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ÉDITORIAL

Dix articles composent le présent numéro. Ces articles se rapportent à trois domaines de la théologie, en l'occurrence : la missiologie et le christianisme mondial, les sciences bibliques, et la théologie systématique. C'est dans cet ordre que ces articles sont présentés dans ce numéro. Ces articles témoignent l'absence d'un thème commun, un aspect réfléchi sous-tendant notre motivation à les délivrer au public étant l'importance des recherches pour le mûrissement et l'ancrage de la foi chrétienne évangélique en Afrique. Les auteurs de ces travaux exercent dans quatre institutions : l'Université Shalom de Bunia, RDC ; la Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui, Centrafricaine ; l'Université Évangélique du Tchad, Tchad ; et Pan Africa Christian University, Kenya. Quelques mots sur le contenu de ce qui est sous vos yeux suffisent.

« Kimpa Vita et le mouvement Antonianiste dans le Royaume Kongo », par le Professeur Georges Pirwoth Atido, retrace les origines des mouvements de revitalisation dans le christianisme africain. L'article révèle que le mouvement politico-religieux de Kimpa Vita, connu sous le nom de l'*antonianisme*, avait prôné un syncrétisme qui mettait en avant une image du Christ africain et la résistance à la domination portugaise. Ainsi, Kimpa conspira avec le Général Pierre IV, l'un des prétendants au trône du Royaume Kongo, mais elle fut capturée. En 1706, lui et son bébé furent brûlés vifs pour hérésie, à l'instigation des missionnaires capucins. Bien que Kimpa Vita ait été exécutée, son mouvement a perduré et a influencé des mouvements de revitalisation ultérieurs, symbolisant la quête d'autonomie culturelle et religieuse, leitmotiv de la création de plusieurs églises d'initiatives africaines.

Georges Pirwoth Atido et Ismaël Kusemererwa Byaruhanga, dans « La Bonne Nouvelle et la théologie des sons dans les Églises d'Initiative Africaine en RD Congo », analysent le style de culte bruyant au sein des Églises d'Initiative Africaine en RDC. Ils suggèrent que le degré d'acuité des sons dans les services de culte d'un bon nombre d'églises implantées

au nord-est du Congo est nocif. Les effets de cette exposition continuelle à la musique et aux prédications forts, arguent-ils, peuvent s'absorber sans douleur au cours des années, tout en produisant des dommages progressifs et irréversibles aux cellules ciliées cochléaires et entraîner des troubles auditifs dans l'avenir. Ce style de culte assourdissant, opinent-ils, est soutenu par une herméneutique d'adoration fondée sur une interprétation littérale des certains passages des Psaumes et une théologie d'adoration « globale ».

Dans, « la Conception du mal dans la vision traditionnelle du monde des Lugbara en RD Congo et ses implications missiologiques », Enosh Anguandia Adia Edre présente la vision du monde des Lugbara du Congo. Anguandia démontre combien la conception traditionnelle du monde par les Lugbara de cette partie du globe influence sa conception chrétienne du péché.

« La signification et usage des verbes **שמע** et **שכל** : une analyse de Néhémie 8.1-2, 13 », que nous propose Samuel Ezua Miria, part d'un constat selon lequel plusieurs versions françaises de la Bible traduisent les verbes **שמע** et **שכל**, respectivement dans Néhémie 8.1-2 et 8.13, simplement et uniformément par « entendre » ; pourtant, il ne semble pas en être ainsi dans le texte hébreu. Ezua argue que le verbe **שמע** est employé par le narrateur pour décrire l'action de tout le peuple dans son ensemble devant la Torah, tandis que le verbe **שכל** présente l'action séparée des leaders du peuple face à la Torah. L'étude sémantique de ces deux verbes, par l'auteur, dégage leurs différentes significations, de laquelle résultent quelques implications pour le contexte des églises et des sociétés africaines.

Victor Lonu Budha, dans « The Davidic Covenant and Its Significance », infère que l'alliance davidique est un concept-clé de l'Ancien Testament et de la Bible. Selon lui, les chercheurs ont accordé une attention considérable à ce concept et l'ont abordé sous différents angles ; mais que, l'alliance davidique, telle qu'elle apparaît en 2 Samuel 7, suit le modèle de l'alliance et des traités dans l'ancien Proche-Orient. Son importance, opine l'auteur, est théologiquement solide et met l'accent sur la fidélité de Dieu. Son apparition et sa mention dans les livres prophétiques, poursuit-il, soulignent

son importance. Elle constitue, pour l'auteur, la base de la fidélité de Dieu dans l'accomplissement de ses promesses au peuple juif.

