

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**FROM DAVID TO SOLOMON, A STUDY OF THRONE SUCCESSION  
DISPUTES: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF I KINGS 1-2**

**BY**

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of Arts, University of Cape Coast in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for award of the Master of Philosophy Degree in Religious Studies.**

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## DECLARATIONS

### Candidate's Declaration

*I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.*

Candidate's Signature ..... Date.....

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### Supervisors' Declaration

*We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the phenomenon of succession problems in ancient Israel during the transfer of power from David to Solomon. The study is an exegetical study and thus focuses on the text I Kings 1-2.

The exegetical method used in the study is the reader-response criticism, specifically the text centred approach. This approach recommends that the reader oscillates within the world of the text and that of the reader. The world of the text is an insight into the historical and sociocultural elements in the narration. The world of the reader is the reader's present contextual make up. The world of the text and the world of the reader merge to produce a meaning through the reader's encounter with the text.

The study shows that ancient Israel at the time of David's last days had not clearly dealt with the issue of the transfer of power and the question of who to succeed David was an open one. Solomon's ascension to the throne epitomizes this problem. Solomon ascended the Davidic throne because he was fortunate to have clever personalities who were able to outsmart the camp of Adonijah to place him on the throne. The study concludes that the phenomenon of throne succession problems during the united monarchy was due to factors such as the rudimentary nature of the procedure for succession, the personality of David and the clash between the old and new political systems.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my dad, J. K. Okyere and mother, Margret Mensah.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis investigates the occurrence of throne succession disputes in ancient Israel. The study uses Solomon's accession to the Davidic throne as a case study to epitomize the recurrent phenomenon of succession dispute during the united monarchy. The case study leads to the text I Kings 1-2 which is the focus of the study. The study is mainly an exegetical work, but historical and sociological approaches will be adopted when necessary in the course of the study. In this chapter, a background to the study is provided. This is followed by the statement of the problem. The significance of the study, objectives of the study, purpose of the study and delimitation of the study follow the statement of the problem respectively. The literature review which demonstrates what scholarship has revealed on the various themes in the topic follows next. The methodology for the exegesis also follows the literature review. Lastly, an insight into the rest of the work is provided in a section which deals with the chapter organisation of the entire study.

#### **Background to the Study**

Political systems are an essential fabric of societies and they play significant roles in the survival and continuity of societies. The study of the

history of Israel by scholars like Martin Noth, Gerhard von Rad, John H. Hayes and John Bright has brought to the fore the transitory processes of the Israelite community in relation to their political system. If the history of Israel is traced from the period of their settlement in Palestine, as Noth (1960) would prefer, we notice a succession of several systems of government. For instance, Noth (1960) was able to identify a system of government among the Israelite tribes which he compared to the Greek system of ‘amphictyony’. In this system, the tribes of Israel were united around a shrine with a similar cultic practice. Roland de Vaux (1961) also concurred with Noth in this identification, though he warned that “the comparison is helpful provided we do not press it too far...” (p. 88). Noth’s identification does not, as E. W. Nicholson (1982) writes, “command the widespread support they once enjoyed” ( p. vi).

The nature of the political system of the Israelites before the adoption of the monarchy is one of the thorny issues one encounters in an attempt to reconstruct the history of the ancient Israelites. Norman K. Gottwald (1979) commented in this respect:

A comprehensive and coherent historical and socioreligious understanding of the people of Israel prior to the united monarchy has yet to be developed. In spite of a wealth of detailed information about Israel in its formative period, the actual course of events and, beyond that, the structural and functional reality of Israelite society, as well as its defining rationale as a radical socioreligious mutation, still elude our grasp. (p. 3).

Many theories have been propounded and various names have been given to the political system of the pre-monarchic era. The amphictyonic theory of Noth, according to A. D. H. Mayes (1977), has failed to stand in the face of the many questions which have been thrown at it. Noth based his theory on certain factors such as the tribal list (a record of the descendants of Jacob) and the availability of a common sanctuary by the tribes (as the story of Joshua suggests). These very pillars on which Noth built his theory are also the very issues which bring about difficulties in his theory. Mayes argued that central to the Greek amphictyony was the presence of a sanctuary which was catered for by all the tribes which constituted the group. Though Noth tried to find such a situation in the Old Testament, this met several challenges because there was lack of evidence in the Old Testament indicating that during the pre-monarchical times a sanctuary united all the tribes of ancient Israel through various cultic activities. The use of the number twelve by Noth was again explained by Mayes as lacking credibility. This is because the number twelve was used more as a symbol than as denoting identifiable twelve tribes.

Noth's theory appears in many forms in the works of other scholars. One of these scholars is John Bright. Bright (1972) described the pre-monarchic political system of the Israelites as a 'tribal league'. By this term, Bright referred to the twelve tribes of the ancient Israelites and how these tribes were united through a common covenant with Yahweh. Thus the uniting thread was the common faith of the people which was nurtured by the central shrine which housed the Ark of the Covenant. Bright argued that this tribal league lacked

formal structures such as a central government and a capital city. Bright's attempt to reconstruct the history of the pre-monarchical political system of the ancient Israelites runs into some difficulty. In the first place, Bright relied much on the account given in the book of Judges and ignored the fact that the biblical accounts are more faith oriented than history. Also the use of the central sanctuary as a basis for his theory runs into the same problem as Noth.

A fair idea of the pre-monarchical political life of the Israelites is given by Hayes and Miller (1986). For these scholars the political system cannot be easily delineated due to the unavailability of enough evidence. The political life of the people was concentrated in the clans and family. The family in those days parallels what today will be called an extended family. A number of families came together to form the clan. The leadership roles of the clans or families fell to the heads of the family and this was attained through social status, wealth and prestige. Thus, the political system was clan or tribal based and there existed some connections or interaction between the various tribes.

The monarchical period in the history of the ancient Israelites is not shrouded in obscurity as the pre-monarchic period. The genesis of the institution of monarchy has to a very large extent been constructed by scholars. The Deuteronomistic history has been the main source for the reconstruction of ancient Israelite monarchic history. In the book of Judges, there is a narrative on Abimelech, a character who tried introducing the institution of monarchy to the Israelites but this turned out to be a failure. The significance of this narrative on Abimelech and his attempt to introduce the institution of monarchy is the insight

gained on earlier attempts in setting up the institution of monarchy among the Israelites which was earlier than what is provided in the book of I Samuel. Considering the story of Abimelech, it can be concluded that ancient Israel had a crude form of the institution of monarchy. Noth (1960) indicated that this adventure of Abimelech was “a prelude to the subsequent formation of a kingdom in Israel” and it is equally significant to see Abimelech as the first Israelite to consider himself as a king (p. 50).

The Abimelech story, again, reveals that the need for a change in the political life of the tribes of Israel was gradually being felt. The demand by the people for Jerubabel (Gideon) to rule over them pointed to this gradual interest in the monarchical form of government. The need for the institution of monarchy could no longer be postponed when the need for the change became apparent. In I Samuel 8:1-22, the elders of Israel approached the Judge, Samuel, for a king. The introduction of the institution of monarchy has been viewed from two angles, the pro-monarchic account (I Sam. 9:1-10:16; 11:1-5) and the anti-monarchic account (I Sam. 10:17-27). According to Albrecht Alt (1966), the development of the institution of monarchy in ancient Israel can be attributed to internal and external factors. The failure of the pre-monarchic order and the threat posed by the Philistines stand out as the two most dominant factors which pushed the Israelites to adopt the monarchical form of government. The need for this transition was because their present political system could not deal with the political and military challenges which confronted them and which threatened the sustenance of the community through their continuous existence. Thus, there was the need for

drastic measures to be taken. This was what led the elders of Israel to request for a king (I Sam.8:5).

The institution of monarchy, in this sense, was an alien form of government adopted by the ancient Israelites considering the nature of the pre-monarchic political system. The transition from the pre-monarchic political system to the monarchic form of government displays the dynamic nature of human beings in responding to environmental threats. Ancient Israelites initiated this change as a natural reaction to the problems they were confronted with. The immediate threat posed by the Philistines and the other city states as pointed above, seemed to have provided the needed push for its adoption. According to Frank Moore Cross (1973), “Evidently the formation of the monarchy was stimulated by the ineffectiveness of the league in withstanding threats from highly organized states, above all the expansive Philistine power, but also the revived Phoenician city- states and the nations beyond Jordan” ( p. 219).

The adoption of the institution of monarchy opened a new chapter in the political history of the Israelites. The dawn of this institution brought in its wake several challenges to the Israelite society. Paramount among these challenges was the question of the mode of succession. Jack Goody (1966) believes that the continuity of society is very much linked to the system of succession which characterises the system of government operative in a society. He asserted that, every society or group which has a political system and seeks continuity has some arrangement for the transmission of power. This is known as the succession process. It is through the political structures such as the system of government

which sees to order within the society. Through the system of government, the maintenance or establishment of social order is attained or aimed at. This means that, government is imperative to the survival of human society. Government has to be perpetual within a society; it has to be consciously instituted and maintained because of its function. One way of gaining this perpetual existence of the system of government in a society is through the mode of succession or the transfer of power. Thus the continuity of the Israelite state was linked to the mode of succession which the new institution, monarchy would operate on.

During the period of the united monarchy, the question of succession was a dominant question which the Israelites struggled with. The transition of power from the first king, Saul, through to David and Solomon was a development which revealed the fragile nature of the infant political system, especially on the question of transfer of power. The transfers of power or the successions which took place during the united monarchy were entangled with tense issues ranging from a conglomeration of factors such as the clash between the pre-monarchic political system and the new system of the institution of monarchy and the fact that the institution of monarchy was a totally new phenomenon among the people. The problems the mode of succession of the institution of monarchy brought to light took many forms and appeared in many ways. The story of Solomon's accession to the Davidic throne reveals the climax of the tensions which surfaced with the inception of the monarchical form of government and hence presents a great opportunity to appreciate the whole difficulty the Israelites faced during these formative periods of the institution of monarchy.

## **Statement of Problem**

Knowledge on the political life of ancient Israelites as preserved in the Hebrew Bible demonstrates that Israel grappled with a number of challenging political issues when it adopted a political system that became the monarchical form of government. One of these was the lack of procedure for accession unto the throne. This study is limited to the succession problems that arose during the transfer of power from David to Solomon. Succession problems were part of the difficulties ancient Israelites encountered when they introduced the institution of monarchy. The study uses the case of Solomon's accession to the Davidic throne as a basis to investigate the underlying causes of succession disputes between Adonijah and Solomon over the throne of David.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this work are:

1. To interpret the text, I Kings 1-2, with the text centred approach of reader-response criticism and through that gain an insight into the transfer of power from David to Solomon.
2. To identify the causes of succession problems during the transfer of power from David to Solomon during.
3. To examine the effects of succession problems.
4. To draw implications for the Ghanaian context.



### **Significance of the Study**

This study will be of help to people who are directly and indirectly involved in biblical studies. Firstly, this work will serve as a useful source of reference for researchers on the potentials of the new methods and how specifically the reader-response criticism can be used.

The study will also inform Old Testament researchers who are involved in reconstructing the history of the ancient Israelites. Specifically, the question of the nature of Israelite kingship and the challenging issue of succession problems will help researchers appreciate the issues at stake and attain a better comprehension of them.

Lastly the study will be a useful material for all who are interested in the story of Solomon's accession to the throne and also contribute to the stock of knowledge, both in literary and historical dimension of biblical scholarship, on the modes of succession process among the ancient Israelites.

### **Purpose of the Study**

A cursory look at the available works in biblical interpretation will reveal the dominant influence of the historical critical method on the available literature on biblical interpretations. The numerous exegetical methods have been loosely grouped under two main categories; the diachronic and the synchronic. For some time now, there has been a protracted debate on the approach which best suits the sacred nature of the biblical texts and also reveals the meaning behind the texts. The historical critical method, from a very humble beginning, has gained such

popularity that it has almost become imperative for every Bible student to gain insight into this composite approach to reading the Bible. The purpose of this study is to use reader-response criticism to interpret 1 Kings 1-2 in order to demonstrate the contribution the synchronic approaches make to the reading of the Bible.

### **Delimitation**

The text for study is delimited to only 1 Kings 1-2. Even though there are other texts which deal with succession narratives (such as 2 Samuel 14-20), 1 Kings 1-2 has been chosen because it presents a complete story which makes it ideal for the research. Again, on the monarchy of ancient Israel, the emphasis of this study is on the united monarchy that is the period from Saul to Solomon. In peculiar instances, other texts may be cited for the purpose of clarification.

### **Literature Review**

The review concentrates on three main ideas which manifest themselves in the chosen topic. The first idea is the succession problems which is an aspect of the wider theme of the institution of kingship in ancient Israel. The second is the methods in Old Testament studies. The third is the text itself and how it has been subjected to different interpretive methods. In this sense, the review below will deal with each idea separately.

## **Kingship in Ancient Israel**

Every society evolves a way it will organize itself politically to ensure its sustenance and ancient Israel is no exception. The institution of monarchy, for instance, was one of the political means ancient Israel realised she could use to achieve her existential goals. In the last century, that is the twentieth century, biblical scholarship witnessed an unprecedented increase in academic attention. The Old Testament which formed the basis of biblical scholarship enjoyed much academic attention in this respect. The study of the Pentateuch dominated Old Testament study prior to the twentieth century, and continued in the early twentieth century: other parts of the Old Testament, with time, begun to attract considerable attention from biblical scholars. The institution of monarchy for instance attracted much academic attention relatively late in the twentieth century. Three prominent scholars, who emanated from the early twentieth century and did consider the subject of monarchy in ancient Israel, though partially, were Alt, von Rad and Noth.

The institution of monarchy, according to Noth (1960) was a timely development which was needed to sustain the existence of the Israelites. Alt (1966) also asserts that Israel's entrance into Palestine was contemporaneous with a group of people known as the Philistines. These Philistines were able to metamorphose into a strong political unit, merging some of their old practices with the just acquired knowledge in Palestine such as iron technology. The Philistines, who were an ambitious seafaring group, found the scattered Israelite tribes as a hindrance to their growth and any slight provocation meant a

confrontation between the two. Thus the continuous threat the Philistines posed to the Israelites prompted the latter to adopt the monarchical form of government. On the subject of succession, according to Noth, the stability of the empire David had couched for himself was dependent on his personality and this was a problem considering the fact that David was not going to be there forever. The problem of succession was, therefore, one of the biggest threats facing the infant monarchy and David himself contributed to the problem by failing to point out who his successor should be. This made his sons fancy their chances of ascending to the throne, though the traditional laws seemed to tilt towards the eldest of the sons. The failure of David to settle on a successor paved the way for the development of succession crisis evident in Absalom's uprising and the clash between Adonijah and Solomon (Noth, 1960).

The discussions of Alt and Noth on the monarchy in Israel and specifically on the succession process can be described as a partial treatment of these subjects. The probable historical development behind the monarchy and the various successions which took place have been presented; but this is short of critical assessment on the whole subject of succession and how this important element of the political life of the Israelites was of critical importance at that stage of the history of the Israelites. Alt's reflections on the question of succession in particular were always in connection with the monarchy itself thus never attaining a separate extensive discussion on its own. For instance the disturbances which cropped up during Absalom's revolt which was an issue of a succession problem and the subsequent election of Solomon by David, only received consideration in

so far as they pointed out the problems the new system, i.e. the institution of monarchy, posed to the political life of the Israelites.

In the book, *A history of Israel*, Bright (1972) attempted to reconstruct the history of ancient Israel with the insight from current archaeological findings. Bright aimed to present the history of the Israelites: this he believed was closely linked to their religion and thus aids in understanding the religion of the Israelites. As part of telling the history of Israel, Bright had to touch on the subject of monarchy and its related issue of succession. On the issue of succession during the reign of David, Bright referred to Absalom's revolt and the court revolt between Adonijah and Solomon. He indicated that these revolts were a clear test case for the fragile monarchy. Though ancient Israel may have succeeded in establishing the monarchy, she had not come up with ways to sustain it especially with respect to the question of succession. It was thus not surprising that the last years of David were characterised by intrigues in the court to get a successor to the throne.

At best, Bright's discussion on the phenomenon of throne succession disputes during the last days of David can be considered as limited and does not bring to fore the comprehensive factors which accounted for the development of the disputes. Bright's concern is to present the history of the Israelites which is closely linked to their religion, and for that reason would help in the understanding of the religion of the Israelites. For this reason, every issue Bright targeted is only important as long as it aided in reconstructing the history of the Israelites. His emphasis on the succession problems was only part of the larger

task of reconstructing the history of the Israelites. Thus several underlying themes on throne succession disputes received only partial treatment. For instance, the issues of the time for succession and the stakeholders involved in the transfer of power were not considered.

Roland de Vaux's work, *Ancient Israel; social institutions*, is one of the many books which surfaced to deal with ancient Israel's institutions which have been overshadowed by Old Testament history. De Vaux (1965) recognized that "the institutions of Israel have usually been studied as part of a large whole" (p. VII). Social institutions, as explained by de Vaux, are the various forms in which the social lives of a people find expression. In this sense, the subject of inheritance and its relation to succession could not be by-passed by de Vaux. According to him ancient Israel had no such thing as a will or a testament but what prevailed was that a father had to "set his house in order" before he died by giving verbal instructions on the distribution of his property, and this had to conform to law and custom (de Vaux, 1965). The basic rule stipulated that only sons had the right to inherit, and the eldest son also had a double portion of the father's property. There were checks to ensure that the eldest son was not by-passed for the son of a favourite wife. Thus the eldest son was of central importance to issues of inheritance and succession.

The brief insight given by de Vaux on the institution of inheritance and succession is very valuable for the study ahead. Though, the information given is more on the system of the inheritance within a family and less of the system of succession within the royal family, it is, nonetheless, very useful since succession

is closely related to the system of inheritance. Also, succession to the throne within royal families was more of an internal family affair especially within the patrilineal societies.

With about three decades to the end of the twentieth century, there emerged a hurricane of works on the Old Testament dealing with every thinkable aspects of the Old Testament. With emphasis on the monarchy and succession issues, some of these books will be examined below. Frank Moore Cross (1973) in his book *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, outlined three issues that in his view have hindered the understanding of Israel's religious development. The conflicting picture created by archaeological findings on ancient Israel, the continual use of old theories and the tendency to stress too much on the uniqueness of Israel were the barriers in the way of progress in Old Testament study. In chapter nine of the book, Cross directed his attention to a critical analysis of the concept of kingship. Following Alt, Cross held the opinion that kingship in ancient Israel was a development which took place due to external factors (the Philistine threat) and internal factors (the ineffectiveness of the tribal league). He pointed out that the establishment of monarchical form of government especially that modelled after Israel's neighbours was however a gradual process which saw its climax in Solomon. For instance the rule of Saul is illustrative of the above point as Saul was given different titles; *Nagid* which Cross interpreted as military 'commander' and *Melek* which meant 'king', on different occasions revealing the uncertainty of the adoption of the new political system, monarchy, in the early stages. Also Saul's

Kingship was rooted in charismatic leadership, as was the office of the Judges. The reign of David saw a step further on consolidating the institution of kingship in Israel. David had two separate agreements with the people of Judah and Israel; he then chose a capital which was neutral to the two states and most importantly forced a connection between the tribal covenant symbolized in the Ark of covenant and the new institution of kingship. The process of consolidating the institution of kingship reached its peak during the reign of Solomon. The manner in which Solomon ascended the throne, in a ruthless suppression of all possible claimants to the throne, revealed his intentions. Clearly, he was out to fashion out for himself an imperial state. His accession to the throne was different from that of Saul and David who had an element of the old charismatic style of election.

The significance of Cross' work lies in his critical examination of the ideologies of kingship in ancient Israel: he gave reasons to explain why dynastic kingship never seemed to have gained roots in the Northern kingdom as opposed to Judah. He also showed how imperial kingship developed in Israel. Cross, however, did not consider the succession process and as such does not provide adequate information into the practice of succession during the united monarchy.

