of Goliath's brother. Such textual variation does not disprove the Davidic tradition, but it shows that the heroic memory surrounding Goliath was complex and subject to later clarification.

David's genealogy further contributed to his dynastic legitimacy. David belonged to the tribe of Judah. His ancestry is traced through Perez, son of Judah, and continues through Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, and Jesse. David was the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem. The Bible identifies David as the son of Jesse, but it does not name David's mother. Later Jewish tradition identifies her as Nitzvet bat Adael, but this name is not given in the biblical text.

The Book of Ruth also plays an important role in the construction of Davidic memory. Ruth, a Moabite woman, becomes the wife of Boaz, the mother of Obed, the grandmother of Jesse, and the great-grandmother of David. Thus, the Davidic genealogy contains both a strong Judahite line and a foreign element incorporated into Israel through loyalty to Naomi, marriage to Boaz, and acceptance of the God and people of Israel. This genealogy later became central to the ideology of the Davidic dynasty and to expectations connected with a royal line descending from David.

For these reasons, the David and Goliath narrative should be read on several levels. On the theological level, it presents divine favour working through the young and unexpected hero. On the literary level, it dramatizes the contrast between outward appearance and hidden election. On the political level, it contributes to the transfer of legitimacy from Saul to David. On the historiographical level, the textual tension between 1 Samuel 17, 2 Samuel 21:19, and 1 Chronicles 20:5 suggests that the heroic tradition was shaped, preserved, and harmonized within the later memory of Israelite kingship.

The question, therefore, is not simply whether the biblical David "defied Goliath", but how the Goliath tradition was used to define David as the true divinely favoured leader of Israel. The story strengthens David's image at precisely the point where Saul's authority is weakened. It may therefore be understood as one of the key narratives through which the Davidic tradition explained, justified, and sanctified the replacement of the house of Saul by the house of David (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chronicles 2:3-15; 1 Samuel 16:1-13; 1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel 21:19; 1 Chronicles 20:5).

The description of David in 1 Samuel 16:12 and 17:42 as *admoni*, commonly translated as "ruddy", may also have literary significance. The term suggests a reddish or striking physical appearance, although it should not automatically be reduced to the modern category of red hair.

David is also presented as the youngest son of Jesse and as absent from the initial family presentation before Samuel, because he was keeping the sheep. In 1 Samuel 17:28, Eliab's angry response to David at the battlefield reveals clear tension between David and his elder brother. The biblical text itself does not state that David was illegitimate, but later Jewish traditions concerning David's mother, often named Nitzvet bat Adael, attempted to explain David's marginal position within Jesse's household and the hostility shown toward him by his brothers. These traditions should be distinguished from the biblical text, but they demonstrate that later interpreters also perceived ambiguity in David's family status.

From a theological perspective, Samuel's anointing of David is presented as the result of divine election. From a historical-political perspective, however, the act can also be interpreted as a prophetic-theocratic intervention in royal succession. Samuel anointed David while Saul was still alive, thereby creating an alternative centre of legitimacy and power outside the reigning king's house. This does not require rejecting the theological

meaning of the narrative; rather, it shows that the text may be read simultaneously as sacred history, political memory, and dynastic legitimation. From a juridical and political perspective, Samuel's action may be viewed as an act of delegitimation directed against the reigning monarch. In modern political terminology, it could even be compared to a silent dynastic coup, although the biblical narrative frames it as prophetic obedience rather than political conspiracy. More broadly, the episode reflects a struggle between two models of authority: centralized monarchy and prophetic-theocratic control over political power.

Saul, Samuel, and David

After his anointing, Saul's activity is presented primarily in connection with the defence of Israel against neighbouring tribes, peoples, and states. Within the historical, ideological, and religious framework of the period, he appears as a military leader whose central task was the protection and consolidation of Israel under conditions of external danger. The biblical narrative preserves memories of Saul as a commander who fought against the Philistines, Ammonites, Amalekites, and other enemies of Israel. Nevertheless, his image is often transmitted in an ambivalent or diminished form.

One example is the proverbial expression connected with Saul's association with prophetic activity: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" In the narrative context, this phrase may be read in more than one way. It may reflect surprise at Saul's charismatic experience, but it may also have contributed to a later ironic or condescending memory of him. Similarly, the accounts of Saul's troubled spirit and emotional instability may have functioned not only as psychological description, but also as literary and theological means of explaining his loss of legitimacy. The tension between Saul and Samuel becomes especially visible in the Amalekite episode. Saul defeats Amalek and preserves the King of Amalek, King Agag and part of the livestock, while Samuel interprets this as disobedience to the divine command transmitted through himself. Samuel then executes King Agag himself, thereby demonstrating that prophetic-theocratic authority claims power not only to judge the king, but also to override royal military and political discretion. This episode reveals two competing centres of authority: the monarchy represented by Saul and the prophetic-theocratic authority represented by Samuel.

Such portrayals are familiar in the wider history of political memory. Rulers who were later replaced by another dynasty or ideological tradition were often represented as unstable, cruel, irrational, or divinely rejected. The case of Ivan IV of Russia is a useful comparative example: Although his violence and political repression were real, later historiography also intensified the image of the "mad tyrant", while placing in the background his role in state centralization, territorial expansion, and military consolidation. The other example is Herod the Great, King of Judea (Brondz, 2023). A similar mechanism may have operated in the later memory of Saul, whose military and state-forming role was overshadowed by narratives emphasizing rejection, instability, and failure.

The episode in which David is brought to Saul's court as a musician is therefore especially significant. According to the biblical account, David is summoned because he is able to play the kinnor, a lyre-type instrument, and his music soothes Saul's troubled condition. This detail has literary and political importance. David, previously presented as a shepherd and the youngest son of Jesse, is introduced into the royal court after having already been anointed by Samuel. The narrative thus places the future rival and successor inside the household of the reigning king.

From a historical-political perspective, however, the scene may also be interpreted as part of a narrative pattern in which David is gradually inserted into the centre of royal power. The combination of Samuel's

earlier anointing of David, Saul's negative portrayal, and David's entry into the royal court creates the impression of a carefully structured transfer of legitimacy from Saul to David and a preparation for a silent coup d'état.

The musical detail also deserves attention. The instrument associated with David should not be imagined as a later European harp, but more cautiously as a kinnor-type lyre or lyre-like plucked string instrument. If the narrative preserves a historical memory, David's ability to play such an instrument suggests a level of skill and cultural preparation not always associated with the simple image of an isolated shepherd. Whether this reflects historical reality or literary construction, the scene serves to present David as a figure of unusual talent, charisma, and suitability for royal proximity.

In this context, the negative portrayal of Saul becomes understandable as part of the broader dynastic narrative. Saul's decline, emotional disturbance, rejection by prophetic-theological authority provide the background against which David's rise appears legitimate and divinely favoured. The question is therefore not only what Saul did wrong, but why the tradition preserved his memory in a way that so strongly prepared the reader to accept his replacement. The narrative may thus be read as both sacred history and political memory: It explains the transition from the house of Saul to the house of David by presenting Saul as increasingly unfit and David as the divinely supported alternative.