Dans « Intendance du présent eschatologique selon Luc 12.54-56 », Corneille Kibuka Kutionga s'interroge sur la question de l'intendance du temps eschatologique, temps auquel les Juifs s'attendaient. L'auteur note que, malheureusement, les Juifs ne l'avaient pas saisie contrairement à leurs occupations habituelles dont ils observaient les signes de temps pour les accomplir.

Abel Ngarsouledé, dans « Amitié de Jésus avec Lazare : implications pour le conflit de leadership », tente d'expliquer le fait que dans une même entité, une même institution ou une structure, l'on parle de conflits de leadership malgré l'investissement énorme que font les gouvernements avec l'appui des organisations internationales dans ce secteur.

Dans « Les vertus de la langue pour le développement de l'homme : regard d'un théologien africain », Ngarsouledé, replace la langue dans le contexte original, le contexte des relations interpersonnelles et son rapport au pouvoir en vue de réaliser ses enjeux et sa dynamique. Il souscrit que le don du langage est d'origine divine en raison du fait que l'homme seul est créé à l'image de Dieu. Selon lui, dans son efficacité transcendante, la vertu de la parole revêt un caractère qui dépasse les possibilités de l'homme. Parmi les substrats de la culture, argue-t-il, la langue occupe la place la plus importante : elle est l'expression intelligible et articulée de la culture ; elle est son véhicule et son symbole pour montrer dans son environnement son identité.

Théophile Makpela Ngboyo, pour sa part, dans « croyance et connaissance messianique dans la littérature intertestamentaire, et les malentendus entre Jésus, les chefs religieux et certains Juifs en Jean 6-8 », explore la relation entre la croyance et la connaissance messianique dans la littérature intertestamentaire et les malentendus entre Jésus, les chefs religieux et certains Juifs dans l'Évangile selon Jean.

La « théologie et précarité de la vie et de la santé en Afrique », par Enoch Tompté-Tom, constate que malgré les ressources minières que regorge l'Afrique, la précarité y perdure. Cette précarité de vie et de la santé en

Afrique, affirme l'auteur, suscite en nous des interrogations. Si un continent est riche en ressources naturelles et s'il reste le continent le plus pauvre du monde et même dans le domaine de la santé, il y a un problème. Il est donc impérieux, selon l'auteur, de justifier le contexte, de présenter les objectifs et de décrire l'état de la précarité de vie et de la santé en Afrique et les différents enjeux y relatifs sur le plan biblique et théologique.

Nous vous convions donc de lire minutieusement les contributions ci-présentes.

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The Davidic Covenant and Its Significance¹

Victor Lonu Budha²

Abstract

The Davidic covenant is a key concept in the Old Testament and in the Bible, as a whole. Scholars have given considerable attention to this concept and have approached it from different angles. The Davidic covenant, as it appears in 2 Samuel 7, follows the pattern of the covenant and treaties ratification in the Ancient Near East (ANE). Its significance is theologically sound, stressing on the faithfulness of God. The Davidic covenant is historically significant. It constitutes the basis of God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promises to the Jewish people.

Résumé

L'Alliance davidique est un concept-clé de l'Ancien Testament et de la Bible dans son ensemble. Les chercheurs ont accordé une attention considérable à ce concept et l'ont abordé sous différents angles. L'alliance davidique, telle qu'elle apparaît dans 2 Samuel 7, suit le modèle de l'alliance et des traités dans l'ancien Proche-Orient. Son importance est théologiquement solide et met l'accent sur la fidélité de Dieu. Son apparition et sa mention dans les livres prophétiques soulignent son importance. Elle constitue la base de la fidélité de Dieu dans l'accomplissement de ses promesses au peuple juif.

Keywords: Davidic covenant, treaties, significance, Old Testament

Mots-clés: Alliance davidique, traités, importance, Ancien Testament

1. Introduction

The Davidic covenant is an important topic in the Old Testament (OT). An appropriate understanding of this topic depends, at some point, on the

¹ This paper is a modified and adapted version of a section in my dissertation entitled "An Intertextual Study of the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7//Ezekiel 34 and 37)".

² Victor Lonu Budha is doctor (PhD) in the Old Testament. He is professor of the Old Testament at Pan Africa Christian University (PAC), Nairobi, Kenya.

understanding of the notion of covenant or treaties in the Ancient Near East (ANE). One of the reasons is that the text of the OT was written in a specific culture, a culture that shares similarities with the cultures of the neighboring people. The study will consider first a few issues regarding treaties in the ANE, then the idea of covenant in the OT, and finally the Davidic covenant in the text of 2 Samuel 7.