The work of Keith W. Whitelam (1992) in the *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, entitled "King and Kinship" deals with the subject of monarchy in ancient Israel. Whitelam in this paper made an effort to give a deep insight into the institution of kingship in ancient Israel and she did that by touching on several sides of the institution of kingship. Issues such as the definition and nature of



kingship, the formation of the state, royal ideology and the nature of Israelite kinship are examined.

Whitelam worked on the theme regarding the nature of Israelite kingship. According to her, the question of the nature of Israelite kingship continued to remain elusive or unresolved. This is because, there are simply not enough evidence to allow for a conclusive stance on it. In view of this she proposed that we cannot get to know whether Israelite kingship was dynastic, charismatic, elective or absolute, though she admitted that many scholars such as Buccellatie and Ishida claimed “that a dynastic understanding of kinship was a basic feature of ancient Near Eastern including early Israelite kingship” (Whitelam, 1992, p. 46). Whitelam’s assertion on the elusive nature of Israelite kingship stretches the argument to the extreme. She may be right in suggesting that there is not much evidence to take any conclusive stance on the nature of Israelite kingship, especially, in the early period. The accounts given in the Old Testament, however, provide some clues to suggest that the Israelite kingship was dynastic and this is especially true for the kingdom of Judah.

Another illustrative paper on the institution of kingship in ancient Israel is the work by S. Szikszai (1962) with the title; “King, Kingship”. This work appears in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*. Dealing with issues on kingship, Szikszai tackled the subject of hereditary transmission of power of the Israelite kingship and therefore provides valuable information on the succession process in Israel’s monarchy. He explained that Israelite kingship in the initial stages lacked any clearly outlined provisions for transmission of power. The reign

of Saul witnessed tensions between the old system characterised by the charismatic aspects of the office of a Judge and the new system of hereditary principles. Szikszai (1962) also explained the issue of primogeniture, hinting that though the hereditary nature of kingship was recognised, the “right of primogeniture was not always statutorily established in the ancient Near East” (p. 12).

Szikszai’s presentation though not exhaustive, reveals quite a lot on the succession process not only in ancient Israel but in the Near East as well. There was also a hint in the presentation on the influence queenmothers may have wielded in the succession process. Sziskszai does not, however, go further to bring out the various factors which were at play in the succession process apart from the few ones he touched on. This will be the thrust of this study.

### **Methods in the Old Testament Studies**

A review of the various methods used in biblical studies will be undertaken in this section to bring out first, the methods which have dominated in Old Testament studies and secondly to reveal the new methods which are gaining grounds in Old Testament studies.

Literature invites itself to interpretation. Any person who is involved with scriptures is also involved with interpretation. James W. Voelz (1995) stated that “interpretation is key for all people who deal with written text” (p. 13). When individuals interact with scriptures, they bring the scriptures to life in every encounter with it. The act of interpreting scriptures is known as hermeneutics (Osborne, 1991). The word “hermeneutics” is derived from the Greek word

“hermeneia”. This word, according to Raymond E. Brown and Sandra M. Schneiders (1992), creates a problem when one tries to give its English meaning. Osborne also concurred with this difficulty posed by the word “hermeneia”. Brown and Schneiders raised the issue of whether interpretation should be the attempt to concentrate on what an author meant or what the words communicated by the author means to the current hearer. They, again, claimed that the difficulty of the word “hermeneia” stems from the meanings which can be generated from the word. They then proposed that three meanings can be derived from the term: first, the term could mean interpretation by speech. Second, “hermeneia” could refer to the process of translation from one language to another. Third, the term could mean interpretation by commentary and explanation. The problem Brown and Schneiders (1992) seem to bring to the fore is that people have not considered the broad sense of the word and have often concentrated on a single aspect of it. The result of this is that the hermeneutical process falls short of its potentials.

Another term famously used in the interpretive task is “exegesis”. This term, many at times, is confused with the term “hermeneutics”. Exegesis according to Richard N. Soulen (1981), is “the process by which a text as a concrete expression of a ‘sender’ to a ‘receiver’ is systematically explained” (p. 66). Osborne (1991) also explained exegesis as the process of “drawing out of a text what it means” (p. 41). The relationship between hermeneutics and exegesis is that exegesis is the heart of hermeneutics (Osborne, 1991). That is, one does exegesis to achieve the hermeneutical goal. In other words, exegesis provides the

platform for obtaining a meaning of a text and thereby facilitates the hermeneutical goal.

A significant development in biblical studies is the array of methods available to a Bible scholar or an exegete in carrying out the interpretive task. These methods can conveniently be placed under two main categories; diachronic and synchronic (Keegan, 1985). The diachronic methods aim at deriving meaning of texts from their historical progression. On the other hand, the synchronic methods concentrate on the text as finished products and pay no attention to the historical progression of the texts (Keegan, 1985).

The diachronic methods, before the middle of the twentieth century, were the most dominant methods in the world of biblical hermeneutics. This development could find explanation in a conglomeration of factors. The rise of empiricism and the quest for historical explanations behind any phenomenon in the eighteenth century onwards were strong contributory factors to this development (Suelzer & Kselman, 1990). Again, the remarkable achievements chalked by early scholars who appealed to such methods helped the diachronic mode of interpretation gain popularity. In this respect mention can be made of Julius Wellhausen who brought so much understanding to the once hazy Pentateuch. The diachronic process has under its umbrella methods such as; form criticism, textual criticism, source criticism and many others. All these methods come together to form the historical critical method which Keegan (1985) rightly described as a “composite method” (p. 25).

The historical critical method for a long time held the key to understanding the world of the Old Testament and the Hebrew scriptures. As early as the seventeenth century, individuals like Richard Simon and Jean Astruc had identified the inconsistencies in the Pentateuch and proposed solutions to them. They mainly resorted to literary criticism which was likened to source criticism (The Pontifical Bible Commission, 1993). From the Pentateuch, the historical critical method provided valuable insights into every section of the Hebrew Bible. The fear associated with this method, because of its uncompromising attachment to scientific process, was gradually allayed. There were some people who did not feel comfortable in subjecting the Bible to scientific examination but these sentiments faded away when the results of the historical critical method became evident.

The underlying assumption of the historical critical method is that one understands a text best by understanding as much as possible about the person who wrote it and the circumstances which gave rise to it. It puts premium on historical research; not only into the general, social, and intellectual milieu but also into private biographical details. A person using the traditional method of interpretation will want to find out background information before making interpretations of the text. Finding out everything about the author and his setting is imperative because the author, it is believed, is the ultimate authority of meaning. It is the author's message, his thoughts that he is trying to place within the reader's own mind (Osborne, 1991).

By the beginning of the last quarter of the twentieth century, new methods emerged to rival the historical critical method in the interpretive task. Several factors contributed to this development in biblical hermeneutics. According to the Pontifical Bible Commission (1993), the historical critical method could not claim “to be totally sufficient” in the interpretive task (p. 41). Again, there were many people who believed that the historical critical method was much engrossed in the historical value of the biblical texts at the expense of the value of the text to the current users of the text. Another concern several people especially non-Europeans raised, was that the historical critical method provided limited opportunity for readers of the text to allow their personality to reflect in the interpretive task. In this respect, B. A. Ntrel (1990) commented that the new methodologies allowed Africans to be who they are in the interpretive task. He continued that “These methodologies free me to be me (an African) in the interpretive task” (Ntrel, 1990, p. 149).

The synchronic approach surfaced to serve as an alternative and a complement to the historical critical method. Several methods come under the synchronic approach. There are, for instance, structuralism, rhetorical criticism, reader-response criticism, and narrative criticism and all these digress from the concerns of the historical critical method. What these methods have in common is that they consider less the historical progression of a text and concentrate on the text itself with emphasis on “the language, composition, narrative structure and capacity of persuasion” (The Pontifical Bible Commission, 1993, p. 31). The

method to be used in this study is the reader-response criticism. The discussion below will, therefore, dwell on this interpretive method.

Biblical criticism is very much indebted to profane studies; this is so because most of the methodologies used in biblical criticism are borrowed from the profane world (Keegan, 1985). One of the borrowed methods which have become highly celebrated in biblical criticism is literary criticism. Literary criticism has several meanings but, in this usage, it means “any undertaking which attempts to understand biblical literature simply as literature often in a manner paralleling the interest and methods of contemporary literary critics” (Soulen, 1981, p. 113). Osborne (1991) explains that “the current interest in literary criticism in biblical studies was spawned in large part by the failure of form and redaction criticism to interpret the text” (p. 152). Literary criticism considers literature as a work of art. It again lays emphasis on the work of art itself and pays less attention to the processes which lead to the creation of the said art. These philosophies of literary criticism have been borrowed into biblical criticism. As Keegan (1985) asserted;

A highly developed methodology for studying biblical narratives from the perspective of reader involvement has been taken over from secular literary critics and is usually referred to as narrative criticism .... This method, however, has applications to forms of literature other than narratives and is often, even when used to analyze narratives, referred to by the more general name, reader-response criticism. (p. 92).

Reader-response criticism from the above thus can be explained as a method in biblical criticism which considers biblical literature as works of art and gives precedence to the reader in the act of interpretation. Reader-response criticism focuses on the meaning being an outcome of the encounter between the reader and the text. It is a literary approach to the Old Testament. To say this method is a literary approach means, first, that the literary work should be considered for what it is in itself, with less emphasis on the historical circumstances of its composition. Second, the literary work should be considered as a whole and not segmented into smaller parts in the attempt to understand it. Reader-response criticism works on the premise that it is the reader who is the creator, or at least an important contributor to the meaning of a text. This method does not think of meaning as something that the texts have, that is whether put there by an author or somehow existing within the shape and structure of the texts. Instead, reader-response criticism regards meaning as coming into being at the meeting point of text and reader.

Reader-response criticism rather than denoting a specific method or critical practice seems to be a general term that refers to a number of different approaches of modern criticism and literary theory that focuses attention on the responses of readers either individual readers or readers belonging to specific categories, such as class, gender, ethnicity, etc. In this sense, reader-response criticism is an umbrella term which has underneath it various approaches and all the approaches qualify to be branded a reader-response approach based on the fact that they uphold the role of the reader in the interpretive task. E. Freund (1987),



who quotes from Susan Suleiman, wrote that reader-response criticism is “not a single widely trodden path but a multiplicity of crisscrossing, often divergent tracks that cover a vast area of critical landscape whose complexity dismays the brave and confounds the faint of heart” (p. 6). James R. Resseguie (1984) also reported that, “A multiplicity of theoretical orientations are placed under the label reader-response criticism: phenomenological, subjective, transactive, rhetorical and structural, to name a few” (p. 307). L. Tyson (199) also added her voice to the variegated nature of reader-response criticism in the following words:

If you’re getting that impression that reader-response criticism covers a good deal of diverse ground, you’re right. In fact, any time an essay analyses the act of reading or readers’ response, one could classify that essay as reader-response criticism. For example, psychoanalytic criticism, when it investigates the psychological motives for certain kinds of interpretations of a literary text, is also a form of reader-response criticism. Feminist criticism, when it analyzes how patriarchy teaches us to interpret texts in a sexist manner, is also a form of reader-response criticism. Structuralist criticism, when it examines the literary conventions a reader must have consciously or unconsciously internalized in order to be able to read a particular literary text, is also considered a form of reader-response criticism. And lesbian and gay criticism, when it studies how homophobic cultures suppress our ability to see

homoeroticism in literary texts, is also reader-response criticism.  
(pp. 153-4).

The above quotation reveals the reality of reader-response criticism. The emphasis on the reader and the reading process paves the way for any theoretical approach which tilts towards the reader and the reading process to brand itself as reader-response criticism. What this means is that there is no easy categorization of the theories. Indeed, this is the reason why there seem not be a consensus on the number of different approaches in reader-response criticism and their names. Osborne (1991) identified two main types of reader-response approach; the text centred approach and the reader centred approach. Tyson (1999) also organized the approaches under five main topics which she believed are representative of the various shades of theories. They are; transactional reader-response theory, affective stylistics theory, subjective reader-response theory, psychological reader-response theory and social reader-response theory. The approaches of Tyson will be examined below followed by that of Osborne.

Tyson attempted to present comprehensively all the approaches which qualify to come under the umbrella of reader-response criticism, hence her five groupings. She explained that the transactional approach operates on the principle that the reader and the text engage in an exchange (transaction). This approach acknowledges the importance of both the reader and the text in the interpretive task and how the two can mutually work out a meaning. In this sense meaning is not achieved until the readers make a transaction with the text by assimilating and actualizing the text in the light of their own knowledge and experience.

Affective stylistic approach, on the other hand, upholds the subjective tendencies which readers bring into the interpretive task. This approach proposes that the true creation of meaning is the reading experience. The changes which occur in the reader as he/she reads the text are what bring about the meaning of the text. Readers are moved by what the text does to them while they read it. According to Tyson (1999), the emphasis on the reading process demands that “the text is examined closely, often line by line or even word by word, in order to understand *how* (stylistics) *affects* (affective) the reader in the reading process” (p. 160).

Subjective reader-response is again another approach under reader-response criticism according to Tyson. This approach operates on the principle that the object of analysis by the reader is not the text. On the contrary, it is the responses of the reader which become the text to be analyzed. To explain this point further, the responses of readers are symbolic texts which are formed as one reads a text. The writings, that is, the physical words on a paper are merely physical texts which lead one to have a symbolic text as one reads the physical text through the creation of emotions in the reader. The object to be interpreted by the reader is the symbolic text which has been created after the encounter between the reader and the text.

Tyson (1999) again identified an approach which emphasizes the psychological position of the reader. This approach dwells on the unconscious state of the reader and this is because the proponents believe that the neglected world of the reader plays a major role in the process of assigning meanings to a

text. The unconscious world of the reader is a store house for past experiences which come to the fore during present encounters of individuals with a text, though it is many at times unnoticed. The argument here is that the psychological traits which are stored up in the unconscious world are resurrected in the encounter between the reader and the text. This encounter demands that the reader find ways of dealing with these stored up traits which surfaces any time a note strikes in the unconscious world.

The last approach identified by Tyson is the social reader-response theory. This theory proposes that there is no “purely individual subjective response” to a text: on the contrary, the individual subjective responses are part and inseparable from the “interpretive community”. In other words, individuals are part of a larger group who through the systems of culture, have come up with modes of interpreting a text. A reader’s meaning he/she assigns to a text is part of the groups shared values and established ideas which the individual reader finds him/herself unconsciously aligned to. The approach further helps the reader who approaches a text to acknowledge the ideas and perceptions he/she imposes on the text, as meaning is obtained after an interaction with the text as well as having an idea of what his fellow readers in the same interpretive community would do with the text.

Tyson’s explanation on the various approaches within reader-response is exhaustive. She reveals all the possible theories which operate within the ideas and principles of reader-response criticism. Tyson’s work is against the background of offering an insight into the various theories used in literature

appreciation. In this sense her work had a wider scope of exploring the various criticisms used in appreciating any literature. Her focus, hence, was not immediately on the criticisms used in biblical exegesis but criticism used in the appreciation of literature in general.

Osborne (1991) on the other hand worked within the field of biblical hermeneutics and provided an exhaustive explanation on the hermeneutical process in his book *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Approach to Biblical Interpretation*. He worked on the historical critical method and gradually enters into the synchronic approaches. On reader-response criticism, he believed that reader-response theories can be placed under two groups; first, those who “centre more upon the text and maintain links with the formalism of the text-centred New Criticism” and secondly, those who emphasize on the reading strategy and the reader (p. 378). In other words, Osborne placed the theories under two headings; the text centred approach and the reader centred approach. The text centred proponents, for him, operate on the principles that the themes in the text serve as a guide to the reader in the interpretive task. The reader of the text is forced to be involved in the world of the text because of the gaps which are inherent in the text. This interaction between the reader and the text is paramount in the production of meaning. The distinctiveness of this approach is evident in the importance placed on the text which serves as the impetus for the reader in producing the meaning.

The reader centred approach deviates from the above approach on the principle that the reader is the epicentre for the production of meaning. The reader's reading process is the main vehicle for the creation of meaning unlike the text centred approach which has the reading strategy of the reader being a component in the creation of meaning alongside the text. According to Osborne (1991), "the text supplies only potential meanings ... and these are actualized by the readers who select those meanings which fit their interpretive strategies" (p. 378). In this sense it is not the text's intention which produces the meaning but the reader's reading strategy. The experience of the reader as he/she reads the text is crucial in this exercise. This approach acknowledges the multiplicity of meanings that can be assigned to texts; and this emanates because of the multiplicity of reading strategies a reader can adopt.

The above discussion reveals the difficulty a biblical exegete has to go through to arrive at a method he/she thinks will best serve his/her purpose. The researcher finds himself in this situation as a specific approach has to be chosen to undertake the exegesis of the text. And this choice has to be made bearing in mind what the researcher aims to achieve after the exegesis. In view of this, the researcher has chosen to use the text centred approach of reader-response criticism as the theoretical frame work to undertake the exegesis. This choice is influenced by a number of factors. A detailed attention, therefore, will be given to this approach below.

### **Text Centred Approach: Its Presuppositions for the Text**

Reader-response criticism rather than denoting a specific method or critical practice is instead a general term that refers to a number of different approaches of modern criticism and literary theory that focuses on the responses of readers, either individual readers or readers belonging to specific categories, such as class, gender and ethnicity, rather than on the works themselves considered as self-contained entities. It is not a single agreed theory, but a shared concern with a set of problems involving the extent and nature of readers' contribution to the meanings of literary works, approached from various positions including those of structuralism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. The common factor is a shift from the description of texts in terms of their inherent properties to a discussion of the production of meanings within the reading process and the reader involved. Reader response criticism, basically, pays attention to the reader and the reader's actions directed towards a text. Reader-response criticism thus, attempts to describe what happens in the reader's mind while interpreting a work of art. The text centred approach has a lot of theoretical orientations concerning how a reader finds meaning from a text. In this respect, the discussion below will deal with the critical assumptions which underline the text centred approach of reader-response criticism.

The text centred approach sets itself apart from the other approaches such as the reader centred approach in one basic form. It recognizes the central role the text plays in the creation of meaning and thus gives much attention to the text. The proponents of this approach such as Wolfgang Iser, believe that the text

contains the structures which are more of instructions for the reader to aid him/her in finding a meaning to the text. The text controls the reading process of the reader through the structured components of the text and the reader has to comply with the text's inherent rules to locate a meaning. To explain this point further, the text has got its ingredients (plot, characters, dialogue, etc) for the intended dialectical exchange with the reader and these ingredients are consciously prearranged and these prearranged ingredients draws the reader to participate in this dialectical exchange.

There are a number of assumptions or principles which underpin the text centred approach to a text and these critical assumptions will be taken one after the other and explained. One of the critical assumptions of this approach is the contribution of the reader in the creation of meanings. Though the text is an important element for the process of interpretation, the status of the reader in relation to the text is equally important (Resseguie, 1984, p. 308). The concentration on the text places this approach very close to the New Critics with their obsession with objectivity but this approach proposes that the reader is not passive in the act of interpretation but active. The active engagement of the reader emanates from the nature of the text: the text has within it gaps which have to be filled by the reader. The filling of these gaps demands the active participation of the reader. A meaning to a text thus is the concretization of the text after there has been a convergence of the text and a reader. Meaning in effect becomes dependent on a reader and how he/she brings forth a realization of a text after an encounter with it. This does not mean that realization of the text "is a subjective



fabrication of the reader” (Resegue, 1984, p. 308). On the contrary the reader is held in check by the text in its realization.

The second critical assumption of this approach addresses the problem of the potential unlimited meanings readers can assign to a given text. The identity of the reader comes to the fore in this respect. The text centred approach has adopted a hypothetical reader commonly known as the ‘implied reader’ as Iser labels him/her (Tyson, 1999). Theoretically, many readers have been identified as having encounters with the text. There exists the ‘real reader’ who is the identifiable human person who picks a text to read. Beside the real reader, there exists the ‘ideal reader’ who according to Resseguie “is a property of the text, and is so manipulated by the text that the ideal reader can perfectly interpret the meaning of a text ...” (1984 p. 308). The term “ideal reader” according to Keegan (1985), does not enjoy popularity as some people do not resort to that (p. 105). Possibly, this is because the line of distinction between the “ideal reader” and the “implied reader” is thin.