Satar: David in the Philistine Camp

Without the chapter on *Satar*, the argument of the present study cannot be properly understood. The episode preceding the battle between Saul's army and the forces of the Philistine Pentapolis is of exceptional importance. According to the biblical narrative, David and his armed men were present in the Philistine camp before the campaign against Israel. This fact alone requires serious historical attention. David, later remembered as the founder of the royal dynasty of Judah, was at that moment not in the camp of Israel, but among Israel's enemies. The narrative describes a conversation between Philistine commanders concerning David's presence. One side asks, in effect: Why are David and his armed men here, and why should they participate in battle against the Israelites? Achish, king of Gath, defends David and presents him as loyal. The other Philistine commanders reject this view and demand that David be sent away. Their fear is clear: David may become an adversary during the battle and may reconcile himself with Saul by turning against the Philistines. In the tradition discussed in Larysa Karaliova's notes, the key term is given as *Satar*, understood as a Philistine or Philistine-context term meaning "traitor" or a person whose loyalty cannot be trusted. In the preserved Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 29:4, the corresponding form appears as *le-satan*, meaning "as an adversary" or "as one who may turn against us". This use should not be confused with the later fully developed theological figure of Satan. In this earlier political and military context, the word designates a dangerous opponent, a potential betrayer, or a person capable of changing sides in battle. This linguistic and narrative detail is essential. The Philistine commanders do not merely dislike David; they identify him as a security risk. Their objection shows that David's presence in the Philistine camp was politically ambiguous and militarily dangerous. He was accompanied by armed men, he had been accepted by Achish, and he was expected to join the Philistine campaign. Yet the other Philistine rulers considered him unreliable because he could become a *satan*—an adversary or turncoat—in the midst of battle. The question therefore arises: How did David and his armed force come to be in the camp of Israel's enemies? The biblical account explains this through the rupture between Saul and David, presenting David as a persecuted fugitive and Saul as increasingly hostile. However, this explanation is shaped by later Davidic tradition and cannot be accepted

uncritically as neutral history. The same narrative preserves details suggesting a more complex political reality. David was not merely an isolated refugee. He led an armed group, operated in the borderlands between Israelite and Philistine power, obtained protection from Philistine authority, and at one point stood ready to accompany the Philistine army against Saul. From a historical-political perspective, David's group may therefore be understood as a semi-independent armed formation positioned between Saul's monarchy and the Philistine city-states. In modern terminology, and with the necessary caution against anachronism, such a force may be compared to a proxy formation: a military group operating under the protection of a hostile power while pursuing its own political survival and advantage. David's relationship with Achish of Gath places him precisely in this ambiguous position. He was useful to the Philistines, dangerous to Saul, and not fully trusted by the Philistine commanders themselves.

The later biblical presentation tends to justify David and to place responsibility for the rupture primarily on Saul. Yet the preserved details allow another reading. Saul's pursuit of David may have been not merely the result of jealousy or mental disturbance, but also a royal response to an armed rival who had entered into relations with Israel's enemies. David's movement into Philistine territory and his acceptance by Achish would naturally have appeared to Saul as a political and military threat.

The term *Satar/satan*¹ therefore becomes central to the interpretation of the whole episode. It identifies David not as the innocent hero of later dynastic memory, but as a figure whose loyalty was doubtful in the eyes of the Philistine commanders themselves. The word points to the deeper political problem hidden beneath the theological narrative: David's rise to power was connected with armed force, shifting alliances, and residence among Israel's enemies. Surviving biblical traditions thus preserve evidence that David's pre-royal career was politically ambiguous. He was not only a shepherd, musician, and future king; he was also the leader of an armed group whose activities were viewed as dangerous by Saul and unreliable by the Philistines. The discussion of *Satar* is therefore indispensable for understanding the transition from Saul to David and for questioning the later idealized portrait of Davidic legitimacy.

The Exploits of David

The story of David and Goliath is one of the best-known episodes of the Torah and Bible, familiar even to readers who are not specialists in biblical studies. In the received biblical narrative, the young David who defeats Goliath is identified with David, the later king of Judah and Israel. However, the tradition is not textually simple. While 1 Samuel 17 presents David as the slayer of Goliath, 2 Samuel 21:19 preserves another tradition in which Elhanan of Bethlehem is associated with the killing of Goliath. The later version in 1 Chronicles 20:5 appears to harmonize this difficulty by stating that Elhanan killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath. This textual tension does not by itself disprove the Davidic tradition, but it shows that the heroic memory surrounding Goliath was complex and later subject to clarification. The sword of Goliath is an especially interesting detail in this tradition. According to 1 Samuel 17, after Goliath fell, David used Goliath's own sword to cut off his head. The weapon is later mentioned again in 1 Samuel 21:8-9, when David comes to the priest Ahimelech at Nob and receives the sword of Goliath, which had been kept there wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. This suggests that the sword had acquired the status of a sacred or heroic relic. Yet the narrative does not subsequently describe David using

¹ The form *Satar* is retained here as it appears in Larysa Karaliova's notes and interpretation of the Philistine-context tradition. The preserved Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 29:4 uses *le-satan*, "as an adversary", in the speech concerning David's possible conduct in battle. The present study treats this not in the later demonological sense of "Satan", but in the older political-military sense of an adversary, turncoat, or potentially treacherous figure.

this weapon in battles. This silence is significant. If the sword of Goliath was indeed a central proof of David's heroic victory, one might expect it to play a more visible role in later accounts of David's military career. Instead, it appears briefly as a relic connected with memory and legitimation and then disappears from the narrative. This absence invites critical reflection. The sword could have served as a powerful symbolic object supporting David's claim to have defeated Goliath and, more broadly, his claim to heroic legitimacy. At the same time, the fact that the weapon is not later used or described in David's campaigns may suggest that its primary function in the narrative is not practical but symbolic. It belongs to the construction of David's heroic image. After Saul's death in battle against the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, David returned from exile and was anointed king over Judah in Hebron (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 2:4). By the time of the battle of Gilboa, Samuel was already dead (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 25:1). Therefore, David's later accession in Hebron was not carried out by Samuel. According to 2 Samuel 2:4, "the men of Judah" anointed David king over the house of Judah. This was not yet kingship over all Israel, but a regional and tribal enthronement. Only later, after the weakening and eventual disappearance of the house of Saul, did the elders of Israel come to Hebron and anoint David king over all Israel (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 5:1-3). The sequence suggests that David's rise was not a single sacred event, but a gradual political process: first prophetic designation, then Judahite kingship, and only later broader Israelite recognition. At the same time, Abner, the commander of Saul's army, installed Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, as king over the remaining tribes of Israel (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 2:8-9). Thus, the death of Saul did not immediately create a united kingdom under David. Instead, it produced a divided political situation and a prolonged struggle between the house of Saul and the house of David. The decisive turning point came with the weakening and eventual destruction of Saul's remaining house. Ish-bosheth was assassinated by his own captains, Rechab and Baanah (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 4:5-7). The biblical narrative presents David as condemning the murder and punishing the assassins. However, a historical-political reading cannot ignore the fact that David was the main political beneficiary of Ish-bosheth's death. The suspicion that the assassination served David's interests, even if the narrative denies his direct involvement, belongs naturally to any critical inquiry into the transfer of power from Saul's dynasty to David's house. David's pre-royal career also deserves close examination. Thus, David was anointed king three times. If the first anointing was performed by Samuel, as claimed by God himself, then the subsequent two had neither divine nor legal force. Thus, the later anointings did not repeat Samuel's prophetic act, but functioned as political acts of recognition by Judah's and, later, by Israel's peoples. It remains unclear why the narrative does not present David as openly invoking Samuel's earlier anointing when he was accepted by the people of Judah and Israel. This difficulty may indicate that the three anointing traditions preserve different stages of David's rise, or even three different persons that were later combined into a single royal biography. The biblical narrative does not present him only as a shepherd, musician, and innocent fugitive. It also preserves the memory of David as the leader of an armed group operating in the borderlands between Israel and Philistia. This group lived by mobility, patronage, intimidation, and negotiated protection. The episode involving Nabal and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25 is especially important. David demands provisions from Nabal, a wealthy man, because David and his men had provided protection in the region. Nabal refuses, and David prepares to attack. Abigail secretly brings food and wine to David and prevents bloodshed. Soon afterward Nabal dies, and David takes Abigail as his wife. The narrative itself does not state that there was an adulterous relationship between David and Abigail before Nabal's death. Nevertheless, the sequence of events is politically and morally suggestive. A wealthy household refuses David's demand; the wife