The comparative and the narrative approaches will drive this article. The comparative approach will help to establish similarities between the ANE treaties and the Davidic covenant, while the narrative approach will consider how the plot develops in 2 Sam 7:8-16. The question the research seeks to answer to is to find out the significance of the Davidic covenant to the message of the Bible. In other words, what is the contribution of the Davidic covenant to YHWH's people and to the biblical corpus? Thus, the thesis of this paper is that the Davidic covenant has theological, literary, and historical significance for Israel and the text of the HB. The Hebrew word used for covenant is *b'rit* and refers also to a wide diversity of commitments bound by oath in different types of relationships (cf. Josh 9:6; 1 Kings 15:19; Gen 14:13; 31:44; Jer 34:8-10; 1 Sam 20:14-17; Mal 2:14).³

2. Covenants and Treaties in the ANE

Dennis J. McCarthy concluded that treaties from Hatti, Syria, and Assyria have common basic features and background.⁴ The two main types of treaties recognized in the ANE are the parity and the vassal treaties.

2.1. Parity Treaties

Parity treaties refer to agreements between two rulers of different nations who have equal status. An example is the Hattusili-Ramesses treaty which was between Ramesses II of Egypt and the Great King Hattusili III of Hatti.⁵ This treaty has been preserved in two versions: the hieroglyphic Egyptian

³ Peter John Gentry, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-theological Understanding of the Covenants*, Wheaton, Crossway, 2018, 2nd edn, pp. 162-3.

⁴ Dennis J. McCarthy & Stephen J. Wellum, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*, AnBib 21A, Rome, Rome Biblical Institute, 1981, p. 140.

⁵ Dietrich Sühnle, "Forerunners of the Hattusili-Ramesses Treaty," *British Museum Studies on Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 6 (2006), p. 59, available at <http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/6e%20Forerunners.pdf> (accessed 10 June 2017).

and the Akkadian versions.⁶ The existence of the two versions is the result of the process in which the agreement was made. To get the final form of the treaty, the two states actively participated in its production in this process.⁷

The process to come up with the treaty indicates that the representative of Egypt and Hatti acted in their capacity of being equal —the reason why it is called a “parity treaty”. Apart from stressing on the equality of the two kings, the purpose of such a treaty was to establish peace between the signatory parties. A translation of the treaty as quoted by Noel Weeks reads,

[The treaty of R]amses, [beloved] of Amon, the great king, king of the [land of Egypt, the hero] with Hatusilis, [the great king], the king of the land of Hatti, his brother, for the granting of [great] peace and great [brotherhood ...] between then fore[ver].

Behold now, I have granted [beautiful] brotherhood (and) beautiful peace between us forever to grant the beautiful peace and the beautiful brotherhood [according to the purpose for] the land of Egypt with the land of Hatti forever. Thus behold the purpose of the great king, king of the land of Egypt, [and] the great king of the land of Hatti. From eternity the god, [by a treaty fo]r eternity, did not grant the making of war between them.⁸

While the concern of the treaty is peace, it is based on the fact that the two kings signing the treaty are equal. In the text of the agreement, their equality is described by the adjective “great”.

2.2 Vassal Treaties

The Hittite vassal/suzerainty treaties are “the agreements between the kings of Hatti and their dependent princes.”⁹ Contrary to the parity treaties, the vassal treaties were an imposed condition which did not equally engage

⁶ McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, p. 46.

⁷ Sørensen, “Forerunners of the Hattusili-Ramesses Treaty”, p. 59.

⁸ Noel Weeks, *Admonition and Curse: The Ancient Near Eastern Treaty/Covenant Form as a Problem in Inter-cultural Relationships*, JSOTSup 407, London, T & T Clark, 2004, p. 73.

⁹ McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, p. 51.

the two parties. The focus “was to reinforce the interests of the suzerain by arguments from history and oath-bound affirmations of loyalty on the part of the vassal states backed up by divine sanctions.”¹⁰ McCarthy states that “One might almost wonder if these are truly treaties. They are so one-sided in making demands almost exclusively on the lesser prince that they must have been more or less imposed on him.”¹¹ This is a treaty between people or nations who are not equal; a kind of vassal-lord relationship, which was not based on a mutual search of peace, but on the fear of invasion and destruction.¹² Even though the vassal treaties were not based on equality, the aspect of relationship between the two parties remains one of its characteristics. While the weaker party sought protection from the stronger party, the latter also needed the former.¹³