The ‘implied reader’, as Iser posits, is gleaned from the text and this is very significant as it brings about several implications for the exegetical enterprise. According to Resseguie (1984), the implied reader who “is an individual who comes to a text with certain social and cultural norms as well as a degree of literary competence, is able to take the clues or guidelines transmitted in a text and concretize the meaning” (p. 308). Tyson (1999) also says of the ‘implied reader’ as “the reader the text seems to be addressing, whose

characteristics we can deduce by the style in which the text is written and the apparent “attitude” of the narrative toward the reader” (p. 174).

The concept of the ‘implied reader’ is of central importance in this assumption of the text centred approach. The explanation given on the ‘implied reader’ by Tyson and Resseguie portrays that the implied reader oscillates between two worlds; the world of the reader and that of the text. Firstly, the ‘implied reader’ needs to be well versed with the social and cultural world created or embedded in the text; the lack of information or knowledge of the social and cultural world in the text creates a problem. This appears so because the ‘implied reader’ is dependent on these facts. According to this approach, the text presupposes that the implied reader who is being addressed is already in the know of certain facts or information, such as the cultural and social values embedded in the text.

Secondly, in the interpretation of the text, personal experiences come to bare in the production of meaning. This can be explained against the background that the reader, who approaches the text in the position of the implied reader, operates within the socio-cultural milieu of the text and the current personal experiences of the reader. The oscillation between the two worlds by the ‘implied reader’ ensures that the realization of the text reflects the realities of the two worlds. Thus the personal experiences which the reader brings to the text get shaped by the world of the text. Resseguie (1984) better explains this in the

following words; “Although the implied reader is located in the reader’s mind, he is called into being by the text which asks to be read in a particular way” (p. 308).

Another important assumption which is closely related to the above point is the condition to which a reader and a text could share an encounter. The nature of the text centred approach demands that some kind of common grounds have to be attained before the encounter between the reader and the text can take place. According to Resseguie (1984), “the reader can interact with a text only to the extent that conventions are shared by both the text and the reader” (p. 309). Due to the fact that this approach considers the text offering a set of instructions to the reader to aid in producing a meaning, the reader has to comprehend the instructions which are very important for the process. The instructions are what are termed the ‘conventions’; and they are encoded in the socio historical and cultural background of the text in many instances. When a text, for instance has the setting of the Middle Ages, this will demand that the reader has a fair knowledge on the culture of the Middle Ages.

Lastly, another important assumption of this approach is the process of ‘defamiliarizing’ (Resseguie, 1984). The status of the implied reader as explained above demands that the reader shares with the text certain conventions such as the social and cultural background of text. This brings about familiarization since the reader is familiar with the shared conventions. However, communication always entails conveying something new; this means that the familiar conventions are placed into a new territory and this becomes unfamiliar to the reader. Resseguie

explains that there are two main structural components within the text that influence the reader's reaction. "First, a repertoire of familiar literary patterns and recurrent literary themes, together with allusions to familiar social and historical contexts; second, techniques or strategies used to set the familiar against the unfamiliar" (1984 p. 309). The reader in effect is called by the text to deal with the familiar themes which have been placed into new settings or unfamiliar territory and it is through this that the process of defamiliarization takes place. In other words, the reader's knowledge of conventions allows him or her to make sense of the literary text.

### **What the Text Centred Approach is Not**

The text centred approach of reader-response criticism should not be mistaken for or likened to the historical critical method. This caution is important because, the approach is accommodating of historical and sociological value of a text which are central concerns for the historical critical method. The difference between the two approaches that is the text centred approach of reader-response criticism and the historical critical method is the role the reader plays in the production of meaning. Even though the reader might appeal to historical and sociological value of the text in the text centred approach he/she is a key component to the production of meaning. This is absent in the historical critical method where no or limited role is assigned to the reader in the production of meaning.

The researcher believes that the text centred approach will enable him to apply the knowledge of the cultural and sociological set up of the text in the interpretive process. This is crucial because an insight into the history and cultural background of the ancient Israelites will lead to a better comprehension of the throne succession disputes and the factors which underlined it.

### **Exegesis on 1 Kings 1-2**

A review of available literature on the text, 1 Kings 1-2, is needed in this study not only to unearth what scholars have said on this text, but to also, reveal the various exegetical methods which have been used in interpreting the text. The works of J. Mauchline (1967), "I & II Kings", in *the Peake's Commentary on the Bible* and Jerome T. Walsh and Christopher T. Begg (1992), "1-2 Kings", in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, demonstrate how the historical critical approach to explaining a text works and the results which such interpretive approach produces. These works, in providing meaning to the text, did so from a sociological and historical background always placing the meaning of a text in its historical context. The main concern in these writings was to present basic foundational explanations to the text to pave way for further works to be done on them. These works and the many works which took this approach were important for a number of factors. By way of providing the foundational information on the texts, these works gave an exegete a fair idea of what a text meant in its historical context. Again these works, because they dealt with issues like the date and authorship of the biblical books, helped the exegete gain a firm understanding of certain conditions or factors which help one in the production of meaning.

The work of John Gary (1970), *I & II Kings* is worth considering in this respect. Though Gary's work is a commentary, the work goes beyond just a baseline study and gives detail analysis of issues in the area of study. His style is mainly historical in approach and he tries to give the meaning of terms as well as explain the possible historical reasons behind the actions of the individuals in the narrative. On the issue of the succession struggle between Adonijah and Solomon, Gary explained that Adonijah made the wrong move for the throne in such an ambitious state. His pride and foolishness ended him losing the throne and his life altogether. Gary's work is insightful but lacks an appreciation of the text as a narrative. His analysis is verse by verse thus breaking the flow of the narrative. Also, there is no conscious attempt to do a discussion on the problem of succession. Though it is acknowledged, it is not a full issue for discussion in the work.

The work of Simon J. DeVries (1985), "1 Kings", in *Word Biblical Commentary*, provides some insight into the intricacies of both the events and the textual difficulties of 1 Kings. DeVries' approach seems to be quite different from that of Mauchline and Walsh and Begg. Though DeVries was also keen on the historical and sociological background to the text, he also gave great attention to the literary form of the text, paying particular attention to the way the contents of 1 Kings have been arranged. On 1 Kings 1-2, DeVries identifies it as the conclusion to the throne succession narrative. As a narrative, DeVries considered it as a story which has a narrator who creatively weaved the story in that manner. DeVries paid attention to the manner in which the story had been composed such

as the narrator's use of dialogue and narrations. This approach of DeVries, sets his analysis apart from the rest and enables him to delve into the plot to analyze carefully every single element in the narrative. More importantly, DeVries tried to make his interpretations relevant for today's world by drawing many useful lessons for modern readers of the story. What is missing in the work of DeVries which this study aims to address is the involvement of the reader in the interpretive task.

The next work examined is significant in a number of ways: first it is the work of an African, who tries to present an African perspective of the story of Solomon's accession and second the method or approach used is quite distinct. The title of this article is; "From David to Solomon (1 Kings 1-2): An African perspective", written by Ntrel. Ntrel (2004) states unambiguously his reason for contributing to this much studied text, as an attempt "to use findings from anthropology to illuminate the problems involved in the transfer of power from David to Solomon" (p. 62). Since many anthropological findings are on African societies, Ntrel believes a close correlation can be drawn between African practices and many Old Testament practices. What this means is that Africans will be conversant with many Old Testament practices and would not consider them as something strange and difficult to comprehend. For instance, Ntrel was able to draw correlation between Solomon's assassination of Adonijah and what happens among the people of Buganda.

Ntrel's work brings to light the varied ways a text in the Bible can be interpreted. It again reveals the beauty of interpretation as a single text can be

subjected to different methods to bring out a rich variety of meanings. This study aims to use one of the new methods in biblical exegesis to bring to the fore some new insights on the text, thereby affirming the point that the Bible can be studied using different methods to speak to the needs of society.

The last work to be examined is a recent study and its importance is in the synchronic approach to the text. Robert Alter's (1999) *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 & 2 Samuel* is an illustration of his call to a literary approach to the text. Alter in this work first prepared the reader for his theory that the bible is basically literature. On this basis, it should be approached as such. The style of the book is mainly a translation and a commentary on certain issues he considered worth explaining. Though as the title of the work suggest, it is mainly a study of the books of Samuel, Alter ventures into I Kings on the basis that the narrative on David ends in I Kings. In this decision, Alter touches on the narrative on Solomon's accession. The strength in Alter's work is the translation he provides as well as the insightful commentary he provides on certain words and issues. Despite these strengths, the work lacks a deeper appreciation of the genre of the text as a narrative. More importantly, succession issues do not form the fulcrum of the study. It receives attention only when it is necessary.

### **Consensus from the Literature Review**

The literature review above as indicated dealt with three themes which manifested themselves in the topic. After undertaking the review various positions have been taken which are discussed below. First, the theme of succession



disputes as realised in the review above has mainly been part of the wider theme of the institution of kingship in ancient Israel. This has prevented it from receiving an attention on its own which opens the way to consider all the issues which interplayed in the political aspect of the lives of the ancient Israelites. Secondly, it was demonstrated that the historical critical method had dominated in biblical exegesis but new methods have also come up which have endeared themselves to many biblical exegetes. The method to be used in the interpretive task, reader-response criticism, as pointed out has been chosen by the researcher because of the greater involvement the method grants to the researcher in the interpretive task. It was again pointed out that many theories operate within the world of reader-response criticism but the text centred approach as identified by Osborne will be adopted and it will serve as the guide for the researcher. This approach has been chosen because it provides the researcher a flexibility to operate within the world of the text and the experience of the reader to produce a meaning to the chosen text. The researcher believes that this is the best approach in examining the theme of succession dispute within the political system of the ancient Israelites. Lastly, it was revealed from the review on the text that though this text has enjoyed popularity amongst exegetes, the approach adopted by the researcher is also one of the several ways by which the text can be put to use. The importance of adopting the reader-response approach lies in the recognition the synchronic approaches are gaining and the contribution they make in the hermeneutical process. This work, therefore, affirms the positive role the

synchronic approach can play and how it can complement the historical critical method.

### **Methodology**

The text centred approach of Reader-response criticism is the method to be used for the exegesis of the text. There are important elements one considers when using this approach. As Alter (1981) points out, words for instance, are of central importance narratives. They carry within them keys to the meaning of texts. In the first place the biblical writers are not over generous in their usage of words and thus choose only words which are just right for the message. Again, there are particular words which stand out and require special attention. These words, according to Alter (1981), are the 'leitwort' (p. 175). These thematic-key words are repeated in the narration to project certain qualities such as the moral or theological significance of the story. Again, the inclusion and exclusion of certain words should catch the attention of the exegete. This is because biblical writers were mostly laconic in their approach; the mention of certain lexical items especially in a descriptive function is of great importance.

Actions, according to Alter (1981) and Shimon Bar Efrat (1989), are giving significant meanings through their recurrence, parallels and analogy. The beauty of biblical narratives manifest itself through the skilful use of the above literary devices as they reveal how actions complement and served as a network of connections as well as provide commentary on other actions. Recurrence of same events constitute the type-scenes and these type-scenes are revelatory as they

reveal the difference between events as well as their relationship in helping bring about better comprehension of the story.

Dialogue is an essential element in biblical narrative. Alter believes that the importance of dialogue in the creation of meaning is underpinned by the fact that speech for the ancient Hebrew writers was the medium through which humans displayed their divine consciousness. This explains why when a message has been conveyed through narration in the story, the narrator does not hesitate to repeat the message in a direct speech in another instance. Alter (1981) says;

As a rule, when a narrative event in the Bible seems important, the writer will render it mainly through dialogue, so the transitions from narration to dialogue provide in themselves some implicit measure of what is deemed essential, what is conceived to be ancillary or secondary to the main action. (p. 181).

Again, questions should be posed on the use of the dialogue. For instance, when was dialogue introduced into the narration, why was dialogue used at that juncture, which characters are made to engage in dialogue among others. Answers to these questions will definitely help the exegete discover some of the obscure meanings in the text. Alter (1981) also draws attention to the repetition of sentences and sometimes whole units. He points out that minute differences exist within these repetitions which throw more light on the characters involved in the events.

Lastly, narration emerges as the last rubric to be considered by the narrative critic. The fundamental importance of narration is seen in the manner in

which the story is told. In other words the point of view of the narrator is critical for consideration. The omniscience style of narration, Alter observes, is the most prevalent. Here, the knowledge of the narrator is unlimited as he can delve into a character's hidden thought and feelings and make them available to the reader. On other occasions, the narrator displays reticence, and this also should hint the reader of the reason behind the refusal of the narrator to comment. The importance of these elements is how they will guide the researcher or exegete in the analysis of the text.

In the story of Solomon's accession to the Davidic throne, many scholars such as Leonhard Rost believed that we are dealing with history (Drane, 1987, p. 94). Though there cannot be much rejection of the suggestion that the story is a showcase of recorded history, it is also clear that the story was told to achieve a purpose. This is more so as the story appears in a religious or faith document. What this means is that there are various values, intentions and visions which underline the telling of the story. The task, hence, is to unravel these obscure values and visions which lie beneath the story. This is why the text centred approach of reader-response criticism is useful since it demonstrates the deeper meanings which lie beneath the narrative.

### **Organisation of Work**

The study is organised along five chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction. This includes a background to the study, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study and purpose of the study. Also the

delimitation of the study and the review of literature forms part of this first chapter and they are followed by the methodology for the exegesis of the text.

The second chapter deals with the concept of inheritance and succession in ancient Israel. The aim of this chapter is to put the issue of the problem of succession in ancient Israel into perspective by exploring the modes of inheritance and succession in the pre-monarchic period and the monarchic period during the united monarchy. This is to prepare the grounds for the next chapter which focuses on the case study to demonstrate the prominence of this difficulty in the early years of the monarchy in Israel.

The third chapter brings to fore the interpretation of the text. First, the pericope of the text is delineated. The structure of the text is also provided after which the exegesis of the first chapter of the Book of Kings is done.

The fourth chapter continues the exegesis with emphasis on the second chapter of the Book of Kings.

The fifth chapter draws implication from the exegesis for the Ghanaian community. It also ends the study with a summary of the study and the conclusion.

## **Summary**

The chapter set out with an introduction to the study which dealt with the imperative need of societies in instituting political systems and ensuring that these political systems attained continuity. One way of achieving continuity was through the system of succession. The research problem dealt with the need to

explore confidently the new methods and utilize them in bringing about an understanding of biblical texts. It also dealt with the need to investigate thoroughly the problem of throne succession disputes in ancient Israel. The task was how reader-response criticism specifically the text centred approach could help explain the issue of throne succession dispute during the latter reign of King David. The next chapter to follow focuses on the concept of inheritance and succession in the ancient Israelite society in the pre-monarchic times and the early monarchical era. This is to put into perspective the issues of the difficulty the Israelite society battled with the problem of succession.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**THE PRACTICE OF SUCCESSION/INHERITANCE IN ANCIENT**  
**ISRAEL: PRE-MONARCHIC AND MONARCHIC TIMES**

**Introduction**

In chapter one, the study was put into perspective when the statement of the problem, the review of literature and the methodology to be used were stated. This chapter focuses on the central theme of the study that is the question of succession and its nature in the pre-monarchical and early monarchical times of the Israelites. The importance of this chapter is seen in the preparatory role it serves for the exegesis of the text. The question of the transfer of power and the problems it brought were not only prominent during the accession of Solomon to the Davidic throne. This difficulty existed before the accession of Solomon and thus it would be appropriate to provide the antecedents of Solomon's accession to fully appreciate the enormity of the problem of succession in the Israelite society, especially in the early period of the monarchical system. In effect, this chapter deals with issues such as;

- The nature of the system of inheritance and succession in the Israelite society before the institution of monarchy and after the adoption of this institution.

- The effects the change of political system had on the process of the transfer of power
- The underlying factors such as the time for succession and personalities involved in the process of succession and how they impacted on the process of the transfer of power.

It has to be pointed out that the discussion within the monarchical times will be limited to the period of the united monarchy. Also discussions on Solomon's accession will not be exhaustive because this will be carried out in the next chapter during the exegesis of the text.

### **The Concept of Succession and Inheritance in Ancient Israel**

The basic drive for human actions and thoughts and indeed their total life on earth is the quest or desire to survive. Throughout the years, humans have had to conform, adjust and adapt to situations in order to guarantee their continuous existence. The extinction of the human race is thus a great fear and threat which has to be combated in any way possible. Ancient Israel like any other society displayed this quest for survival through the changes which characterized their political systems. The transition from the tribal confederacy to the institution of monarchy displays the attempts of the Israelites to adopt new institutions which they believed would secure their survival.

According to Alt (1930), the development of the institution of monarchy in ancient Israel can be attributed to internal and external factors. The failure of the tribal league and the threat posed by the Philistines stand out as the two most



dominant factors which pushed the Israelites to adopt the monarchical form of government. The need for this transition was because their present political system could not deal with the political and military challenges which confronted them and threatened the sustenance of the community. Thus, there was the need for drastic measures to be taken. This was what led the elders of Israel to request for a king (I Sam.8:5).

The institution of monarchy to the ancient Israelites was thus the remedy to the political and military challenges which threatened their existence as a group. If the institution of monarchy was the solution to the problems of ancient Israel, there was the need to ensure that this political system was sustained within the society. One way which this need for continuity of the new political system could be achieved was through the internal mechanism of the transfer of power or the succession process. The element of succession is integral to every political system. Sustenance and continuity of a political system depends, to a large extent, on the concept of succession inherent within the political system. The relationship between political systems and the concept and process of succession is that the succession process ensures the continuity of the political system of government. This relationship is important to any society. Goody (1966) asserts that every society or group which has a political system and seeks continuity has some arrangement for the transmission of power. This is known as the succession process.

This section of the chapter aims to investigate the beliefs and practices of ancient Israel on the concept of succession and inheritance before the adoption of

the monarchy. This is deemed important because the beliefs or traditions and customs on succession and inheritance before the adoption of the monarchy will influence the succession process when the monarchy was instituted. The assumption here is that pre-monarchic customs and traditions will have an influence on early practices in the monarchical period. Traditions and customs die hard and these traditions and customs have a way of merging with new elements when introduced into the society.

### **Succession and Inheritance before the Institution of Monarchy**

The words succession and inheritance are often used interchangeably though to some people each denotes quite a different idea. As Goody points out English lawyers do not distinguish between the two words. For Goody (1966), inheritance deals with the transfer of property while succession pertains to transfer of office. In other words he assigns succession to the realm of politics and inheritance to only the transfer of property. Succession and inheritance, though different, appear to share a lot of common concepts such as both dealing with a transfer or exchange, either of an office or a property. This appears to be so among ancient societies especially when dealing with political offices in these societies since they are to a large extent seen as properties in some cases for particular families or lineages.

The Old Testament is the main source of information for ancient Israel's institution of inheritance. There is not much information to provide an in depth description of ancient Israel's customs and traditions on inheritance. There were

indications of certain customs or practices of inheritance which are insufficient to provide complete understanding on the subject. Inheritance was an important institution in ancient Israel because of its tendency to ensure social harmony. There were laws to control the transfer of office or property. For reasons which are not clear, certain classes of persons in the community were singled out for special attention with respect to the custom of inheritance. These classes of people included the sons of a slave girl or concubine, first born sons, daughters and the widows (Baab, 1962). De Vaux (1965) reported that only two legislative texts talk about inheritance in the Old Testament and they are Deut. 21:15-17 and Nb. 27:1-11 which is linked to Nb. 38:6-9. He explains further that there was nothing as a will or testament in ancient Israel. Instead what pertained was that a dying father had to “set his house in order” before his death. This meant that a dying father had to give verbal instructions on how his property was to be shared or divided. These instructions had to conform to the law or custom. One could consider such an utterance from the father as an oral will, and this would not be wrong.