secretly negotiates with David; the husband dies shortly afterward; and David marries the widow. Even if the text presents the episode as providential and favorable to David, a critical reader may see in it the memory of coercive power, opportunistic alliance, and the absorption of wealth and influence into David's growing political network. David's relationship with the Philistines is even more problematic. According to 1 Samuel 27, David entered the service of Achish, king of Gath, and received Ziklag as a base. From there, he conducted raids while maintaining the protection and confidence of Achish. In 1 Samuel 29, David and his armed men are present in the Philistine camp before the campaign that would lead to Saul's death at Gilboa. The Philistine commanders object to his presence in the battle explained because they fear that David may become an adversary to them in battle and reconcile himself with Saul by turning against the Philistines. In modern political terminology, David's position at this stage may be compared, with caution, to that of a proxy or semi-independent armed force operating under the protection of a hostile powers to Saul and to the Israelite kingdom. He was not merely hiding from Saul; he was living under Philistine patronage, commanding armed men, and positioned in a way that made him useful to the Philistines and dangerous to Saul. This makes Saul's pursuit of David appear less like simple jealousy and more like the response of a reigning monarch to an armed rival who had entered into relations with Israel's enemies. After Saul's defeat, David's rise becomes even more striking. He was first made king over Judah, and only later over all Israel. The biblical narrative presents this process as the fulfilment of divine election. Yet from a political perspective, it also marks the successful replacement of Saul's dynasty by a rival leader who had previously operated from the frontier and had spent time under Philistine protection. This does not mean that David was merely a Philistine puppet. However, it does mean that his rise cannot be separated from his ambiguous relationship with Philistine power. The conquest of Jerusalem also raises questions. The city was already a fortified Jebusite stronghold. The Jebusites are not consistently presented in the biblical narrative as direct enemies of Israel in the same way as the Philistines. Yet David succeeded in taking Jerusalem and making it his capital. The biblical account gives the event theological and dynastic importance, but it leaves many practical questions unanswered. How did David, with a still limited power base, take such a fortified city? Did he receive assistance, direct or indirect, from external allies including the Philistines or from hostile groups to Saul's remaining house? The text does not provide enough detail to answer this with certainty, but the question is legitimate. David's religious policy also deserves critical attention. The movement of the ark and the later desire to build a permanent temple represented a major transformation in Israelite religious symbolism. The older image of divine presence associated with a movable sanctuary which was built by divine instructions gave way to the idea of a royal capital and eventually a stone temple. The biblical text itself preserves tension around this issue: David wishes to build a house for God, but the prophetic response in 2 Samuel 7 indicates that God had not previously required such a house and that David himself would not build it. This raises an important question: Was the centralization of sacred space in Jerusalem a purely religious act, or was it also a political project that joined divine presence to Davidic royal authority? The moral problem of David becomes most explicit in the episode of Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. David commits adultery with the wife of a loyal military officer Uriah the Hittite. When Bathsheba becomes pregnant, David recalls Uriah from the battlefield and attempts to make him go home, apparently so that the child could be attributed to the husband. Uriah refuses to enjoy domestic comfort while the army is in the field and sleeps at the entrance of the king's house. David understood Uriah's suspicions. David then sends him back to the front carrying a letter that orders Joab to place Uriah in the most dangerous part of the battle and then withdraw from him so that he will be killed. This is not merely a private

moral failure. It is an abuse of royal authority, sexual exploitation, deception, and arranged death. Nor is this the only troubling episode. Joab, David's most effective and loyal commander, is later marked for death in David's final instructions to Solomon (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 2:5-6). The biblical narrative gives reasons for Joab's punishment, but the political meaning is also clear: Solomon's throne is secured through the removal of dangerous figures from the older military order. Once again, dynastic stabilization is presented through a moral and theological frame, while the political violence behind it remains visible. These episodes create a serious theological and historical question. Saul is rejected for disobedience to commands transmitted through Samuel, whereas David commits acts that appear morally and politically more severe: alliance with Israel's enemies, coercive activity by an armed group, suspected benefit from assassinations, adultery, the arranged death of Uriah, and the elimination of trustful military general and former allies. Yet the Davidic dynasty is preserved and sanctified, while Saul's dynasty is condemned and erased. Could God love such a sinner and prefer him to Saul? Within the theological logic of the biblical narrative, the answer is connected with repentance, covenant, and divine election. David sins gravely but is said to repent; yet the question of repentance is complicated by his final instruction to Solomon concerning killing of Joab (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 2:5-6). Saul disobeys and is rejected; however, from a historical-critical perspective, this explanation is not sufficient by itself. The asymmetry between Saul and David suggests that the surviving narrative was shaped by later Davidic memory. Saul's faults are emphasized because his dynasty failed, while David's crimes are incorporated into a theology that preserves his election. The result is not a neutral historical portrait, but a dynastic narrative in which David's legitimacy is defended despite the moral and political darkness of his rise.

Repentance and Divine Judgment

The biblical narrative presents Saul and David as two contrasting examples of kings whose relationship with God was profoundly influenced by obedience, repentance, and covenantal responsibility (McCarter, 1984; Brueggemann, 1990). According to the Deuteronomistic History, Saul lost divine favour not merely because of military failure but because of his incomplete obedience to the divine command concerning Amalek (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 15; Gordon, 1986).

Although instructed to devote Amalek to complete destruction (Hebrew: *herem*), Saul spared King Agag and preserved part of the livestock, justifying his actions by claiming that the animals would be offered as sacrifices to the Lord (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Gordon, 1986). The prophet Samuel rejected this justification, declaring that obedience is superior to sacrifice (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 15:22-23). Saul acknowledged his wrongdoing but never demonstrated the profound repentance that later characterizes David (McCarter, 1984; Brueggemann, 1990). Consequently, God rejected Saul's kingship and instructed Samuel to anoint David as his successor.

Nevertheless, the biblical account does not portray David as an ideal or sinless king. Following his adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged death of Uriah the Hittite (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 11-12), the prophet Nathan confronted David with his guilt. David confessed, saying, "I have sinned against the LORD" (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 12:13), and accepted divine judgment. The narrative presents this confession as genuine repentance, although forgiveness did not eliminate the temporal consequences of his actions. Nathan announced that violence would never depart from David's household (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 12:10-14), and the subsequent deaths of his child, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah may be interpreted within the biblical narrative as manifestations of that judgment (McCarter, 1984; Halpern, 2001).

The later history of the Davidic dynasty further demonstrates that God's covenant with David did not constitute an unconditional guarantee of perpetual political rule (Cogan & Tadmor, 1988; Finkelstein & Silberman, 2007). The reign of King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin; Hebrew: יְחֹנָנִי, *Yəḥōnāyā*) ended with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 597 BCE (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Kings 24:8-17; Jeremiah 22:24-30; Cogan & Tadmor, 1988). Through the prophet Jeremiah, God pronounced judgment: "Record this man as if childless ... for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah" (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Jeremiah 22:30).

This oracle has played an important role in later Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Davidic covenant because it raises questions concerning dynastic succession, divine judgment, and the fulfilment of messianic expectations (Halpern, 2001; Finkelstein & Silberman, 2007).

Thus, the biblical narratives concerning Saul, David, and Jeconiah consistently emphasize that covenantal election did not exempt Israel's kings from divine accountability (Brueggemann, 1990; Gordon, 1986). Election was accompanied by the continuing obligation of obedience and repentance, while persistent disobedience could result in rejection, judgment, or the termination of dynastic rule.

Succession

The succession of the Davidic monarchy reached a decisive stage with the accession of Solomon. According to the biblical genealogy, David descended from Ruth the Moabite, who formally entered the covenant community of Israel through her declaration of loyalty to Naomi and to the God of Israel: "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Ruth 1:16-17). Consequently, the Davidic dynasty itself originated from a lineage that included non-Israelite ancestry, while covenantal affiliation was understood primarily in religious rather than purely ethnic terms (McCarter, 1984; Finkelstein & Silberman, 2007).