The one-sided aspect of the vassal treaties emphasizes its selfishness. In these treaties, the vassal party was not involved in drafting the agreement as it was, for example, between Hatti and Egypt. On the other side, the expectation of the vassal was to seek protection from its lord.¹⁴ In the vassal treaties, the suzerain made sure that his vassal was put in a complete submission. As example, the text of a vassal treaty between Suppiluliumas and Shattiwaza of Mitani reads:

[Thus speaks] Shattiwaza, son of Tushratta, ki[ng of the land of] Mitanni: ‘Before [Sh]uttarna, son of Artatama [king of the Hurri land] changed [...] of the land of Mitanni, Artatama, the king, his father, acted wrongly. The pal[aceof the k]ings, together with its prosperity he consumed to give to the land of Ashur and the land of Alse.

If t[hou, Shatti]waza and the people of the [Hurri] land to n[ot keep the]se words of this treaty, then may these gods of the oa[th destroy the Shattiwaza and the people of [Hurri] along with y[our] land, your wives and [your sons] and everything of yours.

¹⁰ Gentry & Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, p. 166.

¹¹ McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, p. 51.

¹² Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, AnBib 88, Rome, Biblical Institute Press, 1982, p. 93.

¹³ George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Biblical Colloquium, 1955, p. 30.

¹⁴ Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, p. 96.

If I Shattiwaza son of the king, and the people of Hurri do not keep the words of this treaty and the oath; I Shattiwaza, along with other wives and we, people of Hurri, along with our wives, sons and land—as a pine tree when it is cut down has no shoots, like this pine tree, shall I, Shattiwaza, together with the other wives I take, and we, the people of Hurri, along with our lands, wives, and sons, like the pine tree, have no offspring.¹⁵

This text shows the commitment of the vassal party to pay allegiance to the suzerain party. The non-respect of the treaty will definitely attract punishment or curse on the vassal, his household and his people.

The difference between the parity or royal and the vassal treaties resides in “the fact that a suzerainty treaty places the emphasis on the interstate relationships (expressed in terms of the monarch’s personal dealings), while the grant treaty has its focus more on the interpersonal relationships, and the favour of the greater king to the lesser.”¹⁶

3. Covenants in the Old Testament

For the Jewish people, covenant with YHWH appears as a key factor in their relationships. The theme of covenant constitutes a main component when it comes to the unity of the biblical stories. In the Noahic covenant we have the stability of the cosmic structure. The Abrahamic covenant contains the promise of people and land. The Davidic covenant promises life, security, and prosperity,¹⁷ being a perpetuity of a dynastic covenant.

In the OT there are two main types of covenants: the obligatory and the promissory covenants.¹⁸ However, scholars, like Laura E. Mumme, do not share the same view. Mumme views three different types of covenants:

¹⁵ Weeks, *Admonition and Curse*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁶ John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6*, JSOTSup 395, London, T & T Clark, 2004, p. 183.

¹⁷ Gentry & Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, p. 171. Friedman is quoted from Richard Elliott Friedman, “The Hiding of the Face: An Essay on the Literary Unity of Biblical Narrative”, in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, Jacob Neusner, Levine A. Baruch & Ernest S. Frerichs (eds), Philadelphia, Fortress, 1987, p. 215.

¹⁸ Moshe Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East”, *JAOS* (1970), p. 184.

Abrahamic, Sinaitic, and Davidic.¹⁹ These three covenants reflect either three or two types of covenants. In my view, they reflect two types, since the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenant belong to the same category of promissory covenant.

3.1 The Obligatory Covenant

The obligatory covenant refers to that covenant made by YHWH to his people, which will be fulfilled if the people carefully observe what YHWH requested of them; it is a conditional covenant. It means that the Israelites were at the center for the realization of the covenant. An example of this covenant is in Exodus 19:5-6 stipulating that Israel will be a special people for God on the condition to obey YHWH's commandment. Victor R. Salanga indicates that "The obligatory type of covenant (Mosaic/Sinaitic covenant) is understood as conditional. It is a covenant formulated in terms of stipulations, with attendant curses and blessing depending on the people's keeping of the stipulations—that is to say, blessings for obeying them and curses for disobeying them. The stress is on the responsibility of Israel."²⁰

The obligatory covenant followed the pattern of the suzerain-vassal treaty in the ANE.²¹ Salanga observes that the obligatory covenant "is modeled on the suzerain-vassal treaties of the Ancient Near East where the vassal is obligated to his master, king or suzerain. The curses are directed toward the vassal who violates the rights of his master, king or suzerain."²² For the people of YHWH they had no choice other than to obey their God for the fulfillment of the covenant.

In Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua 24 we find the full six-part covenant structure that mirrors these suzerain-vassal treaties. This covenant structure consists in the titular, the history, the stipulations, the document

¹⁹ Laura E. Mumme, "The Five Main Themes of the Old Testament", *The Kabod* 2.2 (2016) p. 3, available at <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=kabod>. (accessed on 14 August 2017).

²⁰ Victor R. Salanga *et al.*, "Berit as biblical foundation for religious vows", *Landas* 17.1 (2003), p. 73, available at <http://journals.ateneo.edu/ojs/landas/article/viewFile/958/987> (accessed on 10 August 2017).

²¹ Moshe Weinfeld, "בְּרִית", in *TDOT* II, p. 270.

²² Salanga *et al.*, "Berit as Biblical Foundation for Religious Vows", p. 73.

clause, the God list, and the blessings and the curses.²³ In Exodus, the six-part is seen in Exodus 19–24.²⁴ Chapter 19 stands for the preamble to the covenant. Exodus 20:2 serves for the review of the preceding story, while 20:3-17 contains the stipulations of the covenant, and chapters 21–23 function as application. Exodus 24:4 stands for the witness, and 24:4-8 may contain elements of blessings and curses.²⁵

In regard to Deuteronomy, Baltzer observes that the “elements of the structure of the whole recur again and again in the various parts. This unity remains remarkably constant even in the Deuteronomistic additions and revisions.”²⁶ Drumbrell gives more insight when he states that “In regard to the form of the book of Deuteronomy, it is almost universally held that the book betrays clear evidence of contact with the Ancient Near Eastern treaties.”²⁷ Drumbrell²⁸ quotes Kline to give a clear example of the structure in the book of Deuteronomy:

On his view we have chapter 1:1–5 as preamble in which Moses as mediator is introduced, chapters 1:2—4:49 as the historical prologue in which the history of relationships between Yahweh and Israel is the theme, 5:1—26:19 in which stipulations as to the way in which life within the covenant is to proceed, 27:1—30:20 where wide-ranging covenant sanctions are offered, and 31:1—34:12 which is concerned to provide what is in effect dynastic succession for Moses in the shape of Joshua.

The book of Joshua chapter 24 displays a good example of the structure of the treaty. The pattern in Joshua 24 is the same as in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, which is “much closer in form to the ancient Near

²³ McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, pp. 51-52, 67-68.

²⁴ William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology*, Exeter, Paternoster, 1984, p. 96.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

²⁶ Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary: In Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings* Philadelphia, Fortress, 1971, p. 31.

²⁷ Drumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, p. 115.

²⁸ M. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1963, p. 28.

Eastern suzerainty covenants than are the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.”²⁹

3.2 The Promissory Covenant

While the obligatory covenant is conditional, the promissory covenant is unconditional. Compared to the royal grants in the ANE, the promissory covenants in the OT are “gifts bestowed upon individuals who distinguished themselves in loyalty serving their masters.”³⁰ This covenant or treaty consists in “a grant of property or even a privileged position of a priestly or royal office given as a favour by a god or king. The focus of these treaties is on honour and the interpersonal relationship.”³¹

The grant covenant should not be confused with the suzerain-vassal treaty. Whereas the purpose of the covenant of grant is to protect the rights of the servant, the suzerain-treaty serves to protect the interests of the master.³² The Abrahamic covenant belongs to the category of grant covenant³³, which is a subset of promissory covenants.³⁴ The Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants are grant covenants because

God bestowed them on Abraham and David as gifts. However, blessings came because they were found faithfully serving after the making of the covenant. Thus, Abraham was awarded the blessing of the land (Genesis 22:16, 18; 26:5) and David the benefit and grace of participating in an everlasting dynasty (2 Samuel 7:8–18; 1 Kings 3:6; 9:4; 11:4, 6; 14:8; 15:3).³⁵

²⁹ René Lopez, “Israelite Covenants in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Covenants”, *CTSJ* 9 (2003), p. 73, available at <http://www.michaelsheiser.com/TheNakedBible/OT%20covenant%20ANE%20covenant%20Pt2.pdf>. (accessed on 7 March 2020).

³⁰ Weinfeld, “מִכְרָת”, p. 270.

³¹ Gentry & Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, p. 166.

³² Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East”, p. 185.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ René Lopez, “Israelite Covenants in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Covenants” (Part 1 of 2), available at

<http://www.michaelsheiser.com/TheNakedBible/OT%20covenant%20ANE%20covenant%20Pt2.pdf> (accessed on 27 June 2019).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

In reference to these two covenants, “the promissory type (Abrahamic and Davidic covenants) is unconditional. It is a covenant which Yahweh commits himself to Israel through these prominent figures without requirements or conditions. God is bound to his promise no matter.”³⁶ Nothing can break this type of covenant despite the consequences of disobedience.³⁷ The faithfulness of God in fulfilling his covenant with his people does not exclude the responsibility of Israel, even though the stress in the promissory covenant is not on the role to be played by the receiver. Hillers indicates that when there is a breach in obeying God, there is punishment, while the covenant remains. The understanding is that the promissory covenant being unconditional is not weak since it engages the faithfulness of God.

In the promissory covenant, its beneficiary is not completely passive; he/she has his/her role to play. Despite the role of the beneficiary, the fulfillment of the covenant depends on YHWH and not the beneficiary (cf. Gen 12:1; he is Gen 17; and 22:16–18). From YHWH’s covenant with different people in Israelite society, the covenant with David appears to play a more important role in the history of the people of YHWH. This covenant installs a model of divine kingship and implements it among God’s people. The Davidic covenant also fulfills the intentions and the purposes of God for his people found in the covenant with Abraham.³⁸

4. The Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7:8-16

Prophet Nathan was YHWH’s mouthpiece to deliver to David an important message. YHWH’s message to David is preceded by reminding the king of his humble background (v. 8) and the continuous support that David had benefited from YHWH since then (v. 9a) and what he will do to David — make his name great — (v. 9b). The divine promise ends by the assurance of YHWH to stabilize his people (v. 10). This prelude to the covenant is crucial. It encompasses the surety of what YHWH will do. It means, that if YHWH took David from a humble background and made him the king of Israel, he is able to fulfill what he promises to do in the future.

³⁶ Salanga, “Berit as Biblical Foundation for Religious Vows”, p. 73.

³⁷ D. R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea*, Baltimore, John Hopkins, 1969, p. 112.

³⁸ Gentry & Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, p. 443.

A better way of understanding the promissory covenant is to study at length the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. Reading the covenant that YHWH made with David in 2 Samuel 7, it appears first that the covenant is unconditional and unilateral. At the same time, when it comes to the descendants of David we do see a certain level of conditionality. In support of this view, the Davidic covenant is connected to the Abrahamic and the Sinai covenants. Dumbrell indicates that “the Davidic covenant is a slight modification of the Sinai covenant, and is, as we shall see, presented as being within the process of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.”³⁹ Looking at the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen 15:18-21), there is some conditional aspect given to Abraham. In Genesis 17:9-15 God called Abraham to obey to the covenant sign, circumcision. Circumcision was not a condition per se for the fulfillment of the covenant, but a sign of the covenant that Abraham had to observe. In the Sinai covenant the aspect of conditionality clearly appears. The people of Israel will be special to YHWH if they obey him and keep his covenant (cf. Exod 19:5). Keeping the covenant of YHWH is the guaranty of Israel to belong to YHWH.

In the Davidic covenant, YHWH does not give any condition to David for the fulfillment of the covenant; it is an unconditional covenant. The covenant with David will not end, but those who will disobey will be punished (2 Sam 7:14-16; cf. Ps 89:30-37). The modification in regard to the Abrahamic covenant is that YHWH does not give any physical sign that is directly connected to the covenant. God will unconditionally establish a dynasty for David. In case of disobedience, YHWH will certainly punish the culprit. Dumbrell describes the two aspects as “general” and “particular” where “In general terms the line would not fail. Yet in particular terms, benefits might be withdrawn from individuals. In physical terms, the virtual failure of the Davidic line occurred in 587 B.C.”⁴⁰

5. The Significance of the Davidic Covenant

The place and the role of the Nathan narrative in the corpus of the text of Samuel as well as in the rest of the OT is unquestionable. As for the prophets, it offered an indispensable perspective, establishing the Davidic

³⁹ Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, p. 127.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

tradition in postexilic Judaism.⁴¹ The books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Micah display the relevance of the Davidic covenant. The overview is that “Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel each point forward to a new covenant yet to be instigated. In each of these three books this new covenant is specifically tied in to the promise of an “everlasting” covenant with David, and in one instance, is also linked to the unconditional Patriarchal Promise.”⁴²

While the mentioned prophets do not develop the theme of covenant in detail, it appears that their messages are based in one way or another on the covenants that God made with individuals or with his people, Israel. Meanwhile, there are indications of the Davidic covenant. For the case of Isaiah, the word covenant (in Hebrew) occurs twelve times, but only Isaiah 55:3 makes a direct reference to David.⁴³ The mention of בְּרִית עוֹלָם (bərīt ‘ōlām) (an everlasting covenant) draws the attention of the reader to the covenant that YHWH made with David, which David as the one who qualified as beneficiary of YHWH’s בְּרִית עוֹלָם (bərīt ‘ōlām) in 2 Samuel 23:5.