The fundamental rule, as M. Burrows (1962) and de Vaux have observed, was that sons were the main subjects and recipients of properties. Since ancient Israelite society was patrilineal, sons were held in high esteem as they held the key to continuity of the family. Inheritance was very much centred on sons: not all sons, however, were given equal position in relation to the sharing of the property. The law made the first born the beneficiary of a greater share of the property. The first male child in reality succeeded the father in order to control the family property (Burrow, 1962). The right of the first son is what is known as the

right of primogeniture. This right was emphasized in the law code. The other sons also had a share of the property but they were not given as much as that of the eldest son (Dt. 21: 15 - 17).

The diverse or varying composition of families necessitated that inheritance guidelines be outlined to cater for families who had peculiar situations. Thus a couple that had no sons but daughters could have their daughters inherit their property. However, there was a condition attached to this system which was that the inherited daughter had to find a husband in the father's family. Another situation was when a couple remained childless till the man died. De Vaux (1965) explains that in Israel when a situation like this came up, the childless widow either went back to her father or remained a member of her husband's family through levirate marriage. On the other hand, if a widow had children she could hold the property in trust for her children till the children became of age.

The above discussion reveals that the ancient Israelite society had laws to monitor the transfer of properties. The whole concept and practice of inheritance was tied in with the family and property and the relationship between the two elements. Properties had to remain in the family: that is the line of the father. Also, the fact that ancient Israelite society was patrilineal also impacted their mode of inheritance. These factors- family, property and the relationship between them as well as the patrilineal nature of the society- made males (sons and paternal uncles) dominate in matters of inheritance as the laws were tilted in their favor.

On the practice of succession in ancient Israel before the institution of monarchy, the Old Testament does not provide a clear picture. Just like the practice of inheritance, only few passages give insight into the modes of succession within various offices in the ancient Israelite society. Three main institutions within the Israelite community which could portray the practice of succession are the family or clan, the religious institution of priesthood and the political office of the head of the society. An attempt will be made below to examine the modes of succession within these institutions to help capture the beliefs and customs of succession in the pre-monarchical times.

The family was the basic unit of the society. The Israelite family was of the patriarchal type: the father exercised authority. Even though the Israelite family is patriarchal in nature, de Vaux (1965) indicates that there are traces of fratriachate and matriarchate family types in the Old Testament. However, these instances do not overshadow the general consensus that Israelite family was a patriarchal type. A family was made up of the father or husband, the wife, children as well as wives and husbands of the children. Burrow (1962) points out that family in ancient Israel “included not only a man with his wives and unmarried children but also his married sons and their wives and children and also the slaves with their wives and children” (p. 134). In ancient Israel, to raise a family could also mean to build a ‘house’ (the word ‘house’ here refers to people of the same decent). Families come together to form a clan (de Vaux, 1965). The clan consisted of people who are linked by blood and common dwelling place. The families within the clan called each other brothers because of their strong

recognition of blood ties. A number of clans and families come together to form a tribe (Burrows, 1962). Concerning the internal organization of the clan or tribe, each family was headed by the husband or father. Each clan was ruled by heads of the families, whom de Vaux calls elders. Lastly the tribes were headed by leaders called 'Nasi'. The word 'Nasi' was the name given to the leaders of the twelve tribes (cf Nb.7:2). In some cases, they are referred to as the "chiefs of their fathers' house, the leaders of the tribe" (cf Nb.1:16).

The Old Testament does not reveal much information to determine the modes of succession for the above offices of leadership within the family and clan. It can be suggested that because the society was dominantly patriarchal only males could ascend the position of leadership of the family, clan and tribe. Again, there was also the possibility that this leadership position would be in favour of the eldest surviving male. De Vaux (1965) uses the case of the Arabs to explain what possibly pertained in ancient Israel. He explains that the Arabs had what they called Sheikhs who were the governors of the tribes. When it became necessary to find a successor to the sheikh position, many factors were considered beside the issue of age. De Vaux (1965) writes "This authority generally stays in the same family, but does not always pass to the eldest son, for the Arabs set great store by personality and character and expect their sheikh to be prudent, courageous, noble hearted ... and rich" (p. 8).

All the above suggestions are attempts to reveal the process of succession in social institutions or leadership offices of the family, the clan and the tribe within the ancient Israelite society. The Old Testament does not give much detail

to merit a detailed discussion on this subject. For this reason, the above revelations on the modes of succession in ancient Israel before the institution of monarchy remain suggestions and can be proved only after they are tested perhaps by anthropological evidence. The arguments cannot be stretched any further.

On the office of priesthood, de Vaux (1965) asserts that this office was not instituted in ancient Israel until the period when “the social organization of the community had developed considerably” (p. 345). The priestly office in ancient Israel was hereditary: thus fathers had to teach their sons the profession. In the Old Testament, especially in the early traditions, sons of priests automatically became priests. An example can be seen in the case of Eli the priest at Shiloh and his two sons (cf I Sam.2:12ff). What is not clear in this automatic assumption of the father’s office by the sons is the hierarchy of the authority. On the death of the father, who among the sons took the position of the father, as not only the leader of the family, but most importantly as the head priest of the family? The patriarchal nature of the society does not, and cannot, lead one to readily conclude that the eldest son held that position though this seems to be the only option left for one to take.

Finally the political composition of ancient Israel in the pre-monarchical times comes to the fore in this attempt to find traces of modes of succession in use then. Mayes (1977) raises an important issue with respect to the nature of ancient Israel before the institution of monarchy. He points out that it is difficult to consider the Israel painted in the period of the Judges as the same Israel portrayed in the Former Prophets of the Hebrew Bible. This is because Israel as a single

unified society occurred after the institution of monarchy. It was only once during the period of the Judges that was it recorded that more than two tribes united in a battle against a common enemy. The difficulty here is: what was the political composition of ancient Israel during the period of the Judges? The assumption is that the political system used during the period of the Judges will provide a key to uncovering the mode of successions used then.

Noth (1960), in answering the political organization of ancient Israel before the monarchy, proposed the concept of amphictyony. He explains that the tribes of Israel were united around a sanctuary. It was the sanctuary which served as the unifying factor for the tribes. This theory has been rejected because of the many loopholes it contains. For instance Mayes (1977) questions Noth's reliability on the number twelve which forms the basis for the theory. At best the general assumption among scholars is that there existed some form of a tribal confederacy. In this sense the tribes of ancient Israel were loosely bonded together and the unity of this confederation was their belief in common kinship ties and the faith they professed (de Vaux, 1965). The insight provided by the books of Joshua and Judges is limited to make meaningful conclusions on the political organization of the ancient Israelites. Mayes (1977) indicates that not much can be attained in terms of historical knowledge on the life of Israel before the monarchy.



## **Succession during the United Monarchy**

There is a difficulty in determining the exact political system practiced by ancient Israelites in the pre-monarchical period. This prevents one from making conclusive remarks on the process and mode of succession at that period. The reason for this is that succession processes are always part of a political system: the two elements go hand in hand. The adoption of the institution of monarchy by the Israelites marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of ancient Israel. Monarchy was an alien institution to the Israelites and their only knowledge of this institution was based on the fact that their neighbours practiced this kind of political system. Indeed, it was because they realized the effectiveness of this institution among their neighbours which motivated the elders of the people to consider the possibility of adopting it. In their request for a king, the elders said “appoint for us a king to govern us like the nations” (I Sam.8:5). Monarchy was considered by the elders of Israel as the remedy to their problems. The monarchy of ancient Israel in effect was to be modelled on the lines of her neighbours.

One basic problem the ancient Israelites were bound to face with respect to their new institution was the issue of the succession process. As indicated earlier, the transfer of office is critical to a political system because it ensured the continuity of that system. Thus if ancient Israel was to ensure the continuous existence of the institution of monarchy, they had to give serious considerations to the mode of succession process this institution will adopt. The question to ask then is: to what extent was the succession process used in the new political system influenced by the social customs and traditions of the people? On the other hand,

it is easy to assume that the succession process of the new political system would be similar to the neighbours of Israel. The elders of Israel made it clear that they wanted a king who would rule them like the other nations. This meant that Israel's monarchy as indicated above would have a lot in common with her neighbours and the succession process would not be an exception. This possibility is equally important and worth considering. There were two possibilities: first, were they to adopt the succession process used by their neighbours? Or alternatively, they were to continue the system of succession practiced during the pre-monarchic times?

The examination of the succession process during the united monarchy will be divided into two sections. The first part will deal with the first three kings of the united monarchy: Saul, Ishbaal and David. This will be followed by the second section which will deal with David to Solomon to Rehoboam. Though Rehoboam did not rule a united kingdom, he will be considered in this analysis. It has to be pointed out that the discussion on Solomon will not be exhaustive on the various issues which will come up and this is because he forms the central figure in the next two chapters.

### **Transfer of Power (Saul – Ishbaal – David)**

Saul is the first king of the united monarchy. Even though Saul's premier position is upheld by scholars, it is equally known that the exact nature of Saul's position as a king has been a major concern for scholars. The nature of Saul's kingship is important in understanding the succession process which took place after his death. Many scholars have pointed out the close affinity between Saul's

kingship and the charismatic leadership which existed before the monarchy. Cross (1973), for instance, reveals that Saul's kingship "was rooted in charismatic leadership as was the office of 'Judge' and must be sharply differentiated from the later routinized or dynastic kingship of David and Solomon" (p. 219). Mayes concurs with Cross in this assertion. Mayes (1977), in his discussions on the rise of monarchy, explains that Saul's election was more inclined towards a military role and the activities of Saul during his reign confirm the nature of his office. Saul was constantly in battle with the enemies of Israel particularly the Philistines which led to his death. H. Jagersma (1983) also believes that Saul's position was more as a military commander and less as a king. This picture about Saul can be deduced from the lack of two operative elements during his reign: organisation structure of the state and the structures of diplomacy. There is no evidence in the Old Testament to illustrate that Saul had a comprehensive administrative system in place. As Jagersma (1983) points out "...we hear nothing of the institution of an effective government by Saul" (p. 93).

Despite these shadows which cast doubts on Saul's position as the first king of Israel, there is no reason for one to doubt the designation of Saul as the first king. The rudimentary form of the monarchy which existed under Saul can best be explained as the result of the pioneer position Saul found himself in. The institution of monarchy was an alien institution which had been planted into the Israelite society. There was the need for patience to enable this novel institution fit into the Israelite society. Equally important was the strong continuous influence of the pre-monarchic elements such as the independence of the tribes.

The transition from tribal confederacy to the institution of monarchy cannot easily erase the age long traditions of the people. This explains why Saul's leadership was so much grounded in charismatic style.

It can be gleaned from the above discussion that though the institution of monarchy begun with Saul's reign, it was still in its rudimentary form. The important question to pose is how this office of Saul was to be transferred to another person in his absence. Saul's kingship was strongly rooted in the charismatic aspects of the office of a Judge. This means the office was dependent on a special divine appointment as to who will be king. The charismatic principle of succession was, therefore, an issue to consider during Saul's reign. Besides this charismatic principle, there was also the hereditary or dynastic principle of the ancient Near East type of succession found within the monarchical form of political system which Israel's monarchy was modelled after.

The transition from Saul to Ishbaal then to David was an event which saw the clash of the above principles operative in Israel's early monarchy. In the first place, Saul died an unexpected death when fighting with the Philistines. This incident opened wide the issue of succession. Who was to come after Saul in the office of the king? This question was not easy to answer. The events recorded in the Old Testament reveal that there were some people in Israel that believed in the dynastic principle inherent in the monarchy while others still clung to the old system of charismatic leadership. The pro-dynastic elements were mainly the followers of Saul who wanted to see Saul's progeny on the throne. In II Sam.2:9, it is reported that the Israelites or Northern tribes were content with Saul's son

succeeding him. Ishbaal's accession in this sense contrasts the charismatic mode of succession. Ishbaal never displayed any military prowess and he was not anointed as a *ḏgīn*; (leader of the people). Again, an important element missing in his accession is the acclamation of the people. This acclamation could probably be inferred from the text II Sam. 2:9-10.

Ishbaal in effect became king over Israel because he was Saul's son. His accession took place after Saul's death. Abner played an important role in Ishbaal's accession. It is reported that he made Ishbaal king (II Sam2:8-9). It is unclear why Abner acted in this manner. Abner, Saul's commander in chief and the cousin of Saul probably wanted to have a kinsman continue the leadership role his cousin was playing. It could also be suggested that Abner wanted to rule through Ishbaal since he was going to be the premier counsellor and the main military power behind Ishbaal.

The charismatic elements were seen among the southerners typified in Judah during the death of Saul. As Cross (1973) affirms, "David came to power as a charismatic leader ..." (p. 229). As a charismatic leader, David displayed, in many ways, his capability to lead his people against their enemies. David became an enemy of Saul because of his successes in military expeditions which endeared him to the women who sang his praises (I Sam.18:7). David again had a private militia which he used for his private adventures. When Saul died, the tribe of Judah approached David and made him king over them (II Sam.2:4). The kingdom thus became governed by two kings in the early part of post Saul's era: one in the south – David and the other in the north – Ishbaal. A misunderstanding

ensued between Abner and Ishbaal when the latter accused the former of trying to usurp the throne (II Sam.3:7). This made Abner, decide to help David gain the northern part of Israel (II Sam.3:12). The death of Ishbaal and Abner who were assassinated pushed the northern tribes to appoint David as their leader in a separate covenant.

The death of Saul, in effect, revealed the unsolved question of succession. Different groups and individuals chose either the dynastic principle or charismatic principle based on their interests. It is easy to appreciate why these two principles were still operative in Israel. The ancient Israelites in their history have been conversant with the charismatic principle of leadership. The pre-monarchic times have been littered with numerous charismatic successions within the society as seen in the period of the Judges. It is the individual who showed military prowess and had the charisma of Yahweh upon him who had claim to be a leader. This tradition was indeed entrenched within the society and would take quite some time to diffuse away. The emergence of the monarchy on the other hand, brought its own conventions of dynastic tendencies for succession. The transfer of power from Saul to Ishbaal then to David displayed the clash of these principles and the changes and compromise which took place. The issue was still an open and unsolved one.

### **Transfer of Power (David - Solomon - Rehoboam)**

The reign of David saw many changes in the society with the political life of the ancient Israelites. He undertook several measures which brought out fully

the force of the new political system. David for instance chose Jerusalem, a neutral city, and made it his capital. He did not only make Jerusalem a secular capital, but also, deliberately established it as the central sanctuary for the state. Thus he sought the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of the tribal covenant, and established it in Jerusalem. David again was clever to bring about a good administration of the state. He created offices and appointed officials to fill the positions (Mayes, 1977). In short, as Jagersma (1883) points out, David succeeded in modelling the state on the form after the Egyptians or Canaanite mode. David was able to blend the old traditions and new practices to create a state which fulfilled what the elders of Israel envisaged when they requested for a king from Samuel. As Cross (1973) explains, “David moved slowly in the matter of innovation and stressed continuities between his kingship and the constitution or covenant of the league” (p. 232).

The general effect of David’s ingenuity which were not realised under Saul was that the well being of the state was very much invested in his personality (Bright, 1972). The important question which needed to be addressed was the question of succession. How was this office of the king to be transferred to a successor in the absence of David? Many scholars believe that the issue of succession was never a priority for David and indeed David himself portrayed that in the succession narrative (II Sam.9-20 and I Kings1-2). There were still elements of pro-charismatic principles and pro-dynastic principles during David’s reign. Bright (1972) pointed out that the charismatic leadership had not yet been overcome. Also many people in Israel saw the continuity of the state in David’s

sons succeeding him because of the personal nature of the state David had created.

Scholars like Jagersma and DeVries believe that the famous succession narrative provide some insight into the last days of David's reign and the problems he faced on succession. The succession narrative reveals the unsolved and lingering problem of the definite mode of succession ancient Israel should make operative within their new political system. The revolt of Absalom brought to light the haphazard manner a claimant could attempt ascending the throne. Absalom, capitalising on the failures of his father and the grievances some of the subjects had against the father, coerced such section of the society in supporting him to attain the throne by ousting his father. This attempt of Absalom could be viewed as a charismatic attempt to seize the throne because of the force he employed and which caught the attention of some of the people. Unfortunately his plan did not materialise but his attempts nevertheless epitomize the succession challenges the infant political system faced. The most significant revolt within the succession narrative was the palace intrigue between the camps of Adonijah and Solomon, in their struggle for the throne. The fact that the competing rivals to the Davidic throne were only the sons of David suggests that the dynastic principle to some extent displaced the charismatic principle during the death of David. This did not, however, entirely solve the problem of succession. The dynastic principle promoted the right of primogeniture but as Solomon's accession portrays, this was not so. Adonijah the eldest surviving son of David attempted succeeding his father when he realised that David had become inactive. His plans were foiled by



his brother Solomon and his camp who managed to convince the ailing king to nominate Solomon as his successor.

The challenge which came up during the succession of David was not whether the charismatic or dynastic principle was to be used, but rather it was the nature of dynastic principle to be used. The question was that; did the right of the first born apply to the dynastic mode of succession? One can point out the answer Solomon gave to his mother when she came with the request of Adonijah to Solomon (I Kings 2:22). Solomon recognised the elderly position of Adonijah and seemed to point out that Adonijah under normal circumstances should have been on the throne. Adonijah himself expressed this when he told Bathsheba that he should have occupied the throne had it not been through the bizarre happening which appeared to have the consent of God (I Kings 2:15). In effect, the dynastic mode of succession did recognise the right of the eldest surviving son but the question is that was it adhered to always? Szikszai (1962) discloses that the right of primogeniture was not always statutorily established in ancient Near East. He gives examples of deviation from the right of primogeniture in the Hittite, Assyria and Achaean empires. This observation could be said for ancient Israel as well. This non compliance to the right of primogeniture was what happened in Solomon's accession. It can be argued that the brutal killings which Solomon undertook after his accession to the throne were because of the insecurity he felt concerning his accession. Since he ascended the throne through an unpopular way, he had to remove the possible claimants and those who supported them to

secure his accession. This issue will be considered in detail in the next two chapters to follow.

The death of Solomon, again, raised the problem of succession in ancient Israel. In the accounts given in the book of Kings, it is recorded that after Solomon died Rehoboam reigned in his stead (I Kings 11). This information appears contrary to the events recorded in I Kings 12. Rehoboam is said to have journeyed to Shechem to have himself proclaimed as king. In Judah, it appears Rehoboam automatically ascended his father, Solomon's throne (Jagersma, 1983). He needed, in this situation, to present himself in the North in order to receive from them their own acclamation and to renew the personal union (Herbert Donner, 1977). Rehoboam's foolishness and inability to reason well led to the secession of the northern tribes from the union.

These developments reveal that for the tribe of Judah, the dynastic idea dominated and they regarded the succession of Solomon's son, David's grandson as legitimate. They did not require any pre-conditions; it was a foregone conclusion (Donner, 1977). Alt suggests that the charismatic tendencies were still inherent in the northern tribes and this, partly, accounted for their break away from the union. This could be a remote reason for the breakaway but as the event recorded depicts, the concern of the people was on the harsh treatment meted out to the northern tribes which, in reality, started in David's time and gained momentum during Solomon's reign.

The successions which took place under the united monarchy were inconsistent. There was Ishbaal's succeeding Saul in the dynastic mode, David

ascending the throne on charismatic principles, Solomon succeeding David through dynastic principles and Rehoboam succeeding Solomon on dynastic principles in Judah but not in Israel. On the dynastic level, it is again realised that though the right of the primogeniture was recognised it did not determine automatically who ascended the throne. These inconsistencies suggest the continuous tension which existed between the old elements (charismatic leadership) and the new elements (monarchy) in the society and the inability of the people of ancient Israel to blend the two in relation to the system of the transfer of office.

### **Solomon's Accession and the Causes of Disputes**

The institution of monarchy was an alien political system which was introduced into the ancient Israelite society to aid them deal with their military and political challenges. As an alien institution, it had to struggle in its early times to fit into the structure of ancient Israel's society. Alt (1952) points out the difficulty of the institution of monarchy in integrating into the traditional systems of the Israelite society in the following words;

The monarchy was not, as is well known, part of the basic structure of the Israelite nation, nor did it succeed at a later period in attaining a permanent position as such, although it was the form of government under which the nation lived for centuries, and which had a decisive effect on its destiny. (p. 241).