Solomon was born from David's union with Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah the Hittite (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 11-12). Although Bathsheba became Queen Mother (*gebirah*), the biblical text does not explicitly describe her ethnic origin or record a formal conversion to the religion of Israel. Consequently, her precise background remains uncertain and has been the subject of scholarly discussion (Halpern, 2001).

The biblical narrative presents Solomon as a ruler endowed with exceptional wisdom and entrusted with the construction of the First Temple (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 5-8). At the same time, it also portrays a gradual departure from exclusive devotion to Yahweh. According to 1 Kings 11:1-8, Solomon contracted numerous political marriages with foreign women who retained their ancestral religions. The text states that Solomon permitted, and in some cases actively supported, the establishment of high places and sanctuaries dedicated to foreign deities. Within the theological framework of the Deuteronomistic History, these actions constituted a violation of the covenant and became the principal reason for the subsequent division of the united monarchy (Brueggemann, 2000; Cogan, 2001).

The succession of Solomon itself was not free from political controversy. Although Adonijah appears to have regarded himself as David's natural successor (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 1:5-10), the biblical narrative describes how Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan intervened to secure Solomon's designation as king during David's lifetime (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 1:11-40). Modern historians generally interpret these events as reflecting a struggle for succession within the royal court rather than a straightforward dynastic transition (Halpern, 2001; Finkelstein & Silberman, 2007).

Following his accession, Solomon consolidated his authority by eliminating several political opponents. Among them was Joab, David's long-serving commander, who sought asylum by taking hold of the horns of the altar (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 2:28-34). Despite the traditional association of the sanctuary with asylum, Solomon ordered Joab's execution. This episode has attracted considerable scholarly attention because it illustrates the tension between royal authority, judicial practice, and the sanctity traditionally associated with sacred space (Cogan, 2001).

The account invites comparison with the earlier narrative concerning Uzzah, who was struck dead after touching the Ark of the Covenant while attempting to prevent it from falling (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 6:6-7). The juxtaposition of these narratives raises important theological questions concerning divine holiness, sanctuary, justice, and royal authority. Rather than providing explicit answers, the biblical authors preserve these tensions within the narrative itself.

These events also contribute to a broader theological question that extends throughout the Deuteronomistic History. Although the Davidic covenant promises the continuation of David's house (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 7:12-16), the biblical record simultaneously portrays repeated episodes of divine judgment upon David, Solomon, and their descendants. This tension culminates in the prophetic judgment against King Jeconiah (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Jeremiah 22:30), which has played a central role in subsequent Jewish and Christian discussions concerning the continuity of the Davidic line and the interpretation of messianic expectation: "Record this man as if childless ... for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah" (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Jeremiah 22:30).

The Kingdom of Israel (Hebrew: מַמְלֶכֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, *Mamleket Yīsrā'el*)

According to the biblical tradition, the 12 tribes of Israel settled in Canaan on both sides of the Jordan River and in the regions surrounding the Dead Sea following the Exodus and the subsequent settlement narratives preserved in the books of Joshua and Judges. Outside the biblical text, the earliest widely accepted extrabiblical reference to Israel is found on the victory stele of Pharaoh Merneptah, dated to approximately 1208 BCE, where "Israel" is mentioned among the peoples of Canaan (Hasel, 1994; Kitchen, 2003). This inscription predates the widespread settlement of the Sea Peoples along the southern Levantine coast at the end of the Late Bronze Age and precedes the Arab expansion into the Levant by nearly three millennia (Hasel, 1994).

The biblical narrative presents Saul as the first king who succeeded in uniting a number of Israelite tribes into a single political entity (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 9-11). His reign was characterized by continual military conflicts with neighbouring peoples, particularly the Philistines, and ended with Israel's defeat at the Battle of Gilboa (1 Samuel 31). Following Saul's death, political authority fragmented. David was initially recognized as king by the tribe of Judah and established his capital at Hebron (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 2:1-4), whereas Ish-bosheth (Hebrew: אִישׁ-בִּשְׁת; also known as Ešba'al) ruled over much of the remaining northern tribes (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 2:8-10). After Ish-bosheth's assassination, David was accepted as king over all Israel, resulting in the reunification of the kingdom (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 5:1-5).

Nineteenth-century historical maps, including James Wyld's *Land of Israel, Shewing the Purveyorships in the Reign of Solomon* (1819), reconstructed the territorial extent of the united monarchy primarily based on the biblical *Books of Samuel and Kings*. Modern historical scholarship, however, considers such reconstructions

interpretative rather than archaeological evidence and continues to debate both the geographical extent and political organization of the United Monarchy (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2007; Grabbe, 2007).

David is portrayed in the biblical narrative as a successful military and political leader. Before becoming king, he sought refuge among the Philistines and served under Achish, king of Gath (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 27-29). This episode has led some historians to suggest that David maintained pragmatic political relations with Philistine rulers during the early stages of his rise to power (Halpern, 2001). The capture of Jerusalem (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 5:6-10) marked a decisive moment in the consolidation of the united monarchy. While the biblical text attributes the conquest to David and his forces, historians continue to debate the military circumstances surrounding the capture of this well-fortified Jebusite city and whether external political alliances contributed to its success (Mazar, 1990; Halpern, 2001).

Solomon inherited a relatively stable kingdom and is portrayed primarily as a statesman rather than as a military commander. The biblical narrative emphasizes his administrative reforms, diplomatic alliances, extensive trade networks, international marriages, and large-scale construction projects, including the First Temple in Jerusalem (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 3-10). Modern scholarship suggested that the royal court during Solomon's reign may have played an important role in preserving and shaping traditions concerning both David and Solomon, thereby contributing to the ideological presentation of the Davidic dynasty within the Deuteronomistic History (Van Seters, 1983; Halpern, 2001).

Following Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king of Judah, while the northern tribes proclaimed Jeroboam I as king, resulting in the division of the united monarchy into the Kingdom of Israel in the north and the Kingdom of Judah in the south (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 12). Although both kingdoms survived for considerable periods, the political fragmentation reduced their strategic strength and increased their vulnerability to the expanding Neo-Assyrian Empire during the eighth century BCE (Grabbe, 2007; Liverani, 2005).

The political relationship between Judah and the Philistine city-states during the Neo-Assyrian period remains a subject of scholarly debate. Assyrian royal inscriptions record repeated campaigns against Philistine cities, including Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath, before the campaign against Jerusalem during the reign of Sennacherib in 701 BCE (Kitchen, 2003). Whether earlier political contacts established during David's lifetime had any lasting influence on these later events cannot be demonstrated directly from the available evidence, although the changing geopolitical balance following the Assyrian conquest of Philistia undoubtedly altered Judah's strategic position.

The Name of God and Religious Symbols

The formation of Israelite-Jewish identity should not be reduced simply to the figure of Abraham. In biblical and later Jewish tradition Abraham became the paradigmatic ancestor of Israel, while in Islamic tradition he is presented as neither Jew nor Christian, but as a *ḥanīf*, that is, an upright monotheist who submitted himself to God (The Qur'an, 2017, Qur'an 3:67; 16:120). Thus, Abraham functions as a shared ancestral and theological figure, but the institutional and textual formation of Judaism belongs to a much later historical process.

The decisive crystallization of Jewish religious identity took place during and after the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile (Liverani, 2005; Berlin & Brettler, 2014; The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 52; Psalm 137). The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and the exile became a formative period for the preservation, editing, systematization, and theological reinterpretation of

Israel's earlier traditions. Britannica notes that after the Babylonian exile, and especially from the third century BCE onward, Jews increasingly avoided pronouncing the divine name YHWH, while Elohim became a more common designation emphasizing the universal sovereignty of Israel's God.

In the Hebrew Bible, God is addressed by several names and titles, including El, Eloah, Elohim, Adonai, and the Tetragrammaton YHWH (Mettinger, 2005; Smith, 2002; *The Torah*, 2010, Genesis 14:18-22; Exodus 3:14-15; Deuteronomy 6:4; *The Holy Bible*, 1769/2010, Psalm 7:17; Psalm 91:1-2). The divine name YHWH was treated with exceptional sanctity and later came to be avoided in ordinary pronunciation (Mettinger, 2005; Berlin & Brettler, 2014; *The Torah*, 2010, Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 24:16). Instead, substitute forms such as Adonai were used in liturgical reading. This development reflects not merely linguistic change, but also a theological process in which the sacredness of the divine name became central to Jewish religious practice.