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 we read about a new covenant that YHWH will make with Israel, which will be different from what he initially made and was broken. In Jeremiah 33:14-26 we find reference to the Davidic dynasty and also to YHWH’s everlasting covenant with David (33:15, 17). In this reference “the Davidic covenant is dramatically and powerfully reaffirmed.”⁴⁴

The prophecy of the restoration of Israel in Hosea 3 is linked to the Davidic covenant. There are two things that Israel will experience: (1) They will return; and (2) They will seek YHWH and David their king (Hos 3:5). The mention of David here recalls the Davidic covenant, indicated by the phrase “David their king.” This phrase “*David their king*” implies that the northern kingdom, led by kings who are not descendants of David, will

⁴¹ William W. Watty, *The Nathan Narrative in 2 Samuel 7:1-17: A Traditio-historical Study*, Eugene, OR, Wipf & Stock, 2015.

⁴² Frank Booth, “Covenant & Promise: An Analysis of Biblical Principles of Covenant, the Interaction of Conditionality and Promise in Covenant Theology and the Significance for Israel Today”, *Olive Press Research Paper* 18 (2013), p. 10, available at <https://www.cmj.org.uk/perch/resources/oprp-18.pdf>. (accessed on 12 March 2019).

⁴³ Ronal E. Clements, “The Davidic Covenant in the Isaiah Tradition”, in *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson*, Ernest W. Nicholson, A. D. H. Mayes & Robert B. Salters (eds), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁴ Booth, “Covenant & Promise”, p. 10.

cease to exist and that all Israelites will be ruled by someone from the house of David.”⁴⁵ The prophecy also suggests the faithfulness of YHWH to the covenant that he made with David. The main aspect of the covenant being the Davidic dynasty and the restoration of the people of God, nothing or event could deviate YHWH in fulfilling his covenant. As observed by Douglas Carew, “the exile will not end God’s covenant with his people. He will be faithful to the covenant he made with David and will restore his people.”⁴⁶

In Micah 5:1-4 the text is suggestive of David. The prophecy is about the restoration of the Jewish people. A close reading of the text and its understanding brings into the reader’s mind the Davidic covenant as found in 2 Samuel 7. In the text, Bethlehem is associated with David (1 Sam 17:12) and establishes “a connection between the messianic King and David.”⁴⁷ Clearly, “the connection with David is explicit in the passage when Micah refers to the ancient pedigree of the coming ruler. That pedigree is Davidic and the roots of the fulfillment predicted in verse 2 may be found in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7).”⁴⁸

Referring to Micah 5:2-4 as “the positive message of hope”, Gary V. Smith states that the “mention of a new king from the line of David reminds the people about their tradition of the messianic promise of the eternal reign of David’s son (2 Sam. 7:4–17; Ps. 2; 89; 132).”⁴⁹ Andersen and Freedman express the same idea.⁵⁰ The commonality between 2 Samuel 7 and the prophetic books around the Davidic covenant is clear in Isa 4:2; 9:2-7; 11:1-

⁴⁵ Livingston, “Hosea”, in *Evangelical commentary on the Bible*, p. 607.

⁴⁶ Douglas Carew, “Hosea”, in *Africa Bible Commentary*, Tokunboh Adeyemo (ed.), Nairobi/Grand Rapids, MI, WordAlive/Zondervan, 2006, p. 1017.

⁴⁷ Thomas Edward McComiskey, “Micah”, in *The Expositor’s Bible commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible: Daniel - Minor Prophets 7*, Frank E. Gaebelain (ed.), Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 427.

⁴⁸ Longman III, “Micah”, in *Evangelical commentary on the Bible*, p. 656.

⁴⁹ Gary V. Smith, *Hosea, Amos, Micah: The NIV Application Commentary from Biblical Text – to Contemporary Life*, NIVAC, Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2001, p. 524.

⁵⁰ Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman (eds), *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB v. 24E, New York, Doubleday, 2000, 1st edn, pp. 470-71.

5, 10; 16:5; 55:3-4; Jer 17:25; 23:5-6; 30:9; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos 3:5; Mic 5:1-4.⁵¹

The preceding discussion shows that the three prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were familiar with the Davidic covenant which also was an important component of their messages. Hence, the use of the Davidic covenant in the prophets establishes the context for its significance. The Davidic covenant has theological, literary, and historical significance for Israel and the text of the HB.