This assertion of Alt brings to light the tensions which continued to exist between the new system of monarchy and the old system of tribal confederacy. These tensions could be seen in the relative freedom the tribal league assured the Israelites as opposed to the restrictions the monarchy imposed. Again, the tensions could be seen in the charismatic style of leadership which had Yahweh's endorsement as opposed to the dynastic imperialism. For instance as Alt (1952) suggests, the Northern Kingdom never really eliminated the charismatic leadership but blended it with the monarchy to become what he called "charismatic monarchy". Here, the spirit of Yahweh was actively involved in choosing successors to the throne. These successors displayed considerable strength.

Several factors go into the transfer of office. Goody (1966), for instance, identifies four factors he considers crucial elements for any critical study on succession process. In this study, three main factors which played significant roles in the succession process during Solomon's accession have been identified to provide the framework for the analysis to be undertaken below on Solomon's accession. These factors are;

- The selection process for a successor
- The time of selection
- The participants involved in the selection process

Attention will be directed to the process Solomon used in ascending the throne and the sources of conflict inherent in the process. These issues will be analysed alongside the exegesis in the next chapter.

## **Summary**

This chapter looked at the concept of succession and inheritance in ancient Israel before the institution of monarchy and during the united monarchy. It was revealed from the above discussions that the institution of monarchy was an alien institution within the Israelite society. The introduction of this institution within the Israelite society meant the clash of innovations such as the dynastic principle of succession and the old traditions such as charismatic principles which the tribal confederacy represented. This inevitable clash of change and continuity was realized in many aspect of the Israelites' life of which the system of succession was more prominent. It was not surprising therefore that the charismatic principle of succession which was characteristic of the old tradition was constantly under threat from the dynastic principle of succession which the monarchy introduced. Also it has been revealed that the dynastic principle, which gradually supplanted the charismatic principle, was itself to be guided by traditions on inheritance in the pre-monarchic times. The right of primogeniture was, thus, to be upheld even in dynastic succession. The problem, however, was that these guidelines were not strictly adhered to and possibly never adhered to and this further complicated the already unstable and novel system of succession process within the institution. Again, there lacked a clearly spelt out stage to stage process of choosing a successor to a vacant throne during the united monarchy based on the traditions preserved in the Old Testament. What existed was the rudimentary form of the dynastic system of succession which was later developed especially in the south after the division of the kingdom. Since the office being transferred dealt with a

highly respected position, a position of power, any absence of clear rules to guide such a transfer is a recipe for disaster. This was what happened during Solomon's accession.

The next two chapters will now focus on the accession of Solomon to the Davidic throne and explore how the factors identified were at play in the process of Solomon's accession through a text centred approach to the text.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **EXEGESIS OF I KINGS 1**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the exegesis of the text, I Kings 1-2 and as it was indicated in chapter one, the text centred approach of reader-response criticism will be used and the model as expounded by Alter will be the framework for this exegesis. This chapter examined critically how Solomon ascended the Davidic throne and the various factors which were at play; thus attention will be given to the manner Solomon gained the throne and the people who were involved in the process. Attempt was be made to go behind the mere narration provided and unearth the underlying motivations behind the actions and decisions of the characters. This will equally be done within the framework of the traditions of the Israelites with respect to the transmission of power. It has been pointed out earlier that the method chosen, that is the text-centred approach of reader-response criticism, allows the reader to take into consideration the historical and sociological perspectives of the story to arrive at a meaning. In undertaking the exegesis, certain issues would have to be clarified. First, the pericope of the text will be established. This will be followed by the structure of the text. The significance of the structure lies in the framework it provides for the exegesis of

the text. The analysis of the story will be carried out on the basis of the structure identified.

The exegesis will be carried out with the aim of appreciating Solomon's accession to the Davidic throne. This aim, however, falls within the wider objective of understanding the issue of throne succession dispute. In this sense, specific questions were posed for which answers were sought in the course of the exegesis. These questions were;

- Was there a selection process operative in ancient Israel during the United Monarchy?
- What were the steps in this process if there was any?
- Who were the active participants in this selection process for a successor?
- What were the sources of tensions involved in the process of choosing a successor?

### **Pericope of the Text**

Any interpretive task begins with a text. A text qualifies to be interpreted when the length of the text in terms of its logical beginning and ending point are clearly delineated. A text to be interpreted is not simply taken out of a passage or book. The delineation of a text has to be done with care so as to preserve its coherence. This section of the study establishes the boundaries of the story and, in effect, points out how this chosen pericope is complete.

I Kings 1-2 is seen by many scholars as a sequel to II Samuel 9-20, which has been labelled as the succession narrative. J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes (1986)



define the succession narrative as “An essentially continuous narrative which describes various problems faced by David during his reign and explains how it happen Solomon, rather than any of the older brothers, succeeded David to the throne” (p. 153). In the words of Simon J. DeVries (1985), “I Kgs 1-2 is a severed trunk, to be sure and can never be adequately appreciated except as the continuation of 2 Sam. 9-20. It is the continuation and climax of the throne succession narrative” (p. 8). A careful analysis of the materials would reveal why there is almost a unanimous acceptance by scholars on the linkage between II Samuel 9-20 and I Kings 1-2. On the grounds of tradition history, it is plausible that these stories were linked to each other on the basis of the problems encountered by David during his reign. Though the contents of the stories within the two blocks are varied, David’s invasion into the house of Uriah, Ammon’s rape of his sister, Absalom’s revenge and his revolt among others, they together represented serious challenges David encountered during his reign.

According to DeVries (1985), this truncation of I Kings 1-2 from its original place was, possibly, done by a late editor who inserted a variety of mainly late materials in 2 Sam. 21-24 “in order to wrap up the history of King David, cutting 1-2 Kgs adrift as a separate book and allowing I Kings 1-2 to function as an introduction to the history of Solomon” (p. 10). This assertion is shared by Mayes (1983), who in his division of the materials in II Samuel, identified the materials which came after II Samuel 9-20 as an appendix. The designation of the block, II Samuel 21-24, as an appendix signifies the additional role it played in the book.

The question to ask then is that if I Kings 1-2 is a continuation of II Samuel 9-20, how should I Kings 1-2 be considered and read? The text, I Kings 1-2, firmly establishes itself as a pericope on the following grounds. First, it uniformly deals with the story of Solomon's accession to the Davidic throne and how he consolidates his position. The succession narrative which spans from II Samuel 9-20 and I Kings 1-2, has been organised along several themes and these themes stand out clearly as complete episodes (DeVries, 1985). The story of Solomon's accession and his consolidation of the throne is a complete episode as it contains events or incidents in sequences which make up the narration. Secondly, the unity of the text is seen in the inter relationship which exists between the two chapters. I Kings 1 has a literary and thematic dependency on I Kings 2: chapter two serves as a conclusion to the Solomon episode as well as the succession narrative in general. Severing chapter two from chapter one will result in the loss of the conclusion of Solomon's accession. There is no suggestion in I Kings 3 which points to the continuation of the succession narrative (DeVries, 1985).

### **Structure of I Kings 1-2**

#### Chapter one

1. King David's advancing debilitude and measure to address it (vss. 1-4)
2. Moves by Adonijah and his camp to secure the throne (vss. 5-10)
3. Nathan and Bathsheba's conspiracy (vss. 11-27)
4. David's orders for Solomon installation as king (vss. 28-31)
5. David's instructions of his officials (vss. 32-37)
6. Solomon's anointment and acclamation (vss. 38-40)
7. Alarming Adonijah's camp and its dispersion (vss. 43-49)
8. Adonijah flight, Solomon's clemency and Adonijah's dismissal (vss. 50-53)

## Chapter two

1. David's message of strength & Keeping of Yahweh's law (vss. 1-4)
2. Instruction to Solomon on Joab, Barzillaites and Shimei (vss. 5-9)
3. David's death and confirmation of Solomon's rule (vss. 10-12)
4. Adonijah's approach and appeal to Bathsheba (vss. 13-18)
5. Bathsheba consent and request to Solomon and his response (vss. 19-25)
6. Solomon dealing with Abiathar (vss. 26-27)
7. Joab's flight to the sanctuary and his subsequent execution (vss. 28-34)
8. Solomon's appointment of Benaiah and Zadok (vss. 35)
9. Solomon's agreement with Shimei (vss. 36-38a)
10. Shimei pursuance of his runaway slaves & Solomon's Response (vss. 38b-44)
11. Dynastic well-being and Shimei's execution and conclusion (vss. 45-46)

## Exegesis of Chapter One of the Text

(Vss. 1- 4)

The story opens with no elaborate introductions; only a description of the physical state of King David is provided. According to Bar-Efrat (1989), when no elaborate introductions are provided by the narrator, it means the narrator assumes that the preliminary information needed by the reader is already known. This seems to be the case in this opening of the narrative; the king, David, is presumed to be known by the reader. David is reported to be old and advanced in years: *Now King David is old and advanced in years* (vs.1a). The narrator by this description prepares the reader for the main action to follow. The king is described to be old, but as this description does not accurately define the state of the king, additional information is provided to the reader to enable him/her grasp and picture the deteriorating and devitalised state of the king - *though they spread covers on him, he could not get warm* (vs.1b).

Several reasons underline the manner the story begun. First, the reader is introduced to the man, David, a character who before now had always been the embodiment of strength and valour. David, as a young boy, was able to take on beasts such as bears and lions: he was able to annihilate the much dreaded Goliath and killed thousands of men in war and many other great exploits (II Sam. 17). In this sense, the opening of this story serves as a contrast since there is a movement from vitality to frailness and devitality. In II Sam. 21ff, the declining state of David's strength was displayed when the Israelites were engaged in a battle with the Philistines. This ongoing deterioration of David's strength peaked in I Kgs. 1:1 as the picture given depicts the end of David's once active, exuberant and ecstatic life.

Another role played by this descriptive state of King David is the suspense and curiosity created in the reader. The desire of the reader to know the fate of the state with David in a weak position stems from the knowledge the reader possesses and which the text demands of him/her on the culture of the ancient Near Eastern states. In the Near Eastern world, the strength of the state was vested in the king and a weak king meant a weak state (Mauchline, 1962). These last days of David's reign in effect were significant for the ancient Israelites. The reader finds himself/herself asking; 'what happens to this kingdom created by David as his presence is what seems to secure the state?' Another important issue the reader can project was the question of the succession to the throne. Though, there were one or two distractions which nearly marred the security of the state during David's active days, it seemed that the real threat to the state was the

powerlessness of its leader. II Sam. 21:17 sheds light on this issue when David's men said: *You shall go out no more with us to battle lest you quench the lamp of Israel.* These reflections propel the reader to ask the question; "what becomes of the state now that its king languishes in bed?"

The narrator reports of frantic and desperate actions taken by the servants of David to keep him warm (vss. 1-4). The reader from these verses becomes aware of the narrators use of two literary devices – repetition and direct speech – in conveying the message. The use of repetition is evident in vss. 1-2, where the word "warm" is repeated twice. In vs. 1, the narrator informs the reader that attempts to control David's deteriorating health were not successful since he could not get "warm". This idea is made known to the reader again in vs. 2 and this alerts the reader on the significance of this repetition. The narrator, by this repetition, informs the reader that there is a problem: a problem which proves to be difficult since all efforts made to solve it have proved futile. David had to be active (warm); his inactivity was a worry to all around him and they will stop at nothing to ensure that he radiates with the activeness they wanted to see. This then confirms the belief that the people saw the strength of the state in that of the king. The present situation of David was in effect a troubling time for the nation.

The servants of David, apart from putting covers on the king to get him warm, also sought for a young woman who was to attend to the king and try to energise the king. The description of the young woman as a beautiful girl in vs. 3 is another cunning way the narrator communicates implicit information to the reader. The virgin who had been employed to serve the king was very beautiful

yet the king was unable to touch her. This alarms the reader as King David had a taste for beautiful women even to the extent of killing to have such women (II Sam. 11). The failure of the king to have conjugal relationship with Abishag means the failure of David to prove his vitality and the reader at this moment wonders what this means for the kingdom. The double appearance of the word “warm” highlights the problematic situation the narrator puts forward. Ntrel (2004) provides an insight on the word when he writes, “I am aware of the fact that the Hebrew word ‘hamam’ translated to make warm does not directly connote sexual contact. However, here in I Kings 1:4 and in Ecc 4: 11, there is the inference of sexual intercourse” (p. 63).

The second literary device used by the narrator is direct speech. The narrator switches from narration in vs. 1 to the use of direct speech in vs. 2. Though in the narration, the reader is informed of attempts made to contain King David’s problem, the use of direct speech puts the same message of rescuing David’s problem into a better perspective for the reader. Since action is revealed in speech, the reader appreciates the magnitude of the problem the narrator is bringing to the fore through the direct speech.

King David’s inactivity from vss.1-4 appears to be the dominant theme the narrator presents to the reader. Ntrel (2004) writes on this as follows, “Thus if the king who was the embodiment of the throne had become that weak and senile, it showed that the situation was very dangerous for the kingdom” (p. 64). It is not surprising, considering Ntrel’s assertion, when the servants of David tried all their efforts in getting the king active. The significance of the theme of David’s

senility is how the reader links this theme to the subsequent events to follow. The reader also determines how this theme would affect the events to follow.

(Vss. 5-10)

The narrator moves the reader from David's chamber to another stage in the narration. The character Adonijah is introduced: he is described as the son of Haggith, who was full of ambition. He is obsessed with the ambition to be king and this drives him to acquire needed logistics to realise his ambition. The reader realises that the tempo of the narration in vs. 5 is quick. Adonijah is first introduced. This is followed by the declaration of his ambition and the steps he took to realise his dream. This is revealing of Adonijah's character as an ambitious man who did not delay to get what he wanted. The introduction of Adonijah by the narrator, the reader notices, is harsh and discourteous. These developments appear to be the narrator's technique in drawing the reader's attention to the inter-connection of events which took place so far. The debility of the king had paved the way for developments such as that of Adonijah. The pace of the narration in vs.5 represents the speed with which Adonijah went about his plan to be king. Adonijah's intention which was deliberately put in his mouth is revelatory of the pride and hastiness in his character: *I want to be king* (vs. 5).

The story continues in vs. 6 where the narrator informs the reader of the failure of King David in rebuking his son Adonijah for his actions. The narrator, it appears, deliberately avoids using the title "King David" and prefers the familial

word “his father”. This was done to highlight the relationship between father and son and this probably, demonstrated the authority a father had over his son. According to the narrator, David knew of Adonijah’s plan and actions but the reader is not informed of why David refused to rebuke him. A gap is thus created for the reader to fill. A possible explanation the reader can assign is that the frailness and devitalised state of David account for his failure to call his son to order. The reader has the previous knowledge of Absalom and Ammon and how David dealt with the problems these two children created. In the case of Ammon, David did not confront him when he raped his half-sister, which partly degenerated into the problem Absalom created (II Sam. 13). The reader realises, then, that it is not the frail state of David which prevented him from bringing his son to book but, he was always weak with his children. The narrator, in effect, implicitly presents David as a weakened king whose loss of power is not only evident in his official duties, but had also become manifest in his domestic duties. Another option left to the reader in filling this gap is that David probably knew of the exploits of his son, Adonijah, but for some reasons such as him being the eldest surviving child, made him keep silent (DeVries, 1985). This silence of David, in other words, could be because he endorsed the plans of Adonijah since he was the eldest surviving child and has not grossly deviated from the order of things. The narrator again sheds light on Adonijah’s personality when he/she comments that Adonijah was very handsome and he was born after Absalom.

The narrator does not pass a comment unless it is of importance to the narration considering the laconic manner in which biblical narration is presented.



It is in this respect that the reader has to take a critical look at the narrator's assertion that Adonijah is very handsome and he was born after Absalom. Firstly, through this comment, not only is the connection between Adonijah and Absalom highlighted, but an analepsis or a flash-back is also created. In II Sam.15:7-16:14, Absalom revolted against his father, David, when he seized the throne causing the king to flee. This revolt by a son who attempted to ascend the throne repeats itself in a different circumstance as evident in Adonijah's exploits and this is what the narrator subtly draws the reader's attention to. In the flash-back, David was reluctant in reacting to the disturbing and problematic expeditions of his son Absalom and this appears to be characteristic of the king as Adonijah's case portrays. David tarried in his response to Absalom's crisis but total in action is recorded here for Adonijah's case, at this juncture, in the story.

In vss. 7-8, the narration continues with Adonijah's conscription of Joab, the military man and Abiathar, the priest. Adonijah for some unknown reasons, however, neglected Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei and other important figures who the narrator describes as David's mighty men. The mighty men could be the mercenary David built for himself (II Sam. 23: 8ff). In the next two verses, Adonijah performed a sacrifice and made a feast afterwards where he invites his brothers and friends to feast with him. He again failed to invite Nathan, Benaiah, the mighty men of David and Solomon his brother. There is the use of repetition in a subtle manner and omission as well as reticence on the part of the narrator. In vs. 8, the reader reads that Zadok, Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei, Rei and the mighty men were not with Adonijah. This unclear statement leaves room for

the reader to figure out the message being communicated. Two possibilities come up in comprehending the above statement. It is valid for the reader to assume that Adonijah might have informed the personalities above of his ambition but probably because of their loyalty to David they refused to join him. Also, it could be possible that they never knew what Adonijah was up to.

The list of uninvited guest in vs. 10 after Adonijah performed his sacrifice is a repetition of the earlier list of figures that were reported not to be with Adonijah in vs. 8. The reader notices that the narrator omits certain names in the feast list, repeats certain names and adds another name. This is not a mere oversight on the part of the narrator but a deliberate and conscious narration of the story: a story which is compact and having every word and phrase contributing in shaping the meaning. The retention of the names; Nathan, Benaiah and the retention of the mighty men of David prompts the reader of the interest these characters had in the ongoing development: the search for a king, and the active role they will play in the unfolding drama. The omission of the names Zadok, Shimei and Rei indirectly projected their passive role in the remaining of the story. Rei is not mentioned again or referred to in the subsequent development of the story: Shimei also vanished from the plot and the Shimei who appeared in chapter two is not intended here (DeVries, 1985). Zadok's position is a bit uncertain but the omission of his name implicitly communicates his later absence during the reign of Solomon. The way Solomon was introduced is very significant; the narrator emphasizes the kinship or blood ties between Solomon and Adonijah. Significantly again, the labelling of some characters as not

belonging to Adonijah (vs. 8) brings to fore the conflict in the plot and this would serve as the motivation for subsequent actions to follow.

The above discussion (vss. 1-10) summarily deals with the question of who is to succeed the aging king, David. The state of the king would have many people ask this all important question. But probably, the important question was; what mode of succession was to be used in choosing a successor to the throne. In chapter two, we identified two main elements (charismatic principle and dynastic principle) which were at play in the political world of the ancient Israelites. Again, it has been pointed out that David took various measures which made the state become unified in his personality and that of his household. Alt (1966) points out that the charismatic mode of succession was tamed during David's era and the dynastic mode of succession was the expected system to be practiced. If the dynastic mode of succession was operative at that time, who among David's sons was to succeed? What were the criteria and processes to be used in choosing the successor?

The dynastic mode of succession was a new phenomenon in ancient Israel. Ancient Israel at the time of David's last days had experienced only one dynastic transfer of power. When Saul died, Abner his army commander made Ishbaal, Saul's son king (II Sam. 2: 8-9). It would be important to probe further into this development to aid in appreciating the turn of events in the first ten verses of the narration. The succession of Ishbaal provides insight into the nature of dynastic succession in its primitive stage in ancient Israel. From the traditions in the Old Testament, Ishbaal was not appointed to be a *Nagid*. In the appointment of Saul

and David as leaders of Israel, they were given the title *Nagid*. The significance of this difference is the emphasis on the military might of the charismatic appointees. Ishbaal's appointment through the dynastic mode as a *Melek* reveals that for dynastic successions, one did not have to prove to be the right choice through militaristic adventures. Ishbaal's succession to the throne was because he was Saul's surviving son.