At the same time, ancient Israelite religion was not devoid of material symbols. The biblical tradition itself preserves the episode of the bronze serpent made by Moses during the wilderness period (*The Torah*, 2010, Numbers 21:4-9). Later, according to 2 Kings 18:4, this object, known as Nehushtan, was destroyed by King Hezekiah because it had become an object of improper veneration (Berlin & Brettler, 2014; Dever, 2005; *The Torah*, 2010, Numbers 21:4-9). The bronze serpent is therefore a significant example of the tension within biblical religion between symbolic mediation and the prohibition of idolatry.

This tension is not unique to Judaism. All later Abrahamic religions developed complex relationships with sacred objects and symbols. In Christianity, the cross, icons, relics, and objects connected with the Passion of Christ became central in many traditions (*The New Testament*, 2021; Berlin & Brettler, 2014; Jensen, 2017; *The New Testament*, 2021, Matthew 27:32-56; John 19:17-37). In Islam, despite strong aniconic tendencies, the Kaaba and the Black Stone possess an important ritual and symbolic role within pilgrimage practice (Peters, 1994; *The Qur'an*, 2017; Qur'an 2:125-127; Qur'an 3:96-97; Qur'an 22:26-29). The crescent and star, although widely associated with Islam in later history, were not originally exclusive Islamic symbols; older historical discussions already note that the crescent and star had pre-Islamic and non-Islamic uses.

Similarly, the Star of David became the most widely recognized symbol of Judaism only relatively late (Scholem, 1949). Modern Jewish sources note that the Magen David became a common Jewish communal marker especially in the early modern period, particularly from the 17th century onward, rather than being an ancient exclusive symbol of biblical Israel. The cross also existed as a sign in pre-Christian cultures, although it later became the central symbol of Christianity. Thus, religious symbols often predate the religions with which they later become identified, and their meanings are transformed by later theological and communal use.

The destruction of the First Temple, traditionally commemorated in Judaism on the Ninth of Av, marked a decisive break in the history of Israelite religion. The deportation of royal, priestly, military, and artisan elites to Mesopotamia contributed to the preservation and reorganization of earlier traditions in written form. During and after the exile, inherited narratives, laws, genealogies, prophecies, and cultic memories were collected, interpreted, expanded, and integrated into a broader theological history. In this sense, the written tradition of Judaism did not begin from nothing in Babylonia, but the exilic and post-exilic periods became crucial for its consolidation.

Later Christianity and Islam emerged in relation to this inherited Jewish textual and theological world, but not as simple copies of Judaism (Liverani, 2005; *The Qur'an*, 2017, Qur'an 3:3-4; Qur'an 5:44; *The New Testament*, 2021, Matthew 5:17; Romans 3:1-2). Both religions reinterpreted earlier materials in new theological frameworks. Christianity incorporated Jewish scripture into its own canon and interpreted it through the person

of Jesus Christ. Islam acknowledged earlier revelation, including the Torah given to Moses, while presenting the Qur'an as a later revelation delivered through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad (The Qur'an, 2017, Qur'an 2:97; 3:3-4; 5:44).

The question of the divine name is therefore central to all three traditions. In Judaism, the Tetragrammaton became too sacred for ordinary pronunciation. In Islam, the name Allah functions as the supreme designation of God. Linguistically, Allah is commonly explained as deriving from Arabic al-ilāh, "the God", and is related to other Semitic terms for God, including Hebrew Eloah and Aramaic Elah/Alaha (Jeffery, 1938; Mettinger, 2005). This does not mean that the theological systems are identical, but it shows that the vocabulary of divine address in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam belongs to a shared Semitic linguistic and religious environment.

Christianity developed another solution to the problem of divine address. In the Lord's Prayer, Christians address God as "Our Father" (The New Testament, 2021, Matthew 6:9). In New Testament theology, Jesus is described as seated at the right hand of God after the Ascension (The New Testament, 2021, Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55-56; Hebrews 1:3). Thus, Christian prayer is directed to God the Father, but through a Christological framework that differs from both rabbinic Judaism and Islam.

Consequently, the Abrahamic religions share a common concern with the one God, but they differ in language, ritual symbolism, theological interpretation, and the permissible use of sacred images and objects. The most ancient divine designations—El, Eloah, Elohim, and YHWH in the Hebrew tradition, and Allah in Arabic usage—belong to a broad Semitic field of divine naming. Historically, however, these names and symbols acquired different meanings within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. From a comparative monotheistic perspective, the members of all three Abrahamic traditions direct their prayers to the one Most High God. In the Hebrew tradition, this God is addressed as El, Eloah/Elohim, YHWH, and El Elyon/YHWH Elyon; in Christianity, as God the Father; and in Islam as Allah. These names belong to different theological and linguistic traditions, but they refer to the supreme and unique God of Abrahamic monotheism. Members of all three confessions address their prayers to one and the same Almighty God—YHWH Elion.

Succession of Dynasties From David to Jesus Christ

The first monarchy of Israel was established under Saul, who may therefore be regarded as the founder of the first Israelite royal house. This was followed by the rise of David, whose accession and legitimation are described through a complex sequence of narratives involving prophetic anointing, tribal recognition, military leadership, and political consolidation (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 9-10; 16:1-13; The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Samuel 2:4; 5:1-5; Berlin & Brettler, 2014; Collins, 2017; Liverani, 2005). The Davidic dynasty became especially associated with Jerusalem and with the southern kingdom of Judah after the division of the united monarchy into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Kings 11-12; Collins, 2017; Liverani, 2005).

The Davidic monarchy continued in Judah until the Babylonian conquest. In 586 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar II captured Jerusalem, destroyed the First Temple, and brought the kingdom of Judah to an end as an independent political entity (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Kings 25:1-21; Jeremiah 52:12-30; Berlin & Brettler, 2014; Grabbe, 2004; Liverani, 2005). Jehoiachin, also called Jeconiah or Coniah, had earlier been taken into Babylonian exile, while Zedekiah ruled as a Babylonian-appointed king until the final destruction of Jerusalem (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 2 Kings 24:8-17; 25:1-7; Jeremiah 22:24-30; Berlin & Brettler, 2014; Grabbe, 2004). The prophetic tradition preserved in Jeremiah contains a severe oracle against Jeconiah: "Record this man as childless ... for

none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah” (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Jeremiah 22:30). This text became important for later reflection on the interruption, transformation, and theological meaning of Davidic succession (Berlin & Brettler, 2014; Collins, 2017).

The Babylonian Empire was later conquered by Cyrus II of Persia. According to the biblical tradition, Cyrus issued a decree permitting the Judean exiles to return and authorizing the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Ezra 1:1-4; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23). This marked the beginning of the post-exilic restoration and eventually the Second Temple period (Grabbe, 2004; VanderKam, 2004). However, Judah did not regain full royal independence. Instead, it existed under imperial domination, first within the Persian Empire and later within the Hellenistic kingdoms that emerged after the conquests of Alexander the Great (Grabbe, 2004; Grabbe, 2008; Schürer, 1973-1987).

After Alexander’s death in 323 BCE, his empire was divided among his successors. Judea passed between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid spheres of power before coming under Seleucid control (Grabbe, 2008; Schürer, 1973-1987). Under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, aggressive Hellenizing policies, interference in the Jerusalem priesthood, and the desecration of the Temple provoked the Maccabean Revolt (Coogan, Brettler, Newsom & Perkins 2018, 1 Maccabees 1-2; 2 Maccabees 6-7, Josephus, 1978; Grabbe, 2008; VanderKam, 2004). The struggle eventually developed from a religious resistance movement into a broader war of national liberation. The purification and rededication of the Temple became one of the central symbolic events of this period (Coogan, Brettler, Newsom, & Perkins, 2018, 1 Maccabees 4:36-59; 2 Maccabees 10:1-8; Josephus, 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987).