YHWH's covenant with David serves as one of the bases of "the theological high points of the OT Scriptures."⁵² The covenant with David thus is at the center of the theology of the OT. The main component of the covenant resides in the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty, which encompasses "a high degree of theological dignity."⁵³ Furthermore, the promise made to David being central to the books of Samuel, is viewed as pivotal for the evangelical faith. Commenting on 2 Samuel 7, Walter Brueggemann articulates that this chapter "occupies the dramatic and theological center of the entire Samuel corpus. Indeed, this is one of the most crucial texts in the Old Testament for evangelical faith... In this chapter, we encounter the bold articulation of a new theological claim surpassing anything yet known in Israel."⁵⁴ He adds that this oracle is to be considered as "the most crucial theological statement in the Old Testament."⁵⁵ The boldness of the Davidic covenant resides in the fact that it brings a new dimension in the theological discussion in Israel with focus on David and his descendants. In this,

Chapter 7 is of peculiar interest because it indicates how the requirements and prospects of David change the subject of the theological conversation in Israel. The old discussion spoke with considerable anxiety about Yahweh's presence and how to secure it. The ark is a response to the question of presence. Now, however, the issue is

⁵¹ A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, David A. Hubbard *et al.* (eds), Word biblical Commentary 11 (Waco, TX, Word Books, 1989), p. xxxviii.

⁵² Grisanti, "The Davidic Covenant", p. 233.

⁵³ Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology II*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1996, p. 25.

⁵⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, IBC, Louisville, KY, J. Knox, 1990, p. 253.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

not God's presence in the community but solidarity with this man and this man's family. The sociohistorical character of Israel's faith is powerfully evident here.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the focus on David and his family does not remove YHWH from the scene. YHWH remains in control as the initiator and the executor of the covenant. Making the promise to David and his descendants is not to be taken as YHWH giving them freedom or independence.

The theological significance of the Davidic covenant is connected to its literary significance. The theologico-literary aspect of the covenant is well distributed in the OT literature. The appearance of the covenant with David in other biblical texts stands for proof of its importance. The fact that the covenant appears in the rest of the OT is supportive of the biblical unity. Levenson attributes the significance of the Davidic covenant to the attention that it receives in the HB.⁵⁷ Together with 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89, there is another version of the Davidic covenant in 1 Chronicles 17.

The Davidic covenant also encompasses a literary-historical significance. For example, in Hosea 3:5 the text points to a probable restoration of the two divided kingdoms after they have experienced punishment.⁵⁸ The basis of the restoration recalls the promise that God made to David. Regarding the literary and historical significance of the covenant in Isaiah, Ronald E. Clements is right when he observes that "what is of most significance is the fact that the status of the Davidic dynasty in the life and international standing of Israel formed a foundation platform for the beginning of Isaiah's prophesying."⁵⁹ The historical significance resides thus in the Davidic covenant constituted a basis of hope during hard period like that of the Babylonian exile.

Finally, taking into account the literary significance of the promise, the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7 known also as the dynastic oracle "is rightly regarded as an 'ideological summit', not only in the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁵⁷ Jon D. Levenson, "The Davidic Covenant and Its Modern Interpreters", *CBQ* 41 (1979), pp. 205-206.

⁵⁸ Victor Harold Matthews, *Old Testament Turning Points: The Narratives that Shaped a Nation*, Rapids, MI, Baker Academic, 2005, p. 86.

⁵⁹ Ronald E. Clements, "The Davidic Covenant in Isaiah Tradition", in *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 41.

‘Deuteronomistic History’ but also in the Old Testament as a whole.’⁶⁰ The Davidic covenant carries the divine plan for God’s people.⁶¹

6. Conclusion

In this article, the focus was to stress the significance of the Davidic covenant considering the ANE model on which it was based and the text of 2 Samuel 7. The Davidic covenant is central to the message of the OT. Theologically, its significance underscores the faithfulness of God. Despite the ups and downs in the life of David and his offspring, Jewish history establishes that YHWH did not dissolve his covenant, rather he punished the defaulter. Literally, reference to David and to the Davidic covenant emphasizes its importance.

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⁶⁰ Robert P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary*, Exeter, Paternoster, 1986, p. 235.

⁶¹ C. Marvin Pate (ed.), *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology*, Downers Grove, Ill./Leicester, InterVarsity Press/ Apollos, 2004, p. 62.

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