The attempts of Adonijah to make himself king when the incumbent had not passed away brings to fore the position that a contender could initiate his own succession without the knowledge of the incumbent. This is, especially, so when the incumbent was weak or inactive. This position could be seen in the early period of David's reign during the uprising of Absalom where he tried to seize the throne from his father. The time of succession, in other words, was crucial for a smooth succession to take place. Goody (1966) points out that the accession of a new ruler could occur immediately upon the death of the incumbent or dethronement or after a reasonable interval has elapsed, or even when the incumbent is on the throne. In the case of Adonijah's attempt, he initiated his succession when the incumbent was still alive. It is not clear if Adonijah intended to co-rule with his father. This co-ruling could not have been possible since it was the incumbent who chose the successor unlike the case of Adonijah where he initiated the process himself without the knowledge of the incumbent (Goody, 1966).

Adonijah's attempt in some ways could be attributed to David who heightened the dilemma of the people by keeping silent about who was to succeed

him. His silence opened the door for contenders to make their case for the throne. This was worsened by the fact that a clear system of selection process was lacking in ancient Israel. In the absence of a clear succession process to prevent mayhem, it was advisable for the incumbent or kingmakers to make sure that a successor was obtained before the incumbent left the scene or died. The remaining verses remain interesting as the narration continues to reveal what happens next after Adonijah's attempt.

(Vss. 11-27)

The narrator from vss.11-27 employs a great use of dialogue as the main medium for the unfolding of the story, and this is, occasionally, interspersed with comments. This extensive use of dialogue is explosive as well as revealing. The tempo in this long episode of events slows down and a vivid and intense account of the events is what emerges. The reader's attention and interest are directed to the unfolding drama implicitly by the conventional use of dialogue. The reader observes that the lengthy dialogue was a response to the conflict created by Adonijah's failure to invite some figures to his self acclaimed coronation feast. This inaction of Adonijah constituted a danger to the uninvited personalities. The uninvited guest thus had to take steps to avert the impending danger coming their way. The steps and actions taken are what the narrator has packaged for the reader in dialogue form, highlighting the manner the personalities who feeling insecure, cunningly but impressively turned a hazardous situation into a victorious one.

Nathan begins this episode (vs.11) when he asked Bathsheba a question; *Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith reigns?* Nathan does not stop to listen to Bathsheba's response to his question to her but instead points out the danger which awaits her and her son, Solomon (vs.12). What strikes the reader so far is Nathan's omission of his name and other individuals from the list of those who seemed to be in danger (vs. 12): only mother and son are identified as the ones at risk. The reader, from the list of uninvited guests provided by the narrator in vs.10, knows that if Adonijah posed a threat, it is against all those uninvited guests. Nathan for some reasons put mother and son in the spotlight as those whose lives were in peril. If one critically analyses Nathan's approach, it becomes understandable why he focused Bathsheba and Solomon. Nathan knew that for him to gain the needed response from Bathsheba, he had to make her and her son the focus of the impending threat. Nathan's concentration on the life of Bathsheba and her son is to arouse the feeling of insecurity in a mother: a woman who has her son as her only hope. Devries (1985) points out that Bathsheba was very much interested with the ongoing events because with Solomon she could be exalted or demoted. What really seems to capture the reader's attention is the character, Nathan. The reader cannot help but consider Nathan as a manipulative and subtle character. The question which pops up in the reader's mind is; what does Nathan hope to achieve?

The crafty nature of Nathan was again displayed in his use of certain words such as *come* and *go immediately* (vss. 12-13). Clearly Nathan appeared to have had a plan or scheme in hand and he so far appeared to be in control of it. It

is amazing how Bathsheba did not respond by speech to any of the information and instructions Nathan gave her. The lack of response from Bathsheba was not because the narrator refused to provide that insight but on the contrary, Bathsheba's obedience in action can be explained by the manner Nathan has craftily positioned her into an obedient state through the looming danger and fear he created in her.

Bathsheba was directed by Nathan to go to the king and say to him; *Did you not, lord king, swear to your handmaid; your son Solomon shall be king after me and shall sit upon my throne?* This statement to Nathan was a display of parallelism in a narrative which is quite rare. The use of parallelism by the narrator, a concept used in poetical creations, catches the attention of the reader. The statement is made up of two cola and it displays synonymous parallelism. The first colon points out a supposed oath of David: to make Solomon king. The thrust of the message in the first colon is repeated in the second with little changes evident in the use of different words. Besides the parallelism, the reader notices that there is also the use of literary device known as metonymy. The second colon has the predicate – *shall sit on my throne* – and this is used to refer to the kingship of Solomon. What these stylistic devices do to the reader is that they draw the reader's attention to the message and pauses to analyse the development taking shape. In this respect, several questions come up from the unfolding development. First, the reader cannot help but recall the senile king David and how his state will impact whatever deliberation which was taking place. Again, the reader cannot help but feel suspicious of the authenticity of Nathan's assertion of the promise of

the king to Bathsheba (Walsh & Begg, 1990). The whole scenario appears as if Nathan narrated a pre-thought out plan to be repeated in exact manner to a debilitate king. It would not be too wrong for the reader to believe that Bathsheba was directed by Nathan to practice auto-suggestion on a senile King David to get him think he had given such an oath. Nathan's comment in vs. 14 only goes to confirm the reader's suspicion as the reader finds it difficult to understand how Nathan could testify to the alleged oath unless he was present when the king made the promise to Bathsheba.

Bathsheba goes into the chamber of David where Abishag, the Shunamite woman attended to the king (vs. 15). The narrator due to some reasons repeats the state of King David's health to the reader. This use of reminiscence is the narrator's way of drawing the reader's attention to the physical state of King David. The narrator thereby indirectly indicates to the reader how this concern of David's physical status played an important role in the events to follow. Bathsheba gave respect to the aging king who demanded from her the purpose for her visit (vs. 16). Bathsheba following the instructions of Nathan poured out a speech which was supposed to be what Nathan dictated for her (vs. 17). A critical look at her speech to the king, however, shows a repetition of the lines Nathan gave her and also "expands them with the most persuasive inventiveness" (Alter 1981, 98). Bathsheba did not only repeat what Nathan told her but provides additional touches to achieve a pitiful response from the king. The reader notices that she specifically adds the phrase - *by the Lord your God* - to the supposed oath given to her by David. This supplementary phrase is absent in Nathan's



instructions to her; her usage of this phrase in embellishing the oath is probably to accentuate the divine nature of the oath and thus compel the king to act on his alleged oath. On the other hand, the omission of the phrase by Nathan suggested the seemingly pious state of the prophet and his reluctance to use the name of the Lord to lie – that is if the oath is a lie (Alter, 1981). Bathsheba’s usage only confirmed the extent to which a woman and mother who felt insecure could invoke the name of the lord to attain her security for herself and son.

Bathsheba in vs. 20 hinted on the central theme of her message to the king and she did this in a clever way. The reader notices that Bathsheba’s statement that: *the eyes of all Israel are on you*, is an indirect way of “urging David to action as well as chiding him for his indecisiveness” (DeVries, 1985, p. 15). DeVries (1985) notices that Bathsheba by this statement “accorded a level of autocratic authority not previously seen in Israel” (p. 15). She closes her statement with a pathetic evocation of the fate that will befall her and her son if David fails to act (vs. 20-21). Nathan, faithful to his plan enters the chamber of David at the point where Bathsheba has heightened the danger which awaits her after David’s death (vs. 22). Ingeniously, since he could not have known an oath given by David directly to Bathsheba, Nathan rephrased the oath he himself dictated to Bathsheba and turned the message contained in the oath he earlier narrated to Bathsheba, into a deliberately implicating remark on Adonijah: *have you decided, my lord king that Adonijah is to reign after you and sit on your throne?* Nathan did not wait for David’s response but launches into an account of Adonijah’s politically designing

feast. The narrator here employs repetition as Nathan's description of the feast seems to be what Bathsheba had already narrated to the king (vs. 25).

The reader, however, notices that Nathan's version and Bathsheba's version are revealing of their respective characters. Bathsheba's presentation "reveals the distressed mother and suppliant wife emphasizing the injustice done to her son, the imminent danger threatening mother and son and the absolute dependence of the nation on the powerful word of the king" (Alter, 1981, p. 99). Nathan on the other hand by his addition accentuates the political aspect of Adonijah's actions. He outlines the military elites that have been summoned by Adonijah and has a fuller list of David's faithful who had been set aside by Adonijah. Nathan also began the list of the neglected faithful of David who have been sidelined by Adonijah with - *but me your servant* (Alter, 1981, p. 100). The reader notices Nathan's drive in discrediting Adonijah before the king when he proclaimed that Adonijah and his company are eating and drinking and shouting: *Long live King Adonijah!* (vs. 25), a move calculated to rouse the anger of a still reigning king.

(Vss. 28-31)

The plan of Nathan and Bathsheba had been set in motion. Suspense is created here as one of the main tensions of this chapter comes to fore. Can David summon sufficient power in this hour of crisis to ensure the accession of Solomon? David after receiving all the bombardment from wife and servant gained a renewed life in him as he proceeds to act. He summons Bathsheba

(vs.28) and swears to Bathsheba that Solomon should sit upon his throne (vss. 29-30). The whole events which culminated in David swearing an oath appear clumsily to the reader. The narrator through the process of repetition and addition reveals the manner in which Bathsheba and Nathan overwhelm David, an already devitalised king, with a crescendo of arguments. The progressive intensification or elaboration of Bathsheba and Nathan's scheme as evident in the style of repetition produces a psychological effect on the king and results in the much needed change the two crave for: the proclamation of Solomon as king. Bathsheba eliciting the change she wanted expressed her consent in her blessing of King David in the following words - *May my lord, King David live forever!* (vss. 31). She expresses a desire that David's life power should continue in his posterity and Solomon was to be the starting point. David, whose failing health has been pushed to the background ever since Bathsheba and Nathan descended on him, continues to exhibit some renewed strength and this could more or less be attributed to the unprecedented effect of Bathsheba and Nathan's scheme.

(Vss. 32-37)

David summoned Zadok, Nathan and Benaiah and gave them directives on how to get Solomon crowned (vss. 32-35). Solomon was supposed to ride on the mule which belonged to David and this is significant as Solomon's riding on David's private mule was intended as dramatic and visual evidence that David is actually turning all his authority over to Solomon (DeVries 1985, 16). Benaiah

probably on behalf of Solomon's camp expressed his satisfaction thus endorsing David's pronouncements (vs. 36-37).

(Vss. 38-40)

The climax of the narration took place when Solomon got anointed by Zadok and this sets the scene for wild celebrations. The suspense so far has been whether Bathsheba and Nathan could change the order of things and have Solomon crowned. This materializes in vss. 38-40 and as the narrator reports, the people shout - *Long live King Solomon* (vs. 39). The narrator uses imagery packaged in an enthusiastic language to describe to the reader the extent of excitement and jubilation which accompanied Solomon's investiture or coronation as king - *the land resounded with their noise* (vs. 40). The magnitude of the noise from the celebration of the people made it impossible for anyone to ignore.

(Vss. 41-49)

The camp of Adonijah, which by this time is ending its feast is prompted and alarmed by the resounding noise. What could generate such deafening noise, Adonijah's camp found themselves asking. Joab, representative of the company, displays his surprise when he asked - *what does this uproar in the city mean?* (vs. 41). Joab did not end his question then Jonathan appeared (vs. 42). Adonijah welcomed him and demanded good news from him. This is interesting for the reader: it is difficult to understand the nature of good news Adonijah is expecting. One cannot help but feel pity for Adonijah and his company when his expectation

of good news turned bleak as Jonathan told him he, on the contrary, had an unpleasant message to convey.

From vss. 43-48, Jonathan unleashed a plague of bad news; his style of delivery is in itself harsh and unpolished. Without mincing words, Jonathan said to Adonijah - *our lord King David has made Solomon king* (vs. 43). He then continued to give details of how Solomon had been crowned as he outlined the important members who make up the Solomon camp (vs. 45). The additional but very important information Jonathan gives to his audience in vss. 45-48, suggest to the reader that Jonathan was more than a simple carrier of message. He appears to the reader to be an informant for the Adonijah camp.

(Vss. 50-53)

On hearing such a bad news, the party of Adonijah dispersed in fear (vs. 49). The success of the camp of Solomon meant the failure of their camp. Adonijah is left alone in such a confused state: all his companions who were equally unsure of their lives have each gone his own way wandering what might happen next. Adonijah quickly departed from the scene of banquet and made off for the place of the sanctuary (vs. 51). Adonijah's flight to the place of sanctuary communicates implicit meanings to the reader. What is surprising is that the place of sanctuary is his first destination after his failed attempt to be king. Inferring from his actions, Adonijah knew he was in danger; his failure to be king as a contender meant his life was insecure. Adonijah was simply overwhelmed with uncontrollable fear: he knew what would happen and the sanctuary was the wisest

place to be. He by this action submitted and surrendered himself. This display of fear is reported to Solomon. Adonijah continued to hold out at the sanctuary and pleaded for mercy and wanted a guarantee of assurance from the new king before he could let go his abode of solace. This current development interests the reader. Adonijah the ambitious son who usurped the throne now pleaded for mercy from Solomon whose life was at a point in time in danger because of the move by his brother to be king. There has been a complete reversal of fate. The narrator skilfully displays the turn of fortune as Solomon now becomes king and Adonijah his subject or subordinate.

It is interesting how the narrator in many cases sticks to direct speech when one would have thought that an indirect speech is appropriate. When it was reported to Solomon that Adonijah had seized the horns of the altar (vs. 51), the narrator put Adonijah's saying directly into the mouth of the reporters. The reader notices that this style of the narrator brought the emotions of Adonijah into the foreground making the reader keenly conscious of Adonijah as a figure in great fear of his life and used words to express his stricken fear for Solomon. Interestingly, Solomon gives Adonijah a conditional pardon dependent on his worthiness. The reader is not informed how Adonijah responded to Solomon's grant of mercy. In fact Solomon's message of pardon was directly relayed to the servants who reported Adonijah to him: thus Adonijah was not the direct recipient of Solomon's message. Adonijah is brought down from the altar and submits himself to Solomon. Solomon told him: *go to your house*, a simple but highly

moving command imbedded with strong meaning. The narrator then draws the curtain on this major section of his/her narration.

The events which have unfolded in the narration (vss. 11-53) bring to light the difficulty involved in the transfer of power. Earlier, we noticed Adonijah's attempt to ascend the throne because the question of succession was widely open and no definitive stance or decision had been made on it. The attempts of Solomon and his camp revealed the complex nature of the situation. There are now two contending parties. As Alt (1966) pointed out, the dynastic mode of succession was to be used. The difficulty with this was how this dynastic mode of succession was to be applied. The only precedent in the Israelite history was the succession of Ishbaal to the throne of Saul. However, it has to be pointed out that Ishbaal was the only surviving son of Saul and thus it was quite obvious he was the only contender. In this case of David's successor, there were two contending parties. What criteria were to be used in selecting one over the other? Or were the two parties to work their own ways to the throne? The narration above suggests that this was exactly the case.

In working their ways to the throne, several factors were at play and this would be the focus for the discussion below. In the first place, the time for the occurrence of these attempts by the contending parties is significant. It falls within what Goody (1966) terms the "time for succession" (p. 8). The time for succession could be before the incumbent dies, during the last days of the incumbent or after the incumbent dies. The two contending parties in this situation carried out their activities during the last days of the incumbent. When the society had not outlined

clear procedure to ensure a smooth transfer of power, contending parties took matters into their own hands. When an incumbent died before a successor is chosen, the space in between those events was crucial; it is a period of danger to the state. It can be noticed that David tarried in his pronouncement of whom to succeed him. This partly accounts for the conflict between the two camps. Also the time of succession or naming of a successor is important because if there was more than one claimant to the throne, then a possible collision can be avoided by the naming of the successor before the incumbent died. This is partly observed in Solomon's accession. Adonijah and Solomon were both contenders; until David named Solomon as the successor, each could have proceeded to make himself king and the outcome would be clash of the two camps.

It should be pointed out that it could be possible that David's delay could be explained on the grounds that he thought the automatic selection would take place. That is David believed that the right of the primogeniture will be exercised in his absence. This assertion can only be upheld if the oath the camp of Solomon claimed David uttered to Bathsheba was false. On the other hand, if such an oath was indeed made, why was it not made public to calm tensions but rather kept as a secret which heightened tensions? The oath of Solomon's fate on the throne had been considered by many as one of the manipulative attempts by the Solomon camp in securing the position. DeVries (1985), for instance, asserts that the camp of Solomon jockeyed their way through to attain the position.

The process for the transfer of power was one which involved various participants who influenced the turn of events in one way or the other. Succession



to an office of high repute such as the position of a king was of great concern for the royal family and various groups who were in constant and direct contact with the office holders. Again such an event was of concern to the general public of the society who became the subjects of the successor. What this meant was that many stakeholders were connected to this process. Nonetheless, there are certain individuals and groups who play significant roles in the succession process. Many conflicts stemmed from the inability for such personalities to play their important roles or the deliberate attempt to bend the rules to achieve their personal interest. Succession to the highest office of the land as Goody (1966) stipulates was “unique and non duplicating”; they were highly restrictive roles (p. 2). This meant that people had their vested interests in getting a successor of their choice on the throne.

The importance of various personalities in the narration comes to the fore in this respect. One of the major personalities was David who was the incumbent. The incumbent king was a very important figure in succession issues of certain types of societies where the succession rule allows for uncertainties (Goody, 1966). The accession of Solomon is an example of such a situation. David chose his successor before he died. David as a single individual held the power to declare who to succeed him. The confrontation of Bathsheba with David of which Bathsheba told David, “As for you my lord king, all eyes of Israel are on you to tell them who will sit on the throne of my lord’s, the king after him” (I Kings 1: 20), suggest that the incumbent had the sole right to decide his successor. This practice certainly was alien to ancient Israel. It has been pointed out that the

charismatic mode of succession was what was known to the people. Bathsheba might have been drawing reference to the traditions of the land on inheritance which stipulated that a man should put his house in order before he died. As has been already stated, the state David had created was very much a personal possession and his progeny was more or less deemed as the right person to succeed him. Again there was so much familiarity between inheritance and succession in ancient societies like that of ancient Israel; thus the succession to the position of a king was equally an issue of inheritance for the royal family.

The importance of the incumbent, David, could again be deduced from Nathan's question (I Kings 1:24). Nathan knew that if David had pronounced Adonijah king there was nothing they (Solomon camp) could do. The incumbent then was crucial in the transfer of power. David, it could be noticed by his delay in the accounts, was weak in dealing with his sons. He lacked control over his children as they could do anything they liked without David's reproach. Ntrel (2004) pointed out that it is even possible David might have promised the throne to Adonijah.

The role of the personalities could again be seen in the religious personalities who were actively involved in the turn of events. In ancient societies, the secular and the sacred were in constant convergence. Every sphere of life had religious significance. The political life of the society was not different. On the contrary, the world of politics was of much interest to religion. In the political life of ancient Israel, religion took a centre stage. What this meant was that religious personalities were very much part of political dispensation. They were involved in

every facet of the political life of the people. The transfer of power was a development they could not be disinterested in. The religious personalities involved in Solomon's succession were Abiathar and Zadok the priests and Nathan the prophet.

In ancient Israel, before the institution of monarchy, religious personalities were dominant in the organisation within the tribal confederacy. This importance they exhibited became more pronounced after the institution of monarchy. There were many changes which took place in the religious circles after the monarchy was instituted. S. H. Hooke (1962) explains that various changes occurred in the religious life of ancient Israelites after the adoption of the monarchy. He continues that the most important change was the capture of the old Jebusite city of Jerusalem by David and the establishment there of the central cult of Yahweh with the ark and priesthood. Hooke (19962), again, points out that there was the development of a new relationship established between the king and the prophetic order. The prophet attached to the cult undertook among many other duties inquiry for the king from Yahweh on outcome of an impending war. Another significant change was the elaborate organisation of the priesthood. De Vaux (1985) pointed out that there were generally many priests concentrated in large cities or towns in the ancient times. In Israel for instance during the reign of Saul, the sanctuary at Nob was looked after by Ahimelek and eighty-five priests descended from Eli. This situation would be applicable to the city of Jerusalem. These priests certainly had a leader. Though it cannot be decided whether the title

of 'high priest' did exist before the pre-exilic times, the priests in Jerusalem did have a leader.