The Hasmonean dynasty emerged from this revolt. Simon, one of the surviving Maccabean leaders, was recognized in 141 BCE as high priest, ethnarch, and leader of the Jews, marking the formal beginning of Hasmonean rule (Coogan et al., 2018, 1 Maccabees 14:27-49; Josephus, 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987; VanderKam, 2004). The Hasmoneans combined priestly, military, and political authority, and under their rule Judea achieved a significant degree of independence (Josephus, 1981; 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987; VanderKam, 2004). Their rise was assisted in part by diplomacy with Rome, which supported anti-Seleucid forces as part of its broader eastern policy (Coogan et al., 2018, 1 Maccabees 8:17-32; 14:16-24; Josephus, 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987). In this respect, the Hasmonean use of external alliances may be compared, with caution, to earlier biblical traditions in which David’s rise involved tactical relations with Philistine city-states (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, 1 Samuel 27-29; Berlin & Brettler, 2014; Liverani, 2005).

Such comparisons do not imply identity of circumstances, but they illustrate a recurring political pattern in which local rulers used regional imperial rivalries to secure internal legitimacy and autonomy.

Over time, however, Hasmonean independence weakened, and Judea increasingly fell under Roman influence. Internal dynastic conflict between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II created conditions for Roman intervention (Josephus, 1981; 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987). Pompey entered Jerusalem in 63 BCE, after which Judea became dependent upon Rome (Josephus, 1981; 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987). The last Hasmonean king, Antigonus II Mattathias, came to power with Parthian support, but his rule was defeated by Herod, who had been appointed king of the Jews by the Roman Senate (Josephus, 1981; 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987). Herod captured Jerusalem in 37 BCE and established a new client monarchy under Roman authority.

Herod the Great was not a Davidic king and did not belong to the Hasmonean line by birth (Brondz, 2023). His rule therefore represented a major transformation in Judean kingship: Royal authority was now grounded not

in Davidic descent or Hasmonean priestly-national legitimacy, but in Roman appointment, military success, and political loyalty to imperial power (Josephus, 1981; 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987). After Herod's death in 4 BCE, his kingdom was divided among his sons. Judea proper came under direct Roman administration in 6 CE and was governed by Roman prefects or procurators (Josephus, 1981; 1978; Schürer, 1973-1987).

It was within this Roman provincial context that Pontius Pilate governed Judea. The New Testament presents Jesus of Nazareth as being brought before Pilate under the accusation that he claimed kingship, expressed in the charge "King of the Jews" (The New Testament, 2021, Mark 15:2; John 18:33-37; 19:19). Historically, this accusation must be understood within the Roman political framework: Claims to kingship in Judea could be interpreted as a challenge to Roman sovereignty (Schürer, 1973-1987; Wright, 1992). Thus, the trial of Jesus stands at the intersection of Jewish messianic expectation, Roman imperial authority, and the long history of disputed succession from Saul, David, the Hasmoneans, Herod, and finally to the Roman provincial order (Schürer, 1973-1987; Wright, 1992).

The Abrahamic Sacred Texts

The three principal sacred texts of the Abrahamic religions—the Torah, the Bible, and the Qur'an—differ considerably in their literary composition, historical development, and theological emphasis. Although each occupies a central place within its respective religious tradition, all three present themselves as witnesses to divine revelation and to the relationship between God and humanity (Kugel, 2008; Alter, 2019).

The Torah (Pentateuch), comprising the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, begins with the biblical account of creation and the primeval history of humanity before narrating the history of the patriarchs, the formation of Israel as the covenant people, the Exodus from Egypt, and the revelation of the divine law through Moses (The Torah, 2010, Genesis 1-Deuteronomy 34). From both Jewish and Christian perspectives, the Torah establishes the covenantal framework that shapes subsequent biblical history (Baden, 2012; Alter, 2019).

The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament presents Jesus of Nazareth not as the abolisher of the Mosaic Law but as its fulfillment. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus declared: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (The New Testament, 2021, Matthew 5:17).

This statement has traditionally been understood within mainstream Christian theology as affirming the continuity of God's salvific plan while inaugurating the New Covenant through Christ (Brown, 1997; Wright, 2013).

The Qur'an, regarded by Muslims as the literal word of God (*Allah*) revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel, likewise presents itself as confirming the earlier revelations given to Moses (*Mūsā*) and Jesus (*ʿĪsā*). The Qur'an repeatedly declares that it confirms the Tawrāt (Torah) and the Injīl (Gospel) while presenting itself as the final divine revelation (The Qur'an, 2017; Qur'an 3:3-4; 5:44-48). Islamic exegetical literature (*tafsīr*), developed after the formation of the Qur'anic text, provides theological interpretation but remains distinct from the Qur'an itself (Reynolds, 2008; Sinai, 2017).

Within the theological framework shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the God who revealed Himself to Abraham, Moses, and the later prophets is understood to be the same Creator, although known by different names and described through different linguistic and theological traditions. The Hebrew Bible commonly employs the names YHWH and Elohim, whereas the Qur'an consistently uses Allah, the standard Arabic term for God. From the perspective of comparative theology, these names are generally understood to refer to the one

Creator worshipped within the three Abrahamic traditions, despite important differences in theological interpretation (Armstrong, 1993; Peters, 2003).

The Qur'an explicitly recalls God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt: "O Children of Israel, remember My favour which I bestowed upon you ... and [remember] when We saved you from Pharaoh's people ..." (The Qur'an, 2017, Qur'an 2:40, 2:49; Qur'an 7:141).

These passages establish a direct continuity between the Qur'anic narrative and the biblical account of the Exodus (The Torah, 2010, Exodus 12-14), emphasizing that the God addressing Muhammad is the same God who delivered Israel from Egypt (Reynolds, 2008).

The giving of the Ten Commandments occupies a foundational position in the biblical tradition. According to Exodus 31:18 and Deuteronomy 9:10, the first tablets of the covenant were "written with the finger of God". Following Israel's worship of the golden calf, Moses broke these tablets (The Torah, 2010, Exodus 32:19). God subsequently instructed Moses to prepare a second set of stone tablets, upon which the covenantal words were again inscribed (The Torah, 2010, Exodus 34:1-4; Deuteronomy 10:1-4).

The distinction between the first divinely inscribed tablets and the second set has received comparatively little attention in modern biblical scholarship. One possible theological interpretation is that the narrative symbolically distinguishes between the direct inscription of the divine covenant by God and its subsequent transmission through a human mediator. From this perspective, the covenant itself remains unchanged, whereas responsibility for its preservation and transmission no longer rests with direct divine intervention but with humanity. Such an interpretation should be understood as a theological reading of the biblical narrative rather than as an established historical conclusion.

Accordingly, once the covenant had been entrusted to human custody, responsibility for preserving it, enforcing obedience to its commandments, and responding to their violation likewise became the responsibility of the covenant community rather than requiring the direct intervention of the Almighty. This understanding is consistent with the legal traditions of the Pentateuch, where the administration of justice under the covenant is entrusted to judges, elders, priests, and the community itself (The Torah, 2010, Exodus 21-23; Leviticus 20; Deuteronomy 13; 17:8-13). Within this interpretative framework, the holiness of the covenant is not diminished by its transmission through human hands; rather, the responsibility for preserving its integrity and applying its legal obligations is transferred to those entrusted with its guardianship (Kugel, 2008; Alter, 2019).

Tears of Betrayal, Self-Sacrifice, Repentance, and Suicide as the Ultimate Expression of Remorse

The condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus constitute one of the central narratives of the Abrahamic religions. Although Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize Jesus as a historical religious figure, they interpret the events surrounding his arrest, trial, and death in fundamentally different ways. These differences have significantly influenced subsequent theological developments and continue to shape interreligious dialogue (Brown, 1994; Vermes, 2006; Ehrman, 2003; 2014).

Within the canonical Gospels, Jesus repeatedly refers to himself as the "Son of Man" (The New Testament, 2021, Mark 8:31; Matthew 16:13-16), a designation rooted in the Hebrew Bible, particularly Daniel 7:13-14. By contrast, the title "Son of God" is more frequently employed by other speakers within the Gospel narratives or by later Christian authors as part of their theological interpretation (Brown, 1994; Dunn, 2003). Similarly, the accusation that Jesus claimed to be the "King of the Jews" appears primarily within the context of the Roman

judicial proceedings (The New Testament, 2021, John 18:33-37; Mark 15:2), rather than as a direct self-designation in the Gospel traditions.

The prediction that Peter would deny Jesus three times before the rooster crowed is recorded in all four canonical Gospels (The New Testament, 2021, Matthew 26:34, 69-75; Mark 14:30, 66-72; Luke 22:34, 54-62; John 13:38; 18:15-27). Following the fulfillment of this prophecy, Peter is described as weeping bitterly (The New Testament, 2021, Matthew 26:75; Luke 22:62). The Gospel narratives portray these tears as an expression of profound grief and remorse, although they do not explicitly characterize them as repentance in the theological sense.

The figure of Judas Iscariot has generated even greater interpretative diversity. The epithet *Iscariot* has traditionally been understood as referring to Kerioth (Qerioth) in Judea, although alternative etymologies have also been proposed (Brown, 1994; Bauckham, 2008). Consequently, the precise geographical origin of Judas remains uncertain.

According to the canonical Gospels, Judas identified Jesus to the arresting party by means of a kiss (The New Testament, 2021, Matthew 26:47-50; Mark 14:43-46; Luke 22:47-48). The narratives do not explicitly state whether Judas anticipated that Jesus would ultimately be handed over to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate or whether he expected the matter to remain within the jurisdiction of the Temple authorities. This ambiguity has given rise to diverse theological interpretations throughout Christian history.

The Synoptic Gospels further report that Jesus denied the principal accusations brought against him during the proceedings before the Jewish authorities, while the Gospel of John presents a more extensive theological dialogue concerning his identity (Brown, 1994). The relationship between the Temple proceedings and the subsequent Roman trial has therefore remained an important subject of historical investigation.

Islamic tradition presents a markedly different account. The Qur'an states that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified but that "it was made to appear so to them" (The Qur'an, 2017, Qur'an 4:157-158). Classical Muslim commentators have proposed various explanations of this passage, including traditions in which another individual, sometimes identified as Judas, was substituted for Jesus, although the Qur'anic text itself does not identify the substitute (Ayoub, 1980; Reynolds, 2018). These later exegetical traditions should therefore be distinguished from the Qur'anic narrative itself.

The death of Judas is described differently in the New Testament. According to Matthew 27:3-5, Judas experienced profound remorse, returned the thirty pieces of silver, and subsequently took his own life. Acts 1:18-19 presents a different account of his death. These divergent traditions have stimulated extensive discussion concerning the nature of repentance, moral responsibility, and divine forgiveness within early Christianity (Brown, 1994; Ehrman, 2003; 2014).

The contrast between Peter and Judas has remained one of the most significant moral themes of Christian theology. Peter denied Jesus three times but was subsequently restored and became one of the principal leaders of the early Church (The New Testament, 2021, John 21:15-19). Judas, despite his remorse, became the enduring symbol of betrayal. This contrast has frequently been interpreted as illustrating the theological distinction between repentance accompanied by hope in divine mercy and despair leading to self-destruction.

Questions concerning the formation of the biblical canon have likewise attracted considerable scholarly attention. Numerous early Christian writings were not incorporated into the New Testament, including several texts now commonly designated as apocryphal or non-canonical gospels (Ehrman, 2003; Pagels, 2004). Modern scholarship generally concludes that the canon developed gradually over several centuries and that the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) did not determine the contents of the New Testament canon.

Modern authors have also offered critical reassessments of Pauline theology. Among the most influential was Leo Tolstoy, whose later religious writings sharply criticized many doctrines of institutional Christianity while emphasizing the ethical teachings of Jesus (Tolstoy, 1894). In February 1901, the Holy Governing Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church issued its “Determination Concerning Count Leo Tolstoy”, declaring that Tolstoy had separated himself from the Orthodox Church because of his rejection of its fundamental doctrines. Although this action is commonly described as Tolstoy’s excommunication, the decree did not formally pronounce an anathema according to the traditional canonical formula.

From a historical perspective, renewed examination of the earliest traditions concerning Jesus, Peter, and Judas contributes to a deeper understanding of the diversity of early Christianity and of the complex processes through which later doctrinal traditions developed.

Jesus Christ Is Son of God, King of the Jews, Messiah

Jesus of Nazareth occupies a central position in all three Abrahamic religions, although his identity and mission are interpreted in fundamentally different ways. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each acknowledge Jesus as an important religious figure, yet they differ concerning his nature, authority, and relationship to God.

Islam professes absolute monotheism (*tawḥīd*) and recognizes only one supreme God, known in Arabic as Allah, corresponding to the God worshipped by Jews and Christians, who is referred to in the Hebrew Scriptures by names such as El, Elohim, and YHWH. Within Islamic theology, Jesus (‘*Isā*) is revered as one of the greatest prophets and as the Messiah (*al-Masīḥ*), born miraculously of the Virgin Mary. Nevertheless, the Qur’an explicitly rejects both the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine that God has a son (The Qur’an, 2017, Qur’an 4:171; 5:72-75; 112:1-4). The uncompromising unity of God therefore constitutes the theological foundation of Islam.

Christianity likewise affirms belief in one Almighty God but interprets the relationship between God and Jesus through the doctrine of the Trinity. According to mainstream Christian theology, Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, who, after the Resurrection and Ascension, sits at the right hand of the Father (The New Testament, 2021, Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55-56; Hebrews 1:3). This doctrine was developed during the first centuries of Christianity as the Church sought to reconcile strict monotheism with belief in the divinity of Christ.

Judaism, by contrast, does not accept Jesus as either the Messiah or the Son of God. While some Jewish writers have regarded Jesus as a Jewish teacher or even as a prophet, normative Rabbinic Judaism rejects his messianic claims. Several theological arguments are traditionally advanced in support of this position.

One argument concerns the genealogy of the Messiah. Biblical prophecy associates the expected Messiah with the House of David (The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-6). The genealogies recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke seek to establish Jesus’ Davidic ancestry, although they do so in different ways and have been interpreted differently throughout Christian history. Some scholars argue that Matthew presents Joseph’s genealogy, whereas Luke preserves Mary’s lineage, although this interpretation remains debated (Brown, 1997; McCarter, 1984). Chapter 1, Verses 11-12 of the Gospel of Matthew lists Jeconiah in the genealogy of Jesus, through Joseph. If Joseph was the biological father of Jesus (contrary to Christian belief), then Jesus could not rightfully claim to be the Messiah as the curse of Jeconiah, if true, would apply to Him (Hood, 2011).

Jewish interpreters also point to Jeremiah 22:30, where King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin), a descendant of David, is declared ineligible to have descendants who would rule on the throne of Judah. From this perspective, some

Jewish scholars argue that the Davidic succession had been interrupted, creating a theological difficulty for later messianic claims. Christian theologians, however, have proposed various explanations, including distinctions between legal and biological descent and differing interpretations of the prophetic oracle.

Another point concerns the title “King of the Jews”. Within the canonical Gospels, Jesus rarely describes himself in explicitly political or royal terms. Instead, he most frequently refers to himself as the “Son of Man”. The title “King of the Jews” appears primarily in the context of the Roman trial before Pontius Pilate and in the inscription placed on the cross (The New Testament, 2021, Mark 15:2, 26; John 18:33-37; 19:19-22). Whether this title reflected Jesus’ own claim, the accusations of his opponents, or the political interpretation adopted by the Roman authorities remains a subject of historical discussion.