The importance of these developments is seen in the strong influence of religion in the governance of the state as well as the level of authority these religious leaders wielded though they were in pre-exilic times subordinated to the king. For instance, the establishment of the ark in Jerusalem elevated Jerusalem to the highest sacred place for cultic activities. This meant that the head of the Jerusalem cult wielded great authority unlike the other cultic centres especially those of the country side. This effect brought rivalry between the various religious personalities. This rivalry was seen between Abiathar the priest, on one hand, and Zadok and Nathan on the other hand. The association of Abiathar to Adonijah and Zadok and Nathan to Solomon revealed the vested interest these personalities had in the potential successor to the throne. The appointment of Zadok as the priest of the state after the exile of Abiathar sought to confirm the above assertion. DeVries (1985) shares a similar position when he opines that Zadok might have pressured Solomon in exiling Abiathar because of his personal interest. The religious personalities played a role in the transfer of power. The anointing of the chosen successor by the religious figure represented the consent of Yahweh or the endorsement of Yahweh. This thus meant that for a successor to ascend the throne he had to gain Yahweh's endorsement which was indicated by the anointing of the priest. The absence of this ritual of anointing cast a shadow on one's ability to ascend the throne. This explained why both camps had religious figures attached to them to perform that role of anointing when the need came. Abiathar and Zadok

as well as Nathan knew their role in the process of succession. They knew they were an integral part of the process. They operated on the line of what they stood to gain from whom they supported

The personality of the queenmother came to the fore in this discussion. Until the succession of Solomon, where Bathsheba was actively involved in getting his son to the throne, there had not been a queen who had directly been involved in making a king. Bathsheba's role in this respect was to be a pioneer. As the queen mother of the state she was an important court official. She had access to the king at all times and these privileges she enjoyed were used effectively to secure her son on the throne.

The mercenaries also played important role in the succession processes where indeterminacy is a factor. They acted as the force behind the candidates in their quest for the position. David had his personal private army which aided him in his military expeditions. It was with the help of this private army which catapulted David into the hearts of the people. The indeterminate nature of the succession process required that the two main candidates get the backing of some force to equip them face any opposition which came their way. Adonijah and Solomon did exactly this in their quest to succeed their father. Ntrel (2004) writes that "... Adonijah did not forget to include some persons of military importance on his invitation list. Adonijah invited Joab the commander of the army. Joab was a very crucial inclusion in Adonijah's entourage" (p. 69).

Solomon likewise included military elements in his camp. He solicited the support of Benaiah who was in charge of the Cherethites and Pelethites. The

Cherethites and Pelethites were mercenaries who made up the majority of David's private army. They rallied around David during David's exile in the land of Philistine and they fought in his defence throughout his reign. This development of events meant that the two camps did equip themselves for any eventuality which may come up. A confrontation between the two camps seemed a surety. As the narration indicated, the camp of Adonijah was afraid and disappeared. It is not clear if the disintegration of Adonijah's camp was due to fear of the Solomon camp as is narrated or possibly due to David's choice of Solomon. The effect of this disintegration of the camp of Adonijah was that Adonijah was left with no support. Surely he alone could not be a match against the force of Solomon. In effect a possible clash between the two camps did not happen. The role of the mercenary in Solomon's camp which was headed by Benaiah could be seen in how they were commanded by David to be with Solomon throughout the process of Solomon's accession. They were needed to provide protection from any enemies.

The community had a stake in the succession of a candidate since they would be the subjects of the successor when he/she gets to the throne. In this respect, the consent of the people was an important element for any successful succession process. Many systems of succession have inculcated a stage within the process which requires that the consent of the people was sought to complete or make the succession process whole. In other words the potential successor had to be popular among the people in order to guarantee support. In the charismatic principle of succession, this element of popular support from the people was one

of the critical factors to secure one's position of the leadership of the Israelite society. Saul thus had to make sure that he had the backing of the people and so did David. A deviation of this norm was realised during Ishbaal's succession of David. This became more prominent in the succession of Solomon as the narration indicates. Jagersma (1983) comments on this development as follows, "There is no question of any influence being exercised by the people. Whereas the choice of Saul involved a popular assembly, and both the elders of Judah and of Israel had a role in that of David, the choice of Solomon by-passed the people completely" (p. 112). The impression gathered from this development is that for dynastic successions the consent of the people was not a major factor for the choosing of the successor. The decision was left to few people who belonged to the royal family or individuals who because of an office they held were connected to the royal family.

### **Summary**

This chapter dealt with an interpretation of I Kings 1. The story of Solomon's accession to the Davidic throne as portrayed in the exegesis was an illustration of the tensions which come up during periods of succession. Several questions which came up during the exegesis of the first chapter were considered. The question of who was to succeed David was an open one. Though, the dynastic principle for succession was strong, this principle lacked a clear cut procedure to electing the right candidate to the throne. The nature of the office in question meant that a lot of stakes were involved in the process. The various stakeholders

who had a role to play in the succession process did so from their personal views. Conflict was bound to happen in such a situation. Even though, Solomon, by the end of the first chapter, has ascended the throne, the narration did not end and it would be interesting to know what happened next after Solomon ascended the throne. The next chapter picks the story up from chapter two; thus it would be indicated in the next chapter the events which took place after Solomon ascended the throne.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **EXEGESIS OF I KINGS 2**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed how King David's deteriorated health prompted his son Adonijah of an opportunity to become the next leader of the state. He sought support from powerful personalities who had been in the service of the father. After securing the support of these influential personalities, Adonijah continued his process of self proclamation of king by holding a feast to crown his efforts. Solomon, Adonijah's brother and a likely contender for the throne was left out of Adonijah's scheme together with other important personalities such as Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest. These outcasts of Adonijah on their part formed a counter party with their priority to get their candidate, Solomon, on the throne. With a well thought out plan, which was equally perfectly executed, Solomon and his party were able to displace Adonijah's party and Solomon emerged as the successor to David. This over turn of events disintegrated Adonijah's camp and Adonijah became the subject of Solomon.

## Exegesis of Chapter Two of the Text

(Vss. 1-4)

The story resumes after Adonijah was pardoned by Solomon. David according to the narrator is close to his death and he issued some instructions to his son and new king, Solomon (vs. 1). The laconic manner the narrator informs the reader of David's imminent death and his strong fervent will to instruct Solomon communicated to the reader the importance and urgency of David's message. David tells Solomon: *I am going the way of all mankind. Take courage and be a man* (vs. 2). David informed Solomon he was about to die. David through experience knows his absence could be a problem to his successor and he thus urged Solomon to be strong. The charge to be strong communicates variegated meanings to the reader. Was Solomon to be strong and tough in his dealings with his subjects or to be strong in securing his position by warding off opponents? How is Solomon's strength to reveal itself?

Through direct speech again, the narrator draws the reader's attention on David and his last days. From vss. 2-4, David in direct speech directs Solomon on what to do with respect to keeping Yahweh's commandments. In other words, he instructs Solomon on piety. He points out to Solomon that success depends on his obedience to the Law of Moses. David again points to Solomon the conditional nature of the position he currently holds. In effect, the role of God in the political dispensation of the state was highlighted by David. The successor to David is thus locked or linked to a direct relationship with the Lord. The sustenance or assurance of David's heirs to the state depends on the Lord. Solomon, therefore,

had to acknowledge his dependence on the Lord and give precedence to Him in his reign.

(Vss. 5-9)

In vs. 5, David moves drastically from issues of piety to issues of vengeance. This appears quite baffling to the reader as David who until now was languishing in bed gained some unknown strength from nowhere. This long direct speech is a combination of analepsis and prolepsis as David recounts several events which took place in the past and gave hints to what would happen in the future (Ska ,1990). He first drew Solomon's attention to Joab and his actions in the past. David told Solomon: *you yourself know*, and this suggests to the reader that Solomon was in the know of the actions of Joab. Solomon, possibly, as a young boy and man growing in the palace was privy to events which were happening, especially those which involved his father. David instructed Solomon to end Joab's life. The sin of Joab is his murder of Abner and Amasa when there was no ongoing war. Joab by this murder demonstrated great thirst for blood which to David is unacceptable (Mauchline, 1962). The expression of Solomon or his reaction to this instruction was not indicated to the reader. Moreover Joab's support for Adonijah already pitched Joab against Solomon. Thus Solomon could not be more than happy to execute this command. David, again, instructed Solomon on how to treat the sons of Barzillia the Gileadites. Solomon is to grant them the privilege of eating at his table. They were to receive such a favour because of the one good favour they offered to David (vs. 7). David, again,

instructed Solomon on Shimei and narrated how he was cursed by Shimei. David believed that Shimei's curse was of such potency that the death of Shimei is the only atonement for it. Solomon was to use his wisdom to send Shimei to the grave.

(Vss. 10-12)

The narrator after the long direct speech of David switched to narration where the reader is informed of David's death and his burial. David's last actions the reader noticed are vindictive in character. His instructions to Solomon indicated that time does not take away one's good or bad deeds as they continued to reflect in the lives of those who committed those actions long after the events. The reader is also informed of the length of David's reign (vs. 11). In vs. 12, the narrator, again, through narration informs the reader that Solomon's accession on the seat of David was firmly established. This is more or less a reiteration of Solomon's accession but the narrator adds certain colour to this repetition. The use of the words: *firmly established*, catches the reader's attention. The death of David makes Solomon the undisputed powerful man on the land. When David was still alive Solomon was more of a co-ruler but the passage of his father paved the way for his total sovereignty. He held the final decision in the state.

It can be suggested that co-rulership was what was being practiced at that moment in the narration. Goody reveals that the system of co-rulership that is when the incumbent chooses his survivor while he is still alive, happens when the issues of uncertainties were to be dispensed with (1966, 8). In other words, this is

done to ensure that the man who had won the approval of the present king or kingmakers secured the office. At this moment in the narration, it appears David rules together with Solomon. This accounts for the reasons why David could instruct Solomon on such sensitive issues. Technically he was a king and had the power to order. It is thus not surprising that Solomon's accession became firmly established after David's death.

(Vss. 13-18)

From vss. 13-17, the narrator provides insight to the interesting conversation between Adonijah and Bathsheba. This switch from narration to dialogue is significant because of the insightful nature of the interaction between Adonijah and Bathsheba. Since Adonijah was pardoned by Solomon, the reader does not hear of him till this moment in the story. His reappearance thus strikes a note of curiosity in the reader. The narrator recounts that Adonijah consults Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon (vs. 13). It can be noticed by the reader that the phrase - *mother of Solomon* - attached to Bathsheba is an indirect way of the narrator revealing to the reader the daring nature of Adonijah by his approach to Bathsheba, the mother of the new king, Solomon. Adonijah certainly had something important in mind for his consultation with Bathsheba. Bathsheba asked Adonijah - *do you come as a friend?* This question did not surprise the reader. The two characters know that they are on opposite sides and each is suspicious of the other. Adonijah has lost the opportunity to be the next king and this loss certainly creates feelings of jealousy and resentment towards his rivals.

Bathsheba on the other hand would be revelling in her success in getting his son, Solomon, on the throne and will be cautious to secure the position she and her son have attained. Adonijah assured her of the peaceful nature of his visit (vs. 14). Adonijah then informed Bathsheba of his heart feelings on the way things progressed and how he thought he should have been the king but for some strange developments his brother Solomon rather found himself as king. He then tells Bathsheba he had a request for her. He told her that he had lost the position to be king but he wanted one thing and that was Abishag as a wife. This request of Adonijah, according to Walsh and Begg (1990), “is foolish and ill-fated. The royal harem was the property of the king; aspirations to it were tantamount to designs on the throne” (p. 164). Interestingly, Bathsheba did not answer in the affirmative to Adonijah’s request when Adonijah cleverly added that statement - *Do not turn away my face* (vs. 16). She only said - *speak on*. This probably means she had not been touched by Adonijah’s appeal to sympathy or she is being prudent in not answering in the affirmative. After all she did not know what Adonijah was asking for. Adonijah tells Bathsheba that Solomon would not refuse her, if she asked for this request on his behalf (vs. 18).

Adonijah’s request in vss. 15-18 revealed a lot about his character and intentions. The reader notices that Adonijah is still convinced that his attempt in exalting himself to gain the kingship was right. The phrase - *you know that the kingdom was mine* - reveals an unrepentant Adonijah. He still believed that the throne should have been his. The second part of his statement: *and all Israel expected me to be king* (vs. 15), further revealed the rebellious attitude of

Adonijah. The reader cannot help but imagine the expression which pops up on Bathsheba's face as the narrator presents Bathsheba as a passive listener to Adonijah's outpourings. Adonijah however admitted Solomon's lordship when he asserted that the Lord had a hand in the diversion of the kingship to Solomon. Adonijah was, probably, operating on the conviction that he had aroused enough sympathy from Bathsheba. Since he should have been king but could not, he needed compensation hence his request.

The reader realises that the interaction between Adonijah and Bathsheba in vss. 13-17, brings to the fore the false pretence of both characters as they both believed they could outsmart each other. The interaction between the two reveals to the reader, again, the character of Adonijah who appeared as an unwise person who believed he could easily manipulate a woman. So was the character of Bathsheba displayed as calm but a scheming woman. Adonijah had not accepted defeat and has probably devised a plan which he believed could get him back onto the throne. It was this plan of his which led him to ask for Abishag's hand in marriage. The reader knows that Abishag was a beautiful girl and would be quite a prize for Adonijah yet the request of Adonijah for Abishag did not only depend on her beauty but the request was a well calculated move which could promote Adonijah in his quest to annex the throne. This was so because Abishag had an intimate knowledge of the condition of David and was present at the interview of Bathsheba with David which led to Solomon's accession to the throne. If Adonijah, in any way, suspected Solomon's accession as a foul play on his father,

Abishag could be an important witness. Adonijah in effect by asking for Abishag was making quite a dangerous move.

The narrator does not state the psychological exercise Bathsheba was going through when Adonijah put forward his request. It is possible that Bathsheba knew the import of Adonijah's request but acted calmly on it. If she did know of the danger of Adonijah's request and the possible insecurity to her son Solomon, then she deceitfully gave Adonijah an assurance knowing that such a request would be seen as an offence and thus led to punishment. For sure, the reader knows the limit Bathsheba will go to secure the safety of her son. Her acceptance of Adonijah's request, thus, appears too superficial.

(Vss. 19-25)

Bathsheba's quest to help Adonijah secure Abishag is related in vss. 19-25. The easy acceptance of the request of Adonijah by Bathsheba should have prompted Adonijah of the real intent of Bathsheba in helping him. Adonijah's pride and over ambition which had clouded his thought prevented him from reading the actions of Bathsheba. Bathsheba on the other hand probably saw a chance to deal once and for all with her son's rival, Adonijah. Bathsheba, a queen mother, would be conversant with the customs of her land which indicated that the possession of the previous king's property especially wives was a sign of legitimate kingship. For Adonijah to have Abishag would establish a legal foothold for him to make a legitimate claim to the throne. Bathsheba thus probably knows how Solomon would react to this request. As a mother to



Solomon, she again knew of the pardon Solomon had granted to Adonijah which was in any case conditional. Recognising Adonijah's intention, she quickly agreed to his request in order to eliminate him.

She went to Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah (vs. 19). The preferential treatment given by Solomon to Bathsheba indicated the influential role she had. It is not surprising, therefore, that Adonijah wanted to use her to have access to Abishag. Bathsheba was given the right side of the king to sit. She put her request forward to Solomon (vss. 20-21).

The reader realises that as soon as the request was made Solomon's response was swift and decisive (vs. 22). Solomon told his mother that her request for Abishag for Adonijah was tantamount to asking for the kingdom for Adonijah. He, again, pointed out two factors which made the request of Adonijah dangerous. First, Adonijah is the elder of the two: Solomon and Adonijah. By this statement, Solomon is insinuating that Adonijah had the right to be king due to his birth position. The reader can sense Solomon's caution to the mother when he says to her that Adonijah was supposed to be king but through some unknown reasons he (Solomon) happens to be on the throne at the expense of Adonijah; thus how could she help him in creating danger for them? Secondly, Solomon pointed out the support Adonijah had from Joab and Abiathar and their possible involvement in this move to have Abishag as the wife for Adonijah. Solomon, in short, saw this as a breach of conduct on behalf of Adonijah. Solomon's speech in vs. 23 prompts the reader of the actions to follow. Solomon essentially calls the punishment of God on himself if he failed to deal with Adonijah. The reader at this point

remembers the words of David to Solomon. David instructed Solomon to be strong. The narrator tells nothing of Bathsheba's mood or reaction during Solomon's charged mood. She fizzles out of the narration leaving the reader wondering if Bathsheba was happy with Solomon's fury or not. Is this exactly what she had in mind: to have Solomon enraged because of Adonijah's request so that he punishes him for that?

(Vss. 26-27)

Solomon living out his father's commands moved strongly on Adonijah. He commanded Benaiah to kill Adonijah (vs. 25). Solomon quickly turned his attention on Abiathar, the priest. He told Abiathar to remain in Anathoth as a punishment. He deserved to die but because of his good deeds in the past during his service to David he was to suffer limited movement. The reader finds it difficult to understand the sudden problem Abiathar finds himself in. The only crime the reader can recollect Abiathar committing is his association with Adonijah in the attempt to make Adonijah king. Abiathar again is not part of the list of people given by David to Solomon to eliminate. The rage in Solomon after hearing Adonijah's request seemed to be the catalyst for Solomon's actions now. The reader is not informed of how Solomon came into contact with Abiathar. What is narrated is that the two are in a conversation. It is likely that since Solomon implicated Abiathar in the request made by Adonijah, Solomon felt he had to move on him. This could account for the sudden confrontation between the two. The narrator informs the reader that the disposal of Abiathar by Solomon is

in fulfilment of a prophecy against the house of Eli. It can be recalled by the reader that in I Sam. 2-3, the sons of Eli due to their corrupt practices were condemned by God.

(Vss. 28-34)

With the death of Adonijah and the exile of Abiathar, Joab begun to realise the danger he is in. He, thus, ran to safety in the tent and held the horns of the altar (vs. 28). This brought back the position Adonijah found himself in earlier. Adonijah escaped to the altar out of fear and so does Joab. When Solomon was informed of Joab's action he ordered Benaiah with the command: *go strike him down* (vs. 29). This straight unambiguous command by Solomon portrayed his continuous anger and rage. He did not play with words but gave a direct and strong command. Benaiah gets to where Joab was and told him to come from the altar but Joab refused. He proclaimed: *I will die here*. Benaiah not knowing what to do went back to Solomon and informed him of Joab's response. Benaiah's actions intrigue the reader. Solomon issued out an unambiguous command but Benaiah appeared he wanted to negotiate with Joab or probably trick him to descend from the holy place he was seeking safety from. Possibly Benaiah did not want to kill Joab beside the altar. He reported his interaction with Joab to Solomon. Solomon again issues a command to Benaiah. This repetition of Solomon is important because he expanded his initial statements to include more details. First, Benaiah was to strike Joab down and bury him. This statement revealed Solomon's continuous zeal to deal ruthlessly with his enemies. Again, it

revealed that Solomon was ready to breach certain conventions to kill his perceived enemies. He did not give a second thought to Joab's location: that certainly was not important to him; Joab simply had to die irrespective of where he was. The death of Joab, according to Solomon was needed to atone for the guilt Joab placed on David and his household by killing innocent people. Thus, Solomon was carrying out instructions given to him by his father David (vs.5). Joab misread Solomon's capabilities. Joab's use of the altar was a reflection of his beliefs that Solomon would not resort to extreme measures but this unfortunately did not happen. Benaiah killed him right at his place of sanctuary.