The apostle Paul profoundly influenced the subsequent theological development of Christianity. Many modern scholars have observed that Pauline theology placed greater emphasis upon the redemptive significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection than did the earliest Palestinian followers of Jesus (Dunn, 2003; Wright, 2013). Consequently, some historians distinguish between the historical Jesus and the later theological interpretation developed within the Pauline tradition, although this distinction remains debated.

Jewish objections also concern the concept of atoning sacrifice. The Hebrew Bible repeatedly condemns human sacrifice, particularly the sacrifice of children (The Torah, 2010, Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 12:31; The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Jeremiah 7:31). For this reason, many Jewish theologians reject the Christian understanding of Jesus’ death as a divinely ordained sacrificial atonement. Christian theology, however, interprets the crucifixion not as an act of human sacrifice imposed by God, but as the voluntary self-offering of Christ for the redemption of humanity (The New Testament, 2021, John 10:17-18; Hebrews 9:11-14).

Another important issue concerns the expected nature of the Messiah. Traditional Judaism generally anticipates a future anointed king who will establish universal peace, gather the dispersed people of Israel, restore justice, and inaugurate the Messianic Age. Since these expectations were not fulfilled during Jesus’ earthly ministry, Rabbinic Judaism concludes that he could not have been the promised Messiah. Christianity responds by distinguishing between Christ’s first coming, associated with redemption, and his anticipated second coming, during which the remaining messianic prophecies will be fulfilled.

An additional theological question concerns the expression “sons of God”. Passages such as Genesis 6:2 and the *Book of Enoch* describe the “sons of God” in relation to human women, although these texts have been interpreted in different ways throughout Jewish and Christian history. Some traditions understand them as angelic beings, whereas others interpret them as descendants of Seth or as symbolic expressions. Consequently, these passages cannot be regarded as direct evidence for Christian doctrines concerning Jesus’ divine sonship, although they demonstrate that the biblical expression “sons of God” existed long before the emergence of Christianity.

From a comparative theological perspective, the figure of Jesus illustrates both the common heritage and the profound doctrinal differences among the Abrahamic religions. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all acknowledge Jesus as an extraordinary historical figure, yet they differ fundamentally concerning his identity, his mission, his relationship to God, and the meaning of his death. These divergent interpretations have shaped religious history for nearly two millennia and remain central to contemporary interfaith dialogue.

Discussion

A detailed discussion of the founders of the Israelite dynasties at the beginning of this work was intended not only to provide theologians and professional historians with the historical background necessary for

interpreting the concluding chapter, but also to enable the general reader to place these events within their broader historical and theological context. The development of the Israelite monarchy and its dynastic succession has influenced not only Jewish history but also the religious and cultural traditions of Christianity and Islam.

The Psalms of David, preserved in the Book of Psalms (Psalter), constitute one of the most influential collections of sacred literature in the Abrahamic traditions and continue to occupy a central place in both public worship and private devotion. Likewise, in Christian practice, the Lord's Prayer remains the most widely recited prayer. Nevertheless, comparatively little attention is often given to the theological question of the One to whom this prayer is ultimately addressed. According to the canonical Gospels, Jesus consistently directs prayer to the Father, whom he identifies as the one true God (The New Testament, 2021, Matthew 6:9; John 17:1-3). Within Christian theology, the Father is therefore understood to be the Creator of all things and the Father of humanity.

From the perspective advanced in the present study, both the Hebrew Bible and the teachings attributed to Jesus emphasize the direct relationship between humanity and God. This interpretation holds that divine judgment belongs exclusively to the Almighty and that no human intermediary possesses independent authority to replace or supersede His will. Such a reading is consistent with numerous biblical passages that emphasize God's unique sovereignty and His exclusive role as the ultimate judge (The Torah, 2010, Deuteronomy 32:39; The Holy Bible, 1769/2010, Isaiah 45:5-7; The New Testament, 2021, Matthew 6:9; John 17:3).

The present study further argues that certain theological developments introduced into Christianity after the lifetime of Jesus, particularly those traditionally associated with the Apostle Paul, merit renewed historical and theological examination in light of the Mosaic covenant and the recorded teachings of Jesus. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus declared: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (The New Testament, 2021, Matthew 5:17). The interpretation of the relationship between the Mosaic Law, the teaching of Jesus, and Pauline theology has remained one of the central subjects of Christian scholarship from antiquity to the present and continues to be debated among historians, biblical scholars, and theologians.

From the perspective developed throughout this work, a re-examination of the earliest Christian traditions and of the original scriptural sources may contribute to a clearer understanding of the historical message attributed to Jesus and of the subsequent theological development of Christianity. Whether such a reassessment could contribute to religious renewal or to expectations concerning the coming of the Messiah remains a matter of theological interpretation rather than historical demonstration.

Conclusion

The present article represents, with minor adaptations, a chapter from Larysa's unpublished manuscript. She was inspired by her meeting and subsequent discussion with former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 2011 concerning the principal themes of her work (Brondz, 2025).

This study has examined the historical and theological development of the Abrahamic tradition and its influence on the evolution of human civilization. Throughout history, scientific, technological, artistic, literary, musical, and social achievements have not developed in isolation but have been shaped by underlying ethical and spiritual traditions. Regardless of the complexity of human history—with its achievements, conflicts, acts of heroism, and episodes of self-sacrifice—these cumulative developments have contributed to the civilization that exists today.

The biblical tradition attributes the origin of one of the most influential ethical systems in human history to the emergence of ancient Israel, a comparatively small kingdom situated at the crossroads of the great civilizations of the ancient Near East. Although surrounded by politically and militarily dominant empires, the religious and ethical principles preserved within the Hebrew Scriptures ultimately exerted an influence that extended far beyond the geographical and political boundaries of ancient Israel. While many of the great empires of antiquity have survived primarily through their archaeological remains, the ethical and theological concepts associated with the Abrahamic tradition have continued to shape religious thought, legal traditions, and moral philosophy across much of the world.

From the perspective developed throughout this study, the Ten Commandments constitute one of the foundational expressions of this ethical tradition. Their influence extends beyond Judaism into Christianity and, indirectly, into Islamic ethical thought, forming an important component of the moral heritage shared by the Abrahamic religions.

The Hebrew Bible concludes God's covenant with Abraham with the following declaration: "And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (The Torah, 2010, Genesis 12:3).

Within the theological framework of the Abrahamic traditions, this passage has long been understood as expressing both the universal significance of Abraham's covenant and the enduring relationship between God and those who remain faithful to it. The interpretation and contemporary significance of this promise continue to be the subject of theological reflection and scholarly discussion.

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In Memoriam

Larysa Karaliova (1961-2025) pursued interdisciplinary studies in pedagogy, linguistics, theology, history, medicine, and political thought. She was fluent in Belarusian, Russian, Ukrainian, French, German, and English, and also studied Hebrew and Arabic to facilitate a deeper understanding of the historical, linguistic, and religious sources relevant to her research.

To broaden her knowledge of the history, languages, and religious traditions of the Holy Land, she travelled to Jerusalem, Israel, where she attended an ulpan for foreign students. During her stay, she visited numerous holy sites (Figure 1) and engaged in discussions with representatives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, thereby gaining first-hand insight into the theological traditions that became central to her later scholarly work.

Larysa Karaliova was acquainted with a number of prominent public figures, including former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Princess Märtha Louise of Norway. She worked in the laboratories of the Norwegian Drug Control and Drug Discovery Institute (NDCDDI) AS, Ski, Norway, and served as Assistant

Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Voice of the Publisher* published by Scientific Research Publishing Inc. In addition to her academic and professional activities, she was an accomplished martial artist, practicing Aikido (Figure 1) (Brondz, 2025).



Figure 1. Larysa Karaliova.

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