(Vs. 35)

The elimination of Joab leads to the appointment of Benaiah as the commander of the army and the exile of Abiathar led to the appointment of Zadok as the priest of the state. The appointment of these two personalities to the vacant positions does not come as a surprise to the reader. The two were strong personalities in the Solomon camp and had been instrumental in the succession of Solomon's accession to the throne. These appointments were possibly Solomon's way of thanking the two for their service and efforts in getting him to the throne. Zadok, it should be remembered, is the one who anointed Solomon. He, from the beginning, had always been part of the Solomon camp. The reader feels his efforts have been crowned by this appointment. These appointments make it difficult for the reader to ignore the perception that Zadok and Benaiah had always coveted the positions they have just been given. These positions were strong motivation for

their unrelentless support for Solomon. Thus they had a reason for following Solomon and they have not been disappointed.

For all this while, the reader has not heard of the sons of Barzillia who were supposed to be given preferential treatment by Solomon. Solomon so far has been concentrating on eliminating his perceived enemies. He has been revengeful and vindictive so far. His accession to the throne had produced bloodshed justified by the reason that the deceased have been threats to his position. Solomon's disinterest in the sons of Barzillia communicates to the reader the priority of Solomon. He was preoccupied with securing his position. Though the need to be nice to the sons of Barzillia came as a command from his father, Solomon certainly did not consider that to be a priority. It can even be suggested by the reader that Solomon was not dealing with the commands of his father but instead, he was executing his own plan. Abiathar was not part of David's list but Solomon punished him and the sons of Barzillia have been neglected so far in the narrative. This is enough reason to point out the personal agenda Solomon had for his actions.

(Vss. 36-38a)

The clause: *Then the king summoned Shimei and said to him*, which begins vs.36, pointed to the reader that Solomon was still in the process of dealing with possible threats to him. He felt bound to the David's oath though for some reasons the sons of Barzillia have been relegated from that oath. The summon of Shimei raised the question of whether Solomon was indeed fulfilling his father's charge

or was dealing with a threat to his position from the Benjaminites with their spokesperson, Shimei. It can be recalled by the reader that during the crisis of Absalom, Shimei unleashed a curse upon David but reversed that curse when David returned to Jerusalem (II Sam. 19:16-24). Shimei's threat was not only a threat from an individual but that of a whole tribe. The elimination of Shimei, hence, was necessary to neutralize his curse on David and his house.

Solomon told Shimei to remain in Jerusalem; he should not attempt to go out of Jerusalem since such a move would result in his demise. The reader cannot help but wonder the tactics of Solomon. The command by David on Shimei was clear; Solomon is supposed to use his wisdom to deal with him. From a cursory look, one might reflect that Solomon was being relaxed with Shimei but on a second look the restrictions placed on Shimei were knotty. Solomon's portrayal of his character so far as an uncompromising fellow hinted the reader that Solomon was not merely placing a restriction on Shimei but placing him in an uncomfortable state and position. Shimei had been more or less placed under surveillance in Jerusalem where he probably could not have access to his people the Benjaminites. Shimei's acceptance of Solomon's decree is probably because Shimei considered himself lucky to receive such consideration from Solomon. He, by now, knows the fate of Joab and Adonijah and to be placed under surveillance in Jerusalem was more of a favour than a punishment. Shimei, then, responded that: *I accept.*

(Vss. 38b-44)

Three years pass by and two slaves of Shimei escape to Achish in Gath. This was a difficult case for Shimei: it was not only a slave who had escaped but two slaves. Two slaves are just too much to lose and Shimei was in a tight spot as to what to do. The destination of the escaped slaves was beyond Jerusalem and surely any attempt to rescue the slaves would mean leaving Jerusalem thus breaching his oath to Solomon. The narrator reports that Shimei rose, saddled his ass and went to Achish. This successive flow of verbs revealed that Shimei did not hesitate in deciding to leave and search for his escaped slaves. This can possibly be because Shimei thought he had a good reason to leave Jerusalem: he was looking for his escaped slaves. Surely, there cannot not be anything sinister about this. Shimei returns with his slaves, he has been successful in embarking on the journey.

This news however got to Solomon (vs. 41). Solomon, thus, summoned Shimei. Solomon reminded Shimei of an oath he made to God and himself. This supposed oath Solomon is talking about baffles the reader as he/she finds no oath of Shimei as Solomon claims. In the first encounter between Solomon and Shimei Solomon issued a command to Shimei of which he also accepted. It is thus strange that Solomon referred to an oath by Shimei. After referring to the unknown oath, Solomon puts a question to Shimei: *why then, have you not kept the oath of the Lord and the command I gave you* (vs. 43). He did not wait for a response from Shimei but launched a judgment on Shimei. The judgment he placed on Shimei

means that he believed there was no excuse for Shimei and he is not ready to listen to one either.

All this intrigues the reader. Shimei was a passive subject who had a dispute with the king. It appears Solomon allows Shimei no room to free himself from the tight corner he had placed him. He accuses Shimei of taking an oath which he did not make in the first encounter they had. He asked Shimei a question but did not allow him to answer. The reader cannot help but feel sorry for Shimei. The encounter between him and Solomon was certainly an encounter between unequals: a subject and a king.

(Vss. 45-46)

Solomon reminds Shimei of a misdeed he committed against his father, David. This appeared to be the main reason for Shimei's present woes. The phrase: *you know*, which Solomon told Shimei, meant that Solomon did not need a witness to accuse Shimei as he could not deny the charge against him. It is the Lord who thus punishes Shimei of his deeds as Solomon pointed out. Solomon again tried to point out to Shimei that the Lord played a role in his breach of agreement in order to put him in this situation: the Lord was against him for his wickedness. In all this, Shimei remained defenceless. Solomon celebrated the transfer of the throne from David to him as he declared the indefinite existence of the Davidic throne (vs. 45). He then ordered Benaiah who had been doing all the assassinations for him to strike him. The narrator ends the narration with the statement that: *thus, was the kingdom made secure in Solomon's hand*. This last



statement reveals a lot to the reader. Solomon was now secured which meant he had eliminated all possible threats from the scene. Solomon has nothing to fear any more. The figurative manner the narrator describes the security of the kingdom depicts that Solomon literally had the kingdom in his hands. He was in total and absolute control of affairs. The kingdom now firmly depended on him and he had sufficient power to maintain it.

Once again the various factors such as the personalities involved and their motives had serious consequences for the turn of events as depicted in the narrative. After Solomon ascended the throne one could see a conscious effort on the part of Solomon to eliminate rivals and oppositions to his newly attained status. According to Ntrel (2004), “it is not uncommon to see new kings eliminating all their rivals” (p. 72). This elimination was deemed important to secure the new king’s position. In a society where the question of succession had not been clearly delineated and outlined, competition and conflicts were bound to be the order of the day until a candidate emerged dominant. Even so, rivals had to be dealt with thoroughly in order to consolidate the throne. All the major stakeholders connected to the transfer of power became entangled in the quest for success for their respective candidates.

The elimination of Adonijah comes to the fore in this respect. Though Adonijah made a wrongful move in requesting for Abishag, it was quite obvious that Bathsheba manipulated the situation to achieve her goal. When Adonijah put his request to her, she sensed the danger Adonijah posed though her son was on

the throne. She, therefore, did not hesitate to put Adonijah's request to Solomon; and this was what led to Adonijah's death.

The vested interest of the various stakeholders could clearly be seen in the personality of Benaiah and Zadok, the priest. The promotion they gained confirms the notion that they were supportive of Solomon because of what they, equally, stood to gain. The speed and enthusiasm Benaiah undertook Solomon's orders of assassination can not only be explained against the background of a faithful servant in the service of his king. Besides this conspicuous motivation was the underlying incentive for a place in the palace or position in the state. What made such a motivation strong for people like Benaiah was the fact that there were others who would want to get to such positions. Joab aligned himself with Adonijah because Adonijah could have provided the position and the power he needed. The case of Zadok is also revealing about this matter. On the treatment meted out to Abiathar by Solomon, Devries (1985) says, "strong pressure from Zadok must have been at work, not merely Solomon's resentment of Abiathar's support for Adonijah" (p. 39). Zadok possibly had a stake in his fight for Solomon and Abiathar stood in his way for obtaining his price.

The dynastic mode of succession has won the day as Solomon's accession portrayed. There was not any clear procedure for the transfer of power and the various candidates all gave their all to attain the highest position of the land. One observation of this mode of succession was that the contending parties were limited to few groups within the larger society and, thus, the larger society was not necessarily drawn into the affair. The monarchical form of government had

been sustained with the succession taking place. The question of the transfer of power having been dealt with was most likely to be swept under the carpet till the situation of a similar nature comes up again. It could be said, however, that the transfer of power which was rudimentary in the early stages of the monarchy could become more defined as the institution of monarchy became more entrenched in the society.

### **Summary**

The chapter dealt with I Kings chapter two which is considered by scholars as the conclusion to the pericope known as the Throne Succession Dispute. The exegesis of the chapter which is a continuation of the exegesis in chapter three reveals the continuous struggle of the two camps in securing the throne. By the end of chapter three, it was pointed through the exegesis of chapter one that Solomon's camp had gained the upper hand and thus caused a deadly blow to the camp of Adonijah. This chapter revealed the continuous attempts of the camp of Adonijah or at least Adonijah himself to fight for throne through his request for Abishag. Again, this chapter has brought to light the actions taken by Solomon to secure his throne through the elimination of all possible threats to his throne. Also, the chapter uncovered the motivation of the various personalities involved in the process of the transfer of power and how risky it was for one to engage in such a process. The chapter ended with Solomon comfortably securing his position after eliminating his contenders and cleverly rewarding his

supporters. The next chapter deals with the summary and conclusion of this entire study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **IMPLICATIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The study aimed to employ text centred approach of reader-response criticism to interpret the text, I Kings 1-2. This was to illuminate succession problems during the transfer of power from David to Solomon. Questions such as, what accounted for the recurrence of the phenomenon of disputes and how the occurrence of these disputes affected the chances of candidates eligible for the throne were discussed. There are a number of issues which bear on the Ghanaian context of the transmission of power. In this respect, the section below draws implications from the reading of the text for the Ghanaian community. After this, a summary of the study is given followed by the conclusion.

#### **Implications of 1Kings 1-2 for the Ghanaian Community**

Transmission of power is an integral part of a political system. It is a built in mechanism within the political system which does not only ensure the continuity of the political system within the society but equally the continuous existence of the society. Transmission of power or succession is a practice undertaken by various institutions within the Ghanaian society. On the national

level, there is the national government machinery which consists of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. The highest offices in these arms of government go through succession processes at various intervals to ensure their continuity. There is also the local government system. This system is part of modern governance practice where the national government sends governance to the door steps of local people (Ahwoi, 2010). In Ghana, the local government system is made up of a four/three tier structure headed by the Metropolitan/Municipal/District chief executive and assisted by the Assembly (Ahwoi, 2010). Here again there is a succession plan to ensure the transfer of power at this level. Alongside the local government system is the traditional government system. The traditional government system is distinct from the local government system and it is allowed to operate alongside the modern governance practice (Ahwoi, 2010). The traditional governance system consists of the paramount chief, followed by the sub-chiefs and other offices such as the linguist.

There are, also, other institutions such as the religious institutions and business organisations which all have mechanisms for transfer of power within their various offices. The discussion below, however, will concentrate on the traditional government institution in relation to the lessons that can be derived from the text.

The institution of chieftaincy is the focus for the discussion because of a number of reasons. First, it is a political institution which has a lot in common with the institution of monarchy in ancient Israel. Second, there are numerous cases of succession problems which the institution faces. This view is shared by

A. K. Awedoba (2006) who writes that succession crises are rife in traditional communities when the communities “have to find successors to fill vacancies created through abdications, depositions or death” ( p. 409). The importance of the process of succession within the institution of chieftaincy is underscored by the fact that the institution has lost its prominence with the inception of the modern governance practice. Succession disputes, in effect, mar the importance of this traditional institution. As a result, the major role it plays in the development of the society and its people is overlooked.

The story of Solomon’s ascension to the Davidic throne bears on the traditional practice of succession in many ways. As the reading of 1 Kings 1-2 revealed, in a similar manner, the transmission of power within the institution of chieftaincy in traditional societies presents some challenges. According to Awedoba (2006), one reason for succession conflicts for the position of a chief in Upper East is the lack of clearly defined criteria for a selection of a successor. We see this lack of a defined procedure during Solomon’s accession. In such a situation, individuals who see themselves as potential successors fancy their chances to accede the throne. Rival groups emerge from this state of affairs. Enmity begins to take centre stage and this eventually leads to bloodshed.

When Solomon acceded the throne, he took steps to secure his newly attained position. This meant eliminating all potential threats and all perceived rivals. There have been reports of violent clashes between two parties in their attempt to put their candidate on the throne in many chieftaincy hotspots in Ghana. Sometimes, the various camps in competition all set up their respective

candidate as the chief. This leads to division within the community and tension builds up as well.

Another interesting development evident in Solomon's succession is the participation of certain individuals in the entire process. There were personalities such as Abiathar and Joab who showed their allegiance for Adonijah and promoted his cause. Solomon also had Nathan and Bathsheba to help him. This is also realised in Ghana during transmission of power within the chieftaincy institution. Various people with vested interest in the position rally behind their favourite candidates. The support of such individuals to the candidates could be monetary. Many at times the supporters fuel the conflict between the various candidates because of their commitments such as a financial one, to the process which they do not want to lose.

These problems of succession within the institution of chieftaincy create mixed feelings among Ghanaians especially in the area of the relevance of this traditional institution. The uncertainty with the process of succession within the institution of chieftaincy, however, can be dealt with if the procedure for choosing a successor is clearly set out and documented. In most Ghanaian societies, the succession procedure exists orally and this sometimes complicates the succession process. When documentation takes place, a sense of check and balances would be in place to prevent individuals from having their way. Conflicts appear to be indispensable in human life, nonetheless, it should be given least opportunity to rear its head. Until concrete steps are taken to document the process of succession



within the various societies, succession problems will continue to damage the image of the institution when a seat becomes vacant.

### **Summary of the Study**

The study attempted to provide an alternative reading of the text which has been extensively subjected to historical critical reading. The text centred approach of reader-response criticism was used on the text. In this sense, chapter one gave an introduction to the study which dealt with the imperative need of societies in instituting political systems and ensuring that these political systems attained continuity, which, again, could be realised through the system of succession. Again, the various political systems adopted by the ancient Israelite were identified and linked to the question of the succession process to be used in ensuring the smooth transfer of power. The research problem, firstly, showed the lack of detailed exploration on the phenomenon of succession problems during the transfer of power from David to Solomon and the need to contribute on this subject. The research, therefore, intended to contribute to the discussion on the nature of Israelite kingship in relation to the issue of succession and identify the factors which led to succession disputes in ancient Israel during the united monarchy.

Chapter two looked at the concept and practice of succession and inheritance in ancient Israel before the institution of monarchy and during the united monarchy. It was observed from the discussions that the institution of monarchy was an alien institution within the Israelite society. The introduction of

this institution within the Israelite society meant the clash of innovations such as the dynastic principle of succession and the old traditions such as charismatic principles which the tribal confederacy represented. This inevitable clash of change and continuity was realized in many aspect of the Israelites' life. The system of succession was more prominent in this clash of change and continuity. It was not surprising, therefore, that the charismatic principle of succession which was characteristic of the old tradition was constantly under threat from the dynastic principle of succession which the monarchy introduced. Also, it was realized that the dynastic principle which gradually supplanted the charismatic principle was itself to be guided by traditions on inheritance in the pre-monarchic times. The right of primogeniture was to be upheld even in dynastic succession. The problem was that these guidelines were, however, not strictly adhered to and possibly never adhered to and this further complicated the already unstable and novel system of succession process within the institution. Again, there lacked a clearly spelt out stage to stage process of choosing a successor to a vacant throne during the united monarchy based on the traditions preserved in the Old Testament. This deficiency could probably be due to the fact that ancient Israel as a society was just beginning to get accustomed to the institution of monarchy. What existed in the absence of the clearly defined procedure was the rudimentary form of the dynastic system of succession which was later developed, especially in the south after the division of the kingdom. Since the office being transferred dealt with a highly respected position, a position of power, any absence of clear

rules to guide such a transfer is a recipe for disaster. This was what happened during Solomon's accession.

Chapter three presented a narrative critical reading on I Kings 1 to bring to the fore the succession problems which arose during the very last days of King David. From the exegesis, it was realised that ancient Israel had no definite procedure on the transfer of the office of the king. This opened wide the question of who succeeded the aging king, David. Adonijah who was the eldest surviving son of the king upheld the principle of primogeniture and tried annexing the position of head of ancient Israel kingdom. His brother Solomon had the support of certain high officials who were able to get him on the throne through obscure means.

Chapter four continued and ended the exegesis of the text. It was revealed that Solomon had to undertake several assassinations to consolidate his hold on the throne. He killed his brother who was his contender. This was, however, achieved through the help of his mother, Bathsheba. He then turned his attention onto the supporters of his brother whom he again saw as a threat to his throne. These assassinations were possible because of the undefined nature of the question of succession. Ancient Israel as a society with this new form of political system, that is, the institution of monarchy had not found a way to clearly and unambiguously outline the succession process.

## **Conclusions**

Political systems are imperative to every society's development. It is the engine which operates to ensure the society's collective goal. The sustenance of every political system partly depends on the system of succession which is adopted to ensure that power is transferred from one person to the other. The system of succession thus surfaces to be an essential aspect of a political system. Ancient Israel in the early stages after adopting the institution of monarchy had problems with the transfer of power. Their former political system which they had become accustomed to was highly dependent on charismatic principles as a key to holding the office of a ruler or a leader of the society. The adoption of the institution of monarchy ushered in a new epoch in the political history of the Israelites and this called for changes. The old tradition was strong with the people while certain elements in the society rooted for the changes that the new system brought. The various transfers of power which took place in the united monarchy points to the tensions between the dynastic innovation characterised by the monarchy and the charismatic principles revealed in the old tradition.

The transfer of power from David to Solomon brought to light the factors which facilitated the succession disputes. First, the nation had by the time of David not delineated the succession system to employ. The question of who should succeed David was left open and this fuelled tensions and conflicts. David's reign was quite long and he was smart in setting up administrative machinery to assist in the running of the nation but he failed to set up a system to address the problem of succession.

Secondly, the personality of the king, David, was also a factor. David, probably, out of excessive love for his children, could not strongly confront his children when they were wrong. His lackadaisical attitude towards confronting his children caused him a lot of problems and the conflict between Solomon and Adonijah was also due to this attitude. David stood by when his son Adonijah proceeded to make himself king while he was alive. The problem is not that David did not stop Adonijah because he was wrong (his silence could mean he approved of it) but he did not come out publicly to endorse or condemn his act. This gave the Solomon camp the opportunity to step in and provide a counter plan to Adonijah's.

Thirdly, the innovations the institution of monarchy introduced which was mainly seen in the dynastic principles was opposed to the age long traditions the Israelites held. Dynastic mode of succession meant that power was concentrated into one family unlike the open system where anyone could be the leader depending on who the charisma of Yahweh fell upon. Dynastic mode of succession, again, meant that authority, in some sense, was limited to a particular family unit and this could have produced bad feelings among certain elements of the society. Again dynastic principles limited the role of Yahweh in the process of choosing a king. Though, a king was anointed signifying the presence of Yahweh his election, this was of less a role as that played by Yahweh in the charismatic successions.

The above factors culminated in shaping the transfer of power from David to Solomon. Solomon's accession from the analysis cannot continue to enjoy the

classical view of being an event which was sanctioned by God. Many issues reveal that human factors played a significant role in the way things turned up and Solomon's accession was a calculated effort of his camp and with some luck achieved success. The state of Judah after the division of the kingdom was able to establish the dynastic form of kingship with its dynastic successions. The Northern Kingdom continued to struggle with dynastic kingship and charismatic kingship till it fell in 722 BCE.

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